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Fulfil Constitutional promise to tribals: Assam MP in RS

Empower 6th Schedule Councils: Narzary

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Raising concerns over the stagnation of tribal autonomous councils, UPPL MP from Assam, Rwngrwa Narzary, on Wednesday demanded immediate passage of the Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019, which has been pending in the Rajya Sabha for over five years.

Speaking during Zero Hour, Narzary highlighted that while the Constitution provides for self-governance to India's nine per cent tribal population through the Sixth Schedule, the 10 autonomous councils created under this provision have remained "stagnant" for 74 years, denying tribals their "rightful share of development".

"The Constitution of India provides a unique provision for tribals to govern themselves. The Sixth Schedule was designed to protect and fulfil their economic, educational, linguistic, and socio-cultural



rights, and to preserve land rights and ethnic identity," the MP said.

The autonomous council system began in 1951 with the creation of the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills councils in Assam, followed by the United Khasi-Jaintia Autonomous District Council in

1952. Subsequent councils were established in Mizoram in the 1970s, while the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council came up in 1985 and the Bodoland Territorial Area District in 2002.

Narzary pointed out that the

government initiated a review of the Sixth Schedule Councils' functions in 2019 after 68 years and introduced the Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill to amend Article 280, among other provisions.

"This progressive bill aims to augment the administrative and financial powers and functions of the Sixth Schedule Councils, but it is still pending in the Rajya Sabha," he said.

The MP drew attention to the 2020 Bodo Accord, which he said has now "lapsed five years" and incorporated Clause 4.3 of the peace agreement. The Centre had committed to amending Article 280 through the pending bill to empower the Bodoland Territorial Council. "Despite 70 per cent implementation of the 2020 Bodo Accord under the guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the Assam government, several key clauses (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Himanta targets Cong on VIP culture

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday launched a sharp political attack on the previous Congress-led governments, accusing them of institutionalising "VIP culture, wastage and entitlement politics" that pushed the state into chronic power shortages and financial drain.

In a post on X, Sarma said his government has undertaken a decisive mission to end VIP privileges and bring accountability into governance, particularly in the power sector.

"No more public-funded ministers' electricity bills, no more wastage of power, a drastic drop in power deficit and a clear move towards a green future," the chief minister asserted, underlining what he described as a complete departure from the past.

Drawing a contrast between the earlier Congress regime and the present BJP-led government, Sarma alleged that Assam earlier

functioned as a "government of entitlements," where ministers and senior bureaucrats enjoyed free electricity at the cost of taxpayers.

According to him, most government offices during that period were not even metered, resulting in unchecked consumption and zero accountability.

He pointed out that the Assam Secretariat alone consumed electricity worth nearly Rs 30 lakh every month under the previous system, while the state struggled with an alarming power deficit of around 15 per cent.

"This was the legacy we inherited — privilege for a few and darkness for many," Sarma said, taking aim at the Congress for what he called decades of misgovernance.

Highlighting reforms introduced since 2016, the chief minister said his government has dismantled VIP culture by making ministers and bureaucrats pay their own electricity bills.

Metering has now been made

mandatory across government offices, ensuring transparency and responsible consumption.

Sarma also noted that an automatic power disconnection system after 8 pm has been implemented in government offices to curb unnecessary usage.

In a major push towards sustainability, the Assam Secretariat is now fully powered by solar energy, saving the exchequer nearly Rs 30 lakh every month.

"These reforms are not symbolic; they reflect our commitment to sew, not entitlement," the chief minister said.

As a result of these measures, Assam's power deficit has been brought down sharply to just 4 per cent, he added. Positioning the reforms as part of a larger political narrative, Sarma said the BJP government believes in governance with vision and discipline, unlike the Congress era which, he claimed, normalised waste, privilege and inefficiency at the cost of public welfare.

Curb imposed along Bangla border in Cachar

SILCHAR, Dec 17: Prohibitory orders have been imposed along the India-Bangladesh border in Assam's Cachar district by the administration to prevent illegal movement, an official release said on Wednesday.

Preventive restrictions along sensitive border areas have been imposed due to apprehension over possible movement of extremist elements and unauthorised cross-border activities to disturb peace and stability, it said.

District Magistrate Mridul Yadav, exercising powers under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), issued the order on Tuesday aimed at preventing illegal movement of people, goods and activities.

It has been noted that unchecked movement, particularly during night hours, could facilitate unlawful activities, including unauthorised transportation of essential commodities and cattle, thereby posing serious challenges to law and order, the order stated.

Movement of individuals has

been restricted from sunset to sunrise within a one-kilometre belt along the border of the district.

In addition, movement on the River Surma and along its high banks within the Indian territory has been prohibited during the night.

The order also places strict controls on boating and fishing activities on the Surma river.

Fishing will be permitted only for local residents and for personal consumption, subject to prior authorisation by the Circle Officer, Katigorah, and compliance with lease conditions.

Such permissions will be closely monitored, with copies endorsed to the District Magistrate and the Commandant of the 170th Battalion of the Border Security Force (BSF) at Dholchera, ensuring co-ordination between civil and security agencies. Transportation of essential commodities such as sugar, rice, wheat, edible oil and salt has been restricted during night hours within a five-kilometre belt inside (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

CM launches major devp projects in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Dec 17: Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday unveiled a series of development projects in Dibrugarh district, marking another step in the state government's push for infrastructure and women's empowerment.

The chief minister laid the foundation stones for three key infrastructure projects, inaugurated a new sports complex, and distributed seed money to thousands of self-help group (SHG) members under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan.

The day's highlight was the inauguration of the state-of-the-art Abhaypur Rural Sports Complex at Moran, which has been constructed at a cost of ₹ 12.32 crore.

The chief minister described the facility as a "modern sporting hub" designed to nurture young talent from rural Assam.

The complex includes multiple playing fields, a spectator gallery, and training amenities.

Sarma also laid the foundation stone for the widening and improvement of the 9.3-km Moran Town Club-Gojpuria-Luku-



mari stretch of the Moran-Nital Road.

The ₹ 36.92 crore project, sanctioned under Asom Mala 3.0, aims to improve road connectivity in upper Assam and boost local trade.

The CM also laid the foundation stone of the Tingkhong Co-District Commissioner's Office, which will be built at a cost of ₹ 19.5 crore.

The facility is expected to streamline administrative services in the growing sub-division.

In addition, the chief minister laid the foundation of the new Moran Police Station building under the MOITRI scheme, estimated at ₹ 2.15 crore.

The chief minister also distributed seed

money of ₹ 10,000 each to 23,791 self-help group members from the Tingkhong Legislative Assembly Constituency under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA).

The financial assistance is aimed at supporting small-scale income-generating activities and encouraging entrepreneurship among rural women.

The MMUA is a flagship state government scheme designed to financially empower rural women and promote sustainable micro-enterprises.

It aims to transition women from savings-based SHG models to becoming independent "lakhpati baideos" (women entrepreneurs with earnings of at least one lakh rupees).

The seed capital is intended to kickstart or bolster small businesses, ranging from agriculture and livestock to handicrafts and retail.

While addressing the gathering, the chief minister emphasised the transformative vision behind the investments.

"Today is not just about bricks and mortar. The roads and buildings will form the backbone of (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

CM gives ₹ 5 lakh ex gratia to kin of 21 labourers killed in Arunachal

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday handed over ex gratia of ₹ 5 lakh each to the next of kin of 21 labourers from the state who were killed in a road accident in Arunachal Pradesh.

A truck carrying 22 workers from Tinsukia district fell off a cliff on Hayuliang-Chaglagam Road in Anjaw district in the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh on the night of December 8.

All the victims were from Dhelaghat in Gillapukri Tea Estate.

"Standing with families during trying times! In Tinsukia, HCM Dr. @himantabiswa met the families of those who lost their lives in the tragic road accident in Arunachal Pradesh and conveyed heartfelt condolences," the Chief Minister's Office said in a post on X. Sarma wished the lone survivor, who was critically injured, a speedy recovery and directed the administration to ensure all necessary medical care.

"On behalf of Govt of Assam, HCM handed over ₹ 5 lakh each to the next of kin of the deceased and ₹ 1 lakh from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the treatment of the injured," CMO said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has also announced an ex gratia of ₹ 2 lakh each for the next of kin of those who died from the PM National Relief Fund.

Of the 22 people travelling in the truck, one labourer, Budheswor Deep, miraculously escaped the crash and managed to reach the nearest Chipra GREF camp two days later. Authorities came to (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

₹26-crore market complex to come up at Moran

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: A large market complex will be constructed at Moran at an estimated cost of ₹ 26 crore as part of efforts to boost local commerce and economic activity in the region, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced on Wednesday.

The chief minister said the proposed market complex would provide improved infrastructure for traders and create better marketing opportunities for local produce.

He added that creating organised market facilities is essential to strengthening the local economy and ensuring that economic benefits remain within the State.

The announcement was made during the Chief Minister's visit to Moran, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

In a first for ICG, offshore patrol vessel Sarthak visits strategic Chabahar port

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Indian Coast Guard's ship Sarthak has entered the strategic port of Chabahar in Iran as part of its ongoing overseas deployment to Gulf countries, officials said on Wednesday.

During the port call, Sarthak, an offshore patrol vessel, will engage in a range of activities to strengthen institutional linkages and enhance mutual understanding in maritime safety and security, they said.

The ship entering the Chabahar port marks the "first-ever visit of an ICG ship" to the port, underscoring India's growing maritime engagement in the region, the officials said.

The ICG said Sarthak arrived at Chabahar on Tuesday and it will remain in the port till December 19.

"During the port call, ICG Ship Sarthak will engage in a wide range

of professional and community-oriented activities with the Iranian Navy and other Iranian maritime agencies. These include courtesy calls and professional interactions, aimed at strengthening institutional linkages and enhancing mutual understanding in maritime safety and security," a senior official of ICG said.

Key highlights of the port call include joint training activities focusing on maritime search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, and marine pollution response, the ICG said.

"A marine pollution response demonstration in Chabahar harbour, targeting oil spills and hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) spills, will be conducted to showcase coordinated response mecha-

nisms. MRCC-to-MRCC coordination drills, a table-top exercise, and joint Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) drills will further enhance interoperability and operational preparedness between the two sides," it said.

MRCC stands for Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres.

Sarthak, an offshore patrol vessel, has entered the strategic port of Chabahar, as part of its ongoing overseas deployment to Gulf countries, the ICG official said.

Chabahar, located on the northern flank of Gulf of Oman, is a strategically placed deep-water port that offers India a direct maritime gateway to Iran, land-locked Afghanistan and Central Asia, a shorter and geopolitically independent alternative to (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India summons Bangladesh envoy; demands adequate security to its mission in Dhaka

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: India on Wednesday summoned Bangladesh envoy Riaz Hamidullah and lodged its protest over plans by certain extremist elements to create a security situation around the Indian mission in Dhaka.

New Delhi also expressed its serious concerns over the deteriorating security situation in Bangladesh and reiterated its call for holding free, fair and credible parliamentary elections. The polls are scheduled for February 12.

Hamidullah was summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and was served a demarche or a formal diplomatic note, people familiar with the matter said.

India's action followed after certain extremist elements announced plans to hold protests around the Indian high commission in Dhaka, they said.

In a statement, the MEA said that India "completely rejects the false narrative" sought to be created by extremist elements regarding certain recent events in Bangladesh.

"It is unfortunate that the interim government has

neither conducted a thorough investigation nor shared meaningful evidence with India regarding the incidents," it said shortly after summoning Hamidullah.

The MEA said Hamidullah was summoned and apprised of India's strong concerns at the deteriorating security environment in Bangladesh.

"His attention was drawn, in particular, to the activities of some extremist elements who have announced plans to create a security situation around the Indian Mission in Dhaka," it said.

The MEA said India expects the interim government in Bangladesh to ensure the safety of its missions and posts in that country in keeping with its diplomatic obligations.

It also noted that New Delhi is in favour of peace and stability in Bangladesh.

"India has close and friendly relations with the people of Bangladesh rooted in the liberation struggle, and strengthened through various developmental and people-to-people initiatives," it said.

"We are in favour of peace and stability in Bangladesh and have consistently (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India, UAE troops to take part in joint military exercise in Abu Dhabi starting today

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Militaries of India and the UAE are scheduled to take part in a joint exercise from December 18-30 that seeks to enhance interoperability and foster defence cooperation between the two sides, officials said on Wednesday.

An Indian Army contingent has departed for the United Arab Emirates to participate in the second edition of Exercise Desert Cyclone to be conducted in Abu Dhabi.

The Indian contingent comprises 45 personnel, primarily from a battalion of the Mechanised Infantry Regiment. The UAE Land Forces contingent, of similar strength, will be represented by the 53 Mechanised Infantry Battalion, the defence ministry said.

"The aim of the exercise is to enhance interoperability and foster defence cooperation between the Indian Army and the UAE Land Forces through joint training in an urban environment, with a focus on sub-conventional operations under a United Nations mandate, enabling both forces to operate together in peacekeeping, counter-terrorism and stability operations," it said in a statement.

Over nearly two weeks, troops from both countries will jointly train on a wide spectrum

of tactical drills, including fighting in built-up areas, helicopter operations and detailed mission planning, the officials said.

In addition, the integration of UAS (Unmanned Aerial System) and counter-UAS techniques will be carried out for conduct of operations in built-up areas.

Building on the momentum of the successful visit of the Commander, UAE Land Forces, on October 27-28 this year and Commander, UAE Presidential Guard, from December 15-19, Exercise Desert Cyclone - II will further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation between India and the UAE, the ministry said in a statement.

The conduct of the exercise underscores the deepening strategic partnership and military diplomacy between India and the UAE, reaffirming the shared commitment of both nations to regional peace, security and stability, it said.

"The exercise will further cement professional bonds between the two armies, promote mutual understanding of tactics, techniques and procedures, and contribute to the development of interoperable capabilities," it said.

Commander of the Presidential Guard of the UAE, Major General (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Implementation of newly-approved labour codes will tighten the social security net and preventive health care

India Inc to see 9 pc salary growth in 2026, with focus on short-term incentives: Report

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Average employee salaries in India are set to increase by 9 per cent in 2026, with a renewed focus on short-term incentives and skills-based systems, a report said on Wednesday.

According to Mercer's Total Remuneration Survey 2026, organisations in India are shifting toward broader, more holistic value propositions and the top factors influencing salary increases include individual performance, inflation and the organisation's competitiveness in the job market, among others.

The survey, which covered remuneration trends across more than 8,000 roles and in more than 1,500 companies,

revealed that organisations are continuing to refine their rewards packages, with a focus on short-term incentives, moving toward more transparent, skills acquisition and deployment-based systems.

"Our survey shows most organisations in India will continue to plan pay increases in line with balancing cost pressures and talent retention. Alongside this, there is a growing emphasis on skills-based organisation architecture, talent assessments to better align workforce capabilities with evolving business needs and pay programs to drive desired outcomes," said Malathi KS, Mercer's Rewards Consulting Leader India.



As companies respond to shifting workforce dynamics - ranging from digital transformation and sourcing scarce, in-demand skills to the rising importance of benefits and well-being -- they are re-

designing rewards strategies to build a more resilient, future-ready talent.

"These shifts present Indian organisations with significant opportunities to strengthen workforce engagement and

shape a more agile and inclusive workplace," Malathi KS said.

Short-term incentives like bonuses have led to a stronger emphasis on near-term performance alignment, cost efficiency, and the development of transparent, skills-based pay frameworks to support evolving workforce needs in the face of AI and productivity priorities.

Adding to this, the implementation of newly-approved labour codes will tighten the social security net and preventive health care, the report by the global consulting firm noted. Sectorwise, High Tech (product and consulting) and the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India likely to record about 7 per cent growth in FY26: Gita Gopinath

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: The Indian economy is expected to grow by 7 per cent in the current fiscal, slightly higher than 6.6 per cent projected by the IMF in October, said Gita Gopinath, former chief economist of the Washington-based International Monetary Fund.

Speaking at Times Network's India Economic Conclave 2025, Gopinath said that the IMF made its projection for India's growth before the National Statistical Office (NSO) came out with its July-September quarter growth rate of 8.2 per cent.

"I would say that the IMF number (India's growth projection) was 6.6 per cent that came out in October. But their forecast for the second quarter of the current fiscal, in terms of what the growth would be, was much lower than what it turned out to be at over 8 per cent.

"Just doing math, I would expect that India's GDP growth would go up close to 7 per cent," she said.

Earlier this month, the Reserve Bank of India raised the GDP growth projection to 7.3 per cent for the current fiscal from its earlier estimate of 6.8 per cent, following robust economic performance in the July-September quarter.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) registered a six-quarter high growth of 8.2 per cent in Q2 of 2025-26, underpinned by resilient domestic demand amidst global trade and policy uncertainties.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in October, revised upwards India's GDP growth forecast for the current fiscal to 6.6 per cent compared to its earlier estimate of 6.4 per cent on the back of strong growth, offsetting the impact of US tariffs on Indian shipments.

Gopinath, currently a Gregory and Ania Coffey Professor of Economics at Harvard University, said if India can maintain growth rates of close to 8 per cent for 20 years, then the country will reach much closer to the 2047 goals.

"But it is not easy to maintain even 8 per cent growth for a 20-year period on a sustained basis.

"That is going to require sustained reforms," she said.

Gopinath said India is actually doing better than what was predicted before the India-US trade crisis.

Responding to a question on global trade, Gopinath said tariff rates have gone up substantially, but still are not at extremely high levels.

"I do think that at least from the US perspective, we are past peak tariffs in the US.

"2026 is a year of mid-term elections in the US. I do not think there is anybody who wants to have a lot of uncertainty in the run-up to the elections, tariffs have raised prices in the US," she said.

According to her, tariffs have pushed up inflation, so the increase in the cost of living is a problem for affordability. So, that also dampens the incentive to raise tariffs further.

Responding to a question on India-US trade talks, Gopinath said the US is a very important partner for India.

"Therefore, I think it is very important that both countries, both India and the US, work together to come up with a mutually agreeable solution," she



she said.

The relations between New Delhi and Washington witnessed a major downturn after US President Donald Trump doubled tariffs on Indian goods to a whopping 50 per cent in August, including a 25 per cent additional duty for India's purchase of Russian crude oil.

The strain in the relations has been exacerbated by constant criticism of New Delhi by officials in Trump's administration.

Asked why the IMF is not doing enough to hold Pakistan accountable for the reforms and the economic prudence, Gopinath said that the IMF has a responsibility to help countries that are in an economic crisis.

"And countries that are in economic crisis are in crisis for multiple reasons.

"It is not just because of macroeconomic policies that go wrong, but there is social conflict, conflicts at their borders," she said.

The eminent economist said that is the candidate country which comes to the IMF for financial support.

"...therefore, it is always an important and careful decision that has to be made about, can you help the country? Can you truly improve its macroeconomic situation?" she said.

She pointed out that despite everything else that is going on, there is a set of policies extremely well argued through, and by the way, these policies are signed off, not by IMF management, but by the members, by 195 member countries.

"So there is a defined set of policies that are accepted, and you have to implement it based on that," she said.

Responding to a question on the country's import of crude oil from Russia, Gopinath noted that with oil prices hovering around USD 60 per barrel, India has an opportunity to diversify its energy partnerships beyond Russia and recalibrate relations with the United States.

"From an economic perspective, this trade-off is not a bad one for India," she said.

Flagging regulatory complexity as a challenge, she said that India is still not an easy place to do business, with too many regulations.

"Addressing these issues is critical if India is to realise its ambition of becoming an economic superpower," the eminent economist said. (PTI)

Rupee likely to bounce back strongly in second half of next fiscal: SBI study

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: The Indian rupee, depreciating mainly due to 50 per cent tariff imposed on India by the US, is likely to bounce back strongly in the second half of the next fiscal, an SBI research report said on Wednesday.

Since April 2, 2025, when the US announced sweeping tariff hikes across economies, the Indian rupee (INR) has depreciated by 5.7 per cent against USD (most amongst the major economies), notwithstanding sporadic phases of appreciation owing to optimism over the US-India trade deal. While INR is the most depreciated currency, it is not the most volatile, said the report from SBI's Economic Research Department.

"This clearly indicates that the 50 per cent tariff imposed on India is one of the major factors behind the current phase of rupee depreciation," it said.

It further said that the days of largesse flows is over as geopolitical uncertainties have taken centre stage.

Past trends suggest that during CY07-CY14, net portfolio inflows averaged USD 162.8 billion, while from CY15-CY25 (till date), portfolio inflows have been much lower at USD 87.7 billion. The abundance of portfolio inflows prior to CY14 was the primary reason for rupee movements, the research report said.

"Such a luxury is absent now as geopolitical uncertainties driven by the delay in the trade deal have been the single most important reason... India's trade data shows the remarkable resilience in navigating through prolonged uncertainty, more protectionism and labour supply shocks," it said.

While the geopolitical risk index has moderated since April 2025, the current average value of the index for April-October 2025 is much greater than its decadal average, which indicates how much pressure global uncertainties are exerting pressure on INR, said the report titled 'In rupee we TRUST!'. "Consistent with our empirical analysis, the rupee is currently in a depreciating regime...the rupee is likely to exit regime...Thereafter, we believe that the rupee is likely to bounce back strongly in the second half of next fiscal," the SBI study said.

After breaching the psychologically important mark of 90 per US dollar, the rupee, in a span of just a few days, crossed the 91-level on Tuesday. It took only 13 days for the domestic currency to cross from 90 to 91 per dollar. However, the rupee staged a sharp recovery on Wednesday and ended 55 paise higher at 90.38 against the greenback. (PTI)

Govt streamlines visa processes for foreign professionals, engineers needed by Indian firms

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: The government on Wednesday said it has simplified and streamlined the process for domestic companies to seek e-visas for foreign professionals, including engineers and technical experts, whose services are required for machine installation, quality checks, training, and plant design.

The move is expected to help companies that import machinery from countries such as China. Earlier, certain Indian firms had raised concerns that they were facing issues in getting visas for Chinese professionals whose expertise were needed.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) said that it has launched an online module for Indian companies to generate sponsorship letters for inviting foreign professionals for production-related activities under the e-Production Investment Business Visa (e-B-4 Visa).

The module was launched on November 29 this year. The launch of this digital platform is a part of a series of reforms that have been instituted under the business visa regime for improving the ease of doing business in India, it said.

An official explained that the earlier process was cumbersome and lengthy and now the new system will help domestic firms get e-visas for foreign experts in a shorter time period. As of today, 129 sponsorship letters have been generated by Indian companies.

Now foreign professionals will use the letters to apply for visas and visit Indian manufacturing facilities to offer their services, the official said, adding the time taken to grant visas will be significantly shorter now.

"Business visitors were coming to India earlier also but now the visa process has been streamlined and simplified. It is much structured now," the official said, adding the facility is there now for both PLI (production-linked incentive schemes) and non-PLI beneficiary firms.

In August 2025, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a circular for resolving certain issues related to employment visa, business visa and e-PLI business.

As part of this circular, two activities which were earlier covered under the employment - foreign nationals coming for installation and commissioning of equip-

ment as part of contract of supply of equipment and for which Indian companies pay fees or royalty, are now brought under the business visa regime.

"Further, a new sub-category of Production Investment Visa has been created under the Business Visa regime and called the B-4 Visa for enabling foreign subject matter specialists/engineers/technical people being engaged by Indian companies," the DPIIT said.

The experts are engaged for installation and commissioning; quality check and essential maintenance; production; IT ramp-up; training; supply chain development for empanelment of vendors, plant design and bring-up; and senior management and executives to visit India for such production investment activities seamlessly, it added. "Moreover, the existing e-PLI business visa was dispensed with," it said.

Now this Production Investment Visa will be issued as an e-visa and has to be applied for in the online Visa portal.

Further, to facilitate the visa application process for e-B-4 visa, Indian companies shall generate sponsorship letters digitally.

For enabling this facilitation digitally, DPIIT had launched the e-Production Investment Business registration module on the National Single Window System (NSWS) on November 29, which can be availed by PLI as well as non-PLI businesses.

"Processes have been streamlined with simpler forms, and the recommendation requirement of the Line Ministry has been done away with," it said, adding that with this module, Indian companies and Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) can instantly generate sponsorship letters for inviting foreign professionals for production-related activities under the e-B-4 Visa category on NSWS.

The auto-population of data and automatic authentication through existing databases like MCA (Ministry of Corporate Affairs), GSTN have eliminated the requirement of approval of the line ministry.

The unique ID of the generated sponsorship letter shall be referred to by a foreign professional when he applies for a Visa on the e-Visa portal where the module has been integrated with NSWS through (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Empower 6th Schedule

remain pending. Today, the people of Bodoland demand urgent and complete fulfilment without any more delay," Narzary said.

As the country moves towards 'Viksit Bharat' under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision with several transformative reforms, Narzary questioned why the Sixth Schedule Councils have remained unchanged. He urged the government to undertake "vibrant reforms" as proposed in the 2019 amendment bill to enable these councils function effectively. (PTI)

Curb imposed along

the district boundary along the Bangladesh border. Any relaxation will be granted only after due verification by supply officials and for specific purposes, time and location, reinforcing transparency and accountability, the release added.

State and central government employees who are on official duty in the border areas have been exempted from these restrictions to ensure that essential administrative and security functions remain uninterrupted. (PTI)

CM launches major

our region's progress, but the true strength of Assam lies in its people. By directly empowering nearly 24,000 "baideoes" (sisters) with seed capital, we are igniting a silent economic revolution at the household level. The Self-Help Groups of Assam are the engines of social and economic change in our villages and the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan is our commitment to building a financially independent and resilient woman in every home," the CM said.

CM gives ₹ 5 lakh

know about the accident only after the survivor reported the incident. (PTI)

₹ 26-crore market

where he also inaugurated and laid the foundation for multiple development projects.

In a first for ICG

routes that transit Pakistan, the ICG said. This connectivity enables New Delhi to expand trade and transit linkages including linkage to the International North-South Transport Corridor or INSTC concept.

"This landmark visit marks the first-ever visit of an ICG Ship to the port of Chabahar, underscoring India's growing maritime engagement in the region.

"It strengthens New Delhi's ability to project economic influence, secure supply lines to Afghanistan and Central Asia, and present a competing development model in the region, consistent with India's SAGAR and MAHASAGAR vision of secure, cooperative maritime engagements," the ICG said in a statement.

In addition to professional engagements, the visit will feature sports fixtures and a beach walkathon, with the participation of embarked National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets, aligning with the national Puneet Sagar Abhiyan to promote marine environmental awareness and coastal cleanliness.

The port call at Chabahar follows the Sarthak's earlier visit to Kuwait, where the ICG ship successfully interacted with the Kuwait Coast Guard, further highlighting the ICG's expanding footprint and constructive engagement with regional maritime partners, the statement said.

The historic visit of Sarthak to Chabahar "reflects India's commitment to strengthening maritime cooperation, promoting a rules-based maritime order, and contributing to peace, stability, and sustainable development across the wider Indian Ocean Region and the Gulf," the ICG said. (PTI)

India summons Bangladesh

called for free, fair, inclusive and credible elections, conducted in a peaceful atmosphere," it added.

Three days back, Bangladesh foreign ministry summoned Indian envoy to Dhaka, Pranay Verma and conveyed its concern over former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's "incendiary" statements from Indian soil.

In its reaction, New Delhi asserted that it has never allowed its territory to be used for activities inimical to the interests of Bangladesh.

Last month, Hasina, 78, was sentenced to death by a special tribunal in Dhaka for "crimes against humanity" over her government's brutal crackdown on the student-led protests last year.

The Awami League leader has been living in India since she fled Bangladesh on August 5 last year in the face of the protests.

The relations between India and Bangladesh came under strain after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus came to power.

India has been expressing concerns over attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in that country. (PTI)

India, UAE troops

Ali Saif Humaid Alkaabi, on December 15 called on Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi and held discussions on enhancing defence cooperation and deepening military-to-military engagement.

The visiting United Arab Emirates leader had also engaged in high-level discussions with senior military leaders. He was also briefed on Operation Sindoor and India's security perspective in the region, officials earlier said. (PTI)

India Inc to see

Automotive Industry are set to have the highest salary increases in 2026 at 9.3 per cent and 9.5 per cent respectively, while the IT, ITES, and Global Capability Centers (GCC) sector in India continued to lead the way in offering innovative and progressive employee benefits reflecting the sector's commitment to enhancing employee well-being and engagement.

"As India embraces digital transformation, navigates shifting workforce expectations and sharpens its focus on productivity, revisiting the number of employees eligible to receive an increment is a strategy being adopted by some companies to manage cost.

"This is a time for leaders to review their priorities and build stronger cultures embedded in a high-performance ethos, making empowerment and accountability go hand in hand, and fostering a fit for purpose value proposition", Mercer's Career Business Leader, India, Mansee Singhal concluded.

Mercer, a business of Marsh McLennan, is a global leader in helping clients realise their investment objectives, shape the future of work and enhance health and retirement outcomes for their people. (PTI)

Stock markets fall for 3rd day on foreign fund outflows; Sensex drops 120 pts

MUMBAI, Dec 17: Stock markets declined for the third consecutive day on Wednesday, with benchmark Sensex closing lower by 120 points at a week's low due to relentless foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex edged lower by 120.21 points or 0.14 per cent to settle at 84,559.65. During the day, it dropped 263.88 points or 0.31 per cent to 84,415.98.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 41.55 points or 0.16 per cent to a week's low of 25,818.55.

Among Sensex firms, Trent fell the most by 1.61 per cent. HDFC Bank dropped by nearly 1 per cent, emerging as a major drag on the index. ICICI Bank, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finserv, Bharat Electronics, Titan and Asian Paints were also among the laggards.

However, State Bank of India rose the most by 1.51 per cent, helping Sensex restrict losses. Infosys, Axis Bank and Maruti were among the gainers.

"Foreign investors are pulling out funds, and emerging markets are struggling, while developed economies remain strong, showing that investors are becoming more cautious about emerging markets," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Selling in heavyweight stocks across sectors led to broad-based weakness, while muted cues from global markets further dampened investor sentiment, Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking, said.

Analysts said a rebound in the rupee from record low levels offers temporary relief, as global uncertainty and sustained foreign selling keep upside po-

tential limited.

The rupee rebounded sharply by over 1 per cent in the early session to trade at 89 level against the US dollar briefly on heavy dollar selling by banks. The rupee later pared gains to close at 90.38, up by 55 points over the last record closing low of 90.93.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 2,381.92 crore on Tuesday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹ 1,077.48 crore, according to exchange data.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.85 per cent and midcap index dipped by 0.53 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, capital goods declined by 0.96 per cent, realty (0.81 per cent), consumer durables, industrials (0.76 per cent), services (0.64 per cent).

BSE Energy, IT, metal, oil & gas, teck and BSE Focused IT were the gainers.

A total of 2,694 stocks declined while 1,475 advanced and 159 remained unchanged on the BSE.

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

European markets were trading higher. US markets ended mostly lower on Tuesday.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 2.12 per cent to USD 60.17 per barrel.

On Tuesday, the Sensex tanked 533.50 points or 0.63 per cent to settle at 84,679.86. The Nifty dropped 167.20 points or 0.64 per cent to 25,860.10. (PTI)

TRAI fixes Feb 15 deadline for 1600-series adoption by IRDAI-regulated entities for service calls

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Telecom regulator TRAI has mandated that entities regulated by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) should adopt, by February 15, 2026, the '1600' series numbers for making service and transactional calls to consumers.

Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) said the direction has been issued with the objective of enhancing consumer trust, curbing spam, and preventing fraudulent activities perpetrated through voice calls. The series, it said, will enable people to reliably identify legitimate calls originating from such regulated entities.

"TRAI issued a direction on December 16, 2025 mandating that the entities regulated by IRDAI should adopt '1600' series numbers by the last date of 15 February, 2026 for making service and transactional calls to the consumers," TRAI said in a statement.

The mandate for last date has been issued in consultation with IRDAI, it said adding earlier TRAI had issued similar directions for mandatory adoptions of 1600 series numbers by entities regulated by RBI, SEBI and PFRDA.

"In response to TRAI's regulatory initiative, the '1600' numbering series has been assigned by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) for allocation to entities in the Banking, Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI) sector, and government organisations to clearly distinguish their service and transactional calls from other commercial communications," the statement said.

TRAI said it has regularly engaged with telecom service providers and the BFSI regulators for adoption of 1600 series by sector entities, and about 570 entities have already adopted 1600 series numbers, subscribing to a total of over 3,000 numbers.

NAME CHANGE
I have changed my name from Mohammed Moinul Hoque to Moinul Hoque by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, Hojai (assam)Moinul Hoque and Moinul Hoque same and one person.
Moinul Hoque
Uttar Bandormela,Murajhar,Hojai (Assam)

ENGINEERING WORKS
TENDER NOTICE NO. 53 OF 2025, Date: 12-12-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No.: DCEST_MLG-47-2025. Name of work & Location: (A) At Maligaon: Construction of 10 units Type-II DS Quarters at Goshala Colony under the jurisdiction of SSE/W/NMB in replacement of Qtr Nos. 91 / (A + B + C + D) 92 / (A + B + C + D) & 93 / (A + B) Type-I of Goshala Colony. (B) At Maligaon: Construction of 10 units Type-II DS Quarters at Goshala Colony under the jurisdiction of SSE/W/NMB in replacement of Qtr Nos. 93/(C+D), 94 / (A+B+C+D) & 95 / (A+B+C + D) Type-I of Goshala Colony. (C) At Maligaon: Construction of 10 units Type-II DS Quarters at Goshala Colony under the jurisdiction of SSE/W/NMB in replacement of Qtr Nos 96 / (A+B+C+D)97 / (A+B+ C + D) & 98 / (A + B) Type-1 of Goshala Colony. (D) At Maligaon: Construction Type-II Quarters at Goshala Colony under the jurisdiction of SSE/W/NMB in replacement of Qtr Nos. 98 / (C + D), 99 / (A + B + C + D) & 100 / (A + B + C + D) Type-I of Goshala Colony. (E) At Maligaon : Construction of 12 units Type-II DS Quarters at Central Gotanagar Colony under the jurisdiction of SSE/W/HQ in replacement of Qtr Nos. 113 / (A + B + C+D) 115 / (A+B+C+D) & 116 / (A + B + C + D) Type-1 of Central Gotanagar Colony. (F) At II DS Quarters at Central Gotanagar Colony under the jurisdiction of SSE/W/HQ in replacement of Qtr Nos. 114 / (A + B + C+D+E+F+G+H) & 119 / (A+B) Type-I of Central Gotanagar Colony. (G) At Maligaon: Construction of 10 units Type-II DS Quarters at Central Gotanagar Colony. Tender Value: ₹25,49,72,025.61; Earnest Money: ₹14,24,500.00. E-tenders will be closed at 13:00 hrs. on 13-01-2026 and will be opened at 13:00 hrs. on 13-01-2026. For details please visit www.ireps.gov.in
By, Chief Engineer/Estate, Maligaon
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a smile"

AFFIDAVIT
I Janet Ali / Janif Uddin Miya, S/o. Late Khattu Mandal, Residing at Village - Nagajan, P.O./P.S. - Kharupetia, Dist. - Darrang, Assam, Pin - 784115, shall henceforth be known as Janif Ali as declared before the Notary Public, Darrang, Assam, vide Affidavite No. 6041 dated 18/11/2025, that Janet Ali / Janif Uddin Miya and Janif Ali both are same and identical person.
Sd/-
Janet Ali

Dr Pradip Kumar assesses health, education and water supply initiatives under Aspirational Blocks Programme

NITI Aayog CPO reviews development works in Nilip aspirational block

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Dec 17: Dr Pradip Kumar, IRS (Income Tax), Chief Prabhari Officer (CPO) for Karbi Anglong district under NITI Aayog's Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP) and Director in the Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare, Government of India, carried out a comprehensive field visit to the Nilip Aspirational Block to review the on-ground implementation of key development initiatives.

The visit was aimed at evaluating block-level performance and ensuring effective delivery of essential services in one of Assam's underdeveloped areas covered under the ABP, a flagship programme launched to accelerate socio-economic progress in 500 selected blocks across the country.

During the inspection, Dr Kumar visited the Bogijan Tea Estate Anganwadi Centre, where he reviewed the functioning of early childhood care, education and nutrition services. He interacted with frontline workers and discussed service delivery mechanisms, challenges and beneficiary outreach with a



view to strengthening health and nutrition outcomes.

He also visited the Dokhora English ME

School and held detailed discussions with the Block Development Officer (BDO), Block Primary Education Officer (BPEO)

and the Head Teacher. The interactions focused on key education indicators, student performance and strategies to improve learning outcomes under the ABP framework.

In addition, Dr Kumar inspected the Dakhara Hide Bey Piped Water Supply Scheme implemented under the Jal Jeevan Mission. He reviewed the progress of rural drinking water infrastructure, household tap connections and sustainability measures.

The field visit highlighted the importance of inter-departmental convergence, close monitoring of key performance indicators and strong last-mile service delivery to ensure holistic development in the Nilip block. Dr Kumar emphasised the need for sustained and coordinated efforts to improve the quality of life in aspirational areas through programmes like the Aspirational Blocks Programme.

The Aspirational Blocks Programme focuses on priority sectors including health, nutrition, education and basic infrastructure to promote inclusive growth in remote and underdeveloped regions.

'Suroxito Xaishob, Sonali Axom' campaign launched in Kokrajhar

90-day district campaign focuses on child protection and awareness



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Dec 17: The district-level launch of "Suroxito Xaishob, Sonali Axom", a 90-day campaign on child protection was held on Tuesday at the Conference Hall of Kokrajhar University. The campaign aims to create sustained awareness and preventive action against major child protection issues including child marriage, child trafficking, child labour, substance abuse, sexual offences against children and illegal adoption, while also promoting legal safeguards and non-institutional care mechanisms.

The programme was organised by the District Child Protection Unit under the Department of Women and Child Development, Kokrajhar. Himangshu Kalita, Assistant Commissioner, Kokrajhar, attended the programme along with Jintu Phukan District Social Welfare Officer, Ratan Jhankar Borgayari Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel, District Legal Services Authority, Kokrajhar, Nilu Kumar Brahma in-charge

Joint Director, Directorate of Health Services, Satyaban Brahma Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Kokrajhar, Udangshri Basumatary Clinical Psychologist under the District Mental Health Programme, among others.

It was informed that the 90-day campaign will be implemented across the district through coordinated community and student dialogues, school-based awareness programmes and capacity-building initiatives for teachers, police personnel and frontline workers. Youth platforms such as NSS, NCC and NYK will also be actively engaged.

The campaign will further include faith-based outreach, collaboration with civil society and academic institutions, cultural and creative interventions, awareness rallies, digital safety initiatives, promotion of child helpline services and other activities aimed at strengthening child care and protection mechanisms in Kokrajhar district.

Kamrup unit of All Assam Poets' Conference holds first executive meeting

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: The Kamrup district unit of the All Assam Poets' Conference held its first executive meeting at Yuva Vikas Kendra, chaired by Jagannath Kalita. Achyut Kalita outlined the meeting's objectives and various proposals were discussed by office bearers. The meeting began with a devotional song by Sabita Devi Barua. Attendees included Organising Secretary Mrinal Bora, vice presidents Bhavesh Deka and Dr Shewali Das Kalita, Advisors Anil Goswami, Manik Dutta, Pomi Goswami and Runumi Talukdar, Treasurer Shukleswar Mali and other district and branch representatives. The event featured the release of Dr Shewali Das Kalita's novel 'Jibanar Natun Khoj' by president Jagannath Kalita, poetry recitations by members and concluded with a vote of thanks by Achyut Kalita.

Lions Club of Guwahati Pride organises mass wedding for eleven underprivileged couples

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: A heart-warming mass wedding ceremony was successfully conducted by the Lions Club of Guwahati Pride on Sunday, providing eleven underprivileged couples an opportunity to begin their married lives with dignity and respect.

The event was graced by District Governor Pankaj Poddar as Chief Guest and International Director Endorsee M P Agarwal as Guest of Honour. Special guests included L N Agarwal (PDG), Prabhata Kedia (Former Rotary District Governor), Manoj Bhajanka (First Vice District Governor), Rajesh Agarwalla (Second Vice District Governor) and Ajay Poddar (District Cabinet Member).

Organised under the guidance of Chairperson Nataraw Nagori and Co-Chairperson Chitra Bhartia, the programme began with a traditional tilak and warm welcome of guests, formally conducted by Neha Jain and Archana Sharma. Club members donned yellow attire symbolising unity, joy and service. Each guest and member was presented with a framed photograph as a souvenir of the occasion.

During the ceremony, M P Agarwal felicitated club president Anup Kumar Jajodia and Secretary Manish Jain with International Appreciation Certificates for their leadership and dedicated service. The marriages were solemnised according to religious and social

traditions with Vedic rituals beautifully performed by teachers and students of Panch Kanya Ved Vidyalaya, Basistha. On the occasion, the club also released the second issue of its newsletter, "Pride Samvad." Dignitaries appreciated the club's rapid impact within just four months of its formation and lauded its service-oriented initiatives.

Club president Anup Kumar Jajodia and Secretary Manish Jain expressed heartfelt gratitude to all sponsors, supporters, guest and media personnel, reaffirming the Lions Club of Guwahati Pride's commitment to continue organising meaningful programmes for societal upliftment.

Cement-loaded dumper truck overturns at Lahorijan highway

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Dec 17: A cement-loaded dumper truck overturned on the Lahorijan four-lane highway on Wednesday, injuring the driver and handyman. The injured were taken to a nearby hospital by passersby.

Eyewitnesses reported that the truck was speeding at the time of the accident. Around 300 cement bags were scattered across the highway due to the incident. The police promptly reached the scene, cordoned off the affected section and took necessary action to manage the situation.

Emotional farewell to retiring teachers at Kajikata School



HT Correspondent

BILASIPARA, Dec 17: An emotional atmosphere prevailed at Kajikata People's Multiple Academy Higher Secondary School in Bilasipara as a formal farewell ceremony was organised to honour two retiring headmasters, a science teacher and two Grade-IV staff members.

The programme was attended by students, teachers, guardians and

well-wishers who gathered to bid a heartfelt farewell to former headmasters Samsul Haque and Anshab Ali, science teacher Abdul Siddique Sheikh and Grade-IV staff members Juran Ali Mondal and Humuj Ali Ahmed. All the retiring members were recognised for their long and dedicated service to the institution.

The retirees were felicitated with traditional gamosas, floral garlands, bouquets, books, citation letters and mementos as tokens of respect and gratitude. Speakers at the programme recalled the immense contributions of the retiring teachers towards the educational upliftment of the backward region. They praised their honesty, integrity, dedication, discipline and sense of duty throughout their service. Students, former students, colleagues, parents and members of the local community highlighted how the retiring teachers maintained cordial relationships with all sections of society and worked tirelessly for the overall development of the school.

Several speakers became emotional while sharing their memories and experiences with the departing teachers. The gathering unanimously wished the retirees good health, long life and happiness and encouraged them to remain associated with social and educational activities in the future.

Tamulpur DC visits border villages under Vibrant Village Programme-II

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Dec 17: Under the Vibrant Village Programme-II of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, District Commissioner of Tamulpur, Pankaj Chakravarty, ACS, visited three border villages—Dongargaon No 3, Dongargaon No 1 and Bihangapur on Tuesday to interact with residents and assess developmental needs and future opportunities.

Chakravarty was accompanied by Jasbir Singh, 2nd I/C of 24th Battalion, SSB, Assistant Commissioner Arunima Kakaty and heads

of key departments including Education, Health, Social Welfare and Public Health Engineering. The team held interactive sessions with villagers to understand ground-level issues.

During the visit, villagers openly shared their concerns, challenges and aspirations, highlighting priority areas for improvement. The visits underscored the District Administration's commitment to participatory governance and community-driven planning, ensuring that development initiatives are aligned with grassroots realities.

44th TOLIC meeting held to promote official language Hindi

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Dec 17: The 44th half-yearly meeting of the Town Official Language Implementation Committee (TOLIC), Jorhat, was held at the Central Silk Board - Muga Eri Research and Training Institute, Ladoigarh. The meeting was chaired by Dr V M Tiwari, Director, CSIR-NEIST with Dr Kartik Neug and Dr G P Samphat as Chief Guests. The meeting emphasised the promotion and maximum use of Hindi in official work, in compliance with the Official Language Act and Rules. A Hindi documentary showcasing the scientific achievements of the Muga Eri Research and Training Institute was screened and the Chairperson encouraged all member offices to prepare short Hindi documentaries of their activities for institutional websites.

Active participation was recorded from heads and staff of all TOLIC member offices, including banks, public sector undertakings and Central Government offices in Jorhat. Quarterly progress reports and activities for official language implementation were reviewed, with key decisions taken to further enhance effectiveness. Ajay Kumar, Member Secretary, appreciated the work done by member offices and urged continued progress. Representatives from various institutions, including Jorhat Airport, Kendriya Vidyalayas, Union Bank of India, ICFRE, FCI, LIC, State Bank of India and All India Radio, among others, attended and shared updates on Hindi implementation in their offices.

Leopard carcass found on Bhogdoi river banks

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Dec 17: The carcass of an adult male leopard was discovered on the banks of the Bhogdoi river near Murmura Tea Estate on Wednesday evening.

A Forest Department source confirmed that the carcass has been sent for post-mortem examination, which will help determine the exact cause of death. Authorities are awaiting the report to take further action.

Class X student found dead in Bilasipara field

HT Correspondent

BILASIPARA, Dec 17: A shocking incident has unsettled the Bojer Alga Fifth Part area of Bilasipara, where the body of a Class X student was discovered in a field on Wednesday, creating panic and tension in the locality. The deceased has been identified as Ranjan Ali, a student of River Valley Academy School. According to local sources, villagers first noticed the body lying in the field and immediately alerted others, prompting a large gathering at the site. Preliminary observations revealed visible injury marks on the body, raising suspicions of foul play.

Family members have alleged that unknown miscreants may have murdered the student and disposed of the body in the field. The exact cause of death, however, is yet to be confirmed.

On receiving information, Nayer Alga Police rushed to the scene, recovered the body and sent it for post-mortem examination. An investigation has been launched to determine the circumstances leading to the death.

The incident has sent shockwaves across Bilasipara, with residents demanding a thorough and impartial probe to ensure that those responsible are brought to justice.

Sadou Asam Lekhika Samaroh Samiti observes 22nd Death Anniversary of Aideu Handique

Women have the power to make society more humane and beautiful: Anuradha Sarma Pujari

HT Correspondent



TEZPUR, Dec 17: The Sadou Asam Lekhika Samaroh Samiti observed the 22nd death anniversary of actress Aideu Handique on Wednesday with a daylong programme at its Tezpur central office.

Dr Jahanara Begum was conferred the "Aideu Handique Memorial Award, 2025" for her contribution to Indian cinema. A bust of Padma Shri Sheela Borthakur, founder president of the Samiti, was unveiled by senior journalist and litterateur Anuradha Sarma Pujari, with financial support from Dr Sanjib Borthakur.

The programme began with flag hoisting, floral tributes to Dr Sheela Borthakur, Khuran Borthakur and singer Zubeen Garg, followed by group performances. The commemorative meeting, chaired by Samiti president Subarna Saikia Bordoloi, was inaugurated by adviser Swarna Barua Gogoi, who

recalled Handique's resilience, noting she faced social ostracism for a single dialogue in 'Joymoti' and remained unmarried.

Former president Dr Charu Saharia Nath highlighted the Samiti's growth since 1974 and praised Dr Borthakur as an inspiration for Assamese women. Dr Jahanara Begum urged women to uphold Handique's legacy of courage.

Anuradha Sarma Pujari remarked that Tezpur produced progressive women like Mina Agarwala and Dr Borthakur, who empowered women against patriarchal constraints, adding, "Women have the power to make society more humane and beautiful."

The programme was attended by office-bearers, members of various branches, academicians, writers and cultural figures, who paid rich tributes to both Handique and Dr Borthakur, reaffirming their enduring relevance in Assam's cultural and social history.

Workshop on Integrating Technology and AI in Research

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU) organised a workshop on "Integrating Technology and AI in Research Methodologies" on Wednesday in hybrid mode at its city campus. The event, hosted by the Discipline of Library and Information Science of the Guru Prasad Das School of Interdisciplinary and Vocational Studies along with the Central Library, attracted 210 participants—140 online and 70 offline. The programme was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Prof Rajendra Prasad Das, who highlighted the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in modern research. During the event, research scholar Pompy Konwar was awarded the Best Library Visitor Award by Dr Gobinda Deka in line with the Government of Assam's "Year of Books" initiative. Pranjit Kalita, Assistant Professor, introduced the resource person, Dr Deepjyoti Kalita, Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of Library and Information Science, Cotton University, who conducted a technical session on using AI tools in research, followed by an interactive Q&A session. The workshop concluded with a formal vote of thanks by Dibyajyoti Patgiri, Assistant Librarian, Central Library, KKHSOU.

Modern retiring rooms and dormitory inaugurated at Guwahati Railway Station

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 17: In a significant move to enhance passenger comfort, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has upgraded the Retiring Rooms and Dormitory facilities at Guwahati Railway Station under the Lumding Division. The upgraded facilities were inaugurated in the presence of NFR General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, along with other senior railway officials, reaffirming NFR's focus on passenger-centric infrastructure development.

The Retiring Room complex, situated on the first floor of the station building, now offers a modern and comfortable stay experience. The accommodation includes nine Retiring Rooms—seven two-bedded and two five-bedded rooms—along with a 12-bedded dormitory. All rooms have been converted into fully air-conditioned units with improved interiors and comfortable beds, ensuring a hygienic and convenient environment for passengers.

The initiative also boosts non-fare revenue for NFR. The new arrangement is projected to generate ₹ 1.94 crore over the next five-year contract period, with no expenditure incurred by the Railways for maintenance, operations, or renovation—a notable increase over the earlier in-house model that involved recurring costs.

To achieve these improvements efficiently, the management, renovation and maintenance of the Retiring Rooms and Dormitory have been outsourced through an open tender process.

Morigaon rice procurement begins at government support price

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Dec 17: With the objective of doubling farmers' income, the central and state governments have initiated the procurement of shali paddy at the government-declared minimum support price (MSP) in Morigaon district. The Assam Food and Civil Supplies Corporation (AFSC), in collaboration with the Morigaon District Administration and the Agriculture Department, has taken steps to purchase paddy at fair and reasonable prices. The paddy procurement process was officially inaugurated following the opening of a procurement centre in the presence of Assistant Commissioner Kankan Jyoti Saikia. Speaking on the occasion, the Assistant Commissioner stated that socio-economic development is possible only when farmers' incomes increase. He also urged farmers not to depend on middlemen and to directly approach the department to sell their paddy at the government's minimum support price.

Under the Kharif season 2025-26, the minimum support price for paddy has been fixed at ₹ 2,369 per quintal, along with an additional assistance of ₹ 250 per quintal from the Government of Assam. As a result, paddy procurement is being carried out at a total price of ₹ 2,619 per quintal. Procurement has already begun at nine paddy procurement centres across the district. Senior Agricultural Development Officer Musahid Farooki, Padum Bora, Rice Procurement Centre Manager Anshuman Bora, Rajiv Uddin Ahmed, AFSC representative Sajidul Islam, media expert Gautam Kumar Nath and Agricultural Extension Assistant Abu Yusuf were present at the programme.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

From a small seed a mighty trunk may grow.
-Aeschylus

Setback for LDF in Kerala

There is no denying that the Left Democratic Front (LDF) has suffered a setback in the local bodies elections. The Opposition United Democratic Front (UDF) is certainly on a comeback trail with an excellent victory. As for the BJP, but for the win in Thiruvananthapuram Corporation, it does not have much to be enthusiastic about. True it is an electoral reverse for the LDF which was expecting to register a victory. But this is not the first time that the LDF has lost the local bodies poll. The Front has bounced back with renewed vigour in the past. This too shall pass and the LDF would hit the winning trail again in the final - the crucial Assembly elections scheduled to be held early next year. Contrarily, the UDF is on cloud nine. Understandable. It is their first major electoral win ten years. But this win does not guarantee a victory in the "final". As the saying goes, one swallow does not make a summer. If anything, there is the danger of the front being carried away by the victory and losing the plot. There are many hurdles to overcome before it can reach the winning post in the assembly elections. Victory could exacerbate the factionalism and jockeying for power. Unless it plays its cards well, the front could again end up on the losing side in the Assembly poll battle.

As for the BJP, it has every reason to feel good having won an upset win in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation dislodging the LDF from power. The BJP's win is being attributed to the triangular nature of the contest with the anti-BJP vote split between the LDF and the UDF. The BJP, however, failed to retain power in Palakkad municipality having won only 25 seats as against 28 it had last time. The party can also draw comfort from the fact that it has managed to make its presence felt in Kollam and Kozhikode districts. But the fact remains that its performance has not been up to the expectation of its leaders. But what accounts for the defeat of the LDF? The loss can be attributed to many factors. The most important factor is the alienation of the Muslim community from the front. The CPI(M)'s support to Sree Narayana Paripalana (SNRP) Yogam chief Vellappally Natesan's vituperative outbursts against the Muslim community has played a big role in the LDF's defeat. It was, undoubtedly a political blunder.

The LDF should have taken Vellappally to task for his anti-Muslim statements. Its failure to do so was bad. What was worse was its support to Natesan's Muslim baiting. The LDF must lose no time to reverse its stand and correct this political blunder. Loss of a substantial slice of the Muslim vote will cost it dear in the assembly polls, especially in the Malabar region, where Congress ally the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) is very strong.

Political heat rises in West Bengal after publication of draft Electoral Roll

By: Dr Gyan Pathak

With the publication of Draft Electoral Rolls on December 16, 2025, political heat has considerably risen in West Bengal which is going to poll three months from now in March-April 2026. Over 58 lakh names have been deleted from the existing voter list during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in the state. The ruling TMC Supremo Mamata Banerjee is miffed over the deletion and has asked the party rank and file to carry out fresh door-to-door scrutiny of the deleted names.

As of October 27, 2025, when the SIR process was announced by the Election Commission of India, there were 7.6 crore voters on the electoral rolls. SIR process began on November 4. Out of them 7.08 crore (92.4 %) voters had submitted the enumeration forms whose names are included in the draft voter list. It resulted in deletion of the names of over 58 lakh voters. Of the names deleted, 24.16 lakh (3.15 %) were dead, 32.65 lakh (4.26 %) were found to have shifted or were absent, and 1.38 lakh (0.18 %) were found enrolled at multiple places. The ECI has said that the draft rolls, along with a detailed, booth-wise list of deleted voters and reasons for deletion, have been made available on the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) website, the Election Commission's voter portal and the ECINET application, adding, if a voter does not find his or her name in the draft voter list, then he or she must fill Form 6 and submit it along with the requisite documents. With the publication of the draft voter list, the claims and objection period has begun from December 16, 2025, which will end on January 15, 2026. During this period any existing or prospective elector may file claims or objections for inclusion of eligible electors or deletion of ineligible names. The verification phase will end on February 7. The final rolls will be published on February 14. It is well known that after Bihar, PM Narendra Modi's election machinery is focusing on West Bengal, throw the ruling TMC out of power from the state. TMC Supremo Mamata Banerjee has been Chief Minister of the State since May 20, 2011. This is her third term as chief Minister, and she seems well set to retain power for the fourth consecutive term.

Nevertheless, the SIR exercise has created considerable tension in TMC leadership and its rank and file, chiefly on account of the alleged large scale deletion of voters who are believed to be her support base, especially from among the minority Muslim community. BJP has been campaigning in the state for quite some time that she has been protecting illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators, and many of them have been able to get their name listed as voters in the state.

Mamata Banerjee has said that no valid voter's name should be deleted under any circumstances, and every deleted name must be physically verified by the party workers. TMC leaders and workers have thus started verifying the deleted voters who have been marked "dead", "shifted", or absent by the poll panel.

ECI officials have said that enumeration forms were printed for all voters and delivered door-to-door by booth-level officers (BLOs). They said that whoever submitted signed forms, even if partially filled, their names have been retained in the draft list, though their details will be subject to further verification.

Significant number of voters have been flagged during the SIR process. This is the primary reason of rising tension among voters and political parties. Reports suggest that over 32 lakh voters have been placed in a "no-mapping" category as their names could not be linked with the 2002 electoral rolls. In addition, around 1.7 crore voters have been placed under varying degrees of scrutiny, and BLOs have been tasked with re-verifying their details through door-to-door checks after the draft rolls are published.

Heated political discourse is being heard from every part of West Bengal. TMC has accused the SIR process and the timing of the deletions of being politically motivated and targeted with approaching Legislative elections. Central and state BJP leadership have urged opposition political parties to support SIR exercise to ensure accurate and credible voter rolls. ECI has defended the SIR process.

Nevertheless, many communities other than the minority Muslim community, have raised their concerns and fears. For example, the Matua community in parts of North 24 Parganas have publicly expressed fears of being disenfranchised, with many members listed as unmapped and potentially facing hearings.

The hearing and verification process has already become highly contentious with both bureaucratic and political pressures on the ground level are mounting up. It is visibly impacting the political dynamics ahead of the 2026 assembly elections. SIR has already become the central political issue. (IPA Service)

Power Generation from the Mighty Brahmaputra

The mighty Brahmaputra is not merely a river; it is an endless stream of energy that has nourished the civilisation and culture of north-east India for ages. Emerging from the heart of the Himalayas, this vast body of water holds within it an immense potential for power, which we have not yet been able to fully harness. The continuous flow of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, the swiftness of the water, and the geographical location make this region one of the best places in the world for hydropower generation. Yet the path to realising this enormous reservoir of energy is fraught with numerous challenges, concerns, and technical complexities. The plans to utilise the waters of the Brahmaputra to meet the growing demand for power must not remain confined to economic gains alone; they are inextricably linked to questions of environment, social structure, and the security of future generations. Rather than viewing a river solely as a source of water, the dream of transforming it into the economic backbone of the nation can be realised only through reason and a scientific approach instead of emotion.

To discuss the power generation potential of the Brahmaputra river, we must first deeply understand its geographical and hydrological characteristics. Starting from the Tibetan plateau and flowing down to the plains of India, this river crosses a tremendous elevation, resulting in enormous kinetic energy in its current. This kinetic energy is the primary source of hydropower generation. Very few rivers in the world possess such geographical advantages, where both a huge volume of water and high velocity are found together. The combination of rainwater and meltwater from snow keeps the river's flow uninterrupted throughout the year, which can help power generation centres operate continuously. Each tributary of the Brahmaputra flowing through Assam and Arunachal Pradesh has its own power generation capacity. If the energy from these small and large rivers is combined, the amount of electricity produced would be sufficient not only for the north-eastern region but also to meet the energy deficit of the entire country. However, converting this geographical advantage into electrical energy through technology is hindered by the river's sediment load and erosive nature, necessitating innovative techniques instead of conventional methods.

The potential for power generation from the Brahmaputra has the capacity to radically transform the economic landscape of Assam. In the present era, the development of any state or country depends largely on the availability of energy. Affordable and uninterrupted electricity supply is essential for establishing industries, modernising agriculture, and meeting domestic needs. Despite abundant natural resources in Assam, many large industries have not been able to emerge solely due to the lack of power. Hydropower generated from the waters of the Brahmaputra is not only low-cost but also a renewable source of energy, which can make the state self-reliant in the power sector. Moreover, the revenue earned by the state government from selling excess electricity to other states can be utilised for other developmental works. The construction and operation of hydropower projects will require a large number of skilled and unskilled workers, which can play a positive role in solving the unemployment problem. However, to turn this economic potential into reality, stability in govern-



ment policy and the creation of a favourable environment for investors are extremely essential.

In the context of power generation, there is intense debate and apprehension in society regarding the construction of large dams and their impacts. The Brahmaputra valley is a highly earthquake-prone region, where a powerful earthquake can occur at any moment. The question of how safe massive structures or dams built to contain vast amounts of water in such a sensitive terrain are is of utmost importance. History has shown that man-made structures can often invite disaster during natural calamities. Therefore, geological surveys and the use of modern earthquake-resistant technology are indispensable when constructing power projects on the river. Instead of traditional concrete dams, discussions are ongoing about how to generate power without obstructing the river's flow. 'Run-of-the-river' projects, which utilise the natural flow of the river to produce electricity, are considered comparatively less risky. Nevertheless, any kind of construction activity affects the river's ecosystem to some extent, so no compromise should be made on the aspect of safety.

The Brahmaputra river is not just a flowing stream of water; it is the habitat of thousands of aquatic animals and plants. The unique golden mahseer, various species of fish, and the forests along the river banks are integral parts of this ecosystem. Controlling the water flow or altering its quality for power generation can pose a severe threat to the existence of these creatures. Especially during the dry season, a reduction in the river's water volume can adversely affect the downstream environment. Reservoirs created for hydropower projects often destroy forest areas and obstruct the movement of wildlife. Therefore, maintaining a balance between development and environment is a difficult but indispensable responsibility. Environmental impact assessment must be conducted with utmost honesty and scientific methods for every project, so that energy can be harnessed without destroying the natural character of the river.

The lives and livelihoods of people living along the Brahmaputra are deeply intertwined with the river. Millions of people depend on it for agriculture, fish farming, and daily needs. Changes in the water level or

alteration of the river's course due to power projects directly affect their lives. Particularly, storing water upstream can cause water scarcity for agriculture downstream, or sudden release of water during the rainy season can create artificial floods, causing fear among people. Moreover, land acquisition and displacement of people for project construction are always sensitive issues. Losing one's ancestral land and moving towards an uncertain future is not easy for anyone. Therefore, before adopting any scheme for harnessing power from the Brahmaputra, open discussions with local people, giving importance to their opinions, and ensuring proper rehabilitation are the moral responsibility of the government. Without trust and cooperation, no large project can achieve long-term success.

The issue of water and power from the Brahmaputra is also deeply linked to international geopolitics. Since this river flows through three countries—China, India, and Bangladesh—strategic relations and tensions exist among them regarding the use and control of water. As an upstream country, reports emerge from time to time that China is attempting to build massive dams on the Brahmaputra to control or divert its

flow. In such a situation, for India, proper utilisation of the river's water within its territory and establishing rights over it are extremely crucial in the interest of national security. According to international water law, the country that uses or develops the water first has its rights better protected. Therefore, harnessing the hydropower potential of the Brahmaputra is not just about power generation; it is also a strategy to protect our sovereign rights over the water. At the same time, a friendly and fair understanding with our downstream neighbour Bangladesh regarding water sharing is necessary to avoid any disruption in diplomatic relations.

From a technical perspective, another major challenge in generating power from the Brahmaputra is the enormous amount of sediment carried by the river. Due to flowing through the soft rocks of the Himalayas, the water of the Brahmaputra contains an excessively high sediment load. This sediment fills the bottom of dams or reservoirs, reducing water storage capacity and causing damage to machinery. Turbines or rotating equipment used for power generation are likely to deteriorate quickly due to sediment

abrasion. Therefore, special technologies and equipment capable of functioning efficiently even in highly sediment-laden water are needed for the Brahmaputra. Regular river dredging, arrangements for removing sediment from reservoirs, and the application of modern engineering techniques are extremely essential for sediment management. If these technical complexities are not resolved, projects built at the cost of crores of rupees risk becoming useless. Hence, greater emphasis should be placed on research and new innovations.

Controlling floods and generating power—achieving both objectives simultaneously is a complex equation. Generally, for power generation, water needs to be stored in reservoirs to ensure electricity production continues even during the dry season. On the other hand, for flood control, reservoirs must be emptied before the rainy season to accommodate excess water. Maintaining balance between these two opposing requirements is a major test for project managers. In multipurpose projects, efforts are made to reduce flood intensity while maintaining continuity of power generation through scientific management of water levels. However, this requires accurate meteorological data, advance warning of river water levels, and an efficient management system. In the past, it has been seen that due to mismanagement, water released from dams during the rainy season has caused devastating floods downstream. Therefore, Brahmaputra power projects should be developed not merely as electricity centres but as integrated water resource management centres.

In the global market for renewable energy, the importance of hydropower is increasing alongside solar and wind power. The idea of integrating the vast waters of the Brahmaputra with solar energy to create 'hybrid' or combined power projects can also be considered. Installing floating solar panels on the surface of river reservoirs can enable energy harnessing from both sources simultaneously. This would resolve land issues and also reduce water evaporation. The relevance of such innovative thinking and multipurpose projects is growing day by day to meet future energy demands. Modern energy hubs centred on the Brahmaputra would not only supply electricity but also become centres for research and tourism. There is a beautiful opportunity before us to enjoy and utilise both the beauty and power of the river; all that is needed is a far-sighted and comprehensive plan.

In conclusion, the issue of the Brahmaputra and power generation is not confined to mere numbers or statistics. It is a profound subject connected to the existence, economy, and future of our nation. The immense resource that nature has given us should be used with respect and caution. We must remain vigilant so that in the blind race for development we do not lose the ground beneath our feet. At the same time, there is no justification for unnecessarily closing the doors to progress out of fear and emotion. Policies for harnessing power from the Brahmaputra will be successful and acceptable only if formulated on the four pillars of scientific analysis, transparency, public participation, and responsibility towards the environment. In the roar of the mighty Brahmaputra lies not only the terror of floods but also the potential for a prosperous and illuminated Assam. Transforming that potential into reality is the greatest responsibility and challenge of this generation.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himanshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Hansi: From the centre of history to the margins and then to the district's threshold

By: Dr Privanka Saurabh

History never changes suddenly; it takes a gradual turn. The ancient city of Hansi in Haryana is a living example of this. Once considered one of the most important centers of power, administration, trade, and strategic importance in northern India, this same city was a significant center of governance for centuries. Today, after enduring years of administrative neglect, Hansi is once again moving towards regaining its identity as a district. The announcement of Hansi's new district status in 2025 is being seen not just as an administrative decision, but as an attempt to complete an unfinished chapter of history.

Hansi's glory was at its peak long before the British arrived in India. During the reign of George Thomas, Hansi served as the capital of the Haryana region. At that time, the city was one of the major trading centers of northern India under the Delhi Pargana. Administrative orders were issued from Hansi, and the surrounding area was governed. This city was not only a center of power but also a major hub of trade, cultural exchange, and military strategies.

Hansi's importance remained undiminished even during the Mughal period. Historical documents and maps from Akbar's reign depict Hansi as an important Mughal center. A mint was established here, where coins were minted. The presence of a mint in any city was considered a symbol of its economic and administrative strength. This clearly demonstrates that Hansi was not just a town, but a vital pillar of the econ-

omy of that era. Hansi's geographical location also made it extremely strategically important. Located on the routes leading to Delhi, Punjab, and Rajasthan, the Mughals established a military cantonment here. Later, the British, recognizing this strategic importance, maintained a military presence here. Hansi's fortifications, administrative structure, and military system made it one of the safe and organized cities of northern India.

But the course of history changed with the First War of Independence of 1857. Hansi and the surrounding areas openly revolted against British rule. This region was among the areas where the British faced the most intense resistance. Local people, soldiers, and landlords challenged British authority. This rebellion was not just a law and order problem for the British, but a direct challenge to their authority.

Following the 1857 rebellion, the British adopted a policy of retaliation. Areas that offered the most resistance were administratively weakened. Hansi also fell victim to this policy. Although there is no precise and authentic date for Hansi's district status, historians believe that between 1870 and 1880, the British shifted the district headquarters from Hansi to Hisar, establishing a new district. This virtually eliminated Hansi's administrative importance.

By making Hisar a district, the British not only altered the administrative structure but also marginalized Hansi's historical role. Areas like Fatehabad and Sirsa were governed from Hisar. This change was not merely a matter of

convenience, but a strategy to control a region that had dared to rebel against British rule.

Historians also point out that around 1700 AD, Haryana existed on maps with a distinct geopolitical identity separate from Punjab. Many maps from that period are still available, showing Hansi as the capital of Haryana. George Thomas ruled the entire region with Hansi as his primary center. This clearly demonstrates that Hansi's importance was not limited to a single ruler or period; rather, it remained a center of power for a long time. After independence, when the state of Haryana was formed in 1966, Hisar was the largest district in the state. At that time, Hansi was hoping to regain its historical status. However, administrative priorities and political balances prevented this from happening. Instead, Hisar district was periodically reorganised.

Bhiwani was made a separate district in 1972. Sirsa was followed by district status in 1975 and Fatehabad in 1997. Charkhi Dadri became a new district in 2016, splitting from Bhiwani. All these divisions have continually altered and reduced the administrative map of Hisar, but Hansi has remained excluded from the district list each time.

This neglect gradually led to discontent in Hansi. People began to feel that this was not merely administrative neglect, but rather an extension of historical injustice. Over the past ten years, the demand for Hansi to become a district began to gain momentum. Local social organizations, trade associations, and political representatives consistently raised the

issue. This demand gradually took the form of a mass movement.

The people of Hansi argued that the city met all the criteria for becoming a district—historically, geographically, and administratively. Several administrative offices already existed here. Considering the distance from surrounding areas and population pressure, becoming a district was considered logical. But above all these arguments, there was also an emotional aspect—the desire to restore Hansi's lost prestige.

When Hansi was announced as a new district in 2025, it wasn't just seen as an administrative news. This announcement was seen as the culmination of Hansi's history, struggle, and wait. People saw it as a partial rectification of the injustices inflicted by the British after 1857, which had long been ignored in independent India.

The creation of Hansi as a district is also an important step towards administrative decentralization. This will not only provide better administrative facilities to the local people but will also accelerate regional development. New opportunities are likely to arise in areas such as education, health, roads, and employment. This decision will also strengthen regional balance.

History shows that cities removed from the center of power are marginalized not only geographically but also psychologically. Hansi suffered this fate for a long time. But now, with the creation of a district, the city is poised to return to the center of attention.

The story of Hansi also teaches us that history isn't just a collection of events recorded in books,

but it also influences current policies and decisions. The establishment of Hansi as a district is proof that history, even if delayed, always finds its rightful course.

Today, as Hansi stands on the threshold of districthood, it marks not just the expansion of an administrative unit, but the restoration of the soul of a city that once provided Haryana with its capital, that defied authority, and that endured long periods of neglect, yet remained true to its identity. This new chapter for Hansi connects with the same old glory of history from which its journey began.

Hansi at a glance
Ancient identity: Capital of Haryana region during the reign of George Thomas

Mughal period: Major administrative centre during the time of Akbar, mint established here

Strategic importance: Military cantonment during Mughal and British period

Revolt of 1857: Strong resistance against the British, received administrative punishment

District status: was taken away: Around 1870–80, the district headquarters were moved from Hansi.

Hisar district was formed: Hansi, Fatehabad and Sirsa came under Hisar.

Haryana Formation (1966): Hisar is the largest district

Reorganization of Hisar: 1972 – Bhiwani separated

1975 – Sirsa separated

1997 – Fatehabad separated

2016 – Charkhi Dadri separated

2025: Announcement of making Hansi a new district

Duration of Demand: Continuous movement for the last almost 10 years.

Investing in Children for Climate Adaptation

By: Nilanjan Ghosh

The State of the World's Children 2025 (SOWC), published by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), serves as a reminder that children are not incidental beneficiaries of development; they are at its very core. They are the drivers of future development. Every human aspiration, starting from sustained growth, social equity, and climate resilience, to the Government of India's vision of *Viksit Bharat@2047* (i.e. the ambition to evolve as a developed nation by its 100th year of independence in 2047), rests fundamentally on the well-being, capabilities, and opportunities afforded to children.

SOWC argues that childhood poverty is not a consequence of insufficient global resources, but of misplaced priorities. Presently, 412 million children live in extreme poverty (surviving on less than US\$3.00 per day). By adjusting the poverty threshold to US\$8.30 per day, considered typical for upper-middle-income countries, the estimates of children living below monetary poverty increase dramatically to almost 1.4 billion. These are not statistics on deprivation alone; they are indicators of weakened human capital formation, diminished resilience, and compromised life trajectories.

Climate change is the most severe threat multiplier confronting children.

What distinguishes this year's Report is its powerful presentation of a stark reality – climate change is the most severe threat multiplier confronting children. Globally, four out of every five children are now exposed to at least one major climate hazard annually. In 2023 alone, disasters displaced nine million children, and by 2050, the frequency and magnitude of heatwaves, floods, and wildfires that children are bound to face will increase manifold. These disruptions are not merely environmental episodes – the intersectionalities of climate change with various other Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are well established by now. In the context of human capital, including child poverty, health and education, climate change has profound impacts. Climatic forces interact with nutrition, health, schooling,

safety, earning capacity, and psychological well-being. Therefore, every disruption caused to the child, in the form of every interrupted school year, every migration triggered by climatic distress, and every episode of malnutrition caused by a heatwave or flood, is associated with a direct assault on the human capital base of the future.

Child Investment as Investment in Adaptation

On the other hand, the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Adaptation Gap Report 2025 presents the stark reality that adaptation financing needs in developing countries are 12-14 times the current flows. The prime reason is that, in most cases, adaptation projects are not "bankable" by the existing institutional financial architecture, as they result in the creation of public goods with imperceptible returns on investments (Rols). This creates a problem for the north-south flow of funds, even though the imperative for adaptation for the Global South is rooted in the fact that large parts of the developing and underdeveloped world are climatically vulnerable and lack the wherewithal to adapt. On the other hand, a skilled, educated, and healthy populace has a far higher adaptation capacity. While the accumulation of skills drives adaptation options, a well-endowed human capital exhibits greater occupational mobility and migration opportunities across sectors and political boundaries than a less-skilled and unhealthy populace.

In this context, the Report's emphasis on health and education as core climate adaptation sectors is vital. Yet, paradoxically, only a minuscule share of global adaptation finance reaches these domains—about 6 percent to health and barely 1.3 percent to education. These numbers reflect a critical misalignment, for it is health, nutrition, and foundational learning that build a population's adaptive capacity over the long term. A child who grows up healthy, cognitively strong, nutritionally secure, and emotionally resilient becomes an adult capable of adapting, innovating, and withstanding climatic and economic shocks. Climate adaptation, therefore, must begin with the systems that nurture children. In other words, investment in children serves



the purposes of equity from the perspective of distributive justice by nurturing healthy and educated children, thereby circumventing the poverty trap; efficiency through the creation of a productive human capital base for the future; and sustainability by augmenting the climate adaptation capacity.

A child who grows up healthy, cognitively strong, nutritionally secure, and emotionally resilient becomes an adult capable of adapting, innovating, and withstanding climatic and economic shocks.

The challenge, however, emerges at a moment of severe fiscal stress across much of the developing world. Nearly 45 countries now spend more on interest payments than on health, and 22 spend more on interest than on education. Aid budgets have contracted, domestic budgets are tightening, and social sector allocations are becoming more vulnerable to macroeconomic

volatility. The conclusion is inescapable: public finance, though indispensable, is no longer sufficient to support child development in a world of rising climate risks. A new financing compact that mobilises private capital, philanthropic resources, impact-linked instruments, and blended finance is the need of the hour.

The economics of investing in children make this case even stronger. For instance, generally, every US\$1 invested in resilience yields as much as US\$10 within a decade. A one-time investment of US\$18.51 per child can ensure learning continuity during climate shocks. A 2018 estimate by the World Bank across 34 developing economies accounting for 90 percent of the world's stunted children suggests that the rate-of-return from gradually introducing a nutritional intervention program over a period of 10 years was 17 percent, with the corresponding benefit-cost ratio is 15:1.

Similarly, improvements in foundational learning yield lifetime productivity benefits that surpass the returns of most physical capital investments. These are extraordinary rates of return, both in economic and social terms. Children constitute the world's largest reservoir of future human capital, and nations that invest in this reservoir systematically outperform those that do not.

The Catalytic Capital and Private Sources

With public sources of financing failing either due to fiscal constraints or fiduciary needs, a new form of private capital that is structured, catalytic, and aligned with long-term outcomes is needed to cater to this human capital and climate adaptation nexus. Investments in child development cannot remain the exclusive domain of governments and philanthropic actors, but need a broader financial ecosystem. Innovative instruments such as

impact bonds, child-sensitive adaptation bonds, blended finance platforms, and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)-linked resilience portfolios can de-risk investment and link financial returns to measurable improvements in child outcomes. Philanthropic wealth, both global and domestic, including India's rapidly expanding philanthropic sector and the vast Indian diaspora, offers an underutilised reservoir for child resilience financing. Integrating these diverse pools of capital is not charity; it is strategic macroeconomic planning for a climate-volatile world.

Integrating these diverse pools of capital is not charity; it is strategic macroeconomic planning for a climate-volatile world.

This perspective has profound implications for India's long-term development trajectory. The discourse around *Viksit Bharat@2047* needs to highlight and strengthen the human capital of its children today, along with infrastructure, manufacturing, digital capabilities, and macroeconomic performance. While well-endowed human capital will drive future growth and innovation and promote institutional stability, a child population equipped with strong adaptive capacities becomes the backbone of a climate-resilient India. Conversely, without investments in children, the demographic dividend risks becoming a demographic burden.

In the end, the messages are simple but profound: a) investing in children is investing in the future; b) investing in children is investing in a climate adaptation project with a high RoI. It is not a moral appeal alone; it is an economic and strategic imperative. Reducing child poverty strengthens resilience, accelerates growth, enhances social stability, and fulfils our intergenerational contract. UNICEF has provided the data, the urgency, and the evidence. What is now required is political commitment, institutional innovation, and a financing architecture which allows public and private capital to work in tandem. The story of *Viksit Bharat* will not ultimately be written in Gross Domestic Product tables; it will be written in the lives and capabilities of every child whose future we choose to secure today. (Courtesy: ORF)

Delhi's failure to act against the biggest source of its air pollution – vehicles

By: Vaishnavi Rathore

In January 2024, Delhi's average air quality index was "abnormally high". Low wind speeds slowed the dispersal of pollutants, leaving the city with its worst January air in five years.

In its office in central Delhi, members of the Commission for Air Quality Management convened for their first meeting of the year. The central government formed the body in 2021, under the aegis of the ministry of environment, to ensure better coordination of air quality management between Delhi and the National Capital Region, as well as adjoining states in matters of air pollution that affected the capital. To this end, it was vested with the power to issue directions to authorities in this region.

The commission reviewed 16 "agenda" items that day: for instance, it received updates from states about their action plans to deal with stubble burning, discussed plans for greening the National Capital Region through the planting of "air pollution tolerant species", and plans to control e-waste burning.

Only two agenda items that were discussed dealt with transport: one on ensuring that intercity buses that entered Delhi ran on clean fuels, and another on complying with Supreme Court directions to mitigate vehicular emissions.

Two months later, by mid-March, by which time the air quality had improved substantially, the commission reconvened. This time, the subject of formulating plans with neighbouring states to manage the burning of stubble was a major point of discussion, recorded as an entire page and a half in the minutes – the longest discussed agenda item in that day. The transport sector did not come up in this meeting.

The next time the commission met in July, it discussed further plans to shift inter-city buses to cleaner fuels – and then moved on to other matters unrelated to transport.

By the time the CAQM met again in November, the city was seeing its worst air-quality levels ever recorded. The commission took a few short-term decisions to tackle the problem, focusing on curbing stubble burning, managing construction dust and scheduling Graded Response Action Plans to respond to spikes in pollution. With respect to tackling pollution from the transport sector, it directed that road users should pay higher parking charges every time air quality dropped to "very poor", in order to discourage the use of private vehicles.

Across all four meetings in 2024, the question of vehicles remained on the margins of the CAQM's discussions. This was surprising, given that the sector contributes the most to Delhi's toxic air – according to different studies, between 18% and 40% of the city's PM 2.5 levels.

But in fact, this lack of attention to the transport sector was not only a feature of the commission's 2024 meetings.

Scroll accessed the minutes of its meetings between 2021 and 2025, and found that it had consistently paid limited attention to the transport sector.

In a total of 24 meetings in this period, 179 "agenda" items were discussed in all. Of these, only 22 were related to transport. In fact, the transport sector received only a little less attention than the question of stubble burning – though the latter contributes just about 3% to the city's PM 2.5 levels through the year, it was discussed in 26 agenda items.

A similar lack of attention to transport is evident in the directions that the CAQM has issued since 2021: of the 56 directions published on its website, only nine deal with transportation.

A further examination of the minutes of the commission's meetings reveals that it has done particularly little to discourage private vehicles, and has instead focused more on public transport. Of the 22 agenda items since 2021 that pertained to transport, only six pertained to private cars.

Meanwhile, Delhi has seen an explosive increase in private vehicles – as of 2023, the city had a total of 79 lakh vehicles, of which 67% are two-wheelers and 26% are cars and jeeps.

This growth has been accompanied by a shift away from public transport. Data shows that in the last decade, the proportion of trips taken by people using private vehicles in the city has increased from 38% to 49%, while bus trips have decreased by 20%.

Since cars carry far fewer passengers than buses, this has led to greater congestion, which in turn leads to higher emissions. This is not only because of the higher number of vehicles on roads, but because congestion forces them to move more slowly and halt more frequently, as a result of which they use fuel less efficiently. According to a study by the Centre for Science and Environment, high-congestion traffic can increase emissions between three and seven times, including emissions of certain pollutants, such as carbon, carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides.

However, discussions in CAQM meetings rarely touched upon these concerns. Even when the body discussed private vehicles, it did not focus on crucial long-term measures, such as discouraging car ownership and use, but on short-term reactive ones, such as phasing out overaged cars, intensifying drives to identify and impound polluting vehicles and identifying congestion points.

"While CAQM does discuss the transport sector, these discussions must be enhanced to reflect that the city cannot afford to continue to keep buying more personal vehicles," said Sunil Dahiya, founder and lead analyst at Envirocatalysts, a Delhi-based consultancy that works on environment and climate. He argued that the commission, in coordination with city authorities, "needs to have a more long-term vision of how the city should prioritise mobility of people over mobility of vehicles".

Even when the CAQM has issued directions related to personal vehicles, the measures have often stalled owing to a lack of political will to implement them.

For instance, in July, it sought to impose a ban on the sale of fuel to overage vehicles – specifically, diesel vehicles that were more than 10 years old and petrol vehicles that were more than 15 years old. In response, the Delhi assembly's leader of opposition, Atishi from the Aam Aadmi Party, called the move an "all-out attack on the middle class", and asked the chief minister, Rekha Gupta, to move against it. In August, the Delhi government took the matter to the Supreme Court, which stayed the direction.

For instance, a 2025 study by the Centre for Science and Environment found that bus operators in Delhi paid five times more vehicular tax on a per-passenger basis than private vehicle owners, "despite their low emissions per passenger, considering their role in public transportation".

It arrived at this conclusion by calculating

emissions for different kinds of vehicles, adjusting these values for the number of passengers they carried, and accounting for the fact that private vehicle owners pay one-time taxes, while public transport vehicles pay annual taxes. Over a ten-year period, the study found that a bus paid a tax of Rs 2,199 for each passenger it had the capacity to carry, whereas a car owner paid Rs 443 and a two-wheeler owner paid Rs 189.

The study concluded that "taxes need to be aligned with emissions and road usage, based on the polluter pays principle" and that private cars needed to be taxed at higher rates to encourage a shift to public transport.

Indeed, experts note that efforts to disincentivise car ownership have been limited, and so have been ineffective. For instance, in December 2024, the CAQM directed urban local bodies that determined vehicle parking fees in Delhi to increase these fees to discourage private transport. But in the discussion, it specified that the increase was only to be enforced after the invocation of GRAP stage II measures, which come into force when the air quality falls into the "very poor" category.

Implementing this measure in a limited fashion is a flawed approach, experts argue. "Increasing parking charges is a silver bullet," said Rahul Goel, assistant professor at IIT-Delhi, who researches transportation. "This measure should be the norm, and not linked with GRAP."

Further, he explained, it needed to be accompanied by broader plans for parking, including designating parking areas clearly and setting higher rates for locations with higher demand for space, such as markets.

But efforts to implement broader increases to parking charges through the year have failed. In March, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi rejected a proposal by its own executive wing to double parking rates. "We cannot put such a heavy burden on car owners," said Mukesh Goyal, an AAP politician, leader of the house in the corporation.

Other attempts to discourage the use of private cars have also floundered. In 2017, the National Green Tribunal ordered the Delhi government to create a policy under which an individual or company that registered a second vehicle would pay higher registration fees and road taxes – but the transport department did not implement this order, a report of the comptroller and auditor general found.

Recent years have seen authorities attempt to take more stringent measures – in 2020, for instance, the Delhi government ordered that only vehicles that met BS-6 standards, and thus emitted lower levels of pollutants, would be allowed to be sold in the city.

But even this period has seen a greater emphasis on actions against commercial vehicles. In March, the CAQM announced a blanket ban on commercial vehicles that did not meet this standard from entering Delhi from November 1 onwards.

An official of the CAQM, who requested anonymity, explained that in issuing this direction, the body took into consideration their general understanding of the most serious sources of pollution. "The general perception is that compared to personal vehicles, these commercial vehicles are not serviced on time and hence release more smoke and contribute to pollution," said an official of the CAQM who requested anonymity.

But this view ignores the fact that non-com-

mercial cars of lower standard continue to dominate Delhi's streets.

In response to queries from Scroll about its relatively limited focus on vehicular pollution, the commission noted that apart from issuing directions on enhanced parking fees for vehicles and phasing out older vehicles, it had also created a consultative group that included members from The Energy and Resources Institute and the Council on Energy, Environment and Water to review electric mobility policies, "identify gaps" and prepare a road map for "accelerating the transition to e-mobility".

It added that it had also formed a "Knowledge Forum for Transport Sector" which would hold regular meetings to "deliberate on issues related to the sector and emerging technologies for controlling emissions from Transport sector".

Some car owners in Delhi agree that there is a need to shift away from the use of private cars, and that unchecked air pollution constitutes a serious social injustice.

"I am very well aware that the car we are using is damaging the health of a child who will perhaps never own a car themselves," said Bhavreen Kandhari, a clean air campaigner with Warrior Moms, a network of mothers across India.

Kandhari considers charging a congestion tax to car users, as is common in other countries, a fair measure. But, she added, "For citizens to reduce car use there has to be enough availability of alternate options through public transport, which is currently lacking."

Many, however, point out the challenge is not just infrastructural – rather, public policy needs to incentivise behavioural change to enable a shift from private vehicles to public transport.

But the discussion on tackling pollution in Delhi, experts argue, has been too narrowly focused on ideas such as ensuring vehicles run on clean fuels, and other technological interventions. "India has an obsession with using technology," said Goel. "All progressive traffic emission policies in Delhi have been purely technological." He listed out several policy measures and changes that the city had seen in this regard – such as the shift to BS-6 standards and various subsidies offered to those buying electric vehicles. The minutes of the CAQM meetings record other such discussions that are focused on technological changes and fuel policies. For instance, in November 2022, the commission directed that only autorickshaws that ran on CNG or were electric were to be registered from 2023 onwards, and that diesel ones were to be phased out completely by 2026 in Delhi-NCR as well as in Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

The commission also discussed the question of "cleaner mobility" in services provided by motor vehicle aggregators, and delivery service providers, including e-commerce companies. In a direction this June, it noted that vehicle utilisation by these companies "in terms of running kilometers is quite high". As a step towards curbing the pollution they caused, it directed that only CNG and electric three-wheeler autorickshaws were to be henceforth inducted into the existing fleet of vehicles. Further, it directed that no such vehicles that ran purely on diesel or petrol were to be inducted into existing fleets from 2026 onwards.

Such technological shifts will not amount to much if the overall number of polluting vehicles on the road continues to increase, experts say.

"More than electrification and shift to cleaner

fuels, emission-saving is possible when there is a shift to public or shared vehicles," said Himani Jain, a fellow at the Council of Environment Energy and Water who specialises in the transport sector, while responding to a question from Scroll during a roundtable on air quality in early October. She added that evidence from across the world has shown that such a shift would only result from imposing restrictions on or disincentivising private vehicles.

The problem is not only one of inefficacy – past experience has shown that sweeping technological interventions that fail to take larger factors into consideration can have serious adverse effects.

In his book *Courting the People*, Anuj Bhuwania recounted a 1998 Supreme Court order that all public transport be converted to run on CNG by April 2001. He wrote that this led to a sudden drop in available public buses and an "exponential increase" in private transport. Thus, he argued, the court's actions to reduce the carbon emissions of public transport were "more than compensated for by the rise of private vehicles".

Data also bears this out – the annual average PM 10 levels between 2002 and 2007 reduced by about 16%. However, since then, these levels increased dramatically, by 75% – parallel to the growth in vehicle numbers, as much as 97% between 2002 and 2012.

A 2014 report by the Supreme-Court-appointed Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority, the predecessor of the CAQM, noted: "The deadly combination of growing pollution especially from vehicles and delayed action has enhanced public health risk in the city."

The government's overwhelming focus on the needs of private vehicle owners is also apparent in other ways. For instance, Delhi's economic survey for 2023-'24 provides a glimpse of the city's disproportionate road development in comparison to facilities for pedestrians – in a section on "road infrastructure" it lists just five foot bridges for walkers across the city, but 14 flyovers and road widening projects at congestion points like Sarai Kale Khan, Ashram and Anand Vihar to "allow vehicles move more quickly" and "reduce traffic congestion".

Kandhari argued that such flyovers only support the ecosystem for more private vehicles. "The current city development with flyovers and roads is built for cars, and so encourages more car use," she said.

Scroll emailed the Delhi government, seeking responses to criticisms that it had focused too heavily on car-users to the relative neglect of walkers. This story will be updated if it responds.

Experts also argue that for the CAQM to have a better understanding of the impact of its directions, it would need to work towards tracking the situation more widely through a greater number of indicators than it currently uses. At present, CAQM minutes show that the commission seeks data from the government departments on the number of vehicles running without a pollution-under-control test, the number impounded or fined for this violation, and the number of polluting trucks and freight vehicles stopped from entering Delhi-NCR.

Such indicators "do not give an enhanced understanding of whether CAQM or any such body is being able to reduce pollution and emission loads in geographies under their control", said Dahiya. (Courtesy: Scroll)

India, Ethiopia 'natural partners' in regional peace, security, connectivity: PM Modi

ADDIS ABABA, Dec 17: India and Ethiopia are "natural partners" in regional peace, security and connectivity, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the Ethiopian Parliament on Wednesday, asserting that the two countries work for a world that is "more just, more equal, and more peaceful".

Modi, who arrived here on Tuesday on his maiden bilateral visit, said it was wonderful to be in Ethiopia, the land of lions, as he greeted lawmakers in the local language, "Tena yistilign, Salaam". "I feel very much at home because my home state, Gujarat, is also home to Lions," Modi said in his address to the Joint session of Parliament of Ethiopia. It was the 18th parliament in the world that PM Modi has addressed.

"Ethiopia sits at a crossroads of Africa. India stands at the heart of the Indian Ocean. We are natural partners in regional peace, security, and connectivity," Modi told the lawmakers, who clapped more than 50 times during the prime

minister's speech.

"Our commitment to mutual security became stronger with the signing of the Defence Cooperation Agreement earlier this year. This agreement focuses on closer military cooperation. It includes collaboration in cybersecurity, in defence industries, in joint research, and in capacity building," he said.

India and Ethiopia stand together as members of one family and work for a world that is "more just, more equal, and more peaceful", the prime minister said.

He thanked Ethiopia for its solidarity after the Pahalgam terror attack and for affirming the commitment to zero tolerance towards terrorism.

Modi said he was honoured to be in this temple of democracy, in the heart of a nation with ancient wisdom and modern aspirations. "On behalf of the 1.4 billion people of India, I bring greetings of friendship, goodwill, and brotherhood," he said.



Speaking about the Global South, Modi said the region is writing its own destiny, and India and Ethiopia share a vision for it.

"Our vision is of a world where the Global South rises not against anyone, but for everyone. A world where development is fair, where technology is accessible, and where sovereignty is respected. A world where prosperity is shared,

and peace is defended," he said, adding that the world cannot move forward if its systems remain locked in the past.

That is why, India has emphasised a Global Development Compact. It will prioritise technology sharing, affordable finance, capacity building, and trade for sustainable growth, he said.

"We will walk together as

equals. We will build together as partners. And, we will succeed together as friends," Modi told the lawmakers, amid applause.

Modi said he was honoured to receive the Grand Honour, Nishan of Ethiopia. "I accept this award with folded hands, with humility, on behalf of the people of India," he added. Modi is the first global head of state to receive Ethiopia's highest award.

Describing Ethiopia as one of the oldest civilisations, Modi said, "This blend of old and new... This balance between ancient wisdom and modern ambition... This is the true strength of Ethiopia."

"We too are an ancient civilisation, walking confidently into the future," he said.

"India's national song 'Vande Mataram', and the Ethiopian national anthem, both refer to our land as the mother. They inspire us to take pride in the heritage, culture, natural beauty and protect the motherland," he added.

Modi said that science has traced

some of the earliest footprints of species in Ethiopia, and when the world speaks about them, they are not speaking only of a fossil.

"They are speaking of a beginning. A beginning that belongs to all of us, whether we live in Addis Ababa or in Ayodhya," he said. "And if our beginning was shared, then our destiny must also be shared."

Asserting that India and Ethiopia share "warmth in climate as well as in spirit", Modi said that the ancestors of the two nations built connections across great waters and exchanged ideas and way of life, and not just goods.

Modi also recalled the contribution of thousands of Indian teachers to Ethiopia's development.

As developing countries, the two nations have a lot to learn from and offer to each other, Modi said, adding that agriculture forms their backbone. "We can work together to develop better seeds, irrigation systems and soil-health technologies," he said. (PTI)

Pakistan extends airspace ban for Indian aircraft by another month



ISLAMABAD/LAHORE, Dec 17: Pakistan on Wednesday extended its airspace ban for Indian aircraft by another month till January 23.

Pakistan closed its airspace to India's airlines in April after the Pahalgam attack. India too has imposed a similar ban on Pakistan.

The previous extension was set to expire on December 24 but the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) extended the restrictions on Wednesday till January 23.

"Pakistan airspace will remain closed to Indian-registered aircraft, including all aircraft owned, operated, or leased by Indian airlines, as well as Indian military flights," the PAA said.

According to the NOTAM (Notice to Airmen), the restriction, which has already been in force, "will continue until January 23, 2026, as per the specified timings."

Pakistan's airspace is divided into two flight information regions (FIRs) — Karachi and Lahore, according to a Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) document from 2022.

The NOTAM applies to both Karachi (OPKR) and Lahore (OPLR) FIRs.

A terror attack in April in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam that killed 26 people led to a four-day conflict in May between India and Pakistan, Islamabad has several times extended its ban on Indian airlines flying over its airspace. India too has imposed a similar ban on Pakistan. (PTI)

Suspected gunman in Bondi Beach shooting charged with 15 counts of murder

SYDNEY, Dec 17: A suspected gunman in Sydney's Bondi Beach massacre was charged with 59 offences, including 15 charges of murder, on Wednesday, as hundreds of mourners gathered in Sydney to begin funerals for the victims.

Two shooters slaughtered 15 people on Sunday in an antisemitic mass shooting targeting Jews celebrating Hanukkah at Bondi Beach, and more than 20 other people are still being treated in hospitals. All of those killed by the gunman who have been identified so far were Jewish.

Police said that Naveed Akram, the 24-year-old suspected shooter, was charged on Wednesday after waking from a coma in a Sydney hospital, where he has been since police shot him and his gunman father at Bondi. His 50-year-old father, Sajid Akram, died at the scene.

The charges include one count of murder for each fatality and one count of committing a terrorist act.

Akram was also charged with 40 counts of causing harm with intent to murder in relation to the wounded and with placing an explosive near a building with intent to cause harm.

Police said the Akrams' car, which was found at the crime scene, contained improvised explosive devices.

Funerals began as a country reeling from its deadliest hate-fueled massacre of modern times turned to searching questions, growing in volume since the attack, about how it was able to happen. As investigations unfold, Australia faces a social and political reckoning about antisemitism, gun control and whether police protections for Jews at events such as Sunday's were sufficient for the threats they faced.

First, however, was a day of anguish for families from Sydney's close-knit Jewish community who gathered, one after another, to begin to bury their dead. The victims of the attack ranged in age from a 10-year-old girl to an 87-year-old Holocaust survivor.

A father of 5 who ministered in prisons is buried

The first farewell was Eli Schlanger, 41, a husband and father of five who served as the assistant rabbi at Chabad-Lubavitch of Bondi and organised Sunday's Chanukah by the Sea event where the attack unfolded. The London-born Schlanger also served as a chaplain in prisons across New South Wales state and in a Sydney hospital.

"After what happened, my biggest regret was — apart from, obviously, the obvious — I could have done more to tell Eli more often how much we love him, how much I love him, how much we appreciate everything that he does and how proud we are of him," said Schlanger's father-in-law, Rabbi Yehoram Ulman, who sometimes spoke through tears.

"I hope he knew that. I'm sure he knew it," Ulman said. "But I think it should've been said more often."

Funerals draw a heavy police presence

Outside the funeral, not far from the site of the attack, the mood was hushed and grim, with a heavy police presence. Jews are usually buried within 24 hours of their deaths, but funerals have been delayed by coronial investigations.

One mourner, Dmitry Chlafma, said as he left the service that Schlanger was his longtime rabbi.

"You can tell by the number of

people that are here how much he meant to the community," Chlafma said. "He was warm, happy, generous, one of a kind."

Among others killed were Boris and Sofia Gurman, a husband and wife aged in their 60s who were fatally shot as they tried to disarm one of the gunmen when he got out of his car to begin the attack. Another Jewish man in his 60s, Reuven Morrison, was gunned down by one shooter while he threw bricks at the other, his daughter said.

Many children attended the Hanukkah event, which featured face painting, treats and a petting zoo. The youngest killed was Matilda, 10, whose parents urged attendees at a vigil on Tuesday night to remember her name.

"It stays here," said Matilda's mother, who identified herself only as Valentina, pressing her hand over her heart. "It just stays here and here."

Authorities are probing a suspected connection to the Islamic State group

Authorities believe that the shooting was "a terrorist attack inspired by Islamic State," Australia's federal police commissioner Krissy Barrett said Wednesday.

The authorities have said that Naveed Akram came to the attention of the security services in 2019, but have supplied little detail of their previous investigations. Now, authorities will probe what was known about the men.

That includes examining a trip the suspects made to the Philippines in November. The Philippines Bureau of Immigration confirmed Tuesday that the two suspected shooters travelled to the country from Nov. 1 to Nov. 28, giving the city of Davao as their final destination.

Groups of Muslim separatist militants, including Abu Sayyaf in the southern Philippines, once expressed support for IS and have hosted small numbers of foreign militants from Asia, the Middle East and Europe in the past. Philippine military and police officials say there has been no recent indication of any foreign militants in the country's south.

The younger suspect was Australian-born. Indian police on Tuesday said the older suspect was originally from the southern city of Hyderabad, migrated to Australia in 1998 and held an Indian passport.

Leader pledges action on guns and antisemitism

The news that the suspects were apparently inspired by the Islamic State group provoked more questions about whether Australia's government had done enough to stem hate-fueled crimes, especially directed at Jews. In Sydney and Melbourne, where 85 per cent of Australia's Jewish population lives, a wave of antisemitic attacks has been recorded in the past year.

After Jewish leaders and survivors of Sunday's attack lambasted the government for not heeding their warnings of violence, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese vowed Wednesday to take whatever government action was needed to stamp out antisemitism.

Albanese and the leaders of some Australian states have pledged to tighten the country's already strict gun laws in what would be the most sweeping reforms since a shooter killed 35 people in Port Arthur, Tasmania, in 1996. Mass shootings in Australia have since been rare. (AP)

US adds 20 more countries to travel ban, restrictions list

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, Dec 17: The Trump administration has expanded its travel ban and restrictions to 20 additional nations as well as the Palestinian Authority as part of its efforts to "protect US national security and public safety interests".

US President Donald Trump signed a proclamation on Tuesday expanding and strengthening entry restrictions on nationals from countries with "demonstrated, persistent, and severe deficiencies" in screening, vetting, and information-sharing to protect America from national security and public safety threats.

The proclamation said these measures are necessary to prevent the entry of foreign nationals about whom the US "lacks sufficient information to assess the risks they pose, garner cooperation from foreign governments, enforce our immigration laws, and advance other important foreign policy, national security, and counterterrorism objectives."

It imposed partial restrictions and entry limitations on 15 additional countries - Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominica, Gabon, The Gambia, Malawi, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Tonga, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Full restrictions and entry limitations were



also imposed for nationals of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, South Sudan, and Syria.

Full restrictions and entry limitations have also been placed on individuals holding Palestinian Authority-issued travel documents, as several "US-designated terrorist groups operate actively in the West Bank or Gaza Strip and have murdered American citizens," it said, adding that the recent war in these areas likely resulted in compromised vetting and screening abilities.

"...Considering the weak or nonexistent control exercised over these areas by the PA (Palestinian Authority), individuals attempting to travel on PA-issued or endorsed travel documents cannot currently be properly vetted and

approved for entry into the United States."

The proclamation also imposed full restrictions and entry limitations on Laos and Sierra Leone that were previously subject to partial restrictions, and continued partial restrictions on nationals from Burundi, Cuba, Togo, and Venezuela. The entry of nationals from additional countries must be restricted or limited to protect US national security and public safety interests, the proclamation said.

It continues full restrictions and entry limitations of nationals from the original "12 high-risk countries named by the Trump administration - Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen." Exceptions for lawful permanent residents, existing visa holders, certain visa categories like athletes and diplomats, and individuals "whose entry serves US national interests" are included in the proclamation, it said.

The proclamation said that many of the restricted countries systematically prevent accurate vetting, while some countries' high visa-overstay rates and refusal to repatriate removable nationals "demonstrate disregard for US immigration laws and burden American enforcement resources." (PTI)

Prosecutors will charge Rob Reiner's son Nick with 2 counts of murder in killing of his parents

LOS ANGELES, Dec 17: Rob Reiner's son Nick Reiner will be charged with two counts of first-degree murder in the killing of his parents. Los Angeles County prosecutors said Tuesday.

Nick Reiner, 32, will be charged in the death of the 78-year-old actor and director Rob Reiner and his wife Michele Singer Reiner. District Attorney Nathan Hochman announced at a news conference with LA Police Chief Jim McDonnell.

Prosecutors plan to file the charges, two counts of first degree murder special circumstances of multiple murders, later Tuesday. They will also include a special allegation that he used a dangerous weapon, a knife.

The announcement of the charges came two days after the couple was found dead from apparent stab wounds in their home in the upscale Brentwood neighbourhood of Los Angeles. Nick Reiner was arrested on suspicion of the killing and jailed hours later.

Nick Reiner had been expected to make an initial court appearance earlier Tuesday, but his attorney Alan Jackson said he was not brought from the jail to the courthouse for medical reasons and the appearance would not come before Wednesday.

Jackson did not comment further on the case, and Nick Reiner has not yet entered a plea.

Rob Reiner was the Emmy-winning star of the sitcom "All in the Family" who went on to direct films including "When Harry Met Sally..." and "The Princess Bride." He was an outspoken liberal activist for decades. Michele Singer Reiner was a photographer, movie producer and advocate for LGBTQ+ rights. They had been married for 36 years.

Representatives for the Reiner family did not respond to requests for comment.

Nick Reiner's attorney Alan Jackson said his client will not be in court Tuesday for medical reasons. Jackson told reporters outside the courthouse that he did not know what the medical issue was, but he said Reiner will not appear before Wednesday.

Prosecutors are set to decide whether and how to charge the 32-year-old, who is being held in jail without bail. He was arrested several hours after his parents were found dead in their home in the upscale Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles on Sunday, police said.

Police haven't said anything about a motive for the killings.

Nick Reiner's attorney didn't comment further about the case on Tuesday. Jackson is a high-profile lawyer who represented Harvey Weinstein at his Los Angeles trial and Karen Read at her trial in Massachusetts. He was a central figure in the HBO documentary on the Read case.

Investigators believe Rob and Michele Singer Reiner died from stab wounds, a law enforcement official told The Associated Press. The official, who was briefed on the investigation, could not publicly discuss the details and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

The killings were especially shocking given the warm comic legacy of the family. Rob Reiner was the son of comedy legend Carl Reiner, who died in 2020 at age 98.

Kathy Bates, who won an Oscar as the star of Rob Reiner's 1990 film "Misery," was among those paying tribute to the couple.

"I loved Rob," Bates said in a statement. "He was brilliant and kind, a man who made films of every genre to challenge himself as an artist. He also fought courageously for his political beliefs. He changed the course of my life. Michele was a gifted photographer." (AP)

AI Summit in New Delhi platform for Global South to shape international AI agenda: India



UNITED NATIONS, Dec 17: The AI Impact Summit that India will host early next year will serve as a platform to commit to shared solutions and enable the Global South to actively shape the Artificial Intelligence agenda, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Jitendra Prasad said here.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres will attend the India-AI Impact Summit 2026 that will be held on February 19-20 in New Delhi.

This will be the first time an AI summit

will be hosted in the Global South, following similar Global AI Summits in Bletchley Park (UK), Seoul and Paris.

"This is not symbolic. It's substantive," Prasad said Tuesday in his remarks at a special curtain-raiser event organised in the UN Headquarters by the Permanent Missions of India and France to the United Nations.

He said that emerging and developing economies will account for the majority of future AI users, data generation and real-world deployment scenarios. "Their needs, constraints and innovations must therefore shape the global AI ecosystem," Prasad said.

"India sees the AI Impact Summit not as an endpoint, but as a platform. One that brings together governments, industry, researchers, civil society and international organisations to commit to shared solutions and sustained collaboration, a place where the Global South is not merely discussed but actively shapes the global AI agenda," Prasad said as he extended an invitation to all stakeholders to participate in the New Delhi summit.

The India-AI Impact Summit 2026 is anchored in the principles of People, Planet

and Progress, and envisions a "future where AI advances humanity, fosters inclusive growth, and safeguards our shared planet."

Prasada emphasised that lessons from India's own digital transformation journey are clear. "Technology achieves its greatest value when it is inclusive by design, open by default, and trusted by citizens."

Addressing UN officials, envoys, civil society members and other stakeholders at the curtain-raiser event, Prasad said that the AI Summit is being structured around the idea of translation - from vision to execution.

He said that the three foundational pillars of People, Planet and Progress will guide our approach.

"It will focus on seven areas of cooperation, from human capital and social inclusion to safe AI, resilience, scientific collaboration, equitable access and scaling AI for economic growth and public good," he said, adding that the emphasis throughout will be "practical: what works, what scales, and what delivers results."

A concept note released for the event said that the AI Action Summit held in Paris on February 10-11 this year marked a key moment in global cooperation on inclusive,

open and sustainable AI deployment for people and the planet. The upcoming AI Impact Summit in Delhi will build on commitments to deliver further measurable outcomes and impact-driven applications.

Clara Chappaz, Ambassador for AI and Digital, France, addressing the event, said that the summit in India will be a "key moment" for moving from action to impact and added that Paris is working closely with New Delhi to prepare for the summit, notably through its co-chairmanship of the working group on resilience, innovation and efficiency.

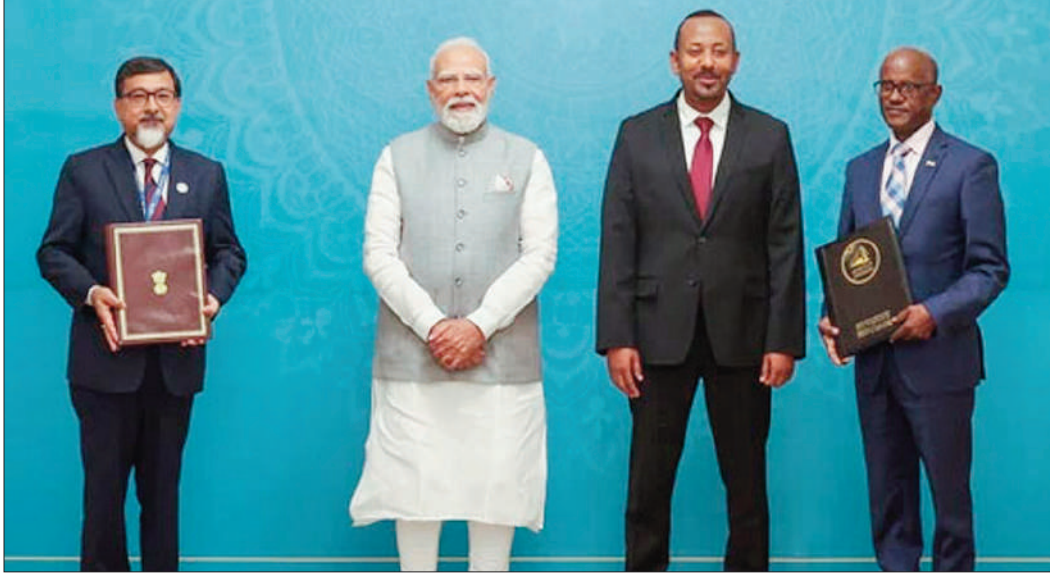
Under-Secretary-General and the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology Amandeep Singh Gill said that Guterres would be attending the summit in India on behalf of the UN system.

"We are working closely with the Indian Government to ensure a successful AI Impact summit" that builds on its previous editions, he said, expressing confidence that the India Summit will be a crucial platform for accelerating progress on various fronts.

Gill stressed that the UN is committed to translating the event's title, 'From Action to Impact,' to reality.

Arunachal leaders hail PM Modi on being conferred Ethiopia's highest national honour

Recognition highlights India's growing global stature and Modi's leadership



ITANAGAR, Dec 17: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and his deputy Chowna Mein on Wednesday congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on being conferred Ethiopia's highest

national honour, describing the recognition as a reflection of India's rising global stature and trusted leadership on the world stage.

In a post shared on social media,

Khandu termed the honour a moment of pride for the nation.

"Heartiest congratulations to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji on receiving Ethiopia's highest national honour,

The Great Honor, Nishan of Ethiopia," Khandu said in a post on X.

He said the rare recognition, which makes Modi the first global head of state or government to receive the award, underscores India's growing international standing.

"It is a proud moment for every Indian," Khandu added.

Echoing similar sentiments, Mein said international honours being conferred upon Modi are a testament to India's progress and expanding global influence.

"With Ethiopia awarding its highest civilian honour, the PM has now received 28 top international civilian honours," Mein said.

Modi was conferred The Great Honor, Nishan of Ethiopia, by the Ethiopian leadership during his official visit to the African country.

The award is bestowed in recognition of exceptional contributions to strengthening bilateral ties and global cooperation. (PTI)

SEC gears up for repolling and counting on December 20

Fresh polls scheduled in seven Arunachal constituencies today

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Dec 17: The Arunachal Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) announced that fresh polls will be held on December 18 in seven constituencies due to irregularities during the December 15 local body elections.

Fresh polling is scheduled for four Gram Panchayat seats in Tirap district under Laho, Dada ZP Constituency: 4/11/2, 4/11/3, 4/11/5, and 4/11/6. Two seats in Nongkhon GP of Upper Lekang, Namsai and one seat in Tamin Dollungmukh ZP Constituency, Kmale district will also go for repolling. In addition, one polling station—12/13 Nisangjang/Besai GP in 03-Nedo ZP constituency, Bichom district has been ordered for repolling.

The SEC clarified that all EVMs and ballot boxes from these repolls will be securely stored in strong rooms under round-the-clock security and included in the official counting on December 20. A total of 41 counting centres have been established across the state, with districts hav-



ing 1 to 4 centres based on voter strength. Strong rooms are equipped with CCTV surveillance to ensure transparency.

Around 10,000 officers and personnel, including counting supervisors and security staff will be deployed to oversee the repolling and subsequent counting process. SEC Commissioner Rinchin Tashi appealed to voters in the affected constituencies to actively participate and cooperate to ensure a free, fair and peaceful election.

The SEC expressed satisfaction over the overall peaceful conduct of the December 15 polls while noting a few stray incidents, including 11 election-related cases registered across East Kameng, Namsai, Tirap and Kra Daadi districts.

This repolling aims to ensure that all eligible voters in the affected constituencies can exercise their franchise without disruption and maintain the integrity of the local body elections.

Training programme for counting personnel ahead of Panchayat poll counting

HT Correspondent

YINGKIONG, Dec 17: A training programme for Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants was conducted on Tuesday at the designated counting centre, the Multipurpose Hall, Yingkiang, in preparation for the counting day of the Panchayat Poll 2025, scheduled to be held on December 20, 2025.

The programme was presided over by the Deputy Commissioner-District Election Officer (PR), Upper Siang, Talo Jerang, who elaborated in detail on the roles and responsibilities of the counting personnel. He emphasised the need to maintain accuracy and transparency, strictly adhere to prescribed procedures and observe all necessary precautions at the counting centres.

The training was imparted by master trainers Sanjay Singh, Agriculture Development Officer and Amit Dihider, ASO (Agri), who provided hands-on guidance to ensure the smooth and error-free conduct of the counting process. Returning Officers (ROs), Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), along with all counting supervisors and counting assistants, attended the training programme.

Massive fire in Tezu claims two children, several houses destroyed

HT Correspondent

TEZU, Dec 17: A massive fire broke out in Tezu at around 4 AM on Wednesday, destroying several houses and tragically claiming the lives of two children. Tezu Deputy Commissioner K N Damo confirmed over the phone that two persons died in the incident. Superintendent of Police Thuten Jamba also verified the casualties, adding that the cause of the fire is yet to be determined.

Strong room security tightened ahead of Itanagar ward election counting



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Dec 17: The strong room for the upcoming counting of votes for Itanagar Municipal Corporation elections has been set up at Siddhartha Hall, Gonpa campus, with enhanced security measures, officials said. Unlike previous years, the facility is being guarded by a two-tier security system including ITBP, SSB and Arunachal Pradesh Police, along with CCTV surveillance, Deputy Commissioner (Capital) Toko Babu informed.

"The strong room, which has previously hosted several election counting

processes, is fully secured. Additional security personnel have been deployed as the counting day approaches, and candidate agents and political party representatives are also monitoring the venue from outside to ensure transparency," said DC Babu.

A special meeting of all SPs, SDPOs, MEROs, administrative officers and observers is scheduled for December 18 to finalise arrangements for vote counting on December 20. Training for counting supervisors and personnel has already been completed, and the DC personally inspected the venue and security

arrangements. Road restrictions have also been imposed leading to Siddhartha Hall.

Voting was held peacefully on December 15 for 16 of the 20 wards, with four corporators elected unopposed. "The cooperation extended by candidates, political parties, police, agents and officials ensured a smooth voting process. We urge all stakeholders and the public to maintain peace and order during counting," added DC Babu.

Counting for the 16 contested wards will begin at 8 AM on December 20, with results expected by 11 AM, he said.

Assam Rifles apprehend armed NSCN-IM cadre in Tirap

HT Correspondent

NAHARLAGUN, Dec 17: Acting on specific and credible intelligence, the Khonsa Battalion of Assam Rifles conducted a joint search operation with Tirap Police in Tirap district.

During the operation, an armed cadre of the NSCN-IM faction, identified as SS Capt Chopsai Pansa (56), a resident of Village Chop, Wakka Circle, District Longding, Arunachal Pradesh, was apprehended on December 15. The cadre was reportedly involved in illegal extortion activities and interfer-

ence in electoral processes within Tirap district.

The apprehension was carried out in a controlled and professional manner, following all standard operating procedures. After preliminary questioning, the cadre was handed over to the Tirap Police for further investigation and legal proceedings.

The operation underscores the continued commitment of Assam Rifles to ensuring peace, security and stability in Tirap district and the surrounding areas.

Strategic 61-km stretch crucial for connectivity, tourism and regional development

Arunachal deputy CM pushes for fast-tracking Chongkham-Brahmakund highway



ITANAGAR, Dec 17: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Wednesday underscored the need to accelerate the construction of the two-lane national highway linking Chongkham (Namsai) to Brahmakund (Parshuram Kund) in the state's Lohit district.

He said this during a meeting with the executive director of the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), Ashish Gupta.

Mein said the strategic highway is vital to bolstering connectivity, regional development and tourism in the state.

"The timely completion of this highway is crucial for improving connectivity and facilitating smoother movement for pilgrims and tourists visiting the sacred Parshuram Kund, as well as to strengthen socio-economic development in the region," Mein said in a social media post after the meeting.

Emphasising the broader impact of the project, Mein said the highway would not only ease travel but also unlock new opportunities for trade, tourism and local businesses.

"We must ensure all possible efforts are made to fast-track the construction," he stressed.

The Chongkham-Brahmakund stretch, part of National Highway 15 is around 61.15 km long and connects the districts of Namsai, Lohit and Anjaw in eastern Arunachal Pradesh.

The highway project was sanctioned by the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) and entrusted to NHIDCL as part of the country's push to enhance connectivity in remote and border districts.

The project forms a key component of a larger ₹ 44,000-crore national highway expansion package approved for the state, which includes three major highway corridors aimed at improving access and boosting economic activity in the northeast, officials said. Under this package, the two-lane Brahmakund-Chowkham highway is estimated at around ₹ 915 crore.

During the meeting, Mein highlighted the dilapidated condition of the existing road and insisted that NHIDCL expedite both maintenance and construction activities to ensure uninterrupted travel for local commuters and visitors alike.

Officials from NHIDCL assured the deputy chief minister that necessary preparatory steps would be taken swiftly and coordination with field agencies would be reinforced to begin construction soon. (PTI)

Chakma organisations hold candlelight march demanding justice for minor girl

HT Correspondent

DIYUN, Dec 17: Several Chakma organisations, including the All India Chakma Students' Union (AICSU), Arunachal Pradesh Chakma Students' Union (APCSU), Mahila Samiti and local youth bodies, organised a candlelight march on Wednesday in Diyun, demanding a fair, transparent and time-bound investigation into the death of a 15-year-old girl from Diyun Circle.

The girl's body was found on December 11, 2025, at a residence in Roing, Lower Dibang Valley, where she had reportedly worked as a domestic helper. While police have described the incident as a suicide, Chakma groups expressed doubts, citing suspicious circumstances and demanding investigation into possible mental harassment, exploitation, abetment to suicide, sexual abuse, or other offences.

Leaders of AICSU and APCSU stressed that, as the victim was a minor, the probe must follow child-protection laws including the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and the POCSO Act, 2012. They also called for senior police monitoring, protection of the family from coercion, transparency in forensic and post-mortem reports and public disclosure of investigation progress.

The march concluded peacefully, with organisers warning that failure to ensure justice could lead to intensified, yet peaceful, protests. Police authorities have not yet issued a detailed response to the demands.

2 Kg Cannabis seized in Nirjuli; woman arrested

HT Correspondent

NIRJULI, Dec 17: Nirjuli Police seized 2 kilograms of suspected cannabis from a residence in P-Sector near the Poultry Farm on Tuesday, following a tip-off about drug peddling. A police team led by Inspector Tadu Hassang, Officer-in-Charge of Nirjuli Police Station, along with ASI DC Namsa and constables Hano Pai, Bishal Newer, T Tanjang, Tamin Rai and Lady Constable L Wangmu, conducted the raid. The cannabis was recovered from the home of Pronoda Nath (55), originally from Madhukushi village in Kamrup, Assam.

The accused was arrested and a case registered under Section 20(b) (ii) (B) of the NDPS Act (NRJ PS Case No 98/2025). Further legal action is underway under relevant provisions of the Act.

Dr Nyellam Nega, Superintendent of Police, ICR, Naharlagun, urged the public to assist police by providing credible information on drug peddling and substance abuse, assuring confidentiality for informants and reaffirmed the police's commitment to strict action against those involved in the drug trade.

HPC EMPLOYEES HOUSING COOPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD.

Registration No. and Year G-15/2004-05

DRAFT VOTER LIST FOR THE YEAR 2025-26 (WITH RIGHT TO VOTE)

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The draft voters' list is hereby published for information. Members may contact the Secretary at the details provided below for any further information.

If any member has any objection, claim, or correction regarding the said list, they may submit a written objection with proper supporting documents to the Secretary of the Society on or before 28-12-2025 during office hours.

(Right to Vote)

Sl No.	Name of the shareholder	Father / Husband's Name
1.	Renumala Chetia	Late Dandihar Chetia
2.	Krishna Bhatta	Late Gopinath Bhatta
3.	Atul Ch. Das	Late Paniram Das
4.	Dhiren Ch. Das	Late Moniram Das
5.	Nitya Gopal Rai	Late Nibaran Ch. Rai
6.	Hiramon Das	Late Prahlad Ch. Das
7.	Sankar Ch. Das	Late Kesab Ch. Das
8.	Dambarudhar Ojha	Late Aditya Ojha
9.	Mukul Sarma	Late K. N. Sarma
10.	Rabin Sarma	Late Baneswar Sarma
11.	Jadu Nath Gogoi	Late Bholanath Gogoi
12.	Ratul Kumar Bora	Radhakanta Bora
13.	Nipendra Bhattacharjee	Late Srikanta Bhattacharjee
14.	Deben Ch. Kalita	Kameswar Kalita
15.	T.K. Das Purkayastha	P.B. Das Purkayastha
16.	N.D. Rajkhowa	Late Deba Dhar Rajkhowa
17.	Dilip Bora	Late B. N. Borah
18.	Durga Padal Pal	Late S.K. Pal
19.	Ratul Baishya	Late Sarat Ch. Baishya
20.	Sajal Das	Late Surendra Kumar Das
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22.	Indra Mohan Sarma	Late Kameswar Sarma

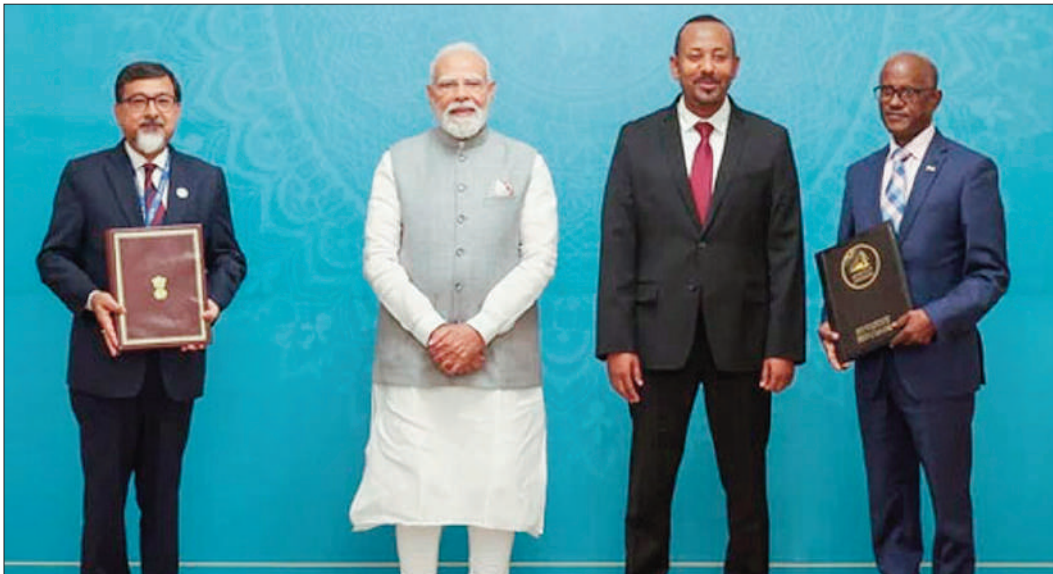
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1.	Anindita Bora	Late Durga Prasad Bora
2.	Rumi Bora	Late L.K. Bora
3.	Nirupama Saikia	Late Achyut Saikia
4.	Dipangkar Maral	Late Chidanda Maral
5.	Nabanita Gayan	Late Pradeep Ch. Gayan

Sd/-
Secretary HPC Employees Housing C.S. Ltd
Betkuchi, P.O + P.S.- Garchuk, Kamrup(M)

Arunachal leaders hail PM Modi on being conferred Ethiopia's highest national honour

Recognition highlights India's growing global stature and Modi's leadership



ITANAGAR, Dec 17: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu and his deputy Chowna Mein on Wednesday congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on being conferred Ethiopia's highest

national honour, describing the recognition as a reflection of India's rising global stature and trusted leadership on the world stage.

In a post shared on social media,

Khandu termed the honour a moment of pride for the nation.

"Heartiest congratulations to Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji on receiving Ethiopia's highest national honour,

The Great Honor, Nishan of Ethiopia," Khandu said in a post on X.

He said the rare recognition, which makes Modi the first global head of state or government to receive the award, underscores India's growing international standing.

"It is a proud moment for every Indian," Khandu added.

Echoing similar sentiments, Mein said international honours being conferred upon Modi are a testament to India's progress and expanding global influence.

"With Ethiopia awarding its highest civilian honour, the PM has now received 28 top international civilian honours," Mein said.

Modi was conferred The Great Honor, Nishan of Ethiopia, by the Ethiopian leadership during his official visit to the African country.

The award is bestowed in recognition of exceptional contributions to strengthening bilateral ties and global cooperation. (PTI)

SEC gears up for repolling and counting on December 20

Fresh polls scheduled in seven Arunachal constituencies today

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Dec 17: The Arunachal Pradesh State Election Commission (SEC) announced that fresh polls will be held on December 18 in seven constituencies due to irregularities during the December 15 local body elections.

Fresh polling is scheduled for four Gram Panchayat seats in Tirap district under Laho, Dada ZP Constituency: 4/11/2, 4/11/3, 4/11/5, and 4/11/6. Two seats in Nongkhon GP of Upper Lekang, Namsai and one seat in Tamin Dollungmukh ZP Constituency, Kmale district will also go for repolling. In addition, one polling station—12/13 Nisangjang/Besai GP in 03-Nedo ZP constituency, Bichom district has been ordered for repolling.

The SEC clarified that all EVMs and ballot boxes from these repolls will be securely stored in strong rooms under round-the-clock security and included in the official counting on December 20. A total of 41 counting centres have been established across the state, with districts hav-



ing 1 to 4 centres based on voter strength. Strong rooms are equipped with CCTV surveillance to ensure transparency.

Around 10,000 officers and personnel, including counting supervisors and security staff will be deployed to oversee the repolling and subsequent counting process. SEC Commissioner Rinchin Tashi appealed to voters in the affected constituencies to actively participate and cooperate to ensure a free, fair and peaceful election.

The SEC expressed satisfaction over the overall peaceful conduct of the December 15 polls while noting a few stray incidents, including 11 election-related cases registered across East Kameng, Namsai, Tirap and Kra Daadi districts.

This repolling aims to ensure that all eligible voters in the affected constituencies can exercise their franchise without disruption and maintain the integrity of the local body elections.

Training programme for counting personnel ahead of Panchayat poll counting

HT Correspondent

YINGKIONG, Dec 17: A training programme for Counting Supervisors and Counting Assistants was conducted on Tuesday at the designated counting centre, the Multipurpose Hall, Yingkiang, in preparation for the counting day of the Panchayat Poll 2025, scheduled to be held on December 20, 2025.

The programme was presided over by the Deputy Commissioner-District Election Officer (PR), Upper Siang, Talo Jerang, who elaborated in detail on the roles and responsibilities of the counting personnel. He emphasised the need to maintain accuracy and transparency, strictly adhere to prescribed procedures and observe all necessary precautions at the counting centres.

The training was imparted by master trainers Sanjay Singh, Agriculture Development Officer and Amit Dihidar, ASO (Agri), who provided hands-on guidance to ensure the smooth and error-free conduct of the counting process. Returning Officers (ROs), Assistant Returning Officers (AROs), along with all counting supervisors and counting assistants, attended the training programme.

Massive fire in Tezu claims two children, several houses destroyed

HT Correspondent

TEZU, Dec 17: A massive fire broke out in Tezu at around 4 AM on Wednesday, destroying several houses and tragically claiming the lives of two children. Tezu Deputy Commissioner K N Damo confirmed over the phone that two persons died in the incident. Superintendent of Police Thuten Jamba also verified the casualties, adding that the cause of the fire is yet to be determined.

Strong room security tightened ahead of Itanagar ward election counting



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Dec 17: The strong room for the upcoming counting of votes for Itanagar Municipal Corporation elections has been set up at Siddhartha Hall, Gonpa campus, with enhanced security measures, officials said. Unlike previous years, the facility is being guarded by a two-tier security system including ITBP, SSB and Arunachal Pradesh Police, along with CCTV surveillance, Deputy Commissioner (Capital) Toko Babu informed.

"The strong room, which has previously hosted several election counting

processes, is fully secured. Additional security personnel have been deployed as the counting day approaches, and candidate agents and political party representatives are also monitoring the venue from outside to ensure transparency," said DC Babu.

A special meeting of all SPs, SDPOs, MEROs, administrative officers and observers is scheduled for December 18 to finalise arrangements for vote counting on December 20. Training for counting supervisors and personnel has already been completed, and the DC personally inspected the venue and security

arrangements. Road restrictions have also been imposed leading to Siddhartha Hall.

Voting was held peacefully on December 15 for 16 of the 20 wards, with four corporators elected unopposed. "The cooperation extended by candidates, political parties, police, agents and officials ensured a smooth voting process. We urge all stakeholders and the public to maintain peace and order during counting," added DC Babu.

Counting for the 16 contested wards will begin at 8 AM on December 20, with results expected by 11 AM, he said.

Assam Rifles apprehend armed NSCN-IM cadre in Tirap

HT Correspondent

NAHARLAGUN, Dec 17: Acting on specific and credible intelligence, the Khonsa Battalion of Assam Rifles conducted a joint search operation with Tirap Police in Tirap district.

During the operation, an armed cadre of the NSCN-IM faction, identified as SS Capt Chopsai Pansa (56), a resident of Village Chop, Wakka Circle, District Longding, Arunachal Pradesh, was apprehended on December 15. The cadre was reportedly involved in illegal extortion activities and interfer-

ence in electoral processes within Tirap district.

The apprehension was carried out in a controlled and professional manner, following all standard operating procedures. After preliminary questioning, the cadre was handed over to the Tirap Police for further investigation and legal proceedings.

The operation underscores the continued commitment of Assam Rifles to ensuring peace, security and stability in Tirap district and the surrounding areas.

Strategic 61-km stretch crucial for connectivity, tourism and regional development

Arunachal deputy CM pushes for fast-tracking Chongkham-Brahmakund highway



ITANAGAR, Dec 17: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Wednesday underscored the need to accelerate the construction of the two-lane national highway linking Chongkham (Namsai) to Brahmakund (Parshuram Kund) in the state's Lohit district.

He said this during a meeting with the executive director of the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL), Ashish Gupta.

Mein said the strategic highway is vital to bolstering connectivity, regional development and tourism in the state.

"The timely completion of this highway is crucial for improving connectivity and facilitating smoother movement for pilgrims and tourists visiting the sacred Parshuram Kund, as well as to strengthen socio-economic development in the region," Mein said in a social media post after the meeting.

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27.	Nabanita Gayan	Late Pradeep Ch. Gayan

Sd/-

Secretary HPC Employees Housing C.S. Ltd
Betkuchi, P.O + P.S. - Garchuk, Kamrup(M)

Ban demolition work in NCR from Oct to Dec: Yadav

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav on Wednesday said that demolition work should be prohibited in the National Capital Region (NCR) during the peak pollution period, i.e., October to December.

Chairing a high-level meeting to review action plans of the municipal bodies of Delhi and Sonapat, he also said that construction and demolition work should not be allowed in the region until construction and demolition waste handling and processing infrastructure is created and identified within a 10 km radius of the site. The minister asked all agencies to work in mission mode to achieve a 40 per cent reduction in the air quality index over the next one year. Stressing the importance of a "Whole-of-Government" and "Whole-of-Society" approach to effectively address air pollution, he said there is a need to improve the "global image of the national capital". He directed the removal of illegal parking and encroachments from 62 identified traffic congestion hotspots in Delhi. "A detailed plan is to be prepared to identify road corridors and enable signal-free movement during peak traffic hours from 9 am to 11 am and 4 pm to 7 pm, in coordination with Delhi Police." (PTI)

National Herald case Modi, Shah must resign, vendetta politics exposed: Congress

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: The Congress on Wednesday demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah's resignation after a Delhi court refused to take cognisance of the ED's money laundering charge against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi in the National Herald case.

The opposition party also vowed to expose the "vendetta politics" against its leadership, asserting that the Congress cadres are agitated and are going to show their strength against this "misuse of agencies" by the government to target opposition leaders.

"We are fighting politically. We will keep fighting them, both inside and outside Parliament, and also on the streets and will teach them a lesson," party president Mallikarjun Kharge said at a press conference.

In a relief to Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and five others, a Delhi court on Tuesday refused to take cognisance of the Enforcement Directorate's money laundering charge against them in the National Herald case, holding that the agency's probe stemmed from a private complaint and not an FIR.

"I want to say that after this judgement Modi and Shah should resign because the court decision is like a slap on their face. They should give resignation as they should not harass people like this," Kharge said at the press conference, which he addressed with party leaders K C Venugopal, Abhishek Singhvi, Jairam Ramesh, and Pawan Khera.

"They should know that if they do such things and will not tolerate it and will not sit quiet, and they will face insult from people," he said.

Kharge said the Congress has been fighting the issue politically by taking out marches since its top leadership was summoned by the

NDA members strongly support nuclear bill, Opposition seeks examination by JPC

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Opposition MPs Wednesday strongly pitched for sending the nuclear energy bill moved by the government to a parliamentary panel for wider consultations while members from the ruling coalition "wholeheartedly" supported the legislation saying it will prove helpful in making the country energy sufficient.

Participating in the debate in Lok Sabha on the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill, which seeks to open the tightly-controlled civil nuclear sector for private participation, BJP member Shashank Mani said every Indian will be benefitted from the measure. He said the bill will facilitate government and private sectors investment in nuclear energy sector, generating employment.

Initiating the debate, Congress member Manish Tewari opposed the bill, contending that the omitting the clause removing liability on suppliers of nuclear equipment would prove to be harmful for India in case of a nuclear incident.

He opposed the provisions in the bill for the repeal of the Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act

of 2010.

Tewari recalled that the Department of Atomic Energy was set up by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the first nuclear tests were carried out by former prime minister Indira Gandhi in 1974. He said former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee ordered the second series of nuclear tests in 1998, and his successor Manmohan Singh brought India out of the nuclear apartheid.

Tewari said the bill does not provide for a framework for handling radioactive waste and seeks to prioritise uranium-based reactors at the cost of thorium reactors and molten salt reactors, which form the mainstay of India's three-stage nuclear programme. The Congress member demanded that the bill be referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for careful examination before being presented in the House for passage.

Former Union minister and Congress MP Shashi Tharoor described the bill as a "dangerous leap into privatised nuclear expansion" without adequate safeguards and asserted that the pursuit of capital cannot be allowed to override the requirements of public safety, environmental protection and victim justice. "I am not sure whether it is a nuclear bill or an unclear bill," he said. Tharoor said the bill represents a "dangerous leap into privatised nuclear expansion" with inadequate safeguards.



"We cannot allow the pursuit of capital to override the requirements of public safety, environmental protection and victim justice," he asserted.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Arvind Sawant questioned how the government would ensure that a private company provides the same level of safety as the public sector.

He urged that the bill be sent to a JPC for comprehensive discussion and then brought back with a consensus.

Dangerous leap into privatised nuclear expansion: Tharoor



NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Congress MP Shashi Tharoor on Wednesday described the government's nuclear energy bill as a "dangerous leap into privatised nuclear expansion" without adequate safeguards and asserted that the pursuit of capital cannot be allowed to override the requirements of public safety, environmental protection and victim justice.

Participating in a debate on the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Bill in the Lok Sabha, Tharoor claimed that the proposed legislation is ridden with exceptions, heavy on discretion and largely indifferent to public welfare.

"I am not sure whether it is a nuclear bill or an unclear bill," he said. The former Union minister said the SHANTI Bill represents a "dangerous leap into privatised nuclear expansion" with inadequate safeguards. "We cannot allow the pursuit of capital to override the non-negotiable requirements of public safety, environmental protection and victim justice," he asserted.

"The name SHANTI means peace and sustainability. Let us ensure that this name is not a cruel irony in the aftermath of a preventable disaster. The promise of transforming India ought not to conflate the risk of scarring India," the MP from Kerala's Thiruvananthapuram said.

Taking a swipe at the Bharatiya Janata Party-led Centre, he said the government speaks grandly about harnessing the immense energy released by splitting an atom, yet it seems to have failed to expend even a fraction of that energy in drafting a bill that is coherent, rigorous and not full of loopholes.

Tharoor said while India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, had laid the foundations for the country's nuclear programme, Manmohan Singh carried the 2008 Indo-US nuclear deal across the last mile, lifting India out of isolation and leading it into an era of strategic confidence in nuclear power.

"This bill now confronts us with a disappointing reversal, as a vision that once expanded horizons gives way to ambiguity and deepens uncertainty as to where India's nuclear framework is headed," he said.

"We have mastered nuclear fusion and fission but

not, apparently, legislative precision. The SHANTI Bill is a milestone but for the wrong reasons," the Congress leader said.

The bill, in its current form, contains such fundamental structural flaws that it requires comprehensive reworking rather than cosmetic amendments, he argued and added that ideally, it should have been referred to a joint parliamentary committee.

"The very preamble of this bill characterises nuclear energy as 'a clean and abundant source for electricity and hydrogen production'. This language is dangerously misleading. It completely neglects the serious, massive and irreversible risks from radioactive leaks, long-lived nuclear waste and the potential for catastrophic accidents," Tharoor said.

Moreover, India's usable uranium reserves are finite and while it does possess significant Thorium-232 reserves, thorium-based reactors remain decades away from significant deployment, he pointed out.

"The full life cycle of nuclear fuel from mining to waste disposal is neither clean nor sustainable. We must be honest with the people of India about what we are asking them to accept. Section 3(1)(c) and (e) provide that any other company or any person expressly permitted by the central government is eligible to apply for a licence to set up and run nuclear facilities," the former diplomat said.

"This effectively amounts to a blanket opening up of the entire nuclear-energy sector -- from mining to waste management -- to a wide range of private actors with indeterminate qualification criteria," he added.

More troubling still, the bill allows for a single composite licence for multiple activities across the nuclear fuel cycle, Tharoor said.

"This means one entity could control mining, fuel fabrication, reactor operation and waste handling. Such concentration of control in a single operator or corporate group heightens systemic risk exponentially rather than containing that risk. When profit becomes the primary motive across the entire chain, safety checks could be compromised at every stage," he argued. Such blanket opening up of the nuclear-energy sector is potentially dangerous, and giving the operational control of fissile and other highly-radioactive substances to private entities that are driven by quarterly earnings and the bottom line of profit significantly increases the possibility of nuclear incidents and accidents, the Congress leader asserted.

Beyond safety, fundamental questions arise about economic wisdom, he said.

Tharoor pointed out that the core of the liability reform caps total nuclear incident liability at approximately USD 460 million or ₹3,910 crore.

"Let this sink in.... This cap has not changed in 15 years despite inflation, despite Fukushima, despite everything we have learnt," he said. (PTI)

Shiv Sena leader Dhairyashel Sambhajirao Mane said that the government has retained special powers for the safety of radioactive materials, "meaning that innovation can be done by the private sector, but the control will remain with the government."

Samajwadi Party member Aditya Yadav, while participating in the debate, strongly opposed it saying the bill will offer red carpet welcome to the foreign companies "ignoring the country's interest".

"This is an attempt to bring US and French companies. If you are opening up the nuclear energy sector to foreign companies, where is your Make In India programme," he asked. Yadav claimed that through this bill, the Modi government is trying to please the Trump administration and lower the tariff imposed by the United States on India. Urging the government to send the bill to a Select Committee, TMC member Saugata Roy said nuclear energy is a "risky proposition" and the government has put maximum liability in case of an accident at just USD 300 million.

The liability should be USD 500 million, he said, adding, if accident takes place, the whole purpose will be defeated.

Roy said India does not have enough raw materials for producing nuclear energy and with this bill, the government is going to allow private companies to get foreign investment and raw materials.

DMK member Arun Nehru termed the name of the bill, SHANTI, as "oxymoron" as the nuclear energy has nothing to do with 'Shanti' (peace). He demanded that the bill be sent to a joint parliamentary committee.

Referring to nuclear accidents, which took place in the past in Japan and Russia, Nehru said the government must have to take extreme precautions while setting up nuclear power stations.

NDA constituent JD-U member Alok Kumar Suman said that the bill will facilitate in providing 24 hour power to the country. He said the production of nuclear energy in the country will go up by 10 times.

While "wholeheartedly" supporting bill, another NDA constituent TDP member Krishna Prasad Tenneti said many countries get 50 per cent of their power from nuclear sector while India's nuclear sector contribute just 3 per cent power. (PTI)

UP highway authorities step up fog safety measures after deadly crashes

LUCKNOW, Dec 17: Highway authorities in Uttar Pradesh have intensified safety measures on expressways and national highways to prevent road accidents amid dense fog conditions during the winter season, officials said on Wednesday, a day after multiple fog-linked crashes left at least 25 people dead across the state.

The Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA), which operates key access-controlled highways including the Agra-Lucknow Expressway (Taj Expressway), Purvanchal Expressway, Bundelkhand Expressway and Gorakhpur Link Expressway, said enhanced precautions were being put in place following Tuesday's accidents.

At least 25 people were killed and 59 were injured in a series of accidents attributed to poor visibility, with the worst incident reported from the Yamuna Expressway in Mathura, where a multi-vehicle pile-up claimed 13 lives. Four people each were killed in Basti and Unnao, while two fatalities were reported each from Meerut and Barabanki, the officials said. UPEIDA Nodal Officer (Route Safety and Security) Rajesh Pandey said fog-related accidents this season began on Tuesday.

"Most of the accidents, including those on the Purvanchal and Taj expressways, were rear-end collisions caused by poor visibility," he said.

Pandey said a proposal would be sent to the state government within a day or two to reduce the maximum speed limit on expressways from the current 120 kmph to 80 kmph during the fog period, which generally lasts until February 15.

He said special advisories were being issued for two-wheeler riders, who are allowed on expressways. "During fog, we request motorcyclists to halt at toll plazas. We are making arrangements for blankets and basic facilities for them," Pandey, a former IPS officer and SSP Lucknow, told PTI.

UPEIDA has also activated public address systems at all toll plazas to make real-time announcements about fog conditions ahead, based on inputs from patrol teams, he said.

"Fog is usually denser near water bodies and low-lying stretches. We alert commuters accordingly," he added.

Pamphlets containing safety guidelines, dos and don'ts, and emergency helpline numbers, including 14449, are also being distributed among commuters. Pandey reiterated that parking on expressways is strictly prohibited.

Meanwhile, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has also launched a statewide drive to improve visibility and awareness among road users during winter fog.

Officials said the speed limit on highways under NHAI is 100 kmph and stressed that besides fog, wrong-side driving and unauthorised entry and exit through highway cuts remain major causes of accidents.

Senior Manager at the Luharli (Gautam Buddha Nagar) and Gahana (Aligarh) toll plazas, Bajrang Saini, said reflective tapes are being distributed to motorists to improve vehicle visibility.

"Certain vehicles like tractors, trolleys and trucks either do not have reflective tapes or have non-functional lights, which increases the risk."

There are also three-wheelers and even bullock carts on largely rural stretches that need to be visible. "I told PTI. Saini said NHAI patrol vehicles are regularly deployed to assist commuters, while toll plazas make frequent announcements about fog conditions, emergency contact numbers and safe driving practices."

"This is a regular annual practice during winters," he said. According to the officials, the Luharli toll plaza records around 40,000 vehicles daily, while Gahana sees nearly 20,000 vehicles per day. (PTI)

Suvendu demands arrest of 2 Bengal ministers for Messi event fiasco

KOLKATA, Dec 17: BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Wednesday demanded the immediate arrest of TMC ministers Aroop Biswas and Sujit Bose, both of whom allegedly hogged the spotlight at the marquee football event featuring Argentine legend Lionel Messi which witnessed widespread spectator rampage at the Salt Lake Stadium on December 13.

Adhikari, also the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in West Bengal Assembly, who was accompanied by some 30 BJP MLAs, paid an unannounced visit to the stadium to assess the damage caused, but failed to gain access to the stadium turf as the entry gates were locked.

He subsequently held a protest demonstration before the office of the Bidhannagar Police Commissioner which is located adjacent to the stadium, and demanded the release of all six spectators who were arrested on charges of vandalism and violence.

"A ticket sale scam took place over the Messi event, proceeds of which ran into several hundred crores and were received by the Trinamool Congress via its ministers Aroop Biswas and Sujit Bose. The stadium chaos, which humiliated West Bengal before the international community, broke out because these ministers and their family members huddled around the football stars and were busy clicking selfies with them. I demand that both these ministers be arrested," Adhikari said.

The LoP also demanded that prices for event tickets must be reimbursed forthwith to spectators who were deprived of catching a glimpse of their favourite football icon despite paying hefty sums for gallery access.

Adhikari, alongside two other advocates, has

moved a petition before the Calcutta High Court seeking judicial intervention into the fiasco and prayed for setting up an independent probe panel, free of state government officers, to unearth both criminality and monetary fraud.

The matter is likely to be heard by the division bench of Acting Chief Justice Sujoy Paul on Thursday.

Adhikari and his colleagues, who made their way up to one of the stadium ramps, pointed at piles of unsold bottled water and beverages inside the stadium complex and alleged that the TMC leaders took "Rs 30 lakhs as cut-money" from the vendors for allowing those banned items inside the premises.

He was later heard shouting "thief thief" slogans outside the police commissionerate.

Adhikari said football fans who have been arrested in this connection will be given legal support, and the saffron party will also approach the court for quashing of FIRs filed against them.

Earlier in the day, at a press conference, state BJP president Samik Bhattacharya said it was a travesty of justice that those arrested were the ones who were duped after buying tickets at hefty prices.

Responding to Adhikari's allegations, TMC spokesperson Arup Chakraborty said that the BJP leader should raise the issue on the floor of the assembly "instead of resorting to drama on streets".

"If Adhikari is so keen on cleaning up the system, he should also ask for an independent panel probe into the Saradha and Narada scams in which he too was involved. I have sincere doubts whether he will ever raise that demand," Chakraborty said. (PTI)

Centre plans to give ambulances to states to ensure quick help for highway accident victims: Gadkari

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Expressing concern over high fatalities in road accidents, Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Wednesday said the Centre plans to provide states with modern ambulances with the condition that these vehicles must reach accident spots within 10 minutes. Replying to supplementaries during the Question Hour in the Rajya Sabha, the Minister of Road Transport and Highways acknowledged that the government has not been successful in reducing the number of deaths due to road accidents despite several measures to improve road infrastructure.

Gadkari was responding to a question of senior Congress member Pramod Tiwari, who sought to know the steps taken by the government on road safety.

Tiwari was referring to a road accident on the Yamuna Expressway on Tuesday.

"In our country, there are 5 lakh road accidents annually, causing around 1.8 lakh deaths," Gadkari said, adding that around 66 per cent of the deaths are in the age group of 18-34.

"This is terrible. We are trying



hard (to reduce fatalities), but we have not been successful," the minister said. Gadkari said the government has made efforts by improving road engineering, making enforcement of laws stricter and increasing penalties.

"Human behaviour is one of the biggest problems," the minister said, as he stressed the need to follow traffic rules. Gadkari agreed that the ambulance should reach the accident sites within 10 minutes. He cited a study by IIM, which found that the lives of

50,000 people could have been saved had they received immediate and timely medical treatment. Based on this study, the minister said, the government has decided that it would honour those helping accident victims by declaring them as 'Raahveers', and also providing a reward of ₹ 25,000 each.

Gadkari said the ambulances will now also have special tools to evacuate people from accident spots. "We have told states to have the same helpline number for ambulance service," he said. Gadkari

said it is not the job of NHAI to manage ambulance services.

"Therefore, he said, "We have decided to have MoUs with states on a kilometre basis, wherein we will provide good quality ambulances to each state. But, our condition will be that ambulances must reach accident spots within 10 minutes".

The minister said the Centre is ready to provide 100-150 ambulances that they can operate in their systems. On a separate question related to loose FASTags, Gadkari said this is a kind of fraud but assured the House that the problem has been addressed.

A loose FASTag is referred to as a FASTag that is not fixed on the vehicle's windscreen and carried in hand by the motorist.

In a written reply, the minister informed that as on 10th December, 2025, a total of 6,725 cases of "Tag in Hand" were reported.

The government, through Indian Highways Management Company Ltd (IHMCL), has progressively strengthened the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for detecting and blacklisting 'loose FASTags' or 'tag-in-hand'. (PTI)

Tripura singed MoU to boost cultivable land research

Land research initiative to make Tripura self-reliant in food-grain: Minister

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Dec 17: In a significant step toward enhancing agricultural productivity and achieving self-sufficiency in food-grain production, the Tripura Agriculture Department has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Bureau of Soil Survey (NBSS), Nagpur.

The collaboration aims to conduct in-depth research on cultivable lands across three districts of the state, paving the way for sustainable farming practices and a stronger agricultural future for Tripura.

This was said by Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath today after inaugurating a workshop on Land Resource Inventory of Tripura using Geo-Spatial Techniques at Pragna Bhawan, Agartala.

The Minister said that we speak about self-reliance in agriculture, and for that, research on land is required.

"Land is the main factor in agriculture; then come seeds, water level, and scientific cultivation. We started working three years ago to check the condition of layers of land. The Agriculture Department team has made a plan to become self-reliant in agriculture. That is why we first selected South and Gomati to conduct a survey. Soil scientists of NBSS from Nagpur carried out the survey and submitted the report. Then we signed a MoU for three districts which



are North, Dhalai, and Unakoti. Today they have presented the report, and the remaining three districts, including West, Sepahijala, and Khowai, are left," he said. The Minister said that nobody had thought of such things before. "I have been in politics for over 30 years. Earlier, food ministers or agriculture ministers said that Tripura needed to be self-sufficient in foodgrain, but they could not specify the plan. Soil scientists can tell us what soil we have and where we can cultivate palm oil, rubber, millet, paddy, etc. In Nagicheria, some palm oil trees were cultivated, but nothing significant hap-

Political parties, civil society organisations denounce fresh firing in Manipur's Bishnupur

IMPHAL, Dec 17: Political parties and civil society organisations of Manipur on Wednesday condemned the firing by unidentified miscreants in peripheral areas of Bishnupur district, while markets remained closed at some places in protest against the violence.

Several rounds of gunshots were fired near the vicinity of Torbung and Phougakchao Ikhai areas, bordering Churachandpur district, around 9 pm on Tuesday, officials said.

Nobody was injured in the incident, a senior officer said, adding, the situation remained tense but calm in the district, with no reports of fresh firing.

Hundreds of displaced people, particularly women and children, who had returned to their homes in the vicinity of Phougakchao Ikhai after nearly two years, reportedly fled once again and took refuge elsewhere in the wake of the firing, he said.

"On behalf of the National Peoples' Party, I highly condemn this provocative and cruel act. I also appeal to the government to punish

those trying to derail the peace process underway among communities," NPP MLA Mayanglam Rameshwar said.

"Necessary precautionary measures should also be taken up by the government to ensure there are no intelligence lapses that could lead to disturbance of peace," he said.

NPP state unit president Pfoze S Lorho said there has been progress towards peace since the last few months. "To have a fresh escalation is unfortunate," he said. Meanwhile, markets and shops at Moirang town in Bishnupur and New Checkon area in Imphal remained closed in protest against Tuesday's firing incident.

Several women protesters hit the streets at New Checkon and stopped vehicular movement for some time, demanding immediate arrest of those responsible for the firing.

Condemning the incident, the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), an umbrella body of Meitei groups, said "armed militants involved in terrorising civilians" should be

tracked and arrested.

It termed the violence "violation of fundamental rights and constitutional order which endangered lives, caused widespread fear and inflicted serious threat to the safety and security of local communities".

The Kuki Zo Council, in a statement, said resettling internally displaced persons in sensitive areas amount to "inviting renewed conflict", and demanded "rollback" of resettlement to "avoid further escalation".

Earlier this month, the government resettled at least 257 displaced people from 64 households at Leimaram Waroiching in Bishnupur district.

At least 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in the ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May, 2023.

Manipur is currently under President's rule, which was imposed on February 13, 2025, after the then chief minister N Biren Singh resigned on February 9. (PTI)

Four dead, four injured after brick kiln furnace collapse in Tripura

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Dec 17: At least four workers were killed and four others injured after a newly constructed furnace at the ABC Brick Kiln in the Aperskar area of Kamalpur subdivision of Tripura's Dhalai District collapsed today during an inauguration ritual.

According to officials, preparations were underway to formally inaugurate the brick kiln furnace, which traditionally involves lighting a ceremonial fire. Moments after the ritual began, the furnace structure suddenly gave way, trapping several workers under bricks and debris.

Rescue operations were immediately launched by the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Fire Service personnel, and local police. Excavators were used to remove debris, and the injured were rushed to nearby hospitals by ambulance. Those with serious injuries were later referred to GB Hospital for advanced treatment.

Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha expressed deep grief over the incident, stating that the chimney of the ABC Brick Industry had collapsed unexpectedly.

"My heartfelt condolences go out to the bereaved families, and I wish a speedy recovery to those injured," the Chief Minister said, adding that SDRF and police teams were promptly deployed at the site.

The deceased have been identified as Subal Debnath (55), Pinku Shil (37), Anil Goutam (49), and Sajal Malakar (42). The injured workers—Bidhu Sharma (45), Santosh Gupta (28), Harkis Chauhan (50), and Harkis Saroj (40)—are migrant labourers from other states.

Brick kiln manager Sankar Kanti Deb said the collapse occurred suddenly during the inauguration process, before the furnace could be fully lit, leading to multiple casualties.

Following the incident, local MLA and former minister Manoj Kanti Deb visited Kamalpur Hospital to meet the injured and later inspected the accident site. Dhalai Superintendent of Police Mihir Das also reached the spot to review the situation.

Describing the incident as "extremely painful," the MLA said a preliminary assessment had been conducted and further investigation was underway to determine the cause of the collapse.

NH-217 widening sparks outrage

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 17: Villagers affected by the NH-217 road widening project in East Garo Hills have alleged that crucial government notices were not communicated to them in time, pointing to serious administrative lapses and deepening mistrust between residents and the local administration.

Residents of Rongjeng and Rongmil areas said they became aware of a Public Notice dated November 17, 2025, issued by the Deputy Commissioner (Revenue), and the appointment of an arbitrator only weeks after the notifications were officially issued. They alleged that no village-level meetings were held and no clear written communication was provided to explain the implications of the notices.

Affected shopkeepers and landowners said many families continued approaching district offices seeking clarity on compensation, unaware that the administration had already directed all disputes to arbitration, effectively closing the window for local grievances. They claimed the delayed flow of information has heightened fear and anger, with the administration appearing more focused on enforcing possession than ensuring informed consent.

"If these notices were so important, why were we not informed properly and on time?" asked a resident of Rongjeng Bazar, adding that learning about such decisions weeks later has left people feeling deliberately sidelined. At Rongjeng Bazar, where

several ancestral shops face demolition, trader M G Momin said the lack of timely information has worsened the situation.

"We did not know about the notice or the arbitrator until much later. By then, it was clear that the decision to take our land had already been made. The compensation is inadequate, and now arbitration is being presented as the only option, without any guidance," he said.

Activist Cherian G Momin criticised the handling of the notices, calling it administrative arrogance.

He said the public notice was written in a threatening tone and compounded by delayed communication.

"This is not governance. It is intimidation through silence and delay," he alleged.

Shop and property owner Shamina N Sangma said the delay has cost villagers valuable time.

"For nearly a year, we have been running from pillar to post. Now we find out weeks later that an arbitrator was already appointed. This has pushed us further into uncertainty. We want timely justice, not endless procedures," she said.

Villagers alleged that the administration's failure to promptly and transparently communicate critical decisions has widened the trust deficit surrounding the NH-217 project.

As resistance grows in parts of East Garo Hills, residents fear that development is being pursued at the cost of transparency, fairness and basic administrative accountability.

E-AUCTION FOR "ADVERTISING ASSETS"
E-Auction for "Advertising Assets" over Lumding Division for a period of 03 years. Details are as under. Auction Catalogue No.: ADVT-LMG-47-25. Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): 11:00 hrs. on 31-12-2025; Auction Close Date & Time: 12:30 hrs. on 31-12-2025; Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee; Trips/Days: 1096.

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Description
AA/1	ADVT-LMG-BPB-OH-422-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	Proposal for Calling of e-Auction for advertisement rights of circulating area of Badarpur (BPB) Railway Station for a period of 03 (Three) years.
AA/2	ADVT-LMG-LMG-OH-426-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Lumding (LMG) Railway circulating area for a period of 03 (Three) years.
AA/3	ADVT-LMG-KXJ-OH-421-25-1 (Advertising - Out of Home)	Proposal for Calling of e-Auction for advertisement rights of Karimganj (KXJ) Railway Station circulating area for a period of 03 (Three) years.
AB/1	ADVT-LMG-LMG-OSN-425-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Lumding (LMG) Railway Station for a period of 03 (Three) years.
AB/2	ADVT-LMG-BPB-OSN-423-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at Badarpur (BPB) Railway station premises for a period of 03 (Three) years.
AB/3	ADVT-LMG-NHLG-OSN-427-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights at New Haffong (NHLG) Railway station premises for a period of 03 (Three) years.
AB/4	ADVT-LMG-KXJ-OSN-424-25-1 (Advertising - On Station Premise (Non-Digital))	A proposal for calling e-Auction for advertisement rights of Karimganj (KXJ) Railway Station premises for a period of 03 (Three) 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"

No.23/228/2021-2022/4
SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER
Dtd.15/12/2025

Sealed tender subsequently to be drawn in F-2 form affixing Non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs.8.25p (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only are invited from the Registered PWD Contractor's under Class-I (A, B, C) of Assam PWD (Rural Roads) and Class-II Roads category will be received for the following works up to 2-00 P.M. of 30-12-2025 in the office of the Executive Engineer, P.W.R.D, Kokrajhar Rural Roads Division, Kokrajhar which will be opened on the same date and place at 2.15 P.M in presence of the tenderers or their authorized agent.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender Amount (in Rs.) (Including G.S.T., L.W.C.)	Earnest Money (in Rs.) (ST, SC, OBC -1% & GEN-2%)	Cost of Tender Paper (in Rs.)	Time for completion in days
1	Immediate restoration of flood damage on RCC Box Culvert no 4/2 eroded on Kokrajhar Ramphalbi Road under SDRF for the year 2023-24"	Rs. 3, 13,600.00	1%-Rs.3,136/- 2%-Rs.6,272/-	500.00	45 (Forty five) Days
2	Immediate restoration of flood damage Approaches of RCC Box Culvert No. 3/1 eroded on Serfangun to Kapurgao road under SDRF for the year 2023-24."	Rs. 2, 43,500.00	1%-Rs.2,435/- 2%-Rs.4,870/-	500.00	45 (Forty five) Days
3	Immediate restoration of flood damage Kokrajhar Ramphalbi road at 2900.00m under SDRF for the year 2023-24"	Rs. 3, 25,700.00	1%-Rs.3,257/- 2%-Rs.6,514/-	500.00	45 (Forty five) Days
4	Immediate restoration of flood damage Ramphalbi to Athiabari road at 5300.00m under SDRF for the year 2023-24"	Rs. 4, 31,800.00	1%-Rs.4,318/- 2%-Rs.8,636/-	500.00	45 (Forty five) Days
5	Immediate restoration of flood damage approaches of RCC Box Culvert No. 1/1 eroded on Nepalpara village road under SDRF for the year 2023-24"	Rs. 3, 02,800.00	1%-Rs.3,028/- 2%-Rs.6,056/-	500.00	45 (Forty five) Days
6	Immediate restoration of flood damage approaches of RCC Box Culvert No. 4/5 on Ramphalbi to Athiabari road under SDRF for the year 2023-24"	Rs. 1, 69,900.00	1 %-Rs. 1,699/- 2%-Rs.3,398/-	500.00	45 (Forty five) Days

Details NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent up to 12.00 Noon on all working days from 18-12-2025 to 20-12-2025 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Banker cheque/Demand draft of any nationalized Bank (Preferable SBI) duly pledged to the Executive Engineer, PWRD Kokrajhar Rural Roads Division.

Sd/-
Executive Engineer, PWD
Kokrajhar Rural Roads Division

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/3320

IN THE COURT OF
JUDGE (SENIOR DIVISION)
KAMRUP (M) AT G
(Under Order 5, R.G)
TITLE SUIT NO. 163 OF 2025
Sri Pramod Kun
Vs.
M / S Shiv Ganesh
To,
1. M/s Shiv Gan
Having its offi
Plaza, G. S. Road
Guwahati - 78100
District - Kamrup
Represented By
Sri Panna Deb.
2. Sri Panna De
Son of Sri Dhire
Resident of 2, B
Birkuchi Narengi
Guwahati - 781026
District - Kamrup

WHEREAS the Pl
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against you for
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a pleader duly i
to answer all r
relating to the
accompanied by s
to answer all su
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the claim and
hereby directed
written statement
and to produce
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Take notice that
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absence.

Given under my
this Court, on
December, 2025
O
Admi nistra
Civ il Judge (Se
Kamrup (Met r

NOTICE INVITING FOR RE-TENDER OF CANE MAHAL UNDER KARBI ANGLONG EAST DIVISION DIPHU FOR THE YEAR 2026.

RE- TENDER NOTICE OF CANE UNDER KARBI ANGLONG EAST DIVISION, DIPHU

Under the same term and notification laid down in the tender dated 13/11/2025 circulated vide letter No. B/KAE/REMA/CANE Mahal/Tender/2025-26/5231-37 dtd. 23/10/2025 the Cane Mahal as shown in enclosed statement are put to re-sale for higher bids to generate more council revenue.

Intending tender may obtain the tender paper during office hours at any working day from the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will receive up to 3.00 PM (IST) on or before 29/12/2025

S C H E D U L E

Period of Operation up to 31-12-2026)

Sl. No.	Name of Mahals	Name of Range	Probable Quantity	Govt. Value	Earnest Money
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Cane Mahal No. 5	North Eastern Range, Silonijan	25,000 Bundles	Rs. 4,00,000/-	2% general, 8,000/- 1% ST(H) 4,000/-
2	Cane Mahal No 1	Northern Range, Dolamara	8,500 Bundles	Rs. 1,70,000/-	2% general, 3,400/- 1% ST(H) 1,700/-
3	Cane Mahal No 4	Western Range, Dokmoka	Sond-4,000 Bdis Lizai-3,000 Bdis Raidang 1,000 Bdis	Rs. 48,000/- Rs. 24,000/- Rs. 20,000/- Rs. 92,000/-	2% general, 1,840/- 1% ST(H) 920/-
4	Rema Mahal No.7 (B)	North Western Range, Parkup Pahar	50 M. Ton	Rs. 2,50,000/-	2% general, 5,000/- 1% ST(H) 2,500/-
5	Cane Mahal No.3	Central Range, Manja	Sond-14,000 Nos Lizai-12,000 Bdis Raidang-6,000 Bdis	Rs. 1,68,000/- Rs. 96,000/- Rs. 1,20,000/- Rs. 3,84,000/-	2% general, 7,680 1% ST(H) 3,840/-
6	Rema Mahal No.3	NE/Range, Silonijan	70,000 Kg	Rs 3,50,000/-	2% general, 7,000/- 1% ST(H) 3,500/-

Sd/-
Devisional Forest Officer,
Karbi Anglong East Division, Diphu

Neeraj Ghaywan's 'Homebound' shortlisted in international feature category at Oscars

Neeraj Ghaywan's "Homebound", the much acclaimed drama about two friends from rural India and their aspirations, has been shortlisted in the best international feature category at the Oscars alongside 14 other films.

Producer Karan Johar said he was over the moon with the journey of "Homebound", which first premiered in the Un Certain Regard category at Cannes in May.

"Homebound" will compete for an Oscar nomination alongside Argentina's "Belén", Brazil's "The Secret Agent", French drama "It Was Just an Accident", Germany's "Sound of Falling" and Iraq's "The President's Cake".

The other movies in the shortlist include Japan's "Kokuho", Jordan's "All That's Left of You", Norway's "Sentimental

Value", Palestine's "Palestine 36", South Korean hit "No Other Choice", Spain's "Sirat", "Late Shift" from Switzerland, "Left-Handed Girl" from Taiwan and Tunisian drama "The Voice of Hind Rajab", the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences announced in a release on Tuesday.

Johar celebrated the news by sharing the screenshot of the Academy's list that mentions "Homebound" in the international feature category.

"We made the shortlist... Way to go team Homebound!" he captioned the screenshot and addressed Ghaywan as the "star" in his stories.

Sharing the same screenshot in a post, Johar said it was difficult for him to articulate how "proud and elated" he was.

"All of us @dharmamovies are privileged to have this

proud and important film in our filmography... thank you @neeraj.ghaywan for making so many dreams of ours come true... from Cannes to being on the Oscar shortlist this has been such an overwhelming journey! Love to the entire cast and crew and teams of this special special film! Upwards and onwards..."

Ghaywan celebrated the news by sharing Johar's screenshots. "Homebound", produced by Johar and Adar Poonawalla, stars Ishaan Khatter, Vishal Jethwa and Janhvi Kapoor in lead roles.

The film is inspired by journalist Basharat Peer's The New York Times article "Taking Amrit Home", also titled (A Friendship, a Pandemic and a Death Beside the Highway).

Hollywood legend Martin Scorsese is attached as an exec-

utive producer on the movie, which portrays the childhood friendship between a Muslim and Dalit who chase a police job that promises them the dignity they have long been denied due to their surnames.

The Academy on Tuesday also announced shortlists in 11 other categories, including the newly added Casting Oscars.

Nominations for the 98th Academy Awards will be announced on Thursday, January 22, 2026.

Twenty-four categories will be awarded at the 98th Oscars. Each category has five nominees, except for Best Picture, which has 10.

The 98th Oscars will be held on Sunday, March 15, 2026, at the Dolby Theatre at Ovation Hollywood and will be televised live on ABC and in more than 200 territories worldwide. (PTI)



'MAYBE NOT A FINAL GOODBYE': SAYANI GUPTA, MAANVI GAGROO ON FOUR MORE SHOTS PLEASE!



As Four More Shots Please! Approaches its conclusion with the fourth season, actors Sayani Gupta and Maanvi Gagroo express that the farewell doesn't feel completely definitive. Although the upcoming season is officially labeled as the series' last, the actors are optimistic that the show still has potential for revival in a different format down the line.

The beloved Prime Video series, set to launch its fourth season on December 19, follows the journeys of four unapologetically flawed women as they navigate friendship, love, careers, and personal development. Since its launch in 2019, the show has resonated with viewers for its honest depiction of contemporary urban womanhood.

Sayani Gupta, portraying investigative journalist Damini Rizvi Roy, mentioned that she believes Four More Shots Please! has the capacity to evolve similarly to global franchises like Sex and the City.

"I genuinely believe this is a show that could run for eight to ten seasons. It can continue to evolve and even return years down the line. Deep down, I feel it's never really goodbye," Gupta stated.

Maanvi Gagroo, who plays Siddhi Patel, echoed this sentiment with a smile, saying, "It's the final season, but not a final goodbye. We'll always remain in the hearts of our viewers."

A Heartfelt Conclusion to a Defining Journey

The actors reminisced about the last day of filming, which was filled with emotions, although the reality of the ending didn't fully hit them until later.

"There were tears on set, but when I actually saw the words 'final season' written down, that's when it truly sank in," Gagroo shared.

Created by Rangita Prithish Nandy and Ishita Prithish Nandy, the show features Sayani Gupta, Bani J, Kirti Kulhari, and Maanvi Gagroo in leading roles. The se-

ries is developed by Devika Bhagat, with dialogues penned by Ishita Moitra. A Career-Transforming Show

For Gupta, Four More Shots Please! represented a pivotal moment in her career.

"People still recognize me as Damini Rizvi Roy in the streets, and that's the highest praise an actor can receive. The affection we receive from audiences worldwide demonstrates how profoundly the show resonated with viewers," she expressed.

Bani J, who portrays the queer fitness trainer Umang Singh, mentioned that she was attracted to the role because it depicted a queer character with authenticity and respect.

"I didn't want to embody a stereotype. I aimed for Umang to come across as a genuine person, which is frequently lacking in such representations," she remarked.

Honoring Female Bonds

Gagroo pointed out that what genuinely distinguished the series was its emphasis on female friendships instead of trauma-centric stories.

"Women-centric narratives often revolve around pain and hardship. This show honored women as individuals — flawed, humorous, ambitious, and vulnerable. That's why it struck a chord so powerfully," she observed.

Final Season Ensemble

In addition to the main quartet, the concluding season will feature the return of Prateik S M Patil, Milind Soman, Rajeev Siddhartha, Lisa Ray, and Ankur Rathee, while Dino Morea, Anasuya Gupta, and Kunaal Roy Kapur will join the cast as newcomers.

As the series gears up to wrap up its current storyline, both fans and creators are clinging to the hope that the journey of these four women might one day embark on a fresh start. (PTI)

'Uniform give us the strength': Sunny Deol on his 'Border 2' role

Sunny Deol, who is set to play a soldier in his upcoming film Border 2, said that the uniform itself gives him the strength to bring authenticity to the role.

At a Mumbai event for the film, Sunny became emotional while delivering a patriotic dialogue. This marked his first public appearance since his

a soldier. We don't train like soldiers but we carry the same emotions inside us."

"It's just that we get the opportunity to essay the character of a soldier and 99 percent times it is the uniform that give us the strength to play the part, besides we've to add certain things from our end," Sunny added.

Border 2 is the second instalment in the war drama franchise that began with J.P. Dutta's 1997 directorial Border.

Reflecting on how patriotism continues across generations, Deol shared, "The country is our mother and today's youth also consider it as their mother and they will also protect the same way as their fathers and grandfathers did. We can call them Gen Z or by any other name but they are our (Indian) children only and their passion (for the country) will remain the same."

Border 2 is helmed by Anurag Singh, known for helming films like Kesari (2019), Punjab 1984 (2014), Jatt & Juliet (2012) and Dil Bole Hadippa! (2009).

The film stars Varun Dhawan, Ahan Shetty, Diljit Dosanjh in key roles. The ensemble cast also features Sonam Bajwa, Mona Singh and Medha Rana.

Recalling how the idea for Border 2 originated, Bhushan Kumar said, "It all came from JP Dutta sahab and Nidhi (Dutta's daughter) came up with the idea that she wanted to make it (part two)."

"There are so many emotions attached with this film. 'Border' is impossible without Sunny sir for his hard work and time. This film is very emotional for us," the producer said, lauding actors like Dosanjh, Dhawan and Shetty," Bhushan added.

Bhushan Kumar also shared that the recreated rendition of the iconic track Sandese Aate Hai is scheduled to launch on 23 January, 2026.

Border 2 is set to hit theatres on 23 January, 2026, ahead of Republic Day. (PTI)



father Dharmendra's passing last month.

Speaking about his role in Border 2, Sunny said, "Whenever you wear the uniform there's an excitement that you feel and you feel you are also



Wanted to know how trauma gets passed on: 'Calorie' director on 1985 Air India bombing

"Calorie" also features veteran actors Anupam Kher and Dolly Ahluwalia in key roles that emphasise familial bonds amidst sorrow. Marjana said the film is largely fictionalised, except its backdrop of the bombing, and added that she has tried to unpack themes of tragedy, loss, family dynamics, and the misunderstandings that often linger on.

The director, who was supposed to be on that ill-fated aircraft, acknowledges that her work serves as an outlet for her own emotions and experiences.

"I dealt with it through art, photography, filmmaking, and by journaling, but mostly through my profession, which is making movies. So, it's just a self-indulgent act, the cliché of artist therapy. I've had people tell me how this film has been healing for them, and that's incredibly rewarding for a filmmaker," the director, known for documentary, "Desperately Seeking Helen", and "Am I the Skinniest Person You've Ever Seen?", said.

Describing the writing process for "Calorie" as "long and complex", Marjana said it was "important" to contextualise the tragedy without being "heavy handed".

"It's very easy to label it as a terrorist attack. The bombing itself and not look at, not zoom out and look at what are the events that led to

it and how it implicated different communities in the South Asian diaspora," she said, adding, there are multiple tragedies taking place in this film.

"Initially, this was going to be Alia's coming of age story and not Monica's. Then I shifted the focus to Monica because it talked more about the political background and the Air India bombing and that history in 1984, in the 1980s," the director said.

The film has been shot both in India and Canada and Marjana fondly recalls her formative years spent in Amritsar with her cousins.

"I would stay at my grandmother's house on my mother's side for the summer. I didn't know the culture. It was all very new to me, getting salwar kameez tailor made for me. We had a set routine of going to the Golden Temple in the evenings and later enjoying street snacks from chaat to golgappa," she said.

When asked if she felt emotional while directing, Marjana said she was "stable" primarily because she has already processed emotions of grief and loss.

"I could really appreciate making the film and being a director and just enjoying the process of working on the film," she said. "Calorie" features Kher and Ahluwalia as

Mohan and Gurdeep, the great-uncle and great-aunt who host the girls on the trip, and the director said, working with Indian actors for the first time in her career turned out to be a great collaborative experience.

"Dolly brought so much charm, warmth and humour to the character. Her sense of comic timing is impeccable. Besides, she had so many ideas that she brought that were not in the script. So, there's a lot of improvisation that happens."

I've seen Anupam ji in numerous films, but mostly Western films. I remember him from 'Bend It Like Beckham', where he played a Sikh, and I had no doubt that he could embody this character, this great uncle, who's benevolent, warm, funny, character, who embraces girls," she added.

As for the film's release in India, producer Joe Balass, Compass Productions, said they intend to bring "Calorie" to Indian and international audiences following its Canadian theatrical release last month.

"When Eisha first shared 'Calorie' with me, I connected instantly. It's a bittersweet look at mother-daughter relationships and the longing for forgiveness speaks to all of us. In a polarized world, the film offers a fresh, deeply human perspective," he said. (PTI)

"Calorie" is a deeply personal film, says director Eisha Marjana, who wanted to explore themes of inter-generational trauma through the story of a Sikh Indo-Canadian family living through the shadow of a tragedy.

The film, which had its international premiere at the 56th International Film Festival of India last month, follows the story of Monika, a single mother of a Sikh Canadian family who sends her two daughters Alia and Simi on a trip to India to visit family and reconnect with their Punjabi heritage.

But during their stay, Alia and Simi get to know that their grandmother was one of the victims of the 1985 Air India flight bombing, which was linked to militant Sikh separatists. They were led to believe that their grandmother had died in a car accident.

Marjana has drawn a lot from her own story for the film. Her mother and younger sister boarded Air India flight 182 from Montreal in 1985, which exploded mid-air killing all the passengers.

"The initial impulse of making this film was about bringing context to the Air India bombing, making sure that I don't villainise the community by speaking about it as a terrorist attack and not looking at the whole picture. I was curious about how when something big, tragic happens, whether it's the Air India bombing or any political or violent event, how it impacts the next generation.

"Like, how does it get passed down and dealt with? And if it doesn't get dealt with in one generation, how does it trickle-down generations? So, that was a question I had," the director told PTI in an interview.

No woman in F1 since 1992 but I aim to be there one day: Trailblazing Indian racer Atiqa Mir

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: In a sport where no woman has raced in Formula 1 since 1992, 11-year-old karting prodigy Atiqa Mir understands both the scale of the challenge and the weight of history while chasing the pinnacle of motorsport.

Competing in one of the most male-dominated sporting arenas in the world, the young Indian racer believes in breaking stereotypes rather than being intimidated by them.

In an interview with PTI after a successful international karting season, Atiqa spoke at length about her blossoming motorsport journey and the challenges she gleefully accepts along the way.

"I think it's because of all the stereotypes and stuff and also it being a mixed gender sport and being male dominated, that's why many females are not in Formula

1," Atiqa told 'PTI Videos'.

"And I think my confidence and belief in myself is going to take me there one day," she said.

Atiqa's rise through the karting ranks has unfolded on grids where she is often one of the only girls competing against a bunch of "bullying" boys, and she doesn't shy away from bullying them back.

"Well, basically, I'm one of the only few girls on the track and all the boys are there and obviously they don't like getting beaten by a girl. So they obviously bully me a lot on the track, but then I always bully them back," she said.

The behaviour, she explained, goes beyond hard racing.

"Well, sometimes they turn on me. Sometimes they brake check me, which is normal for everyone, I guess nowadays, because there's no penalty in karting for a brake check. But sometimes they also hit



me, but I think I learned how to deal with it over time." Rather than allowing such incidents to derail her focus, the teenager says she has learned to

use them for her growth as a racing driver.

"What goes through my mind is that I just try and learn from what I could from the session and the

rest automatically finds its place," she said.

Motorsport runs in Atiqa's family. Her father Asif Mir is a former national karting champion and Formula Asia vice-champion, but she insists her career was not shaped by obligation or expectation.

"...I didn't start because of my dad. And like, there was no such thing as like, having a dream to race in Formula One," she said, underlining that her journey began organically.

Her introduction to Formula 1 itself came relatively late.

"I didn't really know about Formula One and stuff until like 2021. And I think the first race I actually watched on TV was the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix in 2021," she recalled the epic last lap title showdown between Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen.

"And I remember seeing that

overtake (from Verstappen). And it was so good. And it's still in my mind. So I really get motivated by that."

That moment cemented her admiration for Verstappen, now one of her two role models alongside her father.

"So basically, I really like his aggression and ability to drive with the car even if it's not like top one pace," Atiqa said.

"He's gotten loads of poles and he's basically been a great like person in this season when the car wasn't good."

On track, her own performances are steadily strengthening her case.

Competing in Europe for the first time this season, Atiqa finished inside the top nine in the RMC Euro Trophy, one of the toughest karting championships on the calendar.

"Since it was my first season

competing in Europe, I think it's gone pretty well," she said.

"I did the top nine finish in the wet, which I was kind of learning how to drive on," she said, noting that highly competitive nature of racing in Europe exposed her to new tracks, climates and driving styles.

Atiqa has also received the coveted backing from the F1 Academy, becoming the first Indian to be supported by the programme.

Asked whether motorsport is especially tough for women, Atiqa acknowledged the early struggles.

"For the first one and a half years, really, it is because no one knows you and they just expect you to be one of those random girls driving for fun," she said.

"But now it's getting better because of my speed, and my determination to win," she summed up. (PTI)

TATA STEEL CHESS

Anand back after six years for master vs pupil clash with Gukesh

KOLKATA, Dec 17: It will be a compelling showdown between a mentor and his protegee when five-time world champion Viswanathan Anand returns to competitive action after six years to face reigning world champion D Gukesh among his other former wards at the seventh Tata Steel Chess here from January 7 to 11.

Anand, who last played the tournament in 2019, will be making his comeback against a new generation of Indian stars, headlined by Gukesh, whom he has closely mentored in recent years at his WestBridge Anand Chess Academy.

It will be the first time the two world champions meet in an individual tournament on Indian soil.

The Tata Steel Chess India will be held at the Dhono Dhanyo Auditorium, featuring both Open and Women's sections in rapid and blitz formats, with equal prize money for both categories.



The Open field will also include FIDE World Cup runner-up Wei Yi, former US champion Wesley So, Hans Niemann, Volodar Murzin, and a strong Indian contingent comprising R Praggnanandhaa and Arjun Erigaisi, supported by WACA.

The other Indians in the field include Vidit Gujrathi, Aravindh Chithambaram, Divya Deshmukh, Vaishali R, Vantika Agrawal and Rakshita Ravi.

The women's event will be headlined by World Cup winner Divya alongside former world championship challenger Aleksan-

dra Goryachkina, Kateryna Lagno, Nana Dzagnidze, D Harika, and Carissa Yip.

Excited to return as player, Anand said: "...the world of chess has changed massively with the emergence of talented players across the country specially in India.

"I am really excited to accept the challenge from the young chess prodigy in this marquee tournament of India," he added in a press release.

D B Sundara Ramam, vice president (corporate services), Tata Steel, said Anand's return has added a special dimension to the event.

Tournament Director Dibyendu Barua said the event has grown into one of the premier chess tournaments globally, noting that the prospect of seeing Anand face his students and proteges underscored the symbolic passing of the torch in Indian chess. (PTI)

After WC success, junior Indian hockey players eyeing senior team berth through HIL

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: After achieving a podium finish at the World Cup, the Indian colts have now set their sights on a good show in the upcoming Hockey India League to break into the senior national team.

India registered a come-from-behind 4-2 win over Argentina to win the bronze medal in the just-concluded junior World Cup.

The men's HIL will begin in Chennai on January 3, while the women's league is scheduled to commence in Ranchi on December 28.

The junior players are very well aware that India's chief coach Craig Fulton will be closely monitoring their progress during the HIL.

"Ending the Junior World Cup campaign with a medal around our neck surely feels fantastic, but to do well in the Hockey India League is the next big step in making the cut for the senior team," said striker Dilraj Singh, who scored five goals in the tournament.

"We are aware, we will be watched closely and doing well in the HIL where we will be on the same platform as some of the senior players from across nations will be important."

Dilraj will be playing for SG Pipers this season. His compatriot,



Anmol Ekka who was awarded the player-of-the-match for his incredible goals in the bronze medal match, also emphasised on the need to put up an improved show in HIL.

"I am looking forward to my stint with the Ranchi Royals this season where I will be playing

alongside Loick Luypaert and Tom Boon who are both PC experts and I am really looking forward to learning from them. I am pretty sure this experience will put me in good stead to push for a place in the senior core group," said Ekka.

Arsdeep Singh, who played an instrumental role in the Indian forwardline with some fine assists besides scoring a hat-trick in the round robin stage, will be turning up for Hyderabad Toofans.

"We have seen how this league has helped players in the past to make the senior squad. One of the biggest names in Indian hockey to have benefited from HIL is Amit Rohidas whose stint with Kalinga Lancers gave him a fresh lease of life in hockey back in 2017. There was no looking back for him ever since and somehow this story is very popular among our junior team players," he said.

The opening match of the men's HIL be played between Tamil Nadu Dragons and Hyderabad Toofans in Chennai. (PTI)

Chelsea reaches English League Cup semis as subs make difference in win over 3rd-tier Cardiff

LONDON, Dec 17: Chelsea's substitutes made the difference Tuesday as wingers Alejandro Garnacho and Pedro Neto scored second-half goals to secure a 3-1 win at third-tier Cardiff City and a place in the English League Cup semifinals.

Chelsea manager Enzo Maresca started with a largely second-string lineup for the first quarterfinal, but needed some of his first-team stars to avoid an upset in south Wales.

Garnacho was one of two attackers brought on for the start of the second half and opened the scoring in the 57th minute, delivering a low finish into the corner following a defensive mistake.

Cardiff equalized in the 75th through David Turnbull, but Neto restored the lead seven minutes later with a low, deflected shot into the corner and Garnacho grabbed his second goal of the match in stoppage time.

"Sometimes you have to start games and sometimes you have to help from the bench," said Garnacho, who joined from Manchester United in August. "We don't focus on this, we just try to help the team."

Maresca said there was a "big difference" after he made his substitutions.

"Second half, much better on the ball," the Italian said.

Chelsea reached the semifinals for the third time in five years as the team seeks a third cup triumph since Maresca arrived in the summer of 2024. It won the Europa Conference League and the Club World Cup last season.

In a news conference at the weekend, Maresca said he went through the worst 48 hours of his time at Chelsea at the end of last week and expressed his unhappiness at a lack of support at the club, without going into detail.

That came with Chelsea on a four-match winless run in all competitions, but a 2-0 victory over Everton in the Premier League has been followed by progress through to the cup semifinals.

Quarterfinal lineup On Wednesday, Manchester City hosts Brentford and Fulham travels to defending champion Newcastle.

The quarterfinals are wrapped up next week when Arsenal hosts Crystal Palace. (AP)

Gill needs to improve on tackling straight deliveries: Bangar

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Shubman Gill's vulnerability to straight deliveries is an area of concern, former national batting coach Sanjay Bangar said on Wednesday.

Gill has managed 32 runs in three games in the ongoing T20I series against South Africa. But more than the quantum of runs, what Bangar found worrisome is opener's strike rate which drops noticeably against deliveries pitched on a straight line.

Speaking on Game Plan on JioStar, Bangar explained that while Gill has looked comfortable playing balls outside the off-stump, his performance against straight deliveries has been less convincing.

"In the beginning, his footwork was very positive. But if you remove three or four boundaries over 28 games, the issue has been on straighter lines. Against straight deliveries, his strike rate has fallen quite low," Bangar said, urging the young opener to improve his footwork to counter this weakness.

"Outside the off stump, his strike rate is good, but there have been a few edges as well. Overall, he has scored runs, but straight-line play is something he will want to improve.

"In the second (T20) game (against South Africa), the ball that got him out was a very good delivery. It could have dismissed any

batter. His footwork has improved, and if he continues to play with clear footwork, he will be able to hit the same shots consistently, like the three or four boundaries we've seen."

Abhishek's aggressive mindset lauded

Bangar praised young opener Abhishek Sharma for his attacking approach, particularly his ability to hit big sixes over the covers.

The former batting coach noted that Abhishek's high backlift and powerful swing give him excellent reach, enabling him to clear the infield with ease. "His attacking mindset is a key factor. He has the ability to strike the ball cleanly, especially over the covers, which is a special skill," Bangar added.

Hardik Pandya's dual impact Bangar also lauded Hardik Pandya's all-round contributions, highlighting the all-rounder's ability to dominate with both bat and ball.

As a batter, Pandya's wide base and deep stance allow him to generate power on all sides of the field.

With the ball, his fuller deliveries at around 132-133 kmph, along with his swing and yorkers, have made him a crucial asset for India.

"Pandya's versatility provides India with a great balance," said Bangar. (PTI)

Christensen and Rashford give Barcelona win over 3rd-tier club Guadalajara in Copa del Rey



MADRID, Dec 17: Barcelona needed late goals by Andreas Christensen and Marcus Rashford to defeat third-division club Guadalajara 2-0 on Tuesday in the round of 32 of the Copa del Rey in a game delayed because of problems with the stadium's temporary grandstand.

Kickoff was delayed by half an hour because local authorities did not initially allow fans access to the newly built grandstand at the Pedro Escartin stadium in the city of Guadalajara near Madrid.

There were long lines outside the stadium until police finally permitted fans inside. The stadium's capacity increased from nearly 6,000 to about 8,000 with

the new stand. Barcelona was in control from the start but struggled to create significant scoring chances against its lower-tier opponent.

Christensen finally broke the deadlock in the 76th minute with a header off a cross by Frenkie De Jong. Christensen's header deflected off a defender before hitting the net.

The hosts had a few opportunities to equalize but couldn't capitalize, and Rashford sealed the victory on a breakaway in the 90th.

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick rested some of the team's regular starters ahead of Spanish league leader's visit to third-place Vil-

lrearr on Sunday.

Goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who underwent back surgery in the offseason, was back in the starting lineup after 212 days.

Defender Pau Cubarsi, 18, made his 100th appearance with Barcelona. He made his first-team debut with the club in a Copa match in January 2024.

"These are tricky matches," Cubarsi said. "They come out with full force, and we have to come out with the same intensity. They did a great job but we deserved it. We had more rhythm and more chances in the second half. As the time passed they started to get tired."

Other results In the upset of the night, second-division Deportivo La Coruna eliminated top-flight Mallorca 1-0.

The other first-division clubs advanced. Real Sociedad defeated Eldense 2-1 with a winner deep into stoppage time, while Valencia beat Sporting Gijon 2-0.

On Wednesday, Real Madrid visits third-division club Talavera, while Atletico Madrid is at fourth-tier team Atletico Baleares. (AP)

Anantjeet, Darshna clinch mixed team skeet gold at National Shooting C'ship

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Asian Champion shooters Anantjeet Singh Naruka and Darshna Rathore produced a consistent performance to win the Senior Skeet Mixed Team gold medal, at the 68th National Shooting Championships (Shotgun) here on Wednesday.

The Rajasthan duo defeated Uttar Pradesh pair of Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Areeba Khan 45-43 in a closely contested gold medal match to seal the title, at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range here.

Anantjeet hit 21 targets and Darshna contributed 24 to hold off Mairaj (21) and Areeba (22) in the gold medal match.

Earlier in the day, Rajasthan topped the qualification standings with 143 hits as Anantjeet shot 73 and Darshna added 70, securing a direct berth in the gold medal match.

Uttar Pradesh booked their place in the final after edging past Haryana in a shootout during qualification. The pairing of Mairaj (74) and Areeba (68) was tied with Haryana on 142, before prevailing 4-3 in the shootout.

Haryana's team of Raiza Dhillion (72) with 21 hits and Ishaan Singh Libra (70) with 20 hits subsequently went on to secure the bronze medal, defeating Madhya Pradesh 41-39 in the third-place match.

The Madhya Pradesh duo of Rituraj Bundela (20) and Mansi Raghuvanshi (19) finished fourth.

In the Junior Skeet Mixed Team event, the Telangana pairing of Yuvek Battula and Lakku Venkat Lakshmi contributed 19 hits each to secure the title.

Madhya Pradesh fought hard with Jyotiraditya Sisodiya hitting 17 and Vanshika Tiwari adding 20 hits, but ultimately finished one point short in a closely contested final.

The junior bronze medal went to Punjab as Harmehar Singh Lally and Parmeet Kaur claimed the third place with 40 hits over the Rajasthan pair of Yashasvi Rathore and Yashwardhan S Rajawat, who finished with 39 hits.

Earlier, in the junior qualification, Telangana topped the standings with 141 targets through Yuvek (73) and Venkat Lakshmi (66) to secure their spot in the gold medal match along with Madhya Pradesh, who finished in second place with 140 hits through Vanshika (71) and Jyotiraditya (69).

Punjab finished third with an aggregate of 136 hits (Harmehar - 73 and Parmeet Kaur - 63) and Rajasthan finished fourth with a total of 133 hits (Yashasvi - 70 and Yashwardhan - 63).

The 10m Air Pistol Women's finals is scheduled on Thursday. (PTI)

Missing Olympic medal in 2000 biggest regret, but happy to see Indian Hockey on right track: Mohammed Riaz

CHENNAI, Dec 17: It's been well over two decades but missing an Olympic medal after coming reasonably close to it rankles Mohammed Riaz to this date even though some of his regret has eased after seeing the national team claim podium finishes in the mega-event's last two editions.

The 53-year-old former midfielder from Tamil Nadu was a part of the Indian team that ended a 32-year wait by clinching gold at the 1998 Asian Games. But the team could not replicate the performance at the 2000 Sydney Olympics, bowing out after the quarterfinal stage.

"Playing Olympic is the biggest thing and coming close to the medal and not winning it is the biggest regret. I will regret it for the rest of my life but I am happy that India won bronze medals (in 2021 Tokyo and 2024 Paris Olympics) ending that long wait," Riaz told 'PTI Bhasha' in an interview.

In 2000, India were just about two minutes away from booking a berth in the semi-finals but a late



equaliser from Poland crushed their hopes.

Thereafter, at Athens 2004, India hardly made an impression before failing to qualify for the next edition at Beijing in 2008.

Hockey experts believe that the class of 2000 was the most balanced team and the strongest contender for a podium finish after the eighth and

last Olympic gold in Moscow in 1980.

It featured legends like Dhanraj Pillay, Mukesh Kumar, Dilip Tirkey, Baljit Saini and Riaz among others.

Riaz feels that with back-to-back Olympic medals, India are on the right track to revive the glory days of the sport. He said the focus

should be on improving the colour of the medal in the future Games.

"Indian Hockey has completed 100 years and it has been a long journey. It feels good after winning back to back Olympic medals. We have strong grassroots level long-term plan," he said.

"Earlier we used to be at the 7th or 8th place in the rankings but now we are in the top five so definitely the graph is going up. We have to focus on the World Cup, Asian Games and the Olympics," he added.

"Now we have got the confidence that we can compete with any team in the world. We can come in the top three in the Olympics but we have to work hard and with the experience and youth in the team, we should target reaching the final of Los Angeles Games in 2028," said Riaz.

He also expects some junior players to get a chance in the senior team ahead of World Cup to be held in Netherlands and Belgium in August next year.

"We have a very good senior team but few players are playing for a very long time now. We have to give some junior players a chance. There should be a long term strategy about how to compete in the World Cup," he said.

He feels that the Indian team should not feel intimidated while playing against top teams but the team should work on improving its conversion rate inside the scoring zone.

"When we are playing a team like Germany, we must not get scared of its reputation of being a champion. If we play without that mental block, we can beat any team in the world," he said.

"We are in the top league but the only difference between us and European teams is that they convert chances in the circle while we miss many.

"In tough games you get only two or three chances and you can not afford to miss those," added the chairman of Tamil Nadu Hockey Association's selection committee. (PTI)

Carey's hometown century and Khawaja's 82 help Australia reach 326-8

ADELAIDE (AUSTRALIA), Dec 17: Alex Carey posted a hometown hundred and Usman Khawaja scored 82 after a dramatic, last-minute recall to help Australia reach 326 for eight at stumps on a hot opening day of the third Ashes test. Pacer Joffra Archer (3-29) took three big wickets, including two in three balls immediately after lunch, and spinner Will Jacks (2-105) dismissed Australia's two leading scorers to give England a slight edge Wednesday in conditions that were ideal for batting. Carey shared partnerships of 91 with Khawaja, who replaced Steve Smith at late notice, 59 with Josh Inglis, 26 with Pat Cummins and 50 with Mitchell Starc to keep Australia's innings moving at around four runs an over. He was out just before stumps for 106, mistiming a slower ball from Jacks. Mitchell Starc, voted player of the match in the first and second tests, continued his impressive form against England and was unbeaten on 33 at stumps. The temperature topped 35 Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) on Wednesday and is fore-

cast to get close to 40C (104F) on Day 2, which could make conditions tough on the bowling team. The crowd of 56,298, a record for a test match at the Adelaide Oval, helped Carey thrive. "A decent day's cricket. The crowd — 56,000 in Adelaide — it's pretty special," Carey said. "To make a hundred here in front of home fans and family, it was a great moment."

Changing roles
Carey played a key role in one of the most contentious moments in recent Ashes history when he stumped Eng-

Day 1 of 3rd Ashes test

land's Jonny Bairstow in the acrimonious 2023 series. Carey threw down the stumps when Bairstow wandered out of his crease without checking if the ball was dead, a dismissal that ignited a storm across the cricketing world with Australian players verbally abused in the members' Long Room at Lord's and political leaders weighing in.



After scoring his first Ashes century, which he dedicated to his late father and his family, Carey said in a TV interview he'd probably rather discuss the 2023 episode than dwell on the emotions of his big innings.

"I love playing cricket and I understand what comes with playing professional sport," Carey said. "You're not always going to be liked. There's heroes and villains — that's all part of the game."

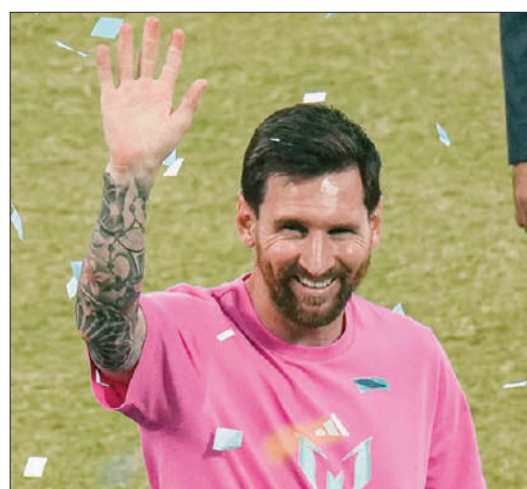
Smith sidelined
Smith led Australia to eight-wicket wins in Perth and Brisbane in the absence of Cummins. He hit the winning runs in Brisbane as Australia took a 2-0 lead in the five-match series, leaving England needing a victory in Adelaide to have any chance of reclaiming the Ashes. But Smith didn't recover in time from dizziness and nausea to start the third test, allowing Khawaja to return the lineup on the eve of his 39th birthday. After Cummins won the toss and elected to bat in his first test since sustaining a back injury in July, Australia's new opening partnership of Travis Head and Jake Weatherald was coasting against some fairly wayward bowling from Brydon Carse. But Archer struck in his fifth over, cramping Weatherald (18) with a short ball at almost 148 kph (92 mph) and getting a top edge to fly up for an easy caught behind. Brydon Carse took a wicket on the first ball of the next over as Australia slumped to 33-2, with Head (10) reach-

ing for a drive and brilliantly caught by Zak Crawley low to the ground at short cover. Khawaja had a reprieve on 5 in the 16th over when Harry Brook put down a catch at second slip. The veteran batter then rallied in innings-building partnerships with Labuschagne and Carey before lofting a slog-sweep Jacks directly to Josh Tongue in the outfield late in the middle session. **Armbands in Bondi tribute**
Players on both teams wore black armbands to honor the 15 people killed and dozens injured in an antisemitic attack on Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach on Sunday that targeted the Jewish community celebrating the start of Hannukah. Police described the mass shooting as a terrorist attack inspired by Islamic State. Flags were flown at half-staff on Day 1 at the Adelaide Oval, where folk singer John Williamson performed his fabled song "True Blue" in a pre-match program that included a moment's silence, the Indigenous "Welcome to Country" and the national anthems. (AP)

I hope football has bright future in India: Messi after 'amazing' tour

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: Lionel Messi hoped that football has a "bright future" in India and expressed gratitude for the "generous hospitality" that he got here during a whirlwind three-day tour, which had thousands of fans jostling to catch a glimpse of the Argentine genius in four different cities. Messi, after extending his stay by a day to visit the Anant Ambani-founded Vantara wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and conservation centre in Jamnagar, left for his base in Miami on Wednesday. Taking to Instagram, the 38-year-old posted a one-minute highlights clip of the tour, featuring his interactions with Indian cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar, Bollywood actor Kareena Kapoor Khan and several young footballers. "What amazing visits to Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Kolkata. Thank you for the warm reception, generous hospitality, and all the feelings of love with which you

surrounded me throughout my tour. "I hope that football has a bright future in India," he wrote underneath the video.



His good wishes come at a time when Indian football finds itself at its lowest ebb.

The domestic season has been brought to a halt for the want of a commercial partner and the national team's fortunes have been in a free-fall following a string of poor results. An ongoing court case over administrative issues has further deepened policy paralysis. The superstar striker, who is among the most recognisable and adored sportspersons in the world, did not play any competitive football during the trip. He was accompanied by Uruguay great and close friend Luis Suarez and Argentina teammate Rodrigo de Paul during the tour.

Messi made stadium appearances for ticketed events in all the four cities starting with Kolkata, where things turned ugly after politicians and officials surrounded him, denying fans, who had paid thousands for a seat, a clear view of the icon. Agitated by this, the gathered spectators indulged in vandalism at the Salt Lake Stadium, prompting Messi to be whisked away sooner than the originally planned time. However, his visits to Hyderabad, Mumbai and Delhi passed off smoothly as he charmed fans by posing for pictures and showcasing some of his warm-up routines besides playing briefly with young players. "...we carry all this love with us, and we will definitely return, hopefully one day to play a match or on another occasion, but we will definitely return to visit India," he said after the final leg of the tour in Delhi. (PTI)

World Athletics boss Sebastian Coe expects 2030 CWG to unlock India's untapped potential

NEW DELHI, Dec 17: India is a market with "untapped potential", according to World Athletics chief Sebastian Coe, who foresees the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad playing a vital role in promotion of track and field events in the country. Coe made these observations while confirming that mixed 4x400m relay and the mile race, which were added to the programme for the 2026 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, will continue at the 2030 Games as well. The mile race was last run in the 1966 edition and will replace the 1500m competition in the 2026 Glasgow CWG. Coe said the Commonwealth Games are very important from the perspective of athletics as the competition is very tough. "Winning a Commonwealth Games medal in track and field is statistically very hard. If you want to win an endurance title, you have to take on the best, including, of course, Kenya. If you want to win a sprints title, you've got Jamaica and the UK and Canada sitting there in the wings," Coe said during a virtual media interaction on Tuesday. "So look, this is a tough championship. The track is always of a very high order." Coe, a middle-distance gold medalist at the 1980 and 1984 Olympics, said the 2030 Commonwealth Games will be very important for the promotion of track and field events in India. "India is an important market for us. It has a lot of untapped potential. Track and field is becoming more

popular in India, partly driven by some of the outstanding performances of Neeraj Chopra. "And look, the opportunity to stage our events for commercial and for participatory reasons in a growing market, in a growing sports marketing market, is really important. And that's got to be a good thing. And we've had lengthy discussions with the Indian federation and even some commercial partners about extending that footprint. "The Commonwealth Games, of course, in 2030 will be a very important moment, particularly in the promotion of track. Athletics is one of the new core sports for the Commonwealth Games," said Coe, adding that World Athletics would want more events to take place in India. India has bid for the 2028 World U20 Athletics Championships, and made strategic bidding of both the 2029 and 2031 Senior World Athletics Championships. On the mile race (little over 1600m) and 4x400m relay, Coe said the two events are being viewed as permanent fixtures in the Commonwealth Games programme. "The reason for the mile (race's inclusion) is I think it's a nod, a good nod, to history and tradition, but also innovation at the same time," Coe replied to a PTI query. "If you think about the Miracle Mile, that is something still talked about in our sport. So yeah, I think this is a good addition," said the 69-year-old Briton during a year-end interaction. (PTI)



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108 for Ambulance Service **104** for Health Related Information

(NHMD/2025-26/95)