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- Japan's Cabinet OKs record defence budget that aims to deter China
- Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak convicted in trial over 1MDB corruption scandal
- Sahibzades represent ultimate expression of bravery against religious fanaticism, terror: PM
- Pro-Hindu protesters march to B'desh dy high commission office in Kolkata, submit memorandum

NDA will protect citizens' voting and land rights: Nitin Nabin

Assam polls: BJP steps up booth-level push



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: BJP national working president Nitin Nabin on Friday asserted that the BJP-led NDA will not allow the voting rights, land rights or welfare entitlements of genuine citizens to be taken away, while simultaneously calling on party workers in Assam to intensify grassroots engagement as the state heads towards the 2026 Assembly elections.

Addressing the inaugural session of the Assam BJP State Executive Meeting in Guwahati, Nabin said infiltration had earlier been passed off as "normal" due to vote bank politics, but the BJP and the NDA were now committed to identifying and sending back illegal migrants.

He said there were political forces that depended on infiltration to win elections, but maintained that the NDA would not allow such practices and would ensure that people retained their right to freely choose

their government.

Emphasising nationalism and constitutional values, he said those who loved the land, the Tiranga and the Constitution would not have their rights over vote, land or government schemes diluted.

Referring to previous governments in Dispur and Delhi, Nabin said their silence on infiltration had adversely affected the rights of genuine citizens, but added that the public had placed its trust in the NDA and the BJP.

He thanked the people of Assam and the Northeast for this support and said public awareness was as crucial as government action in addressing the issue.

He also cited the recent Bihar Assembly polls, claiming allegations of vote theft were decisively rejected by voters.

With Assembly elections due next year, Nabin said the BJP was organisationally prepared to face any challenge and urged workers to strengthen the NDA alliance at all levels.

He said there was no threat to the BJP-led coalition in Assam from outside forces and called upon party cadres to work for the success of all alliance partners, irrespective of individual candidates.

He also highlighted the development trajectory of Assam under the last two BJP-led governments and said the growth of the state and the Northeast had been a priority since the era of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and continued under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

During his Assam visit, Nabin also advised party leaders and workers to step up booth-level engagement and deepen their connection with voters. Addressing the executive (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Four arrested for vandalism in Assam school on Christmas eve

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Four people associated with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Barang Dal were arrested for vandalising decorative items at a school on Christmas eve and damaging festive articles in shops in Assam's Nalbari district, police said.

The arrests were made on Thursday, a senior officer said.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma hailed the police personnel for their prompt action and asserted that his government was committed to "maintaining peace, communal harmony, and ensuring the safety of all institutions and citizens across the state".

The incident took place on Wednesday when the accused allegedly entered St Mary's School in Panigaon village under the Belsor police station limits and burnt and damaged decorative items meant for Christmas celebrations.

"Miscreants who vandalised the school have been arrested. They entered the premises unlawfully," the officer said.

He added that the accused vandalised outer decorations, lights, plant pots, and other articles, as well as set some items on fire, resulting in loss of property.

"In connection with the vandalism at St. Mary's English School, Panigaon, under Belsor Police Station, Nalbari district, the miscreants involved have been arrested. Assam Police acted promptly, and further action will be taken strictly as per law. We are fully committed to maintaining peace, communal harmony, and ensuring the safety of all institutions and citizens across the state," (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Probe in Pahalgam attack, Red Fort area blast examples of 'watertight investigations': Shah

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday praised the investigation into the Pahalgam terror attack and Delhi blast cases stressing that they are not cases of ordinary policing but outstanding examples of watertight investigation.

Lauding the security forces for neutralising the perpetrators of the Baisaran Valley (Pahalgam) terror attack, Shah said the terrorists wanted to disrupt communal harmony in the country and deliver a blow to the new era of development and tourism that has begun in Kashmir.

Inaugurating a two-day Anti-Terror Conference organised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) here, he said that the results

of the investigation into the Pahalgam terrorist attack will put Pakistan in the dock on international platforms.

The home minister said that the security forces neutralised all three terrorists based on extremely precise intelligence, delivering a stern message to Pakistan.

This is the first terrorist incident in which those who planned the terrorist act were punished by us through Operation Sindoor, and those who carried out the act with the weapons provided to them were neutralised through Operation Mahadev, he said.

Shah said at both ends, the government of India, the Indian security forces and the people of the country have given a strong and

HC to be moved for ruling on eviction stay order

Karbi Anglong unrest: Tripartite meeting held ● Families of deceased in police firing to get ₹ 10 lakh as ex-gratia: CM

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said that his government will move the Gauhati High Court for an early order on its previous stay on the eviction in grazing lands in West Karbi Anglong and Karbi Anglong districts.

The chief minister said this after an area of West Karbi Anglong witnessed violence between the indigenous Karbi and the Bihari communities, in which two persons were killed and 70 people, mostly police personnel, injured earlier this week.

A tripartite meeting was held during the day among the state government, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and protesters demanding immediate clearing of encroachment of Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) and Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) lands in West Karbi Anglong district.

"It was decided today that the state government will appeal before the high court for an early



judgment in the matter as it is a sensitive issue and we can act as per the order," Sarma said.

The CM had said on Thursday that the demand by the Karbi people to evict the alleged encroachers from grazing lands cannot be accepted immediately, because of a stay by the Gauhati High Court.

The KAAC, which had not filed its affidavit in the case before the court in the last two years, will do

so by January five, Sarma said on Friday.

"It was also decided that the Karbi people will submit a petition in the case before the Court," he added.

The indigenous Karbi and the Bihari communities have been at loggerheads in West Karbi Anglong district over allegations of encroachment on VGR and PGR lands in the tribal belts by the

Hindi-speaking people.

Agitators from the Karbi community had been on a hunger strike for 15 days, demanding the eviction of the alleged illegal settlers in the two districts.

They went on a rampage on Monday after police took away three agitators from the protest site during the early hours, a move which the administration later claimed was for their hospitalisation.

The badly affected Kheroni area in West Karbi Anglong district witnessed massive violence on Tuesday, as one person was killed in police firing and another was burnt alive inside his house, while more than 70 others, including over 60 police personnel, were injured.

The chief minister termed Friday's meeting "fruitful", and stressed that all issues should be resolved amicably.

He said the state government will grant an ex-gratia of ₹ 10 lakh to the family of the person killed in police (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Amit Shah to inaugurate northeast's largest auditorium during Assam visit

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said that Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate the Jyoti Bishnu Prekhyagriha, the largest auditorium in the Northeast with a seating capacity of 5,000, during his upcoming visit here on December 29, marking another major addition to the state's cultural infrastructure.

Sarma mentioned that the auditorium has been built in record time and named in honour of two towering icons of Assam's cultural heritage — Jyotiprasad Agarwala and Bishnu Prasad Rabha.

He described the project as a tribute to the state's rich artistic

and cultural legacy and a major step towards strengthening cultural spaces in the region.

The Jyoti Bishnu Prekhyagriha has been designed to host large-scale cultural events, performances, conferences and public programmes, and is expected to become a landmark venue not only for Assam but for the entire Northeast.

Officials said the state-of-the-art auditorium will provide a dedicated platform for artists, cultural organisations and institutions, while also boosting Assam's profile as a cultural hub.

The inauguration will be one of the key events during Amit Shah's Assam visit, which is expected to include a series of official engage-

ments.

The Home Minister's visit comes close on the heels of several high-profile central initiatives in the state, reflecting the Centre's continued focus on Assam's development and integration with national growth priorities.

Chief minister Sarma said the naming of the auditorium after Jyotiprasad Agarwala, regarded as the father of Assamese cinema and a pioneering cultural visionary, and Bishnu Prasad Rabha, a revolutionary artist, musician and thinker, symbolises Assam's deep respect for its cultural icons.

He added that the new facility will inspire future generations to connect with the state's artistic traditions. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta welcomes Shah's assurance on interlocutor on three tribes' demand



GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday welcomed Union Home minister Amit Shah's assurance to

appoint an interlocutor to take forward the demand of three tribes of the state for constitutional status for their autonomous councils.

A delegation of Rabha, Mising and Tiwa communities had called on Shah in New Delhi, in the presence of Sarma and state Cabinet minister Ranaj Pegu.

"I offer my sincere gratitude to the Hon'ble Union Home Minister Shri @AmitShah ji for meeting the delegations of the Rabha, Mising and Tiwa communities, who have long been seeking constitutional status for their respective Autonomous Councils," Sarma said in a post on X.

He said the assurance given by the Union Home minister to appoint an interlocutor and initiate an institutional dialogue is "deeply reassuring and heart-warming". "It reflects (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta condoles Tripura Speaker's death

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma condoled the death of Tripura Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen on Friday.

He said Sen was a grassroots leader who worked for social causes.

Sen, who was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Bengaluru after he suffered a massive cerebral stroke, died in the southern city on Friday.

"Pained by the passing away of Shri Biswa Bandhu Sen ji, Speaker of Tripura Legislative Assembly," Sarma said in a post on X.

"Shri Sen was a grassroots leader who dedicated his life to social causes. I fondly recall my meetings with him discussing the shared (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

2025 REWIND

Zubeen's death dominates Assam's landscape

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: The mysterious death of Assam's cultural icon Zubeen Garg cast a long shadow over the state in 2025, eclipsing major political and administrative developments and triggering an unprecedented public outcry that reverberated through the corridors of power.

The year was also marked by political sparring ahead of the 2026 assembly elections, which included allegations involving national security, campaigns against infiltration, and the passage of a bill banning polygamy. The birth centenary celebration of another iconic son of Assam, Bhupen Hazarika, was also launched this year.

Garg, who had travelled to Singapore to attend the North East India Festival, died while swimming in the sea on September 19. The unexpected news stunned

Assam, while the circumstances of the singer's death sparked widespread suspicion.

Lakhs of people lined the streets as Garg's mortal remains were flown back from Singapore. For three days, his body was kept in a stadium for the people to pay their homage before being cremated amid scenes of grief and anger.

Public sentiment soon turned into mass protests demanding justice and the arrest of festival director Shyamkanu Mahanta, Garg's manager Siddhartha Sharma and others who had accompanied him to Singapore and were present on the yacht during his final hours.

Under mounting pressure, the Assam government constituted a Special Investigation Team of the CID. On December 12, the SIT filed a charge sheet accusing Mahanta, Sharma and Garg's band

members Shekharjyoti Goswami and Amritprava Mahanta of murder.

The singer's cousin Sandipan Garg, an Assam Police official who had also accompanied him, was charged with culpable homicide not amounting to murder, while his two personal security officers — Nandeswar Bora and Paresh Baishya — were booked for criminal conspiracy and criminal breach of trust.

The case quickly assumed political overtones, with both the ruling and opposition parties seeking to capitalise on the developments. A massive social media campaign - #JusticeForZubeenGarg - emerged, recording one of the highest-ever engagements seen in the state under this hashtag.

The trial has begun in a court, with the state government promis-



ing to seek fast-tracking of the case in the Gauhati High Court and the appointment of a special prosecutor.

Amid the turmoil, Garg's last film, 'Roi Roi Binale', was released on October 31, as per his plans, and went on to become the

highest-grossing Assamese movie till date.

The cultural sphere also witnessed the launch of the year-long centenary celebrations of Bhupen Hazarika. Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the celebrations on September 13, with multiple

programmes planned across the country. President Droupadi Murmu is scheduled to attend the concluding ceremony next year.

On the political front, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma triggered a controversy by alleging that Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, and his British wife Elizabeth Colburn had links with Pakistan's intelligence agency ISI.

An SIT was set up to probe the alleged links of the couple with Pakistani national Ali Tauqueer Sheikh. The report was submitted to the chief minister on September 10.

Sarma claimed that the probe had "unearthed startling facts which point towards a larger conspiracy aimed at undermining the sovereignty of our nation," adding that the case would soon be handed

over to a central agency.

Gogoi, who was appointed Assam Congress president after the allegations surfaced, dismissed the charges as a "C-grade Bollywood film" that would flop, asserting that the people of Assam "understand everything".

Opposition parties alleged the accusations were politically motivated and aimed at influencing next year's assembly polls. Gogoi said the opposition was ahead of the BJP in poll preparations and alliance-building.

Eight opposition parties, including the Congress, subsequently announced plans to contest the assembly elections together.

The chief minister, however, asserted that the Congress had already "conceded" defeat in the 2026 and 2031 assembly elections and was (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Sensex drops 367 pts on foreign fund outflows, lack of local triggers; falls for 3rd day

MUMBAI, Dec 26: The benchmark BSE Sensex dropped by 367 points on Friday, marking its third consecutive day of losses, amid foreign fund outflows and a lack of major domestic triggers.

In a low-volume trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 367.25 points or 0.43 per cent to settle at 85,041.45. During the day, it tanked 470.88 points or 0.55 per cent to 84,937.82.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 99.80 points or 0.38 per cent to 26,042.30, registering its second day of decline.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Asian Paints, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Eternal and Sun Pharma were among the biggest laggards.

However, Titan, NTPC, Axis Bank, UltraTech Cement, Reliance Industries and Hindustan Unilever were the gainers.

"Overall, Indian equity markets traded with a cautious, mildly negative bias as thin year-end volumes, the absence of strong global triggers, and continued foreign investor outflows kept sentiment re-



strained," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

"Investors engaged in selective profit booking across sectors such as IT, real estate, and energy, while resilience in select few banking and metal stocks helped limit broader downside," Ponmudi said.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined by 0.34 per cent and midcap

index dipped by 0.18 per cent. Among sectoral indices, BSE Focused IT edged lower by 1.04 per cent, followed by IT (0.89 per cent), telecommunication (0.59 per cent), capital goods (0.54 per cent) and auto (0.54 per cent).

BSE commodities and metal were the gainers.

In a holiday-shortened week, the BSE benchmark climbed 112.09

points or 0.13 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 75.9 points or 0.29 per cent during the week.

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

Stock markets in Europe were closed on Friday.

US markets were closed on Thursday for Christmas.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 1,721.26 crore on Wednesday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹ 2,381.34 crore, according to exchange data.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, climbed 0.31 per cent up to USD 62.43 per barrel.

On Wednesday, the Sensex dropped by 116.14 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 85,408.70. The Nifty edged lower by 35.05 points or 0.13 per cent to 26,142.10. The domestic stock markets were closed on Thursday for Christmas. (PTI)

Reliance Jio expands home broadband, strengthens wireless network across North East

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Reliance Jio has recorded strong growth in digital connectivity across the North East telecom circle during the first ten months of 2025, driven by rapid expansion of home broadband services and steady growth in wireless subscribers, according to monthly subscription data released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).

Home broadband emerged as a major growth driver in the region. Between January and October 2025, Jio added 72,155 new home broadband subscribers across Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura through a combination of JioFiber,

JioAirFiber and fixed wireless 5G services. With this addition, Jio's total home broadband connections in the North East have reached 323,140, indicating rising demand for high-speed internet in a region marked by challenging terrain and limited legacy broadband infrastructure.

In the wireless segment, Jio continued to strengthen its presence across the region. As per TRAI data, Jio's wireless subscriber base in the North East stood at 4,418,467 users at the end of October 2025, reflecting sustained growth in mobile data consumption and improved access to digital services in both urban centres and remote areas.

The regional performance mirrors Jio's national growth during the same period. In the first ten months of 2025, the company added over 27 million subscribers across India, taking its total user base beyond 509 million. Jio also emerged as the world's leading Fixed Wireless Access provider, adding close to one million home broadband connections every month nationwide.

Industry observers said the combined expansion of wireless and home broadband services is deepening digital inclusion in the North East, improving access to communication, education, healthcare and economic opportunities across the region.

ICAI Guwahati branch celebrates 48th Foundation Day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: The Guwahati Branch of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) recently celebrated its 48th Foundation Day with a solemn flag hoisting ceremony, marking nearly five decades of professional service in the North-Eastern region.

The ICAI flag was hoisted by Raginee Goyal, Chairperson of the Guwahati Branch, in the presence of managing committee members of the Branch and representatives of EICASA Guwahati, the student wing of ICAI.

The ceremony symbolised unity, continuity and commitment to the core values of the chartered accountancy profession.

Addressing the gathering, Goyal reflected on the history, evolution and rich legacy of the Guwahati Branch and paid tribute to the vision and leadership of its founding members and past office bearers who laid a strong professional foundation in the region.

As per records, the Guwahati Branch was inaugu-

rated on December 25, 1977 under the aegis of the Eastern India Regional Council of ICAI.

The Branch was initially led by K. C. Das, whose efforts were instrumental in establishing and nurturing the institution during its formative years.

After completing 48 years, the Branch continues to carry forward its legacy under the present leadership of Goyal, with a focus on professional excellence, ethical standards and continuous capacity building of members and students.

Over the decades, it has emerged as a vibrant centre of professional learning through regular seminars, conferences, training programmes, student activities and public awareness initiatives.

The Foundation Day celebration concluded with a cake-cutting ceremony commemorating 48 years of dedicated service.

The event was coordinated by Kumar Victor Saha. Anjani Kumar Mundhra, Nitika Bagaria and Vikash Kumar Choudhury were also present on the occasion.

GRA hosts 'GRATITUDE 2025' Realtors Summit in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: The Guwahati Realtors Association (GRA) on Friday organised GRATITUDE 2025, a premier Realtors Summit in Guwahati, aimed at strengthening the real estate ecosystem in Assam and the wider Northeast while underlining the growing role of realtors in the region's development.

A key attraction of the summit was a panel discussion on "Real Estate in Assam 2030 and the Contribution of Realtors in this Journey", which brought together leading voices from the sector, including PK Sharma, Sumanth Reddy, Pulak Chamaria, Ajay Jagati and senior architect Santosh Banta.

The discussion focused on future growth prospects, policy alignment and the evolving contribution of organised real estate professionals in Assam.

The summit was graced by Amit Chopra, President of National Association of Realtors India, as the chief guest, while Association of Real Estate Industry Development Association President PK Sharma attended as the guest of honour. Proceedings included ceremonial lamp lighting, sponsor presentations and the panel discussion.

The event was led by Guwahati Realtors Association office bearers—President Gaurav Agarwal, Secretary Abhimanyu Modi, Treasurer Pabitra Deka—along with Event Chairman Rahul Jain.

NCCF starts onion sale at ₹ 19/kg in Delhi-NCR

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: National Cooperative Consumers' Federation (NCCF) has started subsidised retail sale of onions at ₹ 19 per kg in Delhi-NCR, well below the prevailing market price of ₹ 25-35 per kg.

Onion retailing will be done through mobile vans operating across the Delhi-NCR region at 16 locations, including INA Market, R K Puram, Model Town, and Shalimar Bagh.

Onion will also be sold at NCCF's retail store at Nehru Place and outlets located in major metro stations like Udyog Bhawan, Rajeev Chowk

and Patel Chowk, the cooperative said in a statement.

NCCF is selling onions sourced from Nashik, Maharashtra, and stored in controlled-atmosphere (CA) cold storage using a newly developed irradiation technology recommended by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC). The new technology has been piloted to reduce storage losses and stabilise supply.

"After four months of storage at the CA cold store, the Grade A rabi onions, pink in colour and known for their sweeter taste compared to the red Kharif variety, remain intact in

quality," NCCF Chairman Vishal Singh said. The cooperative is selling onions on behalf of the Union Consumer Affairs Ministry and the initiative aims to protect consumers from soaring prices while ensuring farmers receive fair returns.

NCCF has earlier undertaken a similar market intervention in tomatoes by retailing at ₹ 40 per kg when the ongoing market price was ranging from ₹ 60 to ₹ 80 per kg, which was causing a major drain on consumers' pockets, NCCF Managing Director Anice Joseph Chandra. (PTI)

Silver soars ₹ 9,350 to record ₹ 2.36 lakh/kg in Delhi; crosses USD 75/ounce mark in int'l markets

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Silver prices soared by ₹ 9,350 to hit a fresh lifetime high of ₹ 2,36,350 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday, tracking strong global cues, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The white metal had closed at ₹ 2,27,000 per kilogram on Wednesday.

Over the past four sessions, silver prices have added ₹ 32,250, or 15.8 per cent, from ₹ 2,04,100 per kilogram since December 19.

During the calendar year, the white metal had risen ₹ 1,46,650, or 163.5 per cent, from ₹ 89,700 per kg recorded on December 31, 2024.

Meanwhile, gold prices maintained their upward momentum in the local bullion market. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity jumped ₹ 1,500 to touch a new record of ₹ 1,42,300 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes).

It had finished at ₹ 1,40,800 per 10 grams in the previous market session.

So far this year, gold prices have added ₹ 63,350, or 80.24 per cent, from ₹ 78,950 per 10 grams



recorded on December 31, 2024.

"The precious metals rally continued on the last trading day of the week, with gold and silver reaching new record highs once again," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold rose USD 50.87, or 1.13 per cent, to hit a new lifetime high of USD 4,530.42 per ounce.

"Gold continues to trade at a record high of USD 4,530 per

ounce, buoyed by the Fed rate cut expectations and positive undertone in the commodities market. Thin trading condition due to the year-end holidays is exaggerating the moves," Praveen Singh, Head of Commodities and Currencies, Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

Spot silver rose to hit USD 75 per ounce-mark for the first time in the overseas trade. The white metal climbed USD 3.72, or 5.18 per cent, to touch a new record of USD 75.63 per ounce in overseas trade.

New BIS standard for 'agarbattis' to ensure consumer safety, boost ₹ 8,000 cr market

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: India, the world's largest producer and exporter of 'agarbattis', has come out with a new quality standard in a bid to ensure consumer safety by prohibiting certain insecticidal chemicals in manufacturing, and boost the ₹ 8,000 crore incense stick market.

A dedicated Indian standard 'IS 19412:2025' for agarbattis was developed following heightened stress on consumer safety, indoor air quality, environmental sustainability and regulatory compliance—along with global restrictions on certain fragrance compounds and chemicals globally.

Products complying with the new standard can also carry the BIS Standard Mark, helping consumers make informed choices with confidence, a consumer affairs ministry statement said.

The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) specifies a list of substances prohibited for use in agarbattis or incense stick making. This includes certain insecticidal chemicals such as aléthrin, permethrin, cypermethrin, deltamethrin, and fipronil, as well as synthetic fragrance intermediates like benzyl cyanide, ethyl acrylate, and diphenylamine.

Many of these substances are restricted or banned

internationally due to their potential impact on human health, indoor air quality, and ecological safety, the ministry said.

The new quality standard classifies agarbatti into machine-made, hand-made, and traditional masala agarbattis, and prescribes requirements for raw materials, burning quality, fragrance performance, and chemical parameters, ensuring safer products and consistent quality for consumers.

"It is expected to enhance consumer confidence, promote ethical and sustainable manufacturing practices, support traditional artisans, and improve access to global markets," the ministry said.

The Indian agarbatti industry, estimated at around ₹ 8,000 crore a year, exports products worth ₹ 1,200 crore annually to more than 150 countries with major markets being the US, Malaysia, Nigeria, Brazil and Mexico.

The agarbatti sector supports a vast network of artisans, micro-entrepreneurs, and MSMEs, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. The industry plays a vital role in preserving traditional craftsmanship while generating significant employment, especially for women. (PTI)

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HC to be moved

firing, while the KAAC will provide a job to a family member.

It was further decided in the meeting that all government offices in VGR and PGR lands will be shifted out, and about 8,000 bighas of vacant grazing lands will be fenced by the Council and an afforestation drive undertaken to ensure no future encroachment, Sarma said.

Trade licences issued to business establishments in the grazing lands will also be cancelled, he said.

The KAAC will carry out eviction drives to clear land of various departments encroached in the two districts.

"The second round of talks will take place around January 17, and we hope by then the high court will be with us," the chief minister said.

On the violence in Kheroni, Sarma said, "It was not a clash between two communities. There were many old, unresolved issues. For whatever reason, the violence happened, our aim is to restore peace."

Sarma, who also holds the Home department, added that police will grant general amnesty in the violent incidents, except for the case registered regarding the death of the person whose house was set on fire. (PTI)

Assam polls: BJP

meeting, he praised the commitment and energy of BJP cadres, describing them as the driving force behind the party's growth in the state.

He stressed that electoral success depended on effectively communicating Prime Minister Modi's vision and the achievements of the NDA government to every household, and urged workers to take the party's development agenda and welfare initiatives to the grassroots.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, who welcomed Nabin on his arrival at the Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, said the visit was aimed at energising party workers and sharpening organisational focus ahead of the elections.

Addressing the meeting, Sarma said party workers had renewed their resolve to strengthen their bond with the people of Assam and fulfil their aspirations under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, adding that the BJP's focus remained on responsive governance, development and organisational discipline.

The two-day state executive meet was attended by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, BJP national vice-president Bajjayant Jay Panda, Union Minister Pabitra Margherita, national general secretary (organisation) B L Santosh and Assam BJP general secretary (organisation) Rabindra Raju.

Party leaders said the meetings reviewed organisational preparedness, electoral strategies and outreach programmes, with special emphasis on booth-level strengthening and coordination among party wings as part of the BJP's broader strategy to consolidate its base well ahead of the 2026 polls. (With inputs from PTI)

Amit Shah to

Officials said the auditorium was constructed within a tight timeline as part of the government's push to rapidly upgrade public infrastructure.

The project aligns with the state's broader efforts to invest in cultural, educational and social assets alongside economic development.

The inauguration of the Jyoti Bishnu Prekhyagriha is expected to draw artists, cultural figures and dignitaries, underscoring Assam's renewed emphasis on preserving and promoting its cultural identity while building modern public infrastructure.

Probe in Pahalgam attack

remaining vigilant at all times," he said. He mentioned that the landscape of terrorism in the world is now changing due to the use of technology in terrorist incidents alongside technological advancements, and we too must prepare to prevent this. He said that it is the national responsibility of this conference to anticipate invisible future challenges and to prevent them.

Shah said that all agencies of the government of India, together with the state police, should form a 'Team India' that works effectively for national security. (PTI)

Four arrested for

the CM said on X. "A case has been registered at Belsor police station. Further investigation is going on. We are trying to identify some more people who were involved," the officer said.

The arrested persons are VHP Nalbari district secretary Bhaskar Deka, parishad's district vice-president Manash Jyoti Patgiri and assistant secretary Biju Dutta, along with Bajrang Dal's district convener Nayan Talukdar, he added.

They had raised 'Jai Shree Ram' slogans and warned the school authorities not to organise Christmas celebrations on the school premises on Thursday, the officer said.

The accused also went to various shops selling Christmas goods in Nalbari town and set fire to some items near the Jain Mandir.

They also entered several shopping malls and business establishments selling Christmas items and burnt the goods, he added. (PTI)

Gaurav concerned over

on Monday after the police took away three agitators from the protest site during the early hours, a move which the administration later claimed was for their hospitalisation.

The badly affected Kheroni area in West Karbi Anglong district witnessed massive violence on Tuesday, as one person was killed in police firing and another was burnt alive inside his house, while more than 70 others, including over 60 police personnel, were injured.

Prohibitory orders, night curfew and suspension of mobile internet services in the affected areas continue to be in force.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said the demand by the Karbi people to evict alleged Hindi-speaking encroachers from grazing lands cannot be accepted immediately, because of a stay by the Gauhati High Court. (PTI)

Himanta welcomes Shah's

the Government of India's commitment to inclusive governance, dialogue, and the protection of the constitutional aspirations of Assam's indigenous communities," Sarma added.

The Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council, Mising Autonomous Council and Tiwa Autonomous Council are statutory autonomous councils constituted by the state government for social, economic, educational, ethnic and cultural advancement of the Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities living in Core Areas as well as in Satellite Areas covering several districts. (PTI)

Himanta condoles Tripura

welfare of our people," he said. Sarma extended his condolences to the bereaved family. (PTI)

Zubeen's death dominates

preparing for 2036, with an NDA victory in the state being a "foregone conclusion".

Throughout the year, Sarma campaigned aggressively on the issue of infiltration, launching eviction drives in forest areas and 'sattras' (Vaishnavite monastery) property allegedly encroached upon by Bengali-speaking Muslims. He claimed the government was committed to an infiltration-free Assam, asserting that 35-40 people were being "pushed back" every week.

The administration also rolled out several welfare schemes for women, girls and students, while the chief minister said nearly 1.5 lakh people had been provided government jobs over the last five years.

Political observers viewed the tabling of the Tewary and Mehta Commission reports — related to violence ahead of the 1983 assembly elections, including the Nellie massacre — with scepticism, terming it poll-driven.

Similarly, the introduction of bills on polygamy, land rights for tea garden workers and the cabinet sub-committee report on granting Scheduled Tribe status to six communities were seen as attempts to consolidate electoral support.

Electorally, the BJP-led alliance swept the panchayat polls but suffered a setback in the Bodoland Territorial Council elections, losing power to the Bodoland People's Front, which also became a part of the NDA. (PTI)

Shutdown continues as residents face trauma, supply crunch after violence

Tension lingers in Kheroni despite return of calm



HT Correspondent
KHERONI, Dec 26: Although Kheroni in West Karbi Anglong, which recently resembled a "volatile furnace", has shown signs of calm, tense nerves continue to prevail in the area. Even as the situation begins to stabilise, normal life remained paralysed on Friday as residents struggled to overcome the trauma of witnessing widespread violence and incidents of arson.

The rhythm of daily life has come to a complete standstill.

Shops, petrol pumps, educational institutions and government offices remained closed, while public transport was off the roads. Internet services also continued to remain suspended across the entire Karbi Anglong district as a preventive measure against the spread of rumours.

Though no fresh major incidents were reported, a state of fear gripped Jengka village on Thursday night, underlining the fragile nature of the prevailing peace.

With the shutdown continuing,

residents have begun facing difficulties in accessing essential supplies. As local shops remain closed and the scheduled weekly market has been cancelled, fears of a food shortage are growing. Several families reported that their household stocks are running low with no clear indication of when markets will reopen.

In a move aimed at restoring confidence and communal harmony, three major organisations, including the All Assam Hindi-speaking Association, held a joint

press conference to address the situation. The organisations expressed deep regret over the recent incidents and issued an apology for individuals who allegedly insulted the Karbi community using derogatory slogans such as "Go back" or "China".

The leaders also accused a section of the media of fuelling tensions. The secretary of the Karbi Anglong District Bengali Society cautioned that the situation could worsen further if misinformation or distorted narratives are circulated on social media once internet services are restored.

Speakers at the press conference noted that shops and houses belonging to different ethnic communities were set ablaze, describing the incidents as the handiwork of miscreants rather than the outcome of a communal clash.

Shiva Narayan Pal, president of the All Assam Hindi-speaking Association, said the organisation remains committed to resolving all issues through dialogue with ethnic organisations and the state government. Echoing the appeal for peace, Yam Prasad Ghimire, national vice-president of the Bharatiya Gorkha Parishad, urged citizens to maintain calm and uphold the long-standing tradition of ethnic harmony in the region.

Tripartite talks on PGR/VGR land issue

Hunger strike leaders, KAAC representatives head to Dispur for meeting with CM Himanta



HT Bureau

DIPHU, Dec 26: As per the date fixed by the Government of Assam, a discussion on the PGR/VGR land issue is being held on Friday with leaders of the protesters observing a hunger strike demanding eviction of settlers from the PGR/VGR area in Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong, along with representatives of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). Around 20 persons leading the hunger strike and leaders from other civil organisations supporting the agitation have headed to Dispur for the meeting, which is to be convened by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma this evening at around 7 PM.

Chairman of the Joint Coordination Committee for Autonomous State, Soising Rongpi, who is also participating in the meeting, said that he, along with other leaders of the committee is taking part in the tripartite talks between the state government, the agitating members demanding eviction of settlers from the PGR/VGR area in Kheroni and the KAAC authority.

Rongpi informed that a memorandum has been prepared containing various points of demand related to the protection of land in Sixth Schedule areas of Karbi Anglong, which will be presented to the Chief Minister.

The state government decided to call for discussions

following the December 22 incident at Kheroni in West Karbi Anglong, where government authorities picked up a few protesters from Phelangi, the site of the ongoing hunger strike and incidents of violence occurred during the day.

It may be recalled that on December 6, a group of Karbis led by youth leader Litsong Rongphar and his companion began a hunger strike at Phelangi in Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong, demanding the removal of settlements from PGR/VGR land.

After 15 days of the hunger strike, the situation escalated on December 22 following the picking up of a few hunger strikers by men dressed in black, accompanied by only one uniformed policeman. This led to massive road blockades, violent protests and the torching of the ancestral home of Dr Tuliram Ronghang, Chief Executive Member of KAAC.

People of Karbi Anglong are now eagerly awaiting the outcome of the meeting scheduled this evening at Dispur.

Meanwhile, internet and mobile data services continue to remain suspended as per orders notified by the Home and Political Department, Dispur, to prevent further deterioration of the situation. Mobile users are currently only able to make phone calls and there is growing concern among residents over when internet services will be restored.

NFR sets record with 1,033 m of track renewed in a day

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 26: Northeast Frontier Railway's Alipurduar Division has achieved a significant milestone in mechanised track renewal by completing 1,033 track meters in a single day on 23 December 2025 using PQRS (Plasser's Quick Relaying System). This record-setting performance reflects the efficient use of high-output mechanised track laying technology, optimised traffic blocks and seamless coordination between engineering and operating departments.

Under the ongoing track renewal programme, Northeast Frontier Railway has renewed a total of 290.8 km of track across its network. Division-wise progress includes 51.33 km in Kathihar, 29.77 km in Alipurduar, 75.19 km in Rangiya, 44.98 km in Lumding and 69.96 km in Tinsukia, highlighting a systematic approach toward infrastructure modernization across the zone.

SOS Children's Village concludes health camps in remote Hojai areas

Free medical services reach underserved villages through joint initiative

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, Dec 26: The Family Strengthening Programme (FSP) of SOS Children's Village, Hojai, has successfully concluded a series of General Health Camps, reaching some of the most remote and underserved communities of the district over the past ten days.

The initiative covered Milik Basti, Hawaipur Dhanuwar Basti and Hira Basti areas where access to basic healthcare facilities has remained a major challenge. The health camps were organised in collaboration with the Office of the Deputy Superintendent, Hojai FRU/CHC with medical teams deputed by the Health Department conducting general health check-ups and distributing essential medicines free of cost.

The camps were held at Dhanuwar Basti on December 16, Hawaipur on December 19, Hira Basti on December 24 and Milik Basti on December

26, benefiting a wide section of the rural population.

Senior Child Welfare Officer Niranjan Das said that many families in these villages had never experienced a doctor's visit earlier. He added that elderly persons, children and women received much-needed medical attention and medicines through the



collaborative effort between SOS Children's Village and the Health Department of Assam has been hailed as a model for rural healthcare delivery in Hojai, addressing immediate health concerns while fostering awareness and community empowerment.

Children's Village, along with animators, tutors and other staff, played a key role in mobilising villagers and ensuring smooth conduct of the camps. The programme was guided by Assistant Director Chitta Ranjan Mohanty, whose leadership helped connect government healthcare services with grassroots needs. Community members and PRI representatives appreciated the initiative and expressed gratitude for the timely medical support. They noted that the camps not only provided medicines but also restored a sense of dignity and care among villagers.

The collaborative effort between SOS Children's Village and the Health Department of Assam has been hailed as a model for rural healthcare delivery in Hojai, addressing immediate health concerns while fostering awareness and community empowerment.

Kabyam Award conferred on Kishore Manjit Bora



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Dec 26: The prestigious Kabyam Award, instituted by Asam Kabya Kanan, was conferred on noted poet Kishore Manjit Bora during the open session of the eighth annual conference of the organisation, held on Thursday at Mukti Jujaru Bhawan in Jorhat.

The open session was presided over by Dr Hirendra Kumar Bhagawati, president of Asam Kabya Kanan, while Basanta Kumar Goswami, president of the Asam Sahitya Sabha, attended the programme virtually as the chief guest. In his address, Dr Goswami highlighted the enduring role of poetry in enriching Assamese literature and offered a critical appraisal of contemporary trends in Assamese poetry.

On the occasion, Asam Sahitya Sabha central office secretary and poet Dr Jyotirekha Hazarika unveiled a publication titled 'Amar Kabya Kanan' and delivered an engaging address. Adviser of Asam Kabya Kanan, Pradeep Chandra Sharma, attended as a distinguished guest. The Kabyam Award, carrying a cash prize of Rs

25,000, was formally presented to Kishore Manjit Bora. The programme was conducted by Asam Kabya Kanan founding secretary Naba Rajan.

The day-long eighth annual session began at 9 AM with the hoisting of the organisation's flag by Asim Dutta, executive president of the reception committee. In his address, Dutta highlighted the past and present activities of Asam Kabya Kanan and its contribution to Assamese poetry. This was followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp before the portrait of renowned singer Zubeen Garg by Dr Hirendra Kumar Bhagawati and reception committee president Mrinalini Goswami. Marking the eighth edition of the conference, eight lamps were also lit by senior members and invitees.

Floral tributes were paid in memory of departed social figures, after which the poetry meet was formally inaugurated by organisation adviser Jayanta Kumar Barman. Jorhat Zila Sahitya Sabha secretary Mitali Saikia attended as the guest of honour, while the proceedings were conducted by ad-

viser Pabitra Kumar Nath. In the first session, 30 invited poets recited their poems.

The open session featured a welcome address by Mrinalini Goswami and an explanation of the objectives by secretary Archana Thakuria. The second session of the poetry meet, conducted by poet Ranjit Gogoi was inaugurated by Jorhat District Sahitya Sabha president Mahendra Nath Hazarika. Poets and litterateurs including Hem Chandra Saikia, Madhab Chandra Mahanta, poet Dr Pranjaljyoti Dutta, Pinkumoni Tamuli, Jona Dutta, Sangeeta Bora, Bulbuli Borkotoky, Utpal Kalita and several others took part in the session.

Special felicitations were accorded to Dulai Nath, Sankusiddha Nath, Uttam Kumar Hazarika, Bhairab Gohain, Ajanta Kumar Bora, Bandana Kaushik Bordoloi, Debajani Mahanta and Madan Mohan Pagbandha for their contributions during the session. The programme concluded with the rendition of the State's Jatiya Sangeet.

Obituary

Basudev Sarma, a pious man, a known social worker and a resident of Samar Dalani, breathed his last due to age related ailment at his residence on Thursday evening. He was 96. He was a founder member of Jharna Pani LPS established in 1958 and had served as a secretary of the school management committee. He was closely associated with many socio-cultural and religious organizations. His demise has cast a pall of gloom in the greater Samar Dalani area. He leaves behind his five sons besides a host of relatives.

Aishi Prisha Borah wins Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2025

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Dec 26: A school student of Jorhat, Aishi Prisha Borah, was conferred the 'Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar 2025' on Friday by President Droupadi Murmu at a ceremony held in New Delhi.

According to an official source, Aishi, a class IX student of Kendriya Vidyalaya No 3, RRL Jorhat, at Pulibor, received the prestigious award in the field of Innovation: Science & Technology.

Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma extended his heartiest congratulations to Aishi in a post on social media platform X (formerly Twitter) for the achievement. Sarma said that the award recognises Aishi's innovative work and dedication in the field of science and technology. It is to be mentioned that the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar is the top civilian award for children in India and is given in recognition of exceptional achievements across various domains.

Tezpur Government HS School team secures second place at national-level event in Pune

Tezpur students shine at Rastriya Kala Utsav

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Dec 26: Students of the historic Tezpur Government Higher Secondary School have brought laurels to Assam by securing the second position at the Rastriya Kala Utsav, organised by the Union Ministry of Education in Pune, Maharashtra. The achievement has been widely welcomed by the people of Tezpur and has drawn warm appreciation from the Sonitpur district administration and the district education department.

After successfully progressing through the school, block, district and State-level rounds of the Kala Utsav, a four-member student team from the school represented Assam at the national-level festival held from December 18 to December 25. The team, comprising Nirabjyoti



Saikia, Nilotpal Das, Nayan Das and Lakshya Das, captivated audiences from across the country with an orchestral performance featuring 22 indigenous Assamese folk musical instru-

ments, securing second place at the national level.

The students were guided by teacher-in-charge Ganesh Das, while their artistic training was closely supervised by teachers

Swapani Dutta, Manasi Thakur and Rimpi Borthakur from the school's cultural department.

The school authority expressed gratitude to all those who supported the team throughout their journey from the district to the national level. School principal Manju Barhoo specifically acknowledged the assistance of District Mission Officer (Education) Manoj Gohain, BRP Pranita Medhi and CRCC Sumi Dutta. She congratulated the students and extended her blessings and best wishes for their future endeavours.

Officials said the success has not only brought pride to the institution but has also enhanced the cultural prestige of Sonitpur district and the State of Assam, while congratulating the students on their notable achievement.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

*'Tis not enough to help the feeble up,
but to support them after -William Shakespeare*

Confusion over H-1B visa status

Hundreds of Indian professionals working in the United States on H-1B visas are stranded in India after returning home for what they believed would be routine visa renewals — a process that has now spiralled into months-long uncertainty, financial distress, and professional limbo. Many of these workers travelled to India in early December after explicit assurances from the US Department of Homeland Security that H-1B holders could safely visit their countries of origin and return without facing punitive fees or extraordinary delays. Those assurances, reiterated publicly by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, now ring hollow for families caught in an abrupt policy shift linked to enhanced social media vetting by the US State Department. According to immigration attorneys and affected workers, consular interviews scheduled between December 15 and 26 were suddenly postponed to March 2026 or later, often without explanation beyond a generic email citing “additional administrative processing.” The timing could not have been worse. December is traditionally when thousands of Indian-origin professionals schedule renewals to coincide with holidays, weddings, and family emergencies. Instead, many now find themselves unable to return to the US, unsure when — or if — they will be allowed back. Just weeks earlier, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem had sought to reassure foreign workers amid growing anxiety over visa policies under President Donald Trump’s second term.

The State Department has confirmed that H-1B and H-4 visa applicants are now subject to enhanced social media scrutiny, an expansion of a policy previously applied mainly to students and exchange visitors. Applicants were instructed earlier this year to make their social media profiles public — a move civil liberties groups argue is vague, intrusive, and inconsistently enforced. “Every visa adjudication is a national security decision,” the State Department said in a written response, without addressing delays or backlogs. Lawyers say even benign online activity — political opinions, satire, or associations — can now trigger additional review, delaying cases indefinitely. On December 9, the US Embassy in India issued a sharply worded advisory warning applicants not to appear at consulates on their original interview dates if they had received rescheduling emails, or risk being denied entry altogether. For many stranded workers, the advisory felt like salt in the wound. “It’s Kafkaesque,” said one visa holder in Hyderabad. “You follow instructions, and that becomes the reason you’re punished.”

While H-1B holders form the largest group impacted — Indians account for roughly 71% of all H-1B visas, according to USCIS — immigration lawyers warn that other categories are also being quietly squeezed. As the backlog grows and clarity remains elusive, stranded workers face a stark reality: careers built over years can unravel in months, families can be separated indefinitely, and trust — once broken — is hard to restore. For now, all they can do is wait.

The Pride and Linguistic consciousness of the Assamese

The identity of a nation is not determined solely by its geographical boundaries; rather, it is the language used by that nation, along with the thoughts and culture expressed through it, that grants it a distinct place in the world. For the Assamese people, their language is not merely a medium of communication; it is an emotion flowing through their blood and the pulse of their pride. When an Assamese person expresses thoughts in their own language, a profound shiver of ancient traditions and national glory is felt deep within the heart. This linguistic consciousness is an extremely sensitive and important matter for us because without language, a nation cannot retain any unique identity. In recent times, as the influence of globalisation has accelerated the aggression of various foreign cultures and languages, it has become even more necessary to strengthen this pride in our mother tongue. Only by properly appreciating the gravity and elegance of our language can we stand tall as a proud nation. It is the greatest call of the present time for every Assamese to practise their language purely and to cultivate a deep sense of responsibility towards it. Due to the lack of linguistic consciousness, many prosperous nations have vanished from the face of the earth, and to avoid such a terrifying future, we must become conscious of our vocabulary, our literature, and the manner of our conversations.

Turning the pages of Assam’s history reveals that the Assamese language has preserved its existence through numerous adversities. At a particular time, when a planned conspiracy was underway to remove the Assamese language from government offices and educational institutions, the courageous opposition mounted by the conscious public and literati of Assam was an unparalleled example of national pride. During that difficult period, the sacrifices made by luminaries such as Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Hemchandra Barua, and Gunabhiram Barua to establish the uniqueness of the Assamese language will always remain a source of inspiration for us. Standing against any attack on the language is a matter of life and death for a nation. As a result of the united struggle waged by Assamese society to restore the dignity of their language, we today see it in a position of respect. However, this struggle is never ending; it is a continuous process. Even in the present time, various forms of linguistic and cultural pressures are being exerted on the Assamese language. Particularly, the increased influence of neighbouring state languages and international languages has

created a kind of dilemma in the minds of our younger generation. In such a situation, to strengthen the foundation of our language, we must revive the militant consciousness of the past. Linguistic pride is not narrow-mindedness; it is an unwavering faith in our roots that protects us from feeling inferior in the presence of other languages.

In the name of modernity, many Assamese families today are engaged in a competition to distance their children from the mother tongue. The intense attraction towards English-medium education has created indifference towards the Assamese language among the younger generation. Regardless of the medium of education, not knowing how to speak and write one’s mother tongue purely can never be a matter of pride for an individual. When a child learns to view the world solely through another language instead of becoming familiar with the words of their mother tongue, their cultural foundation becomes weak. It is through language that we assimilate the stories of our grandparents, our folk songs, and the ethics and norms of our society. If the language itself is lost, these invaluable assets will remain unknown to future generations. Therefore, it is essential to accord special respect to the Assamese language in the field of education. Along with making the practice of Assamese language compulsory in both government and private schools, it must be presented to students in a modern and attractive form. The notion must be firmly rooted in the minds of students that learning one’s own language is not a sign of backwardness; rather, it is the primary condition for being a true citizen.

Until the pride in the Assamese language is linked to economic aspects, ensuring its expansion and protection in a sustainable manner will be difficult. In today’s competitive era, people naturally gravitate towards the language that offers greater employment opportunities. If the use of Assamese language is increased in the operations of various government and private institutions in Assam, its necessity will grow further among the common people. Especially in banks, insurance companies, and commercial establishments, making the use of Assamese language mandatory is highly necessary. When an ordinary Assamese person becomes capable of obtaining all facilities in their own language, their faith in their language and nation will become even stronger. Learning other languages for economic self-reliance is not wrong, but sidelining one’s own language in the process is the real danger. If creative use

of Assamese language is employed in the marketing of locally produced goods in Assam, it will give our language a new dimension. Only by linking linguistic consciousness not merely to emotion but to every productive activity in life can the foundation of our pride truly become solid. For this, social awareness is as necessary as government policy.

The use of social media and modern technology has brought both new challenges and opportunities for the Assamese language. Since the current era is one of information technology, the Assamese language must also be shaped to adapt to this digital world. The stronger our language’s presence in the internet realm, the clearer our identity will become to the world. However, it is observed that many Assamese youths find it difficult to use their own script when writing on social media or consider it undignified. The growing trend of writing Assamese words in Roman script poses a major threat to the unique spelling and grammar of our language. This habit can gradually render our script itself extinct. As part of linguistic consciousness, we all must develop the habit of expressing our thoughts using the Assamese script with the help of

our media and literati. If Assamese literature can be elevated to world standards with new ideas and styles, the attraction of the younger generation towards our language will increase naturally. The more creative a language becomes, the longer its lifespan. The vast vocabulary of our language must also be made suitable for the pursuit of modern knowledge and science.

In the geographical environment of Assam, the Assamese language has served as a connecting link among various ethnic communities for ages. This is the greatest strength and characteristic of the Assamese language. It has built bridges of goodwill among people of indigenous communities such as Mising, Bodo, Karbi, Tiwa, Rabha, and others. As a result of this linguistic harmony, Assamese culture has become so rich and diverse. Linguistic consciousness does not mean that we should consider only our language as superior; rather, it means respecting everyone’s language while establishing Assamese as a collective identity. When a Bodo or a Mising person speaks in Assamese, we must respect that linguistic dignity. This very stream of unity will build us into a powerful nation. We can never deny the importance of language in

preserving the unity and solidarity of Assamese society. This sense of linguistic fraternity among us is our true pride. The day every resident of Assam embraces this language as their own and works for its advancement, that day our national consciousness will fully blossom.

In conclusion, it can be said that the pride and linguistic consciousness of the Assamese are not matters confined to speeches or books; they are an inseparable part of our daily lives. The kind of language we use with our children at home, and how conscious we are of our language when conversing in markets or public places—these things reflect our linguistic pride. We all must cultivate the mindset to speak our language with pride, avoiding inferiority. Modernising the language in line with changing times is necessary, but the fundamental character and grammatical purity of the language must never be sacrificed under any circumstances. Only if the language survives will our life and culture survive. Therefore, let us all resolve to accord our mother tongue a position of respect before the world. With the light of our literature, our culture, and our language, we will illuminate the entire world. Though this journey may be long, with the willpower and linguistic love of the Assamese people, we will surely succeed. Our linguistic consciousness will always bind us together as a progressive and proud nation.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

technology. Nowadays, typing in Assamese on mobile phones or computers has become very easy. Therefore, if we become a little conscious, we can transform the digital medium into a powerful tool for promoting our language. Leading technology companies around the world have now begun to give importance to regional languages. If we do not use our language properly, we will be deprived of these global opportunities.

If newspapers, magazines, and television channels use pure and thoughtful Assamese language, its impact will reach every level of society. It is often seen that the standard of language used in the media declines, and the mixing of non-Assamese words spoils the original form of the language. This is a matter of concern for national consciousness. Journalists and literati should always keep in mind that many people in society acquire their language knowledge through their usage. Therefore, the application of wrong words or sentences can lead the entire society astray. The responsibility to revive the indigenous and familiar Assamese words that are gradually disappearing from our society lies with

2026 would be a year of lower oil prices and crude oversupply

By: K Raveendran

As 2026 approaches, the global oil market is heading into a year that could decisively reshape price dynamics, fiscal planning in producing states, and energy security calculations for importing economies. The defining feature of the coming year is not demand destruction or geopolitical shock, but the growing weight of surplus supply. Market projections suggest that oil could face its largest oversupply in years, with as much as 3.2 million barrels per day potentially returning to the market if OPEC+ chooses to unwind its voluntary production cuts. This looming excess sets the stage for a year of difficult trade-offs, strategic recalibration, and shifting leverage between producers and consumers.

The supply-side arithmetic is stark. Voluntary cuts introduced by OPEC+ were designed to stabilise prices in a market struggling to absorb uneven post-pandemic demand growth, accelerating energy transition policies, and efficiency gains. These curbs have so far prevented a deeper price slide, but they have also stored up a dilemma. Should the alliance decide that defending market share is more important than propping up prices, a significant volume of crude could quickly re-enter global trade flows. Even a partial unwind would tilt balances firmly into surplus, amplifying downward pressure on benchmarks. Demand growth, meanwhile, is proving resilient but insufficient to absorb the additional barrels. Consumption is rising steadily in Asia, led by petrochemicals, transport fuels, and aviation, yet the pace is no longer explosive. Structural factors such as electrification of transport, fuel efficiency standards, and slower economic expansion in developed markets continue to cap upside potential. Against this backdrop, even strong buying by China may not be enough to tighten balances. China has been rapidly building its strategic crude inventories, taking advantage of price dips to add to state reserves. This policy-driven demand provides a temporary cushion, but it does not fundamentally alter the global supply-demand equation. Strategic stockpiling is finite and opportunistic; it cannot indefinitely offset millions of barrels per day of new supply.

For OPEC+, 2026 could therefore become a year defined by difficult choices rather than decisive control. Extending production cuts would support prices but deepen internal strains within the alliance, particularly for members eager to monetise capacity investments or facing fiscal pressures. Accepting weaker prices, on the other hand, risks eroding government revenues and testing domestic budgets, even if it helps preserve market share and discourage rival production growth elsewhere. The political economy of this decision is complex. Oil-exporting states rely heavily on hydrocarbon income to fund social spending, infrastructure projects, and economic diversification plans. Prolonged price weakness would force uncomfortable adjustments, from higher borrowing to spending restraint.

Anticipating this risk, key OPEC+ producers have been quietly reshaping their strategies. One of the most significant shifts has been the aggressive expansion of refinery capacity and downstream integration. Rather than relying solely on crude exports, major producers are investing billions of dollars to convert

more of their oil into higher-value products such as fuels, petrochemicals, and specialty chemicals. This move reflects a pragmatic recognition that refining margins and downstream revenues can help offset volatility in crude prices. It also signals a broader attempt to capture more value across the supply chain, insulating national oil companies and state finances from pure upstream exposure. New and expanded refineries across the Middle East and parts of Eurasia are designed not only to meet domestic demand but also to serve export markets in Asia and Africa. These facilities are increasingly complex, capable of processing heavier crudes and producing cleaner fuels that meet tightening environmental standards. For producing countries, the logic is compelling. Even if crude prices soften, refined product exports can generate steadier cash flows and reinforce long-term trade relationships. Over time, this downstream push could subtly alter global trade patterns, with more refined products competing in markets traditionally supplied by independent refiners.

Yet this strategy also carries risks. A surge in global refining capacity raises the possibility of margin compression if product markets become oversupplied. If multiple producers pursue the same downstream hedge simultaneously, the result could be intensified competition and lower profitability. In effect, the volatility may shift from crude prices to refining margins, redistributing rather than eliminating risk. Still, from the perspective of oil-dependent economies, diversification within the hydrocarbon value chain is preferable to remaining exposed to a single, increasingly uncertain revenue stream. For importing countries, the outlook is more straightforward and largely favourable. Nations that rely heavily on imported crude stand to benefit from the prospect of softer prices through 2026. Lower oil prices reduce import bills, ease inflationary pressures, and provide governments with greater fiscal space. For a country like India, which imports the majority of its crude requirements, the implications are significant. Cheaper oil translates into lower energy costs across the economy, from transport and manufacturing to fertilisers and power generation. This can support growth, improve the trade balance, and give policymakers more room to manage subsidies and taxation.

India’s energy strategy is already shaped by a keen awareness of oil price cycles. The prospect of further price declines in the coming months offers an opportunity to build strategic reserves, renegotiate supply contracts, and diversify sources without the pressure of elevated costs. It also provides a buffer against external shocks, allowing authorities to smooth domestic fuel prices and contain inflation. For consumers and businesses alike, sustained moderation in oil prices would act as a quiet stimulant, boosting disposable incomes and competitiveness.

Beyond India, many emerging economies share similar incentives. Import-dependent nations across Asia, Africa, and parts of Europe could see tangible gains if the projected oversupply materialises. Airlines, shipping companies, and energy-intensive industries would all benefit from lower input costs, potentially spurring investment and expansion. At a macro level, reduced energy inflation could allow central banks greater flexibility in monetary policy, particularly in economies still balancing growth with price stability. (IPA Service)

High Temperatures Ahead: BJP Dominance in a Divided India

By: Satyabrata Borah

As the calendar turns to 2026, India’s political arena braces for yet another year of intense turbulence, where alliances shift like sand dunes and public sentiment sways with the winds of regional aspirations. It is safe to predict 2026 will be another politically tumultuous year. Less easy to predict is specific outcomes or developments in ultra-diverse India, but in all likelihood the year will continue to be advantage BJP. Political temperatures will remain high given lack of bipartisanship on practically all issues, and the mutual dislike between senior BJP and Congress brass. This forecast captures the essence of a nation where democracy thrives amid chaos, with over a billion voices echoing through a mosaic of languages, cultures, and ideologies. India’s diversity, often celebrated as its strength, also renders its politics a labyrinth of unpredictability, where national narratives intersect with hyper-local grievances in ways that defy simple prognostications.

To understand why 2026 might favor the Bharatiya Janata Party, one must first revisit the political landscape as it stands at the close of 2025. The BJP, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s stewardship, has solidified its position as the dominant force in Indian politics. Following the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, where the party secured a majority but relied on allies in the National Democratic Alliance to form the government, the BJP has demonstrated resilience.

Recent state elections in 2025, including decisive victories in Delhi and Bihar, have bolstered its momentum. These wins came amid opposition claims of electoral irregularities, yet they underscore the party’s organizational prowess and ability to mobilize voters on themes of development, nationalism, and cultural identity. The NDA’s strong record in major 2025 polls has left the opposition reeling, prompting questions about whether Indian politics is veering toward one-party dominance. Critics argue that the BJP is morphing into a new version of the once-hegemonic Congress, centralizing power and elevating lesser-known leaders to maintain control. This evolution reflects Modi’s enduring popularity, even as whispers of a post-Modi era begin to circulate, with the prime minister halfway through his third term by mid-2026.

The Congress Party, India’s oldest political entity and the primary opposition, finds itself in a precarious position. Led by Rahul Gandhi, it has struggled to regain footing after successive electoral setbacks. In 2025, the party faced crushing defeats and legislative hurdles, exacerbating internal divisions and eroding its credibility as a viable alternative. Gandhi’s efforts to highlight issues like job creation and social justice, as seen in his praise for investments in Congress-ruled states like Karnataka, have garnered attention but failed to translate into widespread electoral gains. The mutual animosity between BJP stalwarts like Modi and Amit

Shah, and Congress figures such as Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, has deepened, manifesting in heated parliamentary exchanges. The winter session of Parliament in 2025, marked by rows over protocol and policy, exemplified this rift, with accusations flying across the aisle and little room for compromise. This lack of bipartisanship extends beyond personal dislikes to ideological chasms, where debates on economic reforms, national security, and social welfare devolve into partisan bickering rather than constructive dialogue.

Looking ahead to 2026, several key electoral battles will test these dynamics. The year will feature assembly elections in four states, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal, along with the union territory of Puducherry. These contests are pivotal, as they represent diverse regional power centers that could either reinforce the BJP’s national narrative or provide the opposition with much-needed victories. In West Bengal, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee’s Trinamool Congress faces a resurgent BJP, which made significant inroads in previous polls but fell short. The state’s volatile politics, characterized by street protests and allegations of violence, could see heightened tensions as both parties vie for the Bengali electorate’s favor.

Similarly, Tamil Nadu’s Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, under M.K. Stalin, anticipates a strong showing, but predictions vary, with some analysts suggesting a potential upset if anti-incumbency surges. Kerala presents a unique challenge, where the Left Democratic Front and United Democratic Front alternate power, leaving limited space for the BJP, though the party aims to expand its footprint through alliances.

Assam, a BJP stronghold in the Northeast, will be a litmus test for the party’s governance model, focusing on issues like immigration and development. Puducherry, though small, adds to the mosaic with its own blend of national and local influences. Beyond these, 2026 will witness Rajya Sabha elections for 75 seats, which could subtly reshape the upper house’s balance. While less glamorous than assembly polls, these indirect elections depend on state assembly compositions, potentially strengthening the NDA if it retains or gains ground in key states. Analysts predict that these races will keep political temperatures elevated, with campaigning likely to intensify communal and economic divides.

The BJP’s advantage stems from multiple factors. Organizationally, the party boasts a robust cadre base, amplified by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s grassroots network, which ensures voter turnout even in adverse conditions. Policy-wise, Modi’s government has pushed major reforms in 2025, boosting economic growth despite global challenges like tariff wars and geopolitical tensions. Initiatives in infrastructure, digital economy, and manufacturing have resonated with aspirational voters, particularly the youth and middle class. The party’s narrative of Hindutva, combined

with welfare schemes like free rations and housing, has broadened its appeal across castes and regions. In contrast, the opposition, including the INDIA bloc, grapples with disunity. Congress’s attempts to forge alliances have faltered due to regional egos and ideological mismatches, as evidenced by fragmented performances in recent elections.

Economic issues will loom large in 2026, influencing voter sentiment. India’s economy is projected to grow steadily, but challenges like unemployment, inflation, and inequality persist. The government’s reform push has helped navigate these, yet critics point to disparities exacerbated by policies favoring big business. Social tensions, including caste-based reservations and religious minorities’ rights, could flare up, especially in states like West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, where identity politics dominate. Internationally, India’s balancing act between Russia, the US, and China will add layers, with persistent border tensions unlikely to escalate into full conflict but providing fodder for nationalist rhetoric.

The absence of bipartisanship exacerbates these fault lines. On issues ranging from farm laws to national security, consensus remains elusive. The BJP’s majority allows it to push legislation, but opposition walkouts and disruptions highlight the dysfunction. This polarization, fueled by social media and 24-hour news cycles, keeps public discourse heated. Mutual distrust between leaders personalizes politics, with barbs exchanged over everything from family legacies to governance failures. Such an environment not only stalls reforms but also erodes public faith in institutions, making 2026 a year where scandals, protests, and legal battles could dominate headlines.

Yet, India’s ultra-diversity ensures no outcome is foreordained. Regional parties like the Trinamool Congress, DMK, or Communist parties in Kerala hold sway in their bastions, potentially checking the BJP’s advance. Voter turnout, influenced by local issues like water scarcity, education, and healthcare, often trumps national themes. Predictions of BJP dominance must contend with historical precedents, where overconfidence led to surprises, as in the 2004 “India Shining” campaign’s failure. However, grounded analysis suggests the BJP’s machinery and Modi’s charisma will likely prevail in key contests, extending its advantage.

As 2026 unfolds, the year promises a spectacle of democracy in action, tumultuous yet vibrant. While specific developments remain hazy in this vast nation, the overarching trend points to continued BJP ascendancy amid high-stakes rivalries. The mutual acrimony between BJP and Congress leaders will sustain the heat, but perhaps amid the clamor, glimpses of bipartisanship could emerge if leaders prioritize national interest over partisan gains. Ultimately, India’s polity, shaped by its people’s resilience, will navigate these waters, reaffirming that in diversity lies not just challenge but the enduring strength of its democratic fabric.

3 courses to master AI agents and boost your salary in 2026

By: Rachel Wells

We're talking about AI and money again, and this time, it's AI agents. "But isn't agentic AI replacing the jobs of junior-level teammates?" I hear you ask.

Yes, you're right, but if you know how to manage and deploy AI agents, you could see a salary raise—plus you might have opportunities open for a completely new job title in the future of work for 2026 and beyond.

Here's why:

- AI agents are able to cut out boring admin and entry-level research, analysis, and other prep tasks, freeing up professionals like you to focus on higher-level strategy work, which means you can actually do what you were hired for, become more effective at it, and stand out to your employer.

- If you know how to manage AI agents as a leader or even as an individual contributor without line management responsibility, you raise your value to your employer as someone who is innovative, adaptable, and focused on driving AI transformation and implementation—which is number one on many employers' priorities right now.

- Companies are beginning to see cost savings from using AI agents and they will be a central part of their AI strategy for the new year, Asana's State of AI at Work 2025 report indicates.

- However, there is still a significant learning curve with understanding what agentic AI even is, to begin with, and then how to use it within the right contexts at work while ensuring a human-in-the-loop approach, Asana's report reveals.

This combination of factors makes you indispensable at this point of AI innovation, driving salary premiums to as much as 56%, according to a PwC study.

What Is Agentic AI Anyway?

AI agents are simply automated teammates that

can perform complex, multi-step, multimodal tasks, on their own, with limited supervision necessary. They can run tasks in the background and can cut a significant amount of time for project managers and operational professionals (they can be used across multiple disciplines and industries however). AI agents execute their tasks by taking the instructions they're provided with, the information they've been trained on, and integrating across tools you'd typically use in your day-to-day (like Slack, Asana, CRM platforms, etc.)

Example of an AI agent at work:

You build and deploy an agent that process customer data into insights and generates a weekly report which you can then proofread and take with you to your weekly stakeholder meeting.

What AI Skills Do I Need?

When using AI agents, you've got to be careful: not everything an agent produces is going to be accurate, ethical, or at the standard you'd desire. This is why skills that lean more on the human side are so important. Skills like:

- Critical thinking, human judgement, and evaluation
- Creativity
- Problem-solving
- Communication skills
- Analysis

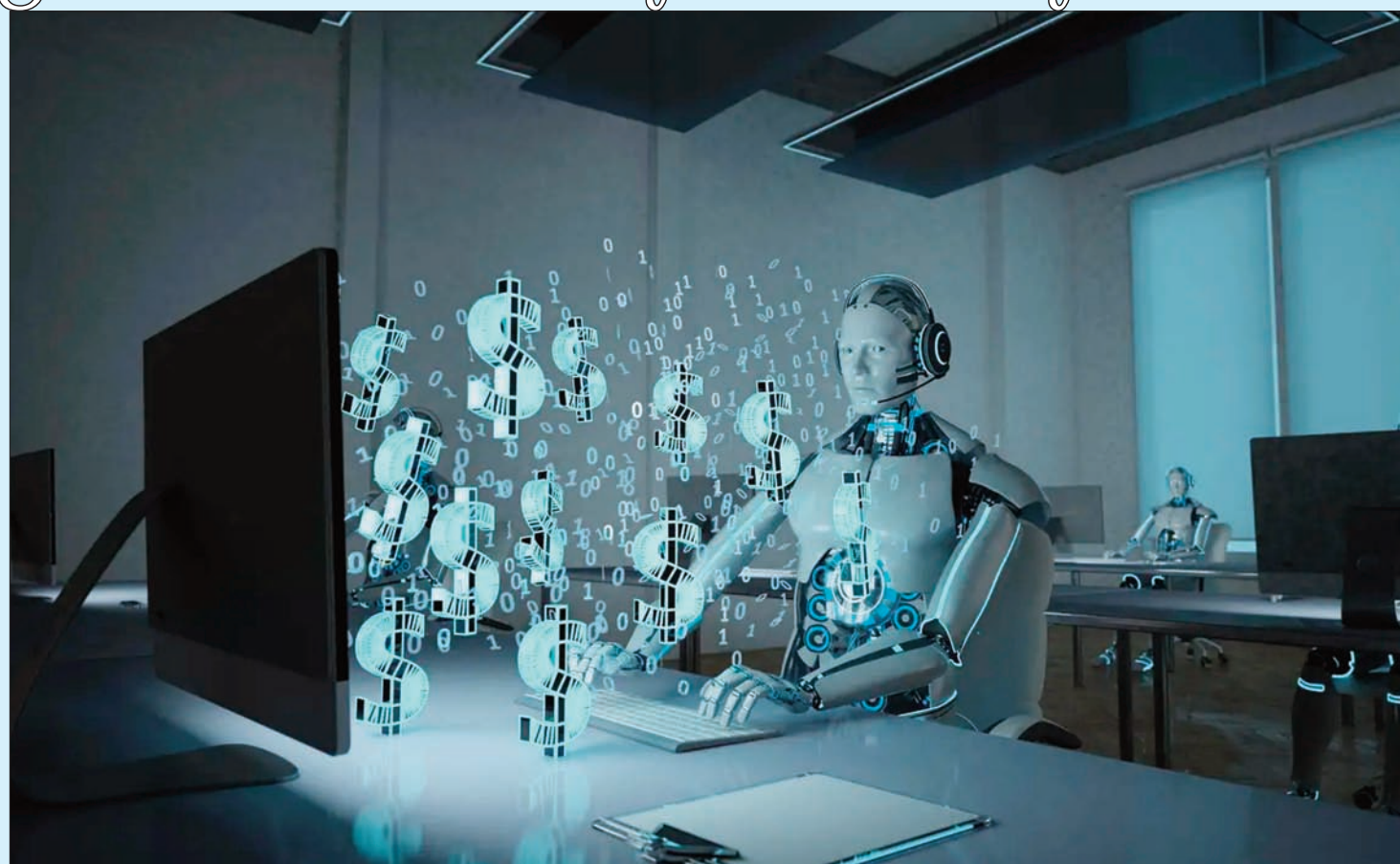
All of these are indispensable. Otherwise, you make yourself and your organization liable.

You also will need technical skills, like:

- AI agent workflow creation
- Expertise using AI agent building tools
- Deep technical expertise if you're creating your own from scratch OR understanding of no-code (vibe coding) tools to create your customized AI agent

3 Of The Best Courses/Certifications To Master AI Agents In 2026

Here are some courses and training programs you can start today or within the next



few weeks to master agentic AI:

- Harvard Data Science Review's Agentic AI Intensive (lasts 2.5 weeks and starts December 2, ending with a certificate.)
- AI Agent Developer Specialization by Van-

derbilt University, via Coursera

- AI Agent Course by Salesforce's Trailhead
- AI agents are already revolutionizing the way we work each day and the construct of our teams. If you know how to design a strategy that includes

them, understand how to work with them, and even how to build your own, you'll step into a window of opportunity with potential for higher-paying roles, and become in-demand in your field. (Courtesy: Forbes)

RRB Group D Recruitment 2026 – 22000 Group D/ Level 1 Posts

Last Date: 20/02/2026.

Railway Recruitment Board has released a short employment notification for the recruitment of approximately 22000 Group D/ Level 1 Vacancy under various zones of Railway Recruitment Board (RRB) against Advertisement No. CEN 09/2025. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here.

Name of post: Group D/ Level 1

No of posts: 22000 posts (approx)

RRB-wise/ Zone-wise Vacancy:

- # Western Railway (Mumbai): To be updated
- # North Western Railway (Jaipur): To be updated
- # South Western Railway (Hubli): To be updated
- # West Central Railway (Jabalpur): To be updated
- # East Coast Railway (Bhubaneswar): To be updated
- # South East Central Railway (Bilaspur): To be updated
- # Northern Railway (New Delhi): To be updated
- # Southern Railway (Chennai): To be updated
- # North Eastern Railway (Gorakhpur): To be updated
- # Northeast Frontier Railway (Guwahati): To be updated
- # Eastern Railway (Kolkata): To be updated
- # Central Railway (Mumbai): To be updated
- # East Central Railway (Hajipur): To be updated
- # North Central Railway (Prayagraj): To be updated
- # South Eastern Railway (Kolkata): To be updated
- # South Central Railway (Secunderabad): To be updated

Pay: Pay Level-1 of 7th CPC Starting Basic Pay ₹ 18000/-

Age Limit: Age limit must be between 18 to 33 years as on 01/01/2026.

Age Relaxation: Category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC/ ST: 5 years

OBC: 3 years

PwD (Unreserved): 10 years

PwD (OBC): 13 years

PwD (SC/ ST): 15 years

Educational Qualification: Candidates must be 10th pass or ITI or equivalent or National Apprenticeship Certificate (NAC) granted by NCVT.

Application Fee:

Category Fee

SC/ ST/ Ex-Serviceman/ PwBD/ Female/ Transgender/ Minorities/ Economically backward class.

(The fee for these categories shall be refunded after deducting bank charges as applicable, on appearing in First Stage CBT.) Rs. 250

Others Rs. 500

Refund of Examination Fee: Candidates belonging to PwBD, Female, Transgender, Ex-Serviceman, SC, ST, Minority Communities, and Economically Backward Classes will receive full refund of Examination Fee Rs.250/- after the examination. All other candidates will receive a refund of Examination Fee Rs.400/- out total paid Rs. 500/- after the examination.

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy through online mode by visiting official RRB Recruitment Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply for RRB Group D Vacancy.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process by clicking "Register Now".

In the next stage, fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.

At the end, pay the application fee as per your category and submit the form.

Don't forget to take a print out of the application form.

Starting date of submission of online application: 21st January 2026, 00.00 Hrs

Last date of submission of online application: 20th February 2026, up to 23:59 Hrs

AAI NER Recruitment 2026 – 14 Senior Assistant & Junior Assistant Posts

Last Date: 11/01/2026.

Airports Authority of India (AAI) Regional Headquarters, North Eastern Region has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 14 Senior Assistant (Electronics), Junior Assistant (HR) and Junior Assistant (Fire Services) posts for its various airports in North Eastern Region. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here.

1. Senior Assistant (Electronics)

No of posts: 5

Pay: NE-06 Level

Educational Qualification: Diploma in Electronics/Telecommunication/Radio Engineering.

Experience: Two years (2) relevant experience in the concerned discipline.

2. Junior Assistant (HR)

No of posts: 2

Pay: NE-04 level

Educational Qualification: Graduate.

3. Junior Assistant (Fire Services)

No of posts: 7

Pay: NE-04 Level

Educational Qualification:

i) 10th Pass + 3 years approved regular Diploma in Mechanical/Automobile/Fire.

(OR)

ii) 12th Pass (Regular Study).

Desirable: Due weightage shall be given to a candidate possessing any one or more (subject to maximum limit of the following).

a) Computer Science as subject at 12th class level;

b) NCC 'B' Certificate

c) Relevant experience in an aviation/regular/industrial fire service

d) Basic Fire Fighting Training Course from AAI Fire Training Establishment.

e) Sub-Fire Officer course from National Fire Service College, Nagpur.

Driving License:

a) Valid Heavy Vehicle Driving License;

OR

b) Valid Medium Vehicle Licence issued at least One Year before the date of advertisement i.e. 06/12/2025.

OR

c) Valid Light Motor Vehicle License (LMV) issued at least two years before the date of advertisement i.e. 06/12/2025.

Age Limit: The candidate's age shall be 18 to 30 years as on 06/12/2025 .

Age Relaxation: Category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below .

SC/ ST: 5 years

OBC/NCL: 3 years

PwBD: 10 years

PwBD {OBC (NCL)}: 13 years

PwBD (SC/ST): 15 years

Application Fee:

Women/SC/ST/PWD/Ex-Servicemen and Apprentices who have completed 01 year Apprenticeship Training in AAI: Nil

General, EWS and OBC Category: Rs. 1000/-

Payment mode: Online

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy by visiting official website of Airport Authority of India (AAI). They may follow below mentioned steps to apply online.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

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

In the next stage, click on "Online Application Form" Link and Login.

Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.

Make payment of application fee as per your category and submit the form.

At the end, take a print out of the application form .

Starting date of submission of online application: 12th December 2025

Last date of submission of online application: 11th January 2026

Starting date of submission of online application: 12th December 2025

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Starting date of submission of online application: 12th December 2025

Last date of submission of online application: 11th January 2026

Bank of India Apprentice Recruitment – 400 Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 10/01/2026.

Bank of India has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 400 Apprentice Posts. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here .

Name of post: Apprentice

No of posts: 400 posts

No of posts @ Assam: 10 posts

Period of engagement: Period of engagement shall be restricted to One Year Apprenticeship Training Programme as per the provisions of the Act.

Stipend: The apprentices are eligible for stipend of Rs.13,000/- (Rupees Thirteen Thousand only) per month for the engagement period of one year. The apprentices are not eligible for any other allowances/ benefits.

Nationality/ Citizenship: A candidate must be a citizen of India.

Age Limit: 20 to 28 years. The candidate must have been born not earlier than 02.12.1997 and not later than 01.12.2005 (both days inclusive) .

Age Relaxation: The category-wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC/ ST: 5 years

OBC/NCL: 3 years

PwBD: 10 years

Educational Qualification: The candidate must possess a graduate degree in any discipline from a recognized university or any equivalent qualifications recognized by central government. The candidate should have passed his/her graduation degree between 01.04.2021 and 01.12.2025.

Application Fee: Application/ Intimation fee to be remitted by all eligible applicants only on demand by BFSI SCC (scrutinizing/ examining body) deputed by the Bank is as under (GST will be charged on application fee as applicable):

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

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process by clicking "New Registration".

In the next stage, click on "Online Application Form" Link and Login.

Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.

At the end, pay the application fee as per your category and submit the form.

Don't forget to take a print out of the application form

Starting date for submission of online application: 25th December 2025

Last date for submission of online application: 10th January 2026

Starting date for submission of online application: 25th December 2025

Last date for submission of online application: 10th January 2026

Starting date for submission of online application: 25th December 2025

Last date for submission of online application: 10th January 2026

Starting date for submission of online application: 25th December 2025

Japan's Cabinet OKs record defence budget that aims to deter China

TOKYO, Dec 26: Japan's Cabinet on Friday approved a record defence budget plan exceeding 9 trillion yen (\$58 billion) for the coming year, aiming to fortify its strike-back capability and coastal defence with cruise missiles and unmanned arsenals as tensions rise in the region.

The draft budget for fiscal 2026 beginning April is up 9.4% from 2025 and marks the fourth year of Japan's ongoing five-year programme to double annual arms spending to 2% of gross domestic product. The increase comes as Japan faces elevated tension from China. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said in November that her country's military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing says must come under its rule.

Takaichi's government, under US pressure for a military increase, pledged to achieve the 2% target by March, two years earlier than planned. Japan also plans to revise



the ongoing security and defense policy by December 2026 to further strengthen its military.

Japan has been bolstering its offensive capability with long-range missiles to attack enemy targets from a distance, a major break from its post-World War II principle limiting the use of force to own self-defence.

The current security strategy, adopted in 2022, names China as the country's biggest strategic challenge and calls for a more offensive role for Japan's Self-Defence Force under its security alliance with the US.

The new budget plan allocates more than 970 billion yen (\$6.2 billion) to bolster Japan's "stand-

off" missile capability. It includes a 177 billion-yen (\$1.13 billion) purchase of domestically developed and upgraded Type-12 surface-to-ship missiles with a range of about 1,000 km.

The first batch of the Type-12 missiles will be deployed in Japan's southwestern Kumamoto prefecture by March, a year earlier than planned, as Japan accelerates its missile buildup in the region.

In part due to Japan's aging and declining population and its struggles with an understaffed military, the government believes unmanned weapons are essential.

To defend the coasts, Japan will spend 100 billion yen (\$640 million) to deploy "massive" unmanned air, sea-surface and underwater drones for surveillance and defence under a system called "SHIELD" planned for March 2028, defence ministry officials said. For speedier deployment, Japan initially plans to rely mainly on imports, possibly from Turkey or Israel. (AP)

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak convicted in trial over 1MDB corruption scandal

PUTRAJAYA, Dec 26: Imprisoned former Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak was convicted Friday following a corruption trial tied to multibillion-dollar looting of the 1MDB state investment fund.

The nation's High Court found Najib, 72, guilty on four counts of abuse of power. Rulings on additional charges of money laundering were still being delivered Friday afternoon.

Authorities said he siphoned more than \$700 million into his personal bank accounts from the 1MDB fund. Najib denied any wrongdoing and had maintained the funds were a political donation from Saudi Arabia and that he had been misled by rogue financiers led by Low Taek Jho. Low, thought to be the scandal's mastermind, remains at large.

Justice Collin Lawrence Sequerah said Najib's claim of a Saudi donation was "incapable of belief". Four letters purportedly from the Saudi donor were forged and evidence clearly showed the funds originated from 1MDB, he said.

He rejected defence arguments that Najib was an unwitting victim, duped by former 1MDB officials and Low. Witness testimonies had pointed to an "unmistakable bond" between Najib and Low, who had played a pivotal role in the scandal and operated as "the proxy, the conduit, the intermediary and the facilitator" for Najib in 1MDB, the judge said.

The judge noted that Najib failed to take steps to verify the origin of the massive funds nor took action against Low. Instead, Najib used the money despite its suspicious origins and also took steps to protect his position, including by removing the then-attorney general and anti-corruption chief investigating the case, he said. "The accused was no country bumpkin," Sequerah said. "Any attempt to paint the accused as an ignorant unaware of the misdeeds going around him must therefore, fail miserably."



Najib, dressed in a blue suit, appeared calm and at times wrote in his notebook.

Najib, who served as prime minister from 2009 to 2018, currently is serving a prison sentence after being convicted in an earlier case linked to the 1MDB scandal, which led to his government's defeat in 2018.

He was sentenced to 12 years in prison in 2020 for abuse of power, criminal breach of trust and money laundering involving 42 million ringgit (\$10.3 million) channelled into his accounts from SRC International, a former unit of 1MDB.

He began his sentence in August 2022 after losing a final appeal, becoming Malaysia's first former leader to be jailed. The Pardons Board, a body that advises rulers on granting clemency, halved his sentence and sharply reduced his fine in 2024.

Najib set up the 1MDB development fund shortly after taking office in 2009. He chaired 1MDB's advisory board and held veto power as finance minister while serving as prime minister.

The corruption case rippled across global markets and triggered investigations in the United States and other nations.

Between 2009 and 2014, top executives and associates of Najib looted over \$4.5 billion from the fund, laundering it through countries including the US, Singapore and Switzerland, according to the

US Justice Department.

Authorities alleged the funds were used to finance Hollywood films and extravagant purchases including hotels, a luxury yacht, art and jewellery. Jeff Sessions, the US attorney general at the time, called it "kleptocracy at its worst".

The scandal also hit Wall Street, with Goldman Sachs facing billions in fines for its role in raising money for 1MDB.

The scion of a prominent political family, Najib was long seen as untouchable until public anger over 1MDB led to the 2018 election defeat of his ruling party, which had governed Malaysia since the country gained independence from Britain in 1957.

Earlier this week, Najib failed in his bid to serve his graft sentence under house arrest.

Malaysia's High Court ruled Monday that a rare royal order for home arrest issued by the nation's former king was invalid because it was not made in accordance with constitutional requirements. Najib's lawyer has said they plan to appeal.

Originally due for release in August 2028 after his sentence reduction, Najib now faces a longer stretch behind bars.

Najib's wife, Rosmah Mansor, also was sentenced to 10 years in prison and a massive fine in 2022 in a separate graft case. She has been released on bail pending an appeal. (AP)

Iran seizes oil tanker in Strait of Hormuz

TEHRAN, Dec 26: Iran seized a foreign oil tanker as it travelled the strategic Strait of Hormuz, state media said Friday.

Mojtaba Ghahramani, a provincial chief of the justice department, said the oil tanker was carrying some 4 million litres, or 25,000 barrels, of smuggled fuel when the Revolutionary Guard naval forces seized the vessel, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Ghahramani said the forces also detained 16 foreign crew members of the tanker, adding that the seizure was a remarkable "blow" to smugglers. He did not disclose the nationality of the crew or the flag of the tanker.

Iran occasionally seizes oil-carrying vessels over similar charges in the region. In November, Iran seized a ship as it travelled through the narrow Strait of Hormuz over what it said were violations, including carrying an illegal consignment.

The West has blamed Iran for a series of limpet mine attacks on vessels that damaged tankers in 2019, as well as for a drone attack on an Israeli-linked oil tanker that killed two European crew members in 2021.

Those attacks began after US President Donald Trump, in his first term in office, unilaterally withdrew from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Iran also seized the Portuguese-flagged cargo ship MSC Aries in April 2024.

Following years of tensions between Iran and the West, coupled with the situation in the Gaza Strip, Iran saw a full-scale 12-day war in June with Israel, whose strikes led to the deaths of senior military commanders and nuclear scientists. Iran's retaliatory missile barrage killed 28 in Israel.

Tehran has long threatened to close off the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf through which 20 per cent of all traded oil passes. The US Navy has long patrolled the Mideast through its Bahrain-based 5th Fleet to keep the waterways open. (AP)

Zelensky says meeting with Trump to happen in 'near future'

KYIV, Dec 26: A meeting with US President Donald Trump will happen "in the near future," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Friday, signalling progress in talks to end the nearly four-year war between Russia and Ukraine.

"We are not losing a single day. We have agreed on a meeting at the highest level — with President Trump in the near future," Zelensky wrote on X.

"A lot can be decided before the New Year," he added.

Zelensky's announcement came after he said Thursday he had a "good conversation" with US special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Trump has unleashed an extensive diplomatic push to end the war, but his efforts have run into sharply conflicting demands by Moscow and Kyiv.

Zelensky said Tuesday he

would be willing to withdraw troops from the country's eastern industrial heartland as part of a plan to end the war, if Moscow also pulls back and the area becomes a demilitarized zone monitored by international forces.

Though Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Thursday that there had been "slow but steady progress" in the peace talks, Russia has given no indication that it will agree to any kind of withdrawal from land it has seized.

In fact, Moscow has insisted that Ukraine relinquish the remaining territory it still holds in the Donbas — an ultimatum that Ukraine has rejected. Russia has captured most of Luhansk and about 70% of Donetsk — the two areas that make up the Donbas.

On the ground, Russian drone attacks on the city of Mykolaiv and

its suburbs overnight into Friday left part of the city without power.

Meanwhile, Ukraine said it struck a major Russian oil refinery Thursday using British-supplied Storm Shadow missiles.

Ukraine's General Staff said its forces hit the Novosakhhtinsk refinery in Russia's Rostov region. "Multiple explosions were recorded. The target was hit," it wrote on Telegram. Rostov regional Gov Yuri Slyusar said a firefighter was wounded when extinguishing the fire.

Ukraine's long-range drone strikes on Russian refineries aim to deprive Moscow of the oil export revenue it needs to pursue its full-scale invasion. Russia wants to cripple the Ukrainian power grid, seeking to deny civilians access to heat, light and running water in what Kyiv officials say is an attempt to "weaponise winter". (AP)

Another Hindu man lynched in Bangladesh over alleged extortion

DHAKA/NEW DELHI, Dec 26: A Hindu man has been lynched in Bangladesh over alleged extortion, according to media reports, days after another man from the minority religion was lynched in the country.

The incident took place on Wednesday in Rajbari town's Pangsha upazila, The Daily Star newspaper on Thursday quoted police as saying.

The deceased, identified as Amrit Mondal, had allegedly formed a criminal gang and was involved in extortion and other criminal activities.

The interim government led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus "strongly condemned" the killing while asserting that it was not a communal attack.

On the day of the incident, Mondal was beaten up by locals when he, along with his group members, tried to extort money from a resident's house, the report said.

Upon receiving information about the incident, police rushed to the spot and rescued Mondal in a critical condition.

He was taken to a hospital where doctors declared him dead around 2:00 am,



Assistant Superintendent of Police (Pangsha Circle) Debrata Sarkar said, according to the report, Mondal's body was sent to Rajbari Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy, Sarkar said.

Most of his associates fled after the incident, but police arrested one man and recovered firearms from his possession.

According to the police, Mondal had at least two cases filed against him, including

a murder case.

Condemning the killing, the interim government said in a statement that it "does not support any kind of illegal activities, mass beatings or violence," the state-run BSS news agency reported.

In a statement, the government said that the incident was not a communal attack but one stemming from a violent situation arising from extortion and terrorist activities.

Legal action will be taken against everyone directly or indirectly involved in the incident, it said.

The incident comes a week after another Hindu man, Dipu Das, was lynched and his body set on fire over blasphemy allegations in Mymensingh.

Police and other law enforcement agencies have made 12 arrests in the case so far.

Das' killing sparked widespread protests by factory workers, students and rights groups in Dhaka and elsewhere in Bangladesh, and India expressed its concerns as well. The interim government has said it would take care of Das' minor child, as well as his wife and parents. (PTI)

Indian student shot dead near University of Toronto campus

TORONTO, Dec 26: A 20-year-old Indian doctoral student has been shot dead near the University of Toronto Scarborough campus in Canada, with authorities probing the case as a homicide, officials said.

The shooting took place on Tuesday, and the Toronto police on Wednesday identified the victim as Shivank Avasthi, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

Police were called to the area of Highland Creek Trail and Old Kingston Road at about 3:30 pm on Tuesday for a report of an injured person lying on the ground, Duty Inspector Jeff Allington told reporters near the scene on Tuesday night.

A person walking through the woods in the area discovered the victim on a paved trail and called 911, Allington said. When officers arrived, they found a person with a gunshot wound. That person was pronounced dead at the scene, the report added.

The police are probing the case as a homicide. "Our immediate focus is on preserving evidence at the scene, determining what happened and notifying this individual's next of kin. Because of that, there is very little information that I am able to share with you tonight," Allington said.

Toronto police said the suspect fled the area prior to police arrival. No suspect description has been released. Anyone with information is asked to contact police.

Meanwhile, India's Consulate in Toronto expressed "deep anguish" over the student's "tragic death".

"We express deep anguish over the tragic death of a young Indian doctoral student, Shivank Avasthi, in a fatal shooting incident near the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus. The Consulate is in touch with the bereaved family during this difficult time, and is extending all necessary assistance in close coordination with the local authorities," the Consulate posted on X. A UTSC spokesperson said the university was "extremely saddened" to learn about the death near their campus, but did not confirm if he was a student, CP24 Television network reported. (PTI)

'Papa, I cannot bear pain': Indian-origin man dies after 8-hour wait at Canada hospital

TORONTO, Dec 26: A 44-year-old Indian-origin man has died of suspected cardiac arrest after waiting for more than eight hours for treatment in a Canadian hospital's emergency room area, a media report has said.

Prashant Sreekumar began experiencing severe chest pains while at work on December 22, Global News reported on Wednesday.

A client drove him to the Grey Nuns Hospital in southeast Edmonton, where Prashant was checked in at triage and then took a seat in the waiting room.

His father, Kumar Sreekumar, soon arrived.

"He told me, 'Papa, I cannot bear the pain,'" Kumar said.

Kumar said his son told him and hospital staff the pain was a 15 out of 10.

They did an electrocardiogram (ECG) on him to check his heart's function, but the family said Prashant was told there was nothing of significance and to keep waiting.

Staff also offered Prashant some Tylenol for his pain.

He waited, and waited some more.

Kumar said as time passed, nurses would check Prashant's blood pressure.

"It went up, up, and up. To me, it was through the roof."

More than eight hours went by before Prashant was called into the treatment area.

"After sitting maybe 10 seconds, he looked at me, he got up and put his hand on his chest and just crashed," Kumar said.

Nurses called for help but it was too late. Prashant died of an apparent cardiac arrest, the report added.

Prashant leaves behind his wife, and three children ages three, 10 and 14. The family loved to travel together and said Prashant was a "goofball" with his kids.

"He was for his family, for his kids, he was so nice. Anybody who talked to him said, 'We don't know a better than him,'" Kumar said.

Family and friends want answers over how could a man with

severe chest pain could fall through the cracks in such a shocking way.

A video has been circulating on social media that shows Prashant's wife narrating the hours-long ordeal.

In the video, she is claiming that his blood pressure had risen to 210 even as he sat in the waiting room and that he was only offered Tylenol despite complaining of "unbearable" pain.

"They said that chest pain is not considered an acute problem, they do not suspect a cardiac arrest..." his wife said.

Family friend Varinder Bhullar, who who would use Prashant's accounting services, said this is a huge loss for the community. He is devastated at what happened.

"We expect better from the hospital and health-care system," Bhullar said.

The Grey Nuns Hospital is run by Covenant Health.

The organisation told Global News in an email that it wouldn't comment on the specifics sur-



rounding patient care because of privacy, but did say the case is before the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

"We offer our sympathy to the patient's family and friends. There is nothing more important than the safety and care of our patients and staff," the statement said.

As family try to remember Prashant for all the good he brought them, they say they will always be haunted by how he died in pain — in a hospital — without ever seeing a doctor.

"They took my baby for nothing. For nothing," Kumar said. (PTI)

UAE president arrives in Pakistan on maiden official visit

ISLAMABAD, Dec 26: President of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, arrived here on Friday on his first official visit to Pakistan at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Al Nahyan, who is on a day-long visit, was received at the Nur Khan airbase by Prime Minister Shehbaz. He had earlier visited Pakistan on a private trip in January this year.

The Pakistan Air Force jets presented a ceremonial aerial salute and escorted Al Nahyan's plane as it entered Pakistani airspace.

According to a statement by the Foreign Office (FO), this is Al Nahyan's first official visit to Pakistan as the UAE president and he is accompanied by a high-level delegation.

President Al Nahyan, who is also the ruler of Abu Dhabi, will review the entire spectrum of bilateral relations with Prime Minister Shehbaz and both leaders will "exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest," the statement said.

"The visit will provide an important opportunity to further strengthen the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates," the FO said.

The FO added that the visit reflects the depth of bilateral relations between both nations and their shared commitment to bolster collaboration in key areas, including trade, investment, energy, development and regional stability.

During the visit, the UAE leader will hold a meeting with the prime minister, where the two leaders will review the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

Pakistan and the UAE have close ties and the visit will further strengthen the longstanding relations between the two countries. Pakistan and the UAE share close diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties, strengthened by historical connections and a large Pakistani expatriate community in the Emirates. (PTI)

24 boys, including minors, traced in Siang district; commission coordinates with Tripura authorities

APSCPCR responds to recovery of missing Tripura youths in Arunachal



HT Correspondent
NAHARLAGUN, Dec 26: The Chairperson of the Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (APSCPCR), Ratan Anya, reacted sharply to media reports regarding missing persons from Tripura who were recently found in Arunachal Pradesh.

In a media briefing, Anya said that upon learning of the matter, the Commission immediately contacted its counterpart in Tripura and assured full support. She confirmed that the case involves minors and that prompt action has been taken by the Siang police and the Siang district administration.

According to the FIR registered on December 23 at Kailashahar Police Station, Unakoti District, Tripura (KLS PS Case No. 69/25 under Section 137(2) BNS), 24 boys including some minors went missing from their homes after returning from work. It was later found that the boys had been taken outside the State for work purposes and were facing difficulties at their workplace, unable to communicate or return home.

Siang District SP JK Lego confirmed that the Boleng police traced and recovered all 24 missing boys on December 24 from an orange orchard at Riew Village, where they were engaged in plucking oranges. Of the recovered boys, eight were specifically mentioned in the Tripura missing report, while the remaining 16, from the same locality, were also found at the site.

SP Lego added that some of the boys may have been taken to Upper Subansiri District for similar work. Given that minors were involved, the District Child Protection Committee has been in constant touch with the police, providing counselling and support.

Ratan Anya appealed to the public not to engage minors in work at homes, offices, factories or industries, emphasising that the commission has received multiple complaints and will take strict action.

The rescued boys have been kept in a safe location. The Tripura police team, in coordination with the Boleng Police, is scheduled to take custody of the boys, including minors and return them safely to Tripura while following all necessary procedures as per the Child Welfare Committee guidelines, SP Lego added.

Arunachal govt promotes 34 police inspectors as DSPs



ITANAGAR, Dec 26: The Arunachal Pradesh government has promoted 34 police inspectors to the rank of deputy superintendent of police (DSP), following the recommendations of the departmental promotion committee (DPC).

According to an order issued by the home department, the promotions include inspectors from civil police, India Reserve Battalion (IRBn) and Arunachal Pradesh Police Battalion

(AAPBn).

The promoted officers have been elevated to pay matrix level-10 (₹ 56,100-₹ 1,77,500) along with other admissible allowances with effect from December 24, the date of the DPC meeting.

The order clarified that inter-se seniority of the promoted officers will be determined separately.

It further stated that officers whose pay had earlier been upgraded under the modified assured career progression (MACP)

scheme may exercise their option for fixation of salary in the promotional post within one month from the date of issue of the order.

All other service conditions not specified in the promotion order will continue to be governed by the relevant rules in force, the government said.

The order was issued with the approval of the governor and signed by state deputy secretary (Home). (PTI)

Aalo PS cracks SBI ATM vandalism, arrests three

HT Correspondent
AALO, Dec 26: The Aalo Police Station has successfully solved the case of SBI ATM vandalism and attempted robbery near the Petrol Pump, New Market, Aalo, which occurred in the early hours of October 18, 2025.

On reaching the scene, police found the ATM booth engulfed in smoke and fire, which was promptly brought under control with assistance from the Aalo Fire Station. Preliminary investigation revealed that the fire was caused during an attempt to cut open the ATM/CDM machine using a metal cutter. Aalo PS Case No. 59/25 was registered under Sections 324(3)/324(4)/324(5)/331(4)/305(e)/62 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and investigated by Sub-Inspector Nending Kojing.

Considering previous ATM robbery incidents in Roing and Pasighat, alerts were issued by the IO and OC Aalo under SP Aalo's direction to police stations along the National Highway route, including Basar, Likhabali, Daporijo, Raga and Ziro.

On December 18, 2025, during a naka checking at Daporijo, police detained two suspicious persons along with an LPG cylinder, oxygen cylinder, gas cutter and other house-breaking tools being transported in a vehicle (Registration No DL-8CAW-7611). One accomplice managed to flee. The detained persons were identified as Shahrukh Khan, 32 and Saddam @ Saddam Khan, 38, originally from Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh and residing in Jonai, Assam. Verification revealed that Shahrukh Khan had



previously been involved in a similar ATM robbery in Guwahati.

On December 19, 2025, the absconding accused, Mohd Hasim, 33, a resident of Mewat District, Haryana was apprehended at the Likhabali check gate. He was also previously involved in an ATM robbery case in Guwahati.

Investigation revealed that Shahrukh Khan and Mohd Hasim met while serving jail terms in Guwahati and formed a gang planning serial ATM thefts across Arunachal Pradesh. Shahrukh would scout targets across districts in Arunachal Pradesh, after which Hasim would coordinate with other gang mem-

bers from Haryana and Rajasthan to commit the robbery. The loot was divided among the members, who then returned to their respective states.

All three accused have been formally arrested and further investigation is underway to ascertain their involvement in other similar offences and identify additional associates.

West Siang Police reaffirmed their commitment to public safety and urged citizens to report any suspicious activity to the nearest police station. Appreciation was extended to Daporijo Police and Likhabali Police for their assistance in apprehending the accused.

APRA congratulates Pemba Tamang on national silver

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Dec 26: The Arunachal Pradesh Rifle Association (APRA) on Thursday congratulated shooters from the State for securing a silver medal at the national level shooting championship.

In a statement, APRA president Chukhu Apa, IPS, said the achievement has made the State proud at the national level. He informed that Pemba Tamang of the Arunachal Pradesh Rifle Association won the silver medal in the 25m Rapid Fire Pistol (individual) event at the ongoing 68th National Shooting Championship being held in Delhi.

Chukhu Apa stated that only two shooters from Arunachal Pradesh—Miss Yalom Mize and Pemba Tamang are participating in the championship, which is being conducted from December 11 to January 4, 2025, at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range in Delhi. Among them, Pemba Tamang clinched the silver medal with an impressive performance.

The APRA president and other office-bearers praised the shooter for his dedication and achievement, stating that his success has brought honour to Arunachal Pradesh at the national level.

Indigenous youth groups raise alarm over alleged Bangladeshi influx in Arunachal Pradesh



HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Dec 26: Arunachal Pradesh Indigenous Youth Organisation (APIYO), Indigenous Youth Force of Arunachal (IYFA) and ANYO raised serious concerns over the alleged influx of Bangladeshi nationals, warning that it threatens local citizens and could alter the demographic profile of the Northeast.

Addressing the media at the Arunachal Press Club, APIYO president Taro Sonam Liyak alleged that there is an attempt to change the region's demographic character under a "Greater Bangladesh" agenda. Citing Assam as an example, he claimed the Bangladeshi population has increased significantly there and cautioned against a similar situation in Arunachal Pradesh.

He also expressed concern over the contin-

ued operation of weekly markets, alleging that their daily functioning discourages traditional local businesses and facilitates the large-scale entry of illegal immigrants.

The three organisations announced they will hold a public rally on December 27 from 3:30 PM to 7 PM, starting at Akashdeep and proceeding to the Tennis Court in Itanagar. They confirmed that permission has been sought from the Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police and the rally will follow standard operating procedures (SOPs).

The movement, carried out under the slogan "Bangladeshi Bhagao, Arunachal Bachao," calls for public support. "This issue is not limited to our organisations alone, it concerns every citizen of Arunachal Pradesh," Liyak said, appealing for collective responsibility to safeguard local interests.

D'Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary trains frontline staff in wildlife and habitat monitoring

HT Correspondent
PASIGHAT, Dec 26: D'Ering Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary (DMWS) organised a training and capacity-building workshop on systematic wildlife and habitat monitoring for its frontline staff at Pasighat, in partnership with the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology & the Environment (ATREE). The workshop saw participation from 35 frontline forest

staff and aimed to strengthen skills in scientific monitoring techniques for long-term conservation planning and field-based data collection.

In her welcome address, Kempie Ete, DFO of DMWS, emphasised the importance of regular and systematic monitoring for effective wildlife management. She noted that the workshop would equip staff with the technical skills required to conduct the sanctu-

ary's first systematic baseline assessment of wildlife and habitats.

Dr Rajkamal Goswami, Fellow and Lead of the ATREE Arunachal Pradesh team, led a session on camera trapping, covering principles, selection of equipment, deployment methods and data management. Dr Aavika Dhanda, Project Manager at ATREE Arunachal Pradesh, conducted a session on bird and habitat monitoring, focusing on

assessing bird diversity and habitat conditions in grassland ecosystems.

The afternoon session included a field demonstration, where participants received hands-on training in deploying camera traps, using GPS devices and rangefinders and practical demonstrations of different camera trap models.

The workshop concluded with participants receiving certificates.

People recalls her contribution to public service and social welfare

Former Arunachal MLA Yadap Apang dies at 71



ITANAGAR, Dec 26: Former Arunachal Pradesh MLA Yadap Apang, wife of ex-chief minister Gegong Apang, died at her Pasighat residence in East Siang district on Friday following age-related ailments, family sources said. She was 71.

She is survived by her husband and six children, including former Union minister Omak Apang.

Yadap Apang, first wife of the former chief minister was elected to the Assembly in 1995 on a Congress ticket.

Apart from her political career, she was associated with media and publishing activities and served as a director of Arunachal Times Publications Pvt Ltd, which publishes The Arunachal Times.

She was also involved in various community and educational initiatives.

Her last rites will be performed on Sunday. Governor KT Parnaik condoned her demise, saying the state had lost an eminent social worker and

a devoted public representative.

In his condolence message to Gegong Apang, the governor described Yadap as a remarkable and compassionate woman who served the people with sincerity, dedication and dignity.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu also expressed grief over her death.

"Deeply saddened by the demise of Yadap Apang. She was a committed public representative and a gracious personality who served the people with dedication and dignity," Khandu said in a post on X, extending condolences to the bereaved family.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein said Yadap Apang was a devoted public servant who served the people with sincerity and compassion.

He conveyed his deepest condolences to Gegong Apang and the family, praying for strength and peace during this difficult time. (PTI)

No. FKDI/TB/5/15		Date: 24/12/2025	
HORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER			
Sealed tender affixing non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty-five paise) only is hereby invited from the eligible registered contractors/surveyor of Irrigation Department, Assam and BTC in prescribed form subsequently to be drawn in APWD F-2 form of Tender Agreement for the works as listed below which will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 p.m. of 05-01-2026 and will be opened on the same day at 2.30 p.m. in presence of the interested tenderer (s) or their authorized representatives. In the event of any reason, if the office remains closed in the specific date, the tenders will be received/opened on the next working day at the same time and same place.			
Detail N.I.T, terms and conditions, etc may be had from the office of the undersigned on payment of non-refundable tender fee of Rs. 500.00 (Rupees five hundred) only in the form of Demand Draft only from any Nationalized Bank duly pledged in favour of the undersigned payable at Udalguri up to 11.00AM on 05/01/2026.			
Sl No	Name of Scheme	Approx Amount in Rs.	
1	Restoration of breached afflux and guide bund and repairing of regulator gates of Tangagora FIS under SOPD-G for the year 2025-26.	Rs 16,00,000.00	
Earnest Money : 2% against work value (1% for SC/ST/OBC) in the shape of Bank Draft/ Call deposit drawn from any Scheduled Bank guaranteed by RBI and duly pledged in favour of "The Executive Engineer, Paneri-Kalaigaon Division (Irrigation) Tangla is to be submitted along with the tender.			
Time of Completion :- 60 (sixty) days only.			
Special Clauses :-			
1. The Tender Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the tenders without assigning any reason there of or stop the process of tender at any time and shall bear no liability whatsoever consequent upon such decision and also not bound to accept lowest tender rate.			
2. Payment of bill etc will be made subject to the availability of fund under the concerned Head of A/C and it is also clear that no interest etc will be made for such inconvenience as agreed.			
IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/3457		Sd/-Executive Engineer Paneri- Kalaigaon Division (Irrigation), Tangla	

'Now, the heroes and heroines of the country will not be relegated to the margins' Sahibzades represent ultimate expression of bravery against religious fanaticism, terror: PM

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the supreme sacrifice of the Sahibzades (sons) of the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, represents the ultimate expression of India's indomitable courage, valour and bravery against the cruel Mughal Sultanate, shaking the very existence of religious fanaticism and terror.

Addressing an event organised on Veer Bal Diwas to commemorate the martyrdom of Sahibzades Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, Modi said the country is remembering the brave sons who represent the pinnacle of India's indomitable courage, valour and bravery.

"Today, we remember the brave Sahibzades, the pride of our nation. They embody India's indomitable courage and the highest ideals of valour. "Those brave Sahibzades broke the limits of age and circumstance. They stood like a rock against the cruel Mughal Sultanate, shaking the very existence of religious fanaticism and terror. A nation with such a glorious past, whose young generation has inherited such inspirations, what can that nation not achieve?" he said.

The prime minister said the Sahibzades were quite young at the time, but Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's cruelty was unremovable by that. "Aurangzeb knew that if he wanted to instil fear among the people of India and force religious

conversion, he would first have to break the morale of Indians. That is why he made the Sahibzades his target. But Aurangzeb and his commanders forgot that our gurus were not ordinary human beings. They were living embodiments of penance and sacrifice, divine incarnations in spirit and action," he said.

Modi said the courage and ideals of Mata Gujri Ji, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji and the four Sahibzades continue to give strength to every Indian.

"Sahibzada Ajit Singh ji, Sahibzada Jujhar Singh ji, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh ji and Sahibzada Fateh Singh ji were compelled, at a very young age, to confront the greatest power of their time. This struggle was not merely about power but a clash between India's core values and religious fanaticism. It was a battle of truth versus falsehood," he said.

On the Prakash Purab (birth anniversary) of Sri Guru Gobind Singh on January 9, 2022, Modi had announced that December 26 would be observed as Veer Bal Diwas to commemorate the martyrdom of Sahibzades Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, whose unparalleled sacrifice continues to inspire generations. The government is organising programmes across the country aimed at informing and educating citizens about the extraordinary courage and supreme sacrifice of the Sahibzades to mark



Veer Bal Diwas.

The prime minister said the country has decided that liberation from the mentality of slavery must be achieved and the sacrifices of Indians, memories of the people's valour will not be suppressed.

"Now, the heroes and heroines of the country will not be relegated to the margins and, therefore, we are celebrating 'Veer Bal Diwas' with full enthusiasm. In our country, which is becoming free from the mentality of slavery, linguistic diversity is becoming our strength," he said.

He emphasised that the saga of the Sahibzades' sacrifice should have been on the lips of every citizen, but unfortunately, even after Independence, the colonial mindset prevailed.

Modi pointed out that this mentality was sown by British politi-

cian Macaulay in 1835 and was not eradicated even after Independence, leading to decades of attempts to suppress such truths. He asserted that India has now resolved to free itself from the colonial mindset, declaring that the memories of Indian sacrifices and valour will no longer be suppressed and the nation's heroes and heroines will no longer be sidelined.

The prime minister said the government has not stopped there, noting that in 2035 it will be 200 years since "Macaulay's conspiracy", and with 10 years remaining, India will demonstrate complete liberation from the colonial mindset.

He stressed that once the nation is free from this mindset, it will take greater pride in indigenous traditions and advance further on the path of self-reliance.

Pro-Hindu protesters march to B'desh dy high commission office in Kolkata, submit memorandum

KOLKATA, Dec 26: Activists of Hindu Sanhati, a fringe pro-Hindu outfit, took out a rally to the office of the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata on Friday to protest the alleged attacks on minority Hindus in the neighbouring country and submitted a six-point charter of demands to the mission officials.

A three-member delegation of the organisation met a senior official of the diplomatic mission and submitted their demands, which included exemplary punishment of those involved in the lynching of Dipu Chandra Das in Meymenshing on December 18 and security of minorities in Bangladesh and their religious institutions.

"We have demanded exemplary punishment for the murderers of Dipu Das as well as the police officials who turned a blind eye towards the incident. We have also insisted that the Bangladesh government should crack down on those spreading rumours against Hindus and other minorities that are triggering such attacks," said Rajat Roy, an advisory committee member of Hindu Sanhati and member of the delegation.

The delegation members informed reporters that they were assured by the diplomat that he would forward those demands to the Bangladesh government. "We have also insisted that minority community members across the border and their religious institutions must be protected. We demanded that portions of religious texts which preach intolerance

and mark followers of different faiths as 'kafers', allowing perpetration of violence against them should be banned in that country," Roy added.

Earlier, the protest march started from Sealdah station in north Kolkata and reached the diplomatic mission office in Beckbagan in the central part of the city, raising slogans against alleged atrocities on minority Hindus in the neighbouring country.

A large contingent of police was deployed, and metal barricades were put up around the office of the deputy high commissioner, which cordoned off the zone and turned it into a virtual fortress to prevent the protesters from reaching the premises.

The demonstrators blocked the AJC Bose Road in front of the mission office and began a sit-in agitation after they were stopped by the police a few hundred metres ahead of their destination.

Three members from the rally were allowed to meet the diplomatic officials.

This was the second attempt by a pro-Hindu outfit to march to the mission office after December 23, when a similar rally, organised by another pro-Hindu outfit, Bongiy Hindu Jagaran Mancha, clashed with the police, leading to injuries on both sides and over a dozen protesters getting arrested.

Leader of the Opposition and BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari is scheduled to meet with the deputy high commissioner later in the day, along with leaders of multiple Hindu organisations. (PTI)

File property details in time or face action: Centre tells IAS officers

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: The Centre has asked all Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers to file their property details in time or face action including disciplinary proceedings and denial of promotion, according to an official communication.

All IAS officers are required to submit the annual Immoveable Property Return (IPR) by January 31 of the next year.

"Failure on part of the members of the service to comply with the requirements of the aforesaid provisions constitutes good and sufficient reason for, inter alia, institution of disciplinary proceedings against them," said the communication issued by the Ministry of Personnel.

Further, rules have been amended to make the timely filing of IPR mandatory for being considered for appointment to the next level of pay matrix, it said.

The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) had introduced online filing of IPR in respect of IAS officers with effect from January, 2017 through the SPARROW module. (PTI)

Red Fort blast: Court extends NIA custody of two accused

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: A court here on Friday extended the NIA custody of two accused in the Red Fort blast case.

Additional Sessions Judge Prashant Sharma allowed the probe agency to quiz the accused Yasir Ahmed Dar in its custody for ten more days, while the other accused Dr Bilal Naseer Malla will be quizzed for eight more days.

Media persons were barred from covering the proceedings.

According to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) investigations, Umar-un-Nabi, who was driving the explosive-laden car that detonated outside the Red Fort on November 10, was the alleged planner of the terrorist attack that left 15 people dead.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested Dr Malla in Delhi on December 9, calling him a key accused in the conspiracy.

According to the NIA investigations, Naseer had knowingly harboured Umar-un-Nabi by providing him logistical support. He is also accused of destruction of evidence related to the terrorist attack, the agency stated earlier on December 9. On December 18, NIA arrested Dar, the ninth accused in the case. He is a Jammu and Kashmir resident and allegedly a close associate of Umar-un-Nabi.

The NIA has arrested nine people, including Dr Muzammil Ganai, Dr Adeel Rather, Dr Shaheen Sayeed, in the case. (PTI)

No conflict between science and dharma: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat

TIRUPATI, Dec 26: RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday said there was no conflict between science and dharma, and asserted that ultimately all seek the same truth through different paths.

Addressing the Bharatiya Vigyan Sammelan here, Bhagwat said dharma was often misunderstood as religion, whereas it was actually the "science governing the functioning of creation".

"Dharma is not religion. It is the law by which creation runs. Whether one accepts it or not, no one can function outside it," Bhagwat said, noting that imbalance in dharma leads to destruction.

Science had historically "kept distance" from dharma due to the assumption that it had no place in scientific inquiry, he said and described such a stand as fundamentally incorrect.

According to Bhagwat, the only difference between science and spirituality lies in methodology, as both aim for the same ultimate goal.

"There is no conflict between science and dharma or spirituality. The methodologies may differ, but the destination is the same—knowing the truth," he remarked.

Explaining the scientific process, Bhagwat said science relies on external observation, experimentation and repeatable experience to establish facts, while spirituality follows the same principle through inner experience.

"Spirituality also insists on direct experience and says that whatever is experienced should be attainable by everyone."

The RSS chief said science focuses on modifying matter through external observation, while spirituality works in the inner, subtle realm through disciplined experimentation.

He further said modern science has begun discussing consciousness as universal rather than local, drawing parallels with ancient Indian philosophical concepts such as 'Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma' and 'Prajnanam Brahma'.

Underscoring the importance of language in understanding dharma, he said Indian languages uniquely capture its essence and called for efforts to communicate scientific knowledge to the masses through mother tongues.



Referring to global concerns such as environmental challenges, Bhagwat said India must provide scientific and dharmic perspectives to the world.

He asserted that while India must grow economically and strategically strong, it should aspire to become a world teacher rather than merely become a superpower.

By integrating material progress with the perspective of dharma, Bhagwat said India can offer a new vision and strength to humanity, enabling nations to move forward cooperatively as caretakers of creation.

He further said that knowledge must be imparted in the language a person understands, noting that people grasp concepts more effectively in their mother tongue.

Citing Finland as an example, Bhagwat said students from different countries receive education in their respective mother tongues up to eighth grade, supported by a dedicated teacher training university.

"Education in mother tongue enhances intellectual development and improves capacity to grasp knowledge efficiently," he said, highlighting the role of language in proper learning and understanding. Bhagwat emphasised that Indian languages have words to express dharma that other languages cannot, and called for steps to ensure scientific and spiritual knowledge reaches people in their mother tongues. (PTI)

Mining mafia destroying Aravali hills, looting public resources: Surjewala

CHANDIGARH, Dec 26: Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala on Friday alleged large-scale illegal mining in Haryana's Aravalli region, claiming it has caused massive environmental damage and huge losses to the state exchequer.

The Rajya Sabha MP charged that the "mining mafia" was openly looting public resources and destroying the Aravalli hills, with little concern for the environment. The Congress general secretary said the Enforcement

Directorate has revealed that illegal mining in the Dadum hills of the Aravalli region has not only harmed the environment but also defrauded the government treasury of ₹ 1,200 crore.

Five people had lost their lives in a mining-related accident in the Tosham area in the past, but alleged no effective action was taken even after the tragedy, he said on X. He further alleged that around 383 hectares of Aravalli hills in Charkhi Dadri district was facing destruction due to illegal mining

and that it was continuing under political protection.

Surjewala said locals were living in fear due to night-long mining activity, heavy machinery noise and constant movement of vehicles.

Houses were developing cracks and people were experiencing tremors, but complaints were being ignored, he charged while slamming the BJP government for failing to stop illegal mining and endangering both the environment and the lives of people. (PTI)

VV Rajesh elected as first BJP mayor in Kerala

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Dec 26: BJP leader V V Rajesh was elected mayor of Thiruvananthapuram Corporation on Friday after the saffron party won 50 of the 101 wards, marking its first-ever victory in a municipal corporation in Kerala.

In the mayoral election on Friday, Rajesh secured 51 votes, including the support of an Independent councillor. P Sivaji of the LDF received 29 votes, while UDF candidate K S Sabarinathan secured 19 votes, of which two were later declared invalid. Senior BJP leaders, including state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar, were present at the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation office to witness Rajesh being elected mayor of the state capital.

Former Union minister V Muralidharan and former BJP state president K Surendran were also present. Rajesh later took the oath as the mayor of the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation. The BJP wrested control of the Corporation after nearly four decades of LDF rule.

In Kollam Corporation, UDF's A K Hafeez was

elected mayor, while in Kochi Corporation, UDF councillor V K Minimol, a four-time councillor, was elected mayor.

In Thrissur Corporation, Dr Niji Justin of the UDF was elected mayor, prompting dissent from another councillor, Lali James, who alleged she was denied the post after leaders took bribes.

In Kozhikode Corporation, the LDF won most wards, while in Kannur Corporation, UDF candidate P Indira is set to be elected as the mayor. Of the six municipal corporations in the state, the UDF won four, while the LDF and BJP won one each.

Another milestone was reported in Pala municipality, where 21-year-old Diya Binu Pulikkankandam was elected chairperson with UDF support, making her the youngest municipal chairperson in Kerala. Diya, along with her father Binu and uncle Biju, contested and won the election as Independents.

They later extended support to the UDF, resulting in the end of Kerala Congress (Mani)'s rule in Pala, considered its traditional stronghold. (PTI)



Multi-door court concept is the 'ultimate empowerment of litigants': CJI CJI Surya Kant pitches for 'multi-door courthouse' for comprehensive dispute resolution

PANAJI, Dec 26: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said on Friday that he envisions a transition towards a multi-door courthouse where the court is a comprehensive centre for dispute resolution and not merely a place for trial.

Addressing the inaugural session of the Bar Council of India's National Conference and Symposium on Mediation in South Goa, the CJI said there is a need for a larger number of mediators across all levels, from district courts to the apex court.

Mediation, which can reduce judicial pendency, is not a sign of the law's weakness but its highest evolution, he said.

"As we look forward towards the horizon, I envision a transition towards the multi-door courthouse. What I mean to say is that this is a visionary concept where the court ceases to be a singular venue for trials. Rather, it becomes a comprehensive centre for dispute resolution," he said.

The CJI said that when a seeker of justice approaches a court, they must find the doors to mediation, arbitration, and ultimately litigation, each tailored to the specific nature of their grievance.

"We must acknowledge that there are bound to be some cases which cannot be resolved through arbitration or mediation. Therefore, the judicial system will always be prepared for fair litigation trials to adjudicate those disputes," he said.

The CJI said the multi-door court concept is the "ultimate empowerment of litigants". After giving the 'Oath of Mediation' to all the participants at the event, the CJI said that mediation is a cause that he holds dear to his heart with deep conviction.

"Litigation is often the autopsy of a dead relationship and clinical exam of what went wrong. Mediation, on the contrary, is the remedial surgery that seeks to preserve the living pulse of a connection. To



truly grasp the significance of mediation in our present context, we might look at a piece of local wisdom," he said.

The CJI said that the success of mediation lies in the mediator's ability to speak not only the local or regional language, but also the dialect, expressions, and cultural idiom of the person for whom the

mediation is being conducted. Asserting the need for mediation training, he said there are 39,000 trained mediators, but there is a gap in "demand and supply".

For effective implementation of mediation at all levels, the country needs over 2,50,000 trained mediators, said the CJI.

He said that one has to be very

careful while training people as a mediator because mediation is not just an art, as the "temperament, behaviour, compassion, passion, commitment, and devotion" of a mediator makes a lot of difference in making the efforts a successful story.

The campaign "Mediation for Nation" was launched in July this year to cut judicial pendency by resolving several kinds of disputes, including matrimonial, commercial and motor accidents, he said.

"I must share with you that the results were more than expected and very encouraging. I am sure that with the introduction of trained mediators at every ladder, our success story will be on a great height and there will be significant achievements in that regard," the CJI said.

He said that mediation is not a sign of the law's weakness, but rather its highest evolution. "It is a true transition from a culture of adjudication to a culture of participation where we cultivate harmony," he said.

Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, SC judges, including Justice J K Maheshwari, Justice P S Narasimha, Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Justice N Kotiswar Singh, Justice Ujjal Bhuyyan, Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra, Chief Justice of Bombay High Court Justice S Chandrasekhar, Chairman of Bar Council of India Manan Kumar Mishra and Advocate General of Goa Devidas Pangam were among those present on the occasion.

The function was held at the India International University of Legal Education and Research in South Goa.

Earlier in the day, the CJI took part in a symbolic walk for 'Mediation Awareness' near Kala Academy in Panaji. "Mediation is being accepted as successful and cost-effective. It is a win-win situation for both parties as it is a settlement," he said. (PTI)

Mizoram's child singing prodigy Esther Hnamte gets Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

AIZAWL, Dec 26: Mizoram's child singing sensation Esther Lalduhawmi Hnamte was on Friday conferred the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar in recognition of her achievements in music and cultural contribution.

The 9-year-old singing prodigy, well known as Esther Hnamte, received the prestigious award from President Droupadi Murmu in a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi.

Hnamte's parents expressed happiness and thanked God and those who helped and inspired their daughter in achieving the national recognition.

"Although we have a very humble beginning, God's kindness and help are marvelous. Not only us (parents) but there are many people who helped and contributed to Hnamte's successful story since she began her singing career at 3," Hnamte's mother R. Lalawmpui told reporters.

"It is a historic as well as a surprising moment for us as there are many young talents who deserve the award more than our daughter," she added.

Meanwhile, Mizoram Governor Vijay Kumar Singh congratulated Hnamte on receiving the prestigious award.

"It is a moment of immense pride for Mizoram and the nation. Wishing you a continued success and a bright future ahead," Singh said in a post on X.



He said the child prodigy truly embodies national pride and cultural harmony, making her a shining inspiration for Viksit Bharat.

"Her soulful renditions of 'Maa Tujhe Salaam', 'Vande Mataram', and several other patriotic songs have touched millions of hearts across the nation, inspiring deep feelings of patriotism and beautifully cele-

brating India's unity in diversity. At such a tender age, Esther Hnamte truly embodies national pride and cultural harmony, making her a shining inspiration for Viksit Bharat," Singh said.

Hnamte, who hails from south Mizoram's Lunglei town, began singing at the age of 3 years and performed primarily in churches and other functions.

She gained widespread recognition when her video of AR Rahman's rendition of "Vande Mataram", shared by former Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga and later by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, went viral in October 2020.

In August 2021, Hnamte released a music video "Jana Gana Mana", the national anthem, on YouTube featuring Assam Rifles, which sponsored the project. The video received 3 million views within a week and now raised to 56 million views.

In December last year, Hnamte performed a rendition of "Vande Mataram" at the inaugural function of Ashtalakshmi Mahotsav 2024 in the presence of Modi, who previously praised the child prodigy for her mesmerising performance.

Hnamte gifted the PM a Northeast mascot doll, "Poorvi" on the occasion.

The youngest of three siblings, Hnamte has won awards, including special appreciation from former state governor P S Sreedharan Pillai, and "Young Achievers Award," presented by Dalmia Cement Bharat Limited.

She has also been honoured the country's largest dairy firm 'Amul' as its Amul girl in 2021.

A documentary of her life, "A Star is Born" won the Best Documentary Award (Silver) at the Northeast Film Festival in 2023. (PTI)

Meghalaya BJP condemns attempts to disrupt Christmas celebrations, demands strict punishment



SHILLONG, Dec 26: Amidst reports of attempts to disrupt Christmas celebrations in parts of the country, the Meghalaya unit of the BJP on Friday demanded the strictest punishment for those involved, asserting that every citizen has the constitutional right to celebrate festivals freely and without fear.

State BJP chief spokesperson Mariahom Kharkrang said Christmas symbolises love, harmony and unity, and is celebrated across communities in India with equal zeal and reverence.

"It is painful to see a handful of people indulging in acts of hate with the sole objective of disrupting and disrespecting the spirit of Christmas and its message of universal love. Such acts go against the very nature of Indian civilisation and attack the values we hold dear," Kharkrang said in a statement.

He said the BJP firmly believes in the unity and equality of all religions and remains committed to upholding the Constitution and protecting every citizen's right to celebrate festivals in a manner they deem fit.

Rejecting attempts to politicise criminal acts, Kharkrang said some parties were trying to portray isolated incidents involving "petty criminals" as organised or orchestrated programmes for narrow political gains.

"The prime minister, along with senior party leaders, participates in Christmas services year after year, including in 2025. This sets an example of inclusivity and mutual respect for every member of our party," he added.

Kharkrang said the party stands with citizens across the country in demanding that those responsible for the incidents be arrested, tried and punished under the strictest provisions of law.

He added that leaders and office-bearers of the party in Meghalaya are in constant touch with counterparts in states where such incidents have been reported, including Assam, to ensure that no individual involved in such acts evades punishment. (PTI)

Banned Yaba tablets worth ₹ 40 crore seized in Manipur, one held

IMPHAL, Dec 26: The Assam Rifles, along with the Manipur Police, seized banned Yaba tablets worth around ₹ 40 crore from Jiribam district, a statement from the paramilitary force said on Friday.

One person was apprehended in this connection, it said.

Yaba tablet, known as "crazy medicine" in Thai, is a highly addictive drug, containing a mixture of methamphetamine and caffeine. It stimulates the central nervous system, which poses severe health risks.

During the joint operation conducted in Jiribam on December 24, 1,60,000 Yaba tablets worth approximately ₹ 40 crore were seized, and one person was apprehended, the Assam Rifles statement said.

The seized contraband, along with the apprehended person, was handed over to the Jiribam police for further investigation, reinforcing the commitment to curb drug trafficking and protect society, it said.

In a separate operation, security

forces arrested two persons, including an active cadre of a banned outfit, and recovered ammunition and explosives in Imphal West district, the police said.

The 44-year-old cadre of the proscribed Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup was apprehended from a rented house in Keishampat Leimajam Leikai area on Thursday, a senior officer said.

An associate of the militant, to whom ammunition and explosives were handed over, was also arrested from his residence, he said.

Search operations have been conducted in Manipur since ethnic violence broke out two years ago. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The Centre had, on February 13, imposed the President's rule in the state after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned.

The state assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation. (PTI)

Tripura Assembly Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen dies at 72, state declares 3-day mourning



AGARTALA, Dec 26: Tripura Assembly Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen died at a private hospital in Bengaluru on Friday, officials said. He was 72.

He is survived by wife, son and a daughter.

Sen was undergoing treatment in the Karnataka capital after suffering a massive cerebral stroke, they

said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi condoleed the Speaker's death and recalled his efforts to boost Tripura's progress.

"Pained by the passing of Shri Biswa Bandhu Sen Ji, Speaker of the Tripura Assembly. He will be remembered for his efforts to boost Tripura's progress and commit-

ment to numerous social causes. My thoughts are with his family and admirers in this sad hour. Om Shanti," the PM said on X.

Sen's body will be brought here on Saturday, the officials said.

A four-time MLA from the Dharmanagar Assembly constituency in North Tripura, Sen had a long political career. He was first elected on a Congress ticket, joined the Trinamool Congress in June 2016 and later joined the BJP ahead of the 2018 Assembly elections.

Chief Minister Manik Saha also expressed grief over Sen's demise.

"I am deeply shocked. The passing away of the Speaker is an irreparable loss to the party. I conveyed my deep condolences to the bereaved family and his followers," the CM wrote on Facebook.

As a mark of respect, the state government has declared a three-day state mourning from Friday, said a notification by the General

Administration (GA, Political) department.

The state authorities also announced the closure of all the government offices, institutions, schools, colleges and other educational institutions on Friday.

The CPI(M) and the Congress also condoleed Sen's death, describing him as a seasoned leader with sound knowledge of parliamentary affairs.

"I am deeply shocked over the death of Speaker Biswabandhu Sen. We may have different political ideologies but it never came in the way of maintaining good relations. He always responded positively whenever we approached him on any issue. May his soul rest in peace", Leader of Opposition Jitendra Chaudhury told reporters.

The Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee said it was shocked by the demise of its former MLA and extended its condolences to the bereaved family. (PTI)

PM condoles death of Tripura Assembly Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday expressed pain over the passing away of Tripura Assembly Speaker Biswa Bandhu Sen, and said he will be remembered for his efforts to boost the state's progress and commitment to numerous social causes.

Sen, 72, died at a private hospital in Bengaluru on Friday. He was admitted to the hospital after suffering a massive cerebral stroke.

"Pained by the passing of Shri Biswa Bandhu Sen Ji, Speaker of the Tripura Assembly. He will be remembered for his efforts to boost Tripura's progress and commitment to numerous social causes. My thoughts are with his family and admirers in this sad hour. Om Shanti," Modi wrote on X. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla also condoleed the demise of Sen. "Deeply saddened by the untimely demise of Shri Biswa Bandhu Sen ji, Hon'ble Speaker of the Tripura Legislative Assembly, he will be remembered for his selfless service to the people. My condolences to his family and supporters. Om Shanti!" he said on X. (PTI)

Forced religious conversions are wrong: Tripura CM

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Dec 26: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday said that it is wrong to convert people to another religion by force or by offering various temptations.

He said that self-sacrifice and faith in religion can be awakened through the celebration of Veer Bal Diwas.

Saha said this while participating in the Veer Bal Diwas celebration organised at Gurudwara Sahib in Chanmari, Agartala, on Friday.

Speaking at the event, Saha said that the main purpose of Veer Bal Diwas is to convey that religion is for everyone.

"It is wrong to convert people to another religion by force or by showing various

temptations. We can see that this is happening in different places. Inhuman torture has been inflicted on Pandits in Kashmir. Before Partition, the situation was similar. After Partition, East Pakistan was formed, and later Bangladesh came into existence. The population of Hindus, Sikhs, and other minority communities in West Pakistan has now decreased significantly," he said.

Saha said that this issue is being discussed in detail and that articles are being written in newspapers and magazines.

"We must remember this on Veer Bal Diwas and think about how to build social resistance against such practices and raise our voice on this issue at national and international levels. In January 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the first 'Veer Bal Diwas'. Since then, the day has been observed with special dignity across the country on December 26 every year," he said.

He further stated that the main aim of celebrating the day is to ensure that the next generation draws inspiration from the values of courage, sacrifice, and

morality. "Through this, lessons can be learned on building confidence among the youth, understanding how to make sacrifices, and strengthening faith in oneself, in religion, and in the nation. Veer Bal Diwas is not just about watching or listening to history; it helps awaken faith in self-sacrifice and religion. We should learn from Veer Bal Diwas," Saha said.

Saha also mentioned that if young children are given proper education, many qualities can be found in them that are often lacking even in adults.

The event was attended by Agartala Municipal Corporation Mayor and MLA Dipak Majumdar, along with other prominent figures from the Sikh community.



Meitei urges Manipur admin to issue clear resettlement plan for IDPs



IMPHAL, Dec 26: Meitei civil organisation Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) on Friday demanded a clear and written resettlement plan for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the state, with village-wise timelines.

In a memorandum to Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla, COCOMI expressed "deep concern over the lack of visible, time-bound and ground-level actions required to facilitate safe, dignified and resettlement of IDPs."

It also urged for "immediate issuance of a clear and written public resettlement plan for displaced persons with village-wise timelines" as well as adequate security deployment to facilitate return of IDPs to their native homes.

Asserting that resettlement of displaced persons is not an administrative exercise but a constitutional and moral obligation of the state, COCOMI urged the administration to allow resettlement within December. (PTI)

A New Future in Sunlight: Tripura crosses 6 MW solar power milestone, eyes 10 MW by March

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Dec 26: In Tripura, sunlight is no longer just a gift of nature it is steadily becoming a symbol of development.

Under the Prime Minister's Surya Ghar Free Electricity Scheme, the state has achieved a significant milestone in its solar energy journey, with power generation crossing the 6-megawatt mark.

Officials describe this as a historic moment for Tripura's renewable energy initiatives.

Biswajit Bhowmik, Managing Director of the state electricity corporation, expressed optimism that the state will reach the 10-megawatt target by March.

The scheme has received an overwhelming response across Tripura.

So far, 17,131 electricity consumers have registered for the program, and solar panel installations have been completed in 1,762 homes.

These rooftops are no longer mere concrete structures—they are small-scale power plants. Together, they are generating 6 megawatts of electricity every day.

Once, sunset meant darkness and uncertainty; today, the same sun ensures a reliable supply of electricity in households across Tripura.

The project is not only providing light but also creating income opportunities.

Consumers are not just meeting their own electricity needs—they are selling sur-



plus power back to the state electricity corporation, earning direct financial benefits.

So far, 187 consumers have sold excess electricity, earning a total of ₹53,514, which has been directly credited to their bank accounts.

This transforms solar energy from just an eco-friendly initiative into a tangible contributor to household income.

From villages to towns, rooftops across Tripura are adorned with solar panels that seem to speak a new language—a language

of development, self-reliance, and leaving a cleaner environment for future generations.

The project is teaching people how to co-exist with natural resources while reducing electricity bills to almost zero.

Aditya Dhar's 'Dhurandhar' earns over ₹ 1000 crore at box office

Filmmaker Aditya Dhar's latest directorial Dhurandhar has crossed the mark of ₹ 1000 crore at the worldwide box office, the makers said.

Featuring Ranveer Singh alongside Sanjay Dutt, Akshay Khanna, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun, R Madhavan and Rakesh Bedi, the film has been produced by Dhar and his brother Lokesh Dhar through their banner B62 Studios alongside Jyoti Deshpande of Jio Studios.

The makers shared the box office numbers with a post on their Instagram handle on Fri-

day. "Entering the 1000 CR club, loud and proud. Book your tickets. (Link in bio). #Dhurandhar Frenzy Continues Worldwide," read the caption.

The film revolves around an underworld saga following a network of criminals, informants and operatives whose lives intersect, navigating covert operations, espionage and betrayals.

It released on December 5 in theatres. The makers have also confirmed the second part of the film, which is set to release on March 19, 2026. (PTI)



VIJAY'S SWANSONG 'JANA NAYAGAN' BUILDS FRENZY; SONG SUNG BY ACTOR-POLITICIAN DROPPED



Actor Vijay's final film 'Jana Nayagan' ramps up excitement with the third single 'Chella Magale' releasing on Friday at 5.04 pm.

The song was sung by the superstar himself. On December 27, the makers have also scheduled a grand audio launch in Malaysia, while the trailer will be released on New Year's Day.

"Jana Nayagan", Directed by H Vinoth, is a political action thriller and it marks Vijay's cinematic swansong before his full-time plunge into politics.

"Chella Magale", composed by Anirudh Ravichander, features Vijay in a touching fa-

ther-daughter moment as teased in the poster.

Social media is already abuzz with fans' excitement, who hail it as an emotional highlight following foot-tapping songs, "Thalapathy Kacheri" and "Oru Pere Varalaaru" -- both are already declared massive hits that celebrate his legacy.

Made on a ₹ 300 crore budget by KVN Productions, "Jana Nayagan" stars Pooja Hegde, Bobby Deol, Prakash Raj, Priyamani, Gautham Vasudev Menon and Mamitha Baiju in key roles.

Sources said the three-hour-six-minute saga packs 10 high-octane action sequences

with political undertones. The film is also likely to be released in Hindi as "Jan Neta".

The sold-out audio launch at Kuala Lumpur's Stadium Bukit Jalil, dubbed "Thalapathy Thiruvizha" with Anirudh headlining, expects 90,000 fans, but drew flak over Malaysian police bans on political speeches, TVK symbols, banners or messaging.

As per news reports, Malaysian authorities warn of strict action if the event is not kept "entertainment only".

Organisers affirm compliance and have said the event is a pure music fest with cast and directors like Atlee reportedly attending. (PTI)



Kartik Aaryan-starrer 'Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri' earns ₹ 8.46 crore at box office

"Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri", featuring Ananya Panday and Kartik Aaryan in the lead roles, has collected ₹ 8.46 crore at the domestic box office on the first day of its release.

The film is directed by Sameer Vidwans of "Satyaprem Ki Katha" fame and is produced by Karan Johar under his production banner Dharma Productions. It released in theatres on Thursday. Aaryan shared the box office numbers with a post on her Instagram handle on Friday. The post comprised a film's poster with the box office numbers written over it. "This holiday season, our hearts are fully booked, all thanks to you! In Cinemas Now."

The film also reunites Aaryan and Panday, who have previously worked together in the 2019 film "Pati Patni Aur Woh".

Also starring Bhumi Pednekar, the film was directed by Mudassar Aziz and emerged as a box office hit, earning over ₹ 100 crore. "Tu Meri Main Tera Main Tera Tu Meri" also stars Jackie Shroff and Neena Gupta in pivotal roles. (PTI)



'Please don't behave like animals: Kailash Kher lashes at unruly crowd during Gwalior concert

Renowned singer and Padma Shri awardee Kailash Kher abruptly stopped his Gwalior concert mid-way to address the uncontrollable crowd, which had some people from the audience jumping over barricades to get to the stage.

Kher was performing at the Gwalior Mela Grounds on Thursday to mark Tabla Day and Gwalior Gaurav Diwas.

In the videos circulating on social media, the crowd is seen turning unruly, with some jumping over the security barricades and running towards the stage.

The singer stopped his perform-

ance mid-way and went on to address the chaos. "Humne aapki prashansa ki aur aap itna jaanwargiri kar rahe hain. Janwargiri mat kariye please..."

Agar koi humare instruments ya equipment ke paas aaya, toh hum show band kar denge (I'm praising you all and you are behaving like animals. Please don't behave like animals. If anyone comes anywhere near our instruments, equipment, we'll stop the show)," he said.

It's not the first time for Kher to have the event turn chaotic. Back in 2023, two men threw a water bottle at the singer during his Karnataka concert. (PTI)

Jordyn Woods, Karl-Anthony Towns announce engagement

American television personality Jordyn Woods shared a series of pictures on Friday as she announced her engagement to basketball player Karl-Anthony Towns after 5 years of togetherness.

Woods, who is best known for appearing in reality show "Life of Kylie", uploaded pictures on her Instagram handle. "Marry Christmas," she wrote in the caption.

The post featured the couple posing for the camera with Woods flaunting her ring.

She wore a white bodycon dress and complemented it with a white fur jacket. Towns opted for formals and completed the look with brown jacket.

Woods, 28 and Towns, 30, started dating in May 2020. They announced their relationship publicly

in September of the same year with a collaborative Instagram post. "I found you, then I found me," it read. (PTI)

Jamie Lever announces social media break: I'm taking some time to rest and reset

Stand-up comic Jamie Lever penned a lengthy note announcing a break from social media and said she is taking some time to "rest and reset".

In a lengthy post on her Instagram handle on Thursday, Lever said she loves her work, but some "recent events" made her feel as if she lost a small part of herself.

"Those who truly know me, know

how deeply I love my work and how honestly I do it. I'm grateful to God for the gift of bringing joy to others and forever thankful for the love I've received over the years," she wrote.

"I've learned on this journey that not everyone will cheer for you or laugh with you. Recent events have made me feel like I've lost a small part of myself - this comes from reflection, not anger," she added.

Her statement comes days after her viral mimicry video of "Bigg Boss 19" contestant Tanya Mittal, for which the comedian received massive backlash online.

Lever said she will continue to entertain. "I love what I do and will always entertain. For now, I'm taking some time to rest and reset. See you next year. Thank you for the love, prayers, and support - always," she said. (PTI)

Indian hockey battles through difficult year

Women's slide causes concern

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Fortunes ebbed and flowed as India's hockey revival hit a few road-bumps in 2025, the most worrying aspect being the women's team's slide even though the men managed to turn things around with their first Asia Cup title in almost a decade.

The Asia Cup crown in Rajgir, Bihar was arguably the biggest moment for Indian hockey in 2025 as it not only ended an eight-year title drought but also sealed India's place in the FIH World Cup to be jointly hosted by the Netherlands and Belgium from August 14 to 30 next year.

The triumph in September, their fourth overall, allowed India to reaffirm their continental dominance.

The biggest positive to be drawn was the 15 goals scored and only two conceded in the last three matches of the tournament, marking a massive improvement for the side.

In the summit clash, the Indians dominated defending champions South Korea 4-1 with solid performances from Dilpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, and Amit Rohidas among others.

This was after a truly nightmarish run at the FIH Pro League earlier in the year. The Paris Olympics bronze-medallists finished eighth out of nine teams and just about managed to avoid relegation from the elite event.

The Harmanpreet Singh-led side did well in the home leg, logging five wins in Bhubaneswar but suffered a run of seven successive losses in the European leg to finish in the penultimate position.

Another encouraging sign for the men was the manner in which a second-string team snared a silver medal at the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup. Returning to the event after six years, five-time champions India lost 0-1 to world no.3 Belgium in the final but what stood out was the competitive depth under a new captain in defender Sanjay even as seniors like Harmanpreet Singh and Manpreet Singh



took a well-deserved break.

Men's junior team ends year on high

The junior men's team also impressed with a brave-heart performance, nullifying a two-goal deficit to beat Argentina 4-2 and clinch the bronze medal in the World Cup in Chennai this month.

Their first World Cup medal since 2016 at the age group showpiece didn't just ensure a positive end to the year but also held out hope for the future with the Asian Games lined up next year.

A gold in Japan would ensure a ticket to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics where India would be hoping to complete a hat-

trick of medals, preferably in better colour than the bronze won in the last two editions.

Women endure downfall

In contrast, the women struggled through the year, failing to register any memorable result and continuing a downward spiral that started with their failure to qualify for the Paris Olympics last year.

The team finished last in the Pro League, winning just two matches and losing 11, including the last eight on the trot, to be relegated to the FIH Nations Cup -- a second-tier competition.

Only a title win in this event will earn the side a promotion to the 2026-27 FIH Pro League.

To add to their woes, the Indian women failed to book a direct berth for next year's World Cup as they lost 1-4 to China to finish runners-up in the Asia Cup in September.

Closer to the end of the year, the side was caught in turmoil when its head coach Harendra Singh had to resign following allegations that his coaching style

was "outdated and dictatorial". However, the national federation maintained that it had more to do with the lack of results.

The downward spiral did not spare the juniors either as the side ended 10th in the World Cup in Santiago earlier this month.

From the look of things, the national federation and the team management would have to do some soul searching for course correction.

From a side that promised much after a fourth-place finish in the Tokyo Olympics, the Indian women's team has collapsed into a seemingly direction-less outfit.

The junior team too was under the scanner as allegations of sexual misconduct engulfed a member of the coaching staff, who was eventually given a clean chit by the national federation.

In December, veteran hockey woman star Vandana Kataria also announced her retirement from international hockey, ending to an illustrious career and adding to the loss of depth in talent that is hurting the side. (PTI)

Ruled out of last two Ashes Tests, Cummins sets sights on T20 WC in India & SL in Feb

MELBOURNE, Dec 26: Australia Test and ODI captain Pat Cummins will cool his heels after his successful hit-and-run Ashes appearance in Adelaide as he sets sights on the T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka in February next year.

Cummins missed the first two Ashes Tests due to a lower-back injury he suffered during the West Indies tour in June-July, but made a brilliant return in the third match in Adelaide to pick up six wickets in the series-clinching win.

With the Ashes urn in their hands, Australia decided to rule Cummins out of the two remaining Tests.

The 32-year-old Cummins said on Friday he will now take rest before targeting the T20 World Cup which begins in early February.

"Feeling good, so got through Adelaide unscathed so pretty happy," he told Channel 7 during the lunch break on the first day of



the Boxing Day Test here.

"As of a few weeks ago, was still coming back from a back injury so playing back-to-back Test matches was pretty high risk.

"Cool our heels for a little bit with T20 World Cup next month," Cummins added.

His optimism came after coach

Andrew McDonald said earlier this week that Cummins was not a certainty for Australia's T20 World Cup campaign.

Australia's first match is on February 11 against Ireland in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Although Cummins captains the Test and ODI teams, all-rounder

Mitch Marsh leads Australia in the shortest format.

Cummins also said veteran spinner Nathan Lyon is facing a lengthy period on the sidelines following surgery on his hamstring.

Lyon suffered the injury on the final day of the Adelaide Test and immediately went under the knife.

Australia's next Test assignment after the Ashes isn't due until August, giving him plenty of time to recover.

"He had surgery a couple of days ago, so he'll have a lengthy layoff, I don't know exactly, but will be at least a few months," Cummins said.

"Bit of a long road ahead for him, but he's done it before so hopefully he'll be back.

"It was a big one, so surgery, and he has his crutches in the change room at the moment so we wish best ... it was a shame but he put a brave face after the Test." (PTI)

Suraj Sharma sweeps senior and junior 25m rapid fire pistol national titles



NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Madhya Pradesh's Suraj Sharma delivered a golden double, sweeping both the senior and junior men's titles in the 25m rapid fire pistol at the National Shooting Championships here on Friday.

Suraj began the senior final in dominant fashion, hitting 19 of his first 20 targets, and went on to close the contest with 31 hits, finishing three clear of defending champion Vijayveer Sidhu of Punjab, who settled for the silver medal with 28 hits.

Rajasthan's Bhavesh Shekhawat rounded off the podium, claiming bronze with a total of 24 hits.

Earlier in the qualification round, Ankur Goel topped the standings with a strong score of 582-20x. He was followed closely by Vijayveer, who shot 580-18x, while Adarsh Singh finished third with 579-22x. Suraj qualified fifth with 579-12x.

Earlier in the RFP junior men final, Suraj produced another composed display to win the gold medal with 30 hits.

Mukeshi secured the silver medal, finishing with 25 hits. Haryana's Jatin settled for the bronze medal with 22 hits after a shoot-off, having earlier shot 575-13x in qualification.

In the senior team category, Punjab claimed the gold medal with an aggregate score of 1725, led by Vijayveer, Udhayveer Sidhu, and Rajkanwar Singh Sandhu.

Haryana secured the silver medal with 1722 through the combined efforts of Adarsh Singh, Mandeep Singh, and Sameer, while the Navy claimed bronze with 1711, courtesy of Pradeep Singh Shekhawat, Rajat Kumar Yadav, and Omkar Singh. (PTI)

Mumbai ride on Tamore's 93 to beat Uttarakhand; Goa, Punjab, Maha too win

JAIPUR, Dec 26: Rohit Sharma suffered a golden duck but Mumbai had enough firepower in its arsenal to quell the Uttarakhand challenge by 51 runs in a Group C match of the Vijay Hazare Trophy, here Friday.

Batting first, Mumbai scored a healthy 331 for seven with useful contributions from keeper-batter Hardik Tamore (93 not out off 82 balls), Sarfaraz Khan (55 off 49 balls) and Musheer Khan (55 off 56 balls).

Later, Musheer (2/57) also did his bit with the ball, snaring a couple of wickets as Uttarakhand managed 280 for 9 in the end largely due to left-handed opener Yuvraj Choudhary's run-a-ball 96.

Onkar Tarmale, a surprise pick by Sunrisers Hyderabad, on List A debut picked 2 for 40 and seemed steady third seamer.

The 5000 odd crowd was in for a disappointing day as their hero Rohit was dismissed off the very first delivery he faced.

Lanky medium fast bowler Devendra Bora (3/74) scalped the most memorable victim of his career when he dug one short and the former India skipper instinctively went for a pull shot.

Jagmohan Nagarkoti stationed at deep fine leg juggled before taking it on second attempt.

While Rohit left even before crowd had gathered in full steam, none of the 6000 to 7000 odd left the ground waiting for their man's fielding session. Rohit took a sharp catch at first slip off Shardul Thakur to dismiss opener Kamal Singh.

The crowd in a mood for a bit more started chants of 'Ek Do, Rohit ko bowling do' but skipper Thakur didn't pay heed to their demand.

During the 49th over when Mumbai had sealed the game, Tushar Deshpande in fact asked his senior colleague if he would like to roll his arm over but he refused.

Earlier, when Mumbai batted, the Khan brothers Sarfaraz and Musheer added 107 runs for the third

wicket to lay the platform for a big total.

While Sarfaraz mainly hit shots square of the wicket including a big six off left arm spinner Mayank Mishra, his younger brother Musheer played a lot within the 'V' with some straight hit over seamer's head.

Both were guilty of throwing away starts.

Tamore then took charge as he ran well between the wickets and also used his feet against the two left-arm spinners Mishra and J Suchith, hitting them for a six each.

One was an inside out lofted drive over extra cover while the other was hit wide off long on.

His stand of 95 in 10.5 overs with Mumbai's forever crisis man Shams Mulani (48 off 35 balls) proved to be decisive even though he missed out on what would have been a well deserved ton.

In another Group C match, Maharashtra defeated Sikkim by eight wickets in a lop-sided contest.

Sent in to bat, Sikkim were bundled out for 150 in 40.2 overs, with Kranthi Kumar top-scoring with a 39-ball 40.

Maharashtra's bowlers dominated the proceedings, with Rajvardhan Hangargekar returning figures of 4 for 21 and Ramakrishna Ghosh claiming 3 for 22.

In reply, Maharashtra romped home in just 18 overs, riding on a 70-run opening stand between Prithvi Shaw (51) and Arshin Kulkarni (40). Skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad then slammed an unbeaten 38 off 13 balls to seal the chase.

At the Anantam Ground, Harnoor Singh and Anmolpreet Singh struck commanding centuries as Punjab thrashed Chhattisgarh by nine wickets.

Asked to bat, Chhattisgarh were dismissed for 253 in 48.4 overs, with Amandeep Khare (70) and Mayank Verma (64) registering half-centuries.

In response, opener Harnoor (115 not out) and Anmolpreet (105 not out) made light work of the chase, adding an unbroken 184-run partnership off 178 balls as Punjab overhauled the target in 42.1 overs. (PTI)

India a big threat and real contender for 2026 Hockey WC: Belgium star Hendrickx

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Star Belgium drag-flicker Alexander Hendrickx said reigning Olympic bronze medallist India will be a threat and a strong contender for a podium finish at next year's FIH Men's World Cup to be held from August 14 to 30.

Eight-time Olympic champions and back-to-back bronze medallists at Tokyo and Paris, India have finished on the World Cup podium only twice, ending runners-up in 1973 and winning their lone title in 1975 in Malaysia, 51 years ago.

"India always has a good side, the results from the last tournaments show it. They are always a threat. I think there are 5 top nations who are always contending for the World Cup and the medals and I think India is one of those 5," Hendrickx, a member of Belgium's Tokyo Olympics gold medal-winning side, told PTI in a virtual interview.

Belgium, who won the World

Cup in 2018 and then finished second-best in the last edition, are currently going through a transition phase but Hendrickx is hopeful that the Red Lions can finish on the podium in the tournament to be jointly hosted by Netherlands and Belgium next year.

"For the World Cup our ambition is to at least win a medal, its our home World Cup and I think it has to be our ambition to win it to celebrate with Belgium fans. But that's far away, we still have a lot of time before that.

"We are always in transition but normally after Olympics, 3 people went out and 3 new guys came in. I think during that period altogether 8 people stopped so it was a big gap. So it took a bit longer than we wanted but the young guys are transitioning really well. After the Azlan Shah Cup I think the transition should be over," said Hendrickx, who was top-scorer in Tokyo Games with 14 goals. (PTI)

Cricket prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi conferred with Rashtriya Bal Puraskar

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: The 14-year-old batting prodigy Vaibhav Suryavanshi, who has taken the cricket world by storm with his audacious stroke-play, and seven-year-old chess prodigy Vaka Lakshmi Pragnika were among a host of children who were on Friday conferred with the prestigious Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar by President Droupadi Murmu here.

Swimming sensation Dhinidhi Desinghu was also among the recipients of the award given for exceptional achievements in the field of sports, bravery, social service and environment.

Just a few days back, Suryavanshi slammed 190 runs off 84 deliveries, studded with 16 fours and 15 sixes, for Bihar against Arunachal Pradesh in a Vijay Hazare Trophy



Plate group match in Ranchi.

With that effort, he became the youngest male cricketer to score a century in List A cricket at just 14 years and 272 days. He reached the three-figure mark off just 36 balls.

Suryavanshi's unprecedented batting saw Bihar pile up 574 for



He first stitched a crucial partnership with Juyal before joining forces with Chennai Super Kings' latest recruit Prashant Veer, with the duo adding 63 runs off just 35 balls to push Uttar Pradesh well beyond the 350 mark.

The performance augers well for India as he has been chosen as the designated finisher in the T20 squad.

Limbani picks fifer as Baroda beat Bengal

Medium pacer Raj Limbani claimed a five-wicket haul as Baroda thrashed Bengal by four wickets in their Group B match.

Limbani made full use of Baroda's decision to bowl first, ripping through the Bengal batting line-up to account for half the side. His victims included skipper Abhimanyu Easwaran, top scorer Anustup Majumdar, Shahbaz Ahmed, Akash Deep and Mohammed Shami as Bengal were bowled out for 205 in 38.3 overs.

Skipper Krunal Pandya (3/39) provided strong support, picking up three wickets.

Chasing a modest target, Baroda never looked in trouble. Shashwat Rawat (61), Priyanshu Moliya (52) and Pandya (57) struck composed half-centuries to guide their side to a comfortable victory with more than 11 overs to spare.

In other Group B matches, a century from Yawer Hassan (138) and a five-wicket haul by spinner Murugan Ashwin (5/34) powered Jammu and Kashmir to a commanding 142-run victory over Assam.

Meanwhile, Vidarbha registered their first win of the season with an emphatic 89-run triumph over Hyderabad.

Brief Scores:

Uttar Pradesh 367 for 4 in 50 overs (Aryan Juyal 134, Rinku Singh 106 not out; Taranpreet Singh 2/74) defeated Chandigarh 140 all out in 29.3 overs (Manan Vohra 32; Zeeshan Ansar 4/29) by 227 runs.

Bengal 205 all out in 38.3 overs (Anustup Majumdar 47, Karan Lal 40; Raj Limbai 5/65) lost to Baroda 209 for 6 in 38.5 overs (Shashwat Rawat 61, Krunal Pandya 5/7, Aamir Gani 2/33) by 4 wickets.

Jammu and Kashmir 341 for 7 in 50 overs (Yawer Hassan 138; Denish Das 2/46) defeated Assam 199 all out in 36.1 overs (Sumit Ghadi-gaonkar 53; Murugan Ashwin 5/34) by 142 runs.

Vidarbha 365 for 5 in 50 overs (Dhruv Shorey 109 not out; Kartikeya Kak 3/87) defeated Hyderabad 279 all out in 49.2 overs (Aelgani Varun Goud 85; Harsh Dubey 3/39) by 89 runs. (PTI)

Court restores Jaiveer Singh's position as EFI Secretary General

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: A Delhi court has restored the position of Col (ret) Jaiveer Singh as Secretary General of the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI), holding his suspension by the federation's Executive Committee illegal and restored his authority over the federation's official communications and bank accounts.

Principal District and Sessions Judge Anju Bajaj Chandra on December 22 restrained EFI from giving effect to the minutes of its Executive Committee meeting on August 21, 2025, which had extended Singh's suspension and appointed another official as acting secretary general.

The court also barred Joint Secretary M M Rehman from functioning as acting secretary general and restored Singh's authority over the federation's official communications and bank accounts.

Background of the dispute

Singh, a former Army officer, was elected Secretary General of the EFI in 2019. The federation has been embroiled in prolonged litigation since 2019.

In November that year, the Delhi High Court appointed former Chief Election Commissioner S Y Quraishi as a court-appointed observer to oversee EFI's functioning amid allegations of mismanagement.

In May 2024, the High Court ordered the reinstatement of the 2019-elected Executive Committee, including Singh, pending disposal of related writ

petitions.

Suspension and legal challenge

The controversy escalated in March 2025 when EFI's Executive Committee issued a show-cause notice to Singh alleging financial misconduct, violation of federation statutes and abuse of authority. On April 11, 2025, Singh was suspended, pending inquiry.

Singh challenged the suspension, arguing that it was imposed without approval of the High Court-appointed observer and without convening the general assembly, as mandated under EFI statutes.

He also pointed out that an application seeking High Court permission for his removal was withdrawn by EFI office-bearers in May 2025.

Despite objections raised by the observer through emails in April 2025, EFI's Executive Committee extended Singh's suspension in an August 21 meeting and appointed an interim secretary general.

Singh alleged that during this period, rival office-bearers changed official email credentials and opened and operated bank accounts without lawful authority.

Court's findings

The court noted that no valid executive committee resolution approving Singh's initial suspension had been placed on record and that the observer's approval was neither sought nor obtained. It held that under the EFI statutes, a member of the Executive Committee could only be suspended or removed by a two-thirds majority of the general assembly. (PTI)

hundred, which came off 35 deliveries, was the second-fastest in IPL history.

The India U-19 cricketer had slammed a century in a four-day game against Australia Under-19 this year.

Hailing from Surat in Gujarat, Pragnika won the Under-7 Girls title at the 2025 FIDE World Schools Chess Championship in Serbia, where she scored a perfect 9 out of 9 points.

Karnataka swimmer Dhinidhi had qualified for the 2024 Paris Olympics in women's 200m freestyle, becoming the country's youngest athlete at the quadrennial showpiece.

She has won seven gold medals at the National Games in Goa and also participated in the World Championships in Doha. (PTI)

AUS VS ENG ASHES 4TH TEST

20 wickets fall on a record-breaking Day 1

MELBOURNE, Dec 26: Australia collapsed for 152 yet still claimed a 42-run lead over England on the first innings in a remarkable opening day of the fourth Ashes test on Friday (December 26, 2025) in which 20 wickets fell.

The day's play unfolded before a world-record crowd for a day of cricket at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The attendance figure of 94,199 beat the 93,013 for the 2015 World Cup final between Australia and New Zealand at the MCG. Australia was 4-0 in its second innings at stumps, an overall lead of 46 runs, after having to bat through one nervous over before stumps. Josh Tongue claimed a career-best 5-45 as England bowled Australia out after winning the toss and bowling. In reply, England made 110 in 29.5 overs as Michael Nesar grabbed 4-45.

Tongue, in his eighth test, took three early wickets as Australia stumbled to 72-4 at lunch.

Travis Head (12) and Jake Weatherald (10) fell cheaply as Australia reached 31-2 in the 10th over. Capitalizing on a pitch offering sideways movement, Tongue deceived Marnus Labuschagne (6) who edged to first slip at 34-3.

In a key breakthrough, captain Steve Smith lost his middle stump while attempting to drive Tongue with the total on 51.

Australia aimed to rebuild through veteran Usman Khawaja, but the 39-year-old was caught behind to Gus Atkinson's bowling for 29 at 89-5. Alex Carey clipped a catch to leg gully two runs later.

Nesar (35) and Cameron Green



(17) shared a 52-run partnership before Green hesitated and was run out at 143-7.

Tongue was cheered off the field at tea after dismissing Nesar and Scott Boland (0) with the first two deliveries of his 12th over, giving England's spirits a boost after losing each of the first three tests.

England was 8-3 in 4.2 overs as Zak Crawley (5), Jacob Bethell (2) and Ben Duckett (2) all departed in an action-packed opening to the innings. When Joe Root was caught

behind for a duck off the bowling of Nesar at 16-4 at the end of the eighth over, Harry Brook charged the next delivery from Mitchell Starc and clubbed it over mid-off for six. Brook bravely belted 41 off 34 balls including two fours and two sixes, adding 50 for the fifth wicket with Stokes.

Boland (3-30) dismissed Brook, Jamie Smith (2) and Will Jacks (5) in three consecutive overs as England slumped to 77-7.

Nesar struck a key blow in the

following over when skipper Ben Stokes (16) was caught at slip.

England's innings closed with just enough time for Australia to face the one over before stumps.

"It's not easy because the ball is nipping around," Nesar said. "We saw when we batted, it was tough." England named its team on Wednesday with the big news the loss of star bowler Jofra Archer for the rest of the series, including the fifth and final test starting Jan. 4 in Sydney. (AP)

Mumbai City confirms exit of majority stakeholders City Football Group due to ISL's uncertainty

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Mumbai City FC on Friday confirmed that City Football Group, which held a majority stake in the club, has divested its entire shareholding to the founding partners of the Indian Super League franchise in the wake of the uncertainty over the ISL's future.

City Football Group owns several top clubs worldwide including English Premier League giants Manchester City.

The Mumbai-based ISL side's full ownership will now return to the founding partners, Bollywood actor Ranbir Kapoor and businessman Bimal Parekh.

"Mumbai City FC can confirm that City Football Group Limited has divested its shareholding in the Club. The founding owners will assume full control of the organisation moving forward," the club said in a statement on its social media handles.

"Since 2019, CFG and Mumbai City FC have reached new heights, winning two ISL League Winners' Shields and two ISL Cup titles, strengthening the Club's football operations, and making meaningful contributions to the growth of the game in India."

The City Football Group acquired a 65 per cent stake in Mumbai City FC in 2019. Mumbai City FC

are one of the most successful teams in the history of ISL, winning four titles, which include two League Winners Shields and two ISL Cups.

The CFG said that the decision followed a comprehensive commercial review and was shaped by the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the ISL.

"CFG has made this decision following a comprehensive commercial review and in light of the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the future of the Indian Super League. This step reflects CFG's disciplined and strategic approach, ensuring its focus remains on areas where it can have the greatest long-term impact," it said. "CFG remains proud of the achievements and deeply appreciative of everyone connected to Mumbai City FC from players and coaches to staff, fans, and partners for their commitment and passion, and looks forward to continuing its relationships and partnerships in India in the years ahead."

Indian domestic football plunged into chaos after FSDL the organisers of the ISL informed the All India Football Federation in July that it was keeping the country's top-tier league on hold due to a lack of clarity over the renewal of the 15-year Master Rights Agreement which ended on December 8. (PTI)

Venkatesh Iyer may not be in RCB playing eleven at the start of season, says Anil Kumble

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Venkatesh Iyer was bought by Royal Challengers Bengaluru for ₹7 crore in the IPL mini auction but former captain Anil Kumble said that the pace-bowling all-rounder may not find a place in their playing XI in the initial phase of the lucrative T20 league.

Earlier this month, RCB were involved in a bidding war with Iyer's former side Kolkata Knight Riders before securing his service.

Defending champions RCB bolstered their squad by securing Iyer, Jacob Duffy and Mangesh Yadav, among others during the auction held on December 16 in Abu Dhabi.

IPL 2026 auction Highlights

"Venkatesh Iyer will not be in the playing eleven at

the start. You do not want to create doubt in a winning team. That is probably why they did not go after Ravi Bishnoi, so that Suyash Sharma does not feel threatened by a senior India spinner," JioStar expert Kumble said.

"RCB thought they might get outbid, but they did not, so they are happy to have Venkatesh Iyer." Kumble, who captained RCB to the 2009 IPL final and became a chief mentor in 2011, said the franchise did well to keep the core of the IPL winning team.

"They (RCB) have done well to keep the core the same, back their players, and just have a few backups in case something goes wrong."

"Jacob Duffy will be a backup for Josh Hazlewood, and Jordan Cox is a like-for-like replacement for Phil

HIL 2026: Hardik Singh named captain of HIL Governing Council squad

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Star Indian midfielder Hardik Singh has been appointed as the captain of the HIL Governing Council team for the men's Hockey India League beginning in Chennai on January 3.

HIL Governing Council will begin their campaign on January 5 against SG Pipers at the Mayor Radhakrishnan Hockey Stadium in Chennai.

"I am grateful for this opportunity and I am looking forward to it. It is always exciting to be in a leadership role and take the team along in both highs and lows through the season," Hardik said in a release.

"We have a strong mix of young players who had a good outing in Junior World Cup as well as experienced players with several international matches under their belt. We are looking forward to a good season and also gain from the knowledge exchange with foreign players."

Hardik will lead the team comprising a good mix of experienced stalwarts like Lalit Upadhyay, Sam Ward, Surender Kumar and Kane Russell.

The team also features India colts, who recently won bronze at the FIH junior men's World Cup such as Gurjot Singh, Manmeet Singh, Talem Priyoborta.

The HIL Governing Council team has taken over the operations from UP Rudras franchise ahead of the 2026 season to ensure continuity for its players.

The Men's Hero Hockey India League 2026 season features eight franchises -- Tamil Nadu Dragons, Hyderabad Toofans, JSW Soorma Hockey Club, Shraichi Rarh Bengal Tigers (defending champions), Vedanta Kalinga Lancers, Ranchi Royals, SG Pipers, and HIL Governing Council.

The tournament will have a single round-robin format with 23 league matches, followed by play-offs (Qualifier 1, Eliminator on Jan 23; Qualifier 2 on Jan 25) and a grand final on January 26 at Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar, totalling 33 high-stakes encounters.

Action will kick off January 3 in Chennai (January 3-9) before shifting to Marang Gomme Jaipal Singh AstroTurf in Ranchi (January 11-16), and concludes in Bhubaneswar at the Kalinga Stadium (January 17-26).

Harmanpreet Singh and Hardik Singh aim for good show in HIL.

India's leading men's hockey players Harmanpreet Singh and Hardik Singh are eyeing good performances in the Hockey India League (HIL), beginning early next year, to fine-tune their skills and build confidence ahead of a busy international season.

The Indian team has a busy schedule next year with the FIH



Pro League, World Cup and the Asian Games in Japan line up one after the other. The upcoming men's HIL, beginning on January 3, will be a stepping stone for players to get into the rhythm for the season ahead.

India captain Harmanpreet, who plays for JSW Soorma Hockey Club, said the standard of HIL could be compared to international events and it would help players find form quickly.

"The HIL comes at the perfect time for all of us in the Indian team," said Harmanpreet.

"The standard across franchises is very high, so every game will feel like an international match, which is exactly what we want before the Pro League, World Cup, and Asian Games." Harmanpreet also stressed how the league environment helps senior players and youngsters grow together.

"As captain of the India team and Soorma, I see HIL as a chance to build leadership depth and give younger players big-match exposure alongside senior names," he added.

"If we set the tone with our work rate, penalty-corner execution, and defensive organisation here, it will carry directly into our performances for India later in the year. The goal is clear — have a strong HIL season and then convert that confidence into medals for the country."

"This HIL season is massive for me and for our HIL Governing

Council team," said Hardik.

"The league always offers high-intensity, high-pressure games, and that is exactly what is needed before a year packed with big tournaments. Our expectation is to play bold, attacking hockey, build a strong identity as a group, and show that this squad can compete with any franchise in the league." The midfielder added that the quality of other participating teams and the tactical variety across franchises will provide crucial preparation for facing top nations later in the year.

"Week in, week out, you face different styles, top drag-flickers, fast forwards, and tight defensive units. If we can execute our plans here and maintain consistency over the season, it will help carry that rhythm into the Pro League, World Cup, and Asian Games. Personally, I want to take up more responsibility in both defence and attack and arrive for India duty in peak shape."

The men's HIL features eight franchises — Tamil Nadu Dragons, Hyderabad Toofans, JSW Soorma Hockey Club, Shraichi Rarh Bengal Tigers (defending champions), Vedanta Kalinga Lancers, Ranchi Royals, SG Pipers, and HIL Governing Council — in a single round-robin format with 23 league matches, followed by playoffs.

The final is scheduled on January 26 at the Kalinga Stadium in Bhubaneswar. (PTI)

Muddappa back with renewed vigour for Drag Nationals 2025 finale

CHENNAI, Dec 26: After a measured first half of the season, ace Bengaluru biker Hed manth Muddappa will be returning this weekend with the title in mind as the final two rounds of the MMS FMSCI Indian National Motorcycle Drag Racing Championship 2025 gets underway here on Saturday.

Riding for Mantra Racing, the 15-time National champion will once again saddle up across four premier categories as he chases yet another milestone season.

The rider, known across the paddock as India's 'Drag King', currently leads two of the four classes he contests and remains firmly in the hunt in the other two, keeping alive the prospect of adding multiple championships to an already unmatched resume. Supported by his long-time tuner and technical partner Sharan Pratap, Muddappa will line up on his trusted superbikes, the Gen3 Hayabusa, BMW S1000RR and Ninja 6R in the Unrestricted (Super Sport) category, 1051-1650cc, 851-1050cc and 551-850cc Super Sport categories.

The opening two rounds in September underlined both his enduring consistency and the growing intensity of competition. Muddappa began the season in familiar fashion with a commanding triple, winning the 551-850cc, 851-1050cc and 1051-1650cc classes. (PTI)

Mumbai batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi rushed to hospital after injury

MUMBAI, Dec 26: Rohit Sharma's Mumbai teammate and batter Angkrish Raghuvanshi was taken to the hospital after injuring his shoulder and neck and suffering a concussion while trying a difficult catch during Friday's Vijay Hazare Trophy match against Uttarakhand in Jaipur.

The incident took place in the 30th over, bowled by off-spinner Tanush Kotian. Right-handed batter Saurabh Rawat attempted a slog-sweep, and Raghuvanshi, positioned at deep mid-wicket, ran in to intercept the top edge, according to PTI.

Despite a determined one-handed attempt, he was unable to make the catch and fell awkwardly, injuring his shoulder and hitting his head on the ground, which resulted in a concussion.

Raghuvanshi briefly got up on his knees before collapsing, prompting Mumbai's physio to rush onto the field. Seeing that he could not stand, a stretcher was brought in and he was taken by ambulance to SDMH Hospital. He

will remain under observation and undergo necessary scans, the report noted. The 21-year-old Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) player reportedly scored 11 runs off 20 balls as Mumbai posted 331/7, with half-centuries from Hardik Tamore, Musheer Khan, and Sarfaraz Khan. Rohit Sharma, who had starred with an unbeaten 155 in Mumbai's campaign opener, failed to make an impact this time, getting out for a duck.

Despite his early setback, half-centuries from Musheer Khan (55 off 56 balls, including seven fours) and Sarfaraz Khan (55 off 49 balls, with six fours and a six), combined with a late flourish from wicketkeeper-batter Hardik Tamore (93* off 82 balls, including seven fours and two sixes), propelled Mumbai to a total of 331/7 in 50 overs from a precarious 230/6. Skipper Shardul Thakur (29) and Shams Mulani (48) also played crucial supporting roles, while Devendra Bora (3/74) was the standout performer for Uttarakhand with the ball. (PTI)

Ahead of key meeting, ISL clubs seek clarity on league structure from AIFF

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: The Indian Super League (ISL) clubs on Thursday (December 25, 2025) shot off a letter to the All India Football Federation (AIFF), seeking clarity from the apex body on its immediate as well as long-term plans for the country's top domestic competition.

The 2025-26 ISL season was put on hold in July due to disagreements over renewing the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) between the league's former organisers, Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), and the AIFF, with the existing deal expiring in December 2025, creating a contractual impasse that also required Supreme Court intervention.

Under the supervision of a Supreme Court-appointed committee, a tender was floated for ISL's commercial rights but there was no taker for it.

"We would find it very helpful if the meeting could begin with a

comprehensive briefing on this long-term roadmap.

"Following that, it would be useful for the clubs to be taken through the short-term plan, after which all ISL clubs can share their thoughts and feedback in a constructive manner," the clubs said in the letter.

The letter was addressed to the AIFF on behalf of the ISL clubs through Mohun Bagan Super Giant CEO Vinay Chopra.

On December 20, a proposal from 10 ISL clubs for "perpetual" operational and commercial ownership of the country's top-tier competition failed to get the approval of the AIFF's General Body, which formed a committee to look into the matter.

"We would also like to share that we still believe the proposal submitted by us represents a strong and sustainable way forward for Indian football, and we would respectfully request that AIFF con-



sider this while formulating the long-term proposal," the clubs said. "With respect to the short-term league proposal by AIFF, while the initial discussion was

helpful, there are still a few areas where further clarity would support our internal assessment.

"In particular, we would welcome more detailed information

on: The proposed revenue model, broadcast arrangements, a clear view of the cost structure for the short term, including clarity on how these costs are to be allocated and who is expected to bear them.

"Once these details are available, we will be better placed to review them and engage in further discussions with the wider ISL club group," the letter added.

The AIFF panel is tasked with holding discussions with representatives of five clubs — Chennaiyin FC, Mumbai City FC, Delhi Sporting Club, NorthEast United FC and Mohun Bagan Super Giant from December 22 to 29.

The clubs added in the letter, "We would also like to gently reiterate that the clubs are positive about the idea of participating in the short-term league subject to above further details and at the same time this to be aligned with a clear long-term plan, rather than being approached in isolation." (PTI)