

6 WORLD

8 NATION

- Over 1,300 dead from floods in Asia
- Former Pak PM Imran Khan's sister allowed to meet him in Adiala Jail
- Nehru wanted to build Babri mosque using public funds: Rajnath
- India's third indigenous nuclear submarine to be commissioned soon: Navy Chief

Demand for removal of VC gets louder • Varsity's teaching, non-teaching staff bodies extend support to agitation

Students shut down Tezpur varsity indefinitely

TEZPUR, Dec 2: Continuing their agitation since mid-September against Vice Chancellor Shambhu Nath Singh alleging corruption and financial irregularities, students of Assam's Tezpur University have shut down the institution demanding immediate replacement of the VC.

The students of this central varsity have shut down all services, including all forms of academic activities, in the campus from November 29 located in Sonitpur district for an indefinite period, forcing the administration to cancel all end-term examinations.

The Tezpur University Teachers' Association (TUTA) and Tezpur University Non-Teaching Employees' Association have extended their full support to the agitation, being carried out under the aegis of Tezpur University United Forum (TUUF), thereby making the university non-functional for the last four days.

The VC abstained from the campus after the university had witnessed heated scenes and an exchange of words between him and students on September 22, leading to a situation where



Singh had to nearly flee from the spot.

"Our protest continued for the third month, but no concrete step has been taken yet. So, we intensified our agitation and started the lockdown. Students, faculty and non-teaching staff are united with just one uncompromising demand -- immediate suspension of the absconding VC," a student member of the TUUF told PTI.

The situation in Tezpur University had been

tense since mid-September with students accusing the VC and varsity authorities of not showing due respect to cultural icon Zubeen Garg even as the state was mourning his death.

The Sonitpur District Administration later ordered a magisterial probe against Tezpur University authorities for allegedly disrespecting Garg. A fact-finding committee, formed by the Assam Governor to look into allegations concerning the functioning of the Vice Chancellor, also visited the varsity to enquire into the matter.

"Our demand also includes immediate publication of the enquiry reports prepared by both the governor's Fact-Finding Committee and the subsequent team from the Union Ministry of Education," the TUUF member said.

The stakeholders have declared the lockdown indefinite, pledging to continue until suspension, transparency and accountability are fully ensured, she asserted.

Supporting the demands and agitation, TUTA President Kusum Kumar Bania said that the VC has been absent from (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Crucial CCTOA-GoM meeting tomorrow

ST status issue: Tribal students' protests continue in Baksa

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, Dec 2: A crucial meeting between the Co-ordination Committee of the Tribal Organisations of Assam (CCTOA) and the Committee of Group of Ministers (GoM) formed to examine the demand for granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities of Assam will be held on December 4, 2025, in Dispur.

According to an official communication issued to CCTOA, the meeting will be chaired by Ranaj Pegu, Minister of Tribal Affairs (Plain) and Education, at 2:30 pm in the Conference Hall of the Minister of Tribal Affairs (Plain).

The meeting comes at a time when the issue has triggered strong reactions across the state, particularly among existing Scheduled Tribe groups, who fear dilution of their constitutional safeguards.

The CCTOA and several tribal



bodies have reiterated their objections, arguing that granting ST status to populous and relatively advanced communities could adversely affect the political, social and economic rights of existing tribal groups.

The GoM's report recommending ST status for six communities was tabled in the ongoing Assembly session on November 29, sparking widespread protests.

Tribal organisations have strongly opposed the recommendations and warned that the Cabinet decision could have far-reaching consequences for the state's indigenous tribal population.

Meanwhile, protests continued on Tuesday across different districts. Thousands of tribal students staged a demonstration in Baksa district, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Two Myanmar-trained ULFA-I militants surrender in Arunachal Pradesh



HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, Dec 2: The outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (Independent) suffered another setback as two Myanmar-trained cadres surrendered before security forces in Arunachal Pradesh's Namsai district on Tuesday.

The surrendered militants, identified as Bhargab Hazarika alias Ban Asom and Astitva Axom, were later handed over to Tinsukia Police for interrogation and further legal procedures.

SSP Tinsukia Mayank Kumar confirmed the development, describing it as "a positive development in our ongoing efforts to

neutralise insurgent activities."

Following his surrender, Bhargab Hazarika, a resident of Dibrugarh district, assisted security forces in a major arms recovery.

He led personnel to a hideout in Nongtaw Khampti village, where a cache of weapons was recovered, including an MQ-81 rifle, 153 live rounds of ammunition and one rifle grenade.

Bhargab was part of a seven-member ULFA-I group involved in an encounter with the Assam Rifles in the same village on October 21, during which one militant, Iwon Asom, was killed.

The surrender comes close on the heels of the high-profile surrender of ULFA-I's self-styled 'major general' Arunodoi Dohutia, alias Bijit Gogoi, on November 23.

Security observers view these successive surrenders as an indication of mounting pressure from counter-insurgency operations and growing disillusionment among militants, a trend seen as encouraging for long-term peace in the region.

Cooking gas at ₹ 300 to become reality soon: CM

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 2: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday announced a major relief measure for households dependent on LPG, declaring that cooking gas at ₹300 per cylinder will soon become a reality for lakhs of families in the state.

The initiative, aimed at easing the financial burden on lower-income households, will provide a ₹250 subsidy on LPG cylinders to beneficiaries under the Orunodoi scheme and the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).

In a post on X, Sarma said the State government would extend the additional support to ensure affordable access to clean cooking fuel.

"Cooking gas at ₹300, not just a dream but soon a reality for lakhs of families in Assam. Orunodoi families and PM Ujjwala beneficiaries in Assam will soon receive ₹250 subsidy on their LPG cylinders from the State Govt, making lives easier for my family members," he wrote, signalling a substantial expansion of the state's welfare outreach.

Official sources said the subsidy will be



routed directly to beneficiaries, supplementing the Union government's existing support under PMUY.

The move is expected to benefit a large segment of economically vulnerable families, particularly women, who form the core of both Orunodoi and PMUY bene-

fiary lists.

The Orunodoi scheme, one of Assam's flagship welfare programmes, currently provides monthly financial assistance to eligible households to support essential expenses. By integrating LPG subsidy assistance into (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Himanta pledges to build inclusive 'Greater Assam'

GUWAHATI, Dec 2: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday pledged to build 'Bor Asom' or Greater Assam, inclusive of all communities.

He made the remark as the state celebrated 'Asom Diwas' to commemorate the arrival of Chaolung Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom, in Assam in 1228 AD.

"On this day, Swargadeo Chaolung Sukapha came to Assam, laying the foundation of our land and legacy. As we observe #AsomDiwas, we pledge to continue building the Bor Asom as he envisaged - proud, strong, and united," the chief minister posted on X.

Sarma also thanked Union Home Minister Amit Shah for his wishes on the occasion.

"Thank you Adarniya @AmitShah ji for your wishes on Asom Diwas. Under Adarniya @narendramodi ji's leadership, the double-engine govt has spared no effort to preserve and promote the glorious legacy of Ahoms and Assam on the world stage," the CM said.

Shah, in a post on X, extended "warm wishes to our sisters and brothers of Assam on #AsomDiwas".

"This occasion commemorates the glory of the Ahom era and fortifies our commitment to protecting the rich culture of Assam, in which every Indian takes great pride," he said.

The Modi-led NDA government has ushered in an era of peace, turning Assam into a hub of development and education, and is resolved to continue this progress unabated, the Union minister said. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Guwahati's air-quality improved due to focused efforts of govt: CM

GUWAHATI, Dec 2: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday asserted that his government's focused efforts have delivered "real results" in air-quality management in Guwahati.

Sarma said the state has achieved success with targeted intervention in solid waste management, vehicle emission control and promotion of electric mobility.

"Guwahati is breathing easier today with our focused efforts in air-quality management delivering real results. As we observe #NationalPollutionControlDay, learn about our efforts to realise a cleaner, greener Guwahati, one that future generations will be proud to call home," he said in a post on X.

The CM said the particulate matter (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

NCB busts int'l drug cartel, seizes ₹ 12.5 cr heroin coming from Myanmar via river

GUWAHATI, Dec 2: In a major operation against an international drug cartel, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has seized ₹ 12.5 crore worth of "high-grade" heroin in Assam, transported through riverine route from Myanmar, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Acting on specific intelligence gathered over an extended period, the NCB's Guwahati Zonal Unit, in a joint operation with CRPF and Assam Police, tracked an illicit drug consignment being ferried through dense forest routes in Manipur and transported via small motorboats along the Barak river to evade conventional security checks.

"On December 1, 2025, NCB Guwahati intercepted an indigenous motorboat on the Barak river near Silchar (Cachar district) and appre-



hended two individuals," the official told PTI.

A thorough search of the machine-operated country boat led to the recovery of 6.149 kg of "high-grade" heroin, concealed inside 530 soap cases and skillfully hidden beneath bamboo layers, she added.

"The seized narcotics are valued at approximately ₹ 12.5 crore in the illicit market," the NCB Guwahati official said.

Both arrested individuals, who are residents of Cachar district of Assam, will be produced before the court along with the seized contraband for further legal action.

Explaining the modus operandi, the NCB official said preliminary investigation indicates that the consignment originated in Myanmar, moved through forest corridors in Manipur, and was headed towards the Hmarkhawlien-Fulertal-Lakhipur belt.

"The traffickers used riverine routes specifically to bypass urban surveillance, police checkpoints and security camps. The operation highlights a growing trafficking strategy that exploits vulnerable river systems for cross-border drug movements," the official added. The official (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

24 Meghalaya children brought back from K'taka



SHILLONG, Dec 2: Twenty-four children brought back from Karnataka's Chikkaballapur district were on Tuesday reunited with their families in a repatriation exercise overseen by the Social Welfare Department and the Meghalaya State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR).

The children were formally received at the Directorate of Social Welfare here in the presence of departmental officials and representatives of child rights organisations. (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Assam police received major transformation boost: Himanta

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Dec 2: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said the State has witnessed a significant transformation in its policing system, shifting from a period marked by inadequate infrastructure and public hesitation to approach police stations to a new era defined by modern facilities and improved public trust.

In a post on X, Sarma said Assam's law enforcement ecosystem had evolved rapidly over the past few years, supported by sustained government investment in modernisation and a renewed focus on citizen-friendly policing.

"From an era when police infrastructure was in shambles and people were reluctant to visit Thanas to an era when police officials have

modern infrastructure and people have a friendly police force to trust, Assam has travelled a long way in a very short time," he wrote.

The chief minister highlighted that this shift is part of his government's broader effort to strengthen internal security and make public-facing institutions more approachable and accountable.

Over the past few years, Assam has seen an expansion of technologically equipped police stations, upgraded forensic capabilities, modern vehicles, and improved housing facilities for personnel. Government officials say these interventions have been central to reshaping public perception of the police. Sarma's remarks come at a time (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

KAAC distributes land pattas under Purthimi Akemang 2.0 in WKA



HT Correspondent HAMREN, Dec 2: The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), continuing its initiative to secure land rights for indigenous tribes in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, has distributed more than one lakh land pattas in the first phase of the Purthimi Akemang scheme.

In the second phase—Purthimi Akemang 2.0—Chief Executive Member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang distributed land pattas free of cost to residents of Chintong in West Karbi Anglong recently.

The distribution programme, held at (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Tai Ahom community in Diphu celebrates Sukapha Divas with renewed hope

HT Bureau DIPHU, Dec 2: Along with the rest of the state, the Tai Ahom community in Diphu, under the banner of the Tai Ahom Cultural Society, Karbi Anglong District Committee, celebrated Sukapha Divas—also known as Asom Divas—to pay homage to Chaolung Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom.

The vibrant celebration was held at the Sukapha Complex of the Tai Ahom Cultural Society at Dharamnala. Men, women and youth dressed in traditional Ahom attire marked the occasion in a festive spirit.

This year's Sukapha Divas held added significance for the community, which expressed satisfaction with the Assam Cabinet's recent decision to approve the Group of Ministers' report recommending Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for six communities: Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Motok, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (Adivasis).

The report was tabled on the final day of the State Legislative Assembly's winter session on Saturday.

The celebration began with the hoisting of the society's flag by its president, Putul Chetia, assisted by general secretary Bikrom Handique.

Floral tributes were offered at the statue of Sukapha seated on a throne installed at the complex.

A meeting was held where speakers highlighted the life and legacy of Sukapha. Society president Putul Chetia, who chaired the meeting, called for (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Vibrant tribal performances and cultural showcases draw massive crowds at Kisama

Cultural performance attract thousands of tourist at Hornbill Festival

KOHIMA, Dec 2: The Hornbill Festival, Nagaland's premier tourism promotion event, witnessed a vibrant line-up of activities at the Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, on Tuesday.

A cultural show organised by the Department of Art & Culture was hosted by Deputy Chief Minister T R Zeliang and co-hosted by G Ikoto Zhimomi, Advisor for Land Resources, with Ambassador of France to India Thierry Mathou, Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court Justice Ashutosh Kumar, and several dignitaries in attendance.

Eighteen tribes of the state took centre stage, presenting a rich tapestry of traditional dances and cultural expressions. A highlight of the day was the Phom troupe's 'Yapo Louh-Po' (Head-hunting Expedition - An Act), which depicted a headhunting raid followed by powerful chants and log drum beats,



captivating the audience. Other tribes that enthralled visitors included the Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Garo, Khiamnungan, Kachari, Konyak, Kuki, Lotha, Pochury,

Rengma, Sangtam, Sumi, Tikhir, Yimkhiong, and Zeliang communities. A prize distribution ceremony for the World War II Peace Rally, commemorating the Battle of Kohima, was also

held at the World War II Museum.

Festival chief host and chief minister Neiphiu Rio, in his address, said the rally symbolises the message that "peace should prevail over warfare" and reinforces the need to spread peace across nations. He reminded the gathering that the Battle of Kohima was fought between foreign powers, but the Nagas endured the gravest impact.

"This rally honours and pays homage to the selfless sacrifices of our Naga people and reaffirms our commitment to live in peace," he said.

Rio also appreciated the Nagaland Flat Fencers Club and the Nagaland Adventure & Motor Sports Association for organising the event and contributing to the preservation of history.

Another major highlight of the day was the official opening of the Hornbill International (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Privacy row: Users free to delete Sanchar Saathi if they wish, says Telecom Minister Scindia

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: Days after his ministry told smartphone makers to preload a state-run cybersecurity app on all new devices, Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday said users are free to delete the Sanchar Saathi app, and it will remain dormant till they register on it.

"If you want to delete it, then delete it," Scindia told reporters outside Parliament. "But not everyone in the country knows that this app exists to protect them from fraud and theft."

His remark followed growing privacy concerns over a November 28 government order directing smartphone makers to pre-install the Sanchar Saathi app on all new devices and to ensure that "its functionalities are not disabled or restricted".

For phones already in use or lying unsold in stores, the order asked manufacturers to push the app through software updates.

Critics fear that the app could be used to read messages that users exchange. The Opposition Congress called Sanchar Saathi a "snooping app".

Denying the Opposition's charges, Scindia asserted that there was no snooping or call monitoring through the app.

"It is our responsibility to make this app reach everyone. If you want to delete it, then delete it. If you don't want to use it, then don't register it. If you register it, then it will remain active. If you don't register it, then it will remain inactive," he said.

Critics also pointed to a similar mandate issued by Russia in August requiring a state-backed messaging app, MAX, to be pre-installed on all smartphones.

The government, however, said the app is crucial to counter "serious endangerment" to telecom cybersecurity from duplicate or



spoofed IMEI numbers, which enable scams and network misuse.

IMEI or International Mobile Equipment Identity is a 14 to 17-digit number unique to each handset, which is used to cut off network access for phones reported to have been stolen.

"Everyone must have the right to privacy to send messages to family and friends without the government looking at everything," Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said, criticising the mandate for installing the app.

As per the direction issued, all mobile phone companies are required to report compliance to the DoT within 120 days.

Earlier in the day, Congress leaders criticised the order of the DoT to mandatorily install the Sanchar Saathi App in all mobile phones.

Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury has filed an adjournment motion notice in the Rajya Sabha seeking suspension of business to discuss the government's directions on the installation of the Sanchar Saathi app in new mobile handsets.

Congress general secretary K C Venugopal had said on Monday that the right to privacy is an intrinsic part of the fundamental right to life

and liberty.

Scindia pointed out that the Opposition is just trying to find an issue out of nowhere and denied allegations that it was an app for snooping.

"There is no snooping on the basis of this, nor is there any call monitoring. If you want, then activate this. If you don't want to, then don't activate it. If you want to keep it on your phone, then keep it. If you want to delete it, then delete it," Scindia said.

The Minister said Sanchar Saathi is an app and a portal on the basis of which every sufferer is able to protect themselves with their own hands.

"This is a step towards public participation. In this, people should not object, people should welcome. On the basis of this, when you buy a mobile phone, on the basis of that, whether the IMEI number is fake or genuine, you can recognise it on the basis of the Sanchar Saathi app," the minister said.

He said there have been more than 1.5 crore downloads of the Sanchar Saathi App. The minister said that to date, approximately 2.75 crore fraudulent mobile connections have been disconnected, and approximately 20 lakh stolen phones have been traced on the basis of public participation through Sanchar Saathi.

The minister said approximately 7.5 lakh stolen phones have been returned to the user, and approximately 21 lakh phones have been disconnected on the basis of user recognition and reporting.

He further said that on one side, the power of telecommunications is connecting citizens, and on the other side, there are forces who are misusing its power to commit fraud, steal money and mobile phones. The minister asserted that the app is meant to protect customers. (PTI)

India pitches for coordinated action to deal with challenges

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: India on Tuesday called for global cooperation for coordinated action to deal with new challenges emanating from the digitalisation of the economy and the emergence of new financial products like crypto and stablecoins, and ensure the timely exchange of information among various jurisdictions.

Inaugurating the 18th Global Forum Plenary meeting, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said technological tools like artificial intelligence should be used to ensure that tax information is exchanged among jurisdictions, which will lead to measurable outcomes.

"Looking ahead, there are new challenges that call for joint attention. The digitalisation of the economy, the emergence of new financial products, and evolving structures of beneficial ownership require continued cooperation between jurisdictions. Confidentiality and cybersecurity must also be maintained with great care," Sitharaman said. Stating that no country can address these challenges alone, the minister said, "They demand coordination, trust and timely exchange of relevant information".

Speaking at the Plenary meeting, Revenue Secretary Arvind Shrivastava said countries need to work towards ensuring strong data confidentiality systems and also make sure that information shared under international standards is used effectively. He said jurisdictions, globally, must also adapt to new challenges, including digital economy taxation and crypto asset reporting frameworks, which will need technical innovation and coordinated action.

"Looking ahead...we must continue to deepen beneficial ownership transparency, ensure strong data confidentiality systems and make sure that information shared under international standards is used effectively," the secretary said. Over the years, the Global Forum has enabled a transformation in the global tax landscape from banking secrecy and limited cooperation to transparency and information exchange, Shrivastava noted.

The Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes is a multilateral framework, comprising 170 jurisdictions. It monitors and peer reviews the implementation of international standards on transparency and information exchange.

Sitharaman said tax transparency can be effective and fair when it is guided by clear rules, mutual respect and shared objectives.

Talking about India, Sitharaman said over the past decade, there has been a visible strengthening of voluntary compliance.

"This improvement in tax morale did not come from enforcement alone...Fairness and predictability, when demonstrated in practice, encourage participation far more effectively than compulsion. That lesson, we believe, holds relevance beyond national borders," the minister said. (PTI)

Sensex tanks nearly 504 pts

Stock markets decline for 3rd day on FII selling, weak rupee

MUMBAI, Dec 2: Stock markets declined on Tuesday, with the benchmark Sensex tumbling nearly 504 points due to selling in blue-chip bank stocks and Reliance Industries, and persistent foreign fund outflows.

Falling for the third straight session, the 50-share BSE Sensex tumbled 503.63 points or 0.59 per cent to settle at 85,138.27. During the day, the benchmark tanked 588.9 points or 0.68 per cent to hit a low of 85,053. The index had scaled a record high level in intra-day trade in the previous session, but closed lower due to profit booking in the second half.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 143.55 points or 0.55 per cent to 26,032.20.

Among Sensex firms, Axis Bank, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, ICICI Bank, Bharat Electronics and Larsen & Toubro were the biggest laggards.

However, Asian Paints, Maruti, Bharti Airtel and Bajaj Finance were among the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) off-loaded equities worth ₹ 1,171.31 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth ₹ 2,558.93 crore, according to exchange data.

"FII selling has once again gathered pace and in the last three sessions have sold domestic shares worth more than ₹ 6,000 crore. Valuations at elevated levels and delay in the announcement of the Indo-US trade deal are causing a lot of anxiety amongst the investors who are looking at fresh positive triggers. The rupee's downward spiral is also adding to investors' discomfort," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The rupee breached the psychological 90-a-

dollar level in intraday trade before settling 46 paise down at an all-time low of 89.99 against the US dollar on Tuesday.

The BSE smallcap gauge declined 0.49 per cent and midcap index dipped by 0.14 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, services dropped 1.03 per cent, financial services (0.78 per cent), bankex (0.75 per cent), industrials (0.49 per cent) and utilities (0.40 per cent).

BSE Telecommunication, consumer durables, teck and auto were the winners.

A total of 2,563 stocks declined while 1,586 advanced and 167 remained unchanged on the BSE.

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

The decline was primarily driven by a sharp contraction in the IIP data, weakness in the rupee, and caution ahead of the upcoming US Fed and RBI policy decisions later in the week, Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

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

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dipped 0.33 per cent to USD 62.96 per barrel.

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

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

JSW Defence kick-starts USD 90-mn project for military drone manufacturing with US partner Shield AI

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: JSW

Defence on Tuesday said it has kick-started a USD 90-million project with the construction of a military drone facility in Hyderabad in partnership with US-based Shield AI. JSW has entered into a strategic partnership with Shield AI to manufacture their Group 3 Unmanned Aerial Systems - VBAT, under a long-term licensing arrangement for transfer of technology, the company said in a statement.

Under the agreement, the JSW Group will invest around USD 90 million to set up JSW's global compliance programme, a manufacturing facility to ensure technology licensing, and train-

ing of manpower.

"This investment will enable JSW to establish a local supply chain and create an advanced facility in India for manufacturing, assembling and testing V-BAT. This effort will enable large-scale production of V-BATs in India to serve the needs of the Indian armed forces and also function as a global production hub," the company said. JSW Defence Pvt Ltd today commenced the construction of its facility at EMC Maheshwaram, Hyderabad. The manufacturing of VBATs at the facility is expected to begin by the last quarter of 2026, it said.

The foundation stone-laying

ceremony of the plant was performed by Parth Jindal of the JSW Group, in the presence of Duddilla Sridhar Babu, Minister for IT, E&C and Industries & Commerce, Telangana, senior officials from the state government, Shield AI and the Indian armed forces. "Today's milestone signals a bold new chapter in India's journey toward self-reliance in next-generation defence technologies. Our collaboration with Shield AI reflects our shared ambition to bring mission-critical, globally benchmarked capabilities to India and to build an ecosystem that will define the future of unmanned systems for the nation," Jindal said. (PTI)

Centre's ₹4,500-crore commitment to modernising SCL marks key boost for semiconductor ecosystem

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 2: The Government of India's continued commitment of ₹4,500 crore to modernising the Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL) in Mohali marks a crucial step towards strengthening the country's semiconductor foundation.

Industry leaders have stressed the need for close coordination between the Centre and the Punjab Government to expedite land allotment and infrastructure clearances to avoid delays and uncertainty.

The India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) has lauded the vision and commitment of Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, Amitesh Kumar Sinha, CEO of the India Semiconductor Mis-

sion, and Kamaljeet Singh, Director General of SCL.

According to IESA, India can leverage SCL as a strategic enabler for new product development while supporting the country's fabless semiconductor initiative.

The modernisation project begins with upgrading SCL for 180-nm technology, which offers significant business potential with an expected 100-fold increase in capacity. A successful 180-nm node is expected to build confidence for future transitions to more advanced technology nodes.

A modernised SCL is projected to play a transformative role for India's deep-tech and semiconductor startup ecosystem by enabling pilot production, small-volume

fabrication, and early-stage prototyping. This will help convert ideas into market-ready products faster, domestically and securely.

The capability is also critical for India's strategic sectors, including defence, aerospace, and space, which require trusted and indigenous semiconductor manufacturing.

IESA has also highlighted the potential for SCL to evolve into a national centre for training and capacity building by offering access to EDA tools, hands-on workforce development, and collaboration with academia and industry to strengthen India's future semiconductor talent pipeline.

Stable policy and fiscal support under the India Semiconductor

Mission will be essential for scaling SCL, integrating it with the broader domestic supply chain, and aligning it with India's export and innovation goals.

The consortium approach involving CDAC, DRDO, ISRO, and support from the state government is expected to enhance the success and impact of the SCL facility.

"IESA and its member companies have reiterated their full support for the initiative and expressed commitment to working with all stakeholders to ensure SCL becomes a modern, high-impact, trusted semiconductor facility that advances India's strategic technology ambitions," IESA president Ashok Chandak said.

Contd. from Page 1...

Students shut down

the university for the last 74 days, even though a fact-finding committee and a delegation from the Ministry of Education visited the campus nearly one and a half months ago.

"During this period, our students continued their protest peacefully for 70 days, demonstrating remarkable restraint and responsibility. However, there is a limit to how long they can wait and this is something the government must recognise with urgency," he told PTI.

The Professor of the Chemical Sciences department said that the prolonged absence of the VC from the campus has brought the administrative functioning of the university to a standstill, and students, teachers and non-teaching staff are facing severe hardship. In this context, the students have initiated the second phase of their protest to make it clear to the government that "enough is enough", and they have declared a complete shutdown of the university, Bania said.

"On behalf of the TUTA, I state unequivocally that we -- teachers and non-teaching staff -- respect and stand in solidarity with the students' decision. The government must take immediate and decisive action to restore normalcy and ensure the timely resolution of this crisis," he added.

Earlier during the day, Rajya Sabha member from Assam, Ajit Kumar Bhuyan, drew the attention of the House to the prevailing situation in the varsity and pointed out that the central institute was established by an Act of Parliament in 1994 as one of the outcomes of the Assam Accord.

"The students are staging dharna and protests, and no sincere attempt has been made to resolve the impasse. Several facts and information surfaced in the public domain regarding irregularities and corruption, which are taking place under direct and tacit approval of the authority," he alleged. The VC, who is not in campus for more than two months, cannot escape responsibility simply by keeping away from the University, Bhuyan stressed. "The need of the hour is to bring back the educational atmosphere to normalcy. For one individual, the highest temple of learning cannot be allowed to suffer. The government should be cautious in the matter of appointment of VC and any extraneous consideration should not be pursued in appointing VCs," he added.

Due to the indefinite shutdown, the TU administration has cancelled the upcoming end-term examinations and announced that these will be rescheduled to ensure that students are not academically disadvantaged.

This is the first instance in the history of the university that academic schedules, that too end-term examinations, have been formally altered due to a student-led uprising against an administrative head.

During this period of agitation, at least 11 faculty members and officials have relinquished their positions, starting with PRO Samaresh Barman. The latest person to leave the office is Finance Officer Braja Bandhu Mishra. The resignees include in-charge registrar, several deans, directors and assistant deans. (PTI)

Crucial CCTOA-GoM

holding banners and placards and demanding that the state government withdraw its move to grant ST status to the six communities. Students from Koklabari-Chapaguri College and Salbari College joined the rally, voicing strong opposition to the proposal and asserting that it would undermine the rights of existing tribal groups.

Himanta pledges to

"May this day strengthen our bond of unity and deepen our connection with our culture. Honouring our past, empowering our future!" he added. The chief minister had earlier announced that Su-Ka-Pha University would be set up in Charaideo.

"With diverse disciplines, we take another stride towards realising the 'Bor Asom' that Swargadeo Su-Ka-Pha envisioned," he added. (PTI)

Cooking gas at

the scheme, the State government hopes to further address rising household costs, especially as fuel prices remain a concern for low-income sections. Political observers view the decision as part of the government's broader thrust on welfare-driven governance ahead of the Assembly elections next year.

The announcement is likely to find resonance among rural and urban poor, who continue to depend on subsidised cylinders for daily cooking needs. While the government has not yet specified the rollout date, officials indicated that modalities are being finalised for smooth implementation.

LPG distributors are expected to be briefed on the subsidy mechanism, and the social welfare and food & civil supplies departments will coordinate beneficiary identification and disbursement.

With this initiative, Assam joins the list of states expanding LPG subsidies at the local level to cushion households from price fluctuations, reinforcing the administration's emphasis on inclusive growth and targeted welfare delivery.

Assam police received

when the State government has been pushing several reforms, from digitising service delivery to enhancing the presence of women in the force.

The introduction of citizen service centres, online FIR systems, and upgraded communication networks has further contributed to reducing gaps between the police and the public.

Observers note that the chief minister's emphasis on improved trust reflects a significant element of the State's governance narrative, especially as law and order have remained a major political talking point in Assam.

Official data shared in recent months indicates reductions in certain categories of crime and improved response mechanisms in urban and rural pockets.

The State government is also working on expanding training facilities and introducing specialised units to deal with emerging challenges such as cybercrime, drug trafficking, and border-related issues.

With a continued focus on modernisation, Sarma said the goal is to build a policing system that is both efficient and sensitive to citizen needs.

24 Meghalaya children

SCPCR Chairperson Agatha Sangma said the "safe return of the children was the central focus" of the operation, and thanked authorities in both Karnataka and Meghalaya for their coordination.

Expressing concern over the growing instances of minors being taken out of the state without following due procedures, Sangma recalled a similar incident reported a few months ago.

She said the Commission had written to Chief Minister Conrad Sangma recommending a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the movement of children below 18 years to institutions outside Meghalaya.

The proposed SOP would require prior intimation to District Child Protection Officers (DCPOs), proper documentation of children and the receiving institutions, verification of the institution's legal status, clarity on the purpose and duration of the stay, mandatory medical examinations and direct communication between DCPOs of both states, she said. Sangma also urged parents to remain vigilant, noting that many were unaware of the name or location of the institutions to which their children had been sent.

Social Welfare Director Camelia Doreen Lyngwa said the department was alerted to the case in August. Most of the children came from marginalised families whose parents had hoped for better educational opportunities outside the state, she said. However, the Chikaballapur DCPO found that the facility housing them was in poor condition and not registered with the Karnataka government, Lyngwa said, adding that technology played a key role in coordinating communication and ensuring their smooth return to Meghalaya. (PTI)

NCB busts int'l drug

claimed that this significant breakthrough against cross-border narcotics smuggling has, in a way, dismantled an international drug trafficking network operating across Myanmar-Manipur-Assam.

"Beyond operations, NCB North Eastern Region has intensified coordination among Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (DLEAs), state police and CAPFs/Border Guarding Forces to improve the overall enforcement ecosystem," she added. The senior NCB Guwahati official further said that state-level Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) meetings have been conducted for Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura to prevent cases of drug trafficking in the region. (PTI)

Guwahati's air-quality

(PM) levels in the city reduced from 119 micrograms per cubic metre to 103 in the 2024-25 fiscal. Assam's rank in the Swachh Vayu Survekshan 2025 has also improved from 38th to 21st place, he said. There are now 256 e-buses and 100 CNG buses running in the city, Sarma said.

He also urged people to reduce personal vehicle use and support greener initiatives. (PTI)

KAAC distributes land

Phonglangso (Maushaldiang), focused on beneficiaries who were left out in the first phase. Speaking as chief guest, CEM Ronghang said that over one lakh land pattas had already been distributed and that the BJP-led KAAC would continue working to fulfil the aspirations of the people. He criticised the opposition, saying it had done little apart from spreading misinformation, while the BJP government remained committed to development in the district. The programme was attended by MLAs Darsing Ronghang and Rup Sing Terang, KAAC Executive Member Uphing Maslai and several others.

Tai Ahom community

strengthening brotherhood among all communities in Assam. Welcoming the state government's move to accord ST status as recommended by the GoM, he expressed gratitude to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and said the decision was timely and significant for all six communities. He added, "I pray for peace and brotherhood among all communities to live together as one entity." Several dignitaries representing various social organisations were present at the celebration.

Cultural performance attract

Photo Fest (HIPFEST) by Ambassador of Switzerland Maya Tissafi. In her remarks, Tissafi said it was a special moment for Switzerland to partner in the Hornbill Festival 2025 celebrations and expressed admiration for the rich culture and diversity of the Naga people. She emphasised the importance of skilled professionals in state development, noting that in Switzerland nearly 70 per cent of the population pursues vocational training.

Skilled individuals, including photographers and artists, play a key role in societal progress, she said, expressing hope that the partnership with Nagaland would continue to expand.

Commissioner & Secretary of Information and Public Relations and Co-operation Orenthung Lotha, in his welcome note, highlighted HIPFEST's growth and described it as a "window to Nagaland", offering glimpses into the state's breathtaking landscapes and vibrant cultural life. He said the festival has become a global platform for emerging photographers to showcase their talent. Co-organiser M Ababe Ezung announced that the 2025 edition features 97 photographers from across Nagaland. (PTI)

Leaders strategise for Assam polls and review voter roll revisions

Kharge, Rahul meet Assam Congress leaders to discuss preparations for 2026 assembly polls



NEW DELHI, Dec 2: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi held a meeting with the party's Assam unit leaders on Tuesday to discuss preparations for the next year's assembly elections, the Special Revision (SR) of electoral

rolls, and other important issues of the state. Congress general secretary (organization) K C Venugopal, Pradesh Congress Committee chief Gaurav Gogoi, AICC in-charge of state Jitendra Singh, Congress legislative party leader (CLP) Debabrata Saikia

and other leaders attended the meeting. Sources said that preparations for the assembly elections, SR and other issues were discussed in the meeting.

The Assam Assembly elections are likely to be held in March-April next year. The process of SR of voter lists is underway in the state.

According to instructions issued by the Election Commission for the chief electoral officer of Assam, January 1, 2026, will be the qualifying date for the state to carry out the Special Revision.

Officials earlier said that the SR stands somewhere between the annual special summary revision and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The EC had last month ordered SIR in 12 states and Union territories, with four going to polls next year. (PTI)

Man sustains injury by jumbo attack in Tamulpur

KOKRAJHAR, Dec 2: The human-elephant conflict has taken a severe turn along the India-Bhutan border in Tamulpur district as a person received serious injury due to attacked by wild elephant and the carcass of a wild elephant calf has been recovered.

The incident took place at Belguri, located in the forested area of Pagladiya along the India-Bhutan border, the carcass of a wild elephant calf was recovered. It is suspected that the elephant calf died two days ago. Officials from the Forest Department and members of an NGO have reached the site and started its investigation into the incident.

A veterinary team from the Forest Department will conduct a post-mortem examination of the elephant calf.

It may be mentioned that, for the past five months, a large herd of wild elephants has been causing continuous havoc in the border region.

NCHISF opposes ST status for six communities

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 2: The NC Hills Indigenous Students Forum (NCHISF) has released a strongly worded statement opposing the Assam Government's recent move to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities considered socially, politically and economically advanced. The proposal, recommended by the Group of Ministers (GoM), was placed before the Assam Legislative Assembly on November 29 and has since sparked widespread discontent among tribal organisations in the hill district.

According to the Forum, the inclusion of these six communities into the ST category poses a direct threat to the constitutional safeguards currently enjoyed by the existing Scheduled Tribes of Assam. The NCHISF argues that granting ST status to large, influential communities would "dangerously dilute" the rights of the indigenous tribes and undermine the core purpose of tribal protections enshrined in the Constitution.

Railways approves final survey for New Coochbehar–Abhayapuri doubling project



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 2: The Ministry of Railways has accorded sanction for conducting a final location survey for the doubling of the New Coochbehar – Golakganj – Gauripur – Abhayapuri section, covering a length of 152.31 km at an estimated cost of Rs 3,65,54,400/-. This approval marks an important step toward strengthening railway infrastructure and enhancing line capacity along this important corridor.

The New Coochbehar – Golakganj – Gauripur – Abhayapuri section is a vital corridor for NFR and provides significant benefits to the people of North Bengal and Lower Assam. With rising passenger demand and a consistent increase in freight movement across the region, enhancing rail line capacity has become an important requirement. The sanctioned survey will help assess these needs and guide effective planning for the proposed doubling work. The project

is expected to improve railway capacity, enable smoother train operations, strengthen local supply chains and support economic growth across the region.

The Final Location Survey will cover detailed examination of geographical features, bridges, tunnels, soil conditions and other engineering aspects. Based on these findings, a comprehensive report will be prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Railways for further consideration and approval. This survey forms a vital preparatory stage for the planned doubling work, aimed at enabling smoother and faster movement of both passenger and freight trains.

Northeast Frontier Railway will continue to carry out such surveys and studies to strengthen railway infrastructure, adopt forward-looking initiatives and enhance the safety, efficiency and overall quality of rail services for the public.

Debt dispute ends in shooting at Kharupetia jewellery shop

Lender critically injured; police probing origin of illegal firearm

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, Dec 2: A long-standing monetary dispute between two friends took a violent turn on Monday night when a jeweller allegedly shot his lender three times inside his shop at Kharupetia town in Darrang district.

The victim, Abhijit Saha alias Munna Saha of Gopal Nagar had reportedly lent ₹ 2 lakh on interest to Ananta Biswas of Sonarupatti, owner of Maa Pramila Jewellery, nearly a year ago. Sources said Ananta had already repaid ₹ 1 lakh with interest, but Munna had been

repeatedly demanding the remaining amount along with further interest, allegedly issuing threats in recent weeks.

According to locals, Munna visited Ananta's jewellery shop near NH-15 around 9 PM on Monday. The two men reportedly consumed alcohol together before the argument intensified. Munna allegedly demanded immediate repayment and brandished a pistol to threaten Ananta. A scuffle followed, during which Ananta is believed to have snatched the weapon and fired three shots. While two bullets

caused minor wounds, the third struck Munna in the chest and lodged near his spine.

Residents rushed the critically injured Munna to Mangaldai Civil Hospital from where he was shifted to a private hospital in Guwahati. He remains in the ICU.

Kharupetia Police detained Ananta Biswas soon after the incident and recovered a pistol along with two live rounds from the shop. However, in an official statement, Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Rosie Talukdar said initial findings suggest Munna may have accidentally shot himself with his own pistol during the altercation. "Both parties had a monetary transaction and a heated argument ensued. We are investigating how the victim came to possess the illegal firearm and all other angles," she said.

Residents described Munna Saha as domineering and claimed he had been pressuring Ananta for months over the loan. They expressed disbelief that Ananta, known locally as a quiet and soft-spoken jeweller, could be involved in such a violent confrontation.

The incident has renewed concerns about rising anti-social activities along Gopal Nagar Road near Shiv Mandir on NH-15, an area locals claim has become a hub for drugs, gambling and late-night drinking.

Police have registered a case, and further investigation is underway.

citizen-soldiers. **Our Tezpur Correspondent adds:** The Indian Army on Monday concluded a 17-day Territorial Army Recruitment Rally at Meghna Stadium, Solmara Military Station, Tezpur. Conducted from 15 November to 1 December 2025, the rally witnessed an impressive turnout of 7,282 motivated aspirants from Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, West Bengal and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands. The presence of youth from remote and high-altitude areas highlighted their determination to serve the nation.

Organised by the 121 Infantry Battalion (Territorial Army) The Garhwal Rifles under the Territorial Army Group Eastern Command, the rally was managed with high standards of professionalism, coordination and logistical planning. Thousands of candidates were processed through multiple stages of physical, medical and documentation tests with strict adherence to transparency and discipline.

A key feature of the rally was "Project Nischay Jeet," a motivational initiative offering personalised counselling to candidates who did not qualify in the Physical Fitness Test. The counter guided them on improving performance and informed



them about similar upcoming recruitment rallies across the Northeast, reflecting the TA's commitment to mentoring motivated youth.

Lieutenant General Gambhir Singh, AVSM, YSM, General Officer Commanding 4 Corps (Gajraj Corps), visited the rally on 29 November 2025 and reviewed the youth-centric, transparent recruitment procedures.

The event was supported by exemplary civil-military cooperation. Sonitpur DC Ananda Kr Das ensured daily administrative supervision through an Executive Magistrate, the Health Department, led by Biman Kumar deployed medical teams for continuous support, Sonitpur Police managed security and traffic and Tezpur Municipal Corporation provided sanitation and essential civic services. Solmara landowners also extended crucial support by making land available for the large-scale event.

The Territorial Army Recruitment Rally at Tezpur offered a major opportunity for thousands of youth across the Northeast and island territories. The event not only strengthened national integration but also underscored the Indian Army's longstanding commitment to transparency, service and nation-building.

Govt holds high-level review meeting with BTC Council

BTC review development plans, ongoing projects, new initiatives and administrative support

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Dec 2: A high-level coordination and review meeting between the Assam Government and the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was held on Monday at the BTC Secretariat, Bodofa Nagar, Kokrajhar. The meeting aimed to review development initiatives, administrative functioning and ongoing projects in BTC.

Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, Cabinet Minister Jayanta Malabarua and Transport Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary represented the Assam Government. From the BTC side, Chief Hagrama Mohilary, Deputy Chief Rihan Daimary, the Assam Government Chief Secretary and senior officials from various departments participated.

Addressing the media after the meeting, Finance Minister Ajanta Neog stated that the objective was to understand the support required for BTC's functioning post-formation. She emphasised that both Central and State government schemes must be implemented fully to ensure balanced and equi-



table development in BTC. "Whether the schemes belong to the Centre or the State, they must be implemented 100%. That is our main objective," she said.

Minister Neog added that Chief Hagrama Mohilary had raised several administrative issues, including land acquisition, employee recruitment, transfers and deployment of government officials. She assured that the Assam Government would extend full cooperation and financial support while also assisting BTC in developing its revenue-generating sources.

Cabinet Minister Jayanta Malabarua highlighted new major

projects slated for BTC, including the Kokrajhar–Gelephu railway line, which is expected to have its construction inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January next year. He also mentioned plans for the upgradation of Rupsi Airport, a railway coach factory and solutions for land acquisition challenges related to the Army firing range.

Regarding the BTC Secretariat incident on 29 November, Minister Malabarua termed it unfortunate and stressed that such events disrupt peace, harmony and development. He clarified that the report on the ST status of six communi-

ties was submitted late in the evening and that reactions prior to reviewing the report were premature. He emphasised that discussions will be held to ensure that existing ST communities retain their rights while addressing demands of other communities.

BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary said the review meeting covered the functioning of 39 departments, centrally implemented schemes and the development of infrastructure projects such as Rupsi Airport. He expressed confidence that BTC would be able to function as envisioned and announced plans for a follow-up meeting in Dispur after 15 days.

On the Secretariat incident, Hagrama Mohilary also questioned the role of ABSU and UPPL in the matter, stressing that unsolicited claims or interventions should not disrupt administrative processes.

The meeting concluded with a commitment from both sides to work collaboratively for BTC's holistic development and to resolve long-standing administrative and socio-economic issues effectively.

Fifth Sukapha Divas celebrated with cultural fervour

Assamese heritage and Ahom legacy honoured on Asom Divas

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Dec 2: The fifth annual Sukapha Divas (Asom Divas) was celebrated with solemnity and widespread community participation in Margherita on Tuesday. Organised by the Chaolung Sukapha Statue Management Committee in collaboration with local residents, the event paid tribute to the Swargadeo Chaolung Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom and a key architect of greater Assam.

The celebrations took place at the Sukapha statue site near NH-315, opposite Margherita Town High School. The programme began with the hoisting of the flag by Upal Konwar, president of the Celebration Committee, followed by traditional prayers and rituals. The ceremonial lamp was lit by Dr Amarjit Saikia, Principal of Doomsdooma Bir Raghav Moran Government Model College.

The Maidam Tarpan, a symbolic homage to Ahom ancestors was inaugurated by Debojit Baruah. A special segment honouring celebrated Assamese icon Zubeen Garg was jointly inaugurated by Nitul

Gogoi, president of the All Assam Land Records Employees' Association and Rajlakhi Gogoi, Vice Chairperson of Margherita Municipal Board. Tai Ahom women of Margherita performed traditional songs celebrating Chaolung Sukapha.

An open meeting was held later in the day, presided over by Upal Konwar. Pabitra Borgohain delivered the welcome address and the session was formally inaugurated by Rana Jyoti Neog, General Secretary of the Tinsukia District Journalists Association. Keynote speaker Pankaj Borthakur, Registrar of Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva Sports University, highlighted Sukapha's enduring legacy and its relevance to contemporary Assam.

The event saw the presence of several distinguished personalities, including Assistant Commissioner Pritom Gogoi of Margherita Co-District Administration, Nabojit Baruah of the Ahom Development Council, Kailash Kumar Gupta, president of the All Assam Bhojpur Parishad Central Executive Committee and AALREC President

Nitul Gogoi.

The day-long programme underscored unity, heritage and pride in Assam's cultural identity, reaffirming Chaolung Sukapha's historic role in shaping the state's history and traditions.

Our Demow Correspondent adds: Under the patronage of the Demow Regional Tai Ahom Students Union and in association with the people of Demow, the seventh annual Kendriya Sukapha Divas (Asom Divas) was organised at the Demow Public Playground on Tuesday.

Different programmes were held throughout the day to mark the occasion. A cultural procession was taken out from the Demow Public Playground across the Demow area. Drawing and essay competitions were organised among students, with prizes awarded to the winners on Tuesday evening.

In memory of celebrated cultural icon Zubeen Garg, a cultural programme was also held at the Demow Public Playground in the evening, highlighting the rich heritage and traditions of Assam.

Elephant herd rampages through Kheroni, one killed, one critically injured

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Dec 2: A massive herd of nearly 100 wild elephants continues to wreak havoc in the Kheroni area of West Karbi Anglong, with fresh tragedy striking on Monday. A 20-year-old girl was trampled to death and a farmer critically injured in two separate attacks linked to the same rogue elephant that had strayed from the main herd.

The fatal incident occurred around 7 PM on Monday when Khushbu Rajbhar, daughter of Dewandra Rajbhar of Bagisadubi village under Kheroni Police Station was attacked in the courtyard of her home. According to locals, the lone elephant charged without warning at dusk, killing her instantly.

Earlier the same day, the same elephant attacked farmer Mansingh Chauhan, 45 and his son Ankit while they were harvesting pulses in their field. The elephant reportedly charged from behind, leaving Mansingh with multiple fractured ribs and a severely injured left leg. He was rushed to HAMM Hospital in Hojai, where his condition remains critical.

Meanwhile, another group from the herd went on a rampage the previous night in 02 No Watijor village near Forest Bazar, destroying three houses belonging to members of the Malakar family—Jasu Malakar, Narendra Malakar and Chandan Malakar. The elephants reportedly broke furniture and consumed stored rice and grains, leaving the families devastated.

Residents say the mega-herd has been moving across villages under the Southern Forest Range for months, flattening crops, damaging homes and uprooting trees almost every night. Villagers allege that despite repeated appeals, the Forest Department has failed to take effective steps to drive the herd back into deeper forested areas.

As of the filing of this report, the herd continued to roam freely through paddy and sugarcane fields and bamboo groves near Dikren (Nawgharwa Basti) and Kheroni Charali, keeping the region on high alert.

Record youth turnout at Territorial Army Rally 2025

Thousands of aspirants undergo rigorous tests, reflecting strong patriotic spirit and discipline

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 2: The Territorial Army (TA) Recruitment Rally 2025 at Masimpur Military Station, Silchar, concluded with a record-breaking turnout, drawing thousands of enthusiastic aspirants from Assam and neighbouring north-eastern states. Organised by the 119 Infantry Battalion (TA) ASSAM under the Territorial Army Group (Eastern Command), the rally marked one of the largest youth gatherings witnessed in recent years for TA recruitment.

The Masimpur grounds buzzed with energy as young candidates queued up before dawn each day to undergo rigorous screening. Officials noted that the overwhelming response reflected the growing inclination of the region's youth towards a disciplined and purposeful life in uniform. "The enthusiasm was palpable. The massive turnout shows the trust and respect the youth of the Northeast have for the Indian Army," said an official spokesperson of the organising unit.

The recruitment process was carried out transparently and in strict adherence to military norms. Candidates completed the challenging 1.6-km run, followed by push-ups, chin-ups and balance tests. Physical measurements were conducted



to ensure compliance with prescribed standards, while document verification and comprehensive medical examinations were undertaken to determine eligibility. Those clearing all stages were shortlisted for the written examination, bringing them a step closer to joining the Territorial Army.

Officials acknowledged the seamless coordination between TA authorities and the civil administration, including district police, which contributed to the smooth conduct of the rally. Facilities such as

drinking water, sanitation and on-site medical care were arranged to support the large number of participants, many of whom had travelled long distances.

The successful completion of the Masimpur TA Rally 2025 underscores the Territorial Army's commitment to regional outreach and equal opportunity, while highlighting the strong patriotic spirit of the Northeast's youth. With the next stage of recruitment ahead, shortlisted candidates now advance closer to their aspiration of serving the nation as proud

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Conflict cannot survive without your participation.
- Wayne Dyer

Putin India visit: Key issues

The visit of President Vladimir Putin, framed within the terminology of a 'special and privileged partnership', signals the desire on both sides to advance an agenda no longer restricted by earlier bottlenecks and no longer shaped solely by legacy compulsions. While oil had dominated negotiations for much of the past year, developments in global energy markets and ongoing conversations in Washington have eased the pressure around hydrocarbons, allowing New Delhi and Moscow to focus their attention on defence cooperation and broader strategic alignment. A key change enabling this shift is the recalibration of expectations around crude supplies. The fluctuations in global oil prices and the changing composition of India's energy basket have created an environment where the friction over Russian heavy crude versus American light crude has begun to lose relevance. India's ability to balance imports from multiple suppliers, coupled with the absence of direct competition between grades of oil it purchases, has reduced the scope for conflict between its partnerships with Washington and Moscow. This has, in turn, lifted a major burden from India's diplomatic bandwidth, enabling policy planners to revisit older templates of cooperation with Russia and explore new ones without the anxiety of antagonising another partner.

The widening space created by this shift is particularly evident in defence cooperation, which has long been the most visible pillar of the India-Russia equation. Both governments have acknowledged that the deepening of the defence relationship will be central to the Delhi summit. The discussions are expected to extend beyond the traditional buyer-seller dynamic that has shaped military ties since the Cold War. India, now more assertive in its push for indigenisation and self-reliance in defence production, is exploring models that combine technology transfers, joint manufacturing and longer-term collaboration in emerging domains such as cyber capabilities, space-based assets and advanced propulsion systems. Moscow, for its part, sees value in retaining India as a trusted partner at a time when its own strategic landscape has undergone considerable strain. Western sanctions and shifting regional alliances have pushed Russia to diversify its economic and political engagements. India's large market, its expanding defence industrial base and its geopolitical weight offer Russia both stability and opportunity. The upcoming summit provides an avenue to reinforce these convergences, building on existing projects while outlining future pathways that reflect shared strategic calculations.

The summit discussions are likely to touch upon broader economic possibilities as well, even if defence and energy dominate the headlines. Trade figures between the two countries have shown spurts of growth followed by periods of stagnation, indicating the need for structural interventions to unlock sustained expansion. Connectivity constraints, limited diversification of export baskets and regulatory hurdles have traditionally impeded progress. In the current environment, where de-risking supply chains has become a global priority, India and Russia may explore ways to stabilise bilateral commerce.

The ripple effect of small Acts

Talking Points

Narvijay Yadav



Public places reveal an unexpected truth about human nature. Even in the middle of noise, there are moments when two strangers pause, speak softly, and help each other. This thought returned to me during my travel from Bengaluru, where the International Airport's bamboo inspired interior glowed like a grand sculpture. Amid the crowd, a man gently whispered near me. He asked if I was travelling to Ranchi. I said I was heading to Delhi and asked how I could help him.

He showed me a few torn parts of a boarding pass. He had travelled from Abu Dhabi and was on his way to Jamshedpur for medical treatment after suffering from paralysis last year. The scale of the airport had confused Abrar Khan. He did not know which part of the ticket was still valid. I helped him identify the boarding gate display, guided him to sit near his departure zone, and explained how the screens update boarding information. He looked relieved. In that small exchange, a sense of peace settled between us. His gratitude was simple. My satisfaction was even simpler. These moments remind us that kindness does not need any stage. A day before this incident, I witnessed a very different kind of stage at Muddenahalli in the Chikkaballapur district of Karnataka. It was serene, green, and filled with a quiet discipline that did not need any advertisement. Sadguru Sri Madhusudan Sai's campus, built on the foundations laid by the Sathya Sai lineage, carried the fragrance of service. It housed a world class free hospital, a free medical college, a global humanitarian mission, and a stream of volunteers who saw service as a daily practice rather than an event.

During my visit, global doctors from Ukraine, Greece, the US and other countries were attending scientific sessions. Senior cardiac surgeons and global experts stood shoulder to shoulder with young volunteers. The atmosphere felt more like a spiritual university of service than an institution. Every corridor was clean and silent. Every gesture carried intention. It felt like witnessing the architecture of a universal family taking shape.

Sri Madhusudan Sai often speaks of One World, One Family. After spending time on the campus, the idea did not feel like a slogan. It felt like a lived reality. The integration of healthcare, nutrition, education and compassion pointed towards a model that many future societies may aspire to adopt. It was humbling to see how much can be achieved when vision aligns with collective action. This thought connects naturally with the idea we have quietly begun under the 5AM Bliss community. The Blissful Earth Mission is not a movement of noise. It is a movement of small daily steps grounded in humility. Its purpose is to encourage people to bring more kindness, clarity and compassion into their routine. No fanfare. No announcements. Just a consistent ripple that grows with time.

December offers a good opportunity to practise this discipline. We have introduced the Bliss December Challenge, where every participant is invited to perform one simple act of kindness each day. It could be helping a stranger at a public place, offering patient guidance to someone in need, smiling at a tired worker, or letting someone speak without interruption. These little acts shape the culture of a community far more deeply than grand speeches. The encounter with Abrar Khan at the airport and the atmosphere at Muddenahalli share a quiet lesson. The world becomes a better place not through large displays of power but through small acts of service performed with sincerity. If Sri Madhusudan Sai's mission can operate at a global scale and still remain rooted in humility, each of us can certainly take one small step every day. This is what the Blissful Earth Mission hopes to nurture. Not a campaign but a habit. Not a declaration but a behaviour. A simple invitation to bring more light into a world that often feels rushed and distracted. Sometimes the biggest changes begin with a soft whisper.

Ending Polygamy: Assam sets a national benchmark

In a significant legislative stride aimed at promoting gender justice, securing women's rights, and reinforcing the rule of law, the Government of Assam has introduced the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025. The Bill, championed by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, marks a watershed moment in Assam's social reform journey. It establishes one of the most comprehensive legal frameworks in India to eliminate the practice of polygamy, protect vulnerable women, regulate community responsibilities, and ensure strict accountability.

This article examines the Bill in depth—clause by clause—while also appreciating the political courage, administrative vision, and social sensitivity displayed by the Chief Minister and his government in bringing forward such transformational legislation.

A Reform Rooted in Justice and Social Welfare

Over the last few years, Assam has witnessed a series of bold initiatives under Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma—from the crackdown on child marriage to reforms in education, policing, and welfare. The introduction of the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025 builds upon this reformist foundation. It sends a clear message: no woman in Assam should suffer discrimination or emotional, financial, or social harm under the pretext of customary or religious practices.

The Bill is not an impulsive political step but a carefully crafted legislative instrument, deeply rooted in constitutional values and designed after wide consultations. It addresses legal loopholes, empowers communities, and places the dignity and rights of women at the heart of public policy.

I. Structure and Scope of the Act

1. Title, Extent & Commencement

Section 3 of the Bill formally names it the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Act, 2025, extending to the entire state and coming into force immediately upon notification.

Crucially, the Act does not apply to:

- Sixth Schedule areas, and
- Scheduled Tribes (STs) as defined under Articles 366(25) and 342 of the Constitution.

This sensitive exemption acknowledges Assam's unique tribal customs and constitutional protections, reflecting Dr. Sarma's nuanced understanding of socio-cultural diversity.

II. Key Definitions That

Strengthen the Law

Section 2 lays down detailed and precise definitions—an essential feature that eliminates ambiguity and strengthens enforcement.

Abetment "Abet" includes:

- Inciting
- Instigating
- Assisting the commission of polygamy or its solemnisation.

This broad definition expands liability beyond the two individuals entering the marriage.

Ordinarily Resident

Defined widely to include:

- Individuals born in or residing in Assam
- Registered voters
- Government employees
- Beneficiaries of state schemes
- Land/property owners
- Anyone fulfilling government-notified criteria

This ensures that the law covers a broad demographic and prevents evasion by claiming temporary residence elsewhere.

Polygamy & Polygamous Marriage

Polygamy: Marrying another person while a prior marriage is still valid.

Polygamous marriage: One where either spouse has a living partner.

Subsisting Marriage

Any marriage that has not been legally dissolved or annulled by a court.

Religious Authority

Priests, qazis, community leaders, and anyone performing or registering marriage rituals.

These definitions create a strong legal backbone for the Act.

III. Core Provisions and Prohibitions

Prohibition on Polygamy (Section 4)

The heart of the Bill states unequivocally:

No person

This applies even if:

- Divorce proceedings are pending
- Appeals are in process
- The earlier marriage has not been legally annulled

The clarity here is crucial. Many exploit legal loopholes to contract a second marriage when divorce is not yet finalized. This section eliminates that ambiguity.

IV. Liability Beyond the Couple: Abetment & Attempts

Section 5: Abetment and Attempts

The Act penalizes:

- Anyone attempting polygamy
- Anyone abetting or facilitating such marriage

Penalties are the same as for the

principal offender. This discourages families, religious leaders, and community members from supporting illegal unions.

V. Strict Penalties to Deter Offences

Section 6: Punishments

A person committing polygamy faces:

- Imprisonment
- Fines, and
- Enhanced punishment if the previous marriage was deliberately concealed.

Additional features:

- Repeat offenders incur stricter penalties.
- Religious authorities performing such marriages knowingly can face up to 2 years imprisonment or fines up to ₹1.5 lakh.

This provision ensures that those who misuse their position or authority to validate illegal marriages are held accountable.

VI. Community Responsibility and Mandatory Reporting

Section 7: Duties of Village Heads, Qazis & Parents

This section is one of the most socially progressive elements of the Act.

It legally mandates:

- Village heads (Gaonburahs)
- Qazis
- Community leaders
- Parents or guardians

...to report any known incident of polygamy or attempted polygamy to the police. Failure to report attracts penalties.

By distributing responsibility across community stakeholders, the law builds social vigilance and ensures potential victims are protected before harm occurs.

VII. Cross-Border Applicability

Section 8: Special Provisions

The Act applies:

- Even if an ordinarily resident of Assam conducts a polygamous marriage outside the state, and
- If a non-resident brings a polygamous marriage into Assam jurisdiction.

This closes typical loopholes where offenders attempt to circumvent state laws by marrying elsewhere.

VIII. Civil Disabilities: A Strong Deterrent

Section 9: Effects of Conviction Upon conviction, an offender:

- Loses eligibility for state government schemes, and
- Cannot contest elections for Panchayati Raj and Municipal bodies.

This ensures that individuals who violate fundamental principles of gender justice cannot occupy positions of public trust.

IX. Police Powers for Prevention and Enforcement

Section 10: Procedures After

Information

Police must:

- Visit the location of the attempted marriage
- Disperse unlawful gatherings
- Inform all present that the act is punishable

Section 11: Search, Inspection & Arrest

Officers (Sub-Inspector and above) may:

- Enter premises
- Stop ongoing marriages
- Seize documents and materials
- Detain suspects

This proactive approach allows law enforcement to prevent the offence before it occurs.

X. Cognizable Offence & Jurisdiction

Section 12

Polygamy is a cognizable offence—police may arrest without a warrant.

Section 13

Trials may occur:

- Where the accused resides, or
- Where the marriage was solemnised.

This ensures practical flexibility in prosecution.

XI. Protection for Authorities & Victim Compensation

Section 14–15

Government officials enforcing the Act in good faith are protected from legal action.

Section 16: Compensation for Victims

A notified authority will:

- Process compensation applications from victimized women
- Provide financial support for rehabilitation

This is a compassionate and progressive step to address the suffering of women trapped in illegal polygamous marriages.

XII. Safeguard for Valid Marriages

Section 17: Savings Clause

The Act does not affect marriages:

- Properly registered under existing state laws
- Conducted under recognized customary practices with valid proof

This prevents misuse of the Act to harass law-abiding families and communities.

XIII. Rule-Making Powers & Overriding Effect

Section 18

The State Government may formulate rules for effective implementation.

Section 19

The Act overrides all other laws inconsistent with it, ensuring primacy and clarity.

A Chief Minister with Vision and Courage

Introducing such a transformative Bill required political

courage—especially in a domain traditionally surrounded by socio-religious sensitivities. Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma has demonstrated leadership by prioritizing women's dignity over political convenience.

His reformist approach aligns with the broader goal of building:

- A safer society
- A more equal legal system
- A governance model rooted in justice and accountability

Combined with past measures against child marriage and initiatives for women's safety, this Bill positions Assam at the forefront of social reform in India.

Social, Legal, and Cultural Impact

The Bill will have far-reaching consequences:

1. Empowering women

Victims of polygamy often suffer emotional trauma, financial insecurity, and social humiliation.

The law gives them:

- Judicial protection
- Financial compensation
- The assurance of state support

2. Strengthening family structures

Clear legal provisions discourage secret or fraudulent marriages.

3. Reducing exploitation

Many women, especially from economically weaker sections, fall victim to deceptive marriages. This Act provides a strong shield.

4. Promoting accountability

Religious authorities, community leaders, and parents are compelled to act responsibly.

5. Respecting cultural autonomy

The exemption for Sixth Schedule areas and Scheduled Tribes ensures social harmony.

A Landmark in India's Legal History

The Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025 stands as one of the most powerful statements made by any Indian state in defence of gender equality and women's dignity. With comprehensive definitions, strict penalties, cross-border coverage, mandatory reporting, police empowerment, victim compensation, and civil disabilities, the Bill leaves no space for exploitation or legal evasion. This is not merely legislation—it is a manifesto for justice.

Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma has once again demonstrated why he is widely regarded as one of India's most reform-oriented leaders. His dedication to building an Assam that is just, progressive, and equitable shines through this historic Bill. With this Act, Assam has not only protected its women—it has set a shining example for the entire nation.

December 2: India's Day against pollution

By: Satyabrata Borah

Every year on December 2, India observes National Pollution Control Day, a solemn reminder of one of the darkest chapters in the nation's industrial history and a call to confront the continuing crisis of environmental degradation. The day is observed in memory of the thousands who lost their lives in the Bhopal Gas Tragedy that occurred on the night of December 2 and 3, 1984, when methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the Union Carbide pesticide plant in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Often described as the world's worst industrial disaster, the tragedy not only exposed the lethal dangers of unchecked industrialization but also laid bare the fragility of regulatory systems, the indifference of corporations toward human life, and the long-lasting consequences of environmental negligence.

More than four decades later, National Pollution Control Day serves as both a tribute to the victims and a renewed pledge to prevent such horrors from ever happening again. The tragedy began shortly after midnight when a large volume of water entered a storage tank containing over forty tons of methyl isocyanate, a highly reactive and toxic chemical used in pesticide production. The reaction generated intense heat and pressure, forcing the deadly gas to escape through a vent into the cool night air. Because methyl isocyanate is heavier than air, it spread low across the ground, silently sweeping through densely populated neighborhoods surrounding the factory. Within hours, thousands lay dead in the streets and in their homes. Official figures placed the immediate death toll at around four thousand, but independent estimates suggest the actual number was far higher. Over half a million people suffered injuries ranging from blinding pain and respiratory distress to permanent disability. Pregnant women miscarried, children were orphaned, and entire families were wiped out in a single night.

The aftermath revealed a cascade of failures. Safety systems that could have neutralized the gas or warned residents had been disabled to cut costs. Workers had raised concerns about leaking valves and deteriorating pipelines, but management ignored them. The local community, largely poor and unaware of the lethal substances stored next door, had no evacuation plan or emergency drills. When the gas spread, hospitals were overwhelmed and doctors had no information about the chemical they were treating. Union Carbide, the American parent company, initially downplayed the toxicity of methyl isocyanate, claiming it was merely an irritant like tear gas. Only later did the full extent of its lethality become clear. Survivors continued to suffer from chronic respiratory illnesses, eye disorders, neurological damage, and increased rates of cancer and birth defects. Contaminated soil and water around the abandoned factory still poison new generations, proving that the disaster never truly ended for Bhopal.

The Bhopal tragedy forced India and the world to confront the dark side of rapid industrial growth. In the early 1980s, the country was opening its economy and inviting foreign investment. Hazardous industries were welcomed with minimal oversight, and environmental regulations were either weak or poorly enforced. The disaster became a turning point. Public outrage led to the passage of the Environment Protection Act of 1986, which gave the central

government stronger powers to regulate polluting industries and respond to environmental emergencies. The Central Pollution Control Board and State Pollution Control Boards received greater authority to monitor emissions and effluents. Public interest litigation gained prominence as affected citizens and activists used the courts to demand accountability and compensation.

Yet the journey since 1984 has been far from smooth. Compensation for victims remained woefully inadequate. After years of legal battles, Union Carbide paid a settlement widely criticized as a pittance compared to the scale of suffering. The site was never properly cleaned, and responsibility kept shifting between the company and successive governments. Dow Chemical, which acquired Union Carbide in 2001, has consistently refused to accept liability for the cleanup. Survivors and their descendants continue to fight for justice, medical care, and dignified rehabilitation, reminding the nation that remembrance without action is hollow.

National Pollution Control Day is therefore observed not merely to mourn the past but to measure how far India has come and how far it still has to go in protecting its air, water, and soil. Each year, government agencies, schools, colleges, non-governmental organizations, and citizen groups organize awareness programs, seminars, rallies, and clean-up drives. Students learn about different forms of pollution, from vehicular emissions choking cities to untreated sewage flowing into rivers, from plastic waste clogging drains to crop burning blanketing northern India in toxic smog every winter. Experts discuss renewable energy, waste segregation, rainwater harvesting, and afforestation as practical solutions citizens can adopt. Industries are reminded of their responsibility to install pollution control equipment and adopt cleaner technologies.

The significance of the day has only grown with time because pollution itself has grown more complex and widespread. In the 1980s, the concern was largely about industrial accidents and factory effluents. Today, India faces a multi-front environmental crisis. Delhi regularly records air quality indices that make it one of the most polluted capitals on earth. Rivers like the Ganga and Yamuna carry loads of industrial chemicals, municipal waste, and religious offerings that choke aquatic life. Groundwater in many states is contaminated with arsenic, fluoride, and nitrates. Coastal ecosystems are threatened by oil spills, plastic debris, and untreated sewage. Noise pollution affects millions in urban areas, and light pollution is erasing starry skies even in rural regions. Climate change has added another urgent dimension. Extreme weather events, heat waves, and shifting rainfall patterns are no longer distant threats but present realities. Scientists warn that continued pollution will lock India into a future of diminished farm yields, water scarcity, and mass displacement. The children marching in rallies on National Pollution Control Day are not just remembering Bhopal; they are fighting for their own right to breathe clean air and inherit a livable planet.

The day also highlights the social justice aspect of environmental protection. Pollution almost always hits the poorest the hardest. Those living next to factories, along polluted rivers, or in urban slums bear the brunt of toxic air and water while having the least voice in decision-making. The Bhopal victims were mostly daily wage workers

and their families who had migrated to the city in search of employment, only to be sacrificed at the altar of industrial progress. Today, waste pickers sort through mountains of garbage without protective gear, farmers inhale pesticides, and street vendors breathe exhaust fumes all day. Any meaningful pollution control strategy must therefore prioritize the health and dignity of the most vulnerable.

Successful governments have launched ambitious programs to mark the seriousness with which India now treats environmental protection. Initiatives such as the National Clean Air Programme, Namami Gange, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, and the push for renewable energy targets reflect political will to tackle pollution at a systemic level. Cities are experimenting with odd-even vehicle schemes, bus rapid transit systems, and cycle tracks. Corporations are under pressure to disclose their carbon footprint and shift to sustainable practices. Courts continue to play an active role, from banning old diesel vehicles to ordering the closure of polluting factories.

Still, implementation lags behind intention. Corruption, weak enforcement, and the sheer scale of the challenge allow violators to flourish. Brick kilns operate with outdated technology, small factories discharge untreated waste at night, and construction dust is accepted as an inevitable part of growth. Public transport remains inadequate, forcing millions into private vehicles or polluting two-wheelers. Single-use plastic is officially banned in many states, yet markets overflow with it. The gap between policy and practice remains the biggest hurdle.

This is why National Pollution Control Day matters more than ever. It is a moment to pause amid the noise of development and ask difficult questions. Are we willing to pay the real cost of clean air and water? Can industries grow without poisoning communities? Will consumers change habits that convenience has made second nature? The answers cannot come from governments or courts alone. Every citizen has a role, whether by refusing plastic bags, planting trees, conserving electricity, or simply holding elected representatives accountable.

As long as the survivors of Bhopal continue to suffer and new environmental threats emerge, December 2 will remain a day of both grief and resolve. It reminds India that the lives lost in 1984 were not just statistics but sons, daughters, mothers, and fathers whose absence still echoes in broken families. Their memory demands more than speeches and symbolic gestures. It demands a nation that places human health and ecological balance above short-term profit, a nation that learns from its gravest mistakes and refuses to repeat them.

On this day, schoolchildren light candles, activists renew their vows, and policymakers promise stricter vigilance. But the most fitting tribute to the victims of Bhopal would be an India where no child wakes up coughing because of poisoned air, where no river runs black with industrial waste, and where no community lives in the shadow of a ticking chemical time bomb. Until that day arrives, National Pollution Control Day will keep calling the country to conscience, urging it to choose life over lethargy and justice over indifference. The tragedy of Bhopal was a warning written in the tears of the dying. Observing this day with sincerity is the least the living can do to honor that warning and to ensure it is never ignored again.

International Day of persons with disabilities 2025

By: Himanshu Ranjan Bhuvan

The true measure of how far a society has advanced or reached the pinnacle of progress is not determined by the gleaming state of its economic coffers. The real character of a society is revealed by the manner in which it treats its most vulnerable or specially-needs sections. When we speak of social progress, we envision a world where every individual, irrespective of any innate or acquired physical or mental condition, receives equal opportunities, respect and rights. The theme of International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2025 — “Building an inclusive society with persons with disabilities for social progress” — is a powerful reflection of this eternal human philosophy. This theme does not merely offer a slogan for a single day’s celebration; rather, it presents a profound social vision and a guiding direction for the future. On the strength of this theme, an urgent need has arisen for us to re-examine today’s social system, our mindset and our future plans. No nation or society can achieve true social progress by keeping persons with disabilities away from the mainstream or by regarding them merely as objects of pity. The concept of inclusion is not only for their benefit; it is the key to the moral and practical advancement of the entire human community.

We often misinterpret the notion of social progress. We think progress means high-speed vehicles, sky-touching buildings and digital revolution. Yet in its true sense, social progress means reducing the gaps that exist among people and raising the standard of living. When a large section of society is deprived of opportunities because of their physical or mental differences, that society can never be called developed. Persons with disabilities are an inseparable part of our society. Their bodily or mental functioning may differ from others, but their feelings, hopes, aspirations and desire to contribute to society are exactly the same as anyone else’s. The 2025 theme reminds us that the participation of persons with disabilities is indispensable for social progress. A society becomes complete only when every section finds its rightful place in it. Just as flowers of different colours and types enhance the beauty of a garden, diversity in human society likewise bestows beauty and strength. Attempting to build a society while excluding persons with disabilities means rendering a vast portion of its potential useless. Therefore, creating a disability-inclusive society is not merely a legal obligation; it is a social and moral responsibility.

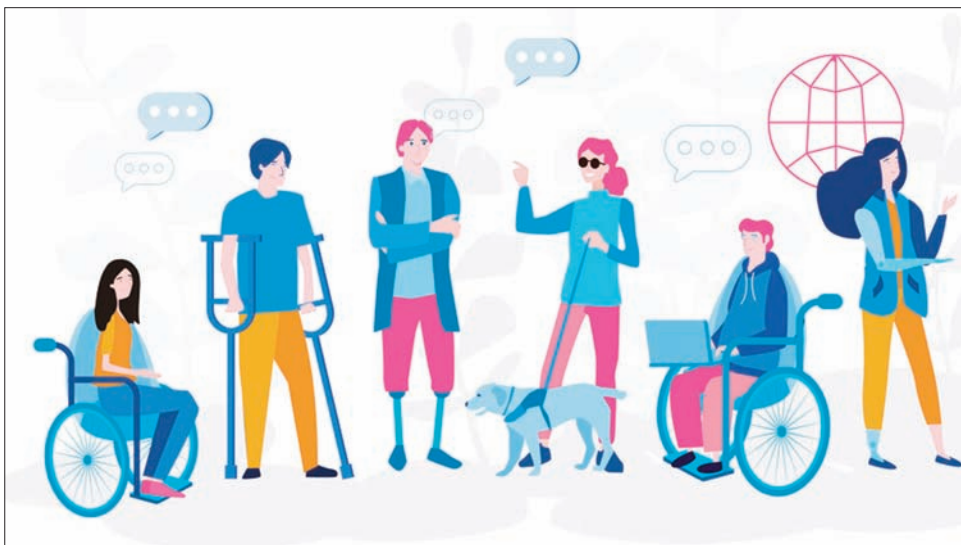
The greatest challenge in building an inclusive society is not infrastructural but attitudinal. For ages, numerous superstitions and misconceptions about disability have taken root in our society. Many people still consider disability to be the result of sins committed in a previous birth or a divine curse. This medieval mindset has kept persons with disabilities mentally isolated from society. The pitying glances or attitudes of neglect directed towards them wound their self-respect. The first step towards social progress must be the transformation of this neg-

ative mindset. We need to understand that disability or different ability is a natural variation in human life. Anyone can face disability at any point due to accident, illness or old age. Hence, the environment we create for persons with disabilities is in reality a safeguard for our own future. True inclusion will begin only when, upon seeing a wheelchair user or a visually impaired person, we learn to give importance to their personality and skills rather than their disability. Without this mental awakening, neither government schemes nor laws can bring about meaningful change in society.

Education is the backbone of any society. To build a disability-inclusive society, the education system must be fully inclusive. At present, many children with disabilities do not get the opportunity to study in regular schools, or even when they do, the environment is not conducive for them. Inclusion in education means a system where children with disabilities and non-disabled children can receive education together under the same roof. For this, necessary changes must be made in curriculum, teaching methods and evaluation processes. When children become familiar with diversity from childhood and grow up together, prejudice does not take root in their minds. They learn to help one another and accept differences naturally. The future generation raised in this way will take the lead in building a sensitive society. Moreover, the absence of education causes the potential of many talented persons with disabilities to wither away. If they are provided appropriate education and training, they too can make outstanding contributions to science, arts, literature and technology for the nation. Depriving anyone of the right to education means creating obstacles in the overall development of society.

Economic self-reliance is one of the primary foundations of human dignity. Creating employment opportunities for persons with disabilities is a major goal of an inclusive society. The prevalent notion in our society is that persons with disabilities cannot perform productive work. This notion is entirely wrong. Given suitable technology and environment, they can perform any task with efficiency. In the present digital age, intellectual skill matters more than physical strength. Therefore, new employment avenues are opening up for persons with disabilities. Employers should change their perspective and appoint disabled candidates on the basis of merit. If necessary facilities are provided in the workplace, they can work equally well as others. Economic self-reliance will free persons with disabilities from depending on anyone and enable them to contribute to the nation’s economy. Their participation can become an important factor in increasing the country’s gross domestic product. Keeping them alive only on allowances or aid is not dignified; true empowerment lies in making them capable of earning.

A vital question is how disability-friendly our surrounding environment and infrastructure are. We must examine whether roads, government offices, markets, hospitals, educational institutions and places of entertainment are accessible to persons with disabilities. Often, a person has



to seek another’s help even for an urgent task simply because they cannot climb stairs. Such dependence erodes their confidence. Making public places accessible is beneficial not only for persons with disabilities but also for the elderly, pregnant women and children. The concept of “universal design” applies here — meaning anything or any place should be constructed in such a way that everyone can use it easily. Accessible transport systems, clear signage and the use of technology can simplify the lives of persons with disabilities. Only when a blind person can cross the road alone or a wheelchair user can shop independently can we claim that our society has truly become inclusive. These infrastructural changes give them the opportunity to step out of the four walls of their homes and mingle with society.

Technology can play a revolutionary role in creating a disability-inclusive society. The development of information technology and artificial intelligence in particular has opened new horizons for persons with disabilities. Through assistive technology, visually impaired people can use computers, hearing-impaired people can communicate, and those with mobility impairments can work with the help of devices. However, if such technology is not available to everyone or its cost is prohibitive, it will create a new form of inequality in society. Therefore, it is essential to follow the principle of inclusion in the invention and distribution of technology. Government and technology companies must ensure that digital services are accessible to all types of users. When websites, mobile applications and other digital platforms are disability-friendly, persons with disabilities will be able to avail education, health and banking services from home. By using technology as a tool, we can overcome physical barriers and build an equitable digital society.

Disabled women and children face double challenges in society. The level of violence and exploitation they suffer is higher. They are frequently deprived in the fields of education and health as well. In a progressive society, the protection and rights of women receive priority. Special protection measures, awareness and

legal assistance for disabled women are essential. Society needs greater awareness about their reproductive health and maternal rights. Often they are denied the right to marriage or family formation, which is a violation of human rights. The concept of a disability-inclusive society speaks of protecting the rights of every individual in society, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised groups. Solutions will be possible only if schemes are prepared with a gender-sensitive approach.

Prolonged isolation from society and continuous neglect cause many persons with disabilities to suffer from depression. Caring for their mental health is also the responsibility of an inclusive society. The goodwill of family members, friends and neighbours can free them from this mental anguish. They should be actively involved in social events such as weddings, religious functions and fairs. This will make them feel that they are not alone. Opportunities to participate in sports and cultural programmes develop their hidden talents and boost confidence. Events like the Paralympics have proved how high athletes with disabilities can rise when given the chance. Through sports and culture, a positive environment can be created in society that celebrates diversity.

Our country has several laws to protect the rights of persons with disabilities. At the international level too, there is the United Nations Convention. Yet how far these laws are actually implemented remains a big question. Often, loopholes in law or administrative negligence deprive persons with disabilities of justice. Strict monitoring mechanisms must be in place to ensure that benefits of government schemes reach the real beneficiaries. Directly involving persons with disabilities or their representatives in the policy-making process is extremely important. No one knows their problems and needs better than they do themselves. Decisions taken on the principle “Nothing about us without us” will alone make schemes effective. Political parties’ manifestos should also give due importance to disability issues. Making polling stations accessible to exercise their voting rights is a good sign for democracy.

The disparity between rural and urban areas is another challenge in this field. While some awareness and facilities exist in urban areas, the condition of persons with disabilities in villages remains deplorable. Medical services, rehabilitation centres and special education facilities are extremely limited in rural areas. Superstition and poverty further complicate the problem in villages. The fruits of social progress must spread to villages and not remain confined to cities. Training grassroots workers and creating awareness through panchayats can solve this problem. Schemes should be adopted to make rural persons with disabilities self-reliant by utilising local resources and technology.

Global issues such as climate change and natural disasters affect persons with disabilities far more severely. During floods, earthquakes or pandemics, special attention must be given to their safety and rescue. Their needs should be prioritised while preparing disaster management plans. Inclusion has been given a place in the sustainable development goals to protect them from the adverse effects of climate change. The more inclusive a society is, the better equipped it will be to face any crisis. The role of media and literature is undeniable in this journey of building a disability-inclusive society for social progress. Public attitudes can change if stories of struggle and success of persons with disabilities are disseminated through newspapers, television and cinema. They should be portrayed not merely as pitiful characters but as strong and inspiring ones. We must also be careful in our use of language. Using respectful terms instead of derogatory words sends a positive message to society. Words shape thoughts, so the right choice of words helps build the right mindset.

In conclusion, the 2025 theme confronts us with a profound truth — our mutual interdependence. None of us is completely independent. We depend on one another. The problems of persons with disabilities are not theirs alone; they are indicators of flaws in our social system. In a healthy society, the weak are given opportunities equal to the strong. Social progress is possible only when we all move forward together. If even one individual is left behind, our progress remains incomplete. Every citizen’s contribution is vital in this journey of inclusion. We can bring about this change through small daily actions. Offering a seat on a bus to a person with disability, helping a blind person cross the road, or behaving amicably with them — these small acts can initiate a great social revolution. Let us resolve today that we shall build a society where disability remains merely a word and never becomes a barrier to life. A society where every individual can breathe freely under the open sky and realise their dreams. This new definition of social progress will establish us as a better human race. To reach this goal, we must open the doors of our hearts and extend the hand of empathy. A disability-inclusive society is not just a dream; it is the only and inevitable destination of our future. Through our collective effort, we can make this world a beautiful home for everyone, where the great Indian philosophy “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” — the whole world is one family — is truly reflected.

Goa’s Coastline, the lifeline of the state is being destroyed

By: Norma Alvares

If any Indian state would stand to benefit from a strong coastal law, it is Goa. With its open seafront and numerous tidal rivers that criss-cross the land before draining into the Arabian Sea, Goa and its residents have lived in tune with this intricate and delicate ecology for centuries — proof of sustainable development, long before the term gained currency.

In 1972, the International Stockholm Conference took cognisance of the fact that urgent, immediate actions were required to protect the environment, if the planet were to survive with its biosphere. India played a lead role in the drafting of the 26 principles enshrined in the Stockholm Declaration. As a signatory to the Declaration, after 1972, the Parliament passed several laws to halt air and water pollution and protect its forests. These included the Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and the Air (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

In 1981, the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi addressed the country’s beaches with a powerful gesture. She wrote a short 5-line letter to the Chief Ministers of the coastal states conveying her strong conviction that no development should be permitted within 500 metres of the High Tide Line in the interests of coastal protection.

Although the courts later held that her letter was merely an executive fiat and not backed by statute, it nevertheless marked a turning point in the coast’s environment conservation history — the beginning of serious coastal protection measures which would culminate a decade later in the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification of 1991, issued under the all-pervasive Environment Protection Act, 1986.

It is not too well known that Goa played a decisive role in giving birth to the CRZ statute. In 1988, a judgment by the Bombay High Court at Goa in Sergio Carvalho v. Union of India, which was concerned with the coastal violations of the Ramada International hotel under construction then at Varca, Salcette, Goa, was instrumental in hastening the introduction of the legal basis to the 500-metre restriction and other protective norms, including a 200-metre No Development Zone (“NDZ”) and limits on heights of permissible constructions.

For two decades, this bold and forward-thinking law stood its ground, protecting the country’s (and Goa’s)

fragile coasts from unchecked development. However, good laws often fall victim to bad politics. Unlike the Environment Impact Assessment Notification of 1994/2006, the 1991 CRZ notification both restricted and prohibited developmental activity, unless essentially connected with the coast.

There were also soon several violations of its provisions. As tourism and real estate interests gained influence, there was pressure to relax some provisions and the Ministry of Environment & Forests made its first serious attempt in 1994 to dilute some of the notification’s provisions. These were struck down by the Supreme Court of India in its 1996 judgment — in a petition to challenge continuing violations — which was also responsible for ensuring that the Coastal Zone Management Plans mandatory under the notification were prepared and notified by September 1996.

On CRZ violations, the top Court made its most telling observation. It wrote: “Enactment of a law, but tolerating its infringement, is worse than not enacting law at all.”

In 2011, the Environment Ministry replaced the 1991 notification with a revised version. The 2011 edition created breaches, pushing the notification in the direction of an enabling statute, very similar to the EIA notification. Even before the numerous actions — specifically the preparation of Coastal Zone Management Plans — required under the 2011 notification could even be taken up, let alone completed, it was again replaced with a new version in 2019. This 2019 CRZ Notification is a far cry from its 1991 predecessor. It undoes decades of environmental safeguards and stands today as a degenerate and perverse law, designed to do more harm than good. It is not only likely to wipe out all the positive conservation efforts of the past thirty years, it will also cause so much permanent damage to the coast that no further notifications may even be necessary. Not for nothing, a challenge against the CRZ 2019 notification is presently pending before the National Green Tribunal.

It is important to note that Mrs Gandhi’s 1981 letter was less than a page. The 1991 notification was a mere 5 pages. The 2019 notification extends over 27 pages. The truth is always simple. Once compromises are permitted, especially where there is no ecological sanction, the statute becomes increasingly complex, as the intent then becomes to allow and

legitimise unwarranted actions and activity by any means.

The CRZ Notification, 1991 had created a simple, effective regime. The 500-metre buffer zone from the High Tide Line was divided into four distinct categories — CRZ-I (ecologically sensitive, no development whatsoever); CRZ-II (developed urban areas — development prohibited only on the seaward side of existing authorised structures — based on the Doctrine of Tolerance and Containment); and CRZ-III (rural areas — within which certain types of construction were either restricted or outright banned).

The coastal areas were categorised not just based on conservation needs, but on actual use as on the date of the notification. Further confirmation came with the notification of the Coastal Zone Management Plans (“CZMPs”) in 1996. Crucially, the coast was no longer seen merely as vacant land (tabula rasa) waiting to be built upon. It was understood as a living system, one that had to be left undisturbed for the most part for its own integrity and for the people who depended on it.

As Dr. Antonio Mascarenhas, a noted NIO scientist, once noted, the 500-metre zone belongs not to human beings really, but to the sea. This space is required for the play of the ocean’s tidal forces, resulting in the movement of beach sands, dependent biodiversity and climate resilience.

Being heavily dependent on the coast due to its unique geography, Goa was required to adhere strictly to the notification, if its local traditions and long history of khazan farming and riverine fishing were to survive. Goa needed to ensure that its natural barriers of mangroves and sand dunes continued to provide their unpaid services of simultaneously protecting the land from erosion and flooding. Breaches in bunds could easily devour the khazan lands and turn them into marshlands. A delicate balance between the land and the sea is what has kept Goa “green” through the ages and made this tiny territory so attractive to the rest of India.

The CRZ 2011 notification was built upon the foundation laid by CRZ 1991, seeking to address many of its alleged shortcomings. While CRZ 1991 was based on a strong consciousness of the need to protect coastal ecosystems, CRZ 2011 recognized the livelihood rights of traditional fishing communities as long-standing coastal dwellers. It continued the three primary zones of CRZ 1991 and added a new category,

CRZ-IV, to govern activity in the coastal waters as well. It also introduced the Hazard Line, which was based on the inevitability of sea-level rise consequent on climate change.

The 2011 notification also recognised the Goa coastal region as a “Special Area”, ensuring that Goa’s khazan lands, its shack culture and its ecologically sensitive habitats received special consideration for their environmental, historical, agricultural, and cultural value.

Like CRZ 1991, the 2011 notification also required CZMPs to be drawn up through the involvement of local bodies and introduced a more structured system for project clearances. The law articulated what Goans have known intuitively for generations — that the law must take local communities, local traditions into confidence and not just the wisdom of latter-day environmental experts. There was, at least on paper, space for both coastal protection and sustainable livelihoods. In many ways, it improved upon the 1991 Notification. It was imperfect though — complicated, frequently litigated (a boon for lawyers), and often manipulated — but it still functioned as a conservation law.

On January 18, 2019, the Government of India unveiled the CRZ 2019 notification, promising simplification, economic growth, and ease of the process of development. What it actually delivered was a systematic dismantling of environmental protection in favour of ease of construction and urbanisation. In effect, it took coastal protection several steps backward. The 2019 notification basically dismantled years of environmental safeguards that had protected fragile coastal ecosystems and traditional coastal communities.

The 200-metre prohibited zone, the NDZ, which was once sacred under CRZ 1991 and maintained through CRZ 2011, was reduced to just 50 metres in many areas. The intertidal zone, which was previously protected, was opened up for construction (18 permissible activities). This move was hazardous and indefensible according to many scientists and environmentalists. The CRZ III category, which covered rural areas, was split into IIIA and IIIB. Partitioning the land on flimsy and arbitrary grounds enabled easy development in areas classified as NDZs in the past. CRZ 2019 brazenly altered even the meaning of the NDZ altogether by allowing construction even in these previously restricted areas.

Goa’s unique features protected by CRZ 2011 — the khazan lands, the named turtle nesting beaches — lost their protections. No reasons were offered. Turtle nesting beaches now risk being lost to noise, light, and shrinking safe zones. Even the 100-metre buffer along rivers was reduced to 50 metres, in blatant defiance of the 1996 Supreme Court ruling that had struck down this very relaxation.

The 2019 version also made another dangerous shift: from expert-based environmental scrutiny to state-level town and country planning regulations, which predictably tilt towards commercial development and favour construction and profit over preservation. This shift was especially dangerous in Goa, where fishing villages are already marginalised and under pressure, khazan systems are prone to tidal flooding and even a slight change in land use could have irreversible consequences.

CRZ 2019 was projected as a reformist statute, but it shattered the trust built over decades between the law and local communities, between the state and the coast. It dislodged the Hazard Line (marking tidal ingress from sea level rise) from regulatory planning and undermined the precautionary principle approach introduced in 2011 in response to climate change and sea level rise risks. A law that was once envisioned to protect the coast has now been converted into an instrument for steady erasure of coastal assets, clearly signalling the Environment Ministry’s abandoning of its mandate to look after India’s coasts.

CRZ 2019 is a textbook example of the Doctrine of Non-Regression — a fundamental principle in environmental law which dictates that once protections are put in place, they must not be taken back. This principle is recognized in both international jurisprudence and by India’s courts and it reminds us that genuine progress does not come from weakening safeguards or moving backwards.

CRZ 2019 also directly contradicts three foundational principles of environmental law which have been repeatedly upheld by the Supreme Court:

The Precautionary Principle, affirmed in the Vellore Citizens’ Welfare Forum case (1996) which insists that a lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as an excuse to delay action when there is a threat or apprehension of serious environmental damage. In other words, it is better to be safe than sorry when environment protec-

tion is at stake.

The Public Trust Doctrine, as upheld in MC Mehta v. Kamal Nath (1997), which holds that the state is not the owner but the trustee of natural resources. It has a duty to protect these resources for the benefit of the public and must not allow them to be alienated for private gain or commercial exploitation.

The Principle of Inter-Generational Equity which reminds us that the earth is not something we inherited from our ancestors to use up, but something we are in fact borrowing from future generations. We have a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that the environment we pass on is healthy, safe, and able to sustain life, just as it did for us.

Together, these doctrines form the backbone of India’s environmental jurisprudence. Surprisingly, the scientific basis for the 2019 notification is also visibly absent. Though it cites the Shailesh Nayak Committee report, the final rules introduce several provisions that the Committee never recommended, without any transparent justification, scientific study, or environmental impact assessment. As cautioned by the Supreme Court, policy decisions made without a rational basis are not acts of governance but acts of abdication.

There is still hope as the notification has not yet been implemented in Goa. A challenge to it has been mounted by environmental organisations from Goa. Considering the significance of the challenge, in November 2024, a larger bench of the NGT issued notice to all the coastal states to respond. In October, it had ruled that the challenge would be heard by a larger bench of judges and experts from the Northern, Western, Southern and Eastern zones combined.

Goa’s coastline is not merely a physical boundary — it is a source of food, livelihood, culture and identity for countless communities. For centuries, people here lived in respectful harmony with the sea, based on the recognition that no one has ever won against the sea. Today, this ancient compact is being broken — not by a storm or natural calamity — but by the perversion of a legal instrument originally meant to safeguard it for posterity from unwarranted human interference. In the pursuit of unthinking development, we have already considerably harmed the sea and scarred the shores. We need to restore the truce — that is the need of the hour. (IPA Service)

Over 1,300 dead from floods in Asia

Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand intensify rescue efforts

BATANG TORU (INDONESIA), Dec 2: Emergency crews raced to reach survivors and recover more bodies Tuesday as the death toll from last week's catastrophic floods and landslides surged past 1,300 in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand, with more than 800 people missing.

Days of heavy monsoon rains inundated vast areas, leaving thousands stranded and many clinging to rooftops and trees waiting for help. The flooding and landslides killed at least 1,303 people, with 712 people confirmed dead in Indonesia, 410 in Sri Lanka and 181 in Thailand, authorities said Tuesday. Sri Lanka's president, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, said it's too early to determine the exact number of dead.

In Indonesia, the hardest-hit nation, rescuers struggled to access villages on Sumatra island, where roads have been washed out and bridges collapsed. At least 507 people remain missing, according to the country's National Disaster Management Agency. Helicopters and boats have been deployed, but officials warn that worsening weather and damaged infrastructure are slowing operations.

Indonesia's forests in ruins

Floods and landslides in North Sumatra carried away millions of cubic meters of felled timber, officials said, sparking public concern

that illegal logging may have contributed to the disaster.

Batang Toru, the lush forested area, has turned into a wasteland of broken logs and shattered homes. Roads have vanished, replaced by rivers of sludge.

"This is not just a natural disaster, it's a manmade crisis," said Rianda Purba from the Indonesian Environmental Forum, an activist group. "Deforestation and unchecked development have stripped Batang Toru of its resilience. Without urgent restoration and stricter protections, these floods will become the new normal."

Survivors desperately search for their loved ones

A week after flash floods and landslides swept through West Sumatra, survivors were still awaiting news of their loved ones, who were still unaccounted for.

Zahari Sutra held photos of his missing wife and two daughters, aged 4 and 2, as he pleaded for help with rescuers in Sikumbang village in Agam district. "Other victims have been found ... why not my family?"

The 38-year-old farmer said he dropped his motorbike and ran for higher ground when rising waters blocked his path home last Thursday. He said the raging current swallowed his home. He waded through the water shouting for his



wife and daughters, but there was only silence.

As darkness fell, he found his eldest, a 5-year-old girl, covered in mud, but safe. Fearing more floods, Sutra clung to a lychee tree with his daughter until dawn, when the full scope of the disaster was revealed: all homes were gone or buried under tons of mud.

"I carried my daughter and went for help," he said, his voice breaking. "My only prayer is to find my wife and children."

Sri Lanka counts the dead, and Thailand begins cleanup

Military-led rescue teams in Sri

Lanka scoured flood-devastated areas for 336 people still missing in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah, the Disaster Management Centre said Tuesday. Roads were blocked by landslides and bridges have collapsed, making access difficult.

In the central city of Kandy, residents struggled without running water, relying instead on bottled water collected from natural springs. Authorities warned that conditions could worsen as more rain is forecast in the coming days.

President Dissanayake, speaking in a meeting with government

officials, described the disaster as the worst to strike the country in recent history, saying it remains impossible to determine the full scale of casualties. He warned that the death toll is likely far higher than current figures.

He said that government agencies were working to reach isolated communities.

Selladurai Yogaraj, 35, a resident of Sarasavigama, said he lost his entire family: mother, wife and two children. "I can't even think what life is going to be like," he said.

Another man, Duraikannu Mahoharan, said he lost his wife, daughter and a house. "Only my sons and I survived. Now I am staying with my brother," he said.

In southern Thailand, cleanup has begun on streets and in buildings after massive floods affected more than 1.5 million households and 3.9 million people. Authorities are working to restore infrastructure, including water and electricity.

Thailand's Interior Ministry said on Monday it would set up public kitchens to provide freshly cooked food to affected residents. The first batch of compensation payments of 239 million baht (USD 7.4 million) is set to be distributed to 26,000 people, government spokesperson Siripong Angkasakulkiat also said Monday. (AP)

Former Pak PM Imran Khan's sister allowed to meet him in Adiala Jail

LAHORE, Dec 2: The Pakistan government on Tuesday allowed Imran Khan's sister to meet him in prison after a large number of party supporters gathered outside Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail following speculation over his health and well-being. An unannounced ban was placed on meeting the 73-year-old former cricketer-turned-politician, who has been in prison since August 2023 in multiple cases, since more than a month.

Constantly denying his family members from meeting the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder led to speculations on social media whether he is alive or dead.

Adiala Jail authorities however claimed that he is in "good health".

The PTI in a statement on Thursday said that one of the sisters of Khan, Dr Uzma Khan, was permitted to meet him.

"Although today the government allowed Dr Uzma to see her brother in jail, but let's see whether the government honours its commitment," it said. Meanwhile, the Punjab government deployed the entire Rawalpindi police force along Adiala Road to thwart the PTI protest.

The government has already imposed Section 144 (ban on gathering of four or more people) in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The station house officers of eight police stations in Rawalpindi along with senior officers are present outside Adiala Jail.

"An eight-kilometre stretch has been completely sealed. Schools and colleges are closed. Residents



are being required to show their ID card to pass through the area," an official of Punjab government told PTI. A group of lawyers also held a demonstration outside the Islamabad High Court against the government for keeping Imran Khan in isolation.

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry said compliance with Section 144 would be ensured in Islamabad and Rawalpindi at any cost.

"Whether they come to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) or the Adiala jail, action under Section 144 would be carried out without any discrimination," the minister said. Earlier, Imran Khan's son Kasim Khan demanded the government present proof that he (Khan) is alive.

"We demand proof of (Imran Khan)'s life," Khan's son Kasim Khan had said in a post on X.

Khan's party has warned the authorities of countrywide protests if the government does not allow his sisters to see him.

His sisters have also warned that if anything happens to Khan, those involved and their families will not be spared by Pakistanis both here and abroad. (PTI)

US vows to refocus G20 on driving growth and prosperity under its presidency

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, Dec 2: The US has said it will steer the G20 back to its "core mission" of driving economic growth and prosperity by prioritising regulatory reform, energy security and technological innovation during its year-long presidency of the grouping.

America assumed the G20 presidency on December 1.

The State Department in a statement on Monday said under President Donald Trump's leadership, the US will "return the G20 to focusing on its core mission of driving economic growth and prosperity to produce results".

"As we usher in these much-needed reforms, we will prioritise three core themes: unleashing economic prosperity by limiting regulatory burdens, unlocking affordable and secure energy supply chains, and pioneering new technologies and innovations," it said.

The US will host the G20 Leaders' Summit in Miami, Florida, in 2026, coinciding with the country's 250th anniversary year.

America took over the presidency from South Africa, but Trump did not attend the Johannesburg Summit held last month. He has also said that South Africa will

not receive an invitation to the 2026 G20 Summit to be hosted in Miami.

Trump had claimed that the US skipped the Johannesburg summit because South Africa had refused to acknowledge or address what he described as "horrific" human rights abuses against Afrikaners and other descendants of Dutch, French, and German settlers.

"At the conclusion of the G20, South Africa refused to hand off the G20 Presidency to a Senior Representative from our US Embassy, who attended the Closing Ceremony. Therefore, at my direction, South Africa will not be receiving an invitation to the 2026 G20," Trump had said.

He added that South Africa has "demonstrated" that it is "not a country worthy of membership anywhere, and we are going to stop all payments and subsidies to them, effective immediately".

The South African President Cyril Ramaphosa had termed Trump's remarks "regrettable".

South Africa had assumed the year-long G20 presidency on December 1, 2024, taking over from the previous presidency held by India.

It hosted world leaders in Johan-

nesburg from November 22 to 23, the first time a G20 Summit was held on African soil.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who attended the Johannesburg summit, said the "successful" meeting would contribute to a prosperous and sustainable planet.

The G20 or Group of 20 is an inter-governmental forum comprising 19 countries, the European Union, and the African Union.

By tradition, the host country hands over a symbolic wooden gavel to the nation taking over the G20 presidency. But there was no American official on hand to receive it from South African President Cyril Ramaphosa because of the boycott.

The US wanted to send a representative from its embassy. South Africa refused, saying it was an insult for Ramaphosa to hand over to what it called a junior official.

The South African Presidency, in a press statement, later said that since the US did not attend the summit, the instruments of the G20 presidency were "duly" handed over to a US Embassy official at the Department of International Relations and Cooperation headquarters. (PTI)

Hong Kong to start independent inquiry into deadly fire as public pressure mounts

HONG KONG, Dec 2: Hong Kong will set up an independent committee of inquiry headed by a judge to determine the cause of a deadly apartment block fire that shocked the city, and to make recommendations to prevent a similar tragedy from happening again, its leader said Tuesday.

John Lee, the chief executive of the Chinese region, pledged to overcome vested interests and bring about systemic change in the construction industry after a fire that killed at least 151 people last week. He said 30 others remain missing.

"We must uncover the truth, ensure that justice is served, let the deceased rest in peace and provide comfort to the living," he told reporters at a weekly press conference. "We want to ensure that we will prevent such a tragedy from happening again."

The fire broke out last Wednesday around scaffolding at the Wang Fuk Court complex in the Tai Po district and spread to seven of the complex's eight towers. They were home to more than 4,600 people and many have been left homeless. Forty people remain hospitalised, Lee said.

At least 14 people have been arrested so far by the city's anti-corruption body and police, including scaffolding contractors, company directors and an engineering consultant, as authorities probe sus-



pected corruption and negligence in a renovation project at the housing complex.

The initial investigation has focused on why the fire expanded so rapidly, overwhelming firefighting efforts.

Lee refused to comment on media reports that people were arrested last weekend in what some saw as an attempt to snuff out criticism of the government, including one person who was reportedly involved in a petition calling for government accountability and arrested on suspicion of inciting sedition.

Lee said only that "I will not tolerate any crimes, particularly crimes that exploit the tragedy that we

are facing now."

Authorities have cited both high winds and substandard materials used for the maintenance work.

Contractors were found to be using substandard netting, authorities said on Monday. Among the 20 samples of netting investigators collected at the complex, seven were found to have failed safety standards.

Lee said that those responsible had mixed substandard netting with qualified materials tricks inspectors.

The entire building renovation system in Hong Kong will be reformed, he vowed.

John Burns, an honorary professor of politics and public administration at the University of Hong Kong, said that investigation results will likely be credible as the government seeks to reassure the public.

"It's in everyone's interest that the process and results of the investigations be credible," Burns said. "Transparency is crucial for restoring trust."

Lee said that 2,500 people have been moved into transitional housing units, some in government housing and others in hostels and hotels. About 20 people remain in shelters that housed hundreds on the first night. (AP)

Pak claims relief operations for cyclone-hit Sri Lanka 'hampered by lack of cooperation' by India

ISLAMABAD, Dec 2: Pakistan on Tuesday alleged that its relief operations for cyclone-hit Sri Lanka were being "hampered by lack of cooperation" by India by "delaying permission" to use its airspace, a claim denied by New Delhi. India on Monday expeditiously heeded to Pakistan's request to use Indian airspace to send humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka, people familiar with the matter said. They said the official request for overflight was submitted by Pakistan at around 1300 hours (Indian time) on Monday and India expeditiously cleared the request and intimated the same to Pakistan at 1730 hours (Indian time).

It was processed at the shortest notice period of four hours, they added. They also described as "fake" reports in the Pakistani media that India has not granted overflight facility to

Pakistan to send aid to Sri Lanka.

"Pakistani media, as usual, is indulging in propaganda and peddling fake news. These allegations are baseless and misleading. All requests for overflight or transit are processed strictly in accordance with established procedures and international norms," said one of the people. The Pakistan Foreign Office (FO) on Tuesday claimed that Islamabad's relief efforts were being "hampered by lack of cooperation" by India which was "delaying permission to allow it to use its air space". "India continues to block humanitarian assistance from Pakistan to Sri Lanka. The special aircraft carrying Pakistan's humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka continues to face delays for over 60 hours now awaiting flight clearance from India," the FO said in a social media post. (PTI)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed heartfelt condolences to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and reaffirmed that India stands firmly beside Sri Lanka and its people in this difficult hour," the president's office said.

Prime Minister Modi on Monday spoke to Dissanayake and assured him of continued support in the rehabilitation efforts across all regions impacted by Cyclone Ditwah.

In a telephone conversation, Modi expressed condolences for the loss of lives and devastation in Sri Lanka,

India took leading role in emergency response in aftermath of cyclone: SL Prez office

COLOMBO, Dec 2: India has taken a leading role in immediate emergency response efforts in the aftermath of Cyclone Ditwah that has killed more than 400 people and caused widespread devastation, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's office said on Tuesday.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed heartfelt condolences to President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and reaffirmed that India stands firmly beside Sri Lanka and its people in this difficult hour," the president's office said.

Prime Minister Modi on Monday spoke to Dissanayake and assured him of continued support in the rehabilitation efforts across all regions impacted by Cyclone Ditwah.

In a telephone conversation, Modi expressed condolences for the loss of lives and devastation in Sri Lanka,

and said the people of India stood in firm solidarity and support with the people of the island nation in this hour of need.

Sri Lanka has been grappling with widespread flooding, landslides and infrastructure collapse triggered by Cyclone Ditwah, leaving several districts isolated and severely straining the country's disaster-response capacity.

The Disaster Management Centre (DMC) has confirmed at least 410 deaths and 336 missing till Tuesday morning in catastrophic floods and landslides caused by extreme weather conditions since November 16.

India launched Operation Sagar Bandhu and sent two urban search and rescue teams comprising 80 NDRF personnel to the island nation, reaffirming the spirit of 'Neighbourhood First'. (PTI)

Canada joins EU defence fund as country pivots away from US

TORONTO, Dec 2: Canada has joined a major European Union defence fund, Prime Minister Mark Carney's office has said, as the country looks to diversify its military spending away from the United States.

The plan allows Canadian defence companies access to a 150 billion euro (USD 170 billion) EU loan programme, known as Security Action for Europe, or SAFE. That would allow Canadian firms to secure cheap, EU-backed loans to procure military equipment.

"Canada's participation in SAFE will fill key capability gaps, expand markets for Canadian suppliers, and attract European defence investment into Canada," Carney said in a statement. Canada is the first non-EU country to gain access. Carney said he intends to diversify Canada's procurement and enhance the country's relationship with the EU. He has previously said that no more will over 70 cents of every dollar of Canadian military capital spending go to the US.

US President Donald Trump's actions — including launching a trade war and suggesting Canada become the 51st US state — infuriated Canadians and created the political environment for Carney to win the job of prime minister after promising to confront Trump's increased aggression.

Carney's government continues to review the purchase of US F-35 fighter jets to explore other options. Carney has said the potential for having more production in Canada is a factor. A proposal by Sweden's Saab promised that assembly and maintenance of the Saab Gripen fighter jet would take place in Canada. Canada has said it will meet NATO's military spending guideline by early next year. (AP)

Pope Leo XIV sends message of support to southern Lebanon as he ends 1st foreign trip

BEIRUT, Dec 2: Pope Leo XIV prayed on Tuesday at the site of a deadly 2020 Beirut port explosion that has become a symbol of dysfunction and official impunity and called for justice to prevail, as he offered words of consolation to Lebanon's people — including in the war-battered south — on the final day of his first overseas trip.

Relatives of some of the 218 people killed by the blast held up photos of their loved ones as Leo arrived at the scorched site. They stood side by side as Leo prayed silently first at a monument to the dead, then greeted each one, grasping their hands.

The emotional encounter took place next to the shell of the last grain silo standing at the site destroyed by the Aug. 4, 2020, blast and the piles of burned cars torched in its wake. The explosion did billions of dollars in damage as hundreds of tons of ammonium nitrate detonated in a port warehouse.

Five years on, the families of those killed are still seeking justice. No official has been convicted in a judicial investigation that has been repeatedly obstructed, angering Lebanese for whom the blast was just the latest evidence of impunity after decades of corruption and financial crimes.

"The visit clearly sends the message that the explosion was a crime," said Cecile Roukoz, whose brother, Joseph Roukoz, was killed and who was on hand to meet the pope. "There should be a message; the country should end impunity and ensure justice is served."

When he arrived in Lebanon on Sunday,

Leo urged the country's political leaders to pursue the truth as a means of peace and reconciliation. In a homily Sunday after praying at the site, Leo referred explicitly to the blast and called for Lebanon to be a place of justice.

Pope calls for justice at Mass

An estimated 150,000 worshippers packed the Beirut waterfront for Leo's final Mass, which he celebrated immediately after praying at the nearby blast site.

In his homily, Leo named the many problems the Lebanese people have faced, from economic crises to the blast and renewed fears of war. He said it's natural to feel "paralysed by powerlessness in the face of evil and oppressed by so many difficult situations."

But he urged them not to be resigned, and to find ways to remain hopeful and grateful. He insisted, though, that justice was part of the equation.

"Let us cast off the armour of our ethnic and political divisions, open our religious confessions to mutual encounter and reawaken in our hearts the dream of a united Lebanon," he said. "A Lebanon where peace and justice reign, where all recognise each other as brothers and sisters."

"Lebanon, stand up! Be a home of justice and fraternity! Be a prophetic sign of peace for the whole of the Levant!"

An emotional visit to the hospital

The American pope opened his final day in Lebanon with an emotional visit to the De La Croix hospital, which specialises in care for people with psychological problems. Awaiting



him were some familiar-looking faces: young boys dressed up as Swiss Guards and cardinals, and even one dressed as the pope himself in all white.

The mother superior of the congregation that runs the hospital, Mother Marie Makhlof, was overcome as she welcomed the pope, telling him that her hospital cares for the "forgotten souls, burdened by their loneliness."

Leo said the facility stands as a reminder to all of humanity. "We cannot forget those who are most fragile. We cannot conceive of a society that races ahead at full speed, clinging to the false myths of well-being, while at the same

time ignoring so many situations of poverty and vulnerability," he said.

"For Lebanon, (the visit) means a lot," said pilgrim Maggie Claudine, who was waiting for Leo at the hospital. "We hope that peace will prevail, and that is what we wish for. We want to live in comfort."

Families of blast dead seek justice

Leo has sought to bring a message of peace to Lebanon as it copes with the economic crisis, the aftermath of last year's devastating war between Hezbollah and Israel and the fallout from the port blast.

Among those on hand to welcome Leo at the

blast site was Lebanon Social Affairs Minister Haneen Sayed, whose mother was killed. Another was Mireille Khoury, whose 15-year-old son, Elias, was killed.

When Leo approached her, Khoury pointed to the building where they lived across the port, where Elias died as he was hanging out in his room.

Khoury said Lebanon cannot heal from its wounds without justice and accountability. She has been among the relatives who have called for finalising the stalled investigation that implicated a long list of political, security and judicial officials. The probe has been obstructed by officials who have largely refused to cooperate.

"Justice is the basis of building any country," she told The Associated Press in an interview before the pope arrived in Lebanon. "Our children were killed in their homes. They were killed because someone kept (ammonium nitrate) in the main port of the city near a residential area."

Khoury said the pope's prayer and support would bring some relief, but said she would not give up on her pursuit of justice.

"I will not say that this anger will fully just disappear," Khoury said. "But I think it will give some sort of relaxation of this anger that is in my heart until justice is served."

The fate of the port's massive grain silos, which absorbed much of the shock of the explosion, has also been a matter of debate.

The Lebanese government at one point planned to demolish the damaged silos but de-

ecided against it after families of the blast's victims and survivors, who want them preserved, protested. The port, meanwhile, is largely functional again but still hasn't been fully rebuilt.

Calls for peace in the south

Pope Leo XIV referenced the ongoing conflict in southern Lebanon in his farewell speech at the Beirut airport and sent a message of support to the people of the south.

Christians in the south had been disappointed that his visit did not include a visit to their areas, which were battered by last year's war between Israel and Hezbollah and are still the target of regular airstrikes that Israel says aim to stop Hezbollah from rebuilding.

"I greet all the regions of Lebanon that I was unable to visit: Tripoli and the north, the Beqaa and the south of the country, which is currently experiencing a state of conflict and uncertainty," Leo said. He also referred to the cities of Sidon and Tyre, which are mentioned in the New Testament, as "biblical places."

"May the attacks and hostilities cease," he said. "We must recognise that armed struggle brings no benefit. While weapons are lethal, negotiation, mediation and dialogue are constructive."

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun urged the pope to keep Lebanon in his prayers.

The Lebanese are "a faithful people who deserve life," he said. "As we bid you farewell, we do not only part with an honoured guest, but with a father who brought us comfort, and reminded us that the world has not forgotten Lebanon." (AP)

Plea concerning contracts to CM's kin: SC asks Arunachal govt to file comprehensive affidavit

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Arunachal Pradesh government to file a comprehensive affidavit giving details of the contracts awarded from 2015 to 2025, including those to firms of family members of Chief Minister Pema Khandu, saying the statistics are "telling".

A bench of justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, which observed it would consider whether any inquiry is required or not, passed the order while hearing a plea seeking a CBI probe into the award of contracts for public works in Arunachal Pradesh to the firms owned by the family members of Khandu.

"The coincidence is absolutely remarkable," the bench observed, adding that it was alleged before it that difference between tenders of the competing firms was minuscule.

The bench said if the difference is minuscule, that shows cartelisation.

"If that is so, that becomes serious," it observed, adding, "The statistics are telling."

Advocate Prashant Bhusan, appearing for petitioner NGOs Save Mon Region Federation and Voluntary Arunachal Sena, told the bench that according to the affidavit filed by the state, several contracts and work orders were given to firms owned by the immediate family members of

Khandu.

The bench asked the state's counsel why its affidavit has given details of contracts relating to Tawang district only.

The state's counsel said that in the petition and the subsequent orders passed by the top court, the controversy was confined to Tawang only.

"We do not find any such confinement or limitation of the petition being confined to district Tawang or the order passed by this court earlier limited it to district Tawang," the bench said.

The state's counsel urged the court to grant him reasonable time to file a detailed affidavit covering all the districts.

Bhusan said with regard to Tawang also, the up-to-date information was not provided.

"As such, the respondent may file a comprehensive affidavit covering all the districts, including Tawang. We make it clear that the details as required by the previous order would be confined only to the period 2015 to 2025 and not prior to 2015," the bench said.

It granted eight weeks to the state to file the affidavit and posted the matter for hearing on February 3.

Bhusan said the apex court had earlier asked the state to file affidavit giving details of the contracts, including those awarded to firms or indi-



viduals related to the chief minister or his immediate family members.

Referring to the state's affidavit, he said several contracts and work orders were given to firms related to immediate family members of Khandu.

Bhusan said according to the affidavit, 31 contracts worth ₹ 188 crore were awarded besides ₹ 2.61 crore work awarded through work orders.

He said the state has said that below ₹ 50 lakh, they can award work without tenders.

"... They (state) say that we want to give the contracts to companies which are trusted by the local people and the companies trusted by the local people are the companies of the chief minister, his wife etc. because he come from that area

and therefore they are trusted," Bhusan said.

He said in an earlier petition, the apex court had asked the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) to look into the allegations and the CAG has filed its report.

Bhusan said it was earlier alleged that state had paid for transportation of rice by head load even when road existed there and it could have been transported through trucks which would have been much cheaper.

"Is it something like Bihar Chara Ghotala (Bihar fodder scam)," the bench asked.

Bhusan responded, "In a way."

The bench told the state's counsel that its affidavit has given details of work orders and contracts which were given and the firms to whom they were given.

"That is not disputed because that has come on the affidavit of the state. We will consider whether or not any inquiry is required," it said.

"Please understand something that in a state, the work orders and tenders are being given to family members of the chief minister in huge numbers as indicated in the counter affidavit of the state," the bench told the state's counsel.

It said the earlier order of the court does not confine it to Tawang only.

"You are trying to project that the writ petition

is limited only to Tawang and order of this court is only limited to Tawang," the bench told the state's counsel, adding, "We may rather think on a line that you are trying to conceal something".

The state's counsel said the allegations relates to Tawang and state will file a comprehensive affidavit giving details for all districts.

"The additional information which we want will cover the entire state and will be up to date," the bench said. When Bhusan argued if the court is inclined to order an investigation, the bench said, "There is no inclination shown as yet. For the time being, we want to receive the information".

On March 18, the apex court asked the state to file a detailed affidavit giving details of parties to whom contracts were awarded with reference to the contracts mentioned in the petition. Pema Khandu is party to the PIL.

Pema Khandu's father Dorjee Khandu's second wife Rinchin Drema and his nephew Tsering Tashi have also been made parties to the case.

Dorjee Khandu served as the chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh from 2007 until his death in a helicopter crash in April 2011.

The plea claimed Drema's firm, Brand Eagles, was awarded a large number of government contracts despite there being a clear conflict of interest. (PTI)

CEC Gyanesh Kumar to take over International IDEA Chairship in 2026

India to lead global democracy body on its 30th anniversary

HT Correspondent

NAHARLAGUN, Dec 2: In a significant global recognition of India's electoral integrity, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar is set to assume the Chairship of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) on December 3, 2026 at Stockholm, Sweden. He will take charge on behalf of India, marking a milestone moment as the organisation completes 30 years of promoting democracy worldwide.

Established in 1995, International IDEA is an inter-governmental body comprising 35 member countries, with the United States and Japan serving as observers. The organisation has held observer status at the UN General Assembly since 2003. Its mandate includes strengthening



global democratic processes, supporting electoral management bodies and fostering democratic norms through research and ca-

capacity-building programmes.

India, a founding member of International IDEA has played an active role in the organisation's governance and collaborative initiatives. Over the years, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has partnered with International IDEA on research, training and best-practice exchange, contributing significantly to global electoral reforms.

As the world's largest democracy with over 90 crore electors, India is expected to draw upon its vast experience in conducting free, fair and transparent elections while steering the organisation through 2026. Under CEC Gyanesh Kumar's chairship, India aims to strengthen global election management systems and support democratic institutions world-

AP Literary Society celebrates 19th foundation day with grandeur

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Dec 2: The 19th Foundation Day of the Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society (APLS), the State's premier literary body was celebrated in a grand ceremony on Tuesday at the State Banquet Hall, Itanagar, chaired by its president, YD Thongchi.

MLA Toko Tatung, attending as the Chief Guest, described himself as an ardent lover of poetry and literature, reciting three poems by renowned writers. He praised Arunachal's literature as a mirror of society, culture and traditions of the state's diverse communities and lauded APLS for fostering a vibrant literary environment and supporting budding writers.

In his presidential address, YD Thongchi highlighted APLS initiatives, including the publication of dramas by state dramatists under the 'Natak Mala' series as a part of the dramatic movement launched by Riken Ngomle with government support.

CM, Deputy CM extend birthday greetings to JP Nadda

ITANAGAR, Dec 2: Chief Minister Pema Khandu and his deputy Chowna Mein on Tuesday extended birthday greetings to Union Health Minister and BJP president J P Nadda, praising him as a leader whose organisational acumen and governance vision have significantly strengthened the ruling party across the country.

Khandu, in an X post, said Nadda's leadership, disciplined work ethic and dedication to organisational strengthening have energised every BJP worker across the nation.

He emphasised that the BJP president has played a pivotal role in boosting the confidence of workers at the grassroots and guiding the party toward sustained expansion in every region.

"Under your guidance, the party continues to expand its reach at the grassroots, deliver good governance and uphold the spirit of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas'," Khandu wrote, adding that Nadda's leadership has ensured continuity in service-driven politics. The chief minister added that Nadda's ability to lead with clarity while maintaining a deep connect with party workers has helped strengthen the organisation's presence even in remote and aspirational districts of the country.

"May Lord Buddha bless you with good health, happiness and long life in the service of our great motherland," Khandu added.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, in another X post, described Nadda as a guiding force whose composed leadership style continues to inspire the BJP in Arunachal Pradesh and beyond.

"Your calm strength, clarity of purpose, and consistent service to the nation continue to motivate every karyakarta," Mein said.

The deputy chief minister added that Nadda's role in shaping both the organisational discipline and vision of the party has been instrumental in driving its progress.

"May this special day bring you renewed energy, happiness and fulfilment," Mein said, wishing Nadda a rewarding year ahead, as he continues to lead the organisation toward new achievements. (PTI)

Parnaik extends greetings on International Day of Persons with Disabilities

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Dec 2: Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), extended warm greetings to the people of the State, particularly the differently-abled community, on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. He expressed hope that the day would deepen public understanding of disability-related challenges and inspire collective efforts to empower Divyang individuals to face life with dignity, confidence and hope.

In his message, the Governor emphasised that the greatest barriers often arise not from physical limitations but from societal and emotional constraints. He underlined that self-confidence and optimism are key drivers of human progress and that, with sensitivity, encouragement and appropriate support, persons with disabilities can transcend physical challenges.

Governor Parnaik highlighted the pivotal role of families, communities and society in ensuring equal participation of persons with disabilities in social and economic life. He urged all sections of society to create meaningful livelihood opportunities and sustainable avenues for growth, making Divyang citizens equal partners in societal development.

"The International Day of Persons with Disabilities is an opportunity to recognise, respect and celebrate the abilities and contributions of our Divyang brethren," the Governor said, reaffirming the State's commitment to inclusivity and empowerment.

Gita Jayanti celebrated in Pasighat by Samskrita Bharati



HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, Dec 2: Gita Jayanti was celebrated with devotion and cultural pride at Donyi-Polo Vidya Niketan, Pasighat under the aegis of Samskrita Bharati, Purvottar Kshetra. This year's observance held special significance as it coincided with Indigenous Faith Day in Arunachal Pradesh, drawing participation from students, teachers and community members.

Chief Guest Prof (Dr) Sanjay Swami, Dean, College of Agriculture, lauded the initiative to celebrate the occasion in the northeastern region. He emphasised the Bhagavad Gita's timeless relevance in inspiring courage, emotional balance and universal human values that unite people across cultures.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr Jnanashree Devi, Assistant Professor at Apex Professional University, highlighted how the Gita offers practical guidance for discipline, emotional resilience and purposeful living in contemporary times. Senior teacher Ram Prakash Sharma also reflected on the scripture's enduring philosophical wisdom.

Indigenous Faith Day observed in Daporijo

HT Correspondent

DAPORILJO, Dec 2: The 26th Indigenous Faith Day was observed with enthusiasm at the Indigenous Ground in Daporijo on Friday. The programme was graced by Daporijo MLA Taniya Soki as Chief Guest, while Baririjo ZPM Pzonga Gango attended as Guest of Honour.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Guest Soki said that the state government has declared 1 December as Indigenous Day across Arunachal Pradesh with the objective of preserving and promoting the traditions and cultures of Indigenous communities. He highlighted that Indigenous priests

are being provided monthly honorariums and a separate Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) has been created to safeguard Indigenous practices. Soki urged the people to uphold the reputation of Arunachal Pradesh as a peaceful state and maintain communal harmony. He cautioned against creating divisions based on caste, community, region or religion, stressing that peace and unity must remain undisturbed.

Resource persons including Larji Rigia president TCS, Reri Pimbu Sorum president IFCSAP District Unit, Taro Nilling Secretary of Tagin Indigenous Faith & Cultural Society,

Tapir Game, Galo Indigenous Faith & Cultural Society and Marging Taji former Assistant General Secretary (HQ), IFCSAP, spoke on the significance of Indigenous identity and cultural preservation.

A two-minute silence was observed in memory of late Reri Tago Dulom, former General Secretary of IFCSAP Upper Subansiri Unit, who passed away last year while engaged in Indigenous community work. A posthumous award was presented in recognition of his dedication and contributions, informed IFCSAP Upper Subansiri Unit president Reri Pimbu Sorum.

Workshops on Dhrupad, Sattriya held in Narottam Nagar



HT Correspondent

KHONSA, Dec 2: Ramakrishna Mission Narottam Nagar in collaboration with SPIC MACAY (Arunachal Chapter), SRF Foundation and the Department of Education, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, successfully conducted five-day workshops on two classical art forms—Dhrupad and Sattriya Nritya—from 26 to 30 November 2025. The programme was coordinated by Chayanika Vashisth of SPIC MACAY Arunachal Pradesh Chapter.

A total of 135 students from various districts of Arunachal Pradesh participated in the intensive training. The Dhrupad sessions were

conducted by Padma Shri Ustad Wasiuddin Dagar, accompanied by Mohan Shyam Sharma on the Pakhawaj. The Sattriya workshop was led by Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar awardee Usha Rani Baishya, who introduced students to the nuances and discipline of the classical dance form.

As part of the initiative, Dhrupad recitals and Sattriya performances were organised at Wangcha Rajkumar Government College Deomali, Ramakrishna Mission School Narottam Nagar, Government Higher Secondary School Deomali, Government Higher Secondary School Khonsa and Mahabodhi Rising Wisdom School, Deomali. These outreach programmes offered hundreds of students and teachers meaningful exposure to India's rich classical traditions.

The workshops aimed to nurture artistic sensibilities among young learners, encourage constructive cultural engagement and deepen appreciation for India's timeless heritage. The successful conduct of the programme reaffirmed the commitment of SPIC MACAY and Ramakrishna Mission to holistic education and cultural enrichment in the region.

Calls for State-level GIS policy, AI-enabled dashboard for smart governance and security



ITANAGAR, Dec 2: Governor Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), participated in GeoSmart India 2025 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, on Tuesday.

The four-day conference-cum-expo, organised by Geospatial Media and Communications, carries the theme 'One Nation, One Map: Advancing Geospatial Infrastructure for National Sovereignty and Economy'.

Speaking at the North East Conclave segment, the Governor emphasized the critical role of geospatial technology—including GIS, GPS, drones, satellite imagery and digital mapping in evidence-based governance and sustainable development. He highlighted that precise mapping of terrain, resources and infrastructure gaps enables planners to make informed decisions on roads, bridges, public services and disaster mitigation, while aligning projects with community needs and environmental realities.

The Governor elaborated on how geospatial tools enhance monitoring of land use, forests, water bodies, crop patterns and project progress in real time, allowing timely corrective action. He stressed the technology's potential to support scientific assessment of natural resources, climate patterns, biodiversity and socio-economic trends for future-ready policymaking.

Outlining strategic recommendations for Arunachal Pradesh, Governor Parnaik proposed developing a State-level geospatial policy, building a central data repository, training government teams in GIS, integrating drone-based mapping and using dashboards for public projects. He emphasised collaboration among departments to create unified geospatial datasets to strengthen decision-making, disaster preparedness, environmental protection, agriculture, urban and

rural development, border management and sustainable tourism.

The Governor underscored the importance of GIS dashboards in promoting transparency in government projects and mapping natural resources and renewable energy potential to support long-term sustainability. Highlighting the GatiShakti platform, he called for a State-specific AI application tailored to Arunachal Pradesh's geography and local needs. Such a platform, he explained, would integrate data across departments, streamline coordination, eliminate duplication and enable faster, more transparent governance.

Further, Governor Parnaik stressed that an AI-enabled, geospatially integrated system could significantly bolster security architecture. The platform would assist in monitoring drug-trafficking routes, supporting border surveillance in remote areas, enabling real-time intelligence fusion and enhancing interagency collaboration. It would also facilitate asset tracking, seizure operations and effective law enforcement, thereby strengthening the protection of communities and long borders.

The Governor concluded that geospatial technology, combined with AI-driven state-level applications, would be a transformative force for Arunachal Pradesh, ensuring smart, sustainable and secure growth for the State.

India's third indigenous nuclear submarine to be commissioned soon: Navy Chief



NEW DELHI, Dec 2: India is strengthening the naval component of its nuclear triad with Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi on Tuesday saying that the third indigenous nuclear-powered submarine 'Ari-daman' will be commissioned soon and that his force is focusing on boosting its overall combat prowess.

Addressing a press conference ahead of the Navy Day, Admiral Tripathi said the process to seal the proposed acquisition of six stealth submarines under Project 75 India (P75-I) is nearing completion.

He also said that the Navy will get the first four of the 26 Rafale-M fighter jets in 2028. India had inked the Rs 64,000 crore deal with France in April to procure the jets.

The Navy Chief highlighted his force's role during Operation Sindoor and said its aggressive posturing forced the Pakistan Navy to remain close to their ports.

The Admiral said the Indian Navy maintained a high operational readiness, including in the Western Arabian Sea, in the last seven-eight months following the hostilities with Pakistan.

The Navy Chief, without elaborating, said Operation Sindoor "remains in progress".

"The aggressive posturing and immediate action during Operation Sindoor, including deployment of

the carrier battle group, forced the Pakistan Navy to remain close to their ports or near the Makran coast," he said.

The Navy Chief said that Operation Sindoor has put financial strain on Pakistan as a significant number of merchant ships avoided travelling to that country following the hostilities.

The cost of insurance for the vessels to travel to Pakistan had also gone up, he said.

To a question on the nuclear-powered submarines, the Navy Chief said India is set to commission the third indigenous nuclear-powered submarine soon.

INS Aridaman is in the final stages of trials and will be commissioned soon, he said while responding to a question.

India's nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) programme is a closely guarded project. INS Arihant was the first vessel under the SSBN project, followed by INS Arighat.

The SSBN programme is a key element of India's nuclear deterrence capability.

While India has proven air and land-launched nuclear capabilities, it is now focusing on boosting its underwater nuclear prowess.

INS Arihant is India's first home-made nuclear submarine. It was launched in July 2009 and was quietly commissioned in 2016.

India is among a select group of countries having nuclear-armed submarines. The countries that have such assets are: the US, Russia, the UK, France and China.

India has been a leading voice in pitching for universal nuclear disarmament aimed at complete elimination of atomic weapons.

In 1998, India conducted Pokhran-II nuclear tests, triggering strong reactions from many countries. Following the tests, India maintained that it carried out the tests to have 'credible minimum deterrence' and it will follow the approach of 'no first use'.

In 2003, India officially came out with its nuclear doctrine that clearly elaborated on the 'no first use' policy. (PTI)

Nehru wanted to build Babri mosque using public funds: Rajnath



VADODARA, Dec 2: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday said the country's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to build the "Babri masjid" using public funds, but Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel didn't allow his plans to succeed.

He also claimed that Nehru had suggested that funds collected by the common people for building a memorial for Patel after his death be utilised for constructing wells and roads.

Addressing a gathering at Sadhi village near Vadodara as part of a 'Unity March' to commemorate Sardar Patel's 150th birth anniversary, Singh hailed Patel as a true liberal and secular person who never believed in appeasement.

"Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru wanted to build the Babri Masjid (in Ayodhya) using public funds. If anyone opposed this proposal, it was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, born to a Gujarati mother. He didn't allow the Babri Masjid to be built using public funds," said Singh.

When Nehru raised the issue of restoring the Somnath Temple in Gujarat, Patel clarified that the temple was a different matter because Rs 30 lakh required for its facelift had been donated by common people, he added.

"A trust had been established, and not a single penny of the government's money had been spent

on this (Somnath temple) work. Similarly, the government didn't give a single rupee to construct the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. The entire cost was borne by the people of the country. This is called real secularism," the BJP veteran said.

Singh said Sardar Patel could have become the Prime Minister, but he never hankered for any position in his career. Despite ideological differences with Nehru, he worked with him because he had given a promise to Mahatma Gandhi, the defence minister added.

He claimed that Nehru became the president of Congress in 1946 because Patel withdrew his nomination on Gandhi's advice.

"In 1946, the President of Congress was to be elected. A majority

of the Congress committee members proposed Vallabhbhai Patel's name. When Gandhiji asked Patel to let Nehru become the president and withdraw his nomination, he immediately withdrew his name," said Singh.

Without naming anybody, Singh said some political forces wanted to erase Patel's legacy. "It was PM Narendra Modi whose crucial role re-established Patel as a shining star in the annals of history".

Singh claimed that "some people" tried to hide and erase Patel's legacy, but they won't succeed until the BJP is in power.

"After Patel died, common people collected funds to build a memorial for him, but when this information reached Nehruji, he said Sardar Patel was a leader of

farmers, so this money should be spent on building wells and roads in the village.

"What a farce! Building wells and roads is the government's responsibility. The suggestion of using memorial funds for that was absurd," said Singh.

This indicated that the government of that time wanted to hide and suppress Patel's great legacy at all costs, he added.

"Nehruji awarded himself the Bharat Ratna, but why was Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel not honoured with the Bharat Ratna at that time? PM Narendra Modiji decided to honour Sardar Patel appropriately by building the Statue of Unity. This is truly commendable work by our PM," Singh said.

Singh also dismissed arguments that Patel was too old to become the Prime Minister.

"This is completely wrong. Morarji Desai was over 80 years old. If he could become prime minister of India, why couldn't Sardar Patel, who was under 80?" asked Singh.

Referring to the Kashmir issue, Singh said if demands raised by Patel had been heeded at the time of Kashmir's merger, India wouldn't have had to grapple with the Kashmir problem for so long.

He said Patel always believed in resolving problems through dialogue. (PTI)

Lok Sabha adjourned for day amid Oppn protest over SIR

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: Relentless protest by the Opposition demanding a debate on SIR led to the adjournment of Lok Sabha proceedings for the day on Tuesday even as the government asserted that it was ready to discuss the issue in the House without assigning a timeline.

After two adjournments earlier in the day, the House met again at 2 pm amid sloganeering by the Opposition members.

Dilip Saikia who was presiding over the House, urged the Opposition to allow the House to function as the government was willing to discuss the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in nine states and three Union territories.

He reminded the members that the SIR exercise has already been completed in Bihar and results are evident.

The Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025 was listed for consideration and passage in Lok Sabha but could not be taken up due to disruption.

Earlier during the Zero Hour, which went on for around 10 minutes, various papers and standing committees' reports were laid on the table of the House.

Members of Congress and some other Opposition parties protested and shouted slogans against the SIR of electoral rolls, an issue on which they have been demanding an immediate discussion.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju told the protesting members that they should protect the decorum of the House and there are many members from different parties who should also be heard.

Disrupting the proceedings by members of a few parties is not right, and also anger of losing elections should not be shown in the House, the minister said and mentioned that even late BJP leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee had also lost elections.

While taking a jibe at the Congress on recent electoral losses, Rijju said they are losing the confidence of the people. (PTI)

Bhopal gas: Months after incineration of Union Carbide toxic waste

INDORE, Dec 2: Nearly five months after the toxic waste, soil and packaging material linked to the Bhopal gas tragedy was incinerated at a plant in Pithampur in Madhya Pradesh, around 900 tonnes of ash generated in the process is still lying without disposal.

The incineration of entire 358 tonnes of matter -- 337 tonnes of toxic waste, 19 tonnes of contaminated soil and 2.2 tonnes of packaging material -- from the defunct Union Carbide factory had concluded in the beginning of July this year, over six months after the incineration was brought to the unit from Bhopal. The waste was burned in an incinerator using a scientific process, mixing lime and other materials, producing approximately 900 tonnes of ash, officials said. They said the state government had planned to bury the generated ash in a landfill cell under construction on the premises of the Pithampur plant, located near Tarpura, a village with a population of about 20,000, in Dhar district.

However, nearly two months back, the Madhya Pradesh High Court directed the state government to find an alternative site to

dispose of the ash saying its presence near human habitation is "unacceptable".

According to officials, the ash is currently safely stored in the plant's leak-proof storage shed. At least 5,479 people were killed and thousands were maimed after the highly toxic methyl isocyanate gas leaked from the Union Carbide's pesticide factory in Bhopal on the intervening night of December 2-3, 1984, making it one of the biggest industrial disasters in the world. The Jabalpur bench of the high court on October 8 this year rejected a proposal to bury the ash of the toxic waste in a landfill cell being constructed on the Pithampur plant's premises, stating that the facility was too close to human habitation.

"The present containment site for the toxic ash in proximity to human habitation is unacceptable to this court," the HC said. In its order, the court referred to an interim application filed by an intervener, which stated that tests had found mercury levels in the toxic ash to be above the permissible limit. The application has been filed by the intervener, which disclosed that the tests conducted on

the toxic ash still reveal the presence of mercury, which is higher than the permissible limits as disclosed in the Madhya Pradesh Pollution Control Board's report dated August 12, 2025, the HC said. It also directed the state government to file a report citing alternative sites for containment of this ash.

Under the circumstances, the state is directed to file a report citing alternative sites for containment and also inform the court whether a global tender was floated in order to obtain the best technical expertise of companies/agencies, which may have unimpeachable technical prowess in executing a work of this nature and have dealt with similar cases of containment of toxic chemical waste, it said. The government officials refuse to comment on the disposal plan, saying the matter was sub judice. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, an official, however, told PTI on Tuesday that the contract awarded to a private company for the disposal of Union Carbide waste includes burying the ash in a dedicated landfill cell within the Pithampur plant premises, and that all safety standards are being observed during this construction. (PTI)

Don't behave like British: Mamata slams Centre over SIR

KOLKATA, Dec 2: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday tore into the BJP-led Centre over the SIR of electoral rolls, accusing it of behaving like the British rulers by imposing directives on the state, and vowed that her government would neither allow detention camps nor practise communal politics.

She was addressing a programme at the state secretariat Nabanna, in which she listed her government's work over the last 14-and-a-half years.

Claiming that the SIR process had been triggered at the behest of the BJP to "save its vote bank", Banerjee alleged that the Centre was attempting to "disturb the states" under the guise of electoral reforms.

"I do not run detention camps in Bengal. We do not torture people. We don't disturb others, why is the Centre disturbing the states?" she asked. Banerjee said the Union government must not act like the British rulers.

"I want to tell the Centre: do not behave like the British and forcefully impose anything on us. If you have something to say, tell the state directly. We are committed to the Constitution," she said, adding, "I do not practise communal politics. I practise secular politics. For me, all religions are the same." The remarks come at a time when political temperatures in West Bengal have risen sharply over the SIR, with

the BJP and TMC locked in a bitter war of words.

The SIR exercise, mandated by the Election Commission of India (ECI), aims at revising electoral rolls by verifying entries, identifying deceased or shifted voters, and ensuring updated records ahead of the 2026 Assembly polls.

However, the process has triggered protests by both-level officers (BLOs) over workload, street demonstrations by political leaders, and mud slinging between the TMC and the BJP. Banerjee, also the TMC supremo, reiterated her longstanding charge that the BJP was attempting to misuse the ECI machinery to influence voter lists.

The chief minister also sought to portray her government as the principal defender of constitutional values and federalism. "Bengal does not discriminate. We treat all communities equally. This is not a government that divides people. This is a government that protects everyone," she said, adding that the state would "resist any attempt" to unsettle the social fabric. Over the past week, the CEO's office in Kolkata has witnessed scenes of chaos, with protesting BLOs engaging in altercations with the police over what they call "inhuman workload". The TMC has accused the BJP of trying to "manufacture tension" around the SIR to create a political narrative ahead of the polls.

Banerjee also took an indirect swipe at the Centre's citi-

zenship-related legislations, stating that Bengal would "never support anything that pushes people into detention camps or renders them stateless".

The TMC has consistently opposed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the NRC, calling them instruments of discrimination. "Let me make this clear: there will be no detention camp in Bengal. Nothing will be allowed that harms any community. We follow the path shown by the Constitution, not by divisive politics," she said.

Soon after the chief minister's remarks, the BJP hit back, accusing her of "peddling falsehoods" to divert attention from the TMC's alleged involvement in maintaining "ghost voters" in the electoral rolls.

Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari said Banerjee was "scared" of a clean-up of the voter list.

"The SIR is an ECI-mandated, nationwide process. Why is she afraid? Because thousands of fake and illegal voters have been protected by the TMC for years," he alleged.

Adhikari said comparing the Centre to the British was "an insult to the democratic structure".

"It is Mamata Banerjee who runs Bengal like a private estate. The BJP does not need to learn democracy from her. She must explain why her party is resisting a transparent voter verification process," he said. (PTI)

Data regarding heart-attack cases not maintained centrally: Govt

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: The data regarding cases of heart attack is not maintained centrally, the government informed Parliament on Tuesday.

In a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, Union Health Minister J P Nadda said according to an ICMR study, hospitalisation with acute myocardial infarction (AMI) is associated with the presence of any known comorbidity, family history of thrombotic events and smoking.

He said the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has informed that in order to understand the reasons for heart attack, the ICMR-National Institute of Epidemiology (ICMR-NIE) has conducted a multi-centric matched case-control study at 25 hospitals across the country.

As a part of the study, cases where patients aged from 18 to 45 years admitted in the hospitals with newly-diagnosed AMI be-

tween October 2021 and January 2023 were followed.

The controls were patients aged from 18 to 45 years admitted in the same hospital for other causes, matched for the time of hospitalisation.

Information was collected regarding the various risk factors, Nadda said.

"The study observed that hospitalisation with AMI was associated with presence of any known comorbidity, family history of thrombotic event and ever been smoker," he said.

Nadda further said the National Health Mission (NHM) provides technical and financial support to the states and Union territories under the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NP-NCD). The cardiovascular disease is an integral part of the NP-NCD, he added.

Under the programme, 770 dis-



trict NCD clinics, 6,410 community health centre NCD clinics and 233 cardiac care units have been set up.

Further, a population-based initiative for the prevention, control and screening for common NCDs, including diabetes and hyperten-

sion, has been rolled out in the country under the NHM as part of comprehensive primary healthcare, Nadda informed.

Under the initiative, those aged above 30 years are targeted for their screening.

To manage acute cardiac events,

a hub-and-spoke model has been implemented, Nadda stated.

District hospitals and community health centres (spokes) are equipped to provide initial thrombolysis and stabilisation, while tertiary hospitals and medical colleges (hubs) offer advanced interventions.

Ambulance services, tele-medicine platforms and streamlined referral pathways further enhance access, especially in rural areas.

The Centre also provides support for awareness generation activities for NCDs, including cardiovascular diseases, to be undertaken by the states and Union territories.

The preventive aspect is strengthened under comprehensive primary healthcare through Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, by promoting wellness activities and targeted communication at the community level, Nadda said.

Furthermore, the Eat Right India

movement, led by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), promotes reduced salt, sugar and trans-fat consumption.

The Fit India movement is implemented by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and various yoga-related activities are carried out by the Ministry of AYUSH, the minister informed the House.

Nadda further said the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) offers a health insurance coverage to more than 50 crore people, covering secondary and tertiary cardiac care, including angioplasty and bypass surgeries.

The Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janashadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) and Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT) pharmacies improve access to affordable cardiovascular medicines, stents and implants, reducing out-of-pocket expenses and supporting long-term treatment adherence. (PTI)

Air pollution crisis needs regular monitoring

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

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

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

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

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

It listed the plea for hearing on December 10.

At the outset, the CJI said, "The Delhi pollution matter cannot be

Tripura now witnessing exfiltration: CM

AGARTALA, Dec 2: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said the northeastern state, which is surrounded by Bangladesh on three sides, is now witnessing exfiltration instead of infiltration from across the international border.

The Border Security Force (BSF) has apprehended 57 illegal Rohingya immigrants, 628 Bangladesh nationals and 280 Indians in various operations in 2024, according to an official statement.

"There is no infiltration from across the border. Instead, the state is now witnessing exfiltration... The BSF has been asked to send the infiltrators back after consultation with Border Guards Bangladesh and in compliance with legal procedures," he told reporters on Monday night.

Asserting that the Centre has taken a firm stand against infiltration, he said guarding the international border in the state is challenging because of its geographical location.

The northeastern state, which shares an 856-km international border, is surrounded by Bangladesh on three sides.

"Due to difficult terrains and riverine topography, barbed wire fences could not be erected in some stretches. Despite the challenging situation, the BSF has been doing its best job to guard the international border," he said.

On reports of exfiltration due to Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in a few states, the chief minister said many people who used to live in the country with fake documents are now leaving.

"Those living in the country with fake documents will have to leave, SIR is going to make an impact in West Bengal after Bihar," he said.

When asked about when SIR will be conducted in Tripura, Saha said, "The Centre has made it clear that illegal foreigners will not be allowed to stay and participate in elections here. If New Delhi wants, SIR will be conducted in our state. The presence of illegal foreigners poses a threat to national security."

On the Opposition's criticism of SIR, Saha said, "Infiltration was a political feed to them, but the exercise is being undertaken to ensure only genuine Indians participate in elections." (PTI)

'India was the only country in the world with the highest GST rate' RS returns Manipur GST bill to Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: The Rajya Sabha on Tuesday returned to the Lok Sabha the Manipur GST bill, which replaces an Ordinance to implement the GST 2.0 reforms in the northeastern state, with Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman saying that the bill will benefit people and businesses there.

The Lok Sabha had passed the bill on Monday.

Replying to the discussion on the proposed law, Sitharaman hit out at the Opposition for shedding "crocodile tears" on Manipur and indulging in "drama" over the grievances of people of the state.

"Did the prime minister visit? Did the home minister visit? Did the law and order come to normal? Every time, about Manipur they will raise (these) issues. They will voice their grievances. Total crocodile tears," she said. Sitharaman said the Opposition parties earlier also did not participate in a debate on a bill for Manipur's budget.

"Even today, when the GST benefits have to go to the state government because they will otherwise not earn the revenue out of it, when we are trying to have an Ordinance converted to be a regular bill and get passed here to become an Act they are not here to participate," she said.

Referring to the bill, Sitharaman said it has very important reforms based on steps like track and trace system.

"So as a result, people in Manipur, busi-



nesses in Manipur, enterprises in Manipur also will benefit from this removal of ambiguity which the entire nation has benefited from but Manipur has been denied because there was no government. Now we are giving that benefit to them," she said.

Referring to issues raised by members on the GST reforms, Sitharaman said 28 per cent tax slab has been abolished and several items have been moved to 18 per cent slab.

Earlier, participating in the discussion on the bill, Biju Janta Dal's Sulata Deo said that President's rule should be lifted in Manipur

and elections be held there.

"India was the only country in the world with the highest GST rate, at 28 per cent, while Argentina charges 27 per cent. We've even surpassed that," she had said.

Speaking in support of the bill, YSRCP's Aoydha Rami Reddy Alla said by reducing compliance burdens and ensuring transparency through the proposed legislation, Manipur can focus on sustainable development, tapping into national economic progress and benefiting from inclusive growth that strengthens both the state and

the country as a whole.

He said violent incidents in Manipur declined significantly over the past decade from a peak of 740 in 2008 to 97 in 2020 and 112 in 2021.

Alla said, insurgent fatalities also fell from 364 in 2008 to seven in 2020 and 18 in 2021. He said civilian deaths dropped from 28 in 2013 to nine in 2020.

"However, only in 2023, this declining trend slowed down and as of April 2025, there were about 260 deaths that were reported. This needs to be certainly looked into. Periods of relative peace also clearly support higher economic activity as seen in the trade, entrepreneurship and local industries," said the Rajya Sabha member from Andhra Pradesh.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kukis-Zo groups in Manipur since May 2023.

Alla said, sustainable peace also requires addressing disparities between hill and valley regions and between majoritarian and tribal communities in Manipur.

Nominated member Harsh Vardhan Shringla said the bill would help in Manipur's efforts for economic recovery and growth. "A clearer and more predictable GST system would boost investment, improve tax revenue and support the state's efforts towards economic recovery and growth," he said. (PTI)

Poppy cultivation on 54 acres destroyed in Manipur's Kangpokpi

IMPHAL, Dec 2: Security forces destroyed poppy cultivation on 54 acres of land in Manipur's Kangpokpi district, a police statement said on Tuesday.

The drive was conducted on Monday, it said.

Poppy cultivation on 18 acres located between Khoiripok and Sehjang villages in Kangpokpi district was destroyed, police said.

Five huts, a bag of fertiliser, chemicals and herbicides used in the cultivation were also destroyed, police said.

In another drive, security forces and forest personnel destroyed poppy cultivation on 36 acres of land in the hill ranges of C Lamjang and the surrounding areas in the district.

A total of 11 huts, 14 bags of fertilisers and nine bags of salt found at the plantation sites were destroyed, police said.

The Narcotics Control Bureau had recently stated that security forces and the forest department destroyed poppy cultivation on 144 acres of land in Kangpokpi last week. (PTI)

Tripura Human Rights Commission initiates inquiry into alleged ragging at school hostel

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Dec 2: The Tripura Human Rights Commission (THRC) has taken notice of reports alleging prolonged ragging at the boys' hostel of Anandanagar Dr B.R. Ambedkar English Medium School in West Tripura District. The Commission has directed the Director of School Education, Government of Tripura, to conduct a thorough inquiry and submit a report within one month.

The order, signed by Chairperson Justice Arindam Lodh, noted that the hostel, which accommodated around 100 students two years ago, now houses only 22 students. Reports suggest that several parents have withdrawn their children following claims of repeated ragging over the past year.

According to the order, the guardian of a Class-VII student recently removed their son after allegations of physical abuse and harassment surfaced. The student and his mother reportedly raised concerns about the conduct of hostel authorities, particularly the

Tripura focuses on agricultural self-reliance: Minister

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Dec 2: Tripura's Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare Minister, Ratan Lal Nath today, highlighted the critical role of self-reliance in agriculture to realize Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India a global grain store.

The Minister made these remarks today while distributing modern agricultural equipment, including tree saplings and spray machines, to farmers at the Mohanpur Agriculture Sub-Division under West Tripura District.

"This initiative is crucial for modernizing agriculture, increasing production, and empowering farmers. With advanced equipment and quality resources, farmers can cultivate more efficiently, accelerating the state's agricultural development," the Minister said.

He emphasized the need for swift progress across all sectors, stating, "We must move forward with proper planning. Self-reliance is essential. If districts like North, Gomati, and Sepahijala stop producing rice, where will it come from? Under the Mohanpur Block, we must be self-sufficient. Our goal is to produce enough so that countries import food from India. Agriculture is the foundation, and achieving self-reliance is key to fulfilling PM Modi's dream."

Minister Nath also addressed misconceptions regarding onion cultivation in the state. "Scientists from the Agriculture College have proven that onion farming is possible here. We cultivate both red and white onions, and we are also focusing on potato cultivation. If we have rice, onions, potatoes, and pulses, no one should worry about food security. Tripura has the potential to be fully self-sufficient in food production," he added.

Highlighting the state's growing agricultural exports, the Minister noted, "India exports fish to the USA, China, Europe, and Japan, and eggs to Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. We also export agricultural products to Bangladesh and Pakistan."

Lai Autonomous District Council elections to be held today

AIZAWL, Dec 2: Polling for the 25-member Lai Autonomous District Council (LADC) will be held on Wednesday under tight security, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Mizoram State Election Commissioner H Lalthlangliana told PTI that voting will be held from 7 am to 4 pm in all the 111 polling stations within the LADC area in south Mizoram's Lawngtlai district. All polling officials have reached their respective polling stations on Tuesday, and adequate security arrangements have been made to ensure a free and fair election, he said.

So far, the state election commission has not received any complaint related to violation of the model code of conduct, he said.

According to the state election commissioner, a total of 56,873 voters, including 29,019 female voters, are eligible to exercise their franchise in the upcoming LADC

Centre clears ₹140 Cr for Ayurveda medical college in Tripura

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Dec 2: Tripura Chief Minister Prof Dr Manik Saha on Tuesday announced that the Ministry of Ayush has approved a sanction of ₹140 crore for setting up an Ayurveda Medical College and a Homoeopathy Medical College in the state.

Dr Saha informed that a high-level meeting was held to chart out the roadmap and expedite the processes required to ensure that both institutions become operational from the next academic session. The Chief Minister said the decision will substantially boost Tripura's healthcare infrastructure and expand opportunities in medical education. He also expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda, and Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Ayush Prataprao Yadav for their continued support in strengthening the state's health sector.

The term of the present council will expire on December 18.

The LADC was created in 1972 under the sixth schedule for the Lai tribal people.

It has 25 elected members and 4 nominated members. (PTI)

Partner countries at Nagaland's Hornbill Festival push for stronger ties with India

The latest edition of the festival commenced at Naga Heritage Village 'Kisama' on December 1, coinciding with the 63rd Statehood Day of Nagaland. The first day registered a footfall of 22,508, the officials said. Ambassador of France to India Thierry Mathou, attending the festival for the first time, said the country sought deeper cooperation with Nagaland in agri-business, technology, education and tourism.

Irish Ambassador Kevin Kelly said the Hornbill Festival reflected identity and resilience, and noted the historical links between Ireland and India. He said a delegation from Ireland, including historian and former footballer Terry Phelan, will explore sports partnerships.

Maya Tissafi, the Swiss Ambassador, described the festival as among Asia's most vibrant cultural events, and said Switzerland looked forward to collaboration in skill development, cultural exchanges, sustainable tourism and innovation based on indigenous knowledge. Austrian Trade Commissioner Hans-Jorg Hortnagl said Austria was interested in promoting sustainable tourism, green technologies and skill development in Nagaland. Representing the United Kingdom, British Council Director Debanjan Chakrabarty said the UK's association with Hornbill is long, noting past collaborations and ongoing scholarship programmes for Naga students. (PTI)

Tripura BJP rebates Pradyot's 'One North East' campaign

HT Correspondent
AGARTALA, Dec 2: Former Member of Parliament and senior BJP leader Rebati Tripura on Monday has strongly criticized Tripura Motha founder Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarman, alleging that his newly launched "One North East" campaign is an attempt to "mislead the people of the region" and mask his "political identity crisis."

Speaking at a press conference on Monday, Rebati accused Pradyot of collaborating with leaders from what he described as "failed regional parties" to revive relevance through a campaign lacking clear purpose.

He claimed that a recent Tipra Motha gathering at the Stable Ground, organised under the One North East banner, featured "provocative and contradictory statements" from Pradyot and other attending leaders.

According to Rebati, Pradyot's confidence in making such remarks is a result of the stable political atmosphere established under the BJP government. He alleged that Pradyot was attempting to "rekindle divisive politics" at a time when Tripura is enjoying "peace and stability."

The BJP leader further criticised regional parties in the Northeast,

asserting that they frequently emerge around "emotional issues" and fail to sustain long-term relevance.

"Pradyot earlier advocated loudly for Tipraland and Greater Tipraland. Today, those demands have disappeared from his vocabulary. The One North East campaign is just another tactic to stay politically afloat," he claimed.

Rebati also accused Pradyot of frequently shifting his political stance. "He spoke one way when he was in the Congress, and now he speaks differently. Give it a decade—he will call it another mistake," he said.

Vibrant cultural performances mark Day 2 of Hornbill Festival

HT Correspondent
KOHIMA, Dec 2: The second day of Hornbill Festival witnessed a vibrant line-up of events at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, on Tuesday, with cultural troupes showcasing a diverse range of Naga traditional dances and cultural expressions.

The Angami troupe presented Phita, a folk dance performed during traditional chants and usually seen in festive seasons.

The Ao troupe performed Nokinketer, a warrior dance symbolising bravery, strength, and martial spirit, while the Chakhesang troupe showcased Lika/Thüüükhü, a horn-blowing performance reserved for festive seasons, followed by Khridikhuhi, the Mass Curse Day observance held annually on the last day of the second lunar month, serving as a reminder to uphold peace, order, and harmony within the village.

The Chang troupe performed Bu Sen Oneed, while the Garo troupe showcased the Wangala Dance, traditionally performed during the post-harvest thanksgiving festival.

The Khiamnungan troupe presented Jamhang, a song performed inside the house during the feast of merit.

The Kachari troupe performed Bima Thanai, an indigenous game involving two teams, one representing a mother and her children and the



other acting as guards.

The Konyak, Phom, Sangtam, Sumi, Lotha, Rengma, Kuki, Pochury, Tikhir, Yimkhoun, Khiamnungan and Zeliang cultural troupes also presented their traditional dances and songs during the day.

Hosted by deputy chief minister TR Zeliang and co-hosted by adviser to land resources, Am-

bassador of France to India Thierry Mathou and Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court Justice Ashutosh Kumar attended the cultural show as special guests.

Other events of the day included World War II peace rally, indigenous practices, Hornbill International Photo Fest, stilt bamboo race, 'Jotsoma Experience 2025', etc.

Nagaland inks MoU with Toyota Kirloskar Motor to strengthen health, education sectors

KOHIMA, Dec 2: The Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN) signed an MoU with Toyota Kirloskar Motor Pvt Ltd on Tuesday for strengthening the state's health and education sectors.

Under the MoU, the health interventions will focus on upgrading essential facilities, expanding access to services, and strengthening both rural and urban healthcare systems.

The education initiatives will support infrastructural improvements, digital learning, and skill development, enabling Nagaland's youth to be better prepared for emerging opportunities.

Addressing the gathering, Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio reiterated that healthcare and education are priority sectors for Nagaland. He stated that this MoU provides a vital impetus to improving the lives of rural communities, where infrastructural gaps and the need for skill development remain pressing challenges.

He emphasised that the initiatives undertaken by Toyota Kirloskar offer a meaningful pathway for long-term improvement.

Reflecting on his recent visit to the Toyota manufacturing facility and the educational institution run by TKM Pvt Ltd, Rio noted that the school's model of experiential learning and holistic development demonstrates how quality education can prepare children for the future.

He added that the positive impact of TKM's initiatives on underprivileged communities reaffirms the value of such partnerships.

The chief minister assured the state government's



full support for the timely, transparent, and effective implementation of the initiatives under this partnership. The state government expressed its appreciation to Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) Pvt Ltd for its commitment to driving positive social impact in Nagaland and expressed confidence that this collaboration with IDAN will generate meaningful and lasting benefits for the people.

Chairman of IDAN, Abu Mehta, said the MoU was conceptualised and executed within an exceptionally short period, commending Toyota for expediting the process and adopting best practices in the implementation framework.

Sudeep Dalvi of Toyota Kirloskar emphasised the company's core philosophy of "Child to Community Development", stating that when a child develops, it leads to the development of the entire community. This approach is aligned with healthcare, education, and holistic social progress. (PTI)

Need support from government and exhibitors for independent cinema: Rima Das



Filmmaker Rima Das expressed displeasure over the diminishing opportunities available for indie cinema in India and said there's a dire need for support and intervention from the government and exhibition sector.

The filmmaker explained that independent filmmakers have less space to exhibit their art compared to big-budget films.

"For independent filmmakers, we have very less space for us. It shouldn't be like that we become invisible; I'm hopeful that it should not happen. I feel there should be a

system, we together need to figure out what is happening and how we can balance that," Das, known for "Village Rockstars", told PTI. Das underscored that big-budget films always get more attention and visibility, whereas the aim should be to have some sort of balance.

"I always believe in balancing things... But they're already getting commercial big cinemas, they have that kind of budget, and they're already getting that visibility mostly everywhere... Government really needs to (support) this kind of initiative, they should support, even NFDC and state level (people) should support," she said.

Recently, director Kanu Behl took to social media to express angst and disappointment for his film, "Agra", not getting screens in multiplexes. Following this incident, more than 40 filmmakers including Nandita Das, Payal Kapadia, Vasan Bala, Chaitanya Tamhane, Alankrita Shrivastava, Varun Grover, Raam Reddy, Honey Trehan and Ruchi Narain came together to issue a joint statement about the declining space for the exhibition of independent films in the country.

She lauded filmmaker Kiran Rao for supporting Aranya Sahay's independent film, "Humans in the Loop".

"It is important (referring to support)," Das

said.

The Assam-born director said she feels fortunate that her films, like "Village Rockstars", managed to create enough buzz, but also highlighted the need for dedicated theatres for screening independent films in every city.

"We couldn't create visibility, later people were asking, 'We wanted to watch it'. So, if we can have theaters in every city and some places, then it will (of great) help. We need more (theatres)... and you will see more and more audiences," Das said.

She further said that "constant efforts" are needed to resolve the issue of lack of space for independent films in theatres.

"It's not a big thing, but it is just, that something is missing, that efforts (are missing), like we should come together, and keep consistently doing it. We should have a five year plan," Das added.

Das is currently at IFFI where her film, "My Melbourne", an anthology, was screened.

"IFFI is one of our best festivals and we had a morning show of 'My Melbourne', and it was houseful. There's a lot of warmth, love. When we're talking about 'My Melbourne', the next season is also happening. This should keep happening more and more because this is a building cultural exchange," she said. (PTI)

Prabhas shares Boman Irani's intense look from The Raja Saab on actor's birthday



Telugu film starring Prabhas in the lead and set to release in the theatres during the Sankranti festive season in January 2026.

Boman Irani plays a psychiatrist, hypnotist, and paranormal investigator — a character wrapped in intellect and mysticism in The RajaSaab. The film's trailer already showcases him placing Prabhas' protagonist under hypnosis, triggering the story's first major twist and setting the emotional pulse of the narrative in motion.

The birthday-special poster gives audiences their closest glimpse yet into Boman's character. Dressed in layered and sombre undertones with a cane in hand, Boman, from the poster,

adopts the intensity of a man navigating unseen realms. Sharing the new poster, Prabhas mentioned, "Many happy returns of the day Boman Irani sir Wishing you a fantastic year ahead."

Along with this reveal, the makers shared an affectionate note for the veteran actor, hinting that his character may hold more secrets than the trailer lets on. The caption says, "The one who stands between REALITY and the UNEXPLAINED Team #TheRajaSaab wishes Boman Irani a very Happy Birthday."

The makers recently released the film's first single Rebel Saab, which involved nearly a thousand dancers, making it one of the biggest song productions in

recent Telugu cinema. Director Maruthi revealed how Prabhas pushed himself to deliver what fans have been waiting for. The team shot several song sequences abroad, where Prabhas had to perform in harsh, freezing temperatures. Despite the conditions, he kept motivating the crew with a single focus: "Whatever fans missed all these days, we must give them back."

The RajaSaab is produced by People Media Factory and IVY Entertainment. The film also stars Malavika Mohanan, Nidhi Agerwal, Ridhhi Kumar, and Sanjay Dutt. It is slated to release in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, and Malayalam on January 9, 2026. (PTI)

The makers of the horror fantasy film The RajaSaab revealed a brand-new look poster of Boman Irani on his birthday, marking a tribute to one of Indian cinema's most versatile performers. The RajaSaab, directed by Maruti, is an upcoming

TWINKLE KHANNA IS RIGHT — MOTHERHOOD IS TOUGH, AND WE'RE ALL JUST TRYING OUR BEST

In the first flush of my pregnancy, buoyed by obsessive readings of the What to Expect series and Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish's How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk, I remember telling a former colleague, a mother of two, my plans for raising the child-to-come: No raised voices, no punishments, only gentle admonitions to convey my disappointment, should the need arise.

In hindsight, I imagine her to have choked inwardly on her coffee as she tried to keep the chortle down. But being the kind soul that she is, she kept a straight face and wished me well.

It didn't take long for my out-of-sync imagination to crash-land. In the sleep-deprived months of the first year, trying to lull a colicky baby to rest, the first seed of doubt reared its head: No one had ever said things would be this way. Is it only me who's incompetent then? And does it get better?

It does, and no, it's not us. Here's the thing about parenting that no one lets on while building up motherhood as a badge of honour: it's a bl**y tough job. Tons of advice, limited infrastructural support (especially for the mother) and a gig where no two days are the same, parenting is the adventure sport you had no idea you were capable of when you signed up blind. And if you are the mother, good luck and a big hug to you, because you'll need it for all the times you feel like the only thing you have become adept at is apologising — to your family ("I have to be there for this meeting, I am sorry"), at the daycare/school ("Sorry, I got late"), at the workplace ("I have to attend the PTM, sorry") and to your child as he grows up ("Sorry, mamma got this wrong. She'll try again tomorrow") — since nothing else seems to fall in place.

The "good" dad who participates equally in the parenting process, ferrying the children from summer camp to birthday parties to sports sessions, who takes an active interest in their academics and their friends, is a phenomenon that's still catching on. And, as luck (or societal construct would have it), the onus on them is far less. But the school for good mothers has long been around, with a toxic insistence on pinning the outcomes of parenting solely on the mother — which is probably why actor Twinkle Khanna's recent social media post on mothering strikes a chord. On Instagram, Khanna wrote, "It doesn't matter what you do. When they grow up, they will go to therapy and blame you! All we can do is hope is that they realise that there are very few truly terrible mothers (sic). Even the mother from Home Alone — who forgot about her child not once, but also in the sequel — was not evil, just overwhelmed. Mothers are far from perfect, but most of us try to do our best, even on our worst days. Agree? Disagree?"

If you have heard the terms helicopter mom, tiger mom or panda mom, you'll know that the models of modern parenting are built to a comparative scale — there's the aspirational Instagram family with chil-



dren who score perfect grades, who have taken their A-levels at piano, while their parents peak yet another professional milestone. There are those at the other end of the spectrum who can make chaos look inviting, homeschooling their children, baking organic treats, turning up their noses at the competitive cycle and living off-the-grid. And then there are those like me trying to find a middle ground, forever racked by doubt and guilt, dithering irresolutely between the tendency to hover and micromanage and the urge to leave them well alone to blunder through and find their way. The only things we are good at are running our lives on tight schedules and multitasking. Otherwise, we are the messiest of moms out there because we don't know who we want to be, tentatively picking our way through our own shortcomings and our hopes for making our children better than the people we are.

After a birthday party last week, a friend comes up and says her son thinks I am the coolest aunt in the group: "He says you never raise your voice and the get-togethers at your place are the most fun." I feel a flutter of pride and smile modestly, the morning's shouting match across the breakfast table over a room worse than a pigsty already receding in my mind. That's also when I catch my son's eye. He looks mildly amused. In the car, he sighs with exaggeration and says he wishes his friends could spend a week in his shoes. They'd know his mom is nowhere near as with it as they imagine her to be. As for being quiet, he rolls his eyes with such passion, I am afraid they'll fall off. We laugh.

Good or not, struggling mothers are often the best at laughing at themselves, sometimes, at starting afresh. Even if their child ends up in therapy, they'll admit that much. (PTI)

ARIJIT SINGH, AR RAHMAN AMONG STARS TO HEADLINE UAE CONCERT SERIES



Bollywood singer Arijit Singh is set to open a new concert series in the UAE with a performance at Etihad Arena, Abu Dhabi, on December 19, the organizers of the event has announced.

Oscar winner AR Rahman is also scheduled to perform at the same venue on January 23, 2026, as part of his Wonderment tour, followed by sitarist Rishabh Rikhiram Sharma at Coca-Cola Arena, Dubai, on January 31.

The series is being organised by Pantheon Development, a Dubai-based real estate company that has

begun adding cultural programming to its activities. The company said four more shows will be announced in the coming months.

Founder Kalpesh Kinariwala said the initiative is intended to create events that bring residents together and encourage wider community participation.

The roll-out of the concert series comes as the company advances several major projects. Pantheon has also recently signed an MoU with NBCC (India) Ltd, a government of India enterprise, to explore future collaboration in the UAE. (PTI)

FLUTTER ENTERTAINMENT INDIA PARTNERS WITH ADITYA MEHTA FOUNDATION TO STRENGTHEN INDIA'S PARA-SPORTS ECOSYSTEM

With an investment of INR 60 lakh, Flutter Entertainment India (FEI) in conjunction with Flutter Global's 'Do More' initiative will enable enhanced training facilities, upgraded adaptive equipment, and customized devices that will directly support up to 15 para-athletes in achieving high-performance excellence HYDERABAD, India, Dec. 2, 2025 /PRNewswire/ - Flutter Entertainment India LLP (FEI), the Hyderabad-based centre of excellence for the world's leading sports entertainment operator, Flutter, today announced a partnership with Aditya Mehta Foundation (AMF) to strengthen India's para-sports ecosystem and further its commitment to empowering communities through sport.

Flutter Entertainment India has committed INR 60 Lakh to support two major programs at AMF - Training, Rehabilitation Centre/Adaptive Gym Upgradation, Nutrition & Coaching and Customized Adaptive Devices & Equipment. Together, these initiatives will directly impact up to 15 para-athletes as they prepare for elite competitions including the Asian Youth Para Games and Paralympic games 2028. The support strengthens AMF's vision

of enabling athletes to train with dignity, confidence, and world-class resources, echoing AMF's belief that the right infrastructure can turn potential into podium finishes.

Ashish Sinha, Managing Director, Flutter Entertainment India, said, "Para-athletes represent resilience, ambition, and the belief that sport should be accessible to everyone. Our partnership with the Aditya Mehta Foundation reflects Flutter's long-term commitment to creating high-quality training ecosystems that enable athletes to perform at their best. By strengthening access to adaptive equipment, sports science, and professional coaching, we aim to support para-athletes in achieving their full potential and competing with confidence on the global stage."

Founded in 2013, AMF is Asia's first organization dedicated exclusively to para-sports rehabilitation and high-performance training. Its efforts have helped develop grassroots talent into world-class competitors, contributing to more than 450 international medals for India. By partnering with AMF, Flutter Entertainment India aims to accelerate this momentum and help para-athletes reach their full potential with the right infrastructure and support.



Aditya Mehta, Founder, Aditya Mehta Foundation, also commented on the partnership and said, "We are delighted to partner with Flutter, whose support will significantly strengthen India's para-sports ecosystem. Para-athletes require specialized training, rehabilitation and adaptive equipment, and this investment will directly help

them access these essential resources. The collaboration will enable athletes to compete in key national and international tournaments, including World Championships and World Cups, which are crucial for earning qualification points. This support aligns with our shared vision of securing multiple slots for the 2028 Paralympics and elevating

talented para-athletes to the highest levels of global competition."

The collaboration will focus on supporting two major programs:

Program 1: Training, Rehabilitation Centre/Adaptive Gym Upgradation, Nutrition & Coaching and National & International Competitions

Flutter's support will enable AMF to enhance its training ecosystem with upgraded adaptive facilities, sports science interventions, physiotherapy support, and structured nutrition plans. This investment aligns with Flutter's larger commitment to building inclusive, safe, and high-quality sporting environments that enable athletes to thrive.

Program 2: Customized Adaptive Devices & Equipment

Recognizing that world-class performance requires world-class tools, Flutter will fund customized adaptive devices and sport-specific equipment for para-athletes. This ensures they have the precision, safety, and accessibility needed to train and compete at elite levels.

Flutter is working hard to drive positive change, delivering long-term growth alongside a sustainable future. 'Do More' - a core pillar of Flutter's

Positive Impact Plan - is a global commitment to give back to the communities and causes where we work, live and play. The partnership with AMF marks a significant step in Flutter's aim to improve the lives of 10 million people by the end of 2030, through supporting athletes with disabilities by improving access to professional training, sports science, and adaptive resources.

About Flutter Entertainment India Flutter Entertainment India is the Global Excellence Centre for Flutter Entertainment, the world's leading sports entertainment operator. With a rapidly growing team of around 1000 colleagues, the India centre plays a critical role in delivering global capabilities across customer operations, data and technology, analytics, finance, procurement and HR.

The India hub powers Flutter's global portfolio of brands across approved markets, enabling innovation, speed and operational scale through a unified, high-performance ecosystem. By building on the specialized ethos of Flutter Edge, the India centre drives strategic value and supports the organisation's commitment to responsible, sustainable growth. (PTI)

India rely on Kohli-Rohit pair to seal ODI series victory against doughty South Africa

RAIPUR, Dec 2: The chatter around the volatile dressing room environment notwithstanding, India will rely on Virat Kohli's imperious form and Rohit Sharma's indomitable presence to seal a series victory over a doughty South Africa in the second ODI, here on Wednesday.

A record-extending 52nd ODI century by Kohli and a rapid 57 from Rohit paved the way for India's 17-run win in the series-opener at Ranchi, where the home bowlers endured a spirited fight-back from the Proteas before managing to stop them.

With the 2027 ODI World Cup two years away, Kohli and Rohit are not only auditioning every match to prove their fitness and form but are also reportedly managing growing differences with head coach Gautam Gambhir.

The issue has dominated the off-field talk and is expected to have the BCCI stepping in at some point.

Having set up two consecutive victories for India in last as many ODIs -- including a nine-wicket hammering of Australia at Sydney in October -- Kohli and Rohit have shown they will everything possible to be on that flight to the World Cup in South Africa.

Both the chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar and Gambhir have remained non-committal about their participation in the World Cup and that has probably been at the centre of the simmering tensions between the two sides.

However, India have a lot more to worry about despite the opening win.

For starters, the combination does not seem perfectly aligned.

Ruturaj Gaikwad, who has built an impressive record in List A cricket, was pushed from opening to No 4. He did not look completely conditioned for the role, with stand-in captain KL Rahul staunchly defending his position at No 6.

Washington Sundar is not new to such experiments as the Tamil Nadu all-rounder, who batted at No 3 in Kolkata Test against the Proteas, has seen plenty of changes in his batting positions. But in the first ODI at No 5, he too was among the batters dismissed in a phase where India slowed down.

And again for an all-rounder, Washington also had another light day in terms of bowling as he sent down only three overs for 18 runs.

To his credit, Harshit Rana did a lot of good to his reputation with two wickets upfront with the new ball but his knack of giving away runs later on will require the all-rounder to bring in more control, especially when only one ball is allowed to play with after the 34th over.

In their bid to restore balance between bat and ball, the ICC's new rule allows only one ball from the existing two to be continued with from 34-50 overs.



Kuldeep Yadav snaffled key wickets for a match haul of 4/68 and even though he was a shade expensive, his variation proved to be the difference as South Africa fell short but then, not by a big margin. South Africa will indeed take a lot of heart in their inspired comeback after being reduced to 11/3 at one stage.

Matthew Breetzke notched up a fine 72 in his first ODI against India to lead a comeback for South Africa while their long tail, which includes the dangerous Corbin Bosch, threatened to take the game away from India.

South Africa played in the first ODI without their regular skipper Temba Bavuma and Keshav Maharaj, who both were rested after their historic Test series win. But the Proteas are expected to bolster their squad with their return.

Like Guwahati where the hosts were not too accustomed with the pitch and conditions, the Shaheed Veer Narayan Stadium in the Chhattisgarh capital is also relatively unfamiliar.

In the only ODI played here at this venue, India made light work of New Zealand in January 2023 when Mohammed Shami and Mohammed Siraj exploited sharp seam movement off the pitch to bowl the Kiwis out for a mere 108. The hosts completed an eight-

wicket win with nearly 30 overs to spare.

Even the only T20I played here in December 2023, against Australia, was also not a high-scoring affair which India won by 20 runs after putting on 174/9.

Teams:

India: KL Rahul (c&wk), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel (wk), Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant (wk), Rohit Sharma, Tilak Varma, Ravindra Jadeja, Washington Sundar, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Kuldeep Yadav, Prasidh Krishna.

South Africa: Temba Bavuma (c), Matthew Breetzke, Dewald Brevis, Quinton de Kock (wk), Tony de Zorzi, Ruben Hermann (wk), Aiden Markram, Ryan Rickelton (wk), Corbin Bosch, Marco Jansen, Premlal Subrayen, Otneil Baartman, Nandre Burger, Keshav Maharaj, Lungi Ngidi.

Match starts at 1:30pm IST. (PTI)

'Khelo India initiative good as nothing more troublesome than a bored teen'

JAIPUR, Dec 2: Australian tennis coach Todd Clark, who has worked in the Indian tennis circuit for close to two decades, is quite impressed with the Khelo India initiative as he feels it has given a sense of purpose to teenagers, who can be "troublesome" when they are "bored".

Clark came to India in 2008 and is presently working for the Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT) in Odisha as a Director of Tennis. He is guiding his trainees at the ongoing Khelo India University Games here.

He was a part of the Indian contingent for the 2025 Summer World University Games in Germany where Vaishnavi Adkar won a historic women's singles bronze. It was India's first-ever women's tennis medal and second-ever medal at the event. The previous medal, a silver, came in 1979 from Nandan Bal.



"There is nothing more troublesome than a bored teenager. What these games have done all over the country is that they have given these teens opportunities to pick up sports and excel at them and eventually make a career. Sports also inculcate character," Clark told 'SAI (Sports Authority of India) Media'.

worked for the Harvest Tennis Academy in Punjab. He has since worked in Gujarat and Haryana. He was with the Indian contingent when Vaishnavi Adkar of Pune won a women's singles bronze medal in the 2025 Summer World University Games.

Clark believes India has a lot of potential in tennis despite the fact that the country has not seen much success in the sport.

"I think India has a lot of talent. Though I believe talent identification could be better. Counselling kids on what sport to pick could also be better. For example, you need to be a certain height to be a good tennis player, 6 feet or thereabouts.

"So if you are, say 5'4", your chances of being a top-class tennis player are very low, so you should pick up another sport that suits you. So, it's important players are advised in the right manner," he said. (PTI)

Barring Salman Ali Agha, all other Pakistan players allowed to play 3 T20 leagues

KARACHI, Dec 2: The Pakistan Cricket Board, barring its T20 skipper Salman Ali Agha, has given green-light to 12 of its contracted national team players to take part in three franchise leagues across the globe during the months of December and January, leading up to the global event in India and Sri Lanka.

Salman who has been leading the Pakistan T20 side since December 2024, is the only one not featuring in any T20 leagues over the two months. Salman's absence from any league is not a surprise as he isn't a sought after player in leagues across the globe with questions being asked about his utility in the shortest international format.

This time the Pakistan players are set to appear in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), Emirates International League (ILT20) and the Big Bash League (BBL) in Australia which will be held simultaneously in the December-January window with the South African T20 League also scheduled from December 25 to January 26.

Gurbaz hails Gambhir as 'best coach, human being', says backlash makes 'no sense'

DUBAI, Dec 2: Gautam Gambhir's coaching methods may have polarised opinions in India but dashing Afghanistan keeper batter Rahmanullah Gurbaz has no hesitation in admitting former KKR Mentor as the "best coach" that he has played under and is baffled by the kind of criticism levelled at him in recent weeks.

Gambhir has faced the wrath of one and all after India's 0-2 Test home whitewash against South Africa that came a year after the unprecedented 0-3 home series defeat to New Zealand, ending India's long-standing dominance at home, where they have now lost five of their last seven Tests.

Gurbaz, an integral part of the IPL winning KKR squad in 2024, feels that this outrage against his "Gautam sir" doesn't make much of a sense.

"If 1.4 billion people are there in your country, you can say 2-3 million will be against him. The rest are with Gautam sir and with India team. It doesn't make sense to talk about them," the 24-year-old told PTI in an interview on the sidelines of the fourth season of the ILT20 here.

"He's the best ever coach and human being, mentor that I have had in my career so far. I love the way he goes about things," Afghanistan opener couldn't stop waxing eloquent.

He was quick to point out at the kind of success Indian team has enjoyed under Gambhir's stewardship.

"India just won the Champions Trophy in ODI format, Asia Cup in T20 format. They have won a lot of series, so you can't blame them for one series."

Gurbaz said Gambhir's biggest strength was the environment he built at KKR of a relaxed, pressure-free and rooted in discipline which allowed the team to flourish.

"I love the way he goes about his job. When you have a good environment, you will be always on the top. He made the environment very easy for us, nothing stressful, nothing strict... and that's why we won the tournament," he said.

"He is not strict but he is disciplined. He is strict only when something goes against discipline."

The Afghan opener said Indian cricketers deserve empathy, not harsh judgment when chips are down.

"As a cricketer, I will never blame players because everyone works hard and tries their best. They lost, so what? They are human. Sometimes you lose -- it's part of life. When you are going through bad times, that's when you need support."

Gurbaz called his three-year stint with KKR "very exciting".

"Being with KKR for 3 years and then winning the championship was very good."

He also recalled being part of Gujarat Titans' victorious 2022 campaign.

"I am the guy who went won two IPL championships -- first year with Gujarat," he said, referring to his stint as a replacement signing.

Released ahead of the upcoming auction by KKR, he is looking forward to the auction later this month.

"I am in the auction now...will see whoever wants me, where I deserve to go. Looking for a great season ahead."

He added that Delhi Capitals, apart from KKR, is his favourite team as India's national capital is his favourite city.

"Delhi feels like home. When I am in Delhi I feel like I am in Afghanistan," said Gurbaz, who would often frequent Afghan eateries in capital's Lajpat Nagar, Bhogal, Jangpura areas.

Gurbaz further backed Shubman Gill to grow as a leader.

"I wish him very best of luck for his captaincy. Why not? If he can do captaincy in IPL, Test and ODI sides, he can lead anywhere."

He said defending champions India will start favourites in the next year's T20 World Cup even without Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli. (PTI)

Unlikely to get bidders, Glenn Maxwell pulls out of IPL auctions

SYDNEY, Dec 2: Glenn Maxwell, whose IPL career over the last decade has largely been underwhelming, decided to pull out of the upcoming mini auctions scheduled in Abu Dhabi on December 16.

The 37-year-old, popularly known as "Big Show" for being a phenomenal talent in his younger days, has played every IPL season since 2012, barring one in 2019.

He has managed only 2819 runs in 141 games at a strike rate of 155 plus and an average of less than 24, which doesn't justify the kind of prices that he has been consistently fetching in auctions over the years. He also picked 41 wickets with his off-breaks at an economy rate of 8.30.

"After many unforgettable seasons in the IPL, I've decided not to put my name into auctions this year. It's a big call and one I make with a lot of gratitude for everything this league has given me," Maxwell wrote on his Instagram page.

"The IPL has shaped me as a cricketer and as a person. I have been lucky to play with world class teammates, incredible franchises, and perform in-front of fans whose passion is unmatched. The memories, challenges and the energy of India will stay with me forever."

While Maxwell didn't specify a reason, it is evident that most major franchises have grown weary of waiting for him to deliver a good season, something that has been rare. (PTI)

Crowdfunding, parents support keep hockey dreams alive for NZ, Swiss players

CHENNAI, Dec 2: Unlike India, field hockey is an amateur sport in nations like Switzerland and New Zealand, where junior players rely largely on crowdfunding and parental support to pursue their dreams.

With little or no government funding for junior programmes, the Under-21 Swiss and Kiwi players had to raise the money themselves to participate in the ongoing FIH Junior World Cup in Chennai and Madurai.

"In our Swiss federation, we try to do everything to promote hockey because ice hockey is more popular in Switzerland, the players have to pay themselves to be here. They have to arrange crowdfunding, give up University, work etc. They put a lot of work into hockey, they love hockey," Switzerland head coach Jaïr Levie told PTI.

"The federation and government give just little bit funds, way too less. We need more funding to play more Test matches, to get used to the international level. We only play tournaments but we need to play more preparation games and for that you need money," he added.

Switzerland are unbeaten in Pool B along with India with two wins from as many matches and will take on the hosts in Madurai on Tuesday.

Levie is optimistic that the performance in the ongoing World Cup will fuel the sport's growth back home.

"This performance will help hopefully. I am always in contact with the government and with our

funding partners," the Dutchman said.

New Zealand striker Jonty Elmes, the current top-scorer in the tournament with seven goals, thanked the parents for keeping their hockey dreams alive.

"All Under-21 programme, both male and female are self-funded, generally comes from our parents. We also go searching for funds for ourselves through forums from where we can get money and that's the reality for us.

"It's very hard for lot of the boys. Credit goes to our parents for the all the hardwork they put in and contribution and we really want show them on the field what it means for us all their contributions. So a big thank you to them," Elmes told PTI.

"We don't get any funding from government for junior programmes.

"In New Zealand both junior and seniors have to maintain work life balance, full time study or full time and then we have to train after that. That the reality of sport and we all love it," he added.

In big hockey playing countries like India and Australia, all the Under-21 programmes are funded by the government.

A lot of parents of New Zealand and Swiss players have travelled to India to watch their sons play in the tournament.

"We are just doing our duty, supporting them the best way we can in fulfilling their sporting dreams. I hope their performance here will improve the situation of the sport in our country," a father of a Swiss player said. (PTI)

Govt clears contingent for Asian Youth Para Games, orders background check to avoid 'disappearances'

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: The Sports Ministry has cleared a 161-strong Indian contingent for the Asian Youth Para Games in Dubai from December 7 to 14, and has mandated thorough background check of the members in view of some officials and athletes "disappearing in foreign countries in the past".

The cleared list comprises 99 athletes (61 male and 38 female) and 62 coaches, support staff, and contingent officials. The ministry has also sought a detailed report on the contingent's performance, including action photographs and other visual highlights, within 30 days of its return to the country.

"In view of the disappearance of some officials/sportspersons in the foreign countries in the past, this Ministry is of the view that the backgrounds/anteecedents of the

members/officials may be checked properly by SAI/NSFs concerned," stated a letter to the Paralympic Committee of India (PCI).

Paralympic Committee of India (PCI) Secretary General Jayawant Gundu Hammanavar, who has been appointed chef-de-mission for the tour, is the lone official whose trip has been cleared at no cost to the government.

"PCI will ensure that any person, if he/she is holding elected position in EC of PCI, any NSF or any sports body, whose name has been included in the list of team officials, will be treated at no cost to the Government," the ministry said.

The ministry's directive to conduct background checks came after some top para-athletes raised the issue of "disappearing support



staff and wheelchair escorts" during big events.

Although no case of athletes leaving the contingent have come to light, there have been complaints of officials treating foreign competitors as "paid for holidays."

"At the Asian Para Table Tennis Championships (in October), a wheelchair-bound coach took his son as his escort and the duo disappeared for the duration of the competition in Beijing. They were busy shopping and sight-seeing,

The coach didn't even come to watch the matches, let alone guiding anyone," a top source told PTI.

"It wasn't the first time, it's been happening for a while and para-athletes are keeping quiet because they don't want to be targeted. Those who need support are not getting because officials are taking up positions meant for their escorts," added a top para-athlete on conditions of anonymity.

"I am glad that the ministry has taken cognisance of our concerns," the athlete stated.

The Asian Youth Para Games will feature over 1500 athletes from 45 countries in the age group 13 to 21 across 13 disciplines, including para-athletics, para-badminton, para-swimming, para-table tennis and wheelchair basketball. India's para-athletics squad features 62 names. (PTI)

Letting Faf go was tough but we needed a younger option: DC coach Badani

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: Delhi Capitals head coach Hemang Badani said releasing big-hitting former South African skipper Faf du Plessis was a difficult call but the franchise wanted to move towards a younger and more aggressive option aligned with the team's style of play.

Du Plessis played for Chennai Super Kings, Royal Challengers Bengaluru and now-defunct Rising Pune Supergiant during his IPL run that ended on Monday after his decision to retire from the league. He was a part of DC's setup last season and will now feature in the Pakistan Super League.

"It's never easy to release a player of Faf du Plessis' caliber. Letting him go was a really tough decision because he has been a stellar performer in the IPL for many years," Badani said during the "TATA IPL Retention" show in JioStar.

"But we felt it was time to move towards a younger option, someone who could bring a more ag-

gressive style that fits the brand of cricket we want to play."

Explaining the rationale behind parting ways with Australian batter Jake Fraser-McGurk, Badani said: "With Jake Fraser-McGurk, we backed him based how he performed last season, but at nine crore, we didn't feel we got enough value from that investment."

"So, we felt it was best to let him go as well. Overall, we are quite pleased with the squad we have right now." DC need to lock in their top order: Kumble

Former India skipper Anil Kumble believes Delhi Capitals have got good Indian talent but must firm up their opening combination quickly.

"Delhi Capitals absolutely need to lock in their opening combination," Kumble said.

"They have strong Indian options with Nitish Rana joining as a left-hander. Players like KL Rahul, Abhishek Porel, Karun NR and Nitish Rana give them solid domestic firepower. (PTI)

Facing India with Kohli and Rohit nothing new, but it does bolster them: Bavuma

RAIPUR, Dec 2: South Africa captain Temba Bavuma feels facing an Indian side with Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma is nothing new but it does bolster the hosts whom the Proteas had blanked 2-0 in the Test series.

Kohli's 52nd ODI ton and Rohit's 57 set up a 17-run victory for India in the opening ODI, giving them a 1-0 lead in the three-match series with the second match to be played here on Wednesday.

"The inclusion of those two guys that does bolster the team. Like we said at the start of the series, these are two guys who have a lot of experience and a lot of skill and that can only benefit the team.

"It is not something that we are not aware of," Bavuma told the media ahead of South Africa's training session at the Shaheed Veer Narayan Stadium here.

Underlining their experience in international cricket, Bavuma recalled watching a young Rohit in the 2007 T20 World Cup which India won as a school student.

"We played against Rohit... I think it was in 2007, the T20 World Cup. I was still in school then. I mean, these guys have been around, so there is nothing new. These are world-class players," he said.

"(Coming up against them is) nothing new, we have come across it. We have been on the bad end of it. But we have also had



good times against them. It all just makes the series a lot more exciting," he said.

Bavuma, meanwhile, said there was nothing for him to clarify on the use of the word "grovel" made by South Africa head coach Shukri Conrad during the fourth day's play in the second Test.

"No, I don't think it is distracting (and) no it's not for me to clarify," said Bavuma, who missed the opening ODI.

Bavuma heaped praise on Marco Jansen whose 39-ball 70 took South Africa on the brink of a victory in the first ODI.

"From an all-rounder point of view, I don't know where the rankings sit (but) I am sure Marco Jansen, in any one of the formats will definitely be in a top 10. His contributions, with bat (or) with the ball (and) sometimes even both, they have been immense to our success," he said.

"He is still a young guy, but he has had a lot of international cricket that is under his belt. He is only growing into his own and becoming a lot more comfortable under his skin."

Bavuma did not read much into South

Africa's loss in the first ODI. "We were 15 runs (17) short of them. The gap between the batting performances wasn't a big one. India played well, their two stalwarts stood up but we were not too far off." Bavuma, who has led South Africa to 11 Test wins in his 12 matches as skipper so far, said it was up to those in "suits" in Cricket South Africa to ensure there are more Test matches against top countries.

"All of us have been crying for more cricket especially against the top nations," he said.

"The Test series (against India) now, as much as there were two match series, a lot of us would have wanted to see it going to three or four-match series. When it's a side like India, they would have raised the standard, which would have forced us to raise our standards as well."

"As players, we don't get involved when it comes to the scheduling, the negotiation, and all of that. Those are for, I guess, the people in suits, the Cricket South Africa."

On a lighter note, Bavuma said some of the South African players want to play a four-Test series as they are growing old.

"Some of us are getting a little bit old, so we're not going to go too long to make another four match Test series against India," he said. (PTI)

Jansen has turned it around with bat, and now he's a premium all-rounder: Jacques Kallis



BENGALURU, Dec 2: Legendary South African cricketer Jacques Kallis said the strides Marco Jansen has made in recent months as a batter will help him find a place among the premier all-rounders in modern day cricket.

Jansen underlined his growing credentials as a powerhouse batter, making quick fifties in the second Test against India at Guwahati and in the first ODI at Ranchi on Sunday.

"He's had a massive year, hasn't he? He's always had the potential. It was just a matter of figuring his game out. He's obviously figured it out now and is getting a good balance," said Kallis during a special interaction with the Indian media, facilitated by SA20 on Tuesday.

"He's always been magnificent with the ball. Perhaps in previous years, he didn't quite fulfil his talent with the bat. He's certainly turned that around now. He's a premium all-rounder now. I think he's going to play a massive role in the SA20," he added.

Apart from his exploits with the bat, Jansen also took 12 wickets across two Tests against India, helping SA blank the hosts 2-0.

"They (Sunrisers Eastern Cape) might even be able to use him in different roles, not only down the order. He's good enough to even go up the order a few times. It's an odd game to surprise the opposition. For me, he's going to be one of the stand-out all-rounders," said Kallis.

Kallis, who has amassed 13289 runs from 166 Tests with 45 hundreds at an average of 55.37, also pinned his hope on Corbin Bosch to develop as a handy performer with both ball and bat.

Bosch gave a glimpse of his skills while hammering a 67 and taking two wickets against India in the Ranchi ODI.

"I first laid eyes on him a few years ago, I always thought he had something special. It's taken

a while for him to break through. But thankfully, he's come through. He's gained confidence. He bowls in the 140s and hits it really hard.

"He's the type of guy who can play different roles. He's good enough to go anywhere in the order. So I'm very happy to see him coming through," he noted.

Kallis hoped that the fourth edition of the SA20, starting from December 26, will stand as a good preparation for Proteas players ahead of next year's ICC T20 World Cup.

"Yeah, I think it's going to play a big role. I don't think it'll make the guys play any harder or anything like that, because the guys would have put the 100% effort in, in any case. But I do think it's fantastic preparation, looking forward to that World Cup.

"You know, a few guys perhaps, who are on the fringe, if they have a good performance in this tournament, you know, might get a look in and get into the squads.

Kallis had little doubt that the SA20 has ticked several boxes in the last four years, particularly in finding some young talents.

"I think what the IPL did for Indian cricket, we were hoping that a similar tournament would take off in South Africa a lot earlier. But now Graeme (Smith) got this tournament going four years ago and I think you can see where it's taken South African cricket.

"These young guys are playing in front of big crowds and in pressure situations and that can only help these guys fast forward their careers, which is exactly what's happened.

"These guys are playing under good coaches, playing with some world-class players, learning and feeding off them. So, that can only bode well for South African cricket as we've seen in the results, not only in white ball cricket, but in the longer formats as well," he signed off. (PTI)

Hardik Pandya's 77 guides Baroda to 7-wicket win over Punjab as Abhishek's fifty goes in vain

HYDERABAD, Dec 2: India all-rounder Hardik Pandya made an excellent return to competitive cricket after two months, striking an unbeaten 77 to power Baroda to a seven-wicket win over Punjab in a Group C match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Tuesday.

Pandya's 42-ball knock (7x4, 4x6) helped Baroda surmount Punjab's challenging 222 for eight in 20 overs, which was built around India opener Abhishek Sharma's 19-ball 50.

Pandya's blitz carried Baroda to 224 for three in 19.1 overs. This was the 32-year-old's first competitive outing after turning up against Sri Lanka in an Asia Cup Super Fours match at Dubai on September 26.

Since then he missed the action owing to a left quadriceps injury, and has been recuperating at the BCCI CoE in Bengaluru.

But on this day, he batted freely and bowled four overs while conceding 52 runs and took the wicket of Anmolpreet Singh.

Pandya's smooth outing might have come as a shot in the arm for national selectors who will be picking up India's squad for the upcoming T20I series against South Africa.

In fact, Hardik gave a typical finish to the match, smashing left-arm pacer Ashwani Kumar for two sixes and then meting out the same treatment to strapping pacer Gurnoor Brar as Baroda bagged four crucial points.

Right now, Baroda are placed third on the table with eight points behind leaders Gujarat (12 points) and Punjab (8 points, but superior net run rate of 2.27 against Baroda's -0.08).



Pandya also got support from Vishnu Solanki (41 off 21 balls), Shashwat Rawat (31, 18 balls) and Shivalik Sharma, who made 47 off 31 balls before getting retired hurt.

Earlier, Punjab rode on Abhishek's whirlwind fifty that contained five fours and four sixes and Anmolpreet's equally flashing 69 off 32 balls (7x4, 4x6) to raise a total in excess of 200.

For Baroda, India under-19 pacer Raj Limbani took three for 36 in four overs.

Brief scores: Punjab: 222/8 in 20 overs (Abhishek Sharma 50, Anmolpreet Singh 69; Raj Limbani 3/36) lost to Baroda: 224/3 in 19.1 overs (Hardik Pandya 77 not out, Shivalik Sharma 47 retired hurt, Shashwat Kumar 31, Vishnu Solanki 43) by 7 wickets.

Pondicherry: 83 all out in 13.1 overs (JK Bhatt 3/17, Ravi Bishnoi 3/13, Arzan Nagwaswalla 2/22) lost to Gujarat: 84/1 in 9 overs (Aarya Desai 53 not out) by 9 wickets. (PTI)

Kane Williamson returns to test action with a half century for New Zealand against West Indies

CHRISTCHURCH, Dec 2: For Kane Williamson it was business as usual. After 12 months away from test cricket as a privateer in professional leagues around the world, Williamson ground out his 38th half century for New Zealand on Tuesday on the first day of the first test against West Indies.

It wasn't classic Williamson: he was rusty and it showed. He played and missed more than usual, many of his early runs came from thick edges and on 33 his stumps were shattered by a no ball.

But his dogged nature was evident as he reached 52 from 102 balls after coming to the crease when Devon Conway was out to the third ball of the day. Williamson put on 93 for the second wicket with Tom Latham and helped New Zealand overcome a makeshift but demanding West Indies attack to reach 231-9 by stumps.

Latham, also out of sorts, made 24, scoring from only 11 of the 85 balls he faced. Of his half century partnership with Williamson from 105, he contributed 10.

West Indies captain Roston Chase needed no prompting to bowl after winning the toss. There was heavy greenish grass on the pitch at



Hagley Oval and a brooding overcast promised the ball would swing.

Chase showed faith in a pace attack led by Kumar Roach, playing his first since January aged 37; Ojay Shields on debut at 29 and Johann Layne, playing his second test at 22. "With age coming on and I hadn't represented the West Indies as yet I didn't think it was necessary to challenge the youngsters for a place in the Jamaica Scorpions franchise team. So I literally was thinking of giving up," Shields said.

"That first over, my heart was pumping real hard. I took control of my emotions and did what I had to do."

Only 10.3 overs were bowled in

a rain-affected first session at the end of which New Zealand was 17-1. New Zealand added 121 runs in an extended second session in which 32.3 overs were bowled and at the cost of Williamson, Latham, Ravindra and Will Young.

Williamson was bowled by Shields in the 19th over but the 29-year-old was denied a prime wicket on debut when he over-stepped. He fell finally to a superb ball from Greaves which pitched short of a length and New Zealand was 94-2.

Latham was out one run later, driving at a ball outside off which moved away slightly and carried from a thick edge to wicketkeeper Tevin Imlach. (AP)

Longer formats suit me, taking advice from Kohli on running between wickets: Tilak

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: India batter Tilak Varma enjoys the longer formats and has been seeking inputs from Virat Kohli on fitness and running between the wickets as he looks to make the most of the opportunities coming his way.

The 23-year-old, who has featured in only four ODIs with one fifty and is yet to make his Test debut, said the presence of stalwarts like Kohli and Rohit Sharma in team in the ongoing ODI series has been a major confidence boost.

"ODI and Test cricket feel like my game because I enjoy the longer format. I'm really excited to play more ODIs as well. When Rohit bhai and Virat bhai

are in the same team, the confidence level is completely different," Varma said on JioStar.

"They have so much experience and knowledge, and I try to take as much advice from them as possible to get better." The young left-hander said he has particularly been seeking inputs from Kohli on fitness and running between the wickets -- an area he enjoys and wants to excel in.

"I speak to Virat bhai a lot, especially about fitness and running between the wickets. His intensity is incredible. I love running too, and I feel I'm pretty quick, so I really enjoy that part of the game," he said. (PTI)

In a first, Delhi lose to Tripura by 12 runs, Padikkal ton in big Karnataka win



AHMEDABAD, Dec 2: Delhi team's ongoing domestic season went from bad to worse as minnows Tripura shocked a team full of cash-rich IPL stars by 12 runs in a Group D match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy here on Tuesday.

Earlier this season in Ranji Trophy, Delhi were soundly thrashed by Jammu and Kashmir, another first in their list of ignominies accumulated over the past few seasons.

Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) President Rohan Jaitley and secretary Ashok Sharma will have a lot of explaining to do with regards to team selection, choice of support staff, including appointment of Saram-

deep Singh, who has proved to be quite a disaster.

In the case of Ranji Trophy, Delhi will need a miracle to reach the knock-outs this season even if they win their last two games outright.

In Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, losing two out of four matches has left them in a precarious position. Chasing a modest target of 158, Delhi's batters made a complete mess on a slowish track as they could never get going against Mani Shankar Muresingh's seam-up deliveries backed by Viki Saha's accurate off-breaks and were restricted to 145 for 8.

Little known all-rounder Muresingh, who has been quietly slogging for a decade at the first-class level, finally had his moment of glory, getting Punjab Kings and India A batter Priyansh Arya out early in the innings.

He first scored 18-ball-25 not out, which included a six and a four in the 20th over bowled by Ayush Badoni, and backed it up with 2 for 19 in four overs with 14 dot balls.

Muresingh, fondly called "Ben Stokes of Tripura" by his teammates, mostly bowled slow off-cutters and pace-off deliveries on a slightly tacky pitch stopping IPL stars like Delhi skipper Nitish Rana (45 off 40 balls), Ayush Badoni (14 off 13 balls) and Priyansh (8 off 10 balls) on their tracks.

Viki shortened the length of his delivery to draw former KKR skipper out of his crease and

got the off-break to turn enough for keeper Sentu Sarkar to complete a neat stumping.

Karnataka crush TN by 145 runs, courtesy Padikkal ton

In another Group D game, Karnataka rode on Devdutt Padikkal's unbeaten 46-ball-102 to comfortably outclass Tamil Nadu by 145 runs.

Padikkal hit 10 fours and six sixes while BR Sharath (53 off 24 balls) and Ravichandran Smaran (46 not out off 29 balls) also played their part in a commanding total of 245 for 3. India's T20 specialist Varun Chakravarthy, for a change, was clobbered for 47 in four wicketless overs.

The chase was out of question and Tamil Nadu were bowled out for a meagre 100 in just 14.2 overs with veteran leg-spinners Shreyas Gopal and Praveen Dubey claiming three wickets apiece.

Brief Scores: Tripura 157/5 in 20 overs (Mani Shankar Muresingh 25 not out, Suyash Sharma 2/16, Digvesh Rathi 2/34) vs Delhi 145/8 in 20 overs (Nitish Rana 45, Mani Shankar Muresingh 2/19). Tripura won by 12 runs.

Karnataka 245/3 in 20 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 102 not out, BR Sharath 53, R Smaran 46 not out, Sonu Yadav 2/34) vs Tamil Nadu 100 in 14.2 overs (Tushar Raheja 29, Shreyas Gopal 3/21, Praveen Dubey 3/15). Karnataka won by 145 runs. (PTI)

Nice fans' fury boils over: Players attacked after sixth straight loss



"However, the incidents that occurred during this gathering are unacceptable. Several members of the club were confronted and targeted. OGC Nice offers them its full support and condemns these actions in the strongest possible terms."

L'Equipe reported some players and staff were spat on when they exited the bus, and even punched. Jérémie Boga and Terem Moffi were reportedly the most violently attacked, taking multiple blows, including to the head and groin, while sporting director Florian Maurice was also said to be assaulted.

L'Equipe and RMC reported that Boga and Moffi have been given medical leave.

Nice did not immediately respond to a request for comments from The Associated Press.

After 14 rounds, Nice sits 10th in the table, 14 points behind leader Lens. It has lost seven matches while conceding 26 goals. The loss against Lorient came just three days after a 3-0 defeat at Porto in the Europa League. The club is bottom of the league phase table, having lost all five of its matches.

"We're fighting for survival, that's the reality," Nice coach Franck Haise said on Sunday. "We'll fight with those who want to fight. A team exists only when everyone has that desire."

Maurice pointed to a lack of cohesion within the team after Nice let a 1-0 lead slip against Lorient.

"Every time there's a slight setback we can't recover," he said. "That proves that we lack cohesion, perhaps values, at a given moment, to fight and go and get results." (AP)