

6 WORLD
 ● B'desh court sentences Hasina to 5-year jail term, UK lawmaker niece to 2 years in land scam
 ● Musk backs H-1B visas: US benefited immensely from talented Indians

8 NATION
 ● Parl no place for drama; Oppn using House to vent out frustration: PM Modi
 ● 18th Bihar Assembly commences with swearing in of newly elected members

Vol .No. II Issue No. 266 RNI-ASSENG/2023/86488 GUWAHATI, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2025 PAGES 12 PRICE ₹ 8

Need framework to deal with challenge of biological weapons: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: India on Monday pitched for a global mechanism to check any possible misuse of biological weapons in view of the uncertain international security environment. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said "misuse" of biological weapons by non-state actors is no longer a distant possibility and that international cooperation is needed to combat such a challenge. He was speaking at a conference on 50 years of the 'Biological Weapons Convention (BWC)'. "Bioterrorism is a serious concern that the international community has to be adequately prepared for. Yet the BWC still lacks basic institutional structures," he said. "It has no compliance system, it has no permanent technical body and no mechanism to track new scientific developments. These gaps must (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nothing in GoM report that can offend anyone: Himanta ST status issue: CM downplays protest

GUWAHATI, Dec 1: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday asserted that the Group of Ministers' report on granting Scheduled Tribe status to six communities of the state does not contain anything that could "offend" any section. He claimed that those protesting against it have not properly read the report. The report with the recommendations of the GoM on the demand for ST status by Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (adivasis) communities was laid in the assembly on Saturday, the last day of the Winter Session. "There is nothing in the report that can offend anyone. It ensures that all communities and sub-communities move forward," Sarma told reporters on sidelines of a pro-



gramme in Nagaon district. "If everyone reads the report properly, they will know that no injustice has been done to anyone. All sections will get justice," he said. Asked about students from the Bodoland University on Saturday storming the assembly hall of the BTC secretariat in Kokrajhar, and vandalising property during a protest against the cabinet's approval of the report, the CM said, "It was laid in the assembly around

7 pm, and the protest was held at 3 pm. It means that the demonstration took place before tabling of the report." Sarma had said on Sunday that some people were commenting on the report without reading it. If there is any "difficulty in reading and understanding" the report, there may be some doubt in a few people's minds, he had said at a press briefing after a cabinet meeting. "But, if it is read carefully, there will not be any doubt. The cabinet decided that the three ministers of the GoM - Ranaj Pegu, Keshab Mahanta and Pijush Hazarika - will invite CCTOA representatives for a discussion and explain the report in front of them to alleviate any misunderstanding," Sarma said. The Coordination Committee of Tribal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Over 2,900 govt schools merged, amalgamated with nearby schools in last 5 years in Assam



NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Over 2,900 government schools have been merged and amalgamated with nearby schools in Assam for optimum utilisation of resources in the last five years, Lok Sabha was informed on Monday. Union Minister of State for Education, Jayant Chaudhary, shared the information in a written response to a question in Lok Sabha about how many government primary and secondary schools have been closed down in Assam during the last five years. The minister shared that a total of 2,774 elementary schools have been merged and amalgamated during the period, while the number of such secondary schools is 206. "No government, provincialised primary, middle, high and higher secondary schools have been closed till date in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India delivers 53 tonnes of relief material to Sri Lanka

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Bolstering its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu, India has delivered 53 tonnes of relief material to it via air and sea since November 28, while more than 2,000 stranded Indians have been brought back from the cyclone-hit island nation, the government said on Monday. "NDRF teams continue to carry out search and rescue operations in various severely affected and isolated regions of Sri Lanka, assisting flood-hit families and ensuring their immediate safety. Over 150 persons have been rescued and assisted in these com-

bin operations, which are continuing," the Ministry of External Affairs said. In the wake of Cyclone Ditwah, which has caused severe flooding, loss of life and widespread disruption across Sri Lanka, India launched Operation Sagar Bandhu on November 28 to provide urgent search and rescue and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) support to "our closest maritime neighbour," it said. New Delhi has delivered aid to Colombo both through sea and aerial routes, using Indian Air Force's transport aircraft (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Five poachers held with arms

TEZPUR, Dec 1: Five suspected poachers were arrested in Biswanath district of Assam with arms and ammunition, officials said on Monday. An operation was carried out by the Eastern Range, Gamari and Crime Investigation Range, Panihharal of Biswanath Wildlife Division of Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve in the fringe areas of the Park, they said. The arrested accused have been produced before court, a senior official said. A rifle and ammunition were also recovered from their possession, she (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India for unity on climate issues, developed nations' failure complicates talks: Env minister

GUWAHATI, Dec 1: Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav called for consensus-based decisions to resolve global climate issues, and said negotiations become "complicated" when developed nations do not perform as per their historical responsibilities and resist equitable distribution of carbon space. Yadav, who led the Indian delegation at the recently held UN COP30 Climate Summit in Brazil, said ensuring energy security for the Global South is essential while deciding a roadmap for



a complete transition from fossil fuels. "India supports consensus-based decision-making initiatives

by utilising multilateral platforms to resolve global issues like climate change," Yadav told PTI in an interview when asked about the ways to hammer out solutions on climate issues, which at times become complex. According to him, the distinction between developed and developing countries is not based on economic parameters, but rather on the contributions to historical greenhouse gas emissions. Asked about the binary terminology to divide the world as Global (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



সত্যমেব জয়তে
অসম চৰকাৰ

অসম দিবস

২ ডিচেম্বৰ ২০২৫

সমৃদ্ধিশালী অসমৰ ভেঁটি প্ৰতিষ্ঠাতা, সমন্বয়ৰ সাধক
 স্বৰ্গদেউ চাওলুং ছ্যু-কা-ফাই ৰাজনৈতিক, সামাজিক, সাংস্কৃতিক তথা অৰ্থনৈতিক
 জীৱনধাৰালৈ আগবঢ়োৱা অৱদান অসমীয়া জাতিৰ সঞ্জীৱনী শক্তি।
 এই পৱিত্ৰ অসম দিবসত স্বৰ্গদেউ চাওলুং ছ্যু-কা-ফাক শ্ৰদ্ধাৰে স্মৰণ কৰিছোঁ।
 তেখেতৰ মহান আদৰ্শই নতুন প্ৰজন্মক উদ্বুদ্ধ কৰক।

ড° হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শৰ্মা
মুখ্যমন্ত্ৰী, অসম

তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰচাৰিত

Connect with us     @diprassam  dipr.assam.gov.in

অসম বাৰ্তা ছাবস্ক্ৰাইব কৰিবলৈ ৭৬৩৬৮৩৪৯৪৩ ত Assam লিখি ৱাটছএপ কৰক

DIPR/D/HLT/239/2-Dec-25

Himadri ships out first liquid coal tar pitch consignment

KOLKATA, Dec 1: Himadri Speciality Chemical Ltd (HSC) on Monday said it has executed its first-ever export shipment of liquid coal tar pitch to the Middle East.

The 3,600-tonne consignment, shipped out from its western India terminal at the New Mangalore Port, marks a key milestone in its international expansion strategy and reaffirms its ability to handle high-volume exports, the Kolkata-headquartered company said.

It also marks the opening of a second western export corridor to complement its existing Haldia terminal in the east, the speciality chemical manufacturer said.

The new route is expected to strengthen Himadri's access to key markets in the Middle East and the Americas, the company statement said. Liquid coal tar pitch is a critical raw material for aluminium smelting, graphite electrode manufacturing and other high-temperature industrial applications. (PTI)

Stock markets retreat from lifetime highs; Sensex slips 65 pts



MUMBAI, Dec 1: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed marginally lower after hitting their fresh all-time highs on Monday due to profit-taking at higher levels and foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex pared early gains and closed 64.77 points or 0.08 per cent lower at 85,641.90. During the day, the benchmark jumped 452.35 points or 0.52 per cent to hit a record intra-day high of 86,159.02.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dipped 27.20 points or 0.10 per cent to settle at 26,175.75. During the day, it climbed 122.85 points or 0.46 per cent to hit a lifetime high of 26,325.80.

Markets faced correction at higher levels as expectations of an RBI rate cut this week faded following better-than-expected Q2 GDP growth, an expert said.

A slower growth in GST collection and profit-taking at higher levels also dragged the key indices.

Stock markets had surged to their record highs in the morning session as investor sentiment turned positive after India's economy grew at a higher-than-expected 8.2 per cent in July-September - recording the

fastest pace in six quarters.

Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Sun Pharma, Trent, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India and Bajaj Finserv were the major laggards.

However, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Maruti, Bharat Electronics, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Adani Ports and HCL Tech were among the gainers.

"After reaching a new high, the market moved into a range-bound phase as expectations of an RBI rate cut in December faded following better-than-expected Q2 GDP growth and a sharp depreciation of the rupee. Sentiment turned slightly cautious due to muted GST collections in November, driven by lower rates," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

"Markets surrendered early gains and pulled back sharply from record highs as profit-taking set in amid weak global cues and a cautious interest-rate outlook," Vikram Kasat, Head Advisory, PL Capital, said.

The BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.19 per cent and smallcap index ended flat marginally up by 0.05 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, realty dropped 1.02 per cent, followed by

consumer durables (0.56 per cent), services (0.45 per cent), telecommunication (0.27 per cent), FMCG (0.23 per cent) and oil & gas (0.13 per cent).

Auto jumped 0.80 per cent, metal (0.56 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.33 per cent), IT (0.28 per cent), and consumer discretionary (0.20 per cent).

India's manufacturing sector activity eased to a nine-month low in November, mainly owing to a softer rise in sales and production amid reports of challenging market conditions, a monthly report said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 56.6 in November from 59.2 in October, highlighting the slowest improvement in operating conditions since February.

Gross GST collection rose at a slower pace of 0.7 per cent in November at ₹ 1.70 lakh crore, as domestic revenues declined, according to the government data released on Monday.

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

Markets in Europe were trading lower. US markets ended higher on Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 3,795.72 crore on Friday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹ 4,148.48 crore, according to exchange data. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 1.96 per cent to USD 63.60 per barrel.

On Friday, the Sensex dipped by 13.71 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 85,706.67. The Nifty skidded 12.60 points or 0.05 per cent to 26,202.95. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

ST status issue

Organisations of Assam (CCTOA) has been spearheading the agitation against the GoM report, claiming that the existing ST communities will be adversely affected if the six communities are included in the reservation category.

The report has recommended a three-tier reservation classification of STs in the state, so that the demand can be met without affecting the reservation of the existing tribal groups.

It has proposed the formation of a new category of 'ST (Valley)', and inclusion of Ahom, Chutia, Tea Tribes, and Kock-Rajbongshi (excluding undivided Goalpara) in it.

For Moran, Matak and Kock-Rajbongshi (Goalpara), it said they can be included in 'ST (Plains)', and the existing communities in this category "do not have much opposition".

The report added that dialogue has to continue with all stakeholders for a "conclusive solution", and the final nod has to be given by Parliament through constitutional amendment. (PTI)

Over 2,900 govt schools

the state of Assam. However, schools have been merged or amalgamated under the Shiksha Khetra Scheme where there is non-sustainable enrolment or schools situated in the same campus or to optimise the use of available resources into a single administrative and academic unit in adherence to norms and guidelines as per Right To Education Act, 2009," Chaudhary said.

"Schools are rationalised within the distance norms for optimum utilisation of teachers and as effort to reduce drop out. No student has been deprived of getting education after merger or amalgamation and it is also ensured that after merger or amalgamation no student face any difficulty to pursue their schooling as all schools are available within the areas as per RTE norms," he added. (PTI)

Need framework to deal

be bridged in order to strengthen confidence," he added.

Jaishankar said India has consistently called for stronger compliance measures within BWC, including verification designed for today's world.

"India supports international cooperation and assistance enabling exchange of materials and equipment for peaceful use," he said.

"We have further called for systematic review of scientific and technological developments so that governance does indeed keep pace with innovation," he added.

Jaishankar said India has consistently called for stronger compliance measures within BWC, including verification designed for today's world.

"India supports international cooperation and assistance enabling exchange of materials and equipment for peaceful use," he said.

The external affairs minister said New Delhi has proposed a national implementation framework that covers identification of high-risk agents, oversight of dual-use research, incident management, and continuous training.

"For 50 years, BWC has stood by one simple idea: that humanity rejects disease as a weapon. But norms survive only when nations renew them. The next 50 years will demand concerted action," he said.

"We must modernise the Convention, we must keep pace with science and strengthen global capacity so that all countries can detect, prevent, and respond to biological risks," he noted.

Jaishankar said that India stands ready as a trusted partner to the Global South and a committed supporter of global biosecurity.

The external affairs minister said the international security environment had become more uncertain and rapid developments in technology have led to availability and affordability of sophisticated biotechnology tools and a marked reduction in costs of sequencing and synthesis.

"Recent outbreaks, including the Covid-19 pandemic, which affected each and every one of us, have imposed a steep learning curve for policymakers and practitioners alike.

"These developments have raised new questions to be considered in the context of the implementation of the BWC," he said. (PTI)

India delivers 53 tonnes

and frontline naval platforms. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in a post on X on Monday, said, "INS Sukanya enters Trincomalee with relief materials. #OperationSagarBandhu".

The Indian vessel, carrying humanitarian aid, had left from Visakhapatnam earlier, a senior official said on Saturday evening.

In coordination with the Sri Lanka Air Force, Chetak helicopters from India Navy's aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and MI-17 helicopters of the IAF conducted extensive rescue operations, airlifting stranded people, including pregnant women, infants, and those critically injured, the MEA said.

"Rescued persons included nationals of Sri Lanka, India, Germany, Slovenia, United Kingdom, South Africa, Poland, Belarus, Iran, Australia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh," the MEA said in a statement.

Soon after the cyclone struck, the Government of India, in coordination with the Sri Lankan authorities, immediately handed 9.5 tons of emergency rations from two Indian Navy ships -- INS Vikrant and frigate INS Udyagiri -- in Colombo.

India also deployed three IAF aircraft for airlifting another 31.5 tons of relief materials, including tents, tarpaulins, blankets, hygiene kits, ready-to-eat food items, medicines and surgical equipment, two BHISHM cubes along with a five-person medical team for on-site training, and 80-person special Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to assist in rescue efforts; and despatched another 12 tons of relief supplies on-board Indian Navy Ship Sukanya, the MEA said in a statement.

"A total of 53 tons of relief material has been handed over," it said.

Evacuation of Indian nationals stranded due to Cyclone Ditwah was also undertaken via special IAF flights as well as commercial flights, with "over 2000 stranded Indians already brought back," the MEA said.

The IAF on Sunday had also intensified its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka, and brought back a group of stranded Indians from Colombo in two transport aircraft.

A C-130J aircraft carrying a group of Indians had landed at Hindan in Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziabad, while an IL-76 aircraft landed at Trivandrum in Kerala on Sunday, a senior official said.

The MEA said, "Guided by India's Neighbourhood First policy and Vision MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), India continues to be the first responder, standing firmly in solidarity with the government and people of Sri Lanka in this time of need, and remains committed to supporting the ongoing rescue, relief, and early recovery efforts." (PTI)

Five poachers held

said. "The weapon was brought from a neighbouring state for poaching of Rhino inside Kaziranga National Park. In total, seven people were involved in the act. Another person has been detained for further interrogation," the official said.

"So far, a total of 12 people have been arrested during the last 10 days, signifying the number of poaching attempts thwarted by an alert forest department," she added. (PTI)

India for unity

North and Global South, Yadav said, "The terminology is well understood within the UNFCCC context and aligned with the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR-RC)."

He stressed that the climate solutions must respect these principles and advance climate justice for developing countries.

"Negotiations become complicated when developed countries fail to acknowledge historical responsibility or resist equitable distribution of carbon space. The situation also gets complicated when they resist to discharge their obligations as provided under the climate treaties," the union minister said.

Negotiators from 194 countries gathered this year at the Brazilian city of Belem in the Amazon region from November 10 to 22 for the annual Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

On why India did not support a roadmap on transition from fossil fuel, Yadav said, "The Belem Roadmap for Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels announced by the Presidency (Brazil) is outside the negotiations and aims to address fiscal, social and economic aspects while respecting national circumstances."

Under the UNFCCC process, the prescriptive language on transitioning away from fossil fuels did not come, he added.

"India emphasised the need for energy security in the Global South. We also highlighted the technological challenges involved in power grid management while we plan for complete transitions to renewable energy. There is intermittent availability of power from renewable energy sources," Yadav said.

The UN climate talks in Brazil ended with a pledge of more funding for countries to adapt to the wrath of extreme weather. But it did not include a roadmap for phasing out fossil fuels.

Asked how India plans to proceed to address the climate issues post COP30, Yadav said, "India has accelerated its transition to a low-carbon economy and sustainable future through a range of large-scale climate actions and flagship schemes to scale up our actions on both adaptation and mitigation."

Appropriate measures are being undertaken across multiple sectors, including water, agriculture, forests, energy and enterprise, sustainable mobility and housing, waste management, circular economy and resource efficiency, he added.

"The government is implementing the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), which serves as the overarching policy framework. Our 34 states and union territories have prepared State Action Plans on Climate Change (SAPCCs), consistent with the objectives of the NAPCC," Yadav said.

He said that India's progress demonstrates a strong commitment to address climate change, with non-fossil fuel capacity reaching 50.73 per cent in August 2025, emissions intensity reducing by 36 per cent from 2005 to 2020, and an additional carbon sink of 2.29 billion tonnes CO2 equivalent created by 2021.

Asked about India's financial commitment to fight climate change over the next 3-5 years, the union minister said, "A detailed and full-scale assessment of climate finance needs will depend on the gap between the actual cost of implementing India's plans and the financing available from domestic and international resources."

India's vision to achieve net zero emissions by 2070 has been carefully formulated, considering the principle of CBDR-RC as well as national circumstances, he added.

"India's climate action cuts across various sectors and is being implemented through multiple schemes and programmes of the Centre. So far, it has been financed through domestic budgetary allocation," Yadav pointed out.

As per the strategy, key investment drivers include renewable energy, industrial transition, hydrogen, transport electrification, public transport and smart infrastructure, he added.

"Patterns of investment needs will be driven by evolving requirements and emerging technologies. Although estimates vary widely and are not directly comparable, they consistently indicate that the required investments will be substantial," Yadav said without specifying any figure.

The 2025 Adaptation Gap Report estimates that developing countries will need between USD 310-365 billion annually by 2035, while current flows are around USD 26 billion only. (PTI)

fastest pace in six quarters.

Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, Sun Pharma, Trent, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India and Bajaj Finserv were the major laggards.

However, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Maruti, Bharat Electronics, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Adani Ports and HCL Tech were among the gainers.

"After reaching a new high, the market moved into a range-bound phase as expectations of an RBI rate cut in December faded following better-than-expected Q2 GDP growth and a sharp depreciation of the rupee. Sentiment turned slightly cautious due to muted GST collections in November, driven by lower rates," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

"Markets surrendered early gains and pulled back sharply from record highs as profit-taking set in amid weak global cues and a cautious interest-rate outlook," Vikram Kasat, Head Advisory, PL Capital, said.

The BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.19 per cent and smallcap index ended flat marginally up by 0.05 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, realty dropped 1.02 per cent, followed by

consumer durables (0.56 per cent), services (0.45 per cent), telecommunication (0.27 per cent), FMCG (0.23 per cent) and oil & gas (0.13 per cent).

Auto jumped 0.80 per cent, metal (0.56 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.33 per cent), IT (0.28 per cent), and consumer discretionary (0.20 per cent).

India's manufacturing sector activity eased to a nine-month low in November, mainly owing to a softer rise in sales and production amid reports of challenging market conditions, a monthly report said on Monday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 56.6 in November from 59.2 in October, highlighting the slowest improvement in operating conditions since February.

Gross GST collection rose at a slower pace of 0.7 per cent in November at ₹ 1.70 lakh crore, as domestic revenues declined, according to the government data released on Monday.

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

Markets in Europe were trading lower. US markets ended higher on Friday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 3,795.72 crore on Friday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹ 4,148.48 crore, according to exchange data. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 1.96 per cent to USD 63.60 per barrel.

On Friday, the Sensex dipped by 13.71 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 85,706.67. The Nifty skidded 12.60 points or 0.05 per cent to 26,202.95. (PTI)

Power, mining, manufacturing drag IIP growth to over one-year low of 0.4 pc in Oct

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: India's industrial production growth slowed to an over one-year low of 0.4 per cent in October this year due to poor showing by power, mining and manufacturing sectors, according to official data released on Monday. Factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), expanded by 3.7 per cent in October 2024. The previous low was recorded as flat growth in September 2024. The National Statistics Office (NSO) revised the industrial production growth to 4.6 per cent for September 2025 from the provisional estimate of 4 per cent released last month.

The latest NSO data showed that the manufacturing sector's output growth decelerated to 1.8 per cent in October 2025 from 4.4 per cent in the year-ago month.

Mining production contracted by 1.8 per cent against a growth of 0.9 per cent recorded a year ago.

Power output contracted by 6.9 per cent in October 2025 compared to a 2 per cent expansion in the year-ago period. During the April-October period of FY26,

the country's industrial production growth decelerated by 2.7 per cent from 4 per cent in the same period a year ago.

Within the manufacturing sector, 9 out of 23 industry groups have recorded positive year-on-year growth in October 2025.

As per the use-based classification, the capital goods segment grew 2.4 per cent in October 2025, down from 2.9 per cent in the year-ago period.

Consumer durables (or white goods production) contracted 0.5 per cent during the reporting month compared to a 5.5 per cent growth in October 2024.

In October 2025, consumer non-durables output declined 4.4 per cent against a 2.8 per cent growth a year ago. Infrastructure/construction goods reported a 7.1 per cent expansion in October 2025, up from a 4.7 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.

The data also showed that the output of primary goods declined by 0.6 per cent in October 2025 compared to 2.5 per cent growth a year earlier. (PTI)

FM says Finance Ministry does not advise LIC on investments, Adani investments as per SOPs

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said her ministry does not issue advisory or directions to Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) regarding its investment decisions, and emphasised that the investments that the state-owned insurer made in Adani Group were as per established SOPs.

India's largest insurer has, over the years, made investment decisions across companies based on fundamentals and detailed due diligence. Following due diligence as per established standard operating procedures (SOPs), it has bought shares across half a dozen listed companies of Adani Group, whose book value stands at ₹ 38,658.85 crore and invested another ₹ 9,625.77 crore in debt instruments of the conglomerate.

"The Ministry of Finance does not issue any advisory/direction to LIC in connection with matters related to investment of LIC fund," she said in a written reply to a question in Lok Sabha.

The investment decisions of the state-owned insurer, she said, are taken by "LIC alone following strict due diligence, risk assessment and fiduciary compliance".

Such decisions are governed by the provisions of the Insurance Act, 1938, as well as regulations issued by Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) (wherever applicable) from time to time, she said.

In October, a report in The Washington Post alleged that finance ministry officials orchestrated a plan to steer LIC into investing in the Adani group earlier this year, when the ports-to-energy conglomerate was facing a debt pile and scrutiny in the US. The report highlighted LIC's May 2025 investment of USD 570 million (around ₹ 5,000 crore) in Adani Ports & SEZ (APSEZ).

Sitharaman said, "LIC has invested

₹ 5,000 crore in secured non-convertible debentures (NCD) issued by Adani Ports Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) in May 2025, after doing due diligence following established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as per their Board-approved policies." She went on to state that LIC has invested in the top 500 companies listed on NSE and BSE, and a major portion of its investment currently is in the larger companies out of these.

"Book value of LIC's investment in Nifty 50 companies, as on September 30, 2025, is ₹ 4,30,776.97 crore which is 45.85 per cent of its total equity investment," she said.

Detailing checks-and-balances that have been put in place, she said the investment functions of LIC are verified by concurrent auditors, statutory auditors, system auditors, internal financial control (IFC) auditors and internal vigilance team.

"Periodical inspections are also done by the sector regulator IRDAI in this regard," she said. "There is no direct oversight by the Government on investments made by LIC."

Detailing LIC's top investments, she said among the private firms, the insurer had the highest equity investment of ₹ 40,901.38 crore in Reliance Industries Ltd, followed by ₹ 38,846.33 crore in Infosys, ₹ 31,926.89 crore in Tata Consultancy Services, ₹ 31,664.69 crore in HDFC Bank and ₹ 30,133.49 crore in Hindustan Unilever.

Similarly, its biggest debt exposure in the private sector is with HDFC Bank where it has a total outstanding of ₹ 49,149.14 crore. It is followed by ₹ 14,012.34 crore in Reliance Industries, ₹ 13,435 crore in ICICI Bank, ₹ 11,075 crore in Shriram Finance and ₹ 9,625.77 crore in Adani Ports and SEZ Ltd.

Among the Adani Group firms, LIC has the highest exposure of ₹ 8,646.82 crore in CNG retailer Adani-Total Gas Ltd. This in LIC's overall investment exposure is ranked at 25th, she said. (PTI)

NAME CORRECTION

I, Narayan Ch Sahu, S/O: Late Kartik Sahu, a resident of Village: Sankar Basti, P.O-Sankardev Nagar, P.S-Lanka, District: Hojai, Assam do hereby solemnly affirm and declare via an affidavit executed before Executive Magistrate, Lumding, Hojai on 25-11-2025 that my actual and correct name is Narayan Ch Sahu, which is recorded in my Aadhaar Card vide No. 7140-0184-4359. But, in my Land documents of Sankar Basti Kissan under Lanka Revenue Circle Lanka Mouza vide Patta No. 17, Dag No. 371/631 my name is inadvertently recorded as Sri Narayan Sahu and in another land document of Sankar Basti Kissan vide Patta No. 247, Dag No. 735 and Patta No. 249 and Dag No. 737 my name has been inadvertently recorded as Sri Narayan Sahu, instead of my actual and correct name i.e Narayan Ch Sahu. I declare that Narayan Ch Sahu, Sri Narayan Sahu and Sri Narayan Sahu are the names of one and same person i.e Narayan Ch Sahu.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Fakharul Islam of the below mentioned address do hereby declare that my original and correct name is Fakharul Islam but in my Passport vide No. M8483296 my name has been recorded as Mohammed Fakharul Islam in place of Fakharul Islam. Both are the same and one person. This affidavit is signed before the Notary Public, Darrang, Mangaldai vide S1 No. 4116/25 dated: 30/09/2025 required to be produced before the authority concerned as a piece of evidence.

Sd/-

Fakharul Islam
SO- Akher Uddin Ahmed
RO- Jogipara, PO- Balabari
Dist- Darrang (Assam)

E-AUCTION PROGRAMME FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER, 2025

E-Auction programme for sale of Railway Scrap materials under jurisdiction of Lumding Division for the month of December, 2025 is hereby fixed as under:

SN	MONTH	DATE FIXED
1	December, 2025	09-12-2025, 16-12-2025 23-12-2025, 30-12-2025

Interested bidders may participate in E-auction through IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. Divisional Material Manager, Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers with a smile

ASSAM POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

BAMUNIMADAM, GUWAHATI - 781021

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

As per the provision of the EIA Notification dtd. 14.09.2006, the Public Hearing for the "Integrated Cement Plant with production capacity of Clinker (0.95 Million TPA), Cement (0.95 Million TPA- OPC, PPC, PSC, Composite Cement, PLC & LC3), WHRS (6 MW) and D.G. Set (2x500 KVA)" of M/s. JK Lakshmi Cement Limited, Umrangso, Vill: 19 Kilo, P.O.: Umrangso, Dist.: Dima Hasao, Assam, PIN: 788931 to be held as per following schedule:

Date & Time	Venue
30-12-2025 at 11:00 A.M.	At Football Play Ground near proposed location, Umrangso, Village 19Kilo, P.O.: Umrangso, Dist.: Dima Hasao, Assam, PIN: 788931

Interested persons of the locality including bonafide residents, NGOs, etc., are hereby requested to attend the aforesaid Public Hearing for getting their statements recorded, if any. Stakeholders may also send their views before the date of Public Hearing to the Member Secretary, APCB.

To know details of the proposed Project, interested person may collect the Executive Summary of Draft Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Report for the project, available at the following offices:

- The District Commissioner, Dima Hasao District, Halflong Assam - 788819, e-mail: dc-nchills@nic.in.
- M/s. JK Lakshmi Cement Limited, Umrangso, Vill: 19 Kilo, P.O.: Umrangso, Dist.: Dima Hasao, Assam, PIN: 788931.
- The Principal Secretary, N C Hills Autonomous Council, P.O.: Halflong

Nominations strengthen inclusive governance and community representation in BTC

Hagrama's BTC team welcomes six nominated members from diverse communities

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Dec 1: The Hagrama Mohilary-led Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) executive team has inducted six government-nominated members representing communities that did not participate in the recent council elections. Among them, youth leader Nandalal Manger from the Gorkha community, hailing from Runkhata in Chirang district has been sworn in as an Executive Member, bringing joy to the Gorkha community across Bodoland.

After taking oath at the BTC Legislative Assembly, Nandalal Manger expressed gratitude to Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary and assured that he would sincerely fulfill his responsibilities. He emphasised his commitment to uniting all communities, tribes and religions for the overall development of Bodoland and expressed confidence that BTC will witness 15



years of accelerated progress under Mohilary's leadership.

Similarly, Kameswar Roy from Fakiragram in Kokrajhar district, representing the

Koch-Rajbongshi community was nominated as an Executive Member. Roy, who previously served in the Kamatapur Autonomous Council (KAC), announced his resignation from KAC responsibilities and expressed his intent to work for the development of the Koch-Rajbongshi community as well as all communities in BTC.

The other nominated members include Hemprabha Devi, a GSP party advisor from Tangla Udalguri district, Ajay Kumar Kalita from the Kalita community Udalguri district, Ridip Kumar Deka from the Saraniya-Kachari community Baksa district and Ratan Chandra Rabha from the Rabha community.

The inclusion of these nominated members reinforces Hagrama Mohilary's commitment to inclusive governance, ensuring representation for all communities and fostering development across the Bodoland Territorial Council.

Bijit Gara Narzary elected Deputy Speaker of BTCLA

BJP MCLA unanimously chosen during Winter Session in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Dec 1: Bijit Gara Narzary, BJP MCLA from Darangajuli constituency in Tamulpur district, was unanimously elected as the Deputy Speaker of the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly (BTCLA) on Monday. The announcement came during the ongoing Winter Session of the BTC Legislative Assembly, held at the BTCLA Hall, Bodofa Nwgrw in Kokrajhar.

The BPF-led BTC government also declared the six nominated MCLAs representing unrepresented communities in the BTCLA. The nominated members are Kameswar Ray, Nandalal Magar, Ridip Kumar Deka, Ratan Chandra Rabha, Hemprabha Devi and Ajay Kumar Hazarika.

Hagrama Mohilary-led BTC government had earlier formed the administration on October 5, 2025, securing a majority with 28 seats out of the 40-member BTCLA house.



Social worker Narayan Prasad Goutam passes away

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Dec 1: Narayan Prasad Goutam, a retired teacher and well-known social worker from Samar Dalani, passed away on Monday at his residence due to age-related ailments. He was 83. Goutam retired as an assistant teacher from Naduar ME Madrasa, now Naduar High School in 2010. He was actively involved with several socio-cultural organisations in the greater Samar Dalani area, earning respect and admiration from the community. His demise has been widely mourned locally. He is survived by his wife, three sons, a daughter and numerous relatives.

NFR adds Pencharthal stop for Agartala-Silchar Express

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 1: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has introduced a new stoppage for Train No 15663/15664 Agartala-Silchar-Agartala Express at Pencharthal (PEC) Railway Station in Tripura, enhancing travel convenience and strengthening regional connectivity. The inaugural flagging-off ceremony took place on Monday at Pencharthal Railway Station, attended by Santana Chakma, Minister for Industries & Commerce, Government of Tripura, along with senior railway officials.

Under the new schedule, Train No 15663 (Agartala-Silchar) will halt at Pencharthal from 14:01 to 14:03 hours, while Train No 15664 (Silchar-Agartala) will stop from 13:13 to 13:15 hours. The addition of this halt is expected to provide smoother travel options, improve access to rail services and enhance connectivity to key destinations for passengers in North Tripura and surrounding areas.

NRL trains 60 Assam youths for energy sector jobs

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Dec 1: Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) has provided specialised skill development training to over 60 youths from Assam to prepare them for employment opportunities in India's rapidly expanding energy sector.

According to NRL officials, the initiative is designed as a six-month residential training programme conducted in two batches of three months each. The first batch ran from September 1 to November 30, 2025, while the second began on December 1 and will conclude on February 28, 2026. The project aims to address the critical skill shortage in the piped natural gas distribution ecosystem and offer meaningful career pathways for under-resourced and marginalised youth.

Officials said the programme begins with two months of classroom instruction followed by hands-on technical training, enabling trainees to contribute to local economies and support sustainable community growth. The need for such initiatives is underscored by India's natural gas network, which as of March 2025 spans more than 34,000 km and serves over 15.3 million domestic connections. Despite this expansion, less than 1% of plumbers in the country are formally trained to work with gas distribution systems, while the sector requires more than 1.2 million skilled technicians.

The programme is supported through NRL's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives and is implemented in partnership with ITI Majuli, which provides the training infrastructure and internship opportunities. The effort aligns with national skill development missions such as Skill India and reflects a growing trend of

corporate engagement in workforce development. MMGLD, the project's coordinating organisation, oversees training logistics, documentation and outreach. It has envisioned the initiative as a pilot that can be scaled up to deliver long-term regional benefits.

Beyond employability, the programme aims to advance cleaner and safer energy access while empowering graduates to contribute to community upliftment through entrepreneurship and local development. The inclusive training model supports youth in breaking cycles of limited opportunity and economic stagnation.

Aligned with India's broader energy and economic goals, the initiative demonstrates how CSR partnerships can catalyse socio-economic transformation by building a skilled, resilient workforce prepared for future challenges.

Howraghat MLA inspects new tribal hostel construction

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Dec 1: In a focused drive toward enhancing educational infrastructure, Howraghat MLA Darsing Ronghang on Saturday conducted an on-site inspection of the 50-bedded Assam-type hostel buildings under construction at Karkok Higher Secondary School. The project is part of the "Dhartii Abha Janjatiya Utkarsh Gram Yojana" of Samagra Shiksha, Assam, aimed at providing safe and modern residential facilities for students from tribal and rural communities.

During the inspection, the MLA closely examined the construction progress, reviewing foundational works, structural layout and adherence to technical standards. He instructed the contractor to rectify and strengthen the foundation in strict accordance with the

approved engineering plans to ensure durability and safety for decades.

Speaking to officials at the site, Ronghang stressed the importance of high-quality workmanship in projects meant for students' welfare. He reaffirmed his commitment to transparency, accountability and long-term planning in all developmental initiatives.

"This hostel will be a crucial support system for our students," Ronghang said, adding that the infrastructure must be safe, durable and truly beneficial for the communities.

The inspection highlights the MLA's proactive approach in ensuring that government schemes translate into tangible benefits, reflecting Karbi Anglong's ongoing push toward improved educational facilities and brighter opportunities for youth.

AKRASU rejects govt announcement on ST status

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Dec 1: The Asom Koch Rajbongshi Students' Union (AKRASU) has criticised the BJP-AGP government's statement in the Assembly on November 29 regarding the proposal to grant Scheduled Tribe status to six communities, including the Koch Rajbongshi.

Addressing a press meet, AKRASU Upper and Middle Assam secretary Sankar Dutta said the announcement was nothing more than a "lollipop" and not a genuine solution to the community's long-standing demand. He asserted that the union would never accept any division of the community into plains, valley or hills categories.

Dutta alleged that the proposal on ST status was not given due importance in the Assembly session and accused the state government of pursuing a divisive policy. He warned that the community would respond "in ample measure" in the next general elections.

Journalist Saidul Islam dies of heart attack during Sikkim tour

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Dec 1: Saidul Islam, a journalist and correspondent for the Assamese daily 'Gana Adhikar', passed away due to a heart attack while on a media tour organised by the District Information & Public Relations (DIPR, Hills), Diphu, Karbi Anglong.

The incident occurred in Gangtok, Sikkim, where Islam complained of uneasiness during sightseeing at a Buddhist monastery. He was immediately taken to the SPNM government-run hospital, but doctors declared him dead around 11:45 AM.

Islam, a resident of Rongnibang Pathar, Diphu also contributed to digital news outlets including ETV Bharat, Assam Times Post and was the founder of Hills Views Today. He was part of a four-day media tour comprising 26 journalists and accompanied by three DIPR officials. The tour, which began on November 29, has been cut short following his sudden demise with arrangements underway to return his body to Diphu by December 2.

Tribal students protest Assam Cabinet's ST status decision



HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Dec 1: Hundreds of tribal students took out a massive torchlight procession in West Karbi Anglong district on Saturday evening, opposing the Assam Cabinet's recommendation to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six populous communities — Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Motok, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (Adivasis).

The protest was organised under the banners of Karbi Students' Association (KSA), Garo Students' Union (GSU), All Tiwa Students' Union (ATSU) and other tribal organisations. Participants warned that the inclusion of these numerically strong communities could undermine the constitutional safeguards for existing smaller hill tribes and intensify competition for limited reservation benefits in education and employment.

Similar demonstrations have been reported across the state following the public release of the Group of Ministers (GoM) reports favouring ST status for the six communities.

In response, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma stated that the state government will soon hold detailed discussions with representatives of all protesting organisations to address their concerns and ensure an amicable resolution.

Deputy Speaker joins traditional harvest ceremony in native village

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Dec 1: In a vibrant celebration of Assamese culture and agricultural tradition, Dr Numal Momin, Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, participated in a traditional harvest-cutting ceremony in his native village on Saturday. The event brought together villagers, farmers, elders and youths to mark the season of abundance with gratitude and unity.

Dr Momin took part in the ceremonial cutting of the first sheaves of paddy, a ritual symbolising prosperity, hard work and the enduring bond between the people and their land. His presence was warmly received by the farming community, who expressed joy at seeing their representative engage personally in this meaningful tradition.

Following the ceremony, Dr Momin shared a traditional Assamese lunch with the villagers, fostering camaraderie and reinforcing the spirit of togetherness. A notable highlight of the gathering was the serving of pomelo (robab tenga), enjoyed amid laughter, storytelling and nostalgic conversations.

Addressing the community, the Deputy Speaker praised the farmers for their dedication and highlighted the importance of agriculture as the backbone of Assam's identity. He noted that preserving such customs not only honours tradition but also strengthens social harmony within the village.

The event concluded with a sense of cultural pride and collective bonding, celebrating both the harvest and the heritage that sustains it.

World AIDS Day observed

Awareness programme highlights prevention, stigma reduction and community health

HT Correspondent

HOJAL, Dec 1: SOS Children's Village Hojal observed World AIDS Day across its Family Strengthening (FS) Clusters, including Dhanuhar Basti, Hira Basti, Milk Basti and Hawaipur with a series of awareness-raising activities aimed at educating children and the community about HIV/AIDS, its transmission and preventive measures.

A key feature of the day was a mass rally organised by Bal Panchayat children and community members, who carried placards bearing informative messages and slogans on HIV/AIDS awareness. The event also included a street play by SRISTI, a social action cultural group from Guwahati, highlighting HIV prevention and safe practices.

The program provided information on essential resources such as Integrated Counselling and Testing Centres (ICTCs), Red Ribbon Clinics, free medications, transportation assistance and social security schemes available for people living with HIV (PLWHIV). Attendees were also informed about the toll-free helpline 1097 for guidance and support. An awareness session in collaboration with FRU Hojal featured ICTC Counsellor Nayanmoni Barua as the resource person.

A drawing competition was held to engage children creatively, with winners awarded tokens of recognition to commemorate the day. The event was coordinated by the Animators and Tutors of the FS Clusters, under the supervision of the FS Team of SOS Children's Village Hojal.

Through these initiatives, SOS Children's Village Hojal reaffirmed its commitment to empowering the community with knowledge and resources, fostering a safe, informed and supportive environment for children and adults to prevent and manage HIV/AIDS.

Our Nagaon Correspondent adds: Gopinath Deb Goswami Commerce College marked World AIDS Day with an awareness programme and cultural activities on campus. The event, held in the college auditorium was inaugurated by Principal Dr Mriganka Saikia, who highlighted the significance of World AIDS Day and its impact on youth, while ad-



vising students on preventive measures.

Counselor Mayuri Barkataki from Nagaon Medical College and Hospital spoke on the modes of transmission of HIV/AIDS and emphasised the importance of empathy and support for affected individuals. She urged students to actively spread awareness about the disease in their communities.

The programme saw participation from NCC and NSS volunteers, student union members and faculty. The Red Ribbon Club, coordinated by teacher Bhupesh Tumung, organised a painting competition in connection with the observance, where students displayed their artistic talents. Winners were awarded prizes by the college authorities.

Our Sivasagar Correspondent adds: Bir Lachit Borphukan (BLB) College in association with Nava Uditia Samaj, observed World AIDS Day with an awareness meeting for students and faculty.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Sugata Shyam of Hiteswar Saikia Civil Hospital explained that the day has been observed globally since 1988 to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. He highlighted that the disease can result from unprotected sexual activity, use of infected syringes, blood transfusions and other causes. Dr Shyam reassured attendees that infection is not a death sentence, as modern medicine and preventive measures can help infected individuals live longer, healthier lives.

Farid Islam Hazarika of Nava Uditia Samaj spoke on social factors such as early marriage and human trafficking, which can exacerbate the spread of AIDS. Earlier, BLB College Prin-

icipal Dr Pankajyoti Hazarika and Dr Simanta Barua also addressed the participants, emphasising the importance of awareness, prevention and responsible behaviour.

Our Jagiroad Correspondent adds: Jagiroad College (Autonomous) observed World AIDS Day with an awareness programme organised by the Red Ribbon Club in collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC).

The event began with a welcome address by Red Ribbon Club Coordinator Om Prakash Deka, Assistant Professor of Hindi, who highlighted the significance of World AIDS Day and the global need for awareness and solidarity.

Dr Lipika Boruah, Assistant Professor of Education, delivered a detailed talk on HIV/AIDS, covering its meaning, modes of transmission, common myths, preventive measures and the 2025 World AIDS Day theme, "Overcoming disruption, transforming the AIDS response." She emphasised that collective efforts, accurate information and proactive health practices can reduce stigma and build an informed community.

IQAC Coordinator Dr Chittaranjan Sarkar addressed the audience on the importance of personal hygiene, wellness and self-care, explaining how cleanliness at home in institutions and in the broader community contributes to public health.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Om Prakash Deka, who expressed gratitude to the participants and resource persons and prayed for greater awareness, compassion and sensitisation towards HIV/AIDS.



the incident as an emotional reaction by young generations regarding ST issues and called for a thorough investigation.

UPPL General Secretary Raju Kumar Narzary echoed the denial, stating that the unrest was driven by students from the General-Z generation and emphasised the need for accountability in security lapses at the highly guarded As-

sembly and Secretariat premises. Narzary urged all individuals and groups to exercise their democratic rights peacefully, stressing that while protests are legitimate, peace must be maintained. He appealed to all parties to respect each other's sentiments and prioritise coexistence, declaring, "Peace is non-negotiable. Please give peace a chance always."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Courage is found in unlikely places.
—J. R. R. Tolkien

IMF report and Indian economy

International Monetary Fund's latest country level consultations with India reveal a flattering picture of the state of the economy. The executive directors have submitted their consultation report to the government, along with their recommendations for the government and its economic managers. Two observations stand out from the IMF's review and recommendations which deserve careful consideration. First, IMF has noted the government's plan for fiscal condition, but underlined the importance of expenditure monitor and review. Secondly, while noting that the Indian financial sector is robust and generally stable, there is one area of vulnerability, that is, the critical weaknesses of the large and expanding non-banking financial sector. IMF report points out: "Directors highlighted that India's financial system has been sound, supported by strong capital and liquidity positions." However, the IMF economists urged "the authorities to mitigate vulnerabilities among nonbank financial institutions and cautiously monitor risks from concentration and rising financial sector interconnectedness." Some of the recent incidents of connected non-banking financial institutions underline the urgency of addressing the issue. A sound piece of advice seems to be its words of caution on expenditure of the government. Expenditure control and monitoring of the quality and returns from public expenditure is a critical aspect of management of government finances.

While commending the government's plans for fiscal consolidation, the IMF directors have suggested "achievement of the fiscal deficit target will require strong spending discipline." This is a universal truth. A rupee in an individual's pocket is much more productive and is spent far more cautiously than in the coffers of the government. As usual, they have harped on further "structural reforms" as a requisite policy initiative for continued robust growth and achieving the country's objective of achieving a developed economy status by 2047. IMF has not done much by way of spelling out a package of reform measures, apart from general observations like continuing with the objective of fiscal consolidation and watching out for the effect of lowering of GST and income tax rates on the overall level government revenues.

Reading IMF reports now a days is such a departure from its earlier stance of policy packages. IMF, for example, has underlined the greater need for social security, which used to be an anathema for it previously. It has also urged intentions in the foreign exchange markets to contain "disorderly" conditions and speculative overhand. There was a time when interventions in foreign exchange markets to bring about stability used to be scoffed at by IMF economists. These were after all interferences with the operations of the free markets. And after all, the foreign exchange market was the holy grail of all free markets. Anyway, leaving aside these ideological or prescriptive areas, the overall review brings out some striking areas of strengths of the Indian economy.

A simpler way to stay fit

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



During a hillside picnic years ago, my friend Dr Divay Mangla, a senior psychiatrist, shared an insight that changed how I understood fitness. He said, "Seventy per cent of illnesses are mental and can be controlled easily. Only thirty per cent truly require medical intervention." That one statement opened a door in my mind. I later learnt that this field is called psychosomatic science. It studies how thoughts, emotions, and stress patterns influence physical health.

Psychosomatic disorders are conditions where mental factors such as anxiety, fear, or emotional distress manifest as physical symptoms. These symptoms can include headaches, high blood pressure, digestive issues, chronic fatigue, and unexplained pain. Modern medicine focuses on curing diseases. Psychosomatic awareness focuses on preventing them. It reminds us that before any illness appears in the body, it first passes through the mind.

Sadhguru of the Isha Foundation explains this from a spiritual and scientific lens. He says that the human body is not built for falling sick. If we eat the right food, breathe consciously, and maintain a balance between body, mind, and energy, around seventy percent of diseases simply will not occur. The remaining ones can be treated with proper medical support. He also says that the belief that "diseases are normal for human beings" has been reinforced by market forces.

In my personal observation, health can be cultivated naturally by following what I call the Bliss Fitness Philosophy. It does not depend on strict gym routines or expensive diets. It begins with early mornings and gentle discipline. When you wake up at five in the morning, take deep breaths, and sit for a few minutes in meditation, you welcome clarity into your system. Gratitude calms the nervous system. Light stretches activate circulation. Mindful eating keeps digestion smooth. Many experts now support the idea of eating only when hunger is real and avoiding heavy meals after sunset.

Movement is the next medicine. A dietician once told me, "Keep your body moving all day long, doing various things. You do not need to go to the gym." Simple daily actions like climbing stairs, walking, cooking, watering plants, cleaning your room, or rearranging your workspace keep the body alive. These movements seem ordinary, yet they keep the body flexible and prevent stiffness.

This form of natural movement therapy is often ignored in a world that equates fitness with extreme workouts. But the human body evolved through natural movement. Our ancestors stayed fit by doing daily tasks. They walked long distances. They lifted, carried, bent, and stretched as part of life. Their bodies stayed strong through consistency rather than targeted training.

The Bliss Fitness Routine is a reminder to return to this original design. It encourages deep breathing, gentle meditation, gratitude, stretches, natural movement, and mindful eating. These are small practices, yet their impact is profound. They influence mental clarity, emotional stability, and physical strength.

Science supports this approach. Studies show that deep breathing reduces cortisol. Meditation lowers heart rate and improves immunity. Gratitude strengthens emotional well-being. Light movement improves blood flow. Mindful eating enhances gut health, which influences the mind through the gut-brain connection. These pieces form a cycle that supports long-term health.

True health is measured by how you feel. It is the ease in your breath, the silence in your mind, and the lightness in your body. It is the ability to sleep well, digest well, and move without pain. When the mind is peaceful, the body listens. When the body is active, the mind becomes more relaxed. This two-way harmony is the foundation of the Bliss Fitness Philosophy. It is not a set of strict rules. It is a way of living that aligns with nature. If you breathe deeply, think lightly, move gently, and eat mindfully, the body takes care of the rest.

The role of Swargadeu Chaolung Sukapha in the making of greater Assam

In the first half of the thirteenth century, Swargadeu Chaolung Sukapha arrived at the eastern end of the Brahmaputra valley. He was an epoch-making personality whose advent was not merely a political event, but rather a golden chapter in the fusion of a vast migratory wave from Southeast Asia with the indigenous culture and traditions of the region. The geographical and mental unity that we today perceive when we speak of "Greater Assam" owes its real form to this great man. To describe his contribution merely as the establishment of a kingdom or the history of a dynasty would be an understatement; his vision was enriched with an extraordinary testament to humanity, coexistence, and synthesis. At a historical juncture when the Brahmaputra valley lay fragmented into numerous small groups and principalities, Sukapha's arrival, like a gigantic banyan tree, began the process of providing shade and bringing everyone together under one canopy.

Sukapha's journey across the Patkai mountains and his entry into the Somaar region was no ordinary expedition. The historic moment of 1228 CE marked the very birth of the Assamese national identity. Leaving his ancestral kingdom of Mao-Lung in search of a new land, Sukapha's migration was the pinnacle of courage and endurance. For the nine thousand followers who accompanied him, he was not only a king but also a guide and guardian. The leadership he displayed while crossing impassable hills, plains, rivers, and dense forests testifies to the firmness of his character. Throughout this long journey he did not merely discover new places; at every step he gathered fresh experiences in statecraft and society-building. Sukapha understood that a new kingdom could not be built by the strength of the sword alone; it required careful planning and a mindset capable of adapting to the local environment. Therefore, wherever he camped, he studied the nature of the land and the temperament of its people. This power of observation was one of his strongest qualities and later helped him immensely in policy-making.

After entering the Brahmaputra valley, Sukapha's greatest challenge was to win the trust and confidence of the indigenous communities. At that time, various ethnic groups such as the Morans, Barahis, Kacharis, and Nagas lived according to their own customs. With remarkable sagacity he noticed an inherent simplicity and hospitality among them. Instead of adopting an ag-

gressive policy, he chose the path of friendship and integration. His philosophy stood in stark contrast to that of most contemporary conquerors. While conquerors generally subdued local populations to extend their dominion, Sukapha embraced the indigenous people and became one with them. He forged bonds of friendship with local chieftains and preserved their dignity intact. He employed this approach not merely as a political tactic but sincerely believed that a lasting kingdom could not be built without the cooperation of all. This sincerity won the hearts of the Morans and Barahis, who voluntarily accepted his leadership.

The establishment of marital alliances formed a vital step in Sukapha's creation of Greater Assam. He encouraged his followers to marry local women and himself wedded daughters of local royalty. These marriages removed the barrier between ruler and ruled. Blood ties created an emotional bond between the two sides. As a result, the Tai people gradually became part of local society, and the indigenous population ceased to regard them as foreigners. This process of assimilation was so natural and smooth that within a few years a new national identity emerged, the one we today call the Assamese nation. Sukapha never tried to impose Tai culture. On the contrary, he adopted the best elements of local culture and generously shared his own cultural components. The exchange gave birth to a composite culture that later became the foundation of Assamese civilisation.

Another remarkable contribution of Sukapha was the radical transformation he brought about in the agrarian economy. The advanced agricultural techniques and irrigation systems he introduced with him triggered a revolution in Assam's economy. By introducing wet-rice cultivation in the fertile soils of the foothills and riverbanks, he laid the foundation of permanent agriculture. Before his arrival, local communities mainly practised shifting or jhum cultivation, which forced them to change settlements frequently. Wet-rice cultivation compelled people to settle permanently in one place, leading to the orderly development of villages and social structures. Food security brought population growth and raised living standards. Economic self-sufficiency strengthened the kingdom and brought contentment among the subjects. Sukapha himself worked in the fields, thereby establishing the

dignity of labour. Seeing their king hold the plough inspired the people, and they accepted agriculture as an honourable profession. This agricultural revolution became the key to the long-term stability of the Ahom kingdom.

Sukapha's system of governance was enriched with democratic values. Although he was king, he did not rule autocratically or arbitrarily. He administered the kingdom with the counsel of two chief ministers known as Buragohain and Borgohain and sought their advice on important decisions. This council system ensured decentralisation of power in administration. He assigned responsibilities according to individual merit and sowed the seeds of the scientifically organised paikan system. During his reign justice was equal for all. He was strict yet impartial in punishing the guilty and protecting the innocent. His sense of justice earned him the reverence and devotion of his subjects. The administrative framework he created was so strong that it sustained the Ahom kingdom for the next six hundred years. Linguistic liberalism was a shining facet of Sukapha's personality. Although his people spoke the Tai language, they re-

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

pected local tongues. Over time, Assamese replaced Tai as the language of the court and the link language. This change was not imposed; it happened naturally. Sukapha realised that to connect with the masses he had to speak their language. Consequently, Ahom rulers embraced Assamese and patronised its development. This enabled the Assamese language and literature to acquire a distinct identity. His far-sighted policy facilitated communication among diverse linguistic communities and helped forge a common linguistic identity. The contribution of his liberal approach to the evolution of the Assamese language we speak today remains undeniable.

By initiating the tradition of writing Buranjis, Sukapha endowed the Assamese nation with historical consciousness. He directed that every significant and insignificant event of the kingdom, royal activities, wars, and social systems be recorded. This directive gave rise to a vast treasury of Buranji literature in Assam. At a time when most parts of India paid little attention to historiography, the emergence of such a scientific historical tradition in Assam was truly remarkable. It is through these Buranjis that we

can today access accurate information about our past. Sukapha understood that a nation ignorant of its past has a dark future. Hence he placed immense importance on preserving knowledge. Buranji writing was not mere royal pageantry; it was a quest for truth and compilation of facts. These chronicles provided the Assamese nation with an intellectual foundation.

Sukapha's religious policy rested upon absolute tolerance and respect. He himself worshipped his ancestors and Tai deities, yet he never interfered with the religious beliefs of local people. Instead, he made donations to local shrines and temples and participated in indigenous rituals. The practice of erecting maidams at Charaideo and Tai deity worship coexisted with local customs. This secular outlook helped maintain communal harmony. Sukapha believed that religion was a personal matter, whereas the kingdom belonged to everyone. Religion therefore never hindered state affairs. His philosophy created a favourable environment even when Srimanta Sankardeva later propagated Neo-Vaishnavism. The tradition of peaceful coexistence among people of different faiths that developed in Assam has its roots in Sukapha's liberal religious policy.

In matters of territorial integrity and kingdom expansion, Sukapha followed the principle popularly described as "uniting seven kingdoms into one". This meant consolidating numerous small principalities into a greater realm. Yet this unification was not achieved through force alone. He first extended the hand of friendship and attempted peaceful resolution. Those who accepted his suzerainty were granted due honour. He never humiliated defeated kings or oppressed their subjects but integrated them into the Ahom administration. Sukapha well understood the importance of Assam's riverine geography. He utilised the Brahmaputra and its tributaries for transport and trade. For the kingdom's defence he constructed strategic outposts and forts. His military strategy was highly modern and scientific.

In Sukapha's personality we discover a compassionate human being. He remained aware of his subjects' joys and sorrows and stood by them in times of calamity. During floods or famines relief was provided from royal granaries. For him kingship was not indulgence but a grave responsibility. He felt that if his subjects suffered, royal happiness had no meaning. This sensitivity elevated him to divine status in popular esteem. People did not

merely fear or respect him; they loved him from the heart. For a ruler there can be no greater reward. Sukapha's philosophy of life was a blend of simplicity and lofty ideals. He harboured no desire for palaces or grandeur; his only aspiration was to build a happy and prosperous society.

In today's Assam, whenever we face various problems, whenever we hear discordant notes among ethnic communities, Sukapha's ideals serve as our guiding light. He demonstrated that unity is possible amid diversity. He taught that tolerance and understanding are the bedrock of social stability. Sukapha's Assam was not meant for a handful of people; it was for every individual living on this soil. His concept of "Greater Assam" calls us to rise above narrowness. If we truly respect Sukapha, we must put into practice his message of synthesis.

Another vital aspect of Sukapha's contribution was bestowing a distinct identity upon Assam. Although different theories exist regarding the origin of the name "Assam", it was during Ahom rule that this land acquired a unique political and cultural identity. Many believe the word "Assam" derives from "Ahom". Whatever the case, the credit for uniting this territory and placing it on the world map belongs to Sukapha. The empire built under his leadership repeatedly defeated mighty powers such as the Mughals. Behind Lachit Borphukan's valour at Saraighat lay the strong foundation and national consciousness that Sukapha had created. Had Sukapha not united diverse communities on that fateful day, resisting the vast Mughal armies later would have been impossible. Thus his contribution, albeit indirect, to preserving Assam's independence and sovereignty remains unquestionable.

In conclusion, it can be said that Swargadeu Chaolung Sukapha was the father of the Assamese nation and the architect of Greater Assam. His wisdom, sacrifice, and love for humanity are unparalleled. He was not merely a king; he was a great social reformer and cultural pioneer. Every action of his life teaches us unity and harmony. Modern Assam stands today upon the foundation he laid. We observe 2 December as "Assam Day" or "Sukapha Day" to pay homage to him. Yet homage on a single day cannot repay our debt to him. True tribute will be rendered only when we march along the path he showed us and, irrespective of caste, creed, or ethnicity, together build a prosperous and peaceful Greater Assam. Keeping alive in reality the Assam of Sukapha's dreams must be the resolve of every Assamese.

Chaolung Sukapha: Founder of the Ahom Kingdom

By: Satyabrata Borah

Chaolung Sukapha, revered in Assamese history as the founder of the Ahom kingdom, was a prince of the Shan tribe who left the verdant hills of present-day northern Myanmar in the early thirteenth century and, after years of wandering and warfare, established a state that would endure for six centuries in the Brahmaputra valley. Born around 1189 at Mong Mao, a powerful Tai-Shan principality on the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy, Sukapha belonged to the royal line of the great Tai chieftain Khunlung and Khunlai, the legendary ancestors who, according to Shan and Ahom chronicles, had descended from heaven. His childhood name was Chao Chao Pha Phu Chao Ti Ying, but upon ascending to leadership he took the title Swargadeu, meaning "Lord of the Heavens," a name that later generations rendered as Sukapha.

The decision to leave Mong Mao was not born of mere adventure. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, the once-mighty kingdom had begun to fracture under internal strife and external pressure. Succession disputes, the growing power of neighboring kingdoms, and perhaps the memory of ancestral migrations westward all combined to convince Sukapha that the future of his people lay beyond the Patkai mountains. In the year 1219, according to some traditional Ahom Buranji chronicles, or more commonly accepted as 1228, Sukapha set forth with a modest but determined retinue. The party consisted of about nine thousand followers, including two hundred horses, three hundred priests and nobles, ordinary soldiers, artisans, and most crucially, members of the royal family and the priestly clans of Deodhai and Bailung who carried with them the sacred ancestral tablets and the copper-plated royal genealogies.

Accompanying him were his chief queen, his two sons Khenung and Khunlai, several lesser wives, and elephants laden with grain, tools, and the ritual objects necessary for establishing a new kingdom. Among the most important possessions were the pair of golden umbrellas that symbolized sovereignty and the sacred Somdeo, a representation of the supreme deity. The march across the rugged Patkai range was arduous. Dense forests, swollen rivers, and hostile Naga tribes slowed their progress. Many perished from disease, exhaustion, and skirmishes. Yet Sukapha pressed on, guided by the belief that the land beyond the mountains had been promised to his ancestors by the god Lengdon.

After thirteen years of wandering, battling local tribes and searching for a suitable place to settle, Sukapha finally reached the fertile plains of the Brahmaputra valley in 1240. The region was then inhabited by Morans, Barahis, and other tribal groups who practiced shifting cultivation and lived in small chiefdoms. Sukapha first established a temporary capital at Chemun, near the present-day town of Jorhat, but soon moved to the banks of the Dihing river. The site he chose for his permanent capital was at the foot of the hills where the Dihing and Dikhow rivers met, a place he named Chetang Borgohain, later known simply as Charaideo, meaning "the shining city on the hill." Here, in 1253, he built a palace of bamboo and thatch and laid the

foundations of what would become one of the longest-lasting kingdoms in Indian history.

Sukapha's greatest contribution was not merely military conquest but the creation of a durable political and social system that allowed a small band of immigrants to establish dominion over a much larger indigenous population without destroying local cultures. He adopted a policy of conciliation and assimilation rather than annihilation. The Morans and Barahis were not driven out; instead, many were absorbed into the Ahom fold. Sukapha married local princesses, the most famous being the Moran girl Nang Borg Konwari and the Borahi princess Nang Simung Mung Ri. Their descendants formed powerful clans within the Ahom nobility. This practice of intermarriage continued for generations, gradually transforming the Ahom elite into a mixed Tai-Aboriginal aristocracy.

He reorganized the administration along Tai lines while adapting to local conditions. The kingdom was divided into territorial units called khels or phoids, each under an officer responsible for supplying a fixed number of paiks, the able-bodied male population who owed labor and military service to the state. Every adult male between sixteen and fifty was registered as a paik and served the king for part of the year in agriculture, construction, or war. In return, he was allotted land for personal cultivation. This paik system, refined over centuries, became the economic backbone of the Ahom state, enabling it to mobilize massive labor forces for wet-rice cultivation, embankment building, and prolonged military campaigns.

Sukapha introduced wet-rice cultivation on a large scale, transforming the marshy floodplains into productive agricultural land. The construction of embankments and tanks, the digging of canals, and the systematic settlement of villages laid the groundwork for the prosperous agrarian economy that sustained the kingdom. He brought with him the sophisticated Tai knowledge of bronze casting, silk weaving, and manuscript writing on bark, skills that enriched the material culture of Assam.

Religiously, Sukapha maintained the ancestral Tai worship of Pha Tu Ying, the supreme god, and the Chumphi deities, but he showed remarkable tolerance toward the beliefs of the indigenous people. He allowed the tribal priests to continue their rituals and even incorporated some local deities into the Ahom pantheon. The sacred hill of Charaideo became the burial ground of Ahom kings, where maidens known as the Kunworis were interred alive with the deceased monarch, a custom borrowed from the local tribes but later abandoned.

Militarily, Sukapha laid down principles that would serve the Ahoms well for centuries. He emphasized guerrilla tactics suited to the terrain of rivers, jungles, and hills. The use of war boats on the Brahmaputra, the construction of stockades, and the employment of war elephants became hallmarks of Ahom warfare. Even in his lifetime, Sukapha faced challenges from the Nagas in the hills and the Chutiyas and Kacharis to the north and south, but he avoided large-scale confrontations, preferring diplomacy when possible and swift punitive expeditions when necessary.

By the time of his death in 1268, at the age of seventy-

nine, Sukapha had created a stable kingdom stretching from the Patkai in the east to the Dikhow river in the west. He had appointed his younger son Khunlai as his successor, bypassing the elder Khenung who had shown less interest in administration. On his deathbed, Sukapha is said to have advised his nobles: "Do not oppress the people. Rule with justice and compassion. The kingdom is not mine alone but belongs to all who live in it." He was buried with great ceremony at Charaideo, and the mound raised over his grave became the first of the famous maidams, the royal burial vaults that still stand as silent witnesses to Ahom glory.

The kingdom Sukapha founded grew steadily under his successors. Within a century, the Ahoms had absorbed the Chutiyas kingdom and extended their sway to the borders of Kamrup. By the sixteenth century, they were strong enough to repel repeated invasions by the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughals, inflicting on the latter some of the most humiliating defeats in Mughal history, including the battle of Saraighat in 1671. The Ahom state lasted until 1826, when it finally succumbed to Burmese invasion and British annexation, making it the longest unbroken reign of any dynasty in the Indian subcontinent after the imperial Guptas. Sukapha's legacy lies not only in territorial conquest but in the creation of a composite culture. The Assamese language that emerged in the medieval period owes much to the interaction between the Tai-Ahom tongue and the indigenous Austroasiatic and Tibeto-Burman languages. The Bihu festival, the distinctive Assamese gamusa towel, the manuscript tradition on sanchi bark, and the satras of Vaishnavism that later flourished under royal patronage all bear traces of the cultural synthesis initiated by Sukapha. Even the name "Assam" itself is believed to derive from the Ahom word "Asama," meaning "unequaled" or "peerless," which the Ahoms applied to their kingdom.

Every year on the first day of the Assamese month of Kati, the people of Assam observe Sukapha Divas, paying homage to the man who crossed mountains with a handful of followers and gave them a homeland. Statues of Sukapha on horseback stand in Guwahati and Charaideo, and the great maidam at Charaideo has been declared a World Heritage site. Historians debate the exact dates and details of his journey, but none dispute his central role in shaping the destiny of the Brahmaputra valley.

Sukapha was neither a world conqueror like Alexander nor a lawgiver like Hammurabi, yet in the quiet persistence with which he built a kingdom that lasted six hundred years, in the wisdom with which he blended conquest with conciliation, and in the enduring institutions he created, he stands as one of the most remarkable state-builders in Asian history. From a wandering prince with nine thousand followers to the founder of a kingdom that defied empires, Sukapha's life embodies the truth that great nations are often born not in the thunder of decisive battles but in the patient labor of those who plant rice, build dikes, marry across tribes, and teach their children to remember where they came from and why they must stay together. In the long chronicle of Assam, no name shines brighter than that of Chaolung Sukapha, the heaven-sent tiger who made the wilderness bloom.

Jane Austen and the Art of Empathy

The cognitive benefits of engaging with literature like Austen's have been substantiated by research. A 2013 study published in the journal Science explored how reading literary fiction enhances theory of mind. The researchers, David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano, conducted experiments comparing the effects of reading literary fiction, popular fiction, nonfiction, and no reading at all. They found that literary fiction, characterized by complex characters and ambiguous motivations, significantly improved participants' performance on tasks measuring empathy and social perception. Unlike popular fiction, which often relies on predictable plots and straightforward character motivations, literary fiction like Austen's demands active interpretation. Readers must infer characters' intentions from subtle hints and navigate the gaps between what characters say, think, and do. This process mirrors the mental work required to understand real people, making literary fiction a powerful tool for strengthening mindreading skills

By: Satyabrata Borah

Jane Austen's novels, with their intricate social dynamics and keen psychological insight, offer readers more than just engaging stories; they serve as a training ground for sharpening cognitive abilities, particularly the skill known as theory of mind. Theory of mind refers to the capacity to attribute mental states such as thoughts, intentions, desires and emotions to others and to interpret their behavior based on these inferences. This ability is fundamental to human social interaction, allowing us to navigate complex relationships by predicting and understanding what others are thinking or feeling. In the context of literature, theory of mind becomes a lens through which readers engage with characters, and Austen's works, especially *Pride and Prejudice*, provide a rich environment for honing this skill. Through her nuanced portrayal of characters' inner lives and their misinterpretations of one another, Austen invites readers to practice mindreading, enhancing their ability to decipher human motivations and emotions in both fiction and real life.

At the heart of *Pride and Prejudice* lies a narrative driven by misunderstandings and evolving perceptions, particularly between the spirited Elizabeth Bennet and the reserved Mr. Darcy. The novel opens with a

pivotal moment: Elizabeth overhears Darcy dismissing her as "tolerable, but not handsome enough to tempt me," setting the stage for her initial prejudice against him. Unbeknownst to her, Darcy's comment stems from his own discomfort and social awkwardness rather than genuine disdain. Meanwhile, Darcy remains unaware that his words have been overheard, planting the seeds for a prolonged emotional and psychological dance between the two. As the story unfolds, both characters grapple with incomplete information about each other's intentions, forcing them to interpret subtle cues, reassess their judgments, and gradually uncover the truth. Readers, privy to the inner thoughts of both characters through Austen's omniscient narration, are drawn into this process of interpretation, actively engaging their theory of mind to make sense of the characters' evolving relationship.

This dynamic illustrates how Austen's writing mirrors the complexities of real-world social interactions. In everyday life, we rarely have direct access to others' thoughts and must rely on indirect signals like body language, tone, or context to infer their mental states. Similarly, Austen's characters often misread one another, as their perceptions are clouded by pride, prejudice, or incomplete information. For example, Elizabeth

initially views Darcy's reserved demeanor as arrogance, while he misinterprets her wit as indifference. Readers, however, are given glimpses into both characters' minds, allowing them to piece together the motivations behind their actions. This dual perspective trains readers to consider multiple viewpoints simultaneously, a hallmark of advanced theory of mind. By following Elizabeth and Darcy's journey, readers practice attributing mental states, predicting behaviors, and revising their interpretations as new information emerges, much like they would in real-life social scenarios.

The cognitive benefits of engaging with literature like Austen's have been substantiated by research. A 2013 study published in the journal *Science* explored how reading literary fiction enhances theory of mind. The researchers, David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano, conducted experiments comparing the effects of reading literary fiction, popular fiction, nonfiction, and no reading at all. They found that literary fiction, characterized by complex characters and ambiguous motivations, significantly improved participants' performance on tasks measuring empathy and social perception. Unlike popular fiction, which often relies on predictable plots and straightforward character motivations, literary fiction like

Austen's demands active interpretation. Readers must infer characters' intentions from subtle hints and navigate the gaps between what characters say, think, and do. This process mirrors the mental work required to understand real people, making literary fiction a powerful tool for strengthening mindreading skills.

Austen's novels are particularly effective in this regard because of her masterful use of free indirect discourse, a narrative technique that blends a character's thoughts with the narrator's voice. This allows readers to slip seamlessly into the minds of characters like Elizabeth or Darcy, experiencing their emotions and perspectives while also maintaining an outside view of the story. For instance, when Elizabeth reads Darcy's letter explaining his actions, readers share her shock and gradual shift in understanding, but they also see how her initial misjudgments were shaped by her limited perspective. This narrative style encourages readers to hold multiple mental states in mind at once like the character's, the narrator's, and their own fostering a deeper engagement with theory of mind. By navigating these layers, readers practice the cog-

nitive flexibility needed to understand that others' beliefs and feelings may differ from their own, a skill essential for empathy and social cooperation.

Beyond *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen's other novels, such as *Emma* or *Sense and Sensibility*, similarly challenge readers to interpret complex social cues. In *Emma*, the titular character's misinterpretations drive much of the plot, requiring readers to untangle her flawed assumptions from the reality of the other characters' feelings. Similarly, in *Sense and Sensibility*, the contrasting personalities of the Dashwood sisters force readers to consider how different temperaments shape perceptions and decisions. Across her works, Austen presents characters who are flawed, multifaceted, and often unaware of their own biases, much like real people. This complexity makes her novels an ideal training ground for mindreading, as readers must constantly adjust their understanding of characters' motivations based on new revelations.

The act of reading Austen's novels also engages readers emotionally, which further enhances theory of mind. When

readers empathize with Elizabeth's humiliation or Darcy's regret, they are not just passively absorbing the story but actively simulating the characters' emotional states. This emotional engagement deepens the cognitive process, as readers draw on their own experiences to understand the characters' feelings while also recognizing the differences between their own perspectives and those of the characters. This dual process mirrors the way we navigate real-world relationships, where we must balance our own emotions with an understanding of others' mental states. Austen's ability to evoke this emotional and cognitive interplay makes her work particularly effective at strengthening readers' social perception.

Austen's focus on social dynamics reflects the intricacies of the society she depicted, where subtle gestures and unspoken rules governed interactions. Her characters operate within a web of social expectations, where a single misstep such as Darcy's initial insult can have far-reaching consequences. Readers must pay close attention to these nuances, interpreting not only what characters say but also what they leave unsaid. This mirrors the real-world challenge of navigat-

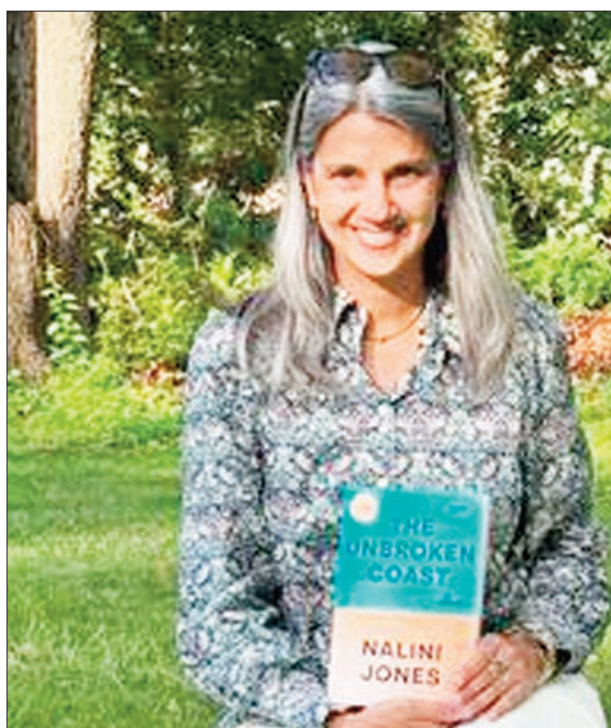
ing social hierarchies and unspoken norms, where understanding others' intentions is often key to success. By immersing readers in this world, Austen's novels provide a safe space to practice these skills, allowing readers to experiment with interpreting motivations without the real-world risks of misunderstanding.

The benefits of reading Austen extend beyond individual enjoyment to broader cognitive and social advantages. Enhanced theory of mind can improve interpersonal relationships, as it fosters greater empathy and the ability to anticipate others' reactions. In professional settings, these skills translate to better communication and collaboration, as individuals who can accurately read others' intentions are better equipped to navigate conflicts and build trust. Even in an increasingly digital world, where face-to-face interactions are often replaced by text-based communication, the ability to infer meaning from limited cues remains crucial. Austen's novels, with their emphasis on subtle social signals, offer timeless practice in this regard.

Jane Austen's novels, particularly *Pride and Prejudice*, serve as a powerful tool for sharpening theory of mind. By immersing readers in the complex inner lives of her characters, Austen invites them to practice interpreting intentions, emotions, and behaviors in a way that mirrors real-world social interactions. Her use of narrative techniques like free indirect discourse, combined with her keen insight into human nature, creates a rich environment for cognitive growth. The 2013 *Science* study confirms what Austen's readers have long intuited: engaging with literary fiction hones our ability to understand others, making us better equipped to navigate the complexities of human relationships. Through the emotional and mental dance of her characters, Austen not only entertains but also trains us to become more perceptive, empathetic, and socially adept. Her enduring popularity is a testament to the universal appeal of her stories and their profound impact on our cognitive and emotional lives.



'The Unbroken Coast' by Nalini Jones: A Bandra novel about family, friendship, and shared history



By: Sanjay Sipahimalani

What shapes people's lives? Is it the range of choices they're allowed to make, the families they're born into, the social and economic environments they live in, or simply chance? Nalini Jones's debut novel, *The Unbroken Coast*, explores the interplay of these forces with quiet intensity, unfolding a story as intimate as it is universal.

A different Bandra

The crucible for this exploration is a fictionalised version of Mumbai's Bandra, a world away from the allegedly trendy clubs, cafes, and other venues that many know the suburb for today. Long before that, there were the Kolis, often referred to as the city's first inhabitants. With the advent of the Portuguese, many from this fishing tribe converted to Catholicism, becoming a part of what came to be called the East Indian community. It is among their environs that *The Unbroken Coast* is largely set.

This exploration of Bandra and its inhabitants isn't new territory for Jones. Her interlinked short story collection, *What You Call Winter* (2007), was also set in a version of the suburb and focused on its Catholic community. *The Unbroken Coast* revisits some of

Jones's metaphors and similes also go a long way in conveying mood and tone. They are unexpected, yet vivid: waves race in "like couriers with urgent news"; retired life feels like wandering through "a series of empty rooms"; wasted days stack up "like containers on a ship"; high-rise balconies "jerk up like chins"; and thoughts become "thin and bitter, like coins on the tongue"

those characters, specifically the members of the Almeida family. Both books also share the same richly-imagined neighbourhood of houses, streets, schools, shops, festivals, and local associations, where the forces of urbanisation and modernity quietly shape daily lives.

Spanning the decades from the 1970s to the 2000s, the novel features a gallery of characters linked by bonds of family, friendship, and shared history. The two around whom much of the book pivots are Francis Almeida, a retired history professor facing the evening of his life, and Celia D'Mello, daughter of a Koli family, who is on the threshold of hers.

A series of coincidental meetings brings their families together, and over the years, they come to each other's aid in different ways. The wives, husbands, siblings, children and domestic helps are all given the benefit of Jones's gracious attention, and they are delineated with care and depth. Life takes new turns through the medium of large and little mishaps – often involving bicycles – that bring people together and tear them apart.

Over time, shifts both personal and collective take shape. Changes in the fortunes of the fisherfolk; the departures of grown-up children; marriage and separation; material changes in the neighbourhood: all these and

more fill the pages. Francis struggles to archive both the history of the area as well as remnants of his past, while Celia learns to survive the sudden shocks caused by the selfishness of those she once trusted to care for her.

Time, memory, reality

The novel's pace is leisurely and the structure episodic. It gently breathes with the rhythm of its characters' lives and the hard-won realisations they arrive at. However, it also shows evidence of careful patterning. For instance, the appearance and reappearance of statues of Mother Mary or, more broadly, interlocking viewpoints that give us a sense of the whole. All of this is narrated in prose that creates a powerful sense of emotional depth.

Some episodes are profoundly moving, such as a deathbed scene, as well as the aftermath of a stillbirth. The style has overtones of Virginia Woolf, fluidly moving between viewpoints to explore how characters experience time, memory, and reality. In fact, this is made cheekily explicit in the opening of one section: "Mrs Almeida said she would buy the fish herself."

Jones's metaphors and similes also go a long way in conveying mood and tone. They are unexpected, yet vivid: waves race in "like couriers with urgent news"; retired life feels like wandering through "a series of empty rooms"; wasted days stack up "like containers on a ship"; high-rise balconies "jerk up like chins"; and thoughts become "thin and bitter, like coins on the tongue".

Given that the novel covers life in Mumbai's recent past, the riots following the Babri Masjid destruction and the subsequent bomb blasts inevitably find a place. Jones sensitively shows how these events affect her characters, a typical reaction being: "This was what the world did: press in on you with its bad-news this and so-sad that, snatch away what little time you had to see to your own affairs..." Yet, much of her account of that time leans toward the factual and reportage-oriented, a approach slightly at odds with the rest of the book.

At one point in the novel, a domestic help learns how to play online solitaire as a way to fill the lonely spaces in her days. *The Unbroken Coast* is itself a bit like that game: characters, in the manner of cards, follow their own paths – sometimes stalled, sometimes advancing – to interact in patterns that gradually reveal a deeper narrative of chance and choice, weaving a tapestry of setbacks and persistence.

What if the quill of our Constitution was wielded solely by women?

By: Arvan Gulati

Constitution Day: I leaned back in my chair, the light of the desk lamp catching the date circled on my calendar on a specific date which was November 26th, tomorrow. Constitution Day. Being a media student, I have a deep-seated love for the history of that day which always sends my mind spinning, pulling me into the high-stakes debates of the Constituent Assembly.

As I often tell myself, my ultimate goal is to become a Polymath who can truly discuss and advise on any topic, and that means looking at history from every angle, valuing facts and figures, but also the human element.

Today, I found myself concentrating not just on the 299 members, but specifically on the 15 professional and qualified women who were part of that foundational journey. These weren't just token figures but were powerhouse such as Dakshayani Velayudhan, known for fighting fiercely for the pride of the oppressed or Hansa Jivraj Mehta, ensuring Fundamental Rights weren't silent on gender or Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, whose vision shaped public health and Begum Aizaz Rasul, who brought a pragmatic, unifying voice. And then the thought arrived, sharp and clear: What if the quill was wielded solely by women? What kind of nation would a constitution, authored entirely by this group of accomplished lawyers, reformists, and freedom fighters, have envisioned? I want to clarify that this idea wasn't about erasing men, but about separating the distinct priorities that emerged from their lived experiences which often sidelined in the formal political sphere. It was about objectivity, about charting a path to a greater perspective.

My conclusion, which I began to sketch out in my notebook, was that a Constitution born from the singular female perspective would have been radically pragmatic and fundamentally inclu-



sive, less focused on lofty legal principles alone and more on tangible mechanisms to secure dignity and livelihood for the most vulnerable.

For them, equality wasn't just a legal principle; it was the immediate, mandatory right to survival and respect. For instance, under their guidance, the Right to Equality (Article 14) wouldn't just prohibit discrimination by the State; it would actively mandate and enforce equal economic rights, the right to equal pay for equal work and ironclad protections against occupational exploitation, moving beyond the mere 'enabling' provisions we see today.

Renuka Ray's and Durgabai Deshmukh's focus on social welfare would have ensured that equal inheritance rights for women across all religious codes wouldn't be a delayed legislative goal but a non-negotiable, fundamental right enforceable from Day One.

Crucially, the Right to Life and Personal Liberty (Article 21) would have bloomed into something far more protective. I believe the concept of a 'Right to Care' would have been introduced, a fundamental, justiciable right ensuring universal access to maternal health, childcare support, and elderly care, recognizing that the burden of care is a societal responsibility that impacts a citizen's liberty and opportunity. The right would also explicitly guarantee a 'Right to Safety in the Public and Private Sphere,' reflecting the reality that a woman's liberty is curtailed not just by the government, but by

fear of violence in her own home or on the street.

This would have shifted the entire legal burden, making the State directly accountable, through measurable metrics, for ensuring a safe environment, a direct reflection of the tireless advocacy of women like Sucheta Kriplani. Furthermore, reflecting the concerns of Dakshayani Velayudhan for economic dignity, the Right against Exploitation (Article 23) would likely have a specific provision making social security, pension, and basic needs support an enforceable Fundamental Right for those unable to work, thereby ensuring basic human sustenance wasn't left to the shifting sands of political will or judicial interpretation.

This female-led Constitution would have been defined by a decisive move to place social and economic justice within the framework of immediate enforcement, rather than treating them as aspirational goals. It would have been a profoundly human document, steeped in the reality of social hierarchies and economic disparities, forcing the State to be an active agent of equity rather than a neutral observer. Looking at the calendar again, I felt a fresh surge of respect for the 15 women who were there.

Imagining their sole leadership only confirms that their priorities were, and remain, the most crucial for achieving the just and equitable society India strives to be. It was a meaningful discussion, and it certainly added value to my understanding of our founding document.

Zelenskyy arrives in Paris for talks with Macron

PARIS, Dec 1: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy arrived on Monday at the Elysee presidential palace in Paris to hold talks with French President Emmanuel Macron, part of a flurry of diplomatic activity aimed at brokering the terms for a potential ceasefire in the nearly four-year-old war in Ukraine. Zelenskyy's visit to Paris came on the heels of a meeting between Ukrainian and US officials in Florida on Sunday, which Secretary of State Marco Rubio described as productive. The two sides have worked to make revisions to a proposed US-authored plan that was developed in negotiations between Washington and Moscow but criticised as being too weighted toward Russian demands.

Those criticisms were perhaps most vehement from Ukraine's European allies, who, while welcoming US peace efforts, pushed back on key tenets of the plan. Ahead of his meeting with Zelenskyy on Monday, Macron's office said the two leaders would discuss conditions for a "fair and lasting peace."

US President Donald Trump has since played down the 28-point peace framework - which would have imposed limits on the size of Ukraine's military, blocked the country from joining NATO and required Ukraine to give up territory - as a "concept" to be "fine-tuned." Last week, Macron - a key ally for Ukraine who has firmly backed Kyiv and sought to counterbalance elements of the US peace plan that are seen to favour Russia - urged Western allies to bring "rock-solid" guarantees to Ukraine in case a ceasefire or a peace deal was to be reached. He has endorsed deploying a "reassurance force" on land, at sea and in the air to help ensure the country's security.

Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov confirmed Monday that Russian President Vladimir Putin would meet with US presidential envoy Steve Witkoff on Tuesday afternoon. Witkoff's role in the peace efforts came under scrutiny last week following a report that he coached Putin's foreign affairs adviser on how Russia's leader should pitch Trump on the Ukraine peace plan. (AP)

World's largest arms producers increased revenue by 5.9 pc last year to record level: SIPRI report

STOCKHOLM, Dec 1: Revenues from sales of arms and military services by the 100 largest weapons-producing companies worldwide rose by 5.9 per cent last year, with demand boosted by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, and global and regional geopolitical tensions, according to a global report released on Monday.

The combined arms revenues of the three Indian companies in this list increased by 8.2 per cent to USD 7.5 billion on the back of domestic orders, says the report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

The Sweden-based global think-tank, in a statement, also shared a weblink that carried the list of "top 100 arms-producing and military services companies" in the world in 2024.

The Indian firms which figure in it are - Hindustan Aeronautics (at 44th spot), Bharat Electronics (58th), Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (91st).

"Revenues from sales of arms and military services by the 100 largest arms-producing companies rose by 5.9 per cent in 2024, reaching a record USD 679 billion, according to new data released today by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)," the statement said. Global arms revenues rose sharply last year, as demand was "boosted by the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, global and regional geopolitical tensions, and ever-higher military expenditure".

For the first time since 2018, all of the

five largest arms companies increased their arms revenues, SIPRI reported.

The top five companies in the list in that order are -- Lockheed Martin Corp. (the US), RTX (the US), Northrop Grumman Corp. (the US), BAE Systems (the UK) and General Dynamics Corp. (the US).

"Although the bulk of the global rise was due to companies based in Europe and the United States, there were year-on-year increases in all of the world regions featured in the top 100. The only exception was Asia and Oceania, where issues within the Chinese arms industry drove down the regional total," it said.

In 2024, the combined arms revenues of US arms companies in the top 100 grew by 3.8 per cent to reach USD 334 billion,

with 30 out of the 39 US companies in the ranking increasing their arms revenues. These included major arms producers such as Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics, the statement said.

"However, widespread delays and budget overruns continue to plague development and production in key US-led programmes such as the F-35 combat aircraft, the Columbia-class submarine and the Sentinel intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Several of the USA's largest arms producers are affected by overruns, raising uncertainty about when major new weapon systems and upgrades to existing ones can be delivered and deployed," it added.

The surge in revenues and new orders

prompted many arms companies to expand production lines, enlarge facilities, establish new subsidiaries or conduct acquisitions, the think-tank said.

"Last year global arms revenues reached the highest level ever recorded by SIPRI as producers capitalised on high demand," Lorenzo Scarazzato, Researcher with the SIPRI Military Expenditure and Arms Production Programme, was quoted as saying in the statement. "Although companies have been building their production capacity, they still face a range of challenges that could affect costs and delivery schedules," Scarazzato said.

Of the 26 arms companies in the top 100 based in Europe (excluding Russia), 23 recorded increasing arms revenues. (PTI)

B'desh court sentences Hasina to 5-year jail term, UK lawmaker niece to 2 years in land scam

DHAKA, Dec 1: A Bangladesh court on Monday convicted and sentenced deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina to five years of imprisonment and her niece, British parliamentarian Tulip Siddiq, to a two-year jail term in a land scam case.

Judge Md Rabiul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 of Dhaka also handed down a seven-year jail term to Hasina's sister, Sheikh Rehana, in the corruption case lodged against 17 people, the state-run BSS news agency reported.

The court handed down the verdict in a packed courtroom in the absence of the three accused.

The 14 other accused were jailed for five years each. The court also imposed a fine of Tk 1 lakh each on all 17 convicts, including Hasina, Rehana, and Siddiq, failing which they will have to serve an additional six months in jail.

Siddiq, a British-Bangladeshi Labour Party politician, is Rehana's daughter and has been the Member of Parliament for Hampstead and Highgate since 2015.

The interim government in April issued an arrest warrant for Siddiq, 43, as part of investigations into corruption during Hasina's premiership. She was found guilty of influencing her aunt, Hasina, to se-



cur a plot of land for her mother, brother, and sister in the outskirts of Dhaka, a charge she strongly denies. This is the fourth verdict involving 78-year-old Hasina in graft cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), The Daily Star newspaper reported.

The ACC filed the land scam case on January 13 against 15 people, including Hasina, Rehana and Siddiq, over allegations that they unlawfully obtained plot allocations during the former premier's tenure. The Investigating Officer later submitted a charge sheet against 17 accused on March 10.

According to The Dhaka Tribune, the ACC filed six separate

cases between January 12 and 14 with its Dhaka Integrated District Office-1 over alleged irregularities in the allocation of plots under the Purbachal New Town project.

The anti-graft body alleged that Hasina, in collusion with senior Rajuk officials, unlawfully secured six plots, each measuring 10 kathas (7,200 square feet), in the diplomatic zone of Sector 27 of the Purbachal New Town project for herself, her son Sajeb Wazed Joy, daughter Saima Wazed Putul, sister Rehana, her son Bobby and daughter Azmina despite their ineligibility under existing regulations.

ACC officials said Siddiq used her power to get plots for Rehana,

Bobby, and Azmina.

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) is the state-run agency responsible for monitoring compliance from planning to construction of government-aided buildings in Bangladesh.

Charges were framed against 29 people on July 31, including Hasina, Rehana, Joy, Putul, and Siddiq, in their respective cases.

On November 27, Hasina was sentenced to 21 years of rigorous imprisonment, seven years in each of the three cases filed over the Purbachal plot scam. Joy and Putul were co-accused in separate cases, one each, and were sentenced to five years of imprisonment.

According to a BBC report, Siddiq, who is based in London and has rejected the charges, is unlikely to serve the sentence.

The UK does not have an extradition treaty in place with Bangladesh. It is categorised as a 2B country, meaning clear evidence needs to be presented to lawyers and judges to authorise any extradition.

Siddiq's lawyers have disputed that she is a Bangladeshi citizen, arguing that she has "never had" an ID card or voter ID, and "has not held a passport since she was a child". (PTI)

Musk backs H-1B visas: US benefited immensely from talented Indians



NEW YORK, Dec 1: The US has been an "immense beneficiary" of talent from India, SpaceX CEO Elon Musk has said, and voiced strong support for the H1B visa programme, cautioning that shutting it down would "actually be very bad" for America.

The US tech billionaire made the remarks in an interview with investor and entrepreneur Nikhil Kamath on his podcast 'People by WTF', released on Sunday. "Yes, I think America has benefited immensely from talented Indians who have come to America... America has been an immense beneficiary of talent from India," Musk said.

On the H-1B visa, the Tesla CEO said, while there has been some misuse of the work visa programme, he strongly believes that it should not be shut down.

"It would be accurate to say that... some of the outsourcing companies have gamed the system on the H-1B front. And we need to stop the gaming of the system. "But I'm certainly not in the school of thought that we should shut down the H-1B programme. That's where some on the right are. I think they don't realise that that would actually be very bad," Musk said.

His comments come at a time when the US has launched a massive crackdown to check abuse of the H-1B visa programme, used extensively by American technology companies to employ foreign workers. Indian professionals, including technology workers and physicians, form one of the largest groups of H-1B visa holders.

In September, US President Donald Trump issued a Proclamation titled 'Restriction on Entry of Certain Nonimmigrant Workers' as an important initial step to reform the H-1B nonimmigrant visa programme. Under the Proclamation, Trump announced a one-time fee of USD 100,000 on new H-1B visas, a move expected to impact Indian professionals seeking to work in the US.

Responding to a question on whether the US "seems to have become anti-immigration to a certain extent", Musk said there are different schools of thought on the issue, and there is no unanimity.

He, however, pointed out that under the Joe Biden administration, "it was basically a total free-for-all, with like no border controls, which, you know, unless you've got border controls, you're not a country". Musk alleged there was "massive" illegal immigration under Biden, which created a negative selection effect.

"If there's a massive financial incentive to come to the US illegally and get all these government benefits, then you necessarily create a diffusion gradient for people to come to the US just as an incentive structure. I think that obviously made no sense," he said, stressing the need for border controls. Musk said the left wanted open borders irrespective of the situation or "if the person coming in is a criminal", while the right believed American jobs were being taken by highly skilled workers from abroad.

"I don't know how real that is. My direct observation is that there's always a scarcity of talented people. So from my standpoint, I'm like, we have a lot of difficulty finding enough talented people to get these difficult tasks done, and so more talented people would be good," he said. Musk noted that some companies are making it more of a cost thing, "where it's like, okay, if they can employ someone for a fraction of the cost of an American citizen, then I guess these other companies would hire people just to save costs".

However, at his companies, the tech billionaire said, they are just trying to get the most talented people in the world. "We pay way above average, so... that's not my experience, but that's what a lot of people do complain about," he said. Asked what message he had for young Indian entrepreneurs, Musk said he respected "anyone who wants to build".

"Aim to make more than you take, be a net contributor to society... If you want to create something valuable... pursue providing useful products and services... then money will come as a natural consequence," he said. "Are you a value creator? That's what really matters," Musk said. (PTI)

UK MP Tulip Siddiq condemns sentence by Dhaka anti-corruption trial as 'unjustified'

LONDON, Dec 1: Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's niece Tulip Siddiq, who is a Labour Party MP in the UK, on Monday condemned her two years' imprisonment after a trial in absentia by an anti-corruption tribunal in Bangladesh as "unjustified".

The 43-year-old had resigned as a Treasury minister in British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Cabinet earlier this year as the allegations of corruption against her family hit worldwide headlines.

A trial by Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) against her and her family was underway in Dhaka. "The whole process has been flawed and farcical from the beginning to the end," said Siddiq.

"The outcome of this kangaroo court is as predictable as it is unjustified. I hope this so-called 'verdict' will be treated with the contempt it deserves. My focus has always been my constituents in Hampstead and Highgate, and I refuse to be distracted by the dirty politics of Bangladesh," she said.

Last week, in a letter addressed to Bangladesh High Commissioner to the UK Abida Islam, senior UK lawyers, including Cherie Blair - the wife of former UK prime minister Tony Blair, and former ministers Robert Buckland and Dominic Grieve had expressed concerns over the "unfair and contrived" trial. Siddiq has consistently denied all the charges and described herself as "collateral damage" in the new Bangladesh government, led by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, campaign against Sheikh Hasina, and dismissed the trial as being based on "fabricated accusations and driven by a clear political vendetta".

In her resignation letter to Starmer back in January, she pointed out that his Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests had not found her in breach of the UK's Ministerial Code and asserted that she had not "acted improperly". (PTI)

Oxford University Press word of year reflects online outrage with 'rage bait'

LONDON, Dec 1: Rage bait, or online content deliberately designed to elicit anger or outrage, was on Monday named the word of the year by Oxford University Press, the publisher of the Oxford English Dictionary.

The Oxford University Press (OUP) said the term is a noun which describes online content that is designed to be frustrating, provocative, or offensive, typically posted in order to increase traffic to or engagement with a particular web page or social media account. It found that the word has increased threefold in usage in the last 12 months, based on its language monitoring data.

"The fact that the word rage bait exists and has seen such a dramatic surge in usage means we're increasingly aware of the manipulation tactics we can be drawn into online," said Casper Grathwohl, President of Oxford Languages at OUP.

"Before, the internet was focused on grabbing our attention by sparking curiosity in exchange for clicks, but now we've seen a dramatic shift to it, hijacking and influencing our emotions, and how we respond."

"It feels like the natural progression in an ongoing conversation about what it means to be human in a tech-driven world - and the extremes of online culture," he said. The linguist pointed out that while the 2024 word of the year "brain rot" captured the mental drain of endless scrolling, the 2025 choice shines a light on the content purposefully engineered to spark outrage and drive clicks.

"Together, they form a powerful cycle where out-

rage sparks engagement, algorithms amplify it, and constant exposure leaves us mentally exhausted. These words don't just define trends; they reveal how digital platforms are reshaping our thinking and behaviour," he added. The OUP's choice for the year followed three days of online voting in which more than 30,000 people had their say.

"With 2025's news cycle dominated by social unrest, debates about the regulation of online content, and concerns over digital wellbeing, our experts noticed that the use of rage bait this year has evolved to signal a deeper shift in how we talk about attention - both how it is given and how it is sought after - engagement, and ethics online," the publisher noted.

Rage bait is a compound of the words rage, meaning a violent outburst of anger, and bait, an attractive morsel of food. Although a close parallel to the etymologically related clickbait, rage bait has a more specific focus on "evoking anger, discord, and polarisation".

"The emergence of rage bait as a standalone term highlights both the flexibility of the English language, where two established words can be combined to give a more specific meaning in a particular context - in this case, online - and come together to create a term that resonates with the world we live in today," the OUP states. The other words on the 2025 shortlist included aura farming, or the cultivation of an impressive, attractive or charismatic persona or public image by behaving or presenting oneself in a way intended subtly to convey an air of confidence, coolness or mystique. (PTI)

Princess Aiko's popularity sparks calls to change Japan's male-only succession law

TOKYO, Dec 1: Japan's beloved Princess Aiko is often cheered like a pop star. During a visit to Nagasaki with Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, the sound of her name being screamed by well-wishers along the roads overwhelmed the cheers for her parents.

As she turns 24 on Monday, her supporters want to change Japan's male-only succession law, which prohibits Aiko, the emperor's only child, from becoming monarch.

Along with frustration that the discussion on succession rules has stalled, there's a sense of urgency. Japan's shrinking monarchy is on the brink of extinction. Naruhito's teenage nephew is the only eligible heir from the younger generation.

Experts say the female ban should be lifted before the royal family dies out, but conservative lawmakers, including Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, oppose the change.

Aiko has gained admirers since debuting as an adult royal in 2021, when she impressed the public as intelligent, friendly, caring and funny.

Support for Aiko as a future monarch increased following her first solo official overseas trip to Laos in November, representing

the emperor. During the six-day visit, she met with top Laotian officials, visited cultural and historical venues and met with locals.

Earlier this year, Aiko accompanied her parents to Nagasaki and Okinawa. She has followed the example set by her father, who places great importance on passing down the tragedy of WWII to younger generations.

"I have always been rooting for Princess Aiko to be crowned," said Setsuko Matsuo, an 82-year-old atomic bombing survivor who came to Nagasaki's peace park scheduled arrival in the area.

"I like everything about her, especially her smile... so comforting," she told The Associated Press at the time.

Mari Maehira, a 58-year-old office worker who wanted to cheer Aiko in Nagasaki, said she has seen Aiko grow up and "now we want to see her become a future monarch".

The princess' popularity has triggered some to pressure legislators to change the law.

Cartoonist Yoshinori Kobayashi has written comic books that push for a legal change to allow Aiko to become monarch, which supporters keep sending to parliamentari-

ans to raise awareness and get their backing for the cause.

Others have set up YouTube channels and distributed leaflets to gain public attention on the issue.

Ikuo Yamazaki, 62, has been using social media to advocate for the succession of the emperor's first child regardless of gender. She says not having Aiko as a successor and the insistence on male-only monarchs will cause the monarchy to die out.

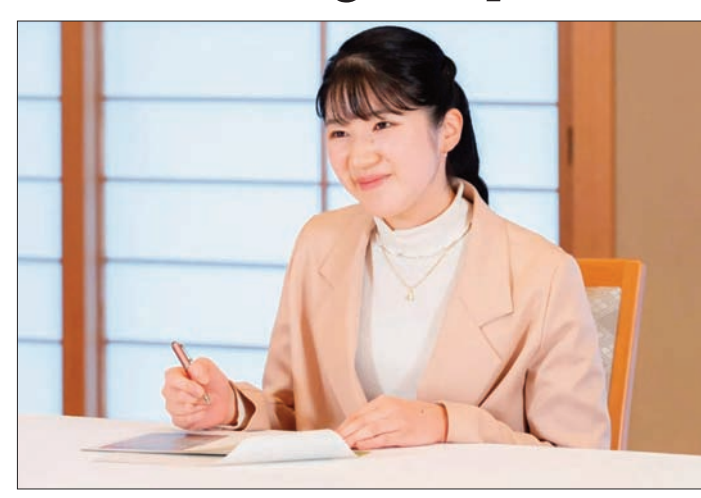
"The succession system conveys the Japanese mindset regarding gender issues," Yamazaki said. "I expect having a female monarch would dramatically improve women's status in Japan."

The popular princess was born on Dec 1, 2001.

Soon after giving birth to Aiko, her mother, Harvard-educated former diplomat Masako, developed a stress-induced mental condition, apparently due to criticism for not producing a male heir, from which she is still recovering.

Aiko was known as a bright child who, as a sumo fan, memorised wrestlers' full names.

However, she also had faced difficulties: As an elementary school girl, she briefly missed classes because of bullying. As a teenager, she appeared extremely thin and



missed classes for a month.

In 2024, Aiko graduated from Gakushuin University, where her father and many other royals studied. She has since participated in her official duties and palace rituals while also working at the Red Cross Society.

On weekends, she enjoys taking walks with her parents and playing volleyball, tennis and badminton with palace officials.

The 1947 Imperial House Law only allows male-line succession and forces female royals who marry commoners to lose their royal status.

The rapidly dwindling Imperial Family has 16 members, down from 30 three decades ago. All are adults.

Naruhito has only two potential younger male heirs, his 60-year-old younger brother, Crown Prince Akishino, and Akishino's 19-year-old son, Prince Hisahito. Prince Hitachi, former Emperor Akihito's younger brother and third in line to the throne, is 90. Akishino acknowledged the aging and shrinking royal population, "but nothing can be done under the current system."

"I think all we can do right now is to scale back our official

duties," he told reporters ahead of his 60th birthday Sunday.

Last year, the crown prince noted that royal members are "human beings" whose lives are affected by the discussion, a nuanced but rare comment. He has seen no change, though palace officials have sincerely taken his remark, Akishino said Sunday.

Aiko had also previously said she is aware of the declining royal population, but could not comment on the system. "Under the circumstances, I hope to sincerely serve every official duty and help the emperor and the empress, as well as other members of the Imperial Family."

The shortage of male successors is a serious worry for the monarchy, which some historians say has lasted for 1,500 years. It's also a reflection of Japan's broader problem of a rapidly aging and shrinking population.

"I think the situation is already critical," said Hideya Kawanishi, a Nagoya University professor and expert on monarchy. Its future is totally up to Hisahito and his potential wife's ability to produce a male offspring. "Who wants to marry him? If anyone does, she would endure enormous pressure to produce a male heir while per-

forming official duties at a super-human capacity."

Hisahito must carry the burden and the Imperial Family's fate by himself, former Imperial Household Agency chief Shingo Haketa said in a Yomiuri newspaper article this year. "The fundamental question is not whether to allow a male or female succession line but how to save the monarchy."

Japan traditionally had male emperors, but there have also been eight female monarchs. The last was Gosakuramachi, who ruled from 1762 to 1770.

The male-only succession rule became law in 1889 and was carried over to the postwar 1947 Imperial House Law.

Experts say the system had only previously worked with the help of concubines who, until about 100 years ago, produced half of the past emperors.

The verb b...
mise one's...
longevity o...
cise routine...
such as dru...
vices - was...
The top thr...
on social m...
make a fina...

It sa...
It said...
Pak...
rarely...
In F...
blood...
manit...
Pak...
said Is...
Esc...
The...
has de...
ghari...
The...
constr...
to dea...
Isra...
which...
Gaza...
The...
ers ha...
are fre...

BJP sweeps Arunachal Pradesh unopposed ahead of Panchayat Polls

58 ZPMs, 4 IMC corporators and over 5,000 Gram Panchayat members secure uncontested wins



ITANAGAR, Dec 1: Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday lauded the unopposed victory of BJP candidates in the run-up to the state's December 15 panchayat and municipal elections, describing it as a reflection of the public's confidence in the party's development

thanked the people for their overwhelming support, saying it reinforces the government's commitment to serve with greater dedication and implement accelerated development programs.

The unopposed victories are also seen as an endorsement of the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP national president JP Nadda and state party president Kaling Moyong.

The State Election Commission (SEC) confirmed that 63 candidates—58 from BJP and one from the National People's Party (NPP) for zilla parishad seats, along with four BJP nominees for IMC wards were elected uncontested following the withdrawal of nominations. Meanwhile, 440 candidates remain in the fray for 186 zilla parishad seats, 39 for 16 IMC wards and 21 for eight Pasighat Municipal Council (PMC) wards.

The SEC had received 600 nominations for 245 zilla parishad constituencies, 10,550 for 8,182 gram panchayat seats, 101 for 20 IMC

wards and 28 for eight PMC wards by the November 24 deadline, completing scrutiny on November 26. Thirteen gram panchayat constituencies received no nominations, while nominations for 14 others were rejected. Polling in Dumba Singpho gram panchayat constituency has been countermanded due to the death of a candidate. Vacant seats will be filled later through by-elections.

The 12th elections to panchayati raj institutions and the third municipal polls for Itanagar and Pasighat will be held simultaneously on December 15. A total of 8,31,648 voters including 7,59,210 for panchayat seats and 72,438 for municipal elections are eligible to vote across 2,171 polling stations for rural polls, 67 for IMC and 12 for PMC. Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) will be used for municipal polls, while ballot boxes will be deployed for panchayat elections. Counting of votes is scheduled for December 20. (PTI)

model and governance.

A total of 58 zilla parishad members (ZPMs), four corporators of the Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC) and 5,037 gram panchayat members (GPMs) have already been declared elected without any contest. CM Khandu

needed development.

BJP's Thingnong Umbu is campaigning on the "double-engine" narrative, promising accelerated development in roads, drinking water, education, healthcare and irrigation if elected. Diyun in particular, suffers from poor road connectivity, hampering students, office-goers, traders and patients alike.

On the other hand, NCP's Mualin Agan is gaining traction, especially among young voters and those dissatisfied with the ruling party's inability to secure the Assembly seat. His campaign focuses on grassroots issues and ensuring a strong local voice to press governments at both state and Centre levels for long-standing demands. Political analysts suggest the election result could send a key signal ahead of the next Assembly polls. A BJP victory could break its decade-long jinx in the constituency, while an NCP win would underscore the appeal of a spirited local challenger in this multi-ethnic region.

As campaign loudspeakers echo across tea gardens, paddy fields and riverine villages, voters in Bordumsa-Diyun prepare to decide between the promise of "double-engine" development and the rising local appeal of Mualin Agan.

Bordumsa Zilla Parishad election heats up: BJP and NCP in neck-and-neck contest



HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Dec 1: With just two weeks remaining for the 14/01 Bordumsa Zilla Parishad Constituency election in Arunachal Pradesh's 49th Bordumsa-Diyun Assembly segment, political temperature is soaring as the contest narrows to a direct fight between BJP candidate Thingnong Umbu and NCP nominee Mualin Agan.

The constituency has 7,712 voters, comprising diverse communities including Singpho (2,270), Adivasi (2,474), Tangsa (1,330), Nocte (767), Tai Khanti (597) and Sonawal Kachari (348). Together, the Adivasi and Singpho communities form over 60% of the electorate and are widely seen as decisive in this closely watched poll.

Despite BJP's decade-long pres-

ence in the state and at the Centre under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the party has not won the 49th Bordumsa-Diyun Assembly seat since 2014. Nikh Kamin (PPA) won in 2014, Somlung Mossang (Independent) in 2019 and in 2024 Nikh Kamin, contesting on NCP tickets, retained the seat by 1,352 votes.

Residents express frustration over the stark development deficit, citing broken roads, lack of middle and high schools in interior villages, erratic water supply, understaffed health centres, crumbling school buildings and inadequate irrigation facilities. "Namsai, just 30 km away, looks like a different world," said a local resident, noting that voters hope BJP's win at both ZPM and future MLA elections could finally bring much-

ECI seeks public suggestions to make ECINet app more user-friendly

Citizens can submit feedback till December 27

HT Correspondent
NAHARLAGUN, Dec 1: The Election Commission of India (ECI) has invited citizens to download the ECINet app and share suggestions to improve its usability through the 'Submit a Suggestion' tab between November 27 and December 27, 2025. The trial version of the app was used during the Bihar Assembly Elections 2025 and recent bypolls, offering quicker voter services, real-time polling percentage trends and publication of Index Cards within 72 hours of polling—an exercise that earlier took weeks or months. Inputs from CEOs, DEOs, EROs, Observers and field officials are being incorporated to further refine the platform.

According to the Commission, all user suggestions re-

ceived will be reviewed and integrated into the next update. The official launch of ECINet is planned for January 2026.

Developed under the leadership of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi, the app aims to enhance voter convenience and transparency through integrated digital services. Work on ECINet began after its announcement in May 2025.

ECINet unifies 40 election-related apps and websites—including Voter Helpline, eVIGIL, Saksham, Polling Trends and Know Your Candidate—into a single platform. It is available for download on both Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

CM hails para-athletes for 'historic performance' Arunachal finishes runner-up at NE Para Games



ITANAGAR, Dec 1: Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday hailed the state's para-athletes for delivering a "historic performance" at the second North East Para Games in Guwahati.

The Arunachal Pradesh contingent finished runner-up in the overall medal tally with an impressive haul of 84 medals.

"Heartiest congratulations to Team Arunachal Pradesh for a historic performance at the 2nd North East Para Games 2025, Guwahati! Our para-athletes made the state proud by finishing Runner-Up in the overall medal tally, winning a

remarkable 84 medals - 23 Gold, 31 Silver and 30 Bronze," Khandu said in a post on X.

Calling the achievement inspirational, the chief minister said the medal haul across several sporting disciplines reflects "the courage, talent and unwavering spirit of our Divyangjan sportspersons".

"Proud of every athlete, coach and the Paralympic Association of Arunachal (PAA) for this milestone," Khandu said.

The chief minister in his post, reaffirmed the government's commitment to strengthening opportunities for para-athletes, saying their

success will continue to inspire countless young talents across the state.

The second North East Para Games, organised by Assam Sports and Youth Affairs department in collaboration with the Paralympic Committee of India, brought together para-athletes from all eight Northeastern states.

Events were held across multiple venues in Guwahati, showcasing competitions in athletics, swimming, badminton, powerlifting, archery, table tennis, boccia and other disciplines.

The multi-sport meet aims to promote inclusivity, provide a competitive platform for differently-abled athletes and encourage greater institutional support for para-sports in the region.

This year's edition saw significantly higher participation than its debut edition in 2023, reflecting growing interest and investment in para-sport infrastructure across the Northeast.

Arunachal's second-place finish marks one of its best performances in a regional para-sports event, underscoring rising talent nurtured by the PAA and grassroots training initiatives supported by the state government, officials said. (PTI)

Observer holds key coordination meet ahead of Panchayat election 2025



HT Correspondent
ZIRO, Dec 1: A coordination meeting for the smooth conduct of the upcoming Panchayat Election 2025 was held on Saturday at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hall, District Secretariat, Ziro. The session was chaired by Election Observer Pagli Sora and attended by Deputy Commissioner-cum-DEO Oli Perme, DPDO Hage Tarung, SP Keni Bagra, Returning Officers, representatives of political parties and contesting candidates.

DEO Oli Perme welcomed participants and expressed satisfaction that a majority of ZPM seats—10 of 14—are uncontested, terming it a sign of cooperative democratic spirit. She urged all stakeholders to maintain peace during the polls.

DPDO Hage Tarung detailed the Model Code of Conduct and called for strict adherence to State Elec-

tion Commission guidelines. SP Keni Bagra outlined security arrangements, stressing timely deposit of firearms and adherence to MCC provisions.

Observer Pagli Sora, representing the State Election Commission, reminded that the Observer serves as the Commission's "eyes and ears" and urged candidates to guide workers responsibly, maintain expenditure limits and keep proper accounts. He encouraged stakeholders to reach out for any election-related issues.

An interaction session allowed candidates to raise queries and offer suggestions, contributing to what officials described as a constructive discussion.

The District Administration reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring a peaceful, transparent and inclusive Panchayat Election 2025 and extended best wishes to all candidates.

Governor greets people on Indigenous Faith Day

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Dec 1: Governor Lt Gen KT Parnaik (Retd) has extended greetings to the people of the State on Indigenous Faith Day, expressing hope that the occasion will inspire all to preserve and promote traditional belief systems.

The Governor noted that Arunachal Pradesh is home to numerous tribes, each with its own distinct culture, beliefs and practices that have been carefully pre-

served through generations. He said the observance of the day reflects the State's rich cultural heritage and reinforces traditions rooted in peace, harmony and a deep bond with nature.

Underscoring the need to respect indigenous belief systems and protect unique customs, the Governor said the cultural legacy of tribal communities must continue to be safeguarded.

He also offered prayers for the well-being of all on the occasion.

Graduates urged to uphold curiosity, courage and character

Governor presides over RGU's 23rd Convocation

HT Correspondent
DOIMUKH, Dec 1: Governor Lt Gen KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd) presided over the 23rd Convocation of Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), Rono Hills, where degrees were conferred upon 115 PhD scholars, 911 postgraduates, 6,331 undergraduates and 127 postgraduate diploma recipients for the academic session 2024-25. A total of 38 postgraduate and 33 undergraduate gold medalists were also honoured for their academic excellence.

Congratulating the graduates, the Governor said their achievements rest on the love, sacrifices and support of parents, teachers, friends and the society that nurtured them. He encouraged them to let their education become a tool for uplifting others and to step forward as responsible contributors and leaders. He reminded them of their responsibility to use their knowledge for the greater good, uplift communities and contribute meaningfully through everyday choices rooted in honesty, integrity and kindness.

The Governor urged the graduating stu-

dents to carry with them three guiding values: curiosity to keep learning, courage to face challenges and character to stand firm in their principles. He expressed confidence that with humility and purpose, they would bring honour to their families, the university and the nation. As ambassadors of Arunachal Pradesh and citizens of a New India, he said, the graduates must use their knowledge to build bridges, their ideas to create opportunities and their actions to inspire positive change.

Highlighting the role of Rajiv Gandhi University as the premier higher education institution of the State, the Governor said it stands as a vibrant centre of knowledge, research and cultural heritage, shaping young minds through a blend of modern academic disciplines and Arunachal's rich traditions. With committed faculty, an energetic student community and a strong focus on innovation and inclusivity, the university continues to produce graduates who are academically strong, socially conscious and ready to serve.

The Governor said national initiatives



such as Digital India, Skill India, Start-up India, Make in India and NEP 2020 are empowering youth with flexible learning pathways, creativity and research-driven

education. As Arunachal Pradesh moves rapidly towards development, he urged RGU to act as a catalyst for progress by nurturing innovation, strengthening re-

search, promoting entrepreneurship, modernising infrastructure and fostering national and international collaborations. He also stressed the need for a Clean, Green and Plastic-Free campus, along with promoting sports and physical activities for holistic growth. With these efforts, he said, RGU can help drive local solutions, support the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 and play a transformative role in shaping a prosperous and future-ready Arunachal Pradesh.

Addressing the faculty, the Governor said educators carry not only the responsibility of teaching but also inspiring, as classrooms are spaces where ideas are shaped and futures defined. He urged them to nurture curiosity, critical thinking and innovation, guiding students to question, explore and challenge themselves so they can excel in a rapidly transforming State.

The Governor appreciated Convocation Speaker Prof S Mahendra Dev, Chairman of the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, for highlighting the challenges and opportunities where new graduates can contribute to-

wards national transformation.

During the convocation, the Governor, who serves as Chief Rector of RGU, conferred the Chancellor's Gold Medal on Bobita Hazarika (MSc Chemistry) and the Vice Chancellor's Gold Medal on Prastuti Borah (BED). He also awarded the Puspha Rani Mitra Gold Medal 2025 to Nyayir Lendo (MA Psychology). The medal was instituted by Prof Amitava Mitra (Retd.), former Pro-VC, for the top-performing girl students in the Faculty of Social Sciences.

Chancellor Dr J Suresh Babu, Vice Chancellor Prof SK Nayak and Dr NT Rikam of RGU also addressed the gathering. Convocation Speaker Prof Mahendra Dev delivered the convocation address, outlining key sectors requiring improvement to achieve the Viksit Bharat vision.

Members of the Court, Academic Council, Executive Council, faculty members, deans, heads of departments, directors, awardees and their families, students, staff, community members and other guests attended the event.

18th Bihar Assembly commences with swearing in of newly elected members



PATNA, Dec 1: The 18th Bihar Legislative Assembly commenced on Monday with newly elected members being administered the oath of office.

They were sworn in by Pro-tem Speaker Narendra Narayan Yadav, who informed the House that members could take oath in Hindi, English, Urdu, Sanskrit or Maithili, and the process would begin with cabinet ministers.

Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, who has been elected from Tarapur assembly seat, was the first to take the oath, followed by fellow Deputy CM Vijay Kumar Sinha, who has retained Lakhisarai for a fourth consecutive term. After taking oath, the ministers greeted the pro-tem speaker and Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who, incidentally, is a member of the Legislative Council. Next in line for taking oath was veteran BJP leader Prem Kumar, who is understood to be the main contender for the Speaker's post.

The election of the Speaker is scheduled on Tuesday. After Prem Kumar, it was the turn of RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, who is tipped to retain the post of the Leader of the Opposition.

Yadav received a warm hug, before returning to his

seat, from minister Ram Kripal Yadav, who had joined the BJP 11 years ago, burning bridges with his father Lalu Prasad, the RJD president.

A former Union minister, Ram Kripal Yadav had lost his Lok Sabha seat of Pataliputra to Misa Bharti, eldest daughter of Prasad, in last year's general elections. He made a political comeback in the recently held assembly polls, wresting Danapur from RJD strongman Reet Lal Yadav.

A number of MLAs, including minister Anand Shankar Prasad, took oath in Maithili, while some others, mostly from the Seemanchal region, did so in Urdu. A few members also took oath in Sanskrit.

At least two members, Vishnu Deo Paswan and Rahul Kumar Singh, elected from Darauli and Dumraon, respectively, took oath in English.

Some of the members swore "in the name of God" as well as "in the name of Truth", only to be corrected by the pro-tem speaker, a veteran several-term MLA, who told them that they could choose only one of the options. Another MLA, Anita Mahto, who made her debut from Warsaliganj, left the Chair bemused as she launched into a soliloquy before reading out the statement of oath. She said, "I... a daughter of the Bahujan community... do swear in the name of Babasaheb Ambedkar's Constitution, standing in this temple of democracy, in the land of Buddha".

The pro-tem speaker curtly told the MLA that she must stick to the statement of the oath provided to her. Mahto, thereafter, took oath as per procedure, swearing "in the name of Truth". The House was adjourned for the day after Khyati Singh, the secretary in charge of Vidhan Sabha, said that quite a few members had not turned up and they will be sworn in on Tuesday after the election of the Speaker.

The pro-tem Speaker, who spoke before commencement of the swearing in, told the House, "Many formalities have to be completed in the ongoing session, a reason why no questions will be taken". (PTI)

Parliament no place for drama; Opposition using House to vent out frustration: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Parliament is not a place for drama but for delivery, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday in a hard-hitting attack on the Opposition as he accused it of turning the House into a "warm-up arena" for elections and an outlet to vent out frustration after defeat.

Speaking to reporters outside Parliament ahead of the start of the Winter session, he said the House must not become a stage for political theatrics but a platform for constructive and result-driven debate, and offered to give the opposition tips to bring positivity in politics.

"There is plenty of room for drama; those who want to do it, keep doing it. Parliament is not a place for drama; it is a place for delivery," the prime minister said, targeting the Opposition for stalling parliamentary proceedings during the previous sessions.

"Even for raising slogans, you can do so across the country. You have spoken where you have been defeated. You can also speak where you are yet to face defeat. But in Parliament, the focus should be on policy, not slogans," Modi, buoyed by the landslide victory of the NDA in recent Bihar polls, said in a swipe at opposition parties, while



urging lawmakers to work with a sense of responsibility.

The Monsoon session of Parliament was virtually washed out over the Opposition's protests on Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar.

Opposition parties have also threatened to stall the Winter session of Parliament over the SIR exercise in nine states and three Union territories if the issue is not discussed in Parliament.

"For some time now, our Parliament is being used either as a warm-up arena for elections or as an outlet for frustration after defeat," Modi said. Referring to the drubbing of opposition parties in the Bihar polls, he said they were

perturbed by the electoral loss and unable to digest failure. "Defeat should not be the ground to create disruption. Victory should not convert into arrogance either," the prime minister said.

Highlighting the importance of informed debate, Modi urged members to offer constructive and accurate critiques where needed, so that citizens are better informed. "This work is demanding, but it is essential for the nation," he said.

The prime minister cautioned political parties against allowing frustration over electoral defeats to overshadow parliamentary proceedings. "The Winter Session must reflect balance, responsibility and the dignity expected from pub-

lic representatives," he said.

The record turnout witnessed in the Bihar elections is the biggest strength of democracy, he said, adding the Opposition too should fulfil its responsibility and come out of its "depression" after the loss in elections.

The prime minister said the game the Opposition has been playing for the last 10 years is no longer acceptable to the people. "They should change their strategy - I am ready to give them a few tips," Modi said. He urged all parties to recognise the purpose of Parliament and "come out of the frustration of defeat".

Prime Minister Modi added that he had heard statements of leaders of certain opposition parties that suggest their inability to accept electoral outcomes.

"There are one or two parties that are unable to accept their defeat. From the statements I heard yesterday, it seems that the loss has deeply troubled them," he said.

The prime minister also stressed that opportunities should be given to the new generation of Members of Parliament. "The House should benefit from their experiences, and through this House, the nation should also gain from their fresh perspective," Modi said. (PTI)

Tension outside West Bengal CEO's office amid BLOs' protest

KOLKATA, Dec 1: A section of BLOs, engaged in the SIR process in West Bengal, held a massive protest outside the CEO's office here on Monday over alleged excessive workload during the ongoing enumeration exercise, prompting the authorities to increase police deployment at the demonstration site.

Demonstrators also intensified their protest, raised slogans and attempted to breach the police barricades as a BJP delegation led by Leader of Opposition Suwendu Adhikari arrived there for a meeting with election officials. Adhikari and several other BJP MLAs, however, went ahead with their meeting with the officials. Minutes after the BJP delegation entered the CEO's office premises, protesting members of the BLO Adhikar Raksha Committee tried to break through the barricades, insisting that they too be allowed to go inside to submit a memorandum. Members of the committee shouted "go back" slogans targeting the opposition leader, triggering sharp verbal exchanges with BJP workers who had also gathered outside.

The BLO forum members, who have been protesting for days demanding better working conditions for booth-level officers (BLOs), have been seeking a two-month extension for the deadline of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and compensation for the families of deceased BLOs.

Officials said the sit-in had so far witnessed "limited participation" from actual BLOs, but the crowd grew larger as the standoff intensified. Police had erected multiple layers of barricades and deployed additional forces ahead of the visit of Adhikari. Inside the CEO's office, Adhikari submitted a memorandum and raised a series of demands, including the removal of "superannuated IAS officers", exclusion of EROs who are not of SDO rank, and deletion of names of what he described as "Bangladeshi Muslims" from electoral rolls. (PTI)

Sitharaman moves bills in LS to levy excise on tobacco, cess on pan masala post GST cess ends

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday moved two new bills in the Lok Sabha that look to re-purpose levies on 'sin goods' such as tobacco, pan masala and related products ahead of the scheduled phaseout of the GST compensation cess levied on them.

The Central Excise (Amendment) Bill seeks to levy excise duty on tobacco and related products, while "The Health Security National Security Cess Bill, 2025" would be applicable on manufacturing of pan masala and other goods that the government may notify.

The bills, introduced amid din in the Lok Sabha as Opposition members protested demanding a discussion on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, may be taken up for discussion in the House on Tuesday.

TMC member Saugata Ray opposed introduction of the two bills saying that tobacco is harmful but the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill does not mention that. With regard to the Health Security National Security Cess Bill, 2025, Ray said that since cess proceeds are not shared with states he opposes the bill.

While the revenues from levy of

excise on tobacco would be part of the divisible pool of tax revenues, the collection from the health and national security cess would go towards funding public health initiatives and national security while maintaining high taxation on 'sin goods'.

The Central Excise (Amendment) Bill provides for a new central excise duty on tobacco products like cigarette, chewing tobacco, cigars, hookahs, zarda, and scented tobacco, replacing the existing compensation cess.

The bill seeks to levy excise duty on cigars / cheroots / cigarettes in the range of ₹ 5,000-11,000 per 1,000 sticks depending on the length. Also, it proposes levy of 60-70 per cent on unmanufactured tobacco and 100 per cent on nicotine and inhalation products.

This will be over and above the 40 per cent GST rate that would be applicable on sin goods.

Currently, tobacco and pan masala attract 28 per cent GST, plus a compensation cess.

"We are on track to complete the loan repayment and end the compensation cess within this fiscal," a government source said, without disclosing the timeline as to when the cess levy

would cease to exist.

At the time of the introduction of the GST on July 1, 2017, a compensation cess mechanism was put in place for 5 years till June 30, 2022, to make up for the revenue loss suffered by states on account of GST implementation.

The levy of compensation cess was later extended by four years till March 31, 2026, and the collection is being used to repay the loan that the Centre took to compensate states for the GST revenue loss during the Covid period.

On September 3, 2025, the GST Council had decided to continue with the compensation cess on tobacco and pan masala till the loans taken are repaid.

On other luxury items, the compensation cess ended on September 22, when the GST rate rationalisation was implemented with just 2 slabs of 5 and 18 per cent. A 40 per cent rate was fixed for ultra-luxury goods, aerated drinks and other demerit goods.

The Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Health Security National Security Cess Bill, 2025 will ensure that the tax incidence on sin goods like tobacco and pan masala remains the same after discontinuation of the compensation cess. (PTI)

Welcoming new chairman, Kharge refers to Dhankhar's 'sudden' exit in RS

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge on Monday while welcoming Chairman C P Radhakrishnan on his first day of chairing the House proceedings made a mention of the "unexpected and sudden exit" of his predecessor Jagdeep Dhankhar that triggered sharp reactions from the treasury benches.

In his brief speech, Kharge urged the Chairman to maintain a balance between both sides and allow the opposition members also to raise their issues in the House. He also recalled that Radhakrishnan belonged to a Congress family as his uncle represented the Coimbatore constituency as a Congress member, which he later succeeded.

Kharge also referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's statement at the beginning of the Winter Session, and said they would respond later.

Assuring the Chairman of his party's cooperation in the conduct of House proceedings, Kharge said the Congress "staunchly stands by constitutional values and time-honoured Parliamentary traditions".

"Be assured of our cooperation in the conduct of proceedings".

He, however, added, "Fair and impartial conduct of proceedings, providing just opportunity to members of each party, is essential for credibility of this office".

Referring to the sudden exit of Dhankhar, who had resigned from the post of Vice-President on July 21 over health issues, Kharge said he is constrained to refer to bring up the matter.

"It was a completely unexpected and sudden exit from the office of Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, which is unexpected in the annals of the parliamentary history. I was disheartened that this House did not get an opportunity to give him a farewell," he said, triggering an uproar from the treasury benches.

Kharge also mentioned that Radhakrishnan is related to former three-term Lok Sabha MP CK Kuppuswamy, who was a member of the Congress.

"It is better if you keep a balance between both sides. I wish you a successful term... The background you come from was mentioned by the PM, but you should also not forget you are from a Congress family," he said.

"Secondly, PM gave a statement outside (Parliament). He attacked us indirectly as well, we will reply to it here..." he added.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, meanwhile, slammed the Leader of Opposition for mentioning Dhankhar's resignation on the "solemn occasion".

"This is a very solemn occasion... The Prime Minister has made very dignified remarks as part of the felicitation event... Why did the honourable Leader of Opposition refer to a case which was not necessary to be raised at this moment..." Rijiju said. "The language you used for the former chairman, the way you insulted him, the motion you served, we still have that copy..." he said. He was referring to a motion for the removal of the Vice-President submitted by Opposition parties when Dhankhar was in office.

Leader of the House JP Nadda also intervened, urging members to maintain the dignity of the occasion. He also referred to the loss faced by the opposition alliance, including Congress, in the recent Bihar assembly polls.

"This program is a pious occasion. We should maintain the dignity of the occasion. The issue that the Leader of Opposition raised, if we start discussing this, it is irrelevant... We will also have to mention that you brought a no-confidence motion against him twice. It is an obstacle in a good and congenial environment debate which is going on," Nadda said. (PTI)

India delivers 53 tonnes of relief material to Sri Lanka, over 2000 stranded Indians brought back

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Bolstering its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka under Operation Sagar Bandhu, India has delivered 53 tonnes of relief material to it via air and sea since November 28, while more than 2,000 stranded Indians have been brought back from the cyclone-hit island nation, the government said on Monday. "NDRF teams continue to carry out search and rescue operations in various severely affected and isolated regions of Sri Lanka, assisting flood-hit families and ensuring their immediate safety. Over 150 persons have been rescued and assisted in these combined operations, which are continuing," the Ministry of External Affairs said.

In the wake of Cyclone Ditwah, which has

caused severe flooding, loss of life and widespread disruption across Sri Lanka, India launched Operation Sagar Bandhu on November 28 to provide urgent search and rescue and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) support to "our closest maritime neighbour," it said. New Delhi has delivered aid to Colombo both through sea and aerial routes, using Indian Air Force's transport aircraft and frontline naval platforms. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in a post on X on Monday, said, "INS Sukanya enters Trincomalee with relief materials. #OperationSagarBandhu".

The Indian vessel, carrying humanitarian aid, had left from Visakhapatnam earlier, a senior official said on Saturday evening. In coordina-

tion with the Sri Lanka Air Force, Chetak helicopters from India Navy's aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and Mi-17 helicopters of the IAF conducted extensive rescue operations, airlifting stranded people, including pregnant women, infants, and those critically injured, the MEA said. "Rescued persons included nationals of Sri Lanka, India, Germany, Slovenia, United Kingdom, South Africa, Poland, Belarus, Iran, Australia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh," the MEA said in a statement. Soon after the cyclone struck, the Government of India, in coordination with the Sri Lankan authorities, immediately handed 9.5 tons of emergency rations from two Indian Navy ships -- INS Vikrant and frigate INS Udayagiri -- in Colombo. (PTI)

Air pollution crisis needs regular monitoring, not customary hearing in winter: SC

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: The Supreme Court on Monday said the air pollution issue in the Delhi-NCR cannot be treated as a "customary" case to be listed only during the winter months, noting that it will be taken twice in a month to find out short and long-term solutions to the menace.

In a significant shift from the usual narrative, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said, "The issue of stubble burning should not unnecessarily become a political issue or an issue of ego."

Questioning the usual blame on stubble burning as the key contributor to air pollution in Delhi-NCR, CJI Kant, who comes from a farmer's family at Hissar in Haryana, asked, "Stubble burning was there during COVID, but why could people still see clear blue skies? This suggests other factors are at play."

"We do not want to comment on stubble burning as it is incorrect to pass the burden onto people (farmers) who are hardly represented in this court," the CJI said, adding, "The issue of stubble burning should not unnecessarily become a political issue or an issue of ego."

Seeking clarity on immediate and long-term measures, the CJI asked the Centre to spell out specific steps of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and others to apprise it of the short and long-term measures to tackle the menace of air pollution.

It listed the plea for hearing on December 10.

At the outset, the CJI said, "The

Delhi pollution matter cannot be listed customarily in the month of October and rather it should be taken up regularly at least twice a month."

Referring to Monday's Air Quality Index (AQI), he said, "My brother (Justice Bagchi) tells me that just because this item is listed today and heard... there is improvement in the AQI levels."

Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, appearing for the central government authorities, referred to key contributors of air pollution and said "stubble burning, vehicular pollution, construction dust, road dust and biomass burning have been named as contributors".

"I can give a detailed list on what steps have been taken under each of the heads," she said.

Hinting towards other contributing factors, the CJI said during COVID-19-induced lockdowns, stubble burning happened as usual but still blue skies and stars were visible to citizens.

"Why? Something to be thought about and other factors. We would like to have a report within a week on the measures taken to contain other factors," the bench said, adding it wanted to "see long-term and short-term plans". The CJI then referred to unplanned urban growth and rising aspirational population in the country and said, "None of the cities of the country were developed to accommodate this scale of population or with the thought that each home will have multiple cars. Let us see which measures are suggested to us and how these measures are implemented or are only on paper." (PTI)

New HIV infections nearly halved since 2010; AIDS-related deaths down by over 80%

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: India achieved 48.7 per cent decline in annual new HIV infections and 81.4 per cent reduction in AIDS-related deaths between 2010 and 2024, according to government data.

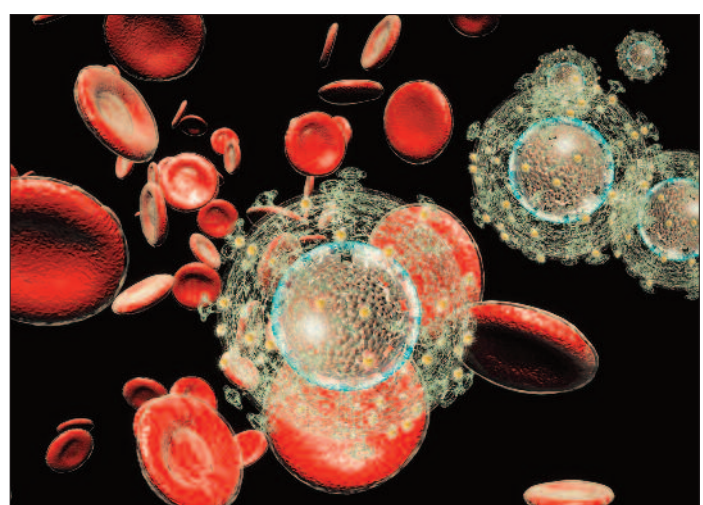
There has been a 74.6 per cent decline in mother-to-child HIV transmission, the data stated.

The HIV epidemic in India remains low nationally, with new infections and AIDS-related deaths declining faster than the global average, stated the India HIV estimation 2025 report.

All the same, certain states had a rising epidemic, potentially due to injecting drug use and casual heterosexual behaviour, it said.

"India is on track to attain SDG 3.3 of ending HIV-AIDS as a public health threat by 2030," the report said.

According to it, India had around 25.61 lakh people living with HIV (PLHIV) in 2024 with Maharashtra (3.99 lakh) having the



highest number of them, followed by Andhra Pradesh (3.10 lakh) and Karnataka (2.91 lakh). Of the total number, 13.97 lakh were male and 11.64 lakh were female.

Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Bihar, Gujarat, and Punjab have between 1 lakh to 2

lakh PLHIV. Together, these nine states have 74 per cent of the total PLHIV burden in India.

An annual new HIV incidence rate per 1,000 uninfected population was estimated at 0.05 (UB-0.03-0.08) nationally — males

0.05 and females -0.04.

The incidence rate was 0.06 among the young population. Mizoram had the highest estimated HIV incidence per 1,000 uninfected population, followed by Nagaland and Tripura, the report said. Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya were other states with an incidence rate of 0.20 or higher.

Annual new cases were estimated to decline nationally by around 48.70 per cent between 2010 and 2024 but increased by more than 400 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura. Globally, annual new infections had declined by 40 per cent between 2010 and 2024.

Annual AIDS-related mortality rate per 100,000 population was estimated nationally at 2.32 (men -2.91 vs women 1.70).

AIDS-related mortality per 100,000 population was highest in Manipur (15.49), Mizoram (10.88), and Nagaland (7.59), the report stated.

Annual AIDS-related deaths declined by 81.40 per cent between 2010 and 2024 in the country.

Such deaths have declined between these 14 years in nearly all states and UTs, except in Chandigarh, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, where more PLHIV died due to AIDS-related causes during 2024 as compared to 2010, it said.

Globally, annual AIDS-related deaths had declined by 54 per cent between 2010 and 2024.

According to officials, India continues to demonstrate substantial progress under the current phase of the National AIDS Control Programme.

HIV testing increased from 4.13 crore (2020-21) to 6.62 crore (2024-25), while access to antiretroviral treatment rose from 14.94 lakh to 18.60 lakh PLHIV in the same time period.

Viral load testing nearly doubled from 8.90 lakh to 15.98 lakh in the same period. (PTI)

BJP-ally IPFT to maintain separate political entity: Party president

AGARTALA, Dec 1: The Indigenous Peoples' Party of Tripura (IPFT), an ally of the BJP-led coalition government, would continue to remain a separate political entity to fight elections, a top party leader said on Monday.

The statement came days after the Tripura Motha Party (TMP) organised a rally under the banner of "One North East" in a bid to bring all regional political parties of the Northeast into a common umbrella to fight for a common cause.

"We had floated IPFT with a mission to achieve Tipraland (a separate state for TTAADC areas) in 2009. In 2021, another party (TMP) was formed, promising Greater Tipraland. The IPFT was invited to join the 'One North East' rally (on November 27). We had a meeting of the Central Working Committee (CWC) on Sunday and resolved that the party will continue to maintain a separate political entity," IPFT president Prem Kumar Reang said at a press conference on Monday.

He said the party favours contesting the upcoming elections to

Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) with the BJP and TMP jointly. At present, the three parties are part of the Manik Saha-led government in Tripura.

"In that case, we will seek seats as per our strength. As of now, we are of the view of contesting the ADC election even if an alliance is not maintained," he said.

The election to the tribal council is due in April this year.

Reang said the party will stage a day sit-in in Delhi to press for the passage of the 125th Constitution Amendment Bill seeking to empower the tribal council during the winter session of Parliament.

"The Tripura Assembly has already passed a resolution seeking renaming of TTAADC as Tripura Territorial Council and increase in the number of seats from 30 to 50. Besides, the state government also sought the passage of the 125th Constitution Amendment Bill by the Parliament. We are also demanding the passing of the Bill during the current session," he said. (PTI)

Nagaland celebrates 63rd Statehood Day

CM Rio calls for urgent political settlement

KOHIMA, Dec 1: Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Monday urged all stakeholders to expedite an "honourable, acceptable and inclusive" solution to the Naga political issue.

Addressing the 63rd Statehood Day celebration at the Secretariat Plaza here, Rio reaffirmed that the state government is "unwaveringly pursuing" an early settlement and highlighted the recent resolution of the Political Affairs Committee endorsing the Ungma Statement of August 23.

He appealed to Naga political groups, the Government of India, and tribal bodies to converge on a common ground and resume negotiations at the political level.

On the Eastern Nagaland issue, Rio said the state government had submitted its comments on the draft Memorandum of Settlement for the Frontier Nagaland Territory to the MHA and expressed hope for an early resolution.

The chief minister announced that the 26th Hornbill Festival, which will commence Monday evening, would showcase the largest-ever roster of six partner countries—Austria, Malta, Switzerland, Ireland, France, and the United Kingdom—alongside Arunachal Pradesh as a state partner.

He termed the festival a testament to Nagaland's "resilience, strength and cultural pride".

Rio highlighted major achievements across sectors, including youth and sports infrastructure, the launch of multiple AI and innovation initiatives, upgrades in higher

and technical education, trade and industry reforms, new connectivity projects, and health sector milestones such as progress in malaria elimination and the award-winning Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme.

He also welcomed the Centre's decision to relax the Protected Area Permit (PAP) regime during the Hornbill Festival, while reiterating the state's request for its permanent lifting.

The chief minister underscored rapid urbanisation, unveiling developments such as the Kohima Peace Memorial & Eco-Park, ongoing land acquisition for the planned 'Nagaki City' in Chümoukedima, and sanitation improvements through new vehicles for urban local bodies.

He also noted progress in agriculture, horticulture, sericulture, fisheries, coffee development, rural livelihoods under NSRLM, and border-area growth initiatives under DUDA.

"On this Statehood Day, let us work together to build a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future," Rio said.

The celebrations opened with ten contingents of armed and non-armed forces and village guards taking part in the march-past, led by Parade Commander Akihito X. Sumi, Deputy Commandant, 1st NAP Battalion, with Zareni Yanthan, Deputy SP, as second-in-command.

Marking the occasion, the chief minister also made several major inaugurations, digital launches, publications, cultural show-



cases, and civic initiatives.

Rio virtually inaugurated 120 Children and Adolescents Libraries with digital infrastructure and the Nagaland Scholarship Nodal Cell (NSNC) to streamline scholarship delivery. He also launched the State-Sync App for inter-departmental coordination and the Discover Kisama App to enhance tourism experiences.

To promote cultural preservation, Rio released the first phase of documented books on traditional attires and ornaments of 10 tribes, the Dream Nagaland Book under the disability empowerment mission, and publications under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, highlighting artisan skills.

Supporting media professionals, tablet computers were distributed to accredited journalists. The chief minister also flagged off 10 sanitation vehicles to urban local bodies to streamline waste management.

The programme featured special presentations including "Cantate Domino" by Cantabile and "Warrior's Call" by The Dream Team, followed by cultural performances from Meriema (Angami), Zhove (Chakhesang), Shena Old (Sumi), and Tikhir Cultural Troupe, Kohima. The event also included the inauguration of an exhibition titled "Journey of Nagaland Down the Decades", set up by the Directorate of Information & Public Relations. (PTI)

State, district level committees set up for rehabilitation of IDPs in Manipur

IMPHAL, Dec 1: The Manipur government on Monday said state and district level committees have been constituted to rehabilitate and resettle internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the northeastern state.

The committees, chaired by the chief secretary and deputy commissioners, have been tasked with monitoring and coordinating all rehabilitation and resettlement initiatives for IDPs, and addressing bottlenecks to ensure timely and efficient delivery of support, an official statement said.

"The government of Manipur has taken a significant step to strengthen the ongoing efforts for the rehabilitation and resettlement of IDPs in the state by constituting state level and district level committees with immediate effect," it said.

The panels are designed to ensure "unified decision-making, enhance inter-departmental coordination, and address systemic issues that may affect the overall progress of rehabilitation and resettlement efforts", the statement said.

"This structured intervention is expected to streamline processes, enhance inter-departmental coordination, and ensure that assistance reaches families," it said.

The displaced people have been staying at different relief camps here in the wake of the ethnic violence that broke out in 2023.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis in Manipur since May 2023. (PTI)

Nagaland sets up Tourist Information Centre-cum-ILP facilitation counters

DIMAPUR, Dec 1: With the 10-day long Hornbill Festival all set to begin from December 1, the Tourism department of Nagaland, in collaboration with the district administrations of Dimapur and Chümoukedima, has set up a Tourist Information Centre-cum-Inner Line Permit (ILP) facilitation counters at the senior tourist officer's office, Dimapur, and at the Dimapur Airport.

These Centres will facilitate and issue offline Tourist Inner Line Permits (ILP) for visitors entering Nagaland.

Tourist Information Centre, Dimapur, is conveniently located within walking distance from the railway station and the bus stand. The centre caters to tourists arriving by road and rail while the Tourist Information Counter, Dimapur Airport, located at the arrival area of Dimapur Airport, will cater to tourists arriving by air.

Visitors may also find the locations on Google Maps by selecting "Tourist Information Centre" or reach the helpline at +91-6909636762 for assistance. The Tourist Information Counters process only offline Tourist ILPs. Travellers may continue to apply online at <https://ilp.nagaland.gov.in/>.

The Tourist Information Centre-cum-ILP facilitation counter at Dimapur was formally activated by the deputy commissioner of Dimapur, Dr. Tinojongshi Chang, along with ADC, Dimapur Zakabo V Rotkha, senior tourist officer, Dimapur, Keholeno Kennao, and other officials and staff of the Tourism department.

Earlier, the Tourist Information Counter at Dimapur Airport was launched by the deputy commissioner of Chümoukedima, Polan John, in the presence of officials from the Tourism department. (NNN)

Lok Sabha passes Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Second Amendment) Bill

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: The Lok Sabha on Monday passed the Manipur GST Bill to replace an Ordinance promulgated to implement the GST 2.0 reforms in the North-Eastern state, amid protests from the Opposition on the SIR issue.

The Lok Sabha passed The Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Second Amendment) Bill, 2025, after a brief discussion and a statement by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The statutory resolution, moved by RSP member N K Premachandra, disapproving of the Manipur Goods and Services Tax (Second

Amendment) Ordinance, which was promulgated on October 7, 2025, was rejected by a voice vote as Opposition members protested in the well of the House demanding discussion on the special intensive revision of electoral rolls in 12 states and Union Territories.

TDP member Krishna Prasad Tenneti, who was in the Chair, called Premachandra to speak on the resolution, but the RSP member told the presiding officer that the House was not in order.

The Chair then called BJP member Shashank Mani, who spoke in favour of the Bill. The Bill was then passed by a voice vote.

Earlier, Sitharaman said the Bill seeks to give effect to decisions taken at the 56th meeting of the GST Council.

The 56th GST Council, comprising the Centre and states, had decided to rationalise GST rates on about 375 items by merging the 5, 12, 18 and 28 per cent slabs into 2 - 5 and 18 per cent. A 40 per cent rate has been proposed on ultra-luxury items.

The new tax rates were implemented on September 22.

To give effect to the GST rate changes on goods and services, the state GST laws were required to be amended. (PTI)

CM Rio renews demand to lift Protected Area Permit regime from Nagaland

KOHIMA, Dec 1: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio appealed to the Centre for lifting the Protected Area Permit (PAP) regime from the state, maintaining that Nagaland must be treated differently based on ground realities.

Speaking at the 'Nagaland United: A Gathering of Faith, Hope and Revival' held at Indira Gandhi Stadium here on Sunday, Rio said that foreign dignitaries, including evangelist Franklin Graham, continue to face difficulties as PAP clearances are not issued on time.

Graham was supposed to be the main speaker at the programme and also attend the inaugural session of the 10-day Hornbill Festival, which will start on Monday. But he could not attend the programme after his travel documentation and clearance were delayed.

PAP is a travel document required by foreigners to visit certain sensitive areas in the country.

Rio had on November 18 and 28 written to the Union Home Minister Amit Shah, requesting early clearance of visas for foreign tourists, and urging that the PAP regime for Nagaland be lifted permanently, which was reimposed from December last year.

The CM said that although the Centre has relaxed the PAP requirement for Nagaland from December 1 to 10 to facilitate the Hornbill Festival, the temporary measure "does not solve the larger issue".

He said the state Cabinet reviewed the matter in January, and several representations were sent to the Centre since the

re-imposition of PAP on December 17 for Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.

"The state government will continue to pursue the matter for complete and permanent lifting of the PAP regime for Nagaland. Our state deserves to be treated differently, based on the reality on the ground," Rio asserted.

Welcoming Rev Robert Cunville of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA), Rio recalled the historic 1972 "Billy Graham Crusade" at Khuochiezie, which he had attended as a youth.

He lauded Cunville's long-standing ministry in the Northeast and extended warm greetings to the visiting BGEA team, asking them to convey Nagaland's goodwill to Franklin Graham.

The chief minister also appreciated the KBPF, NBCC and the Nagaland Joint Christian Forum for organising the programme.

Emphasising unity, Rio urged citizens to uphold peace and coexistence, recalling how the gospel and education transformed Naga society from a history of conflict to a community anchored in faith and progress.

As the festive season approaches, he called for renewed commitment to brotherhood, harmony and fellowship.

Delivering a powerful gospel message, Cunville urged believers to pause from the world and listen to God's voice.

Thousands of people from all age groups filled the stadium, joining in worship, prayer and reflection during the special revival service. (PTI)

Lok Sabha adjourns for the day; Bill on Manipur GST passed amid din

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Monday amid unrelenting protests by opposition parties demanding a debate on the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls.

Amid the uproar, a bill to implement amendments to the GST law in Manipur was passed after a brief discussion.

The Bill was introduced earlier in the day by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to replace an ordinance on the issue. The state is under President's rule, hence Parliament is using its powers to pass the legislation.

Before being adjourned for the day around 2.20 PM, the House saw two earlier adjournments during the Question Hour in the morning and later in the afternoon.

The first day of the Winter session, which will have 15 sittings, saw frequent disruptions. Several Opposition members trooped into the Well shouting slogans and protesting over SIR, as they have been demanding a debate on the issue. During the 12 minutes of the Zero Hour, Sitharaman introduced three bills besides tabling supplementary demands for grants for 2025-2026.

Two bills to levy excise duty on tobacco and tobacco products, as well as a new cess on the manufacture of pan masala, were introduced. They are the Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and the Health Security and National Security Cess Bill, 2025.

The Election Commission had announced SIR in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Among these, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, and West Bengal will go to polls in 2026. (PTI)

E-AUCTION FOR "ADVERTISING ASSETS" OVER LUMDING DIVISION		
E-Auction for "Advertising Assets" over Lumding Division for a period of three (03) years. Details are as under. Auction Catalogue No.: ADVT-LMG-46-25; Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): 10:30 hrs. on 15-12-2025; Auction Close Date & Time: 17:30 hrs. on 15-12-2025; Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee; Trips/Days: 1096.		
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	ADVT-LMG-TGE-OH-367-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement right at Thekeraguri (TGE) station circulating area for a period of 3 years.
AA/2	ADVT-LMG-DML-OH-401-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Dharamtul (DML) station circulating area for a period of 03 years.
AA/3	ADVT-LMG-MBO-OH-376-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Mairabari (MBO) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/4	ADVT-LMG-SCE-OH-373-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Senchoa (SCE) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/5	ADVT-LMG-HBN-OH-371-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Haibargaon (HBN) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/6	ADVT-LMG-DBZ-OH-381-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Dhing Bazar (DBZ) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/7	ADVT-LMG-RUP-OH-379-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Rupahigaon (RUP) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/8	ADVT-LMG-CPK-OH-366-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement right at Chaparmukh (CPK) circulating area for a period of 03 years.
AA/9	ADVT-LMG-JKB-OH-372-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Jakhlabandha (JKB) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/10	ADVT-LMG-KKET-OH-369-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Kamrup Khetri (KKET) circulating area for a period of 03 years.
AA/11	ADVT-LMG-RAHA-OH-378-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Raha (RAHA) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/12	ADVT-LMG-BRHU-OH-370-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Barahu (BRHU) Railway station for a period of 03 years.
AA/13	ADVT-LMG-KYQ-OH-356-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	Proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Kamakhya (KYQ) Railway station (Circulating area).
AA/14	ADVT-LMG-JID-OH-382-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Jagiroad (JID) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/15	ADVT-LMG-BEE-OH-380-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Bebejia (BEE) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/16	ADVT-LMG-SHTT-OH-377-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Silghat Town (SHTT) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/17	ADVT-LMG-AONI-OH-375-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Amoni (AONI) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AA/18	ADVT-LMG-AJRE-OH-368-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement right at Aujuri (AJRE) station circulating area for a period of 3 years.
AA/19	ADVT-LMG-NGAN-OH-374-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Nagaon (NGAN) Railway Station for a period of 03 years.
AB/1	ADVT-LMG-BTDR-OH-406-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Batadroad (BTDR) station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/2	ADVT-LMG-DIU-OSN-408-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Dhing (DIU) station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/3	ADVT-LMG-SHTT-OSN-398-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Silghat Town (SHTT) Railway station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/4	ADVT-LMG-JKB-OSN-397-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Jakhlabandha (JKB) Railway station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/5	ADVT-LMG-BRHU-OSN-390-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Barahu (BRHU) Railway Station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/6	ADVT-LMG-KKET-OSN-388-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Kamrup Khetri (KKET) Railway Station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/7	ADVT-LMG-DML-OSN-385-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Dharamtul (DML) Railway Station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/8	ADVT-LMG-TGE-OSN-384-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Thekeraguri (TGE) Railway Station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/9	ADVT-LMG-SMGR-OSN-389-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Samaguri (SMGR) Railway Station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/10	ADVT-LMG-DMV-OSN-352-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	Proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Dimapur (DMV) Railway Station premise.
AB/11	ADVT-LMG-MBO-OSN-409-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Mairabari (MBO) station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/12	ADVT-LMG-RAHA-OSN-392-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Raha (RAHA) station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/13	ADVT-LMG-AJRE-OSN-386-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Aujuri (AJRE) Railway Station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/14	ADVT-LMG-RUP-OSN-400-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Rupahigaon (RUP) Station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/15	ADVT-LMG-DGX-OSN-402-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Dagaon (DGX) station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/16	ADVT-LMG-BKS-OSN-405-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Balikotia (BKS) station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/17	ADVT-LMG-SCE-OSN-394-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Senchoa (SCE) station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/18	ADVT-LMG-JRX-OSN-403-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Junigaon (JRX) station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/19	ADVT-LMG-BEE-OSN-393-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Bebejia (BEE) station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/20	ADVT-LMG-JID-OSN-387-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Jagiroad (JID) Railway Station premise for a period of 03 years.
AB/21	ADVT-LMG-DBZ-OSN-407-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Dhing Bazar (DBZ) station premise for a period of 03 years.
Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module of IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in .		
Divisional Railway Manager (C), Lumding		
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY "SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"		

I REACT TO THE TIMES I LIVE IN, SAYS VIDHU VINOD CHOPRA ON HIS FILMMAKING



Filmmaker Vidhu Vinod Chopra says his films have always been shaped by the world around him, whether it was the 1989 gangster drama "Parinda" or his most recent movie "12th Fail".

Speaking at a session during the ongoing 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) on Saturday, Chopra said his films are not manufactured but an expression of what he sees and feels about the times.

"I react to times; an artist is not independent of the times he lives in. Shakespeare wrote what he wrote because he is doing plays there, and Van Gogh, painted, what he (wanted to). I'm a reflection of society. For an artist, the right thing is to represent what he's going through in his work," Chopra said.

"Unfortunately, now it's all about, Sanjay Dutt told me, 'You're the only one who uses paper and pencil to write scripts.' Now they just say, 'proposal, this is sold to Netflix, Amazon, this is sold to this, profit. They don't even write scripts anymore, which is very sad. It shows in our cinema. The content decides and determines how you're going to prepare that film," he added.

The director said he made "12th Fail", which won the best feature national film award recently, as he was "sick and tired" with the corruption around him.

"'12th Fail' came from the level of corruption in our system, it was a reaction to that. I'm personally sick and tired of the level of corruption. I'm sure everybody's trying to make sure that it kind of calms down a bit. But '12th Fail' was my attempt at saying that, 'Let's be honest for a change.'"

"When I made the film, I was like, 'If I can convert 1 per cent population, 1 per cent bureaucracy to 1 per cent political system to honesty instead of dishonesty, I would have succeeded,'" the filmmaker said.

The film, starring Vikrant Massey in the lead, is based on the life of Manoj Kumar Sharma who over-

came extreme poverty and educational setbacks to become an IPS officer. Massey won the national film award for best actor, an honour he shared with superstar Shah Rukh Khan.

Chopra also revisited the making of "Parinda", which follows Kishan (Jackie Shroff), a loyal aide of underworld don Anna (Nana Patekar), whose world fractures when his younger brother Karan (Kapoor) returns from the US and seeks revenge for his friend's murder.

The filmmaker said the film's central message was clear to him from the start — "violence begets violence" and he revealed that many people wanted him to change the film's ending in which Kapoor and Madhuri Dixit's characters are killed.

"The whole idea of 'Parinda' was that violence leads to Anil and Madhuri being massacred and Jackie's left alone in the movie. When 'Parinda' was to release, all the distributors got together and got Rs 11 lakhs in cash for me. At the time, I didn't have money to have dinner, so Rs. 11 lakhs (was huge).

"And they said, 'Please don't kill Anil and Madhuri, kill Jackie, and we will give you Rs. 11 lakhs, if you can turn it around'. I said, 'I can't do

that' because what I'm saying in the film is that violence begets violence."

Chopra further shared that a distributor from Punjab was harrowed after seeing the reaction of the audience towards the climax.

"I still remember my Punjab distributor calling me from Jalandhar, and all shows were full. Just before that 'Ram Lakhani' was released. He called me during the interval of the film and said, 'Sir, we're ruined, you've ruined us?'"

"I said, 'The film is yet to get over, it's just interval point', and he replied, 'Anil and Madhuri are getting killed and people are clapping, (thinking) this is a dream sequence'. So, that film was made at that time because that is what who I was," he said.

On a lighter said, Chopra credited his wife Anupama Chopra, a noted film critic, for bringing a sense of "calmness" to his life.

"When I made Parinda, I was a very violent man myself, I'm far less violent now, thanks to Anupama, who married me and stayed married for 30 years. She has calmed me down. Her mother is here. I hope this will go back to her, but this is true," he said. (PTI)

SRK PAYS TRIBUTE TO TERROR VICTIMS: 'NOTHING CAN SHAKE INDIA IF WE HAVE PEACE AMONG US'



Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan has paid tribute to victims and security personnel of major terror attacks and urged people to rise above divisions to uphold peace, saying that when there is peace, "nothing can shake or defeat India" and break the spirit of its citizens.

Speaking at the 2025 Global Peace Honours event here, the 60-year-old actor remembered the people who lost their lives in 26/11 Mumbai attacks in 2008, the Pahalgam terror attack in April this year and the recent blast near Red Fort in Delhi.

"My humble tribute to the innocent people who lost their lives in the 26/11 terrorist attack, the Pahalgam terrorist attack, and the recent Delhi blasts and my respectful salute to our brave security personnel who were martyred in these attacks," he said.

The "Jawan" actor also saluted the families of the martyrs for their courage.

"I want to salute the mothers who gave birth to such brave sons. I salute the spirit of their fathers; I salute the courage of their partners. Even though the soldiers were on the battlefield, you also fought that battle with immense bravery," he said.

SRK said India has never bowed down in the face of adversity as the country's strength lies in unity. "No one has been able to stop us, defeat us or snatch our peace away because as long as this country's superheroes, the men in uniform, stand strong, peace and security will always stay in our land," he said.

Khan said peace is "a beautiful thing", something the whole world constantly strives for as it leads to "better thinking, ideas and innovation".

"Peace is the revolution needed for a better world. Let us all move together towards peace. Let us rise above caste, creed and discrimination and walk the path of humanity, so that the sacrifices of our brave soldiers do not go in vain. If we have peace amongst us, nothing can shake India, nothing can defeat India and nothing can break the spirit of us Indians," he said.

The actor also recited a set of lines dedicated to the country's soldiers.

"When someone asks you what you do, say with pride, 'I protect the country.' If someone asks how much you earn, smile gently and say, 'I earn the blessings of 1.4 billion people.' And if they still ask whether you ever feel afraid, look them in the eye and say, 'Those who attack us are the ones who feel fear.'" Khan said. (PTI)

'Amaran' a proud feather on my shoulder, don't feel burden of its success: Rajkumar Periasamy

Film director Rajkumar Periasamy says he feels overwhelmed by the love people have showered on his war drama movie "Amaran", a war drama starring Sivakarthikeyan and Sai Pallavi.

The 2024 Tamil-language film, which served as the opening film of the Indian Panorama section of the ongoing International Film Festival of India (IFFI), is based on the true story of Indian Army officer Major Mukund Varadarajan, played by Sivakarthikeyan.

The story, adapted from a chapter of the book "India's Most Fearless: True Stories of Modern Military Heroes", chronicles Varadarajan's journey from college to his military service in Kashmir, and the sacrifice that he makes during a counter-terrorism operation in 2014.

Pallavi essays the role of

Mukund's wife Indhu Rebecca Varghese, who received the Ashoka Chakra award on behalf of her late husband.

"I don't remember the process of 'Amaran', or the screenplay order. By the time I gave away the film from post production centers for the release until then I was carrying the film within me. Once, I gave it out, then the audience owns it and we are burden free. I don't have the burden of success on me. I'll wear 'Amaran' as a proud feather on my shoulder," Periasamy, who made his debut with the 2017 Tamil film "Rangoon", told PTI.

"Since, the time it was released the love that has been showered upon the film, cast and crew, and me, is overwhelming. When I look back, the process for the film was more than six to six-and-half years, so it took a lot

of time, but it was worthwhile," he said.

The filmmaker further said he is glad viewers connected with the film for its true purpose — telling the real-life story of a soldier who sacrificed his life for the country.

"Every time I receive an award or felicitation or I'm at a screening, I only think of the sacrifices made by our Indian army, soldiers, and the families of the soldiers," Periasamy said.

The film, which released across the country on October 31, 2024, reportedly earned over ₹ 300 crore at the box office. It is produced by veteran actor Kamal Haasan's banner Raaj Kamal Films International.

The filmmaker said he feels "blessed" to have had two exceptional performers — Pallavi and Sivakarthikeyan — leading the film.

"I wrote the film during

lockdown. There's a scene where Indu walks on the stage wearing a sari, until then she is tomboyish. While I was writing the sari scene, I only thought of Sai Pallavi as a character, I didn't know if she would agree to it. But she said yes after I gave her the narration," Periasamy said.

For the role of Varadarajan, Sivakarthikeyan was the only actor who came to the director's mind.

"Both Siva and I knew each other beforehand, we both started our career with TV and so I had that access. I found him right for the role because he has not done any such character before," he said.

Periasamy reportedly is set to direct Dhanush in his next movie.

When asked about the project, the filmmaker said, "My films will always have theme of humane (stories), and a lot of realism." (PTI)



NIMRAT KAUR ON JOINING 'THE FAMILY MAN 3': MEERA IS A 'BITTER CHOCOLATE' OF A CHARACTER

Kaur said.

The 43-year-old actor praised the show's team, saying the series has always portrayed its antagonists in a complex, layered way, not as simple "villains".

"What wins your heart on the page is bound to work, also you don't know whether to feel bad for the so-called antagonists or should you judge them. So, at the end, you're almost left confused. And that is something which I find very therapeutic," she said.

Kaur further said she didn't judge her character, Meera, irrespective of her negative traits.

"When a part comes to you, and when you're approaching a project, a part can't be judged, (otherwise) it rids you of your judgments in life. You have to let go of those labels — good, bad, ugly. The fun of playing a character is that you can't meet a Meera or a Rukma in real life.

"These are characters that you just have to build from the page that is given to you, with the vision that the directors have and the fun that the co-actors bring to the set, and then hope that you can do justice to it. So, I'm always looking forward to such parts, I really thrive on a set like this," she added.

The third season of "The Family Man" will see actor Priyamani reprising her role of Suchi, wife of Srikant Ti-

wari.

Looking back at the earlier seasons, Priyamani said her family and friends immediately recognised the authenticity in her performance.

"A lot of the scenes that are between Srikant and Suchi, especially where they have disagreements, are very real. I remember telling Raj sir and DK sir in season one, whenever Srikant and Suchi have any sort of disagreement or argument, I can relate to it so much because such kind of disagreements happen in real life as well," she said.

"When my family even saw the seasons, they said, 'This is so real, this is so you, we can see you reacting like this in real life'. So, it is so real that a lot of people, my friends have texted me saying, 'This is how we probably argue with our family members, our respective partners'. It is a part and parcel of who we are," she added.

According to the actor, the questions she faces the most from fans is "Why did you cheat Srikant?" or "What really happened in Lonavala?"

But Priyamani is in no mood to give away anything - not even a hint about whether season three finally answers those fan obsessions.

"The Family Man 3" also brings back actors Sharib Hashmi, Priyamani, Ashlesha Thakur, Vedant Sinha, Shreya Dhanwanthary, and Gul Panag. (PTI)

Actor Nimrat Kaur says stepping into the role of Meera in the new season of "The Family Man" was a thrilling opportunity to embrace a character shaped by charm, danger and unapologetic ruthlessness.

In the third chapter of the spy-action thriller, which premiered on Prime Video on Friday, Kaur's Meera emerges as one of the key antagonists alongside Jaideep Ahlawat's Rukma, with the duo pitted against Manoj Bajpayee's Srikant Tiwari.

Kaur, known for films like "The Lunchbox", "Airlift", and "Dasvi", described her character as a "bitter chocolate".

"She is a bitter chocolate, delicious as a character because she is un-achievable for a common person... The fun of playing something like that is the flamboyance, the

flair, and just the unapologetic ruthlessness that you can have fun with. It's just like intoxication," Kaur told PTI in an interview.

Kaur said she had never received an excited reaction to any of her upcoming projects as she did when she mentioned she was part of "The Family Man".

The actor revealed that initially she would answer quietly because she is generally a low-key person.

"Later, I understood that I'm getting such a big reaction from everyone and anyone, family, friends, and people, anywhere you meet them. Then I started showing off."

"Whenever someone would ask me, 'What are you doing next?', I would say, 'The Family Man' (shows attitude). It's been the most anticipated piece of work that I've been able to talk about, and that is a matter of honour."

FIH JR WC

Untested India look to polish grey areas against Switzerland

MADURAI, Dec 1: In-form but untested Indian team will look to fine-tune its grey areas while continuing its winning run against Switzerland in the final group league encounter ahead of the knockout stage at the FIH Junior Men's World Cup here on Tuesday.

Both India and Switzerland are unbeaten in Pool B with two wins from as many matches but the hosts are on top of the table by virtue of superior goal difference. It was a goal-fest for the Indians in the first two games in Chennai as they beat Chile 7-0 before thrashing Oman 17-0.

Switzerland, on the other hand, beat Oman 4-0 and then eked out a narrow 3-2 win over Chile.

And come Tuesday, the world no.2 side is expected to get the better of Switzerland comfortably.

But some concerns remain for India ahead of the knockout stage. In the first two games, the Indian defence was hardly tested as goalkeepers Prince Deep Singh and Bikramjit Singh were least bothered.

The defence led by skipper Rohit too would like to be more in action going into the business end of the tournament.

Another area of concern for India would be conversion dragflick goals from penalty cor-



ners. Skipper Rohit, the team's main dragflicker, looked a pale shadow of himself and needs to up his game.

It is not that India didn't score from penalty corners but most of the goals came from indirect variations and rebounds.

The most heartening aspect of India's outing in the first two games is the performance of their midfield and forwardline.

Dilraj Singh is the joint top-scorer of the tournament with six goals, including a hat-trick against Oman, while Arshdeep Singh too scored three goals in the last

match. The likes of Manmeet Singh, Ajeet Yadav and Ingalemba Luwang Thouraojam too have been among goals.

The match against Switzerland is India's only game in Madurai before they return to Chennai for their remaining campaign.

And it remains to be seen how the Indians acclimatise to the conditions here.

But India's assistant coach Birendra Lakra, who is in charge of communicating with the players from the dug out, is not too much bothered.

"Definitely the ground will

change but we will have the same weather conditions. We also got two days time to practice and adjust."

Despite being considered as clear favourites, Lakra warned the players against taking Switzerland lightly.

"Switzerland is a good team, they also have won two matches, so it won't be that easy against Switzerland. But we will analyse them and make our strategy," he said.

"To play in the quarterfinals we need to win the next match. So we are not thinking about quarterfinals now, our focus is on Switzerland match."

Meanwhile in other matches on Tuesday, Spain will play Namibia in Madurai, Belgium will face Egypt (Madurai), Chile will take on Oman (Chennai), Netherlands vs Austria (Madurai), France vs Bangladesh (Chennai), England vs Malaysia (Madurai) and Australia vs Korea (Chennai).

The ongoing 14th edition of the FIH Junior World Cup is the largest ever with 24 teams vying for top honours in Chennai and Madurai.

The teams have been split into six groups and the pool winners and two best-second placed sides will progress to quarterfinals. (PTI)

Most 38-year-olds hate leaving home but Kohli eager to be out there: Dale Steyn

RANCHI, Dec 1: Most 38-year-olds would hate leaving home but Virat Kohli's commitment to the game remains unmatched, feels former South Africa pacer Dale Steyn following the Indian superstar's 52nd ODI hundred in the series opener against the Proteas.

Despite retiring from T20s and Tests, Kohli has shown that his ODI game remains unimpacted.

"When you speak to most 37 or 38-year-olds, they say they hate leaving home, their dog, their kids. But he's in a place mentally where he's eager to be out there playing for India. You can see it when he's running between the wickets, fielding and diving. He's mentally young, fresh, and wants to be here," Steyn told JioStar.

"He's played over 300 ODIs in 15-16 years, so the experience is inside him. It's in his body and mind. Even if he arrived here after three days of rain, it wouldn't have affected his preparation. He's mentally strong, visualises well, and can see the ball onto the bat. That's what the best in the world do.

"They back themselves because they've been out there so many times. A key thing he said is that he's excited about playing," Steyn added.

Following his 83rd international hundred, Kohli had spoken about his mindset and preparation at this stage of his career.

"I have never been a believer of a lot of preparation. All my cricket has been mental. I work physically very hard, as long as my fitness levels are up and I am feeling well, it's good," said Kohli. (PTI)

RS lauds women's cricket, kabaddi, blind women's cricket team for winning World Cups



NEW DELHI, Dec 1: The Upper House of the Parliament on Monday lauded the country's women's cricket team, women kabaddi team and women's blind cricket team for winning their respective World Cup tournaments.

Rajya Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan said the achievements of women sportspersons underscore the growing excellence of Indian women in diverse sporting arenas.

"Our nation has created history by winning the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup for the first time, defeating South Africa by 52 runs in the final match held at Navi Mumbai on the 2nd of November 2025. Our women's cricket team, led by Ms Harmanpreet Kaur, delivered a magnificent all-round performance to achieve this landmark victory," Radhakrishnan said on the first day of the Winter Session of the Parliament.

He lauded the blind women's cricket team for winning the inaugural Blind Women's T20 World Cup.

"Our nation also achieved another proud milestone when our blind women's cricket team won the inaugural Blind Women's T20 World Cup, defeating Nepal by 7 wickets in the final match that was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on the 23rd of November

2025. The team, led by Ms Deepika T C, put up an inspiring performance," the chairman said.

He said yet another remarkable feat was achieved by the Indian women's Kabaddi team, led by Ritu Negi, that won the Women's Kabaddi World Cup for the second successive time by defeating Chinese Taipei in the final match held at Dhaka, Bangladesh, on November 24, 2025.

"These back-to-back global victories by our women's sportspersons mark a golden moment in Indian sports," Radhakrishnan said.

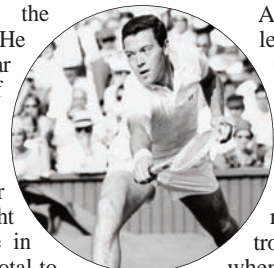
He said that the achievements not only reflect the courage, consistency, and discipline of our women's sportspersons, but also the testament to the long, arduous, yet remarkable and fulfilling journey that the country's women sportspersons have traversed for these momentous occasions.

"These achievements underscore the growing excellence of Indian women in diverse sporting arenas. On my own behalf and on behalf of the whole House, I extend our warmest congratulations to all the three teams, their coaches, and their support staff. Their achievements have elevated India's honour and inspired millions across the nation," Radhakrishnan said. (PTI)

Nicola Pietrangeli, Italy's most accomplished tennis player before Jannik Sinner, dies at 92

ROME, Dec 1: Nicola Pietrangeli, the Italian tennis champion of the 1950s and 1960s whose records were only recently broken by Jannik Sinner — but remains the winningest Davis Cup player of all time — has died. He was 92.

The Italian Tennis and Padel Federation announced Pietrangeli's passing on Monday, without providing a cause of death. The federation noted that Pietrangeli is the only Italian player who was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame. Pietrangeli was the first Italian player to win a Grand Slam trophy, triumphing at the French Open in 1959. He defended that title a year later and his record of two Grand Slam singles titles among Italian players wasn't broken until Sinner won his second straight Australian Open title in 2025 to increase his total to



three. Sinner has now won four majors. "I won \$150 for the 1960 title, which covered two months' rent for my home in Rome," Pietrangeli told the Gazzetta dello Sport in 2020.

Pietrangeli was also runner-up at Roland Garros in 1961 and 1964, losing both finals to Spanish player Manuel Santana. He won the doubles title in Paris in 1959 with Orlando Sirola. "In 1964 Santana and I made a bet whereby the loser would pay for dinner," Pietrangeli said. "I honored the agreement and 10 of us went out that night, including our wives, and Manolo invited (Spanish soccer player) Luisito Suarez," Pietrangeli said. "I spent my entire earnings from the tourna-

ment to cover the evening." Pietrangeli also reached the semifinals at Wimbledon in 1960 and the quarterfinals at the Australian Open in 1957.

Davis Cup records
In Davis Cup, Pietrangeli holds the record for most total wins and most singles wins, having played 164 matches for Italy in 66 ties. His singles record was 78-32 and his doubles record was 42-12. He also formed half of the most successful Davis Cup doubles partnership with Sirola, the pair winning 34 of their 42 matches together.

As a player, Pietrangeli led Italy to the Davis Cup final twice, losing both times away to an Australia team featuring Rod Laver and Roy Emerson. Pietrangeli finally raised the Davis Cup trophy as captain in 1976, when he coached Adriano Panatta, Corrado Barazzutti, Paolo Bertolucci and Antonio Zugarelli to the title with a win over Chile played amid the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

There were calls for Italy not to travel to Chile but Pietrangeli pushed for the Azzurri to go. "That was really my biggest contribution for that final," Pietrangeli said. "Without me, Italy would have not traveled to that final and we wouldn't have won." Italy didn't win the Davis Cup again until Sinner led the Azzurri to the title in 2023 and 2024; and then Matteo Berrettini and Flavio Cobolli led Italy to a third straight Davis Cup — and first on home soil — in Bologna last month. (AP)

Red Bull voices regret over claims Kimi Antonelli let Lando Norris pass him

MILTON KEYNES (ENGLAND), Dec 1: Red Bull expressed regret Monday following "clearly incorrect" comments alleging that Mercedes' Kimi Antonelli had let Lando Norris past at the Qatar Grand Prix, influencing the Formula 1 title fight.

Standings leader Norris was in fifth place behind Antonelli toward the end of Sunday's race when the Italian slid wide and Norris overtook him for fourth place. That allowed the McLaren driver to stay 12 points in front of Red Bull's Max Verstappen ahead of the season finale this week in Abu Dhabi.

Verstappen's race engineer Gianpiero Lambiase suggested to the Dutch four-time champion over the

radio that it seemed Antonelli had let Norris pass him, and Red Bull adviser Helmut Marko claimed Antonelli "waved him by" in comments to Sky Sport Germany.

"Comments made before the end of and immediately after the Qatar GP suggesting that Mercedes driver Kimi Antonelli had deliberately allowed Lando Norris to overtake him are clearly incorrect," Red Bull posted on social media Monday.

"Replay footage shows Antonelli momentarily losing control of his car, thus allowing Norris to pass him. We sincerely regret that this has led to Kimi receiving online abuse."

Antonelli was defended by Mer-

cedes team principal Toto Wolff, who said it was "hard to understand" the claims that the Italian rookie would give up a place, especially when he still had a chance of catching Carlos Sainz, Jr. for third at the time.

"I was pushing hard to stay ahead of Norris in the closing stages and unfortunately just pushed a little bit too hard. I got out of shape through turn nine and then had a massive snap of oversteer," Antonelli said.

"I was lucky to save the car but sadly dropped the position to the McLaren. It was a frustrating and disappointing way to end what had been a good race up to that point." (AP)

Akshat Baruah wins gold at All India Full Contact Karate Tournament

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 1: Akshat Baruah of Guwahati clinched the gold medal at the All India 35th Full Contact Karate Tournament held in Dehradun on November 30, 2025.

Nearly 250 players from more than nine states participated in the event, organised by the Kyokushin Karate Foundation of India (K).

Akshat secured the top position in the Kumite event in the boys' under-12 category. He is currently training under coach Sensei Rinku Das.



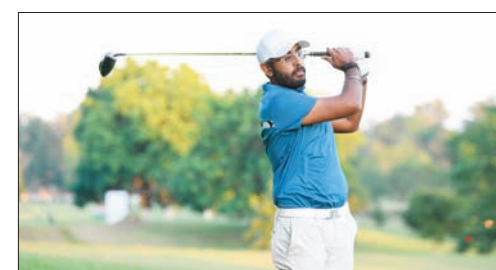
Yuvraj, Ahlawat, Gandas to lead strong field at Jaipur Open golf

JAIPUR, Dec 1: Domestic regulars, including Yuvraj Sandhu, Veer Ahlawat and Manu Gandas, will vie for honours when the Rs 1 crore Jaipur Open golf tournament begins at the Rambagh Golf Club here on Tuesday. The Professional Golf Tour of India (PGTI) event will feature a field of 126 professionals.

The tournament boasts several leading Indian names such as PGTI Ranking leader Yuvraj Sandhu, Shaurya Bhattacharya, Arjun Prasad, Veer Ahlawat, Manu Gandas, Om Prakash Chouhan, Angad Cheema, Khalin Joshi and Ajeetesh Sandhu.

Among the prominent foreign challengers are Bangladesh's Jamal Hossain, Badal Hossain, Md Akbar Hossain and Md Sonrat Sikdar, along with Stepan Danek of the Czech Republic, Italy's Federico Zucchetti, Nepal's Subash Tamang and Uganda's Joshua Seale.

Jaipur-based professionals in the field include



Prakhar Asawa, Vishal Singh, Girraj Singh Khadka, Abhyudaya Rawat, Rishi Raj Singh Rathore and Hemendra Choudhary.

The Pro-Am event played on Sunday was won by the team led by professional Shamim Khan with a nett score of 52.6. The amateurs on the team were Rajendra Jakhar, Shankar Prashar and Ankur Thakur. (PTI)

Dubai Capitals to take on Desert Vipers in ILT20 opening match



DUBAI, Dec 1: Defending champions Dubai Capitals will take on Desert Vipers — a rematch of last season's final — in the inaugural match of ILT20 beginning here Tuesday, with all-rounder Gulbadin Naib saying his team is looking forward to another fruitful campaign.

The Afghanistan cricketer, who was a member of title-winning Dubai Capitals last time, added that familiarity with the conditions will help his side continue its good showing in season four as well.

"Last year we won, but we're looking forward to another successful season. It's a huge platform for everybody. We have got some new faces and they are very keen to do something for the team," said Naib. "This is a mega event, so as professionals it's important for us to get our mindset right. We know the conditions, so we should be able to adapt. We had amazing support and we're looking forward to more of the same," he added. This edition marks a new chapter in the league's journey, with ILT20 organising its first-ever player auction and including players from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait for the first time.

New Zealand cricketer Lockie Ferguson, who led the Desert Vipers to the final last season — their second in the ILT20 — said a well-balanced bowling unit will help his side do well this time around as well.

"We played great cricket throughout the tournament last season, so this year we're looking to do even better. We have some new faces, so I'm excited about it. I'm looking forward to working alongside Naseem Shah, David Payne and Khuzaima Tanveer as well in a well-balanced bowling attack.

"What's great about this tournament is that the young players get a chance to learn very quickly," added Ferguson.

West Indies all-rounder Jason Holder, who is leading Abu Dhabi Knight Riders, said he would like his players to execute the team plans on the field and hoped they would do much better than the bottom-table finish in the previous edition.

"We all want to win. It's simple for us. We just need to be disciplined and execute our plans. It's a long tournament, so we'll take each game as it comes. It's good to have guys who are familiar with each other. We have a lot of power and depth in our line-up, so the task for us will be to figure out how to put it all together," said Holder.

Gulf Giants' England all-rounder, Moeen Ali, whose side lifted the trophy in its inaugural edition, said his local players will hold the key to the team's success. "The quality has gone up, and I'm excited to be part of a new team. We've gone in a different direction with our players. I think what's important is how good our local players are, and we're hoping to get back to where our squad belongs, which is competing for the title," he said. (PTI)

JAIPUR, Dec 1: What started as water therapy for a child battling health complications has blossomed into a medal-rich sporting career, with Pratyasha Ray emerging as one of India's brightest swimmers at the Khelo India University Games here.

She has won three gold, one silver and a bronze at KIUG. Across four editions of the event, she has amassed 18 medals — nine gold, seven silver and two bronze — in addition to strong results at national and international meets.

Yet, few know the struggles her parents endured in her early years, when her health was a constant source of worry.

By the time Pratyasha turned three, her parents had already been to numerous hospitals, seeking answers for their daughter's recurring health issues and delayed physical development.

It was then that her mother, Charushree, came across an article on water therapy and decided to try it.

"Pratyasha was born healthy. But she was given antibiotics to protect her from an infection when she was just 21 days old and those medicines reacted adversely. After that, her natural physical development



stopped. Our concern grew. We wanted a healthy child, but everything was going against us," Charushree told SAI Media.

"During that time, I read in Reader's Digest that swimming can help children with several health issues. Tired of continuous hospital visits, I decided to take that risk.

"I started taking my three-year-old daughter to a swimming pool in

for the first time that she could enter the pool without a tube.

"It was as if water gave her relief. She started enjoying being in water and realised that it was keeping her away from hospitals. Over the next two to three years, she easily increased her swimming distance from 25 meters to 50 meters," her mother recalled.

Pratyasha doesn't remember these early days; everything she knows comes from her mother. "A local coach in Sambalpur recognized my potential and suggested I take up competitive swimming," she said.

At the age of eight, Pratyasha started training professionally at the Jharsa Khaitan Swimming Complex under Rangnidhi Seth.

"During this period, my father, Rajat Kumar Ray, who works in the Odisha government, was transferred to Bhubaneswar. I then began professional training in Kalinga. Balancing studies and sports, I am now pursuing a double postgraduate degree from Utkal University," she said.

Pratyasha is now aiming to make it to the Indian team for the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan. (PTI)

'Always nice to walk in when the top five are on a roll'

Jansen's all-round rise puts him among cricket's most valuable assets

RANCHI, Dec 1: Marco Jansen's rapid evolution as a genuine fast-bowling all-rounder has given South Africa a rare two-in-one asset at a time when world cricket is short on pacers who can influence matches with both bat and ball.

The 25-year-old left-arter, once viewed primarily as a new-ball prospect, has grown into a player capable of shaping sessions with the ball and altering momentum with his batting, making him central to South Africa's long-term plans across formats.

Jansen's bowling remains his biggest currency — steep bounce, natural angle across right-handers and the ability to extract movement even on slowing surfaces have already earned him several match-shaping spells.

His fuller length and improved control have added layers to his threat, pushing him into the leadership bracket of South Africa's attack. Yet it is his batting progress that has elevated his overall value and offered balance the side has long missed.

No longer a hit-or-miss tailender, Jansen now walks in with a clearer method, often rescuing South Africa from difficult positions or extending competitive totals into winning ones.

"It's always nice to walk in when the top five are on a roll. I'm just watching the ball and playing



it as it comes. At the moment it's working for me," Jansen said.

His most compelling statement with the bat came in the recent Guwahati Test against India in November 2025, when he smashed a 91-ball 93 at No. 9 to pull South Africa out of trouble.

Walking in at 334 for seven, he counter-attacked a tiring Indian attack with six fours and seven sixes, nearly becoming the first visiting No. 9 to score a Test hundred in India in more than six decades.

His assault lifted South Africa to a formidable 489 — a total that shifted the course of the match and allowed their bowlers to control proceedings. The significance of the knock was amplified by the match situation and the fluency with which he scored on a slowing surface.

This was not an isolated burst. Jansen had earlier produced a gritty 59 at Wellington to lift South Africa from a precarious position and steer them to a competitive

first-innings total.

In limited-overs cricket, his cameos have carried increasing weight: a brisk 35-ball 42 against India in Gqeberha in a rain-revised ODI kept South Africa ahead of the DLS target, while his late hitting in the Kimberley ODI — where he scored 38 off 26 — pushed the team to a defensible score in a match they went on to win.

These contributions, though lower down the order, have regu-

larly arrived at pressure moments, and underline why South Africa now view him as a genuine lower-order asset rather than a bowler who can bat.

Stacked against the game's other contemporary fast-bowling all-rounders, Jansen's trajectory stands out. While someone like Cameron Green offers stronger batting numbers, he doesn't match Jansen's hostility with the ball.

India's Hardik Pandya's impact is limited by workload restrictions, and England great Ben Stokes — incomparable for influence — no longer bowls consistently.

Among specialists who can deliver with both speed and bounce, few possess the ceiling that Jansen currently projects.

What keeps him firmly in the conversation for the best emerging all-rounder is his adaptability.

In Tests, he offers breakthroughs with both new and old ball while adding crucial runs.

In ODIs and T20Is, his ability to hit the deck and swing late, combined with clean hitting at No. 7 or 8, provides South Africa with balance and flexibility.

His challenge now will be to stitch together seasons of consistent returns with both bat and ball.

If that happens, South Africa may well have in Jansen their most influential seam-bowling all-rounder since Jacques Kallis, albeit of a very different mould. (PTI)

Gill's fitness assessment to start at COE

Hardik cleared to play SMAT vs Punjab today



NEW DELHI, Dec 1: India's T20I vice-captain Shubman Gill will be reporting at Bengaluru's Centre of Excellence on Monday for his mandatory fitness assessment protocols, which will determine his return to action for the upcoming five-match series against South Africa starting December 9.

Gill had sustained a neck injury while batting during the second day of the opening Test against South Africa in Kolkata and since then has missed the second Test and the ongoing ODI series.

Since the Indian T20I squad wouldn't have any surprises — not even minor — unless there are any injury issues, the selection committee headed by Ajit Agarkar will be waiting for Gill's fitness report from the Sports Science team at the COE.

"Gill was administered an injection and advised 21 days of rest and rehabilitation, which included specific exercises to strengthen the muscles of the injured area. Obviously, the sports science team would go through all his mandatory fitness tests before he starts the skills training.

"Nothing can be said unless the sports science team assesses his movements during skills training and whether he is having zero discomfort while batting," a BCCI source privy to the developments

told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

As of now, the chances of Gill's return for SA T20Is seems to be 50-50.

Fully-fit Hardik to play two SMAT games

Meanwhile, there is some good news for Indian fans as Hardik Pandya has got the clearance to return to the T20 format and will be playing his first match in nearly two-and-a-half months against Punjab in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy in Hyderabad on Tuesday.

He is also supposed to play the December 4 game between Baroda and Gujarat with national selector Pragnan Ojha in attendance during both the games to check his overall fitness before the squad is announced.

"From October 21 to November 30, Hardik didn't even move out of the COE and completed his full rehab and 'Return To Play' protocols. As of now, he has been given the all clear — to bat and bowl in T20Is — and he has already linked up with the Baroda team for the Punjab game. He will play on December 4 vs Gujarat and if the Indian team management doesn't summon him earlier, then he plans to play the December 6 game against Haryana also," a source in the know of the developments at the COE informed. (PTI)

INDIAN PICKLEBALL LEAGUE BEGINS, SIX TEAMS TO COMPETE FOR TROPHY

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: The Indian Pickleball League commenced here on Monday amid great fanfare with the organisers saying it had tremendous potential, and promised to make it a leading sport in the country.

The league, launched by The Times Group and sanctioned by the Indian Pickleball Association (IPA) under the Sports Ministry, will see six franchise teams compete for the glittering trophy, which was unveiled at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall of the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium by Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

The event, which will conclude on December 7, will see Bengaluru Blasters, Hyderabad Royals, Chennai Super Warriors, Mumbai Smashers, Capital Warriors and Lucknow Leopards vie for the top prize.

Unveiling the trophy, the Delhi CM said, "India has always been a country where sport has played a vital role in life. Every Indian wants to pick up one sport or the other. Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought a culture of sport in the country, every Indian is motivated to get involved in some sport or the other.

"Pickleball is a new sport which has got added to a long list of disciplines in India. We in the Delhi government will ensure pickleball becomes a part of the school curriculum in the state," she added.

Inaugurating the league, Vineet Jain, Managing Director, The Times Group, said, the inaugural edition "marks the start of something truly transformative" in sport.

"This is India stepping on to the world pickleball stage with confidence and conviction. This league is not just a competition, it is the beginning of a sporting movement in India, one that tests every young player," said Jain.

"This is a sport where you can grow, shine and dream without limits. We are fully committed to our mission of making pickleball the second-most popular sport after cricket in India." (PTI)

Star Bangladesh flicker Amirul idolises India's Harmanpreet and Australia's Govers

'Hockey is not that popular in Bangladesh compared to cricket and football. We need more exposure domestically and internationally. Our players need to play more in foreign leagues,' says Bangladesh's rising hockey star Amirul Islam

CHENNAI, Dec 1: Bangladesh's rising hockey star Amirul Islam, who has been in sensational drag-flicking form at the ongoing FIH Junior World Cup, idolises India captain Harmanpreet Singh and Australia's Blake Govers, and hopes to etch his name in the sport's history by drawing inspiration from the duo.

The 21-year-old defender and ace drag-flicker has been in prime form at the tournament, producing back-to-back hat-tricks to sit atop the goal-scorers' chart with six strikes, alongside India's Dilraj Singh and New Zealand's Jonty Elmes.

The 21-year-old defender's all goals came from powerful and perfectly executed penalty corners in a 3-5 loss against Australia and a come-from-behind 3-3 draw against Korea here on Sunday.

"I am a big fan of Harmanpreet Singh. I idolise him and Australia's Blake Govers when it comes to drag-flicks. I study their technic and try to learn from them," Amirul told PTI after the draw against Korea.

In his debut FIH Junior World Cup campaign, Amirul has already brought valuable experience from the senior setup, having represented Bangladesh at the Hangzhou Asian Games and



this year's Asia Cup in Rajgir, Bihar.

A product of the Bangladesh Krira Shikkha Protishtan (BKSP) — the country's premier sports institute — Amirul is among eight Bangladeshi players from the Asia Cup squad featuring in the Junior World Cup.

But by his own admission, Amirul is also working on his defensive game besides focussing on penalty corner conversions.

"I am primarily a defender besides being a drag-flicker and I constantly try to improve my overall game. Everyday, I practice 150 to 200 drag-flicks and that has been beneficial for me," he said.

Amirul, Bangladesh's backbone when it comes to scoring goals, however, defended the team's forwardline and said they are a work in progress.

"It's not that we only rely on

penalty corners. We are also focussing on scoring field goals and try a lot. You have seen that in the last two matches, how we have pressed Australia and Korea hard," he said.

"But scoring field goals is not easy against top teams, teams ranked above us. So, we tactically decided to earn more penalty corners and there where my role comes into play."

Amirul first started to play the sport at the age of 10, but he was introduced to drag-flicks much later during the 2019 Independence Cup while playing for BKSP.

"At that tournament I returned empty-handed and since then I started to give more time in practising drag-flicks," he said.

But Amirul rues the fact that hockey is not a popular sport in Bangladesh with the emphasis more on cricket and football, and called for more international exposure for the sport.

"Hockey is not that popular in Bangladesh compared to cricket and football. We need more exposure domestically and internationally. Our players need to play more in foreign leagues," he said.

"I got an offer from a Bundesliga third-division club in the past, but I couldn't go as I was on national duty." (PTI)

Sports minister to meet all stakeholders of Indian football tomorrow

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya will meet representatives of all stakeholders in Indian football, including the sport's national federation, its former commercial partner and clubs on December 3, to try and find a way out of the current crisis.

The latest crisis emerged after the All India Football Federation (AIFF) could not find a new commercial partner for the conduct of domestic league, including the top-tier Indian Super League.

"The Supreme Court has directed that the ministry step in to figure a solution and this is being done in compliance with that directive. This will be a day long series of meetings with representatives of Indian football. They can raise their concerns and the minister will give his suggestions accordingly," a ministry source told PTI on Monday.

Indian domestic football first plunged into chaos after Football

Development Limited (FSDL), the entity the owned and organised the ISL, informed the AIFF 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 (MRA) that ends on December 8.

The sport has since then grappled with multiple issues but one of the rare bright spots during this time was the Supreme Court approval for the new AIFF constitution prepared by former apex court judge L Nageswara Rao.

Meanwhile, it is also learnt that the SC had taken cognisance of some "important points" raised by Rao in his report to the top court, which wants the government to help the stakeholders in find a solution to the deadlock by ensuring that the global practices, as dictated by FIFA Statutes, are followed.



"The presence of all relevant stakeholders — ISL Clubs, Prospective Commercial Partners, FSDL, Broadcasters & OTT Platforms, I-League & Lower Division Clubs, etc. will be crucial for effective deliberation in the matter," the ministry said in a letter to the AIFF.

"... AIFF is requested to intimate the concerned stakeholders about the scheduled meeting and to make necessary arrangements to ensure their participation as per the schedule attached.

"It is also requested that representatives of Transaction Advisor,

viz. KPMG India Services LLP may also be asked to attend all the meetings to provide required clarifications during the proposed meeting," the ministry added.

As many as six meetings have been scheduled at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) on Wednesday, including separate discussions with the ISL clubs, I-League clubs and FSDL.

The minister had held a meeting with representatives of I-League a few weeks ago and had asked all stakeholders to find an amicable solution to the current crisis.

During the meeting, the minister heard their grievances and urged for "constructive dialogue" between all the stakeholders to find a way forward.

The I-League clubs had demanded a common league partner to ensure that top tier ISL and the two divisions of the I League are managed by one body. (PTI)

Record participation for National Shooting Championships

NEW DELHI, Dec 1: A record 16,000-plus athletes across pistol, rifle and shotgun events have qualified for the National Shooting Championships, which began on Monday, breaking the record of the previous edition where over 13,500 had made the grade for the annual competition.

While the shotgun competition began at the Kani Singh Ranges in Tughlaqabad on Monday, the pistol and rifle events will begin at Delhi and Bhopal respectively on December 11. Over the next one month, competitions in all three disciplines will be conducted in seven categories — Super Masters (70 years and above), Senior Masters (60-70 years), Masters (45-60 years), Seniors (Open), Juniors (21 years), Youth (19 years or before), Sub-Youth (16 years or before), "Regardless of the category or categories under which the shooters have registered, each athlete is permitted to shoot only once throughout the competition but their scores will be counted towards any other category they have registered. The competition will also feature dedicated categories for Para-athletes and Deaf athletes," said a National Rifle Association of India release. (PTI)