

The Hills Times publication will remain suspended on January 14 and 15 on account of Magh Bihu and will resume on January 16. We extend our warm wishes to our valued hawkers and well-wishers for a joyful, peaceful and prosperous Magh Bihu celebration.

-Publisher

Himanta condemns Cong leader's remark on Sivasagar

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Jan 12: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday launched a sharp attack on the Congress, strongly condemning what he termed an "insulting and provocative" remark by a party leader regarding Sivasagar.

Reacting to a statement that Sivasagar would be turned into "Dhubri," Sarma questioned both the intent and the authority behind such comments, saying they reflected arrogance and a deliberate attempt to demean the historical and cultural significance of the former Ahom capital.

"The question is, who is Congress leader Rezaul Karim to talk about turning Sivasagar into Dhubri in the name of a so-called greater Assam?" the Chief Minister told reporters.

He alleged that a Congress leader whose ancestors had migrated from Bangladesh had no moral right to make such remarks and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

33,811 beneficiaries receive ₹10,000 each under MMMUA at Dokmoka

CM flags concerns over demographic changes

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Jan 12: On the eve of Bhogali Bihu's Uruka, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday launched a major women's empowerment initiative in Dokmoka and issued a strong political message on Assam's demographic and cultural identity.

Addressing a large public rally under the Howrahgah Assembly constituency, the chief minister formally rolled out the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMMUA).

As part of the programme, cheques of ₹10,000 each were distributed to 33,811 women beneficiaries, aimed at strengthening rural livelihoods and encouraging entrepreneurship.

Officials said the scheme is intended to help women associated with self-help groups transition into small-scale entrepreneurs.



Speaking at the event, Sarma said the government's objective was to ensure that women in Karbi Anglong played an active role in the state's economic growth rather than remaining limited to welfare support.

The chief minister also announced an expansion of social welfare coverage in the region, stating that an additional 2,500 women from Howrahgah would be included under the Orunodoi scheme in the coming days.

He further said that welfare initiatives would continue if the BJP returned to power in the 2026 Assembly elections.

Referring to alleged remarks by former AMSU president Rejaul Karim Sarkar, who recently joined the Congress, the chief minister claimed that statements about creating a "Greater Assam" reflected a dangerous mindset linked to demographic change.

Sarma alleged that in Dhubri, indigenous people had been reduced to a minority due to large-scale settlement by people from outside the state, and warned against any attempt to replicate such a demographic pattern in Upper Assam districts.

He rejected what he described as an expansionist interpretation of "Greater Assam" and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Decision on seat-sharing with allies BJP's prerogative: CM

'Congress has turned into a money-making machine through ticket distribution'

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Jan 12: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday stepped up his attack on the Congress, alleging that the party has turned ticket distribution into a money-making exercise, with senior leaders allegedly using the proceeds to fund extravagant wedding ceremonies.

Speaking to reporters, Sarma claimed that Congress tickets for the upcoming Assembly elections were being "sold for money" and that the scale of the alleged transactions would become evident once the party officially announces its candidates.

"Everyone is watching closely. How much money has been taken by the Congress in the name of tickets will be clear after the list is declared," he said.

The chief minister asserted that even Congress candidates themselves would eventually acknowledge the practice.

"What I am saying today will be repeated by the candidates on the day tickets are announced. I am speaking on the basis of confirmed and reliable information," Sarma claimed, adding that others would soon echo the same allegations.

Referring to seat-sharing arrangements, Sarma said it was entirely the prerogative of the Bharatiya Janata Party to decide how many seats it would allocate to its allies, including the Asom Gana Parishad, Gana Shakti and the BPF-UPPL alliance.

"How many seats the BJP gives to AGP, Gana Shakti or BPF-UPPL is our internal decision," he said.

Drawing a parallel, the Chief Minister said it was also an internal matter for (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tripura CM plans expansion of Churaibari Check Post, to take up matter with Assam Govt

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Jan 12: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday said that he will hold discussions with the Assam Government and chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma regarding the expansion and modernisation of the Churaibari Check Post in North Tripura district to ease traffic congestion and ensure systematic vehicle checking.

The chief minister shared this while speaking to the media after returning from a two-day tour of North Tripura district, where he stayed overnight.

He said multiple complaints had been received from the Churaibari border area, prompting him to personally inspect the situation.

Four endangered Greater Adjutant Storks found dead in Kamrup district

PALASBARI, Jan 12: Four endangered Greater Adjutant Stork (GAS) were found dead on the premises of a hospital in Assam's Kamrup district, forest officials said on Monday.

Three birds fell off their nests and died on Friday while another was found dead the next day.

The storks, egrets and other birds usually nest on tall trees within the campus of Moniari Tinali State Dispensary, which has long served as a breeding site.

Recognising the ecological importance of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Despite setback, Assam celebrates launch of Lachit 1 satellite

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Jan 12: It was a moment of pride for Assam as the state's first satellite, Lachit-1, developed by students of Assam Don Bosco University (ADBU), was carried onboard Indian Space Research Organisation's PSLV-C62 rocket that lifted off on Monday.

Although the mission did not achieve its intended outcome due to the launch failure, the event marked a historic milestone for Assam and the Northeast, symbolising the growing participation of regional academic institutions in India's space journey.



The satellite project involved nearly 50 students of ADBU, making it a landmark achievement in terms of student-led space research and innovation.

Lachit-1 was conceived, designed and built entirely by students under the guidance of faculty members, making ADBU the first university in Northeast India to undertake such an ambitious satellite mission.

Preparatory work for the project began in 2022 under the leadership of Professor Bikramjeet Kakati, with students gaining hands-on exposure to real-world satellite technology.

A core team of five students spearheaded the mission, while around 20 (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJYM Assam marks National Youth Day with grand youth convention in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 12: Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), Assam Pradesh, on Monday organised a large-scale programme to mark National Youth Day at the Srimanta Sankaradeva International Auditorium where drawing participation from over 1,100 youths from different parts of the state.

The event, aimed at celebrating youth energy and leadership, was attended by several senior BJP leaders, including BJP Assam president and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Advertisement for Assam Bihu featuring a large haystack in a rural landscape. Text in Assamese: 'অগ্নি প্রজ্জ্বলিতং বন্দে চারুবৰ্ণ হুতাশনম্। সুবৰ্ণ বৰ্ণ মমলং জ্যোতীৰুপায় তে নমঃ।।' 'অসমবাসীলৈ উৰুকা আৰু মাঘ বিহুৰ আন্তৰিক শুভেচ্ছা জনাইছোঁ' 'ড° হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শৰ্মা মুখ্যমন্ত্রী, অসম' '১৩ জানুৱাৰী ২০২৬' 'তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্রচাৰিত' 'Connect with us @diprassam dipr.assam.gov.in' 'অসম বার্তা ছাবস্ক্ৰাইব কৰিবলৈ ৭৬৩৬৮৩৪৯৪৩ ত Assam লিখি ৱাটছএপ কৰক' 'DIPR/D/HLT/272/13-Jan-26'

PLASTINDIA 2026 launched in Guwahati, underscores focus on North-East and sustainability

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 12: The PLASTINDIA Foundation recently announced PLASTINDIA 2026 at a launch programme here, marking a significant step in its nationwide outreach and deeper engagement with stakeholders in the North-East.

Recognised as one of the world's leading platforms for the plastics and polymer industry, PLASTINDIA 2026 is expected to bring together industry leaders, policymakers, global exhibitors, startups and technology providers from across the value chain.

The Guwahati launch highlighted the growing importance of the North-East in India's industrial growth story, particularly in sectors such as infrastructure, packaging, agriculture and sustainable materials.

Organisers said the region aligns closely with the exhibition's theme, 'Bharat Next', which focuses on inclusive, innovation-driven and future-ready industrial development.

PLASTINDIA 2026 is being planned as India's first zero-waste plastics exhibition, with organisers committing to responsible waste



management practices throughout the event.

Measures will include segregation, recycling and reuse of materials, along with audited scientific processes to ensure zero landfill waste, showcasing large-scale implementation of circular economy principles.

As part of its sustainability initiatives, the Foundation will roll out the 'Swachhita Yatra', a nationwide awareness campaign that will cover nearly 25 locations.

The campaign will feature a patented 'Sustainability on Wheels' mobile unit, demonstrat-

ing decentralised waste management, source segregation and recycling through live demonstrations and community engagement programmes.

The exhibition will be held at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi from February 5 to 10, 2026.

It will span more than 22 halls, covering an exhibition area of around 75,000 square metres, and will feature raw materials, machinery, moulds and dies, automation solutions, recycling technologies and finished products catering to diverse industrial applications.

Innovation will be promoted

through the 'Bharat Next Challenge', a startup initiative being organised in association with the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta.

The programme will identify startups working in areas such as material innovation, recycling, automation and circular economy solutions, with the top 10 ventures set to receive over ₹2 lakh in prize money along with mentorship and industry exposure.

An exclusive CEO and Industry Leaders' Meet will also be organised during the event, bringing together senior industry leaders, policymakers and global experts for discussions on investments, technology adoption, sustainability and India's positioning in the global plastics industry.

Addressing the gathering, Alok Tibrewala, Chairman of the National Executive Council, said PLASTINDIA 2026 represents the transformation of the plastics industry through innovation, responsible manufacturing and sustainable, adding that engaging regions such as the North-East was crucial for building an inclusive and future-focused industry ecosystem.

Mahindra unveils XUV 7XO and XEV 9S at Poddar Mahindra in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 12: Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd., India's leading SUV manufacturer, on Monday launched the new XUV 7XO the company's latest trendsetter starting at a price of ₹13.66 lakh (ex-showroom) and XEV 9S — India's Big New Electric 7-seater SUV starting at ₹19.95 lakh at Poddar Mahindra.



The vehicles were unveiled by Nishita Goswami, famous Assamese actress, Avishek Das, ASM, NER, M&M Ltd, Avinash Kumar Mishra, CGM, Poddar Mahindra and Shantanu Chaudhury, ASBM, NER, M&M Ltd.

According to an official statement, the bookings and the deliveries for the XUV 7XO will start from Jan 14, 2026.

The bookings for the XEV 9S will start from Jan 14, 2026. The deliveries for the XEV 9S will start from Jan 23, 2026, the statement said.

The XUV 7XO comes with 5 Pioneering Tech Disruptions: World's first DAVINCI suspension system, India's first ICE SUV with coast-to-coast triple screen across all variant, India's first ICE Software Defined Vehicle (SDV), India's first Integrated Dolby Atmos and Dolby Vision Experience and India's first ADAS Level 2 with Dynamic Visualisation.

Starting at a price of ₹13.66 lakh (ex-showroom), the XUV 7XO raises the benchmarks set by the gamechanger XUV 700, which has had over 300000 customers since its launch in 2021.

The XUV 7XO promises to deliver an experience that rewrites the rules of high-end SUVs by elevating sophistication and technology like never before.

The XEV 9S is said to arrive as India's Big New Electric — a bold idea crafted into an intelligently spacious SUV for people whose lives, dreams, and daily journeys are getting bigger.

A Big New Electric for Big Lives With its expansive cabin, clever three-row electric-first layout, whisper-quiet drive, and an almost magical sense of openness, the XEV 9S gives families, travellers, creators, and commuters something Indian mobility has long denied them: Comfort that isn't negotiated. Space that isn't apologised for.

Electric that isn't small. The bookings for the XEV 9S will start from Jan 14, 2026. The deliveries for the XEV 9S will start from Jan 23, 2026.

Contd. from Page 1...

CM flags concerns

Assam", asserting that the concept, as envisioned by Swargadeo Chaoling Sukapha and Mahapurush Sri-manta Sankardeva, was rooted in Assam's indigenous and cultural ethos.

The chief minister's visit and announcements were seen as a morale boost for the Karbi Anglong region ahead of Magh Bihu celebrations, combining welfare outreach with a strong political message on identity and demographic balance.

Decision on seat-sharing

the Congress to decide how many seats it would offer to its allies such as Rajior Dal and the Assam Jatiya Parishad.

However, he cautioned that there must be a clear ethical boundary.

"There is only one line that should never be crossed — tickets must not be sold for money," he said. Sarma further alleged that the Congress's alleged practice of collecting funds was not limited to elections alone. "From weddings to elections, this collection drive will continue," he remarked, accusing senior Congress leaders of reducing the ticket distribution process to a fundraising mechanism rather than a democratic exercise.

The chief minister's remarks come amid intensifying political exchanges between the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress as preparations gather pace for the Assembly polls.

Himanta condemns Cong

accused the party of indulging in irresponsible rhetoric that could hurt public sentiment.

Sarma asserted that Sivasagar is not the ancestral property of any Congress leader and warned against dragging the town into divisive political narratives.

He said Sivasagar occupies a unique place in Assam's history and heritage and should not be used for political provocation or appeasement.

The chief minister also targeted senior Congress leaders Gaurav Gogoi and Debabrata Saikia, questioning why they "continue to practise appeasement politics," which he described as puzzling and deeply disturbing. He alleged that such political conduct had repeatedly damaged Assam's social harmony and unity.

Strongly criticising any attempt to pitch one region against another, Sarma said comparing Sivasagar with Dhubri was unacceptable and amounted to an open provocation.

"Such statements are not only irresponsible but also dangerous, as they seek to create regional and communal divisions for narrow political gains," he said.

Reiterating his government's position, the chief minister said the BJP-led dispensation would not tolerate any effort to undermine Assam's cultural identity or disturb peace in the state.

He asserted that the people of Assam were capable of recognising divisive politics and would respond appropriately.

Sarma said his government remained committed to preserving the historical legacy of Sivasagar and ensuring inclusive development across all regions of Assam, without discrimination or appeasement.

Tripura CM plans

added. Saha highlighted that limited space at the checking point on the Assam side is causing frequent traffic snarls.

"I will take up the issue with the Assam Government to explore ways to expand the area for smooth vehicle movement and effective inspections. The matter will also be raised in the plenary session," he said.

The chief minister also expressed concern over stone crushing units operating near the National Highway.

"The environmental condition in the area was alarming. As per rules, such units must be located at least 100 metres away from the highway. Many of these units were established during the Left Front tenure and were not adequately monitored," he said.

He added that a meeting would be convened to regulate and reorganise stone crushing operations and noted that several trucks were found carrying overloaded stone materials, calling for immediate reforms.

During the visit, Saha also inspected the IOCL depot and interacted with drivers, advising them not to engage in illegal payments.

"If any such incidents occur, they should be reported directly to my office. This will not be allowed to continue," he said.

He further said that IOCL officials were instructed to ensure transparency and adherence to proper procedures in their operations.

Four endangered Greater

the area, the Loharghat range office of the forest department had earlier identified the trees as a safe habitat for the endangered storks and installed signboards to ensure their protection.

The forest department has also installed CCTV cameras on the trees to monitor the birds.

Officials said the dead birds have been taken by the forest department to carry out tests to ascertain the exact cause of their deaths.

Meanwhile, environmentalists and local citizens have demanded a thorough investigation into the deaths of the endangered birds and to ensure their protection.

The GAS is a huge scavenging stork that was once widely distributed across India and Southeast Asia but is now mostly confined to Assam, with a small population in Cambodia's northern plains region. (PTI)

Despite setback, Assam

student groups worked across multiple verticals, including satellite design, engineering, data systems and mission planning.

Students associated with the project said the initiative reflected years of teamwork, technical learning and innovation.

Dinesh Baishya, Director of Indigenous Knowledge at ADBU, described the mission as unprecedented for the region.

"This is the first time in the history of Northeast India that a university has attempted to launch a satellite through the collective efforts of students and teachers," he said.

The satellite was named after Lachit Borphan, the legendary Ahom general who led Assam to victory against the Mughal forces, symbolising courage, leadership and indigenous pride — values the university seeks to instil among young innovators.

Once operational, Lachit-1 was designed to assist in monitoring landslides, floods, weather patterns and environmental changes, providing crucial data to support disaster management and climate research in the region.

University officials said that despite the setback, the mission remains a proud moment for Assam, demonstrating the potential of its youth.

With this initiative, Assam Don Bosco University has firmly placed Northeast India on the national space innovation map, inspiring a new generation to pursue careers in space science and technology.

BJYM Assam marks

MP Dilip Saikia, Assam election in-charge Baijayant Jay Panda, state prabhari Harish Dwivedi, election co in-charge Darshana Jardosh, MPs Bijuli Kalita Medhi and Pradan Barua, BJP general secretary (organisation) G R Ravindra Raju, BJP general secretaries Anup Barman and Rituparna Baruah, BJYM Assam president Rakesh Das, and BJP vice-president Ratna Singh.

As part of the programme, 70 youths from various districts of Assam were felicitated with the 'Yuva Pratibha Bota Award' in recognition of their achievements and contributions in fields such as innovation, social service and leadership.

Addressing the gathering, BJYM Assam president Rakesh Das said the youth of the state remained committed to nationalism, cultural values and indigenous identity.

He also took a swipe at Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi, challenging him to visit Batadrava Than and Swahid Samarak, while asserting that the BJP stood with the indigenous people of Assam.

BJP Assam president Dilip Saikia, in his address, said the people of the state would not allow forces perceived to be divisive or anti-Assam to shape the state's future leadership.

He reiterated the party's commitment to protecting Assam's identity, security and cultural heritage.

The programme concluded with a call for unity and youth empowerment, with BJYM Assam leaders underlining their resolve to engage the youth in nation-building initiatives under the BJP's leadership.

Ather riders gain access to over 5,000 two-wheeler fast chargers nationwide

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 12: Electric two-wheeler manufacturer Ather Energy on Monday announced a major expansion of its charging ecosystem, with Ather riders now able to access more than 5,000 public fast chargers equipped with the LECCS (Light Electric Combined Charging System) connector across the country.

The expanded network spans over 395 cities, comprising more than 3,675 fast chargers operated directly by Ather Energy and over 1,400 chargers available through partner networks.

The chargers are spread across major metropolitan centres, tier-II and tier-III cities, as well as key intercity corridors, aimed at supporting both daily commutes and long-distance travel.

According to the company, cities including Bengaluru, Pune, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai now have over 100 LECCS-compatible chargers each, with Bengaluru alone hosting more than 240 such charging points.

Karnataka, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat account for the highest concentration of public fast chargers.

Beyond major metros, cities such as Nashik, Malappuram and Indore have more than 45 fast chargers, while Kozhikode and Coimbatore feature over 65 each.

The charging network has also been extended beyond India, with more than 30 fast chargers now operational in Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Commenting on the development, Ravneet Singh Phokela, Chief Business Officer at Ather Energy, said charging infrastructure remained a critical enabler for electric vehicle adoption.

He said the company had steadily invested over the past seven years in building a reliable charging network across cities, towns, highways and intercity routes, enabling riders to plan longer journeys with confidence.

Phokela added that alongside network expansion, Ather continued to enhance the charging experience, including the recent

introduction of a new fast charger, to make ownership more seamless and convenient.

Ather has played a key role in developing the LECCS connector, which was designed specifically for electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers.

The company opened the intellectual property for the connector in 2021 to promote interoperability across the industry.

In October 2023, the LECCS connector received approval from the Bureau of Indian Standards and was subsequently notified as an Indian Standard under IS17017 specifications.

With the LECCS standard now adopted by multiple original equipment manufacturers such as Hero Vida and Matter, as well as charge point operators including Bolt, Kazam and EVamp, interoperability within the electric mobility ecosystem has strengthened.

Ather Grid chargers are also visible on Google Maps, allowing LECCS-enabled scooter users to easily locate and navigate to nearby charging points, further improving the overall ownership experience.

TCS Q3 profit falls 14 pc to ₹10,657 cr; headcount dips by 11k

MUMBAI, Jan 12: The country's largest IT services company TCS on Monday reported 13.91 per cent decline in December quarter net profit at ₹10,657 crore, hit by one-time impact of the implementation of new labour codes. The Tata Group company's net profit was ₹12,380 crore in the October-December period of FY25 and ₹12,075 crore in the preceding September quarter, a statement said. Implementation of the new labour codes during the quarter led to a "statutory impact" of ₹2,128 crore, the company said, adding that but for all the one-time impact, its profit would have grown 8.5 per cent to ₹13,438 crore.

The company, one of the largest private sector employers in the country, disclosed that the overall head-

count was down by 11,151 in the three months to December 31, 2025 to 5,82,163 employees.

TCS had announced to lay off around 12,000 people earlier in the year as part of a restructuring exercise. It reported a reduction of 19,755 in the overall staff in September quarter, but hinted that only 6,000 of these were involuntary actions because of the restructuring exercise. The company's revenue from operations during the quarter under review increased 4.86 per cent to ₹67,087 crore from ₹63,973 crore.

The operating profit margin during the quarter was stable at 25.2 per cent when compared with September quarter but higher than 24.5 per cent in the year-ago period, the company statement said. (PTI)

Rupee pares early losses, ends 1 paisa higher at 90.17 against US dollar

MUMBAI, Jan 12: The rupee recovered from low levels and settled 1 paisa higher at 90.16 against the US dollar on Monday on weak American currency and sliding crude oil prices.

Equity market sentiment also improved after the new US envoy to India, Sergio Gor, said that both sides are actively engaged in firming up a trade deal, forex analysts said.

However, a volatile geopolitical situation kept the domestic currency under pressure, restricting its recovery, they said. Also, traders awaited cues from domestic and US macroeconomic data to be released this week.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 90.23 and strengthened to 90.13 during intra-day. It also touched a low of 90.25 before ending the session at 90.17 against the greenback, registering a gain of 1 paisa from its previous closing level.

On Friday, the rupee depreciated 28 paise to close at 90.18 against the US dollar.

The rupee opened weak on risk aversion in global markets and rising geopolitical tensions, but recovered on a bounce back in domestic markets after US Ambassador Sergio Gor said the delegates of both nations are working to finalise a trade deal, said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

"Traders now focus on inflation data from the US and India. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹89.90 to Rs 90.60," he added.

Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst, Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said the rupee traded flat as markets awaited cues from domestic consumer as well as wholesale price inflation data this week. (PTI)

LOST

I, Gurjit Kaur daughter of Gurudayal Singh and Bhajan Kaur resident of Diphu Council Colony near Amalparity Road, Diphu, lost my Birth Certificate Registration No.- 6117; Registration date: 18/03/2002; Place of Birth: Fouzdaripatty, Nagaon; Date of Birth: 13/08/1996. If any body finds contact : 7002357628. A lost report submitted at Diphu Police station.

NAME CHANGE

My adopted son Prakash Boral change his name as Bikash Timung . In this regard we Sri Amon Timung and my wife Smt. Daris Hansepi has made an affidavit and do hereby solemnly affirm and declare that from now Prakash Boral will be known as Bikash Timung . We are the legal parents of Bikash Timung. And we are accepted him as our son as per Karbi Customary Law . Sri Amon Timung Smt. Daris HansepiVill :- Dokmoka

LOST

I, Biplob Purakayastha, S/O-Bijoy Kumar Purakayastha, R/O: Vill-Oksek Hati Bandha,P.O-Choudhury Bazar, P.S-Murajhar, Hojai, District: Hojai, Assam, PIN: 782439, have lost my Higher Secondary Final Marksheet and Pass Certificate bearing Roll- 0536 No. 10300 issued by Assam Higher Secondary Education Council, Assam on 25-06-2020.

PROVISION OF CCTV COVERAGE AT LUMDING DIV.

E-Tender Notice No. SNT-31-LMG-2025-26 Dated: 08-01-2026.

E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Name of work: Provision of CCTV coverage at yard covering mainline points and crossings of A&B category station (Dimapur, Hojai, Halbargon) at Lumding Division. **Tender Value: ₹1,06,45,377.96/- Earnest Money: ₹2,03,200/- Date & Time of closing of tender: At 15:00 hrs. & opening at 15:30 hrs on 30-01-2026.** The complete information of above e-tender will be available in website www.ireps.gov.in

DSTE, Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

E-AUCTION IS INVITED FOR LEASING OF SLRS AND VP'S OVER LUMDING DIVISION

E-Auction is invited for leasing of SLRs and VP's for 03 years in trains originating from Lumding Division. **Auction Catalogue No.: LEASE-LMG-01-26. Rate Unit: Per Trip Licensing Fee & Per Round Trip (Two Way). Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots) : At 11:00 hrs. on 23-01-2026.**

Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Lot End Date & Time
AA/1	55608-SLR-F1-GHY-MNDP-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	11:30 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/2	55687-SLR-F1-DLCR-SCL-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	11:40 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/3	55620-SLR-F1-GHY-MNDP-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	11:50 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/4	55688-SLR-F1-SCL-DLCR-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	12:00 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/5	15655-SLR-F1-KYO-SVDK-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	12:10 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/6	55601-SLR-F1-GHY-LMG-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	12:20 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/7	55804-SLR-F1-GHY-NBO-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	12:30 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/8	55661-SLR-F1-MSSN-SCL-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	12:40 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/9	55665-SLR-F1-SCL-VNGP-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	12:50 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/10	55689-SLR-F1-DLCR-BPB-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	13:00 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/11	55690-SLR-F1-BPB-DLCR-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	13:10 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/12	55676-SLR-F1-DMR-AGTL-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	13:20 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/13	55662-SLR-F1-SCL-MSSN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	13:30 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/14	55675-SLR-F1-AGTL-DMR-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	13:40 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/15	55666-SLR-F1-VNGP-SCL-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	13:50 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/16	55685-SLR-F1-MSSN-SCL-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	14:00 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/17	55606-SLR-F1-SKHV-GHY-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	14:10 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/18	55604-SLR-F1-MBO-GHY-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	14:20 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/19	55605-SLR-F1-GHY-SKHV-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	14:30 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/20	55678-SLR-F1-DMR-SCL-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	14:40 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/21	55686-SLR-F1-SCL-MSSN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	14:50 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/22	55662-SLR-F1-LMG-GHY-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	15:00 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/23	55802-SLR-F1-GHY-NBO-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	15:10 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/24	55810-SLR-F1-GHY-NBO-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	15:20 hrs. on 23-01-26
AA/25	55603-SLR-F1-GHY-MBO-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	15:30 hrs. on 23-01-26
AB/1	15615-15616-VP-1-GHY-SCL-25-1 (Parcel-Parcel Van)	15:40 hrs. on 23-01-26

Initial Cooling off period is 30 minutes. Successive lots closing interval 10 minutes. Note : Prospective bidder are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in for more details.

Divisional Railway Manager (C), Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

Financial assistance provided under MMUA scheme Cheques distributed to women SHG members in Baksa



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Jan 12: A ceremonial cheque distribution programme was organised on Monday at Kadamtala under the Baksa Legislative Assembly Constituency to provide financial assistance to eligible women members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan (MMUA) scheme.

Under the women empowerment initiative launched by the Assam government, cheques of ₹ 10,000 each were distributed to beneficiaries. As part of the programme, a total of 35,324 eligible women members belonging to 3,549 Self-Help Groups in the Baksa constituency received financial support aimed at strengthening their livelihoods.

The programme was attended by BTC chief Hagrama Mohilary, cabinet minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, cabinet minister Jayanta Mallabarua and BTC deputy speaker Bijit Gwara Narjary, along with several other dignitaries and officials.

The Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyaan scheme seeks to promote women entrepreneurship, enhance financial independence and encourage sustainable livelihood development by supporting women-led self-employment initiatives across the state.

The impact of the collision was severe, resulting in Chauhan's death on the spot. The two persons riding the motorcycle sustained serious injuries and were rushed for medical treatment. Their identities are yet to be ascertained.

On receiving information, Kheroni Police reached the spot, recovered the body and took custody of the damaged vehicles. The body was sent for necessary formalities. Police have launched an investigation to determine the exact cause of the accident with preliminary reports suggesting over speeding as a possible factor.

During the delegate session, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha adopted several important resolutions. Prominent among them were resolutions aimed at strengthening literary activities and taking strategic initiatives to protect and uplift Bodo medium education in the state.

A colourful multicultural rally was organised on the concluding day. The rally was flagged off by Prasanna Boro, vice president of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. Cultural troupes from neighbouring

exhibitions, a book fair and cultural programmes.

Meanwhile, a chaotic incident was reported during the delegate session on Saturday evening over the formation of the new executive committee of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. According to sources, some unknown miscreants allegedly forcefully entered the delegate session and created an unusual situation, following which the session had to be postponed.

Several organisations and individuals, including ABSU and the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, have strongly condemned the incident and expressed dissatisfaction over the chaos created by unidentified miscreants during the conference.

The open session of the conference was attended by Assam cabinet ministers Urkhao Gwra Brahma and Jayantamallah Baruah, BTC chief Hagrama Mohilary, Lok Sabha MP Joyanta Basumatary and ABSU president Dipen Boro, among others. The session was chaired by Dr Surath Narzary, president of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. A grand mass participation was witnessed throughout the conference, along with

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Cyclist killed in road accident at Kheroni

HT Correspondent
KHERONI, Jan 12: A tragic road accident occurred on Monday in the Mandad area of Kheroni in West Karbi Anglong, claiming the life of a cyclist and leaving two others critically injured. The incident has once again raised concerns over reckless driving and road safety in the region.

According to reports, the deceased has been identified as Raghbir Chauhan of Lambathar village. He was travelling on his bicycle from Dayangmukh towards Kheroni Chariari when a speeding motorcycle coming from the opposite direction collided head-on with him. The motorcycle involved in the accident bears registration number AS 31S 8623.

The impact of the collision was severe, resulting in Chauhan's death on the spot. The two persons riding the motorcycle sustained serious injuries and were rushed for medical treatment. Their identities are yet to be ascertained.

On receiving information, Kheroni Police reached the spot, recovered the body and took custody of the damaged vehicles. The body was sent for necessary formalities. Police have launched an investigation to determine the exact cause of the accident with preliminary reports suggesting over speeding as a possible factor.

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Bodo Sahitya Sabha annual conference concludes

Multicultural rally marks closing day in Chirang

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Jan 12: The 65th annual conference of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) concluded on Sunday after a three-day programme held at Thengpakri Fwthar, Boriagoan, near Bijni in Chirang district. The conference witnessed large participation from sahitya lovers, writers and common people from across Assam and beyond.

Several thousand delegates and observers from different districts of the state took part in the conference. Participants also arrived from neighbouring states such as West Bengal, Meghalaya and Tripura, as well as neighbouring countries including Bangladesh, Bhutan and Japan, reflecting the growing reach of Bodo literature and culture.

During the delegate session, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha adopted several important resolutions. Prominent among them were resolutions aimed at strengthening literary activities and taking strategic initiatives to protect and uplift Bodo medium education in the state.

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Gold chain snatched from retired woman in Nagaon

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Jan 12: The menace of chain snatching in Nagaon town and its adjoining areas continues unabated, creating fear and insecurity among residents. Another such incident was reported in broad daylight on Sunday on the Shivanagar-Kolongpar road, where a retired woman was robbed of her gold chain.

According to eyewitnesses, the incident occurred around 1 PM when the victim, identified as Nijara Saikia, a retired employee, was walking towards her home along with a companion. Suddenly, two unidentified miscreants riding a motorcycle approached her, snatched the gold chain from her neck and fled the spot within moments. The incident triggered shock and anger among local residents, who expressed serious concern over the rising number of similar crimes in the area. Saikia later lodged a complaint with the Itachali police outpost, seeking action against the culprits.

The award, which includes Rs 20,000, a citation, memento, seeleng sador and a gamusa was presented during a programme also marking the fifth foundation day of the scribes' body and the welfare fund. Saikia, in his acceptance address, thanked the organisers and submitted a report on his study titled "Impact of Climate Change and River Dams on Mising, Deuri and Fishermen Communities of Assam," based on field visits across the region.

The event featured an insightful lecture on "The Future of Journalism in the World of Artificial Intelligence" by Mukul Madhab Baishya, an eminent IT expert and painter. The programme began with a lamp-lighting ceremony in tribute to Deba Kumar Bora, conducted by his wife Barnali Saikia Bora, Deputy Chairperson of the Assam State Commission for

Women.

AAJU Jorhat district president Jogesh Ojha presided over the event, while Journalist Welfare Fund Secretary Navajyoti Boruah outlined its objectives. Devajit Boruah delivered the welcome address. Lalit Bora, president of the Journalists' Welfare Fund and veteran journalist, spoke on Bora's life and contributions. Special guests included Jayshree Bora, senior official of ONGC, Cinnamara, and Dr Suryya Kumar Chetta, Head of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at Assam Women's University, Jorhat. Union Minister of State (MoS) for Textiles and External Affairs Pabitra Margherita attended the flag hoisting ceremony earlier in the morning.

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Pankaj Saikia receives Deba Kumar Bora Memorial Media Fellowship

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Jan 12: The Deba Kumar Bora Memorial Media Fellowship, 2025, was awarded to Pankaj Saikia, News Editor of Pratinidhi, at a function held at the auditorium of Jorhat Science Centre and Planetarium on Sunday.

The fellowship, instituted by the All Assam Journalists' Union (AAJU), Jorhat district committee and the Journalists' Welfare Fund, honours the memory of Deba Kumar Bora, a prominent AASU leader during the Assam students' movement, former Minister in the first Assam Gana Parishad Government and former Editor of Dainik Janambhumi.

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Creative literature programme held by Dibrugarh District Lekhika Samaj

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Jan 12: The Dibrugarh District Lekhika Samaj organised a Creative Literature and Cultural Programme on Sunday at the Lalchand Kanoi Auditorium of DHSK College (Autonomous), Dibrugarh, during which three books were formally released. Speaking at the book launch ceremony, DHSK College Principal Dr Sashikanta Saikia highlighted the vital role of literature in shaping society, stating that while science and technology provide physical comfort, it is literature that teaches people to live as true human beings. He said advanced literature in developed countries had played a key role in awakening nationalism and intellectual consciousness among the masses.

Dr Saikia emphasised that a nation without literature cannot preserve its history and that the responsibility of protecting language and literature should not rest solely on writers but must be regarded as a sacred duty of every citizen. He further observed that the younger generation often loses touch with its roots due to the lack of creative literary engagement. According to him, creative literature can help prevent intellectual and mental poverty, cultural identity crises, language stagnation and distortion of history in society.

The three books released on the occasion were 'Avrabhedhi Sur Malita' by writer Archana Bora and 'Emuthi Limarik' and 'Charai Howa Hole' by Class IX student Bagmita Gogoi. The programme was attended by Ranjan Dutta, retired officer of Dibrugarh APDCL, along with Madhumita Dutta, president of the Dibrugarh Lekhika Samaj and Anita Gogoi, secretary of the

organisation. The event was inaugurated by Dr Sashikanta Saikia by lighting a ceremonial lantern. The meeting was chaired by Lekhika Samaj president Madhumita Dutta, while secretary Anita Gogoi explained the objectives of the programme. Writers Archana Bora and Bagmita Gogoi also shared their views on literature and creative expression.

The cultural segment of the programme featured solo dance performances by Ankita Borthakur, Kanjun Das, Nibha Borchetta and Banashree Devi, while a group creative dance was presented by Lorioli Bagmita Gogoi, Aradhya Bora and Tjusmita Das. Child singer Chauli Gogoi paid tribute to late Zubeen Garg by rendering one of his songs. Poets Bitumoni Gogoi and Minakshi Das Baruah were also present on the occasion.

During the programme, the Organisational Achievement Award was presented to Junti Bora Gogoi, while the Organisational Achievement Inspirational Award was conferred on Rimjhim Saikia. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by secretary Anita Gogoi.



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Sivasagar gears up for 'National Road Safety Month'

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Jan 12: The Road Safety Committee of Sivasagar district recently held a meeting to discuss the celebration of National Road Safety Month, which began on January 1. The meeting was chaired by District Development Commissioner Pavithra Kumar Das and focused on the effective and successful implementation of road safety programmes across different parts of the district.

During the meeting, members deliberated on organising various road safety awareness activities under National Road Safety Month through the coordinated efforts of different government departments. The discussion also covered key factors contributing to the rising number of road accidents in the district and explored possible measures to prevent them. Emphasis was laid on raising public awareness about road safety rules through innovative approaches such as meetings, bike rallies, street plays and other outreach initiatives.

The District Development Commissioner urged all stakeholder departments to ensure the successful completion of every programme planned for National Road Safety Month by maintaining close coordination and cooperation among themselves.

The meeting was attended by ADC Sonatrishna Gharphalia, Member Secretary of the District Road Safety Committee and Superintendent of Public Works (Roads) Engineer Prakash Pegu, Joint Director of Health Services Dr Makhana Chandra Kalita, District Transport Officer Hiraak Jyoti Deka, along with other concerned departmental officers and employees.

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The cultural segment of the programme featured solo dance performances by Ankita Borthakur, Kanjun Das, Nibha Borchetta and Banashree Devi, while a group creative dance was presented by Lorioli Bagmita Gogoi, Aradhya Bora and Tjusmita Das. Child singer Chauli Gogoi paid tribute to late Zubeen Garg by rendering one of his songs. Poets Bitumoni Gogoi and Minakshi Das Baruah were also present on the occasion.

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Sivasagar reviews arrangements for Republic Day

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Jan 12: A preparatory meeting to ensure the peaceful and smooth celebration of the 77th Republic Day in Sivasagar district was held recently at the Sukapha Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office. The meeting was chaired by the newly appointed District Commissioner, Mridul Yadav and focused on finalising arrangements for the district-level celebrations scheduled to be held on January 26 at the Boarding Hall.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on the responsibilities and duties of various departments involved in organising the day-long programme. District Commissioner Mridul Yadav called for wholehearted cooperation from all concerned departments and organisations to ensure the successful conduct of Republic Day events. Superintendent of Police Subhashish Baruah addressed the meeting and highlighted the security measures to be put in place ahead of the celebrations to maintain law and order.

Additional District Commissioner Lukumani Bora read out the minutes of the previous year's Republic Day meeting, following which the programme schedule for the main function was discussed and finalised. As per the programme, a morning ferry will be organised from 5 AM to 6 AM, followed by the playing of patriotic songs from 6 AM to 7 AM. Individuals will hoist the National Flag at their respective residences at 7 AM, while educational institutions and government, non-government and semi-government offices will hoist the flag at 7:30 AM.

Martyrs' tarpan will be held at Piyoli Phukan Park, Anandaram Barua Park and the War Memorial at 8:20 AM. The main ceremonial programme will begin at 9 AM at the Boarding Ground, where the Chief Guest will hoist the National Flag and take the salute of contingents from the police, NCC, Scouts and Guides, Home Guards, paramilitary forces and others.

As part of the celebrations, various organisations will distribute fruits and vegetables among patients and maternity patients at Sivasagar Civil Hospital, distribute daily necessities among women inmates of Sivasagar District Jail and provide fruits and vegetables at different shelters and children's homes. A friendly cricket match between District Administration XI and Press XI will be held at 2 PM, after which the National Flag will be lowered at 4:40 PM.

Criticism of apex court verdict

The sharp criticism mounted by Opposition leaders against the Supreme Court's refusal to grant bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case has been foregrounded as a defence of constitutional liberty. Yet, when examined closely, the argument appears driven more by political optics than by a sound understanding of judicial process and constitutional law. The critique rests on two pillars: a perceived inconsistency in bail decisions among co-accused, and a comparison with the repeated paroles granted to convicted Dera Sacha Sauda chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh. Both pillars, however, are conceptually weak and legally unsustainable. Khalid and Imam were denied bail, even as it was granted to other accused in the same conspiracy case. Opposition leaders have projected this as selective denial of liberty, implying ideological or political bias. Such a reading overlooks a foundational principle of criminal jurisprudence: bail decisions are inherently individualised. Courts do not grant bail by association or parity alone; they assess the specific role attributed to each accused, the nature of allegations, the evidence on record, and the potential impact on trial and public order. The Bench of Justices Arvind Kumar and N.V. Anjarlia explicitly noted that the allegations against Khalid and Imam placed them on a "qualitatively different footing" from the other accused. This phrase is not rhetorical flourish but judicial shorthand for a differentiated assessment of culpability, influence, and alleged role in the conspiracy.

The Opposition's comparison with the paroles granted to Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh illustrates a deeper misunderstanding of the separation of powers embedded in the constitutional framework. Bail and parole are often conflated in public discourse, but they are legally distinct concepts. Bail is a judicial act exercised by courts under criminal procedure, typically before conviction, to balance personal liberty against the interests of justice. Parole, by contrast, is an executive decision granted to a convicted prisoner as a temporary release under specific conditions, usually governed by prison rules and state policies. Courts may review parole decisions if challenged, but they do not initiate or routinely supervise them. To juxtapose a judicial refusal of bail with an executive grant of parole is to compare two decisions that arise from different authorities, serve different purposes, and are guided by different considerations.

This distinction matters because the Opposition's argument implies judicial complicity or inconsistency. If there is a concern about the frequency or propriety of paroles granted to Ram Rahim Singh, the accountability lies squarely with the executive branch that authorised them. Dragging the judiciary into that debate conflates institutional responsibilities and risks eroding public understanding of how constitutional checks and balances operate. It also diverts attention from the substantive legal reasoning underpinning the bail denial in the case.

Makar Sankranti: Kite Flying, Joy, Culture and Consciousness

By: Dr Satyawan Saurabh

The festival of Makar Sankranti is not just a date in Indian culture, but a vibrant expression of seasonal change, social participation, and folk life. This is the time when the sun moves from Dakshinayan to Uttarayan, and new energy is infused into nature as well as human life. The tradition of kite flying associated with this festival has been going on for centuries. Over time, it has not limited itself to mere entertainment but has also incorporated social, cultural, and health-related dimensions. Today, kite flying is not just a game of standing on rooftops and pulling the string, but has become a symbol of collective celebration, mental happiness, and physical activity.

The tradition of kite flying is considered very ancient in India. References to it are found in historical accounts and folklore. Once a symbol of skill and strategy in royal courts, it has, over time, become a part of everyday life. The sky, filled with colorful kites during Makar Sankranti, Basant Panchami, and other festivals, reflects the collective consciousness and festivity of Indian society. In states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi, this festival is not just a tradition but also a major social event. The most beautiful aspect of kite flying is its social nature. It brings people out of their homes and connects them with each other. Conversations from rooftops, the laughter of children, the competition of young people, and the smiles of memories from the elderly—all these scenes bring this festival to life. The echo of "Woh kata... Woh mara" is not just the excitement of the game, but the sound of collective participation. In today's times, when social interaction is shrinking, such festivals provide an opportunity to preserve human relationships.

Kite festivals and mass events held on the occasion of Makar Sankranti have given this tradition a new dimension. In many places, local administrations, social organizations, and voluntary organizations jointly organize such events, aimed not only at entertainment but also at cultural preservation and promoting social harmony. Women, children, and the elderly participate in these events equally, making this festival a celebration for every segment of society, not just a section of society. Kite flying is often considered a seasonal sport, but its health benefits are numerous. Flying kites activates many parts of the body, facilitating coordination between the hands, shoulders, and eyes, maintaining physical activity. Spending time outdoors provides the body with solar energy and reduces mental fatigue. Doctors and psychologists believe that such collective and enjoyable events can help reduce stress. Kite flying is also extremely beneficial for mental health. Watching colorful kites soar in the open sky brings joy and peace to the mind. It connects one to the present moment and provides a kind of spontaneous meditation experience. In today's fast-paced and stressful life, such experiences can play an important role in maintaining mental balance. For children, kite flying is not just entertainment, but also a learning experience. It develops patience, balance, coordination, and a sense of competition. Understanding wind direction, maintaining proper string tension, and making timely decisions—all these skills strengthen children's decision-making. Furthermore, when this activity is done with family, it deepens children's social values and cultural connections.

However, while kite flying is a festival of joy and excitement, it also poses safety challenges. Over the years, the use of Chinese manjha and nylon string has resulted in several serious accidents. This has proven fatal not only for humans but also for birds and other animals. Road accidents, throat slits, and bird deaths—all point to the distorted nature of this tradition. The government and administration have established regulations in this regard, but regulations alone are not enough. It is crucial to spread awareness and foster a sense of responsibility in society. Using cotton string, choosing open and safe spaces, supervising children, and observing time limits—all these steps can make kite flying safe. It is crucial that the joy of the festival does not become a source of suffering for anyone. Kite flying also needs to be reconsidered from an environmental perspective. Kite waste becomes entangled in trees, power lines, and roads, creating environmental problems. Kites made of plastic and nylon do not decompose for long periods of time and pose a threat to wildlife. Therefore, promoting the use of eco-friendly kites and natural dyes is the need of the hour. Many social organisations and volunteer groups are making positive efforts in this direction. They are encouraging children and youth to practice safe and environmentally sensitive kite flying. Awareness campaigns are being conducted in schools and social forums to maintain a balance between tradition and nature. With changing times, the nature of kite flying is also evolving. It is no longer confined to rooftops. Social media and digital platforms have given it a global presence. Photos and videos of kite festivals are being shared worldwide. Indian communities living abroad also stay connected to their cultural roots by organizing kite festivals on the occasion of Makar Sankranti.

Mejighar and Bhogali's Joyful Night

The Mejighar is constructed during the days leading up to Bhogali Bihu, primarily for the spectacular night of Uruka—the eve of the festival. Sometimes, young men and boys undertake this activity, collecting bamboo, straw, and other natural material to create this structure. Care is taken to ensure the Mejighar is not only functional but also aesthetically pleasing culturally. It normally stands in open fields or beside the house, big enough to hold a community feast. The fact that it uses biodegradable materials like bamboo and dried leaves represents a sustainable relationship with nature, where the agrarian wisdom of Assamese traditions has preference

The tradition of the Mejighar is an integral part of Bhogali Bihu, the vibrant harvest festival of Assam celebrated in mid-January. Deeply rooted in the agrarian heritage of the region, the Mejighar, a temporary hut made of bamboo, thatch, and dried leaves, plays a central role in the festivities. Mejighar is not a physical structure but a deep cultural symbol of abundance, unity, and thanksgiving for nature's bounty. As Bhogali Bihu marks the end of the harvesting season, Mejighar becomes the center of the celebration, bonding the community together, spiritually reflecting, and a shared sense of prosperity.

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Uruka is the night before Bhogali Bihu. The Mejighar is placed at the center of attention in which families along with their community can gather together for a sumptuous feast. The Mejighar itself becomes the centerpiece of the occasion, where one can feel the spirit of togetherness and community joy. A feast prepared with the freshly harvested crops of the season, prepared with traditional Assamese delicacies like pithas, larus (sesame sweets), various fish, meat, and lentil preparations, in large quantities that are shared throughout the community. Cooking and feasting together within the Mejighar forms some social ties with class and social background set apart, because of equal participation on the part of all in it.

On an Uruka night, when there are traditional folk performances called Husori Bihu Singing and dancing inside the Mejighar, various cultural expressions begin to bloom with the words they speak in story form. The cultural expressions not only are for adding a celebratory touch but also act as a medium for conserving Assamese folklore and oral traditions. The rhythmic beats of the dhol, the drum, and the melodies of the pepa, the buffalo hornpipe, each echoing through the night, which makes it an evening full of joy and nostalgia. Such performances fortify cultural identity while passing on stories of



harvest, prosperity, and community values to the next generation.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The Mejighar actually symbolizes and signifies spiritual depths that lie beneath the superficial depth of Bihu's spirit. In the golden-golden presun dawn for Bhogali Bihu, Mejis are worshipped in holy offerings to one particular structure—a mejighar—alongside of it called, where "The Meji or the wood-based structure formed inside is lightened on auspicious day time before dawn or pre sun raising". Flames burning out from Mejighar denote the burning of old negativities and creating a way for prosperity and positive energy in the new agricultural cycle. Foodstuffs like betel nuts, rice cakes, and sesame seeds are also burned as offerings, signifying respect and reverence towards nature's bounties. The ashes of the Mejighar and Meji burn also have agricultural importance. The farmers often sprinkle the ashes in their fields because they believe it has fertilizing properties that can enrich the soil for the next planting season. This practice shows a deep understanding of the natural cycle, where even the remnants of the festival contribute to the sustenance of life. The tradition thus harmoniously merges spirituality with ecological wisdom, promoting harmony between human life and the natural world.

Social unity is also emphasised in the communal nature of the Mejighar tradition.

A feeling of belongingness and mutual respect among the community members would be created by the shared experience in building the Mejighar, cooking together, and participating in cultural performances. Mejighar turns Bhogali Bihu socially level playing, because the general mass gathers as a collective event for all in this particular festival, thus it affirms and ensures that inclusivity and equality prevail throughout. Hence, not just an harvesting festival, it also stands to be a symbol of cultural unity.

Mejighar goes way back as one of Assam's pre-historic traditions from time immemorial agrarian practice done by its original folk. The Bodo-Kachari tribes and other early settlers of the region celebrated similar harvest rituals, where temporary huts were built to host communal feasts. This practice gradually picked up across the Assam Valley and assimilated the Bhakti movement doctrines, especially of Srimanta Sankardeva's teachings, as he emphasized community worship and collective festivals. Mejighar, therefore, becomes defined as a synthesis of indigenous modes of agriculture integrated with spiritual culture, which becomes a significant icon of Assamese culture. Modern days are no exception to this rule. The principle of Mejighar has not lost its sheen; though the tradition has undoubtedly undergone certain changes. Ritual is altered in terms of scale and performance with the advent of urbanisation and changed lifestyles. Still, bigger Mejighars are built in the open fields of rural villages by involving

active participation of community members; however, in the urban localities, Mejighars were more symbolic in nature and were built smaller in size or community space hosting the affair. Despite all these transformations, cultural bodies, schools, and local bodies contribute to keeping the spirit of Bhogali Bihu intact by conducting mass festivals around Mejighar.

On the other hand, Mejighar has lost much of its charm in modern society. Modernisation, urbanization, the absence of bamboos, and thatching materials have seriously marred the construction of the traditional Mejighars. Furthermore, nuclear families and hectic modern lifestyles have led to a change in focus from large community gatherings to more personal celebrations. Despite all this, the culture of Mejighar remains significantly ingrained within Assamese consciousness. As a result, many communities actively strive to sustain the practice.

The Mejighar of Bhogali Bihu is thus a strong metaphor for Assamese culture, spirituality, and ecological prudence. Rather than a fleeting hut, it is an example of collective glee, appreciation, and peaceful co-existence with nature. And the burning of Mejighar at every crucial year shows the values of unity, respect toward nature, and importance of cultural identity shared with everyone. The glamorous world of ancient tradition which prevails with the rhythm of agriculture as well as great community life binds them to their existence within Assam, ensuring a great legacy intergenerationally.

Mejighar: The living flame of Assamese life

By: Dipak Kurmi

Bhogali Bihu, also known as Magh Bihu, occupies a deeply revered place in the cultural landscape of Assam, marking the culmination of the harvest season and celebrating abundance, community, and gratitude towards nature. Among its many symbols, the Mejighar stands out as the most evocative and meaningful representation of this festival. Constructed from bamboo, straw, hay, and leaves, the Mejighar is not merely a temporary structure but a cultural statement that encapsulates Assamese identity, agrarian wisdom, and collective consciousness. It signifies the completion of an agricultural cycle and serves as a symbolic offering of thanks to nature for sustaining human life through its bounty. Over generations, the Mejighar has evolved into a powerful cultural metaphor, carrying within it the values of unity, sustainability, spirituality, and continuity that define Assamese society.

The construction of the Mejighar itself is a reflection of communal harmony and shared responsibility, principles that lie at the heart of Assamese life. Days before Bhogali Bihu, villagers gather to prepare for its erection, collecting natural materials from nearby fields, riverbanks, and forests. This collective labour, often led enthusiastically by children and supported by elders, transforms preparation into celebration. Songs, laughter, and storytelling accompany the building process, turning physical work into a cultural performance. The act of constructing the Mejighar reinforces social bonds, as individuals from different households contribute equally, dissolving social hierarchies in favour of cooperation. In this shared endeavour, the Mejighar becomes not just a structure but a symbol of consensus, mutual dependence, and the joy of working together for a common purpose.

Beyond its social dimension, the Mejighar embodies a profound relationship between humans and nature. The deliberate use of biodegradable materials such as bamboo and hay reflects an ancient ecological consciousness rooted in sustainable living. Long before environmental discourse entered modern vocabulary, Assamese communities practised harmony with nature through traditions like Bhogali Bihu. The Mejighar, destined to return to the earth through fire, represents a cycle of creation and dissolution that mirrors natural processes. This practice underscores the belief that human celebrations should not harm the environment but exist in balance with it. In an era marked by ecological degradation and excessive consumption, the Mejighar offers a quiet yet powerful lesson in sustainable festivity and respect for natural resources.

Central to the symbolism of the Mejighar is the ritual of fire, represented by the Meji, the sacred bonfire lit at dawn after the night-long celebrations of Uruka. After a night of communal feasting, music, and merriment, people gather at sunrise to witness the burning of the Mejighar, offering rice, grains, and sweets into the flames. This ritual signifies purification, the destruction of negativity, and the welcoming of a new agricultural year filled with hope and prosperity. Fire, in this context, is not destructive but regenerative, symbolizing warmth, light, and

continuity of life during the cold winter months. The burning of the Mejighar thus becomes a spiritual act, reaffirming faith in natural cycles and the resilience of community life.

The Mejighar also serves as the focal point of community feasting, one of the most cherished aspects of Bhogali Bihu. On Uruka night, families and neighbours gather around the Mejighar to share elaborate meals prepared from freshly harvested crops. Traditional delicacies such as pitha, laru, and various meat dishes are prepared collectively, reinforcing the values of hospitality and inclusivity. The Mejighar transforms into a communal dining space where social distinctions dissolve, and equality is practised through shared food and shared space. This act of eating together strengthens interpersonal bonds and reinforces the idea that prosperity is meaningful only when shared. In a rapidly modernising world where communal dining is becoming rare, this tradition remains a powerful reminder of collective joy and social cohesion.

Philosophically, the Mejighar represents the concept of impermanence, a theme deeply ingrained in Assamese cultural thought. Built with care and celebration, used briefly, and then surrendered to fire, the Mejighar mirrors the transient nature of human life and material existence. Its burning at dawn is both an end and a beginning, marking closure while opening the door to renewal. This ritual teaches acceptance of change and encourages optimism rooted in continuity rather than permanence. The cycle of creation and destruction embodied by the Mejighar resonates with agrarian life, where sowing follows harvesting, and loss is inseparable from regeneration. Through this symbolism, Bhogali Bihu offers a philosophical reflection on life's rhythms and humanity's place within them.

Cultural transmission is another vital function of the Mejighar within Assamese society. The entire process surrounding it, from construction to ritual practices, becomes a living classroom for younger generations. Elders narrate folk tales, sing traditional songs, and explain the meanings behind rituals, ensuring that cultural knowledge is passed on orally and experientially. This intergenerational exchange strengthens cultural identity and fosters respect for heritage. In an age dominated by digital media and global influences, such practices play a crucial role in preserving indigenous traditions and resisting cultural homogenisation. The Mejighar thus acts as a vessel of memory, carrying collective wisdom across time.

In contemporary Assamese society, the relevance of the Mejighar extends beyond tradition into the realm of ecological and social consciousness. As environmental concerns intensify globally, the sustainable practices embedded in Bhogali Bihu gain renewed significance. The Mejighar stands as a reminder that celebration need not be commercialised or environmentally harmful. Its simplicity and harmony with nature contrast sharply with resource-intensive modern festivities, offering an alternative model rooted in respect and restraint. By celebrating abundance without excess, the tradition encourages a balanced approach to consumption and reinforces the ethical responsibility of communities towards the environment.



There is also a deep spiritual dimension associated with the Mejighar, often described as agrarian spirituality. In this worldview, land, crops, and natural elements are seen as sacred gifts rather than mere resources. The offerings made to the flames during the burning ritual express gratitude to these life-sustaining forces. This spiritual connection fosters humility and reverence, reminding people that human survival is intertwined with natural cycles beyond their control. Such beliefs nurture an ethic of care and responsibility towards the environment, reinforcing sustainable practices through spiritual conviction rather than external regulation.

Despite the pressures of modernisation and changing lifestyles, the Mejighar remains a resilient symbol of Assamese cultural continuity. Its continued presence during Bhogali Bihu celebrations across urban and rural Assam reflects the enduring strength of community-based traditions. Even as celebrations adapt to contemporary contexts, the core values embodied by the Mejighar remain intact, bridging past and present. It stands as evidence that cultural practices rooted in collective life and ecological wisdom can survive and thrive amidst transformation.

Ultimately, the Mejighar represents far more than a temporary structure or a ritualistic bonfire. It embodies Assamese identity, collective joy, environmental ethics, and spiritual depth. As people gather around its glow, sharing food, stories, and songs, they reaffirm their connection to the land, their history, and one another. The Mejighar lights not only the physical space of Bhogali Bihu but also the moral and cultural path of the community, reminding each generation of the values that sustain life in harmony with nature and society. (the writer can be reached at dipakurmigpltd@gmail.com)

Bhogali Bihu of Assam in India: A festival of abundance & joy

By: Diganta Barooah

*"Bohagote amare aai mohura hoi ghure
Maghot xunor haatere lakhimi aadore*

*Xorot nixai torare xojai aair e kexh
Bharatore purba dixhor surya utha dexh"*

*"In (the month of) Bohag, mother
dances and whirls with grace like a
mohura (spool of thread).*

*In Magh, she welcomes the goddess
of prosperity.*

*She adorns her tresses with the stars
of the autumnal sky of Sarat.*

She is the land of the rising sun."

These evergreen lyrics from a song by the late Dr Bhupen Hazarika aptly capture the beauty and spirit of the land of Assam that lies in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent. The song represents the deep interconnect between nature, culture and civilization of the region. The festival of Bihu, and its integral relationship with agriculture and fertility, is of utmost significance to the culture and heritage of Assam. Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu is a celebration of bountiful nature and abundance. It is also an occasion for the people of Assam to enjoy (bhog kora) and share in the gifts of nature as a community, and to strengthen a sense of identity and belonging. The spirit of indulgence and sharing is manifested in the numerous delicacies, snacks and savouries that are prepared and relished during the festival. Magh Bihu, also known as Bhogali Bihu, is a traditional festival



begins its northward journey or Uttarayan and transitions into the Hindu zodiac sign of Makara. On this day the Sun God is worshipped in various parts of India in the form of different festivals such as Pongal (Tamil Nadu), Maghi (Punjab) and Uttarayan (Gujarat). Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu is a celebration of bountiful nature and abundance. It is also an occasion for the people of Assam to enjoy and share the gifts of nature as a community, and to strengthen a sense of identity and be-

longing. During Magh Bihu, people prepare and eat traditional foods, such as pitha (a type of sweet or savory cake), laru (a type of sweet), and other delicacies. People also participate in various cultural activities, such as dancing and singing, and traditional sports such as buffalo fighting, cock fighting, etc. Magh Bihu is an important cultural event for the people of Assam and is a time for celebration, renewal, and coming together with friends and family. On the night of Uruka (the day before Magh Bihu), the people feast together in a Bhelaghar, a temporary structure created out of bamboo, wood, hay, etc. Another structure built for Magh Bihu is the Meji: a tower prepared out of bamboo, wood, and hay. Another age-old tradition observed on the day of Uruka is- community fishing, in which the people of a village fish together in a river or a community pond. The fresh catch goes towards the preparation of various delicacies for the Uruka feast.

A unique and fun-filled tradition of Magh Bihu is that of stealing, mostly practiced by youths of the village. Items of theft may include hay, bamboo, and vegetables for the feast. However, such acts of mischief are generally overlooked as everyone is in a generous and festive mood. After the feast, the night is spent reminiscing and sharing stories in front of bonfires. On the next day, people brave the chills of the freezing winter morning to witness the burning of the Meji. Offers rice, pulses, ghee, and pithas (snacks) to the sun god. The burning of the Meji symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and life over death. As the flames engulf the Meji, the people chant: "Pooh gol Magh hol, amar meji joli gol" Certain ethnic communities of Assam such as the Sonowal Kacharis, Dimasas, and Rabhas associate the burning of the Meji with ancestor worship.

Bhogali Delicacies
The chief highlight of this festival are the countless delicacies prepared for the occasion, the quintessential among them being the Pithas. In the days leading up to Magh Bihu, the sound of the Dhenki pervades the atmosphere of rural Assam, and many a Bihu song has been inspired by the phenomenon. The Dhenki is a wooden pounding device used for threshing paddy and grinding rice, and is integral to most rural Assamese households.

Pithas are traditionally prepared by the womenfolk of the region. The process starts days ahead of the actual festival and is itself an occasion for the women to socialise and bond. Preparing Pithas is itself an art.

For example, Sira (flattened-rice) grains are supposed to be teteli-potiya, i.e., as flat and fine as the leaves of a tamarind tree. The pounding of every item (such as flattened rice, rice-flour etc.) is to be done with utmost care and requires specific intensity and technique. Although the pounding of rice is a demanding task, the laughter, gossip and festive spirit involved keeps every-

one energised.

The base ingredient for Pithas is mostly rice, of which Assam boasts of several exotic varieties. Some varieties used for Bhogali snacks are: Bora-dhan, Malbhog-dhan, Beji-Dhan and Sokua-dhan. Pithas are prepared out of Pithaguri (rice-flour), Til (sesame), Gur (jaggery), Narikol (grated coconut), Muri and Akhoi (varieties of puffed rice).

One of the most unique delicacies prepared on the occasion of Magh Bihu is Sunga-pitha. Cylindrical pieces of bamboo are stuffed with equal parts of Bora-saul (sticky rice that has been soaked overnight) and water, and the ends are sealed with straw. These are then rested on an iron stand and a fire is lit from below using hay.

The fire is kept going till the outermost layer of the bamboo is burnt and the Pitha is fully cooked. The Pitha is extracted by cracking the bamboo open and thereafter relished with curd, cream and jaggery.

Another variety of Sunga-pitha is prepared with rice-flour mixed with jaggery. Pithas are also prepared by stuffing and rolling sesame or coconut mixed with jaggery into layers of rice-flour (much like a dosa). These are known as Til-pitha (with a sesame filling) and Narikol-pitha (with a grated coconut filling).

Ghila-pitha are dumplings prepared by frying a paste of sticky rice flour and jaggery in mustard oil and is similar to the well-known malpua.

Another delectable sweetmeat is the Tekeli-mukhot-diya-pitha prepared by steaming rice-flour mixed with grated coconut and jaggery, tied in small bun-

dles of cloth.

Khola-sapori-pitha is prepared by frying a runny batter of rice flour and salt into thin discs over an earthenware pan called Khola.

A variety of Laru or laddoos is also prepared using coconut, sesame, jaggery, puffed rice and rice flour.

Various types of delectable Jolpan (a light meal) are also enjoyed on the day of Bhogali Bihu. Sandoh-guri (a variety of porridge) is prepared by mixing coarsely ground roasted rice with jaggery and milk. Komal-saul (a unique variety of rice that turns soft and fluffy on soaking) and Bora saul (sticky rice), mixed with Doi (curd) and Gur are other delightful Jolpan combinations.

These dishes are not only enjoyed during Magh Bihu but also constitute traditional breakfast items of the region. Another preparation especially enjoyed on Magh Bihu is Mah-karai, a crunchy mixture of roasted rice, sesame, black gram and dried ginger.

Over time, the festival of Magh Bihu and the rituals and practices associated with it have changed considerably. Although Assam's economy is still primarily agrarian, many families have given up farming and moved to the cities. Being essentially a harvest festival, the resonance of Bihu alters when removed from a rural-agricultural setting. For many city-dwelling families, the celebration of Bihu is hardly a community event. Electrical kitchen appliances have replaced traditional methods of preparing Bihu delicacies which requires teamwork and collaboration. Packaged Pithas have similarly replaced home-made ones. Traditions, customs and rituals are dynamic by nature. They inevitably continue to evolve, to keep pace with the times. Despite all changes, at the heart of Bhogali Bihu lies a spirit of gregariousness. It is an occasion for the Assamese to thank nature for its boundless gifts, to appreciate sustainable living practices, to enjoy and share resources as a co-dependent society, and to strengthen a sense of belonging to the community. Magh Bihu has some similarities with other festivals celebrated in different parts of India. One such festival is Makar Sankranti, which is celebrated in several states in India, including Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka. Like Magh Bihu, Makar Sankranti is a harvest festival and is celebrated in the month of January. It is marked by the burning of a bonfire, similar to the Meji of Magh Bihu, and the exchange of sweets and gifts. Another festival that has some similarities with Magh Bihu is Pongal, which is celebrated in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Pongal is also a harvest festival and is marked by the preparation of traditional foods, such as Pongal (a type of rice dish) and Venn

Pongal (a type of savory rice dish), and the offering of prayers and thanksgiving to the gods and goddesses. There are many other festivals in India that have similarities with Magh Bihu, such as Lohri in Punjab. These festivals are all celebrations of the harvest season and are marked by traditional customs, such as the burning of a bonfire, the preparation of traditional foods, and the participation in cultural activities.

Antiquity

Harvest festivals are as old as human civilization itself and are rooted in the human desire to harness nature's fertility through various rites and rituals. The origin of Bihu is hence difficult to establish. The festival of Bihu is primarily linked to the cycle of paddy cultivation. Hence it has evolved along with the development of rice cultivation in Assam. A number of present-day Bihu rituals such as ancestor-worship, and dances and songs evoking fertility, are believed to be the cultural remnants of the beliefs and practices of certain indigenous tribes of the region like the Khasis. The most significant contribution to the cultivation of paddy in the region was made by the Ahoms who came to Assam in the 13th century CE. The Ahoms revolutionised the cultivation of paddy in the Brahmaputra valley by introducing Sali-kheti or wet rice cultivation (in place of the earlier Ahu technique which did not require standing water on the field). The three forms of Bihu today revolve around the cycle of Sali cultivation. The Ahoms also institutionalised and popularised the celebration of Bihu. During Magh Bihu, various games and contests were held on the royal grounds of Rang Ghar. The festival of Bihu has three forms: Bohag Bihu, Kati Bihu and Magh Bihu, each of which coincides with crucial events in the agricultural calendar of the region. Bohag Bihu (celebrated in mid-April) signals the onset of spring and the beginning of the crop-planting cycle. Kati Bihu (October) is observed as a day of prayer for a good harvest. Magh Bihu (mid-January) marks the completion of the agrarian cycle after the harvest has been reaped.

Conclusion :

Magh Bihu or Bhogali Bihu is deeply rooted in the very soul and existence of traditional ethos of Assamese people and its society. The bonding becomes stronger when people celebrate together with joy and enthusiasm and it has been celebrating by the indigenous people of Assam since ages in India. If you come to Assam in India, you will be amazed by the rich culture and traditions of Assam and its people. Assam is a land of beauty and stunning landscape. Do visit Assam and be cherished forever by the love and warmth of Assamese people and its culture.



celebrated in the Indian state of Assam. It is a harvest festival and is typically celebrated during the winter season after the harvesting is over. The festival is marked by the burning of a large bonfire, called the "Meji". Magh Bihu is celebrated on the cusp of Magh, i.e., the last day of the month of Pooh or Pausa (as per the lunar calendar). It is also called Domahi or the confluence (samahar) of two months. This day is considered auspicious in the Hindu lunar year and is known as the Makar Sankranti, i.e., the day when the sun

longing. During Magh Bihu, people prepare and eat traditional foods, such as pitha (a type of sweet or savory cake), laru (a type of sweet), and other delicacies. People also participate in various cultural activities, such as dancing and singing, and traditional sports such as buffalo fighting, cock fighting, etc. Magh Bihu is an important cultural event for the people of Assam and is a time for celebration, renewal, and coming together with friends and family.

Magh Bihu is an important cultural



The Magic of Uruka Night

By: nSatyabrata Borah

Uruka, the vibrant eve of Magh Bihu, holds a special place in the heart of every Assamese person. As the harvesting season draws to a close in mid-January, this night becomes a joyful celebration of abundance, togetherness, and gratitude for the earth's generosity. Known also as Bhogali Bihu, Magh Bihu marks the end of the agricultural cycle when granaries overflow with freshly harvested rice, and families look forward to a period of rest and enjoyment after months of hard work in the fields. But it is Uruka, the evening before the main day, that truly captures the spirit of community and merriment in Assam.

The word Uruka itself carries deep meaning. It comes from the Deori-Chutia term "Urukuwa," which simply means "to end." This refers to the conclusion of the harvesting season and the closing of the month of Pooh in the Assamese calendar. On this special night, the air fills with excitement as people prepare to bid farewell to the old agricultural year and welcome the new one with open arms. Villages come alive with activity from the afternoon onward, as families and neighbors begin gathering for

what is arguably the most delicious and lively night of the year.

One of the most charming traditions of Uruka is the construction of bhelaghar, temporary huts made from bamboo, paddy straw, hay, and sometimes banana leaves or thatch. Young men, especially the energetic youth of the village, take the lead in building these structures in open fields or near rivers. They work together, laughing and chatting, turning simple materials into cozy shelters that become the heart of the night's festivities. These bhelaghars serve as gathering spots where people sit, eat, sing, and share stories late into the night. In some areas, they are called harli ghar in upper Assam, and their size and design can vary from place to place, with some communities even creating artistic or multi-tiered versions in recent years to add a touch of modern creativity.

Alongside the bhelaghar stands the meji, a large bonfire structure built with wood, bamboo, dry hay, and often arranged in a conical or pyramidal shape for maximum height and impact. In many villages, especially in upper Assam, there is friendly competition to see whose meji stands the tallest. The preparation starts days in advance, with care-

ful stacking so that the fire burns steadily and brightly. Banana trunks are sometimes placed at the corners for support, and the whole structure becomes a symbol of warmth, light, and the triumph of human effort over the winter chill.

As evening falls on Uruka, the real magic begins. Families bring out their best dishes, prepared with ingredients from the fresh harvest. Women spend the day cooking a feast that includes a wide variety of traditional foods. There are different kinds of pitha, soft rice cakes made from sticky rice, such as til pitha filled with sesame, sunga pitha steamed in bamboo tubes, and others flavored with coconut or jaggery. Laru, sweet balls made from coconut, sesame, or puffed rice, add sweetness to the meal. Freshly harvested vegetables turn into tasty curries, while fish and meat dishes take center stage. Roasted fish, chicken cooked with sesame seeds, duck with ash gourd, and skewered meats grilled over open flames fill the air with irresistible aromas. Curd, cream, flattened rice known as chira, puffed rice or akhoi, and jaggery complete the spread. The food is simple yet rich, reflecting the bounty of the land and the skill of Assamese home cooks.

The feast is rarely a solitary family affair. People gather in groups, sometimes in the bhelaghar, sometimes around community fires. Everyone shares what they have brought, passing plates and encouraging others to eat more. Laughter echoes as old friends catch up, children run around playing, and elders recount tales from past harvests. In many places, the entire village joins in a grand communal bhoj, or feast, where social differences fade away, and the joy of togetherness takes over. This sharing of food is at the core of Uruka, symbolizing unity, gratitude, and the belief that prosperity should be enjoyed collectively.

As the night deepens, the bonfire crackles, casting a warm glow over the gathering. People sit close to the flames, warming their hands and faces against the January cold. Folk songs fill the air, often accompanied by the rhythmic beat of dhol drums and the sweet notes of pepa, the buffalo-horn instrument. Bihu songs speak of love, nature, and the joy of harvest, while young people dance spontaneously, their movements lively and full of energy. In some groups, games and light-hearted teasing continue, with boys playfully "stealing" vegetables or firewood from neighbor-

ing fields, a custom that adds fun without malice, as it has been part of the tradition for generations. This playful mischief has even earned Uruka the nickname "Chor Bihu" in some areas, though it remains innocent and full of humor.

Another beloved custom on this night is group fishing. In rivers, ponds, or wetlands, communities come together to catch fish using nets, traps, or bare hands. Everyone participates, regardless of age or background, and the fresh catch becomes part of the feast. This practice echoes ancient times when fishing and hunting supplemented farming, reminding people of their deep connection to nature and the rivers that sustain life in Assam.

The morning after Uruka brings the climax of the fire rituals. People rise early, often before dawn, take a ritual bath to purify themselves, and gather around the meji. As the first light appears, the bonfire is lit, and the flames rise high, consuming the carefully built structure. People offer pithas, betel nuts, and prayers to the fire god, seeking blessings for the coming year. Children and adults alike circle the flames, taking in the warmth and believing that standing near or under the meji brings good

fortune and fulfills wishes. In some traditions, half-burnt wood from the meji is carried home and placed among fruit trees to ensure better yields. Another sweet ritual is tying paddy straw or bamboo strips around fruit trees in the courtyard. Known as "magh bandha," this act is done with the belief that it encourages the trees to bear more fruit. Children scatter small clumps of earth around the garden while chanting simple rhymes, asking the month of Magh to fill the branches with abundance and keep troubles away.

From an anthropological perspective, Uruka and Magh Bihu reveal layers of history and cultural evolution. The festival blends indigenous Tibeto-Burman traditions with later influences, possibly dating back thousands of years to early agrarian societies. Some scholars trace its roots to the practices of tribes like the Dimasa Kachari or Deori, where community feasting and fire rituals marked seasonal changes. The burning of the meji may symbolize the transition from old to new, a way to offer thanks to nature and seek protection from wild animals that threatened crops in ancient times. Over centuries, these customs have evolved, incorporating ele-

ments from Vedic traditions while preserving their unique Assamese character.

In today's world, even as modern life changes many things, Uruka remains a cherished moment of return. People working in cities make plans to visit their villages, where the sights, smells, and sounds of childhood await. Families reunite, old bonds strengthen, and the warmth of the community fire reminds everyone of their shared roots. Whether in a remote village or an urban courtyard, the essence stays the same: gratitude for the harvest, joy in togetherness, and hope for the future.

Uruka is more than a festival; it is a living expression of Assamese identity. It teaches that true abundance lies not just in full granaries but in shared meals, laughter around a fire, and the simple act of being together. As the flames of the meji die down and the new year begins, the spirit of Uruka lingers, carrying warmth and promise through the rest of the season. In every bite of pitha, every song sung late into the night, and every story told by the fire, the people of Assam celebrate life itself, grateful for another successful harvest and ready to face whatever comes next, hand in hand.

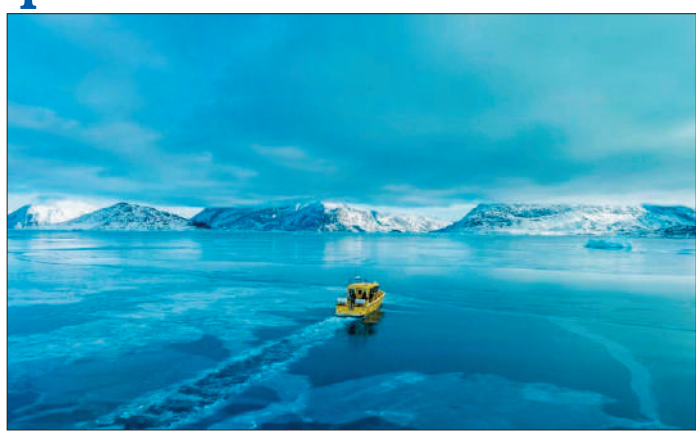
China says US shouldn't use other countries as 'pretext' to pursue its interests in Greenland

NUUK (GREENLAND), Jan 12: China said on Monday that the United States shouldn't use other countries as a "pretext" to pursue its interests in Greenland and said that its activities in the Arctic comply with international law.

The comment by a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson came in response to a question at a regular daily briefing. US President Donald Trump has said that he would like to make a deal to acquire Greenland, a semi-autonomous region of NATO ally Denmark, to prevent Russia or China from taking it over.

Tensions have grown between Washington, Denmark and Greenland this month as Trump and his administration push the issue and the White House considers a range of options, including military force, to acquire the vast Arctic island.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that an American takeover of Greenland would mark the end of NATO. On Friday, Greenland Prime Minister



Jens-Frederik Nielsen and the leaders of the four other parties in the territory's parliament issued a joint statement reiterating that Greenland's future must be decided by its people and emphasising their "wish that the United States' contempt for our country ends."

Trump reiterated his argument that the US needs to "take Greenland," otherwise Russia or China would, in comments aboard Air Force One on Sunday. He said

he'd rather "make a deal" for the territory, "but one way or the other, we're going to have Greenland."

In 2018, China in 2018 declared itself a "near-Arctic state" in an effort to gain more influence in the region. Beijing has also announced plans to build a "Polar Silk Road" as part of its global Belt and Road Initiative, which has created economic links with countries around the world.

Asked in Beijing on Monday about US statements that it is necessary for Washington to take over Greenland to prevent China and Russia from taking control, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning replied that "China's activities in the Arctic are aimed at promoting peace, stability, and sustainable development in the region and are in accordance with international law." She didn't elaborate on those activities.

"The rights and freedoms of all countries to conduct activities in the Arctic in accordance with the law should be fully respected," Mao said, without mentioning Greenland directly. "The US should not pursue its own interests by using other countries as a pretext."

She said that "the Arctic concerns the overall interests of the international community."

Danish and Greenlandic envoys are expected in Washington this week for talks, and plans are also being put together for US senators to visit Denmark. (AP)

Trump says Iran wants to negotiate as death toll in protests rises to at least 544



DUBAI, Jan 12: US President Donald Trump said Iran wants to negotiate with Washington after his threat to strike the Islamic Republic over its bloody crackdown on protesters, a move coming as activists said on Monday the death toll in the nationwide demonstrations rose to at least 544.

Iran had no direct reaction to Trump's comments, which came after the foreign minister of Oman — long an interlocutor between Washington and Tehran — travelled to Iran this weekend. It also remains unclear just what Iran could promise, particularly as Trump has set strict demands over its nuclear program and its ballistic missile arsenal, which Tehran insists is crucial for its national defence.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking to foreign diplomats in Tehran, insisted "the situation has come under total control" in fiery remarks that blamed Israel and the US for the violence, without offering evidence.

"That's why the demonstrations turned violent and bloody to give an excuse to the American president to intervene," Araghchi said, in comments carried by the Qatar-funded Al Jazeera satellite news network. Al Jazeera has been allowed to report from inside the country live despite the internet being shut off.

However, Araghchi said Iran was "open to diplomacy." Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said a channel to the US remained open, but talks needed to be "based on the acceptance of mutual interests and concerns, not a negotiation that is one-sided, unilateral and based on dictation."

Meanwhile, on Monday, Iran drew tens of thousands of pro-government demonstrators to head to the streets in support of the theocracy, a show of force after days of protests directly challenging the rule of 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Iranian state television aired chants from the crowd, which appeared to number in the tens of thousands, who shouted "Death to America!" and "Death to Israel!"

Others cried out: "Death to the enemies of God!" Iran's attorney

Iran's government has not offered overall casualty figures.

Those abroad fear the information blackout is emboldening hardliners within Iran's security services to launch a bloody crackdown. Protesters flooded the streets in the country's capital and its second-largest city on Saturday night into Sunday morning. Online videos purported to show more demonstrations Sunday night into Monday, with a Tehran official acknowledging them in state media.

At 2 p.m. Monday, Iranian state TV showed images of demonstrators thronging Tehran toward Enghelab Square, or "Islamic Revolution" Square in the capital. It had been airing statements all morning from Iranian government, security and religious leaders to attend the demonstration.

It called the rally an "Iranian uprising against American-Zionist terrorism," without addressing the underlying anger in the country over the nation's ailing economy. State TV aired images of such demonstrations around the country, trying to signal it had overcome the protests.

Fear pervades Iran's capital
In Tehran, a witness told AP that the streets of the capital empty at the sunset call to prayers each night. By the Isha, or nighttime prayer, the streets are deserted.

Part of that stems from the fear of getting caught in the crackdown. Police sent the public a text message that warned: "Given the presence of terrorist groups and armed individuals in some gatherings last night and their plans to cause death, and the firm decision to not tolerate any appeasement and to deal decisively with the rioters, families are strongly advised to take care of their youth and teenagers."

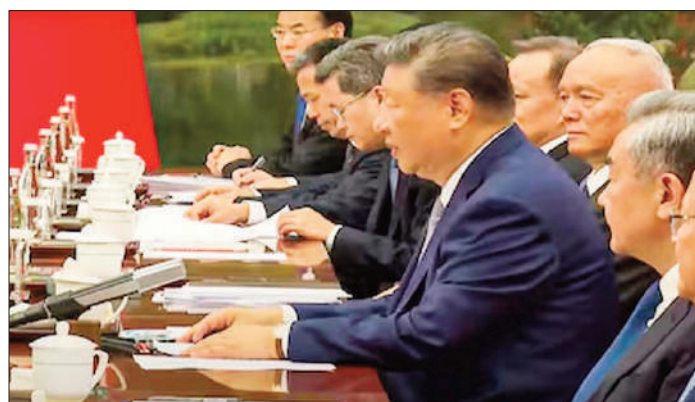
Another text, which claimed to come from the intelligence arm of the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, also directly warned people not to take part in demonstrations.

"Dear parents, in view of the enemy's plan to increase the level of naked violence and the decision to kill people, ... refrain from being on the streets and gathering in places involved in violence, and inform your children about the consequences of cooperating with terrorist mercenaries, which is an example of treason against the country," the text warned.

The witness spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity due to the ongoing crackdown.

The demonstrations began Dec. 28 over the collapse of the Iranian rial currency, which trades at over 1.4 million to USD 1, as the country's economy is squeezed by international sanctions in part levied over its nuclear program. The protests intensified and grew into calls directly challenging Iran's theocracy. (AP)

China, EU agree on steps to resolve their dispute over EV imports



HONG KONG, Jan 12: China and the European Union said on Monday they have agreed on steps toward resolving their dispute over the bloc's imports of Chinese-made electric vehicles.

A statement by China's Commerce Ministry said the EU would issue guidelines on minimum pricing for Chinese auto exporters. It did not directly mention if the deal involved an end to the tariffs of up to 35.3 per cent that the EU imposed on imports of Chinese EVs in 2024 following an investigation.

"This is conducive not only to ensuring the healthy development of China-EU economic and trade relations, but also to safeguarding the rules-based international trade order," a statement by the commerce ministry said.

A "guidance document" released by the EU gives instructions for EV manufacturers on making price offers, including minimum import

prices and other details. It said that wide variations in the types of vehicles made it necessary to set specific minimum import prices "appropriate to remove the injurious effects of the subsidisation."

The EU said the European Commission would assess each offer in an "objective and fair manner, following the principle of non-discrimination" and in line with World Trade Organisation rules.

The expansion of Chinese EV makers overseas has alarmed automakers in Europe and the US. The EU imposed the tariffs to counter an influx of affordably priced Chinese EV models into its markets, saying Chinese automakers had benefited from unfair government subsidies. The US enacted a 100 per cent tariff on China-made electric cars in 2024. The value of battery-powered cars imported to Europe skyrocketed from USD 1.6 billion in 2020 to USD 11.5 billion in 2023. Most

of the imports were from Western automakers with factories in China, including Tesla and BMW.

EU officials complained that China's homegrown automakers were poised to gobble up market share by undercutting European car brands on price thanks to Beijing's massive subsidies. Those include orders for government fleets, low-interest loans from state-owned banks, access to cheap land for factories, tax breaks, and subsidised raw materials and parts from state-owned industries.

The US tariffs effectively block virtually all Chinese EV imports. The EU needs affordable electric cars from abroad to achieve its goals of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 55 per cent by 2030.

Chinese car brands have been expanding into Europe despite the higher tariffs. China-manufactured cars rose to 6 per cent of sales in the EU in the first half of 2025, according to the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association (ACEA) and S&P Global Mobility, up from 5 per cent in the same period of 2024.

EU-based manufacturers represented 74 per cent of total EU car sales in the first half of 2025, the ACEA said. Germany still produced about 20 per cent of cars sold in the EU, followed by Spain, Czechia and France. By 2030, Chinese automakers are likely to double their European market share to 10 per cent, according to the consultancy AlixPartners estimated last year. (AP)

Pope Leo XIV meets with Machado in a surprise audience

ROME, Jan 12: Pope Leo XIV met with Venezuelan opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner María Corina Machado in a private audience at the Vatican on Monday.

The meeting, which hadn't been previously included in the list of Leo's planned appointments, was later listed by the Vatican in its daily bulletin, without adding details.

Machado is touring Europe and the United States after she reemerged in December to accept her Nobel Peace Prize in Norway.

Pope Leo, the first American pontiff, has called for Venezuela to remain an independent country after US forces captured former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro from his compound in Caracas and flew him to New York to face federal charges of drug-trafficking.

Leo had said he was following the developments in Venezuela with "deep concern," and urged the protection of human and civil rights in the Latin American country.

Venezuela's opposition, backed by consecutive Republican and Democratic administrations in the US, had vowed for years to immediately replace Maduro with one of their own and restore democracy to the oil-rich country. But US President Donald Trump delivered them a heavy blow by allowing Maduro's vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, to assume control. (AP)

UK in talks with NATO to counter Russia, China in Arctic

LONDON, Jan 12: Britain is discussing with NATO allies how it can help beef up security in the Arctic to counter threats from Russia and China, a government minister said Sunday.

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander said the talks are "business as usual" rather than a response to recent threats by US President Donald Trump to take over Greenland.

Trump said Friday that he would like to make a deal to acquire Greenland, a semi-autonomous region of NATO ally Denmark, to prevent Russia or China from taking it over.

"We are going to do something on Greenland whether they like it or not," Trump said Friday.

Greenland, with a population of around 57,000, is defended by Denmark, whose military is dwarfed by that of the US, which has a military base on the island. Denmark's prime minister has warned that a takeover would threaten NATO. (AP)

China reaffirms its territorial claims over Shaxsgam Valley after India's objections

BELJING, Jan 12: China on Monday reaffirmed its territorial claims over the Shaxsgam Valley in the backdrop of India's objections, stressing that the Chinese infrastructure projects in the area are "beyond reproach". India last Friday criticised China's infrastructure development projects in the Shaxsgam Valley, saying it reserves the right to take necessary measures to safeguard its interests as it is an Indian territory. Pakistan illegally ceded 5,180 sq km of Indian territory in the Shaxsgam Valley to China in 1963 from areas illegally occupied by it.

"Shaxsgam Valley is Indian territory. We have never recognised the so-called China-Pakistan 'boundary agreement' signed in 1963. We have consistently maintained that the agreement is illegal and invalid,"

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"We also do not recognise the so-called China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which passes through Indian territory that is under forcible and illegal occupation of Pakistan," he said. Reacting to Jaiswal's comments, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here that "first of all, the territory you mentioned is part of China's territory".

"China's infrastructure activities in its own territory are beyond reproach," she said while responding to a question on India's criticism.

Mao said China and Pakistan have signed a border agreement and determined the border between the two countries since the 1960s. (PTI)

Indian-origin astronomer wins UK's Royal Astronomical Society Gold Medal

LONDON, Jan 12: US-based astronomer Professor Shrinivas Kulkarni has been awarded the prestigious Gold Medal by the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS) in London for his "field-defining" discoveries in time-domain astronomy.

Maharashtra-born Kulkarni is the George Ellery Hale Professor of Astronomy and Planetary Science at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech), where he has discovered a wide range of astronomical objects, including brown dwarfs and remote bursts of gamma rays.

His RAS Gold Medal citation from last week recognises his "sustained, innovative and ground-breaking contributions to multi-wavelength transient astrophysics".

In receiving the highest honour from the historic organisation, awarded annually since 1824, he joins great scientific minds such as Stephen Hawking, Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Albert Einstein and Edwin Hubble.

"I was very surprised to hear the news, especially given the stellar list of past winners," said Kulkarni.

"I would like to thank my long-term collaborators and the engineering crew and members of the Palomar Transient Factory



and the Zwicky Transient Facility for their immense contribution to the projects," he said.

The scientist described this discovery of the first millisecond pulsar as "the most fun achievement in my life", adding: "I was a graduate student when I made the discovery. I could not sleep for several days!"

Kulkarni, who also won the 2024 Shaw Prize in Astronomy recently, joined Caltech in 1985 and has since made many landmark findings including demonstrating in 1997 that powerful gamma-ray bursts originate outside our galaxy.

He went on to lead the development of the Palomar Transient Factory (PTF) and its successor, the Zwicky Transient Facility (ZTF), which have caught thousands of real-time cosmic events as they blink, explode, and otherwise light up the skies. ZTF, based at Caltech's Palomar Observatory near San Diego, is still going strong and surveying the entire Northern sky every two nights.

His RAS award citation notes that these "have revolutionised time domain astrophysics at optical wavelengths".

In his 2024 Watson Lecture at Caltech titled 'Illuminating the Dynamic Night Sky: Discoveries from the Zwicky Transient Facility', Kulkarni discussed his passion for building instruments to explore uncharted areas in astronomy. He has built a total of 10 instruments in his career.

"My motto has been to build a big enough gizmo and things will happen," he said at the

time. Currently, Kulkarni is involved with developing NASA's Ultraviolet Explorer (UVEX) mission, led by Fiona Harrison, the Harold A. Rosen Professor of Physics at Caltech. The mission, targeted to launch in 2030, will perform the most sensitive sky survey in ultraviolet light to date.

He is the principal investigator of Z-Shooter, a very powerful and versatile spectrometer for the W.M. Keck Observatory in Hawaii that is under development with a first light expected in 2029.

Kulkarni received his Master's from the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi in 1978, his PhD from UC Berkeley in 1983 and has been based at Caltech for over 40 years.

Each year the RAS recognises significant achievement in the fields of astronomy and geophysics through a number of awards, medals and prizes, encompassing different types of talent from research to education and outreach.

This year's Gold Medal in Geophysics has been won by Professor Andrew Jackson of ETH Zurich for his instrumental work in the field of geomagnetism. (PTI)

UN court to begin hearings on whether Myanmar committed genocide against Rohingya



THE HAGUE, Jan 12: Myanmar will face accusations on Monday that it is responsible for genocide against the Rohingya ethnic minority at the top court of the United Nations, as long-awaited hearings are set to begin. The West African country of Gambia first filed the case at the International Court of Justice in 2019, arguing a so-called "clearance operation" by Myanmar's military in 2017 violated the 1948 Genocide Convention.

Myanmar, which has since been taken over by the military, has denied the allegations.

Without the ICJ, the military "will be accountable to no one and there will be no constraints on their persecution and ultimate destruction of the Rohingya," lawyer Paul S. Reichler argued on behalf of Gambia during a preliminary hearing in 2022. The Southeast Asian country launched the campaign in Rakhine state in 2017 after an attack by a Rohingya insurgent group. Security forces were accused of mass rapes, killings and torching thousands of homes as more than 700,000 Rohingya fled into neighbouring Bangladesh.

Now, some 1.2 million members of this persecuted minority are languishing in chaotic, overcrowded camps, where armed groups recruit children and girls as young as 12 are forced into prostitution. The

sudden and severe foreign aid cuts imposed last year by U.S. President Donald Trump shuttered thousands of the camps' schools and have caused children to starve to death.

"Myanmar's case before the ICJ is a beacon of hope for hundreds of thousands of people like myself that our plight for justice will not go unheard," Lucky Karim of Refugee Women for Peace and Justice, an organisation that advocates for justice for the Rohingya, said in a statement.

Myanmar was initially represented at the court by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, who denied that her country's armed forces committed genocide, telling the ICJ in 2019 that the mass exodus of Rohingya people from the country she led was the unfortunate result of a battle with insurgents. The pro-democracy icon is now in prison after being convicted of what her supporters call trumped-up charges after a military takeover of power.

Myanmar contested the court's jurisdiction, saying Gambia was not directly involved in the conflict and therefore could not initiate a case. Both countries are signatories to the genocide convention, signed in the wake of World War II, and in 2022, judges rejected the argument, allowing the case to move forward. (AP)

CM Khandu emphasises protecting indigenous rights and strengthening rule of law

Arunachal to roll out technology-driven ILP system to curb illegal migration



ITANAGAR, Jan 12: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Monday said the state government is working on a robust, technology-driven Inner Line Permit (ILP) system to effectively curb illegal migration and prevent misuse of permits, asserting that protecting indigenous rights and maintaining rule of law remain top priorities.

"Working on a robust, IT-enabled ILP system to track overstaying, expired permits, unusual travel patterns and real-time entry-exit data," Khandu said in a social media post on X after chairing a review meeting at his civil secretariat office here.

He stated that the state must remain protected from unlawful stay and permit misuse, ensuring

security, rule of law and safeguarding indigenous rights.

Elaborating on the initiative during a press conference here on January 6, the chief minister said the earlier ILP mechanism suffered from monitoring limitations, which prompted the government to migrate the system to a fully digital platform.

"Earlier, the ILP system could not be properly monitored. We have now migrated to a digital platform. After Cabinet approval, new rules will come into force," he had said during the press conference.

According to Khandu, the digitised system will enable closer tracking and more effective enforcement against illegal migrants.

The CM further said under the new framework, employers bringing labourers from outside the state would be required to formally inform the government, allowing authorities to carry out proper verification.

This step, he said, is aimed at preventing illegal entry and ensuring accountability.

He also added that the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR), 1873, which regulates the entry of non-residents to protect indigenous communities, land and culture, would be further amended to make it stronger and more effective. (PTI)

Panchayat office building handed over in Dumporijo

HT Correspondent

DUMPORIOJO, Jan 12: The Panchayat office building, constructed under the State Own Revenue (SOR) for the year 2024-25, was completed and formally handed over to the Meche Marde PLF Group by Nikron Bui, C.O. cum Member Secretary of Topo Heche-II Gram Panchayat, at a function held here in Dumporijo, Upper Subansiri District.

Addressing the gathering, Nikron Bui highlighted that the building has been provided to the ARSRLM Self Help Group to meet essential requirements and to strengthen livelihood activities at the grassroots level of Panchayati Raj.

The handing-over ceremony was also attended by Nyato Marde, former ZPC and Juri Nasi, Block Mission Manager of ARSRLM, who spoke on the significance of the initiative in promoting rural development and community welfare.

Heema Hospital records successful delivery of triplets

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 12: Heema Hospital, a multi-specialty facility in Itanagar, recorded the successful delivery of triplets on January 7, 2026. All three babies are stable and in good health, according to a press statement issued by the hospital.

The delivery, described as highly complicated and high-risk was successfully carried out under the leadership of Dr Syed Shelim Ahmed. Despite the challenges associated with such rare cases, the procedure was completed safely with all three babies delivered within a span of just two minutes: the first baby, a male, weighing 1.6 kg at 12:55 PM, the second, a female, weighing 1.8 kg at 12:56 PM and the third, a female, weighing 1.3 kg at 12:57 PM.

The press release highlighted the dedication, skill and coordination of Dr Ahmed and the entire medical and support team, noting that many were hesitant to take on the complex case. The hospital emphasised its commitment to advanced, compassionate and life-saving healthcare, even in challenging situations.

The patient's family, relatives, well-wishers and hospital staff, including Heema Hospital Managing Committee authorities Dr Byabang Rana and Dr Byabang Heema, congratulated Dr Ahmed and the medical team for their outstanding achievement.

First sighting of rare Pin-tailed Parrotfinch in Arunachal boost to biodiversity; Deputy CM Mein

ITANAGAR, Jan 12: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Monday described the first-ever sighting of the rare Pin-tailed Parrotfinch in the state as a moment of pride for the conservation community and a significant boost to the state's biodiversity record.

"The first-ever sighting of the Pin-tailed Parrotfinch in Arunachal Pradesh, recorded inside Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve, is a remarkable addition to the state's rich avian diversity and a moment of pride for our conservation community," Mein said in a post on X.

Calling the discovery ecologically significant, the deputy chief minister observed that the rare observation, possibly only the second record of the species in India, underscores the extraordinary biodiversity of the north-eastern state and the ecological importance of protected landscapes like Namdapha. (PTI)

Sikkim Chief Minister calls on Arunachal Governor

Guv commends Sikkim's cleanliness drive and highlights regional cooperation opportunities

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 12: The Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang, called on the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), during the Governor's two-day official visit to Sikkim at Lok Bhavan. The meeting was a courtesy call.

Governor Parnaik commended the Chief Minister of Sikkim's remarkable achievement in emerging as the cleanest State in India. He lauded the State Government's sustained efforts in cleanliness, environmental conservation and civic responsibility, noting that these initiatives reflect strong public discipline and collective ownership.

The Governor also appreciated the professionalism and people-friendly approach of the Sikkim Police, emphasising that responsive policing contributes to public trust, safety and social harmony.

Highlighting the commonalities between Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, he noted that both Himalayan States are blessed with rich biodiversity, vibrant ethnic cultures, unique traditions and significant tourism potential, particularly in eco-tourism and orchid preservation.

Governor Parnaik expressed hope that the cordial relationship between the Chief Ministers of the two States would translate into enhanced cooperation in sustainable tourism, environmental conservation, cultural exchanges, capacity-building and people-to-people connect for mutual benefit. Drawing from his tenure as former Commander of the 17 Mountain Division in Sikkim, he also reflected on evolving security dynamics along sensitive international borders and stressed the importance of vigilance, coordination and inter-State cooperation for peace, stability and development in the Himalayan region.

Tirap Art and Literature Exhibition 2026 concludes with resounding success

HT Correspondent

KHONSA, Jan 12: The Tirap Art and Literature Exhibition 2026, held from January 9 to 11 in Tirap, Arunachal Pradesh, concluded on a high note, celebrating art, literature and culture. Organised by the Tirap Institute of Research, Art, Literature and Philosophy (TIRAP), the three-day event featured fine arts, photography, book exhibitions, poetry readings, storytelling sessions, panel discussions and folk and contemporary musical performances.

The exhibition provided a vibrant platform for artistic expression and cultural exchange, attracting enthusiastic participation from artists, writers, students and the general public. The event highlighted the growing appreciation for art and literature in the region, promoting local talent, preserving cultural narratives and encouraging creative dialogue within the community.

Founded by Wanggo Socia, a young author and activist from Khonsa village, TIRAP seeks to create opportunities for artists and literary voices while contributing to the cultural development of Tirap. The exhibition marked a significant milestone in the institute's journey, reinforcing its commitment to nurturing art, literature and cultural thought.

KT Parnaik interacts with 17 Mountain Division on 65th Raising Day

Guv lauds Division's legacy and calls for technology-driven, people-centric security initiatives



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 12: The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), interacted with officers and all ranks of the 17 Mountain Division on the occasion of its 65th Raising Day at the Army Cantonment here.

Addressing the Sainik Sammelan, the Governor emphasised that the Division carries a historic responsibility as the guardian of the North Eastern Region and the sentinel of the Siliguri Corridor, one of India's most sensitive strategic frontiers. He urged officers and troops to embrace technology as a force multiplier, highlighting the operational importance of artificial intelligence, drones, modern surveillance, cyber capabilities and emerging technologies in the post-Operation Sindoor environment.

The Governor outlined a vision for the evolving security landscape, stressing agility, innovation, continuous learning and perception management. He also encouraged the Division to strengthen people-centric initiatives such as Operation Sadbhavana and Military-Civil Fusion to win hearts and minds alongside securing terrain.

Paying rich tributes, Governor Parnaik lauded the 17 Mountain Division for its illustrious legacy, exceptional professionalism and unwavering dedication to duty. He recalled its historic contributions, from the World Wars and the liberation of Goa to pivotal roles in the merger of Sikkim with India and engagements at Nathu La, Cho La and Doklam.

Reflecting on his tenure as Division Commander, he spoke of landmark initiatives, including the opening of Nathu La Pass for trade in 2006 and acknowledged the Division's continued role in promoting development, tourism and community welfare in Sikkim. The Governor also appreciated the General Officer Commanding, Maj Gen Mahipal Singh Rathore and all ranks for the meticulous planning and dignified conduct of the Raising Day Sammelan.

Concluding his address, Governor Parnaik expressed faith in the courage, discipline and moral strength of the officers and troops, calling upon them to place the nation above self while upholding the Division's glorious legacy and contributing decisively to a strong, secure and self-reliant Viksit Bharat.

Dy CM inaugurates Academic Block, unveils Swami Vivekananda statue at VKV Sunpura

National Youth Day celebrations highlight education, youth empowerment and holistic development



HT Correspondent

SUNPURA, Jan 12: Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Chowna Mein, participated in the National Youth Day (Swami Vivekananda Jayanti) celebrations at Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya (VKV), Sunpura, where he inaugurated a new Academic Block and unveiled a statue of Swami Vivekananda.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Chief Minister emphasised the enduring relevance of Swami Vivekananda's ideals, highlighting character-building, discipline, courage and service as the foundation of nation-building. He stressed that today's youth are active contributors to development and social transformation. Mein also underscored the state government's commit-

ment to youth empowerment through focused investments in education and skill development. He highlighted Mission Shikshit Arunachal 2029, aimed at implementing the National Education Policy 2020, strengthening foundational learning, enhancing secondary-level performance and fostering 21st-century skills.

Citing VKV Sunpura's journey from 30 students in 1981 to over 300 today, the Deputy Chief Minister praised the school for achieving 100% pass results in all Board examinations and for students' outstanding performances in academics, science programmes, sports and national-level competitions. He commended the Principal, teachers and non-teaching staff for their dedication and assured continued government support, including funding for a Multipurpose Hall for the institution.

The programme also featured cultural performances, patriotic songs, dances and student presentations, reflecting the spirit of National Youth Day and the timeless teachings of Swami Vivekananda.

The event was attended by Dr Mohesh Chai, MLA of Tezu Assembly Constituency, former Minister Nokul Chai, VKVAPT Secretary Rupesh Mathu, HoDs, Panchayat leaders, teachers, parents, students and members of the local community.

GOVT. OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CONTROLLER OF LEGAL METROLOGY(ZONAL):: DIPHU

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In pursuance of approval of KAAC, Diphu vide letter No. KAAC/Esstt-313/ Legal Metrology/P(B)/Misc/2020-21/24, Dated Diphu, the 31st December 2025. The Deputy Controller of Legal Metrology, Diphu invites application from intending and eligible Candidates who are citizen of India as define in article 5 and 8 of the India Constitution preferable of Sixth Schedule district of Assam in prescribe Standard form Part-IX of the Assam Gazzete along with self attested Photocopies with all testimonials and KAAC cash receipt of Rs 10/- in case of ST/SC categories and Rs. 20/- for General category.

Sl No.	Name of Vacant Post	Total Number of Vacant Post	Grade/Scale of Pay	Minimum Education Qualification
1.	Publicity Organiser, Grade-III	1(One) No.	PB-2 [14000-70,000] + Grade pay Rs. 7,600/-	Graduate in any discipline from a recognized Institution/University with a Computer Diploma of at least 6(Six) Months with basic knowledge of MS Words, Excel etc.
2.	Laboratory Attendant, Grade-IV	1(One) No.	PB-1[12000-52000]+ Grade Pay Rs. 3900/-	Class-VIII passed from recognized Institute.
1.	Peon, Grade-IV	1(One) No.	PB-1[12000-52000]+ Grade Pay Rs. 3900/-	Class-VIII passed from recognized Institute.

Terms and Condition:

- The envelope containing the application should be superscripted as "APPLICATION FOR THE POST OF ...", whichever is applicable.
- Application should be addressed to "THE DEPUTY CONTROLLER OF LEGAL METROLOGY(ZONAL), DIPHU" and should be submitted at the office drop box within the date fixed with
- The Last Date for Submission of form is 22/01/2026 upto 3.00 PM. No application will be accepted/entertained after the last date fixed.
- The candidate should apply along with self attested copies of testimonials and two recent Colour Passport Size photographs along with the Standard Form dully filled up.
- Incomplete and late received applications will be rejected without assigning any reason thereof and the undersign shall not be responsible for any postal delay.
- No. TA/DA will be provided form the department for the same.
- The competent authority reserves all the rights to enhance or reduce the post and also be cancelled/postpone the interview at any time without assigning any reason thereof and or any intimation to the candidate.
- Next working day will be count for interview if some unavoidable Holiday/Bandh call arises.
- Date, Time, Venue of the Examination will be mention on the Hall ticket/Admit Card and office notice board.
- The eligible Candidate for appearing Written exam/Viva-Voice test shall be made available soon after scrutiny of application form and the list of eligible Candidate shall be made in the notice board of the office of the Deputy Controller of Legal Metrology, Diphu and requested to collect their admit card from the undersigned office during office hour from 28/01/2026 to 30/01/2026.
- Syllabus for Gr-III written exam will be of General English, Mathematics & General Knowledge.

Sd/-

Deputy Controller of Legal Metrology (Zonal, Diphu)

Memo No: DCLM/DPU/E-2/2025-26/240-6

Dated 09/01/2026

Congress top brass to hold meeting with Bengal leaders to finalise assembly polls strategy

Congress also has to decide what alliances it forges for the polls

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: Congress top brass will hold a meeting with senior party leaders from West Bengal on January 17 here to discuss poll preparedness and strategy for the forthcoming assembly elections, sources said.

A meeting of the party's screening committee for West Bengal will also take place in Kolkata on January 18, they said.

Other meetings involving state political action committee members and election committee members as well as senior party observers for the state will also be held on January 18 in Kolkata.

Sources said the party's strategy for the polls is likely to be discussed and finalised during the January 17 meeting. The Congress also has to decide what alliances it forges for the polls.

Sudip Roy Burman, Shaheel Ahmad Khan and Prakash Joshi

Ex-VP Dhankhar admitted to AIIMS after two bouts of unconsciousness



NEW DELHI, Jan 12: Former vice president Jagdeep Dhankhar was admitted to the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here on Monday after he fell unconscious twice on January 10, officials said.

Dhankhar, 74, underwent an MRI, the officials said, adding that other tests will be carried out on Tuesday. The former vice president had "two bouts of unconsciousness" in the washroom around 3.30 am on January 10, they said.

"Today, he had gone to AIIMS for a checkup when the doctors insisted that he should get admitted for tests. He will remain there overnight," an official said.

Dhankhar had blacked out on multiple occasions in the past, including in the Rann of Kutch, Uttarakhanda, Kerala and the national capital while attending public events as the vice president, he said.

Dhankhar had quit as the vice president on July 21 citing health grounds. He was admitted to AIIMS last year too for a heart-related ailment. (PTI)



have been appointed as senior observers for the West Bengal Assembly election by the Congress.

Besides Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, AICC general secretary in-charge organisation K C Venugopal, AICC general secre-

tary in-charge West Bengal Ghulam Ahmad Mir and West Bengal Congress Committee chief Subhankar Sarkar, among others, are expected to participate in the January 17 meeting.

The meetings come amid a row

over ongoing Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in West Bengal which has been vehemently criticised by parties such as the TMC and the Congress.

The TMC and the BJP have also traded barbs over the Enforcement Directorate (ED) carrying out raids at the office of political consultancy firm I-PAC and the residence of its chief in connection with a coal smuggling case.

TMC leaders have maintained that I-PAC, which provides political consultancy services to the party and manages its IT and media operations, was being targeted to gain access to sensitive internal documents.

Polls in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry would be held in the next few months as the tenures of their respective assemblies are due to end in May and June. (PTI)

Singer Prashant Tamang's body reaches Darjeeling; hills recall how his 2007 win reshaped politics

DARJEELING, Jan 12: The mortal remains of singer-actor Prashant Tamang, whose journey from a Kolkata Police personnel to a national celebrity following his victory in a reality show transformed the political consciousness of Darjeeling hills, were on Monday brought to his home here amid an outpouring of grief and reverence.

Tamang, winner of Indian Idol Season 3, died in Delhi on Sunday following a cardiac arrest. He was 43. Officials said his last rites would be held in Darjeeling with full honours, as directed by the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA).

Calling his death an irreplaceable loss for the hills, B K Ghisingh, Assistant Director of the Information and Cultural Affairs Department of the GTA, said arrangements were being made to receive Tamang's body "with dignity befitting a legend who carried Darjeeling to the world stage".

A procession carrying his mortal remains is scheduled in Darjeeling on Monday, where a condolence meeting and a Sarva Dharma Puja will be organised. Artists, political leaders and members of the public from across the hills are expected to pay their final respects.

"He was not just a singer. He became the voice and identity of Darjeeling," Ghisingh said.

While Tamang's musical success captured the nation's imagination, it was his 2007 Indian Idol victory



that left an indelible imprint on the socio-political history of the hills.

Securing the title with an unprecedented surge of public support, marked by millions of votes mobilised from across the Darjeeling hills and beyond, Tamang emerged as a powerful symbol of Gorkha pride and aspiration at a time of growing political churn in the region.

What began as a cultural campaign to back a local boy on a national stage soon spilled into the political domain. Mass mobilisation during the contest created a grassroots network that quickly outgrew the television competition and pro-

vided a ready template for political organisation.

Political observers note that the groundswell generated during Tamang's Indian Idol run proved to be a turning point in hill politics. The cultural networks and fan clubs that sprang up around the campaign gradually morphed into organised political units.

Bimal Gurung, who was at the forefront of mobilising public support for Tamang, deftly channelled this surge of popular sentiment into a political force, a momentum that eventually dislodged veteran leader and GNLF supreme Subash Ghisingh from the centre of power and

Chhattisgarh coal levy extortion funds used for election expenses, bribe politicians: ED

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: The Enforcement Directorate on Monday said a part of the Rs 540 crore "extortion" money generated from an alleged illegal coal levy scam in Chhattisgarh during the previous Congress government was used to fund election-related expenses and "bribe" politicians and bureaucrats.

The federal probe agency said in a statement that it has attached assets worth a combined Rs 2.66 crore of Soumya Chaurasia, a suspended state administrative service officer who was deputy secretary in the Chhattisgarh CMO, and another person as part of a money laundering investigation into these allegations.

A total of eight immovable properties, land parcels and residential flats, have been provisionally attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

These properties were "acquired" by the accused in the case-- Chaurasia and Nikhil Chandrakar-- in the names of their relatives from the proceeds of crime generated from the "illegal" collection of coal levy and other extortion activities, the federal probe agency said in a statement.

The combined value of the attached assets is Rs 2.66 crore, it said.

The case pertains to charges that a group of private individuals, in active connivance with senior politicians and bureaucrats of Chhattisgarh, formed a "racket" to "extort" money from coal transporters at the rate of Rs 25 per tonne during July 2020-June 2022.

The agency alleges that Rs 540 crore was "illegally" collected by the syndicate.



The Congress had rejected the charges and claimed political conspiracy in these charges made against its government.

"The extorted cash was used to bribe government officials and politicians, fund election-related expenses, and acquire movable and immovable assets," it alleged. Chaurasia, known to be a powerful bureaucrat in the government of former chief minister Bhupesh Baghel, and ten others were arrested by the ED in this case. She later obtained bail from the Supreme Court.

The agency has filed five chargesheets in this case till now naming 35 individuals and companies.

The money laundering case stems from a 2022 FIR of the Bengaluru Police, a chargesheet filed by the Income-Tax Department in 2023 and a complaint filed by the Chhattisgarh economic offences wing/anti-corruption bureau (EOW/ACB) in 2024. (PTI)

Goa SIR: 'System-driven procedure' behind notice to ex-Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash, says EC

PANAJI, Jan 12: The Election Commission (EC) on Monday clarified that a "system-driven procedure" led to the controversial notice issued to former Navy chief Admiral Arun Prakash (ret) as part of Goa's ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The commission said the incomplete details in his previous enumeration form triggered the notice.

The notice to Admiral Prakash, an 81-year-old Vir Chakra awardee and hero of the 1971 India-Pakistan War, had sparked a social media storm, with veterans and citizens questioning why such a decorated officer was required to "prove his identity" in person.

Officials said the form had now been duly completed and that the former Naval chief was not required to appear now.

In a clarification issued on Monday, Electoral Registration Officer Dr Medora Ermomilla D'Costa said the Booth Level Officer (BLO) for the Cortalim constituency collected the Admiral's form but found it lacked mandatory particulars from previous revisions.

"It was observed that the said enumeration form did not contain the mandatory particulars relating to the previous SIR, including the name of the elector, EPIC number, name of the relative, name and number of the Assembly Con-

stituency, Part number, and serial number in the electoral roll," D'Costa added.

In the absence of these essential identification details, the BLO Application was unable to establish an automatic linkage between the submitted enumeration form and the existing electoral roll database, the official pointed out.

As all the fields pertaining to the last SIR were left blank, the system categorised the enumeration form under the "unmapped" category," the clarification mentioned.

D'Costa said, as per the standard, system-driven procedure, a hearing notice was automatically generated and issued to enable verification of the elector's details and ensure due opportunity for confirmation of eligibility.

Admiral Prakash, who has lived in Goa since his 2006 retirement, took to social media to highlight the logistical hurdles for elderly citizens and said that he and his wife were asked to appear on two separate dates at a location 18 km away from their residence.

"I neither need, nor have ever asked for any special privileges... but if the SIR forms are not evoking required info, they should be revised," Prakash, who was Naval chief from 2004 till 2006, posted on X. He added that the BLO had visited his home three times and could have easily requested the missing documents then. (PTI)

AI-driven digitisation errors causing widespread hardship during SIR: Mamata to CEC

KOLKATA, Jan 12: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote to CEC Gyanesh Kumar again on Monday, claiming that AI-driven digitisation errors in the 2002 electoral rolls were causing widespread hardship to genuine voters during the SIR exercise in the state. In her fifth letter to the chief election commissioner (CEC) since the beginning of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, Banerjee said serious errors occurred in electors' particulars during the digitisation of the 2002 voters' list using AI tools, leading to large-scale data mismatches and wrongful categorisation of genuine voters as having "logical discrepancies".

Accusing the EC of disregarding its own statutory processes followed over the last two decades, she said electors were being compelled to re-establish identity despite earlier corrections made after "quasi-judicial hearings". "Such an approach, disowning its own actions and mechanisms spanning more than two decades, is arbitrary, illogical and contrary to the letter and spirit of the Constitution of India," she alleged.

Banerjee further claimed that no proper acknowledgement was being issued for documents submitted during SIR, claiming that the procedure was "fundamentally flawed". She said the SIR hearing process had become "largely mechanical, driven purely by technical data", and was "completely devoid of the application of mind, sensitivity and human touch", claiming that it undermined "the bedrock of our democracy and constitutional framework".

Highlighting the human cost, she wrote that the exercise, which should have been constructive, "has already seen 77 deaths with 4 attempts to suicide and 17 persons falling sick and necessitating hospitalisation," attributing it to "fear, intimidation and disproportionate workload due to unplanned exercise undertaken by ECI." Mamata also condemned the harassment of eminent citizens, noting that Nobel Laureate Prof Amartya Sen, poet Joy Goswami, actor and MP Deepak Adhikari, international cricketer Mohammed Shami and the Maharaj of Bharat Sevashram Sangha were "subjected to this unplanned, insensitive and inhuman process." (PTI)

Hatred being fuelled on basis of caste, religion: Cong slams BJP after Dalit woman's 'killing' in UP

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: The Congress slammed the Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh on Monday over the alleged killing of a Dalit woman in Meerut and said hatred is being fuelled on the basis of caste and religion under the patronage of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) dispensations.

A 22-year-old man allegedly killed the Dalit woman and abducted her daughter in a village in Meerut on Thursday morning, police said. The incident triggered tension in the locality, prompting authorities to deploy additional police forces. The deceased was identified as the mother of a 20-year-old woman.

The 20-year-old Dalit woman, who was abducted from Kapsad village in the Sardhana area, was found from Saharanpur district on Saturday and the accused arrested, police said.

Addressing a press conference, Congress's SC (Scheduled Caste) department head Rajendra Pal Gautam alleged that "hatred is being fuelled in the country on the basis of caste and religion, and this

is happening under the patronage of the BJP government".

"Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi is openly using resources to crush Dalits, tribals and backward classes. Chief Minister Yogi's bulldozer often operates only after considering caste and religion. When a Dalit is oppressed in the state, their bulldozer does not move," he said.

"In Meerut, a girl was going towards the forest with her mother. The daughter was abducted and when the mother came to save her, she was brutally killed... When we went to meet the victim's family, we were stopped," Gautam said.

"If the Uttar Pradesh Police showed the same diligence in preventing crime and ensuring punishment for the guilty, crimes would stop happening altogether," he added.

Gautam claimed that if the perpetrator was a Dalit, tribal or from the backward classes, the "chief minister's bulldozer" would run down his place within 24 hours.

"We believe that the law should not do its work by looking at caste and religion. If this is done, the country will weaken. The situation is such that the government itself has not made public the data on Dalit oppression after 2022. This is a complete failure of the government," the Congress leader said.

In the last five years, the highest number of cases of atrocities against Dalits in the country has surfaced in Uttar Pradesh, he claimed.

"Five BJP-ruled states in the country -- Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Bihar -- account for 76 per cent of Dalit-atrocity incidents. The shocking fact is that 26 per cent of Dalit-atrocity incidents have come to light in Uttar Pradesh alone," Gautam claimed.

"The government did not allow our protest earlier by saying that in any case, one must inform 10 days in advance to hold a protest. Our question to the government is -- if a rape or killing happens anywhere in the country, will we have to wait for 10 days to demand justice?" he asked. (PTI)

SC extends January 31 deadline by 2 weeks for completion of Maharashtra local body polls

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: The Supreme Court on Monday extended the timeline for completing the poll process for local body elections in Maharashtra by two weeks.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Jyoyamalya Bagchi extended the time after the State Election Commission (SEC), represented by senior advocate Balbir Singh, submitted that it has filed an interlocutory application seeking an extension of time by 10 days from January 31.

Singh said the court had earlier fixed the January 31 deadline, but around 10 more days are needed as elections are to be held for some zila parishads and panchayats.

The bench extended the time by two weeks for completing the electoral process of the local body polls, after directing the registry to number the application of the SEC.

Hearing another plea alleging that the quota limit in the Maha-

rastra local body polls has crossed the 50-per cent mark, the court said it has already clarified that the election will be held but it will be subject to the outcome of the petitions.

"If 50 per cent of lakshman rekha has been crossed, like in this case where it is 52 per cent, then the election will be held but it will be subject to the outcome of these petitions," the bench told senior advocate V Giri.

It refused to entertain any fresh intervention application in the matter, saying those are only intended at delaying the election process and that all such petitions will be listed after the local body polls.

The top court pulled up the Maharashtra SEC on September 16 last year for the non-compliance of its order. It had directed earlier that the local body polls in the state, stalled since 2022, to be completed by January 31, 2026, without further extension. (PTI)

ISRO's PSLV-C62 rocket encounters 'anomaly,' deviates from flight path, misses orbit

SRIHARIKOTA (ANDHRA PRADESH), Jan 12: ISRO's PSLV-C62 rocket carrying 16 satellites, including a foreign Earth Observation satellite, "encountered an anomaly", the space agency said on Monday, signalling the failure of the mission.

Disturbances in the rocket and later deviation from flight path was observed when strap-on motors were providing thrust during the flight's third stage to propel the vehicle to the intended altitude, space agency chairman V Narayanan said adding a detailed analysis has been initiated to identify the cause.

The mission of placing the satellites in the intended orbit could not be achieved and all the 16 satellites were lost in space, ISRO sources told PTI adding this was the second consecutive PSLV mission failure during the third stage.

A similar, previous attempt in May 2025 (PSLV-C61-EOS-09) also did not succeed due to "motor pressure issue," and there was a fall in the chamber pressure of the

motor case.

A former top ISRO scientist said it would take some time for the space agency to collect data, analyse, understand what happened and make necessary corrections. It is expected that ISRO would officially release the findings in the days to come, he told PTI requesting anonymity. To a query, he said, "it is a setback as the satellites did not reach the intended orbit and all satellites lost in space may be drifting as space debris."

As the 22.5-hour countdown concluded on Monday morning, the 44.4 metre tall four-stage rocket lifted off as scheduled at 10.18 am from the spaceport here. The mission was to deploy a primary Earth Observation satellite and multiple co-passenger satellites into a 512 km Sun-Synchronous Orbit, after a flight journey of about 17 minutes.

The automatic launch sequence commenced following approval from the mission director. ISRO



scientists provided real-time updates as the vehicle ascended. The initial phases of the flight proceeded according to plan.

However, after the announcement that the "third stage ignited", an uneasy calm took over the Mission Control Centre. In his address at the centre, Narayanan said: "The PSLV is a four-stage vehicle with two solid stages and two liquid stages. The performance of the ve-

hicle up to the end of the third stage was expected. Close to the end of the third stage we are seeing more disturbance in the vehicle and subsequently, there was a deviation observed in the flight path."

Confirming the mission's failure on its 'X' handle, ISRO said, "The PSLV-C62 mission encountered an anomaly during the end of PS3 (third stage) of the vehicle. A de-

tailed analysis has been initiated." However, the space agency did not provide more details.

Later, in a brief press conference, Narayanan, who is also the Secretary of Department of Space, said, "As all of you are aware, today we attempted PSLV-C62/EOS-N1 mission... the mission could not proceed in the expected (flight) path. That is the information right now available." Further, he said: "We are going through the data and with the data collected from all the ground stations and once the data analysis is completed, we shall come back to you."

When the earlier PSLV-C61 mission failed last year, former ISRO Chairman S Somanath had said he was aware of the formidable challenges faced during the development of the third-stage solid motor, an endeavour marked by multiple failures. "Failure is never defeat, but rather a formidable tutor," he had said. (PTI)

'Ten people have so far been arrested in connection with the incident at Fatikroy' Police to take unbiased action if disorder takes place: Tripura CM on Unakoti violence

AGARTALA, Jan 12: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday asserted that the police will take unbiased action firmly if any disorder takes place. He was referring to the communal violence that happened on Saturday at Fatikroy, also known as Saidarpar, in the Kumarghat subdivision of Unakoti district over the collection of 'chanda' (subscription) for a local Shiva temple. Addressing a government programme here, the chief minister said, "When I received information about the untoward incident, I directed the DGP, district magistrate and the SP (of Unakoti) to take strong action against the attackers." At least 10 people, including four police personnel, were injured, shops and houses were



torched, while vehicles and a mosque were vandalised during the clash. "Ten people have so far been arrested in connection with the incident at Fatikroy. Life should be in order, and the police will take

strong action if any disorder happens. The police will not act selectively," he said, adding that sometimes force must be applied to establish peace. He said ministers Sudhangshu Dasand and Tinku Roy, who were in Agartala, rushed to the spot immediately after the incident to ensure return of peace. Meanwhile, internet service has been restored in Kumarghat subdivision from Monday, while prohibitory orders under section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita remained in force at Fatikroy police station limit, District Magistrate Tamal Majumder said. The Congress on Monday submitted a memorandum to the SP of Unakoti district, demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment for those goons who were involved in the communal violence at Saidarpar. The opposition party also sought the release of those arrested on suspicion and found innocent later. (PTI)

Yaba worth ₹ 20 lakh seized in Tripura, one held



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Jan 12: Acting on confidential intelligence, personnel of the Tripura Police conducted a joint operation on Sunday late night in the Ichhaipara area under Kadamtala Police Station of Orth District near the India-Bangladesh border, leading to the seizure of Yaba tablets worth ₹ 20 lakh along with cash and mobile phones. According to Police, the joint raid was carried out by the 97th Battalion of the Border Security Force (BSF), stationed at Yakubnagar, in coordination with Kadamtala Police. During the search at the residence of local resident

Taj Uddin in Ichhaipara, the team recovered a total of 1,929 Yaba tablets packed in 10 packets, four mobile phones, ₹ 77,910 in Indian currency, and 1,577 Bangladeshi taka. "However, sensing the raid, the house owner Taj Uddin managed to flee the scene. One person, Nizam Uddin (41), was arrested from the spot. He is a resident of Ward No. 5 under Bhagyapur Gram Panchayat" said Police. Kadamtala Police Station Second Officer-in-Charge Remulas Sangma stated that the estimated black market value of the seized Yaba tablets is approximately ₹ 20.29 lakh. "A case under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act is being processed, and efforts are underway to arrest the absconding accused. The arrested person, along with the seized contraband, cash, and mobile phones, will be produced before the Dharmanagar District and Sessions Court", he said. Meanwhile, local residents alleged that the border-adjacent area has long been used as a safe route for drug trafficking. Police have assured that surveillance and operations in the region will be intensified to curb cross-border narcotics smuggling.

3 suspected smugglers arrested

IMPHAL, Jan 12: Three suspected drug smugglers were arrested with 5.89 kg of yaba tablets in Manipur's Tengnoupal district, police said on Monday. The arrests were made after security forces intercepted their vehicle at a checkpoint in the Tengnoupal police station area. The accused were identified as James Baite (28), Hatneikim Baite (50) and David T Mate (41). A total of 5.89 kg of yaba tablets, worth more than Rs 1 crore, was seized from them, police said. Yaba, meaning 'crazy medicine' in Thai, is a tablet form of methamphetamine, and a very powerful stimulant. It was introduced in East Asia during World War II to enhance soldiers' performance, and has become increasingly popular among young people in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, as well as Vietnam and Myanmar, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. (PTI)

SKM supremo Prem Singh Tamang chairs preparatory meeting of party's foundation day function

We have consistently adopted pro-people policies and initiatives, working tirelessly for the welfare and development of our state

GANGTOK, Jan 12: Sikkim Krantikari Morcha (SKM) supremo and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Monday chaired the second preparatory meeting for the 14th foundation day of the ruling party in the Himalayan state. The 14th foundation day of the Sikkim Krantikari Morcha will be held at Rangpo on February 4. "I chaired the 2nd preparatory meeting for the SKM's 14th Foundation Day celebration scheduled to be held at Rangpo on February 4 next," he said in a social media post. The meeting focused on detailed discussions and the assignment of responsibilities to various individuals and party organisations in preparation for the upcoming event to be held in a grand and befitting manner, Tamang, the founding president of SKM said. During the meeting, the SKM supremo urged all members to work collectively and with dedication to ensure the grand success of



the event, emphasising that our commitment to the party and its ideals is the very purpose of our collective journey. "We have consistently adopted pro-people policies and initiatives, working tirelessly for the welfare and development of our state", he said. Tamang also announced that a five-day party convention will be organised in the near future to further strengthen the organisation and reinforce the party's commitment to the people. This year's Foundation Day celebration will be held under the theme 'Jan Andolan Dekhin Jan Sarkar' (see the people's movement, see the people's government) and is expected to witness large-scale public participation, reflecting the strong bond between the party and the people, he said. (PTI)

Mining firm director arrested for GST fraud of ₹ 53 cr in Nagaland

DIMAPUR, Jan 12: The director of two mining firms was arrested in Nagaland for his alleged involvement in a GST fraud amounting to ₹ 53.28 crore, officials said on Monday. The arrest was made by the Anti-Evasion Unit of CGST Dimapur following an investigation into the fraudulent availment of input tax credit through the issuance and receipt of fake invoices without any actual supply of goods, they said. The accused was identified as Atiqur Rahman Barbhuiya, director of Bendangtoshi Mining Pvt Ltd and Kevitho Mining Pvt Ltd, firms engaged in the supply of coal and coke, they added. The scrutiny of GST returns revealed that the two companies had allegedly availed fraudulent input tax credit of ₹ 27.52 crore and ₹ 25.76 crore, totalling to ₹ 53.28 crore, officials said. Investigations found that the firms had issued invoices without movement of goods and failed to produce supporting documents such as e-way bills, transport records and bank statements. Physical verification conducted by CGST officials revealed that both companies were either non-existent or non-operational at their registered places of business, raising serious concerns over the authenticity of their transactions. Following the investigation, Barbhuiya was arrested on Saturday, under Sections 132(1)(b) and 132(1)(c) of the CGST Act, 2017, which deal with the issuance of invoices without supply of goods and fraudulent availment of ITC. The offences are cognisable and non-bailable, officials said. Further investigation is underway to identify other entities and individuals involved in the racket, they said. (PTI)



Mizoram assembly's Budget Session to begin on Feb 17

AIZAWL, Jan 12: The Budget Session of the Mizoram assembly will begin on February 17, an official said on Monday. The detailed schedule, including the date on which the Budget for the fiscal 2026-27 will be tabled, will be chalked out by the Business Advisory Committee (BAC), chaired by Speaker Lalbiakzama, said the Assembly Secretariat's Additional Secretary Lalthangmawia. The BAC meeting is yet to be scheduled, he said. The meeting will also decide the duration of the session based on official business, he added. This will be the sixth session of the ninth assembly after the Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) government, headed by Chief Minister Lalduhoma, assumed power in December 2023. (PTI)

18 injured as bus fell into gorge in Tripura

AGARTALA, Jan 12: A bus accident early Monday morning in Tripura's Kamalpur area of Dhalai District has left 18 passengers injured, causing alarm among local residents and disrupting the nearby market in Saikabazar. The bus, en route from Agartala to Kailashahar in Unakoti District, reportedly lost control while navigating a sharp turn and fell into a deep gorge. Passengers stated that the journey had originally started from Radhanagar Bus Stand in Agartala. After the first bus broke down near Khowai, they switched to another vehicle, which was allegedly travelling at high speed when the accident occurred. Around 32 to 35 passengers were on board. Emergency teams, including the Fire and Emergency Services and local officials, promptly reached the scene to assist the victims. Injured passengers were transported to nearby medical facilities: 11 to Kamalpur Sub-Divisional Hospital, five to Dhalai District Hospital, and two to Fatikroy Primary Health Center. Tripura chief minister Manik Saha expressed concern over the incident, offering his wishes for a speedy recovery.

IDPs hold protest rally in Imphal demanding govt's response to their resettlement

IMPHAL, Jan 12: Hundreds of internally displaced people held a protest rally here on Monday, demanding a response from Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on their resettlement. The demonstrators, internally displaced people, and Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity commenced their rally from Kwakeithel in Imphal West district to the Lok Bhavan here but were stopped at Keisampat junction, nearly 200 metres from Lok Bhavan. Dozens of security forces, including Rapid Action Force personnel, have been deployed while barricades have been put up at Keisampat junction as well. The demonstrators raised slogans demanding they be allowed to return home and that the governor should respond to their demands. They also held placards stating the governor must respond, resettlement is a right, not a favour and no more delays on IDP resettlement. One protester, S Kebisana Devi, told reporters, "dozens of memorandums demanding resettlement to our native homes have been submitted to the authorities, in-



cluding the governor, but there have been no replies. How can they just remain silent and ignore the situations of citizens?" At least 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in the ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. Manipur is currently under President's rule, which was imposed on February 13, 2025, after the then chief minister N Biren Singh resigned on February 9 last year. Manipur Chief Secretary Puneet Kumar Goel, on December 30 last year, had said that nearly 10,000 people, who have been displaced because of the ethnic violence in the state since May 2023, have been resettled. He said that the government has initiated measures for phased resettlement of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) under the Rs 573 crore Resettlement and Rehabilitation Package, announced in the 2025-26 Manipur Budget by the Centre. (PTI)

5 ZPM members of Chakma district council joins BJP

AIZAWL, Jan 12: Five ZPM members of the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in Mizoram joined the BJP. The development happened days after the ruling ZPM claimed it commanded a majority with 16 members in the 20-strong council and urged Governor VK Singh to order a floor test in the House. It also follows the state Cabinet ruling out any political instability in the council, necessitating the extension of the governor's rule, which was imposed in July last year, citing that no party has a majority. BJP district president Durjya Dhan Chakma told PTI that five members of the council quit the ZPM on Sunday and joined the BJP. With the newly inducted members, the BJP's strength in the CADC has risen to seven, he said. Chakma also claimed that one more member is likely to join the



BJP this week. The ZPM and MNF now have 11 and one members, respectively, while there is also an Independent member. (PTI)

At 145, Mizoram recorded six-year high TB deaths in 2025: Official data

Aizawl district recorded the highest number of cases, followed by Lunglei and Kolasib

AIZAWL, Jan 12: A total of 145 people have died of tuberculosis (TB) in Mizoram in 2025, the highest fatalities in six years, according to official data. A total of 2,275 people, including 911 females, were diagnosed with the disease during the year, a marginal decrease from 2024's record of 2,291 cases, as per the National TB Elimination Programme under the National Health Mission, Mizoram. Of the 2,275 new cases, 1,900 were detected in government facilities, while the remaining 375 cases were found in private centres, it said. TB fatalities have continuously increased in the state since 2020. While 31 people died in 2020, the number of fatalities increased to 46 in 2021, 87 in 2022, 119 in 2023 and 136 in 2024. Of 2,275 new cases found in 2025, 146 people were diagnosed with multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), and 267 were found suffering from both TB and HIV AIDS, according to data. Among the new patients, 141 were below 14. Altogether 84 per cent of the patients were successfully treated. Aizawl district recorded the highest number of cases at 1,569, followed by Lunglei at 155 and Ko-



lasib at 138. Serchhip district reported the least at 52 cases. More than 100 people have registered to adopt TB patients or donate for them through the online platform, 'Nikshay, under the PM TB Mukht Bharat Abhiyan, officials said. It is a programme to augment community involvement in meeting India's commitment to end TB and provide additional patient support to improve treatment outcomes for patients and leverage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, they said. (PTI)

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL DEPARTMENT OF WORKS KAAC SECRETARIAT DIPHU-782460

No. KAAC/S.E-W-46(Pt-2)HRN/2024-25/20

Dated.12/01/2026

EXTENSION NOTICE

It is for general information to all the concerned that Short Re-Tender Notice issued vide Memo. No. KAAC/S.E-W-46(Pt-2)HRN/2024-25/19(A), Dtd- 30/12/2025 FOR Construction of Boundary Fencing with RCC Pillar at Kheroni PGR Land (Professional Grazing Reserve) has been extended upto 19th January 2026 4:00P.M and will be opened on the same date, place in presence of the tenderers or their authorised agencies if any.

Sd/-
Additional Chief Engineer (Works),
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,
DIPHU



'One Battle After Another' and 'Hamnet' take top honours at Golden Globes

Paul Thomas Anderson's ragtag revolutionary saga "One Battle After Another" took top honours at Sunday's 83rd Golden Globes in the comedy category, while Chloe Zhao's Shakespeare drama "Hamnet" pulled off an upset over "Sinners" to win best film, drama.

"One Battle After Another" won best film, comedy, supporting female actor for Teyana Taylor and best director and best screenplay for Anderson. He became just the second filmmaker to sweep director, screenplay and film, as a producer, at the Globes. Only Oliver Stone, for "Born on the Fourth of July", managed the same feat.

In an awards ceremony that went almost entirely as expected, the night's final award was the most surprising. While "One Battle After Another" has been the clear front-runner this awards season, most have pegged Ryan Coogler's Jim Crow-era vampire thriller as its closest competition.

But "Hamnet", a speculative drama about William and Agnes Shakespeare based on Maggie O'Farrell's bestseller, won in the dramatic category shortly after its star, Jessie Buckley, won best female actor in a drama.

It was a banner night for Warner Bros, the studio behind "One Battle After Another" and "Sinners". Warner Bros. Discovery has agreed to be sold to Netflix in a USD 83 billion deal. Paramount Skydance has appealed to shareholders with its own rival offer.

In his speech after winning best director, Anderson praised Warner co-chief Michael DeLuca.

"He said he wanted to run a studio one day and let filmmakers make whatever they want," said Anderson. "That's how you get 'Sinners'. That's how you get a 'Weapons'.

That's how you get 'One Battle After Another'."

The final awards brought to, or near, the stage a handful of the most talented filmmakers together in Anderson, Zhao and Coogler — plus Steven Spielberg, a producer of "Hamnet".

Regardless of who won what, it was a heartening moment of solidarity between them, with a shared sense of purpose. Zhao fondly recalled being at Sundance Labs with Coogler when they were each starting out.

"As students, let's keep our hearts open and let's keep seeing each other and allowing each other to be seen," said Zhao, while Coogler smiled from the front row.

"Sinners" won for best score and cinematic and box-office achievement. The win for box office and cinematic achievement, over franchise films like "Avatar: Fire and Ash", was notable for Coogler's film, a movie that some reports labelled a qualified success on its release.

Yet "Sinners" ultimately grossed USD 278 million domestically and USD 368 million worldwide, making it highest grossing original film in 15 years.

"I just want to thank the audience for showing up," said Coogler. "It means the world."

Coming off years of scandal and subsequent rehabilitation, the Globes and host Nikki Glaser put on a star-studded ceremony that saw wins for the streaming sensation "KPop Demon Hunters" (best animated film, song), a meta triumph for Seth Rogen's "The Studio" and an inaugural award for podcasting that went to Amy Poehler's "Good Hang".

Many of the Oscar favourites won. Timothee Chalamet won his first Golden Globe, for "Marty Supreme", after

four previous nominations. The 30-year-old is poised to win his first Oscar. Fellow nominees like Leonardo DiCaprio and George Clooney stood to applaud his win.

"My dad instilled in me a spirit of gratitude growing up: Always be grateful for what you have," said Chalamet. "It's allowed me to leave this ceremony in the past empty handed, my head held high, grateful just to be here. I'd be lying if I didn't say those moments didn't make this moment that much sweeter."

The Globes, held at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California, got underway with a pointedly political opening from host Nikki Glaser and an early award for the night's favourite, "One Battle After Another". Emceeding the show for the second straight year, Glaser kicked off the show with self-aware satire.

"Yes, the Golden Globes, without a doubt the most important thing happening in the world right now," she said.

In a winning, rapid-fire opening monologue that landed some punch lines on the usual subjects — the age of Leonardo DiCaprio's dates, Kevin Hart's height — Glaser also dove right into some of her most topical material.

For the on-the-block Warner Bros, Glaser started the bidding at USD 5. Referencing the Epstein files, she suggested best editing should go to the Justice Dept. The "most editing", however, she suggested deserved to go to Bari Weiss' new CBS News — a dig at the Paramount Skydance-owned network airing the Globes.

Political tension and industrywide uncertainty were the prevailing moods heading into Sunday's awards. Hollywood is coming off a disappointing box-office year and now anxiously awaits the fate of one of its most storied studios, Warner Bros. Following the fatal shooting of Renee Good in Minneapolis by a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer, several attendees wore pins reading "Be Good".

The Globes, formerly presented by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, have no overlap or direct correlation with the Academy Awards. After being sold in 2023 to

Todd Boehly's Eldridge Industries and Dick Clark Productions, a part of Penske Media, the Globes are voted on by around 400 people. The Oscars are voted on by more than 10,500 professionals.

But in the fluctuating undulations of awards season, a good speech at the Globes can boost an Oscar campaign. Winners Sunday included Rose Byrne ("If I Had Legs I'd Kick You") for best female actor in a comedy or musical, and Wagner Moura, the Brazilian star of "The Secret Agent", for best male actor in a drama.

Kleber Mendonca Filho's period political thriller also won best international film.

"I think if trauma can be passed along generations, values can do," Moura said. "So this to the ones who are sticking with their values in difficult moments."

Other winners Sunday included the supporting actor front-runner, Stellan Skarsgard who won for the Norwegian family drama "Sentimental Value." It was the first major Hollywood movie award for the 74-year-old, a respected veteran actor who drew a standing ovation.

"I was not prepared for this because I, of course, thought I was too old," said Skarsgard.

In the television awards, "The Pitt" took best drama series, while Noah Wyle won, too, brushing past his former "ER"-star Clooney on the way to the stage.

Netflix's "Adolescence" won four awards: best limited series, and acting awards for Erin Doherty, Stephen Graham and 16-year-old Owen Cooper.

Other winners included Rhea Seehorn for "Pluribus" and Jean Smart for "Hacks".

But the most comically poignant award of the night went to "The Studio", the best comedy series winner. Seth Rogen's Hollywood satire memorably included an episode devoted to drama around a night at the Globes. (Sample line: "I remember when the red carpet of the Golden Globes actually stood for something.") Rogen also won best male actor in a comedy.

"This is so weird," Rogen said, chuckling. "We just pretended to do this. And now it's happening." (AP)

'RECOGNITION COMES AT A CRUCIAL TIME'

Docu series 'In Transit' nominated at 2026 GLAAD Media Awards

"In-Transit", the unscripted documentary series produced by Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti, has been nominated for Outstanding Documentary at the 37th Annual GLAAD Media Awards.

The GLAAD Media Awards recognise global excellence in fair, accurate and inclusive representation of LGBTQ+ lives across media.

Directed by Ayesha Sood and produced by Tiger Baby, the four-part docu series premiered on streaming service Prime Video in June last year. It chronicled the deeply personal journeys of nine transgender and non-binary individuals across India as they navigate identity, love, family and self-expression.

Akhtar, who has produced the show through banner Tiger Baby, said the nomination was an honour.

"This reaffirms our belief that rooted Indian stories, when told authentically, will resonate powerfully with audiences around the world," she said, thanking Amazon Prime Video for providing the platform.

Kagti, co-founder of Tiger Baby, added, "'In-Transit' is a very special series for us. We're grateful to GLAAD for creating space for stories that are too often unseen, and for championing narratives that celebrate identity, dignity, and truth."

Sood said the recognition comes at a crucial time.

"At a time when trans realities are more important than ever, we are privileged to be able to tell the stories of these nine incredible characters.



Their stories, while unique and particular to them, are also universally important and resonant," she added.

"In-Transit" is the only Indian documentary series nominated in the category this year.

The 37th Annual GLAAD Media Awards will be held in Los Angeles on March 5. (PTI)

Thank you for letting me live so many lives: Rani Mukerji on 30 years in cinema



Rani Mukerji on Monday looked back at her three decades in cinema that she says began with "curiosity, fear, and a deep love for stories" and evolved into a career where she still gets to live many lives.

In a long post shared by Yash Raj Films, ahead of the release of her new film "Mardaani 3", Mukerji said despite so many years and movies, she still feels like a newcomer, ready to take on new cine-

matic challenges.

Daughter of late filmmaker Ram Mukherjee and playback singer Krishna Mukherjee, she made her acting debut with the 1996 movie "Raja Ki Aayegi Baaraat".

"I believe actors are a vessel of ideas and creativity and I'm truly blessed that I could become an actor. As long as there are stories to tell and emotions to explore, I will remain a student of this beautiful, demanding art.

"Thank you for letting me live so many lives. Today, I'm still feeling like a newcomer, wanting to excel, to work harder, to take on new cinematic challenges and write a totally new chapter of my life starting right now," Mukerji said.

The 47-year-old actor said acting wasn't a dream that she chased, it was something that found her.

"A young girl, drawn into cinema almost by chance, hesitant at first... and yet, somewhere between instinct and vulnerability, I fell in love with the craft.

"Cinema has a strange way of freezing emotions. Somewhere inside me, I am still that nervous girl

standing in front of the camera for the first time, hoping I wouldn't forget my lines, hoping I belonged," she said.

Mukerji added that she didn't come into films with a master plan as she was driven by "curiosity, fear, and a deep love for stories, for the exploration of the human mind through characters".

As an artist, she said she has always been drawn to women who challenge the world around them.

"Whether it was the spirited small town girl with big dreams in 'Bunty Aur Babli', the fierce journalist in 'No One Killed Jessica', or the relentless police officer in 'Mardaani', I felt a deep connection to characters who refuse to back down, who want to shatter patriarchy and have a lot of grace while doing so."

According to Mukerji, marriage and motherhood changed her — not by slowing her down, but by sharpening her focus.

"I became more selective, more protective of my energy, and more aware of the kind of legacy I wanted to build and the films that I want to lend my voice to," she said.

The actor said her 2023 movie "Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway" reaffirmed her belief that emotional truth transcends borders. The movie helped her win her first National Award for best actress.

"A mother fighting a system larger than herself is a story that needs no language. The response to that film told me something profound: audiences still want sincerity. They still want stories that come from the heart. Playing a mother gave me my first National Award and I'm a believer in signs. Maybe I was born to play this role, which is why the universe reserved the feeling of me winning this award for when I became a mother and understood what a woman can do for her offspring," she added.

Looking back, Mukerji said her journey in films has taught her that longevity is not about staying relevant — it is about staying honest.

"I have made choices that surprised people, sometimes even myself. I have taken breaks, returned on my own terms, and trusted my instincts even when they went against trends." (PTI)

'FA9LA' fame Flipperachi announces India tour



Bahraini rapper Hussam Aseem, better known by the name of Flipperachi, who rose to fame after his song "FA9LA" was featured in the Bollywood film "Dhurandhar", has announced his India tour.

Flipperachi shared the news with a post on his Instagram handle on Sunday. The rapper said he will perform in Bengaluru on March 14 at UN40 Music Festival, and more dates will be announced shortly.

He also asked fans to comment names of the cities they would want him to perform in. "First India show date announced! We're excited to be in Bengaluru on March 14 at @un40fam! More dates to be added soon. Which city should we stop in? Drop your city in the comments! For booking inquiries in India, contact our exclusive booking agent: @rebellionmanagement," read the caption.

Flipperachi's song was released in May 2024, but it got recognition only in December 2025, with the release of Aditya Dhar's "Dhurandhar".

The film featured Ranveer Singh in the lead role and revolved around covert intelligence operations set against a backdrop of geopolitical and terror events like Kandahar plane hijack, 2001 Parliament Attack and 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

It also starred Akshaye Khanna, Sanjay Dutt and Sara Arjun. (PTI)

National Olympic Academy will "collaborate" closely with the International Olympic Academy in Olympia

IOA 'reactivates' National Olympic Academy in Ahmedabad with Usha as head

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: Calling it a major step towards strengthening the Olympic movement in India, the IOA on Monday announced the "formal reactivation" of a National Olympic Academy (NOA) in Ahmedabad with its President and sprint legend PT Usha leading the facility's management.

The IOA (Indian Olympic Association) also said that a National Olympic Education and Development Programme (NOEDP) will also be launched.

"The IOA General House unanimously approved President P T Usha as the President of the National Olympic Academy, and Shri Gagan Narang, Vice President of the IOA and Olympic medalist, as the Director of the National Olympic Academy," the body stated in a press release.

India had a Bharat Centre of Olympic Research and Education (BCROE) at the Rashtriya Raksha University in Gandhinagar. While the NOA has existed since 2018, its operations were stalled due to various reasons, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This National Olympic Academy has been there since 2018 but



remained inactive due to reasons which include the pandemic. That's why we are saying it's a re-activation," IOA CEO Raghuram Iyer told PTI.

The decisions were taken during the IOA (Indian Olympic Association) Executive Council meeting held on January 8 and were unani-

mously endorsed by the IOA General House at its Annual General Meeting on January 9. Both the meetings were held in Ahmedabad.

"The initiatives reflect the IOA's renewed focus on athlete-centric development, Olympic education, and institutional capacity building, aligned with global best practices,"

the IOA stated.

"The National Olympic Education and Development Programme (NOEDP) has been conceived as a comprehensive national framework to deliver structured education and development programmes across the Olympic ecosystem," it added.

The programme will be implemented in collaboration with National Sports Federations (NSFs) and State Olympic Associations (SOAs) to ensure wide outreach and grassroots-to-elite impact.

Key focus areas of NOEDP include: Olympic values education and ethics, holistic athlete development, welfare, and career transition support, capacity building of coaches, officials, administrators, and support personnel, and Strengthening governance among others.

"...professionalism within sports bodies, and long-term athlete development models aligned with international standards" will also be a part of the module.

"As a cornerstone of this initiative, the National Olympic Academy (NOA) has been reactivated to function as the central institution

for Olympic education, learning, research, and dialogue in India," the IOA stated.

Beyond its academic and institutional role, the NOA will work closely and directly with athletes, supporting their educational needs, personal development, leadership skills, and understanding of the Olympic movement alongside their sporting careers.

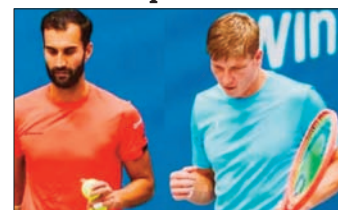
Under Usha and Narang, the National Olympic Academy will "collaborate" closely with the International Olympic Academy in Olympia, to "align India's Olympic education programmes with the Olympic Charter and international best practices."

This collaboration will facilitate exchange of knowledge, joint programmes,

research initiatives, and participation in global Olympic education forums.

"...the reactivation of the NOA mark an important milestone in creating a values-driven, athlete-focused, and future-ready Olympic ecosystem in India -- one that integrates education, excellence, and ethical governance at every level," the body stated. (PTI)

Bhambri-Goransson ease into ASB Classic quarterfinals



AUCKLAND, Jan 12: Top seeds Yuki Bhambri and Andre Goransson made a confident start to their campaign at the ASB Classic, cruising into the men's doubles quarterfinals with a straight-sets win on Monday. Bhambri and Goransson defeated wild card pairing Ajeet Rai and Jean-Julien Rojer 6-3 6-2 in a first-round match, displaying sharp coordination and control throughout the contest.

The Indo-Swedish duo dominated on serve and capitalised on key break opportunities to wrap up the match in just over an hour, underlining their strong form in the lead-up to the Australian Open.

The top seeds saved three of the four breakpoints they faced in the contest and broke their rivals four times. The ASB Classic is part of the build-up to the season's first Grand Slam, with players using the Auckland tournament to fine-tune their preparations ahead of the Australian Open. (PTI)

Endrick scores in Lyon debut in French Cup win at Lille

PARIS, Jan 12: Brazil forward Endrick scored in his club debut as Lyon won 2-1 at Lille to reach the last 16 of the French Cup.

The 19-year-old Endrick is on loan from Real Madrid. He surged at the right post to neatly guide the ball in after Corentin Tolisso as-tutely flicked on a left-wing cross in the 42nd minute.

Portuguese forward Afonso Moreira put Lyon ahead in the first minute and, after defender Nathan Ngoy equalized for Lille in the 28th, it was Moreira's cross which led to Endrick's goal.

Endrick played only three games for Madrid this season under new coach Xabi Alonso. He was encouraged to look elsewhere by former Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, who is now Endrick's coach with Brazil.

Under Ancelotti last season, Endrick scored seven goals in 37 games for Madrid and caught the eye with his speed, dribbling ability and spectacular finishing.

Endrick scored three goals for Brazil last year. He started his career at São Paulo-based Palmeiras and his performances there earned a "dream" move to Madrid.

In other last-32 matches: Ligue 1 leader Lens won 3-0 at Sochaux; Nice won on penalties at Nantes in an all-French division game; and top-flight Rennes rallied to win 3-1 at fourth-tier Chantilly. Second-tier Montpellier, which was relegated last season, won 4-0 at Metz, which is last in Ligue 1.

Defending champion Paris Saint-Germain hosts new capital city rival Paris FC on Monday and Marseille is at minnow Bayeux on Tuesday. (AP)

High hopes, tricky draws await home shuttlers at India Open Super 750

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: India's top shuttlers, including P V Sindhu and Lakshya Sen, will look to convert recent form into results on home courts when the USD 950,000 India Open Super 750 begins here on Tuesday.

Indian players, however, have struggled to fully capitalise on home advantage, with only a handful lifting the title in the last 15 years.

The draw once again will throw up early challenges for the home contingent, including a marquee all-Indian men's singles opener between Lakshya Sen and Ayush Shetty, while Sindhu begins against Vietnam's Nguyen Thy Linh.

Sindhu, a 2017 champion, comes into the Delhi leg on the back of a confidence-boosting run at the Malaysia Open Super 1000, where she reached the semifinals before losing to China's Wang Zhiyi.

The tournament, to be held at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, marked a timely lift for the two-time Olympic medalist after an injury-interrupted phase.

Sen, a 2022 India Open champion, has also had a volatile start to the season narrative. He ended 2025 by winning the Australian Open Super 500 and then suffered a setback at the Malaysia Open.

Ayush, on the other hand, announced himself in 2025 by winning the US Open Super 300 and has beaten the likes of Kodai Naraoka, Loh Kean Yew, Chou Tien Chen and Brian Yang.

Last week, the 20-year-old from Karnataka, a bronze medalist at the 2023 World Junior Championships, upset Paris bronze medalist Malaysia's Lee Zii Jia in the first round.

At Kuala Lumpur, Lakshya had lost to Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu, who now awaits H.S. Prannoy in the India Open first round.

A 2015 winner, Kidambi Srikanth, who reached the finals of Malaysia Masters super 500 and Syed Modi International in



2025, has been drawn against Chinese Taipei's Lin Chun-Yi.

In women's singles, apart from Sindhu, India will bank on Malvika Bansod, who faces Chinese Taipei's Pai Yu Po, while a cluster of young Indians will look to use the home conditions to push into the deeper rounds.

India's best podium hopes again hinge significantly on men's doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty.

They have reached two finals in the last four editions, winning the crown in 2022.

The Indian duo finished runners-up at Hong Kong Open and China Masters, won a second world championships bronze and also reached the knockout stage of World Tour Finals last year.

However, Satwik and Chirag ended campaign at Malaysia Open in the quarterfinals and they will look to make amends when they open against Chen Zhi Yi and Presley Smith.

In the women's doubles, the top Indian pair Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand Pullela will meet Thailand's Ormicha Jongsathapornpan and Sukitta Suwachai.

Treasa and Gayatri arrive with momentum after defending their title at the Syed Modi International Super 300 in Lucknow last month.

The tournament also offers exposure to India's next rung of doubles combinations.

Priya Konjengbam and Shruti Mishra face Hong Kong's Lui

Lok Lok and Tsang Hiu Yan, while Rutaparna Panda and Swetaparna Panda take on Japan's Nanako Hara and Riko Kiyose.

In another women's doubles tie, Kavipriya Selvam and Simran Singh run into second seeds Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan of Malaysia.

Mixed doubles presents its own set of tests.

Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto face Thailand's Pakkapon Teeraratkul and Sapsiree Taerattanachai, while Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadge open against Germany's Marvin Seidel and Thuc Phuong Nguyen.

Another Indian pair, Dhruv Rawat and Maneesha K, take on Japan's Hiroki Midorikawa and Nami Matsuyama, and Ashith Surya and Amrutha Pramuthesh face Japan's Yuichi Shimogami and Sayaka Hobara.

Kapila and Crasto will particularly look for a sharper showing after a Malaysia Open first-round exit, and the India Open becomes a key opportunity to build rhythm ahead of a hectic season.

Saina Nehwal, Sindhu, Srikanth, Satwik and Chirag and Lakshya have won the title in the past 15 years, while mixed par of Jwala Gutta and V Diju claimed the title when it was a grand prix gold event.

With the event moving to a larger arena that will also host the BWF World Championships in August, Indian shuttlers will aim to acclimatise quickly and turn familiarity into silverware. (PTI)

Bayern demolishes Wolfsburg 8-1 to go 11 points clear in Bundesliga

MUNICH, Jan 12: Michael Olise scored twice as Bayern Munich started the new year by routing Wolfsburg 8-1 with six second-half goals to move 11 points clear at the top of the Bundesliga.

Olise, Harry Kane and Luis Diaz picked apart the Wolfsburg defense on Sunday in a display of dominance which leaves Bayern firmly on course to defend the title in only the 16th game of the 34-game season.

Bayern coach Vincent Kompany was pleased his players didn't let up.

"It's these moments where it's five, six, 7-1, and they keep running, they keep pressing and keep trying to score goals," he told broadcaster DAZN. "I have to say, I like that."

In freezing temperatures for Bayern's first game since the winter break, Olise got a brace and Kane and Diaz one apiece, along with goals for substitutes Raphael Guerreiro and Leon Goretzka, and two Wolfsburg own-goals.

Bayern only had two nervous moments all game. The first was Dzenan Pejcinovic's goal for Wolfsburg in the 13th, which leveled the score at 1-1 after right back Konrad Laimer missed an interception.

In a largely one-man show, Shams Mulani struck an impressive 86 to hold the Mumbai innings together after a top-order collapse.

Mumbai were tottering at 60/4 in 17.2 overs before Mulani and skipper Siddhesh Lad (38 off 58 balls; 4x4) added 76 runs for the sixth wicket.

After Lad's dismissal, Shedge and Kottian fell in quick succession, but Mulani held firm, scoring 86 from 91 balls with eight boundaries.

Mulani took 68 balls to reach his fifty, but stepped up in the death after getting support from Sairaj Patil (33 not out off 25 balls; 5x4, 1x6), as Mumbai smashed 59 runs in the last five overs.

Patil's late assault gave the Mumbai bowlers something to defend.

Mulani was trapped lbw by Abhilash Shetty in the final over, ending his determined knock.

For Karnataka, Vidyadhar Patil returned 3/42, while Abhilash

Padikkal, Nair power Karnataka into fourth straight Hazare semis

Patil's late assault gave the Mumbai bowlers something to defend



BENGALURU, Jan 12: Defending champions Karnataka stormed into their fourth successive Vijay Hazare Trophy semifinals with a thumping 54-run victory over Mumbai via the VJD method here on Monday.

With the tournament's leading run-getter Devdutt Padikkal (81 not out; 95 balls, 11x4) and veteran India batter Karun Nair (74 not out; 80 balls, 11x4) unbeaten, Karnataka were cruising at 187 for 1 in 33 overs while chasing a modest 255 when rain stopped play.

The VJD par score at that stage was 132, and with Karnataka 55 runs ahead they were declared winners.

Earlier, heavyweights Mumbai, already without pacer Tushar Deshpande due to personal reasons, suffered a major blow when top batter Sarfaraz Khan (303 runs at 75.75) was ruled out after being struck on the finger during net practice.

In his absence, Mumbai managed only 254 for 8 after Karnataka skipper Mayank Agarwal opted to bowl at the BCCI Centre of Excellence Ground 1.

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Mulani was trapped lbw by Abhilash Shetty in the final over, ending his determined knock.

For Karnataka, Vidyadhar Patil returned 3/42, while Abhilash

Shetty and Vidwath Kaverappa picked up two wickets each.

In reply, Agarwal and Padikkal began cautiously before Karnataka lost their skipper inside the powerplay.

Agarwal, Karnataka's second-highest run-getter this season with two centuries and two fifties, edged Mohit Avasthi to slip for 12 off 24 balls.

Mumbai's cause was further hurt by sloppy fielding, as the in-form Padikkal was given two reprieves.

Avasthi induced a thick outside edge from Padikkal that flew to Raghuvanshi at first slip, but the chance was wasted.

Earlier, on 24, Onkar Tarmale spilled a straightforward chance running in from deep fine leg.

Padikkal made Mumbai pay for those mistakes on the field.

The tall left-hander, who now has 715 runs from eight innings with four hundreds and two fifties at an average of 102.14 this season, went on the offensive, pulling Sairaj Patil over midwicket and then flicking him through the same region.

From thereon, there was no stopping Karnataka as Padikkal and Nair added 143 runs off 150 balls for the second wicket.

Nair, who had endured a lean run with scores of 0, 14 and 10 in his previous three innings, returned to form with a fluent 44-ball fifty - his third of the tournament and 16th in List A cricket.

He looked in complete control, whether in defence or attack, and dissected the field with ease.

Mumbai tried as many as seven bowlers, but apart from Avasthi's early strike, none could make any impact.

Karnataka had earlier topped Elite Group 'A' with six wins from seven matches.

Brief Scores

Mumbai: 254/8; 50 overs (Shams Mulani 86; Vidyadhar Patil 3/42, Vidwath Kaverappa 2/43, Abhilash Shetty 2/59) lost to Karnataka 187/1; 33 overs (Devdutt Padikkal 81 not out, Karun Nair 74 not out) by 54 runs via VJD method. (PTI)

ISPL creating pathway from 'amateur' cricket to professional game: League Commissioner Samat

SURAT, Jan 12: Success stories like those of Abhishek Kumar Dalhor and Irfan Umair highlight the Indian Street Premier League's (ISPL) growing role as a pathway between amateur cricket and the professional game, says league commissioner Suraj Samat.

Dalhor earned a stint as a net bowler with IPL side Kolkata Knight Riders last year on the back of his performances in the ISPL. Left-arm pacer Irfan Umair, who represented Falcon Risers Hyderabad, made his Ranji Trophy debut for Mumbai in 2025.

"Every sport today has an amateur side and a professional side. In cricket, which is almost a religion in our country, there is no amateur side as yet today," Samat told PTI.

"We have just given an organised platform to this sector so that these boys who lose hope while they are reaching to where they want to reach in cricket get an opportunity and showcase their talent."

Samat said the league allows players to earn a livelihood while also opening pathways to the state teams

and the IPL.

"They can make money and, at the same time, use their talent to move to more professional sides. If you look at Irfan Umair, who has now been selected in the Mumbai Ranji team, or Abhishek Dalhor, who was picked as a net bowler by KKR, these are stories that are only beginning to come out," he added.

The league is backed by a strong leadership group, with batting legend Sachin Tendulkar, Maharashtra minister Ashish Shelar and Samat serving as core committee members.

"ISPL is a platform for the country and for the people of this country. This is an opportunity for each and every boy to showcase his ability. This is all what we want to showcase through this platform that we have created."

From six teams in the first two years, the league has expanded to eight sides from the ongoing third season.

"This new season we have come to Surat now. This



is a new city for us. And just like our tagline, it's three times bigger. We have got two more new teams, which is Ahmedabad Lions of Ajay Devgn and Delhi Superheroes of Salman Khan ji."

"With the two teams added, the number of players have been increased. Now there are 18 players in each team. We have also increased the number of rules for making more interesting content for the children to showcase their talent."

Apart from a prize pool of Rs 5.92 crore, ISPL Season 3 will also recognise individual excellence with the Most Valuable Player of the season winning a brand-new Porsche 911.

"It is not anything else but it is a way of giving them aspirational hope that if you perform, if you are good, nobody can stop you."

Samat said the ultimate aim is to expand to 32 teams.

"And our idea is that more children come together. In the coming times, we want to increase the number of teams. 32 teams is eventually our goal, one scheme for every state and every child gets his due. And if he is good, he should have that platform to perform." (PTI)

Satwik-Chirag banking on India Open to revive title-winning run

'I dropped to number 27 in the world and still managed to finish the year at number 3'

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: The Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty on Monday said "one breakthrough title" can reignite a strong run as they look to revive their glory days at the USD 950,000 India Open Super 750.

Despite finishing runners-up at the Hong Kong Open and China Masters, and winning a bronze at the World Championships, and qualifying for the knockout stage of the World Tour Finals last year, Chirag admitted the season felt underwhelming by their own lofty standards.

"From the outside it might seem like it wasn't the best year, especially since we didn't end up winning a title. I think we've set our expectations so high that for us anything less than a title feels below the mark," Chirag told PTI.

The pair, used to winning at least one title every season over the last few years,

had to navigate significant physical and personal challenges, particularly Chirag's long-standing back issue.

"We went through some really tough times, both personally and physically. I was dealing with a back injury, and I honestly didn't know how long it would take to get back. I did everything possible to return to the court, but it took much longer than expected," he said.

Chirag highlighted how perspective can often get lost in elite sport.

"I dropped to number 27 in the world and still managed to finish the year at number 3. When I was injured, if someone had told me I'd end the year ranked third, I would've taken it without hesitation.

"But once we actually finished at number 3, my first thought was still that I didn't win a title. That's just how an athlete's mind works. It's never satisfied," he said, adding that in hindsight it was "a really good year."



Another title is just a matter of time, want to emulate 2022 run

Satwik and Chirag have a strong history at the India Open, having reached the final twice in the last four editions and winning the title in 2022. That triumph proved to be a turning point, triggering a remarkable run that included the Thomas Cup title and gold at the Commonwealth Games.

Recalling the unusual build-up to the

2022 event amid COVID restrictions, Satwik said the win transformed everything.

"Winning a tournament changes a lot of things. Just winning, no matter what, small or big. That tournament gave a lot of confidence," Satwik said.

"We are looking for that one win where we get that confidence and play our A game. It's just a matter of time. We've won many titles before, so I wouldn't call it a

mental block. All we can do is keep finding ways to improve and address our shortcomings."

Chirag echoed the sentiment, calling the 2022 India Open a defining moment.

"We beat (Mohammad) Ahsan and (Hendra) Setiawan in the finals. That was a big win. That just kept the ball rolling. It completely changed the year for us. That 2022 India Open win was definitely very special. I hope we emulate that," he said.

Focus is on service receiving during training

The pair said they have doubled down on sharpening their service-and-return game, an area they believe can decide matches at the highest level.

"I think it's an ongoing process. You can never be perfect, but we place a lot of emphasis on service and receiving because if you are good in those first two or three strokes, you end up winning most of the rallies, if not all of them," Chirag said.

"I think every other men's doubles pair would agree that you need to be strong in those first two or three strokes, whether you're serving or receiving. You can't be at 100% every time, but you're always looking for areas where

you can get better."

It has been a year since the Indian duo reunited with Malaysian coach Tan Kim Her, who is credited with bringing them together, following the departure of Denmark's Mathias Boe after the Paris Olympics.

"It was tough at the start because we were used to play a more European style. With Tan, it's very different, the mindset, the planning, everything," Satwik said, explaining how longer, sustained training sessions initially took time to adapt to.

The duo now enjoy a more collaborative relationship with Tan, blending what worked under Boe with new ideas, particularly service and return.

Looking ahead, Chirag acknowledged that Korea's world number one pair Kim Won Ho and Seo Seung Jae, winners of 11 titles last year, remain the benchmark.

"They don't give away points easily. To beat them, you have to be at your absolute A-game and very patient," Chirag said.

"We've played them twice and both matches were very close. We're confident we can change that with the right ideas and game plan.

"And yeah, we'd definitely love to play against them again soon," he added. (PTI)

ICC becomes unnecessary if it cannot enforce decisions on India: Saeed Ajmal



KARACHI, Jan 12: Former Pakistan off-spinner Saeed Ajmal says the International Cricket Council (ICC) would become "unnecessary" if it fails to deal with the current "dominance" of the Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) in its functioning.

Speaking to the media at a function here, Ajmal said that if the ICC cannot take "unbiased and principled decisions in the overall interest of world cricket", it should shut down its operations.

"If the ICC can't enforce its decisions on the Indian board then its very existence is unnecessary," he said.

Ajmal asserted that a majority of Test-playing nations agreed with this sentiment but would not go public with their stance.

He said the ICC agreeing to India's refusal to play in Pakistan even in global competitions is a prime example of the world body's "helplessness".

"There is no logical reason for India not to play in Pakistan but the ICC is helpless because it is dominated by Indians now," he alleged.

India's refusal to travel to Pakistan is rooted in security concerns and the Indian government's refusal to approve bilateral sport between the two countries.

As a result, India-Pakistan cricket, which has been limited to ICC white-ball events, is being conducted only on neutral venues.

Last year, the India-Pakistan bilateral ties hit rock bottom after the Pahalgaon terror attack which was followed by a brief military showdown. The ICC is currently led by former BCCI secretary Jay Shah. (PTI)

Active sportspersons not eligible: Ministry

Ministry notifies NSG Act rules, lays down criteria for SOM, maintains election ban on convicted people

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: The Sports Ministry on Monday notified the rules that would govern the implementation of the National Sports Governance Act, unveiling a tiered eligibility criteria for the inclusion of Sportspersons of Merit (SOM) in national federations and reiterating the ban on convicted people from the election process.

The Act was partially implemented on January 1 and the National Sports Federations have been given six months to amend their bylaws to make them compliant with the new law. They have also been allowed to delay any pending election process till the end of this year for a smooth transition. The ministry mandates at least four SOM, two of them women, in the General Bodies of national sports bodies.

Athletes who have won at least one of any gold, silver or bronze medal in the Summer Olympic Games or Winter Olympic Games have been placed in Tier I.

Tier II is for those who have participated in two or more editions of the Olympics or the Winter Olympics. Tier III would be for applicants who have participated in at least one edition of the Olympics or Winter Olympics.

Winners of Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award or an Arjuna Award are in Tier IV, while Tier V is for applicants who have won at least a gold, silver or bronze medal or equivalent placing, in a World Championship or "equivalent competition". There are a total of 10 tiers in descending order of achievements.

With the implementation of the Act notified, a three-member National Sports Board, from which the NSFs will have to seek affiliation for grant of government funds, will take shape in the days to come. A five-member search-cum-selection headed by the Cabinet Secretary will assess candidates.

Convicted people barred
Persons convicted of any offence by a court of law will continue to be barred from contesting elections to the Executive Committee and the Athletes Commission of national federations.

"A person shall be disqualified from being a member of the General Body, or of any committee of a National Sports Body, and shall not be eligible for contesting for election to the Executive Committee or the Athletes Committee, if such person is- (a) declared insolvent under applicable law; or (b) subject to a conviction by a court of competent jurisdiction in India for an offence, followed by a sentence of imprisonment..." the rules stated.



The sportspersons applying to be designated as SOMs should not be less than 25 years of age and must have retired from active sports.

"They should have not participated in any competitive sport event which leads to selection to represent a district, State or India for at least one year prior to the date of application," the ministry stated.

"The Tiered criteria has been kept broad enough to meet requirements of different sports disciplines," it added.

National Sports Election Panel
The rules provide that the roster of the National Sports Election Panel must have at least 20 members at all times.

"The fee of the electoral officer, selected from the Election Panel, will be decided by the National Sports Body on the basis of mutual agreement with the Electoral Officer, subject to a maximum amount of Rs five lakh," it stated.

The rules authorise the central government, on receipt of the application from a National Sports Body, to relax the provisions of the rules for a period of 12 months. The reasons must be recorded in writing for any waiver. (PTI)

My career can end today or tomorrow but I am enjoying the grind again: Prannoy

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: HS Prannoy has rediscovered the joy in daily grind after a forgettable second half of the "toxic" 2025 season but the veteran Indian shuttler is unsure if he will be able to extend his career much.

Prannoy, 33, endured a tough 2025 season, in which he competed in 19 tournaments and not even once managed to go beyond the second round.

"I don't even know what's going to happen after three months. Asian Games, World Championship, all these things are way too far for me to go," Prannoy told PTI Videos on the sidelines of the India Open 2026 press conference here.

"The important thing is to focus on what is in my hand right now and just enjoy what I can do rather than cribbing on how I'm not able to play on the top level." In the twilight of his career, Prannoy said finding happiness in competing has become central to his outlook.

"I'm still here, still able to play against somebody who is 14 years younger to me and give tough competition, I should be able to find happiness in it," Prannoy said.

Asked about the World Championships later this year in India, Prannoy remained non-committal.

"I don't know. To be honest, I'm a little far behind right now but things just change in sport very,



very quickly. So, hopefully, I will be here chatting with you again during the World Championships," he said. Reflecting on a difficult 2025, Prannoy admitted inconsistent results and circumstances affected his mindset.

"Last year was a little bit toxic to me in that way. Couldn't really get going in a lot of tournaments. Had a lot of good matches, but couldn't finish a lot of good matches. But more than that, I was not really enjoying playing in the second part of 2025," he said.

Despite early exits across several BWF Tour events last season, Prannoy showed resilience even as injuries and fitness issues hampered his momentum.

He said rediscovering enjoyment in training has helped him reconnect with the sport ahead of the

India Open.

"The important thing was to find that enjoyment in playing and training and enjoying the grind as such. I think probably last few weeks were good in that way, and so really looking forward to the next few weeks of badminton.

"The one thing is to always get something which you have not achieved. And I think I have not achieved a lot of things in badminton as such. So the drive is to always be better and find a better result when you're able to play.

"I know that playing career is very short and probably can end today or tomorrow, but the important thing is how committed you are when you are playing. Because I don't want to regret myself saying that I could have done that when I stopped playing." (PTI)

Hasaranga and Shanaka star in Sri Lanka's series-leveling T20 win against Pakistan



DAMBULLA (SRI LANKA), Jan 12: Sri Lanka ended a 14-year drought by beating Pakistan (28) in a Twenty20 game at home to draw their three-match series 1-1.

The hosts won the third T20 by 14 runs on Sunday. In a rain-reduced match, Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka smashed five sixes in 34 runs off nine balls that propelled Sri Lanka to a strong 160-6 in its allotted 12 overs after Pakistan won the toss and chose to bowl.

Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha matched his counterpart with a blistering 45 off just 12 balls before Sri Lanka fast bowlers Matheesha Pathirana (2-34) and Eshan Malinga (1-27) bowled two tidy overs at the end and restricted the visitors to 146-8.

Pakistan won the first T20 by six wickets before the second game was washed out without a ball being bowled in Dambulla.

The series was part of both teams' preparations for next month's T20 World Cup to be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka. Pakistan is due to play all its World Cup games in Sri Lanka.

Agha had slashed the target to 101 inside the first four overs of Pakistan's lively chase when he smacked three sixes and five fours. But Pathirana provided a crucial breakthrough when Agha holed out to short fine leg while attempting a ramp shot against the pacer.

Key wrist-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga (4-35) then picked up two wickets in his first five deliveries — Saim Ayub and Usman Khan were caught in the out-

field as Pakistan slipped to 67-4. Mohammad Nawaz (28) and debutant wicketkeeper-batter Khawaja Nafay (26) revived the chase with a breezy 49-run stand before Hasaranga grabbed two more wickets in his final over.

With 30 needed off the final two overs, Pathirana clean bowled Nawaz with a slower delivery in the penultimate over which went for 10 runs. Malinga's final over conceded just five runs, including four wides.

It was Sri Lanka's first T20 win against Pakistan at home since 2012.

Sri Lanka's late flurry
Sri Lanka's top-order batters earlier kept scoring at a rapid pace in challenging conditions for the bowlers, who had to bowl with the wet ball due to soggy outfield. Opener Kamil Mishara scored 20 off 8 balls; Kusal Mendis capitalized on a dropped catch with a knock of 30 off 16; and former white-ball captain Charith Asalanka scored 21 off 13.

Shanaka and Janith Liyanage (22 not out off 8 balls) provided the late flurry as Sri Lanka scored 58 runs in the final three overs - 19 runs in the 10th over, 15 in the 11th and 24 in the 12th.

Shanaka stayed deep in his crease and smacked Wasim for three successive sixes in the last over.

Pakistan will play a three-match T20 series against Australia at home before the T20 World Cup begins Feb. 7 while Sri Lanka hosts England in a white-ball series later this month. (AP)

Kohli walks the talk: Shreyas Iyer

24-year-old (Iyer) says that he is working on his batting to contribute more at No 8

VADODARA, Jan 12: India vice-captain Shreyas Iyer lavished praise on Virat Kohli, saying the batting great has been "walking the talk" for years, the latest being his masterclass in a successful run chase against New Zealand in the ODI series opener.

Kohli struck a fluent 93 off 91 balls as India chased down a target of 301 to register a four-wicket win and take a 1-0 lead in the three-match rubber here on Sunday.

During the innings, Kohli also became the fastest player to reach 28,000 international runs across formats and the second-highest run-scorer in international cricket, behind Sachin Tendulkar.

"Whatever we talk about his innings, it would be less. We have been seeing it for so many years now he's been doing it consistently. The way he rotates the strike and he takes on the bowlers, he basically walks the talk," Iyer said in a video posted by BCCI.

Iyer, who returned to international action after a long injury lay-off following a spleen laceration



with internal bleeding sustained during the third ODI against Australia in Sydney in October last year, said he was delighted to begin the series on a winning note.

"Great start to the series. Coming back after a while into the team, it feels great to be a part of this squad. More than that, it was a great feeling to share the dressing

room with each and every one. I was missing it for quite a while, but I am happy to be back," Iyer said.

Fast bowler Harshit Rana made an impact with the ball, dismissing openers Devon Conway and Henry Nicholls, before chipping in with a handy 29 off 23 balls down the order.

"The first wicket I took was of Nicholls. While I was planning to bowl wide to him but I hadn't thought of a wide yorker but it landed right. The other wicket was of Devon Conway and it felt great to scalp two wickets in two back-to-back overs," said Rana.

The 24-year-old added that he is working on his batting to contribute more at No. 8.

"The credit for my batting goes to my father because he always used to think that all-rounders get early chances for playing in the Indian team. I am developing my game in such a manner that I can contribute with 30-40 runs for the team, coming at number 8," Rana added. (PTI)