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- BJP govt in Delhi likely to be sworn in by Feb 19-20
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'Youth Forum on Foreign Policy met diplomats from several countries, not just Pak'

Pak meeting row: Gaurav clears air, pins charges

GUWAHATI, Feb 14: Senior Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi, facing accusations from the BJP on his wife's alleged links with the ISI, on Friday asserted that the Youth Forum on Foreign Policy (YFFP), an organisation he started in 2011, had interacted with diplomats from many countries, and not just Pakistan.

Gogoi made the statement a day after Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, without naming the Congress leader, said that members of the YFFP interacted with the Pakistani High Commissioner to India in 2015 to discuss India-Pakistan relations.

In his Facebook post, the deputy leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha also did not make any reference to the attack launched against him by the BJP over the activities of the YFFP since its formation.

"The photograph with former Pakistan High Commissioner



Abdul Basit during a panel discussion which has been circulated by some brought back memories of 2011 when I along with a few friends had set up the YFFP. The idea to set up such a forum had first come to my mind while I was an intern at the Indian mission in New York in 2010, the Jorhat MP said in the Facebook post written

in Assamese.

The Forum was aimed to provide a platform for students and young professionals to discuss foreign policy and international affairs, he said.

Various BJP politicians had also participated in dialogues initiated by the Forum, primarily to help students of political science and

UPSC aspirants discuss foreign policy matters with experts, Gogoi claimed.

"The YFFP had organised discussions with diplomats and envoys and the exchange of ideas had greatly helped in enhancing the knowledge of students," he said.

The Forum had interactions with former foreign secretary Shyam Saran, former US ambassador Richard Verma, former British High Commissioner James Bevan, and other retired diplomats, Members of Parliament and ambassadors of the Netherlands, Singapore, Israel, Australia, Thailand, and Pakistan among others, Gogoi said.

The year 2011 was very "encouraging for us as we were able to set up branches of the Forum with college students and young professionals in Delhi, Guwahati, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chandigarh," the Congress leader said. "The (CONTD. ON PAGE 2

Working on logistics of Tahawwur Rana's surrender, extradition to India: Foreign Secretary Misri



WASHINGTON, Feb 14: India is working on the logistics of Tahawwur Rana's surrender and extradition from the US, foreign secretary Vikram Misri has said, as President Donald Trump announced that his administration has given the go-ahead to extradite the 26/11 terror attack accused "to face justice".

"This is an issue on which the US authorities have taken very clear decisions. I think you've seen the President announce it himself from the White House podium" the decision of the US to extradite Rana, Misri said at a press conference here on Thursday. During a joint press conference with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the White House, US President Donald Trump announced that his administration has approved the extradition of "very evil" Tahawwur Rana, wanted by Indian law en-

forcement agencies for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, "to face justice in India".

In response to a question by PTI on the timeframe by when Rana will be extradited to India, Misri said: "We are working on the logistics of his surrender and extradition to India. There are a few final steps to be completed. The two sides are in touch on this par-

tical issue." The India-US joint statement issued during the Prime Minister's visit to the US notes that Modi and Trump reaffirmed that the global scourge of terrorism must be fought and terrorist safe havens eliminated from every corner of the world. "They committed to strengthen cooperation against terrorist threats (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India, US kickstart new relationship after Modi-Trump summit

WASHINGTON, Feb 14: India and the United States rekindled their relationship on a high note Friday with a summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump yielding a range of benefits including US sale of oil, gas and F-35 fighter aircraft to India, a possible mega trade deal and the immediate extradition of Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Rana.

Trump said after talks with Modi that India will buy more oil, gas and military hardware from America to bring down the trade deficit while asserting that Washington will not spare New Delhi from reciprocal tariffs.

At his Oval Office in the White House on Thursday (Friday India time), Trump warmly welcomed Modi with a long handshake and a bear hug and described the prime minister as a "great friend" for a long time and a "terrific" man.

"We missed you. We missed you a lot," Trump said as he greeted Modi.

The elaborate welcome allayed the trepidation and put to rest the uncertainty that had clouded bilateral relationship after Trump took office last month and unleashed a series of executive orders that have upended the global economic and diplomatic order.

Yet, Modi's visit went off without any hiccups and in fact produced rich dividends. The only fly in the ointment was Trump's announcement a day before the summit that he would impose reciprocal tariffs on countries that do the same with American goods.

India is among those countries Trump is targeting, and he did not mince his words when talking about reciprocal tariffs against India during a 44-minute joint news conference with Modi.

"Whatever India charges, we will charge them," Trump said. "We are being reciprocal with India."

He said both sides are looking at striking a major trade deal soon while calling import duties imposed by India on certain US products "very unfair" and "strong".

The Modi-Trump meeting with an expansive agenda took place hours after the US President announced a new reciprocal tariff policy for all trading partners of the US, the latest in a series of such actions by his administration.

In a post on X, the prime minister said the "excellent" meeting will add "significant momentum to the India-USA friendship". Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said it was a "very substantive and very productive" visit.

In his remarks, Trump said he and PM Modi have reached an agreement that could potentially make the US the "number one supplier" of oil and gas to India, suggesting it was part of measures to bring down the US trade deficit with India that stands at around USD 50 billion.

The US president also said that both sides have decided to expand the overall defence partnership.

"Starting this year, we will be increasing military sales to India by many billions of dollars," Trump said.

"We are also paving the way to ultimately provide India with F-35 stealth fighters," he added. The F35 jets are known as the most lethal, survivable and connected fighter aircraft in the world.

Trump also announced that India and the US will work together like "never before" to confront the threat of radical Islamic terror across the world.

"I am pleased to announce that my administration has approved the extradition of one of the very evil people of the world," he said, referring to 26/11 Mumbai attack accused Tahawwur Rana to India.

Rana, currently detained at a metropolitan detention centre in Los Angeles, is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the terror attack in 2008.

"He is going to be going back to India to face justice," Trump said. "We're giving him back to India immediately and more such extraditions could (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Oppn parties ask Centre to acknowledge 'failure' in Manipur, ask govt's plan for resolution

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Opposition parties on Friday said the President's rule was imposed in strife-torn Manipur "to buy time to settle internal conflicts within the ruling coalition" as they asked the ruling BJP to acknowledge its "failure" in the state.

They also questioned why the government offered no clarification on Manipur in Parliament and why there was a delay in removing Biren Singh as chief minister. They also asked if there was a future plan for the state that has been in a state of chaos since ethnic violence erupted in May 2023.

President's rule was imposed in Manipur on Thursday and the state assembly put under suspended animation, days after Biren Singh resigned from his post.

The Congress on Friday said the imposition of President's rule in Manipur is a direct admission of the failure of the BJP governments at the Centre and the state, and asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi to



apologise to the people there.

In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said there is a Constitutional crisis in Manipur that forced the imposition of the President's rule.

"Narendra Modi ji, it is your party which has been ruling at the Centre for 11 years. It is your party which was ruling Manipur for 8 years. It is the BJP which was re-

sponsible for maintaining Law & Order in the state.

"It is your government which is responsible for National Security and border patrol. The imposition of President's rule by YOU, suspending YOUR own party's government is a direct admission on how YOU failed the people of Manipur," Kharge said. The CPI(M) politburo, in a statement, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

SC declines to hear plea on Tripura job notification



NEW DELHI, Feb 14: The Supreme Court on Friday refused to hear a plea against a notification, which made permanent resident certificates mandatory for applying for jobs in Tripura government departments.

After a bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih showed its disinclination in examining the plea and asked the petitioner to move high court with his

grievance, the counsel withdrew the petition.

"Whether the High Court of Tripura is on leave?" it asked the petitioner's counsel.

The lawyer argued the notification mandated that a permanent resident of Tripura certificate was required to apply for jobs in the state government departments and semi-government bodies.

He referred to a recent verdict of the apex court which held that domicile-based reservation in post graduate medical courses by a state was unconstitutional.

"Why can't you raise all these issues before the high court?" asked the bench, "why can't you go to the high court?" When the petitioner's counsel said the matter involved larger question (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India-B'desh border talks next week; fencing, attacks by Bangladeshi miscreants on agenda

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: The border forces of India and Bangladesh will hold their bi-annual talks here next week with issues such as border fence construction and attacks on BSF personnel and civilians by Bangladeshi miscreants figuring among the discussion points, an official statement said on Friday.

The 55th Director General-Level Border Coordination Conference between BSF and the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) will be organised at the Border Security Force (BSF) headquarters here between February 17-20 February.

This would be the first top-level meeting between the two sides after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in August last year. The Indian side will be led by

BSF director general (DG) Daljit Singh Chawdhary while the BGB delegation will be headed by Maj General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui.

The conference is being organised to discuss border-related issues and for better coordination between both the border guarding forces, the BSF said in a statement.

Discussions will be held on prevention of attack/assault on BSF personnel and Indian civilians by Bangladesh-based miscreants/nationals, how to prevent trans-border crimes, construction of single row fence, action against Indian insurgent Groups in Bangladesh, issues related to border infrastructure, joint efforts for effective implementation of Coordinated Border Management Plan,

Confidence Building Measures and other issues.

The last edition of these bi-annual talks was held in Dhaka in March last year.

The 4,096 km long India-Bangladesh boundary spans across five states -- West Bengal (2,217 km), Tripura (856 km), Meghalaya (443 km), Assam (262 km) and Mizoram (318 km). The BSF is designated as the lead security and intelligence-gathering agency for this front.

The ties between the two countries came under strain after the neighbours summoned each other's high commissioners in December last year.

While Bangladesh expressed to the Indian high commissioner its concern (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

PM maintains silence in country, says 'personal matter' abroad: Rahul on Adani

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "covering up" businessman Gautam Adani's alleged corruption.

In a post on X, he said the prime minister maintains silence when questions are asked in the country and terms it a personal matter when asked abroad.

"If you ask questions in the country, there is silence. If you ask abroad, it is a personal matter!"

"Even in America, Modi Ji covered up Adani Ji's corruption!" Gandhi charged in his post in Hindi.

"When filling a friend's pocket is 'nation building' for Modi Ji, then taking bribes and looting the nation's wealth becomes a 'personal matter'," he also said.

Congress general secretary (communications) Jairam Ramesh said, "Modi ji's face turned pale on hearing Adani's name. Then he beat around the bush and gave irrelevant knowledge and said - this is a personal matter."

"Since when has corruption become a personal matter," he asked in a post on X.

"In Mr. Modi likes to display his knowledge of algebraic equations acquired through his



training in entire political science. First he likened Indo-Canada relations to $(a+b)^2 = a^2 + b^2 + 2ab$.

"Now he says in the context of India and USA that $MAGA + MIGA = MEGA$. Actually the only equation that counts is $Modi + Adani = Modani$," Ramesh said in another post.

The Congress also took a swipe at the prime minister and said in a post on its official X handle, "In America, a journalist asked a question related to the corruption of Narendra Modi's best friend Adani. Narendra Modi called it a personal matter and started talking about other things. His face turned pale as soon as he heard the question." "Investigations are going on against Adani in (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Environment minister stressed that the needs of forest dwellers should be considered

Centre says 'voluntary' village relocation from core areas of tiger reserves a 'priority'

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Voluntary relocation of villages from core areas of tiger reserves should be carried out on a "priority" to support wildlife conservation and ensure the inclusive growth of people living in forest areas, the NTCA has said.

During a meeting of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), some members also said that the current voluntary village rehabilitation package might not be attractive to all communities living in core and critical tiger habitats and suggested it be revised.

According to the minutes of the latest NTCA meeting, Union Environment minister Bhupendra Yadav said green growth should be achieved through mitigation strategies in buffer and corridor areas while core and critical tiger habitats made "inviolate", according to tiger management principles.



Yadav, who is also the NTCA chairman, "emphasised" that "voluntary relocation of villages from core or critical tiger habitats of the tiger reserve, which is backed with statutory provisions,

should be taken on a priority so that a win-win situation for tiger conservation and inclusive growth can be achieved and people living inside forest areas can be brought into the mainstream".

He stressed that the needs of forest dwellers should be considered while carrying out voluntary relocations and highlighted the potential of tiger reserves as an "instrument for development of Tier II cities".

Last year, a large number of people from tribal communities living in the core zones of India's tiger reserves protested against the NTCA's directive to forest officials to speed up the relocation of 64,801 families from 591 villages in the core areas of 54 tiger reserves.

Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj, the NTCA's member secretary, said in the meeting that village rehabilitation was a "completely voluntary process" and "informed consent of the gram sabha and the people affected is obtained" before relocation. The resettlement package for families was (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Sensex, Nifty slide for 8th day on FPI outflows, weak Q3 numbers

MUMBAI, Feb 14: Benchmark Sensex declined nearly 200 points on Friday, extending its losing run to the eighth day due to persistent foreign fund outflows and weak quarterly earnings by corporates.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex dropped 199.76 points or 0.26 per cent to settle at 75,939.21 with 21 of its constituents ending lower. During the day, it tanked 699.33 points or 0.91 per cent to 75,439.64. The NSE Nifty declined 102.15 points or 0.44 per cent to 22,929.25.

In eight trading days to Friday, the BSE benchmark has tumbled 2,644.6 points or 3.36 per cent, and the Nifty slumped 810 points or 3.41 per cent.

From the 30-share Sensex pack, Adani Ports dropped over 4 per cent. UltraTech Cement, Sun Pharma, IndusInd Bank, NTPC and Tata Steel were also among the laggards.

Nestle, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services and HCL Tech were among the gainers.

"The risk-averse sentiment continues to rule investors' minds as corporate earnings are significantly lower than the market expectations during the start of the year, especially for mid and small caps."

"Muted earnings trend, INR depreciation along with external factors like tariffs are expected to keep



the sentiments weak in the near term, which could further push FIIs outflows. Volatility is expected to stay elevated until there is clarity on tariffs and a recovery in corporate earnings," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

"The Indian equity markets have witnessed a devastating trading week, completely overshadowing the positive momentum built over the past two weeks. This week was marked by an unsettling trend of eight straight sessions of sell-offs, creating a climate of concern among investors," Osho Krishnan, Sr. Analyst, Technical & Derivatives of Angel One, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge tanked 3.24 per cent and midcap index

dropped 2.59 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, services plunged 3.16 per cent, industrials (3.03 per cent), capital goods (2.76 per cent), power (2.65 per cent), utilities (2.52 per cent), consumer durables (2.39 per cent), commodities (2.25 per cent) and realty (2.03 per cent).

BSE Focused IT emerged as the only gainer.

As many as 3,320 stocks declined while 681 advanced and 82 remained unchanged on the BSE.

On the weekly front, the BSE bellwether gauge plunged 1,920.98 points or 2.46 per cent, and the Nifty declined 630.7 points or 2.67 per cent.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled higher

while Tokyo ended lower.

European markets were trading on a mixed note. US markets ended higher on Thursday.

India and the US have resolved to more than double the two-way trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 and announced plans for a bilateral trade agreement to bring down duties and increase market access.

According to a joint statement issued after the meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump in Washington, the two leaders have also pledged the bilateral trade relationship to promote growth that ensures fairness, national security and job creation.

"To this end, the leaders set a bold new goal for bilateral trade - Mission 500 - aiming to more than double total bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030. Recognizing that this level of ambition would require new, fair-trade terms, the leaders announced plans to negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025," it said.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 2,789.91 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude went up by 0.55 per cent to USD 75.43 a barrel. (PTI)

HCLTech opens applications for TechBee early career program

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 14: HCLTech has announced the opening of applications for its TechBee program, an initiative aimed at providing students an opportunity to kickstart their careers immediately after completing Class 12. The program is open to students across India who have cleared their exams in 2023, 2024, or are set to graduate in 2025.

TechBee offers selected candidates a 12-month training period with HCLTech, after which they receive full-time job offers at the company. Alongside employment, participants can also pursue part-time higher education at institutions such as BITS Pilani, IIT Kottayam, SASTRA University, and Amity University Online. Students with a background in mathematics or business mathematics are eligible to apply for technology roles within the program.

Since its inception in 2017, TechBee has trained thousands of students, preparing them for careers in digital engineering, cloud computing, data science, and artificial intelligence. "The TechBee program equips students with job skills and provides them opportunities to work on projects for leading global brands while continuing their education," said Subbaraman Balasubramanian, Senior Vice President at HCLTech.

More details on eligibility criteria, financial aid, and application procedures are available at www.hcltechbee.com.

ICAI elects new leadership for 2025-26

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 14: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has elected its new leadership for the term 2025-26. CA.

Charanjot Singh Nanda has been appointed as the President, while CA. Prasanna Kumar D has taken over as the Vice-President, effective from February 12, 2025.

The oath of office was administered by Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Law & Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.

Congratulating the newly elected leaders, Meghwal expressed confidence in their leadership, stating that India would progress toward achieving Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of becoming the world's third-largest economy.

Meanwhile, CA. Ravi Kumar Patwa and CA. Sanjib Sanghi, elected from the Eastern Region (EIRC) in the recent ICAI elections, also assumed charge as Central Council Members at an event in Delhi. Patwa, a member of the Guwahati Branch, has previously served as Chairman of both the Guwahati Branch and the EIRC.

The ceremony in Delhi was attended by the Vice-Chairperson of the Guwahati Branch, CA. Raginee Goyal, and Treasurer CA. Jay Prakash Gupta.

Rupee rises 12 paise to close at 86.81 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Feb 14: The rupee extended its recovery and settled 12 paise higher at 86.81 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday amid easing American currency.

However, higher crude oil prices and incessant selling of domestic equities by foreign institutional investors capped a sharp gain in the local unit, forex traders said.

Also, the aggressive dollar chase was halted after the US government announced the implementation of reciprocal tariffs on April 1, giving its trading partners some relief.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.86 and touched the high of 86.79 against the greenback during intraday. It also touched the low of 86.90 before ending the session at 86.81 (provisional) against the dollar, logging a gain of 12 paise from its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee settled almost flat with a marginal gain of 2 paise at 86.93 against the US dollar. The unit had closed 16 paise lower on Wednesday, a day after surging 66 paise, witnessing the highest single-day rise in nearly two years.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the rupee gained on the weak US dollar index.

He further said that the US dollar declined as President Donald Trump delayed the implementation of reciprocal tariffs to April 1 which calmed market nerves.

"Persistent outflows by FIIs may

pressurise the rupee further. However, any further intervention by the RBI may support the rupee at lower levels. Traders may take cues from retail sales and industrial production data from the US, Choudhary said, adding the "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 86.60 to 87.10". The domestic unit has been facing extreme volatility for the past few months due to several global macroeconomic uncertainties.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday said the rupee along with other Asian currencies has depreciated against the US dollar on account of uncertainty pervading the global macroeconomy.

"Quarter four of 2024, certainly witnessed extensive currency-related volatility across major countries, not just India. Indian rupee, like other Asian currencies, depreciated against the US dollar on account of uncertainty pervading the global macro economy," Sitharaman said in her reply to a discussion on the Union Budget 2025-26 in Rajya Sabha.

She said that the US Dollar Index rose to 6.5 per cent during October 21, 2024 to January 27, 2025.

On Friday, the US dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.39 per cent lower at 106.79. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.35 per cent to USD 75.28 per barrel in futures trade. (PTI)

Modi-Trump talks: AI, hi-tech, semiconductors in focus as India, US pledge to boost technology ties

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Artificial Intelligence, innovation and next-generation technologies figured prominently during the high-stakes discussion between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump at the White House, as the two sides announced transformative measures, including the US-India TRUST initiative, roadmap on accelerating AI infrastructure and INDUS Innovation, to boost tech ties.

Artificial intelligence, semiconductors, data centres, and quantum - the essential building blocks shaping an intelligent, new-age world - were in focus as the two leaders held bilateral talks at Washington, DC.

India and the US pledged to enhance collaboration in areas of critical and emerging technologies and announced the launch of the US-India Transforming the Relationship Utilising Strategic Technology (TRUST) initiative.

According to India-US joint statement, the TRUST initiative aims to catalyse government-to-government, academia and private-sector collaboration to promote the application of critical and emerging technologies in areas like defence, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, quantum, biotechnology, energy and space, while encouraging the use of verified technology vendors and ensuring sensitive technologies are protected.

As a central pillar of the 'TRUST' initiative, the leaders



committed to work with US and Indian private industry to put forward a US-India roadmap on accelerating AI infrastructure by the end of the year, identifying constraints to financing, building, powering, and connecting large-scale American-origin AI infrastructure in India with milestones and future actions.

The US and India will work together to enable industry partnerships and investments in next-generation data centres, cooperation on development and access to compute and processors for AI, innovations in AI models and building AI applications for solving societal challenges while addressing the protections and controls necessary to protect these technologies and reduce regulatory

barriers, the joint statement said.

The leaders also announced the launch of INDUS Innovation, a new innovation bridge modelled after the successful INDUS-X platform, that will advance US-India industry and academic partnerships and foster investments in space, energy, and other emerging technologies to maintain leadership for both sides in innovation and to meet the needs of the 21st century.

The leaders also reinforced their commitment to the INDUS-X initiative, which facilitates partnerships between US and Indian defense companies, investors and universities to produce critical capability for our militaries, and welcomed the next summit in 2025.

As part of the TRUST initiative, India and the US committed to

build trusted and resilient supply chains, including for semiconductors, critical minerals, advanced materials and pharmaceuticals.

The leaders hailed 2025 as a pioneering year for US-India civil space cooperation, with plans for a NASA-ISRO effort through AXIOM to bring the first Indian astronaut to the International Space Station (ISS), and early launch of the joint 'NISAR' mission, the first of its kind to systematically map changes to the Earth's surface using dual radars.

They also called for enhanced collaboration in space exploration, including long-duration human spaceflight missions, spaceflight safety and sharing of expertise and professional exchanges in emerging areas, including planetary protection.

The two leaders committed to further commercial space collaboration through industry engagements in conventional and emerging areas, such as connectivity, advanced spaceflight, satellite and space launch systems, space sustainability, space tourism and advanced space manufacturing.

Underscoring the value of deepening ties between the US and Indian scientific research communities, the two sides announced a new partnership between the US National Science Foundation and the Indian Anushandhan National Research Foundation in researching critical and emerging technologies. (PTI)

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Pak meeting row: Gaurav

visit of Nobel laureate economist Joseph E Stiglitz to Guwahati in 2012 on our invitation is memorable for me personally," he added. The MP claimed that since 2014 when he became an MP for the first time, his work with the Forum has declined considerably and his role is now limited to that of an advisor. "It is, however, heartening to note that a group of brilliant youth have taken over the leadership and are continuing with research and fellowship programmes. My interest in foreign policy, however, continues," he said.

Referring to the meeting with the former Pakistan ambassador, Gogoi said that there were several amusing anecdotes which included discussions not only on cricket but also arguments related to which country's 'kebabs' were more delicious.

Gogoi posted a series of photographs of events of the Forum and said that there are many familiar faces which include former BJP minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar, BJP MP Baijayant Panda, entrepreneur Nandan Nilekani, Gauhati University Vice Chancellor Nani Gopal Mahanta, journalist Wasbir Hussain, among others.

The Congress MP ended the post with "Don't underestimate the intelligence of the Assamese people".

The chief minister, reacting to the post, said, "The Hon'ble MP has shared pictures of esteemed individuals to suggest that they, too, were invited to his meetings. However, these meetings cannot be equated with his meeting with the Pakistan High Commissioner and the subsequent parliamentary questions that followed".

But, he questioned, if the meeting with the Pakistan High Commissioner was held with the consent of the central government. "Did the Hon'ble MP debrief the Home Ministry or the Ministry of External Affairs after the meeting? Attempts to divert public accountability by sharing unrelated photographs of intellectuals and prominent citizens will not change the core issue," Sarma posted on X. The chief minister on Thursday had levelled a series of allegations that the MP had raised questions in Parliament on sensitive defence matters after his marriage to a British citizen, a charge termed by the opposition leader as a "false accusation".

"In 2015, the Pakistani High Commissioner to India, Mr Abdul Basit, invited a first-term Member of Parliament (MP) and his startup, Policy for Youth, to discuss India-Pakistan relations at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi," Sarma had claimed in a post on X without naming Gogoi. The chief minister claimed that the visit occurred "despite India's official protest against the Pakistani High Commission's interference in internal matters, particularly its involvement with the Hurriyat Conference". Sarma's comment came a day after the BJP had accused Gogoi's wife of having links with Pakistan and the ISI.

The deputy opposition leader in the Lok Sabha on Thursday rejected the allegation as "laughable and entertaining". (PTI)

Working on logistics of Tahawwur

from groups, including Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Jaish-e-Mohammad, and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba in order to prevent heinous acts like the attacks in Mumbai on 26/11 and the Abbey Gate bombing in Afghanistan on August 26, 2021," the joint statement said.

"Recognising a shared desire to bring to justice those who would harm our citizens, the US announced that the extradition to India of Tahawwur Rana has been approved," it said. The leaders further called on Pakistan to expeditiously bring to justice the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai, and Pathankot attacks and ensure that its territory is not used to carry out cross-border terrorist attacks.

"The leaders also pledged to work together to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems and to deny access to such weapons by terrorists and non-state actors," the joint statement added.

Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, is currently lodged at a metropolitan detention centre in Los Angeles. He is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the main conspirators of the 26/11 attacks. Speaking at the joint press meet, Trump said "Today I am pleased to announce that my administration has approved the extradition of one of the plotters and very evil people of the world, and having to do with the horrific Mumbai terrorist attack, to face justice in India. So, he is going back to India to face justice." The extradition of Rana was cleared by the US Supreme Court in January as it rejected his review petition in the case. India last month said it was working with American authorities for the early extradition of Rana. (PTI)

Oppn parties ask Centre

said the imposition of the President's rule underlines the "utter bankruptcy" of the BJP's "double-engine" government. It demanded that all political parties be taken into confidence to bring back normalcy in the state.

"President's rule has been imposed not in the interests of Manipur but to buy time to settle internal conflicts within the ruling coalition," the statement said. The party said, "The (former) chief minister (N Biren Singh), the main culprit, who was backed all along by the BJP-RSS was forced to resign because his partisan role was being examined by a court where evidence was presented of his sectarian partisan role which left him with no choice but to quit". The CPI(M) said the central leadership of the ruling party (BJP) refused to take the required action to alleviate the deep suffering inflicted on the people of Manipur, "symbolised by the prime minister's callous refusal to even visit the troubled state". "This exposes the sectarian approach of the ruling party and the state and central government it heads, which put its own political interests above that of the state and its people," they said. The CPI(M) party said imposing the President's rule is not the solution, and the Central government cannot escape responsibility. (PTI)

India, US kickstart new

follow as we have quite a few requests (from New Delhi)," he added. The US president also noted positive momentum in India-US cooperation in the civil-nuclear energy sector. "In the ground-breaking development for the US nuclear industry, India is also reforming laws to welcome US nuclear technology to the Indian market," he said.

In his remarks, Prime Minister Modi said cooperation between India and the US can shape a better world. A defence cooperation framework will be prepared for the next decade, he said. "One thing that I deeply appreciate, and I learn from President Trump, is that he keeps the national interest (of the US) supreme. Like him, I also keep the national interest of India at the top of everything else," Modi said. To a question on whether the issue relating to vasudhaiva kutumbakam, Modi said, "India is a democracy and our culture is 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. We consider the whole world as one family. I believe every Indian is mine." "Two prominent leaders of two countries never discuss such individual issues," he added. On ties between India and China following the eastern Ladakh border row, Trump said, "I do see the skirmishes on the border which are quite vicious... If I could be of help." (PTI)

SC declines to hear plea

of law, the bench asked, "Whether the high courts are not empowered to decide on them?" The petitioner's counsel then withdrew the plea with liberty to approach the jurisdictional high court. The counsel referred to a separate petition, listed before the bench, and challenged a February 2024 order of the Tripura High Court in a matter related to the notification. He said the high court had noted the submissions of the state's advocate general that the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council was an independent entity/autonomous body and there was no document under which they had adopted the government notification. "When a statement is made before a court by a constitutional functionary, the authorities are bound to abide by the same," said the bench and disposed of the plea. (PTI)

India-B' desh border talks

over the "activities" of the BSF vis-a-vis fence erection and border killings, India made it clear to the acting Bangladeshi high commissioner in Delhi that all laid down protocols were being followed while constructing the fence.

The government also informed Parliament in the Budget session that India has conveyed to Bangladesh that it expects a cooperative approach from the neighbouring country for combating cross-border crimes and this includes the border fencing work.

Minister of State for Home Nityanand Rai said in a written reply in Parliament that the unfenced part of this front was 864.482 km, which includes 174.51 km of "non-feasible" gap. "Construction of fence is an important measure for securing the border. Fencing helps to ensure a crime-free border by effectively addressing the challenges of cross-border criminal activities, smuggling, movement of criminals and trafficking," Rai said.

He added the challenges faced in completing the "feasible" stretches of fencing projects relate to land acquisition, BGB objections, limited working season and landslide/marshy land. The BSF last month said its "strong objection" led to the stopping of "illegal" construction by Bangladeshi citizens and its frontier force along the International Border in West Bengal, a phenomenon it said was "increasing" in recent times. According to sources who spoke to PTI, the Indian side is expected to put across instances of spiked infiltration attempts by Bangladeshi nationals across this front after August last year. These instances are linked to human trafficking and cross-border smuggling, the sources said earlier. Bangladesh's interim government had recently said in Dhaka that it would seek to scrap some "uneven agreements" on borders with India during the meeting of the directors general of the border guards of the two countries to be held between February 17-20. (PTI)

PM maintains silence in

Sri Lanka, Kenya, Bangladesh, Australia and many other countries, people are taking to the streets and protesting. In America, a warrant was even issued in the corruption case. There are many allegations of corruption, but for Narendra Modi this is a personal matter. Shameful," the party said in a post in Hindi. To a question on whether the issue relating to Adani figured in the talks, Modi at a joint media briefing with Donald Trump in Washington said: "India is a democracy and our culture is 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. We consider the whole world as one family. I believe every Indian is mine." Modi said such individual matters are not discussed in talks between two leaders. "Two prominent leaders of two countries never discuss such individual issues," he said. (PTI)

Centre says 'voluntary' village

raised from ₹ 10 lakh to ₹ 15 lakh in 2021, he added. An NTCA member suggested that the relocation package be revised periodically based on inflation trends. He pointed out that the people being relocated from forest areas were usually reluctant to change and this should be considered while encouraging voluntary rehabilitation through capacity and skill development programmes.

A Union tribal affairs ministry official informed the NTCA that it had received several representations from organisations following the NTCA's letter requesting states to undertake voluntary village relocation. The ministry last month asked states to gather data on the number of villages and families living in tiger reserves, details of villages relocated outside, and the status of claims to forest land and produce settled under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. A tiger reserve consists of two zones -- the core (critical tiger habitat) and the buffer (peripheral areas). According to the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, core areas must remain "inviolable for the purpose of tiger conservation". The buffer areas, in contrast, permit sustainable human activities alongside wildlife conservation. Tribal and indigenous communities residing in the core areas say they have lived in harmony with nature and forests for generations and their livelihoods, culture and traditions are deeply connected to the forest ecosystem. (PTI)

UPPL gets more than 450 new members Former MLA Hitesh Basumatary joins UPPL in Mushalpur

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Feb 14: Former Chapaguri LAC MLA, BPF leader and Mushalpur district committee president, Hitesh Basumatary, formally joined the UPPL along with more than 400 members at a grand joining programme held at Mushalpur Durga Mandir complex in Baksa.

Basumatary joined UPPL amidst presence of UPPL president and chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro, Assam cabinet minister and senior UPPL leader, Urkhao Gwra Brahma.

CEM Boro, cabinet minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, BTC deputy CEM and UPPL vice president, Gabinda Chandra Basumatary, UPPL general secretary, Raju Kumar Narzary, former minister Chandan Brahma, former BTC deputy chief, Kampa Borgoyary, and several senior party leaders greeted and welcomed Hitesh Basumatary with party mufflers and traditional Aronai.

Notably, Basumatary was one of signatories of BTC Accord of 2003, and represented the



Mushalpur BTC Constituency from 2005 to 2011, and held the position of executive member in Bodoland Territorial Council. He was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly representing the Chapaguri LAC in 2011 and continued till 2016.

He was holding the charge of president of Mushalpur district committee of BPF party, and recently tendered his resignation from the post as well primary membership of the BPF party.

He along with more than 400 party workers and his followers joined the UPPL party that show-

ing a strengthening of the ruling UPPL party in Bodoland Territorial Region.

In Kokrajhar, more than 50 prominent personalities and BPF party leaders joined the UPPL party in the presence of UPPL president Pramod Boro, and senior party leaders.

Former ABSU general secretary, Gautam Mushahary, former cashier of ABSU, Jashamanik Brahma, and several BPF party workers and members representing the Baukhungri block joined the UPPL party.

CEM of BTR Pramod Boro wel-

coming the newly joined members said, "Today people cutting across communities are joining the UPPL. Opposition BPF is now irrelevant amongst the citizens due to aimless attitude."

He alleged that the BPF party failed to address the problems and grievances of the society in their 17 year rule in Bodoland Territorial Council as people had to face severe hardship.

He said that the UPPL party and BTR government was committed to work for all round development of the citizens, and subsequently rendering relentless services.

"I'm delighted to welcome Shri Hitesh Basumatary, former MLA of Chapaguri constituency, who, along with 400 BPF supporters, has left BPF behind to embrace UPPL's vision of peace and progress, today. His decision reflects the ever growing faith of the people in our party's commitment to peace, progress & good governance in BTR. My heartfelt welcome to all who have joined us today—together, we will build a peaceful, smart and green Bodoland", Boro added.

Railway Board member (O&BD) visits NF Railway

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 14: Hitendra Malhotra, member (operations & business development), Railway Board & ex-officio secretary to the Government of India, visited Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) to assess the zone's operational efficiency and safety preparedness.

As part of his visit, Malhotra took part in a high-level meeting at NFR Headquarters with Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, general manager, NFR and Arun Kumar Chaudhary, general manager (Construction), NFR.

He also held a detailed review meeting with the concerned principal heads of departments (PHODs) and other senior officials. The dis-

cussions focused on reviewing operational performance, commercial strategies and service efficiency, ensuring seamless railway operations and business growth in the zone. The deliberations also emphasised strategic planning for freight optimization, streamlining train operations, and strengthening coordination among divisions. Key performance indicators were reviewed, and innovative approaches to revenue generation and logistics management were explored. Malhotra provided valuable insights into advancing business development initiatives, enhancing freight logistics and reinforcing safety measures, reaffirming Indian Railways' commitment to operational

excellence.

During his visit, Malhotra also inspected the Central Control Room, assessing its real-time monitoring systems, emergency response mechanisms and traffic management capabilities. A detailed field inspection was also conducted at Azara Station & Goods Yard, where the Railway Board Member examined infrastructure readiness, freight handling efficiency and potential capacity expansion. The visit highlighted the importance of modernizing goods-handling processes, reducing turnaround time and boosting freight revenue, reinforcing NFR's role in regional economic growth.

Bag containing ₹ 4 lakh snatched in Sivasagar

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Feb 14: Two full-masked motorbike rider dacoits snatched away a bag from one Sambhunath Jha containing Rs 4 lakh from near the SBI Bazar Branch at Doulmukh Chariali in broad daylight on Friday.

Jha, a stone quarry merchant withdrew the money from the bank after depositing a cheque. The bikers fled through the Gayangaon road. The Sivasagar Police has been investigating the case after examining the CCTV footage.

5 day-long youth exchange programme in border areas

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 14: The inaugural ceremony of the youth exchange programme in border areas was held at the Youth Hostel, Paltan Bazaar, Guwahati on Friday.

The programme, organised by the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, Kamrup (Metro), was inaugurated by Guwahati Municipal Corporation ward commissioner Ratna Singh Bhardwaj.

In her inaugural speech, Bhardwaj emphasised the importance of cultural exchange and brotherhood among the youth of border areas. She stated that this programme will promote cultural integration and brotherhood among the youths.

The programme was attended by IngKhuang Guang, regional director, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, North East Region, Promothesh Chakraborty, deputy director, NYKS, Assam, National Service Scheme, North Eastern Regional Office, youth officer Nakul Deori and Azizur Rahman, youth leader and school teacher of Jamadarhat Higher Secondary School while Chayan Suklabaidya, the district youth officer, Kamrup Metro NYK, welcomed the guests and participants of the programme.

The programme aimed to promote unity, cultural exchange, and understanding among the youth of different communities and states. Over 25 selected participants from Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Tripura respectively took part in the programme.

The programme would feature various activities, including educational programmes, yoga sessions, field trips, and quizzes.

According to Jiban Chandra Doley, accountant and programme supervisor of Nehru Yuva Kendra, Kamrup, the programme would provide a platform for the youth to share their experiences, traditions, and cultures, and to promote national integration.

94 Media professionals in Cachar honoured



HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, Feb 14: Altogether 94 government-recognised journalists from Cachar were honored with a Gift of Goodwill from Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The felicitation ceremony took place on Friday at the newly inaugurated conference hall of the District Commissioner's office in Silchar.

The event, organised by the regional office of information & public relations, Barak valley Zone Silchar under the aegis of Cachar district administration aimed to acknowledge the relentless contributions of journalists in shaping public awareness and supporting governance.

Cachar district commissioner, Mridul Yadav graced the occasion as the chief guest and personally handed over the goodwill gifts to the journalists present.

In his address, DC Mridul Yadav lauded the media fraternity for their dedication to truth and responsible reporting. "Journalists play a pivotal role in society, bridging the gap between the administration and the public. Their relentless pursuit of truth helps build a well-informed and respon-

sible citizenry. This gesture from our Honorable Chief Minister is a token of appreciation for their unwavering commitment," he said.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from journalists representing various media platforms across the district. Deputy Director in-charge of Information & Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar, Bonnykha Chetia, was also present at the function.

Earlier, addressing the gathering, IC DDIPR & assistant commissioner, Bonnykha Chetia emphasised the government's continuous efforts to support and recognize the vital role of the press in a democratic society.

Several journalists expressed their gratitude for the thoughtful initiative, describing it as a morale booster for the media community. "This recognition reinforces our responsibility to continue serving the public with truth and integrity," shared one of the recipients.

It is pertinent to mention here that the initiative is part of the Assam government's broader strategy to foster stronger ties with the media while acknowledging their indispensable contribution to governance and public discourse.

Governor hands over radio sets and megaphones to Dima Hasao Autonomous Council

'District is a shining example of inclusivity and mutual respect'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 14: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya while concluding his two-day Dima Haso district visit, on Friday handed over radio sets and megaphones to chief executive member of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council Debolal Gorlosa.

It was done under "Governor Assam Amrit Sarovar Sadbhavna Sangat Protsahan Yojana" in presence of principal secretary of the Council, and the District Commissioner of the district.

It may be noted that the yojana was launched to transform Amrit Sarovars into centers of public engagement, encouraging greater community participation in nation-building exercises.

The Governor as a part his visit, also met representatives of social organisations, spiritual institutions,



including ISKCON, Prajapita Brahmakumari, and Ramakrishna Mission and political organisations. During his interaction with the organisations, Governor Acharya encouraged everyone to actively participate in nation-building exercises by contributing to the well-being of society in their own capacities. He emphasised that life is an opportunity to bring happiness to others, as he said that

meaningful efforts towards social progress can make a significant difference in the positive development of the society. Appreciating Dima Hasao and its natural beauty, the Governor said that Dima Hasao's cultural richness and its unity in diversity has made the state unique. He commended the peaceful coexistence of multiple demographic units, describing it as a shining example of inclusivity

Illegal sand mining disturbing ecology in West KA and Hojai border areas

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Feb 14: Illegal sand mining activity which is disturbing the ecology and peace in the border areas of West Karbi Anglong and Hojai, particularly at Jorashimolu has been a concern among locals.

The intensity of sand mining allegedly by mafia on the Kopili River is so high that it has damaged the roads in the area and polluted the environment.

The locals have complained that school and college going students in the area were having trouble traversing the road due to the movement of the machinery, illegal sand ferrying trucks and damaged roads.



Following complaints by villagers, local BJP MLA of Hojai, Ramkrishna Ghosh visited the area and shut down the illegal sand mining, but within less than a week the sand mining activity resumed. The illegal miners operate with

impunity with no fear from the forest department and the administration, sources said.

The residents of the area have been protesting against such sand mining and smuggling activities in the area.

KAAC PWD Development Board chairman inspects road construction

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Feb 14: Chairman, PWD Development Board, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Longsing Tokbi recently inspected ongoing road construction and completed schemes executed by PWD Roads Department, KAAC.

He was accompanied by executive engineer, PWD, Dokmoka division, Badan Tisso and board member, Longkiri Tisso and nodal officer, Nokbe Teron; sectional assistant among others.

It may be mentioned that the PWD department is under Chief Executive Member (CEM), KAAC, Tuli-

ram Ronghang, and has directed Tokbi to inspect the ongoing road construction in the district for quality of work and efficiency.

During the inspection Tokbi inspected work at Nagaria path under Muylkomotrir Nagoria Path Nirman Asoni; Gaurav Path at Dokmoka town and road from Birensing Engti village under Muylkomotrir Nagoria Path Nirman Asoni.

He also visited road construction from Dokmoka town to Bi Sarpo upto Kothori Assam Mala 2 and the Assam Mala 1 road from Howraghat tinali to Nilbagan, Hojai district.

51st Karbi Youth Festival ready to celebrate tradition, culture

HT Correspondent

MAILLOO, Feb 14: The 51st edition of the Karbi Youth Festival (KYF), one of Northeast India's most prominent ethnic cultural events, will start from Saturday. The event will conclude on February 19. This year's festival promises a vibrant showcase of tradition, art, and unity, with the Governor of Chhattisgarh Romen Deka slated to attend as the Special Guest on February 16. The KYF is organised annually by the Karbi Cultural Society (KCS).

Governor Deka's participation highlights the festival's significance in promoting cross-cultural dialogue and preserving the heritage of the Karbi community. Known for its grandeur, the event attracts thousands of visitors annually, featuring traditional dance, music, indigenous sports, handicraft exhibitions, and culinary delights. Organisers emphasised this year's focus would be on youth engagement and environmental sustainability, with workshops and competitions aimed at fostering cultural pride among the young generation. The hosting of Governor Deka has been aimed at showcasing the richness of Northeast India's traditions to a broader audience.

Held in Karbi People's Hall, Taralango, Karbi Anglong, Assam near Diphu, the festival also serves as a platform for local artisans and performers, boosting regional tourism and economy. Attendees can expect five days of immersive experiences in folk music and dance, ethnic and contemporary food culminating in a grand cultural parade on the closing day.

As preparations enter their final stages, anticipation grows for a celebration that bridges heritage and modernity, reaffirming the festival's role as a cornerstone of Northeast India's cultural tapestry.

Awareness programme on pre-conception & pre-natal diagnostic techniques



HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, Feb 14: An insightful awareness programme on the Pre-Conception & Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PC & PNDT) Act was organised at the AMISA Hall, Civil Hospital, Silchar as part of the 10th Anniversary Celebration of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP).

The event, spearheaded by SANKALP: District Hub for Empowerment of Women, department of women & child development, Cachar, was conducted in collaboration with the health department, Assam Rural Livelihood Mission (ARLM), and District Legal Services

Authority (DLSA). The programme aimed to spread awareness about the prevention of female foeticide and the importance of gender equality. It witnessed active participation from ASHA workers, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), and members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), who play a critical role in community healthcare and social welfare.

Addressing the gathering, advocate Arunima Purkayastha, Legal Aid Counsel from DLSA, delivered a compelling talk on the legal provisions and strict enforcement of the PC & PNDT Act. She emphasised that gender-biased sex selection is not just a legal offence but a deep-rooted social issue that threatens the demographic balance and dignity of women.

"We must work collectively to ensure the birth of every girl child is celebrated, not prevented. The PC & PNDT Act is our legal safeguard against the evil of female foeticide, and community awareness is the first step towards its success," said advocate Purkayastha during her address.

The session also highlighted the multi-dimensional efforts of BBBP over the last decade in promoting girls' education, health, and rights. The participants engaged in interactive discussions, sharing grassroots experiences and strategies for effective community mobilization.

As a symbolic gesture of hope and commitment to the cause, saplings were planted in the hospital campus in the name of the girl child, reflecting the collective resolve to nurture gender equality and social justice.

KA Garo Union founder president passes away



HT Correspondent
DONGKAMUKAM, Feb 14: Hriday Marak the founder president of the Karbi Anglong Garo Union (KAGU) passed away in the wee hours of Friday morning at 3.35 am after prolonged illness at his residence at Satgaon West

Karbi Anglong. Born in the year on Oct 10, 1934 he was popular social worker among all communities.

He was also donated land for the Garo Cultural Hall at Satgaon and Garo Union ME School Rengthama.

Marak had a pioneer role in establishing both Satgaon Assamese LP, ME school and Satgaon English LP, ME School.

He left behind his wife several children and grand children.

The funeral service was held in the evening by Fr Brightinson Terang of CNI Mondolis priest in presence of Fr Subhash Danggo, Fr Albert Thyriang Parish Priest of Satgaon.

Fr Justin Chinaparaj, Sr Superior Mary Hasda, Rev Pitson Marak, KAGU president Martin Marak among others.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Love the giver more than the gift
-Brigham Young

Manipur under PR

The President of India was obliged to impose President's Rule in Manipur on February 13, 2025, for the 11th time in the last 57 years. It is in itself a manifestation of the political uncertainties under which the strife-torn Manipur has been suffering. President's Rule has been generally welcomed in the state in the present circumstances, but only as a step towards realizing the hope of facilitating the political solution to the ethnic violence, under which the state has been reeling under since May 2023 claiming at least 250 lives while displacing about 60,000 people. Governor of Manipur had convened the Legislative Assembly session to begin on February 10, but Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned a day before on February 9. His resignation came hours before the Congress was set to table a no-confidence motion, and there were reports that the 7 BJP MLAs from the Kuki-Zo community would vote against the N Biren Singh government. The KPA and NPP having 2 and 6 MLAs respectively had already withdrawn support from the government. It has been also reported that within the BJP also, several MLAs were against CM N Biren Singh. Just to avoid greater humiliation in the Legislative Assembly, BJP has orchestrated resignation of CM N Biren Singh.

Moreover, as per the Constitution of India, there can't be a gap of more than six months between the two assembly sessions, and February 11 was the last date. Resignation orchestrated by the BJP, then the Governor delayed the constitutionally mandated session, presumably to give BJP a chance of finding its new Chief Minister. Then came Manipur governor's decision to issue an order of making the assembly session "null and void" which the Congress called a blatant violation of the Constitution. Though the BJP could avoid the impending humiliation, it could not find a new Chief Minister though BJP has 37 MLA, including the 5 from JD(U) who have switched over to BJP, increasing its strength from 32 that the party had won in 2022 in the 60-member House. Due to death of an MLA, the present strength of the Vidhan Sabha is 59. BJP spokesperson and political in-charge of North-East has had a series of talks with BJP MLAs, but failed to find any leader for CM post, since BJP is currently a divided house. What was the problem in finding a Chief Minister the BJP was facing? It has been already reported that Kuki-Zo MLAs within BJP were not only against N Biren Singh, but also any other Chief Minister from Meitei community.

It is but only one narrative of the political crisis in Manipur, the solution of which is not seen coming in the near future, though the BJP has bought some time. There are much serious issues beneath this surface level political acrobatics. In the power corridor of New Delhi, there is a buzz that the Union Government will utilize the President's Rule to help create a neutral setting for talks between Meitei and Kuki-Zo leaders to sort out issues for lasting peace, since Kuki-Zo leaders have been resisting sitting across the table with CM N Biren Singh. However, the final decision rests on Modi-Shah duo, and all eyes are looking towards them.

Immigrant workers including Indians are employed as indentured labour in Britain

By Elizabeth Short

Campaigners have demanded reform after a damning report laid bare shocking conditions facing migrant workers propping up Britain's crumbling care system. Unison surveyed more than 3,000 people who came to Britain on health and care worker visas to tackle shortages in the sector. It found that nearly a quarter had paid fees to an employer or an intermediary upfront in return for a job — with dozens handing over more than £20,000.

Many workers, who are from countries including Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Zambia as well as India and the Philippines, were given no shifts when they arrived, or not the number promised. Around 18 per cent said employers had deducted money from their salaries since arriving, with firms claiming the fees were for expenses such as training and administration.

Pay issues impacted three in 10 migrant care staff, with problems including unpaid travel time between care visits and no sick pay. More than a quarter were paid below the legal minimum wage of £11.44 an hour.

In one shocking testimony, a worker reported having to sleep on the streets because their employer did not pay them for shadowing other colleagues. And 9 per cent described the accommodation they were provided with as poor or very poor.

Nearly a quarter of those living in company accommodation shared a bedroom with other workers. One worker reported 15 people staying in a one-bedroom flat. Forty-six per cent of respondents experienced racism, including verbal insults and physical abuse, at work.

Over a third said they or a migrant worker colleague had been threatened with dismissal or redundancy for raising issues about their treatment. Unison reported employers threatening workers who speak out with deportation. If a firm goes bust or workers leave, this can follow if they aren't able to secure a new sponsor within 60 days.

The union is calling on the government to take over the sponsorship of migrant care staff from employers, and for pay to be boosted for all to the resolve the ongoing staffing crisis. Unison general secretary Christina McAnea said: "Only when wages rise with the promised fair pay agreement will the care sector be in a better position to recruit and hold on to the growing number of workers needed to deliver quality care to an ageing population."

"Care staff who come here from overseas are shoring up a crumbling sector. These workers should be treated with respect, not taken advantage of and abused." Some workers are effectively being employed as indentured labour. This is not only immoral but also illegal. "The government must overhaul the spon-

sorship system as a matter of urgency." The calls were echoed by Stand Up to Racism. Co-convenor Sabby Dhalu, said: "We cannot allow hard-working migrants who contribute to our economy and society to be exploited."

Fizza Qureshi, CEO of the Migrants' Rights Network which has worked extensively with sponsored workers, said that the organisation has "heard stories of workers facing destitution, and being charged extortionate and illegal fees, which leaves them trapped in endless cycles of debt."

"We heard stories of workers being promised jobs that do not exist, being threatened with deportation, or facing certificate of sponsorship cancellations." "These sponsorship schemes are designed solely on the basis of productivity and business and economic interests, rather than the well-being and protection of migrant workers in mind. "Calls for change should aim to dismantle the existing sponsorship model, by demanding greater freedom for sponsored workers to move jobs, and by creating safe reporting mechanisms."

Anti Trafficking and Labour Exploitation Unit solicitor Jamila Duncan-Bosu commented: "If the government genuinely wishes to tackle this exploitation, then at a bare minimum they should stop outsourcing the issuing of sponsorship certificates to commercial companies."

A government spokesperson said that it has "set out first steps to ban rogue employers from sponsoring overseas workers, and will deliver legislation for the Fair Work Agency to ensure strong and fair employment rights for all. "Businesses found guilty of breaching employment law will have their sponsorship licenses refused or revoked, and care workers affected by this will be supported to find alternative employment."

Anti-slavery charity Unseen director Justine Carter said the scheme has become a "gateway to abuse." Data from the anti-slavery charity's helpline assessment revealed a 30 per cent increase in potential victims in the care sector in 2023.

"We need a complete overhaul of the health and social care visa system to ensure that workers are not burdened with exorbitant recruitment fees, and have clear information on their rights and entitlements from the outset, allowing them to carry out their vital roles with dignity and respect."

Public Services International care organiser Huma Haq said the findings reflect a broader global crisis in care: "The exploitation of migrant care workers in the UK is not an isolated incident but a symptom of a broken system globally where governments have increasingly privatised and underfunded essential care services. "Governments must step up and take responsibility for providing quality public care services." (IPA Service)

Constitutional crisis deepens in US as President Trump sidetracks courts

In only one of an avalanche of unconstitutional, outrageous and crude executive orders this week, Donald Trump installed an 18-year-old who goes by his internet name "Big Balls" as Senior Adviser to the U.S. Department of State.

That appointment followed his refusal to obey court orders halting his declaration of an end to birthright citizenship, his freeze on billions of dollars in federal funding and his lockout of tens of thousands of federal workers. That refusal has plunged the nation into a constitutional crisis caused by a president who, in his quest for total power, has discarded both the Congress and the courts. He is aiming to transfer the billions of dollars in public funds approved by Congress to meet the people's needs and transfer the money into the pockets of his billionaire pals.

The lockouts are being enforced by individuals from mysterious police forces who, in Nazi brown-shirt style, are literally standing in doorways, barring anyone from the public from entering the public buildings. Sycophant Republicans are calling for the impeachment of the judges trying to enforce democratic rule, not Trump.

Also in defiance of court orders he is barring federal workers and even elected lawmakers from entering the buildings in which they do the work of operating critical federal agencies. No agency, not even the Consumer Finance Protection operation, the EPA, or cancer research have escaped his slash and burn operation. By cutting those operations often local economies will suffer because of the job producing and economy boosting impact of those programs in communities across the country.

The government workers Trump and Musk are attempting to roll over, however, are refusing, to remain silent. They have been gathering across the country, including in Washington DC itself to resist. The Government Employees (AFGE) announced here that they have crafted a five-pronged plan to stop the scorched-earth destruction of federal workers and programs by worker-hating, union-hating and government-hating Donald Trump, union President Clarence Kelley says.

And marshalling public support, by pointing out how the deep slashes in government personnel and services will endanger the public—producing everything from unsafe airplanes to unsafe chickens—will be a key part of it. That danger is nationwide, says Kelley. "It doesn't matter what the colour of the state is"—red for Republican, blue for Democratic and purple for swing. "If the chicken is bad, it's bad." Kelley began his keynote address to the hundreds of delegates gathered at a legislative conference here by trashing Trump, even while admitting later that approximately 30% of his members had voted for the convicted felon.

"This president has contempt for the rule of law, for the Constitution and for our democracy," Kelley declared. "We in AFGE are on the front lines" of saving all three. Otherwise, "they're coming after us," referring to Trump, his puppeteer, multimillionaire Elon Musk, the Trumpite MAGA forces and Musk's "Department of Government Efficiency" (DOGE) hit squad of age 22-something numbers crunchers.

"And then they're coming after you," meaning the rest of the country. "But they



only win if we let them" do so. "We cannot be bullied unless we let them bully us. We cannot be silenced unless we let them silence us...Musk is a travesty and DOGE is a scam." "We're in a very trying time, but if we continue to stand strong and stand together, we will prevail," union president Kelley declared.

Whether that will actually occur is still very much an open question. The unions' normal allies, congressional Democrats, influenced by big givers and campaign dollars, have waffled. So has the Democratic leadership, notably Senate leader Charles Schumer, D-N.Y. He sent a mild "we are with you" video to the conference.

And the criminal corporate class is enthusiastic about Trump's dictatorial plans to reduce the government's size and reach. Such cuts would allow the plutocrats to run roughshod over the rest of us. One conference speaker said they could turn workers into slaves again.

Kelley unveiled the plan on the first full day, February 10, of the union's annual legislative conference in D.C., and his members are following up with a mass march on Congress, joined by the Professional and Technical Engineers, other unions, the Jewish Labour Committee and worker allies.

AFGE members will then fan out through the Capitol, lobbying lawmakers to preserve public services in the face of massive pressure from Trump and his handler, multimillionaire Elon Musk, to cut them.

Congressional Democrats addressing the conferees were supportive, as was the sole Republican, Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa. But he admitted he has a selling job to do on his side of the aisle to overcome myths and lies—propagated, though he didn't say so, by Republicans going back to Ronald Reagan and extending through Trump—about federal workers.

"I've been trying to educate my fellow Republicans. There is a stigma attached to fed-

eral employees. They don't know what you do behind the scenes" to keep the country going, Fitzpatrick said. "I've been nailing down the facts and clarifying the law."

The latest cuts loom at the Labour Department, the Veterans Affairs Department, and the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, site of a late-afternoon demonstration and a MAGA invasion February 10.

A federal judge in D.C. refused to stop—at least for now—the raids by Trump's partner in crime, multimillionaire Elon Musk, and his 22-somethings at DOL. They're snooping through union records, OSHA enforcement records, wage and hour violations, including those by Musk's firms, and visas for temporary farm workers and for skilled foreign workers, such as baseball players.

Trump Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought, a key crafter of Trump's radical right party platform, aka Project 2025, named himself the CFPB Director, called Musk's brigade in to rifle the files seeking data on enforcement against malefactors, and planned to shut it down.

The five-part plan Kelley discussed was also taken up by Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., Hillary Clinton's running mate in 2016. Kaine handily beat a Trump-picked foe last November. The first step, said both Kelley and Kaine, is to contest Trump's illegal and/or unconstitutional moves in court. Unions and their allies have filed at least 36 lawsuits against Trump's schemes. And the deep-blue California legislature just approved Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom's request for \$25 million in spending on lawyers to contest Trump plans.

The lawsuits have already produced some wins against the misogynist convicted felon's schemes to trash, lay off and fire federal workers, but also Trump's proposal to round up, incarcerate and deport people Trump calls "illegal immigrants" and worse.

Union contracts backstop many of the law-

suits, with clauses Trump illegally violates, such as by imposing mandatory back-to-work schemes or negotiating over the union's head with illegal direct offers of "buyouts"—for which there may be no money after March 14. "If they don't follow the law, the contracts and the regulations" concerning layoffs, "we'll file unfair labor practices" charges, the official name for labour law-breaking. That will be followed by grievances and lawsuits, Kelley added. In practice, Trump's federal ICE raiders are rounding up anyone with a brown skin, legal or not, migrant or not, on streets, dragging people out of cars after routine traffic stops, and raiding schools, churches and hospitals.

The second prong of the stop-Trump schemes involve using all available tools to tie up Congress in knots so it can't enact Trump's plans, despite its Republican majorities in both houses. In an interview after his own speech to the conference, Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., said that would include using parliamentary tactics to hamstring the Senate—everything from frequent quorum calls to objecting to unanimous consent demands on routine legislation to filibusters, such as a 30-hour talkathon the 47 Democrats conducted against Vought. Ultimately, though, they couldn't stop him and lost party-line, 53-47.

But Van Hollen also said the Republican-run House is vulnerable to stoppages, too. The GOP controls it by a 220-215 margin, including three vacant Republican-held seats up for special elections so far this year. And MAGA members of that majority, Van Hollen said, are quarrelling constantly with more traditional, practical and business-oriented Republicans.

The third part of the defeat-Trump plan is to rely on the states, especially blue states, to intervene and assert both states' rights and take over responsibilities Trump demands the feds dump. Several governors, including Illinois's J.B. Pritzker and Maryland's Wes Moore, are already doing that.

The fourth and fifth parts of the stop-Trump plan go hand-in-hand: Activism and education by union members and their allies aimed at the rest of the electorate, including Trump voters. They voted for Trump, "but they didn't vote for this," Kelley said. And, then, after two years of campaigning and pointing out the practical effects of the cuts, defeat of the MAGAites in 2026. "This is a slow-moving avalanche," unlike 2017 when Trump's first win drew the massive women's march into D.C.'s streets days after his inauguration.

One part of the avalanche is moving faster than the others, though: Unionization. AFGE, which had just over 300,000 members at the end of last year, set a goal of 325,000 net for the end of this year. In practice, Kelley said, that means it must recruit two new people for every retiree. But since voters elected Trump by a plurality—not a majority—over Democratic nominee Kamala Harris, Joe Biden's VP, the phones have been ringing off the hook at the union.

In December, Kelley reported, when the union usually loses members to end-of-the-year retirements, it gained about 1,000 members. In January, February and other months, it usually gains a net of 800-900 monthly. January's figure topped 8,000, staffers reported to Kelley, and February's is already at 8,264. (IPA Service)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT
By Mark Gruenberg & John Wojcik

Child education in Assam's villages

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Child education in Assam's rural areas is an issue that continues to demand urgent attention, as it faces multifaceted challenges that hinder progress. Despite various government initiatives and policies aimed at improving access to education, the situation in Assam's villages remains dire, with infrastructural, socio-economic, and cultural barriers preventing many children from receiving a proper education. For these children, education often remains a distant dream, held back by the constraints of geography, resources, and entrenched social norms. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that targets the root causes of educational deprivation in rural Assam.

A significant obstacle to education in rural Assam is the poor state of school infrastructure. While the state has made strides in building new schools and upgrading existing ones, many rural institutions are still plagued by basic infrastructural issues. Inadequate buildings, lack of proper seating arrangements, and a shortage of essential amenities such as clean drinking water and functional toilets are common problems. For students, these conditions not only make attending school uncomfortable but also discourage regular attendance. Furthermore, the vast geographical spread of Assam's rural areas means that many children have to travel long distances to reach the nearest school. This becomes a major deterrent, especially for girls, who often face additional challenges in terms of safety and cultural restrictions. Many children, particularly in the most remote parts of the state, are forced to abandon their education due to the lack of accessible schools. Despite efforts to build more schools under programs like Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), these measures are still insufficient to meet the growing demand for educational infrastructure in rural regions.

Equally problematic is the shortage of qualified teachers. Assam's rural schools often suffer from a lack of properly trained and dedicated educators. Many teachers are either unqualified or inadequately trained to handle the specific needs of rural students. The state's heavy reliance on contractual teachers, who are poorly compensated and lack job security, exacerbates this problem. Teacher absenteeism is also a major issue in rural schools, with many teachers failing to attend classes regularly due to personal reasons or administrative inefficiencies. As a result, children often receive inconsistent education, which leads to poor learning outcomes and high dropout rates. The quality of education is further compromised by the lack of teacher training and professional development opportunities. Without a stable, well-trained teaching workforce, it is difficult to achieve any meaningful improvements in education quality.

Poverty in rural Assam is another major barrier to education. For families living in poverty, sending children to school is often seen as a luxury rather than a priority. With many parents struggling to meet basic needs, education is often sidelined in favor of economic survival. Children, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, are frequently pulled out of school to work and contribute to the family income. This issue is especially prevalent among marginalized communities, such as indigenous groups and those living below the poverty line. While government programs like the Mid-Day Meal Scheme and free textbooks have helped alleviate some of the financial burdens, they have not been sufficient to overcome the deep-rooted economic challenges faced by rural families. Child labor remains a pervasive issue, as children are often expected to contribute to household chores or work in fields, further hindering their access to education. The persistence of poverty and child labor reinforces the cycle of illiteracy and

underdevelopment, making it difficult for children to escape the grips of poverty.

Cultural attitudes toward education, especially for girls, further complicate the situation. In many rural communities, traditional norms and values often discourage the education of girls, viewing them primarily as caregivers and homemakers. These cultural beliefs result in a high dropout rate among female students, as girls are expected to perform domestic duties or marry at an early age. Although government schemes have aimed to encourage female education, progress has been slow, and many families still prioritize boys' education over girls'. The belief that girls are better suited for domestic roles rather than academic pursuits continues to persist, perpetuating gender inequality in education. This deeply ingrained bias against female education means that even when girls do attend school, they often face additional barriers in terms of societal expectations, safety, and lack of support from their families.

While government initiatives such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) have succeeded in increasing enrollment rates in rural areas, these figures alone do not paint a complete picture. The quality of education remains a significant concern, as the increase in enrollment does not necessarily translate to better learning outcomes. Poor infrastructure, insufficient teaching staff, and socio-economic pressures continue to undermine the effectiveness of educational policies. As a result, many children who are enrolled in school do not stay long enough to complete their education, and even fewer acquire the skills necessary to succeed in the future. To truly improve education in rural Assam, the focus must shift from simply increasing enrollment to improving the quality of education provided.

The potential of digital education to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas is undeniable, but its implementation has been slow and uneven. While

digital learning offers an opportunity to enhance educational access, especially in remote regions, rural Assam faces significant challenges in terms of internet connectivity, technological infrastructure, and digital literacy. Many schools lack basic digital resources, and students often have limited access to online learning platforms. For digital education to be effective in rural Assam, the government must invest in the necessary infrastructure and ensure that both teachers and students are equipped with the skills to use digital tools effectively.

The way forward requires a comprehensive approach to addressing the educational challenges in rural Assam. This means improving school infrastructure, recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, addressing socio-economic barriers to education, and challenging cultural norms that restrict access to education, particularly for girls. It is essential that the government works in close collaboration with local communities, NGOs, and educational institutions to create a more inclusive and equitable education system. Moreover, a focus on improving the quality of education, not just enrollment numbers, is vital to ensure that children in rural Assam are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

In conclusion, child education in Assam's rural areas is at a critical juncture. While the challenges are formidable, they are not insurmountable. With concerted efforts to address the infrastructural, socio-economic, and cultural barriers that impede education, Assam can create an educational environment where every child has the opportunity to learn and succeed. Only through sustained efforts at the community, governmental, and institutional levels can Assam's rural children be empowered to overcome the obstacles they face and build a brighter future for themselves. (The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-magazine SAMPROTIK who can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

Careers in Pulses for a Diverse Agriculture

By: **Ranjan K Baruah**

We consume pulses on a daily basis. Pulses are an important part of our diets. Pulses, also known as legumes, are the edible seeds of leguminous plants cultivated for food. Dried beans, lentils and peas are the most commonly known and consumed types of pulses. For us when it comes to pulses then the easiest way is to understand it as dals which are consumed all over India.

For centuries, pulses have been vital to sustainable agriculture and nutrition. In many countries, pulses are part of the cultural heritage and are consumed on a regular or even daily basis. Pulses are naturally low in fat and contain no cholesterol, which can contribute to reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Pulses are the best sources of plant based protein, good source of iron, naturally gluten free, etc.

To celebrate the importance of these remarkable crops, the United Nations has celebrated

10th February as World Pulses Day since 2018 through the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). This 2025, under the theme "Pulses: Bringing diversity to agrifood systems," underscores the vital role of pulses in promoting diversity – both above and below the ground. When we integrate pulses into our diets and agrifood systems, we unlock a more sustainable, nutritious and equitable future.

There is no doubt that pulses make essential nutrients available to soils. Pulses get over 60 percent of their nitrogen from the air. This nitrogen is then fed into the soil and allows these legumes to share this nitrogen with nearby crops, essentially reducing the need for chemical fertilizers. Pulses have a natural capacity to mobilize phosphorous and other essential nutrients and micronutrients to soils which can contribute to healthier and larger crop yields.

Pulses help maintain soil biodiversity. Instead of misusing or overusing agro-chemicals which can result in environmental

degradation, pulses used in crop rotation systems help to curb and control pests and diseases and pulses enhance soil structure as producing legumes, such as pulses, improves soil structure.

Pulses with their ability to mobilize essential nutrients to soils can help reduce the need for chemical fertilizers and help to decrease greenhouse gas emissions – major drivers of climate change. They also increase root development, boosting carbon sequestration and contributing to climate change mitigation. I would like to inform our readers that I have taken inputs from the UN publications while compiling this article.

Knowing the importance of pulses one may be also interested to work in the fields related with pulses. One may choose to study agriculture after senior secondary and contribute in the research activities related to pulses. The most popular courses are B Sc in Agricultural Science for which aspirants must be from the science background. Similarly one may also choose agricultural

marketing to brand pulses and reach out to more and more people.

The agricultural sector is undergoing a significant transformation, and pulses are emerging as a vital component of sustainable farming practices. Pursuing a career in pulses can bring diversity to agriculture, offering numerous benefits like food security, sustainable agriculture, economic empowerment, innovation and research, etc. Career prospects include Pulse Breeding and Genetics, Agronomy and Crop Management, Food Processing and Technology, Marketing and Trade, etc.

The Indian Council for Agriculture Research - Indian Institute of Pulses Research, Kanpur, is the premier Institute for pulses research in India. The laboratories are well equipped with modern infrastructure and equipment, to carry out cutting edge research in modern science and technology. The Institute extends facilities for project work and training to students pursuing MSc/M.Tech



degrees in Indian Universities/Institutes for three months and six months duration. Aspirants may embark on a rewarding career in pulses and

contribute to a more diverse, sustainable, and food-secure agricultural sector. (The write is a Career Mentor and Skill Trainer and currently the Advi-

sor, Skill Employment and Entrepreneurship Department of Bodoland Territorial Council and can be reached at bkranjan@gmail.com or 8473943734)

NIPER Guwahati Recruitment 2025 – 7 Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 18/02/2025

National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education & Research (NIPER) has released two employment notifications for the recruitment of 7 Posts under different projects. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. Junior Research Fellow

No of posts: 01

Age Limit: 30 years.

Pay: ₹ 37,000/- + HRA (as applicable)

Educational Qualification & Experience: The candidate must have a postgraduate degree (M.S./M.Pharm.) in Pharmaceutical Analysis/ Natural Products from a PCI/AICTE/UGC/NAAC recognized/accredited University/Institute with a minimum of 60 % marks. The candidate must have cleared GPAT/ GATE/ CSIR-NET or any National entrance test exam conducted by any Central Govt. agency at the time of the interview/selection process.

2. Project Scientist I (Non-Medical)

No of posts: 01

Age Limit: 35 years.

Pay: ₹ 56,000/- + 20% HRA (as applicable)

Educational Qualification & Experience: Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences or Analytical Chemistry/ Pharmaceutical Analysis with first-class postgraduation in M.Sc. (Analytical Chemistry/Organic Chemistry) or M.Pharm./ MS.Pharm. (Pharmaceutical Analysis / Quality Assurance / Natural Products/Medicinal Chemistry) with 60% marks. The candidate must have at least one research publication in SCI-indexed Journals.

3. Junior Research Fellow (JRF)

No of posts: 02

Age Limit: 32 years.

Pay: ₹ 37,000/- + 20% HRA (as applicable)

Educational Qualification & Experience: M. Pharm/MS (Pharm) (Pharmaceutical Analysis/Quality Assurance/Natural Products/ Medicinal Chemistry/MSc in analytical chemistry or Organic Chemistry from a PCI/ AICTE/ UGC/ NAAC recognized/ accredited University/Central Autonomous Institutes with 60% marks or above.

The candidate must have cleared GPAT/GATE/CSIR-NET or any National entrance test exam conducted by any Central Govt. agency at the last date of application.

4. Project Scientist I (Civil)

No of posts: 01

Age Limit: 35 years.

Pay: ₹ 56,000/- + 20% HRA (as applicable)

Educational Qualification & Experience: ME/ MTech in the relevant branches under Civil Engineering or BE/BTech with 3 years of R&D/industrial experience. The candidate must have at least one research publication in SCI-indexed Journals.

5. Project Scientist I (Mechanical)

No of posts: 01

Age Limit: 35 years.

Pay: ₹ 56,000/- + 20% HRA (as applicable)

Educational Qualification & Experience: ME/ MTech in the relevant branches under Mechanical Engineering or BE/BTech with 3 years of R&D/industrial experience. The candidate must have at least one research publication in SCI-indexed Journals.

6. Project Scientist I (Electrical)

No of posts: 01

Age Limit: 35 years.

Pay: ₹ 56,000/- + 20% HRA (as applicable)

Educational Qualification & Experience: ME/ MTech in the relevant branches under Electrical Engineering or BE/BTech with 3 years of R&D/industrial experience. The candidate must have at least one research publication in SCI-indexed Journals.

Important Dates of NIPER Guwahati Recruitment 2025

Starting date to apply online: 4th February 2025

Last date to apply online: 18th February 2025

Chirang Judiciary Recruitment 2025 – Peon Post

Last Date: 20/02/2025

Chief Judicial Magistrate, Chirang has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 1 Peon post in the office of the Sub-Divisional Judicial Magistrate(M), Bijni under Chief Judicial Magistrate, Chirang. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

Name of post: Peon (Grade IV)

No of posts: 01 post [UR]

Pay: (PB- I) 12000-52000 G.P.3900

Educational Qualification: Candidates must have passed Class VIII but Candidates who have passed H.S. or above shall be ineligible to apply for the aforesaid

post.

Age Limit: Candidates must not be less than 18 years of age or more than 40 years of age as on 01/01/2025. The upper age is relaxable as per Govt. norms.

Other Criteria of Chirang Judiciary Recruitment

Citizenship: Candidate must be an Indian Citizen as per the Constitution of India.

Other Skills: Preference will also be given to those candidates who are having professional skills. Preference will be given to those candidates who are working in Judicial Court.

How to Apply for Chirang Judiciary Recruitment ?

The application must be submitted along with self-attested copies of all testimonials regarding Educational Qualification, Age, Caste along with 03 (three) copies of recent passport size photographs duly signed by the candidate on the reverse side.

The application should be addressed to The Chief Judicial Magistrate, Chirang, P.O. & P.S. Kajalgaon, Dist. Chirang, Assam - 783386.

The applicants shall submit their application in a drop box made available for the same in front of the office of the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Chirang, Kajalgaon or they may submit through ordinary postal service or speed post. Application sent through registered post or private courier service will not be entertained.

The applicant should mention their mobile number in the application without fail.

Envelope containing application should indicate the name of the post and category to which they applied for on the top in the Block letters as "APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF PEON". Those who failed to do so, their application shall not be considered under the said category.

The last date of receipt of application form is 20/02/2025 up to 5:00 P.M.

Important Dates of Chirang Recruitment 2025

Starting date of submission of application: 5th February 2025

Last date of submission of application: 20th February 2025

PWD Assam Recruitment 2025 – 654 Assistant Architect & Junior Engineer Posts

Last Date: 23/02/2025 and 04/03/2025

Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) has released two employment notifications for the recruitment of 654 Assistant Architect & Junior Engineer (Civil) Posts under Public Works (Building & National Highway) Department [PW(B&NH)D] and under joint cadre of Public Works Roads Department (PWRD) & Public Works (Building & NH) Department respectively. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

1. Assistant Architect

No of posts: 4 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

UR: 2
OBC/MOBC: 1
STH: 1

Name of department: Public Works (Building & National Highway) Department [PW(B&NH)D]

Scale of Pay: ₹ 30,000/- to ₹ 1,10,000/-GP: ₹ 12,700/- Pay Band – 4

Age Limit: The candidates should not be less than 21 years of age and not more than 38 years of age as on 01/01/2025.

Educational Qualification: Bachelors Degree in Architecture from an Indian or Foreign University recognized by the Government.

2. Junior Engineer (Civil)

No of posts: 650 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

UR: 396
OBC/MOBC: 157
OBC/MOBC (Tea Tribe & Adivasi): 20
SC: 27
STP: 34
STH: 16

Name of department: Joint cadre of Public Works Roads Department (PWRD) & Public Works (Building & NH) Department

Scale of Pay: ₹ 14,000/- to ₹ 70,000/-GP: ₹ 8,700/- Pay Band – 2

Age Limit: The candidates should not be less than 21 years of age and not more than 40 years of age as on 01/01/2025.

Educational Qualification:

Candidate must have 3 years Diploma in Civil Engineering/ Civil Engineering & Planning/ Construction Technology from any technical institute recognized by AICTE.
The Diploma course must be a regular course.

Eligibility Criteria of PWD Assam Recruitment

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC: 5 years
ST: 5 years
OBC/MOBC: 3 years
PwBD: 10 years
For more details pl read the official notification.

Citizenship: Candidates must be Indian Citizens as defined in Articles 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India.

Resident-ship:

(i) The candidate must be a permanent resident of Assam.
(ii) The candidate must produce PRC issued in Assam for educational purpose/ Employment Exchange Registration certificate as proof of residency along with the application form.

Small Family Norms: The candidates have to submit a declaration regarding "The Small Family Norms" in Form-A at the time of applying for the post.

Application Fee:

General/EWS: ₹ 297.20

OBC/MOBC: ₹ 197.20

SC/ST/BPL: ₹ 47.20

PwBD: ₹ 47.20

Payment Mode: Online

How to Apply for PWD Assam Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these posts by visiting at official recruitment portal of Assam Public Service Commission. They may follow below mentioned steps .

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

Click on Online Application Form link .

A new webpage will be opened.

Enter all your personal and educational details as required .

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

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

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

Important Dates of PWRD Assam Vacancy 2025

Assistant Architect

Starting date of submission of online application: 24th January 2025

Last date of submission of online application: 23rd February 2025

Junior Engineer

Starting date of submission of online application: 5th February 2025

Last date of submission of online application: 4th March 2025

Indian Coast Guard Navik Recruitment 2025 – 300 Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 25/02/2025

Indian Coast Guard has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 300 posts of Navik (General Duty) & Navik (Domestic Branch) in the Indian Coast Guard, an Armed Force of the Union for 02/2025 Batch. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Navik (General Duty) & Navik (Domestic Branch)

No of posts: 300 posts

Zone-wise vacancy:

North: 75 posts

West: 62 posts

East: 43 posts

South: 63 posts

Central: 57 posts

The details of area/states covered under various zones are as follows:-

North: Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chandigarh.

West: Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Goa, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu.

East: West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Sikkim, Odisha.

South: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, Karnataka, Lakshadweep.

Central: Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar.

Name of batch: 02/2025 Batch

Name of organization: Indian Coast Guard

Mode of application: Online

Eligibility Criteria of Coast Guard Navik Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidates age should be between 18 years to 22 years. Candidates should be born between 01 Sep 2003 to 31 Aug 2007 (both dates inclusive) applying for post of Navik (GD).

Age Relaxation: Upper age relaxation of 5 years for SC/ST and 3 years for OBC (non-creamy) candidates is applicable only if posts are reserved for them.

Educational Qualification:

(a) Navik (General Duty): Candidates must have Class 12th passed with Maths and Physics from an education board recognized by Council of Boards for School Education (COBSE).

(b) Navik (Domestic Branch): Candidates must have Class 10th passed from an education board recognized by Council of Boards for School Education (COBSE).

Examination Fee:

UR/OBC: Rs. 300

SC/ST: Nil

Mode of Payment: Net banking or by using Visa/ Master/ Maestro/ Rupay Credit/ Debit Card/ UPI .

Important Dates of Indian Coast Guard Recruitment 2025

Starting date of online application submission: 11th February 2025

Last date of online application submission: 25th February 2025

Pope Francis to be hospitalised for medical tests, Vatican says



ROME, Feb 14: Pope Francis will be hospitalised at the Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic at the end of Friday's daily audiences to undergo some necessary diagnostic tests and to continue his ongoing treatment for bronchitis in the hospital, the Vatican said in a short statement.

Since being diagnosed with bronchitis last Thursday, the 88-year-old pope has continued his activities and audiences indoors at Casa Santa Marta, the Vatican residence where he lives, with a public appearance on Sunday.

Francis has long battled health problems, including lung bouts of bronchitis. He uses a walker or cane when moving around his apartment and recently fell twice, hurting his arm and chin. (AP)

EU Commission vows to react firmly and immediately to Trump's tariffs



BRUSSELS, Feb 14: The European Union's executive branch on Friday vowed to "take firm and immediate action" against US President Donald Trump's imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminum.

The European Commission said in a statement that Trump's proposed "reciprocal" trade policy goes "in the wrong direction."

"The EU will take firm and immediate action against unjustified barriers to free and fair trade, including when tariffs are used to challenge legitimate and non-discriminatory policies," the Commission said. "The EU will always protect European businesses, workers and consumers from unjustified tariff measures."

The Commission, which negotiates trade relations on behalf of the 27-nation bloc, said the EU has some of the lowest tariffs in the world and sees no justification for increased US tariffs on its exports.

"Tariffs are taxes. By imposing tariffs, the US is taxing its own cit-

Sarfraz Dogar's oath as acting Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court draws ire of fellow judges

ISLAMABAD, Feb 14: President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday gave oath to Sarfraz Dogar as acting Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court, a move that has drawn ire of judges and opposition parties.

Dogar made headlines when he was transferred last month to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) from the Lahore High Court (LHC).

Judges, lawyers and opposition parties criticised the development as Dogar was 13th on the seniority list of the judges but rose to the second position in IHC.

He was tipped to rise to the top after the elevation of the IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq to the Supreme Court. Five other IHC

Bilateral cooperation should not harm third party: China on Modi-Trump meeting

'China is wary of Quad and asserts that the alliance is aimed at containing its rise'

BELJING, Feb 14: In a guarded reaction to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump's meeting, Beijing on Friday said China should not be made an issue in their bilateral cooperation, and it should not harm the interests of a third country.

Keeping a wary watch on the Modi-Trump talks in Washington covering a range of issues, including firming up defence cooperation besides reaffirming that a close partnership between the US and India is central to a free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said Asia-Pacific is a hub for peaceful development not an arena for geopolitical rivalry.

China believes that relations and cooperation between countries should not make an issue of China or harm other's interests and it should be conducive to peace, stability and prosperity, Guo said replying to a question.



Ganging up to form exclusive groups and engaging in bloc politics and bloc confrontation will not bring about security and can, by no means, keep the Asia-Pacific and the whole world peaceful and stable, he said.

The joint statement issued after Modi-Trump talks on Thursday (early Friday India time) said the two countries have agreed to advance India-US defence ties and launched a new initiative - the

'US-India COMPACT' (Catalyzing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce & Technology) for the 21st Century.

The two leaders also reaffirmed that a close partnership between the US and India is central to a free, open, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region and spoke of strengthening Quad partnership among other issues. India is a member of Quad al-

liance, which includes the US, Japan and Australia. China is wary of Quad and asserts that the alliance is aimed at containing its rise.

Soon after Trump assumed office, the foreign ministers of Quad met on January 22 and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening a Free and Open Indo-Pacific where the rule of law, democratic values, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are upheld and defended.

The Indo-Pacific, which includes the South China Sea on which China lays its claim for most part while Vietnam, The Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan have counterclaims over the area.

Prime Minister Modi's meeting with Trump weeks after the US President assumed office for his second term has evoked considerable interest in China, especially the outcome in the arena of defence cooperation between New Delhi and Washington. (PTI)

Senate panel advances nomination of Kash Patel, Trump's pick to lead the FBI

WASHINGTON, Feb 14: The Senate Judiciary Committee voted along party lines on Thursday to advance the nomination of Kash Patel, Donald Trump's pick for FBI director, pushing past Democratic concerns that he would operate as a loyalist for the president and target perceived adversaries of the White House. The committee voted 12-10 to send the nomination to the Republican-controlled Senate for full consideration.

A final confirmation vote is likely next week. So far even nominees once seen as having uncertain prospects - including new defence secretary Pete Hegseth, Tulsi Gabbard, the director of national intelligence, and Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr - have been able to marshal sufficient support from Republicans eager to fall in line with Trump's agenda.

Patel has raised alarm for his lack of management experience compared to other FBI directors and because of a vast catalog of incendiary past statements, which include calling investigators who scrutinised Trump "government gangsters" and describing at least some defendants charged in the Jan. 6, 2021 riot at the US Capitol as "political prisoners."

At his confirmation hearing last

month, Patel said Democrats were taking some of his comments out of context or misunderstanding the broader point that he was trying to make, such as when he proposed shutting down the FBI headquarters in Washington and turning it into a museum for the so-called "deep state."

And Patel denied the idea that a list in his book of government officials who he said were part of a "deep state" amounted to an "enemies list," calling that a "total mischaracterization."

Patel, who was selected by Trump in November to replace Christopher Wray as FBI director, would inherit an agency riven by turmoil amid the recent forced departures of a group of senior executives and by a highly unusual Justice Department demand for the names of all agents who participated in investigations related to January 6.

A letter this week from Sen. Dick Durbin, the top Democrat on the committee, cited undisclosed sources in saying that Patel was covertly involved in that process despite telling the panel at his confirmation hearing that he was unaware of any plans to fire agents. A Patel spokeswoman called the allegations "second-hand gossip" aimed at pushing what she said was

a "false narrative."

Democrats on Thursday portrayed Patel as a dangerous and inexperienced loyalist who would abuse the FBI's law enforcement powers at a time when the country is facing an escalated threat including from China and international terrorism.

"This is a guy whose judgment is beyond questionable. It's appallingly bad," said Democratic Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island. He added: "Mark my words: this Patel guy will come back to haunt you."

Durbin told his colleagues "we are inviting a political disaster if we put Kash Patel into this job."

Addressing Republicans on the committee, Durbin said, "I know you want to be loyal to your president. I know you want to vote for all his nominations. I know none of you want a call from Elon Musk reminding you what he might do to somebody who votes the wrong way. But this really gets down to the heart of the future of an agency that is critical to the security of this nation."

Republicans, by contrast, praised Patel as the right person for the job, insisting he was needed to fix an FBI that they claim has been tainted by bias amid criminal investigations into Trump. (AP)

Plane carrying Secretary of State Rubio to Europe turned around because of a mechanical issue

WASHINGTON, Feb 14: An Air Force plane carrying Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, Sen. Jim Risch, to Germany for the Munich Security Conference was forced to return to Washington late Thursday after developing a mechanical issue.

"This evening, en route from Washington to Munich, the plane on which Secretary Rubio is flying experienced a mechanical issue," State Department spokeswoman Tammy Bruce said.

"The plane has turned around and is returning to Joint Base Andrews," she said. "The secretary intends to continue his travel to Germany and the Middle East on a separate aircraft."

The issue with what one official said had to do with the cockpit windshield on the C-32, a converted Boeing 757, occurred about 90 minutes after the flight took off from Joint Base Andrews outside of Washington.

Although Rubio plans to resume his journey on a new plane, it was not immediately clear if the delay would cause him to miss a scheduled Friday morning meeting with vice president JD Vance and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Munich. (AP)

11 killed in Pakistan as roadside bomb hits vehicle carrying coal miners

ISLAMABAD, Feb 14: At least 11 people were killed and seven others injured when a roadside bomb struck a vehicle carrying coal miners in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province on Friday, officials said.

The blast hit a mini truck in the Shahrag area of Harnai district of the province, according to Harnai deputy commissioner Hazrat Wali Kakar.

"We have moved at least 11 bodies to the hospital and seven workers who were wounded have also been sent for medical attention," Kakar said.

He said the victim worked in the coal mines and they were shifted to a nearby hospital.

Police said that initial reports showed that the blast was caused due to an Improvised Explosive Device, which was planted on the roadside.

The officials of law enforcement agencies rushed to the place and launched a manhunt to nab the culprits.

Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind ex-



pressed grief over the tragic incident, stating that an investigation had been launched.

Rind said that evidence was being collected, and an initial investigation showed that the explosive material was planted on the roadside and was detonated when the truck passed by.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack so far. But similar attacks in the past have been blamed on the outlawed Baloch Liberation Army.

Banned insurgent groups in the restive northwestern province have grown bolder in recent months and have frequently targeted security forces, security installations, civilians and Chinese nationals working in Balochistan. (PTI)

Vance to meet Zelenskyy amid concerns about US-Russia talks to end the war in Ukraine



MUNICH, Feb 14: Vice President JD Vance hammered home the US demand that the NATO alliance step up defence spending on Friday, ahead of a security meeting in Europe at a time of intense concern and uncertainty over the Trump administration's foreign policy.

The future of Ukraine is the top item on the agenda at the Munich Security Conference following a phone call between US President Donald Trump and Russian leader Vladimir Putin this week, when they pledged to work together to end the 3-year-old Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Vance is expected to meet Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy later Friday for talks that many - particularly in Europe - hope will shed at least some light on Trump's ideas for a negotiated settlement to the war.

Vance started his day in Munich meeting separately with NATO secretary-general Mark Rutte and German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. He used the engagements to reiterate the administration's call for NATO members to spend more on defence. Currently, 23 of NATO's 32 member nations are hitting the Western military alliance's target of spending 2 per cent of the nation's GDP on defence.

"NATO is a very important military alliance, of course, that we're the most significant part of," Vance told Rutte. "But we want to make sure that NATO is actually built for the future, and we think a big part of that is ensuring that NATO does a little bit more burden sharing in Europe, so the United States can focus on some of our challenges in East Asia." Rutte said he agreed that Europe needs to step up. "We have

to grow up in that sense and spend much more," he said.

Hours before Vance and Zelenskyy were set to meet, a Russian drone with a high-explosive warhead hit the protective confinement shell of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in the Kyiv region, the Ukrainian president said. Radiation levels have not increased, Zelenskyy and the U.N. atomic agency said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Friday denied Ukraine's claims.

US secretary of State Marco Rubio was supposed to join Vance and Zelenskyy but was delayed when his Air Force plane had to return to Washington after developing a mechanical problem en route to Munich. The State Department spokeswoman said he would take a different aircraft, but it was unclear whether he would arrive in time for the meeting with Zelenskyy.

Trump, who upended years of steadfast U.S. support for Ukraine during his call with Putin on Wednesday, has been vague about his specific intentions - other than suggesting that a deal will likely result in Ukraine being forced to cede territory that Russia has seized since it annexed Crimea in 2014.

"The Ukraine war has to end," Trump told reporters Thursday.

"Young people are being killed at levels that nobody's seen since World War II. And it's a ridiculous war," Trump's musings have left Europeans in a quandary, wondering how - or even if - they can maintain the post-WWII security that NATO afforded them or fill the gap in the billions of dollars of security assistance that the Biden administration provided to Ukraine since Russia's February 2022 invasion. (AP)

Judge orders Trump administration to temporarily allow funds for foreign aid to flow again

'Trump called much of US aid out of line with his agenda'

WASHINGTON, Feb 14: A federal judge has ordered the Trump administration to temporarily lift a three-week funding freeze that has shut down US aid and development programmes worldwide.

Judge Amir Ali issued the order Thursday in US district court in Washington in a lawsuit brought by two health organizations that receive US funding for programmes abroad.

In his order, Ali noted that the Trump administration argued it had to shut down funding for the thousands of US Agency for International Development aid programmes abroad to conduct a thorough review of each programme and whether it should be eliminated.

However, administration officials "have not offered any explanation for why a blanket suspension of all congressionally appropriated foreign aid, which set off a shockwave and upended" contracts with thousands of non-profit groups, businesses and others "was a rational precursor to reviewing programmes," the judge

said.

The ruling was the first to temporarily roll back a Trump administration funding freeze on foreign assistance that has forced USAID and State Department contractors around the world to stop providing humanitarian aid and other assistance and lay off staff, paralyzing much of the world's aid delivery networks.

The order allowing funds to flow again applies to existing contracts before Trump issued his January 20 executive order declaring a freeze on foreign assistance. Trump called much of US aid out of line with his agenda.

Earlier Thursday, a judge in a separate case over the Trump administration's dismantling of USAID and US aid programmes abroad said that his order halting the Trump administration's plans to pull all but a fraction of USAID staffers off the job worldwide will stay in place for at least another week.

US District Judge Carl Nichols ordered the extension after a nearly three-hour hearing Thursday, much



of it focused on how employees were affected by abrupt orders by the Trump administration and ally Elon Musk, who leads Trump's Department of Government Efficiency, to put thousands of USAID workers on leave and freeze foreign aid funding.

The judge said he plans to issue a written ruling in the coming days on whether the pause will continue.

Nichols, a Trump appointee, closely questioned the government about keeping employees on leave

safe in high-risk overseas areas. When a Justice Department attorney could not provide detailed plans, the judge asked him to file court documents after the hearing.

USAID staffers who until recently were posted in Congo had filed affidavits for the lawsuit describing the aid agency all but abandoning them when looting and political violence exploded in Congo's capital last month, leaving them to evacuate with their families.

The funding freeze and purge of

the concept of legal standing - whether the unions can show the kind of legal harm that would justify a continued block on the Trump administration's plans.

Standing is a legal technicality, but an important one. A different judge cited it when he sided with the Trump administration and allowed a Musk-backed plan to cut the federal workforce through deferred resignations, often known as buyouts.

While the administration and Musk's cost-cutting initiative, the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, have taken aim at other agencies, they have moved most destructively against USAID, asserting without evidence that its work is wasteful and out of line with Trump's agenda.

In a court filing, deputy USAID head Pete Marocco argued that "insubordination" made it impossible for the new administration to undertake a close review of aid programmes without first pushing almost all USAID staffers off the job and halting aid and development work. He did not provide ev-

idence for his assertion.

USAID staffers, in court filings, have denied being insubordinate. They said they were doing their best to carry out what they describe as vague and confusing orders, some of which were said to come from a Musk associate and other outsiders.

Agency supporters told Democratic senators earlier this week that the shutdown - along with other administration steps, including revoking USAID's lease on its Washington headquarters - was really about eradicating USAID before lawmakers or the courts could stop it.

The employee groups, the Democratic lawmakers and others argue that without congressional approval, Trump lacks the power to shut USAID or end its programmes. His team says the power of courts or lawmakers to stand in the way is limited at best.

"The President's powers in the realm of foreign affairs are generally vast and unreviewable," government lawyers said in court documents. (AP)

Divided house within BJP on selecting new CM led to President's rule in Manipur: Cong



IMPHAL, Feb 14: Manipur Congress president Keisham Meghachandra on Friday claimed that a leadership crisis within the BJP and its failure to reach a consensus on a chief ministerial candidate led to the imposition of President's rule in the state.

Meghachandra also said the central BJP leaders have "finally begun to understand" the ground situation in the strife-torn state.

"The leadership crisis that prevailed after resignation of the chief minister, and a divided house within the BJP (on selecting a new CM) led to imposition of President's rule," he told reporters here.

President's rule was imposed in Manipur and the assembly put

under suspended animation on Thursday evening, days after chief minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post that led to political uncertainty in the state.

"Now, the prime minister has the whole responsibility... Now, (PM) Modi will hopefully look into the government's inability to function and start addressing the crisis in the state," Meghachandra said.

The onus for protecting the territorial and administrative integrity of Manipur is on the Union government, he added.

Singh, who was heading the BJP government in Manipur, resigned as chief minister after nearly 21 months of ethnic violence that has claimed over 250 lives so far.

The Manipur assembly has a tenure till 2027.

Manipur BJP president A Sharda had said on Thursday that the assembly has been put under suspended animation in accordance with the constitutional process, and asserted that the House had not been dissolved yet. (PTI)

NNPGs' working committee asks business houses to remove religious nomenclature



HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, Feb 14: The N Kitoviled working committee of the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) on Friday asked all business owners in Nagaland not to misuse religion for profit and to remove religious nomenclature from their establishments within one week.

It warned that strict measures would be taken against business establishments that prominently display religious names such as Hindu Hotel, Muslim Hotel, Christian Hotel, Buddhist Hotel and any other religious names. The working committee took the decision at a joint meeting of the NNPGs today, aiming to address and discourage the commercialisation of religious identities in the business sector that threaten community values and social unity.

The committee also asked the business houses, including hotels and other establishments, not to incorporate religious names in their branding and remove these names from their signage and marketing materials.

"This action should be taken within

one week to ensure compliance with regulations regarding the use of religious nomenclature in commercial settings," the committee said in a release. Stressing that Nagaland is recognised as an overwhelmingly Christian state, the committee said despite this religious predominance, the Naga people have successfully engaged with the broader world, embracing democratic principles that allow for the practice of various faiths within Nagaland without restrictions.

"While individuals enjoy the freedom to practice their beliefs, it is imperative to refrain from exploiting religious identities for personal gain as such actions can lead to disharmony and disunity within the community," it said.

It further expressed appreciation to those business establishments that engage in charitable activities or donation efforts that align with their religious practices to support the less fortunate and those in need. However, it added that any actions that contradict these principles may lead to serious repercussions.

Focus on BJP central leadership over next course of action in Manipur

IMPHAL, Feb 14: All eyes are now on the BJP central leadership over its next step in strife-torn Manipur, a day after President's rule was imposed in the northeastern state and the assembly put under suspended animation.

Security has been beefed up across the state following the Centre's announcement of President's rule, officials said.

President's rule was imposed in Manipur and the assembly put under suspended animation on Thursday evening, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from his post that led to political uncertainty in the state.

The decision came as the BJP failed to build a consensus on a chief ministerial candidate, despite having several rounds of discussions between its northeast in-charge Sambit Patra and legislators.

Singh, who was heading the BJP government in Manipur, resigned as chief minister after nearly 21 months of ethnic violence that has



claimed over 250 lives so far. The Manipur assembly has a tenure till 2027.

Officials said on Friday that security forces were on high alert in state capital Imphal, particularly around the Raj Bhavan and the CM secretariat.

"The Manipur Police increased deployment of personnel in Imphal area, especially in front of Kangla Gate, Sanjenthong, Moirangkhom,

Keisampat and Konung Mamang," an officer said.

"The precautionary measures were put in place to prevent any unwanted activities by miscreants who want to take advantage of the prevailing political situation," another official said.

Talking to reporters soon after the announcement of President's rule, Manipur BJP president A Sharda had said on Thursday that

the assembly has been put under suspended animation in accordance with the constitutional process, and asserted that the House had not been dissolved yet.

She said once the situation improves in the state, the House can be reinstated.

Reacting to the development, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said it is a belated admission by the BJP of their complete inability to govern Manipur.

"Now, PM Modi can no longer deny his direct responsibility for Manipur," he said in a post on X.

"Has he finally made up his mind to visit the state, and explain to the people of Manipur and India his plan to restore peace and normalcy?" Gandhi said.

In another post on X, Congress general secretary, Communications, Jairam Ramesh said, "Finally what the Indian National Congress has been demanding for almost 20 months has happened. President's rule has been imposed in Manipur."

Meanwhile, the Manipur CPI(M) unit said the President's rule should be immediately revoked and fresh elections held at the earliest.

CPI(M) state committee secretary Ksh Shanta told reporters that the party, along with other like-minded ones, will stand for Manipur's territorial integrity during President's rule.

He also claimed that the selfish quest for power among legislators brought the state to such a situation.

Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) leader Ginza Vualzong said President's rule will give a ray of hope to the Kuki-Zo community and added that having a new Meitei chief minister is "far from comforting".

"The Kuki-Zo do not trust the Meitei anymore, so a new Meitei CM is still far from comforting. The President's rule will give a ray of hope to the Kuki-Zo, and we believe that it will be one step closer to our political solution," he said. (PTI)

NEHU non teaching staff seeks Union education minister's intervention

SHILLONG, Feb 14: The North Eastern Hill University Non-Teaching Staff Association (NEHUNSA) has sought the intervention of Union Education minister Dharmendra Pradhan for immediate resolving the crisis in the university.

In a statement issued on Thursday, NEHUNSA president Dr Wandondor Ryngh Synrem said, "With deep concern for the stalemate prevailing in North-Eastern Hill University, NEHUNSA once again communicate to the Union Minister of Education to improve by taking immediate steps to resolve the crisis in NEHU. The North-Eastern Hill University was established to impart higher education to the people of this region. The outcome is to develop and improve the standard of living, leading to the upliftment of the State in particular and the country in general."

He said that the university cannot function without having a proper administration and the regular functioning of the University offices.

"The non-teaching employees of the University play a very important role in this administrative process since it is the non-teaching staff who are actively involved in the admission process, registration of the students, processing the scholarship/fellowship, conduct of examination etc. The daily affairs of the University staff, be it the faculties and non-faculties, are also managed by the non-teaching employees," Dr Synrem said.

He added, "But, as mentioned in our earlier letter, the strength of the non-teaching staff is rapidly declining to the extent that the regular affairs of the University are getting disturbed. We have also mentioned that the non-teaching positions have been advertised pending appointment."

The NEHUNSA also requested the Union Minister to direct the acting Vice Chancellor for filling up the vacancies in the university.

"The current acting Vice-Chancellor is not holding any Executive Council meeting which is crucial for the advertised posts to be filled up. As concerned stakeholders of this university, we pray that you direct the acting Vice-Chancellor to do the needful to prevent any further damage to the very purpose for which this university was established", Dr Synrem added. (NNN)

Major breakthrough in fight against interstate drug trafficking

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Feb 14: In a significant breakthrough against interstate drug trafficking, Banderdewa Police apprehended four drug peddlers in two separate operations.

Based on credible intelligence regarding the transportation of a large quantity of narcotic drugs suspected to be heroin, the Banderdewa Police Team set up a trap and apprehended an interstate drug peddler, identified as Tahir Ali (29 years), S/o Lt Iman Ali, resident of Village No 2 Sonapur, PO/PS Bihpuria, District Lakhimpur, Assam at Karsinga. Upon thoroughly searching the vehicle, the police recovered 10 vials containing a narcotic substance suspected to be heroin, weighing a total of 13.61 grams, hidden inside the glove box.

In another operation the Banderdewa Police Team apprehended three interstate drug peddlers from Niya Colony, Banderdewa. The accused were identified as: 1. Faizul Islam (28 years), S/o R. Amin, resident of Village No. 2 Ahmedpur, PO/PS Bihpuria, Assam. 2. Faruk Ahmed Laskar (30 years), S/o Alim Uddin, res-

ident of Soddar Gaon, PO Nilbagan, PS Murazar, District Hojai, Assam and 3. Miss Akhlma Begum (30 years), D/o Lt. Fasan Ahmed, resident of Soddar Gaon, PO Nilbagan, PS Murazar, District Hojai, Assam.

A body search conducted in the presence of SDPO Naharlagun Rishi Longdo and inspector Tayem Jamoh, tax and excise, Banderdewa led to the recovery of two soap cases and 70 vials containing suspected heroin, weighing a total of 115.62 grams from their possession.

The entire operation was successfully executed by the Banderdewa Police Team led by SDPO Naharlagun Rishi Longdo, SI Koj Tada, SI SP Rai, ASI SK Jha, ASI A. Rajbar, HC T. Bomdom, Ct. R. Tsering and L/Ct. N.S Chauhan under the active supervision of SP Naharlagun Shri Mihin Gambo. Two separate cases under the NDPS Act have been registered at Banderdewa Police Station and four interstate drug peddlers including one woman have been arrested. SP Naharlagun lauded the Banderdewa Police Team for successfully dismantling an interstate drug trafficking network.

Charge sheet filed in St Alphonso School water tank collapse case

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Feb 14: Police in Arunachal has filed a charge sheet in St Alphonso School Water Tank Collapse Case on Thursday before the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Yupia. The chargesheet has been filed against the alleged accused Shaji Cherian (principal), Kurian Pallikunnel John (vice principal) and Kapa Rai (building owner).

The charge sheet was submitted under Sections 105/106(1)/125(b)/3(5) BNS.

"A written FIR was received from a complainant regarding the collapse of a water tank at St. Alphonso School, Naharlagun which occurred on 14.12.2024 at around 9:00 AM.

The incident resulted in the tragic deaths of three students and caused severe injuries to two others. Consequently, a case was registered at Naharlagun Police Station vide No. 154/2024 U/S 105/106(1)/3(5) BNS, dated 14.12.2024," a PR stated.

"Five individuals were arrested namely Kapa Rai (46 years), owner of the school building, Shaji Cherian (51 years) principal, Gaurav Gogoi (24 years) warden, Dicky Kumar Das (24 years), warden and Kaushik Chetry (22 years) Warden. Further investigation led to the arrest of one more accused Kurian Pallikunnel John (64 years), vice principal on December 27 in 2024 from Guwahati," the PR further stated.

Workshop on 'Multi-Disciplinary Approaches in Bioinformatics and Computational Biology'

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Feb 14: The Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Centre (BIC), DBT-APSCS&T Centre of Excellence for Bioresources and Sustainable Development (CoE for BRSD), Kimin, successfully organised a four-day workshop on "Multi-Disciplinary Approaches in Bioinformatics and Computational Biology: Network Pharmacol-

ogy, QSAR Modelling, Virtual Screening, Role of AI in Drug Designing, and Transcriptome Data Analysis."

The workshop commenced on February 11 and concluded on February 14, with the participation of 14 PhD scholars and M.Sc. students from various universities.

The primary objective of the workshop was to provide participants with Hands-on experi-

ence and theoretical insights into emerging trends in Computational Biology, particularly in Computer Aided Drug Discovery and Transcriptome Data Analysis. The program aimed to enhance research capabilities by equipping participants with knowledge in Network Pharmacology, QSAR Modelling, Virtual Screening, AI applications in Drug Designing and Transcriptome Data Analysis.

Need 'honest political will' for peace in Manipur: Irom Sharmila Prez rule no solution

KOLKATA, Feb 14: Rights activist Irom Sharmila on Friday claimed that the imposition of the President's rule in Manipur is "not a solution" but merely a way to "evade democratic accountability" for the ongoing ethnic violence in the state.

In a telephonic interview with PTI, Sharmila emphasised the need for "honest political will" to restore peace in the strife-torn northeastern state and fresh elections "will not bring real change".

Instead, Sharmila suggested that the "titular king of Manipur be invited to serve as a symbol of unity with powers akin to those of the current governor".

"The Presidential rule is not the solution. Manipuris have never wanted this. But since it is now the reality, let the Centre prioritise the restoration of the status quo ante for the internally displaced. Let Prime Minister Narendra Modi bring investments from industrialists' friends to provide at least basic infrastructure and development. The Presidential rule, when imposed in the past, was merely another way to avoid democratic accountability," Sharmila told PTI.

To address the ongoing turmoil, she proposed the formation of three intra-state mini-assemblies representing the Meitei, Naga, and Kuki communities, arguing that such a model would ensure fair representation and direct funding for all ethnic groups.

"Another election will not bring real change. Instead, to restore faith and trust, the titular king of Manipur should be invited to become the symbol of unity again with powers



similar to the current governor. Then, with the unity of the state guaranteed, three intra-state mini-assemblies should be set up to provide representation for the three aggrieved groups - the Meitei, the Nagas, and the Kukis. This would also provide direct funding for the three groups," she said.

The values, principles and practices of different ethnic groups must be respected, she said.

"India is known for its diversity, and the Centre must recognise and embrace it in Manipur as well," Sharmila claimed.

She questioned whether the Centre would have remained silent had similar ethnic violence occurred in major states like Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, or Madhya Pradesh.

"Manipur has been burning for the last two years, and the Centre is just a spectator. Can you imagine such a situation persisting for months in cities like Mumbai or Delhi? Just because Manipur is located at the far end of the country, no one is bothered about the northeast. In the name of fighting insurgency, crores of rupees are wasted, which could have been used for the development

of the region," she claimed. President's rule was imposed in Manipur, and the assembly was put under suspended animation on Thursday evening, days after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned from the post, leading to political uncertainty in the state.

The decision came as the BJP "failed" to build a consensus on a chief ministerial candidate despite several rounds of discussions between its northeast in-charge Sambit Patra and legislators.

Singh, who was heading the BJP government in Manipur, resigned as chief minister on February 9 after nearly 21 months of ethnic violence that has claimed over 250 lives so far. The Manipur assembly has tenure till 2027.

Sharmila, who had earlier demanded the resignation of Singh over his handling of the crisis, welcomed his exit and said it should have happened long ago.

Sharmila also claimed, "The approach of the Centre is not right. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visiting every state and several countries, but he has not gone to Manipur. He is the democratically elected

leader of the country. It has been nearly two years since the violence started, yet he has not visited. He wouldn't have taken the same approach if a similar situation had happened in a mainland state of the country."

She asserted that a direct intervention from the prime minister would have helped resolve the crisis long back.

"Just like the state government, the Centre too can't evade responsibilities," she said.

Sharmila criticised Singh and called his tenure as the chief minister a "complete failure".

She stressed that the ongoing ethnic violence requires immediate and decisive action.

"The wrong policies of the state government and the Centre's silence have pushed Manipur into this unprecedented crisis. N Biren Singh should have stepped down long ago for failing to restore peace since May 2023. It is already too late," she alleged.

Sharmila began her hunger strike in 2000 after security forces allegedly killed 10 civilians at a bus stop in Malom near Imphal. She continued her peaceful resistance against the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) for 16 years, gaining widespread recognition.

However, despite her prolonged struggle, the law was not repealed. She ended her hunger strike in 2016.

She subsequently married in 2017 after miserably failing to make a mark in the assembly elections and is now settled in south India with her family, including her two daughters. (PTI)

No.DPRD/BTC/15th FC/ 2/2024/45

Dated Kokrajhar the 13th Feb., 2025

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders with a validity period of 90 (ninety) days from the date of receipt in prescribed from affixing non-refundable court fee stamps of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only subsequently to be drawn up in printed F-2 form are hereby invited from the Govt. registered PWD (Roads/ Building) others Govt. Contractor's under Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II and Class-III category from approved firm/ suppliers of 2020-21/2021-22 according to tender limit of eligibility for the following works and will be received in the office of the undersigned up to 2.00 pm on 07/03/2025 and will be opened on the same date and place at 2.15 pm in the presence of willing contractors or their authorized agents.

Sl. No	Name of Scheme	Tender Amount (Rs.)	Earnest Money (ST, SC, OBC-1% & Gen-2%)	Cost of Tender	Pre-Bid Meeting	Time for completion in days
1	Installation of Solar Plants at Kokrajhar Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	9,528.00(1%) 19,056.00(2%)	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
2	Installation of Solar Plants at Dotma Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
3	Installation of Solar Plants at Kachugaon Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
4	Installation of Solar Plants at Gossigaon Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
5	Installation of Solar Plants at Debitola Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
6	Installation of Solar Plants at Sidli-Chirang Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
7	Installation of Solar Plants at Borobazar TD. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
8	Installation of Solar Plants at Jalah Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
9	Installation of Solar Plants at Baska Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
10	Installation of Solar Plants at Bhergaon Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
11	Installation of Solar Plants at Nagrjuli Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
12	Installation of Solar Plants at Tihu-Barma Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
13	Installation of Solar Plants at Dhamadhama Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
14	Installation of Solar Plants at Goreswar Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
15	Installation of Solar Plants at Gobardhana Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
16	Installation of Solar Plants at Udalguri Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
17	Installation of Solar Plants at Bhergaon Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
18	Installation of Solar Plants at Khoirabari Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
19	Installation of Solar Plants at Rowta Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
20	Installation of Solar Plants at Kalaigaon Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
21	Installation of Solar Plants at Mazbat Dev. Block	Rs. 9,52,828.00	-do-	290.00	01/03/25	3 Months
22	Const. of Drinking Water Supply at Mwinaguri Village.	Rs. 10,00,000.00	10,000.00(1%) 20,000.00(1%)	300.00	01/03/25	6 Months

Details NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent up to 12.00 Noon on all working days from 07/03/2025 to 14/02/2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment of in the form of Banker Cheque/ Demand draft of any nationalized Bank (Preferable SBI) duly pledged to the Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar. The Cost of tender (Non-Refundable) must be in the form of Demand Draft/ Banker Cheque of a Nationalized Bank drawn in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar and payable at SBI, Kokrajhar Courtpara, Kokrajhar to be deposited 0.03%.

Sd/- Director,
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1469

Cong stalwart Ahmed Patel's son says he will no longer work for party

AHMEDABAD, Feb 14: Faisal Patel, son of late Congress stalwart Ahmed Patel, has announced he will stop working for the grand old party, claiming that he tried to follow in his father's footsteps but was denied at every step.

Ahmed Patel, who had served as a Rajya Sabha MP, All India Congress Committee treasurer and former party president Sonia Gandhi's political secretary, died in November 2020.

Faisal had aspired to contest from the Bharuch seat in Gujarat in last year's Lok Sabha elections but the Congress did not nominate him.

"With great pain & anguish, I have decided to stop working for @INCIndia. It's been a tough journey for many, many years. My late father @ahmedpatel gave his entire life working for the country, party & the #Gandhi family," Faisal announced on X.

"I tried following his footsteps but was denied every step of the way. I will continue to work for mankind in any way possible. The Congress party will remain my family as it has always been. I want to thank all the Congress leaders, party workers and well-wishers who have supported me," he added. (PTI)

BJP govt in Delhi likely to be sworn in by Feb 19-20

'Public sentiment must be respected'

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: The swearing-in ceremony of the BJP government in Delhi is likely to take place on February 19 or 20 and the new dispensation will give priority to clean drinking water supply, improved civic infrastructure, among other things, party leaders said.

The prime minister is coming back from his foreign visit and soon the observers for a meeting of the BJP legislature party will be appointed, newly elected BJP MLA and national secretary of the party Manjinder Singh Sirsa told PTI. "The new government will start working around February 19-20," said the Rajouri Garden MLA who is considered a contender for the post of Chief Minister or a ministerial berth.

Sirsa said that he expected that the BJP legislature party meeting would be held around February 18-19 and added "The new government will be formed, I think, by February 20, after the swearing-in ceremony." The newly elected BJP MLAs laughed off any race for the post of Chief Minister of Delhi,



saying such talks were merely speculations by the media.

"There is no race for the post of Delhi chief minister. In our party the CM or the leader of the legislature party is elected in a meeting of the MLAs," said second-time MLA from Laxmi Nagar seat Abhay Verma.

Verma, a Purvanchali, is also talked about as a prospective candidate for the top post of the Delhi government. "We have come to serve the people and now thinking

about addressing issues like development, clean water supply and clean air for the people as well as how to free the Yamuna from pollution," he said.

The BJP MLAs asserted that as per the Prime Minister's promise, the Ayushman Bharat health scheme obstructed by the AAP government will be implemented in Delhi in the first meeting of the new Cabinet.

The prime minister has already announced that the Ayushman

Bharat health insurance scheme will be implemented through the first meeting of the new Cabinet.

Sirsa said that providing clean drinking water, ensuring sanitation in the city and starting work to deal with air and Yamuna pollution, will be priorities of the new government within 100 days in power.

Sixth-time MLA Mohan Singh Bisht said the new chief minister of Delhi will be elected from the 48 BJP legislators.

The Mustafabad MLA, also reiterated his proposal for changing the name of the minority dominated constituency to "Shiv Vihar" or "Shiv Puri".

"There are around 42 per cent people of one community (minorities) and on the other hand are 58 per cent people (Hindus)... So, the public sentiment must be respected," said the senior BJP MLA.

He also said that the BJP government will ensure removing pollution in the Yamuna by setting up sewage treatment plants (STPs) to tap 28 major drains flowing into the river. (PTI)

Meeting between central team, farmer leaders underway in Chandigarh



CHANDIGARH, Feb 14: A meeting between a Central team led by Union Minister Pralhad Joshi and farmers' representatives began here on Friday, discussing their various demands that include a legal guarantee for MSP on crops.

The meeting comes after a year-long protest by farmers.

The Union minister of consumer affairs, food and public distribution is leading the central team in the meeting attended by a 28-member delegation from the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha spearheading the farmers' ongoing protest.

Punjab Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian and the state's Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Lal Chand Kataruchak along with top government officials, including Chief Secretary KAP Sinha and DGP Gaurav Yadav, are also present at the meeting being held at the Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration here.

Union Minister Joshi reached the meeting venue around 5 pm.

Farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who is on an indefinite fast, was brought to the meeting venue from the Khanauri protest site in an ambulance.

Speaking to reporters after reaching the venue, farmer leader Kaka Singh Kotra said it took four hours for Dallewal to reach Chandigarh.

Dallewal, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) convenor, has been on an indefinite hunger strike at the Khanauri border point since November 26 to press the Centre on various demands, including a legal guarantee for MSP on crops.

Another farmer leader Abhi-

many Kohar said the government should frame a law to give a guarantee for MSP. He said the farmer leaders will strongly put forth the demands before the central team in the meeting.

Kohar said the farmers are convinced that a law guaranteeing MSP on crops will benefit every section of the country.

Prominent leaders who are a part of the farmer delegation are Sarwan Singh Pandher, Abhimanyu Kohar, Kaka Singh Kotra, Sukhjit Singh, PR Pandian, Arun Sinha, Lakhwinder Singh, Jaswinder Longowal, MS Rai, Nand Kumar, Balwant Singh Behramke and Inderjit Singh Kotbudha.

On January 18, a delegation of senior officials from the Union agriculture ministry, led by Joint Secretary Priya Ranjan, invited representatives from the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha for a meeting to discuss their demands.

Dallewal had agreed to take medical aid following the invitation but refused to end his fast unto death.

Four rounds of meetings took place between central ministers and the protesting farmers in February 2024 but the talks remained inconclusive.

A panel of three Union ministers -- Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal and Nityanand Rai -- held talks with farmers' representatives on February 18 last year. At that time, the farmers had rejected the Centre's proposal of buying pulses, maize and cotton crops at MSP by government agencies for five years.

Kisan Mazdoor Morcha leader Pandher on Thursday said they would make efforts to nudge the Centre towards resolving the farmers' issues. (PTI)

Opposition UDF alleges SFI links to accused, govt promises strict action

KOTTAYAM (KERALA), Feb 14: The Congress-led opposition UDF on Friday claimed that the accused in the Kottayam Government Nursing College ragging case have connections with the Left student organisation, SFI.

Speaking to reporters, Leader of Opposition V D Sathesan alleged that the accused in the Kottayam ragging case are members of SFI and that the Kerala Government Nursing Students Association (KGNSA) has links with the Left-affiliated student organisation.

However, Higher Education Minister R Bindu stated that stringent action would be initiated against the accused in the Kottayam ragging incident.

"Everyone knows they are SFI activists, yet they are now denying it," Sathesan said.

There have been allegations that the accused are associated with KGNSA, a pro-Left outfit and that one of them holds a key position in the organisation. However, SFI has refuted these claims, asserting that it has no connection with the accused.

Taking a swipe at SFI, Sathesan also alleged that its leaders and members were involved in the death of a student at the College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences in Pookode, Wayanad, last year allegedly due to ragging.

"In the Pookode ragging case, SFI members were accused, yet they were allowed to appear for exams, and the only ones who suffered were the victim's family," he said, adding that such incidents should not be repeated.

Minister Bindu stated that the government has directed authorities to take stringent action in the incident and they would get maximum punishment in the case.

She added that since the incident occurred at an institution under the Kerala University of Health Sciences, there are limitations to direct intervention.

The minister also highlighted the increasing prevalence of behavioural disorders among children and stressed the need for collective societal efforts to address the issue.

Meanwhile, a team appointed by the Director of Medical Education will visit the college to conduct an



inquiry. The probe will be led by the Deputy Director of Nursing Education, sources said.

On Friday, KSU workers took out a march to Kottayam Government Nursing College, demanding strict action against the accused. ABVP also announced a protest march.

Earlier, disturbing visuals of the brutal ragging of a junior student at the Government Nursing College surfaced on Thursday, showing the victim being tied to a cot and his body repeatedly pierced with a compass.

According to footage received by the Gandhinagar police, the victim was stripped half-naked and subjected to horrifying acts, including having dumbbells placed on his private parts after being tied to a cot and having facial cream poured into his mouth.

The abuse took place in the boys' hostel targeting first-year nursing students.

Five third-year students, identified as Samuel Johnson (20), Rahul Raj (22), Jeev (18), Rijil Jith (20), and Vivek (21) were arrested in the case.

They were arrested after a case was registered under the Prohibition of Ragging Act, following a complaint that ragging had been ongoing for nearly three months at the nursing institute, which operates under the Government Medical College.

The accused have also been booked under Sections 118(1) (intentionally causing hurt using dangerous weapons or means), 308(2) (punishment for extortion), and 351(1) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023, the police said.

The arrested are currently in the district jail after being remanded by a court here.

According to the complaint, the ragging began in November last year. (PTI)

Ruckus in Odisha assembly over 'mismanagement' in paddy procurement

BHUBANESWAR, Feb 14: Opposition Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress legislators created a ruckus in the Odisha assembly on Friday over law and order situation in the state and alleged mismanagement in paddy procurement, prompting the Speaker to adjourn the House several times.

The opposition members trooped to the well of the House even before Speaker Surama Padhy took her seat and raised slogans against the BJP government in the state.

They demanded discussions on the law and order situation and alleged mismanagement in procuring paddy, and urged the Speaker to suspend all other businesses of the House.

Senior Congress MLA Tarasdas Bahinipati was seen attempting to climb the Speaker's podium. BJD members stressed the al-

leged mismanagement in the paddy procurement, while the Congress raised the law and order issue.

Unable to run the House, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings till noon.

When the House reassembled, a similar scene was seen forcing the Speaker to further adjourn the proceedings till 4 PM.

The Question Hour and Zero Hour proceedings could not be held due to the din in the House.

Opposition chief whip Pramila Mallik said the BJD members staged an agitation in the House as the Speaker rejected the party's notice for a discussion on farmers' issues.

"At least 14 farmers have died by suicide over crop loss due to unseasonal rains. We have given a notice for a discussion on the issue. However, the Speaker refused to accept

it. Farmers are on the streets and have alleged that they are not being paid for about 10 kg of paddy for a quintal. The authorities deduct 10 kg of paddy for a quintal of grain in the name of 'katni chatni' (deduction of paddy)," Mallik told reporters outside the House.

Asked how to resolve the impasse in the House, Mallik, who is a former Speaker, said: "Our agitation will continue till the government accepts our demand and allow a discussion on farmers' plight."

BJD's deputy leader in the assembly Prasanna Acharya alleged that farmers are in distress in 'mandis' (marketplace) set up by the state government.

"I have received at least 10 phone calls from farmers in different parts of the state. They are in distress and their issues need to be discussed in the assembly," Acharya said. (PTI)

MHA requests Prez for prosecution sanction against Satyendar Jain

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: The Union home ministry has requested the president for grant of sanction to prosecute AAP leader and former Delhi minister Satyendar Jain in a money-laundering case being investigated by the ED, sources said on Friday.

The sanction against the 60-year-old politician has been sought under Section 218 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, they said.

The ministry requested the sanction from the president of India on the basis of an Enforcement Directorate (ED) investigation and the presence of "adequate proof", they added. The federal agency booked Jain in a money-laundering case linked to alleged hawala dealings and arrested him in May 2022.

Jain held the health, power and a few other portfolios when he was taken into ED custody.

He is currently out on bail and has been charge-sheeted by the ED. The money-laundering case stems from an August 2017 FIR filed against Jain and others by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on charges of alleged possession of disproportionate assets.

The CBI filed a chargesheet in December 2018, stating that the alleged disproportionate assets were to the tune of ₹ 1.47 crore, about 217 per cent more than Jain's known sources of income during 2015-17.

The ED had earlier said its probe found that "during 2015-16, Satyendar Jain was a public servant and four companies (beneficially owned and controlled by him) received accommodation entries (hawala) to the tune of ₹ 4.81 crore from shell (bogus) companies against cash transferred to Kolkata-based entry operators through the hawala route". (PTI)

Tejashwi rides a horse and Nitish sits atop a tortoise in RJD poster

PATNA, Feb 14: A poster was put up in Patna, showing RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav sitting atop a galloping horse, ahead of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar perched on the back of a languid tortoise.

"Tejashwi government is coming. Things would move at the same speed that was seen during the 17-month period," the poster declares in bold letters. The "17-month" period alludes to the regime of the Mahagathbandhan, during which the RJD leader was the deputy CM.

Found just a few meters away from Kumar's residence, the poster thus projects the challenge that the opposition party's leader is throwing at the JD(U) supreme in the Bihar assembly polls due later this year.

Yadav has also been cast in on his "performance" as the deputy chief minister under Kumar in the Mahagathbandhan government, until the JD(U) decided a year ago that the party was better off as a BJP ally.

The JD(U) dumped the BJP and joined the RJD-led Mahagathbandhan in 2022, but went back to the NDA in 2024.

The poster has been put up by an RJD worker, at a place also close to 10, Circular Road, the bungalow allotted to Yadav's mother Rabri Devi, a former chief minister.

Yadav has been claiming credit for recruitment in government departments on a large scale, linking these to the promise of "10

lakh sarkari naukri" he had made to the electorate ahead of the 2020 assembly polls.

The promise had paid off to an extent, as the RJD-led alliance put up a better than expected performance, falling short of majority by just a dozen seats.

However, Tejashwi's assertion has often been contested by Kumar, who claims that in principle clearance for the recruitments had been given long before he committed the "mistake" of aligning with the RJD-helmed coalition in 2022.

Nonetheless, Yadav maintained that Kumar was "tired and needs to retire".

For the next state polls, the JD(U) supreme has set up an ambitious target, for the NDA, of "225 plus seats" in the 243-strong assembly.

Yadav's image in the poster, "riding a horse", depicts him well past a milestone with the inscription "2025", a reference to the year in which assembly polls are to be held. In a state where people relish politics like a popular sport, "poster war" has often been a tactic adopted by parties to make a statement.

This is why posters put up by BJP leaders here are mostly about the achievements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Likewise, posters of JD(U) are all about Kumar's success in pulling Bihar out of the alleged "jungle raj" under the RJD. (PTI)

Atishi claims 'internal tussle' in BJP over portfolio allocation

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Outgoing Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Friday said "internal conflicts" are happening among BJP MLAs over portfolio allocation and accused the party of making excuses to avoid fulfilling its poll promises.

Addressing a press conference, Atishi claimed that BJP leaders were engaged in a "tussle" over ministerial posts to "exploit" public funds.

She further alleged that the BJP had no intention of delivering the commitments the party made in its election manifesto.

"We have learned from our sources that the BJP is planning to blame the AAP for its failure to fulfil promises. They will claim that the Delhi government has no money due to the previous AAP administration," Atishi said.

Highlighting the AAP government's financial track record, she stated that Delhi's budget had increased from ₹ 31,000 crore in 2014-15 to ₹ 77,000 crore in 2024-25 during its tenure.

"In the last 10 years, Delhi's budget has grown 2.5 folds. The Arvind Kejriwal-led government even repaid the debt inherited from the previous Congress administration," the senior AAP leader added. Atishi demanded that BJP to implement all its promises without any delay, particularly the promise of providing ₹ 2,500 per month to women. (PTI)

Under-fire Maharashtra minister Munde named member of his party NCP's 'core group'

MUMBAI, Feb 14: Maharashtra cabinet minister Dhananjay Munde, facing political heat over the alleged involvement of his close aide in an extortion case in his home turf Beed district, has been made a member of his party NCP's newly formed 'core group'. The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar has formed a 'core group' comprising senior leaders to work on strengthening the organisation ahead of the local body polls, taking policy decisions and initiating welfare schemes.

Besides, Ajit Pawar, NCP working president Praful Patel, senior leaders Sunil Tatkare, Chhagan Bhujbal, Dilip Walse Patil, Hassan Mushrif and Munde are members of the key body, the party, a constituent of the BJP-led ruling coalition Mahayuti, said on Friday.

A statement from Tatkare, who is Maharashtra NCP president, said the main purpose of the group will be to work on party restructuring and planning for the upcoming local bodies polls. Munde and Mushrif are ministers in the BJP-led Mahayuti government, while Bhujbal and Walse Patil

were members in the previous Eknath Shinde-led cabinet.

Ajit Pawar, who split the NCP founded by his uncle Sharad Pawar in July 2023, later got the party name and clock symbol and on basis on his group's legislative strength. As part of the BJP-led Mahayuti, the party contested 57 seats and won 41 of them in the November 2024 assembly polls.

Munde's membership of the core group shows NCP president Ajit Pawar's confidence in his beleaguered party and cabinet colleague, who is facing call for resignation from the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA).

The MLA from Parli in Beed district is under attack from opposition parties and even some leaders of the ruling Mahayuti as his close aide Walmik Karad has been arrested in an extortion case linked to the murder of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh in December last year. The NCP leader faced more trouble when activist Anjali Damania last week alleged a ₹ 88 crore 'scam' in the agriculture department when Munde held the portfolio in the previous Mahayuti coalition government. (PTI)

PM-chaired selection panel to meet on Monday to name next CEC, say sources

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: A selection committee headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet here on Monday to finalise the name of the next chief election commissioner, sources said on Friday. The panel also comprises the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

It will meet on Monday at the prime minister's official residence ahead of the retirement of incumbent Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar on February 18. The panel will recommend a name from among the candidates shortlisted by a search committee. The president will then appoint the next CEC based on the recommendation.

After Rajiv Kumar, Gyanesh Kumar is the senior-most election commissioner. His tenure is till January 26, 2029. Sukhbir Singh Sandhu is the other election commissioner. So far, the senior-most election



commissioner (EC) was elevated as CEC following the retirement of the incumbent. However, after a new law on appointments of the CEC and ECs came into force last year, a search committee shortlisted names of five secretary-level officers for consideration by a prime minister-led panel for appointment to the posts.

Besides the CEC, a new EC could also be appointed to fill the vacancy created by Rajiv Kumar's

retirement.

While provisions of the "Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023" are being applied for the first time to appoint a CEC, it was used to appoint ECs Gyanesh Kumar and Sandhu to fill the vacancies created by the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey and the resignation of Arun Goel last year.

The law gives power to the selection committee to name a person beyond the five names shortlisted by the search committee headed by the law minister.

According to the law, the CEC and ECs will be appointed by the president on the recommendation of a selection committee headed by the prime minister and comprising the Lok Sabha opposition leader and a Union Cabinet minister to be nominated by the prime minister.

The sources said the same set of candidates could also be used to appoint a new EC.

According to the law, the CEC and other ECs will be appointed from among persons who are holding or have held a post equivalent to the rank of secretary to the government of India and will be persons of integrity with knowledge of and experience in management and conduct of elections. In other words, serving and retired secretary-level officials can be appointed as the CEC and ECs. (PTI)

UPGRADATION OF POWER SUPPLY SYSTEM

E-Tender Notice No. Sr. DEE/LMG/35 of 2024-25 Dated: 11-02-2025.

E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Tender No. ELLM/24-25/43. Name of work:** (i) Guwahati: Upgradation of Power Supply system by replacing higher capacity Transformer at Guwahati Station Sub-Station against re-development of Station Soft upgradation, improvement at Guwahati station. (ii) At Guwahati, New Guwahati & Pandu: Provision of Aerial Bundled Cable at Guwahati, New Guwahati & Pandu Railway colonies for enhancing safety and prevention of pilferage of electricity in staff colonies, etc. **Tender Value:** ₹2,15,81,722/-, **Earnest Money:** ₹2,57,900/-, **Date and time of closing of tender:** 11.00 hrs. of 04-03-2025 & opening at 11.30 hrs. of 04-03-2025. The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 11.00 hrs. of 04-03-2025 in website www.treps.gov.in

Sr. DEE/G&Chg, Lumding

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Buddha's teachings of middle path, avoiding extremes solution to global challenges: PM

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday that many of the world's conflicts are an outcome of taking extreme positions instead of a balanced approach, asserting that Buddha's teachings of following the middle path and avoiding extremes offer solution to numerous global challenges.

In a video address to the fourth edition of Samvad, a global Hindu-Buddhist initiative for conflict avoidance, organised in Thailand, Modi said the shared traditions of Asia rooted in the principles of Dharma provide answers to the environmental crisis plaguing the world.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, and other Asian traditions teach people to live in harmony with nature, he said, adding they do not see themselves as separate from nature but as a part of it.

According to a statement, Modi highlighted the concept of trusteeship, as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, and emphasised that when



using natural resources for progress, one must also consider our responsibility to future generations. This approach ensures that resources are used for growth, not greed, he added.

Noting that this edition of Samvad is hosting a religious round-table, bringing together diverse religious leaders, he expressed confidence that valuable insights will emerge from this platform, shaping a more harmonious world.

Praising the host country Thailand for its rich culture, history, and heritage, Modi stressed that it stands as a beautiful example of the shared philosophical and spiritual traditions of Asia.

Underlining the deep cultural ties shared by India and Thailand spanning over two thousand years, he said Ramayana and Ramakien connect the two nations and that their shared reverence for Lord Buddha unites them. Citing Buddha, he said

the principle of moderation remains relevant today, offering guidance in addressing global challenges.

He mentioned the vibrant partnership across multiple sectors between the two countries, and said India's 'Act East' policy and Thailand's 'Act West' policy complement each other.

He said another cause of conflict is perceiving others as fundamentally different, adding that differences lead to distance, and distance can turn into discord.

To counter this, he cited a verse from the Dhammapada, which states that everyone fears pain and death.

The prime minister noted that he hailed from Gujarat's Vadnagar and represented Varanasi in Parliament, and said it is a beautiful coincidence that places associated with Lord Buddha have shaped his journey.

He said, "Our reverence for Bhagwan Buddha is reflected in the policies of the Indian government."

India has developed tourism infrastructure to connect important

Buddhist sites as part of the Buddhist Circuit, he said, while also highlighting the 'Buddha Purnima Express' special train to facilitate travel on this circuit and the inauguration of the Kushinagar International Airport to benefit pilgrims.

He also announced various development initiatives for Bodhi Gaya to enhance its infrastructure and invited pilgrims, scholars, and monks from around the world to visit India.

In his speech, Modi said the Nalanda Mahavihara was one of the greatest universities in history and destroyed centuries ago by the forces of conflict, adding that India has shown resilience by reviving it as a centre of learning and expressed confidence that Nalanda University will regain its former glory.

He highlighted the significant step taken to promote Pali, the language in which Bhagwan Buddha delivered his teachings, by declaring it a classical language to ensure the preservation of its literature. (PTI)

Ready to lodge 26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana in Maharashtra's jail once extradited: CM Fadnavis



NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Friday said the state government is prepared to lodge 26/11 Mumbai terror attack accused Tahawwur Hussain Rana in jail once he is extradited from the United States.

The chief minister's comments came after US President Donald Trump announced that his administration has approved the extradition of "very evil" Rana, wanted by Indian probe agencies for his role in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, "to face justice in India".

"We kept Kasab, what is the big deal here? We will keep him for sure," Fadnavis said here when asked about Maharashtra's preparedness once Rana is extradited.

Ajmal Kasab, one of the 10 terrorists involved in the November 26, 2008, Mumbai terror attacks, was arrested from one of the carnage sites in Mumbai.

He was lodged in jails in Maharashtra during his trial for four years and hanged in Pune's Yerwada central jail in 2012.

Fadnavis said during the investigation, Pakistan's role in the terror attack was exposed and established.

He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his efforts to bring Rana to India for trial.

"I want to profusely thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his (Rana) extradition. We all wanted that the person who conspired

against us, the mastermind of the Mumbai terror attack to be handed over to India," he said.

The chief minister said initially America was reluctant to hand over Rana to India and wanted to protect him but due to the initiative of the Prime Minister, extradition of Tahawwur Rana has been in a way cleared by America and its President Donald Trump.

"I believe this is very significant for India. Because it is very important that the criminals should get punishment through our judicial and legal process," he said.

Rana, a Canadian national of Pakistani origin, is currently lodged at a metropolitan detention centre in Los Angeles. He is known to be associated with Pakistani-American terrorist David Coleman Headley, one of the key conspirators of the 26/11 attacks.

Speaking at a joint press meet along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington on Thursday, President Donald Trump said, "Today I am pleased to announce that my administration has approved the extradition of one of the plotters and very evil people of the world, and having to do with the horrific Mumbai terrorist attack, to face justice in India. So, he is going back to India to face justice."

The extradition of Rana was cleared by the US Supreme Court in January as it rejected his review petition in the case. (PTI)

Police visit Allahbadia's Mumbai flat, find it locked

MUMBAI, Feb 14: Teams of Mumbai and Assam police on Friday visited the residence of podcaster Ranveer Allahbadia here as part of a probe into his controversial remarks made on a YouTube show, but found his flat locked, an official said.

Crass remarks by Allahbadia, popular on YouTube for his 'BeerBiceps' channel, about parents and sex on comedian Samay Raina's now-deleted YouTube show 'India's Got Latent' have sparked massive outrage, leading to complaints from several persons. "The Mumbai police, who have initiated an inquiry in connection with Ranveer Allahbadia's controversial remarks, on Friday went to his flat in Versova area, but found it locked," an official said.

Allahbadia had been asked to remain present at the Khar police station here on Thursday in connection with the probe into his controversial comments. But after he failed to appear, the police issued a second summons, asking him to appear on Friday, he said.

The podcaster had requested the Khar police that his statement be recorded at his residence, but his request was turned down, he added.

Meanwhile, an Assam police team

also wants to question Allahbadia in a case registered in Guwahati on a complaint by a resident there for alleged promotion of obscenity in a publicly accessible online show, he said.

"Accordingly, teams of the Mumbai and Assam police went to Allahbadia's flat in Versova this morning, but found it locked. Both the police teams then returned to Khar police station," the police official said. The case in Guwahati was registered on Monday. Besides Allahbadia and Raina, others named in the case in Assam are Ashish Chanchlani, Jaspreet Singh and Apoorva Makhija.

The Assam police team on Thursday met the Maharashtra Cyber Department officials.

The Mumbai police as well as the cyber department, who are conducting separate probes into the remarks, have also asked Raina to appear before them in the next five days.

The Mumbai police (Khar police station) have so far recorded the statements of seven persons, including Makhija, Chanchlani and Allahbadia's manager, on a complaint filed by a BJP functionary. But the city police have not registered any FIR in this connection so far, he said. (PTI)

90 drug peddlers held in Delhi, over 700 locations raided



NEW DELHI, Feb 14: The Crime Branch, in collaboration with all districts and special units, conducted simultaneous raids at over 700 locations across the city and arrested 90 narco-offenders, officials said on Friday.

The operation, 'Kavach' 7.0, began on Wednesday and continued till Thursday, they said.

The operation resulted in the arrest of 90 narco-offenders in 87 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances cases, with the seizure of 553 grams of heroin, 43 kilograms of marijuana, 199 grams

of cocaine and over 2 lakh habit-forming tablets, Special Commissioner of Police (Crime Branch) Devesh Chandra Srivastava said.

A total of 784 locations were raided during this operation, police said.

The officer further said that as part of the operation, the police also took action against illegal arms and illicit liquor trade. A total of 157 cases under the Delhi Excise Act led to 161 arrests, with the recovery of over 33,000 liquor bottles.

Additionally, 29 individuals were apprehended in 27 Arms Act cases, leading to the seizure of one revolver, one pistol, six country-made pistols, 11 live cartridges, 18 knives, a surgical blade and ₹ 24,000 in cash.

"A total of 909 people were taken under preventive custody. Additionally, three gambling cases led to the arrest of three individuals. Teams also prosecuted 1,407 violators for illegal tobacco sale within 100 metres of educational institutions," said the Special CP.

He said that operation 'Kavach', launched in May 2023, is a periodic intensive drive targeting street-level peddlers and high-profile traffickers. (PTI)

'Karnataka receives ₹ 10.26 lakh cr in investment proposals'



BENGALURU, Feb 14: Karnataka Medium and Large Industries Minister M B Patil on Friday said the state received investment proposals worth ₹ 10.26 lakh crore at the Global Investors' Meet, which will create six lakh jobs.

Addressing reporters after the valedictory session of the Invest Karnataka-2025 summit, Patil said 75 per cent of the investments would be made outside Bengaluru.

"We have received investment proposals of ₹ 10,27,378 crore, which will create six lakh jobs. Of this, 75 per cent pertains to 'Beyond Bengaluru.' I am happy to share that 45 per cent of these investments will be made in North Karnataka," Patil said.

The minister said he and his department had been preparing for this event for the past six months.

As part of this effort, he toured various countries to attract investors to Karnataka. Roadshows were also conducted across India, he added.

According to Patil, the highest investments came in the renewable energy sector, with proposals worth ₹ 4.26 lakh crore.

He said the manufacturing and sunrise sectors, such as aerospace, defence, automobiles, electric vehicles, Electronic System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) and Research and Development (R&D) would receive ₹ 1.38 lakh crore in investments.

General manufacturing, including food and agriculture, textiles, pharmaceuticals, machinery tools

and Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) is set to receive investments worth ₹ 1.05 lakh crore.

In the core manufacturing sector, including steel and cement, the state received proposals worth ₹ 1.60 lakh crore. For infrastructure and industrial logistics, including city gas distribution, telecom, airports, and other infrastructure projects, the state received investment proposals totalling ₹ 1.08 lakh crore.

The minister emphasised that the Global Investors' Meet should not be limited to signing Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs). "The investments will continue even after the GIM. We did not sign all the MoUs blindly this time. We conducted screenings to check their reliability. This time, we insisted on greenfield projects rather than brownfield, which means expansion. We now have 70 per cent greenfield projects," Patil said.

According to the minister, some of the key investments include ₹ 1.2 lakh crore by the JSW Group in renewable energy, cement, steel and affiliated businesses. Baldota Steel and Power Limited has agreed to invest ₹ 54,000 crore in an integrated steel plant, while Lam Research will establish a ₹ 10,000 crore semiconductor equipment manufacturing and R&D facility. Volvo will set up a ₹ 1,400 crore unit to manufacture EV trucks. Samvardhana Motherhood has proposed investing ₹ 3,700 crore in manufacturing, engineering, and assembly facilities. (PTI)

ISRO develops 10-tonne propellant mixer for solid motors

BENGALURU, Feb 14: ISRO on Friday said it has developed and realised the ten-tonne propellant mixer for solid motors.

Solid propulsion plays a crucial role in Indian Space Transportation Systems and vertical mixer is one of the critical equipment in solid motor production, ISRO said in a statement.

"Solid propellants are the backbone of rocket motors, and their production requires precise mixing of highly sensitive and hazardous ingredients," the statement read.

The space agency said that towards increasing the production scale of solid motor segments, Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota in collaboration with Central Manufacturing Technology Institute (CMTI), Bengaluru has successfully designed and developed 10-tonne Vertical Planetary Mixers for processing the solid propellants.

ISRO has termed it a significant technological marvel. It added that the 10-tonne vertical mixer is the world's

largest solid propellant mixing equipment. The development involves collaboration with academia and industries and has completed factory-level acceptance tests.

This high-capacity mixer will enable productivity, quality and throughput improvement for heavy solid motors production.

Stating that the Department of Space has undertaken multiple initiatives towards indigenous development of critical technologies, materials and machinery as part of 'Atmanirbharata (self reliance in Space)', ISRO said. "The realisation of indigenous 10-tonne vertical mixer is a true testament to India's growing technological prowess, self-reliance and unwavering commitment to innovation," it added.

The 10 tonne vertical mixer is handed over to Director, SDSC SHAR by Director, CMTI in the presence of ISRO Chairperson V Narayanan on Thursday in CMTI, Bengaluru. (PTI)

Amit Shah pays tribute to Pulwama martyrs

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday paid tribute to the 40 CRPF personnel killed in a terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama in 2019.

The Narendra Modi government is determined to completely destroy terrorists by carrying out a campaign with a "zero-tolerance" policy against them, Shah also said. "On behalf of a grateful nation, I pay my heartfelt tribute to the soldiers who were martyred in the cowardly terror attack in Pulwama on this day in 2019," he said in Hindi in a post on X.

Terrorism is the biggest enemy of the entire humanity and the whole world has united against it, the home minister added. "Be it through a surgical strike or an air strike, the Modi government is determined to completely destroy terrorists by carrying out a campaign with a 'zero-tolerance' policy against them," Shah said. (PTI)

Au revoir, Aero India: Bengaluru bids goodbye to its biennial aero show

BENGALURU, Feb 14: As soon as they entered, as if on cue, the crowd made a beeline to the stands from where they could get a better view of the aerial stunts on the final day of 'Aero India 2025' on Friday.

Their efforts paid off: the pilots put on a breathtaking show.

They rolled the aircraft zig-zagged through the sky flipped them over, and hovered vertically before plunging at full speed—cutting through the air like a bomb—only to pull up again.

The daredevilry drew a collective gasp from the crowd.

The penultimate show at 10.30 am showcased the prowess of 10 aircraft, including the popular Russian Su-57 and the American F-16, along with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)'s LUH, HTT-40, LCA Mk-1A, and IJT.

The Indian Air Force's Su-30 MKI and nine HAWKS flown by the renowned Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT) also participated along with National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL)'s Hansa and the Defence Research and Development Organisation



(DRDO)'s FTB.

In the final aerial display at 2.30 pm, which also showcased 10 aircraft the American F-16 was replaced with another American aircraft, the KC-135.

Meanwhile, the exhibitors, thanks to the fifth-day fatigue and the pressing crowd, were seen putting their things together already waiting to leave as soon as they could.

But mostly the exhibitors were a happy lot.

Siddhant Singh Chauhan, Senior Manager of Business Communications at Boeing, said he was thrilled as Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited the Boeing stall on the inaugural day.

Chauhan said he also was happy with the response that Boeing's AI-driven presentation got.

In what looked like a scene from a sci-fi movie, people learnt about Boeing's product portfolio in a sensor-activated transparent screen with the flick of their hands.

Vasili Fainveits, CEO, CTO & Founder of Latvia-based Fixar, a software and aircraft design developing firm said he found a perfect partner in Hyderabad-based Aksi Aerospace Group.

With their help, said Fainveits he would be able to scale up the production of his 'luxury' drone Fixar 007, a fully autonomous, vertical

take-off and landing drone giving them the advantage of pricing it cost-effectively.

"We are also planning to name the drone Shiv, as a nod to one of my good friends who passed away recently and who happened to be Indian," said Fainveits to PTI.

Arjun Naik, Founder and CEO of Scandron, a Bengaluru-based logistics and surveillance drone manufacturer who launched his 200-kg capacity logistic drone during 'Aero India 2025' felt the heat most as his drones were displayed right by the hangar where the roar of the aircraft was almost a constant background noise.

"You get used to it, believe me," Naik insisted to PTI, even as visitors to his stall instinctively closed their ears whenever flights roared past them.

Stalls displaying crowd-favourite things—like military outfits and SKAT souvenirs—were filled to the brim even on the last day.

Especially SKAT souvenir stall, as has been the case on all days, saw a swell in the crowd every time the famous aerial acrobats put up a show. (PTI)

JOINT DIRECTOR OF HEALTH SERVICES CUM MEMBER SECRETARY, DISTRICT HEALTH SOCIETY WEST KARBI ANGLONG HAMREN

File No: DHS/NHM/WKA/HR/Recruitment/2024-25/029/415

Date: 12.02.2025

ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE VARIOUS POST AS MENTIONED BELOW

Application are invited by District Health Society, National Health Mission, West Karbi Anglong District for the candidate willing to work in mission mode in various position mentioning below on purely contractual basis. The candidates have to be applied in standard form. The undersigned reserve the right to reject any or all applications without assigning any reasons thereof. Merely having the requisite qualification and experience will not render the applicant eligible for shortlisting.

Name of Post	Number of Post	Educational Qualification
ANM	6	ANM nursing course passed from any nursing school/recognized institution and registered with "Assam Nurses Midwives' and Health Visitors' Council"
ANM (RBSK)	4	ANM nursing course passed from any nursing school/recognized institution and registered with "Assam Nurses' Midwives' and Health Visitors' Council"
GNM	20	GNM B. Sc. Nursing course passed from any nursing school/recognized institution and registered with "Assam Nurses' Midwives' and Health Visitors' Council"
Lab Tech	4	Laboratory Technician Diploma Course from Medical Colleges of Assam or Regional Institute of Paramedical and Nursing Sciences, Mizoram or Institutes affiliated to Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences, Assam
Pharmacist	8	Degree/ Diploma in Pharmacy course from recognized Institutes and must be registered under Assam Pharmacy Council.

Age Limit: up-to 40 years as on 01.01.2025 (Relaxation in maximum age: SC/ST Candidate :5 years, OBC/MOBC Candidate- 3 Years, PWD Candidate-10 Years)

Application Fee: No fees is required to pay

Last Date: 21.02.2025

Instruction:-

- Incomplete application shall be rejected without giving any prior information.
- Claims for any correction will not be entertained after submitting the application."
- Candidate must submitted the supporting documents including educational qualification, experience and others relevant documents.
- The age limit of the candidates will be calculated on the basis of the Matriculation/ HSLC Admit Card or Pass Certificate issued by a recognized Board/Council and no other document shall be accepted in lieu of the mentioned documents.
- The schedule of interview/selection test for the respective post will be published in the office notice Board in due course of time along with the list of provisionally shortlisted candidates. The candidates are advised to visit the Office of the Joint Director of Health Services, Hamren, West Karbi Anglong. No separate individual call letter for interview/selection test will be sent. No TA/DA will be paid for attending the interview/selection test.
- The authority reserves the right to reject any or all applications without assigning any reasons thereof.

Sd/-
Joint Director of Health Services
Hamren, West Karbi Anglong

'Aandhi' should be re-released: Javed Akhtar on 50 years of Gulzar's 1975 classic

MUMBAI, Feb 14: Veteran lyricist-scriptwriter Javed Akhtar says Gulzar's 1975 "Aandhi", starring Sanjeev Kumar and Suchitra Sen, will do "extremely well" today if it is re-released in theatres.

The film, which turns 50 this week, is considered a modern classic and perhaps the best known film in lyricist-poet Gulzar's filmography as a director that also includes movies such as "Mausam", "Parichay", "Mere Apne", "Khushboo" and "Lekin" among others.

"It's a really nice film. It needs to be re-released today in multiplexes. There is a certain disadvantage to films that are subtle, intelligent and of an higher IQ. They perhaps don't get that kind of audience in big

theatres. I think a film like 'Aandhi', if it re-releases, will do extremely well today," Akhtar told PTI.

"Aandhi" had a great soundtrack by RD Burman with singers in Kishore Kumar and Lata Mangeshkar. Its songs "Tere Bina", "Tum Aa Gaye Ho" and "Iss Mod Se Jaate Hai" are popular even today.

The film, written by famous Hindi author Kamleshwar, revolved around a couple whose relationship suffers because of different ambitions. Sen played Aarti Devi, a woman from a political family, while Kumar essayed the role of JK, a hotel manager.

"Aandhi", which reportedly ran for just weeks in theatres, was banned during the Emer-

gency as many believed Sen's character resembled the then prime minister Indira Gandhi. It was re-released later.

Not just Akhtar, the film holds a special place in the heart of filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, directors Sooraj Barjatya and Karan Johar, actor Pratik Gandhi and producer Harman Baweja.

Bhatt, who has explored the many layers of man-woman relationship in films such as "Arth" and "Zakhm", said while people talk about politics when they speak about "Aandhi", he sees it as a film about "lost love".

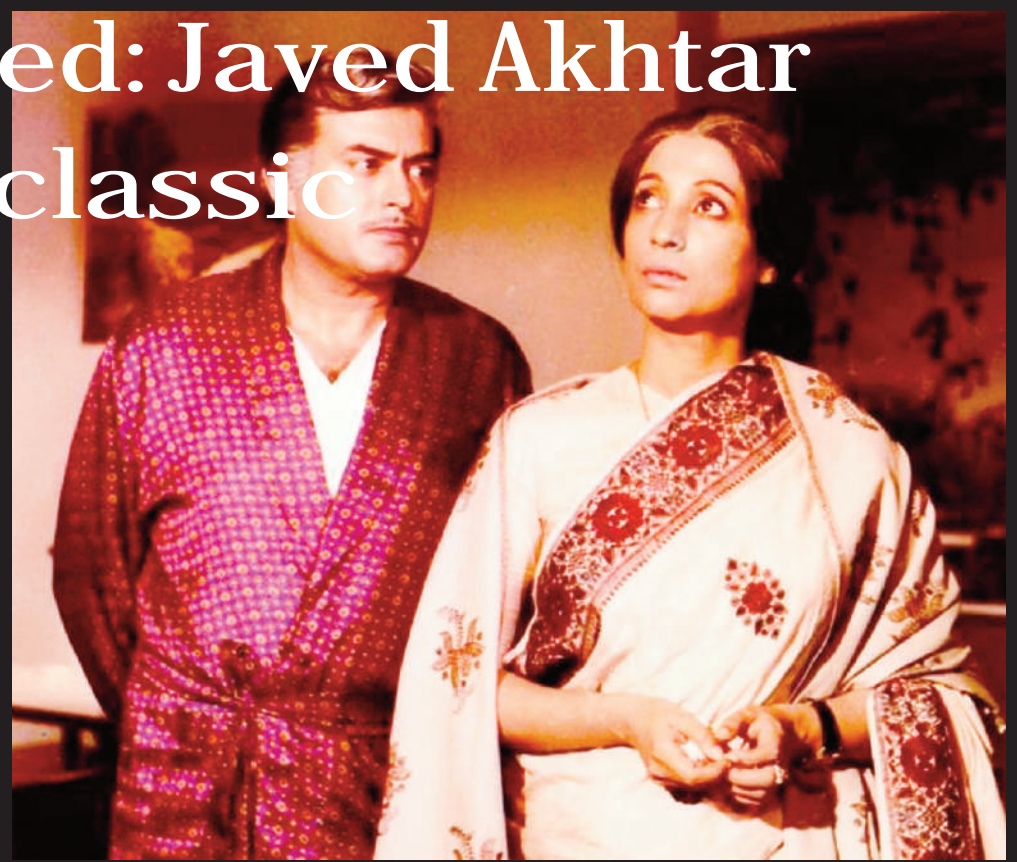
"It's the irony of life that two human beings meet again to realise that some distances can never be crossed. It is a medita-

tion on love and ambition. At that time for a woman to be ambitious was unheard of, very bold, and she paid the price for it. It's a deeply personal story. It was very brave of Gulzar sahab to have a character like that and go against the diktat that a woman must sacrifice.

"Also, 'Tere Bina Zindagi Sei' is RD Burman's timeless song, and that captures the ache of what life could've been had they stayed together," Bhatt told PTI.

"Scam 1992: The Harshad Mehta Story" star Gandhi said "Aandhi" is among his all time favourite movies as it featured Sanjeev Kumar.

"His range and the way he's created comedy, intense performances and drama and



everything. So he's my all time favourite actor and we happen to share the same city. He also comes from Surat," Gandhi told PTI.

Johar said he remembers watching all of Gulzar's films on VHS cassettes.

"I was one of those old soul kids that wasn't reading comics, that wasn't watching, what the kids that age were watching. I was obsessed with the vintage magic of Guru Dutt, with the glory and social commentary of Raj Kapoor, with Gulzar Saab's ethos and pathos in cinema," Johar told PTI, adding that though one cannot match the masters, he is always inspired by Gulzar's body of work that he discovered at a young age. (PTI)

RICHA CHADHA TO FEATURE IN SLICE-OF-LIFE MOVIE 'AKHRI SOMVAAR'

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Richa Chadha will next star in a dramedy film, tentatively titled "Akhri Somvaar", the actor-producer announced on Friday. Chadha has also penned the script of the movie, which is described as a "refreshing take on love, societal expectations, and the lengths one goes to for a dream wedding", according to a press release.

"Akhri Somvaar" revolves around a successful reality TV producer who becomes desperate to get married after someone at work calls her a 'childless cat lady'.

The 38-year-old actor, who recently ventured into production with her husband Ali Fazal, said the movie is inspired by her experiences of growing up in a middle-class Punjabi household.

"From my childhood, watching older cousins be set up for arranged marriages, emerged this deeply personal story that I think a lot of families will resonate with. When we graduate from college, we are full of dreams and ambitions," Richa said in a statement.

She added, "Somehow those dreams get dulled when we enter the job market and before you know it, you are in your mid-30s hoping to have both a career and a husband/family but society thinks it's too late and you become jaded because the dreams are now not achievable".

Richa shared that the film is a slice-of-life story about "coming undone and coming together".

"I think there is currently a dearth of family entertainment. And I think as an actor, my comic timing has been greatly underutilised," mentioned the actor, who welcomed baby girl, Zuneyra Ida Fazal, last year in July.

Richa Chadha and Ali Fazal met on the sets of Fukrey. The couple announced their eco-friendly marriage ceremony in September 2022. (PTI)



Harshvardhan announces new movie 'Deewaniyat', Milap Zaveri to direct

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Actor Harshvardhan Rane on Friday announced his next feature film, "Deewaniyat," a musical love story from director Milap Zaveri.

The actor, whose debut Hindi film "Sanam Teri Kasam" was re-released recently and is doing well in theatres, shared the news in a post on Instagram.

"Announcing Our Next: #Deewaniyat. A soul-stirring musical love story starring @harshvardhanrane, following the phenomenal success of the re-release of #SanamTeriKasam," Rane wrote alongside a teaser video of the project.

"A tale of love, heartbreak, and music that will echo in your hearts forever. In Cinemas 2025," he added.

Zaveri, known for "Marjaavaan" and John Abraham's "Satyameva Jayate", has penned "Deewaniyat" with Mushtaq Shiekh.

The film is produced by Amul Vikas Mohan and Anshul Mohan under their production banner Vikir Films.

"Sanam Teri Kasam", which came out in 2016 and also featured Pakistani star Mawra Hocane, was re-released in theatres on February 7. The movie has raised Rs 27.96 crore nett, a marked improvement from its original release earnings of around Rs nine crore. (PTI)

'Legally Blonde' prequel series 'Elle' casts Lexi Minetree as young Elle Woods



LOS ANGELES, Feb 14: "Elle", the upcoming prequel series to Reese Witherspoon's hit "Legally Blonde" movies, has found its young Elle Woods in actor Lexi Minetree.

The series, backed by Amazon MGM Studios and Witherspoon's production banner Hello Sunshine, will follow Woods during her high school years before she went off to Harvard. It will premiere on the streaming service Prime Video.

Witherspoon, who played Elle Woods in two movies in the 2000s, shared the news in a post on Instagram.

"Allow me to introduce you to the new Elle Woods! After watching so many incredible auditions for the new Elle prequel series on @PrimeVideo, we finally found our Elle. And today, I got to break the news myself! Meet @leximinetree," she wrote alongside a video, featuring her and Minetree.

According to entertainment news outlet Variety, "Elle" marks the first lead TV role for Minetree, who earlier appeared in series like "Law & Order: SVU" and in TV movies like "The Murdaugh Murders", "Crowdsourced Murder" and "The Paramedic Who Stalked Me".

The project was originally announced in May 2024 with Laura Kittrell as the creator. She also serves as co-showrunner and executive producer alongside Caroline Dries.

Witherspoon, Lauren Neustadter, and Lauren Kisilevsky executive produce via Hello Sunshine along with Marc Platt. Amazon MGM Studios will produce. Witherspoon had kick-started the movie franchise with 2001's "Legally Blonde", where she played the idealistic Elle Woods who follows her boyfriend to a law school in order to win him back.

But in the process, she discovers a natural aptitude for the law. A sequel, titled "Legally Blonde 2: Red, White & Blonde", was released in 2003 and since then, there have been talks for a third part but it is yet to materialise. (PTI)

I LOVE LOVE STORIES: director Nicholas Stoller on Reese Witherspoon and Will Ferrell-starrer 'You're Cordially Invited'



NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Nicholas Stoller, the director of hit romantic comedies like "Forgetting Sarah Marshall" and "The Five-Year Engagement", says he has a fascination for love stories as they are harsh, raw but also sweet. Stoller, whose latest film is the Reese Witherspoon and Will Ferrell-starrer "You're Cordially Invited", said he has been "obsessed" with love stories since he was a child.

"I love 'love stories'. I like them. I think it's always my favourite (genre). Whenever I'm watching a TV show, if there's not a love story, I kind of end up turning it off.

"I've always been the most obsessed since I was like a kid... I think I'm fascinated by love stories and what makes people fall in love, what makes people fight about love, all of that stuff... They're honest, they're kind of harsh and real, but they're also sweet. And so that's always my kind of north star," Stoller told PTI in an interview. The filmmaker said he isn't a fan of a "schmaltzy movie" with a lot of crying and melodrama. "There's nothing wrong with that but that's not what I like... I think that the movies that I love, that I watch over and over again are 'When Harry Met Sally' and 'Annie

Hall' because they're honest about love. They tend to be very much like 'Broadcast News'," he added. "You're Cordially Invited", which currently streams on Prime Video, revolves around two weddings that are accidentally scheduled at the same small island hotel on the same day.

Witherspoon portrays Margot, a reality TV executive organising her sister's wedding. Ferrell is Jim, a widowed father preparing for his daughter's wedding. Comedic conflicts arise when they strive to outdo each other, each determined not to move. "The primary relationship is between Will and his daughter and Reese and her sister, but then it also is a story about two people finding each other a little bit in midlife and falling in love," Stoller said about the movie.

It was a couple years ago when Stoller thought about making a comedy about a double booked destination wedding. But at the time, he didn't have much to play with the story and so he put the project on the shelf.

"Two years ago, I was like, 'Oh, I wanted to do a movie for Will Ferrell and Reese Witherspoon.' And I was like this is a kind of high concept that could really work for them. And so I kind of built out the characters and approached

them and pitched them the movie. And they both said yes. And then I developed the movie for them and we shot it. It kind of went pretty quickly from there."

According to Stoller, all of the comedy in his movies comes from the emotional journey of the characters, whether it was in "Forgetting Sarah Marshall", about a heartbroken man who takes a Hawaiian vacation and finds love there, or "The Five-Year Engagement", which followed a couple whose engagement keeps getting delayed by life's unexpected challenges. And he followed a similar approach with "You're Cordially Invited". "Everything comes from the emotional journey of the characters. And without that, the comedy won't work. I spent most of the time working on the script. I come up with funny ideas and funny set pieces and all of that, but really I'm trying to figure out like what is the movie about? What are these characters going through? What's their emotional experience?"

"And then making sure every set piece is connected to that emotional experience," he added. Asked about the challenges of making a comedy in the era of reels, Stoller said he has chosen to stay off the internet. (PTI)

India crash out with 0-3 loss to second-string Japan in Asia Mixed Team C'ship

QINGDAO (CHINA), Feb 14 HS Prannoy fought valiantly, but India succumbed to a 0-3 defeat against a second-string Japan in the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships, ending their campaign on a disappointing note here on Friday.

India, the 2023 bronze medalists in Dubai, struggled to find their rhythm, and trailed 0-1 after going down in the mixed doubles.

Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, ranked 37th in the world, showed resilience before going down 13-21, 21-17, 13-21 to world number 12 Hiroki Midorikawa and Natsu Saito.

With PV Sindhu sidelined due to a hamstring injury, India faced an uphill task against Tomoka Miyazaki, who has quickly risen to world number 8 following her triumph at the 2022 World Junior Championships.

World number 31 Malvika Bansod, stepping in for Sindhu, put up a brave fight, especially in the second game, but struggled to match the control and consistency of her younger opponent and lost 12-21, 19-21, leaving India 0-2 behind.

It all came down to Prannoy to keep India alive, but despite a determined effort, the 32-year-old, returning after a long break and struggling with early-season form, couldn't sustain the pressure against world number 16 Kenta Nishimoto.

The Japanese star sealed the rubber with a 21-14, 15-21, 21-12



victory in 1 hour and 17 minutes.

India will be disappointed with the loss, especially as Japan did not field their full-strength team, with several top players absent.

Japan were the inaugural edition champions in 2017 and were runners-up in 2019.

Miyazaki, leading the new-look Japanese team, was sharp and precise, quickly surging to an 11-3 lead after Malvika hit long.

Despite some good net play from the left-handed Indian, Miyazaki's cross-court drops and winners kept Malvika on the back foot.

Malvika narrowed the gap to 12-19, capitalising on unforced errors from Miyazaki.

However, two mistakes from the Indian allowed the Japanese to take the first game.

The second game was more

competitive as Malvika took a 5-3 lead, engaging in tight rallies. She managed a slim 11-10 advantage after Miyazaki went long.

Malvika stayed sharp, not allowing her opponent to play her usual drops freely, moving to 17-15.

But Miyazaki fought back, taking the lead at 18-17 after Malvika went wide.

Miyazaki earned two game points, and despite Malvika saving one, a miscue handed the game to the Japanese, leaving India 0-2 down in the tie.

In the men's singles, Prannoy fell behind 4-7 as Nishimoto dominated with angled returns.

The Indian clawed back to 8-8 after Nishimoto made a few errors, but two unforced mistakes gave the Japanese a three-point cushion at the break.

Prannoy kept up the pressure, reducing the gap to 12-13 with a couple of jump smashes.

However, there was little net play, and Nishimoto surged ahead 17-12, winning four straight points.

Prannoy handed Nishimoto six game points with a net error, and another mistake sealed the first game for Japan.

The second game was intense, with Prannoy and Nishimoto tied at 6-6.

Two powerful cross-court smashes from Prannoy leveled the score at 7-7, followed by a huge roar and a fist pump.

However, a subsequent smash led to a warning from the umpire, asking Prannoy not to celebrate in such a manner.

Prannoy moved to 10-9 after a brilliant net block, and took a one-point lead into the break.

A cross-court return left Prannoy flat on the floor, and Nishimoto moved to 14-12.

However, the Indian erased the deficit to lead 16-15 after winning a lengthy rally. (PTI)

3rd Inter-MAC Cup 2024-25 reaches thrilling semi-finals as top four teams battle for glory

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Feb 14: After a month-long intensive battle in the 3rd Inter-MAC Cup 2024-2025, the tournament has reached its climax, with only four teams remaining. They will clash in the semi-finals on Saturday (February 15) to determine which two teams will advance to the final.

The month-long football carnival of the 3rd Inter-MAC Cup 2024-2025, organized by the Sports & Youth Welfare Department, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), began on January 11. One team from each of the 26 Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituencies under KAAC's jurisdiction participated in the competition.

The tournament started with the group stage, played in a league format with both home and away matches. Each group consisted of three to four teams. At the end of the group stage, the top two teams from each group, based on points, advanced to the Round of 16. From this stage, the tournament followed a knockout format. The eight winning teams then competed in the quarter-finals, which were held on February 12 at four different venues.

At Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium here was played between Lumbajong MAC and Kopili MAC, the host team Lumbajong have won by 4-2 to get into the semi final spot. While the match played at Hanjanglangso Sports Association (HSA) ground between Borjan MAC team and Korkanthi MAC team, the host team Borjan defeated the defending champion Korkanthi by 5-2 to reach the semi final.

In another quarter final match played at Bhoksong in West Karbi Anglong between Singhason MAC team and Duar Amla MAC team, the visitors Singhason won via tie-breaker shot out. In the stipulated time of the 90 minutes match it was a tie of 2-2. In the extra it ended scoreless, and to decide the winner the two teams went for a tie-breaker shoot out. In

the kick from the penalty mark the visitors Singhason converted 6 shots, while the home side Duar Amla converted 5 shots. The visitors Singhason were luckier to win in the kick from the penalty mark and found their berth in the semi final.

The match at Hongkram High School PlayGround played between Bithung Rengthama MAC team and Rongkhang MAC team, the home team Rongkhang has also won via tiebreaker shot out. As the two teams were strong contenders for the semi final spot, and at the field they have displayed an entertaining game. In the 90 minutes the game ended scoreless. In extra time, the two teams failed to find the back of the net. In the kick from the penalty mark the host team Rongkhang made it 5, while the opponent Rongkhang could make only 3 shots. Rongkhang finally won the match by 5-3 via tie breaker to reach the semi final.

As the semi final matches take place on February 15 the four teams will battle it out to find their place in the final. The semi final matches will be played at two separate venues. The match at KASA stadium will be played between Lumbajong MAC team and Borjan MAC team. Lumbajong team is supported by Lumbajong local MAC Johny Timung, while Borjan MAC team is supported by Executive Member (EM), KAAC, Surjya Rongphar.

On the other hand the semi final match to be played at Dongkamukam, West Karbi Anglong will be between Rongkhang MAC team and Singhason MAC team. Rongkhang team is supported by local MAC Longbison Bey, while Singhason team is of EM, KAAC and MP Amarsing Tisso. From these two teams, one team will reach the final.

The football fans of the Karbi Anglong are eager to witness which of the two teams from among the four teams will be able to move to the final to fight for glory as the competition reaches its climax.

Pakistan wins the toss and bats against New Zealand in the tri-nation series final

KARACHI (PAKISTAN), Feb 14: Pakistan won the toss and elected to bat against New Zealand in the tri-nation series final on Friday in a dress rehearsal for both teams ahead of next week's opening game of the Champions Trophy.

Pakistan eliminated South Africa from the final with its epic run-chase of 355-4 at the same venue on Wednesday with captain Mohammad Rizwan and vice-captain Salman Ali Agha scoring centuries.

Pakistan brought in fast bowling all-

rounder Faheem Ashraf for his first ODI since his last appearance against Sri Lanka at the Asia Cup in 2023.

Ashraf replaced fast bowler Mohammad Hasnain, who went wicketless in his eight overs for 72 runs during Pakistan's highest ever successful run-chase in ODIs two days ago. "The pitch looks a little dry, and we want to put runs on the board," Rizwan said at the coin toss. "The ODI win in the last game was massive and it has given us the momentum."

New Zealand, which beat both Pakistan and South Africa at Lahore last week, made two changes and brought in Nathan Smith and Jacob Duffy. Smith replaced fast bowler Matt Henry while Duffy came in place of Ben Sears, who has been ruled out of the Champions Trophy with a hamstring injury. "The boys have played here a lot and we had two trainings on similar wickets," New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner said. "In Pakistan, the wickets are good. You always want to win, but there's a bigger picture."

Lineups: Pakistan: Fakhar Zaman, Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha, Tayyab Tahir, Faheem Ashraf, Khushdil Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Abrar Ahmed. New Zealand: Devon Conway, Will Young, Kane Williamson, Daryl Mitchell, Tom Latham, Glenn Phillips, Michael Bracewell, Mitchell Santner (captain), Nathan Smith, Jacob Duffy, Will O'Rourke. (AP)

Mourinho's Fenerbahce beats Anderlecht 3-0 in Europa League playoff

LONDON, Feb 14: José Mourinho's Fenerbahce might have only just squeezed into the Europa League knockout playoff round but it is already on the brink of the round of 16.

Fenerbahce dominated to beat Anderlecht 3-0 on Thursday and take a comprehensive lead to Belgium for the second leg next week. Two of Mourinho's former clubs, Porto and Roma, drew 1-1 in Europe's second-tier competition.

Fenerbahce only just reached the playoffs by placing 24th in the new 36-standings format — the last qualification place, and on a tiebreaker of goal difference. Anderlecht had finished 10th, only missing out on automatic progression to the last-16 by goal difference.

Fenerbahce took the lead in the 11th minute Thursday. Anderlecht failed to clear a corner and the ball was put back to the area where Yusuf Akçipek nodded it on for Dusan Tadic to head into the net. Edin Dzeko doubled his team's advantage shortly before halftime following good work from Filip Kostic down the left flank. Dzeko's initial shot was

blocked by Anderlecht defender Lucas Hey but the veteran forward fired home the rebound.

Youssef En-Nesyri added a third with a powerful header in the 57th minute and Fenerbahce missed several chances to extend its advantage.

Notably, Yusuf Akçipek's header was deflected onto the post — it would have been the 19-year-old's first career goal, after recording his first-ever assist in the first half.

Dutch club AZ Alkmaar also has a healthy advantage to take into next week's second leg after it beat 10-man Galatasaray 4-1.

Key Roma forward Paulo Dybala limped off in the first half of the match in Portugal with a knee injury.

Dybala had yelled out in agony when his knee felt the full force of Porto midfielder Alan Varela's boot in the 20th minute but the Argentina World Cup winner had played on for another 15 minutes before admitting defeat.

Roma took the lead with practically the last kick of the first half, with defender Zeki Celik scoring his first goal for the club. (AP)

Iga Swiatek beats Elena Rybakina to reach Qatar Open semifinals

DOHA, Feb 14: Three-time defending champion Iga Swiatek reached the Qatar Open semifinals by beating Elena Rybakina 6-2, 7-5 on Thursday.

Swiatek will face Jelena Ostapenko, who beat Ons Jabeur 6-2, 6-2, for a spot in the final.

"The second set I felt like she raised her level so I needed to do that too," the second-ranked Swiatek said after defeating Rybakina in what was a rematch of last year's title match.

Rybakina began the year with a 4-2 advantage head-to-head against Swiatek, but now they are tied.

Ekaterina Alexandrova continued her winning run by eliminating sixth-seeded Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-1, 6-1. The Russian, who is ranked 26th, defeated top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka earlier this week.

"When I saw the draw I thought maybe I will not get very far," Alexandrova said. "But overall so far played great matches here. I hope it continues."

Alexandrova will face another American player in the semifinals. Amanda Anisimova beat Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine 4-6, 7-5, 6-4 to advance. (AP)

Ban threatens Pakistan's involvement in soccer's Asian Cup

LAHORE, Feb 14: Pakistan's international soccer players are facing another spell in the sporting wilderness after the country's federation was hit with a third FIFA suspension in less than eight years, just a month before the men's national team was scheduled to start qualification for the 2027 Asian Cup. FIFA recently announced the latest ban after the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Congress voted on Jan. 25 to reject changes to its constitution that were recommended by the sport's

world governing body and the Asian Football Confederation. It follows similar punishments in 2017 and 2021 which lasted five and 14 months respectively.

"It's not surprising any more as there are power struggles in Pakistan football with people promoting themselves and not caring about the game," Pakistan international Navid Rahman told The Associated Press. "Also FIFA and the AFC should take some of the blame as this is a recurring issue which should have been sorted out before."



world governing body and the Asian Football Confederation. It follows similar punishments in 2017 and 2021 which lasted five and 14 months respectively.

SWOT ANALYSIS: India's three group league opponents for Champions Trophy

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Pace talisman Jasprit Bumrah's absence will certainly hurt India big time, but quality of batting and spin bowling will make Rohit Sharma's team one of the title contenders alongside South Africa and Pakistan. India will play Bangladesh on February 20 followed by Pakistan on February 23 and New Zealand on March 2.

Here's a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) analysis of India's position in group stages:

BANGLADESH

Strength: This is the format where Bangladesh are the strongest. They have been Asia Cup finalists. They have been Asia Cup quarter-finalists. With seasoned players like Mahmudullah and Mushfiqur Rahim still around, the 'Tigers' can't be taken lightly. The biggest strength is the number of multi-utility cricketers in their ranks like Soumya Sarkar, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, vice-captain Mehidy Hasan Miraz to name a few.

Weakness: Consistency has always been Bangladesh's bane against better oppositions. Someone like Litton Das couldn't make it to the Champions Trophy squad due to non-performance. With his ability to take the game back to the opposition, Litton would have been an asset in Powerplays but he misses out. Shakib Al Hasan's prowess has been on the wane, but as they say, there is no substitute for experience.

Opportunity: Against India in Dubai, if the tracks are a bit on the slower side, then Bangladesh's spinners Mehidy and leg-break bowler Rishad Hossain will have a role to play. Not to forget Mustafizur Rahman has enough variations up his sleeve to trouble the batters.

Threat: Bangladesh have lost five of their last six ODIs against Afghanistan and the West Indies. They are also coming into the Champions Trophy after playing the BPL, which at best can be

called sub-standard among all the T20 Leagues across the globe. Bangladesh's top-order including their talented skipper Nazmul Shanto haven't exactly set the international stage on fire.

PAKISTAN

Strength: There has been criticism about team selection, but they do have players, who can be destructive on their day. Fakhar Zaman had bled India in the 2017 Champions Trophy final.

Weakness: Saim Ayub's untimely injury has pegged Pakistan back but there would be concerns about Babar's form as well. Even in the tri-series involving New Zealand and South Africa, the returns (10, 23 and 29) have been underwhelming. Kamran Ghulam, Khushdil Shah and Tayyab Tahir will have to pull their socks up on big days.

Khushdil and Faheem Ashraf are the weak links in this squad.

Opportunities: Playing at home is certainly an

six more official international fixtures and some optimism for the future.

"As soon as there is a little traction that develops in Pakistan football then something happens" Rahman said. "For a player my age, the last 10 years have been terrible. There have been three FIFA bans and a global pandemic. So much time has been taken away from us."

Pakistan, which is No. 198 among FIFA's 210 ranked national teams, was set to start Asian Cup qualification against Syria on March 25. Soccer's Asian organizers have stated that if the national team is to compete, the ban needs to be lifted by March 4.

There may be a chance. The PFF has decided to hold an Extraordinary Congress on Feb. 27 at Lahore where "the revision of the PFF Constitution as suggested by FIFA and AFC," is on the agenda, according to a letter, dated Feb. 12, sent by Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar, the PFF's acting general secretary, to congress members.

Any development would be welcomed by players.

"The Asian Cup qualifiers are huge," Rahman said. "The issue with the national team is a lack of official games. It's now time for a permanent solution that allows football to resume and whatever elections need to be held, should go ahead." (AP)

advantage for Pakistan. They have a potent pace attack but there needs to be something in tracks at Karachi and Rawalpindi for the troika of Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah and Harris Rauf to come good.

Threat: Having just one specialist spinner in Abrar Ahmed is a risky ploy. The only other player, who can slow down things is Salman but he at the best is a part-timer or a batter, who can bowl.

All-rounder Faheem Ashraf's batting average or bowling economy rate doesn't inspire confidence. **NEW ZEALAND**

Strength:

The Kiwis are one of the most compact sides with a lot of players who have enough experience of playing white ball cricket in the sub-continent. In Devon Conway and Tom Latham, they have two dependable openers and in 50-over format, Kane Williamson can control the proceedings. **Weakness:**

After a long time, New Zealand

are going into an ICC event where they won't have the peerless duo of Tim Southee and Trent Boult. Even Lockie Ferguson is highly unlikely and the fast bowling department looks a bit short on experience.

Opportunities: New Zealand is always a candidate to be in the top four and it doesn't change even this time round. In Mitchell Santner, they have a steady skipper, who is doing well and with Glenn Phillips and Daryl Mitchell for company, they can control the game in middle overs which will possibly decide the outcome of this tourney.

Threat: It will be interesting to find out how New Zealand play out the opposition spinners during the middle overs. The conditions will be way flatter in Pakistan and the UAE, but playing against Indian spin troika, or Bangladesh's Rishad and Pakistan's Abrar would require special skills in ODIs. (PTI)

ICC Champions Trophy: Winners to receive prize money of USD 2.24 million

DUBAI, Feb 14: Winners of the upcoming Champions Trophy will walk away with a whopping USD 2.24 million cash reward after the International Cricket Council (ICC) announced a 53 per cent hike in its prize money pool for the eight-team tournament starting February 19.

The winners' purse would be close to 20 crore in Indian currency. The runners-up will receive half the amount, USD 1.12 million (₹ 9.72 crore), while each losing semi-finalist will take home USD 560,000 (₹ 4.86 crore). The total prize pool has increased to USD 6.9 million (₹ 60 crore approx).

"The substantial prize pot underscores the ICC's ongoing commitment to investing in the sport and maintaining the global prestige of our events," ICC chairman Jay Shah said in a statement ahead of the tournament which will be held in Pakistan and the UAE.

Each group stage win would be worth over USD 34,000 (₹ 30 lakh) for the victorious team.

Teams finishing in fifth or sixth place will receive USD 350,000 each (₹ three crore), while the sev-



enth and eighth-placed sides will take home USD 140,000 (₹ 1.2 crore).

Additionally, all eight teams will receive a guaranteed USD 125,000 each (₹ 1.08 crore) for participating in the event.

This tournament marks the first time Pakistan will host an ICC event since 1996. However, India will play all their matches in Dubai owing to security concerns related to travelling to Pakistan. Rohit Sharma's men will begin their

campaign on February 20 against Bangladesh.

The Pakistan leg will feature games in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi.

The 2025 edition features eight teams split into two groups of four, with the top two from each group advancing to the semi-finals.

"The ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 represents a pivotal moment for cricket, reviving a tournament that highlights the pinnacle of ODI talent, where every match is critical," the ICC chairman emphasised in his statement. "Beyond the financial incentive, this tournament ignites fierce competition, captivates fans worldwide, and plays a vital role in fostering the growth and long-term sustainability of cricket for future generations," Shah added.

The men's Champions Trophy was held every four years from 2009 to 2017 before a COVID disruption and deliberations on its relevance led to it being postponed. The tournament was first introduced as a biennial event in 1998.

The women's Champions Trophy will make its debut in 2027 in the T20 format. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: The Sports ministry has rejected speculation that it would consider harnessing the country's massive pool of aspiring cricketers to turn them into baseball medal prospects at the Asian Games or Olympics, saying that such an idea has never been discussed or considered at any level.

A ministry source said that suggestions that this came up for discussion at the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) meeting earlier this week are "wrong", pointing out that baseball is not even a recognised national federation at this point.

"This is completely imaginary. Baseball is not even recognised by the ministry. Why will SAI (Sports Authority of India) get into cricket or turning cricket players into baseball players?" a senior ministry source said.

Baseball has been a part of the Asian Games since 1994 and the Olympic Games since 1992.

India has never participated in the event. The country does have an Amateur Baseball Federation of India, which is affiliated to the sport's global body, but it is not



recognised by the sports ministry, nor entitled to any funding from the government.

"This was not discussed at MOC meeting. We are busy ensuring that we improve and build upon sports in which we are doing reasonably well, there is no time to get involved in something like this," the ministry source said.

To tap into country's cricket resources would require a degree of coordination with the BCCI, which is an autonomous body that generates its own funds. However for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, where cricket will make its debut

in T20 format, the BCCI will be entrusted with team selection.

According to a senior official of the Board, no serious cricketer would consider moving to baseball even though financially rewarding given state-level T20 leagues are at this point.

"Why would any aspiring cricketer turn to baseball? Is it a commercially viable career option? And especially when you have options like the IPL and state T20 leagues. Even the unofficial tennis-ball leagues are offering close to ₹ 40-50 lakh per annum," a senior BCCI official told PTI. (PTI)

National Games closing ceremony begins in Haldwani

HALDWANI, Feb 14: The closing ceremony of the 38th National Games began here on Friday with home minister Amit Shah as its guest of honour and sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya also joining the event to laud the athletes' performances.

To start with, Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami welcomed Shah with a commemorative memento, a shawl and a bouquet of flowers.

Besides Shah and Dhami, several other dignitaries are in attendance here, including Mandaviya, next host Meghalaya's CM Kongkal Sangma, Uttarakhand's Sports Minister Rekha Arya, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha, boxing legend MC Mary Kom, and Olympic medalist shooter Gagan Narang, among others.

"Uttarakhand has conveyed to the country that it is not just Devbhoomi but also a Khelbhoomi. The state ensured that no athlete faced any difficulty during the Games. It is the beginning of India becoming a sports hub," said Mandaviya in his address to the gathering at the Indira Gandhi International Sports Complex here. The venue has a capacity of 25,000 and was packed for the ceremony.

"It is the beginning of India coming inside the top 10 Olympic performers by 2036. The country now has a sports ecosystem. It is moving forward in every aspect, including sports," Mandaviya said.

Usha also conveyed a similar message in her address.

"The journey does not end here, it is only the beginning for Indian sports," said Usha. (PTI)

We want to win every FIH Pro League match and qualify for 2026 WC: Harmanpreet

BHUBANESWAR, Feb 14: Indian men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh on Friday said his team's target is to win every FIH Pro League match and finish on top of the league to earn a direct ticket to the 2026 World Cup.

India will open their FIH Pro League campaign against Spain on Saturday in Bhubaneswar.

They will next play Spain again the next day, followed by matches against Germany on February 16 and 19 in the opening leg of the India tour.

"Our training is going well from Hockey India League, we have been preparing for months, have learnt a lot from HIL. We

have been able to maintain our fitness as well," Harmanpreet said ahead of the FIH Pro League opener.

"We just want to play good hockey, all players in good shape and the target is to win every game (in Pro League) looking at the World Cup," he added.

The 2026 men's hockey World Cup will be held from August 14 to 30 in Wavre, Belgium and Amstelveen, Netherlands.

Harmanpreet, regarded as one of the best dragflickers in the world currently, praised HIL's top-scorer Jugraj Singh for his flicking abilities and said the rise of next generation of domestic players augur well for the national



side. "We have seen some good domestic players in HIL. It was an opportunity for youngsters and

they performed well," he said.

"Jugraj was the top-scorer and he was brilliant. I am happy for him and it is beneficial for the national team as well."

Harmanpreet, however, was in no mood to take Spain lightly.

"Spain is a good team, we can't take them lightly. Our focus is to give our best and win the match," he said.

India's chief coach Craig Fulton said the FIH Pro League is a "building phase" for the side.

"It's a building phase for us. We will look to try out things and see what best suits us. We will like to use our players' HIL experience and integrate their learning into the team," he said. (PTI)

Playing 10 months a year will lead to more injuries: Kapil Dev

KOLKATA, Feb 14: World Cup-winning captain Kapil Dev on Friday expressed concern over the rising number of injuries among Indian cricketers, attributing it to the demanding schedule that keeps players in action for almost 10 months each year.

The National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru has turned into a rehabilitation hub, with players spending more time recovering than training.

The latest casualty being India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah who was forced to sit out of the second innings of the final Test in Sydney due to a back injury.

Initially named in the Champions Trophy squad, Bumrah has now been ruled out.

Mohammed Shami, India's top wicket-taker in the 2023 ODI World Cup (24 wickets), suffered a leg injury post-final and underwent surgery.

His 14-month recovery ruled him out of the BGT series, which India lost for the first time in a decade. Shami's absence left Bumrah without a reliable bowling partner.

"The only thing that worries me is that they play for 10 months a year -- injuries will be much more common," the 1983 World Cup-winning skipper said at the Tata Steel Golf prize distribution ceremony here.

Asked whether Bumrah would be missed in CT, Kapil urged players to focus on supporting each other rather than dwelling on injured players.

"Why talk about someone who is not in the team? It's a team game, and the team has to win, not individuals. This is not badminton, tennis, or golf; we are playing a team sport in the Champions Trophy. If we play as a team, we will definitely win," said the 66-year-old.

"You never want your main players to get injured, but if it happens, you can't do anything about it. Good luck to my Indian team -- go and play well," he added.

India will begin their Champions Trophy campaign against Bangladesh in Dubai on February 20.

Kapil said he's excited to see so much rising talents in the Indian cricket team these days.

"When you see the youngsters, their confidence is unbelievable. We didn't have this much confidence when we were young. Good luck to them."

A known golf enthusiast and the current PGTI president, Kapil also made a playful pitch for the sport.

"Tell everyone to play golf. If they are not playing cricket, they should come and play golf. If they do, their performance will be better. There is a lot of fun in golf." (PTI)

Wellalage takes 4 wickets to guide Sri Lanka to 174-run win over Australia and 2-0 series win

COLOMBO (SRI LANKA), Feb 14: Kusal Mendis scored his fifth century and Dunieth Wellalage took four wickets as Sri Lanka beat Australia by 174 runs in the second one-day international on Friday and swept the two-match series 2-0.

Sri Lanka made a competitive 281-4 in its 50 overs after captain Charith Asalanka had won the toss and elected to bat first. Australia lost its last seven wickets for 28 runs to be bowled out for 107 runs in the 25th over.

Mendis top scored with 101 and was well supported by Asalanka, who followed up a fighting century in the first game with an unbeaten 78.

Opener Nishan Madushka scored his second one-day international half-century to be dismissed for 51. Fast bowler Sean Abbot had the best bowling figures 1-41.

Australia's score is its second lowest against Sri Lanka after the 74 all out it made in 2013. Sri Lanka's victory margin is also its largest win by runs in one-day internationals against Australia.

Australia fast bowler Aaron Hardie gave his team an early breakthrough by bowling out opening batter Patham Nissanka for 6 with the total on 15. But Kusal Mendis and Madushka rebuilt the innings with a 98-run partnership for the second wicket off 115 deliveries.

Madushka was out for 51, caught by Adam Zampa off fast bowler Ben Dwarshuis. He hit a six and four boundaries.

Eight runs later, Abbot bowled out Kamindu Mendis for four leaving the hosts 121-3.

Kusal Mendis again shared a 94-run partnership with Asalanka, who

hit three sixes and six boundaries in a 66-ball 78. Kusal Mendis faced 115 deliveries and hit 11 boundaries.

Sri Lanka's fast bowler Asitha Fernando dismissed Matthew Short lbw for six. Jake Fraser-McGurk was caught by Asalanka at mid off for nine and Travis Head (18) was caught in the deep by substitute fielder Avishka.

A partnership of 46 runs between captain Steven Smith and Josh Inglis showed promise for a recovery when Inglis (22) was bowled by Wellalage. Glenn Maxwell was out for one, bowled by Wellalage, and Smith was the highest scorer with 29 runs before being bowled by leg spinner Wanindu Hasaranga.

Wellalage had 4-35 while Fernando and Hasaranga took three wickets each. (AP)

Injury rules out Ben Sears from Champions Trophy, Jacob Duffy named replacement

CHRISTCHURCH, Feb 14: Pacer Ben Sears has been ruled out of the Champions Trophy due to a hamstring injury, a significant setback for New Zealand ahead of the ICC event which kicks off on February 19.

New Zealand Cricket (NZC) has named Jacob Duffy as Sears' replacement.

"Sears felt some pain in his left hamstring at the team's first training in Karachi on Wednesday and a subsequent scan revealed a minor tear that would require at least two weeks' rehabilitation," NZC said in a statement.

"The rehabilitation timeframe means that Sears would likely be available for only the team's final Group A match against India in Dubai, and so the decision was made to rule him out."

Sears' absence has paved the way for Duffy, who is currently with the squad for the ODI Tri-Series against Pakistan and South

Africa.

"We're all really feeling for Ben. It's always tough being ruled out of a major event at such a late stage, and it's especially tough in Ben's case given it would have been his first major ICC event," said New Zealand head coach Gary Stead.

"The timeframes for Ben to be fit to play again meant he would likely miss the majority of the group stage, and given the short nature of the tournament, we felt it was appropriate to bring in a player who is fully fit and ready to go."

"Ben is a player with huge potential and given the short rehabilitation timeframe, we're sure he'll be fit and raring to go for the home series against Pakistan back in New Zealand."

On Duffy's inclusion, Stead said, "Jacob showed with his performances in the recent home series against Sri Lanka that he is more than capable at international level." (PTI)



AHMEDABAD, Feb 14: England's head coach Brendon McCullum has dismissed suggestions

that his team did not prepare adequately during their white-ball tour of India, calling such claims

"factually incorrect".

The New Zealand great was responding to criticism that emerged during TV commentary for the third ODI, where Ravi Shastri and Kevin Pietersen suggested that, apart from Joe Root, England's players had not trained during the ODI series that India swept 3-0.

"Firstly, it's factually incorrect, the whole statement that we don't train," McCullum told 'talkSPORT' after England's third ODI defeat here on Wednesday.

"We've trained plenty right throughout, and guys have come from a lot of cricket as well. I think it's an easy thing to have as a throwaway line that guys don't train enough when the results aren't right."

While England had trained before the first match in Nagpur, they opted against formal sessions ahead of the second and third ODIs in Cuttack and Ahmedabad. England suffered a 142-run de-

feat to India in their final ODI before the Champions Trophy slated in Pakistan and Dubai next week.

The ODI series loss came after a 1-4 drubbing by India in the T20I rubber.

McCullum also pointed out the injury setbacks to Jacob Bethell (hamstring) and Jamie Smith (calf).

"We've got a style and a method that we believe in. We've got guys who are battling injuries and trying to make sure that we've got enough bodies out on the field, knowing that we've got a huge assignment coming up in a week or two."

"Ultimately it's factually incorrect what's been said and we'll stay true to what we believe in," he asserted.

England's Test coach McCullum, who took charge of the white-ball side before the India series, also stressed the importance of fostering a positive team environment despite recent setbacks.

"Ultimately, you're judged on results... From our point of view, we've got to strip away the fear of failure that results can bring," he said.

"Guys are fiercely determined and competitive... how do you allow an environment to provide the freedom and clarity of thought to go out there and allow your talent to come out?" he asked.

England will be in UAE for a short break before beginning their Champions Trophy campaign against Australia in Lahore on February 22. McCullum said the squad-building will continue over the next week as well.

"We'll give the guys a freshen-up in Abu Dhabi, make sure all the bodies are fit and ready to go, and have a full squad to pick from come that first game against Australia," he said.

"If we do that, hopefully, we walk a little taller, play a little better, and end up getting better results as well." (PTI)