

**6 NATION**

- Rahul Gandhi adamant on proving himself 'jhooth ki dukan': BJP
- BJP's strategy to pit Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay against Tagore backfired: Cong

**7 ARUNACHAL**

- Six bodies recovered from Anjaw mini-truck accident
- Arunachal records major leap in national education assessment, CM hails improvement

## Siddhartha, Shyamkanu, Shekhar and Amritprava face murder charge

**Zubeen death case: M P Gupta-led SIT submits charge sheet to CJM court ● Sandipan charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder ● Two PSOs charged with criminal conspiracy and criminal breach of trust**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** The Special Investigation Team, probing the death of Zubeen Garg, charged four accused, including the singer's secretary Siddhartha Sharma and festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, with murder in the charge sheet filed in a court here on Friday.

Garg's band members, Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amritprava Mahanta, have also been charged with murder.

Shyamkanu Mahanta was the chief organiser of the North East India Festival, to attend which Garg had gone to Singapore, where he died under mysterious circumstances while swimming in the sea on September 19.

Speaking to reporters after submission of the charge sheet, Special DGP (CID) M P Gupta, heading the SIT team, said



that Garg's cousin and suspended Assam Police officer Sandipan Garg has been charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

The singer's two personal security officers (PSOs) -- Nandeswar Bora and Prabin Baishya -- have been charged with criminal conspiracy and criminal breach

of trust by misappropriating funds or property entrusted to them, Gupta said.

Besides murder, Mahanta has been charged with criminal conspiracy, extortion, cheating, and destruction of evidence. Zubeen's secretary has also been charged with murder, criminal conspiracy and criminal breach of trust.

In addition to the murder charge, his band member Goswami has also been charged with criminal breach of trust, while Amritprava Mahanta has also been charged with destruction of evidence. All the accused have been arrested and are currently in jail, with five of them in Baksa Jail and Goswami and Amritprava in Hailong Prison.

The charge sheet was submitted before the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Kamrup (Metro).

Gupta said that the charge sheet runs to 2,500 pages while documentary evidence submitted to the court, both in material and digital formats, runs to over 12,000 pages.

Gupta, who along with another official, had gone to Singapore, said that all evidence received (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Will talk to Chief Justice, CM on fast-track court trial

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday asserted that the promise made to the people of the state in connection with singer Zubeen Garg's death has been fulfilled with the filing of the charge sheet by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) within the stipulated time frame.

"We had taken the responsibility of ensuring justice to Zubeen Garg and we fulfilled this with the SIT submitting the charge sheet within a record time in the court today," Sarma said on the sidelines of a programme in Kokrajhar.

Some of the accused have been

charged with murder, and "now I am sure that the court will conduct the trial and give necessary punishment to the accused", he said.

The SIT on Friday charged four of the seven accused with murder in its charge sheet filed in a Guwahati court.

"We all know that the court is impartial. Now, the entire responsibility lies with the court of law. We must all respect the process of the law," Sarma said.

On the issue of hearing the case in a fast-track court, the CM said the government will have (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### CM launches Orunodoi 3.0 benefits for women in Kokrajhar

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, Dec 12:** Poor women of Bodoland received a major boost on Friday as financial benefits under the Arunodoi 3.0 Scheme were formally distributed in Kokrajhar, the administrative centre of the Bodoland Territorial Region.

A total of 50,000 beneficiaries received the Arunodoi 3.0 benefits ceremonially.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma attended the programme as the chief guest and inaugurated the event held at the Greenfield area in

Bodofa Nagar.

The programme was attended by BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary, Public Health Engineering Minister Jayanta Mallah Baruah, Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, West Kokrajhar MLA and BTC EM Rabi Ram Narzary, Derhasat Basumatary, Mun Mun Brahma, former minister Pramila Rani Brahma, several BTC Executive Members, and Principal Secretary Mukesh Sahu.

A total of 1,20,854 beneficiaries in Kokrajhar district will receive support under the Orunodoi

scheme. Simultaneously, distribution under the Assam Government's Abhilashi Scheme was carried out across all five districts of BTC.

BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary thanked the chief minister for providing financial support to poor women and said that the promises made to the people of BTC would start getting fulfilled from January.

On land taxes, he said the previous government had increased rates heavily but BTC had resolved in an executive meeting to reduce the taxes. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Woman married to Pakistani national, 3 others held in Tezpur

**TEZPUR, Dec 12:** Four persons, including a woman reportedly married to a Pakistani national, have been arrested in Assam's Sonitpur district, a top police officer said on Friday.

The accused were arrested based on a complaint of suspicious financial transactions, he said.

Sonitpur Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Barun Purkayastha said the investigation began after unusually large foreign deposits were detected in the bank account of a family from Borjhar village in Tezpur.

"Based on a complaint submitted by the bank, we launched a probe that has led to several startling discoveries," he said.

The prime accused, a woman who returned from Dubai on December 5, was arrested along with three others in connection with the financial transactions.

While the three others were sent to judicial custody on the same day, the woman was remanded in police custody by a local court.

"During interrogation, the woman said she was in a relationship with a Pakistani man and they got married on February 25. Records of her foreign travels have been found during investigation," the SSP said.

Police seized 44 ATM cards, 17 bank pass-books, cheque books and other documents from the four accused in connection with the suspected irregular. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Varsity students sit for exams as protests continue

**TEZPUR, Dec 12:** Agitating students of Assam's Tezpur University (TU) agreed to sit for end-term examinations, even as they continued to impose a shutdown of all other activities to press for their demand for an inquiry into alleged financial irregularities by Vice Chancellor Shambhu Nath Singh, and his removal from the post.

As a mark of respect for the request of acting VC Dhurba Kumar Bhattacharya, the students agreed to sit for the examinations from Thursday, a member of Tezpur University United Forum (TUUF), a joint platform of students, teachers and non-teaching staffers, under the aegis of which



the protests have been going on, said on Friday.

The senior-most faculty member, Bhattacharya, had assumed charge as acting Vice Chancellor suo motu on December 5, citing the Tezpur University Act, 1993.

The TUUF member

said the end-term exams were initially scheduled from December 3-15.

"It has now started from Thursday with a similar schedule," he said. However, all other activities in this central university will remain under the shutdown.

"The protest is still underway. The students will only sit for the exams, and once it is over, the boycott and complete shutdown will continue until the demands are met," he said.

He added that a more "intensive shutdown" will be enforced after the examinations are over, and "this time, everything will be closed down, including all facilities within the campus, banks, ATMs, and the post office".

The varsity, located on the north bank of Brahmaputra in Sonitpur district, has been under complete shutdown since November 29 as a joint forum of all stakeholders have demanded the removal of the VC and starting of an inquiry (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



President inaugurates, lays base of several projects in Manipur

and met with displaced persons."

She also said the Maram tribe, which is found in Senapati and Kangpokpi districts, is recognised as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal group and is the only PVTG group in the state.

"The unique culture of Maram contributes to India's tribal diversity," she said.

Murmu said, "The growth and opportunities of tribal communities of Manipur and ensuring their greater participation in the country's progress is a national priority."

The President said, "The government of India is working

closely with local leaders, civil societies and communities to ensure their development in Manipur. The Union government is committed to ensure that development reaches every corner of the country. The government is giving special attention to the development of remote tribal regions."

"In recent years, the hill districts of Manipur have benefited from focused investments such as road and bridge connectivity, including national highways, rural roads and healthcare, education, drinking water and electricity supply."

Murmu also urged all communities to continue supporting the efforts for peace, understanding. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Now time to focus on Gaurav case: Himanta



**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday as the SIT has already submitted the charge sheet on the case related to the death singer Zubeen Garg, "we will now move on to the case of Gaurav Gogoi".

The Assam government had constituted an SIT to probe into the alleged Pakistani links of state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi and his British wife Elizabeth Colburn.

The SIT had submitted the report on September 10 to the chief minister, who claimed that the investigating agency had "unearthed startling facts which point towards a larger conspiracy aimed at undermining the sovereignty of our nation".

Sarma has been attacking Gogoi and his wife over the last few months, alleging that they have a connection with the Pakistani intelligence agency ISI. (PTI)

### Sonowal visits lone Arunachal accident survivor

**DIBRUGARH/TINSUKIA, Dec 12:** The condition of the lone survivor of the Arunachal Pradesh road accident in which 18 people died was still critical with Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal meeting him at the Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH) in Dibrugarh where he is admitted, officials said on Friday.

Budheswar Deep (23) was initially brought to Tinsukia Medical College and Hospital, but doctors referred him to Dibrugarh for further treatment, Tinsukia District Commissioner Swapnil Paul told PTI.

Sonowal visited Deep at the hospital and directed the hospital authorities to provide the best treatment to him.

AMCH superintendent Dhruvrajyoti Bhuyan said Deep's health condition was critical.

"He has suffered severe head and chest injuries. At this point, we cannot say he is out of danger," Bhuyan told PTI.

Deep also suffered internal injuries and is also in a state of 'shock and trauma', he added.

He survived the accident and trekked with difficulty to the nearest Chipra GREF Camp, following which police were alerted and rescue operations began.

At least 18 people from Assam's Tinsukia district were killed and three others went missing as the

truck carrying them fell into a deep gorge in a remote terrain in neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh, officials said on Thursday.

The accident took place on Hayuliang-Chaglagam Road in Anjaw district in the eastern part of the hill state on December 8 when the truck was carrying 22 labourers, Defence PRO Lt Col Mahender Rawat had said.

"We received the lone survivor at 3pm on Thursday and after initial treatment, he was shifted to Dibrugarh," Paul said.

He said a team of officials from Tinsukia reached the accident spot on Friday, and 'we are in touch with the Anjaw district administration'.

Assam Minister for Cultural Affairs Bimal Borah and Tinsukia BJP MLA Sanjay Kishan have also reached Anjaw to oversee the rescue operations.

"The process of recovering the bodies has started since Friday morning. Some bodies have been spotted inside the vehicle, which is hanging in a precarious position," Paul said.

He said that six bodies were recovered from the gorge on Friday, but details of their arrival in Tinsukia are awaited and they were likely to be brought on Saturday.

The rescue operation was scheduled to resume tomorrow, he said. Meanwhile, a pall of gloom descended. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

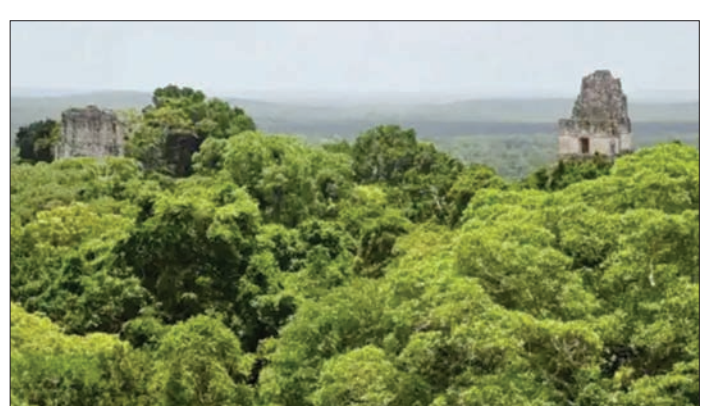
### Panel has asked for a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan

## Govt nod for forest diversion in Assam for strategic underground weapon storage facility

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** The central government has recommended in-principle approval for diversion of 299 hectares of reserved forest in Assam for a tunnel-based underground weapon storage facility, saying the project carries "strategic importance" amid the "changing geopolitical environment in the eastern theater and the associated instability".

The proposal, submitted by the Station Commander, Air Force Station Digaru, pertains to Sonaikuchi Reserved Forest under Nagaon division in Morigaon district.

According to the minutes of the December 2 meeting of the environment ministry's Advisory Committee, the project requires 265.513 hectares for the underground



weapon storage area and 33.688 hectares for surface infrastructure such as administrative buildings, guard posts, fencing, boundary wall and approach roads.

The forest has a canopy density of 0.7 and 203 trees are expected to be felled.

According to the minutes, the site is not within 10 kilometres of any

protected area and no protected archaeological or heritage sites were reported.

The nodal officer informed the panel that the "proposal assumes strategic importance considering the changing geopolitical environment in the eastern theater and the associated instability".

"There is an urgent requirement to increase the underground storage capacity to strengthen the rapid response capability and deployment of available stores in the shortest possible time," the official said.

The committee said the state government has proposed compensatory afforestation over 85.75 hectares in Sonaikuchi Reserved Forest, of which 68 hectares were found (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

### Focus on rural, tribal areas under PMUY 3.0 in Assam: Officials

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** Rural and tribal-dominated areas with low LPG penetration will be the focus points in Assam under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) 3.0, being rolled out across the country, a top IndianOil official said here on Friday.

With a section of people still preferring traditional means such as firewood for cooking purposes, awareness on health hazards of such means will be highlighted, they said.

"The North East is a focus area for the Centre under the PMUY 3.0. A total of 25 lakh additional free LPG connections have been approved for the country. Of these, five lakh are for the region, including 2.5 lakh for Assam," Rajesh Nambiar, Executive Director and State Head, IndianOil Assam Oil Division (AOD) state office, said at a press conference.

He emphasised that LPG penetration was much low when the PMUY was first launched in 2016, with the coverage now crossing 100 per cent in many places, including in the state.

Amar Jyoti Bordoloi, CGM LPG, IndianOil AOD state office, added that the penetration is still less in rural and tribal areas, and PMUY 3.0 will be focusing on reaching those parts.

"In these areas, people still prefer traditional means like firewood. Creating awareness in those areas is crucial," he said.

The state government will be playing an important role in awareness generation, Hemanta Bhuyan, commissioner, Food and Public Distribution, Consumer Affairs and Legal Metrology, government of Assam, also present in the press conference, said.

"We will be engaging in more

publicity in the areas where coverage is low. Special camps will be held," he said.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MOPNG) introduced the PMUY as a flagship scheme in May 2016, with an objective to make clean cooking fuel such as LPG available to the rural and deprived households which were otherwise using traditional cooking fuels such as firewood, coal, cowdung cakes, etc.

Sharing details of PMUY coverage in the state, Bordoloi said the total domestic LPG connections are 92.24 lakh with a coverage of 115.8 per cent, out of which about 52 lakh connections are under the free connection scheme.

While most districts have high penetrations, some still have low coverage -- Sivasagar 65.7 per cent, Baksa 67.1 per cent, Dhemajee 73.2 per cent, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# IndiGo board ropes in external aviation expert for flight disruption probe

**MUMBAI, Dec 12:** IndiGo's board on Friday announced the appointment of an external aviation expert to carry out a root-cause analysis of recent flight disruptions.

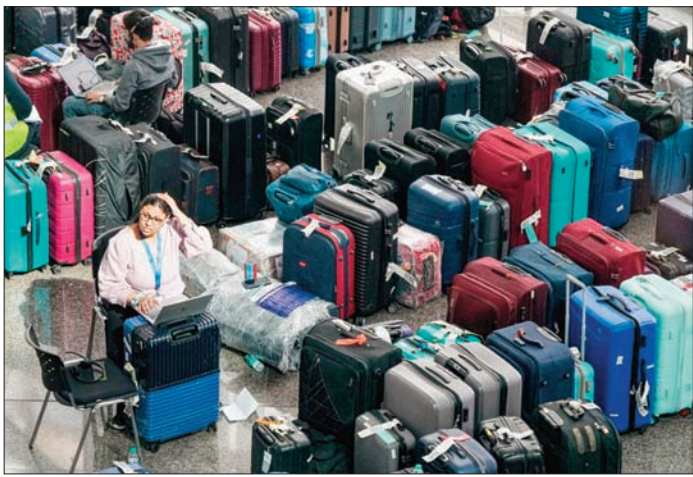
The independent aviation expert will start the review at the earliest and submit a comprehensive report to the board, IndiGo said in a statement.

The board has approved the appointment of aviation Advisors LLC for a comprehensive review and carry out root cause analysis of the airline's recent flight disruptions, it said.

The announcement comes on the day IndiGo Chief Executive Officer Pieter Elbers and Chief Operating Officer, Isidre Porqueras are being grilled before a four-member panel, set up by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation with a mandate to identify the root causes of widespread operational disruptions at the leading domestic carrier.

The mandate of the panel comprising Joint Director General Sanjay Brahamane, Deputy Director General Amit Gupta, senior Flight Operations Inspector Kapil Manglik, and FOI Lokesh Ramlal, includes assessing manpower planning, fluctuating rostering systems, and the airline's preparedness to implement the latest duty period and rest norms for pilots, which came into effect from November 1 this year.

In a related development, the DGCA on Friday sacked four



Flight Operations Inspectors (FOIs) over operational disruptions at the Gurugram-headquartered airlines.

"Chief Aviation Advisors LLC, led by Captain John Illson, veteran aviation expert, to conduct an independent expert review and assessment of the recent operational disruption and the contributing factors," the airline said.

IndiGo Chairman Vikram Singh Mehta had in a video message earlier this week said that the board had decided to involve external technical experts to work with the management and help determine the root causes that led to the disruptions.

The board of InterGlobe Aviation, the parent of IndiGo, has already set up a crisis management group in the wake of the significant operational disruptions that

started on December 2.

"The objective is to conduct an independent root cause analysis of the recent operational disruption, besides opportunities for improvement," it said.

This decision follows the recommendation of the Crisis Management Group, IndiGo said.

As part of its assessment, the CMG advised commissioning an independent expert review in the matter, the airline said, adding with the board's approval now in place, the review will begin at the earliest. The independent expert reviewer will submit a comprehensive report to the board upon completion, it stated.

The Rahul Bhatia-controlled airline cancelled thousands of flights between December 1 and December 9 on account of lack of proper planning, and crew short-

age in implementing the new set of regulations for pilots' duty period and rest, which were put in place from November 1.

"The four FOIs, under various categories, on a contract basis, are hereby relieved from the DGCA with immediate effect to join their respective parent organisation," a DGCA order said on Friday.

FOIs are senior officials within the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, working as part of its regulatory and safety oversight functions, often deployed to monitor airline operations.

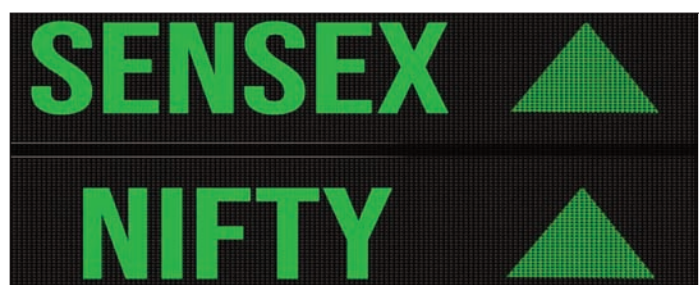
These officials, who come on deputation from various air operators, ensure aviation safety by inspecting, auditing, and certifying airlines and personnel, such as pilots, dispatchers, and cabin crew, to meet strict regulatory standards, verifying various regulations and overseeing training, flight standards, and accident prevention measures in India.

Enhancing oversight, DGCA officials have from Thursday started monitoring IndiGo's operations, refunds, and other processes from the airline's headquarters.

These officials are expected to submit daily reports on the situation, as per sources.

Moreover, as part of its probe, the DGCA has also deployed two members from an 8-member oversight panel at IndiGo's Gurugram headquarters to monitor cancellation status, crew deployment, unplanned leave, and routes hit by staff shortages, among others. (PTI)

## Sensex jumps nearly 450 pts on buying in metal shares, positive global trends



**MUMBAI, Dec 12:** Benchmark stock index Sensex rallied nearly 450 points while broader Nifty closed above the 26,000 level on Friday following buying in metal shares and positive global trends.

Rising for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 449.53 points or 0.53 per cent to settle at 85,267.66. During the day, it jumped 502.69 points or 0.59 per cent to 85,320.82. Rebounding from the month's low level, the 50-share NSE Nifty surged 148.40 points or 0.57 per cent to settle at 26,046.95.

Among Sensex firms, Tata Steel, Eternal, UltraTech Cement, Larsen & Toubro, Maruti and Bharti Airtel were the major gainers.

However, Hindustan Unilever, Sun Pharma, ITC and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

"Global risk appetite improved after the US Fed rate cut, boosting liquidity optimism and lifting domestic equities despite the rupee hitting record lows and continued FII outflows. Broader indices are showing buying interest, bouncing back post recent consolidation," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.14 per cent and smallcap index

climbed 0.65 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal surged 2.58 per cent, commodities (1.84 per cent), realty (1.47 per cent), services (1.34 per cent), telecommunication (1.27 per cent), oil & gas (1.21 per cent) and industrials (1 per cent). BSE FMCG emerged as the only laggard.

A total of 2,593 stocks advanced while 1,593 declined and 170 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled in positive territory.

European markets were quoting higher. US markets ended mostly higher on Thursday. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dipped 0.05 per cent to USD 61.25 per barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,020.94 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 3,796.07 crore, according to exchange data.

On Thursday, the Sensex climbed 426.86 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 84,818.13. The Nifty went up by 140.55 points or 0.55 per cent to 25,898.55. (PTI)

## Brookfield to invest USD 1 billion to build Asia's largest GCC in Mumbai

**MUMBAI, Dec 12:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis on Friday said asset manager Brookfield is set to invest over USD 1 billion (around ₹ 9,000 crore) to create a global capability centre (GCC) facility in the state. Fadnis said a formal agreement for the GCC, which will create a total of 45,000 jobs, will be signed in due course, pointing out that the government and Brookfield have zeroed in on a plan in discussions.

"It (investment) will be more than USD 1 billion. One single project will create 45,000 jobs," Fadnis told reporters on the sidelines of an event here. In a statement issued later, Brookfield said it has partnered with one B S Sharma for the project, and added the project is being developed through an agreement between Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA).

The project is spread over six acres in suburban Powai, and will see construction of a "leatable area" of 20 lakh sq ft by 2029, the statement said.

The facility will be the largest in Asia and Brookfield has signed up with a multinational bank for a lease having a 20-year term, the statement said, adding that the entire power requirements for the GCC will be met through green sources.

The asset manager said it has already commissioned a similar build-to-suit tower in Pune for the GCC of a large financial services corporation.

In May this year, Brookfield Asset Management aims to more than triple its assets under management in India to USD 100 billion over the next five years. (PTI)

## Rupee slumps 17 paise to close at all-time low of 90.49 against US dollar

**MUMBAI, Dec 12:** The rupee depreciated by 17 paise to close at an all-time low of 90.49 against the US dollar on Friday, as uncertainty over the India-US trade deal and persistent foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiment.

Forex traders said the rupee is under pressure, largely due to aggressive dollar purchases by importers amid surging global precious metal prices.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.43 against the US dollar, then fell further to a record intraday low of 90.56 against the greenback, registering a fall of 24 paise from its previous close.

The unit settled the day at 90.49 against the US dollar, down 17 paise over its last close.

On Thursday, the rupee had plunged 38 paise to close at an all-time low of 90.32 against the US dollar.

The rupee is expected to trade with a negative bias as the delay in the trade deal between India and the US may weigh on the domestic unit.

India and the US on Thursday concluded two days of talks, during which both sides exchanged views on trade-related issues, including the ongoing negotiations for a mutually beneficial bilateral trade agreement.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump on Thursday discussed ways to sustain momentum in the bilateral economic partnership in a phone conversation amid signs of the two sides inching closer to firming up a much-awaited trade deal.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias amid uncertainty over the Indo-US trade deal. However, improved global sentiments and falling crude oil prices may support the rupee. A weak dollar and any intervention by the central bank may also support the rupee at lower levels," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.07 per cent higher at 98.41. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Siddhartha, Shyamkanu, Shekhar

from that country has been submitted before the court.

He said that the charge sheet submitted to the court was in CID case no. 18/2025, the original case registered after nearly 60 FIRs were received across the state following Garg's death.

Investigation into the second case (CID case no. 19/2025), pertaining to property-related and other activities, is still underway, he said.

The Assam government had constituted the SIT, led by Special DGP M P Gupta, to investigate the singer's death.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had claimed in the recently concluded assembly session that Garg's death was "plain and simple murder".

The Singapore Police Force (SPF), carrying out an independent investigation into Garg's death, had said in a statement that the preliminary probe has not indicated any foul play, and that the investigations may take up to another three months. (PTI)

## Will talk to

to talk with the chief justice in this matter.

"There is a procedure to be followed. The case will go from the CJM's court to that of the sessions judge, and only after that, the issue of fast-track court and special prosecutor will come up," he said.

Sarma had said earlier that the state government would request the Gauhati High Court to set up a fast-track court for hearing Garg's death case.

The Assam cabinet had also decided to appoint a special public prosecutor on the recommendation of the advocate general, who will be engaged exclusively for the hearing of the case from the filing of the charge sheet to the delivery of justice. (PTI)

## Support efforts for

and reconciliation. The President said, "I urge all communities to continue supporting the efforts for peace, understanding, and reconciliation. The government of India recognises the aspirations of the people of the state. I understand with total empathy your concerns and desires for a peaceful and prosperous future. I reiterate the government of India's commitment to the well-being and progress of the people of Manipur, including the people of the region."

Murmu also inaugurated and laid foundation stones of several projects. Expressing happiness on the projects, the President said "She is confident the projects will contribute to strengthening education, healthcare, security and community infrastructure and that the completion of projects will improve the lives of thousands of families in the area and bring essential services closer to remote communities."

"Let us continue working together for a peaceful and prosperous Manipur," she added. (PTI)

## Woman married to

financial transactions, he added. Another police official said the woman had come into contact with the Pakistani national through Facebook, after which she travelled to Dubai. The prime accused was later remanded in judicial custody by the court of the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Tezpur, on Thursday. (PTI)

## CM launches Orunodoi 3.0

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said Orunodoi benefits could not be provided earlier due to the BTC elections.

He said the scheme will now cover all five BTR districts and that more than four lakh women beneficiaries in BTR have become eligible. Across the state, 38 lakh women receive Orunodoi benefits.

He added that along with monetary support, beneficiaries will also receive lentils, sugar, salt and rice. "Now no woman will have to depend on anyone to run her household," he said.

Additional assistance of ₹10,000 will be distributed on December 13 in Gossaigaon and on December 17 in Dotma.

The Orunodoi funds had been deposited into the accounts of 4,12,000 women beneficiaries in BTR. The chief minister said the SIT had submitted the chargesheet in the Zubeen Garg case, ensuring justice, and added that the SIT report on Gaurav Gogoi would also be submitted.

He said a major new scheme, the 'Babu Scheme', will be announced on January 1.

A judicial inquiry has been ordered into the BTC Assembly attack incident. The inquiry will be conducted by retired Gauhati High Court judge Hirendra Nath Sharma.

## Sonowal visits lone

over Gelapukhuri Tea Estate, from where most of the workers hailed.

Around 6 am on December 8, 19 workers began their journey from Gelapukhuri Tea Estate for work at a construction site for building a hostel in Anjaw district, deceased Pankaj Manki's family member said.

"For two days, families of all the workers who had gone from the tea garden were anxiously trying to call their loved ones but the phone calls remained unanswered," he said.

Another deceased Rahul Kumar's brother said that they are now waiting to receive his body so that they can perform the last rites.

Gangamani lost her only son, Rahul Chetria, in the accident and refuses to believe that he is no more.

"My son had gone to work as a daily wager outside the state for the first time and I cannot believe that he is no more", she said.

Daleshwaria Chetria, mother of another victim Dhiraj, said she will not accept his death till she sees his body. Sonowal met the bereaved families at Gelapukhuri Tea Estate, assuring them of all assistance.

He said he was monitoring the situation and had directed the Chief Secretary to maintain close coordination with officials in Arunachal Pradesh.

"All government agencies have been directed to work together to ensure that rescue and relief operations continue swiftly and efficiently," he said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced an ex gratia of ₹ 2 lakh each for the next of kin of those who died from the PM National Relief Fund.

Assam ministers Keshav Mahanta and Atul Bora also met the bereaved families and said that Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh to the next of kin of the deceased. (PTI)

## Varsity students sit

against him. The situation in Tezpur University had been tense since mid-September, with students accusing the VC and varsity authorities of not showing due respect to cultural icon Zubeen Garg even as the state was mourning his death.

Apart from fiscal irregularities, the agitators are also protesting alleged deforestation carried out under Singh's administration.

The protesters have said that the university will remain closed until a formal communication from the Centre is received regarding the removal of the VC.

The VC abstained from the campus after the university had witnessed heated scenes and an exchange of words between him and students on September 22, leading to a situation where Singh had to nearly flee from the spot.

Singh had convened a virtual meeting of the Board of Management (BOM) on December 4, and appointed Mass Communication Professor Joya Chakraborty as pro-VC, a role she declined. (PTI)

## Focus on rural,

South Salmara 84 per cent and Tinsukia 85 per cent. The official maintained that there are diverse reasons for low penetration.

A district like Sivasagar has piped gas connections in a large area, which leads to lower LPG coverage, Bordoloi said.

"But there are other areas where awareness is the key, and the focus will be kept on it," he added. (PTI)

## Govt nod for forest

suitable for planting, with a 10-year maintenance plan.

It said that parts of the site show signs of kachha roads and cultivation; the state clarified these are forest patrol routes and that encroachers will be evicted.

The Regional Office inspection found no violation of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980.

The panel has asked for a comprehensive wildlife conservation plan to address human-?elephant conflict, conserve natural water bodies and assess whether an alternate water body can be created to reduce wildlife stress.

The plan's cost must be borne by the user agency and deposited in the state CAMPA account. It also directed that wildlife movement to natural water bodies must not be obstructed.

The committee further required the user agency to prepare an approved muck disposal plan in consultation with the Directorate of Geology and Mining, ensuring controlled excavation, scientific muck disposal, slope stabilisation and geohazard risk mitigation. (PTI)

## PhonePe Wealth launches 'Daily SIP' in mutual funds with minimum investment of ₹10

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:**

PhonePe Wealth Broking Private Limited (PhonePe Wealth) on Friday announced the launch of its Daily SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) feature in mutual funds, enabling users to invest as little as ₹10 per day directly through the PhonePe app.

The company said the feature is aimed at helping potential investors convert small daily savings into long-term investments and making wealth creation more accessible.

India's mutual fund industry has been witnessing rapid expansion, with SIPs contributing significantly to this growth.

According to the Association of Mutual Funds of India (AMFI), monthly SIP inflows crossed ₹29,000 crore in October 2025, reflecting an annualised growth of more than 30 per cent over the last five years.



The number of contributing SIP accounts has also risen steadily to 9.45 crore during the same period, indicating a growing preference for disciplined investing.

With the introduction of Daily SIPs, PhonePe Wealth said users will now be able to start investing with a minimum of ₹10 per day, making the process easier for individuals who prefer small, frequent contributions.

The feature allows instant setup through UPI Autopay, offers access to a

feature is designed to make investing a habit for millions of Indians.

He added that daily contributions help investors benefit from rupee-cost averaging, reducing the impact of short-term market volatility, and even a small daily investment can contribute meaningfully to long-term wealth creation.

He said the initiative aligns with the company's broader goal of simplifying investments and enabling more Indians to participate in the country's growth story.

PhonePe Wealth said the launch of Daily SIPs strengthens its commitment to democratising investing by offering flexible and accessible options for both new and experienced investors, and supports its objective of fostering financial inclusion and a culture of disciplined, long-term investing across income groups.

Speaking at the launch, Nitesh D Naik, Head of Investment Products at ShareMarket (PhonePe Wealth), said the Daily SIP

**CONSTRUCTION OF SUB STRUCTURE IN RCC & SUPER STRUCTURE IN COMPOSITE GIRDER**

**Tender Notice No.:** CON/2025/DEC/04. **Dated:** 09-12-2025. E - Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work.

**Tender No.:** CE/CON/DK/EPC/2025/06. **Name of Work:** Construction of Sub Structure in RCC & Super Structure in composite girder for via duct (14 X 30.5) at Pherima yard and other ancillary works in connection with Dimapur (Dhansiri) - Kohima (Zubza) New BG line Project. **Approx. Value :** ₹255.63,16,147.48/-; **Date & time of closing of tender at 14:30 hrs. on 15-01-2026 and opening at 15:30 hrs. on 21-01-2026.** For complete information and tender document of e-Tender will be available in website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

**Chief Engineer/Con/Nagaland Project/Malgaoon**

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## NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar visits Nagaon, emphasises women's empowerment

Focus on government schemes, political participation and district-level initiatives for women



### HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, Dec 12:** With a day-long schedule, National Commission for Women Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar on Friday visited Nagaon district and held a series of meetings with district officials and beneficiaries of various government schemes.

During her visit, Rahatkar interacted with beneficiaries of schemes such as Arunodoi, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Janani Suraksha Yojana and others. She

emphasised the importance of women's empowerment and their role in nation-building.

Rahatkar also inaugurated a workshop titled "She is a Changemaker" for elected women representatives of panchayats in the district. She stressed the need for women's participation in politics and decision-making processes.

The Chairperson also met with district officials and reviewed the implementation of various schemes and programmes for

women's welfare. She appreciated the efforts of the district administration and urged officials to ensure that the benefits of government schemes reach the intended beneficiaries.

Earlier, Rahatkar released a booklet titled "Panchayat Ki Jananayika" at the workshop. The program was attended by officials from the district administration, panchayat representatives and women beneficiaries, stated an official press release.

## Treemate AI app launched to revolutionize gardening and farming

### HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, Dec 12:** Treemate, a leading startup in collaboration with Neatehub and Assam Agricultural University (AAU), has launched Treemate AI, an artificial intelligence-powered app designed to assist gardeners and farmers in Assam and the North-East.

The app, available on the Google Play Store, provides guidance on garden layout, seasonal planting of fruits, flowers and vegetables, as well as advice on pest and disease management through photo uploads.

Gaurang Gogoi, one of the proprietors, said the app is aimed at both small-scale gardeners and large-scale farmers. Registered users receive regular notifications on watering, fertilisation and disease control to ensure healthy plant growth.

"Users can ask questions about any tree, identify species worldwide and get information on tree diseases and remedies," Gogoi explained. "They can also register their own trees and the app will send timely alerts for care and maintenance."

In addition, Gogoi and his partner Nayan Jyoti Gohain have launched four new initiatives via Treemate.in: integration of regional farming systems with technology, a garden cost calculator, access to Central Government agriculture schemes and a platform for tree-based product manufacturers to expand their customer base.

The launch event on Thursday was attended by Bidyut Bikash Rajkonwar, CEO of Neatehub, Bikash Bora, known as 'Bharat Gaurav,' and representatives from The Hub Jorhat.

## Reactions pour in after chargesheet filed in Zubeen Garg case

### HT Correspondent

**SIVASAGAR, Dec 12:** Filing of the long-awaited chargesheet in Zubeen Garg's mysterious death case by the SIT on Friday in Guwahati has sparked sensational reactions across different quarters. Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi, in his characteristic style, criticised it as a well-tailored BJP election agenda for 2026, calling it "worth throwing into the dustbin." Speaking to the media, he alleged that it is the only chargesheet in the world where the investigating agency did not visit the place of the

crime. Zubeen's uncle, Manoj Kr Borthakur, appreciated the SIT for successfully submitting the voluminous chargesheet within the stipulated time frame but noted that sustaining the allegations in the Honourable Court remains to be seen. Noble Konwar, ANI journalist, told this correspondent that, up to this stage, the government has been doing its best in the investigation process. Irshad Ahmed added that it will definitely take time before a court verdict is reached, given that the investigation involved over a thousand interviews and documents.

## Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar launches 'Frontier Insights' and Assamese edition of 'Pancha Parivartan'

### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** The Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar officially launched its monthly journal, 'Frontier Insights', along with the Assamese edition of the book 'Pancha Parivartan', marking a significant step in promoting awareness on border security and citizen engagement in nation-building. The ceremony was held at the NEDFi Auditorium in Guwahati under the leadership of Editorial Chairman Sanjay Aditya Singh.

Frontier Insights is designed to highlight the critical role of citizens in safeguarding national security while fostering sustainable development in border regions. Through focused reporting, stories of resilience and strategic insights, the publication aims to connect remote communities with the national consciousness.

The Assamese edition of 'Pancha Parivartan' (Five Transformations) presents a five-pronged framework for societal change emphasising self-sufficiency, social cohesion, environmental stewardship, civic responsibility and family-oriented enlightenment. The



book offers actionable guidance for citizens, especially in the Northeast, to actively participate in nation-building.

Dr Sunil Mohanti, Prachar Pramukh of RSS Assam Kshetra, stressed the alignment of both initiatives with the mission of cultural and national awakening. He said, 'Pancha Parivartan' and 'Frontier Insights' encapsulate the essence

of Vyakti Nirman to Rashtra Nirman (Individual Development to Nation Building), fostering pride, vigilance and collective responsibility among citizens."

Dhruva Mahanta, Press Secretary to the Chief Minister of Assam, emphasised the importance of accurate and targeted media in promoting development narratives and national

## Excise crackdown in Nagaon: three arrested

### HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, Dec 12:** The District Excise Department has intensified its crackdown on illicit liquor in the region, conducting a series of operations across various locations in the district and yielding significant results.

Under the supervision of Borish Borkakati, Superintendent of Excise, Nagaon and led by Excise Inspector Chandra Kumar Baruah, the Excise team launched raids in Borkola, Barhampur, Bamuni, Dakshin Gomariati and Katahguri. The operation was carried out on the basis of eight specific inputs.

During the raids, the Excise team destroyed 4,280 kilograms of fermented wash meant for liquor production, 15 liquor-making devices and 350 litres of spurious liquor. The team also arrested three individuals, including two women, involved in the illicit liquor trade. Necessary legal action has been initiated against them as per departmental norms, sources added.

## Mini Recruitment Drive at govt ITI Srikona draws large participation DC Yadav inspires ITI Srikona students



### HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Dec 12:** District Commissioner Mridul Yadav, IAS, delivered an inspiring and detailed address at the inauguration of the Mini Recruitment Drive organised at Government ITI, Srikona, on Friday. Speaking as the Chief Guest, he urged students to seize opportunities with determination, discipline and a clear sense of direction. He stressed that today's employment landscape rewards those who sharpen their skills, remain adaptable and develop strong communication and problem-solving abilities.

Calling such recruitment drives crucial gateways that can transform the lives of young professionals, he highlighted the Government of Assam's sustained focus on expanding skill development and employment avenues. He encouraged candidates to engage confidently with participating employers, make in-

formed career decisions and adopt a mindset of life-long learning to stay relevant in a rapidly evolving world.

Earlier, Assistant Director of the District Employment Exchange, Silchar, Himangshu Kr Das, delivered an insightful and motivating address aimed at strengthening the spirit of the initiative. Speaking directly to the aspirants, he stressed the need to understand the dynamic job market and prepare accordingly. While qualifications may open doors, he noted that success depends on discipline, sustained effort, technical competence and a willingness to learn.

Das underscored the importance of industry-oriented training and practical exposure, urging students to adapt to modern workplace demands. He encouraged candidates to interact confidently with employers, ask pertinent questions and present their strengths effectively. Highlighting the value of punctuality, professionalism and a positive outlook, he reminded the youth that every interview is an opportunity to learn and grow. He also outlined the various employment schemes, training programmes and support mechanisms under the Employment & Craftsmen Training framework, assuring participants of continued guidance from registration to placement.

The Mini Recruitment Drive, organised by the District Employment Exchange, Silchar under the Directorate of Employment & Craftsmen Training, Skill, Employment & Entrepreneurship Department, Government of Assam, witnessed notable enthusiasm and participation. Designed to bridge the gap between job seekers and employers, the event offered a meaningful platform for direct interaction, career clarity and real-time opportunities.

A total of seven employers, including both local and international companies, took part in the drive, offering diverse job opportunities across multiple sectors. Around 350 candidates attended the event, marking a promising turnout and reflecting the growing interest of youth in structured employment initiatives.

## Historic Pran Pratishtha: Rare Somnath Shivalinga fragments consecrated

### HT Correspondent

**KHERONI, Dec 12:** In a momentous spiritual event, the Pran Pratishtha (consecration) ceremony of rare Shivalinga Temple in Gujarat will be held on Saturday at the Art of Living International Centre (Ashram) in Diphu, Karbi Anglong district. The ceremony will be led by the founder of Art of Living, Gurdudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

These sacred Somnath Shivalings, preserved for over a thousand years following historical invasions, have arrived at the ashram, offering devotees a rare opportunity for darshan and divine blessings after centuries. The program will feature darshan of the Somnath Shivalings, Rudra Pooja performed by Vedic Pandits, and distribution of prasadam. Devotees are invited to participate in this historic occasion, which marks a signi-

## NTPC Bongaigaon inks MoA for Mobile Science Lab Project



### HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR, Dec 12:** NTPC Bongaigaon, Salakati has signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for the implementation of a Mobile Science Lab Project across 60 government schools in the districts of Bongaigaon, Chirang and Kokrajhar, covering 20 schools in each district, under its Corporate Strategic CSR framework with a total CSR outlay of ₹ 57.88 lakh.

The MoA was signed between Riju Dutta Secretary, Seva Bharati Purbanchal and Amit Kumar Asthana Head of HR, NTPC Bongaigaon in the presence of Arnab Maitra Head of Project, NTPC Bongaigaon, Sanjiv Barman Joint Secretary, Seva Bharati Purbanchal, Sanjiv Bist Coordinator and Surendra Talkelkar, representative of the organisation. Representatives from the HR and CSR wings of NTPC Bongaigaon were also present. The project will be implemented by Seva Bharati Purbanchal, a CSR-registered organisation with experience in education-focused interventions across the North-East.

The Mobile Science Lab Project aims to strengthen science education through hands-on, activity-based learning, particularly in schools located in remote and underserved areas. Fully equipped mobile laboratory vans fitted with scientific instruments, demonstration models and digital teaching aids will take experiential learning directly to school campuses. The initiative will provide students with practical exposure to concepts in physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy and renewable energy, fostering curiosity and scientific temper among young learners.

Speaking on the occasion, Arnab Maitra Head of Project, NTPC Bongaigaon, said the initiative reflects NTPC's long-term commitment to building a robust education ecosystem in its operational areas. He noted that by taking science learning beyond textbooks and classrooms, the project seeks to encourage scientific thinking, spark curiosity and nurture interest in STEM disciplines, contributing to the development of future-ready human capital in the region.

Each mobile science lab will be equipped with microscopes, telescopes, solar energy kits, optics and rocket models, along with laptops, projectors and other learning tools. The project also includes engagement of trained lab instructors and support staff, preparation of IEC materials and capacity-building measures to ensure effective outreach and sustained impact.

The project will be implemented over a one-year period with structured monitoring, periodic reporting and submission of utilisation certificates in line with CSR norms. NTPC Bongaigaon will undertake regular reviews and site visits to ensure transparency, accountability and timely achievement of project outcomes.

Through this initiative, NTPC Bongaigaon reaffirms its commitment to inclusive, future-oriented education and community development, aligned with national priorities of promoting scientific temper and innovation.

## Kamal Rashid Ahmed receives Rajen Borthakur Memorial Award 2025

### HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, Dec 12:** The sixth death anniversary of former MLA and social activist Rajen Borthakur was observed on Wednesday at Nij-Haleswar with tributes, cultural programmes and community participation. The event, organised by local residents and the Rajen Borthakur Memorial Committee, highlighted Borthakur's contributions to the socio-cultural and sports life of Tezpur and Rangpara.

The Rajen Borthakur Memorial Award 2025 was conferred on vocalist, music director, actor and former student leader Kamal Rashid Ahmed for his contributions to culture. Ahmed was felicitated with traditional honours, including a phulam gamocha, cheleng chador, citation, memento and cash prize, by Borthakur's spouse Monisha and elder brother Jiten Borthakur.

The programme included a minute of silence for departed music icons Zubeen Garg, Deepak Sarma and Syed Sadulla; reminiscences by former AASU leader Dilip Bora and student leader Santanu Mahanta and reflections on Borthakur's legacy by his brother Jiten Borthakur and social worker Pramod Nath. Activities included garlanding Borthakur's statue, Swahid Tarpan, a children's drawing competition, Naam-Prasanga and evening lamp-lighting.

Sibasagar Barhoi was also felicitated for maintaining Borthakur's memorial statue. The event was anchored by Pramod Nath.



integration. PVSLN Murty, CMD of NEDFi, highlighted the link between economic empowerment and border security, stressing the role of first-generation entrepreneurs in strengthening frontier regions.

Sanjay Aditya Singh, Executive Member of Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar and Chairman of the Editorial Board, said, "The security of our border regions is a collective endeavor. Frontier Insights provides knowledge and strategic insights, while 'Pancha Parivartan' offers a guiding philosophy for community engagement, ensuring that frontier villages evolve into self-reliant strongholds of national pride and security."

Seemanta Chetana Mancha Purvottar, a socio-cultural and non-political organization, works to foster patriotism, national integration and holistic development along Bharat's international borders, creating a foundation of peace, harmony and progress for border communities. fificant moment of spiritual and cultu Here's an edited version of your news article with a short headline and strap, keeping the news body mostly intact:

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### SALE INTIMATION AND PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE OF SECURITIES PLEDGED TO HDFC BANK LTD.

The below mentioned Borrowers of HDFC Bank Ltd. (the "Bank") are hereby notified regarding the sale of securities pledged to the Bank, for availing credit facilities in the nature of Loan/Overdraft Against Securities.

Due to persistent default by the Borrowers in making repayment of the outstanding dues as per agreed loan terms, the below loan accounts are in delinquent status. The Bank has issued multiple notices to these Borrowers, including the final sale notice on the below-mentioned date whereby, Bank had invoked the pledge and provided 7 days' time to the Borrower to repay the entire outstanding dues in the below accounts, failing which, Bank would be at liberty to sell the pledged securities without issuing further notice in this regard. The Borrowers have neglected and failed to make due repayments, therefore, Bank in exercise of its rights under the loan agreement as a pledgee has decided to sell / dispose off the Securities on or after 20<sup>th</sup> December 2025 for recovering the dues owed by the Borrowers to the Bank. The Borrowers are, also, notified that, if at any time, the value of the pledged securities falls further due to volatility in the stock market to create further deficiency in the margin requirement then Bank shall at its discretion sell the pledged security within one (1) calendar day, without any further notice in this regard. The Borrower(s) shall remain liable to the Bank for repayment of any remaining outstanding amount, post adjustment of the proceeds from sale of pledged securities.

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 10 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 2025	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXXXXXXXX3793	RHEMBOR G SAIBON	9,95,850.78	08-12-2025
2	XXXXXXXXXX9802	SANTOSH KR TIWARI	40,483.00	08-12-2025
3	XXXXXXXXXX5525	DIPAK PAUL	2,44,847.22	06-12-2025
4	XXXXXXXXXX9396	SANTOSH KUMAR RAY	96,015.82	08-12-2025

DATE : 13.12.2025

PLACE : MEGHALAYA

Sd/-  
HDFC BANK LTD.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*Syllables govern the world.*  
—George Bernard Shaw

## Discovery of Alakananda

India's scientific community has quietly handed the world an intriguing cosmic puzzle. It is called Alakananda after the ancient Himalayan River, but its significance runs far deeper than its poetic name. Alakananda is one third the size of a Milky Way containing roughly 19 billion stars. It has a symmetrical spiral arm with the classic "beads on a string" pattern. Its very essence compressed the timeline of a cosmic evolution. A galaxy of this size and order should not have had the time to assemble, stabilise and begin forming stars at a rate far exceeding our own galaxy's present output. And yet, 12 billion years later, its ancient light reaches us with unmistakable clarity. Discovered by researchers Rishi Jain and Yogesh Wadekar using data from James Webb Space Telescope, the finding forces us to rethink long held assumptions about how and how quickly the old universe organised itself. For decades, the prevailing view of the "cosmic dawn" placed it in a state of restless disorder. Astronomers believed that early galaxies were small and misshapen. These primitive clumps gradually evolved into graceful spirals and majestic ellipticals we see today. The emergence of well-defined discs and spiral arms, according to mainstream theory, required millions of years of gravitational settling and star formation.

The discovery of Alakananda challenges this theory. It is not merely a exotic outlier. It is a reminder that nature often builds faster, earlier and more creatively than our models predict. A single observation is overturning an assumption about the universe's first billion years. It suggests that there may be many more such galaxies. They are awaiting discovery. James Webb has only begun revealing the early cosmos with resolution and sensitivity required to distinguish between real structure from distant smudges. Its observations are accumulating. A time may come when the narrative of a chaotic early universe may have to give way to one of surprising maturity. The discovery also highlights something else. There is a growing presence of Indian researchers at the frontier of astrophysics. A young scientist has painstakingly examined 70,000 candidate objects. Thereafter, a system has been identified that now forces the re-evaluation of global cosmology.

It is a reminder that major breakthroughs are not the monopolies of large observatories alone. They often begin with a careful eye, sharp intuition and scientific patience. We may not know what Alakananda looks like today. But what it reveals about the past is profound. Every such discovery nudges us towards a humbler cosmic truth. The universe has always been ahead of our theories, waiting for our instruments and our imagination, to catch up.

# The wastage of talent and Assam's intellectual crisis

By: Himaneshu Ranjan Bhuyan

For any nation, the most valuable asset is the fertility of its people's minds and the sharpness of their thoughts. The all-round progress, stability, and future of a society depend on how that society nurtures its talented children, how it recognises their abilities, and how it applies their innovative energy for the greater good. In the present context of Assam, the most sensitive and thought-provoking issue is the continuous wastage of talent and the all-devouring intellectual crisis that has emerged as a result. Assam, a land rich in natural resources and geographical diversity, is on the verge of becoming intellectually impoverished. This crisis is not limited merely to the departure of a few highly educated young men and women from the state; rather, like a deep social malady, it has spread to every level of our society.

The word "talent" or "intellect" is not confined only to educational qualifications, degrees, or examination marks. Talent is an abstract yet powerful concept that denotes human creativity, problem-solving ability, foresight, and the inherent strength to show society a new path. It is regrettable that in our current social system the idea of talent has been accepted in an extremely narrow form. From the student stage itself, the race for marks has obstructed the pursuit of real knowledge and the development of original thinking. When a society considers marks and government jobs as the sole aim of life, superficial competition takes root instead of depth of knowledge. This very process is the first and most deadly stage of talent wastage. The natural abilities of many gifted children and adolescents are destroyed in their infancy by our rigid education system and social pressure. Forced to walk the conventional path prescribed by society instead of advancing according to their own interests and skills, they ultimately turn into frustrated citizens devoid of creativity.

The outward migration of talent, or brain drain, from Assam has today become a complex problem. The roots of this problem extend far. It is a natural process for students from Assam to go outside the state or abroad for higher education and research. Certainly, in the age of globalisation, geographical boundaries cannot be an obstacle to the acquisition of knowledge. Yet the worrying aspect arises when, even after acquiring knowledge and skills, these talented individuals find no way to return to their motherland or lose all desire to do so. Behind this lie not only economic reasons but also deep social and psychological ones. Economic security and living standards are undoubtedly important factors, but equally re-

sponsible are the lack of freedom in the workplace, the absence of proper infrastructure for research, and the lack of genuine respect for talent in society, which have given this outward flow a permanent character. When a highly educated or specially skilled person tries to work in his own state and encounters bureaucratic complications, political interference, and the dominance of the incompetent at every step, relocation becomes for him not merely a professional decision but a psychological necessity. The present condition of our institutions of higher learning makes this picture of intellectual crisis even clearer and more tragic. Universities and colleges, instead of being temples of knowledge, are gradually turning into degree-distribution centres and arenas of politics. The environment for original research, the emergence of new ideas, and world-class academic discourse is extremely limited in these institutions. Complaints of decrepit laboratories, absence of new books in libraries, and nepotism or corruption in teacher appointments demoralise the new generation. When a research student sees that his teacher has reached that position not on the basis of merit but through some invisible force, a feeling of revolt and hatred towards the entire system arises in the student's mind. This disgust compels them to leave the state. As a result, there is a shortage of talented teachers and students in Assam's higher education institutions, and mediocre thinking has taken their place, dragging the intellectual world downward. Another profound aspect of talent wastage is the death of talent or its fall victim to "intellectual inertia" even while remaining within the state due to the absence of a suitable environment. Many talented youths may not go outside the state for family or personal reasons, yet while staying here they get no opportunity to develop their abilities. In both government and private sectors, obedience and conventionality are given more importance than creativity. Our society does not easily accept people who want to do something new or think against the prevailing current. Rather, they are repeatedly discouraged through criticism and non-cooperation. The prevalent "crab mentality" in Assamese social life—the tendency of one to pull another down—has prematurely killed many promising initiatives and thoughts. Thus, countless talents are silently perishing within our society, unnoticed by anyone. This too is an irreparable loss of talent.

The effect of Assam's intellectual crisis is clearly visible in our literature, culture, and media. The kind of serious discussion, literary practice, and reasoned debate that once existed in Assam is rapidly disappearing today. The superficial,

cheap, and emotion-dominated content that now dominates newspapers and social media is indicative of the community's intellectual bankruptcy. Instead of deep study and analysis of complex social and economic problems, only momentary excitement finds space. Thoughtful scholars and researchers are receiving less respect in society, while the influence of rabble-rousers and those who gain cheap popularity is increasing. When emotion replaces knowledge and shouting replaces logic in a society, that society can never progress. In such an environment, genuinely talented people distance themselves, leaving the seat of intellectual leadership either vacant or in the hands of the incompetent.

Political instability and long-standing social conflicts have also acted as major obstacles to the development of talent in Assam. Over the past several decades the state has faced numerous movements and unrest. Their direct impact has fallen on the academic calendar and educational environment. Although the present situation is somewhat calm, the fear of future uncertainty and apprehension has not entirely vanished from people's minds. Because of this uncertainty, many parents want to educate their children outside the state and settle them there in the hope of a secure future. This is a situation akin to "intellectual refugees". Despite love for their birthplace, they are compelled to stay away for the sake of future security. As a result, Assam has lost thousands of skilled doctors, engineers, scientists, economists, and social scientists who have earned fame in various parts of the world with their expertise, yet have been unable to contribute anything directly to their own state. From an economic perspective, this wastage of talent is a major disaster for Assam. Today's global economy is a "knowledge-based economy". The nation that possesses more intellectual wealth and technological skill becomes correspondingly richer. Despite abundant natural resources in Assam, we are unable to utilise them properly due to the lack of appropriate technical knowledge and innovative power. Consequently, we remain mere suppliers of raw materials and consumers of external products. The participation of talented economists and experts in the state's economic planning and policy-making is nominal. In most cases, bureaucratic decisions dominate, where realistic research is absent. Because the modern technology and management skills required for establishing industries are not locally available, people have to be brought from outside. This neither solves the local unemployment problem nor prevents the state's wealth from flowing outward. Intellectual poverty has bound us in chains of eco-

conomic dependence as well.

The inferiority complex that has developed towards language and culture is another major cause of this crisis. Knowledge of English is essential in the age of globalisation, but to neglect or demean one's mother tongue and take refuge in another language is a symptom of intellectual slavery. A large section of our new generation finds it difficult to engage in serious thought, writing, or reading in Assamese. As a result, the connection of the Assamese language with the world of knowledge is beginning to break. Because the latest philosophy, science, and technology of the world are neither translated into Assamese nor discussed, the mental horizon of the common people is not expanding. Talent that is not connected to its own soil and people cannot fully benefit society. At present a "rootless" class of talented people has emerged in Assam who achieve success at the international level yet are unable to make any significant contribution to the advancement of their own language and culture.

Due to the unprecedented advancement of technology, geographical distance is no longer a major problem in today's world. Yet in the context of Assam we have failed to use these technological advantages for talent retention. There is no structured and continuous relationship between the state government or local institutions and the expatriate Assamese experts living abroad or outside the state. Although some conferences or festivals are occasionally held, they remain confined to formality. Even when expatriate experts wish to offer advice in the fields of education, health, or agriculture based on their experience, there is a lack of proper platform or goodwill to accept it. In many cases, local leadership refuses to welcome new ideas from outside for fear that their own power or influence will diminish. This lack of communication and coordination has greatly dimmed Assam's potential. Another aspect of this intellectual crisis is the absence of ideal personalities or "role models" in society. Whom will the new generation look up to for inspiration? Most of those projected as successful in today's society are either owners of immense wealth or politically powerful individuals. People who lead their lives through the pursuit of knowledge, sacrifice, and social service are pushed into a corner of society. When an adolescent sees that wealth, not knowledge, receives the highest honour in society, respect for knowledge naturally diminishes in his mind. As a result, a materialistic and opportunistic mentality takes root in society. This mentality teaches people to regard talent merely as a tool for acquiring personal luxuries. The

number of people who think about the greater interest of society or human welfare becomes countable on one's fingertips.

To escape this terrible situation, we need a comprehensive and radical change. This is not possible merely through government schemes; it requires a social awakening. The first and foremost task is the reform of the education system. Education must be used not only as a job-oriented tool but as an instrument for building human beings. An environment that keeps curiosity, the courage to question, and creativity alive must be created in the classroom itself. Emphasis must be placed on practical and analytical education instead of rote learning. Institutions of higher education must be completely freed from political interference and granted academic autonomy. Only if merit and skill become the sole criteria for appointing vice-chancellors or professors can the lost glory of these institutions return. Building a healthy research culture in Assam is extremely urgent. The government must increase budget allocation for research and development while also involving the private sector. Funds and infrastructure must be provided for high-quality research on local problems such as floods, agriculture, and biodiversity conservation. When our talented students see that their research has value and benefits society, they will prefer to work here rather than go elsewhere. Think tanks should be formed by bringing together experts from various fields and their advice should be taken in policy-making for the state. Similarly, encouraging industrialisation and a "start-up" culture is an effective way to retain talent. A mindset of self-reliance must be built among Assam's new generation. The mentality of running only after government jobs must be abandoned, and young men and women must be inspired to start new businesses or services with their own skills and creativity. The government must provide easy loans, tax concessions, and market facilities for this. When sufficient employment opportunities are created within the state and a favourable environment for entrepreneurship exists, the outward migration of talent will automatically decrease. The number of "incubation centres" must be increased to nurture those young people who come with new ideas. Improving the quality of life is essential. For living in a city or town, minimum civic amenities must be of high standard. Only when there are good schools, good hospitals, a safe environment, and cultural recreation facilities will highly educated people like to settle there permanently. Along with metropolises like Guwahati, district headquarters also need to be developed in a planned

manner. Problems such as traffic congestion, pollution, and artificial floods must be solved for these places to become livable for talented people. Moreover, if internet and digital connectivity are strengthened, many will be able to work for international organisations while staying in Assam through "work from home".

The change in societal mentality is the most important. We must learn to honour the meritorious. Those who selflessly contribute to literature, art, science, or social service must be publicly recognised and honoured. An environment of constructive discussion must be created instead of criticism. We must possess the generosity to respect differing opinions and welcome new thoughts. Especially, parents must identify their children's real interests and talents instead of imposing their own unfulfilled dreams and encourage them to move forward accordingly. We must abandon the habit of measuring success only by money. Furthermore, a separate diaspora policy should be prepared to establish relations with expatriate Assamese. States like Kerala or Andhra Pradesh have beautifully utilised the skills and capital of their expatriate population for the state's development. The Assam government can also maintain regular contact with Assamese organisations and individuals living in different parts of the world following similar models. Creating a favourable investment environment in Assam for them or inviting them as guest professors for knowledge dissemination are measures that can be taken. This will not only bring economic benefits but also smooth the path of intellectual exchange.

In conclusion, it can be said that the wastage of talent and the intellectual crisis are crucial questions connected with Assam's very existence. Its solution is not possible overnight; it is a long-term struggle. But if we do not start this struggle now, in the future we will have nothing left except regret. To build a talent-illuminated, knowledge-based, and self-reliant Assam, the government, society, parents, and the new generation—all must move forward together. Talent is not merely personal property; it is national wealth. The future of this fertile land on the banks of the Luit depends on the preservation and proper utilisation of this wealth. We hope that every Assamese endowed with good sense will realise the depth of this crisis and become active in its resolution from their respective positions. We must remember that only the light of knowledge can defeat darkness and decay; otherwise, in the pages of history we will survive merely as a nearly extinct possibility. Time has not yet run out; what is needed is only a firm resolve and far-sighted thinking.

# Premeditated Murder? Zubeen Garg case chargesheet

The untimely death of Zubeen Garg, the beloved Assamese singer, composer, actor, and cultural icon, has left an indelible scar on the hearts of millions across Northeast India and beyond. On September 19, 2025, the 52-year-old artist, known for his soul-stirring melodies that blended folk traditions with contemporary rhythms, collapsed while swimming in the sea off an island near Singapore. He had traveled there as the cultural brand ambassador for the fourth edition of the North East India Festival (NEIF), an event meant to showcase the vibrant heritage of the region under the auspices of the Indian High Commission. What began as a routine outing on a yacht, organized by members of the Assam Association Singapore ahead of his scheduled performance, spiraled into a tragedy that shook Assam to its core. Garg's body was recovered from the waters, and initial reports from Singapore authorities attributed the incident to drowning, with no immediate signs of foul play. Yet, back home in Guwahati, whispers of suspicion quickly grew into a roar of public outrage, demanding answers for how a man in his prime, celebrated for hits like "Mon Jai" and "Mayabini," could vanish so abruptly.

Born on November 18, 1972, in Tura, Meghalaya, to an Assamese family rooted in the village of Tamulichiga in Jorhat district, Zubeen Garg was more than an entertainer; he was a symbol of Assamese pride. His career spanned over three decades, encompassing playback singing, film direction, and philanthropy. Garg's voice carried the raw emotion of the Brahmaputra's floods and the resilience of the tea garden workers, earning him accolades like the Asom Ratna and a legion of fans who saw in him a bridge between tradition and modernity. He was unmarried, dedicating his life to music and social causes, including environmental advocacy and support for flood victims. His presence at NEIF was poised to be a highlight, drawing expatriates eager for a taste of home. Instead, news of his collapse spread like wildfire, prompting an outpouring of grief. Vigils lit up Guwahati's streets, and social media overflowed with tributes, but beneath the sorrow simmered questions: Was this truly an accident, or something far more sinister?

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wasted no time in signaling that the state would not accept surface-level explanations. Addressing the assembly and the public within days, Sarma declared the incident "not a normal case," hinting at deeper conspiracies tied to financial irregularities that predated the COVID-19 pandemic. "It was a murder case from the very first day," he asserted, vowing that the truth would "shock the state." This bold stance set the tone for an unprecedented investigation, bypassing initial skepticism from Singapore police, who had issued a death certificate citing drowning and suggested a coroner's inquiry for further clarity. The Assam government, undeterred, invoked Section 208 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Surak-

sha Sanhita to secure Central government sanction for prosecuting an extrajurisdictional crime, underscoring their conviction that justice transcended borders.

The probe kicked off swiftly with the formation of a nine-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), headed by Special Director General of Police Munna Prasad Gupta. Registered as Case No. 18/2025 at the Dispur Police Station, the investigation initially invoked Sections 61 (criminal conspiracy), 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), and 106 (causing death by negligence) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), India's revamped criminal code. But as evidence mounted, the SIT pushed for escalation. Within two days, they petitioned the court to add Section 103, equivalent to the erstwhile IPC 302 for murder, arguing that preliminary findings pointed to deliberate foul play rather than negligence. After intense debates, the court approved the amendment, transforming the case from potential manslaughter to premeditated homicide. A parallel case, No. 19/2025, targeted property-related offenses against key figures, broadening the net to include forgery and breach of trust.

The SIT's work was exhaustive, spanning three gruelling months. Over 300 witnesses were interrogated, from festival organizers and hotel staff in Singapore to fellow performers and locals in Assam. The team traversed continents, collaborating with Singapore authorities to obtain critical documents: two post-mortem reports—one from Singapore and another from Guwahati—a toxicology analysis from the Singapore Police, and viscera examination from the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) in Kolkata. Seized items included Garg's mobile phone, personal medicines, a suitcase, multiple hard drives, forged PAN cards, and at least 28 seals from various companies and government offices, hinting at a web of financial manipulation. Gupta, in a December 6 briefing, revealed that the chargesheet would encompass nearly 3,500 pages—some reports even cited 7,000—detailing timelines, forensic correlations, and inmate confessions from the seven accused, who had been grilled relentlessly in CID lockups.

Arrests began trickling in almost immediately, each revelation fueling public fervor. The first breakthroughs came on September 30, when prime suspects Shyamkanu Mahanta, the NEIF chief organizer, and Siddharth Sharma, Garg's long-time manager, were apprehended after days on the run. Mahanta was nabbed in Delhi, Sharma in Haryana, and both were produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's residence amid closed courts, remanded to 14-day police custody. Mahanta's home yielded a trove of incriminating documents, leading to a fresh forgery case. Sharma, who handled Garg's schedules and finances, faced

scrutiny over suspicious transactions totaling over ₹1.1 crore. By October 2, murder charges under BNS 103 were formally slapped on them, with Gupta confirming the SIT's certainty of orchestration.

The dragnet widened to include those closest to Garg during his final hours. Shekhar Jyoti Goswami, a bandmate and musician, and Amritprabha Mahanta, a co-singer and relative, were arrested after six days of questioning. Goswami, part of the entourage on the fateful yacht, and Amritprabha, who shared stages with Garg, were accused of abetment, their roles allegedly pivotal in luring him into vulnerability. Sandipan Garg, Zubeen's cousin and an Assam Police Service officer serving as Deputy Superintendent of Police, was detained next, charged under BNS 105 for culpable homicide—implying knowledge or intent without full premeditation. His proximity to the victim raised eyebrows about insider betrayal. Rounding out the septet were the singer's personal security officers (PSOs), Pareswari Baisya and Nandeswar Bora, booked under BNS 316 for criminal breach of trust (CBT), their failure to protect deemed not mere oversight but complicity in fatal negligence.

The chargesheet, submitted on December 12, 2025, before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court in Kamrup Metropolitan under heavy security—a convoy of six vehicles ferrying the voluminous files—crystallized these allegations. It explicitly invoked BNS 103 against Siddharth Sharma, Shyamkanu Mahanta, Amritprabha Mahanta, and Shekhar Jyoti Goswami for abetment of murder, poring them as architects who "facilitated or encouraged the act." Sandipan Garg stood accused under 105, his actions linked to causing death with awareness of consequences. The PSOs faced 316, underscoring their breach as a direct enabler of harm. Accompanying the document were seized exhibits, forensic linkages, and timelines reconstructing the yacht outing: how the group, ostensibly celebrating, isolated Garg in the water, where toxicology hinted at possible impairment from undisclosed substances.

Yet, the chargesheet was just the prelude to deeper revelations. Sarma, in a November 25 assembly address amid an opposition adjournment motion, dropped a bombshell: "One person murdered him, and others cooperated." He refrained from naming the principal perpetrator but stressed that four to five faced murder charges outright. The motive, he implied, wove through financial entanglements—disputed festival funds, embezzlement from Garg's tours, and a "big story" of conspiracy simmering since pre-pandemic years. Opposition leaders, including those from the Congress and AAP, had lambasted the government for premature conclusions, but Sarma countered with the court's endorsement of Section 103, crediting the SIT's rigor for preventing bail-outs. The probe's extrajurisdictional nod from the Ministry of Home Affairs

further validated their pursuit.

Complicating the narrative was the legal standoff over representation. In a rare show of solidarity, the Assam Advocates' Association, representing over 10,000 lawyers, resolved to boycott the accused, citing the gravity of betraying a cultural icon. Shyamkanu Mahanta's wife, Anita Deka Mahanta, a lawyer herself, penned a desperate plea for withdrawal, arguing it undermined due process. "In the context of legal proceedings," she questioned in her letter, "decrying the decision as emotional overreach. The association stood firm, forcing the accused to navigate without local counsel, a move that amplified perceptions of communal outrage. Protests erupted outside suspects' residences, with arrests for incitement underscoring the volatile mood.

As the chargesheet landed in court, it marked a pivotal closure to the SIT's phase, but the trial loomed as the true battleground. Gupta emphasized that while the core murder probe concluded, ancillary inquiries into finances and forgeries persisted, promising no escapes. Public sentiment, raw and unrelenting, echoed in chants of "Justice for Zubeen Da," with fans from Sivasagar to Shillong holding candlelight marches. Garg's absence reverberated in empty concert halls and silenced airwaves, his songs now anthems of loss. The case exposed fissures in the entertainment industry's underbelly—managerial greed, security lapses, familial fractures—while highlighting Assam's unyielding quest for accountability. Was the plot to eliminate Zubeen Garg hatched long before that fateful swim? Inmate testimonies, buried in the chargesheet's annexures, reportedly affirm a premeditated snare, with whispers of earlier attempts thwarted. Financial trails point to siphoned royalties and festival kickbacks, Mahanta's forged seals suggesting a syndicate preying on artists. Sharma's evasion to Rajasthan, Mahanta's Delhi hideout—these were no panic flights but calculated dodges, per investigators. Singapore's initial clean bill clashed with CFSL's viscera insights, possibly indicating tampering or overdose, though details remain sealed until trial.

Three months on, as December's chill settled over Guwahati, the submission of the chargesheet felt like a collective exhale. Yet, for a state that revered Garg as its heartbeat, closure remains elusive. His music, once a balm for everyday joys and sorrows, now underscores a cautionary tale of trust shattered. The courts will dissect the 3,500 pages, weighing abetment against intent, conspiracy against coincidence. But beyond legalese, this is a reckoning for a legacy: Zubeen Garg, the voice of Assam, silenced not by waves but by human shadows. As Sarma promised, the full story will shock, but in unveiling it, perhaps it heals—reminding us that icons, too, deserve guardians as fierce as their admirers. In the Brahmaputra's steady flow, one hears his echo still: a call for justice, unyielding and pure.

# How to survive the holidays while unemployed

By: Maria Gracia Santillana Linares

Visiting family during the holiday season can be stressful for everyone. But for the 7.6 million unemployed Americans (as of September), it can be even harder.

It's not just about the difficulty in gathering funds for holiday travel or gifts—there's added stress about the inevitable awkward conversations that will arise. "So, you're still out of work?" "Why haven't you gotten a new job yet?" And a favorite among TikTok users: "Have you tried mailing your résumé to so-and-so?"

Never mind the reality many job seekers are well aware of: Over 23% of unemployed individuals have been out of work for over 27 weeks as of September, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and white collar workers are looking for jobs for more than 6 months on average. Increased AI use among both applicants and hiring managers to

screen job descriptions and résumés means that simply hitting submit is not an effective way to get a new job.

So for those gearing up for potentially tough conversations during the holidays, contributor Julia Korn has some advice: Prepare your messaging ahead of time and know when to leave the party. While you might be annoyed by offers to connect with your uncle's best friend's son who works in a tangential industry, the reality is that networking is still the best way to find your new gig.

You've been CEO at the Ronald McDonald House Charities for about three years now, but you've had a long career in the nonprofit sector, from Make-A-Wish to Feed America. What made you want to do this type of work in the first place?

I'm a social worker by training and I've been in the nonprofit sector my entire professional career. I was very fortunate in the 1970s to grow up in a really diverse community and neighborhood, so I was able to have a lot of differ-

ent friends and families that I interacted with that were from different socioeconomic levels, religions, races, sort of the gamut. What I noticed as a young adult was how different people's journeys started to look based on the opportunities they had. So I really wanted to be a part of impacting systems and opportunities for kids and families. That's what got me into social work.

Since then, that's really been where I've focused my work, which has been at the intersection of all kinds of issues that impact families. Coming to Ronald McDonald House was the culmination of those experiences. Here is a mission that's working with families again. They are diverse families across 60 countries, with all forms of religious faiths, cultural norms and wildly different healthcare systems, but we're all united in helping very vulnerable families through what, I would argue, is probably one of the most difficult times in their lives when their child's gravely ill. So we're providing those comprehensive

services, from housing to mental health care, which is what good social work does.

Obviously it's a tough time for the sector. For those receiving federal grants, many of those have been cut across the board this year. And even those that rely on private donations are seeing a shift in donation sizes and amounts. What has kept you motivated to stay in this type of work?

I'm never lacking motivation. I think if you get into nonprofit work, and for those of us who've been doing it for a long time, it's not easy work. We take on some of humanity's most vexing problems, whether they're family dysfunction, healthcare crises, housing instability, substance abuse, poverty. These are problems that humanity has not been able to solve, and yet we choose to be a part of trying to create solutions. We do positively impact people's lives. So I think if you're in this work, you're kinda wired to not be easily defeated or unmotivated.

Now having said that, obviously it ebbs and flows, and it's a particularly challenging time in the nonprofit sector right now. But what keeps us all going is that every day that folks gain a new donor, or they impact a family, they help someone get to sobriety or permanent housing, that fills people's cups. It makes you just wanna do more of it and take on these challenges.

From your experience, what drives people to leave their job for one at a nonprofit?

You can come into this work from any kind of industry and apply your skills in a really mission-driven environment. We run sophisticated organizations, especially operating across 60 different countries. So we have entire finance, marketing, and communications teams. And I think it's really fulfilling for folks. I talk with people all the time who wanna come into the nonprofit sector because they're looking for that in their experience. They're fulfilled professionally, but they wanna translate those finance



skills or those marketing skills or those technology skills into a mission-driven kind of work.

What advice, or pitch for the nonprofit sector, do you have for those kinds of people looking for more mission-driven work?

You know, people can achieve great heights in their professional career, but yet feel like they're not really making an impact. Oftentimes it's people who are further in their career and are reflecting on their life legacy that start wondering about the change. They're asking themselves: "How have I impacted the world?" or "What

besides monetary and financial achievement has my life been about?" I think they're looking to come into the nonprofit sector to know that their life and work made a difference. It's less about just compensation or professional accomplishments, but to feel like they've been about something beyond themselves. But I also think there are a lot of people that just connect with the organization's purpose or might have a personal story or experience that drives them to the mission. It's hugely fulfilling for people. (Courtesy: Forbes)

## DRDO CEPTAM Recruitment 2026 – 764 Senior Technical Assistant & Technician Posts

Last Date: 01/01/2026

Central for Personnel Talent Management (CEPTAM), Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 764 Senior Technical Assistant B and Technician A Posts. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here.

DRDO CEPTAM Recruitment 2026

1. Senior Technical Assistant-B (STA-B)

No of posts: 561 posts  
Scale of pay: Level 6 (Rs. 35400-112400)  
Educational Qualification: Bachelor's Degree in Science or Diploma in Engineering or Technology or Technical Computer Science or Allied subjects, recognised by AICTE in the respective discipline.

2. Technician-A (Tech-A)

No of posts: 203 posts  
Scale of pay: Level 2 (Rs. 19900-63200)  
Educational Qualification:  
# Xth Class pass or equivalent from a recognized Board or Institute; and  
# Certificate from a recognized Industrial Training Institute in the required discipline; or Certificate of minimum one-year duration from a recognized Institution in the required discipline if the Industrial Training Institutes do not award certificate in that discipline; or National Trade Certificate in the required discipline; or National Apprenticeship Certificate in the required discipline.

Other Criteria of DRDO CEPTAM Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidate must be between 18-28 years of age, as on crucial date of eligibility i.e. 01.01.2026.

Age Relaxation: The relaxation of upper age limit for reserved categories are as follows:

Category	Age Relaxation
OBC-NCL	3 years
SC/ST	5 years
PwBD - UR & EWS	10 years
PwBD - OBC/NCL	13 years
PwBD - SC & ST	15 years

Application Fee: Candidates are required to pay the prescribed fee as per the following categories:

Refundable Fee: An amount of Rs. 500/- shall be refunded only to those candidates who appear in Tier-I exam.

How to Apply for DRDO CEPTAM Recruitment?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy by visiting official Recruitment Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply online.

# Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .  
# Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process by clicking "New Registration".  
# In the next stage, click on "Online Application Form" Link and Login.  
# Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.  
# At the end, pay the examination fee and submit the form.  
# Don't forget to take a print out of the application form .

Important Dates of DRDO CEPTAM Vacancy 2025

# Starting date of online application submission: 11th December, 2025  
# Last date of online application submission: 01st January, 2026

## Intelligence Bureau Recruitment 2025 – 362 Multi Tasking Staff (MTS) Posts

Last Date: 14/12/2025

Intelligence Bureau (IB) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 362 Multi Tasking Staff (MTS) Posts in the following Subsidiary Intelligence Bureaux, (Ministry of Home Affairs), Government of India. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here .

Intelligence Bureau Recruitment 2025

Name of post: Multi Tasking Staff (General) (MTS) (G)

No of posts: 362 posts  
No of posts @ Guwahati: 10 posts  
Category-wise vacancy:  
# UR: 160  
# EWS: 34  
# OBC: 72  
# SC: 42  
# ST: 54

Name of organisation: Intelligence Bureau, (Ministry of Home Affairs), Government of India

Classification of service: General Central Service, Group 'C' (Non-Gazetted, Non-Ministerial)  
Pay scale: Level 1 (₹18,000-56,900) in the pay matrix (Plus admissible Central Govt. allowances).

Helpline Phone No: 022-61087526

Eligibility Criteria of Intelligence Bureau Recruitment

Nationality: Candidate must be an Indian national.  
Age Limit: The candidate's age should be between 18 years to 25 years as on 14.12.2025.  
Age Relaxation: Permissible relaxations in upper age limit for different cate-

gories are as under:

> Upper age limit is relaxable by 5 years for SC/ST and by 3 years for OBC candidates.

> Upper age limit is relaxable for departmental candidates' up to 40 years of age who have rendered 3 years of regular & continuous service. This relaxation is applicable only to Central Govt. Civilian employees holding civil posts & not applicable to personnel working in PSUs, Autonomous/Statutory bodies, etc.

> The age limit is relaxable upto age of 35 years for UR candidates, 38 years for OBC and up to 40 years for SC/ST in case of widows, divorced women and women judicially separated from their husbands and not remarried.

Educational Qualification: Must have passed Matriculation (Class 10) or equivalent from a recognized board.

Domicile Requirement: Must possess a valid domicile certificate of the state they applied for.

Examination Fee:  
Category  
Fee  
UR/OBC/EWS (Male)  
Rs.650/-  
Others Rs.550/-  
# Payment Mode: Payment can be made online via SBI EPAY LITE through Debit Cards (RuPay/Visa/MasterCard/Maestro), Credit Cards, Internet Banking, UPI, SBI challan etc.

How to Apply for Intelligence Bureau Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy. They may follow below mentioned steps to apply online.

# Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .  
# Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process .  
# In the next stage, click on "Online Application Form" Link and Login.  
# Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.  
# Make payment of application fee as per your category and submit the form.  
# At the end, take a print out of the application form .

Important Dates of IB Recruitment 2025

# Starting date of submission of online application: 22nd November 2025  
# Last date of submission of online application: 14th December 2025 (11:59 PM)

## UPSC CDS I Examination 2026 – Online Apply for 451 Posts

Last Date: 30/12/2025

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 451 vacancy through Combined Defence Services Examination (I), 2026. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here .

UPSC CDS I Examination 2026

Name of exam: Combined Defence Services Examination (II), 2026

No of posts: 451 posts

Training Institute-wise vacancy:

# Indian Military Academy, Dehradun: 100  
# Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala: 26  
# Air Force Academy, Hyderabad: 32  
# Officers' Training Academy, Chennai (Madras), 125th SSC (Men) (NT): 275  
# Officers Training Academy, Chennai (Madras), 125th SSC Women (NT): 18

Helpline no.: 011-24041001 | upscsoap@nic.in

Eligibility Criteria of UPSC CDS II Examination

Nationality: Candidate must be unmarried and must either be:

(i) a Citizen of India, or  
(ii) a subject of Nepal, or  
(iii) a person of Indian origin who has migrated from Pakistan, Burma, Sri Lanka and East African Countries of Kenya, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Zaire and Ethiopia or Vietnam with the intention of permanently settling in India.

# Provided that a candidate belonging to categories (ii) and (iii) above shall be a person in whose favour a certificate of eligibility has been issued by the Government of India.  
# Certificate of eligibility will, however, not be necessary in the case of candidates who are Gorkha subjects of Nepal.

Age Limits, Sex and Marital Status:

# IMA: Unmarried male candidates born not earlier than 2nd January, 2003 and not later than 1st January, 2008 only are eligible.

# Indian Naval Academy: Unmarried male candidates born not earlier than 2nd January, 2003 and not later than 1st January, 2008 only are eligible.

# Air Force Academy: 20 to 24 years as on 1st January, 2027 i.e. born not earlier than 2nd January 2003 and not later than 1st January 2007. Upper age limit for candidates holding valid and current Commercial Pilot Licence issued by DGCA (India) is relaxable upto 26 yrs. i.e. born not earlier than 2nd January 2001 and not later than 1st January 2007 only are eligible.

# Officers' Training Academy: (SSC Course for men) Unmarried male candidate born not earlier than 2nd January 2002 and not later than 1st January 2008 only are eligible.

# Officers' Training Academy: (SSC Women Non-Technical Course) Unmarried women, issueless widows who have not remarried and issueless divorcees (in possession of divorce documents) who have not remarried are eligible. They should have been born not earlier than 2nd January 2002 and not later than 1st January 2008.

Educational Qualification:

# I.M.A. and Officers' Training Academy, Chennai: Degree of a recognised Uni-

versity or equivalent.

# Indian Naval Academy: Degree in Engineering from a recognised University/Institution.

# Air Force Academy: Degree of a recognised University (with Physics and Mathematics at 10+2 level) or Bachelor of Engineering.

Application Fee:

# Others: Rs. 200/-

# Female/ SC/ ST: NIL

# Payment mode: Online. Using Visa/Master/Rupay Credit/Debit Card/UPI Payment or by using internet banking facility of any Bank .

How to Apply for UPSC Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy through online mode by visiting official UPSC Recruitment Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply for UPSC CDS I recruitment.

# Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .  
# Click on the "Online Application Form".  
# The official application portal will be displayed.  
# Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.  
# Make payment of application fee as per your category and submit the form.  
# At the end, take a print out of the application form .

Important Dates of UPSC Recruitment 2026

# Starting date of submission of online application: 10th December 2025  
# Last date of submission of online application: 30th December 2025  
# Release date of Admit Card: To be updated later  
# Date of written exam: 12th April, 2026

## UPSC NDA & NA (I) Recruitment 2026 – Online Apply for 394 Posts

Last Date: 30/12/2025

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has released the employment notification for the recruitment of 394 vacancy through National Defence Academy & Naval Academy Examination (I), 2026. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here .

UPSC NDA & NA (I) Recruitment 2026

Name of exam: National Defence Academy & Naval Academy Examination (I), 2026

No of posts: 394 posts

Vacancy Breakup:

# National Defence Academy: 370

# Naval Academy (10+2 Cadet Entry Scheme): 24

Helpline no.: 011-24041001 | upscsoap@nic.in

Related Article: UPSC CDS I Examination 2026

Eligibility Criteria of UPSC NDA & NA (I) Recruitment

Educational Qualification:

Army Wing of National Defence Academy: 12th Class pass of the 10+2 pattern of School Education or equivalent examination conducted by a State Education Board or a University.

Air Force and Naval Wings of National Defence Academy and for the 10+2 Cadet Entry Scheme at the Indian Naval Academy: 12th Class pass with Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics of the 10+2 pattern of School Education or equivalent conducted by a State Education Board or a University.

Candidates who are appearing in the 12th Class under the 10+2 pattern of School Education or equivalent examination can also apply for this examination

Age Limit: Only unmarried male/female candidates born not earlier than 01st Jul 2007 and not later than 01st July 2010 are eligible .

Application Fee of UPSC NDA & NA (I) Exam 2026

+ Others: Rs. 100/-

+ SC/ST Candidates/Sons of JCOs/NCOs/ORs: Nil

+ Women: Nil

+ Payment Mode: Online. Visa/Master/RuPay Credit/Debit Card/UPI Payment or by using internet banking of any Bank.

How to Apply for UPSC NDA & NA Recruitment ?

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+ Release date of Admit Card: To be updated later

+ Date of written exam: 12th April, 2026

BJP counters Congress, accuses Rahul of peddling falsehoods amid heated Parliament debates on national song and electoral reforms

## Rahul Gandhi adamant on proving himself 'jhooth ki dukan': BJP

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** The BJP on Friday called Congress MP Rahul Gandhi "jhooth ki dukan" and said he along with others in the opposition benches was looking away when the Congress was exposed by the treasury benches under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah during debates on Vande Mataram and election reforms in Parliament.

This came after Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, hailed his party members' performance during the debates on the two topics in both Houses of Parliament, and claimed that the government was taken to the cleaners by the opposition.

Hitting back, BJP national spokesperson Prem Shukla said, "Rahul Gandhi says the opposition ripped the BJP members apart (dhajhiyan uda di). On the contrary, Rahul Gandhi and others in the opposition were looking away when the Congress was exposed with proof by the members of the treasury benches under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah during the debates on Vande Mataram and Election Reforms."

"The entire country saw it... Rahul Gandhi is adamant on proving himself to be a 'jhooth ki dukan' (shop of lies)," he told reporters at the BJP headquarters here.

The BJP spokesperson said the country also saw how the entire opposition "fled"



from the Lok Sabha the moment Shah "reiterated" the Modi government's "resolve" to drive the 'ghuspathiyas' (infiltrators) out of the country.

"The entire country saw how Rahul Gandhi and the members of the other opposition parties were ripped apart on the issue of 'ghuspathiyas'," he added.

Shukla said that Shah told Parliament during debates on the two topics "with proof" as to how Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first prime minister, "compromised" on the issue of Vande Mataram's stanzas in the

original version of the national song.

Intervening in the discussion on Election reforms, the Union home minister also gave a "logical and evidence-based" rebuttal to the opposition's allegations against the Special Intensive Review (SIR) of the electoral rolls by the Election Commission, the BJP spokesperson said.

"The Congress is not in a position to counter his (Shah's) response," he added.

The BJP spokesperson also slammed the leader of the opposition over his remarks that Shah got "scared" by the opposition at-

tack, and said, "Rahul Gandhi, you feel scared and you have accepted it."

"When Sonia Gandhi was named the Congress president post, both the son and the daughter were scared of what would happen if she was made president of the party," Shukla claimed in an apparent reference to Gandhi and his sister Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, who is now an MP from Kerala's Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency.

"Amit Shah was not scared even when the erstwhile UPA government remained busy day and night in conspiring to implicate him and Narendra Modi, then chief minister of Gujarat, in false cases," he added.

The BJP spokesperson also took a swipe at the Congress over the absence of its MP Shashi Tharoor in Gandhi's meeting with the party's Lok Sabha members in the Parliament House complex on Friday, saying, "All Congress leaders are preparing to leave the Congress' sinking ship."

Tharoor could not attend the meeting as he was travelling out of the station.

The BJP spokesperson alleged, "The Congress is a sinking ship with no visible possibility of its survival. All the Congress leaders keep talking about the party's fate," he said.

"But I don't know how Rahul Gandhi is living with such arrogance. He says, 'paksh ki dhajhiyan uda di (his party members ripped the government apart),' he added. (PTI)

## BJP's strategy to pit Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay against Tagore backfired: Cong



**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** With both Houses of Parliament wrapping up the debate on 150 years of "Vande Mataram" this week, the Congress on Friday said the BJP's "strategy to pit" Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay against Rabinradranath Tagore and insult the latter has "spectacularly backfired".

Union minister J P Nadda on Thursday asserted in the Rajya Sabha that "Vande Mataram" is linked to nationalism and the country should take a resolve to accord it a status equal to that of the national anthem and flag.

He also accused the Congress of appeasement and negating the importance of "Vande Mataram" during pre and post-independence, even though the national song was linked to the country's ancient cultural heritage.

After both Houses held a debate on 150 years of "Vande Mataram", the Congress on Thursday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and "his entire brigade" have been thoroughly "bruised and exposed for their lies".

On Monday, Modi tore into the Congress, alleging that Nehru betrayed "Vande Mataram" by bowing to Muhammad Ali Jinnah's opposition to the national song that led to it being fragmented and pandering to his communal concerns, putting India on the path of appeasement politics. (PTI)

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## Bill to set up single higher education regulator gets Cabinet nod

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** A bill to set up a higher education regulator which will replace bodies such as the UGC and AICTE was approved by the Union Cabinet on Friday, officials said.

The proposed legislation which was earlier christened the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI) Bill has now been named Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan Bill.

The single higher education regulator which was proposed in the new National Education Policy (NEP), looks to replace the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE).

"The bill to set up Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan has been approved by the Cabinet," an official said.

While the UGC oversees non-technical higher education, the AICTE oversees technical education and the NCTE is the regulatory body for teachers' education.

The Commission is proposed to be set up as a single higher education regulator, but medical and law colleges will not be brought under its ambit. It is proposed to have three major roles -- regulation, accreditation and setting professional standards.

Funding, which is seen as the fourth vertical, is not proposed to be under the regulator so far. The autonomy for funding is proposed to be with the administrative ministry.

## Ex-Union minister Shivraj Patil passes away; funeral today

**LATUR, Dec 12:** Veteran Congressman and former Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil passed away at his home town Latur in Maharashtra on Friday morning, family sources said.

Patil, 90, passed away at his residence 'Devghar' after a brief illness, they said, adding that his funeral will be held on Saturday.

Patil is survived by his son Shailesh Patil, daughter-in-law Archana, who unsuccessfully contested the assembly polls last year on a BJP ticket against Congress' Amit Deshmukh from Latur city, and two granddaughters.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and many others offered condolences and paid tributes to Patil.

Born on October 12, 1935, Patil began his political journey as the president of Latur municipality between 1966 and 1970 and was subsequently elected as an MLA for two terms. He held key posts in the Maharashtra assembly, including Deputy Speaker and Speaker, between 1977 and 1979.

He then went on to win the Latur Lok Sabha seat seven times and was the 10th Speaker of the Lok Sabha from 1991 to 1996. He lost to BJP's Rupatai Patil Nilangekar in the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. He was also a Rajya Sabha member. (PTI)

## Shivakumar will become CM after ongoing winter session of Karnataka legislature: Cong MLA

**BELAGAVI (KARNATAKA), Dec 12:** Karnataka Congress MLA Iqbal Hussain on Friday claimed that D K Shivakumar will become the chief minister after the ongoing winter session of the state legislature here.

The MLA from Ramanagara was among the ministers and legislators, who met for dinner, along with Shivakumar, late last night.

"MLAs from various constituencies have come for the session; it is a rare opportunity for

all of us to meet. During the session, we meet each other. We had dinner together. What's there in that? Can having food together be called a show of strength?" Hussain told reporters here in response to a question about the dinner meeting.

Asked whether only those close to Shivakumar were invited for the dinner, he said, all are friends and close to each other.

To a question whether Shivakumar gave any good news during

the dinner, the MLA, who is considered close to the Deputy CM said, "I'm giving the good news. He will become (CM) after the session, he will become. What's wrong with it?"

He said, "...Shivakumar will get a chance, he will become the chief minister now."

Replying to a question about statements that Shivakumar will become if it is written in his fate, Hussain said, "Everything will happen if the god has written in

one's fate....We are all confident that Shivakumar has a chance for his efforts, struggle, and organising the party. We have told the same to the high command, the high command will decide."

According to Hussain 50-55 Congress legislators met for dinner late last night.

Though leaders term it a casual dinner meeting, speculation is rife as it had taken place amid a power tussle in the ruling party, over the CM post. (PTI)

## SC seeks CBI's reply on ex-R&AW official's plea seeking documents in OSA case

**NEW DELHI, May 31:** The Supreme Court on Friday sought a response from the CBI on a former R&AW official's plea seeking documents relied upon by the probe agency in a trial against him under the Official Secrets Act.

A bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and Vijay Bishnoi issued the notice to the CBI seeking its reply on a plea by Major General V K Singh (retired).

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for Singh, submitted that the high court on September 19 modified an order of the trial court and stated that the documents relied upon by the CBI in the case can only be inspected by the counsel for petitioner and not supplied to him owing to their sensitive nature.

"It is normal procedure under Section 207 of the CrPc where the accused is supplied the document relied upon by the prosecution. The magistrate allowed supply of documents but the high court modified it," Bhushan said.

Singh has served in the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and has written a book in which certain allegations of corruption in procurement of equipment were

made but the CBI booked him under the Official Secrets Act (OSA), Bhushan said. The bench said it is seeking CBI's response on the plea and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks.

The CBI has registered a case against Singh on September 20, 2007, on a complaint that he allegedly revealed secret information by publication of his book titled 'India's External Intelligence - Secrets of Research and Analysis Wing'.

Search warrants were issued against Singh on September 20, 2007, and a compliance report was filed on September 24, 2007, in the court.

On April 7, 2008, the Centre authorised the filing of a complaint under Section 13(3) of the Official Secrets Act and a chargesheet was filed in the case under Sections 3 and 5 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, and Sections 409 and 120B of the IPC on April 11, 2008, with request to keep the classified documents in sealed cover.

The trial court took cognisance of the chargesheet on January 31, 2009, for the offences under Sections 3 and 5 of the Official Secrets Act, 1923, and under Sections 409, 120B of the IPC. (PTI)

## Cabinet nod for Census 2027

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Friday said the government has approved Rs 11,718 crore for the conduct of the Census of India 2027.

The Union Cabinet, at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the proposal to conduct the Census which will be the first digital exercise of its kind, Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told reporters here.

The Census will be conducted in two phases -- house-listing and housing census from April to September, 2026; and population enumeration (PE) in February 2027. For Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the PE exercise shall be conducted in September, 2026, he said.

The Census 2027 will also capture caste data electronically in the PE phase, Vaishnaw said.

About 30 lakh field functionaries will complete this gigantic exercise of national importance. (PTI)

RTI findings point to regulatory inaction as key power plants near the capital remain unchecked for harmful emissions for years

## No stack-emission checks at thermal power plants near Delhi-NCR in 10 years: RTI reply

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has not conducted full stack-emission monitoring for any thermal power plant (TPP) within a 300-km radius of Delhi in the past 10 years, according to an RTI reply.

Stack-emission monitoring refers to the measurement and analysis of pollutants released from industrial chimneys to verify air pollution levels and compliance with environmental norms.

The government had introduced rules in 2015 mandating all TPPs to regularly check and report their emissions. This includes detailed stack-emission monitoring. However, the RTI reply has revealed that the CPCB has not conducted full stack monitoring for any coal-based thermal power plant within 300 km of the national capital in the last 10 years, even though these plants release significant amounts of sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) and PM<sub>2.5</sub>.

According to the RTI reply, only two plants -- Deenbandhu Chhoturam Thermal Power Station in Haryana and Guru Hargobind Thermal Power Plant in Punjab -- underwent partial monitoring. Even for these, the CPCB said complete monitoring, analysis and submission of emission results are pending.

The reply further states that under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's notification dated



July 11, 2025, sulphur dioxide emission standards are mandatory only for Category-A thermal plants.

Of four such plants around Delhi -- NTPC Dadri, Mahatma Gandhi TPS (Jhajjar), Indira Gandhi STPS (Hisar) and Panipat TPS -- three have installed pollution-control systems, while the Panipat plant remains non-compliant. It has been given time until December 31, 2027 to meet the norms.

The RTI response also shows that neither monitoring, nor action has been initiated against any of these plants over non-compliance with pollution-checking regulations.

Amit Gupta, who filed the RTI, said the findings expose "serious enforcement failures" at a time when Delhi-NCR continues to endure hazardous air quality every winter.

Pointing to the regulatory gaps, he added that unchecked emissions from thermal power plants significantly contribute to Delhi's PM<sub>2.5</sub> levels. "With Delhi breathing toxic air every winter, the absence of full-stack monitoring for nearly a decade is alarming. Enforcement has clearly failed," he said.

On Friday, the 24-hour average air quality index (AQI) was recorded at 349 at 4 pm, in the 'very poor' category. (PTI)

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(iv) 96 posts of Safai Karmachari in Assam Police, 3 posts of Safai Karmachari in Assam Commando Battalions, 5 posts of Safai Karmachari in F & ES and 8 posts of Safai Karmachari under DGCD & CGHG.

2. Online Applications will be received with effect from 16-12-2025 to 16-01-2026.

For details of eligibility criteria, how to apply etc. are available at the SLPRB website ([www.slprbassam.in](http://www.slprbassam.in))

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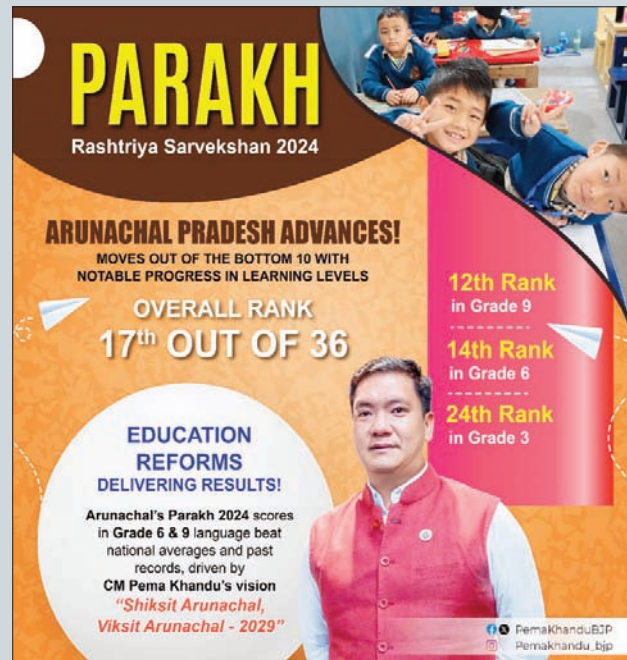
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# Arunachal records major leap in national education assessment, CM hails improvement

State moves up to 17<sup>th</sup> in Parakh 2024, showing significant gains in language learning



**ITANAGAR, Dec 12:** Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday said the state has recorded "remarkable improvement in learning outcomes", with the latest Parakh Rashtriya Sarvekshan 2024 report placing it at the 17th position among 36 states and Union territories.

Khandu described the improvement as a "clear sign that education reforms are delivering results" in the state.

"We have moved out of the bottom 10 with remarkable improvement in learning outcomes. Overall rank 17th out of 36. A clear sign that education reforms are delivering results!" he said in a post on X, expressing optimism over the state's education trajectory.

The CM highlighted that Arunachal's performance in language learning at the middle and secondary levels has shown significant progress.

"Our Parakh 2024 scores in Grade 6 and Grade 9 (language) have surpassed national averages and outperformed our own past records. A true

milestone in our journey of educational transformation," he said.

Calling the achievement a collective success, Khandu extended his appreciation to the education community.

"Gratitude to all teachers, students, parents and education officials who are making this mission a reality," he added.

The Parakh 2024 assessment reflects improvements across multiple grades, with Arunachal ranking 12th in Grade 9, 14th in Grade 6, and 24th in Grade 3, indicating upward trends driven by ongoing education reforms under the state's vision of Shiksit Arunachal, Viksit Arunachal 2029.

Officials at the state education department said the latest rankings strengthen the momentum of the government's comprehensive reforms aimed at enhancing foundational learning, upgrading infrastructure and improving the quality of teaching and assessments across the state. (PTI)

## Rescue operations continue in Anjaw gorge as authorities work to recover remaining victims

# Six bodies recovered from Anjaw mini-truck accident



**ITANAGAR, Dec 12:** Six bodies were retrieved on Friday from the deep gorge in Arunachal Pradesh's Anjaw district, where a mini-truck on which 22 people from Assam were travelling fell, police said.

The operation was initiated by a joint team of the NDRF and Army at the first light of day, Anjaw SP Anurag Dwivedi informed.

"The retrieval process was extremely difficult because of the treacherous terrain. The gorge is very deep," he said.

Eighteen bodies have been spotted at the site and the search for the remaining three missing would continue after the retrieval of these bodies, he said.

The operation to retrieve the

rest of the bodies will resume on Saturday morning, he added.

All those travelling in the vehicle were labourers from Assam's Tezpur district. The accident happened on the evening of December 8, around 40 km from Hayuliang towards Chaglagam.

On the evening of December 10, one survivor managed to climb out of the gorge and reach a nearby Border Roads Task Force (BRTF) labour camp. The officer commanding the BRTF subsequently alerted the district authorities, officials said.

State Disaster Management Secretary Dani Salu said that, considering the extremely treacherous terrain and unreliable weather, a rescue attempt on the night of December 10 was

deemed unsafe.

He said the next day, the Army, BRTF, local police and district administration launched a full-scale operation to retrieve the bodies.

Salu said the identities of 18 bodies have been established so far.

He said the mini-truck was privately owned and the labourers were being transported by a private contractor.

"The private contractor has been taken to the police station for questioning," he said.

Mourning the loss of lives in the accident, Chief Minister Pema Khandu lauded the Army, BRO, the NDRF and the local administration for their swift response to the crisis in such a challenging terrain. (PTI)

## Former Congress leader, 23 others join BJP in Anjaw

HT Correspondent

**ITANAGAR, Dec 12:** The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday received a significant boost in Anjaw district with the induction of former Congress functionary Gungso Kri and 23 opposition members from Longling village.

Women and Child Development Minister Dasanglu Pui announced the development on social media, stating that Gungso Kri, a former vice president of the Congress Party's Anjaw unit, formally joined the BJP expressing confidence in the party's policies and its development agenda for Arunachal Pradesh. Pui welcomed Kri into the party fold and said his support would strengthen ongoing efforts toward welfare and progress in the region.

In a separate development, 23 opposition members from Longling also joined the BJP on Thursday. The group, led by Sobrab Longling and outgoing Gram Panchayat Member (Independent) Lobasha Longling, announced their decision in the presence of party leaders.

Pui said the induction of the group has "virtually brought the opposition in Longling to an end," adding that the people of the village have extended overwhelming support to the BJP. She said the mass joining further reinforces the party's commitment to development, stability and unity in the area.



"With renewed commitment and collective resolve, we look forward to taking Longling and Anjaw on the path of inclusive growth," she added.

The organisations have demanded action on alleged unauthorised religious structures, regulation of migrant entry, recognition of only two established Jama Masjid in the Capital Com-

plex and a complete ban on weekly markets in areas such as Doimukh and Hollongi. They claimed that unregulated activities were affecting local security, cultural practices and economic stability.

Phasang urged the government to prioritise the matter. He said the organisations fear demographic and economic impacts if the issues remain unaddressed. He also ex-

pressed concern over recent reports of two individuals arrested in Jammu & Kashmir for alleged espionage, saying such incidents highlight the need for strong security measures in all states.

Reiterating their opposition to weekly markets, he appealed to residents to remain vigilant about newcomers in their localities and to follow proper verification processes while renting out property.

APIYO general secretary Tapor Maying raised concerns about door-to-door commercial activities and unregulated weekly markets, stating that these could pose challenges to local livelihoods and security. He said the recent bandh saw wide public support and thanked residents for their cooperation.

Maying urged the government to initiate discussions on the organisations' charter of demands, adding that their democratic movement would continue if concerns remain unaddressed. He also welcomed recent official action in some states on unapproved structures and said similar steps should be taken in Arunachal Pradesh, while emphasising that their concerns are focused on public safety and regulatory compliance.

The organisations appealed to the public to stay aware of security-related issues and to cooperate with authorities in maintaining peace and order in the Capital Region.

## Youth bodies seek urgent govt action

HT Correspondent

**ITANAGAR, Dec 12:** The Arunachal Pradesh Indigenous Youth Organisation (APIYO), All Capital Complex Youth Welfare Association (ACCYWA) and All Naharlagun Youth Welfare Association (ANYWA) have jointly submitted a memorandum to the Chief Secretary seeking immediate intervention regarding what they allege are illegal constructions, rising migrant presence and unregulated markets in the Itanagar-Naharlagun Capital Region. Addressing newswriters at the Arunachal Press Club on Thursday, APIYO chairman Kamta Phasang said the organisations have been raising concerns over alleged illegal structures in the Capital Complex. He referred to the recently held 12-hour capital bandh, thanking the public for what he described as their support.

## IndiGo resumes full operations at Donyi Polo Airport

HT Correspondent

**ITANAGAR, Dec 12:** The Airports Authority of India (AAI), Donyi Polo Airport, Itanagar stated that IndiGo Airlines has resumed operations from 12 December, with the reinstatement of the Kolkata-Itanagar-Delhi flight following the recent nationwide cancellations of IndiGo services.

Airport Director P Narendra informed the media that during the temporary disruption, the airport team ensured continuous passenger support through a dedicated helpline activated at the airport. Regular updates and on-ground assistance were provided to minimise inconvenience to travellers.

AAI extended gratitude to passengers for their patience, cooperation and understanding during the affected period, reaffirming its commitment to

maintaining reliable, responsive and passenger-friendly services.

The Airport Director added that even during the disruption, the Itanagar-New Delhi flight operated normally and saw higher passenger numbers than usual. He noted that although many anxious passengers made frequent inquiries regarding service continuity, the airport maintained constant communication to relay timely updates.

Addressing concerns raised by various organisations regarding migrant verification, Narendra stated that an ILP counter is already functional within the airport campus. Most travellers arrive with the required Inner Line Permit, while those without proper documentation can obtain an ILP on a temporary basis, as required for tourism or other purposes.



## Child dies in hostel fire at Taktsang school

DC orders magisterial inquiry, district-wide safety audit

HT Correspondent

**TAWANG, Dec 12:** A tragic fire broke out around 12:20 AM on Thursday in the hostel of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose Awasiya Vidyalaya, Taktsang, reportedly caused by an electrical short circuit.

During the emergency, student Dorjee Tsomu (Class VIII) and hostel warden Nima Lhamu bravely rescued several children who were asleep when the fire erupted. Despite their courageous efforts, one student, Choine Tsomu (Class I), aged six, could not be saved due to the intensity of the blaze.

Personnel from a nearby Indian Army unit, along with villagers, school staff and hostel authorities, rushed to the spot. The fire spread rapidly, fuelled by dried wooden planks and furniture inside the hostel. Combined efforts using water and fire extinguishers eventually brought the flames under control.

The incident resulted in the

heartbreaking loss of a young life and extensive damage to school property.

This morning, DC Tawang Nangyal Angmo (IAS), Superintendent of Police Dr DW Thongon, Additional Deputy Commissioner Lungla Tashi Dhondup, DDMO Genden Tsomu and DDSE Tawang Hridar Phuntsok visited the site to assess the damage and meet the family of the deceased student.

The body of the child, identified as Choine Tsomu, daughter of Tenzin Yeton and Yeshe Wange of Shocksan village under Jemeithang Circle has been sent for post-mortem and completion of other legal formalities. DC Tawang has ordered a magisterial inquiry to ascertain the facts and circumstances leading to the incident through the Circle Officer, Jemeithang. She has also issued instructions for a district-wide safety audit of all residential schools and hostels.

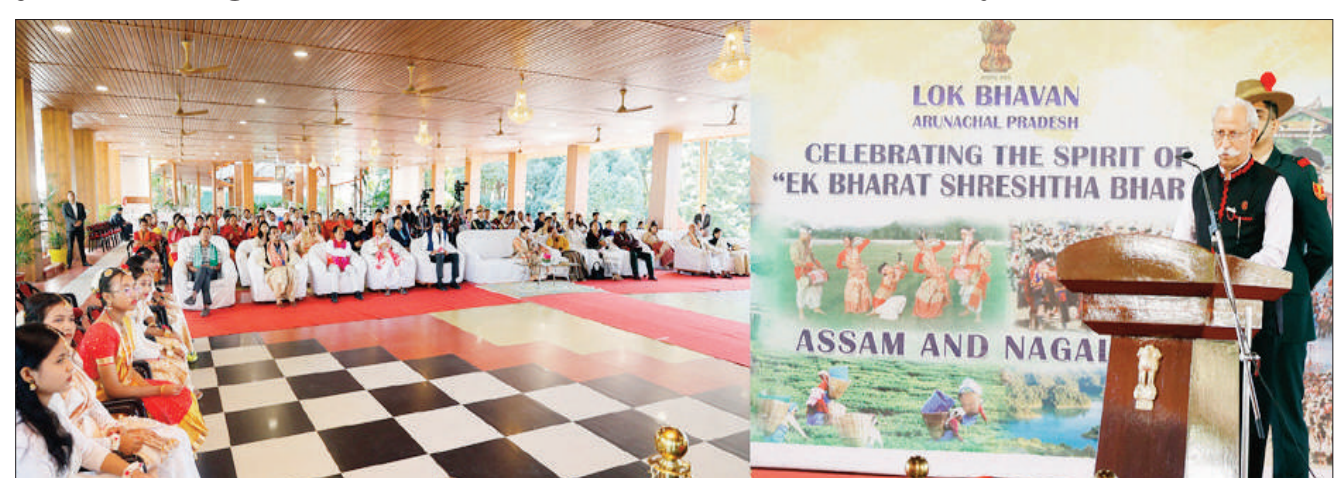
Event highlights cultural unity, youth engagement in Arunachal Pradesh

## Guv Parnaik joins joint Nagaland-Assam Foundation Day celebrations

HT Correspondent

**ITANAGAR, Dec 12:** Governor Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), along with the First Lady Anagha Parnaik, participated in the joint celebration of Nagaland and Assam State Foundation Day with the Naga and Assamese communities at Lok Bhavan, Itanagar on Thursday. The occasion celebrated India's unity in diversity and aligned with the Governor's vision of fostering intercultural understanding, especially among youth, as a foundation for an inclusive and harmonious society.

Governor Parnaik reflected on the shared histories of Assam and Nagaland, praising both States for preserving their natural environment, cultural heritage and traditional textiles and handlooms. He noted that the Assamese language once served as a connecting dialect in Arunachal Pradesh, symbolising the long-standing bonds among northeastern neighbours. He thanked the people of Assam and Nagaland for their contributions to the progress of Arunachal Pradesh and the collective vision of Viksit Bharat, highlighting how mutual trust has strength-



ened inter-State camaraderie.

The Governor emphasised that such celebrations embody the Prime Minister's vision of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat', fostering awareness among youth about the lives, traditions and cultures of other States—an experience that will inspire them as future leaders.

As part of the programme, Naga students

from NERIST performed 'Ahoi', a gospel folk-fusion song from Nagaland originally composed by Jano Nyekha. Children of the Assamese community paid tribute to the Late Zubeen Garg through a dance performance, while women from the Assamese community presented the traditional Vaishnav devotional song Diha Nam. Bodo women performed the graceful Bagarumba

dance. Children from Oju Mission, Naharlagun, attended as special guests of the Governor.

The Governor and the First Lady later hosted a High Tea for all participants, engaging with members of the Assamese and Naga communities and appreciating their efforts in preserving and promoting their cultural heritage in Arunachal Pradesh.

# Record-breaking Suryavanshi powers India to big 234-run win over UAE in U19 Asia Cup opener

**DUBAI, Dec 12:** Vaibhav Suryavanshi was at his imperious best while smashing a 171 off 95 balls, powering India to a mammoth 234-run win over hosts UAE in the inaugural match of the U19 Asia Cup here on Friday.

The 14-year-old from Samastipur, Bihar, unleashed a stunning display of batting, hitting 14 sixes - the most by any batter in a single innings in the U19 level - en-route to his breathtaking innings.

Half-centuries from Vihaan Malhotra (69) and Aaron George (69) further bolstered India's charge as they piled up 433 for 6 in 50 overs. The 400-plus total is India's highest-ever in U19 ODIs and is the highest in the U-19 Asia Cup's history.

In reply, UAE were never in the contest despite fighting fifties from Prithvi Madhu (50) and Uddish Suri (78 not out), as they could only manage 199/7 in their allotted 50 overs. Suryavanshi's blistering knock, studded with nine bound-



aries, is now the second-highest score by an Indian in youth ODIs, behind Ambati Rayudu's unbeaten 177 against England in 2002 and the ninth-highest score by a batter in a men's U19 ODI.

Sent into bat, the young opener looked a class apart as he pun-

ned the UAE bowlers into submission, racing to his fifty off just 30 balls and bringing up his hundred in only 56 deliveries.

He then shared a 212-run stand with George to completely flatten the hosts' attack. His fiery innings finally came to an end in the 33rd

over when he was bowled by spinner Suri.

After his dismissal, the middle-order maintained the tempo, with Vedant Trivedi (38), Abhigyan Kundu (32 not out) and Kanishk Chouhan (28) keeping the runs flowing to take India past the coveted 400-run mark.

Faced with a daunting target, UAE lost two wickets inside the first four overs, before the quick dismissals of Muhammad Rayan, Ayaan Misbah and Ahmed Khudadad in the space of nine balls left them tottering at 48 for 5, effectively ending the chase.

Suri and Madhu added 85 runs to arrest the slide, but the damage had long been done.

**Brief Score:**

India 433 for 6 in 50 overs (Vaibhav Suryavanshi 171, Vihaan Malhotra 69, Aaron George 69; Yug Sharma 2/75.

UAE 199 for 7 in 50 overs (Uddish Suri 78 not out, Prithvi Madhu 50; Deepesh Devdaran 2/21) (PTI)

## India slip to sixth in WTC standings after New Zealand's big win against WI

**DUBAI, Dec 12:** India on Friday slipped a rung to sixth position in the World Test Championship standings after New Zealand's comprehensive nine-wicket victory against the West Indies in Wellington propelled them to the third place.

Runners-up in the first two WTC cycles, India were placed fifth after they were blanked 2-0 by South Africa at home last month with New Zealand occupying the sixth position. However, the table saw a major turnaround after the Kiwis' big win in the second Test at Basin Reserve on Friday.

Former champions Australia continue to hold the top position with 100 percentage points (win-loss percentage) with South Africa in second place with 75 percentage points.

Sri Lanka (66.67) and Pakistan (50) occupy the fourth and fifth position respectively.

New Zealand have so far accumulated 66.67 percentage points, while India has a win-loss percentage of 48.15.

India can drop further down to seventh if England stage a comeback against Australia in the Ashes. The Aussies lead the series 2-0 with three more matches to play.

India's next assignment is against Sri Lanka in August next year.

With the latest result, New Zealand have also boosted their prospects of a second appearance in the World Test Championship Final.

The Black Caps' bowlers did the damage on the third day at Basin Reserve, with Jacob Duffy's five-wicket haul helping the hosts dismiss the West Indies for just 128 in their second innings.

That left New Zealand requiring 56 for victory and a 1-0 series lead and Devon Conway (28 not out) and Kane Williamson (16 not out) guided them home after the early loss of skipper Tom Latham for nine.

The victory saw New Zealand earn 12 valuable WTC points and allowed the 2021 winners to jump in front of Pakistan and India and join Sri Lanka in third place on the standings.

The third Test between New Zealand and West Indies will commence in Mount Maunganui on December 18. (PTI)

## Make in India: PT Usha calls on govt to promote manufacturing of anti-doping kits

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Indian Olympic Association President (IOA) and Rajya Sabha member P T Usha on Friday urged the central government to promote production of indigenous anti-doping testing kits under the 'Make in India' initiative, saying it will not only reduce cost but also increase transparency.

Usha raised the issue in Rajya Sabha and said that having to import testing kits causes delayed results and dependency on "external agencies". Two Swiss companies, Berlinger and LockCon, are the major suppliers of these testing kits to India right now, according to a well-placed source.

"I want to draw the urgent attention of this house to a matter that affects the integrity of our athletes and the global image of our nation. The need to promote indigenous production of anti-doping kits under the Make in India initiative to work towards making India a dope-free sporting nation.

"...the menace of doping continues to threaten fairplay, athlete health and our country's reputation on the world stage. At present a significant portion of high quality dope testing kits is imported, resulting in high cost, delay in testing cycles and dependency on external agencies," she said.

India is bidding to become an Olympic host in 2036 and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has made it clear that the country will have to considerably improve its current doping record. India ranks poorly in tackling the menace and regularly features in the global top five of dope offenders. Her statement comes a week after Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, in response to a



question in the Upper House, said that the government is committed to expanding the anti-doping measures.

The Minister said NADA has increased its testing capacity considerably and 7751 dope control tests are planned in the current year, a significant increase from the 7474 tests done in 2024 and 5794 tests in 2023.

Usha said having indigenous dope testing kits would be transformative as it would encourage research, manufacturing and technology development, including sample collection devices, and portable detection equipment.

"India can become self-reliant and even emerge as a global supplier of world-class anti-doping solutions. Such an initiative will not only reduce cost but also speed up testing, increase transparency and strengthen the deterrence mechanism across all levels of sports," she said.

"Indigenous kit production will also open new avenue of employment, innovation and scientific

research in line with the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat," she added. Usha said along with this, efforts are also on to launch aggressive awareness campaigns among young athletes and ensure stronger monitoring at training centres.

She said the aim is to have "regular random testing and strict action against violators while ensuring that clean athletes receive full support and protection."

"Therefore I urge the government to establish a national programme of indigenous anti-doping kits development under Make in India and support Indian scientific institutions and startups in doping detection technology," she said.

"We should strengthen NADA (National Anti-Doping Agency) and Regional Testing Laboratories with modern equipment and man power and launch a nationwide movement to build a clean transparent and dope-free sporting culture.

"Protecting the purity of sport is not just a regulatory duty, it is a national responsibility. I request the government to take urgent and concrete step in this direction," she added.

A ministry source, well-versed with the functioning of anti-doping agencies, said while her suggestion is a welcome one, such manufacturing units have to deliver products of highest quality to be reliable suppliers.

"Anti-Doping kits and exceptionally sensitive where even a small wear and tear can cast aspersions on the test results. We should work towards the plan she is suggesting but ensure that we get absolutely the best to enter the market," he said. (PTI)

## Liverpool coach Arne Slot to hold talks with Mohamed Salah and suggests a way back for the icon

**MANCHESTER, Dec 12:** Liverpool coach Arne Slot said he was having talks with Mohamed Salah on Friday after the forward's explosive outburst threw his Anfield future into doubt.

Salah said last week that his relationship with Slot had broken down after being dropped for three straight games, and that he felt like "someone doesn't want me in the club."

The Egypt forward was then left at home when Liverpool traveled to Inter Milan in the Champions League on Tuesday, with Slot saying he did not know if Salah would play again for the club.

Speaking ahead of Saturday's Premier League game against Brighton, Slot said he was having talks with Salah and suggested there could be a way back into the team for the club icon.

"I will have a conversation with Mo this morning and the outcome of that conversation determines how it (the team) will look tomorrow," Slot told a news conference. "What I need is a conversation with him and I think the next time I speak about Mo should be with him and not in here."

Salah was an unused substitute for the 3-3 draw with Leeds last week and then gave an impromptu interview to reporters outside the stadium.

"It seems like the club has thrown me under the bus. That is how I am feeling. I think it is very clear that someone wanted me to get all of the blame (for recent poor results)," he said.

Slot said those comments came after he already



had discussions with the player.

"We've spoken a lot in the last week after the Sunderland game (on Dec. 3). I think there have been a lot of conversations between his representatives and ours, our representatives and him, between him and me after the Sunderland game and today I will speak to him again."

Salah, who has four league goals in 13 appearances this term, was first dropped for the game against West Ham last month. He was then on the bench for the match against Sunderland and again at Leeds.

He has won two league titles and the Champions League with Liverpool. He is also the club's record scorer in the Premier League.

Salah is due to head off to the Africa Cup of Nations next week and said last week he did not know what would happen while he was away. (AP)

## National record-holder Gulveer, defending champ Sanjivani to compete in Kolkata 25K

**KOLKATA, Dec 12:** National 10,000m and 5,000m record holder Gulveer Singh and defending women's champion Sanjivani Jadhav will vie for top honours in the Indian elite field at the Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata here on December 21.

Gulveer, the country's fastest long-distance runner and the first Indian to break the 13-minute barrier in the 5000m, will take centre stage at the 10th edition of the meet.

The event has a total prize purse of USD 142,214 with equal prize money for men and women.

The top three Indian elites stand to earn Rs 3 lakh, 2.5 lakh and 2 lakh respectively, along with an event record bonus of Rs 1 lakh.

The men's field also features multiple National champion and 2023 Tata Steel World gold medalist Sawan Barwal.

Reigning national 5000m and 10,000m champion Abhishek Pal, winner of the TCS World 10K Bengaluru 2025 and the 2022 Tata Steel World 25K Indian elite title, will also be in the hunt.

Adding depth are rising Maharashtra star Kiran Matre, who has won

national titles and set event records across major 10K and half-marathon races and Gaurav Mathur, a two-time Tata Steel World 25K podium finisher.

With five in-form athletes who have clocked national, meet or event records in the last 18 months, the men's contest promises a high-intensity battle.

Sanjivani, a two-time winner (2022, 2024), has dominated domestic long-distance running and delivered consistent podiums across Asia.

"With the Asian Games round the corner, I am looking forward to clocking a good time here," Sanjivani said.

Her key challengers include Seema, Indian elite winner at the 2025 Delhi Half Marathon and South Asian Championships silver medalist.

Middle-distance star Lili Das, who has transitioned smoothly to road racing with titles in Delhi and a personal best at last year's Tata Steel World 25K, has also confirmed her entry.

Also in contention are Nirmaben Thakor, Indian elite winner at the 2025 Tata Mumbai Marathon. (PTI)

## Messi visit set to fulfil dreams tea-stall owner and engineer superfan

**KOLKATA, Dec 12:** For Ichhapur tea-seller Shib Shankar Patra, Argentine superstar Lionel Messi's arrival in Kolkata on Saturday will be more than a dream fulfilled. It will be a moment he believes he "survived to see".

Patra, 56, is one of two diehard fans handpicked for a special meet-and-greet with the Argentine superstar, a gesture the organisers planned after his story drew widespread media attention.

Once a club-level footballer, Patra built an entire life around his devotion to Argentina and Messi. Ahead of his visit to Kolkata with the national side to play a FIFA friendly against Venezuela in 2011, Patra painted his three-storied house in Nawabganj blue-and-white, turned his decades-old tea stall into an "Argentina fan club", and installed a life-size statue of Messi at the entrance. Inside, walls, doors, even wardrobes are covered in Argentine colours.

Locals drop in for tea and football 'adda', while visiting supporters pose with the giant 120x20 ft flag and posters lining the street.

The fandom runs in the family.

His daughter Neha themed her wedding in 2022 around Argentina colours, and the father-daughter duo also organise blood donation camps and distribute blankets to the needy.

But behind the celebrations is a difficult year for the Patras.

Patra recently underwent heart surgery, had a pacemaker implanted and suffered multiple falls that badly affected his small business.

Even then, he refused to give up hope of seeing Messi again after first watching him live in 2011 at the Salt Lake Stadium, an experience he says kept him awake "for many days".

The family had initially bought two tickets worth Rs 7,000 each for Saturday's event -- a steep price for them -- before organiser Satadru Dutta personally called to invite them to the exclusive meet-and-greet at Messi's hotel.

"We are all ready to go and meet him. We dreamt of seeing him and finally the dream will come true for him. He's alive today to see him I will say," Patra's wife Sapna told PTI.

"He had heart surgery and was very ill. While making tea he had

two-three falls and hit his head but managed to survive and then pacemaker was implanted last month.

"Guess he's survived to see Messi now, we are so excited. He's having sleepless nights to see his idol... We have been called for a meeting this afternoon perhaps to discuss how to go about it and all details. Then we will go to his hotel at 7am tomorrow," she said. Ichhapur won't be the only fan landmark represented.

**Failed civil engineer builds Messi 'temple'**

The owner of the Messi-themed Dum Dum Leo Cafe, Soumendra Ghosh -- a popular stop for supporters near Dum Dum Metro station -- has also been invited, completing what promises to be an emotional morning for Kolkata's most devoted Messi faithful. Ghosh, a civil engineer and a diehard admirer of Lionel Messi, has turned his cafe into what he proudly calls a "temple" dedicated to the Argentine icon.

The walls portray Messi's career, and Ghosh recalls how the football icon inspired him during one of the lowest phases of his life. (PTI)

## New Zealand beats West Indies by 9 wickets in the 2nd test; leads the series 1-0

**WELLINGTON, Dec 12:** Jacob Duffy took 5-38 as New Zealand's weakened attack bowled out the West Indies for 128 on the third day to set up a nine-wicket win in the second test. New Zealand leads the three-match series 1-0 after the first test was drawn. The third test begins on Dec. 18.

Duffy claimed his second five-wicket bag of the series as the West Indies were left with an overall lead of only 55 after trailing by 73 runs on the first innings.

New Zealand reached 56-1 in only 10 overs, losing Tom Latham (9) along the way. Devon Conway was 28 not out at the end and Kane Williamson was 16, hitting a four off Anderson Phillip for the winning runs minutes before the schedule tea break.

Pacer Michael Rae and wicket-keeper-batter Mitch Hay also made major contributions to New Zealand's win after being called up to make their test debuts in an injury-hit team.

Hay scored a match-high 61 in as

New Zealand made 278 in its first innings in reply to the West Indies's 205. Rae took 3-66 in the first innings and 3-45 in the second, match figures of 6-106.

New Zealand's bowling attack, already depleted by injuries to Matt Henry, Will O'Rourke and Nathan Smith and the absences of Kyle Jamieson and Ben Sears was further weakened when Blair Tickner suffered a dislocated left shoulder in a fielding mishap after taking 4-32 in the first innings. He was playing his first test in two years.

Pressure again fell on Duffy, who bowled 19 overs in the West Indies first innings and 17.2 of the 46.2 overs bowled in the second innings. That came after he was called to bowl 43 overs in the second innings of the first test and 60 overs in that match after injuries to Henry and Smith left New Zealand with only two fit pacers.

"I guess to lose (Tickner) like that he bowled great in the first innings and I thought the way the guys

bowled today was awesome," Duffy said. "I thought it was a great team performance and we got the job done. Day three, how good?"

The West Indies made 205 after being sent in Wednesday on a light green pitch at the Basin Reserve which provided pace, bounce and a little movement on all three days. Shai Hope top-scored with 47 and John Campbell made 44.

Hay's maiden half century and Devon Conway's 60 helped New Zealand establish a significant first innings lead.

The West Indies resumed at 32-2 Friday, still 41 runs behind after losing Campbell and nightwatchman Anderson Phillip late on the second day. New Zealand captured four wickets in the first session, including the wicket of Hope to take full command of the match. The West Indies' slump began when Brandon King (22) was run out in a mix-up with Kavem Hodge.

The West Indies were 98-6 at lunch, only 25 in front. (AP)

## If we start judging Gill after two T20I games, then we have a problem: GT head coach Nehra

**NEW DELHI, Dec 12:** Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra is not amused by the snap judgements being passed on skipper Shubman Gill's form, cautioning that writing him off after a couple of outings in the volatile T20 format reflects the growing tendency of arriving at quick conclusions.

Gill, who made a comeback to the T20I set-up as vice-captain during the Asia Cup, has totalled 181 runs in the last 10 games at a below 140 strike-rate.

Nehra, who has watched Gill from close quarters as the GT head coach for the past two seasons, was asked whether he is worried considering that IPL is three months away. "Forget three months, had IPL been three weeks away, I (still) wouldn't be worried. Because you are talking about a format like T20. And only two matches have been played against South Africa, if I am not wrong," Nehra, the former fast bowler known for straight shooting, replied to a query from PTI during

an interaction with a select group.

Nehra feels that the fundamental problem with criticism in India is reaching a conclusion on the basis of numbers alone.

"This is our problem. In such a fast-paced tournament format, whether it's international cricket or IPL, if a player like Shubman Gill is judged after not coming good in two to three matches, then it will be difficult," Nehra said.

In his inimitable style laced with sarcasm, Nehra said if one reckons that change is needed, so many options are there to be tried.

"You have a lot of options if you want to see. You can remove Abhishek Sharma and Shubman Gill and you can open with Sai Sudharsan and Ruturaj Gaikwad," Nehra said and his dig at critics wasn't lost on anyone.

"If you want to remove them (Sai and Ruturaj), you can open with Washington Sundar and Ishan Kishan. So, you have a lot of options.

"Now, if you lose 1 or 2 matches,



if the stats of the so-called batsmen or bowlers are not good and if you talk about changing them, then it will be difficult," Nehra batted with full force for Gill.

**Washi is a batter who can play anywhere from 1 to 6**

Washington Sundar played only six games for Titans last season because of a set combination but

skill-set is being a top class batter and on conducive surfaces, he is a complete package with his off-breaks also coming into play.

"Washington Sundar, the kind of skill-set he has, number one, for me, Washington Sundar is a batsman who can bat at any slot between 1 to 6 or 7, whatever number you want him to bat. He has the ability to bat that much.

"And coming back to your question (batter or bowler), it depends on the conditions. As I said, if there is a little help on the pitch, then Washington Sundar has the full package with both batting and bowling.

"He has done very well in Powerplays, bowling with new ball when he started his career. It depends on how a team uses it. Washington Sundar is still not a finished product and sky is the limit. He will keep getting better from here," the head coach encouraged his ward.

"He is only 25-26 years old and has been in the system for so many

years. So, now his experience is coming in front of you. Due to the combination of last year, he was not able to play that much (in IPL).

"But next year, I hope he stays in form, then you will see him playing more compared to last year," he assured.

**Not much option at auction**  
The mini-auctions in Abu Dhabi, slated for December 16, will be huge for teams like KKR (Rs 64.30 crore) and Chennai Super Kings (Rs 43.40 crore), who are rebuilding their core.

But Titans need only five players and are going in with a purse of Rs 12.90 crore, which is third lowest among 10 teams.

"Our core team is set and we have released only 4-5 players. So, we go into the auction with a very open mind. See, when you are making a team from scratch, like last year, it was a different kind of strategy.

"But right now, pretty much all the slots are filled. So, we'll see

what we get, the kind of purse we have because other teams have so much purse. So, you have to go with the flow during the auction," Nehra said.

In fact, if one looks at Titans' line-up, when all players are fit, 10 slots -- Jos Buttler, Gill, Sudharsan, Rahul Tewatia, Shahrukh Khan, Rashid Khan, R Sai Kishore, Kagiso Rabada, Prasidh Krishna and Mohammed Siraj are filled.

In the one slot remaining, New Zealander Glenn Phillips, who was retained instead of Sherfane Rutherford, could be used as a big-hitting all-rounder, where Washington is the Indian option.

"Like I said earlier, we go with an open mind. Our team is set. Rahul Tewatia, Shah Rukh Khan, Washington Sundar, and so many middle order batsmen already. "If I'm not wrong, the highest purse, CSK has it. But they also need players. So, we are sitting in a very comfortable position," he added. (PTI)