

**6** WORLD

**8** NATION

- US and Iran-backed Houthis both vow escalation after US airstrikes target rebels
- Pak's NA speaker summons closed-door session
- AIMPLB stages protest against Waqf Bill
- 'One district, one mafia' era in UP replaced

## Punjab Police team in Assam for transfer of seven aides of Amritpal

### Formalities for shifting from Dibrugarh jail completed



**DIBRUGARH, March 17:** A 25-member team of Punjab Police has been stationed in Assam's Dibrugarh for the past two days to facilitate the transfer of radical preacher Amritpal Singh's seven aides who have been imprisoned along with the 'Waris de Punjab' leader here for nearly two years, officials said.

The date of the transfer, how-

ever, has not been officially disclosed but could be within the next two to three days, the officials added.

Ten members of the outfit, including Amritpal who is an Independent MP, and one of his uncles, have been housed in the Dibrugarh Central Jail since 2023 after they were arrested under the National Security Act (NSA) from different

parts of Punjab following a crackdown on the outfit.

The Punjab Police team, led by Superintendent of Police Harinder Singh Gill, was engaged in completing the legal formalities in Dibrugarh, a town in eastern Assam, to proceed with the transfer, the officials said.

The detainees set for transfer are Daljit Singh Kalsi, Kulwant Singh Dhaliwal, Gurmeet Singh Bukkanwala, Harjit Singh, Bhagwant Singh alias Pradhan Mantri Bajke, Basant Singh and Gurinderpal Singh.

Amritpal Singh, along with Palpreet Singh and Varinder Singh Johal, will continue to be held under NSA here, with their detention scheduled to expire in June 2025.

The radical preacher had contested the 2024 Lok Sabha elections as an Independent candidate and won from (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## MP demands 2 trains in the name of Sankaradeva, Madhavdeva

Dilip Saikia takes part in debate on the demands for grants under the control of the Ministry of Railways



**NEW DELHI, March 17:** BJP MP Dilip Saikia on Monday urged the railway ministry to name two long-distance trains from Assam to Delhi and Chennai in honour of revered Vaishnavite saints Srimanta Sankaradeva and Srimanta Madhdeva, respectively.

Participating in a debate on the Demands for Grants under the control of the Ministry of Railways for 2025-26, the MP from Assam's Darrang-Udalguri constituency also urged the

government to start a Vande Bharat Express train between Dibrugarh and Guwahati via Rangia and Udalguri, besides a direct train from Guwahati to Odisha for the benefit of the 45 lakh people of Odisha-origin living in Assam.

"Two long-distance trains from Assam to Delhi and Chennai, respectively, should be named on Srimanta Sankardev and Srimanta Madhdev," he said.

Srimanta Sankaradeva was a 15th-16th century Assamese saint, scholar, poet, playwright, social reformer and founder of Assam's neo-Vaishnavite movement.

Srimanta Madhavdev, the main disciple of Srimanta Sankaradeva, was a prominent Vaishnavite saint and known for his artistic brilliance.

Referring to his Darrang-Udalguri constituency, Saikia said Darrang district did not have railway connectivity.

"I have requested the railway minister several times by meeting him personally and also through this House but there is no positive response so far. Please inform me about the current status," he said. Saikia also requested the Railways to restore halting points of several trains at stations such as (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Oppn misleading Muslims on Waqf Bill, no threat to board's properties: BJP

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The BJP on Monday accused the opposition parties of "misleading" Muslims on the proposed amendments to the Waqf Act and asserted that not "an inch" of waqf properties with clear titles will be taken away if the bill gets Parliament's nod.

The accusation came amid a host of Muslim organisations, led by the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, protesting the Waqf (Amendment) Bill here, with several MPs joining in support.

AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi cautioned the NDA constituents like TDP, JD(U) and LJP (Ramvilas) that Muslims will never forgive them if they support this legislation.

Asked for comment, BJP MP Tejasvi Surya said, "The politics of vote bank in the country has always been based on fearmongering that has been the modus operandi of all of these so-called secular parties."

"Let me assure everybody that the intent of the government in bringing about the Waqf Bill was

to bring about professionalism, good management and transparency in the management of Waqf properties," he told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here.

The Bangalore South MP said the government has ensured that the powers of the Waqf Board are not abused to encroach on lands that did not belong to it.

"All those institutions which have clear titles, all those places of religious worship that have been in existence for years together, not a single one of them have fear from the new Waqf law," Surya said.

Attempts are being made to mislead Muslims, he charged, asserting, "Not an inch of such lands will be taken away."

Slamming the opposition parties, he alleged that those who call themselves secular parties did nothing for the Muslims, except always making efforts to scare and mislead them.

"The government intends to make the Waqf Boards more stronger," he added. (PTI)

## Inter-state motorcycle lifting gang busted in Assam, 7 people nabbed



**GUWAHATI, March 17:** An inter-state motorcycle lifting gang has been busted in Assam, with the arrest of seven people, including six hailing from Manipur, and recovery of 14 motorcycles, police said on Monday.

According to a senior officer, police received a complaint on March 11 regarding theft of a motorbike

and a case was registered with Dispur police station against some unknown culprits.

"During the investigation, the stolen motorcycle was recovered along with another 13 stolen motorbikes. The police have also arrested seven accused people," the officer told PTI.

The arrests and recoveries were made in the past few days, with the last one being on Monday. "Six of the arrested persons are from different places in Manipur and one is from Kamrup district of Assam. We have also seized a long-distance bus travelling between Guwahati and Imphal which was used to transport stolen motorcycles," he added.

Explaining the modus operandi, the police officer said that the members of the gang travelled to Guwahati by flight and stole the motorcycles from different parts of the city during their stay of 3-4 days.

"After that, they used to transport the motorcycles to Manipur in the passenger bus. We suspect that these motorbikes then crossed the international border to Myanmar, but we are verifying this," he added.

Further investigation is underway to find out whether more people were part of the network, the Guwahati Police officer said. (PTI)

## Body of suspected hooch victim exhumed in Assam tea garden

**GUWAHATI, March 17:** The body of a man was exhumed in a tea garden in Assam's Golaghat district on Monday after locals claimed that the person had died after consuming spurious country-made liquor, an official said.

The body of another local, who had died on Sunday, has already been sent for post-mortem examination following similar suspicion raised by people of the area.

The official said that these two persons, Rajesh Telenga and Shankar Telenga, of Lattakoojan tea estate in Numaligarh area had died over the weekend.

The body of Rajesh, who had died on Saturday, was buried following rituals by his family and was exhumed during the day, the official said.

Shankar's mortal remains were sent for autopsy soon after his death on Sunday.

"The local people and organisations have alleged that they had died after consuming spurious country-made liquor. We are taking



this very seriously," the official said.

Locals staged protest in the area on Sunday demanding action against those selling spurious liquor.

They claimed that country-made liquor was being sold illegally in the area, with teenagers also falling victim to alcoholism due to its easy availability.

The locals alleged that at least 10 deaths have occurred in the area in the past one year owing to consumption of spurious liquor. The official said the allegations raised by the local people will also be looked into by the authorities. (PTI)

## Himanta to distribute PMAY-G sanction letters

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, March 17:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday reviewed the distribution of sanction letters for the first instalment of funds to beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (Gramin), said an official statement.

Sarma reviewed the same during a meeting via video conferencing with the District Commissioners and Co-District Commissioners at Janata Bhawan in Dispur.

"The purpose of the meeting was to review the distribution of sanction letters for the first instalment of funds under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Gramin) to 3,88,358 beneficiaries across the state, an event scheduled for 19 March 2025," the statement added.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarma stated (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Modi raises concerns with Kiwi PM over pro-Khalistani activities

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** India and New Zealand on Monday inked an ambitious pact to institutionalise defence ties and vowed to boost co-operation in the Indo-Pacific even as Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged concerns to his Kiwi counterpart Christopher Luxon over certain pro-Khalistani elements indulging in anti-India activities in the island nation.

Following talks between Modi and Luxon, the two sides signed six agreements to ramp up cooperation in several areas including education, sports, agriculture and climate change, and decided to prepare a roadmap for cooperation in the defence industry sector.

Both prime ministers welcomed the launch of negotiations for a "balanced, ambitious, comprehensive, and mutually beneficial" free trade agreement (FTA) between the two countries to achieve deeper economic integration.

Secretary (East) in the Ministry of External Affairs Jaideep Mazumdar indicated that the two countries will try to seal the FTA by the end of this year.

In his media statement, Modi said India and New Zealand support a free, open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific, adding "We believe in the policy of development, not expansionism", remarks that came amid growing global concerns over China's expansionist behaviour in the region.

The two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to supporting an Indo-Pacific where sovereignty and territorial integrity are respected,

according to a joint statement.

Luxon arrived in the national capital on Sunday on a five-day visit primarily to push for deeper economic engagement between the two sides.

In the context of the negotiations for the trade deal, the two sides agreed to start discussions on an arrangement facilitating the mobility of professionals and skilled workers, primarily to address the challenge of irregular migration, according to a joint statement. Within the context of FTA negotiations, Modi and Luxon agreed to discussions between respective authorities on both sides to explore early implementation of cooperation in the digital payments sector.

In his remarks, Modi, referring to the 2019 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

the trial of the Manipur ethnic violence cases, probed by the CBI, would be conducted in Guwahati, Assam, where they were transferred to earlier.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna also extended till July 31, 2025, the tenure of a committee headed by Justice Gita Mittal, the former chief justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court.

The panel, also comprising former Bombay High Court judge Shalini P Joshi and Asha Menon, former Delhi High Court judge, was set up on August 7, 2023 by the top court to oversee relief and rehabilitation of the victims of ethnic violence in Manipur.

The tenure of the panel was previously extended by the top court by six months on August 5, last year. On Monday, the bench noted the submissions of a lawyer over the fate of the trials in the cases that were transferred to Guwahati for pre-trial proceedings by the bench on August 25, 2023.

"We clarify that the trial of transferred cases will be held before the courts at Guwahati," the CJ said. Keeping in mind the "overall environment in Manipur and the need for ensuring a fair process of criminal justice administration", the top court transferred to Assam, 27 cases, having various offences, including the sexual assault case of the two women seen in a viral video being paraded naked.

While passing a slew of directions, the top court had directed the Gauhati High Court chief justice to nominate one or more judicial officers to deal with the transferred cases. Of the 27 cases, 20 related to charges of molestation, rape, murder whereas three related to loot of weapons.

On the supply of the several reports submitted by the judges' panel to all the litigants, the bench was in the affirmative but asked the parties to exercise caution due to the "sensitivities involved".

Concurring with the bench, solicitor general Tushar Mehta, representing the Manipur government, pointed out the possibility of some having "other motives". The bench posted the next hearing in the week of July 21. On December 9, last year, the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

pending before the apex court. The PIL filed in the high court raised several issues concerning the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem of Kaziranga National Park including eco-fragile zone, protection of nine notified animal corridors and for action against alleged unauthorised industrial and other non-forest activity.

The petitioner alleged non-forest activity, including settlement of land within the forest area, had ramifications and referred to a report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India stating a change in land pattern and other non-forest activities might wipe out the one-horned rhino to extinction. While adjourning the matter sine (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Manipur violence: Cases to be tried in Guwahati itself, says SC

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The Supreme Court on Monday said the trial of the Manipur ethnic violence cases, probed by the CBI, would be conducted in Guwahati, Assam, where they were transferred to earlier.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna also extended till July 31, 2025, the tenure of a committee headed by Justice Gita Mittal, the former chief justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court.

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## 'India is keen to share our DPIs with the global community'

### India's digital disease surveillance system a valuable model for other nations: Minister

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel on Monday said India's digital disease surveillance system offers a valuable model for other countries seeking to strengthen their public health infrastructure.

The rise of emerging and re-emerging health threats in recent times underscores the critical necessity of strengthened preparedness, enhanced surveillance and well-coordinated international response mechanisms to safeguard global health security, Patel said after inaugurating the QUAD Workshop on Pandemic Preparedness for the Indo-Pacific Region here.

The purpose of the three-day workshop, jointly organised by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of External Affairs, is to strengthen global health emergency frameworks, enhance pre-



paredness and resilience to health threats, ensure coordinated responses to evolving pandemics, implementation of One Health approach, and address human, animal and environmental

health through a multisectoral lens. Highlighting India's commitment to strengthening global pandemic preparedness and response efforts, Patel said, "India has contributed USD 10

## Kaziranga National Park: SC refuses to hear plea against HC order

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The Supreme Court on Monday refused to hear a plea against an order of the Gauhati High Court which adjourned sine die a case over the protection and preservation of Kaziranga National Park.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih said the issues relating to the park, including the declaration of eco-sensitive zone, was pending before the apex court.

The bench told the petitioner's counsel to withdraw the plea challenging the high court order and file an application in the proceedings pending before the top court.

The counsel withdrew the plea with liberty to move an appropriate plea in the apex court. The petitioner's counsel said the plea filed before the high court raised several issues concerning the park, including the declaration of eco-sensitive zone.

"That issue is pending before this court," the bench observed.

In its order passed on December 6 last year, the high court adjourned the matter sine die (without a future date fixed) observing several issues relating to the national park were



pending before the apex court.

The PIL filed in the high court raised several issues concerning the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem of Kaziranga National Park including eco-fragile zone, protection of nine notified animal corridors and for action against alleged unauthorised industrial and other non-forest activity.

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## Sensex bounces back, snaps 5-day losing run

### 341 pts on gains in banking shares, global rally

**MUMBAI, March 17:** Benchmark BSE Sensex rebounded by 341 points on Monday, snapping its five-day losing streak following buying in banking stocks and a sharp rally in global shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 341.04 points or 0.46 per cent to settle at 74,169.95 as 19 of its constituents ended in the green and 11 in the red. In intra-day trade, the benchmark jumped 547.44 points or 0.74 per cent to 74,376.35.

The NSE Nifty rose by 111.55 points or 0.50 per cent to 22,508.75.

From the Sensex pack, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance, Adani Ports, ICICI Bank, Zomato and UltraTech Cement were among the biggest gainers.

However, ITC, Nestle, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints and Tata Consultancy Services were among the laggards.

Shares of IndusInd Bank jumped 5.30 per cent in intra-day trade after the Reserve Bank on Saturday assured customers that the firm remains 'well-capitalised', even as it directed the bank's board to complete remedial action relating to an estimated Rs 2,100 crore accounting discrepancy within this month. The stock finally ended at ₹ 676.95, up 0.72 per cent.

"Markets started the week on a positive note, gaining half a per



cent as the consolidation phase continued. Strong global cues, along with buying interest in select heavyweights, particularly from the banking and financial sectors, led to a firm start, followed by a range-bound session," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.77 per cent, while smallcap index dipped 0.02 per cent.

Among BSE sectoral indices, healthcare surged 1.12 per cent, commodities (0.92 per cent), metal (0.91 per cent), financial services (0.83 per cent), auto (0.80 per cent) and bankex (0.71 per cent).

Telecommunication, realty and FMCG were the laggards.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory. Stock mar-

(FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 792.90 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Domestic stock markets were closed on Friday for Holi.

The total outflow by foreign investors has reached ₹ 1.42 lakh crore (USD 16.5 billion) in 2025 so far, data with the depositories showed.

"The market experienced a positive trading session, driven by strong performance in the healthcare and financial sectors. However, lower participation from domestic investors due to tariff-related uncertainties may cause the market to fluctuate within a range in the near term," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

A decisive momentum will depend on signs of earnings growth, while improving domestic economic indicators suggest a potential recovery, he said.

"Investors are closely monitoring the upcoming FED and BOJ meetings, with expectations leaning towards maintaining the current stance due to inflation risks associated with tariff uncertainties," Nair added.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.06 per cent to USD 71.33 a barrel.

On Thursday, the Sensex declined by 200.85 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 73,828.91. The Nifty fell 73.30 points or 0.33 per cent to settle at 22,397.20. (PTI)

## Govt's Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme now offered at HDFC Bank

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, March 17:** HDFC Bank has announced that it will now accept deposits under the Senior Citizens' Savings Scheme (SCSS), a government-backed savings instrument designed for elderly citizens. The private sector lender will serve as an agency bank for the Government of India, facilitating SCSS deposits while ensuring a seamless customer experience.

The scheme is available to individuals aged 60 and above, as well as those who have retired at or after the age of 55.

Additionally, retired personnel from the Defence Services can apply for the scheme upon reaching 50 years of age. SCSS investments qualify for tax benefits under Section 80C of the Income-Tax Act.

The scheme offers a quarterly interest payout and has a five-year lock-in period, with the option of extending it by three years.

The interest rate for SCSS is periodically revised by the government.

Parag Rao, Country Head - Payments, Liability Products, Consumer Finance, and Marketing at HDFC Bank, highlighted the significance of the initiative, stating that the scheme provides elderly citizens with a steady income stream at an attractive interest rate while also offering tax benefits.

He also noted that SCSS complements HDFC Bank's existing government-backed savings options, such as the Public Provident Fund and the Sukanya Samridhi Account Scheme.

HDFC Bank is among the top three agency banks in the country for government-related transactions.

In the financial year 2023-24, the bank's tax collections exceeded ₹10 lakh crore, as per data from the Press Information Bureau and the Controller General of Accounts.

## HCMCT Manipal Hospital to launch OPD services in Guwahati

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, March 17:** To further improve access to specialised liver care in the Northeast, HCMCT Manipal Hospital, New Delhi, will soon launch regular OPD services in Guwahati, said an official statement here on Monday.

This initiative aims to bring expert consultation closer to patients, ensuring they receive timely diagnosis and treatment, it said.

Addressing a gathering in Guwahati, Dr Niteen Kumar, Head of Department and Consultant in Liver Transplant and HPB Surgery at HCMCT Manipal Hos-

pital, Delhi, emphasised the importance of early detection. He pointed out that liver diseases often progress silently, with symptoms becoming apparent only after significant damage has occurred.

"Regular screenings and early intervention are crucial to preventing severe complications. For patients with end-stage liver disease, liver transplants can be lifesaving, offering them a second chance at life when performed at the right time. Our goal is to spread awareness about liver health, encourage early diagnosis, and ensure that patients receive the best possible care without unnecessary delays".

Liver diseases are becoming an increasing health concern in India, with rising cases of fatty liver, cirrhosis, and liver failure caused by factors such as excessive alcohol consumption, obesity, viral infections like Hepatitis B and C, and unhealthy diets, the statement said. Many patients fail to recognise early symptoms, leading to severe complications where a liver transplant becomes the only viable option.

In cities like Guwahati, limited access to specialist liver care further delays diagnosis and treatment, reducing the chances of timely medical intervention, the statement concluded.

## Assam Rising CSR Award 2024-25 to Bandhan Bank



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, March 17:** Bandhan Bank has been honoured with the prestigious Assam Rising CSR Award 2024-25 at a grand ceremony held at Dibrugarh University, Assam. The award recognises the Bank's exceptional contributions to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives across Assam. The award was received by Suman Ghosh, zonal head, Bandhan Bank and Sarvashish Roy, head - CSR, Bandhan Bank and in the distinguished presence of Pabitra Margherita,

Union minister of state for textiles & foreign affairs, Jiten Hazarika, vice-chancellor - Dibrugarh University, Rituparno Baruah, chairman - Assam Tourism Corporation amongst others.

The award ceremony was organised by the Aalok Pravanjyan Welfare Society as part of the 15th Assam Rising Youth Conclave 2024-25. The conclave focused on youth empowerment and highlighted Assam's potential in key sectors such as tourism, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and skill development.

## Aditya Birla Real Estate targets ₹ 2,700 cr revenue

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** Birla Estates, a subsidiary of Aditya Birla Real Estate Ltd, is expecting a revenue of ₹ 2,700 crore from its first housing project in Pune.

In a regulatory filing, Aditya Birla Real Estate informed that its subsidiary Birla Estates has launched its first project in Pune 'Birla Punya' with an estimated revenue potential value of ₹ 2,700 crore.

The project is spread over 5.76 acres and will feature 1.6 million (16 lakh) sq ft of saleable area including 1,000 flats. The project will be developed in phases, with Phase I offering two towers and 500 units.

K T Jithendran, MD & CEO of Birla Estates, said, "As Pune's real estate market continues to be on the rise, driven by its thriving IT ecosystem and strong infrastructure development, we see that there is a growing demand for premium homes."

Birla Estates has projects in Mumbai, Pune, Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru. (PTI)

## Govt launches mobile app for PM Internship Scheme

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** Union Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday launched a dedicated mobile application for the Prime Minister Internship Scheme and urged more companies to join the programme.

Also, the minister said she has appealed to MPs to encourage youth to join the scheme.

The pilot project of the scheme targeted at providing 1.25 lakh internship opportunities to the youth during 2024-25 was launched on October 3, 2024.

After launching the app in the national capital on Monday, Sitharaman, who is in charge of the Finance and Corporate Affairs ministries, said the scheme is aimed at getting youth from Tier II and III cities and help them to understand the skills that are required by the industry as well as the job availability.

There is a shortage of people in terms of industry expectations and requirements and the scheme is aimed at bridging that gap, the minister said.

Regarding the scheme, she emphasised that there is no compl-



sion on industry and no interference.

The scheme is for a national cause, Sitharaman said and urged more companies to be part of it.

Indian industry should participate in the larger interest. "You need to open the window... for people to have a peek," the minister said.

Minister of State for Corporate Affairs Harsh Malhotra said the scheme provides on the ground

experience for youth and will help in contributing towards Viksit Bharat.

In the first round of the scheme's pilot project, more than 1.27 lakh internship opportunities were provided by the companies and the second round of the project started in January this year under which over 1.18 lakh internship opportunities have been posted by around 327 companies. The deadline for applications in

the second round is March 31.

According to Sitharaman, the scheme's website and app are being made more accessible. It is available in various languages. "Every language should have its prominence," she noted.

Interns will be provided monthly financial assistance of ₹ 5,000 for 12 months and a one-time grant of ₹ 6,000 under the scheme. The scheme, announced in the 2024-25 Union Budget, aims to provide internship opportunities to one crore youth in the top 500 companies in five years.

The top 500 companies have been identified by the Corporate Affairs Ministry, which is implementing the scheme, on the basis of their average CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) expenditure over the last three years.

Corporate Affairs Secretary Deepthi Gaur Mukherjee said more companies beyond the top 500 ones are expected to join the scheme.

The ministry has also introduced a framework for assessment of the implementation of the pilot project. (PTI)

## Rupee jumps 24 paise to close at 86.81 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, March 17:** The rupee appreciated 24 paise to close at 86.81 against the US dollar on Monday on positive domestic equities and weakness of the American currency in the overseas market.

Forex traders said the rupee traded with a slight positive bias on weakness in the US dollar and positive global markets. However, surge in crude oil prices capped sharp gains for the local unit.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 86.90 then touched an intra-day high of 86.76 and a low of 86.90 against the greenback. The unit ended the session at 86.81 against the dollar, registering a gain of 24 paise from its previous closing level. On Thursday, the rupee surged 17 paise to settle at 87.05 against the US dollar. Forex, stock markets were closed on Friday on the occasion of Holi festival.

"The rupee appreciated for the fourth day on a troc backed by better-than-expected economic data and recovery in the risk-assets. The weakness in the dollar index and lower treasury yields also supported the local

units," Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on weakness in the US dollar and positive global markets. However, the ongoing trade tariff issue and outflows by foreign investors may cap sharp upside," Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.11 per cent lower at 103.60.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.92 per cent to USD 71.23 per barrel in futures trade.

Choudhary further noted that traders may take cues from retail sales and Empire State Manufacturing Index data from the US. USDINR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 86.60 to 87. In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex surged 341.04 points, or 0.46 per cent, to settle at 74,169.95, while the Nifty advanced 111.55 points, or 0.5 per cent, to close at 22,508.75 points. (PTI)

*Contd. from Page 1...*

## MP demands two trains

Khoirabari, Dekargaon, Goreswar, Mazbat, Tangla and Udalguri that were done away with during the Covid pandemic. The BJP MP said the Narendra Modi government allocated ₹ 2,65,200 crore for the Indian Railways during 2025-26, breaking all records.

This allocation is six times higher than the ₹ 45,900 crore allocated during the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime, he said. In the last decade, a total of 31,180 kilometres of railway lines were laid while the Kavach security system was made operational along 4,876 kilometres of tracks, he said.

The MP said the Railways electrified 21,000 kilometres of tracks since Independence to 2014 but, during the last 10 years, more than 60,000 kilometres had been electrified and the Railways would soon achieve its 100 per cent target. Later, Saikia said in a post on X, "Today in Parliament, I raised key issues, including the railway network in Darrang, which falls under my parliamentary constituency, and other important concerns related to the railway department. Committed to strengthening railway connectivity and infrastructure for the people of my region!" (PTI)

## Formalities for shifting from

the Khadoor Sahib seat in Punjab. His seven aides are being taken back after the Punjab government decided not to reinvoke the NSA at the end of their detention period, Punjab DGP Gaurav Yadav had said on Sunday.

They will be formally arrested in the 2023 Ajnala police station attack incident and face the law, he said. (PTI)

## Manipur violence: Cases to

bench directed the Manipur government to submit a detailed sealed-cover report on the number of properties that were fully or partially burnt, looted, or encroached upon during the ongoing ethnic violence in the state.

It had emphasised the need for the state to address the grievances of the displaced persons and take steps to restore their properties. The court also directed the Manipur government to provide specific details such as "buildings burnt or partially burnt, buildings looted, buildings trespassed or encroached upon".

The report was ordered to also provide information on the owners and current occupants of these properties, along with the details of any legal actions taken against trespassers.

The report was directed to indicate the steps taken by the state government to ensure trespassers were proceeded against as per the law. "You have to take a decision on how you want to deal with it or in terms of criminal action as well as to ask them (encroachers of the properties) to pay 'mesne profits' for the use of the occupation..." the apex court had said.

Mesne profit is the compensation paid to a rightful owner of a property by a person who is in unlawful possession of it.

The top court also asked the state government to respond to the issue of release of funds for temporary and permanent housing as flagged by the judges' panel.

In August, 2023, the top court asked former Maharashtra police chief Dattatray Padsalgikar to monitor the probe into the criminal cases. Over 200 people were killed, several hundred injured and thousands displaced since ethnic violence first broke out in the state on May 3, 2023 when a "tribal solidarity march" was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for scheduled tribe status. (PTI)

## Modi raises concerns with

Christchurch terror attack and the 26/11 Mumbai strike, said that terrorism in any form is "unacceptable". "Strict action is necessary against those guilty of terrorist attacks. We will continue to cooperate together against terrorist, separatist and radical elements," he said. "In this context, we shared our concern about anti-India activities by some illegal elements in New Zealand. We are confident that we will continue to get the cooperation of the New Zealand government against all these illegal elements," he said.

At a media briefing, Mazumdar said the issue of activities of some pro-Khalistani elements in New Zealand came up for discussion at the Mod-Luxon talks. "We do alert our friends to the activities of anti-India elements in their countries and their abuse of freedom of speech and other democratic freedoms to glorify terrorism and to threaten attacks against our diplomats," he said.

"The government of New Zealand has been receptive and has taken our concerns on board in the past as well," he said, adding, "This was also the reaction that we got today".

In his remarks, Modi said both sides decided to strengthen and institutionalise defence and security partnership and a roadmap will be prepared for cooperation in the defence industry sector.

In his remarks, Luxon said he and Modi discussed a strategic outlook for the Indo-Pacific.

"I reiterated our strong commitment to address shared concerns over our respective interests in contributing to a prosperous Indo-Pacific," he said.

On the proposed FTA, Modi said mutual cooperation and investment will be encouraged in areas like dairy, food processing and pharma. Prime Minister Modi also delved into the India-New Zealand defence ties.

"We have decided to strengthen and institutionalise our defence and security partnership. Along with joint exercises, training, port visits, a roadmap will be made for mutual cooperation in the defence industry as well," he said.

The agreements signed between the two sides include one on a mutual recognition pact between the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs of India (CBIC) and New Zealand's Customs Service. The joint statement said the defence pact will further strengthen overall defence ties.

In the context of maritime security, New Zealand welcomed India joining the Combined Maritime Forces.

Both Modi and Luxon welcomed advancement in defence ties during the island nation's command of Command Task Force 150. (PTI)

## Himanta to distribute PMAY-G

that the distribution would take place at various district and Co-district levels, encompassing 126 assembly constituencies, following the central event to be held in Palashbari. "A list of dignitaries, including ministers, MPs, MLAs, and other prominent individuals who are expected to attend as chief guests, had already been forwarded to the district and co-district commissioners," he noted. The chief minister further urged the officials to assess the progress of the preparations and take the necessary steps to ensure that all arrangements are in place by tomorrow.

The chief minister also addressed the Gamocha distribution program during the meeting. He said that the Assam government has introduced a scheme called "Swanirbhar Naari" to ensure that Gamocha weavers receive a fair price for their products in the market. Under this initiative, the government directly purchases Gamocha from the weavers at a fixed price each year, thus guaranteeing them a fair price while eliminating intermediaries from the Gamocha market.

"The government had already procured 6.5 lakh Gamochas this year and plans to purchase 10 lakh Gamochas in the upcoming year," he added. He further urged the district commissioners to purchase Gamochas directly from the weavers and incorporate them into government programs. Additionally, he highlighted the growing recognition of Gamochas in states like Jharkhand, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh and mentioned that he had encouraged the Chief Ministers of these states to buy Gamochas from Assam.

"In the future, a Gamocha sales center would be established at every Assam Bhavan," Sarma concluded. Principal Secretary of the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Dr JB Ekka; principal secretary to the chief minister, Dr KK Dwivedi; and commissioner of the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Keerthi Jalli, along with other senior officials were present on the occasion.

## Kaziranga National Park

die, the high court noted no material was brought before it to show that the issue relating to eco-sensitive zone with respect to Assam in general and for the Kaziranga National Park in particular was finally decided by the Supreme Court. Aside from the rhinoceros, the park's elephant grass, marshland and dense tropical moist broadleaf forests are home to hoolock gibbon, tiger, leopard, Indian elephants, sloth bear, wild water buffalo and swamp deer. (PTI)

## India's digital disease surveillance

healthcare system towards the vision of creating and stabilising a resilient and pandemic-ready healthcare system. She cited Integrated Disease Surveillance Program (IDSP), National One Health Programme for Prevention and Control of Zoonosis and National Vector Borne Disease Control and Prevention (NVBDCP) among others.

The Union minister highlighted that India's harnessing of digital technology in healthcare through initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) and tools like the CoWIN platform, eSanjeevani, National Telemedicine Service, Tele-MANAS to manage mental health diseases and the Ni-Kshay portal for tracking monitoring and management of tuberculosis patients. "Our robust digital disease surveillance system offers a valuable model for other countries seeking to strengthen their public health infrastructure," she added. Patel said India as a lighthouse country in digital health technologies has been at the forefront of deliberations across various international forums. "India is keen to share our Digital Public Infrastructures (DPIs) with the global community, especially with our friends in the Global South to enable modern healthcare approaches". (PTI)

# CM Sarma announces more developmental aspects for BTR

## Kokrajhar University to be fully operational with expanded academic and infrastructure facilities

**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, March 17:** Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has announced for upgrading the Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma's cemetery and declaring May 1 as a statewide remembrance day in his honour.

CM Sarma announced this remark on Sunday on the occasion of the 57th annual conference of the All Bodo Students Union's (ABSU) open session held at the Bodofa Fwthar, Dotma in Kokrajhar. Sarma graced the occasion as special guest in the presence of Union home minister, Amit Shah, and announced several major announcements towards the welfare and development of the Bodoland region.

He has lauded the students union who has been working and rendering services for the development and welfare of the Bodo and other



communities since its inception.

He has announced that the state government is initiating necessary step while upgrading Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma's Cemetery and declaring May 1 as a statewide

remembrance day in his honour. He said that upgradation of Bodoland University and ensuring the full-fledged functioning of the Udalguri campus.

He stated that the Kokrajhar Uni-

versity to be fully operational with expanded academic and infrastructure facilities to facilitate higher educational environment in Bodoland region.

A new Medical College in Udalguri to be established within the next three years, boosting healthcare facilities in the region. Bodo language to be introduced as a medium of instruction up to the Undergraduate (UG) level in Bodoland and upgradation of 35 High Schools into Model High Schools, improving education infrastructure and quality in the Bodoland region, CM Sarma said.

The ABSU and Bodo community have expressed their gratitude and sincere thanks to the chief minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma for initiating the noble steps to make more uplift and developmental aspects across the region.

# Police seize PDS fraud and cross-border smuggling

**HT Correspondent**  
**DHUBRI, March 17:** In a major development, Garchuk Police in Guwahati have recently seized 240 sacks of alleged Public Distribution System (PDS) rice and intercepted a truck bearing registration number AS-17C-6071, which was suspected to be meant for smuggling in Bangladesh.

According to sources, the rice was in transit from a godown or rice mill owned by Aminur Islam in Dhubri and was allegedly being tried to be smuggled trespassing the international border to Bangladesh via Meghalaya, probably through a newly discovered route.

The consignment was supposed to be unloaded at 13 Mile in Meghalaya crossing Assam border.

In the past, when Public Distribution System (PDS) rice bags were being smuggled into Bangladesh via the river channel in Dhubri, the Border Security Force (BSF) frequently confiscated them.

The traffickers may decide to take a different way, switching the jute sacks bearing a government-imposed branding.

The police suspect that this smuggling attempt is part of a larger organised racket involving diversion of subsidised food grains meant for the poor.

The truck driver, Rabiul Hoque, and handyman, Sirajul Hoque, were taken into custody in connection with the illegal transportation of the stolen goods.

Authorities have launched a detailed investigation to trace the masterminds behind the operation and identify any officials or traders involved in the illegal network.

The incident underscores the ongoing challenge of food grain theft and smuggling in the region.

The authorities are also looking into whether gov-



ernment-subsidised PDS rice has been routinely diverted for such illegal activities.

Further updates are awaited as the investigation progresses.

Meanwhile, a well-organised cattle smuggling network operates between West Bengal and Bangladesh, using Dhubri as a crucial transit point.

The gang, originating from Coochbehar, Tufanganj, and Bakshirhat in West Bengal, discreetly transports two to three cows each night using Tata DI vehicles.

The cows are then smuggled across the border via Fakirganj, exploiting the river route to avoid detection by law enforcement agencies.

This clandestine operation continues despite periodic crackdowns, raising serious concerns about border security and illegal trade activities in the region.

The porous border and riverine terrain make enforcement challenging, despite efforts by law enforcement agencies.

## Solo dance competition organised

**HT Correspondent**  
**BOKAJAN, March 17:** Dancing Soul Solo Dance Competition Session-1 was organised by Bokajan Dancing Soul Studio on Sunday at Bokajan Sports Association Auditorium hall.

Sajan Tamang and Thomas Basumatary were judges for the event.

More than 30 people participated in the dance competition.

Judge Sajan Tamang said that children should learn to dance than fiddle with a mobile phone all the time.

Dancing Soul Studio president, Rekha Basumatary; president of Nari Suraksha Samity, Misty Sur and others were at the dance competition.

## KCS joint meeting convened



**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, March 17:** The Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) convened a joint extended meeting at its head office, Karbi People's Hall, Taralango, on Monday, where discussions were held regarding the society's future activities and cultural initiatives.

The meeting was chaired by KCS president Humsing Bey and KCS general secretary Sunil Tokbi formally disclosed the objectives of the gathering.

During the meeting, key deliberations were made on the promotion and preservation of Karbi culture, upcoming events, and initiatives to strengthen the society's outreach.

The dignitaries emphasised the importance of collective efforts in preserving traditional art forms and ensuring their continuity for future generations.

The meeting concluded with a commitment to furthering the society's objectives through active participation and collaboration among all stakeholders.

The meeting was attended by an Executive Member (EM) of Art & Culture, who also serves as an Advisor to KCS, Surjya Rongphar.

Another Advisor, Chandrasing Kro was also in attendance.

## Ambedkar Bhavan turns into wasteland

**HT Correspondent**  
**DHUBRI, March 17:** At the centre of Dhubri town, the Ambedkar Bhavan, which was built by the Directorate of Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Assam, at a cost of thirty lakh rupees, has been found to be abandoned and in ruins as a result of inadequate administration and upkeep. The government-funded building, meant to honour the legacy of Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, remains abandoned, leading to growing public anger over the wastage of public funds.

Despite the allocation of an additional rupees nine lakh sixty thousand eight hundred by the Welfare of Scheduled Castes for the construction of a boundary wall and connecting road, the building has remained unused since its completion in 2015.

A letter (No. DDG-11/2010/97) from the office of the deputy commissioner, Dhubri, dated September 2, 2015, addressed to the executive engineer of the Public Works Department (Building), Dhubri, to confirm the completion of the Ambedkar Bhavan and hand over the building to sub-divisional welfare officer, Dhubri.

However, since then, it has re-

## Sankalpita Mahapal Nam in Betbari comes to an end

**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, March 17:** The four-day Second Sankalpita Mahapal Nam held in Sukanpukhuri Betbari near Sivasagar came to an end on Sunday.

The Mahapal Nam was organised by Krishna Surjya Nam Samaj.

The concluding acts included staging of the 'Sakunir Pratisodh' Bhaona by Desangporiya Samilita Yuva Samaj in the evening following devotional songs (Pal Nams), Kirtan path and spiritual speech by noted spiritual leader Sri Sri Nani Gopal Devagowami, Satradhikar, Dakhinpat Satra.

Devagowami in his speech said that Nam can arouse the spark of God in men and it is the way a Nara can become a Narayan.

He added that Nam can enlighten the inner soul which can bind the universe.

The Krishna Surjya Nam Samaj conferred 'Sant Siromoni Bota' for his distinguished services in sensitising the youths on the importance of spiritual initiation from Gurus and values of Sanatan Sanskriti.

The award was presented to him by Bhaben Handique, president, Sarbananda Kalita and Rajani



Chetia, executive presidents, Dilip Changmai, general secretary, and other members.

Sushanta Borgohain, MLA, Thowra inaugurated the Nagara nam from Barpeta district and the Santanu Borgohain, namacharya and Asst Professor, Bir Lachit Borgohain, inaugurated the Dihanam.

Earlier on Friday, a massive procession of hundreds of Vaishnavite devotees and cultural troupes of diverse communities was the main attraction of the second day Maha

Palnam for world peace organised by Sadou Asom Krishna Surjya Nam Samaj aru Gobeshana Parishad at Sukanpukhuri Betbari, Sivasagar.

Despite intermittent rain, a large number of participants took part in the procession. It was flagged off by Sushanta Borgohain, MLA, Demow, Thowra.

Borgohain said that the massive religious procession show cases the communal harmony and peace prevailing in our society.

The Paal Nam in the third

evening was initiated with a spiritual speech by Sri Sri Devananda Deva Goswami, Deka Satradhikar of Auniati Satra.

Devananda Devagowami was presented the 'Satra Saurov Bota' by the organising committee.

Goswami in his speech said that during Sri Sankardev's life, the 'Pal Nam' was first organised by his disciple followers in a massive way to propitiate Lord Krishna for the release of Sri Sri Madhav Deva, chief disciple of Guru Sankardev, from the clutches of the Ahom Swargadeo who had arrested Sankardev's son-in-law Hari and Madhovdev.

Madhovdev was finally released by the Swargadeo out of reverence for the Palnam, the devotees believe.

Achyut Chutia inaugurated the Dihanam while Namacharya Anil Baruah lit the ceremonial light and Hiren Baruwati took lead in the Palnam in the evening.

BuraBhakat of Titabar Sonaram Sarma addressed the women devotees on the importance of spiritual training. Kulelika Drama Group presented 'Gajaketu Upakhyan, Dhritarastra' Dwigbijay' bhaona in the evening.

## Executive meet of ANSS held at Biswanath

**HT Correspondent**  
**BISWANATH CHARIALI, March 17:** The executive meeting of Assam Sahitya Sabha was held at the conference hall of Biswanath College on Sunday with Chinta Mani Sharma, president of the state literary body in the chair, stated a joint press release issued by Chinta Mani Sharma, president and Tilak Sarma, chief secretary of ANSS.

The programme began with the illumination of an earthen lamp in front of the portrait of Padma Shri Lil Bahadur Chhetry who breathed his last on March 13 due to prolonged illness.

It was followed by observance of one minute silence in memory of Padma Shri Lil Bahadur Chhetry and eminent writer and composer Lakshya Hira Das.

Indu Prabha Devi, working president of the literary body and Lakshman Adhikari, secretary of literature sub-committee briefly presented a pen picture of the liter-

ary contribution of professor Lil Bahadur Chhetry.

After the first session, the second session began with explanation of the objectives of the meeting and reading out the proceedings of the earlier meeting.

Rajen Sarma, vice president of Biswanath district committee of ANSS forwarded a welcome address.

Biswanath district committee of ANSS also felicitated newly elected working president and chief secretary Indu Prabha Devi and Tilak Sarma respectively.

A series of organisational resolutions were adopted to expedite and smoothen the organisational activities of the literary body.

Various sub-committees viz literary, education, organisational, women wing etc were formed in the meeting. Durga Khatiwora, outgoing president and present chief advisor addressed the meeting and provided a good amount of organisational advice.

## Youth Parliament at TU discusses 'One Nation, One Election'

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, March 17:** The National Service Scheme (NSS), Tezpur University (TU), in collaboration with the Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Government of India and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan successfully started the two-day Viksit Bharat Youth Parliament 2025 (VBYP 2025) on Monday.

The event aims to provide a dynamic platform for young minds to engage in meaningful discussions on national issues and contribute to the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047.

The event saw the participation of 150 enthusiastic students from Sonitpur and Udalguri dis-

tricts.

The participants engaged in vibrant discussions on the topic "One Nation, One Election", exploring its potential benefits and challenges.

The session provided a platform for young voices to critically analyse the policy issues and propose innovative solutions.

Prof KC Biswal, registrar, TU; Dr Dulmoni Nath, principal, Tezpur Law College; AS Kabir, resource person, Nehru Yuva Kendra; and Dr Tridib R Sarma, head, department of business administration, TU served as judges for the deliberations.

Prof Shambhu Nath Singh,

vice chancellor, TU commended the initiative and emphasised the importance of youth engagement in nation-building.

He stated, "Through structured debates and discussions, the youth will gain a deeper understanding of India's robust democratic process and governance".

Dr Apurba Saha, faculty coordinator, NSS, TU and Dr Sarmistha Das, programme officer, NSS, TU were also present on the occasion.

The second day of the event will feature further deliberations, followed by the announcement of winners and a valedictory ceremony.

## Asam Sahitya Sabha prez visits Sainen Rajbongshi

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, March 17:** Assam Sahitya Sabha president, Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami along with the team of Sahitya Sabha officials visited the house of former sabha leader Sainen Kumar Rajbongshi who has been suffering from prolonged ailments. Visiting him Dr Goswami and the team hoped for his speedy recovery.

During the visit Sabha President Dr Goswami sat for a long time discussion with him and recalled his activities and dedicated services rendered to Assam Sahitya Sabha in different capacities including as secretary of sabha's Mangaldai regional office prior to his illness.

During the visit Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami was accompanied by Assam Sahitya Sabha Vice President Padum Rajkhowa, Principal Secretary Debojit Borah, Treasurer Maniram Lahon, former sabha incharge secretary Abanmohan Sahariah, Secretary of Assam Sahitya Sabha Guwahati Office Dr Sanjeev Kumar Sarma, for convener of Kunhi Sankusiddha Nath, secretary Ashok Senapati, former Darrang district sahitya sabha president Sahir Bhuyan, Mukut Hazarika and several others.

## Primate Watch at Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary raises awareness about primates



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, March 17:** Aaranyak, a leading biodiversity conservation organisation, in collaboration with the Jorhat Forest Division of Assam Forest Department, organised a unique initiative called 'Primate Watch' at the primate-abode Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, Jorhat District of Assam, an official statement said on Monday.

The event packed with outdoor activities was organised on March 16 as part of the International Macaque Day observation, a day dedi-

cated to the outreach of conservation of Macaques, it added.

A total of twenty participants, including students, nature enthusiasts and professionals from various parts of Assam, attended the event.

The event commenced with a welcome address by Nandita Medhi, a senior consultant at the Primate Research and Conservation Division of Aaranyak.

This was followed by an introduction to primates of Assam, with a special focus on macaques, presented by Dr Dilip Chetry, a

renowned primatologist and Head of Primate Research and Conservation Division of Aaranyak.

Akshay Upadhyaya, a researcher at the Primate Research and Conservation Division served as the field guide and resource person during the field observations.

Participants successfully observed three primate species -- Hoolock Gibbon, Pig-tailed Macaque, and Rhesus Macaque during the two-hour Primate Watch conducted within the sanctuary, the statement informed.

Following the field observation, an interactive session allowed participants to share their experiences.

"The attendees expressed enthusiasm and appreciation for the initiative and requested more such programmes in the future," it quoted.

Nandha Kumar, IFS, Divisional Forest Officer of Jorhat Forest Division joined the session and encouraged participants to stay engaged in similar activities.

Dr Dilip Chetry extended sincere gratitude to the secretary general and CEO of Aaranyak, Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar for his extensive support and thanked the Jorhat Forest Division for their invaluable assistance in making the programme a success.

He also expressed appreciation to the participants for their enthusiastic involvement.

At the end of the event, all participants were awarded with certificates marking the successful conclusion of the Primate Watch event, the statement concluded.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*Be true to your work, your word, and your friend*  
— John Boyle O'Reilly

## B'desh opts for China-Pak axis

Bangladesh interim government is exploring all avenues to rejuvenate the country's ailing economy by expanding its trade and investment relationship with Pakistan and China. The objective is to reduce the dependence on India in major areas where the outsourcing is possible from these two friendly countries. Chief Adviser Dr. Mohammad Yunus is paying a visit to China on March 26-29 this year which according to the Chinese ambassador in Dhaka is going to be the most important visit by any Bangladesh leader in the last 50 years as the two countries are taking the relations to a new height. Apart from political discussions, the most important part will be the assistance being sought by Bangladesh chief adviser from China in expanding and building new manufacturing facilities in the country. Bangladesh wants Chinese companies to set up large number of factories in various core sectors of the economy. Dr. Yunus will have a separate meeting with the leading CEOs of the Chinese manufacturing companies. He will invite them to set up units in Bangladesh to turn the country into a major manufacturing hub of South Asia.

After the ouster of the Sheikh Hasina and her fleeing to India on August 5 and the installation of the interim government led by Dr. Yunus on August 8 last year, China has been active in cultivating the political parties apart from the members of the interim government. Already high level delegations of the BNP and the Jamaat Islami have visited Beijing and had talks with the Chinese leaders. China is in touch with the new students party National Citizens Party (NCP). That way, the Chinese government has cultivated all the stakeholders in the present political arena of Bangladesh. This visit of Dr. Yunus is taking place in the wake of the completion of the political consultations of the Chinese leaders with the other political constituents. Historically, the trade relationship between Bangladesh and Pakistan has been lukewarm, preventing Pakistan from becoming a major sourcing hub. For instance, Bangladesh exported goods worth \$39.77 million to Pakistan in the July-December of the current fiscal year, according to the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB).

Though the Bangladesh political situation is in turmoil and there is no definite date about the timing of the next elections, experts in China are confident of having good ties with whatever formation comes to the government after elections. China is more advantageously placed vis a vis Pakistan in Bangladesh economy as Beijing has successfully launched a number of projects in the country. China watchers say that the future of the China-Bangladesh relationship is intertwined with Bangladesh's journey through political reform and economic recovery. Despite recent challenges, the long-standing friendship between the two nations provides a robust platform for collaboration. Bangladesh will be getting maximum benefits by collaborating with Beijing in the manufacturing sector. Interim govt sources say Bangladesh stands to benefit from enhanced trade ties with Pakistan as local traders are optimistic about getting more competitive prices and a broader range of raw material sources. Currently, trade dynamics favour Pakistan, with Bangladesh importing cotton, yarn, fabrics, and essential commodities from the country. However, these imports are still considerably lower than those from China and India — Bangladesh's top two trading partners.

## President Putin's sanctions-hit economy gets big relief with Beijing's help

By: T N Ashok

It's a paradox of sorts. While Chinese goods flood the markets globally from watches to pens to electronic gadgets and EVs and luxury goods, China is facing a deluge of Russia made goods in its markets taking the local citizens by craze.

Reports from Chinese cities indicate that shopfronts are decked out in white, blue and red, with Chinese and Russian flags hanging side by side from the ceiling. Waist-high Russian dolls greet customers at the entrance. Inside, shelves are stocked with an array of Russian goods — from chocolates and cookies to honey and vodka, says an on-the-spot report from Hong Kong, a full Chinese territory.

In China, pop-up stores specializing in Russian-made products have become an increasingly common sight. Their proliferation has left some residents puzzled, with many on Chinese social media questioning why these stores seem to have sprung up overnight.

Thousands of such stores have opened across the country in recent years, tapping into the Chinese public's affinity for Russia and deepening trade ties between Beijing and Moscow since Vladimir Putin's full-scale invasion of Ukraine began in 2022.

China has become a critical economic lifeline for US sanctions-hit Russia, with bilateral trade reaching record highs year after year. While cheap Russian oil, gas, and coal dominate China's imports, Russian food products — such as ice cream, sweet biscuits and milk powder — have also risen sharply in popularity, says a report from the US media network CNN.

Chinese businesses are capitalizing on the booming demand. More than 2,500 new companies involved in the trade of Russian goods have been registered since 2022, according to China's business records, with nearly half registered in the past year alone. Around 80% of the new firms that rushed to cash in on the craze remained in operation as of this month, business registration records show.

Most of these companies are based in Heilongjiang, the northeastern province bordering Russia, though in the past two years they've spread in other provinces.



More than aquatic and agricultural products, which make up the bulk of China's food imports from Russia, it is Russian-branded chocolates, biscuits and milk powder that have captured the attention of Chinese consumers, appealing directly to the "Made in Russia" brand promoted by Moscow.

The stores' explosive growth — dubbed "crazy" by a Chinese state media report — has also sparked scrutiny over the authenticity of their products. Investigations by media outlets and influencers alike have revealed that some Russian branded items were actually made in China, prompting authorities to crack down on misleading labelling and advertising.

At a Russian goods store in downtown Beijing in February, a shop assistant arranged rows of neatly packaged candies, biscuits, and milk powder — some of the store's most popular items. "The best seller is Russian honey — it's a big hit. And this chocolate is pure. They're all very good," she said, gesturing toward a wide selection of chocolates.

In the background, a loudspeaker played a looping message, welcoming customers to the "Russian Goods Pavilion" and hailing Russian products for their "healthiness, natural ingredients, and high quality." "This is not only a platform for selling Russian products but also a window showcasing Russian culture and charm," it declared.

Liang Jinghao, a tourist from the northern Shanxi province, said he had seen many similar Russian goods stores back home. "Russia is a very good country, with a vast

land area and rich resources, and its people are also very friendly," he said.

Su, 20, has opened three Russian goods stores in Pingliang, a small city in the northwestern province of Gansu, since September last year. "China and Russia have maintained pretty good relations in recent years, and personally, I have a fairly positive view of Russia as a country," she said. Su's stores also sell products from Sri Lanka and Australia, but they were far less popular, she said. "I think Russian products are a better fit for the local taste," she said.

As Russian president Putin wages his three-year war on Ukraine, China and Russia have grown closer than ever, accelerating a trend driven by their shared animosity toward the US and common goal of pushing back at a Washington-led global economic and political order. Russia and its autocratic leader also enjoy wide popularity among the Chinese public.

In a poll released last year by the Center for International Security and Strategy at Beijing's Tsinghua University, 66% of respondents expressed "very favourable" or "somewhat favourable" views toward Russia. Contrastingly, about 76% expressed "unfavourable views" toward the United States.

The made-in-Russia craze can be traced back to early 2022, according to Chinese state media. Just days after Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, the "Russian State Pavilion" — an e-commerce store endorsed by the Russian embassy in China — went viral on Chinese

social media. Shoppers rushed to snap up everything from candies to tea sachets, spending nearly 6 million yuan (\$826,000) on Russian goods within three days, according to Chinese media reports at the time.

In a short video posted on the online store, a Russian business representative toasted "the friendship of old Chinese friends under this complicated and constantly changing international situation." By April 2023, more than 300 Moscow-based companies had joined Chinese e-commerce platforms, including Taobao and JD, according to Russian state news agency Sputnik, citing the Moscow Export Center.

The following year, the first "Made in Russia Festival and Fair" debuted in Shenyang and Dalian, the two biggest cities in Liaoning province in northeast China. The event was organized by the Russian Export Centre — a state-owned development institute — with support from Moscow and the provincial government. More than 150 Russian companies participated in the week-long event, selling \$2.3 million of Russian goods to Chinese consumers online and offline, Sputnik reported, citing the Russian Export Center.

Three more such fairs have since been held, including in the southwestern metropolis of Chengdu. The Russian Export Center has authorized eight official retail stores in China under the "Russian State Pavilion" brand. However, these outlets are vastly outnumbered by thousands of unofficial stores capitalizing on the surging demand for Russian products.

As their popularity grows, the unofficial stores have also come under greater scrutiny from Chinese consumers and media, especially over the quality and authenticity of the goods sold there. Late last year, Chinese shoppers took to social media to complain that some products labelled as Russian for sale at the stores were in fact made in China and other countries, including Malaysia.

A report by state-affiliated Jiemin News found a significant portion of food products sold at Russian goods stores — such as bread, sausage and milk powder — were produced in factories in northeastern China.

On Douyin, China's version of

TikTok, Russian influencers based in China rushed to expose what they called "fake Russian goods." "I've never seen these candies in Russia. The packaging is all fake," a Russian Douyin user said. "There's absolutely nothing like this in Russia," said another, holding a sausage at a store in Shanghai, while a shopkeeper could be heard in the background asking her to stop filming.

The Russian embassy in China also weighed in, warning Chinese customers against "counterfeits" disguised as Russian goods. "These products often do not meet quality requirements and are different from similar products produced in Russia, but Russian words are used on the packaging to imitate the Russian origin," it said in a statement.

Following the outcry, market regulators in Shanghai launched two rounds of inspections on 47 Russian goods stores in the city. Seven of them were accused of falsely advertising themselves as "state pavilions," misleading customers into believing they have official backing; others created "highly misleading impressions" about the origins of their products, the regulators said in a statement in January.

Some stores were ordered to close, while others were fined and required to label domestically produced goods more clearly. Other cities soon followed suit with similar inspections. Despite the controversy, the popularity of Russian goods is driving more stores to open in China, including official ones.

The Russian Export Center said in February it plans to set up as many as 300 Russian goods stores with Chinese partners across the country before the end of the year. At this year's "Made in Russia Festival and Fair" in Shenyang, Veronika Nikishina, director general of the Russian Export Center, offered a tip for distinguishing authentic Russian products from counterfeits.

Genuine goods carry a dove shaped "Made in Russia" label on their packaging, with Russia clearly marked as the country of origin, she explained. "We sincerely hope that all Chinese consumers can purchase authentic, high-quality Russian-made products," Nikishina said. (IPA Service)

## Assam Budget 2025–26: A pioneering initiative to empower young writers

In a groundbreaking move that underscores the transformative power of literature and creativity, the Assam government has unveiled an inspiring initiative as part of its 2025–26 state budget. This visionary scheme pledges financial assistance of ₹ 25,000 each to 1,000 aspiring young writers across the state. Far from being a mere fiscal allocation, this step reflects a profound commitment to fostering a culturally vibrant, inclusive, and intellectually enriched society. By empowering the next generation of literary talent, Assam is not only preserving its rich heritage but also investing in its future.

Assam's cultural landscape has long been defined by its linguistic diversity and literary legacy. From the spiritual and poetic works of Srimanta Sankardev, a 15th-century saint-scholar, to the modern narratives of acclaimed authors like Dr. Hiren Gohain and Rita Chowdhury, the state's literature has mirrored its social complexities, aspirations, and resilience. Yet, for many young writers—particularly those hailing from rural or marginalised communities—the path to literary success has been fraught with challenges. Limited access to resources, mentorship, publishing platforms, and financial stability has often stifled their potential. The Assam Budget 2025–26 addresses these barriers head-on, offering a lifeline to those who dream of weaving words into stories, poems, and essays.

At the helm of this initiative is Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, whose administration has prioritised a balanced approach to governance—one that harmonises economic progress with cultural preservation. Known for his focus on education, healthcare, and youth empowerment, Dr. Sarma has now extended his vision to the creative arts. This move signals a departure from traditional policymaking, which often overlooks the softer, yet essential, aspects of human development. By championing young writers, the government acknowledges that literature is not a luxury but a necessity—a medium through which societies reflect, heal, and evolve.

Equally instrumental in this endeavor is Assam's Finance Minister, Ajanta Neog, whose budget presentation for 2025–26 has been lauded for its inclusivity and foresight. Neog's emphasis on youth-centric programs, particularly in the creative domain, reflects a nuanced understanding of progress. In an era where development metrics are dominated by infrastructure projects and industrial output, her decision to allocate funds for literary pursuits is both bold



and refreshing. It reaffirms that a state's growth is incomplete without nurturing the minds and voices that shape its identity.

The ₹ 25,000 grant is designed to be a versatile tool for recipients. Young writers can channel these funds into purchasing books, attending writing



workshops, or acquiring digital tools to hone their craft. For those eager to share their work with the world, the assistance could cover the costs of self-publishing or participating in literary festivals. Beyond its practical utility, the grant carries a deeper significance: it validates the aspirations of emerging writers, offering them the confidence to pursue their passion without the burden of financial insecurity. For many, this could be the difference between abandoning their dreams and seeing them take flight.

The initiative's ripple effects extend far beyond individual beneficiaries. Assam's linguistic mosaic—encompassing Assamese, Bodo, Karbi, Mising, Dimas, and numerous other indigenous languages—stands to gain from a new wave of literary expression. By empowering young writers, the state is ensuring that these diverse voices, often at risk of fading, are preserved and amplified. This could spark a renaissance of sorts, with fresh perspectives breathing life into age-old traditions while addressing contemporary realities.

The literary community has greeted the announcement with enthusiasm.

Writers, educators, and cultural advocates across Assam have hailed it as a long-overdue recognition of the arts' societal value. Emerging authors, in particular, see it as a beacon of hope—a sign that their struggles are seen and their contributions matter. If executed with transparency and accessibility, this program could foster the creation of literary networks, writing collectives, and community-driven storytelling platforms. It might even pave the way for collaborations across regions and languages, enriching Assam's cultural fabric further.

For readers, the promise of discovering new talent is an exciting prospect. The initiative could yield a wealth of stories—tales of rural life, urban dreams, historical reckonings, and futuristic visions—all crafted by voices that might otherwise have remained unheard. For Assam, it represents an investment in its intellectual and emotional capital, a testament to the belief that imagination is as critical as infrastructure.

This initiative, driven by Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma and Ajanta Neog, transcends budgetary arithmetic. It embodies a philosophy of governance that values human potential in all its dimensions. Assam is not merely constructing roads or factories; it is cultivating a generation of storytellers, poets, and thinkers who will shape its soul. In a world increasingly obsessed with measurable outcomes, this scheme dares to champion the immeasurable—the power of a well-told story to inspire, unite, and endure. As the state sets this precedent, it invites others to follow, proving that empowering young writers is not just an act of generosity but a blueprint for a brighter, more thoughtful future. (The author can be reached at [Shashankadasnov1@gmail.com](mailto:Shashankadasnov1@gmail.com))

## Resurrecting the grand old party: A defining moment for the Congress

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Congress Party, once the unchallenged fulcrum of Indian politics, is now teetering on the brink of irrelevance. Its survival is no longer a matter of mere electoral strategy but an existential necessity for Indian democracy. The upcoming AICC session in Ahmedabad presents an opportunity—perhaps the last—to confront the hard truths about the party's decline and initiate a transformative rebirth. The Congress must be willing to let its current avatar die, only to be reborn in a form that can effectively uphold the ideals of democracy, secularism, and justice that once defined it.

The party's downward spiral has been relentless since its last great electoral victory in 1984, when it secured 48.1% of the vote. Every subsequent election has seen a steady erosion of its influence, culminating in the disastrous performances of 2014 and 2019. The 99 seats secured in 2024 were seen by some as a sign of revival, but closer scrutiny reveals a grim reality. The Congress has been reduced to a marginal force in several of its traditional strongholds, performing dismally in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, and West Bengal. In many regions, its victories were dependent on regional allies or on the failures of the BJP rather than on any inherent resurgence of the Congress itself.

This stagnation is not just a matter of electoral misfortune but of fundamental structural decay. The Congress, once a party with an indomitable grassroots network, now finds itself organizationally hollow. The disconnect between leadership and workers has widened into an unbridgeable chasm, making the party's rhetoric seem increasingly empty. The BJP's spectacular rise from two seats in 1984 to a dominant political force by 2014 was driven by its deep investment in grassroots organization, cadre-building, and ideological commitment. The Congress, in contrast, has neglected the first two and remains confused about the third.

The consequences of the Congress' decline extend far beyond its own fate. The absence of a strong national alternative to the BJP distorts the balance of India's parliamentary democracy. While regional parties have successfully challenged the ruling party in certain pockets, no single force has emerged as a cohesive coun-

terweight at the national level. This has weakened the opposition's ability to provide a structured and united challenge to the BJP's hegemony. Moreover, the Congress' inability to lead an opposition alliance with confidence has made it more of a liability than an asset to its partners. Without a strong Congress, the very idea of a multiparty democracy faces the risk of becoming a fragmented and ineffective system, where the ruling party enjoys unchecked power.

Internally, the Congress remains plagued by inertia and denial. The Gandhi family—while well-intentioned—has repeatedly failed to recognize and address the party's fundamental flaws. Surrounded by a protective coterie, they have distanced themselves from dynamic leadership voices that could have revitalized the party. The expectation that the BJP will eventually stumble, thus handing power back to the Congress, is delusional at best. The BJP, through its ideological clarity and organizational discipline, has shown no signs of faltering. The Congress, if it continues along its current path, may find itself politically extinct before the BJP even



enters a phase of decline.

One of the gravest issues within the Congress is its unwillingness to acknowledge failure. Rather than holding individuals accountable, the party has mastered the art of blame-shifting. Even when reports are commissioned to analyze electoral debacles, they rarely translate into meaningful action. These exercises serve more as symbolic gestures than as catalysts for reform. The party's internal culture is one where dissent is stifled, and sycophancy is rewarded. This has led to an ecosystem in which genuine problem-solving is avoided, and superficial fixes are applied to deep-seated structural issues.

If there is to be any hope for the Congress' revival, it must be willing to embrace radical change. Superficial exercises such as chintan shivirs or incremental reforms will not suffice. When a body is on a ventilator, band-aids do little to revive it. What is needed is a bold reimagining of the party from the ground up. The Congress must recognize that it is not yet completely dead, but neither is it truly alive. It exists in a state of political limbo, where its future depends on the willingness of its members to break free from outdated models and chart a new course.

The AICC session in Ahmedabad could be the moment when the Congress either seals its fate or begins its rebirth. But for the latter to happen, the session must go beyond predictable rhetoric and engage in rigorous, unflinching self-examination. A new generation of leaders must step forward, unburdened by past failures, and commit to rebuilding the party with fresh energy and ideas. Instead of relying on nostalgia for its past glories, the Congress must craft a vision for the future—one that resonates with the aspirations of modern India.

The fundamental question now is: will the Congress muster the courage to undergo this transformation, or will it once again succumb to the comforts of its familiar dysfunction? The choice is stark, and the stakes are enormous. If the Congress fails to act decisively now, it may not get another chance. The time for half-measures is over. What is needed is a revolution within, one that dismantles the old and makes way for the new. Whether Ahmedabad becomes the site of this long-overdue reckoning or merely another exercise in complacency remains to be seen. (The writer can be reached at [dipakkurmigphtd@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurmigphtd@gmail.com))

# Medical Myths: IBS myths and facts

By: Annie Lennon

Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) is a chronic gastrointestinal disorder that affects around 11% of adults worldwide.

#### Symptoms include:

- abdominal pain
- excess gas
- bloating
- sudden, urgent need to use the bathroom
- changing bowel habits.

While relatively common, IBS is often misunderstood. To help us dispel some prevalent myths about this condition, we spoke with Dr. Ashkan Farhadi, a gastroenterologist at MemorialCare Orange Coast Medical Center in Fountain Valley, CA, and Dr. Mollie J. Jackson, a gastroenterologist at the University of Kansas Health System.

#### 1. We know what causes IBS

Dr. Farhadi told Medical News Today that although research is uncovering more about IBS, we still do not know what causes it.

While certain foods such as dairy products or spicy foods may trigger symptoms, they do not cause the condition.

He noted, however, that post-infectious IBS can be caused by bacteria such as *Campylobacter jejuni*.

#### 2. Stress causes IBS

In recent years, research has suggested that levels of mental stress influence gut bacteria composition and play a key role in IBS via the gut-brain axis.

Dr. Farhadi says, however, that people with and without IBS generally face similar amounts of stress, meaning that it may be how people manage stress — rather than stress alone — that influences whether or not they may experience IBS symptoms.

"In my book on IBS, [I wrote about a study showing] that when a person is stressed, numbers of mast cells in their gut increase. So stress doesn't just increase the release of hormones and mediators in the gut; it also changes the anatomy of the gut in a way that makes it more sen-

sitive to stress," he explained.

"This means that even if you come out of that stressful period, your gut is not the same gut you had before. IBS symptoms triggered by stress can thus linger even though the stress is gone. And this is very common in patients with IBS," he added.

Dr. Farhadi also mentioned a study he conducted that found that subjective perception of well-being is linked to fewer symptoms of IBS.

Previous research has also suggested that psychological, social, and genetic factors may all play a role in the development of IBS symptoms.

#### 3. Doctors only diagnose IBS via 'fancy tests'

"IBS can be diagnosed without fancy tests," Dr. Farhadi told us. "With the right clinical criteria, doctors can diagnose IBS with 97% accuracy in 5 years. No other test in the medical field has that kind of accuracy."

"We diagnose IBS based on the Rome IV criteria: Patients with IBS should report symptoms of abdominal pain at least once weekly — on average — in association with a change in stool frequency, a change in stool form, and/or relief or worsening of abdominal pain related to defecation," explained Dr. Jackson.

"There are subtypes of IBS, and you may have predominantly diarrhea, constipation, or a mixed pattern. Patients often also experience bloating, but his symptom is not needed in making the diagnosis," she added.

#### 4. IBS is curable

There are different ways of treating IBS, including a mixture of prescription medication and lifestyle changes tailored to each person's individual situation.

"I can assure you in the overwhelming majority of cases, management is very cheap and simple: fiber, probiotics, reassurance, and exercise," said Dr. Farhadi.

When it comes to medication, according to Dr. Farhadi, it can be a "trial and error" experience. However, it can help relieve the symp-

ptoms caused by IBS, alongside other interventions.

"Ultimately, there is no cure for IBS," Dr. Farhadi noted, and sometimes medication may "only [work] like a bandaid for symptom relief. I have to repeat prescriptions for medications like management of bacterial overgrowth with antibiotics. Ultimately, there is no cure for IBS."

#### 5. IBS is uncommon, does not affect quality of life

"IBS is often a chronic, debilitating, and common disorder of the gut-brain interaction," said Dr. Jackson.

Its "prevalence in North America is 10-15% and is associated with increased health care costs," she emphasized, adding that "[I]t can significantly affect patients' quality of life."

"One study highlighted the negative impact of IBS with patients reporting that they would give up 10-15 years of their life expectancy for an instant cure for their condition."

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#### 6. All types of exercise help IBS

While Dr. Farhadi agreed that some kinds of exercise do help IBS, he said that not all exercise is the same.

"Competitive exercise doesn't relieve stress — it produces stress. The

same is true for weight-lifting in the gym if you have to pay a lot of attention to what kind of weight you're lifting, how you're pulling this muscle, and how you're pushing that muscle," he noted.

He also said that many runners have what is known as "runner's run," or diarrhea after running for long periods. Thus, he warned, it is very likely that long periods of run-

ning can cause IBS symptoms to flare.

#### 7. Meditation helps

While some studies suggest that meditation may help relieve symptoms of IBS, research is ongoing.

"We are continuing to understand the brain-gut-microbiome axis and how it plays a role in IBS," said Dr. Jackson. "Gut-directed psychotherapies have been shown to be beneficial in improving IBS symptoms."

"Meditation and mindfulness have shown to help stimulate changes in the brain and how we process thoughts, sensations, and emotional responses, and this may positively affect how we perceive and interpret signals from the gut, thus improving IBS symptoms," she added.

#### 9. Natural treatments work for IBS

Natural remedies such as peppermint oil and cardamom have shown some promise in relieving symptoms of IBS and gastric ulcers. However, research into natural remedies is lim-

ited, so they may not be universally helpful.

"Black cardamom seeds and spearmint are muscle relaxants for the gut, and so they could reduce symptoms," said Dr. Farhadi.

#### 8. Cutting out lactose helps

A recent review found that, although many patients with IBS report milk intolerance, there is no conclusive link between IBS and lactose intolerance.

As around two-thirds of the world's population is lactose intolerant, it is reasonably likely for someone to be lactose intolerant and have IBS. This means that cutting out dairy products may help relieve gastrointestinal symptoms.

"Many patients with IBS associate their symptoms with eating and try to ease their symptoms by avoiding certain foods," said Dr. Jackson. "An elimination diet involves removing multiple foods out of your daily diet and then slowly reintroducing them to help identify trigger foods."

"The most studied diet for IBS is the low FODMAP diet. FODMAP foods can lead to increased gas and distension and the triggering of meal-related symptoms in patients with IBS. Dairy is a high FODMAP food, and for some/many may be a dietary trigger, but this is not universally true," she explained.

"Food choices can be overwhelming and if available, a gastrointestinal dietitian can help guide you in this process," she added.

#### 10. Fasting relieves IBS

"Imagine you have an engine, and the engine has a problem. Now you turn it off. Or course, you may not have any problems as long as it's off, but how long can you keep it off?" said Dr. Farhadi.

"So, if you reduce the number of times you eat from perhaps three to two times per day, you may reduce the number of symptoms you experience per day. It may help, but it isn't necessarily the way to go," he explained.

#### 11. Fiber helps IBS

If a patient has chronic constipation, Dr. Farhadi said that fiber could help. However, if overdone, fiber can lead to bloating from excess gas in the gut.

To avoid this, Dr. Farhadi recommended consuming fiber via a pinch of water-soluble fiber psyllium — a prebiotic — on a spoon of Greek yogurt, which is a probiotic.

#### 12. There is an IBS diet

"There's no specific diet for IBS," said Dr. Farhadi.

"Diets are not only individualized; they are dynamic. One person may be able to drink coffee when on vacation yet experiences problems with it during finals. As there is no specific diet for different individuals, there is no specific diet for individuals at all times." he advised. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)



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## The significant role of moral education

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

As societies grapple with issues of ethical behavior, integrity, and social responsibility, the importance of instilling moral values from an early age becomes evident. Moral education, often overshadowed by academic and professional achievements, serves as the bedrock upon which individuals build their character and navigate the moral complexities of life. This article explores the profound significance of moral education, examining its impact on personal development, societal cohesion, and the broader global community.

Moral education is fundamentally about teaching individuals the principles of right and wrong, and guiding them in making ethical decisions. It encompasses more than just adherence to societal norms; it involves fostering a deep-

positively to their communities. Conversely, a lack of moral guidance can result in the development of unethical behaviors and attitudes, which can have long-term negative consequences.

One of the primary benefits of moral education is its impact on personal development. Moral values provide a framework for individuals to navigate the challenges and dilemmas they encounter throughout their lives. When faced with difficult decisions, individuals with a strong moral foundation are better equipped to make choices that align with their ethical beliefs and values. This internal compass not only guides them in making the right decisions but also helps them to build trust and respect in their relationships with others. In essence, moral education contributes to the development of a well-rounded individual who is not only knowledgeable but also ethically

challenges such as climate change, human rights, and social justice require a collective response. Moral education equips individuals with the values and principles necessary to engage in global citizenship and address these pressing issues. By instilling a sense of responsibility towards the global community, moral education encourages individuals to take action and advocate for positive change on a broader scale.

Despite its importance, moral education often faces challenges in implementation. In many educational systems, academic subjects are prioritized over moral and ethical teachings, leading to a gap in moral development. Additionally, the diverse nature of moral values and beliefs can make it difficult to establish a uniform approach to moral education. However, these challenges do not diminish the necessity of moral education; rather, they highlight the need for a thoughtful and inclusive approach to its integration into educational curricula and societal practices.

To effectively incorporate moral education, educational institutions and parents must collaborate in creating an environment that values ethical behavior and character development. Schools can integrate moral education into their curricula through subjects such as social studies, literature, and history, where ethical issues and moral dilemmas are explored. Additionally, extracurricular activities and programs that promote character building and community service can reinforce moral values in practical ways. Parents, too, play a vital role in modeling ethical behavior and discussing moral issues with their children, thereby reinforcing the lessons learned in educational settings. Furthermore, moral education should not be limited to formal educational institutions. Community organizations, religious groups, and media outlets can also contribute to the moral development of individuals by promoting ethical values and providing platforms for discussions on moral issues. By creating a culture that values and supports moral education, society can collectively work towards building a more ethical and compassionate world.

Conclusion, the importance of moral education cannot be overstated. It serves as the foundation for personal character development, societal cohesion, and global citizenship. By instilling moral values from an early age and integrating ethical teachings into various aspects of life, we can foster individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also ethically grounded. As we navigate the complexities of the modern world, the role of moral education in shaping character and guiding behavior remains a fundamental aspect of building a just and harmonious society. It is through the commitment to moral education that we can address the challenges of today and work towards a better future for all. (The writer is the Editor in Chief of an Assamese E-magazine SAMPROTIK. He can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

## Is social media an 'addiction'? This study looked at bodily responses while scrolling Instagram

The most intriguing effect in our study happened when we interrupted participants at the end of their Instagram stint and asked them to go back to reading another news article

By: Niklas Ihssen

The typical adult in the UK spends nearly two hours on social media per day. And for younger users, this can easily be up to five hours. The likes of Instagram or TikTok seem to draw us into their ever-changing feeds and it's difficult to tear ourselves away from these platforms. Now our latest study shows that even our body reflects a state of being glued to the screen when we are on social media.

We asked 54 young adults to browse their Instagram on their phone for 15 minutes as they would normally do in their daily life. However, in our study we had attached electrodes to their chest and fingers that allowed us to record their heart rate and "skin conductance", which is an indicator of sweating. Psychologists can use these physiological markers to infer subtle mental states and emotions. We also added a control condition where our participants read a news article on their phone, just before they logged onto Instagram.

What we found was that, relative to the news reading condition, scrolling away on Instagram led to a marked slowing of participants' heart rate while, at the same time, increasing their sweating response.

From other research we know that such a pattern of bodily responses shows that someone's attention is fully absorbed by a highly significant or emotional stimulus in their environment — it's a state of simultaneous excitement and deep immersion into something very meaningful to us. Importantly, from the control condition we knew that it was not just being on the phone or reading that caused this bodily response. So there seems to be something special about social media that can easily engross us.

The most intriguing effect in our study happened when we interrupted participants at the end of their Instagram stint and asked them to go back to reading another news article. Rather than snapping out of the excitement and returning to a calmer state,



participants' sweating response increased further, while heart rate also increased rather than slowed down further.

#### Is it addiction?

What was going on? What helped us interpret these effects were participants' ratings of their emotions. We collected these before their social media bout and at the time we asked them to log off.

Participants reported being stressed and anxious when they had to disconnect from their feed. They even reported having social media cravings at that moment. So it looked like the physiological response that we observed when participants had to log off reflected another form of arousal — but this time it was more negative and stress-related.

Such bodily and psychological stress responses also occur when people with a substance addiction go through withdrawal during abstinence or after quitting "cold turkey". So were these signs that we observed "withdrawal" from Instagram?

The answer to this question is not straightforward. However, our study may give us some clues. After the experiment, we asked all participants to fill in a questionnaire assessing symptoms of "social media addiction". While this concept is controversial and currently not recognised as a mental health disorder, the questionnaire told us something about how social media use can negatively affect someone's daily life. This can even include their work or school results, or lead to conflict with their partners.

Notably, we did not see any

heart rate and sweating differences between participants who scored high or low on these addiction measures. That means, that all our participants showed a pattern of excited immersion during use and stress-related arousal when use was interrupted.

We don't think that this finding means that we are all addicted to social media though. Instead, we believe that social media offers very powerful rewards. And some of its features may indeed have an addictive dimension, such as the personalised short-video streams that trap us in an endless loop of entertaining content.

Critically however, our previous study shows that it is primarily the social aspect of social media that drives most people to use it so intensively. This also means that — in contrast to drugs — social media taps into basic human needs: we all want to belong and to be liked.

So if we recognise the existence of "social media addiction", we might also need to recognise a "friendship addiction". We should therefore exert caution with the term addiction in the context of social media — the risk is that normal behaviour could become "pathologised" and lead to stigma.

And, as our previous research indicates, we may be just fine abstaining or cutting down from social media for a while without experiencing dramatic changes to our wellbeing (either positive or negative). The reason for this is that in contrast to drugs, we can satisfy our needs through other means — for instance, by talking to people. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)



seated sense of integrity, empathy, and responsibility. Unlike academic subjects that focus on intellectual knowledge, moral education delves into the ethical dimensions of human behavior and interactions. Its goal is to cultivate virtues such as honesty, kindness, fairness, and respect, which are essential for personal growth and harmonious coexistence.

The importance of moral education is particularly evident in the context of early childhood development. During these formative years, children are highly impressionable and absorb values and behaviors from their environment. Instilling moral values early in life helps shape their character and influences their actions and decisions as they grow. For example, teaching children about empathy and compassion can lead them to develop a strong sense of social responsibility and a desire to contribute

grounded. Moreover, moral education plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion and harmony. In diverse societies, individuals come from various cultural, religious, and ethical backgrounds, which can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. By promoting universal moral values such as respect, fairness, and empathy, moral education helps bridge these gaps and encourages mutual understanding and cooperation. It provides a common ground for individuals to interact and collaborate, regardless of their differences. This shared moral framework can contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious society where individuals work together for the common good.

The impact of moral education extends beyond individual and societal levels to the global community. In an interconnected world, ethical issues often transcend national borders, and global

# US and Iran-backed Houthis both vow escalation after US airstrikes target rebels in Yemen

CAIRO, March 17: The United States and Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen are both vowing escalation after the US launched airstrikes to deter the rebels from attacking military and commercial vessels on one of the world's busiest shipping corridors.

The Houthi-run Health Ministry said the US strikes killed at least 53 people, including five women and two children, and wounded almost 100 in the capital of Sanaa and other provinces, including Saada, the rebels' stronghold on the border with Saudi Arabia.

"We're not going to have these people controlling which ships can go through and which ones cannot. And so your question is, how long will this go on? It will go on until they no longer have the capability to do that," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told CBS on Sunday.

President Donald Trump on Saturday vowed to use "overwhelming lethal force" until the Houthis cease their attacks, and warned that Tehran would be held "fully accountable" for their actions.

The Houthis have repeatedly targeted shipping in the Red Sea, sinking two vessels, in what they call acts of solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza, where Israel has been at war with Hamas, another Iranian ally. The attacks stopped when an Israel-Hamas



ceasefire took hold in January — a day before Trump took office — but last week the Houthis said they would renew attacks against Israeli vessels after Israel cut off the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza this month.

There have been no Houthi attacks reported since then.

The U.S. airstrikes were one of the most extensive attacks against the Houthis since the war in Gaza began in October 2023.

Trump's national security adviser, Mike Waltz, on Sunday told ABC that the strikes "actually targeted multiple Houthi leaders and took them out." He didn't identify

them or give evidence. Rubio said some Houthi facilities had been destroyed.

In a speech aired Sunday night, the rebels' secretive leader, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi, warned: "We will confront escalation with escalation."

"We will respond to the American enemy in its raids, in its attacks, with missile strikes, by targeting its aircraft carrier, its warships, its ships," al-Houthi said. "However, we also still have escalation options. If it continues its aggression, we will move to additional escalation options."

He did not elaborate. The

Houthis have targeted U.S. warships and shot down American drones flying over Yemen.

The rebels on Sunday claimed to have targeted the USS Harry S. Truman carrier strike group with missiles and a drone.

According to a U.S. official, the Houthis did fire drones and at least one missile in response to the U.S. attack. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to provide updated information on operations, said that beginning at about midnight local time in Yemen, the Houthis fired 11 drones and at least one missile over about 12 hours. Ten of the drones were intercepted by U.S. Air Force fighter jets and one was intercepted by a Navy F/A-18 fighter jet. The missile fell into the water far from the ship, and nothing came close to hitting either the carrier or the warships in its strike group.

The spokesperson for U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in a statement called for "utmost restraint and a cessation of all military activities," while warning of the "grave risks" to the dire humanitarian situation in Yemen, the Arab world's poorest nation.

Rubio said that over the past 18 months the Houthis had attacked the US Navy "directly" 174 times and targeted commercial shipping 145 times using "guided precision anti-ship weaponry."

The attacks sparked the most serious combat the U.S. Navy had seen since World War II.

On Sunday, the head of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, Gen. Hossein Salami, denied his country was involved in the Houthis' attacks, saying it "plays no role in setting the national or operational policies" of the militant groups it is allied with across the region, according to state-run TV.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, writing on X, urged the US to halt its airstrikes and said Washington cannot dictate Iran's foreign policy.

The U.S. and others have long accused Iran of providing military aid to the rebels. The U.S. Navy has seized Iranian-made missile parts and other weaponry it said was bound for the Houthis.

The United States, Israel and Britain previously hit Houthi-held areas in Yemen, but the new operation was conducted solely by the US. It was the first strike on the Houthis under the second Trump administration.

The USS Harry S. Truman carrier strike group, which includes the carrier, three Navy destroyers and one cruiser, is in the Red Sea and was part of the mission. The USS Georgia cruise missile submarine has also been operating in the region. (AP)

## Military leadership to brief lawmakers on security situation Pak's NA speaker summons closed-door session



ISLAMABAD, March 17: The Pakistan government has convened an in-camera meeting of a high-level parliamentary security panel on Tuesday where the top military leadership would brief lawmakers on the prevailing situation, amid a surge in the terror attacks in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has asked National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq to convene the security meeting at Parliament House on Tuesday at 1:30 pm, it emerged on Monday.

The military leadership will provide a comprehensive briefing to the Parliamentary Committee on National Security on the prevailing security situation, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

The development comes in the wake of a series of deadly terror attacks in the two provinces, which share a border with neighbouring Afghanistan.

Citing a source in the National Assembly, Dawn newspaper reported that since no parliamentary committee on security was formed, therefore, members of the Standing Committees on Defence and Foreign Affairs from the National Assembly, federal cabinet members, chief ministers of the four provinces and leaders of all parliamentary parties or their representatives will attend the closed-door session.

Prime Minister Sharif and Army Chief Gen Asim Munir will join the briefing.

Meanwhile, the government is said to be planning a massive operation against the BLA and other terror groups, involved in growing terror attacks in the province, the paper reported.

One of the Prime Minister's aides, Rana Ahsan Afzal, said the government will soon convene a Multi-Party Conference (MPC) to discuss the security situation.

He also revealed plans to carry out a massive operation against terrorists in Balochistan but did not offer any details.

The security situation seems volatile in the two provinces of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan where terrorists belonging to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan

and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) have repeatedly attacked the security personnel and civilians. On Sunday, five people, including three security personnel, were killed and 30 others injured when a paramilitary convoy was attacked by BLA militants in Noshki district of Balochistan.

Last week, the BLA militants ambushed a train carrying 440 passengers in the same province and killed 21 passengers and four paramilitary soldiers. The army eliminated all 33 terrorists and rescued passengers.

On Sunday, three security personnel were killed in five separate terrorist attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces accounted for over 96 per cent of terrorist attacks and deaths in Pakistan in 2024.

The militants also this month attacked Bannu Cantonment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 16 terrorists were killed and five soldiers died. Also, renowned cleric Maulana Hamidul Haq Haqqani was killed with five other people in a suicide attack at his seminary in Nowshera district of KP.

Pakistan has repeatedly blamed Afghanistan for the surge in terrorist attacks, allegations that Kabul has denied. As if to put pressure on the Afghan government, Pakistan set March 31 as the deadline for Afghan Citizen Card (ACC) holders to leave the country or face deportation. In a related development, Pakistan turned down a request by the Afghan Taliban to grant an extension in the stay of Afghan refugees, reported The Express Tribune. Official sources told The Express Tribune on Sunday that the Pakistani decision was final and there would be no relaxation.

Sources said relevant authorities and all four provinces have been given instructions to make appropriate arrangements for the return of Afghan refugees.

Over 800,000 Afghans living in Pakistan illegally have been repatriated to their country since Pakistan launched the campaign in November 2023. Pakistan, however, had spared those who were registered with the UNHCR or had the ACC. (PTI)

## Radical Islamist party intensifies its action against Ahmadi community in Pakistan

LAHORE, March 17: A radical Islamist party in Pakistan has intensified its action against the minority Ahmadi community, forcibly stopping its members from offering special Friday prayers in several cities of Punjab and also torturing them, a community organisation said on Monday.

Last Friday, the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) members surrounded the worship places of Ahmadis in Faisalabad, Sargodha, Layyah, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Bahawalpur and Okara districts of Punjab and threatened the Ahmadi worshippers to stop offering Friday prayers. Jamaat-e-Ahmadiyya Pakistan (JAP) said. (PTI)

## Trump shares Modi's podcast with Lex Fridman on his Truth Social handle

WASHINGTON, March 17: US President Donald Trump on Monday shared a video link of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's interaction with US-based popular podcaster and computer scientist Lex Fridman on his social media platform Truth Social.

During the interaction lasting over three hours, Modi on Sunday said he and Trump connect well as both put their respective countries first and asserted that their mutual trust remained unshaken even when the Republican leader was out of office during Joe Biden's presidency.

Asked what he likes about Trump, Modi recalled that during his first term, Trump ignored security protocol and agreed to his request to take a lap around the stadium hosting the 'Howdy Modi' event in Houston.

"I was touched by his courage and his trust in me," he said, noting that Trump conveyed similar courage following the assassination attempt on him during the presidential campaign.

Modi said that Trump believes in "America First", and his motto is "nation first" or "India first". He added that this similar spirit makes them connect well.

Without referring to the trade issues involving the two countries, Modi, while speaking of his recent meeting with the US president and his colleagues, noted that Trump seems far more prepared with a clear roadmap and has put together a strong team in his second term.

The prime minister also lauded Mahatma Gandhi's legacy and described himself as a peacemaker who has nudged both Russian and Ukrainian leaders to come to the negotiating table. In the podcast, Modi also opened up on a host of foreign affairs issues and touched on various aspects of his life journey.

Fridman, who moved to the US from Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, started his podcast in 2018 which was originally titled the Artificial Intelligence Podcast but the name changed to Lex Fridman Podcast in 2020. (PTI)

## Putin, Trump will speak today about war in Ukraine

WASHINGTON, March 17: US President Donald Trump will speak with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday as efforts continue to end the war in Ukraine, a move that could represent a possible pivot point in the conflict and an opportunity for Trump to continue reorienting American foreign policy.

Trump disclosed the upcoming conversation to reporters while flying from Florida to Washington on Air Force One on Sunday evening, while the Kremlin confirmed Putin's participation on Monday morning.

"We will see if we have something to announce maybe by Tuesday. I will be speaking to President Putin on Tuesday," Trump said. "A lot of work's been done over the weekend. We want to see if we can bring that war to an end."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday morning confirmed the plans for the two leaders to speak on Tuesday, but refused to give details, saying that "we never get ahead of events" and "the contents of conversations between two presidents are not subject to any prior discussion."

European allies are wary of Trump's affinity for Putin and his

hardline stance toward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who faced sharp criticism when he visited the Oval Office a little more than two weeks ago.

Although Russia failed in its initial goal to topple Ukraine with its invasion three years ago, it still controls large swaths of the country.

Trump said land and power plants are part of the conversation around bringing the war to a close.

"We will be talking about land. We will be talking about power plants," he said, a process he described as "dividing up certain assets."

Trump special envoy Steve Witkoff recently visited Moscow last week to advance negotiations.

Russia illegally annexed four Ukrainian regions after launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 — the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the east and the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions in the southeast of the country — but doesn't fully control any of the four.

Last year, Putin listed Kyiv's withdrawal of troops from all four regions as one of the demands for peace.

In 2014, the Kremlin also an-

nexed Crimea from Ukraine.

In the occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region, Moscow controls the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant — the largest in Europe. The plant has repeatedly been caught in the crossfire since the invasion. The International Atomic Energy Agency, a UN body, has frequently expressed alarm about the plant amid fears of a potential nuclear catastrophe.

During his conversation with reporters on Air Force One, Trump said he was pushing forward with his plans for tariffs on April 2 despite recent disruption in the stock market and nervousness about the economic impact.

"April 2 is a liberating day for our country," he said. "We're getting back some of the wealth that very, very foolish presidents gave away because they had no clue what they were doing."

Trump has occasionally changed course on some tariff plans, such as with Mexico, but he said he had no intention of doing so when it comes to reciprocal tariffs.

"They charge us and we charge them," he said. "Then in addition to that, on autos, on steel, on aluminum, we're going to have some additional tariffs." (AP)

## Sri Lanka's suspended police chief loses court plea to prevent his arrest

COLOMBO, March 17: Sri Lanka's suspended police chief Deshabandu Tennakoon on Monday lost his appeal at the Court of Appeal seeking an order to stay the arrest warrant issued against him by a local court. The Appeal Court refused his plea without a hearing, court officials said. The two-judge bench, headed by Justice (Acting President) Mohamed Laffar, also directed the police to execute the arrest warrant issued against Tennakoon. Tennakoon, under suspension since July 2024, remains a fugitive and has been hiding since the Magistrate's court in the southern town of Matara on February 28 ordered his arrest over the December 2023 incident in the southern resort of Weligama.

Tennakoon, as the inspector general, had sent police officers from the Colombo Crime Division (CCD) to the resort hotel in Weligama for a raid in connection with illegal drugs. However, the Weligama police, unaware of the undercover operation, opened fire at the CCD vehicle, killing an officer. (PTI)

## Chagos Islanders seek to take UK government to court over deal with Mauritius

LONDON, March 17: Two women born on the Chagos Islands are seeking to take the British government to court over a proposed deal to transfer sovereignty of the disputed Indian Ocean archipelago to Mauritius. Lawyers for the two women argued Monday that it was unlawful to exclude Chagossians from deciding the future of the tropical archipelago, home to a strategically important UK-US naval and bomber base.

The UK government announced in October that it intends to hand the Chagos Islands to Mauritius — though Britain would retain control of Diego Garcia, the largest island where the military base is located.

But negotiations have stalled, pending agreement from US President Donald Trump's government.

Britain evicted hundreds of people from the remote islands in the 1960s and 1970s so the US military could build the base on Diego Garcia. Many of the islanders were relocated to the UK and have faced legal challenges returning to their birthplace. Bernadette Dugasse and Bertrice Pompe, both British citizens, fear it will become even harder to go back to live where they were born once Mauritius takes control of the islands.

"Chagossians were removed from their place of birth, without their consultation, and have been treated badly for 60 years," said Pompe. "Since then we have been struggling to understand why we have been treated so poorly by the British government. I want to stay British and I also want the right to return to the Chagos Islands." (AP)

## Deadly nightclub blaze leaves North Macedonia in grief, desperate for accountability

KOCANI (NORTH MACEDONIA), March 17: North Macedonia is grappling with the loss of dozens of young lives in a nightclub inferno, while trying to hold those responsible to account and prevent another calamity.

Fire tore through the overcrowded Club Pulse early Sunday in the eastern town of Kocani, leaving 59 people dead and 155 injured from burns, smoke inhalation and being trampled in the panicked escape toward the building's single exit. Although the investigation into the fire's cause is ongoing, videos showed sparking pyrotechnics on the stage hitting Club Pulse's ceiling and igniting the blaze as a band played.

People as young as 16 were among the casualties, and the nation declared



seven days of mourning.

"We are all in shock, and I am shocked myself: as a mother, as a person, as a president," North Macedonian President Gordana Davkova Siljanovska said in an address to the nation Sunday night.

"I still cannot believe that the terrible tragedy in Kocani is a reality. I do not know with what words to express my condolences to the parents and loved ones of the deceased," she

said. "No one responsible should escape the law, justice and punishment! Let us not allow anyone to endanger the lives of innocent people anymore." The fire that shook the nation of 2 million — where close-knit extended family bonds made the disaster personal to many — was the latest in a string of deadly nightclub fires around the world.

**Allegation of bribery surrounding nightclub**

Authorities say they are investigating allegations of bribery surrounding the nightclub that was crammed with young revellers and at double capacity. And North Macedonia's government ordered a sweeping three-day inspection to be carried out at all nightclubs and cabarets across the country, starting Monday. (AP)

# Trump administration deports hundreds of immigrants even as a judge orders their removals be stopped

WASHINGTON, March 17: The Trump administration has transferred hundreds of immigrants to El Salvador even as a federal judge issued an order temporarily barring the deportations under an 18th century wartime declaration targeting Venezuelan gang members, officials said Sunday. Flights were in the air at the time of the ruling.

US District Judge James E. Boasberg issued an order Saturday temporarily blocking the deportations, but lawyers told him there were already two planes with immigrants in the air — one headed for El Salvador, the other for Honduras. Boasberg verbally ordered the planes be turned around, but they apparently were not and he did not include the directive in his written order.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt, in a statement Sunday, responded to speculation about whether the administration was flouting court orders: "The administration did not refuse to comply with a court order. The order, which had no lawful basis, was issued after terrorist TdA aliens had already been removed from U.S. territory."

The acronym refers to the Tren de Aragua gang, which Trump targeted in his unusual proclamation that was released

Saturday.

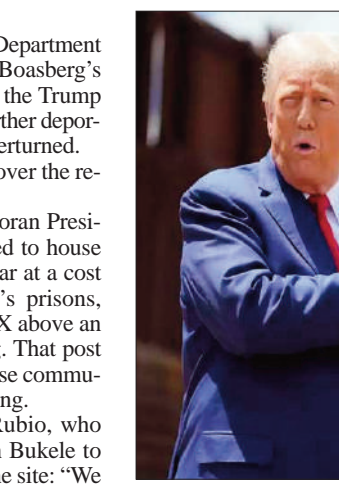
In a court filing Sunday, the Department of Justice, which has appealed Boasberg's decision, said it would not use the Trump proclamation he blocked for further deportations if his decision is not overturned.

Trump's allies were gleeful over the results.

"Oopsie... Too late," Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele, who agreed to house about 300 immigrants for a year at a cost of \$6 million in his country's prisons, wrote on the social media site X above an article about Boasberg's ruling. That post was recirculated by White House communications director Steven Cheung.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who negotiated an earlier deal with Bukele to house immigrants, posted on the site: "We sent over 250 alien enemy members of Tren de Aragua which El Salvador has agreed to hold in their very good jails at a fair price that will also save our taxpayer dollars."

Steve Vladeck, a professor at the Georgetown University Law Center, said that Boasberg's verbal directive to turn around the planes was not technically part of his final order but that the Trump administration clearly violated the "spirit" of it.



"This just incentivizes future courts to be hyper specific in their orders and not give the government any wiggle room," Vladeck said.

The immigrants were deported after Trump's declaration of the Alien Enemies Act of 1798, which has been used only three times in U.S. history.

The law, invoked during the War of 1812 and World Wars I and II, requires a president to declare the United States is at war, giving him extraordinary powers to

detain or remove foreigners who otherwise would have protections under immigration or criminal laws. It was last used to justify the detention of Japanese-American civilians during World War II.

Venezuela's government in a statement Sunday rejected the use of Trump's declaration of the law, characterizing it as evocative of "the darkest episodes in human history, from slavery to the horror of the Nazi concentration camps."

Tren de Aragua originated in an infamously lawless prison in the central state of Aragua and accompanied an exodus of millions of Venezuelans, the overwhelming majority of whom were seeking better living conditions after their nation's economy came undone during the past decade. Trump seized on the gang during his campaign to paint misleading pictures of communities that he contended were "taken over" by what were actually a handful of lawbreakers.

The Trump administration has not identified the immigrants deported, provided any evidence they are in fact members of Tren de Aragua or that they committed any crimes in the United States. It also sent two top members of the Salvadoran MS-13 gang to El Salvador who had been arrested in the United States.

Video released by El Salvador's government Sunday showed men exiting airplanes onto an airport tarmac lined by officers in riot gear. The men, who had their hands and ankles shackled, struggled to walk as officers pushed their heads down to have them bend down at the waist. The video also showed the men being transported to prison in a large convoy of buses guarded by police and military vehicles and at least one helicopter. The men were shown kneeling on the ground as their heads were shaved before they changed into the prison's all-white uniform — knee-length shorts, T-shirt, socks and rubber clogs — and placed in cells.

The immigrants were taken to the notorious CECOT facility, the centerpiece of Bukele's push to pacify his once violence-ravaged country through tough police measures and limits on basic rights.

The Trump administration said the president actually signed the proclamation contending Tren de Aragua was invading the United States on Friday night but didn't announce it until Saturday afternoon. Immigration lawyers said that, late Friday, they noticed Venezuelans who otherwise couldn't be deported under immigration law being moved to Texas for deportation flights. They began to file law-

suits to halt the transfers.

"Basically any Venezuelan citizen in the US may be removed on pretext of belonging to Tren de Aragua, with no chance at defense," Adam Isaacson of the Washington Office for Latin America, a human rights group, warned on X.

The litigation that led to the hold on deportations was filed on behalf of five Venezuelans held in Texas who lawyers said were concerned they'd be falsely accused of being members of the gang. Once the act is invoked, they warned, Trump could simply declare anyone a Tren de Aragua member and remove them from the country.

Boasberg barred those Venezuelans' deportations Saturday morning when the suit was filed, but only broadened it to all people in federal custody who could be targeted by the act after his afternoon hearing. He noted that the law has never before been used outside of a congressionally declared war and that plaintiffs may successfully argue Trump exceeded his legal authority in invoking it. The bar on deportations stands for up to 14 days and the immigrants will remain in federal custody during that time. Boasberg has scheduled a hearing Friday to hear additional arguments in the case. (AP)

## Security forces seize firearms in Manipur's Bishnupur

IMPHAL, March 17: Security forces seized firearms and ammunition during a search operation in Manipur's Bishnupur district, police said on Monday.

One 5.56 mm Insas rifle, two 9 mm carbine machine guns, one .303 modified sniper with magnifier scope, one SBBL gun, one pistol, four hand grenades, and cartridges were seized from the vicinity of Uyok forest on Sunday.

Police also said that intelligence-based combing operations and cordon and search operations are being carried out in both hill and valley districts to recover all the looted and illegal weapons in the state.

Meanwhile, security forces ensured movement of 475 vehicles carrying essential items along NH-2 (Imphal to Dimapur) and strict security measures have been taken up in all vulnerable locations as well and security convoy is provided in sensitive stretches to ensure free and safe movement of the vehicles. (PTI)

## Clashes between the Hmar and Zomi communities led to stone pelting Prohibitory orders imposed in Manipur's Churachandpur amidst rising tensions

IMPHAL/CHURACHANDPUR, March 17: Manipur's Churachandpur administration on Monday imposed prohibitory orders across the district following clashes between the Hmar and Zomi communities, a day after a Hmar tribal leader was assaulted amidst demands from the community to identify the perpetrators, police said.

According to the additional district magistrate, the prohibitory orders have been imposed under Section 163 of the BNSS 2023.

"Whereas reports have been received from the Superintendent of Police, Churachandpur, indicating a serious apprehension of a breach of law and order in the district, which is likely to disturb peace and tranquillity among different communities and may lead to damage to life and public property," the order stated. To prevent further escalation, unauthorised processions or unlawful assemblies of five or more people have been banned, along with the carrying of weapons, including sticks, rods and stones, it added.



Throughout the day, protesters attempted to enforce a shutdown, urging shops to close immediately. Groups of men patrolled the streets with sticks, while clashes between the Hmar and Zomi communities led to stone pelting in multiple areas of the district headquarters.

Central security forces intervened, firing gunshots in the air to disperse mobs, officials said.

According to officials, general secretary Richard Hmar of Hmar Inpui, one of the apex bodies of the

tribe, was attacked by a group of men inside the VK Montessori complex at Zehang Lamka around 7.30pm on Sunday.

Strongly condemning the incident, Hmar Inpui issued a statement demanding that the perpetrators be handed over immediately and warned that failure to comply would result in it taking "its own course of action."

Sources alleged that Richard Hmar was driving a vehicle which almost hit a two-wheeler rider. This led to a brief altercation that

ultimately resulted in the assault.

In an appeal, deputy commissioner Dharun Kumar S assured that appropriate actions are being taken to de-escalate the situation and urged for calm and peaceful dialogue between community members. Kumar stated, "Our attention has been drawn to incidents where tensions are rising in some areas, leading to unrest and disturbances that threaten the peaceful coexistence of our citizens."

He urged residents to uphold harmony regardless of their background, beliefs, or traditions, reaffirming that the district administration is committed to ensuring safety and enforcing law and order strictly.

Calling on community leaders to come together for a peaceful dialogue, Kumar emphasised Churachandpur's history of diversity and unity, urging all to find a common ground through discussions.

He also warned against believing unverified information and advised people to contact local authorities or community leaders for any concerns. (PTI)

## 11 illegal migrants apprehended by RPF during February

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 17: Continuing the fight to detect illegal migrants (Bangladeshis and Rohingyas) the Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway has nabbed 11 illegal migrants and 2 Indian agents during checks at Dharmanagar & Agartala railway stations of NF Railway during February 2025.

In an incident on February 15, RPF team of Agartala conducted a routine drive at Agartala Railway Station. While checking they detected 2 female Bangladeshi nationals at the station. On interrogation, they could not provide any valid documents of their identity. Afterwards they confessed that they entered India illegally from Bangladesh. Later, the illegal migrants were handed over to Officer In-charge/Government Railway Police/Agartala for further legal action.

Several steps are taken by RPF of N. F. Railway on regular basis to keep a close eye on illegal migrants, Rohingyas and suspected persons at stations and trains. RPF staff deployed at stations and trains are very vigilant at different levels to detect any such kind of suspicious activities.

## Concern on partially completed Kimin-Potin road

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, March 17: The local people of Kimin in particular and state as a whole raised questions on the inauguration of half completed road between Kimin-Potin in 2021 constructed by BRO.

Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament Nabam Rebia informed, "The BRO people know it better and is not fair, the Union defense minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the half done road and more than half of the stretch of the said road is still to be constructed and completed."

I have spoken to the Brigadier of the BRO and this is a half done road, the road has been inaugurated before it is completed and it has been a concern that the road has been inaugurated without being completed. As per information the said road is kept in priority C and the issue needs to be reminded the government of India that certain portion of road is double lane while remaining portion is single lane. I have requested the BRO people to follow up and I will like to see that the issue is take-up soon on priority. I will meet the chief minister Pema Khandu to write to the Defense Minister, he said.

## TYCM conducts one-day legal awareness programme

IMPHAL, March 17: In an effort to empower tribal communities with legal knowledge and access to justice, the Tribal Youth Council Manipur (TYCM) 'successfully' conducted a one-day legal awareness programme at Pantilong village community hall recently, in collaboration with the Manipur State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA) and the District Legal Services Authority (DSLA), Imphal East. Advocate B Supriya Devi, a panel lawyer of DSLA, Imphal East, addressed the gathering and elaborated on key legal topics, including the functions of legal service institutions, the role of Para-Legal Volunteers (PLVs), the process of applying for legal aid, and the rights of individuals before and after arrest. (NNV)

## NAME CHANGE

I, Bablu Chauhan, S/O Hira Chauhan, resident of Vill-Dakhin Udaipur, P.O. & P.S: Hojai, Dist: Hojai (Assam) do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as follows that I wholly renounce/relinquish and abandon the use of my former name that is Bulu Chauhan and in place thereof, I do hereby declare via a notary affidavit at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, Hojai on 17-03-2025, that here after I will be known as Bablu Chauhan for all official and unofficial purpose.

## Arunachal SEC to hold summary revision of electoral rolls

ITANAGAR, March 17: The Arunachal Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) will hold summary revision of electoral rolls for Panchayati Raj institutions and municipal bodies of the state with January 1, 2025 as qualifying date, an official said on Monday.

The draft publication of rolls will be carried out on April 17, said SEC under secretary Tage Nipa. The period of filing of claims and objections will be from April 17 to May 8.

The reading of relevant part/section of electoral rolls in gram sabha/local bodies for verification of names, will be on April 19 to 21. Nipa said the SEC will conduct a special campaign with booth-level agents of political parties for receiving claims and objections on April 24 and 25.

The disposal of claims and objections will be done from May 8 to 29. The preparation and printing of the supplementary list will be done on June 10 while the final publication of electoral rolls will be on June 16, the official said.

The official directed the Electoral Registration Officers/Assistant Electoral Registration Officers to conduct the summary revision of e-rolls strictly as per the provisions contained in Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1997 (preparation of e-rolls) Rules 2002.

Elections to the two-tier panchayat and municipal bodies in Itanagar and Pasighat in East Siang district are due in November-December 2025. (PTI)

## NECTAR organises Farmers' Mobilization & Awareness Programme in Nagaland

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 17: North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR), an autonomous institute under the department of science and technology (DST), with its headquarters in Shillong conducted a Farmers' Mobilization and Awareness Programme on March 17.

The programme was held in Nihoto Village of Dimapur district in Nagaland where representatives from eight villages participated. It was part of the PM-DevINE project "NECTAR livelihood Improvement project (Multi State) - A Value Chain on Utilization of Banana Pseudo Stem for Value-Added Products", which is being implemented by NECTAR. Under this scheme, NECTAR constructed a Common Facility Centre (CFC) in Kukidolong village, Chumukedima in Nagaland.

This project is focused on creating sustainable livelihoods and rural entrepreneurship by encouraging the utilisation of Banana Pseudo-stem by converting it into various marketable products, like extraction of fibre from banana pseudo stem, preparing nonwoven fabrics, preparation of organic liquid nutrient using banana pseudo stem and various types of hand-made paper from banana fibre.

The training was conducted by Consortium for Training, Research and Development (CTRD), Guwahati with support from The Entrepreneurs' Associate, Kohima. The programme also received valuable insights from SDAO Pughoboto, Kitoho Michael Swu of the State Agriculture Department, and progressive farmer Kitoho S Rotokha and officials from NECTAR. They guided farmers on best agricultural practices and emphasised the importance of supporting the Common Facility Center (CFC) for the collective benefit of the community.

This initiative is expected to boost rural entrepreneurship, reduce agricultural waste, and promote sustainable industrial development in North East India.



## ASHAs frontline disseminators of health information: Arunachal minister

ITANAGAR, March 17: Arunachal Pradesh minister Biju-ran Wahge on Monday lauded the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) as frontline disseminators of health information, emphasising their critical role in promoting healthcare awareness, motivating villagers and ensuring access to essential medical services.

Speaking at the state ASHA convention here, the Health and Family Welfare minister acknowledged the challenges ASHA workers face in mobilising communities and urged them to remain committed to their noble cause. The event was organised by the state's National Health Mission (NHM).

Wahge called on all stakeholders to support efforts to improve the state's healthcare system and ensure wider access to medical ben-

efits and services.

Recognising the best ASHA workers and facilitators from 26 districts, Wahge presented them with mementos and certificates as a token of appreciation for their dedicated services in strengthening grassroots healthcare.

He also encouraged everyone to utilise 'Scan & Find', a digital indoor navigation system recently launched at the Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHM), to enhance accessibility within hospital premises.

Health and Family Welfare commissioner Pawan Kumar Sain commended ASHA workers for their pivotal role in healthcare delivery system, particularly in rural and underserved communities.

NHM Mission Director Marge Sora reiterated that ASHAs serve

as the first point of contact for those seeking healthcare services.

He emphasised their role in bridging the gap between healthcare facilities and remote communities, often where medical access is limited.

The convention also featured presentations from Dr Dimong Padung, NHM nodal officer, who provided an overview of NHM's initiatives and Dr Gomi Basai, who introduced two newly launched software platforms 'Scan & Find' and 'Scan & Feedback', under a pilot programme at TRIHM.

While 'Scan & Find' helps patients navigate hospital departments and doctor chambers, 'Scan & Feedback' enables them to submit complaints and suggestions, ensuring better healthcare service delivery. (PTI)

## Drug peddler arrested with suspected heroin in Naharlagun

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, March 17: The Naharlagun police arrested a lady drug peddler in a raid conducted at Panchayat Colony, Damsite, Naharlagun recently.

Acting on credible information, a police team led by Inspector Krishendu Dev. OC, PS Naharlagun, along with SI Vivek Linggi, HC Kanto Samyor, Ct W Singpho, Ct Bakin Mitkon, Ct Osinam Pabin, and L/Ct Lobsang Wangmu, conducted the operation under the supervision of SPO Naharlagun Rishi Longdo and SP Naharlagun Shri Mihin Gombo. The raid was carried out in the presence of EAC Naharlagun, Khoda Bath, APPS.

During the search of the residence of Enime Kena Mihu, (31 Yrs) who is a permanent resident of Anini, Dibang Valley, 25 vials containing suspected heroin weighing 32.9 grams, including plastic vials, one plastic container with suspected heroin 30.7 grams, including the container, 42 empty vials, a red plastic container, two used syringes, three empty cigarette packets and suspected heroin were recovered weighing 63.6 grams including weight of containers.

During questioning Enime Kena Mihu admitted to purchasing the contraband from Assam for personal consumption and peddling. Subsequently, a case was registered at Naharlagun PS Case No. 36/25 under Sections 21(b), 27, and 29 of the NDPS Act and the accused drug peddler.

## Outreach session on NCD conducted at Raj Bhavan

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, March 17: The District Health Society, Itanagar Capital Region, conducted an outreach session on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) under the National Programme for Prevention & Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases & Stroke (NPCDCS) at Raj Bhavan, Itanagar on Monday.

Large numbers of people, including the officers and staff of Raj Bhavan attended the programme. Health Checks and counselling were carried out during the session.

Senior medical officer of Raj Bhavan Dispensary, Itanagar Dr Jennifer Tayeng informed that the initiative aimed to enhance awareness, promote early diagnosis, and ensure better management of NCDs within the community. She highlighted the importance of early screening using the Community-Based Assessment Checklist (CBAC), a tool designed for the early detection of NCDs and also

emphasised the creation and linking of Ayushman Bharat Health Accounts (ABHA) with the NCD portal, enabling individuals to access and share their digital health records seamlessly with healthcare providers.

The District Health Society Kurung Kumey District has launched its Special Vaccination Campaign (SVC) 3.0 at CTDH Koloriang on Monday.

The programme was inaugurated by Vishakha Yadav, Deputy Commissioner Kurung Kumey District. Programme was attended by Tadar Tagh DRCHO, Dr Bengia Tani MS CTDH Koloriang, Nursing Officers, ANM and ASHAs of Koloriang block. The objective and its important of SVC3.0 was highlighted by Dr Bengia Tani MS CTDH Koloriang and he also suggested the vaccinators and other staffs for coordinate and cooperation during 7 (seven) days Special Vaccination Campaign.

## 28 smoke houses in Tripura to produce high quality rubber sheets: Official

AGARTALA, March 17: The Tripura government has initiated the process to construct 28 modern smoke houses to produce high-quality rubber sheets, an official said on Monday. Smoke houses play a crucial role in enhancing the quality of rubber sheets, which have higher market value. "The Centre has sanctioned ₹ 37.50 crore for the construction of 28 modern smoke houses under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme," Subhash Das, director of Tripura's Tribal Welfare Department, told PTI, adding that the government aims to complete it within the next six months. (PTI)

## Tripura aims to install 50,000 solar plants in 2025: Minister 1-kilowatt plant can generate around 100 units of electricity per month

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, March 17: The Tripura government has set an ambitious goal of installing 50,000 solar plants across the state during the current financial year, power minister Ratan Lal Nath announced on Sunday.

Speaking at the inauguration of a registration camp for the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana at Ranirgaon Vidyalaya in Jirania, Minister Nath highlighted that 12,800 solar plants have already been installed as part of the initiative.

He emphasised that the scheme, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 13, 2024, aims to promote rooftop solar energy, enabling households to generate their own electricity and reduce their dependency on traditional power sources.



"Government subsidies are being provided to encourage the installation of solar plants," the minister said. "For a 3-kilowatt system, consumers will receive a subsidy of up to ₹ 85,800. A 1-kilowatt solar

plant, which costs ₹ 65,000, will have a subsidy of ₹ 33,000, while a 2-kilowatt unit costing ₹ 1,30,000 will get a subsidy of ₹ 66,000."

Highlighting the benefits of solar power, Nath stated that a 1-kilowatt plant can generate around 100 units of electricity per month. This not only helps in lowering household electricity expenses but also offers the opportunity to sell surplus power, generating additional income for consumers.

"These solar systems can be installed on rooftops, tin sheds, or open spaces, with a lifespan of around 25 years," he added.

To ensure widespread adoption, registration camps are being held across Tripura, urging residents to take advantage of the scheme. The event also saw the presence of tourism minister Sushanta Chowdhury as a special guest.

## OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF RAIL COACH RESTAURANT AT AGARTALA AND LUMDING RAILWAY STATION

E-Auction is invited for Operation and Maintenance of Rail Coach Restaurant at Agartala and Lumding Railway Station over Lumding Division. Auction Catalogue No.: RCR-LMG-03-25. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): At 10:00 hrs. on 28-03-2025. Days: 1826.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	MSS-LMG-AGTL-RCR-2-23-1 (Misc-Static-Services-Rail Coach Restaurant)	Operation and maintenance of Rail Coach Restaurant at Agartala Station Circulating Area.
AA/2	MSS-LMG-LMG-RCR-7-25-3 (Misc-Static-Services-Rail Coach Restaurant)	Operation and maintenance of Rail Coach Restaurant in MG Coach Near Lumding Railway station between Parking area (Escalator) & Electric office near Vivekanand Stadium & Demo Shed.

Closing date & time : At 10:40 hrs. on 28-03-2025. Initial Cooling off period is 30 minutes. Successful lots closing interval 10 minutes. Lot wise closing time can be viewed in E-Auction module of IREPS. Note : Prospective bidder are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module on IREPS website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for more details.

Sr. DCM, Lumding  
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY  
Serving Customers With A Smile

# AIMPLB stages protest against Waqf Bill; Owaisi cautions TDP, JD(U), LJP (Ramvilas) 'One district, one mafia' era in UP replaced with One District, One Product: Adityanath



**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The All India Muslim Personal Law Board on Monday led a protest against the Waqf (Amendment) Bill which was joined by several MPs, with AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi cautioning NDA constituents TDP, JD(U) and LJP (Ramvilas) that Muslims will never forgive them if they support the legislation.

A host of Muslim organisations joined hands under the aegis of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) to stage the demonstration at the Jantar Mantar here.

Speaking at the protest site, Owaisi claimed the Narendra Modi government's intention to bring the Waqf Bill is to disturb peace in the country.

"The prime minister's intention is that people keep fighting over Mandir-Masjid. Safeguarding Waqf properties is not the bill's objective," the AIMIM chief said.

"The bill attempts to take way Muslims' mosques, dargahs and cemeteries. We are cautioning (TDP chief) Chandrababu Naidu, (LJP-Ramvilas chief Chirag) Paswan Sahab and (JD-U's) Nitish Kumar -- remember that if you support this bill at this critical juncture, Muslims will not forgive you ever because it would be passed with your support," Owaisi said.

"Don't support this unconstitutional bill," he added.

The five-term MP from Hyderabad also pointed out that the bill is for non-Muslims to be part of the Waqf council and boards, whereas in the management of endowments of other religions, only those belonging to that community are made members.

"The government is going to take an unconstitutional and anti-Muslim step," Owaisi said.

Speaking to reporters at the protest site, Congress leader and former minority affairs minister Salman Khurshid claimed that the bill is not valid constitutionally and people are not satisfied with it.

Shia cleric Kalbe Jawad alleged that the bill's sole intention is to grab Waqf properties.

"Waqf grants Muslims the same rights that other religions enjoy over their institutions. If every faith has the right to administer its affairs, why are Muslims being singled out," Syed Sadatullah Husaini, president of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind and vice-president of AIM-PLB, asked.

Political leaders from a host of opposition parties took part in the protest, raising questions over the government's intention behind moving the Waqf (Amendment) Bill by overlooking their concerns.

"We are supporting the protest against the Waqf Bill. It is against our Muslim brothers... The government is eyeing their lands. By rejecting all the suggestions of the opposition, the government has shown what its intention is. We are against this bill," Samajwadi Party leader Dharmendra Yadav said.

Yadav's party colleague from Sambhal, Ziaur Rahman Barq, said they have been opposing the bill since it was introduced in Parliament.

Accusing the government of creating a rift in the society, Trinamool Congress MP Shatrughan Sinha said, "This is divisive politics... No religion or community should be targeted like this. They are trying to sideline a community, which is not going to work. If they force this bill on the basis of brute

majority, there will be protests." The government should call an all-party meeting on this issue, the actor-politician added.

Claiming that the opposition members' suggestions to the joint parliamentary committee were rejected, Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi said, "It shows the government does not want to resolve any issue, but just wants to create a divide in the society. We want the country to function as per the Constitution." The 'dharma' was to be held on March 13 but was postponed in view of holidays on account of Holi.

AIMPLB spokesperson S Q R Ilyas said that after careful consideration, the board came to the conclusion that the proposed legislation will pave the way for the "usurping" of Waqf properties, which would be a "direct attack" on Muslims.

The protest came amid the ongoing Budget Session during which the Waqf Bill could be introduced with the joint parliamentary committee having submitted its report on the proposed legislation.

The 31-member panel on the bill, after multiple sittings and hearings, suggested several amendments to the proposed legislation, even as the opposition members disagreed with the report and submitted dissent notes. (PTI)

**SAHARANPUR (UP), March 17:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday targeted the previous Samajwadi Party government, accusing it of fostering a culture of lawlessness with its "one district, one mafia" policy, which he said has now been replaced by the ODOP initiative.

Adityanath was addressing an event here as part of the 'CM Yuva Udyami Vikas Abhiyan' where loans were distributed to 365 entrepreneurs.



now exports goods worth ₹ 1,000 crore globally.

"Every district had a mafia under the previous government. We replaced that with One District, One Product so that artisans and local products get global recognition and create jobs," the chief minister said.

Without naming former chief minister and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, Adityanath said, "If the leader of a state wakes up at noon, gets ready by 2 pm and then goes on picnics with his friends, when will he work? The public suffered while his associates looted the state."

Adityanath also highlighted his government's focus on connectivity, stating that efforts are underway to reduce travel time from Saharanpur to Delhi to just 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Underlining the impact of the One District, One Product (ODOP) scheme, he noted that Saharanpur's renowned wood carving industry

provided over 7 lakh government jobs so far, with no allegations of nepotism or regional bias.

The chief minister further said, "This government is here to recognise and support your hard work. It is not meant for dynastic politics where a handful of people loot power for themselves."

Encouraging young entrepreneurs, he said, "Remember, in business, one must have a sense of satisfaction, avoid unnecessary greed and have the passion to work hard. Having knowledge about the field we are entering and advancing based on that knowledge ensures that there will be no problems."

On the BJP-led governments at the Centre and in Uttar Pradesh, Adityanath said that when a double-engine government works, public welfare and national interest remain the top priorities. He described the recently concluded Maha Kumbh as a grand event that witnessed the arrival of over 66 crore devotees in Prayagraj.

He praised the hospitality shown by the people of Prayagraj and surrounding districts, saying, "Because of the Maha Kumbh, people from different sectors found opportunities -- some started tea stalls, some sold vegetables, some offered taxi services, some ferried passengers on boats, while others supplied goods, earning crores of rupees." (PTI)

## Chhattisgarh govt will enact strict law to curb illegal religious conversion: Dy CM Sharma

**RAIPUR, March 17:** Chhattisgarh Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma on Monday said the state government will soon enact a stringent law to prevent illegal religious conversion.

Sharma, who also holds the Home portfolio, said this after ruling BJP MLA and former minister Ajay Chandrakar raised the issue of alleged illegal religious conversion through a call attention notice in the assembly.

In the guise of 'changai sabha' (healing meeting) innocent, helpless, poor people are being converted through allurements, Chandrakar said, adding that NGOs formed with the purpose of working in health, education and social work sectors were receiving funds from foreign countries, which was being allegedly used for conversion activity.

"There are several such NGOs in the state, which are registered on religious basis and are also getting funds from abroad. In Bastar district, nine out of 19 registered organizations and in Jashpur district, 15 out of 18 institutions are being run by Christian missionaries. Conversion activities are getting encouragement due to lack of control on these organisations," Chandrakar alleged.

Most of the organisations are operating in Jashpur district (the home district of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai), where a majority of cases of conversion are reported, he said. The BJP MLA also cited some cases of religious conversion registered with police in Bilaspur and Raipur districts earlier this year.

"The use of foreign funding in conversion cannot be denied. Though the government claims to have banned such funds, the institutions find their way by not providing audit reports," Chandrakar claimed. In his reply, Deputy CM Sharma said it is not correct to say that incidents of conversion are increasing due to lack of control of the local administration on NGOs.

He said police conducts proper investigation and takes prompt legal action when complaints are received about people being lured to convert at such healing meetings.

Sharma said one case was lodged in 2020, seven in 2021, three in 2022, nil in 2023, a total of 12 in 2024 and four cases so far in 2025. (PTI)

## Four terrorists nabbed in Haryana's Karnal, arms & ammunition seized

**CHENNAI, March 17:** BJP Tamil Nadu president K Annamalai, the party's wing national chief Vanathi Srinivasan and senior state leader H Raja were among the party leaders who were detained here on Monday by the police ahead of their protest against the alleged irregularities in state-run liquor retailer TASMAC.



The saffron party had announced a picketing protest of the TASMAC headquarters here over the alleged ₹ 1,000 crore irregularities, as claimed by the Enforcement Directorate recently.

The BJP found support from the most unexpected corner, with its strident critic and DMK ally VCK welcoming the protest, from the prohibition point of view.

Annamalai lashed out at the ruling DMK and its party president and Chief Minister M K Stalin, alleging the "rupee symbol and budget drama" were an attempt to divert attention from the recent ED raids at the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC), besides other entities.

Annamalai, clad in a black shirt, was detained near his house along with his supporters by the police.

In a social media post, the BJP state chief alleged senior party leaders including former state president and ex-Governor of Telangana, Tamilisai Soundararajan have been placed "under house arrest" by the police.

Senior BJP leaders including H Raja, Pon Radhakrishnan, BJP Mahila Morcha chief

and Coimbatore South MLA Vanathi Srinivasan, the party's legislators Dr C Saraswathi, MR Gandhi, Nainar Nagenthran and functionaries including Vinoy P Selvam and Amar Prasad Reddy were detained.

Annamalai said there have been "irregularities of ₹ 1000 crore," in the Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAC) and asserted the party will continue to protest on the matter.

Lashing out at CM Stalin, Annamalai said it was his 'guess' that the DMK leader was 'afraid' of something and therefore was 'strangling' BJP's voice.

"I charge that their symbol drama, budget drama was all aimed at diverting attention from ED raids," he said about the DMK government replacing the Indian rupee symbol with the Tamil word 'Ru,' as the budget logo recently.

Annamalai told reporters that although the ED has quantified the alleged irregularities in TASMAC at ₹ 1,000 crore, he estimates it to be "₹ 40,000 crore." (PTI)

## Govt will do its job, you do yours: Rane tells Hindutva bodies

**PUNE, March 17:** Maharashtra Minister Nitesh Rane on Monday invoked the demolition of Babri masjid and asked Hindutva outfits to do their duty while the government will carry its responsibilities amid protests by right-wing bodies for the removal of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's tomb.

Rane, known for making controversial comments, also denounced attempts to label Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj as a "secular king". The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) staged protests for the removal of Aurangzeb's grave, which they termed as the "symbol of pain and slavery", in Khuldabad, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district.

"The government will do its part while Hindutva outfits must do theirs. When Babri Masjid was being de-

molished, we did not sit and talk to each other. Our karsevaks did what was appropriate," Rane said.

He spoke while addressing a gathering at Shivaji Maharaj's birthplace, Shivneri fort, in Pune district on the occasion of his birth anniversary. The VHP staged protests at government offices in different parts of Maharashtra and submitted memorandums for the removal of Aurangzeb's grave. In case of government inaction, the VHP warned that it would march to Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district and demolish the grave. Rane also denounced the portrayal of Shivaji Maharaj as a "secular king".

"We must continuously emphasise that Shivaji Maharaj was the founder of Hindvi Swarajya. This identity must be reiterated repeatedly so that the attempts of certain groups to portray him as a secular king, can be thwarted (by us) as true devotees of Shivaji Maharaj," he said. Rane reiterated that Shivaji Maharaj's army never had Muslim soldiers.

"It is not as if only a handful of people understand history while the rest do not. We, too, have knowledgeable sources guiding us."

"The British referred to my king as a Hindu General. When Adil Shah sent Afzal Khan to kill Shivaji Maharaj, the decree issued at the time explicitly stated that the spread of Islam had been hindered during Shivaji Maharaj's reign. These historical records are now coming to light," the BJP leader added. (PTI)

**KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL**  
**DEPARTMENT OF WORKS**  
**KAAC:: BRANCH SECRETARIAT**  
**HAMREN- 782486**  
 No. KAAC/HRN/W-67/2024-25/160 Dtd 17/03/2025

### TENDER NOTICE

Scaled tender affixing Non refundable KAAC court fee stamp (Receipt) Rs.10.00 (Rupees Ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor/reputed firms of Works Department and will be receive by the undersigned upto 4 P. M. on 01/04/2025 and will opened on the same date, place and the hours in presence of the tenderers or their authorized agent if any.

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

Sl. No.	Name of Works	Tender Amount (Rs.)	A/A Amount (Rs.)	Earnest money	Time allowed for completion
1.	Construction of Manikut and Namaghar at Phelangpi under Kopili Constituency	Rs. 26,13,000.00	Rs. 26,13,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% General =2%	Days 30
2.	Construction of boundary wall at Phelangpi under Kopili Constituency	Rs. 11,50,000.00	Rs. 11,50,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% General =2%	Days 30

Detail N.I.T/ documents and name of works amounts may be obtained from Office of the E.E (Works) KAAC, Branch Secretariat, Hamren during working hours.

### Terms & Conditions

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

Sd/-  
 Executive Engineer(Works),  
 KAAC, Branch Secretariat  
 Hamren  
 Memo No. KAAC/HRN/W-67/2024-25/160(A) Dtd 17/03/2025

No.GDB/13th-FC/226/2022-23/877 Dated:- 05/03/2025

**TENDER NO.17 OF 2024-25**  
**INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)**

Selected tenders affixing Non-refundable court fee stamp of RS.8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty Five Paise) only with at validity period of 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days which will subsequently to be covered and drawn up in the printed F-2 form are invited from the intending Registered Contractors of all categories of the Assam PWD (Bldg. & Roads) for submitting tender for the work below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2:30 PM 05-03-2025 to 25-03-2025 and will be opened on the date 25-03-2025 at 2:30 PM.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Apporx Estimated value of work	Tender Value	Earnest money 2% for GNL & 1% for ST/SC/OBC/MOBC	Cost of tender document	Time of completion
1	Const. of Community toilet at Banganahati Satra Sava No-2 Goreswar, under (Tied Grant) 15 <sup>th</sup> -FC fund for the 2023-24 during 2024-25.	11,00,000.00	10,47,960.00	Rs. 21,000/- & Rs. 10500/-	Rs.300/-	3(Three month)

Detailed NIT may be seen in all working days in the Office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent up to 11:30 AM in all working days from 05-03-2025 to 25-03-2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Banker Cheque/Bank Draft/ Demand draft duly pledged in favour of the BDO, Goreswar Development Block.

Sd/-  
 Block Development Officer  
 Goreswar Development Block

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1624



## Ex-Union minister Debendra Pradhan dies at 84, Prez, PM mourn

**BHUBANESWAR, March 17:** Veteran BJP leader Debendra Pradhan, who was a minister in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, died on Monday.

He was 84 and survived by two sons, including Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Pradhan, the three-time Odisha BJP president, breathed his last at his son's official residence at Teen Murti Lane in New Delhi.

Condoling his death, President Droupadi Murmu said that having known him for many years, she got the opportunity to witness his dedication to public service and contribution to the development of Odisha and the nation.

"My heartfelt condolences to his son and Union Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, other family members and admirers," she said in a post on X.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid floral tributes to Pradhan's mortal remains, and hailed his efforts in strengthening the BJP in Odisha.

"Dr Debendra Pradhan Ji made a mark as a hardworking and humble leader. He made numerous efforts to strengthen the BJP in Odisha. His contribution as MP and Minister is also noteworthy for the emphasis on poverty alleviation and social empowerment. Pained by his passing away. Went to pay my last respects and expressed condolences to his family. Om Shanti." Modi posted on X. Several Union ministers also visited the Teen Murti Lane residence to pay their respects.

Pradhan, a doctor by profession, started his journey in politics in Talcher and rose from the grassroots level. He first became the BJP's state president in 1988 and continued in the post for consecutive two terms till 1993. He returned to the post in 1995 and remained there till 1997. He won the 1998 Lok Sabha elections from the Deogarh seat and was re-elected again in 1999.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said he was a popular public leader and an able parliamentarian.

"He had discharged his duties as the Union Minister for Transport and Agriculture from 1999 to 2001 with efficiency. As a public representative and MP, he had become the object of the common people's affection by doing many welfare works," Majhi said. (PTI)

## Govt scholarship not sufficient to meet present-day expenditure: Parl panel

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** A parliamentary standing committee has noted that the annual scholarship granted for pursuing education is not sufficient to meet the present-day expenditure and recommended that its quantum be periodically reviewed to contain the inflation.

In its latest report on the Demands for Grants for 2025-26, the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment has urged the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment to review the scholarship amounts in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders.

The panel, which tabled its report in Parliament on Monday, asked the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment to review the annual scholarship amount granted to each student pursuing various courses along with the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders to achieve the envisaged objectives of the various scholarship schemes of the department.

The committee is of the opinion that the annual scholarship granted to a student for pursuing education



is not sufficient to meet the present-day expenditure required to get proper and quality education, the report said.

"The committee would like to recommend that the quantum of scholarship granted to a student under each scheme should be periodically reviewed to contain the inflation so that the scheme is more fruitful," it said.

The committee also observed discrepancies between the projected requirements and the actual allocations across multiple welfare programmes.

Despite a budgetary allocation of Rs 14,164.42 crore for the fiscal 2025-26, several schemes remain underfunded, limiting their reach and impact.

The panel particularly emphasised the need to improve the efficiency of fund utilisation, highlighting that large sums of money remain unspent due to procedural delays and administrative inefficiencies.

It criticised the delayed submission of proposals and utilisation certificates by the state governments resulting in the accumula-

tion of unspent funds in the Single Nodal Agency (SNA) accounts.

As of February, the total unspent balance in SNA accounts stood at Rs 2,779.32 crore, down from Rs 5,055.93 crore the previous year.

The committee urged the ministry to work closely with the states to expedite the completion of necessary formalities, enabling quicker fund disbursement.

Additionally, the report highlighted a lack of transparency and coordination between the ministry and implementing agencies.

It expressed concern that the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment's heavy reliance on the state governments for execution has led to inconsistent implementation and delays in delivering benefits to the intended recipients.

The panel called for a more robust monitoring mechanism to track fund disbursement and ensure better accountability.

The committee further noted that while the budgetary allocation increased marginally over the years, the funds have not been proportionately utilised for critical welfare programmes. (PTI)

## Gabbard, Rajnath hold talks; focus on integration of defence supply chains



**NEW DELHI, March 17:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard on Monday held wide-ranging talks, focusing on India-US collaboration in niche technologies, information sharing and integration of defence industrial supply chains.

Singh and Gabbard also reviewed bilateral strategic cooperation in the maritime domain, according to an official readout.

The US director of national intelligence arrived in the national capital early Sunday on a two-and-a-half-day trip in the first high-level visit to India by a top official of the Donald Trump administration. In a social media post, Singh said he was "happy" to meet the US national intelligence chief and discussed ways to further deepen the India-US partnership.

"We discussed a wide range of issues which include defence and information sharing, aiming to further deepen the India-US partnership," he said.

It is understood that the two sides also deliberated on the evolving security situation in the Indo-Pacific against the backdrop of China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region.

The defence ministry said Gabbard and Singh emphasised that "strategic security" remains a vital pillar of the India-US comprehensive global strategic cooperation.

"Rajnath Singh and Tulsi Gabbard reviewed the significant strides made in the areas of military exercises, strategic cooperation, integration of defence industrial supply chains and information-sharing cooperation, especially in the maritime domain,

between India and the US," it said in a statement.

They also explored avenues for collaboration in cutting-edge defence innovation and niche technologies, reflecting their shared commitment to advancing mutual strategic interests, it said.

"Additionally, they addressed key areas such as enhancing interoperability and fostering greater integration of defence industrial supply chains to bolster resilience and innovation," the ministry added.

It said Singh expressed "gratitude" to the US director of national intelligence for her "steadfast goodwill and admiration for Indian culture and heritage", noting that such sentiments further deepen the bonds of friendship between India and the US.

"Drawing from the joint statement issued after the recent meeting of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with US President Donald Trump, the discussions reaffirmed the growing strength of the India-US bilateral defence partnership," the ministry said.

Gabbard's talks with Singh came a day after she met National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and attended a conclave of global intelligence czars hosted by India in the national capital.

In their one-on-one meeting, Doval and Gabbard mainly discussed ways to strengthen intelligence sharing and working closely in the security domain in sync with the India-US global strategic partnership, it is learnt.

Gabbard, Canadian spy chief Daniel Rogers and UK National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell were among the top global intelligence czars who attended the India-hosted security conclave chaired by Doval.

The deliberations at the conclave were held behind closed doors.

It is learnt that the top intelligence and security officials focused on sharing intelligence and cooperation to tackle terrorism and threats posed by emerging technologies. (PTI)

## MEA constituted 'gender budget cell': Govt to parliamentary panel

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The government has informed a parliamentary panel that it has established a "gender budget cell" which has been tasked with evaluating gender-related contributions of projects implemented by the Ministry of External Affairs.

Also, the Committee on External Affairs, chaired by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, in its report has recommended that the MEA should establish a "comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework" for all ongoing and upcoming development projects.

The 'Fifth Report of the Committee on External Affairs (2024-25) on Demands for Grants (2025-26)' was presented in Parliament on Monday.

On committee's specific ques-

tion on incorporation of the dimension of gender budgeting in proposing the budgetary demands, it has been submitted that the ministry has "constituted a gender budget cell, which has been tasked with evaluating gender-related contributions of projects implemented by the ministry", the report said.

A data collection exercise with respect to the gender-related aspects of the projects, has been undertaken and the data is presently being analysed with a view to initiating further action based on the analysis. In this regard, two officers of the gender budget cell were also trained on gender budgeting in Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, the panel was told.

The committee said it acknowledges the efforts made by the MEA in establishing a gender budget cell to assess and incorporate gender-related dimensions into the ministry's budgetary processes, according to the report.

The initiative to evaluate the gender-related contributions of projects implemented by the ministry is a "commendable step" towards aligning the ministry's budgetary framework with India's broader commitment to gender equality and inclusive development, it said.

However, the committee in its report has observed that while the ministry has undertaken a data collection exercise to evaluate the gender-related aspects of its projects, "the data is still under analysis, and further action is awaited". (PTI)

## Engineer Rashid can't be allowed to use legislator status for reprieve: NIA to Delhi HC

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Monday said jailed Jammu and Kashmir MP Sheikh Abdul Rashid alias Engineer Rashid's couldn't be allowed to use his status to "get away from the rigours of imprisonment".

The NIA's response in the Delhi High Court came on Rashid's plea against a March 10 trial court order refusing him custody parole or interim bail to attend Lok Sabha proceedings till April 4.

The Baramulla MP, the probe agency said, faced serious charges under the anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). The NIA argued Rashid could neither be granted an interim bail nor allowed custody parole for he had no enforceable right to attend Parliament session while in lawful custody. (PTI)

## SC issues contempt notice to official for not deciding on convict's remission

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The Supreme Court on Monday issued a contempt notice to the principal secretary of Delhi government's home department for not deciding the remission plea of a convict in the 2002 Nitish Katara murder case and said its orders are not followed unless drastic measures are taken.

"We believe that unless a contempt notice is issued, our orders are not complied with," a bench comprising Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan said after the Delhi government failed to take a

decision on the grant of remission to convict Sukhdev Yadav alias Pehalwan, who is serving a 20-year jail term without remission in the case.

Referring to its previous order, the bench said, "A solemn statement on instructions of the state government was recorded in the order. Now we are informed that the SRB (sentence review board) is to consider the case of the petitioner today. The state government has not shown even the elementary courtesy of even making an appli-

cation for grant of extension of time." The bench went on, "We therefore issue notice to the principal secretary of the Home Department of Delhi government calling upon him to show cause why action under the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 should not be initiated against him. Notice of contempt is made returnable on March 28."

The official was asked to remain present via video-conferencing on the next hearing. On March 3, the Delhi government in-

formed the bench that it would take a decision on the grant of remission to the convict in two weeks.

During the hearing, additional solicitor general Archana Pathak Dave, appearing for the Delhi government, said a meeting of the SRB was scheduled during the day and sought more time for a decision on the remission. "We have seen that the Delhi government does not make a decision without extension of time... We are seeing it in every case. Earlier there was an excuse that the chief minister was unavailable," Justice Oka said. (PTI)

Named after the former director of ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre and a distinguished alumnus of IIT Madras, the Centre inaugurated in the presence of IIT-Madras director Prof V Kamakoti, will support 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiatives, promoting self-reliance in advanced space technologies and attract global talent and research funding.

"This will position India as a leader in thermal sciences research for space applications," the IIT Madras said.

Narayanan said the Centre would contribute immensely for the country's development. "Whether it is rocket launch vehicle, or satellite, thermal and fluid flow plays a very vital role, especially on how to handle the heat or thermal energy which is generated," Narayanan said.

During this year, ISRO has planned a series of launches including GSLV, a commercial satellite from the USA, and unmanned test mission with humanoid as part of the Gaganyaan mission, Narayanan told reporters.

The state-of-the-art research Centre, housed in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, will focus on critical advancements in spacecraft and launch vehicle thermal management — a key area for India's expanding space ambitions.

The centre will serve as a nodal centre for research in heat transfer, cooling sys-

## Indian Railways expands global footprint with major exports

**GUWAHATI, March 17:** In a significant boost to India's manufacturing capabilities, Indian Railways continues to export Metro coaches, bogies, propulsion systems, passenger coaches and locomotives to multiple countries, an official statement said on Monday.

"Indian made Metro coaches are being exported to Australia, while bogies have found markets in the UK, Saudi Arabia, France and Australia. Additionally, propulsion systems are being supplied to France, Mexico, Romania, Spain, Germany and Italy," the statement added. The quality of Indian passenger coaches has been appreciated by various countries worldwide, as a result of which the demand of Indian passenger coaches continues to gain momentum.

"India's expertise in passenger coach manufacturing is being recognised worldwide, with exports to Mozambique, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The country is also supplying locomotives to Mozambique, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh, strengthening its position as a global railway equipment supplier," the statement further said.

These are essential for the next generation of spacecraft and satellite technologies. Scientists and engineers from ISRO will work alongside faculty and researchers from IIT Madras to address complex thermal challenges in space applications.

"This initiative is a game-changer for India's space program as thermal control is vital to satellite longevity, spacecraft safety, and mission success. The research at this Centre of Excellence (CoE) will directly impact upcoming lunar, Mars, and deep-space missions, ensuring India remains at the forefront of space technology," the institute said.

Also, the 'Arcot Ramachandran Seminar Hall' was inaugurated by Kamakoti, on the occasion.

Arcot Ramachandran (1923 - 2018), a world-renowned Professor of Heat Transfer, was the Director of IIT Madras between 1967 and 1973. He was instrumental in establishing the Heat Transfer and Thermal Power lab at IIT Madras.

Centre Coordinator Prof Arvind Pattamatta, Head, Department of Mechanical Engineering, IIT Madras Prof P Chandramouli, and Professor of Practice, Department of Mechanical Engineering, IIT Madras, P V Venkatkrishnan, too, were among those who participated. (PTI)

## ISRO Kulasekarapattinam spaceport will see first SSLV launch in 2027



**CHENNAI, March 17:** The Kulasekarapattinam spaceport in Tamil Nadu's Thoothukudi district, the second launch complex for ISRO outside Andhra Pradesh, will see the maiden launch with the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) in 24 months, chairman of the space agency V Narayanan said on Monday.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) SSLV will primarily support polar launches of upto 500 kg, with Indian industry involved in its production.

"All facilities will be commissioned for launch in 24 months. The first launch will take place in two years. Don't think it will be literally small in size. It will be a 500 kg satellite," Narayanan told reporters after inaugurating a new research centre at the Indian Institute of Technology Madras - 'S Ramakrishnan Centre of Excellence for Research in Fluid and Thermal Science (ISRO-IITM)'.  
5002 / 14

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM**  
**OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER (PHE)**  
**KAKBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL:: DIPUU**

**NOTICE**

It is for General information for all concerned applicant with reference to this office notification No. Addl. CPHE/DIP/Estt-73/2024-25/2277-86 dt. 07.03.2025 the venue of the Oral (Viva Interview) for the post of Peon and Chowkidar is O/o the Additional Chief Engineer (PHE), KAAC, Diphu.

The date of interview as per Roll No. wise is as follows. All applicant are requested to take note and attend the oral interview as per the schedule.

Reporting time: 9:30 A.M.

Date ↓	Name of Post →	Peon	Chowkidar
25/03/2025		Roll No. 01 to 202	Roll No. 01 to 70
26/03/2025		Roll No. 203 to 404	Roll No. 71 to 140
27/03/2025		Roll No. 405 to 608	Roll No. 141 to 210

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

Memo. No. Addl. CPHE/DIP/Estt-73/2024-25/ 2348-54      Dated: - 17/03/2025

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM**  
**OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER (PHE)**  
**KAKBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL:: DIPUU**

**NOTICE**

It is tier General information for all concerned applicant with reference to this office notification No. Addl. CPHE/DIP/Estt-73/2024-25/2277-86 dt. 07.03.2025 the venue of the written test to be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March for the post of Stenographer/ Sectional Assistant/ Junior Assistant/ Assistant Driller is Diphu Govt. College, Diphu.

Therefore all concerned applicant are to report the venue before one hour (i.e 8:30 AM) (Morning) for Stenographer, Sectional Assistant, Assistant Driller) and (i.e 12:30 PM) (Afternoon) for Junior Assistant.

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

Memo. No. Addl. CPHE/DIP/Estt-73/2024-25/ 2341-47      Dated: - 17/03/2025

# 'All We Imagine As Light', 'Santosh' actor Shahana Goswami win big at Asian Film Awards

**LOS ANGELES, March 17:** Payal Kapadia's 'All We Imagine As Light', 'Santosh' star Shahana Goswami and its director Sandhya Suri won top honours at the Asian Film Awards 2025.

The 18th edition of the awards took place on Sunday at the Xiqu Centre in the West Kowloon Cultural District, Hong Kong. The Asian Film Awards shared the winner's list on its official website.

All We Imagine As Light went on to win the Best Film award. It was in the competition alongside 'Black Dog' (China), 'Exhuma' (South Korea), 'Teki Cometh' (Japan) and 'Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In' (Hong Kong). Goswami was named

the Best Actress for her role in 'Santosh', which also won Suri the trophy of Best New Director.

'All We Imagine As Light', an official India-French co-production, charted history by becoming the first Indian title from India to win the Grand Prix Award at the Cannes Film Festival last year.

The widely-feted Malayalam-Hindi movie follows two nurses Prabha (Kani Kusruti) and Anu (Divya Prabha) from Kerala navigating life and love in Mumbai along with their friend and cook Parvati (Chhaya Kadam).

'Santosh' revolves around a newly widowed housewife (Goswami) as she inherits her late hus-

band's job as a police constable and becomes embroiled in the investigation of a young girl's murder.

It is a joint production of India, United Kingdom, France, Germany.

Other nominees in the Best Actress category were: Kani Kusruti ('All We Imagine As Light'), Sylvia Chang ('Daughter's Daughter'), Kawai Yuumi ('Desert of Namibia'), and Kim Go-eun ('Exhuma').

Suri, a British-Indian filmmaker, bested Yamanaka Yoko ('Desert of Namibia'), Sora Neo ('Happyend'), Dong Zijian ('My Friend An Delie'), and Truong Minh Quy ('Viet and Nam') in the Best New Director category. (PTI)



## Ayushmann Khurrana becomes 'Fit India Icon', talks on importance of health

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** Actor Ayushmann Khurrana has been named as the official 'Fit India Icon' by Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya at the inaugural ceremony which took place on Sunday in New Delhi.

The actor 40-year-old actor has joined Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Fit India Movement which aims "to inspire people to focus on their fitness and wellbeing," according to a press release.

The Fit India Movement is dedicated to fostering a culture of fitness through various initiatives and events. Its core objectives include promoting fitness as easy, fun, and free by showcasing simple and enjoyable ways to incorporate physical activity into daily routines, eliminating barriers to fitness.

Khurrana said "Good health empowers us to do anything".

"When your health is good, the challenges in life whether personal or professional seem manageable. But when your health is compromised, it becomes the only challenge that matters. A healthy individual is capable, confident, and resilient even when the world around them feels uncertain," he said in a statement.

"Health truly is everything. A healthy nation is a wealthy nation. When we are healthy, we are more productive, more prosperous and contribute to nation-building," he added.

Mandaviya said, "When celebrities like you come on this platform and give a positive message about Fit India, after hearing your words, many youngsters will get inspiration and will join the Fit India movement and stay fit."

Khurrana's latest work is "Dream Girl 2". Directed by Raaj Shaandilyaa, the film released in 2023 also starring Ananya Pandey. (PTI)



## Hindi version of Vijay Sethupathi-starrer 'Viduthalai: Part 2' to stream on ZEE5

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The second part of Tamil film "Viduthalai", directed by Vetrimaaran, will be available for ZEE5 subscribers in Hindi starting March 28.

Billed as a riveting political crime thriller, the movie stars Sethupathi as the enigmatic revolutionary Perumal alongside Soori, Manju Warrier, Kishore, and Rajiv Menon.

The first part of "Viduthalai" was released in March 2023 to rave reviews from the critics.

According to the official synopsis, "Viduthalai: Part 2" continues the intense journey of Perumal, a man whose life story weaves together anger, empathy, and a battle against an oppressive system. Following his capture, Perumal recounts his transformation from a righteous school teacher to a revolutionary leader, leaving Constable Kumaresan (played by Soori) caught between his duty and his growing understanding of Perumal's cause.

In the sequel, following his capture, Perumal begins to recount his life story to the officers transporting him, shedding light on his transformation from a righteous school teacher to a revolutionary leader.

Vetrimaaran, also known for films such as "Aadukalam", "Visaranai", "Vada Chennai", and "Asuran", said "Viduthalai: Part 2" delves

deeper into the lives and struggles of the characters.

"The film is a reflection of the raw realities faced by those caught in the crossfire of power and survival. I'm excited to see the story unfold for a wider audience through ZEE5, and I hope viewers, whether they are returning fans or new to the world of 'Viduthalai', will experience the intensity and depth of this narrative in Hindi," the filmmaker said in a statement.

"I'm truly excited for audiences to experience 'Viduthalai: Part 1 and 2' in Hindi as well. The audience can witness the evolution of my character, Perumal... Ultimately, it's a story of one man's courage to stand up for what he believes in, no matter the consequences. I truly hope that fans show the same love and support for 'Viduthalai: Part 2' in its digital release as they did during its theatrical run," added Sethupathi. Working on the "Viduthalai" films was an intense and a deeply personal journey, said Soori.

"Director Vetrimaaran has crafted a story that is both powerful and thought-provoking, and I feel truly honoured to be part of it. I hope audiences connect with Kumaresan's struggles and choices just as they did in Part 1. I am excited for everyone to experience this next chapter in Hindi as well." (PTI)

## LFW X FDCI 2025: Anamika Khanna to open gala; Tarun Tahiliani, Shantnu Nikhil to showcase pret labels

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The Lakmé Fashion Week, in partnership with the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI), will open on March 26 with the 25th edition of the gala presenting the pret labels by celebrated designers Tarun Tahiliani and Shantnu Nikhil, the organisers said on Monday.

Celebrated designer Anamika Khanna will open the fashion week, presented by the House of Lakmé, the Fashion Design Council of India (FDCI), and Reliance Brands (RBL), with her pret label AK|OK Anamika Khanna in partnership with the Lakmé 9to5 Hya-Matte range.

Tahiliani and Shantnu Nikhil will showcase their pret labels OTT Tarun Tahiliani and S&N by Shantnu Nikhil, respectively.

NIF Global presents GenNext will unveil three emerging talents: Abhichq, That Antique Piece, and Quarter.

Sunil Sethi, Chairman, FDCI, said it is a privilege to have been associated with the industry this long as the platform turns 25 years.

"Hopefully, our endeavour to provide a platform over these years for the business of fashion is being realised as we go along the way. This season promises to highlight exceptional design talent on the runway.

"Our aim is to create a dynamic platform for both established and emerging designers, showcasing their work to industry professionals while fostering new talent through our discovery initiatives. We are eagerly anticipating this season

and believe it will elevate the Indian fashion industry to new heights," Sethi said in a statement.

"As we commemorate 25 years of Lakmé Fashion Week, we take immense pride in our legacy of shaping the convergence of beauty and fashion in India.

"With a dynamic confluence of designers, cutting-edge beauty looks, and a continued emphasis on defining trends at scale, we are looking forward to our opening show titled Silver Collar, where we are collaborating with Anamika Khanna AK|OK to bring runway-inspired beauty to the daily work wardrobe of the woman at work," added Sunanda Khahtan, Vice President, Lakmé India.

Jaspreet Chandok, Group Vice President, Reliance Brands, said they are excited to return with an exhilarating line-up, showcasing outstanding design talent from India and around the world.

"This season will feature a diverse array of influential and visionary creators as we also look ahead to setting an agenda for the next 25 years. We're grateful for the ongoing support of our valued brand partners and are thrilled to welcome new collaborators to this dynamic journey. With high anticipation, we aim to transform the event into a vibrant epicentre of design, innovation, and sustainability at the iconic Jio World Center," Chandok said.

The fashion gala, which will conclude on March 30, will feature new partnerships, including NOTHING x Amit Aggarwal, Lufthansa x Falguni Shane

Peacock and L'Atelier 1664 x Shivan Narresh.

Sustainable fashion, a mainstay at the LFW X FDCI, will be presented through showcases by Eka, RKiwe City (CDC Winner), Khadi India showcase and a

special artisan designer Soumya Kala Vidya showcase.

NEXA presents 'The Spotlight' with the platform Somya Goyal who beat over 50 emerging designers for the coveted prize. Acclaimed designer showcases like

NEXA Presents AFEW Rahul Mishra & Lakmé Salon X Satya Paul by Abraham & Thakore will be held during the fashion show.

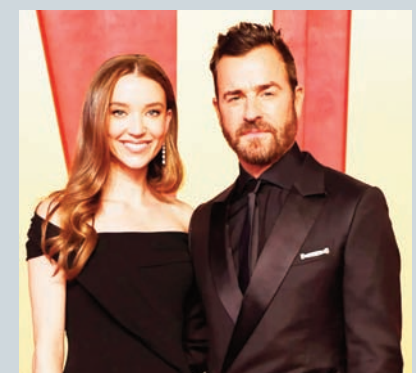
British fashion powerhouse ASOS will also make a grand entry on the Indian runway with its debut at the LFW X FDCI Lakmé Fashion Week X FDCI.

FDCI Stockroom, where people can explore and shop designer wear at jaw-dropping prices, will culminate the five-day-long initiative.

All showcases will be live-streamed across Lakmé, Lakmé Fashion Week, and FDCI social media channels as well as JioTV on OTT. (PTI)



## Justin Theroux, Nicole Brydon Bloom tie the knot



**LOS ANGELES, March 17:** Actor couple Justin Theroux and Nicole Brydon Bloom got married in a beach wedding in Tulum, Mexico over the weekend.

According to photos obtained by entertainment website TMZ, the duo can be seen dancing and hugging on the beach.

Theroux, 53, sported a classic tuxedo with a cream jacket and Bloom, 30, wore a flowy white dress.

The couple first sparked romance rumours in 2023 when they were spotted at a Netflix event together. They were then clicked sharing a kiss months later in August during a romantic date.

Theroux and Bloom made their first appearance as a couple on the red carpet of the 2024 Vanity Fair Oscars party.

They got engaged months later in August 2024. While this is Bloom's first marriage, Theroux was previously wedded to 'Friends' star Jennifer Aniston. (PTI)

# Inter takes a big step to retaining Serie A crown with 2-0 win at title rival Atalanta

**MILAN, March 17:** Inter Milan took a significant step to keeping its Serie A crown with a 2-0 win at title rival Atalanta.

Carlos Augusto and Lautaro Martinez scored in the second half to lift the league leader three points above second-placed Napoli and six points above third-placed Atalanta.

Napoli had earlier been held 0-0 at relegation-threatened Venezia.

The fight for the final Champions League spot is also tight, with just six points separating six teams in the race for fourth place after more misery for Juventus, which lost 3-0 at Fiorentina.

It was a head-to-head clash for top spot in Bergamo, with

Atalanta knowing that victory would move it level on points with Inter and Napoli.

Both sides had great chances in an entertaining first half, with Inter going closest with less than seven minutes on the clock.

Marcus Thuram was on the verge of wheeling away in celebration as he swept a finish past Atalanta goalkeeper Marco Carneschi and toward the far corner, following good play with Lautaro Martinez. But his effort bounced off the base of the right post.

At the other end, Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer pulled off a fantastic save to fingertip Mario Pasalic's header over the bar.

Inter broke the deadlock in

the 54th minute, immediately after play resumed following a delay of several minutes as a fan got medical treatment in the stands.

A corner was whipped in from the right and Carlos Augusto rose relatively unmarked to head into the bottom left corner.

It was only his third goal for Inter in two seasons at the club.

Lautaro thought he had doubled Inter's lead in the 71st but the whistle had already been blown for a foul by him on Berat Djimsiti.

Atalanta's chances of getting back into the match diminished nine minutes from time. Eder-son was booked for dissent and then sarcastically applauded the

referee, who showed the Atalanta midfielder a second yellow card and then a red.

Lautaro sealed the match six minutes later. Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini was still protesting the Ederson decision and he was also sent off.

Inter defender Alessandro Bastoni was

also sent off following a second yellow card.

It was another draw for Napoli — its fifth in its last seven matches.

Napoli almost got off to the perfect start in Venice but Giacomo Raspadori's effort came off the left post in the fourth minute.

Venezia also had plenty of chances, with the best opportunity coming three minutes from the break. Alex Meret did well to parry from Kike Pérez and Daniel Fila's follow-up was cleared off the line by Napoli defender Amir Rrahmani.

Napoli went even closer on the stroke of halftime but Ionut Radu pulled off a superb save to grasp Romelu Lukaku's header on the goaline.

It was a fourth straight draw for Venezia — with two of those coming against Atalanta and Lazio — but it remained in penultimate position in the standings, five points from safety.

Juventus coach Thiago Motta is under even more pressure

after his team slipped out of the top four, shipping seven goals in two matches and scoring none.

Robin Gosens and Rolando Mandragora scored within two minutes of each other in the first half and Albert Gudmundsson added another after the break as Fiorentina moved to within five points of the top four.

Juve's season was already in tatters after a dismal 4-0 loss at home to Atalanta last weekend. The Bianconeri had also been eliminated from the Champions League and Italian Cup.

Motta's former team, Bologna, replaced Juventus in fourth after an impressive 5-0 drubbing of sixth-placed Lazio.

Seventh-placed Roma beat Cagliari 1-0. (AP)



## BFI elections: Ajay Singh faces challenge from Kalita, Bhandari for President's post

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** Incumbent Boxing Federation of India chief Ajay Singh, who is eyeing a third consecutive term as president, will be up against Secretary General Hemanta Kalita and Vice President Rajesh Bhandari when the BFI holds its long-awaited elections on March 28.

Singh is also the chairman of SpiceJet Airlines and his name was proposed by the Uttarakhand state body.

He will be challenged by Assam Amateur Boxing Association secretary Kalita, Himachal Pradesh Boxing Association president Bhandari.

Bhandari has also applied for the North Zone vice president's post, which he currently holds. Kerala State Amateur Boxing Association secretary D Chandralal is the fourth contender for the President's post.

The election will take place during BFI's Annual General Meeting in Gurugram.

The last date for filing nominations was March 16.

Former Sports Minister Anurag Thakur was also expected to contest for the president's post, with the Himachal Pradesh Boxing Association sending his name as its representative. His name, however, did not figure in the Electoral College finalised by Singh even though Kalita included him in a separate list. However, the Return-



ing Officer R K Gauba, following established norms, approved the list given by the BFI head. Singh had said Thakur was "ineligible" to represent Himachal Pradesh.

Thakur's faction has not ruled out taking legal action against that decision.

For the secretary's post, multiple candidates have entered the fray, including Uttar Pradesh's Pramod

Kumar, Karnataka's Satish N, Odisha's Anil Kumar Bohidar, and incumbent treasurer Digvijay Singh (Madhya Pradesh). Digvijay has also filed a nomination for the treasurer's post. Eight zonal vice presidents and an equal number of zonal joint secretaries are also to be elected.

The scrutiny of nominations will take place on Tuesday, while the publication of the list of valid nominations and withdrawals are scheduled for March 19.

The BFI elections have been significantly delayed.

The body was supposed to conduct them before February 2 and federation sources said it was due to the ongoing turmoil in international boxing administration. A new world body is expected to take charge this week after the International Boxing Association was suspended for corruption and governance related issues.

Last month, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) formed a five-member ad hoc committee to oversee boxing affairs in the country. The move was promptly stayed by the Delhi High Court after the federation challenged it, calling it "arbitrary and illegal." (PTI)

## Omarzai's arrival at Punjab Kings delayed due to personal reasons

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** Afghanistan all-rounder Azamatullah Omarzai's arrival at Punjab Kings has been delayed due to personal reasons ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League.

The foreign players of Punjab Kings are arriving from Monday onwards but Omarzai, the ICC ODI Player of the Year, would be able to join the squad only on March 20.

Punjab Kings play their season opener against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad on March 25.

The season also marks the start of captain Shreyas Iyer and head coach Ricky Ponting's

journey at Punjab Kings. Ponting linked up with the team in Dharamsala.

The Indian players of the squad, including new recruit Yuzvendra Chahal, reached Chandigarh on Sunday night after a training camp in Dharamsala where they will play three home games this season.

Lead pacer Arshdeep Singh and captain Iyer, who were part of India's Champions Trophy squad, have also joined the team in Chandigarh. The Indian players were given a week off post the Champions Trophy triumph. (PTI)

## XXth Tadar Tang State Level Football Tournament kicks off in Tawang

**HT Correspondent**  
**TAWANG, March 17:** The XXth Tadar Tang State Level Football Tournament, Zone IV (West Zone), commenced on Monday at Gyalwa Tsangyang Gyatso High Altitude Stadium, Tawang.

A total of six teams - Capital Complex, Pakke Kesang, West Kameng, East Kameng, Bichom, and Tawang - are competing in this prestigious zonal tournament.

In his inaugural address, Deputy Commissioner Tawang extended a warm welcome to all participating teams and urged them to uphold discipline and sportsmanship. Highlighting the significance of physical fit-



ness and good health, he encouraged players to set higher goals and aspire to represent the state and country at the international level.

Brigadier Bhupal Singh, Commander of Tawang Brigade, also conveyed his best wishes to the teams and expressed gratitude to the organizers for bringing a state-level tournament to Tawang. He assured full cooperation

and support from the Tawang Brigade to ensure the tournament's success.

Tawang District Football Association executive members Tashi Dhondup and Urgan Dorjee expressed their gratitude to Chief Minister Pema Khandu and the Arunachal Pradesh Football Association for their support in promoting football in the region.

The tournament began with three exciting matches: Match 1: East Kameng defeated Bichom with a score of 4-1. Match 2: Pakke Kesang won against West Kameng with a close score of 3-2. Match 3: Capital Complex

dominated Tawang, securing a 5-0 victory.

The inaugural function was graced by several dignitaries, including SP Tawang Dr. DW Thongon, District BJP President Lhundup Choising, District NPP President Phurpa Lama, District Olympic Association President Dr. Rinchin Neema, and public leader Tenzin Monpa, alongside the Deputy Commissioner, Commander Tawang Brigade, and enthusiastic spectators.

The tournament is set to continue with more thrilling matches in the coming days, promising an exciting showcase of football talent in Arunachal Pradesh.

## McLaren has ominous pace, Hamilton has work to do: 5 takeaways from F1's season-opener

**LONDON, March 17:** Lando Norris heads to the second round of the Formula 1 season in China with a lead over champion Max Verstappen after winning a thrilling race in Australia.

Ahead of Sunday's race in Shanghai, here are five takeaways from the season-opening Australian Grand Prix: Without the rain and the safety car, the Australian Grand Prix might not have been much of a contest.

The two McLarens of Norris and Oscar Piastri quickly built a lead of more than 15 seconds to Verstappen in third early in the race. The McLarens were also three-tenths of a second faster than anyone else in qualifying. So much for pre-season predictions that this year could be exceptionally close between multiple teams.

Norris acknowledged McLaren are favorites but warned the team shouldn't get complacent. "If you start thinking things are good and groovy, that's when you get caught," he said. "We will have races where we struggle."

Lewis Hamilton briefly led on his Ferrari debut. Unfortunately for the seven-time champion, a strategy blunder meant Ferrari left Hamilton and his new teammate Charles Leclerc on dry tires in increasingly heavy rain. "Missed a big opportunity," Hamilton told Ferrari over the radio. Hamilton finished 10th, two places behind Leclerc.

Hamilton and Ferrari may need to work on their communication. After more than a decade working with Peter "Bono" Bonnington at Mercedes, Hamilton was

frustrated at regular radio updates from his new engineer Riccardo Adami. "Leave me to it, please," he said repeatedly.

No one expected Liam Lawson, in his 12th career F1 race, to beat his four-time champion teammate Verstappen. However, Lawson also underperformed compared to Yuki Tsunoda, his old teammate, after being picked over Tsunoda for the Red Bull seat. Lawson qualified 18th and made little progress before crashing out. Tsunoda qualified fifth and was competitive, though a team strategy error meant he finished 12th. If Lawson doesn't improve, Red Bull could face even more scrutiny of its decision to pick him.

Formula 1's biggest rookie class in years struggled — with one big exception. The 18-year-old

Andrea Kimi Antonelli became the second-youngest driver ever to score F1 points, behind only Verstappen, as he finished fourth with a strong drive from 16th. Of the other drivers starting their first full F1 seasons, Lawson, Sauber's Gabriel Bortoleto and Alpine's Jack Doohan crashed out, Racing Bulls' Isack Hadjar crashed before the start and Haas' Oliver Bearman was the last finisher in 14th.

Alex Albon benefited from his new teammate as he finished fifth for Williams' best result since 2021. Carlos Sainz, Jr. crashed out early but joined the team staff on the pit wall to offer Albon advice over the radio on how best to handle the rapidly changing weather. "We're a very bonded team," Albon said. (AP)

**KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL**  
**DEPARTMENT OF WORKS**  
**KAAAC:: SECRETARIAT**  
**DIPHU- 782460**

No. KAAC/W-11/2024-25/527 Dtd 17/03/2025

**TENDER NOTICE**

Scaled tender affixing Non refundable KAAC court fee stamp (receipt) Rs.10.00 (Rupees Ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor/reputed firms of Works Department and will be receive by the undersigned upto 4 P. M. on 20/03/2025 and will opened on the same date, place and the hours in presence of the tenderers or their authorized agent if any.

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

Sl. No.	Name of Works	Tender Amount (Rs.)	A/A Amount (Rs.)	Earnest money	Time allowed for completion
1.	Construction of foot bridge near ST/SC/ Lungmailam Daikho at Lower Mohondijua, Karbi Anglong	25,00,000.00	25,00,000.00	ST/SC/ OBC=1% General =2%	Days 30
2.	Construction of ADSU office building, Land filling, Construction of Iron gate and boundary wall at Dhansiri Bazaar, Karbi Anglong Assam.	57,90,900.00	57,90,900.00	ST/SC/ OBC=1% General =2%	Days 30

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

**Terms & Conditions**

**N.B**

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

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer(Works),  
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,  
Diphu

Memo No. KAAC/W-11/2024-25/ Dtd \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/2025

# Bowling worries at IPL: KKR, SRH, MI have most balanced attacks

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** In a tournament that has fans flocking the grounds to see batters smash everything out of the park, bowlers have gradually established themselves as the cornerstone of success and the upcoming edition of IPL is going to be no different.

If one looks at the bowling units of various IPL outfits, defending champions Kolkata Knight Riders, five-time champions Mumbai Indians and last year's runners-up Sunrisers Hyderabad have the most balanced line-ups.

With all-rounders rendered less useful due to the Impact Player Rule, most teams now look at playing five specialist bowlers. Some even have luxury of playing the sixth bowler if need be while defending a total.

So, what makes KKR special in terms of bowling? In Harshit Rana, who has the uncanny ability of taking wickets with sheer pace and extra bounce, they have a potent Indian fast bowling option.

He would be supported by Varun Chakravarty, who has been India's T20 trump card in recent years.

Add to that mix Anrich Nortje's blistering pace and Sunil Narine's guile, and 16 overs will be sorted for the side on most days.

The uncapped Vaibhav Arora was impressive last year and there is Andre Russell too who can always chip in with an over or two. In all of KKR's seven home games at the Eden Gardens, this attack came expected to be lethal.

In addition, Ramandeep Singh, and vice-captain Venkatesh Iyer can chip in with an over or two as per the team's requirements.

In case Nortje doesn't fire, there is the six-foot left-armner Spencer Johnson. On tracks like the one in Chennai, Moeen Ali's off breaks could also be handy.

By the look of things, KKR does have the best bowling attack on paper.



Mumbai Indians have had a torrid last four years even. But they have managed to retain their bowling core. In skipper Hardik Pandya, they have a proper bowler who can win matches with a sharp spell of fast bowling.

But MI's campaign will also depend on how the attack performs till Jasprit Bumrah joins them in April.

The momentum shifts very quickly in IPL but a fit-again Deepak Chahar could be a handful with his incisive swing bowling during Powerplay overs.

He will have support of Trent Boult, who can bring the ball back into the right-handers at the start of the innings.

Mitchell Santner has mastered in the Indian conditions although MI would have fancied better quality of Indian spinners compared to lucky mascot for IPL

teams Karn Sharma in their squad. Once Bumrah comes in, the MI bowling will be too hot to handle.

For Sunrisers Hyderabad, the biggest challenge for bowlers is to counter the flatness of the Uppal track.

But in Pat Cummins and Mohammed Shami, they have two smart operators who can assert themselves if the batting unit piles on the big scores.

The third Indian pacer could be a weak link but

Harshal Patel, despite a higher economy rate, is a good death overs bowler.

While they have a wrist spinner in Adam Zampa, it would be difficult to include him in all conditions. In this scenario, Rahul Chahar and Abhishek Sharma's slow bowling would be handy.

Talking about multiple utility bowlers, Ashish Nehra's Gujarat Titans is also a fine unit with World's

best T20 bowler Rashid Khan there to support Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Siraj, and Prasadidh Krishna.

To support Rashid in slow bowling, Tamil Nadu captain R Sai Kishore and also Washington Sundar will have crucial roles to play.

For Rajasthan Royals, they have got a better spin attack with one among Wanindu Hasaranga and Maheesh Theekana set to play. Riyan Parag's off-breaks are also handy.

But it's the pace department where Jofra Archer might need more support from Indian bowlers.

Sandeep Sharma is good in specific conditions and young Railways man Ashok Sharma, who recently clocked 146 kmph in U23 Irani Cup is man to watch out for.

Ditto for CSK where save Matheesa Pathirana and R Ashwin, others in bowling unit don't inspire much confidence.

Mukesh Chaudhary was good a few seasons back and Anshul Kamboj is not bad either but whether they can deliver consistently is the question.

Khaleel Ahmed has been playing for nearly 10 years but no team has had faith in him in death overs where he has been profligate save the one odd season for Delhi Capitals.

Lucknow Super Giants had punted on Mayank Yadav's pace but it is still not clear when India's fastest bowler will be available.

The batting has a lot of firepower but the overall bowling unit looks a bit short on experience.

For Delhi Capitals, 12 overs out of 20 are taken care of by skipper Axar Patel, Mitchell Starc and Kuldeep Yadav but inconsistency in T20 has been the Australian's bane.

However, T Natarajan and Mukesh Kumar's variations will keep DC fans interested with two specialist death bowlers who can bowl those wide Yorkers which can make or break games.(PTI)

## Ensure gender parity of athletes in events: Delhi HC to sports ministry

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** The Delhi High Court has directed the central sports ministry to ensure parity when it comes to participation of men and women athletes in the events of the national sports federations.

Justice Sachin Datta also directed the ministry to ensure that the pool of participating athletes was "broad enough" to include not only the athletes who had participated in international events, but it must also adequately accommodate those who participated in domestic or local or Khelo India sporting events.

The court order of March 12 came on a plea challenging a February 13, 2025 notification issued by the Badminton Association of India (BAI), restricting the participation of women para-athletes by providing them with only eight slots per event whereas men para-athletes received 16 slots.

"It is a matter of record that female athletes have brought significant sporting glory to the country and this court cannot countenance a situation where equilibrium is not maintained between the male and female contingents in sporting events," it added.

The judge said the allocation of lesser slots to women para-athletes did not commend itself to the court.

The principle of gender parity in sports was mandated under constitutional provisions as also in terms of the National Sports Development Code of India, 2011, it said.

The court added, "... it is directed that the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports must endeavour to ensure that parity is maintained in the participation of male and female athletes in sporting events organised by the National Sports Federations."

The court, as a result, disposed of a plea of one Rahul Kumar Verma challenging the BAI's circular, notifying the selection criteria for participation in the para-badminton events under the second Khelo India Para Games, 2025, to be held in Delhi between March 20 and March 22.

The plea said the notification amounted to discrimination against women athletes and was contrary to the National Sports Development Code of India, 2011.

The court also termed as "untenable" the submission of BAI's counsel who attributed the reduced slots of the women para-athletes to the reduced pool of performing international athletes in the sporting events concerned.

The court said there was no reason why the participation of women para-athletes should not be augmented by drawing from the pool of para-athletes who participated in the National Para-badminton Championship, 2024 and the Khelo India Para Games, 2023.

It would also allay the concern that disproportionate weightage has been given to participation in international events, it added.

The BAI counsel said in the upcoming Khelo India Para Games, 2025, it would try to increase the participation of women para-athletes by providing for additional slots by drawing from the pool of participants in the National Para-badminton Championship, 2024 and the Khelo India Para Games, 2023.

Taking note of the submission and the fact that the Khelo India Para Games, 2025 were just round the corner, the court refrained from "passing any peremptory/binding directions". (PTI)

## PSG win over Marseille marred by homophobic, racist chants



**PARIS, March 17:** A French campaign group has called on the country's authorities to punish homophobic and racist chanting after PSG fans displayed insulting banners directed at her and her son.

"I don't understand why the match wasn't stopped," she said, denouncing double standards. "I don't understand why nobody is outraged. Why are some matches stopped and not others?"

The Rouge Direct group said the derogatory chanting should be tackled more seriously, especially as it was broadcast and seen by millions of TV spectators including children.

The discriminatory chants at the Parc des Princes were the latest in a series of similar incidents. Homophobic insults often heard at Ligue 1 matches have been tolerated for a long time by club officials.

Following a match at the Parc des Princes in 2019 between PSG and Marseille, during which home fans used homophobic insults, the league launched an action plan allowing spectators to report sexist, homophobic or racist incidents they witness.

French clubs have been sanctioned with fines, and the league's disciplinary commission also ordered the closure of stands for similar cases in recent years.

French law provides for up to one year's imprisonment and a 45,000 euros (\$47,600) fine when anti-gay insults are made in public.

Earlier this season, PSG was forced to close part of the Parc des Princes as punishment for homophobic chanting by its fans. Marseille supporters were banned from attending Sunday's match. They, too, have been criticized for their repeated homophobic chanting at the Velodrome Stadium.

PSG extended its lead at the top to 19 points with eight rounds remaining. (AP)

Rabiot's mother Veronique, who is also his agent, told Radio France that she will be lodging a complaint after PSG fans displayed insulting banners directed at her and her son.

"I don't understand why the match wasn't stopped," she said, denouncing double standards. "I don't understand why nobody is outraged. Why are some matches stopped and not others?"

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PSG extended its lead at the top to 19 points with eight rounds remaining. (AP)

## Sindhu, Lakshya hope to regain form at Swiss Open

**BASEL, March 17:** Star shuttlers PV Sindhu and Lakshya Sen will continue their quest to regain top form when the USD 250,000 Swiss Open gets underway here on Tuesday, featuring draws that are crowded with Indians.

Two-time Olympic medallist Sindhu, who is seeded seventh, will take on Malvika Bansod, India's number-two female shuttler, in a clash between two generations.

Lakshya will also face a compatriot in HS Prannoy, who is a 2016 winner here, in his men's singles opening match of the BWF Super 300 tournament.

Sindhu, the 2022 champion, suffered an opening round exit from the All England Championship last week after returning to action following a hamstring injury. Malvika, however, logged a confidence-boosting win over Singapore's Yeo Jia Min at the same event. Lakshya and Prannoy too endured contrasting results in Birmingham last week with the former reaching the quarterfinals and the latter going down in the opening round.

The Indian shuttlers have a formidable record at the Swiss Open. Past champions include Sindhu, K Srikanth, Prannoy, Sameer Verma, Saina Nehwal, and the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty.

This will be the first encounter between Lakshya and Prannoy, who were a part of the 2022 Thomas Cup-winning team, since the Paris Olympics.

Lakshya, who finished fourth at the Paris Olympics, defeated Indonesia's Jonatan Christie last week, while Prannoy, having returned from a long lay-off due to chikungunya, has struggled with early exits since his comeback.

Among others, Aakarshi Kashyap and Anupama Upadhyaya will also aim for a decent run in women's singles.

While Kashyap is facing a qualifier, Upadhyaya will take on Denmark's Line Hojmark Kjaersfeldt. Rakshitree Sree Santhosh Ramraj will meet another Danish player, Line Christophersen, in her opening match.

In men's singles, Kiran George, who made waves by reaching the quarterfinals at the India Open Super 750, will look to live up to

his potential when he faces Denmark's tricky Rasmus Gemke. Priyanshu Rajawat will take on Switzerland's Tobias Kuenzi.

After a quarterfinal finish at the All England Championship, Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, seeded fourth here, will square off against Aline Muller and Kelly Van Buiten in their opening match.

Other Indian women's pairs in fray include Priya Konjengbam/Shruti Mishra and Arathi Sara Sunil/Varshini Viswanath Sri.



National Games gold-medallists Sathish Karunakaran and Aadya Variyath will square off against Kocceila Mammeri and Tanina Violette Mammeri in mixed doubles. In the men's singles qualifiers, five Indians -- 2015 champion Kidambi Srikanth, Ayush Shetty, Tharun Manneppalli, S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian, and Sathish -- will compete.

Isharani Baruah, Tasnim Mir, and Anmol Kharb will battle it out in the women's singles qualification. (PTI)

The court said there was no reason why the participation of women para-athletes should not be augmented by drawing from the pool of para-athletes who participated in the National Para-badminton Championship, 2024 and the Khelo India Para Games, 2023.

It would also allay the concern that disproportionate weightage has been given to participation in international events, it added.

The BAI counsel said in the upcoming Khelo India Para Games, 2025, it would try to increase the participation of women para-athletes by providing for additional slots by drawing from the pool of participants in the National Para-badminton Championship, 2024 and the Khelo India Para Games, 2023.

Taking note of the submission and the fact that the Khelo India Para Games, 2025 were just round the corner, the court refrained from "passing any peremptory/binding directions". (PTI)

## Assam Rifles Women Sentinel Cup 2025 kicks off

**HT Correspondent BISWANATH CHARIALI, March 17:** The Assam Rifles Women Sentinel Cup 2025 kicked off at Lokra Garrison Football Ground with great enthusiasm, bringing together seven state teams from across the Northeast along with the DGAR Women's Football Team.

The opening ceremony held on March 16 was graced by Ankur Bharali (ACS) District Commissioner of Sonitpur and Kumar Chandra Vikram, DIG SSB Training Centre Salonibari as the chief guests along with other dignitaries.

The participating teams include Nagaland, Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, DGAR Women's Football Team, Assam and Meghalaya. The tournament aims to promote women's football and foster sportsmanship among the youth.

The first match played between Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh kicked off at 1300 hours setting the stage for an exciting competition. Assam Rifles continues its commitment to empowering women in sports strengthening community ties and inspiring young athletes in the region.

## Men's national hockey camp begins with focus on analysing recent performances, says coach Fulton

**BENGALURU, March 17:** The men's national hockey camp, featuring a 36-member core probable group, began at the SAI Centre here on Monday, with chief coach Craig Fulton saying the focus will be on "introspecting" on recent performances.

The camp will conclude on March 28. "It has been a busy season for the players with back-to-back events and high-quality matches. During this camp, our focus will be more on fitness and conditioning apart from introspecting on the recent performances and where we stand in terms of key focus areas," Fulton was quoted as saying in a Hockey India release.

"Our efforts now will be towards building up for the matches in the next phase of Pro League in Europe and I will also be interested in seeing how some of the fresh talents live up to the billing," he added.

Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Pawan, Suraj Karkera and Mohith Honnenahalli Shashikumar are the goalkeepers who have been named

in the core group, while Jarmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas, Sumit, Sanjay, Jugraj Singh, Amandeep Lakra, Nilam Sanjeev Xess, Varun Kumar and Yashdeep Siwach are the defenders. Rajkumar Pal, Shamsheer Singh, Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Nilakanta Sharma, Moirangthem Rabichandra Singh, Mohd Raheel Mousen, Vishnukant Singh, Rajinder Singh and Poovanna CB are the midfielders named in the core probable group. Among forwards, Abhishek, Sukhjeet Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Gurjant Singh, Angad Bir Singh, Aditya Arjun Lalage, Bobby Singh Dhami, Sudeep Chirmako, Selvam Karthi, Shilananand Lakra, Dilpreet Singh and Uttam Singh have been called up for the short two-week camp. Striker Amandeep Singh, who is set to get married next week, has been exempted from the camp.

In their recent outing in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024-25, the Indian team impressed with five wins out of the eight matches it played at home. (PTI)

## Khelo India Para Games important platform for growth of para athletes: Paralympic champion Navdeep

**NEW DELHI, March 17:** Paris Paralympics gold medal-winning javelin thrower Navdeep Singh believes the Khelo India Para Games is an important platform for the continued growth of para athletes.

The second edition of the Khelo India Para Games (KIPG 2025) is set to kick off on Thursday and Navdeep, an Arjuna awardee, feels the tournament will help in developing the sporting ecosystem for para athletes.

"KIPG 2025 is a great platform for senior athletes to compete against each other. We also motivate each other at all times. It further helps us in testing our training modules and practice our strengths and weaknesses before international competitions.

"We also get a chance to meet with budding athletes and get to exchange different ideas and

thoughts on the competitions," Navdeep told SAI Media.

Over 1200 para athletes will participate across six disciplines in the seven-day tournament at three venues -- Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Indira Gandhi Stadium and the Dr Karni Singh shooting range -- in New Delhi.

"After India's performance at Paris Paralympics, there is a growing interest in the Para Games, with a lot of youngsters coming up. I am confident the Khelo India Para Games 2025 will also see several new athletes joining in to compete," Navdeep said.

"I am hopeful the country will get to witness new talent, which will help in recognising future prospects.

The inaugural edition of the Khelo India Para Games took place in December 2023 and proved to be a success.

At least 25 athletes competing in the first edition of KIPG were among India's 84-member contingent for the 2024 Paralympics in Paris.

Navdeep also competed in KIPG 2023 and claimed a silver medal. At the Paris Paralympics, he won the javelin throw gold in F41 category.

"The domestic tournaments are important for growth of para athletes. In the recently concluded World Para Athletics Grand Prix 2025, several new athletes were also introduced and earned opportunities. KIPG 2025 will further help in unearthing of talent in the country," the 24-year-old added.

Among other elite para athletes to participate in the event are Paris gold medallists Harvinder Singh (archery), Dharambir (club thrower) and Praveen Kumar (high jump). (PTI)

