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Attack on KAAC CEM's ancestral home, police fire blanks as protests escalate over grazing reserve land

Hunger strikers' detention sparks violence, blockade in WKA



HT Correspondent
KHERONI, Dec 22: West Karbi Anglong district witnessed a sharp escalation of tension on Monday after the forcible removal of hunger strikers from Phelangpi in the early hours, triggering massive road blockades, violent protests and an attack on the ancestral home of Tuliram Ronghang, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.

The indefinite hunger strike, led by Litsong Ronghang who has claimed no affiliation to any organisation, has been continuing for over 15 days demanding eviction of alleged illegal settlements from Village Grazing Reserve and Professional Grazing Reserve

land in the Kheroni area of West Karbi Anglong.

The situation took a dramatic turn around 2-3 am when hunger strikers were reportedly picked up from the agitation site by men dressed in black, some allegedly wearing balaclavas, with only one uniformed policeman accompanying them.

Protesters alleged that AK-47 rifles were pointed at the agitators and that some hunger strikers managed to escape during the operation.

Angered by what they described as heavy-handed police action reminiscent of extremist tactics, thousands of Karbi and other indigenous residents staged a massive road blockade at

Kheroni Bridge (Thong Nokbe). Women, elders, youths and students from nearby villages joined the protest, sitting on the road and raising slogans demanding the immediate release of the detained agitators and protection of reserved grazing lands.

The blockade soon intensified as protesters marched towards Donkamokam, the home constituency of the KAAC CEM, creating a highly volatile situation. In the ensuing unrest, an irate mob attacked and set fire to the parental home of Tuliram Ronghang at Artukekang village.

The extent of damage to the house is yet to be ascertained. Police fired blank shots in the air to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Prohibitory orders imposed in KAAC

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Dec 22: The district administrations of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong have imposed prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNS), 2023, citing apprehension of disturbance to public peace, tranquility and harmony in view of the prevailing situation.

In Karbi Anglong district, District Magistrate Nirola Phangchopi, ACS, promulgated the prohibitory order across the entire district with immediate effect.

The order prohibits obstruction, picketing, rallies, mashaal processions, public meetings, dharnas and assemblies (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Total government appointments in Assam touch 1.45 lakh

HT Bureau
DISPUR, Dec 22: The total number of government appointments made during the tenure of the present Assam government has risen to 1,45,449, with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday handing over appointment letters to 3,420 candidates in the health sector at a function held in Guwahati.

The appointment letters were issued to 1,403 technical and 595 non-technical candidates under the Directorate of Medical Education and Research, 828 technical candidates under the Directorate of Health Services, 592 technical candidates under the Directorate of Health Services (Family Welfare), and two technical candidates under the Directorate of AYUSH.

With these appointments, the cumulative figure of government jobs provided by the state government has crossed 1.45 lakh, reinforcing its stated commitment to transparent and merit-based recruitment.

Addressing the gathering, the chief minister said that after achieving the target of one lakh appointments, the government is now



steadily moving towards its next goal of providing two lakh government jobs.

He announced that fresh appointments to Grade III posts through the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination would be made on January 10 next year, while appointment letters for a large number of Grade IV posts would be issued before January 20.

He added that the process of issuing appointment letters to candi-

dates already selected for various departments would continue till February.

Sarma said that no previous Assam government had been able to provide more than 25,000-30,000 government jobs in a five-year term.

To fulfil the pre-election promise of one lakh jobs, the first Cabinet of the present government constituted a sub-committee and prioritised recruitment in the Home, Health and

Trial of all 7 accused in Zubeen Garg death case gets underway in Sessions Court

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: All the seven accused in the death of singer Zubeen Garg appeared virtually before a sessions court here, as the trial in the case got underway on Monday.

The Kamrup (Metro) District and Sessions Court, after examining the accused via video-conferencing, fixed the next date of hearing on January 3, 2026.

It will consider framing of charges on the date of the next hearing, a senior lawyer said.

The court will call for their production, either in person or virtually, to ask them whether they plead guilty or will stand for trial in the case, he said.

Garg had gone to attend the North East India Festival (NEIF) in Singapore, where he died under mysterious circumstances while swimming in the sea on September 19.

The accused - NEIF chief organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, the singer's secretary Siddhartha



Sharma, his cousin Sandipan Garg, and two personal security officers (PSOs) Nandeswar Bora and Paresw Baishya appeared from the Baksa Jail, while musician Shekharjyoti Goswami and singer Amritprava Mahanta were present online from Hailong Jail.

The celebrated singer's sister Palmee Borthakur was present in court during the hearing, and later told reporters that the family has

'Historic milestone': PM Modi on conclusion of negotiations with NZ on free trade deal

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: The conclusion of talks in just nine months between India and New Zealand for a free trade agreement (FTA) is a "historic milestone" reflecting a strong political will and shared ambition to deepen bilateral economic ties, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday.

The FTA is set to facilitate greater market access and promote investment flows including an FDI commitment of USD 20 billion over a period of 15 years.

Modi and his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon held a phone conversation following the conclusion of the negotiations for the trade deal.

"Concluded in just nine months, this historic milestone reflects a strong political will and shared ambition to deepen economic ties between our two countries," Modi said on 'X'.

This FTA will ensure enhanced market access and deeper investment flows, and bring in numerous opportunities for innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, students and youth, he said.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said Modi and Luxon jointly announced the "successful conclusion of the historic, ambitious and mutually beneficial India-New Zealand free trade agreement".

The FTA would significantly deepen bilateral economic engagement, enhance market access, promote investment flows, strengthen strategic cooperation and

open up new opportunities, it said.

"With the strong and credible foundation provided by the FTA, both leaders expressed confidence in doubling bilateral trade over the next five years as well as an investment of USD 20 billion in India from New Zealand over the next 15 years," the MEA said.

"The leaders also welcomed the progress achieved in other areas of bilateral cooperation such as sports, education, and people-to-people ties, and reaffirmed their commitment towards further strengthening of the India-New Zealand partnership," it added in a statement.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar described the conclusion of the negotiations for the FTA as a "landmark" development for India-New Zealand ties.

"The FTA places our partnership on an accelerated growth trajectory," he said, adding it will surely boost trade, investment and economic collaboration across sectors.

Apart from tariff liberalisation, the pact includes provisions to address non-tariff barriers through enhanced regulatory cooperation, and streamlined customs, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures and technical barriers to trade disciplines.

Luxon said the FTA would reduce or remove tariffs on "95 per cent of our exports to India". "It's forecast that NZ exports to India (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam on high alert in view of fresh unrest in Bangladesh: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Assam is on "high alert" in the wake of the fresh wave of unrest in neighbouring Bangladesh, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Monday.

Sarma, speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a programme here, said the state government was closely monitoring the developments in Bangladesh.

"We have seen that in Bangladesh, Hindus are being subjected to atrocities and burnt alive... those who are currently in power in Bangladesh have been talking about including northeast India in their country," the CM claimed.

It is also well known that people from Bangladesh entered Assam at different times and the state is "full of these people", he asserted.

"We have to be vigilant and must keep (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Bid to set up outposts thwarted at Assam-Nagaland border

Assam authorities halt construction at Lahorijan entry gate, high-level inspection ordered amid boundary concerns

HT Correspondent
LAHORIJAN, Dec 22: Tension prevailed along the Karbi Anglong-Nagaland border on Monday after an attempt by the Nagaland Police and civil administration to establish outposts on what Assam authorities asserted was their territory was thwarted following swift intervention.

The incident took place at the Lahorijan Fourlane Entry Tax Gate, where Nagaland officials reportedly began construction activities on both sides of the gate.

The move was immediately challenged by local authorities, leading to heated exchanges, after which the Nagaland contingent was asked to stop all work and retreat beyond the Karbi Anglong Entry Tax Gate.

In response to the development, a high-level inspection was carried out by senior officials of Karbi An-

glong Autonomous Council and the district administration.

The delegation was led by Nirola Phangchopi, District Commissioner, Karbi Anglong, and included Pushparaj Singh, Superintendent of Police, along with Tensing Rongpi, Joint Secretary of the KAAC Land and Revenue Department.

Representatives of social organisations, including Karbi Students' Association President Chunbang Desoi Teron, were also present.

Officials inspected the site and interacted with local residents amid growing concerns over territorial integrity.

During the inspection, KAAC officials asserted that the land around the entry tax gate does not fall under any "no-man's-land" category, but is covered by valid land pattas held by local residents and influential individuals.

Sources in the KAAC Land and Revenue Department said such legal ownership weakens any claim of encroachment by Nagaland authorities.

The administration also took note of reports regarding a Karbi-owned establishment allegedly located within Dimapur, examining whether it had been cited as a justification for the recent movement by Nagaland officials.

Following discussions, construction activities were temporarily halted, with both sides agreeing to pursue a diplomatic resolution.

Authorities confirmed that a formal meeting between the KAAC and the Nagaland Government is expected in the first week of the New Year.

A joint survey and verification exercise has also been planned for next month to clearly demarcate the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Bangladesh Mission in Agartala suspends visa, consular services

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Dec 22: The Bangladesh Assistant High Commission in Agartala, Tripura, has halted all visa and consular operations starting December 23, 2025, citing "unavoidable circumstances."

The decision was announced through an official notice released on Monday.

The notification, signed by S M Almas Hossain, First Secretary and Head of Mission, confirmed that all categories of visa issuance and consular services will remain suspended until further notice.

This development follows escalating tensions after protests were held outside the mission premises.

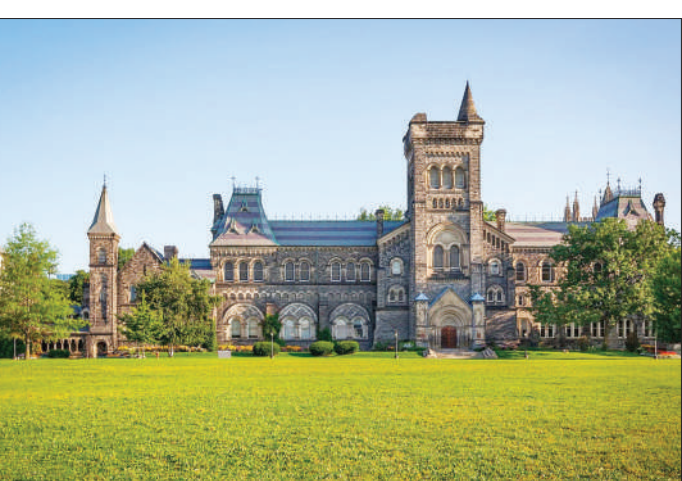
The demonstrations were led by the youth wing of the Tipra Motha Party, the Tipra Indigenous Students Federation (TISF), along with (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Canada, US, UK top destinations for higher education for Indian students: NITI Aayog report

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Canada, the USA, the United Kingdom, Australia and Germany have emerged as the top five international higher education destinations for Indian students, according to a report released by NITI Aayog on Monday.

In 2024, Canada was the top international higher education destination with a total of 4,27,000 Indian students visiting the country. This was followed by the USA with 3,37,630 Indian students, the United Kingdom with 1,85,000, Australia (1,22,202), and Germany (42,997), the report said.

It further said that India is the world's largest source country of international students with over 13.35 lakh students studying overseas in 2024. Also, the country has the largest higher education age cohort (18-23 years) in the world,



15.5 crore.

"In 2024, for every 1 international student coming to India, 28 Indian students went abroad, underscoring a significant brain drain for the country," it said.

About the inflow of foreign students in India, the report titled 'Internationalisation of Higher Education in India' presented the

data of 2021-22.

Nepal, Afghanistan, the USA, Bangladesh and the UAE were the top source countries of international students in India in 2021-22, it said.

As per the report, Canada, the US, UK and Australia host 8.5 lakh Indian students who spent ₹ 2.9 lakh crore on higher education in 2023-2024.

At the same time, Latvia has the highest 17.4 per cent of Indian students, followed by Ireland hosting 15.3 per cent, and Germany, 10.1 per cent.

The report, citing numbers recorded in 2020, said that among states, Andhra Pradesh was the top source with 35,614 students going overseas, followed by Punjab, which sent 33,412, and Maharashtra 29,079 students for higher education. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Amit Shah to inaugurate Batadroba Cultural Project on December 29

CM reviews final construction, inspects venue ahead of Union Home Minister's visit

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Dec 22: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday visited the Batadroba Cultural Project site in Nagaon district to review the final phase of construction and inspect the venue for the public meeting to be held in connection with the project's formal inauguration.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to inaugurate the Batadroba Cultural Project on December 29.

During the visit, the chief minister assessed the progress of the remaining works and examined arrangements at the public meeting venue to be addressed by the Union Home Minister.

He issued necessary directions to officials of the district adminis-

tration, Public Works Department and other concerned departments to ensure timely completion of all pending works and smooth conduct of the inauguration programme.

The Batadroba Cultural Project has been undertaken by the Government of Assam with the objective of developing the sacred Batadroba Than, the birthplace of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva, into a world-class spiritual and tourism destination.

The project is being developed at an estimated cost of around ₹217 crore on 162 bighas of land freed from encroachment as part of a focused initiative of the state government. The project aims to preserve and showcase the religious and cultural (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India seals free-trade pact with New Zealand, third agreement this year

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: India and New Zealand on Monday said they have concluded talks on a free trade deal that will give India tariff-free access to the island nation's markets, bring in USD 20 billion of investment over the next 15 years and help double bilateral trade in the next five years.

The third free-trade agreement this year, following a similar pact with the UK in July and another with Oman earlier this month, will give India more temporary employment visas, easier access for pharmaceuticals and medical devices.

While the agreement will eliminate or reduce tariffs on 95 per cent of New Zealand's exports of items ranging from wool, coal, wood, wine, to avocados and blueberries to India, New Delhi made no concessions on allowing imports of dairy, onions, sugar, spices, edible oils and rubber to protect farmers and domestic industry.

New Zealand, which committed to investing USD 20 billion in India over the next 15 years in manufacturing, infrastructure, services, innovation and job creation, will also get quota-based tariff cuts for kiwifruit and apple exports.

The deal is expected to be signed in the first half of 2026 and aims to double bilateral trade to USD 5 billion in five years.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephone conversation with his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon before the two leaders jointly announced the successful conclusion of the "historic, ambitious and mutually beneficial India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA)," according to an official statement.

"The FTA will significantly deepen bilateral economic engagement, enhance market access, promote investment flows, strengthen strategic cooperation between the two countries, and also open up new opportunities for innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, students and youths of both countries across various sectors," the MEA said.

The agreement is likely to be signed and implemented in about



7-8 months. The pact would help Indian exporters, reeling under the impact of 50 per cent tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on Indian goods, diversify shipments in the Oceania region. India has already implemented a trade pact with Australia.

"The gains are wide-ranging and significant," said New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in a statement. "India is the world's most populous country and is the fastest-growing big economy, and that creates opportunities for jobs for Kiwis, exports and growth."

Under the pact, New Zealand will get duty-free access to goods such as sheep meat, wool, coal and over 95 per cent of forestry and wood articles. Under the pact, Wellington will get duty concessions on a number of other items such as kiwi fruit, wine, some seafood, cherries, avocados, persimmons, bulk infant formula, Manuka honey and milk albums.

To protect the interests of domestic farmers and MSMEs, India will not give any duty concessions in the politically sensitive dairy sector, like milk, cream, whey, yogurt, and cheese.

The other products which will not be covered under the pact include vegetable products (onions, chana, peas, corn, almonds), sugar, artificial honey, animal, vegetable or microbial fats and oils, arms and ammunition, gems and jewellery, copper and its products, and aluminium and articles.

As regards the services sector, New Zealand will give a temporary employment entry visa pathway for Indian professionals in skilled occupations with a quota of 5,000 visas annually and a stay of up to three years.

This pathway covers Indian professions such as AYUSH prac-

tioners, yoga instructors, Indian chefs, and music teachers, as well as high-demand sectors including IT, engineering, healthcare, education, and construction, strengthening workforce mobility and services trade.

With negotiations initiated during Luxon's visit to India in March 2025, the two leaders agreed that the conclusion of the FTA in a record 9 months reflects their shared ambition and political will to further deepen ties between the countries.

The FTA will significantly deepen bilateral economic engagement, enhance market access, promote investment flows, strengthen strategic cooperation between the two countries, and also open up new opportunities for innovators, entrepreneurs, farmers, MSMEs, students and youth of both countries across various sectors.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said that the investment will give a boost to domestic manufacturing and generate jobs.

Further under the pact, New Zealand will set up a dedicated Agri-Technology Action Plan on kiwifruit, apples and honey with a view to helping Indian farmers enhance productivity and quality.

The cooperation includes the establishment of Centres of Excellence, improved planting material, capacity building for growers and technical support for orchard management, post-harvest practices, supply chain performance, and food safety.

Commitment has been extended by New Zealand on Geographical Indications (GIs), including amendment of its law to facilitate the registration of India's wines and spirits.

"Cooperation has been agreed in AYUSH, culture, fisheries, audio visual tourism, forestry, horticulture and traditional knowledge systems," the commerce ministry said.

Apart from tariff liberalisation, the pact includes provisions to address non-tariff barriers through enhanced regulatory cooperation, and streamlined customs, sanitary and phytosanitary measures and

technical barriers to trade disciplines.

The Pharma and Medical Devices sector will get a boost through faster regulatory access in New Zealand by enabling acceptance of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) and GCP (Good Clinical Practice) inspection reports from comparable regulators, including approvals by the US FDA, EU's EMA, UK's MHRA.

"This will reduce duplicate inspections, lower compliance costs, and expedite product approvals, thereby facilitating the growth of India's pharmaceutical and medical devices exports to New Zealand," the ministry said.

Goyal said that this is the seventh agreement finalised by the NDA government. It includes the UAE, Australia, the UK, EFTA bloc, Oman and Mauritius.

He said that the India-New Zealand pact is the first pact in which all the main officials from the Indian side involved in the negotiations were women. India's chief negotiator is Joint Secretary in the Ministry, Petal Dhillon.

He also said that India has so far finalised FTAs with three members of the Five Eyes (FVEY) alliance - Australia, the UK and New Zealand. The five intelligence-sharing network countries are Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the US.

India is in the advanced stage of negotiations for a bilateral trade agreement with the US and in the process of resuming talks for a trade agreement with Canada.

"The current bilateral trade with New Zealand is small but the upside potential is huge," Goyal told reporters here.

Bilateral merchandise trade stood at USD 1.3 billion in 2024-25, while total trade in goods and services reached about USD 2.4 billion in 2024, with services trade alone reaching USD 1.24 billion, led by travel, IT, and business services.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that although only five formal rounds were held for the pact, both sides remained in continuous touch to close the negotiations. (PTI)

Gold jumps to record high of ₹ 1.38 lakh/10g, silver hits new peak of ₹ 2,14,500 per kg

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Gold prices rose to a fresh lifetime high of ₹ 1,38,200 per 10 grams, gaining ₹ 1,685, in the national capital on Monday following the precious metal scaling record highs in the global markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Silver prices also raced to hit an all-time high of ₹ 2,14,500 per kilogramme (inclusive of all taxes) in the capital, up by ₹ 10,400 per kg. "Bullish momentum extended in bullion, with gold and silver surging to another fresh record high on Monday," Saamil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the international markets, spot gold increased by USD 80.85, or 1.86 per cent, to hit a record of USD 4,420.35 per ounce.

"Investor interest in silver and gold has grown considerably as interest rates are going down in the US, fis-

cal concerns are growing, and the American economy is becoming more uncertain," Gandhi said.

He added that this has led to a shift towards the safe-haven asset. In addition, the demand for silver has also increased, due to the escalating geopolitical tensions. Spot silver appreciated by USD 2.31, or 3.44 per cent, to hit a lifetime high of USD 69.45 per ounce in the overseas markets.

"Silver prices have reached a record high, reflecting strong industrial demand along with rising investment demand," Satish Dondapati, Fund Manager at Kotak Mutual Fund, said. Expressing similar views, Renisha Chainani, Head - Research at Augmont, said, "Mining disruptions and limited current silver inventories are causing severe supply shortfalls, driving prices higher." (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Hunger strikers' detention

bring the situation under control as tension ran high in and around Kheroni, amid fears of ethnic fallout and rumours of possible attacks on non-Karbi villages.

Around 1,000 police personnel were deployed across sensitive areas, while security was significantly tightened around the KAAC CEM's bungalow in Diphu following the arson incident.

An Executive Magistrate from the DC office, West Karbi Anglong district, Hamren, visited the blockade site and attempted to engage with the protesters.

However, demonstrators insisted on direct talks with the KAAC Chief Executive Member. Responding to the developments, CEM Tuliram Ronghang told the media that the issue is currently sub-judice. "There is a PIL case going on. While the matter is sub-judice, I cannot do anything. If I do anything, it will be contempt of court and I will be thrown in jail," he said.

The situation remains tense and fluid, with authorities closely monitoring developments as more supporters continue to join the agitation demanding eviction from protected grazing reserve lands.

Prohibitory orders imposed

of five or more persons without prior permission.

Carrying of firearms and explosive substances, use of firecrackers in public places, inflammatory or communal speeches, banners, posters, wall writings and use of loudspeakers without permission have also been banned. Movement of individuals, groups and private vehicles has been restricted during night hours from 5 pm to 6 am. However, the order exempts police, paramilitary and military personnel, officials engaged in essential services, persons with medical emergencies, and allows examinations and functioning of courts and offices to continue as usual. The order was issued ex-parte and will remain in force until further orders, with violations attracting action under relevant provisions of law.

Similarly, in West Karbi Anglong district, District Magistrate Saranga Pani Sharma, ACS, imposed a prohibitory order within the jurisdiction of all police stations in the district.

The order bans all processions, rallies, public marches, demonstrations and assemblies of five or more persons, including picketing or holding meetings at public places.

It also imposes a complete ban on making or circulating provocative statements, speeches or communications, whether verbal, written, printed or through electronic or social media, that may disturb public peace or promote enmity. The order has been passed ex-parte due to urgency and will remain effective until withdrawn or modified, with violations inviting punitive action under Section 223 of BNSS, 2023.

Both district administrations have directed law enforcement agencies and concerned authorities to ensure strict enforcement of the prohibitory measures to prevent any breach of peace and maintain public order.

Total government appointments

project at Namrup and the proposed thermal power project at Chapar in Dhubri district, stating that these initiatives together would create employment for thousands of youths.

Alongside government jobs, the Chief Minister said the state has laid strong emphasis on self-employment through schemes such as Mukhyamantr Atmanirbhar Assam, which have generated hope among young people.

He said that through clean recruitment practices, Assam has earned recognition across the country and the government has succeeded in building trust among the younger generation.

Addressing the newly appointed health department employees, Sarma said their responsibility is greater than that of many other government employees, as their work is directly linked to human lives.

He urged them to ensure that government hospitals provide accessible and dignified healthcare to the poor and underprivileged. Referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, he said the dedication of doctors and healthcare workers had strengthened public trust in government hospitals.

The chief minister also expressed concern over the rising number of children affected by cerebral palsy in the state, stressing the need for vigilance and high standards of care during childbirth to reduce preventable cases.

He said recruitment is not the final objective of the government, but a means to bring positive change in people's lives, and appealed to the newly appointed employees to serve patients with compassion and a sense of duty.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Ashok Singhal, Guwahati Lok Sabha MP Bijuli Kalita Medhi and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Trial of all 7 accused

culpable homicide not amounting to murder, while the two PSOs were charged with criminal conspiracy and criminal breach of trust by misappropriating funds or property entrusted to them.

The first hearing in the case, after the SIT submitted the chargesheet, took place on December 16 at the CJM court here. The CJM, thereafter, committed the case to the sessions court for the trial to begin.

The accused were present virtually during the December 16 hearing, too, as the police had cited law and order issues if they were produced physically.

The hard copies of the chargesheet were handed over to the accused by the jail authorities before the first hearing, and their family members were provided a pen drive each with copies of the document.

Asked about the charges against the accused, Borthakur said that they have not received the certified copy of the chargesheet yet. Advocate Dhrubajyoti Das was appointed by the District Legal Services Authority to represent the accused, though an independent lawyer appeared on behalf of Amritprava during Monday's hearing. (PTI)

Bid to set up outposts

boundary. Officials said any final decision on the placement of outposts would be taken only after the verification report is completed. Meanwhile, local social organisations have remained on alert, urging the KAAC to ensure that no portion of Karbi Anglong land is conceded during the forthcoming negotiations.

Assam on high alert

a sharp eye on the developments in that country," Sarma said. Sarma had claimed last week that "Bangladeshi elements" have been repeatedly saying that northeast India should be merged with the neighbouring country, which is "irresponsible and dangerous," and India will not remain silent on this.

"India is a very big country, a nuclear nation and the fourth largest economy of the world. How can Bangladesh even think about it?" the chief minister had said.

Bangladesh has witnessed a fresh wave of unrest following the death of student leader Sharif Osman Hadi. He was a prominent face in the anti-government protests that forced the collapse of the Sheikh Hasina government. Meanwhile, prohibitory orders are in force along the India-Bangladesh border in Assam's Cachar district to prevent illegal movement and potential law and order threats, officials said. (PTI)

'Historic milestone': PM

could increase USD 1.1B to USD 1.3B per year over the coming two decades. Boosting trade means more Kiwi jobs, higher wages and more opportunities for hard working New Zealanders," he said.

"The agreement builds on the strong friendship between our two countries. India is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, and this gives Kiwi businesses access to 1.4 billion Indian consumers," he said.

The conclusion of the negotiations for the trade deal comes days after India inked a free trade pact with Oman. (PTI)

Amit Shah to

legacy of Sankardeva while providing modern amenities for visitors. Envisioned as a comprehensive spiritual and cultural complex, it features the world's tallest Guru Asana, guest houses reflecting Satriya cultural motifs, an art centre inspired by traditional cymbals, a research centre designed in the form of a khol, a boat-shaped skill development centre and a theatre modelled after a traditional japi, among other facilities.

The components have been designed to blend traditional aesthetics with contemporary infrastructure. Water Resources minister Pijush Hazarika, MLAs Rupak Sharma, Jitu Goswami, Ramakanta Deuri and Shashikanta Das, Satriadhikar of Narowa Satra and president of the Batadroba Than Management Committee Amlanjyoti Dev Goswami, district commissioner Debashish Sarma, senior district officials, heads of departments and local residents were present during the chief minister's visit, an official release stated.

Bangladesh Mission in

several right-wing groups. Protesters expressed anger over alleged violence against the Hindu community in Bangladesh and criticized recent remarks made by leaders of Bangladesh's National Citizen Party.

During the protest, demonstrators raised slogans and urged Bangladesh authorities to take decisive steps to protect minority communities. In response to the situation, security arrangements around the Assistant High Commission were strengthened to prevent any disruption and ensure public order.

Canada, US, UK

It noted a surge in outward remittances from ₹ 975 crore to ₹ 29,000 crore during 2014-24 under the RBI's Liberalised Remittance Scheme for Indian students studying abroad. (PTI)

NF Homes unveils 'Level II' Premium Home Décor showroom

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: NF Homes on Monday launched Level II, a new flagship showroom dedicated to premium home furnishings and décor, at the Red Cross Building on Kedar Road here.

Spread across 6,500 sq ft, the showroom positions itself as a complete lifestyle destination, bringing together curated collections of furniture, outdoor furniture, lighting, luxury gifting, premium crockery and bespoke interior solutions under one roof.

The showroom was inaugurated by Gita Devi Jalan, Atmaram Jalan, Krishna Kumar Jalan, Nirmal Jalan and Natwar Jalan in the presence of other dignitaries, marking a significant milestone in the brand's expansion.

Google Pay, Axis Bank launch FLEX UPI-powered credit card

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Google Pay and Axis Bank on Monday announced the launch of the Google Pay Flex Axis Bank Credit Card, a UPI-powered co-branded credit card aimed at simplifying and enhancing the credit experience for users across India.

Built on the RuPay network, the card seeks to make credit as seamless and widely usable as everyday UPI payments.

It is the first offering under Flex by Google Pay, marking Google's entry into the co-branded credit card segment in India, while combining Google Pay's digital experience with Axis Bank's banking capabilities.

With Flex by Google Pay, users can apply for and receive the card within minutes through the Google Pay app and use it across millions of online and offline merchants.

The card allows users to earn and redeem reward points instantly on transactions, while also offering flexible repayment options, including the ability to convert credit card bills into EMIs directly through the app.

Arnika Dixit, President and



Head - Cards, Payments and Wealth Management at Axis Bank, said the partnership aims to redefine digital payments by aligning credit offerings with India's growing preference for UPI-based transactions.

She said the collaboration brings together Axis Bank's financial expertise and Google Pay's technology to deliver instant rewards, flexible repayment options and a simplified credit experience.

Sharath Bulusu, Senior Director - Product Management at

Google Pay, said the launch reflects Google Pay's objective of making financial products simple and accessible.

He added that the company plans to announce additional issuer partnerships soon and that the new card is designed to give users greater confidence and control over everyday spending.

The launch underscores the growing convergence of UPI and credit products in India's digital payments ecosystem, aimed at expanding access, convenience and flexibility for consumers.

Indian Surgical Robot SSi Mantra seeks US FDA Clearance

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 22: India's homegrown surgical robotics company SS Innovations International has taken a major step onto the global regulatory stage with the filing of a 510(k) premarket notification with the US

Food and Drug Administration for its next-generation SSi Mantra surgical robotic system.

The submission, completed on December 5, 2025, covers multiple high-demand surgical specialties, including general surgery, urology, colorectal surgery, gynaecology and cardiac procedures.

The move marks one of the most significant regulatory milestones achieved so far by an Indian-developed surgical robotic platform in a sector traditionally dominated by global players.

Dr Sudhir Srivastava, Founder, Chairman and CEO of SS Innovations, described the filing as a defining moment for both the company and India's medical technology ecosystem.

He said the SSi Mantra has been designed to be affordable, accessible and technologically differentiated, with the potential to benefit hospitals, particularly those serving underserved communities, by offering a cost-effective, world-class alternative.

After pre-submission meetings and detailed consultations with the FDA, the company chose the 510(k) pathway instead of the De Novo route, aiming to leverage a potentially faster and more efficient approval process.

The FDA's target review timeline for 510(k) applications is 90 days, although the overall duration may vary. SS Innovations is also progressing towards European Union CE mark-

ing, which is expected in the first half of 2026.

As of November 30, 2025, the SSi Mantra platform has recorded 138 installations across eight countries and is in active use at 137 hospitals.

More than 7,300 surgical procedures have been performed using the system, including 88 telesurgeries and 390 cardiac surgeries, one of the most technically complex domains in robotic surgery.

Industry observers say the growing adoption of the SSi Mantra reflects increasing global confidence in India's indigenous med-tech capabilities and represents a significant inflection point for the country's medical devices and robotics sector.

CONSTRUCTION OF STAFF QUARTERS

E-Tender Notice No. CON/2025/Dec/02 Dated: 08-12-2025. Open tender through e-Tendering system is invited from experienced and reputed contractor (s)/firm (s) for the following works. **Tender No. CE/CONV/BLD/2025/05. Name of work:** Construction of Staff Quarters (Type-II 128 units, Type-III 50 units, Type -IV 18 units), Pump house, OHT, Deep tubewell with IRP, Drain, Road, other ancillary works with all necessary Electrification works in connection with Lumding-Furkating doubling project under Dy.CE/CON/Lumding, Dimapur and Mariani Jn. **Approx. Value:** ₹ 88,77,39,268.50/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 50,88,700/-. **Date & Time of closing of tender:** At 14.30 hrs. & opening at 15.30 hrs. on 14-01-2026. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available in website www.ireps.gov.in

Chief Engineer/Con/Lumding

Project/Maligaon

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
(Construction Organisation)
Serving Customers With A Smile

E-AUCTION FOR RAPIDO PICK UP POINTS

E-auction for Rapido pick up points over Tinsukia Division. Details are as under; **Auction Catalogue No.:** TSK-RAPID-02. **Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots) :** 11:00 hrs. on 02-01-2026; **Auction Close Date & Time :** 11:30 hrs. on 02-01-2026; **Rate Unit:** Annual Licensing Fee; **Trips/Days:** 1096.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	MSS-TSK-DBRG JTNN MXN-STGen-23-25-1 (Misc-Static-Services - Static General)	Rapido pick up points at Dibrugarh, Jorhat Town & Mariani Jn. railway stations under NFR policy.

The press notification has already been uploaded in the IREPS website on 17-12-2025 through e-auction portal www.ireps.gov.in

Divisional Commercial Manager (IC), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Spiritual values and academic excellence must go hand in hand, says Governor

Governor attends first convocation of Krishnaguru Adhyatmic Viswavidyalay

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 22: Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Monday attended the first convocation ceremony of Krishnaguru Adhyatmic Viswavidyalay at Nasatra in Barpeta district, where he conferred degrees on graduating students in the presence of Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal.

Addressing the students, the Governor paid reverential salutations to Krishnaguru Prabhu and expressed happiness at being part of what he described as a sacred and historic occasion.

He recalled that Krishnaguru Prabhu established the Krishnaguru Sevashram on the same land as a model of selfless service to humanity, founded on the ideals of Krishnaguru Ek-Naam Dharma rooted in monotheistic Sanatan Dharma.

Acharya said the institutions run by the Sevashram are unique for seamlessly integrating academic learning with spiritual education.

He noted that Krishnaguru Adhyatmic Viswavidyalay imparts value-based education aimed at producing responsible, ethical and socially conscious citizens.

Calling convocation an unforgettable milestone in a student's life,



the Governor said it celebrates years of dedication and perseverance by both students and teachers. He congratulated the graduating students and also felicitated eminent Indian classical dance maestro Jatin Goswami, who was conferred an honorary degree.

Reflecting on the life and legacy of Krishnaguru Prabhu, the Governor said every initiative of the Sevashram—from its establishment in 1974 with a vision of world peace to the creation of multiple educational institutions—was inspired by human welfare, spiritual awakening and global harmony.

He remarked that material progress without spiritual consciousness remains incomplete and

noting that Acharya Shilabhadra of Assam served as a renowned teacher at Nalanda.

He described spirituality as the essence of Indian culture, stating that education must transcend livelihood and become a guiding philosophy of life. Citing the maxim "Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye", he said true knowledge liberates, and expressed satisfaction that Krishnaguru Adhyatmic Viswavidyalay embodies this ideal by blending education with spirituality and service.

Referring to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's remarks during Pariksha Pe Charcha held recently in Guwahati, the Governor said education is a powerful instrument of nation-building and human upliftment.

He added that Assam is progressing steadily in sectors such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, culture and youth empowerment, and that spiritually grounded and educated youth will be key to the state's future.

The convocation ceremony was attended by Vice Chancellor Dr Mohan Chandra Kalita, Chairperson of Krishnaguru Foundation Trust Kuntala Patowary Goswami, members of the Academic Council, faculty members and other dignitaries.

UAMKP condemns killing of hindu youth in Bangladesh

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Dec 22: The killing of a Hindu youth, Dipu Chandra Das, in Bangladesh has drawn condemnation in Sivasagar, with several organisations expressing concern over the incident and its wider implications.

Members of the Ujoni Asom Muslim Kalyani Parishad (UAMKP), led by president M I Bora, held a protest in the district on Monday to denounce the killing.

During the protest, participants expressed strong opposition to the incident and criticised the interim administration in Bangladesh led by Mohammad Yunus, alleging failure to protect minorities.

The incident was also condemned by the Sivasagar district committee of the All Assam United Brahmin Council, the Sivasagar Press Club and the Sivasagar Mu-



nicipality Taxpayers' Association.

Representatives of these bodies described the killing as brutal and urged the Government of India to take appropriate diplomatic and other measures to address concerns over the safety of minorities in

Bangladesh.

Leaders of the organisations said such incidents have caused anxiety among people in the region and called for steps to ensure peace, communal harmony and protection of vulnerable communities.

Snatcher caught red-handed in Jorhat

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Dec 22: A man identified as Sagar Kumar of Purnia district in Bihar was caught red-handed on Monday by a Jorhat rider patrol team while allegedly attempting to snatch a bag from a woman in Jorhat.

Police sources said items including a screwdriver, a master key commonly used for stealing motorcy-

cles, and a sharp, pointed screw buckle were recovered from his possession.

Snatching incidents have seen a rise in Jorhat in recent weeks.

A mobile phone was reportedly snatched from a resident recently, while an elderly woman had her chain forcibly removed in the Choldhora area around 5 pm about ten days ago, sources added.

Karbi Anglong women writers' biennial session concludes

HT Correspondent
HOWRAGHAT, Dec 22: The fourth biennial session of the Karbi Anglong District Lekhika Samaroh Samiti (Women Writers' Association) concluded successfully on Sunday at Rangina Bhavan in Diphu, bringing together women writers, literary enthusiasts and cultural figures from across the district for a day-long programme.

The session began with the ceremonial hoisting of the organisational flag by Sabitri Gogoi, President of the Karbi Anglong District Lekhika Samaroh Samiti, followed by Smriti Tarpan led by Dipali Amphi, President of the Diphu Lekhika Samaroh Samiti, in memory of departed literary personalities.

As part of the inaugural rituals, ceremonial lamps were lit before the portraits of Padma Shri Dr Sheela Borthakur and noted artiste Zubeen Garg by Hiranmayi Kakati, Advisor of the Bokajan Lekhika Samaroh Samiti, and Anupama Saikia, Vice-President of the committee. The open session commenced at 11 am under the chairmanship of Sabitri Gogoi.

Former All Assam Lekhika Samaroh Samiti president Swarna Baruah Gogoi attended as chief guest and spoke on the evolving role of women in literature. Writer and artiste Hridayananda Sarma was present as special guest, while the souvenir of the session was formally released by senior journalist and writer Pabitra Bora.

During the programme, the Samiti felicitated veteran contributors Bimala Patar, Bina Borbora, Rina Dutta and Gitanjali Das Kro in recognition of their long-standing contributions to the literary field.

The results of various literary competitions held as part of the biennial session were also announced.

Dr Maphie Rojje Boro receives Yuva Lekhak Sanman

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Dec 22: Young writer Maphie Rojje Boro of Kokrajhar has been selected for the Yuva Lekhak Sanman announced by the Assam government's Education Department, bringing a wave of joy among the literary community in the district.

According to official information, a total of 818 young writers from across Assam have been honoured with the award this year. From Kokrajhar district, Dr Boro received the recognition for her poetry collection Ang Arau O Ti Rum (Me and the OT Room). She is currently serving as an employee in the Irrigation Department, Kokrajhar.

Speaking to the media, Dr Boro expressed happiness at receiving the honour and thanked the Assam government and the Education Minister. She said her inspiration came from the Bodo Women Writers' Association, as well as from her parents and husband.

Despite balancing official responsibilities and household duties, she said she continues to write in her free time and added that the award would serve as a strong motivation for young writers.

Dr Boro informed that two poetry collections have been published so far, with Ang Arau O Ti Rum being her second book.

She also noted that several other writers from Kokrajhar district were selected for the same honour, bringing the total number of awardees from the district to 16.

Other recipients from Kokrajhar include Alpina Mosahary, Andolan Brahma, Bibeka Narzary, Buddhadeb Narzary, Debajyoti Basumatary, Dhananjay Narzary, Dr Gobinda Baishya, Guneswar Awary, Geneva Musahary, Joysagar Murmu, Latach P. Narzary, Nijara Musahary, Ratul Deka, Shiva Ram Narzary and Ukrangoura Narzary.

Meanwhile, local residents felicitated Dr Boro with an Aarona, and celebratory scenes were witnessed at her residence following the announcement.

16 Bodo books released

Bodo Women Writers' Association meeting held in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Dec 22: A meeting of the Bodo Women Writers' Association along with a book release programme was held on Monday at Bodoland University, showcasing works by both new and senior women writers in the Bodo language.

The programme, organised at the auditorium of the Bodo Department of the university, was presided over by Anjali Basumatary, President of the Bodo Women Writers' Association and a Sahitya Akademi Award recipient. The event was attended as chief guest by Dr Surath Narzary, President of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, while noted litterateur and Sahitya Akademi Award winner Janil Kumar Brahma was present as a distinguished guest.

During the programme, a total of 16 books published in 2025 were formally released on the same day. The publications included poetry and short story collections authored by women writers representing different generations of Bodo literature.

Sonitpur hosts 'Pranamo Matribhasa' meet to promote mother-tongue education

Mother tongue is never a barrier to acquiring knowledge, says Abhijit Sarma Baruah



HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Dec 22: Stressing the central role of the mother tongue in the academic and intellectual development of students, speakers at a Mother Tongue Awareness Meeting held in Tezpur on Sunday asserted that the Assamese language is not facing any external threat, but rather suffers from neglect rooted in misplaced perceptions.

The meeting, titled Pranamo Matribhasa, was organised at Chandranath Sarma Smriti Bhawan, Pithakhowa, under the initiative of Pranamo Matribhasa with the support of the Sonitpur District Jatiya Vidyalaya Coordination Committee.

Speakers highlighted the importance of using the mother tongue—particularly Assamese and other indigenous languages of the state—in education and daily life, while opposing the sense of inferiority associated with the use of As-

samese among sections of society.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Narayan Sarma, Secretary of Asom Jatiya Vidyalaya, described the mother tongue as a scientifically grounded medium of education and said Assamese does not face any inherent crisis. He observed that since the early 1990s, many parents shifted children from Assamese-medium to English-medium schools under the misconception that English alone ensures success.

He said Asom Jatiya Vidyalaya was established in 1994 to uphold the relevance of mother-tongue education and added that institutions such as Asom Jatiya Vidyalaya, Sankardev Shishu Niketan and government Assamese-medium schools require renewed societal support.

He stressed that mother-tongue education is backed by science, not merely emotion or nationalism.

MLA Basanta Das launches three programmes at Outala HS School

HT Correspondent
MANGALDAI, Dec 22: Mangaldai MLA Basanta Das on Monday implemented three key programmes at Outala Higher Secondary School, including the inauguration of a boundary wall, the laying of a foundation stone for another boundary wall and the distribution of free bicycles to Class IX students under a state government scheme.

The MLA inaugurated a newly constructed boundary wall on one side of the school, built using MLA funds, and laid the foundation stone for an additional boundary wall on the eastern side of the cam-

pus. The construction of the boundary wall has been prioritised as the school also functions as an examination centre for the HSLC and Higher Secondary final examinations.

He also inaugurated the distribution of free bicycles provided by the Assam Government to Class IX students, aimed at supporting regular attendance and easing access to education.

Addressing students at a meeting held on the occasion, Basanta Das said that the government is fully discharging the role of a guardian for students across the state.

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Dec 22: A five-day district-level entrepreneurs' conclave, the Swadeshi Mela, began in Kokrajhar on Monday with a focus on promoting local enterprise and self-reliance.

The fair is being organised by the Assam Small Industries Development Corporation Limited (ASIDC) in collaboration with the District Industries and Commerce Centre.

The Swadeshi Mela, being held at the premises of the Kokrajhar District Industries and Commerce Centre, was inaugurated by BTC Executive Member for Industries and Commerce Mun Mun Brahma. Addressing the gathering, Brahma lauded the participation of young entrepreneurs who have put their home-made products on display and praised the talent and skills of the entrepreneurial youth of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) area.

KKHSOU observes World Meditation Day at Rani

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 22: The Discipline of Yoga of Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) observed World Meditation Day recently at the Guru Prasad Das School of Interdisciplinary and Vocational Studies (GPSIVS), Rani, with the objective of promoting awareness about the role of yoga and meditation in physical, mental and emotional well-being.

The programme began at 11 am with an inaugural prayer led by Dr Hridayananda Tamuli Phukan, Assistant Professor, Discipline of Yoga, KKHSOU, setting a calm and reflective tone.

This was followed by a welcome address and felicitation of invited guests by Dhruva Jyoti Nath, Assistant Professor, Discipline of Yoga, after which the dignitaries ceremonially lit the lamp.

Delivering the opening address, Dr Gobinda Deka, Director (i/c), GPSIVS, KKHSOU, highlighted the relevance of World Meditation Day and underlined the importance of meditation in managing stress, improving concentration and achieving inner balance in contemporary life.

He welcomed the guests and participants and acknowledged the presence of Dharendra Nath Choudhury, Dipen Kumar Kakati and Manjira Deka.

Veteran Assamese actress Ranjana Sarmah Bordoloi passes away



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Dec 22: Veteran Assamese actress Ranjana Sarmah Bordoloi, a prominent figure of Assamese cinema during the 1960s and 1970s, passed away on Sunday evening at JMM Hospital here. She was 80.

Bordoloi, regarded as one of the most glamorous and talented actresses of her era, starred in several landmark Assamese films including Dr Bezbaruah, Kokadeuta Nati aru Hati, Maniram Dewan, Morom Trishna, Loti-Ghoti, Pratihdhwani, Ratanlal and Sonmai.

At a time when few Assamese women ventured into acting, she carved a lasting place for herself on the silver screen through her talent and screen presence.

Apart from acting, Bordoloi was an accomplished dancer, proficient in Bharatanatyam and other classical forms, which further enriched her contribution to Assam's cultural life.

She also performed in films directed by legendary cultural icon Bhupen Hazarika and shared a close professional association with him.

She was a founding member of the renowned theatre group Mancharupa, established in 1957 by Bhupen Hazarika and noted artist Hasani Sharif Ahmed, and also lent her voice to radio plays broadcast by All India Radio.

In recognition of her contribution to Assamese art and culture, Ranjana Sarmah Bordoloi was honoured with the state government's prestigious Bishnu Rabha Award and was an artist pensioner.

Her passing marks the end of a significant chapter in the history of Assamese cinema and theatre, and she is widely remembered for her pioneering role and enduring legacy in the cultural landscape of the state.

Five-day Swadeshi Mela begins in Kokrajhar



She expressed confidence that the creativity and courage of young entrepreneurs would not only help them become self-reliant but also play a key role in strengthening the economic foundation of BTC. Brahma said that after taking charge of the

Industries and Commerce Department, her priority is to create better market opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

Referring to future initiatives, she said the Hagraha Mohilary-led BTC Council government is planning to introduce special

schemes for entrepreneurs on the lines of those implemented by the Assam government.

She added that ₹100 crore has already been earmarked by BTC for the promotion of young entrepreneurs, with a proposal to provide financial assistance of ₹2 lakh to each entrepreneur for self-employment.

The Swadeshi Mela features 20 stalls set up by self-help groups and partner organisations, showcasing a range of locally produced goods.

The inaugural programme was attended by General Manager of Kokrajhar District Industries and Commerce Centre Rohiteswar Narzary, BTC Industries and Commerce Department Joint Secretary Jyotimoy Daimary, Assistant Director of District Industries Rakesh Kashyap, Detsung Khugur Basumatary, ASIDC Deputy Director Akhil Narayan Bhowmik, social worker Rahul Narzary and other dignitaries.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If you're alive, there's a purpose for your life.
—Rick Warren

Trump's tariff hike hits India's exports

India's export-led growth strategy is facing its most severe test in years as sweeping U.S. tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump ripple through the country's manufacturing heartland, triggering order cancellations, factory slowdowns and mounting job losses. Nowhere is the pain more visible than in Tamil Nadu, one of India's richest and most industrialized states, whose chief minister has warned Prime Minister Narendra Modi of "irreparable damage" to the regional economy unless Washington and New Delhi strike a trade deal soon. In a letter sent this week, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said the state is suffering daily revenue losses of nearly ₹600 million (\$6.7 million) as export orders dry up across key industrial districts. Tiruppur—often described as India's knitwear capital—has seen confirmed export orders worth ₹150 billion wiped out since August, he said, forcing manufacturers to slash production by as much as 30%. The disruption follows Trump's decision to impose tariffs of up to 50% on a wide range of Indian goods, among the steepest levies faced by any major U.S. trading partner. The tariffs, announced in August as part of Trump's broader push to rebalance U.S. trade and protect domestic manufacturing, have hit India's labour-intensive export sectors particularly hard, including textiles, leather goods, gems and jewellery, footwear and processed foods.

For India, the stakes are high. The U.S. is its single largest export destination, accounting for roughly one-fifth of total outbound shipments. The tariffs have not only made Indian goods sharply less competitive in American markets but have also undermined Prime Minister Modi's flagship "Make in India" initiative, which seeks to turn the country into a global manufacturing alternative to China. Despite months of negotiations and repeated assurances from Indian officials that a bilateral trade agreement is imminent, talks have stalled. The tariffs remain in place, leaving exporters uncertain whether to wait, relocate production, or abandon the U.S. market altogether. Tamil Nadu has borne some of the worst fallout. The southern state contributes nearly 28% of India's textile exports and employs an estimated 7.5 million workers across spinning, knitting, dyeing and garment-making units.

According to industry estimates, India's merchandise exports to the U.S. have fallen by double digits since the tariffs took effect, translating into billions of dollars in lost earnings. The federal government has rolled out temporary relief measures, including interest subsidies and expanded credit guarantees for exporters, but business leaders say these steps only cushion the blow rather than solve the underlying problem. For now, container traffic at ports like Chennai tells the story: fewer outbound shipments, longer idle times and growing anxiety across factory floors. Whether New Delhi can secure a breakthrough with Washington may determine not only the fate of millions of jobs, but the credibility of India's ambition to emerge as a manufacturing powerhouse in an increasingly protectionist world.

Living on the enchanted island: A spellbinding fantasy tale for the children

By: Himnavana Rajbongshi

The importance of fantasy literature in the mental, intellectual, and creative development of children and adolescents is immeasurable. Fantasy sharpens a child's imagination, and imagination, in turn, gives thought the freedom of an open sky. Through reading such stories, children learn to envision new characters, unfamiliar situations, and entirely new worlds. Fantasy narratives nurture a love for reading and significantly enhance linguistic skills. They also play a vital role in shaping moral values, courage, empathy, and self-confidence. By easing mental stress and infusing joy and hope, fantasy stories become an essential companion in a child's emotional world. It is therefore heartening to note that Assamese children's fantasy literature has recently been enriched by the addition of a new book.

The Assamese book is titled 'Jadukori Dwipatut Zeeu.' Recently published, in Assamese, this fantasy novel has been written especially for children and adolescents. Published by Rekha Prakashan, 'Jadukori Dwipatut Zeeu' is authored by novelist Neelam Akash Kashyap. This fantasy novel unfolds a delightful, magical tale crafted with young readers in mind. The story revolves around a little girl named Zeeu, who, while travelling with her parents, accidentally boards a self-moving boat and, by a twist of fate, finds herself all alone on a mysterious enchanted

island. The novel vividly narrates the many adventurous and thrilling experiences Zeeu encounters on this magical island. With dreamlike storytelling woven into every page, the book invites children and adolescents into a captivating world of imagination. Alongside this imaginative journey, 'Jadukori Dwipatut Zeeu' subtly incorporates many life lessons that are essential for young minds. Beyond fantasy cartoon characters like Doraemon and Shinchan, books such as Harry Potter have gained immense popularity among children and adolescents. Yet, Assamese literature still shows a noticeable scarcity of fantasy stories written specifically for young readers—rare as a lone chilli in a field of greens. Stories with the power to truly stir young hearts and minds, like global fantasy classics, remain few in number. At such a time, one can reasonably hope that 'Jadukori Dwipatut Zeeu' will help bridge this gap. This is because the novel is infused with magic on every single page. Reading it makes one realise that a sequel is likely to follow. Undoubtedly 'Jadukori Dwipatut Zeeu' is a must-read for children and adolescents.

Published by Rekha Prakashan, the book is also affordably priced at just sixty rupees. From the pen of popular novelist Neelam Akash Kashyap—following 'Tumi Kiya Nowariba' and 'Zeeu, Kuhu Aru Koto Je Mozar Kahini!'—comes this engaging fantasy novel for young readers, 'Jadukori Dwipatut Zeeu.'

POST BAG

Lack of coaching facilities for competitive examinations in upper Assam

Sir,

Through the columns of your esteemed daily, "The Hills Daily," I wish to highlight a pressing concern for the student community of Upper Assam—the stark lack of adequate coaching facilities for competitive examinations.

While Upper Assam is home to some of the state's most prestigious academic institutions, there is a significant void when it comes to specialized preparation for national-level exams like UPSC, APSC, NEET, and JEE. Currently, thousands of bright students from districts like Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, and Tinsukia are forced to migrate to Guwahati or cities like Delhi and Kota. This not only results in a massive "brain drain" from our region but also places an immense financial and emotional burden on families who struggle to afford the high cost of living in distant cities.

Most premium coaching centers and government-sponsored guidance programs are concentrated in the capital, leaving the hills and Upper Assam peripheral.

There is a critical need for modern, 24/7 dig-

ital libraries and study hubs where students can access high-speed internet and updated study materials. Another very important issue faced by the students is many meritorious students from rural and tea-garden backgrounds remain excluded from the competitive race due to the lack of affordable, local guidance.

I through your prestigious daily urge the state government and the North Eastern Council (NEC) to intervene by establishing Regional Centres of Excellence in Upper Assam. Partnering with reputed educators to provide satellite classes or establishing fully-funded coaching centers would ensure that talent, regardless of geography or economic status, has a fair chance to succeed.

The youth of the hills and the plains of Upper Assam are resilient and capable. They deserve an environment that supports their aspirations without forcing them to leave their homes.

Yours sincerely,
Anabil Gowswami
1st semester, Department of Mass Communication
Guwahati University

The political awareness of the common people and the future of democracy

The concept of democracy is not confined merely to forming a government or the process of casting votes every five years; rather, it is a living system that depends on the overall thinking, consciousness, and sense of responsibility of the citizens of a country. In a nation where the level of political awareness among the common people is high, the foundation of democracy is extremely strong and its future bright. However, in a society where the general public makes political decisions under the influence of emotion, excitement, or temporary allurements, there democracy gradually risks turning into a farce. The primary reason behind the rapid decline in democratic values currently witnessed across the world is the lack of genuine political education and far-sighted thinking among citizens. Political awareness does not mean merely keeping track of political parties or listening to leaders' speeches; it implies the ability to subtly analyse how the state's policies, economy, social system, and international relations affect the daily life of an ordinary person. Without this ability, a citizen becomes merely a passive participant in the governing machinery, incapable of playing any constructive role in determining the country's future. Therefore, to secure the future of democracy, every citizen must not only be a voter but also a vigilant sentinel who keeps a sharp eye on every step of the governing system.

A prevalent misconception in society is that politics is only for politicians or party workers, and the task of ordinary people is limited to going to the polling station on election day and voting for their preferred candidate. This narrow notion poses a grave danger to democracy. In reality, politics is the driving force that controls every aspect of our lives. The nature of our education system, the availability of medicines in hospitals, the prices of goods in the market, and even what we can eat or wear—all these matters depend directly or indirectly on political decisions. When the common people fail to deeply comprehend this, they distance themselves from politics or accept it merely as entertainment. This indifference provides the ruling class with the licence to govern according to their whims. Due to lack of awareness, people forget to raise their voices against anti-public policies of the government and gradually begin to lose their rights. Although it is said in democracy that the people are the sovereign, in practice, the people become powerful only when they are armed with reason and facts. Any political decision taken under the sway of emotion pushes the country toward peril, because emotion is transient while its consequences are far-reaching.

In the present era, the explosion of infor-

mation technology and the widespread reach of social media have created a new challenge in the realm of political awareness among the public. While access to information has become easier on one hand, distinguishing between truth and falsehood has become difficult on the other. Various political forces and vested interests are engaged in a well-planned conspiracy to brainwash the public using social media. Through fake news, half-truths, and messages spreading hatred, false notions are implanted in people's minds. When a citizen falls into this trap of propaganda, their judgement vanishes, and they turn into blind supporters or blind opponents. In such a situation, there is no place for reason; only blind faith and rage remain. This is a terrifying disease for democracy, because democracy thrives on argument, debate, and the exchange of differing opinions. When a society begins to be guided solely by a specific ideology or a fabricated narrative, the soul of democracy dies there. Therefore, in today's age, true political awareness means the ability to verify the authenticity of information and the capacity to understand the real intent behind any propaganda.

Political parties often capitalise on the lack of awareness among the public to devise strategies for winning elections. When votes are garnered by invoking religion, caste, language, or the fear of imaginary enemies instead of fundamental issues like development, education, health, or employment, it indicates that the political consciousness of that society is at a low level. Aware people never fall for such emotional issues. They always ask—what has the government done in the past five years? Why are my children not getting jobs? Why is the condition of government schools or hospitals so deplorable? When the people start asking these questions, political parties are compelled to speak about development. Unfortunately, a large section of our society is still unable to free itself from personality cult or party blindness. They consider the leader or party as part of their family and do not hesitate to support any mistake made by them. This mental servitude cripples democracy. In democracy, no leader or party is permanent; what is permanent is the country and the constitution. Only when people learn to love the country more than the leader will the true benefits of democracy be realised.

There is a deep connection between economic awareness and political awareness, which it is extremely important for the common people to understand. The beneficial facilities or free goods that the govern-

ment distributes through various schemes—whose money is that? It is the tax money collected from the public. Often, people think that the government is graciously giving them these things, and in return, they must vote out of gratitude. This is a feudal mindset that is shameful for democracy. An aware citizen knows that the government's job is not to show favour but to ensure the rights of the people. Rather than creating beneficiaries, the government should prioritise creating employment opportunities so that people can live with dignity through their own earnings. When people demand work instead of alms, the government's economic policies will be forced to change. But as long as people remain ready to sell their future for immediate gains, governments will not think about long-term development. To stop this process of using poverty as political capital, it is essential to awaken self-respect and economic knowledge among the people.

The future of democracy depends on a strong opposition and an independent media, but the responsibility of keeping both alive ultimately falls on the public. No matter how popular the ruling side may be, a strong opposition is needed to point out their mistakes and keep them in check. However, in the current times, it is observed that a section of the public has started viewing opposition as enmity toward the country. A dangerous trend has emerged of attacking or socially boycotting those who criticise or question the government. This intolerance is a symptom of democracy's death. Aware people must understand that the government and the country are not the same. Criticising the government does not

mean criticising the country; rather, it is an effort to improve the country. Similarly, the public must pressure the media to work impartially. When the people themselves prefer biased news or attack journalists who report the truth, the media also deviates from its ethical responsibility. To protect these pillars of democracy, tolerance and rational thinking must develop in the minds of the people.

A minimum knowledge of law, constitution, and citizens' rights should be mandatory for every voter. Most people are ignorant about the rights granted to citizens by our country's constitution. When the administration or powerful individuals commit injustice, ordinary people think it is the rule or their fate. This ignorance allows corruption and exploitation to take root. Political awareness should teach people that everyone is equal in the eyes of the law and no one is above it. Fighting for one's own rights and protecting the rights of others is the sacred duty of every citizen.

When even an ordinary person from a village can courageously go to a government office and ask why my work is not done or where the money for this scheme has been spent, only then can it be said that democracy has succeeded in that country. This courage does not come solely from education; it comes from political awareness. Many highly educated people can be politically unaware, while illiterate individuals can possess intense political consciousness. The real issue is the mindset to speak out against injustice and a sense of responsibility toward society.

The indifference of the younger generation is an ominous sign for the future of democracy. Currently, many young men and women consider politics a dirty game and stay away from it. They think that politics has no role in shaping their lives. But the reality is that their careers, their freedom, and their future—all are determined by politics. If good people stay away from politics, the vacuum will be filled by dishonest and opportunistic elements of society. As a result, the entire system becomes corrupt. The younger generation must realise that expressing anger only on social media does not fulfil their responsibility. They need to actively participate in the political process, intervene in policy-making, and step forward to take leadership when necessary. The student community and youth power are the main drivers of change. History shows that in countries where the youth have awakened, even authoritarian rulers have not been able to stand. Therefore, fostering healthy political thinking among the new generation is an urgent call of the present time.

Finally, the time has come to deeply realise that democracy is not a gift received; it is the fruit of continuous struggle. Our ancestors left us this freedom and voting rights through much sacrifice and hardship. The responsibility of preserving this dignity now lies with us. If we fail to fulfil our democratic duties due to temporary interests, fear, or laziness, we will leave a dark world for our future generations. Political awareness means opening our eyes to see, lending our ears to listen, and judging with our minds. When even the last person in society becomes capable of questioning the workings of the state, when elections become battles of policy and ideals instead of emotion, only then will democracy be meaningful. Let us establish ourselves not merely as part of the crowd but as thoughtful citizens. Our awareness is our shield. The future of democracy lies not in any leader's written promises but in the fingerprints of the common people and the mirror of their conscience. Only by accepting this truth and moving forward can our society and country stand tall in the global arena as an ideal democratic nation.

Assam's emergence in India's Northeast development vision

By: Dipak Kurmi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to Assam, which concluded on Sunday, was not merely another stop on a crowded political itinerary but a carefully calibrated statement about the evolving place of the Northeast in India's national imagination. Over the past decade, Assam has increasingly moved from the margins of policy discourse to its centre, and this visit reinforced that shift with both symbolism and substance. By combining large-scale infrastructure inaugurations, industrial investments, cultural remembrance, and direct engagement with the youth, the Prime Minister's programme reflected a multidimensional approach to development. It sought to signal that growth is not limited to concrete and capital alone, but also encompasses memory, identity, and human potential. In doing so, the visit underlined the BJP-led government's broader strategy of accelerating the pace of development across the Northeast while anchoring it firmly within the national mainstream.

The inauguration of the new terminal building of the Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi International Airport in Guwahati stood out as a defining highlight of the visit. Built at a cost of around Rs 4,000 crore, the state-of-the-art terminal represents a significant leap in aviation infrastructure for the region. Its design theme, inspired by 'Bamboo Orchids', consciously draws upon Assam's rich biodiversity and cultural aesthetics, offering travellers a sense of place even before they step outside the airport. Designed to handle up to 1.3 crore passengers annually, the terminal has the potential to transform Guwahati into a major aviation hub for eastern India and neighbouring countries. Once fully operational, it is expected to elevate the airport from its current position as the tenth busiest in the country, thereby strengthening Assam's role as the principal gateway to the Northeast.

Beyond its functional importance, the airport inauguration carried a deeper historical resonance with the unveiling of an 80-foot statue of Gopinath Bardoloi within the premises. Bardoloi, Assam's first Chief Minister, occupies a special place in the state's collective memory for his decisive role during the tumultuous years of independence, when Assam's future was uncertain under the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946. By commemorating Bardoloi at a site that symbolises movement, connection, and openness, the government sought to link Assam's historical struggle for identity with its contemporary aspirations for progress. The statue serves as a reminder that development divorced from historical consciousness risks becoming hollow, and that the foundations of today's growth were laid by leaders who safeguarded the region's political and cultural integrity.

Equally significant was the Prime Minister's laying of the foundation stone for a new ammonia-urea fertilizer plant at Namrup in upper Assam, involving an investment of Rs 10,600

crore. This large-scale industrial project marks a decisive step towards revitalising Assam's industrial base, particularly in the fertiliser sector where Namrup has a long legacy. With a targeted completion timeline of 48 months, the new plant is expected to enhance fertiliser self-sufficiency not only for Assam but for the wider Northeast, reducing dependence on supplies from distant regions. In an agrarian economy where timely access to fertilisers directly affects productivity and farmers' incomes, this investment has implications that extend well beyond balance sheets and output figures.

The Namrup project also reflects a broader policy shift towards decentralised industrialisation. For decades, the Northeast suffered from a paradox of resource abundance and industrial scarcity, constrained by poor connectivity and limited investment. By committing such a substantial sum to a core sector industry in upper Assam, the government signalled its intent to break that pattern. The multiplier effects of the plant, in terms of employment generation, ancillary industries, and regional economic integration, could be transformative if implemented effectively. More importantly, it reinforces the idea that the Northeast is no longer viewed merely as a consumer of national resources but as a contributor to India's economic resilience.

The emotional core of the Prime Minister's visit, however, lay in his stop at the Swahid Smarak Udyan in Guwahati, a memorial park dedicated to the 860 martyrs of the Assam Movement of 1979 to 1985. The anti-infiltration movement remains one of the most defining episodes in Assam's modern history, shaped by anxieties over demographic change, cultural survival, and political rights. By paying homage at the memorial, the Prime Minister acknowledged the sacrifices made during a turbulent period that continues to influence Assam's politics and society. For many Assamese, this gesture resonated deeply, as it represented national recognition of a struggle that had often been misunderstood or marginalised in mainstream discourse.

The visit to the martyrs' memorial also implicitly underscored the continuing relevance of issues related to migration and demographic pressure in Assam. While the language of the visit focused on respect and remembrance, it inevitably reminded the nation that these concerns are not relics of the past but ongoing challenges that require sensitive and sustained policy responses. By situating this remembrance within a broader development narrative, the visit suggested that security, identity, and growth must move together, rather than being treated as competing priorities.

Perhaps the most distinctive and forward-looking element of the Prime Minister's Assam visit was his interaction with a select group of 25 meritorious students from different districts, conducted on the Brahmaputra. In an era where political engagements are often dominated by rallies and inaugurations, this quiet conversation stood out for its symbolic and practical value.

Discussing exam stress, self-discipline, and motivation, the Prime Minister sought to connect with young minds at a formative stage of their lives. This interaction was not about immediate political gain but about investing in human capital, reinforcing the idea that the future of Assam and the nation ultimately rests with its youth.

Such engagements also reflect a broader emphasis on education and personal development as integral components of nation-building. By choosing students from diverse districts, the interaction subtly acknowledged the varied social and geographic realities within Assam. Holding the discussion on the Brahmaputra, a river that has shaped Assam's history, economy, and culture, added a layer of symbolism, linking the continuity of the past with the promise of the future. In many ways, this session encapsulated the idea that development is as much about nurturing confidence and aspiration as it is about building infrastructure.

When viewed together, the elements of the Prime Minister's visit reveal a coherent narrative about Assam's place in India's eastern strategy. The focus on airports, fertiliser plants, memorials, and student interactions suggests an integrated vision that spans connectivity, industry, identity, and human resources. This approach aligns with the government's broader Act East policy, which seeks to position the Northeast as a bridge between India and Southeast Asia. Improved aviation infrastructure in Guwahati, for instance, is not only about domestic travel but also about facilitating international connectivity in the long term.

The frequency of Prime Minister Modi's visits to the Northeast in recent years further reinforces this perspective. These visits have consistently been accompanied by the launch of substantial projects aimed at transforming connectivity, expanding economic opportunities, and enhancing cultural recognition. For a region long accustomed to episodic attention, this sustained engagement represents a significant departure. While challenges remain in terms of execution, inclusivity, and environmental balance, the symbolic and material investments signal a clear intent to integrate the Northeast more deeply into India's development trajectory.

The Prime Minister's latest visit to Assam was not a collection of isolated events but a carefully woven statement about priorities and possibilities. By honouring historical figures like Gopinath Bardoloi, remembering the martyrs of the Assam Movement, investing in critical infrastructure and industry, and engaging directly with the youth, the visit articulated a vision of development that is both rooted and forward-looking. It suggested that Assam's future lies not in being a peripheral beneficiary of national growth but in becoming an active participant in shaping India's economic and cultural landscape. If sustained with consistency and sensitivity, this approach could mark a turning point not only for Assam but for the entire Northeast region. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Olympus Mons: King of Mountains

By: Satyabrata Borah

Imagine standing on a rusty red plain that stretches so far it curves away beneath your feet. The sky above you hangs pale pink, almost butyry, and the air is so thin that every breath feels like sipping through a straw. Now look up. Really up. A giant wall of rock rises in front of you, gentle at first, then steeper, steeper, until it disappears into a haze twenty-two kilometres high. Your eyes tell you it cannot be real, yet there it is: Olympus Mons, the tallest mountain not just on Mars but anywhere in the Solar System we have ever seen.

Long before spacecraft ever kissed the Martian surface, astronomers peering through telescopes noticed a bright spot that refused to behave like ordinary ground. Sometimes it vanished under white clouds, sometimes it glowed like a beacon. In 1971, when Mariner 9 sent back the first proper pictures, scientists gasped. What they thought might be a crater turned out to be the summit of a monster volcano wider than the country of France and taller than three Mount Everests stacked on top of one another.

The numbers still sound like science fiction. From its base on the surrounding plains to the scalloped edge of its caldera, Olympus Mons stands roughly 21.9 kilometres high. Mount Everest, our own champion, reaches a mere 8.8 kilometres above sea level. If you dropped the Martian giant into the Pacific Ocean, its peak would stick out far above the water and still have kilometres to spare. The base sprawls across 600 kilometres, so wide that a traveller walking around it would think they were crossing a continent, not circling a mountain.

Why is it so enormous? On Earth, volcanoes never grow this big because the crust keeps moving. Hot spots that feed lava stay in one place while the tectonic plates slide overhead, creating chains like Hawaii or the Emperor Seamounts. Mars has no moving plates, or at least none that shuffle

about today. The crust stays put, so lava can pour from the same vent for millions of years, piling up layer upon layer like batter poured onto a griddle that never shifts. Gravity on Mars is only about a third of ours, so the weight pressing down on the molten rock is gentler. The mountain can rise higher before its own mass crushes the ducts that feed it.

Stand at the bottom and you barely notice you are on a slope. The average incline is only five degrees, about the same as a gentle wheelchair ramp. You could ride a bicycle up the lower flanks for hundreds of kilometres without changing gears. Only near the top do the cliffs appear, a ring of steep scarps six to eight kilometres high where the ground finally gave up trying to stay smooth and broke into gigantic steps.

At the summit sits not one crater but a nest of them, six collapsed calderas overlapping like petals. The biggest is eighty kilometres wide. Walk across that floor and you could fit the entire city of Paris inside with room left over for suburbs. These pits formed when magma chambers emptied and the roof fell in, again and again, over millions of years. The youngest lava flows look fresh enough that astronauts once worried the volcano might still be active. Today we know it has been quiet for at least twenty-five million years, maybe longer, but on Mars that still counts as recent.

Long ago, when Mars was young and wet, rivers of lava longer than the Nile rushed down these slopes. You can see them frozen in place, shiny black streams coiled like rope. Wind has rubbed away the dust in places, revealing glass-smooth surfaces that glint in the weak sunlight. In other spots, the lava built tunnels. When the outer crust hardened and the molten river inside drained away, it left hollow tubes big enough to drive a train through. Future explorers might park their rovers inside for shelter from radiation and night-time cold.

The mountain does not stand alone.



It rises from a huge bulge called the Tharsis region, a blister on the planet the size of North America. Three other giant volcanoes line up nearby like brothers: Arsia Mons, Pavonis Mons, and Ascraeus Mons. Together they look as if someone pressed a hot thumb into wet clay and then sprinkled four massive peaks on top. Scientists argue about what created the bulge. Some say a single plume of hot rock rose from the mantle and just kept pushing. Others think many smaller plumes merged. Whatever happened, the weight of Tharsis actually tilted the whole planet a little, like a spinning top wobbling under a heavy hat.

Around the base of Olympus Mons stretches a strange moat, a cliff-edged terrace that circles the mountain like a

castle wall. Lava once flowed out so gently it spread sideways instead of down, building an apron that eventually became too wide for its own strength. The edges sagged and broke away, leaving a scarp that towers three kilometres above the plains. If you stood on that rim and looked back toward the peak, the summit would be hidden beyond the horizon because Mars is a smaller world and curves faster than Earth.

The air up there is almost nothing. At the top the pressure is one thousandth of what you feel at sea level on Earth. A spacesuit would swell like a balloon, and any cup of tea you tried to drink would boil instantly from the low pressure alone. Sunlight is weaker too, only forty percent of what reaches

Earth, yet the view would stretch forever because there is no haze of water vapour or pollution to blur the distance. On a clear day you might see the three brother volcanoes lined up to the southeast, their summits poking through a layer of morning mist like islands in a rusty sea.

People dream of climbing it one day. The gentle lower slopes would be easy, almost boring, but the final cliffs are another matter. No human has ever climbed a wall eight kilometres high in one go, and doing it in a bulky suit with oxygen tanks sounds like a nightmare. Maybe they will fly instead. A small hopper plane could glide hundreds of kilometres on the thin air, using the long runways nature has already provided. Or perhaps climbers

will ride roped elevators up the scarp, dangling like spiders on a thread.

For now, robots do the exploring. Orbiters circle overhead, painting the mountain with radar and lasers to measure every wrinkle. In 2021, the European Trace Gas Orbiter spotted water ice hiding in cracks near the summit, frost that clings to shadows where the sun never reaches. Down on the northwestern flank, a Chinese rover called Zhurong sniffed the rocks and found signs that water once flowed there billions of years ago, back when Mars still had oceans and rain.

Every picture we get makes the mountain feel more real and yet more alien. The colours are wrong: butter-scotch sky, brick-red soil, black lava that shines like patent leather. Dust devils whirl across the plains, tall as skyscrapers and thin as smoke. At night the temperature drops to minus ninety degrees Celsius, cold enough to freeze carbon dioxide out of the air into feathery snow.

One day, maybe soon, children born on Mars will grow up staring at that silhouette on the horizon. To them it will be their Kilimanjaro, their Matterhorn, the mountain that defines home. They will tell stories about the ancient fire that built it, about explorers who flew drones into the caldera and found caves big enough to hold cities. They might even carve trails up the lower slopes and race electric buggies across lava fields that have not felt a footstep in a hundred million years.

Until then, Olympus Mons waits, patient as stone, the quiet king of a sleeping world. It reminds us how different planets can be, how light gravity can hold a mountain, how long lava can flow when no one is around to stop it. Every time we look at its picture, we feel the same tug: part wonder, part homesickness for a place we have never visited. One day we will stand on those rust coloured plains, crane our necks, and finally understand what twenty two kilometres really looks like when there is nothing taller to compare it to.

As War in Ukraine completing four years in february, No immediate truce in sight

By: Ashok Nilakantan Ayers

Nearly four years since Russia's February 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia still occupies roughly 20 percent of the country, and Russian President Vladimir Putin made clear Wednesday that he has no intention of compromising on his territorial demands despite President Donald Trump's intensifying efforts to broker peace.

In a combative speech delivered at the annual meeting of the Russian Defense Ministry, Putin lashed out at Ukraine's European allies and declared Russia would seize territory by force if necessary.

"We would prefer to do this, and eliminate the root causes of the conflict, through diplomacy," Putin said. "If the opposing country and its foreign patrons refuse to engage in substantive discussions, Russia will achieve the liberation of its historical lands through military means."

The remarks came as diplomatic efforts to end Europe's bloodiest conflict since World War II reached a critical juncture. European Union leaders are meeting in Brussels this week to debate an unprecedented plan to use frozen Russian assets to finance Ukraine's defense, while Russia continues to gain ground, capturing 215 square miles of Ukrainian territory in the past four weeks.

The path to peace has been marked by repeated failures, most notably Trump's much-hyped Alaska summit with Putin in August. The meeting at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage was intended to achieve a rapid ceasefire, but after nearly three hours of talks, Putin and Trump did not announce a ceasefire or an agreement to end the war.

Zelensky was not invited to the talks, and had warned that decisions made in his absence would be meaningless. The Ukrainian president's exclusion from negotiations became a persistent theme as Trump pursued a bilateral approach with Russia that alarmed European allies.

Following Alaska, Putin and his officials have repeatedly referred back to the "spirit and letter" of the August summit, treating the meeting as a diplomatic victory. Meanwhile, Trump celebrated it as "a great and very successful day," though no concrete progress toward peace materialized.

Yuri Ushakov, an advisor to Vladimir Putin, summed up subsequent negotiations between the Russian President and U.S. Special Envoy Steve Witkoff by noting that "so far, no compromise version of a peace settlement has been found". The failure stems from Putin's consistent refusal to negotiate in good faith, continuing to demand maximalist territorial concessions from Ukraine while offering nothing in return.

The human cost of the conflict continues to mount at a staggering pace. Russia has sustained more than 790,000 killed or injured, according to an April 2025 estimate, while Ukraine has suffered 400,000 killed or injured. Fighting and air strikes have inflicted over 53,000 civilian casualties, while 3.7 million people are internally displaced, and 6.9 million have fled Ukraine.

At the current rate of its advance, Russia would not seize the entire Donbas region until August 2027, according to analysis by the Institute for the Study of War. Yet Putin appears content to trade thousands of Russian lives for incremental gains, gambling that Ukraine's smaller population and dwindling Western support will eventually force Kyiv to capitulate.

The battlefield dynamics remain dire for Ukraine. Russian strikes since October have pushed Ukraine's grid to the brink, with Kyiv residents facing up to 16 hours a day without power. Russia's systematic campaign against Ukraine's energy infrastructure represents a calculated strategy to break civilian morale as winter approaches.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen underscored the urgency Wednesday, calling on the continent to take responsibility for its own security. "There is no more important act of European defense than supporting Ukraine's defense," von der Leyen said in a speech to the European Parliament. "The next few days will be a crucial step for securing this. It's up to us to choose how we fund Ukraine's fight."

The war's impact extends far beyond Ukraine's borders, disrupting global supply chains and threatening food security for millions. In a country once known as the bread basket of Europe, the conflict's disruption to grain exports wiped \$859 million off the value of Ukraine's economy.

The war has caused massive disruptions in Ukraine's grain exports, with Black Sea ports becoming largely inaccessible due to the ongoing conflict, causing dramatic price spikes and worsened food insecurity worldwide. Before the war, Ukrainian farmers earned around \$270 per ton of grain. Now their earnings have dropped to only \$100 per ton—below production costs—while U.S. and EU farmers have experienced record profits.



The disruptions have cascaded through multiple sectors. The review identifies five major impact domains: food security disruptions, energy market volatility, critical material shortages, transportation bottlenecks, and financial market responses. Energy prices surged dramatically in the war's early months, with natural gas prices rising by 120-130% and coal prices by 95-97% in the first six months after the conflict began.

Sri Lanka experienced a dual blow through disruption of its \$142 million tea exports to Russia and the loss of \$4-7 billion annual foreign currency from Russian and Ukrainian tourists, demonstrating how even distant nations face economic consequences. Many African countries, which rely on Ukraine and Russia for more than half their grain consumption, now confront acute food shortages with limited ability to secure alternative sources.

Russia itself has not escaped economic damage. Russia's GDP declined by 2.1% in 2022 and 0.2% in 2023, with oil and gas revenues decreasing by 17% due to Western sanctions. Over 200,000 educated and skilled workers have left Russia, creating significant gaps in the IT sector and knowledge-intensive industries.

The EU now faces a defining choice: whether to use approximately 210 billion euros in frozen Russian assets to support Ukraine. The European Union on Friday indefinitely froze Russia's assets in Europe to ensure that Hungary and Slovakia, both with Moscow-friendly governments, can't prevent the billions of euros from being used to support Ukraine.

The European Commission has proposed a "repatriation loan" that Ukraine would only need to repay if and when Russia pays war reparations. But the plan faces significant opposition. Belgium, which holds most of the frozen assets through the Euro-clear depository, has expressed deep concerns about potential Russian lawsuits. Italy, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Malta have joined Belgium in calling for alternative solutions.

Russia's Central Bank announced Friday that it has filed a lawsuit in a Moscow commercial court against Euroclear, accusing one of Europe's largest securities depositories of unlawfully preventing it from accessing its own frozen funds. Russian officials have warned of retaliation, with Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev claiming the move could constitute justification for war. Yet European leaders increasingly recognize they have little choice. With Trump having curtailed U.S. aid and signalling frustration with both sides, Europe faces the prospect of shouldering Ukraine's defense largely alone. France has suggested security guarantees resembling NATO's Article 5 mutual defense clause, though Washington's commitment to such arrangements remains uncertain.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned Wednesday that Putin's reference to "historical lands" portends danger for all of Europe. "There are other countries in Europe that someone in Russia may one day call their 'historical lands,'" Zelensky said. "We need real protection from this Russian history of madness."

Seventy-four percent of Ukrainians support negotiated peace along the front line as of mid-September 2025, backed by Western security guarantees, suggesting war fatigue even among those under daily assault. Yet any settlement that legitimizes Russian territorial gains would reward aggression and encourage future conflicts.

Putin made clear Wednesday that Russia remains "engaged in a dialogue with the US," but dismissed the possibility of meaningful engagement with Europe under current leadership. "It is unlikely that this is possible with the current political elites, but in any case, it will be inevitable as we continue to strengthen," Putin said, openly hoping for political change in European capitals more favourable to Russian interests.

As winter deepens and the war approaches its fourth year, the fundamental question remains unresolved: whether the international community will provide Ukraine with the resources to survive and ultimately prevail, or whether Putin's bet on Western exhaustion will prove correct. The answer will shape not only Ukraine's fate, but the future of the international order itself. The Brussels summit this week may provide clarity on Europe's commitment. But with Russia advancing daily, diplomatic failures mounting, and Trump's engagement proving ineffective, the path to peace remains as elusive as ever. What began as a swift invasion intended to topple Ukraine's government has devolved into a grinding war of attrition with no end in sight—a conflict whose economic and human toll continues to ripple across the globe. (IPA Service)

Don't Punish Manipur's Scholars for waiting: Relax the Assistant professor age cap now

By: Mr Naoroibam Ratan (Kapu) Meetei

Manipur's government colleges urgently need good teachers. So, the Manipur Public Service Commission (MPSC) recruitment for 419 Assistant Professor posts is welcome news. It brings hope to students, parents, and thousands of young people who have worked hard for academic careers.

But this same recruitment also brings a painful shock, because one rule can stop many qualified people even before they get a chance to compete. The notification says an applicant "shall not be less than 21 years and not more than 38 years as on 19th January 2026." On paper, that may look like a normal rule. In Manipur's real situation, it becomes unfair because Assistant Professor recruitment has often come after long gaps (more than 11 years). Reports show that an earlier large recruitment for 280 Assistant Professors began around November 2014 and was completed around January 2016, and public commentary described that 2014 advertisement as coming after a hiatus of about nine years. After 2014, regular large-scale recruitment did not happen for many years. When recruitment comes late like this, the age cap stops being a neutral condition. It becomes a punishment for delay.

Teaching careers are different from many other jobs. A serious academic pathway takes time. A candidate usually completes a Master's degree, clears NET, often completes a PhD, writes research papers, attends seminars, and teaches as a guest or contract teacher while waiting for regular posts. Many do this work on small honorariums. These are not "wasted years." These are the years that create strong teachers and improve colleges.

That is why one national fact is important for everyone to understand. For UGC-NET, the Assistant Professor category has no upper age limit to appear. At the same time, recruitment rules are decided by the employer—state government, PSC, university, or college. In simple words: Manipur has the power to set recruitment age rules, and Manipur also has the power to correct them when they create injustice.

If anyone thinks this is only "theory," look at the human reality. Many candidates in Manipur cleared NET in their 20s. They then spent years doing PhD work, publishing, and teaching on contract because regular posts were not announced. When recruitment finally arrives after a long gap, some cross 38 and get disqualified in one line—despite being exactly the trained and experienced teachers our colleges need.

Here is a typical story that many Manipuri families will recognise. A candidate cleared NET in 2017, finished a PhD in 2024, and has been

teaching as guest faculty since 2019. Today that person is 39. Under the current rule, that person cannot even apply. This is not a failure of merit. It is a failure of timing.

This problem does not only hurt candidates. It also harms colleges and students. When trained NET/PhD candidates are blocked, the selection pool becomes smaller. Departments depend more on temporary arrangements. Research culture becomes weaker. Students lose the benefit of stable, experienced faculty. A fair age policy is not only justice for candidates—it is also good for the quality of higher education in Manipur.

India already shows that age policy for teaching posts can be designed in different ways. Some UGC-style recruitments explicitly follow a no upper age limit approach, like central universities, certain Delhi-based recruitment notices. Kerala offers another model: for some Assistant Professor recruitments, the age window has gone up to 50. These examples prove one simple point: age rules for Assistant Professor posts are a policy choice. Governments can design them in a way that protects merit instead of destroying careers.

So what should Manipur do now? The best and most practical step is a one-time age relaxation for this recruitment cycle, because the harm is happening right now. After that immediate correction, Manipur can choose a stronger long-term reform for teaching posts. The state may adopt a no upper age limit approach for Assistant Professor recruitment, in the spirit of many UGC-pattern recruitments. It can protect quality because selection will still be through qualifications, screening, and interview.

Finally, Manipur must fix the root cause: irregular recruitment. The state should announce and follow a fixed recruitment calendar, at least once every one or two years. When recruitment is predictable, controversy reduces, fairness improves, and colleges get better teachers on time.

Manipur needs strong colleges. Strong colleges need strong teachers. Strong teachers are built through years of study, research, and classroom work. The state should not close the door on such people because the door was opened too late. This problem is not limited to colleges. Manipur's government schools are also facing a serious teacher shortage. Many citizens and reports speak of thousands of vacant teacher posts in primary schools. If these vacancies are not filled on time, government schools will struggle to function properly. When there are not enough teachers, students suffer, parents lose confidence, and the government school system becomes weaker year by year.

Manipur must not turn administrative delay into permanent disqualification.

Ukraine is leveraging its powerful - and cheap - new drone killers for air defence



KYIV, Dec 22: The icy ground crackling under their feet, members of an elite Ukrainian drone-hunting team set up for a long night.

Antennas and sensors are clipped to a light stand. Monitors and controls are pulled from hard cases, and a game-changing new weapon is readied for deployment.

The Sting, shaped like a flying thermos, is one of Ukraine's new homegrown interceptors. The unit's commander says the interceptors can effectively counter Russia's fast-evolving suicide drones, which are now flying faster and at higher altitudes. "Every destroyed target is something that did not hit our homes, our families, our power plants," said the officer, known only by the call sign "Loi," in line with Ukrainian military protocol. "The enemy does not sleep, and neither do we."

Nightly attacks on Ukrainian cities and power infrastructure have forced Kyiv to rewrite the air defence rule book and develop cut-price drone killers costing as little as \$1,000.

Interceptors went from prototype to mass production in just a few months in 2025 and represent the latest shift in modern warfare.

Effective defense in Ukraine depends on mass production, rapid adaptation and layering low-cost systems into existing defences instead of relying on a few expensive, slow-to-replace weapons.

Models like the Sting — made by the volunteer-driven startup Wild Hornets — and the newly appeared Bullet can surge in speed before crashing into enemy drones. They are flown by pilots watching monitors or wearing first-person-view goggles.

The economics are crucial. Andrii Lavrenovych, a member of the

strategic council of the fast-growing startup General Cherry which develops the Bullet, says the drones they destroy cost anywhere from \$10,000 to \$300,000.

"We are inflicting serious economic damage," he said.

Russia favors the Iranian-designed Shahed suicide drone and has produced multiple variants of the triangle-winged craft, armed with jammers, cameras and turbojet engines in a constant battle of innovation.

"In some areas they are one step ahead. In others, we invent an innovative solution, and they suffer from it," Lavrenovych said.

Federico Borsari, a defense analyst at the Washington-based Center for European Policy Analysis, says interceptors are a valuable addition to Ukraine's — and Europe's — anti-drone arsenal.

"Cheap interceptor drones have become so important, and so quickly, that we can consider them a cornerstone of modern counter- unmanned aerial systems," he said. "They realign the cost and scale equation of air defense." Their mobility and low cost allow them to defend more targets, but Borsari added: "It would be a mistake to see them as a silver bullet."

Their success, he said, depends on sensors, fast command and control as well as skilled operators. They can be used in a menu of options that starts with multimillion-dollar missiles and ends with nets and anti-aircraft guns.

Defense planners in Ukraine and NATO expect the hyper-scaling of drone production on both sides of the conflict to continue in 2026, adding urgency to European plans to create a layered air-defense system known as the "drone wall." (AP)

Starlink in crosshairs: How Russia could attack Elon Musk's conquering of space

MOSCOW, Dec 22: Two NATO intelligence services suspect Russia is developing a new anti-satellite weapon to target Elon Musk's Starlink constellation with destructive orbiting clouds of shrapnel, with the aim of reining in Western space superiority that has helped Ukraine on the battlefield.

Intelligence findings seen by The Associated Press say the so-called "zone-effect" weapon would seek to flood Starlink orbits with hundreds of thousands of high-density pellets, potentially disabling multiple satellites at once but also risking catastrophic collateral damage to other orbiting systems.

Analysts who haven't seen the findings say they doubt such a weapon could work without causing uncontrollable chaos in space for companies and countries, including Russia and its ally China, that rely on thousands of orbiting satellites for communications, defense and other vital needs.

Such repercussions, including risks to its own space systems, could steer Moscow away from deploying or using such a weapon, analysts said.

But the commander of the Canadian military's Space Division, Brig. Gen. Christopher Horner, said such Russian work cannot be ruled out in light of previous U.S.

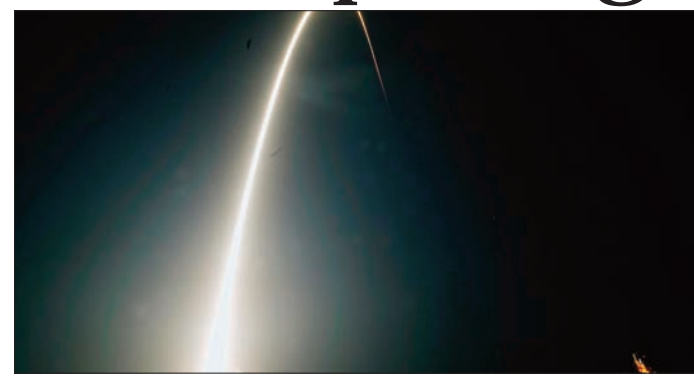
allegations that Russia also has been pursuing an indiscriminate nuclear, space-based weapon. "I can't say I've been briefed on that type of system. But it's not implausible," he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov didn't respond to messages from the AP seeking comment. Russia has previously called for United Nations efforts to stop the orbital deployment of weapons and President Vladimir Putin has said Moscow has no intention of deploying nuclear space weapons.

Weapon would have multiple targets

The intelligence findings were shown to the AP on condition that the services involved were not identified and the news organization was not able to independently verify the findings' conclusions.

The US Space Force didn't respond to e-mailed questions. The French military's Space Command said in a statement to the AP that it could not comment on the findings but said, "We can inform you that Russia has, in recent years, been multiplying irresponsible, dangerous, and even hostile actions in space." Russia views Starlink in particular as a grave threat, the findings indicate. The thousands of low-orbiting satellites have been pivotal for Ukraine's survival



against Russia's full-scale invasion, now in its fourth year.

Starlink's high-speed internet service is used by Ukrainian forces for battlefield communications, weapons targeting and other roles and by civilians and government officials where Russian strikes have affected communications.

System is possibly just experimental

The findings seen by the AP didn't say when Russia might be capable of deploying such a system nor detail whether it has been tested or how far along research is believed to be. The system is in active development and information about the timing of an expected deployment is too sensitive to share, according to an official familiar with the findings and other related

intelligence that the AP did not see. The official spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the nonpublic findings. Such Russian research could be simply experimental, Samson said. "I wouldn't put it past some scientists ... to build out something like this because it's an interesting thought-experiment and they think, you know, Maybe at some point we can get our government to pay for it," she said.

Tiny pellets could remain undetected

The intelligence findings say the pellets would be so small — just millimeters across — that they would evade detection by ground- and space-based systems that scan for space objects, which could make it hard to pin blame for any attack on Moscow.

Clayton Swope, who specializes in space security and weaponry at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington, D.C.-based security and policy think tank, said if "the pellets are not trackable, that complicates things" but "people would figure it out." "If satellites start waking up with damage, I guess you could put two and two together," he said.

Exactly how much destruction tiny pellets could do isn't clear. In November, a suspected impact by a small piece of debris was sufficient to damage a Chinese spacecraft that was meant to bring three astronauts back to the Earth.

Weapon of fear' could threaten chaos

After such an attack, pellets and debris would over time fall back toward Earth, possibly damaging other orbiting systems on their way down, analysts say.

Starlink's orbits are about 550 kilometers (340 miles) above the planet. China's Tiangong space station and the International Space Station operate at lower orbits, "so both would face risks," according to Swope. The space chaos that such a weapon could cause might enable Moscow to threaten its adversaries without actually having to use it, Swope said. (AP)

After Hadi, another Bangladesh student leader shot in head

DHAKA, Dec 22: Unidentified gunmen on Monday shot in the head Moteleb Shikder, a second leader of Bangladesh's violent student-led 2004 uprising.

The attack took place in southwestern Khulna city, days after the killing of prominent youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi.

"The Khulna Division head of NCP (National Citizen Party) and central coordinator of the party's workers front, Moteleb Shikder, was shot a few minutes ago," NCP's joint principal coordinator Mahmuda Mitu said in a Facebook post.

Mitu, a doctor, said Shikder was rushed to Khulna Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

The Kaler Kantha newspaper, quoting hospital sources, said Shikder was shot on the left side of his head, and he was bleeding profusely when he was brought to the facility, where the doctors started emergency treatment.

The attack came days after Hadi, a prominent leader of the student-led protests last year that led to the ouster of the prime minister Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government, was shot in the head on December 12 by masked gunmen at an election campaign in

central Dhaka's Bijoynagar area.

The 32-year-old Inqilab Mancha spokesperson died while undergoing treatment in Singapore on Thursday, Hadi was a candidate for the scheduled February 12 general elections.

The interim government of Muhammad Yunus staged a nationwide mourning for Hadi's death on Saturday and said no stone would be left unturned to track down his killers as violence erupted in Dhaka and other major cities afresh over the attack and subsequent death. Faisal Karim Masud's parents, wife and a female friend of the prime suspect have been arrested by police, but said they were unsure about his current whereabouts.

After Monday's clandestine attack on Shikder in Khulna city's Majid Sarani area, police said they were yet at dark about the attack perpetrators or motive but launched an "immediate manhunt" for their arrest.

Local police station chief Animesh Mondal, however, informed reporters that Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) authorities now shifted Shikder to its City Imaging Centre to pinpoint the state of his injury. (PTI)

Bondi Beach shooting suspect conducted firearms training with his father, Australian police say

MELBOURNE, Dec 22: A man accused of killing 15 people at Sydney's Bondi Beach conducted firearms training in an area of New South Wales state outside of Sydney with his father, Australian police documents released on Monday allege.

The men recorded a video about their justification for the meticulously planned attack, according to a police statement of facts that was made public following Naveed Akram's video court appearance Monday from a Sydney hospital where he has been treated for an abdominal injury. Officers wounded Akram at the scene of the Dec. 14 shooting and killed his father, 50-year-old Sajid Akram.

The New South Wales state government confirmed Naveed Akram was transferred on Monday from a hospital to a prison. Neither facility was identified by authorities.

The statement alleges the 24-year-old and his father began their attack by throwing four improvised explosive devices toward a crowd celebrating an annual Jewish event at Bondi Beach, but the devices failed to explode.

Police described the devices as three aluminum pipe bombs and a tennis ball bomb containing an explosive, black powder and steel ball

bearings. None detonated, but police described them as "viable" IEDs.

Authorities have charged Akram with 59 offences, including 15 counts of murder, 40 counts of causing harm with intent to murder in relation to the wounded survivors and one count of committing a terrorist act.

The antisemitic attack at the start of the eight-day Hanukkah celebration was Australia's worst mass shooting since a lone gunman killed 35 people in Tasmania state in 1996. The New South Wales government introduced draft laws to Parliament on Monday that Premier Chris Minns said would become the toughest in Australia.

The new restrictions would include making Australian citizenship a condition of qualifying for a firearms license. That would have excluded Sajid Akram, who was an Indian citizen with a permanent resident visa.

Sajid Akram also legally owned six rifles and shotguns. A new legal limit for recreational shooters would be a maximum of four guns.

Police said a video found on Naveed Akram's phone shows him with his father "reciting their political and religious views and appear to summarise their justification for the Bondi terrorist attack." (AP)

Passenger bus crash in Indonesia kills at least 16 people, official says

JAKARTA, Dec 22: A passenger bus crash killed at least 16 people on Indonesia's main island of Java just after midnight Monday, officials said.

The bus carrying 34 people lost control on a toll road and struck a concrete barrier before rolling onto its side, said Budiono, a search and rescue agency chief who goes by single name like many Indonesians.

The inter-province bus was traveling from the capital Jakarta to the country's ancient royal city of Yogyakarta when it overturned while entering a curved exit ramp at the Krapyak toll way in Central Java's Semarang city, he said.

"The forceful impact threw several passengers and left them trapped against the bus body," Budiono said.

Police and rescue teams arrived about 40 minutes after the accident and recovered the bodies of six passengers who died at the scene. Another 10 people

died on the way to a hospital or while being treated, Budiono said.

The 18 victims being treated at two nearby hospitals included five people in critical condition and 13 in serious condition, he said. Television news reports showed the yellow bus overturned on its side and surrounded by National Search and Rescue Agency personnel, police and passersby as ambulances transported victims and the dead away from the accident scene.

Witnesses told authorities the bus was travelling at high speed before the driver lost control, Central Java Police Chief Ribut Hari Wibowo said at Dr. Karyadi General Hospital in Semarang where the bodies were being identified.

The driver was a substitute who sustained serious injuries but was able to communicate while under medical care, he said. (AP)



Coast Guard is pursuing another tanker helping Venezuela skirt sanctions, US official says

MIAMI, Dec 22: The US Coast Guard on Sunday was pursuing another sanctioned oil tanker in the Caribbean Sea as the Trump administration appeared to be intensifying its targeting of such vessels connected to the Venezuelan government.

The pursuit of the tanker, which was confirmed by a US official briefed on the operation, comes after the US administration announced Saturday it had seized a tanker for the second time in less than two weeks.

The official, who was not authorized to comment publicly about the ongoing operation and spoke on the condition of anonymity, said Sunday's pursuit involved "a sanctioned dark fleet vessel that is part of Venezuela's illegal sanctions evasion."

The official said the vessel was flying a false flag and under a judicial seizure order.

The Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security, which oversees the US Coast Guard, deferred questions about the operation to the White House, which did not offer comment on the operation.

Saturday's pre-dawn seizure of a Panama-flagged vessel called Centuries targeted what the White House described as a "falsely flagged vessel operating as part of the Venezuelan shadow fleet to traffic stolen oil."

The Coast Guard, with assistance from the Navy, seized a sanctioned tanker called Skipper on Dec 10, another part of the shadow fleet of tankers that the US says operates on the fringes of the law to move sanctioned cargo. It was not even flying a nation's flag

when it was seized by the Coast Guard. President Donald Trump, after that first seizure, said that the US would carry out a "blockade" of Venezuela. It all comes as Trump has ratcheted up his rhetoric toward Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

This past week, Trump demanded that Venezuela return assets that it seized from US oil companies years ago, justifying anew his announcement of a "blockade" against oil tankers travelling to or from the South American country that face American sanctions.

Trump cited the lost US investments in Venezuela when asked about his newest tactic in a pressure campaign against Maduro, suggesting the Republican administration's moves are at least somewhat motivated by disputes over oil investments, along with accusations of drug trafficking. Some sanctioned tankers already are diverting away from Venezuela.

US oil companies dominated Venezuela's petroleum industry until the country's leaders moved to nationalise the sector, first in the 1970s and again in the 21st century under Maduro and his predecessor, Hugo Chávez. Compensation offered by Venezuela was deemed insufficient, and in 2014, an international arbitration panel ordered the country's socialist government to pay \$1.6 billion to ExxonMobil. Maduro said in a message Sunday on Telegram that Venezuela has spent months "denouncing, challenging and defeating a campaign of aggression that goes from psychological terrorism to corsairs attacking oil tankers." (PTI)

130 schoolchildren and staff abducted in Nigeria last month have been released, police say

ABUJA, Dec 22: Some 130 schoolchildren and staff abducted from a Nigerian Catholic school last month by gunmen have been released, police said Sunday.

Gunmen seized at least 303 schoolchildren and 12 teachers in Nigeria's north-central Niger state when they attacked St. Mary's Catholic School in the Papi community on Nov 21.

Fifty escaped in the hours that followed, and 100 schoolchildren were freed earlier this month.

Niger State police spokesperson Wasuu Abiodun said in a statement that "the remaining batch of the abducted students" has now been released.

"A total number of 130 victims, including the staff, have been released," Abiodun said.

When asked about the 35 unaccounted-for schoolchildren and missing teachers, Abiodun told The Associated Press: "Further details will be communicated."

Presidential spokesperson Bayo



Onanuga said in a post on X that the "remaining 130 schoolchildren abducted" have been released.

He said the released schoolchildren would arrive in Minna, the Niger state capital, on Monday and rejoin their parents for Christmas.

"The freedom of the school-

children followed a military intelligence-driven operation," Onanuga said.

Sunday Dare, another spokesperson for Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu, also said 130 schoolchildren were released and that none are left in captivity, in a post on X.

No group has claimed responsibility for the Nov 21 abduction, but locals blamed armed gangs that target schools and travellers in kidnappings for ransoms across Nigeria's conflict-battered north.

The Niger state attack was among a spate of recent mass abductions in Nigeria, and happened four days after 25 schoolchildren were seized in similar circumstances in neighbouring Kebbi state's Maga town. A church in southern Kwara state was also attacked around the same time, and the 38 worshippers abducted in that attack last month were freed.

Bola Tinubu had been under pressure at home and from US President Donald Trump, who has alleged that Christians are being targeted in Nigeria's security crisis. Nigerian authorities usually do not say much about rescue efforts, and arrests in such cases are rare. Analysts believe that's because ransoms are usually paid. Officials do not admit payment of ransoms. (AP)

Assurance on APFRA rules Global scholars discuss Tai Khamti heritage, manuscripts with Arunachal DyCM

IFCSAP delegation meets Amit Shah



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Dec 22: A delegation of the Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh (IFCSAP), led by its president Dr Emi Rumi, on Monday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah at his official residence here and sought early framing of rules under the Arunachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act (APFRA), 1978.

The delegation highlighted that although the Act was enacted decades ago, its rules are yet to be framed, affecting effective implementation.

They urged the Home Minister

to intervene to ensure that the long-pending rules are notified at the earliest.

The Home Minister assured the delegation that necessary steps would be taken to facilitate the framing of the APFRA rules, an assurance described by IFCSAP as a significant and positive development for Indigenous Faith believers in Arunachal Pradesh.

Members of the delegation included Er Katung Wahge, Chairman of the Donyi Polo Charitable Trust and former IFCSAP president; Er Dibang Tayeng, Secretary General of the Donyi Polo

Yelam Kebang; Techi Gubin, President of Arunachal Vikas Parishad and Vice President of All India Kalyan Ashram; and advocate Tambo Tamin, former General Secretary of IFCSAP.

IFCSAP said it has been consistently engaging with authorities for early framing and implementation of the Act's rules.

The assurance from the Union Home Minister, the organisation said, has been received with optimism by Indigenous communities, who view it as a positive step towards safeguarding their faith, culture and traditions in Arunachal Pradesh.

ITANAGAR, Dec 22: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Monday held an interaction with an international delegation of scholars and Tai Khamti elders at Chongkham in Namsai district, focusing on the preservation of the community's language, cultural heritage and ancient manuscripts.

The meeting underscored the need for documentation, research and digitisation to safeguard indigenous knowledge systems in the state.

International scholars included Dr Yashwant Pathak, Professor at the University of South Florida, Devesh Pandit, ICCS USA board member and executive director of the Research Institute of World's Ancient Traditions, Cultures and Heritage (RIWATCH) Vijay Swami, along with Tai Khamti elders and executive members of Pali Vidyapeeth at Chongkham.

"The discussions focused on cultural heritage, language and ancient manuscripts of the Tai Khamti community, highlighting their rich literary and oral traditions and the central role of language in preserving identity and indigenous knowledge," Mein said in a post on X after the interaction.

Mein said the exchange of views 'underscored the importance of



documentation, research and digitisation to safeguard these invaluable cultural assets', and added that such efforts would also help strengthen civilisational linkages with neighbouring regions for future generations.

Bhutan and Sri Lanka to the Centre for Tai Khamti Language and Folk Culture at Chongkham," the deputy chief minister said.

He termed the engagement a significant step in promoting global academic collaboration around Arunachal Pradesh's indigenous heritage.

The visiting delegation was led by RIWATCH executive director

Vijay Swami. Mein observed that the presence of international researchers reflects the growing global engagement with Arunachal Pradesh's indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage, and reaffirmed the state government's commitment to preserving and promoting the diverse cultural traditions of its indigenous communities. (PTI)

Army to conduct expedition to sacred Topo Gone peak in Arunachal

ITANAGAR, Dec 22: The Army will organise an expedition to the holy Topo Gone, a pilgrimage site of the Galo community in Arunachal Pradesh's Shi Yomi district, from January 19 to 24 next year, an official said on Monday.

Topo Gone is a 2,900-metre peak along the McMahon Line, and it finds mention in the folklore and folktales of the community.

A 24-member expedition team, including four women, will embark on the expedition, jointly organised by the Army and the Galo Welfare Society (GWS), from January 19.

A senior army official said the expedition will mark a landmark collaboration in preserving the indigenous cultural fabric of the community.

The Indian army is committed to ensuring the pilgrimage is conducted with the highest standards of safety, dignity, and logistical precision, the official said.

In a recent meeting with the Army, GWS Research and Documentation chairman Moi Bagra shared the historical significance of the Topo Gone. He highlighted how the peak has served as a vital ancestral landmark symbolising the resilience and heritage of the Galo people.

Priest Mogi Ori emphasised the religious importance of the expedition, which aims to reconnect the community with a spiritual meridian that has been geographically challenging to access for generations.

During the discussion, the opening up of the area by the Defence and Home Ministry for civilian access, development of tourism infrastructure, and strengthening of national security and territorial sovereignty were discussed.

The expedition will be flagged off from the Aalo Brigade in West Siang district on January 19. (PTI)

APSCS&T observes National Mathematics Day at AP Science Centre



ITANAGAR, Dec 22: The Arunachal Pradesh State Council for Science and Technology (APSCS&T) on Monday observed National Mathematics Day at the Arunachal Pradesh Science Centre, marking the 138th birth anniversary of legendary mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan.

The celebration paid tribute to Ramanujan's extraordinary contributions to mathematical analysis, number theory, infinite series and continued fractions, achieved despite his limited formal training in pure mathematics.

As part of the celebrations, APSCS&T organised a series of academic and outreach activities through-

out the month.

A lecture programme held on December 6 at Government Secondary School, Mani, featured Dr Neelabja Chatterjee, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics, NERIST, who spoke on the importance of mathematics in daily life. Another lecture was organised on December 11 at Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya (VKV), Nirjuli, where Dr Dakjum Eshi, Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics, Rajiv Gandhi University, delivered a talk titled "Mathematics Is Not a Monster: From Fear to Fun Through Puzzles and Patterns."

In addition, competitions including drawing, quiz, extempore speech and

model-making were conducted on December 16, 2025, in collaboration with VKV, Itanagar.

Around 70 students from various schools across the Itanagar Capital Region participated.

The winners were felicitated during the main programme on December 22. In the quiz competition, Lomra Tacho and Tai Asha of Government Secondary School, Itanagar, secured first place.

Rakli B Bagra of VKV, Itanagar, won the model-making competition. Aryan Parasar of VKV, Chimpur, and Tai Jarma of Ramakrishna Public School, Itanagar, secured first and second positions respectively in the extempore speech competition, while Jigyasha Das of VKV, Itanagar, won the drawing competition.

The main programme commenced at 10 am with ceremonial lamp lighting and floral tributes to Ramanujan.

Dr Arun Joram, Lecturer, RGGP, Itanagar, attended as chief guest, while Dr Pakngu Lombi, Deputy Director, APSCS&T, presided over the event. Mrs Gem Peri Tayeng, Education Officer, Arunachal Pradesh Science Centre, was also present.

Cash prizes, mementos and certificates were distributed to the winners by the dignitaries.

The programme concluded with a Taramandal show for students, adding an interactive and educational dimension to the National Mathematics Day celebrations.

Arunachal: Cong flags ₹ 130-crore land compensation scam, seeks probe

ITANAGAR, Dec 22: The Congress on Monday alleged a ₹ 130-crore land compensation scam linked to the Lada-Sarli stretch of the Arunachal Frontier Highway project and accused the BJP-led governments at the Centre and the state of failing to ensure transparency and accountability.

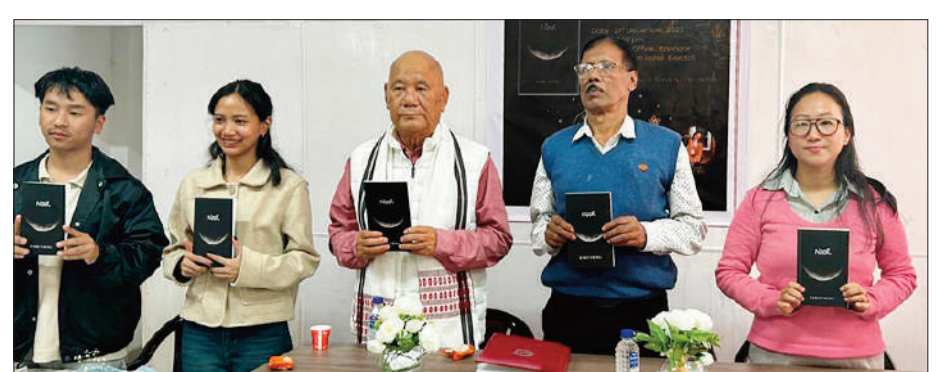
Addressing a press conference, Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Bosiram Siram termed the case one of the biggest land compensation scams in the state's history and demanded immediate corrective action.

Siram said the scale of the alleged irregularities, ranging from manipulation of land records and fraudulent claims to inflated compensation and misuse of public funds, points to a 'well-orchestrated scam' rather than an administrative lapse.

Such a magnitude of financial wrongdoing, he said, could not have occurred without political patronage or wilful negligence at higher levels. The APCC chief demanded that the state government issue a comprehensive white paper on the case, detailing the land acquisition process, verification of records, identification of beneficiaries, disbursement of compensation, and the roles of officials and political executives. He said the document should be made public within a month to restore public trust.

Siram further sought the resignation of Union minister Kiren Rijiju, Chief Minister Pema Khandu, and state home minister Mama Natung on moral grounds, alleging direct or indirect responsibility and failure to prevent or act against the alleged scam. (PTI)

Din Din Club, APLS host book launch and literary session in Itanagar



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Dec 22: A Book Launch-Literary Session jointly organised by the Din Din Club and the Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society (APLS) was held recently at the APLS Office in E-Sector here, drawing over 30 writers, literary enthusiasts and dignitaries.

The programme began with the launch of Noor, the debut poetry collection of Radhe Yarang.

Din Din Club president Wanggo Socia inaugurated the session and spoke on the objectives of the club, stressing the need to identify, mentor and encourage young writers.

Senior literary figures, including APLS president Y D Thongchi, R N Koley, Dr Bompi Riba and Dr Mogge Basar, were felicitated in recognition of their contributions to literature and academia. The author read select poems from her collection and reflected on her writing journey, acknowledging the support of her family, friends and teachers.

Offering critical feedback, Dr Bompi Riba advised emerging writers to seek sound editorial guidance and cultivate originality in their

work. A brief interaction followed, during which Wanggo Socia recalled encouraging Radhe Yarang to publish after noticing her potential at Din Din Club meetings.

The literary session featured poetry recitations by Kamwang Wangsu, Tania Mite and Nyoki Siram, who presented Hindi poems on themes of love and longing.

Motivational addresses by Dr Mogge Basar and Y D Thongchi urged participants to continue writing and highlighted the support extended by APLS and Din Din Club to budding authors.

Additional readings were presented by Kapu Sanjay and Cha Ong Rangiang, while Dr Bompi Riba concluded the session with recitations of her poems To Study or Not to Study and Talar. The programme ended with a vote of thanks by Cha Ong Rangiang, General Secretary of Din Din Club, followed by a group photograph.

Organisers said the event reinforced literary engagement in the capital and provided an encouraging platform for young and emerging writers.

APLSA opens legal aid clinic at Chimpur Police Station

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Dec 22: The Arunachal Pradesh State Legal Services Authority (APLSA) on Monday inaugurated a Legal Aid Clinic at Police Station Chimpur to enhance access to legal assistance at the grassroots level. The clinic was inaugurated by APLS Member Secretary Yomge Ado in the presence of Kengo Dirchi, SDPO, Itanagar, and Niraj Nishant, Officer-in-Charge of Police Station Chimpur. Police personnel, advocates, office-bearers

of the Chimpur Youth Association, local vendors and other stakeholders also attended the programme.

Officials said the Legal Aid Clinic will provide legal awareness and free legal services to people in need, particularly vulnerable sections, and will facilitate timely legal guidance at the police station level.

The initiative is aimed at strengthening access to justice and promoting legal literacy among the public.

Arunachal weathers turbulent 2025 amid diplomatic row, protests, natural disasters

ITANAGAR, Dec 22: Arunachal Pradesh faced a challenging year in 2025, which saw a diplomatic row over the harassment of an Arunachalee woman at Shanghai airport, protests against a power project and natural disasters affecting over 16,000 people.

The year also witnessed the NDA's dominance in the political sphere with the BJP winning a majority of zilla parishad and gram panchayat constituencies and emerging victorious in civic elections.

The BJP bagged 170 out of 245 zilla parishad member (ZPM) seats, including 59 uncontested ones, establishing its clear dominance at the district level. The party won 14 of the 20 wards in the Itanagar Municipal Corporation elections, while it got two wards, and its partner Peoples' Party of Arunachal (PPA) secured five in the Pasighat Municipal Council. The opposition Congress failed to open its account in both civic bodies.

The year's most-talked-about episode was the ordeal of Pema Wangjom Thongdok, an Arunachal Pradesh native residing in the UK, who was allegedly detained for nearly 18 hours at Shanghai airport in November while transiting from London to Japan.

According to her, Chinese immigration refused to recognise her Indian passport, declaring it "invalid" because the document listed Arunachal Pradesh as her birthplace. She also claimed that officials at the airport allegedly insisted Arunachal was "part of China" and pressured her to accept their claim.

"I was held at Shanghai airport for over 18 hours...They called my Indian passport invalid because my birthplace is Arunachal Pradesh, which they claimed is Chinese territory," she had written on X, describing deprivation of food and facilities.

The Centre had immediately issued a

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strong demarche to the Chinese side, with the Indian consulate in Shanghai intervening in the matter.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu condemned the incident as "unacceptable, unlawful and an affront to India's sovereignty".

On the domestic front, the proposed 11,000-MW Siang Upper Multipurpose Project, considered India's counter initiative to a big Chinese dam, faced fierce resistance from the indigenous Adi community people, who had held



protests claiming that the initiative could lead to displacement and irreversible ecological damage.

Villagers and organisations like the Siang Indigenous Farmers Forum (SIFF) alleged that the project was being pushed without their consent. Communities feared submergence of 27 villages and displacement of 1.5 lakh people, along with loss of agricultural land, deforestation, and threats to fragile ecosystems.

Even culturally significant sites like

Kekar Moying, linked to the Anglo-Abor war, were perceived as at risk.

Acknowledging anxieties, Khandu said hydropower generation is only a by-product, asserting, "The real objective of the project is to save the Siang river and the communities that have depended on it for generations." He also assured, "If you don't want a dam... Chapter closed."

Experts, however, dubbed the Siang project a strategic one as it could potentially mitigate risks of the Chinese dam

being constructed in the upper stream of the Brahmaputra river.

A major corruption controversy also came to the fore during the year over compensation for the Lada-Sarli stretch of the Frontier Highway project in East Kameng district.

Local organisations alleged that payments were made for non-existent land and assets, while genuine landowners were deprived.

Following a preliminary probe, the state government suspended four officials - the DFO, district agriculture officer, district horticulture officer and district land revenue and settlement officer - and recommended suspension of the deputy commissioner. Later, one of the four officers was arrested.

Claiming that preliminary findings revealed "massive misuse" of funds, Khandu asserted that his government would not tolerate this, and the misused money would also be recovered.

The arrest of four people by Arunachal Pradesh Police for allegedly sharing sensitive security-related information with Pakistani handlers also drew media attention.

The arrests were made in Itanagar Capital Region, Aalo in West Siang district and Miao in Changlang, following

coordinated intelligence inputs. Cases were registered under multiple provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Official Secrets Act, highlighting heightened counter-espionage action in the sensitive border state.

One of the deadliest road accidents of the year was reported from the remote Anjaw district, where a mini-truck with 22 labourers on board from Assam's Tinsukia district plunged into a gorge on the Hayuliang-Chaglagam road on December 8, killing at least 18 people and leaving several others missing.

A multi-agency operation involving the Army, NDRF, police and civil administration was launched to locate and retrieve the bodies, underscoring the challenges of disaster response in Arunachal Pradesh's far-flung border areas.

Monsoon rains caused destruction across 26 districts, killing 16 people, affecting nearly 40,000, and damaging over 670 houses.

From international confrontation to local unrest and disaster response, 2025 etched a defining chapter for Arunachal Pradesh, a year that tested its institutions, emboldened its communities and reaffirmed its strategic importance. (PTI)

Bihar CM Nitish Kumar, Dy CM Samrat Choudhary call on PM



NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Monday called on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a month after retaining charge of the eastern state following the NDA's landslide victory in the assembly election.

Kumar was accompanied by Bihar Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader Samrat Choudhary and JD(U) leader and Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh during his meeting with the prime minister.

"Chief Minister of Bihar, Shri @NitishKumar, Deputy CM, Shri @samrat4bjp and Union Minister, Shri @LalanSingh_1 met Prime Minister @narendramodi today," the Prime Minister's Office said on 'X'. After the meeting, Choudhary said that following the resounding mandate received by the NDA in Bihar, the chief minister, he and Singh had a courtesy meeting with PM Modi, the "world's most popular leader". "Under the guidance and leadership of esteemed Modi ji, the country and Bihar are continuously progressing. During this time, valuable guidance was also received on the goals of a developed Bihar." Choudhary wrote on 'X' in Hindi.

Earlier, Union Home Minister Amit Shah met the Bihar chief minister, who had arrived here on Sunday for a two-day visit.

During the meeting at Shah's residence, the leaders discussed various issues related to the development of the state.

The issue of expansion of the state cabinet is likely to figure prominently in Kumar's talks with NDA leaders during the visit, with the exercise expected to take place after Makar Sankranti. Election to the 243-member Bihar assembly was held in November, in which the NDA secured 202 seats and Kumar returned as chief minister for the 10th term in office. Among the NDA partners, the BJP won 89 seats, the JD-U bagged 85, the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) 19, Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) five and Rashtriya Lok Morcha won four seats. (PTI)

Leadership issue needs to be resolved locally, says Parameshwara

BENGALURU, Dec 22: Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said any differences or confusions within the party over the leadership issue in the state have to be resolved locally as instructions have come from the AICC president.

The senior Congress leader met Mallikarjun Kharge at this residence here, which he termed as personal and nothing to do with politics.

"I met the Congress president, but our relationship is different. We have a family relationship, so, I discussed family matters, not politics. I did not speak even a word of politics with him," Parameshwara told reporters after meeting Kharge.

Noting that Kharge had asked state leaders to resolve the differences locally, the home minister, responding to a question, said, "That is the message (from Congress chief). What can I comment on it?"

"Everyone of us should know, we should resolve ourselves. If the All India Congress president says that you (state leaders) resolve yourself and have nothing to do with the high command, we all have to sit together and resolve," he added.

His statement came a day after Kharge said that the confusion over the leadership issue in the party's Karnataka unit exists only at the local level and not within the party high command.

He had also said that the local leaders should take ownership of the internal disputes rather than blaming the high command.

The power tussle within the ruling party has intensified amid speculation about a change in chief minister in the state, after the Congress government reached the halfway mark of its five-year term on November 20.

The speculation was fueled by the "power-sharing" pact between Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM D K Shivakumar in 2023.

Earlier in the day, speaking to reporters, Parameshwara said since the instructions have come from the AICC president to resolve locally, it should be followed.

Demolition of MGNREGA to have catastrophic consequences: Sonia

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Monday warned that the "demolition" of the MGNREGA will have catastrophic consequences for crores of people in rural India, and called upon all to unite and safeguard the rights that protect everyone.

In an editorial in 'The Hindu' titled "The bulldozed demolition of MGNREGA", the former Congress chief said the "death" of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act was a "collective failure".

This comes a day after President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) Bill, which replaces the MGNREGA and has a provision for 125 days of wage employment for rural workers.

"MGNREGA realised the Mahatma's vision of Sarvodaya (welfare of all) and enacted the constitutional right to work," Gandhi said. "It is imperative, now more than ever, to unite and safeguard the rights that protect us all."

She said the UPA-era employment guarantee scheme to deal with rural distress has now been "bulldozed and demolished".

The MGNREGA was a rights-based legislation inspired by Arti-

cle 41 of the Constitution, which calls upon the government to secure citizens' right to work, Gandhi said.

"Over the past few days, the Narendra Modi government worked to bulldoze MGNREGA's abolition without any discussion, consultation, or respect for parliamentary processes or Centre-State relations.

"The removal of the Mahatma's name was only the tip of the iceberg. The very structure of MGNREGA, so integral to its impact, has been annihilated," she said.

Gandhi described VB-G RAM G as "nothing but a set of bureaucratic provisions".

Reacting to the article, BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said it "reads less like a serious engagement with law or data and more like a flight of political fancy".

"It is evident that she has not read the VB-G RAM G Act, because her arguments rest on mischaracterisations, selective memory, and outright falsehoods," he charged in a post on X.

Sonia Gandhi said the Modi government's law has restricted the ambit of the scheme to rural areas as notified by the Union at its discretion.

Against uncapped central allocation, there is now a pre-determined



budgetary allocation that caps the number of days of employment provided in each state, she claimed.

The number of workdays provided is, therefore, left to the Centre's priorities rather than the people's needs, Gandhi said, adding that the all-year guarantee of employment has been finished off.

The senior Congress leader said one of the greatest impacts of MGNREGA was the increased bargaining power of the landless poor in rural India, which elevated agricultural wages.

"This bargaining power will definitely be eroded under the new law. The Modi government is attempting to suppress wage growth, and that too at a time when the proportion of employment in agriculture has risen for the first time since Independence, contrary to what should have been the case," she noted.

Gandhi also said that by transferring a significant portion of the expense onto the states, the Modi government was "discouraging" them from providing work under the scheme. The finances of states, already under severe

stress and strain, will be further devastated, the Congress leader claimed.

Under the VB-G RAM G Bill, the cost-sharing pattern is 60:40 between the Centre and states, 90:10 for northeastern and Himalayan states, and 100 per cent central funding for Union territories without legislatures.

Gandhi further claimed that aside from demolishing the demand-based nature of the programme, the Modi government has ended the decentralised nature of the scheme.

"The Modi government is resorting to fraudulent claims that it has enhanced the employment guarantee from 100 days (under MGNREGA) to 125 days. For all the reasons outlined above, that will certainly not be the case. Indeed, the real nature of the Modi government's intentions can be understood from its decade-long track record of throttling MGNREGA.

"It began with the prime minister's (in)famous mocking of the scheme on the floor of the House and proceeded apace through a 'death by a thousand cuts' strategy through, for instance, stagnant budgets, the use of disenfranchising technology and delayed payments to workers," she said.

Gandhi said the demolition of

the right to work must not be seen in isolation but as part of the long assault by the ruling establishment on the Constitution and its rights-based vision for the country.

"The most fundamental right to vote is under unprecedented assault. The Right to Information has been desecrated with legislative changes that weaken the autonomy of information commissioners," she said.

The Right to Education has been undermined and The Forest Rights Act, 2006, was markedly weakened by the Forest (Conservation) Rules (2022), which removed the gram sabha from any role in permitting the diversion of forest land, the Congress leader said, adding The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, has been significantly diluted.

"Through the three black farm laws, the government attempted to deny farmers the right to a minimum support price. The National Food Security Act, 2013, may very well be next on the chopping block," Gandhi said.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said that in the next few days, the Congress will announce a public agitation campaign to repeal the VB-G RAM G Act that abolished MGNREGA. (PTI)

National Herald case: Delhi HC seeks Gandhis' reply on ED plea against trial court order

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: The Delhi High Court on Monday asked Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and others to respond to a plea by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) challenging the order of the trial court that refused to take cognisance of its chargesheet against them in the National Herald case.

Justice Ravinder Dubeja issued notice to the Gandhis and others on the main petition as well as on the ED's application seeking a stay on the December 16 trial court order, which held that cognisance of the agency's complaint in the case was "impermissible in law" as it was not founded on an FIR.

The high court listed the matter for further hearing on March 12, 2026.

Besides Gandhis, the high court issued notices to Suman Dubey, Sam Pitroda, Young Indian, Dotex Merchandise Pvt Ltd and Sunil Bhandari on the ED's plea.

While Solicitor General Tushar Mehta represented the ED in the case, senior advocates Abhishek Singhvi and R S Cheema represented the Gandhis.

In its order, the trial court had said that an investigation and the consequent prosecution complaint (equivalent to a chargesheet) pertain-

ing to the offence of money laundering is "not maintainable" in the absence of an FIR for the offence mentioned in the schedule to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). It said the agency's probe stemmed from a private complaint and not an FIR.

During the hearing on Monday, Mehta contended that the trial court with its view has gone "horribly wrong" and this would affect other cases also. He said after investigation, the ED officials gather evidence and other material and, like the police files a report, the ED files a prosecution complaint.

Singhvi disputed the submissions made on behalf of ED but said he will accept notice and file a reply in the matter. "I want to say something. I am only saying that there is a perspective which is contrary to what my friend is saying," he said.

The ED, in its plea, said the trial court order has in effect given a hall pass to a category of money launderers only on the ground that the scheduled offence is reported by a private individual by way of a complaint to a magistrate.

It claimed there are such grave allegations levelled against Gandhis and others which cannot be brushed aside lightly by relying upon ju-

dicial precedents cited to conclude that the ingredients of the criminal offences alleged are lacking.

The ED said the trial court order suffers from the vice of judicial legislation which the special judge appears to be admittedly cognisant of.

"The sole ground given for declining cognisance is that a prosecution complaint filed by an authorised officer under the PMLA cannot be based on a scheduled offence emanating from a private complaint filed by a private individual and such scheduled offence must be registered only by a Law Enforcement Agency, that is, either by way of an FIR by the police or a complaint by a person authorised to investigate the scheduled offence," the plea said.

The trial court, in its order, said cognisance upon the complaint being liable to be declined on a question of law, other arguments relating to the merits of the allegations are not required to be adjudicated upon.

The trial court said that despite receiving the complaint made by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy and the consequent summoning order in 2014, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) refrained from registering an FIR in relation to the alleged scheduled offence. (PTI)

Gross errors in SIR exercise conducted so far by EC in West Bengal: Mamata

KOLKATA, Dec 22: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday lashed out at the Election Commission, alleging that there were "gross errors" in the draft rolls published following the enumeration phase of the SIR in the state.

Addressing a meeting of TMC's Booth Level Agents (BLAs) at the Netaji Indoor Stadium here, she also blundered at an exercise "riddled with blunders from A to Z".

Banerjee alleged that the EC was appointing observers without informing the state government, and working to foster the BJP's interests.

"The Election Commission is working only as per the directions of the BJP. There are gross errors in mapping of voters during the enumeration phase of the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise in the state," she claimed.

Alleging that thousands of "legitimate voters" have found their names deleted from the draft rolls, Banerjee said, "We don't know how the problems of so many genuine electors can be solved in so little time."

In the draft electoral rolls published after the enumeration phase, 58,20,899 names have been excluded, reducing the electorate to 7.08 crore in West Bengal.

Around 1.36 crore entries have also been flagged for "logical discrepancies", while 30 lakh voters were categorised as unmapped – a significant percentage of whom are likely to be called for verification hearings over the next 45 days.

The TMC supremo also asserted that central officers who have been appointed micro observers for SIR hearings have little knowledge of the local language, and are "unfit" to conduct the verifications during the second phase of the ongoing revision exercise.

"Several central agencies have played a role in appointing BLOs. They have also appointed observers without our knowledge. The state will extend all cooperation to them, but I must know the

details of all these people, including where they live and which departments they serve," Banerjee stated.

The chief minister accused the EC of "forcefully" conducting the exercise, "which takes two years to complete", within two months, ahead of the assembly elections so that the state is unable to carry out its development activities for a good six months.

"I have never seen such a shameless commission in the past, nor do I want to see a repeat of this current poll body in the future," she said.

Without directly referring to Banerjee's own Bhabanipur assembly constituency in south Kolkata from where nearly 45,000 names were deleted in the draft rolls, Banerjee said, "Several wards in the Kolkata municipal area underwent delimitations recently on account of which many addresses were realigned. That led to faulty mapping in the SIR rolls. This isn't the fault of the BLOs, it's an error of the commission".

At that gathering of about 14,000 BLAs of the Trinamool Congress from Kolkata and its adjacent areas, Banerjee instructed party workers to reach out to all voters whose names have been erroneously deleted, and to remain vigilant about "outsiders trying to get their names included".

"Our BLAs must reach voters at block levels, help them in filing their claims and objections and assist them during hearing sessions. Our councilors must assist the BLAs, wherever required. We will take strong action against councilors who will remain inactive during this phase."

"Attempts are being made by outsiders to get their names included in voters' lists. You must remain vigilant, identify these people and raise objections," she said.

Banerjee also reassured the Matua community members, and those belonging to minority communities to not worry about disenfranchisement. (PTI)



"I don't know with what meaning he has said it, and what instructions may come in the future. But, we will have to follow his directions," he added.

The home minister said Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress president, and Siddaramaiah are likely to go to Delhi to attend the Congress Working Committee meeting on December 27. "During the visit they may meet high command."

Responding to a question on his earlier statement that high command should resolve the issue at the earliest, Parameshwara said his intention is that there should be no issues or confusion, as it may have an impact on administration.

"We should resolve issues and focus on promises made to people. Internal differences should not be important, governance is important. We should rectify things and give people good governance."

"If issues persist, it may have an impact on administration, as it may cause confusion among officials. Such things have happened in the past. So, I want issues to be resolved and a right message should go to everyone," he said.

On some seers in Tumkur pitching him for the CM post, Parameshwara said it is their opinion and feeling, and they have expressed it. "I won't say it is wrong."

Regarding the demand for a Dalit CM, he said, "You (media) are saying that there is such a demand everywhere."

Parameshwara, a senior Dalit leader, is seen as a prime contender for the CM post, if a leader from the community is considered, in case of leadership change in the state. (PTI)

Largest wholesaler arrested in codeine syrup case granted license under SP's govt: UP CM

LUCKNOW, Dec 22: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday strongly rebutted allegations by Leader of the Opposition Mata Prasad Pandey over "deaths" due to consumption of fake medicines and codeine syrup, asserting in the Assembly that no such case has come to the notice of the state government so far.

He said that cases related to illegal diversion of the syrup were being pursued under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, and the state government successfully defended its stand in court.

Launching a sharp attack on the Samajwadi Party, Adityanath alleged that the largest wholesaler involved in the codeine syrup case, first arrested by the special task force (STF) in 2016, was issued a license when the SP government was in power.

Referring to photographs circulating in the public domain, he said, "Whenever such issues come up nationally, some people immediately flee the country. I think the same may be happening with your people as well."

Odisha govt to spend ₹ 160 cr for development of tourism in Koraput

KORAPUT, Dec 22: Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said ₹160 crore would be spent for the development of tourism in the tribal-dominated Koraput district.

Majhi made the announcement on Sunday while addressing the five-day 'Paraba' festival organised by the district administration.

"The state government will spend at least ₹ 160 crore for the development of tourism in the district," he said.

Majhi said the unparalleled natural beauty of Koraput attracts visitors from across the world.

"From Deomali, the highest peak of Odisha, to Duduma waterfall, Gupteswar and ancient Jain temples, the district has everything to emerge as a major tourism hub," he said.

The CM said the district has set an example with its unique produce such as Koraput coffee, millets, black turmeric and 'kala jeera' rice. "Its natural resources are abundant, and the bauxite found here is among the best in the world," he said. (PTI)

Govt prepares plan for dual-use green field airport at Great Nicobar

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: The central government has prepared an ambitious plan for the construction of a dual-use green field international airport at Great Nicobar that will play an important role in the country's national security and in promoting tourism.

According to the Detailed Project Report (DPR) prepared for the strategic airport, it will be developed as a dual-use military airfield with the control of the airside and Air Traffic Control with the Indian Navy and civil apron control and associated passenger-related facilities with the Airports Authority of India (AAI).

Great Nicobar is the southernmost and largest of the Nicobar Islands. Andaman and Nicobar Islands' main city, Port Blair, is located at a distance of more than 500 km from the island whereas international destinations like Phuket and part of the Sumatra islands are within a distance of 500 km from the proposed airport.

Apart from strategic needs, the airport will ensure ease of connectivity and hence present a great opportunity for tourism-oriented



development that would put Andaman and Nicobar Islands on the map of global tourist destinations as well, according to the DPR.

The Indian mainland is at least 1500 km from this island, with cities like Delhi ranging at a distance of approximately 3000 km, while Calcutta and Mumbai are located at a distance of 1,850 and 2,250 km respectively. Singapore, Vietnam, Bali etc. are within a range of 1000 to 1500 km from the proposed airport.

The Great Nicobar island is situated at the foot of the Andaman and Nicobar islands and extends from Ranganatha Bay on the east coast to southwards to Galathea Bay and around the corner of Indira Point to Pemayya Bay.

The island of Sumatra is located barely at a distance of 180 km to the south of the Indira point which is also known as the southernmost tip of India. The island covers a total area of approximately 910 sq km with the majority of the island

designated as 'Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve'.

The proposed site is located along the sea in between Gandhi Nagar and Shastri Nagar area on the South side of the Island. The site is accessible by a road connecting Galathea Bay to Campbell Bay at a distance of approximately 30 km from Campbell Bay.

The site is surrounded by hills and necessary site grading has been planned to facilitate safe aircraft operations. The flight path of the aircraft will run over the sea, and there will be minimal disturbance due to the overflying of aircraft at low altitude. The runway at this site is oriented in an approximate north/south direction which is suitable for the prevailing wind direction, according to the DPR.

The island's original inhabitants are the Shompen and Nicobarese tribes. The DPR also mentioned about the Great Nicobar Development Plan, which is a massive infrastructure plan envisaged by the government and includes a major transhipment port, airport and future strategic defence for the southern tip of Great Nicobar island. (PTI)

**OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT PRIMARY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL, DIPHU**

No: KAAC/DPED/SIU-198-208/2025-26/1560

Dt. 20/12/2025

ADVERTISEMENT

In the interest of Public Service, and with a view to improving the quality of education and strengthening remedial learning in Single-Teacher Schools, located in far-flung areas of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts under the Administrative control of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu and to improve the quality of Primary Education in compliance with the mandate of Section-29 (2) (f) of RTE Act, 2009, and Constitutional provision at Para -6 (1) read with article 244 (2) of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, and in conformity with the objective stated under Para 2.3,4,9, and 4.10 of NEP, 2020, and in pursuance of Additional Secretary, i/c PED, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu vide letter No.PED/KAAC/PED/Pt-File/Apptt./4048 dated 18/12/2025, applications are invited from eligible Sixth Schedule TET, ATET and CTET qualified candidates of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts for appointment to the post of Assistant Teacher for filling up of 198 (one hundred ninety eight) numbers of regular sanctioned vacant posts in Lower Primary Schools in the notified Special Focus Areas under Primary Education Department, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu. The List of Notified Special Focus Area Schools is enclosed at Annexure-A.

The vacancies may vary due to administrative reasons. The Primary Education Department, KAAC, Diphu reserves the right to make changes in sequences of the recruitment process after publication of the advertisement.

The aspiring candidates must be ready to serve in the Special Focused Area Schools as Notified by the Department of School Education vide Notification No:KAAC/Edn-(H)/Pt-XI/2096 Dated 08/07/2025.

Conditions of Recruitment: -

- The candidates of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong Districts of Assam, who have passed the Special Sixth Schedule TET, Assam TET and Central TET for Lower Primary School will be eligible for applying.
- Either the Language-I or the Language-II of Special Sixth Schedule TET of Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong Districts, Assam TET and Central TET candidates shall match the medium of instruction of the school, and also possess desired Language Proficiency (Speaking Skill) for the school. Please see the Notified Special Focus Area Schools with required Language proficiency.
- Preference will be given to candidates from the local area.
- Proficiency in Mother Tongue/Local Language as notified for the school will be given preference.
- The appointment shall be non-transferable for a minimum continuous period of 5 (five) years.
- Every Candidate so appointed shall, prior to joining, execute an undertaking on a non-judicial stamp paper of Rs. 10/- (Rupees ten) only affirming their consent to the mandatory service requirement and non-transferability during the specified period. The said undertaking shall be duly notarized.
- The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu reserves the right to modify, postpone, or cancel the recruitment process at any stage.
- Candidates must be medically fit and of good moral character.
- A candidate must not be less than 18 years of age and not more than 40 years for unreserved category, 42 years for Ex-Servicemen, 43 years for OBC/ MOBC and 45 years for SC/ ST (P)/ST (H) and 50 years for Persons with Disability (PWD), as on 1st January, 2026.
- The eligible candidates can apply by submitting the documents as per the check list **from 22nd December, 2025 to 3rd January, 2026 till 04:00 PM** in the office of the District Primary Education Officer, Primary Education Department, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu during office hours.
- The candidature will be cancelled forthwith, if any kind of fraudulence/ discrepancy/ misrepresentation of facts submitted by the candidate is detected by appropriate authority at any point of time. The candidate will also be barred from taking part in any Govt. recruitment process in future and subsequent legal action will also be initiated against such candidate.
- The contractual teachers already working in LP/UP Schools under Samagra Shiksha are not allowed to apply.
- The candidate must apply in the prescribed Form of application along with a KAAC Money Receipt of Rs. 50/- (for ST/SC) & of Rs. 100/- (for others).
- Candidates are required to appear for physical verification of original documents and screening test which will be intimated later on.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Eligibility Criteria for LP Schools as per Department of School Education, KAAC Notification No. KAAC/Edn-(H)/Pt-XI/2096 Dated 08/07/2025.

Sl. No.	Category of Post	Essential Qualification & Experiences	Marking/Weightage
1	Assistant Teacher for Lower Primary School	Higher Secondary/ Senior Secondary (or its equivalent) with at least 50% marks	5% of marks secured in Higher Secondary/ Senior Secondary or equivalent Examinations.
		And 2-year Diploma in Elementary Education (by whatever name known)	5% of marks secured in Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed) or Bachelor of Elementary Education (D.El.Ed) examination or Diploma in Education (Special Education)
		Sixth Schedule TET, Assam TET or Central TET for Lower Primary.	75% of marks secured in Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET) for Lower Primary Schools.
		Language Proficiency - Speaking Skill Oral Test only- Total 20- Marks	10% of Marks secured in Language Proficiency Test conducted in the interview
		(Non-Essential) 1. NCC Certificate - 5 marks for "C" Certificate and 3 marks for "B" Certificate Or 2. 5 marks for participation/ achievement in recognized sports at National Level or beyond representing State or Nation. Or 3. 5 marks for participation/ achievement in recognized Fine Arts and Cultural Activities representing State at National Level or Beyond representing State or Nation (organized by recognized institutions).	5 Marks (Maximum) Even if the candidate possesses all the three qualification/ achievements.
Maximum Total Marks		100	

- The candidates having Not Clear (NC) status against any qualification will not be eligible to apply.
- Betterment/ Improvement of Marks in respect of Higher Secondary/ Senior Secondary or equivalent Examination will be considered only in the same subjects which were originally taken by the Candidates. Only the 1st betterment examination/ improvement of marks will be taken into account.
- Selection Process: The Selection of the candidates shall be strictly in order of merit and as per the Recruitment Rules Notified by Department of School Education KAAC.
- Documents required(Self Attested):

(Check List):

- Passport Size Photograph.
- HSLC Admit Card.
- HSSLC Mark-sheet and Certificate.
- Any other Mark-sheet and Certificate of higher education.
- 2 (Two) Years D.El.Ed Mark sheet and Certificate.
- Caste Certificate (in case of SC/ ST (P)/ST (H)/OBC/MOBC).
- Document in support Resident.
- Certificate and Mark sheet of Sixth Schedule TET/ATET/CTET.
- Candidates with disabilities will have to enclose certificates of disabilities issued by Govt. authority.
- Certificate of Ex-servicemen issued by the Director, Sainik Welfare Board.

Note:

Canvassing directly or indirectly will lead to cancellation of candidature.

STANDARD APPLICATION FORM

For candidate qualified in Sixth Schedule TET/ATET/CTET				
Sixth Schedule TET/ATET/CTET Roll No. :			Year of passing :	
Language-I		Language -II.....		
Name of candidate:				
Date of Birth:				
Gender:				
Caste:				
Father's Name:				
Mother's Name:				
Mobile No.:				
Permanent Address:			Present Address:	
Physically Handicapped (Yes/No):				
Qualification	Year of Passing	Mark obtained	Total Marks	Percentage
HSSLC:				
Graduation				
TET				
2 Years D El Ed				
Language Proficiency :				
Co-curricular activities (if any):				

Declaration

I hereby declare that the information submitted herein are true and correct. I understand that in the event of particulars or information given herein being found false or incorrect, my candidature for the recruitment is liable to be rejected or cancelled. In the event of my misstatement/discrepancy in the particulars if detected, after my appointment, my service shall be terminated without any notice to me.

Signature of Candidate

ANNEXURE-A

Sl. No	District Name	Name of Block	School Code	School Name	Medium of Instruction (L-1)	Language- 2	Dominant Tribe	Required Language Proficiency (Specify Language)
1	KARBI ANGLONG	BOKAJAN	18190201709	MONGBUNG ENGLISH L.P	ENGLISH	Karbi	KUKI	Kuki and English
2	KARBI ANGLONG	BOKAJAN	18190201708	MOLSANG ENGLISH L.P	ENGLISH	Karbi	KUKI	Kuki and English
3	KARBI ANGLONG	BOKAJAN	18190201707	MOL HOI ENGLISH L.P	ENGLISH	Karbi	KUKI	Kuki and English
4	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191100601	LANGCHITUNG L.P.S	Assamese/English/Karbi	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
5	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191100901	UPPER CHAPONG L.P.S	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
6	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191101801	BINHUM ENGLISH L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
7	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191102003	TORTELANSO ENGLISH L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
8	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191103102	DUNGKEK LANGSO L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
9	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191103103	PRANPRISO ENGLISH L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
10	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191103108	LANGMEKLU L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
11	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191103110	PRANPRI LANGSO L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
12	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191103115	TARLONG L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
13	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191103118	LONGKIRAM TERON L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
14	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191103501	UPPER SELAWOR L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
15	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18191103506	LOCHINLANGSO L.P.S	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
16	KARBI ANGLONG	LANGSOMEPI	18190510613	JOYSING RONGPI ENGLISH L.P SCHOOL	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
17	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190501612	DOLONGBARI L.P SCHOOL	Assamese	English	Chakma	Bengali/Assamese
18	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190502101	BORLANGFER MODEL ENGLISH	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	English / karbi
19	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190502117	ARTHEMLANGSO L.P SCHOOL	Assamese / Karbi	English	Chakma	Bengali/Assamese
20	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190502113	TRIPURI HINDI L.P	Hindi	English	Bihari (Hindi Vasi)	Hindi
21	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190502401	SIRIM LANGSO	Assamese/ Karbi	English	Karbi	English / karbi
22	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190502402	ARLONG PHARLA L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	English / karbi
23	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190502407	LANGKAJAN L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi / chakma / garo	karbi / chakma / garo
24	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190510607	MONGJANG L.P	English	Karbi	Kuki	English / kuki
25	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190513004	PITAJAL L.P	English	Karbi	Kuki	English / kuki
26	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190513005	VONGJANG L.P	English	Karbi	Kuki	English / kuki
27	KARBI ANGLONG	LUMBAJONG	18190513012	GANGJANG ENGLISH L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Kuki	English / kuki
28	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190601209	RONGTEKE L.P	English/Karbi	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI/ASSAMESE
29	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190601234	ANJOK RONGPI L.P SCHOOL	English/Karbi	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI/ASSAMESE
30	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606904	HANGIK LANGSO L.P	Assamese	English	KARBI	KARBI/ASSAMESE
31	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606907	NO. 1 BOPUNG L.P	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
32	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606908	LOWER TARAPUNG L.P	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
33	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606909	JPI L.P	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
34	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606910	PITILANGSO L.P	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
35	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606911	UPPER TARAPUNG L.P	Assamese	English	KARBI	KARBI/ASSAMESE
36	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606912	BORPUNG SARTHE TIMUNG L.P	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
37	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606913	SARTHE TERANG L.P SCHOOL	English/Karbi	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
38	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606914	LONGKI ENGTI L.P SCHOOL	Assamese	English	KARBI	KARBI/ASSAMESE
39	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606915	DEROLA TOKBI L.P SCHOOL	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
40	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606920	BODOLANGSO L.P SCHOOL	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
41	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606923	LONGKIRAM KRO L.P SCHOOL	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
42	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606925	NOROI TISSO L.P SCHOOL	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
43	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606926	LANGMING TERANG L.P SCHOOL	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
44	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190606928	SARTHE RONGPI L.P SCHOOL	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
45	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190607702	BALJAN ENGLISH	English	KARBI	KARBI	KARBI
46	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190607703	NAGA RENGMA L.P	English	KARBI	RENGMA	RENGMA/KARBI
47	KARBI ANGLONG	NILJP	18190607303	PHANCHEROP L.P SCHOOL	English	KARBI	RENGMA	RENGMA/ASSAMESE
48	KARBI ANGLONG	RONGMONGVE	18190802508	THANGLONG(BARKING INGTI) L.P SCHOOL	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
49	KARBI ANGLONG	RONGMONGVE	18190802901	DA-DHORA	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese

Contd. on P-10

Contd. From P-9

ANNEXURE-A								
Propose List of Hard to Reach Area of Single Teacher School Under Primary Education Department, Karbi Anglong.								
Sl. No	District Name	Name of Block	School Code	School Name	Medium of Instruction (L-1)	Language-2	Dominant Tribe	Required Language Proficiency (Specify Language)
50	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190802903	UPPER DA DHARA L.P	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
51	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190803502	RONGINGHAN L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
52	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190803506	CHONHONG ATHOI L.P SCHOOL	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
53	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190803706	HIDIPI L.P	Assamese / Karbi	English	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
54	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190804206	PANIRAM TOKBI L.P	Assamese / Karbi	English	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
55	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190804207	HIDISO L.P	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
56	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190804218	RONGTARA TERON	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
57	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190804223	PANIRAM LEKTHE L.P SCHOOL	Assamese / Karbi	English	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
58	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190805102	PHELOSO LANGSO L.P	Assamese / Karbi	English	Karbi	Assamese
59	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190803403	CHEKSO ENGLISH L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
60	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190806408	LANGVOTHUNG ENGLISH L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
61	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190806503	LANGSOMEPI ENGLISH L.P	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
62	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190807203	BIJULI L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
63	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190807703	KHORSIM ATHOI L.P	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Assamese
64	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190807704	NO. 1 PARKUP PAHAR L.P	Assamese / Karbi	English	Karbi	Assamese
65	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190807706	BISI-IM L.P	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Assamese
66	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190809604	RAMPHI TERANG L.P SCHOOL	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
67	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190809802	RUIPI LANGSO ENGLISH L.P	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
68	KARBI ANGLONG	ROMGMONGVE	18190809902	DUMFURJURI L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi/Assamese
69	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190603715	NAHORSOLA L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
70	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190606927	BANON BEY L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
71	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190901201	ANGJOK RONGBONG RONGPHAR	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
72	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190901204	RUIPLANGSO ENGLISH L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
73	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190901502	NIHANGLANGSO L.P SCHOOL	Assamese / English / Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	English / Karbi
74	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190902001	THEDONG	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
75	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190902002	CHING THULANGSO L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
76	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190903001	THEREBASA ENGLISH	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
77	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190903003	SAMBHETI L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
78	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190903004	ANGJOK LALUNG GAON L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
79	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190903006	NOLASOSAR THE RONGPI L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
80	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190903007	SIKARI BEY L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
81	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190905501	PAKLONGKAM	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
82	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190906301	DIKRUTPI	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
83	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190906304	DIKRUTSO L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
84	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190906501	LEMTEM SINGNAR L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
85	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190906505	KHA ENGTI L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
86	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190913604	KAYA KRAMSA	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
87	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190914801	MUKASONG	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
88	KARBI ANGLONG	SAMELANGSO	18190914903	KHALA SINGNAR L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
89	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330102303	LONG DANG GAON L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	Karbi
90	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330102401	AMDUBA L.P	Assamese/Tiva	English	Tiva	Tiva
91	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330102601	BALJUNCHI L.P	Assamese/Tiva	English	Tiva	Tiva
92	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330102603	THARAKHUN CHI L.P	Assamese/Tiva	English	Tiva	Tiva
93	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330100401	MOWROH L.P	English/Tiva	Karbi	Tiva	Tiva
94	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330101203	AHOMBAROI L.P SCHOOL	Assamese / Karbi	English	Karbi	Karbi
95	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330101301	UMPACHI L.P	English/Tiva	Karbi	Tiva	Tiva
96	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330101803	BORAMLI L.P	Assamese / Karbi	English	Tiva	Tiva
97	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330103002	UMBORMON KARBI L.P SCHOOL	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
98	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330103101	UMSAMUKH L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
99	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330103405	LEMRA L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
100	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330103701	SARU AMLI L.P	Assamese / Tiva	English	Tiva	Tiva
101	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330103801	MUGAGURI L.P	Assamese/Tiva	English	Tiva	Tiva
102	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330104201	RAPADANG L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
103	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330104301	SILANG KUNCHI L.P	Assamese/Tiva	English	Tiva	Tiva
104	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330104302	GOMNASAL L.P	Assamese/Tiva	English	Tiva	Tiva
105	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330104601	NONGTHAM L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
106	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330104701	SHANGHON L.P	Assamese/Karbi	English	Karbi	Karbi
107	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330104901	KARBI HIDI L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
108	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330104902	KARBI HIDI L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
109	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330105301	BOGAJAMIN L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
110	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330105502	LUMLAER L.P	Assamese/Karbi	English	Karbi	Karbi
111	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330105503	TOKBI RUMSU L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	Karbi
112	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330105901	PANTALO L.P	English/Tiva	Karbi	Tiva	Tiva
113	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330106004	LANGKAM L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Khasi	Khasi
114	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330106005	UMLIT L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Khasi	Khasi
115	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330106602	MAILANG CHENG L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	Karbi
116	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330106603	ENGTI THENG KIRI L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	Karbi
117	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330106604	TERANG NAKAR L.P	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
118	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330106802	KRO BAMUN L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
119	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330107004	CHOPIKELOK (CHAIDILI) L.P SCHOOL	Assamese	English	Karbi	Karbi
120	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330108701	LANGTARA PHERERE L.P	Assamese/Karbi	English	Karbi	Karbi
121	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330109001	THEDONG L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	Karbi
122	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330109002	HARLAK L.P	Assamese / Karbi	English	Karbi	Karbi
123	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330109003	JASERA L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	Karbi
124	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330102602	BOR RONGKHOI L.P	Assamese/Tiva	English	Karbi	Karbi
125	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330104303	UTTANG KUNCHI L.P	Assamese/Tiva	English	Tiva	Tiva
126	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330106003	DENGHAR L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Tiva	Tiva
127	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	AMRI	18330106001	RONGCHEK NO.2	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
128	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330300201	PATIKINDOK L.P.	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
129	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330300203	MOKINDUR L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
130	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330303202	INGTI HABE L.P.	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
131	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330303203	KLENG SARPO RONGMI L.P.	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
132	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330303504	MUNDILI L.P.	English	English	Karbi	English
133	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330304108	RUIMUNG SENAR L.P SCHOOL	Assamese/Karbi	English	Karbi	English
134	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330304705	LONG-EKU L.P.	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
135	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330303201	DENGHALWALI L.P.	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
136	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330303204	ARLONGSARLANG L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
137	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330303501	KUNGRIPI L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
138	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330303503	BATLOK L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
139	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330305601	MORINTO L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
140	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330305602	CHINTHONG L.P	Assamese	English	Karbi	English
141	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330305603	HEMPHU L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
142	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330305402	LANGLONGDANG KRAMSA	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
143	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330310101	LANGSOMEPI ENGLISH	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
144	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330314501	LANG LONG DANG KRO L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
145	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330301502	KHILMULONG L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
146	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330301701	SOCHENG L.P	English/Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
147	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330314101	NINGKRENG L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
148	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330315801	BIRMAINE	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
149	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330305303	RANGSINA L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
150	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330311201	LANGIKSO	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
151	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330300301	HARLONG DONGKI L.P.	Assamese	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
152	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330309101	RONGKOR L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
153	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330303601	NONGKEDA L.P	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
154	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330305604	UMRAGI L.P.	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
155	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330305608	UMLADO L.P.	Assamese/Karbi	English	Karbi	English
156	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330311301	MURI CHINTHONG	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
157	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330300601	MURAP	English	Karbi	Nepali	Karbi
158	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330300901	LARU	English	English	Nepali	English
159	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330314004	KIRI PHANGCHO L.P.	English	English	Nepali	Nepali
160	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330311602	THONG NOKBE	English	English	Nepali	Nepali
161	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330303901	RONGKANGTUI L.P	English	English	Nepali	English
162	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	CHINTHONG	18330310701	KHLIEH UMANG	English	English	Nepali	English
163	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330715501	SIRVOMU	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
164	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330715101	PHONGJANGRE	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
165	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330715103	RONGMONGVE L.P SCHOOL	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
166	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330712003	LANGTUK THEPI	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
167	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330712004	MOLAHIN L.P	ENGLISH / KARBI	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
168	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330712007	RONGCHIRIM L.P SCHOOL	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
169	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330713101	NONGKRONG	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
170	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330721801	BILENDI ENGLISH	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
171	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330721804	TORTE APAM L.P SCHOOL	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
172	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330714901	RONGMUNPI	ENGLISH / KARBI	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
173	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330712302	SING TERON L.P SCHOOL	ENGLISH / KARBI	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
174	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330720502	C.S TERON ENGLISH L.P	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
175	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330709401	BAIDA	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
176	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330716501	LINCHIKA L.P	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
177	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330717403	RONGPI OK-HI L.P SCHOOL	ENGLISH	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
178	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330701906	DERANIHANG L.P	ENGLISH / KARBI	KARBI	Karbi	Karbi
179	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	RONGKHANG	18330718201	LONG-EPI	ENGLISH	KARBI	KARBI	Karbi
180	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	SOCHENG	18331009303	LUMUJEM L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
181	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	SOCHENG	18331003905	KHATKASALA L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Jaintia	Jaintia
182	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	SOCHENG	18331009302	JIKILOK L.P SCHOOL	English / Karbi	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
183	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	SOCHENG	18331001601	UPILANGSO L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
184	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	SOCHENG	18331002401	UM BASO L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
185	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	SOCHENG	18331005501	NANGJIRONG L.P. SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Khasi/Nepali	Khasi/Nepali
186	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	SOCHENG	18331008001	TADOLANGSO L.P SCHOOL	English	Karbi	Karbi	Karbi
187	WEST KARBI ANGLONG	SOCHENG	18331001719	RONGPARBI L.P SCHOOL				

Raphinha and Yamal score as Spanish leader Barcelona beats Villarreal at La Liga



MADRID, Dec 22: Raphinha and Lamine Yamal celebrated each other's goals with a raised arm and hands linked as Barcelona won 2-0 at 10-man Villarreal on Sunday to stay four points clear of Real Madrid at the top of La Liga.

Raphinha won a penalty after being fouled when cutting inside. He took a slow run-up and sent goalkeeper Luiz Junior the wrong

way in the 12th minute for his seventh league goal of the season and Barca's 50th.

Yamal also grabbed his seventh this season, striking from close range in the 63rd after being set up by midfielder Frenkie de Jong following a goalmouth scramble.

It was a seventh straight win in all competitions for coach Hansi Flick's side.

Barcelona was without central defender Andreas Christensen, who tore the ACL in his left knee in training on Saturday.

Villarreal defender Renato Veiga was shown a straight red card late in the first half for a heavy tackle from behind on Yamal, who briefly had treatment on the ground.

Villarreal's defeat allowed Atletico Madrid to move into third

place with a 3-0 win at Girona. Atletico has played two more games than Villarreal.

Atletico cruises to victory
Midfielder Koke put Atletico ahead in the 13th minute with a fine half-volley from just outside the penalty area and into the top right corner.

Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak made a stunning save to keep out

Axel Witsel's close-range shot midway through the half, clawing it off the line one-handed near the left post. Atletico doubled its lead in the 38th when midfielder Conor Gallagher's strike from 20 meters (yards) deflected off a defender and wrong-footed goalie Paulo Gazzaniga.

Atletico's traveling fans gave midfielder Thomas Lemar a warm welcome when he came on for Girona in the second half. The former France midfielder is on loan this season at Girona from Atletico, having played nearly 200 games for "Los Colchoneros" (The Mattress Makers) over seven seasons.

Gallagher was substituted in the 77th, having come on in the 28th for Nico Gonzalez.

Clinical Griezmann
Veteran forward Antoine Griezmann sealed Atletico's win with a clinical goal in stoppage time.

The former France star swapped quick passes on the edge of the box with fellow substitute Giacomo Raspadori, expertly controlled the ball with the outside of his right foot and guided a low shot into the opposite corner with his left.

Girona remains in 18th place in the 20-team league.

In other matches Sunday, Elche crushed Rayo Vallecano 4-0 and Real Betis beat Getafe by the same scoreline.

On Saturday, Real Madrid star Kylian Mbappé celebrated his 27th birthday with a 59th goal for Real Madrid in 2025 to equal the club record for the most in a year held by Cristiano Ronaldo. (AP)

Pakistan colts get hefty cash reward of PKR 10 million for Asia Cup title run

KARACHI, Dec 22: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif on Monday announced a special cash award of 10 million rupees for Pakistan's U19 Asia Cup-winning squad members.

The Pakistan colts thumped India by 191 runs on Sunday to claim the title. Sharif made the announcement at a reception for the team and officials in Islamabad where he lauded the team's performance.

Sarfraz Ahmed, the mentor and manager of the team, told the media after the reception that the Prime Minister has announced cash award of 10 million (Approx USD 36,000) to each of the players.

Sarfraz said he was enjoying working with a bunch of talented players who had a great future in the sport. Head coach Shahid Anwar credited win to a long process of selecting the squad and giving each player enough exposure of 50-overs cricket.

"The process started in June when we picked around 70 players after trials and then reduced the number to 20. Most of these players were then given chances to play 50-over cricket at domestic level," Anwar a former Test batsman said. (PTI)

Aston Villa beats Man United 2-1 to seal 10th straight win

MANCHESTER (ENGLAND), Dec 22: Morgan Rogers scored two brilliant solo goals to down Manchester United 2-1 and keep Aston Villa in the hunt for the Premier League title.

The win at Villa Park on Sunday was a 10th straight victory in all competitions for Unai Emery's team, which is third in the standings and three points off leader Arsenal.

Rogers whipped two curling shots into the top corner - either side of Matheus Cunha's goal for United.

The midfielder fired Villa in front in the 45th minute when cutting in from the left. His second came in the 57th - again curling the ball beyond the dive of United goalkeeper Senne Lemmens.

The win maintains Villa's outstanding run, which has seen it win 11 of its last 12 games in the league.

"Our supporters should be proud of everything we are doing together," Emery said.

Wins on Saturday for Arsenal and second-placed Manchester City saw the top two pull away. But Villa's latest victory was another show of its title credentials since recovering from a desperate start to the season.

Villa's emergence as a surprise contender comes after it lost two of its first three games and was winless in five. Now it is unbeaten in 19 games in all competitions, with 16 wins dur-



ing that run.

It was Rogers' second double in as many games after scoring twice in last week's 3-2 win at West Ham.

"Sometimes it's your day, sometimes it isn't, and luckily lately it's been my day," he told Sky Sports. "I'm feeling really confident and enjoy my football, but it's not just me, it's the team."

Defeat was another blow for United, which is seventh in the standings after winning just two of its last eight games.

But coach Ruben Amorim believes his team is heading in the right direction.

"I think we are improving ... I think we deserve so much more today, but the better team didn't win," he said.

Cunha leveled the game at 1-1 by scoring from a tight angle in the third minute of added time in the first half. He could have equalized again after the break but blew a golden chance when heading wide from in front of the goal.

"We were really unlucky today," Amorim added.

Another setback for United was an injury for Bruno Fernandes, who was substituted at half-time after pulling up late in the first half.

"I think it's soft tissues, so it's going to take a while. We'll see," Amorim said.

United were already without Kobbie Mainoo due to a calf injury and the suspended Casemiro. Bryan Mbeumo, Amad Diallo and Noussair Mazraoui were also missing because they are playing in the Africa Cup of Nations.

In their absence, academy graduates Jack Fletcher and Shea Lacey came on for their Premier League debuts in the second half. Fletcher is the son of former United midfielder Darren Fletcher. They became the first father and son to play for United in the Premier League.

"During this year, especially in this time, we have so many problems, but we have to cope with that," Amorim said. (AP)

Shakib Al Hasan shines as MI Emirates down table-toppers Desert Vipers by four wickets

DUBAI, Dec 22: Shakib Al Hasan's all-round show helped MI Emirates register a composed four-wicket victory over the table toppers Desert Vipers to extend their winning streak in the ILT20 here.

After a disciplined bowling performance in the first innings, MI Emirates overcame early pressure, before Kieron Pollard and Shakib guided the team to victory. The Desert Vipers managed to score 124 courtesy Dan Lawrence's gritty 35 off 34 balls, but MI Emirates navigated a tricky chase with relative ease.

With the ball, spinner Shakib's two wickets for 14 runs led the charge and kept the Vipers in check, before Zahoor Khan's death bowling ensured the total remained below par. In reply, MI Emirates stumbled in the powerplay and lost momentum in the middle overs, but Pollard's 26 off 15 balls flipped the contest decisively.

Even after his dismissal, Shakib held firm to see the chase through, striking the winning boundary to complete a controlled four-wicket win with 15 balls to spare. In the first innings, the Vipers made a subdued start in the powerplay, as Chris Woakes was excellent up front, conceding just 15 runs from his three overs. (PTI)

All Karbi Anglong Inter Sub-Association Athletics meet begins

HT Correspondent
HANJANGLANGSO, Dec 22: The 27th edition of the All Karbi Anglong Inter Sub-Association Athletics Meet (2025-26) commenced on Monday at the Hanjanglangso Sports Association playground, with the two-day event dedicated to the memory of late Tung-eh Longkumar Rongphar.

The meet is being organised under the aegis of the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) and has brought together athletes from various sub-associations across the district.

The inaugural ceremony was

attended by Rustom Raj Brahma, SDPO, Bokajan, and Rajen Rongpi, Athletics Secretary of KASA, among other officials and sports organisers.

The programme began with a tribute to Tung-eh Longkumar Rongphar, recalling his contributions before the start of competitive events.

Addressing the gathering, speakers including Jivan Chandra Pathak appreciated the coordinated efforts of KASA and the Hanjanglangso Sports Association in creating opportunities for grassroots athletes to display their sporting talent.

Competitions got underway at 8 am with a series of track and field events.

The opening session featured long-distance races, including the 5,000m, 1,000m and 600m events, along with field disciplines such as long jump and discus throw, drawing enthusiastic participation from athletes and spectators alike.

The athletics meet, regarded as one of the major sporting events in the district, will conclude on December 23 with the final events followed by the closing and prize distribution ceremony.

Its first Serie A win of the season Fiorentina gets what it wanted for Christmas

MILAN, Dec 22: Beleaguered Fiorentina finally got its first Serie A win of the season after its opponent played nearly the entire match with 10 men.

Fiorentina eased to a 5-1 victory at home to Udinese, which had goalkeeper Maduka Okoye sent off with less than eight minutes on the clock.

It was Fiorentina's first win in 16 league matches and saw the last-placed team cut the gap to safety to five points.

Midtable Udinese beat defending Serie A champion Napoli last weekend.

However, the visitors got off to the worst possible start as Okoye came rushing out of the penalty area and clattered into Moise Kean who was clear through on goal.

The stopper, who also touched the ball with his arm, was shown a straight red card.

Fiorentina took the lead in the 21st minute when Nicolò Fagioli tapped a free kick towards Rolando Mandragora, who fired a low shot underneath Udinese's replacement goalkeeper Razvan Sava.

Albert Gudmundsson's fine strike and Cher Ndour's header put Fiorentina comfortably ahead at halftime.

Kean scored twice after the break, either side of Omar Solet's consolation goal for Udinese.

An even earlier red
Atalanta managed to snatch a 1-0 victory against 10-man Genoa, which saw red in very similar circumstances to Udinese.



Genoa goalkeeper Nicola Leali was sent off in the third minute for a foul on Atalanta forward Gian-

luca Scamacca. Atalanta, as expected, dominated possession but Genoa —

which looked far more dangerous with its chances — remarkably appeared to have held on for a draw before Isak Hien headed in a corner in the fourth minute of stoppages.

United States midfielder Yunus Musah made his first Serie A start for Atalanta since the second round on Aug. 29.

Genoa remained two points above safety.

Safety hopes
A last-gasp equalizer from Stefano Moreo saw Pisa snatch a 2-2 draw at Cagliari.

Pisa inched to within three points of safety. Cagliari was left three points above the relegation zone.

Elsewhere, Torino won 1-0 at Sassuolo. (AP)

Cluster Block Level Sports Meet held at Manja



HT Bureau
DIPHU, Dec 22: The Cluster Block Level Sports Meet 2025-26 was successfully organised from December 20 to 21 at the 9th Mile Chandmari Playground, Manja, under the Lumbajong Development Block of Karbi Anglong district.

The event was organised by MY Bharat Kendra, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, in collaboration with Amar Youth Club, Manja.

The sports meet was inaugurated by Krishna Bhattarai, Member of Autonomous Council (MAC), Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.

President of Amar Youth Club Bikram Bhattarai delivered the welcome address and felicitated the guests, referees and officials.

The two-day programme witnessed enthusiastic participation from students, youth clubs and sports teams representing various clusters of the development block.

Group events including Volleyball (Men) and Kabaddi (Women), along with individual events such as the 100-metre race and Long Jump for both men and women, were conducted, highlighting teamwork, discipline and sportsmanship.

In Volleyball (Men), Nightingale English High School emerged champions, while Mohongdijua High School finished runners-up. In Kabaddi (Women), Nightingale English High School secured the title, with Amar Youth Club

(Women's Team) as runners-up.

In the 100-metre race (Women), Rewrew Basumatary of Mohongdijua High School won first place, followed by Dearlee Hasnu and Rengka Engtipi in second and third positions respectively.

In the men's category, Waisong Terang of Nightingale English High School secured first place, Mohen Signar of Oxford Model English High School finished second, and Ujit Munda of Manja Hindi M.E. School came third.

In the Long Jump (Men), Sarjiong Rongpi of Oxford Model English High School won first place, followed by Waisong Terang of Nightingale English High School and Bipson Engti of Oxford Model English High School.

In the Long Jump (Women), Mohongdijua High School athletes dominated the podium, with Rewrew Basumatary securing first place, Dearlee Hasnu second and Sermika Teronpi third.

Winners and runners-up were awarded trophies, medals and certificates, while medals and certificates were presented to the first, second and third position holders in all individual events.

The programme was attended by Manikanta Basumatary of MY Bharat Kendra, Diphu; Indra Aryal, former vice-president of Amar Youth Club; Tarakanta Poudel, Gaon Bura of 9th Mile Gorkha Gaon; Rabindra Subba, Gaon Bura of 9th Mile Chandmari; Balaram Sapkota, well-wisher of Amar Youth Club, and several other dignitaries.

Matt Kuchar ends the year with emotional PNC victory with his son



ORLANDO, Dec 22: Matt Kuchar couldn't imagine a better ending to a year when he lost his father than to finally win the PNC Championship with his son. There was no stopping them Sunday in a record-smashing performance that led to an 18-under 54 and a whopping seven-shot victory.

The tournament that is all about family and fun ended with Kuchar wiping away tears as his voice cracked while speaking about how much it meant without his father, who died in February.

The finish was simply surreal to him.

Cameron Kuchar, who was able to use one tee box forward as a high school student, hammered another drive and watched his father hit 7-iron to 18 inches. Kuchar gave his son the honor of tapping in for the final touch on an unforgettable week for the Kuchar family.

"I don't know if you believe in karma, if you believe in fate, whatever you believe in, there's something magical that does exist," Kuchar said as tears began to form.

"I'm a believer in God that Dad is up above looking down, and what happened on 18, I could hardly stand up and hit a shot. For me to hit it to a foot, makes me think there's something more out there. Just miss Pops."

Peter Kuchar, who at one time was the top-ranked doubles tennis player in Florida, first became a presence on the golf scene when he caddied for his son when Kuchar won the U.S. Amateur in 1997, and when he was low amateur at the Masters and U.S. Open the following year.

He played with Kuchar at the PNC Championship before yielding the stage to Kuchar's sons.

Peter Kuchar died in February of a heart attack while swimming when he was on a Caribbean cruise with his wife, Meg, to celebrate her birthday.

Kuchar and his son each got the Willie Park Trophy, a red belt that Kuchar jokingly said would wear well with his tartan jacket he won from Harbour Town at the RBC Heritage.

The PNC Championship, which began in 1995 as the Father-Son Challenge, is for major champions and their children. It has been expanded over the years to include The Players Championship winners, senior and LPGA major champions. Players have brought parents or daughters.

Kuchar, who won The Players Championship in 2012, said he keeps photos to go with the trophies from most of his nine PGA Tour victories. In early victories he could hold both sons. And then they were too big to hold. The most recent photo taken Sunday afternoon leaves him heartbroken.

"And now to have this shot with the family, it's clearly missing ... missing one," he said, pausing because his voice was so choked with emotion. "But it's special, very special."

So was their golf, and it was a runaway from the start. Cameron Kuchar, who has signed to play for TCU next year, birdied the first hole and his father hit hybrid to 12 feet for eagle on the third.

They made only two pars in the scramble format and countered that with two eagles. They finished at 33-under 111 to break the tournament record by five shots.

Lee Trevino delivered the highlight when the 86-year-old holed out from the fairway with a lob wedge for eagle on the 13th hole.

John Daly and John Daly II, a senior at Arkansas and the Southern Amateur champion, made eagle on the last hole for a 59 to tie for second with Davis Love III and Dru Love (58). Nelly Korda and her father, and Steve Stricker and his daughter, finished another shot behind. (AP)

Duffy takes 5-42 as NZ bowls out the WI for 138 to win the 3rd test by 323 runs

MOUNT MAUNGANUI (NEW ZEALAND), Dec 22: Jacob Duffy took 5-42 as New Zealand bowled out the West Indies for 138 on a deteriorating fifth-day pitch to win the third test by 323 runs Monday and take the three-match series 2-0.

Duffy surpassed Richard Hadlee's New Zealand record of 80 wickets in a calendar year and finished the series with 23 wickets at an average of 15.4 including three five-wicket hauls. He bowled more than 154 overs as the workhorse of the New Zealand attack in the three tests.

"I saw that list at lunchtime and there were some cool names on there, so to be up there on any sort of list with those sort of names was special," Duffy, who was voted Player of the Series, said of his bowling record.

Absent bowlers. Runs aplenty
New Zealand's win ended a series in which both teams had to cope with significantly depleted pace attacks and in which a slew of batting records fell.

The West Indies were without Shamar Joseph and Alzarri Joseph. Duffy became New Zealand's pace spearhead after injuries sidelined Matt Henry, Will O'Rourke, Ben Sears, Kyle Jamieson, Nathan Smith and Blair Tuckner.

The third test was a feast for statisticians. Devon Conway made 227 and Tom Latham 137 in a 323-run opening stand in New Zealand's first innings of 575-8 declared. Conway then made 100 and Latham 101 in a partnership of 192 in the second innings before New Zealand declared at 306-2, leaving West Indies a target of 462 to win after being bowled out for 420 in the first innings.

Conway was the 10th test



player and first New Zealander to score a double-century and a century in the same match and he and Latham were the first openers to score centuries in both innings of a test.

Latham and Conway accumulated 515 runs across two innings, a record total for an opening pair. Latham also followed his father, Rod, by featuring in opening partnerships of more than 100 in both innings of a test.

"I don't think it's sunk in yet. It will take some time for me to get my head around what happened in this test match," Conway said, "but I'm really glad we got the win."

New Zealand faced some criticism for the lateness of its declarations in both innings on a pitch at Bay Oval which had been relatively docile for the first three days. Cracks had appeared and plates had begun to form by Day 4 and on the last day, the ball had

begun to bounce irregularly.

Last Day

Still, Brandon King and John Campbell survived 16 overs and scored 43 before stumps on the fourth day, leaving New Zealand needing to take all 10 wickets on the last day to win. Campbell and King then batted through the first hour Monday to frustrate the New Zealand bowlers. King reached his half-century from 63 balls.

But both openers were out within five balls — King for 67 and Campbell for a dogged 16 from 105 balls — and that provoked a slump that saw five wickets fall before lunch. Duffy took three of those, two with deliveries that lifted uncomfortably.

Duffy then dismissed Roston Chase after lunch with a ferocious ball that reared to shoulder height from just short of a length, giving Glenn Phillips his third catch of the day.

Shai Hope batted 78 balls for 3 runs and was out lbw, kicking away a full toss on his off stump to give Ajaz Patel his third wicket of the day. Patel had 85 career wickets coming into this test, which was his first in New Zealand for five years. His first wicket of the match was his first-ever wicket in a test in New Zealand.

Kemar Roach (4) batted with a hamstring injury and was bowled by a ball from Phillips which turned and took the inside edge.

Anderson Phillip and Tevin Imlach held out for 14 overs until Phillip (10) fell lbw to Rachin Ravindra. Duffy returned to claim his fifth wicket and end the innings after 80.3 overs when he bowled Jayden Seales.

Close series

The West Indies were competitive for long periods in all three tests. In the first test, after being set 531 to win, Justin Greaves batted 564 minutes for 202 and the West Indies batted 163.3 overs to reach 457-6 and draw the match. That was the highest fourth-innings score since tests were limited to five days. Kemar Roach batted almost five hours for 58.

Latham made 145 and Rachin Ravindra 176 in New Zealand's second innings of 466-8 declared.

The second test, which New Zealand won by nine wickets, was a contrast in which Mitch Hay's 61 on debut was the highest score for both teams.

The West Indies made 205 and New Zealand made 278-9 and 57-1, chasing 55 to win in the fifth innings. Duffy took 5-38 as New Zealand bowled the West Indies in 46.2 overs in their second innings to set up the easy run chase. His first was 5-34 in the first innings of the first test. (AP)

Versatile Connolly open to batting anywhere for Punjab Kings in maiden IPL season

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Punjab Kings' latest recruit Australian all-rounder Cooper Connolly prides himself on being versatile and is open to batting at any position the team deems fit in his maiden IPL season next year.

Known for his aggressive batting, sharp fielding and handy left-arm spin, Connolly was snapped up by Punjab Kings for ₹3 crore at the mini-auction earlier this month.

"I like to model my game on being able to be versatile in any position. So whether that's at three, whether that's in the middle, I'm happy to perform any role," Connolly said at a virtual media interaction on Monday.

The 22-year-old has been in sensational form for Perth Scorchers, scoring two blistering fifties, in the ongoing Big Bash League batting at No. 3.

However, Punjab Kings are particularly keen on his ability to finish games and handle high-pressure situations, as highlighted by skipper Shreyas Iyer post the auction.

"I feel like I'm still learning the role at number three for the (Perth) Scorchers. It's a role I enjoy. But if the role in the IPL is different, that's totally understandable because it's a world class team.

"To just be in the middle order would be sort of a nice opportunity just to sort of knock down and get to work in the middle order," he added.

Connolly has quickly established himself as one of the most promising young talents in Australian cricket. He made his T20I and ODI debuts in September last year before earning his Baggy Green in January.

The Western Australian also impressed during the ODI series against India, producing a calm, match-winning knock under pressure.



Reflecting on his rapid rise over the past three years, Connolly said adapting to the demands of international cricket has been crucial.

"I think over the last three years, it's been about understanding how different the international level is. It's about adjusting to that, understanding how bowlers are trying to get me out more and how I can counter that."

"I've had to earn the right to be in the Australian set-up. So it's about learning from guys like Travis Head, Steve Smith, how they go about it and how they sort of train to all those standards."

"I'm just trying to tweak my game slowly and add more strings to it as I move forward."

Connolly also said he is looking forward to working closely with Australia's World Cup-winning captain Ricky Ponting, who is the head coach of Punjab Kings.

"I've heard a lot of good things about him. I haven't done a lot of work with him just yet. So, I'm looking forward to spending some time with him and sort of doing

some tweaks to my batting and seeing what his thoughts are on it."

He is also looking forward to face some of the best bowlers in the world at the IPL.

"Everyone goes to this tournament (IPL) because it's probably going to be the most competitive. And also looking forward to getting me out there and challenging myself against some of the best bowlers in the world."

Aware that IPL conditions will be vastly different from the fast, bouncy pitches of Australia, Connolly said adapting to spin would be a big challenge.

"Yeah, it's very different to Australia. We've obviously got some fast, bouncy pitches. But that challenge of playing spin is a challenge that is tough for everyone."

"So, it's just about picking the brains of people that have done it for a long period of time and understanding how they go about it, I guess, add their method into my game and see how I can sort of play in those spinning conditions. (PTT)

Kokrajhar Veteran FC lift Jatin Islary Memorial title



KOKRAJHAR, Dec 22: Kokrajhar Veteran FC won the 12th Jatin Islary Memorial Football Tournament, defeating Salakati NTPC 1-0 in the final played at Harigaon Playground in Salakati here on Sunday.

HT Correspondent

Sushanta Narzary scored the lone goal of the match to secure the title for Kokrajhar Veteran FC.

The champions received the trophy along with a cash prize of ₹40,000, presented by BTC Executive Member for Health and Family Welfare Derhasat Basumatary.

Runners-up Salakati NTPC were awarded a trophy and ₹25,000 by NTPC Public Relations Officer Madhurjya Lahkar.

Sushanta Narzary was adjudged the Best Player of the Tournament and received a trophy and ₹2,500, while Salakati NTPC goalkeeper Birdao Narzary was named Best Goalkeeper and awarded ₹2,500.

The tournament was organised by the Salakati Sports Promoter Society.

Morocco opens 35th Africa Cup of Nations with 2-0 win over Comoros

RABAT (MOROCCO), Dec 22: A spectacular bicycle kick earned royal approval for Ayoub El Kaabi as host Morocco opened the 35th Africa Cup of Nations with a 2-0 win over Comoros on Sunday.

Home fans including Moroccan Crown Prince Moulay Hassan, who greeted the players before kickoff, had endured a frustrating game as island nation Comoros, ranked 108th in the world, stubbornly held out against one of the tournament favorites.

Comoros goalkeeper Yannick Pandor even saved an early penalty from Soufiane Rahimi.

Brahim Diaz finally broke the deadlock in the 55th minute, setting off relieved celebrations around the stadium, before El Kaabi sealed the win with an overhead kick in the 74th.

The prince, watching from his royal box, was unable to conceal his delight as he applauded.

Morocco's quest to become a soccer superpower is a family affair. It was a passion for the prince's grandfather, Hassan II, and the current king, Mohammed VI, who oversaw one of the most aggressive buildouts in African sporting history to achieve his aim. The Kingdom is set to be a main co-host of the 2030 World Cup with Spain and Portugal.

Mohammed VI's portrait was beside Gianni Infantino as the FIFA president proclaimed in French before kickoff, "This will be the best ever Africa Cup of Nations!"

The only blemish from a Moroccan point of view was an early injury to team captain Romain



Saïss, who wiped away tears as he left the field. "He felt something behind his knee but we don't know if it is muscular or something else," Morocco coach Walid Regragui said. "We hope it's not too serious and that we can get him back later."

Spectacular light show

Excitement had been building for hours Sunday and wintry showers failed to dampen the mood. Beninese artist Angélique Kidjo, Moroccan singer Jaylann and French-Moroccan rapper Lartiste performed the tournament's official song for the first time during a spectacular light show for the opening ceremony.

But the highlight for the Moroccan fans — judging by the sea of smartphones to capture the moment — was the appearance just before kickoff of the king's eldest son beside Infantino and Patrice Motsepe, the president of the Confederation of African Football. Prince Moulay Hassan

shook hands with the Comoros players and then posed for a photo with the Morocco team, seemingly unperturbed by heavy rainfall.

Atlas Lions ready to roar

The Atlas Lions, as Morocco is known, are backed by many to lift what would be just their second Africa Cup title 50 years after their only success in 1976. The final is Jan. 18 next year.

Morocco is the highest-ranked African team at No. 11. The Atlas Lions became the first African team to reach the World Cup semifinals in 2022. Comoros proved to be a difficult opponent on Sunday.

"I am very proud of my players," Comoros coach Stefano Cusin said of his team's battling performance. "We have a lot of youngsters. I think we gave a good image of Comoros."

The opening match was played in Rabat's renovated almost 70,000-capacity Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium, one of nine venues across six cities that were constructed or renovated for the tournament.

Morocco captain Achraf Hakimi remained among the substitutes after recovering from an ankle injury. He showed his African Footballer of the Year trophy to fans before kickoff.

The tournament mascot is a lion named Assad, inspired by the barbary lions that once prowled the mountains of north Africa. The last known photograph of a wild lion in Morocco was taken by French army photographer Marcelin Flandrin from a flight over the Atlas Mountains in 1925. (AP)

Pinkathon draws over 5,300 women

MUMBAI, Dec 22: The 10th edition of the Pinkathon Mumbai brought together over 5,300 women participants and set a world record for the maximum number of visually impaired women running together, with 115 of them competing across categories.

The two-day meet that concluded on Sunday, featured 3 km, 5 km, and 10 km races, drawing runners across age groups.

Pinkathon founder Milind Soman said, "What stands out every year is not just the numbers, but the diversity of women who show up. From visually impaired runners to first-timers and competitive athletes, Pinkathon continues to reflect how women's running in India is evolving, becoming more inclusive, confident, and visible."

Piyusha Lohar won the 3 km race in 12:23, followed by Ovi Patil (13:00) and Jyoti Punjabi (14:16).

In the 5 km category, Yamini Thakare finished first with a time of 18:18, while Komal Khandekar (20:16) and Shreya Ojha (22:03) were placed second and third.

The 10km race was won by Padma Karande in 42:06, with Anchal Marwah (48:16) and Shalini Singh (48:52) completing the podium. (PTT)

Indian Athletics in 2025: Neeraj hits 90m high but no end to country's doping woes

NEW DELHI, Dec 22: Despite a rare blip in form, Neeraj Chopra was the biggest saving grace for India's doping-marred athletics landscape after getting the 90m "monkey off his back" even as the sport's administrators worked towards making the country a hub of big-ticket events in a bitter-sweet 2025.

The 27-year-old Chopra went past the coveted mark, considered the gold standard in javelin throw, in the Doha Diamond League but suffered a heartbreak when he failed to win a medal in the World Championships final in Tokyo later in the year.

Young Sachin Yadav outperformed Chopra to emerge as a potential world-class javelin thrower with a fourth-place finish.

But the doping menace showed no signs of decline with several top Indians caught in the net, including Olympian javelin thrower Shivpal Singh and former Asian Games medallist discus thrower Seema Punia.

An athlete-coach duo was also suspended for doping in a first of its kind instance, while two minor athletes too joined the Hall of Shame.

There was a silver lining though, as India staged two World Athletics Continental Tour events, with Chopra hosting and winning one of them.

The country also mounted bids on some high-profile continental and global events, including the 2031 World Athlet-

ics Championships with Ahmedabad as the proposed venue.

Marriage and 90m high for Chopra

One of the most eligible bachelors in the country, Chopra tied the knot with tennis player Himani Mor in an intimate ceremony in a private resort in Himachal Pradesh with just a few close relatives and family members present.

The outside world got to know of the event only after Chopra himself posted the marriage photos in his social media handles. A few months later, Chopra sent his spear to 90.23m to become the third Asian and 25th overall to achieve the feat.

Chopra clinched three more major titles — the Paris Diamond League, the Golden Spike meet and the inaugural NC Classic. He realised his dream of hosting a world-class event in front of the home crowd and family members.

He, however, came up short in the Diamond League Finals, finishing second to German Julian Weber. He was bidding to regain the trophy he had won in 2022, but was barely able to touch the 85m mark.

But the most unexpected happened during the World Championships in Tokyo in September at the very venue where he achieved fame and Olympic gold in 2021.

Struggling with back pain, defending champion Chopra was ousted after the fifth and penultimate round with a best effort of 84.03m that left him eighth over-



all. He was outperformed by debutant compatriot Yadav (86.27m) who logged a creditable fourth-place finish.

Chopra, who had also won a silver in the 2022 edition, has not finished outside the top-2 since winning gold in 2021 Tokyo Games. After that, he has either won or finished second in 24 international events.

Never-ending doping menace

India continued to occupy the second spot in the global list of athletes ineligible to compete due to doping offences, with 128 athletes in the list released by Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU).

Some of the country's top athletes caught for doping included Shivpal, Pune Half Marathon winner Pradhan Vilas Kirulakar, sprinter Sekar Dhanalakshmi and 2014 Asian Games medallist hammer thrower Manju Bala.