

Contribution of northeast most important in making developed India, says Amit Shah

NEW DELHI, March 11: Union Home Minister Amit Shah Tuesday said the contribution of the northeastern region will be most important in the making of a developed India.

Addressing the North-East Students' and Youth Parliament organised by the Student Experience in Inter-Štate Living (SEIL), he also said the Narendra Modi government is fully committed to the development, unity and peace of the northeast.

The northeast is very close to the heart of Prime Minister Modi and the Government of India, he said.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the northeast the focal point of every programme of the Central government. The contribution of the northeast will be the most important in the building of a developed India," he said.

The home minister highlighted the region's immense potential to attract global attention, especially from a tourism perspective.

He also praised the youth of the northeast for having the highest IQ in India and noted that the region is home to some of the most hard-



Shah emphasised the northeast is rest of the country but also among the states within the region, the a land of diversity with over 220 tribal groups, 160 tribes, 200 di-Union home minister pointed out. alects and languages, 50 unique As a result, the region faced a festivals, and more than 30 world-

40-year delay in development, with terrorism and separatist groups being the primary obstacles during He acknowledged that despite its many unique qualities, the norththis period, he said. east lagged in development due to The home minister said when-

a time when insurgency and sepaever the BJP came to power, it alratism were fuelled by creating varways prioritised the Northeast. He mentioned that previously, there Violence, bandhs, drugs, blockwas no separate ministry for such a ades, and regionalism fragmented large and underdeveloped region, the region, causing a divide not but it was (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

new announcements even as assembly polls are due next year, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday. He maintained that the Assam government is pursuing a model of development where physical infrastructure is built along with taking forward culture and heritage, and funds are made available to the lowest strata to boost economic ac-

GUWAHATI, March 11: The Assam budget for 2025-26 is fo-

cused on the expansion of existing

schemes and ensuring that benefits

percolate to more people, with no

tivities. Sarma was speaking in the assembly during a discussion on the state budget, his government's last full-fledged one, which was presented by Finance Minister Ajanta Neog on Monday.

Assembly elections in Assam are likely to take place during March-April next year.

"Some are trying to say that this is an election budget. But, there are no new announcements in it. The



Himanta bins Oppn's 'election budget' slur

No new announcements in state budget, focus on

budget focuses on taking forward crore in 2015-16 to nearly ₹ 25,000 the existing schemes with some crore in 2024-25. new additions," he said. The state is expected to cross ₹

Some of the new additions in the budget relate to the ones about the OTT platform for Assamese content, especially the old classics, and its own satellite, the CM said.

Asserting that the state has improved its financial parameters, Sarma said the capital expenditure

said Sarma. increased from around ₹ 3,000

able to maintain a good debt-to-GSDP ratio, registering a higher GSDP annual growth rate than the national average since 2015-16, making it among the "fastest growing states in the country"

The chief minister highlighted various infrastructure development initiatives in the budget, "which align with the government's focus on equal growth in all parts of the state"

Sarma also asserted that his government is focused on creating infrastructure and conserving the state's heritage and culture, which is the "new model of development, where development happens in all sectors"

"We are emerging as a manufacturing hub, an economic hub and also as a soft power," he said.

The recognition of Charaideo Moidam as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, classical language status to Assamese, a world record through 'Bihu' dance performance and a mega 'Jhumur' dance recital He said Assam has also been are some (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

4 B'deshi infiltrators nabbed, deported: CM

GUWAHATI, March 11: Four infiltrators from Bangladesh have been nabbed and deported to the neighbouring country, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

They have been identified as Abdul Kabir, Bodhiur Rahman, Md Tayub and Abdul Kalam.

In a post on X after Monday midnight, the CM said, "4 illegal infiltrators held and deported ... Continuing with their efforts to combat infiltration, @assampolice apprehended 4 Bangladeshi nationals and pushed them back across the border. Great work team!"

Sarma, however, did not mention where they were nabbed or through which border district they were deported. The CM had earlier claimed that 305 infiltrators from Bangladesh have been nabbed and sent back to their country in the last seven months and the state govern-

Law and order situation improves in Manipur; to get all financial support: FM Sitharaman NEW DELHI. March 11: Fi-

nance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday said all financial support will be provided to Manipur for economic development as she stressed the overall law and order situation has improved in the northeastern state, except for some sporadic incidents.

renowned dance forms.

ious illusions and disputes.

The Minister was replying to the discussion on Supplementary Demands for Grant (SDG) Second Batch 2024-25, Demands for Excess Grants for 2021-22, Manipur Budget 2025-26 and SDG (Ma-

nipur) 2024-25 in the Lok Sabha. Sitharaman on Monday tabled the Manipur budget for 2025-26, envisaging an expenditure of ₹ 35,103.90 crore, up from ₹ 32,656.81 crore in the current financial year.

Over 2.43 crore tourists visited

Assam in last four years: Minister



Consequent to the Proclamation issued under Article 356 of the Constitution on February 13, 2025, the powers of the Legislature of the State of Manipur are exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament.

She informed the House that "...with the collective effort of arms and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Top global intelligence czars to converge in India this weekend to hold crucial deliberations

32,000 crore in capital expenditure

In terms of budget utilisation, it

was 63 per cent in 2015-16, the last

fiscal of Congress CM Tarun

Gogoi's 15-year-regime, which has

gone up to 83 per cent in 2024-25,

during the next fiscal, he said.

NEW DELHI, March 11: The US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, Canadian spy chief Daniel Rogers and Britain's MI6 boss Richard Moore will be among top global intelligence czars converging in India this weekend to attend a security conclave, people familiar with the matter said on Tuesday.

India's National Security Advisor Ajit Doval is set to chair the India-hosted conclave on March 16 which is expected to deliberate on ways to enhance intelligence-sharing to combat terrorism and various transnational crimes

Intelligence chiefs of Australia, Germany, New Zealand and several other friendly countries of India are also expected to join the deliberations to be held in New Delhi.

both the Centre and state government, there has been an improve-Gabbard is visiting India as part of a multi-nation ment in overall law and order tour of Japan, Thailand and France. situation in the state, to a large ex-

It will be the first high-level visit to India by a top official of the Donald Trump administration.

Besides attending the intelligence chiefs' conclave, Gabbard is likely to address the Raisina Dialogue and hold a one-on-one meeting with NSA Doval.

It is learnt that the US Director of National Intelligence (DNI) will arrive in India on March 15 after concluding her trip to Thailand. Last month, Gabbard met Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his visit to Washington DC.

The conclave of the security and intelligence chiefs is expected to bring together heads and deputy heads of the intelligence and security organisations of around 20 nations.

In their deliberations, the intelligence chiefs are also expected to focus on various global challenges including implications of the Russia-Ukraine war and the conflict in the Middle East.

The security and intelligence chiefs are also likely to discuss ways to deal with terror financing as well as crimes in the digital space, the people cited above said.

The visit to India by Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) chief Rogers is taking place amid frosty ties between the two countries over the Hardeep Singh Nijjar case. The ties between India and Canada came under severe strain (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ment was committed to an "infil tration-free (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Yaba tablets worth ₹ 30 cr seized, 1 arrested: CM

GUWAHATI, March 11: Yaba tablets worth ₹ 30 crore have been seized and a person has been arrested in this connection in Assam's Cachar district, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. A total of 98,000 tablets, along with ₹ 3.5 lakh in cash, were seized during the operation in Lakhipur police station area on Monday night, he said.

"Massive drug bust in Assam: 98,000 Yaba tablets seized worth ₹ 30 crore! Thanks to credible intelligence, @cacharpolice launched an anti-narcotics operation in Chandrapur Part II, Kakmara, under Lakhipur police station, resulting in the arrest of a suspect with 98,000 Yaba tablets valued at ₹ 30 crore and ₹ 3.5 lakh in cash. Kudos to @assampolice for their tireless efforts towards a #DrugFreeAssam," Sarma posted on X. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

GUWAHATI, March 11: Over 2.43 crore tourists visited Assam in the last four years, Tourism Minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass told the assembly on Tuesday.

Replying to a question by Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi, Dass said the total number of tourists visiting the state from 2021-22 to December of 2024-25 is 2,43,64,180. Among them, 60,306 were foreign tourists, he said.

The year 2022-23 recorded the highest tourist footfall at 98,31,141, followed by 70.67.335 tourists visiting the state in 2023-24. The number of tourists was 17,02,932 in 2021-22, while it was 57,62,772 in 2024-25 (till December).

Replying to another question by AIUDF legislator Aminul Islam, the minister said the state government has been taking up schemes for infrastructure development, publicity, and skill development to

promote the tourism sector. To promote river tourism, the department started a luxury cruise service, 'Jalporee', on the Brahmaputra river in Guwahati in 1991-92 and 'Mahabahu' from Guwahati to Majuli in 2011-12.

Moreover, plans are afoot for a 'hop on hop off' boat service connecting eight major religious destinations in Guwahati and its adjoining areas situated along the Brahmaputra river. For its implementation, a new

body has been formed jointly by Sagarmala Development Co. Ltd, Inland Waterways Authority of India Ltd, the state Tourism Department and Inland Water Transport Department, Assam. "It has been christened 'Brahma-

putra Sagarmala Mandir Dar-SPV Pvt Ltd' and shanam entrusted with the implementation of the project," Dass added. (PTI)

GUWAHATI, March 11: The North East Tea Association (NETA) on Tuesday welcomed the Assam budget's proposal for an AI-driven, blockchain-based tea auctioning system in the state.

tent, except for some sporadic (in-

cidents)," Sitharaman said.

It also lauded the extension given to the exemption of green leaf cess for another two years.

"The proposal in the state budget presented on Monday for an AI-driven, blockchain-based tea auctioning system is an excellent initiative and we welcome this step of the government," NETA advisor Bidyananda Barkakoty said on Tuesday.

According to the budget proposal, the Assam government will work with tea industry stakeholders to introduce India's first AI-driven, blockchain-based tea auctioning system to enhance transparency and efficiency

The digital platform will revolu-

tionise the tea trade by ensuring secure transactions and fair pricing. The initiative will strengthen Assam's position as a global leader in the tea industry, it said.

Assam tea body welcomes proposal for

AI-driven, blockchain-based auctioning system

Barkakoty pointed out that a blockchain auction is a decentralised, transparent and tamperproof auctioning system built using blockchain technology which will ensure fair bidding, eliminate fraud and provide immutable records of transactions.

"We must, however, go step-bystep by first introducing Artificial Intelligence and then blockchain so that trade is not disrupted," he added. The former vice chairman of the Tea Board of India further said that NETA is also happy over the extension given to the exemption of green leaf cess for another two

The extension on exemption of green leaf cess was given in the

budget in 2022 for a period of three years effective from January 1, 2022 and it expired on December 31, 2024.

This year's budget further extended the exemption by another two years under the 'Assam Taxation (on specified lands) Act'.

Prior to 2022, tax of 40 paisa per kg of green leaf was levied for lands exceeding 40 hectares and 25 paisa per kg of green leaf for lands not exceeding 40 hectares.

Barkakoty also urged the state government to have provisions for generic promotion of Assam Tea so that the per capita consumption of tea increases in the country.

"Engaging a brand ambassador for Assam Tea can further help the generic promotion," he added. The budget proposals also in-

clude provisions for 800 four-seater trailer-mounted mobile toilets to

cover all the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

World in worse situation because of inaction

NEW DELHI, March 11: Climate impacts are unfolding faster than expected and scientists have been surprised by the speed of temperature rise, the chief of the United Nations' climate science panel has said.

In an interview with PTI, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Chair Jim Skea said the world is in a worse situation than three years ago due to inaction on climate change

"If you look back over the last, say, five years or so, I think scientists have been surprised by the speed at which temperatures have risen globally and by the very obvious nature of climate impacts we have already seen... wildfires in some parts of the world, floods and more extreme events.

"So, things do appear to be happening, perhaps more quickly than people expected," he told PTI.

The year 2024 was the hottest year on record and the first with the global average temperature 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. According to the World Meteorological Organisation, the past decade (2015-2024) was the 10 warmest years on record.

Skea said scientists are now focusing on attribution science to determine how much human activity has influenced specific climate events, with growing evidence that many would not have occurred without greenhouse gas emissions. He said the IPCC's target of a 43 per cent emission reduction by 2030 from 2019 levels is now out-

dated due to inaction, meaning the actual reduction needed is even higher

"The 43 per cent figure is now about three years old and because we have not acted in the interim, it may have changed. If you were to recalculate it using new information but the same methods, the number would likely be different. So, we really are in a worse situation than we were three years ago when that (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Conduct new training, examination for Delhi most polluted capital: Report Meghalaya's Byrnihat tops global pollution list teachers every three years: Sudha Murty

NEW DELHI, March 11: Thirteen of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in India, with Byrnihat in Meghalaya topping the list, according to a new report published on Tuesday.

The World Air Quality Report 2024 by Swiss air quality technology company IQAir said Delhi remains the most polluted capital city globally, while India ranked as the world's fifth most polluted country in 2024, marking an improvement from its third rank in 2023. Four cities in neighbouring Pakistan and one in China are among the world's top 20 polluted cities. The report said India saw a 7 per cent decline in PM2.5 concentrations in 2024, averaging 50.6 micrograms per cubic metre, compared to 54.4 micrograms per cubic metre in 2023.



Yet, 13 of the world's 20 most cubic metre in 2024. polluted cities are in India. The Indian cities in the list of

The air pollution in Delhi has world's top 20 most polluted cities worsened, with the annual average are Byrnihat, Delhi, Punjab's Mul-PM2.5 concentration rising from lanpur, Faridabad, Loni, Guru-102.4 micrograms per cubic metre gram, Ganganagar, Greater Noida, in 2023 to 108.3 micrograms per Bhiwadi, Muzaffarnagar, Hanumangarh and Noida.

Overall, 35 per cent of the Indian cities reported annual PM2.5 levels exceeding 10 times the World Health Organization (WHO) limit of 5 micrograms per cubic metre, the report said.

The high level of pollution in Byrnihat, a town on the Meghalaya-Assam border, is due to emissions from local factories, including distilleries, iron and steel plants. Delhi grapples with high air pollution year-round and the problem worsens in winter when unfavourable meteorological conditions, combined with vehicular emissions, paddy-straw burning, firecrackers and other local pollution sources, make the air quality hazardous.

Air pollution remains a serious health risk (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NEW DELHI, March 11: Rajya Sabha member Sudha Murty on Tuesday pitched for conducting new training courses and holding examinations of teachers every three years and even more for those

During a discussion on the workeducation system will not improve if there are no good teachers.

"Teachers, once they pass the exam, BA, or MA, or even PhD at

prove," Murty said. "Excellent school premises, all those things you can do, but if you don't have a good teacher, it is of no use. Teachers play an important role in the education system, not only by their qualification, their methodology of teaching, convincing, be-

coming friendly, at times strict, many times, you know, very soft. It's an art.' She said that there are many

training sessions but there are no examinations linked to those training sessions.

"Every three years, a teacher has to appear for an examination with a different learning technology. Because technology changes. Nothing is free in life except for mother's love. Everything has a price. If you want to be a good teacher, there is a price for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

teaching at the primary level.

ing of the Ministry of Education, Murty, wife of Infosys co-founder Narayana Murthy, said that teachers play a very important role and the

a college level, they enter into the system and afterwards, there are no exams until they retire. This should not happen. Every three years, they should have a new technique or new

knowledge examination should be there. Otherwise, they will not im-

BUSINESS

India, US to increase mkt access, cut tariff, non-tariff barriers: Govt

NEW DELHI, March 11: India and the US are planning to negotiate a trade agreement and both countries will focus on increasing market access, reducing import duty and non-tariff barriers, and enhancing supply chain integration, Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

In a written reply to the Lok Sabha, Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Jitin Prasada said that as on date, reciprocal tariffs have not been imposed by the US on India. "Both countries plan to negotiate a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement. Both countries would focus on increasing market access, reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers, and enhancing supply chain integration," he said.

The US issued a memorandum on reciprocal trade and tariffs on February 13, wherein the US Commerce Secretary and United States Trade Representative (USTR) are to take necessary actions to investigate harm to America from any non-reciprocal trade arrangements adopted by trading partners and provide a report with detailed proposed remedies for each trading partner. Tariffs are import duties imposed and collected by the government and paid by companies to bring foreign goods into the country. During the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to

Nothing Phone (3a) sale starts Tuesday

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, March 11: Nothing, the London-based technology company announced the open sales for the Nothing Phone (3a) Series across Flipkart, Vijay Sales, Croma and all leading retail stores in India, starting 11 March.

As a special introductory offer on day 1, Phone (3a) will be available for as low as ₹19,999, and the Phone (3a) Pro for as low as ₹24,999 (including all offers).

Nothing launched the Phone (3a) Series globally on March 4, 2025, with major camera upgrades. The Phone (3a) features a 50MP main sensor, a Sony ultra-wide sensor, and a 50MP telephoto lens with 2x optical zoom, while the Phone (3a) Pro with a periscope camera, boasts 60x ultra zoom. For selfies, the Phone (3a) has a 32MP front camera, while the Pro model features a 50MP sensor with 4K video recording.

Both phones feature the Snapdragon 7s Gen 3 Mobile Platform and 5000mAh batteries delivering up to two days of use on a full

Washington last month, India and the US announced their commitment to more than double the twoway commerce to USD 500 billion by 2030 and negotiate the first tranche of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) by fall of 2025.

In 2023, the US-India bilateral trade in goods and services stood at USD 190.08 billion (USD 123.89 billion in goods and USD 66.19 billion in services trade). That year, India's merchandise exports to the US stood at USD 83.77 billion, while imports were USD 40.12 billion, leaving a trade gap of USD 43.65 billion in favour of India.

During 2021-24, America was India's largest trading partner. The US is one of the few countries with

Prasada also said that India continues to engage with the US to achieve enhancement and broadening of bilateral trade ties in a mutually beneficial and fair manner. "This is an ongoing exercise and Indian exporters are working to-

wards diversifying trade baskets and export destinations," he said. Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal on Monday told a Parliamentary panel that negotiations between the two countries are still on and no agreement on trade tariffs has been reached so far. Barthwal briefed the Parliamen-

tary Committee on External Affairs, on US President Donald Trump's recent claims that India has agreed to reduce its tariffs

'way down" while Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri briefed the committee on China and Europe.

In 2023-24, India exported engineering goods worth USD 17.62 billion to the US. The other major goods included electronics (USD 10 billion), gems and jewellery (USD 9.9 billion), petroleum products (USD 5.83 billion), textiles (USD 4.7 billion), marine products (USD 2.5 billion).

In a separate reply, the minister said India's tariff policy aims to regulate trade, protect domestic industries, and generate revenue through taxes on imported and exported goods. "Recent reforms have focused on streamlining the tariff structure and facilitating trade," Prasada said.

India is a member of the WTO (World Trade Organization) and bound to its maximum tariff that can be applied on a product category. The applied tariffs are generally below the bound tariff for a given commodity line. "With the changing trade scenario, India is moving towards having Preferential/Free Trade Agreements wherein customs tariffs and nontariff barriers are reduced or eliminated on substantial trade between the PTA/FTA members," he added. At present. India is a member of

13 FTAs and 9 PTAs apart from the negotiations with the EU, the UK, and Oman. (PTI)

Airtel partners Elon Musk's SpaceX for providing high-speed internet services in India

NEW DELHI, March 11: Telecom operator Bharti Airtel on Tuesday said it has partnered with Elon Musk's SpaceX for providing Starlink's high-speed internet services to its customers in India.

This agreement is subject to SpaceX receiving authorisations to sell Starlink's satellite communications-based services in India, Airtel said in a statement.

The agreement will enable Airtel and SpaceX to further explore how Starlink could complement and expand Airtel's offerings, and how Airtel's expertise in the Indian market could complement SpaceX's direct offerings to consumers and businesses.

Bharti Airtel Managing Director and Vice Chairman Gopal Vittal said that working with SpaceX to offer Starlink services to Airtel customers in India is a significant milestone and further demonstrates company's commitment to next-generation satellite connectivity.

"This collaboration enhances our ability to bring world-class high-speed broadband to even the most remote parts of India, ensuring that every individual, business, and community has reliable internet. Starlink will complement and enhance Airtel's suite of products to ensure reliable and affordable broadband for our Indian customers - wherever they live and work," Vittal said.

Under the pact, Airtel and SpaceX will explore offering Starlink equipment at Airtel's retail stores, Starlink services via Airtel to business customers. opportunities to connect communities, schools, and health centres, among many others, in even the most distant rural parts of India.

Airtel and SpaceX will also explore how Starlink could help expand and enhance the Airtel network, as well as SpaceX's ability to utilise and benefit from Airtel's ground network infrastructure and other capabilities in India, the statement said. (PTI)

healthcare infrastructure, and ex- need it most." Equipped with state-

this

Contd. from Page 1... Himanta bins Oppn's 'election

of the instances that have displayed Assam's prominence as an emerging soft power, asserted Sarma

"After witnessing the Jhumur performance here last month, the European Union commissioner said he will be meeting me in New Delhi, as he was so overwhelmed and wanted to congratulate our participants," he said. Schemes like 'Orunudoi' are being emulated by other states, while Assam also looks towards the best practices of different states to ensure more benefit for people, the CM said.

On criticism over money transfer schemes to beneficiaries, Sarma said it was to ensure that the funds are directly "pumped into the bottom of the society", which will increase economic activities. "Whether it be the existing monthly ₹ 1,250 financial aid to women under 'Orunudoi' or the newly announced ₹ 5,000 one-time grant to tea workers and $\gtrless 2,500$ per month for a year to fresh unemployed graduates, these will give purchasing power in the hands of people and this is our economic model," Sarma added. (*PTI*) **Contribution of northeast most**

established during the government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Under Prime Minister Modi, the northeast has come under the focus of every programme of the Union government, he said, adding the greatest achievement of the Modi government is reducing the distance between the region and the rest of India.

Shah announced that by 2027, all state capitals in the northeast will be connected by rail, air, and road networks. Shah said Prime Minister Modi not only enhanced physical connectivity between the northeast and the rest of India but also worked to bridge the emotional divide.

Maintaining that the northeast is now experiencing peace, he highlighted that the Modi government kept the region at the heart of every plan, engaging in discussions with insurgent groups one by one, understanding their concerns and working to bring them into the mainstream through agreements.

The home minister said that between 2004 and 2014, there were 11,000 incidents of violence in the region, whereas from 2014 to 2024, the number decreased by nearly 70 per cent, dropping to 3,428

He said there has been a 70 per cent reduction in the death of security forces and an 89 per cent decline in civilian deaths. The Modi government has signed agreements with all insurgent groups, leading to over 10,500 rebels surrendering their weapons and reintegrating into the mainstream, Shah added while underlining that in the past 10 years, as many as 12 significant agreements had been signed with insurgent groups

Under the 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat' initiative, the government has respected and preserved the languages, dialects, cultures, costumes, traditional dances and arts of the northeast while fostering an atmosphere of peace across the region by encouraging the surrender of weapons by more than 10,000 individuals, he said. (PTI)

Law and order situation improves

ammunition looted in the state are being recovered. Sitharaman also assured that all financial support will be provided to Manipur for faster economic development. (PTI)

Top global intelligence czars

following Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations in September 2023 of the "potential" involvement of Indian agents in the killing of Nijjar on Canadian soil.

New Delhi rejected Trudeau's charges as "absurd". The relations nosedived further in the second half of last year after Ottawa linked several Indian diplomats including High Commissioner Sanjay Verma to the murder of Nijjar. In October last, Canada expelled Verma and five other diplomats. In retaliation, New Delhi also expelled Canadian Charge d'Affaires Stewart Wheeler and five other diplomats. It is expected that the case may figure during Doval's conversation with Rogers.

On the sidelines of the conclave, NSA Doval is expected to hold one-on-one meetings with his counterparts from several leading countries.

In meetings with her Indian interlocutors, Gabbard is also expected to bring up the need for expanding cooperation between the two countries in the Indo-Pacific.

In a post on 'X', Gabbard said on Monday that she was travelling to France, Japan, Thailand and India.

It will be her second foreign trip after assuming charge as the DNI.

During her first international trip, Gabbard travelled to Germany to attend the Munich Security Conference last month. "Terrorism remains a persistent threat, requiring a coordinated global response," she said at the conference. "We must disrupt and destroy terrorist organisations by targeting their ideology, leadership, command structures, and financial networks," she said.

"This effort necessitates close cooperation to share intelligence, coordinate law enforcement activities, and prevent the flow of funds to terrorist groups," she asserted.vIn the address, Gabbard also referred to challenges presented by Russia, China, Iran and North Korea.

"To deter aggression and maintain stability, we look forward to working closely with those who share those interests," she said. (PTI)

Assam tea body welcomes

tea gardens of the state, while ₹ 109 crore was allocated to the Labour Welfare Department for establishing mobile creches and toilet units in strategic locations, including tea gardens.

In a bid to improve healthcare for tea garden workers, the 'Healthy Garden Population Comprehensive Health Screening' initiative will be launched in 20 tea gardens while 'Durgam to Sugam' initiative has been announced which offers financial incentives to doctors working in remote areas.

A one-time financial assistance of ₹ 5,000 has also been announced for both casual and permanent workers. The budget also proposed to create a digital tourism circuit, banking upon homestays and tea tourism facilities in Assam. "All these proposals will go a long way in helping the tea industry and its workers," Barkakoty added. (PTI)

4 B'deshi infiltrators nabbed

Assam". The BSF has intensified its vigil along the 1,885-km India-Bangladesh border in the Northeast



charge. With upgraded fast charging now at 50W, the Phone (3a) Series delivers a full day's power (50%) in under 20 minutes. Furthermore, both phones boast

an immersive display of 6.77 inches with Full HD+ resolution. Visuals look crisp with 387 pixels in every inch of screen, and a fluid 120Hz adaptive refresh rate. The display offers 1000 hz sampling rate in gaming mode making gaming smooth and responsive. The Nothing Phone (3a) Series runs Nothing OS 3.1 on Android 15, optimized for stability, utility, and customization. It includes updates to the Nothing Gallery, Camera, and Weather apps and guarantees six years of updates—three years of Android updates and six years of security updates. The series also introduces Essential Space, an AIpowered hub for notes and ideas, and the Essential Key (on the right side of the phone) for quick access-press to save content, longpress for voice notes, and double-tap to view saved items.

novations on Tuesday unveiled India's first Mobile Tele-Surgical Unit at the second Global SMRSC 2025, said an official statement. The Tele-Surgical Unit was un-

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veiled during the Second Global SSI Multi-Speciality Robotic Surgery Conference (SMRSC) 2025 at the Leela in Gurgaon.

The two-day event saw enthusiastic participation from over 1200+ world-renowned medical professionals, who gathered on a single platform to explore the transformative potential of robotic surgery. "In a groundbreaking announcement at the SMRSC 2025, SS Innovations unveiled the SSI Mantra Tele-Sync Mobile Unit -"SSI MantraM", a first-of-its-kind innovation set to transform the landscape of robotic surgery and telemedicine in India," the statement added.

It further said that the revolutionary mobile tele-surgical unit reflects SS Innovations' unwavering commitment to advancing medical technology, redefining

breakthrough, SS Innovations continues to push the boundaries of med-tech, revolutionizing surgical infrastructure and cementing India's position as a global leader in robotic surgery and health-tech innovation," it added. Speaking on the launch of SSI

"With

SS Innovations unveils India's first Mobile

Tele-Surgical Unit at 2nd Global SMRSC 2025

GUWAHATI, March 11: SS In- panding access to cutting-edge sur- of-the-art telesurgery capabilities,

care.

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MantraM, Dr. Sudhir Srivastava, founder, chairman, and CEO of SS Innovations said, "SSI MantraM is more than a mobile telesurgical unit, it's a movement to democratize and decentralise world-class healthcare. With high-speed telecommunication and satellite connectivity, it breaks geographical barriers, delivering life-saving robotic-assisted surgery to underserved communities. Beyond telesurgical procedures, SSI MantraM serves as a powerful platform for surgical education, tele-mentoring, and real-time patient data analytics. With continuous research and innovation, SSI is taking a major step toward ensuring that advanced robotic surgery reaches those who

SSI MantraM breaks barriers in surgical care by delivering worldclass robotic-assisted procedures to remote and underserved regions. The Tele-Sync Mobile Unit seamlessly integrates the SSI Mantra Surgical Robotic System, highspeed connectivity, and advanced surgical robotics to enable realtime collaboration between remote and on-site surgical teams.

This innovation empowers expert surgeons to perform and guide procedures with minimal latency, making advanced surgical care more accessible than ever. Building on the success of SMRSC 2024, this year's conference elevated discussions on innovations in robotic surgery and telesurgery, with a focus on Urology, General Surgery, Gynecology, Oncology, Head & Neck, and Cardiothoracic surgery. The event served as a platform to showcase the advanced capabilities of SS Innovations' flagship surgical robotic system-SSI Mantra 3, which continues to redefine modern surgical care.

since disturbances began in the neighbouring country last year. Assam Police were also maintain alert along the border to ensure that no person could enter the state illegally, an official said. (*PTI*)

Yaba tablets worth ₹ 30

Yaba, also called 'crazy medicine', is illegal in the country as it contains methamphetamine, a Schedule II substance under the Controlled Substances Act. (PTI)

World in worse situation because

number was produced," Skea said. The IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) - Working Group III, published in 2022, said global greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by 43 per cent by 2030 (compared to 2019 levels) to limit the average global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius since the start of the Industrial Revolution.

Asked why governments are not acting with urgency, Skea said scientists have made the urgency of climate action clear, but it is up to policymakers to implement solutions.

"Scientists can sometimes say things in ways that are incomprehensible or difficult to understand. (But) I think our messages have been absolutely clear.

"We have pointed out the available measures, the options (including) renewable energy, changes in land use patterns, all of these things could contribute to constraining the increase in emissions. I think you can even blame scientists for many things, but not for actions not taking place," the IPCC chief said. (PTI)

Conduct new training, examination

that. The price is not money, but good training and an examination for the teachers," Murty said. NCP-SCP member Fauzia Khan supported Murty's call for training and conducting examinations of teachers every three years.

She said that there is a huge difference between the words of the government and their actions.

Khan said that the National Education Policy vision talks about 6 per cent of GDP as expenditure on education but the government has continuously reduced expenditure of the ministry to 2.5 per cent from 3.8 per cent between 2015-16 and 2025-26.

She said no clear funds have been allocated for early childhood education and three lakh schools are ungoverned in the country. Khan said that the government has talked about setting up a world-class educational institution but has reduced the budget by 73 per cent. BSP member Ramji called for regulating online education as children are encountering age-inappropriate content. (PTI)

Meghalaya's Byrnihat tops global

in India, reducing life expectancy by an estimated 5.2 years. According to a Lancet Planetary Health study published last year, about 1.5 million deaths in India every year from 2009 to 2019 were potentially linked to long-term exposure to PM2.5 pollution.

PM2.5 refers to tiny air pollution particles smaller than 2.5 microns, which can enter the lungs and bloodstream, leading to breathing problems, heart disease and even cancer. The sources include vehicle exhaust, industrial emissions and the burning of wood or crop waste.

Former WHO chief scientist and health ministry advisor Soumya Swaminathan said India has made progress in air quality data collection but lacks sufficient action.

"We have the data; we need action now. Some solutions are easy like replacing biomass with LPG. India already has a scheme for this, but we must further subsidise additional cylinders. The first cylinder is free, but the poorest families, especially women, should receive higher subsidies. This will improve their health and reduce outdoor air pollution," she told PTI in an interview.

In cities, expanding public transport and imposing fines on certain cars could help.

"A mix of incentives and penalties is necessary," she said.

"Finally, strict enforcement of emission laws is crucial. Industries and construction sites must comply with regulations and install equipment to cut emissions instead of taking shortcuts," the former director general of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) added.

Avinash Chanchal, deputy programme director, Greenpeace South Asia, said the report once again exposed that the steps being taken under clean air action plans to control pollution in India are not sufficient.

"Numerous studies have identified emissions from road transport as one of the major contributors to PM2.5 concentrations in our cities. However, the government has failed to strengthen the public transport system. The crisis is further exacerbated by a myopic policy focus.

Measures like the odd-even scheme serve as political theatre but fail to address systemic drivers like vehicular pollution and construction dust. What cities like Delhi need is not more stopgap measures but a centralised, well-funded regulatory overhaul, Agarwal said. (PTI)

Sensex, Nifty recoup losses to settle almost flat; IndusInd Bank tanks 27pc on derivatives scare

MUMBAI. March 11: Benchmark BSE Sensex recovered most of its losses to close marginally down in a volatile session on Tuesday even as private lender IndusInd Bank slumped 27 per cent and global markets declined on US recession worries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex settled down by 12.85 points or 0.02 per cent at 74,102.32 with half of its constituents closing lower. The index opened sharply down and slumped further 451.57 points or 0.61 per cent to hit a low of 73,663.60 in early deals following weak global trends. The barometer later recovered losses to close almost flat. Analysts said late-buying in select blue-chips such as ICICI Bank, Reliance and Airtel helped recover losses.

The broader Nifty of NSE advanced 37.60 points or 0.17 per cent to close at 22,497.90, rebounding from the day's lows. The index rose by 61.8 points or 0.27

per cent to hit a high of 22,522.10. Shares of IndusInd Bank plummeted by more than 27 per cent to close at ₹ 655.95 apiece on BSE after the private sector lender reported some discrepancies in its derivatives portfolio. During the day, the stock of Mumbai-based lender tanked 28 per cent to hit a 52-week low of Rs 649 per share. Additionally, the shares emerged as the major laggard on the 30share BSE barometer. Infosys, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, Zomato, Hindustan Unilever, Power Grid, Axis Bank, UltraTech Cement, Adani Ports, and Tata Consultancy Services were among the laggards in the Sensex pack.

On the other hand, Sun Pharmaceuticals, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, HCL Technologies, Maruti Suzuki India, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Titan were the gainers. "Despite significant sell-offs in the US and other Asian markets

driven by concerns over an economic slowdown caused by the ongoing trade war, the domestic market is showing signs of a gradual recovery. "Its relatively lower volatility can be attributed to a moderation in valuations, following recent corrections, along with supportive factors like falling crude oil prices, an easing Dollar Index, and expectations of a rebound in domestic earnings," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. The attention remains on the upcoming retail inflation data, which could provide insights into potential interest rate cuts, Nair added. Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said markets

remained volatile but managed to close slightly in the green amid mixed signals. A weak global outlook led to a gap-down opening, but selective buying in heavyweight stocks helped recover losses, he added.

Analysts said that US President Donald Trump's flip-flop tariff policy and the high uncertainty has started impacting US stock markets with benchmark indices tanking up to 4 per cent on Monday.

The BSE Smallcap gauge fell 0.70 per cent, however, the midcap index went up 0.72 per cent.

Among the BSE sectoral indices. Realty. Telecommunication. Energy, Oil & Gas, Commodities, Consumer Discretionary, Healthcare, Capital Goods, Consumer Durables and Metal were among the gainers. FMCG, IT, Utilities, Auto, Bankex, Teck and Focussed IT were the laggards. As many as 2,506 stocks declined while 1,466 advanced and 119 remained unchanged on the BSE.

Despite the market ended in the negative zone. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms edged up by ₹ 39,721.99 crore to ₹3,94,25,540.72 crore (USD 4.51 trillion). (PTI)

REGION

He said that the traditional

Bodo dance especially Bagu-

rumba dance has arrived in

Narzary played a pivotal role in nurturing local talent **Bodo Dance exponent Barlangfa Narzary** named for Assam Gaurav Award 2024

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, March 11: Imminent Bodo dance exponent who is also the director of the Ramfalbil Bodoland Cultural Centre, Barlangfa Narzary, has been selected for the prestigious Assam Gaurav Award 2024.

The Assam Gaurav Award is one of the highest civilian honors in the state, recognising individuals for their outstanding contributions in various fields.

Barlangfa Narzary's dedication to promoting and preserving Bodo traditional dance has played a pivotal role in nurturing local talent and showcasing Bodo culture on wider platforms. His efforts have significantly contributed to preserving the rich cultural heritage of the Bodo community.

Narzary hailed from Ramfalbil area of Kokrajhar district, and has been dedicating his life to-

Bodo culture.

NFR conducts 69th Management Development

He has been representing the Bodo cultural troupes while showcasing Bodo Bagurumba Dance in the national arena on wards the promotion of the many national occasion and

today's juncture under the leadership of Narzary who had repre-Gaurav Award.

events. On the achievement of Narzary

the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region, Pramod Boro wished heartfelt greetings

sented the Bagurumba dance in the national arena. ABSU president Dipen Boro also extended his heartfelt congratulations to Barlangfa Narzary on being conferred the Assam "I' am delighted to extend

heartfelt congratulations to Barlangfa Narzary on being conferred with the Assam Gaurav Award 2024 one of the highest civilian honors in the state. Your tireless dedication to preserving and promoting Bodo traditional dance is truly inspiring. This recognition reflects your invaluable contribution to Bodo culture and heritage. Wishing you continued success in enriching our community's cultural legacy", Boro said.

BPL family students receive bicycles

Margherita

BTMC Act 1949.

Bihar.

HT Bureau DIPHU, March 11: Madhuram Lekthe, executive member (EM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Fishery, Adult Education and Handloom & Textile distributed bicycle to class IX students of Below Poverty Line (BPL) families at Rajapathar Higher Secondary School on Tuesday.

Attending as the chief guestm EM Lekthe asked the students to concentrate on their studies and to

EM Lekthe said, "I had the privilege of attending the bicycle distribution programme for Class IX students of Rajapathar Higher Secondary School. This initiative is aimed at supporting students from BPL families, ensuring they have better access to education. It is heartening to witness such efforts being made to uplift and empower young minds, fostering a brighter future for our commu-

by Chairman BMB, Hemsing Teron; president BJP LMC, Mohendra Lekthe, and other digni-



HT Bureau DIPHU, March 11: "Bithung

Ronghang. Bithung" is a shortened form Asami" was released by Kache of "Bithung Rengthama," one of Teronpi on her birthday (March the Member of Autonomous 10) at the chief executive mem-Council constituency located in ber of Karbi Anglong Au-West Karbi Anglong. Notably, tonomous Council Bungalow, Tuliram Ronghang, the CEM of Diphu. Teronpi is the wife of the CEM of KAAC, Tuliram KAAC, represents the constituency. The phrase "Bithung

'Bithung Asami' released

Asami" combines "Bithung," representing the constituency, with "Asami," meaning "maiden" in the Karbi language. Therefore, the song title translates into "Girls of Bithung." Composed by Diphu City Rap's Christin Teron, the song was inspired by his experience as an invited artist at various villages under the Bithung Rengthama constituency during the Karbi New Year celebrations on February 1 last.

The villages Christin (he) visited included Rongkuru; Menmiji; Mukhim; Karbi Rongsopi; Rongmindar; Artukekang and Sarsenot. During these celebrations, Christin Teron was struck by the beauty of the girls he met, which inspired him to create the song "Bithung Asami".

The song released was attended by CEM of KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang; EM of KAAC, Madhuram Lekthe and others.

ganised by All Assam Buddhist HT Correspondent MARGHERITA, March 11: A sit Association Tinsukia district comin demonstration for three hours mittee, Purvanchal Bhikkhu was held on Monday at North Sangha, Purvanchal Buddha Rangamancha, Samity, Federation of Barua Bud-Margherita to repeal the Buddha dhists Welfare Association of Gaya Temple Management Assam along with Buddhist people (BTMC) Act 1949 at Buddh Gaya, such as from Singpho, Magh Baruah, Tangsa, Tamang, Tai Khamyang and Tai Phakey com-munity who came from More than 500 Buddhist people including Buddhist monks staged sit in demonstration at North Margherita, Digboi, Tinsukia dis-Margherita Rangamancha where trict, Dibrugarh District and neighthrough Panchsheel prayer the probouring state Arunachal Pradesh.

gramme began as protesters held Sibu Talukdar secretary general placards and Festoons to repeal the of Federation of Barua Buddhist Welfare Association of Assam said The sit in demonstration was orthat it was very unfortunate that

NEATEHUB of AAU enters into partnership with Legalwiz.in

Sit-in demonstration in Margherita Buddha Gaya Temple Management Act has been run by non-Buddhist community (Hindu Brahmin) as Buddha Gaya is a sacred shrine where Buddhist community residing all over the world come here for pilgrimage.

From February 12 onwards Buddhist monks participated in a peaceful hunger strike at Buddha Gaya Bihar but unfortunately on February 28 midnight hours Buddhist monks were forcefully removed by Bihar police from the Hunger strike which have hurt millions of Buddhist devotees residing across the world, said Sibu Talukdar

Programme at MDZTI, Alipurduar



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 11: The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) successfully conducted the 69th Management Development Programme for senior supervisors of Alipurduar Division at the Multi-Disciplinary Zonal Training Institute (MDZTI), Alipurduar. This program aimed at enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of railway supervisors by equipping them with the necessary managerial and technical skills to handle operational challenges effectively. Sr deputy general manager (SDGM) and chief vigilance officer (CVO) Rajiv Mahajan graced the occasion and distributed certificates of participation to all 50 supervisors who successfully completed the training. As part of the event, distinguished individuals from diverse fields were also felicitated for their outstanding achievements. Among them was Swapna Barman, an Asian Gold Medallist and recipient of the pres-

tigious Arjuna Award, recognized for her excellence in athletics. Mahua Biswas, a dedicated railway teacher, was honoured for her contribution to the field of education. Sandhya Rani, chief nursing superintendent, was also acknowledged for her commitment to healthcare services. Additionally, Trishita Das, a talented Bharatnatyam dancer, was acknowledged for her dedication to Indian classical dance and culbecome good citizens.

The programme was attended

HT Correspondent JORHAT, March 11: NEATEHUB (North East Agricultural Technology Entrepreneurs Hub), the Atal Incubation Centre of Assam Agricultural University, announced a strategic partnership with Legalwiz.in, a leading Legal Tech firm. This collaboration aims to provide NEATE-HUB-incubated startups with streamlined access to essential legal, financial, and business compliance services, ensuring they can scale efficiently and focus on their core innovations. Danish Tamuly, Director of NEATEHUB said that as a premier incubation hub, NEATEHUB is dedicated to fostering a dynamic and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem in the agri and agritech sectors.

"This partnership with Legalwiz.in will enable our startups to leverage best-in-class professional services at preferential pricing. Additionally, they will have access to the Legalwiz.in Partner Services Platform-a comprehensive solution that includes eCommerce, CRM, web development, customer care, financial services, payment gateways, and more, all at exclusive rates." he added. Regarding the collaboration, Tamuly said, "We are delighted to join hands with Legalwiz.in to offer seamless compliance solutions to our startups. This partnership will ensure that our entrepreneurs can focus on innovation and growth without worrying about regulatory hurdles. Additionally, we plan to develop a rich repository of knowledge with Legalwiz.in, benefitting not just AgriTech startups but the entire startup ecosystem in the Northeast."

Speaking on the occasion, Shrijay Sheth, Founder -Legalwiz.in, said, "We are proud to partner with NEATeHUB to further catalyze & accelerate agriculture-centric entrepreneurship and startups. There is immense potential in agri-centric enterprises in the North East and as enablers, we stand committed to helping them scale rapidly. I strongly believe that academia-industry collaborations will usher in the next phase of growth and drive entrepreneurship, creating market-facing, customer-ready products and services.

Multi-specialty medical camp inaugurated in Chirang

HT Correspondent

The program's primary objective is to enhance the KOKRAJHAR, March 11: A multi-specialty med- quality of life for children in the region by offering accessible and specialized healthcare services at no cost to the families. Through this initiative, RBSK aims to promote health awareness and provide the necessary medical support to children in the community The event was attended by prominent officials, in-Sahityarathi cluding the joint director of health services (Jt DHS), district tuberculosis officer (DTO), district program manager (DPM), district accounts manager (DAM), district medical officer (DME), district co-ordination (DCO - RBSK), and block co-ordinator (BCo). Their presence underscored the importance of this initiative and highlighted the collective effort to improve children's healthcare in the region.

Preparation underway to celebrate death anniversary of Lakshminath Bezbarua

ouncil organised an online discussion on Sattriva dance on Saturday last.

Delphic dialogue on Sattriya dance

HT Correspondent NAGAON, March 11: Delphic India, the Indian unit of the Interna-

The dialogue took place between leading danseuse Meenakshi Medhi and the leading researcher of Sattriya culture Dr Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti. Delphic India has been holding such dialogues to promote cultures in different parts of India. It may be noted that Sattriva dance is recognised as one of the eight classical dance forms of India. Meenakshi Medhi is a Sattriya dancer and teacher, with 14 years of experience as a soloist. She runs a dance school in Noida, offering both online and offline dance lessons, some of her students being from outside India too. She has travelled extensively all over India performing Sattriva dance, several of them on the Spic-Macay platform.

Dr Sanjib Kumar Borkakoti explained the genesis of Sattriya dance at the outset, while also drawing attention to the fact that Lasya dance had originated in Assam 5,000 years ago and Usha from Tezpur, Assam imparted its knowledge to the rest of India. The birth of Sattriva dance along with the epoch-making play Chihna Yatra by Srimanta Sankaradeva in 1468 CE was alluded to. Role of the Sattras in preserving this dance for more than five centuries was also mentioned

Medhi spoke about the distinctive features of Sattriya dance and how it differed from other classical dance forms of India. She spoke about features like arms remaining bent at elbows and the wave-like movements of the torso in this dance form. The predominance of Santa-rasa in this dance was stressed. Borkakoti also mentioned about the use of sommersault in Sattriya dance. Meenakshi explained different items of Sattriya like Suttradhari Nritya, Nadubhangi etc.

Parallel to the dialogue, several students of Meenakshi Medhi also performed the items of Sattriya Dance in order to explain them properly. Samaira Arora from Greater Noida, Francisca S.Ruz from Chile and Subhiksha Sarmah from Chicago regaled the audience with their performance of Mati Akhora, hand gestures and foot movements.

Earlier the programme was initiated by Yamini Telkar, a leading Art Specialist and chairperson of Delphic India. Jahnabi Phookan, eminent entrepreneur and Dilip Changkakoty, North East zone representative of ICOMOS also spoke in the programme. Delphic members from different states of India attended the programme.

Two suspects apprehended in cattle smuggling near Indo-Bangla border in Dhubri HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, March 11: In the commitment to keep border secure, the 66 Bn Border Security Force (BSF) apprehended two Indian individuals suspected of involvement in cattle smuggling near the Indo-Bangladesh border, which falls under Gaspara Gaon Panchayat at around 3:30 pm on Monday.

The suspects have been identified as Ainul Hoque, son of Golap Uddin, and Abdul Rashid, son of Syed Ali, both residents of Sastarghat area under Patamari Gaon Panchayat. During the operation, the BSF also seized cash amounting to rupees one lakh, believed to be linked to illegal activities.

Following the apprehension, the 66 Bn BSF handed over the two individuals to Dhubri Sadar Police Station for further investigation. Authorities are probing their possible connections to cross-border smuggling networks, and legal action is expected to follow.

The incident highlights ongoing efforts by security forces to curb illegal cattle trade along the sensitive border areas of Assam.

ical camp, organised by the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK), was officially inaugurated by the District Social Welfare Officer of Chirang at the JSB Civil Hospital, Kajalgaon. The camp was held to provide comprehensive healthcare services to children and improve their overall well-being.

The medical camp featured specialist screenings conducted by a team of healthcare professionals, including Pediatricians, Gynecologists, ENT specialists, Eye specialists, Dental surgeons, Physiotherapists, Community nurses, and Audiometric assistants. These screenings were designed to address a wide range of health concerns and ensure early diagnosis and treatment.

HT Correspondent MORIGAON, March 11: Asom

For smooth organisation of Sahitya Sabha has decided to observe the death anniversary of Lakshminath Bezbarua centrally at his birth place at Ahatguri. Under the initiative of Morigaon district literary body in co-

peration with Ahatguri literary body the death anniversary of Lakshminath Bezbarua to be celebrated on March 26.

the literary body meeting ,a public meeting was held in a solemn atmosphere at Anchalik Sankar Guru Kirtan Ghar which was presided over by the president of Anjali Das, Ahatguri Sahitya Sabha. The secretary of AXX ,Morigaon Kushal Bora moderated the meeting. The preparation is going on to celebrate the meeting in tumultuous situation here.

This land, which once nurtured tea plants, now nurtures minds, ideas, and dreams

Dibrugarh University hosts 23rd convocation

HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, March 11: The XXIII Convocation of the prestigious Dibrugarh University was held on Tuesday at the Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha Rangamancha.

The event was inaugurated by the Chancellor of Dibrugarh University and Governor of Assam, Lakshman Prasad Acharya, who declared the convocation open.

Vice-chancellor Jiten Hazarika delivered the welcome address, expressing gratitude to students, parents, teachers, and attendees for their support in making Dibrugarh University a premier institute of higher learning.

He remarked, "Today, we celebrate not just the academic achievements of our students but also the collective progress and vision of this great institution, which has been a beacon of knowledge, innovation, and social responsibility for six decades. As we gather here, I am reminded of the rich legacy of Dibrugarh University, situated on a land that was once a tea garden, generously donated for the noble cause of education. This land, which once nurtured tea plants, now nurtures minds, ideas, and dreams. It is a testament to our commitment to transforming lives and communities through education.3

Highlighting the university's achievements during its Diamond Jubilee year, he added, "Dibrugarh University has organised over 70 national and international conferences this year, bringing together scholars and experts from across the globe. These events, like the Dibrugarh University International Literature Festival 2025, bringing more than 120 reputed writers, including Padma Shri and Sahitva Akademi awardees. together, and the Japan NE Caravan, organised jointly by Japan Foundation and Dibrugarh University, have not only enriched our



academic environment but have also positioned us as a hub for intellectual exchange and collaboration.

Hazarika also discussed key academic advancements made by Dibrugarh University to align with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, including the introduction of a Five-Year Integrated Postgraduate Programme, the construction of a Multidisciplinary Centre, and the launch of a vocational course on semiconductors.

The chief guest of the convocation. Rupam Sarmah, a renowned filmmaker, expert in data modernization and AI, and the first Assamese appointed as senior advisor to former US President Joe Biden, addressed the gathering. Currently serving as the Chief Technology and Innovation Officer at the California Health Agency, Sarmah shared insights from his journey from Jorhat, Assam, to the US, inspiring students to pursue ex-

cellence with dedication and service. He urged upon the students to follow a roadmap of life rife with aspiration beyond boundaries, seeking knowledge, skill development,

adaptability with life and situations and a mission-driven approach. Citing one of Bhupen Hazarika's song, which called for integrating science with humanism, he advised the graduating students to adopt this twofold policy.

In his address, Chancellor Lakshman Prasad Acharva commended the university's commitment to higher education. He encouraged the students to respond to the call of the time and society. He emphasized that traditional knowledge should be yoked with scientific development to ascertain real progress in our life. Moreover, he highlighted skill-development as a core measure to ensure life and employability of our youths. He eulogised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative or skilling India through his PM-USHA's MERU grant. which Dibrugarh University was a proud recipient. He emphasized educational curriculum that would lead to entrepreneurship development, thereby making students empowered as job creators, then job seekers. He commended Dibrugarh University's efforts towards women's empowerment, which resulted in girls outshining boys in almost all fields.

A total of 10,648 students applied for the convocation, with 1,888 attending in person to receive their degrees. Among them, 114 students were awarded Ph.D degrees, and 38 students received Gold Medals for outstanding academic achievements, including 35 postgraduates and 3 graduates from the Science, Arts, and Commerce streams. Dikshita Deka, the best postgraduate from the department of Anthropology, was honoured with the Dr Junali Kropi Memorial Gold Medal and Endowment Award.

Additionally, the university conferred D.Sc. (Honoris Causa) upon Dr Joyanti Chutia, a distinguished and acclaimed plasma physicist, and D.Litt (Honoris Causa) upon Nahendra Padun, a prominent linguist and litterateur of the state.

The convocation witnessed a gathering of around 1,500 attendees, including vicechancellors from other universities, alumni, faculty members, administrative staff, media representatives, and graduating students. It should be mentioned that more than 40 school going students from the vicinity of Dibrugarh University got the rare opportunity to attend this convocation as audience. Registrar Paramananda Sonowal extended his appreciation to the student community and the university family for making the convocation a grand success.

4

THE HILLS TIMES VOL.II, ISSUE 013, DIPHU, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025

QUOTE OF THE DAY

At times I think and at times I am -Paul Valery

A commendable budget

ssam Finance Minister Ajanta Neog on Monday tabled a $\gtrless 2.63$ lakh crore Budget for the next financial year that roposed no new tax for the general public but gave additional relief to nearly 1.5 lakh salaried people. With a deficit of ₹620.27 crore, this is the last full Budget of the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led second BJP government, and it offered sops to jobless graduates and tea garden workers while suggesting an exemption from professional tax for a section of the salaried class in the state where assembly polls are due next year. While doing a commendable job in preparing this budget, Neog announced extending the tax holiday for green tea leaves for two more years to alleviate the challenges faced by the industry, while offering a one-time cash benefit of ₹5,000 to 6.8 lakh garden workers. A glance at the Budget gives the impression that it is a people-friendly budget as it placed significant importance on subsidies for solar adoption, support for youth and tea workers, financial aid for writers, and reduced electricity rates. It also includes development plans for industrial parks, an energy hub, and better logistics connectivity under the Bhutan-Bodoland-Bay of Bengal Corridor. Along with the expansion of existing state government schemes such as Orunodoi, Nijut Moina, and Atma Nirbhar Asom Abhijan, the minister announced the launch of the Chief Minister's Jibon Prerona scheme from October to provide ₹2,500 per month to those graduating from government universities and colleges in Assam.

The Budget proposed an exemption on 'professional tax' for individuals earning up to ₹15,000 per month under the Assam Profession, Trades, Callings, and Employments Taxation Act, 1947. This will benefit more than 1.43 lakh taxpayers/families and boost their purchasing capacity. Another significant aspect of this Budget is that the government would provide lentils, sugar, and salt at subsidised rates to ration card holders, in addition to subsidised rice from October this year. The Budget proposed government support of ₹250 per quintal for paddy and maize, and ₹500 per quintal for mustard, over and above the minimum support price (MSP). As per the Budget announcement, the government planned to launch Assamsat, a dedicated satellite to ensure a continuous and reliable flow of data for the implementation of critical socio-economic projects. To be developed in collaboration with the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre, the satellite is envisaged to provide services for agriculture, disaster management, infrastructure development, border management, and police operations. This is a praiseworthy initiative.

There is no denying the fact that Assam's capital expenditure has grown nearly tenfold in the last 10 years, leading to rapid infrastructural and industrial development, something this Budget gives further momentum to. The proposed ₹2,000 crore Assam Industrial Momentum Fund will drive the creation of new industrial zones and promote ease of business. The finance minister has done the right thing in setting the correct business incentives. Her measures will certainly boost private consumption to some extent. Neog's Budget strategically balances economic expansion along with populist welfare measures, besides reiterating the government's commitment to building a self-reliant Assam.

Narendra Modi has put all his focus on winning assembly polls in Bihar by year end

The Bihar assembly elections are still months ahead but why waste time? The Bharatiya Janata Party is in a hurry much before the elections. And it doesn't matter if Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to cultivate his 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' narrative, there is little evidence to prove that the Haryana, Maharashtra, the Uttar Pradesh bypolls and the Delhi assembly elections weren't won by fanning Hindu sentiments.

Bihar will be no exception. In fact, certain key actors are already on the job of marshalling Hindus. Prime Minister Narendra Modi need not split hair. Modi values his international image and he is completely aware that the global goal is dismantling Hinduism, has been dismantling Hinduism for ever since one can pull back in recent history. Modi's studied indifference to Hinduism is broken only when there's an impending state election with a loss staring him in the face.

Then, the pseudo-secular Prime Minister, casts away his secular choga and turns into an incandescent Hindutva icon. The next target in the Sangh Parivar's crosshair is the Bihar elections. Perhaps the toughest, tougher than Haryana and Maharashtra. Bihar is where caste politics is entrenched. Bihar is open range for Rashtriya Janata Dal and Lalu Prasad Yadav is still the ultimate Muslim-Yadav social-engineer. Caste politics is woven into the

state's political dna. Bihar Assembly elections 2025 will not escape the caste net, where parties like the RJD and the Congress can ignore caste only at their own peril. Even the Janata Dal (U) has to pander to caste politics. In these circumstances what does the Bharatiya Janata Party have if not the Hindu card? Like United States President Donald Trump told his Ukrainian counterpart, "You don't have the cards?"

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, doesn't have the cards



is busy smiling |

It is all part

from indecipherable depths.

their positions. The BJP's early

birds have already hit the ground

bird which catches the worm and

BJP's side are 'Kathawachak'

The trio have been shaking up

the Bihar electoral scene and stir-

RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat.

of the game.

at Muslim fo-

rums.

tions. He will have to rely on the 'Hindu-card'. The BJP can only challenge the status quo with convincing clarity that the BJP toxic Hindutva. This isn't new to the BJP; the party had played the that the Hindu card is that of the 'Hindu-card' in 2015, too. But BJP for keeps. In fact, Dr Alok is then, Nitish Kumar's JD(U) wasalways getting into altercations with his Shiv Sena (UBT) 'counn't with the BJP.

Then, in 2015, Janata Dal (U) aligned with the Tejashvi Yadavled RJD. The question being asked, today, is when the BJP-JD(U) are together, why the 'Hindu Card'? The answer is the gap between uncertain victory and certain victory. The RSS is convinced Hindu consolidation will deliver victory to the BJP and even if Prime Minister does not acknowledge, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's 'Batenge toh katenge' is a votewinner. The Sangh Parivar is fully in the Yogi's corner.

It doesn't matter how much Modi-friendly television news anchors continue to pitch the airwaves with Modi's 'Ek hai toh Safe hain'. The diehard among them are incorrigible Modi sycophants, shameless purveyors of the 'Modi-cult', their duty and their high salaries are to sell 'Modi-ism' to the hoi polloi, who are the ones who turnout on voting day, election after election.

And the Sangh Parivar works on the 80:20 formula, which today has become part of the BJP spokesperson's lexicon. "What's wrong, I will tell it straight. Yes, we work on the basis of 80:20. There is no shame in admitting, 80 percent Hindus against 20 percent Muslims?" said Dr. Ajay Alok, one of the several BJP tions in Bihar and smell the bispokespersons who brag they call

Bageshwar is the loudest of the trio, literally and audibly. He is also the one the opposition parties are most apprehensible about. Bageshwar says he is not in Bihar to take "sides" and that his only goal is to "unify the Hin-The Bihar Assembly elections will likely take place in October-

November 2025. Baba Bageshwar will likely keep visiting Bihar again and again. This Hindu 'Dharamguru' is immensely popular among Hindus with the charisma to draw huge crowds, up to even 20 lakhs at lives and breathes 'Hindutva'; one venue. Naturally, he is getting special attention from the RJD, which would rather do without "unifying Hindus."

But this is only the start, Bihar terpart on debates focusing on Hindutva and the Hindu card. will be seeing a string of "Hindu The good doctor is not bothered Dharamgurus" visiting the pollif Prime Minister Narendra Modi bound state in the months to DEGREE OF THOUGHT

Politics

suddenly play-

ing up in Bihar.

is

By: Sushil Kutty

People are call-Ultimately, it will be the Hindu ing it "siyasi hulchal". Baba card though the credit for the poll Bageshwar Dhirendra Shastri toured Vaishali, Gopalganj and victory will go to "Pradhan Mantri Narendra Modi". All BJP Banka in the "first phase", from March 6-10 holding large public spokespersons are conditioned to singing praise of Prime Minister meetings with the rhetoric rising Modi, even the brightest among to a crescendo wherever he them, the ones who quote from pitched tent. Some of his public quotable quotes and pull out data statements are definitely controversial but the Nitish Kumar-BJP The Bharatiya Janata Party is government is friendly. not waiting for the Bihar elec-

Earlier, from February 16-26 a tions to be announced or for the 9-day 'Mahamrutnjaya Yagna' RJD or the Congress to start was performed at Patna's Gandhi Maidan by the BJP. Present at the showing signs of stirring from event included former central minister CP Thakur, Member of running. It is always the early Parliament Vivek Thakur and minister in the Nitish Kumar the early birds in Bihar on the government Prem Kumar. If there were Hindu Dharamgurus, Baba Bageshwar, Art of Living they weren't advertising themguru Sri Sri Ravishankar and selves. But the event itself was "Hindu"

As for Mohan Bhagwat, he was in Bihar on March 7, furing voters to wake up early to elling the RSS' "cultural nationthe impending assembly elecalism." The RSS Chief has been an "active politician" ever since hari coffee. And each to his own, the Haryana elections were an-

like the saying goes. Baba nounced and held. And the RSS made sure voters turned out in large numbers for the BJP in Haryana, Maharashtra and even in Delhi, where assembly elections returned the BJP to power after 27 years.

The RSS political modus operandi is to hold "small meetings" with groups of voters. In Maharashtra alone, the RSS operatives held as many as 70,000 "nukkad meetings" with voters. Even otherwise, the language of the Maharashtra assembly elections was "Hindutva" with the RSS and Devendra Fadnavis taking charge of the poll campaign in the absence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

For once, Prime Minister Modi's divisive "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas" slogan wasn't given free-run in Harvana and Harvana was added to the BJP kitty thanks to Yogi Adityanath's four-to-five "Batenge toh katenge" rallies in the state, where the Dalit votebank took a clearly demarcated 'Hindutva line', teaming up with other non-Jat voters except the Muslim voters.

Maharashtra also voted overwhelmingly on the Hindu and Hindutva line and if anybody is saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi won Delhi for the BJP, that was a stray statement. Delhi, too, voted Hindutva and more so with the Mahakumbh in full flow. The lesson learned, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was among the first in Bihar, talking about Mahakumbh and Hindu consolidation before setting out to appease the Sufi Muslim in Ajmer Sharif.

Be sure, the Prime Minister will be back in Bihar again and again to cash in on Hindu sentiments, his only ticket to cling on to power despite all the talk of "Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'. Make no mistake, the Bihar polls will be won or lost on how many vote caste and how many vote Hindu. The Muslim vote is no longer the ace. Ask Sri Sri Ravishankar, he knows the 'Art of Voting' pretty well after his visit to Bihar. (IPA Service)

Rise of Bangladesh's National Citizens Assam Budget 2025-26: A growth blueprint **Party:** A new era or a fleeting moment?

By: Dipak Kurmi

commitment to social justice, transparency, and institutional integrity, remains vague on the specifics of its pro-R angladesh has once again found itself at the cross-roads of history, with the emergence of the Naunclear. The party's declaration that it stands for justice over vengeance is also difficult to reconcile with the ongoing persecution of Awami League leaders under the interim government.

<u>By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan</u>

The Assam Budget 2025-26 presents a clear plan for balanced growth and long-term development in the state. With a total allocation of ₹2.63 lakh crore, the government has focused on creating a stable financial system, boosting infrastruc-

set plans to establish three new medical colleges, which will help in training more healthcare professionals and improving medical services. These colleges, along with additional projects to build more medical facilities in various parts of the state, are expected to expand access to quality healthcare. Furthermore, the proposal to disaster management, and urban planning. By investing in space technology, the government is opening up new avenues for research and development and providing students and researchers with opportunities to work on high-tech projects. This move not only modernizes the state's approach to governance but also positions Assam as a

Utional Citizens Party (NCP), or Jatiya Nagorik Party (NJP) in Bengali. Officially founded on February 28, 2025, the party is the political offspring of the Anti-Discrimination Students Movement (ADSM), which played a pivotal role in the ousting of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on August 5, 2024. The movement, initially driven by students and later embraced by wider civil society, culminated in the establishment of the National Citizens Committee (NCP), or Jatiya Nagorik Committee (INC), on September 8, 2024. With the transition from a revolutionary movement to a formal political entity, the NCP now faces the daunting challenge of consolidating its position and fulfilling its promises of political reform.

The Road to Political Transformation

For nearly seven months, speculation swirled about the formation of a new political party that could sustain the momentum of the mass movement that toppled Hasina's government. A report by Reuters, dated August 16, 2024, under the headline 'Student Protesters Plan New Party to Cement Their Revolution', captured the sentiments of the movement's leaders. Mahfuz Alam, a key figure in the ADSM and an advisor to the interim government, was quoted as saying that the decision to form a party would be made within a month. His statement, however, was later retracted in what appeared to be an attempt to downplay expectations, reflecting internal tensions within the movement's leadership.

Nahid Islam, another influential ADSM leader, and the current convener of the NCP, articulated the party's vision of a Bangladesh free from authoritarianism and systemic corruption. According to Islam, structural reforms are essential to ensure that no autocratic regime can reclaim power. However, from the outset, the NCP's internal dynamics have been fraught with ideological and strategic disagreements. Reports of infighting surfaced as early as August 2024, when factional disputes led to resignations within the ADSM's leadership. This discord became even more pronounced in January 2025, when a violent clash among ADSM supporters in Khulna left eight people injured. More recently, on February 24, 2025, a protest erupted on the Dhaka-Aricha highway against the appointment of a new district committee, highlighting ongoing tensions.

The Challenges of Cohesion and Identity

The ideological diversity within the NCP is both an asset and a liability. The party's ranks include former members of Islamist student groups like Shibir, as well as leftist activists and politically unaffiliated individuals who joined the ADSM out of frustration with the traditional power structure. While the party currently enjoys broad support as an alternative to the entrenched political establishment, its longevity will depend on its ability to forge a coherent political identity.

A key concern surrounding the NCP is the source of its funding and organizational support. The Daily Star, in a report dated March 2, 2025, noted that the Pirojpur district administration had requisitioned private buses to transport students to the NCP's inaugural rally—an act that raises questions about whether state resources are being leveraged for partisan purposes. Such incidents fuel fears that, despite its rhetoric of reform, the NCP may fall prey to the same political malpractices it seeks to abolish.

Moreover, the party's manifesto, while ambitious in its

The Political Landscape Ahead

The biggest question facing the NCP is whether it can translate its revolutionary momentum into electoral success. Had elections been held immediately after Hasina's ouster, the NCP might have enjoyed a sweeping victory. However, public sentiment is shifting. The interim government, despite initially being hailed as a force for change, has been increasingly criticized for its inability to control inflation, economic instability, and lawlessness. These grievances have started to erode the public's faith in the movement's leadership, and by extension, the NCP.

Meanwhile, the political opposition, particularly the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which suffered severe repression under Hasina's rule, is regaining strength. The BNP's resurgence poses a direct challenge to the NCP as does the latter's lack of a well-established grassroots network. The party's leadership has called for elections to be delayed until major reforms are implemented, but this strategy may backfire if the electorate perceives it as a delaying tactic rather than a genuine effort at democratic restructuring.

The Legacy of Sheikh Hasina's Fall

Sheikh Hasina's resignation on August 5, 2024, marked the end of a 15-year rule that many critics described as increasingly authoritarian. The spark for her downfall was the reinstatement of a controversial quota system in June 2024, which reserved 30% of government jobs for the families of veterans from the 1971 war of independence. This decision ignited student protests at a time when graduate unemployment was already at alarming levels. Despite a subsequent reduction of the quota to 5%, the protests escalated as security forces responded with violent crackdowns, resulting in the deaths of approximately 600 demonstrators.

The government's attempts to quell the unrest-including internet shutdowns, mass arrests, and a curfew-only deepened the crisis. When the military refused Hasina's orders to open fire on protesters, her fate was sealed. As thousands of demonstrators advanced toward her official residence, she resigned and fled to India.

A Moment of Reckoning

As Bangladesh navigates this new political era, the fate of the NCP hangs in the balance. The party represents both the hope of a new beginning and the risk of repeating historical patterns of internal discord and political opportunism. Its ability to institutionalize the ideals of the ADSM, maintain unity among its diverse factions, and offer a viable governance model will determine whether it emerges as a transformative force or fades into history as another transient political experiment.

The Latin phrase Sic transit gloria mundi-'Thus passes the glory of the world'-serves as a reminder that political fortunes are ephemeral. The NCP must act deciively if it is to solidify its place in Bangladesh's evolving democratic landscape. The next parliamentary elections will be the ultimate test of whether this fledgling party can rise to the occasion or succumb to the same pitfalls that have plagued its predecessors. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)

ture, and improving social services like education and healthcare. The budget reflects a careful economic analysis that aims to enhance financial resilience, provide better services for citizens, and drive overall economic progress in Assam.

A major part of the budget is dedicated to strengthening the state's financial framework. The Finance Department has received the highest allocation of ₹35,301 crore. This investment is meant to improve important financial indicators and bring Assam closer to national standards. By upgrading digital payment systems and strengthening the Direct Benefit Transfer mechanism, the government is working to make financial transactions smoother and more transparent. One important initiative is the zero-premium insurance scheme for

more than four lakh government employees. This move not only secures the financial future of government workers but also builds confidence in the public sector. In this way, the budget supports economic stability by ensuring that funds are managed efficiently and reach those who need them most

The allocation for education shows the government's commitment to the future of Assam's youth. With ₹18,733 crore set aside for the School Education Department, the focus is on creating better learning environments and expanding access to education in both urban and rural areas. By extending the PM POSHAN Scheme, the government plans to improve the nutrition of over 31.75 lakh children, helping them to perform better in school. Additionally, measures like providing free bicycles to Class IX students and supplying free textbooks and uniforms to a large number of students aim to remove barriers to learning. The recruitment of new teachers and the introduction of modern learning tools such as smart classrooms and ICT labs will contribute to a better educational experience, thereby nurturing a skilled workforce for the future.

Healthcare also receives significant attention in the budget, with ₹5,393 crore allocated to this sector. The government has

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create seven new nursing colleges indicates a strong focus on building a robust healthcare system. This investment in health infrastructure is not only about treating illnesses; it also strengthens the overall human resource base and contributes to a healthier, more productive workforce, which is essential for economic growth.

Infrastructure development is another key area that the budget addresses. With an allocation of ₹10,200 crore for the Public Works Department, the focus is on building better roads and bridges to improve connectivity across the state. Projects like the Mukhvamantir Pakipath Nirman Achani and the Asom Mala Project are designed to connect rural areas with urban centers, reducing travel time and promoting eco-

nomic activities. The near-completion of the Brahmaputra Bridge and other major road projects highlights the state's dedication to developing an efficient transportation network. Improved infrastructure not only makes daily life easier for citizens but also attracts investment and supports commerce, thereby driving overall economic growth.

Social welfare is another pillar of the budget, with several initiatives aimed at supporting vulnerable communities. For example, a one-time financial aid of ₹5,000 for nearly 6.8 lakh tea garden workers is a significant step toward ensuring that some of the most disadvantaged groups receive timely help. The Orunodoi scheme, with an allocation of ₹5,000 crore, provides financial assistance to over 37 lakh women, helping them to manage their day-to-day needs and contributing to greater social stability. Other initiatives, such as the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan, are designed to support women entrepreneurs and boost local businesses. Financial support for farmers, in the form of direct payments per quintal of crops, ensures that those in the agricultural sector receive fair compensation. In addition, providing essential commodities to ration card holders underscores the government's commitment to improving the standard of living for all citizens.

The budget also pays attention to technology and innovation, which are crucial for long-term economic growth. One of the most forward-thinking projects is the launch of Assam's first satellite, known as ASSAMSAT. This project, developed in collaboration with IN-SPACe and the Indian Space Research Organisation, aims to support various sectors such as agriculture.

hub for innovation in the future.

The economic analysis of the Assam Budget 2025-26 shows a careful balance between immediate needs and long-term goals. By directing funds toward strengthening financial systems, improving education and healthcare, developing infrastructure, and supporting social welfare, the budget is designed to create a stable and inclusive economy. These measures are expected to generate a positive cycle of growth, where improvements in one sector boost overall productivity and contribute to better outcomes in others. For example, better infrastructure can lead to increased investment, which in turn supports job creation and raises incomes, ultimately contributing to greater social stability.

The focus on simple yet effective initiatives reflects the government's understanding of the challenges faced by the state. By using straightforward measures like free textbooks, improved road networks, and better healthcare facilities, the budget seeks to address the basic needs of the people while laying the groundwork for more advanced development in the future. This approach is expected to lead to sustained economic growth and help Assam overcome the hurdles that have previously limited its progress.

Overall, the Assam Budget 2025-26 serves as a clear roadmap for the state's future. It combines efforts to stabilize the economy, improve public services, and drive innovation, all of which are critical for long-term growth. With targeted investments in finance, education, healthcare, infrastructure, social welfare, and technology, the budget lays a strong foundation for a more prosperous and resilient Assam. The measures outlined in this budget are expected to not only address current challenges but also create a positive environment for future growth, ensuring that the benefits of development are shared widely among all citizens.

This comprehensive approach, based on sound economic principles and simple, effective strategies, shows that Assam is ready to take a significant step forward. The budget is not just a financial plan; it is a commitment to creating a better, more secure future for the people of Assam. By focusing on both immediate needs and long-term objectives, the government aims to transform the state into a model of inclusive growth and sustainable development, ensuring that every citizen can share in the progress and prosperity of the years to come. (The writer is Editor in Chief of the Assamese E-magazine SAMPROTIK. can be reached He at himangshur1989@gmail.com)



MISCELLANEOUS

THE HILLS TIMES 5

Are eggs good or bad for cholesterol? Outdated misconceptions seem to persist

By: Corrie Pelc

or many people, the humble egg is considered an almost perfect food due to all the nutrients it contains, including protein, micronutrients like lutein and choline, and a variety of vitamins such as vitamin A and vitamin B12.

Past studies suggest that eating eggs can have a positive impact on brain health, the immune system, muscles, and eye health.

Over the last few decades, there has been much debate about whether eggs contribute to high cholesterol and an increased risk of heart disease because of their dietary cholesterol content.

Thanks to updated research, the 2015 dietary guidelines removed previously recommended limits on egg consumption over dietary cholesterol concerns, reaffirming eggs as a healthy part of the diet.

Despite these dietary guideline changes, a new study has found that lingering misconceptions about eggs might still prevent people from including them in their daily diets.

According to new research recently published in the journal Nutrients, as of 2021, people still reported limiting their egg consumption due to the cholesterol content of eggs. This leads to the need for additional education for both the general public and healthcare professionals regarding the health benefits of eggs.

It's important to note that this research was funded by an unrestricted grant from the American Egg Board's Egg Nutrition Center (Award #20194881), but the authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Tracking egg consumption for over 48 vears

For this study, researchers analyzed data from about 6,300 participants in the Rancho Bernardo Study between 1972 and 1974. During this period, participants were asked how many eggs they ate each week.

Approximately 1,600 and 1,400 participants, respectively, were asked again about their egg consumption during follow-up visits between 1988-1991 and 1992-1996.

In 2021, a survey was mailed to surviving participants. Of them, 710 participants responded, providing information about their egg consumption and barriers that might limit their egg intake.

"Data from the Rancho Bernardo Study afforded us an unparalleled opportunity to examine the trends in egg consumption over 48 years," Donna Kritz-Silverstein, PhD,

professor and assistant dean for teaching programs at the Herbert Wertheim School of Public Health & Human Longevity Science, and professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health, both at the University of California San Diego, and lead author of this study, told Medical News Today.

"There is no other study that has followed participants that can examine whether egg consumption impacts health over such a long period of time," she said.

Early guidelines lead to lower egg consumption in the 90's

Upon analysis, Kritz-Silverstein and her team found that while participants reported eating 3.6 eggs per week in 1972-1974, this amount dropped to 1.8 per week from 1988-1991 and about the same amount from 1992-1996.

"Guidelines limiting egg consumption and dietary cholesterol were first promoted in 1968 by the American Heart Association," Kritz-Silverstein explained.

Advice on eggs and cholesterol

"At the time, it was thought that dietary cholesterol (i.e. the cholesterol found in eggs) could raise levels of plasma cholesterol. Trusted Source This amount of dietary cholesterol that could be consumed per day was further reduced later on for those at high risk of heart disease. It was not until 2015 and after a lot of research had been done

- that these guidelines were abandoned.' Donna Kritz-Silverstein, PhD

"In this study, egg consumption was only assessed at four time points, so that we cannot know the precise timing at which guide-lines were adopted or abandoned," she continued.

"But given that the adoption of guidelines by the general public likely takes some time from when they are first put forth, it is reasonable that the original assessment of egg intake in 1972-74 was close to the time when people first became aware of these guidelines. By 1988-91 and 1992-96, guidelines likely had widespread adoption," she told MNT.

Egg misconceptions linger as of 2021

When looking at egg consumption numbers in 2021, the researchers found that the average number of eggs consumed per week increased to 3.4, an amount similar to that in 1972-74.

"By 2021, guidelines had been abandoned, but it takes time for the information to trickle down and for people to change

their habits," Kritz-Silverstein said. Also, in the 2021 data, scientists found that 22.1% of those who responded reported

limiting their egg consumption. "Most people indicated that they limited their egg intake because they either thought it was healthier, because of the high cholesterol content of eggs, or because of a doctor's recommendation due to their own high (plasma) cholesterol level," Kritz-Silverstein detailed.

"Our study showed that the guidelines surrounding egg consumption, whether they were appropriate or not, impacted egg in-

Despite the abandonment of these guidelines, they continue to serve as a barrier to egg consumption for some people."

"Results of this study suggest that to counter the lingering effects of outdated dietary restrictions, additional education is needed for healthcare professionals as well as the general public. Campaigns targeting older individuals regarding the benefits of eggs for health maintenance could be use-- Donna Kritz-Silverstein, PhD ful."

Clinical trials showing egg consumption benefit needed

MNT spoke with Yu-Ming Ni, MD, a board certified cardiologist and lipidologist at MemorialCare Heart and Vascular Institute at Orange Coast Medical Center in Fountain Valley, CA, about this study.

"This is a paper looking at historical trends in egg consumption (and) there are many reasons why people choose or don't choose to eat eggs that have nothing to do with health. I want to make it clear that this does not change my opinion on how people eat eggs at all," Ni said.

Ni suggested clinical trials showing the various health benefits of people eating more eggs versus less would be beneficial.

"I think without a study like that, I'm not willing to make any conclusions about whether egg consumption is good or bad for you all," he continued.

How many eggs a week?

"I can say that a single egg has 70% of your daily dietary cholesterol intake, so I tell patients not to overdo it. I would recommend no more than seven eggs in a week, whether you bunch it up on the weekend or you eat it throughout the week. And then egg whites don't have the same amount of cholesterol, so that's fine. That's my general recommendation, but that's not going to change based on this



study." - Yu-Ming Ni, MD. Should I eat more eggs?

MNT also spoke with Monique Richard. MS, RDN, LDN, a registered dietitian nutritionist and owner of Nutrition-In-Sight, about how readers can alleviate their fears regarding misconceptions about eggs, high cholesterol, and heart disease.

"Concern over the egg and cholesterol connection is about as time-tested as the 'which came first-chicken or egg?' question, but it is important to remember to think 'big picture' and keep in mind that egg yolks are not often consumed in isolation, which influences how the body metabolizes, uses, and processes components such as cholesterol," Richard explained.

"Factors such as fiber, especially [soluble] fiber, and types and amounts of fat within a meal and within a dietary pattern on a daily basis impacts total cholesterol. Oftentimes briefly tracking intake can reveal additional information and insight about what may be beneficial or consequential to our health goals and needs," she continued.

Richard encouraged readers to observe their egg intake with the following questions:

How many eggs do I consume on a daily and weekly basis? How are they being prepared?

What portion of animal products compose my diet per meal, per day?

Are whole grains such as oatmeal, quinoa, whole wheat/rye/oat toast being consumed along with the eggs?

Are the eggs I am consuming usually in a recipe or dish such as baked oatmeal, cookies, casseroles, quiche, pancakes, or waf-

"In addition, taking a look at other factors often related to egg consumption may reveal how and where the impact on your specific lipid health is being made," Richard said. "For example, it is pretty standard in America for eggs to be fried in butter or margarine and be accompanied by other animal products such as bacon, sausage, ham, cheese, and milk — items higher in saturated fat and cholesterol.

Substitutes for eggs

"Egg substitutes are also a very viable option for those that need and/or want it, or it may be appropriate for those related to an allergy or other medical condition. Substituting ground flaxseed, chia seed, tofu, mung bean, garbanzo beans, mashed bananas, or applesauce in recipes such as casseroles and muffins are an option as well as using silken tofu for a scramble or 'eggsalad' sandwich can be delicious, nutritious while providing additional nutritional bene-- Monique Richard, MS, RDN, LDN. fits."-

"When we begin to understand our own unique needs and our body's response to input (food, environmental factors, etc.), fear of the unknown of what could happen and labeling of 'condemned' food dissipates," Richard added. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

When did the ancestors of humans first start eating Teachers in Assam need relief

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

leachers in Assam play an indispensable role in shaping the minds and futures of countless students.

becomes a rushed and superficial process.

Beyond its impact on teaching quality, the workload crisis is also a serious mental and emotional health issue. Teaching is already an emotionally taxing job, with teachers conand effective. Over time, this stantly addressing the diverse needs of students while balancing the expectations of school authorities and parents. When this is combined with the added pressure of administrative tasks, it leads to chronic stress and burnout. Teachers who once entered the profession with enthusiasm and passion often find themselves disillusioned and struggling to keep up with the demands. Their job satisfaction declines, and many begin to experience anxiety, frustration, and emotional exhaustion. In rural and semi-urban areas of Assam, the problem is even more acute. Many schools face a severe shortage of staff, which forces the existing teachers to take on multiple roles. A single teacher may be responsible for teaching multiple subjects while managing administrative tasks and extracurricular activities. In such situations, it becomes nearly impossible to maintain a healthy work-life balance. The lack of proper infrastructure and resources further aggravates the problem, making it harder for teachers to perform their duties effectively. The COVID-19 pandemic has added another layer of complexity to this crisis. During the shift to online education, teachers had to adapt to new technologies without sufficient training or support. Many spent endless hours creating digital content, resolving connectivity issues, and helping students navigate the unfamiliar world of online learning. Even after the return to physical classrooms, the pressure to bridge the learning gap caused by the pandemic remains intense. Teachers are expected to help students catch up academically while simultaneously managing their regular duties. This dual responsibility has only increased the burden on them. The consequences of this growing workload are farreaching. When teachers are overburdened, it directly affects the quality of education.

Exhausted teachers cannot give their best to students, and the teacher-student relationship suffers. This lack of personal connection and attention can demotivate students, making the learning process less engaging

meat? Tooth fossils could provide some clues <u>By: Tina Lüdecke</u> <u>& Dominic Stratford</u>





They are not merely educators but also mentors, guides, and pillars of the community. However, the increasing demands placed on them have created an environment of overwhelming stress and fatigue. The burden of excessive workload, compounded by numerous nonteaching responsibilities, has made their jobs far more challenging than ever before. If left unaddressed, this mounting pressure could have serious consequences for the education system and the well-being of teachers. It is time to recognize their struggles and offer muchneeded relief.

Teaching is inherently a demanding profession that requires constant preparation, innovation, and emotional engagement with students. Teachers must plan lessons, assess student progress, address individual learning needs, and maintain a nurturing classroom environment. Yet, in recent years, their primary role of teaching has been overshadowed by a long list of administrative duties. Teachers are often tasked with record-keeping, data collection for government schemes, election duties, and other bureaucratic responsibilities that have little to do with actual teaching. These additional tasks consume significant time and energy, leaving teachers drained and unable to focus on their core responsibility-providing quality education.

The pressure to meet deadlines and complete administrative work has taken a toll on the teaching-learning process. Teachers are forced to spend hours filling out forms and compiling reports, while the time they can devote to planning lessons and interacting with students continues to shrink. This results in a mechanical approach to teaching, where creativity and personalized attention take a backseat. Students, who should be the central focus of education, are ultimately the ones who suffer from this situation. The joy of learning fades when teaching

weakens the overall foundation of the education system, creating a ripple effect that impacts future generations. It is crucial for policymakers and educational authorities to acknowledge the harsh realities faced by teachers in Assam. Reducing non-teaching duties and providing administrative support staff can significantly ease their burden. Schools must be equipped with adequate resources and infrastructure to ensure that teachers can focus on teaching without unnecessary distractions. Hiring more staff, especially in rural areas, can help distribute the workload more evenly, preventing teachers from being overwhelmed. Professional development

programs and counseling services can also play a vital role in helping teachers manage stress and build resilience. Creating a supportive environment where teachers feel valued and respected can boost their morale and enhance their job satisfaction. Most importantly, the focus must shift back to the core mission of education—nurturing students and helping them grow into capable, responsible individuals. Teachers are the backbone of the education system, and their well-being is essential for its success. In Assam, they continue to work tirelessly despite the challenges they face, driven by their commitment to their students. However, they cannot carry this burden alone. Offering them the relief and support they need is not just an act of kindness; it is a necessary step toward building a stronger, more effective education system. Teachers deserve to be empowered, not weighed down by excessive responsibilities. By addressing their workload crisis, we can ensure that they are able to do what they do best-teach, inspire, and shape the future of Assam. (The writer is an Editor in Chief of the Assamese e-magazine SAMPROTIK. He can he reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)

hominins, particularly their reliance on plants. Yet we still don't know when these ancestors of humans started eating meat

This is a frustrating gap in our understanding of human evolution. We think regular meat consumption was one of the main drivers of brain growth and evolution in hominins, because animal products are calorie-dense and easier to digest than unprocessed plant foods. They also contain all the essential amino acids and are rich in biologically important nutrients, minerals and vitamins.

What we do know is that by the time our genus, Homo, emerged over two million years ago, hominins were regularly eating meat. This is clear from their increased reliance at this point on stone tools to butcher and process meat products. We've also found fossil bones with cut marks that indicate butchering.

But that doesn't explain when and where regular meat eating started and which species of our ancestors made that crucial shift.

Now, thanks to fossilised tooth enamel. we're a step closer to an answer. In a study with several other co-authors, we measured nitrogen isotopes in the enamel from fossilised teeth belonging to the hominin genus Australopithecus, discovered in South Africa's Sterkfontein Caves. This is one of the oldest known human ancestor species.

Atoms of the same element can have different versions, called isotopes, which have the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons. This makes them slightly heavier or lighter but chemically similar. For example, nitrogen has two stable isotopes: nitrogen-14 (14N) and nitrogen-15 (¹⁵N). These occur naturally, but their ratio varies in nature. In food webs. nitrogen isotopes become enriched as you move up the chain, meaning predators have higher ¹⁴N/¹⁵N ratios than herbivores.

Identifying these isotopes is a way to reconstruct ancient diets and ecosystems, helping scientists understand how past environments shaped the survival of species including early humans.

We also tested the isotopic signature of animals that lived in the ecosystem at the same time. We saw that the isotopic signature of Australopithecus was low - similar to that of herbivores.

Our findings suggest that these ape-like, small-brained early hominins were eating mostly plants. There was little to no evidence of meat consumption. They may have snacked on the occasional egg or insect but they were not regularly hunting

-🐼



large mammals like Neanderthals did millions of years later.

A toothy approach

One of us (Dr Lüdecke) began working with fossilised tooth enamel during her PhD. The focus was on measuring stable carbon isotopes in the enamel as a way to uncover the plant-based part of an extant or extinct animal's diet.

This approach reveals whether a species relied on lush, leafy plants or hardy, grasslike vegetation in African savanna ecosystems. But there was always that small, unsatisfying sentence in the discussion section of her academic papers: "This dataset cannot inform about the meat portion of the diet."

Then inspiration struck. The co-authors of the latest study, Alfredo Martínez-García and Daniel Sigman, had developed a method with their teams to measure nitrogen isotopes in marine microfossils – tiny creatures that, like fossilised tooth enamel, contain almost no organic material.

We wondered whether the same technique could work for ancient teeth and finally provide a date marker for early nominins' meat eating behaviour.

We started small by testing the method on rodent tooth enamel from animals with controlled diets in a specialised feeding experiment. It worked. From there, we moved on to the enamel of wild mammals from museum collections and other animals that had lived naturally in African ecosystems.

When these results aligned with what we expected in terms of their known diets, we knew we had a reliable tool. After more laboratory testing, method tweaking and checking, we felt ready to analyse the fossilised tooth enamel of non-primate fauna found in one of the oldest fossil-bearing deposits of South Africa's Sterkfontein Caves. This deposit, Member 4, formed about 3.4 million years ago, during the Late Pliocene period.

Again, these analyses gave us the exected results: it was clear at the isotopic level whether we were dealing with the teeth of a herbivore or a carnivore.

Then we finally sampled seven Australopithecus molars from Member 4 to uncover whether these ancient hominins, which lived and died around the Sterkfontein Caves about 3.4 million years ago, were sinking their teeth into meat or sticking to a largely vegetarian menu.

By comparing the nitrogen isotope ratios of these early hominins with those of other animals from the same ecosystem - like antelopes, monkeys and carnivores - we found that the isotopic signature of Australopithecus was low, similar to that of herbivores.

Future plans

This discovery is just the beginning. We're now expanding our research to other fossil sites across Africa and Asia, hoping to answer bigger questions. When did meat truly enter the hominin diet? Which species of hominins through our evolution consumed meat? Did the behaviour emerge several times and did it coincide with the rise of larger brains, or marked changes in behaviour, like new stone tool technology? And what does this mean for how we understand the evolutionary path that led to our species? (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

World

12 dead, dozens

hurt as bus

overturns

JOHANNESBURG, March

11: A bus overturned on a high-

way on Tuesday and passen-

gers were thrown out of it,

killing at least 12 people and

injuring 45 in the South African

'All hostages will be executed'

Gunmen open fire on express train in Pakistan's Balochistan, BLA claims responsibility

KARACHI, March 11: Several passengers were injured when gunmen attacked a train in Pakistan's troubled Balochistan on Tuesday, prompting the provincial government to direct authorities to take "emergency measures".

"There are reports of intense firing at a Jaffar Express, which was heading from Quetta to Peshawar, between Pehro Kunri and Gadalar," Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind said.

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) claimed that it seized control of the train by derailing it, killed six security personnel and took over 100 passengers, including active duty personnel, into custody. However, there was no independent confirmation of their

In a statement, the BLA warned that if Pakistan military launches an operation, "all hostages will be executed". The group is banned in Pakistan, the UK and the US.

Official data on casualties was not available, but security sources said that the train driver and several passengers were injured in the gunfire.

Rescue teams and security forces have reached the scene, and an operation is underway to track down the assailants. Emergency was declared in the local hospitals. Railway officials confirmed that the train's driver sustained serious injuries, and an emergency relief train has been dispatched to assist. Meanwhile, Controller Railways

with questions open over how to revive slowing economy



BEIJING, March 11: China is wrapping up its biggest political event of the year on Tuesday leaving one question unanswered: How far will it go to try to revive economic growth in 2025?

A recurring theme throughout the week-long meeting of the nearly 3,000-member National People's Congress was the need to boost investment and consumer spending

How much will be done to translate words into action will only become clear in the months ahead as the ruling Communist Party juggles priorities. What is clear is that a trade war with the United States has left the outlook for the coming months uncertain.

The meeting ended Tuesday in the absence of top political leader Zhao Leii, who serves as chairman of the Standing Committee of the

the country's state-dominated

economy. Years of regulatory crackdowns have shaken the confidence of entrepreneurs and other investors.

The Congress reviewed comments on a law meant to improve the environment for private enterprises by regulating aspects of market access, financing, competition and property rights protection,

among others. Xi aims to send a "message to entrepreneurs, but also to local governments and regulators, that the private sector's important and it's necessary", Neil Thomas, a fellow on Chinese politics at the Asia Society Policy Institute, said ahead

of the congress. Private companies will also gain access to a higher share of loans than before, and financing for private businesses raised through



Muhammad Kashif said that the around 500 passengers on board. train, comprising nine coaches, had "The train was stopped by

armed men in Tunnel No 8," the controller said.

There are 17 tunnels in this area on the railway line and due to the difficult terrain, the speed of the train is often slow. The Balochistan government di-

rected local authorities to take "emergency measures". A provincial government statement said an emergency was imposed at Sibi hospital and ambulances and security forces

were on their way to the site. In the past, the railway tracks in this area have been attacked by Baloch militants by using rockets or remote-controlled bombs and

the BLA claimed responsibility for most of the attacks.

Railways announced tion of train services between Quetta and Peshawar after a suspension of more than a month and a half.

uptick in terrorist attacks over the ects in the oil and mineral-rich

contributing to the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' ini-

Before this, the prime minister had under-

Över 27,500 trees have already been planted

the National Assembly, Leader of the Opposi-

tion, Foreign Minister, Cabinet Secretary, Chairperson of Grand Port District Council and

A total of 200 dignitaries were present to wel-

Modi will call on the president of Mauritius,

In October last year, Pakistan province. (PTI)

many others.

come Modi

Balochistan has witnessed an

past year. In November 2024, at least 26 people were killed and 62 injured after a suicide blast ripped through a Quetta Railway Station. Balochistan, bordering Iran and Afghanistan, is home to a longrunning violent insurgency. Baloch insurgent groups frequently carry out attacks targeting security personnel, government projects and the USD 60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) proj-

city of Johannesburg, emergency services said. Emergency crews were trying to lift the bus back onto its wheels to see if any more vic-

tims were trapped underneath it, said William Nthladi, a spokesperson for the city's Ekurhuleni Emergency Management.

"On arrival we found patients lying across the road,' Nthladi said

The early-morning crash happened on a highway near Johannesburg's main O.R. Tambo International Airport.

The bus was lying on its side near the edge of the highway. It had been transporting people from the township or Katlehong, east of Johannesburg, officials said.

Nthladi said 12 people were declared dead at the scene of the crash by paramedics.

Nthladi said he also couldn't give exact details on the extent of the injuries but said they ranged from serious to critical. The driver was among those taken to the hospital.

No other vehicle was involved in the crash and officials weren't yet able to determine the cause. Police are investigating and the crash was being treated as a crime scene because of the fatalities, Nthladi

China ending annual Congress PM Modi visits Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden; pays homage to two Mauritian leaders

PORT LOUIS, March 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart Navinchandra Ramgoolam of Mauritius on Tuesday laid a wreath at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden where both the leaders participated in a tree plantation drive.

The prime minister laid a wreath at the concrete 'Samadhi' of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the founding father of Mauritius. He also laid a wreath at the 'Samadhi' of

Anerood Jugnauth, former president and prime minister of Mauritius.

"Went to the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden with Prime Minister Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. This is a fine botanical garden, a living archive of biodiversity which illustrates Mauritius' conservation efforts and botanical heritage," the prime minister said in a post on X.

"Humbled by the heartfelt gesture of my friend, Prime Minister Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, commitment to a greener and better future," the

dramodi paid homage to the two towering leaders of Mauritian history - Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and Sir Anerood Jugnauth — at the iconic Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Botanical Garden, Pamplemousses," Randhir Jaiswal, the official spokesperson of the Ministry of Exter-

"Reinforcing joint commitment to a green fu-



"A moment of remembrance! PM @naren-

nal Affairs, said on X.

ture, PM planted a Bael sapling in the garden,

possible'

National Police.

meet the prime minister, and hold meetings with senior dignitaries and leaders of political parties said. (AP) in the island nation. (PTI) Senate confirms Lori Chavez-DeRemer as Trump's labor secretary

WASHINGTON, March 11: The Chavez-DeRemer 67-32.

Senate voted Monday to confirm Lori Chavez-DeRemer as U.S. labor secretary, a Cabinet position that puts her in charge of enforcing federally mandated worker rights and protections at a time when the White House is trying to eliminate thousands of government employees. Chavez-DeRemer will oversee the Department of Labor, one of several executive departments named in lawsuits challenging the authority of billionaire Elon Musk and two police sources with knowledge the Department of Government Effi-

Hampshire — voted with the majorciency to order layoffs and access of the investigation as saying that ity. sensitive government data During her confirmation hearing before the committee, several Repub-The Labor Department had nearly 16,000 full-time employees and a prolican senators grilled Chavez-DeRemer about her decision to co-sponsor posed budget of \$13.9 billion for fiscal year 2025. Some of its yast legislation that would have made it responsibilities include reporting the easier for workers to unionize and pe-U.S. unemployment rate, regulating nalized employers who stood in the workplace health and safety stanway of organizing efforts. She dedards, investigating minimum wage, clined to explicitly state whether she child labor and overtime pay disputes, still backed the Protecting the Right and applying laws on union organizto Organize Act, also known as the PRO Act. Chavez-DeRemer exing and unlawful terminations. plained she had signed on as a co-Several prominent labor unions, including the International Brotherhood sponsor because she wanted a seat at of Teamsters, endorsed Chavezthe table to discuss important labor is-DeRemer's nomination. The former sues. Under further questioning, she Republican congresswoman from walked back some of her support of Oregon is the daughter of a Teamster, the bill, saying that she supported and during her one term in the House state "right to work" laws, which earned a reputation as pro-labor. allow employees to refuse to join a The Senate voted to confirm union in their workplace. (AP)

The Senate has now confirmed all but one of Trump's picks for his Cabinet. The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & amp; Pensions had voted 14-9 in favor of her nomination last week, with all Republicans except Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky giving Chavez-DeRemer their support. Three Democrats on the committee - Sens. John Hicken-

looper of Colorado, Tim Kaine of Vir-

ginia and Maggie Hassan of New

prime minister said on X.

in taking part in 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' - a tribute to nature, motherhood and sustainability. His support stands tall as a symbol of our shared

Indian student goes missing while vacationing in Dominican Republic

NEW YORK, March 11: A 20year-old Indian student has gone missing while on vacation in the Dominican Republic and US federal law enforcement agencies are working with authorities in the Caribbean country in the probe into her disappearance.

Sudiksha Konanki is a citizen of India and a permanent resident of the United States.

A student at the University of Pittsburgh, Konanki was vacationing with five female college friends



one who may have seen or been with Konanki before she went missing," the LCSO statement said.

The statement said the LCSO has filed for a Yellow Notice (world-

with Modi having participated in tree plantation in two countries. Earlier, the prime minister received a memorable welcome at Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport by his Mauritius counter-Ramgoolam was joined by the Deputy Prime

al People's Congres

Zhao, who was supposed to host the congress closing ceremony, was suffering from a respiratory infection and had to take a leave of absence, according to Li Hongzhong, vice chairman of the political body.

Li chaired the closing session in his place.

At stake is the health of the world's second largest economy, a major exporter of products to countries around the world and an important market for foreign companies from Apple to Volkswagen.

A prolonged property crisis has sapped consumer and business confidence, depriving the economy of its past vitality. Now, a tariff war unleashed by US President Donald Trump is compounding those problems.

The Congress opened with the announcement of an economic growth target of "about 5 per cent" for this year, a level that analysts said would be difficult to achieve with the measures detailed during this year's Congress.

They include borrowing more money for a slew of initiatives, such as giving 300 billion yuan (USD 41.3 billion) in rebates to consumers who trade-in old cars and appliances for new ones. But much of the borrowing will go to supporting the housing market and local governments weighed down by debt.

"It is unclear how much of a jolt this budget will provide to underlying domestic demand and reflation efforts, despite the sizeable rise in the deficit," Jeremy Zook, the lead China analyst for Fitch Ratings, said in a report.

The ambitious 5 per cent growth target signalled to analysts that more stimulus may be coming. Last year, the government surprised stock markets with various moves beginning in September to push growth up to 5 per cent, also the target in 2024.

Finance Minister Lan Fo'an told journalists covering the Congress that the government had sufficient tools in reserve to deal with external or domestic uncertainties.

Chinese President Xi Jinping seems bent on reinvigorating private businesses, which provide a large share of growth and jobs in

ond issuance will Chinese Premier Li Qiang said in his work report.

Much rides on how far Trump pursues his trade wars with China and other countries.

China has diversified its export markets in recent years, but the US remains a vital trading partner. The greater fear is not the tariffs themselves but the health of the US economy and demand for Chinese products, said Alicia Garcia Herrero, the chief Asia-Pacific economist for Natixis investment bank. Trump has raised tariffs on im-

ports from China twice since taking office in January. China has shown no sign of backing down.

"If the American side goes further down this wrong path, we will fight to the end," Commerce Minister Wang Wentao told journalists during the Congress.

Asked about Trump's "America First" policy, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the law of the jungle would reign if all countries adopted a "my country first" approach.

"A big country should honour its international obligations and fulfil its due responsibilities," he said to journalists at the Congress. "It should not put selfish interests before principles, still less wield its power to bully the weak."

The government said in its annual report that it would address what it considers unproductive "rat-race" competition, invoking a term that was a buzzword in China five years ago among stressed-out younger workers.

The government is applying the term "neijuan" — more commonly translated as "involution" - to companies and local governments rather than workers

A proliferation of green energy firms, for example, has led to gluts in solar panels and other equipment and fierce price wars that ultimately harm the industry.

"Their strategies are similar, which leads to extremely cruel competition," Chinese tech leader Lei Jun, the CEO of Xiaomi and a delegate to the Congress, told state media. The solutions are unclear, experts say, noting that government subsidies for green energy helped create the problem by encouraging so many start-ups. (AP)

at a resort in Punta Cana, Domini can Republic, when she went missing on March 6, the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office said in a

statement Monday. The Loudoun County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) said it continues to assist and support the US federal law enforcement agencies working with the Dominican National Police and others to determine Konanki's whereabouts and what may have happened to her.

Konanki was on a spring break trip in Punta Cana and was last seen in the early morning of March 6. "The ongoing investigation includes wide-ranging search efforts, along with a review of surveillance

video and telephone records. Interviews are also continuing with any-

wide police alert for a missing person) to be issued by INTERPOL.

A report in ABC News said three Dominican officials involved in the investigation told the outlet "over the weekend that Konanki is believed to have drowned in the ocean". The LCSO cautioned against drawing any unsubstantiated conclusions, saying there has been considerable public speculation

about what may have happened to Konanki and who may be involved. "We caution anyone from drawing any unsubstantiated conclusions and are committed to ensuring that a thorough investigation is conducted before any conclusions are reached," it said.

The LCSO said it is hopeful for Konanki's safe return and "we are

Konanki's clothes were discovered on a "portable beach bed close to the beach where she went missing". The police have found no evidence of violence, according to

committed to supporting this inves-

tigation and her family in every way

The LCSO is working closely

with federal partners at the US De-

partment of State, FBI, DEA,

Homeland Security Investigations

(HSI), and the University of Pitts-

burgh Police concerning the ongo-

ing investigation by the Dominican

The report in ABC News quoted

sources. The ABC News report said that after going to a nightclub on March 5 night, Konanki and a group of people went to the beach about 4 am local time on March 6.

The report quotes sources as saying that the other women travelling with Konanki returned to their hotel about 5:55 am, with security cameras capturing their return to their rooms.

"A man stayed behind with Konanki on the beach," according to a Dominican Republic investigative police report. (PTI)

Confronting backlash against women's rights, 193 nations commit to speed action on gender equality



UNITED NATIONS, March 11: Confronting a rising backlash against women's rights, the U.N.'s 193 member nations made a commitment Monday to accelerate action on more than a dozen fronts to achieve gender equality. A political declaration adopted at the start of the annual meeting of the U.N.'s preeminent body promoting equality for women and girls recognizes that men and boys must be "strategic partners and allies" to achieve the goal.

The declaration — approved by consensus and a bang of the gavel by the chair of coincides with the 30th anniversary of the Beijing women's conference where the world's nations adopted a 150-page roadmap to achieve gender equality.

While it recognizes progress toward implementing the Beijing platform, the declaration also recognizes that after 30 years no country has achieved gender equality and

that progress has been "slow and uneven," with major gaps and obstacles to overcome. A report released last week by UN Women, the agency focused on empowering women, found that nearly one-quarter of governments worldwide reported a backlash against women's rights in 2024. Its policy and program director, Sarah Hendriks, told a news conference the number of countries reporting a backlash is likely underreported and reflects "an increasingly hostile environment.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told Monday's meeting that three decades after Beijing's conference, women's rights are "under siege." Hard-won gains are being thrown into reverse, he said, pointing to attacks on reproductive rights and the discarding of initiatives promoting gender equality. 'The poison of patriarchy is back — and it is back with a vengeance: slamming the brakes on action, tearing-up progress, and mutating into new and dangerous forms," he

warned. "Age-old horrors like violence, discrimination and economic inequality are rife," the U.N. chief said. "The gender pay gap still stands at 20%. Globally, almost one in three women have been subject to violence. And horrific sexual violence in conflict is happening from Haiti to Sudan.'

He said new technologies including artificial intelligence are creating new platforms for violence and abuse, "normalizing misog-

yny and online revenge." One result, he said, is that "up to 95% of all online deepfakes are non-consensual pornographic images. Ninety percent depict women.³

The 189 countries that attended the 1995 Beijing conference called for bold action in 12 areas, including combating poverty and gender-based violence, advancing women's rights and health, and putting women at top levels in business, government and at peacemaking tables.

The Beijing platform also said for the first time in a U.N. document that women have the right to decide "on matters relating to their sexuality, including their sexual and reproductive health, free of discrimination, coercion and violence.

Guterres urged governments and people around the world who care about equality for women and girls "to stand up and speak out" — and deliver on Beijing's promise. The eight-page declaration adopted Mon day calls for "concrete action," including: - Promoting women's access to credit

and entrepreneurship.

- Reducing women's unpaid care work by expanding systems to care for children, the needy and disabled.

 Reducing women's domestic work by promoting equal sharing of household responsibilities with men.

- Closing the gender digital divide so all women can benefit from technology and innovation

 Ensuring access to quality education for girls and lifelong learning for women.

 Adopting, implementing and funding national plans to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls.

At last year's opening of the annual twoweek meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, there were five male speakers in a row — a lineup that made some of the men uneasy and was somewhat baffling to the hundreds of women in the packed General Assembly chamber.

On Monday, the CSW chair, Saudi Arabia's U.N. Ambassador Abdulaziz Alwasil, opened the meeting in the same packed chamber but had three young women speak immediately after him.

He called the Beijing conference "a watershed moment" but told the ministers and diplomats that 30 years later, its commitments remain an urgent promise that all countries must turn into action.

"Real progress demands inclusive governance, sustained investments and unwavering political will," he said.

The political declaration, adopted with sustained applause and a few cheers, recommends one possible action.

It encourages U.N. member nations to nominate women for the next secretary-general. The U.N. has never had a female chief, and Guterres' successor will be chosen next year for a five-year term starting on Jan. 1, 2027. (AP)

NORTHEAST

Tripura has asked Centre to lift cap on borrowing: CM

AGARTALA, March 11: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Tuesday said the state government has approached the Centre to lift the cap on borrowing as it will take up big projects.

As part of prudent fiscal management, the Centre has allowed 4,000 crore borrowing for Tripura in the next three years.

While speaking at a programme in Udaipur, the chief minister said the state's budget was pegged at Tripura Govt aims to transform state into an education hub: ₹ 27.800 crore for the current fiscal (2024-25) and only Tripura Govt aims to transform state into an education hub: ₹ 10,000 crore remain left after meeting non-plan expenditures like salary, pension, loan and interest on loan.

"Of the ₹ 10,000 crore, the state needs to provide 25 per cent to Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADCA) and 10 per cent to urban local bodies," he said.

Saha said the Centre has allowed the state to borrow ₹ 4,000 crore for the next three fiscals.

"We want the Centre to lift the borrowing cap of Tripura as the

state is set to take up big projects with the investors coming for setting up business. The state has already taken up the issue with Delhi seeking withdrawal of cap in borrowing," he said.

The chief minister said in the recently concluded investors meet in Agartala altogether 87 Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) valued at ₹ 3,700 crore were signed during the business conclave. Saha said the state needs to escalate its gear for flourishing tourism sector to boost the state's

economy "We have to move forward with the promotion of tourism banking on the splendid nature, scope for adventure and religious tourism. If a person from Odisha can greet saying 'Jai Jagannath' to anyone. why we can't say 'Jai Tripurswari'. We must make it as word of mouth to promote Tripureswari temple,' he said. Tripurewari temple located in Gomati district is one of the Shakti Peeths

Saha also exhorted the officials to keep daily monitoring of development works to ensure better delivery system up to grassroots level. (PTI)

Rules are not intended to target any specific religious group whether Buddhists, Hindus, Christians or Muslims Arunachal govt to seek views of all religious groups before framing rules of APFRA: CM

ITANAGAR, March 11; Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Tuesday said the state government will form a committee comprising members from various religious groups to seek their views before framing the rules of the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (APFRA), 1978.

Responding to concerns raised by MLAs during a discussion on the motion of thanks to the Governor's address, regarding their apprehensions that the Act could divide the state along religious lines, Khandu informed the House that the government would not take any hasty decision and will act accordingly.

He said that the government is in the process of drafting rules for the 46-year-old Act. which had remained defunct until a directive from the Gauhati High Court in September 2024 ordered their formulation within six months.

The directive followed a PIL filed by a local resident Tambo Tamin.

The chief minister assured the Assembly that the government would request an extension from the court to allow adequate time for consultations with religious groups.

"We will appeal for an extension and ensure that inputs from all religious communities are considered to maintain a balanced and inclusive approach," he said.

Emphasising that the rules are not intended to target any specific religious group whether Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, or Muslims. Khandu clarified that the Act is neither in favour of nor against any religion. He pointed out that while the Act has existed for 46 years, it lacked formal rules, which are now being addressed.

"If any individual or group believes that

3 BSF personnel killed, 13 injured in Manipur road accident

IMPHAL, March 11: At least three BSF jawans died and 13 others were injured, after the truck they were on board fell into a gorge at Changoubung village in Manipur's Senapati district, an official said. Two personnel of the border guarding force died on the spot, while another succumbed to injuries on the way to hospital, he said. The bodies of the deceased have been kept at the district hospital in Senapati, the

some of the injured BSF personnel is stated to be serious, he added. lage, Senapati district, where three

ITANAGAR, March 11: No malaria-related death has been reported in Arunachal Pradesh in the last eight years, a senior health official said.

they are free to approach the court. If our in-

have drafted the rules in secrecy," he said.

tentions were against any religion, we could

Senior BJP member Wangling Lowang-

dong taking part in the discussion, stressed

sensus among stakeholders before finalising

the rules. NCP member Toko Tatung high-

lighted the need for unity in the state, warn-

ing that the implementation of the Act could

ment efforts will be futile," Tatung re-

"Without unity and peace, all develop-

the importance of reaching a broader con-

Between 2022 and 2024, two more districts have been declared malaria-free, taking the total number of such districts in the state to 16. he said.

create divisions.

Dr K T Mulung, while providing ported any malaria-related death in

tional Center for Vector Borne Dis-

marked, urging the government to carefully consider the Act's impact on the state's future

NCP legislator Nikh Kamin cautioned that the Act if implemented, could be misused, while NPP MLA Thangwang Wangham, acknowledging the protests by the Arunachal Christian Forum (ACF) and other groups, called for a comprehensive review of the Act with the involvement of all stakeholders before finalisation.

The Act has long been a contentious issue, particularly among Christian groups. The Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP) and the state government claimed that the legislation is vital for preserving indigenous culture and faith, whereas the ACF contends that it "discriminates" against Christians.

Enacted in 1978 under the Janata Party government led by Chief Minister P K Thungon, the Act received presidential assent on October 25, 1978.

It aims to prevent forced religious conversions through inducement or fraudulent means, prescribing penalties that include imprisonment of up to two years and fines up to ₹ 10,000. (PTI)



ID system, bill passed in assembly ITANAGAR, March 11: The Data Repository, setting guidelines

Arunachal to create family-based

Arunachal Pradesh assembly on Tuesday passed a bill, which seeks to bring more transparency in the distribution of public welfare benefits through the creation of a family-based identification system.

The Arunachal Pradesh Arun Parivar Authority Bill, introduced on March 6 by deputy chief minister Chowna Mein, was passed by a voice vote.

It proposes the creation of the Arun Parivar Patra (APP) ID as a family-based identification system and constituting the Arunachal Pradesh Arun Parivar Patra Authority to monitor its implementation.

Responding to queries from MLAs, Mein said the APP ID would simplify the distribution of welfare benefits by serving as a unique identifier for families.

Residents could apply for the APP ID online or at Common Service Centres (CSCs) with Aadhaar, proof of residence, and basic family details, he said.

The authority would be responsible for creating and maintaining the Arun Parivar Patra Resident

for CSCs, managing data security, synchronising the APP ID with existing welfare databases, and overseeing monitoring and grievance redressal, he added.

Mein emphasised that consolidating family information under a single ID would make benefit transfers faster and more transparent, ensuring that public welfare schemes reach the right beneficiaries efficiently.

He said awareness campaigns would be conducted to encourage enrollment, particularly in rural areas

Addressing concerns over data security, Mein said the data repository would be protected through strong encryption and legal safeguards, with penalties in place for unauthorised use, providing false information, and corporate offences

The House also passed the Arunachal Pradesh Goods & Services Tax (Amendment) Bill to amend the state's GST Act of 2017. The amendment bill, also tabled by the deputy CM on March 6, was passed without opposition. (PTI)

No malaria death reported in Arunachal in last 8 yrs: Official ease Control (NCVBDC) state pro-

gramme officer, emphasised that the annual parasite index (API) remains below 1, reflecting effective control measures

> Family welfare director Dr Marbom Basar emphasised the need for early detection, proactive surveillance, and increased blood slide collection, particularly among individuals traveling from

Dr Basar also highlighted the importance of local innovations tailored to sustain malaria-free zones and strengthening disease control mechanisms

ment in achieving malaria elimina-

tion. He reiterated that performance-based funding would be prioritised to ensure the successful implementation of disease control

Sora also cautioned that any negligence in malaria surveillance and control could lead to potential outbreaks, emphasising the need for continued vigilance.

tion of long-lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) and strengthening cross-border disease notification were also highlighted as crucial measures to prevent the reintroduction of malaria.

growing concern over dengue, with discussions on declaring it a notifiable disease to enhance monitoring and control efforts. (PTI)

I, Probin Rajkhowa son of late Melenga Rajkhowa lost my original Class-IX

School Certificate at Manja Market on March 1, 2025. Name :

LOST

Probin Rajkhowa

Address : Garmur Satra, Roha, Nagaon, Phone No. 8011104109

> **RECONDITIONING OF** WORNOUT CMS CROSSING IN SITU

Notice No. LMG/Engg/19 of 2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Brief Description of Item Reconditioning of wornout CMS crossin

BSF personnel lost their lives. He ex-

tended his condolences to the bereaved families and wished for the

official said. The health condition of

Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla has expressed condolences over the loss of lives in the accident. "Manipur Governor, Shri Ajay Kumar Bhalla, has expressed deep sorrow over the tragic accident in Changoubung vil-

Health services deputy director an overview of the state's malaria elimination efforts during a review meeting on malaria here on Monday, said, "The state has not rethe last eight years due to the suc-

cess of ongoing prevention and control initiatives. Dr Mulung, who is also the Na-

endemic areas.

National Health Mission MD Marge Sora stressed the significance of efficient administration and integrated resource manage-

Tawang MLA raises manpower shortage in LM dept

tion, he revealed that ₹ 48 lakh was

spent on electronic and digital media

advertisements, including national

Earlier, raising the question, Tatung

highlighted that the policy introduced

in 2020 would regulate the rapid

growth of media outlets and boost the

morale of journalists by ensuring finan-

"In the absence of proper financial

support, many reporters are forced to

charge fees, including transportation

costs, for news coverage. Proper imple-

mentation of this policy will help curb

favouritism and ensure fairness," the

Reiterating the government's com-

mitment, Dukam assured the House

that the policy would fully be imple-

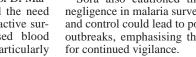
mented within six months. (PTI)

cial support for their work.

minister added.

satellite channels, from 2020 to 2024.

programmes.



In the meeting, proper distribu-

The meeting also addressed the

state into an education hub: CM

Tripura Govt aims to transform

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, March 11: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha on Tuesday said that those with education and knowledge would lead the world, the country, and the state in the future.

Saha said this while addressing the foundation day celebration of Lipika Dasgupta Memorial School at its premises in East Gakulnagar, Bishalgarh, Sepahijala District.

"The current government is prioritizing the special development of the education system in the state. Various educational projects are being implemented to bring about a radical transformation in the entire education system. The government aims to establish an education hub in the state in the future," said Saha.

Expressing his appreciation for the initiative, Saha said that it was heartening to see such a well-established school integrating Kokborok and Bengali while following the CBSE curriculum.

"One would not have fully understood this without visiting the school in person," he added.

There is a different feeling being here. In such an environment, both students and teachers have a role to play in preserving and advancing our traditions. I thank Dr Alekhya Dasgupta Trust for establishing this school. Nothing is possible without education. Our Prime Minister Narendra Modi has repeatedly emphasized that in the future, those who possess education and knowledge will lead the world, the country, and the state," he stated.

Saha, who also serves as the state's education minister, mentioned that while the school currently offers classes up to the eighth standard, it will gradually be upgraded to secondary and higher secondary levels.

"As human beings, one day we all have to leave this world. However, we wish to live on through our work. As public representatives, we are born to serve the people. Dr Alekhya Dasgupta has exemplified this spirit through social work. I am aware that they have now established a school in this district and are planning to set up more schools in other districts in the future." he said

speedy recovery of the injured," the Raj Bhavan said in a post on X. (PTI) Five Bangladeshi held with

fake Aadhaar in Tripura HT Correspondent AGARTALA, March 11: The Gov-

ernment Railway Police (GRP) in Udaipur, Gomati district, have detained five Bangladeshi nationals with forged Aadhaar cards after they illegally entered Tripura and attempted to travel to Gujarat in search of work. According to a GRP official, they received a tip-off early this morning about the movement of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants at Udaipur Railway Station, just as the Kanchanjunga Express was approaching. "Acting on the information, we conducted a search operation at the station and found one man and four women behaving suspiciously. They presented Aadhaar cards, but upon closer inspection, the documents ap-

peared to be fake. During interrogation, they admitted to being Bangladeshi nationals who had crossed the international border with the help of a tout. Their plan was to reach Gujarat via Sealdah in West Bengal. We have since handed them over to the Tripura Police for further action," the official stated.

HT Correspondent ITANAGAR, March 11: The Tawang Assembly Constituency MLA Namgey Tsering on Tuesday has raised the issue of lack of manpower in the Land management department in Tawang.

The Tawang MLA said, "It is a critical issue concerning our Tawang district. There has been severe shortage of field staff in the Land Record/Management branch in the district. This shortage has led to delays in many developmental activities, leaving important projects in a mute mode. I urge the state gov-

Electronic media advertisement policy within 6 months in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, March 11: Arunachal Pradesh minister Nyato Dukam on Tuesday assured the assembly that the electronic media advertisement policy will be fully implemented within six months after necessary modifications.

The information and public relations (IPR) minister, while responding to a question raised during Question Hour by NCP MLA Toko Tatung, said while the policy has been implemented in principle, the funding pattern remains an issue.

"As per the existing policy, a separate fund should be allocated to the IPR Directorate on a quarterly basis, which has not been done. The review process is ongoing, and amendments will be made as funds become available," Dukam said.

In response to a supplementary ques-

ernment and land management department minister to immediately depute and post sufficient manpower in the district.

While replying to the question during the question hour the land management minister Balo Raja has assured to resolve the issue soon. But the minister has requested the house not to send in any recommendation for transfer and posting of staffs as it hampered in rational posting of manpower and thereby hampering the overall development of the state.

situ under Sr. DEN/III/Lumding (Fe 2 years). Tender Value: ₹67.72.871/ Earnest Money: ₹1,35,500/-. Date and time of closing of tender: 15.0 hrs, of 01-04-2025 & will be opened a 15.00 hrs. of 02-04-2025. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. of 01-04-2025 in website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (W), Lumding NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY Serving Customers With A Smile

E-AUCTION FOR INSTALLATION AND OPERATION **OF WATER VENDING MACHINE AT 13 STATION** OVER LUMDING DIVISION

E-Auction invited for Installation and Operation of 36 Nos. of Water Vending Machines at 13 Station over Lumding Division for a period o 05 years. Auction Catalogue No.: LMG-WVM-01-25. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Days: 1826; Auction Start Date & Time At 11:00 hrs. on 21-03-2025

Seq. No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	MSS-LMG-LMG-WVM-21-25-1 (Misc-Static-Services - Water Vending Machines)	lof 26 nos of Mator

Cooling off period is 30 minutes. Successive lots closing interval 10 minutes. Note : Prospective bidder are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in for more details



Byrnihat tops global pollution list: CM says 'disturbing' fact

SHILLONG, March 11: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Tuesday said it is disturbing to know that Byrnihat town in the state has topped the list of the world's most polluted cities.

Sangma said that his government is doing its best to control the situation in Byrnihat, an industrial area located near the Assam border.

According to the World Air Quality Report 2024 by Swiss air quality technology company IQAir, thirteen of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in India, with Byrnihat topping the list.

In 2023, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) first declared Byrnihat as the most polluted urban centre in the country, with an Air Quality Index (AQI) of 302 which put it in the category of "very poor". The town carried the dubious distinction last year also. "This is a disturbing revelation... We are leaving no stone unturned to arrest the situation. Efforts, both short and long term, are being taken," the chief minister told PTL

According to Sangma, polluters have been identified in Meghalaya and closure notices have been issued in the past one year. The high level of pollution in Byrnihat is due to emissions from local factories, including distilleries and iron and steel plants.

Sangma said there is a need to work closely with Assam.

"We seek that our neighbouring state take action against polluters in their area of iurisdiction. We are hopeful of improving the situation," he said.

Byrnihat is also close to brick kilns and industrial units near Guwahati city of Assam. Sangma had said in the assembly last week that he would formally write to his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma about the need for the two states to jointly address the issue of air pollution in **Byrnihat**

Meanwhile, the people of the area are at the receiving end as the poor quality of air affects their day-to-day activities. Headman of Harlibagan, one of the 20

odd localities in Byrnihat, Sisten Nongrum said people of the town are suffering not only from air pollution but also from noise and water pollution.

"It is very difficult for the children and elderly people to breathe. A lot of people are having asthma and breathing difficulties. We urge the authorities of both Assam and Meghalaya to take note of the situation seriously," he told PTI. While there is one iron bar factory in his locality, the maximum number of units are in Lower Balian locality where the industrial area of the state is located, Nongrum said.

"Our water is polluted. The noise level from industries is also at its unbearable limits," he said.

In the assembly, the CM had said as many as seven industrial units have been closed down so far for flaunting the norms leading to air pollution.

"Surprise checks will continue and wherever we find that any industrial unit is flaunting the rules, the government will take firm action," he had said. (PTI)

No.DDB/BTC/Sports/NIT-01/2024-25/569

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty Five Paisa) only with a validity period of 180 (One Hundred Eighty) days, which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the APWD's printed F-2 forms are invited from the registered contractors of class-II and class-I(A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the following works under Sports & Youth Welfare Deptt.(SOPD) fund for the year 2024-25. The Tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 12.00 P.M. on 03.04.2025 and will be opened on the same date & place at 12.30 P.M.

SI. No.	Name of Work	Tender Value (Rs. In Lakh)	EMD/Bid Security. (in Rs. 1% ST, SC & 2% Oth)	Cost of Tender Paper	Time of Completion (Month)	Pre-bid Date & Time.	Last date & Time of Bid submission.	Date & Time of Bid Opening.)
1	Const. of iron goal post with earth filling at 486 No. Padmabil L.P school field under Ramfalbil VCDC, Dotma Dev. Block, Kokrajhar.	Rs. 8,00,000/-	Rs. 8,000.00	Rs.160/-	45 Days	26.03.2025 (10.30 A.M)	03.04.2025 (12.00 P.M.)	03.04.2025 (12.30 P.M.)
	 The Tender document can held as mentioned above The address for the meethe undersigned as per the undersigned a	e. ting is BDO's	Chamber Dotm	a Dev. Blo				1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 - 1997 -
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IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1607

Dotma Development Block, Dotma

Dated: 10/03/2025

NATION

Uproar in Odisha assembly

BJP, Congress members scuffle; House adjourned multiple times

BHUBANESWAR, March 11: High drama unfolded in the Odisha assembly on Tuesday, when members of the ruling BJP and Congress engaged in a scuffle, as a senior opposition MLA attempted to climb the Speaker's podium, and later accused a saffron party legislator of holding his shirt collar and pushing him.

Tension erupted in the House during Question Hour as senior BJP lawmaker Jaynarayan Mishra rushed towards Congress MLA Taraprasad Bahinipati, who was standing in front of Urban Development Minister K C Mohapatra when the minister was replying to a question.

Mohapatra was giving the reply amid a ruckus by opposition BJD and the Congress members.

Earlier, Bahinipati attempted to climb the Speaker's podium in order to stall the proceedings but failed, with Speaker Surama Padhy allowing the Question Hour amid the din. Thereafter, he approached the minister asking him to stop giving the reply as the opposition members were protesting in the well. "Mishra caught hold of my shirt collar and pushed me. I was requesting minister Mohapatra to stop giving a reply when the House was not in order. I requested him with folding hands. But, Mishra suddenly came up to me and caught hold of my collar," Bahinipati told reporters outside the House

Soon, other members of the treasury bench rushed to the well of the House and scuffled with the

<u>'Glorifies one region'</u> After Koshala remark, BJP's Mishra objects to Odisha state song

BHUBANESWAR, March 11: Senior BJP MLA Jaynarayan Mishra on Tuesday raised objection to the state song 'Bande Utkala Janani', amid the row over his comment that the erstwhile Koshala made a "historical mistake" by joining Odisha as the region has remained neglected.

Speaking to reporters outside the assembly, which has been paralysed by opposition protests over his statement, Mishra said Odisha was formed with the merger of three regions -- Kalinga (southern), Koshala (western) and Utkala (coastal), in 1936. "I have no objection to Odisha as a state, but to the song 'Bande Utkala Janani'

Congress members who were present there, and raised anti-government slogans.

As the chaos prevailed, Speaker Padhy first adjourned the proceedings till noon, and later three more times. While the BJP and Congress members were seen pushing one another, the BJD members, though present in the well, did not engage in the scuffle. The BJD and Congress members were protesting on various issues.

While the BJD members demanded a statement from Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi over Mishra's remark referring to the merger of erstwhile Koshala with Odisha in 1936 as a "historical mistake", Congress MLAs agitated over the alleged increase in crimes against women in the state. The opposition members were

also seen standing on the reporters' table and raising slogans.

adjournment for 10 minutes from noon, and then again till 2 pm.

2 pm, several BJP members, injourned the proceedings till 4 pm.

The Congress MLAs also staged

When the House reassembled at

cluding Irashish Acharya, Babu Singh, Laxman Bag and Upasana Mohapatra, demanded action against the opposition members for "continuously disrupting the proceedings and disrespecting the woman Speaker of the assembly". As the opposition protests continued, the Speaker again ad-

Both the BJD and BJP legislature parties held separate meetings on the assembly premises to chalk out their strategies. While Majhi was not present in the House, Deputy Chief Minister K V Singh Deo presided over the meeting where discussions were held on the situation arising out of the scuffle.

a sit-in near the Mahatma Gandhi

With the CM not coming to the House for the last two days, the BJD members, wearing black badges, launched a symbolic 'search" for him on the assembly premises with a lantern. They also staged a sit-in in front of the CM's chamber. This was the second day that the House witnessed turmoil. The opposition members were irked as the Speaker allowed Question Hour for around 30 minutes amid protests "For the first time, women

members were panicked by the situation in the assembly today. The Speaker should not have allowed the proceedings when the House was in turmoil. Our senior leader was heckled by the BJP members," Congress MLA Sofia Firdous alleged. BJD member Arun Kumar Sahoo said, "We had never seen members of opposition and treasury bench clashing in the well of the House. This had never happened in the history of Odisha Assembly

to the National Conference, PDP, BJP MLA Tankadhar Tripathy said that the behaviour of the opposition members in the assembly was unacceptable. "Opposition is ple of Jammu and Kashmir." part of a democracy. Limits should be drawn in the House. While the Urban Development Minister was replying to a question in the House, the BJD and the Congress MLAs tried to break the mic and took away the files from his table.

> Rejecting claims that his speech started on a pessimistic note, the chief minister said he simply stated the truth. "The body has wounds, and we must decide where to apply

fulfil everything in the first budget

The chief minister, while speak-

ing in the assembly, also said the

budget is a "love letter" to the peo-

ple of J&K as well as political par-

ties. Dismissing criticism that his

government's budget is pes-

simistic, he said, "If I were truly

pessimistic, I would have said the

wounds are so deep that death is

the only solution, or that there is no

balm available. But instead, I ac-

called a love letter, then so be it."

to the Congress. It is a love letter

itself.

needed.

the healing balm.' He emphasized the financial constraints of the Union Territory, saying "if we had enough funds, our situation would have been different today. Do I have the money to take over all power projects and start work immediately? No. Can I provide free electricity to everyone? No. We don't even have the budget to ensure uninterrupted 24hour electricity.'

Highlighting the budget's approach, Abdullah said "there is a saying 'cut your coat according to your cloth'. That is what we have



knowledged the wounds and said done. We did not make unrealistic promises. We did not exaggerate.' we will apply balm where it is He said the government care-Referring to opposition comfully formulated this budget to enments that his speeches were being sure that social measures do not labelled as "love letters", Abdullah have an adverse impact on the peo-

ple. "This budget will not lead to said "whenever I speak, they call it a love letter. Fine, what can I do? massive inflation. If my budget speech is also being On his party's election promises, he said, "We remember them better He further said, "Yes, it is a love than anyone else. We are commitletter to the BJP. It is a love letter

ted to fulfilling every single one of them. Terming the budget as the foun-

dation of a robust future for J&K, the People's Conference, CPIM, and independents. Most imporhe said, "We never said we would fulfil everything in the first budget tantly, it is a love letter to the peoitself. We said we would lay a strong foundation. That was the Defending his sentiment, he said, "Why do you write a love letpurpose of this budget — to send a message to the people that we have ter? It is meant to express love. not forgotten anything. We stand And yes, I love the people of

Jammu and Kashmir immensely. I firm on our promises. He justified prioritizing the poor, and said, "We started by helping the poorest. Did we make a mistake? Should we have helped the richest first instead? Just as when building a house, you start with a solid foundation, we have begun in the same way. Over time, this structure will take shape." Abdullah also took a swipe at opposition BJP member Balwant

Mankotia. "Like an opening batsman, he stepped onto the field, fully prepared — gloves on, helmet on. But soon, I got confused. He stepped onto a cricket field but started playing football instead. The discussion was on the budget, but he spent 20 minutes on political talk and only five minutes addressing the budget," he said.

The chief minister said that after the governor's speech, he did not respond immediately. "But when I finally did, I heard

RAIPUR, March 11: The opposi-

tion Congress on Tuesday claimed

that the Chhattisgarh government's

decision to sell in the open market

surplus paddy it procured in the

Kharif marketing year (KMY)

2024-25 will cause a huge loss to

Congress members demanded a

discussion on the issue in the state

legislative assembly by moving an adjournment motion notice.

The chair disallowed the de-

mand after the state Food Minister

Dayaldas Baghel responded to

their charges, following which

Congress legislators trooped into

the well of the House and were

suspended. Raising the issue of

paddy procurement in the Zero

Hour, Leader of Opposition Cha-

ran Das Mahant said the state gov-

ernment procured 149.24 lakh

tonnes of paddy at support price in

the KMY 2024-25 under the Cen-

According to the data presented

by the government, after supplying

rice from the procured paddy to the

Centre and state pools, the state

tre's procurement scheme.

the state exchequer.

the principal opposition party faced a lot of criticism. Their leaders from New Delhi and here, too, pulled them up for allowing us to change the narrative," he said.

He reiterated his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for supporting Jammu and Kashmir. "Why should I not thank the persons who support us. I reiterate my thanks to PM for the support.'

Defending his government's budget, he said it accommodated most welfare measures, particularly for women. "We started this budget by ensuring benefits for the underprivileged sections. Should we have started with the rich instead?'

He said the biggest takeaway from this budget is that it is the first budget made by a democratically elected government and will be passed by elected members in the assembly instead of Parliament

"It was discussed here, not in Parliament. Everyone, including you (BJP members), has taken part in discussion on it. It will be decided and passed by elected members here. We want to restore the dignity of Jammu and Kashmir.' he said

Abdullah acknowledged that J&K's budget is a burden on the central budget but added that it is not entirely dependent on the Cen-

Referring to various components of the budget, he said J&K is financially dependent on the Centre, but efforts are being made for self-sufficiency.

"For works worth ₹ 35,000 crore, we have to spend ₹ 70,000 crore as salaries. If to sell products worth ₹ 35,000 crore, a company has to pay ₹ 70,000 crore, how can that things got tense. Apparently, the company run?" he asked. (PTI)

Chhattisgarh govt's move to sell surplus paddy in open market will cause huge losses, claims Cong

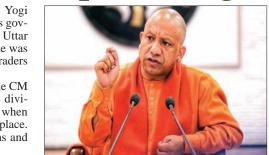


are neither under your control nor ours, and such an incident should not have taken place," he said. MLA Vikram Randhawa, supported by BJP members, blamed the government for forcing daily wagers to take to the streets, arguing that despite promises made by the National Conference, the budget had nothing for them. Leader of the Opposition Sunil Sharma and Sham Lal Sharma blamed the previous National Conference government for the current crisis.

However, Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary countered, and said the NC government had employed these daily workers and would ensure their regularisation. (PTI)

Uttar Pradesh was left underdeveloped due to incompetence of previous govts: Adityanath

JHANSI, March 11: Chief Minister Yogi uesday slammed previou



Udyami Yojana, Adityanath encouraged young to create jobs instead of them. "Every youth should aim to provide employment to 8-10 others. Innovation and technology are key to business success," he said.

try my best to contribute to their well-being. I am not ashamed of This is not acceptable in a democwriting a love letter. If God keeps racy," Tripathy said. me alive, I will continue writing The BJP MLA also alleged that this love letter for the next five the opposition members threw years. posters at the Speaker. (PTI)

The Speaker later extended the statue on the assembly premises. BJP MLAs walkout from J&K Assembly following

JAMMU, March 11: BJP members staged a walkout from the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Tuesday after a war of words with NC MLAs over the detention and baton charge of protesting daily wage employees of the Jal Shakti department.

Scores of Jal Shakti (PHE) department workers and daily wagers were baton-charged and detained on Monday during demonstrations in Srinagar and Jammu as they marched towards the Assembly and the chief minister's residence demanding release of their wages and regularisation. Their march was foiled by police authorities.

Intervening in the House, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said it was a humanitarian issue and that members should wait for the government's response on the

(glorify mother Utkala). I will have no objection if it is changed to 'Bande Odisha Janani'," said the Sambalpur MLA.

"The state song glorifies one region, and there is no mention of the two other regions. Therefore, I am against it," he added. Mishra's latest comment added fuel to the fire ignited by his earlier statement.

While addressing a government function on Saturday, he had said it was a "historical mistake" for erstwhile Koshala, comprising the western part of the state, to have joined Odisha when it was formed in 1936. "People of this region participated in the movement for merger with Odisha. But that was our biggest mistake," he said.

Responding to opposition criticism that his statement had hurt the 'Odia Asmita', Mishra said, "Was Odisha Asmita not hurt when the former CM failed to even speak Odia? Now that I am raising my voice about the development of my region, it is hurting the pride?"

He said the Supreme Court has been clear that there cannot be a state song or flag. (PTI)

ernments for allegedly failing to ensure Uttar Pradesh's development, claiming the state was once considered unsafe, and youths and traders were forced to migrate.

In his address at a credit camp under the CM Yuva scheme for Jhansi and Chitrakoot divisions, Adityanath said, "There was a time when Uttar Pradesh was not considered a safe place. Women faced security issues, and youths and traders were forced to leave the state.'

"But today, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has become the world's fifth-largest economy, and Uttar Pradesh is marching forward with full potential." Lambasting previous governments, he said their "incompetence" left Uttar Pradesh backward, plagued by mafia rule and riots.

But the state has transformed today under PM Modi's leadership and "what was once a lagging state is now India's second-largest economy and a key driver of national growth", he said. "Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of MSME units in the country, creating jobs for millions," said the chief minister.

He also reiterated the BJP's commitment to Bundelkhand's development. "When I first visited Bundelkhand in 2017, there was despair. The region was under the grip of the mining mafia, struggling for its identity. I promised to rid Bundelkhand of dacoits and mafia rule. Today, we are fulfilling that promise," he said.

The chief minister highlighted the success of the recent Maha Kumbh, stating, "The state has a population of 25 crore, yet over 66 crore devotees attended the Maha Kumbh. This speaks volumes about Uttar Pradesh's growing prominence." Adityanath also inaugurated a 200-bed smart hospital in Jhansi, built under the public-private partnership (PPP) model. "This hospital will have a 50-bed ICU and top-notch diagnostic facilities. The hub-and-spoke model will allow consultants to provide services across multiple locations," he said.

During his visit, the chief minister toured the Sky Museum in Jhansi, which offers insights into space and the universe. "I had inaugurated this museum virtually, and it has already generated over ₹ 20 lakh in revenue," he noted, stressing that projects should be self-sustainable, educational, while also serving as entertainment hubs. Discussing the CM Yuva

Referring to the Maha Kumbh, he mentioned that students preparing for competitive exams took advantage of the event by transporting devotees to the Sangam area on motorcycles, earning a livelihood. "Business needs innovation and adaptation," he added.

Adityanath said that while the government had expected one lakh applications for the CM Yuva scheme between January and March, over 1.5 lakh were received, and loans had already been disbursed to nearly 30,000 young entrepreneurs. He said that on March 25, the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh would complete eight years in power, and exhibitions showcasing its schemes would be held in every district. "Each district should connect at least 1,000 youths with the CM Yuva scheme to help them start their own ventures," he stated.

He urged young entrepreneurs to register their businesses with the MSME department, highlighting the government's support. "Once you register, even in the unfortunate event of a disaster, the government provides ₹ 5 lakh in insurance coverage," he assured.

Adityanath announced the establishment of the Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority (BIDA), covering 56,000 acres between Jhansi and Kanpur. (PTI)

will be left with a surplus of 40 lakh tonnes, he said. Mahant said the state government has decided to sell this surplus paddy in the open market by inviting tenders.

Congress legislators, in the adjournment motion notice, pointed out that 172 lakh tonnes of paddy was procured from farmers in Punjab on the support price, and the Centre accepted the entire stock.

They further questioned why the Centre wasn't accepting surplus rice from Chhattisgarh.

Congress members claimed that selling 40 lakh tonnes of paddy in the open market would cause a loss of Rs 8,000 crore to the state exchequer, and no provision was made for this in the budget.

They sought to know whether the Centre would compensate for the loss under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantee and demanded a discussion on their adjournment motion notice.

Speaker Raman Singh read their notice in the House and said the state food minister would give a statement. (PTI)

Jharkhand govt plans for tax on lands being People living by river drains more prone to cancer: ICMR cites study used for commercial purposes: Minister Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), which pro-NEW DELHI, March 11: A study con-

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RANCHI, March 11: Jharkhand Revenue and Land Reforms minister Dipak Birua on Tuesday said in the assembly that the state government is considering the introduction of a commercial tax on lands being used for commercial purposes.

Birua, who also holds the Transport portfolio, further added that the government is planning to include road safety as a subject in the school curriculum to raise awareness and reduce road accidents.

Speaking during the debate on the demands for grants of his departments in the House, Birua said, "Many lands are being used for commercial purposes, and the government is contemplating the imposition of a commercial tax on such properties in the near future. A committee has been assigned to evaluate the situation and submit a report accordingly."

He emphasised that the government's initiative aims to enhance transparency in land-related matters, which have a significant impact on the state's law and order situation.

Regarding the issue of rising road accidents, Birua said, "The government is taking this matter seriously. We have distributed breath analyzers across 15 districts of the state, and during enforcement drives, many individuals have been caught driving under the influence of alcohol.

Speaking over road safety, Birua said that they have requested the chief minister to introduce road safety education in government schools.

"By educating children on road safety, we hope to create awareness and ultimately reduce road accidents," he added.

During the debate, BJP legislators staged a walkout, accusing the assembly of not giving their members an opportunity to speak. (PTI)

ducted in 2024 revealed that people dwelling near river drains were highly prone to cancer, with several hazard quotients observed to be above the threshold limit, the ICMR informed Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

The study revealed that lead, iron, and aluminium exceeded the limit prescribed by the Central Pollution Control Board, Minister of State for Health Prataprao Jadhav said in a written reply.

He said that under an initiative, 19 State Cancer Institutes (SCIs) and 20 Tertiary Care Cancer Centres (TCCCs) have been approved to provide advanced diagnostic and treatment facilities.

The National Cancer Institute in Jhajjar, Haryana, and the second campus of the Chittaranjan National Cancer Institute in Kolkata have been established to further enhance cancer care services, Jadhav said. In addition, cancer treatment facilities have been approved for all 22 new All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). Cancer treatment is also covered under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan

vides up to ₹ 5 lakh per family annually for secondary and tertiary care, the minister said in response to a question.

The scheme benefits approximately 55 crore people (12.37 crore families) from the bottom 40 per cent of the population, he claimed.

Recently, the PMJAY extended health coverage to everyone aged 70 and above, regardless of income.

The scheme includes over 200 packages, encompassing more than 500 procedures related to medical oncology, surgical oncology, radiation oncology, and palliative medicine within the National Health Benefit Package.

In addition, the Centre has launched the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP)to establish dedicated outlets known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Kendras (PMBJKs), he said. As of February 28, 2025, a total of 15,057 PMBJKs were opened across the country, providing generic medicines at affordable prices. The scheme lists 2,047 types of medicines and 300 surgical devices, with 87



products specifically available for cancer treatment, Jadhav said.

The Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT) initiative, launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, aims to provide affordable medicines for cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and other health conditions, said the MoS.

As of January 31, 2025, there were 222 AMRIT Pharmacies across 29 States and

Union Territories, offering over 6,500 drugs, including those for cancer, at discounts of up to 50 per cent off market rates.

To combat major non-communicable Diseases (NCDs), including cancer, the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD) is being implemented by the Department of Health and Family Welfare, Jadhav said.

The programme focuses on strengthening infrastructure, human resource development, health promotion, early diagnosis, and management. Under NP-NCD, 770 District NCD Clinics. 372 District Day Care Centres, and 6,410 NCD Clinics at Community Health Centres have been established nationwide

The preventive aspect of cancer is being reinforced through Comprehensive Primary Health Care via Ayushman Arogya Mandir, he said. The NP-NCD also provides financial support under the National Health Mission for awareness generation activities related to NCDs, including cancer, as outlined in the States/UTs Programme Implementation Plans (PIPs), Jadhav said. (PTI)

NATION

THE HILLS TIMES 9

Allahabad HC cautions state over use

Being a good person more important than being a successful person: Murmu

BATHINDA, March 11: President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday asserted that morality is the foundation of a meaningful life, saying being a good person is more important than being a successful person

The president was addressing the convocation ceremony of the Central University of Punjab here. Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria and state Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khuddian were also present on the occasion.

She told the students that whatever opportunities they choose in their personal lives or work should not be based on immediate gain but on the possibility of using their abilities and interests in a lasting way. Murmu said the convocation ceremony is an occasion about the completion of one phase in the students' lives and the beginning of another.

She expressed confidence that all the students, through their conduct and contribution, would bring glory to this university, their families and the country. Advising the students to make five good things -- curiosity, originality, morality, farsightedness, and spontaneity -a part of their lives.

"Curiosity keeps a person eager to gain new information. Curious

3.56 lakh claims worth

₹ 643 cr rejected for

Bharat scheme

NEW DELHI, March 11: Union

Minister of State for Health Prat-

aprao Jadhav told the Rajya Sabha

on Tuesday that suitable actions in-

cluding rejection of 3.56 lakh

claims worth ₹ 643 crore and de-

empanelment of 1,114 hospitals

have been taken against fraudulent

entities as reported by the states

and UTs under the Ayushman

He said in a written reply that

1,504 errant hospitals have been

penalised ₹ 122 crore and 549 hos-

pitals have been suspended. The

Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri

Jan Arogya Yojana is a flagship scheme of the govt which provides

health cover of ₹ 5 lakh per family

per year for secondary and tertiary

care hospitalisation to approxi-

mately 55 crore beneficiaries cor-

responding to 12.37 crore families

constituting economically vulnera-

ble bottom 40 per cent of India's

population. On October 29, 2024,

Prime Minister Narendra Modi an-

nounced expansion of AB-PMJAY

to include all senior citizens aged

70 years and above. Under the ex-

pansion, all senior citizen aged 70

years and above are receiving

'Ayushman Vay Vandana Card'

which will help them avail health-

Bharat health insurance scheme.

people keep learning new things throughout their lives," she said. She stated that after understanding any subject properly, one should try to do something new in that subject or any other field, adding, "Originality gives a unique identity.

"Curious people keep learning new things throughout their lives. They ask the right questions. Curious people do not worry that they will be considered ignorant for asking questions," she said.

She also cited an example of former president Dr A P J Abdul Kalam and said once his science teacher explained about the flight of birds in the classroom and when the teacher asked, all the children said that they understood the topic. "Only Kalam Sahab said he had not understood. In fact, no child had understood the topic.

"Kalam Sahab's teacher again explained the topic to the children at the seashore. He explained the basic concepts of aerodynamics by showing flying birds," she said.

After understanding those basic principles, Kalam decided to become a space scientist in his childhood, she said, adding that he remained curious throughout his

Murmu said, "Morality is the



foundation of a meaningful life. Being a good person is more important than being a successful person." "Whatever opportunities you choose in your personal life or in the workplace, they should not be based on immediate benefits but on the possibility of using your skills and interests permanently," she said.

The president said the emphasis is often on the rapid pace of change in technology and work fields, and she held it right. But even amidst these changes, she said, some things remain permanent. For example, if an institution or enterprise is famous for its eth-

ical values, then working in such an institution at a relatively low salary is a good idea, she said,

adding, "It will be better for you." She told the students that after understanding any subject properly, their effort should be to do something new in that subject or in anv other field. "This will be the hallmark of originality. Your originality will give you a distinct identity in your field.

"An impressive example of originality has been presented by Professor Raj Kumar of your university. I had the opportunity to present him the Visitor's Award for research in the field of cancer at Rashtrapati Bhavan last week," she said. She asked the students to take

inspiration from such achievements based on originality. "Spontaneity is a valuable quality. It has many dimensions. Avoiding pomposity or show-off is one dimension of it. Consistency in words and actions is another dimension of spontaneity," she said.

Staying connected to one's roots is also a very important dimension of spontaneity, she noted.

Murmu said it was their good fortune that they had all gathered in the vicinity of Takht Sri Damdama Sahib situated in Talwandi Sabo here.

She said tenth Sikh master Guru Gobind Singh spent some time in Takht Sri Damdama Sahib and had given this region the holy name of 'Guru ki Kashi'. She was happy to note that students from almost all states and Union Territories are studying in the Central University of Punjab.

She noted that the university's teaching community also reflects India's diversity. She said this all-India representation is a commendable feature of this university. Such institutions are representative of the vibrant culture of our country, Murmu added. (PTI)

PRAYAGRAJ, March 11: The Allahabad High Court has warned the state authorities against the use of land of private citizens without following the proper legal procedure of acquisition.

A division bench of Justices Manoj Kumar Gupta and Anish Kumar Gupta said in case of any default while taking land of the owner, heavy penalty would be imposed on the erring officers.

Allowing the plea of one Kanyawati from Bareilly district, the court said, "The state authorities are required to be cautious that they should not utilise the land of the citizens without due authority of law or without following the oper procedure of acquisition." Else, the court said, the authorities if found responsible for such utilisation of land without due procedure of law should be held responsible personally and the court will have to impose "heavy penalty" on the authorities, which would be recovered from their personal account. Kanyawati had purchased a piece of land in Bareilly district. At the time of the purchase, the revenue record reflected Chak Road to be south of the petitioner's plot. The road was subse-

of private land sans due legal process quently widened and a portion of her land was acquired without due compensation. Upon an RTI inquiry, the petitioner was informed there was no record for any acquisition proceedings for petitioner's land.

Despite repeated representations to the authority for compensation, the petitioner received no response. She later moved the high court and her petition was disposed of with a direction to "the district magistrate- Bareilly to refer the matter to the district level committee in terms of the government order of May 12, 2016 for the determination of entitlement of compensation. The district level committee rejected her claim stating that initially the road was 3-metre wide and an extra 2.5 metre was available on both sides, therefore, by widening the road 1.25 metre, no individual right of the tenure holder was infringed. She against moved court with the present plea. The court observed the initial road was developed by the Sugar Industry and Cane Development Department around 20 years ago without any acquisition and it was subsequently widened by the PWD by taking away a certain portion of petitioner's land without proper acquisition process. (PTI)

Linking of faith and economy through Maha Kumbh transformed Prayagraj: Adityanath frauds under Ayushman

LUCKNOW, March 11: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said the Maha Kumbh has had a transformative impact on Prayagraj, saying the city was once dominated by mafia and criminals but has now evolved into a new form.

Speaking at a private channel's conclave at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan here, the chief minister said Prayagraj has undergone a complete transformation with major development projects, giving the historic city a modern identity.

He also attributed this change to the linking of faith and economy through the Maha Kumbh.

In a statement, the UP government said the chief minister honoured sanitation workers, showering them with flower petals at the event. "They have successfully brought the message of a Swachh Kumbh to life," he said, calling them the foundation of cleanli-

Adityanath also emphasised the crucial role of sanitation workers in making the Maha Kumbh a grand success.

"After any work concludes, people often move on, thinking about the next task. While everyone lives in a building, its foundation stones are forgotten. The sanitation workers who strengthened the foundation of the Maha Kumbh deserve recognition. Their efforts made this event possible, and this programme to honour them is truly heartwarming," he said. Highlighting the power of collective effort, he said, "Any event reaches great heights only when people come together with a shared vision. When we view collective efeveryone who attended the Maha Kumbh appreciated sanitation and security personnel. The chief minister mentioned that more

than 66.30 crore pilgrims visited the Maha Kumbh in just 45 days and shared statistics of the crowd turnout on each day of the holy bath

He also addressed "misinformation and negative narratives" on the Kumbh, stating, "The more people spread rumours and negativity, the more devotees flocked to Prayagraj with even greater determination."

Narrating an incident, he said, "A YouTuber asked a devotee from Karnataka how far he had walked, and he replied, 'five kilometres'. The YouTuber then informed him that he had another five kilometers to go. The devotee responded, 'even if I have to walk 50 kilometers, I will'," the chief minister said.

"When the YouTuber suggested that the government should have arranged better facilities, the devotee replied 'I am walking, so why is it bothering you? Reaching God's abode on foot is a form of devotion for me'." Adityanath said.

He said Sanatan Dharma is rooted in gratitude, and every visitor considered the Maha Kumbh their own event, rather than just a government-organised festival.

"This was the largest human gathering in history, sending a powerful message to the world. It demonstrated that such massive events can be successfully managed, that faith can be linked to livelihoods, and that millions of lives can be transformed," he added.

The chief minister recalled his visit to

PUBLIC NOTICE

Foreclosure of Langklangvong Water Supply Scheme under NLCPR

In pursuance to letter from the Secretary, T&DD, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu vide No. KAAC/T&D-390/RM/2024/192 Dtd. Diphu the 4th February 2025. It is notified to all concerned that the afore mentioned PWSS namely "Langklangvong Water Supply Scheme" under NLCPR amounting to Rs. 596.47 has been fore closed without any financial expenditure due to technical non-feasibilities of the project site. Henceforth, no transaction of any kind in the name of "Langklangvong Water Supply Scheme under NLCPR" shall be undertaken nor entertained.

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

Memo. No. Addl. CPHE/DIP/GS-178/2307-12 Dated:- 11/03/2025

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM. OFFICE OF THE JOINT DIRECTOR, HANDLOOM & TEXTILES (Hills),

DIPHU.

No. HTHE.90/2024-25/12

NOTIFICATION

It is for general information to all concerned applicant that the Date of Written Test Examination for the post of Sectional Assistant will be held as per program mentioned below.

Sd/-

Date Diphu the 07/03/2025

care benefits. Âyushman Vay Vandana Card provides ₹ 5 lakh free health cover to all senior citizens aged 70 years and above irrespective of their socio-economic status. The senior citizens belonging to families already covered under AB-PMJAY get an additional top-up cover up to ₹ 5 lakh per year for themselves. The scheme was expanded to cover six crore senior citizens belonging to 4.5 crore families. The AB-PMJAY is governed by a zero-tolerance policy towards misuse and abuse and various steps are taken for the prevention, detection and deterrence of different kinds of irregularities that could occur in the scheme at different stages of its implementation, Jadhav said. (PTI)

forts positively, they become an inspiration for society. This is exactly what happened in Prayagraj.

Adityanath also shared how people from countries like the US, Australia, Canada, and the UK expressed their desire to bring their elderly parents to the Kumbh for a holy dip.

"The Maha Kumbh has taken forward the campaign to link faith and economy. The Maha Kumbh successfully pushed forward the development of a city like Prayagraj. It was once in the grip of dreaded mafias and criminals. They were trampling the entire Prayagraj over. Today, it has been transformed due to the Maha Kumbh. Several big development projects were executed here. Due to the Maha Kumbh, this ancient city evolved into a new form," he said.

The CM further emphasised the importance of cleanliness and security, stating that

Prayagraj on February 27, a day after the event concluded.

"Along with both the deputy chief ministers and other ministers, I led a cleanliness drive as a gesture of gratitude to Maa Ganga. We performed a ritual in her honour, acknowledging that her blessings made this grand event possible. Sanitation workers were honoured. They shared a meal with us, and we pledged to improve their wages. Their revised minimum salary will take effect in April and a bonus has also been announced,' he said.

Adityanath urged the sanitation and contract workers to ensure their children receive proper education.

"Send your children to school. If you have any bad habits, don't let them pass on to your kids. Educate them well and work with dedication," he advised. (PTI)

Bureaucrats can't be allowed to
frustrate grassroot democracy: SC

NEW DELHI, March 11: The Supreme Court has said bureaucrats couldn't be allowed to "frustrate grassroot democracy" and upheld a Bombay High Court order reinstating a woman as the sarpanch of a Maharashtra village

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh said it noticed several recent instances from the state where bureaucrats misbehaved with the elected representatives of Panchayats.

"We have given judgements in twothree cases where babus were found to be misbehaving with the elected representatives. This is happening typically in Maharashtra. These babus should be under the elected representatives. These bureaucrats cannot be allowed to frustrate the grass root democracy," it said.

The court also came across bureaucrats trying to open old cases to disqualify elected representatives especially at grassroot level.

"They (bureaucrats) try to open old cases like your grandfather has encroached upon government land and hence you are disqualified," Justice Surya Kant told the counsel for Archana Sachin Bhosale, whose election as the sarpanch was set aside by the high court on January 29.

Reinstating Kalavati Rajendra Kokale as the sarpanch, the top court upheld the high court quashing the June 7, 2024 order of the collector of Raigad district



declaring a vacancy for the post of sarpanch in village Ainghar, Taluka-Roha and appointing a returning officer to conduct the election.

"We are inclined to agree with the view taken by the high court... we uphold and affirm the continuation of respondent number 1 (Kokale) as the duly elected pradhan of the Gram Panchayat, Ainghar Taluka-Roha, district Raigad," the bench said in its March 7 order.

Kokale was aggrieved with the June 7. 2024 order of the collector confirming her resignation from sarpanch's post under Section 29 of the Maharashtra Village Panchayats Act despite her withdrawing the resignation.

The high court held her resignation "did not take effect" owing to her withdrawing it during a meeting held on March 15, 2024.

"The collector has erroneously arrived at a conclusion that the post of the sarpanch had fallen vacant without appreciating the position that resignation was already withdrawn," it said The high court, therefore, found the collector's order "illegal" and "liable to be set aside"

Bhosale's election, as a result, was held to be "ab initio void"

"Since petitioner did not vacate the post of sarpanch, there is no question of election of respondent number 4 to that post," the high court said.

It noted though there was no specific provision in Section 29 of the Village Panchayats Act for withdrawal of resignation, a member, upa sarpanch or sarpanch tendering resignation had an inherent right to withdraw the same.

Election for the Gram Panchayat, Ainghar was conducted in February, 2021, and Kokale was elected as sarpanch, a post reserved for the backward class women.

Kokale withdrawing her resignation was intimated to the authorities concerned including the block development officer and the tehsildar.

The Raigad district collector, however, on June 7, 2024 said her resignation had been accepted by the chairperson, Pachayat Samiti, Roha, and Bhosale was subsequently elected on June 13, 2024. On September 27, last year, in another case from Maharashtra, the top court said removal of an elected public representative should not be treated lightly, especially when it concerned women belonging to rural areas. (PTI)

SI. No.	Name of post	Date	Time	Venue
1	Sectional Assistant	23-03-2025	10:00 AM to 12.00 PM	Govt. Boys Higher Secondary School, Diphu

In this connection, the applicants shall bring 2 (two) nos. of thump size photo, who have applied for the above mentioned post and may collect Admit Card from the office of the Joint Director, Handloom & Textiles (Hills), Diphu from 10th March 2025 during office hours.

> Sd/-Joint Director Handloom & Textiles (Hills), Diphu



GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER CUM COUNCIL HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT IRRIGATION: KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL: DIPHU.

Dated Diphu, the 10th March' 2025

NOTIFICATION

No. ACEI-CHD/E/Recruitment/1/2024-25/16: In continuation of the advertisement vide No. ACEI-CHD /E/Recruitment / 1/2024-25/11 Dated Diphu, the 25th October'2024, it is for information to all the candidates that the interview/viva voce for various post of Grade-IV under Irrigation Department will be held on the following date, time and venue as given below.

SI. No.	Name of post	Date & Time	Venue
1	Khalashi	19-03-2025 (10.00 am onwards)	
2	Switch Board Attendant	20-03-2025 (10.00 am onwards)	Office of the Addl. Chief Engineer cum CHD, Irrigation, KAAC,
3	Office Chowkidar		Diphu
4	Grade-IV		

N.B: All concerned candidates are requested to bring the Admit Card and all relevant documents in original for verification/scrutiny on the day of interview.

> Sd/-Addl. Chief Engineer & CHD Cum Member Secretary, Selection Committee Irrigation Department

Memo No. ACEI-CHD/E/Recruitment/1/2024-25/16 (A)

Dated Diphu, the 10th March' 2025

Entertainment

10 THE HILLS TIMES

took home the awards for best supporting role (male) and best debut (Female), respectively.

Laapataa Ladies also won in several technical categories, including Best Story (Original) for Biplab Goswami, Best Screenplay for Sneha Desai, and Best Editing for Jabeen Merchant. Prashant Pandey was awarded Best Lyrics for the song Sajni, while Ram Sampath received the Best Music honour. Actor Janki Bodiwala won Best Supporting Role (Female) for her

performance in Shaitaan, while Raghav Juyal was awarded Best Performance in a Negative Role for his role in Kill. In the debut categories, Kunal Kemmu won Best Directorial

Debut for Madgaon Express, while Lakshya Lalwani was named Best Debut (Male) for his role in Kill. The Best Story (Adapted) award was given to the team of Merry

Christmas, comprising Shriram Raghavan, Arijit Biswas, Pooja Surti, and Anukriti Pandey.

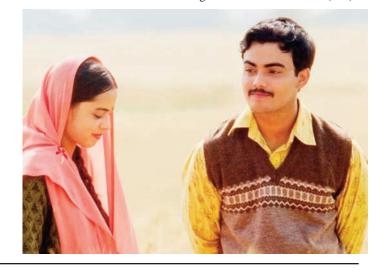
Article 370 won Best Dialogue trophy for Arjun Dhawan, Aditya Dhar, Aditya Suhas Jambhale, and Monal Thaakar. Technical categories saw Kill winning Best Cinematography for Rafey Mahmood and Best Sound Design for Subash Sahoo, Boloy

Kumar Doloi, and Rahul Karpe. The Best Choreography award went to Bosco-Caesar for the song

Tauba Tauba from Vicky Kaushal-starrer Bad Newz. Red Chillies VFX bagged Best VFX for Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3. In the music categories, Jubin Nautiyal won Best Singer (Male) for Dua from Article 370, while Shreya Ghoshal was honoured with Best Singer (Female) for Ami Je Tomar 3.0 from Bhool Bhulaivaa 3.

At the ceremony, veteran filmmaker Rakesh Roshan was honoured with the Outstanding Achievement in Indian cinema award. He was felicitated by veteran actor Rekha.

"If I can stand here, then you can also. Please dream big and they come true," she said, before referencing Shah Rukh Khan's popular dialogue from Om Shanti Om. (PTI)



Kiran Rao's 'Laapataa Ladies' sweeps IIFA Awards; wins best picture, direction & acting honours

In his acceptance speech, the actor, who also hosted the awards gala with Karan Johar, said people doubted him when he took over the franchise from superstar Akshay Kumar.

"Bhool Bhulaiyaa' has been a journey full of difficulties. From the start, when I was selected for Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2, many questions were raised whether I will be able to carry the film," he said, adding that similar things happened during the making of Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3.

"I want to thank the audience that supported us throughout this journey," he said. An emotional Goel said she used to watch IIFA Awards on the television as a kid and never imagined herself being on the stage.

"It's a dream for anyone to be a part of a movie produced by Aamir Khan Productions and that's why it was a huge honour for me. People have showered love on Phool, please continue to do so," she said.

Goel also asked aspiring actors to never stop dreaming

Her co-stars -- Ravi Kishan and Pratibha Ranta -

JAIPUR, March 11: Kiran Rao's critically-acclaimed film Laapataa Ladies emerged as the biggest winner at the 2025 International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards, bagging 10 tro-

phies, including Best Picture and Best Direction, at a star-studded ceremony held in Jaipur. The film, which was named India's official Oscar entry, won in all major categories, with Rao taking home the Best Director award, while Nitanshi Goel secured the Best Performance in a Leading Role (Female) for her role of lost bride Phool.

"It's a rare privilege to win an award for a film like Laapataa Ladies. It's been a wonderful night. It's a rare privilege to make a film like this," Rao said after accepting the trophy.

"There's absolutely nothing to compare with the love of people who say that we've not just watched your film once, but multiple times. It's what a filmmaker lives for. So thank you for watching our films," she added.

Bollywood star Kartik Aaryan clinched the Best Performance in a Leading Role (Male) for Bhool Bhulaivaa 3.



Will be acting and then take on direction: Kunal Kemmu

NEW DELHI, March 11: Actor-director Kunal Kemmu says he is set to get back to direction soon but acting remains his first love.

Kemmu, known for films like "Malang", "Traffic Signal" and "Golmaal franchise", made his directorial debut with "Madgaon Express" last year.

Starring Avinash Tiwary, Divyenndu, Pratik Gandhi and Nora Fatehi, the film emerged as a box office hit and also made Kemmu the winner of 'Best Directorial Debut' award at the 25th edition of the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards.

Kemmu, 41, said he will be back to acting field before taking another directorial project.

"I will be getting back into direction soon, and I also love acting; it's my first love. I will be acting in the coming months, and then I will be making my next (film). I am kind of going back into acting in the coming months," he told reporters at the IIFA. His latest work as an actor was in the 2023 film "Kanjoos Makhichoos" alongside Shweta Tripathi, Raju Srivastav, and



I DON'T PLAN MY JOURNEY, I JUST GO WITH THE FLOW: JYOTIKA

NEW DELHI, March 11: South star Jyotika says she is happy to come back to the Hindi entertainment space, especially at a time when women are getting an opportunity to play well-written

The actor returned to Bollywood in 2024 with the supernatural thriller film "Shaitaan", 26 years after her acting debut "Doli Sajake Rakhna" (1998).

"It's taken me 25 years to come back to Hindi. I can see

the show follows five ordinary women and how their low-key dabba service spirals into an unexpected venture: a high-stakes drug delivery operation.

Jyotika, 46, said she resonated with the character of Varuna, a former corporate big shot with dreams of running a successful clothing franchise, as she had the face of "a common woman"

"Real characters are the toughest to perform because when you see those roles, you see yourself in (them)... I feel you have to be as real as you can and that attracts me to a character a lot. But they are very seldom well written. The other factor which connected me to 'Dabba Cartel' was the layering. I love the way it was written. And it was with 'the Shabana Azmi', which was the first factor. There is one scene of Ganpati (festival) where we share a solo frame, which is rare in the whole series. It was just the shot of the two of us, I got goosebumps seeing those two faces on screen," she said. Jvotika, known for films such as "Kaakha Kaakha", 'Tagore", "Chandramukhi" "Mozhi" and "Kaathal - The Core", is happy that there is growth in the way roles are being written for women even in the male-led films. (PTI)

characters on OTT.

the OTT's boom and the kind of work, not just multi-language actors, but also all age groups of women are getting... (In terms of) a journey, I do not plan. I'm just flowing. And the flow is really very beautiful," she told PTI. The actor's

Raiiv Gupta.

Kemmu also cheered for India's win at the ICC Champions Trophy on Sunday. "I am so happy ... I was watching it while. I was stuck in traffic and I heard you all scream and I figured out that India has won... India has done such an amazing job and for the last few months they have been so active and they have done amazing." IIFA concluded on Sunday in Jaipur. (PTI)



is Netflix's new crime series "Dabba Cartel". It also stars Shabana Azmi, Nimisha Sajayan, Anjali Anand, Sai Tamhankar, and Lillete

Dubey. Directed by Hitesh Bhatia, latest work

have changed, the writing has changed... Something with meaning and entertaining as wholesome. "Whether positive or negative (roles), just happy to be working to be honest. This is such a great time for Indian cinema. There's so much content out there, so much new talent, such a fresh eye on the way films are being written, and what audiences are liking," he The IIFA Awards 2025 will come to a close on Sunday. (PTI)

Open to exploring South cinema: **Fardeen Khan**

JAIPUR, March 11: In his second innings in the film industry, actor Fardeen Khan on Sunday said he is looking forward to doing meaningful work and is also open to venturing into South cinema.

Fardeen, known for films such as "Prem Aggan", "Jungle", "Pyaar Tune Kya Kiya", and "No Entry", returned to cinema after 14 years with last year's Netflix series "Heera-mandi". He followed it up with films such as "Khel Khel Mein" and "Visfot".

Asked if he would like to work in South cinema, the actor told PTI: "With the right opportunities, I'm open to it (exploring South cinema).

He was speaking on the green carpet of the IIFA Awards 2025 underway in Jaipur on Sunday.

Fardeen said he is happy to have made a comeback at a time when things are looking good for Indian cinema

"I'm looking forward to doing some meaningful work like I always have. I'm at a different age and stage of my career. The audiences

No similarity between Salman Khan's fatherdaughter film script and 'Be Happy': Remo

MUMBAI, March 11: Filmmaker Remo D'Souza says his new film "Be Happy", about the bond between a father and daughter, has no similarity with one of the scripts he wrote for Salman Khan.

"Be Happy", featuring Abhishek Bachchan and Inayat Verma, will release on Prime Video on March 14. Remo had pitched a father-daughter story to Salman Khan in 2017 and it was reportedly titled "Dancing Dad".

"I don't know how the tentative title of that film came about. That film was something else; that script is still with Salman sir. There is no similarity between this script and that script," Remo told PTI.

"I've many such scripts of fatherdaughter. It's not like there is only one. There's one film that we are also trying to make with Nassar sir . It is not related to dance but something different," he added.

The director-choreographer, who has written "Be Happy" with Kanishka Singh Deo and Chirag Garg, said the film challenged him in getting the emotional quotient of his characters correct. The director said the idea for the movie took shape in 2020 following the COVID-19 lockdown.

"Apart from commercial films, which I've made like the 'ABCD' franchise, I make sure that whatever films I do, I incorporate some reallife incident or experience that I've had into my films. So, some portions of 'Be Happy' are real; for instance, the character of Shiv is thematically similar to my father.

"The film may seem to be about dance, but it's not based on dance; it's a father-daughter story, and more. There are other elements like the emotional aspect, which were a little difficult to get, but we eventu-ally got it nicely," the director said. Remo said he is actively working on the third part of his dance-musical franchise, "ABCD".

"No dance-based films are being made today. 'ABCD 3' will come for sure. We will have actors in it who know dance," he said.

The franchise started with 2013's "ABCD: Anybody Can Dance", fronted by actor-choreographer-director Prabhu Deva, and the makers followed it up with a sequel, titled "ABCD 2", in 2015, which featured Shraddha Kapoor and Varun Dhawan in the lead.

"Be Happy", also featuring Nora Fatehi, Nassar, Johny Lever and Harleen Sethi.

The film is produced under the banner of Remo Dsouza Entertainment Pvt Ltd by D'Souza's wife, Lizelle Remo D'Souza. (PTI)



SPORTS

ICC unlikely to

offer any

explanation to PCB

INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE 2024-25 Hyderabad FC, Kerala Blasters FC look for respective highs in final league game



HYDERABAD, March 11: Out of the top six race, Hyderabad FC and Kerala Blasters FC will look to finish their campaign on a high note when they face off in the Indian

Super League here on Wednesday. This is the last league match

of the current ISL before the playoffs begin. Both these sides are out of

after celebrating Carnival



of the top-six race, which will round off with the match between Mumbai City FC and Bengaluru FC on Tuesday. After 23 games each, Hyder-

place in the standings with 17 Kerala points, whereas Blasters FC are ninth with 28 points.

Hyderabad FC secured a 2-1 abad FC are at the penultimate win in the reverse fixture on

eager to complete their firstever league double over Kerala Blasters FC Hyderabad FC have let go of

multiple goals in each of their last two ISL games, facing defeats in both by a two-goal margin.

Their last longer run of such results was a three-game stretch in April 2024, which included a 1-3 loss to Kerala Blasters.

Hyderabad FC have spent 47.4% of their game time trailing this season, the highest percentage in the league, and 16 percentage points more than Kerala Blasters FC (31.4%). The team will want to assume greater control over proceedings early on in their final match of the season.

Kerala Blasters FC did not find the back of the net in their last away game – a 0-2 defeat to FC Goa (February 22, 2025). If they go scoreless again, it will be the first time since February-March 2024 that they do so in consecutive games on the road.

Kerala Blasters FC wrapped up a five-game streak with a 1-0 victory over Mumbai Citv FC. To finish the season, their eyes will be set on registering consecutive shutouts for the first time since December 2023. In their 12 face-offs so far, Hyderabad FC and Kerala Blasters FC have won five and six games respectively. One match has produced a draw.

11: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is unlikely to receive any "formal clarification" from the ICC on the perceived snub during

> the closing ceremony of the Champions Trophy in Dubai. India beat New Zealand by four wickets in the title clash on Sunday to win the tournament for the third time.

The controversy erupted when Sumair Ahmed, who is chief operating officer of the PCB and was the tournament director of the Champions Trophy, was not invited on stage for the final presentation.

'We have filed a formal complaint with the ICC as what happened is unacceptable to us," a PCB official said on Tuesday. However according to ICC sources, the PCB won't be given any formal explanation.

"If the PCB mandarins look up, even ICC CEO Geoff Allardice wasn't present on stage. The reason is protocol," said the ICC source.

'Sumair Ahmed is an emplovee of the PCB and not an office-bearer. Also please check when has a tournament director been on stage for presentation? "We can give an example. ICC's

DUBAI/KARACHI, March once Tournament Director for Asia Cup in Dubai. Was he on stage for final presentation," an ICC source said.

BCCI president Roger Binny presented the white jackets to India players and the medals to match officials, while ICC chairman Jay Shah handed the trophy to skipper Rohit Sharma and gave the medals to the winners. BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia and New Zealand Cricket's CEO Roger Twose were also present on stage. It must be mentioned that Saikia is BCCI Director on ICC board and Binny is the Alternate Director.

'The reasons being given for not having our COO and tournament director on stage for the final presentation make no sense to us. We are waiting for a formal clarification/apology," the PCB official said.

"We are appalled by this blatant disregard for Pakistan's role as the host nation," the official said. "Giving explanations that ICC only invites CEOs, chairmen, vice-chairmen or secretaries for the ceremony is illogical. We want a full public clarification and an assurance that such biased and unjust treatment will not happen again or we new head of operations and com- will push this matter to the Board munications Gaurav Saxena was of governors," he added. (PTI)

World Para Athletics Grand Prix off to a sedate start

absence of star para athletes like javelin thrower Sumit Antil and discus exponent Yogesh Kathuniya came as a dampener as India began its campaign in the threeday World Para Athletics Grand Prix on a sedate note here on Tuesday. With the Para Athletics World Championships scheduled in September, several top Indian athletes are missing the Grand Prix because "they are training as per their international schedule", said Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) president and two-time goldmedallist javelin thrower at the Paralympic Games Devendra Jhajharia. In the absence of several Indian and foreign para athletes, who had initially confirmed their participation but pulled out for vari-

NEW DELHI, March 11: The Egamnazarov emerging on top with a best throw of 18.05m. India's Devershee Sachan came in second with a best of 11.34m.

In men's 100m (T11, T12) sprint near-total visual impairment --Brazil's Joeferson Marinho de Oliveira won the gold clocking 11.17 seconds, while Vishnu (12.39 sec) and Pragadeeshwara Raja Moorthy (12.94 sec) of India finished second and third in a three-man field. Another Indian. Ramanjee did not start.

"If I look at it from the point of an athlete, this is a very big tournament," said Jhajharia, one of the legends of Indian para games. "Every athlete has a dream of playing for the country and that has been materialised."

"As a PCI president, I am happy

Injured Neymar under fire for Pak cricket is in ICU because missing semifinal with Santos of incorrect decisions: Afridi KARACHI, March 11: Former

captain Shahid Afridi has questioned the return of all-rounder Shadab Khan to the national T20 squad, saying Pakistan cricket is in ICU because of incorrect decisions

Out of favor since the last T20 World Cup, Shadab was recalled and also appointed vice captain to Salman Ali Agha in Pakistan's T20 squad for the away series against New Zealand.

"On what basis has he been recalled. What are his perform ances in domestic cricket or otherwise that he had been picked again," Shahid said during a media interaction.



SAO PAULO, March 11: Neymar's justification for missing a semifinal with Santos was criticized because he was seen at Carnival last week.

Santos lost to archrival Corinthians 2-1 on Sunday in the semifinals of the Sao Paulo state championship, and Neymar sat on the bench for all 90 minutes. On Monday, he said he had a minor injury without elaborating.

Days earlier, the striker was photographed at Rio de Janeiro's Sambadrome, the venue for the glitzy Carnival parade.

Neymar, who rejoined his boyhood club Santos in January, attended the Carnival parade only hours after being substituted in the second half of another Sao Paulo state championship match on March 2 because of an apparent left thigh injury.

He recently recovered from an ACL tear that sidelined him for more than one year.

Santos did not reveal Neymar had any injuries before Sunday's semifinal.

"All I wanted was to be on the pitch and help my teammates in some way." Nevmar said on Instagram. "But last Thursday I felt a discomfort that prevented me from being on the pitch. We took a test this morning and I ended up feeling it again.

Santos coach Pedro Caixinha said he asked Neymar to stay on the bench despite the injury.

"It was just a discomfort, but it meant he couldn't participate. It was my request and he agreed to be with the squad," Caixinha said in a news conference after his team's elimination. "He's a different player, he is enlightened and has fantastic energy. Neymar suffered a lot for not being able to participate in the game."

Still, many pundits accused Neymar of not focusing on his career, which he is trying to revive at the Brazilian club following spells at Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain

and Al-Hilal. "He chose Carnival over the semifinal," popular pundit Walter Casagrande Jr. said on his social media channels. "Neymar's behav-

ior of the last five, six years has come back. He switches the professional side for pleasure and fun."

Santos president Marcelo Texeira told local media that Neymar was examined several times from Friday to Sunday and all of them showed he was unfit to play against Corinthians.

"It is a precaution, we understood we shouldn't (play him)," Teixeira said. "It is not about the national team, it is because he had not conditions (to play). He is in a process of recovery. We need to understand that."

Spanish newspaper Marca described the Brazilian player's week as "Neymar's saddest Carnival after being tossed by Barcelona;

on the bench and knocked out." Later, amid the heavy criticism against its star player, Santos published a video of a tearful Neymar talking to his teammates in the dressing room before the semifinal. "It is very hard to be out in moments like this. I am trying to control myself in every way, not show the sadness I am feeling," the striker said. "If you can, run for me. I wish I could be with you, running for each of you. You don't know how desperate I am in my

heart." The 33-year-old striker has three goals and three assists in seven matches for Santos since his return. Those stats convinced Brazil coach Dorival Jr. to recall him for World Cup qualifiers this month

against Colombia and Argentina. Neymar's next match for Santos is likely on March 29, after the international window, in the opening round of the Brazilian league against Vasco da Gama. Santos was promoted to the country's top league after its 2023 relegation. (AP)

The flamboyant all-rounder said unless decisions are taken on merit nothing will change in Pakistan cricket.

"All the time we talk about preparations and when an event comes and we flop then we talk about surgery. Fact is Pakistan cricket is in ICU because of incorrect decisions.

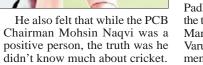
He noted that whenever a new Chairman takes charge he comes and changes everything. "There is no continuity, consis-

tency in the Board's decisions and policies. We keep changing captains, coaches or some play-



ers but in the end what is the accountability for Board officials," the former skipper questioned.

He said it was sad to see coaches blaming players to save their jobs and the management blaming players and coaches to save their seats." "How can our cricket progress when there is a sword hanging constantly over the captain and coaches' heads.



"He wants to do well for Pakistan but in the end he depends on advice and I told him he can't continue doing three jobs at a time. He needs to focus on one job because being PCB Chairman is a full-time job." (PTI)

ous reasons, there were several events where the participation was a bare minimum -- in some disciplines just one athlete participated. The men's high jump T42 final -- for those with single above the knee amputations or a disability

that is comparable -- saw just one athlete, Ramsingbhai Gobindbhai Padhiyar, competing and taking the top spot. Three others --Lokesh Mantra, Shailesh Kumar and Varun Singh Bhati -- pulled out. In men's javelin throw (F33, F34) -for those with a moderately affected movement and coordination across the whole body, or affecting part of the body which affect their movement to a high degree in the legs -- only two para athletes took part with Uzbekistan's Oybek

that we have been able to organise such a great event in the country. This will benefit our athletes as we will be hosting the Worlds in September, so we have got the opportunity to conduct a major event before that," he said.

"The opening ceremony (today) was so well organised. Our hospitality was really appreciated by the foreign para athletes. That is a big thing," he added. With Sumit Antil, two-time Paralympic gold medallist in javelin thrower, and Yogesh Kathuniya, the Paris Paralympics discus-throw silver medallist, missing from the lineup and robbing the event of some of its sheen, Jhajharia said elite athletes go according to their training schedule. (PTI)

Medics who treated soccer legend Maradona before his death go on trial for homicide

BUENOS AIRES (AR-GENTINA), March 11: Seven members of the medical team that treated Argentine soccer great Diego Maradona before his death will go on trial for homicide starting Tuesday in Buenos Aires.

The case revolves around allegations that negligence by the health care professionals contributed to the World Cup winner's death in 2020 at the age of 60, which triggered an outpouring of grief in his native Argentina and across the world.

Maradona suffered a heart attack at his rented house in Tigre, an affluent district north of Argentina's capital Buenos Aires, where he had been recovering from surgery to remove a blood clot on his brain weeks earlier. Widely perceived as one of the

sport's greatest players, Maradona famously led Argentina to victory in the 1986 World Cup and inspired his compatriots with a ragsto-riches story that vaulted him from poverty in the hardscrabble outskirts of Buenos Aires to international reverence.

Maradona had struggled with

drug addiction, obesity and alcoholism for decades, and reportedly came close to death in 2000 and 2004. But prosecutors concluded that — were it not for the negligence of his doctors — his death could have been avoided.

Seven of the eight medical professionals who have been charged in the case, including Maradona's brain surgeon, psychiatrist and nurses, are now standing trial for culpable homicide, a crime roughly commensurate with involuntary manslaughter.

They deny wrongdoing but could face up to 25 years in prison. Maradona's neurologist, Leopoldo Luque, served as Maradona's personal doctor for years and performed the surgery that removed his brain blood clot on Nov. 3, 2020.

Luque oversaw Maradona's hospital-to-home transition after the surgery. The swift discharge raised questions at the time, with some experts suggesting that Maradona should have stayed longer in the hospital after his operation. Psychiatrist Agustina had prescribed Cosachov



Maradona's medications. There cardo Almirón, another nurse who was no alcohol or illegal drugs detended to the former athlete and tected in the toxicology test per-Pedro Pablo Di Spagna, a clinical formed after Maradona's death. physician. A third nurse, Gisela But the report said Maradona had Dahiana Madrid, has asked to be psychotropic drugs for anxiety and depression in his system when he died. The five other defendants this week include: Carlos Diaz, an addiction specialist who had overseen Maradona's treatment for alcohol dependency; Nancy Forlini, a doctor who had helped manage Maradona's home care; Mariano culpable homicide. Perroni, a nursing coordinator; Ri-

board accused the soccer star's medical team of acting in an "inappropriate, deficient and reckless manner." "The home confinement did not comply with norms and protocols," the report said.

The experts also questioned why Maradona had been released so soon from the hospital after his operation when he was unable to care for himself and had limited or no access to critical medical devices, like an oxygen tube and a defibrillator, which administers an electric shock to restore heart rhythm.

The team's failure to properly monitor Maradona contributed to his death, the panel determined, describing his treatment as beset by "deficiencies and irregularities.

For instance, the report said, medics overlooked Maradona's 'unusual body swelling," a sign of possible heart failure. Maradona agonized for more than 12 hours before his heart attack, the panel added. Exacerbating concerns, Maradona had not undergone any heart or lab tests in the two weeks leading to his death. (AP)

In an explosive 2021 report, the

tried separately by jury at a later date. The prosecutor's office assembled a medical board made up of a dozen experts — including forensic doctors, cardiologists, psychiatrists and toxicologists ---to see if there was evidence of Maradona's medics committing

SPORTS

Sports Ministry revokes WFI suspension after 15 months, restores its NSF status

NEW DELHI, March 11: The Sports Ministry has revoked the suspension imposed on the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), ending the months of uncertainty surrounding the sport and paving the way for resumption of activities, including selection trials for the upcoming Asian Championship in Amman.

The ministry had suspended the WFI on December 24, 2023 for lapses in governance and procedural integrity by the new body, which was elected on December 21. It had asked IOA to form an ad-hoc panel to run the affairs of the Federation.

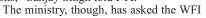
The Sanjay Singh-led body had announced the conduct of Under-15 and Under-20 National Championships in Nandini Nagar, Gonda - the stronghold of former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh - and the choice of venue irked the government since the former BJP MP was facing charges of sexual harassment.

The ministry, in its order issued on Monday, said that the WFI has taken compliant measures, so in larger interest of the sport and athletes, the ministry has decided to lift the suspension.

There were complaints that the WFI was still operating from the residence of Brij Bhushan, prompting the ministry to form a verification committee, which performed a spot inspection and found that the Federation had shifted its office to East Vinod Nagar in New Delhi.

The ministry was satisfied with the corrective measures taken and considering that not having a competent body in place will affect Indian wrestlers' medal chances at 2026 Asian Games and 2028 Olympic Games, it ended the suspension.

"I thank the government for taking this step. It will allow us to function smoothly. It was needed for the sake of the sport. The athletes were suffering for lack of competitions," Sanjay Singh told PTI.





to follow certain directions, such as the Federation has to ensure that there is a balance of power among the elected office bearers, and it keeps itself disassociated from the suspended/terminated officials.

It may be noted that Prem Chand Lochab, the new general secretary, was elected from the rival camp and the ministry's directive could be understood in that context.

"The EC of the WFI must give an undertaking in this regard within 4 weeks. Any violation of the undertaking will invite appropriate legal action, including the action under the Sports Code," the ministry structions." he said said in its order.

It also said that the WFI must ensure that

West Karbi Anglong beat KA by 6 wickets in friendly cricket match

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 11: Ahead of the 3rd Karbi Anglong Premier League (KAPL), a friendly cricket match was played between Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong (above 35 years) at KASA Cricket Stadium, here on Tuesday. The match was organised by Karbi Anglong Cricketer Association on Tuesday. Karbi Anglong won the toss and elected to bat first, setting a target of 157 runs at the loss of 7 wickets in 25 overs for West Karbi Anglong. In response, the West Karbi Anglong team successfully chased the target, scoring 160 runs at the loss of 4 wickets in 23.4 overs, winning the match by 6 wickets.

Jitu Timung of West Karbi Anglong was awarded the Man of the Match. The winning team received a cash prize of Rs. 20,000.

Minority Board Chairman, Prakash Sangma, stated, "We played a friendly cricket match ahead of the 3rd KAPL. We extend our gratitude to CEM, KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang, for his dynamic role in promoting sports in the region. Thanks to his efforts, we now have a cricket playground at 6th Mile, Diphu. The 3rd KAPL will kick off on March 20."

Education Board Chairman of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and President of the Karbi Anglong Cricketer Association, Sardili Bey, said, "There are many talented cricketers in the district. To promote cricket in the region, we organized this friendly match. Players like Senglong Rongpi, Anil Sarma, Vicky Hanse, and others are highly talented cricketers from Karbi Anglong.

The Asian Championship is scheduled to be held in Amman, Jordan from March 25.

(United World Wrestling).

that can't be followed.

GONDA (UP), March 11: Hailing Sports Ministry's decision to lift the WFI suspension, its former chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh on Tuesday said justice has been dust.

after it conducted elections in December 24, for misgovernance, the ministry restored Wrestling Federation of India's status as an NSF after the sports body took corrective measure such as moving its office from the premises of Brij Bhushan.

The country's top wrestlers Vi-

The Indian wrestlers missed out on competing in Ranking Series tournaments in Zagreb and Albania due to the ministry's suspension and the court cases filed by prominent wrestlers Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang

Punia and Satyawart Kadian. The Indian wrestlers could have missed participation in the World Championship also last year but after they protested outside the residence of Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, they were allowed to participate.

The wrestlers, who had led the protest against Brij Bhushan, had contended that the WFI did not have the authority to pick national teams since it was suspended.

The court had directed the Indian Olympic Association to restore the ad-hoc panel for managing the WFI but the sports body had refused, saying UWW, the world governing body, recognises only the WFI and won't accept entries from the ad-hoc panel.

The UWW, which lifted its suspension on WFI on January 13, 2024, had threatened IOA to suspend WFI again if there was interference in its governance.

"We are so relieved that this suspension has been lifted. There was a compete lull, the young wrestlers were suffering for no fault of theirs. They were missing tournaments, there was no national camp. The suspension should have been lifted long back," said a coach associated with a leading training centre in Haryana.

Vinesh, Bajrang and Sakshi Malik had accused Brij Bhushan of sexual abuse of junior wrestlers and held a long protest at Jantar Mantar. An FIR was lodged and the former BJP MP is facing a trial in the case.

Brij Bhushan has denied the charge. Vinesh later joined the Congress and won the Julana seat during the Haryana state elections last year. Bajrang was appointed chief of All India Kisan Congress (AIKC). (PTI)

Conspirators could not succeed: Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh

should be done in a free, fair and transparent

manner as per the extant provisions of the

Sports Code and the other latest instructions

issued in this regard along with regulations

issued from time-to-time by the UWW

The WFI president said there is nothing

"We have already shifted to a new office

and soon we will call for an EC meeting and

also issue a circular for the selection trials.

We have no issues in following these in-

delivered as conspirators bit the Suspended only three days





NEW DELHI, March 11: People who know Gautam Gambhir, describe him as someone "boringly consistent", someone who has not even changed his eating pattern in the last 20 years An experiment is out of ques-

He loves wearing his denims for casual gatherings and it has not changed for years. But when it comes to cricket, his brain is always ticking and seeking solutions to various strategic problems.

It has been eight months since Gambhir took charge of the national team after Rahul Dravid ended his stint with the T20 World Cup triumph in July.

The man from Delhi's Old Rajinder Nagar has witnessed some heartbreaking and baffling defeats as well as success. He has seen both ends of the spectrum with high of Champions Trophy and

low of six Test losses. The CT win has come like a breath of fresh air and 'Guru Gambhir' will get a chance to analyse the big picture as Indian cricket is expected to undergo a sea-change in the next two crucial years.

It won't be wrong to say that Gambhir has completed his probation period and will get into a phase where he would have three distinct challenges, starting with the Test tour of England.

That will be, as usual, right after the T20 spectacle known as IPL with no time for preparation. His second big challenge will

be the 2026 T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka where Suryakumar Yadav's men will be defending their title.

And last but certainly not the least is 2027 ODI World Cup in South Africa, which will be a helluva challenge.

If one segregates Gambhir's coaching across formats, he has already built a fabulous core for the T20 team with Surya at the

Kumar Reddy and Shivam Dube Surya and Axar along with Hardik are old guards in this team. It is a team which has all its bases covered and is running on auto-pilot with a tweak here and there

But it is the other two formats where Gambhir, the strategist, the disciplinarian and the man-manager would have to merge for results

Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli have made it clear that they are not retiring from ODIs anytime soon. Retirement is an individual call and both have performed in Champions Trophy. But during the 2027 World Cup Gambhir won't have the option of using four specialist spinners and create magic with totals in range of 240-2.50

Scores will be on higher side and the question is if Rohit with his short and aggressive bursts can do enough along with Kohli, who is now more of an anchor now

Rohit has said that he won't retire but was also unsure of his participation in the 2027 World Cup. Here, Gambhir will have to step in. Gambhir's, 'team first' philosophy won't change.

He loaths the superstar culture. He has immense respect for performers which is seniority neutral. It will not be a surprise if he demands a bit of clarity both from the board as well as national selection committee as to how they plan to see Rohit in ODI scheme of things with only 27 ODI games ahead of World Cup.

Another issue to ponder over would be the next captain? Shubman Gill is a terrific ODI player and has been Rohit's deputy but Hardik Pandya is also a good leader, who believes in implementing the coach's strategy to the 'T'

He did that well in Gujarat Titans with another football teamlike head coach Ashish Nehra at the helm.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 12, 2025

Victorious Indian cricketers return home, get a week off ahead of two-month-long IPL

NEW DELHI, March 11: The Indian cricketers, led by Rohit Sharma, have made a quiet return home following their triumph in the Champions Trophy in Dubai. After leading India to their second ICC title in nine months, skipper Rohit landed back in Mumbai on Monday night.

The squad members have got a week off before they join their respective IPL teams ahead of the tournament beginning March 22.

"All the players with families left from Dubai on Monday. There are some players who have stayed back for a couple of days," a BCCI source told PTI.

With players preferring to rest ahead of the two-month-long IPL, the BCCI did not plan a felicitation for the team like it did when the squad returned from Barbados following the win in the T20 World Cup.

The players had also met Prime Minister Narendra Modi following their return from Barbados via a special flight back in July. (PTI)

nesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik had alleged that Brij Bhushan sexually exploited junior wrestlers during his tenure and staged a protest at Jantar Mantar in January 2023, demanding his arrest and a complete overhaul of WFI.

The matter is still in court even as Brij Bhushan loyalist Sanjay Singh won the elections later that year.

For a few months IOA ad-hoc panel ran the show but after UWW lifted its suspension following the conduct of elections, the committee was dissolved. "For 26 months, many conspiracies were hatched, false allega-

tions were levelled and efforts were made to stall Indian wrestling, but the conspirators

could not succeed in their aim," Brij Bhushan told reporters.

"Due to this controversy, Indian teams could not participate in international competitions, the training camps were halted and the sport suffered.

"Before Holi, this is a gift for all the people associated with wrestling. Such situations were prevailing in sports, but now justice has been done.'

With the resumption of WFI operations, Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh urged the new president Sanjay Singh and other officials to take fair decisions in the interest of the players and avoid any kind of discrimination.

"Now, trials in a transparent manner should be held and players should get equal opportunity.

Organising training camps and tournaments should be accelerated in collaboration with the government."

"Whether it is Karan Bhushan Singh or Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, the leadership of Uttar Pradesh in the association has been important. Now I am not associated with the association, but my support for the sport and the players will always be there." Karan Bhushan Singh is the

son of Brij Bhushan, and now BJP's Lok Sabha MP from Kaisarganj

"This whole agitation was only about why there is a person from Uttar Pradesh in the wrestling association? Why Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh? The allegations were false." (PTI)

helm. Even as Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja walked into the sunset in shortest format, their absence was hardly felt as the new brand of cricket that India has been playing in T20 is earning them fans globally.

He has unearthed a gem in Abhishek Sharma.

When Varun Chakravarthy and Jasprit Bumrah would bowl during a global meet (World T20) those eight overs would be a nightmare for batters. Sanju Samson has found his mojo although Rishabh Pant will be around and so would be Yashasvi Jaiswal.

There is a prolific powerplay wicket-taker in Arshdeep Singh and at least three seam allrounders in Hardik Pandya, Nitish

In immediate future, Gambhir will also have to deal with Test cricket squad where he would face the maximum challenge.

In case Rohit plays and has Jaiswal and KL Rahul in topthree, where will it place Shubman Gill, the Test cricketer.

Will he get all three Bumrah, Mohammed Shami and Mohammad Siraj in best shape for the series where swing and seam will be the order of the day.

And what happens to that one middle-order slot that has been India's Achilles heel for some time. Shall Karun Nair fit in there or Shreyas Iyer should regain his Test place? 'Guru Gambhir' has some really tough choices to make but he has never been afraid of making bold decisions. (PTI)

People more focussed on playing IPL but With IPL on horizon, New Zealand rest one should always aim for India cap: Pant T20 regulars for series against Pakistan



NEW DELHI, March 11: India wicket- bottom hand very lightly. I mainly try to use keeper Rishabh Pant feels the lure of the IPL is understandable but budding cricketers should always focus on playing for the country as "everything else" follows thereafter.

Pant, who was part of India's triumphant Champions Trophy squad but did not get a game, made his international debut back in 2017.

"Since childhood, I had only one dreamóto play for India. I never even thought about playing in the IPL. I think today, people are more focused on the IPL. Of course, it's a great platform, but I believe that if your goal is to play for your country, everything elseóincluding the IPLówill eventually fall into place," Pant told JioHotstar.

"If you have that bigger mindset, success will follow. I always believed that I would play for India one day, and God has been kind. At 18, I got the opportunity to make my debut, and I am grateful for that," said the 27-yearold.

Pant is known for flamboyant style of play and some of his trademark shots include a onehanded six with the bat often slipping out of his hands. He explained why that happens frequently.

"I think it mostly happens because I hold my

my bottom hand for support because, at times, it starts dominating. So, I focus on gripping my top hand tightly," said Pant.

"But when I overreachóespecially when the ball is too wide or too shortóit's not always in the ideal hitting zone. Sometimes, the shot I attempt may only have a 30-40% success rate, but depending on the match situation, I'm willing to take that risk. That's my mindset.

"When I take that chance and overreach, I need to do something to maintain balance. At times, it may look like I'm throwing the bat, but in reality, I'm just trying to make the most of that delivery. If my bat slips, if it's not in my hand, or even if it hits my headómy only focus at that moment is finding the boundary.

Pant said being a gymnast in his younger days has also helped him as a cricketer.

"I used to do gymnastics as a kid. My gymnastics coach always told me that it would come in handy in life.

"Basu Sir, our Indian team trainer, once told me in 2018-19, ëThank you to your gymnastics coach because what he taught you in childhood is still benefiting you today.' I kept practicing hand springs, and it has played a huge role in my fitness for sure," he said. (PTI)



WELLINGTON, March 11: New Zealand have rested a majority of their T20 regulars for the home series against Pakistan with the IPL around the corner.

The series, comprising five T20Is, begins March 16 while the IPL begins March 22.

Michael Bracewell, who was one of the main performers for New Zealand in the Champions Trophy, will lead the side in the absence of Mitchell Santner.

Besides Bracewell, six more players in the T20 squad featured in

the 50-over Champions Trophy. New Zealand lost the final to India on Sunday. Devon Conway, Lockie Ferguson, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra and white-ball captain

Santner were unavailable for selection due to IPL commitments. Kyle Jamieson and Will

O'Rourke have been included only for the first three games of the series, as the selectors seek to manage the workload of the pace bowlers returning from the Champions Tro-

phy. Matt Henry, who finished as the leading wicket-taker in the tournament despite missing the final through injury, has been selected for games four and five, subject to further assessment once the ODI squad arrives home on Wednesday.

Bevon Jacobs, who was part of the squad for the recent T20 series against Sri Lanka, was unavailable due to IPL commitments, while Kane Williamson wasn't considered for selection after making himself unavailable. Selector Sam Wells said the Pakistan series was important for several reasons.

"We're certainly starting to narrow our sights on the ICC T20 World Cup in India next February and March," he said.

"We made it clear in our planning and communication with players that availability for that tournament and the build-up to it was required to be considered for this series against Pakistan.

"Half of this squad is only returning from the Champions Trophy on Wednesday and so we're going to need to manage those players really carefully," he said. (PTI)

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