

6 REGION  
8 NATION



- 'Prashashan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign launched
- 80 bighas of encroached land cleared at Gerekoni beel
- Winter Session of Lok Sabha ends
- Oppn stalled debate in Parliament on air pollution: Minister Kiren Rijju

26 YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM  
www.thehillstimes.in

# THE HILLS TIMES

Voice of the hills people

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Vol .No. XXVI

Issue No. 334

RNI-ASSENG/2000/12862

DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2025

PAGES 12

PRICE ₹ 8



Government of Assam

## HONOURING ASSAM'S PATHFINDER



*If Sardar (Vallabhbhai) Patel and Gopinath Bardoloi had not taken a strong stand at the time of Partition, then Assam's identity would not have been what it is today*

**Shri Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister



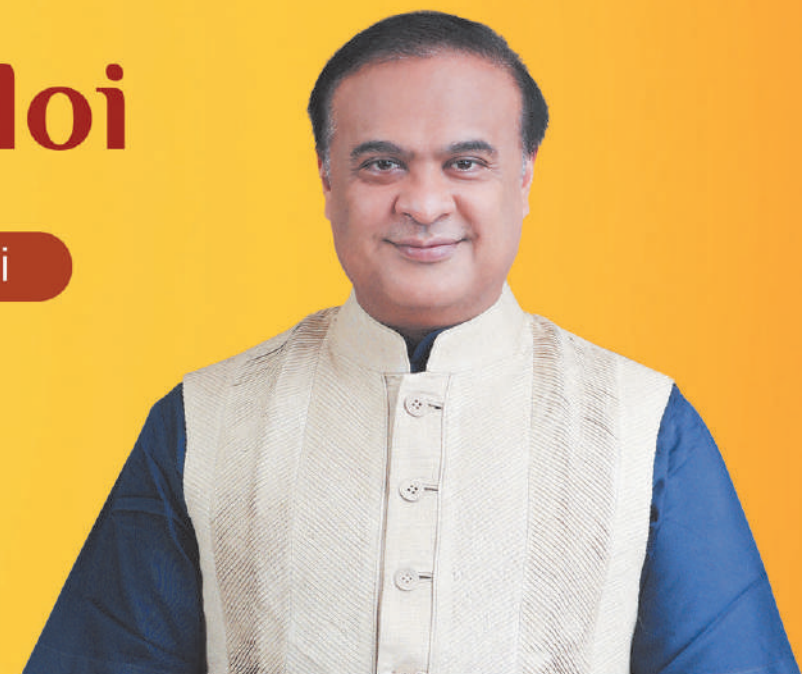
Unveiling the Statue of  
Bharat Ratna

## Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi

at LGBI Airport, Borjhar, Guwahati



Chief Guest  
**Shri Narendra Modi**  
Prime Minister



In august presence of

**Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya**  
Governor, Assam

**Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma**  
Chief Minister, Assam



20 December 2025



2 PM

# RBI's neutral stance to enable actions according to evolving situation: MPC members

MUMBAI, Dec 19: RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra has said that a neutral monetary policy stance would give flexibility to the central bank to act according to the evolving macroeconomic conditions while voting for a 25 basis points cut in repo rate, along with five other MPC members.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday released the minutes of the meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) held on December 3-5, 2025.

The RBI reduced the short-term lending rate (repo) by 25 bps to 5.25 per cent, following the status quo on the rate in the two preceding MPC meetings.

While five members voted for continuing the neutral stance to enable the central bank to take data-driven policy action, one member, however, advocated for changing it to 'accommodative', according to the minutes.

"I vote for a 25-bps rate cut. This will also stimulate demand and be growth-supportive. Moreover, I am in favour of retaining the neutral stance, which gives the requisite flexibility to remain data-dependent and act according to the evolving macroeconomic conditions and outlook," Governor Malhotra said.

He also said headline inflation is projected to be close to the 4 per cent target in

H1 2026-27. Excluding precious metals, inflation is likely to be much lower, as has been the trend since the beginning of 2024, Malhotra added.

Deputy Governor and MPC member Poonam Gupta said the most crucial recent development from the perspective of monetary



policy has been the faster-than-anticipated moderation in CPI headline inflation.

"One may ask whether the current rate cut, resulting in a cumulative rate cut of 125 bps, could lead to overheating in the economy.

"However, not just headline and core inflation, but most other nominal indicators of the economy are prevailing at levels that indicate that the economy at this point is not showing any signs of overheating," she said.

Gupta voted for a neutral stance, so any future course of policy action would be totally data dependent.

Indranil Bhattacharyya, RBI Executive Director and MPC member, noted that inflation surprised on the downside by plummeting to 0.3 per cent (the lowest level in the current CPI series) in October 2025.

Moderation of headline inflation by about 180 bps during September-October was faster than anticipated and primarily driven by the deflation in food prices.

In the current context, he said, when a muted inflation outlook, both in terms of the trajectory of headline and core (excluding precious metals), suggests the absence of demand pressures, the MPC ought to support growth, particularly when it is projected to decelerate going ahead.

Besides RBI officials in MPC, there are three independent members -- Ram Singh (Director, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi); Saugata Bhattacharya (Economist, Mumbai); and Nagesh Kumar (Director and Chief Executive, Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, New Delhi).

According to the MPC minutes, Ram Singh said that since the MPC's October meeting, incoming data on growth-inflation dynamics have provided additional policy space to support the growth momentum.

"Will the rate cut heat up the economy? Numbers speak for themselves," he said, adding that whichever way the inflation data is sliced, the headline CPI inflation has been on a downward tra-

jectory.

While voting for a 25-bps cut in repo rate, he said that in view of the dormancy in the price momentum underlying headline CPI and CPI core, and the case for supporting growth momentum, the rate cut should be accompanied by a change in stance to "accommodative".

Saugata Bhattacharya said the cumulative policy rate cuts and liquidity infusions will have moved the orientation of monetary policy from mildly restrictive to balanced.

"Pending incoming data, I believe the policy interest rate is now consistent with macroeconomic stability. Based on the totality of this assessment, I vote to cut the policy repo rate to 5.25 per cent, with the caveat that the next actions will be data dependent," he added.

MPC member Nagesh Kumar said the December 2025 MPC meeting is taking place against the backdrop of mixed trends in the Indian economy. The GDP growth in Q2 FY2026 at a robust 8.2 per cent exceeded expectations, particularly in the context of a challenging and uncertain external environment.

He also said there is some evidence that the geopolitical and trade-related uncertainties have started to hurt the business sentiment.

The Trump tariffs, Kumar said, are particularly affecting the labour-intensive industries, such as textiles and garments, leather goods, gems and jewellery, processed food products like shrimp that have a higher exposure to the US market. (PTI)

# Gujarat best destination for real estate development, realtors must explore opportunities: CM

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel on Friday urged real estate developers to invest in the state, as it offers huge business opportunities and provides time-bound permission for projects. He noted that Gujarat has become the best destination for real estate activities and also a role model for well-planned urban development.

Addressing realtors apex body CREDAI's national conclave here, Patel urged real estate players to explore business opportunities at GIFT City and the upcoming Dholera industrial city in Gujarat.

He also asked real estate companies to focus on the development of environmentally friendly projects.

"The prime minister has given a vision of making India a developed nation by 2047. Real estate sector will play an important role in realising this goal," he said.

Patel stressed that the government and the real estate industry need to work together to achieve 'Housing for All'.

He also asked developers to focus on India's heritage while designing and building their projects, even if they take inspiration from construction technology

available overseas.

"Real estate players should focus on sustainable development," he said, adding that the construction of homes, offices, and malls should be environmentally friendly. Talking about his state, Patel said that Gujarat has become the role model of well-planned urban development.

He highlighted that there is a single window clearance system in the state for approvals of projects and that too in a time-bound manner.

The chief minister noted that land records are fully digitised in the state.

"We have determined fixed timelines for giving all necessary approvals for real estate development. Therefore, all top developers of the country are ready to invest in Gujarat," Patel said.

He said the state is focusing on promoting green buildings and renewable energy projects.

The chief minister said Gujarat has become the best destination for real estate development, and urged realtors to explore business opportunities at GIFT City near Ahmedabad and the upcoming Dholera Industrial city, which is spread over 920 square kilometers. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

## New terminal to

strengthening the Northeast as a gateway to Southeast Asia under the Act East policy. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has described the new terminal as a "transformational project" that will boost tourism, trade and investment while generating employment opportunities.

He said Guwahati's enhanced airport capacity will further integrate the Northeast with the rest of the country and the world.

With the commissioning of the new terminal, LGBI Airport is set to play a pivotal role in driving economic growth, improving regional connectivity and elevating the travel experience for millions of passengers.

## No foul play

to perform at the 4th Northeast India Festival at Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre on September 20. (PTI)

## Zubeen death: Complaint

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 prison and Goswami and Amritprava in Haflong jail. (PTI)

## PM to pay homage

in the movement have been placed, and garland the statue of the first martyr Khageswar Talukdar. He will then leave for Dibrugarh and from there to Namrup where he will do the 'Bhumi puja' of the Rs 12,000 crore ammonia-urea fertiliser plant which marks substantial impetus to the state's growth and development.

The PM will also address a public meeting at Namrup before leaving for New Delhi. (PTI)

## Himanta greets people

continue its upward trajectory of progress and development in the year ahead. (PTI)

## Fast patrol vessel

developed controllable pitch propellers and high-precision gearboxes, which offer superior manoeuvrability, operational flexibility and enhanced performance at sea, it said.

"The ship is armed with a 30 mm CRN-91 gun and two 12.7 mm stabilised remote-controlled guns, supported by advanced target acquisition and fire-control systems," the ICG added.

"The ship also features integrated technologies, including an Integrated Bridge System, Integrated Machinery Control System, and Automated Power Management System that enhance situational awareness, system reliability, and operational efficiency," it said.

ICGS Amulya will be based in Odisha's Paradip and will be under the administrative and operational control of the commander of the Coast Guard Region (North East), through the commander of the Coast Guard District Headquarters No 7, officials said.

The ship is commanded by Commandant (JG) Anupam Singh and has a complement of five officers and 34 personnel.

The commissioning of Amulya marks another step forward in ICG's ongoing fleet expansion and will contribute substantially to strengthening coastal security, enhancing operational readiness, and supporting the coast guard's chartered responsibilities in the region, officials said. (PTI)

## Himanta attacks Cong

irregularities. He added that the recruitment reforms have restored public confidence in the system.

Over the past few years, the Assam government has completed large-scale recruitment drives across departments, filling thousands of vacant posts.

CM Sarma said that merit-based recruitment is crucial not only for providing employment to educated youth but also for strengthening governance and service delivery.

The CM reiterated that his government remains committed to ensuring that government jobs are earned through hard work and merit alone.

"From scams to systems, Assam has changed. This change was possible only because of our resolve to deliver clean and accountable governance," he said.

## Assam Cong to

addressing issues related to quality, research and innovation, Gogoi said on Friday.

"As a first step, we are seeking guidance and suggestions on Assam's higher education system, which is closely linked to human resource development," he said.

The Congress MP said that his interactions with students from colleges and universities across the state show that significant work is still needed to improve quality, strengthen research and innovation, and empower students to become self-reliant.

The consultations will be conducted through five parallel field teams, each assigned a geographically optimised route through buses, to ensure comprehensive coverage across Upper Assam, Central Assam, Barak Valley, Bodoland, the Hill districts and Lower Assam.

A total of five buses have been kept ready to move for the purpose, Gogoi said. A coordination team will monitor and support field operations, with one full day earmarked per district and each team covering one district per day.

The campaign 'Rajior Podulit Rajior Congress' was formally launched in Dibrugarh on December 6, marking the beginning of the party's manifesto consultation process.

Gogoi said that to ensure wider and inclusive participation, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee has launched a dedicated digital platform to enable citizens to submit their views online.

The party has also started installing "Aspiration Boxes" across districts in a phased manner since December 6. Over 4,000 boxes are targeted to be placed at high-footfall locations such as marketplaces, tea garden lines, near tea stalls, bus stops etc. for wider public participation.

Gogoi urged the people of Assam to become partners in shaping the state's future.

"We envision a state where the aspirations of not one section, but of all people are reflected. As meeting every person physically is not feasible in a digital era, this platform allows us to connect with everyone," he said.

Gogoi said that the party wants to listen to farmers, workers, students, small shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, women, intellectuals and social organisations across Assam, and collectively use their experiences to design a roadmap for a new Assam. (PTI)

## China says it will

the tariff war with the US, China has announced export control measures on rare earths, putting a squeeze on the precious metals.

Reports from India spoke of growing concerns about shortages of the rare metals, especially in automobiles and other industries, prompting New Delhi to raise the issues in bilateral forums.

Beijing began easing the export controls after reaching an agreement with the US to permit the export of the semiconductor chips needed for China's burgeoning AI industry.

India has been pressuring China to resume rare earth exports, highlighting the issue in different bilateral dialogue platforms, including the recent consultations of foreign ministry officials here on December 12.

In the Beijing talks, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said, "the Indian side emphasised on the need for early resolution of outstanding issues pertaining to export control. Regional and global developments of mutual interest were also briefly touched upon."

Besides rare earths, India has also been calling on China to permit the exports of its heavy boring machines to be used for mining. (PTI)

## Judima Festival 2025

and local communities have extended a warm invitation to visitors to participate in the Judima Festival and experience the heritage, hospitality and progress of the Dimasa people in Dima Hasao.

## Net direct tax mop up grows 8 pc to ₹17 lakh cr

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: Net direct tax collection grew 8 per cent to over ₹ 17.04 lakh crore this fiscal till December 17 on slower refunds and higher advance taxes from corporates, the income tax department data showed on Friday.

Net corporate tax mop up grew 10.54 per cent to over ₹ 8.17 lakh crore. Non-corporate tax (which includes taxes paid by individuals, HUFs, firms) grew 6.37 per cent at ₹ 8.47 lakh crore.

Net revenue from Securities Transaction Tax (STT) rose marginally year-on-year at ₹ 40,195 crore till December 17 of the current fiscal.

Advance tax paid by corporates showed a growth of 8 per cent to over ₹ 6.07 lakh crore. Advance tax collection from non-corporates showed a de-growth of 6.49 per cent at over ₹ 1.81 lakh crore. Overall, advance taxes grew 4.27 per cent to over ₹ 7.88 lakh crore till December 17. Refunds issuance dropped 14 per cent compared to last year to over ₹ 2.97 lakh crore.

Gross direct tax collections, before adjusting refunds, recorded 4.16 per cent growth at over ₹ 20.01 lakh crore till December 17, as per the income tax department data.

In the current fiscal (2025-26), the government has projected its direct tax collection at ₹ 25.20 lakh crore, up 12.7 per cent year-on-year. The government aims to collect ₹ 78,000 crore from STT in FY26.

Deloitte India Partner Rohinton Sidhwa said overall the corporate advance tax increase signals good corporate earnings.

Non-corporate advance tax collections have however declined possibly on the back of rate cuts for individuals given in the previous budget.

Sidhwa said the drop in refund issuance is being attributed to higher amount of screening of any fraudulent refund claims. Holding back of refunds also accelerates litigation that the tax department can ill afford, he added. (PTI)

## Two-day National Conference of Chartered Accountants inaugurated in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: A two-day National Conference of Chartered Accountants, organised by the Eastern India Regional Council (EIRC) under the aegis of the Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Committee of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and hosted by the Guwahati Branch of EIRC of ICAI, was inaugurated on Friday at the Srimanta Sankardeva International Auditorium here.

The conference was inaugurated by Branch Chairperson CA Raginee Goyal in the presence of CA (Dr) Debashis Mitra, Past President of ICAI, Dev Kumar Pandey, CGM (Finance), North Eastern Electric Power Corporation, Central Council Members CA Sanjib Sanghi and CA Ravi Kumar Patwa, Regional Council Members of ICAI, past chairpersons of the Guwahati Branch and delegates from across the country.

In her welcome address, CA Raginee Goyal unveiled the theme of the conference, "Lakshya - Where Dreams Meet Direction."

She said the two-day programme aims to focus on professional vision, goal-setting and emerging opportunities amid rapid technological and legal transformations affecting the profession.

Addressing the delegates, CA Sanjib Sanghi drew an analogy between the conference theme and the unwavering focus of Arjuna from the Mahabharata, emphasising that clarity of purpose and sustained concentration are critical for professional excellence.

CA Ravi Kumar Patwa commended the organising team and spoke on the evolving nature of the Chartered Accountancy profession, stressing the importance of preparedness to adapt to continuous change.

CA (Dr) Debashis Mitra shared insights on the future of the profession and informed the gathering about ICAI's vision under the Lakshya initiative to establish a Centre of Excellence in Guwahati, outlining the progress made towards achieving this goal.

CA Jay Prakash Gupta, Secretary of the Guwahati

Branch of EIRC of ICAI, proposed the formal vote of thanks.

The first technical session of the conference focused on indirect taxation and deliberated on the topic "In-depth Study on Evidence and Statements in GST Proceedings."

The session was chaired by CA Rajendra Kumar P and addressed by Adv (CA) JK Mittal, who offered detailed insights into the legal and procedural aspects of evidence and statements under GST laws.

The session saw active discussions on practical challenges, recent judicial trends and best practices for effective compliance and representation.

The second technical session featured a panel discussion on "Crystal-gazing the Profession - 2030 and Beyond."

Moderated by CA (Dr) Debashis Mitra, the panel comprised Past Presidents of ICAI Adv (CA) Ved Jain, CA Manoj Fadnis and CA Aniket Talati.

The panel examined the changing role of Chartered Accountants in an evolving economic, regulatory and technological environment, highlighting future opportunities and challenges.

The post-lunch technical session on Technology and Artificial Intelligence addressed the topic "Agentic AIs vs Chartered Accountants."

Chaired by CA Sanjib Sanghi, the session was addressed by CA Anil Bhandari, who spoke on the growing influence of artificial intelligence in professional services.

He emphasised the need for continuous upskilling and urged professionals to view technology as an enabler that strengthens strategic and advisory capabilities rather than as a disruption.

Addressing the media, CA (Dr) Swati Tejawat said the conference features expert speakers from diverse fields and provides a valuable platform for professional learning, networking and knowledge-sharing, while enhancing the professional image of Chartered Accountants in the region.

## Bharti Airtel announces top leadership transition

Gopal Vittal to become executive vice chairman

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: Bharti Airtel on Thursday announced a major leadership transition as part of a structured succession plan, with long-serving Managing Director and CEO Gopal Vittal set to assume the role of Executive Vice Chairman from January 1, 2026.

Shashwat Sharma will succeed him as Managing Director and CEO of Bharti Airtel India.

Gopal Vittal has led the telecom major for the past 13 years and was appointed Vice Chairman of Bharti Airtel Ltd in October 2024 as part of the transition process.

In his new role as Executive Vice Chairman, Vittal will oversee Bharti Airtel and all its subsidiaries.

He will also be responsible for driving group-level synergies in digital and technology initiatives, network strategy, procurement and talent management, while focusing on long-term group strategy and future readiness.

Following a year-long transition period, Shashwat Sharma, who was appointed CEO-designate earlier, will take charge as MD and

CEO of Bharti Airtel India on January 1, 2026.

Over the past 12 months, Sharma has worked closely with Vittal across business verticals to prepare for the role. He will report to Vittal.

The company also announced key finance and governance appointments. Soumen Ray, currently Chief Financial Officer of Bharti Airtel India, will be elevated to Group Chief Financial Officer and will report to Vittal.

Ray has been in his current role for around four years and has played a key role in strengthening Airtel's financial performance.

Akhil Garg, presently Financial Controller at Bharti Airtel, will be appointed Chief Financial Officer of Bharti Airtel India.

Garg, who has been with the company for nearly 12 years, has led several major initiatives, including the Hexacom IPO. In his new role, he will report to Shashwat Sharma and Soumen Ray.

Rohit Puri, currently Joint Company Secretary and Compliance Officer, will be appointed Com-

pany Secretary and Compliance Officer of Bharti Airtel.

Pankaj Tewari will continue to provide leadership as Group Company Secretary at the group level.

Welcoming the leadership changes, Bharti Airtel Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said he was pleased with the smooth succession and transition process, noting that the company is entering a phase where continuity and change will move together.

He expressed confidence that Vittal and Sharma would continue to build on Airtel's momentum and strengthen its leadership position.

Mittal added that Airtel's highly professional and energised management team, combined with its entrepreneurial spirit, continues to deliver world-class technology and services to hundreds of millions of customers across geographies.

He said he looked forward to working closely with Vittal and the leadership team as the company pursues its ambition of becoming a leading global telecom enterprise.

**REFURNISHING, SEAT RENEWAL AND PLUMBING REPAIR WORK**

**E-Tender Notice No. DBWS-NIET-42-2025-26 dated: 17-12-2025.** E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:

**Name of work:** Refurnishing, Seat Renewal and Plumbing Repair Work for POH Coaches at Dibrugarh Workshop.

**Approximate Cost of the work:** ₹2,34,72,664.17/- inclusive GST @ 18%. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 2,67,400/-.

**Date & Time of closing of tender:** At 15.00 hrs. & opening at 15.30 hrs. on 09-01-2026. The complete information of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. of 09-01-2026 in website [www.treps.gov.in](http://www.treps.gov.in)

**CWM, Mechanical Workshop, Dibrugarh**

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
Serving Customers With A Smile

## New terminal to modernise NE's aviation infra: PM

**India's first nature-themed airport terminal to be opened at Guwahati today**

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Dec 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the new terminal building of Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi International Airport (LGBI) here on Saturday, marking a major milestone in Assam's aviation and infrastructure growth. The state-of-the-art facility is India's first nature-themed airport terminal and is designed to reflect Assam's rich natural landscape and cultural heritage.

Ahead of the inauguration, Prime Minister Modi posted on X on Friday, highlighting that the new terminal will significantly enhance passenger handling capacity and modernise aviation infrastructure in the Northeast.

The terminal has been developed with a capacity to handle over 1.3 crore passengers annually, po-



sitioning Guwahati as a major aviation hub for the entire region. The new integrated terminal is equipped with modern passenger amenities, improved circulation spaces, and advanced security and

baggage handling systems. Its nature-inspired architecture incorporates design elements reflecting Assam's rivers, forests and biodiversity, offering travellers a distinctive sense of place upon arrival and departure. In addition to the terminal building, major upgrades have been undertaken across critical airport infrastructure. These include improvements to the runway, airfield systems, aprons and taxiways, aimed at enhancing operational efficiency, safety and accommodating increased air traffic.

The expanded infrastructure is expected to support larger aircraft operations and improve on-time performance.

The inauguration forms part of Prime Minister Modi's visit to Assam, during which he is also scheduled to launch and lay foundation stones for several key development projects across sectors such as infrastructure, industry and connectivity.

The visit underscores the Centre's focus (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Modi to pay homage to Assam Movement martyrs during 2-day visit

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to pay a two-day visit to Assam from Saturday, during which he will inaugurate and lay foundation stones for several projects and address public meetings.

During the visit, he will also pay homage to the martyrs of the Assam movement, a six-year-long violent anti-foreigner agitation that began in 1979.

In a post, the PM said that on Sunday he will pay homage to the martyrs of the Assam movement, and then go to Namrup in Dibrugarh district for the 'Bhoomi Pujan' of the Ammonia-Urea Fertiliser Project.

The project of Assam Valley Fertiliser and Chemical Company Limited "will help meet the fertiliser requirements of Assam and other states. At the same time, it will reduce imports, thus boosting Aatmanirbharta", Modi said.

The PM paying homage to the martyrs

of the Assam Agitation will be "nothing less than historic", Sarma said, adding that the Ammonia-Urea Plant will also be a major economic driver for the state and "further accelerate your (Modi's) vision for Assam's growth".

Modi will begin his two-day visit to the state by unveiling an 80-foot-tall statue of Assam's first chief minister Gopinath Bardoloi, sculpted by eminent artist Ram Sutar, outside the new terminal of the airport named after him.

After inaugurating the new terminal of the airport, he will spend around 15 minutes inside.

Earlier, the chief minister said in a post: 'Excitement at its peak! LGBI Airport's Integrated Terminal is all decked up to welcome Adarniya @narendramodi ji tomorrow! Just a few hours to go!'

The Prime Minister will also address a public meeting just outside the terminal building on Saturday.

After the meeting, Modi will proceed

in a road show towards the BJP headquarters in Basistha area, where he will interact with party workers.

Sarma claimed that this is the first time that a Prime Minister will visit a BJP office in the state, and it is a "historic occasion" for the party.

The Prime Minister will spend the night at the state guest house in Koinadhora, Khanapara area of the city.

On Sunday morning, Modi will interact with 25 meritorious students of different schools in his programme 'Pariksha pe Charcha' for around half an hour while sailing on the River Brahmaputra aboard a cruise ship 'Charaideo'.

After the cruise, he will visit the newly constructed 'Swahid Smarak Kshetra' in memory of 860 martyrs of the Assam movement, and offer his tributes before the lamp which always remains lit.

The PM will also visit the martyrs' gallery, where the bust of the 860 people who lost their lives (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Himanta greets people of Goa on Liberation Day

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday greeted the people of Goa on the occasion of its Liberation Day. Goa Liberation Day is observed every year on December 19 to commemorate its freedom from Portuguese colonial rule in 1961.

"Warm greetings to my brothers and sisters of Goa on #GoaLiberationDay," the chief minister posted on X.

"Today, we salute the courage and sacrifices of the bravehearts who restored Goa's rightful place in Bharat," he said.

Sarma hoped that the state would (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Fast patrol vessel 'Amulya' commissioned into Indian Coast Guard

NEW DELHI, Dec 19: Amulya, the third ship in the new generation Adamyaclass fast patrol vessels, was commissioned into the Indian Coast Guard on Friday, bolstering its role in safeguarding the country's eastern seaboard.

The vessel will undertake a range of missions for coast guard, including surveillance, search and rescue, anti-smuggling operations and pollution response, officials said.

Amulya, whose name means 'priceless', is a projection of Indian Coast

Guard's (ICG) will and commitment to ensure safe, secure and clean seas, and safeguard the nation's maritime interests, they said.

"This 51-metre FPV (fast patrol vessel), designed and built by Goa Shipyard Limited, represents a new benchmark in indigenous shipbuilding," a senior official said.

With more than 60 per cent of indigenous components, Amulya underscores India's steady progress towards self-reliance in defence and highlights the synergy between the ICG's operational vision and the government's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' initiatives, officials said. The vessel integrates modern design philosophy focused on efficiency, endurance and rapid response capability. Powered by two 3000 KW advanced diesel engines, the vessel delivers a top speed of 27 knots and an operational endurance of 1,500 nautical miles, enabling extended missions in India's maritime zones, the ICG said. The ship is fitted with indigenous (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## ZUBEEN DEATH CASE PROBE

### No foul play suspected yet: Singapore police



SINGAPORE, Dec 19: Investigations into the death of singer Zubeen Garg are ongoing but so far no foul play is suspected, Singapore police have said.

Garg died under mysterious circumstances while swimming in the sea in Singapore on September 19.

The case is currently still being investigated by the Singapore Police Force (SPF), in accordance with the Singapore Coroners Act 2010, the police said on Thursday.

"Based on our investigations so far, the SPF does not suspect foul play in the death of Garg," said the statement.

Upon completion of the investigations, the findings will be submitted to the State Coroner in Singapore, who will hold a Coroner's Inquiry (CI), currently

scheduled for January and February 2026.

A CI is a fact-finding process led by the Coroner to establish the cause and circumstances of death. Its findings will be made public upon conclusion, said the SPF.

Singapore police are committed to conducting a thorough and professional investigation into the case, it said.

"We seek the patience and understanding of the parties involved. Meanwhile, we urge the public not to speculate and spread unverified information," said SPF.

A Special Investigation Team probing Garg's death charged four accused, including the singer's secretary Siddhartha Sharma and festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, with murder in a chargesheet filed in a court in India last week. Garg was due (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Zubeen death: Complaint filed against Akhil for 'circulating' charge sheet

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: The special investigation team (SIT), probing into the death of singer Zubeen Garg, filed a complaint with the Assam Police's Crime Branch against Independent MLA Akhil Gogoi for allegedly circulating on social media "unverified" documents related to the charge sheet in the case, a senior official said on Friday.

The circulation of such documents is 'illegal' and will "mislead the public and create confusion", he said.

Gogoi, the Sivasagar MLA, was accused of circulating some documents on social media, claiming these to be part of the charge sheet against the seven accused in the singer's death case.

The nine-member SIT, headed by Special DGP Munna Prasad Gupta, had submitted the charge sheet before the Kamrup (Metro) Chief Judicial Magistrate on December 12.

The court is yet to release



certified copies of the charge sheet to those who have applied for it, a lawyer pointed out, adding that it has only been shared with the accused and their family members.

"SIT's Investigating Officer Rosie Kalita has filed the complaint against Gogoi for registration of an FIR with the Crime Branch of the police. The complaint is being examined, and a decision on the matter will be taken accordingly," the official said. Gogoi, in a social media

post, said, 'I have come to know that the government has filed a case against me for making the charge sheet public. I am severely ill, but I will go to Guwahati to face the case.'

The SIT chief had said that the singer's secretary Siddhartha Sharma, festival organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, and band members Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amritprava Mahanta have been charged with the murder. Mahanta was the chief or-

ganiser of the North East India Festival in Singapore, which Garg had attended, and he died under mysterious circumstances there while swimming in the sea on September 19.

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 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 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Himanta attacks Cong on government recruitment

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday took a potshot at Congress, saying that government recruitment in the state has undergone a fundamental transformation over the past few years, moving from an era marked by court battles, alleged corruption and cash-for-jobs scandals to a system that is fair, transparent and merit-based.

Referring to past recruitment processes during the Congress regime, CM Sarma said that earlier, almost every government examination in Assam would lead to multiple court cases, delaying appointments for years and depriving deserving candidates of opportunities.

"There was a time when jobs were allegedly sold to the highest bidders, recruitment processes were opaque, accountability

was missing, and the entire system was time-consuming and unfair to honest aspirants," the Chief Minister said in a post on X.

Highlighting the present scenario, the CM asserted that his government has put an end to corruption and middlemen in recruitment.

"Today, there are zero court cases related to government recruitment and no allegations of corruption. There are no middlemen and no bribery. Only transparency, accountability and equal opportunity for Assam's youth," he said.

The chief minister said that the state government has introduced technology-driven and time-bound recruitment processes to ensure fairness and credibility.

According to him, written examinations, skill tests and interviews are conducted in a structured manner, with strict monitoring to prevent any (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Assam Cong to launch mass outreach programme: Gogoi

GUWAHATI, Dec 19: The Congress will launch a mass outreach programme from Saturday to directly engage with citizens, stakeholders and party workers across Assam, state party president Gaurav Gogoi said.

The initiative, taken ahead of the assembly elections due early next year, is part of the ongoing campaign 'Rajior Podulit, Rajior Congress (Peoples' Congress at Peoples' doorstep) aimed at building a "people-driven manifesto" through a structured and state-wide consultation process.

The consultations will begin with a focus on higher education in Assam, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Three-day festival to feature Judima tasting sessions and competitions

### Judima Festival 2025 to begin today

**HT Bureau**  
DIPHU, Dec 19: Dima Hasao is set to host the Judima Festival 2025 from December 20 to 22 at Gunjung in Assam's hill district, inviting people from all walks of life to experience the rich cultural heritage, inclusive development and growing tourism potential of the region.

Centred around Judima, the Geographical Indication-tagged traditional rice wine of the Dimasas tribe, the festival showcases the community's deep-rooted traditions while highlighting its journey towards self-reliance, entrepreneurship and sustainable development.

The event seeks to blend cultural preservation with modern aspirations, reflecting Dima Hasao's evolving iden-



tity. The three-day festival will feature Judima tasting sessions and competitions, along with a vibrant lineup of traditional Dimasa music and dance performances. Folk songs such as Dishruni and Johaya ni, rhythmic

drum beats, children's musical presentations like Khumi damba, and special cultural showcases including Bagaba will offer visitors an immersive glimpse into the living traditions of the Dimasa people. Exhibitions and local stalls

will be a key attraction, displaying indigenous handicrafts such as Kram khuba and Muri khuba, traditional seeds, organic hill produce and premium Dima Hasao coffee.

These exhibits underline the district's progress in livelihood generation, sustainable practices and cultural entrepreneurship. Set against the scenic backdrop of Gunjung's hills, the festival brings together culture, nature and development, reinforcing Dima Hasao's emergence as an important cultural and eco-tourism destination in the Northeast.

The theme of the event celebrates Dimasa identity, community pride and inclusive growth. The district administration (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## China says it will allow export of rare-earth metals for civilian use

BEIJING, Dec 19: China on Friday said it will approve export of its rare-earth metals for civilian use, amid India's persistent calls for Beijing to lift curbs and resume the export of precious metals needed to manufacture a host of modern products.

China's export control on rare earth-related items in accordance with laws and regulations does not target any specific country, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing while responding to a question on India's calls for resumption of rare-earth over which Beijing holds a near monopoly.

"As long as the export is for

civilian use and complies with regulations, the Chinese government will approve the application in a timely manner," he said, highlighting China's stand not to export the metals to manufacture defence products.

"China stands ready to step up dialogue and cooperation with relevant countries and regions to jointly keep the global industrial and supply chains stable," he said.

However, he emphasised that the permits would be for civilian use, considering that they could also be used to manufacture defence equipment.

"We'd like to stress that

given the dual-use nature of medium and heavy rare earth and related items, exercising export control on the items is in line with international practice and reflects China's consistent position of firmly upholding world peace and regional stability and actively participating in international non-proliferation effort," Guo said.

China on Thursday confirmed the resumption of exports of rare-earth metals, lifting the curbs imposed earlier this year.

He Yadong, spokesperson of the Commerce Ministry, told the media that his ministry has received and ap-

proved applications from some Chinese exporters for general export licenses for rare earth-related items, confirming that China has resumed exports of rare-earth metals.

China, which accounts for about 70 per cent of global rare earth mining and nearly 90 per cent of their processing, is the world's dominant supplier of the minerals critical for manufacturing electronics, automobiles, wind energy, and defence equipment.

The US, the EU and India are the top importers of China's rare earth metals. Amid (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*In life, as in chess, forethought wins.*  
—Charles Buxton

## Protests over G RAM G Bill

Lok Sabha passed the Viksit Bharat – Guarantee For Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill 2025 today December 18, 2025 which seeks to replace the Mahatma Gandhi National Employment Guarantee Act amid fierce opposition, uproar, and tearing of the copy of the Bill by opposition in protest. The Bill will now be tabled in the Rajya Sabha. The Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha by the Union Minister for Rural Development, and Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan on December 16, and was debated on December 17 until 10 PM. Even as opposition had demanded roll back of the G RAM G Bill 2025, the government had clearly conveyed its intention to pass the Bill, in the ongoing session of the Parliament itself that is going to conclude tomorrow December 19, 2025. During the several protest demonstrations, including on in the Parliament Complex and at several places across the country, the protestors demanded immediate withdrawal of the Bill, which was just ignored by the government.

Members of the opposition wanted the Bill sent to a standing committee of the Parliament. They protested in the Well of the house when the Lok Sabha Speaker said that the legislation had been discussed at length. Opposition MPs even tore the copies of the Bill. The Bill seeks to replace the MGNREGA 2005, over which protest was intensified, while states including BJP and NDA ruled states have raised concerns about increase of financial burden on states. Though NDA allies are supporting the bill, TDP has flagged increased burden on states and pointed out that a fund-starved state like Andhra Pradesh will need additional support. The opposition MPs hold protest march on December 18 in the morning in Parliament Complex demanding withdrawal of VB – G RAM G Bill. With photographs of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, the MGNREGA is named after, the MPs of opposition political parties took out a protest march from the Gandhi statue at Prerna Sthal to Makar Dwar, raising slogan against the government led by PM Narendra Modi.

Apart from the Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi, Samajwadi Party MP Akhilesh Yadav, DMK MP TR Baalu, A Raja, AICC general secretary KC Venugopal, IUML leader E T Mohammed Basheer, Shiv Sean (UBT) leader Arvind Sawant, RSP leader N K Premchandran and others participated in the protests. Congress leader Sonia Gandhi also joined the protesting MPs at Makar Dwar. Many objections have been raised against the G RAM G Bill including that it will put an end to the rural people's right to get works on demand under MGNREGA scheme, which is the only rural employment guarantee programme in India. Within six months from the date of commencement of the G RAM G Act, the states will have to make a scheme consistent with the provisions of the new legislation.

# Prime Minister Modi ji's 'A' for Assam, the journey from Vision to Victory

Since 2014, under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, the developmental story of Assam along with the whole of India, has fundamentally changed. Our state and the Northeast region, which historically remained in the periphery of national focus, have since moved to the core of India's growth vision as the Ashtalakhshmi and a new engine of national development, the growth multiplier of a new Bharat.

Decades since our independence, the Northeast and Assam in particular remained on the margins of India's development narrative. Geography was often cited as an excuse, diversity as a challenge, and distance as a limitation. Yet, the deeper issue was one of political attention and intent. Aspirations born out of historic movements, including the Assam Agitation, remained unaddressed for years, while the region's economic and strategic potential went largely untapped. The change to this inertia 'Paribartan' began with the PM Narendra Modi's advent as the powerful leadership at the national level and his earnest commitment to the people of Assam and the Northeast.

The national transformation led by PM Modi ji found strong expression in Assam from 2016 onwards with the formation of the BJP-led NDA government, creating the momentum of a true double-engine government working in close coordination with the Centre. Assam entered a new development cycle marked by clear intent, seamless Centre-State alignment and a focus on execution over announcements, ensuring that flagship central initiatives delivered visible results on the ground. The foundations of several landmark projects shaping Assam's modern trajectory were laid, including AIIMS Guwahati, the new terminal at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Swahid Smarak, the Numaligarh Bio-Ethanol Plant and the Batadrava Than development project. With their gradual commissioning strongly reflects the BJP-led NDA's governance model of vision of growth, mission to realise it, and ultimately to commission of these projects for welfare of the people.

The scale of national commitment is reflected in numbers. Budgetary allocation for the Northeast has risen from ₹2,332 crore in 2014-15 to 5,900 crore in 2024-25—a 2.5-fold increase. Externally aided projects worth over 1.35 lakh crore between 2017 and 2023 have strengthened social and physical infrastructure across the region. This sustained investment has corrected historical imbalances and restored confidence among business interests to invest in the state.

Connectivity has been the most powerful catalyst of transformation. Railway investment in the Northeast has increased fivefold, with cumulative allocations exceeding 62,000 crore and projects worth over



₹77,000 crore underway. Engineering landmarks such as the Bogibeel rail-cum-road bridge as well as the Dr Bhupen Hazarika Setu have permanently altered Assam's logistics landscape, while rail connectivity to state capitals has integrated the region with the national mainstream. Trains have reached Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram for the first time in history, a long awaited realisation of a dream of the people. Road infrastructure has seen a similar push, with over 11,000 km of highways upgraded or built, improving access to markets, healthcare and education. Air connectivity has doubled, supported by the UDAN scheme, bringing remote districts into the national economic grid.

A defining milestone in this journey is the inauguration of the new terminal building at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, Guwahati, by PM Modi ji. For more than six decades, Assam's principal airport functioned with constrained capacity despite Guwahati's role as the gateway to the Northeast. The new terminal marks a decisive break from that legacy of neglect.

Spread across 1.40 lakh square metres nearly seven times the earlier terminal the new facility increases annual passenger handling capacity from 3.4 million to over 13 million. Peak-hour capacity has risen from 800 passengers to nearly 3,900. Aircraft parking has expanded to include wide-body operations, security and baggage systems have been scaled up, and parking capacity has quadrupled. Built at a cost of around ₹4,000 crore, the terminal aligns Guwahati with global aviation standards and reinforces Assam's position as the region's principal transport hub, paving the way for more in-

tiatives like MROs to transform Guwahati into an aviation hub.

Inland waterways have emerged as another pillar of Assam's transformation. The Brahmaputra and Barak rivers, long central to the region's civilisational life, are now being integrated into India's modern logistics network. Brahmaputra (NW-2) and Barak (NW-16) are witnessing assured-depth dredging, modern cargo and tourist terminals at Pandu, Dhubri, Joghghopa and Bogibeel, and the development of ship repair and navigational infrastructure. A developed waterways network further enrich our transpirational dynamics resulting in lower logistics costs, improving multimodal connectivity and reconnecting the business interest of the Northeast with global trade routes. A recent MoU at India Maritime Week (IMW) has resulted in export of petroleum products from Assam to the world market is already in play.

Under the visionary leadership of PM Narendra Modi ji, industrial growth has followed connectivity. The expansion of Numaligarh Refinery from 3 to 9 MMTPA, with an investment exceeding 22,000 crore, has strengthened Assam's role as an energy hub for eastern India. India's first bamboo-based bio-refinery at Numaligarh has empowered thousands of farmers while advancing the green energy transition. As PM Modi ji lay the foundation stone to set up the Namrup IV fertiliser plant, it aims to fulfil a five-decade-old aspiration of Assam's as well as the Northeast farmers and strengthens national fertiliser self-reliance. The upcoming semiconductor assembly and test facility at Jagiroad signals Assam's entry into high-technology manufacturing and global

supply chains.

Along the Brahmaputra, riverfront development in Assam is being taken forward through a coordinated national effort-bringing together inland waterways projects on National Waterway-2, river conservation initiatives, targeted support for the Northeast, and urban renewal missions-reflecting PM Narendra Modi ji's emphasis on combining infrastructure, ecology and public spaces in the development of the region. The Indo-Israel Centre of Excellence for Vegetables at Khetri, whose foundation I laid in 2020, introduced Israeli expertise in drip irrigation, protected cultivation and soil-less farming to Assam's farmers. Implemented under the Indo-Israel Agricultural Project (IIAP), it strengthened climate-smart agriculture through focused technology transfer and high-value crop promotion.

Healthcare & education have also seen structural change. AIIMS Guwahati—the first in the Northeast—has become a regional healthcare anchor, complemented by new medical colleges and a growing cancer care network. Investments in skill development and higher education are strengthening the region's human capital. The chain of Cancer Care Hospitals as well as revamp of existing medical facilities and amping up Medical Colleges simultaneously provide Assam a unique opportunity to provide people a world class healthcare system, a due aspiration of the people finally being realised.

Equally significant is PM Modi's sensitivity to Assam's emotional and historical consciousness. Modi ji has been the biggest brand ambassador of Assamese culture as he wears our beloved 'Gamusa' long before he became PM. This shows his unflinching love for the people, their culture and their identity. The martyrs of the Assam Agitation have been formally honoured, their sacrifices institutionalised through 'Swahid Smarak Khetra', and their families acknowledged with dignity. Long-overdue national recognition for our icons such as Lachit Barphukan and Bharat Ratna for Dr Bhupen Hazarika in 2019 has restored cultural pride and corrected historical omissions. It is also a matter of great pride for Assam that the historic Charaideo Maidam has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, bringing global acknowledgment to the state's rich civilisational and cultural legacy.

Today, Assam stands more connected, more confident and more competitive than ever before. This is Modi ji's 'A' for Assam—Advantage Assam—built on trust, decisive governance and a long-term vision that integrates infrastructure with identity. The journey continues, but the direction is clear: a stronger Assam at the heart of a stronger India. PM Narendra Modi continues to ace for the growth story of Assam and the Northeast, championing the hopes and aspirations of the people of the region.

## In the hands of Ram V Sutar, stone learned to speak

By: Lalit Garg

Ram V. Sutar's century-long life was not merely a calculation of years; it was a living extension of the centuries-old spiritual discipline of Indian sculpture. His passing at the age of one hundred feels like the sudden silence of a language that once made stone speak, like a pause in the emotions born between hammer and chisel. He was among those rare artists for whom stone, metal, and bronze were never mere materials—they became consciousness itself. What emerged from his hands were not just forms, but life. The inanimate awakened under his touch, and sculpture absorbed the very heartbeat of humanity. Ram V. Sutar was not only a great sculptor; he was a philosopher in himself. His life stood as proof that art is not merely an expression of beauty, but an expansion of humanity. When he sculpted a great personality, he did not simply carve facial features; he gave form to the inner struggles, resolve, compassion, and vision that defined that life. This is why his statues seem to look back at the viewer—silent, yet deeply communicative—transcending time to inspire generations.

Today, the Statue of Unity stands as the tallest statue in the world. But its height should not be measured only in feet and meters. Embedded within it, along with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's iron will, are Ram V. Sutar's own penance, patience, and profound insight. This monument is not merely a national symbol; it is a global proclamation of the strength and capability of Indian sculptural art. Whether it is the Gandhi statue in the Parliament complex or the countless sculptures spread across India and the world, his art bridged history with the present and made the present meaningful for the future. Stone spoke through his hands, but it was humanity that spoke through his heart. He understood that while creating a statue of a leader, saint, or thinker, physical resemblance alone is insufficient; what is required is a likeness of the soul. Therefore, he first studied the personality—read it, understood it, absorbed it. His creative discipline was an extraordinary confluence of study, meditation, and sensitivity. Perhaps this is why his craftsmanship combined meticulous detail with a vibrant vitality that touched viewers at a deeply human level.

Ram V. Sutar lived for 100 years and in his later years struggled with age-related ailments. He was born on 19 February 1925 in Gondur village of Dhule district, Maharashtra, into a poor family. His full name was Ram Vanji Sutar. He was one of India's most renowned sculptors. Sculptures of Mahatma Gandhi created by him have been installed in more than three hundred cities across the world. In recognition of his unique artistic devotion, the Government of India awarded him the Padma Shri in 1999 and the Padma Bhushan in 2016. In October 2018, he was also honored with the Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony (for 2016). His father, Vanji Hansraj, was a carpenter by caste and profession. Ram Sutar married Pramila in 1952, and in 1957 they were blessed with a son, Anil Ram Sutar, an architect by profession, who now oversees his father's studio and workshop in Noida.

Despite such towering achievements, Ram V. Sutar remained an embodiment of simplicity. There was no trace of arrogance in him. He was a seeker of sculpture, not of noise or publicity. His work spoke for itself, while he remained silently eloquent. He proved that true greatness does not depend on self-promotion; it is complete in itself, and time inevitably recognizes it. His

art was deeply rooted in Indian tradition, yet his vision was thoroughly modern and global. He drew inspiration from the past, understood the needs of the present, and shaped forms for the future. That is why his sculptures are not confined to any single era—they remain relevant in every age, carrying historical dignity, contemporary awareness, and hope for tomorrow.

Inspired by his guru Ramakrishna Joshi, Ram Sutar went to Mumbai and enrolled at the J.J. School of Art. In 1953, he secured the Mayo Gold Medal by achieving the highest marks in modeling. As a modeler with the Archaeology Department in Aurangabad, he worked between 1954 and 1958 on the restoration of sculptures in the ancient Ajanta and Ellora caves. From 1958 to 1959, he also served as a technical assistant in the Audio-Visual Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. In 1959, he voluntarily left government service to pursue life as a professional sculptor. He later lived with his family in Noida. Among his many remarkable works are the 45-foot-high Chambal Devi statue at the Gangesagar Dam; the 17-foot statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Gandhinagar, Gujarat; the 21-foot statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Amritsar; the 18-foot statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel in the Parliament House, New Delhi; the 9-foot statue of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in Jammu; the bust of President Shankar Dayal Sharma; and the bronze Krishna-Arjuna Chariot memorial at Brahma Sarovar. Above all, the Statue of Unity in Gujarat—the world's tallest statue—stands as a monumental testament to Ram Sutar's extraordinary artistic mastery. Expressing grief over his demise, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India has lost an artist who elevated the nation's cultural identity to new global heights. Home Minister Amit Shah described him as a pillar of Indian artistic tradition, stating that his sculptures would continue to connect future generations with the nation's great personalities. Numerous politicians, artists, and thinkers echoed similar sentiments, acknowledging that Ram V. Sutar's passing marked not merely the loss of an individual, but the end of an era. Yet, perhaps Ram V. Sutar himself valued such tributes less than his work. For him, the greatest honor was when someone stood silently before one of his sculptures—reflecting, feeling, and immersing themselves in thought. He made his life as vibrant as his art. His personality was gentle, simple, and deeply humane. Wherever he went, he became a quiet source of inspiration.

Ram Sutar's life was a living school of sculpture and art, teaching that art is not just technique—it is spiritual discipline. Before shaping stone, one must shape the mind; before carving form, one must purify vision. This may explain why his creative energy remained undiminished until the final moments of his century-long journey. Age, for him, was only a number; his passion for art never grew old. As we bid him farewell today, this farewell is not truly a goodbye. He lives on—in his sculptures, in his craft, in his sensitivity. Whenever someone bows their head before the Gandhi statue in the Parliament complex, whenever someone feels the spirit of national unity under the shadow of the Statue of Unity, Ram V. Sutar will be present—like a heart beating within stone, like a consciousness that speaks through silence. His life testifies that an ordinary human being, through dedication, resolve, and compassion, can rise to extraordinary heights. He gave life to stone, but his greater achievement was giving meaning to life itself. A humble tribute to this towering figure of Indian sculptural art.

## PM Narendra Modi's Assam tour and its deeper Significance

By: Dipak Kurni

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's forthcoming two-day visit to Assam from December 20 has been described by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma as "significant, symbolic and substantial," a formulation that captures both the political weight and developmental depth of the itinerary. At a time when Assam stands on the threshold of Assembly elections early next year, the visit is being carefully projected not merely as a campaign exercise but as a reaffirmation of the Prime Minister's constitutional role and his long-term engagement with the state. Sarma, while reviewing arrangements at the state BJP headquarters in Guwahati, underlined that Modi has been elected to run the nation, not to conduct state-level electoral manoeuvres, yet acknowledged that the programmes lined up during this visit carry profound symbolic and material implications for Assam's political narrative, historical memory and economic trajectory. The visit, therefore, must be read as part of a broader continuum in which governance, history, infrastructure and public symbolism intersect.

The Prime Minister's Assam tour will commence on Saturday afternoon with the unveiling of an imposing 80-foot-tall statue of Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi, Assam's first Chief Minister and one of the most revered figures in the state's modern history. Bordoloi, a Congress leader by political affiliation, played a decisive role in safeguarding Assam's territorial integrity during the tumultuous years surrounding Independence and Partition. His posthumous conferment of the Bharat Ratna by the Atal Behari Vajpayee-led BJP government remains a rare example of cross-party recognition of historical contribution, and Modi's decision to inaugurate the statue adds another layer of symbolic reconciliation between ideology and legacy. From there, the Prime Minister will inaugurate the newly constructed terminal of the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, a Rs 4,000 crore project that stands as one of the most ambitious aviation infrastructure upgrades in the Northeast. The terminal, envisioned as a gateway connecting Assam more seamlessly to national and international destinations, reflects the Centre's emphasis on integrating the region into global economic and mobility networks. Modi is also scheduled to address a public meeting outside the terminal building, reinforcing the link between infrastructure creation and public accountability.

From the airport, the Prime Minister will lead a road show towards the BJP headquarters at the Bashista area in Guwahati, culminating in an interaction with party workers. Chief Minister Sarma has highlighted the historic nature of this event, noting that it will be the first time a sitting Prime Minister visits a BJP office in Assam. Such an interaction is designed not only to engage the party cadre but also to signal organisational consolidation in a state where the BJP has, over the past decade, transformed itself

from a marginal presence into the dominant political force. Sarma confirmed that he had discussed arrangements with state BJP president Dilip Saikia and party workers, underscoring the meticulous planning surrounding the visit. Modi will spend the night at the state guest house in Koinadhora, Khanapara, a detail that may appear procedural but symbolises the Prime Minister's continued preference for official state hospitality over ostentatious arrangements, reinforcing an image of administrative sobriety.

Sunday's schedule introduces a markedly different, softer dimension to the visit, blending education, culture and geography. On Sunday morning, Modi will interact with 25 meritorious students from various schools under his flagship programme Pariksha pe Charcha, an initiative that seeks to reduce examination stress and foster a more humane approach to education. What makes this interaction distinctive is its setting: a cruise aboard the vessel Charaideo on the River Brahmaputra. Sarma revealed that the Prime Minister has a particular affection for the Brahmaputra, recalling that a similar river-based event had been planned during a proposed visit by the Japanese Prime Minister a few years ago, though that trip was ultimately cancelled. By choosing the Brahmaputra as the backdrop for Pariksha pe Charcha, Modi is not only engaging with students but also spotlighting the river as a cultural, economic and touristic asset. The Chief Minister expressed confidence that, much like Modi's visit to Kaziranga National Park last year which was followed by a surge in tourist footfalls after the Prime Minister shared his experience on social media, the Brahmaputra cruise would have a catalytic effect on river tourism in Assam.

Following the cruise, the Prime Minister will visit the Swahid Smarak Kshetra, a memorial dedicated to the 860 martyrs of the Assam movement against illegal infiltration. The Assam Movement, which shaped the state's political consciousness in the late twentieth century, remains an emotive chapter, and the memorial stands as a site of collective remembrance. Modi will offer tributes before the perpetually lit lamp, visit the martyrs' gallery where busts of all 860 individuals have been installed, and garland the statue of Khageswar Talukdar, the first martyr of the movement. This segment of the visit carries deep political and emotional resonance, particularly in a state where issues of identity, migration and citizenship continue to influence public discourse. By paying homage at the memorial, the Prime Minister signals his government's policies within a historical continuum of Assamese aspirations and sacrifices.

The final leg of the visit will take Modi to Upper Assam, first to Dibrugarh and then to Namrup, where he will perform the Bhumi puja for a Rs 12,000 crore ammonia-urea fertiliser plant. This project, widely regarded as a long-pending demand of the people of Assam, is expected to provide a substantial boost to the state's industrial base, agricultural productivity and employment landscape. Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda

Sonowal, who inspected preparations for the Prime Minister's public meeting at Namrup on December 21, described the project as a transformative initiative that would not only strengthen Assam's economy but also enable the Northeast to compete in global markets. Sonowal emphasised that the laying of the foundation stone for the fourth unit of the Namrup fertiliser plant marks the beginning of a new developmental phase for Assam and the wider region, aligning with the Prime Minister's vision of increasing farmers' income and reducing regional disparities. He noted that the demand for a fourth unit had been raised for decades but ignored by successive Congress governments, contrasting this with what he described as the Modi government's decisive approval of the project at a cost of around ₹ 10,000 crore within just 11 years.

Sonowal, a former Chief Minister of Assam, also used the occasion to underscore the breadth of initiatives undertaken by the Modi government across the Northeast, spanning connectivity, infrastructure, semiconductors and the establishment of new institutions. According to him, the benefits of these projects are reaching farmers, youth, women, workers and other sections of society, gradually altering the region's developmental profile. During his tour of the proposed rally venue in Namrup, Sonowal held discussions with officials from various government departments and the district administration, reviewed logistical arrangements, and interacted with BJP workers from Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Charaideo districts. Ministers Prasanta Phukan and Yogendra Mohan, along with MLAs from Dibrugarh and Tinsukia, were present during the inspection, reflecting the political importance attached to the event. Sonowal candidly acknowledged that the Prime Minister's rally at Namrup would also signal the start of the campaign for the upcoming Assembly elections in Upper Assam, and discussions were held on mobilising people from across Upper Assam districts to ensure large participation.

Taken together, Prime Minister Modi's December 20-21 visit to Assam represents a carefully layered exercise in governance, symbolism and political communication. From honouring a Congress-era stalwart like Gopinath Bordoloi to inaugurating cutting-edge infrastructure, from engaging students on a Brahmaputra cruise to paying homage to the martyrs of the Assam Movement, and from energising party workers in Guwahati to laying the foundation of a mega fertiliser plant in Namrup, the visit traverses Assam's past, present and projected future. It reinforces the Centre's narrative of integrating the Northeast into the national mainstream while acknowledging its distinct historical experiences and aspirations. Whether viewed through the lens of development, cultural affirmation or political mobilisation, the visit stands poised to leave a lasting imprint on Assam's public life, making it, in the Chief Minister's words, truly significant, symbolic and substantial. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurni@gmail.com.)

# 7 innovative ways to unlock funding for a global reskilling revolution

By: Aarushi Singhania and Neil Allison

Technology is on track to transform 1.1 billion jobs by 2030. In the US alone, 1.37 million workers could be displaced from their roles in the next decade as a result of the adoption of new technology. These workers could be reskilled to perform new roles that require a similar skillset and pay higher wages, however. Reskilling would cost \$34 billion or \$24,800 per displaced worker, on average.

Currently, there is limited reliable information available about the business case and the return on investment of such upskilling and reskilling initiatives. This lack of clarity on where and how much to invest creates a similar challenge for employees, who don't know how much to invest themselves. The same can be said for potential financial supporters of upskilling and reskilling efforts such as specific government entities and programmes, businesses and labour unions.

As of 2024, Reskilling Revolution, a World Economic Forum initiative, has gathered commitments from various organizations to reskill, upskill and train 680 million people around the world. But turning these commitments into tangible action will require a critical look at the costs associated with lifelong learning. It will also require more innovative

models for fairly distributing responsibility for training across individuals, employers and governments.

Members of the World Economic Forum Future Skills Alliance have identified four key principles to consider when financing lifelong learning, upskilling and reskilling initiatives:

The following seven initiatives have used these principles to create funding models that provide skills development, upskilling and reskilling in a wide range of contexts:

**1. Siemens SiTecSkills Academy:** Building tomorrow's workforce today

Using a blended funding model, this initiative provides technical training to Siemens' workforce and that of its external partners. The content draws partly from the company's vocational education training on digitalization and sustainability. By securing government co-financing of up to 25% under Germany's Qualification Opportunities Act and sharing training costs with its partners, Siemens can ensure long-term employability and alignment with evolving industry demands for its workers.

**2. Skillsoft and Syracuse University:** Collaborative skills financing for post-service lives of America's veterans and their families

Syracuse University's D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, together with Skillsoft, delivers the On-

ward to Opportunity programme. This approach to reskilling provides servicemen and women, and their spouses, with in-demand technology certifications in cloud, cybersecurity, networking and project management. The programme is financed through an innovative blend of corporate sponsorships, federal grants and private donations. This creates a sustainable funding base while aligning with the university's mission-driven partnerships.

**3. The Adecco Group's General Assembly and Tankeen:** Partnering to prepare Bahrain's tech talent of the future

This programme uses a 100% outcome-based government-funded model to offer fully accessible tech bootcamps to Bahraini nationals. It is led by tech and artificial intelligence training provider General Assembly, part of the Adecco Group, and Tankeen, a government agency that supports private sector training. The programme aligns this training with industry needs to address skill gaps and advance Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 goals. This approach, powered by public-private collaboration, focuses on emerging technology and digital skills training in particular.

**4. Social Finance US and American Diesel Training Centers (ADTC):** Empowering economic mobility

ADTC and nonprofit Social Finance

have partnered to tackle the shortage of diesel technicians in the US. This programme provides a condensed, affordable training route for underserved communities. Funded with nearly \$9 million from Social Finance's UP Fund, this initiative also uses a flat-fee repayment model where employers cover training costs for many graduates. This makes it a sustainable, accessible pathway to economic mobility for the workforce.

**5. Aramco:** Enhancing vocational training through strategic public-private partnerships

Saudi Aramco has used its expertise in vocational training to establish National Training Centers with the government to address certain skill requirements in technical and vocational fields through an employment-led training scheme. These centres align education with industry demand in sectors like energy and manufacturing to foster long-term workforce development. This initiative relies on a unique contribution scheme in which Saudi Aramco provides startup funding and technical expertise, while the government provides training facilities, approvals and subsidies to sponsoring companies.

**6. Majid Al Futtaim Group:** Empowering Emirati talent for emerging jobs

This programme from Majid Al Futtaim addresses skill alignment for Emirati talent in high-demand sectors,

providing "power skills" workshops for career growth. This includes on-the-job and employability training to upskill and reskill local talent. The training covers communication, resilience, critical thinking, adaptability and change-readiness. The programme's public-private funding model sees 70% of costs funded by the government through the Abu Dhabi Global Market and 30% covered by employers.

**7. Amazon Web Services (AWS) Spain's tech alliance:** Bridging the global tech skills gap

The AWS Skills to Jobs Tech Alliance is a global coalition that aims to address the technology skills gap by collaborating with employers, government agencies, workforce development organizations and education leaders. The initiative operates in 11 countries and adopts a collaborative funding model of co-investment from AWS, employers and governments. AWS provides – at no cost to the learners – access to learning materials, cloud credits for applied learning activities using AWS technical resources and support for educator enablement. Regional governments contribute by allocating budget for educators' professional development in digital skills.

These investments in adult learning all aim to address current skill shortages and build future talent pipelines, creating

specific pathways into work through training, upskilling, learning on the job and reskilling for job transitions. Each programme is delivered within a specific context and faces individual challenges, suggesting the importance of alignment on funding.

To monitor success, these initiatives measure four different levels of impact:

All organisations involved measure the impact on adoption and engagement (level one), while a smaller proportion measure levels two and three.

The next step for these initiatives – level four – will be a shift from tracking the number of people they reach to achieving real, measurable outcomes in terms of business and economic impact including job accessibility, placement rates, economic mobility, and improving productivity and competitiveness. There is certainly a need for more longitudinal tracking of data and outcomes on how upskilling and reskilling initiatives are contributing to business productivity and economic growth.

As the global workforce faces the monumental challenge of adapting to new technology, these initiatives are already showing how we can start distributing the responsibility for funding training, upskilling and reskilling more equally across learning providers, employers, individuals and governments. (Courtesy- World Economic Forum)

## SSC Constable Recruitment 2026 – 25487 Constable GD Posts

Last Date: 31/12/2025

Staff Section Commission (SSC) has released the official notification for the recruitment of 25487 vacancy as Constable (General Duty) in Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Indo Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), and Secretariat Security Force (SSF) and Rifleman (General Duty) in Assam Rifles (AR). Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here.

SSC Constable Recruitment 2026  
Name of post: Constable (General Duty)

Name of exam: Constable (GD) in Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and SSF, and Rifleman (GD) in Assam Rifles Examination, 2026

No of posts: 25,487 posts  
Discover more  
Water bottles hydration  
Assam job alerts  
Healthy snacks food  
GD Constable practice  
SSC online courses  
Online practice tests  
Digital watches timers  
Job news subscription  
Backpacks gear bags  
Career counseling services

# Male: 23,467 posts  
# Female: 2,020 posts

Organization-wise vacancy details:

Organization	No of posts
BSF	616
CISF	14595
CRPF	5490
SSB	1764
ITBP	1293
Assam Rifles	1706
SSF	23
Total	25487

Pay scale: Pay Level – 3 (₹21,700/- to ₹ 69,100/-) for all the posts.

Eligibility Criteria of SSC Constable GD Recruitment

Nationality: The candidate must be a citizen of India. Vacancies in CAPFs & AR are State/UT/area wise, hence a candidate must submit a domicile certificate/PRC against his domiciled state/UT.

Age Limit: Candidate age must be between 18 to 23 years as on 1st January 2026. Candidates should not have been born earlier than 02-01-2003 and later than 01-01-2008.

Age Relaxation: Permissible relaxations in upper age limit for different categories are as under:

# SC/ ST: 5 years  
# OBC: 3 years  
# Ex-Servicemen: 3 years

Educational Qualification: The candidates must have passed the Matriculation or 10th Class Examination from a recognized Board/ University as on or before the cut-off date i.e., 01-01-2026.

Domicile/ Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC): As the vacancies in CAPFs have been earmarked State/ UT-wise, candidates are required to submit a Domicile/ Permanent Residential Certificate of the State/ UT indicated by them in the Online Application Form at the time of DME/ Documents Verification failing which their candidature will be cancelled forthwith and they will not be allowed to appear in the Detailed Medical Examination.

If a candidate produces Domicile/ Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) issued by a State other than the State mentioned in his/ her Online Application Form, he/ she shall not be allowed to change the State at the time of Document Verification and his/her candidature shall be cancelled straightaway.

Application Fee:

Candidates have to pay a certain amount as application fee depending up on their category. The details are as given below:

Category	Fee
UR	Rs 100/-
OBC/MOBC	Rs 100/-
SC/ ST/ Women/ Nil	Nil
Ex-Servicemen	Nil

Payment Mode: BHIM UPI, Net Banking, by using Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, RuPay Credit or Debit cards or through cash in SBI Branches by generating SBI Challan.

SSC Examination Centres in Assam and Other North East States

A candidate must indicate the Centre(s) in the online Application Form in which he/ she desires to take the examination. Here's the list of centres available under North Eastern Region (NER).

Itanagar (5001)	Dibrugarh (5102)	Guwahati (Dispur) (5105)
Jorhat (5107)	Silchar (5111)	Tejpur (5112)
Imphal (5501)	Shillong (5401)	Agartala (5601)
Aizwal (5701)	Dimapur (5301)	Kohima (5302)
Churachandpur (5502)		

How to Apply SSC Constable GD Recruitment?

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

# Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

# Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process

by clicking "New User ? Register Now".

# 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 SSC Constable Recruitment 2026

# Starting date to apply online: 1st December 2025

# Last date to apply online: 31st December 2025

# Schedule of Computer Based Examination: Feb- April, 2026

Selection Process of SSC Constable GD Vacancy

The selection process of SSC Constable GD will consist of following stages:

- Computer Based Examination (CBE)
- Physical Standard Test (PST)
- Physical Efficiency Test (PET)
- Detailed Medical Examination (DME)/ Review Medical Examination (RME) and
- Document Verification

Computer Based Examination

Candidates who submitted online applications for 25,487 vacancy as Constable (General Duty) must first appear in Computer Based Examination (CBE). The detail structure of Computer Based Examination (CBE) is as mentioned below.

No of questions: 80 MCQs

Total marks: 160 marks

Duration: 60 minutes

Type of exam: Online (CBE)

Level of questions: Matriculation level

Negative marking: 0.25 marks for each wrong answer

Language: English, Hindi, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

Exam pattern:

Part	Subject	No of MCQs	Marks
A	General Intelligence and Reasoning	20	40
B	General Knowledge and General Awareness	20	40
C	Elementary Mathematics	20	40
D	English/ Hindi	20	40
	Total	80	160

Syllabus of Computer Based Test (CBT)

The syllabus for the Examination will be as follows:

A) General Intelligence and Reasoning:

Analytical aptitude and ability to observe and distinguish patterns will be tested through questions principally of non-verbal type. This component may include questions on analogies, similarities and differences, spatial visualization, spatial orientation, visual memory, discrimination, observation, relationship concepts, arithmetical reasoning and figural classification, arithmetic number series, non-verbal series, coding and decoding, etc.

B) General Knowledge and General Awareness:

Questions in this component will be aimed at testing the candidate's general awareness of the environment around him. Questions will also be designed to test knowledge of current events and of such matters of every day observations and experience in their scientific aspect as may be expected of any educated person. The test will also include questions relating to India and its neighboring countries especially pertaining to sports, History, Culture, Geography, Economic Scene, General Polity, Indian Constitution, and scientific Research etc. These Questions will be such that they do not require a special study of any discipline.

C) Elementary Mathematics:

This paper will include questions on problems relating to Number Systems, Computation of Whole Numbers, Decimals and Fractions and relationship between Numbers, Fundamental arithmetical operations, Percentages, Ratio and Proportion, Averages, Interest, Profit and Loss, Discount, Mensuration, Time and Distance, Ratio and Time, Time and Work, etc.

D) English/ Hindi:

Candidates' ability to understand basic English/ Hindi and his basic comprehension would be tested.

Based on the performance in CBE, candidates will be shortlisted for PST/ PET by the Commission. Physical Standard Test (PST) and Physical Efficiency Test (PET) will be conducted at various centres finalized by the CAPFs.

Physical Standards for the posts are as follows:

Category	Height
Male	170 cms
Female	157 cms

Relaxation in Height

Relaxation for	Male (Cms)	Female (Cms)
ST	162.5	150.0
ST candidates of NE States	157.0	147.5

ST candidates of Left Wing

Extremism affected districts

Candidates falling in the categories of Garhwalis, Kumaonis,

Dogras, Marathas and candidates belonging to the

States/ UTs of Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir

and Ladakh

Candidates hailing from the North-Eastern States of

Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland,

Sikkim and Tripura

Candidates hailing from Gorkha Territorial

Administration (GTA)

Chest

Male candidates should have following standards of chest measurement:

Status	Expansion
Un-expanded	80 cms
Minimum expansion	5 cms
Relaxation in chest	

Relaxation for Un-expanded(cms) Minimum Expansion (cms)

ST 76 5

Garhwalis, Kumaonis, Dogras, Marathas and

candidates belonging to the States/ UTs of

Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir

and Ladakh 78 5

North-Eastern Sates of Arunachal Pradesh,

Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland,

Sikkim, Tripura and Gorkha Territorial

Administration (GTA) 77 5

# Chest measurement for female candidates will not be taken. However, it will

be ascertained that the chest is well developed.

Weight

Weight must be proportionate to height and age as per medical standards.

Physical Efficiency Test (PET)

Candidates have to clear the race within the following time limits:

Region	Male	Female
Other region	5 Kms in 24 minutes.	1.6 Kms in 8 ½ minutes
Ladakh region	1.6 Kms in 7 minutes	800 metres in 5 minutes

Medical Examination

Candidates will be shortlisted for Detailed Medical Examination (DME) from the pool of candidates who qualify PST/ PET.

The shortlisted candidates will be medically examined by the Medical Boards constituted by the CAPFs to assess their physical and medical fitness. The medical examination of the candidates will be conducted in terms of Uniform Guidelines for recruitment Medical Examination for GOs and NGOs in CAPFs and AR issued vide MHA UO No. A.VI-1/2014-Rec(t)(SSB) dated 20.05.2015 and MHA UO No: E.32012/ADG(Med)/DME&RME/DA-1/2020(Part File)/1166 dated 31.05.2021 and as amended from time to time by the government. These instructions are accessible at following link: [https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/policedevision\\_17062021\\_0.pdf](https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/policedevision_17062021_0.pdf)

## TRTC Guwahati Apprenticeship Training 2025

Tool Room & Training Centre (TRTC), Guwahati has released the official notification of Apprenticeship Training 2025 for Engineering and Commerce Graduate Students to engage as Apprentices under "Apprenticeship Act 1961" as amend in 1973, 1986 & 2014, Board of Practical Training (BOPT), Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India for one year for those who passed out in 2023, 2024 & 2025. Interested and eligible candidates may apply here for 9 Apprenticeship Trainee vacancy.

TRTC Guwahati Apprenticeship Training Details

Name of post: Apprenticeship Trainee

No of posts: 9 posts

Discipline-wise vacancy:

Interview preparation guide

Books for competitive exams

Interview coaching sessions

Legal advice employment law

Discipline	No. of seats	Date of Interview
General Graduate (Commerce)	3 Nos.	30/12/2025
Engineering Graduate	6 Nos.	29/12/2025

Name of institute: Tool Room & Training Centre (TRTC), Guwahati

Selection process: Walk-in Interview

About Tool Room & Training Centre Guwahati

Tool Room & Training Centre (TRTC), Guwahati has been established by Government of India to cater tooling and training need of Industries of North Eastern Region. The State Government of Assam has provided the land as well as initial building to the Tool Room.

TRTC has been registered as Government of India Society on 24th February 2000. It is situated at Amingaon Industrial Area, North Guwahati Road, Guwahati-781031. It is a sprawling campus with Administrative Block, Training Block, Modern Workshop, Knowledge Centre, Staff Quarters and Hostel.

Eligibility Criteria of TRTC Guwahati Apprenticeship Training

Educational Qualification:  
Information Technology: B.E./B. Tech. in Information Technology from Govt. recognized Institute/University.

Computer Science & Engineering: B.E./B. Tech. in Computer Science & Engineering from Govt. recognized Institute/University.

Electronics & Telecommunication Engineering: B.E./B. Tech. in Electronics & Telecommunication Engineering.

General Graduate (Commerce): Bachelor Degree in Commerce from Govt. recognized Institute/University. Bachelor Degree in Commerce from Govt. recognized Institute/University. is desirable.

Age Limit: Not mentioned .

Stipend:

# Rs. 12,000/- (per month)

How to Apply for TRTC Guwahati Apprenticeship Training?

Interested and eligible candidates may attend the walk-in interview as per the schedule given below:

Walk-in schedule:

Date: As above

Reporting Time: 9:30 AM

Venue: Tool Room & Training Centre, Guwahati, Near EPIP, Amingaon Industrial Area, North Guwahati Road, Amingaon, Guwahati – 31 (Assam).

Document Required:

# Candidates should bring their original documents along with one set of photocopies of Educational Qualification Certificates, Marksheet, Age Proof, ID Proof and a recent passport-size photograph.

## Good Governance Week to focus on grievance redressal and service delivery

# 'Prashashan Gaon Ki Ore' campaign launched

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, Dec 19:** With a view to promoting transparency, accountability and efficiency in administration, Sonitpur district, along with the rest of the nation, is observing the 5th Good Governance Week (GGW) from December 19 to December 25, 2025.

Under the subtitle Sushasan Saptah, the week-long campaign titled 'PRASHASHAN GAON KI ORE' 2025 will focus on the disposal of pending public grievance cases and ensuring improved and assured service delivery. As part of the initiative, concerned officers will visit the places of occurrence of grievances to ensure on-the-spot and time-bound disposal.

After disposal of the cases, officers have been instructed to upload details, along with photographs on the Good Governance Portal. The district administration aims to achieve complete clearance of grievances lodged through the CP-GRAMS portal and to dispose of all pending and overdue applications submitted through the Sewa Setu portal. In addition, the district administration has decided to organise field-level special grievance redressal camps at the offices of Block Development Officers, Circle Offices and other departmental offices to facilitate easy access for the public.

**Our Hojai Correspondent**



**add:** The Hojai district administration is observing Good Governance Week from December 19 to December 25, 2025, under the campaign titled 'Administration to the Village 2025', with the aim of strengthening service delivery and grievance redressal at the grassroots level.

As part of the initiative, special camps will be organised at various designated locations across the district. The identified venues include the revenue circle offices at Lanka, Hojai and Dabka, the Block Development Offices at Binakandi and Udali and the Gram Panchayat offices of Dalphukhuri GP and Taralangu Dimora Tongia GP.

During these camps, several government departments, including Agriculture, Women and Child Development, Public Health Engineering and Banking will provide public services directly to the people, ensuring easy access and timely assistance.

Citizens will also have the opportunity to register their grievances on the spot and seek immediate resolution, thereby ensuring prompt redressal and direct benefits to the public.

**Our Kokrajhar Correspondent add:** District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty addressed a meeting of chairpersons of VCDC and TLCC held at the Srimanta

Sankardeva Public Auditorium in Tamulpur on the occasion of Good Governance Week. He urged all concerned to give priority to various public welfare initiatives of the government.

Pointing out existing gaps, Chakravarty said that despite the introduction of numerous facilities and schemes by the government, a large section of people are still unable to avail themselves of the benefits due to lack of awareness.

During the meeting, discussions were held on developmental works being implemented under the Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Health Department, Assam Rural Livelihoods Mission and other related sectors. Executive Member of the Shuklai Serfing Council Constituency, Ganesh Kachari, also delivered an important address on the subject.

It was highlighted that many people remain unaware of key schemes such as the Ayushman Bharat (ABHA) Card, Child-Mother Protection Card and several others. The need to intensify awareness campaigns among the public at the earliest was also stressed.

Information and Public Relations Officer Bijoy Bezbaruah, senior officials of the district administration and heads of various departments were present at the meeting.

## 80 bighas of encroached land cleared at Gerekoni beel

Nagaon administration conducts eviction drive under Dhing revenue circle

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Dec 19:** In a major crackdown on encroachments, the Nagaon district administration with support from police, carried out an eviction drive at Gerekoni beel under the Dhing revenue circle on Thursday.

The operation was undertaken to reclaim government land and protect wetlands from illegal occupation. During the drive, around 80 bighas of land at Gerekoni beel were cleared, where locals had allegedly constructed large ponds and were engaged in fish farming.

Officials said such activities had caused environmental damage and disrupted nearby agricultural land. A Poclain excavator was deployed to demolish embankments and drain the illegally created ponds, thereby reclaiming the encroached land.

The eviction drive was con-



ducted under tight security arrangements. Senior district officials, including Additional District Commissioners Sudeep Nath and Bhaskar Choudhury, were present on site to supervise the operation. The district administration

stated that the drive was part of the state government's ongoing initiative to remove encroachments from government land and protected wetlands to ensure environmental conservation and lawful land use.

## Husband beaten to death by wife

**HT Correspondent**

**JAGIROAD, Dec 19:** A man, identified as Jalaluddin, died after being allegedly beaten by his wife, Halema, late on Thursday night.

According to sources, the dispute arose over demands for cash and landed property. It is alleged that Halema had been regularly demanding money

and property from her husband and reportedly resorted to physical assault when her demands were refused.

Jalaluddin was admitted to a hospital following the incident, but succumbed to his injuries. Halema has been arrested by Jagiroad police and further investigation into the case is underway.

## Medicine is not just science, but a fusion of science and art: Dr Randeep Guleria

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 19:** "Medicine is not just a science; it is a fusion of science and art," said Padma Shri awardee Dr Randeep Guleria, former Director of AIIMS Delhi, at the 22nd Dr Amitabh Chowdhury Memorial Lecture held at the Pragjyoti ITA Centre in Guwahati.

Speaking on the theme "Shifting Paradigms in the Science and Art of Medicine," Dr Guleria emphasised the need to reform medical education and adopt a patient-centric approach. He highlighted that even 40 seconds of explanation can significantly reduce a patient's stress.

Dr Guleria stressed the importance of integrating scientific knowledge with human connection while prescribing treatment and noted the growing role of Gene Editing, Artificial Intelligence and Robotics in Indian healthcare. He expressed hope for their faster adoption in the near future.

The program, organised by the Dr Amitabh Chowdhury Memorial Trust, began with a "Guru Vandana" and included a formal welcome for Dr Guleria and other dignitaries with Phulam Gamosas and flower bouquets. The Trust has been hosting this lecture series since 2004 in memory of Dr Amitabh Chowdhury, a promising physician who died in a road accident.

## Nagaon commemorates 140th birth anniversary of Ambikagiri Raichoudhury

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, Dec 19:** The 140th birth anniversary of Asom Kesari Ambikagiri Raichoudhury was observed as "Chetana Divas" by the Nagaon District Kabi Sammilan under the aegis of Assam Kabi Sammilan on Thursday at Nehru Yuva Kendra, Nagaon.

The programme began with the hoisting of the Assam Kabi Sammilan flag by Shrutimala Gayan, president of Nagaon District Kabi Sammilan, who also delivered the keynote address. Nava Kumar Mahanta, an educationist and Tridip Laskar, Executive president of the Central Committee, paid floral tributes and lit the lamp before a portrait of Ambikagiri Raichoudhury.

Lyricist and music composer Dharmaprasad Goswami paid homage to the late iconic singer Zubeen Garg by presenting a self-composed song. Nilkamal Bora, General Secretary of the Central Committee, Dr Mahendra Das and Kabin Bhagawati, Joint Secretary of the Central Committee, also paid floral tributes to Dr Bhupen Hazarika's portrait.

A poetry session titled "Shitit Kavitar Umal Gununani" saw poets including Narayan Kalita, Chandra Saikia and Anjana Goswami reciting their compositions. Ajay Mahato, Acting Secretary of Nagaon District Kabi Sammilan, explained the purpose of the event.

Tridip Laskar spoke about Ambikagiri Raichoudhury's life and philosophy, while Dr Dhananjay Kusre, retired Vice-Principal of Morigaon College, delivered a lecture urging the youth to contribute to national development. The event concluded with a vote of thanks and the national anthem.

## Lahorijan border vulnerabilities exposed with deportations

**HT Correspondent**

**KHERONI, Dec 19:** In a significant recent move to address ongoing issues of illegal immigration, the Karbi Anglong district administration has issued deportation orders against four individuals declared as foreigners by the Foreigners' Tribunal. Two of the individuals hail from the Lahorijan area, a region strategically located on the Assam-Nagaland interstate border known for its challenges with cross-border activities.

Lahorijan has long been identified as a sensitive zone prone to various illegal activities, including drug trafficking, land encroachment and smuggling, partly due to its proximity to the border and frequent movement of people. Recent police operations in the broader Karbi Anglong area have uncovered significant contraband seizures, underscoring the region's vulnerabilities.

This development comes as Assam prepares for the 2026 Assembly elections with the Election Commission of India opting for a Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls in the state rather than the more intensive Special Intensive Revision (SIR) conducted in several other states and union territories. Critics and local stakeholders have expressed concerns that the SR process may not sufficiently identify additional doubtful voters, particularly in border areas affected by historical migration issues. The Election Commission's decision accounts for Assam's unique citizenship verification framework linked to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process.

## Teacher accused of defying transfer order, students affected

**HT Correspondent**

**GOSSAIGAON, Dec 19:** A teacher has allegedly defied the directive of the BTC Education Director, triggering serious concern within the education department and leaving students of Nabajyati High School deprived of quality education.

The incident involves Farhana Arju Ahmed, an assistant teacher of Hawriyapet Nabajyati High School in Kokrajhar district under the BTC Education Department. She is the only Hindi teacher at the school.

According to reports, Farhana Arju Ahmed was transferred from Nabajyati High School in May this year and temporarily attached to Simultapu High School in Kokrajhar district on the initiative of former Executive Member Wilson Hasda. The sudden transfer of the

sole Hindi teacher allegedly resulted in hundreds of students being deprived of proper education in the subject, leading to resentment among students, guardians and local residents.

Despite repeated appeals and representations by the school authorities and the local community seeking her re-transfer to Nabajyati High School, the teacher could not be brought back. It has been alleged that due to a political conspiracy involving the former Executive Member and the rigid stance of the Education Director at the time, the matter remained unresolved.

Sources said that the Simultapu High School authorities received the directive only on December 3. Even after receipt of the order, the teacher has allegedly ignored the instructions and has not joined

Nabajyati High School. With the academic year nearing its end, students continue to remain without a Hindi teacher, sparking strong public reaction.

It has further been alleged that despite defying the Director's order, the teacher is frequently seen visiting education department offices and has reportedly approached an MCLA in an effort to continue serving at a school closer to her residence for personal reasons.

Meanwhile, the President of the TLCC of Sirimpur constituency and former student of Nabajyati High School, advocate Mokhesur Rahman, along with former students, guardians and local residents, have demanded immediate reinstatement of the teacher at her permanent post to safeguard the academic future of the students.

## Bodo organisations meet to plan joint annual convention

**HT Correspondent**

**HOWRAGHAT, Dec 19:** An important meeting was held on Friday by the leading Bodo organisations of the Howraghat Tinali region in Karbi Anglong district—including ABSU, Kachari Samaj, Bodo Sahitya Sabha, ABWWF, Gaonburha Association, Dularay Bodo Harimu Afad, Ex-BLT Welfare Council and EX-NDFB—to organise their joint annual convention scheduled for January 4th.

During the meeting, a 23-member reception committee was formed, with Subal Basumatary appointed as the president and Jyoti Baglary as the Secretary.

The meeting was attended by Hari Narzary (President, Kachari Samaj), Biren Swargiary (Secretary, Kachari Samaj), Subal Basumatary (vice president), Gopen Khakhlyar (president, Bodo Sahitya Sabha), Dharmendra Khakhlyar (Secretary, Bodo Sahitya Sabha), Pramila Phakbari (president, All Bodo Women Welfare Federation (ABWWF)), Prabha Basumatary (Secretary, ABWWF), Gurucharan Goyary (Secretary, Harimu Afad) and Bimal Khakhlyar (Secretary, Gaonburha Association), along with Pradip Basumatary, Jyoti Baglary, Dhaneswari Basumatary, Dilkumari Narzary, Chitra Basumatary and others.

Akonir Sahitya Sabha to honour Bijoy Kumar Dutta and young writer Gahana Chakraborty

## Assamese Children's Literature Awards on December 27

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, Dec 19:** The children's literary body of the State, Akonir Sahitya Sabha will confer the prestigious Assamese Children's Literature Award and the Best Children's Book Award for 2025 in recognition of outstanding contributions to children's literature in the Assamese language.

For the year 2025, noted children's literature figure Bijoy Kumar Dutta of Golaghat has been selected for the Assamese Children's Literature Award for his Assamese translation of the globally acclaimed novel Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone. His work has been widely appreciated for making world literature accessible, engaging and enjoyable for Assamese-speaking children.

The Best Children's Book Award will be conferred on Gahana Chakraborty, a Class X stu-



dent of Asom Jatiya Vidyalaya, Noonmati, Guwahati, for her book titled The Mysterious Fish. The award seeks to recognise emerging literary talent and encourage creative writing among students at an early age.

The award distribution cere-



mony will be held on December 27 at 3 PM at the Tezpur Sahitya Sabha Bhawan. The programme will be presided over by Pankaj Baruah, president of Akonir Sahitya Sabha and will be attended by Surendra Mohan Das, Sahitya Akademi Award-winning chil-

## Fruit vendors bring juicy Jongpha oranges to Rongkhelan market



**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Dec 19:** Two fruit vendors, Jacob Bey of Bormanthi Bey Village and Raho Raho Seb Rengma of Jongpha Rengma Village, were seen selling oranges at Rongkhelan daily market on Thursday. The oranges, plucked from the slopes of Jongpha in Nilip, Karbi Anglong are cultivated by the Naga Rengmas.

Bey, the son of Rengma's sister, considers Rengma his maternal uncle, highlighting the close familial ties and local tradition of inter-marriage between Karbis and Naga Rengmas. Both travel regularly to Rongkhelan to sell their soft, juicy oranges, covering a distance of approximately 130 km from the hills to Diphu.

Rengma explained that harvesting the oranges involves hiring laborers at ₹ 600 per 1,000 oranges and negotiating prices with garden owners—₹ 4 per smaller orange and ₹ 8 per larger fruit. Around

2,000 to 4,000 oranges are loaded in the rear of their car with the back seat removed to accommodate the produce. The journey passes through dusty Nilip roads and stiff climbs at Koilamati before reaching the plains and the market.

At Rongkhelan market, oranges are sold at ₹ 100 for 10–12 small fruits, with larger oranges priced higher. Despite the effort, vendors earn a net profit of just ₹ 2,000–3,000 per day. Rengma noted that orange cultivation in Jongpha has been declining over the years. While the area was once famous for its juicy oranges, many locals have switched to betel nut cultivation or other crops due to declining soil fertility and older trees producing fewer fruits. Fewer oranges are now transported to towns like Jorhat, Golaghat, Bokaghat, Silonijan and Bokajan, reflecting the decreasing trend in traditional orange farming.

## Self-styled filmmaker arrested for exploiting women

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAO, Dec 19:** Police arrested Imran Sarkar, also known as Rahul Das, for allegedly luring women with false promises of film roles. The case, registered at Jagiroad Police Station, involves claims that the accused coerced women into spending nights with him under the pretext of giving them acting opportunities.

Authorities stated that over 100 women had reportedly come into contact with Sarkar through these deceptive tactics. The police acted based on the evidence collected, leading to his arrest.

## Gaurav Gogoi shrugs off CM Sarma's threats

**GUWAHATI, Dec 19:** Assam Pradesha Congress Committee chief Gaurav Gogoi said he is unfazed by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's alleged threats and intimidation. Speaking in Jorhat, Gogoi stated that the CM's tactics "will not last long" and that Sarma will eventually have to answer to the people.

The remarks come amid ongoing allegations by Sarma against Gogoi and his British wife, Elizabeth Colburn, over alleged links to Pakistani intelligence, which prompted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe. Gogoi criticised the SIT's charge-sheet related to Zubeen Garg's death, calling it "extremely weak" and designed to protect Sarma's associate Shyamkanu Mahanta, with key accused omitted. (PTI)

The programme will also feature children's songs and cultural performances, adding colour and vibrancy to the celebration of children's literature. In a joint statement, Akonir Sahitya Sabha working president Manoranjan Borgohain and secretary Dipjyoti Bora have appealed to the public to attend the event and extend support to initiatives aimed at promoting children's literature in Assam.

## CM Khandu directs officers to ensure Itanagar-Banderdewa highway completed in winter

CM emphasises urgency and accountability to ensure road safety and uninterrupted traffic



**ITANAGAR, Dec 19:** Expressing concern over the delay and "poor execution" of the NH-45's Itanagar-Banderdewa section, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday said it has caused public hardship, particularly during the monsoon season.

Emphasising immediate corrective measures, he said instructions have been issued to ensure that the road is made "safe, fully trafficable, and fit for uninterrupted

vehicular movement within this winter".

"This is a crucial 11.5-km road in the state capital, and delays along with poor execution have caused avoidable hardship to the public, especially during the monsoon," he said in a post on X after chairing a review meeting.

"This critical road will now move forward with urgency, accountability and a people-first approach," he said, underlining that lapses in execution would no

longer be tolerated.

The Itanagar-Banderdewa stretch of NH 415 is of major strategic and economic importance as it serves as the primary gateway connecting Itanagar with the rest of the country via Assam.

The corridor is vital for the movement of essential supplies, emergency services, and defence logistics, while also supporting trade, tourism and administrative mobility in the capital region. (PTI)

## Project to be executed under BOOT model with ₹ 1,700 crore investment Arunachal inks MoU with private firm to revive 144 MW Gongri hydro project

**ITANAGAR, Dec 19:** The Arunachal Pradesh government on Friday inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with a private firm for reviving the 144 MW Gongri hydroelectric project in West Kameng district, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said.

It was among several projects stalled for non-completion of work on time by the implementing agency.

Mein, in a post on X, said that the project is the first to be restored under the state's policy to revive long-pending and terminated hydropower initiatives.

"The signing of the MoU reflects our firm commitment to revive stalled hydropower projects through innovative policy interventions and to strengthen Arunachal Pradesh's energy landscape," Mein, who also holds the power and hydropower portfolios, said.

The Gongri project, located near Dirang town on the Gongri River, involves an estimated investment of ₹ 1,700 crore.

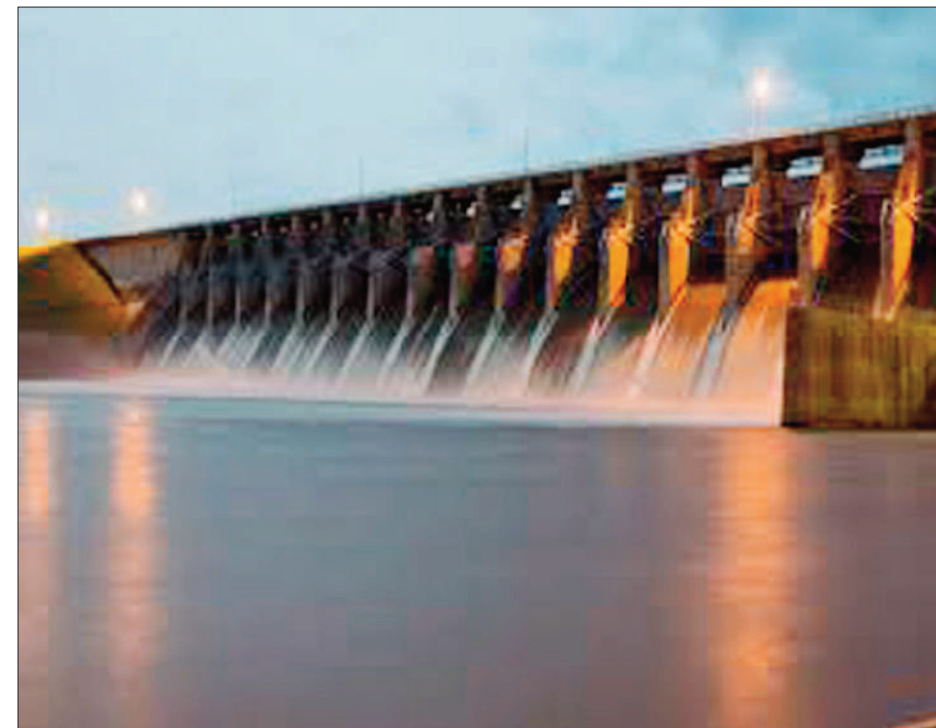
The project will be executed under the BOOT (Build-Own-Operate-Transfer) model with a lease period of 40 years, after which it will be transferred to the Arunachal Pradesh government, the deputy chief minister said.

He added that the developer, Patel Engineering Limited, has committed to restore and commission the project within 48 months from re-allotment, with commissioning targeted by December 2029.

"This milestone marks a significant step towards unlocking stalled hydropower potential and reinforcing long-term energy security for the state," he added.

The deputy chief minister stated that the revival of the Gongri project sends a strong signal of policy stability and investor confidence, while ensuring responsible and sustainable hydropower development in the state.

Meanwhile, Mein on Thursday reviewed the progress of small hydropower projects being



developed by the Hydropower Development Corporation of Arunachal Pradesh Limited (HPDCAPL), with a focus on both ongoing and proposed small hydropower projects across the state.

The review included a detailed assessment of strategically important projects such as the Sumbachu hydro project and the Taksang Chu project in Tawang district, officials said on Friday.

The deputy chief minister, during the review, examined construction progress, electro-mechanical works, inter-departmental coordination and site-specific challenges impacting timely

execution, they said.

The status and readiness of other identified small hydro projects allotted to HPDCAPL were also reviewed, along with a roadmap for accelerating implementation while ensuring environmental responsibility and local participation.

The exercise forms part of a broader effort to strengthen HPDCAPL as a key implementing agency for small hydropower development, promote clean and decentralised energy generation, and reinforce Arunachal Pradesh's long-term energy security through responsible hydropower development, the officials added. (PTI)

## ANYA meets Home Minister over Lada-Sarli land compensation issue

Group gives state government till Dec 28 for action, threatens democratic movement



**HT Correspondent**  
**ITANAGAR, Dec 19:** The All Nyishi Youth Association (ANYA) met Home and Border Affairs Minister Mama Natung on Thursday to discuss the long-pending Lada-Sarli land compensation issue in East Kameng district. The group has threatened to launch a democratic movement if concrete action is not taken by December 28.

Briefing the media after the meeting, ANYA president Jamru Ruja said the meeting, though held on the Minister's invitation, did not yield satisfactory outcomes. The Fact Finding Committee (FFC) report, central to

resolving the issue has not yet been submitted and ANYA termed the delay as a tactic linked to the state's local body polls.

"We had a marathon meeting of over two hours today, discussing several aspects of the Lada-Sarli land compensation issue. The state government should set an example through thorough investigation," Ruja said. ANYA has already issued a 15-day ultimatum to the government and has now sought an additional ten days for the authorities to take all necessary action, including providing justice to victims and initiating legal action against the accused.

Ruja stated that the organisation has previously held peaceful rallies, a Pad Yatra from Seppa to Itanagar and a five-day dharna in Itanagar to press the issue. "We expect written assurance from the government by December 28. If no action is taken, we will initiate a democratic movement and may even demand a central agency investigation," he added.

ANYA emphasised that while legal action should be taken against the culprits, development activities in the region must continue unhindered. The group will monitor the government's response closely over the next ten days.

## Arunachal govt officer held for 'misappropriation' of funds in highway project

**ITANAGAR, Dec 19:** The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in Arunachal Pradesh has arrested a government officer for alleged misappropriation of funds related to a highway project in East Kameng district, officials said on Friday.

ACB Superintendent of Police (SP) Mridul Yadav said a case was registered on the basis of a complaint, jointly submitted by members and office-bearers of the All Nyishi Youth Association (ANYA), East Kameng unit.

Following a detailed scrutiny of documents, interrogation of persons concerned and technical analysis, the ACB arrested the district land revenue and settlement officer (DLRS) on December 17 for alleged misappropriation of compensation funds related to the Lada-Sarli Frontier Highway project, he said.

The SP said the investigation into the alleged misappropriation of compensation funds for those who are affected by land acquisition is underway, he said.

The frontier highway, a 1,748 km-long strategic road along the India-China border, is a critical infrastructure project aimed at improving connectivity in remote border regions of Arunachal Pradesh and enhancing India's border management and security, according to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. (PTI)

## District administration focuses on grievance redressal and citizen-centric services

## Tawang launches 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore 2025



**HT Correspondent**  
**TAWANG, Dec 19:** The Tawang district administration successfully launched the 5th edition of Sushasan Saptah - Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore 2025 with a vibrant inaugural programme, reaffirming its commitment to people-centric and inclusive governance. The event was graced by retired APCS officer Jigme Choden as the Chief Guest.

Deputy Commissioner Namgyal Angmo highlighted that the Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore camps will be organised across villages throughout the week to deliver essential government services directly to the grass-roots. A key focus of the initiative is grievance redressal through Jansunvai, ensuring prompt, transparent and responsive administration.

Chief Guest Jigme Choden emphasised that the initiative embodies the spirit of people-centric governance, where the administration reaches citizens with dignity, care and com-

mitment, leaving no one behind.

During the Jansunvai session, Gaon Burah of Khirmu Village, Lobsang Phuntso, raised issues including the approach road to Khirmu (Meith) village community hall, shortage of one teacher and disruption of drinking water supply. The Deputy Commissioner directed concerned department heads to initiate immediate action.

Bazar Secretary of Nehru Market, Tsangpa Tashi, also highlighted concerns regarding erratic streetlight power supply and the need for security fencing at the drinking water source in the market area.

The inaugural programme included awareness camps by various departments, along with blood donation drives, Aadhaar enrolment, fire safety awareness and other citizen-focused services, making the event both impactful and service-oriented.

The next Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore camp is scheduled to be held at Kyidphel Circle.

## DC Capital reviews NH-415 package B work at Naharlagun

**HT Correspondent**  
**ITANAGAR, Dec 19:** The Itanagar Capital Complex Deputy Commissioner, Toko Babu, along with officials from the Highway Department, visited Naharlagun on Thursday to inspect the progress of work on NH-415 Package B.

According to official sources, the DC-led team reviewed the progress of GSB laying in selected areas and also assessed the construction of culverts and drainage systems at various sites. He interacted with officers and officials to understand the current status and challenges faced on the project.

The Deputy Commissioner directed the EPC contractors and project personnel to accelerate the work by deploying additional manpower, machinery and equipment to ensure timely completion of the ongoing highway construction. The PWD Highway Division Executive Engineer accompanied the DC during the inspection.

## East Siang conducts mock counting ahead of Panchayat & PMC elections

**HT Correspondent**  
**PASIGHAT, Dec 19:** The East Siang District Administration carried out a full-scale mock counting exercise at the IGI School auditorium, putting final preparations to the test for the upcoming Panchayati Raj and Pasighat Municipal Council elections.

The rehearsal served as real-time training for counting supervisors and assistants, led by master trainers Dr AK Kumar, Dr Romeo and Tayom. Officials were guided through critical steps including opening ballot and EVM boxes, verifying seals and executing the counting

process, ensuring clarity and coordination ahead of the actual counting.

The official counting is scheduled to begin at 8:00 AM on 20 December at the same venue. The administration confirmed that the process will be conducted under strict, multi-layered security to guarantee transparency and orderliness.

The dry run was successfully overseen by District Election Officer Sonalika Jiwan, IAS, along with Returning Officers ADC (HQ) Pebika Logo, IAS, ADC Mebo Nancy Yirang and other election officials and observers from East Siang district.

## SEC Commissioner Rinchin Tashi reports smooth polling, counting to begin today

## Fresh and re-polls held peacefully across Arunachal Pradesh

**HT Correspondent**  
**ITANAGAR, Dec 19:** The Arunachal Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) has confirmed that fresh and re-polls at various polling stations across the state were conducted successfully and peacefully. SEC Commissioner Rinchin Tashi said the re-polls were ordered at stations where voting had earlier been disrupted due to technical issues or law and order concerns.

In Bichom district, at UPS Lada (Nedo) of 3-Nedo ZP constituency, 206 out of 340 voters cast their votes, recording a turnout of 60.58%. In Kamle district, at Rotom Forest Camp of 6-Rotom ZP segment, 171 out of 222 voters participated, marking 77.02% polling. Namsai district saw 50 out of 58 voters casting ballots at 23-Nongkhon in 2-Upper Lakang ZP segment, yielding an 86.21% turnout. In Tirap district, at 4-Dadam ZP segment covering constituencies 4/11/2, 4/11/3, 4/11/4 and 4/11/5-II, 258 out of 308 voters exercised their franchise, registering 83.76% polling.

The SEC is now focusing on preparations for counting of votes scheduled on December 20. Training sessions for counting supervisors, agents, candidates and other personnel are underway to ensure smooth oper-



ations across the 41 counting centers set up across the state. Additionally, 41 strong rooms have been established under tight security as per protocol. It may be noted that Panchayati Raj elections were conducted

using ballot papers, while municipal polls were held through EVMs. Voting had taken place on December 15 and counting will commence at 8 AM on December 20.

No.DPRD/BTC/(15<sup>th</sup> FC)UT(V)UdI-26/2025/09, Dated 28/11/2025  
**PRESS NOTICE**  
(e-Procurement)  
The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for implementation of work "Imp of road E/F & S/G from Gututola football field to connecting MTBT road near tea garden with 3 nos HPC approx 1.5 km" for an amount not exceeding of Rs. 25,00,000.00 (Rupees twenty five lakhs) only under 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission to BTC for the year 2023-24 during 2025-26 under Untied Grant from the registered contractors of Class - I & Class- II (A,B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building), BTC.  
Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the Office of the undersigned during office hours.  
Sd/-Director,  
Panchayat & Rural Development, BTC, Kokrajhar  
**IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/3368**

No.DPRD/BTC/(15<sup>th</sup> FC)UT(VIII)UdI-28/2025/09, Dated 28/11/2025  
**PRESS NOTICE**  
(e-Procurement)  
The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for implementation of work "Construction of RCC culvert & heavy earth filling from Bodoland Agro Heritage road to Tila Basti (Garo Basti)" for an amount not exceeding of Rs. 37,40,000.00 (Rupees thirty seven lakhs forty thousand) only under 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission to BTC for the year 2023-24 during 2025-26 under Untied Grant from the registered contractors of Class-I & Class- II (A,B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building), BTC.  
Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the Office of the undersigned during office hours.  
Sd/-Director,  
Panchayat & Rural Development, BTC, Kokrajhar  
**IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/3365**

## Oppn stalled debate in Parliament on air pollution: Minister Kiren Rijiju



**NEW DELHI, Dec 19:** The government on Friday accused the opposition of "stalling" the debate in Parliament on air pollution saying some of the MPs have shown "unacceptable behaviour" during the debate on rural jobs guarantee bill and conveyed that they did not want any discussion on the health hazard issue in the national capital region.

Addressing a customary press conference after the conclusion of the Winter Session of Parliament, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, however, termed the session as "very productive" as eight bills were passed after debates in both Houses and these legislations will "speed up" the 'Reform Express' flagged off by the Narendra Modi government to bring changes in the everyday life of the common people.

"But the opposition's behaviour during the debate in Lok Sabha on Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill was unacceptable. Some of the opposition members even stood atop the desks of the table office and (Lok Sabha) Secretary General. Some Congress members also conveyed that there was no need for a debate on pollution. That is why the issue could not be taken up for discussion," he said.

Expressing regret for being unable to hold the debate on air pollution, Rijiju said the government was fully ready for the discussion on pollution and the minister concerned got ready after the subject was listed in the name of three

members -- Priyanka Gandhi Vadra (Cong), Kanimozhi (DMK) and Bansuri Swaraj (BJP).

"We were fully ready for the debate on pollution. But Congress encouraged others to stage protests (on VB-G RAM G bill) in the Well of the House. They threw papers, paper planes and stood atop desks and stalled the proceedings. I want to tell the opposition that they won't get votes through such tactics. Only good works will get them votes," he said.

Rijiju, flanked by his two deputies -- Arjun Ram Meghwal and L Murugan -- said the Parliament had extensive discussion on the national song Vande Mataram, which is the pride of the nation and members of all political parties took part in the debate. He said some of the crucial bills, including the VB-G RAM G, were passed by the Parliament and all these legislations will help the government to carry forward its reforms agenda.

"The Reform Express of the Modi government will not stop. It will speed up now. The bills will contribute in a big way in our reform initiatives. Crores of people will be benefitted, their lives will be changed and will be helpful in bringing all round development in the country," he said.

On the debate on the election reforms, Rijiju said it was for the first time the country saw discussions on the crucial subject as demanded by the opposition.

"We have allocated more time than the opposition sought for the debates," he said. (PTI)

**NEW DELHI, Dec 19:** The Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die on Friday, drawing curtains on the 19-day-long Winter Session of Parliament, which saw the passage of crucial bills, including one to repeal the 20-year-old MNREGA and another on opening up the civil nuclear sector for private participation. The total sitting hours during the Winter Session was 92 hours and 25 minutes.

As soon as the House met for the day, Speaker Om Birla read out his brief valedictory address, noting that the productivity of the Lok Sabha during the session was registered at 111 per cent, with members sitting till late hours to discuss crucial legislation.

He then adjourned the House sine die (for an indefinite period), drawing curtains on the brief session that commenced on December 1. When Birla was reading out his valedictory statement, some members were heard raising "Mahatma Gandhi ki jai" slogans. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was present when the proceedings were adjourned.

During the 15 sittings of the Winter Session, the House took up two politically-charged debates -- one on the 150 years of Vande Mataram and the other on election re-



forms. The prime minister had initiated a discussion to commemorate the completion of 150 years of the national song. The House discussed the subject for 11 hours and 32 minutes, during which 65 members participated. A debate on air pollution, which was to be initiated by Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi, could not take place.

The opposition had been insisting on a debate on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of the voter list in 12 states and Union Territories, but the government made it clear that the poll panel and its functioning cannot be discussed in the House, and agreed to hold a debate on election reforms instead.

The issue was discussed for ap-

proximately 13 hours, with the participation of 63 MPs. The opposition, however, focused its attack against the government on SIR, the new law on the appointment of the chief election commissioner and election commissioners, and the "vote chori" issue. Eight bills were passed during the session.

The Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) or VB-G RAM G Bill, assuring 125 days of guaranteed jobs for rural India, was passed amid opposition protests on Thursday, including tearing of papers.

The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, which seeks to open the

tightly-controlled civil nuclear sector for private participation, was also passed during the session.

The Lok Sabha also passed a bill to raise foreign direct investment (FDI) in the insurance sector to 100 per cent from the current 74 per cent. It is expected to increase insurance penetration, lower premiums, and boost job creation.

The Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025, was cleared by the Rajya Sabha with a voice vote, a day after it was passed by the Lok Sabha. The Lower House also passed a Bill to repeal 65 amendment Acts and six principal laws, which had lost relevance.

The Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Second Amendment) Bill, 2025; the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025 and the Health Security and National Security Cess Bill, 2025 were also among the bills passed in the Lok Sabha during the session. The House also passed the Supplementary Demands for Grants - First Batch, 2025-26.

A bill to set up a higher education regulator -- the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhithan Bill, 2025 -- was referred to a joint committee of the two Houses. It seeks to establish an overarching higher edu-

cation commission along with three councils for regulation, accreditation and ensuring academic standards for universities and higher education institutions in India.

Another bill on the market securities code was introduced and referred to a department-related standing committee for further examination. During the session, 300 starred questions were admitted, and 72 were answered orally. A total of 3,449 unstarred questions were admitted during the Session.

In total, 408 matters of urgent public importance were raised by the members during the Zero Hour, and 372 matters were taken up under Rule 377. On December 11, as many as 150 members raised their matters during Zero Hour in the House.

PRS Legislative, a think tank, said the Lok Sabha functioned for 103 per cent of its scheduled time and the Rajya Sabha for 104 per cent. Each House spent over 40 per cent of its time on debates.

It also noted that seven out of the nine Bills introduced in the Winter session were passed within a week. The think tank pointed out that private members' bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha for the first time since August 2024. (PTI)

## Govt to set up Bureau of Port Security to boost port, vessel security

**NEW DELHI, Dec 19:** To beef up the security infrastructure of ports, the government will set up a statutory body - the Bureau of Port Security - that will ensure timely analysis, collection and exchange of security-related information of ports and vessels, officials said on Friday.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday convened a meeting for the constitution of the dedicated body, the Bureau of Port Security (BoPS), which was attended by the Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, and the Minister of Civil Aviation, Ram Mohan Naidu, an official statement said.

Emphasising that there is a need to establish a country-wide robust port security framework, Shah directed that security measures should be implemented in a graded and risk-based manner, taking into account vulnerabilities, trade potential, location, and other relevant parameters. The meeting also noted that lessons learned from the maritime security framework shall be replicated in the aviation security domain, the statement said.

The new body, modelled on the lines of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), will be constituted as a statutory body under the new Merchant Shipping Act, 2025, and will work under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), it said. Headed by a senior IPS officer as its director general, the BoPS will be responsible for regulatory and oversight functions relating to the security of ships and port facilities. "During the transition period of one year, the director general of shipping shall function as the director general of BoPS," the statement said. "The BoPS will ensure timely analysis, collection and exchange of security-related information, with a special focus on cybersecurity, including a dedicated division to safeguard port IT infrastructure from digital threats," it said. (PTI)

## SC restores complaint over cheque dishonour, says Patna HC conducted 'roving enquiry'

**NEW DELHI, Dec 19:** The Supreme Court on Friday set aside the Patna High Court order which quashed criminal proceedings arising out of a cheque dishonour complaint, saying the high court committed an error by conducting a "roving enquiry" at the pre-trial stage.

A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and Ujjal Bhuyan said the high court, in its jurisdiction under section 482 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), had proceeded to test whether the cheque was issued for the discharge, in whole or in part, of any debt or other liability.

Referring to some earlier verdicts of the apex court and the provision of the Negotiable Instruments Act, the bench said, "We are of the considered view that the high court committed an error by conducting a roving enquiry, at the pre-trial stage, as regards the cheque being issued

for the discharge of debt or liability".

The bench said that as fulfilment of the necessary ingredients of section 138 of the Act is prima facie made out from the allegations, neither the summoning order nor the complaint could have been quashed at the pre-trial stage.

Section 138 of the Act deals with dishonour of a cheque for insufficiency, etc. of funds in the account. The top court delivered its verdict on an appeal challenging a June 2019 order of the high court which quashed criminal proceedings arising out of the complaint case. The appellant had lodged a complaint under section 138 of the Act against a person claiming that a Rs 20 lakh cheque issued to him in lieu of delivery of goods was dishonoured. The magistrate took cognisance of the complaint and summoned the respondent under section 138 of the Act. The respondent

moved the high court challenging the summoning order. The high court quashed the complaint proceedings on the ground that the cheque was not issued for the discharge, in whole or in part, of any debt or other liability. Dealing with the appeal, the apex court said, "The law is well settled that while considering a prayer to quash the criminal complaint and the consequential proceedings at the threshold, the court is required to examine whether the allegations made in the complaint along with materials in support thereof make out a prima facie case to proceed against the accused or not." It said no doubt, in exceptional circumstances, the court may take notice of attending circumstances to conclude that continuance of proceedings would amount to an abuse of the process, or where quashing is necessary to secure the ends of justice. (PTI)

## Session started with govt insulting Tagore, ended with insult of Gandhi: Congress

**NEW DELHI, Dec 19:** With Parliament's Winter Session drawing to a close, the Congress on Friday alleged that the session began with the government "insulting" Rabindranath Tagore and ended with the "insult" of Mahatma Gandhi.

Terming it as a "pradushan kaleen" session, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh also said that his party was absolutely ready to have a discussion on air pollution but the government was "running away" from a discussion on it.

"We were told 14 bills will be taken up with two being a mere formality on Manipur and Supplementary demand for grants. Out of the 12 bills, five were not introduced. I don't know why they give this information when they don't want to bring bills," Ramesh said at a press conference.

"I had told Rajnath Singh at the all-party meeting that the meeting is a formality and usually at the end of session they come out with a Brahmos missile. He laughed. It happened this time as well and a bill was brought towards the end

and was passed amid opposition uproar," Ramesh said in a reference to the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) or VB-G RAM G Bill. He said the Vande Mataram debate during the session was all about government "defaming Nehru" and "twisting history".

"Tagore was insulted. It was on Tagore's recommendation in 1937, the CWC decided that the first two stanzas will be sung as national song," he said.

India's first PM, Jawaharlal Nehru, was also insulted, he said. The session then ended with the "insult of Gandhi", he said in an apparent reference to the passage of G RAM G Bill that replaces MGNREGA -- a UPA-era law.

"PM Modi's strategy was clear which was to insult the three people who built modern India," Ramesh said.

Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die on Friday, drawing curtains on the 19-day-long Winter Session of Parliament which saw the passage of crucial bills, including one to repeal the 20-year-old MNREGA

and another on opening up the civil nuclear sector for private participation.

The G RAM G Bill, assuring 125 days of guaranteed jobs for rural India, was passed amid opposition protests on Thursday, including tearing of papers.

The Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, which seeks to open the tightly-controlled civil nuclear sector for private participation, was also passed during the session.

The Lok Sabha also passed a Bill to raise FDI in the insurance sector to 100 per cent from the current 74 per cent, which is expected to increase insurance penetration, lower premiums, and boost job creation.

The Rajya Sabha was also adjourned sine die. The Winter session of Parliament started on December 1. The Upper House sat past midnight on Thursday to pass legislation that replaced the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA). (PTI)

## Rahul talks about India's trajectory in rapidly changing global landscape in Berlin

**NEW DELHI, Dec 19:** Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday engaged with German think-tanks and talked about India's trajectory in a rapidly changing global landscape.

He also addressed the Hertie School in Berlin, where he said democracy is not merely a system of government but also accountability.

"Democracy is not merely a system of government -- it is a constant process of engagement, responsibility and accountability," Gandhi said.

Gandhi also separately met and held discussions with Vice Chancellor of Germany Lars Klingbeil and former chancellor of Germany Olaf Scholz.

Speaking at the Hertie School, the Congress leader reflected on leadership, democracy and global responsibility in a rapidly changing world.

Addressing an audience of students, scholars and academics, he shared insights drawn from his personal and political experiences.

Gandhi spoke about a world undergoing a transition in power, while also offering his perspectives on the state of the Indian democracy.

He emphasised the importance of inclusive and equitable education and highlighted the need for stronger global cooperation to address deep-rooted structural inequalities, according to the Congress.

Addressing the Indian community in Berlin at an event organised by the Overseas Indian Congress, he said the party stood for truth and defended the truth of India. Addressing the community at the 'Connecting Cultures' event, the Congress leader reaffirmed the

shared commitment of his party to truth and democratic values. The interaction reflected a strong cultural bond and meaningful engagement with Indians living overseas, the Congress said.

Later, the party shared a video clip of the event, where he said, "Our entire culture is based on truth. You can look at any religion you want, essentially they are saying 'follow the truth'. The Congress, Mahatma Gandhi and even you, we defend the truth of India."

"The ideological head of the RSS is openly saying that truth is of no consequence, power is important. This is the difference between them and us," Gandhi added, referring to a recent statement by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat. He also lauded the Indian community in Germany, saying they are excellent ambassadors for the country.

"You carry the idea of India, you carry the truth of India. And I am extremely proud of all of you," he said. The Congress MP also had a discussion on lunch with former chancellor of Germany, Olaf Scholz.

"The two leaders spoke at length about global affairs, trade and strengthening India-Germany ties in a changing world," the Indian Overseas Congress said in a post on X, sharing a picture of the two during the meeting. Gandhi also had an interaction with the Vice Chancellor of Germany, Lars Klingbeil.

"The two leaders discussed the shared challenges shaping the world today and the importance of building a deeper and forward-looking partnership between India and Germany," the Indian Overseas Congress said. (PTI)

## PSCs need to anticipate emerging challenges in tech, focus on transparency: President Murmu

**HYDERABAD, Dec 19:** President Droupadi Murmu on Friday said Public Service Commissions need to anticipate emerging challenges in technology and also focus on strengthening transparency and developing globally comparable teams of civil servants.

Speaking after inaugurating the National Conference for Chairpersons of Public Service Commissions here, she also said the Public Service Commissions should give the highest priority to the aspect of honesty and integrity of candidates they recruit.

"The Public Service Commissions need to anticipate the emerging challenges on the frontier of technology, strengthening transparency and credibility as well as developing globally comparable teams of civil servants," she said.

Murmu noted that integrity, sensitivity and competence of the civil servants constituting the permanent executive are of utmost importance for implementing the people-oriented policies at national and state levels.

She stressed that honesty and integrity were paramount and non-



negotiable. While lack of skills and competencies can be dealt with through learning interventions and several other strategies, lack of integrity may pose grave challenges, which may be impossible to overcome, she added.

The president urged the Public Service Commissions to look for instruments and tools which help understand ethical orientation of candidates. Gender sensitisation should be given high priority by Public Service Commissions, she said. "I have been told that the conference will deliberate on issues

related to technology, legal aspects and making the entire process of recruitment more effective. I hope the deliberations in the conference will result in very useful future oriented solution to important issues before the Commissions," she said.

The President also said India, as the world's fastest growing major economy and also a nation marked by enormous diversity, needs most effective governance systems at all levels. She expressed confidence that the PSCs will continue to fulfil their responsibilities and contribute to building a future-ready

team of civil servants selected by them.

The President said the Constitution makers dedicated an entire part of the Constitution to Services and Public Service Commissions. This highlights the significance they attached to the roles and functions of the Public Service Commissions for the Union and for the States.

The Preamble of the Constitution, the Fundamental Right of equality of opportunity in matters of public employment and the Directive Principle guiding the State to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people indicate the pathways for the Public Service Commissions, she said.

The Public Service Commissions should not only be guided by the ideal of equality of opportunity but should also try to achieve the goal of equality of outcomes. The Commissions are change-agents which promote equality and equity, she said.

Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma, UPSC Chairperson Ajay Kumar and other dignitaries attended the event. (PTI)

## Delhi's air quality remains very poor as stringent anti-pollution curbs enter 2nd day

**NEW DELHI, Dec 19:** Delhi's air quality remained 'very poor' for the fourth consecutive day on Friday and is forecast to deteriorate to the 'severe' category by tomorrow, while long queues were seen outside pollution under control centres on the second day of the 'No PUC, No Fuel' enforcement drive in the city.

As part of measures to tackle worsening air pollution, authorities here have banned the entry of non-Delhi private vehicles below BS-VI standards and enforced the 'No PUC, No Fuel' rule.

Official data showed that in the past 24 hours, enforcement teams have issued around 11,776 challans against polluting and non-compliant vehicles as part of an aggressive crackdown on emission sources across Delhi.

Even then, the 24-hour average AQI stood in the 'very poor' category at 374, marginally higher than 373 recorded a day earlier. Eleven of the 40 monitoring stations in the city have recorded 'severe' air quality, while 29 stations recorded AQI in the 'very poor' range.

Anand Vihar recorded the highest AQI at 430, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) SAMEER app.

Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said the government has adopted a multi-sector strategy combining enforcement, dust control, waste management, and vehicle regulation, which has led to a notable improvement in AQI levels compared to previous winters.

As part of the anti-pollution drive, 5,037 vehicles were checked at the national capital's border points between 8 pm on Thursday and 8 am on Friday to see

if they met BS-VI norms. As many as 419 vehicles were returned, and 374 were prosecuted. Around 2,800 vehicles were identified without valid PUC certificates between 6 am on Thursday and 6 am on Friday, a senior Transport Department official told PTI.

Meanwhile, nearly one lakh pollution-related complaints have been registered with multiple civic and enforcement agencies in Delhi over the past five years, according to official data. The Transport Department, Delhi Fire Services, and the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) reported 100 per cent disposal of complaints received during the period.

A total of 99,435 pollution-related complaints were received till 11 am on December 18 this year, of which 86,984 were resolved, while 12,451 remain pending across various departments, according to data from the Green Delhi App compiled by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC).

A day after pollution-under-control (PUC) certificates were made mandatory for refuelling at petrol pumps, commuter awareness appeared to have improved, with many people producing the required documents without being asked.

Nischal Singhania, the president of the Delhi Petrol Dealers' Association, told PTI that queues at PUC certification centres remained unchanged, while fuel sales had taken a hit in some border areas.

"Earlier, there was uncertainty about how long the 'No PUC, No Fuel' rule would continue. Now, it is clear that it will remain in force till GRAP-IV is in place. Sales have dipped in border areas. Pump owners in Badarpur reported a decline yesterday, and the trend has continued," he said. (PTI)

# Kohima holds workshop on good governance

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Dec 19:** The Kohima DC's office organised the Kohima district workshop on good governance initiatives and practices at its conference hall as part of the Good Governance Week, which began on Friday, aiming to ensure clean, transparent, and efficient public delivery systems.

Addressing the workshop themed "Prashasan Gaon Ki Ore, Kohima DC B Henok Buchem emphasised the importance of good governance that is rooted in accountability, transparency, and efficient public service delivery.

Noting that good governance has emerged as a growing trend across India and globally, Buchem cited Singapore and Scandinavian countries as notable examples of effective governance systems.

Stressing the need for Nagaland to move forward by strengthening its governance mechanisms, he said the Kohima district, and particularly the Kohima DC's office, is well-placed to set an example in this regard.



Buchem highlighted the necessity of systematic and disciplined office functioning, with special focus on file management and record-keeping.

He underlined the importance of using proper file covers, maintaining accurate indexing, preparing structured notesheets, and ensuring timely processing of files to enhance transparency and efficiency

in government offices.

He further elaborated on the introduction of a hybrid governance model combining digital and off-line processes.

Under this system, Buchem said documents can be scanned and uploaded through a mobile application, reducing procedural delays and paperwork.

All records will be securely

stored in a software database, enabling quick access and retrieval while improving overall administrative efficiency, he added.

Reiterating that good governance is about being answerable for one's work, the DC called upon all officials to work collectively toward improving governance standards in the district.

SDO (Civil) Rorheu Peseyie

presented a PowerPoint presentation on the district's vision and strategic framework, focusing on citizen-centric governance under the motto "Prashasan Gaon Ki Aur," aimed at bringing government services closer to the rural population.

The officers and staff of the DC's office attended the workshop.

# Tripura focuses on rainwater conservation to ensure sustainable water supply: Min

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Dec 19:** The underground water level in Tripura is in a good position, and to keep this position steady, the present state government has taken a series of steps on how, in the coming days, rainwater can be stored more effectively and people can be made self-reliant.

This was informed by Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath today after he chaired an important Executive Committee meeting on the Watershed Development Project under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana at Pragna Bhavan.

The Minister said that states which are dependent on rainwater must think about what they will do in the coming days, and that is why this scheme was launched.

"To store rainwater after it falls into the soil, we have taken this initiative. That is why we construct watersheds, check dams, ponds, plantations, etc. We have been doing this by spending money and we are almost successful. After March, Phase 3.0 will start," said the Minister.

He informed that states like Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan do not depend on rainwater; instead, they use groundwater for personal and agricultural purposes. However, they are now facing a water crisis as the groundwater level is decreasing.

"Tripura is in a safe position, as only 9.7% of groundwater is used here, while Assam uses 15% and West Bengal uses 52%. But we must think about the next generation. That is why this Watershed Development Project under the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana was launched. Through this executive meeting, we are deciding how, in the coming days, we can store more rainwater and make people self-reliant. I request the officials to spend the remaining funds by January 15 so that in the next project we can bring more funds for the development of the state," the Minister said.

The Minister also informed that the government is thinking of creating water bodies beside national highways along with road connectivity, children's parks, open gyms, and plantations.

# Tripura Police arrested three from Assam over delivery worker's suicide, sent to 14 days Judicial Custody



**AGARTALA, Dec 19:** The Chief Judicial Magistrate Court in Dharmanagar, North Tripura, on Thursday remanded three individuals, including two women, to 14 days of judicial custody in connection with the suicide of Prasenjit Sarkar, a delivery worker.

Sarkar, employed with Blue Dart Courier, reportedly took his own life on December 14 after allegedly being harassed and physically assaulted by the trio over a parcel-related dispute that gained attention on social media.

An Additional Public Prosecutor stated that the Dharmanagar Police had registered an FIR on December 14 following the incident. "The three accused were produced before the CJM court after their arrest in Sribhumi, Assam. The court rejected their bail plea and ordered judicial custody until December 30, directing further interrogation during this period," the prosecutor added.

The accused, identified as Sangeeta Bhattacharya, Sushmita Bhattacharya, and Saurabh Bhattacharya, with Saurabh reportedly being the main accused, have been taken to Churaibari Police Station for continued investigation.

North Tripura Superintendent of Police Avinash Rai confirmed the arrests, stating that they were made following a confidential tip-off. "This is a significant development. While we respect public demand for justice, any attempts to mislead or obstruct the investigation only hinder the process," he said.

The case stems from the tragic death of Sarkar, whose body was discovered hanging in Dharmanagar's Kameshwar area. Police and eyewitness accounts suggest that Sarkar faced both mental and physical harassment from the group over a parcel dispute, which is believed to have driven him to suicide.

Following the incident, the Dharmanagar Police had filed cases against five individuals, triggering widespread protests across Tripura demanding justice. While three suspects have now been apprehended, two remain at large. Protesters argue that arrests alone are insufficient, calling for full justice, compensation, and support for Sarkar's family, who are left struggling as he was the sole earner.

# Ready to deal with any situation: Tripura CM on protests in Bangladesh

**AGARTALA, Dec 19:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday said his government is ready to deal with any situation in the wake of violent protests in neighbouring Bangladesh.

Tension gripped Bangladesh on Friday after the death of Sharif Osman Hadi, one of the key leaders in the student uprising there, triggered protests and violence in various parts of the country.

"All of us know under what circumstances, elected Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had to leave her country. After Hasina's ouster, fundamentalists, criminals and thieves walked free from jails in Bangladesh. What we had anticipated is now happening in the neighbouring," the chief minister told the reporters. Since the matter is an international issue, the state government is sending updates to Delhi, he said.

"Nowadays, war is not fought physically, and it is based on technology. We are ready to deal with any situation," the CM said when asked about the Bangladesh situation. Saha also said security along the international border has been beefed up in view of violent protests in the neighbouring country. "There was a security-related meeting here, and the Army also joined the meeting," the CM added. While no incidents of violence were reported in the morning, protesters were seen vandalising the already demolished structure of 32 Dhanmandi, the home of Bangladesh's founding father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. (PTI)

# Nagaland collaborates with HLL Lifecare Ltd to offer affordable medicine

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Dec 19:** The Nagaland health & family welfare department signed an MoU with the HLL Lifecare Limited, a public sector undertaking under the Union ministry of health & family welfare, to start AMRIT (affordable medicine and reliable implants for treatment) Pharmacy in the state on Wednesday, an official report said on Thursday.

AMRIT Pharmacy is a novel initiative launched by HLL Lifecare Ltd to provide affordable medical items (medicines of all types and categories, surgical items, consumables and implants) for the treatment of cancer, cardiovascular and all other diseases, with the strong commitment to reducing the treatment cost of all types of diseases and bringing about a change with treatment being affordable to every Indian.

As per the MoU, HLL Lifecare Ltd will set up a warehouse at the State Family Welfare Training Institute in Chumoukudima, from where the Citizen Welfare Pharmacy of various public hospitals will procure their requirements.

# No discrimination in medical services, healthcare must reach all: Tripura CM

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Dec 19:** Tripura Chief Minister Prof Dr Manik Saha on Thursday said that the establishment of the state's only government dental college is a historic milestone in fulfilling the long-awaited hopes and dreams of the people of the state.

He said that the government dental college has emerged as a significant institution in the field of education, medical education, and health services within a short period of its establishment.

Chief Minister Prof (Dr) Manik Saha said this while inaugurating the third Foundation Day celebration of Agartala Government Dental College at Muktaadhar Auditorium today.

It is worth mentioning that on the same occasion, the Chief Minister also inaugurated the earthquake-resistant renovation and restoration work of the old I.G.M. Hospital building and later participated in the ground-breaking ceremony of the new building of Agartala Government Dental College and I.G.M. Hospital.

The Chief Minister said that the journey of this government dental college began in 2023.

"With the positive initiatives of the present state government and the sincere support of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this college is moving forward on the path of success. Students of the state are getting the opportunity to pursue advanced dental education, and the people of the state are receiving advanced medical services," he said.

Recalling past experiences, the Chief Minister said

that the present government was formed in 2018.

"No previous government has taken the initiative to establish such a college in such a short period of time. Considering the needs of the people, the future of students, and the development of the health system, the present state government has established a dental college within a very short time. Today, this dental college is appreciated across the country. From the academic year 2023-24, the college started teaching the B.D.S. course with 50 students. Currently, the number of seats has increased to 63," said Dr. Saha.

The Chief Minister said that the Tripura government is continuously making efforts for infrastructural development and reforms across the state.

"The old I.G.M. Hospital will be renovated, but its historical significance will be preserved," he said.

He further stated that the Foundation Day of an institution is a very significant and proud day for its students, teachers, and staff. However, it is also the responsibility of everyone associated with the institution to uphold its dignity and reputation.

He emphasized that there should be no discrimination in medical services and that healthcare must reach everyone. Doctors should always work with a spirit of service.

"A doctor has many responsibilities towards society. The current state government is determined to ensure healthcare facilities reach people from all walks of life. The state government is progressing in all areas, including health, education, and the legal system," said Dr Saha.

# Youth Tipra Federation stages protest in Agartala over remarks targeting Northeast, slams MD Yunus

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Dec 19:** Members of the Youth Tipra Federation (YTF), the youth wing of the Tipra Motha Party, held a protest on Friday outside the office of the Assistant High Commissioner of Bangladesh in Agartala.

The demonstration was organised in response to remarks allegedly made by a Bangladeshi political leader that were perceived as hostile toward Northeast India.

Led by YTF president Suraj Debbarma, protesters raised slogans expressing concern over statements that, according to them, challenged India's sovereignty and targeted diplomatic institutions. The demonstrators said the protest reflected public sentiment rather than any immediate political agenda.

Speaking to the media, Debbarma claimed that a recent speech delivered near the Indian High Commission in Bangladesh contained remarks that were threatening in nature. He said such statements had caused anxiety among people in the Northeast and undermined regional stability.

Debbarma highlighted India's historical role in the formation of Bangladesh and stressed the importance of maintaining mutual respect between the two neighbouring nations. He expressed



pressed disappointment over what he described as increasing anti-India rhetoric and warned that such narratives could damage long-standing ties.

The YTF leader also cautioned that continued hostile statements could provoke strong reactions among communities in the Northeast. He urged the Indian government to closely monitor

developments and take appropriate diplomatic steps to ensure national security and regional peace.

The protest concluded peacefully, with YTF members reiterating their commitment to safeguarding India's territorial integrity and calling for dialogue and restraint on both sides of the border.

# Top Army brass review security at Tripura's Bangladesh border

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Dec 19:** Against the backdrop of escalating tensions in neighbouring Bangladesh, top officials from the Indian Army, Assam Rifles and the Border Security Force (BSF) conducted a security review along the Indo-Bangladesh border in Tripura's South District on Friday.

The inspection was carried out in the Belonia sub-division, which lies along a strategically sensitive stretch of the international boundary.

Tripura shares an 856-kilometre-long border with Bangladesh, with large sections still remaining unfenced, making the region particularly vulnerable from a security perspective.

As per a statement issued by the Eastern Command of the Indian Army on X, Lt General RC Tiwari, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Command, visited a Border Outpost in Belonia along with senior military officials to evaluate the preparedness of forces deployed in the area. During his visit, Lt General Tiwari interacted with personnel stationed at forward locations and praised the Indian Army, Assam Rifles and BSF for maintaining a high level of alertness and professionalism.

areca nuts. Lalduhoma said ₹ 3.18 crore has been received from the Centre under the police modernisation scheme, and an additional ₹ 21.27 crore has also been approved in this regard.

He said several essential requirements, including three bulletproof vehicles, will be fulfilled with the funds.

Lalduhoma said the DGP-IGP conference formulated 107 recommendations, aimed at strengthening and modernising policing in India. He expressed satisfaction that several of these recommendations are already being implemented in Mizoram.

Efforts would be made to implement other recommendations as far as possible, for

# NU faculty receives research award in Thailand

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Dec 19:** Dr Rumi Dhar, assistant professor, department of law, Nagaland University, received the Best Paper Presentation Award at the 1st Asia Pacific Conference on Engineering, Education, Social Science and Humanities (APCEESH 2025) held in Bangkok recently, a varsity release said on Friday.

From among the international participants, Dhar's research paper titled "Regulation of Transborder Data Flows under Data Protection and Privacy Law: Past, Present and Future", co-authored with Sonia Nath, was selected for the award.

According to the varsity release, the achievement reflected the authors' unwavering commitment to meaningful legal research and academic discourse.

which support from the Centre would also be required, he said.

Home Minister K Sapdanga, who attended the conference, said policing is not limited to punishing offenders alone, but is fundamentally aimed at ensuring public safety and social harmony.

He stated that while continuing to monitor traditional forms of crime, the police must also be prepared to tackle emerging and contemporary challenges.

Director General of Police (DGP) Sharad Agarwal gave a detailed presentation on the recommendations of the national conference. SPs of all districts participated in the meeting through video conference. (PTI)



# Manipur: 4 UNLF militants among 7 arrested for hijacking truck loaded with fish

**IMPHAL, Dec 19:** Security forces have arrested seven people, including four members of a banned outfit, for hijacking a truck transporting fish in Manipur's Imphal West district, police said on Friday.

Four members of the proscribed United National Liberation Front (Pambei) outfit were arrested from different locations of Imphal West district on Thursday, the police statement said.

They had hijacked a truck loaded with boxes of iced fish from the Maharabi-Pheidinga Road in the district on Thursday, it said.

The arrested militants were identified as Borish Sagolsem (25), Herojit Sharma (32), Asem Amar Meitei (20) and Md Salman Khan (35).

UNLF(P) signed a peace pact with the Centre in 2023, but their members continue to be arrested for involvement in extortion activities and illegal firearms trafficking.

Police also said the hijacked truck, along with the boxes of iced fish, as well as two tipper trucks used for shifting the fish boxes from the hijacked truck have been seized. Three persons, including the drivers of the seized vehicles, have also been arrested.

Meanwhile, in an unrelated operation on Thursday, 16 improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were seized in Kangvai area in Churachandpur district. The IEDs were defused by the bomb disposal squad. The explosives were seized a few kilometres from Torbung and Phougakchao Ikhai in Bishnupur district, which witnessed indiscriminate firing on Tuesday night. (PTI)

# Mizoram CM says narcotics supply chain substantially curtailed

**AIZAWL, Dec 19:** Lauding the police for successfully tackling the menace of drugs, Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma said complete eradication remains challenging, but the supply chain has been substantially curtailed.

Chairing a state-level conference with police officers in view of the DGP-IGP conference in Raipur, he said the menace of drug abuse has significantly declined over the last two years due to the dedicated efforts of the force.

He also hailed law enforcement agencies for curbing illegal areca nut smuggling from Myanmar, which, according to him, has led to the highest-ever price of locally produced

## Two-day music fest in Andamans from December 19

A two-day international music festival will be held in Sri Vijaya Puram, the capital of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, from Friday.

The festival, which will be held in Marina Park overlooking the Bay of Bengal, will feature performances by Japanese group 'Drum Tao', Indian vocalist Suswati Mallick, and Nicobari dance, among other events, Tourism Director Vinayak Chamadia said.

Tight security arrangements have been made for the festival, the entry for which has been made free for people. The event will start around 5.45 pm with Nicobari and contemporary dance performances, followed by songs by Nicobari youth band 'Kuan Panam'.

"Drum Tao, a renowned Japanese drumming group, will perform in the islands for the first time. Their shows are described as a spectacular fusion of traditional Japanese music, contemporary dance, martial arts-inspired choreography, and modern theatrical

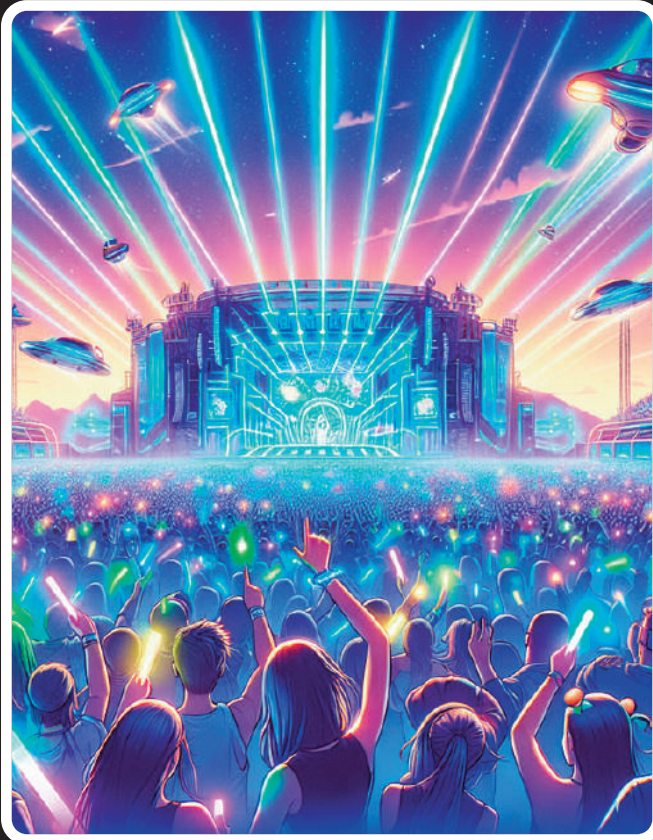
flair," the official said.

Another star attraction will be celebrated Indian vocalist Suswati Mallick, who is acclaimed for her expressive musicality and powerful stage presence, he said.

This event marks the first-ever international-scale music and cultural festival in the history of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, bringing globally renowned artistes and performances to the archipelago, Chamadia said.

On Saturday, classical and Nicobari dance performances will be held, besides singing and playing of instruments by local singers and students, he said.

"This ground-breaking initiative represents a defining moment for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, positioning the region as a rising hub for large-scale cultural and artistic events. This two-day festival not only highlights artistic talent from the islands and mainland but also brings an international flavour to the archipelago," Chamadia added. (PTI)



## KERALA FILM FEST DROPS SIX MOVIES AFTER MEA WARNING



In an exclusive interview with PTI Videos, the academy's chairman and Oscar winner Resul Pookutty said the decision was made by the academy alone, without any political input.

He added that the state government had earlier asked the academy to screen all 19 films for which permission had been refused by the union government. The alleged delay in granting censor exemptions to over a dozen films at the ongoing International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) event had sparked widespread public outrage.

"They (the Centre) told us that they had given permission for 180 films out of the 186 films on the list. So, we did not want to create further tension or give the impression that the entire people of Kerala are people of defiance," he said.

Pookutty added that the chief secretary of Kerala has also sent him an email instructing strict compliance with the orders of the MEA.

He rejected the allegations that there was a procedural delay from the side of the Academy in seeking clearance for the exhibition of the movies in IFFK. According to him, a sudden change in Visa norms by the Ministry of Home Affairs complicated everything.

"MHA said that all foreign delegates coming to IFFK should apply for conference/symposium visas. Earlier, we used to bring them in on business visas and the procedure was simpler. But for the conference visas, we could only apply through a

portal, with no person-to-person communication," Pookutty said.

He said without the clearance of visas for the jury members and other delegates, they were unable to curate the movies for the festival.

"The delay in clearance of the movies from the union government was more of a bureaucratic one than a political one. The stand of the state government, to screen all the 19 movies that did not get a clearance, fastened things up and except for six movies, we got clearance for all others," he said.

He said he personally went to Delhi once to get things cleared up as all 186 movies were not given clearance.

Pookutty said his physical absence did not affect the festival at all as he was always virtually present.

"I used to have 10 to 15 video conferences a day from London, despite the time difference and coordinating everything. I talked to the Union ministers, secretaries and other officials to speed up the clearance formalities," Pookutty said.

He said he went to London due to a formerly agreed commitment and he took up the position of the Chairman of the Academy, informing the government about this commitment. "The government asked me to go for my work and reassured me that everything will be fine and that was a great signature from the government and I am giving my 150 percent back," he said. (PTI)

## Tom Cruise, Alejandro G. Iñárritu film 'Digger' to open in 2026 fall festival corridor



Alejandro G. Iñárritu's upcoming tentpole for Warner Bros and Legendary starring Tom Cruise is called Digger and will open on October 2, 2026 - fuelling speculation that the film will premiere at a fall festival.

On Thursday morning Warner Bros dropped a poster on Instagram with the tagline "A Comedy of Catastrophic Proportions". The teaser trailer

was accompanied by a tortured guitar riff and began with a silhouette of a dishevelled Cruise swirling balletically with a shovel in a dimly-lit apartment, before he scales a railing by the sea and cavorts along the top bar.

The opening date is prime territory for a Venice Film Festival (September 2-12, 2026) berth and indeed the Lido has been a happy place for the Oscar-winning Mexican auteur Iñárritu. Two of his three last films - Bardo in 2022 and Birdman in 2014 - premiered there, as did 21 Grams in 2003. He won back-to-back directing Oscars in 2015 and 2016 for Birdman and The Revenant.

Digger shot in the UK and marks Iñárritu's return to English-language filmmaking after The

Revenant in 2015. The feature previously went by the working title Judy and bore the logline: "The most powerful man in the world embarks on a frantic mission to prove he is humanity's savior before the disaster he's unleashed destroys everything."

The cast includes Oscar-nominated Anatomy Of A Fall star Sandra Hüller and Jesse Plemons, who is in awards contention this season with Bugonia. Iñárritu appears to be flexing his absurdist muscles again as he did on Birdman and Bardo, and co-wrote Digger with Mexican playwright Sabina Berman and his Birdman collaborators Nicolas Giacobone and Alexander Dinelaris.

Cruise was last seen in 2025 summer tentpole Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning and has demonstrated superior acting chops in art-house films like Magnolia and a penchant for comedy (and dancing) as seen in his notorious cameo as Len Grossman in Tropic Thunder. (PTI)

## Rapper DIVINE unveils new album 'Walking On Water'

Rapper and songwriter DIVINE on Friday released his fifth studio album, "Walking On Water", a 16-track testimonial chronicling his ascent from the streets of Mumbai to the global hip-hop arena.

The rapper, whose work includes tracks such as "Kohinoor", "Baazigar" and "Mirchi", had his breakthrough in 2015 with "Mere Gully Mein".

The latest album is the singer's most complete artistic statement yet—an ambitious, meticulously crafted body of work that merges spiritual conviction with street-hardened truth, expansive sonic exploration with the unmistakable swagger that has cemented his legacy, a press release said here.

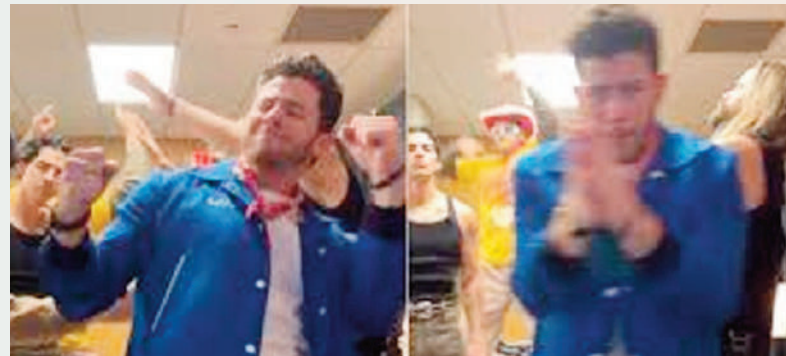
Released via Gully Gang, the album features an elite roster of collaborators including artists like Hanumankind, Gurinder Gill, Riar Saab, MC Altaf, Sammohit

and Kalyani Priyadarshan, producers ZZORAWAR, Stunnah Beatz and Phenom alongside bold reinterpretations of some of Bollywood's most iconic tracks.

"This album is a declaration of evolution, dominance, reflection and spiritual grounding—celebrating everything I've built and everything I've survived. It's an album for the streets. For the culture. For the believers. And for those who doubted," DIVINE said in a statement.

The tracks in the album include: "Walking on Water", "Doctor DIVINE", "Jungle Juice", "Late Knights", "Saucy", "Boom", "ABCD", "Doordarshan", "You & I", "Drama", "Homicide", "Rain - Sampling 'Give Me Some Sunshine'", "Tequila Dance", "Triple OG", "DADA - DIVINE, and "BOOM"

DIVINE and Naazy were the inspiration behind Zoya Akhtar's hit film "Gully Boy". (PTI)



## Nick Jonas dances to 'Shararat' from Dhurandhar: 'New pre show hype song'

Pop singer and Priyanka Chopra's husband Nick Jonas surprised his fans and followers by sharing a video of himself on social media, dancing to the track 'Shararat' from Ranveer Singh-starrer Dhurandhar.

The song is sung by Madhubanti Bagchi and Jasmine Sandlas and has been composed by Shashwat Sachdev.

Nick uploaded a post on his Instagram handle on Friday, which featured him alongside his brothers-musicians, Joe Jonas and Kevin Jonas grooving to the song. "New pre show hype song unlocked," he wrote in the caption.

Directed by Aditya Dhar of Uri: The Surgical Strike fame, Dhurandhar released in theatres on December 5 and also features Sanjay Dutt, Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun, R Madhavan and Rakesh Bedi. The film's lead Ranveer, also left a cheeky comment on Nick's video. Hahahahahaah JIUUUU JAAANE DEEEEEE," he wrote.

The film has been produced by Aditya and his brother Lokesh Dhar through their banner B62 Studios alongside Jyoti Deshpande of Jio Studios. It has already crossed the mark of Rs 500 crore at the domestic box office. (PTI)

## SPNI to bring 'Wheel of Fortune' to India, Akshay Kumar to host the game show

Sony Pictures Networks India on Friday announced that it is bringing the Emmy-winning game show "Wheel of Fortune" to India with Bollywood superstar Akshay Kumar attached as its host. SPNI is also gearing up for one of the largest integrated media launches in the recent years to ensure "Wheel of Fortune" becomes an unmissable event, according to a release here. Highgate Entertainment, LLC has licensed the format to Sony Pictures Networks India and Frames Production Company is producing the Indian edition for SPNI.

"Wheel of Fortune" has been a beloved show for millions around the world, and I'm truly excited to bring its Indian edition to audiences here. Its multi-generational appeal and the thrill of puzzle-solving have made it a global favourite and I'm confident it will be immensely enjoyed by Indian audiences. With the combined reach of Sony Entertainment Television and Sony LIV, Wheel of Fortune India will engage viewers across platforms like never before," Akshay said in a statement. Nachiket Pantvaideya, Business Head, Sony Entertainment Television, said Sony Entertainment Television has long pioneered the reality format space in India. "With 'Wheel of Fortune', we're adding another marquee global franchise to the portfolio, bringing high-energy entertainment to Indian homes. Anchored in our strategy across Sony Entertainment Television and Sony LIV, the show promises to create a powerful brand-building and engagement platform, offering advertisers unparalleled reach and impact across television and digital," he added. (PTI)

## RGV praises 'Dhurandhar' as quantum leap in India cinema, Aditya Dhar says he feels seen

Ram Gopal Varma on Friday praised "Dhurandhar" by calling it a quantum leap in Indian cinema and its director Aditya Dhar said as a fan he feels overwhelmed and seen as he came to the city years ago with a desire to work with the "Satya" helmer.

In a long post on X, Varma, known for Hindi movies such as "Rangeela", "Satya" and "Company", said Dhar's film has "completely and single handedly" changed the future of Indian cinema.

"Dhurandhar" is not just a film... it is a quantum leap. What 'Dhurandhar' achieves is not just scale, but a never before experienced vision not just in sight but in the mind. Aditya Dhar doesn't direct scenes here... he engineers the states of minds of both the characters and us audience. The film doesn't ask for your attention... it

commands it," Varma said praising the Ranveer Singh starrer.

The filmmaker said Dhar's film "refuses to be polite" whether it is through its writing or the way scenes are staged.

"Dhar understands that power in storytelling is not volume... It's pressure building. Every sequence feels compressed, like a spring being wound never knowing when it will snap. And when it does, the impact is not just brutal but it is also symphonically operatic..."

"But beyond craft, what truly elevates 'Dhurandhar' is its intent. This is not a film chasing trends or validation. It is a solemn declaration, that Indian cinema doesn't need to dilute itself to become successful and doesn't need to mindlessly copy Hollywood. Dhar proved that it can be rooted and still be internationally cinematic," Varma



said. Dhar, who debut with "Uri: The Surgical Strike", responded by sharing his admiration for the filmmaker's past movies.

"I came to Mumbai years ago carry-



ing one suitcase, one dream, and an unreasonable belief that I would one day work under Ram Gopal Varma. That never happened. But somewhere along the way, without knowing it, I worked inside your cinema. Your

films didn't teach me how to make movies — they taught me how to think dangerously," Dhar said.

"To have you say that 'Dhurandhar' is a quantum leap feels surreal, emotional, and honestly a little unfair... because now whatever I do next has to live up to this tweet. You were one of my favourite directors who made Indian cinema feel fearless, impolite, and alive. If 'Dhurandhar' has even a fraction of that DNA, it's because your films whispered (sometimes screamed) in my head while I was writing and directing it," Dhar said.

Dhar said he assumed that the audience is intelligent by watching Varma's films which never apologised for their ambition.

"Thank you for this generosity, this madness, and this validation. The fan in me is overwhelmed. The filmmaker

in me feels challenged. And the boy who came to Mumbai to work under RGV... finally feels seen," Dhar added.

Featuring Ranveer Singh alongside Sanjay Dutt, Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun, R Madhavan and Rakesh Bedi, the film released in theatres on December 5. Its box office collection in India has already crossed Rs 500 crore. The worldwide box office collection of the film is over Rs 700 crore.

The film follows covert intelligence operations set against a backdrop of geopolitical and terror events like Kandahar plane hijack, 2001 Parliament Attack and 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

It is produced by Dhar and Lokesh Dhar under B62 Studios in association with Jyoti Deshpande's Jio Studios. (PTI)

# RUNS APLENTY: NEW ZEALAND DECLARE AT 575 AND WEST INDIES 110-0 AFTER DAY 2 OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> TEST

**MOUNT MAUNGANUI (NEW ZEALAND), Dec 19:** Devon Conway scored his second Test double century more than four years after his first to speed New Zealand to a declaration at 575-8 Friday on the second day of the third Test against the West Indies.

Undeterred by the New Zealand total and the need to bat in gloomy conditions late in the day, West Indies openers John Campbell and Brandon King rushed to 110 without loss in 23 overs before stumps.

New Zealand leads the three-match series 1-0 after the first test was drawn and the Black Caps won the second by nine wickets.

King reached a half century from 63 balls and was 55 not out at the close and Campbell was 45 not out after a century opening partnership from only 116 balls.

After reaching 200, Conway

went on this time to his highest test score of 227 in an innings of almost 8-1/2 hours. He made exactly 200 in the first innings of his debut test against England at Lord's in June 2021.

His mammoth innings of 508 minutes, 367 balls, 31 fours which encompassed a 323-run opening partnership with Tom Latham put New Zealand in control of the test.

Latham made 145 on the first day and Rachin Ravindra built a half century in the second and third sessions Friday, finishing 72 not out when the declaration was made approaching 5 p.m., with around 90 minutes or 23 overs left in the day.

Ravindra hit six fours and two sixes, speeding up as the declaration approached. He shared an unbroken partnership of 39 with Ajaz Patel who finished 30 not out.

"We would have liked a wicket at the end but that's the



way the cookie crumbles," Ravindra said. "They both batted well, King and Campbell, and they showed the ability to punish when we missed. Hopefully, the pitch wears a little bit

from now on and offers a bit to the spinners."

The West Indies bowled 155 overs, 65 on the second day when they were without attack spearhead Kemar Roach who was unable to bowl because of a hamstring injury. When they came to bat, they were without Shai Hope who remained at the team hotel Friday with an unspecified illness.

New Zealand resumed at 334-1 with Conway 178 not out. He hit a four from the first ball of the day and went on to reach his double century from 316 balls in 437 minutes.

Though short-handed in Roach's absence, the West Indies bowlers performed better on the second day than on the first, regularly chipping out the New Zealand batters. Their ability to find the edge of the New Zealanders' bats presented four catches to wicketkeeper Tevin Imlach.

Nightwatchman Jacob Duffy was the first, caught behind on 17 after hitting two boundaries to add to his overnight total of 9. Then Kane Williamson fell before lunch for 31, taken from 60 balls.

Justin Greaves was the best of the West Indies bowlers and took 2-83 from 29 overs.

New Zealand lost Daryl Mitchell (11) and Tom Blundell (4) between lunch and tea and Glen Phillips (29) in the last session as it made often desultory progress until Ravindra stepped up the pace with the declaration imminent.

New Zealand came out full of energy after the declaration, expecting to take wickets before stumps. But the New Zealand pacers bowled poorly, mixing their lengths and allowing the West Indies to score freely.

Zak Foulkes gave up 39 runs from only six overs before the close. (AP)

## Bhattacharya, Jaglan lead Indian charge for Asian Tour cards



**HUA HIN, Dec 19:** Shaurya Bhattacharya chipped in twice on successive holes for an eagle and a birdie to compile a superb six-under 65 in the third round and move to tied second in the Final Stage of the Asian Tour's Qualifying School here.

He was overnight Tied-15th. His first two rounds were 70-67 and is now 11-under for three rounds.

Bhattacharya is one shot behind the leader, unheralded and surprise third round leader, Tomohiro Ishizaka from Japan.

Ishizaka, who qualified for this week by making it through a pre-qualifier last week, shot a seven-under-par 64, for a tournament total of 12-under and a one-shot lead.

He leads Bhattacharya and Roberto Lebrija from Mexico (67) by one. Korean amateur Minchan Kim is another stroke behind, following a 68.

India's Shubham Jaglan, who was in lead after the second round dropped a double bogey on the closing 18th hole and slipped to Tied-10th place at 7-under total.

Two layouts are being used this week, with all four leaders today playing the C&D course here at Lake View Resort & Golf Club, in the seaside resort town of Hua Hin, Thailand.

The top-70 and ties make the 72-hole cut with the leading 35 on Sunday securing their cards for the 2026 season on the Asian Tour.

Other Indians in with a chance to make the card include Honey Baisoya (68) at 5-under and Tied-20th, young Kartik Singh (70) and Khalin Joshi (68) at 3-under and both are Tied-36th.

S Chikkarangappa (67) moved into reckoning and is 2-under and T-46th alongside Ajeetesh Sandhu (69). Rashid Khan (73) is tied-70th and needs to stay there to ensure fifth and final round action in the Qualifying School.

Viraj Madappa (72) and Sachin Baisoya (76) are T-119, while Yuvraj Singh (73) and Pukhraj Singh Gill (73) are T-128. They all need to get into Top-70 to make it to the fifth and final round to have a chance for a 2026 Asian Tour card. (PTI)

## SLC sacks Asalanka as skipper, appoints Shanaka as captain for T20 World Cup

**COLOMBO, Dec 19:** Sri Lanka on Friday named Dasun Shanaka as skipper of its preliminary 25-member squad for the T20 World Cup as the co-hosts sacked Charith Asalanka as the leader of the side.

Pramodaya Wickramasingha, who is back as the chairman of selectors, said Asalanka's poor batting form and Shanaka's experience in playing three previous World Cups were factors in making the decision.

Asalanka was speculated to be out-of-favour since he abandoned the white-ball tour to Pakistan last month over safety concerns following a suicide bomb explosion in Islamabad that killed nine people.

"Shanaka's role will be of an all-rounder. When I stopped being a selector Shanaka was the captain. Charith (Asalanka) was in our long term plans then," said Wickramasingha.

Sri Lanka have been clubbed with Australia, Ireland, Zimbabwe and Oman in tournament, starting February 7. Wickramasingha said the selectors needed to revive Asalanka of the captaincy burden ahead of home series against Pakistan and England. Asalanka will be part of the squad as a batter.

"We hope he will regain his bat-



ting form. In consultation with Sanath Jayasuriya (the head coach) we decided it was not the time to make too many changes. So we decided to go with the same squad," he said.

On Niroshan Dickwella's return to the squad, Wickramasingha said he was considered for several possible roles: "as an opener, a reserve wicket keeper or even a middle order batter."

He said in future coach would also be a stake holder. Previously it was only the selectors who got the blame or the praise on the team performance.

"We will have targets for fitness for example. I will hold the trainer responsible if the players were not able to meet the required fitness level," he said.

Sri Lanka Squad: Dasun Shanaka (Captain), Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis, Kamil Mishara, Kusal Perera, Dhananjaya de Silva, Niroshan Dickwella, Janith Liyanage, Charith Asalanka, Kamindu Mendis, Pavan Rathnayake, Sahan Arachchige, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dunith Wellalage, Milan Rathnayake, Nuwan Thushara, Eshan Malinga, Dushmantha Chameera, Pramod Madushan, Matheesha Pathirana, Dilshan Madushanka, Maheesh Theekshana, Dushan Hemantha, Vijayakanth Vijayakanth and Traveen Mathew. (PTI)

## Gossaigaon Global FC clinches Bodoland Martyrs Gold Cup title

**HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, Dec 19:** Gossaigaon Global FC emerged champions of the 25th Bodoland Martyrs Gold Cup Football Tournament after defeating Salbagan FC of Gossaigaon 4-3 in a tie-breaker in the final match held at the Kokrajhar District Sports Association (KDSA) stadium on Thursday evening.

The much-anticipated final ended in a 1-1 draw at the end of regulation time, forcing the match into a penalty shootout. Gossaigaon Global FC held their nerve in the tie-breaker to secure a narrow 4-3 victory and lift the coveted trophy.

The final was ceremonially inaugurated with a kick-off by Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary, who attended the event as chief guest.

Addressing the gathering, Mohilary announced that the existing KDSA stadium would be reconstructed within the next two years to upgrade sporting infrastructure in the region.

At the prize distribution ceremony, the champion team Gossaigaon Global FC received the trophy along with a cash prize of ₹1 lakh, while runners-up Salbagan FC were awarded the trophy and a cash prize of ₹50,000.

## Nagal, Shrivalli shine as Eagles down Hawkes to close in on WTL final

**BENGALURU, Dec 19:** Indian stars Sumit Nagal and Shrivalli Bhamdipaty played lead roles as Eagles downed Hawkes to all but seal a World Tennis League (WTL) final berth here on Friday.

The 22-12 win helped Eagles to swell their total points tally to 65 and Hawkes ended up with 53 points after their final set of league matches. The lone glitch for Shrivalli on the day was her defeat in mixed doubles, as she and Gael Monfils lost to Yuki Bhambri and Elina Svitolina 4-6.

But Hawkes did not have any more success on the day as Shrivalli made her first appearance in the WTL a memorable affair.

She returned to court for women's singles soon and made short work of Maaya Rajeshwaran Revathi 6-2.

The 24-year-old right-hander then teamed up with Paula Badosa in the women's doubles to beat Maaya and Svitolina 6-3, as a break in the eighth game did the trick for the Eagles' pair.

**Nagal beats Shapovalov**

This was expected to be the feature event of the evening. But the match between Nagal and world No. 23 Denis Shapovalov turned out to be a lop-sided contest, as the

Canadian was struggling with a neck injury.

It was evident from the outset that Shapovalov was not his usual self as there was no strength in his serve and ground shots. He was not even able to run to retrieve the balls properly.

Once Nagal took a 3-0 lead, the tournament authorities allowed Monfils to come in as a 'helper' for Shapovalov.

The Frenchman took over the serving duties from his teammate while the latter continued to execute the ground-strokes.

But the arrangement made no difference to the outcome as Nagal wrapped up an easy 6-1 victory, much to the disappointment of the crowd.

The winning moment came with Nagal's powerful forehand cross-court winner.

"Feel so sorry for Shapo. Every athlete goes through that, but we take it (the result) for the team's sake as every game is important in this tournament. I have known Shapo since the age of 12, as we used to train together a lot and hopefully he will get better soon," Nagal said after the match.

In the final league match, Falcons will play Kites. (AP)

## PSG goalkeeper fractures hand after penalty shootout heroics

**PARIS, Dec 19:** Paris Saint-Germain goalkeeper Matvey Safonov has been left with a fractured hand following his penalty shootout heroics to win the Intercontinental Cup. Safonov made four straight penalty saves as PSG beat Brazil's Flamengo 2-1 in the shootout on Wednesday to secure the club's first global title. He was thrown in the air by his teammates during the celebrations. PSG said Friday that Safonov has a fracture in his left hand, without specifying how or when he was injured, and that "this situation will be re-evaluated" after three or four weeks. Safonov, PSG's Russian backup goalkeeper, hadn't played a single minute for the team until summer signing Lucas Chevalier sustained an ankle injury which has ruled him out since his last game Nov. 29. (AP)

## Self-imposed pressure key to World Cup preparations, says Varun Chakravarthy

**AHMEDABAD, Dec 19:** India spinner Varun Chakravarthy says his T20 World Cup preparation is centred around backing his lengths, maintaining confidence and constantly challenging himself mentally even in matches that appear straightforward.

The 34-year-old has 51 wickets from 32 T20Is, including six wickets in the first three games of the ongoing five-match series against South Africa. Chakravarthy is vital for India's title defence at the World Cup, which is scheduled to be held from February 7 to March 8 in India and Sri Lanka.

"It is very important to keep putting pressure on yourself to get ready for the World Cup," the Karnataka-born spinner said on 'Follow The Blues' on Jiohotstar.

"You have to challenge yourself even when there is no challenge. If a match feels easy, you have to create that pressure mentally and start challenging yourself.

"Confidence, bowling the right lengths, and understanding the opposition are key. That is one major factor I want to take into the World Cup.

With a better understanding of the opposition, I think I can do well."

Chakravarthy said sticking to the basics and trusting his skill-set have been the key to his recent success at the international level.

"My plan is simple, stick to the basics and bowl my length. Sometimes it works, and thankfully in the last three matches, it has worked well. I will try the same in the next match," he said. India and South Africa are set to face off in the fifth and final T20I here on Friday.

"When you are not confident, your mindset affects your skill. The key is to stay confident and back your skills. That is when you execute well, without much change. That is the secret to being consistent.

"At this level, you must be consistent, playing at the highest level is important to know where you stand," Chakravarthy said.

"In my first match at the international level, I struggled a bit initially and that's when I understood a few things. I went back to practice and made corrections. So, it is very important to keep playing at the highest level." (PTI)

## Judge dismisses \$800 million lawsuit by Enhanced Games, which declines to pursue the case further

**WASHINGTON, Dec 19:** A federal judge has dismissed an \$800 million lawsuit filed by the Enhanced Games alleging that World Aquatics, the World Anti-Doping Agency and USA Swimming led an illegal effort to dissuade swimmers and other athletes from competing in its new series.

U.S. District Judge Jesse Furman ruled against the sports startup in November, giving it 30 days to refile the case to address his objections. On Thursday, WADA sent out a news release announcing the deadline had passed.

"It vindicates the strong stance we have taken on this matter," WADA said in a news release.

A person with knowledge Enhanced's legal maneuverings told The Associated Press it did not refile because it has had recent success signing swimmers, and also because it does not

want to complicate its recent filing for a public offering that it expects will raise around \$200 million.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the ongoing public-offering process.

Earlier this month, Enhanced announced five more swimmers who planned to compete at its event next May, where athletes will compete for \$250,000 first prizes.

They joined a field that now numbers around a dozen, including Olympic medalists James Magnussen, Ben Proud and Cody Miller. Fred Kerley is the top sprinting name set for the event, which will require strict medical observation of the athletes but will not ban drugs the way Olympics sports do.

The lawsuit centered on a rule adopted by Switzerland-based World Aquatics earlier this year that threatened to banish athletes who compete in

"sporting events that embrace the use of scientific advancements or other practices that may include prohibited substances and/or prohibited methods."

It added WADA and USA Swimming as defendants because they supported the rule.

The fatal flaw in the case, Furman wrote in response to the defendants' motion to dismiss, was that "Enhanced fails to plead that World Aquatics has monopoly power" in the markets it is trying to compete in — namely, among elite athletes who want to test themselves under different drug-testing protocols than are used at the Olympics and other elite sports.

Furman acknowledged in his decision that Enhanced said it knew of facts that could answer the shortcomings he pointed out, but because Enhanced didn't respond in the 30-day window, the case is closed. (AP)

# Ahlawat cards solid final round 67 to win CIDCO Open No surprises expected but T20WC could be SKY's last as India skipper

**NAVI MUMBAI, Dec 19:** Veer Ahlawat brought all his experience to the fore, carding a four-under 67 on the final day to emerge as the champion at the Rs 1 crore CIDCO Open here on Friday.

The Gurugram golfer (65-65-73-67), who was at the top of the leaderboard for the first three days being the sole leader in the first two rounds and the joint leader after the third round, emerged victorious by three shots at a total of 14-under 270.

Six-foot four-inch tall Ahlawat, the 2024 PGTI Order of Merit champion, secured his second title of 2025 and sixth win overall that earned him the winning cheque worth Rs 15 lakh and propelled him from 18th to 11th position in the 2025 PGTI Ranking.

Pune's Rohan Dhole Patil (70-69-64-70), the overnight joint leader, came up with a last round of 70 to finish runner-up at a total of 11-under 273 and thus record his best finish on the PGTI.

Rohan collected a cheque worth

₹ 10 lakh that pushed him up from 42nd to 32nd in the PGTI Ranking.

Gurugram's Manu Gandas (68-68-70-68) and Italy's Michele Ortolani (67-66-72-69) finished tied third at 10-under 274.

Ravi Kumar of Chandigarh made the third hole-in-one of the tournament during his final round of 71. Ravi aced the 13th hole. He totalled four-under 280 to claim tied ninth place at four-under 280.

Ahlawat, who gained valuable international experience by playing on the DP World Tour in the 2025 season as a result of his PGTI Order of Merit win last year, said, "I started off well today but then made some mistakes till the 10th. I then got on a roll from the 11th onwards.

"Despite the tough stretch in the middle, I was quietly confident because I knew at the back of my mind that I had played well in such tight situations before. I knew that once I brought my 'A' game out, I would be hard to beat." (PTI)

**MUMBAI, Dec 19:** Skipper Suryakumar Yadav and his deputy Shubman Gill's indifferent form is a massive concern but the national selection committee is unlikely to make any shocking changes when it picks the 15-member squad for next year's T20 World Cup here on Saturday.

The BCCI would be at liberty to replace any of the named 15 till the start of the T20 World Cup on February 7. For the record, during the Champions Trophy earlier this year, Varun Chakravarthy replaced Yashasvi Jaiswal after slow tracks in Dubai were taken into consideration.

While nobody in BCCI is spelling it out, the global event in India could well be the last for Suryakumar as national T20 skipper. He is already 35 and has been out of form for the past one year.

Having endured a barren run for almost 14 months and across 24 games, Suryakumar is holding on to his place only because he is the captain. The committee will also pick the



T20 squad for New Zealand which will be the same as the one chosen for the T20 World Cup.

For the time being, there aren't any slots up for grabs although Gill's position has repeatedly come under scanner while an in-form Yashasvi Jaiswal waits in the wings.

It remains to be seen if the selectors name Jaiswal as an extra player

for the New Zealand series just to observe him in case he is needed during the mega-event to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.

The reserve opener's slot currently belongs to Sanju Samson, who was wrongfully displaced from his position when the selection committee and an important member of the team think-tank decided to fix something that wasn't

broken.

Had the T20 World Cup been six months away, there was every possibility of the selection committee looking at alternative options for leadership.

However, what has worked for Suryakumar is an early T20 World Cup and form deserting his deputy Gill, who was being seen as the all-format captain after taking over the reins of the Test and ODI sides.

But with only five games left before the opening World Cup match against the United States of America in Mumbai on February 7, no selection panel would want to break the continuity.

While there is a good chance that the 15 selected against South Africa for the home assignment will also play against New Zealand and subsequently the T20 World Cup, Jaiswal's name is almost certain to come up as he has shown himself to be a more versatile T20 player compared to both Gill and Samson.

But with Samson being the second keeper now (Jitesh Sharma is the first choice stumper and fin-

isher) and Gill being promoted as vice-captain, it is difficult for Jaiswal to break into the 15 as he doesn't fit any other role specific slot.

The other weak link in the 15 is Washington Sundar, who hasn't yet shown any pyrotechnics in 57 T20Is. But in this format, he is more of bowling all-rounder.

On paper, the side looks unbeatable with 14 proven IPL superstars (save Washington) but what is likely to stick out like a sore thumb is that two out of top three batters are horribly out of form.

**India Likely 15:**

Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Shubman Gill (vice-captain), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Axar Patel, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav, Harshit Rana, Sanju Samson (wk), Washington Sundar

Likely Stand Bys (5/6): Yashasvi Jaiswal, Rinku Singh, Riyan Parag, Shahbaz Ahmed/Nitish Kumar Reddy, Prasidh Krishna. (PTI)

It was trademark 'Travball' on Day 3 of the third Ashes cricket test

# Head's hundred helps Australia to a 356-run lead in 3<sup>rd</sup> Ashes test against England

**ADELAIDE, Dec 19:** Travis Head took off his helmet and gloves, dropped to his knees and planted a kiss on the pitch after posting a century in a fourth consecutive test on his home ground at the Adelaide Oval.

It was trademark "Travball" on Day 3 of the third Ashes cricket test.

The freewheeling Australia batter had a huge reprieve on 99 when he slashed at a Jofra Archer delivery and was dropped by Harry Brook at gully. That was after he fended a Joe Root twacker and took off for a quick single, only to be sent back by batting partner Alex Carey.

Head faced eight balls without scoring while on 99, then went for broke and advanced down the pitch and drove the ball back over Root's head to the long-on boundary to move to 103.

It was his 11th century in 63 tests, and second in five innings since being promoted from No. 5 to open the innings in Perth. That's where his match-winning innings sealed Australia's eight-wicket win to open the series.

By stumps Friday, Head was unbeaten on 142 and his unbroken partnership with fellow South Australian Carey (52) was 122. Australia was 271-4, with a lead of 356.

Head said his new-look celebration of the century was designed to get a laugh out of his teammates.

"I got the rise out of the dressing room that I expected," he said in comments published by Fox Sports. He added, more seriously, that his hometown "wicket has looked after me over the last few years."

"I didn't think I'd get one, so to get four (centuries at the Adelaide Oval) is not too bad. I felt alright."

Brook took two excellent catches in the slips to remove Marnus Labuschagne (13) and Cameron Green (7) off Josh Tongue's bowling, but the one he missed against Head was costly.

**Stokes and Archer**

The Australians went in to bat after dismissing England for 286 just before lunch, after Ben Stokes and Archer helped cut the first-innings margin to 85 with a record 106-run ninth-wicket stand.

Stokes walked off the field yelling at himself and shaking his head after being bowled for 83 by Mitchell Starc, bringing an end to a defiant, 198-ball innings that dragged his team back into the contest.

After losing the first two tests in Perth and Brisbane and allowing Australia to post 371 in the first innings here, England's chances of keeping the five-test series alive seemed remote when Stokes went to the crease on Day 2 with the total at 71-4. With England on the verge of collapsing at 168-



8, Stokes joined forces with No. 10 Archer to bat out the evening session. The pair resumed Friday with England at 213 for eight, still 158 behind. Australia wanted to clean up the last two wick-

ets quickly but Stokes and Archer, who took a five-wicket haul when England was bowling, dug in.

Stokes stepped down the wicket to Scott Boland for a driven boundary to bring up the 50 partnership off 89 balls, then raised his half-century with a single off 159 deliveries. It was his slowest 50 in test cricket — his 37th — but vital for his team.

Not long after, Archer took a single off Cummins to reach his first test half-century off 97 balls, bringing England's deficit under 100.

But the innings ended relatively quickly after left-arm Starc bowled Stokes with a delivery from over the wicket that angled back. The Stokes-Archer partnership was the highest ever for the ninth wicket for England at Adelaide.

**The impact**

All that time in the sun had an impact on England's bowling attack, though. Archer, who took five wickets in the first innings, took 0-15 in 10 overs on Friday. Stokes, England's highest wicket-taker this year, didn't bowl and had to leave the field for a short while in the evening session.

England is capable of tracking down a big target in the fourth innings, chasing 370-plus against India twice in the last three years, so Bazball won't be completely dispensed with despite Stokes' stoic first innings. (AP)

## Ministry musings: Doping crisis being addressed

**NEW DELHI, Dec 19:** India's shambolic doping record is being addressed aggressively and a marginal decline in the overall positivity rate in the recently-released 2024 international testing figures is evidence that awareness campaigns are making a difference as the country bids to host the 2036 Olympics, a Sports Ministry source asserted on Friday.

As per the latest testing figures released by WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency), India conducted 7113 tests (6576 urine samples and 537 blood samples) last year.

Of these, 260 returned adverse analytical findings, accounting for a positivity rate of 3.6 per cent, the highest among all major countries which conducted 5,000 or more tests. India thus topped the list for a third consecutive year, something that might hurt its chances when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) evaluates its bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games in the near future.

Asked if the Sports Ministry is concerned about the impact of this doping record on the ambitious Olympic bid, a top source pointed to the marginal decline compared to 2023.

"From 3.8 per cent in 2023, the positivity rate dropped marginally to 3.6 per cent even though significantly more tests were conducted. In 2025 too, over 7,000 tests have already been conducted and our positivity rate so far is just over one per cent. So, the improvement cannot be ignored," the source said in response to a PTI query.

"To be a bit blunt, the athletes and coaches have to rise above their desperation for government jobs which trigger doping violations. Some of the violations are inadvertent, we don't deny that, like taking a medicine which might contain prohibited substances but that's being addressed through apps like 'Know Your Medicine'," he said. (PTI)

## Aturkimi Academy kicks off 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Sports Week in Diphu



**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Dec 19:** Aturkimi Academy, a CBSE-affiliated school in Diphu, formally inaugurated its 16th Annual Sports Week at the school campus on Friday, marking the beginning of a four-day sporting event aimed at promoting fitness, discipline and sportsmanship among students.

The Sports Week will be held from December 20 at the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) Stadium.

The inaugural ceremony was led by the school's Managing Director, Tisso, who said the annual sports meet plays an important role in strengthening students' physical and mental well-being while instilling discipline and team spirit.

He urged students to follow instructions from their group leaders and maintain discipline throughout the event.

Addressing the gathering, Tisso

reminded students that both victory and defeat are part of competitive sport and encouraged them to give their best on the field.

He asked them to focus their body, mind and soul on the game and participate with sincerity and determination.

Highlighting the institution's academic journey, the Managing Director said Aturkimi Academy was established in 2007 with the aim of providing quality education through the CBSE curriculum.

He noted that the school has consistently recorded a 100 per cent pass rate in the Class X CBSE examinations.

In the 2025 examination, all 20 students who appeared secured first division.

He also mentioned that the school provides hostel facilities for both boys and girls and has expanded its reach with a branch at Jengkhra, opened in 2015, which currently has an enrolment of 340

students.

The inaugural programme began with the hoisting of the school flag by the Managing Director, followed by a prayer dance by Sanvi Yadav of Class III.

Cultural and drill performances included a Karbi traditional dance by hostel students, balloon drills by Montessori students, ring drills by Class I and III students, a warm-up dance by hostel girls and a karate demonstration by students Pajir, Mayuri and Rimjain.

A march-past by the Lion and House squads was also presented, and the ceremony concluded with the lighting of the torch by the captain of all Houses.

Principal Dipak Chetry said the sports events will be conducted at the KASA Stadium from Saturday and will include football, badminton, kho-kho, kabaddi and athletics events such as running races, long jump, high jump, shot put and javelin throw.

**NEW DELHI, Dec 19:** Australian batter Josh Inglis, who was to be available for only four IPL matches next year, could play more games after securing a hefty bid from Lucknow Super Giants in the recent players' auction, triggering uneasiness in the BCCI and his former franchise Punjab Kings.

Inglis was released by Punjab Kings before the auction due to his limited availability even though the team was keen to retain him. In its pre-auction communication to the 10 teams, the BCCI had clearly stated that Inglis will be available for only four games in IPL 2026 because of his marriage.

The BCCI and the IPL Governing Council are now closely monitoring the situation as it is believed that he may alter his personal schedule for IPL commitments.

The Lucknow Super Giants and Sunrisers Hyderabad went on a bidding war for the 30-year-old before the former acquired him for ₹ 8.6 crore, which was ₹ 6 crore higher than his previous fee deal with Punjab.

The entire episode has ignited a discussion on whether Inglis took advantage of the situation, and the BCCI and the GC might have to take a look at it.

"The communication was clear (about Inglis' availability for IPL 2026), but we need to check whether anything has changed about his personal plans, or whether those teams knew about his personal plans much more than others," a source close to the developments told PTI.

However, he said Punjab Kings are yet to raise an official complaint.

Inglis was scheduled to get married on April 18, followed by a honeymoon holiday, which would



have seen him missing a large part of the IPL 2026, which begins on March 26.

Both Lucknow and Sunrisers have a heavy Australian presence in their dugout.

The LSG have Justin Langer and Tom Moody as coach and director, while SRH is led by current Australian skipper Pat Cummins.

Even Daniel Vettori, the SRH head coach, has been working as the assistant coach of the Australian men's team since 2022.

However, the teams concerned were not forthcoming with a reaction.

"He was going to be out for personal reasons but that's always subject to change. You never know people can make different decisions once the auction is done. So, we thought that with the relationship Dan and him have, he could maybe convince him to play a few extra games," SRH bowling coach Varun Aaron

had said after the auction.

However, Inglis indicated that he got to know about his new IPL contract much after the auction had concluded.

"I don't have full availability this year (IPL 2026). I'm getting married in early April. So, I didn't really expect to go. So, I sort of saw my name go by unsold.

"I was like 'alright stuff this, I'm going to bed' and I need to switch on for tomorrow (Ashes) and then woke up to the news. I didn't know until I'd seen a few messages this morning," Inglis told ABC Sport after the second day of the ongoing third Ashes Test against England at Adelaide.

Inglis was used in the disruptor's role in IPL 2025, making 278 runs in 11 matches at a strike-rate of 163.

He made 73 off 42 balls against Mumbai Indians and then a 38 off 21 balls in Qualifier 2 to help PBKS reach the final. (PTI)

## Ishan Kishan 2.0: Calm, spiritual and matured cricketer eyes journey into future

**KOLKATA, Dec 19:** Ishan Kishan's mind now does not rage. Delight of leading Jharkhand to their maiden Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy title and the uncertainty surrounding him a day ahead of India's T20 World Cup squad selection are met with the same stoicism.

The emotions are now walled behind the soothing verses of Bhagavad Gita, Kishan's new companion as indicated to PTI by his father Pranav Pandey.

On his part, Kishan now lives in the present, and all that matters is Jharkhand's SMAT victory.

"Bahut achha khele, bahut maja aya; jaldi aur baat hogi aur aise hi jeet te rahenge (We really played well and hope we keep playing like this)," Kishan said after arriving to a rousing welcome at the Ranchi airport on Friday.

The Kishan-led Jharkhand defeated Haryana by 69 runs in the final at Pune, and the left-hander finished the tournament as the leading run-scorer, amassing 517 runs in 10 innings at an average of 57.44 and a strike rate in excess of 197.

Kishan smashed 101 off 49 balls -- his fifth century in the competition -- in the final equalling India T20I opener Abhishek Sharma's record for the most hundreds in the tournament.

The reaction was more crisp than flamboyant. "Achi thi, bahut khushi hui aur wapas tournament chalu hue toh usme bhi jeet ke ayege (I really felt good hope we win more)."

Kishan and the Jharkhand team were understandably received with enthusiasm



at home. Accompanied by former India batter and Jharkhand State Cricket Association (JSCA) secretary Saurabh Tiwary, they were received with dhols and mandars greeting the players at the airport.

The squad was garlanded, felicitated at the stadium and later visited Chief Minister Hemant Soren's residence.

So, is it Kishan's revival after waves of unpleasantness wrapped him since losing his central contract and a place in Team India in early 2024?

Only time will tell! But those dark hours helped him discover his spiritual side.

**Gita's influence**  
Kishan's father Pranav, a businessman,

said following Gita's holy scriptures was an idea mooted by him for Kishan to find some solutions to his troubles.

"My mother told me to read the Gita. So, I suggested that he read the Gita. She had told me if you are in a lot of tension, then you keep your question in your mind and open the Gita.

"Read the page that comes in front of you. You will get the answer to your question in that page, helping in dealing with the situation. I asked him (Kishan) to do the same," said Pandey.

Pandey said now it has become a habit with Kishan.

"The Gita is always with him, and he keeps it in his box. If he feels the need, he

reads it. He carries a pocket Gita wherever he goes. Whenever something happens, he opens it and reads it."

According to Pandey, the impact of this spiritual grounding is evident in Kishan's batting as well.

"We have seen it. For any person, the Bhagavad Gita gives you strength to support you anytime," he said.

"His maturity level has increased. His batting has matured. He likes to take more responsibility. He is mentally more mature. He plays less rash shots now."

Pandey recalled an incident that underlined the new mindset of Kishan.

"He was here after getting injured during the county stint with Nottinghamshire. There was a 20-odd days break, and he met with a freak accident when he fell off a motorcycle," he said.

"His friend had come with his new motorcycle and he was taking a test drive and didn't have much knowledge of the scooter and fell off and injured his legs. He had to get stitches.

"We didn't expect it to be serious, but after seeing the stitches we got to know the seriousness of the accident."

The unfortunate incident scuttled his chances of getting drafted into the India squad in England as a replacement for injured Rishabh Pant, who suffered a toe niggle in the fourth Test at Manchester.

Instead, N Jagadeesan joined the national squad in England.

"He (Kishan) was very depressed that time. Now he's perfectly fine. When you are in depression, his nature was never to

show emotions.

But as parents, we could understand his emotions," he added.

Pandey believes that spirituality played a big role in Kishan's resurgence.

"I believe the spirituality he has imbibed has played a big role in this turnaround. It has played a big role."

**Rs 2 Crore reward**

But now gradually goodness has begun to seep back into Kishan's career, and the first sign is a Rs 2 crore reward for the SMAT winning team by the JSCA.

JSCA president Ajay Nath Shah Deo said the team's historic triumph had drawn national attention and was confident that Kishan would soon return to the Indian team.

"We are champions, and the whole country has taken notice of them. I am sure Kishan is going to be in the (Indian) team," Shah Deo said.

"Obviously, this is a matter of pride for the whole of Jharkhand and our Chief Minister, Hemant Soren ji. He is a cricket fan. He is very happy with the performance of our team." He also lauded the collective effort behind the title, singling out key performers from the final.

"If you see the Jharkhand team, five or six players -- Anukul, Kushagra, Sushant Mishra, the kind of bowling he did -- they have been performing like this for the last seven to eight years," Shah Deo said.

"It is very motivating for younger players. I think from here, Jharkhand is only going upwards and will be number one in all formats," he said. (PTI)