



- Gen Z revolters angry at govt they installed after Nepal's protests
- Denmark, Greenland seek talks with Rubio after WH says again it wants the island
- Prima facie no bar on LS Speaker in setting up inquiry panel to probe Justice Yashwant Varma: SC
- People dying not only due to dog bites but also because of road accidents caused by strays: SC

Pijush reviews development works in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau
 DIPHU, Jan 7: Assam Minister for Water Resources, Information & Public Relations, and Social Justice & Empowerment Pijush Hazarika arrived in Diphu on Tuesday evening to review developmental projects and assess the organisational strength of the Bharatiya Janata Party across Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts. Immediately after his arrival on January 6, the Minister held a strategic interaction with BJP leaders and party workers at the Arboretum-cum-Craft Centre at Matipung.

The 90-minute meeting, which began at 7 pm, focused on the implementation and monitoring of development and welfare schemes under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

During the interaction, discussions centred on addressing challenges in scheme implementation and gathering feedback from the grassroots. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SPECIAL REVISION ROW IN ASSAM
'Preparing correct poll rolls sans 'illegal Miyas' BJP's agenda'

DHEMAJI/DHAKUAKHANA/ GUWAHATI, Jan 7: Amid allegations of "irregularities" in the draft voter rolls published after the Special Revision (SR), Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said preparing a correct list is "BJP's agenda" in order to delete the names of Bangladeshis and "illegal Miyas."

The state has registered a 1.35 per cent increase in voters according to the integrated draft electoral rolls for the state published on December 30 after the SR.

"Correct voter list is BJP's agenda. Otherwise, what have we done to delete Bangladeshi names from voter lists? There is nothing to hide that retrieving land from Bangladeshis is our agenda," Sarma told reporters.

A political controversy has erupted after Rajgor Dal president and MLA Akhil Gogoi alleged that



state BJP chief and MP Dilip Saikia directed party leaders to delete 10,000 valid "anti-BJP votes" from 60 assembly constituencies, a charge the ruling party has strongly denied.

"Is it not our responsibility to check that illegal Miyas' names are not included in the voter lists. Checking that our lands are not under the control of illegal Miyas is our duty. People had voted for us to do these works only," Sarma said.

"Miyas' is originally a pejorative term used for Bengali-speaking

Muslims in Assam and the non-Bengali speaking people generally identify them as Bangladeshi immigrants. In recent years, activists from the community have started adopting this term as a gesture of defiance.

Asked about Gogoi's allegations, Sarma said, "Akhil Gogoi does a lot of entertainment, and he does not know the rules. You (journalists) watch his press meets and Facebook live after the day's work at night, you will enjoy it as entertainment."

He added that if there is any doubtful citizen, every Indian citizen can complain by filling form Nos 6, 7 and 8 before the Election Commission.

"But the names will not be automatically removed. First a notice will be sent and a reply will be filed. Every political party appoints booth-level (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Jihadi elements present in Assam, says Himanta

CM raises B'desh instability, rising fundamentalist activity before Shah

HT Bureau
 GUWAHATI, Jan 7: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said he has discussed with Union Home Minister Amit Shah the increasing activities of fundamentalist elements in Assam ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, while warning that the evolving situation in neighbouring Bangladesh could have serious security implications for the state.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an official function at Dhakuakhana, Sarma said that after nearly four-and-a-half years of relative peace in Assam, there has been a sudden surge in the activities of fundamentalist forces.

"A big conspiracy is going on in Assam. I spoke to the Union Home Minister yesterday. Assam remained peaceful for the last four-and-a-half years, but suddenly

fundamentalist forces have become active," he said, urging people to maintain unity and peace until the elections are over.

The Chief Minister said security forces have apprehended several people entering Assam from Bangladesh in recent times, adding that the situation across the international border cannot be viewed in isolation.

He expressed concern over reports of increasing violence and harassment of Hindus in Bangladesh, stating that such developments could have a direct impact on Assam due to its sensitive geographical and geopolitical location.

"Whatever is happening in Bangladesh is a matter of serious concern. Torture and harassment of Hindus are reportedly increasing, and this could have implications for Assam as (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

PM Modi, Himanta, others mourn demises of BJP veteran
Ex-Union Minister Kabindra Purkayastha dies

HT Bureau
 GUWAHATI, Jan 7: Veteran Bharatiya Janata Party leader from Assam and former Union Minister Kabindra Purkayastha passed away on Wednesday at Silchar Medical College and Hospital following prolonged age-related illness. He was 94.

His death has drawn widespread tributes from across the political spectrum, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma leading the condolences.



In a message posted on X, Prime Minister Modi expressed deep sorrow over Purkayastha's demise, remembering him as a committed public servant who played a vital role in Assam's political and social life.

The Prime Minister said Purkayastha's dedication to public service and his contribution to strengthening the BJP in Assam would always be remembered, and extended condolences to his family and admirers.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

37 Assam youth meet Guv ahead of Viksit Bharat Dialogue 2026

HT Bureau
 GUWAHATI, Jan 7: A delegation of 37 young leaders from Assam, selected under the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, called on Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at Lok Bhavan here on Wednesday evening.

The delegation will represent Assam at the national-level Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue, to be held as part of the National Youth Festival at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi from January 9 to 12, 2026. Interacting with the young (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

NDA seat-sharing likely to be finalised by February 15
New faces will have advantage, says Himanta

DHEMAJI/DHAKUAKHANA, Jan 7: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said he met Union Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss the seat-sharing agreement with NDA partners for the upcoming assembly elections in the state.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an official function, Sarma said the BJP is likely to formalise its seat-sharing arrangement with the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and other smaller NDA allies by February 15.

Last month, Sarma had said the

finalisation of the alliance with existing NDA partners was expected to be over by January 15.

"Our seat sharing and other details related to the alliance will be finalised by February 15. Last night, I went to meet the Union home minister and discussed it. Hagrama Mohilary (BPF chief) was also with me during the meeting," the CM said.

Prior to this meeting, UPPL president Pramod Boro had also met Shah, he added.

The CM went to Delhi on Tuesday in a special flight and re-

turned on Wednesday morning.

"Yesterday, I had a long discussion with AGP president Atul Bora. Our discussions are going on. We will amicably decide on a seat-sharing agreement and there will be no issue at all," Sarma said.

He, however, did not share any reason for the delay of a month in finalising the seat-sharing agreement and other details for the elections.

Sarma also said new faces always get an advantage in every election and this time will not be

different.

The BJP currently has an alliance with AGP, United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF).

Besides, Rabha Hasong Joutha Sangram Samiti (RHJSS) and Janashakti Party (JP) are also NDA constituents in Assam.

On December 5, Sarma said, "I feel we will complete our discussion with AGP regarding poll alliance and seat-sharing before Magh Bihu." In the same manner, BJP's talks with the RHJSS and JP would (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Government of Assam

National Textile Ministers' Conference

8-9 January 2026

Assam warmly welcomes

all the Textile Ministers and participants from various states across the country

Guwahati, Assam | Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

Grok obscene AI content: X submits response, IT Ministry examining it, say sources



NEW DELHI, Jan 7: The IT Ministry is examining the response and submissions made by X following a government directive to crack down on misuse of artificial intelligence chatbot Grok by users for the creation of sexualised and obscene images of women and minors, sources said.

X had been given extended time until Wednesday, 5 PM to submit a detailed Action Taken Report to the ministry, after a stern warning was issued to the Elon Musk-led social media platform over indecent and sexually-explicit content being generated through misuse of AI-based services like 'Grok' and other tools.

Sources told PTI that X has submitted their response, and it is under examination.

The details of X's submission were, however, not immediately known.

On Sunday, X's 'Safety' handle said it takes action against illegal content on its platform, including Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), by removing it, permanently suspending ac-

counts, and working with local governments and law enforcement as necessary.

"Anyone using or prompting Grok to make illegal content will suffer the same consequences as if they upload illegal content," X had said, reiterating the stance taken by Musk on illegal content.

On January 2, the IT Ministry pulled up X and directed it to immediately remove all vulgar, obscene and unlawful content, especially generated by Grok (X's built-in artificial intelligence interface) or face action under the law.

In the directive on Friday, the ministry asked the US-based social media firm to submit a detailed action taken report (ATR) within 72 hours, spelling out specific technical and organisational measures adopted or proposed in relation to the Grok application; the role and oversight exercised by the Chief Compliance Officer; actions taken against offending content, users and accounts; as well as mechanisms to ensure compliance with the mandatory reporting requirement under In-

dian laws.

The IT Ministry, in the ultimatum issued, noted that Grok AI, developed by X and integrated on the platform, is being misused by users to create fake accounts to host, generate, publish or share obscene images or videos of women in a derogatory or vulgar manner.

"Importantly, this is not limited to creation of fake accounts but also targets women who host or publish their images or videos, through prompts, image manipulation and synthetic outputs," the ministry said, asserting that such conduct reflects a serious failure of platform-level safeguards and enforcement mechanisms, and amounts to gross misuse of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in violation of stipulated laws.

The government made it clear to X that compliance with the IT Act and rules is not optional, and that the statutory exemptions under section 79 of the IT Act (which deals with safe harbour and immunity from liability for online intermediaries) are condi-

tional upon strict observance of due diligence obligations.

"Accordingly, you are advised to strictly desist from the hosting, displaying, uploading, publication, transmission, storage, sharing of any content on your platform that is obscene, pornographic, vulgar, indecent, sexually explicit, paedophilic, or otherwise prohibited under any law..." the ministry said.

The government warned X in clear terms that any failure to observe due diligence obligations shall result in the loss of the exemption from liability under section 79 of the IT Act, and that the platform will also be liable for consequential action under other laws, including the IT Act and Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

It asked X to enforce user terms of service and AI usage restrictions, including ensuring strong deterrent measures such as suspension, termination and other enforcement actions against violating users and accounts.

X has also been asked to remove or disable access "without delay" to all content already generated or disseminated in violation of applicable laws, in strict compliance with the timelines prescribed under the IT Rules, 2021, without, as such, vitiating the evidence.

Besides India, the platform has drawn flak in the UK and Malaysia too. Ofcom, the UK's independent communications regulator, in a recent social media post, said: "We are aware of serious concerns raised about a feature on Grok on X that produces unaddressed images of people and sexualised images of children".

"We have made urgent contact with X and xAI to understand what steps they have taken to comply with their legal duties to protect users in the UK. Based on their response, we will undertake a swift assessment to determine whether there are potential compliance issues that warrant investigation," Ofcom said. (PTI)

Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles' Yezdi Adventure and Roadster go online on Amazon and Flipkart

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 7: Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles has made its top-selling models—the 2025 Yezdi Adventure and the 2025 Yezdi Roadster—available for online booking on Amazon India and Flipkart.

Previously sold only through showrooms and recording strong festive sales compared to last year, the two motorcycles are now accessible to customers across India through the country's largest e-commerce platforms, expanding the brand's digital reach and convenience for riders.

With the entire new line-up now online, the company is building on a successful digital debut last year.

It was the first to list premium classic motorcycles on Flipkart, followed by Amazon.

The online retail model is supported by an expanding dealership network across core markets, enabling customers to move seamlessly from discovery to booking, while final fulfilment continues through authorised dealers.

Commenting on the launch, Anupam Thareja, Co-founder of Jawa

Yezdi Motorcycles, said that bringing the brand's two most popular models to Amazon and Flipkart would make it easier for riders nationwide to experience classic motorcycling.

He said the 2025 Adventure and Roadster had drawn an overwhelming response in showrooms and that online retail would simplify the process, allowing dealerships to focus on delivering the motorcycle to the rider in the most convenient way.

Under the online purchase process, customers pay the ex-showroom booking amount on Amazon or Flipkart. An authorised local dealer then confirms the order and guides the buyer through the remaining on-road payment.

Registration and insurance are completed at the dealership, followed by the final handover, while accessories and add-ons continue to be purchased through dealers.

Platform-specific offers are also available.

Amazon is offering credit card cashback of up to ₹6,500, 5 per cent cashback for Amazon Prime customers on the Amazon Pay ICICI co-

branded credit card, and no-cost EMI options of up to six months. Flipkart is providing bank offers of up to ₹10,000 and credit card cashback of up to ₹4,000.

The models listed online include the 2025 Yezdi Adventure and the 2025 Roadster, along with the full Jawa portfolio comprising the Jawa 350, 42, 42 FJ, 42 Bobber and Perak.

The brand's e-commerce network currently operates across 44 cities with 55 dealers onboard, covering key markets in the south, north, east and west of the country.

All Jawa and Yezdi motorcycles are covered under the comprehensive 'Jawa Yezdi BSA Ownership Assurance Programme'.

The programme includes a four-year or 50,000-kilometre standard warranty, extended warranty options of up to six years, a two-year anytime warranty within six years of ownership, one year of complimentary roadside assistance extendable up to eight years, and a five-year comprehensive AMC package aimed at predictable servicing costs and hassle-free ownership.

A Saucy Start to 2026 with KFC India's All New Dunked Range

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 7: The new year is set to get a whole lot saucier as KFC India rolls out its all-new Dunked range, bringing a bold, fiery and sauce-loaded twist to some of its most loved favourites.

Described as an "awesome sauce-some" offering, the Dunked range features KFC's iconic finger lickin' good chicken fully dunked, not dipped, in an all-new Fiery Texas BBQ sauce. Designed for those who like their chicken bold and indulgent, the range promises a saucy experience in every bite.

The new line-up includes the classic Chicken Zinger Burger loaded with juicy chicken fillets, along with drool-worthy Chicken Wings, crispy Chicken Leg Pieces, and Boneless Chicken Strips, all generously coated in the Fiery Texas BBQ sauce.

The Dunked range is available across all 1,300+ KFC restaurants in India for dine-in and takeaway, and can also be ordered via the KFC app and website, as well as through leading food delivery platforms.

Prices for the all-new Dunked range start at just ₹89.

Shyam Steel ropes in Harmanpreet Kaur as brand ambassador

KOLKATA, Jan 7: TMT bars producer Shyam Steel on Wednesday announced the appointment of Indian women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur as its brand ambassador. As part of the partnership, Kaur will also be associated with the company's digital home-building platform, which offers support for homeowners from planning and material selection to execution and final possession.

"This partnership represents a shared belief in discipline, determination and reliability and values that define both the company and Harmanpreet Kaur," Shyam Steel Director Lalit Beriwal said. (PTI)

NAME CORRECTION

I, Asrab Ali, C/O-Hachen Ali, R/O-Vill-2 no. Gagalmari, P.S.-Mayong, Dist- Morigaon (Assam) have corrected my name from date of birth through an Executive Magistrate, Morigaon on 03/01/2026. In my Aadhar card bearing no. 369641457444 and Pan card bearing no. EXQPA2298B where my name has been recorded as Ashraw Ali instead of Asrab Ali and my date of birth has been recorded as 01/01/1966 instead of 01/04/1968. It is true. Asrab Ali and Ashraw Ali is the same and one person..

Maa Kamakhya Associates launches 'The Gardener' and 'Amsoi' packet tea brands

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 7: Maa Kamakhya Associates has launched its branded packet tea portfolio under The Gardener and Amsoi, expanding its presence in the organised tea segment.

The portfolio is structured across three segments—The Gardener as a super-premium brand, Amsoi Premium for the premium segment, and Amsoi Kadak as a value offering.

The Amsoi range is currently available across multiple states including Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Maharashtra, Telangana, Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, with further expansion planned across eastern, northeastern and southern India. Products are also available online.

The brands source tea from the group's own estates in Cachar, Nagaon and Kokrajhar, along with trusted bought-leaf partners across Assam.

The range includes CTC blends, CTC with orthodox leaf and elaiichi blends, green tea, and a premium Darjeeling-Assam golden tippy orthodox blend, offered in



poly pouches, bags and jars.

Pareesh Sharma, Director, Nutratea Industry Group, said the focus is on building scalable brands rooted in Assam's tea heritage.

Haradhan Ghosh said the clearly defined segments would support steady growth, while Sudip Poddar

said the strategy ensures strong distribution across general trade, modern trade and online channels.

Maa Kamakhya Associates operates under the Nutratea Industry Group, which has over 35 years of business legacy, a turnover exceeding ₹100 crore and a workforce of more than 1,100 employees.

Contd. from Page 1...

Pijush reviews development

Emphasis was laid on ensuring that government initiatives reach every eligible beneficiary without administrative hurdles. Party leaders stressed that development should not remain limited to official records but must be visible and meaningful at the household level.

Party workers were also urged to act as a bridge between the government and the public by communicating government achievements while conveying public feedback and concerns to the leadership.

Speaking after the meeting, Minister Hazarika said the visit was aimed at reviewing the party's organisational preparedness in the hill districts. He stated that the BJP's objective is to secure victory in all five Assembly constituencies in the region by strengthening its strategy and deepening public outreach.

Responding to a media query on land-related issues, the Minister adopted a firm stance on unauthorised settlements, stating that eviction drives would continue and encroachers would be removed in accordance with the law. The review meeting was attended by several senior leaders, including Amarsing Tisso, Tuliram Ronghang, Roland Killing, along with local MLAs, Executive Members (EMs) and Members of the Autonomous Council (MACs).

'Preparing correct poll

agents (BLA) so that he can assist in the correction of the voter list," Sarma said.

He explained that if anyone is deceased, his name will be removed. If anyone has two entries, the name from one place will be deleted. "Otherwise, Rahul Gandhi will hold a press conference to allege that names were present in two places. That is why a correct voter list is a duty of every political party. I will appeal to Congress also to help the government in deleting the names of the deceased," the CM said.

Meanwhile, Saikia in a press conference in Guwahati launched a scathing attack on Gogoi and denied the allegations made by the opposition leader. "Akhil Gogoi has no moral or political strength. He is trying to fool the people. The demand for a correct and error-free voters' list is legitimate and essential for democracy," the Lok Sabha MP said. He further accused Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) chief Lurinjyoti Gogoi of being "excessively sympathetic" towards illegal immigrants and alleged that Akhil Gogoi shares the same mindset.

Saikia also clubbed Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi with them, stating that all the three share a "dangerous mindset" that could harm the state.

According to Akhil Gogoi, Dilip Saikia in a video conference on January 4 evening allegedly directed Assam Minister Ashok Singhal to take charge of voter list "corrections" in 60 assembly constituencies with the objective of deleting the names of eligible voters from the electoral rolls.

The Congress has been claiming "serious irregularities" in the draft electoral rolls, published after the SR of the voter lists. Leader of the Opposition in Assam Assembly, Debabrata Saikia, wrote a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar demanding halting of the finalisation of the electoral rolls until all "irregularities are thoroughly verified and resolved" to ensure removal of any "unauthorised or unknown" voter entries.

The draft rolls reflected a total of 2,52,01,624 electors, representing a 1.35 per cent increase from the previous final rolls published in January 2025. A total of 7,86,841 additions and 4,47,196 deletions have taken place from January 6 to December 27 last year. During the SR process, 4,78,992 deceased electors and 5,23,680 shifted electors were identified. Another 53,619 multiple entries were identified.

The Election Commission, however, said these names have not yet been deleted. These will only be processed for removal or shifting after formal applications are received during the current claims and objections period.

Claims and objections can be filed from December 27 to January 22 with special campaign dates fixed for January 3-4 and January 10-11. The final electoral rolls will be published on February 10. (PTI)

Jihadi elements present

well. We must remain cautious and vigilant till the elections," Sarma said.

He also appealed for unity and calm, stressing that peace at the grassroots level is crucial during this sensitive period. Referring to recent political and social developments in Bangladesh, the Chief Minister said incidents of mob violence and targeted attacks on minority communities have intensified in the past few weeks.

He said the Assam government and security agencies are closely monitoring the situation to prevent any spillover effects. At the same time, he emphasised the need to extend moral support and reassurance to the Hindu community in Bangladesh. Highlighting internal security concerns, Sarma said extremist elements have existed in Assam for years and continue to pose a threat. "There is no denying that jihadi elements have been present in Assam. We have received evidence of this repeatedly. Some of them may still be operating as sleeper cells," he said.

In December last year, police arrested 11 people in Assam and Tripura for their alleged links with Bangladesh-based fundamentalist groups that were reportedly aiming to destabilise the Northeast. Sarma said such incidents underline the need for sustained vigilance, strong intelligence gathering and proactive security measures.

According to the 2022 census, Bangladesh has around 13.13 million Hindus, constituting nearly eight per cent of its population. The Chief Minister reiterated that Assam's strategic location makes it particularly vulnerable to cross-border and internal security challenges, and maintaining peace and stability remains a top priority for the state government. (With inputs from PTI)

Ex-Union Minister

described Purkayastha's passing as a loss that leaves a void which can never be filled.

Recalling his long association with the veteran leader, Sarma said he would always cherish the guidance and lessons he received from him. He noted that Purkayastha was known for his simplicity, values and unwavering commitment to sewa bhav, and that his life was dedicated to the welfare of displaced Hindu refugees, marginalised communities and the overall development of Assam.

Born in 1931 at Kamarkhal in Sylhet, Purkayastha began his public life by joining the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in 1951 and later played a key role in spreading its ideology across Assam and the Northeast, particularly in the Barak Valley. With the formation of the Bharatiya Janata Party in 1980, he became one of its founder members and emerged as a central organisational pillar in Assam.

He is widely regarded as the patriarch of the BJP in the state.

Purkayastha entered national electoral politics in 1991, when he was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Silchar constituency. He was re-elected in 1998 and again in 2009, and was known for consistently raising issues related to Assam and the Northeast in Parliament.

He served as Union Minister of State for Communications during the first Atal Bihari Vajpayee government between 1998 and 1999. In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, he registered a notable victory from Silchar by defeating senior Congress leader Santosh Mohan Dev and AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal.

However, he lost the seat in the 2014 general elections to Congress candidate Sushmita Dev.

Beyond electoral politics, Purkayastha remained deeply engaged in social and organisational work. In recognition of his lifelong contribution to public service, he was conferred an honorary doctorate degree in September 2024. Respected across party lines for his ideological commitment and organisational acumen, he leaves behind a lasting legacy as one of the principal architects of the BJP's growth in Assam and the Northeast. Purkayastha is survived by a son and a daughter.

His son, Kanad Purkayastha, is a Rajya Sabha MP from Assam. His wife had predeceased him.

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal described Purkayastha's demise as a personal loss and a major void in Assam's political life, calling him a guiding light and father figure.

As a mark of respect, the Assam BJP has suspended all scheduled party activities on Thursday. (With inputs from PTI)

37 Assam youth

leaders, the Governor congratulated them on being selected for the prestigious national initiative launched by Narendra Modi and described their selection as a significant personal and professional milestone.

He said the programme would offer them a rare platform to share ideas and experiences at the national level and to draw inspiration from the Prime Minister's vision of a developed India.

Governor Acharya observed that the Viksit Bharat Young Leaders Dialogue seeks to connect the country's youth with the larger national vision of a developed India, adding that the strength, creativity and leadership potential of young people form the backbone of nation-building.

He noted that India is currently witnessing a transformative phase marked by rapid digital advancement, growth of startups, expansion of infrastructure, inclusive welfare initiatives and a stronger global presence, all powered by youth energy. Quoting Swami Vivekananda, the Governor said the future of India lies in the hands of its youth and urged the young leaders to step beyond their comfort zones, take calculated risks and pursue ambitious goals, as emphasised by the Prime Minister.

He encouraged them to visualise the India they wish to see in 2047 and to clearly define their role in shaping that future. Highlighting the importance of Assam and the Northeast in national development, the Governor said the region is emerging as India's gateway to Southeast Asia, driven by improved connectivity and growing opportunities in trade, tourism, innovation and entrepreneurship.

He added that Assam's progress in education, skill development, healthcare and the startup ecosystem is motivating young people to become job creators rather than job seekers.

Expressing confidence in the delegation, Governor Acharya said that ideas rooted in local realities and guided by strong values and ethics have the potential to address national challenges and contribute to building a strong, self-reliant, inclusive and developed India.

He wished the young leaders success at the dialogue and urged them to participate with enthusiasm, return with fresh ideas and work with renewed commitment for the nation. Commissioner and Secretary to the Governor SS Meenakshi Sundaram, Director of Sports and Youth Welfare Ankur Bharali, along with several other dignitaries, were present on the occasion.

New faces will

also be over by Magh Bihu, which is celebrated usually on January 13-15, he had said.

"My target is that all understandings with our allies should be formalised by January 15," the CM had said. Assembly elections are likely to take place during March-April.

The BJP presently has 64 seats in the 126-member House, while its allies AGP have nine, UPPL seven, and BPF three MLAs. In the opposition, Congress has 26 seats, AIUDF 15, CPI(M) one, and one Independent legislator. In August, several NDA leaders including Sarma, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, and AGP chief Atul Bora had set a target of winning 100 seats, with Sarma later claiming the ruling alliance had high chances in 103 constituencies.

Gogoi alleges deletion of indigenous voters' names for not supporting BJP

Congress unveils 'People's Manifesto-2026' in Jorhat, highlights key issues

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Jan 7: A press conference on the Congress party's "People's Manifesto-2026" was held on Wednesday at the Jorhat Press Club, focusing on four key issues affecting the state.

APCC president Gaurav Gogoi raised serious allegations, claiming that the names of many indigenous voters who did not vote for the BJP have been removed from the voter list, while names of outsider voters have been included. He called such practices a threat to the democratic system. Gogoi further alleged that even within the BJP, discussions are ongoing regarding the deletion of anti-BJP voters' names and questioned whether the Central Election Commission would demand evidence from the party regarding these claims.

Gogoi also addressed the issue of justice for Zubeen Garg, stating that the government has failed to deliver justice, forcing the family to seek legal assistance directly. He said this reflects the govern-



ment's overall approach toward law and order.

On industrial development, Gogoi accused the government of

neglecting agricultural industries, asserting that while the administration talks about industrialisation, it does not take steps in the interest of farmers. In contrast, he alleged, the government acts swiftly when dealing with coal mafias and stone-sand mafias.

Regarding women's safety, Gogoi criticised the BJP for limiting its efforts to announcing schemes rather than ensuring actual security. At the press conference, he reiterated the slogan, "Save the community, save the land, save the vote."

He emphasised that the vision for Assam envisioned by the late Tarun Gogoi must reach every village and hamlet. Noting feedback from women voters, he highlighted that they seek opportunities for self-employment in addition to welfare schemes. Gogoi assured that good news for the women of Assam will be included in the election manifesto and indicated that the party may announce its candidate list by the end of January.

Tea workers stage strike across Brahmaputra Valley

ACMS warns of statewide agitation over wage hike demand



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Jan 7: Tea workers across the Brahmaputra Valley on Wednesday observed a one-hour strike, warning of a massive statewide agitation if long-pending wage revisions are not implemented immediately. The protest, led by the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS), resulted in a complete shutdown of operations at tea estates during the demonstration period.

In Dibrugarh district, workers of the Rajabari Tea Estate in Moran joined employees from hundreds of other gardens across the valley. Holding banners and raising slogans, the protesting workers highlighted the growing desperation and financial distress within the tea community.

Following the demonstrations, memorandums were submitted to the respective garden managements for onward submission to

the state government, urging immediate intervention.

The central demand of the workers is an immediate increase in daily wages to ₹ 351. At present, tea workers receive only ₹ 250 per day. ACMS leaders pointed out that stagnant wages, combined with the soaring prices of essential commodities such as food, fuel and medicines have pushed plantation families into severe financial hardship.

Addressing workers near Moranhat, senior ACMS leader Lakheshwar Tanti said that the current wage structure is no longer sustainable. He alleged that despite repeated appeals, the government and the Consultative Committee of Plantation Associations (CCPA) have failed to act. "This one-hour strike is a final warning. If our demands are not addressed, we will be compelled to launch an intensified, statewide movement," he said.

Minor girl raped

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 7: A 16-year-old tribal girl was allegedly raped by a 26 yrs old man, belonging to Religious Minority community under Balajan police outpost in Kokrajhar district.

The accused has been identified as Momin Ali Mondol (26), son of Mannan Ali Mondol, a resident of Simbargaon Mojabari under Kokrajhar police station. Momin Ali Mondol is a father of two children. According to police sources, the incident occurred on the evening of January 3, at around 5 PM, when the minor was returning home after visiting her sister.

Following the complaint, police arrested the accused and registered a case under Case No 03/2026 under Sections 65(1) and 109/351(2) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), read with Section 4 of the POCSO Act.

The accused was produced before the court on January 5, 2026 and was subsequently sent to jail.

The girl was produced before the Child Welfare Committee, Kokrajhar.

Kamatapur Koch Rajbongshi Shilpi Samaj marks 8th Foundation Day

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 7: The Kamatapur Koch Rajbongshi Shilpi Samaj celebrated its 8th Foundation Day with the formation of a new committee, re-electing Shrimanta Mondal as president and pledging to move forward with renewed momentum and discipline.

Established on January 6, 2018, the organisation was founded near the scenic Chakchaka Beel in the Dholmara area of Kokrajhar district, at a site that was previously a dumping ground for coal slurry from the Salakati NTPC. Since its inception, the Samaj has been organising programmes across different locations, honouring senior artists for their contributions to the Koch Rajbongshi community and inspiring junior and emerging artists.

The Foundation Day meeting was held at the venue of the ongoing Fourth Kamata Music Festival on the banks of the Tarang River at Diyajijiri village, near Kokrajhar town, the headquarters of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). During the meeting, the old committee was dissolved and a new 31-member committee was formed. Along with Shrimanta Mondal as president, Dijoel Koch, Jaymati Ray and Dhanjit Barman were appointed vice presidents, Mahananda Koch Gandhi as Secretary, Riyan Ray and Amulya Barman as Assistant Secretaries, Shiva Sheshar Singh as Cultural Secretary and Tapas Koch as Treasurer.

After assuming office, president Shrimanta Mondal announced that the new committee would rectify past mistakes, hold monthly Google Meet sessions, organise meetings every three months, complete official registration of the organisation, open a bank account and work in a systematic and dynamic manner to progress with a renewed vision. He also earnestly sought the support and cooperation of all members to achieve these objectives.

Pubali Gohain assumes charge as Darrang DC

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, Jan 7: Assam Civil Service officer Pubali Gohain on Wednesday assumed charge as the 33rd District Commissioner of Darrang district. She formally took over responsibilities from the outgoing District Commissioner Parag Kumar Kakati at the District Commissioner's office here.

Prior to her new assignment, Pubali Gohain served as Secretary in the Home and Political Department of the Assam government and was also holding the additional charge of Inspector General of Prisons, Assam.

Meanwhile, outgoing District Commissioner Parag Kumar Kakati has been transferred and appointed as the District Commissioner of Golaghat district.

Six new shops inaugurated in Hojai to boost livelihoods

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, Jan 7: In a significant step towards fostering economic self-reliance among underprivileged families, six new shops were inaugurated in Hojai on Tuesday under the aegis of the newly registered non-governmental organisation, Nathgaon Jeevanjyoti Vikas Samiti. This initiative is designed to uplift six disadvantaged families by providing them with sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The first phase of the project saw the opening of shops for the families of Ritumani Nath, Rudra Kant Nath, Nijara Mudai, Anamika Das, Chandana Debnath and Khagen Das. The initiative is expected to enhance their financial stability and play a vital role in poverty alleviation within the community.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by prominent members of Nathgaon Jeevanjyoti Vikas Samiti, including president Litumani Nath, Secretary Arup Nath Kakati, Deepak Nath, Pradip Nath, Biswajit Nath, Jagannath Nath, Kishore Das and other office bearers. Social worker Uttam Das from Hojai also attended the event, offering encouragement and support to the beneficiaries.

This endeavor not only marks a transformative milestone for the six families involved but also serves as a model of community-driven empowerment. It is anticipated that such initiatives will inspire broader participation and motivate more individuals and organisations to contribute towards the upliftment of marginalised sections of society.

Howraghat Town Committee celebrates golden jubilee

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, Jan 7: The Howraghat Town Committee in Karbi Anglong district celebrated its Golden Jubilee on Wednesday with a day-long program at the Howraghat Auditorium Hall.

The event began with flag hoisting by Chairman Bidya Teron, followed by a tribute to former leaders. A cultural procession showcased the town's vibrancy, leading to a public meeting chaired by Teron and moderated by Mamit Khaklary with MLA Darsing Ronghang as Chief Guest.

MLA Ronghang highlighted regional development projects, including the ₹ 922 crore Howraghat Tiniali-Hamren road under the Asom Mala scheme and various social welfare initiatives for women, farmers and students.

Over 100 distinguished personalities, including former leaders Mahendra Gogoi, Deuri Lekthe and Ratan Teron were felicitated. Ronghang also released the souvenir 'Rongso-pi Aarchi' and inaugurated a Golden Jubilee Memorial Gate and a Multi-Utility Building at the town market.

The celebrations concluded with prize distribution for winners of quiz and drawing competitions.

NFR RPF sets high benchmarks in passenger safety

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 7: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) delivered an outstanding and people-centric performance during December 2025, significantly strengthening passenger safety, security enforcement and humanitarian assistance across the zone. Through proactive vigilance, swift response and coordinated operations, the RPF reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring safe, secure and compassionate rail travel.

During the month, the RPF achieved notable success in protecting passenger belongings by apprehending 17 persons involved in theft cases and recovering 17 stolen mobile phones valued at approximately ₹ 2.22 lakh, which were handed over to the concerned Government Railway Police. Demonstrating exceptional alertness, RPF personnel also saved the life of a woman passenger who slipped while boarding Train No 13125 UP at Guwahati Railway Station, averting a potentially serious mishap.

Humanitarian service remained a key focus with 36 minor boys and girls and three



women rescued during the period and handed over to Childline, concerned NGOs and GRP for care and rehabilitation. RPF personnel also extended timely assistance to two pregnant women during childbirth at New Jalpaiguri and Rangiya stations.

In enforcement activities, five persons were arrested for stone pelting on running trains. Swachhata drives resulted in the prosecution of 1,722 offenders for littering with fines amounting to about Rs 2.29 lakh. Overall, 2,669 cases were registered under the Railways Act, leading to the arrest and prosecution of 2,632 offenders and realisation of fines worth around ₹ 3.36 lakh.

The RPF intensified its drive against organised crime and smuggling by arresting five touts and seizing 13 railway tickets. A major crackdown on narcotics led to the

detection of 32 cases, recovery of ganja, heroin, brown sugar and cough syrup valued at about ₹ 3.16 crore and the arrest of 13 persons. In addition, 39 cases of illicit liquor smuggling were detected, resulting in the seizure of 2,960 bottles worth around ₹ 2.98 lakh.

Passenger facilitation also remained a priority as the RPF assisted the Commercial Department in apprehending 325 ticketless travellers and realising fines of ₹ 4.85 lakh, prosecuted 293 persons for smoking violations and recovered 118 left-behind luggage items worth approximately ₹ 26.80 lakh, which were safely returned to passengers.

In support of safe and obstruction-free rail operations, the RPF extended assistance to the Engineering Department in removing 115 encroachments at various locations.

Bodoland University scholar wins international award in Italy

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 7: Bhoirob Gogoi, a research scholar of the Department of Botany, Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, has brought laurels to the university by winning the prestigious MUNA MedLife Award for Best Oral Communication at the 2nd Mediterranean Union Annual Meeting held recently in Naples, Italy.

Gogoi received the award for his oral presentation titled "Microbial and Biostimulants Assisted Phytoremediation of Nitro-PAHs - A Microcosmic Study". The research focuses on sustainable and eco-friendly approaches for the remediation of emerging toxic nitro-polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (nitro-PAHs) using plants, microbes and biostimulants. The study highlights the role of microbial-assisted technologies in improving soil health and promoting long-term environmental sustainability in alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The research offers innovative solutions for mitigating environmental pollution and contributes significantly to the fields of environmental biotechnology and remediation.

The work was carried out under the supervision of Prof Hemen Sarma, Head of the Department of Botany, Bodoland University, whose academic guidance and mentorship played a key role in the successful completion of the study. Prof Sarma, who is recognised among the top two per cent of scientists globally, expressed pride in Gogoi's achievement, stating that such international recognition reflects the growing global impact of high-quality research from Bodoland University.

The MUNA MedLife Award is conferred on researchers demonstrating excellence in scientific communication, originality and innovation. The achievement marks a significant milestone for both Bodoland University and the scientific community of the region, highlighting the potential of Indian research in addressing global environmental challenges through sustainable and nature-based solutions.

Members of the academic fraternity of Bodoland University have congratulated Bhoirob Gogoi and Prof Hemen Sarma on this accomplishment, which is expected to inspire young researchers to pursue high-impact studies with international relevance and societal importance.

Three-day Kainakanda drama festival from January 30

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, Jan 7: The second annual Kainakanda Shalangiri Drama Festival will be held for three days from January 30 at Baghara in Morigaon district. The festival will feature six plays performed in daylight amidst a completely natural environment.

The decision to organise the festival was taken at a public meeting held at the Galchepa Middle English School ground. The meeting was chaired by president Ratul Bhuyan, while chief advisor Babul Bora presented the overall outline of the festival.

Sensitisation programme on Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016

HT Correspondent

DHUBRI, Nov 7: An awareness-cum-sensitisation programme on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPWD) Act, 2016 was held on Wednesday. The event was organised by the Office of the Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Assam in collaboration with the Office of the District Commissioner, Dhubri.

Rajeev Bharadwaj from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, participated as the resource person and explained various provisions of the RPWD Act, 2016.

"According to the Rights of Persons with Dis-

abilities Act, 2016, enacted on December 28, 2016 and which came into force on April 19, 2017, the concept of disability is evolving and dynamic. The types of disabilities have increased from 7 to 21. Both the Government of India and the Government of Assam have initiated several steps to safeguard the rights of persons with disabilities, enabling them to enjoy rights like other citizens," Bharadwaj said.

He urged arrangements for inclusive education for Divyang children and called upon the health department to provide timely Disability Certificates. This would allow persons with disabilities to avail benefits under the Unique Disability Identity (UDID) Card scheme offered by the government.

NCW Chairperson lauds women's role in India's development

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Jan 7: National Commission for Women (NCW) Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar extolled the role played by women in driving the country's development during the "She is a Changemaker" capacity-building workshop held at Jorhat Engineering College (JEC) on Tuesday.

Rahatkar, who was the chief guest, spoke about the significant contributions of women across India in diverse sectors such as science, technology, agriculture, entrepreneurship and governance. She urged women to step forward and participate even more actively in the nation's development process.

NCW Additional Secretary Radhika Chakravarthy also addressed the workshop, highlighting ongoing women empowerment initiatives in the country. Among the trainers were Assam Women's University faculty member Aditya Borborah and District Technical Expert of Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission, Ankita Bharali. The event was attended by State Government Additional Secretary of the Women and Child Department, Assam, Abhijit Sinha.

The workshop began with a welcome address by Jorhat Additional District Commissioner Sultana Akhtara Ahmed.

Following the workshop, Chairperson Rahatkar interacted with beneficiaries of the 'Namo Drone Didi Scheme' and other government welfare initiatives at Jorhat Circuit House. On Monday, she also chaired a review meeting with district administration officials led by Jorhat District Commissioner Jay Shivani to discuss the implementation of women-centric programs.

BJP ramps up organisational drive across 39 districts

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 7: The Assam BJP has launched extensive organisational activities across all 39 districts ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections. From January 5-11, district executive committee meetings are being held under the slogan, "Once Again, a BJP-Led Alliance Government," to strategise election preparations. The party highlighted achievements under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, including public welfare schemes, industrial development, educational expansion, women's safety measures and illegal encroachment removal. BJP leaders are emphasising grassroots outreach and organisational discipline to consolidate support for the alliance government.

Chengbong all set for Karbi Sanghari Amei

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Jan 7: The remote area of Chengbong in West Karbi Anglong is abuzz with activity as preparations enter the final stage for the grand Karbi Sanghari Amei (Karbi Sanghari Sabha), scheduled to be held on 8 January. The event is expected to witness a massive gathering of around one lakh people. The atmosphere in the region has turned festive and vibrant with local residents working tirelessly to ensure the smooth conduct of the day-long programme. The Karbi Sanghari Amei is regarded as a vital platform for the preservation and promotion of the Karbi community's unique religion, culture and heritage.

Memorial lecture honours Sukuram Das, highlights 800 years of Assamese nation-building



HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Jan 7: The fourth annual memorial day of noted educationist Sukuram Das was observed on Wednesday. Ranangan Publishers organised the Sukuram Das memorial lecture at the office of Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha, Kamaladevi Todi Bhavan.

Delivering the lecture, Dr Indrajit Bezbaruah, Principal of Samaguri College, spoke on "The contribution of Sankardev and Sukuram Das to the formation of the 800-year-old Assamese Nation". Dr Bezbaruah highlighted the long history of Assamese nation-building and praised Sukuram Das as a dedicated ed-

ucationist, lawyer and natural healer.

He emphasised that Sukuram Das was instrumental in shaping the Assamese nation, respecting the diversity of various ethnic groups. Dr Bezbaruah also noted that the inclusive approach of the Ahom kings helped repel invasions and that the Assamese people have drawn lessons from their history.

The event was attended by several notable personalities, including former presidents of Nagaon Zila Sahitya Sabha, literary figures and journalists. The function was preceded by a candle-lighting ceremony and a welcome speech by Mintu Das, son of Sukuram Das.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Reality leaves a lot to the imagination.
—John Lennon

Khaleda Zia's death and B'desh polls

In Bangladesh, the political developments take unpredictable course many times, but the latest alliance between the NCP, the party of the students' body which led the July Revolution and the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami, has shocked the progressive forces who supported the uprising that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina led Awami League government on August 5, 2024. The national elections are due on February 12 this year and the nomination process will be over by January 21. So, in the next few days, intense negotiations will be held between the two contradictory combinations for finalizing candidates for the 300 seats of the Bangladesh Parliament. The alliance is still under fire from a section of secular minded activists of NCP. This has resulted in lot of resignations, but the core NCP leadership is going ahead with the sharing of seats with Jamaat. BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia's death on December 31 has led to sympathy wave among the common Bangladeshi citizens spreading across party affiliations. This was evident at the massive turn out of people at the funeral and the way the entire country grieved on her passing away at a time, people were talking of the return of the BNP to power after February 12 polls with Khaleda Zia as Prime Minister again. Khaleda's son Tarique Rahman, is now the chairman of the BNP and he is the Prime Minister face of BNP which is planning to submit nominations to its candidates to more than 90 per cent of the seats leaving a few seats to its allies including independents.

As on January 1, the opinion polls and surveys have placed BNP in a dominant position followed by Jamaat. In earlier polls, the NCP got around 6 to 8 per cent. That was why the NCP lobbied with Jamaat for alliance as the combination of the two can pose some challenge to the BNP supremacy. But the political analysts in Dhaka point out this Jamaat-NCP alliance may fail as the NCP supporters may not vote for Jamaat candidates and the Jamaat supporters are certainly not voting for the NCP candidates. The two parties are so different in their approaches that for the commoners outside political affiliations, this alliance is a big opportunist combination.

The NCP leaders who are in favour of alliance say that this alliance is based only to fight February 12 polls to take on BNP, the NCP has not diluted its programme, it sticks to its July Charter and will pursue that after the polls are over. That NCP is not getting approval of the people despite its great role in the movement to oust the Hasina government, is known to its leadership. If it fights alone, it will be decimated, so it has aligned with the Jamaat to get respectable number of seats, but in the process, the Party has turned itself into a partner with a Party which has a big role in fanning communal tensions against the minorities in Bangladesh.

What the US Action in Venezuela Really Means

By: Mowsam Hazarika

History shows a painful pattern: whenever the United States interferes militarily in other countries, the result is usually suffering and instability. What is different in the latest U.S. action against Venezuela under President Donald Trump is that it is not only tragic, but also deeply absurd — almost like a bad play, except that real people are paying the price.

In 2026, the world witnessed the U.S. carrying out military strikes, naval blockades, and covert operations in Venezuela. President Nicolás Maduro was forcibly removed and sent into exile. This action was taken without approval from the United Nations and clearly violates international law, especially the UN Charter, which says that no country has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another.

This is not a new story. In 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq claiming it wanted to remove a dictator and bring democracy. Instead, the country was destroyed, millions suffered, and violent groups like ISIS emerged. Similar interventions later happened in North Africa, leaving behind chaos and broken states. Venezuela now seems to be following the same tragic path.

The U.S. has tried to justify its actions by calling them anti-narcotics operations. In the name of stopping drug trafficking, U.S. forces have stopped oil tankers and even attacked civilian boats in Caribbean waters. These actions were done without proof and without international permission. This shows how the U.S. has ignored global rules and acted as if it alone can decide who is right and who is wrong.

Why has Venezuela been targeted? The reasons are quite clear. First, the U.S. wants to restore its old control over Latin America, following the Monroe Doctrine, which treats the region as America's "backyard." Governments like Venezuela's that resist this control are seen as enemies.

Second, Venezuela has been building closer economic ties with China. This has worried Washington, which wants to reduce China's influence in the region. Third, Venezuela has some of the world's largest oil reserves. Controlling these resources has always been a strong motivation behind foreign interventions.

The U.S. claims it has "liberated" Venezuela, but this claim is doubtful. While Maduro ruled in an authoritarian way, his party and the Bolivarian movement still have strong support among poor and working-class people. These movements originally arose to fight deep inequality created by earlier elite governments backed by the U.S. For many Venezuelans, the U.S. intervention confirms their fear that foreign powers are more interested in taking resources than helping people.

The double standards of the U.S. are also obvious. While accusing Maduro of being a drug criminal without public evidence, the Trump administration helped release Juan Orlando Hernández, the former president of Honduras who was convicted of drug trafficking in the U.S. At the same time, it supported leaders in Honduras who were friendly to Washington. This shows that "justice" is applied only when it suits political interests.

After the Cold War, many believed that the world would become more peaceful and rule-based. But repeated U.S. actions have shattered that hope. Under Trump, the U.S. withdrew from climate agreements, started trade wars, and openly ignored international institutions. The attack on Venezuela is part of this broader pattern.

What is happening in Venezuela is the result of a dangerous mix of isolationism and imperialism — pulling away from global cooperation while using military force to control others. If the world stays silent, it sends a message that powerful countries can violate sovereignty whenever they want.

This is why Venezuela is not just a local crisis. It is a warning. When global rules are ignored, tragedy follows — and when power is exercised without responsibility, the result often looks less like leadership and more like farce.

Youth Unemployment and the Future of India

India stands at a defining crossroads in its modern history, poised between the intoxicating promise of becoming a global superpower and the sobering reality of a domestic employment crisis. The narrative of the nation in the third decade of the twenty-first century is a tale of two distinct economies. One is the economy of headlines, characterized by a soaring stock market, a rapidly digitizing financial ecosystem, and infrastructure projects that are rewriting the physical geography of the subcontinent. This is the India that is feted in global capitals, the fastest-growing major economy that has successfully navigated the post-pandemic turbulence. However, shadowing this luminous growth story is a second, darker narrative—one of stagnation, anxiety, and frustration that grips a significant portion of its most vital asset: its youth. The crisis of youth unemployment is not merely a statistical glitch in an otherwise smooth trajectory; it is a structural fault line that threatens to swallow the demographic dividend that policymakers have long touted as India's ticket to prosperity.

Demographics have long been viewed as destiny for the Indian state. With a median age of under thirty, the country possesses a surplus of working-age population at a time when much of the developed world, including China, is rapidly aging. Economic theory suggests that such a bulge in the workforce should lead to a massive surge in productivity, savings, and investment. Yet, the transmission mechanism between population growth and economic prosperity is broken. The labor market is simply not creating enough high-quality jobs to absorb the millions of young people entering the workforce annually. We are witnessing a paradox where the economy grows, but employment opportunities do not keep pace. This phenomenon of jobless growth has created a volatile environment where high aspirations meet crushing limitations. The youth of today are more educated than any generation before them, yet they face a labor market that places little value on their credentials.

The roots of this crisis are deeply entrenched in the misalignment between the education system and the economic reality. For decades, the Indian social contract has been built on the premise that a university degree is the passport to a stable, middle-class life. Families sell land and take on crushing debt to send their children to engineering colleges and universities, believing that education is the great equalizer. However, the proliferation of educational institutions has prioritized quantity over quality. We have created a vast archipelago of colleges that churn

out graduates with degrees that hold no currency in the modern job market. Industry leaders routinely cite the unemployability of fresh graduates as a major bottleneck, pointing out that the theoretical knowledge imparted in classrooms is often obsolete or irrelevant to the practical demands of the workplace. This education-employability gap means that we have a surplus of degree holders but a shortage of skilled workers. The tragedy is not just that these young people are unemployed; it is that they are, in the eyes of the market, unemployable without significant retraining.

This disconnect is being exacerbated by a technological tsunami that is reshaping the very nature of work. The Information Technology sector, which for thirty years served as the primary engine of white-collar job creation and social mobility for the Indian middle class, is undergoing a painful metamorphosis. The era of mass recruitment, where IT giants would hire tens of thousands of fresh engineering graduates to perform basic coding and maintenance tasks, is drawing to a close. Generative Artificial Intelligence and automation are rapidly taking over entry-level tasks, fundamentally altering the pyramid of the IT workforce. The industry is shifting from a model based on labor arbitrage—hiring large numbers of people at lower costs—to a model based on non-linear growth driven by algorithms and niche expertise. This shift has pulled the ladder up for millions of average engineering graduates who previously would have found a safe harbor in the tech parks of Bengaluru, Hyderabad, or Pune. The decline in tech hiring is not a cyclical dip; it is a structural reset, and the economy will have to find a replacement engine that can generate white-collar jobs at a similar scale.

While the services sector struggles with disruption, the manufacturing sector has failed to act as the necessary shock absorber. The classic developmental model, followed successfully by East Asian tigers, involves moving surplus labor from low-productivity agriculture to high-productivity manufacturing. India has attempted to replicate this through initiatives like Make in India and Production Linked Incentive schemes. While these policies have spurred investment in capital-intensive sectors like mobile phone assembly and specialty chemicals, they have not triggered a boom in labor-intensive manufacturing. Modern factories are automated and efficient; they require fewer humans to produce more goods. The result is that while industrial output rises, factory employment remains stagnant. This failure to industrialize in a labor-intensive manner is perhaps the single biggest policy fail-

ure of the last three decades, leaving the vast majority of the semi-skilled workforce with nowhere to go.

The consequences of this industrial stagnation are visible in the regressive trends within the rural economy. In a healthy developing economy, the share of the workforce in agriculture should steadily decline. In India, recent years have seen a reversal of this trend, with labor moving back to the farms. This reverse migration is a symptom of deep economic distress. It suggests that the cities and industrial hubs are failing to provide a living wage, forcing workers to retreat to the safety net of the village. This overcrowding in agriculture leads to disguised unemployment, where five people toil on a plot of land that could be farmed by two. It depresses rural wages and traps a huge swathe of the population in subsistence living, effectively masking the true extent of the unemployment crisis.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The psychological toll of this economic dislocation on the youth is profound and disturbing. A culture of waiting has permeated the younger generation. Walk into any small town in North India, and you will find libraries and coaching centers packed with young men and women preparing for government exams. The obsession with government jobs has reached fever pitch, driven not by a desire for public service, but by a desperate search for security in a precarious economy. The government job is seen as the only shield against market volatility. This results in the spectacle of millions of applicants competing for a few thousand vacancies, a ratio that is statistically more daunting than winning a lottery. This preparation industry consumes the most productive years of a young person's life. They spend their twenties in a suspended state of animation, memorizing trivia for exams that are often delayed, cancelled, or mired in legal battles due to paper leaks and corruption. When the result finally comes, and they do not make the cut, they are left in their late twenties with no work experience, no marketable skills, and a shattered sense of self-worth.

The crisis is also heavily gendered, representing a colossal waste of potential. India has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates in the world, a statistic that is shameful for a major economy. Despite rising female enrollment in higher education, this has not translated into jobs. A complex web of patriarchal social norms, safety concerns, and the lack of suitable employment near homes keeps millions of qualified women out of the workforce. When jobs are

scarce, women are often the first to be pushed out or discouraged from entering. This exclusion acts as a massive brake on the economy. No nation can achieve its full potential while sidelining half its population. The lack of safe transport, childcare facilities, and flexible work options makes it nearly impossible for many women to balance domestic expectations with professional aspirations.

Regional disparities further fracture the labor market. The demographic bulge is concentrated in the northern and eastern states, regions that historically suffer from poor governance, weak infrastructure, and a lack of industrial investment. Conversely, the southern and western states are aging faster and facing labor shortages in certain blue-collar sectors. This creates a necessity for internal migration, but the migration corridors are often fraught with exploitation. The lack of a unified national market for labor, where skills and opportunities can be matched efficiently across state borders, remains a hurdle. Furthermore, the desperation in states like Punjab and Haryana is driving a dangerous exodus of youth who are willing to risk their lives on illegal donkey routes to reach Western nations. This flight of human capital is a vote of no confidence in the local economy.

The rise of the gig economy has been hailed by some as a solution, but it is often a band-aid on a gaping wound. Platforms for food delivery, ride-hailing, and quick commerce have absorbed millions of young men who would otherwise be unemployed. However, classifying this as high-quality employment is misleading. Gig workers operate in a legal grey zone, often classified as partners rather than employees, which strips them of rights to minimum wage, health insurance, and provident fund benefits. They are the new precariat, working long hours with no job security, entirely dependent on the whims of an algorithm. While the gig economy provides immediate cash flow, it offers no career progression or long-term stability. A nation cannot build a robust middle class on the backs of delivery riders; it requires stable, productive jobs that allow for savings and asset creation.

Addressing this multi-headed hydra requires a fundamental shift in how the nation approaches economic planning. The government must move beyond the obsession with headline GDP numbers and focus on employment elasticity as a core metric of success. This requires a revitalization of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises sector. MSMEs are the traditional job creators of the Indian economy, yet they are constantly strangled by regulatory complexity, lack of access to formal credit,

and delayed payments from large corporate buyers.

Unshackling the MSME sector would do more for job creation than enticing a few mega-corporations to set up automated plants. We need a policy environment that favors labor-intensive industries like textiles, leather, and tourism, which have the potential to absorb semi-skilled workers in large numbers.

Simultaneously, the education system needs a complete overhaul to prioritize vocational training. The stigma associated with vocational skills must be dismantled. In countries like Germany, vocational training is a respected pathway to a good life; in India, it is seen as a failure. Integrating apprenticeship programs into the college curriculum is essential. Students should not graduate without having spent time on a shop floor or in a corporate office. The industry must stop acting as a passive consumer of talent and become an active creator of it, partnering with academic institutions to design curricula that reflect the realities of the twenty-first century. The clock is ticking on the demographic dividend. This window of opportunity is finite. By the mid-2030s, the aging process will accelerate, and the ratio of dependents to workers will begin to rise. If the current generation of youth is not absorbed into productive employment within the next decade, India risks growing old before it grows rich. The burden of supporting a large, elderly population without the accumulated wealth of a productive workforce will be catastrophic for the state's fiscal health. We are already seeing the early tremors of social unrest, with violent agitations over recruitment schemes and job quotas. These are warning signs that the frustration on the ground is reaching a boiling point.

The future of India will not be determined in the boardrooms of its unicorns or the stock exchanges of Mumbai, but in the aspirations of its youth. If these aspirations are met with opportunity, India will rise to become a beacon of shared prosperity. If they are met with continued stagnation, the demographic dividend will curdle into a demographic disaster. The time for incrementalism is over. The crisis demands a war-footing response, a national mission to put India to work. It requires a new social compact between the state, the private sector, and the youth—one that values dignity of labor, prioritizes skills over degrees, and recognizes that the true wealth of a nation lies not in its reserves of gold, but in the productive potential of its people. The youth are waiting, and their patience is not infinite. *(The author is the recipient of the 'Yuba Lekhak Sanman - 2025' from the Government of Assam)*

Global Instability: 2026 Begins with Fire

By: Satyabrata Borah

As the calendar turned to 2026, the world awoke to a new year shadowed by escalating tensions that seemed to encapsulate the fragile state of global affairs. Barely days into January, two major developments dominated headlines and sparked intense debate across continents: the ongoing intensification of the Russia-Ukraine war and a stunning United States military operation in Venezuela that resulted in the capture of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife. These events, occurring almost simultaneously, underscored a growing sense of instability, where longstanding conflicts persisted and bold unilateral actions reshaped regional dynamics overnight. The convergence of these crises raised profound questions about international norms, great-power competition, and the potential for wider confrontations in an already volatile geopolitical landscape.

The Russia-Ukraine war, now entering its fifth year since the full-scale invasion in 2022, showed no signs of abating as 2026 began. Russian forces made significant territorial gains in 2025, capturing over 5,600 square kilometers of Ukrainian land, the largest annual advance since the war's early months. This momentum carried into the new year with renewed offensives, particularly in the eastern Donetsk region and around Kharkiv in the north. Reports from early January detailed brutal exchanges, including Russian missile and drone strikes on Ukrainian cities that killed civilians, among them a three-year-old child in Kharkiv, and Ukrainian counterstrikes accused of targeting occupied areas, leading to dozens of deaths in places like Khorly in Kherson Oblast. Both sides traded accusations of deliberate attacks on non-combatants during New Year's celebrations, highlighting the war's descent into increasingly indiscriminate violence.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, responding to the relentless pressure, appointed new key aides, including military intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov as his top advisor, signaling a focus on bolstering defense and diplomacy. Allied security advisers from Europe, Canada, and representatives from NATO and the EU gathered in Kyiv to discuss a U.S.-brokered 20-point peace plan, aiming for potential leader-level talks by late January. Zelenskyy expressed cautious optimism, stating Ukraine was close to a framework with strong security guarantees, possibly involving European troops and U.S. commitments.

However, Russian officials dismissed these efforts, insisting on terms that included recognition of territorial annexations and limits on Ukrainian sovereignty. President Donald Trump, in public remarks, voiced frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin for prolonging the conflict, claiming progress toward a ceasefire while criticizing the high casualties. Analysts noted that Russia's battlefield advantages in manpower

and munitions suggested a prolonged attritional fight, with little immediate prospect for resolution unless external pressures forced concessions.

Compounding this European crisis was the dramatic U.S. intervention in Venezuela on January 3, an operation dubbed "Absolute Resolve" that stunned the international community. In a meticulously planned overnight assault involving over 150 aircraft and special forces, U.S. troops struck military targets in Caracas and surrounding areas, disabling air defenses and power infrastructure before extracting President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores from a secure location. The couple was swiftly flown to New York, where Maduro faced long-standing federal charges of narco-terrorism, drug trafficking, and weapons-related offenses. Trump hailed the mission as a flawless display of American military prowess, announcing that the U.S. would temporarily "run" Venezuela to facilitate a transition and rebuild its oil sector, leveraging the country's vast reserves.

The operation's execution was swift and precise, with Delta Force and other elite units involved, supported by naval assets in the Caribbean. No U.S. casualties were reported, though some Venezuelan defenses fired back. Trump emphasized the action as law enforcement against a regime accused of flooding the U.S. with drugs, but critics quickly pointed to broader motives, including countering Russian and Chinese influence in Latin America and securing energy resources. Venezuela's vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, assumed interim leadership, condemning the strikes as aggression and demanding the couple's release. Protests erupted in Caracas, while Venezuelan expatriates in the U.S. celebrated in cities like Miami and New York.

Global reactions were swift and divided. Russia vehemently denounced the U.S. actions as illegal aggression, drawing parallels to its own criticisms of Western interventions while defending its Ukraine campaign. China and Cuba echoed these condemnations, warning of threats to sovereignty. European allies expressed concern over the unilateral nature, prioritizing their focus on Ukraine peace efforts. Latin American nations voiced alarm at the precedent of external regime change. Legal experts debated the operation's compliance with international law, comparing it to past U.S. actions like the arrest of Panama's Manuel Noriega, but noting the absence of congressional notification or broad coalition support.

These twin crises amplified perceptions of a world sliding toward greater disorder. The Russia-Ukraine war's persistence drained resources, exacerbated energy shortages in Europe, and fueled inflation worldwide through disrupted grain and commodity exports. Russia's advances raised fears of further escalation, potentially drawing in NATO more directly if red lines like attacks on allied supplies were crossed. Meanwhile, the Venezuela operation signaled a more assertive U.S. foreign

policy under Trump, willing to use force for strategic gains, which analysts warned could embolden other powers. Russia might intensify its Ukraine efforts in retaliation, while China could feel justified in hardening positions on Taiwan or the South China Sea, viewing U.S. actions as evidence that norms against intervention were eroding.

Economically, the shocks rippled outward. Oil prices surged amid uncertainty over Venezuelan production, already degraded under Maduro's rule but now under U.S. oversight promises of revival. Global markets fluctuated as investors assessed risks of broader sanctions or conflicts. Humanitarian impacts were stark: millions displaced in Ukraine faced another harsh winter, while Venezuela's longstanding crisis of hyperinflation and migration threatened to worsen amid political vacuum.

Broader implications touched on the erosion of multilateralism. The United Nations struggled to respond effectively, hampered by veto powers in the Security Council. Calls for de-escalation and dialogue grew, but trust between major powers remained low. Trump's approach, blending diplomacy in Ukraine with decisive force in Venezuela, reflected a pragmatic yet unpredictable style that prioritized American interests. Yet it risked isolating the U.S. from allies wary of extraterritorial actions and provoking adversaries to mirror such tactics.

In quieter corners of the world, these events cast long shadows. Developing nations in the Global South, long skeptical of Western interventions, saw validation in their critiques of double standards—condemning Russia's invasion while questioning U.S. methods. Environmental concerns intertwined, as prolonged wars disrupted green transitions and oil-focused policies in Venezuela delayed climate goals.

As January 4 dawned, the world grappled with uncertainty. Peace initiatives in Ukraine offered slim hope, contingent on compromises neither side seemed ready to make fully. Venezuela's future hung in balance, with U.S. promises of reconstruction clashing against accusations of imperialism. The interplay between these theaters illustrated interconnected risks: actions in one region reverberating in another, testing alliances and deterrence.

The opening days of 2026 served as a stark reminder of fragility in the international order. Conflicts once seen as regional now threatened global spillover, driven by resurgent nationalism, resource competition, and waning faith in collective security. Observers hoped diplomatic channels would prevail, fostering negotiations that addressed root grievances without further violence. Yet the rapid pace of events suggested 2026 could prove pivotal, either toward fragile stabilizations or deeper entrenchments in division. The path forward depended on leadership willing to prioritize restraint and equity over short-term gains, lest the cycle of instability deepen further.

Women's safety and the moral failure of society

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuvan

The measurement of a civilization's worth is not found in the height of its skyscrapers, the speed of its economy, or the reach of its geopolitical influence. It is found, with terrifying simplicity, in the ability of a woman to walk down a street, at any hour, without the paralyzing fear of violation. By this metric, despite our technological advancements and claims of modernity, we are failing. The crisis of women's safety is no longer merely a question of law and order, police patrolling, or judicial delays. It has metastasized into something far more malignant: a profound, systemic, and collective moral failure of society itself. We are witnessing a collapse of the fundamental social contract that promises dignity and security to half the human population, and this collapse is not an accident of governance but a direct result of a rot within our collective conscience.

To understand the magnitude of this failure, one must look beyond the headlines that momentarily capture public outrage. The headlines are merely the visible symptoms of a chronic disease. The true crisis lies in the normalization of fear. It is the accepted reality that a woman must constantly negotiate her existence—modifying her dress, her route, her timing, and her tone of voice—to purchase a temporary safety that should be hers by right. When a society accepts that "safety" is a privilege contingent upon a woman's behavior rather than an inalienable right guaranteed by the state and respected by the citizenry, that society has morally capitulated. We have created a culture where the burden of preventing crime is placed squarely on the victim, while the potential perpetrator is treated as an inevitable force of nature, a hazard to be avoided rather than a human being capable of moral restraint.

This moral failure is rooted deeply in the hypocrisy of our cultural narratives. We exist in a dichotomy where the feminine is abstractly worshipped as a deity or a symbol of national honor, yet concretely devalued as a human being. This cognitive dissonance allows society to perform rituals of respect while simultaneously stripping women of their autonomy. The violence we see—rape, molestation, domestic abuse—is not an aberration; it is the logical conclusion of a worldview that sees women as property or objects of consumption. The moral failure lies in our refusal to admit that the rapist is not a monster from the void, but a product of our homes, our schools, and our peer groups. He is the result of a socialization process that has failed to instill the basic tenet of consent and the recognition of a woman's humanity. When we



raise sons to believe that dominance is the primary marker of masculinity, we are planting the seeds of the violence we later claim to abhor.

The institutions charged with protecting women—the police and the judiciary—often reflect this same societal rot. The legal framework exists, often robust on paper, but it is operated by individuals who carry the same patriarchal biases as the rest of society. The trauma of reporting a crime is often as damaging as the crime itself, a process known as secondary victimization. When a survivor is met with skepticism, moral policing, or lethargic indifference at a police station, it is a declaration that the state does not prioritize her pain. The staggering backlog of cases and the abysmal conviction rates send a clear, dangerous message to perpetrators: impunity is likely. This is not just an administrative failure; it is a moral one. A society that delays justice for years, allowing evidence to degrade and memories to fade, effectively condones the crime. It signals that a woman's body is a low-priority asset in the grand scheme of governance. Furthermore, the public discourse surrounding women's safety reveals a disturbing tendency toward performative outrage followed by apathy. We see a cycle of horror, protest, and then silence, until the next atrocity occurs. This cycle is indicative of a society that treats vio-

lence against women as a series of isolated incidents rather than a structural crisis. We are quick to demand the death penalty in high-profile cases, seeking a cathartic release of anger, yet we resist the harder, more pervasive work of dismantling the everyday sexism that makes such violence possible. We are comfortable hanging a rapist, but we are uncomfortable challenging the uncle who makes sexist jokes at the dinner table, the boss who overlooks harassment, or the film industry that glamorizes stalking as romance. This selective morality is cowardice. It seeks to amputate the gangrenous limb while refusing to treat the infection in the blood.

The role of the bystander in this ecosystem of violence cannot be overstated. The "moral failure" is perhaps most visible in the silence of the good. In public spaces, harassment often occurs in full view of witnesses who choose to look away. This apathy is born of a self-preservation instinct that has overridden our communal duty. We have atomized into individuals who believe that as long as the violence is not visiting our own doorstep, it is not our problem. But the safety of women is a collective asset; when it is eroded for one, it is eroded for all. The fear that keeps a woman from working the night shift or taking public transport is an economic and cultural loss for the entire nation. By turning a blind eye, so-

ciety becomes complicit. The perpetrator derives his confidence not just from his own strength, but from the assumption that the crowd will remain passive. We must also confront the technological dimension of this crisis. The digital age has expanded the frontier of violence, creating new avenues for harassment, stalking, and the non-consensual dissemination of images. Here too, our moral compass is spinning wildly. The anonymity of the internet has unleashed a torrent of misogyny that would be socially unacceptable in face-to-face interactions. The ease with which threats of rape and violence are typed and sent reveals the dark underbelly of our civilized veneer. It exposes a simmering hatred that was perhaps always there, now given a megaphone. The failure here is not just of regulation, but of empathy. We are raising a generation that is increasingly desensitized to digital violence, unable to bridge the gap between a pixelated screen and the real human suffering it causes.

The family unit, often touted as the bedrock of society, is frequently the crucible where this inequality is forged. The moral failure begins in the disparity of freedom granted to sons and daughters. It begins when a girl is taught to be "careful" while a boy is taught to be "brave" but not necessarily "kind" or "respectful." It begins when domestic violence is hushed up to pro-

tect the "honor" of the family, sacrificing the safety of the individual for the reputation of the collective. Until the home becomes a place of absolute equality, the streets will remain unsafe. We cannot expect men to respect women in public if they see them being disrespected or subservient in private. The revolution for women's safety must therefore be a domestic revolution, overturning centuries of ingrained gender roles that equate femininity with submission. Ultimately, the restoration of women's safety requires a complete overhaul of our moral architecture. It requires us to move beyond the paternalistic language of "protection." Women do not need knights; they need citizens. They do not need to be placed on pedestals; they need to be met on level ground. The language of protection implies ownership—that we protect what is ours. Instead, we must adopt the language of autonomy and rights. A woman's safety is hers to claim, and society's duty is to ensure the environment allows it, not to act as a chaperone.

We are standing at a precipice. If we continue to view women's safety as a "women's issue" to be solved by women's ministries and NGOs, we will remain in this cycle of tragedy. It is a human issue. It is a crisis of our humanity. The rapist is the mirror of a society that has lost its way, a society that has

failed to integrate the values of empathy, consent, and equality into its core identity. To reclaim our moral standing, we must stop looking for excuses. We must stop blaming the headline, the time of night, or the "bad apple." We must look inward at the culture we participate in, the media we consume, and the silence we keep. Only when the collective conscience of society genuinely revolts not just against the rape, but against the entitlement that precedes it, will the shadows lift. Until then, our progress is a lie, and our civilization is a hollow shell. The safety of women is the final verdict on our moral legitimacy, and currently, the verdict is damning. (The author is the recipient of the 'Yuba Lekhak Sanman - 2025' from the Government of Assam)

While the Department of Science and Technology's Women Scientists Scheme exists, its reach remains limited. This problem not only hinders women's individual achievements, but is also deeply linked to India's future. As India resolves to fulfill the dream of a developed India, ignoring the participation of half the population in scientific innovation and research could prove self-defeating. The World Bank estimates that increasing women's participation in science and technology could generate an additional \$700 billion in growth for the Indian economy by 2025. If women contribute equally to the fields of artificial intelligence, clean energy, biotechnology, and digital technology, India's global competitiveness will automatically increase.

It's also a question of India's global image. Concrete steps towards gender equality are consistent with India's international commitments and leadership aspirations. When Indian women scientists speak on global issues like climate change at international forums, it becomes a symbol of India's credibility. Furthermore, it's a question of the aspirations of future generations. If we ensure equal opportunities for women in science today, tomorrow our daughters will be filled with confidence and will consider science a field of choice.

The government has taken some positive steps. Initiatives such as the Department of Science and Technology's Kiran Scheme, the Women Scientists Scheme, and the SERB Power Fellowship have been created to encourage young women researchers. ISRO and DRDO have implemented flexible working hours, extended maternity leave, and work-from-home options. Gender sensitivity committees have also been formed in many institutions. But this remains insufficient. There is a need to expand the reach of these schemes and implement them effectively.

The way forward is to establish minimum representation thresholds for women in research institutes and universities. Ensure special funding for women-led projects. Ease re-entry after career breaks and provide increased re-entry fellowships. Build mentoring bridges between senior women scientists and new researchers. Above all, change the mindset of society. Families and society must accept that science is not a domain of men, but of everyone.

Women in Indian science have progressed beyond a symbolic presence, but many barriers to leadership remain. These barriers are not only a personal loss but also a national one. If India is to become a knowledge power, this leakage must be stopped. True innovation and excellence are possible only when men and women stand shoulder to shoulder as equals in laboratories, universities, and research institutes. This is not just a question of equal opportunity, but also of India's scientific future and global competitiveness.

Funding and recognition are also a major challenge. Women are often given less priority in research grants, limiting the direction of their projects and the potential for innovation. Social perceptions also consider science a male-dominated field, often discouraging girls from pursuing it. Even if a woman takes a career break, re-entry becomes extremely difficult.

Beyond Survival to Leadership: The Rising Era of Girls and Women

By: Lalit Garg

There was a time when, across large parts of the world, the birth of a daughter was considered a burden. Her life was often ended in the womb itself, or, if she was born, discrimination, neglect, and deprivation became her destiny. This regressive and archaic mindset, sustained over centuries, inflicted deep wounds on society, civilization, and nature alike. Yet today, within that very world, a decisive shift in thinking is visible—a new consciousness is taking shape. Global surveys by institutions such as Gallup International indicate that in 44 countries, a large number of parents are now indifferent to the gender of their child; it no longer matters to them whether the baby is a boy or a girl. This change is not merely a play of statistics—it represents a historic transformation unfolding within human consciousness. The evolving perception of girls reflects a deeper philosophy of humanity itself.

It is true that while one side of the picture appears bright, the other remains deeply troubling. Over the past 25 years, the world has saved nearly seven million baby girls—an undeniable testament to human progress. Yet the bitter reality is that even today, more than one million girls are eliminated in the womb every year, and over the last 45 years, this number has crossed fifty million. In other words, the demon of gender discrimination has not yet been fully defeated. Still, hope shines strong, because this bias is steadily losing social acceptance—and that is the most solid foundation of any true revolution.

In India, this struggle has been even more complex. Low levels of education, rigid patriarchal norms, superstition, and social misconceptions kept the existence of girls under constant threat for a long time. However, recent years show a noticeable improvement. According to the National Family Health Survey, the preference for sons in India has declined from 33 percent in 1999 to 15 percent today. This decline is not merely numerical; it signals a shift in mindset. Yet even 15 percent is significant, as it directly affects the sex ratio.

Today, India's sex ratio stands at 943 girls for every 1,000 boys. Scientific studies suggest that the natural birth ratio of boys to girls is approximately 105:100, which should balance out by the age of five. If, even after five years, there are 57 fewer girls per 1,000 boys, it is clear that this is not nature at work, but society intervening.

Fifty-seven is a large gap. At the current pace of improvement, it may take more than twenty-five years to bridge this divide. To ensure that these girls not only enter the world but also live healthy, fulfilling lives, both the scale and speed of protective measures must be significantly increased. This is essential not only for social justice, but also for maintaining the balance of creation itself. The real "external force" disrupting this balance is society's distorted mindset—manifested through discrimination, neglect, unequal nutrition, inadequate healthcare, and unequal opportunities. If progress continues at its present rate, it could take more than a quarter of a century to close this gap. Therefore, expanding and accelerating corrective measures is imperative.

Education has emerged as the most powerful catalyst behind this transformation. Whenever girls have been given equal access to education, they have not only proven their capabilities but also reshaped the direction of society. In India and many other countries, initiatives related to girls' education, scholarships, digital literacy, skill development, and health security have opened new pathways in their lives. Even in rural areas, school enrollment among girls has increased; their presence in higher education has strengthened; and they are now making their mark in science, technology, sports, administration, and entrepreneurship. Equally significant is the shift in policy—from mere protection to genuine empowerment. Alongside education, nutrition, maternal health, safe transportation, digital access, and leadership training have collectively given wings to girls' self-confidence. This holistic approach ensures that future women are not merely "recipients of support," but active "decision-makers."

Across the world, women are now at the forefront of politics, administration, and corporate leadership. They are heads of state, leaders of armed forces, pioneers of scientific discoveries, and key participants in global policymaking. This transformation proves a fundamental truth: when given opportunities, talent does not recognize gender. The gender indifference reflected in Gallup International surveys is, in essence, a social affirmation of this belief—that girls are just as capable. For the first time on a global scale, a positive narrative around girls is emerging.

Yet, amid this changing mindset and rising power, it is also a time for deep introspection over the tragic and brutal realities of crimes, exploitation, rape, and discrimi-

nation against girls and women. According to global peace and security indices that assess inclusion, justice, and safety for women, India ranks 128th among 177 countries. NCRB data shows that the national average rate of crimes against women is 66.4, while the capital city, Delhi, stands alarmingly high at 144.4 points. It is widely believed that nearly 90 percent of sexual abuse is committed by someone known to the victim. This means girls are often most unsafe within their own homes or among familiar circles. Laws and schemes are necessary, but they are not sufficient. True transformation occurs within culture—in- side homes, in language, and in traditions. When a family celebrates the birth of a daughter, invests in her education, and includes her in decision-making, only then do sex-ratio statistics improve sustainably.

The role of media, literature, and cinema is equally decisive—they can either reinforce stereotypes or shape new perspectives. Today, positive representations are increasing, portraying girls as self-reliant, courageous, and capable leaders—an encouraging sign of cultural change. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiative Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao was launched with precisely this aim: to address the declining child sex ratio and transform societal attitudes. The direction of the future is clear. Equality is not merely a list of rights; it is the real availability of opportunities. Saving girls was the first step; allowing them to grow, soar, and lead is the next. Health, education, and safety must be complemented by employment, property rights, digital access, and participation in decision-making—these are the true pillars of equality.

If sustained and coordinated efforts continue on these fronts, the coming years will not only see an improved sex ratio, but also a more balanced, sensitive, and productive society. There was a time when a girl was eliminated in the womb; today, the same world is learning to celebrate her birth. This change may be incomplete, but it is decisive. The declining preference for sons in India, the growing global trend of gender neutrality, and the expanding landscape of education and empowerment for women all point toward one conclusion: the coming era truly belongs to women. If this momentum is maintained, the girls of this nation will not only raise their own banners of achievement, but also guide human civilization toward a more just and harmonious future. This alone is the natural and necessary balance of creation.

The unfinished journey of women in Indian science

The struggle to move from symbolic presence to effective leadership and the imperative of national innovation

By: Dr Priyanka Saurabh

India has made remarkable progress in science and technology over the past few decades. Indian scientists are recognized globally in areas such as the space program, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, the digital economy, and nanotechnology. Women's participation in this journey has proven to be more than merely formal, but rather concrete and effective. The contributions of Dr. Tessa Thomas, known as the Missile Woman, or the Chandrayaan-3 mission's female scientists Kalpana Kalahasti and Ritu Karidhal are vivid examples of this. This demonstrates that the role of Indian women scientists is no longer merely symbolic; they have become the driving force behind real change.

Yet, the other side of the picture is worrying. While the number of girls studying science and technology in India is large, this number steadily declines as they reach research and leadership positions. This trend is known as the "leaky pipeline." The 2022 report of the All India Survey on Higher Education shows that women's participation in science and technology at the graduate level is approximately 43 percent. This figure would be a matter of pride for any country. However, when these same girls pursue research and development, only 14 percent remain in this field. Furthermore, the number of female faculty in higher education institutions is limited to approximately 15 percent. The country's most prestigious institutions, such as the IITs, IISc, or CSIR, have never been headed by a woman.

Inequality is also evident in the world of scientific awards and recognition. Of the more than six hundred Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prizes awarded until 2023, only sixteen were awarded to women scientists. This data suggests that while women enter science and technology with equal enthusiasm at the initial stage, as responsibilities and pressures increase, their numbers dwindle. This is the leakage that undermines national excellence.

This leakage has many layers. Motherhood and family responsibilities impact women's careers the most. Long working hours, high-pressure projects, and a lack of flexible options lead many talented women to drop out. Institutional structures also remain male-dominated. Promotion and leadership positions in universities and research institutes are difficult for women. Informal networks, social biases, and gender stereotypes further exacerbate this difficulty.

Funding and recognition are also a major challenge. Women are often given less priority in research grants, limiting the direction of their projects and the potential for innovation. Social perceptions also consider science a male-dominated field, often discouraging girls from pursuing it. Even if a woman takes a career break, re-entry becomes extremely difficult.

Gen Z revolters angry at govt they installed after Nepal's protests

KATHMANDU, Jan 7: Mukesh Awasti was all set to leave for Australia to pursue a degree in civil engineering on a sunny day in September, but instead he joined a youth revolt against corruption in Nepal and lost his leg after being shot by security forces.

Lying on a hospital bed at the National Trauma Centre in the capital Kathmandu where his leg was amputated, 22-year-old Awasti said he regrets giving up so much for the little that has been achieved after the sacrifices of so many people.

Violent protests in Kathmandu that began Sept 8 left 76 people dead and more than 2,300 injured before the demonstrations fuelled by "Gen Z" activists forced the appointment on Sept 12 of Nepal's first female prime minister, Sushila Karki, a retired Supreme Court judge who has promised fresh elections in March.

Since then, the interim government and its leader have come under criticism from many of the people who took part in the protests and expected major changes in the Himalayan nation.

"I am regretting my decision to take part in the protest because they have been zero achievement from the new government we brought which has failed us," Awasti said.

"There should be end to corruption which has not happened and the people who opened fire on the demonstrations should have been arrested but that has also not happened either."

Bangladesh to resume direct flights with Pakistan from Jan 29

DHAKA, Jan 7: State-run Biman Bangladesh Airlines will resume direct flights between Dhaka and Karachi from January 29, restoring nonstop air connectivity between Bangladesh and Pakistan after more than a decade, officials said on Wednesday.

"Initially, flights will operate twice a week, on Thursdays and Saturdays," Bengali daily Prothom Alo reported, quoting a press release issued by the airlines.

The flight will depart Dhaka at 8:00 pm local time and arrive in Karachi at 11:00 pm. The return flight will depart Karachi at 12:00 midnight and arrive in Dhaka at 4:20 am, it said.

The development comes amid growing bonhomie between Bangladesh and Pakistan following the fall of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina's regime in 2024, with Dhaka and Islamabad taking steps in recent months to rebuild diplomatic, trade and people-to-people ties after years of strained relations.

Though the shortest route between Dhaka and Karachi is through Indian airspace, it is not immediately known whether Bangladesh has secured the necessary clearance from New Delhi for overflight permissions.

Quoting Biman officials, news portal tbsnews.net reported discussions with Pakistani regulators had been ongoing for several months to reopen the Dhaka-Karachi route, which last saw direct operations in 2012.

The re-launch follows formal approval from the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority, which has cleared Biman to operate on the route and to use designated air corridors within Pakistani airspace, the officials said.

Plans to restart direct flights between the two countries were first announced in August last year during the visit of Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar to Dhaka.

Dar's Dhaka visit was the first such high-level engagement between Pakistan and Bangladesh in over a decade. (PTI)

So far the government's anti-graft agency has filed one significant corruption case that does not include key political figures. The politicians accused of corruption by protesters are preparing to contest upcoming elections and there has been no case filed against leaders who were in power when protesters were injured in September.

Demonstrators say promises have not been met

Dozens of demonstrators, including some who were injured in September, recently have protested against the government they brought to power. These protests outside the prime minister's office has been held in the past few weeks with police forced to break some of them.

"We are back here in the street because the government has failed to live up to their promise. There are so many families of those who lost their lives and many who were injured but what has the government done? Nothing," said Suman Bohara, who walks with crutches on a shattered right foot. "We are here because we are compelled to."

Tens of thousands of mostly young demonstrators first gathered in Kathmandu on Sept 8 to protest widespread corruption, lack of opportunities, employment and poor governance, which was triggered by a ban on social media.

They broke through police barricades and attempted to enter parliament, only to be shot by security forces.



A day later, the protests spread across the country. Angry mobs burned down the offices of the prime minister and president, police stations and the homes of top politicians who were forced to flee on army helicopters.

The army eventually stepped in to restore control and negotiations ended with Karki's appointment and the key task of conducting parliamentary elections.

The government has said it is determined to meet that goal.

"As the world is looking forward to a smooth change in government through our elections on March 5, I want to assure that we will deliver these elections," Karki said.

"Our preparations are almost complete, and the security environment has improved a lot with our security apparatus is assured

enough."

Gen Z groups show a lack of clarity

Different demands have emerged from separate groups among the young protesters including direct election of prime ministers, scrapping the present constitution and jailing all previous politicians.

There is no single leader or group but rather several individuals who have claimed to represent Nepal's voice in the Gen Z movement.

The lack of clarity among the protesters since September has been a key hurdle in Nepal, according to analysts.

"All the confusion right now in Nepal is because of the lack of clarity among the Gen Z groups on what they are demanding and how the government was formed," said Abeeral Thapa, principal of Poly-

China bans exports to Japan of dual-use goods that could enhance Tokyo's military power

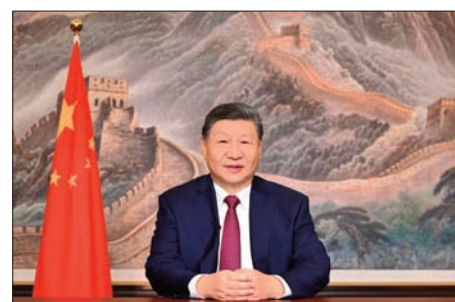
BEIJING, Jan 7: China on Tuesday banned exports of dual-use goods that can serve military purposes to Japan, a move that comes at time of heightened tensions between the two countries over Taiwan, a self-ruled island Beijing claims as its sovereign territory.

The Chinese commerce ministry said in a statement that exports of such items, which can serve both civilian and military purposes, to Japanese military users and all other end-users that could help enhance Japanese military power are prohibited.

Any individual or organization that violates the rule by transferring or providing these made-in-China products to Japanese groups and people would face legal consequences, regardless of where they are from, it said.

The notice did not identify or describe specific items, but some exports — particularly in the technology sector such as drones and navigation systems — could be adapted for military use.

Masaaki Kanai, the Japanese Foreign Ministry's



head of Asia Oceanian affairs, "strongly protested" to Chinese deputy consul Shi Yong, according to a statement from the Japanese ministry. Kanai said a measure exclusively targeting Japan that deviates from international practice is unacceptable and demanded it be retracted.

Relations between Japan and China worsened late last year after Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said its military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan.

In December, Japan said Chinese military aircraft locked radar on its fighter jets even though there was a safe distance between them. Tokyo is barreling forward with efforts to significantly boost its military capabilities to stand up to China's growing threats by doubling annual arms spending.

Last week, China launched large-scale military drills around Taiwan for two days to warn against what it calls separatist and external forces.

At that time, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi slammed both Japan and Taiwan's "pro-independence forces." Wang said Japan's current leaders openly challenge China's territorial sovereignty and the postwar international order. Japan was defeated in World War II by the United States and its allies.

In his meeting with South Korean President Lee Jae Myung in Beijing on Monday, Chinese leader Xi Jinping mentioned China's and South Korea's historical rivalry against Japan, calling on the two countries to "join hands to defend the fruits of victory in World War II and safeguard peace and stability in northeast Asia." (AP)

Bangladesh expresses 'potential interest' in procuring JF-17 fighter jets, says Pakistan

LAHORE, Jan 7: Bangladesh has expressed a "potential interest" in procuring JF-17 Thunder fighter aircraft from Pakistan, the military said on Wednesday.

The JF-17 Thunder is a multi-role combat aircraft jointly developed by China and Pakistan.

Pakistan claims that the fighter jet has proved its combat capabilities during the four-day military conflict with India in May 2025.

The development came during a meeting between Bangladesh Air Force Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Air Chief Marshal Zaher Ahmed Babar Sidhu in Islamabad on Tuesday.

"The meeting focused on strengthening operational cooperation and institutional synergy, with emphasis on training, capacity building, and collaboration in aerospace advancements," Pakistan military's media wing Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement.

"Detailed discussions were also held on the potential procurement of JF-17 Thunder aircraft," it said.

The fighter jet has proven its combat capabilities during the re-



cent conflict with India, the statement claimed.

Khan was leading a high-level defence delegation. During the meeting, Sidhu briefed his Bangladeshi counterpart on PAF's recent advancements and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to supporting the Bangladesh Air Force through a comprehensive training framework from basic to advanced flying and specialised courses across PAF institutions, it said.

The Bangladeshi delegation also visited key PAF facilities.

Sidhu also assured fast-tracked delivery of Super Mushshak trainer aircraft, along with a complete training and long-term support ecosystem, the statement said.

The move follows warming rela-

tions between Islamabad and Dhaka after changes in Bangladesh's political leadership in August 2024.

According to the ISPR, the Bangladeshi air chief praised the PAF's combat record and expressed interest in benefiting from its operational expertise, seeking assistance in maintenance support for Bangladesh Air Force's aging fleet and integration of air defence radar systems to enhance air surveillance.

"The visit underscored the strong historical ties between Pakistan and Bangladesh and reflected a shared resolve to deepen defence cooperation and build a long-term strategic partnership," it said.

Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan in 1971. Dhaka and Islamabad have sought to build closer ties since the installation of the Muhammad Yunus-led government in 2024, following the ouster of then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League.

Relations between the two countries had been particularly strained after the then Hasina government in 2010 initiated trials of collaborators accused of aiding Pakistani forces during the 1971 Liberation War. (PTI)

Denmark, Greenland seek talks with Rubio after WH says again it wants the island



COPENHAGEN, Jan 7: Denmark and Greenland are seeking a meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio after the Trump administration doubled down on its intention to take over the strategic Arctic island, a Danish territory.

Tensions escalated after the White House said Tuesday that the "US military is always an option", even as a series of European leaders rejected President Donald Trump's renewed calls for the US to take over Greenland, citing strategic reasons. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen warned earlier this week that a US takeover would amount to the end of the NATO military alliance.

"The Nordics do not lightly make statements like this," Maria Marti-siute, a defence analyst at the European Policy Centre think tank, told The Associated Press on Wednesday. "But it is Trump, whose very bombastic language bordering on direct threats and intimidation, is threatening the fact to another ally by saying 'I will control or annex the territory'."

The leaders of France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK joined Frederiksen in a statement Tuesday reaffirming that the mineral-rich island "belongs to its people".

Their statement defended the sovereignty of Greenland, which is a self-governing territory of Denmark and thus part of NATO.

Trump has floated since his first term the idea of acquiring Greenland, arguing that the US needs to control the world's largest island to ensure its own security in the face of rising threats from China and Russia in the Arctic.

This weekend's US military action in Venezuela has heightened fears across Europe, and Trump and his advisers in recent days have reiterated the US leader's desire to

take over the island, which guards the Arctic and North Atlantic approaches to North America.

"It's so strategic right now," Trump told reporters Sunday.

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen and his Greenlandic counterpart, Vivian Motzfeldt, have requested the meeting with Rubio in the near future, according to a statement posted Tuesday to Greenland's government website. Previous requests for a sit-down were not successful, the statement said.

While most US Republicans have supported Trump's statement, Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Thom Tillis, the Democratic and Republican co-chairs of the bipartisan Senate NATO Observer Group, blasted Trump's rhetoric in a statement Tuesday.

"When Denmark and Greenland make it clear that Greenland is not for sale, the United States must honour its treaty obligations and respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Denmark," the statement said. "Any suggestion that our nation would subject a fellow NATO ally to coercion or external pressure undermines the very principles of self-determination that our Alliance exists to defend."

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said he spoke by phone Tuesday with Rubio, who dismissed the idea of a Venezuela-style operation in Greenland.

"In the United States, there is massive support for the country belonging to NATO — a membership that, from one day to the next, would be compromised by... any form of aggressiveness toward another member of NATO," Barrot told France Inter radio Wednesday.

Asked if he has a plan in case Trump does claim Greenland, Barrot said he won't engage in "fiction diplomacy". (AP)

Inqilab Moncho rejects Hadi murder chargesheet, warns of escalation if justice denied

DHAKA, Jan 7: Slain Bangladeshi student leader Sharif Osman Hadi's party has rejected the police chargesheet in his murder case and accused the state machinery of being involved in the killing.

Inqilab Moncho on Tuesday also warned that those who "have shed blood" may be forced to "take blood as well" if justice is not ensured, Bengali daily Prothom Alo reported on Wednesday.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police's (DMP) Detective Branch on Tuesday pressed formal charges against 17 people, including prime suspect Faisal Karim Masud, in connection with the murder and said Hadi was killed due to "political vengeance" at the behest of Awami League-nominated ward councillor Taizul Islam Chowdhury Bappi. Inqilab Moncho member secretary Abdullah al Jaber said "even a lunatic would not believe" the claim that Hadi was murdered merely on the instructions of a ward councillor, asserting that the party does not accept the chargesheet submitted by police.

He claimed that an entire "criminal syndicate", as well as the "state machinery", was involved in the killing. "Until they are brought to justice, our struggle will not stop. Any charge sheet that does not include their names is not acceptable to us," Jaber said after the conclusion of the party's 'March for Justice' programme.

He said Inqilab Moncho had carried out peaceful programmes to convey its demand for justice, but the chargesheet showed the government had ignored public sentiment and "treated the people as fools".

Jaber warned that if justice for Hadi's murder is not ensured and what he described as "Indian hegemony" is not ended, the people would decide the consequences.

"These people have shed blood; if necessary, they will take blood as well," he said.

Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Hadi, 32, rose to national prominence during the July-August 2024 mass protests that led to the fall of the Hasina-led government, was shot in the head on December 12 during an election campaign in Dhaka. He was also a parliamentary candidate for the upcoming February 12 elections. Hadi was airlifted to Singapore for treatment, but died on December 18. At a press briefing in Dhaka on Tuesday, DMP Detective Branch's Additional Commissioner Md Shafiqul Islam said the alleged shooter, Masud, was directly involved with the Awami League's student wing Chhatra League.

He said Hadi was murdered on the instructions of Bappi, who allegedly helped Masud and Alamgir Sheikh, another prime suspect, flee after the killing.

Bappi was also the president of Pallabi Thana Chhatra League. The interim government led by Muhammad Yunus last year banned both the Awami League and its student wing. Hadi's killing has triggered fresh political unrest in Bangladesh and strained ties with India, after some groups alleged an Indian link to the crime.

New Delhi has strongly rejected the accusations, calling them a "false narrative".

"We have rejected the false narrative that has been projected in Bangladesh. The law and order situation and developments happening there is the responsibility of the government of Bangladesh. To portray a narrative where things go in another direction is completely false, and we reject that," Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said last month in New Delhi. (PTI)

Trump says US to get 30-50 million barrels of oil from Venezuela at market price

CARACAS (VENEZUELA), Jan 7: President Donald Trump has said on his social media site that "Interim Authorities" in Venezuela would be providing 30 million to 50 million barrels of "High Quality" oil to the US at its market price.

The announcement on Tuesday came after officials in Caracas announced that at least 24 Venezuelan security officers were killed in the dead-of-night US military operation to capture Nicolás Maduro and spirit him to the United States to face drug charges. Trump posted on Truth Social that the oil "will be taken by storage ships, and brought directly to unloading docks in the United States." He said the money would be controlled by him as president but it would be used to benefit the people of Venezuela and the United States.

Separately, the White House is organising an Oval Office meeting Friday with oil company executives regarding Venezuela, with representatives of Exxon, Chevron and ConocoPhillips expected to attend,

according to a person familiar with the matter who requested anonymity to discuss the plans.

Earlier Tuesday, Venezuelan officials announced the death count in the Maduro raid as the country's acting president, Delcy Rodríguez, pushed back on Trump, who earlier this week warned she'd face an outcome worse than Maduro's if she does not "do what's right" and overhaul Venezuela into a country that aligns with US interests. Trump has said his administration will now "run" Venezuela policy and is pressing the country's leaders to open its vast oil reserves to American energy companies.

Rodríguez, delivering an address Tuesday before government agricultural and industrial sector officials, said, "Personally, to those who threaten me: My destiny is not determined by them, but by God."

Venezuela's Attorney General Tarek William Saab said overall "dozens" of officers and civilians were killed in the weekend strike in

Caracas and said prosecutors would investigate the deaths in what he described as a "war crime." He didn't specify if the estimate was specifically referring to Venezuelans.

In addition to the Venezuelan security officials, Cuba's government had previously confirmed that 32 Cuban military and police officers working in Venezuela were killed in the raid. The Cuban government says the personnel killed belonged to the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior, the country's two main security agencies.

Seven US service members were also injured in the raid, according to the Pentagon. Five have already returned to duty, while two are still recovering from their injuries. The injuries included gunshot wounds and shrapnel injuries, according to a US official who was not authorised to comment on the matter publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A video tribute to the slain Venezuelan security officials posted



to the military's Instagram account features faces of the fallen over black-and-white videos of soldiers, American aircraft flying over Caracas and armoured vehicles destroyed by the blasts. Meanwhile, the streets of Caracas, deserted for days following Maduro's capture, briefly filled with masses of people waving Venezuelan flags and bouncing to patriotic music at a state-organised

display of support for the government.

"Their spilled blood does not cry out for vengeance, but for justice and strength," the military wrote in an Instagram post. "It reaffirms our unwavering oath not to rest until we rescue our legitimate President, completely dismantle the terrorist groups operating from abroad, and ensure that events such as these

never again sully our sovereign soil."

Trump grumbles about how Democrats reacted to the raid. Trump on Tuesday pushed back against Democratic criticism of this weekend's military operation, noting that his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden had also called for the arrest of the Venezuelan leader on drug trafficking charges.

Trump in remarks before a House Republican retreat in Washington grumbled that Democrats were not giving him credit for a successful military operation, even though there was bipartisan agreement that Maduro was not the rightful president of Venezuela.

In 2020, Maduro was indicted in the United States, accused in a decades-long narco-terrorism and international cocaine trafficking conspiracy. White House officials have noted that Biden's administration in his final days in office last year raised the award for information leading to Maduro's arrest after he

assumed a third term in office despite evidence suggesting that he lost Venezuela's most recent election. The Trump administration doubled the award to USD 50 million in August.

"You know, at some point, they should say, 'You know, you did a great job. Thank you. Congratulations.' Wouldn't it be good?" Trump said. "I would say that if they did a good job, their philosophies are so different. But if they did a good job, I'd be happy for the country. They've been after this guy for years and years and years."

With oil trading at roughly USD 56 a barrel, the transaction Trump announced late Tuesday could be worth as much as USD 2.8 billion. The US goes through an average of roughly 20 million barrels a day of oil and related products, so Venezuela's transfer would be the equivalent of as much as two and a half days of supply, according to the US Energy Information Administration. (AP)

Minor amendment to BEFR-1873 proposed for stronger monitoring and enforcement

CM announces digital ILP system to curb illegal immigrants

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 7: Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Pema Khandu, has announced that a strong digital system will soon be launched to check illegal immigrants and Bangladeshis in the state.

Speaking to reporters at the State BJP headquarters, the CM said the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, while effective in principle has not been properly monitored, resulting in cases of illegality and detection of duplicate ILPs at check gates. "A new robust system is needed," he noted.

He explained that under the old ILP system, employers had to fill a form to bring persons from outside the state. In the new system, employers will also be required to submit a form after the completion of the project or work assigned to the outsider. Clear and detailed information will have to be provided regarding the ILP, including the employer's name and contact number. This step is aimed at in-



creasing accountability and preventing misuse of the system. The Chief Minister added that a minor amendment is re-

quired in the ILP framework under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR)-1873, where employers or owners will be made responsible for violations. The proposal has been prepared and sent to the Advocate General for legal vetting. Once cleared by the AG, a special amendment will be introduced. The team of officers who conducted research on the ILP system will present the final proposal within a week or two, after which it will be placed before the state cabinet for approval and implementation on the ground.

Pema Khandu also mentioned that while AI intervention technology may be considered in the future, the immediate focus is on launching the first digital system to ensure proper monitoring and enforcement. He emphasised that this initiative will strengthen the ILP system and ensure that illegal immigration is effectively checked, enhancing security and governance in Arunachal Pradesh.

Arunachal leaders welcome revised VB-G-RAM-G Bill to boost rural development

DY CM Mein and MP Gao highlight strengthened employment, tech integration, funding benefits



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 7: Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein and Arunachal East MP Tapir Gao welcomed the NDA Government's revised bill, "Vikshit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin)" [VB-G-RAM-G], at a press conference held at the State BJP headquarters in Itanagar on Wednesday.

The leaders said the revised legislation would significantly enhance rural employment, self-livelihood opportunities and grassroots development across Arunachal Pradesh, particularly benefitting villages in remote and border areas. The press conference was attended by State BJP president Kaling Moyong, Minister for Rural Development & Panchayati Raj Ojing Tasing and former Minister and Chairman, Science & Technology, Tage Taki.

Addressing the press, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein dismissed opposition claims regarding the renaming of MGNREGA and commended the Prime Minister-led Government for revising the Act to strengthen public welfare. He described the scheme as visionary and transformative for

Vikshit Bharat and said the update incorporates AI technology to modernise implementation.

Chowna Mein recalled the origins of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), enacted in 2005 under the UPA Government and noted past criticisms from both opposition and ruling alliance leaders regarding its effectiveness and employment limits. He highlighted concerns raised by former ministers Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, Jairam Ramesh and Sharad Pawar on aspects such as long-term farmer welfare, the nature of works undertaken and funding clarity.

The Deputy Chief Minister, who also oversees Planning and Finance, expressed gratitude to the Government of India for the favorable 90:10 central-to-state funding ratio under the VB-G-RAM-G Bill, which significantly reduces the State's financial burden. He contrasted this with the previous 60:40 ratio for other states.

He also highlighted the substantial support MGNREGA received under the NDA Government with allocations from 2014 to 2025-26 totaling approximately ₹ 48 lakh

crore and benefiting nearly 25 crore rural households. In comparison, allocations during the Congress-led regime from 2006 to 2014 were around ₹ 12.8 lakh crore, with funding declining sharply during the pandemic.

Under the revised VB-G-RAM-G framework, the Unemployment Allowance will be strengthened, monitoring mechanisms improved and permissible administrative expenditure raised from 6 per cent to 9 per cent to ensure timely wage payments. The scheme will be integrated with PM Gati Shakti and advanced digital technologies, emphasising the creation of durable assets, biometric authentication and transparent monitoring to eliminate duplication.

Arunachal East MP Tapir Gao clarified that the VB-G-RAM-G nomenclature is purely an acronym for Vikshit Bharat - Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) and not linked to any deity, addressing misconceptions raised in Parliament. He expressed hope that the Arunachal Pradesh Congress and other stakeholders would acknowledge the clarification and cooperate constructively to advance rural development in the State.

Focus on security, border management and use of technology

Home Minister meets Governor



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 7: The State Home Minister, Mama Natung, called on the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parinaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), at Lok Bhavan, Itanagar on January 7, 2026. The meeting involved wide-ranging discussions on security and law and order with special emphasis on border management, indigenous affairs and other issues crucial to the State's stability and well-being.

The Governor commended the Home Minister, Director General of Police Anand Mohan and the entire police force for the meticulous and peaceful conduct of the Panchayat and local bodies' elections. He also appreciated the Home Minister's resolute leadership in the ongoing campaign against drugs, describing it as a critical mission to protect the youth and preserve the social fab-

ric of Arunachal Pradesh.

Emphasising the need to stay ahead of emerging challenges, the Governor advised the Home Minister to progressively adopt technology as a tool for strengthening security systems in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision. He underlined that the use of geo-spatial technology is imperative for governance and that widespread awareness of cybersecurity has become the need of the hour for the State. Stressing the importance of digital safety, he said the State must place strong emphasis on cybersecurity to ensure the confidence and security of citizens in the digital age.

While monitoring the rescue operation related to the Chaglagam accident, the Governor expressed concern for public safety and advised the Home Minister to instruct district police to closely monitor

vehicle movement during night hours as a precautionary measure. He noted that proactive steps, timely supervision and effective coordination at the district level can significantly reduce risks and help save lives.

The Governor also recommended prompt action to deter constructions by illegal immigrants who are attempting to make inroads into the State.

Briefing the Governor, the State Home Minister outlined the prevailing law and order situation in Arunachal Pradesh, highlighting challenges on the ground and measures taken to address them. He shared details of preventive steps, enforcement actions and ongoing initiatives aimed at maintaining peace, ensuring public safety and strengthening citizens' trust in the administration.

Surprise inspection at Daporijo pharmacies

Expired medicines seized, action warned against violators

HT Correspondent

DAPORIJO, Jan 7: The District Administration, Daporijo, conducted a surprise inspection of all pharmacies operating within Daporijo town on Wednesday at around 11 AM. The inspection was led by AMA Nungnu Mara, Town Magistrate, Daporijo, along with Adap Maling, In-Charge Trade and Development Officer.

During the inspection, several irregularities were detected, including stocking of expired medicines, operation of pharmacies without valid trading licences and failure to produce mandatory certificates as required under prevailing rules and regulations.

Taking serious note of the violations, the District Administration stated that necessary legal action would be initiated against the defaulters as per provisions of law to safeguard public health and consumer safety.

All seized expired medicines were immediately disposed of through the deep pit burial method,



following due procedure and in the presence of the inspection team.

The District Administration, Daporijo, has appealed to all pharmacy owners and traders to strictly adhere to licensing norms and reg-

ulatory requirements and to ensure that only safe and valid medicines are sold to the public. It also stated that such inspections will continue in the interest of public health and general welfare.

Khandu reviews plan to develop Chakzam Bridge as heritage tourism hub

Chief Minister emphasises community-led conservation and sustainable tourism



ITANAGAR, Jan 7: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday reviewed the master plan for development of a proposed tourist and heritage centre around the historic Chakzam Bridge in Tawang district, stressing a community-first approach to preserve the region's rich indigenous engineering legacy.

Highlighting the civilisational depth of the Himalayas, Khandu said that the region had a long history of innovative engineering.

"The Himalayas have a long history of innovative engineering, with iron-chain suspension bridges existing here centuries before such methods appeared elsewhere," Khandu said in a post on X, after the meeting held at his office here.

Referring to the Chakzam Bridge, Khandu said the 15th-century structure stands as a powerful example of indigenous engineering and community-oriented infrastructure.

"The historic Chakzam Bridge at Mogto, traditionally attributed to a Buddhist Monk Thangtong Gyalpo and constructed in the 15th century, stands as an important example of indigenous engineering and community-oriented infrastructure," the chief minister said.

Khandu said the proposed heritage and

tourism centre at Mogto in Tawang district has been envisioned as a model that places local communities at the centre of conservation and development.

"This heritage must be protected, celebrated and shared in a way that benefits the people living around it," he said.

The Chakzam Bridge, located near Mukto village, spans the Tawang Chu River and lies about 20-25 km from Tawang town in the westernmost part of Arunachal Pradesh.

One of the oldest surviving iron-chain suspension bridges in the region, it connects settlements on both sides of the river and remains a key cultural landmark in the high Himalayan terrain.

The chief minister added that the bridge is already a point of interest for visitors travelling from Tawang towards Dirang and Bomdila and said planned development would strengthen heritage tourism while safeguarding its historical and cultural significance.

He underlined that the project should balance conservation, community participation and sustainable tourism, ensuring that the legacy of the Chakzam Bridge continues to inspire future generations. (PTI)

VKV Oyan among India's top innovators at Big Bang 2026

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 7: Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya (VKV), Oyan, Arunachal Pradesh, has achieved national recognition by securing a place in the Grand Finale of Big Bang 2026 - The Great Rotary Innovation Challenge. The event is supported by the Rotary Club of Coimbatore West, iExplore Foundation, Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and NITI Aayog, Government of India.

According to VKV authorities, out of more than 700 project submissions from 24 states across India, only 162 projects were shortlisted for the Grand Finale. Among these, VKV Oyan's project, "Aerobic Composer," has been selected, placing the school among the top innovative teams of the country.

The project is presented by Rubu Daniel, a Class VIII student of VKV Oyan, who has emerged as an inspiration and motivation for the younger generation. VKV Oyan is the only school from the North-Eastern region of India to showcase its innovation at this prestigious national platform.

The Grand Finale is scheduled to be held on January 24-25, 2026, at the National Model School, Peelamedu, Coimbatore. Selected teams from across the country will exhibit their innovations before eminent experts and juries, providing a platform for young innovators to gain recognition and contribute to the national innovation ecosystem.

Prima facie no bar on IS Speaker in setting up inquiry panel to probe Justice Yashwant Varma: SC

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: The Supreme Court on Wednesday orally observed that there was no bar under the Judges Inquiry Act on Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla setting up an inquiry committee to probe corruption charges against Allahabad High Court judge Yashwant Varma after a similar motion was rejected in the Rajya Sabha.

Expressing prima facie opinion, a bench comprising Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma was also not in agreement with the submissions of senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, representing Justice Varma, that the deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha was not competent to reject the motion following the resignation of chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar.

The top court, however, observed that there appears to be "some infirmity" in the manner in which the Lok Sabha Speaker constituted the panel, and said it would examine whether the defect is grave enough to warrant termination of the proceedings. Rohatgi, at the outset, opposed the setting up of the inquiry committee by the Speaker, saying that if the impeachment motions are moved simultaneously in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on the same day, the panel committee has to be formed jointly by both the houses.

"Prima facie let us be clear that we are not with Rohatgi on (point) one and two (setting up of the inquiry panel and the action of Deputy Chairperson of Rajya Sabha to reject the motion)... We have to only see if we should inter-



vene under Article 32 to see if the person (Justice Varma) should have got the benefit of the joint committee (of both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha)... Justice Datta said. The bench was hearing a petition of Justice Varma challenging the legality of the parliamentary panel under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, for inquiry against him over the discovery of unaccounted half-burnt cash currencies at his residence here.

Rohatgi referred to a proviso of Section 3(2) of Act which reads: "Provided that where notices of a motion referred to in sub-section (1) are given on the same day in both Houses of Parliament, no Committee shall be constituted unless the motion has been admitted in both Houses and where such motion has been admitted in both Houses, the Committee shall be constituted jointly by the Speaker and the Chairman."

The bench said that the Act does not expressly state that if one House rejects a motion, the other House is barred from proceeding.

"Where is the bar under the proviso for the Lok Sabha to appoint a committee if the Rajya Sabha rejects the motion?" Justice Datta asked. "If one house has rejected a motion, then where is the bar on the Lok Sabha in constituting the Committee," he asked again.

Justice Datta said that the proviso is silent on whether the rejection of the motion in the Rajya Sabha will bar the Lok Sabha from proceeding with it. "We have to read the silence in the provision purposively," he said.

The bench, however, said that had the Rajya Sabha also admitted the motion, then Justice Varma would have got the benefit of a joint committee.

"But whether it is so prejudicial to your interest that we have to in-

terfere under Article 32," the bench asked and listed the plea for further hearing on Thursday.

Rohatgi also assailed the decision of the deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha to reject the motion, which was earlier admitted by the chairperson of the Upper House. The question is whether the Speaker of the Lok Sabha could unilaterally constitute an inquiry committee when removal motions were initiated in both Houses of Parliament on the same day, but admitted only in one House, Rohatgi said.

He said for the removal of a judge, Parliament must strictly adhere to the procedure prescribed under the Act, which requires a motion signed by at least 100 members of the Lok Sabha or 50 members of the Rajya Sabha.

Once such a motion is admitted, a committee is to be constituted to conduct an inquiry, akin to a departmental proceeding, followed by debate in the House.

Drawing the attention of the bench, Rohatgi emphasised that impeachment motions against Justice Varma were moved in both Houses of Parliament on the same day, that is July 21, 2025.

Referring to provisions, he said that when notices of motion are given in both Houses on the same day, no committee shall be constituted unless the motion is admitted in both Houses. In such a situation, the Act contemplates the formation of a joint committee by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. (PTI)

People dying not only due to dog bites but also because of road accidents caused by strays: SC

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: Flagging non-compliances of rules and directions by civic bodies, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said that people were dying not only due to dog bites alone in the country but also because of accidents caused by stray animals on roads.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and N V Anjaria, which was hearing pleas for modification of its earlier orders of the apex court filed by dog lovers and those seeking stringent compliance of orders, said it is conducting the hearing as many lawyers and animal activists claimed that they were not heard before passing of the order on November 7.

"The roads should be clear of dogs and stray animals. It is not only the dog bites but also the roaming of stray animals on roads that are proving dangerous and causing accidents. No one knows which dog is in what mood in the morning. Civic bodies have to implement the rules, modules and directions strictly," the bench said.

Justice Mehta pointed out that two Rajasthan high court judges have suffered accidents in the last 20 days and one of the judges is still suffering from spinal injuries.

"It's a serious issue," he told lawyers appearing in the matter.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for the petitioner seeking modification of the earlier order of the court in the matter, said that the solution is not to capture all dogs but to adopt a scientific formula, accepted worldwide for reducing animal-human conflict.

He submitted that the court can adopt the formula of CSVR (Capture, Sterilise, Vaccinate and Release) for managing and controlling the population of stray dogs which will gradually reduce the dog bite incidents.

"Prevention is always better than cure," Justice Nath said and pointed out that there was nothing much to argue in the matter as the court is only directed to remove the stray dogs from institutional areas and has not interfered with any rules and regulations.

The bench said what it is trying in the matter is the strict enforcement of rules, regulations, modules and standard operating procedures (SOPs) by states and civic bodies.

"Some states have not responded to compliance

with our orders and implementation of the arguments. We will be very harsh with those states. All the rules, regulations and SOPs need to be followed," the top court said.

When some counsels, appearing for different parties, submitted that dog attacks are happening, the bench said that it understands that children and adults are being bitten and losing their lives.

At the outset, senior advocate Gaurav Agarwal, who has been appointed as amicus curiae in the matter, said that the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has prepared an SOP to implement the court order.

"They have identified 1,400 km of road as a vulnerable stretch. However, after detection, the NHAI says that the state governments have to take care of it," Agarwal said.

The bench suggested fencing the roads and expressways to prevent stray animals from coming onto the roads.

Agarwal submitted that states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab are yet to file compliance affidavits while some states have filed very "disappointing" affidavits.

Justice Nath said that the court will deal with those states.

In his arguments, Sibal submitted that the response against this stray dog issue should be reflective of a mature and responsible society.

"First of all, this is not an adversarial issue and we are here as dog lovers. If one tiger is a man-eater, we don't kill all tigers.

"We must make sure that sterilisation takes place and the population must come down. There is a process for that," Sibal submitted while pointing to the CSVR model and said it has brought down the dog population in Lucknow to almost zero.

He added that if dogs that have rabies and those that do not have rabies are put in the same shelter, all of them will get rabies.

The bench in a lighter vein said, "The only thing missing is providing counselling to the dogs as well so that he doesn't bite when released back."

Similar arguments were made by senior advocates Colin Gonsalves, Anand Grover, C U Singh and some animal rights activists appearing in-person. (PTI)

'Nothing wrong in Cong party seeking share in power'

COIMBATORE (TAMIL NADU), Jan 7: There is nothing wrong in seeking a share in power, Congress leader Praveen Chakravarty said here on Wednesday and that he had called on TVK chief Vijay only once.

All these years the Congress party did not seek a share in power, but that does not mean it should never make that demand, he said speaking to reporters.

Only days ago Congress MP Manickam Tagore had said that it was time to debate power sharing. Congress leader and Killiyoor MLA S Rajeshkumar had said months ago that the party legislators and office bearers would urge the All India Congress Committee to persuade the DMK to accept "coalition government" and allot more seats to the party.

Asked whether the Congress party's chorus for power sharing has grown louder, Chakravarty wondered whether his party must not put forth the demand seeking power as it had not insisted on such an arrangement before.

"A party will grow only if it takes part in elections, contest seats, and shares power. Also, its future and that of these youngsters will be bright. There is nothing wrong in asking (power sharing). That is also their request," he said, pointing towards the large number of cadres clad in white shirts who were standing behind him.

To a query on his meeting with the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam Chief Vijay, he said, "I just met him once. Thats all." The reported meeting had created quite a buzz in the state political circles, prompting Congress to declare it was with its ally DMK. (PTI)

5 cops injured in clash during demolition drive near Delhi mosque; Juvenile among 5 held

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: Violence erupted during an anti-encroachment drive near the Faiz-e-Elahi mosque in Delhi's Ramlila Maidan area early Wednesday, with some people pelting stones at police personnel, leaving five of them injured.

Police used mild force and teargas to quell the protest that broke out on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday and took five people, including a juvenile, into custody and also detained 10-15 others.

Police sources said the trouble broke out after a social media post claimed that the mosque was being demolished during the anti-encroachment drive.

Soon after, several people gathered there, and some pelted stones and glass bottles at the police and MCD workers, the sources said.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), on the Delhi High Court's direction, was carrying out a demolition drive on land adjoining the mosque and a nearby graveyard at Turkman Gate.

Some commercial establishments, including a diagnostic centre and banquet hall, were demolished during the drive, MCD Deputy Commissioner Vivek Kumar said while making it clear that no damage was caused to the mosque. The police said when the drive was underway, around 100-150 people gathered at the site. While most of them dispersed after being persuaded, some created a ruckus and resorted to stone-pelting, resulting in injuries to five police personnel.

They are probing whether the violence was spontaneous or a pre-planned attempt to disrupt the drive, the police said.

The Delhi Police, in a statement, said that teargas was used to disperse the crowd, after which the situation was brought under control and normalcy restored.

Additional Commissioner of Police (Central) Nidhin Valsan said MCD, which owns the land, scheduled the demolition for the intervening night of January 6 and 7. They had informed the



police in advance about the proposed drive and sought deployment of force for maintaining law and order.

The Additional CP said most people dispersed after being persuaded. However, some tried to create a ruckus and resorted to stone-pelting, in which five policemen sustained minor injuries and were given medical treatment.

A police source said, "One of the videos that triggered the controversy was allegedly recorded by a person named Khalid Malik, who urged people to step out of their homes in large numbers. Rumours were circulated that bulldozers had been deployed to demolish a mosque, which fuelled tension in the area." Five people arrested in the case have been identified as Mohd Arib (25), Mohd Kaif (23), Mohd Kashif (25), Mohd Hamid (30) and a 17-year-old boy.

CCTV footage and videos circulating on social media are being analysed to identify other involved, the police said.

In one of the purported videos of the incident, a mob can be seen charging towards police personnel, hurling stones and climbing over barricades erected at the spot.

The police have also recovered masks that some of them wore to hide their identities. Footage from body cameras worn by the police personnel and drone cameras are also being analysed to identify the culprits.

The Additional CP said a banquet hall and a dispensary near the mosque, which were declared encroachments by the court, were to be demolished. Immediately after receiving intimation from the

MCD, the police contacted local residents and informed them that the demolition was a legal action.

The police also took people of the area into confidence and received considerable cooperation from them, he added.

The FIR has been registered under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 221 (Obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions), 132 (Assault or criminal force to deter public servant from discharge of his duty), 121 (Voluntarily causing hurt to deter public servant from his duty), 191 (Rioting), 223 (A) (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) and 3(5) (Joint liability) and provisions of Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984.

Kumar said around 36,000 square feet of encroached area was cleared during the drive. The cleared area included a diagnostic centre, a banquet hall and two two-storey boundary walls, Kumar said, adding that the demolition continued through the night. Kumar also clarified that no damage was caused to the mosque during the drive.

Joint Commissioner of Police (Central Range) Madhur Verma, in a statement, said, "The entire area was meticulously divided into nine zones, each placed under the supervision of an officer of the rank of additional deputy commissioner of police. Adequate deployment of police force was made at all sensitive points."

Prior to the demolition drive, several coordination meetings were held with members of the Aman Committee and other local stakeholders, with the objective of maintaining peace and preventing any untoward incident. All possible preventive and confidence-building measures were undertaken, he said.

"During the course of the demolition, a few miscreants attempted to create a disturbance by indulging in stone pelting. The situation was promptly brought under control through measured and minimal use of force, ensuring that normalcy was restored without escalation," he added. (PTI)

BJP woman functionary claims police disrobed her during arrest

HUBBALLI (KARNATAKA), Jan 7: A controversy has erupted in Karnataka following allegations that the police disrobed a BJP woman functionary while arresting her recently here in connection with an attack on government officials.

Police rejected the woman's allegation, saying she removed her clothes herself and also attacked the cops, causing them bite injuries. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah blamed the woman for the incident, while the BJP alleged that its party functionary was disrobed by the police. A video of the woman being topless has gone viral, sparking a row. Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner N Shashikumar on Wednesday dismissed her allegations, claiming the woman not only disrobed herself but also bit four police officers, including two sub-inspectors, in their abdomen.

According to sources, there was an encroachment of government land. To clear it, revenue officials had gone there with policemen, and they were attacked by the alleged illegal occupants.

A case was registered in this connection, and the woman was a key accused. When a police team went to pick her up, she resisted arrest, they claimed. The police team overpowered her and bundled her into the police vehicle. Videos of the woman emerged showing her topless. She alleged the police team disrobed her. Refuting the charge,

Shashikumar explained the chronology of the events to reporters. He said that when government officers went to the Chalukya Nagar area of Keshwapur in Hubballi, for a land survey, people quarrelled with them and attacked them. Three separate cases were registered in this connection. The investigating officer of the cases decided to arrest one of the women involved in the offence. While effecting the arrest, the investigating officer had shown utmost restraint and precaution. He had taken about 8-10 women officers and staff, knowing very well that there was a possibility of some nuisance, Shashikumar said. "Despite that, when she was taken inside the police vehicle, she undressed herself. Our women officers and staff who were present at the spot took the assistance of local people and got a separate dress for her," the officer said. He added that the police repeatedly requested her to wear another cloth.

"So the accusation against the police is absolutely false, and it is made with all bad intentions. I have verified the sequence of events," Shashikumar said. He said he has still asked the Deputy Commissioner of Police to conduct a thorough inquiry into the whole sequence of events from January 1 to 5.

Shashikumar said the woman has about nine cases pending against her. She has been sent to judicial custody. Four women police officers

got injured in the melee, he said. "Two were very badly injured because she bit them in their abdomen, and two others have also sustained some injuries. And three to four of our male staff have also sustained some injuries. But they thought, you know, it's part of our job, and why should complain," Shashikumar said. "Men officers and staff have not given any complaint, but lady officers, two of them were very badly injured and have filed a complaint," he added.

Speaking to reporters in Haveri, Siddaramaiah said the accused woman had bitten police officers.

"When police officers went to arrest her she bit many officers. It's very bad. There was an FIR against her. When police personnel went to arrest her, she beat them and bit them," the chief minister said. He said no one should take law into their hands or else, they will face legal action. The Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly, R Ashoka, condemned the police action.

"The inhuman incident that took place where Hubballi Keshwapur police stripped and beat a BJP woman worker in response to a complaint filed by a Congress party municipal member has become another example of the hate politics that the state Congress government, which has been in power, is carrying out unabashedly, bringing shame upon itself," Ashoka alleged in a post on 'X'. (PTI)

Bihar NDA leaders slam oppn for criticising VB-G RAM G Act

PATNA, Jan 7: Bihar NDA leaders on Wednesday slammed the opposition parties for criticising the VB-G RAM G Act, saying that the new legislation will strengthen the rural economy.

The NDA leaders addressed a press conference at the BJP headquarters here. Talking to reporters here, BJP state president Sanjay Saraogi claimed that the opposition seems to have resolved to "oppose all the good work" done by the NDA government at the Centre.

"Narendra Modi-led NDA government aims to make India a developed nation by 2047, for which it is important to develop Bihar, and the development of the state is possible only through progress of its villages," he said, adding that "VB G RAM-G Act will prove to be an effective medium for fulfilment of the Vikashit Bharat 2047 goal."

Saraogi said that the provisions of the VB-G RAM G Act will go a long way in ensuring the development of villages across India.

"This legislation has been brought to strengthen the rural system, empower poor farmers and labourers, and create more employment opportunities," he said.

JDU state president Umesh Kushwaha alleged that the propaganda being run by the opposition is misleading.

The number of working days has been extended from 100 to 125. Opportunities have increased under the new law, administrative expenditure has been enhanced substantially, and provision for weekly compensation for labourers has been made in the VB-G RAM G Act," he said.

Kushwaha asserted that the Act will "enhance accountability and transparency".

Regarding the omission of Mahatma Gandhi's name from the employment scheme and its renaming as VB-G RAM G Act, the JDU leader said, "Mahatma Gandhi used to say that to develop the nation, villages have to be developed. He wanted to bring Ram Rajya".

LJP(RV) state president Raju Tiwari also defended the renaming of the scheme. (PTI)

IITs to revamp curriculum for MTech, PhD courses; rethink education system for AI advancements

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: The MTech and PhD courses in the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are set to be revamped following a meeting of the IIT Council, with officials claiming that opportunities being offered by these programmes are under-utilised.

The IIT Council, the apex coordination body of the 23 premier engineering institutes, took the decision in their meeting in August last year, after a gap of over two years.

In a move aimed at making the JEE Advanced exam "a better and less stressful assessment," the IIT Council also recommended exploring the possibility of making the test adaptive, where questions are dynamically generated and adjusted in real-time depending on the candidate's ability.

The council discussed the impact AI will have on the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and research in IITs.

They discussed rethinking the education system in light of ad-

vancements in AI and suggested that each IIT should explore the goal of developing concrete steps to reshape engineering education accordingly, over the next 2-3 years.

"One of the major reasons as to why B. Tech graduates are not inclined to pursue MTech in India due to the limited availability of specialisations. Another reason is the lack of internship opportunities," according to minutes of the meeting.

The Council emphasised the need to make industry internships a compulsory component of the MTech programmes.

"The Council also discussed the benefits of creating a dual-track M.Tech programme, with one stream dedicated to industry engagement and the other to research, to better align academic pathways with both national research objectives and private sector demands and to consider multidisciplinary MTech programmes and blended mode MTech programmes, in greater



measure and product based MTech programmes without the need for publishing papers," it added.

They also directed all IITs to revamp or redesign the MTech curriculum in line with their specific needs and vision, within the next one year. The Council also deliberated upon the need to reposition IIT PhD programmes as engines of innovation, leadership, and global competitiveness.

IIT Ropar proposed a comprehensive reform of doctoral educa-

tioned," it said.

"The establishment of doctoral Academies at each IIT was also proposed to support mentorship 'career development' and international engagement, backed by upgraded infrastructure and digital labs," it added.

All IITs have been directed to set up an internal committee that would survey the baseline quality of incoming PhD students, process improvement in the administration of PhD and mapping of outcomes.

"IITs have been asked to initiate reforms to monitor the relative performance and dedication of faculty in their PhD guidance and future assignment of a number of PhD students based on relative performance in this regard," the minutes said. "A sub-committee may be formed by MoE to deliberate upon and propose a detailed framework to further promote product-based PhDs in IITs along with the existing and make a presentation to the Chairman, IIT Council within 1 month from its constitution," the minutes said. (PTI)

Tripura's Chabimura set for major transformation; ₹ 60 crore project nears completion

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Jan 7: Tripura's iconic Chabimura (Chobimura) tourist destination in Gomati district is poised for a major transformation, with the state government developing it into a world-class ecotourism hub within the next 10 months. The ambitious Rs 60-crore project is being implemented with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB).



Tourism Minister Sushanta Chowdhury, during his third inspection visit to the site on Wednesday, announced that nearly 35 percent of the work has already been completed, and the project is progressing steadily. Reaffirming the government's commitment to sustainable tourism, the minister emphasized that the development is being carried out while preserving Chabimura's natural beauty and archaeological heritage.

"We are focusing on developing this tourist spot in the lap of nature. Chabimura has gained national attention, and with the addition of basic amenities and facilities demanded by visitors, it has the potential to become a world-class destination. We are moving firmly in that direction," Chowdhury said.

Often referred to as the "Mini Amazon of Tripura," Chabimura is a unique archaeological and eco-tourism site, famed for its ancient rock carvings of Hindu deities such as Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, and Goddess Durga, sculpted on steep cliffs along the banks of the Gomati River. The massive Durga carving remains the

site's most prominent attraction.

Accessible primarily by boat through dense forests, Chabimura offers visitors a rare blend of heritage, adventure, and natural beauty, including trekking routes, river views, and birdwatching opportunities. Under the ongoing development project, the government is constructing 26 eco-friendly log huts, along with a cafeteria, children's play area, landscaped zones, walkways, and other essential tourist amenities to significantly

enhance the visitor experience. The Tourism Minister stated that the project is expected to be completed by October, with the site to be formally opened to the public by December.

Highlighting the state's broader tourism vision, Chowdhury remarked that although tourism was declared an industry last year, no substantial groundwork had been undertaken by the previous government.

"After coming to power, our government initiated several key tourism projects including Chabimura, Narikel Kunja, and Adventure Tourism initiatives. In the coming years, tourism will generate livelihoods across the North East and help Tripura emerge as a major tourism hub for the nation," he added.

The minister also informed that he would soon inspect Banduar in Gomati district, where a replica complex of the 51 Shakti Peethas is currently under construction, further strengthening Tripura's religious and cultural tourism landscape.

Sikkim witnesses over 17 lakh tourist arrivals in 2025

GANGTOK, Jan 7: Sikkim recorded more than 17 lakh tourist arrivals in 2025, up by over 82,000 in the previous year, but the number of foreign visitors declined sharply, an official said on Wednesday.

Compared to 2024, when the state had witnessed 15,40,421 domestic tourist footfalls, the number increased to 16,35,650 in the last year.

The count of foreign visitors declined to 71,710 in 2025 from 84,710 in the previous year.

Tourism Department Additional Chief Secretary CS Rao said efforts are underway to attract more foreign visitors and strengthen sustainable and responsible tourism practices in the state.

Explaining the reason behind the drop in foreign tourist arrivals, he said extensive road damage in October, particularly along NH-10, had adversely affected the travel plans of visitors.

He further stated that if road conditions across the state, including NH-10, continue to improve and remain stable, Sikkim can expect nearly 20 lakh tourist arrivals in the current year.

Rao also attributed the growth in domestic tourist count to the growing preference of visitors for the Himalayan state. (PTI)

Nagaland Dy CM Patton calls for public support in reporting crimes to police

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Jan 7: Nagaland deputy chief minister Y Patton, who also holds the home portfolio, urged the public to actively support the police force by reporting crimes and cooperating with law enforcement, an official report said on Tuesday.

Inaugurating the new SP office building and police barrack at Wokha on Monday, Patton highlighted the issue of under-reported cases.

He emphasised the importance of timely registration of complaints to ensure effective policing and access to resources.

On the police recruitment process in the state, Patton assured that the selection process would remain free, fair, and based solely on individual merit.

Patton congratulated the Wokha district police and the SP for the successful completion of the new infrastructure and expressed appreciation for the improved facilities. He also extended thanks to the land donor for generously contributing land for the construction of the new buildings.

In his address, DGP Rupin Sharma underscored the role of district police as first responders, noting that the number of registered cases often does not reflect the ground reality due to underreporting.

He pointed out that the allocation of resources and future development is closely tied to the volume of reported cases.

Sharma called for efficient police administration and the strengthening of trust between the police and the public. He also stressed the importance of utilising the new facilities to their fullest potential.

Naga business body, SBI renew MoU to bolster local entrepreneurs

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Jan 7: The Business Association of Nagas (BAN) and the State Bank of India (SBI) have renewed their MoU at the SBI regional office in Dimapur on Wednesday, reaffirming their commitment to act as catalysts for economic development of local entrepreneurs.

This renewal marked three years of sustained collaboration aimed at empowering local entrepreneurship and enhancing access to formal credit in the state, a BAN release said.

A key feature of the MoU is the formalisation of dedicated nodal officials from both SBI and BAN. These designated representatives will ensure streamlined coordination and efficient operations, with a specific focus on en-



hancing credit access for Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs).

Speaking on the occasion, BAN president L Mongkum Jamir underscored the association's continued focus on improving financial literacy among its members and facilitating smoother credit linkages.

He expressed his appreciation for SBI's consistent support in nurturing en-

trepreneurship across Nagaland, creating a business ecosystem in the state.

Hubert AS Wungshim, assistant general manager, SBI regional office, highlighted the pivotal role of banking institutions in driving state and national economic growth.

"As the lead bank in the region, SBI remains deeply committed to expanding financial inclusion, reaching unbanked areas, and actively promoting entrepreneurial success through strategic partnerships," he added.

The renewed collaboration signifies a strengthened resolve to bolster Nagaland's economic landscape by supporting existing businesses, encouraging new ventures, and creating a more accessible financial environment.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER (PHE), KAAC ZONE, DIPHU, KARBI ANGLONG

No. Addl. CPHE/KAAC/ESTT-73/2025-26/

Dated: - 2026

NOTIFICATION

On approval of the KAAC authority, it is for information to all concerned candidates who have qualified in written examination are to attend viva voce and computer test as per following scheduled. All the qualified candidates in written examination are hereby directed to carry original Admit card along with educational qualification documents.

The viva voce and computer test will be held on 10/01/2026 and 11/01/2026 from 10.00 AM to 4:00 PM at the Office of the Additional Chief Engineer (PHE), KAAC Zone, Near AGCC colony, Rongmirjeng, Diphu, Karbi Anglong. There will no change of schedule

Roll Number of the Selected Candidates for Viva Voice & Computer Test

Name of Post: Junior Assistant

Date of Interview: 10-01-2026

3	37	78	105	142	176	208	248	284	324
8	43	80	107	143	177	209	254	288	327
10	44	81	108	144	181	211	255	289	328
11	47	83	109	146	183	212	258	294	331
15	48	86	115	152	184	213	260	296	338
17	51	88	117	154	185	214	261	298	339
21	52	89	123	155	192	215	266	299	342
22	57	93	124	157	197	223	270	303	
26	59	94	128	158	199	225	273	305	
27	62	95	130	160	200	230	274	309	
29	63	96	135	162	202	241	278	314	
31	65	98	136	167	203	242	279	318	
32	67	99	139	168	205	244	280	320	
34	76	104	140	172	206	247	281	321	

Date of Interview: 11-01-2026

346	398	456	504	530	560	589	624	672	706
349	405	457	506	535	561	596	625	673	709
357	416	459	509	538	567	597	627	675	711
360	422	461	510	540	569	598	628	683	719
362	427	466	514	544	570	605	629	687	726
368	429	472	516	547	573	607	637	690	731
369	431	473	519	548	576	611	640	691	732
373	434	480	520	550	577	617	644	693	734
374	438	481	522	553	579	618	648	694	735
376	442	491	523	554	580	620	657	697	736
381	444	492	525	556	583	621	663	698	738
382	448	500	528	558	587	622	664	700	740
390	449	503	529	559	588	623	669	705	743
745									

Name of Post: Sectional Assistant

Date of Interview: 10-01-2026

1	40	49	61	68	86	96	200	315	326
31	46	53	62	81	87	161	312	321	373
384									

Date of Interview: 11-01-2026 (Stenographer and Assistant Driller)

Name of Post: Stenographer

1	3	4	6	8	9
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Name of Post: Assistant Driller

1	2	8	9	13	16
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Sd/-
Additional Chief Engineer (PHE)
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,
Diphu

Memo No. Addl. CPHE/KAAC/ESTT-73/2025-26/1683-86

Dated: 7/01/2026

OFFICE OF THE ADDL. DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION:: KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL, DIPHU.

No. ADE/Principal/Apptt./Hr.Edn./2024/924

Dated Diphu the 07/01/2026.

CORRIGENDUM

In continuation of this office advertisement no. E-1/Principal/Apptt./Sec.Edn./2024/2268 Dated Diphu the 25-11-2024 published in Local Dailies on 26-11-2024, it is for information to all concerned that the sanctioned vacant posts of Principal of Provincialised Higher Secondary School under Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu may be read as follows:

Sl. No.	Name of post	Pay Band	Grade Pay	No. of posts already advertised	No. of posts added	Total nos. of actual sanctioned vacant posts
1.	Principal of Higher Secondary School (Provincialised)	Rs. 30,000/- Rs. 1,10,000/-	Rs. 13,300/-	05 (Five)	02 (Two)	07 (Seven)

Provided that, all terms and conditions shall remain same as mentioned in the earlier advertisement no. E-1/Principal/Apptt./Sec.Edn./2024/2268 Dated Diphu the 25-11-2024.

Sd/-
Addl. Director of Education,
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,
Diphu.

Aditya Dhar's 'Dhurandhar' becomes biggest Hindi film ever, tops box office with ₹ 831 crore nett

Filmmaker Aditya Dhar's "Dhurandhar" has become the highest-earning Hindi film ever with a nett India collection of over ₹ 831 crore, the makers said on Wednesday.

With its Day 33 earnings on Tuesday standing at ₹ 5.70 crore nett, the Ranveer Singh-starrer's total India nett collection climbed to ₹ 831.40 crore, placing it at the No. 1 spot among all Hindi releases to date.

"History has been rewritten. With Tuesday's collections, 'Dhurandhar' has officially risen to become the highest-earning Hindi film of all time, a towering achievement that has redefined Indian box office success," the makers said in a statement.

The top position was earlier occupied by the Hindi version of Allu Arjun's 2023 blockbuster "Pushpa 2: The Rule". The Telugu movie had earned ₹ 830 crore in Hindi.

The other highest-earning Hindi titles are Shah Rukh Khan's "Jawan" and hor-

ror comedy "Stree 2", which had earned ₹ 643 crore and 627 crore respectively.

The India box office break-up shows a robust run across weeks, with ₹ 218 crore in its opening week, followed by ₹ 261.50 crore in week two, ₹ 189.30 crore in week three and ₹ 115.70 crore in week four. The film added ₹ 35.80 crore over its fifth weekend before continuing its steady run during the weekdays.

Globally, "Dhurandhar" has grossed over ₹ 1220 crore and is currently behind SS Rajamouli's "RRR" (₹ 1230 crore), "Pushpa 2" (₹ 1742 crore), "Baahubali 2 The Conclusion" (₹ 1788 crore) and Aamir Khan's "Dangal" (₹ 2070 crore), according to industry tracker Sacnilk.

"Dhurandhar" is a high-octane spy thriller, which is directed and written by Dhar. Featuring Singh in the lead role, the film follows covert intelligence operations set against a backdrop of geopolitical and terror events like Kan-

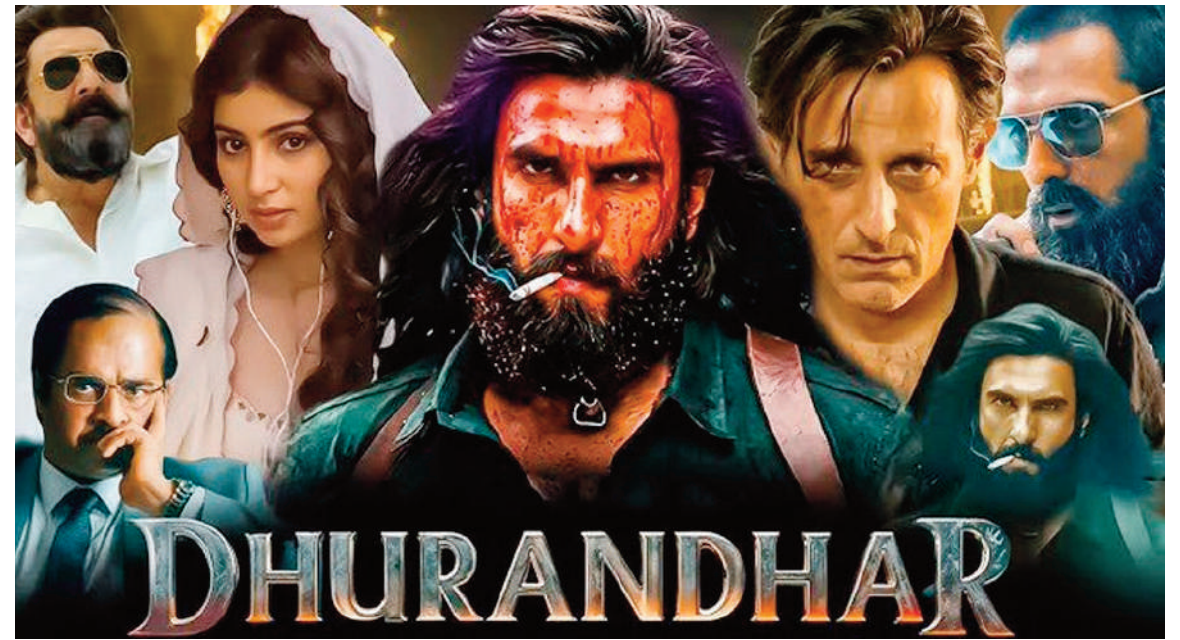
dahar plane hijack, 2001 Parliament Attack and 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

The film, which has led to polarising reactions from many critics and people in India, is mostly set in Lyari town of Karachi, an area known for its history of gang wars and violent turf battles.

Produced by Dhar and Lokesh Dhar under B62 Studios in association with Jyoti Deshpande's Jio Studios, the film also stars Sanjay Dutt, Akshaye Khanna, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun, R Madhavan and Rakesh Bedi.

Meanwhile, Bollywood studio Yash Raj Films congratulated the team of "Dhurandhar" on its achievement.

"DHURANDHAR is not a film... it's a milestone moment in Indian cinema that will be remembered forever. Congratulations to Aditya Dhar and Jio Studios for becoming the highest grossing Indian film of all time (in a single language)," the production banner said in a note posted on its official social media pages. (PTI)



Khaki Signals a Bold Turn in Assamese Cinema, Political Drama to Hit Screens Before Polls



By Mowsam Hazarika

Assamese cinema is preparing for a sharp political turn with Khaki, an upcoming thriller that delves into the uneasy relationship between political authority, the police system and the control of truth. Drawing heavily from real-life political and administrative experiences, the film promises a gripping and provocative narrative timed strategically ahead of the elections.

The storyline of Khaki is closely linked to the long professional journey of veteran journalist Atanu Bhuyan, who has spent decades observing and reporting on Assam's political and governance landscape.

His deep familiarity with the inner workings of power is said to have shaped the film's core, giving it a strong sense of realism and credibility. The film mirrors lived experiences and actual events, offering an unfettered look at the often opaque nexus between politicians and law enforcement.

Recently, the official poster of Khaki was unveiled at a small programme by senior cultural journalist Utpal Mena, in the presence of Atanu Bhuyan and cultural commentator Shivanu Bora. The poster has already sparked discussion for its bold imagery and unmistakable political undertone.

Visually, the poster is rich in symbolism. It shows a political

leader seated on a throne, representing authority and dominance, while a police officer and the force appear to physically support the throne to keep it from collapsing. Behind this central image runs a scene of protest, with rival political flags confronting each other. The composition powerfully suggests that political power survives not on its own, but through the active backing of the state machinery amid public dissent.

The filmmakers have confirmed that Khaki is slated for release on February 27. Post-production work is currently underway in Mumbai, where director Atanu Bhuyan recently spent nearly two weeks coordinating with technical professionals to fine-tune the film to high production standards.

A major highlight of the project is its Digital Intermediate (DI) process, which is being carried out at the renowned Prasad Laboratories in Mumbai. This marks a significant step for Assamese cinema, as Khaki is using advanced colour grading and correction technology. The DI work is being handled by Kiran Kota, a well-known name in Hindi cinema, lending further

technical weight to the film.

Sound design and music are also being developed in Mumbai. The background score and music direction are in the hands of Bollywood composer Daniel B. George, celebrated for his work in films like Andhadhun, Merry Christmas and Johnny Gaddar. A Filmfare Award winner for Andhadhun, George was also nominated for the Filmfare Best Soundtrack Award in 2025. For Khaki, he is personally overseeing the background music, ensuring it complements the film's intense political mood.

The film's layered sound design is being supervised by Devajit Changmai and Amrit Prateek, adding depth and texture to its narrative experience.

Directed jointly by Anuja Bhuyan, Rupam Bhuyan and Joy Baroua, Khaki is shaping up to be a noteworthy contribution to Assamese cinema. With its politically charged subject, grounded storytelling and sophisticated technical treatment, the film seeks to expose the power structures that often operate behind khaki uniforms and the façade of political authority.

Adivi Sesh on incorporating 'Tu Cheez Badi Hai Mast Mast' in 'Dacoit': Absolutely love the song



Actor Adivi Sesh says the 90's track "Tu Cheez Badi Hai Mast Mast" has been his favourite and that became the reason for him to acquire the rights to the song and incorporate it in his upcoming film "Dacoit".

Set to release on March 19, "Dacoit" is directed by Shaneil Deo. It also features Mrunal Thakur alongside Sesh.

The actor said when the teaser of the film was being conceptualised, he was clear he wanted to recreate the sense of nostalgia.

The track is from the cult classic film "Mohra", which released in 1994.

"Some songs stay with you forever, and 'Tu Cheez Badi Hai Mast' is one of those songs for

me. Growing up in the 90s, this track was everywhere, and I absolutely loved it. It was actually part of the first dance performance I ever did on a school stage, in a medley of songs, and that moment is still very vivid in my memory," Sesh said in a statement.

The 41-year-old actor said he felt "an instinctive pull to bring this song in".

"When we were working on the film, I felt an instinctive pull to bring this song in - not as a gimmick, but as a feeling. Using it as one of the songs in the film was my way of tipping my hat to that younger version of myself who fell in love with music, performance, and the joy of entertaining people."

"We made sure to acquire the rights properly because it mattered to me that this homage was done the right way. It's a small, personal memory woven into a much larger film, and I hope audiences feel that sense of nostalgia and energy when they hear it," he said. The film follows the story of an angry convict seeking vengeance on his ex-girlfriend who betrayed him.

It will release in Hindi and Telugu. (PTI)

Nagarjuna Akkineni's Anna-purna Studios hires senior colourist Andreas Brueckl



Actor Nagarjuna Akkineni-led Anna-purna Studios has onboarded internationally acclaimed senior colourist Andreas Brueckl to its creative team, the studio announced on Tuesday.

Brueckl, who brings over two decades of experience across Europe and Asia, will work with Annapurna Studios' creative and technical leadership under chief technology officer CV Rao, a press release said.

He has worked on critically acclaimed and blockbuster titles like "Paatal Lok", "Jailer", "Sacred Games", "Maidaan", "Delhi Crime", and "Daaku Maharaj", along with other projects and collaborations extending to Los Angeles, Europe, and the Middle East.

In a statement, Supriya Yarlagadda, executive director of Annapurna Studios, said the studio remained focused on creative excellence and collaboration with top global talent.

"We are pleased to welcome Andreas Brueckl, whose expertise will strengthen and enrich our team," she said.

Rao said Brueckl's global experience would add a valuable new dimension to the studio's creative vision.

"With a strong and accomplished team already in place, his perspective across international projects and Indian cinema will further expand our capabilities," he added. (PTI)

Gwyneth Paltrow claims she was fired from film due to 'harsh press' surrounding divorce from Chris Martin

Gwyneth Paltrow has claimed she was fired from an acting job because of the attention-grabbing headlines surrounding her divorce from Chris Martin.

The actor, 53, and the Coldplay frontman, 48, announced their split, which they famously called "conscious uncoupling," in 2014, after nearly 11 years of marriage. Although they finalized their divorce in 2016, they have remained friends and co-parent their two children, Apple, 21, and Moses, 19.

Now, the Goop founder is looking back on getting divorced in the spotlight and how it affected her career. During Tuesday's episode of Amy Poehler's podcast, Good Hang, Paltrow claimed that while she was scheduled to do a movie right after her and Martin's "conscious uncoupling," the opportunity fell through.

"There was a lot of harsh stuff in the press, and I think the distributor was like, 'This might be too hot to touch,'" she explained, without naming the movie.

"Interesting. They were like, 'We don't need the heat?'" Poehler responded, which Paltrow agreed with.

"So that was great!" the Marty Supreme star joked. "Cause I was getting a divorce, and then I got fired off. It was so awesome."

When Poehler mentioned the "big reactions" to the actor's "conscious uncoupling," Paltrow said she understood why there was backlash.

"I think the implicit learning is like, 'Oh, f***.' Like, they're saying I did something wrong, which of course was not the intention," she explained. "The inference that I messed someone up. Like that's not a nice thing to contemplate. So, I do understand why

it was so personal for people."

When Paltrow and Martin announced their divorce, they called it a "conscious uncoupling," a term for mindfully and respectfully ending a relationship, with the intention of positively moving forward.

"We have always conducted our relationship privately, and we hope that as we consciously uncouple and coparent, we will be able to continue in the same manner," the pair wrote in a 2014 blog post on Paltrow's Goop website, titled "Conscious Uncoupling."

In a 2022 essay for British Vogue, the Iron Man star reflected on the immense backlash surrounding her divorce statement, which she didn't initially expect.

"The public's surprise gave way quickly to ire and derision. A strange combination of mockery and anger that I had never seen. I was already pretty tattered from what had been a tough year," she wrote at the time.

"Frankly, the intensity of the response saw me bury my head in the sand deeper than I ever had in my very public life."

However, in a 2023 Instagram Q&A, Paltrow said she took pride in using the "conscious uncoupling" phrase to announce her divorce.

"It makes me feel pretty proud when people come up to me on the streets and say, 'Thank you for introducing that concept because I've become good friends with my ex,'" she said.

"I'm very happy that we were able to play a small part in that cultural shift."

After the divorce, Paltrow married Brad Falchuk in 2018. Meanwhile, Martin dated actor Dakota Johnson for eight years before they split up in June. (PTI)

'There was a lot of harsh stuff in the press, and I think the distributor was like, 'This might be too hot to touch,' she explained, without naming the movie



NZ focussed on India white-ball challenge, not T20 WC: Mitchell

MUMBAI, Jan 7: New Zealand is not dwelling on the T20 World Cup, which is still a month away, and is instead focused on the immediate challenge of facing the Indian bowlers in the upcoming white-ball series, batter Daryl Mitchell said on Wednesday.

With Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in their ranks, India will take on the Kiwis in a three-match ODI series starting on Sunday followed by a five-match T20I series. The T20 World Cup will be held from February 7 to March 8 in India and Sri Lanka.

"We'll look at the T20 World Cup in a month's time. For now we'll worry about playing an ODI series against India, and they've got some pretty good bowlers themselves with the likes of Bumrah and Chakravarty," Mitchell told the media here during New Zealand Cricket Golf Day organised with TCM Sports here.

"A really key value for us as the New Zealand credit team is being where out

feet are and that means being in the present and what the challenge is at that moment.

"That's the exciting thing is we got three ODIs against the world-class Indian team in Indian conditions in front of full crowds. So we'll be where our feet are. We'll control the now and we'll look forward to the World Cup in a month," he added.

Interestingly, both Bumrah and Chakravarty are not a part of the ODI series but will feature in the T20Is.

Mitchell said he will look to draw from experience of playing in India when it comes to handling spinners.

"I've been playing international cricket for a little while now and as a part of playing international cricket you have to adapt to different conditions all around the world," he said.

"It's a great challenge when you come into these parts. As a New Zealander, you don't grow up on surfaces like this.



So I'll be able to draw on experiences that I've had in the last few years and take on the positives such as the ODI World Cup in 2023," he added. New Zealand batter Henry Nicholls

said playing against India in their backyard will be a like a "carrot" for the youngsters given the prospect of playing in the IPL, but added that they will have to keep it simple.

"There's not many places around the world they have the same excitement and passion that the fans here do. We've got some fresh guys in the squad as well who haven't experienced it," he said.

"Anytime we play for New Zealand, there's a lot of pride and we want to compete and play really well. There's a couple of new faces and for them coming over here and playing against India in their own conditions will be invaluable."

"I'm sure there'll be an absolute carrot, but again, the interest when you play over here certainly from the fans, but also around the world, that's what you want to test yourself against is the best team in their own conditions and that sort of the challenge we have in front of us," he added.

Nicholls said for the young players in the Kiwis' touring party, it will be vital to keep it simple.

"(It can be) overload at times, but as we always talk about in the group, as

BlackCaps it's about is keeping it really simple and guys knowing what their role is and in doing that as best you can," he said.

"And accepting a bit of the outer noise and actually enjoying it as well. I say there's not many places you play in the world that has the level of interest and excitement as when you play a game in India at these grounds with the fans," he added.

Nicholls, who has toured India before, said not too much is known about the venues for the first two ODIs in Vadodra and Rajkot.

"Yeah, not too much. I played (in) Indore last time. We're here in the one-day series, so this is quite a high scoring game," he said.

"But anytime you go around the world it's about assessing those conditions and grounds. Especially in India, the grounds sizes and outfield and stuff like that can affect the scores," he said. (PTI)

Players will need to make 'sacrifices' for ISL clubs to survive: Bengaluru FC owner Parth Jindal

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: Bengaluru FC owner Parth Jindal on Wednesday called on the players to "make sacrifices" in view of the "financial burden" the club will shoulder to participate in the delayed Indian Super League (ISL) next month, saying without their support, the club may have to "shut shop for good".

All India Football Federation's (AIFF) bid to rope in a new commercial partner did not find any takers after the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) with the ISL organisers, the Reliance-owned FSDL, ended on December 8 last year.

Though Sports Minister Manu Singh Mandaviya on Tuesday announced that the delayed and truncated 2025-26 ISL season will begin on February 14 with all the 14 clubs participating in it, the franchises will struggle financially if the top-tier tournament does not get a commercial partner soon.

The AIFF is expected to float another tender soon for a commercial partner.

Jindal did not specifically explain the kind of sacrifice the footballers will be expected to make, but it could well be a reduced salary for this season. The club features, among others, former India captain Sunil Chhetri and star goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu.



The ISL clubs are required to share 60 per cent of the financial cost (around ₹ one crore per club) for the league to start after a nearly six months long pause. The total cost for the upcoming season has been pegged at ₹ 25 crore by the AIFF.

"Tremendous sacrifice from all clubs is being asked for to play the ISL in its current format. Repercussions if we don't have a league are very worrying," Jindal wrote on 'X'.

"Truly hope the players understand the additional financial burden on the clubs and agree to also sacrifice as we are all in this together. We are in this for the love of football and to see our country play the beautiful game and be

good at it."

He admitted that Bengaluru FC has been a loss-making franchise since joining the ISL and said the club may have to wind up its operations if players do not cooperate.

"@bengalurufootball has been a loss making proposition for all since I can remember - this year's numbers without the players helping out will force many to shut shop for good," he said in the tweet which was reposted by FC Goa CEO Ravi Puskur.

Jindal also thanked Mandaviya "for his intervention and his proposal", which led to the ending of a crisis that paralysed Indian football.

Earlier on Friday, leading names such as Sunil Chhetri, along with

several foreign recruits of the ISL, had called for world governing body FIFA's intervention to rescue the ISL.

Chhetri, Gurpreet Singh Sandhu and Sandesh Jhingan voiced concern over the prolonged uncertainty, warning that Indian football would be slipping into a state of "permanent paralysis".

On Tuesday, Mandaviya announced that the ISL will have 91 matches on home and away basis, the logistics of which are still being worked out.

AIFF President Kalyan Chaubey, who took over the explaining part after the Minister's announcement, said a ₹ 25 crore central pool has been made for only the conduct of the ISL.

"Ten percent of this fund will come from AIFF, 30 percent was to come from a commercial partner but since we don't have one right now, the AIFF will pitch in with that contribution," Chaubey had said.

"In all, the AIFF will give ₹ 14 crore for ISL and about ₹ 3.2 crore for I League till we find a commercial partner. The rest of the fund will come through the legacy participating clubs. Hopefully we will find a commercial partner soon," he added.

"In case, we face any difficulty, the government will also step in to assist us," he stated. (PTI)

Asiad gold-winner and 1500m national record holder Jinson Johnson retires

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: National record-holder and Asian Games gold-winning Indian middle distance runner Jinson Johnson announced his retirement on Wednesday, saying that "it is time for something new" after a 15-year career shaped by "relentless training, quiet struggles, and painful injuries".

The 34-year-old Kerala athlete has not competed since winning a 1500m bronze in the Hangzhou Asian Games in October 2023. His best moment was winning the 1500m gold in the 2018 Jakarta Asian Games with a time of 3 minutes 44.72 seconds. He also won a silver in 800m in the same Games.

"From a boy with dream started the journey from Kolkata and reached up to Asian Games podium in Hangzhou 2023. Thank you Athletics," Johnson wrote on Instagram.

"Some journeys are measured in meters and seconds. Some are measured in tears, sacrifices, faith, and the people who never let you fall."

In 2018, Johnson broke legendary Sriram Singh's 42-year-old men's 800m national record during the National Inter-State Championship in Guwahati by clocking 1

minute 45.65 seconds. His national mark was, however, eclipsed by Mohammed Afsal in 2025.

During the 2018 Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast, Australia, Johnson broke Bahadur Prasad's 23-year-old 1500m national record with a time of 3 minutes 37.86 seconds though he finished fifth in the final.

He later improved his own national record twice, the latest instance being the 3:35.24sec mark in 2019 in a Berlin meet.

"Breaking two National Records and contributing to Indian athletics remains one of the proudest moments of my life.

"I was blessed to represent my Country at the Olympic Games, World Athletics Championships, Asian Games, and Commonwealth Games. Every time I wore the tricolour, I ran not just with my legs, but with my heart."

Recalling his long journey, Johnson said, "My journey began in 2007 in Kolkata, with my first school National medal. I did not know then where this road would lead me. I only knew one thing -- I wanted to run for India.

"What followed was a life shaped by relentless training, quiet

struggles, painful injuries, lonely tracks, comebacks that tested my soul, and moments that made every sacrifice worth it."

The year 2018 was the best of his career with several successes coming his way.

"In 2018, I was ranked top athlete in Asia, which gave me the opportunity to represent Asia-Pacific at the IAAF World Continental Cup in Ostrava. That year was truly momentous -- I won gold in the 1500m and silver in the 800m at the Jakarta Asian Games.

"Everything was going well until 2019, when COVID and a severe Achilles tendon injury hit my career hard. After three long years of setbacks and recovery, I returned to win a bronze medal at the Hangzhou Asian Games 2023 -- my final race at the National and International level."

He thanked his coaches, fellow athletes, the government and the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) for guidance and support.

"This journey was never mine alone. My heartfelt thanks to everyone who worked tirelessly behind the scenes--often unseen, but always felt... thank you for pushing me every single day. (PTI)

Harmanpreet credits WPL and her franchise Mumbai Indians in helping her develop 'winning mindset'

MUMBAI, Jan 7: Harmanpreet Kaur on Wednesday credited Women's Premier League and her franchise Mumbai Indians in helping her develop a "winning mindset", which she made good use of while leading the national team to women's ODI World Cup title.

Harmanpreet, who has led Mumbai Indians to two titles in the WPL, said working with the franchise has helped her approach competitions differently.

"I believe wherever I go, I want to think about winning because participation, we have been doing for so many years, I think that doesn't change anything," Harmanpreet said at a press conference organised by Mumbai Indians here.

"But if you go with a winning mindset and work towards that, that can bring a lot of things to you and to your country. WPL made a lot of changes in me, especially thinking because before that, some limitations were there but when I came here and worked with MI."

Talking further about the changed mindset, she said, "MI has been winning IPL title for so many years and that winning mindset came and when I was sitting with them, they were always thinking about what best we can do to beat any team or to win the title.

"That's what has completely changed," she added.

Lisa Keightley, the new coach of the Mumbai Indians, said Indian domestic players are getting the right amount of competition, which is now reflecting in their perform-



ances.

"The Indian international players are getting fantastic competitions to lead into international cricket in World Cups and being put under pressure," Lisa said.

"And if you're doing that in your domestic competition, it's only going to enhance your performance when you go away and play international cricket. We've seen the result of that through India winning the last 50-over World Cup when they're under pressure in the semi-final to win that match, and then go on and win the final.

"It was big for the country and big for those players like Harman who have played a number of years and had that feeling of winning one of those big tournaments," she added.

The Australian said India winning the women's ODI World Cup was also possible with the advent of the WPL.

"I think that's a result of WPL in the last three years and we're seeing the reward when they go away to

international competitions," she said.

Keightley has taken charge of the defending champions Mumbai Indians in the WPL after Charlotte Edwards quit her role to become the England women's team head coach.

"It's my first job in Mumbai and I think it's a very special city for me because whenever I get a chance to play here, I always get to see positive results," she said.

"I am sure this season is also going to be very special. I am really happy that last season and last year turned out to be very good overall for women's cricket. I hope this year also starts the same way."

She acknowledged that the challenge for the leadership group will be to ensure that the squad is in the right mental shape for the competition starting on January 9 here.

"The team's pretty settled. We've got a really good core group of players and we'll have really good role clarity going into those matches," she said. (PTI)

Sarthak-Hardee upset third seeds Snehit-Sayali



VADODARA, Jan 7: Sarthak Arya and Hardee Patel upset third seeds Snehit Suravajjula and Sayali Wani 3-2 to advance to the second round of the mixed doubles qualifying while the top singles players comfortably won their opening group matches in the WTT Feeder Series here on Wednesday.

Sarthak-Hardee beat third seeds 5-11, 11-9, 11-9, 9-11, 12-10.

Yashansh Malik, Sanyog Kapali, Jash Modi in men's singles and Selena Selvakumar, Nithya Mani and Sampada Bhiwandikar in women's singles won their opening matches.

Yashansh Malik was made to work hard by Preyesh Suresh for a 11-8, 9-11, 7-11, 14-12, 11-8 win in Group 1, Sanjoy Kapila beat Harsh Merotha 11-1, 11-6, 11-3 in Group 2, while Jash Modi registered a dominant 11-1, 11-2, 11-6 over Nepal's Rubin Maharjan in Group 3 of men's singles.

In women's singles, Selena defeated Mukta Dalvi 11-7, 11-6, 11-6 in Group 1, Nithya Mani overcame Sammriddhi Banik 12-10, 11-9, 8-11, 11-9 in Group 2 and Sampada Bhiwandikar fought back from a 1-2 deficit to beat the young Naisha Rewaskar 11-8, 8-11, 11-13, 11-5, 12-10 in Group 3. (PTI)

Man United candidates for interim coach include Solskjaer and Carrick, AP source says

MANCHESTER, Jan 7: Manchester United has approached Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Michael Carrick in its search for an interim coach to take over until the end of the season, a person with knowledge of the situation confirmed to The Associated Press on Tuesday.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the recruitment process has not been made public.

United is considering a short-term replacement for Ruben Amorim, who was fired on Monday, with a view to a long-term appointment in the summer.

Talks were being held with former players Solskjaer and Carrick. United youth coach Darren Fletcher has been installed as interim for Wednesday's game against Burnley and may also put himself in contention if he impresses.

"Honestly, it's not something I've thought about. I'm focusing on Burnley," Fletcher said in his pre-game news conference.

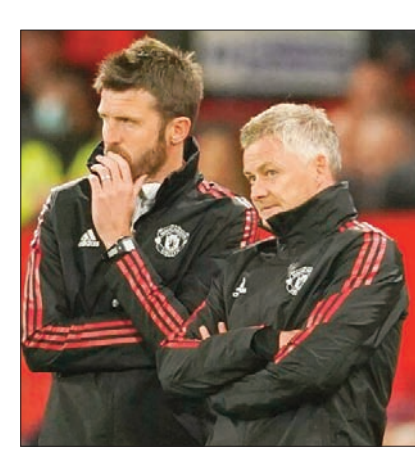
He said discussions about his potential candidacy were for after the game.

"There's been that much going on, it's all happened so quickly, all my concentration and efforts and thoughts are going into Burnley," Fletcher said.

It is not known if other names are being seriously considered, but former striker and coach Ruud van Nistelrooy, who was interim before Amorim took charge in 2024, was reportedly another option.

Solskjaer, who managed United between 2018 and 2021 and is a club icon after scoring the winning goal in the 1999 Champions League final, has the strongest managerial pedigree of that list. He led United to a second-place finish in the league in 2021 and was also a losing finalist in the Europa League that same season. Solskjaer was fired by Turkish club Besiktas in August.

Carrick was on the coaching staff at United after retiring as a player and was briefly caretaker when Solskjaer was fired.



He was in charge of second-tier Middlesbrough from 2022-25 where he earned a reputation as a rising coaching talent.

Solskjaer would be a surprising appointment -- even on a temporary basis -- after leaving the club more than four years ago.

The Norwegian initially took over as interim when Jose Mourinho was fired, but inspired such an uplift in atmosphere that he was given the job full time. He came closer than anyone to delivering a first Premier League title since club great Alex Ferguson's retirement when the team finished second five years ago, 12 points behind Manchester City.

Since leaving United, Solskjaer has spoken openly about his disappointment after failing to sign stars like Erling Haaland and Jude Bellingham that would have boosted his chances of delivering success. Mourinho also steered United to second -- but was 19 points behind champion City in 2018.

Under Ferguson, United dominated the Premier League since its inception in 1992 -- winning 13 titles -- but has not been champion since his final season in 2013. Amorim was fired on Monday after only 14 months in the job and a slew of unwanted records such as United's worst season in the Premier League era last term.

But he departed with United still in a strong position to secure Champions League qualification for next season, with the club believing a change would enhance its chances of rising up the standings.

"Everyone expects Manchester United to be on the top and winning," Fletcher said. "That's the standard. That's what we all have to try to achieve. That's a standard that's set for everyone at the club and I just do my best in whatever role I'm in to help make that happen."

Sporting director Jason Wilcox is leading the search for an interim and the next long-term appointment.

By waiting until the end of the season for a full-time replacement for Amorim, United would likely have more options when potential candidates are out of contract or rival clubs are more open to releasing coaches. Names speculated so far include Crystal Palace's Oliver Glasner, Fulham's Marco Silva and Marseille's Roberto De Zerbi. (AP)

Jacob Bethell's first test century helps England push the fifth Ashes match to Day 5

SYDNEY, Jan 7: Jacob Bethell posted his first test century Wednesday and it couldn't have come at a more crucial time for England, ensuring the fifth and last Ashes test will be decided on Day 5 at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

The 22-year-old, Barbados-born allrounder went to the crease in the first over of England's second innings when Mitchell Starc trapped Zac Crawley lbw on the fifth ball.

He shared an 81-run second-wicket stand with Ben Duckett (42), 32 with Joe Root (6), 102 with Harry Brook (42) and 45 with Jamie Smith (26) to help England reach 302-8 at stumps on Day 4, a lead of 119 runs.

Bethell finished 142 not out from 232 balls, helping England erase the 183-run first-innings deficit and maintain a chance of winning back-to-back tests Down Under. The Australians retained the Ashes with wins in the first three tests, but England is determined to narrow the margin after its drought-breaking win in Melbourne.

"It was special to get the milestone," Bethell said in a TV interview. "To have the family over ... (and) to top it off with a hundred here is very special."

In just his sixth test, and second of this series, Bethell found a way to survive while wickets tumbled around him as allrounder Beau Webster (3-51) emerged as the unlikely star for Australia by taking three wickets with his occasional offspin.

Webster took two wickets in three deliveries to swing momentum. He removed Brook, trapped lbw to a ball that turned sharply



out of the rough, and Will Jacks, inexcusably hitting out and caught in the deep by Cameron Green for a second-ball duck, as England slumped to 219-5.

A chaotic run out, first ball after the drinks break in the evening session, saw Jamie Smith (26) sent back by Bethell and well out of his ground when Jake Weatherald threw to Marnus Labuschagne to whip off the bails at the bowler's end.

Bethell was 123 at the time, and England at 264-6, when his injured skipper Ben Stokes went to the crease.

England added just three runs before Webster, bowling around the wicket, enticed Stokes (1) to cut a turning ball to Steve Smith at slip.

Scott Boland then dismissed

two as quickly as we can, hopefully with the new ball around the corner as well, ... and (England) hopefully not too many ahead, and let the top-order boys get the job done."

Stokes injured
England picked up Australia's last three first-innings wickets for 49 runs after the hosts resumed at 518-7 but the morning session was overshadowed by an injury to Stokes. He bowled 10 deliveries before leaving the field for treatment on a right adductor problem. He didn't move freely when he batted and there's doubt over his ability to bowl on Day 5.

"He's moving pretty gingerly," Bethell said. "I don't think that bodes too well for him bowling tomorrow."

Australia's 1st innings
Australia's commanding innings was built on centuries from stand-in opener Head, his third of the series, and Steve Smith (138) and a late contribution from allrounder Webster, who remained unbeaten on 71.

Smith was 129 overnight but didn't settle into a rhythm before he was caught behind off Josh Tongue's bowling, ending a 107-run eighth-wicket partnership with Webster.

The last two wickets fell within six deliveries, with Starc (5) bowled by a full delivery from Tongue that moved late off the seam and off-spinner Will Jacks (1-34) having Scott Boland caught for a first-ball duck at first slip.

The century was Smith's 13th in Ashes tests and 37th of his career, moving him to sixth on the all-time list. (AP)

Sindhu, Satwik-Chirag make winning start at Malaysia Open



KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7: Returning from a prolonged injury lay-off, PV Sindhu began the new season on a winning note along with the formidable men's doubles pair of Chirag Shetty and Satwik-sairaj Rankireddy as they entered the second round of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

The 30-year-old former world champion, who had opted to withdraw from all BWF World Tour events in October last year to recover from a foot injury, defeated Chinese Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun 21-14, 22-20 in a 51-minute showdown of the women's singles opening round.

The 18th-ranked Sindhu showed no signs of discomfort as she overcame the lower-ranked Sung for the second time to take her head-to-head to 2-0 and set up a round-of-16 clash with world No.9 Tomoka Miyazaki of Japan.

Miyazaki, a 2022 world junior champion, advanced after her 10th-ranked opponent, Sim Yu Jin of South Korea, retired hurt when the Japanese was leading 21-19, 1-2.

Sindhu has a 1-1 record against Miyazaki, whom she beat in the 2025 China Masters during their last meeting.

Later, Satwik and Chirag, the former World No.1 pair, saw off Chinese Taipei's Yang Po-Hsuan and Lee Jhe-Hue 21-13 21-15 in 35 minutes to also enter the quarterfinals.

The Asian Games champions, who had reached the semifinals of the season-ending BWF World Tour Finals in December, will face Malaysia's Junaidi Arif and Roy King Yap.

The mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, ranked 17th in the world, however,

bowed out in the round of 32 after losing to the lower-ranked American duo of Presley Smith and Jennie Gai 15-21, 21-18, 15-21 following a hard-fought 56-minute contest.

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand, who won their second Syed Modi International Super 300 crown in December, put up a fight before losing 9-21 23-21 19-21 in a 66-minute battle against Indonesia's Febriana Dwiupuji Kusuma and Meilysa Trias Puspitasari.

The Panda sisters -- Rutuparna and Swetaparna -- also faced defeat, going down 11-21 9-21 in a lop-sided contest against second seeded Malaysians Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan.

Earlier, Sindhu looked in fine fettle as she took an early 6-2 lead and did not look back, overpowering her opponent in the opening game.

However, the second game turned out to be a fiercely-contested one with Sindhu trailing 4-11 at one stage before finally levelling it at 13-all.

But the unrelenting 28-year-old Sung kept pushing and took a three-point lead at 17-14 before the Indian again displayed her fighting qualities to claw back and level at 17-all.

At 20-all, Sindhu grabbed the decisive last two points to win the contest.

In the doubles competition, Satwik and Chirag came into the match with an overwhelming 6-0 record and the Indian duo stamped its authority to lead from start to finish in the opening game.

The Taiwanese duo put up a better show in the second game, staying close till 12-12 when Satwik and Chirag changed gears and closed out the match. (PTI)

Jacob Duffy named in New Zealand's squad for the T20 World Cup

WELLINGTON (NEW ZEALAND), Jan 7: Pacer Jacob Duffy was named in New Zealand's squad for the Twenty20 World Cup on Wednesday after an outstanding 2025 in which he captured 81 international wickets.

The 31-year-old Duffy broke Richard Hadlee's 40-year-old record of 79 wickets in a year and rose to second place on world T20 bowling rankings. He is the only member of a New Zealand squad boasting 1,064 T20 international caps who has yet to play at a T20 World Cup.

Duffy joins an experienced New Zealand pace attack, including Matt Henry, Lockie Ferguson, Adam Milne and the allrounder Jimmy Neesham for the tournament in India and Sri Lanka from Feb. 7 to March 8. Kyle Jamieson will travel with the squad as the pace bowling reserve.

The New Zealand squad is captained by allrounder Mitchell Santner, who is part of a spin bowling contingent that includes specialist Ish Sodhi and allrounders Michael Bracewell, Glenn Phillips and Rachin Ravindra. Santner and Sodhi both played at the 2016 T20 World Cup in India.

Finn Allen, Mark Chapman, Devon Conway, Daryl Mitchell and Tim Seifert are the specialist batters in the squad. Seifert, who will also keep wicket, will join the squad at the conclusion of Australia's Big Bash League.

"We've got plenty of power and skill in the batting, quality bowlers who can adapt to conditions, plus five all-rounders who all bring something slightly different," New Zealand coach Rob Walter said. "This is an experienced group and the players are no strangers to playing in the sub-continent, which will be valuable."

Allen (finger/hamstring), Chapman (ankle), Ferguson (calf), Henry (calf), and Santner (adductor) are receiving treatment. Ferguson and Henry's partners are due to give birth during the tournament and are likely to be granted short-term maternity leave.

Duffy led the New Zealand pace attack in all three formats during the New Zealand domestic season in the absence of Henry, Will O'Rourke, Ben Sears, Jamieson, Nathan Smith and Ferguson, all of whom were recovering from injuries. His 81 wickets in 2025 came in 36 matches at an average of 17.

New Zealand will play a white ball series in India in January and a warm-up match against the United States before the World Cup in which it is drawn in Group D with Afghanistan, UAE, South Africa and Canada. (AP)

Coco Gauff's two wins lead the defending champion Americans into the United Cup semifinals

PERTH, Jan 7: After a singles loss and social media drama earlier in the week, Coco Gauff did all her talking on court Wednesday in the United Cup quarterfinals.

Gauff won twice — once in singles and then a clinching victory in mixed doubles — to send the Americans into the semifinals in Sydney on Saturday.

Gauff beat Maria Sakkari 6-3, 6-2 to give the defending champion United States a 1-0 lead over Greece. Taylor Fritz, affected by knee tendinitis, had a chance in his singles match to clinch the quarterfinal against Stefanos Tsitsipas, but lost 6-4 7-5. That sent the quarterfinal match to a mixed doubles decider.

In that match, Gauff and Christian Harrison beat Tsitsipas and Sakkari 4-6, 6-4, 10-8. It was on track for a runaway in the third-set, 10-point tiebreaker when the Americans led 4-0 and 5-1, but the Greek pair rallied to level it at 6-6. Gauff and Harrison held on for the win.

"I think I was striking the ball well today, and when that happens, my movement on the court is also good," Gauff said after her singles win. "I usually know it's going to be a good day."

On Monday, Gauff dropped a post on social media about a half-hour before she started her singles match, hoping to add context to her recent comments about American tennis fans. (AP)

ICC willing to work with us to address security concerns on playing in India: BCB

DHAKA, Jan 7: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday said the ICC is "willing to work closely" with it to address "security concerns" around the team's participation in the T20 World Cup in India even though its demand for a change of venue has not yet been accepted.

The T20 World Cup starts on February 7 and Bangladesh are due to play their four games in Kolkata and Mumbai.

"The Bangladesh Cricket Board has received response from the ICC regarding the Board's expressed concerns over the safety and security of the Bangladesh National Cricket Team in India for the ICC T20 World Cup, including the request for relocation of the team's matches," the BCB said in a statement here.

"In its communication, the ICC has reiterated its commitment to ensuring the full and uninterrupted participation of the Bangladesh team in the tournament.

"The ICC has conveyed its willingness to work closely with the BCB to address the concerns raised and has assured that the Board's inputs will be welcomed and duly considered as part of the detailed security planning for the event," it added.

Hostilities shot up between India and Bangladesh following Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from the IPL on BCCI's instructions.

The Indian Board did not give a



clear reason for the decision but it was largely attributed to the deepening diplomatic tensions between the two neighbours in the wake of attacks on Hindus in Bangladesh.

The BCCI's action prompted a livid BCB to demand that its four World Cup matches in India be shifted to co-host Sri Lanka in a written submission to the ICC.

The ICC has not yet issued a public response to the BCB on this subject and a planned meeting between the two bodies on Tuesday also could not take place.

The BCB said it will continue the "constructive engagement" with the ICC and relevant event authorities in a "cooperative and professional manner".

The Board also stated that it was

confident of "an affable and practical solution" for the "smooth and successful" participation of the team in the T20 World Cup.

Drawn in Group C, the team is scheduled to face the West Indies in their opening match at the Eden Gardens in Kolkata and subsequently compete against defending champions England, Italy and Nepal.

"No Ultimatum from ICC"

The BCB also rejected reports that it had been told to either participate as per the decided schedule or forfeit its games by the ICC.

"The BCB has also taken note of certain reports published in a section of the media suggesting that the Board has been issued an ultimatum in this regard. (PTI)

Young Zuhair sets high targets after 'trapping' gold at National Senior Shooting

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: Young shotgun shooter Zuhair Khan had been waiting for the moment when he would win the senior national title ever since he decided to pick up a gun after watching his father compete.

That day finally arrived earlier this month at the Karni Singh Shooting Range, when the 20-year-old clinched the trap gold at the National Championships, outshooting seasoned stalwarts and Olympians.

A third-year B.Tech student at Aligarh Muslim University, Zuhair took up the sport at 12 and had been relentlessly pursuing a senior national medal, only to miss it each time despite reaching the final on three previous occasions.

"This is my first senior national medal. I have two bronze medals in the junior category. I had reached the senior finals earlier as well, but this time I man-

aged to convert it into a win," says Zuhair, whose father Babar Khan is also a national-level shotgun shooter.

However, the youngster's professional journey has not been smooth. Zuhair suffered a collarbone fracture while playing football and missed his inaugural nationals at the age of 13. The COVID-19 pandemic break too hampered his progress.

"I started trap shooting at the age of 12 and have been competing ever since. I lost one year due to a collarbone injury and another because of COVID-19, but apart from that, I have trained consistently at the Karni Singh Ranges," he added.

With very few talented trap shooters coming through the ranks, Zuhair has emerged as an exciting new find. His journey began when he would tag along with his father to the shooting range. (PTI)

LPGA Tour gets its turn at tech-infused indoor golf with WTGL to start next season

NEW YORK, Jan 7: TMRW Sports' indoor golf league is going to feature teams from the LPGA Tour starting next season.

The entertainment group and the LPGA announced the addition Tuesday of the WTGL, which will be run separately from the TGL while looking every bit like the tech-infused indoor league. Matches will be played at the SoFi Center in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida.

Key details still to be worked out include how many four-player teams will be part of the inaugural WTGL season.

TGL has six teams, with a seventh team (Detroit) to be added for its third season in 2026-27. The WTGL also is still forming ownership groups, making it too soon to announce the size of the inaugural season or which cities they will represent. Commissioner Craig Kessler has leaned into four pillars — trust, visibility, growing fans and securing financial stability — since taking over the LPGA in July.

"We view our partnership with TGL exciting on two of those — growing fans and visibility," Kessler said in a telephone interview. "Any chance we get to put our women on center stage, competing and showing their personalities, will only attract more people to follow."

Kessler said there had been discussions to add women to the indoor league before he was appointed commissioner, and those talks accelerated over the last couple of months.

The WTGL would be played primarily during the LPGA's offseason, and there's a chance it could overlap with TGL. The LPGA season ends a week before Thanksgiving in November and starts at the end of January. For 2026, the first Asian swing is in the middle of February.

The TGL ends ahead of the first major at the Masters in April.

TMRW Sports said TGL in its inaugural season drew the second-youngest audience in sports behind the NBA in median age (52) and percentage of audience in the 18-49 age group (41%). TGL began its second season in late December and has its third match on Tuesday night.

"WTGL is another step in creating a modern, media-focused version of a centuries-old game that appeals to today's sports fan," TMRW Sports founder and CEO Mike McCarley said in a statement.

McCarley said a women's league has been in the works since the TGL launch last year and "now, along with the LPGA and its athletes, we look forward to creating a stage to help showcase the stars



of the LPGA."

Kessler believes the format will help create a stronger connection with fans while putting his players in a new light. The matches are two hours, the audience can hear conversations and there is more attention on six players — three per team — instead of getting only glimpses of them during a full-field event over four days.

"What makes this unique is we talk about building stars, and this is a chance to go deeper than ever on those personalities," Kessler said.

Rory on Koepka

Rory McIlroy, once a publicly fierce critic of LIV, has been preaching since last February his opinion that LIV players should be able to return.

That goes for Brooks Koepka, and not just on the PGA Tour.

McIlroy was asked if he'd like to see Koepka as part of the TGL indoor league now that the five-time major champion has left LIV.

"I would say that's up to people that are more powerful and more important

than me," McIlroy said after his Boston team won a TGL match on Friday. "But I am one of the founders. I would love him to play. If there's space on a team for Brooks to come and play, it only makes what we're trying to do stronger."

"If he decides it's something that he wants to do, I'm sure we'll find a way to include him."

He also was in favor of Koepka returning to the PGA Tour while speaking on the "Stick to Football" podcast last week. But unlike his comment at Torrey Pines last February, the Masters champion acknowledged he's in a different stage in his career than other PGA Tour members.

"They've made the money, but they've paid their consequence in terms of the reputation and some of the things they've lost by going over there," McIlroy said of LIV defectors. "If it made the overall tour stronger to have Bryson DeChambeau back and whoever else, I would be OK with it."

"But again, it's not just me, and I recognize that not everyone is in my position," he said. "It would be up to the collective group of PGA Tour members to make that decision."

Career money

Matt Kuchar spent more than a month

researching his best option and concluded he would not be using a one-time exemption for being in the top 25 on the PGA Tour career money list.

Kuchar, 47, finished at No. 118 in the FedEx Cup in the first year the tour reduced full cards to the top 100 (instead of 125). Even with rising purses, he was in no danger of falling out of the top 25 in career money this year.

Kuchar is at No. 13 with \$61,538,738, which is just over \$18 million more than Tommy Fleetwood at No. 26 in career money. He has conditional status at No. 118, though he will be subject to being reshuffled in his category of Nos. 111 through 125.

He figures he can get into somewhere around 18 to 20 tournaments, that using his one-time exemption would only be the difference of four or more events. If necessary, he could use one of his career money exemption the year he turns 49 and the other when he turns 50.

The tour said one player signed up for a career-money exemption — Vijay Singh, who turns 63 in February. As a testament to his career, Singh still is No. 6 on the career money list even though he has not played a full schedule since 2020. (AP)