

The management and editorial team of The Hills Times extend their sincere gratitude to our valued readers, dedicated hawkers, and all our well-wishers for their continued trust, support, and encouragement. There will be no publication of The Hills Times on January 27, 2026, as office will remain closed on January 26, 2026 on account of Republic Day. We wish you all a very happy Republic Day
-Publisher

PM Modi to address large public rally in Assam on February 14: Himanta

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Jan 25: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said that PM Narendra Modi will visit Guwahati on February 14 for a packed programme centred on infrastructure development and political outreach, marking another significant engagement of the Prime Minister with the state.

During the visit, Prime Minister Modi will inaugurate the much-anticipated Guwahati-North Guwahati bridge, a major infrastructure project expected to significantly improve connectivity across the Brahmaputra. The bridge is aimed at easing traffic congestion, reducing travel time and boosting economic activity in the region by strengthening links between Guwahati and northern Assam.

In a major push towards sustainable urban transport, the Prime Minister (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM accuses Cong of appeasing Bengali-speaking Muslims; reiterates report of Gogoi's links with ISI on Jan 31

Only 'Miyas' are being evicted in Assam: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Jan 25: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday asserted that only "Miyas" (Bengali-speaking Muslims) are being evicted in the state.

He accused the opposition parties of concentrating on appeasing the Miyas, stating with sarcasm that the Congress state headquarters has been 'swamping' with people of the community.

"Only Miyas are evicted in Assam. How can Assamese people be evicted," Sarma told reporters here, dismissing purported reports that anti-encroachment drives will be undertaken in the hills surrounding Guwahati.

"Miya" 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, ac-



tivists from the community have started adopting this term as a gesture of defiance.

Sarma maintained that it was the media which was spreading rumours of possible eviction drive in Guwahati hills.

"Till election, when not a single eviction will happen, then people

residing in the hills will understand that it was the media which gave them tension," he claimed. Elections for the 126-member state Assembly are due in the first half of this year, in which the BJP-led coalition will seek a third straight term.

"The BJP has been in power in

the state for 10 years now. Where has eviction been carried out in Guwahati hills?" Sarma asserted, adding that the government was actually working on providing land rights to the people residing on the hills without paying any premium.

He, however, maintained that eviction notice will be given to any Miya residing in the hills, but not to any Assamese people. Accusing the Congress of appeasing only the Bengali-speaking Muslims, Sarma said, "The Congress has said that it has received 750 applications from prospective candidates seeking party ticket. But what they didn't say is that 600 of these applicants are Miyas. Only about 120-130 applicants are Hindus."

"There has been a 'Miya ujan' in Rajib Bhawan (swamping of the state (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Scindia launches 2 bamboo projects for NE in Guwahati



GUWAHATI, Jan 25: Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Sunday launched two key bamboo projects for the northeast in Guwahati, officials said.

On the occasion, MoUs were signed by the North East Cane and Bamboo Development Council (NECBDC) with Amazon, Flipkart and All Time Plastics to improve market integration, and enhance the overall value proposition of bamboo-based enterprises in the region,

they said.

One of the projects launched is aimed at strengthening traditional bamboo artisan clusters by enhancing market access, modernising products and linking them with digital and retail ecosystems, the officials said.

The second project pertains to promotion of engineered bamboo products through cluster strengthening and export facilitation in the northeastern region, they added. (PTI)

BJP says Gogoi 'feigns amnesia' over CM Sarma

Spokesperson refers to Sarma's international engagements

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 25: The Assam unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party on Sunday launched a sharp attack on Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi, accusing him of adopting appeasement politics and deliberately refusing to acknowledge chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in an attempt to court a particular vote bank ahead of the Assembly elections.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP state headquarters, Vajpayee Bhawan, senior party spokesperson Brajen Mahanta said the Congress in Assam had lost political direction, public credibility and substantive issues, and was entering the electoral

battle in what he described as a state of "intellectual bankruptcy".

He alleged that after suffering repeated electoral defeats, the opposition had fallen back on accusations of vote theft and EVM manipulation as a convenient excuse.

Mahanta said similar allegations were raised by the Congress in recent elections outside Assam as well, but were rejected by voters who, he claimed, delivered clear mandates in favour of the BJP.

He asserted that the opposition had already accepted its impending defeat in Assam and was now resorting to what he termed a campaign of misinformation (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

USTM was started with money from organisation linked with Al Qaeda

GUWAHATI, Jan 25: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday alleged that privately-owned University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya (USTM) was started with money that came from an organisation connected with terror outfit Al Qaeda.

He urged the Sanatani people of Assam not to enrol in that varsity, located near Guwahati, and "stop patronising it".

"I have been saying for long that USTM is a place of fraud. Now, when this woman has been arrested, her details have been deleted from the university's website," Sarma (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Eminent sculptor, art director Nuruddin Ahmed 'elated' to receive Padma Shri

GUWAHATI, Jan 25: Assam's eminent sculptor and art director Nuruddin Ahmed, whose recent work include the newly inaugurated Batadrava Cultural Project at Borduwa, on Sunday said that he was elated to hear the news of his name in the list of Padma Shri awardees.

Ahmed is among five Padma Shri recipients from Assam, along with former Union minister Kabindra Purkayastha (posthumously), Jogesh Deuri for agriculture, Pokhila Lekthepi and Haricharan Saikia, both for art.



"I have just received the news of winning the award while I was

on stage receiving another award from the Asom Natya Sanmilan

in Kaliabor", Ahmed told PTI.

The Sangeet Natak Akademi awardee said that he was "elated beyond words" that his contribution to art has been recognised by the Union government.

"I don't work for awards but love my art. The recognition, however, has touched my heart and given me a reason to work harder", Ahmed said.

He said "respect and love" that he has received from the people, and the appreciation for his creations has kept him going for years (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



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India, EU to announce conclusion of FTA negotiations tomorrow

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: India and the European Union are set to announce on January 27 the conclusion of negotiations and the finalisation of a free trade agreement aimed at boosting economic ties between the two regions amid disruptions in global trade due to US tariffs, an official said.

The pact is nearing the finishing line after 18 years of negotiations. The talks started in 2007.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has termed this free trade agreement (FTA) "the mother of all deals" the country has signed so far.

The conclusion of talks for the agreement will be announced in the India-EU (European Union) Summit here, the official said.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen landed here on January 24 for a four-day visit.

President of the European Council Antonio Costa and von der Leyen will hold summit talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 27.

While India and the 27-nation bloc EU will announce closure of FTA talks this week, it will be signed after legal vetting of the text on a mutually agreed date.

Implementation of the deal may take some time, as it requires approval from the EU Parliament. In India, it requires only the nod of the Union Cabinet.

The pact is likely to provide duty free access to a number of Indian goods from labour intensive sectors such as textiles, chemicals, gems and jewellery, electrical machinery, leather and footwear.

The EU's tariffs on Indian goods are about 3.8 per cent, but labour-intensive sectors attract about 10 per cent import duty. India's weighted average duty on EU goods is about 9.3 per cent, with particularly high duties on automobiles, parts (35.5 per cent), plastics (10.4 per cent), and chemicals and pharmaceuticals (9.9 per cent).

Both sides are likely to consider extending quota-based duty concessions on cars. Like for Australia and the UK, India may provide a tariff rate quota on European wines under the agreement. India imposes a duty of 100-125 per cent on alcoholic beverages.



Sensitive agriculture issues have been kept out of the deal. The EU has been protective of its beef, sugar and rice markets.

India, on the other hand, has protected its farm and dairy sectors from competition, as the livelihoods of large numbers of small and marginal farmers depend on them.

Dairy has been excluded from all FTAs that India has signed so far.

In an FTA, two sides reduce or eliminate import duties on over 90 per cent of goods traded between them. An FTA also liberalises norms to promote trade in services sectors such as telecommunications, transportation, accounting, and auditing. The NDA government has finalised seven trade pacts since 2014: Australia, the UK, Oman, New Zealand, the UAE, the EFTA bloc, and Mauritius.

This pact is important, as the US' imposition of high tariffs has disrupted global trade flows. India is facing steep 50 per cent tariffs. The FTA is expected to help Indian exporters diversify their shipments. It will also help reduce dependence on China.

Besides FTA, the two are also negotiating a pact in investment protection and Geographical Indications (GI). The India-EU FTA covers 24 chapters, including trade in goods, services and investment.

BILATERAL TRADE
India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU was USD 136.53 billion in 2024-25 (exports worth

USD 75.85 billion and imports worth USD 60.68 billion), making the EU India's largest goods trading partner. The services trade in 2024 was USD 83.10 billion.

India has a trade surplus of USD 15.17 billion in 2024-25. The EU market accounts for about 17 per cent of India's total exports, and the bloc's exports to India constitute 9 per cent of its total overseas shipments.

As per reports, the EU, with a GDP of about USD 20 trillion and a population of over 450 million, is the major global trade player, exporting about USD 2.9 trillion and importing more than USD 2.6 trillion annually.

India, with a population of 1.4 billion, exported USD 437 billion in goods and USD 387.5 billion in services. It imported goods worth USD 720 billion and services worth USD 195 billion in 2024-25.

India's major goods exports to EU in FY2025 included petroleum products (USD 15 billion); electronics (USD 11.3 billion - smartphone USD 4.3 billion); textiles (USD 1.6 billion - garments USD 4.5 billion); machinery, computer (USD 5 billion); organic chemicals (USD 5.1 billion); iron and steel (USD 4.9 billion); gems and Jewellery (USD 2.5 billion); pharma (USD 3 billion); auto parts (USD 1.6 billion); footwear (USD 809 million); and coffee (USD 775 million).

The main imports included machinery, computer (USD 13.0 billion); electronics (USD 9.4 billion - mobile phone parts-USD 3.7 bil-

lion, ICs USD 890.5 million); aircraft (USD 6.3 billion); medical devices, scientific instruments (USD 3.8 billion); gems and jewellery (USD 3 billion - rough diamonds USD 1.7 billion); organic chemicals (USD 2.3 billion); plastics (USD 2.3 billion).

India's key services exports to the EU were other business services, telecommunication and IT, transportation services. Imports included intellectual property services, telecommunication and IT.

INVESTMENT
The EU is also a major investor in India. India's cumulative FDI inflows from the EU during April 2000 to September 2024 were USD 117.4 billion with 6,000 EU firms present in India. FDI from the EU represented over 16.5 per cent of the cumulative amount of FDI equity inflows from all countries.

India's FDI outflows to the EU are valued at about USD 40.04 billion from April 2000 to March 2024.

MOTHER OF ALL DEALS
Once concluded, this would be India's largest FTA in both economic size and regulatory scope. As the EU is a customs union, the agreement would give India preferential access to all 27 EU countries under a single framework.

The EU includes France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Denmark, and Sweden.

SOME STICKING ISSUES
According to think tank GTRI, India is pushing hard to resolve the CBAM (carbon border adjustment mechanism) issue in the FTA talks because it risks undermining the core benefits of tariff liberalisation.

The EU's CBAM, already in force for products such as steel and aluminium, effectively acts as a new border charge on Indian exports, even if import duties are eliminated under the FTA, it said.

India is also seeking EU recognition as a "data-secure" country under EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which would allow smoother transfer of EU citizens' data. Without it, Indian firms face higher compliance costs than competitors from Japan or South Korea. (PTI)

Greatwhite showcases end-to-end electrical solutions at Electrofest 2026 in Guwahati

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 25: Greatwhite Electricals made a strong impression at Electrofest 2026, Northeast India's premier electrical exhibition, by showcasing its extensive range of electrical products and solutions, underlining the company's growing focus on the region.

The Greatwhite stall at the exhibition was formally inaugurated by Assam Minister for Water Resources, Information and Public Relations, and Social Justice, Pijush Hazarika, in the presence of company officials and industry stakeholders.

The inauguration marked the beginning of Greatwhite's active participation in one of the most significant platforms for the electrical and allied industries in the Northeast.

Speaking on the occasion, Bimlendu Kumar, Vice President of Greatwhite, said the company remains committed to innovation, consistent quality and expanding



its footprint in emerging markets, particularly in the Northeast.

He noted that Electrofest offers an important opportunity to engage directly with customers, channel partners, dealers and contractors, while also strengthening relationships with key stakeholders across the electrical ecosystem.

Representing the company's Northeast operations, CSA Rajkumar Dhanuka was present along with Anshuman Dhanuka, Yash Dhanuka and their team, who have played a key role in reinforcing Greatwhite's regional presence and market engagement.

The team actively interacted with visitors and highlighted the versatility and application of the

company's product portfolio.

At the exhibition, Greatwhite displayed a comprehensive lineup of products, including modular and non-modular switches, wires and cables, domestic switchgear, lighting solutions, fans, conduit pipes, PVC insulation tapes and advanced automation products.

The stall attracted strong footfall from the very first day, with dealers, contractors and visitors showing keen interest in the brand's offerings and technological features.

Company officials said the encouraging response at Electrofest 2026 reflects growing trust in Greatwhite's products and its ability to deliver reliable, innovative and end-to-end electrical solutions.

The participation, they added, reaffirms Greatwhite's long-term commitment to addressing evolving customer needs and strengthening its presence across India, with a particular focus on the fast-growing Northeast market.

Contd. from Page 1...

Only 'Miyas' are being

Congress headquarters by Miyas," he added. "The Congress party has become a threat to our religion, culture, and the more convincingly we defeat them, the more we can save our state and 'jati' (community)," the chief minister claimed.

He also maintained that the opposition parties will come together for the Assembly elections "for the sake of the Miyas".

Sarma also affirmed that the details of state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi's alleged Pakistan links will be made public very soon.

"I want to reveal it by January 31. But since there is the Union Budget on February 1, there might be a delay by a day or two," he added.

The Assam CM and the BJP have been attacking Lok Sabha MP Gogoi over his wife's alleged connection with Pakistan's spy agency ISI.

The state government had formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe a case of alleged interference of Pakistani national Ali Tauqueer Sheikh, who was claimed to have links with Gogoi's British wife Elizabeth Colburn, in India's internal affairs.

The SIT had submitted its report to Sarma, who also holds the Home portfolio, on September 10, the date which was initially set by the chief minister for providing evidence to back his accusations against Gogoi. (PTI)

PM Modi to address

will also hand over 100 electric buses to the Assam government. These buses, provided by the Centre, are part of the government's broader initiative to promote clean mobility and reduce carbon emissions in urban centres. Officials said the induction of electric buses will enhance public transport facilities in Guwahati and surrounding areas while supporting Assam's green transition goals.

Apart from development-related programmes, the Prime Minister is scheduled to address a large election-focused rally at Khanapara in Guwahati. The rally is expected to see the participation of both-level workers, party functionaries and leaders from across the state, reflecting the Bharatiya Janata Party's organisational mobilisation ahead of upcoming electoral battles.

The proposed visit continues Prime Minister Modi's sustained engagement with Assam and the Northeast over the past few years.

In his recent visit to the state earlier this month, PM Modi laid the foundation stone of state government's ambitious project of an elevated corridor in the Kaziranga national park primarily aimed to save wildlife from getting hit by the vehicle on the national highway connecting Guwahati and Jorhat.

The Prime Minister also flagged off two trains connecting Assam with the northern parts of the country.

The Centre's focus on Assam has also been evident in investments in flood management, energy, tourism and urban development, alongside repeated outreach to youth, farmers and entrepreneurs.

The Chief Minister said the upcoming visit will further reinforce the Centre's commitment to Assam's development and growth trajectory.

BJP says Gogoi 'feigns

and personal attacks against the BJP and chief minister Sarma. Targeting Gaurav Gogoi, the BJP spokesperson alleged that the Congress leader was attempting to project himself as a proponent of a "Greater Assam" while simultaneously aligning with individuals and organisations that, according to the BJP, have demanded reservation of Assembly seats for the Miyas. Mahanta said Gogoi's refusal to recognise the role and leadership of Himanta Biswa Sarma was politically motivated and aimed at appeasing a specific constituency.

Mahanta further alleged that Gogoi was choosing to associate with leaders and organisations that had historically opposed the Assam Movement, instead of standing with indigenous communities of the state.

He claimed that such associations stood in contrast to the BJP's narrative of safeguarding indigenous interests and cultural identity.

Highlighting the chief minister's work, Mahanta said Sarma had played a decisive role in ending 15 years of Congress rule in Assam and in forming an NDA government in the state.

He credited the chief minister with undertaking eviction drives against illegal encroachments, initiating development projects at religious and cultural sites such as Bordowa Than, providing over 1.5 lakh government jobs through what he described as a transparent, merit-based process, and constructing a Shaheed Smarak to honour martyrs of the Assam Movement.

The BJP spokesperson also referred to Sarma's recent international engagements, stating that despite extensive travel abroad, including to Davos, the chief minister returned immediately to attend to governance and public service in Assam.

Mahanta claimed that Gogoi's alleged refusal to acknowledge Sarma's leadership and achievements was a deliberate political strategy rooted in appeasement.

"Denying the identity and contribution of the Chief Minister is nothing but an attempt to please a particular section," he said.

Another BJP spokesperson, Pranjal Kalita, was also present at the press conference.

'USTM was started

said, when asked for his reaction to Delhi Police apprehending a Guwahati woman while driving in a vehicle using forged diplomatic registration plates.

The arrested woman was purportedly associated with USTM, but the link with the details has been deleted from the varsity's website.

Sarma, who had earlier held USTM and its chancellor Mahbabul Hoque responsible for "flood jihad" against Guwahati, asked the people of Assam to refrain from "supporting" the institution and its proprietor.

He claimed that the money with which Haque had founded USTM had come from an organisation with connections to Al Qaeda.

"We have complete information on it. That's why I have been saying that we should stop patronising USTM," the chief minister said.

"I request people of Assam's Sanatani society to not study in USTM. The certificates given by it could become irrelevant," he added.

Sarma also mentioned allegations against Haque of forging his OBC certificate and being arrested multiple times after a series of cases were registered across the state over the controversy related to promising students to allow unfair means in exams. (PTI)

Eminent sculptor, art

and this award will also "motivate me to work on more projects which people hopefully will appreciate".

Ahmed thanked Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the state and the Union government for the award.

Ahmed has been at the forefront of designing and executing various cultural projects in the state, including the state tableau at the Republic Day parades, set productions for various mobile theatre, stage designing for amateur and professional theatre and also for films.

Sixty-eight-year-old Ahmed was born in Sathikuchi village of Assam's Nalbari district and had received training in J.J. College of Arts in Mumbai for a short period.

He later studied the application of modern technology in sculpture at the Lalit Kala Akademi at its Garhi studio.

He also received a diploma in puppetry from the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training and started his artistic career with puppetry, but his inquisitiveness took him not only to mobile theatre, but he also carved out a niche in the field of ambience design.

Ahmed has attended and conducted a number of workshops on puppetry, drama, Ankia Bhaona, painting, sculpture, costume and property.

Ahmed received the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for the year 2017 for his contribution to stagecraft in Indian theatre.

The artist is also famed for creating unique Durga idols during the annual festival, gates of revered institutions, cultural and art pavilions of the state government at various exhibitions across the country and his most recent creation of the various structures of the redevelopment project of Vaishnava saint Srimanta Sankardeva's birth-place won wide accolades. (PTI)

Bengal coal gasification project: Bids invited for key air separation unit facility

KOLKATA, Jan 25: The proposed coal gasification complex at Paschim Bardhaman in West Bengal is moving ahead, with Coal Gas India Ltd (CGIL) advancing key preparatory steps for the ₹ 13,052-crore project to produce synthetic natural gas (SNG), an official said on Sunday.

Projects & Development India Ltd, acting as consultant on behalf of CGIL, has invited bids for setting up an Air Separation Unit (ASU) on a Build, Own and Operate (BOO) basis, he said.

The ASU will supply oxygen and nitrogen to the coal gasification complex on a continuous, round-the-clock basis throughout the contract period, sources told PTI.

The last date for submission of bids for the ASU is January 31.

The project is being implemented through a joint venture company - CGIL, in which Coal India holds a 51 per cent stake, and (GAIL) 49 per cent. The JV plans to set up a coal-to-SNG plant at Eastern Coalfield Ltd's Sanctoria area in Paschim Bardhaman district, using surface coal gasification technology. The proposed facility is designed to produce 80,000 Nm³ (normal cubic metre) per hour of synthetic natural gas, primarily using low-ash coal supplied by ECL, the official said. The project is aligned with the Centre's broader push to reduce dependence on imported natural gas by promoting domestic coal gasification.

The plant is scheduled to be commissioned during 2029-30, with construction activities expected to run from January 2027 to August 2028, he said. The Bardhaman coal gasification project forms a part of India's target to achieve 100 million tonnes of coal gasification by 2030, he added. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I Sanjita Tiwari, age about 31 years, W/O Late Anand Kumar Tiwari, a resident of Gautam Basti, Khatkhati, P.O & P.S, Khatkhati, district Karbi Anglong, (Assam), do hereby solemnly affirm before the judicial court, Bokajan, dated 22/01/2026, that Miss Archana Tiwari is our daughter and she was born on 21-01-2011 as mentioned in her Aadhaar Card No. 3515 0384 4714.

Coal India arm ECL urges employees to ramp up production

KOLKATA, Jan 25: Coal India subsidiary Eastern Coalfields Limited (ECL) has urged its employees to enhance production in the final quarter of the current fiscal to bridge the gap between targets and achievements, citing shortfalls in cumulative output till December.

In a message to employees ahead of the 77th Republic Day, ECL CMD Satish Jha said cumulative coal production up to December 2025 stood at 33.482 million tonnes, below the proportionate target of 38.752 million tonnes, underscoring the need for accelerated production in the remaining months of the fiscal. The Coal India arm, however, said it remained on a strong operational footing, supported by robust overburden removal of 133.013 million cubic metres

during the period, which it described as a key area of strength enabling higher coal output.

Cumulative coal offtake during the April-December period stood at 33.666 million tonnes, helping ensure continuity of supplies and revenue flow.

Calling for concerted efforts from employees, officers and executives, the company said collective commitment and sustained hard work would be critical in meeting annual targets and strengthening ECL's role in supporting the country's energy security. ECL said its focus in the current financial year has been on sustaining performance through strengthened systems and operational reliability across production, evacuation, safety, governance and infrastructure, rather than pursuing isolated achievements. (PTI)

Myntra Glamfest tour to light up IIT Guwahati



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 25: After a successful outing in Kolkata, the Myntra Glamfest Tour is set to arrive at IIT Guwahati on February 1 as part of Alcheringa, the institute's annual cultural festival, blending fashion, music and youth culture into a single, high-energy campus celebration.

Renowned singer Shaan will headline the event, which is expected to be one of the most anticipated youth-centric programmes in the Northeast this year.

Conceptualised as a campus-first, culture-led platform, the Myntra Glamfest Tour aims to celebrate student creativity and self-expression through a mix of live music, fashion experiences and interactive engagements.

With a strong and growing customer base in Guwahati, Myntra is

positioning the tour as a vibrant moment that brings together students, creators and music enthusiasts in an environment rooted in participation and discovery.

A major attraction of the event will be the Myntra Experience Zone, designed as a multi-format fashion and engagement space that takes fashion discovery beyond digital screens.

The zone will feature themed sections inspired by party culture, pop aesthetics and street-style fashion, offering hands-on activities such as games, styling experiences and visual installations that mirror Gen Z's social and expressive approach to fashion.

Students participating across the Experience Zone will have opportunities to earn rewards while engaging with Myntra's app ecosystem, creating a seamless bridge between on-

ground interaction and digital fashion discovery.

The initiative is expected to generate strong campus engagement while extending its impact through online platforms.

The programme will also showcase a curated line-up of student-led performances, highlighting campus talent and reinforcing the tour's focus on youth-driven creativity.

The evening will culminate in a live performance by Shaan, bringing together nostalgia and contemporary appeal, while participation from regional creators and influencers is expected to amplify the event's reach and social media buzz.

Commenting on the Guwahati edition, Abhishek Gour, Senior Director of Brand, Myntra, said the Glamfest Tour reflects the brand's commitment to engaging student communities through culture-led, on-ground experiences.

He said the collaboration with IIT Guwahati provides an opportunity to celebrate diverse youth cultures while integrating fashion discovery with music and creativity, adding that Shaan's performance is expected to strike a chord with young audiences through his iconic songs.

The Glamfest Tour forms part of Myntra's broader Gen Z engagement strategy, alongside initiatives such as GlamStream and GlamStream Fest, aimed at strengthening the brand's campus presence through immersive, content-driven and community-first experiences across the country.

Tea garden workers receive ₹5,000 each, as Assam marks 200 years of tea Cheques distributed to tea workers under 'Eti Koli Dut'i Paat' scheme

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 25: As part of Assam's statewide celebration of 200 years of tea, the Mukhyamantrir "Eti Koli, Dut'i Paat" scheme was launched in Kokrajhar on Sunday, providing one-time financial assistance of ₹ 5,000 to tea garden workers and employees.

The programme, held at Daloabari Tea Estate Football Ground, was attended by BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary, EM Dehasat Basumatary, Prakash Basumatary, MLA Dhaneswar Goyary, Azamul Hoque, Jubiraj Basumatary, District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty, senior officials and tea garden representatives. Beneficiaries included 1,755 workers from Kokrajhar Tea Garden and 2,321 from Daloabari Tea Garden, totaling 4,076 workers.

The celebration commenced with a live streaming of the central programme from Doomdooma, where Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma distributed cheques to beneficiaries.

Addressing the gathering, BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary noted that this was the first dedicated initiative for the welfare of the tea tribes community. He emphasised the government's efforts under Chief Minister Sarma to introduce opportunities and facilities for tea tribes after decades of neglect, highlighting the importance of communal harmony and peace for sustained development in Bodoland.

District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty in his welcome address, marked the day as a special occasion celebrating Assam Tea's 200-year legacy and



highlighted government initiatives to improve health, education and socio-economic conditions in tea estate areas.

The event saw active participation from community leaders, tea garden representatives, officials and stakeholders, reinforcing the collective commitment to celebrate tea heritage and promote inclusive development.

Our Tamulpur Correspondent adds: Under the Assam Government's flagship "Mukhyamantrir Eti Koli Dut'i Paat" scheme, cheques were distributed on Sunday to tea garden workers and employees of Menka and Nagrizuli tea estates in Tamulpur district, recognising their contribution to Assam's 200-year-old tea industry.

The programmes were held at Nagrizuli

and Menka tea gardens. Assam Cabinet Minister and Tamulpur Guardian Minister Jayanta Mallabarua attended the event at Nagrizuli, while BTC Deputy Chief Bijit Goura Narzary and local MLA Jalen Daimary were present at Menka.

At the start, participants watched Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "Mann Ki Baat" and the central scheme programme from Tinsukia, addressed by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. District Commissioner Simi Karan in her welcome address at Nagrizuli, congratulated all beneficiaries.

Minister Mallabarua highlighted issues such as tea garden land rights, subsidised essential commodities, inclusion of 2,000 new beneficiaries under the Arunoday scheme and allocation of 50 bighas of land for a de-

gree college.

As part of the scheme, ₹ 5,000 each was distributed to 1,053 tea workers of Nagrizuli and 782 workers of Menka, benefiting a total of 1,835 tea workers. The Nagrizuli programme was also attended by BTC Executive Member Laxhi Das, District Commissioner Simi Karan and SSP Taburam Pegu, while Menka saw the presence of BTC Deputy Chief Bijit Goura Narzary, MLA Jalen Daimary and other dignitaries, informed Sub-Divisional IPR Officer Bijoy Bezbaruah.

Our Biswanath Chariali Correspondent adds: The Assam government's "Eti Koli, Dut'i Paat" scheme for tea workers, recognising their contribution to the 200-year-old tea industry, was launched in Biswanath district on Sunday. The programme was rolled out through events at Mijikajan Tea Estate (Biswanath), Bargang Tea Estate (Behali) and Helem Tea Estate (Gohpur).

The Biswanath event was inaugurated by MLA Pramod Barthakur, former MP Pallab Lochan Das and Additional District Commissioner Kabita Kakati Konwar. Officials and employees of the district administration were present. ₹ 5,000 each will be provided to 12,361 beneficiaries from seven tea estates in Biswanath constituency.

The Behali inauguration was attended by MP Ranjit Dutta, MLA Diganta Ghatowal and other dignitaries with 15,520 workers from 10 estates set to benefit. In Gohpur, MLA Utpal Bora and officials oversaw the launch for 4,889 beneficiaries from five estates.

Hojai celebrates 10th District Day with grand cultural fervor

HT Correspondent

HOJAI, Jan 25: Hojai district, a vibrant symbol of unity in diversity, celebrated its 10th District Day on Sunday with exuberant festivities that highlighted its rich cultural heritage and developmental achievements.

The celebrations began at 8.30 AM with a majestic cultural procession from Kachari Maidan in Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, which energised the entire area. The procession drew over 3,000 participants and featured colourful folk dances, traditional attire and eye-catching tableaux representing the district's diverse linguistic and tribal heritage. The presence of renowned Assamese singer Barnali Kalita added a special charm to the event, captivating the large gathering.

Several dignitaries graced the occasion, including District Commissioner Bidut Bikash Bhagwati, Hojai MLA Ramkrishna Ghosh, Lumding MLA Sibul Mishra, Public Prosecutor Amar Jyoti Saikia, social worker Habib Mohammad Chaudhary, Arjun Majumdar, Ashok Kejriwal, Munwar Hussain, Anup Kumar Deb and Hojai Municipal Board Chairperson Chaturthi Rani Biswas, further amplifying the enthusiasm of the celebrations. Various government departments presented impressive tableaux depicting the district's journey from ancient Namghars and Gursthans to modern development schemes.

At around 11 AM, the open session commenced at Kachari Maidan with the rendition of the State song. Addressing the gathering, the District Commissioner highlighted Hojai's glorious history, cultural harmony and recent developmental strides. One of the major highlights of the programme was the felicitation of individuals from various fields, including young achievers for their contributions to society. On the occasion, the district administration also unveiled a coffee table book titled "Unity Amidst Diversity: Our Hojai", aimed at preserving and showcasing the district's rich cultural legacy.

The celebration concluded on a high note with soulful performances by Barnali Kalita before thousands of spectators, followed by the national anthem, symbolising social harmony and unity. Posthumously, five eminent personalities—Jugal Kishore Kedia, Pandit Jiban Ram Barman, Uma Phukan, Rahim Uddin Ahmed and Syed Abdul Sattar, were honoured for their invaluable contributions to the growth and development of Hojai district with their family members receiving the honours.

The programme received widespread appreciation from people across the district, marking the 10th District Day as a memorable celebration of unity, culture and progress.

Tezpur Reads: Page Turners hosts silent reading gathering

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Jan 25: Tezpur witnessed a rare moment of collective quiet as Page Turners, a women-led literary initiative, organised "Tezpur Reads," a silent reading event that drew an overwhelming response from the town. More than a hundred readers gathered to read together in silence, reaffirming the city's enduring bond with books.

The event was graced by Dr Sanjukta Parasor, IPS, Inspector General of CID, Assam and Satyakee D'Com Bhuyan, noted author, academician and actor, as special guests. Their presence lent inspiration and encouragement to this cultural venture aimed at reclaiming reading as a shared, reflective experience.

Highlighting the importance of books, Dr Parasor said, "Reading transports individuals to different places and dimensions, regardless of the book's genre or the reader's location. A book has the power to take one to a different world while sitting here in Tezpur enjoying the winter sun." Satyakee D'Com Bhuyan spoke on the enduring values of stories like Grandmother's Kitchen Stories and emphasised the importance of reading for the younger generation. Quoting his favorite phrases, "so what" and "why not," he said, "I've been using these two phrases to keep myself alive."

The event saw strong participation from students and faculty of institutions including Government Boys' and Girls' Higher Secondary Schools, St Joseph's Convent School, Tezpur Science Academy, Roushan National School, Polaris Academy, Tezpur College, Darrang College and Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi Girls' College. A special moment was the felicitation of four students—Nilotpal Das, Nayan Das, Lakhya Das and Nirab Jyoti Saikia, who won the second prize at the National Orchestra Competition during National Kala Utsav 2025.

With readers sitting together in shared silence—reading, reflecting and simply being—Tezpur Reads emerged not just as an event but as a statement that in an age of constant noise, silence can be a powerful form of collective expression. Page Turners' initiative marks a promising beginning for future literary engagements in the city.

Margherita gears up for grand Me-Dam-Me-Phi celebrations

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Jan 25: Full preparations are underway with great enthusiasm and fervour in Margherita for the celebration of Me-Dam-Me-Phi, the most important traditional religious and social festival of the Tai-Ahom community. The festival is being organised by the Margherita Co-District Me-Dam-Me-Phi Celebration Committee and will be observed over two days on January 30 and 31 at the historic Chao Cheng Ren premises in New Colony, Margherita. The organisers have expressed hope that with widespread participation of the Tai people along with all indigenous communities of the region, the festival venue will once again transform into a vibrant platform of harmony, unity and cultural convergence.

vances such as Phuralung, flag hoisting, Maidam tarpan (ancestral mound offerings), tarpan in memory of the Swargadeus of the Ahom rule period, tree plantation and a Tai-Ahom mass invocation. An open public session will also be organised, during which special honours and memorial awards will be presented to individuals for their outstanding contributions in various fields of society.

This year, the prestigious Gyati Mahiyan Award will be conferred upon Girin Buragohain. In addition, memorial awards instituted in the names of late Girin Mohan Baruah, Pranab Gogoi, Binu Chetia, Phunu Chetia, Rajani Gogoi, Suren Phukan, Horenath Baruah, Meghnath Borgohain, Bhupen Chandra Neog, Kulo Konwar, Madan Gogoi and Hitesh Gogoi will be presented to 12 distinguished individuals, as informed by the organising committee. Two important infrastructural additions will also be inaugurated during the festival on January 31. These include a stage constructed with a grant of ₹ 23 lakh from Rajya Sabha MP and Union Minister Pabitra Margherita and a guest house built with a grant of ₹ 10 lakh from Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma. The organising committee stated that these facilities will greatly support future social, cultural and religious events at the venue. Several sub-committees have already been constituted and extensive preparations are in progress to ensure the successful conduct of the festival. The president of the Margherita Co-District Me-Dam-Me-Phi Celebration Committee, Mintu Deodhai Phukan, along with chief secretary Ranajyoti Neog and Pranjit Chetia, have earnestly appealed to the public to attend the historic festival with their families and make it a grand success.

Government of India

Greeting to all fellow citizens on 77th REPUBLIC DAY

Soul of the Nation – Vande Mataram
Strength of the Nation – Aatmanirbhar Bharat

“The inherent spirit of the Constitution is 'We the People.' We must move forward, with the mantra of 'Sabka Prayas'. When Viksit Bharat becomes the shared dream of 140 crore citizens, collective resolve turns aspirations into achievements. - Narendra Modi”

Live telecast of Republic Day celebration from Kartavya Path 9:25 AM onwards on Doordarshan Network

QUOTE OF THE DAY

If opportunity doesn't knock, build a door.
- Milton Berle

High drama in TN Assembly

Governor R N Ravi on January 20 last has once again created controversy by walking out of Tamil Nadu Vidhan Sabha, third year in a row, alleging disrespect of the National Anthem of India, while his conduct itself is a disrespect of the tradition of the House where the state anthem "Tamil Thaa Vaazhthu" is sung when the House meets and the National Anthem is sung at the end. He walked out without reading the customary address prepared by the state government and cited not playing of the National Anthem along with the State Anthem and 12 other reasons for doing so. It prompted Chief Minister M K Stalin to assert that he will work with "like-minded" parties to amend the Constitution of India to do away with the practice of customary address by the Governor at the beginning of the first session of Legislative Assemblies every year. The high drama that the Legislative Assembly of Tamil Nadu witnessed smacks politics, since Tamil Nadu is going to polls in April-May 2026. DMK led INDIA bloc in the state is hoping to return to power, while BJP led NDA is trying its best to gain as many seats as it will be possible for them. BJP has made significant inroads in the state and is promoting its own brand of Hindutva-Nationalism, which Governor RN Ravi has been deliberately promoting ever since he assumed the office on September 18, 2021. Governor Ravi has been picking up unnecessary quarrels with the state government since then, on the one or the other pretext.

His stand on the National Anthem is that it should be sung before and after his address. Traditionally, the State Anthem is sung when the House meets and the National Anthem is sung at the end, and this has never been considered anti-national, since it is not. Neither it is disrespect of the National Anthem as Ravi would like us to believe. Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly respects both the State and the National Anthem by singing both – respectively in the beginning and the end. Governor Ravi thinks that it is his constitutional duty to change the tradition of the House, by alleging disrespect of the National Anthem. "The national anthem is yet again insulted and the fundamental constitutional duty disregarded," the statement added. After the Governor's walkout from the Legislative Assembly, the Lok Bhavan issued a three-page statement. It was alleged that the Governor's microphone was switched off repeatedly and he was not allowed to speak.

This conduct of the Governor also smacks of politics on behalf of the BJP led Centre. Since everybody knows that the governor is supposed to read the speech written by the government, and he has no business to interfere. It is worth noting that Governor Ravi read the speech prepared by the state government only once in 2022. In 2023, he skipped a certain portion and added his own words in the speech. Thereafter, he has been walking out of the Tamil Nadu Legislative assembly every year since 2024.

Republic Day 2026: Vande Mataram & the Republic

Republic Day occupies a unique space in India's historical and emotional landscape, marking not only the birth of the Republic on 26 January 1950 but also the moment when political freedom was anchored firmly in constitutional sovereignty. Three years after independence, India chose to define itself not through revolution or rupture, but through law, consent, and democratic continuity. The adoption of the Constitution replaced colonial authority with popular will, transforming a former dominion of the British Crown into a sovereign democratic republic while retaining membership of the Commonwealth. This transition, peaceful and unprecedented in global history, was meticulously documented by newspapers in India and abroad, creating a rich journalistic archive that continues to shape how the nation remembers its constitutional rebirth. In 2026, as Republic Day celebrations resonate with the theme "150 Years of Vande Mataram," the commemoration acquires deeper meaning by linking constitutional achievement with the cultural and emotional forces that sustained the freedom struggle.

The choice of 26 January was itself an act of historical remembrance. Long before the Constitution came into force, the date had symbolised India's uncompromising demand for complete independence. At the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress in December 1929, the call for Purna Swaraj rejected the limited vision of Dominion Status. When Indians across the country observed 26 January 1930 as Independence Day, pledging allegiance to full sovereignty, the date became a moral anchor of the freedom movement. By bringing the Constitution into effect on that very day in 1950, the framers consciously linked the Republic to the aspirations articulated during the struggle, ensuring that constitutional governance was rooted in sacrifice, resistance, and popular resolve rather than colonial inheritance.

Indian newspapers chronicled the birth of the Republic with unmistakable gravity. Front pages were dominated by proclamations, photographs, and detailed descriptions of ceremonies that unfolded

in New Delhi. The Indian Express carried the emphatic headline "INDIA PROCLAIMED SOVEREIGN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC," reporting how at 10:18 in the morning the last Governor-General, C. Rajagopalachari, formally proclaimed the Republic at the Durbar Hall of Government House, followed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad taking the oath as the first President amid a salute of 31 guns. Alongside celebration, the paper also noted Communist anti-Republic Day demonstrations, reminding readers that the new republic emerged amid ideological contestation and social tension rather than universal consensus.

The Hindustan Times and The Times of India captured the day visually and narratively, publishing photographs of illuminated buildings, ceremonial processions, and vast crowds gathered to witness history. Fauji Akhbar, later known as Sainik Samachar, offered vivid detail from a military perspective, describing the solemnity of the ceremony under the brilliantly lit domes of Durbar Hall and the precise moment when the Republic was announced. It recorded how the President later drove out in state in a specially renovated 35-year-old coach bearing the new Ashoka emblem, drawn by six Australian horses, tracing a ceremonial route through Vijay Chowk, Parliament House, Connaught Place, India Gate, and finally to the Irwin Amphitheatre. An estimated 15,000 people assembled at the venue, while thousands more lined the streets, perched on rooftops and trees, shouting jubilant cries as the symbols of the Republic passed by.

The Statesman noted the bitter cold of the January morning and preserved a moment of lightness amid solemnity, recalling how General K.M. Cariappa humorously told his troops that freedom now belonged to everyone, even their dog. Such details, preserved in print, humanised a historic

transformation and conveyed the mixture of pride, relief, and hope that characterised the day. A striking feature of Indian press coverage was the absence of prominent bylines. Reports were typically attributed to institutional voices such as staff reporters or special correspondents, reinforcing the sense that the Republic was a col-

Courier-Mail hailed the event as a modern miracle of a bloodless revolution, while British newspapers such as The Manchester Guardian highlighted the significance of a former colony redefining itself constitutionally while remaining within a transformed Commonwealth.

Visual documentation played a critical role in shaping global understanding of the moment. Official photographs coordinated by the Press Information Bureau showed the President taking the salute, ceremonial parades, and illuminated landmarks, images that travelled across borders and appeared in international publications. British Pathé newsreels carried scenes of the early Republic Day celebrations to cinema audiences in Europe, embedding India's constitutional moment within global visual memory. Together, headlines, wire reports, and photographs formed a living archive through which India announced itself to the world.

lective achievement rather than an individual story.

President Rajendra Prasad's words, widely circulated in the press, offered a moral compass for the new nation. He reminded citizens that independence had been achieved through a unique, non-violent method taught by Mahatma Gandhi and that it was the responsibility of future generations to preserve and protect that freedom, ensuring it bore fruit for the ordinary citizen. These words framed the Republic not as an endpoint, but as the beginning of a long constitutional journey demanding vigilance, responsibility, and ethical governance.

International coverage placed India's transformation within the broader reordering of the post-war world. The New York Times reported the event under the headline "India a Republic," Prasad President," with correspondent Robert Trumbull outlining the constitutional transition, the oath-taking ceremony, and the declaration of a national holiday. Newspapers across the Commonwealth echoed Reuters dispatches describing how thousands poured into cities as ancient India prepared to become the world's youngest republic, with buildings adorned in lights and hotels overflowing with visitors. Australia's

scended linguistic and regional boundaries, binding Indians together through shared emotion and purpose. Its resonance lay not merely in melody or poetry, but in its ability to transform political resistance into moral commitment.

By foregrounding Vande Mataram, Republic Day celebrations acknowledge that India's freedom was sustained as much by cultural imagination as by political negotiation. The Constitution gave form to sovereignty, but songs, symbols, and shared memories gave it soul. National unity was forged through sacrifice, endurance, and collective aspiration, expressed as powerfully in cultural expression as in constitutional text. Remembering 150 years of Vande Mataram alongside the Republic reminds citizens that democracy depends not only on institutions and laws, but also on emotional bonds and shared values.

At the same time, Republic Day remains a moment of reflection as much as celebration. The Constitution enshrines ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, yet the gap between promise and practice persists. Economic inequality, social discrimination, and political polarisation challenge the Republic's moral foundations. The press coverage of 1950, which recorded both celebration and dissent, reminds us that democracy has always been contested and unfinished. The Republic endures not because it is perfect, but because it allows space for debate, reform, and renewal.

As India commemorates Republic Day under the banner of "150 Years of Vande Mataram," the occasion unites past and present, law and culture, memory and aspiration. The journalistic record of 26 January 1950 allows us to witness the moment when India declared itself a republic before its people and the world. The continued celebration of that day reaffirms a commitment to constitutional governance, national unity, and the sacrifices that made freedom possible. In honouring both the Constitution and the song that stirred a nation's soul, Republic Day reminds Indians that the Republic lives through faith in shared ideals and responsibility towards one another. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi



76th Republic Day: Invitation to Collective Introspection

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

The 76th Republic Day of India arrives at a moment of profound national churn, where the symbolism of the day compels citizens to look deeper into the condition of the republic rather than merely admiring the ceremonial splendour that takes place on Rajpath. Republic Day is both a celebration and a reminder. It celebrates the historic moment when India embraced its Constitution on 26 January 1950 and became a sovereign democratic republic, but it also reminds every citizen, every institution, and every generation that the republic is not a finished sculpture—it is a continuous creation shaped daily by collective choices, civic virtues, and the willingness to introspect. The 76th anniversary amplifies this reminder because it stands at a junction where India's rapid transformations coexist with unprecedented challenges. In such a landscape, Republic Day becomes not only an occasion of national pride but an invitation to look inward with honesty and courage.

To begin such introspection, one must return to the ideals of the Constitution. The Preamble, with its resounding commitment to justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, is perhaps the most profound moral declaration in modern India. Yet introspection requires acknowledging that translating these ideals into lived experiences remains a long, uneven, and sometimes fragile journey. Justice in its social, economic, and political dimensions continues to elude many, creating contradictions between constitutional promise and everyday reality. The 76th Republic Day calls on the nation to ask whether its development trajectory has been inclusive enough, whether marginalised communities have access to equal opportunities, and whether institutional mechanisms are strong enough to address inequities without bias. The republic must be measured not by ceremonial grandeur but by its capacity to provide dignity to the weakest and most invisible citizen.

Economic transformation is one of the defining themes of contemporary India. The country has risen to become one of the world's major economies, its

digital revolution reshaping markets, innovation, entrepreneurship, and everyday life. Yet this economic vibrancy demands introspection because growth has not eradicated the deep structural disparities that divide rural and urban populations, formal and informal labour, skilled and unskilled workers, the digitally connected and those left behind. The republic cannot rely solely on macroeconomic achievements to justify its progress. It must confront the rising cost of living, unemployment concerns among the youth, vulnerabilities of small farmers, and the precarity experienced by millions working without social security. Republic Day thus becomes a moment to reflect on how economic justice must remain at the ethical core of development plans, ensuring that prosperity does not turn selective or exclusionary.

Equally important is the need to introspect on the health of India's democracy. Elections remain robust, participation remains high, and the democratic spirit continues to animate public life. Yet the broader ecosystem of democracy—comprising free debate, responsible media, independent institutions, and a culture of dissent—requires constant nurturing. The 76th Republic Day urges a re-examination of how democratic dialogue is conducted in the age of sensational media, polarised debates, and rapid-fire digital communication. The rise of misinformation, emotional manipulation, and the erosion of nuanced discourse challenge the foundational principle that democracy thrives on informed citizenship. Introspection demands recognising that the quality of public conversation is as crucial as the procedures of electoral democracy. A republic cannot flourish if citizens are divided by suspicion, manipulated by demagoguery, or disengaged from reasoned discourse.

Federalism is another pillar of the republic that demands reflective scrutiny. India's strength has always been its ability to balance unity with diversity, a central authority with strong regional identities. The federal structure was designed to be elastic and cooperative, accommodating linguistic, cultural, and economic differences across states. Yet tensions between the

centre and states have intensified in recent years, ranging from fiscal allocation disputes to debates over administrative jurisdiction and policy implementation. The 76th Republic Day invites India to introspect whether this balance is shifting in ways that weaken the spirit of cooperative federalism. A republic thrives when states feel empowered, respected, and engaged as partners in national progress rather than mere administrative units. The invitation to introspection includes examining how federal institutions can be strengthened, how decentralisation can be deepened, and how governance can become more responsive at the grassroots level.

The social landscape of the country also requires earnest introspection. India's diversity is its cultural inheritance, a mosaic of languages, religions, castes, ethnicities, and traditions that have coexisted through centuries. Yet, the fragility of social harmony has been exposed time and again through conflicts, identity-based tensions, and polarising narratives. Republic Day, with its spirit of fraternity, calls for an inward gaze into the collective consciousness of the nation. The republic cannot be strong if society is divided, if communities mistrust one another, or if hate finds more currency than empathy. Introspection demands questioning how prejudices are formed, how they are amplified through digital platforms, and how they can be dismantled through dialogue, education, and shared community engagement. The celebration of Republic Day must go beyond symbolic displays of unity and inspire real human connections that reaffirm the value of coexistence.

Technology is perhaps the most transformative force shaping the new republic, but it too invites a series of introspective questions. Artificial intelligence, big data, biometric systems, and the digital economy bring vast opportunities but raise concerns about privacy, surveillance, and algorithmic inequality. The 76th Republic Day presents the chance to reflect on how technological adoption must remain aligned with constitutional values. A republic is defined not by the speed of its technological progress but by the ethical frameworks that govern such progress.



Citizens must be assured that data is protected, digital platforms are safe, and technological tools do not become instruments of discrimination or control. Introspection here requires examining how to balance innovation with rights, efficiency with accountability, and digital expansion with digital inclusion.

Environmental sustainability is no longer a peripheral issue; it is an existential one. The effects of climate change—heatwaves, unpredictable rainfall, water scarcity, and biodiversity loss—are increasingly evident across the country. As the republic moves forward, it must reflect on the ecological debt accumulating silently but dangerously. Celebrating Republic Day under clear blue skies or amidst the greenery of ceremonial avenues must not distract from the reality that many cities grapple with severe air pollution, forest areas shrink under developmental pressure, and river systems face continuous degradation. The day invites the nation to introspect whether development policies sufficiently respect ecological limits, whether environmental justice is considered in planning, and whether future generations will inherit a sustainable country. Ecological introspection must become central to the republic's vision.

In rural India, where much of the population still resides, the call for introspection is equally urgent. Farmers face challenges ranging from climate change impacts to fluctuating crop prices, rising input costs, and inadequate infrastructure. Rural youth often migrate to cities in search of eco-

economic security, leaving behind villages struggling with poor connectivity, limited healthcare, and uncertain educational opportunities. The republic must ask whether its development policies address these rural realities or whether they remain urban-centric. The well-being of rural India is not merely an economic necessity but a moral responsibility. A republic that values equity must ensure that rural citizens receive the same dignity, opportunities, and public services as their urban counterparts.

Healthcare, too, presents an area where introspection becomes essential. The pandemic years revealed the vulnerabilities of the healthcare system in ways that cannot be forgotten. Shortages of beds, oxygen, medical staff, and equitable access exposed a structural frailty that requires long-term reform. Celebrating the 76th Republic Day should include acknowledging the progress made in vaccine production, telemedicine, and medical research, but it must also prompt reflection on what more needs to be done. Strengthening primary healthcare, improving mental health services, investing in medical infrastructure, and ensuring affordability must form part of the republic's introspective agenda.

One cannot talk about introspection without reflecting on gender equality. Women in India continue to make strides in education, leadership, entrepreneurship, and public service. Yet the persistence of gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, unpaid domestic labour, and so-

cial stereotypes indicates that equality remains an incomplete project. The republic must reflect on how to transform societal attitudes, strengthen protective laws, provide economic opportunities, and ensure safety in both public and private spaces. Republic Day stands as a reminder that the constitutional promise of equality must be experienced by every woman, not celebrated only in symbolic representation.

Urban India, with its sprawling megacities and rapidly growing towns, also requires thoughtful introspection. Traffic congestion, inadequate public transportation, housing shortages, pollution, and waste management challenges create daily struggles for millions. The republic must reflect on how urban governance can become more humane, efficient, and sustainable. Cities must be designed not only as economic engines but as inclusive spaces where mobility, access, and quality of life are guaranteed for residents irrespective of income. Republic Day offers the chance to imagine cities that embody the dignity and livability that the Constitution promises.

Youth form the heart of the 21st-century republic, and their aspirations, anxieties, and experiences must shape national introspection. India's young population is dynamic, globally connected, and ambitious. Yet they face concerns about employment, identity, mental health, and the ethical dilemmas of digital life. The republic must engage with the emotional and psychological contexts of youth, ensuring systems that encourage creativity, critical thinking, and innovation. The 76th Republic Day invites the country to reflect on how to empower the youth not just through skill development but through an environment where they feel valued, heard, and supported.

Ultimately, the deepest invitation to introspection lies in returning to the Constitution as a living document. The Constitution is not a relic of the past; it is a guide for the future. Yet constitutional morality—embedded in ideas of transparency, accountability, fraternity, and ethical governance—requires continuous cultivation. Republic Day asks whether citizens truly understand their rights and duties, whether

they engage with public issues responsibly, and whether civic education is sufficient to build informed citizenship. A republic does not thrive on laws alone; it thrives on civic virtue. Citizens must introspect on how individual actions voting, public behaviour, participation, tolerance shape the collective destiny of the nation.

The 76th Republic Day, therefore, is not merely an event but a moment of national meditation. The parade, the ceremonial guard of honour, the cultural tableaux, and the national anthem collectively inspire pride, but beyond these symbols lies the more profound duty of reflection. India must ask itself hard questions not to undermine its achievements, but to deepen its commitment to the constitutional vision that binds the nation together. Introspection is not a sign of weakness; it is a sign of maturity. Nations grow when they reflect, correct, and renew.

As India steps into another year of its republican journey, the invitation to collective introspection becomes a roadmap for its future. It urges citizens to rediscover the moral force of the Constitution, to rejuvenate democratic culture, to rebuild social trust, to balance technological change with ethical frameworks, and to ensure that progress does not leave behind those who are most vulnerable. Only when such introspection becomes a shared national habit can the republic remain strong, resilient, and humane.

The 76th Republic Day, then, stands not just as a celebration of constitutional adoption but as a call to honour the spirit behind it. The republic is not an abstract entity—it lives through the choices of its people. To introspect is to uphold the dignity of the Constitution, to respect the diversity of the nation, and to reaffirm the promise of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. When a nation looks inward with sincerity, it emerges stronger, wiser, and more united. And that, above all, is the true celebration of Republic Day. (The author is the International Tagore Awardee Formerly Affiliated Faculty Virginia Commonwealth University & Ex Associate Professor and Head Post Graduate Dept of English Dum Dum Motijheel College.)

Historical Context of Republic Day

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuvan

The date of 26 January holds profound significance in the history of Indian political context and the evolution of the modern nation-state system. This day marks a historic moment when the people of our country transitioned from being "subjects" to "citizens". It is true that India achieved political independence on 15 August 1947 by breaking the chains of British colonial rule, but that independence was incomplete. For even then, the governance of the country was conducted under the Government of India Act of 1935, and the head of state was a representative of the British monarchy. It was only on 26 January 1950, when India's own Constitution came into effect, that the country truly attained sovereignty. On this day, India shed the status of a British Dominion and emerged before the world as an independent, sovereign, democratic republic. This transformation was not merely legal or constitutional; it was an ultimate declaration of liberation from the mentality of subjugation that had persisted for centuries. The Indian Republic's journey stands as a shining example of how a written constitution can determine the destiny of millions and bind a nation together with the thread of unity amid diversity.

To trace the roots of Republic Day, we must look back a little into history, to a decisive chapter in the Indian freedom struggle. In December 1929, at the annual session of the Indian National Congress held in Lahore under the presidency of Jawaharlal Nehru, the resolution for "Purna Swaraj" or complete independence was adopted for the first time. Until then, the primary goal of the freedom movement had been to attain Dominion status, meaning a degree of self-governance while remaining under the British Empire. But at the Lahore session, the Indian leadership realised that without complete independence, solutions to India's problems were impossible.

Based on that historic decision, 26 January 1930 was observed across the country as "Purna Swaraj Day" or the first Independence Day. On this day, millions of people in villages, towns and cities across India hoisted the tricolour flag and took oaths to end British rule. When the country finally gained independence in 1947, the date was fixed as 15 August, and the historic significance of 26 January seemed on the verge of fading. However, to eternally preserve the memory of that fiery day in the freedom struggle, the framers of the Constitution, despite completing the document on 26 November 1949, waited until 26 January 1950 to bring it into force. Thus, the date of 26 January built a bridge between the struggles of the past and the constitutional journey of the future. It was not merely a change of date; it was a continuous reflection of the aspiration for freedom embedded in the Indian psyche.

The process of drafting India's Constitution was one of the most complex and intellectually rigorous exercises in human history. Amid the horrors of Partition, communal violence and the crisis of thousands of refugees, the members of the Constituent Assembly sought to lay the foundation of a nation that could withstand all future challenges. The immense effort and intellect invested by the Drafting Committee under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar remain subjects of research even today. They adopted the best aspects of constitutions from countries such as the United States, Britain, Ireland and Canada, but adapted them to suit India's soil and people. A study of the debates in the Constituent Assembly reveals that every word and concept was discussed in depth. Issues such as the relationship between the Centre and the states, the scope of fundamental rights, and the protection of minorities were debated with differing opinions, yet reaching consensus was the first victory of Indian democracy. This Constitution did not merely

shape India as a political nation; it also provided a blueprint for building a modern society. By legally prohibiting evils such as caste discrimination, untouchability and gender inequality, the Constitution initiated a social revolution. Therefore, to describe the Indian Constitution merely as a legal document would be mistaken; it is in fact a manifesto of India's renaissance, maintaining a balance between tradition and modernity.

The meaning and significance of the term "republic" are profoundly deep. Its core implication is that the supreme authority of the state does not rest with any hereditary ruler. India's President, the constitutional head of state, is elected for a fixed term through representatives chosen by the people. This system proves that in India, no one can become ruler by birth; even the child of an ordinary farmer or labourer has the constitutional right to occupy the highest office in the land. The concept of a republic vests sovereignty in the people. In other words, no matter how powerful the government or administration may be, it remains accountable to the Constitution and the people. Until 1950, Indians were "subjects" of the British Empire, possessing no independent political identity. But on Republic Day, Indians transformed into "citizens". Citizenship does not merely grant voting rights; it provides the opportunity for direct participation in the governance of the country. This mental and political transition is the greatest achievement of Republic Day. It ended feudal thinking and laid the foundation for an egalitarian social order.

Each word in the Preamble of the Constitution—"sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic"—carries special weight. Sovereignty signifies that India is completely independent in making its decisions; no foreign power can interfere in its internal or external policies. Millions sacrificed their lives to achieve this independence. The socialist vision emphasises equitable distri-

bution of national resources and the upliftment of the poorer classes. Although the global economic context has changed, the relevance of socialist ideals remains undiminished in a developing country like India. Secularism is the key mantra for maintaining peace and harmony in a multi-religious nation like ours. The state has no religion of its own, and people of all faiths enjoy equal dignity and rights—this principle forms the bedrock of Indian unity. Democracy ensures that the people decide through elections who shall govern the country. The edifice of the Indian Republic stands on these four pillars. Any damage to even one of them risks weakening the entire structure. Therefore, on Republic Day, it is the duty of every citizen to reaffirm and safeguard these principles.

The relationship between fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy maintains the balance of the Indian Constitution. The Constitution grants citizens rights to freedom of speech, security of life, religious freedom, education and constitutional remedies. These rights protect individual liberty and dignity. If the government violates any person's rights, that individual can approach the courts for justice. On the other hand, the directive principles guide the government to adopt welfare-oriented policies. Although these principles are not enforceable through courts, the government is morally bound to follow them in order to build a healthy society. This combination of rights and responsibilities empowers Indian citizens. Yet alongside enjoying rights, citizens also have certain fundamental duties. Protecting the integrity of the nation, respecting the Constitution, preserving the environment and fostering a scientific temperament are duties of every citizen. Regrettably, we often speak only of rights and forget duties. Republic Day reminds us that freedom without responsibility can lead to chaos. Building a successful republic requires vigilant and re-

sponsible citizens.

India's federal structure is another unique feature of the Constitution. Governing such a vast and diverse country through a single central authority is impossible. Therefore, the Constitution clearly divides powers between the Centre and the states. Through three lists—Union List, State List and Concurrent List—the jurisdiction of each level of government is defined. This system recognises the regional aspirations of India's different regions while simultaneously strengthening national unity. The environment in which people of diverse languages, cultures and traditions can preserve their distinct identities while taking pride in being Indian is the result of this constitutional arrangement. Of course, disputes and conflicts between the Centre and states arise from time to time. Yet the remarkable blend of flexibility and firmness in the Indian Constitution has shown the way to resolve such conflicts through dialogue and legal processes. This federal ethos has kept India alive as "unity in diversity". When the cultures of different states are showcased during the Republic Day parade, this picture of federal unity becomes even clearer.

The independence of the judiciary is another brilliant aspect of the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court has been empowered as the guardian and interpreter of the Constitution. If any law passed by Parliament or state legislatures contravenes the Constitution, the courts can strike it down. This power of "judicial review" prevents the government from becoming arbitrary. The judiciary has clarified through various judgments that even Parliament lacks the authority to alter the basic structure of the Constitution. This legal safeguard has protected Indian democracy during crises. Even in difficult times such as the Emergency, the role of the judiciary helped revive democracy. An ordinary citizen can stand against governmental injustice in court and emerge victorious—this is where the strength of the Indian Constitution lies. On Republic Day, we should also pay tribute to those eminent judges and jurists who have tirelessly worked

to uphold the dignity of the Constitution. This independence of the judiciary continues to strengthen the democratic foundation of India day by day.

Even after seven decades of independence, many pressing problems confront India. Poverty, illiteracy, lack of healthcare, unemployment and gender discrimination continue to plague society. The constitutional ideals of equality and justice remain unrealised in many spheres. The gap between rich and poor keeps widening. Politics in the name of religion and caste creates divisions in society. Corruption has eroded the administrative machinery. In such circumstances, celebrating Republic Day means conducting an impartial review of how far we have progressed and how much further we have to go. In his final address to the Constituent Assembly, Dr. Ambedkar had warned that political democracy remains insecure until it transforms into social and economic democracy. That warning remains equally relevant today. If we cannot bring light into the life of the last person in society, we must accept that the objectives of the Constitution have not been fulfilled.

Many countries that gained freedom from colonial rule could not sustain democracy and fell into the grip of dictatorship. Yet India has maintained its democratic tradition unbroken despite countless problems and challenges. This is a source of wonder and inspiration for the entire world. India's success proves that democracy is not only for Western nations; it is universal. India's electoral process, peaceful transfer of power and freedom of the press have enhanced the country's image internationally. The military strength displayed in the Republic Day parade does not merely signify preparedness for war; it expresses India's capability to preserve peace. India's progress in science and technology presents the identity of a modern and progressive nation. India's growing importance in global politics is the result of this democratic and constitutional stability.

Spreading and promoting the values of the Constitution and the republic among the younger generation is a primary need of our

time. Today's youth have not witnessed the freedom struggle or the struggle to frame the Constitution. For them, independence may seem an easily available commodity. But it is essential to make them understand the immense sacrifices through which this independence was achieved. Incorporating the fundamental lessons of the Constitution into the education system, creating awareness about citizens' rights and duties, and imparting education that fosters respect for democratic values are of utmost importance. In the age of social media and information technology, misinformation and propaganda can create confusion in society. In such times, only accurate knowledge of the Constitution and rational thinking can keep the nation on the right path. When the younger generation truly understands the essence of the Constitution, only then will they be able to fulfil their responsibilities as true citizens. Republic Day should become an educational and inspirational occasion not only for government programmes but also for students and youth.

In conclusion, this sacred day of 26 January offers us once again an opportunity for self-examination. Our Constitution is the longest written constitution in the world, but its success depends on the people who implement it. The Constitution is not inert; it is a living document. It can adapt itself with time, but its soul—founded on justice, equality and fraternity—remains eternal. The journey of the Indian Republic is an ongoing process. There are achievements in this journey, but there are mistakes and shortcomings, but there is also an indomitable will to move forward. If every citizen performs their duty towards the country from their respective positions, stands against corruption and injustice, and reflects the ideals of the Constitution in their own lives, then building a better India is not impossible. The celebration of Republic Day will truly be meaningful only when every child in India receives education, every youth finds employment, and every Indian feels secure. *(The author is the recipient of the 'Yuba Lekhak Samman - 2025' from the Government of Assam)*

Republic Day 2026: A Celebration of Largest Democracy & '150 Years of Vande Mataram'

By: Prof Jayadeba Sahoo

"India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages; she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and Democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all" — Will Durant

Om samgacchadhvam samvadadhvam sam va manasi jnatam deva bhagam yatha purve sajananam upasate ||

Let us gather in harmony, speak in one voice; let our minds be in agreement; just as the ancient gods shared their portion of sacrifice. (Let us gather, speak in one voice, with a united mind and purpose) that embody democratic ideals of unity in Rig-Veda

This hymn of Rig-Veda to Samjnana offers a foundational concept of democracy, urging people to gather in assemblies (Sabha), speak with one voice (Samvadadhvam), with a united mind (Sammanah) and heart (Samachittam), and a shared policy (Sammantrah) and aspirations (akuti).

As the sovereign Republic of India prepares to commemorate its 77th Republic Day on January 26, 2026, the nation is poised to enthroned the sacrosanct values of democracy, liberty, and fraternity. This auspicious occasion is a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Indian people, who have relentlessly toiled to establish a governance system that is "of the people, by the people, and for the people".

The Grandeur of Democracy

As, the resplendent visage of India, the Mother Democracy, radiates an aura of transcendental grandeur, as the world's largest democracy continues to epitomize the inimitable spirit of its people! In the hallowed halls of its sacrosanct Constitution, India has enshrined the sacred values of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, thereby transforming itself into a veritable crucible of democratic aspirations.

The Republic Day celebrations will be a spectacular display of India's military prowess, prowess, cultural diversity, and rapid progress towards self-reliance. The grand parade at Kartavya Path in New Delhi will feature 30 tableaux, including 17 from states and Union Territories, and 13 from various ministries, departments, and services.

Republic Day 2026: A Celebration of '150 Years of Vande Mataram'

The central theme for Republic Day 2026 is "150 Years of Vande Mataram", commemorating the national song's role in India's freedom movement. The theme will be reflected in the parade's décor, tableaux, and cultural performances, highlighting India's rich cultural heritage and progress towards self-reliance.

150 Years of Vande Mataram is a national commemorative initiative to celebrate the spirit of Vande Mataram and its unique role in the history of India. Vande Mataram is not

just a song, it is the collective consciousness of India and was the rallying cry of freedom fighters during the struggle for independence. On 1st October the Cabinet approved country-wide celebrations for the 150th anniversary of "Vande Mataram" to foster an impactful movement to connect citizens, especially our youth and students with the song's original, revolutionary spirit. The celebrations will honour this timeless message and ensure its legacy is fully celebrated and embedded in the hearts of the next generation.

Pandit Omkarnath Thakur's Version

August 15, 1947, Pandit Omkarnath Thakur accepted an invitation from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to broadcast the tune over All India Radio at 6.30 AM.

Freedom Struggle

Role of Vande Mataram in the Freedom Struggle

Over time Vande Mataram became a rallying cry of freedom fighters, a symbol of love and devotion to the motherland and a slogan of resistance against the foreign power. The colonial authorities recognized its power: they banned public singing or display of it in many places because it served as a unifying nationalist chant. Vande Mataram was not only used as a song in meetings, processions and large public gatherings but also as a slogan ("Vande Mataram!") shouted by protesters, freedom fighters, and bravehearts.

Seminal thinkers like Sri Aurobindo were instrumental in popularizing it as a central cry of the independence movement. According to him "Vande Mataram" had inherent spiritual powers capable of awakening the collective consciousness of the people. He felt that reciting Vande Mataram was not merely a political act but a spiritual one, designed to connect people to a deeper, shared identity.

In 1896, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore sang Vande Mataram at the Kolkata session of the Indian National Congress. Later, singing the first two stanzas of Vande Mataram became a routine at the Congress meetings. It gradually became an anthem for the freedom fighters. Vande Mataram was sung at the proclamation of provisional Government of Azad Hind.

Use of Vande Mataram during the partition of Bengal

In 1905 Vande Mataram was an important part of the protests against partition of Bengal. In 1905, a meeting was conducted at Calcutta town hall to protest against the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon. About 40,000 people took part in the meeting and all of them sang Vande Mataram there. Lord Curzon had ordered the police to arrest anyone who sang the song.

Vande Mataram Movement of Gulbarga

Vande Mataram Movement in Gulbarga, Karnataka, is said to be a significant moment in the history of the Hyderabad-Karnataka Freedom Struggle. Gulbarga was earlier part of the Hyderabad-Karnataka area. This Movement was majorly a student-led movement where students from varied colleges such as Osmania University, Aurangabad Intermediate College, and Gul-

barga University participated.

On 16 November 1938, owing to its patriotic nature, the government banned the song Vande Mataram from being sung under any circumstances. As a form of protest, on 28 November 1938, the students resolutely sang the song, because of which they were kept under house arrest by the authorities. The students decided to continue protesting until their demands were met. To prevent this Movement from spreading, the British government posted policemen at various campuses and rusticated every student who refused to comply with their orders.

Concept of Democracy by Rig Veda

Bharat (India) has been practicing spiritual, philosophical and democratic values since the ancient Vedic period. We can trace the conceptual roots of Loktantra or democracy in the Rigveda and the Atharvaveda, the oldest literary composition, in terms of Sabha (assembly of elders), Samiti (assembly of common folk), & Sansad (parliament).

Since ancient times, democratic system has been strong in India? Its evidence is derived from ancient literature, coins, and various records. Anytime before 2.5 kya, the word Gana-Sangh / Gana-Rajya finds the existence with the same meaning in the oldest extant text, Rig Veda (3.26.6).

It would not be wrong to say that the principle of democracy is originated from the Vedas.

The terms Sabha (gathering), Samiti (smaller Gathering or Committee), Rajan or Raja (Householder, Leader) exists and are found in Vedic literature. Rig Veda also says that the position of the King (Leader) was not absolute and he could be removed by the Sabha or the Assembly.

The Sabha and Samiti are mentioned in both Rig Veda and Atharva Veda. In these meetings, a decision was made after the discussion with the king, ministers, and scholars at that time. This shows how politics was at that time because people together used to settle the decisions of the Sabha and Samiti with good vision. Even people of different ideologies were divided into various groups and take a decision after mutual consultation. Despite the bleak situations arising from wars and conflicts globally, there is always hope. History shows that societies often demonstrate resilience and find ways to rebuild and reconcile. It is time to intensify our efforts in using technology and AI to build democracies again. It is also time to support numerous global efforts aimed at supporting democratic elections, governance, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and democratic development. Grassroots movements and civil society organizations should be supported to ensure they remain active and a beacon of hope. Ultimately, Republic Day serves as a reminder for all of us that while technology and AI are a challenge and a blessing, the pursuit of democracy, peace, and human rights are an ongoing journey worth undertaking, we have no choice but to fight until our last breath. We must harness the positive impact of AI to ensure human rights thrive.

India's Republic Day: Pride, Parade, Promise

By: Satyabrata Borah

Republic Day of India stands as one of the most significant national celebrations, marking the moment when the country fully embraced its identity as a sovereign democratic republic. Observed every year on January 26, this day commemorates the enforcement of the Constitution of India in 1950, a document that laid the foundation for the world's largest democracy. While Independence Day on August 15 celebrates freedom from colonial rule, Republic Day honors the culmination of that freedom through the establishment of a republican form of government, where the people became the ultimate sovereign power.

The choice of January 26 carries deep historical meaning. During the freedom struggle, the Indian National Congress had declared complete independence, known as Purna Swaraj, on January 26, 1930, as a bold assertion against British dominion. This date symbolized the aspiration for full self-rule, and when the time came to implement the new Constitution, the framers deliberately selected January 26 to connect the republican ideals with that earlier pledge of sovereignty. On January 26, 1950, India ceased to be a dominion under the British Crown and became a republic. Dr. Rajendra Prasad took oath as the first President, the national flag was unfurled with a 21-gun salute, and the Constituent Assembly transformed into the provisional Parliament. This transition replaced the Government of India Act of 1935 with a homegrown framework that guaranteed justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity to all citizens.

The Constitution itself represents one of the most remarkable achievements in modern history. Drafted over nearly three years by a committee chaired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, often called the architect of the Indian Constitution, it drew inspiration from various sources while remaining uniquely suited to India's diverse society. Adopted by the Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949, it came into effect after a two-month period to allow preparations. The document's preamble declares India a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic, emphasizing values that continue to guide the nation. Its provisions cover fundamental rights, directive principles of state policy, federal structure, and mechanisms for governance that balance unity with regional diversity. Over the decades, the Constitution has been amended to adapt to changing needs, yet its core principles remain intact, proving its resilience and relevance.

The significance of Republic Day extends far beyond a mere historical milestone. It serves as a reminder of the hard-fought journey toward self-governance and the commitment to democratic principles in a country marked by immense linguistic, religious, cultural, and social diversity. In a world where many nations have struggled with democratic stability, India's consistent adherence to constitutional governance, regular elections, and peaceful transfers of power stands out as an extraordinary accomplishment. The day reinforces national unity, encourages reflection on civic responsibilities, and inspires generations to uphold the ideals of equality and justice. It also highlights India's progress in various fields, from economic development to technological advancement, military capabilities, and cultural preservation.

Celebrations of Republic Day unfold across the country with patriotic fervor, but the grandest and most iconic event takes place in the capital, New Delhi. The central highlight remains the Republic Day Parade along Kartavya Path, the ceremonial boulevard stretching from Rashtrapati Bhavan past India Gate. Organized by the Ministry of Defence, this spectacle begins early in the morning when the President of India, as the supreme commander of the armed forces, arrives escorted by the President's Bodyguard. The President unfurls the national flag at the saluting base, accompanied by the national anthem and a 21-gun salute from artillery units. A wreath-

laying ceremony at the National War Memorial precedes the main parade, paying homage to fallen soldiers.

The parade itself showcases a harmonious blend of military discipline, cultural richness, and technological prowess. It opens with contingents from the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force marching in precise formation, followed by mechanized columns displaying modern weaponry, tanks, missiles, and indigenous defense equipment. This year, for the 77th Republic Day in 2026, the Indian Army introduced a unique battle array formation for the first time, simulating real combat scenarios with reconnaissance units leading into logistics and frontline troops in full gear. New additions like the Bhairav Light Commando Battalion, Shaktibaag Regiment, drone capabilities, and universal rocket launchers highlighted India's growing self-reliance in defense manufacturing under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

Cultural diversity shines through the vibrant tableaux, or floats, presented by various states and union territories. Each tableau depicts regional traditions, historical events, developmental achievements, folklore, dances, and architectural marvels, creating a moving mosaic of India's unity in diversity. Ministries and central organizations also participate with displays reflecting national priorities. The parade includes marching bands playing patriotic tunes, camel contingents from the Border Security Force performing daredevil stunts, and motorbike displays by daredevils that thrill the crowds. A breathtaking flypast by the Indian Air Force forms one of the most exhilarating segments. Aircraft formations trace patterns in the sky, often releasing plumes in the tricolor of saffron, white, and green. Helicopters shower flower petals on spectators below, adding to the festive atmosphere. The event concludes with a salute to the President and the national anthem, leaving audiences filled with pride.

In 2026, the celebrations carried special resonance as they marked the 77th anniversary of the Republic and coincided with the 150th year of the national song Vande Mataram. Composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in 1875 and first published in his novel Anandamath, Vande Mataram became an anthem of resistance during the freedom movement, inspiring countless patriots. The parade theme, 150 Years of Vande Mataram, wove this legacy throughout the proceedings. Paintings by Tejendra Kumar Mitra from 1923, illustrating the song's verses, adorned view-cutters along Kartavya Path. Cultural performances, band displays, and tableaux emphasized the song's enduring role in fostering national consciousness and unity. Adding to the international dimension, the chief guests for 2026 were Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, and Antonio Costa, President of the European Council. Their joint invitation underscored strengthening ties between India and the European Union, reflecting shared interests in trade, technology, security, and democratic values. The presence of such dignitaries enhances the global stature of the event and highlights India's growing diplomatic influence.

Beyond the parade, Republic Day fosters widespread participation. Schools, colleges, and communities organize flag-hoisting ceremonies, cultural programs, essay competitions, and patriotic songs. The President confers prestigious civilian awards on the eve of Republic Day, including the Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, and Padma Shri, recognizing exceptional contributions in various fields. Gallantry awards honor military personnel for bravery. Beating Retreat ceremonies a few days later feature massed bands performing soul-stirring tunes at Vijay Chowk, blending tradition with musical excellence.

Republic Day encapsulates the spirit of a nation that has journeyed from colonial subjugation to becoming a vibrant democracy. It reminds citizens of the Constitution's role as the guiding light, ensuring that power resides with the people. As India continues to evolve, facing contemporary challenges while preserving its pluralistic ethos, this day renews the collective resolve to build a just, inclusive, and prosperous society.

Army already certain to keep control over government

Myanmar holds its last election round

YANGON, Jan 25: Voting was held Sunday in Myanmar in the final round of a three-stage general election, capping a nearly month-long process that has already ensured the country's military rulers and their allies will command a parliamentary majority to form a new government.

Critics say the polls were neither free nor fair, and were designed to legitimise the power of the military after it ousted the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021.

The army-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, or USDP, had already won most of the seats contested in the first two rounds of voting. Twenty-five per cent of the seats in the upper and lower houses of the national Parliament are reserved for the military, guaranteeing it and its allies control of the legislature.

Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, who heads the current military government, is widely expected by both supporters and opponents to assume the presidency when the new Parliament meets.

Voting is limited by the ongoing civil war

The army's 2021 takeover triggered widespread opposition that dragged Myanmar into a civil war. Security concerns engendered by the fighting meant voting was not held in more than one-fifth of the country's 330 townships, another reason the process was described as neither free nor fair.

Malaysian Foreign Minister Mohamad Hasan on Tuesday said the Association of Southeast Asian



Nations, of which Myanmar is a member, did not send observers and would not certify the election, citing concerns over the lack of inclusive and free participation.

Min Aung Hlaing pushed back against critics of the polls on Sunday, declaring that "the people who live in Myanmar are the ones who vote. Not from outside." "We are not concerned whether this is recognised by foreign countries or not. We recognise the people's vote. It should be like that," he told journalists after inspecting a polling station in Mandalay, the country's second-largest city. Asked if he intended to take part in the new government, he declined to comment, noting the president would be selected when Parliament meets.

Suu Kyi, Myanmar's 80-year-old former leader, and her party did not participate in the polls. She is serving a 27-year prison term on charges widely viewed as spurious

and politically motivated. Her party, the National League for Democracy, won landslide victories in the 2020 and 2015 elections, but was forced to dissolve in 2023 after refusing to register under new military rules. Other parties also refused to register or declined to run under conditions they deem unfair, while opposition groups called for a voter boycott.

A new Election Protection Law imposed harsh penalties for most public criticism of the polls, with the authorities charging more than 400 people recently for activities such as leafleting or online activity. Voting began on Sunday at 6 a.m. and ended at 4 p.m. in 61 townships across six regions and three states, including many areas that have seen clashes in recent months.

At the polling station in Dagon township in Yangon, the country's largest city, 86-year-old Soe Tint said he cast his ballot because he

wants the country to be peaceful and develop "in all sectors, including education."

At the same station, Lae Lae Yi, 62, was less hopeful. "I'm not expecting anything at all, because there is no motivation," she said.

Fighting was reported in at least one township holding polls, with five people injured on Sunday, independent online media, including the Irrawaddy, reported. The previous two rounds of voting were disrupted by armed groups opposed to military rule carrying out attacks on polling stations and government buildings in several townships, killing at least two administrative officials, according to the military government.

No voting in many areas beset by fighting

The election was held in three phases due to the armed conflict. The first two rounds took place on Dec. 28 and Jan. 11 in 202 of the country's 330 townships. A total of 67 townships — mostly areas controlled by armed opposing groups — did not participate, reducing the original seats in the 664-member national parliament to 586.

Final results for all parliament seats are expected to be announced later this week. The military government has announced that Parliament will be convened in March, and the new government will take up its duties in April.

The party with a majority in the combined upper and lower houses of Parliament can select the new president, who in turn names a Cabinet and forms a new government. (AP)

Ceasefire with Kurdish-led force extended for another 15 days, Syrian army says

RAQQA (SYRIA), Jan 25: Hours after the expiration of a four-day truce between the Syrian government and Kurdish-led fighters Saturday, Syria's defence ministry announced the ceasefire had been extended by another 15 days.

The defence ministry said in a statement that the extension was in support of an operation by US forces to transfer accused Islamic State militants who had been held in prisons in northeastern Syria to detention centres in Iraq.

There was no immediate statement from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. Over the past three weeks, there have been intense clashes between government forces and the SDF, in which the SDF lost large parts of the area they once controlled.

A four-day truce between the Syrian government and Kurdish fighters ended Saturday evening.

The end of the truce came as government forces have been sending reinforcements to Syria's northeast. Over the past three weeks, they have witnessed intense clashes in which the Kurdish-led and US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, or SDF, lost large parts of the area they once controlled.

Syria's state news agency SANA earlier quoted an unnamed government official as saying that the truce has ended and the government "is studying its options."

Syria's interim government signed an agreement last March with the SDF for it to hand over



territory and to eventually merge its fighters with government forces.

In early January, a new round of talks failed to make progress over the merger, leading to renewed fighting between the two sides.

A new version of the accord was signed last weekend, and a four-day ceasefire was declared Tuesday. Part of the new deal is that SDF members will have to merge into the army and police forces as individuals.

The SDF said in a statement Saturday that military buildups and logistical movements by government forces have been observed, "clearly indicating an intent to escalate and push the region toward a new confrontation." The SDF said it will continue to abide by the truce.

On Saturday, state TV said au-

thorities on Saturday released 126 boys under the age of 18 who were held at the al-Aqtan prison near the northern city of Raqqa that was taken by government forces Friday. The teenagers were taken to the city of Raqqa where they were handed over to their families, the TV station said.

The SDF is also home to some of the 9,000 members of the Islamic State group. Most of them remain held in jails run by the SDF. Government forces have so far taken control of two prisons while the rest are still run by the SDF.

Earlier this week, the US military said that some 7,000 IS detainees will be transferred to detention centres in neighbouring Iraq. On Wednesday, the US military said that 150 prisoners have been taken to Iraq. (AP)

US envoys urge Netanyahu to move into Gaza ceasefire's second phase

CAIRO, Jan 25: Top US envoys met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday, urging his government to move into the second phase of the ceasefire in Gaza.

Netanyahu met with US President Donald Trump's envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and Middle East adviser, according to the prime minister's office, which did not give details.

A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe the talks, told reporters the envoys had been working closely with Netanyahu on recovering the remains of the last hostage in Gaza, and on the next steps for demilitarising the territory. The US is anxious to keep the Trump-brokered deal moving, but Netanyahu faces pressure to wait until Hamas returns the hostage's remains. The biggest signal of the second phase would be the reopening of the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

Ali Shaath, the head of a future technocratic government in Gaza that is expected to run day-to-day affairs, said Thursday the border crossing will open in both directions this coming week. There was no confirmation from Israel, which said it would consider the matter this week. The crossing's Gaza side is currently under Israeli military control.

The family of Ran Gvili, whose body is still in Gaza, urged more pressure on Hamas. "President Trump himself stated this week in Davos that Hamas knows exactly where our son is being held," the family said Saturday. "Hamas is deceiving the international community and refusing to return our son, the last remaining hostage, in what constitutes a clear violation of the agreement it signed." Hamas said Wednesday it has provided "all information" it has on Gvili's remains to ceasefire mediators, and accused Israel of obstructing search efforts in areas it controls in Gaza. The ceasefire took effect on Oct 10.

Egypt pushes for Rafah crossing to open

Egypt's top diplomat pressed for an immediate opening of the Rafah crossing with the director of Trump's new Board of Peace in Gaza, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said Saturday, including the ability of Palestinians to enter and exit the territory.

Foreign Minister Bader Abdelatty spoke by phone with Bulgarian diplomat Nikolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza, the ministry said in a statement. They discussed the implementation of the ceasefire's second phase, including the deployment of an international monitoring force, the opening of the Rafah crossing in both directions and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the strip, the statement said.

The Egyptian minister said implementing the second phase is a "key entry point" to launch Gaza's reconstruction. The statement didn't say when the crossing will open for travellers and the evacuation of sick and wounded. Israel is expected to discuss opening the Rafah crossing during Sunday's Cabinet meeting. Hamas in a statement Saturday said a delegation met in Istanbul with the head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization about the ceasefire's second phase and "the fulfillment of the requirements of the first phase."

Two teens killed in Gaza while searching for firewood

Also on Saturday, an Israeli strike killed two Palestinian teens in Gaza, according to hospital authorities. The boys, cousins aged 13 and 15, were searching for firewood, according to Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, which received the bodies. (AP)

Top General Zhang Youxia threatened Chinese Communist Party's leadership over military: PLA Daily

BEIJING, Jan 25: PLA Daily, the mouthpiece of the Chinese military, has accused top military official Zhang Youxia and senior General Liu Zhenli of threatening the Communist Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces as one of the reasons why they were placed under investigation.

They have severely fuelled political and corruption problems that threaten the Communist Party's absolute leadership over the armed forces and undermine the party's governance foundation, an editorial in People's Daily said on Sunday.

The two senior Chinese military officials were placed under investigation for serious violations of the ruling Communist Party's discipline and laws, the Defence Ministry here said on Saturday. The charge of threatening the party's absolute leadership is regarded as "very serious" as the Chinese military functioned under the command of the Communist Party of China (CPC), which exercises absolute control of the armed forces.

Ever since he took over the leadership in 2012, President Xi Jinping, 72, who also heads the party, the military besides the presidency has been emphasising that it is imperative for the military to function under the party leadership. The party holds the gun, he has been persistently reminding the military generals. Observers say the emphasis of party loyalty also means endorsing his absolute leadership as he has been declared as the core leader of the party and action against Zhang 75, came as Xi may regard the top general undermining his leadership.

Unlike the other generals, Zhang is the first-ranking Vice Chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall

high command of the Chinese military headed by Xi.

Zhang's position on the CMC makes him the highest-ranking uniformed officer in the Chinese military.

In the end, his fate is no different to the two defence ministers and eight other generals who were sacked since 2023 under his watch as he too was detained by the military corruption investigators on Monday, according to reports.

He was accused of corruption and of failing to rein in his close associates, family members and relatives and blamed for not flagging problems to the party leadership at the first instance, the charges against him said.

Foreign observers view the intensification and continuation of anti-graft and disciplinary crackdown against the top brass of the military as aimed at unsettling the higher echelons and keeping them on tenterhooks.

The PLA Daily editorial said the decision made by the CPC Central Committee to investigate Zhang and Liu has once again demonstrated the clear stance of the CPC Central Committee and the CMC that in the fight against corruption, no place is out of bounds, no ground is left unturned and no tolerance is allowed.

It shows the determination of the party to persevere in the fight against corruption and the firm stand that no matter who they are or what position they hold, anyone involved in corruption will be dealt with without leniency, it said.

The editorial carried by state-run Xinhua news agency hailed the investigation as a major outcome of the anti-corruption fight and an important demonstration of the determination and strength of the party

and the military, adding that it carries great significance for winning this tough, protracted and all-out battle in the military.

Zhang and Liu, as senior officials of the party and the military, have gravely betrayed the trust placed in them by the CPC Central Committee and the CMC, and seriously trampled on and undermined the system of ultimate responsibility resting with the CMC chairman, the PLA Daily says.

They have severely fuelled political and corruption problems that threaten the party's absolute leadership over the armed forces and undermine the party's governance foundation, according to the editorial. They have gravely tarnished the image and authority of the CMC leadership and severely damaged the political and ideological foundation of unity and progress among all military personnel, it said.

They have inflicted grave harm on efforts to strengthen political loyalty in the military, the military's political environment and overall combat readiness, posing a serious adverse impact on the party, the country and the military, it said. The investigation against Zhang and Liu will help the military undergo a thorough renewal, injecting powerful momentum into the development of a strong military, it said.

It has been well demonstrated that the more the military combats corruption, the stronger and purer it becomes, with greater combat capacity. The more thoroughly corruption is eradicated, the more confident and capable the armed forces will be in achieving the centenary goals of the PLA, says the editorial. (PTI)

New FBI-style UK police force to take over counter-terrorism, fraud investigations

LONDON, Jan 25: A new National Police Service made up of "world class talent" will be created to take over counter-terrorism, fraud and other serious gang violence investigations in the UK, Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said on Sunday.

The National Police Service (NPS), modelled on the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in the US, will be equipped with state-of-the-art technology to track down and catch dangerous criminals. The new nationwide force will bring the work of existing agencies, such as the National Crime Agency (NCA) and regional organised crime units, under one umbrella.

"The current policing model was built for a different century; some local forces lack the skills or resources they need to fight complex modern crime such as fraud, online child abuse or organised criminal gangs," said Mahmood, who will table the proposals in Parliament on Monday.

"We will create a new National Police Service — dubbed 'the British FBI' — deploying world-class talent and state-of-the-art technology to track down and catch dangerous criminals. In doing so, local forces will be able to spend more time fighting crime in their communities," she said.

The NPS will cover England and Wales but be able to operate in the wider United Kingdom including devolved Scotland, setting national standards and training. It will be led by a national Police Commissioner, who will become the most senior police chief in the country.

The announcement forms part of wider police reforms unveiled by the UK Home Office, including a reduction in the overall number of police forces in England and

Wales, with some merged to create bigger regional constabularies tackling complex crimes, such as murder, drugs and county lines gangs.

Meanwhile, counter-terror policing currently led by the Metropolitan Police, the National Air Service run by West Yorkshire Police and National Roads Policing will all be brought under the new NPS.

Intelligence and resources will be shared across different forces in stages to ensure the public receive the same level of security no matter where they live, the Home Office said.

In a joint article in 'The Telegraph', the heads of the NCA, Met Police, counter-terrorism, National Police Chiefs' Council and College of Policing backed the new national force to replace the "outdated" 43-force model in the face of growing complexity of organised crime.

They wrote: "Criminals do not respect local boundaries or national borders — yet too often our policing structures still do. The system [our officers] operate within is too messy and too complicated. Expertise is locked away in silos. "Technology systems do not speak to each other and frontline officers have to wade through complexity or battle with bureaucracy rather than focusing on protecting communities."

The Opposition Tories said the changes must not come at the expense of local and community policing. "Labour wants to strip through mega-forces after forcing 1,316 officers from the front line. More top-down reorganisation risks undermining efforts to catch criminals and it delivers no real improvement on the ground," said Chris Philp, shadow home secretary. (PTI)

Thousands of flights cancelled as major winter storm moves across the US

OKLAHOMA, CITY, Jan 25: Thousands of flights across the US set to take off over the weekend were cancelled as a monster storm started to wreak havoc Saturday across much of the country, knocking out power and snarling major roadways with dangerous ice.

Roughly 140 million people, or more than 40 per cent of the US population, were under a winter storm warning from New Mexico to New England. The National Weather Service forecast widespread heavy snow, sleet and freezing rain from Saturday to Monday, stretching from the southern Rocky Mountains to New England. It warned people to brace for a string of frigid days.

"The snow and the ice will be very, very slow to melt and won't be going away anytime soon, and that's going to hinder any recovery efforts," said Allison Santorelli, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

President Donald Trump had approved emergency declarations for at least a dozen states by Saturday with more expected to come. The Federal Emergency Management

Agency pre-positioned commodities, staff and search and rescue teams in numerous states, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said. "We just ask that everyone would be smart — stay home if possible," Noem said.

As crews in some southern states began working to restore downed power lines Saturday, officials in some eastern states issued final warnings to residents.

"We are expecting a storm the likes of which we haven't seen in years," New Jersey Gov Mike Sherrill said Saturday while announcing restrictions on commercial vehicle travel and a 35 mph (56 kph) speed limit on highways. She added: "It's a good weekend to stay indoors."

Power outages hit Louisiana and Texas

Forecasters say the damage, especially in areas pounded by ice, could rival that of a hurricane.

Around 120,000 power outages were reported in the path of the winter storm Saturday, including about 50,000 each in Texas and Louisiana, according to power-outage.us. In Shelby County,

Texas, near the Louisiana border, ice weighed down on pine trees and caused branches to snap, downing power lines. About a third of the county's 16,000 residents lost power on Saturday.

"We have hundreds of trees down and a lot of limbs in the road," Shelby County Commissioner Stevie Smith said from his pickup truck. "I've got my crew out clearing roads as fast as we can. It's a lot to deal with right now." There were reports of vehicles hitting fallen trees and trees falling onto houses in DeSoto Parish, Louisiana, said Mark Pierce, a spokesperson for the local sheriff's office. "We got limbs that are dragging the ground," Pierce said. "These trees are just completely saturated with ice."

Airplanes are grounded

About 13,000 flights were cancelled Saturday and Sunday across the US, according to the flight tracking website FlightAware.

All Saturday flights were cancelled at Will Rogers International Airport in Oklahoma City, and all Sunday morning flights also were cancelled off, as officials aimed to



restart service Sunday afternoon at Oklahoma's biggest airport.

Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, a major hub, saw more than 700 departing flights cancelled on Saturday and nearly as many arriving flights called off. Disruptions were also piling up at airports in Chicago, Atlanta, Nashville, and Charlotte, North Carolina. By late Saturday afternoon, nearly all departing flights scheduled to leave Ronald Reagan

Washington National Airport on Sunday had already been cancelled.

Bracing for the biggest ice storm in a decade

Officials in Georgia advised people in the state's northern regions to get off the roads by sundown Saturday and be prepared to stay put for at least 48 hours.

Will Lanxton, the senior state meteorologist, said Georgia could get "perhaps the biggest ice storm

we have expected in more than a decade" followed by unusually different ballgame than snow," Lanxton said. "Ice, you can't do anything with. You can't drive on it. It's much more likely to bring down power lines and trees."

Crews began treating highways with brine after midnight Saturday, with 1,800 workers on 12-hour shifts, Georgia Department of Transportation Commissioner Russell McMurry said.

"We're going to do what we can to keep the ice from sticking to the roads," McMurry said. "This is going to be a challenge."

After sweeping through the South, the storm was expected to move into the Northeast, dumping about 1 to 2 feet (30 to 60 centimetres) of snow from Washington through New York and Boston, the weather service predicted. "Please, if you can avoid it, do not drive, do not travel, do not do anything that can potentially place you or your loved ones in danger," New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani said Saturday. "Instead, I urge every New Yorker who can to put a

warm sweater on, turn on the TV, watch Mission Impossible' for the 10th time, above all to stay inside."

Frigid temperatures affect the Midwest and North

The Midwest saw windchills as low as minus 40 F (minus 40 C), meaning that frostbite could set in within 10 minutes. The minus 36 F (minus 38 C) reading in Rhinelander, Wisconsin, on Saturday morning was the coldest in almost 30 years. In Minneapolis, the worst of an extreme cold wave was over, but protesters calling for US Immigration and Customs Enforcement to leave Minnesota on Saturday still faced an outdoor temperature of minus 6 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 21 Celsius).

Weather forecasters said the winter storm was unusual.

"I think there are two parts of this storm that make it unique. One is just a broad expanse of spatial coverage of this event ... You've got 2,000 miles of country that's being impacted by the storm with snow, sleet, and freezing rain," said Chris Weisse, a meteorologist at NOAA's Weather Prediction Center. (AP)

Karbi Anglong education official Dr Hemari Kro honoured with special award

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Jan 25: Dr Hemari Kro, a prominent official in the Karbi Anglong education sector was conferred with a prestigious "Special Award" for his contributions to education and social work during the concluding ceremony of the 30th National Sports and Cultural Festival (NSCF) held at Kumar Bhaskar Natya Mandir, Guwahati, on January 24, 2026.

Dr Kro serves as the Head Assistant in the office of the Inspector of Schools (Karbi Anglong District Circle) and as Superintendent-in-charge for the Additional Director of Education under the KAAC. The award, jointly organised by the Assam Sports Association (ASA) and the Assam Socio-Cultural Association (ASCA), recognised his long-standing commitment to societal upliftment. Upon receiving the memento, citation and a traditional phulam gamocha, Dr Kro said, "This is a recognition of my long-term involvement in social activities. I pray for continued health to serve and uplift our society."

Earlier, on March 21, 2025, he had received the 'Samaj Sewak Prerona Award' from the Uttar Purvanchal Perona Samanyan Unnayan Charitable Trust for his outstanding social contributions. Known in Diphu for his punctuality



and professional sincerity, Dr Kro continues to balance administrative duties with extensive grassroots work.

The 30th NSCF, held from October 23, 2025, to January 24, 2026, commemorated the 111th birth anniversary of freedom fighter and actor Premoda Kanta Sarma, Northeast India's first

national sports gold medalist. The festival concluded by honouring distinguished personalities across fields including Education & Research, Medicine & Social Work, Journalism & Literature and National Defence, with Dr Kro among the select achievers recognised for their impact on the region's cultural and intellectual landscape.

Dr Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and Ideal Mother Tilottama Bordoloi Memorial Award to Bandita Dutta Bordoloi

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Jan 25: A solemn award presentation and felicitation ceremony was held at Dr Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Memorial Hall, Jorhat, under the joint initiative of the Jorhat District Sahitya Sabha and the Dr Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Memorial Preservation Committee.

The prestigious Dr Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and Ideal Mother Tilottama Bordoloi Memorial Award was conferred during the programme, which was conducted by Mahendranath Hazarika, president of the Jorhat District Sahitya Sabha. The ceremonial lamp was lit by Dr Binoy Kumar Bordoloi, elder son of Dr Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, while floral tributes were offered by vice president of the Sahitya Sabha, Madhab Mahanta.

Participating as chief guest, retired Professor of Political Science, Dibrugarh University, Prof Dr Adil-ul-Yasin highlighted the multifaceted life and lasting contributions of Dr Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, stating that his ideals would continue to inspire future generations. He also acknowledged the contributions of Dr Binoy Kumar Bordoloi in the fields of education, society, literature and healthcare in Assam.

The commemorative souvenir "Smritimalya" was formally released by Nirada Gogoi Bora, vice president of the All Assam Women Writers' Association. During the ceremony, eminent dancer and Director of



Nrityakanan, Bandita Dutta Bordoloi was honoured with the 2025 Dr Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and Ideal Mother Tilottama Bordoloi Memorial Award. She received a gamosa, seleng chador, xorai, books, citation, jaapi, bouquet and a cash award of Rs 40,000. Accepting the award, she expressed gratitude and said the honour would inspire her to further dedicate herself to the performing arts.

Marking the birth centenary of Dr Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, several individuals from diverse fields were felicitated for their contributions to society. On the occasion, multiple editions and translations of the book "Namghar in America" by Dr Binoy Kumar Bordoloi were also formally released.

Assam CM's goodwill gifts distributed to Journalists in Morigaon

HT Correspondent
MORIGAON, Jan 25: As a gesture of goodwill, Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma extended special gift hampers to 39 government-recognised print and electronic media journalists in Morigaon district. The distribution took place at the conference hall of the District Commissioner's Office, where District Commissioner Anamika Tewari formally handed over the gifts on behalf of the Chief Minister.

Addressing the gathering, the District Commissioner acknowledged the dedication and professionalism of journalists, even under challenging circumstances. She assured that issues such as minimum wages, health insurance, official procedures, loans and access to government welfare schemes would be taken up with higher authorities. Provisions for financial assistance from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund in cases of serious illness affecting journalists or their families were also promised. Discussions with the Labour Department regarding appointment letters and payslips for journalists were highlighted.

Journalists requested the arrangement of a goodwill exposure tour and Additional District Commissioner Anusuya Sharma encouraged them to continue offering constructive suggestions for public welfare. The programme was attended by Additional District Commissioner Rakesh Deka, Assistant Commissioners Santosh Buragohain and Jyotika Kumari, DIPRO Pompy Devi, journalists from across the district and officials of the district administration and Information and Public Relations Office.

Pathik organises free health camp for sr citizens on 77th Republic Day

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Jan 25: "A person does not become inactive and sick when older or retired. If you increase your mental and physical ability, disease cannot work easily. Health is the supreme resource," said Dr Amal Chandra Katakai, former Director of Dr B Barua Cancer Institute, during a free health check-up camp and awareness meeting for senior citizens, held to celebrate India's 77th Republic Day.

The 15th camp of the Sunday OPD was organised for senior citizens on Sunday, allowing participants to interact and exchange views with Dr Katakai. The camp, hosted by Pathik Director Victor Rajkumar and assisted by Hareswar Talukdar, Monalisa Mahanta and Rajalaxmi Rajashree, provided free health checks including weight, RBS, pulse and routine blood tests. Earlier Sunday OPD camps, conducted with Dr Ruby Katki (Dental Treatment), Dr Parashjyoti Bora (Diabetes), Dr Kamal Dev Goswami (General Medicine) and Dr Amal Chandra Katakai (Cancer and Gynaecology), served around 400 patients across 14 previous camps.

Kokrajhar district administration forms social media monitoring committee

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Jan 25: Following the restoration of internet services in the district after nearly six days, the Kokrajhar District Administration, under District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty, has constituted a Social Media Monitoring Committee. The move aims to promote responsible use of social media and ensure that accurate, verified information reaches the public.

The committee will continuously monitor digital platforms to identify and address content that is false, misleading, or likely to create confusion or anxiety among citizens. The initiative seeks to maintain peace, harmony and public confidence while fostering a safe and positive information environment.

The administration has urged residents to remain calm, exercise restraint and verify information before sharing it. It has also warned that individuals or groups found spreading rumours or unverified messages will face strict action under the law, as such acts can create unnecessary panic or disturb law and order.

Assam oppn parties approach CEO raising concern over 'neutrality' of electoral roll revision

GUWAHATI, Jan 25: Opposition parties in Assam on Sunday alleged gross anomalies in the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of electoral rolls ahead of Assembly polls and notices being served to genuine voters at the behest of the ruling BJP-led dispensation.

They raised objection to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's public statement, indicating that people of 'Miya' (Bengali-speaking Muslims) community would be harassed during the SR exercise and maintained that such a remark undermines the neutrality of the process.

The Congress, CPI (M), Rajior Dal and Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), in a joint memorandum to the state's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), sought his "immediate intervention and prompt action for ensuring free and fair exercise of SR in the state."

They claimed that "illegal, arbitrary and unlawful bulk objections were filed against genuine voters mainly on the ground of dead voters and permanently shifted voters", adding that in a large number of such cases the objectors have maintained that these were filed without their knowledge.

The opposition further claimed that notices are being served to the voters based on such bulk objections, in violation of rules and guidelines. They urged the CEO to summarily reject the bulk/illegal objections "without calling the persons for hearing and without harassing them", and take necessary action against the objectors who have filed these. They also sought

that reasonable time be given to the people for appearing in the hearing in case of any genuine objection filed. The opposition parties alleged that officials involved in the SR process have been deleting names from the electoral rolls suo moto, and asked the CEO to prevent it.

Referring to a statement by CM Sarma indicating that people of Miya community "would be subjected to harassment" during the SR process and would be deliberately issued notices, the opposition said, "Such a statement is arbitrary, mala fide and wholly unconstitutional, as it betrays a predetermined intent to target a specific community and undermines the neutrality of the electoral process". (PTI)

Cachar administration urges citizens to uphold flag code on Republic Day

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Jan 25: With the 77th Republic Day approaching, the Cachar District Administration has reiterated the provisions of the Flag Code of India and appealed to citizens to uphold the dignity and sanctity of the Indian National Flag during Republic Day celebrations across the district.

The administration emphasised that the Tricolour should be unfurled briskly from the top of the flagpole, with the saffron band uppermost and accorded a place of prominence without being overshadowed. The flag must be clean, intact and conform to the 3:2 length-to-width ratio. Following the 2022 amendment to the Flag Code, the National Flag may be flown both day and night if properly illuminated and displayed respectfully. Flags made of cotton, polyester, wool, silk, or khadi bunting are permitted if free from stains, tears, or fading.

Strict prohibitions include ensuring the flag never touches the ground, floor, or water; is not flown upside down or dipped in salute and is not used decoratively or commercially. While lapel pins are allowed, the flag must not be worn below the waist or draped over vehicles and platforms except in state or military funerals. Damaged flags should be retired privately, preferably by burning. Intentional disrespect or desecration is punishable under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971. As Cachar prepares for Republic Day ceremonies, cultural programmes and tributes to freedom fighters, the administration called upon citizens to view the unfurling of the Tricolour as a solemn reaffirmation of India's unity, integrity and ideals.

Swami Vivekanand University named 'Best Emerging University in Northeast'

HT Correspondent
GOSSAIGAON, Jan 25: Swami Vivekanand University, Kokrajhar, Assam, has achieved a significant milestone by being conferred the prestigious "Best Emerging University in North East" award by the Indian Achievers' Forum. The honour was presented during the International Seminar on Innovative Educational Practices held recently in New Delhi. The award was formally received by the Chancellor of the University, Dr Ajay Karma, on behalf of the institution. The recognition acknowledges the university's sustained efforts in delivering quality higher education, promoting in-

novation, encouraging skill-based learning, and aligning its academic programmes with the evolving needs of industry. It also highlights the growing role of Swami Vivekanand University in strengthening the higher education landscape of the North Eastern region.

Expressing gratitude on the occasion, the university leadership attributed the achievement to the collective dedication and hard work of its faculty members, students, staff and stakeholders, whose continued support has been instrumental in the institution's steady growth and progress.

Reiterating its vision for the fu-

ture, the university reaffirmed its commitment to enhancing academic excellence, fostering research and innovation and creating meaningful opportunities that empower students to succeed at regional, national and global levels.

Located in Kokrajhar, Assam, Swami Vivekanand University plays a vital role in reducing regional brain drain by offering contemporary, future-ready courses and nurturing local talent. The recognition further reinforces the university's mission to emerge as a leading centre of learning and a catalyst for positive transformation in higher education across the Northeast.

Tezpur Sahitya Sabha hosts lecture on Oriental Studies and Dhireswaracharya

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Jan 25: "Assam has a long and distinguished tradition of Prāchya Vidya (Oriental studies), a scholarly stream that has shaped the literature and culture of medieval Assam. The literary works and philosophical vision of the Vaishnavite saints were firmly rooted in this tradition," observed historian and litterateur Kanak Chandra Sharma, keynote speaker at the Tezpur Sahitya Sabha's monthly lecture series on 'Asomot Prachya Vidya Charcha Aru Dhireswaracharya' on Sunday. Sharma described Kaviratna Dhireswaracharya as one of modern Assam's foremost Oriental scholars, placing him alongside Anundoram Borooah and Krishna Kanta Handique.

Referring to the colonial period, Sharma noted that British administrators sought to educate Indians in English to alienate them from their own traditions, disparaging India's rich literary and cultural heritage. Institutions like the Asiatic Society, he said, played a key

role in preserving Oriental scholarship. He highlighted the need for a fresh critical evaluation of scholars like Dhireswaracharya, who pointed out errors even in the Sanskrit interpretations of figures such as Swami Vivekananda, to showcase Assamese literature nationally.

The programme, presided over by Tezpur Sahitya Sabha president Dhruba Jyoti Das and conducted by Mahendra Kumar Nath, included addresses by Dr Pal-lab Bhattacharya, senior public figure Mahendra Nath Keot, novelist Dr Bhupen Saikia and retired professor Dr Satish Chandra Bhattacharya, who detailed Dhireswaracharya's life and works. Prominent writers and intellectuals including Chidananda Goswami, Bipul Chandra Bhattacharya and Bhupen Kumar Sharma attended the lecture. Rupjyoti Sharma Borthakur and Sabha member Chiranjib Baruah donated valuable books to the Sabha library, receiving certificates of appreciation from Dhruba Jyoti Das and Kanak Chandra Sharma.

Joint Secretary visits Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institute in Biswanath

Inaugurates e-Library and reviews agricultural mechanisation initiatives

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, Jan 25: S Rukmani, Joint Secretary, Machinery and Technology Division, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, along with Deputy Commissioner C R Lohi and Agricultural Engineer S G Power, visited the North Eastern Region Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institute (NERFMTTI) at Biswanath Chariali from January 22 to 24 as part of a three-day official visit. On January 22, they held discussions with senior officials of the Assam Agriculture Department on schemes for agricultural mechanisation and farmer welfare. On January 23, the Joint Secretary, with ministry officers and NERFMTTI Director P Kamalabai, attended a

high-level meeting organised by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh. On January 24, she revisited the institute, reviewing the progress and implementation of various schemes with officers and staff.

During her visit, S Rukmani formally inaugurated the newly constructed "e-Library cum Computer Lab," the first of its kind among all Farm Machinery Training & Testing Institutes. She also inspected the laboratory for the newly introduced "Agricultural Drone" technology, obtained information on its use and offered suggestions to strengthen the institute, ensuring farmers in the North-East benefit from modern agricultural technologies. She departed for Delhi this morning after completing the visit.



Renowned folk singer Seema Das no more

HT Correspondent
GUWAHATI, Jan 25: Noted folk singer Seema Das, widely admired for her immense contribution to Kamrupi folk music, passed away on January 14. She was a retired teacher of Tinali Brindavati Das Girls' High School and a respected figure in Assam's cultural and academic circles.

A regular artiste of the Guwahati All India Radio Centre from 1982 to 2000, Seema Das was best known for her soulful renditions of Kamrupi and Goalpariya folk songs, through which she played a significant role in preserving and popularising Assam's rich folk traditions. Her musical journey was closely associated with reputed institutions such as Goalpara College and Gauhati University, where her contributions were highly valued.

Seema Das was the wife of late Nripendra Narayan Das, a retired officer of the Reserve Bank of India. She is survived by her two daughters, grandchildren and a large circle of relatives, students and admirers who cherished her artistry and gentle personality. Her son, noted artist Anal Jyoti Das, had predeceased her in a tragic accident.

Several organisations, including Tinali Brindavati Das Girls' High School and Aelita Art & Craft School, have expressed deep sorrow over her demise and paid rich tributes to her lasting legacy in the field of folk music and education. Her passing marks an irreparable loss to Assam's cultural heritage.

Unidentified man body found at Jagiroad

HT Correspondent
JAGIROAD, Jan 25: A body of an unidentified man was found lying at the end of platform number one at Jagiroad railway station on Sunday. Railway Police officer-in-charge Rajnikant Bharali said the victim was a 55-year-old man, approximately 5 feet 3 inches tall, wearing grey pants and a black and blue full shirt.

The victim's body was sent to Morigaon Civil Hospital for post-mortem, the Jagiroad railway police said.

Over 1,100 children rescued in 2025 by RPF of NFR

HT Correspondent
GUWAHATI, Jan 25: The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) continues to shoulder the vital responsibility of identifying and rescuing children in need of care and protection who are lost or separated from their families for various reasons at railway premises.

During the year 2025, the RPF rescued a total of 1,101 children, including 802 boys and 299 girls and handed them over to Child Welfare Committees (CWC) or reunited them with their parents for proper care and rehabilitation. Under Mission AAHT (Action against Human Trafficking), the RPF also rescued nine children and 80 adults, leading to the arrest of nine traffickers.

In a recent incident on January 21, 2026, the RPF at Guwahati, in coordination with CPDS and CIB teams, rescued two runaway minor boys at Guwahati Railway Station. Both minors were safely handed over to Child Line, Guwahati, for care, protection and rehabilitation. On the same day, the RPF team at Kamakhya Railway Station rescued one runaway minor girl, who was subsequently handed over to Child Line, Guwahati, for safe custody and further rehabilitation.

The RPF of Northeast Frontier Railway reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring the safety and protection of vulnerable children at railway premises. The force remains actively engaged across the zone in preventing human trafficking and in maintaining a safe and secure railway environment for all passengers.

Grand cultural procession marks 14th Sonitpur AASU conference

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Jan 25: The 14th conference of the Sonitpur District AASU was held with enthusiasm and dignity in the historic martyr city of Dhekiajuli on Sunday. The programme commenced with the hoisting of the All Assam Student Union (AASU) flag, followed by floral tributes to the martyrs. After the inaugural rituals, a grand and colourful cultural procession was taken out across the town, highlighting Dhekiajuli's legacy as a prominent martyr city of the Indian freedom movement, with tableaux and performances depicting the sacrifices of its brave sons and daughters.

Students from various schools participated actively, spreading strong social awareness messages such as "Stop Child Marriage" and "Stop Witch-Hunting." Vivekananda Sister Nivedita School presented a special tribute to the late singer and cultural icon Zubeen Garg, which received wide appreciation from the public. The procession also showcased Assam's rich cultural diversity through traditional performances including Gayan-Bayan, Bihu, Bagurumba, Jhumur and other folk art forms representing different communities.

The event was attended by AASU Central president Utpal Sharma, popular actor Nayan Nilim, AASU Central Committee vice president Nitul Bora, Sonitpur District president Abhijit Nath, general secretary Arup Talukdar and District Education Secretary Shankar Das, among others. Several units of the students' organisation, including the Dhekiajuli Unit, along with various local organisations and schools of the area, also took part in the procession.

Army Public School Jorhat celebrates annual day with tribute to 'Operation Sindoor'

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Jan 25: The annual day celebrations of Army Public School Jorhat were held at the Rhino Auditorium, 41 Sub Area, here on Saturday, marked by the depiction of "Operation Sindoor" through a musical presentation titled Samarpan - A Line of Love, A Life of Valour. A statement by the school stated that the function was graced by Brigadier Yusuf Saify, Dy GOC 41 Sub Area, as the chief guest, and Farida Saify, Vice-Chairperson, Family Welfare Organisation, as the guest of honour.

NATIONAL VOTER'S DAY

Shun allurements, prejudice, employ wisdom while casting votes: President Murmu

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday said she hoped that Indians would exercise their right to vote by employing wisdom and shunning allurements, prejudice and misinformation to strengthen the country's electoral system.

She also lauded women voters for coming out in large numbers to exercise their franchise during elections.

Addressing a 16th National Voters' Day event held here, Murmu asserted that while the right to vote is important, it is also imperative that all citizens exercise it by keeping in mind their constitutional duties. For the last 16 years, the foundation day of the Election Commission (EC) has been celebrated as the National Voters' Day.

On November 26, 1949, when the Constituent Assembly adopted the Indian Constitution, 16 of its articles came into force immediately, including one that pertained to the creation of the EC.

The EC came into existence on January 25, 1950, a day before India became a republic.

The remaining part of the Constitution came into force on January 26, 1950.

Addressing the gathering, the president said the strength of India's democracy lies not only in the sheer size of its voters but also in the depth of its democratic spirit.

Even the oldest voters, divyang (differently-abled) voters and those living in remote areas exercise their franchise, she pointed out.

Murmu said public participation gives a practical shape to the spirit of democracy at the grassroots level. She noted that the EC has made numerous efforts with the objective of ensuring that "no voter is left behind".

The president said voting is not merely a political expression, it is a reflection of the citizens' faith in the democratic process of elections. It is also a means for citizens to express their aspirations.

The right to vote, available to all adult citizens without discrimination, gives a concrete expression to the constitutional ideals of political and social justice and equality, Murmu said.

The "One Person, One Vote" principle enshrined in the Constitution was a result of the Constitution makers' firm faith in the wisdom of the common people, she underlined.

Separately, Vice President C P Radhakrishnan said over the last 75 years, India's electoral journey has been a remarkable testament to the strength, resilience and inclusiveness of its democracy, upholding the values enshrined in the Constitution.

In a post on X, Radhakrishnan said by exercising the right to vote



with responsibility and awareness, citizens contribute to inclusive and credible democratic processes.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged people to take part in democratic processes, saying being a voter is not just a constitutional privilege, but an important duty that gives every citizen a voice in shaping the country's future.

"Greetings on National Voters' Day. This day is about further deepening our faith in the democratic values of our nation," Modi said in a post on X.

"Being a voter is not just a constitutional privilege, but an important duty that gives every citizen a voice in shaping India's future," he added. "Let us honour the spirit of

our democracy by always taking part in democratic processes, thereby strengthening the foundations of a Viksit Bharat," the prime minister said.

Addressing the voters' day gathering, Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal said

NVD is not just an annual event but an occasion to hold "dialogue with the soul of India's democracy". He said the principle of "One Person, One Vote, One Value (of every vote)" is the gift of B R Ambedkar.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar said all democracies worldwide recognise that a clean electoral roll is the corner-

stone of a strong democracy.

According to the Constitution and the law, only those who are 18 years of age or older, who ordinarily reside in a constituency and who are citizens of India are eligible to register in the electoral roll of that constituency, he said.

"To fulfil this fundamental objective, the EC has launched a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) to ensure that no eligible voter is left out and no ineligible person is included in the electoral rolls," the CEC said.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge claimed that in recent times, institutions like the EC have faced sustained pressure and therefore, it is "our responsibility" to protect their independence, so that democracy does not merely survive, but truly thrives.

He said snatching the "Right to Vote" through "vote chori" (vote theft) and an unplanned SIR tarnishes India's long-cherished democracy.

In a post on X, Kharge said the National Voters' Day is a powerful reminder that a country's future belongs to its people and that their collective voice can shape their shared destiny. "The people of India deserve free, fair and fearless elections, where clean electoral rolls and level-playing field is the primary requisite," the Congress chief said. (PTI)

2026 polls not just election, but democratic battle: Vijay



MAMALLAPURAM (TAMIL NADU) Jan 25: TVK chief Vijay on Sunday characterised the upcoming Tamil Nadu Assembly elections as a high-stakes "democratic battle" rather than a mere electoral contest, asserting his party's unique position to challenge established political powers.

"What is going to happen now is not just an election; it is a democratic battle. You are the commanders who are going to lead this democratic battle," Vijay told a gathering of Tamilaga Vetti Kazhagam (TVK) cadres here.

The actor-turned-politician declared that only TVK has the guts and attitude to take on the "evil force" that is ruling right now and the "corrupt force" that has previously governed the state—obvious references to the ruling DMK and the AIADMK, respectively.

"Whether it is this evil force or that corrupt force, both should not rule Tamil Nadu. Only we have the guts and the attitude to truly and boldly oppose such parties," said Vijay.

He also emphasised the core mission of his political entry, stating, "we are here to save the people and protect the soil from anyone who intends to cause harm".

Claiming that the support to his party transcends traditional political affiliations, and that he is viewed as a family member in homes across the state, the top star committed to a high standard of political integrity, maintaining that "we will never compromise our politics for anyone or anything".

"I will not commit corruption like those before or those here now. I will not touch even a single paisa. Not even a drop of a corruption stain will occur," Vijay vowed.

He also dismissed rumours of political pressure or surrendering

to national parties. He alleged that previous administrations were "slaves to the BJP" and claimed the current DMK government had "surrendered indirectly" while maintaining a "facade" through attractive announcements.

But he acknowledged that cleaning the system is a process, and requires a leader who does not desire personal gain.

"You might ask, Is this a movie? Is this the film Mudhalvan (where the protagonist becomes CM for a day). Will he come and clean everything in one day. Practically, that is not possible. It is a process," the actor-politician said.

The TVK leader invoked the legacy of freedom fighter Rani Velu Nachiyar and her commanders to inspire his cadres.

Labeling his party workers as "front-line warriors" and "commanders," Vijay noted that while rivals underestimate his strength, the people have already decided to give him a clear mandate.

While claiming that for other parties, a booth is just a place to cast a vote -- and sometimes to "steal" votes -- he asserted that for his party, booths are "halls of democracy".

"We must ensure democracy isn't stolen there. We must protect every vote", Vijay said, urging his party cadres to stay vigilant in the coming months.

Further, he said "the TVK army is so gutsy that it can win even if it stands alone, in the absence of a friendly force," in an apparent reference to alliance.

He also took oath along with his cadres to work "truthfully, solemnly, and firmly" to reclaim Tamil Nadu in the 2026 elections. At the meeting, he unveiled his party's symbol "whistle," and also played it, with enthusiastic party workers joining and cheering him. (PTI)

Tejashwi named RJD working president



PATNA, Jan 25: RJD chief Lalu Prasad's younger son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav was on Sunday named the working president of the party at its national executive meeting here.

Yadav's elevation comes after the RJD's drubbing in the recent assembly polls, which the "Mahagathbandhan" had fought with the 36-year-old leader as its chief ministerial candidate. In a post on X, the Rashtriya Janata Dal said the decision, which makes clear the line of succession in the party, was taken at its national executive meeting, which was attended by Yadav, Prasad and other senior leaders.

Yadav's eldest sister and Patliputra MP Misa Bharti, who was said to be eyeing that party post, was also present at the meeting. Tejashwi, a former deputy chief minister of Bihar, is currently the leader of the opposition in the assembly. He had, on Saturday, appeared confident of his elevation in the party, as he had told workers at the RJD office that he was thinking of revamping the party structure from the booth level.

Yadav and his close aides, like Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Yadav, were squarely blamed for the poll debacle by his elder sister Rohini Acharya, who also alleged that when she insisted that accountability be fixed, abuses were hurled at her.

Yadav's elder brother Tej Pratap Yadav, who had made his political debut along with the former in 2015, was expelled from the party by Prasad last year, understandably at the insistence of the image-conscious younger sibling. Tej Pratap has since floated his own outfit, Janshakti Janta Dal, which is yet to make an impact. (PTI)

75 Maharashtra cops get President's medals; 31 from Gadchiroli for gallantry against Naxals

MUMBAI, Jan 25: A total of 75 Maharashtra police personnel have been bestowed with medals on the occasion of Republic Day, including 31 from Gadchiroli for gallantry in the fight against Naxalism, an official said on Sunday.

The Union Home Ministry has released a list of 982 personnel from the police and fire as well as home guard and civil defence units across the country who have been selected for gallantry and service medals, a traditional practice ahead of Republic Day. The list also includes 101 President's Medal for Distinguished Service (PSM) and 756 Medal for Meritorious Service (MSM) to the officers and personnel.

The 31 personnel from Gadchiroli police include naik constable Bitaji Veladi and constable Kare Irpa Atram, who laid down their lives in the fight against Left Wing Extremism, the official said.

Constable Mohan Lachhu Usendi (1st Bar to GM), assistant inspector Amol Phadtare, assis-



tant sub inspector Wasudeo Madavi, Madhukar Naitam, police naik Santosh Naitam and Vishwanath Sadmek are among other gallantry medal awardees, he added.

"Additional Commissioner of Police Mahesh Patil, DCP Balkrishna Yadav, ACP Cyrus Boman Irani and Vitthal Kubade have been awarded the President's Medal for Distinguished Service. DCP Yadav of Mumbai police has been a key person in implementing CCTV

surveillance, and Dial 100/112 Projects. He was also responsible for implementing Radio Trunking System, Tactical Communication for the police's Quick Response Team and the Force One commando unit," the official said.

Inspector Generals of Police Rajiv Jain, Sudhir Hiremath, Superintendent of Police Sheela Sail, part of the Anti Terrorism Squad (ATS), Superintendent of Police Mohan Dahikar posted in Sindhudurg district, DCP (Cyber) Puroshottam Karam, ACP Mahesh Tawade, Neelam Waval, Additional SP Kiran Patil are among the 40 officials awarded for meritorious service. As per the Union Home Ministry, a bravery medal is awarded to a person on grounds of rare conspicuous act of gallantry, and conspicuous act of gallantry in saving life and property, or in preventing crime or arresting criminals, the risk incurred being estimated with due regard to the obligations and duties of the officer concerned.(PTI)

BJP asks Sonia Gandhi to clarify meeting with prime accused in Sabarimala gold loss case

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Jan 25: Kerala BJP president Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Sunday said that Congress leader Sonia Gandhi should reveal the agenda behind her meeting with Unnikrishnan Potty, the prime accused in the Sabarimala gold loss case.

Addressing a press conference here, Chandrasekhar displayed a photograph showing Sonia Gandhi with Potty and questioned the purpose of the meeting.

He alleged that the meeting took place when Sonia Gandhi was the Congress president and Oommen Chandy was the Chief Minister of Kerala.

"Sonia Gandhi and the Congress should explain what the agenda behind the meeting was," he asked.

Chandrasekhar also alleged that Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had held a similar meeting with Potty, but no clear explanation has been given so far.

He claimed that while the Congress projects organisations such as the Indian Union Muslim League and Jamaat-e-Islami as secular, it also held meetings in Delhi with a person accused of stealing gold from Sabarimala.

"What is the relationship between Sonia Gandhi, the Congress and Potty? We have been saying from the beginning that gold theft has been happening for the past 15 years. The photograph of Sonia Gandhi meeting Potty is clear evidence of this," he alleged.

He further alleged that not only Vijayan, but also

Sonia Gandhi and the Congress, had promoted Potty. Chandrasekhar accused the chief minister of violating the norms by appointing a former Upa Lok Ayukta as Ombudsman for local self-government institutions.

He said the appointment of former Justice Babu Mathew P Joseph as Ombudsman violated Section 5(3) of the Kerala Lok Ayukta Act, 1999, which bars a former Lok Ayukta or Upa Lok Ayukta from holding any subsequent office of profit under the government.

He said a representation was submitted in this regard to Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Saturday.

Chandrasekhar also alleged that the Governor's speech in the Assembly was replaced in official records with a different version by the CM.

"What is happening here? Is there no system? Has the Constitution been forgotten," he asked.

He said whatever the Governor speaks should be included in the Assembly records and replacing it with a paragraph reflecting the government's interests was wrong.

Chandrasekhar said that CPI(M) MPs speak about protecting the Constitution while such actions are taking place. "For the first time in India, a practice of amending the Governor's speech has occurred," he claimed. (PTI)

Veteran journalist Mark Tully passes away in Delhi at 90

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: Veteran journalist Mark Tully, a chronicler of India and an acclaimed author, passed away at a private hospital here on Sunday after suffering multi-organ failure, hospital authorities said. He was 90.

The award-winning journalist was ailing for some time and had been admitted to the Max Hospital at Saket in south Delhi on January 21, under the head of the nephrology department, a hospital source told PTI.

In a statement, the hospital said, "Max Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, confers with deep sadness the passing of Mr William Mark Tully on January 25, 2026, at 2:35 pm. The cause of death was multi-organ failure following a stroke.

"Our thoughts and heartfelt condolences are with his family, loved ones, and all those affected by his passing," Satish Jacob, veteran journalist and a close friend of Tully, told PTI. "Mark passed away at Max Hospital Saket this afternoon."

Born in Calcutta (now Kolkata) on October 24, 1935, Tully was the chief of bureau for the BBC, New Delhi, for 22 years. An acclaimed author, Tully was

the presenter of the BBC Radio 4 programme 'Something Understood'.

He was also part of several documentaries on subjects ranging from India and the British Raj to the Indian Railways. Tully was knighted in 2002 and received the Padma Bhushan from the government of India in 2005.

He wrote several books on India, including 'No Full Stops in India', 'India in Slow Motion', and 'The Heart of India'. Tully's work with the BBC was underlined by his coverage of some historic episodes in post-Independence Indian history.

The major events included the Bangladesh war of 1971 to the Emergency of 1975-77, the execution of former Pakistan president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1979, Operation Blue Star, the assassination of Indira Gandhi and the anti-Sikh riots in 1984, the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991, and the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992.

Operation Blue Star and the Punjab problem were the subjects of Tully's first book, 'Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle' (1985), co-written with Satish Jacob. (PTI)

Ex-bus conductor among 45 awarded Padma Shri in 'unsung heroes' category Anke Gowda set up the world's largest free-access library 'Pustak Mane'

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: A former bus conductor who set up the world's largest free-access library, a paediatrician who formed Asia's first human milk bank, and a 90-year old rare musical instrument player were among 45 individuals from across India chosen for the Padma Shri award in the 'unsung heroes' category on the occasion of Republic Day, sources said on Sunday.

Anke Gowda, once a bus conductor, set up the world's largest free-access library, 'Pustak Mane', comprising more than two million books in 20 languages along with rare manuscripts.

The 75-year-old bibliophile from Haralhalli village near Mysuru in Karnataka has been chosen for the Padma Shri for his unique effort to empower learners across India.

Joining him will be Armida Ferdnandes, the Mumbai-based paediatrician who set up Asia's first human milk bank, improving the survival prospects of infants. Bunde war art trainer Bhagwandas Raikwar from Madhya Pradesh, Bhikya Ladakya Dhinda, a 90-year old tribal Tarpa player – a musical instrument made of bottle gourd and bamboo – from Maharashtra, and distinguished social worker from Jammu and Kashmir, Brij Lal Bhat, among others.

Continuing with the principle of celebrating ordinary Indians making extraordinary contributions, this year's Padma awards recognise a wide spectrum of unsung heroes from across the length and breadth of India, the sources said.

From preserving indigenous heritage and promoting national integration in the border states to promoting tribal languages and indigenous martial arts, dying arts and weaves to safeguarding the nation's ecological wealth and cham-



pioning 'swachta' – this set of awardees truly epitomises everyday Indians silently going about their everyday lives, in service of the country, they said.

The list also includes Budri Thati, who set up schools in the Naxal-affected areas of Chhattisgarh; Charan Hembram, a Santhali author-composer from Odisha;

personal hardships and tragedies to not just excel in their chosen fields, but go further on to serve society at large, the sources said.

These include individuals from marginalised and Dalit communities, primitive tribes and those from remote and difficult terrains, they said.

These are people who have dedicated their entire lifetimes in service of the disabled, women, children, Dalits and tribals – working to promote healthcare, education, livelihood, sanitation, sustainability, etc.

Puducherry's K Pajanivel has been awarded the Padma Shri for nurturing Silambam, an ancient Tamil weapon-based martial art, while senior journalist Kailash Chandra Pant, who has been working for over 60 years to propagate Hindi across India, has been awarded in the literature and education category. (PTI)

Jaishankar hosts US lawmakers: Security and economy top agenda

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday discussed with a three-member American Congressional delegation various aspects of India-US relations, including trade and security, against the backdrop of continuing strain in ties between the two countries.

US Ambassador Sergio Gor, who was also present at the meeting, said the talks were "productive" and that the focus was on strengthening the bilateral partnership in the domains of security, trade and critical technologies. The visit of the US Congressional delegation to India, comprising Jimmy Patronis, Mike Rogers and Adam Smith, came as both sides are looking to move forward in the negotiations for a bilateral trade deal.

In a social media post, Jaishankar described the meeting as a "good interaction". "Discussed various aspects of India-US ties, Indo Pacific and Ukraine conflict. Congressional interactions have always been an important facet of our relationship," he said.

On his part, Gor said on X: "Just wrapped a productive meeting with EAM @DrSJaishankar, @RepMikeRogersAL, @RepAdamSmith, and @JimmyPatronis on ways to strengthen US-India partnership for stronger security, expanded trade, and cooperation on critical technologies."

The India-US ties witnessed a major downturn after President Donald Trump slapped a whopping 50-per cent tariff on Indian goods, including a 25-per cent punitive levy over Russian oil purchases. Both sides have held multiple rounds of negotiations last year to firm up the proposed bilateral trade deal. However, it could not be sealed yet largely in view of Washington's demands to open up India's farm and dairy sectors. Apart from the tariffs, the relations came under strain on a number of other issues, including Trump's claim of ending the India-Pakistan conflict in May last year and Washington's new immigration policy. (PTI)

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Guv extends greetings on State Foundation Day, lauds contributions of UP community to Arunachal Lok Bhavan celebrates Uttar Pradesh Diwas in Itanagar

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 25: Arunachal Pradesh Lok Bhavan celebrated Uttar Pradesh Diwas with the people of Uttar Pradesh residing in the State at Lok Bhavan, Itanagar on 24 January, truly reflecting the spirit of 'EK Bharat Shreshtha Bharat'. The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), along with the First Lady of the State, Anagha Parnaik, graced the occasion and participated in the programme, adding warmth and dignity to the celebration.

The Governor extended State Foundation Day greetings and conveyed his good wishes to the people of Uttar Pradesh, especially those living and working in Arunachal Pradesh across various professions and business sectors. On behalf of the people of Arunachal Pradesh, he also expressed his deep appreciation and gratitude for their valuable contributions to the State's growth, development and social fabric.

Reflecting on the rich legacy of Uttar Pradesh, the Governor highlighted the State's profound contributions through its cultural heritage, artistic traditions and revolutionary spirit, which played a pivotal role in India's freedom struggle. He said that today Uttar Pradesh stands as a dynamic centre of development under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, emerging as a major hub of information technology, a cradle of spirituality and one of the most sought-after destinations for pilgrims and visitors alike, symbolising India's journey of progress rooted in tradition.

Commending the enthusiastic participation of the people of Uttar Pradesh and the local community, the Governor observed that such celebrations, envisioned by Prime Minister



Narendra Modi, are playing a vital role in strengthening the spirit of unity, oneness and national integration. He said these shared platforms bring people closer, deepen mutual understanding and reinforce the idea that despite diverse cultures and traditions, the nation stands united as one family.

The celebration unfolded as a joyful confluence of cultures, beautifully reflecting India's unity in diversity and nurturing a spirit of shared belonging and harmony. Cultural performances added vibrancy to the occasion, with members of the Uttar Pradesh community presenting traditional items, while Arunachali children delighted the audience with graceful folk dances of Uttar Pradesh, symbolising cultural exchange and mutual respect. The highlights of the programme included a deeply moving pa-

triotic dance by the special children of K Blooming, a soulful poem recital by Shashwat Maurya, an engaging solo folk dance by Akshita and an elegant Kathak performance by Techi Ajum, a student of Nrityangan Dance and Music Academy, Itanagar. The programme was further enriched by energetic patriotic and Bhojpur dances presented by the students of Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, Chimpu and a devotional Kirtan by Sachindir Kr Maharaj and team, which added a spiritual resonance to the evening.

The students of Holy Cross Higher Secondary School, Itanagar, attended the programme as special guests of the Governor. The Governor and the First Lady later interacted warmly with the students over a high tea, making the occasion even more memorable and special for the young participants.

Capital DC appeals public to join Republic Day celebrations at IG Park

Elaborate arrangements in place for January 26 celebrations in Itanagar

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 25: The Itanagar Capital Complex Deputy Commissioner Toko Babu on Saturday appealed to the citizens of the Capital Complex to visit IG Park and become a part of the 77th Republic Day celebration on January 26, describing the occasion as a very special day for the country.

Speaking to the media, Capital DC Toko Babu said that January 26, being the Republic Day of India, holds great significance for every citizen. He informed that all preparations are at the final and finishing stage, with each department assigned specific responsibilities. Officers of various departments are engaged in their respective duties, which are expected to be completed by the evening of January 25.

The Deputy Commissioner said that the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), will be the chief guest for the celebration. The Governor will unfurl the National Flag at IG Park, address the people of the State and inspect the ceremonial parade. The parade will feature uniformed contingents including NCC, Scouts and Guides, school students and other groups, with a total of around 26 parade contingents. A special contingent of achievers in sports will also participate, represented by Mount Everest summiteer Tagit Sorang. He further informed that cultural programmes will be presented by 14 cultural troupes from various districts of the State, showcasing the rich cultural diversity of Arunachal Pradesh. The State awards will also be announced on the same day at the venue by the Chief Secretary.

The DC said that the final dress rehearsal was conducted on Saturday and was witnessed by top police officers of the State, including the Director General of Police and Inspectors General of Police. He added that the police department has been directed to deploy sufficient manpower at all locations to ensure foolproof security and adequate security personnel will be in place during the celebrations.



Regarding traffic movement, the Deputy Commissioner said that a traffic advisory has been issued to ensure smooth movement of vehicles in Itanagar city. Visitors coming to IG Park on foot may enter through the C Sector gate, while private and government vehicles with valid entry permits and vehicle passes can enter through the D Sector gate. VVIPs and VIPs will enter the venue through the Niti Vihar gate.

He also informed that an exhibition stall has been set up as the country is commemorating 150 years of 'Vande Mataram'. The Government of India has decided to observe the 150 years of 'Vande Mataram' across the country from November 7, 2025, to November 7, 2026 and the ongoing celebrations mark the second phase of the commemoration.

Apart from the general public, invitations have been issued to more than 4,000 invitees and it is expected that a large number of people will attend and witness the national festival celebration at IG Park.

Appealing to visitors and invitees, the Capital DC requested everyone to strictly adhere to the advisory and guidelines to ensure safety and security without any hindrance or obstruction. He said that prohibitory orders have already been issued through various media platforms and newspapers and urged people not to carry any objectionable items or weapons during the celebration in and around the IG Park area.

KGBV student leads Women Police Station Pasighat on National Girl Child Day

HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, Jan 25: In observance of National Girl Child Day, the East Siang District Police undertook a special initiative aimed at promoting leadership, confidence and empowerment among the girl child.

As part of the programme, Yapi Pujan, a Class IX student of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), Saw Mill, Pasighat, was symbolically designated as the Officer-in-Charge of the Women Police Station (WPS), Pasighat, for a day.

During her symbolic tenure, Yapi Pujan was provided practical exposure to policing responsibilities. She patrolled the town, visited JE Examination Centres, interacted with members of the public to hear their grievances and received briefings from police personnel to gain an understanding of the day-to-day functioning of the Women Police Station. She was guided throughout the programme by the regular Officer-in-Charge and other senior police officers.

The initiative was purely symbolic and educational in nature and was designed to inspire young girls by familiarising them with leadership roles and the functioning of the police system in a safe and supportive environment. The experience proved to be a memorable and empowering one for the student, leaving a lasting impression and reinforcing the message of confidence, capability and aspiration among young girls.

Poppy cultivation on 8 acres destroyed

ITANAGAR, Jan 25: Security forces have destroyed poppy cultivation on eight acres of land in Arunachal Pradesh's Longding district, police said on Sunday. Longding Superintendent of Police (SP) Dekio Gumja said that the plantations were destroyed at Votnu and Khasa villages near the India-Myanmar border. The drive, which was undertaken on Friday, was overseen by Pangchau circle executive magistrate. The work

was carried out smoothly after proper survey, negotiating tough terrain and taking into confidence the village authorities, he said. The team used drones for surveillance and aerial surveys. The SP said no case has been registered against the growers as they were ignorant of the illegality of poppy cultivation. He said the villagers will have to be sensitised about the ills of drugs and given awareness on alternative or sustainable agriculture practices. (PTI)

Tripura BJP mandal president suspended

AGARTALA, Jan 25: A BJP mandal president in Tripura has been placed under suspension for his alleged involvement in criminal activities, the party said in a statement on Sunday.

The action follows a day after Rajib Saha, president of Barjala BJP mandal (Assembly) committee, was arrested by police for assaulting a security guard of a judicial officer at Patnagar in West Tripura district on Saturday.

"As per the direction of state BJP president Rajib Bhattacharjee, president of Barjala mandal committee, Rajib Saha is placed under suspension with immediate effect for his alleged involvement and arrest by police on January 24, in connection with criminal activities", party general secretary Amit Rakshit said in a press release. (PTI)

LPG cylinder-laden truck meets with fatal accident in Kra Daadi

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 25: A tragic road accident occurred in Kra Daadi district on Friday evening when a truck carrying LPG cylinders met with a fatal mishap, resulting in the instantaneous death of the driver at the spot.

According to Kra Daadi Superintendent of Police Sepraj Perme, the truck loaded with LPG cylinders was en route from Naharlagun to Koloriang in Kurung Kumey district when the accident occurred at around 5.30 PM. He said the vehicle was proceeding towards

Koloriang when it met with the accident, leading to the death of the driver on the spot.

As per preliminary information, the truck had been stopped between Shakti and Palin at Papey area, around 9 km from Palin headquarters, to cool down the brakes. Stones were placed behind the tyres as a safety measure while the crew stepped aside to allow the brakes to cool.

The handyman of the vehicle, who survived the incident, stated that the truck suddenly started moving downhill towards a cul-

vert. The driver attempted to stop and control the vehicle to prevent it from falling but was crushed in the process, resulting in his death on the spot. The handyman managed to escape and did not sustain any serious injuries.

Police personnel later reached the spot and the matter is currently under investigation. The deceased driver of the truck bearing registration number AS-25 DC-7159 has been identified as Tapan Kumar Deka, while his assistant (handyman) was reported to be safe and unhurt.

Tripura CM exhorts TMP to reach out voters with 'report card instead fueling communal sentiments'

AGARTALA, Jan 25: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday exhorted BJP's ally Tipra Motha Party (TMP) to reach out to the voters with its "report card instead of fueling communal sentiments".

While the BJP is ruling the northeastern state and has the support of TMP and the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura (IPFT), the TMP is governing the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACD).

Addressing a gathering at a 'Mann Ki Baat' event at Bishramganj in Sepahijala district, the chief minister said, "Many people don't understand the real strength of the BJP, which has guardians like Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah."

"We made attempts to ensure the return of those involved in underground activities to the mainstream, but it seems they haven't changed their minds and language yet. Too much cleverness is not good," he said, ostensibly targeting rebel-turned-TMP MLA Ranjit Debbarma. Debbarma, who had once led the outlawed All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), had called for a statewide bandh in the name of Tripura Civil Society, which turned into a bloody clash at Santirbazar in Dhalai district last year.

"The people of the state know your past. The government will not tolerate road blockades in the name of agitation. Any unlawful activity will be dealt with strongly," he said.

Recently, the Tripura Civil Society, led by Debbarma, had blocked the roads at Bishramganj in Sepahijala district for several hours in protest against the government's move to form the



Bishramganj Nagar Panchayat.

Saha exhorted its ally, TMP, to go to the voters with a report card (in the run up to the tribal council's elections) instead of "fomenting communal sentiment". The present council's tenure is scheduled to expire on April 28 this year.

"Those attacking the BJP workers, blocking roads and staging protests should go to the voters with the report card or what you have done for the people. We know you have done nothing for the people. Stop fueling communal tension on falsehood," he said. (PTI)

Democracy deeply rooted in Nagaland's social fabric: Official

KOHHIMA, Jan 25: Democracy is deeply rooted in the social fabric of Nagaland, where decisions are traditionally taken through dialogue and consensus, state Home Department's Principal Secretary Abhijit Sinha said on Sunday.

Addressing the state-level programme on the 16th National Voters' Day (NVD), he said the day serves as a reminder for citizens to renew their commitment to democracy.

He cautioned against decision-making imposed by a few, stressing that democratic governance must reflect collective thinking.

"In a true democracy, everyone has a voice and decisions should emerge from discussion and consensus," he said.

Sinha said faith in democracy must be translated into practice through voting.

Congratulating newly enrolled voters, he urged them to exercise their franchise in every election and motivate others who feel their vote does not matter.

He said ballots should be cast without fear, inducement or pressure, warning against influences based on money, religion, tribe, community or region.

Chief Electoral Officer Bhagyashree Banayat said National Voters' Day reaffirms India's commitment to constitutional values of justice, liberty and equality. Referring to this year's theme, "My India, My Vote", she said democracy flourishes through the active and informed participation of citizens. (PTI)

Bhalla calls for empowering Nagaland rural communities with skills

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Jan 25: Nagaland Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Sunday said empowering rural communities in the state with skills, markets, and modern infrastructure remains a key priority.

In his message on Republic Day eve, Bhalla stressed the transformation of the villages through rural development.

Greeting the people on the occasion, he said Republic Day is not merely a celebration of the past, but it is a reaffirmation of the collective commitment to the ideals that define our nation.

He said this year's celebrations resonate deeply with two powerful national themes "Vande Mataram", marking the 150th anniversary of our national song, and "Atmanirbhar Bharat", reflecting our resolve for a self-reliant, prosperous, and technologically empowered India.

Bhalla said Nagaland, blessed with rich biodiversity and pristine



landscapes, has a vital role to play in preserving ecological balance while pursuing development that is both people-centric and environment-friendly.

He pointed out that digital connectivity is opening new pathways

we strengthen education, skill development, and opportunities for women, we strengthen the nation itself," he said.

Bhalla also stressed that it is everybody's collective duty to nurture the talents of the youth of the state and provide them platforms to realise their full potential.

He said Nagaland's unique traditions, customary laws, and cultural heritage blend seamlessly with the constitutional framework of India, strengthening the fabric of our federal democracy.

Bhalla said the state's diversity is not a challenge but a strength, which is a testament to the inclusive and pluralistic soul of our nation.

"Let this Republic Day be not only a celebration but also a renewal of purpose to work together in harmony, respect diversity, serve the nation with sincerity, and to place collective good above narrow interests," he appealed.

Scindia lays foundation stone of ₹ 450 crore Matabari Tourism Circuit in Tripura

AGARTALA, Jan 25: Union Minister for Development of North East Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya Scindia on Sunday laid the foundation stone of the ₹450 crore 'Matabari Tourism Circuit' at Narikel Kunja in Tripura's Dhalai district. Under the project, five tourist destinations - Maa Tripura Sundari temple and Chhabimura in Gomati district, Neermahal and Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary in Sepahijala district, and Dumber in Dhalai district will get a major facelift. Addressing the programme, Scindia said employment opportunities will be created with the commencement of the Matabari Tourism Circuit.

Stunned by the beauty of Dumber lake comprising as many as 48 islands, the DoNER minister urged tourists across the world to visit the place to have a feeling of paradise. "I am overwhelmed by the beauty of Dumber lake, which comprises 48 islands. It appears

that Mother Nature has blessed Dumber lake abundantly. I urge the domestic tourists as well as foreigners to visit the place and feel as if you are in paradise," he said.

Tripura Tourism Minister Sushanta Chowdhury, senior state and NEC officials were present during the foundation stone laying event. While Matabari is one of the 51 'Shakti Pithas', Chhabimura is often called the mini Amazon of India, and Neermahal is the only lake palace in Eastern India.

Later, speaking to the media, Scindia said during his three-day visit to Tripura, he unveiled projects worth approximately Rs 950 crore in diverse sectors, from solar micro grids to tourism to agarwood industries and healthcare.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a dream of making 'Ashtalaxmi', often referred to as the eight Northeastern states, a centre point of the country's development and growth." (PTI)

Two arrested, explosives seized in Manipur's Pherzawl

IMPHAL, Jan 25: Security forces have arrested two persons and seized some explosives from their possession in Manipur's Pherzawl district, a police statement said on Sunday.

The two persons, identified as C Sangkunga Mizo (58) from Surtuinek village and Michael Lal-nithang (27) from Sibapurikhal, were arrested on Friday in an area between Buraikhal and Lower Kharkhuplien in Parbung police station area, it said. Thirty gelatin sticks, 20 detonators, 20 metres of wire and Rs 1.02 lakh in cash were seized from their possession.

Meanwhile, in an unrelated operation on Saturday, security forces seized a cache of ammunition, including that of a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG), from an area between Loilamkot and Nalon in Churachandpur district.

Three RPG ammunition, five 30 mm grenades, one bolt action rifle (.303 calibre), two single-barrel guns and two 'pumpi' (locally made mortars) were seized during the operation. (PTI)



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Arunachal Pradesh will rise like the dawn—strong, dynamic, and resilient—steadily progressing towards its destiny in the sacred Amrit Kaal”

- Pema Khandu, Chief Minister (AP)

JAI HIND, JAI ARUNACHAL

Aryna Sabalenka beats 19-year-old Mboko, faces 18-year-old Jovic in Australian Open quarterfinals

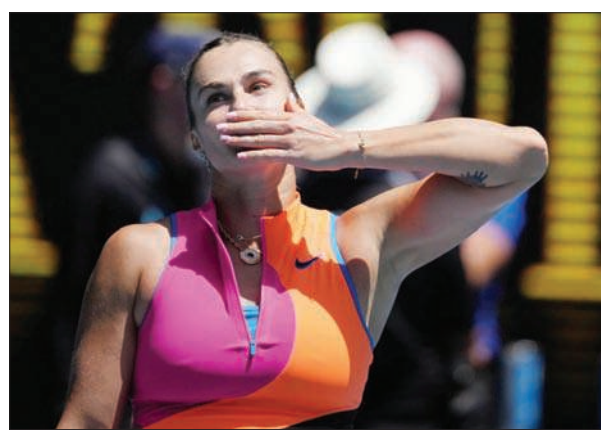
MELBOURNE, Jan 25: TikTok influencer and top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka is having to work her way through some rising teenager stars in her bid for a third Australian Open title in four years.

Sabalenka held off 19-year-old Vicky Mboko 6-1, 7-6 (1) at Rod Laver Arena on Sunday to advance to a quarterfinal match against 18-year-old Iva Jovic.

The 29-seeded Jovic overwhelmed Yulia Putintseva 6-0, 6-1 in 53 minutes at John Cain Arena, the so-called People's Court, and she secured a spot in the last eight of a Grand Slam for the first time.

Coco Gauff, who was still a teenager when she won her first major title in 2023, is back into the quarterfinals in Australia for the third straight year after a 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 win over No. 19 Karolina Muchova. In a good omen for Gauff, her four previous wins over Muchova have been during runs to the title, including in the semifinals at the 2023 U.S. Open. In the opening men's match Sunday, No. 1-ranked Carlos Alcaraz continued his bid for a career Grand Slam at age 22 with a 7-6 (6), 6-4, 7-5 win over No. 19-seeded Tommy Paul to reach the quarterfinals for the third consecutive year in Australia.

He's never gone past the last eight at Melbourne Park, the only one of the four Grand Slam venues where he hasn't won the title. That's a statistic he's determined to rectify, to the point where he's



reworking his serve to a look a little bit more in style like 10-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic.

Djokovic's influence
Jovic has been getting some good advice from Djokovic, a 24-

time major winner, during the tournament. He said he's been happy to help an up-and-coming star with Serbian heritage.

Jovic made it clear last year that she wanted a chance to play the World No. 1. Now she'll get the chance.

Sabalenka, who has joked about waiting for a formal invitation to partner Djokovic in mixed doubles at a major, breezed through the first set in 31 minutes against Mboko but had some difficulty in the second. Mboko saved match points and played well enough to beat many players, but not the two-time Australian Open champion.

"What an incredible player for such a young age," Sabalenka said of Mboko. "It's incredible to see these kids coming up on Tour. I can't believe I say that. I feel like I'm a kid!"

"She pushed me so much, and I'm happy to be through," Sabalenka added in her on-court TV interview.

Sabalenka led the second set 4-1, and then failed to convert three match points while leading 5-4. Mboko slowly took momentum and forced a tiebreaker only for Sabalenka to dominate.

It was the 20th straight tiebreak victory for Sabalenka.

"I try to — not to think this is a tiebreak and play point by point," said Sabalenka, who won back-to-back titles in Australia in 2023 and 24 before losing last year's final to Madison Keys. "I guess that's

the key to consistency." Sabalenka said playing the morning match at Melbourne Park came with some challenges, including shadows and bright sun. "Don't get me wrong, I like to play the first match, but the tricky part, at some point the sun goes right into your serve point. It's kind of like tricky. You can break the serve," she said.

"That's what actually happened. Two breaks that she got, it was on the side when I was facing the sun. Yeah, I didn't deal that good with the serve. She did an incredible job serving on that side."

Jovic and Mboko were scheduled to play doubles together later Sunday on Kia Arena against fourth-seeded Elise Mertens and Zhang Shuai.

Jovic's instincts
After her singles win — when she broke Putintseva's serve six times and led 6-0, 4-0 before she dropped serve herself — Jovic said she'd just concentrate on her own game when she faced Sabalenka.

She saved two break points in the opening game of the match against Putintseva and was dominant throughout. She had her 31-year-old rival chastising herself during the changeovers and practicing shots trying to work out ways to get back into the match.

When Jovic hit a crosscourt forehand winner to convert another break in the second set, Putintseva tossed her racket toward the ball, trying to make a connection. (AP)

MP spinners consign Karnataka to 217-run defeat; Maharashtra trounce Goa

BENGALURU, Jan 25: Spinners Saransh Jain and Sagar Solanki shared six wickets between them equally as Madhya Pradesh handed Karnataka a heavy 217-run defeat on the fourth and final day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group B match here on Sunday.

Resuming from overnight 204 for six, MP declared their second innings at 229 for eight, setting the hosts a target of 362 runs.

But off-spinner Jain (3/37) and left-arm spinner Solanki (3/20) ran through the Karnataka batting lineup to fold them for 144 in their second innings.

Opener KV Aneesh, who made a 92 in the first innings, made a 57 (142 balls) to offer a token fight for Karnataka.

The absence of injured Karun Nair too hastened the eight-time champions' downfall as the veteran



batter suffered a cut on the webbing between his left index and middle fingers.

Nair did not come out to bat as Nikin Jose was employed in the form of a concussion substitute. Jose fought hard with a 101-ball 26 but eventually Jain trapped him in front

of the wicket.

Jose and Shreyas Gopal added 61 runs in 27 overs but once the third wicket pair was separated in the space of one over — 76 for three in 35.4 overs and 77 for four in 36.2 overs — Karnataka collapsed.

The win helped MP move up to

second place with 22 points, while Karnataka (21 points) slipped from the top to third spot.

Maharashtra, who beat Goa by eight wickets, climbed to top of the table with 24 points.

The result reverses Karnataka to beat Punjab in their last league game at Mullanpur, starting from January 29, to progress to the knockout stage as Saurashtra (19 points) are also in contention in Group B.

Brief Scores:
At Alur: Madhya Pradesh: 323 and 229/8 declared in 75.1 overs beat Karnataka: 191 and 144 all out in 67.5 overs (KV Aneesh 57; Saransh Jain 3/37, Sagar Solanki 3/20) by 217 runs.

At Pune: Goa: 209 all out and 248 all out lost to Maharashtra: 350 and 109/2 in 21.1 overs 9 (Arshin Kulkarni 52 not out) by 8 wickets. (PTI)

Housemaid accuses Abdul Qadir's son of sexual assault

LAHORE, Jan 25: A housemaid has accused Sulaman Qadir, son of former Pakistan leg-spinner Abdul Qadir, of sexually assaulting her at his farmhouse. The police have detained Sulaman, one of the four sons of Qadir, after the maid filed an FIR with the police.

The maid has alleged in her FIR that she worked at the house of Sulaman and he forcibly took her to his farmhouse and raped her.

A police official said she had been sent for a medical check-up after which it would be confirmed if she was sexually assaulted. (PTI)

Field Day Fiesta 2026 celebrated at DPS, Nagaon

GUWAHATI, Jan 25: Delhi Public School, Nagaon organised its Field Day Fiesta—2026 with great enthusiasm on Sunday, celebrating the school's strong sporting tradition under the theme "Our Athletic Era Continues."

The annual event saw spirited participation from students, parents and staff, turning the campus into a vibrant display of discipline, teamwork and sportsmanship.

The programme began with an introduction to the event and a formal welcome to the chief guest, renowned swimmer Fariha Zaman. The Annual Athletic Meet was ceremoniously inaugurated with the release of balloons and pigeons, symbolising peace, freedom and a healthy sporting spirit, while the lighting of the ceremonial marshal added solemnity to the occasion. A colourful march past by young athletes highlighted their discipline and coordi-

nation, following which the chief guest officially declared the meet open. Addressing the gathering, Principal Ritu Rajnish emphasised the role of sports in nurturing confident and disciplined individuals. She was joined by Divya Chhawchharia, Director, DPS Nagaon, School Administrator Anwar Pervaz and Headmaster Dhrubajyoti Das.

The event featured drill performances by students of Grades I and II, followed by track events for Grades III, IV and V. Winners of various competitions were felicitated during the medal distribution ceremony, recognising their effort and determination. One of the highlights of the day was a pyramid formation presented by students of Grades III to V, which received loud applause from the audience. Adding a fun and inclusive element to the programme, a tug-of-war competition between parents and teachers further enlivened the atmosphere.

Sainyam and Gaurav win 10m Air Pistol Trial 2 Finals

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: Sainyam of Chandigarh and Gaurav Kumar of Uttar Pradesh came on top in the women's and men's 10m Air Pistol Trial 2 finals respectively as the National Selection Trials 1 & 2 concluded here Sunday.

World Cup Final silver medalist Sainyam continued her good run of form, finishing on top in the finals with a dominant final score of 243.1, 5.4 points more than Rhythm Sangwan (237.7).

Meenu Pathak once again finished in the top three in the finals, finishing with a score of 218.5.

Earlier in qualification, Suruchi Singh finished on top with an impressive 587-31x, but could only finish in eighth place in the finals.

Palak shot 579-16x to finish second in qualification and shot 178.2 in the finals to finish fifth.

The experienced Shwetha Singh took the third spot in qualification with a score of 578-18x and came back in the finals to finish on sixth place.

Meenu Pathak shot 577-12x in qualification while Priya Muralidhar hit 576-16x. Rhythm Sangwan and Sainyam scored 576-15x and 576-13x while Divya T.S completed the top eight with a score of 575-19x.

Gaurav improved on his second-place finish in Trial 1, finishing on top in T2 in a tightly contested final.

Gaurav, who qualified third for the finals with a score of 584-21x, shot 245.5 in the finals to take the top spot ahead of Yogesh Kumar who finished second with a final score of 244.6.

Harsh Swami of Uttar Pradesh took the third spot with a final score of 221.9 after qualifying for the finals in second place with a score of 585-26x. (PTI)

BAI plans exchange programme with Asian nations to boost junior badminton

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: The Badminton Association of India (BAI) is set to roll out an exchange programme with leading Asian nations to improve the skills of Indian shuttlers.

BAI has already held discussions with countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia to conduct training sessions in India and abroad.

"We have discussed with our Asian counterparts like Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand for an exchange programme under which our junior shuttlers can travel to their countries, while they can also come to India for training sessions," BAI secretary general Sanjay Mishra told PTI.

Asked what is the expected timeline for the program, Mishra said: "We have been busy with India Open but now we will focus on this and we hope to roll it out in a month or two."

"The host nation will bear the cost of accommodation, transportation, food and other expenses, while the travelling con-

tingent will cover the flight fares," he added.

Former India coach Vimal Kumar had recently floated the idea of organising Test matches and bilateral series against Asian powerhouses to raise the standard of Indian players, especially in doubles.

Calling for a sharper focus on doubles, Kumar said India must expose young pairs to international, team-style competitions by hosting bilateral series and Test matches against top badminton nations to achieve sustained success at the elite level.

Currently while the men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty is among the world's best, there is a significant drop-off beyond them.

"We should have a good understanding with Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Their under-21 teams should come and play Test matches with us. We can form a small circuit with these nearby countries and host it across three or four cities," Vimal, co-founder and chief coach of the



Prakash Padukone Badminton Academy, had said during the India Open.

"Have an India versus Indonesia Test match, or add one more country and make it a triangular series. It is just 10 players per team. Everybody benefits," the Dronacharya awardee had added.

However, Mishra said organising Test matches or bilateral series across multiple cities was not feasible at present.

"Organising a Test or bilateral series across different cities is difficult at this point," Mishra said.

"But these training sessions, where 10 to 15 juniors travel to these badminton nations, will help improve their game. They will no longer have inhibitions while facing these opponents."

While India's junior shuttlers are yet to establish sustained dominance on the lines of Asian powerhouses such as China, they have shown steady progress in recent years. The home team achieved a historic milestone at the BWF World Junior Mixed Team Championships last year, winning its first-ever medal, a bronze, at the prestigious event.

Among the emerging talents, Tanvi Sharma claimed a silver medal at the BWF World Junior Championships and has delivered competitive performances against top international players.

She pushed China's world No. 2 Wang Zhi Yi and world No. 9 Tomoka Miyazaki close and also defeated former world champion Nozomi Okuhara at the Syed Modi International last December. (PTI)

Pamela Conti appointed as Indian U-17 women's team head coach

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: Former Italy international Pamela Conti was on Sunday named head coach of the Indian women's U-17 team to take charge of the country's AFC Asian Cup campaign later this year, second such appointment of a national side this month made by the All India Football Federation (AIFF).

Earlier this month, Costa Rica's Amelia Valverde, who led her nation in the FIFA Women's World Cups in 2015 and 2023, was roped in as the senior women team's mentor up to the AFC Asian Cup from March 1 to 12 in Australia.

The AFC Women's U-17 Asian Cup runs from April 30 to May 17 in China.

The AIFF said the 43-year-old Conti has joined the Indian U-17 women's training camp in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, where the Young Tigresses are preparing for the continental tournament.

"As part of Conti's support staff, assistant coach Vincenzo Conti, who is her brother, will also join the India U-17 women's team," the AIFF said in a release.

Nivetha Ramadoss will continue

in the role of assistant coach.

Conti's first official assignment will be the SAFF U-19 Women's Championship 2026 that will take place in Pokhara, Nepal, from January 31 to February 7. India will participate in the tournament with their U-17 squad, consisting of players born in or after 2009.

A former Italy international midfielder, Conti brings with her a wealth of experience at both the elite playing and international coaching levels.

During a distinguished playing career, she earned 90 caps and scored 30 goals for the Italy women's national team, representing her country at the highest levels of European football, including the 2005 and 2009 UEFA Euro Women's Championship.

She also enjoyed an extensive club career across Italy (Sassari Torres), Spain (Levante and Espanyol), Sweden (Eskilstuna United), Russia (Energy Voronezh and Zorky Krasnogorsk) and the United States (Buffalo Flash), winning multiple domestic league titles and cup competitions.

Conti began her coaching career



in 2018 with the Atletico de Madrid Femenino U-16 team in Spain. In 2019, she took up the Venezuelan senior and U-20 women's national team job, where she remained for five years.

Conti guided Venezuela to their second-ever FIFA U-20 Women's World Cup qualification in 2024. The South American nation came

close to qualifying for their maiden FIFA Women's World Cup under her stewardship, but narrowly missed out on a play-off tournament berth on penalties in 2022.

In 2021, India played against Venezuela in the Torneo Internacional de Manaus de Futebol Feminino in Brazil, but Conti was absent from the dugout due to a

Andhra humble holders Vidarbha to grab top spot

ANANTAPUR (ANDHRA PRADESH), Jan 25: Andhra surged to the top of the Group A pecking order with an emphatic eight-wicket win over defending champions Vidarbha in their Ranji Trophy match here on Sunday.

Set a target of 259, Andhra, who resumed their second innings at overnight 93 for one, completed the task in 56.1 overs, with Shaik Rasheed remaining unbeaten on a magnificent century.

Rasheed slammed 132 off 144 balls, and was involved in a third wicket stand of 145 runs with skipper Ricky Bhui (64 not out off 92 balls), which sealed the game in favour of Andhra on the fourth and final evening. Rasheed was batting on 50 when the stumps were drawn on the third day.

After the early departure of first-innings top-scorer Abhishek Reddy, Rasheed found an able ally in wicketkeeper Srikanth Bharat, as the two added 99 runs for the second wicket to lay the foundation for the chase.

Nachiket Bhute (2/83) was the only bowler from Vidarbha to get wickets in Andhra's second innings, reflecting the home team's dominance in the chase.

The result marks a fine comeback for Andhra, who conceded a handy first-innings lead of 67 runs after being bowled out for 228 in

reply to Vidarbha's 295.

Andhra secured the top spot with 29 points, followed by Vidarbha and Jharkhand, setting up a tight finish for the knockout qualifications. In Lucknow, visitors Jharkhand inflicted on Uttar Pradesh a humiliating innings and 301-run defeat after bundling the home team out for 84 in their second innings.

Saurabh Shekhar was the wrecker in chief for Jharkhand, bagging 5/16, while there were two wickets apiece for Jatin Pandey and Sahil Raj.

Brief Scores:
In Anantapur: Vidarbha 295 and 191 all out in 55.2 overs (Aman Mokhadde 51, Yash Rathod 56; Kavuri Sateija 4/28) lost to Andhra (Target 259) 228 and 259/2 in 56.1 overs (Shaik Rasheed 132 not out, Ricky Bhui 64; Nachiket Bhute 2/83) by 8 wickets.

In Lucknow: Jharkhand 1st innings 561/6 declared beat Uttar Pradesh 176 and 84 all out in 27.4 overs (Aryan Juyal 24; Saurabh Shekhar 5/16) by innings and 301 runs.

In Bhubaneswar: Tamil Nadu 286 and 316 all out (Athish SR 88, Guruswamy Ajitesh 49; Badal Biswal 3/56) beat Odisha 148 and 247 all out in 83.5 overs (Anil Parida 98; Nidhish Rajgopal 2/9, R Sai Kishore 2/43, P Viduyth 2/46, Sonu Yadav 2/39) by 207 runs. (PTI)

Djokovic advances to Australian Open quarterfinals on a walkover after Jakub Mensik withdraws

MELBOURNE, Jan 25: Novak Djokovic has had a walkover into the Australian Open quarterfinals after Jakub Mensik withdrew 24 hours ahead of their scheduled fourth-round match with an abdominal injury.

The tournament confirmed Mensik's withdrawal late Sunday. The match had been scheduled for Rod Laver Arena on Monday night. "After last couple of matches, I started to feel worse, and actually the problem is my abdominal muscle on the left side," Mensik said in comments published by the tournament.

"Like I said, last few matches I got significantly worse, and I think if I would step on the court tomorrow, it would be such a big risk for me for my next weeks, for my next tournaments, and actually for my health." No. 16-seeded Mensik beat Ethan Quinn in straight sets on Saturday. He was the second player in as many days to withdraw before a match because of an abdominal injury, with Naomi Osaka



pulling out of her fourth-round match on Saturday night.

Novak Djokovic has won the Australian Open a record 10 times and is a 24-time major winner.

He became the first player to reach 400 wins in Grand Slam sin-

gles when he beat Botin van de Zandschulp 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (4) on Saturday night in the third round.

Djokovic will be content with a night off as he continues to fine-tune his bid to end the dominance of Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sin-

ner of the major titles in the last two years.

The 38-year-old former No. 1 won his last major singles title in 2023. He reached the semifinals of all four Grand Slam events last year but didn't reach a championship match.

After his third-round win here, Djokovic said two-time defending Australian Open champion Sinner and 22-year-old Alcaraz are "playing on a different level right now (but) I'm still trying to give these young guys a push for their money."

With his first-round win over Pedro Martinez, Djokovic equaled two all-time tennis records by starting his 21st Australian Open and his 81st Grand Slam event, and he added another milestone with his 100th win at Melbourne Park.

That made him the first man to win 100 or more matches on three surfaces at the Grand Slams, with his 102 on grass at Wimbledon and 101 on clay at Roland Garros. (AP)

RCB seek quick rebound, MI fight for revival in WPL clash

VADODARA, Jan 25: Table-toppers Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look to bounce back from their first setback of the season when they take on struggling Mumbai Indians in a Women's Premier League match here on Monday.

RCB's unbeaten run came to an end on Saturday as they suffered their first loss of the campaign in the match against Delhi Capitals, a timely reminder that momentum can shift quickly in the business end of the league.

Despite the defeat, Bengaluru remain well-placed at the top of the standings, having shown consistency across departments through the tournament, and will be keen to quickly put the loss behind them as the playoffs draw closer.

Mumbai Indians, on the other hand, find themselves in urgent need of revival. The defending champions have lost three matches in a row, a slide that has stalled their campaign and put their playoff aspirations under pressure.

A win against the league leaders could not only arrest the slump but also provide a much-needed confidence boost for a side searching for rhythm.

MI's concern has largely been inconsistency, particularly in closing out key moments, while RCB will be eager to iron out the issues exposed in their previous outing.

With both teams carrying contrasting motivations -- one aiming to reassert dominance and the other fighting to stay alive -- the match promises to be a keenly-contested affair.

The Vadodara surface has offered assistance to bowlers in recent matches, making discipline and smart shot selection crucial. With the league entering a decisive phase, Monday's clash could have



a significant bearing on the final standings.

For RCB, skipper Smriti Mandhana has led from the front with consistent runs at the top, while Nadine de Klerk has been the side's reliable all-round contributor.

RCB will expect more from their middle order, with Richa Ghosh and Radha Yadav needing to convert starts into match-defining knocks, especially after the batting stumbled in their previous outing.

Mumbai Indians have relied heavily on Nat Sciver-Brunt, who has been their standout performer with both bat and ball, while captain Harmanpreet Kaur has played a few impactful cameos. Amelia Kerr has also chipped in with timely wickets, keeping MI competitive despite the losses.

That said, MI will need stronger contributions from their top order which has been changing with matches. The bowling unit, particularly in the death overs, will also be under scrutiny after failing to

defend or restrict totals during the three-match losing streak.

Both teams will be hoping their key players step up as the league phase reaches a decisive stage.

In the last outing against each other, RCB had piped MI by three wickets in the season-opening game at DY Patil stadium in Navi Mumbai.

The Squads:

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Smriti Mandhana (c), Richa Ghosh, Shreyanka Patil, Georgia Voll, Nadine de Klerk, Radha Yadav, Lauren Bell, Linsey Smith, Prema Rawat, Arundhati Reddy, Pooja Vas-trakar, Grace Harris, Gautami Naik, Prathyosha Kumar, D. Hemalatha, Sayali Satghare.

Mumbai Indians: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Nat Sciver-Brunt, Hayley Matthews, Amanjot Kaur, G. Kamalini, Amelia Kerr, Shabnim Is-maili, Sanskriti Gupta, Sajana Sajeewan, Rahila Firdous, Nicola Carey, Poonam Khemnar, Triveni Vasistha, Nalla Reddy, Saika Ishaque, Milly Illingworth.

Match Starts at 7:30pm. (PTI)

Geopolitics once again tangles sub-continent cricket

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: Cricketing contours are once again being redrawn by geopolitics in the Indian sub-continent.

For decades, political disruption in the region's cricketing ecosystem was largely framed as an India-Pakistan issue. That distinction no longer holds.

Unresolved bilateral tensions stemming from political and diplomatic issues have led to Bangladesh's exclusion from the T20 World Cup, starting February 7.

The troubles briefly threatened to widen with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday saying that his country's participation in the tournament would depend on government advice, hinting that they may pull out in solidarity with Bangladesh.

"Pakistan was fishing in muddy waters and trying the game of 2 vs 1. (Pakistan and Bangladesh against India)," former off spinner Harbhajan Singh told PTI.

"They already are playing in Sri Lanka, this wasn't their matter. Why interfere where you are needed? In the end, it is Bangladesh cricket team and its players who are losing. The players missing out on a World Cup participation is massive."

In any case, Naqvi's threat fizzled out as the PCB announced its 15-member squad for the World Cup on Sunday.

Still, it is clear that political frictions that once disrupted only one bilateral axis are now spilling into relationships previously considered stable, such as Bangladesh.

It exposes how deeply crinkled in the Indian sub-continent is now intertwined with diplomatic equations.

Relations between India and Bangladesh strained following former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's dramatic exit from Dhaka and her subsequent move to India.

This was followed by a surge of anti-India feelings in Bangladesh and several killings of Bangladeshi Hindus.

For cricket, the first visible signs of strain emerged with the ouster of Mustafizur Rahman from the IPL, apparently as retaliation for the killings of Hindus in Bangladesh. What followed

was a battle for reputation for Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

They did not understand why Rahman was pushed out of the League and built their argument of shifting their World Cup matches to Sri Lanka, arguing that their players and others will be unsafe in India.

The International Cricket Council, which is now controlled by India, did not accept the argument.

Harbhajan said it became "a matter of ego" for the BCB, which erred by adopting an offensive strategy rather than looking for resolution.

"They should have kept the channels open for discussion with the ICC before straightaway saying 'no' to coming to India," Harbhajan told PTI.

The spinner also said that Naqvi had no business in throwing a pull-out threat on Saturday.

The off-spinner said that from a purely cricketing point of view, Bangladesh team had a better chance of doing well on Indian tracks with quality spinners at their disposal.

"Had the T20 World Cup been played in England or Australia, they didn't even stand a chance but here they could have actually made it to second round and may be cause a few upsets in Super Eights. So it's no one's loss but Bangladesh's."

Despite decades of hostility, India and Pakistan now operate under a formal neutral-venue framework for ICC events.

That arrangement exists precisely because politics has consistently dictated cricketing ties between the two countries. While flawed, it preserves competitive integrity.

Bangladesh, by contrast, has no such institutional protection.

Years of relatively smooth cricketing exchanges with India meant there was never a perceived need for contingency mechanisms. When political relations soured, Bangladesh was left exposed — without fallback options, precedent or leverage.

For Bangladeshi cricket, the cost is immediate — lost World Cup participation, loss of revenue and reduced visibility for players. (PTI)

Anahat nearly pulls off an upset in New York

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: Rising Indian squash talent Anahat Singh nearly pulled off an upset before going down to Japanese world No. 7 Satomi Watanabe in the second round of the Sprott Tournament of Champions in New York.

Appearing in her first PSA Platinum-level event, the women's world No. 31 Anahat won the opening two games before the experienced Japanese sixth seed rallied to claim a 6-11, 6-11, 11-2, 11-8, 11-6 result in her favour.

"It was a really difficult match for me — she (Anahat) played such amazing squash and her winners were insane," Satomi said.

"All I could do was retrieve those ones which weren't straight to the point... I'm just happy to get through today," she added.

India's top women's player Anahat had earlier defeated Lucy Turmel to move into the second round of the tournament. Anahat beat England's Turmel 11-3, 11-6, 9-11, 13-11. (PTI)

Ganguly brings sense of calm to dressing room: Maharaj

CAPE TOWN, Jan 25: Pretoria Capitals captain Keshav Maharaj has credited head coach Sourav Ganguly for transforming the team's culture, saying the former India skipper's positive outlook and patience have brought calm and belief into the dressing room ahead of the SA20 final against Sunrisers Eastern Cape.

Led by Maharaj, the Capitals have scripted a remarkable turnaround this season after failing to reach the playoffs in the previous two editions.

In his debut stint as head coach, Ganguly has guided the side to its second-ever final, where they will face a formidable Sunrisers team at the Newlands Cricket Ground here Sunday.

"Dada (Ganguly) was really excited, obviously it's his first assignment as head coach. He's been a captain who won many big occasions for India and feeding off his knowledge and having someone of his stature in the change room, along with our South African legends, has brought that sense of calm," Maharaj said ahead of the summit clash.

"He's very positive and very excited with information because he wants the best out of his players. He gives everyone the same love, care and attention that is required," he added.

The Sunrisers, who won back-



to-back titles in 2023 and 2024 before finishing runners-up last season, are aiming for a historic third crown after reaching the final for the fourth consecutive year.

"Obviously, we've had a bit of an up-and-down season. We haven't played too well at home, to say the least, but we've found a bit of rhythm at the right time. It is about keeping the momentum and implementing our basics," he said.

The second qualifier at the Wanderers was played on a slow surface, but Maharaj is opti-

mistic about conditions at Newlands.

"I'm sure it'll be better than Qualifier 2. It looks like a good wicket and we've had really good weather in Cape Town, so we're hoping for a surface that balances both teams," he said.

On the fitness front, Maharaj said there were no major concerns despite Dewald Brevis suffering a finger injury in the qualifier and fast bowler Lungi Ngidi failing to complete his quota of overs in the previous match.

"There's no concern about Brevis; he's fine. Ngidi bowled today, so I hope he'll be back in action tomorrow," he said.

Sunrisers captain Tristan Stubbs also confirmed that his entire squad is available for the

final. Leading the side for the first time in the SA20, Stubbs said the responsibility has helped him grow as a cricketer, with senior player Quinton de Kock playing a key mentoring role.

"I've actually enjoyed it. Some days you know exactly what needs to be done and other days I lean on Quinny. He's been a great help, and it's helped my fielding as well because you think less about yourself and more about the game," Stubbs said.

Despite losing to the Capitals by seven wickets in the first qualifier, Stubbs said the Sunrisers are not driven by thoughts of revenge.

"We start nought for nought in a final. We'll plan like we do for every game. I've been hounded for tickets, so it's going to be sold out and exciting," he said. Stubbs also praised England all-rounder James Coles, who starred in Qualifier 2 with figures of one for 15 and an unbeaten 45 off 19 balls against Paarl Royals.

"I don't think many South Africans would have seen him before this. He's probably having the best month of his life. From what the English boys and AB (de Villiers) told us, they said he's a player — a really good spinner and a really good batter — and he's been magnificent for us," Stubbs said. (PTI)

Bangladesh's exit from T20 World Cup 'sad moment': Global players' body

LONDON, Jan 25: The World Cricket Association (WCA) on Sunday expressed concern over Bangladesh's exit from the upcoming T20 World Cup, saying it was "a sad moment" that requires "deep reflection".

The ICC on Saturday confirmed that Scotland has replaced Bangladesh in the T20 World Cup beginning February 7, saying the "difficult decision" was taken since it was not feasible to meet Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB) request to shift their matches to Sri Lanka so close to the tournament.

"The withdrawal of Bangladesh from the T20 World Cup, and resulting absence of a valued cricketing nation from cricket's pinnacle international T20 event, is a sad moment for our sport, the Bangladesh players and fans, and one that requires deep reflection," WCA CEO Tom Moffat said in a statement.

The BCB refused to let its team travel to India citing security concerns in the wake of Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from the IPL.

The ICC, however, maintained that there was no verifiable security threat to the Bangladesh national team, officials or supporters in India and it was not appropriate to amend the published event schedule.

"Cricket is at its strongest when every team and every player is treated with respect, supported appropriately and consistently, and able to participate on fair

terms. The game is at its best when all participants are genuine contributors to its success."

WCA is a global body for professional cricketers with membership of players from several countries. But, Indian cricketers are not members of the WCA.

"In recent times, the WCA has become increasingly concerned by broader trends in the sport, including agreements not being honoured, rights being eroded, and a lack of meaningful consultation with players and their representatives — all of this amounts to a careless approach to people that should not belong in cricket," Moffat said. "It also highlights significant issues with the game's existing operating model at global level. These issues, if continued to be left unaddressed, will weaken trust, unity, and ultimately the health and future of the game we love." At the ICC Board meeting on Wednesday, Bangladesh lost its proposal to shift matches by an overwhelming 14-2 margin with only Pakistan supporting its cause.

The WCA CEO said the development "provides an opportunity for reflection across cricket."

"Rather than allowing division or exclusion to take hold, we call on the game's leaders to work with all stakeholders, including Governing Bodies, leagues and players, to unite the sport, not divide it, and in the shared interest of the game's long-term health and success. (PTI)

Saudi Arabia postpones 2029 Asian Winter Games at futuristic NEOM project

DUBAI, Jan 25: Saudi Arabia's Olympic Committee and the Olympic Council of Asia have agreed to indefinitely postpone the 2029 Asian Winter Games, which were to have been held in a mountain resort in Saudi's futuristic city project NEOM.

In a statement released Saturday, the Olympic Council of Asia said the two bodies had agreed "to an updated framework for future hosting" of the games, which will be postponed "to a later date to be announced in due course." It did not provide a reason.

Instead, Saudi will host a series of standalone winter sports events in coming years, the statement said. It added that the decision came after "extensive consultations between the two organizations and reflects a shared strategic commitment to the long-term and sustainable development of winter



sports in Saudi Arabia and across the West Asia region."

The games were to have been held in Trojena, planned as a year-round ski resort in the mountains of NEOM, a \$500 billion project to build a new city in Saudi Arabia's

western desert on the Red Sea.

The kingdom is slated to host a series of major events in coming years which require tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure investments, including the 2030 World Expo in Saudi's capital, Riyadh,

and the 2034 FIFA World Cup.

The events are part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's sweeping Vision 2030 project that aims to modernize Saudi society and its economy, build a sports hosting portfolio and help diversify the economy from its reliance on oil. At its core is spending on sports by the \$900 billion sovereign wealth operation, the Public Investment Fund. But with oil trading at around \$60 a barrel as global demand slows, affecting the kingdom's revenues, the postponement of the Asian Games was an indication that the ambitious projects are coming under pressure.

The decision to award the Asian Winter Games to Saudi had come under criticism from leading World Cup skiers and other critics, who noted the environmental impact of hosting a winter sports event in a location naturally poor in water and precipitation. (AP)