

6 REGION  
8 NATION



- Hagrama distributes PMAY approvals in Gossaigaon
- Ambedkar Foundation marks Ambedkar's death anniversary
- No law should be burden on citizens, govt reforms must make life easy: PM to NDA MPs
- Division of Vande Mataram song led to partition of India: Shah



Government of Assam



Pedalling Dreams  
Empowering Future

# Distribution of Bicycles

to class IX Students  
Under Chief Minister's Special Scheme  
at **Dibrugarh**

Total Students  
**3,10,031**

11 December 2025 11:00 AM  
Old Government Boys High School Field  
Phoolbagan, Dibrugarh



Chief Guest

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

In august presence of

**Dr Ranoj Pegu**  
Minister, Education, etc., Assam

### Who are eligible

Class IX students studying in

- Government & Provincialised Secondary Schools
- Tea Garden Model Schools
- Adarsha Vidyalayas

### Objectives

- Easier & faster transport to schools in rural & remote regions
- Boost enrollment in schools
- Improve regular attendance
- Reduce drop-out rates

DIPR/D/HLT/251/10-Dec-25

# DS Group looking to expand in hospitality sector in NE: Top executive

**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** The DS Group, a FMCG conglomerate and multi-business corporation, is exploring greenfield hospitality projects in the Northeast but is unlikely to venture into the super-luxury category at present, a top company executive said on Tuesday.

Nathan Andrews, business head of the group's hospitality segment, said the company is looking at projects that can be completed within four to five years and align with the "price point" of each location.

"The strategy for Northeast is to develop 'quick to market' projects, which are ready in four to five years. We are looking more into greenfield projects in the region," Andrews told reporters here.

He said the group is scouting for suitable sites in Kaziranga (Assam) and Shillong, among other locations.

Regarding the proposed Kaziranga project, Andrews said feasibility studies were crucial, as the national park remains shut for six months every year and accessibility remains a challenge.

"Kaziranga National Park remains closed for six months. One



also has to travel nearly four hours by road from the nearest airports to reach the area," he said.

The group currently has a single property in the region, the Radisson Blu hotel in Guwahati, often called the "gateway to the North East". Citing the market dynamics in Guwahati, Andrews said pricing has a natural limit.

"People are willing to pay up to a point in the hospitality sector in Guwahati, specifically. The point

is going up and now coming close to the market cost and product," he said. In such a scenario, Andrews expressed apprehension that Guwahati is not ready for super-luxury category of hotels.

"It might be difficult to sustain properties that come with ₹ 15,000-20,000 per night packages in the near future in the region," he said.

With nearly a dozen leading hoteliers lining up to open shop in

the city, the DS Group top executive said many of them are coming up with 'boutique hotels', which have a better chance at capturing the market.

The DS Group, in the hospitality business since 2000, currently encompasses six properties in its hospitality portfolio, including Radisson Blu here.

Andrews said the group's growth strategy involves pan-India expansion through asset management and brand partnerships, targeting high-growth Tier I and Tier II cities, and capitalising on the opportunity in domestic and international tourism with a mix of city and resort properties.

The company plans to significantly expand its room inventory, aiming to double its current room count by 2029, with an investment of ₹ 1,000 crore over the next few years, funded through internal resources and strategic partnerships.

"While focusing primarily on luxury and mid-scale hotels, DS Group aims to have 10-12 hotels in its portfolio within the next three years, including new developments in the North and East and a stronger presence in the Northeast," Andrews said. (PTI)

## Sting Energy, Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team unveil groundbreaking global partnership

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** Sting Energy, PepsiCo's electrifying energy drink and an Official Team Partner of Formula 1®, has announced its global partnership with the Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team through a first-of-its-kind digital reveal where the car itself delivered the news.

The precision lap, ending with the engine's roar forming the word "STINGGGGGG," marked a bold creative twist in brand-sport collaborations and set the stage for heightened fan engagement during race weekends. Eugene Willemssen, CEO, International Beverages at PepsiCo, said the partnership brings together performance, energy, and flavour while uniting Gatorade, Sting, and Doritos with Formula 1 culture.

Mercedes-AMG PETRONAS F1 Team Principal and CEO Toto Wolff noted that PepsiCo's portfolio aligns perfectly with the team's pursuit of innovation and excellence.

Chief Commercial Officer Richard Sanders added that the collaboration will strengthen fan experiences both at the track and beyond.

### AMSL signs pact with

Telangana govt to invest ₹ 1,500 cr

**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** Infra tech solutions provider Apollo Micro Systems Ltd (AMSL) on Tuesday announced the signing of an initial agreement with the Telangana government to invest ₹ 1,500 crore in manufacturing defence products. (PTI)

### AFFIDAVIT

I, MOHAMMED MAMIZUL HOQUE, S/o. Late Aijuddin, Residing at Village - Mowamari, P.O./P.S. - Kharupetia, Dist. - Darrang, Assam, Pin - 784115, shall henceforth be known as MAMIZUL HOQUE as declared before the District Magistrate, Darrang, Mangaldai, Assam, vide Affidavite No. 82 dated 10/02/2025. That Mohammed Mamizul Hoque and MAMIZUL HOQUE both are same and identical person.

### NAME CORRECTION

I, Smt Kareng Phangchopi, W/o-Lt Long Teron, resident of Jirikindeng, PO-Jirikindeng, P/S-Zerikindeng, Dist-West Karbi Anglong, Assam by an affidavit before Hamren Judicial Court, West karbi Anglong that my husband actual and correct name is Lt. Mon Bahadur Thapa and accordingly in my all documents my husband name is recorded incorrectly as Lt. Mon Bahadur Thapa, but in my adhar Card wherein my husband name has inadvertently been recorded as Lt. Long Teron instead of my husband actual and correct name is Lt. Mon Bahadur Thapa. That is true that Lt. Long Teron and Lt. Mon Bahadur Thapa is the same person.

Kareng Phangchopi  
W/o-Lt. Mon Bahadur Thapa  
Vill.- Jirikindeng,  
PO & PS-Jirikindeng,  
Dist--West Karbi Anglong, Assam  
Pin -782448

### NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from Muhammad Ala Uddin to Ala Uddin by wearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, Hojai (Assam).

## Sensex sheds 436 pts

Stock markets fall for 2<sup>nd</sup> day on profit booking in bank, oil shares

**MUMBAI, Dec 9:** Stock markets closed lower for the second straight day on Tuesday, with benchmark BSE Sensex declining by 436 points as investors booked profit ahead of the US Federal Reserve's policy decision.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 436.41 points, or 0.51 per cent, to close at a nearly two-week low of 84,666.28. During the day, the barometer plunged by 719.73 points, or 0.84 per cent, to hit an intraday low of 84,382.96 as blue-chip private banks, oil and IT shares retreated.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped by 120.90 points, or 0.47 per cent, to settle at 25,839.65. In the intraday session, it depreciated by 232.55 points, or 0.89 per cent, to hit a low of 25,728.

Analysts said persistent foreign fund outflows and weak global cues weighed on the investor sentiment.

Among the Sensex constituents, Asian Paints, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Tata Steel, Maruti Suzuki India, Sun Pharmaceuticals, Tata Consultancy Services, ICICI Bank, Bajaj Finance, UltraTech Cement, Mahindra & Mahindra and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles were the laggards.

However, Eternal, Titan, Adani Ports, Bharat Electronics Ltd, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, NTPC and Bharti Airtel were among the gainers.

"Domestic equities opened lower, extending profit booking amid caution ahead of tomorrow's US Fed policy decision, rupee weakness, persistent FII outflows, and ongoing uncertainty over the US-India trade deal. IT stocks led the decline, while PSU banks, realty, and consumer durables gained, with small caps outperforming other indices," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

The US Federal Reserve is set to begin its two-day policy meeting later on Tuesday, where the central bank's Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) will decide on key benchmark interest rates for the world's largest economy.

"The equity benchmarks staged a partial rebound on Tuesday after a steep sell-off at the open, with value



buying helping the indices trim losses through the afternoon. The Sensex recovered nearly 450 points from its intraday low, while the Nifty climbed back above 25,900, though both remained in negative territory," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemnon Markets Desk, said.

Broader markets rebounded with BSE midcap gauge rising by 0.60 per cent and smallcap index advancing 1.27 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, Focused IT declined the most by 1.18 per cent, Information Technology by 0.89 per cent, Tech by 0.72 per cent, Auto by 0.63 per cent, Metal by 0.34 per cent, and Consumer Durables and Energy fell by 0.16 per cent each.

On the other hand, Capital Goods, Power, Industrials, Telecommunication, Consumer Discretionary, FMCG, Utilities were among the gainers. As many as 2,550 stocks advanced, while 1,625 declined and 156 remain unchanged on the BSE.

"Fresh tariff concerns on Indian rice exports weighed on agri-related stocks, while persistent FII outflows and the rupee's slide past 90 continued to add to investor anxiety," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

In Asian markets, Hong Kong's Hang Seng index, Shanghai's SSE Composite, South Korea's KOSPI settled lower while Japan's Nikkei

225 benchmark ended in the green territory.

European markets are trading higher. Wall Street ended lower in overnight deals on Monday.

Nair added that global sentiment was further pressured by surging Japanese bond yields and expectations of the Bank of Japan (BoJ) tightening monetary policy at its upcoming December meeting. While the markets largely anticipate a 25-basis-point rate cut by the Fed and a rate hike by the BoJ, forward guidance for 2026 will be critical.

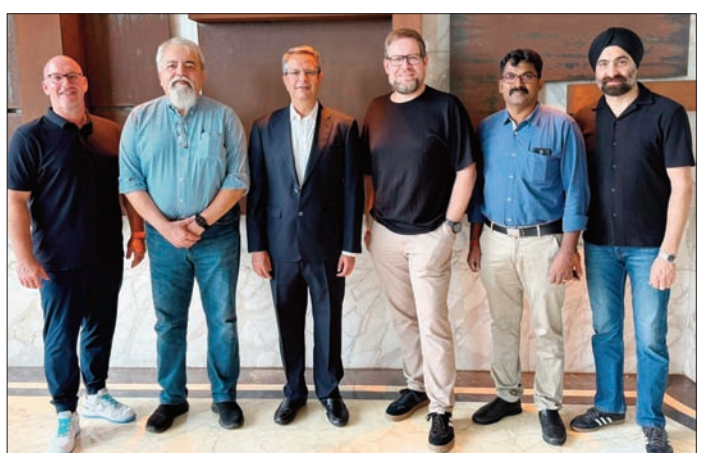
Meanwhile, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 655.59 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹ 2,542.49 crore, according to exchange data.

"In the near term, central bank commentary, currency movement, and FII flows will steer sentiment, while domestic macro resilience is expected to provide a cushion against downside risks," he said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.27 per cent to USD 62.33 per barrel.

On Monday, the 30-share BSE Sensex plunged by 609.68 points to close at 85,102.69. Snapping a two-day gaining streak, the 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 225.90 points to settle at 25,960.55. (PTI)

## Blaupunkt extends car infotainment and accessories partnership with BPIN Pvt Ltd till 2041



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** Blaupunkt, the globally trusted brand in car infotainment and audio accessories, has extended its licensing partnership with BPIN Pvt. Ltd. for an additional 15 years, strengthening a 27-year collaboration built on innovation and reliability.

The renewed agreement, now

running until 2041, reinforces Blaupunkt's long-term commitment to India's growing automotive market and expands joint efforts across both OEM and aftermarket segments.

BPIN managing director Pankaj Jagwani said the extension reflects a shared vision to bring global innovation to Indian roads and to po-

sition Blaupunkt as the top choice for OEMs and car owners seeking premium-quality infotainment solutions.

Blaupunkt's Director Licensing, Thorsten Gebhardt, noted that nearly three decades of partnership have established a strong foundation of trust, quality, and customer confidence, and the renewed agreement sets the stage for the next generation of smart, connected in-car technologies.

BPIN's strengths—including a 30,000 sq ft warehouse for efficient logistics, a dedicated development team backed by external engineering support, nationwide service coverage, and an expanding product portfolio—will continue to play a central role in the brand's growth.

The extended partnership underscores Blaupunkt's commitment to delivering high-performance, German-engineered infotainment and accessory solutions tailored for Indian consumers and future vehicle models.

Contd. from Page 3...

## 'My govt has

monument is intended not only as a tribute but also as an educational site for future generations. Swahid Divas, observed every December, commemorates the death of first martyr Khargesarwar Talukdar in 1979, whose killing galvanised the agitation led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU).

Over the decades, the day has evolved into a political marker for various parties, especially the BJP, which has consistently foregrounded the issue of illegal migration in its electoral messaging.

Reiterating his government's commitment to protecting Assam's "land, language and culture," Sarma said the memorial stands as a reminder of the sacrifices made to safeguard the state's demographic character.

"The Swahid Smarak will stand tall as a testament to their supreme sacrifice. Assam will forever remain indebted," he said.

## 'Deal with it

nothing is there. The rest are historical references and the materials are presumptive, based on newspaper reports," Justice Bagchi said. "Can the court, based on a single FIR, say this situation is unique and special to West Bengal alone and that there is no obstruction in any other state? We are sympathetic to your cause. But what we are trying to find out is whether this is a narrative from one end. What we find as forensic evidence of obstruction is only one First Information Report," he said.

The bench said in this situation, the court cannot say that the state of affairs in West Bengal is so unique that a specific direction should be issued with respect to that state alone and if all the police in all the states in India can be put under the control of the Election Commission.

At the outset, Dwivedi submitted that a strong letter has been written by the EC to the West Bengal government, as there were instances of BLOs being threatened, their work being obstructed and the state election office being gheraoed.

Justice Bagchi said the argument has been made by some petitioners that the state election commission office was gheraoed as the BLOs were getting exhausted due to being over-burdened and committing suicides. Dwivedi said there are a lot of political narratives that have been floating around, including in courts, since the SIR exercise began.

He said the number of voters per polling booth has been reduced to 1,200 from 1,500 and the BLOs will have to map around 30-35 voters per day, which comes to six to seven houses. "So there is no strain as such," Dwivedi said. Justice Bagchi, however, disagreed with the submission and said, "This is not desk work. BLO has to go to each house, verify and then the enumeration form is submitted to him. The enumeration has to be uploaded. This is the pressure on him. This is why we directed the states to beef up the number of BLOs."

The judge further said the court is not on any narratives. Dwivedi replied that the strain on the BLOs is caused by the interference of political parties and other factors, and pointed out that there are reports of the Congress blaming the CPI(M) in Kerala for putting pressure on a BLO who committed suicide.

CJI Kant said, "The court does not want to get into a blame game between political parties. You tell us what is the impediment caused in the BLOs' functioning. Bring to our notice and we will deal with it."

Dwivedi said the EC has written to the State for protection.

Justice Bagchi said if there is any grievance on that score, the EC can come before the court and appropriate orders will be passed. The bench, while issuing notice to the poll panel, said the court cannot accept the narrative with an isolated instance. "We are issuing notice to you. Let us get your response, not only about West Bengal, but about the cooperation or lack of cooperation you are getting from different states. If the BLOs are getting threatened, that is a serious issue," CJI Kant said while concluding the hearing in the matter. (PTI)

## Last rites of

flight and then taken to his village by road. Both district administrations had coordinated with the Goa police in bringing back the bodies. All three worked as cooks in the nightclub.

A pall of gloom descended the three villages as the bodies arrived, with family members and villagers breaking down in grief. Mal and Tanti, belonged to the tea tribe, were cremated while Patir was buried according to the rituals of the Missing tribe to which he belonged. Relatives of Mal and Tanti alleged that the two had to leave their village and the state because of the lack of employment options. The villagers said poor conditions in the tea gardens of Barak Valley had forced many youths to migrate for work to distant places.

Patir's mother said both her sons were employed in distant states such as Goa and Kerala, as livelihood opportunities were scarce in Dhemajai, a district frequently hit by floods and erosion.

A jam-packed nightclub in North Goa turned into a death trap after midnight on Sunday as a massive fire tore through it, claiming 25 lives and leaving six injured while raising serious questions about "illegal" operations and flouting of safety norms. While police said that a cylinder blast seemed to have started the blaze, a tourist who survived the tragedy claimed that fireworks were set off when dancers were performing, and it was the likely cause. Most of the deaths were caused by suffocation, as the victims, many of them employees, got trapped on the ground floor of "Birch by Romeo Lane" nightclub at Arpora, 25 km from Panaji, a fire official said. (PTI)

## Zubeen conferred D.Litt

Technology, Meghalaya (USTM) in August 2024 and he had received it himself.

At the Cotton University convocation on Tuesday, the Governor also conferred honorary D.Litt (Honoria Causa) to eminent Assamese writer and scholar Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami for his contribution to literature and cultural studies. (PTI)

## Civil Aviation Minister

non-compliance with regulations. "Strict and appropriate action will be taken."

The DGCA, he said, has already issued notices to IndiGo and that the airline is being held fully accountable for the chaos caused by its internal crew-rostering failures.

IndiGo flight schedules are stabilising, and all other airlines continue to operate smoothly across the country, he said. After meeting the IndiGo CEO, the minister in the post on X said, "During the last week, many passengers faced severe inconvenience due to IndiGo's internal mismanagement of crew rosters, flight schedules and inadequate communication".

While the enquiry and necessary actions are underway, another meeting with IndiGo's top management was held to review the stabilisation measures on Tuesday evening.

IndiGo CEO "confirmed that 100 per cent of the refunds for flights affected till 6th December have been completed. A strict instruction to expedite the completion of the remaining refunds and baggage handover was given," he said. "Indigo has been instructed to comply with all the directives of the Ministry, including fare capping and passenger convenience measures without any exception."

On Tuesday, IndiGo cancelled 422 flights from six metro airports, as the disruption in the crisis-hit airline prolonged for the eighth consecutive day. Prior to meeting the Civil Aviation Minister, Elbers, in a video message on X, said the airline is back on its feet, and operations are stable.

"IndiGo is back on its feet, and our operations are stable. We've let you down when a major operational disruption happened, and we're sorry for that," he said. "Earlier, we had indicated to normalise between December 10-15. I can confirm now that today, as of December 9, our operations are fully stabilised, which means flights reflecting on our website are scheduled to operate with an adjusted network."

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), in the December 8 order, asked IndiGo to submit a revised schedule by Wednesday. The latest order is part of a suite of actions by authorities that followed IndiGo, which controls over 65 per cent of the market share, cancelling more than 4,000 flights since December 2 that left tens of thousands of passengers stranded, upending their vacation plans, important meetings and weddings.

DGCA, which previously issued a show cause notice to IndiGo's chief executive and chief operating officer to explain the disruptions, has set up a four-member panel to probe the lapses.

The regulator, in the fresh notice, said that IndiGo's winter schedule shows that the airline has increased its departures by 9.66 per cent from last year, while the same relation to its summer schedule is set to rise by 6.05 per cent. "However, the airline has not demonstrated an ability to operate these schedules efficiently," the notice said. "Therefore, it is directed to reduce the schedule by 5 per cent across sectors, especially on high-demand, high-frequency flights, and to avoid single-flight operations on a sector by IndiGo."

For decades, IndiGo relied on aggressive scheduling and max night-flight utilisation - a business model that collapsed when tighter safety regulations that increased the mandatory weekly rest period for pilots and sharply reduced permissible night-landings and any extended night-duty hours came into force.

The result was catastrophic: on-time performance plunged, hundreds of flights were cancelled daily, and major airports saw chaos with stranded passengers, overloaded terminals and long queues.

IndiGo has said that increased congestion in the aviation system, the implementation of pilot rest rules from November 1, minor technical glitches and adverse weather were behind the disruptions. It operated over 2,200 flights daily before the travel chaos struck. The airline has said it hopes to return to normalcy this week.

The DGCA, in its flight curtailment order, said it had approved 15,014 IndiGo departures per week for the winter season when travel demand picks up in India. But the airline cancelled 951 flights in November out of the 64,346 flights approved for the entire month. Shares of InterGlobe Aviation Ltd, the firm that operates the IndiGo, were down 2 per cent on Tuesday. The shares have lost over 17 per cent of their value this month. (PTI)

## EVM First-Level

witness the inspection. Webcasting facilities have also been arranged to ensure transparency in the process. ECI-appointed Observer Shania Kayem Mize, Deputy DEO of Arunachal Pradesh and State Nodal Officer (EVM), will visit and monitor the FLC on December 11. The Election Officer of Sonitpur has requested all stakeholders to extend full cooperation to ensure the smooth and timely completion of the FLC exercise.

## CM urges Cotton

growth, and cited the example of 800 Assamese girls working at Apple's facility in Hosur as a reflection of the state's growing talent pool. The convocation conferred degrees on postgraduates, undergraduates and diploma holders. Among those present were Cotton University vice chancellor Prof Ramesh Ch Deka, AIIMS Guwahati executive director Prof Ashok Puranik, registrar Dr Hiren Deka, faculty members, dignitaries, students and their families.

## NIA arrests 8<sup>th</sup>

Bilal had knowingly harboured the deceased accused Umar Un Nabi by providing him logistical support. He is also accused of destruction of evidence related to the terrorist attack," it added.

The NIA is continuing with its investigation into the conspiracy behind the deadly blast. The anti-terror agency is working closely with various central and state agencies to unravel all the threads of the conspiracy. (PTI)

## Guv releases Doordarshan's

is being aimed public participation and welfare of the public, he said. (PTI)

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

THE HILLS TIMES 3

# 'My govt has corrected historical injustice'

**Congress govt responsible for loss of 850 lives during Assam agitation: Himanta ● Swahid Smarak in Guwahati to be inaugurated today**

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Dec 9: Referring to martyrs of Assam agitation, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday launched a sharp attack on Congress party alleging that more than 850 youths lost their lives due to misrule of the previous Congress government in the state.

Sarma said that the young people who laid down their lives were victims of "state brutality", punished for raising a legitimate demand for a "safe and secure Assam".

"All that we have seen, youths died for demanding Assam to be made a safer place by deporting illegal immigrants in the state. However, unfortunately, more than 850 lives were lost due to the brutality unleashed by the state administration. At that time, Congress was at the power at both centre and state.



The Congress government was solely responsible for the loss of lives during Assam agitation," Sarma told reporters here.

As the state government has built the Swahid Smarak in Guwa-

hati which is set to be inaugurated on Wednesday, the chief minister asserted that the present state government has corrected a "historical injustice" by giving the martyrs a permanent memorial in the heart of

the city.

Sarma said that for decades, successive governments had failed to provide a permanent resting place for the martyrs, despite the central role they played in shaping modern Assam and preserving its cultural identity.

"Their only fault was demanding an end to unchecked infiltration. For years, Assam's bravehearts were denied the honour they deserved," he said.

The newly built Swahid Smarak, located in the city's central precinct, has been conceived as a symbolic space of collective remembrance.

The memorial features inscriptions dedicated to the agitators, along with exhibits chronicling the trajectory of the Assam Movement between 1979 and 1985. Officials said the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# 'Deal with it or it will cause anarchy'; SC flags threats to BLOs doing SIR work



**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday expressed concern over BLOs and other officials engaged in SIR 2.0 being "threatened" in West Bengal and other states, and asked the Election Commission to deal with the situation or "it will cause anarchy".

A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi also voiced concern over the alleged lack of cooperation by state governments in the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls and said, "What we want to ensure is that the SIR is done on the ground without any glitches."

"Bring to our notice instances of lack of cooperation, hindrances to work of BLOs and we will pass appropriate orders," the bench told senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, appearing for the Election Commission (EC).

Dwivedi submitted, "The state governments are supposed to cooperate with us and give us protection. If the state government refuses to do so, then we have

no option other than taking the local police under deputation. If the situation still does not improve, then we will have to call central forces."

Justice Bagchi said the poll panel cannot take the police under its jurisdiction until the commencement of the election process.

Dwivedi said the EC has all constitutional powers to deal with instances of BLOs and other officials engaged in SIR work being threatened.

"Deal with the situation or it will cause anarchy," CJI Kant told Dwivedi, terming the situation "very serious".

Senior advocate V Giri, appearing for petitioner Sanatani Sangsad and others, pointed out that the petitioners have alleged violence and threats against BLOs and other officials engaged in SIR work and sought directions to the EC to protect them.

The top court sought responses from the EC, the Centre and the West Bengal government on the plea of Sanatani Sangsad for directions to deploy the state police officers under the EC's deputation till the final publication of electoral rolls in the state after SIR.

The plea also sought the deployment of central armed forces in the state till the completion of SIR.

Giri submitted that there was a spate of violence in West Bengal against booth-level officers (BLOs) carrying out SIR duties, and hence, there was a need for the deployment of central forces since the state was opposed to it.

Justice Bagchi told Giri that apart from one FIR, there was no other instance mentioned in the petition. "Apart from a single FIR, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Zubeen conferred D Litt posthumously by Cotton University

**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** Assam's cultural icon Zubeen Garg was conferred the honorary Doctor of Literature degree posthumously by Cotton University on Tuesday.

Governor Laxman Prasad Acharya bestowed the honour on the late singer-actor, and the award was received by his sister Dr Palme Borthakur during the fourth convocation of the University.

"It is an academic honour and the family is very proud of him," Borthakur said

after receiving the award.

It is an "emotional moment to receive the award in his absence", she said.

Borthakur claimed that the singer had helped all during his lifetime, but during the last three months, "we realised how people took advantage of him".

The singer died in Singapore while swimming in the sea on September 19. The government formed an SIT to probe into his death and the charge sheet will be

filed on December 12.

The family is now hoping for a strong charge sheet and the guilty is booked, Borthakur added.

"We just want he gets justice. We have faith in the investigation and will know the details of the charge sheet on December 12," she said.

Earlier, Garg was conferred with an honorary D Litt by the University of Science and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Last rites of 3 Goa fire victims from Assam performed

**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** The bodies of the three persons from Assam who died in the Goa nightclub fire reached their respective homes in Cachar and Dhemaji districts on Tuesday, and their last rites were performed, officials said.

The three were working at the nightclub in Arpora when a fire broke out shortly after midnight on Sunday, killing at least 25 people and injuring six others.

The bodies of Manojit Mal (24) and Rahul Tanti (32) arrived at Silchar airport and were taken by road to Silcoore and Rangirkhari villages, respectively, in Cachar district.

Their bodies were handed over to their relatives who were also working in Goa and they accompanied the victims back home.

The body of 23-year-old Diganta Patir was received by his brother who works in Kerala and he accompanied the mortal remains during the journey to their village in Jamukani Matikhola in Dhemaji district.

Patir's body was brought to Dibrugarh by (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Sanction letters to 3,25,234 new beneficiaries under PMAY-G distributed CM assures graft-free access to welfare schemes

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday launched the distribution of sanction letters to 3,25,234 new beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) at a state-level event held at Gandhi Maidan in Boko, Kamrup.

He said the initiative strengthens Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mission of providing housing to economically weaker families and marks another major milestone in Assam's PMAY journey.

Recalling earlier progress, Sarma noted that sanction letters were issued to 5 lakh beneficiaries in May 2022, followed by the first installment disbursed to 2 lakh families in May 2022 and another 3 lakh in February 2023.

The government enabled Griha Pravesh for over 3 lakh beneficiaries in July 2023, while the Prime Minister dedicated 5,67,083 completed houses from Meleng-Meteli Pathar in March 2024.

With 3,88,358 beneficiaries receiving sanction letters in March this year, the latest approval for 3,25,234 families continues the momentum.

The chief minister said the government aims to ensure every household currently living in a kutcha house receives a pucca home. Geo-tagging of eligible families has been

completed, and updated beneficiary lists will soon be finalised through gram sabhas.

He said PMAY's enhanced assistance—over ₹1.5 lakh along with toilet support—offers dignity and security to poor families, unlike the limited help earlier provided under the Indira Awas Yojana.

Sarma also cited other welfare schemes, including the Orunodoi benefit of ₹1,250 per month and the provision of dal, sugar and salt at ₹117 for ration card holders.

He said the government is working to build a corruption-free system where poor families can access all welfare benefits smoothly, noting that central and state schemes together provide nearly ₹3,000 in monthly support to each poor household.

Urging families to prioritise children's education, he said investing savings in education is key to building a stronger future for Assam. He announced that 3,000 additional women from Chaygaon, Boko and Palashbari will be included in the Orunodoi scheme.

Panchayat and Rural Development minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, MLAs Hemanga Thakuria and Nandita Das, GMC mayor Mri-gene Sarania, additional chief secretary B Kalyan Chakravarty, P&RD commissioner Keerthi Jalli, Kamrup DC Deva Kumar Mishra and senior officials attended the programme.

# EVM First-Level Checking in Sonitpur from tomorrow

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, Dec 9:** The First Level Checking (FLC) of Electronic Voting Machines for Sonitpur district ahead of the 2026 Assam Legislative Assembly Elections will be carried out from December 11 to 25 at the EVM/VVPAT Warehouse of the Sonitpur Election Office.

Officials said all arrangements have been made strictly in accordance with the Election Commission of India's Manual of EVMs.

Armed police personnel will guard the venue, while political parties have been informed and asked to send authorised representatives to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Civil Aviation Minister orders 10 pc curtailment of IndiGo flights, airline says operations stable

**NEW DELHI/MUMBAI,**

**Dec 9:** The Civil Aviation Minister has asked for a 10 per cent cut in planned IndiGo flights to help restore order at India's biggest airline, which cancelled thousands of flights nationwide after failing to plan for tighter safety regulations.

Posting a picture of IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers, sitting with folded hands in front of him, Minister Ram Mohan Naidu, in a post on X, said that the airline management was summoned to the ministry to provide an update.

"The Ministry considers it necessary to curtail the overall IndiGo routes, which will help in stabilising the airline's operations and lead to reduced cancellations. A curtailment of 10 per cent has been ordered. While abiding by it, IndiGo will continue to cover all its destinations as before," he said.

The curtailment is double of what the sector regulator DGCA had ordered on Monday. As part of the winter schedule for 2025-26, the airline has been operating over 2,200 flights per day.

Airline, on its part, said

there was "steady improvement across the network", as it reinstated flights to all 138 stations. It flew more than 1,800 flights on Tuesday, which will go up to nearly 1,900 on Wednesday, IndiGo said in a statement.

"We have optimised our operations, and our on-time performance is also back to normal levels," it added.

Earlier in the day, Minister Naidu in the Lok Sabha said that no airline, however large, will be permitted to cause hardship to passengers through planning failures and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

World already heated up by 1.3 degrees Celsius since the pre-industrial era

# India's Aditya-L1 joins global effort in landmark solar storm study: ISRO

**BENGALURU, Dec 9:**

India's first solar observatory Aditya-L1 played a key role in helping scientists decode why the strongest solar storm in more than two decades that struck Earth in May 2024 behaved so unusually, ISRO said on Tuesday.

Aditya-L1, which joined forces with six US satellites, including NASA's Wind, with its precise magnetic field measurements helped researchers to study the rare event simultaneously from multiple vantage points in space, it said.

According to a statement from ISRO, the solar storm, now called "Gannon's storm", which disturbed Earth's environment severely, involved a series of giant explosions on the Sun, known as coronal mass ejections (CMEs). These CMEs are massive bubbles of hot gas and magnetic energy thrown out from the Sun into Space.

When these bubbles hit Earth, they can shake our planet's magnetic shield and cause serious trouble for satellites, communication systems, GPS, and even power grids, the country's space agency



said.

In this regard, the space agency said that a team of Indian scientists has published a breakthrough study in the Astrophysical Journal Letters that possibly explains why the strongest solar storm which struck Earth in May 2024 in more than two decades behaved so unusually.

"During the May 2024 solar storm, scientists discovered something unusual—the Sun's magnetic fields, which are like twisted ropes inside a solar storm, were breaking and rejoining within the storm," ISRO said.

According to the space agency, usually, a CME carries a twisted "magnetic rope" that interacts with Earth's magnetic shield as it approaches Earth.

But this time, two CMEs collided in space and squeezed each other so firmly that the magnetic field lines inside one of them snapped and rejoined in new ways, a process called magnetic reconnection.

This sudden reversal of the magnetic field made the storm's impact much stronger than expected. Satellites also detected particles suddenly

speeding up, indicating an increase in their energy, confirming the magnetic reconnection event, it stated.

"For the first time, researchers could study the same extreme solar storm from multiple vantage points in space. Thanks to precise magnetic field measurements from India's Aditya-L1 mission, scientists were able to map this reconnection region," ISRO said.

The space agency said the researchers found that the area where the CME's magnetic field was tearing and reconnecting was enormous—about 1.3 million km across, i.e., nearly 100 times the size of Earth.

"It was the first time such a giant magnetic breakup and rejoining had ever been seen inside a CME," it said.

"This discovery matters because it enhances our understanding of how solar storms evolve as they travel from the Sun to Earth. This demonstrates India's growing leadership in global space science. With Aditya-L1's contributions, India is now better prepared to understand and predict (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# CM urges Cotton University graduates to drive Assam's journey of competence and self-reliance

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, addressing the 4th convocation of Cotton University, called upon graduates to unlock their potential and contribute to making Assam a competent and self-dependent state.

Congratulations the 2,804 degree recipients, he said their achievements reflect their dedication as well as the support of teachers and families.

Reminiscing his student days at the erstwhile Cotton College, Sarma said the institution shaped his life and continues to inspire young minds with its dynamic academic environment.

He noted that Cotton University has embraced emerging fields such as AI-driven climate research and satellite-enabled environmental studies, strengthening its role

in advancing scientific knowledge in the Northeast.

The chief minister highlighted Assam's rapid transformation in the education sector, citing the establishment of over 25 medical colleges—15 functional and others under construction—along with 25-26 universities and multiple engineering institutions including IIT Guwahati and NIT Silchar.

He said Assam is now a hub of new opportunities, from startups to industrial growth, and is steadily progressing toward becoming one of India's five most developed states.

Referring to role models such as Simu Das, Lovlina Borgohain, Hima Das and Uma Chetry, Sarma encouraged graduates to adopt a positive mindset and drive societal change.

He expressed happiness at the rising number of women graduates, calling it a sign of the state's inclusive (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# Guv releases Doordarshan's special publication 'Good News Assam'

**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Tuesday released 'Good News Assam', a special publication by state's Doordarshan News at a ceremony held at Lok Bhawan, formerly the Raj Bhawan, here.

"Good News Assam" is a weekly programme that has, across more than 50 episodes, documented inspiring stories of service, innovation, entrepreneurship, and community leadership. The book features 55 of its most impactful stories, offering a vivid and inspiring snapshot of the state's

resilience, creativity, and collective progress.

Acharya, in his address, praised the vision that shaped Good News Assam, noting that the publication brings together powerful narratives of human spirit, innovation, social service, and community leadership.

He said the initiative beautifully captures everyday heroes whose contributions, though often unnoticed, strengthen the social fabric and reflect the state's progress.

He described the book as "a valuable documentation of

Assam's positive transformation," as such stories help future generations recognize how seemingly ordinary individuals accomplish extraordinary feats in diverse fields.

The governor pointed out that the programme effectively communicates the on-ground implementation of central and state welfare schemes and highlights improvements in key sectors such as health, education, agriculture, digital services, infrastructure, women's empowerment, and community development.

He said that Good News

# RED FORT BLAST

# NIA arrests 8<sup>th</sup> accused: Officials

**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has made the eighth arrest in connection with last month's car blast near the Red Fort, officials said on Tuesday.

An NIA spokesperson said a team from Delhi has arrested key accused Dr Bilal Naseer Malla of Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir. He was arrested from the national capital.

The NIA has found Bilal's involvement in the conspiracy behind the terrorist attack that killed 11 people and injured several others in the Red Fort area on November 10, a statement said. "As per NIA investigations, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The governor pointed out that Lok Bhawan is committed to nurturing this initiative through people-centric initiatives ranging from youth skill development and leadership programmes to environmental protection and the promotion of natural farming.

The renaming of Raj Bhawan to Lok Bhawan is a strong indication that governance (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

There is nothing new in the world except the history you do not know. - Harry S Truman

Putin's India visit amid global pressure

Russian President Vladimir Putin's two-day state visit to India has become a diplomatic flashpoint, testing New Delhi's ability to maintain strategic independence amid mounting pressure from Washington and European capitals. The arrival marks Putin's first trip to India since the Ukraine war began nearly four years ago, and comes at a moment when India's foreign policy finds itself under unprecedented scrutiny. After enduring months of escalating U.S. tariffs on Indian goods and Western criticism over its continued energy partnership with Moscow, New Delhi has chosen to respond not with capitulation but with ceremonial grandeur. Even before Putin's plane touched down at Palam airport, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally greeted him with a warm embrace, preparations in the holy city of Varanasi captured global attention. In Modi's parliamentary constituency along the Ganges, residents organized what they called an "India-Russia Friendship March," performing traditional aarti ceremonies before photographs of the Russian leader adorned with vermilion and marigold flowers. The spectacle—unusual even by Indian standards of hospitality—reflected deep-seated gratitude for Russia's support during critical moments in Indian history, including the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war when Moscow stood with New Delhi against Western pressure.

Putin proceeded directly to Modi's residence for a private dinner—the opening act in an elaborately choreographed diplomatic ballet. Discussions spanned defense manufacturing, energy cooperation, pharmaceuticals, technology transfer, and efforts to rebalance a trade relationship that has swelled to nearly \$69 billion but remains heavily tilted toward Russian exports. Defense cooperation was at the heart of the summit. India continues to operate military hardware predominantly of Russian origin—approximately 55% of its legacy systems—and is seeking additional batches of S-400 air defense systems after they proved effective during a brief air conflict with Pakistan in May. Discussions are also expected to cover upgraded BrahMos cruise missiles, hypersonic weapon projects, and long-range missile systems.

Energy remains the quiet pillar of the relationship. Despite Western discomfort, India has become Russia's largest oil customer, purchasing discounted crude that has helped tame domestic inflation while providing Moscow a critical revenue stream amid sanctions. However, recent U.S. pressure has caused Indian state-owned refiners to pause some Russian purchases, creating uncertainty about future energy ties. In an extraordinary diplomatic breach, the ambassadors of Britain, France, and Germany published a joint opinion piece in a leading Indian newspaper just before Putin's arrival, accusing Russia of escalating the war even during peace talks and suggesting Moscow could immediately end hostilities if Putin chose to do so. For Western capitals hoping to diplomatically isolate Russia, this reality is unwelcome but increasingly unavoidable. India's strategic autonomy—long dismissed as rhetorical posturing—is now revealed as operational policy. As officials in Delhi often remind visiting diplomats: India does not choose sides. It chooses outcomes. And Putin's high-profile visit, complete with riverside prayers and presidential banquets, is the latest reminder that New Delhi's independence is not negotiable—even under the heaviest global pressure.

A rational approach to Immigration policy Is needed for Britain

By: Ben Chacko

Britain's incoherent, counterproductive and needlessly cruel border control policy has resulted in a spiralling increase in death and violence. The one thing it has failed to do is deter small boat arrivals. The Humans for Rights Network has assembled a compelling collection of reports from two dozen human rights organisations, operating in both Britain and France, that detail alarming evidence from asylum-seekers, aid workers and medics. In a move which parallels the European Union's policy of funding the Libyan state and coastguard authorities to intercept small boats crossing the Mediterranean, Britain is spending millions in funding French police and border control authorities to perform the same operation across the English Channel.

While the notoriously violent French police are, as yet, not violent enough to match the excesses of the jihadists who make up the Libyan state apparatus, they are brutal enough. Since the NATO powers, US, Britain and France bombed Libya to smithereens — and British intelligence enabled the same jihadists responsible for the Manchester bombing to take power — the Mediterranean has seen an escalation of violence along the EU frontier. Both the Labour government and the competing parties of Britain's presently disunited capitalist class present small boat arrivals as the central question of immigration policy.

In fact, immigration overall is substantially down and while small boat arrivals are largely seasonal, asylum-seekers are wilfully confused with migrants in general. Asylum-seekers, who by definition are compelled to use unorthodox routes to reach Britain, are in a different category to routine migration into Britain and are a very small part of immigration overall. The public perception of immigration is greatly distorted by the tendentious framing of the issue by both media and the main parties of capitalist continuity. In fact, if safe routes to entry for genuine asylum-seekers were instituted, the flow could be rationally managed and the criminal gangs, which are in fact the creation of EU and British government policy, would be out of business. Once the idea gains ground among the British public that asylum-seekers arriving in small boats are a minor part of the migratory flow to Britain, it will be possible for a more rational discussion to take place about what should be a rational immigration policy. At present the question is posed as a contradiction between a strong border policy, essentially a policing problem, versus the ultra-liberal notion of open borders. The former is represented by the media, and a right wing more interested in hyperbole than reason, as the totality of the question.

At the same time, woolly liberal opinion — sometimes shot through with an holier-than-thou ultra leftism — is wilfully ignorant of the ways in which the imperialist-induced contemporary capitalist labour market functions. Imperial Britain traditionally relies on denuding its former colonies of their skilled labour to fill gaps in the labour market that a profit-hungry ruling class finds this more congenial than actually skilling up the existing labour force, investing sufficiently in labour efficient technology and recasting our economy for the 21st century. A large proportion of incoming migrants are English-speaking foreign students attracted by our well-established higher education system and another tranche are migrant workers from many parts of the world, and especially Europe, actively recruited by employers and whose entry is sanctioned and facilitated by government. (IPA Service)

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF PARENTS IN THE PRACTICE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE

The existence of a nation is not secured merely within the boundaries drawn on a map; it is the uninterrupted practice of that nation's language, literature, and culture that truly keeps the nation alive. Language is not just a medium for expressing thoughts; it is the heartbeat of a nation, the mirror of a civilization, and the greatest legacy left for posterity. In recent times, the deep concern that has arisen in our society regarding the practice and future of the mother tongue is not merely a linguistic crisis; rather, it is a crisis of national existence itself. In addressing this crisis, parents have a far more important, decisive, and historic role to play than government policies or formal educational institutions. A child's first school is their home, and their first teacher is their parents. Therefore, the primary responsibility of instilling respect, love, and a sense of duty towards the mother tongue rests with parents. In the fierce whirlwind of contemporary globalization, there is no alternative to the goodwill, awareness, and farsightedness of parents in holding fast to one's roots.

In present-day middle-class and upper-middle-class society, an extremely uncomfortable and self-destructive mindset has taken shape, where English-medium education is no longer accepted merely as a medium of instruction but is blindly regarded as a symbol of elitism. This mindset plants the seeds of deep inferiority towards the mother tongue in a child's tender mind. When parents, within the four walls of the home, attempt to speak with their children in broken English or a strange mixed language, the child begins to believe that a foreign language is far more prestigious and superior to their own. Once this notion takes root, the mother tongue, for that child, remains merely an examination subject in the future; it never becomes the language of their emotions, feelings, or thoughts. Parents must realize with all their heart that learning any language in the world is a matter of pride and essential for expanding the horizons of knowledge, but learning another language by neglecting or destroying one's own can never be a sign of intelligence. If the natural and fluent practice of the mother tongue does not take place at home, a child's vocabulary will never be rich, and they will suffer from a complex linguistic crisis when trying to fully express the deeper emotions of their mind.

The mother tongue is not merely necessary but indispensable for a child's intellectual development, mental maturity, and creativity. A child can grasp any complex concept, new scientific theory, or subtle emotion far more easily and quickly in the mother tongue than in any other language. Human thought processes always operate first in the primary language, which we call the mother tongue. When parents forcibly compel a child to think or speak in another language, they create an artificial obstacle in the child's natural intellectual growth. In our societal context, it is observed that many parents raise children from a very young age in an environment where books, newspapers, or magazines in their own language have no place. Instead, foreign cartoons, Western culture, and alien behaviours dominate the child's mind. As a result, children feel greater affinity with foreign characters than with the folktales told by their grandparents. This gap is not merely linguistic; it is a vast chasm in culture, tradition, and values. The sole and primary duty of parents is to introduce children intimately to literature, art, and folk culture that carry the fragrance of their own soil, alongside modern education.

Within the Assamese language lies centuries of our nation's history, struggles, traditions, and social values. When a child learns to scorn the mother tongue, they unknowingly become disconnected from their own heritage. The melody of our Bihu songs, the solemnity of prayers in the namghar, the tenderness of folk songs, or the spiritual sweetness of zikir and zari can only be truly felt through one's own language. If parents do not introduce children to these cultural elements from an early age, future generations may claim to be global citizens, yet the foundation of their identity will always remain weak. It is often noticed nowadays that many of the younger generation cannot read numbers in their own script or write simple conjunct letters. This failure is not really the child's; it is the failure of those parents who made no effort whatsoever to instill love for the mother tongue during childhood. Respect for language is born through daily use; it is impossible to awaken such affection solely through school textbooks.

The linguistic landscape of our state is extremely diverse, rich, and complex. It contains a beautiful confluence of languages and dialects of various communities. Amidst this, our language has long served as a connecting thread, binding everyone together. Yet, at present, the influence of globalization and the aggression of English and Hindi have somewhat loosened this bond. Especially among urban parents, there exists a mistaken and fatal notion that one cannot succeed in life or survive in society without knowing English. Under the spell of this belief, they unnecessarily overuse English words even in everyday household conversation. The result is a strange "mixed language" that possesses neither the pure grammar of English nor the authentic structure and beauty of one's own language. Such linguistic habits prevent children from becoming proficient in any single language. Parents must understand that mastering multiple languages is a great skill, but needlessly mixing words from one language with another and creating an odd hybrid is a symptom of linguistic weakness.



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The habit of speaking and writing pure language must begin from the study table or drawing room of the home.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The rapid spread of technology and the easy availability of mobile phones have exerted a profound and adverse impact on children's language learning. Today, the primary source of children's entertainment is the internet, mobile games, and social media, most of whose content is available in English or Hindi. Due to their own busy schedules or to keep children quiet, parents very easily hand over mobile phones to them. Consequently, children spend most of the day wandering in a virtual, imaginary world where their own language has no existence. In this regard, the role of parents is extremely decisive and sensitive. They must consciously and systematically ensure that children use e-books, audiobooks, or educational materials in their own language available on the internet. Instead of treating digital media as an enemy, it should be turned into an ally for the promotion and expansion of the mother tongue; only then can the new generation be attracted. If parents themselves feel ashamed to write in their own language on social media or use Roman script to write their language, children will follow suit and gradually become unfamiliar with their own script.

Our present education system also has many limitations and flaws, yet parents cannot escape their sacred duty by using those limitations merely as excuses. Even if children study in English-medium schools, the practice of the mother tongue at home can be kept completely intact. In many advanced countries of the world—such as China, Japan, France, Germany, or Russia—all education from higher studies to research is conducted in the mother tongue, and they are not lagging behind on the global stage. Our society too needs such a mental revolution. Parents must realize that language is merely a medium for acquiring knowledge; language itself is not knowledge. Only when a child has mastery over their own language can they learn other languages correctly and grammatically. The subtle nuances of linguistic structure, word choice, and expression that are mastered in the mother tongue make learning another language as easy as drinking water. Therefore, sacrificing one's own language in the name of modern education is a suicidal decision. Instead of depending entirely on schools, parents must take special initiative to let children savour the essence of their own literature at home.

Another important aspect is the preservation of the authentic idioms, proverbs, and sayings of our language. These are not merely collections of words; they are the distilled wisdom, observation, and experience of our ancestors gathered over centuries. In modern lifestyles, their usage is gradually declining and they are on the verge of being lost. If parents apply these in daily conversation, children will be able to appreciate the beauty, gravity, and depth of the language. A language lives through its use. If we resort to another language to express our daily emotions—joy, anger, resentment, love, or sorrow—our own language will remain confined only to meetings, seminars, or formal occasions. Parents must remain conscious so that their

children do not regard their language merely as a tool for scoring marks in examinations but accept it as something close to their heart and feel proud of it.

The behaviour and linguistic usage of parents at social functions, festivals, or weddings have a deep impact on children. When parents give importance to speaking English-mixed language instead of pure language or speak faulty English with their children just to show off to others, children begin to think that abandoning one's own language is necessary to gain status in society. To remove this inferiority complex, parents must first learn to take pride in their own language. It is the parents' duty to instill in children the confidence to stand on any world stage by speaking their language clearly, wearing their traditional attire, and partaking of their own cuisine. There is no need to erase one's identity to establish oneself in the global arena. Rather, maintaining one's uniqueness while keeping pace with the world is true modernity.

The language crisis is not confined to our region alone; across the world, smaller languages are presently moving towards extinction under the grip of globalization. In this complex situation, securing the future of our language requires massive public awareness, the beginning of which must start from within every home. Parents can regularly take children to book fairs or literary festivals, encourage them to watch mobile theatres or plays, and foster interest in our indigenous music. Gifting a good book instead of expensive toys or gadgets on birthdays or special days will increase children's eagerness for books and language. These small yet significant efforts can gradually initiate a major transformation. The movement to protect language must not remain limited to street slogans or placards; it must also continue in our drawing rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms.

A noteworthy point at present is that many expatriate families, even while living on foreign soil, have succeeded in teaching their children pure language, whereas many parents living on our own soil either cannot or do not wish to teach their children the mother tongue—an extreme irony. The root cause is a lack of mindset and will. Expatriates, being far from their roots, understand the value and urgency of language more deeply, while we neglect it thinking it is easily available. Parents must emerge from this complacency and indifference. They must realize that a language is like a river; if its flow of practice stops, it will one day die, and no one takes pride in a dead stream. Just as we provide our children with nutritious food, expensive schools, and good clothes, providing a healthy,

successors—nothing less.

In today's fiercely competitive age, parents are running only after their children's careers, marks, and grades. In this blind race, human values, empathy, and language-culture have been left far behind. Yet life is not merely jobs, bank balances, or big buildings. To become a complete human being, one needs thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and knowledge of one's own culture—something impossible without deep practice of the mother tongue. A person who cannot speak fluently in their own language or does not read their own literature will always have an incompleteness in personality, no matter how highly educated or wealthy they may be. Parents must become conscious to protect their children from this incompleteness. They must create an environment at home where speaking one's own language is not just a rule but a matter of joy and pride.

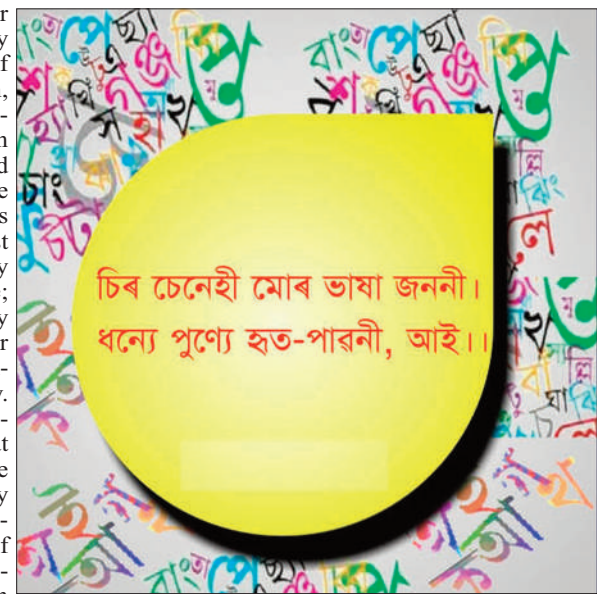
For a language to remain alive, the process of creating and accepting new words must continue uninterrupted. A mindset must be cultivated to find appropriate synonyms for new scientific and technological terms or to assimilate them naturally into our language when necessary. If parents occasionally discuss these matters with children, curiosity about the structure, change, and development of language will arise in their minds. When such intellectual engagement with language begins at home, future generations will be able to give the language new dimensions and momentum. Stagnation invites death; therefore, encouraging the new generation to maintain the dynamism of language is essential.

One thing must always be remembered: practicing the mother tongue does not mean hating other languages. Rather, it means accepting the best from others only after strengthening one's own foundation. Parents must explain to children that English or other languages may be keys to unlock the world's storehouse of knowledge, but the mother tongue is the only path to utilize that knowledge for one's own people and to satisfy one's own soul. A nation that does not respect its own language will never be respected by the world. Parents must realize this eternal truth themselves and engrave it in their children's tender minds from an early age.

In the name of linguistic purity, being excessively strict can sometimes backfire. Parents should adopt a middle path in this regard. If children make mistakes while speaking, correcting them with love rather than scorn or humiliation is far more effective. Parents must always remain vigilant so that children do not abandon speaking their own language out of fear. There must be an open environment at home where children can discuss anything in their own language without hesitation. This open conversation with parents is the greatest classroom for language learning.

In conclusion, it is undeniable that the role of parents in the practice of the mother tongue is not merely important; it is an indispensable condition for national life. Government policies, offices, or school curricula may keep the language formally alive, but the very soul of the language resides within the four walls of the home, amidst the smoke of the kitchen, and in the adda of the drawing room. The day every household in our state proudly speaks with their children in pure and fluent language, the day our literature is discussed at the evening study table—that day there will be no apprehension about

the future of our language. Parents must shoulder this historic and sacred responsibility. This is not merely about saving a language; it is about preserving our national identity, self-respect, and existence. We must send our children to conquer the world, but we must also equip their feet with the sturdy shoes of our own language and culture so that, no matter how far they go or how high they climb, they never forget their roots. Time has not yet run out; what is needed is only a positive resolve, indomitable will, and tireless effort. Let every parent turn their home into a small yet powerful fortress of our language and culture; only then will our mother tongue remain ever-flowing and ever-vigilant for the distant future. This struggle may be difficult, but it is not impossible, and for the sake of our future generations, we must win this struggle.



চিৰ চেনেহী মোৰ ভাষা জননী।  
ৰন্যে পুষ্যে হত-পারবনী, আই।

# Swahid Divas 2025: Unveiling Swahid Smarak Khetra, Assam's tribute to its Martyrs

By: Dipak Kurmi

Swahid Divas 2025 unfolds in Assam with a resonance unlike any observance in the past four and a half decades. What was once a solemn annual ritual of remembrance has transformed this year into a defining milestone in the State's collective journey of memory, justice, and identity. On December 10 in Guwahati, Assam witnesses a historic moment with the inauguration of the Swahid Smarak at Paschim Boragaon, a memorial dedicated to honouring the 855 martyrs of the Assam Movement. The memorial, conceptualised as a permanent embodiment of gratitude and remembrance, is being formally unveiled by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The day's significance is heightened further by the lighting of the eternal flame in the evening, symbolising the immortal spirit of those who fell in the movement that reshaped the socio-political destiny of Assam.

For many in Assam, the Assam Agitation remains one of the most influential mass movements in the region's history, driven by concerns over cultural survival, illegal immigration, and safeguarding the unique Assamese identity. Beginning in 1979 after the tragic martyrdom of Khageswar Talukdar, who became the first youth to sacrifice his life for the cause, the movement catalysed a sweeping wave of student activism, political consciousness, and widespread public participation. Over the years, the movement's legacy has been preserved largely through memory, literature, songs, and personal testimonies. Yet, despite the magnitude of the sacrifices, a dedicated, state-recognised memorial had been conspicuously absent—until now.

Chief Minister Sarma, after reviewing final preparations before the inauguration, described the day as a pivotal and emotional one for the State. He emphasised that this is the first time since Independence that Assam has officially honoured the martyrs of the Movement through such a grand and permanent tribute. The



Swahid Smarak, which will be inaugurated at 11 am, is followed by the lighting of the eternal flame at 4 pm, a gesture expected to become a symbolic centrepiece for future commemorations. The Chief Minister expressed that the event marks a moment of reconciliation with the past, a moment nearly forty-five years overdue, yet profoundly significant for every family that lost a loved one during those turbulent years.

Swahid Divas has long been a day of mourning and remembrance, but 2025 elevates it to a new plane of historical recognition. Schools, colleges, and public institutions across Assam will join the observance, with the inauguration ceremony being broadcast live across all districts to ensure statewide participation. One of the most emotionally compelling collective gestures of the day will be the simultaneous performance of the patriotic song Swahid Pranamu Tumak in every district. This coordi-

nated homage is intended to unify the State in a moment of shared gratitude, remembrance, and reflection.

The Swahid Smarak itself is not merely a structure of stone and steel. It is a meticulously designed space intended to carry the lived memories of the Assam Movement into the future. Architecturally significant installations will narrate the timeline of the agitation, offering an immersive journey through the events, sacrifices, and hopes that defined the movement from 1979 to 1985. The memorial includes dedicated areas for public gatherings, educational programmes, and cultural commemorations, ensuring that it evolves into a vibrant space of learning and reflection rather than a static monument. By integrating interactive and interpretive elements, the Smarak is envisioned to serve as a living classroom for younger generations, many of whom only know

the Movement through textbooks and family anecdotes.

A particularly poignant element of the memorial is the inclusion of reserved spaces representing martyrs whose photographs or complete information could not be traced. The Chief Minister noted that records remain incomplete for nearly 400 martyrs. For some, names exist without photographs; for others, photographs survive without names or addresses. This gap in documentation reflects the chaos and urgency of the period during which the Assam Movement unfolded. To address this, the State government has committed to a special project aimed at tracing families, collecting additional details, and commissioning artistically sketched portraits for those whose images may never be recovered. These empty yet symbolically charged spaces in the memorial will stand as silent reminders of the unnamed sacrifices embedded within Assam's collective history.

Another significant development on Swahid Divas is the inauguration of the new office building for the Implementation of Assam Accord Department. This department plays a crucial role in operationalising the clauses of the Assam Accord, signed in 1985 as the culmination of the movement. The inauguration of the new office signifies a renewed governmental commitment not only to honouring the memories of the martyrs but also to implementing the promises made to the people of Assam nearly four decades ago. Alongside this, a dedicated photo gallery has been opened to the public, showcasing rare archival photographs and historic documents from the years of the Assam Agitation. These visuals, curated to recreate pivotal moments from 1979 to 1985, offer profound insight into the scale, intensity, and emotional energy of the movement. For many families who lost loved ones during the agitation, this gallery represents an official acknowledgement of their personal histories and sacrifices.

The significance of Swahid Divas 2025 ex-

ceeds beyond the physical inauguration. It represents a moment of reckoning with the unfinished tasks of remembrance. For decades, the martyrs were honoured through community gatherings and personal tributes, but the absence of a central memorial left many families seeking a formal space of recognition. With the establishment of the Swahid Smarak, that void is finally addressed. It creates a unified site where the stories of the 855 martyrs can be preserved, honoured, and transmitted across generations. Many of these martyrs were young, often students, driven by an unwavering belief in protecting Assam's cultural and linguistic heritage. Their sacrifices, long held within the private spaces of homes and villages, now find a permanent place within the public consciousness of the State.

The inauguration ceremony is expected to draw families of martyrs from various districts, turning the event into a deeply personal moment for those who have waited for decades to see their loved ones formally recognised. Cultural bodies, civil society organisations, and citizens from diverse backgrounds will converge at Paschim Boragaon, transforming the space into a collective ground of remembrance and solidarity. The memorial is expected to become a site for annual observances, student visits, cultural programmes, and historical retrospection.

As Assam steps into this new chapter of remembrance, the Swahid Smarak becomes more than an architectural landmark; it becomes a testament to a people's unbroken resolve to honour their past. It stands as a symbol of unity, a repository of history, a space of learning, and, above all, a site for emotional healing. On Swahid Divas 2025, as the eternal flame is lit and the State collectively pays tribute to its martyrs, Assam reaffirms that the sacrifices made in the movement were not in vain. Through stone, light, and memory, the stories of the martyrs continue to shine, guiding the generations that will inherit the legacy of the land they loved and defended. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)*

## Tezpur University Locked in Revolt Assam's agriculture on a New growth path

By: Satyabrata Borah

Imagine a quiet campus nestled in the lush green hills of Assam, where the Brahmaputra River whispers secrets to the wind. Tezpur University, born from the dreams of the Assam Accord in 1994, has long been a beacon of hope for students from across the Northeast. It's a place where young minds chase degrees in everything from environmental science to cultural studies, far from the chaos of city life. But lately, this haven of learning has turned into a battleground. For over three months now, as of December 2025, the university has been locked in a fierce controversy that has shut down classes, boycotted exams, and drawn the eyes of the nation. At the heart of it all is Vice-Chancellor Shambhu Nath Singh, a man whose leadership has sparked cries of corruption, absence, and utter disregard for the community he was meant to serve.

It started innocently enough, or so it seemed, back in mid-September 2025. Assam was draped in black. The state mourned the sudden death of Zubeen Garg, the beloved singer whose voice had woven itself into the soul of Assamese culture. From roadside tea stalls to grand concert halls, people gathered to remember him, sharing stories of how his songs bridged generations and healed old wounds. In Tezpur, the university community wanted to join this collective grief. Students and faculty approached the administration with a simple request: hold a condolence meeting on campus. It was a gesture of respect, a way to honor a son of the soil who had inspired so many of them.

But what happened next shattered that unity. Professor Singh, the Vice-Chancellor, refused. Flat out. No explanation, no compromise. As the state shut down in sorrow, classes continued as if nothing had happened. Whispers turned to shouts. "How can we study when our hearts are breaking?" one student later recalled asking. The refusal felt like a slap, especially in a region where cultural icons like Zubeen are more than entertainers—they're family. Tensions boiled over on September 22. A group of students confronted the VC in his office, demanding an apology and the closure of classes for mourning. Videos captured the chaos: Singh allegedly pushed through the crowd, claiming assault, while students insisted they only blocked his path to make him listen. He fled the campus that day and hasn't been seen since. Seventy-nine days of absence followed, leaving the university leaderless and adrift.

That incident was the spark, but the fire had been smoldering for much longer. Professor Singh, appointed in 2023 from his previous role at Patna University, brought with him a trail of questions. Whispers of financial irregularities from his time in Bihar had followed him to Tezpur, but no one expected them to erupt here. Students and staff began piecing together a damning picture. Allegations poured out like monsoon rain: questionable tenders for campus projects, hires of unqualified relatives and friends at inflated salaries, and misuse of funds meant for research and infrastructure. One report highlighted how Higher Education Funding Agency (HEFA) loans—millions of rupees intended to modernize labs and hostels—seemed to vanish into thin air, with no audits or explanations. "We came here to build futures," said a young lecturer who wished to remain unnamed, "not to watch our dreams get siphoned off."

The accusations didn't stop at money. Faculty spoke of forced labor, where PhD scholars were made to teach classes for peanuts, displacing experienced guest pro-

fessors. Promotions under the UGC Career Advancement Scheme dragged on for years, breeding resentment. And then there was the infrastructure nightmare. Hostels leaked during rains, labs lacked basic equipment, and roads cracked under neglect. "It's like the VC treated our university as his personal fiefdom," a protester told reporters, her voice trembling with frustration. The Tezpur University United Forum (TUUF) emerged as the voice of this anger—a coalition of students, teachers, and non-teaching staff who vowed not to back down. What began as a sit-in outside the administrative block grew into torchlight marches that lit up the night sky, effigies burning like beacons of defiance.

By late November, the protests had paralyzed the campus. The autumn recess, meant to start on September 29, was hastily pulled forward to September 25—a move seen as a sly way to scatter the agitators. But the students refused to be silenced. They returned stronger, linking arms with local groups like the All Assam Students' Union (AASU). On November 29, the indefinite shutdown began. Gates locked, classes canceled, and exams postponed for the first time in the university's history. "This isn't just about one man," explained Xarodi Xandhya, a research scholar leading the student wing. "It's about accountability. If we let this slide, what message do we send to the next generation?"

The ripple effects spread far beyond Tezpur's borders. In Guwahati, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma picked up the phone to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan. "Appoint a pro-Vice-Chancellor immediately," Sarma urged, hoping to steady the ship while an inquiry unfolded. But the protesters wanted more—they demanded Singh's outright removal and a full probe by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI). Congress leaders, including MP Gaurav Gogoi, jumped in, writing to Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the "controversial VCs" plaguing Northeast universities. "Stop using our institutions as dumping grounds for troubled administrators," Gogoi thundered in Parliament, linking Tezpur's woes to similar storms at North-Eastern Hill University in Shillong.

As December dawned, the drama intensified. On December 4, Professor Dhruba Kumar Bhattacharyya, the senior-most faculty member, took a bold step. Citing the Tezpur University Act of 1993, he declared himself acting Vice-Chancellor. "The statutes are clear," he said in a simple notification. "If the VC is absent and no pro-VC is appointed, I must step in." It was a move born of necessity, but it didn't sit well with everyone. Hours earlier, Singh—still MIA—had convened a hybrid Board of Management meeting via Zoom and named Professor Joya Chakraborty as pro-VC. She declined, calling it a farce. Chaos reigned: two claimants to power, neither trusted by the masses.

The government's response came on December 6, when a high-level delegation from the Ministry of Education arrived. Led by Acting UGC Chairperson Vineet Joshi and Joint Secretary Saumya Gupta, they were meant to mediate. Instead, they walked into a hornet's nest. Protesters blocked their vehicles for over two hours, refusing to let them leave until demands were met. "We want it in writing," the crowd chanted. After tense negotiations that stretched past midnight, Gupta scribbled a handwritten note on ministry letterhead. It acknowledged "multiple issues" with Singh's governance and promised his administrative ouster pending a time-bound inquiry. The team drove off into the dawn, but the victory felt hollow. "Verbal

promises are like smoke," one student remarked. "They vanish when you need them most."

The next day, December 7, saw the protests hit a fever pitch. Students boycotted end-term exams scheduled for Monday and Tuesday, turning exam halls into echo chambers of dissent. Torch rallies snaked through Sonitpur district, with AASU supporters swelling the ranks. Social media buzzed with videos and threads—researchers like Aboyob Bhuyan shared footage debunking Singh's assault claims, while journalists like Rajdeep Sardesai amplified the story to national audiences. "This is real India," Sardesai tweeted, "where a university crumbles under absent leadership." Even the university's Finance Officer, Braja Bandhu Mishra, became a flashpoint. Accused of complicity in the irregularities, he quietly slipped away to a new post at Sikkim University, sparking cries of "dumping ground" for Northeast institutions.

Through it all, the human cost mounts. Imagine Priya, a final-year student from a remote village in Arunachal Pradesh. She left home with dreams of becoming an engineer, scraping together fees from her family's meager farm income. Now, her exams are delayed, her future hangs in limbo, and the campus that promised opportunity feels like a trap. "We didn't choose this fight," she says softly, sitting cross-legged on the dewy grass during a midnight vigil. "But if we don't fight, who will?" Faculty members echo her pain. Professor Kusum Kumar Bania of the Teachers' Association recalls how the movement gained steam after Zubeen's death. "It was the tipping point," she says. "We realized this wasn't just mismanagement—it was a betrayal of our shared values."

This controversy isn't isolated. It mirrors a deeper malaise in India's public universities, especially in the Northeast. Institutions like Tezpur and NEHU, forged in the fires of regional movements, now grapple with VCs imposed from afar, often with checkered pasts. Private colleges mushroom with glossy ads and sky-high fees, pulling away the elite, while public ones like Tezpur limp on, underfunded and undervalued. "We've fought for these spaces," says Gaurav Gogoi, "through accords and agitations. We won't let them crumble now." The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) once praised Tezpur for its research output and NAAC accreditation. But rankings mean little when basic dignity is denied.

As the sun sets on December 9, 2025, the campus remains eerily still. Protesters huddle around bonfires, sharing tea and tales of resilience. They've rejected half-measures, vowing to keep the gates barred until a formal gazette notification seals Singh's fate. Will the Centre buckle? An inquiry is promised, but timelines blur in bureaucratic haze. For now, Tezpur stands as a testament to the power of collective voice—a reminder that education isn't just about books and degrees. It's about respect, transparency, and the courage to call out wrong when it knocks on your door.

In the quiet moments, amid the chants and placards, there's a flicker of hope. These students, teachers, and staff aren't just fighting for one university; they're reclaiming the promise of public education for all. Zubeen Garg's songs, once blaring from dorm windows, now fuel their resolve—melodies of unity and unyielding spirit. Whatever the outcome, Tezpur's story will echo. It tells us that when leaders falter, they rise. And in that rising, perhaps, a stronger foundation is laid—one class at a time, one voice at a time.

## Assam's agriculture on a New growth path

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Over the last few years, Assam's agriculture sector has witnessed a steady and structured transformation driven by farmer-centric schemes, infrastructure expansion, digital integration, and sustainable practices. From crop insurance and income assurance to mechanization, irrigation, organic farming, and market access, the state is gradually building a more resilient and future-ready agricultural ecosystem. One of the most significant success stories has been the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY). Farmer participation has grown rapidly, reflecting increasing trust in the scheme. During Kharif 2023, Assam recorded over 4.07 lakh applications, registering a sharp 67.62 percent rise over the previous year. Enrolment nearly doubled in Kharif 2024 with 7.67 lakh applications and further increased to 9.05 lakh in Kharif 2025. Rabi seasons also showed similar trends, with enrolment rising from 3.87 lakh in 2023 to 4.35 lakh in 2024. The State Government's decision to cap the farmer's premium contribution at just ₹100 for the first hectare, with the remaining amount fully subsidized, has made crop insurance affordable for even the smallest farmers.

Alongside crop insurance, direct income support under PM-KISAN has expanded significantly. In the 21st instalment released on 19 November 2025, Assam disbursed ₹363.47 crore to 18.87 lakh farmers through Aadhaar-based Direct Benefit Transfer. This represents a 46 percent increase in beneficiaries compared to 2021, highlighting the state's focused efforts on Aadhaar authentication, e-KYC completion, and maintaining a clean and transparent beneficiary database.

Seed distribution, innovation, and entrepreneurship have received strong support under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY). Between 2021-22 and 2025-26, around 8.82 lakh quintals of seeds covering cereals, pulses, oilseeds, potato, spices and cash crops were distributed over nearly 6.48 lakh hectares, benefiting about 23.9 lakh farmers. Beyond input support, RKVY has also promoted startups and agri-entrepreneurship, expanding income opportunities for farmers and rural youth.

The National Food Security Mission (NFSM) has played a central role in enhancing productivity across rice, pulses, nutri-cereals and commercial crops. Introduction of high-yielding and climate-resilient varieties, supported by cluster demonstrations and improved agronomic practices, has expanded cultivation in rainfed and rice-fallow areas. NFSM has also strengthened farm mechanization through the distribution of machinery such as seed pump sets, cono weeders and combine harvesters. Pulses have received special attention through area expansion, quality seed supply and better cultivation techniques. In addition, NFSM has strengthened post-harvest infrastructure such as storage and processing units, reducing losses and improving farmers' income.

Farm mechanization has gained major momentum in Assam under the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM) and other schemes. During the last five years, the state has distributed over 17,000 tractors, 14,000 power tillers, 1,343 rotavators, 105 combine harvesters and nearly 2.47 lakh other farm machines with subsidy. Since 2021-22, 1,452 Village Level Farm Machinery Banks have been established with up to 95 percent government subsidy to provide custom hiring services. Individual farmers have also received assistance for owning machinery. Though Assam's farm power availability of 0.78 kW per hectare is still below the national average, mechanization is steadily reducing labour drudgery and production costs.

Irrigation expansion has been another major focus area. As of 2015, Assam had irrigation potential for only about one-fourth of its total cropped area. To bridge this gap, the Agriculture Department has accelerated the installation of Shallow Tube Wells under RIDF. Since 2017-18, more than 74,000 tube wells have been installed with diesel, electric and solar pumps, creating irrigation potential over 1.48 lakh hectares. This has brought greater stability to cropping patterns and reduced monsoon dependency.

Assam has also made rapid advances in digital agriculture. The AgriStack project and Digital Crop Sur-

vey, launched during Kharif 2023-24 as a pilot in six districts, have now been scaled up to 30 districts. The recently concluded Digital Crop Survey covered over 12,000 villages and more than 35 lakh plots. Alongside this, the state has begun implementing a comprehensive Farmer Registry linked with digitized land records and Aadhaar-based consent. By December 2025, over 10 lakh Farmer IDs had already been generated.

Soil health management has received renewed emphasis under the Soil Health and Fertility scheme. With intensive soil sampling and testing through 26 laboratories, over 13 lakh Soil Health Cards have been distributed to farmers. A unique initiative introduced in 2024 is the School Soil Health Programme, under which Mini Soil Testing Labs have been set up in schools to promote scientific thinking and soil conservation awareness among students.

Assam has also emerged as a leading state under the National Mission on Edible Oils-Oil Palm. The scheme is being implemented in 18 districts, and with over 13,600 hectares under cultivation, Assam now ranks fourth in the country in oil palm coverage. To further boost farmer income, the state introduced an additional support of ₹250 per quintal over the MSP from April 2025. This intervention had a direct impact on procurement, with paddy procurement for KMS 2024-25 achieving nearly 99.91 percent success.

Natural farming is another important addition to Assam's agricultural roadmap. The National Mission on Natural Farming was launched in 2024-25 across 15 districts, with clusters covering 100 hectares per district. Thousands of farmers have been trained by KVKs and supported through Bio-Input Resource Centres, encouraging a gradual shift towards chemical-free cultivation.

The agriculture extension system has also been strengthened under ATMA and Krishonnati Yojana. Since 2021, more than 9,000 farmers' training programmes, 423 farm schools, 131 exposure visits and 52 Kisan Melas have been conducted, benefiting over 2.37 lakh farmers across the state. These efforts are helping bridge the gap between research institutions and the farming community.

Investment in post-harvest infrastructure is growing under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF). Since April 2022, 675 projects with loan sanctions of about ₹1,038 crore have been approved in Assam. Parallelly, agroforestry has been promoted under RKVY since 2023-24, with new nurseries and mixed plantation models being developed to improve climate resilience and carbon sequestration.

Under the "Per Drop More Crop" scheme, micro-irrigation has expanded rapidly. More than 70,000 hectares have been covered using drip and sprinkler systems, benefiting nearly 68,000 farmers and improving water-use efficiency across agricultural and horticultural crops.

Organic farming and export-driven value chains have emerged as a major success under the Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region. Between 2021 and 2026, 15,000 hectares have been converted to organic farming, involving around 20,000 farmers. Processing units, vermicompost facilities and collection centres have been established at the grassroots level. Exports of organic red rice, ginger, pineapple, banana and Assam lemon to the Middle East, Europe and Southeast Asia have strengthened Assam's global agri-footprint. The state's organic brand "ASOMA" is now gaining wide recognition in domestic and international markets.

In horticulture, the Holistic Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture in the North East (HMNEH) has boosted high-value crop production, elite planting material, mechanization and post-harvest management. A major milestone has been the Centre of Excellence for Vegetables at Khetri receiving approval under the Indo-Israel Agricultural Project.

Taken together, these initiatives reflect a broad-based transformation of Assam's agriculture—from risk mitigation and income assurance to mechanization, irrigation, digitization, natural farming and export-linked growth. While challenges remain in productivity gaps, climate risks and market integration, the sustained policy focus and steady expansion of farmer-oriented schemes signal a hopeful future for Assam's rural economy.

BTC Chief alleges previous govt politicised beneficiary selection

# Hagrama distributes PMAY approvals in Gossaigaon

**HT Correspondent**  
**GOSSAIGAON, Dec 9:** BTC Chief Executive Member (CEM) Hagrama Mohilary on Monday strongly criticised the previous UPPL government led by Pramod Boro, alleging that it indulged in political favouritism during beneficiary selection for several welfare schemes. He claimed the earlier government engaged in “cheap politics,” using poor families as political tools and depriving many genuine beneficiaries of government schemes, including Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), ration cards and the Orunodoi scheme.

Speaking as the Chief Guest at a house approval letter distribution programme held at the UN Brahma Playground in Habrubli under the 1 No Gossaigaon Assembly Constituency, Mohilary urged VCDC chairpersons and members to make sincere efforts to ensure that all eligible families are covered under welfare schemes of the present administration.

He said that during the previous government’s tenure several people were intentionally excluded due to political bias, resulting in more than eight thousand women in the region being left out of the Orunodoi scheme. Mohilary added



that the present government is working to fulfil the five guarantees announced before the elections and is committed to extending additional housing support to poor families.

Stating that there would be no irregularities in the construction of houses this time, unlike in the past, the CEM warned that newly selected PMAY beneficiaries must receive their houses without paying any bribe. “Anyone taking bribes in exchange for providing houses will be sent to jail,” he cautioned.

Mohilary also instructed VCDC chairpersons and members to submit application forms of the remaining eight thousand eligible beneficiaries of Gossaigaon within two days. He emphasised that no one should be left out and reminded leaders of their responsibility to fulfil promises made to poor families during the election.

During the programme, around 349 beneficiaries were formally issued house approval letters. District president and former Executive Member Shobaram Basumatary also addressed the gathering, highlighting pro-people initiatives undertaken by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to meet the basic needs of poor families.

The event was attended by BTC Executive Member Mrityunjay Narzary, MCLA William Narzary, former MLA Hemendra Nath Brahma, former Municipal Chairman Dhruva Kumar Brahma Narzary, former MCLA Devajit Narzary, SDO (Civil) Mridul Kumar Shivhare, BDO Anjima Daimari, project officials, departmental officers, party workers and beneficiaries. A total of 349 approval letters were distributed in Gossaigaon.

Meanwhile, at Binyakhata under the 4 No Baukhungri constituency of the Kachugaon Development Block, another PMAY house approval distribution ceremony was held, where BTC Executive Member Derhasat Basumatary attended as Chief Guest. The programme was also attended by MCLA Entaj Ali, Kachugaon BDO Doimolu Daimari, Sarabil Block Committee president Aftab Uddin Sheikh and several prominent citizens. Under the Kachugaon Block, 301 beneficiaries received PMAY house approval letters.

# Ambedkar Foundation marks Ambedkar’s death anniversary

Event discusses land pattas for 200 landless Harijan families



**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, Dec 9:** BR Ambedkar Foundation, Sivasagar, celebrated the death anniversary of Bharat Ratna Bhimrao Ambedkar on Monday. The meeting held on the occasion was presided over by Pranjal Das and attended by Dem-

biram Panging, president of the ONGC ST SV Employees Association, District BJP president Bitopan Raidongia, Ambedkar Foundation advisor Dr Binapani Hazarika, Shyamant Das, Upen Das, Rajiv Das and Chankya Das of Nagaon. The event was moder-

ated by the Foundation’s secretary Bidyut Das.

The meeting also decided to apply to the District Commissioner and the Land Allotment Committee for permanent land pattas for 200 landless families of the Harijan community residing in Melachakar Old Chowk Bazar and Jaysagar Harijan Colony in Sivasagar.

The event was attended by Bhaskar Kumar Das, Chimu Das, Pankaj Barua, Seemanta Das, Amit Das, Arn Das, Surbhi Shaikia, Banti Hazarika, Shamir Basfor, Shital Basfor, Bitu Das, Hemant Das, Kalpana Das and others. Senior journalist Ratukumar Das, Press Club secretary Himanshu Neog, journalists Pranjal Pujari and Umesh Baldowa and BJP Scheduled Tribes Morcha president Shantiram Panging were also present.

A peace procession was taken out to the statue of Dr Ambedkar to mark the occasion.

## HPV vaccine workshop held in Hamren

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Dec 9:** A one-day district-level workshop on the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine was organised by the Additional Chief Medical & Health Officer (FW), Hamren at the Conference Hall of the Branch Secretariat of KAAC, Hamren.

The workshop aimed to spread awareness about the HPV vaccine and highlight its importance in preventing cervical cancer. Dr Sarsing Rongpi, Additional Chief Medical & Health Officer (FW), Dr Climen Teron, District Immunization Officer, DM&HO of Donkamukam, Baithalango, Umpanai and Zirikindeng BPHC, along with district and block officials of NHM, West Karbi Anglong, attended the programme. Participants discussed strategies for effective implementation of the HPV vaccination programme in the district. The workshop also provided a platform for healthcare professionals to share their experiences and expertise on HPV vaccination.

The HPV vaccine, regarded as a crucial tool in the fight against cervical cancer, formed the core of the discussions. The workshop is seen as a significant step towards creating awareness and promoting vaccination in West Karbi Anglong.

## Hojai concludes 16-day campaign against gender violence

**HT Correspondent**  
**HOJAI, Dec 9:** The district of Hojai witnessed the successful conclusion of the “16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence” campaign with a vibrant rally held at Tangia Gram Panchayat on Monday. Organised by SANKALP: District Hub for Empowerment of Women, Hojai in collaboration with Hojai Police, Tangia GP officials and ICDS Supervisors, the rally brought together Anganwadi Workers, Jeevika Sakhi of ASRLM and local women to raise their voices against violence towards women.

## Buyer-Seller Conference held in Diphu to promote local agriculture

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Dec 9:** The Department of Agriculture, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, organised a Buyer-Seller Conference at the Arboretum cum Craft Centre, Diphu on Tuesday. The event aimed to facilitate communication between farmers, production groups, traders and various market organisations.

The conference focused on the display, pricing and quality requirements of locally grown agricultural products, as well as long-term market linkage opportunities. Companies reliant on agricultural products from across India directly discussed commercial aspects with departmental officials, Farmers Producer Companies (FPCs) and local farmers of Karbi Anglong.

The Principal Secretary of the



Autonomous Council, Mukul Kumar Saikia, expressed hope that the upcoming “Ginger Festival cum Buyer-Seller Meet” would be conducted smoothly and successfully. Other officials present included Dilip Terang (Secretary I/C Agriculture), Bidyashree Langthasa (Deputy Secretary I/C Agricul-

ture, KA), K Dayamay Sinha (Chief Scientist, AAU-Regional Agricultural Research Station, Diphu), Mukul Bharati Nath (District Agriculture Officer), Pirbi Tisopri (Sr ADO Marketing), Serjili Hansepi (District Agriculture Information Officer) and Gauranga Chetia (ADO).

## KKHSOU observes Armed Forces Flag Day

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** The Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) observed Armed Forces Flag Day on 7th December 2025 through an online programme. The event, held on the Zoom platform, aimed to honour the bravery, sacrifice and commitment of the Indian Armed Forces while promoting awareness about the significance of the day. Faculty members, officials, staff and learners participated in the programme. The event began at 11:00 AM with Dr Dola Borkatoky serving as the anchor. She welcomed all attendees and highlighted the purpose of observing Armed Forces Flag Day. This was followed by a welcome address by Dr Sangeeta Kakoty, Deputy Director, EMPC, who paid tribute to the valour of the Armed Forces and emphasised the role of educational institutions in nurturing national spirit.

A series of performances and presentations enriched the programme. Dr Moureen Kalita rendered the patriotic song “Ae Watan, Watan Mere Aabad RaheTu,” setting a reflective tone. Dr Abhijit Bhuyan delivered a lecture on the historical importance of the day, the sacrifices of soldiers and the need for public support through the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund. Adding cultural depth, Dr Ritimoni Bardoloi recited the Assamese poem “Axomiya Dekar Ukti” by Jyoti Prasad Agarwala. Patriotic performances continued with Pranjit Deka singing “Ae Mere Watan Ke Logon” and Ujjal Deka Baruah presenting a Hindi poem dedicated to the Armed Forces.

The Registrar (i/c), KKHSOU, addressed the gathering, commending the organisers and encouraging voluntary contributions to the Flag Day Fund. He also shared two of his own poems on patriotism and valour.

The programme concluded with expressions of gratitude. KKHSOU’s observance of Armed Forces Flag Day successfully honoured the nation’s defenders and inspired collective respect and solidarity.

## NCHAC holds special session on key financial issues

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Dec 9:** The North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) on Monday convened its 13th Special Session at the Session Hall of the NCHAC Secretariat under the chairmanship of Mohet Hojai. The session focused on key financial matters linked to developmental and administrative activities.

During the meeting, NCHAC Executive Member (Finance) Donpation Thaoson placed the Supplementary Demand for Grants, seeking approval for an additional allocation of ₹ 30 crore to meet emergency financial requirements across various departments for the current fiscal year. The House also deliberated on the status of unspent SOPD (State Owned Priority Development) funds accumulated between 2015-16 and 2018-19. Members held detailed discussions on the utilisation framework and the need to expedite sanctioned projects to ensure timely implementation and prevent future lapses.

## Rajyogini Brahma Kumari leader Manika Devi passes away

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Dec 9:** Rajyogini Brahma Kumari Manika Devi, in-charge of the Brahma Kumari’s Rajyoga Meditation Centre, Morigaon, breathed her last on Sunday after suffering from illness for quite some time.

Born in 1969 at Lakhinagar Chariali in Nagaon town, she pursued her graduation before receiving spiritual training in Rajyoga Meditation at the Nagaon Centre of Prajapita Brahma Kumari’s Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya. She devoted her life to the spiritual upliftment of society from 1995 onwards.

Her last rites were performed on Monday at the Nagaon Anulapatty crematorium.

Her demise has been mourned by various dignitaries and local organisations of Nagaon and Morigaon districts. Throughout her life, Brahma Kumari Manika Devi conducted numerous spiritual sessions and delivered talks on themes such as ‘Alvida Tanaav’, ‘Nasha Mukti Bharat Abhiyan’, stress management and leadership, ethics and values in life, among others.

## DC honours blind cricket world cup winner Simu Das



**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Dec 9:** In a heartwarming gesture, Nagaon District Commissioner Debashish Sharma on Monday visited the Kathiatoli Kocharibasti residence of Simu Das, a member of the Indian women’s blind cricket team that won the T-20 World Cup in Sri Lanka this year.

During the visit, the District Commissioner held a cordial interaction with Das, praising her indomitable spirit and remarkable achievement. Sharma said her accomplishment serves as an inspiration for all, showcasing her determination to overcome physical challenges and excel in sports.

He extended his heartfelt congratulations to Das and announced that the district administration would provide her with a house, considering her financial constraints. Sharma also interacted with the landowner and resolved the issue of land ownership, ensuring that Das’s residence-related concerns are addressed.

This positive intervention by the district administration is expected to boost Das’s morale and motivate her to continue pursuing her passion for cricket, an official press release added.

## 19-year-old Dibrugarh girl missing for 15 days

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIBRUGARH, Dec 9:** Nineteen-year-old Barsha Gope of Dibrugarh has been missing since November 25, 2025 and even after 15 days, police have failed to trace her whereabouts.

According to reports, the girl went missing on November 25 when she left for home for lunch. Her last known location was Grambazar, Dibrugarh. The family has lodged a kidnapping case at the Gabrupathar police outpost.

Barsha is the daughter of Ranjit Gope of Kadomoni, KC Gogoi Path near SKV School in Dibrugarh.

“My sister Borsha Gope has been missing since November 25, 2025. On that day, she left her workplace saying she was going home to have food, but she neither reached home nor returned to her workplace. Since then, her whereabouts are completely unknown. On the same day, we lodged a missing FIR at Gabrupathar Outpost, but we did not receive any



proper response,” said her sister Anamika Gope.

She added, “After that, we approached Dibrugarh Police Station, then the Crime Branch Office Dibrugarh and later the DC Office as well. Everywhere we were asked only to wait. My father, mother and grandmother are all seriously ill due to extreme mental stress. We also lodged a complaint at Banipur NF Railway. With their assistance, we checked nearly five hours of CCTV footage, but unfortunately no clue was found.”

Anamika said that Barsha had a

boyfriend named Vivek Mandal of Gangapara, Dibrugarh. He has also been searching for her since November 25. Police have already questioned him but found no definite leads. “As per our information, my sister’s final phone call before going missing was with this boyfriend,” she said.

She further stated that CCTV footage could not be retrieved because the cameras were not functioning. “We are helpless and don’t know what to do. For the last 15 days she has been missing and there is no clue. We urge Dibrugarh police to act swiftly to find her whereabouts,” she said.

“We suspect that my sister has been kidnapped. My entire family is in shock. She had been working at Rayan Store for the last one and a half years. Her relationship with her boyfriend was good, but what happened to her, we don’t know,” Anamika added.

Sources said kidnapping and human-trafficking cases have been rising in Upper Assam areas.

## Programme aims to provide secure housing for rural families

# PMA Y-G letters distributed across state

**HT Correspondent**  
**TEZPUR, Dec 9:** Along with the rest of Assam, the Ceremonial Distribution of Sanction Letters under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) for Sonitpur district was held on Tuesday across all five Legislative Assembly Constituencies (LACs) of the district. At the LAC-level events, live streaming of the central programme from Boko, Kamrup, graced by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, was arranged. The Chief Minister inaugurated the state-wide distribution of sanction letters for houses under PMAY-G, benefiting over 3.25 lakh families across Assam.

In Sonitpur district, the ceremonies were attended by Cabinet Minister and Dhekiajuli MLA Ashok Singhal, Barchalla MLA Ganesh Kumar Limbu, Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rava, Rangapara MLA Krishna Kamal Tanti and Naduar MLA Padma Hazarika, along with president of Sonitpur Zilla Parishad Manisha Upadhyay in their respective LACs.

District officials and dignitaries also participated in the events. District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das and CDC Barchalla Kamal Baruah joined the programme at Barchalla, CEO Zilla Parishad Jayanta Kumar Borah and

CDC Naduar Manash Kumar Saikia attended in Naduar, District Development Commissioner Sanjeev Kumar Sharma and ADC James Aind were present at Tezpur, CDC Dhekiajuli Dyotiva Bora took part in Dhekiajuli and CDC Rangapara Sanskriti Somani attended Rangapara. Other invited dignitaries, Block Development Officers and officials also graced the respective ceremonies.

**Our Kokrajhar Correspondent adds:** A total of 659 beneficiaries in the Kokrajhar Assembly Constituency received sanction letters for constructing houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) scheme on Tuesday. The distribution ceremony was held at the Kokrajhar Block Office in the presence of several leaders and officials.

During the programme, Kokrajhar MLA Lawrence Islary, MCLA Daneswar Goyary and former minister Pramila Rani Brahma jointly handed over the sanction letters to the beneficiaries. The leaders highlighted that the initiative aims to provide secure, permanent and dignified housing to economically weaker families living in rural areas.

MLA Lawrence Islary said the government is actively working to ensure that all eligible fami-



lies receive housing support under PMAY-G. He added that the distribution of 659 sanction letters marks a significant step towards improving living conditions in the constituency. Former minister Pramila Rani Brahma ad-

ressed the gathering, stating that the scheme would bring relief and stability to hundreds of households. She encouraged beneficiaries to complete the construction of their houses within the stipulated timeframe.

The event was attended by beneficiaries from different villages under the Kokrajhar Legislative Constituency, who expressed gratitude to the government for extending this vital support. Officials informed that construction work for the houses will begin soon, following PMAY-G guidelines.

The distribution programme reflects the government’s continued commitment to rural development, housing security and social welfare in the region.

**Our Margherita Correspondent adds:** A programme for the distribution of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) sanction letters was organised on Tuesday at PM Shri Town High School, Margherita, under the Margherita Development Block. The event was held in connection with the state-level programme at Boko, which was live telecast during the function.

At the state-level event, Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma described the day as historic, stating that the dreams of more than 3,25,234 families in Assam to own a safe and dignified

home are now closer to becoming reality. He said that the PMAY-G sanction letters symbolise security, dignity and the government’s commitment towards building a stronger Assam.

At Margherita, Co-District Commissioner Rahul Doley, while addressing the gathering, said that PMAY-G is not merely about constructing houses but about building respect, safety and stability for the underprivileged.

Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma highlighted the importance of the scheme and urged Gaon Panchayat presidents and secretaries to ensure timely and quality completion of the houses.

A total of 788 beneficiaries under the Margherita Development Block received their PMAY-G sanction letters and the instalments will be released directly to the beneficiaries through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).

The programme was attended by Tinsukia Zilla Parishad Chairman Bhadeswar Moran, Margherita Anchalik Panchayat president Munni Gogoi, Margherita Circle Officer Gyanjyoti Dutta, Margherita Co-District Assistant Commissioners Pritom Gogoi and Pronamika Konwar, Margherita Block Development Officer Rohit Kumar Yadav, along with other officials and beneficiaries.

# 12-hour Arunachal's Capital Complex bandh disrupts normal life

## Shutdown called by three organisations over illegal construction and immigration concerns



**ITANAGAR, Dec 9:** Normal life was affected in Arunachal Pradesh's Capital Complex on Tuesday following a dawn-to-dusk bandh called by three organisations to press for the fulfillment of their demands.

A senior police officer said markets, banks, educational institutions, business establishments and government and private offices remained shut in the Capital Complex, while vehicles stayed off the roads. Capital Complex comprises Itanagar, Naharlagun, Nirjuli and Banderwa areas.

At least 6 persons were detained for enforcing the bandh in the city, police said.

The shutdown was called by the Indigenous Youth Force of Arunachal (IYFA), Arunachal Pradesh Indigenous Youth Organisation (APIYO) and All Naharlagun Youth Organisation (ANYO), demanding demolition of allegedly illegally constructed mosques

and madrasas in the Capital Region. The groups also sought identification and deportation of people they allege to be illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and a ban on weekly markets in the state capital.

Inspector General of Police (Law and Order) Chukhu Apa said adequate security arrangements had been put in place to prevent any law and order problems.

He warned of strict action against people circulating "objectionable" voice messages, urging people not to take the law into their own hands.

"You are going to face serious consequences. We will take legal action against those circulating these objectionable voice messages," he said.

On the Inner Line Permit (ILP) mechanism, Apa said earlier loopholes had enabled some people to operate illegally in the state, but arrests have since been made. He said the new ILP 3.0 system would

"plug all loopholes" and significantly strengthen monitoring.

Given Arunachal's porous borders, he said spot verification and regular checks under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, 1873, would continue alongside intensified internal checking.

Sharing enforcement data, the IGP said police had detected 8,936 people who entered the state without ILP or valid documents, out of which 7,351 cases were formally recorded.

The bandh came a day after the Capital District Magistrate declared the shutdown "illegal and unlawful," citing threats to public order and the ongoing municipal and panchayat election processes.

In an order issued under Section 163 of the BNSS and the Arunachal Pradesh Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2014, District Magistrate Toko Babu said the bandh violated fundamental

rights and could cause hardship to the public.

The DM noted that the Supreme Court has held bandh calls unconstitutional and warned that enforcing the shutdown would invite penal action. Meanwhile, APIYO president Taro Sonam Liyak said that the agitation was not directed against any community, but against "illegal" immigrants from Bangladesh and Rohingya Muslims, illegal mosques and panjra-namas.

"Our movement is for the future of our state," Sonam said, alleging that the bandh call was necessitated due to the state government's alleged failure to acknowledge the genuine demands.

He warned that the shutdown could extend beyond 12 hours.

"Today we have declared a 12-hour bandh and it may extend to 24, then 36. We will keep fighting till the government fulfils our demands," Sonam added. (PTI)

# Arunachal govt launches AI training programme for college students, recent grads

## Programme to build future-ready workforce with skills in AI, Python and data analysis

**ITANAGAR, Dec 9:** The Arunachal Pradesh government on Tuesday launched a programme to train college students and recent graduates with industry-relevant competencies in artificial intelligence (AI). The initiative is being conducted by the

ITANAGAR, Dec 9: The Arunachal Pradesh government on Tuesday launched a programme to train college students and recent graduates with industry-relevant competencies in artificial intelligence (AI).

The programme will be conducted by the state's IT Department in collaboration with Rancho Labs and the Technology Innovation Hub of IIT-Delhi.

Announcing the launch, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said the programme has been designed to strengthen the state's young workforce by offering training that keeps pace with global technological advancements.

"This program will equip young learners with essential skills in artificial intelligence, data analysis, Python programming, and job-readiness," he said in a post on X.

"It will help them confidently pursue high-growth careers in the tech sector," he said.

Mein said the government wants to ensure the state's students are not left behind as AI and machine learning continue to reshape industries



and employment patterns.

He urged students across the state to take advantage of the opportunity, calling it an important step in building a future-ready generation.

The training will be conducted offline in Itanagar from the second week of January, and will run for five to six weeks with daily two-hour sessions.

Participants will receive instructor-led lessons on AI and machine learning fundamentals, data analysis and visualisation, Python programming, real-world project development and career preparation.

The programme is fully funded by the government and is open to students free of cost, with limited seats available for applicants who register before January 4. (PTI)

# FTII students refuse second semester over 'collapsed' academic infra

**ITANAGAR, Dec 9:** Students of screen acting and documentary cinema at the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) here have refused to begin their second semester, alleging that the institute continues to function from an "unfinished, non-functional campus" without essential academic infrastructure.

In a statement on Tuesday, the students said they had already lost an entire semester due to what they described as a "collapsed academic environment" marked by non-operational studios, faulty classrooms, limited camera equipment, no sound studio, weak medical support and a lack of access to basic amenities.

"The institute that was promised as a state-of-the-art national campus is still under construction," they alleged.

The students claimed they have repeatedly alerted the Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute (SRFTI) Kolkata and the Union Information & Broadcasting ministry through several letters since December last year, but no corrective measures have followed.



They added that the institute had already undergone two academic halts in March and May this year owing to the same unresolved issues.

"After classes resumed in August, all infrastructure work stopped completely with the ministry failing to intervene," the statement alleged.

The students added that recent RTI responses and official correspondence between SRFTI and the

ministry show the campus remains incomplete and is unfit to admit new students in 2025, forcing a pause in admissions.

"If the institute is officially unfit for future students today, why were we admitted last year when the situation was worse?" the students asked, accusing the ministry of treating them as "experimental subjects in a prematurely launched institution". (PTI)

# Arunachal's first-generation IAS officer & cultural icon Oshong Ering laid to rest

**HT Correspondent PASIGHAT, Dec 9:** The passing of one of Arunachal Pradesh's most respected pioneering figures — first-generation retired IAS officer, prolific writer, cultural icon, thinker and scholar Late Oshong Ering on Dec 8 at his Mirku residence after a prolonged illness has led to an outpouring of mourning from all sections of society. He was laid to rest on Tuesday at Mirku Village, where prominent personalities, community members, admirers, well-wishers, relatives and people from various walks of life thronged his residence to pay their last respects. His passing marks not only the loss of a highly distinguished officer but also the departure of a profound thinker whose philosophical and literary contributions will continue to guide future generations. Born to Late Adul Ering and Late Gomyi Gao Ering in ancestral Roring village near Pasighat on February 1, 1937, Late Ering began his school education at LP School, Pasighat in 1942, continued at Sadiya Govt Hr Secondary School in 1946 and Pasighat Middle School in 1949, completing matriculation from Govt. HSS Pasighat. He later pursued further studies at St Edmund's College, Shillong.

He joined government service in 1960 as Area Superintendent at Pasighat and served in various administrative posts, rising to key positions including Deputy Commissioner, Director of Arts & Culture, Director of Civil Supplies, Director of Relief & Rehabilitation and Registrar of Cooperative Societies. Throughout his decades of service across Pasighat, Yingkiang, Pangin, Boleng, Mariyang, Anini, Tezu and other regions, he was admired for his honesty, integrity, humility and dedication to public service and community welfare. Parallel to his service career, he contributed immensely to Adi literature, cultural knowledge and the Bogum Bokang Kebang institution, strengthening indigenous identity and intellectual continuity.

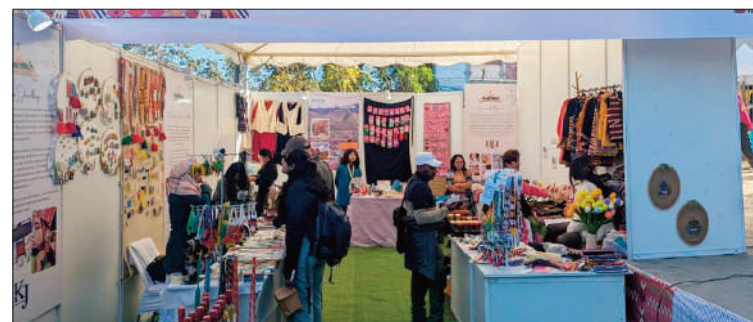
Expressing grief, MP Tapir Gao stated, "Shri Oshong Ering's demise is a great loss to the State of Arunachal Pradesh and to all who had the privilege of knowing and working with him." Pasighat MLA Tapi Darang, Mebo MLA Oken Tayeng, former MLAs Kaling Moyong and Bosiram Siram also paid heartfelt condolences. West Pasighat MLA Ninong Ering said, "He was an officer of impeccable character — simple, grounded and entirely devoted to the people and community. His life will continue to inspire generations of officers and youth." East Siang DC Sonalika Jiwani and SP Pankaj Lamba also condoled the loss. The Adi Agom Kébang (AAK) HQ Pasighat, led by president Dr Tayek Talom, expressed deepest condolences, stating, "The passing of a great writer and philosopher, Late Oshong Ering, has created a vacuum in the Adi society in terms of literature, writing, publications, philosophical thought and societal development — an irrevocable loss for Arunachal Pradesh and the Adi community." Late Ering, who led a quiet but impactful life after retirement is survived by three sons, three daughters and many grandchildren.

# Arunachal Pradesh entrepreneurs shine at Hornbill Festival

**HT Correspondent DIMAPUR, Dec 9:** Arunachal Pradesh, the only state partner, continues to make a remarkable impression at the 26th edition of the Nagaland Hornbill Festival 2025, held at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama. The state presented a vibrant showcase of home-grown entrepreneurs, highlighting Arunachal Pradesh's rich cultural legacy, traditional craftsmanship and emerging creative industries.

The participation reflects the Arunachal Pradesh government's ongoing efforts to promote local enterprises, empower artisans and create broader national market linkages for indigenous products.

Among the distinguished entrepreneurs from the state, Khangam Jewellery has garnered special attention for its exquisite handcrafted jewellery rooted in the cultural heritage of the Wancho community. Inspired by the intricate bead-making traditions of Wancho women, Khangam Jewellery



blends indigenous artistry with modern aesthetics while upholding values of identity, craftsmanship and heritage.

Beyond creativity, the brand is contributing to social impact by empowering rural and unemployed women, especially school dropouts, through skill development and sustainable livelihood opportunities. Its inclusion strengthened Arunachal Pradesh's entrepreneurial presence at the Hornbill Festival and underscored the state's

vibrant ecosystem of innovation rooted in tradition.

Meanwhile, Day 9 of the Hornbill Festival showcased Nagaland's cultural heritage. Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh and Subhash Chandra Mynam, territory manager (retail), Shillong, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, graced the occasion as special guests. The day featured cultural performances highlighting the diversity and vibrancy of Nagaland's traditions.

Gyan Bharatam Mission highlights preservation and digitisation plans for rare texts

# Arunachal Pradesh showcases manuscript heritage at national workshop

**HT Correspondent NAHARLAGUN, Dec 9:** The Ministry of Culture, Government of India, organised a special Workshop on Script and Manuscript Preservation during the ongoing 20th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH 20COM) in New Delhi.

A delegation from Arunachal Pradesh comprising Mamta Riba, IAS, Secretary (Art & Culture & Civil Aviation), Lt Col TC Tayum, OSD (Research) & Nodal Officer, Gyan Bharatam Mission and Manyu, Assistant Director, Department of Art & Culture—attended the workshop chaired by Vivek Aggarwal, IAS, Secretary, Ministry of Culture.

Secretary Mamta Riba highlighted Arunachal Pradesh's rich manuscript traditions, including the Lik-Thai manuscripts of Namsai, ancient Buddhist Kangyur scriptures and other rare indigenous manuscripts. She expressed gratitude to the Ministry for its guidance under the Gyan Bharatam Mission and appealed for support in scientific conservation, systematic documentation and modern archival infrastructure.

Lt Col TC Tayum presented a detailed overview of the Gyan Bharatam Mission, showcasing field documentation carried out in Tawang, West Kameng, Shi-Yomi, Upper Siang and Namsai districts. The



presentation revealed rare manuscripts, including texts with episodes from the Mahabharata and Ramayana, highlighting deep historical and literary interconnections among Arunachal Pradesh communities. It also outlined risks from age, climate and inadequate archival facilities and proposed a roadmap for preservation, digitisation, capacity-building and cultural continuity.

In response, the Secretary of the Ministry

of Culture commended Arunachal Pradesh's initiatives and assured immediate central support. He announced that a Central Expert Team will soon visit the five districts to begin scientific documentation, digitisation and conservation of manuscripts, including the Lik-Thai texts, Kangyur collection and other ancient works identified during field surveys. A Dedicated Manuscript and Digitisation Support Cell

for Arunachal Pradesh will also be established at the Ministry to ensure coordinated, long-term assistance.

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh expressed gratitude for the Ministry's support and reaffirmed its commitment to safeguarding the State's rich manuscript and script heritage under the Gyan Bharatam Mission, envisioned to contribute significantly to the national digital repository.

**ASSOCIATE SIGNALLING WORKS**  
 E-Tender No. SNT-35-LMG-2025-26; Dated: 05-12-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work. Name of work & its Location: Associate signalling works in connection with provision of track machine siding at Digaru, Kamrup Khetri, Aujari, Chaparmukh Jn., Jugijan, Kamrup, Barlongfer, Senchoa Jn. of Lumding Division. Tender Value: ₹ 3,47,52,878.59. Bid Security: ₹ 3,23,800.00. E-tender will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 29-12-2025 and opened at 15:30 hrs. on 29-12-2025. For details visit: www.treps.gov.in

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# 'Shahjehan' returns to Red Fort amid UNESCO heritage cheer for Delhi

**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** Delhi's historic Red Fort is hosting the ongoing key meeting of UNESCO on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, and fittingly 'Shahjehan' has returned to the Mughal-era palace complex to greet the delegates.

Except, we are not talking about the celebrated emperor himself, but a striking model of an old aircraft -- a Boeing 747 - Jumbo Jet -- named after him, which was once part of Air India's iconic 'Emperor' fleet. It has been displayed prominently in front of a British-era barrack housing a brand new gallery that showcases some of the priceless artefacts and objects drawn from Air India's 'Maharaja Collection'.

Nearly 300 objects, which includes ancient sculptures, Chola bronzes, Mughal miniature art,

kalamkari artworks, contemporary paintings and several iconic old 'Air India' posters have been displayed in two of the old barracks -- 'A1' and 'A2' -- to mark the UNESCO meet, being hosted in India for the first time.

The galleries in these two barracks have been curated by Delhi-based National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA), which now owns the collection that was earlier housed at the landmark Air India Building at Nariman Point in Mumbai.

The 20th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is being held at the Red Fort from December 8 to 13. Hundreds of delegates have gathered at this UNESCO World Heritage Site to take part in deliberations, and India has showcased its rich tangible and intangible

heritage on the occasion. "Four new galleries have been set up in the Red Fort complex. Two of them showcase artefacts which have been drawn from the Air India collection, which we got after Air India was privatised," Union Culture Secretary Vivek Aggarwal told PTI on Monday.

One gallery on arms and armouries has been curated by the National Museum. And, the fourth gallery is on archaeological objects excavated or found from the Red Fort premises, he said.

These galleries have been set up in four 19th century British-era barracks on the Red Fort premises. But, proving a head-turner among these objects, is the model of the old Air India (AI) plane, marked by its distinctive white and red livery and jharokha-style window design, and the tail number -- 'VT-EBE'. The AI in a post on X

in 2021, had shared a photo of this aircraft with a caption -- "On 4th May 1971, 'Emperor Shahjehan' became the second B747-237B (VT-EBE) to join the Air India fleet".

"#FlyAI: Air India spread its wings to soar high - adding another world-class Boeing 747 - Jumbo Jet - into its fleet named after Emperor Shahjehan. #ExperienceRegality #PioneerAirline," it said.

Named after legendary emperors, including Ashoka, Air India had introduced this luxury fleet for patrons as 'Your Palace in the Sky'. This tagline is painted on the rear section of the 'Shahjehan' aircraft model, while the nose section carries its name in English and Hindi, one on each side. And, as delegates visit the gallery, they also get a taste of the royal collection that legendary

industrialist and aviation pioneer JRD Tata and others from his illustrious family had built over the decades.

NGMA's Jyoti Tokas, the curator of the Air India collection galleries at the Red Fort said, "Many of these old objects used to be originally displayed at Air India's offices in foreign countries". "It was in a way, a show of India's soft power through culture, back then by Air India," she told PTI.

Tokas said the collection was "acquired in 2024, and brought to the Red Fort last year, and three months back it was decided that as part of the (UNESCO) meet of the Intergovernmental Committee (for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage), we should have an exhibition here from the collection". (PTI)

## Division of Vande Mataram song led to partition of India: Shah

**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** The division of 'Vande Mataram' song for "politics of appeasement" led to partition of India, Home Minister Amit Shah said in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday, as he slammed Opposition for linking the debate on 150 years of the national song with the upcoming West Bengal elections.

Initiating the debate in the House, Shah said Vande Mataram was the "mantra" that awakened India's cultural nationalism, and remains as relevant today as it was during the freedom struggle.

He stressed that the song will remain relevant in the days to come as well, in taking the country towards Viksit Bharat.

Shah also attacked Congress for questioning the need for a debate on Vande Mataram, and accused first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru of "dividing" the poem and limiting it to two stanzas.

"Yesterday some MPs in the Lok Sabha questioned what is the need to discuss Vande Mataram. The need for discussion...was as relevant when the song was written, during the freedom movement, today, and will be as relevant in 2047 when the Viksit Bharat would be achieved," Shah said.

"Some people are saying Vande Mataram is being discussed because elections are coming in West Bengal... They are trying to reduce the importance of Vande Mataram by linking it with Bengal elections," he said. The home minister urged members to take the spirit of the message of Vande Mataram to the youth of the nation. He said the song was written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in Bengal, but it spread across the nation, and became the chant for India's freedom struggle.

The home minister said the song was written years after India tolerated "Islamic attacks", and the British tried to impose a new culture on the country.

"The song reestablished the culture of witnessing nation as a mother. Even though the (British) government tried to ban it, and people were beaten and jailed for chanting Vande Mataram, it touched people's



hearts and spread from Kashmir to Kanyakumari," he said. That is why Maharshi Aurobindo said Vande Mataram is the mantra of India's awakening.

"India is the only nation whose boundaries have not been decided by any act, its borders have been decided by our culture, and culture has united it. That is why the idea of cultural nationalism, this cultural nationalism was awakened by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay," Shah added. He also accused the Congress and Nehru of "dividing" the song.

"Many members of Congress questioned why the discussion on Vande Mataram was required, calling it a diversionary tactic. We are not scared of taking up any debate. We do not stall Parliament, we have nothing to hide, we are ready to discuss any issue," Shah said. "On the 50th anniversary of Vande Mataram in 1937, Jawaharlal Nehru divided it into two and limited it to two stanzas. This was the way Congress honoured Vande Mataram," he said, leading to protests from Opposition MPs.

Shah called it the beginning of appeasement politics, and said it led to partition of India.

"If they had not divided the song into two for appeasement politics, India would also not have been partitioned," he said, leading to more uproars from Opposition benches. (PTI)

## No law should be burden on citizens, govt reforms must make life easy: PM to NDA MPs

**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** Sending a clear message that making people's lives easy is his government's priority in its third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said no law should be a burden on any citizen, and rules and regulations should always be for people's convenience.

Addressing an NDA parliamentary party meeting here, Modi also said the country is now in a full-fledged "Reform Express" phase, where reforms are happening rapidly and with clear intent.

The government's reforms are completely citizen-centric and not just economic or revenue-focused. The goal is to remove everyday hurdles of people so that they can grow to their full potential, the prime minister emphasised.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, which was attended by all NDA MPs, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said Prime Minister Modi gave very good guidelines for the lawmakers and conveyed that the most significant issue in the third term of his government is the "Reform Express".

"I want to stress that the Narendra Modi government's 'Reform Express' has started to move. It will not stop. This reform is to change the life of every citizen. When we talk about reform, some



people will think of it as economic reform, some people will think of it as political reform, administrative reform or cultural reform. Reform means improvement in the life of every citizen.

"The prime minister has stressed that whatever law is framed, it should have no provision which is harmful or causes inconvenience to any citizen. The rules and laws should not become a burden on the life of a common citizen. Everyone must ensure that rules and regulations are for the convenience of the common people and improve their lives," Rijiju said.

Quoting Modi, Rijiju said rules and regulations must be for im-

proving the system, not to harass people, and there should be no law which harasses people without any reason. "Now we will work in this direction. The central government, the state governments and the local self-governing bodies like the municipalities and panchayats, all should work in (this) direction..." he said.

Sources said Modi urged MPs to actively share real problems faced by ordinary people, so that the "Reform Express" can reach every household and remove day-to-day hardships.

Modi also said he wants to end the culture of 30-40 page forms and unnecessary paperwork,

stressing that there is a need to provide services at citizens' doorsteps and eliminate repeated data submissions, the sources said.

The prime minister recalled that the government trusted citizens by allowing self-certification, and this has worked successfully for 10 years without misuse.

Modi stressed that both ease of life and ease of doing business are the top priorities of his government, the sources said.

At the outset of the meeting, Modi was felicitated for the NDA's massive victory in the recent Bihar elections.

Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah and J P Nadda, who is also the BJP president, were among those present at the meeting held at the Parliament House complex here. Modi was garlanded by JD(U) leader Sanjay Jha and Rashtriya Lok Morcha chief Upendra Kushwaha -- both Rajya Sabha members.

In the 243-member Bihar Assembly, which went to polls last month, the NDA secured 202 seats, paving the way for JD(U) supremo Nitish Kumar to return as chief minister for the 10th time.

Among the alliance partners, BJP won 89 seats, JD(U) 85, LJP (Ram Vilas) 19, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) five, and Rashtriya Lok Morcha four. (PTI)

## CBI books Jai Anmol Ambani in a bank fraud case; ₹ 14000 cr loan defaults in 2 cases under scanner

**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** The CBI registered two FIRs against Anil Dhirubhai Ambani (ADA) group companies -- Reliance Home Finance Ltd. (RHFL) and Reliance Commercial Finance Ltd -- in separate bank fraud cases, naming Jai Anmol Anil Ambani in one of them and bringing alleged loan defaults worth ₹ 14,852 crore under scanner, officials said Tuesday.

Following the registration of the FIR against Jai Anmol Anil Ambani, the son of industrialist Anil Ambani, the CBI teams carried out a search at his residence on the seventh floor of the Sea Wind building, Anil Ambani's home in Cuffe Parade, Mumbai. The CBI has named Jai Anmol Ambani, the then Director of Reliance Home Finance Ltd. (RHFL), along with ex-CEO Ravindra Sharad Sudhakar in connection with the case of allegedly cheating the Union Bank of India of ₹ 228 crore.

In a separate case, the CBI has booked Reliance Commercial Finance Ltd (RCFL) and its former directors in a case of allegedly cheating Bank of Maharashtra to the tune of ₹ 57 crore. Jai Anmol has not been named in this case.

The CBI also conducted searches in Bank of Maharashtra case at the premises of the RCFL and residence of its former director Devang Mody in Pune on Tuesday.

RHFL had availed loans to the tune of ₹ 5572.35 crore from 18 banks and financial institutions including the Union Bank of India, while RCFL availed loans to the tune of ₹ 9,280 crore from 31 banks and financial institutions including the Bank of Maharashtra, CBI Spokesperson said in a statement. "A thorough investigation will be conducted into allegations of defrauding all the banks and financial institutions by the accused companies," the CBI Spokesperson said.

In the case against Jai Anmol, the CBI acted on a complaint from the erstwhile Andhra Bank (which merged into Union Bank of India in 2020), alleging that RHFL did not repay the credit availed from the bank that turned the account into a non-performing asset in 2019, they said. Queries for reaction from the Ambanis' spokesperson went unanswered.

"The CBI obtained search warrants from the court of Special Judge for CBI, Mumbai and has

commenced searches at two official premises of Reliance Home Finance Ltd., residential premises of Jai Anmol Ambani... the then Director of Reliance Home Finance Ltd. and residential premises of Ravindra Sudhakar, Ex-CEO and Whole Time Director of RHFL, all at Mumbai on 09.12.2025," the CBI spokesperson said in a statement on Tuesday.

The case pertains to credit facilities worth ₹ 450 crore availed by the company in 2015 from Andhra Bank's SCF branch in Mumbai for business needs.

The company failed to pay the instalments to the bank and hence, the said account was classified as a non-performing asset (NPA) on September 30, 2019, a complaint from the Union Bank of India, now part of the FIR, said. A forensic examination of the accounts was carried out by Grant Thornton (GT), for a review period--April 1, 2016, to June 30, 2019--which showed that borrowed funds were misappropriated and considered as diversion of funds, they said.

The GT examined ₹ 12000 crore disbursed by the housing finance company which showed 86 per cent funds went to potentially indirectly linked entities (PILE).

The report mapped end utilisation of ₹ 8842.87 crore of open loans extended by RHFL which showed 40 per cent of the funds aggregating to ₹ 3,573.06 crore were utilised towards debt servicing of PILE/group companies for term loans.

A large portion of the loans to PILE and other entities were sanctioned and disbursed without giving due consideration to prudential lending norms related to the repayment capacity, adequacy of security/collateral and other key financial metrics of the borrower(s), the report alleged.

The report pointed out 48 per cent of the total amount of loans disbursed by the RHFL (a housing finance company) during the review period pertain to Corporate loans which does not appear to align with the core objective of disbursing housing loans.

The bank in its complaint has alleged that Jai Anmol Anil Ambani and Ravindra Sharad Sudhakar were in-charge of and responsible for the "day-to-day affairs and business decisions" of the company at the relevant period of time. (PTI)

## Debate on Vande Mataram for gains in Bengal elections: Kharge

**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday said the true homage to Bharat Mata will only be when Parliament discusses and resolves the issues of common people, accusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi of holding a discussion on Vande Mataram while keeping Bengal elections in mind.

He also accused the ruling dispensation of holding the discussion to divert the people's attention from the real challenges the country faces, including financial problems, like rising unemployment, poor economy and fall in the value of the rupee, among other social issues.

"He has started a discussion on Vande Mataram only keeping in the Bengal elections (in mind)," said Kharge, adding that the real issue is to divert the attention of people from the real issues faced by the people. The aim of this house should be to discuss the burning issues faced by the country.

"Bharat Mata will get real Homage only when this parliament discusses the issues faced by the people and their resolution," he said.

In his nearly hour-long speech, Kharge also raised issues related to international affairs, saying that in our neighbouring countries, India's influence is decreasing, whereas China's influence is on the rise.

"Nepal is demanding investment from China. Bangladesh, with China and Pakistan, is participating in trilateral meetings. Beijing is openly pulling South Asia towards itself under its strategic plan," he added.

Kharge sarcastically remarked What

is the use of a 56-inch chest, "when you do not say a word against China?"

Referring to the UPA tenure, Kharge said the Indian rupee was ₹ 55-60 (against the US dollar) at that time. Today, it is at ₹ 90. It's just like someone has "fallen from the Himalayas", he said. Taking a dig at the Prime Minister and Home Minister, who were sitting in the house, Kharge mentioned their old speeches on the fall of the Indian rupee, when Modi was Gujarat's Chief Minister, and Shah was the state's Home Minister.

"When there are economic challenges in front of the country, then to have a political discussion on the national song Vande Mataram is just an attempt to divert attention," he said, adding that the real patriotism is to find solutions to the problems, like the falling domestic currency. "It should not be limited to symbolism and speeches".

The treasury benches created an uproar over Kharge's remarks. The Leader of the House JP Nadda alleged that he was deviating from the subject by bringing up the economy and international affairs, while the House was having discussions on Vande Mataram.

"The government is ready to have a discussion on all issues... you discuss on Vande Mataram here. Do not deviate from the subject," he said, adding that if Kharge wants to have a discussion on the Indian economy, and we are ready.

Chairman CP Radhakrishnan, who was presiding over the house, said, "That is not correct, Kharge ji. You stick to the subject. If you want to discuss any other subject, the government is ready. We

can go for that discussion later".

In his speech, the Congress president accused BJP leaders, including the Prime Minister, of insulting Jawaharlal Nehru, as he said the decision to use only the first two stanzas of 'Vande Mataram' as the national song was collectively taken by stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhash Chandra Bose, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Acharya JB Kripalani, and Rabindranath Tagore.

As the ruling BJP accused the Congress of 'dividing' the song written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, the Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Kharge countered the ruling party, saying that Congress leaders have always been chanting 'Vande Mataram'.

Starting his speech by raising the slogan Vande Mataram, Kharge alleged that the politics of appeasement was behind the decision to use only two stanzas of the poem as the national song.

"We have always been singing Vande Mataram. But those who did not sing Vande Mataram have also started singing it now. It is the power of Vande Mataram. It is a national festival, not a debate. "When the non-cooperation movement was started in 1921, Congress members were going to jail chanting Vande Mataram... What were you doing? You were working for the British," Kharge said.

"You are teaching patriotism to us? You were scared of patriotism and were serving the British. PM Modi leaves no opportunity to insult Jawaharlal Nehru, nor does the Home Minister... I heard the Prime Minister blamed Nehru for stanzas being removed..." (PTI)

## 2025 set to become 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> warmest year on record: Copernicus

**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** 2025 is currently tied with 2023 to be the second-warmest year on record, according to new data published by Europe's climate agency Copernicus. Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said the year is virtually certain to end as the second- or third-warmest ever recorded, behind 2024.

C3S said the global average temperature anomaly for January to November 2025 stands at 0.60 degree Celsius above the 1991-2020 average or 1.48 degree Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial level. The agency also said November 2025 was the third-warmest November globally.

The month saw notably warmer-than-average temperatures across northern Canada and the Arctic Ocean, along with several extreme

weather events, including tropical cyclones in Southeast Asia that caused widespread and catastrophic flooding and loss of life.

"For November, global temperatures were 1.54 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and the three-year average for 2023-2025 is on track to exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius for the first time," said Samantha Burgess, Strategic Lead for Climate. "These milestones are not abstract -- they reflect the accelerating pace of climate change and the only way to mitigate future rising temperatures is to rapidly reduce greenhouse gas emissions," she said. November 2025 recorded an average surface air temperature of 14.02 degree Celsius, which is 0.65 degree Celsius above the 1991-2020 average for the month. It was 0.20 degree Celsius



cooler than the warmest November on record, in 2023, and 0.08 degree Celsius cooler than November 2024. C3S said November 2025 was 1.54 degree Celsius above the estimated 1850-1900 average used

to define the pre-industrial level. It was the second month this year, after October 2025, to exceed 1.50 degree Celsius since April 2025.

The agency said that while 2025 may not cross 1.5 degree Celsius

above the pre-industrial benchmark on an annual basis, the 2023-2025 average is likely to exceed 1.5 degree Celsius for the first time in the instrumental record.

The Paris Agreement, adopted by nearly 200 countries in 2015, aims to keep global temperature rise well below 2 degrees Celsius and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Warming has already crossed 1.3 degrees Celsius and global emissions continue to rise.

According to the WMO, 2024 was the hottest year on record and the first with a global average temperature 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. However, a permanent breach of the 1.5-degree Celsius limit under the Paris Agreement refers to long-term warming over a 20- or 30-year period, not a single year. (PTI)

## 'Calculated political exercise': Kuki outfits criticise Meitei MLA's relief camp visit



IMPHAL/ CHURACHANDPUR, Dec 9: Kuki outfits on Tuesday condemned the visit of BJP MLA Yumnam Khemchand Singh to a relief camp in Manipur's Ukhrul district, claiming that it was a "calculated political exercise" rather than an act of genuine concern.

Singh, the former speaker of the assembly who belongs to the Meitei community, on Monday visited a relief camp in Ukhrul district, where people of the Kuki community displaced by the ethnic violence have been living.

Kukis and Meiteis do not venture into each other's areas after the violence broke out in May 2023, leaving the state deeply divided on ethnic lines. Singh became the first leader from either side to cross the divide and visit a camp of the other community.

Kuki Inpi Ukhrul, the apex body of the community in the Naga-dominated Ukhrul district, criticised Singh's visit, calling him "uninvited".

"The Kuki Inpi Ukhrul expresses its unequivocal and vehement condemnation of the uninvited and unauthorised visit undertaken by MLA Y Khemchand to Litan Sareikhong relief camp," said a statement.

"His sudden appearance, accompanied by an excessive number of security personnel, constitutes a serious breach of protocol, propriety," it added.

The outfit claimed that the visit was unacceptable and profoundly disrespectful to a community awaiting justice. "The visit was a calculated political exercise rather than an act of genuine concern," it alleged.

The Kuki-Zo Council called the MLA's visit an "irresponsible publicity stunt".

"His visit was made without any prior intimation to Kuki-Zo leaders, camp authorities, or the district administration. Reports confirm that he was visiting BJP workers elsewhere and made an impromptu stop at the camp on his way back. He later circulated photos and videos

online, projecting himself as a peace-maker in conflict-torn Manipur," it said.

"This raises a fundamental question: Where was Khemchand during May 3-7, 2023, when violence broke out, and Kuki-Zo families in and around Imphal were targeted and displaced? What prevented him from speaking then? His silence during the tragedy and sudden concern now do not align. The wounds are deep, trust has been shattered, and no symbolic drop-in can undo the trauma faced by our people," it added.

The KZC said the location Singh chose to visit is "hardly an accomplishment".

"Meiteis have always travelled freely to Ukhrul and other Kaccha Naga-dominated districts without restriction. A casual stop during his leisure travel brings no safety, justice, or accountability to the displaced families who continue to suffer. The KZC abhors this insincere act and cautions all individuals against visiting Kuki-Zo areas or relief centres without prior communication to community leaders," it said.

The KZC claimed such unannounced visits can spark misunderstanding or lead to unwanted confrontations.

L Baite, the in-charge of the camp, said the MLA arrived "unannounced and accompanied by several BJP workers".

He took advantage of the absence of "responsible inmates" and clicked photos with "unsuspecting children", Baite claimed.

During his visit to the camp, Singh had told the inmates, "With the arrival of Christmas, we all should pray for the return of peace to the state." "There are conflicts almost everywhere in the world. But we should learn to live in harmony despite the existing differences. There should not be any hindrance in visiting each other's villages," he added.

Over 260 people have been killed and thousands displaced in the ethnic clashes. The state has been under the President's Rule since February, after BJP leader N Biren Singh resigned as the chief minister amid criticisms over his government's handling of the crisis. (PTI)

## Impact of enhanced education budget now visible: Meghalaya CM

SHILLONG, Dec 9: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma said on Tuesday that the state education department's annual budget has been increased from ₹ 2,000 crore to ₹ 3,500 crore in recent years, the highest so far, and the impact of this investment is "becoming visible".

Highlighting the government's initiatives since 2018, Sangma said education has remained one of the top priorities of the administration.

The rise in annual budgetary allocation from ₹ 2,000 crore to ₹ 3,500 crore reflected this commitment, he said, adding that the investments are now translating into the kind of transformation the government had envisioned. On holistic learning, the chief minister stressed that education went beyond textbooks and degrees.

"Education is not just about books or degrees, it is about building character. It instils discipline, faith, patriotism, and respect for elders, hard work, commitment, and a sense of purpose. True education nurtures children into individuals of strong character," he said, while addressing a programme at Nartiang Presbyterian Higher Secondary School.

Comparing Meghalaya's school density with other northeastern states, Sangma noted that while Tripura, with over 45 lakh people, had around 4,000 schools, and Manipur and Nagaland had about 5,000 and 4,000 schools respectively, Meghalaya had as many as 14,000.

"We have 55,000 teachers, while Manipur has 36,000 and Tripura 40,000, despite their larger popu-



lations," he said.

He acknowledged that this high density also came with challenges, pointing out that 206 schools had full teaching strength but no students, while about 2,000 schools had 5-7 teachers in each institution for only one to five students.

Rationalising such institutions was sensitive, he said, as the livelihoods of thousands of teachers depended on them.

On reforms, Sangma said the government was in the final stages of creating a structured salary system for ad hoc and SSA teachers, which would ensure job security, annual increments, and post-retirement benefits.

A final decision was expected before Christmas, he added.

He also said the government was assessing the demand for science streams across higher secondary schools to ensure that students could pursue the subjects of their choice without constraint.

Announcing support for Nar-

tiang Presbyterian Higher Secondary School, Sangma said that ₹ 20 lakh would be provided from the Chief Minister's Special Development Fund for the development of the school building.

He added that the state was working with the Centre to set up girls' hostels to expand opportunities for female students.

Deputy Chief Minister Sniawhalang Dhar, reflecting on the school's 50-year journey, said the institution had overcome many challenges through the collective effort of the community, teachers, and managing committee.

"We hope the students of this school will go on to become doctors, engineers, leaders, and successful individuals who will bring pride to our village," he said.

The Golden Jubilee Souvenir of the school was released during the celebration, which also featured cultural performances, including the school anthem and a fusion dance presented by students. (PTI)

## 35 years of CPIM rule destroyed Tripura: CM



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Dec 9: Tripura Chief Minister Prof Dr Manik Saha today said that everyone must work for the next generations so that they can live with self-respect, as 35 years of CPIM rule had destroyed the state.

Dr. Saha said this after inaugurating various projects and laying foundation stones (virtually) for several projects under Sepahijala and West Tripura districts from the new SDM Office in Sonamura of sepahijala district.

He said, "We must work for the next generations so that they can live with self-respect. The 35 years of rule had destroyed the Sepahijala district and the entire state, and the Chief Minister who was from this Sonamura sub-division never worked for development. However, due to PM Modi's blessings, we are working for the development of Sepahijala district and the entire state."

Dr Saha informed that a total of 18 projects worth ₹ 50 crore were inaugurated, among which 7 are for health, 5 for education, 5 for the revenue department, and one for the minority affairs.

"If we can't invest in infrastructure, we can't develop the state, and then Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas

will not be possible. That is why we have kept ₹ 7,000 crore for infrastructure development for 2025-26. The way the previous government used to lie before 2018, we are now realizing it. Now we are witnessing a wave of development. For a brighter future, we are introducing many schemes and projects," he said.

Dr Saha also added that in the North East region, Tripura is second in GSDP and also second highest in per capita income.

"The law and order situation has also significantly improved. We want to build a new Tripura with Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas. We must work for the development of society, which is necessary for the progress of Tripura. We have launched Amar Sarkar, CM Helpline, Mukhyamantri Samipeshu, etc., so that people do not face problems and we can solve issues early. The earlier government used to stay in power by creating problems, but we want to solve them. From 2018 till now, we have provided 20,184 government jobs, and no one can challenge us. We know how to give jobs in a transparent manner." He also informed that many universities have expressed their desire to establish their institutions in Tripura.

## Crackdown on areca nut smuggling led to significant rise in its prices in 2025, says Mizoram CM

AIZAWL, Dec 9: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Monday said a sustained crackdown on areca nut smuggling from Myanmar has led to a significant rise in its prices this year.

He credited the improvement to the efforts of the police, district officials and civil society organisations. Addressing an areca nut festival at Rengdil in Mamit district, the CM said his government has been taking "robust measures" to curb the smuggling of areca nuts and drugs since assuming office in December 2023. "Mizoram witnessed its most profitable year in terms of areca nut prices. Our police, magistrates and NGOs will be very happy to know the outcome of their hard work," he said.

Citing data from the soil and water conservation department, Lalduhoma said areca nut is cultivated on about 30,000 hectares across the state, and nearly 2 lakh quintals were harvested last year. The harvest figure for the current year is yet to be finalised, he said. Lalduhoma said areca nut has the potential to substantially boost Mizoram's economy when proper market linkages are in place. The state government has encouraged expansion of plantations as the crop yields good returns, he said.

Areca nut cultivation can also be taken up under the loan component and the chief minister's special package under the flagship Handholding Scheme, he said. Lalduhoma also said the Mizoram government has set up an areca nut processing unit at Buhchangphai in Kolasib district near the Assam border to support marketing, and enhance farmers' income.

The unit will be commissioned soon, he said.



Two more processing units are being established at Zamuang in Mamit district and Chemphai in Kolasib district at a cost of ₹ 7.43 crore under the North Eastern Council, he said. Lalduhoma also said the government will construct 170 km of link roads in different parts of the state to connect areca nut, rubber and broomstick cultivation areas.

A total of ₹ 27.66 crore has been received from NABARD and the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) for the project, he said.

According to officials, areca nut growers in the Hachhek area of Mamit district bordering Tripura and Bangladesh have so far harvested fresh produce worth over ₹ 50 crore this year. The total output is expected to rise further as the harvest season is still underway, they added. (PTI)

## BJP won 2023 Tripura Assembly elections because of vote division: Tipra Motha leader

AGARTALA, Dec 9: Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) chief executive member (CEM) Purna Chandra Jamatia on Tuesday claimed that the BJP has managed to win the 2023 Assembly elections in the state because of vote division.

Jamatia, whose Tipra Motha Party (TMP) rules the tribal council despite its alliance with the BJP, said the party had fielded candidates in all 20 ST-reserved seats in the first phase and later contested 22 non-ST constituencies. This, he said, contributed to splitting votes in mixed-population seats and

led to the defeat of the Left-Congress combine. "The BJP managed to win the 2023 Assembly elections because the party had contested in 42 Assembly seats. It ensured vote division among political parties, which helped it retain power," Jamatia told reporters. In Tripura, 20 of the 60 Assembly seats are reserved for STs, while tribal voters play a decisive role in at least 22 other constituencies.

Asked about BJP general secretary Bipin Debbarma's remark that Tipra Motha would "vanish" in the upcoming TTAADC elections early next year, TTAADC member of district

council (MDC) Hansa Kumar Tripura said the ruling party had failed to deliver on promises made before the last Assembly polls.

"The results in the TTAADC elections will completely reverse what the BJP is dreaming of. Under Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma's leadership, Tipra Motha has consolidated its base across the state. Everybody knows the BJP won in 2023 due to vote division in 22 seats," he said.

Later, Minister of State for Industries and Commerce Brishketu Debbarma welcomed 21 BJP leaders into the Tipra Motha fold. (PTI)

## M'laya govt regularises appointments of 221 nurses, paramedics, approves mental healthcare rules

SHILLONG, Dec 9: The Meghalaya government on Tuesday cleared a series of proposals, including the confirmation of services of 221 nurses and paramedics appointed between 2008 and 2012, approval of the mental healthcare rules and reforms in land lease, judicial services and health administration.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said the Cabinet formally recognised the appointments of the "bonded nurses and paramedics after a detailed review".

"Cabinet has decided to confirm and formally recognise the appointments of 221 bonded nurses, as well as bonded paramedic staff, who were appointed between 2008 and 2012," he said.

Previously, the council of ministers had resolved that all appointments made after 2007 that did not follow the proper procedures and were considered ad hoc would need to be re-advised for recruitment. As a result, the "bonded nurses were initially included in that list", the chief minister said.

"After discussions with the Health Department, consultations with the bonded nurses and a thorough review of the documentation, we found that the appointments during that period had, in fact, followed the required procedures. The Cabinet has therefore decided to formally recognise and validate these appointments," he said. Fresh recruitment for those posts will no longer be required.

The Cabinet also cleared the Meghalaya Mental Healthcare Rules, which will provide a regulatory framework for institutions dealing with mental healthcare, rehabilitation and allied activities.

"Until now, these institutions have been functioning without a formal structure or policy. With the approval of the Meghalaya Mental Healthcare Rules, we are creating a comprehensive framework to guide mental health services across the state," Sangma said.

In another decision, the government simplified the procedure for regularising excess areas on government lease lands by delegating pow-

ers to the deputy commissioners, the CM said.

Sangma said the earlier system was "tedious and time-consuming" and required multiple layers of approval.

The Cabinet approved the Meghalaya Pharmacists Service Rules to govern recruitment and service conditions of pharmacists, an area previously lacking formal guidelines.

The council of minister also green-lighted amendments to the Meghalaya Judicial Service Rules 2006 and Meghalaya Higher Judicial Service Rules 2015 to improve examination processes and recruitment systems.

Knowledge of Khasi or Garo will now be mandatory for judicial service aspirants, based on recommendations from the judiciary, the CM said. On the delay in release of over ₹ 700 crore under the Jal Jeevan Mission, Sangma said the Centre had passed payments to all states pending a nationwide audit mandated by the Union Cabinet.

Responding to Assam's efforts to promote music tourism, the chief minister termed it



"healthy competition" that benefits the entire northeast.

On the recent ED raids in Garo Hills, Sangma said the agency functions independently, and the government would not interfere.

He also said the government is balancing legal enforcement with humanitarian concerns in tackling illegal coal mining, stressing the need to transition gradually towards scientific and safer mining while supporting affected communities. (PTI)

## NEC releases over ₹ 478 cr for Nagaland in Nov

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Dec 9: The North Eastern Council (NEC) released ₹ 478.27 crore for Nagaland during November this year for various development programmes, supporting heritage and cultural centres, youth and sports infrastructure, and initiatives aimed at preserving indigenous traditions, while promoting tourism and local enterprise.

The NEC's support of projects spans critical sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture and allied activities, tourism, culture and heritage, education, sports, skill development, livelihood promotion, and innovation.

The council released ₹ 562.37 crore during the month for funding projects across all eight northeastern states as well as for supporting various cultural festivals, seminars, researches, etc. in the region, Union ministry of development of north eastern region, NEC secretary, Shillong said in its updates on the status of project sanction, implementation and other related

matters for each state of the north-east for November.

Meanwhile, the project titled "Rain Water Reservoir for Fire Safety and Skill Training Centre, Nagaland", sanctioned on March 9, 2023, at a cost of ₹ 381.795 lakh has been completed in November this year. The project will enhance fire-safety infrastructure and disaster-response capabilities, particularly in Nagaland's inter-state border areas.

It provides for the construction of rainwater-harvesting reservoirs at key locations in Dimapur (Assam border) and Khuzama (Manipur border) to ensure reliable water sources for fire-fighting operations.

The project also includes the development of essential facilities at the Skill Training Centre, Chiechama.

The Bamboo-Based Craft Concentration Centre, Nagaland, established at Sovima village, Chumoukedima, at a cost of ₹ 4.48 crore, has also been completed during the month.

### UNIDENTIFIED DECEASED



The above photograph of an unidentified deceased. On 05/12/2025 informed at Tinsukia GRPS to the effect that one unidentified male dead body age about 60 yrs found on laying at near 67 DD L/C Gate Ghumti Doomdooma Railway Station. Accordingly, the inquest over the dead body of deceased was held and P.M. Examination of the deceased has been conducted at Tinsukia Medical college & Hospital (Makum) and after the same the body of the deceased is kept at the morgue of Tinsukia Medical college & Hospital (Makum) for 72 hours.

In this regard Tinsukia GRPS UD Case No-78/2025 has been made.

Description of unidentified deceased :-

1. Built - Thin
2. Height - 5'5 Feet
3. Complexion - Swarthy
4. Teeth - Normal
5. Eyes - Closed
6. Wearing - One t-shirt and long pant
7. Age - 60 Years (appx.)

All effort may kindly be taken to trace out the above deceased family member with intimation to the undersigned.

Sd/-

Adl. Supdt. of Police (HQ)  
Tinsukia, Assam

DIPR /D/HLT/250/10-Dec-25

### FOURTH NATIONAL LOK - ADALAT TO BE HELD ON 13/12/2025

THE DISTRICT LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY, DIMA HASAO IS ORGANISING THE FOURTH NATIONAL LOK ADALAT ON 13-12-2025 FOR AMICABLE SETTLEMENT OF ALL TYPES OF CIVIL CASES, MACT CASES, CRIMINAL COMPOUNDABLE CASES, MV ACT CASES, PRE-LITIGATION CASES SUCH AS BANKS, APDCL, BSNL ETC AT JATINGA COURT COMPLEX AND ADDITIONAL COURT BUILDING, HAFLONG FROM 10.00 AM TO 3.00 PM.

Sd/-

Secretary, DLSA,  
DIPR /D/HLT/249/10-Dec-25  
Dima Hasao, Haflong

# To have known him is to have experienced a rare and steady light: Sharmila Tagore on 'birthday twin' Dharmendra

Veteran star Sharmila Tagore says whenever she thinks about Dharmendra, her "birthday twin" and co-star in Hindi cinema classics such as "Satyakam", "Anupama" and "Chupke Chupke", what comes to her mind is "an unaltered, steady radiance" of someone who carried his fame lightly.

Dharmendra, who passed away on November 24, would have turned 90 on Monday, while Tagore turned 81 today.

She remembered her friend and co-star of many movies in an affectionately drawn portrait for The Indian Express.

"Looking back across the decades, the light that falls on Dharmendra remains unchanged. It is a curious thing to say about someone whose career has spanned such a vast and changing landscape of Hindi cinema, but that is what I have always felt: An unaltered, steady radiance.

"Perhaps it is because even when he was being celebrated as the 'He-Man' of Indian cinema, or adored as one of our most beautiful stars, Dharmendra himself seemed pleasantly unaffected by all of it. He carried fame lightly as though it belonged to someone else," she wrote in the newspaper.

The actor said Dharmendra's legacy is not just limited to the vast body of work he leaves behind, but the gentleness with which he inhabited that journey.

"To have known him, to have worked with him, is to have experienced a rare and steady light, one that illuminated not just the screen, but all of us who stood beside him," Tagore said.

Recalling her earliest memories of working with Dharmendra on "Devar" and "Anu-

pama", the actor said she was struck by the gentleness behind his presence. Dharmendra, she said, went out of his way to put her at ease while she was still finding her place in the industry.

Tagore said Hrishikesh Mukherjee, who is often credited for giving Dharmendra some of his career's best movies, required his actors to build a world "out of restraint, feelings that breathed beneath the surface, eyes that spoke more than words".

And Dharmendra understood that language instinctively.

"He had an intuitive grasp of stillness: How a character could convey warmth, longing, or empathy without being overdramatic. Watching him live the part was a lesson in quiet control. I remember thinking how unusual it was for a leading man, at that time, to be so comfortable with softness. There was no need for him to assert masculinity; he simply was, and that confidence allowed him to let the moment speak for itself," she recalled.

Remembering the actor's performance of an idealistic man in "Satyakam", Tagore said Mukherjee's films required "honesty, not performance" and Dharmendra rose to that challenge.

"Satyakam", she said, remains one of the "most luminous achievements" of his career.

"Even now, when I think of Satyakam, what stays with me is the transparency of his emotions, untainted, unguarded, profoundly moving," she said.

"Mere Humdam Mere Dost" and "Chupke Chupke" were the lighter movies that they did together and Dharmendra, she said, was equally great in these comedic performances.

"The same actor who carried the weight of



'Satyakam' could, within a few years, inhabit the delicious absurdities of 'Chupke Chupke' with a lightness that seemed to defy gravity altogether. The lisp, the mock-serious botanical discourse — every gesture was precise yet appeared entirely spontaneous. Comedy, in his hands, became a form of revelation rather than escape," she said, adding that Dharmendra's portrayal of Parimal Tripathi deserved a National Award.

Tagore last worked with Dharmendra in "Sunny", starring his son Sunny Deol. Dharmendra had a cameo in the movie.

Dharmendra, she said, was one of those rare human beings who never allowed fame to distort his values.

"Stardom can do complicated things to people. It can create distance, it can magnify insecurities, it can harden one's relationship with



the world. But he remained remarkably untouched by all that.

"He extended the same warmth to the spot-boys who rushed with chairs between takes, to the light-men perched on precarious ladders, and to the junior artists waiting on sets endlessly. He offered them the same easy smile, there was no pretence. The generosity came from the Punjab soil that inhabited him — open, warm, indifferent to rank. Dharam is now returned to that same soil," she said.

Tagore said they last spoke over the phone after she had a surgery. While in hospital, she saw "Chupke Chupke" and she called her co-star to say how she relished his brilliant performance in the movie. Tagore reportedly underwent a surgery for early stage lung cancer in 2023.

"Stardom can make people larger than life,

Dharmendra, paradoxically, became larger by remaining human. When I think of him now, what rises first is not a particular film, not even a particular scene, but a feeling of warmth, of reassurance, of camaraderie that was spontaneous.

"... It has been one of the privileges of my life to have shared some of my finest cinematic journeys with him. Those years shaped me as an actor and enriched me as a person. Dharmendra brought grace to every interaction, depth to every performance, and a quiet dignity to a profession that often overwhelms its own practitioners," she said.

Tagore, who was initially offered Shabana Azmi's role in Karan Johar's "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahani" but had to turn down the role as she just had her surgery, said she still regrets not doing the film.

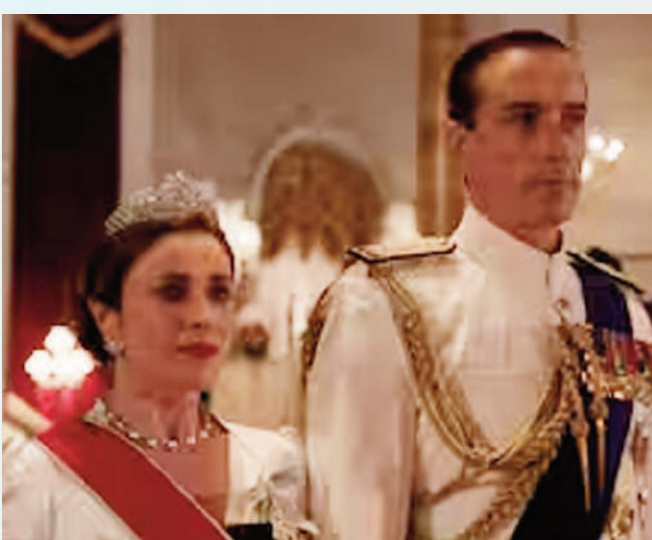
"Covid, doctors, fear — had stopped me. It would have been wonderful to share screen space with him after all those years. Alas, it was not meant to be," she said.

Tagore believes Dharmendra is "still laughing his open, defenseless, immortal laughter" somewhere over the fields of Punjab.

"The lights dim in hundreds of small-town cinema halls. Somewhere a harmonica plays 'Yeh dosti,' and young men who never knew a world without him feel, for the first time, the small ache of irreversible loss. And we, who spend our lives trying to trap truth inside the delicate net of art, will remember a man who simply lived it, authentically, carelessly, magnificently.

"Thank you Dharam, my birthday twin, for the light you carried so lightly. I am sure with your entry into heaven; the Gods must be smiling 'chupke chupke'," she wrote. (PTI)

## 'Freedom at Midnight' to return with second season on Sony LIV from January 9



Sony LIV on Friday announced the second season of its historical drama series "Freedom at Midnight", which will begin streaming on the platform from January 9.

Based on Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins' acclaimed book of the same name, the series revisits key events from the tumultuous year of India's independence and features Sidhant Gupta as Jawaharlal Nehru, Chirag Vohra as Mahatma Gandhi and Rajendra Chawla as Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

The new season explores the turbulent months that followed, highlighting political decision-making at the highest levels as well as the human stories shaped by a country in transition.

Produced by Emmay Entertainment in association with StudioNext, the show is led by filmmaker Nikkhil Advani, who returns as showrunner and director.

The narrative has been crafted by Abhinandan Gupta, Adwitiya Kareng Das, Gundeeep Kaur, Divya Nidhi Sharma, Revanta Sarabhai and Ethan Taylor.

The ensemble cast also includes Arif Zakaria, Ira Dubey, KC Shankar, RJ Malishka, Rajesh Kumar, Luke McGibney, Andrew Cullum, Richard Teverson, Alistair Finlay and Cordelia Bugeja.

Advani said the second season journeys further into "India's most defining months", marked by upheaval, courage and difficult choices.

"These were times of turmoil, courage, and impossible decisions, moments that shaped the soul of a new nation. Through this season, we've focused on bringing alive not just the political corridors where history was written, but the human stories that carried its weight," the filmmaker said in a statement.

"It's a reminder of the sacrifice, leadership, and resilience that guided India through its most turbulent transition," he added. (PTI)

## Swara Samrat Festival 2025-26: Raga of Reverence Blooms Eternal

In Nazrul Manch's sacred hush, where sarod strings whisper Ustad Ali Akbar Khan's eternal legacy like a lover's sigh, Swara Samrat Festival (SSF) 2025-26 ignites. This Boroline-presented symphony fuses Hindustani fire with Carnatic grace, pulsing from Kolkata's December 12-14 winter embrace to Hyderabad's February 21-22 rhythmic crescendo. The festival's grand announcement unfolded at a star-studded press conference graced by luminaries including Pt. Ajoy Chakraborty, Alokannanda Roy, Tanushree Shankar, Sutapa Talukdar, Aniruddha Roychowdhury, Pt. Bickram Ghosh, Pt. Tannoy Bose, Srikanta Acharya, Joy Sarkar, Lopamudra Mitra, Indraadip Dasgupta, Pt. Tejendra Narayan Majumdar, and Indrayuddh Majumdar. Founded by Padma Sri Pt. Tejendra Narayan Majumdar, Manasi Majumdar, and Indrayuddh Majumdar, SSF stands as a global classical beacon, alive with jugalbandis that bridge ancient eras and tomorrow's dreams, nurturing young flames in the guru-shishya parampara.

Day 1's twilight awakens with Abhishek Lahiri and Samanwaya Sarkar's sarod-sitar duet dancing wildly to Pt. Sanju Sahai's tabla storm. Pt. Ullhas Kashalkar's vocals soar like eagles into the ether, flowing into a heartfelt Samarpan to Ustad Zakir Hussain: Ud. Taufiq Qureshi's djembe heartbeat quickens, Pt.

Bickram Ghosh's bols cascade, Pt. Rakesh Chaurasia's bansuri breathes soulful winds, Vid. V. Selvaganesh's kanjira sparkles like stars, Sanjoy Das's guitar weaves modern magic.

Day 2 unleashes Pt. Tushar Dutta's khayal depths pulling heartstrings, Pt. Pratyush Banerjee's sarod gale sweeping audiences away with Sukhvinder Singh Pinky's tabla soliloquy speaking unspoken emotions. Pt. Jayateerth Mevundi and Vid. Abhishek Raghuram's vocal jugalbandi conquer horizons, while Pt. Rajendra Gangan and Vid. Rama Vaidyanathan's kathak-bharatanatyam whirlwind spins pure ecstasy.

Day 3 crowns the rapture: Pt. Raghunandan Panshikar's sarod purity purifies, Indrayuddh Majumdar's disciple ensemble blooms in orchestrated harmony, Vidushi Dalia Rahut's semi-classical elixir intoxicates. Pt. Tejendra Narayan Majumdar's sarod mastery duets with Pt. Swapan Chaudhuri's tabla, exploding into an electric India premiere—Kavita Krishnamurthy's voice melting into Sujata Mohapatra's odissi poetry, Pt. Tannoy Bose's tabla fire, Guru Ratikant Mohapatra's pakhawaj verses etching eternity.

Hyderabad's echoes summon deeper: Vidushi Malavika Sarukkai's bharatanatyam poetry flows like rivers, Pt. Satish Vyas's santoor shimmers in



moonlight. Ud. Shahid Parvez's sitar enchants with spells.

Indrayuddh Majumdar's sarod saga unfolds legends, Pt. Kumar Bose's tabla torrent floods senses, Vid. Sanjay Subrahmanyam's carnatic rapture lifts spirits to divine realms—rhythms binding every soul in unity.

"It is our responsibility to nurture young talents in Indian classical music," Pt. Tejendra Narayan Majumdar intones, SSF's visionary architect. "SSF bridges

generations, preserving Ustad Ali Akbar Khan's legacy through bold innovation."

Indrayuddh Majumdar, sarod player, co-founder and ensemble conductor, resonates with passion: "Our orchestra showcases exquisite harmony and bright futures for the guru-shishya tradition."

Secure tickets now on BookMyShow — limited seats remaining upon your presence to this timeless raga. RSVP essential for media and dignitaries. (PTI)

## Mona Singh, Kunal Roy Kapur on 'Thode Door Thode Paas': Relevant show in the age of social media

Actor Mona Singh and Kunal Roy Kapoor say they deeply resonated with the theme of their new show "Thode Door Thode Paas", which talks about how technology has impacted inter-personal relationship.

The slice-of-life-drama follows the Mehta family, whose patriarch, played by Pankaj Kapur, challenges his family to undertake a six-month digital detox in exchange for a monetary reward. The five-episode show for ZEE5 is written by Shishirak S Anand and directed by Ajay Bhuyan.

"We've witnessed all of that. It is 100% nostalgia. It was a yes from the word go for this show," Singh told PTI in an interview.

Kunal Roy Kapur, who features as Singh's husband in the show, said he felt the story to be relevant for every household including his own.

"I've kids, so I know what it means for them to hand over their device. Like, there's a time limit especially during exams for them otherwise, people are constantly on their devices. It becomes a kind of co-parent to you, and you don't know what that parent is telling them. You don't know who is giving them information from which part of the world, whether they're being radicalized. It is scary," the actor said.

Roy Kapoor said the show talks about taking a break from screens.

"I know there's no running away from it, it's part of your work, and social circle.

But just stop and think how it's affecting the people around you," he said.

Asked about the relevance of social media in an actor's life, Singh said she



doesn't succumb to that pressure to be seen constantly.

"I don't take the constant pressure of posting. My team keeps telling me to post saying, 'Instagram is drying out'. I'm like, 'I'm not doing anything, I'll do it at my own leisure'. The number of likes and comments don't make me personally happy; it's not the bar to happiness.

"We should realise that human touch, human relationships matter the most. I

don't let social media consume me so much that I feel bad about not posting," Singh said.

Roy Kapur said he is more engaged with social platforms like YouTube and likes watching automobile, architecture and cooking related videos.

"Digitally, the challenge for me is to get off the phone. I don't want to see my life, but I want to see other people's lives. I'm not being holier than thou, I'm happy to be on YouTube, Instagram or Twitter," he said.

Singh and Roy Kapur also shared their experience of working with Pankaj Kapur.

"We talked about the process of 'Office, Office', and the beauty is that they used to rehearse for the first half of the day, and they'd shoot the whole episode in the second half of the day. He shared these kinds of stories, it was so fascinating for us," Roy Kapur said.

Singh described the veteran actor as a "simple and high thinking man".

"It was lovely to shoot with him. He is a simple man, simple living, high thinking," she said.

Singh, who has straddled different mediums from TV to OTT to films, said the key for her survival in the industry is the ability to take risks.

The actor, who was most recently seen in "The Ba\*\*\*ds of Bollywood", said, "There was nobody to guide me, I kept

taking risks, trying something new, to know myself, to see whether I can do this or not. The worst thing in this industry is to stay complacent, which I never wanted to." Sometime in 2014-15, Singh said, she felt "lost" career wise and didn't know what else to explore but luckily OTT came.

"It was a time when OTT was coming into India with YouTube, TVF producing shows like 'Tripling', 'Permanent Roommates', I was like, 'Why am I not doing this?'," the actor who made her debut on OTT with the series, "Yeh Meri Family", said.

Roy Kapur, who became one of the popular actors in early 2000, courtesy, the teenage-comedy drama show, "Just Mohabbat", said TV became his learning ground.

"It was literally like going to film school, and understanding how the camera works, what are the systems? What are the roles that people play on a set, and that helped me throughout my career."

The actor later forayed into films with supporting roles in "Delhi Belly", "Yeh Jawani Hai Deewani".

"Delhi Belly" gave me a career in films, then 'Yeh Jawani ...'. But you need to try different mediums to see how things work out, you find your niche. Later on, as you get more comfortable with who you are, and how the world sees you, you have that self-awareness also as you go along in your journey," he said. (PTI)

# Heartbroken India eye podium finish in FIH Junior WC

'Winning and losing matters a lot'

**CHENNAI, Dec 9:** The dream of reclaiming the FIH Men's Junior World Cup title might have been over, but hosts India will hope to at least finish on the podium and give the home fans something to cheer when they take on Argentina in the bronze medal match here on Wednesday.

India, who won their last title nine years back in 2016 in Lucknow, lost 1-5 to seven-time champions and title holders Germany in the semifinals on Sunday.

Heartbroken at missing out the title yet again, India would look to regroup, make amends of their mistakes and at least finish with a medal in the home tournament.

Two-time champions Argentina will, however, be a tough customer for India and they have already showed their prowess in the tournament.

Argentina, who won the title in 2005 and 2021, lost 1-2 in a closely contested semifinal against Spain and they too are hurt and desperate to finish the tournament on a high.

The Indians were simply hammered by the ruthless Germans in the semifinals. The home team simply buckled under pressure and conceded soft goals, which they can't afford on Wednesday against Argentina if they want to stand on the podium.

The Indian backline was guilty of giving away possession easily,



resulting in goals, while the forwards cut a sorry figure in front of the Germans after a superb show in the pool stages against lowly opponents.

The likes of Dilraj Singh, Arshdeep Singh, Sourabh Anand Kushwaha, Gurjot Singh and Ajeet Yadav created a lot of chances but simply failed to convert them into goals against the Germans.

India's chief coach PR Sreejesh too admitted that his side failed to execute their plans and committed silly mistakes that ultimately put

"It's all about collective effort. You need to defend well first and then you need to attack and create opportunities. We are not converting our opportunities," he added.

The Indian defence, led by skipper Rohit, will have to raise their game by leaps and bounds to control the Argentines.

The midfield too lacked cohesion against Germany the other day and the likes of Rosan Khujur, Ankita Pal, Manmeet Singh, Adrohit Ekka and Thounaojam Ingalemba Luwang will have to be more proactive and cohesive to create chances for the strikers.

Penalty corner is another area which continues to be India's perennial problem.

Amol Ekka scored India's lone goal against Germany through a penalty corner, but skipper Rohit, India's best bet from drag-flicks, simply couldn't make his mark in the tournament from set pieces.

There is no question about his solid defensive skills but India expected more from Rohit from penalty corners.

Princedeep Singh has been the stand-out performer at the Indian goal and the hosts will expect the young Punjab goalkeeper to continue his fine showing.

Meanwhile, Germany will be looking for their eighth title when they take on Spain in the summit clash, also on Wednesday. (PTI)

## Two-goal Bruno Fernandes leads rampant Manchester United to 4-1 win at hapless Wolves

**WOLVERHAMPTON, Dec 9:** Bruno Fernandes scored two goals and made another as Manchester United beat Wolverhampton 4-1 to move into the top six of the English Premier League on Monday.

Fernandes' first-half goal was cancelled out on the stroke of half time by Jean-Ricner Bellegarde but Bryan Mbeumo restored United's lead early in the second half.

Mason Mount added a third in the 62nd minute before Fernandes rounded off a comprehensive victory with an 82nd-minute penalty.

It was the eighth defeat in a row for Wolves and saw sixth-place United move on to 25 points, level with Chelsea, which is fifth.

Wolves remains bottom of the table with two points, eight adrift of the team above it, Burnley.

"We got ourselves back in the game but, with the goals we conceded, you're never going to get anything out of a game of football," Wolves coach Rob Edwards said.

"There's a nervousness and I can understand it but, in the big moments in the game, we insisted on giving the ball back to them. We're getting punished and we've got to try and improve and be consistent - but it's not going to be a quick turnaround." Amorim 'angry' after Man United allows late goal in 1-1 draw with West Ham Although United has been consistently inconsistent all season, it came into the game as heavy favourites against a team that has one of the worst starting records of any Premier League side at this stage of the campaign. Thousands of Wolves fans boycotted the first 15 minutes in a coordinated protest at the ownership of the club by Chinese con-

glomerate Fosun International.

They had barely sat down when United took the lead with a goal that typified Wolves' season. The Brazilian player Andre lost the ball in midfield and a counter attack led to Fernandes racing inside the Wolves box.

He fought off the attentions of Emmanuel Agbadou and, even though he lost his footing, he still managed to get in a shot that the goalkeeper Sam Johnstone got a hand to but couldn't stop from rolling into the net. United failed to capitalize on its pressure and it paid a price seconds before half time. David Moller Wolfe crossed from the byline and Wolves' stand-out performer Bellegarde whipped his volley past Senne Lammens into the United net.

It was Wolves' first league goal since a 3-2 loss at home to Burnley on Oct. 26, and the 13th league game in succession United has failed to keep a clean sheet.

Nevertheless, United outclassed Wolves in a second-half blitz.

Ruben Amorim's men were 2-1 up after 51 minutes. Mbeumo tapping in Diogo Dalot's neat pass to complete a fine counter attack.

Mount converted Fernandes' lovely chipped assist 11 minutes later before Fernandes added the fourth. "The first half we had loads of chances, created a lot going forward and didn't make as much of them as we should have done," Mount said. "We let them back into it with some sloppy play, the gaffer (manager Amorim) had some things to say at half time and the onus was on us to put things right with a proper performance in the second half. All our focus was on being ruthless, going forward with purpose and taking our chances. (AP)

## England's Mark Wood ruled out of Ashes series with knee injury

**BRISBANE (AUSTRALIA), Dec 9:** Injured fast bowler Mark Wood has been ruled out of the Ashes in a major setback for an England lineup trailing 2-0 in the five-match series.

Wood had limited impact in the first test, bowling 11 overs without taking a wicket in the eight-wicket loss in Perth. He then missed the second cricket test in Brisbane because of his troublesome left knee.

The 35-year-old Wood's fitness had been an issue ahead of the Ashes tour after he only recently returned following knee surgery in March.

Matt Fisher, who made his only test appearance in the Caribbean

in 2022, was drafted into the test squad as cover.

In an Instagram post, Wood said he was "guttured to be out the remainder of the Ashes. After extensive surgery and seven long, hard months of work and rehab to get back into the test arena, my knee just hasn't held up."

Wood said he traveled to Australia "with high expectations about making a big impact. I'm desperately disappointed that despite yet more injections and intensive medical treatment it has become clear that the flare up in my knee is worse than feared."

Wood was England's leading wicket-taker in the 2023 Ashes series, when his return from injury

## Goalkeeping stints in football shaped Princedeep's hockey career

**CHENNAI, Dec 9:** What began as a stint at full-back eventually turned into a career between the posts for Princedeep Singh, whose early goalkeeping experiences during football training sessions played a pivotal role in shaping his journey in hockey.

The 21-year-old custodian from Batala in Punjab, who has been one of India's standout performers at the ongoing FIH Junior World Cup, idolises two-time Olympic medalist and current junior men's team captain PR Sreejesh.

"I started my career with the Cheema Academy in Batala, Punjab, as a full back. That time I used to be a goalkeeper in football during training sessions but used to play hockey as full back," Princedeep told PTI.

"I used to make good saves then and from there it started. The coaches told me to become a goalkeeper in hockey."

Princedeep credited Sreejesh for shaping his mindset.

"I started my hockey career in 2015 and in 2016 I saw Sreejesh bhai playing in the Olympics. I idolise coach sir only, got to learn a lot of things from him. He was himself a goalkeeper and he knew how to handle pressure," he said.

Princedeep made crucial saves against Belgium in the quarterfinal, including two in the shoot-out, to take India into the semifinal, where they fell short against Germany, losing 1-5.

Princedeep admitted that playing in front of a packed stadium can test nerves but stressed the importance of internal communication. (PTI)

## Trailblazing first transgenders' football league kicks off in Jamshedpur



**JAMSHEDPUR, Dec 9:** In a landmark development in Indian football, seven transgender teams made debut in an exclusive tournament under the umbrella of Jamshedpur Super League (JSL) here.

The Transgenders' League, which began here on Sunday, features seven teams -- Jamshedpur FT, Chaibasa FC, Chakradharpur FC, Jamshedpur Indranagar FC, Naomundi FC, Saraikela FC and Kolhan Tiger FC -- in a five-a-side format.

Initially, only four teams were to compete in the transgenders' league but later three more sides were added. The tournament forms a part of the Jamshedpur Super League, which also has other competitions such as age-group leagues.

In the inaugural match of the Transgenders' League on Sunday, Jamshedpur FT trounced Chaibasa FC 7-0, while Kolhan Tiger FC notched 3-0 win over Chakradharpur FC, and Jamshedpur Indranagar FC and Naomundi FC played out a goal-less draw.

For Jamshedpur FT's Puja Soy, scoring four goals in the opening match of the Transgenders' League was the beginning of a new identity, not as a transgender, but as a footballer finally recognised on the stage she had long dreamt of.

"Football is such a beautiful sport, and for the first time, I felt like I wasn't being seen for my gender, but for my game," she said.

"This is the first time we are playing in a proper professional environment," said Aliya, another participant in the league.

"The support from the club and the fans makes us feel like we truly belong to the football family."

For many of these players, participation itself is a liberation.

"We are thrilled to be part of this ground-breaking initiative, India's first Transgender League," said Pyari Hessa, cap-

tain of Jamshedpur FT.

"It gives us a platform we never had before and will hopefully inspire other states to create similar spaces. We're very grateful to Jamshedpur FC for making this possible."

"A platform for inclusion of third gender in football"

For Indian Super League (ISL) side Jamshedpur FC which is organising the Transgenders' League, the inclusion of the "third gender" forms a key part of the club's broader community outreach programme, designed to make football accessible and representative of every segment of the society.

"The introduction of the Transgender Football League marks a progressive and meaningful step in our commitment to making football inclusive, accessible, and empowering for every individual," Jamshedpur FC's Head of Grassroot and Youth Football Kundan Chandra said on Tuesday.

"As a club we firmly believe that football must serve as a platform where talent is nurtured without discrimination, and where all players regardless of gender identity are given equal opportunities to participate, compete, and excel."

"The Transgender League, introduced within the JSL's broader philosophy of inclusivity and football for all, has quickly become a symbol of what sport can achieve when barriers are removed. It goes beyond communities, labels, or social boundaries, standing today as one of the very few dedicated football leagues for the transgender community in India."

Chandra said the Transgender League is made up of 70 players who come from all walks of life, said the Head of Grassroot and Youth Football at Jamshedpur FC Kundan Chandra said on Tuesday.

He said the participants included Tata Steel employees, daily-wage labourers, small business workers, and others who simply wanted a chance to play. Every team will get 12 matches, with the league comprising 42 fixtures in total.

Rebranded from the All India Football Federation's Blue Cubs League framework, the JSL has evolved from a structured grassroots platform into a vibrant six-month football festival. (PTI)

## AC Milan back on top of Serie A thanks to Christian Pulisic double



**TURIN (ITALY), Dec 9:** A second-half double from substitute Christian Pulisic gave AC Milan a come-from-behind 3-2 win over Torino on Monday and swept it back to the top of Italy's Serie A.

Weekend wins for title rivals Napoli and Internazionale left Milan in third and it knew three points were required to return to the summit.

However, it was 2-0 down after 17 minutes.

Nikola Vlasic gave the home side the lead with a penalty after nine minutes, and then made the second goal eight minutes later when he powered forward to feed Duvan Zapata, whose powerful angled drive beat Mike Maignan from 12 meters.

Milan got back into the game seven minutes later, Adrien Rabiot lashing in a shot from 35 meters that will feature in many goal of the season competitions come May. It fell to American forward Pulisic to turn the game around with two second-half goals. After 67 minutes, one minute after replacing Davide Bartesaghi, he found himself unmarked in the box and made

no mistake from close range.

Ten minutes later Pulisic put Milan ahead for the first time in the match when he swept home a low cross from the right.

Milan avoided what would have been only its second defeat of the season and extended its unbeaten league run to 13 games. The result leaves Torino, a club with the worst defense in the league, in 16th place, one of four teams on 14 points.

Genoa beats Udinese In Udine, Genoa won a second consecutive league match for the first time in almost two years when a late goal from Brooke Norton-Cuffy secured a 2-1 victory over Udinese.

The 83rd-minute decider was the England under-21 international's first goal for the club since signing from Arsenal last year. It followed a 34th-minute penalty from Ruslan Malinovskyi that put Genoa ahead, and a 65th minute equalizer by Jakub Piotrowski. The result maintained Genoa's revival under new coach Daniele De Rossi. It is unbeaten in its last four, with eight points from 12 since the former Roma midfielder took the helm.

The win lifted Genoa into 14th place, one of the four teams on 14 points. Udinese is three places above it with 18. Parma sinks Pisa At the bottom of the table, a penalty from Adrian Benedyczak gave Parma a 1-0 win at Pisa. The Polish forward struck after 40 minutes to move Parma four points clear of the relegation zone.

M'Bala Nzola came close three times for the home side in the second half. His day got worse in stoppage time when he was shown a straight red card for a senseless kick at Mandela Keita. The result leaves Pisa third-bottom with 10 points from 14 games. (AP)

## Dembele and Chevalier to miss PSG's Champions League match against Athletic Bilbao

**PARIS, Dec 9:** Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele and goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier will both miss Paris Saint-Germain's trip to Athletic Bilbao in the Champions League on Wednesday.

PSG said Dembele is sick while Chevalier is still recovering from a right ankle injury.

It's another setback for Dembélé, who returned from a left calf injury against Tottenham at the end of November and only made two more appearances in the French league.

Before that, Dembele had been sidelined several weeks by a right hamstring injury sustained while playing for France in September. PSG will also still be without Morocco right back Achraf Hakimi, who has a sprained left ankle and faces a race against time to recover before the Africa Cup of Nations in his home country from Dec. 21.

Matvei Safonov is expected to start in goal in the absence of Chevalier, who was injured in a loss against Monaco after a violent tackle from Lamine Camara on Nov. 29.

PSG won the Champions League last season and currently sits second in the league phase after five games, three points behind leader Arsenal. (AP)

## Salah-less Liverpool plays Inter in Champions League; Barcelona, Bayern, Chelsea all in action

**LONDON, Dec 9:** After leaving Mohamed Salah at home, Liverpool needs to show it can win without the Egyptian forward as Arne Slot's team takes on Inter Milan in the Champions League on Tuesday.

On a night when Barcelona, Bayern Munich, Chelsea and Tottenham are all in action, the focus is on Liverpool after Salah said Saturday it "seems like the club has thrown me under the bus." Liverpool's response was to leave him out of the squad for its trip to Italy.

Liverpool's poor recent form boosts Inter's chances of picking up a fifth win in six games. A win for 13th-place Liverpool would put Slot's team back into the hunt for the top eight seedings for the knockout stages.

After losing its last Champions League game 3-0 to Chelsea, Barcelona aims to recover at home to

struggling Eintracht Frankfurt. It will have to do without defender Ronald Araujo, who is suspended after his red card against Chelsea and has also been unavailable for personal reasons.

Seventh-place Chelsea is unbeaten in four Champions League games and visits Atalanta aiming to strengthen its hold on a top-eight spot offering direct entry to the round of 16. Bayern can earn its fifth win of the league stage by beating Sporting Lisbon in an early kickoff.

Tottenham, which lost 5-3 to Paris Saint-Germain last time out, has an easier task against Czech team Slavia Prague. Atletico Madrid visits PSV Eindhoven, Monaco hosts Galatasaray and Union Saint-Gilloise plays Marseille.

One game starts in an unusually early window at 15:30 GMT (10:30 a.m. ET) as Kazakhstan's Kairat Almaty hosts Greece's Olympiacos. (AP)

## Desert Vipers beat Gulf Giants in Super Over thriller

**DUBAI, Dec 9:** Desert Vipers held their nerves to prevail over Gulf Giants in the first-ever Super Over finish of the ICL20 after Sam Curran and Dan Lawrence heroics here.

After the scores were tied at 179, the Vipers went on to score 13 in the Super Over with Lawrence finding the boundary once, before Thushara got his wicket.

But, Naseem Shah clinched the game for the Vipers after restricting the Giants to just nine runs on Monday. The Vipers have beaten the Giants in each of their previous five matches.

Curran (44 off 36) and Dan Lawrence's (56 off 31) partnership ensured the Vipers tied the scores despite a challenging target of 180.

Azmatullah Omarzai bagged four wickets for the Giants, but it was not enough to stop the Vipers from their third straight win of the season. The lower-order batters of the Vipers also scored crucial runs in a team effort.

The Gulf Giants started on the front foot, with Pathum Nissanka (56 off 29) and Rahmanullah Gurbaz (41 off 31) taking 14 runs off Naseem in the opening exchanges. The opening pair raced to a 50-run stand inside five overs and powered



the Giants to 58 in the powerplay.

Nissanka continued his rich vein of form, bringing up his third half-century in as many games, off just 27 balls. He struck Noor Ahmad for his fourth six of the innings, but the Afghan spinner had the final say, dismissing him off the very next delivery to end the 73-run opening stand.

Gurbaz then took charge, with James Vince providing solid support with 25 runs off 22 balls. Their 54-run partnership was broken by Khuzaima Tanveer, who removed

Vince before sending Gurbaz back two balls later. The Giants were 129/3 at the end of the 14th over.

The Giants' bowlers fought their way back into the contest thereafter. Noor picked up his second wicket by dismissing Azmatullah Omarzai (20 off 13), while David Payne removed Moeen Ali (11 off 11). With only 38 runs coming from the final five overs, the Giants finished on 179/5.

Omarzai made early inroads for the Giants by dismissing Fakhar Zaman (1 off 9). Mark Adair struck

soon after, removing Andries Gous (11 off 9), leaving the Vipers struggling at 14/2 early in the chase.

Curran and Impact Player Max Holden (15 off 15) attempted to steady the innings, but Haider Razaq provided the third breakthrough by sending Holden back. At the halfway mark, the Vipers were 65/3, still needing 115 runs for victory.

Curran then joined forces with Lawrence as the pair began to find regular boundaries. Curran's pivotal knock of 44 had one four and three sixes, before falling to Nuwan Thushara. The 60-run partnership with Lawrence brought the Vipers back into contention.

Lawrence reached his half-century in just 28 balls, but Omarzai turned the game again in the 18th over, dismissing Shmiron Hetmyer (16 off 8) before removing Lawrence. Hasan Nawaz chipped in with a quick 11 off 4, but Thushara claimed his second wicket of the innings.

With 13 needed off the final over, Tanveer struck Omarzai for a six, but a fine catch by Gurbaz ended the UAE batter's stay. Vriitya Aravid then found the gaps to level the scores and force a Super Over. (PTI)

# There is no other player like Hardik Pandya in Indian T20 team: Bangar

**NEW DELHI, Dec 9:** Former India batting coach Sanjay Bangar believes there is no other player like Hardik Pandya in the national T20 set-up because the star all-rounder is capable of commanding a spot in the team merely as a specialist batter or bowler too.

Out for more than two months due a quadriceps injury during the Asia Cup, Pandya will return to the Indian squad for the home five-match ODI series against South Africa beginning in Cuttack on Tuesday.

"Look at all the all-rounders in world cricket now. Does England have a back-up for Ben Stokes? No. In one-day or even Test cricket, there is no back-up for Ravindra Jadeja. It is the same with Hardik Pandya," JioStar expert Bangar said.

"He (Pandya) can command a spot in the top five on his batting alone. He could also be one of the top three seamers in any team if he was just a bowler.

"The point is, to be that kind of all-rounder, you must earn your place with your batting and also with your bowling. There is no other player like Hardik Pandya in the Indian team."

On Pandya's workload management, Bangar said he should at least play the first three matches against South Africa.

"We need to see how he copes," he said, insisting that it is too early to say if he should play six or seven T20s before the World Cup.

"Playing in the SMAT (Syed Mushtaq Ali



Trophy) is different from the intensity of an international game. The team management must manage the workload of important players like him.

"So, if needed, we must do that for Hardik

too. A fit Hardik Pandya allows the team to play its desired combination, especially with the spin options we have. That's why his presence is critically very vital."

Before the India return, Pandya made a

42-ball 77 not out for Baroda in SMAT before bowling four overs at full tilt for 1/52.

Test and ODI captain Shubman Gill is also making a return after missing almost a month of cricket owing to a neck spasm suffered while attempting a slog sweep during the opening Test against the Proteas.

Bangar said Gill's growth as Test captain will benefit him in other formats.

"The confidence Shubman Gill has now after doing so well in Test cricket over the last year will certainly help him. More than his skill, his mindset has grown. Taking extra responsibility as a Test Captain makes him a far more rounded player. He now understands the game situation and what is needed from him.

"At the top of the order, Shubman Gill could do the job for the team in T20i cricket. And if needed, Hardik Pandya could do a similar job in the middle order."

Bangar felt Sanju Samson may find it difficult to get a slot in the Indian T20 side.

"...his best spot in T20 cricket is still at the top. With players like Tilak Varma, Shivam Dube, or Hardik Pandya available, there may not be a place for him at number four, five, or six.

"Jitesh Sharma has shown he is quite a capable player. He can bat lower down the order and look to hit the big shots even with a slightly older ball."

On the Samson versus Jitesh selection debate, Bangar said, "I think Jitesh will now get the number seven spot." (PTI)

## Morgan, Steyn, Uthappa in star-studded commentary panel for SA20 Season 4

**JOHANNESBURG, Dec 9:** An array of influential voices such as former England captain Eoin Morgan, India's 2007 T20 World Cup-winner Robin Uthappa and South African legend Dale Steyn will feature in a star-studded commentary team for the upcoming SA20.

The fourth season of the T20 league will begin from December 26 across venues in South Africa.

"SA20 is set to elevate its world-class broadcast experience for Season 4, unveiling some of the biggest names in global cricket. Robin Uthappa, one of India's most respected T20 voices, returns to the panel alongside global icons Dale Steyn and Eoin Morgan," a release from the Star Sports Network stated.

"The addition of Steyn and Morgan significantly strengthens the analysis across all 34 matches. Their presence will give fans an unparalleled view into fast-bowling tactics, leadership decisions, team strategy, and match-defining moments," it added.

This edition of SA20 will be live on JioHotstar and Star Sports Network in India.

Other than the trio, former England captain Kevin Pietersen, ex-England opener Mark Butcher, former SA skipper AB de Villiers and his one-time teammates JP Duminy, Ashwell Prince, Chris Morris, Vernon Philander and the former Zimbabwe pacer Mpmbelelo Mbangwa will also be in the commentary panel.

This year's SA20 will be played across Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Paarl, Centurion, and Gqeberha.

The six team vying for honours are: Durban's Super Giant, Joburg Super Kings, MI Cape Town, Paarl Royals, Pretoria Capitals and Sunrisers Eastern Cape. (PTI)

## Tendulkar recalls former teammate Gursharan's gesture in scoring Irani Cup ton in 1989-90

**MUMBAI, Dec 9:** Sachin Tendulkar on Tuesday recalled former India player Gursharan Singh's gesture to walk out at No 10 with a broken hand only to help him score a valiant 103 for the Rest of India in their Irani Cup match against Delhi in 1989-90. A rampant Delhi crushed the Rest of India by 309 runs in the contest played here at the Wankhede Stadium in which Tendulkar waged a lone battle scoring 103, with former India opener WV Raman's 41 being the other noticeable performance.

Struggling at 209 for nine in pursuit of a mammoth target of 554, the former India, Delhi and Punjab player Gursharan walked out at No 10 with a broken hand to support Tendulkar as the two put on another 36 runs for the final wicket. ROI were bowled out for 245

"As they say, promises are meant to be kept. I feel I'll go a step fur-



ther and say that promises are meant to be kept, but also meant to be delivered... and that is what is our DNA," Tendulkar recalled at an Aegae Federal Life Insurance event here.

"I can recall an incident... long

way back in 1989 when I was playing Irani Trophy. This was a trial match before one got selected for India. I was batting in the 90s, and my partner, Gursharan Singh, had an injury — a broken hand — and he wasn't supposed to bat.

"But he was asked by the chairman of the selection committee, Raj Singh Dungarpur, to go out and bat and support his teammate. Gursharan came and helped me reach my hundred and I got selected to play for India after that. Afterward, Gursharan also became part of the Indian cricket team," he added.

Tendulkar said the gesture from Gursharan, who made a solitary appearance each in Tests and ODIs for India, was something that touched his heart.

"I thanked him profusely on the ground and in the dressing room because it was a big thing for him to come out with a broken hand," Tendulkar said.

"Just stepping out with a broken hand was significant. Whether I scored a hundred or not was secondary. His intent and attitude mattered most to me (and) that truly touched my heart," he added. (PTI)

## IPL 2026 auction to feature 350 players including 240 Indians

**MUMBAI, Dec 9:** A total of 350 cricketers, including 240 Indians, will go under the hammer in the IPL auction to take place in Abu Dhabi on December 16, with South Africa's comeback man Quinton de Kock a surprise late addition to the final list.

Wicketkeeper-batter De Kock, who recently came out of his ODI retirement, has been kept at a base price of ₹ 1 crore. The list also includes Australia batter Steve Smith at a base price of ₹ 2 crore. Smith last played in the IPL in 2021.

A total of 1,390 players registered for the Player Auction. The number was pruned to 1,005 players before 350 were finally short-listed to battle for 77 slots available including 31 for overseas players, across the 10 teams for the 19th edition of the world's biggest T20 league.

The first set of players in the auction includes India and Mumbai batters Prithvi Shaw and Sarfaraz Khan, who both have kept their base price at ₹ 75 lakh each. Shaw had a regular run in the IPL from 2018 to 2024 but had gone unsold in the auction for the last edition, whereas

Sarfaraz has not played in the competition since 2021.

The list shared by the IPL features two Australians in Cameron Green and Jake Fraser-McGurk, along with New Zealand and former Chennai Super Kings opener Devon Conway and South Africa's David Miller, with each of them keeping a base price of ₹ 2 crore.

Venkatesh Iyer, who was released by Kolkata Knight Riders, has listed himself at a base price of ₹ 2 crore. Among domestic players, Kunal Chandela and Ashok Kumar, who are among the leading run-getters and wicket-takers respectively in the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy, are also in the final list.

Three-time winners KKR will go into the auction with the biggest purse of ₹ 64.3 crores, followed by five-time champions CSK with ₹ 43.4 crores. Sunrisers Hyderabad, who have won the IPL once, have the third highest purse of ₹ 25.5 crores.

As many as 21 England players feature in the list, including wicketkeeper-batter Jamie Smith, pacer Gus Atkinson, Liam Livingstone and Test opener Ben Duckett.

Green, expected to garner a lot of attention in this auction, leads the list of 19 Australians, with Josh Inglis, Matthew Short, Cooper Connolly and Beau Webster being the other prominent names.

De Kock and Miller are among the 15 Proteas players in the IPL auction, along with fast bowlers Anrich Nortje, Lungi Ngidi, Gerald Coetzee and all-rounder Wiaan Mulder.

Fast bowlers Alzarri Joseph and Shamar Joseph, Akeem Auguste, Shai Hope and Roston Chase are among the nine players from the West Indies in the auction.

Sri Lankan spinners Wanindu Hasaranga, Dunith Wellalage, Maheesh Theekshana and Traveen Matthew will be among the dozen players from the island nation in the auction, along with Pathum Nissanka, Kusal Mendis and Kusal Perera.

Conway and Rachin Ravindra, who were released by CSK, are among the 16 New Zealand players in the auction.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Naveen ul Haq feature in the list of 10 players from Afghanistan. (PTI)

## Hazlewood out of Ashes series

# Cummins set to return for Australia



**BRISBANE, Dec 9:** Australian pace bowler Josh Hazlewood has been ruled out of the Ashes series with hamstring and Achilles injuries.

Hazlewood missed Australia's two eight-wickets wins over England in Perth and Brisbane but had been expected to return later in the five-match series.

Australia coach Andrew McDonald on Tuesday said the veteran paceman would now be targeting a return for the Twenty20 World Cup early next year.

"He'll be out of the series and his preparation will then shift toward the World Cup, which is an incredibly important campaign for us," McDonald said.

"It's really flat for him. A couple of setbacks we didn't see coming — we thought he'd play a huge part in the series."

Hazlewood has been a key member of Australia's regular bowling attack for a decade.

There was better news for skipper Pat Cummins, who is expected to return for the third test in Adelaide starting Dec. 17 after missing the first two tests while he recovers from a back problem.

The 32-year-old paceman increased his training workload at Allan Border Field in Brisbane while the Australians were playing the second test against England at the Gabba.

He is set to be recalled as captain when the match squad is announced Wednesday. Steve Smith has been leading the Australia XI in the absence of Cummins.

"We feel as though he'll be as best prepared as can be," McDonald said. "Us seeing him further advanced, we feel he'll be really well placed for the challenges of Adelaide."

"We feel as though the simulation in the nets has got him skill ready. His body's ready to go. Barring anything else happening in the next week, I'd be expecting Pat to be tossing the coin and putting the blazer on."

The under-fire England squad, which needs a win in Adelaide to have any chance of reclaiming the Ashes, is taking a few days out this week to rest and relax at one of Australia's iconic beach towns.

The fourth test starts Boxing Day at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and Sydney will host the fifth test from Jan. 4. England hasn't won an Ashes test in Australia since the 2010-11 series.

Mitchell Starc, the only regular member of the Australian attack involved in the first two tests, is the leading bowler in the series so far with 18 wickets and has won back-to-back man-of-the-match awards. (AP)

## Double Olympic and triple world champion among 23000 runners for Kolkata event

**KOLKATA, Dec 9:** The 10th Tata Steel World 25K Kolkata will witness over 23,000 runners from across the world with double Olympic and triple world champion Joshua Cheptegei headlining the event.

Uganda's Cheptegei and women's defending champion Sutume Asefa Kebede will race to better world standings in the World Athletics Gold Label Road Race here on December 21.

Even promoter Procram International has this time announced a USD 25,000 bonus for any athlete who shatters the world record of 1:11:08. The race carries a total prize purse of USD 142,214 with equal offering for the men's and women's winners.

The top three winners stand to win USD 15,000, USD 10,000, and USD 7,000, respectively. The runners will be further incentivised by an event record bonus of USD 5,000.

Cheptegei (29), won three consecutive world titles in 10,000m, had four world records to his credit, including the 5K and 10K on roads.

A winner of last year's Delhi Half Marathon and this year's TCS World 10K at Bengaluru, the Ugandan whose 5000 and 10000 world records still stands, revealed his interest in making a debut at 25K in Kolkata.

Another important entrant in the men's list will be Alphonse Felix Simbu from Tanzania. Simbu, who earned a thrilling victory in the World Championships Marathon in Tokyo in September, is all set to give Cheptegei a run for his money in Kolkata.

There are two more important names from the African continent popping up among the men's rosters. Ethiopian Haymanot Alew, who narrowly missed the podium in Kolkata during the 2023 race, will join hands with Lesotho's Tebello Ramakongoa, a runner-up in Xiannmen Marathon earlier this year.

Ethiopian star Sutume Asefa Kebede, who first set the world record for 25K in 2015 at Berlin and conquered the Kolkata roads with yet another record time in 2023, is all set to come back for a hat-trick here. (PTI)

# Messi, Suarez to reunite on Mumbai ramp for a cause

## WC memorabilia sought for auction

**KOLKATA, Dec 9:** Argentine football icon Lionel Messi will walk the ramp in Mumbai "for a cause" during his India tour, the organisers of which have requested him to bring select memorabilia from their 2022 World Cup triumph for an auction.

The sole promoter of the 'G.O.A.T. India Tour 2025', Satadru Dutta, told PTI on Tuesday that Messi, along with long-time strike partner Luis Suarez and Argentina midfielder Rodrigo De Paul, will feature in a 45-minute fashion segment on the night of December 14.

It will be a "philanthropic fashion show for a cause", Dutta said.

"It's a fully reserved night. There will be celebrity models, celebrity cricketers, Bollywood celebrities, millionaires, founders, Tiger and Jackie Shroff, John Abraham among others," he said.

Suarez will also be part of a Spanish music show, while the organisers have "made a formal request" for Messi to bring "some memorabilia of the 2022 World Cup which will be auctioned" dur-

ing the Mumbai leg of the tour.

The Mumbai event starts at 5pm at Wankhede Stadium, preceded by a Padel Cup at 3.30pm at Cricket Club of India.

**Kolkata leg: Statue unveiling switched to virtual mode**

In the Kolkata leg, the unveiling of Messi's "biggest ever statue" — a 70-foot structure — will be done virtually from his team hotel owing to security concerns.

"Police has not given permission so he will do it from the hotel. It will be done virtually in the morning," a Kolkata Police source said.

Earlier, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner was scheduled to visit Sreebhumi in person for the inauguration.

Kolkata Police sources confirmed Messi will land in the city at 1.30am in the wee hours of Saturday and will stay at a five-star hotel on the EM Bypass.

A sponsor-exclusive meet-and-greet programme will run from 9.30am to 10.30am.

A special Argentine-Indian fusion food festival will be held on the sidelines, keeping in mind Messi's love for 'mate' (Argentine herbal tea).

It will showcase Argentine herbal tea infused with Assam flavours, along with



a spread of Bengali fish delicacies — including hilsa — and an assortment of local sweets.

A 3x20ft Messi mural, planned for

the upcoming Durga Puja season, will also be unveiled.

"Not only will he unveil his biggest-ever statue, we will have a huge mural,

which will be kept at strategic Durga Puja pandal-hopping locations so that all his fans will have an opportunity to paint and post messages in a nearby message box," Dutta said.

The mural will be presented to Messi at the Salt Lake Stadium during the Kolkata leg of the tour.

A crowd of more than 70,000 is expected for the Kolkata event.

"75,000 seats are open for spectators. There is heavy demand and we have made counter sales open from Tuesday," Dutta said.

After the meet-and-greet, Messi will proceed to Salt Lake Stadium before departing for Hyderabad at 2pm.

**Hyderabad leg**

Following the cancellation of his proposed friendly match in Kochi — originally announced by Kerala Sports Minister V Abdurahiman for November 17 — the organisers added Hyderabad to create a pan-India tour: East (Kolkata), South (Hyderabad), West (Mumbai), North (New Delhi).

Messi will attend the Hyderabad GOAT Cup at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium, Uppal, from 7pm, backed by Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy.

The Hyderabad programme includes a 7v7 celebrity match, a masterclass for scouted young talents, penalty shootouts, and a musical concert celebrating Messi.

**Final leg and meeting with PM**

The World Cup winner will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his residence in Delhi on Monday.

Minerva Academy's youth team, which swept three major European titles earlier this year, will be felicitated in the presence of Messi during the GOAT Tour's New Delhi leg.

The Punjab-based academy's U-14 and U-15 squads had won the Gothia Cup, Dana Cup and Norway Cup during their July-August tour, while also reaching the Helsinki Cup final. There will also be a nine-members' celebrity match during Messi's visit to the capital.

Messi's India visit, his first since 2011, when he played a friendly for Argentina against Venezuela in Kolkata, received its final seal of approval on August 15.

Dutta had met Messi's father, who is also his agent, before securing the deal, and then held a 45-minute meeting with the football legend at his home on February 28. (PTI)