6 REGION

● Moran people in Arunachal allowed for job registration in Assam: CM Himanta
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8 NATION

● Nabin slams TMC over infiltration, SIR row
● NCP's future at stake after Ajit Pawar's death: Political analysts

27 YEARS OF DEDICATED JOURNALISM

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Voice of the hills people

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जनेताब चबकाब | my Gov मेरी सरकार

सत्यमेव जयते

Government of Assam
Department of Sports & Youth Welfare

Ushering in a New Era of
Sports Development
in Dibrugarh

Multi-Disciplinary Sports Complex
Khanikar, Dibrugarh

Inauguration
Phase I

Foundation Stone
Phase II

Total project cost
₹447
crore

Chief Guest
Shri Amit Shah
Union Home Minister & Minister of Cooperation

In august presence of

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

Shri Sarbananda Sonowal
Union Minister, Ports, Shipping & Waterways

Smti Nandita Gorlosa
Minister, Sports & Youth Welfare, etc., Assam

30 January 2026 11 AM Khanikar Parade Ground, Dibrugarh

Phase I
Key components

- Indoor Stadium
- Swimming Pool Complex
- Football Playground
- Main Gallery
- Lawn Tennis Court — 2
- Volleyball Court — 2
- Basketball Court — 1
- Boys & Girls' Hostel

Project cost
₹238
crore

Phase II
Key components

- Additional **30,000 spectator** seats
- Integration with existing central field and athletic track
- Staircases and lifts for safe and easy access

Project cost
₹209
crore

DIPR/D/HLT/288/29-Jan-26

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Quota under auto duty concessions to largely benefit traditional EU carmakers under FTA

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: India has fully protected its mass market cars in the trade pact with the EU and has extended import duty concessions only in a calibrated and phased manner for passenger vehicles priced above ₹ 25 lakh, subject to an annual quota of 2.5 lakh units, an official said on Wednesday.

In addition, the quota will largely be extended to traditional automobile manufacturers from the European Union (EU), the official said.

India and the EU on Tuesday announced the conclusion of negotiations for the agreement. It is expected to be signed and implemented this year only.

As per the agreement, India has granted a total annual quota of 1.6 lakh diesel and petrol vehicles, and 90,000 for electric vehicles (EVs).

India has not extended any duty concessions on cars priced below 15,000 euros (CIF - cost, insurance, freight) value, which translates to a retail price of about ₹ 25-27 lakh after adding components such as customs duty, GST and other levies like road tax, etc.

About 90 per cent of India's mass market in the domestic passenger car segment comes in the sub-₹ 25 lakh price category. The country's passenger vehicle market, now the third largest in the world, stands at over 43 lakh units annually.

"India is granting quota mostly on large-size ICE (internal combustion engines) vehicles, and high price range EVs while simultaneously protecting sensitive segments of India's automotive industry (small size engine capacity ICE vehicles and mid-low price range EVs)," the official said.

Under the FTA, the quota is divided into three price bands for diesel and petrol cars.

Cars priced below 15,000 euros will not receive any duty concessions.

For cars priced between 15,000 euros and 35,000 euros, import duty will be reduced to 35 per cent in the first year of the pact's implementation, with a quota of 34,000 units. In this band, India's market is about 2.5-3 lakh units at present.

For cars priced between 35,000 euros and 50,000 euros, and those priced above 50,000 euros, the duty will be reduced to 30 per cent in the first year, with a quota of 33,000 units each.

The total quota in the first year will be 100,000 units.

The 30–35 per cent duty range will be gradually reduced to 10 per cent for vehicles of all the above price bands from the current 110 per cent by the fifth year, while the quota will be increased to 160,000 units.

Duty for CKDs (completely knocked down) units for 75,000 ICE vehicles will be reduced from 16.5 per cent to 8.25 per cent, a move that is expected to bring down the prices of luxury cars assembled in India by makers such as Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Audi.

Similarly, for EVs, there will be no concession on cars priced up to 20,000 euros.

The 90,000 quota is distributed in three price bands: 20,000 euros to 40,000 euros; 40,000 euros to 60,000 euros; and above 60,000 euros.

The duty concession on EVS will start in the fifth year of the implementation of the pact.

The duty cuts and quota will help the EU makers launch new models and gradually start manufacturing in the country, the official said, adding that India's quota starts with one lakh, then it goes to 2 lakh units in the 10th year and then 2.5 lakh in the 14th year.

The quota for CKD also starts from 75,000 and till fifth year, and it will be reduced to 50,000 in the 10th year. At any time, India's quota will not cross 3 lakh. There is no duty cut on Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) units.

"And we expect the numbers to be less than 2.5 per cent of our markets," the official added.

For Indian carmakers, the EU will provide a quota that is 2.5 times higher than what India will offer to European manufacturers under the agreement. The EU has agreed to give complete liberalisation in CKDs and all vehicles above 50,000 euros.

Below 50,000 euros, the quota for India is 6.25 lakh vehicles.

"We want to capture the market and bring in supply chains. Auto part concession goes down to zero in the 10th year, so that we can bring in supply chains here and do value addition," the official said.

The EU will offer complete liberalisation for the Indian auto sector for ICE, hybrids and battery electric vehicles.

The official added that easing norms for CKD imports will encourage the EU's OEMs (original equipment manufacturers) to set up local assembly lines.

This serves as a stepping stone, moving foreign OEMs from importing to assembling, eventually to full localisation as they build local supply chains.

This brings high-end manufacturing processes, quality standards and advanced R&D practices into the Indian ecosystem, the official said. (PTI)

Kamrup Chamber of Commerce submits development memorandum to CM

CARRYING OUT PERIODICAL MAINTENANCE AND ATTENDING FAILURE

E-Tender No.: SN1-SS-LMG-2025-26: Dated: 23-01-2026. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: Name of work : Carrying out periodical Maintenance and attending to urgent of 04 Nos. Passenger make Environment friendly (HCNG) [1kW/4-all new 40kVA-01no. & 5kVA-3Nos.] furnished DG sets for proper use in Badarpur Jn - Agartala Saharan - Aizawl - Kinnguang & Kanchanjungha - Howrah-Sealdah Section including DG sets at 35 nos. LC Gates stations of Lumding Div. on Tender Value: ₹19,37,0.66;Bid Security: ₹38,500.00 E-tender will be Closed at 15.00 hrs. on 18-02-2026 and Opened at 16.00 hrs. on 18.02.2026. For details visit www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. DSTE, Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 28: Emphasising entrepreneurship through cooperatives as a key driver of rural economic growth, NABARD's Assam Regional Office on Wednesday organised a state-level workshop on the development of Multipurpose Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (MPACS) at its Guwahati office.

The workshop, held for Resource Support Agencies (RSAs) and Resource Persons (RPs), focused on strengthening the institutional and entrepreneurial capacities of newly formed MPACS and improving field-level coordination across districts.

The programme began with a welcome address by Loken Das, chief general manager, NABARD, Assam Regional Office, followed by a keynote address by Narayan Konwar, IAS, registrar of Cooperative Societies, Government of Assam.

Addressing the participants, Konwar said fostering a strong culture of entrepreneurship through cooperatives is essential for enabling MPACS to emerge as vibrant, community-based institutions.

He stressed that such an approach would allow MPACS to play a meaningful role in promoting rural livelihoods and economic development across Assam.

The workshop featured a series of technical sessions chaired by Qamar Javed, general manager, NABARD.

In the first session, officials from the office of the Registrar of Cooperative Societies outlined expectations from RPs, RSAs and newly formed MPACS, with emphasis on good governance, member mobilisation, operational preparedness and timely affiliation.

The need for transparency and efficiency at the grassroots level was highlighted as critical for the success of the new cooperatives.

Subsequent presentations by NABARD officials focused on gaps and challenges in operationalising MPACS, including delays in affiliation with the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd (ACAB), difficulties in preparing Business Development Plans (BDPs) and the need for greater clarity in initiating both credit and non-credit activities.

Providing a practical perspective, the director of the Institute of Cooperative Management, Guwahati, explained the step-by-step preparation of scientific BDPs, covering area profiling, assessment of member needs and financial planning.

The session underlined the importance of structured planning in helping MPACS develop viable and sustainable business models.

In the final technical session, officials from ACAB detailed the procedures for commencing credit operations and preparing Credit Limit Statements for accessing short-term credit. They underscored the importance of proper documentation and credit discipline at the PACS level to ensure financial sustainability.

Participants welcomed the discussions for their practical orientation and relevance to field-level implementation. NABARD, Assam Regional Office reiterated its commitment to supporting the cooperative sector through financial assistance, capacity-building and institutional development initiatives, noting that empowered MPACS are crucial for advancing Assam's rural economy.

AFFIDAVIT

The name of my parents have been recorded as Jaynul Haque and Salma parveen in my Academic Records. However, through a judicial affidavit at Notary Public Changlang, I affirm that their correct names are Joynul Haque and Salma Begum as per my birth records. Both Jaynul Haque and Joynul Haque, Salma Parveen and Salma Begum are the one and the same persons.

Sd/-
Hasina Parveen

AFFIDAVIT

I, Kamala Borah, W/O Late Sonaram Agni Borah residing at Charigaon, P.O. Bahona, P.S. & Dist. Jorhat, Assam, that my husband Sonaram Agni Borah shall henceforth be known as Sonaram Borah as declared before the Notary Public at Jorhat vide affidavit Sl. No. 14008 on 31/10/2025. That Sonaram Agni Borah and Sonaram Borah both are same and one identical person

AFFIDAVIT

I, Kamala Agni Borah, W/O Late Sonaram Borah residing at Charigaon, P.O. Bahona, P.S. & Dist. Jorhat, Assam shall henceforth be known as Kamala Borah as declared before the Notary Public at Jorhat vide affidavit Sl. No. 14008 on 31/10/2025. That Kamala Agni Borah and Kamala Borah both are same and one identical person

AFFIDAVIT

I, Smt Doli Saikia, W/o Arup Kalita have changed my name to Dolly Kalita under an judicial affidavit bearing certificate no. IN-AS13824985392401Y. I affirm that Dolly Saikia and Dolly Kalita are one and the same person.

Dolly Kalita
P.O.: Rupnagar
P.S.: Bhangagarh
District: Kamrup (M)

Medanta highlights next-generation cardiac care, stresses early intervention in Assam

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 28: With cardiovascular diseases emerging as one of the leading causes of death among adults above 40 in Assam, and increasingly affecting people at a younger age in urban and hilly regions, Medanta – The Medicity on Wednesday showcased the future of advanced heart treatment, underlining the need for early detection and proactive care.

Gurgaon-based Medanta, which has been ranked the Best Private Hospital in India by Newsweek for six consecutive years, brought its specialised cardiac expertise to Guwahati as part of its continued outreach to the North Eastern states.

Addressing doctors and healthcare stakeholders, Dr Praveen Chandra, Chairman, Interventional Cardiology, Cardiac Care at Medanta – The Medicity, highlighted the growing burden of cardiac diseases in the region and reiterated Medanta's commitment to making world-class healthcare accessible beyond metropolitan centres.

Speaking on the topic "Treatment of CAD & Valvular Heart Diseases in 2026 – Where have we reached", Dr Chandra said cardiovascular care has entered a new era marked by precision-driven and minimally invasive interventions.

"We now have advanced cardiac interventions — including a range of valve repair and replacement options, where damaged heart valves are either repaired to restore proper function or replaced with artificial valves," he said.

He explained that treatment approaches have expanded to include minimally invasive small-access surgeries that use smaller incisions to reduce pain, scarring and recovery time, as well as robotic-assisted surgeries that enhance precision and control during complex procedures.

"There are also advanced interventions to manage uncontrolled blood pressure and cholesterol, which play a critical role in preventing long-term cardiac complications," Dr Chandra added.

Coronary Artery Disease, one of the most common cardiac conditions, is caused by plaque build-up in heart arteries and is driven by factors such as high cholesterol, smoking, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, stress, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity.

Valvular Heart Disease, on the other hand, affects the heart valves and disrupts blood flow, leading to symptoms such as breathlessness, chest discomfort and fatigue, and can progress to heart failure or stroke if left untreated.

Dr Chandra stressed that the future of cardiac care lies in shifting from a reactive to a preventive approach.

"By integrating medical expertise, technology and community health programmes into a unified strategy, we can transform heart care from being reactive to proactive — preventing avoidable complications and saving countless lives," he said.

Medanta officials said the initiative in Guwahati reflects the hospital's broader vision of strengthening advanced cardiac care across regions, particularly in states where awareness, early diagnosis and access to specialised treatment remain key challenges.

Kamrup Chamber of Commerce submits development memorandum to CM

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 28: The Kamrup Chamber of Commerce recently submitted a detailed memorandum to the chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, outlining key suggestions aimed at accelerating development, industrialisation and employment generation in the state.

The memorandum was submitted through Member of Parliament Bhubaneswar Kalita and Pradan Baruah at the office of the Kamrup Chamber of Commerce.

It presents a focused five-year implementation roadmap covering multiple sectors critical to Assam's growth trajectory.

According to the Chamber, the proposals emphasise strengthening infrastructure, promoting industrial growth, boosting tourism potential, improving urban planning and creating large-scale employment opportunities across the state.

The recommendations are aimed at ensuring balanced and sustainable development while enhancing Assam's economic competitiveness.

The Kamrup Chamber of Commerce reiterated its willingness to work in close coordination with the state government and concerned authorities to ensure effective execution of the proposed initiatives.

It expressed confidence that collaborative efforts between the government and industry stakeholders would help translate the recommendations into tangible outcomes in the coming years.

Contd. from Page 3...

Ajit Pawar, four

aircraft crash as residents near the Baramati airport described a scene of chaos as the plane appeared to lose control before erupting into a series of big explosions. The crew was advised to descend at their discretion under Visual Meteorological conditions and were also informed that winds were calm and visibility was approximately 3,000 metres. Upon reaching the final approach for the runway, the crew reported that the runway was not in sight and initiated a go-around to reposition for a second attempt on the runway.

After initially stating the runway was still not visible, the crew reported "runway in sight" just seconds later and the ATC cleared the aircraft to land at 8.43 am. However, the crew did not provide the mandatory readback of this final clearance and at 8.44 am, exactly one minute after the last communication, ATC personnel observed flames erupting near the threshold of the runway. Emergency services reached the scene immediately following the explosion and the wreckage was located on the left side of the runway.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is currently analysing why the crew struggled to maintain visual contact with the runway despite the reported 3,000-metre visibility.

The aircraft was trying to land amid poor visibility, Civil Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu told reporters in Pune. VSR Ventures' fleet includes seven Learjet 45 aircraft (including the one involved in the crash), five Embraer 135BJ aircraft, four King Air B200 aircraft and one Pilatus PC-12 aircraft, the statement said.

Ajit Pawar is survived by wife Sunetra, a member of the Rajya Sabha and two sons, Parth and Jay.

His Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) had contested the recent municipal corporation elections in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad in alliance with his uncle Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP). President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and several other leaders expressed grief over Pawar's demise. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who reached Baramati and met Ajit Pawar's family members, described the NCP leader's tragic death as unbelievable, and said he had lost a good friend.

Maharashtra government declared a three-day state mourning till January 30, during which the national flag will be flown at half-mast on all buildings. Ajit Pawar's last rites will be held with full state honours on Thursday in Baramati. Modi and Shah are expected to attend the funeral, which will be held at Vidya Pratishthan ground at 11 am, the Nationalist Congress Party said. (PTI)

Deeply pained by

said. "May he attain sadgati. Om Shanti," Sarma added. (PTI)

'Unknown people now

examine that. But if we don't file any complaint, then tomorrow people will question why there was not a single complaint if there were foreigners," Sarma said. He asserted that filing complaints during the SR is a national responsibility of the Assamese community. "It's not only the BJP's responsibility, but of every political party. But unfortunately, other parties did not file any complaint and are trying to show that there is no Bangladeshi. But the BJP is against foreigners and it works like what it says.

"That is why our workers have filed more than five lakh complaints. Otherwise, everyone would have become our nationals. At least, the BJP has tried to protect Assam and show that Assamese people have not surrendered yet," the CM said. Assam has registered a 1.35 per cent increase in voters as per the integrated draft electoral roll for the state, published on December 30 after Special Revision was conducted ahead of the Assembly elections. Sarma also claimed that "Bangladeshi Miyas" have ventured into different districts of Upper Assam in recent years. "People of Duliajan complained to me that Bangladeshi Miyas have entered there. It is there in Margherita also. You have seen our eviction drive at Sarupathar in Golaghat. Till around five years back, Upper Assam was protected. But now slowly, this security is not seen," he added. (PTI)

Amit Shah to reach

told reporters on the sidelines of an official function at Rangamadi in Lakhimpur district on Wednesday.

Later in a post on X, he said that Shah will also lay the foundation stone of a wildlife health centre in the district. "Assam leads in animal welfare! The Foundation stone of the Institute of Wildlife Health & Research in Chabua will be laid by Adarniya @AmitShah ji on 30 January, which will boost research and diagnostic efforts and help in framing better policy interventions for our wildlife," Sarma said.

After the Dibrugarh events, Shah will head towards Dhemaji district and join a cultural festival of the Mising community, he added. "In the evening, he will visit the Assam BJP's headquarters in Guwahati. There, he will have a discussion on the political situation of Assam. Then he will go to West Bengal at 7 pm in the evening," Sarma said. The Assam Assembly elections to 126 constituencies are likely to take place in March-April this year. (PTI)

NDRF joins rescue

The accident took place when the boat, carrying 22 people, was going to Borghul char (riverine vegetative islands) from Rahampur. "When the boat was sailing, it reportedly came into contact with a whirlpool and sank. Most of the people were rescued by a nearby boat," Choudhury had said.

According to the locals, the boat was sailing without any safety measures. None of the passengers was wearing life jackets, Choudhury had added. The missing people have been identified as Madhu Mia (60), Sukurjan Nesa (45), Amina Parbin (8), Rahul Amin (7), Aryan Islam (4) and Junufa Yasmin (5), he said. (PTI)

BJP defends CM's

Constituent Assembly period and the inclusion of leaders associated with the Muslim League, and alleged that Congress leaders lacked the moral authority to make such comparisons.

Mahanta also said that before making such allegations, Gaurav Gogoi should clarify his own position and "prove that he has no connection with Pakistan", accusing him of lacking historical understanding.

Responding to comments by AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal that Assam could be taken over by "Miyas" in the next 20 years, the BJP spokesperson said the party's position was unequivocal.

He stated that the BJP had not given tickets to any "Miya" candidates in the 2014, 2019 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections, nor in the 2016 and 2021 Assembly elections, and would not do so in the 2026 Assembly polls either.

"The BJP does not need 'Miya' votes in the 2026 elections," he said, adding that the party would not allow what it terms "love jihad" or "land jihad" in Assam. Referring to remarks attributed to Rezaul Karim Sarkar about demographic changes in Dhubri and the possibility of "Miya" commissioners in cities like Guwahati and Sivasagar, Mahanta alleged that such statements were aimed at creating communal tension.

He warned that leaders making such remarks would face a strong political response from the BJP.

India-EU FTA

is a new blueprint for shared prosperity," Modi said on Tuesday.

The FTA that will account for almost a quarter of the global GDP will reduce tariffs on 99 per cent of Indian exports to the EU and cut duties on over 97 per cent of the EU's exports to India, according to officials. The National Cadet Corps' (NCC) PM Rally was held at the Cariappa Parade Ground.

In his address, the prime minister also said the NCC, as an organisation and as a movement, fills India's youth power with "self-confidence" and makes them disciplined and sensitive citizens who are dedicated to the nation. "The entire world is looking at youth with a lot of trust and the reason behind that trust is skill and 'sanskar' (culture). India's youth possess a culture of democracy, a sense of respect for diversity and an ethos of treating the world as one family," he said. The theme of the NCC PM Rally is 'Rashtra Pratham - Kartavya Nishth Yuva', reflecting the spirit of duty, discipline and national commitment among India's youth. (PTI)

Gaurav has no

constituencies are likely to take place in March-April this year. Asked about Gogoi's criticism of Sarma as "Hindu Jinnah", the CM said, "Jinnah is from Pakistan. Why does he bring in items from Pakistan, he could have given examples from other places also. There are people in India too. I cannot comment on an example from Pakistan as I have never visited that country." The Assam CM and the BJP have been attacking Gogoi over his wife's alleged connection with Pakistan's spy agency ISI. They even claim that the Congress leader has "direct links" with the neighbouring nation. (PTI)

Ajit Pawar left

said in a post on X. "My heartfelt condolences to his family, and to all his friends, colleagues, and followers," he added. The Assam Congress president also said that it is important to conduct a proper and transparent investigation into the accident in the public interest. (PTI)

Iconic figures of

Northeastern region is also integrating with the mainstream of development. Assam, in the northeastern region, is the land of great icons like Srimanta Sankardev. Soon, a semiconductor chip manufactured in Assam will become a lifeline for electronic products worldwide," she said.

Murmu also spoke of another iconic figure from Assam, Bhupen Hazarika, who was bestowed with Bharat Ratna by the Modi government in 2019. "All citizens also witnessed that the birth centenary celebrations of Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika were imbued with melodies and the spirit of national unity.

"When the citizens recall such great milestones of their glorious past and the remarkable contributions of their ancestors, it inspires the new generation. This inspiration further accelerates the nation's journey towards 'Viksit Bharat'," she said. In her address, the president also invoked Kerala's renowned saint, philosopher, spiritual leader and social reformer Sree Narayana Guru (1856-1928).

"Sree Narayana Guru, the great saint of Kerala, said: 'Acquire knowledge through education and become powerful through organisation'. Because, when a nation dreams, such dreams are envisioned by its youth only, and are also realised by those very youth," she said. "You will be happy to know that in the electronics manufacturing sector alone, over 25 lakh new jobs have been created during the last 11 years.

With the enabling policies of my government, many new sectors are also emerging in the country. New employment opportunities are being created in new areas like semiconductors, green energy, and green hydrogen," Murmu said. Assembly elections in West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Kerala and Puducherry are due in the coming months. (PTI)

India's factory output

Based on use-based classification, the top three positive contributors to the growth of IIP in December 2025 are infrastructure/construction goods, primary goods and intermediate goods.

Within the manufacturing sector, 16 out of 23 industry groups have recorded a positive growth in December 2025 over the year-ago month. The top three positive contributors to December 2025 IIP numbers include the manufacturing of basic metals (12.7 per cent), motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (33.5 per cent) and pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products (10.2 per cent). (PTI)

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Voice of the hills people

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026

'Unknown people now living in Upper Assam'

5 lakh complaints against 'Bangladeshi Miyas' in SR: CM

SIVASAGAR, Jan 28: Stating that "Bangladeshi Miyas" live in Assam, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said more than five lakh complaints have been filed by BJP workers during the Special Revision (SR) process against such "foreigners".

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an official function at Demow in Sivasagar district, Sarma said the "unknown people" have now gone from here, and are living in several Upper Assam districts where no such "suspected people" used to live five years ago.

"We all in Assam know that Bangladeshi Miyas have come. If none of them get notice in SR, it will mean that there is not a single foreigner in Assam," he added.

'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, activists from the community have started adopting this term as a gesture of defiance. "That is why BJP workers have filed complaints if they doubted someone as a foreigner and the government or the Election Commission will *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Ajit Pawar, four others killed in plane crash

Aircraft carrying Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister bursts into flames on the edge of runway ● Poor visibility at the time of landing likely cause of crash

BARAMATI, Jan 28: Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four other persons on board an aircraft were killed after it crashed near the Baramati airport in Maharashtra's Pune district on Wednesday.

The 66-year-old leader's death has not only left a vacuum in the BJP-led state coalition government, but also cast a shadow on the future of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), which he headed.

His uncle and NCP founder Sharad Pawar said the plane crash was an accident which shouldn't be politicised.

The "black box" (comprising the Flight Data Recorder and Cockpit Voice Recorder) from the aircraft, will be analysed after recovery to determine the cause of the accident, an official said.

Ajit Pawar had taken off from Mumbai in the morning to address four rallies in the day in Pune district for the February 5 zilla parishad elections.

The others killed in the tragedy were Captain Sumit Kapoor, who had a flying experience of 15,000

hours, co-pilot Capt. Shambhavi Pathak with 1,500 hours of flying, Personal Security Officer (PSO) Vidip Jadhav and flight attendant Pinky Mali.

The government released a statement detailing the sequence of events that led to the crash and Pawar's death.

The aircraft, a Learjet, was cleared for landing in Baramati on Wednesday morning after a go-around due to poor visibility, but having finally received a clearance it did not give any read-back' to the ATC, and moments later burst into flames on the edge of the runway.

In aviation parlance, a go-around is a standard procedure where a pilot discontinues a landing attempt and initiates a climb to fly another approach. It is used when a landing cannot be completed safely due to factors like poor weather, an unstable approach, or traffic on the runway. It is a proactive safety measure rather than an emergency.

A readback is a crucial safety procedure where a pilot repeats back the essential parts of a message or instruction received from Air Traffic Control (ATC). It acts as a "closed-loop" communication system, ensuring that the controller's instructions were heard and understood correctly by the flight crew.

The 16-year-old chartered aircraft, operated by VSR Ventures Pvt Ltd, crashed while attempting a second landing approach at Baramati airport which is an uncontrolled airfield where traffic information is typically provided by instructors and pilots from local flying training organisations.

V K Singh, owner of VSR Ventures, said the pilot apparently could not see the runway and carried out a "missed approach", a standardised procedure in such cases. Terrifying eyewitness accounts have emerged from the site of the *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Deeply pained by Ajit Pawar's death: CM

GUWAHATI, Jan 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday condoled the death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash, and said his contribution to the western state's development left a lasting imprint.

"Deeply pained by the passing away of Ajit Pawar ji, the Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra in an unfortunate plane crash this morning.

"A seasoned leader who devoted his life to public service and towards the welfare of people, his contributions to state's development and governance have left a lasting imprint," Sarma said in a post on X.

Pawar (66) and four others were killed after an aircraft carrying them crashed in Pune district on Wednesday morning, officials *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Amit Shah to reach Assam today for 2-day tour, will unveil govt projects

NORTH LAKHIMPUR, Jan 28: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will arrive in Assam on Thursday for a two-day tour, during which he will lay the foundation stone for the second complex of the state assembly in Dibrugarh, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

This will be Shah's second visit to Assam within a month after he made a one-day tour to the state on December 29 last year and rolled out a series of government projects.

"The Union Home Minister will come tomorrow evening and will stay the night in Dibrugarh. On January 30, he will lay the foundation stone of the Assam Assembly's second complex. There are some more programmes there," Sarma *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

NDRF joins rescue ops to find six missing in boat accident

BARPETA, Jan 28: The NDRF on Wednesday joined the rescue efforts to trace six people who went missing after a machine-operated country boat sank in the Brahmaputra river in Assam's Barpeta district a day ago, officials said.

Barpeta Revenue Circle Field Officer Jyotirmoy Choudhury told PTI that search operations by multiple agencies resumed this morning.

"So far, there is no news about the missing people. Experts are working very hard to find them," he said, adding that the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) joined the rescue operations.

At least six people, including four children, went missing after

the machine-operated country boat sank in the Brahmaputra river in Barpeta district on Tuesday afternoon.

The police, civil administration and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) personnel started rescue operations with the help of locals immediately after the tragedy. *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

BJP defends CM's legacy, accuses Congress leaders of misleading narrative

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 28: The Assam BJP on Wednesday strongly defended Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's leadership, describing him as the "architect of modern Assam", while accusing Congress leaders, particularly Gaurav Gogoi, of attempting to mislead the public for political positioning ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP state headquarters, party spokesperson Devajit Mahanta responded to remarks made by Gaurav Gogoi questioning the identity and credentials of the chief minister.

Mahanta said Himanta Biswa Sarma has played a decisive role in Assam's development and governance, contrasting his political journey with that of Gogoi.

Referring to the chief minister's background, Mahanta said Sarma, born on February 1, 1969, to Kailash Nath Sarma and Mrinalini Devi, is the 15th chief minister of Assam and has risen through public service without any political lineage.

He said the chief minister can "proudly say that his wife, son and daughter are children of India and Assam, and Indian citizens," while alleging that three members of Gaurav Gogoi's four-member family are foreigners.

He questioned how Gogoi could raise doubts about the chief minister's identity in such a context.

Mahanta further alleged that apart from being the son of former chief minister Tarun Gogoi, Gaurav Gogoi has made no significant contribution to Assam's political life. In contrast, he said, Sarma's grandfather, father or other family members had no connection with politics, underscoring what he described as a self-made political career.

Reacting sharply to Gaurav Gogoi's remark comparing Himanta Biswa Sarma to the "Jinnah of Hindus", Mahanta said such thinking reflected the Congress party's historical legacy.

He claimed that "Jinnah's genes are in Rajiv Bhavan and in the heart of the Congress party", alleging that the Congress had historically supported communal politics. He cited historical references to Jawaharlal Nehru's role during the *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

India-EU FTA, previous free trade pacts to open countless opportunities for youths: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said the free trade agreements which India has signed with several countries and the "historic" FTA agreed upon between India and the European Union in Delhi a day ago will open countless opportunities for lakhs of Indian youths.

Addressing a gathering at the annual National Cadet Corps PM Rally at Delhi Cantonment here, the prime minister also said the entire world is looking at India's youth with a "lot of trust" and the reason behind that trust is "skill and 'sanskar' (culture)".

"I had addressed from the Red Fort that 'Yahi samay hai, sahi samay hai' (this is the time, this is the right time). For the country's youth, it is a time for maximum opportunities," Modi said.

He asserted that it is the government's effort to ensure that youths get "more and more benefits" of this time period.

"One example you saw yesterday only. India and the European Union (EU) agreed upon a historic free trade agreement. Before this, India has done FTAs with Oman, New Zealand, Britain, the UAE, Australia, and countries like Mauritius. All these agreements are going to open countless opportunities for lakhs of our youths," the prime minister said.

India and the EU on Tuesday sealed a landmark free trade agreement, billed as the "mother of all deals", to create a market of two billion people with Prime Minister Modi and the top EU leadership unveiling a transformative five-year agenda to largely leverage trade and defence in protecting the rules-based world order.

The two sides also inked two crucial pacts, one on security and defence collaboration and another on mobility of Indian talents to Europe, after Modi hosted EU leaders Ursula von der Leyen and Antonio Costa for summit talks amid frosty ties with the US.

"This is not just a trade agreement. This *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Gaurav has no responsibility for Assam: Himanta

'Gogoi would not be able to tell names of constituencies from Tinsukia to Golaghat'

SIVASAGAR/NORTH LAKHIMPUR, Jan 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday alleged that Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi does not have any responsibility towards the state and asserted that the opposition has no stand on any issue ahead of the Assembly elections.

"He (Gogoi) comes like a tourist. He does not have any responsibility towards Assam. He has been announcing to make a greater Assam. What is the primary condition of making a greater Assam?" he told reporters on the sidelines of official programmes.

Gogoi is a Lok Sabha MP from Jorhat constituency and is also the Deputy Leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha.

"He (Gogoi) should first make his children Assamese. How can he even pronounce the word greater Assam when his own children are not Assamese?" Sarma said.

The BJP leader has been continuously criticising the Assam Congress president over the citizenship of Gogoi's wife and two children, saying that three out of four in the family are British citizens.

Carrying on with the tirade, Sarma said, "Who will live in his (Gogoi's) greater Assam? Only the Miyas will live. That is why nobody should pay any attention to this man's statements and I don't think we should discuss him seriously."

'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, activists from the community have started adopting this term as a gesture of defiance.

"Gaurav Gogoi would not be able to tell the names of the constituencies from Tinsukia to Golaghat. The Upper Assam as we understand, there are not 50 seats," Sarma said while reacting to the Congress leader's claim that the opposition will win 50 seats in the coming Assembly polls.

The Assam Assembly elections to 126 *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Ajit Pawar left lasting imprint on Maharashtra politics: Gaurav

GUWAHATI, Jan 28: Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi on Wednesday condoled the demise of Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar and said he left a lasting imprint on the western state's politics.

Pawar and four others were killed after an aircraft carrying them crashed in Maharashtra's Pune district.

The accident occurred when the plane was landing in the Baramati area.

"Deeply saddened by the sudden passing of Ajit Pawar ji in the tragic plane crash at Baramati today. His years of public service and contribution to Maharashtra have left a lasting imprint on the state's political life," Gogoi, the deputy leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha, *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Infrastructure/construction goods, primary goods and intermediate goods top contributors

India's factory output grows fastest in 2 years at 7.8 pc in Dec: Govt data

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: India's industrial production grew at an over two-year high pace of 7.8 per cent in December 2025 on the back of robust output in manufacturing, mining and power sectors, according to government data released on Wednesday.

The factory output, measured in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), expanded by 3.7 per cent in December 2024.

"Industry momentum further strengthened in December 2025 as the IIP rose by 7.8 per cent, reaching its highest level in over 2 years, after registering a high growth of 7.2 per cent in November 2025," the National Statistics Office (NSO) said in a statement.

The NSO also revised the industrial production growth for November 2025 to 7.2 per cent from the provisional estimate of 6.7 per

cent released last month.

During the April-December period of FY26, the country's industrial production growth slowed to 3.9 per cent compared to 4.1 per cent in the same period a year ago.

According to the NSO data, the manufacturing sector's output grew by 8.1 per cent in December 2025 compared to 3.7 per cent in the year-ago month.

"In manufacturing, highest growth recording industries are computer, electronic and optical products (34.9 per cent), motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers (33.5 per cent) and other transport equipment (25.1 per cent)," it said.

Mining production rose by 6.8 per cent against a growth of 2.7 per cent recorded a year ago.

Power generation grew by 6.3 per cent in December 2025, compared to 6.2 per cent expansion in the year-ago period.

The corresponding growth rates of IIP as per use-based classification in December 2025 over December 2024 recorded at 4.4 per cent in primary goods, 8.1 per cent in capital goods, 7.5 per cent in intermediate goods, 12.1 per cent in infrastructure/ construction goods, 12.3 per cent in consumer durables and 8.3 per cent in consumer non-durables. *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Iconic figures of poll-bound states get special mention in President's address

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: Social, religious and literary icons of poll-bound states of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam and Kerala received special mention in President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament on Wednesday.

At the outset of her 62-minute speech, Murmu said India is now celebrating 150 years of Vande Mataram and people of the country are paying homage to Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, who wrote the national song, for this profound source of inspiration.

"I congratulate the Honourable Members that a special discussion in Parliament was organised on this auspicious occasion," she said.

On another occasion, the President invoked Nobel laureate and literary icon from West Bengal Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and said that he had opined that freedom remains incomplete without a

life of self-reliance.

"My government is taking continuous and concrete steps towards making India self-reliant. Today, products made with the vision of 'Make in India' are reaching various global markets. There is also great enthusiasm among the citizens for 'Swadeshi'," she said.

Explaining the importance of agriculture in her address, Murmu said Sant Thiruvalluvar, a revered Tamil poet-saint and philosopher, had said that irrespective of their vocations in society, the life of every individual is dependent on the arduous labour of a hard-working farmer.

"In view of this, for my government, a prosperous farmer is its first priority for Viksit Bharat. With this spirit, the government launched a scheme like PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. Under this scheme, over 4 lakh crore rupees have been directly transferred to their bank accounts, so far," she said.

Thiruvalluvar is known for authoring Thirukkural, a classical Tamil text on ethics, governance and other subjects written over 2000 years ago.

Talking about the development initiatives taken in the Northeast by the central government, the President, in her address, referred to Assam's 15th-16th century socio-religious, cultural and literary icon Srimanta Sankardev. "Now, the *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

We love life, not because we are used to living but because we are used to loving. -Friedrich Nietzsche

Union Budget and transport sector

India's transport sector, combining road, rail, air and water, is ready for a significant job boom, with the logistics industry alone projected to grow at a 10.7 percent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) through the current year. The national budget for 2026-27, which is scheduled to be placed in Parliament on February 1, should strongly focus on the transport sector, especially on the under-tapped civil aviation field, and incentivize enthusiastic private entrepreneurs to play a growing role in this highly potential area of industry. The sector offers a tremendous opportunity to entrepreneurs – big, medium or small. The forthcoming budget should provide further stimulus to tap the opportunity, creating millions of new jobs, with the logistics sector specifically aiming to add up to 10 million job opportunities over the next two years. There has been a big surge of private entrants in the transport sector alongside the traditional operators, led by the Tatas. Lately, the Adani Group is significantly expanding its transport sector footprint beyond airports, sea ports and shipping. The ongoing large capital expenditure on highways, rural road connectivity, and modernisation of railways having dedicated freight corridors are boosting demand for engineers and construction personnel. Automation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and Machine Learning (ML) are being integrated into logistics, driving demand for specialized tech roles.

The logistics industry's record growth is expected to create several million new jobs by the end of next year in sectors such as roadways, railways, airways, shipping, EV Manufacturing, Warehousing, and E-commerce. Among the major investment areas are roads and highways (aiming for 200,000 kms of national highway); private manufacturing of wagons, coaches, digital signalling, station redevelopment, DFC logistics parks; upgrading airports and creating new civil aviation enclaves such as Varanasi, Bihta and Bagdogra; development of dedicated container transshipment ports (Vizhinjam); and improving urban mobility through regional rapid transit systems and metro projects. The country's booming transport sector is leveraging robust public support and strategic policy to unlock substantial private capital for transformative infrastructure development, focusing on both physical assets and digital/sustainable solutions on a massive scale. The infrastructure construction market is fast expanding with the transport sector poised for a rapid and lasting boom and growing broader logistics market driven by public investment and digital initiatives like Gati Shakti.

By modernizing infrastructure, adopting technology, and streamlining policies, India's logistics sector is poised to become a massive catalyst for sustained economic growth, supporting its ambition to become a developed economy. Currently, the Indian aviation sector employs around 369,700 people directly. The domestic passenger market, the world's third largest, can grow much faster with additional support from the government by encouraging more private participation and making land acquisition for new airports and for expansion of existing runways easy. Land acquisition remains a major hurdle for airport expansion, causing significant project delays, accounting for a large portion of unresolved infrastructure issues, and necessitating better compensation and resettlement strategies.

A strategic silence in US defence policy

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Satyabrat Borah

When the Pentagon released its latest US defence blueprint, the most striking feature was not a dramatic new doctrine or an unexpected enemy, but the silence. In a document meant to signal priorities, reassure partners, and warn rivals, some of the most familiar pillars of Indo-Pacific strategy were either muted or absent. There was no strong emphasis on the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, the informal but influential grouping of the United States, Japan, India, and Australia. Taiwan, long viewed as one of the most sensitive and strategically important flashpoints in Asia, appeared in far more cautious and indirect language than many had expected. For allies and partners who have spent years aligning their policies around American leadership, these omissions felt less like editing choices and more like strategic messages.

The question that immediately followed was unsettling: is the United States, under Donald Trump's renewed strategic vision, quietly stepping back from its Indo-Pacific commitments and leaving its allies exposed to growing pressure from China?

To understand why the absence of the Quad and the downplaying of Taiwan matter so much, it is important to understand what they have represented over the past decade. The Quad was never a formal military alliance, but it was a powerful symbol. It signaled that four major democracies, each with its own history, geography, and interests, shared a common concern about the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. It reassured smaller regional states that the United States was not acting alone but was embedded in a network of capable partners. Even when its activities were limited to dialogues, exercises, and coordination, the Quad carried psychological weight. It told Beijing that coercion would not be met by fragmented responses.

Taiwan, meanwhile, has occupied a unique place in US strategy. It is not a treaty ally, yet it has been treated as a critical test of American credibility. Its location makes it central to the first island chain, and its political status touches on values, identity, and international norms. For decades, Washington has relied on strategic ambiguity, promising neither abandonment nor automatic intervention, while supplying Taiwan with defensive capabilities and maintaining a regional military presence designed to deter drastic moves. The balance was always delicate, but it was anchored by the assumption that the United States would remain deeply engaged in the region and willing to coordinate closely with allies.

The new defence blueprint suggests a different mindset. Its language emphasizes homeland defense, economic and industrial resilience, and the need for allies to take greater responsibility for their own security. From a domestic perspective, this approach is easy to understand. American voters are weary of endless overseas commitments. Defence planners face the reality of limited resources and simultaneous challenges in multiple theaters. The argument is that a United States focused on protecting its core interests and revitalizing its domestic strength will ultimately be a stronger, more credible power.

Yet strategy is not only about efficiency and restraint. It is also about perception. What allies and adversaries believe matters just as much as what is written in classified annexes. When a major strategic document avoids explicitly highlighting the Quad or clearly articulating Taiwan's role in regional security, it sends a signal that American priorities are narrowing. Even if officials insist that nothing fundamental has changed, the absence of reassurance can feel like a form of withdrawal.

For America's Indo-Pacific allies, this creates a new and uncomfortable reality. Japan, which faces constant pressure around the Senkaku Islands and worries about regional sea lanes, has relied heavily on the US security umbrella. Australia has invested political capital in aligning itself closely with Washington, even at the cost of economic friction with China. India has balanced its tradition of strategic autonomy with growing cooperation with the United States, particularly in response to tensions along its border with China. All three have seen the Quad as a flexible mechanism that strengthened deterrence without forcing rigid alliance obligations.

If the Quad's prominence fades, each of these countries must reassess its assumptions. Japan may feel compelled to accelerate its shift toward more independent military capabilities, including long-range strike options that were once politically taboo. Australia may deepen its defense integration with select partners while quietly preparing for scenarios in which US support is slower or more conditional. India, always cautious, may interpret the shift as confirmation that it should continue diversifying its partnerships rather than relying too heavily on any single external power.

Taiwan's position is even more precarious. Its security has always depended on a combination of its own defensive resilience, international sympathy, and the implicit backing of the United States. When American strategic documents grow more ambiguous, that balance becomes harder to maintain. For Taipei, the risk is not that the United States will suddenly abandon it, but that uncertainty itself will invite miscalculation. Deterrence works best when red lines are understood. If those lines appear blurred, an adversary may be tempted to probe them incrementally, through military pressure, economic coercion, or political warfare.

Supporters of the new US strategy argue that these fears are overblown. They point out that the Indo-Pacific remains identified as a priority theater and that the United States continues to invest heavily in capabilities designed to counter China's military rise. They argue that encouraging allies to do more for themselves is not abandonment, but maturation. In this view, a region in which Japan, Australia, India, and others are stronger and more self-reliant is ultimately more stable.

There is truth in that argument. Overdependence on any single power creates vulnerabilities, and allies who invest seriously in their own defense can contribute more effectively to collective security. However, the transition from reassurance to self-help is a delicate one. If managed poorly, it can produce gaps rather than strength. Allies may build capabilities that are not well integrated with one another. Political leaders may hedge by seeking accommodations with adversaries rather than risking isolation. Smaller states may feel compelled to bandwagon with the strongest nearby power if they doubt the reliability of distant partners. China is watching these signals closely. Beijing has long sought to weaken US-led coalitions not necessarily through direct confrontation, but by encouraging doubt and division. A defense blueprint that appears less committed to multilateral frameworks plays into that strategy. Even without dramatic actions, China can increase pressure in gray-zone areas, test responses in contested waters, or intensify diplomatic and economic influence campaigns. Each successful probe reinforces the perception that the regional balance is shifting. The risk is not immediate war, but gradual erosion. Deterrence rarely collapses all at once. It weakens through accumulated doubts, misread signals, and inconsistent responses. When allies are unsure whether the United States will stand firmly beside them, they may act more cautiously, or conversely, more independently. Both reactions can be destabilizing.

There is also a broader structural issue at play. Multilateral frameworks like the Quad do more than coordinate military activities. They create habits of consultation, shared threat assessments, and political alignment. Removing them from the center of strategy does not just reduce symbolic reassurance; it weakens the connective tissue that holds regional responses together. In times of crisis, those relationships matter as much as hardware.

From Washington's perspective, the challenge is balancing restraint with leadership. The United States cannot and should not promise to solve every security problem in the Indo-Pacific. But leadership does not require omnipresence. It requires clarity, consistency, and a willingness to invest in relationships even when they do not produce immediate returns. Strategic ambiguity has its place, particularly with sensitive issues like Taiwan, but ambiguity without context can easily be mistaken for indifference.

What should Indo-Pacific allies do in this environment? First, they must assume that uncertainty will persist. Rather than waiting for Washington to clarify its intentions, they should accelerate practical cooperation with one another. Joint exercises, intelligence sharing, defense industrial partnerships, and crisis communication mechanisms can strengthen deterrence even in the absence of formal guarantees. Second, they should engage the United States candidly, pressing for clearer signaling and more predictable consultation processes, even if formal commitments remain limited.

Third, allies must invest in resilience beyond the military sphere. Economic diversification, supply-chain security, and technological cooperation can reduce vulnerability to coercion and make political decisions easier in times of stress. Finally, diplomacy with China should not be abandoned. Clear communication, confidence-building measures, and crisis management channels are essential to prevent misunderstandings from spiraling into conflict.

For India in particular, the evolving US posture may reinforce its instinct to maintain flexibility. New Delhi can deepen cooperation where interests align while avoiding entanglements that limit its autonomy. For Japan and Australia, the challenge will be managing domestic debates about defence expansion while maintaining public support for a more assertive regional role. For Taiwan, the task is existential: building a defence posture that is credible enough to deter aggression while sustaining international engagement in an increasingly uncertain environment. The absence of the Quad and the muted treatment of Taiwan in the new US defense blueprint do not automatically mean that America is abandoning the Indo-Pacific. But they do mark a shift in tone and emphasis that cannot be ignored. Strategy is as much about what is not said as what is declared openly. Allies are already adjusting their calculations, and adversaries are certainly revising theirs.

The real test of this strategy will come not from its wording, but from events. If a crisis erupts and the United States responds decisively and in coordination with partners, today's doubts may fade. If responses are hesitant or fragmented, the perception of retreat will harden. The Indo-Pacific is entering a period in which assumptions that held for decades can no longer be taken for granted. Whether this leads to a more balanced, resilient order or to a more dangerous and uncertain one will depend on how carefully all parties navigate the space between reassurance and self-reliance.

The question posed by the blueprint is not only whether the United States is leaving its allies to the wolves, but whether those allies can adapt quickly enough to ensure that no one in the region stands alone when pressure mounts.

First newspaper in Bharatvarsha

By: Er Prabhat Kishore

HICKY's
BENGAL GAZETTE;
OR THE ORIGINAL
Calcutta General Advertiſe

A Weekly Political and Commercial Paper, Open to all Parties, but influenced by None,

From Saturday March 3d to Saturday March 10th 1781.

The credit for bringing out the first full-fledged printed newspaper in Bharat goes to Irishman James Augustus Hicky. The first issue appeared on January 29, 1780 in Kolkata (then capital of British India), bearing the title, "HICKY's BENGAL GAZETTE or The Original - Calcutta General Advertiser".

But before Hicky started his paper an attempt was made by William Bolt's in censored servant of East India Company, who had resigned earlier to start a newspaper to give expression to the differences existing between the opposing groups in the East India Company. In September 1766, William Bolt's pasted a paper on the door of Council house of Kolkata. Bolt's attempt to start a newspaper was put down, as he was ordered to leave Bharat and proceed to Europe by the first available ship.

On Saturday January 29, 1780 appeared "Hicky's Bengal Gazette or The original Calcutta General Advertiser". People simply remember it as "Hicky's Gazette" on his name, who was founder, editor & promoter-all rolled in one-of that paper. It was a weekly paper and consisted of two pages of size 12"x8". The paper was clumsily printed, the reading material was less and the advertisement more.Also, there were comments on personal affairs of individuals.

When Hicky started his newspaper, he announced his motives "I have no particular passion for the printing of newspaper. I have no propensity. I was not bred to slavish life of hard work yet; I take pleasure in enslaving my body in order to purchase freedom for my mind and soul". Hicky's Gazette was published in English language and this was the first regular newspaper in India.

The first issue carried news' bit not fresh and up-to-date like today's newspapers. The news bits were taken from the old European newspapers. In those days due to difficult transportation system, foreign newspapers usually took months to reach the Bharatiya shore. Hicky announced the policy of his paper and declared that his news was a 'weekly, political and commercial paper open to all parties, but influenced by none'.

This paper was a primitive one from the point of view of contents, printing and publication. But it has the significance of a historical newspaper. With the first newspaper of Bharat started the era of Indian journalism, which has developed as the agency for the safeguard of democracy in the country.

Fighting tradition begins:-

The Bengal Gazette had a thrilling and turbulent history despite the fact that it had a sharp life of only two years. It did not educate Indian freedom and published no sermons. On the other hand, it published scurrilous story. But the paper greatness lay in its undaunted and valiant height for liberty of the press. The paper upheld the freedom of conscious of education, of speech and of assembly, which it considered the fundamentals of human existence.

Hicky is remembered as the father of Indian journalism. He was courageous and resolute in his endeavours. He was a poor man, but was bold in every step he took. The paper made a point of challenging most powerful people in Bharatvarsha.He boldly accused the Governor General Warren Hastings of corruption tyranny and warmongering. An attempt to punish Hicky was thought necessary by Hastings and suit after suit was filed to gag him and strangle his paper. Armed European soldiers and 4000 servants raided Hicky's press to arrest him as per definite orders from the Governor General and the Chief Justice. But Hicky fought them back and voluntarily presented himself before the Supreme Court. He was immediately arrested but allowed to go on bail after he paid a huge sum of Rs Eighty thousand as security money. He was charged by the government for other defamatory and scurrilous writings. He was tried in the court of law and was found guilty. He was sentenced to four months' imprisonment and was asked to pay a fine of ₹ 500/-, but he did not frighten.

Antagonists of Hicky, who made up their minds to bring about closure of 'The Bengal Gazette', succeeded in procuring an order for the seizure of the press. The types were seized along with printing plant in March 1782 which marked the pre-mature death of Bharat's first regular newspaper.

Hicky's early life is unknown even as his later life. He was practically a total stranger to the public until the appearance of 'The Bengal Gazette'.He faced trouble after trouble and suffered heavily by counting the wrath of the authority. He lived and died in obscurity. But his name is indelible in the history of the Indian press and he will always be remembered for evolution of this fourth pillar of democracy in the country. ***(The author is an engineer and Academician. He has studied Journalism & Mass Communication from Patna University, Patna)***

When budget policy meets global competitiveness

By: Dipak Kurmi

As India approaches Budget 2026, its trade and export strategy stands at a decisive crossroads shaped by forces far beyond its borders. The global economy is undergoing a profound reconfiguration, driven by supply-chain realignment after successive shocks, the tightening grip of sustainability-linked regulations, and intensifying geopolitical competition that increasingly blurs the line between economics and security. For India, this moment carries both promise and peril. Over the past few years, the country has expanded its export base, diversified markets, and deepened integration with global value chains, even amid pandemic disruptions and geopolitical turbulence. Yet sustaining this momentum will not occur automatically. It demands a careful alignment of short-term macroeconomic management with long-term structural reforms, ensuring that India's trade strategy is resilient, competitive, and forward-looking rather than reactive to global shifts.

In the near term, export performance hinges on a factor that often receives insufficient attention in public debate: external price competitiveness. Empirical evidence consistently shows that movements in the real effective exchange rate exert a strong influence on India's exports in the short run. A stronger rupee can rapidly erode competitiveness in price-sensitive sectors such as textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, and labour-intensive manufacturing, while a more competitive currency environment can support export growth even when global demand is subdued. Preserving macroeconomic stability, therefore, is not merely a financial or inflation-management objective; it is a prerequisite for sustaining export competitiveness. Budget 2026 must recognise this linkage explicitly, ensuring that macroeconomic policy, including fiscal discipline and exchange-rate vigilance, remains aligned with the needs of exporters during the crucial 2026–2029 period. In an era of volatile capital flows and tightening global financial conditions, maintaining this balance will be essential to prevent external shocks from undermining hard-won export gains.

However, macroeconomic support alone cannot deliver durable trade competitiveness. Structural trade reforms must be carefully sequenced with prevailing economic conditions so that improvements in market access and cost efficiency translate into tangible export outcomes. Free Trade Agreements offer a case in point. India has concluded several FTAs in recent years, opening preferential access to key markets across Asia, the Middle East, and beyond. Yet utilisation rates remain suboptimal, particularly among micro, small, and medium enterprises that struggle with complex rules-of-origin requirements and fragmented compliance processes. Institutionalising FTA usage has therefore become imperative. The creation of a National FTA Facilitation Authority could address this gap by providing unified guidance, simplifying compliance frameworks, and deploying digital tools to manage documentation and origin certification. By coordinating closely with industry bodies, export promotion councils, and state governments, such an institution could significantly raise FTA utilisation, transforming legal market access into real export growth rather than leaving it as a largely untapped advantage.

Digitalisation must lie at the heart of this transformation. Simplified, technology-driven compliance systems can empower firms, especially smaller exporters, to access preferential tariffs without being overwhelmed by administrative burdens. The integration of digital platforms for customs, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, and port authorities would reduce transaction costs and delays that often negate tariff advantages. Alongside this, Budget 2026 should announce a credible, multi-year tariff rationalisation roadmap that provides predictability to investors and exporters alike. While India has already made progress through initiatives such as the National Logistics Policy and PM GatiShakti, sustained public and private investment remains essential to modernise ports, strengthen rail-road connectivity, expand cold-chain infrastructure, and develop efficient logistics corridors. These reforms may not immediately reflect in annual export statistics, but their cumulative impact over several years will be decisive in reducing costs and improving reliability, which are increasingly critical determinants of global competitiveness.

As global markets become more regulated, standards compliance and sustainability are emerging as central determinants of market access rather than peripheral concerns. Carbon border adjustment mechanisms, environmental reporting requirements, and digital traceability norms are reshaping trade flows, particularly in Europe and North America. Budget 2026 must therefore prioritise investment in accredited domestic testing, certification, and conformity-assessment infrastructure to help Indian exporters meet increasingly stringent international standards. Building national capacity for carbon accounting, lifecycle assessment, and environmental compliance is no longer optional; it is essential for accessing high-value markets and participating in future-oriented value chains. Proactive alignment of domestic standards with evolving global sustainability, digital, and environmental regulations will ensure that Indian exporters remain future-ready rather than perpetually adjusting after new rules take effect. This approach also offers an opportunity to upgrade domestic production processes, improve energy efficiency, and strengthen India's credibility as a responsible trading partner.

Export diversification must be elevated from aspiration to strategic priority if India is to reduce vulnerability to external shocks. Geographically, deeper engagement with Africa, Latin America, and Central Asia is essential, supported by targeted trade missions, improved logistics connectivity, and credit-guarantee mechanisms that mitigate risk for exporters entering new markets. These regions offer growing demand and opportunities for Indian firms across pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, agriculture, and digital services. Sectorally, India must accelerate its shift towards future-growth industries such as advanced electronics, renewable energy equipment, artificial intelligence-enabled services, medical technologies, and precision manufacturing. At the same time, export-linked industrial development should be designed to reduce strategic import dependencies in critical areas, strengthening economic resilience alongside export expansion. This dual focus on outward competitiveness and inward capability will be crucial as global trade becomes increasingly intertwined with national security considerations.

To ensure credibility and accountability, these reforms must be anchored in a results-based monitoring framework for the 2026–2029 period. Tracking changes in export-market composition, measuring FTA utilisation rates, assessing logistics performance at the port and corridor level, and monitoring reductions in critical import dependencies will provide a clear picture of whether policy interventions are delivering structural progress. Transparent data and periodic evaluation will also allow mid-course corrections, preventing policy drift and ensuring alignment with evolving global conditions. Budget 2026, therefore, should not be viewed merely as an annual fiscal exercise but as a strategic inflection point in India's trade trajectory. By aligning macroeconomic conditions with deep structural reforms, India can move beyond adapting to global changes and begin shaping the emerging architecture of international trade, positioning itself not just as a participant, but as a rule-shaper in a rapidly transforming global economy. ***(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)***

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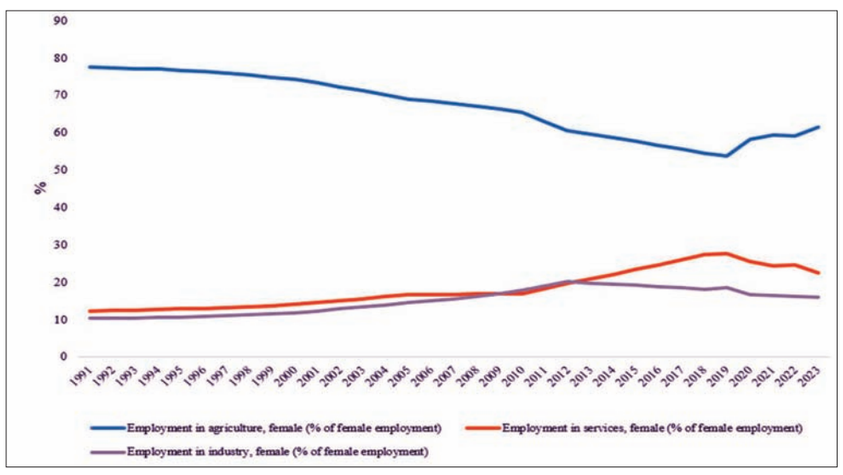
Closing the knowledge gap for women in agriculture

By: Manjushree Banerjee

India has one of the lowest female employment participation rates globally. Women make up only 29 percent of the workforce in India. Scholars have identified an array of reasons behind these low female participation rates. A strictly gendered division of labour means that women bear much of the care burden (such as child and elder care, cooking, cleaning, collecting firewood, maintaining kitchen gardens, and tailoring), leaving little time to pursue paid work outside the home. Socio-cultural norms also prevent women from seeking work outside their homes. For instance, women and girls often need permission from household members before making decisions about education or employment, certain jobs are considered unfit for women, and there are constraints on the time that they can spend outdoors. Moreover, with poor overall job creation in the economy, women are increasingly denied access to the job market.

Figure 1: Distribution of Female Employment across Agriculture, Industry and Service Sectors in India (1991-2023)



However, there is one sector where women dominate, i.e. agriculture. Agriculture in India critically depends on the female workforce. In 2023–24, the share of female workers in agriculture was approximately 64.4 percent, significantly higher than the male participation of 36.3 percent. This preponderance of women in agriculture has often been described in the literature as 'feminisation of Indian agriculture'. Figure 1 highlights that the percentage of women employed in agriculture in India decreased consistently from 78 percent in 1991 to 54 percent in 2019. However, there was a notable increase in this percentage after 2019. Many economic studies attribute this rise in female employment in agriculture to the health and fiscal crises resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies—including Nanda, M. and Ghosh, S. (2025) and Leder, S. (2022)—associate feminisation of agriculture with male outmigration and conclude that traditional gender conventions still limit women's positions. Men and women typically perform different tasks in agriculture. Women are predominantly associated with sowing seeds, transplanting, weeding, farm cleaning, harvesting, irrigation, cleaning produce, and storage. These tasks are intricate and time-consuming, and a crucial aspect of the cultivation and post-harvest process. Such tasks are generally performed manually.

Despite the central role of women in agriculture, women enjoy little autonomy in decision-making and income. Women wage workers in agriculture also receive lower pay compared to their male counterparts. Economist Jayati Ghosh says that despite the prominent role of women in agriculture, they are barely recognised as farmers. Only 13 percent of rural women who engage in agriculture hold land titles in their names. Even in cases of joint registration of land titles, Ghosh posits that women have little to no control over the actual holding. Women farmers also fail to fully access government schemes designed for farmers. For instance, the share of females in the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana was a mere 16 percent for the Rabi (winter) crops in 2024. One of the eligibility criteria is possession of a valid and authenticated land ownership certificate or a valid land tenure agreement. This criterion reduces the scope of a female's entitlement to crop insurance coverage.

Strengthening women farmers—given that agriculture employs the largest share of working women (Figure 1) and depends heavily on the female workforce—serves a dual purpose. First, initiatives reducing gender inequality reach a wider population. Second, it strengthens the agriculture sector, which further enhances food security.

Interventions to increase insurance coverage among women farmers necessitate major shifts in eligibility criteria, such as insurance coverage entitling the farmer, regardless of the land titles. A primary survey could provide deeper insights into the challenges associated with the insurance coverage for women farmers. Alternatively, greater efforts must be employed to secure land ownership for women. Here, India can take a leaf from Rwanda's Systematic Land Registration Programme (2009-2013), which registered nearly 19 percent of the country's agricultural land in women's names individually and 49 percent jointly. The programme secured women's tenure by regularising land ownership. An open-access course by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) mentions that during interviews and focused group discussions for the assessment of the programme, women reported feeling more empowered, exercised increased influence in household decision-making, and felt more confident in asking for bank loans. The decision-making processes, division of labour, and market involvement of landholding households are deeply influenced by cultural norms and longstanding societal structures. Interventions at these levels necessitate a deeper, longer, and more systematic approach. However, smaller steps are equally important and possess the potential to contribute towards strengthening women in agriculture. One small step is enhancing the capacity of women farmers to access information for women farmers, which requires a multi-faceted approach, such as;

• **Educating women to access and understand agriculture-related information via digital interface:** Information services, such as agricultural weather forecasting services, are available through digital interfaces like mobile phones and websites. The reading abilities of the women farmers and their accessibility to mobile phones or computer systems are a concern. Training on accessing and understanding agriculture-related information empowers women farmers to make informed decisions and actions.

• **Involving female agriculture extension workers:** A study based on primary information indicates the predominance of male staff in the government's agriculture services. This often leads to reduced interaction between female farmers and extension workers due to the prevalent gender norms. Female agriculture extension workers are likely to be better placed to communicate with women farmers.

• **Creating a contact database of women farmers:** The mobility constraints may be a hindrance for the women farmers if the agricultural information is shared through public meetings. The database will help the extension workers to reach and interact with smaller groups of women farmers.

• **Customised training courses:** Skill training courses and meetings for farmers are already in place, which are generally managed by the State Agriculture Departments, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) and State Agricultural Universities. Customising training courses and meetings tailored to the needs of female farmers and ensuring their participation is an important step. There are cases of customised initiatives. For example, Better Life Farming Alliance (BLFA) manages 12 community centres operated by trained women smallholder farmers, providing extension services and inputs to fellow smallholder farmers.

The share of agriculture in India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been declining. The Union Budget 2025–26 reinstates hope in enhancing the sector performance. Within this hope lies the empowerment of the major workforce in agriculture, the women. The way forward is to ensure that agriculture-related information reaches all women farmers and that they can effectively understand it. Informed women farmers are more likely to make their own choices and better decisions. ***(Courtesy: ORF)***

Cover her or erase her: Why is women's consent still unheard?

By: Rudrani Gupta

Women must cover themselves.
Men have defined how, when and why women must hide behind clothes. The rule has been stamped on the face of every woman- some stamps are ghooghats, some are hijaab, and others are patriarchal families. While many women resisted the rule, others owned it with pride. But when did men decide how, when and why women must not cover themselves?

If men wanted to cover, why are they enforcing the uncovering? Are women mere subjects of men's changing politics? Why must women be the instrument for men to impose their rules against consent, orthodox, changed or evolved? When will women get to choose? When will men learn consent? Indian men said, once again, out loud- NOT YET!

I am talking about the recent incidents in India that raised questions about women's clothes and their safety.

Firstly, I would point out the one in which Nitish Kumar forcefully pulled down the hijaab of a woman. The video went viral with many speaking against him and many standing in support. The woman, Nusrat Praveen, was one of the recruited AYUSH doctors involved in Ayurvedic, Homoeopathic, and Unani fields. The event was to award the joining letters to the recruited doctors, including Praveen. During a national viewership, Kumar pulled down her hijaab while awarding her to "show her face". While one minister tried to stop Kumar, others just stood there and laughed.

People who resisted called out his impermissible act of breaching a woman's consent and choice. It was considered a disrespect for not just the woman but her religion too. While those who stood in support, blew the incident away as a joke. Some gave it the name of official formality to know the identity of the woman who is receiving the award.

Result? Praveen, who was supposed to join on December 20, refused the joining letter. She felt humiliated and decided not to join as an Ayush doctor. Basically, Bihar lost a potential doctor, and a woman lost the opportunity for growth and empowerment just because of the changing ideas of public morality.

Amidst all this chaos, the one question that trailed for answer was- when did men decide that women must now uncover?

The incident takes me back to the hijab ban order of Karnataka's High Court in 2022. In the order, the bench banned hijab or headscarves inside schools or college premises. The 'logic' behind the decision was that hijab is not a part of religious practice. The judgment, rather than enforcement, faced several rejections and protests from students, primarily Muslim students and their parents. The protest was to allow students to decide how they want to dress up or express their religious beliefs. Many counter-protests rose from the Hindu community too, supporting the Karnataka HC hijab ban. What was the result? The case is still waiting for the Supreme Court's absolution while the hijab-ban is in place. This was in 2022.

Cut short to today, the internet is aghast at the mutilated murals of women doing yoga in a Smart City of India, Gwalior. The murals have been scratched to mark the private parts of women. The video of the defaced murals raises alarming questions. It shows that even the image or shadow of women is not safe in India. If not covered, women's bodies are public property fated for mutilation. What was the reaction of the authorities to this incident? Finding the culprits? No. Whitewashing the walls to erase any existence of such murals. This proved, once again, that the answer to crimes against women and women's safety is covering them up.

If that is the rule, then how is Nitish Kumar or the Karnataka Government not guilty? The women in their cases are already covered. Then, why are the people in authority enforcing uncovering? As per the rules, covered women are safe. But are they?

This proves that women are meant to be policed, humiliated and harassed irrespective of their apparel, caste or religion. A woman's bodily agency has been turned into an instrument of artisan politics, in which ideologies are enforced, even legalised, by regulating women's bodies.

Logically, the murals were of covered women. Neither their faces, nor their "sexualised" body parts are visible. Still, they were subjected to such monstrosity. Is this not altogether humiliating and terrifying for every woman in India? The incident was targeted at every woman, irrespective of face or identity. The women in the murals could be you or me or any woman around you. But the faceless black murals covered our faces and bodies, yet couldn't save us.

Incidents of enforcing clothing ethics on women are many. But the point of discussion is that nothing changed. No protests, no strikes could undo the self-proclaimed authority of men who can decide women's life choices. Sometimes men enforce the covering of women under hijaab, burkha, or ghooghat. They police women's clothing choices by defining the character of a woman based on the length of their clothes- the longer the clothes, the better the character. And, sometimes, just strip it off in public!

Now, after years of (still ongoing) moral policing of women based on their clothes, why have men decided to flip the coin? Is it the spark of evolution, modernity or feminism? Or is it just another way of enforcing patriarchy? Because women still don't get to choose- the basis of every evolution of mindset or feminism. Women's bodily autonomy remains absent in the public domain and political discussions.

So, what should we conclude from these parallel incidents? Can women be touched, harassed, and mutilated without consent, whether covered or not? Yes. Also, that we are still in a man's world where men's words and actions are always right and women's consent is meaningless noise. ***(Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)***

India's latest rural employment guarantee act still fails to see women clearly

By: Yogesh Kumar

Beyond the change in name, the most visible shift from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 to the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 is the extension of guaranteed employment from 100 to 125 days. The statutory right to wage employment has been retained, and that continuity matters. However, the revision also presented an opportunity to confront long-standing implementation realities — especially those related to women's work — which the new law largely leaves untouched.

Women are not peripheral to India's employment guarantee programme. For over a decade, they have consistently contributed around 50-55 per cent of total person-days under MGNREGS, rising to nearly 58 per cent during the COVID-19 years. Few public employment programmes globally show such sustained participation by women. Yet, paradoxically, this numerical visibility has not translated into policy design that recognises women's diverse work realities.

The problem lies in how women are perceived—largely as a single, undifferentiated category of workers. In reality, women's participation varies sharply across life stages. Pregnant women, lactating mothers, and women caring for children below six years of age face very different constraints from older women or those without care responsibilities. Their needs relate not only to the availability of work, but also to timing, proximity, task intensity, and access to childcare support. These differences have remained largely invisible because of a critical data gap. Despite being one of the world's largest digital workfare systems, the MGNREGS dashboard has never captured age-disaggregated data for women workers. Women appear in official records only as "female", not as young mothers, caregivers, or women in peak reproductive years. What cannot be seen cannot be planned for.

The 2025 Act repeats this blind spot. It reiterates that at least one-third of beneficiaries should be women, and that efforts should be made to include single women and persons with disabilities. These provisions reflect continuity with the 2005 Act, but they no longer match ground realities. When women already account for half the workforce, the question is no longer one of minimum inclusion, but whether the programme is designed for those women who face the highest participation costs.

This omission matters even more in the context of India's broader growth ambitions. Women's workforce participation in India remains among the lowest globally. Recent labour force surveys show female work participation rates hovering around 35–40 per cent, compared with over 75 per cent for men. Rural women participate more than their urban counterparts, but much of this work is informal, irregular, and constrained by unpaid care responsibilities.

Demographically, India has a large pool of potential women workers. A significant proportion fall within the 21-50 age group — the core productive years for both formal and informal work. Yet this is also the phase when childcare demands peak. Without policy design that responds to this reality, India risks underutilising one of its most important economic resources. Employment guarantee programmes are uniquely placed to address this challenge because they offer work close to home. But proximity alone is not enough. Women with young children need flexible work arrangements, predictable timings, and reliable care support. One practical step would be to align work hours with the functioning of Anganwadi centres, including extending their timings to match the workday. Another would be to leverage the extensive self-help group (SHG) network under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission to provide neighbourhood-based childcare and support services. These are not new ideas; they build on existing institutional strengths.

India's policy landscape also offers examples of how direct support to women can work. Cash transfer schemes such as the Ladli Behna Yojana in Madhya Pradesh, and similar initiatives elsewhere, have shown that modest, predictable transfers can enhance women's agency. A small wage top-up for women workers with young children — explicitly recognised within the employment guarantee framework — could enable them to arrange trusted childcare through family members, neighbours, or SHGs. Such flexibility acknowledges care responsibilities without forcing women to choose between work and childcare.

The absence of disaggregated gender data also limits convergence. Employment guarantee schemes, women-and-child development programmes, and livelihoods missions often serve the same households, yet their data systems operate in silos. Integrating these systems would enable life-cycle-based planning, allowing local governments to design employment, care, and livelihood pathways together rather than as disconnected interventions. The irony is that the 2025 Act speaks the language of Viksit Bharat — of empowerment, convergence, and inclusive growth — without putting in place the informational foundations needed to realise these goals for women. Centralisation may improve administrative efficiency, but without finer gender lenses it risks flattening complex realities on the ground.

India's employment guarantee has always been more than a welfare programme. It reflects how the State understands work, care, and citizenship. As states frame the rules under the new Act, there is still time to course-correct — by collecting better data, recognising differentiated needs, and designing work around the lives women actually lead. Viksit Bharat will not be achieved merely by adding more days of work. It will be achieved when policies learn to see women clearly — not as aggregates, but as workers whose productive potential depends on how seriously the care economy is addressed. ***(Courtesy: Down to Earth)***

Turmeric in beauty care

By: Shahnaz Husain

Though it is an essential ingredient in every Indian kitchen, an age-old ingredient, turmeric, has been a staple in traditional beauty regimes. Turmeric gets its skin-enhancing properties mainly from curcumin, an active component that provides glow and lustre to the skin. This easily-available yellow spice is loaded with antioxidants and anti-inflammatory components, which help to brighten the complexion by combating redness and uneven skin tone.

One of the most well-known turmeric benefits for skin is its ability to calm irritation while evening out the skin tone and brightening the complexion. From acne to stretch marks and psoriasis, turmeric is a miracle ingredient for your skin.

The pre-wedding ceremony – "Haldi", "Tel Baan" or "Manjha", of applying turmeric on the bride and groom's faces is believed to be auspicious and bestows exceptional radiance to the skin.

Turmeric-Infused Moisturiser

Add a pinch of turmeric to your regular moisturiser. It aids in the reduction of inflammation and the preservation of skin suppleness during the harsh winter months

Turmeric Face Mask

Combine turmeric, honey, and yoghurt to make a nourishing face mask. Turmeric's antibacterial properties aid in treating acne and blemishes, while honey and yoghurt add moisture and soothe irritated skin.

Turmeric Scalp Massage

Massage Turmeric into your scalp with olive oil. Turmeric's anti-inflammatory properties soothe the scalp, while the oil nourishes the hair, preventing winter dryness

Make a whipped paste of turmeric, honey, and milk to exfoliate dead skin. Apply this paste to your face, neck, hands, and other parts of the body, and you rehydrate your skin simultaneously. Alternatively, blend a quarter of a teaspoon of turmeric powder into a tablespoon of fresh aloe vera gel, and apply that paste to your face. Wash off after 15 minutes.

A turmeric face mask will be helpful if you are facing the problem of scars and marks on your skin. Mix one teaspoon of turmeric with half a teaspoon of honey. Apply this thick paste on the affected area and leave it on for 15 minutes. Rinse with water and follow it up with a mild face wash or cleanser. Honey and turmeric together will not only heal pimple marks but also hydrate and nourish your skin.

If you are facing the problem of dark circles, mix two teaspoons of turmeric powder, one tablespoon of curd and a few drops of lemon juice. Apply the paste on the affected area and let it sit for about 15 to 20 minutes. Rinse with lukewarm water.

To remove tan: Add a pinch of turmeric to yoghurt and apply daily on the face. Wash it off after 20 minutes.

Turmeric can also be mixed with Aloe Vera Gel to soothe and moisturise the skin. In fact, it helps to heal sunburn.

As a body pack: Mix besan (gram flour) with yoghurt and a pinch of turmeric into a paste. Apply to the arms and legs three times a week. Wash it off after half an hour.

For facial hair: Apply a paste of turmeric powder and milk, and rub this on the skin with a circular motion. It is said to discourage facial hair over a period of time, but it may leave a slight yellowish colour on the skin.

To minimize stretchmarks: First, apply olive oil and massage it on the areas. Then mix besan, yogurt and turmeric (body pack given above) and apply it on the area. Wash it off after half an hour.

Mix ground almonds with yoghurt and a pinch of turmeric to make a face and body scrub. Apply and rub gently on the skin with small circular movements. Wash off with water. ***(The author is international fame beauty expert and is popularly called the Herbal Queen of India)***

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Assam cabinet approves Tinsukia registration, Chutia reservation and other development measures

Moran people in Arunachal allowed for job registration in Assam: CM Himanta

GUWAHATI, Jan 28: The Assam cabinet on Tuesday approved the registration of Moran community people, living in Arunachal Pradesh in the employment exchanges of Tinsukia district, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

Addressing a press conference after a cabinet meeting here, Sarma said the registration will help enhance employment opportunities for those belonging to the community.

"The state cabinet has allowed the registration of persons of the Moran community living in Arunachal Pradesh bordering Assam, possessing a valid permanent residence certificate (PRC) and OBC certificates issued by the Government of Assam in the employment exchanges of Tinsukia district," he added.

The registration will enable them to participate in government recruitment and employment-related initiatives, thereby improving access to formal employment

channels in Assam, Sarma said.

To uplift the socio-economic status of the Chutia community, the Assam cabinet also gave its nod to the reservation of one post each in state civil and police services recruitment within the OBC quota for the next five Combined Competitive Examinations, he added.

Sarma further said that the cabinet approved "de-reservation" of a portion of the Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) in Tiloibari Bongali and Tiloibari Nepali Gaon under the Moran revenue circle in Dibrugarh district for the settlement of indigenous individuals residing there.

"The state cabinet has approved the proposal for relaxation and rationalisation of settlement premium for tea garden workers residing in Labour lines falling within town and peripheral areas under Section 17-A of the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holdings Act, 1956," he added.

Besides, the state cabinet green-lighted the raising of a loan amounting to Rs 200.36 crore by the Government of Assam from NABARD for 27 projects, the CM said.

The cabinet decided to bring the elected representatives of Zila Parishad, Anchalik Panchayat and Gaon Panchayat within the ambit of Mukhya Mantri LoK Sevak Arogya Yojana (MMLSAY). *(PTI)*

Farmers' fair begins in West Karbi Anglong

Two-day exhibition focuses on boosting productivity and self-reliance

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Jan 28: With the objective of boosting agricultural productivity and fostering self-reliance among local farmers, a two-day Farmers' Fair and Exhibition commenced on Wednesday at Menmeji in West Karbi Anglong district. The event is jointly organised by the West Karbi Anglong District Agriculture Department and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).

The fair was officially inaugurated by Additional District Commissioner of West Karbi Anglong, Bedanga Kashyap Das. Following the inauguration, the ceremonial lamp was lit by Ramson Rongpi, Chairman of the Village Development Committee under the Bithung-Rengthema Council Constituency. Organised under the supervision of District Agriculture Officer Tapan Dutta and Senior Agriculture Development Officer Debajit Saikia, the event showcased a wide range of resources and opportunities for the farming community.

A variety of locally grown crops and agricultural products were put on display. The Agriculture Department exhibited essential farming tools, including traditional implements such as daos and hoes, along with modern agricultural machinery. Several Self-Help Groups set up stalls to display and sell indigenous products directly to consumers at affordable prices. Farmers were also able to procure quality seeds, pesticides and fertilisers at discounted rates from departmental stalls.

The initiative aims to bridge the gap between departmental resources and grassroots farmers, encouraging entrepreneurship and economic independence among the farming community of West Karbi Anglong.

4th Mwihur international theatre festival from Feb 1

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 28: The fourth edition of the Mwihur International Theatre Festival will begin on February 1 at the Bodofa Cultural Complex, Chandamari, Kokrajhar. The event is organised by the Lwrgi Theatre Group.

Addressing media, Lwrgi Theatre Group president Swmdwn Brahma said seven theatre groups from India and abroad has confirmed participation. Bodoland Territorial Council Chief Hagrama Mohilary will inaugurate the opening ceremony. On the first day, the English-language production "(Un)Belonging" by Anikaya Dance Theatre, Boston, USA, will be staged. Competitions in spot art and storytelling will be held for students from Class V to XII, with prize money ranging from ₹ 3,000 to ₹ 8,000.

The plays to be presented during the festival include: "(Un)Belonging" (English) by Anikaya Dance Theatre, USA; "Fultar" (Bengali) by Theatre Shine, West Bengal; "Letters to the Unborn Children" (Hindi) by Santoshpur Anuchintan, West Bengal; "Mingmangni Simang" (Bodo) by Lwrgi Theatre Group, Kokrajhar; "Love You Zindegi" (Assamese) by Akhara Ghar Natya Prashikhan Kendra, Assam; "Wo Ek Zinda Admi Tha" (Hindi) by Aspiring Actor Studios, New Delhi and "Orgeng Lama" (Boro) by Rwnswndri Theatre, Baganpara, Baksa, Assam.

Historical drama on Maharaj Prithu to be staged in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Jan 28: Under the initiative of Pragya and with the active cooperation of the people of Jorhat, the historical drama "Mahanayak Maharaj Prithu", based on the life and valour of Assam's legendary warrior king Maharaj Prithu, will be staged on January 30 at the Jorhat District Sports Association Playground.

The announcement was made at a press conference held at the Jorhat Press Club on Tuesday. Addressing the media, Organising Committee president Shantanu Pujari said that Maharaj Prithu was among the most courageous military commanders not only in the history of Assam but also of India. He said that in 1226 AD, Maharaj Prithu successfully drove away foreign invaders from the northeastern region of Assam, but despite his immense contribution and reign as king of ancient Kamarupa, his legacy remains largely overlooked in mainstream history.

The drama has been written by noted playwright Hillol Kumar Pathak and directed by eminent theatre personality Asim Krishna Barua. The production has already received wide appreciation after being staged in various parts of Assam.

The organisers said the objective of staging the play is to present the glorious chapters of Assam's history before the younger generation and to instil patriotism, courage and pride in the state's rich heritage.

Although amateur theatre has seen a decline in recent years, elaborate arrangements have been made to accommodate around 3,000 spectators so that audiences can experience live theatre collectively. Several well-known actors and actresses from across Assam will perform in the drama.

The play will be staged at 6 PM on January 30 and will be free and open to the general public.

Pujari further said that an organising committee has been formed with Shantanu Pujari as president, Diganta Dutta as working president and Pradyumna Bora and Manoj Bora as secretaries. He appealed to the people of Jorhat to extend cooperation for the successful conduct of the programme.

It was also announced that on the same day, artists who are beneficiaries of the Assam Government Artist Pension Scheme and those who have received one-time financial assistance will be felicitated for their contributions to the cultural field.

The press conference was attended by Dipak Nath, president of Pragya Jorhat District Committee, Ashish Kashyap, secretary and other office bearers of the organisation.

IR approves 202 additional train stoppages under NFR

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 28: In a significant passenger-centric initiative, Indian Railways has approved 202 additional stoppages of trains at 82 stations across Assam, West Bengal and Bihar under the jurisdiction of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR). The stoppages will come into effect soon and will be closely monitored for passenger response and operational feasibility.

Several important and premium trains have been included under this initiative. Notably, stoppages have been approved for the New Jalpaiguri–Guwahati–New Jalpaiguri Vande Bharat Express at Rangiya, Anand Vihar–Agartala–Anand Vihar Rajdhani Express at New Haflong and New Cooch Behar, Kolkata–Sairang–Kolkata Express at Katakhal and Guwahati–Sairang–Guwahati Express at Katlicherra, among others. These additions are expected to further strengthen railway connectivity in North Bengal, Bihar and Assam.

The New Delhi–Dibrugarh–New Delhi Rajdhani Express will now halt at Dhemaji, Sibsagar Town and Vishwanath Chariali, improving access to Rajdhani services for passengers from Upper Assam.

Additionally, key mail and express services including Guwahati–Howrah–Guwahati, Dibrugarh–Howrah–Dibrugarh, Kamakhya–Puri–Kamakhya, Silchar–Guwahati–Silchar and Alipurduar–Delhi–Alipurduar Express trains have also been covered under the expanded stoppage plan.

A number of important stations across NFR have been selected for these experimental halts, including Rangiya, Nalbari, Barpeta Road, Goalpara Town, Basugaon, Dangtal, Kokrajhar, New Cooch Behar, New Alipurduar, Sibsagar Town, Dhemaji, Lanka, Hojai, Vishwanath Chariali, Aluabari Road, Bagdogra, Dalkhola, Samsi, Harischandrapur, Raninagar Jalpaiguri, New Mal Junction and Sivok.

These stoppages are expected to benefit passengers from semi-urban and rural areas by reducing travel time to major junctions and providing better interchange opportunities with long-distance and premium trains.

The additional stoppages will be implemented in a phased manner over the coming weeks.

Postal workers stage protest in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Jan 28: Hundreds of postal employees under the banner of the Bharatiya Gramin Dak Karmachari Sangh staged a dharna in front of the Postal Division Office in Dibrugarh on Wednesday, demanding better working conditions, fair compensation and an end to alleged harassment by authorities.

The protesters, mostly Gramin Dak Sevaks (GDS), raised several long-pending grievances related to pay structure and workplace treatment. Their primary demand was the inclusion of GDS employees under the proposed 8th Central Pay Commission or, alternatively, the formation of a separate high-level pay commission exclusively for GDS, headed by a Supreme Court judge.

"We have been serving in the most remote corners of the country, ensuring that postal services reach every village and hamlet, yet we are consistently overlooked when it comes to fair compensation. We demand recognition of our contributions through inclusion in the 8th Central Pay Commission or a dedicated pay commission that addresses our unique challenges," said a senior member of the Bharatiya Gramin Dak Karmachari Sangh.

The protesters also raised serious concerns over alleged harassment of GDS employees in the name of achieving targets.

Another major issue highlighted during the dharna was the abolition of GDS posts and the rationalisation or relocation of branch post offices in rural areas. The union said these measures were detrimental to rural populations who depend heavily on postal services for banking, communication and delivery of government welfare schemes.

Art competition marks Republic Day at Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Jan 28: An art competition was organised at Nagaon Bengali Girls' High School by Anupurbik Art and Craft Institute in collaboration with the United States of America Book of World Records on the occasion of Republic Day. Several hundred students participated in the competition across various categories.

The prize distribution ceremony was conducted by Rajiv Das, Principal of Anupurbik Art and Craft Institute. Noted artists Subrata Dutta, Shailen Das and Pallavi Sarma attended the event as judges.

Over 13 junior artists were honoured with the National Junior Artist Award. The awardees were Ayush Sarkar, Ranbir Das, Mondeep Das, Arhaan Deep Saikia, Neha Chourasia, Swastik Pal, Rajdeep Debnath, Shreyashree Bora, Shraddha Nandy, Jihan Ghrit Kaushik, Adil Haque Khan, Kaushik Kumar Bora and Shubhamita Sarkar. Besides, 40 other individuals contributing to society in various disciplines were also felicitated by the institute.

The event was made successful through the efforts of the teachers and members of Anupurbik Art and Craft Institute.

₹ 5,000 cheques distributed to 4,204 tea garden workers in Tinsukia

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Jan 28: As part of the Assam government's welfare initiative for the tea community, ₹ 5,000 one-time financial assistance cheques under the Chief Minister's scheme "Mukhya Mantri Eti Koli Duti Paat" were distributed on Wednesday to 4,204 tea garden workers across three estates in the 83rd Margherita Assembly constituency. The beneficiaries included 1,584 workers from Dirok Tea Estate, 1,174 from Ledo Tea Estate and 1,446 from Dehing Tea Estate. Earlier, on January 25, 3,752 workers of Namdang and Margherita Tea Estates had received the cheques.

The scheme aims to provide economic support and strengthen social security for tea garden workers who have contributed to Assam's tea industry for nearly two centuries. The distribution event was attended by Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma, local officials, BJP leaders and representatives from Gaon Panchayats.

UFBU observes strike; bank employees demand five-day banking week

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Jan 28: As part of a nationwide agitation, bank employees in Morigaon on Tuesday staged a protest under the banner of the United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU), demanding the introduction of a five-day banking week. The one-day strike, continuing a two-month-long campaign, saw active participation from employees and officers of various public sector banks.

Protesters highlighted excessive workload, safety concerns and the need to improve customer service. They said a five-day week would enhance employee well-being and efficiency. Prahlad Borkataki, working president of the All India Punjab National Bank Officers' Association, noted that public sector bank employees handle 1,600–2,500 customers on average, compared to 300–400 in private banks and stressed the crucial role of public banks in serving rural and remote areas.

The unions also underscored the banks' role in implementing government schemes such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Atal Pension Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Bima Yojana, despite limited time and resources.

The protest was attended by Samajit Chakravarty, secretary and Dipankar Bora, president of the Morigaon District Committee of the All Assam Provincial Bank Employees' Association, along with other UFBU union members. Leaders assured continued dedication to customer service while pressing for their long-standing demands.

International theatre festival in Nagaon from January 30

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Jan 28: The National School of Drama (NSD), New Delhi, in collaboration with the Nagaon district administration, will host an international theatre festival in Nagaon for the first time from January 30.

The 25th Bharat Rang Mahotsav will feature performances from Assam, Delhi, Manipur and Italy from January 30 to February 3 at the Nagaon District Library auditorium. The festival will include five productions:

January 30 – "Janak Nandini" by Maithili Lok Ranga Theatre, Delhi

January 31 – "Pebet" by Kanglei Mime Theatre Repertory, Imphal

February 1 – "Exclamation Mark" by Powol Avantanio Entertainment, Italy

February 2 – "Molakhu" by Jonak Theatre, Assam

February 3 – "The Wild Duck" (Assamese adaptation) by NSD trainees under Silpa Kanan, Nagaon

The festival will begin on January 30 at 5 PM with an inaugural ceremony, followed by the first performance. All productions are scheduled daily at 5:30 pm.

The organising committee, including MLA Rupak Sarma (president) and Deputy Commissioner Debashish Sarma (executive president), has called upon the public to support and attend the event.

'Victoria' wins Best Film at Indian Showcase Awards

Indian Showcase Awards 2026 held during Guwahati Asian Film Festival

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Jan 28: The Indian Showcase Awards 2026, presented as part of the second Guwahati Asian Film Festival (GAFF), celebrated outstanding achievements in Indian and regional cinema, recognising filmmakers and artists whose work reflects cinematic excellence, diversity and storytelling depth.

At the awards ceremony, the Best Film Award was conferred on the Malayalam feature 'Victoria', directed by Sivaranjini, for its compelling narrative and strong visual language. The film also received additional recognition, with cinematographer Anand Ravi being awarded the Jury Special Mention for his exceptional cinematography.

The Second Best Film Award was presented to the Nepali film 'Shape of Momo', directed by Tribeny Rai, which was appreciated for its sensitive storytelling and fresh cinematic voice.

Highlighting cinema from the Northeast, the NE Spotlight Award went to the Assamese film 'Noi Kotha' (River Tales), directed by Dr Pankaj Borah, for its cultural relevance and regionally rooted narrative.

Speaking on the occasion, Monita Borgohain, Festival Director of GAFF, said that the Indian Showcase Awards reflect the spirit of the festival by celebrating bold storytelling, regional diversity and meaningful cinema. She said this year's winners demonstrate how powerful narratives can emerge from different cultural landscapes while remaining universally resonant.

The Indian Showcase Competition jury at GAFF 2026 was chaired by acclaimed filmmaker Girish Kasaravalli, with noted film personalities Utpal Borpujari and Anupama Bose serving as jury members.

The awards reaffirm GAFF's commitment to promoting diverse voices from across India and Asia, providing a platform for emerging and independent filmmakers alongside established talent.

During the festival, GAFF 2026 also conferred its Lifetime Achievement Honour on veteran actor Bishnu Kharghoria, also known as Bishnu Khargharia, in recognition of his enduring contribution to Indian cinema.

Organised by Trending Now Media, the second edition of the Guwahati Asian Film Festival was held with the support of the National Film Development Corporation and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. The festival showcased 26 curated films from 10 Asian countries and witnessed strong participation from filmmakers, cinephiles and industry professionals.

GAFF has gradually emerged as an important cultural platform in Northeast India, fostering creative exchange, dialogue and regional cinematic growth.

Journalist Gautam Sarma receives Karmabir Chandranath Sarma Award

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Jan 28: Senior journalist Gautam Sarma was conferred the Karmabir Chandranath Sarma Award at the 7th biennial ceremony organised by Nandan Kanan Music School at Bihaguri near Tezpur on Monday. The award was presented during the main session at Juriya Ahat Primary School, Tumuki, Bihaguri. Sarma, Executive Editor of Amar Asom, was honoured with a gamosa, traditional jaapi, angabastra, books, a citation, a memento and a cash award.

In his address, Sarma described Chandranath Sarma's personality as "vast like an ocean" and expressed concern over the freedom fighter's continued marginalisation in public discourse. He urged the Assam Government to include a dedicated chapter on Chandranath Sarma in school textbooks and questioned why institutions could not be named after him. Highlighting Sarma's contributions, including founding the Assam Chatra Sanmiloni and promoting the mother tongue, he noted that Chandranath Sarma had envisioned economic freedom even before India's political independence. Sarma donated the entire cash component of the award back to Nandan Kanan Music School.

The programme featured addresses by Chief Guest Dr Satish Chandra Bhattacharya, writer and former Vice Principal of Darrang College and speakers including KSIDC Vice-Chairman Kishore Upadhyay. The event was presided over by Bankim Baruah, Director of Gyan Bharati Public School, with guests including MLA Ganesh Kumar Limbu, poet-journalist Dushmanta Sarma, Zila Parishad member Rakesh Nath and Bharat Das, president of the Chandranath Sarma Branch of Asam Sahitya Sabha.

The ceremony began with the lighting of the lamp by Trailokya Mohan Nath, Secretary of Karmabir Chandranath Sarma Smriti Bhawan, followed by floral tributes to Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg and tree plantation in their memory. The event concluded with the inauguration of the stage by theatre personality Trinayan Nath and a children's play "Joy Zubeen Da" performed by students of Juriya Ahat Primary School.

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State leaders mourns the demise of Takar Marde

Former Arunachal Minister's last rites to be held at Dumporijo

ITANAGAR, Jan 28: Former Arunachal Pradesh minister Takar Marde died at a hospital in New Delhi on Wednesday morning.

He was 64. Marde is survived by three wives, three sons and a daughter.

Born on July 9, 1961 at Aya Marde village in Upper Subansiri district, Marde started his political journey in 1987 as a zilla parishad member.

From 1992 to 1998, he served as anchal samiti member.

He was first elected to the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly from the Dumporijo constituency on a Congress ticket in 1999 and was re-elected from the same seat in 2004.

Marde served the government in various capacities such as Panchayati Raj and Rural Development minister, deputy Speaker and chairman of the state Planning Board.

Governor KT Parnaik, Union Minister Kiren Rijiju, Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Deputy CM Chowna Mein led the state in condoling Marde's untimely demise.

In a condolence message, Parnaik said Arunachal Pradesh has lost a compassionate and dedicated social activist who devoted his life for the uplift of the downtrodden and worked selflessly for the welfare of society.

In a social media post, Rijiju wrote, "I am deeply saddened by the untimely and tragic demise of former minister of Arunachal Pradesh Shri Takar Marde. He was a seasoned politician, a man of words and kind hearted. His contributions to the state will be cherished forever."

"His death is an irreparable loss to society and family. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and pray for the peace of the departed soul," he added.

Khandu and Mein also expressed shock at the untimely demise of Marde.

"Deeply saddened by the passing of Late Shri Takar Marde Ji. A senior leader, former MLA, Deputy Speaker, Minister and chairman of the State Planning Board, he devoted his life to the service of Arunachal Pradesh and its people. He will always be remembered for his leadership, wisdom and dedication to public welfare," Khandu said.

In a post on X, Mein wrote, "Deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Shri Takar Marde Ji... A steadfast leader who devoted his life to the service for the people of Arunachal Pradesh. He will always be remembered for his contributions to the development of the state and welfare of the people."

Offering condolences to the bereaved family and loved ones during this difficult time, Mein prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

Marde's mortal remains will be flown to Dibrugarh in Assam and then transported to Itanagar, where people can pay their last respects.

His body will be taken to his native Dumporijo on Thursday. *(PTI)*

Arunachal CM, Dy CM, Guv mourn Ajit Pawar's death in plane crash

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 28: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday condoled the death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash.

Pawar (66) and four others were killed after an aircraft carrying them crashed near Baramati in Pune district on Wednesday morning.

"We mourn the untimely demise of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Shri Ajit Pawar ji and the others who tragically lost their lives in the aircraft crash in Baramati, Pune district today," Khandu said in social media post.

"Shri Ajit Pawar ji was a dedicated public servant whose contributions to the people of Maharashtra will long be remembered. In this moment of deep grief, my thoughts and prayers are with his family, loved ones, and all affected by this heartbreaking loss. May their souls attain Sadgati," he said.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also expressed grief over the death of Pawar.

"Deeply shocked and saddened by the untimely passing of Hon'ble DyCM of Maharashtra, Shri Ajit Pawar ji. A true leader of the people, he was known for his strong grassroots connect, tireless work ethic, and deep understanding of administrative matters," Mein said.

The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd), has also joined to condole the demise of Takar Marde. He said that with the passing of Marde, Arunachal Pradesh has lost a compassionate and dedicated social activist who devoted his life to the upliftment of the downtrodden and worked selflessly for the welfare of society.

The Governor recalled Late Marde as a committed leader whose sincere service, unwavering dedication, and steadfast concern for the people earned him wide respect and admiration. He said Marde's meaningful contributions to public life have left an enduring imprint on the State and will continue to inspire generations to come.

Joining the people of Arunachal Pradesh in this moment of grief, the Governor offered his prayers for the eternal peace of the departed soul. He also extended his condolences to the bereaved family, praying that they may find strength and solace during this difficult time.

Man arrested with heroin in Arunachal Pradesh

ITANAGAR, Jan 28: Police have arrested a suspected drug peddler and seized heroin weighing over 24 gm from his possession in Banderdewa area here, an officer said on Wednesday.

The 22-year-old accused hails from Dhanabhari in Assam's Sonitpur district, he said.

Based on a tip-off, a police team intercepted his two-wheeler at Banderdewa check gate, and recovered 19 vials containing 24.6-gm of heroin, SP (Naharlagun ICR) Nyelam Nega said.

The contraband was hidden in the undergarment worn by the accused, he said.

A case under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, has been registered against the accused at Banderdewa police station, the SP added.

Further investigation is underway. *(PTI)*

Coordination meeting with newly elected PRI members

HT Correspondent

DAPORIJO, Jan 28: A coordination meeting with newly elected Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members, coupled with a District Level Monitoring Committee (DLMC) meeting, was conducted under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Tasso Gambo, aimed at reviewing ongoing developmental activities and strengthening coordination between government departments and grassroots leadership.

The meeting witnessed the participation of all Heads of Departments (HODs) of Upper Subansiri district, along with newly elected Panchayat representatives, including Zilla Parishad Members (ZPMs) and the Zilla Parishad Chairperson (ZPC). The active involvement of the newly elected representatives marked a significant step toward collaborative governance and inclusive development.

During the session, each HOD delivered detailed PowerPoint presentations outlining the status of ongoing developmental works across the district. The presentations highlighted operational challenges, field-level issues and grievances faced during project execution. Officials emphasised the importance of close cooperation with elected Panchayat leaders to ensure effective public communication and smooth implementation of government schemes.

The newly elected ZPMs and Panchayat members assured full cooperation to the administration, committing to work alongside departments to facilitate public engagement and address local concerns. An open dialogue allowed both departmental heads and Panchayat leaders to discuss field-level challenges and share suggestions constructively.

Zilla Parishad Chairperson Jyoti Sikom underscored the pressing need to improve cleanliness and strengthen waste management systems in the district, calling for concerted efforts from all stakeholders.

Deputy Commissioner Tasso Gambo assured that all genuine grievances raised during the meeting would be personally followed up with concerned authorities. He reiterated the importance of teamwork between government departments and elected representatives, urging continuous coordination for effective service delivery and sustainable development in Upper Subansiri.

Tawang observes National Road Safety Month with awareness drive

HT Correspondent

TAWANG, Jan 28: Observing National Road Safety Month, the District Transport Office (DTO), Tawang in collaboration with the District Administration and District Police, organised a comprehensive Road Safety Awareness Programme on Wednesday at Old Market, Tawang, aimed at promoting responsible driving and safer roads across the district.

The programme was attended by officials including SP Tawang Dr DW Thongon, Additional Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Transport Officer Rinchin Leta, Dy. SP Kesang Norbu, Inspector Niyi Angu and MVI A L Khushwaha, who addressed drivers, taxi operators and members of the public.

In his address, SP Dr DW Thongon highlighted that "everyone is a driver today," emphasising the importance of traffic awareness for all road users. He urged taxi drivers to proactively brief tourists on dos and don'ts issued by the District Administration and stressed that national security is a shared responsibility, informing drivers about restrictions on foreign tourist movement in certain sensitive locations in Tawang.

ADC-cum-District Transport Officer Rinchin Leta focused on traffic discipline and safe driving practices, citing the alarming statistics that one life is lost every four minutes in India due to road accidents, many caused by delayed assistance. He also highlighted the Government of India's Raah Veer Scheme, which encourages citizens to help accident victims without fear of legal consequences.

Dy SP Kesang Norbu appealed to participants not only to listen to the guidance but also to practically implement traffic rules, stressing that road safety is essential for both drivers and pedestrians. Inspector Niyi Angu explained the legal implications of traffic violations and urged strict compliance with traffic laws. Meanwhile, MVI A L Khushwaha provided detailed information on traffic signs, road symbols and their proper interpretation.

The president of the Taxi Union Tawang, Tashi Dondup, addressed drivers, advising them to keep snow chains ready during winter months to prevent accidents caused by black ice. As part of the programme, free helmets were distributed to selected riders to encourage safety measures among motorcyclists.

The District Transport Officer also informed participants that similar road safety awareness programmes will continue across schools, colleges and other areas throughout the district. The initiative reaffirmed Tawang district's commitment to creating safer roads, cultivating responsible drivers and fostering a culture of care, compliance and awareness among all road users.

One-Day awareness programme on PM Vishwakarma scheme

HT Correspondent

YUPIA, Jan 28: The Branch MSME–Development and Facilitation Office (MSME-DFO), Itanagar, under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Government of India, successfully organised a One-Day Awareness Programme on the PM Vishwakarma Scheme at the District Industries Centre (DIC) Hall, Yupia on Wednesday.

Organised in collaboration with the Department of Industries, Government of Arunachal Pradesh and Niumhi Foundation, the programme aimed to create awareness among artisans and beneficiaries about the scheme's various components, benefits and opportunities available under MSME, including access to institutional finance and measures to strengthen entrepreneurship, marketing capabilities and business sustainability at the grassroots level.

Addressing the participants, Dani Abing, Joint Director of Industries, highlighted that the PM Vishwakarma Scheme, launched by the Government of India on September 17, 2023, provides comprehensive support to traditional artisans and craftspeople. He encouraged artisans to register under the scheme to avail benefits such as a PM Vishwakarma certificate and ID card, skill upgradation through basic and advanced training with a ₹ 500 daily stipend, collateral-free loans up to ₹ 3 lakh at 5% interest, a ₹ 15,000 toolkit incentive, ₹ 1 per digital transaction incentive and marketing support for branding and quality certification.

During the technical session, Sourav Kumar, Assistant Director, MSME, elaborated on the scheme and motivated artisans to register. Dasher Taba Aka, DDI, Yupia, addressed participants on skill development, while Tashi Nungnu, SLBC Coordinator, Arunachal Pradesh, spoke on financial literacy and banking support available under the scheme. Diksha Nanda Bora and Juna Dada, MSME Experts from SLPMU, Department of Industries, Arunachal Pradesh, provided detailed guidance on entrepreneurship development, marketing, packaging, online onboarding and other related aspects.

The technical session was followed by a question-and-answer segment. Udyam Registration and QR Code Generation facilities were also made available to participants for on-the-spot registration and onboarding under the PM Vishwakarma Scheme.

Around 90 Gram Panchayat Chairpersons (GPCs) and PM Vishwakarma artisans attended the programme. Key dignitaries present included Dani Abing, Joint Director of Industries; Hinium Takung, Chairman, Niumhi Foundation, Arunachal Pradesh and Omang Apang, Assistant Director of Industries.

The programme reinforced the government's commitment to promoting entrepreneurship, skill development and financial inclusion among traditional artisans in Arunachal Pradesh.

ICAR-CIFT holds first-ever coracle training in Arunachal

HT Correspondent

ZIRO, Jan 28: The Indian Council of Agricultural Research–Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (ICAR-CIFT), under its North Eastern Hill (NEH) flagship component, organised a two-day training programme on "Introduction of Coracles and Sustainable Inland Fishing Systems" at Ziro, Arunachal Pradesh on January 27–28. The programme marked the first-ever introduction of coracles in the North Eastern region, showcasing a low-cost, durable and easy-to-use fishing craft for inland fisheries.

The inaugural session at Seeh Lake was graced by Oli Perme, Deputy Commissioner, Lower Subansiri District, as Chief Guest. She lauded ICAR-CIFT's support to fish farmers in strengthening harvest and post-harvest fisheries and released a leaflet titled "ICAR-CIFT Coracle – A Friendly Craft of Inland Fisheries." The event saw participation from Liagi Lasa, District Fisheries Development Officer, Ziro; Tasso Butung, District Agriculture Officer; Mihin Tapin, Manager of Tarin Integrated Aqua Park; heads of departments, fish farmers and local lake representatives.

Dr B Madhusudana Rao, Scientist-in-Charge, along with ICAR-CIFT Principal Scientists, introduced the institute's work in promoting sustainable fisheries and entrepreneurship. Dr U Sreedhar, Principal Scientist, highlighted the benefits of coracles for inland fisheries. Liagi Lasa welcomed participants and acknowledged ICAR-CIFT's consistent support over the past three years, while Mihin Tapin proposed the vote of thanks. The programme was organised in association with the Department of Fisheries, Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

A practical training session at Tarin Integrated Aqua Park enabled fishers to learn coracle usage and sustainable fishing methods. Ten coracles with paddles and fishing gear were distributed to Apatani tribal beneficiaries through the Fisheries Department, Lower Subansiri District.

During the visit, Dr B Madhusudana Rao also inspected the mini fish processing unit established by ICAR-CIFT under the NEH component at Ziro, interacting with members of M/s Gaumco Multipurpose Cooperative Society Ltd on their future requirements and opportunities in fish processing.

The training reinforced ICAR-CIFT's commitment to promoting sustainable inland fisheries, capacity building and livelihood enhancement for fish farmers in the North Eastern region.

Fire guts four houses in Boleng, no casualties reported

HT Correspondent

BOLENG, Jan 28: A fire broke out at Parong-II Kinne under Riga Circle around 4:50 PM on Tuesday, completely destroying four residential houses. The Fire Brigade from Geku rushed to the spot and carried out fire-fighting operations.

Deputy Commissioner of Siang District, Tayi Taggu, Additional Commissioner Philip Jerang and Boleng Police Station Officer-in-Charge visited the site to assess the situation and oversee relief measures. Immediate assistance was provided to the affected families as per norms. No casualties or injuries were reported.

Orientation programme for newly elected Zilla Parishad, Gram Panchayat leaders

CM Khandu urges discipline, grassroots empowerment in Panchayat orientation

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Jan 28: Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday highlighted the importance of discipline, ideological clarity and grassroots empowerment while addressing the State Level Orientation Programme for newly elected Zilla Parishad Chairpersons (ZPCs), Zilla Parishad Members (ZPMs) and Gram Panchayat Chairpersons (GPCs).

Congratulating the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its historic performance in the recent Panchayat elections, Khandu noted the entry of many first-time representatives, including graduates and postgraduates, into the Panchayati Raj system. He said the orientation programme aims to equip elected representatives with clarity on party ideology, responsibilities, conduct and coordination with government systems, adding that separate training sessions would also be conducted by the Panchayati Raj Department in the coming days.

Describing the BJP as a "party with a difference," Khandu emphasised its principle of "Nation First," prioritising service to society over individual or party interests. He traced Arunachal Pradesh's democratic

journey since 1972 and said the state has seen significant transformation over the past decade, particularly under BJP-led governance. He stressed that development is a continuous process dependent on good governance and urged Panchayat representatives to strengthen democratic institutions at the grassroots.

Khandu highlighted the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in achieving a "Viksit Bharat," saying empowered Gram Panchayats are key to stronger constituencies, districts, states and a developed nation. He reminded representatives that their conduct reflects on both themselves and the party and stressed the need for discipline integrity and accountability. The Chief Minister assured that Panchayati Raj Institutions' autonomy would be respected, with no interference from MLAs and promised enhanced support systems and decentralisation of power.

He urged better coordination between the party organisation and governance by integrating Panchayat members into booth-level party committees, ensuring effective scheme implementation and promoting last-mile delivery of benefits. Khandu emphasised training, leadership development and ideological grounding, stating that BJP is a service-oriented movement guided by "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas." He also warned that disciplinary action would be taken against representatives failing to uphold performance standards.

The programme was attended by BJP state unit president Kaling Moyong, vice president cum Convenor Chow Zingnu Namchoom, Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein, cabinet ministers, MLAs, senior leaders including Dr Vinay Sahasrabuddhe and representatives from Public Policy Research Centre.

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NCP's future at stake after Ajit Pawar's death: Political analysts

MUMBAI, Jan 28: The tragic and untimely demise of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash on Wednesday has not only left a vacuum in the BJP-led state coalition government, but also cast a shadow on the future of the NCP.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) is likely to face a leadership crisis following Ajit Pawar's death, as there is no clear second-in-command, say political observers.

As the 'clock' symbol lost its undisputed leader, questions loomed over the party's survival and its future equation with founder Sharad Pawar, whose Rajya Sabha tenure ends in April this year.

There has been speculation whether the NCP might reunite with the Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP), especially as ties between the factions have softened in recent months.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will need to ensure that the 41 MLAs aligned with Ajit Pawar do not drift back toward Sharad Pawar, political analysts say.

Ajit Pawar's wife, Sunetra, is currently a Rajya Sabha member and has been politically active, though she lacks administrative experience.

The NCP has one Lok Sabha member, Sunil Tatkare, and two Rajya Sabha MPs - Praful Patel and Sunetra Pawar.

With NCP founder Sharad Pawar staying away from the public glare during the recently held local bodies and civic elections, his daughter and NCP (SP) working president, Supriya Sule, campaigned for the party candidates, but was no match for her cousin Ajit Pawar, who campaigned statewide.

State politics was abuzz with speculation about a possible merger of NCP (SP) with the NCP under Ajit Pawar's leadership. However, his untimely death in a plane crash has cast uncertainty over the future of his faction.

Apart from state NCP president Sunil Tatkare and national working president Praful Patel, the party lacks a senior leader capable of succeeding Ajit Pawar. The only other mass-based leader, Chhagan Bhujbal—recently acquitted in a money laundering case—is currently unwell.

While Patel and Tatkare have been key organisational figures, they lack the statewide grassroots connect that Ajit Pawar commanded.

In the ruling Mahayuti, which won a massive mandate in the 2024 assembly polls, the BJP has 132 MLAs, followed by Eknath Shinde- led Shiv Sena with 57 and Pawar's NCP 41.

Senior journalist Prakash Akolkar told PTI that both NCP factions are contesting the February 5 Zilla Parishad elections together on the 'clock' symbol, effectively signalling an unofficial merger.

"The question is no longer about who merges with whom. With only two Opposition parties left—Congress and Shiv Sena (UBT)—it remains to be seen whether the Congress can revive itself," he said.

In the recently-concluded civic polls in Maharashtra, the NCP, which contested separately from Mahayuti allies, bagged 167 seats across 29 municipal corporations and was defeated by the BJP on its home ground of Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad, where it had aligned with Sharad Pawar's NCP (SP), which won only 36 seats across the state. In the 165-member Pune Municipal Corporation, the NCP won only 27 seats and NCP (SP) 3 seats against BJP's tally of 119, whereas in the 102-member Pimpri Chinchwad civic body, Ajit Pawar's party got 37 and Sharad Pawar's faction drew a blank, while BJP got 84 seats.

Last month, in the polls to 246 municipal councils and 42 nagar panchayats, the NCP won 966 and NCP (SP) 256 out of the total 6,851 seats. (PTI)

'Mamata govt of endangering national security'

Nabin slams TMC over infiltration, SIR row

DURGAPUR (WB), Jan 28: BJP president Nitin Nabin on Wednesday accused the TMC government of endangering national security by patronising infiltration, and harassing voters during the ongoing SIR of electoral rolls in West Bengal, and called for a change of guard in the upcoming assembly elections.

Addressing a public meeting in Durgapur during his first visit to West Bengal after assuming the party post, Nabin alleged that there was a "deliberate attempt" by the TMC to change the state's demography and "turn Bengal into Bangladesh", posing what he described as a serious threat to national security.

"While the Election Commission is determined to remove infiltrators and fake voters, the TMC government is trying to derail the SIR exercise through fear-mongering and misinformation," he said, dismissing the ruling party's allegation that the poll panel was harassing common people.

"It is not the Election Commission but the state administration-DMs, SDOs and BDOs acting as puppets of the TMC government-which are intimidating citizens to malign the EC," the BJP president alleged.

He cautioned officials against acting at the behest of what he termed a "temporary government".

Placing the issue of demographic change in a historical and ideological context, Nabin invoked Jana Sangh founder Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, saying Bengal existed in its present form because of his resistance to attempts to merge it with East Pakistan, and claimed that "similar forces are active even today".

"Those who are not children of Bengal's soil cannot claim rights here. BJP workers are ready to make any sacrifice, but we will not allow Bengal to be merged with Bangladesh," he said, calling upon party cadres to intensify their movement against infiltration.

The BJP leader also linked the SIR exercise with the broader political battle ahead of the assembly polls, asserting that TMC supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was "crying foul in Delhi".

Nabin accused the TMC government of presiding over what he described as "jungle raj", alleging

that corruption and lawlessness had replaced governance, with party leaders openly collecting "TMC tax". "Factories have been shut, and companies of corruption have been opened," he said, alleging that several ministers were either in jail or out on bail in recruitment-related scams and warning that those facing cases would not be spared.

Nabin said Durgapur in Paschim Bardhaman district was once an industrial hub attracting workers and students from Bihar and Jharkhand, but alleged that industrial growth had stalled under the TMC regime.

"Mamata Banerjee promised industrialisation during the Singur movement. Fifteen years later, even old industries are shutting down, forcing youths to migrate outside the state," he said.

Targeting the state government over crimes against women, Nabin referred to a Durgapur rape incident in the region and accused the administration of insensitivity and shielding the culprit.

"When the chief minister questions why women were outside after 7 pm, it reflects the mindset of the government. BJP workers have taken responsibility for the safety of mothers and sisters and are ready to make any sacrifice," he said.

On religious issues, the BJP leader alleged discrimination against 'Sanatan' traditions, claiming that "while there were no restrictions on 'azaan', Durga Puja faced obstacles". "No Sanatani will tolerate this," he said, linking the issue to what he described as a broader ideological challenge.

With an eye on the upcoming assembly elections, Nabin urged party workers to strengthen booth-level organisation, asserting that a "double-engine government" under Prime Minister Narendra Modi would usher in a "developed and golden Bengal".

"Mamata Banerjee's countdown has begun. Raise your voice so loudly that it reaches Delhi," he told party workers, expressing confidence that the BJP would dislodge the TMC from power. (PTI)

Discrimination-free approach reflects Ram Rajya: Adityanath

SIDDHARTHNAGAR (UP), Jan 28: Asserting that development cannot be divided based on caste, religion or region, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday said the government is committed to carrying out welfare and development works "without bias or discrimination".

He noted that a discrimination-free approach reflects Ram Rajya (an ideal rule of just, ethical, people-centric governance as described in Ramayana).

Addressing a public gathering here after inaugurating and laying the foundation of 229 development projects worth over ₹ 1,052 crore, Adityanath said the state government considers the entire population of Uttar Pradesh as one family and works with the spirit of inclusive and sustainable development.

"Development cannot be achieved by dividing society. It has to be pursued with a comprehensive outlook and without any discrimination, no 'mine' or 'yours', no caste, religion, language or regional bias. This discrimination-free approach alone reflects the true spirit of Ram Rajya," the chief minister said.

The programme, marking the inauguration of the Siddharthnagar Mahotsav, was attended by Leader of Opposition in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly and Itwa MLA Mata Prasad Pandey, state minister Anil Rajbhar, Dumariaganj MP Jagdambika Pal and other public representatives.

Adityanath paid tributes to Lord Buddha, describing Siddharthnagar as a sacred land that gave the world the message of compassion and harmony.

He also expressed condolences over the reported death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in an airplane crash and extended sympathies to the bereaved families.

Calling the inaugurated projects a "collective effort", the chief minister said the proposals came from public representatives and were approved on merit.

"We are only a medium. When justified proposals come, funds are released without discrimination," he said.

Highlighting the transformation of Siddharthnagar, once classified as an aspirational district, Adityanath said the region earlier suffered from poor infrastructure, disease and migration. He noted that encephalitis, which had claimed lives for decades, was eliminated within a few years after 2017 through sustained efforts inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The chief minister said Siddharthnagar now has improved road connectivity, including four-lane highways linking the district with neighbouring regions and Nepal, which would boost investment and employment. He added that the Shamli-Gorakhpur corridor passing through Dumariaganj, Bansi and Itwa would act as a development corridor for the area.

Referring to infrastructure expansion, Adityanath cited the establishment of a medical college, the start of a nursing college, the inauguration of a women's hostel and plans for a 1,000-seat auditorium under corporate social responsibility initiatives. He also spoke about welfare schemes, saying benefits such as ration, toilets, housing under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Ayushman Bharat health cards must reach every poor household without discrimination.

"This is the essence of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'," he said.

Urging farmers to diversify cropping patterns, Adityanath appealed to them to adopt a third crop in addition to the traditional two, citing examples from Kannauj, Auraiya and Kanpur Dehat where maize cultivation has yielded additional income of nearly ₹ 1 lakh per acre. (PTI)

'Flying to Baramati, will talk tomorrow': Father of attendant on Pawar flight recalls her last words

MUMBAI, Jan 28: His voice filled with emotion and his eyes welling up, a distraught Shivkumar Mali said his daughter had promised to speak to him "tomorrow", but that moment will never come.

His daughter Pinky Mali was among those killed in the Baramati plane crash that also claimed the life of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

"Pappa, I am flying to Baramati tomorrow (Wednesday) with DCM Ajit Pawar. After dropping him, I will go to Nanded and will speak to you once I reach the hotel…" Shivkumar, a resident of Prabhadevi in Central Mumbai, said, recounting his last conversation with his daughter. Pinky was an attendant on the Learjet 46, operated by Delhi-based VSR Ventures, that crash-landed at the Baramati airport. There were five people onboard, including the crew members, according to the aviation regulator DGCA.

She had flown with the President, chief ministers and several political leaders, Shivkumar said, adding that she was flying with Ajit Pawar for the fourth time, according to her father.

"I spoke to her last evening, and she told me that she would be going to Baramati with Deputy CM Ajit Pawar and would then proceed to Nanded. I told her 'let us speak tomorrow after your duty'. But that tomorrow will never come," said Shivkumar, his eyes moist.

The father, who is also an activist of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) that Pawar headed, said a local politician named Samadhan Sarvankar informed him about Ajit Pawar's plane crash.

"I switched on the television. The news left me shocked," he said.

The father and daughter had last met on January 16, when Pinky visited Prabhadevi from Thane to cast her vote in the civic polls. Shivkumar said they spoke frequently.

Pinky had been working as a flight attendant for the last five years. She started with Air India and moved to private chartered flights after a couple of years, he said. (PTI)

Cong flags concerns over giving relief on 96% of EU exports to India

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: The Congress on Wednesday flagged concerns after the India-EU free trade pact was sealed, including the Modi government's "failure" to secure an exemption for India's aluminium and steel-makers from the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and tariff reduction or relief on over 96% of the bloc's exports to India.

Congress general secretary incharge communications Jairam Ramesh said there are also concerns about the EU's strict health and product safety rules, which will continue to be in force over Indian exports even after the FTA, as well as the concern about India's largest export to the EU -- refined fuels.

A large portion of this fuel is sourced from Russia, and there needs to be clarity on the future of these trade routes amidst pressure from Washington DC, the Congress leader said. India and the 27-nation European Union first started negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in June 2007, he pointed out.

Ramesh said 16 rounds of negotiations took place but were suspended in May 2013 because of lack of agreement on many important issues.

Talks on an FTA remained suspended till June 2022 when they were resumed, he noted.

"This hugely-hyped FTA is the biggest trade opening India has given to any trade partner (tariff reduction or relief on over 96% of EU exports to India) and it is expected to double India's imports from the EU. Its impact on India's trade deficit will have to be monitored closely," Ramesh said.

"The Modi government's failure to secure an exemption for India's aluminium and steel-makers from the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is one of Congress' key concerns regarding the FTA," he said.

India's aluminium and steel exports to the EU have already fallen from USD 7 billion to USD 5 billion and are only expected to fall further beginning this year due to the enforcement of the CBAM since January 1, 2026, he said.

"Over time, CBAM will also expand to include other categories of India's industrial exports and can effectively nullify any gains India secures from the FTA," Ramesh said. He further said there are also concerns about the EU's strict health and product safety rules, which will continue to be in force over Indian exports even after the FTA.

"This can easily become a non-tariff trade barrier, and the EU has been accused of the same by other trade partners. Questions over Intellectual Property (IP) rights for our pharmaceutical sector are also unanswered. The EU has also claimed privileged access to Indian services market in key sectors like financial services and maritime transport - exceeding India's commitments with any other trading partner, including the UK and Australia," Ramesh said.

"The inclusion of automobiles in the FTA is also a concern. The Modi Government opened up India's automobile sector for the first time ever in its FTA with the UK, and the FTA with the EU only opens up further risk for domestic automobile manufacturers," he said. (PTI)

BJP's arrogance broke tradition, it's extremely ominous: Akhilesh

LUCKNOW, Jan 28: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav launched into a diatribe against the ruling BJP on Wednesday, accusing it of hurting Sanatan traditions after Shankaracharya Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati left the Magh Mela in Prayagraj without taking a holy dip at the Sangam.

The seer left the fair ground "with a heavy heart", ending his sit-in protest outside the Shankaracharya camp since January 18 over allegedly being prevented by the local administration from taking a holy dip at the Sangam -- the confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati river -- on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya.

In a post on X, Yadav said the BJP's "arrogance" broke a tradition that has continued since time immemorial. "Jagadguru Shankaracharya ji leaving the Magh Mela on the sacred land of Prayagraj without taking a holy bath is an extremely ominous incident," he said. The former Uttar Pradesh chief minister claimed the entire Sanatan community was not only hurt but also gripped by a sense of fear. "The global Sanatan society is deeply pained and filled with an uncertain sense of apprehension," he said.

Yadav alleged that the ruling party could have acted differently, but it was "blinded by power".

"If the BJP and its associates wanted, they could have shed the arrogance of power, carried him on their shoulders and ensured his sacred bath at the Triveni Sangam, thereby upholding his honour," he said. "The BJP is intoxicated with the pride of power acquired through corrupt means, which is stopping it from doing so."

The Samajwadi Party chief said hurting saints could never bring well-being. "No one can attain happiness by hurting the hearts of saints. A bigger mistake than committing an error is not seeking forgiveness," he said, adding that "no political post can be greater than the honour of saints".

Taking a swipe at the ruling party's claims on religion, Yadav said, "The BJP is not even truly aligned with Sanatan. Today, every Sanatani is deeply distressed."

Invoking religious texts, he warned of consequences for the development involving the seer. "Do those who create obstacles in religious rituals need to be told what they are called? Our epics clearly state that no wrongdoer ever escapes the punishment of arrogance," he said.

Yadav concluded the post with the message: "Hurt saints mean the end of power."

On January 18, Swami Avimukteshwaranand was riding a palanquin to the Sangam on the occasion of Mauni Amavasya, when a dispute broke out as administrative and police officials asked him to dismount and proceed for the ritual bath on foot, citing heavy crowds.

The Mela administration alleged that the Shankaracharya and his supporters broke a barricade on a pontoon bridge and moved towards the ghats, creating serious difficulties for the police in managing the situation. Following the incident, there was an exchange of allegations between Swami Avimukteshwaranand and the police administration, and he ultimately left the Magh Mela on Wednesday without taking the holy dip. (PTI)

60 per cent of mental disorders found in patients below 35 years: Indian Psychiatric Society

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: A deeply concerning picture of India's mental health landscape emerged at the 77th Annual National Conference of the Indian Psychiatric Society (ANCIPS 2026), where experts revealed that nearly 60 per cent of mental disorders were diagnosed in individuals below the age of 35.

The data shared during high-level scientific deliberations underscores that mental illness in India is no longer confined to later stages of life but is increasingly affecting adolescents, young adults and people in their most productive years.

The four-day national conference is being held from January 28 to 31 at Delhi's Yashobhoomi, and has brought together thousands of psychiatrists, clinicians, researchers and policymakers from across the country.

Experts at ANCIPS 2026 highlighted that mental disorders frequently manifest early, often during adolescence or young adulthood, with the median age of onset ranging between 19 and 20 years.

Global and Indian studies presented at the conference paint a sobering picture. A large-scale international study published in the journal Molecular Psychiatry, tracking over 7 lakh individuals,

has shown that 34.6 per cent of mental disorders begin before the age of 14 years, 48.4 per cent before 18 years, and 62.5 per cent by the age of 25 years.

These findings indicate that for a majority of patients, mental illness begins well before adulthood, silently shaping educational outcomes, career paths, relationships and overall quality of life.

By the age of 25, most cases of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety disorders, and eating disorders have already emerged, experts noted.

Depression, substance use disorders, and behavioural addictions are also being reported at younger ages than ever before. The Indian Psychiatric Society cautioned that when mental disorders begin early and remain untreated, they often become chronic, leading to long-term disability and significant social and economic costs.

Dr Deepak Raheja, organising secretary of ANCIPS Delhi and director of Hope Care India, said that the data demands urgent action.

"When 60 per cent of mental disorders are affecting people below 35 years of age, it becomes clear that India's mental health crisis is unfolding far earlier than we once believed. These are the years when individuals are studying, building careers and contributing to society. Early identification, school- and college-based mental health programmes and de-stigmatisation are no longer optional; they are essential if we want to protect the future of our nation," Dr Raheja said. The vulnerability of young people was further underscored by suicide statistics.

According to the World Health Organisation, suicide is now the third leading cause of death among individuals aged 15 to 29 years, making mental health challenges among youth a public health emergency rather than just a clinical concern. Experts linked this trend to a complex mix of academic pressure, unemployment, social isolation, digital overexposure, substance use and unresolved emotional distress.

Recent data has also revealed a dramatic rise in psychological distress among young adults. Studies indicate a 101.7 per cent increase in frequent mental distress among individuals aged 18 to 25 years between 2011 and 2021.

Mental health professionals at ANCIPS pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with economic uncertainty and changing social structures, has further intensified stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms in this age group. Dr Nimesh G Desai, chairperson of the organising committee of ANCIPS 2026 and former director of the Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences, emphasised the long-term consequences of ignoring early-onset mental illness.

"Excess use of digital devices and dependency on virtual world will further increase mental issues in future. One of the main reason for rising cases in India is lack of awareness on timely treatment. Mental disorders that begin in youth often follow a lifelong course if not treated early. This impacts not just the individual, but families, workplaces and the country's overall productivity," Dr Desai said.

Psychiatry in India must move from a reactive approach to a preventive and early intervention-driven model, he stated.

Highlighting the unique pressures faced by urban youth, Dr Savita Malhotra, president of the Indian Psychiatric Society, said that rapid social change has significantly altered young people's lives experiences.

"Today's youth are dealing with intense academic competition, constant digital comparison, loneliness despite connectivity, and uncertainty about employment and relationships." (PTI)

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Manipur violence

SC extends tenure of Justice Gita Mittal committee till July 31

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: The Supreme Court on Wednesday extended till July 31 the tenure of the apex court-appointed Justice Gita Mittal committee set up to oversee relief and rehabilitation of the victims of ethnic violence in Manipur. A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi extended the panel's term after it was informed that its tenure ended in July last year.

The bench was informed that the panel has so far submitted 42 reports to the apex court on various aspects related to rehabilitation of the victims.

"Since no formal extension was granted since July 2025, the continuation of the committee shall be regularised and is granted time till July 31, 2026," the CJI Kant said.

On August 7, 2023, the top court had ordered the setting up of the committee of three former women high court judges to oversee relief and rehabilitation of the victims and compensation to them, besides asking former Maharashtra police chief Dattatray Padsalgikar to monitor the probe in criminal cases.

The committee was authorised to submit its reports directly to the top court, which is monitoring the cases related to ethnic strife.

The panel, headed by former Jammu and Kashmir High Court Chief Justice Gita Mittal, includes Justices (retd) Shalini P Joshi, a former judge of the Bombay High Court, and Asha Menon, an ex-judge of the Delhi High Court.

The three-member panel was constituted days after the apex court had termed as "deeply disturbing" the video of women being paraded naked in the state.

More than 200 people have been killed, several hundred injured and thousands displaced since ethnic violence first broke out in Manipur on May 3, 2023, when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status. (PTI)

M'laya to reactivate VDPs

SHILLONG, Jan 28: Meghalaya is taking steps to curb illegal immigration, with plans to reactivate Village Defence Parties (VDPs) along its international border with Bangladesh.

Announcing this, Deputy Chief Minister in-charge Home, Prestone Tynsong said, "If you talk about illegal immigration, this is a national subject and it is not a state subject, but as far as the situation in Bangladesh is concerned, we have decided as a state government that we will re-activate the functioning of the VDPs in all international borders as well as the interstate borders."

On whether the government is considering providing arms to the VDPs, Tynsong said, "Not necessarily arms, but we will give them further training. We will have some kind of training and also assess the basic requirements needed. We are in the process of completing this whole issue. We will give more training to the VDPs so that they can also handle the issue of illegal immigration."

The deputy chief minister also assured that the state is taking action against illegal immigration as per existing laws and enforcement mechanisms. "Action is an ongoing process. We take action accordingly as per the provisions of the law."

He further assured border safety, stating, "Right now, we are safe. Jointly, the BSF and state police are fully alerted, and district administrations have been directed to take action on receiving information." (NNN)

Sikkim Guv, CM condole death of Ajit Pawar

GANGTOK, Jan 28: Sikkim Governor Om Prakash Mathur and Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang on Wednesday expressed grief over the death Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash.

Pawar and four others were killed after an aircraft carrying them crashed near Baramati in Maharashtra's Pune on Wednesday morning.

In a post on Facebook, Mathur said, "Shri Ajit Pawar's untimely demise in a plane crash is very sad. My condolences to the Pawar family. Om Shanti." The chief minister said he was shocked and saddened by Pawar's demise. "His departure is a tremendous loss to the people of Maharashtra and to all who knew and respected him," he said. (PTI)

জাননী

ইয়াৰ দ্বাৰা কার্বি আংলং আৰু পশ্চিম কার্বি আংলং জিলাৰ ৫৫ বছৰ অনুর্ধ যি সকল গৃহৰক্ষীয়ে পৰবর্তী ৩ (তিনি) বছৰৰ কাৰণে পুনৰ কার্যকাল বৃদ্ধিৰ বাবে আবেদন কৰিছে তেখেত সকলক অহা ইং ০৩/০২/২০২৬ তাৰিখ মঙ্গলবাৰে পুৱা ১০ (দহ) বজাত নিজৰ নিজৰ কুপন ক্রমিক নম্বৰ লগত লৈ মাঞ্জাস্থিত জিলা গৃহৰক্ষী প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রত উপস্থিত হ'বলৈ আহ্বান জনোৱা হ'ল।

বিঃদ্র ঃ- ১) গৃহৰক্ষী স্বেচ্ছাসেৱক/স্বেচ্ছাসেৱিকা সকলে আবেদন জমা কৰা ক্রমিক নম্বৰৰ কুপন লগত লৈ আহিব।
২) গৃহৰক্ষী স্বেচ্ছাসেৱক /স্বেচ্ছাসেৱিকা সকলে আবেদনৰ লগত জমা কৰা নথিৰ মূল কপি লগত আনিব।

জিলা অধিনায়ক,
DIPR/D/HLT/286/29-Jan-26 গৃহৰক্ষী বাহিনী, কার্বি আংলং, ডিফু

Quit notice poster in Garo Hills

SHILLONG, Jan 28: West Garo Hills district police have launched an investigation to nab those responsible behind pasting of a poster which was allegedly signed by ISIS-K, warning Garos to vacate their land by 2027.

The poster, pasted on an electric pole near Law College in Araimile, Tura, Meghalaya, on Wednesday has sparked concerns about law and order in the district.

"The poster has been removed, and will be sent for forensic analysis. A case has been registered at Araimile police station and investigation has started," West Garo Hills district police chief Abraham T Sangma said while assuring that "all our efforts are being made to identify and trace the persons responsible for pasting the poster and those who are circulating it to create panic and create communal disharmony. Accordingly, necessary actions will be taken against them as per relevant section(s) of law." He informed that at present, no other such posters have been noticed or reported from any other parts of the district.

"Preliminary assessment indicates that this may be a deliberate attempt by a person(s) or group with vested interests to create anxiety and disturb the law and order situation in the district," Sangma stated.

He also appealed to the public not to panic and not to be misled by such messages on social media or other platforms which are being circulated to create communal disharmony.

Any suspicious activity or information, the public are requested to share the same with the nearest police station, outpost, beat house or the police control room, Tura immediately.

The police officer further assured that the law and order situation in the district is under control and necessary steps are being taken to maintain peace and harmony in and around the district. (NNN)

Wildfire erupts in southern Dzukou Valley, over 30 trekkers evacuated

KOHIMA, Jan 28: A wildfire broke out in the southern part of Dzukou Valley in Nagaland's Kohima district, leading to the evacuation of over 30 trekkers who were stranded due to the blaze, officials said on Wednesday.

The trekkers have been safely evacuated from the high-altitude valley, and containment operations were launched by the district administration and the Southern Angami Youth Organisation (SAYO) to prevent the fire from spreading further, they said.

Officials of the Kohima District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) said the fire was believed to have erupted on Monday, though authorities were informed about it on Tuesday. The cause and exact point of origin of the blaze were not immediately known.

Deputy Commissioner B Henok Buchem has constituted a team to conduct reconnaissance and rescue operations.

"All available resources shall be mobilised to contain the further spread of the fire," Buchem said, adding that additional personnel would be deployed as required.

A DDMA official said that an emergency meeting would be held on Wednesday afternoon to decide upon further measures.

SAYO said it was alerted about the wildfire on Monday afternoon, after volunteers shared videos and photographs from the site.

The organisation was prioritising the evacuation of trekkers and the implementation of precautionary measures, its president Zasitsolie Beio said.

All trekking activities in the Dzukou Valley, from both the Jakhama and Viswema entry points, have been temporarily suspended, the officials said.

The wildfire incident comes less than a month after a major blaze in the Khonoma Dzukou Valley in December, which had prompted a multi-agency firefighting response. (PTI)

GOVT OFASSAM
DIRECTORATE-CUM-ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER
PWD(R&B), HILLS, ASSAM,
DIPHU.

No. ACEH/CS/PMC/80/2025-26/0
Date:28.01.2026.

Cancellation Notice

It is for information to all concerned that the Bids for "Consulting Service for Project Management Consultacy Seevice for the"Constructin of Executive Member Residential Bunglow & MAC Hostel at Council Colony, Diphu in Karbi Anglong District (EPC Mode-1) published earlier vide Press Notice Inviting No.ACEH/CS/PMC/80/2025-26/01, Dated: 08.01.2026 is hereby cancelled due to non received of required no's of bid no bid received.

Re-tender notice will be floated for the same shortly.

Sd/-
Director-Cum-Chief Engineer,
P.W.D. (R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu
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Memo No. ACEH/CS/PMC/80/2025-26/0 -(A) Date:28.01.2026.

Centre sanctioned 50-bed critical care block at Dhalai district hospital: Tripura CM

AGARTALA, Jan 28: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday said the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has sanctioned a 50-bed critical care block at Dhalai district hospital.

The facility will significantly enhance treatment for trauma care, cardiac care, and other serious illnesses at the district level, eliminating the need to refer critical patients to Agartala, Saha said in a post on Facebook. "Good news for Dhalai District! The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, has sanctioned a 50-bed Critical Care Block at Dhalai District Hospital under PM-ABHIM, with a project cost of Rs 23.75 crore," the CM said.

"I extend my heartfelt thanks to Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji and Union Health Minister J P Nadda ji for their visionary leadership and for ensuring state-of-the-art healthcare facilities in the tribal areas of Tripura," he added. Dhalai had earlier been declared an 'aspirational district'. (PTI)

Students take out march in Manipur's Churachandpur to protest attempts to form popular govt

CHURACHANDPUR, Jan 28: Thousands of students took out a march in Manipur's Churachandpur district on Wednesday to protest against attempts to form a popular government in the state and press the demand for a "political solution" for the Kuki-Zo community.

The procession by the Joint Students of Churachandpur began at the Lamka Public Ground in the district headquarters and culminated at Tuibong, covering a 2 km distance, with protesters raising slogans on the need for a "political solution and not popular government". They also held placards with the message "no solution, no rest" written on them. Student leaders also submitted a representation addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi through the additional deputy commissioner.

The memorandum sought a "political solution before the installation of a popular government in Manipur". More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The Centre had imposed the President's rule in the state after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned last year. The state assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation. (PTI)

Ajit Pawar served people with unwavering commitment: Biren Singh

IMPHAL, Jan 28: Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh expressed sorrow over the demise of Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar in a plane crash, and said he served the people of the western state with unwavering commitment.

Pawar and four others were killed after an aircraft carrying them crashed in Maharashtra's Pune district on Wednesday morning. The accident occurred when the plane was landing in the Baramati area.

In a post on X, Singh said, "Deeply saddened by the tragic demise of Shri Ajit Pawar ji, Deputy Chief Minister of Maharashtra, in a plane crash at Baramati."

Singh also said Pawar was a "seasoned leader who served the people of Maharashtra with unwavering commitment and dedication", and extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

Manipur BJP president Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi said the untimely demise of Pawar is a great loss to the nation. (PTI)

CM Rio, Dy Speaker condole death of pawar

KOHIMA, Jan 28: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and Deputy Speaker S Toiho Yeptho on Wednesday expressed grief over the death of Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash.

Pawar (66) and four others were killed after an aircraft carrying them crashed near Baramati in Maharashtra's Pune district on Wednesday morning.

In his condolence message, Rio described the incident as "tragic and unforeseen", and said it has plunged Maharashtra and the nation into mourning.

He said Pawar was a seasoned leader, whose decades of service in governance and public welfare earned him respect across political and social spectrums. (PTI)

Nagaland-Japan Connect organised in Dimapur

DIMAPUR, Jan 28: The Government of Nagaland, through the Investment and Development Authority of Nagaland (IDAN), organized Nagaland–Japan Connect 2026 at the Integrated Business Hub & Innovation Centre (IBHIC) in Dimapur on Wednesday.

This event marked a major milestone in the Nagaland state government global engagement strategy, positioning human capital development, international mobility, and people-to-people partnerships at the centre of the State's economic vision.

The initiative brought together Nagaland state government representatives, Japanese prefectural officials from Kochi, industry partners, academic institutions, and youth to create structured pathways for overseas employment, skill enhancement, and long-term institutional cooperation with Japan.

Delivering a speech at the event, Abu Metha, advisor to the chief minister of Nagaland and chairman of IDAN, highlighted that the initiative reflects Nagaland's evolving global outlook.

"Dreams are meant to be realised through hard work, enabling youth to achieve success and excellence," he said, while urging the youth to gain knowledge and experience, bring back

good practices, and contribute to Nagaland, with assurance that the Government will continue to support them.

Hekani Jakhalu, Nagaland minister for Industries and Commerce, in her special address, highlighted the importance of youth stepping beyond traditional boundaries.

"With more than ten lakh job seekers, the challenge before us is to create sustainable livelihoods. This initiative is about expanding horizons and enabling our youth to compete globally. Japan choosing Nagaland reflects the credibility and commitment of our people and our Government," she remarked, adding that the programme marks "a beginning, not an end."

Representing Kochi Prefecture, Japan, Kunitoshi Hojo emphasised the growing demand for skilled youth from Nagaland.

"Japan is facing a rapidly ageing population, and Kochi Prefecture is actively seeking motivated and disciplined young workers. From zero workers from Nagaland just two years ago, we now have 19, and we expect many more success stories to follow," he said, reaffirming Kochi's commitment to strengthening cooperation with Nagaland.

Highlighting the academic and language-training backbone of the programme, Dr Pangersenla Walling, Centre of Excellence for Foreign Languages, Nagaland University, noted, "Language is the gateway to opportunity. Our certificate programmes are designed to make students job-ready, culturally prepared, and globally competitive, with targeted subsidies ensuring access for deserving candidates."

Delivering the keynote address, T R Zeliang, deputy chief minister, described Nagaland–Japan Connect as a strategic economic intervention.

"Human capital is economic policy. By investing in language, skills, and international exposure, we are creating long-term returns through employment, remittances, and institutional capacity. This partnership is built on mutual trust and a shared vision for the future," he said, recalling the long-standing engagement between Nagaland and Japan since 2014.

A dedicated technical session was organised to prepare participants for overseas employment, focusing on Japanese working culture, workplace ethics, discipline, and expectations, along with a clear roadmap for employment in Japan, covering language proficiency, skill standards, recruitment procedures, and long-term career pathways.

Japanese companies and cooperative associations participating in the programme made detailed presentations on their company profiles, sectors, job roles, working conditions, and growth prospects, enabling candidates to gain first-hand understanding of employment opportunities and living conditions in Japan. (NNN)

ADVERTISEMENT

Applications are Invited from the citizens of India as defined under Articles 5 and 6 of the Constitution of India for filling up of 01 (One) No. of existing vacancy of PEON in the establishment of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Karbi Anglong, Diphu (Assam) in the Pay Scale as shown below: -

SI. No.	Name of Post	No. of Vacant Post	Scale of Pay	Qualification/Eligibility	Category
1.	**Peon**	**01 (One)**	PB-1, (12000/- to 52000/-) + GP 3900/- P.M. + other allowances as admissible as per ROP Rules, 2017	Minimum educational qualification is class-VIII standard; and those who have passed HSSLC or above shall be ineligible to apply for the said post. However, candidates possessing special skills like Plumbing, Electrician and Driving may be given preference.	**Unreserved**

ELIGIBILITY:-

1. The candidate must be an Indian Citizen.
2. The candidate must possess the minimum educational qualification of VIII standard and those who have passed HSSLC or above shall be ineligible to apply for the said post.
3. The candidate must not be less than 18 years and more than 40 years of age as on **01.01.2026.** The upper age limit will be relaxed: -
   i) By 5 years for ST and SC candidates i.e. upto 45 years as per Govt. Notification No. ABP.6/2016/51, dated 02-09-2020 issued by Department of Personnel, Government of Assam.
   ii) By 3 years for OBC/MOBC candidates i.e. upto 43 years as per Govt. Notification No. ABP.6/2016/51, dated 02-09-2020 issued by Department of Personnel, Government of Assam.

HOW TO APPLY:-

1) Eligible candidates will have to apply in Standard Form of Application (Published in the Gazette Part IX of Govt. of Assam) with the name of the post superscribed on top of the envelope and same must be addressed to "The Chief Judicial Magistrate, Karbi Anglong, Diphu, Near Diphu Medical College, Diphu-782460." The Last date of receipt of application is 20.02.2026 till 05:00 PM.
2) The application must be accompanied with the following: -
   a) Three recent coloured passport size photographs with signature on the reverse side.
   b) Self-attested copies of testimonials in support of his/her AGE, CASTE and EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS etc.
   c) Mobile Nos. must be written on the top of the Standard Form in RED INK.
3) Candidates already in Govt. service must apply through proper channel along with "No Objection Certificate" from the proper authority.
4) Incomplete or late received applications will summarily be rejected.
5) If any candidate found canvassing directly/indirectly his/her candidature will be rejected.
6) Candidates having knowledge and skill of plumbing/driving/electric equipment may be given preference.
7) If the candidate is found to have suppressed his/her educational qualification or given any wrong information at the time of applying for the post, his/her candidatures shall be liable to be rejected or his/her candidature will be terminated.
8) Valid Employment Exchange Registration Number is mandatory for those who are not in service.
9) The applicant can submit their application through ordinary/speed/registered post or directly drop their application in the Drop Box, which will be kept in the office of the Chief Judicial Magistrate, Karbi Anglong, Diphu during office hours on all working days.
10) The office will not be responsible for any postal delay.

SELECTION PROCEDURE: -

The candidates will have to appear in an Interview (viva-voce) at their own expense. The selection will be made purely on merit basis.

No individual call letters will be issued to the candidates. However, the list of eligible candidates and Date of Interview will be uploaded in the official website https://karbianglong.dcourts.gov.in. Candidates are advised to visit the official website regularly for updated information.

The Selection Board reserves the right to cancel, modify or alter the advertisement or other terms and condition of the advertisement without any prior notice.

Sd/-
Chief Judicial Magistrate
Karbi Anglong

DIPR/D/HL/287/29-Jan-26

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Manipuri film 'Boong' nominated in children's and family category at BAFTA Awards 2026

"Boong", a Manipuri-language film from debutante director Lakshmipriya Devi, on Tuesday secured a nomination in the best children's and family film category at the BAFTA Awards 2026.

The nominations for the awards, officially called the EE BAFTA Film Awards, were announced by the British academy in London.

"Boong", backed by actor-producer Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani, is pitted against Disney hits "Lilo & Stitch" and "Zootopia 2" as well as animated science fantasy film "Arco".

The coming-of-age movie follows the story of a young boy named Boong (Gugun Kipgen), from the valley of Manipur, who plans to surprise his mother with a gift.

In his innocence, he believes that bringing his father back home would be the most special gift. His search for his father leads to an unexpected gift - a new beginning.

The film, which had its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival in 2024, was released in theatres in September last year.

It was also showcased at film festivals such as the Warsaw International Film Festival 2024, MAMI Mumbai Film Festival 2024, the 55th International Film Festival of India and the Indian Film Festival of Melbourne 2025.

"Boong" is the first feature film from Devi, who earlier served as a first assistant director on Akhtar and Sidhwani's Excel Entertainment movies such as "Luck by Chance", and "Talaash", besides Aamir Khan-starrer "PK", and Mira Nair's series, "A Suitable Boy". Devi shared the news in a post on her Instagram Stories and wrote, "@bafta- grateful, in shock."

"Boong" is also produced by Chalkboard Entertainment and Suitable Pictures.

The BAFTA Awards 2026 will take place at London's Royal Festival Hall on February 22. (PTI)

'Border 2' crosses ₹ 200 crore mark at domestic box office in five days

Sunny Deol-starrer "Border 2" raked in ₹ 23.31 crore on day five, pushing its net domestic box office collection past the ₹ 200-crore mark, the makers said on Wednesday.

A sequel to Deol's 1997 blockbuster "Border", the movie released in theatres on January 23. It is backed by T-Series and J P Films.

In a press note, the makers said the film has so far grossed ₹ 216.79 crore at the box office.

"Border 2" has achieved a sensational new milestone, breaching the coveted ₹ 200 plus crore mark at the Indian box office in just five days of release.

"After a massive long weekend, the film has held up remarkably well on its first working day, adding a strong ₹ 23.31 crore in net box office collection (NBOC) on day five and taking its total collection to a thunderous ₹ 216.79 crore NBOC," the note read.

According to the makers, "Border 2" collected ₹ 32.10 crore on its opening day, followed by ₹ 40.59 crore on day two, ₹ 57.20 crore on day three and ₹ 63.59 crore on day four.

"Border 2" also stars Varun Dhawan, Diljit Dosanjh and Ahan Shetty.

While the 1997 film was based on the events of the Battle of Longewala during the 1971 India-Pakistan war, "Border 2" is also set against the backdrop of the same conflict.

The movie reportedly didn't find a release in six Gulf nations -- Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) -- due its alleged anti-Pakistan narrative.

A response from the makers is awaited.

It is the second Indian film in recent times to be denied clearance for theatrical release in the Gulf countries after director Aditya Dhar's spy action movie "Dhurandhar".

"Border 2" is produced by Bhushan Kumar, Krishan Kumar, Dutta and Nidhi Dutta. It also features Mona Singh, Sonam Bajwa, Anya Singh, and Medha Rana in pivotal roles. (PTI)

I HOPE IT'S ONE OF MANY TRIPS TO INDIA: WESLEY SCHULTZ OF THE LUMINEERS ON DELHI-NCR CONCERT

Popular American folk-rock band The Lumineers is back in India for the second time and lead vocalist Wesley Schultz hopes that their performance leads to many more such trips to the country.

The Grammy-nominated group, known for hits such as "Ho Hey", "Cleopatra", "Stubborn Love" and "Ophelia", will perform at Huda Ground in Delhi-NCR on February 1, 2026.

"What I really want to do is eat a lot more food when I'm there and meet more people and see some of the sights," Schultz told PTI in an interview about his wishlist of things he wants to do during his visit.

Schultz and his bandmate Jeremiah Fraites first came to India for a show in Pune in November 2022 when they headlined the Bacardi NH7 Weekender festival but this marks their first standalone performance in the country as part of their 'The Automatic World Tour'.

"It was like a whirlwind...We were in the midst of a long tour... The things I do remember are the drives... Everyone seemed not to be fazed at all by how close the cars were getting, and it was kind of amazing to me. And the crowd itself felt way more passionate than I maybe would have expected. So I'm super excited to be going back... I'm glad for the excuse to go through touring, but I think we're all just really excited to get to go back again. And we hope this is the first or the second of many trips to India," he added.

Asked about the secret of staying strong for over two decades, Schultz said the best part of making music with Fraites is that there is no one to tell them what they should or should not do.

"(There's) no one in the room, except me and Jeremiah, typically just writing. So I think that's the engine behind why we were passionate about it because no one gets to tell us what to do. Everywhere else in our life, someone has to say, but here we get to make all the decisions and explore things," he said.

Schultz is not familiar with the artists in India or anywhere around the world, but is excited to "dive into other styles of music" during his trip.

"I listened mostly to artists from like the 70s. So I feel like an old man. I'm excited to sort of dive into some of that because not only for the musicians themselves, but the style of music, some of the scales that are used...And the time signatures are often very different from Western music. So I am excited to hear that," he said.

'Automatic' is their fifth album after self-titled debut album in 2012, 'Cleopatra' (2016), 'III' (2019) and 'Brightside' (2022), and it was made in the "most innocent way", Schultz said.

"It marked 20 years of me and Jeremiah making music together, which is a big deal for us... We did it very quickly and we didn't do many takes of any songs, so it felt like we were just innocent kids making music. We didn't really know what we were doing because we were recording so quickly. It's our fifth album, but it feels a lot more like our first album because it's really raw."

Released in February 2025, 'Automatic' comprises 11 songs with tracks such as "Strings", "Plasticine" and "Same Old Song", among others.

The singer-guitarist believes The Lumineers is "slowly evolving" with each album. "If you were to listen to our fifth album and then go right back, back to the first, you're going to hear a lot of differences. But if you listen to them in sequence, it's a slow evolution," he said. Schultz said the band is proud that people are coming for their show.

"We're so excited. We're also just really proud to be able to like, say, we can play a show here and there's people coming," he said.

The India concert of The Lumineers is produced and promoted by BookMyShow Live. (PTI)

Ralph Fiennes, star of stage and screen, makes opera debut in Paris directing 'Eugene Onegin'

Ralph Fiennes vision of "Eugene Onegin" was cinematic. A three-time Academy Award nominee and a Tony Award winner, Fiennes made his opera directing debut Monday at the Paris Opera's ornate Palais Garnier. Using bright lighting near the proscenium as other characters receded to the rear in faded illumination, he controlled focus as a movie director determining the audience's view.

"It became clear that his priorities are quite cinematic as if everything is kind of in close up," mezzo-soprano Susan Graham said.

Based on Alexander Pushkin's 1833 novel, "Onegin" was composed by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky to a libretto the composer co-wrote with Konstantin Shilovsky. Baritone Boris Pinkhasovich stars as Onegin, soprano Ruzan Mantashyan as Tatyana and tenor Bogdan Volkov as Lensky. The entire 11-performance run through Feb. 27 is sold out. France TV will broadcast the opera on Feb. 9.

Conductor Semyon Byckov, announced three weeks ago as Paris Opera's music director starting in August 2028, picked Fiennes to direct, writing in a text message: "Ralph is an immense actor and director, with a profound connection to Russian culture."

"I was shocked, delighted and scared — principally delighted," Fiennes said during a Jan. 6 public discussion. "My history with `Eugene Onegin' goes back to when I was an acting student and the librarian of our academy, who was also a teacher, suggested I read Pushkin's novel in verse in English because the character might appeal to me, maybe for an audition piece. I read it. I was completely transfixed by the poem and the character."

A history with Pushkin

Fiennes portrayed the title character in the 1999 movie "Onegin," directed by his sister Martha and co-starring Liv Tyler. He also directed "The White Crow," a 2018 film about ballet dancer Rudolf Nureyev.

"His telephone call woke up my love, or reawoke my love of Pushkin but of course, opera was new to me," Fiennes said of Bychkov. "I had an instinctive feeling that with Semyon's support and guidance I could take it on."

Fiennes, 63, stars in the recently released movies "The Choral" and "28 Years Later: The Bone Temple," and he returns to London theater in April with David Hare's "Grace Pervades."

He had seen director's Rimas Tuminas' stage dramatization of the Pushkin novel that portrayed the title character and Lensky simultaneously as two people, young and old. Fiennes decided to set the opera in the 1830s.

"If I tried to find a 20th or 21st century parallel, I felt I would be contriving something," he said. "I didn't go through some long analysis or philosophical dissection. I followed my gut."

Jettisoning cliched opera acting

Graham, at 65 sang her first Russian-language role as Madame Larina, mother of Tatyana and Olga. When she met Fiennes in Los Angeles last spring, he emphasized eschewing grand opera gestures.

Mantashyan and Volkov were successful creating emotional tension — the tenor had tears streaming down his face during Lensky's second-act aria.

"The scope of gesture is different on an opera stage certainly than it is in front of a film camera. You can do something with eyes in a film camera that doesn't read past the third row in a theater," Graham said. "We're not lapsing into park and bark by any stretch of the imagination. It's all still very real and very human movement. We try to avoid the spread arms of great, big opera singing, but sometimes you have great big operas singing."

Pinkhasovich at times sang to the audience rather than his cast mates.

"In rehearsals I've asked the singers sometimes to speak the libretto so they are in touch with the conversations," Fiennes said.

That was new for Mantashyan, who first read the novel in school as a 13-year-old.

"It's strange for a singer to do, but I think during that you discover some new possibilities or new colors that you could use in your acting," she said. "Of course, it comes from the actor's perspective. He listens to music, but his first tool is in the text."

Michael Levine's sets were simple, trees on a backdrop and leaves on the ground for the Larin country estate, using that also as Lensky moved to the snowy outdoors, the crowd following, as he challenged Onegin to a duel in Act 2. The backdrop switched to Prince Gremin's ballroom in St. Petersburg for the third act.

Costume designer Annemarie Woods' outfits are not period accurate, with Fiennes emphasizing contemporary body language. Still, Mantashyan used a quill for Tatyana's letter scene, Alessandro Carletti's lighting accentuating her intense expressions.

Rehearsals started Dec. 1 and moved on stage Jan. 9, just 2 1/2 weeks before the opening

"The process is very fast and very, very messy and some people are very surprised by that," Levine said. "I think maybe it's helpful having me around saying: Don't worry. Just keep pushing, keep working on all this time and detail and moving forward."

Fiennes's final vision was the shattered Onegin, collapsed, sobbing and clutching the shawl he had grabbed from Tatyana during their confrontation — the same shawl she had worn when they first met. (AP)

CM Sai launches trailer of film on cows; movie declared tax-free in Chhattisgarh

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Tuesday launched the trailer of Hindi film 'Godaan', which highlights spiritual, scientific and economic significance of cows in India, and announced the movie, scheduled for release next week, will be made tax-free in the state.

The Chief Minister also unveiled the film's poster and released a song titled 'Gau Mata ke pranon ko bacha lo deshvasiyon' (save cows citizens) at the trailer launch event held at his official residence here.

Speaking on the occasion, Sai said the state government was firmly committed to the protection and promotion of 'Gaumata' (mother cow), which holds immense economic and scientific importance and is also revered in the country.

He said 'Godaan', slated to hit cinemas across India on February 6, would be granted entertainment tax-free status in Chhattisgarh.

Sai said through this first-of-its-kind film centred on 'Gaumata', people would gain a deeper understanding of the importance of cows.

The CM highlighted initiatives undertaken by his government for cattle welfare in the state.

Fodder grant for cows housed in 'gaushalas' (cow shelters) has been increased from ₹ 20 to ₹ 35 per animal, while financial assistance to them has been enhanced to ₹ 25 lakh, he note.

The state government has also been setting up 'Godhams' to ensure proper care and management of stray cattle, the CM added.

Organic manure produced from cow dung forms the backbone of organic farming, he said, adding that the 2.90-hour-long film would effectively convey the message of cattle conservation.

Cinema is a powerful medium capable of reaching a wide audience and spreading positive messages, he noted.

'Godaan' has been produced and directed by Vinod Chaudhary. (PTI)

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RCB look to make amends, seal WPL final berth in clash against depleted UP Warriorz

VADODARA, Jan 28: Table-toppers Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look to make amends with the bat after two consecutive defeats and lock their berth in the final when they take on a depleted UP Warriorz in the Women's Premier League, here on Thursday.

RCB (10 points) are the only team confirmed for the WPL playoffs so far and a victory over UPW will seal a top-two finish in the points table along with a berth in the final.

On their part, facing an uphill task to remain in playoffs contention, UPW have been rocked by an injury to their leading run-getter Phoebe Litchfield (243 runs). Amy Jones has been named the replacement.

There's still work to be done for the Smriti Mandhana-led side who notched up five wins on the trot to emerge head and shoulders above the rest, but two defeats since have indeed jolted their campaign.

RCB lost to Delhi Capitals when a collective batting failure resulted in a seven-wicket hammering.

The 2024 edition's winners were then headed for another heavy loss to Mumbai Indians on a benign wicket, slipping to 35/5 in a tall run-chase but Richa Ghosh's explosive 50-ball 90 reduced the margin to a significant limit.

MI came out firing on all cylinders, riding Nat Sciver-Brunt's first-ever century of the tournament's history to set a 200-run target for RCB.

In process, MI also exposed the RCB bowlers particularly during a phase wherein England captain and Hayley Matthews unleashed a flurry of boundaries while adding 131 runs, making the bowlers look clueless.

Lauren Bell (11 wickets) thus would have a lot dependent on her but she would need the likes of Sayali Satghare (8) and Nadine de Klerk (11) to come up with better execution.

For the bottom-placed UP Warriorz, it is a do-or-die situation now as they also depend on the outcome of other matches to make it to the

final three.

UPW have only two wins and four points to show from six matches along with a poor NRR of -0.769, which means they are also required to record wins by big margins to cover the lost ground.

Unlike the other four teams, UPW have two more games in hand — versus RCB and DC — to make one final push and get to eight points, but they will also need Gujarat Giants to beat Mumbai Indians.

In case GG lose to MI, the equation will come down to teams being ranked on basis of their NRR and this is where UPW will have to improvise.

A lot will thus hinge on captain Lanning (207) and Indian star Harleen Deol (150), while UPW will have to fill in the void created by the exit of Litchfield at the top.

They will also hope the spin pair of Sophie Ecclestone (6 wickets) and Deepti Sharma (5) are able to contain RCB batters.

Teams :

Royal Challengers Bengaluru: Smriti Mandhana (c), Richa Ghosh (wk), Dayalan Hemalatha, Prathyoosha Kumar (wk), Georgia Voll, Nadine de Klerk, Grace Harris, Gautami Naik, Shreyanka Patil, Sayali Satghare, Lauren Bell, Arundhati Reddy, Prema Rawat, Linsey Smith, Pooja Vastrakar and Radha Yadav.

UP Warriorz: Meg Lanning (c), Harleen Deol, Shipra Giri (wk), Phoebe Litchfield, Kiran Navgire, Pratika Rawal, Simran Shaikh, Gongadi Trisha, Deandra Dottin, Charli Knott, Shikha Pandey, Shweta Sehrawat, Deepti Sharma, Asha Sobhana, Chloe Tryon, Sophie Ecclestone, Kranti Gaud and Suman Meena.

Match starts at 7.30pm. *(PTI)*

US sending ICE unit to Winter Olympics for security, prompting concern and confusion in Italy

MILAN, Jan 28: News that a unit of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement would be present during the upcoming Winter Games has set off concern and confusion in Italy, where people have expressed outrage at the inclusion of an agency that has dominated headlines for leading the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

Homeland Security Investigations, a unit within ICE that focuses on cross-border crimes, frequently sends its officers to overseas events like the Olympics to assist with security. HSI officers are separate from the ICE arm at the forefront of the immigration crackdown known as Enforcement and Removal Operations, and there was no indication ERO officers were being sent to Italy.

That distinction, however, wasn't immediately clear to local media Tuesday.

Italy reacts to U.S. security deployment The reaction among some in Italy reflects not only a worsening perception abroad of the administration's tactics on immigration but also underscores a broader rift between the U.S. under President Donald Trump and its international allies.

Vague reports that ICE would be deployed in some capacity surfaced over the weekend, resulting in a series of online petitions gathering support of people opposed to the presence of ICE at the Games. They followed a RAI news report that aired Sunday showing an Italian news crew being threatened in Minneapolis by ICE agents. Trump's immigration crackdown has in recent weeks intensified in Minneapolis, leading to the fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens at the hands of

federal immigration officers.

Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala said that ICE would not be welcome in his city, which is hosting the Feb. 6 opening ceremony to be attended by U.S. Vice President JD Vance, as well as most ice sports.

"This is a militia that kills, a militia that enters into the homes of people, signing their own permission slips. It is clear they are not welcome in Milan, without a doubt," Sala told RTL Radio 102.

Italy's Interior Ministry said later that the HSI investigators would be stationed at a control room at the U.S. Consulate in Milan, in a support role with other U.S. law enforcement agencies, and that they would not include personnel involved in immigration controls in the United States. It noted in a statement issued after Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi and U.S. Ambassador Tilman Fertitta met Tuesday morning that HSI agents are present in more than 50 countries, including for many years Italy.

"All of the security operations in the territory remain as always the exclusive responsibility and direction of Italian authorities," the ministry said.

ICE units breakdown Immigration and Customs Enforcement is broken into various arms. Enforcement and Removal Operations is the part of the agency that is tasked with monitoring, arresting and removing foreigners who no longer have the right to be in the U.S. They're the officers most directly tasked with carrying out Trump's mass deportation agenda.

Another arm of ICE is Homeland Security Investigations. Agents from HSI conduct investigations into anything that has a cross-border nexus from human smuggling to fentanyl trafficking to smuggling of cultural artifacts. Agents from HSI are stationed in embassies around the world to facilitate their investigations and build relations with local law enforcement in those countries.

The ICE agents deployed to Italy for the Games will have a different role from the one seen in immigration crackdowns in the U.S., officials have stressed.

"Obviously, ICE does not conduct immigration enforcement operations in foreign countries,? the Department of Homeland Security said in a statement Tuesday.

A U.S official speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss security measures said the general public likely wouldn't even see or be aware of the HSI agents on the ground during the Olympics. The official said HSI agents would be working behind the scenes, mainly in offices or the U.S. consulate in Milan, as they have done during previous international events.

For years HSI distanced itself from anything having to do with deportations or immigration enforcement. At one point they got new branding and email addresses to set themselves apart because agents working in parts of the country with strong political opposition to immigration enforcement wouldn't get their emails answered because they had an ICE.gov address.

Under the Trump administration, however, HSI agents have been working closer with ICE's other arm — the deportation officers — to focus more on immigration issues. They've been going out on operations with deportation officers and focusing more on immigration fraud cases.

Reaction underscores fraught ties The International Olympic Committee underlined in a statement that security "is the responsibility of the authorities of the host country, who work closely with the participating delegations." *(AP)*

OWGR set to meet this week

A decision whether to let in LIV Golf could be near

SAN DIEGO, Jan 28: The LIV Golf League added to its roster by signing NCAA champion Michael La Sasso. It also removed from its league Jinichiro Kozuma, who finished 32nd in the standings last season with three top 10s, including a runner-up finish in Dallas.

Both were curious moves as the Official World Golf Ranking tries to decide whether LIV should get ranking points.

OWGR chairman Trevor Immelman said last month that one hurdle in LIV's application was that a vast majority of its players were invited to join instead of earning their way, different from the other 24 tours that are part of the OWGR system.

"That's one of the beauties of our sport is earning your way onto a tour, fighting to keep your job on that tour," Immelman said at the PNC Championship.

The OWGR board is to meet on Wednesday, and while a vote on LIV was not believed to be on the agenda, there's a chance a decision could be forthcoming by the end of the week.

The OWGR last month decided that 54- and 36-hole tournaments would have a reduction in points, whether 54 holes was the standard or there was an interruption in play because of weather.

LIV, meanwhile, already announced it was increasing to 72 holes. It also created more pathways through qualifying, though its percentage of turnover still lags well behind other tours.

But with the fifth season of the Saudi-funded league a week way, how the rosters are formed raised more questions for the OWGR to consider in Wednesday's meeting.

Players out of the top 48 were relegated from the league, a list that includes Henrik Stenson. But four players from the "open" zone (24th through 48th) were not retained — Kevin Na, Jinichiro Kozuma, Max Lee and Matt Jones.

Kozuma told Sports Illustrated that he didn't learn he would not be part of the Iron Heads — rebranded as Korea Golf Club — until reading about it on social media. He said he reached out to other teams to see if there would be a spot.

"What I found was that teams seemed to be building their rosters not only based on results but also based on team identity and the type of player profile they were looking for," Kozuma said in an email to SI translated by his manager. "In that sense, I think it was simply difficult to find the right fit for me within the available team openings at that time."

Six of the 13 teams have all four players born in the same country.

As far as meritocracy, LIV added players like Thomas Detry, Byeong Hun An and Victor Perez, who held membership in other tours.

La Sasso was No. 3 in PGA Tour University ranking. Only the top player advances to the PGA Tour, though La Sasso would have had full Korn Ferry Tour status if he had stayed in the top 10.

Rose waitsJustin Rose is among those who believe Luke Donald has earned the right to decide whether he wants to return as the Ryder Cup captain for Europe a third straight time. Rose would seem to be a logical choice if Donald doesn't want the job again, and the Englishman is interested.

Just not now.

"From my point of view, if you could lean into it two months before and just take up the captaincy, I'd be interested," Rose said. "Luke has set such a high bar of what it means to be captain, the work he's put in, it's a big commitment."

Rose has played in seven Ryder Cups, and at age 45 he was the oldest player by seven years at Bethpage Black. He also is No. 10 in the world and was runner-up in two of the last five majors.

"All the previous captains have said if you can play, then push to play," Rose said. "You're a long time retired. I think you've got to take care of playing if you can."

His answer if Donald were to decide against a third term as captain? Rose smiled.

"It would be a hard no' because you don't want to leave the team in a bad spot," he said. "And I'm not saying there wouldn't be a good option, but there's no natural option at that point. So we'll see where it all lands."

Thomas on the mend

Justin Thomas is making strides in his recovery from back surgery in November and is targeting his return during the Florida swing.

Thomas last week posted videos of his gym work and a few swings with wedges in his 10th week after surgery.

"Little victories and patience have been the biggest part of the process," he wrote. "I'm looking to come back competitively at some point during the Florida swing. I know how important it is to get this injury behind me so that I'm only looking forward over the course of the season."

Player Advisory Council

Former U.S. Open champion Lucas Glover is getting involved with tour policy for the first time.

Glover is among four players who have agreed to serve on the Player Advisory Council for the first time, joining Alex Noren, Hank Lebioda and rookie Neal Shipley.

Along with being new to the PAC, Glover and Adam Scott were chosen to run for PAC chairman. The winner will serve a four-year term that starts in 2027 and replace Scott, whose current term ends this year.

Women's indoor league

Lottie Woad of England and Rose Zhang are the latest LPGA players who have signed up for the WTGL, the tech-infused indoor league for women that starts later this year. *(AP)*

Leipzig settles for a draw as Hoffenheim wins in weather-delayed Bundesliga games

BERLIN, Jan 28: Martijn Kaars scored a stoppage-time penalty for St. Pauli to deny Leipzig all three points with a 1-1 draw in their weather-delayed Bundesliga match on Tuesday. Leipzig defender David Raum slipped at an inopportune time as he missed the ball and took down Kaars to concede the spot kick. Leipzig goalkeeper Péter Gulácsi got his fingers to the ball but couldn't keep Kaars' well-struck effort out, and the home team celebrated as if it had won. It was St. Pauli's second consecutive point after the derby draw against Hamburger SV and it lifted it a point above bottom side Heidenheim with 15 rounds to play. Leipzig still moved to fourth, the last qualification spot for the lucrative Champions League, ahead of Stuttgart on goal difference. Yan Diomande scored midway through the second half for the Red Bull-backed club, which failed to qualify for any European competition last season.

Also Tuesday, Hoffenheim consolidated third place with a 2-0 win at Werder Bremen despite finishing with 10 men. Alexander Prass broke the deadlock with a brilliant strike inside the top right corner before the break, and Grischa Prömel made it 2-0 early in the second half just after Hoffenheim had Wouter Burger sent off after a VAR check for a dangerous challenge on Cameron Puertas. *(AP)*

Amy Jones replaces injured Litchfield in UP Warriorz

VADODARA, Jan 28: UP Warriorz on Wednesday picked England wicketkeeper-batter Amy Jones as a replacement for injured Phoebe Litchfield for the remainder of the Women's Premier League.

Litchfield, who is the team's leading run-getter, has been ruled out of the tournament due to injury in big blow to UPW's playoff hopes ahead of their clash against Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Thursday.

The Australian batter is among the top three run-getters this season with 243 runs in six matches.

Jones has featured in 125 T20Is and has 1,666 runs. She will join the Warriorz for ₹ 50 lakh, the WPL stated in a release.

UPW currently have just two wins and four points from six matches and a poor net run rate of -0.769 as they will need big wins to climb the standings.

The Warriorz, however, have two matches in hand --

against RCB and Delhi Capitals -- and can reach eight points, but will also depend on other results. *(PTI)*

Are tennis players being treated like zoo animals? Iga Swiatek thinks so

MELBOURNE, Jan 28: Iga Swiatek picked up a theme that Coco Gauff left the Australian Open with after the 21-year-old American's racket-smashing, frustration-releasing moments away from the court went viral.

Gauff said a "conversations needs to be had" about the seemingly limitless access-all-areas cameras that track players from the locker room to the court and just about everywhere in between.

After her 7-5, 6-1 quarterfinal loss to fifth-seeded Elena Rybakina on Wednesday, Swiatek was asked how she feels about the lack of off-camera areas for the players and what she thinks should the balance between entertainment, constant content and player privacy.

"Yeah, the question is, are we tennis players, or are we, like, animals in the zoo where they are observed even when they poop, you know?" she said, apologizing slightly for the latter reference. "OK, that was exaggerating obviously, but it would be nice to have some privacy.

"It would be nice also to, I don't know, have your own process and not always be, like, observed."

Swiatek and Gauff are two of the top three players in women's tennis, so it stands to reason they'll be more in focus at the tournament.

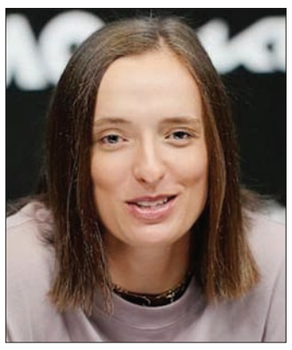
Vision of Swiatek being stopped by security after forgetting her credential became a meme. She's won four French Open titles as well as Wimbledon and the U.S. Open. But security is, well, security.

Fan engagement

The off-court camera surveillance occurs at other tournaments and isn't confined to the Australian Open, where organizers have created a three-week festival around the season-opening major by incorporating all kinds of fan engagement activities.

The vision from the non-public areas stadium isn't always broadcast, but players don't need reminding that some moments that get captured will turn up on the internet for being cute, informative or just outright dramatic.

No. 2-ranked Swiatek said there were parts of her game she'd like to practice immediately before



walking out for a match and "it would be nice to have some space where you can do that without the whole world watching."

The 24-year-old is one of Poland's star athletes, and is fully aware that being in the public gaze is part-and-parcel of being a tennis champion.

"We're tennis players. We're meant to be watched on the court, you know, and in the press. That's our job," she said. "It's not our job, like, be a meme when you forget your accreditation.

"Oh, it's funny, yeah, for sure. People have something to talk about. But for us I don't think it's necessary."

Gauff's racket

No. 3-ranked Gauff, a two-time major winner, smashed her racket into the concrete floor of a ramp near the player area seven times after her Australian Open quarterfinal loss to Elina Svitolina on Day 10.

She struggled with her serve in the 59-minute match, and stayed composed as she left the center court before trying to find somewhere in the shadows to vent.

Turned out, there's pretty much no place with the confines of Rod Laver Arena except for the locker rooms that is beyond the scope of the cameras.

"Certain moments — the same thing happened to Aryna (Sabalenka) after I played her in the final of the U.S. Open — I feel like they don't need to broadcast," Gauff said in her post-match news conference. "I tried to go somewhere where I thought there wasn't a camera because I don't necessarily like breaking rackets."

Serena's advice

Gauff received some encouragement from 23-time major winner Serena Williams, who posted on social media that there's "nothing wrong with hating to lose," and offering to show her how to demolish in one swipe — Serena style. "

Gauff said she didn't want to smash her racket on the court within sight of fans, which is why she saved it for a quieter area.

"So, yeah, maybe some conversations can be had," she said, "because I feel like at this tournament the only private place we have is the locker room."

And that's exactly where fourth-seeded Amanda Anisimova proceeded after her quarterfinal loss to fellow American Jessica Pegula.

"I knew that that was there, so I just kept my head down and went to the locker room," she said. "There are good moments, obviously that people see, and that's fun. Then, when you lose, there are probably not-so-good moments.

"The fact that the video of Coco that was posted, it's tough, because she didn't have a say in that." *(AP)*

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Suryakumar jumps five spots to seventh in latest ICC T20I rankings

DUBAI, Jan 28: India captain Suryakumar Yadav on Wednesday climbed five places to seventh in the ICC men's T20I rankings following a prolific run in the ongoing five-match home series against New Zealand, which India currently lead 3-0.

The former No.1 batter struck scores of 32, 82 not out and 57 not out to climb the table, as India dominate the upper reaches of the rankings with Abhishek Sharma at the summit and Tilak Varma in third position, just 10 days out from the T20 World Cup.

Ishan Kishan, who hit 76 off 32 balls in the second match in Raipur has re-entered the rankings in the 64th position while Shivam Dubey (up nine places to 58th) and Rinku Singh (up 13 places to 68th) are among other batters to gain from the top-ranked T20I side.

Afghanistan openers Ibrahim Zadran and Rahmanullah have also made significant gains after a productive run during their 2-1 series win over the West Indies in Dubai. Ibrahim has moved up two places to 13th and Rahmanullah is up three places to 15th even as Player-of-the-Series Darwish Rasooli has progressed 29 slots to 87th position after aggregating 156 runs.

South Africa captain Aiden Markram's 47-ball 86 not out in their first match against the West Indies has lifted him into the top 20, while the West Indies' Brandon King (up 15 places to 35th) and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips (up 18 places to 44th) have also made notable progress.

In the T20I bowling rankings, Afghanistan spinner Mujeeb ur Rahman's haul of four for 21 in the second match against the West Indies sees him gain five places and reach ninth position, while India's Jasprit Bumrah (up four places to 13th) and Ravi Bishnoi (up 13 places to 19th) have progressed along with South Africa's Corbin Bosch (up eight places to a career-best 32nd).

India's Hardik Pandya has surged 18 places to 59th position in the bowling rankings after taking four wickets in three matches. He is also up two places to 53rd among batters and inched up one slot to third among all-rounders.

In the ODI rankings, England batters Harry Brook and Joe Root have gained after helping with their side register a 2-1 series win in Sri Lanka.

Brook's 247 runs across the three matches have lifted him 17 places to 11th, while Root's 184 runs take him from 23rd to 17th spot.

In the ODI bowling rankings, leg-spinner Adil Rashid has moved up six places to fifth with seven wickets in the series and Sri Lanka's left-arm spinner Dunith Wellalage has progressed from 43rd to 29th. *(PTI)*

Rohit identifies Arshdeep, Hardik as key to India's chances in T20 World Cup

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: T20 World Cup-winning captain Rohit Sharma reckons all-rounder Hardik Pandya and left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh will hold the key to India's prospects in the upcoming edition of the tournament.

Defending champions India will enter the T20 showpiece as one of the overwhelming favourites due to their massive depth and quality.

Rohit highlighted Arshdeep's effectiveness with the new ball and at the death.

"It is a big positive to have both Jasprit Bumrah and Arshdeep Singh together because they always attack for wickets. Arshdeep's biggest strength is swinging the new ball and taking early wickets. He mainly bowls with the new ball and at the death. Starting and finishing are the most important phases, and he is strong in both," Rohit told JioHotstar.

"With the new ball, he swings it to get left-handers caught in the slips and targets the pads of right-handers. He has also started taking the ball away from right-handers. These skills are key for a new-ball bowler. He always tries to take wickets, which is why he bowls the first over."

Rohit added, "In the 2024 T20 World Cup final against South Africa, he did a great job. I still remember he dismissed Quinton de Kock when he was set and batting well. In the 19th over, he gave away just two or three runs, which built pressure on the South Africans.

"That is his game, bowling with the new ball and at the death, and he will play a key role for India in the 2026 T20 World Cup."

India won the last edition of the tournament in the Americas under Rohit's captaincy, after which the dashing opener retired from the T20 format internationally.

Rohit also spoke about how Hardik's dual role as a finisher and multi-phase bowler provides crucial balance to the Indian team.

"Whenever Hardik Pandya is in the team, his role is huge. He bats and bowls very consistently. His batting is crucial when the team is stuck. If we have a score of 160 on the board in 15-16 overs and Hardik is batting, then he's the one who can help the team reach 210-220 from there or if we are 50 for 4, he has to build the innings.

"Batting in the middle order at 5, 6, or 7 is very tough. That is why Hardik's role is critical in any format. We know his bowling. He bowls in key phases, with the new ball, in the middle and in the death as well. His role is very important because he gives the team balance, letting us play six bowlers and keep our batting deep."

Rohit said accommodating both Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakravarthy together in the playing XI is going to be a big challenge for the Indian team management.

"The biggest challenge for captain Suryakumar Yadav and coach Gautam Gambhir will be how to play both Kuldeep Yadav and Varun Chakaravarthy together. If you want that combination, you can only do it if you play with two seamers, which is a big challenge.

"But honestly, I would be tempted to play both Varun and Kuldeep because they are wicket-takers and batters struggle to read them. I would surely pick them."

The former India skipper added, "Looking at the conditions in India, like in this New Zealand series, there is a lot of dew. In February and March, dew will be heavy across most parts as winter ends.

"Even in Mumbai, which doesn't get cold, there's still dew. I'd say 90-95 percent of grounds in India have dew. That's the challenge. What do the coach and captain think? Are they comfortable with three spinners? Then they can play spin, but there's no fixed rule. It depends on the team leaders' thinking."

Rohit also urged Kuldeep to stop appealing on every ball and to rely on the wicketkeeper's judgment for reviews.

"My one simple advice to Kuldeep is to just bowl quietly and go back to his mark. You can't appeal on every ball. This is basic. I keep saying it, but it still happens often. Even after telling him many times, he appeals at every chance. You have to use your head. Just because it touches the pad, it doesn't mean it's out every time. This isn't gully cricket.

"I get he is enthusiastic, but think of the team first. Each team only gets two DRS reviews. If I was the keeper, I could see where the ball pitched and if it was hitting, I could tell the bowler.

"But from covers or slip, you don't know the angle. You have to listen to what the keeper and bowler say. That's why when there's a review off Kuldeep's bowling, I don't look at him, I look at the keeper to decide."

The T20 World Cup is scheduled to be held in venues across India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8. *(PTI)*

Badoni, Arya to join India A squad for T20 WC warm-ups

MUMBAI, Jan 28: Delhi captain Ayush Badoni and batter Priyansh Arya will miss the Ranji Trophy match against Mumbai starting here on Thursday as they have been called-up to the India A side for T20 World Cup warm-up matches.

Ayush Doseja will thus lead Delhi in the contest to be played here at the MCA-BKC Ground.

India A will play against the USA at Navi Mumbai's DY Patil Stadium on February 2 before heading to Bengaluru where they will take on Namibia at the Centre of Excellence.

Badoni had earlier this month received his maiden call-up to the Indian team during their three-match ODI series against New Zealand.

Squad: Ayush Doseja (c), Sanat Sangwam, Vaibhav Kandpal, Sumit Mathur, Pranav Rajvanshi, Siddhant Sharma, Dhruv Kaushik, Rahul Dagar, Anuj Rawat (wk), Divij Mehra, Aryan Rana, Money Grewal, Rohan Rana, Rahul Chaudhary. *(PTI)*

Surprising that Indian batters' spin play has gone down in Tests: Ian Smith

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: Cricketer-turned broadcaster Ian Smith remains surprised about New Zealand's watershed 3-0 Test series win in India in late 2024 and put down their recent red ball struggles at home to Indian batters' diminishing ability against spin.

Left-arm spinners Ajaz Patel and Mitchell Santer were the architects of the famous Test series triumph in India, ending the hosts' unbeaten run of 12 years. On the batting front, Rachin Ravindra and Will Young outdid their more accomplished counterparts.

More recently, South Africa blanked the "mighty" India in their own backyard in a two-Test series with off-spinner Simon Harmer wreaking havoc, exposing the frailties of Indian batters on turning tracks.

Speaking to PTI, Smith called the Test series win for New Zealand in 2024 and even the ODI success earlier this month as remarkable achievements.

"It's a remarkable achievement. It was also a bit of a surprise to me (the Test series win over India. I didn't think they'd do that. Some of our key players play a lot more here now than they used to. I think they've got a different attitude to playing spin.

"When we've come here in the past, spin has tied us in knots. They've had very good spinners. And you've still got very good spinners. It's just that I think the modern day players, because of their attitude towards spin, are a lot more aggressive, become a lot more effective."

But it was the performance of the spinners that landed the knockout punch on India. The high-profile batting line crumbled against the left-arm spin of Santner and Patel on turning tracks.

Smith said Indian batters' spin play has gone down but it is difficult to pinpoint the root cause considering the depth of talent at the team's disposal.

"It looks as if it has (gone down). If you look at the numbers, I'm sure they play it well. Whether they've lost confidence, whether they're doubting themselves, which would surprise me because it's not something I'd be used to," said the former New Zealand wicket-keeper batter.

Trend of NZ cricketers declining central contracts won't stop

Smith is okay with the likes of Kane Williamson and Trent Boult opting out of New Zealand central contracts to make more money in T20 leagues around the world but not when a cricketer like Finn Allen in his 20s declines the national contract.

"But it's not going to stop. I don't see it stopping. Particularly in New Zealand because we don't have a lucrative T20 competition. Our players make nothing out of our T20 competition. Our Super Smash provides no income. They are looking at putting together a new competition.

"If that eventuates and the money is what they say it might be, some of these players might stay at home a bit longer. But you can't blame them. The only thing that concerns me is they're going at such a young age.

"When you get to Williamson's and Conway's and those guys in their mid to late 30s, I don't blame them. Take the money and you've deserved it. But when you're going in their mid-20s, that's a worry," Smith added. *(PTI)*

George, Manjunath progress to second round in Thailand Masters

BANGKOK, Jan 28: India's Kiran George and Mithun Manjunath advanced to the second round of the men's singles with contrasting wins over their respective rivals at the Thailand Masters Super 300 badminton tournament here on Wednesday.

Seeded seventh, George took just 27 minutes to get the better of world no. 45 Sholeh Aidil 21-15 21-9, while world no. 60 Manjunath stunned eighth seed Magnus Johannesen of Denmark 21-12 9-21 21-17 in a 59-minute battle.

Tharun Mannepalli also entered the second round, beating Thailand's Kantaphon Wangcharoen 22-20 21-17. But it was curtains for the likes Priyanshu Rajawat, Manraj Singh and S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian in their respective men's singles matches.

While Rajawat lost 21-15 13-21 20-22 against fourth seed and world no. 33 Brian Yang of Canada, Manraj was shown the door by China's Zhu Xuan Chen 21-16 21-14.

Subramanian gave tough fight to fifth seed and world no. 37 Arnaud Merkele before losing 13-21 21-14 19-21.

In the women's singles, fast-rising Anmol Kharb beat Lo Sin Yan Happy of Hong Kong 21-12 21-12 to enter the second round, but Tasnim Mir exited in the opening round losing 9-21 19-21 against fifth seed Huang Yu-Hsun of Chinese Taipei. *(PTI)*

Australia arrive in Pakistan for three-match T20I series ahead of T20 World Cup

LAHORE, Jan 28: Australia squad led by Mitchell Marsh arrived here on Wednesday to play in a three-match T20I series, even as confusion prevails over Pakistan's participation in next month's T20 World Cup.

The series has been seen as Pakistan's final preparatory step for the T20 World Cup but it remains to be seen if the national team would get the government's nod to take part in the tournament starting on February 7.

Pakistan Cricket Board Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, after a meeting with Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, had conveyed that all options were on the table the decision will be taken by either Friday or next Monday.

Pakistan has been protesting ICC's decision to replace Bangladesh with Scotland after the Bangladesh Cricket Board and interim government insisted they will not play T20 World Cup matches in India over security concerns.

Pakistan, meanwhile, announced their squad for the 20-team tournament which is, with one exception, the same which will face off against Australia.

The selectors have dropped pacer Muhammad Wasim Jr from the squad for the World Cup but he will be available for series against Australia.

Australia have reached Lahore without some of their experienced players including Pat Cummins.

Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Glenn Maxwell, Tim David and Nathan Ellis have all been rested for the Pakistan series to recover completely from injuries before the WC.

But the Australian squad, in Pakistan for the first time after mid 2022, is still strong with Travis Head, Cameron Green and Josh Inglis among those who featured in the Ashes.

Australia squad: Mitch Marsh (c), Sean Abbott, Xavier Bartlett, Mahli Beardman, Cooper Connolly, Ben Dwarshuis, Jack Edwards, Cameron Green, Travis Head, Josh Inglis (wk), Matthew Kuhnemann, Mitch Owen, Josh Philippe (wk), Matthew Renshaw, Matt Short, Marcus Stonis, Adam Zampa. *(PTI)*

Markram and Linde guide SA win

PAARL (SOUTH AFRICA), Jan 28: South Africa captain Aiden Markram scored an unbeaten 86 off 47 balls as the Proteas beat the West Indies by 9 wickets Tuesday in the opener of their three-match T20 international series.

Markram, who hit nine boundaries and three sixes, shared a partnership of 83 with Lhuan-dre Pretorius (44) and 93 with Ryan Rickelton to reach 176-1 with 13 balls to spare.

Left-arm spinner George Linde picked 3-25 to earn player-of-the-match honors, while Keshav Maharaj and Corbin Bosch took two wickets each as the visitors reached 173-7 in 20 overs after South Africa won the toss and elected to bowl first.

Shimron Hetmyer top-scored for the West Indies with 48 runs off 32 balls that included four boundaries and three sixes. Hetmyer and Rovman Powell (29 not out) shared a sixth-wicket partnership of 74.

The second match is on Thursday at Centurion. *(AP)*

Winter Olympics now set to have just 13 Russian athletes and 7 from Belarus competing

LAUSANNE, Jan 28: A total of 13 Russian athletes are now set to compete as neutral individuals at the Milan Cortina Olympics after invitations from the IOC were confirmed Tuesday for Alpine skiers and lugers.

Four years ago, the Russian team was more than 200 athletes at the 2022 Beijing Winter Games, which closed four days before Russia's full military invasion of Ukraine which led to its exclusion from much of international sports.

Seven Belarusian athletes have now been invited to the Winter Games that open next week on Feb. 6. The Russians and Belarusians will not have their national identity of team colors, flag or anthem and cannot take part in the opening ceremony athlete parades.

Neutral status can be approved by the International Olympic Committee for athletes in individual sports who were judged to have not actively supported their countries' war on Ukraine, and who are not contracted to the military or state security agencies.

Two Russian athletes and one Belarusian have been invited to compete in Alpine skiing at the Olympics though none is a realistic medal contender.

Yulia Pleshkova has started three World Cup three races this season — with a best result of 40th in a downhill — and is due to compete later this week in Crans-Montana, Switzerland.

Simon Efimov and Maria Shkanova of Belarus compete in slalom though neither has qualified for a second run in a World Cup race this month.

They could try to qualify for the Olympics after a Dec. 2 ruling at the Court of Arbitration for Sport overturned a blanket ban by the International Ski and Snowboard Federation imposed within days of the war in Ukraine intensifying in February 2022.

Luge athletesIn luge, the IOC said it invited Russians Daria Olesik and Pavel Repilov to compete at the sliding track in Cortina.

Olesik was the first Russian to start a luge World Cup race in almost four years when she competed last month at Lake Placid, New York.

Repilov was a silver medalist in boy's singles at the 2020 Lausanne Winter Youth Olympics.

Russian medal contendersThe best Russian medal prospects at the Olympics are figure skaters Adeliia Petrosian and Petr Gumennik.

Russia is still excluded, as it was at the 2024 Paris Summer Games, from team sports like ice hockey.

At the 2022 Beijing Olympics, Russian athletes won 32 medals including five gold competing at ROC — the acronym for Russian Olympic Committee, which was a neutral title as punishment in the long-running scandal of state doping.

In Italy next month, the athletes will be known as AIN, the French acronym for Individual Neutral Athletes. *(AP)*

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