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Four accused in Zubeen Garg's death case file bail pleas

● Govt lawyer opposes bail pleas ● Next hearing on January 17

Garima demands strong prosecution team

GUWAHATI, Jan 3: Four accused in singer Zubeen Garg's death case filed bail petitions before the court on Saturday.

The Kamrup (Metro) District and Sessions Court, which is hearing the case, fixed January 17 as the next date of hearing when the bail objection by the public prosecutor will be filed.

The bail pleas were moved by Garg's band member Amritprava Mahanta, his cousin Sandipan Garg, a police officer, and his two personal security officers (PSOs), Nandeswar Bora and Prabin Baishya.

The singer-composer-actor had died on September 19 while swimming in the sea in Singapore, where he had gone to attend the Northeast Festival.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the CID, which is probing the case, has charged festival organiser Shyamkanu

Mahanta, the singer's secretary Siddhartha Sharma and his two band members, Shekharjyoti Goswami and Amritprava, with murder, and his cousin, who was accompanying him, with culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

The two PSOs were charged with criminal conspiracy and criminal breach of trust by misappropriation of funds or property entrusted to them.

Guwahati Bar Association's general secretary Apurba Kumar Sharma said Mahanta's lawyer moved her bail petition, while the lawyers appointed by the District Legal Services Authority filed the pleas on behalf of Garg's cousin and the two PSOs.

"The government lawyer Bhupendra Bhattacharya strongly opposed the pleas and said that he will file an objection,"

Sharma added. He said the festival organiser's team of lawyers from Kolkata appeared physically in the court but did not submit any bail plea.

"Siddhartha Sharma's advocate appeared virtually before the court and sought time for hearing on framing of charges as the charge sheet is a voluminous one," he added.

The charge sheet runs to 2,500 pages, while documentary evidence submitted to the court, both in material and digital formats, is over 12,000 pages, according to the CID.

It was not known whether Goswami, the other band member, had hired any lawyer or was represented by the DLSA-appointed advocate.

Garg's wife, Garima, who was present at the hearing, urged the government to expedite the appointment of a special

public prosecutor.

"The accused have built a strong legal team, as we can see. We also have to form our own strong team. The chief minister has said that a special prosecution team will be formed, and I request him to do so at the earliest," she said.

She said senior lawyers with expertise on the matter and who enjoy the confidence of the people should be appointed.

Garima also requested fast-tracking the trial process, as there are nearly 400 witnesses in the case, and it "would take decades for progress to be made in routine hearings".

"We have faith in our legal system, and we will fight for justice for Zubeen within its ambit," she said. The first hearing of the case after the SIT submitted the charge sheet was held on December 16 at the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



US forces capture Maduro, his wife KKR releases Mustafizur Rahman after BCCI directive

America hits Venezuela with a 'large-scale strike'

CARACAS, Jan 3: The United States hit Venezuela with a "large-scale strike" early Saturday and said President Nicolas Maduro and his wife were captured and flown out of the country after months of stepped-up pressure by Washington — an extraordinary nighttime operation announced by President Donald Trump on social media hours after the attack.

The legal authority for the strike — and whether Trump consulted Congress beforehand — was not immediately clear.

The stunning, lightning-fast American military action, which plucked a nation's sitting leader from office, echoed the US invasion of Panama that led to the surrender and seizure of its leader, Manuel Antonio Noriega, in 1990 — exactly 36 years ago Saturday.

US Attorney General Pam Bondi said Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, would face charges after an indictment in New York.

Trump announced the develop-



ments on Truth Social shortly after 4.30 am ET (0930 GMT) and said he would host a news conference at 11 am ET (1600 GMT).

In South Florida, Venezuelans celebrated the news of Maduro's capture at a rally held outside a South American eatery.

People wrapped themselves in Venezuelan flags, ate fried snacks and cheered as music was playing at the event. At one point, the crowd chanted "Liberty! Liberty! Liberty!"

The rally took place in Dorale, Florida, a city of 80,000 people surrounded by Miami sprawl and home to the largest Venezuelan community in the United States.

European leaders react to Maduro's capture by the US: EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas wrote on X that she had spoken with (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

GUWAHATI, Jan 3: Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman has been released by IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders after being instructed to do so by the Indian Cricket Board (BCCI) amid heightening diplomatic tensions between the two neighbouring countries.

KKR had acquired the services of the 30-year-old left-arm fast bowler for Rs 9.20 crore from a base price of Rs 2 crore after an intense bidding war with Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals at the players' auction last month.

The BCCI said KKR will be allowed to name a replacement player if required for the event scheduled to start on March 26.

"The BCCI has asked Kolkata Knight Riders to release Mustafizur Rahman from its squad. They can ask for replacement, if needed. And upon request, BCCI will allow a replacement player," BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI here on Saturday.

Asked why the BCCI has asked Kolkata Knight Riders to do so, he replied, "Because of recent developments all across."

In a statement, the franchise said it has released the player as instructed by the BCCI.

"Kolkata Knight Riders confirms that BCCI/IPL as the regulator of IPL has instructed it to release Mustafizur Rahman from the squad ahead of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season.

"The release has been carried out following



due process and consultations, upon the instruction of the Board of Control of Cricket in India," KKR said in a statement.

The pressure had been mounting on the BCCI over Rahman's participation after recent killing of a Hindu man in the country and India's expression of concern for the safety of minorities there. The criticism has also extended to KKR co-owner and Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan with some politicians from the ruling BJP questioning the call to include the bowler in the current scenario.

Rahman has featured in eight IPL editions since 2016, missing the tournament only in 2019 and 2020. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Hindu trader dies 3 days after attack in B'desh

DHAKA/NEW DELHI, Jan 3: A Hindu businessman, who was brutally attacked, hacked and set on fire three days ago, died on Saturday in Bangladesh, reports and a minority faith group leader said.

This is the fifth death of a person from Hindu community since December and radical groups in Bangladesh are visibly trying to intimidate the minority faiths, Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council spokesman Kajol Debnath said.

Khokon Chandra Das, 50, was assaulted near Keurbhanga Bazar in Damudya in Shariatpur district, about 100 kilometres south of Dhaka, on Wednesday night while returning home after closing his shop.

"Das died this morning after battling for life for three days," Debnath confirmed.

Das, who ran a medicine shop and mobile banking business, was travelling in an autorickshaw (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CCTOA panel rejects GoM report on ST status

HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, Jan 3: A meeting of the Consultative Group constituted by the Coordination Committee of Tribal Organisations of Assam (CCTOA) to examine and suggest on the report of the Group of Ministers (GoM) regarding the scheduling of six communities into the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list of Assam was held at the Tribal Rest House in Guwahati on Friday.

The meeting was chaired by Suhas

Chakma, Chairman of the Consultative Group, and was attended by members Jiten Borgohary, Prafullo Kumar Hazowary, Kulaswami Laluwary, Sabda Ram Rabha, Tankeswar Rabha, Chief Executive Member of the Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council, along with leaders of the CCTOA.

After detailed deliberations, the Consultative Group unanimously decided to reject the recommendations of the Group of Min-

isters, which were submitted on the floor of the Assam Legislative Assembly on November 29 last.

The members expressed serious concern over the findings and recommendations of the GoM report, stating that they did not adequately address the interests and safeguards of existing tribal communities in the state. The Consultative Group and CCTOA leaders resolved to convey their decision to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Social harmony intrinsic to Indian society: Bhagwat

BHOPAL, Jan 3: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Saturday that social harmony was intrinsic to Indian society, stressing the need for sustained dialogue and collective efforts to strengthen it.

He was addressing a social harmony meeting at Kushabhau Thakre Auditorium in Bhopal.

Attempts are being made to create

divisions by spreading confusion among tribal and other communities, even though people living in the sub-continent for thousands of years share the same DNA, the Sangh said in a release, quoting Bhagwat.

The RSS chief underlined the need for continuous engagement and mutual understanding, and said the strong must support the weak, it added. He said that while laws can (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



'Empathy in the legal system distinguished a just society from an unjust one'

Bend arc of justice towards communities that need it most: CJI

PATNA, Jan 3: Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Saturday asserted that "empathy" in the legal system distinguished "a just society from an unjust one", and underscored the need to "bend the arc of justice towards the communities that need it the most".

The CJI made the remarks while addressing a convocation ceremony at the Chanakya National Law University in Patna, where he reminded young lawyers that "intensity" in pursuit of their careers must not lead to "erasure" of finer sensibilities.

"Many young lawyers believe that success requires total surrender to work, to guidelines and to expectations, and for a while, intensity is inevitable, but it must not become erasure. If the law occupies every corner of your life, you risk losing the very empathy and judgment that justice requires," the CJI said. This very empathy in our



legal system is what distinguishes a just society from an unjust one, he observed.

"As you leave this university, remember that the law is not just for those who can afford it, but for anyone who is in dire need of it. You carry a solemn duty to use

"Whether you choose litigation or public service, academia, judicial service or any other path... Never lose sight of the fact that law draws its legitimacy from the people it protects. When you use your skills to give voice to the unheard, voiceless, and you also give dignity to those who have been overlooked, you will be honouring not only your own education but the constitutional promise that underpins it," he added.

Paying rich tributes to the history of Bihar, the CJI said this land, the cradle of great thinkers of logic and jurisprudence, has long been a meeting point of ethics, reason and justice. From the compassion of Buddha, to the moral clarity of Mahavira, from Dr Rajendra Prasad's humble dedication to Sachchidanand Sinha's service or Jaiprakash Narayan's Sampoorna Kranti, Bihar has shaped ideas that speak not (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Heritage tourism to be promoted: Dy CM

'Hump Museum keeps World War II legacy alive in Arunachal'



ITANAGAR, Jan 3: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Saturday said the state government is committed to promote heritage tourism, including developing World War II war

sites and trekking routes to aircraft crash locations across the north-eastern state.

Highlighting key initiatives, Mein said that as part of the upcoming International Pangsau Pass Winter Festival, the state will observe 80 years of World War II with a special Willy Jeep Rally from Pasighat to Pangsau Pass.

"New museums and tourism projects are being taken up to honour the sacrifices made during the war and to keep this important chapter of history alive for future generations," Mein said in a social media post. The deputy chief minister made these remarks during his visit to the Hump World War II Museum at Pasighat, accompanied by former chief minister Mukut Mithi and other MLAs.

Mein commended Mebo MLA Oken Tayeng for his visionary initiative in establishing the museum.

He said the museum preserves rare and valuable artefacts, including remains of aircraft that crashed during World War II, and serves as a moving (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tea Board for hundred per cent testing of imported crop: Dy Chairman

KOLKATA, Jan 3: Deputy chairman of Tea Board C Murugan on Saturday assured that hundred per cent testing of quality of imports would be carried out to prevent inflows of the cheap variety into the country.

The industry had been complaining that cheap imports of inferior quality are entering the country, which is destroying the industry.

Speaking at the biennial general meeting of the Tea Association of India (TAI) here, Murugan said that the Board is formalising the procedure for hundred per cent testing of the quality of imports of the beverage.

"We are creating the infrastructure towards this. It will take 15 to 20 days. Thereafter, legal opinion would be obtained, followed by approval of the ministry (commerce)", he said.

He said cheap and poor quality imports of tea are taking place from countries like Nepal and Viet-



nam. Murugan also said the Board will play a facilitator and also liberalisation of control on the industry. He said the Tea Board would also not get involved in the auction system but would facilitate the process.

The Board will make efforts to make generic promotion of Indian tea in other countries, he said.

Murugan said that under the Tea Development and Promotion Scheme of 2026, an outlay of ₹ 1,500 crore has been earmarked for the next five years, the benefits of which will also be extended to small tea growers.

West Bengal Labour Secretary Avinandra Singh said the tea industry is passing through a difficult

phase. "Cheap imports of inferior quality from Nepal are entering the country, destroying the Darjeeling tea industry".

He said that in West Bengal, people with no experience in the tea industry are acquiring huge tracts of land of sick and closed gardens at dirt cheap prices.

"I urge the industry to come forward and acquire the closed tea gardens in West Bengal. The best way for the industry to survive is through the participation of tea workers in running the gardens by giving them equity", he said.

This will create a sense of ownership by the workers, he said.

Singh said wages and statutory dues are still unpaid to tea workers and urged for quick payment of these by the garden management's.

President of TAI Sandeep Singhamia said that duty-free imports of cheap quality teas have increased substantially. "Restriction of these imports is crucial for the survival of the Darjeeling tea industry". (PTI)

Centre pushes states to speed up farm scheme spending warns of fund delays

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday urged states to adopt a strategic approach to budget utilisation, warning that delays in spending allocated funds result in losses for states and hamper the timely release of subsequent central instalments.

Addressing a review meeting with state agriculture ministers, Chouhan said states must ensure funds earmarked for various schemes are spent before March to avoid administrative bottlenecks that delay the effective implementation of programmes.

"If states are unable to spend their budgets on time, it only results in losses for them," the minister said, adding that budget allocations are often held up due to minor administrative and procedural issues.

The meeting reviewed the progress and budget utilisation of central agriculture schemes, including the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (PM-RKVY) and Krishonnati Yojana (KY).

Chouhan stressed the need for prompt verification of eligible farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme, expanding coverage under the crop insurance scheme, and ensuring timely settlement of claims. He also emphasised the importance of seed and fertiliser availability, their balanced use, and strengthening central-state coordination. The meeting was attended by agriculture ministers from Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and Mizoram, along with Agriculture Secretary Devesh Chaturvedi, and senior ministry officials. Chouhan assured states that the Centre will continue to provide support to strengthen the agriculture sector and safeguard farmers' interests, an official statement said. (PTI)

Gig model doesn't pressure riders, flexitime work reliable income source for many: Deepinder Goyal

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: Amid the debate on gig workers' payouts and working conditions, Eternal Founder and CEO Deepinder Goyal said this model does not pressure riders, and flexible schedules and welfare benefits make gig work a reliable source of income for many.

Eternal owns Zomato and Blinkit businesses. His remarks come at a time when gig workers' unions have been staging protests, demanding better payouts and improved working conditions.

"In 2025, Zomato and Blinkit spent over ₹ 100 crore on insurance coverage for delivery partners. In 2025, average earnings per hour (EPH), excluding tips, for a delivery partner on Zomato were ₹ 102. In 2024, this number was ₹ 92. That's a ~10.9 pc year-on-year increase. Over a longer horizon also, EPH has shown steady growth," Goyal said on X.

He claimed that the 10-minute delivery promise does not pressure riders, explaining how flexible schedules and welfare benefits make gig work a reliable source of income for many.

However, his comments drew mixed responses from internet users on X, with several accusing riders of rash driving and violating traffic rules to meet 10-minute delivery deadlines.

The Gig & Platform Services Workers' Union (GIP-SWU) last month wrote to Union Minister for Labour and Employment Mansukh Mandaviya raising several issues, with a key highlight being their demand to "urgently discontinue 10-20-minute service delivery mandates to prioritise worker safety".

Goyal also batted for "less regulation" for India's gig economy, arguing that it will eventually help bring more people into the "organised" workforce.

"Delivery partners are not overworked on our platforms. In 2025, the average delivery partner on Zomato worked 38 days in the year and 7 hours per working day, reflecting true gig style participation rather than fixed schedules. Only 2.3 pc of partners worked more than 250 days in the year. Demanding full-time employee benefits like PF, or guaranteed salaries for gig roles doesn't align with what the model is built for," he argued.

The Eternal founder said most delivery partners work for a few hours and only a few days in a month. "But if someone were to work for 10 hours/day, 26 days/month, this translates to ~₹ 26,500/month in gross earnings. After accounting for fuel and maintenance (~20 pc), the net earnings for the partner are ~₹ 21,000/month," he stated.

In November, the government notified all four labour codes, ushering in major reforms, including universal social security coverage for gig workers.

The labour ministry has proposed a 90-day annual work threshold as the mandatory eligibility criteria for gig and platform workers to access social security under new draft rules on the Social Security Code 2020, published on December 31.

According to estimates, there are over 12.7 million gig workers in India, with government think tank NITI Aayog saying this workforce is expected to rise to 23.5 million by 2029-30. (PTI)

FY26-27 will be an important milestone AM International chairman Ashwin Muthiah

CHENNAI, Jan 3: The financial year 2026-27 would be an important milestone for AM International, which manages various businesses across fertilisers, petrochemicals and speciality chemicals in Tamil Nadu, a top official said on Saturday.

AM International Founder-Chairman Ashwin Muthiah said the financial year 2025-26 has been a year of measured recalibration as some industries benefited from strong domestic demand while others naturally corrected after the extraordinary highs experienced during the pandemic years.

"What reassures me is that our institutional resilience remains

strong, while our net worth continues on its upward trajectory. This speaks to the fundamental robustness of the group," he said in a company statement here on Saturday. Under the Fertilisers business, the company operates Southern Petrochemicals Industries Corporation (popularly known as SPIC Ltd) while Manali Petrochemicals Ltd caters to the petrochemicals segment. AM International runs the Tuticorin Alkali Chemicals and Fertilisers Ltd (TFL), engaged in the manufacturing of Soda Ash while another group entity Tamil Nadu Petroproducts Ltd manufactures Caustic Soda and chlorine. "Our priorities across SPIC,

TFL, Manali Petrochemicals Ltd and Tamilnadu Petroproducts Ltd remain consistent and tightly aligned with our long-term strategy", he said. Commenting on the performance, Muthiah said the capacity expansion taken up by Tuticorin Alkali Chemicals and Fertilisers Ltd is on schedule. "Production will increase from 75,000 metric tonne to 200,000 metric tonne by November 2026 and then scale further to 275,000 metric tonne," he said. Muthiah said, "We are expanding propylene glycol production capacity at Tamilnadu Petroproducts and accelerating the growth of PennWhite's speciality chemicals in India." (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Garima demands strong

Chief Judicial Magistrate's court. The CJM, thereafter, committed the case to the sessions court for trial to begin. There, it commenced on December 22.

In all three hearings so far, the accused have appeared virtually before the court, as the police cited law and order issues if they were produced physically. (PTI)

US forces capture Maduro

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the EU ambassador in Caracas. "The EU has repeatedly stated that Mr Maduro lacks legitimacy and has defended a peaceful transition. Under all circumstances, the principles of international law and the UN Charter must be respected. We call for restraint."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez called for "de-escalation and responsibility. International Law and the principles of the United Nations Charter must be respected," Sánchez wrote on X.

— Russia's Foreign Ministry said it is "extremely alarmed" and called for "immediate clarification," according to a statement posted Saturday on the ministry's Telegram channel. The ministry said such actions, if confirmed, would constitute "an unacceptable infringement on the sovereignty of an independent state."

— British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the UK was not involved in the US operation in Venezuela and that he would seek more information from Trump. Without condemning the US action, Starmer said he always believes that international law should be upheld. "But I think at this stage, fast moving situation, let's establish the facts and take it from there," he said.

At a pro-Maduro protest in the capital, Caracas Mayor Carmen Meléndez joined a crowd that demanded that Maduro be returned immediately.

"Maduro, hold on, the people are rising up!" the crowd chanted. They also said: "We are here Nicolás Maduro. If you can hear us, we are here!" Elsewhere, residents were still taking in the events.

"How do I feel? Scared, like everyone," said Caracas resident Noris Prada, who sat on an empty avenue looking down at his phone. "Venezuelans woke up scared, many families couldn't sleep. I have been on the street, I just got back from Maracay, everything is blocked, everything is bad, very bad."

"They impose the law," electrician Alfonso Valdez said about the US government. "They are the police of the world ... they are assassins."

Venezuelan opposition leader Machado's spokespersons declined comment on the US operation.

Machado was last seen in public last month, when she emerged from 11 months in hiding and travelled to Norway, where she was honoured with the Nobel Peace Prize.

US attorney general says Maduro and wife to face criminal charges: US Attorney General Pam Bondi says Maduro and his wife will face criminal charges after an indictment in New York.

Bondi vowed in a social media post that the couple will "soon face the full wrath of American justice on American soil in American courts."

Maduro was indicted in 2020 in New York, but it was not previously known that his wife had been.

KKR releases Mustafizur Rahman

He has played for teams such as Sunrisers Hyderabad, Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals, Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals. The upcoming edition was going to be his first for three-time IPL winners KKR. Neither him, nor the Bangladesh Cricket Board had reacted to the development yet. Rahman was allowed to register for the auction by the Indian Board but the Indo-Bangladesh ties have grown more tense amid political unrest in that country.

With Rahman's ouster, it remains to be seen if Bangladeshi players would be excluded from the IPL the same way their Pakistani counterparts have been for the past several years owing to political tensions. Bilateral cricket uncertain: India and Bangladesh cricket boards had postponed a white-ball bilateral series last year. The Bangladesh Cricket Board on Friday said the series will be played there in September this year.

However, the BCCI is non-committal on the schedule and is unlikely to agree to it given the volatile situation in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh at T20 WC: Bangladesh are also scheduled to play their T20 World Cup games in India next month. The relationship between the two countries hit a rough note after the ouster of Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India in August last year following anti-government protests.

She was sentenced to death in absentia by a tribunal this year for her alleged role in a deadly crackdown during the agitation in which several students were killed. Dhaka summoned Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma five times over various issues, while India summoned Bangladesh's High Commissioner Reaz Hamidullah once to express concerns over security in Bangladesh. The transition, from what was widely regarded as an "India-friendly" Awami League government to Muhammad Yunus-led interim dispensation, significantly altered Bangladesh's diplomatic position.

Dhaka's engagement with Pakistan to deepen ties further complicated the regional equation. (PTI)

Hindu trader dies 3 days after

when the attackers intercepted the vehicle and allegedly beat him up, hacked him with sharp weapons and then poured petrol on his head before setting him on fire, media reports had said on Thursday. (PTI)

CCTOA panel rejects GoM

the concerned authorities and continue advocating for the protection of the rights and constitutional safeguards of the Scheduled Tribes of Assam. Chakma said that the meeting discussed at length on the protection of the existing tribal communities and objected the group of minister's report for granting ST status to six communities in the state. He said that the consultative group has been emphasizing intact wellbeing towards the welfare and development of the existing tribal communities in the state.

Social harmony intrinsic to Indian

regulate society, it is goodwill that truly connects and sustains it. Bhagwat emphasised that unity amid diversity is India's core identity. Social harmony is intrinsic to Indian society, he said. "We may appear different externally, but at the level of nation, culture and spiritual temperament, we are one," he said, as per the release. He also described the Hindu society as one that embraces unity in diversity. Representatives from various social groups and organisations from 16 administrative districts of the RSS' Madhya Bharat region participated in the meeting, which was held in two sessions.

In the first session, spiritual narrator Pandit Pradeep Mishra said social groups are active at their respective levels, but they must also reflect on their contribution to the nation. He said the Sangh continues to work with restraint and in the national interest despite criticism from some quarters. Mishra cautioned against religious conversions, describing them as a serious conspiracy that "impacts not only the present generation but also future ones".

Earlier, representatives from various communities presented reports on initiatives related to education, healthcare, environmental conservation, women empowerment, economic support and cultural promotion.

The meeting ended with a resolution that society would address local issues through collective efforts without waiting for government intervention, with speakers emphasising the goal of strengthening society as a whole, the release added. (PTI)

Bend arc of justice towards

merely to the faith but fairness in public life, he added. The CJJ wound up his two-day visit of the Bihar capital with the address to the convocation ceremony, which was held hours after he laid the foundation stone for seven infrastructure projects on the Patna High Court premises.

The seven projects included an Alternative Disputes Redressal building, an auditorium, an IT building, an administrative building, a multi-level car parking, a hospital, a residential block for ministerial staffers of the Patna High Court, and an annexe building of the office of advocate general.

"The laying of foundation stones for the administrative block, the IT block and other facilities of the Patna High Court is very crucial. I believe this occasion assumes a deeper resonance in Bihar, which is a land that occupies a distinctive place in India's civilisational memory," the CJJ said in his address. He also emphasised on "capacity building" which could "lay the groundwork for a justice system that can meet the demands of a growing population, increasing litigation and disputes of rising complexity".

"The first dimension of this effort is institutional capacity. A modern administrative block functions much like the nervous system of the court," he added. The CJJ asserted that the IT building will mark an important transition for courts that are "paper-heavy and time-intensive" to the ones that were "data-informed, digitally enabled and user-centric".

He said the ADR building and auditorium will serve as a "place of learning and exchange" by hosting, among other things, ADR initiatives and conversations that will "strengthen the relationship between Bar and the Bench".

Justice Kant also highlighted the importance of a hospital facility within the court premises because "justice is delivered by human beings and not machines". The CJJ also launched a new application, e-ACR Nyaya, which is designed to modernise the process of filing and processing the annual confidential reports online. (PTI)

Heritage tourism to be

memorial for families of soldiers who laid down their lives. The deputy chief minister further added that many tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh had contributed during World War II as porters and by supporting the construction of the historic Ledo Road.

To honour this legacy, Mein said a World War II Museum at Jairampur is under construction, and war-related sites in Changlang district are being developed as tourist attractions.

These include trekking routes to aircraft crash sites and other heritage locations, aimed at boosting tourism while preserving history.

"These efforts are a tribute to those who sacrificed during World War II and a reminder that their contributions must never be forgotten," he added.

The Hump World War II Museum at Pasighat stands as a powerful reminder of Arunachal Pradesh's crucial role during World War II, officials said.

Dedicated to preserving wartime history, the museum houses rare artefacts, photographs and remnants of aircraft that crashed in the region during the conflict.

It not only documents the strategic importance of the Hump air route and the Ledo Road but also honours the sacrifices of soldiers and the invaluable contribution of local tribal communities who served as porters and guides.

The museum offers visitors a deeply moving insight into a lesser-known chapter of history, while serving as a place of remembrance for families of those who laid down their lives during the war, they added. (PTI)

InnovHer enters a new growth chapter with Jeet Vijay joining as Co-Founder

JAIPUR, RAJASTHAN, Jan 3: InnovHer has announced a major leadership milestone with Jeet Vijay joining the organization as Co-Founder. The appointment marks a defining moment in InnovHer's journey as it formally transitions into InnovHer 2.0, its next phase as a full-scale venture institution focused on startups, SMEs, and regional economic development.

Over the past two years, InnovHer has steadily built credibility as a Tier-2 venture platform—deploying capital, enabling co-investments, facilitating early exits, and positioning Jaipur as an emerging national convergence point for founders and investors. With this transition, InnovHer is

sharpening its focus on institutional design, governance rigor, and long-term capital stewardship. The inclusion of Jeet Vijay significantly strengthens this ambition by adding policy depth, national-global perspective, and execution discipline.

A Leader Shaped by Policy, Capital, and Ecosystem Building Jeet Vijay brings over 18 years of experience across venture capital, private equity, startup policy, and ecosystem leadership. Most recently, he served as the CEO of MeitY Startup Hub, the Government of India's nodal agency for technology startups. In this role, he operated at the center of India's innovation architecture—working closely with central ministries, investors, incubators, accelerators, and founders across the country.

His work has spanned national advisory roles, startup funding frameworks, and large-scale ecosystem programs, giving him a rare vantage point on what differentiates activity-driven initiatives from institution building. Beyond domestic policy leadership, Jeet's international exposure—including collaborations with the University of Texas (USA)—has shaped his understanding of how mature ecosystems integrate universities, capital, and enterprises into long-term economic engines.

Equally significant is Jeet's

strong regional grounding. Hailing from Alwar, Rajasthan, and coming from a business family, he brings first-hand insight into the realities of Tier-2 and Tier-3 India. This perspective aligns closely with InnovHer's founding belief that regional India requires durable institutions, not episodic programs, to unlock sustainable growth. Commenting on his decision to join InnovHer, Jeet Vijay said, "Coming from Alwar, Rajasthan, I have always believed that regional India should not just export talent to metros, but build strong institutions at home. Joining InnovHer is my way of contributing back—by bringing policy experience, global exposure, and capital discipline to strengthen startups and SMEs in Rajasthan and other Tier-2 regions. If we want sustainable growth, we must build local economic engines that can compete nationally and globally while remaining rooted in their communities."

Strengthening InnovHer's Strategic and Institutional Output

As Co-Founder, Jeet Vijay's role will focus on sharpening InnovHer's strategic direction, governance frameworks, and institutional architecture. His presence brings greater rigor to venture selection, capital structuring, and policy alignment—ensuring that InnovHer's growth is disci-

plined, auditable, and scalable.

More importantly, his inclusion expands InnovHer's horizon. With a deep understanding of national policy, global best practices, and regional execution, Jeet strengthens InnovHer's ability to support startups and SMEs as long-term economic contributors, not merely high-growth bets. This approach is increasingly relevant as India's next growth cycle is expected to be driven by MSMEs, regional enterprises, and innovation-led local economies.

InnovHer 2.0: Building a Venture Institution from Tier-2 India InnovHer 2.0 represents a deliberate shift—from a venture platform to a venture institution. The next phase is designed to deliver deeper, more structured support to:

- SMEs seeking capital readiness and sustainable growth pathways
- Startups requiring governance-first scaling frameworks
- Local economies aiming to build durable innovation capacity

With Jeet Vijay joining as Co-Founder, InnovHer reinforces its commitment to institution-grade execution, long-term capital stewardship, and ecosystem accountability. The organization aims to demonstrate that venture institutions built from Tier-2 India can deliver outcomes on par with, or better than, metro-centric models. (PTI)

CORRIGENDUM NO. - 01
FOR TENDER NOTICE NO.: CON/
2025/DEC/04, DATED: 09-12-2025
**Corrigendum-01 for Tender
Notice No. CON/2025/DEC/04
has been issued against
Tender No. CE-CON-DK-
EPC-2025-06. For details
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Former MP Satyendra Nath Brahma Choudhury dies at 82



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 3: Former Member of Parliament from Kokrajhar, Satyendra Nath Brahma Choudhury, passed away at his Bongaigaon residence on Friday morning. He was 82. A respected advocate, he served as legal adviser to the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and Bodoland Peoples Action Committee (BPAC) during the Bodoland movement and represented the Kokrajhar constituency in the Lok Sabha from 1991 to 1996 as an Independent candidate backed by Bodoland groups. The son of late Sitanath Brahma Choudhury, former president of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, he was widely admired for his dedication to the Bodo cause and public service. Leaders including ABSU president Dipen Boro, former Bodoland Territorial Region CEM Pramod Boro, Rajya Sabha MP Rungwa Narzary and Kokrajhar MP Joyanta Basumatary expressed deep condolences.

Filmmaker Parthajit Baruah to speak at NDWBF 2026

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Jan 3: Parthajit Baruah, noted film historian and filmmaker has been officially invited to deliver a lecture at the New Delhi World Book Fair (NDWBF) 2026. He will speak on the topic "Uniform on Screen: Portrayal of Indian Military in Cinemas" as part of the fair's Theme Pavilion, under the overarching theme "Indian Military History: Valour and Wisdom@75."

The lecture is scheduled to be held on January 16, 2026, at 12:00 PM at the Theme Pavilion in New Delhi. The event is being organised by the National Book Trust (NBT), India in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Government of India.

As the apex body for book promotion and a key partner of the NDWBF, the NBT has highlighted the importance of scholarly engagement with military history and its representation in popular culture. Baruah's session will focus on the depiction of Indian military subjects on screen, examining issues of historical accuracy, myth-making, cinematic language and

CM launches MMUA cheque distribution in Borsola and Sipajhar

Over 70,000 women receive first instalment, foundations laid for major health, education and sports projects

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Jan 3: Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday launched the distribution of cheques under the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) in Borsola and Sipajhar Assembly constituencies, reaffirming the State government's commitment to women's economic empowerment. Under the programme, cheques of ₹ 10,000 each were distributed to 30,655 enterprising women in Borsola constituency of Sonitpur district, while seed capital was handed over to 39,701 women in Sipajhar constituency of Darrang district. With this phase, entrepreneurship funds under MMUA have been distributed to a total of 14, 46,021 women across 62 Assembly constituencies in Assam.

During the programme, the Chief Minister also virtually laid the foundation stone for a Super Specialty Hospital at Tezpur Medical College and Hospital to be constructed at an estimated cost of ₹ 306 crore. He further laid the foundation for the Karmabir Chandranath Sharma Government Model Degree College at Nij Bihaguri with a financial outlay of ₹ 35 crore and virtually inaugurated the Sarakahat Mini Stadium, built at a cost of ₹ 11 crore.

The proposed six-storeyed Super Specialty Hospital block at Tezpur Medical College will house departments such as Cardiology, Neurology, Nephrology and Urology, along with emergency services. The facility will also include a mortuary block, medical gas pipeline system, cafeteria and modern waste management infrastructure, aimed at providing advanced healthcare services to the people of the region. The three-storeyed academic building of the model degree college at Nij Bihaguri will be equipped with classrooms, laboratories, digital classrooms, faculty rooms and a lecture recording studio, among other modern facilities to enhance access to quality higher education.

The Sarakahat Mini Stadium, inaugurated at the Sarakahat playground in Borsola constituency, in-



cludes a football ground, accommodation facilities for players, an RCC gallery, a boxing ring and an indoor stadium with two badminton courts. Arrangements for parking, sanitation, water supply and electrification have also been made.

Addressing public meetings at the Thelamara in Borsola constituency and at the historic Jora Pukhuri site in Ramgaon under Sipajhar constituency, the Chief Minister said the MMUA scheme covers 32 lakh women across the state with the aim of enhancing women's dignity and making them self-reliant. He stated that the core objective of the scheme is to transform every woman into a 'Lakhpati', adding that over eight lakh women in Assam have already crossed the

annual income mark of ₹ 1 lakh, with several thousand emerging as 'Maha Lakhpaties' by earning more than ₹ 10 lakh annually.

Referring to Sipajhar constituency, Dr Sarma said it has secured the top position in the state in terms of MMUA beneficiaries, with nearly 40,000 women receiving seed capital. Highlighting success stories from Borsola, he cited the example of Dulmoni Devi of Mekanar Suburi village, who earns around ₹ 35,000 per month through a banana chips manufacturing unit, and Latashree Tati of Dhankhana village, who earns about ₹ 19,000 per month by supplying milk to Purabi Dairy. From Sipajhar, he mentioned Gitanjali Kalita Deka of Pithakhawa village, who

earns around ₹ 28,000 per month through a beauty parlour and handloom unit and Pranati Deka of Chengapara village, who earns ₹ 45,000-50,000 per month through betel vine cultivation and vegetable farming.

The Chief Minister said welfare schemes such as Orunodoi, free rice distribution, cooking gas subsidy, free admissions, Nijut Moina and others have helped improve the quality of life and dignity of women. He informed that Orunodoi beneficiaries will receive ₹ 8,000 in one instalment on February 20 and that ration card holders will be able to purchase pulses, sugar and salt for ₹ 100 from this month.

Highlighting development works in Borsola, he said over 30,000 beneficiaries have been covered under Orunodoi, while 2,225 girl students have benefited under Nijut Moina. Road projects under the Assam Mala initiative have also been completed or are underway in the constituency. In Sipajhar, over 33,000 beneficiaries have been covered under Orunodoi, 3,450 girl students under Nijut Moina, and more than two lakh people through ration cards.

Dr Sarma said the completion of the Guwahati Ring Road and the Narengi-Kuruwa connecting bridge would bring significant socio-economic transformation to Sipajhar. He added that the cooperation of the people over the past five years has enabled the government to move steadily towards building a New Assam, and expressed gratitude for their continued support.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Ashok Singhal, Sonitpur MP Ranjit Dutta, Borsola MLA Ganesh Kumar Limbu, Tezpur MLA Prithviraj Rabha, Rangapara MLA Krishna Kamal Tanti and other dignitaries were present at the Borsola programme. The Sipajhar programme was attended by MP Dilip Saikia, Sipajhar MLA Paramananda Rajbongshi, Mangaldoi MLA Basanta Kumar Das, Chairman of Assam Fishery Development Corporation Gurujyoti Das, and other officials and public representatives.

AKRSU slams CM's remarks on ST issue, calls 12-hour Assam bandh on January 9

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, Jan 3: The All Koch Rajbongshi Students' Union (AKRSU) has expressed strong dissatisfaction over Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's recent remarks on the long-pending issue of granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six indigenous communities of Assam and demanded that the State Government clarify its stand within a stipulated timeframe.

Addressing a press conference at the Gossaigaon Press Club, AKRSU president Dipen Ray and general secretary Sunadhar Ray accused the State Government of adopting "deceptive and dilatory tactics" on the sensitive issue. They alleged that the report submitted by the ministerial committee on tribal status on the last day of the winter session of the Assam Legislative Assembly was intended to mislead the people.

The AKRSU expressed serious apprehension over the report tabled in the Assembly on December 29, particularly the decision to grant one month's time to an organisation named the Tribal Coordination Committee of Assam, which has reportedly claimed that granting ST status to the six communities would threaten the existence of existing tribal groups. Such a move, the student body alleged, has effectively stalled the entire process of granting tribal status.

Dipen Ray demanded that the State Government make it clear whether the report placed in the Assembly has been forwarded to the Central Government. He strongly criticised the Chief Minister's statement that no community had demanded tribal status ahead of the forthcoming Assembly elections, terming it misleading and contrary to facts.

Stating that the Koch Rajbongshi community has been agitating for decades for ST status, Ray said the organisation remains firm in its demand that tribal status be granted before the next Assembly elections. He alleged that repeated assurances by the BJP and claims that ST status would be granted within a short period



have remained unfulfilled due to a lack of political will.

Ray further announced that if the government fails to clarify its stand on the issue by January 7, coinciding with Koch Rajbongshi Martyrs' Day, the AKRSU will enforce a 12-hour statewide Assam bandh on January 9.

AKRSU general secretary Sunadhar Ray also criticised the ministerial committee's report, calling it a "mere eyewash". He alleged that the Koch Rajbongshi community continues to be deprived of ST status due to a lack of sincerity on the part of both the State and Central governments.

He said the community has long been demanding protection of its identity, land and socio-cultural rights and described the Chief Minister's remarks on the issue as unfortunate, given its sensitivity. Recalling assurances made as early as 2014, he said promises of granting ST status on the grounds of educational, socio-economic and political backwardness have not been fulfilled.

Warning of intensified agitation, Sunadhar Ray said that if the government does not clearly commit to granting ST status to the Koch Rajbongshi community before the 2026 Assembly elections, the organisation would be compelled to launch a statewide campaign against the BJP during the polls.

Assam govt, Hans Foundation launch music talent hunt for tea garden students



GUWAHATI, Jan 3: The Assam government in collaboration with The Hans Foundation, has launched a state-wide music talent hunt for students of 54 Model Schools in tea garden areas of Sonitpur, Tinsukia and Dibrugarh districts, under the Uttam Xikhya programme.

Auditions will be held over the next month, followed by district-level selections and a pre-state competition on January 21 in Dibrugarh. The top 15 students will receive intensive mentorship in Guwahati, culminating in a grand finale on February 6, where the top five will be awarded scholarships, recognition and an exposure visit to Suresh Wadkar's music institute in Mumbai.

The initiative aims to promote co-curricular learning, nurture talent and empower over 14,000 participating tea garden students through music education.

HT Bureau

Dr Angiras Bhattacharyya becomes Sonitpur's first neurosurgeon

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Jan 3: Bringing laurels to the historic city of Tezpur, Dr Angiras Bhattacharyya, a native of the town has emerged as the first neurosurgeon from Tezpur and Sonitpur district after securing a gold medal in the M.Ch. (Neurosurgery) examination.

Neurosurgery is regarded as one of the most complex and challenging disciplines in medical science, pursued by only the most meritorious students and completed after years of rigorous training and perseverance. Dr Bhattacharyya has demonstrated academic excellence at every stage of his educational journey. After completing his MBBS and MS degrees from Gauhati Medical College, he went on to obtain his M.Ch. in Neurosurgery from the same institution, culminating in this notable achievement.

forest houses deer, hares, jackals, civets, foxes, reptiles, numerous indigenous and migratory birds and vibrant butterflies. He has also developed fruit orchards and a butterfly garden for students and wildlife.

In an effort to reduce human-elephant conflict in the area, Deh Bora planted banana, mango, jackfruit and letuku (Burmese grape) trees around the forest to provide elephants with a natural food source.

Sharing his journey, Deh Bora recounted a childhood incident with a myrobalan fruit that inspired him to dedicate his life to creating a meaningful green space. "If trees survive, humans survive," he said, highlighting

the importance of forest conservation amid increasing human-elephant conflicts.

Despite receiving recognition from private organisations over the years, Deh Bora has yet to receive government support. Authorities' intervention could help expand the forest and provide much-needed relief to his family, ensuring that "Dev Aranya" continues to thrive as a sanctuary for wildlife and a resource for the community.

The forest now features flowering plants, orchids, medicinal herbs and fruit-bearing trees, offering a living example of biodiversity conservation driven by individual commitment.

Karbi girl suffers severe burns in Nagaon, authorities promise justice

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Jan 3: A 9-year-old Karbi girl, Arlbon Timung was found burned and traumatised on the afternoon of January 1 at Ujagaon, Kamrup in Nagaon district.

The Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Dr Tuliram Ronghang, strongly condemned the incident and assured all help and justice in the case.

According to sources, the minor went out to play by the roadside in Ujagaon village while waiting for her aunt (father's sister) to arrive from Diphu. Somehow, she caught fire and the parents were informed by the children who were with her, saying they had managed to put out the flames. The panicked parents rushed her to the nearest medical facility and later shifted her to Guwahati Medical College and Hospital with 80% burns.

As of Saturday, Arlbon's condition has stabilised. She is the daughter of Himasar Timung and Shewali Bepoi of Ujagaon, Kamrup, under Kamrup police station.

Condemning the incident, the CEM expressed deep anguish over the "horrific and inhuman attack" on Arlbon Timung.

Highlighting the seriousness of the crime, he stated that violence against a child is an unforgivable offence, demanding zero tolerance and swift action. He emphasised that those responsible must be identified, prosecuted and punished without delay, ensuring justice prevails.

Demonstrating solidarity and compassion, the CEM assured that all necessary assistance for her medical treatment has been provided and reaffirmed that continued support will be extended until her full recovery.

Meanwhile, the publicity secretary of Nagaon Karbi Students Association (NKSA), Archo Bey, informed that the victim's parents have filed an FIR with Kamrup police station.

Bey further stated that NKSA is closely monitoring the case and has been extending all possible support to the victim's family.

Garumara's nature lover transforms 14 Bighas into 'Dev Aranya' Forest



Deh Bora's solitary effort nurtures wildlife, medicinal plants and fruit orchards

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Jan 3: Amid growing mechanisation and urbanisation, a nature enthusiast from Garumara, on the outskirts of Jorhat, has created a sprawling forest on his own land, spreading across nearly 14 bighas. The forest, officially named "Dev Aranya" on November 2, 2025, was inaugurated with the support of the Jorhat Environment Forum and local residents.

Deh Bora, a resident of Garumara Majuli village, began planting saplings and cultivating various species of trees, fruit plants, medicinal plants and flowers on his land since 2001 using his own resources. Today, the

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Assam DGP accepts patronship of Asom Sahitya Sabha session

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 3: The Organising Committee of the forthcoming Asom Sahitya Sabha Session met the Director General of Police, Assam, Harmeet Singh, IPS, at his chamber in Ulubari here in connection with his acceptance of the patronship of the organising committee. The Asom Sahitya Sabha session is scheduled to be held from January 31, 2026, at Kalakshetra, Guwahati.

During the meeting, members of the organising committee briefed the DGP on the progress of preparations and the various organisational arrangements being put in place for the smooth conduct of the prestigious literary event.

The DGP formally accepted the patronship and assured the committee of his full support, guidance and cooperation to ensure the successful and orderly conduct of the Asom Sahitya Sabha session.

The Asom Sahitya Sabha expressed its sincere gratitude to Harmeet Singh, IPS, for his encouragement and continued support to the organisation and its activities.

The delegation included Dr Bishnu Ram Nunisa vice-president of the organising committee, Dr Hiralal Bora president of the organising committee, Bashab Kalita working president and Mrs Biju Devi general secretary of the organising committee of the Asom Sahitya Sabha.

Weights and measures awareness week observed in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Jan 3: The All-India Weights and Measures Awareness Week was observed in Nagaon district by the Legal Metrology Department from December 28 to January 3, with a series of programmes aimed at educating consumers and traders about accurate measurement practices.

District Development Commissioner Debajani Choudhury, who attended one of the awareness programmes, emphasised the need for consumers to remain vigilant while buying or selling goods to avoid being cheated. She urged consumers to check whether weights and measures instruments, including weights, scales, litres, metres and electronic scales were properly verified and stamped by the Legal Metrology Department.

The awareness programme was organised by Assistant Controller Sontara Das, along with Inspectors Rintu Choudhury, Aditi Dutta and Nilamoni Kumar and Publicity Organiser Jiyaur Rahman. Others associated with the programme included Praharjit Das, Akabar Ali, Nizamuddin Ahmed, Babita Deka, Mahibur Rahman, Utpal Kro, Omar Ali and Rinki Saikia.

As part of the observance, publicity campaigns were conducted through banners, posters and miking across weekly and bi-weekly markets, shops, daily markets, business establishments, educational institutions and among various categories of consumers in different parts of the district.

The awareness week aimed to sensitise consumers about the importance of accurate weights and measures and to highlight the necessity of checking verification and stamping of measuring instruments by the Legal Metrology Department.

Jorhat Flower Festival and Fair inaugurated by 'Forest Man' Dr Jadav Payeng

HT Correspondent

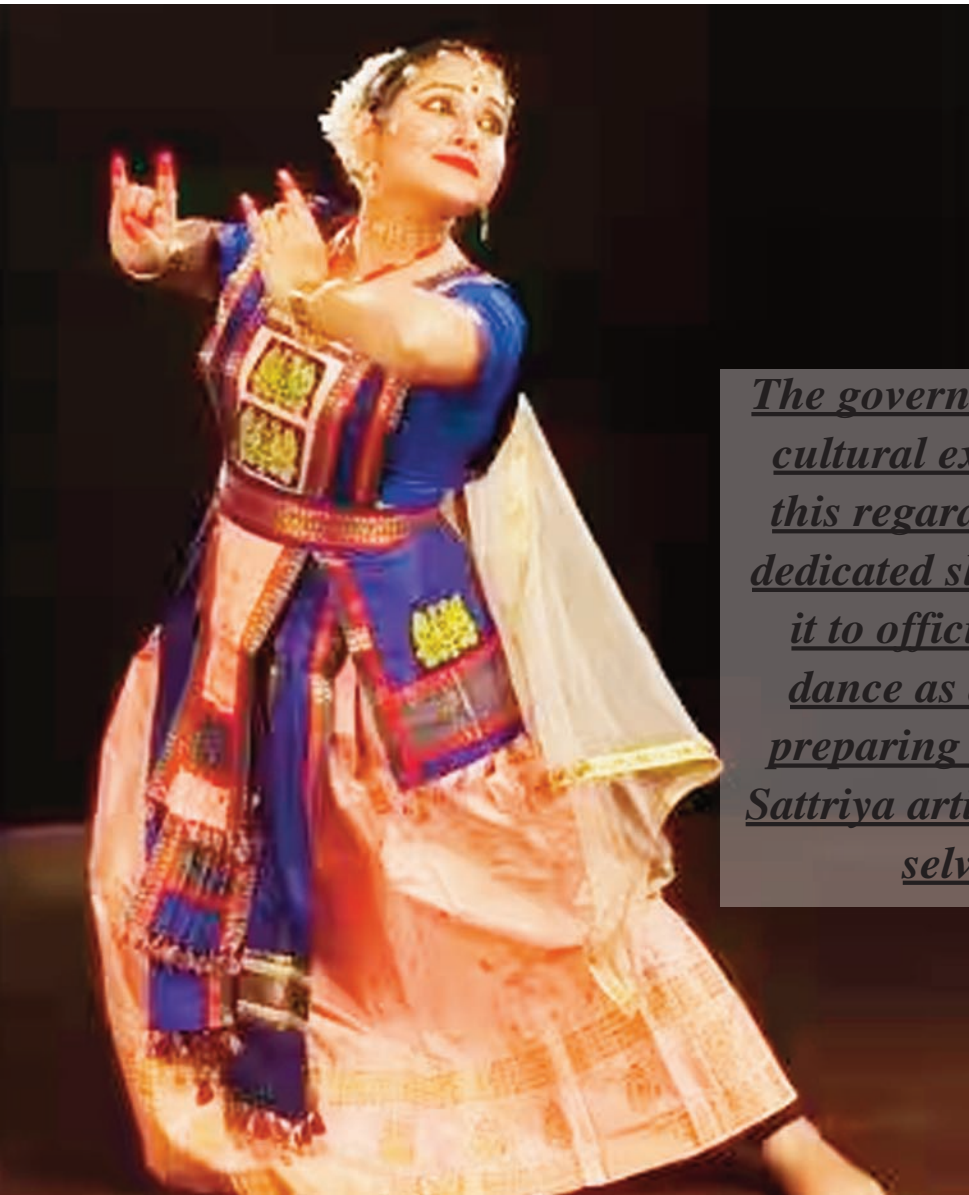
JORHAT, Jan 3: The two-day Jorhat Flower Festival and Fair began on Friday at Jaya Bhawan, Jorhat, organised by the Jorhat Flower Society. The event was inaugurated by "Forest Man" Padma Shri Dr Jadav Payeng, who lit a ceremonial lamp before the portrait of singer Zubeen Garg. During the inauguration, Dr Payeng stressed that merely planting saplings is not enough, they must be nurtured properly. He noted that students are being taught about tree plantation and for the past 30-40 years, he has personally planted thousands of saplings while spreading awareness about the importance of forests and tree conservation across the region.

Dr Payeng highlighted the consequences of deforestation caused by industrial development, which has led to increased conflicts between humans and wildlife such as elephants and monkeys. He said that over a hundred new sandbars (chaporis) have emerged along the Brahmaputra and need to be greened. He emphasised that responsibility lies with the government, the Forest Department and the people of Assam to reduce human-animal conflicts through proper afforestation efforts.

Speaking to journalists, Dr Payeng also condemned the recent fire set by miscreants at "Mulai Forest 2.0," calling the act reprehensible and assuring that the culprits would be identified after investigation. He encouraged the youth involved in restoring the forest, expressing hope that they would succeed in creating a conducive environment for new saplings.

The event saw participation from prominent personalities including Dr Jyotirekha Hazarika, Secretary of the central office of Asom Sahitya Sabha, Swapan Bezbaruah, scientist Bikash Hazarika and Mridusmita Baruah Borborah. Organising committee member Haren Gogoi said that around twenty stalls are participating in the special exhibition over the two-day fair.

The festival combines flower competitions, exhibitions and awareness activities aimed at promoting environmental stewardship and community engagement in Jorhat.



By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Sattriya dance, created by the great saints Srimanta Sankardeva and Sri Sri Madhavdeva, is one of the strongest pillars of the vast and magnificent edifice of Assamese culture. This dance is not merely physical movement or a means of entertainment; it is a profound blend of spiritual philosophy, devotional essence, and aesthetics. In the fifteenth century, a cultural renaissance began in Assam to unite society and propagate human values through the path of devotion, and Sattriya culture is a sacred and timeless creation of that movement. Confined for centuries within the boundaries of the sattras, this dance has in recent times crossed the sacred thresholds of the sattras and succeeded in securing its place in the global arena. After the Sangeet Natak Akademi of the Government of India granted Sattriya dance the status of a classical dance form, a new horizon has opened in the field of its expansion. However, establishing this great art on the world stage while preserving its unique character and dignity intact has become a significant challenge and responsibility in the present era. The global journey of Sattriya dance is not merely a voyage that transcends geographical boundaries; it is an uninterrupted process of extending the Assamese identity and spiritual consciousness across the world.

The foundation of Sattriya dance lies in devotion, and it is through this devotional essence that it possesses the capacity to conquer the hearts of people worldwide. In this dance, the performer does not dance merely to entertain the audience but strives to merge their own being with the Supreme Being. The body postures, hand gestures, footwork, and facial expressions transport the viewer to a realm of transcendental joy. When considering the global expansion of Sattriya dance, it is essential that we place the utmost importance on its spiritual and philosophical aspects. In today's mechanical and intensely competitive world, people are searching for mental peace. While many dance styles prevalent in the Western world or other parts of the globe are largely light entertainment or mere physical exercises, Sattriya dance transcends entertainment to offer a quest for spiritual tranquillity. Spreading this message of peace to the world through Sattriya dance could become one of the strongest foundations for its universal acceptance. When a foreign viewer experiences Sattriya dance, they should not be captivated only by its external beauty but also feel its inherent spiritual depth. For this, our promotional and performance approaches must be highly thoughtful and well-planned.

The greatest challenge in establishing Sattriya dance on the global stage is preserving its purity and tradition. The strict discipline, reverence, and restraint with which this dance is practised in the sacred environment of the sattras cannot

The new generation to Sattriya culture is another vital responsibility and a major investment for the future. Amid the intense wave of globalisation, we as parents and society must remain conscious so that our own children do not become uprooted. Sattriya dance and culture should be included in detail in the curriculum at school and college levels. Not only theoretical knowledge but also practical training opportunities must be provided

always be recreated on modern stages or foreign soil. Nevertheless, we must remain vigilant and cautious to ensure that changes in place and time do not harm the core spirit of the dance. Unnecessary alterations to the grammar and style of Sattriya dance in the name of globalisation or modernisation would cause irreparable loss to our community. Presenting this dance in a trivial form or distorting it under the guise of fusion for commercial gain would strongly risk diminishing its dignity. Therefore, our primary and foremost duty is to establish strict standards in the training and practice of Sattriya dance. We must ensure that no deviation occurs in the presentation of its distinctive features, such as mati akharas, bhangas, Krishna nritya, nadu



bhangi, and others. For this purpose, it is advisable to prepare a specific code of conduct or guidelines in consultation with experienced gurus, sattradhikars, and learned scholars, which artists performing the dance at home and abroad should feel morally obliged to follow.

Language barriers may emerge as a major obstacle in promoting and expanding Sattriya dance across different parts of the world. The songs and verses associated with Sattriya dance are composed in Brajawali or old Assamese, whose meanings and emotional essence are not easily comprehensible to foreign audiences. To overcome this linguistic distance, it is essential to make scientific arrangements for explaining the content and philosophy of the dance in various foreign languages alongside its performance. In this regard, the role of high-level research and translation literature is immense. We should emphasise publishing quality books, essays, and research papers on Sattriya culture in English, French, Spanish, and other major languages of the world. It is not enough to merely show the dance; the world must also be theoretically informed about the philosophy behind it, its history, and the greatness of Sankari culture. Only through widespread promotion of the theoretical aspects of Sattriya dance via educational discussions, international seminars, and workshops can it truly become universal. Steps such as offering scholarships for the study of Sattriya culture through universities and implementing researcher exchange programmes would deeply attract foreign students and scholars to this culture, and they in turn would become its ambassadors in their own countries.

The present age is one of information technology, which has transformed the entire world into a small village. Through the internet and various digital platforms, we can instantly connect with people anywhere on the planet. By preparing high-quality videos, documentaries, and educational materials on Sattriya dance and making them available on digital platforms, it can easily reach global audiences. Caution is needed here as well. Rather than uploading

THE GLOBAL EXPANSION OF SATTRIYA DANCE AND OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

The government should give greater importance to sending Sattriya dance troupes under cultural exchange agreements with various countries, and compromising on quality in this regard would be inappropriate. Efforts are needed at the diplomatic level to secure dedicated slots for Sattriya dance in the world's leading art festivals, rather than limiting it to official events alone. Additionally, we can seriously consider developing Sattriya dance as a cultural industry. Building a strong economic foundation is necessary for preparing costumes, constructing musical instruments, and professionally establishing Sattriya artists. Only when artists become economically self-reliant can they devote themselves to artistic practice with peace of mind and complete concentration.

mediocre videos indiscriminately, only professionally produced and factually rich content should be promoted. Furthermore, creating a comprehensive digital museum or archive detailing the costumes, ornaments, masks, and musical instruments of Sattriya dance, along with their construction techniques and usage, would become an invaluable resource for future generations and foreign researchers. Technology should be used not only as a medium of promotion but also as a tool for preservation and accurate documentation, so that this treasure suffers no loss in the flow of time.

The goodwill, foresight, and active cooperation of both governmental and non-governmental sectors are indispensable for the advancement of Sattriya dance. The government should give greater importance to sending Sattriya dance troupes under cultural exchange agreements with various countries, and compromising on quality in this regard would be inappropriate. Efforts are needed at the diplomatic level to secure dedicated slots for Sattriya dance in the world's leading art festivals, rather than limiting it to official events alone. Additionally, we can seriously consider developing Sattriya dance as a cultural industry. Building a strong

economic foundation is necessary for preparing costumes, constructing musical instruments, and professionally establishing Sattriya artists. Only when artists become economically self-reliant can they devote themselves to artistic practice with peace of mind and complete concentration. Private institutions, business groups, and affluent sections of society should also extend patronage in this field. Constructing international-standard theatres and training centres for Sattriya dance is one of the foremost demands of the present time.

Through logic, philosophy, and comparative study, we must prove that Sattriya dance is in no way inferior to any classical dance in the world and that some of its aspects are unique. For this, we need a group of theoretical critics and writers who do not merely enjoy the dance but can analyse its subtleties and present them to the world. Like other Indian classical dances, Sattriya dance too requires a strong theoretical foundation. If its grammar is analysed in a modern framework based on texts such as Abhinaya Darpana or Natyashastra and presented on in-

ternational platforms, its acceptance and prestige will increase manifold. There is reason to regret that, due to the lack of intellectual discourse, our culture has often not received the recognition it deserved.

Another extremely important aspect of the global expansion of Sattriya dance is the development of cultural tourism. Special packages or programmes can be adopted to directly and deeply introduce foreign tourists visiting Assam to Sattriya culture. By developing the sattras as tourism focal points and regularly organising dance and music performances there, tourists will be attracted to this art and its promotion will also be aided. However, it is crucial to remain vigilant so that the sanctity of the sattras is not compromised and their spiritual environment is not disturbed. Rather than confining Sattriya dance to artificial stage lighting, introducing viewers to it in its birthplace—the natural and devotion-filled environment of the sattras—will allow them to truly savour its essence. This experience will inspire them to speak about this culture to others upon returning to their countries. Connecting tourists with mask-making, the practice of Borgeet, and the Sattriya lifestyle would benefit both our economy and culture.

In this long and challenging global journey of Sattriya dance, the role of the artists is the most crucial. When an artist steps onto the stage, they do not represent only themselves; they represent an entire community, a culture, and a great heritage. Therefore, it is desirable that the artists' conduct, personality, education, and knowledge be broad-ranging. They must not only master the dance but also acquire understanding of world cultures, audience psychology, and communication skills. When performing abroad, they should possess the ability to interact with the audience, answer their questions, and logically explain the greatness of our culture. For this, emphasis on language learning and personality development is essential. By blending the traditional guru-shishya parampara with modern teaching methods, we must build a community of artists who can stand confidently on any stage in the world and mesmerise the audience.

In conclusion, it can be firmly stated that the global expansion of Sattriya dance must be the result of long-term planning and uninterrupted effort. We must move forward by upholding the liberal, vast, and humanistic philosophy with which Mahapurush Sankardeva created this culture. Avoiding narrow-mindedness while embracing the world with an open heart and remaining connected to our roots should be our guiding principle. Sattriya dance is not merely the treasure of the Assamese people; it is a priceless spiritual and cultural gift for all humanity. Taking this gift to every art-loving person in the world is our moral duty. With the sincere and united efforts of the government, society, sattras institutions, media, and artists, we firmly believe that Sattriya dance will one day secure its place among the greatest arts of the world. If we fulfil our responsibilities with dedication and honesty, Assam will shine as a radiant star on the global cultural map through Sattriya culture. What is needed is only our unity, goodwill, and far-sighted vision. May Sattriya dance in the days to come illuminate the entire world with the message of peace, harmony, and devotion—this should be our aspiration and goal. *(The author is the recipient of the 'Young Writer Honour 2025' from the Government of Assam)*



Love on the Magic Mountain

Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

The Magic Mountain rose like a rumour against the sky—blue at dawn, violet by dusk, and always wrapped in a veil of stories no one could prove. Some said the mountain healed; others whispered it cursed. The villagers at its foot agreed on only one thing: those who climbed it returned changed, if they returned at all.

Anaya arrived on a winter morning when the mist lay thick as wool. She had come to catalogue rare alpine herbs for a pharmaceutical trust, a task chosen for its solitude. Grief had made her crave quiet. Her father's unsolved death—declared an accident after a fall—had left her with questions that gnawed like mice in the walls of her mind. The mountain's silence, she hoped, would still them.

She met Arjun by accident, or so it seemed. He was standing outside the old sanatorium, its white paint flaking like old snow, staring at the door as if it might answer a question he had not dared to ask. He wore a threadbare jacket and held a notebook that had seen better years. When he turned, startled by her footsteps, his eyes were alert and kind, the kind that noticed things and kept them safe.

"I thought the place was abandoned," Anaya said, gesturing to the sanatorium.

"Abandoned by people," he replied. "Not by stories."

They laughed, surprised by the ease of it. He told her he was a journalist, tracing a series of unexplained deaths linked, rumor said, to the mountain. She told him about the herbs and the silence she sought. They did not speak of their reasons for being alone; some truths needed time to breathe.

Over the next days, their paths crossed too often to be coincidence. Anaya found Arjun on the forest trail where foxgloves bloomed like warnings, in the village tea shop where gos-

sip poured thicker than chai, and once, unexpectedly, at the edge of the old quarry where the rock fell away into a bowl of shadows. Each meeting drew a thread between them, invisible yet strong.

At night, the mountain breathed. Wind sighed through pines like a choir learning a hymn. Anaya dreamed of footsteps following her, careful and patient. Arjun dreamed of a clock that ran

backward, its hands scraping the glass until they bled.

On the fourth day, a man was found dead near the quarry. The villagers gathered, faces drawn, voices hushed. The police called it a fall. Arjun did not. He had seen the scuffed earth, the peculiar angle of the body, the bruises that spoke of a struggle. Anaya felt the old ache flare—another fall, another easy

ending. "Help me," Arjun said quietly when the crowd thinned. "You see what others don't."

She hesitated. Involving herself meant inviting the past into the present. But the mountain had brought her here for more than herbs. She nodded.

They began with the sanatorium. Built decades ago for patients with mysterious ailments, it had closed abruptly after a fire whose cause was never found. The official records were sparse; the unofficial ones lived in whispers. Inside, dust lay thick as snow. Rooms lined the corridors, doors ajar like mouths mid-sentence.

In the basement they found ledgers, their pages curled, ink faded but legible. Names repeated. Dates clustered. Symptoms vague: dizziness, paranoia, euphoria. Anaya noticed a pattern. "These patients," she said, "were all treated with the same experimental compound."

Arjun photographed the pages. "If it worked," he said, "why close the place?"

"Maybe it did," Anaya replied. "At a cost."

They left as dusk fell, unaware they were being watched. From the treeline, a figure lowered binoculars and smiled thinly.

That night, Anaya's room was broken into. Nothing was stolen, but her notes lay scattered, pages torn. A warning. Fear sharpened into resolve. She and Arjun agreed to continue together, daylight or dark. They traced the compound to a mine high on the mountain, long sealed after a collapse. The villagers avoided it. "The mountain keeps what it takes," the shopkeeper muttered, refusing to meet their eyes.

The climb was steep, the path narrow. Snow fell softly, blurring edges, muffling sound. Halfway up, a rock skittered loose under Anaya's boot. She stumbled, heart leaping. Arjun's hand found her wrist, firm and warm. For a moment, the world steadied around that

simple fact: they were not alone.

At the mine entrance, the air smelled metallic and old. Inside, veins of ore glittered faintly in their headlamps. Deeper in, they found crates marked with a symbol—a mountain circled by a serpent biting its tail. Anaya's breath caught. She had seen the symbol before, in her father's papers, scribbled in the margins like a secret he could not abandon.

"He was here," she whispered. Footsteps echoed behind them. A man stepped into the light, flanked by two others. He was tall, immaculate, his smile practiced. "You shouldn't be here," he said pleasantly.

Arjun recognized him instantly: Vikram Sen, a magnate whose foundation funded research across the region. "You fund the compound," Arjun said. "And the deaths."

Vikram shrugged. "Progress demands courage."

"Or silence," Anaya said. "My father refused yours."

Vikram's smile thinned. "Your father was a tragic man. He slipped."

The lie was a familiar knife. Anaya felt anger steady her. "You tested on villagers," she said. "When they became unstable, you staged accidents."

Vikram sighed. "The mountain amplifies," he said. "Mind and matter. The compound only awakens what's latent. Most can't handle it."

A gun appeared in his hand, casual as a pen. "You won't publish," he told Arjun. "And you," he nodded at Anaya, "will go home."

Arjun moved first, shoving a crate toward the men. The mine erupted in chaos. A shot rang out, deafening. Anaya ducked as splinters flew. She grabbed a flare from her pack and struck it, the red light screaming into the dark. Smoke filled the tunnel. Someone cursed. Someone fell.

They ran, hearts pounding, lungs burning. Outside, snow swallowed their tracks. They did not stop until the trees closed around them, branches lacing a roof above their heads.

They hid in a shepherd's hut, breath fogging the air. Anaya's hands shook. Arjun took them, anchoring her. The closeness felt inevitable, like gravity. When he leaned in, she met him halfway, the kiss fierce and tender as once, a promise forged in danger.



"I won't lose you," he said, forehead to hers.

"Then don't let go," she replied. They knew they couldn't outrun Vikram's reach. They needed proof. Anaya remembered the ledgers. If they could link the compound to the deaths publicly, Vikram's shield would crack. But the ledgers were in the sanatorium, now surely compromised.

They returned at dawn, slipping in through a back window. Inside, the air felt watched. As they reached the basement, lights flared. Vikram stood at the stairs, alone this time.

"You're persistent," he said. "It's almost admirable."

"Enough," Anaya said. "It ends here." Vikram raised his gun. Arjun stepped in front of her. The shot cracked, and the world fractured. Anaya screamed as Arjun fell, clutching his side. Blood bloomed dark.

Something in the mountain answered her cry. The walls hummed, a low vibration that settled in her bones. She felt it—an amplification, the latent force Vikram had spoken of. Grief and love braided into something fierce. She grabbed a loose cable, yanking it from the wall. Sparks flew. The lights flickered, then died.

In the dark, Vikram shouted. Anaya moved by instinct, by memory of trails and shadows. She struck, felt the gun skitter away. There was a scuffle, a thud, a final, terrible silence.

When the lights came back, Vikram lay at the bottom of the stairs, neck twisted at an angle that told the truth.

An accident, the mountain might say.

Anaya knelt beside Arjun, pressing her scarf to his wound. Sirens wailed in the distance—someone had finally called for help. She whispered to him, her voice a tether. He smiled weakly.

"Told you," he murmured. "I don't let go."

The aftermath was messy and public. Arjun's article broke the story open. The symbol became a headline. The foundation's money curdled into scandal. Investigations followed, then arrests. The mountain exhaled.

Anaya stayed until spring. She finished her catalogue, but more importantly, she made peace with the past. Her father's name was cleared, his work reclaimed from the margins. Sometimes she climbed to the quarry and let the wind carry her words.

Arjun healed slowly. He returned often, sometimes to write, sometimes just to walk. They spoke of the future carefully, like people handling something precious. Love, they learned, was not a sudden fall but a deliberate ascent, hand in hand, choosing each step.

On the Magic Mountain, mysteries still lingered. But crimes had met their match in two people who found each other when they were lost—and chose, against the odds, to climb together. (The writer International Tagore Awardee short story writer Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee author of Twilight of Love (Partridge 2025) is a former Affiliate Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University and a multilingual poet. Email prafatanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)

Echoes of a Promise

A Love story beyond time

(CONTD FROM PREVIOUS ISSUE)
By: Chafikhur Rahman

His words struck Rudra like arrows. For a second, Rudra felt his own breath falter. Because deep inside, a whisper told him the old man was not wrong.

After a long pause, the old man sank back onto the stone, exhausted. His voice grew softer, like the last flame of a lamp.

"They went to the river that evening. Kabita was with him, her red dupatta flying like fire. They laughed as they walked, my son and his love. I watched from far, from the trees, because I feared the headman's men. I told Rataneswar not to meet there at night, but he said, 'Baba, love is not afraid.'"

His voice cracked. "Then I saw them—shadows—three, maybe four men. They came from behind, carrying sticks. I shouted, but the river swallowed my cry. They struck my boy on the head. Kabita screamed. She tried to protect him. They pushed her. She fell into the water. She struggled, but they held her down. My legs froze. My heart stopped. I could not reach in time. I ran, I ran—but when I reached, the river had already taken them. Only silence remained."

He buried his face in his hands, his shoulders shaking. "I told the police. I begged them. But no one listened. The headman was powerful. People were afraid. My son became just a story. Only I remembered. Only I still call his name."

Rudra felt his throat burn. He looked at Kaberi, and she looked back, her eyes wet. The old man's story was broken, mixed with grief, its mismatched the whispers in the file. But, it matched the suspicions about the headman and his nephew.

Kaberi bent down beside the old man. She placed her hand gently on his arm. "Baba," she said softly, "we will not let their story be forgotten. We will find the truth. We promise."

The old man lifted his face slowly. His eyes softened when he looked at Kaberi. "You... you are Kabita," he whispered. "Yes... her eyes, her smile. You came back too."

Kaberi's hand trembled. She wanted to deny it, to correct him, but the words did not come. Because deep in her heart, she also felt the truth.

They sat with him for a long time, listening to his broken words, his fragments of memory. Sometimes he cried, sometimes he laughed suddenly as if recalling a happy day from the past.

When they finally rose to leave, the old man caught Rudra's hand tightly. His grip was surprisingly strong. "Bring justice," he whispered. "Bring peace to my boy. Then I will sleep. Then I will not need to call the river anymore."

Rudra bowed his head. "I promise, Baba."

As they walked back to the car, the sound of the river followed them. Kaberi said quietly, "Rudra... did you feel it? The way he looked at us? It was as if he knew."

Rudra's jaw tightened. "Yes. And maybe he does." Kaberi touched her shawl, her eyes distant. "Perhaps love and grief can see beyond time."

That night, Rudra could not sleep. He kept hearing the old man's cry—"Rataneswar! My son has returned!" He kept seeing Kaberi's face when the father called her Kabita.

He rose from his bed and stood by the window. The town was asleep. The sky was full of stars. The hills stood silent, yet alive.

And in the silence, Rudra heard it again—the soft whisper of the river, carried by memory:

"Rataneswar... Kabita... come back."

He closed his eyes. His heart beat like a drum. Somewhere deep inside, he knew: this was not just an investigation. This was his own unfinished story.

(8)
The rain came down softly over Diphu that evening. It was not a heavy storm, only a quiet drizzle, the kind that turns the air cool and makes the earth smell sweet. Rudra sat in his quarters with the old case file open before him, but his mind was not on the papers. His thoughts kept circling back to the river, to the broken voice of Rataneswar's father, and to the way Kaberi's eyes had filled with tears when the old man called her "Kabita."

The clock struck eight. He closed the file and rubbed his forehead. His phone buzzed—a message from Kaberi: "Are you free?"

He replied: "Yes. Do you want to meet?"

Her answer came quickly: "Come to my bungalow. Just tea. Nothing official."

The District Commissioner's residence was larger than Rudra's quarters, with a garden full of hibiscus and bougainvillea. The gate guard saluted as Rudra drove in. Kaberi was waiting in the veranda, dressed simply in a pale blue cotton saree. Her hair was loose, falling over her shoulders. "Come," she said with a small smile. "I was about to have tea. It's better with company."

They sat in the living room. The walls had old wooden panels, the lampshades gave a warm glow, and the air smelled faintly of incense. A table was set with a teapot, cups, and a plate of puffed rice laddoos.

Biren, her orderly, served them quietly and left. For a while, they spoke of ordinary things—the rain, the day's work, the files. But then Kaberi grew quiet. She stared into her cup as if searching for something in the tea leaves.

"Rudra," she said softly, "do you know why I always keep myself busy? Why I bury myself in work?"

Rudra looked at her, surprised. "Why?"

She took a deep breath. "Because I have no one else. My parents died when I was twenty. A road accident near Jagiroad. One moment they were laughing with me on the phone, the next moment they were gone. I was the only child. No brothers, no sisters. I studied hard after that, not just for myself but for them. Every exam, every posting—I thought, if they were alive, they would be proud. But when I return home at night, there is no one waiting. Only silence."

Her voice trembled, but she did not cry. She had learned long ago how to carry her pain without letting it spill.

Rudra felt his chest tighten. He had seen many kinds of loss—murder victims' families, widows, children left orphaned. But something in Kaberi's quiet confession struck deeper. She carried her grief like a hidden scar, invisible to the world yet always there.

"I'm sorry," he said gently. "I didn't know."

Kaberi gave a faint smile. "Few people know. I don't tell this often. But today... after meeting Rataneswar's father, after hearing his cry... I felt something break inside me. His loneliness is mine too. He lost a son. I lost parents. Both of us are still calling for people who will never return."

The rain tapped on the roof like soft fingers.

After some time, Rudra spoke. "Kaberi, can I tell you something I have never told anyone?"

She nodded.

"When I was a boy, maybe twelve or thirteen, I often had strange dreams. Dreams of hills, rivers, a temple by the water. I grew up in Nagaon, far from Diphu, yet in my dreams I walked roads that looked like these. I thought it was just imagination. But when I came here... everything felt familiar. The first turn of the road, the banyan shrine, even the river—it was like stepping into my own memory. Yesterday, when the old man called me 'Rataneswar,' for a second I believed him. I felt like... I really was his son."

Kaberi's eyes widened. She leaned closer. "Do you know... I also had such dreams? Since childhood. A river, a red dupatta, a boy with books in his hands. I never understood them. I thought they were just fragmenting of stories my mother told me. But now... when I saw that photograph, when I heard the old man call me Kabita... it all made sense."

Their eyes locked. In that moment, the boundary between past and present blurred. It was as if Rataneswar and Kabita were looking at each other again through Rudra and Kaberi.

Kaberi's voice softened. "Maybe we really are them, Rudra. Maybe fate has given us another chance to finish what was left unfinished."

Rudra felt a shiver, not of fear but of recognition. "Then we must find the truth. We must give justice to Rataneswar and Kabita. Only then can we live freely in this life."

Kaberi squeezed his hand. "Yes. Together."

When Rudra finally rose to leave, the rain had stopped. The garden smelled fresh, the hibiscus flowers heavy with droplets. Kaberi walked with him to the veranda.

"Be careful," she said. "We don't know who may try to stop us. If the headman's family was involved, there may still be danger."

Rudra gave a small smile. "I have faced many criminals. But this case... this is different. I will not let anyone silence it."

Kaberi looked at him for a long moment. Her eyes were steady, but her voice was soft. "Good night, Rudra."

LET YOUR INNOCENCE SPRING ERECT

By: Bipul Chandra Kalita

Many auctionable gardens fill your mind
Wherein illicit dreams misguide
Emotional planters,
Thoughtful planners,
Passionate intruders to sow divisive seeds;
Zooming in your heart's landscape
I enter into its gardens
Wherein hopes bloom soulfully,
Waiting for its earnestly expected visitor.
Your heart is detached from your mind
Wherein haughtiness grows,
Generating thoughts inhumanly
To demean the most honourable ones;
Helplessly I feel pity for your isolated heart,
Failing to bridge the gap between the two.
Now you are in sound health and wealth,
With an emotional vacuum,
Extremely devoid of sense and sensibility;
How long will you play the game of hurting,
Sporting openly,
Ignoring my nonsalable presence
In your salable mind's auctionable gardens?
Stop being bought and sold in the bazaar
Of dream-merchants' inhumanity;
Let your innocence spring erect,
Bringing light to both of our original eyes.



THE RIVER KNOWS MANY THINGS

By: Pritam Borah

The river knows every turn and bend of the wind.
She knows how the wind's twisting paths cover the truth with dust, then strip it bare with an instant, forceful blow.

When the river descends from the hilltop to the valley, it is witness to many battlefields where swarms of locusts rise and scatter.

The river can easily identify which flags of the sandbank darken the sunlight with the shadow of war.

The river is aware of the quiet conspiracies that erode foundations—entering through a single, tiny breach during the flood.



Absurd

By: Aniruddh Oghori

Spring in possum
Or an anachronism
Muskets getting honorarium
My muscat munificence
Hoopoe's hoo-ha
Coconut mousse ahha
Pussillanous ramshackles
Of heavans during spring clean
Spring is on a Lassa-fever
A pang in the feet that approach
Grasses within interstices
Geysers in the ghettoes

Congress to launch nationwide 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' from Jan 10-Feb 25 against G RAM G Act

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: The Congress on Saturday announced a nationwide 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' from January 10 to February 25 to demand the withdrawal of the VB G-RAM-G Act, and restoration of MGNREGA as a rights-based law, the right to work, and the authority of panchayats.

Addressing a joint press conference, Congress general secretaries K C Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh said through the new VB G RAM G Act, the Centre has ensured complete centralisation as "employment will no longer be a right under the new Act", which will be challenged in court.

On whether the states ruled by the INDIA bloc constituents would not implement the new Act or oppose it, Venugopal said the Congress would hold consultations with all the alliance partners on the way forward.

A consensus will be reached within the opposition-ruled chief ministers, and "we will explore possibilities of how to move forward on this", Venugopal said.

Ramesh claimed that no BJP-ruled state is in a position to implement the G RAM G law, which, he said, is against the federal structure of the country.

Venugopal also termed the Act an attack against the federal structure itself, as "no discussion was held with the states to implement it, even as their finances will be disturbed".

He said through the 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram', the Congress aims to defend the right to work, protect the Panchayati Raj institutions, and stand with the women workers, Dalits, Adivasis, and the rural poor by taking the issue to every village of the country.

"Our clear demand is to withdraw the VB GRAM G Act and restore MGNREGA in its



original, rights-based form, restoring people's right to work and the authority of the panchayats," Venugopal said.

Sharing details, he said the MGNREGA Bachao Sangram will commence on January 10 and continue till February 25.

"This is not only a Congress programme... We will hold detailed discussions with all the opposition-ruled states, and fight together," Venugopal said.

On January 10, district-level press conferences will be held, followed by a day-long fast and symbolic protests at the district headquarters on January 11, the Congress leaders said.

From January 12 to 29, panchayat-level chaupals and mass contact programmes will be organised at all the gram panchayats, fol-

lowed by ward-level peaceful sit-ins on January 30 to press for the right to work, they said.

From February 7 to 15, state-level gheraos of Vidhan Sabhas will be organised, while four major rallies will be held between February 16 and 25 before the culmination of the nationwide movement, Venugopal said.

Ramesh said it is not just a 'MGNREGA Save Campaign', it is the 'MGNREGA Save Struggle' and its first phase will begin on January 8 with preparatory meetings at all the state Congress headquarters to finalise plans for the agitation.

While the VB G RAM G Act has a grand name, the only guarantee in it is "dangerous centralisation", Ramesh said.

"There is no guarantee of employment or

financial assistance for the state governments," he noted.

Claiming that under the Act, only the Central government will decide how funds will be allocated, Ramesh said it has become a centralised programme and not a right to employment, unlike in MGNREGA, where it was the responsibility of the Central government to provide employment.

The new law sets a 60:40 funding split between the Centre and the states, which is a violation of Article 258 of the Constitution, the Congress leaders alleged.

Ramesh said Article 258 states that this funding ratio will be determined only after the consent of the state governments and the Central government, but "they (the Centre) have decided it (the split) on their own without taking consent from anyone".

"We will challenge it (the Act) in court," Ramesh said.

"Our demand is not modification, but complete withdrawal of this law and restoration of MGNREGA," he asserted.

Ramesh also said that while the agitation against the three "black" farm laws was Delhi-centric, the MGNREGA Bachao Sangram will be panchayat, block, district and state-centric.

The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission Bill, or VB-G RAM G, was passed with a voice vote amid protests in the Rajya Sabha on December 18, 2025, hours after the Lok Sabha cleared it.

On December 21, President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Bill, making it an Act, which seeks to replace the rural employment law, MGNREGA, guaranteeing 125 days of wage employment per rural household every financial year. (PTI)

Sacred relics of Buddha not merely artefacts, but part of India's revered heritage: PM



NEW DELHI, Jan 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated an exposition of sacred ancient gems and bone fragments linked to the Buddha, asserting that they were not mere artefacts but part of India's revered heritage.

The prime minister said the sacred Piprahwa Relics travelled to different countries with significant Buddhist populations, including Vietnam, Thailand and Russia, where waves of faith and devotion arose, and people turned up in huge numbers to pay homage.

"This shared heritage of Lord Buddha is proof that India is not connected merely through politics, diplomacy, and economy, but through deeper bonds of emotions, faith and spirituality," he said.

Modi was speaking at a function to inaugurate the exhibition "The Light and the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One" at Qila Rai Pithora Cultural Complex in south Delhi.

He recalled that the sacred relics were returning to India after more than 125 years at the intervention of the government and the Godrej Group, which together stopped them from being auctioned off in Hong Kong last May.

"For India, the sacred relics of Bhagwan Buddha are not merely artefacts; they are a part of our revered heritage and an inseparable part of our civilisation," the prime minister said at the event here in the presence of Buddhist scholars, diplomats and other guests.

"India is not only the custodian of Lord Buddha's sacred relics but also the living carrier of his tradition," he said.

Striking a personal note, Modi said his birthplace — Vadnagar in Gujarat — was a major centre of Buddhist studies and Samath near Varanasi, where Lord Buddha delivered his first sermon, was his karmabhoomi. The prime minister represents the Varanasi Lok Sabha seat in Parliament.

Modi said before being in government, he travelled as a pilgrim to Buddhist sites, and as Prime Minister, he has had the privilege of visiting Buddhist pilgrimage centres across the world.

He recalled his visits to Lumbini in Nepal, To-ji Temple and Kinkaku-ji in Japan, Giant Wild Goose Pagoda in Xi'an, China, and the Gandan Monastery in Mongolia.

The prime minister said his visit to Jaya Sri Mahabodhi in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, was an experience of connecting with the tradition sown by Emperor Ashoka, Bhikkhu Mahinda, and Sanghamitra.

He said that his visits to Wat Phou in Thailand and the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple in Singapore further deepened his understanding of the impact of Lord Buddha's teachings.

The prime minister said he made a point to carry saplings of the Bodhi tree to places of Buddhist pilgrim centres across the world.

"One can imagine the profound message for humanity when a Bodhi tree stands in the botanical garden of Hiroshima, a city devastated by the atomic bomb," he said.

The prime minister said that his government was making efforts to ensure that Buddhist heritage reaches the next generations in a natural way and added that the Global Buddhist Summit and international events like Vesak and Ashadha Purnima were driven by this very thought.

The prime minister said that his government had granted classical language status to Pali to make the language in which the Buddha delivered his sermons more accessible to the people.

"This will make it easier to understand and explain the Dhamma in its original essence and also strengthen research connected to the Buddhist tradition," he said.

The Piprahwa Relics hold a central place in the archaeological study of early Buddhism.

The relics are among the earliest and most historically significant deposits directly connected to Bhagwan Buddha, according to an official statement.

Archaeological evidence associates the Piprahwa site with ancient Kapilavastu, widely identified as the place where Bhagwan Buddha spent his early life before renunciation. (PTI)

20 Maoists led by commander Badse Sukka surrender before Telangana police

HYDERABAD, Jan 3: In a significant blow to the CPI (Maoist) insurgency, high-ranking commander Badse Sukka alias Deva, along with 19 underground cadre, surrendered before the Telangana police, official sources said on Saturday.

This surrender sounded the death knell for the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) and the Telangana State committee of the CPI (Maoist) party.

The surrendering group turned over the 'arms dumps' of the PLGA, including that associated with Hiduma and Badse, a press release from the police said.

Another senior leader Kankanala Raji Reddy alias Venkatesh also surrendered, it said.

A contemporary of Madavi Hiduma, Badse is the second most important tribal leader in the CPI (Maoist).

He joined the CPI ML PWG (People's war group) in 2003 and is a specialist in military strategy, explosives, manufacturing firearms, IEDs etc, the release said.

Badse is a ruthless strategist and was instrumental in several high-profile attacks, including the 2013 Jhiram Ghati ambush in which former Chhattisgarh Minister Mahendra Karma and other INC leaders were killed.

He is carrying a reward of ₹ 75 lakh on his head.

Raji Reddy played a key role in establishing a guerrilla base on Karreguttalu (Chhattisgarh-Telangana border). He provided logistic support and made all arrangements for strengthening the guerrilla base. The 20 surrendered Maoists along with weapons, will be given a total of eligible reward amount of ₹ 1.82 crore as part of the state and Centre's relief and rehabilitation policy.

The Telangana State Police Department assures that all entitled benefits will be provided promptly, enabling the surrendered cadres to rebuild their lives with dignity and security, the release added. (PTI)

Attacking MGNREGA akin to attacking crores of workers, their right to work: Kcharge

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday said attacking MGNREGA is like attacking crores of workers and their constitutional right to work, which the party would resist peacefully and firmly from panchayats to Parliament.

In a post on X, Kharge said the VB GRAM G Act, which replaces the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), is designed to dismantle the right to work, which the Congress opposes strongly.

"The Indian National Congress makes three demands, clearly and unequivocally — withdraw the VB GRAM G Act, restore MGNREGA as a rights-based law, and restore the right to work and panchayats' authority.

"That is why we are launching the nationwide 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' (from January 10 to February 25)."

"MGNREGA is not a charity. It is a legal guarantee. Crores of the poorest people get work in their own villages; MGNREGA reduced hunger and distress migration, raised rural wages, and strengthened women's economic dignity.

TN CM Stalin announces new assured pension scheme for govt employees

CHENNAI, Jan 3: Fulfilling the over 2-decade-old demand of government employees and teachers, Chief Minister M K Stalin on Saturday announced a new plan, the "Tamil Nadu Assured Pension Scheme," and said it would provide the benefits of the Old Pension Scheme.

Fifty per cent of the last drawn salary of government employees would be the assured pension, the chief minister announced.

For this purpose, the state government would provide, alongside the 10 per cent contribution of the employees, the required entire additional funding to the Pension Fund. Pensioners receiving 50 per cent assured pension would be granted Dearness Allowance hike every six months on a par with government employees. In case of the death of pensioners, 60 per cent of the pension amount would be granted as family pension to the nominee of the deceased.

If an employee dies in harness, or in case of death at the time of retirement, upto a maximum of ₹ 25 lakh (Death gratuity) would be provided in keeping with the length of service. After the implementation of the new Assured Pension Scheme, all who retire without completing the qualifying service period for receiving pension will be provided a minimum pension, the chief minister said in an official release. (PTI)



VB GRAM G is designed to dismantle this right," Kharge said.

The Congress opposes the new Act because work will no longer be a guaranteed right under it, the Congress chief said.

"Budgets will be capped, so work ends when money ends, even during a crisis, and Delhi will decide funds and works, pushing the gram sabhas and panchayats into irrelevance," he claimed.

The 60-day work blackout will legalise denial of work during peak distress, and wages will become uncertain and suppressible instead of being a protected entitlement, he added.

"The states will be forced to fund 40 per cent (of the scheme), which will weaken federalism and harm the poor states. Technology will exclude workers through bio-

metrics and app-based barriers. Village assets will be replaced by contractor-style projects.

"Attacking MGNREGA is like attacking crores of workers and their constitutional rights. We will RESIST, peacefully and firmly, from every panchayat to Parliament," Kharge said in his post.

The Congress on Saturday announced a nationwide 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' from January 10 to February 25 to demand the withdrawal of the VB G-RAM-G Act, restoration of MGNREGA as a rights-based law, the right to work, and the authority of panchayats.

The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission Bill, or VB-G RAM G, was passed with a voice vote amid protests in the Rajya Sabha on December 18, 2025, hours after the Lok Sabha cleared it.

On December 21, President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the Bill, making it an Act, which replaces the rural employment law, MGNREGA, guaranteeing 125 days of wage employment per rural household every financial year. (PTI)

Sandeshkhali mob attack on police injures six; nine held

KOLKATA, Jan 3: Six policemen were injured and a police vehicle vandalised in a mob attack during an attempt to arrest a TMC worker in Sandeshkhali, once again pushing the coastal block into political chaos ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

The incident occurred on Friday night when a team from Nazat police station went to Boyermari village in Sandeshkhali to arrest local TMC activist Musa Mollah in connection with alleged illegal occupation of land and water bodies for pisciculture, police said.

As officers tried to pick up Mollah from his residence and place him inside the police vehicle, a group of villagers, described by police as his supporters, allegedly blocked the car, threw stones and vandalised it. Six policemen, including an officer, were injured and later treated at a local hospital before being discharged. Taking advantage of the chaos, Mollah managed to escape, police said, revising earlier

information that he had been arrested.

"We have arrested nine people so far, but Musa Mollah is still absconding. Efforts are on to nab him," a senior police officer told PTI.

Earlier it was reported that Mollah was nabbed by the police.

Police sources said Mollah had been served repeated notices in a land dispute case, which he allegedly ignored. Following complaints that agricultural land was being filled with saline water, a Basirhat subdivisional court had imposed prohibitory orders on the disputed property. Reinforcements were rushed to the area after the police team came under attack.

Besides arresting nine people, the police detained two local TMC leaders, including the gram panchayat pradhan and upa-pradhan of Boyermari Gram Panchayat 2, for allegedly instigating the violence, officials said. (PTI)

Devotees bathe in freezing Sangam waters as Magh Mela begins in Prayagraj

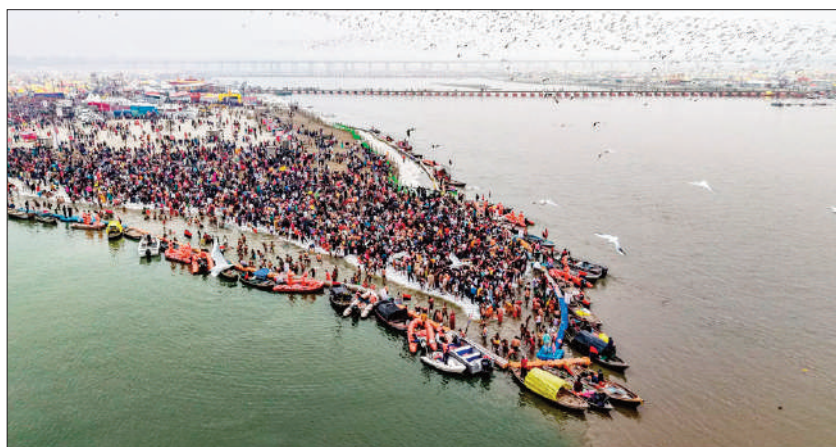
PRAYAGRAJ, Jan 3: Lakhs of devotees from different walks of life, including the elderly and children, took a dip in the icy cold waters of the Sangam on 'Paush Purnima' as the Magh Mela began here on Saturday.

The month-long 'Kalpavas', which is believed to absolve people of their sins, also began with 'Paush Purnima'. During 'Kalpavas', devotees bathe twice in the Ganga every day and eat one meal a day, spending the rest of their time meditating and worshipping their chosen deity.

According to the Magh Mela authorities, around 9 lakh devotees had taken the holy dip till 10 am.

In a post on X in Hindi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said, "Salutations to Goddess Ganga! Congratulations and best wishes to all devotees and residents of the state on the commencement of the Magh Mela and the auspicious occasion of Paush Purnima."

"A warm welcome and greetings to all the revered saints, religious leaders, members of all the Akharas, and pilgrims who



have arrived at Prayagraj -- the king of pilgrimage sites -- to take a holy dip in the sacred confluence. May Mother Ganga, Mother Yamuna, and Mother Saraswati fulfil everyone's wishes. This is our prayer," Adityanath said.

Acharya Rajendra Mishra, president of the Triveni Sangam Aarti Seva Samiti, told

PTI that approximately 5 lakh devotees will begin their 'Kalpavas' on Saturday.

Due to the biting cold, the number of devotees is slightly less in the morning, but it is expected to grow as the day progresses. The 'Paush Purnima' bath will go on throughout the day, he said.

Rajendra Paliwal, president of the

Prayag Dham Sangh, said around 20 lakh devotees, including the Kalpavas, are expected to take the holy dip on 'Paush Purnima' by the evening.

The auspicious time for the dip is till 4 pm. The Kalpavas, after taking a bath, will take a vow of 'Kalpavas' from their priests and stay at the fair, he said.

According to Prayagraj Divisional Commissioner Soumya Agarwal, 20-30 lakh devotees are expected to take a bath in the Ganga and the Sangam on 'Paush Purnima'.

Ten bathing ghats have been constructed over an area of 10,000 square feet at the Magh Mela, and nine pontoon bridges have been built.

Kalyani Nand Giri of the Kinnar Akhada was among those who took the holy dip on the first day of the Magh Mela.

Kalyani Nand Giri urged devotees to take a dip and get blessings. She also said that seeing the crowd of devotees, it seems that this is the Kumbh Mela and not the Magh Mela.

The Kinnar Akhada is observing 'Kalp-

vas' in the Magh Mela for the first time.

Pooja Jha, who has come from Kolkata with her family to take the holy dip, said that she felt very good being at the Magh Mela.

It was a little less crowded because it was the first day of bathing. This allowed people to bathe comfortably, she said.

Shivani Mishra from Rewa in Madhya Pradesh said she came to bathe three times during the Maha Kumbh and the smaller crowd at the Magh Mela allowed for a more peaceful bathing experience.

ADM (Magh Mela) Dayanand Prasad said that for the first time, a separate township has been established for the pilgrims (Kalpavas) in the Magh Mela area. This township, spread over 950 bighas, has been named Prayagwal. It is located opposite the Nagvasuki Temple.

Besides 'Paush Purnima', the major bathing occasions of Magh Mela 2026 are Makar Sankranti (January 14), Mauni Amavasya (January 18), Basant Panchami (January 23), Maghi Purnima (February 1) and Mahashivratri (February 15). (PTI)

J&K: Tourists flock to Guldanda in Doda as bright sun follows season's first snowfall

BHADERWAH/JAMMU, Jan 3: The season's first snowfall, followed by bright sunshine, has transformed Guldanda in Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district into a picturesque winter hotspot, attracting a large number of tourists and locals with its scenic beauty. The snowfall on New Year's Day has offered much-needed relief to the tourism stakeholders hit hard by the Pahalgam terror attack last April that killed 26 people, mostly tourists.

The locals and the tourism players said the snowfall, the first of the season after a prolonged dry spell of two-and-a-half months, drew more than 200 tourist vehicles to Guldanda, located at a height of 9,555 ft above sea level on the Bhadarwah-Pathankot highway in Jammu province.

The sudden rush of visitors has brought cheers to the faces of tour operators and hoteliers, as all hotels and homestays are packed to capacity, which is considered a good omen for winter tourism.

"The tourism industry was literally on a ventilator after the Pahalgam attack, and the war-like situation between India and Pakistan that followed Operation Sindoor.

"But the snowfall on the first day of 2026 acted as a catalyst to break the ice. Since the last two days, all the hotels and guesthouses are packed with tourists from across the country," Manish Kotwal, a hotelier from Nalthi-Bhaderwah, said.

He expressed hope that the positive trend will continue in the coming months.

Not only the hoteliers, but the small vendors putting up makeshift shops in Guldanda are also overjoyed with the sudden spurt in tourist footfall. (PTI)

Infrastructure development changing face of Agartala: CM

Roads, ring road, multi-level parking and high-rise directorate building to redefine cityscape

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Jan 3: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha said on Friday that the state government is working to develop a new Agartala by combining infrastructure development with benefits for the people.

"We have constructed roadways and beautified the roads. Due to drain construction, people are facing difficulties, even at home. When we construct something, we also face issues, but once it is completed, it will be useful and will not create any problems. We are also constructing a ring road and multi-level car parking. The highest building is being constructed at Gorkhabasti, where all the directorates will be housed. We are changing the face of Agartala. We are beautifying the city. We are making a new Agartala and a new Tripura with infrastructure development," he said.



Dr Saha made the remarks while attending a blood donation camp at the 39 No Ward Community Hall in Agartala.

Speaking on health awareness, he emphasised the importance of scientific knowledge and maintain-

ing proper blood circulation in winter by drinking hot water. He also highlighted the benefits of donating blood, saying, "There is nothing greater than donating blood. People cannot donate their liver or kidney easily, but without blood, nothing is possible."

He added that blood is universal with no distinction of religion, age or gender. "The blood of women, men, children or a 60-year-old person is the same. Donating blood is beneficial for the human body and also sends a message to society. We must store blood for emergency needs while maintaining balance. Blood should flow properly; otherwise, it can create problems in the body," Dr Saha said.

The Chief Minister stressed that sustained work and dedication toward public welfare leave a lasting impact on society.

NE Youth Cong delegation visits Anjel Chakma's home to console bereaved family



AGARTALA, Jan 3: A delegation of North East Youth Congress Coordination Committee (NEYCC) on Saturday met the father of Anjel Chakma who was killed by miscreants in Uttarakhand last month after he objected

to their racial slur.

NEYCC said they met the deceased's father, Tarun Prasad Chakma, at their home in Machmara in Tripura's Unakoti district. "Following an instruction from Rahul Gandhi, an eight-member

delegation of NEYCC visited the father of Anjel Chakma at Machmara and consoled the victim's family," Tripura Pradesh Youth Congress Committee president Neel Kamal Saha told the reporters.

Chakma, a 24-year-old student from the northeastern state was attacked by six men on December 9 in Dehradun and he succumbed to his injuries on December 26. He went there to pursue an MBA course.

"What has happened can't be undone, but we stand by the family in the hours of extreme grief. Rahul-ji has given a serious look at the way Anjel Chakma had become a victim of racial discrimination," he said.

Saha added that the Uttarakhand government must ensure capital punishment for those who are involved in the attack. (PTI)

OIL signs deed of agreement for composite licence of Phop Graphite in Arunachal's Yazali

ITANAGAR, Jan 3: OIL India Limited has signed a Deed of Agreement for Composite Licence of Phop Graphite and Vanadium block at Yazali circle in Arunachal Pradesh, an official statement said.

The agreement was signed on Thursday for the mineral block located in Keyi Panyor district in the presence of the state Geology and Mining secretary A K Singh, Chief General Manager of OIL Raghunath Mishra and Centre of Earth Science and Himalayan Studies (CESHS) Director Tana Taje, the statement said here on Friday.

Under the agreement, CESHS will join the project as a local partner with a 10 per cent stake.

As a local stakeholder with strong grassroots presence, CESHS will support preliminary and exploratory survey work and assist in coordination with local communities and authorities to ensure the smooth conduct of exploration activities.

Officials said OIL's technical expertise in mineral and resource exploration, combined with CESHS's

local knowledge and on-ground engagement is expected to improve operational efficiency, strengthen stakeholder coordination and promote responsible and sustainable mineral development in the region.

The signing of the agreement is seen as a major



milestone in India's critical minerals roadmap, aimed at enhancing resource security, boosting strategic self-reliance, supporting the energy transition and contributing to overall development in Arunachal Pradesh. (PTI)

1,800 kg waste cleared from Arunachal river in cleanliness drive by NGO

ITANAGAR, Jan 3: Around 1,800 kg of waste was removed from the Yagamso River during a cleanliness drive conducted by an NGO along the Energy park stretch here on Saturday.



The large volume of waste collected from the river mainly comprised household plastic items and debris from building construction, highlighting the growing im-

provement of urban water bodies, an NGO official said.

To ensure environmentally responsible disposal, the volunteers of Youth Mission for Clean River (YMCR) segregated the

waste at the site itself. Plastic waste and construction materials were transported to the dumping site for further processing, while organic wet waste was composted in nearby pits to naturally enrich the soil, the official said.

The drive witnessed active participation from the Nyishi Students' Union of Rajiv Gandhi University, along with social media influencers Shiva Tells and Deju Bayor, who joined hands to spread awareness on river conservation. (PTI)

Arunachal CM congratulates writer Subi Taba on winning literary award

Writer's short story collection 'Tales from the Dawn-Lit Mountains' wins best fiction award

ITANAGAR, Jan 3: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday congratulated renowned writer Subi Taba on winning the 'Ramnath Goenka Sahitya Samman 2025' in the best fiction category for her critically acclaimed short story collection 'Tales from the Dawn-Lit Mountains'.

The prestigious award, instituted by 'The New Indian Express Group', was presented at a ceremony in Chennai on Friday by Vice President C P Radhakrishnan, in the presence of eminent jury members, writers and cultural figures.

"Heartiest congratulations to Subi Taba on being conferred the Ramnath Goenka Sahitya Samman for Best Fiction 2025 for her acclaimed work Tales from the Dawn-Lit Mountains," Khandu said in an X post.

This prestigious recognition is a proud moment for Arunachal Pradesh and a significant milestone for contemporary literature from the Northeast, he added.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also congratulated the writer, stating that the achievement brings national recognition to the rich stories, culture and voices of Arunachal Pradesh and wished her continued

success in her literary journey.

"Tales from the Dawn-Lit Mountains: Stories from Arunachal Pradesh" is "a luminous work of fiction that gives voice to a landscape and people too rarely represented in Indian literature", according to the citation issued.

Rooted in oral traditions and shaped by a contemporary literary style, the collection was praised for capturing the rhythms of life in Arunachal Pradesh with quiet power and deep empathy.

The jury noted that through spare and evocative prose, Subi Taba explores themes of memory, belonging, loss and resilience, portraying mountain communities as they negotiate social and cultural change.

The citation added that the book expands the imaginative geography of Indian fiction and affirms storytelling as an act of cultural preservation and renewal.

The collection emerged as the Best Fiction title, surpassing other shortlisted works, including 'Heart Lamp' by Bhanu Mushtaq and 'The Girl with Seven Lives' by Vikas Swarup, the acclaimed author of 'Slumdog Millionaire'. (PTI)

Vision for inclusive growth and youth development discussed

CM calls on Guv KT Parnaik

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 3: State Chief Minister Pema Khandu called on the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd.), at Lok Bhavan, Itanagar, on January 2, 2026. During the meeting, they exchanged warm New Year greetings and reaffirmed their shared resolve to work together for peace, progress and the overall well-being of the State and its people.

During the interaction, the Governor shared his broad vision for Arunachal Pradesh for the New Year with the Chief Minister, underscoring a balanced and inclusive approach to development. He identified education, health, hydropower and tourism as the four key pillars, describing them as the "four wheels" driving the State's progress. Stressing the importance of investing in the future, the Governor called for a strong focus on youth development and capacity building in line with the national aspiration of Viksit Bharat@2047.

The Governor also briefed the Chief Minister on his recent engagements with the Vice President of India and the Chief of Defence Staff, as well as deliberations held during a high-level security review meeting at Lok Bhavan. He highlighted the relevance of these discussions to Arunachal Pradesh's strategic and developmental priorities.

The Chief Minister, in turn, apprised the Governor of ongoing developmental initiatives across



various districts of the State. He shared observations from his recent district tours and participation in the Dong Sunrise Festival, highlighting grassroots progress, public outreach efforts, inclusive growth initiatives and the promotion of the State's rich cultural heritage across Arunachal Pradesh.

2 arrested, arms and ammunition seized in Manipur

IMPHAL, Jan 3: Two persons have been arrested and arms and ammunition seized from their possession in separate incidents in Manipur's Imphal East district, police said on Saturday.

One person, identified as Thoudam Ranjan Singh (41), was arrested from the locality of his residence at Leimakhong Mapal Mamang Leikai on Thursday and nine 9mm cartridges were seized from his possession, a police statement said.

Security forces also arrested 35-year-old Karam Mani Meitei from his residence at Thongju Part-II, Pichu Lampak Ningombam Leirak on Friday and seized a 9mm pistol with magazine, it added. (PTI)

Assam man arrested with meth tablets worth ₹ 33 cr in Mizoram



AIZAWL, Jan 3: A man from Assam was arrested with methamphetamine tablets worth ₹ 33.18 crore in Mizoram's Saitual district, the Assam Rifles said on Saturday.

Acting on intelligence inputs related to drug trafficking near the India-Myanmar border, the Assam Rifles and the Mizoram Police conducted an operation in Keifang, about 67 km from Aizawl, on Friday, a statement said.

The operation resulted in the seizure of 11.06 kg of methamphetamine tablets, it said. One person was arrested for transporting the drugs, and his vehicle was seized, it added.

The arrested man was identified as Hasan Ali, a resident of Badapur in Assam, the statement said without providing any other details.

Meth is a powerful, highly addictive stimulant primarily used illegally for its intense euphoric effects. (PTI)

Tripura tightens border security amid reports of Bangladesh-based armed group movement

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Jan 3: In response to reports of movement by Bangladesh-based armed groups, including the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) and United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), the Gomati district administration has imposed restrictions under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023 and tightened security along parts of the international border.

The order, issued by Gomati District Magistrate Rinku Lather, cited information from the Commandant of the 159 Battalion, BSF Bagma, expressing concerns over potential infiltration by militants, Bangladesh nationals, Rohingyas and members of other militant organisations along the border stretch from BOP Labokant Para to BOP Chaplin Chera in Karbook Sub-Division. The report warned that such movement could involve criminal activities, smuggling and disturbance of public order.

"I am satisfied that there are sufficient grounds to impose restric-



tions under Section 163 of the BNSS, 2023, for ensuring peace and tranquillity by preventing the designs of anti-national elements and activities of associations inimical to the safety and security of the general public," the order stated.

The restrictions, effective from December 3, 2025, to February 28, 2026, include a prohibition on assembly of more than four persons between 6:00 PM and 6:00 AM without valid permission from local authorities, restriction on movement of the general public during the same period without written authorisation from the

SDM, Karbook and a ban on carrying lathis, firearms, or any weapons, except by police, CRPF, BSF, or other security personnel on duty. Residents living within 300 metres of the border are exempted from these restrictions.

The district administration has also alerted social organisations, local community leaders and residents to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activities to the authorities immediately, emphasising the need for cooperation from all sections of society to maintain safety and peace in the sensitive border region.

AR Chief Secretary discusses governance reforms and AI-driven solutions with Governor

Parnaik stresses AI, digital infrastructure and evidence-based governance for sustainable development

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 3: State Chief Secretary Manish Gupta paid a courtesy call on the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd.), at Lok Bhavan, Itanagar, on Friday. During the meeting, both dignitaries exchanged New Year greetings.

During the interaction, the Governor shared his guidance on strengthening governance and improving service delivery across key sectors. He advised closer monitoring of developmental projects through the effective use of geospatial technologies, emphasising transparency, timely execution and evidence-based decision-making.

The Governor also underscored the importance of enhancing productivity and competitiveness in both the manufacturing and services sectors. He highlighted the need to accelerate structural transformation by investing in robust infrastructure, improving efficiency and adopting cutting-edge technologies to ensure sustainable and inclusive growth.

The Governor discussed the possibilities of exploring practical AI-driven solutions in governance and development, while stressing the need to further scale up and effectively utilise India's Digital Public Infrastructure. He noted that these measures would help improve outcomes, expand access and strengthen citizen-centric services across the State.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary apprised the Governor about ongoing initiatives related to urban development, the status of hydropower projects, security concerns in the eastern districts and the forthcoming meeting of the North Eastern Council.

Siraj makes ODI comeback for NZ series, Shreyas included subject to fitness

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: Senior India fast bowler Mohammed Siraj on Saturday made a comeback to the ODI side for the three-match home series against New Zealand while batter Shreyas Iyer was included subject to fitness clearance.

Siraj, who was overlooked for the home series against South Africa, is back in the ODI setup. His new ball partner Jasprit Bumrah was expectedly rested from the series with the focus on the shortest format ahead of the T20 World Cup beginning next month.

Iyer, who was hospitalised during the ODI series in Australia in November for spleen laceration, will need to prove his match fitness in a Vijay Hazare Trophy game on January 6 to get fitness clearance from the Centre of Excellence (COE). He returns to the squad as vice-captain.

Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya was not cleared by the COE to bowl 10 overs in a match and therefore the selectors did not include him in the team for the series beginning in Vadodara on January 11. There is also little point in risking him with T20 showpiece around the corner.

The other two matches will be played in Rajkot and Indore on January 14 and 18 respectively.



"Shreyas Iyer's availability is subject to fitness clearance from BCCI COE," said the BCCI in a statement.

"Hardik Pandya has not been cleared by the BCCI COE to bowl 10 overs in a match,

and considering the ICC Men's T20 World Cup to follow, his workload is being managed," it added.

Ruturaj Gaikwad could not get the selectors' nod despite scoring a fine hundred dur-

ing the South Africa series. With captain Shubman Gill and Shreyas Iyer not part of the South Africa ODIs due to injuries, Gaikwad had made a splendid 105 off 83 balls batting at number four in Raipur.

After being dropped from the T20 World Cup squad, Gill will take back the ODI leadership mantle from KL Rahul, who led the team in the former's absence.

Despite speculation, Rishabh Pant has retained his place as the second wicket-keeper in the squad.

Tilak Varma and Dhruv Jurel, who were part of the previous series, have been left out with senior players returning from injuries.

The pace attack comprises Siraj, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh with all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy being the fourth option.

India superstars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, now one format players, are once again expected to draw huge crowds to the three venues.

India ODI squad for NZ series: Shubman Gill (C), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul (WK), Shreyas Iyer (VC); subject to fitness clearance), Washington Sundar, Ravindra Jadeja, Mohd Siraj, Harshit Rana, Prasad Krishna, Kuldeep Yadav, Rishabh Pant (WK), Nitish Kumar Reddy, Arshdeep Singh, Yashasvi Jaiswal. (PTI)

Hardik Pandya smashes five sixes in an over in VHT, goes on to make 133



RAJKOT, Jan 3: India all-rounder Hardik Pandya on Saturday clobbered nearly half a dozen sixes including five in an over on way to a 93-ball 133, for Baroda against Vidarbha in their Vijay Hazare Trophy contest here.

Pandya hit an overall 11 sixes and eight fours to turn the tables on Vidarbha, who had taken control of the game by reducing Baroda to 71 for five at one stage and then 136 for six in the first half.

However, batting as low as No 7 in his first match of the competition, Pandya came out all guns blazing to bring up his maiden List A century in his 119th match, taking Baroda to a competitive total of 293 for nine in their 50

overs. In the 39th over, Pandya went after Vidarbha spinner Parth Rekhade to collect a total of 34 runs which included five sixes and a four.

The first five balls of the left-arm spinner went flying over the ropes while the final ball was hit for a boundary.

Pandya's innings included only 31 singles as he launched the counter-attack, hitting most of his sixes in the midwicket region and over long-on. A few also went flying over long-off.

Pandya's domination could also be gauged with the fact that the next best batter in Baroda's innings was Vishnu Solanki, who made 26. (PTI)

Austria's Janine Flock wins World Cup skeleton race

SYDNEY, Jan 3: Police with long-armed rifles, a rarity at sporting events in Australia, will patrol the final Ashes cricket test in Sydney starting Sunday as part of heightened security measures following the Bondi Beach terror attack in the city. Uniformed and mounted police along with public order and riot squad officers will watch over the sold-out match at the Sydney Cricket Ground. It comes three weeks after two gunmen killed 15 people and injured many more at a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi.



The increased visibility of the rifles is intended to reassure the public and there is no threat to the community, New South Wales state Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon said Saturday. "Many people may not be used to seeing police carrying rifles at sporting events, but our objective here is to help the public feel safe and police will be out in force," he said. "The difference will be in the visibility of long-arms and a stronger presence. Police will otherwise be targeting anti-social and unsafe behavior as usual."

The measures are similar to those for the fourth Ashes test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground which began Dec. 26 where specialist police officers were armed with semiautomatic rifles and patrolled around the busy stadium, a nearby park and railway station. Seven people remain hospitalized following the Dec. 14 attack at Bondi. Six remain in stable condition, while one is in a critical but stable condition.

Naveed Akram, 24, one of the two accused gunmen, is facing 59 charges over the attack that includes 15 counts of murder. Akram was shot by police at the scene and spent days in a coma before being charged. His father Sajid Akram, 50, was killed by police at the scene. (AP)

MI Emirates crush Abu Dhabi Knight Riders by 7 wickets to reach ILT20 final

SHARJAH, Jan 3: MI Emirates produced a robust all-round performance to crush Abu Dhabi Knight Riders by seven wickets and qualify for the final of the ILT20 tournament here.

MI Emirates will take on the Desert Vipers in the tournament's summit clash on Sunday.

In a low-scoring game, MI Emirates responded with 122 for three after restricting the Knight Riders for a mere 120 for eight.

Alishan Sharafu scored a 40-ball

50 for the Knight Riders for a lone hand but MI Emirates kept chipping away with regular wickets.

Muhammad Rohid returned 4-0-19-2 in a measly spell in which he dismissed Brandon McCullen (13) and Liam Livingstone (4), but it was AM Ghazanfar who was the pick among the bowlers with 4-0-24-3, accounting for Alex Hales (29), Jason Holder (1) and Sunil Narine (4).

Fazalhaq Farooqi also chipped in with a couple of wickets to re-

Vijay Hazare: Pant's unbeaten half-ton in big Delhi win over Services

BENGALURU, Jan 3: India keeper-batter Rishabh Pant overcame a patchy form to strike an unbeaten half-century as Delhi thrashed Services by eight wickets to return to winning ways in a fifth-round Vijay Hazare Trophy Group D match here on Saturday.

Delhi rode on opener Priyansh Arya (72 not out off 45 balls) and Pant's (67 not out off 37 balls) half-tons to overhaul Services' meagre total of 178 all out in just 19.4 overs. The Pant-led side drastically improved their net run rate (NRR), which was battered following their crushing defeat by Odisha in the previous round in Alur.

Delhi are back on top of the table with 16 points and a healthy NRR of +0.803, followed by Haryana (16 points, +0.460), Odisha, Railways and Saurashtra are on 12 points each while Gujarat are on eight points.

This was Pant's second half-century in five games and came after two below-par performances with the bat. The timely unbeaten half-century came on a day when Pant was named in India's squad for the three-match ODI series against New Zealand start-

ing on January 11. Delhi had slumped from pole position to fourth spot in the group following their 79-run defeat to Odisha, which was chiefly due to Pant's mixed fortunes this season in the domestic 50-over tournament and the top-order batters failing to fire.

But on Saturday, there were no such troubles for Delhi as India pacer Harshit Rana (4/47) and upcoming right-arm quick Prince Yadav (3/28) proving more than a handful for a weak Services batting line-up that struggled to come to terms with quality bowling. Veteran pace bowler Isant Sharma (1/16) too chipped in with a wicket as Services' folded up in 42.5 overs after the team was reduced to 82 for 5 in the 26th over.

Delhi opener Priyansh Arya absorbed the early shock of losing opener Sarthak Ranjan for 4 by stitching together a 93-run stand with Nitish Rana (32 runs off 33 balls) following which he shared an unbeaten 85-run partnership with Pant to compete the formalities even before the 20-over mark had been crossed.

Pant, with his free-flowing style of stroke-making, struck four boundaries

and six maximums at a strike rate touching 182, while Arya matched his captain by striking nine boundaries and three sixes.

Axar Patel strikes century
Leading India all-rounder Axar Patel struck his maiden List A century -- 130 (111 balls) -- as Gujarat defeated Andhra by seven runs in a thrilling game in Alur.

Patel, playing his first Vijay Hazare match this season following the T20I series against South Africa recently, stabilised the innings just when his team was struggling at 99 for 5. He struck 10 boundaries and five sixes, and shared a 142-run stand with Vishal Jaiswal (70 off 60 balls) for the sixth wicket as Gujarat built a sizeable total.

Haryana beat Odisha
Haryana, riding on young Parth Vats' superb all-round display (3/60 and 157 not out), aed a stiff 306-run chase versus Odisha with right balls to spare.

The 21-year-old Vats, who made his Ranji Trophy debut this season, struck his second domestic century, and first List A ton, in style by smashing 13 fours and five sixes. (PTI)

Rifle-toting police will patrol the 5th Ashes cricket test in Sydney following Bondi shootings

SYDNEY, Jan 3: Police with long-armed rifles, a rarity at sporting events in Australia, will patrol the final Ashes cricket test in Sydney starting Sunday as part of heightened security measures following the Bondi Beach terror attack in the city.

Uniformed and mounted police along with public order and riot squad officers will watch over the sold-out match at the Sydney Cricket Ground. It comes three weeks after two gunmen killed 15 people and injured many more at a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi.

The increased visibility of the rifles is intended to reassure the public and there is no threat to the community, New South Wales state Police Commissioner Mal Lanyon said Saturday.

"Many people may not be used to seeing police carrying rifles at sporting events, but our objective here is to help the public feel safe and police will be out in force,"

he said. "The difference will be in the visibility of long-arms and a stronger presence. Police will otherwise be targeting anti-social and unsafe behavior as usual."

The measures are similar to those for the fourth Ashes test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground which began Dec. 26 where specialist police officers were armed with semiautomatic rifles and patrolled around the busy stadium, a nearby park and railway station.

Seven people remain hospitalized following the Dec. 14 attack at Bondi. Six remain in stable condition, while one is in a critical but stable condition.

Naveed Akram, 24, one of the two accused gunmen, is facing 59 charges over the attack that includes 15 counts of murder. Akram was shot by police at the scene and spent days in a coma before being charged. His father Sajid Akram, 50, was killed by police at the scene. (AP)

Would love to see one bowler allowed to bowl a fifth over in T20 cricket: Simon Taufel

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: Former umpire Simon Taufel has called for a better balance between bat and ball in T20 cricket, suggesting that one bowler should be allowed to bowl five overs instead of the existing four-over quota.

Currently, every bowler is permitted a maximum of four overs in the shortest format and Taufel, regarded as one of the greatest umpires of the modern era, believes relaxing the restriction for one bowler could add a new tactical dimension to the game.

"I've made a couple of suggestions to a couple of different leagues, which are yet to be given the time of day. But I'd love to see - I'd love to see again - bat and ball be more equalised in limited-overs cricket," the 54-year-old Australian told Cricbuzz.

"I'd love to see in T20 cricket, one bowler bowl a fifth over. If a batter can be out there for the whole innings and score 100 from ball number one, we're limiting all the bowlers to four overs."

"Can we actually maybe give one bowler one extra over, to try to even up a dominant batter ver-



sus a dominant bowler? You know, so those sorts of things. I'd just like to see how we can rebalance the scales a bit," he added. Taufel, who won five consecutive ICC Umpire of the Year awards between 2004 and 2008, said he does not endorse all recent rule changes, including the Impact Player rule and strategic timeouts.

"Not all changes are good. Sometimes things aren't broken. And we go changing things just for the sake of a marketing gimmick, which, we've got to be careful in that space," he said.

When further prodded, Taufel said: "Well, look, IPL has the Impact Player. ILT20 has (a) Super Sub. My core cricket tells me that I'd love to see 11 (players taking) on 11. I'd love to see all-rounders, more all-rounders in the game." (PTI)

Paarl Royals pip MI Cape Town by one run in SA20

PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA), Jan 3: Lhuan-dre Pretorius hammered 98 not out as Paarl Royals extended MI Cape Town's winless streak by a narrow one-run victory in their SA20 encounter here.

Pretorius missed out on a personal milestone by a narrow margin but his 65-ball knock with 10 fours and a six pushed the Royals to a daunting total of 181 for three. In reply, MI Cape Town finished at 180 for eight.

Ryan Rickelton (36) and Rassie van der Dussen (59 off 42 balls; 2 fours, 5 sixes) got MI Cape Town off the blocks with a robust start as they added 77 runs for the first wicket inside eight overs in their chase.

However, MI Cape Town lost wickets in heaps once the partnership was broken, slipping to 118 for six by the 15th over as none among Nicholas Pooran (12), Jason Smith (1), Jacques Snyman (2) and Tom Moores (0) could make an impact.

It was Sikandar Raza (4-0-27-3) who caused the damage, dismissing Rickelton, Pooran and Moores in the middle overs to put the Royals in command.

MI Cape Town skipper Rashid Khan (35 off 18 balls; 2 fours, 3



sixes) then joined forces with George Linde (20 not out) with a 51-run partnership for the seventh wicket to revive his side.

With 15 runs needed off the final over, MI Cape Town lost two wickets in the final over in form of Rashid and Kagiso Rabada with Otneil Baartman finishing with 4-0-51-4.

MI Cape Town needed seven

more runs off the last two balls, but only managed a single off the penultimate delivery and a four off the last to finish one run short.

Earlier in the first half, the young Pretorius was in his elements to get the Royals off to a strong start.

With Asa Tribe (51 off 34 balls; 5 fours, 1 six) in tow, he put on 100 runs for the first wicket in 10.4

overs to set up a strong platform but the Royals did slow down in their second half.

Skipper David Miller, coming off a match-winning half-century in their last outing, managed 19 with three fours as the Royals finished at 180 for three.

Rashid was the pick among the bowlers for MI Cape Town, returning 4-0-31-2. (PTI)

Stan Wawrinka opens his 2026 farewell tour with a stirring comeback win at the United Cup



PERTH, Jan 3: Stan Wawrinka's 40-year-old legs didn't let him down over three-plus hours in his first singles match of a 2026 farewell tour on Saturday.

Three-time Grand Slam singles champion Wawrinka beat Arthur Rinderknech of France, who is ranked 29th to Wawrinka's 157th, 5-7, 7-6 (5), 7-6 (5). The match went 3 hours, 16 minutes.

Wawrinka announced in December that this year would be his last on the ATP tour.

"Today was a tough battle... it's amazing to come here for the first time, to have so much support," Wawrinka said Saturday. "Twenty years on tour, you kind of always play in the same place and tournaments. So for me it's amazing to have this opportunity this year to play in Perth."

Ahead of his first match, Wawrinka said he hoped to improve on his current ranking and move back into the top 100 before he retires. His highest ranking was No. 3, achieved when he won the Australian Open in 2014.

"I'm happy with the decision (to retire) and feeling at peace with that," Wawrinka said.

The United Cup is among a number of tournaments being played over the next two weeks Down Under ahead of the Australian Open which begins in Melbourne on Jan. 18.

His teammate Belinda Bencic started off the tie Saturday with a 6-2, 6-4 win over France's Leolia Jeanjean, giving the Swiss team a winning 2-0 lead. (AP)