

6 REGION
7 ARUNACHAL



- Minister Pijush Hazarika inaugurates Electrofest 2.0
- MP Dilip Saikia lays foundation for ₹ 43.77 cr road project in Darrang
- Arunachal emerging as strong contributor to India's startup ecosystem: CM Khandu
- Education, girl child empowerment key to Arunachal's future: Dy CM

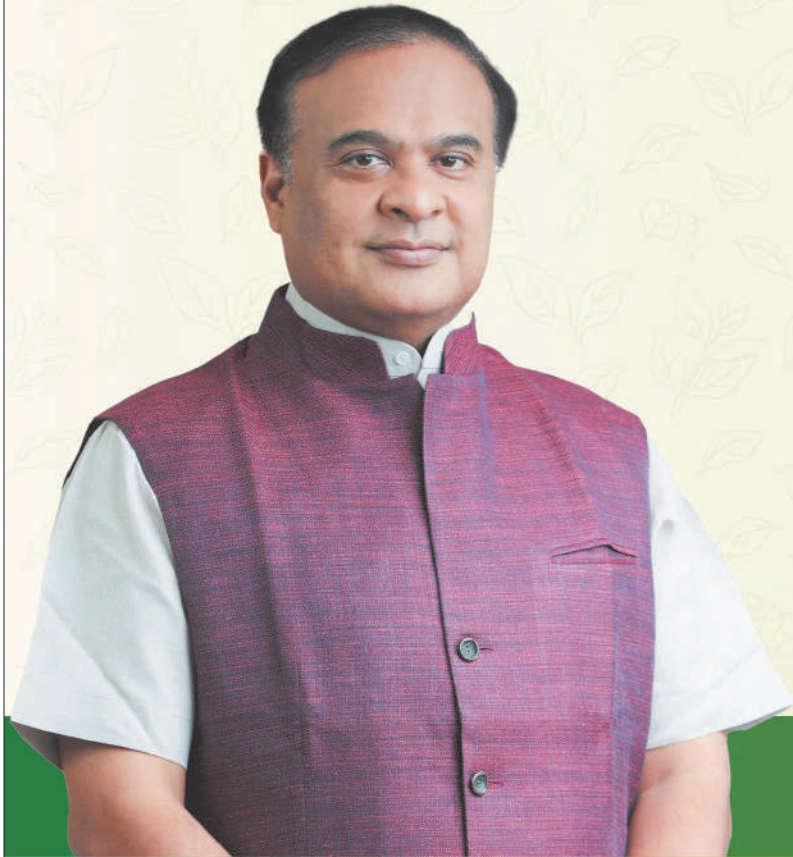


Honouring the Contributions of *Cha Shramiks* to Assam's 200-Year-Old Tea Industry

Ceremonial Launch of Chief Minister's **Eti Koli, Duti Paat Scheme**



Total Financial Outlay
₹302 crore



Chief Guest

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma

Chief Minister, Assam

25 January 2026 Doomdooma, Tinsukia



11:00 AM: Mann Ki Baat by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi

11:30 AM: Ceremonial Launch of Eti Koli, Duti Paat Scheme

One-time assistance of ₹5,000 each to over 6 lakh labourers and employees of 836 tea gardens

LAC-wise List of Designated Guests for Cheque Distribution

DISTRICT	LAC	DESIGNATED GUEST/S
Baksa	Baksa	Shri U G Brahma, Minister Shri Moneswar Brahma, Ex- MLA
	Manas	Shri Phanidhar Talukdar, MLA Begum Akhtara Ahmed, EM, BTC
Biswanath	Behali	Shri Diganta Ghatowal, MLA Shri Ranjit Dutta, MP
	Biswanath	Shri Promod Borthakur, MLA Shri Pallab Lochan Das, Chairman, ASTC
	Gohpur	Shri Utpal Borah, MLA Shri Ranjit Dutta, MP
Bongaigaon	Bongaigaon	Smti Diptimayee Choudhury, MLA Shri Phani Bhushan Choudhury, MP
Cachar	Borkhola	Shri Kaushik Rai, Minister Shri Parimal Suklabaidya, MP Shri Kangkan Narayan Sikdar, Chairman, Cachar Zila Parishad
	Dholai	Shri Nihar Ranjan Das, MLA Shri Parimal Suklabaidya, MP
	Katigorah	Shri Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha, MLA
	Lakhipur	Shri Kaushik Rai, Minister
	Udharbond	Shri Mihir Kanti Shome, MLA Shri Parimal Suklabaidya, MP
Charaideo	Mahmora	Shri Jogen Mohan, Minister
	Sonari	Shri Dharmeswar Konwar, MLA
Darrang	Dalgaon	Shri Dilip Saikia, MP Mazibur Rahman, MLA
Dhemaji	Dhemaji	Dr. Ranoj Pegu, Minister Shri Pradan Baruah, MP
Dhubri	Bilasipara	Shri Ranjeet Kumar Dass, Minister
Dibrugarh	Chabua-Lahowal	Shri Binod Hazarika, MLA Shri Ponakan Baruah, MLA
	Dibrugarh	Shri Prasanta Phukan, Minister
	Duliajan	Shri Terash Gowalla, MLA
	Khowang	Shri Chakradhar Gogoi, MLA
	Naharkatia	Shri Taranga Gogoi, MLA
	Tingkhong	Shri Bimal Borah, Minister
Dima Hasao	Haflong	Smti Nandita Gorlosa, Minister Shri Debolal Gorlosa, CEM, NC Hills Autonomous Council
Goalpara	Dudhnoi	Smti Bijuli Kalita Medhi, MP
	Goalpara East	Shri Tankeswar Rabha, CEM, RHAC
Golaghat	Bokakhat	Shri Atul Bora, Minister
	Dergaon	Shri Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, MP Shri Bhabendra Nath Bharali, MLA
	Golaghat	Smti Ajanta Neog, Minister
	Khumtai	Shri Mrinal Saikia, MLA
	Sarupathar	Shri Biswajit Phukan, MLA
	Hailakandi	Algapur- Katlicherra
Hailakandi	Hailakandi	Shri Krishnendu Paul, Minister
	Jorhat	Shri Hitendra Nath Goswami, MLA
Jorhat	Jorhat	Shri Hitendra Nath Goswami, MLA
	Mariani	Shri Rupjyoti Kurmi, MLA

DISTRICT	LAC	DESIGNATED GUEST/S
Jorhat	Teok	Shri Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, MP Shri Santanu Pujari, Chairman, AIIDC
	Titabor	Shri Rameswar Teli, MP
Kamrup	Kamalpur	Shri Diganta Kalita, MLA
	Palasbari	Shri Hemanga Thakuria, MLA
Kamrup Metro	Dimoria	Smti Bijuli Kalita Medhi, MP
Karbi Anglong	Bokajan	Dr Numal Momin, Deputy Speaker, ALA
	Kokrajhar	Shri Hagrama Mohilary, CEM, BTC
Kokrajhar	Parbatjhora	Smti Moonmoon Brahma, EM, BTC
	Dhakuakhana	Shri Naba Kr Doley, MLA Shri Pradan Baruah, MP
	Lakhimpur	Shri Manab Deka, MLA
Morigaon	Ranganadi	Dr Ranoj Pegu, Minister
	Jagiroad	Shri Pijush Hazarika, Minister
Nagaon	Barhampur	Shri Jitu Goswami, MLA
	Kaliabor	Shri Keshab Mahanta, Minister
	Raha	Shri Sashi Kanta Das, MLA
Sivasagar	Demow	Shri Sushanta Borgohain, MLA
	Nazira	Shri Pabitra Margherita, Union Minister of State Shri Mayur Borgohain, Chairman, Tai Ahom Development Council
Sonitpur	Barchalla	Shri Ganesh Kumar Limbu, MLA Shri Ranjit Dutta, MP
	Dhekiajuli	Shri Ashok Singhal, Minister
	Naduar	Shri Padma Hazarika, MLA
	Rangapara	Shri Krishna Kamal Tanti, MLA Shri Ranjit Dutta, MP
	Tezpur	Shri Prithiraj Rava, MLA Shri Ranjit Dutta, MP
Sribhumi	Karimganj North	Shri Kripanath Mallah, MP
	Karimganj South	Shri Sanjib Banik, Social Worker
	Patharkandi	Shri Krishnendu Paul, Minister
	Ramkrishna Nagar	Shri Bijoy Malakar, MLA
Tamulpur	Goreswar	Shri Jayanta Mallabaruah, Minister Shri Ganesh Kachari, EM, BTC, Shri Lakhi Das (Bhajan), MCLA, BTC
	Tamulpur	Shri Bijit Gwra Narzary, Deputy Speaker, Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly Shri Jolen Daimary, MLA
Tinsukia	Digboi	Shri Suren Phukan, MLA
	Doomdooma	Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister Shri Rupesh Gowala, Minister Shri Pradan Baruah, MP
	Makum	Shri Rupesh Gowala, Minister
	Margherita	Shri Bhaskar Sharma, MLA
	Sadiya	Shri Bolin Chetia, MLA
	Tinsukia	Shri Sanjay Kishan, MLA
Udalguri	Bhergaon	Shri Biswajit Daimary, Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly Shri Dilip Saikia, MP
	Mazbat	Shri Charan Boro, Minister
	Tangla	Shri Dilip Saikia, MP Shri Durgadas Boro, MLA
	Udalguri	Shri Rihon Daimari, Deputy CEM, BTC

DIPR /D/HLT/283/25-Jan-26



Karnataka gets investment commitments for over ₹ 13,000 cr at Davos: Minister

BENGALURU, Jan 24: The WEF meet held in Davos has become a "major springboard" for Karnataka to achieve significant gains in investments, expansion and partnerships across sectors, with investment commitments amounting to ₹ 13,070 crore, the state's Industries Minister M B Patil said on Saturday.

The sectors that attracted investment commitments include aerospace, food processing, data centres, digital infrastructure, clean energy and advanced manufacturing, he said.

More than 45 meetings and consultations held over five consecutive days have successfully drawn global attention to Karnataka as one of the country's leading destinations in artificial intelligence, Global Capability Centres (GCCs), research and sustainable urban development, the minister said, sharing details after returning from the World Economic Forum (WEF) meet held in Davos.

The consultations with industry leaders have laid a strong foundation for fresh investment inflows into the state and have also significantly accelerated projects already under implementation. They will help Karnataka strengthen its competitive position in the next phase of global trade and industrial transformation, he was quoted as saying in a release.

"Global business leaders have praised the state's industry-friendly environment and the availability of skilled human resources, reflecting the foresighted, industry-oriented initiatives being implemented by the state government," he added.

Patil said he had clearly conveyed how Karnataka is emerging as a preferred global destination for investments, industrial estab-



lishment and expansion, while explaining the State's industry-friendly policies and appealing to companies to invest in Karnataka. "The RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group (RPSG) will invest ₹ 10,500 crore over the next three years in Vijayapura and Ballari districts, significantly boosting the renewable energy sector and development in north Karnataka.

Global brewing major Carlsberg Group has reiterated its commitment to set up a ₹ 350 crore bottling plant at Nanjangud. Schneider Electric has come forward to invest ₹ 1,520 crore, including in IT operations," he said.

INOX GFL, which has already invested ₹ 10,000 crore in the state and commenced turbine blade manufacturing for wind power at Kushtagi, is investing an additional ₹ 400 crore in manufacturing wind power towers and solar panels, he said, adding that Belrise Industries is investing ₹ 300 crore to expand its Mysuru unit, which supplies components to TVS.

Further noting that discussions were held with the Singapore Eco-

and research centres in the State, the Minister noted and said, "In line with the State Government's priority of developing cities beyond Bengaluru as self-sustaining urban centres, Tech Mahindra has shown interest in expanding operations into Tier-2 cities."

Bharti Enterprises is keen on setting up a data centre, while Sify Technologies has stated that it will launch one soon in the State, he said.

Highlighting that Imperial College, one of London's most prestigious universities, has shared plans to set up a research and development centre in 'KWIN City' (Knowledge, Wellbeing, and Innovation), coming up between Dabaspet and Doddaballapur near Bengaluru, Patil said. Global cybersecurity major Cloudflare is also considering becoming part of the 'KWIN City' project.

US-based Voyager Technologies and space technology company Vast Space have expressed interest in entering into partnership agreements with the state government, he said. "UAE-based Crescent Enterprises has come forward to invest in enterprises and companies across the State," he added.

According to the Minister, an MoU has been signed to facilitate Swiss companies in leveraging Karnataka's industry-friendly and innovation-driven ecosystem. Natural Fibre Welding (NFW Earth) has said it would share a detailed expansion proposal with the state government.

With the objective of strengthening bilateral trade ties, the minister participated in productive discussions with corporate leaders, investors, reputed educational institutions, heads of governments and senior officials at the WEF, the release said. (PTI)

France-based Mistral AI has expressed interest in establishing a phased research and development centre in Bengaluru. US-based Philip Morris has indicated its intent to manufacture smoke-free products in Karnataka, he added.

Nokia Corporation has expressed its keenness to establish a Global Capability Centre (GCC)

Flipkart's 'Crafted by Bharat' sale to celebrate women-led enterprises and Indian artisans this R-Day

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Jan 24: Flipkart, India's homegrown e-commerce marketplace, on Saturday announced the eleventh edition of its flagship Samarth initiative, 'Crafted by Bharat' Sale 2026, scheduled to be held on January 26 to mark the country's 77th Republic Day.

According to an official statement, the one-day event will feature a dedicated Crafted by Bharat storefront on Flipkart's app and website, highlighting India's diverse artisanal heritage.

The special storefront will showcase over 200 traditional art forms, including Warli, Patachitra, Madhubani, Pichwai and terracotta, along with toys made from soft ivory wood, wooden crafts, handlooms and regional paintings.

Products from more than 2,300 artisans, weavers and small entrepreneurs rooted in local traditions and cultural practices will be featured during the sale.

Anchored in Flipkart Samarth, the company's flagship programme launched in 2019 to uplift underserved communities, this edition of the Crafted by Bharat Sale

places a strong focus on women-led enterprises from Tier-2 and Tier-3 regions.

Artisans and entrepreneurs from centres such as Kannauj, Bhuj, Bhadohi, Hathras, Hisar, Madurai, Chitrakoot, Ramanagara, Ghazipur, Ujjain, Churu and Ratangarh will take centre stage, reflecting Flipkart's efforts to bring regional craftsmanship to a national audience. The event will see participation from government and private brands as well as local businesses across the country and is expected to positively impact over 1.9 million livelihoods.

With more than 300 new sellers joining this year, customers will have access to a wider range of authentic handcrafted products spanning categories such as furniture, furnishings, home décor, kitchenware, apparel and lifestyle items.

Aligned with Flipkart's broader strategy to empower MSMEs and artisans through e-commerce, the Republic Day edition of Crafted by Bharat will provide sellers access to a pan-India customer base, along with optimised pricing support, platform-led promotions and dedicated assistance to help them

build sustainable digital businesses.

Sharing her experience, Aprajeta of CraftcartIndia, a seller on the Flipkart platform, said the Samarth tag helps customers identify and support genuine homegrown businesses in an online space crowded with mass-produced replicas.

As a first-generation entrepreneur, she said, the programme's dedicated account support, reduced commissions and cataloguing assistance enabled her to compete with established retailers and focus on creating unique décor items and handmade jewellery.

Flipkart Samarth, launched in 2019, is a nationwide initiative aimed at opening new growth avenues for MSMEs, artisans and underserved communities through e-commerce.

The programme currently supports over seven million livelihoods, with beneficiaries reporting business growth of up to 300 per cent. Its core objective is to provide indigenous communities and enterprises with an inclusive digital platform and help them build long-term earning capabilities.

Cuba keen to deepen economic ties with India: Envoy NSE sets up investor awareness stall at Kolkata Book Fair

KOLKATA, Jan 24: Cuba is keen to deepen economic engagement with India in sectors such as agro-industry, biotechnology, healthcare, information technology, renewable energy, sports and tourism, Cuban Ambassador to India Juan Carlos Marsan Aguilera said on Saturday. Addressing a special session on India-Cuba bilateral trade and economic cooperation organised by the Merchants' Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI) here, Aguilera said Cuba is a pioneer in biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, with its biopharma products exported to 45 countries.

He said Cuba is also in the process of transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy, opening avenues for cooperation in clean energy solutions. The envoy said his country allows companies the use of land for business purposes, and offers an electronic visa facility to facilitate ease of travel and investment. Highlighting Cuba's tourism potential, Aguilera said the country has 10 international airports, three cruise terminals and 10 international marinas, offering wide-ranging opportunities for collaboration in tourism and allied infrastructure. He also hailed the International Kolkata Book Fair and expressed Cuba's interest in participating in the event next year, underlining the importance of cultural exchanges alongside economic ties. (PTI)



KOLKATA, Jan 24: The National Stock Exchange (NSE) has set up an investor awareness pavilion at the 49th International Kolkata Book Fair, as part of its annual outreach initiative to promote financial literacy and informed investing, a statement said on Saturday.

The pavilion will remain open for 14 days from January 22 to Boimela Prangan, Bidhanagar.

The pavilion aims to enhance investors' understanding of the securities market through interactive displays, one-on-one interactions, investor awareness workshops and a grievance redressal helpdesk.

Visitors can take part in initiatives such as the 'Wheel of Financial Freedom' and 'Every Move Matters' games, along with joint activities with online financial quizzes and fraud identification exercises, it added.

As of December 2025, West Bengal had 73.5 lakh registered investors, accounting for 5.9 per cent of NSE's total investor base and ranking fourth in the country.

The state added 9.9 lakh new investors last year, contributing 6.3 per cent of total new registrations nationwide.

During the year, five companies from the state were listed on the mainboard, raising Rs 4,507 crore, while 13 companies debuted on the SME platform, raising Rs 591 crore, NSE said.

Meanwhile, SEBI has indicated that NSE is expected to get its NOC for the long-awaited IPO of the country's largest bourse. The bourse earlier had indicated that the listing will be pursued after addressing regulatory and governance-related requirements. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

Former AASU leader

joined the BJP along with Barua, reflecting the diversity of the induction. Among them were former principal of Pragjyotish College Manoj Kumar Mahanta, young singer Trin Sharma, youth leader Dipankar Oja, retired Assam government finance department officer Hemanta Kumar Deuri, AASU central executive members Kanak Gogoi, Rajiv Gogoi and Raktim Bora, former president of the AASU Tinsukia district committee Satya Borgohain, former president of the AASU Majuli district committee Pranjit Hazarika, former ATSA executive Shibu Karmakar, former president of Dulaijan Anchalik Panchayat Bablu Bhumij, assistant general secretary of the Gorkha Students' Union in Dibrugarh district Damodar Sharma, and member of the Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council Samiranjan Barshaikia.

Others who joined included former chief advisor of the AASA Dibrugarh district committee Ramesh Garh, former vice-president of Dibrugarh district AASU Dipjyoti Dihingia, retired deputy conservator of forests Kharg Singh Dekaraja, president of Morigaon district Nath Yogi Sammilani Nab Kanta Nath, and retired block development officer Dulen Pator, along with several other figures from different walks of society.

The joining programme was formally conducted by BJP Assam state general secretary Anup Barman. The event was attended by BJP Assam in-charge Harish Dwivedi, organisational general secretary Rabindra Raju, Union Minister of State Pabitra Margherita and Assam cabinet minister Jayanta Malla Baruah, underscoring the importance the party attached to the induction.

CM clears air

already enrolled or not an Indian citizen. Similarly, any voter of that constituency can apply for deletion of names of others on the basis of any of the five reasons: death, underage, absent/permanently shifted, already enrolled, or not an Indian citizen. Hearing is conducted by the authorities on the basis of Form 7 applications before deletion of names.

A state Congress functionary had on Friday also filed a police complaint against local BJP leaders and government officials involved in the electoral roll revision in Boko-Chhaygaon Assembly constituency over alleged attempted deletion and inclusion of voters' names unauthorisedly.

"There is nothing to hide. We are giving them trouble," Sarma asserted, mentioning how he had earlier also stated that 'Miyas' will be in for problems under his regime. The chief minister maintained that it was a tactic to keep them under pressure and said, "They have to understand that at some level, people of Assam are resisting them. Otherwise, they will get a walkover. That's why some will get notices during SR, some for eviction, some from border police (relating to citizenship)."

"We will do some 'utpaat' (mischief), but within the ambit of law... we are with the poor and downtrodden, but not those who want to destroy our 'jati' (community)," Sarma added.

The chief minister had earlier claimed that 'Miyas' will form about 40 per cent of the state's population in the next Census. (PTI)

Zubeen's family writes

the case is conducted with the highest professional competence and seriousness it warrants and in order to expedite the process.

They further sought "active diplomatic and legal engagement" with Singapore to monitor proceedings in the Coroner's Court at the highest level, to ensure that all relevant materials and testimonies are made available to Indian authorities, explore all lawful avenues for mutual legal assistance, and prevent jurisdictional complexity from becoming a barrier to truth.

"We are a family in grief, but also citizens of a Republic founded on justice. We place our trust in your good office to ensure that this matter is pursued with the seriousness, urgency and moral weight it deserves," the family added in the memorandum.

Garg had died on September 19 while swimming in the sea in Singapore, where he had gone to attend the North East India Festival.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the state police's CID is probing the case and had submitted its charge-sheet on December 12. Out of the seven arrested in the case so far, the SIT has accused four of murder and one of culpable homicide not amounting to murder.

The other two have been charged with criminal conspiracy and criminal breach of trust by misappropriating funds or property entrusted to them.

A separate enquiry is also underway by local authorities in Singapore, with a coroner's court recently ruling out foul play and stating that Garg was severely intoxicated and had drowned off Lazarus Island after declining a life jacket. (PTI)

Trade agreements opening

and MSMEs, while historic labour reforms have strengthened social security for workers and employees, benefiting businesses as well.

PMO stressed that the new labour codes have expanded and empowered the scope of social security. A PMO statement said the Rozgar Mela is a key initiative aimed at translating this vision into action in line with the prime minister's commitment to accord the highest priority to employment generation.

Since its inception, more than 11 lakh recruitment letters have been issued through Rozgar Melas organised across the country, it said.

The 18th Rozgar Mela was organised at 45 locations across the country, and newly recruited candidates, selected from all parts of India, joined various ministries and departments of the government.

The new appointees will be serving in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Department of Financial Services, Department of Higher Education, among others. (PTI)

CM Relief Fund assistance

Himanta Biswa Sarma for earmarking Rs 1 crore for each Assembly constituency under the CMRF.

He added that the initiative has already provided assistance to over 500 people in the Dibrugarh constituency.

The Chief Minister's Relief Fund is designed to provide immediate monetary support to patients across Assam who are burdened with urgent and critical medical expenses, helping them access necessary treatment without delay.

Nagaland capital to join

when passenger train services were started for the first time from Shokhuvi, making it the second railway station in Nagaland, more than hundred years after Dimapur station was commissioned.

"In September 2025, cargo operations started for the first time at Molvom railway station, marking a major milestone in development of trade and commerce in Nagaland," the NFR official said.

Outlining the utilities of the project, officials said it will strengthen rail connectivity between Nagaland, neighbouring northeastern states and the rest of India, making travel more convenient and accessible.

"Regular train services are operational, connecting Shokhuvi with Guwahati (Assam) and Naharlagun (Arunachal Pradesh), offering smoother, safer and more reliable travel," officials said.

"With Molvom becoming the third major railway station in Nagaland after Dimapur, and Shokhuvi to handle freight traffic, safe and cost-effective transportation of goods to and from Nagaland has received a major boost," they added.

Besides, officials said, the improved connectivity allows passengers easier access to education, healthcare, jobs and markets within and outside the state.

The new route reduces dependency on road transport, offering passengers a comfortable, affordable and time-efficient travel alternative in the hill state, they said.

"Growth of stations and goods sheds encourages economic development in the surrounding areas -- creating jobs, services and small businesses that directly benefit daily commuters and local passengers," the NFR said. (PTI)

Sonitpur gears up

Deputy Commissioner Ankur Das and Additional Superintendent of Police Mousumi Kalita inspected the final rehearsal in the afternoon and reviewed the arrangements for the ceremonial event.

Meanwhile, the district administration has also planned Republic Day programmes at the sub-divisional level in Dhekiajuli, Biswanath Chariali, Rangapara and Naduar, ensuring wide participation across Sonitpur district in the national celebrations.

Tripura Agar industry

infrastructure initiatives are being undertaken to boost the agar industry in Tripura and Assam.

"In North Tripura district alone, an agar-based project worth ₹ 80 crore has been launched. From cultivation and processing to branding and marketing, the entire ecosystem is being strengthened," he said.

He further informed that two central agar processing centres are being established — one in Golaghat district of Assam and another in North Tripura.

As part of policy reforms, export quotas for agar products have been increased sixfold. Agar chip exports have been raised from 25,000 kg to 1.5 lakh kg, while agar oil exports have gone up from 1,500 kg to 7,500 kg.

The minister said the digitisation of approval systems would help farmers seamlessly connect with global buyers.

"This effort reflects the Prime Minister's vision of 'Vocal for Local' and 'One District, One Product'. Agar has emerged as a flagship product in Fulbari of North Tripura," he said.

Expressing confidence in the sector's future, Scindia said agar plantations are expected to expand rapidly.

"Of the estimated 15,000 crore agar trees worldwide, nearly 90 per cent are found in the North East. Tripura's share is expected to increase by around 50 per cent over the next four years," he said.

He also mentioned that buyer-seller meets are being organised to link Tripura's agar industry with international markets.

"Last year, a buyer-seller meet was held with Qatar, and more such engagements are planned in the future," he added.

Golden Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.

CORRIGENDUM

In continuation of the vacancy advertisement published on dated 23 January 2026, the following clarifications are hereby issued for information of all concerned:

- Application Process:** Interested candidates are required to contact the District Employment Exchange, Diphu, P.O.- Diphu, Dist.-Karbi Anglong, Assam, Pin - 782460 for submission of application, as the vacancy details have already been notified through the Employment Exchange. CV's received from the employment exchange will only be interviewed.
- Submission of applications to the district employment exchange, Diphu, Karbi Anglong should be on or before 31-Jan-2026.
- Interview: Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview after screening the application.
- Date of Interview :** shortlisted candidates will be intimated via email / call

For any further clarification, candidates may contact through email: pranjit@goldenhospitality.in
Phone: 9864010778

CM clears air over SR controversy

No controversy over SR; notices served to Miyas and such people, else they will walk over our heads: Himanta



GUWAHATI, Jan 24: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday asserted that there is no controversy surrounding the ongoing SR, as claimed by the opposition, and claimed that no Hindus and Assamese Muslims have received notices for the exercise. He indicated that only 'Miyas'

(Bengali-speaking Muslims) are being served notices during the voter revision drive in the state as a tactic to "keep them under pressure". "There is no controversy over SR. Which Hindu has got notice? Which Assamese Muslim has got notice? Notices have been served to

Miyas and such people, else they will walk over our heads," Sarma said, talking to reporters on the sidelines of a government programme in Nalbari district.

'Miya' is originally a pejorative term used for Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, and a section of the people identify them as Bangladeshi immigrants. In recent years, activists from the community have started adopting this term as a gesture of defiance.

The opposition parties have alleged that the SR exercise ahead of the assembly elections is being conducted to harass genuine citizens, mostly religious minorities, by "BJP agents", with Form 7 especially being used to complain against bona fide voters.

By using Form 7, one can request for deletion of own's own name for any of three reasons: permanently shifted, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

BJP leadership cites nationalism, development under Modi and Sarma as driving force behind mass induction

Former AASU leader Shankarjyoti Barua joins BJP

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Jan 24: Former general secretary of the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) Shankarjyoti Barua on Saturday formally joined the Bharatiya Janata Party, along with more than a hundred leaders and workers drawn from various student bodies, social organisations and political backgrounds.

The mass joining programme was held at the BJP's Assam state headquarters, Bajpayee Bhawan, at Basistha, marking a significant political development in the state.

Welcoming the new entrants, Assam Pradesh BJP president Dilip Saikia said the party today occupies a unique and unparalleled position globally, with 14.50 crore primary members and nearly 12 lakh active members.

Addressing the gathering, Saikia said the BJP has emerged as the world's largest political organisation, with its presence spread



across nearly 71 per cent of India's geographical landscape.

He attributed this growth to the spirit of nationalism and the dedication of millions of party workers committed to serving the nation.

Saikia said India has achieved a distinct and dignified position on the global stage under the leader-

ship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a transformation that has instilled pride among citizens across the country.

Drawing a parallel at the state level, he said Assam, under the leadership of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has emerged as a model of development and is

now widely recognised as a progressive and empowered state.

Expressing confidence in the new entrants, the BJP state president said those who joined the party would dedicate themselves to the service of Mother Assam and Mother India.

He added that their participation would further strengthen what he described as Assam's historic journey of development and transformation.

Speaking on the occasion, Shankarjyoti Barua said his decision to join the BJP was driven by a desire to become an active partner in chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's mission of development.

He said he was inspired by the party's nationalist ideology and governance approach, and pledged to work with commitment for the welfare of the people and the nation. A wide cross-section of personalities (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Police probing origin of bomb threats to Guwahati schools

GUWAHATI, Jan 24: The police have begun an investigation into the bomb threats received over email by two Guwahati-based schools, a senior officer said on Saturday.

He said it was also being probed if other schools received similar emails, with the two threats turning out to be hoax on Friday.

"We are investigating from where the emails were sent. Other angles are also being looked into," the officer said.

"As it was Saraswati Puja yesterday, and many schools are closed for the weekend, official emails might not have been checked. We are keeping a tab if any other school received similar emails," he said.

The Delhi Public School, Ahomgaon, and Sanskriti-The Gurukul, had received the threat mails on Friday, amid Saraswati Puja celebrations.

A bomb squad searched the premises, but could not find any explosive, the officer said.

"But, we are not leaving anything to chance and a thorough investigation is underway," he added. (PTI)

'Combined scientific brilliance with nation building': Himanta pays tribute to Bhabha

GUWAHATI, Jan 24: Remembering Homi J Bhabha on his death anniversary, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said he combined scientific brilliance with nation-building.

Sarma said his ideas shaped institutions, inspired generations of scientists, and strengthened India's quest for self-reliance.

"India's journey into modern science began with his vision. Homi J Bhabha, the father of India's nuclear programme, combined scientific brilliance with nation-building foresight," he said in a post on X.

"His ideas shaped institutions, inspired generations of scientists, and strengthened India's quest for self-reliance. Remembered with deep respect on his Purnyathithi," the CM added. (PTI)

Sonitpur gears up for centralised R-Day celebrations at Tezpur Nehru Maidan

STAFF REPORTER

TEZPUR, Jan 24: Preparations are in full swing in Sonitpur district for the 77th Republic Day celebrations, which will be observed in a centralised manner at Tezpur Nehru Maidan.

The district administration is organising the main Republic Day Samaroh at the venue, in line with nationwide celebrations.

As part of the preparations, the final rehearsal of the ceremonial march-past was held at Tezpur Nehru Maidan on Friday.

As many as 17 contingents participated in the rehearsal, including personnel from the Sashastra Seema Bal, Assam Police, Assam Home Guards, and the Tezpur Frontier Band of the SSB. Educational institutions and youth organisations were also represented, with contingents from Darrang College, Tezpur College, Tezpur Government Higher Secondary Multipurpose Girls' School,

Zubeen's family writes to PM seeking expeditious trial in his death case

GUWAHATI, Jan 24: The family of popular Assam singer Zubeen Garg on Saturday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi requesting a special court for expedited trial and appropriate diplomatic-legal action in Singapore in connection with his death in the island country last September.

They also sought that bail should not be granted to any of the accused in the case till the judicial process is over.

The memorandum, signed by Garg's wife Garima, sister Palmee Borthakur and uncle Manoj Kumar Borthakur, has been sent via email to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Posting the memorandum on Facebook, Garima wrote: "Ahead of celebration of glorious 77th Republic Day of our nation, I conveyed my greetings to PM Narendra Modi and also sent a memorandum on behalf of our family regarding the legal process concerning Assam's heartthrob Zubeen Garg's death."

In the memorandum, the family said the singer-composer's death has left be-



hind not merely a grieving family, but also millions of people seeking clarity and lawful action in the matter.

"We have a sole objection now... Zubeen Garg has to receive real and complete justice. The guilty must get the most severe punishment," she added.

The family mentioned that while the Assam Police's CID is investigating the matter here, the Singapore authorities are also conducting their own enquiry with the family in "continuous engagement with authorities in both jurisdictions".

The memorandum said that, along with detailed statement through emails,

Garg's uncle, Manoj Borthakur, had in person appeared before the Coroner's Court on the first day of hearing earlier this month and sought "factual clarity regarding the sequence of events, safety measures, human decisions and emergency response surrounding Zubeen's death".

The family requested the intervention of the Central government in the constitution of a special court in India "to ensure focused adjudication, public confidence and avoidance of procedural delay in the case".

They have sought fast-tracking of the trial through appropriate judicial and administrative measures "so that justice is neither delayed nor diluted by time", and also ensuring that none of the accused are granted bail unless the process of justice is completed.

The family also requested the appointment of more public prosecutors, if necessary, to assist the five-member team already put in place by the Assam government, so that (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

CM Relief Fund assistance extended to 94 patients in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Jan 24: Financial assistance from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) was extended to 94 patients from the Dibrugarh Legislative Assembly Constituency on Saturday, with Assam Power Minister and local MLA Prasanta Phukan handing over the cheques at his residence office.

Addressing the beneficiaries, Phukan said the support was aimed at reducing the financial strain on patients and their families during periods of serious medical treatment.

He noted that timely financial help often plays a crucial role in ensuring uninterrupted healthcare for those facing critical illnesses.

The minister thanked chief minister (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Trade agreements opening up new opportunities for youth: PM

NEW DELHI, Jan 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said India is entering into trade and mobility agreements with various nations to create new opportunities for the youth both within the country and abroad.

Modi made these remarks at the 18th Rozgar Mela where he handed over 61,000 appointment letters for various government jobs electronically.

"India is signing trade and mobility agreements with several countries. These trade agreements are bringing new opportunities for the youth of the nation," Modi said, addressing the job fair at 45 locations across the country via video conferencing.

Modi said India has the maximum number of youngsters in the

world and his government was making efforts to create new opportunities for the youth within the country and abroad.

The prime minister urged the new appointees to consider the appointment letters as an invitation to join nation building and a pledge to work for creating a developed India.

He asked the youth to recall their experiences at government offices in previous years and urged them to resolve to not let such hardships affect citizens during their tenure.

Modi also urged the youth to work with the motto 'Nagrik Devo Bhava' (citizen is akin to God) while discharging their duties.

The prime minister said in recent times, the government has

made unprecedented investments in modern infrastructure, leading to increased employment across construction-related sectors.

He said that India's startup ecosystem was expanding rapidly, with nearly two lakh registered startups employing over 21 lakh youth.

Modi said 'Digital India' has expanded a new economy, with India emerging as a global hub in animation, digital media, and several other sectors.

"Today, the nation has embarked on the reform express, aimed at making both life and business easier," he said.

The prime minister said that next-generation reforms in GST have benefited youth entrepreneurs (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Of the estimated 15,000 crore agar trees worldwide, nearly 90 percent are found in North East

Tripura Agar industry poised for ₹ 2,000 crore turnover as centre expands export quota: Scindia

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Jan 24: The agarwood industry in Tripura is set for major growth, with the Central Government working towards securing a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for Tripura Agar and significantly increasing export quotas for agar products, Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Saturday.

Speaking after laying the foundation stone of an Agarwood Cluster Processing Centre at Kadamtala in North Tripura district, Scindia said the initiative, funded under the PM-DevINE scheme, would strengthen the entire agarwood value chain.

He noted that Tripura's agar industry has the potential to achieve a turnover of nearly ₹ 2,000 crore. The Union minister said the Cen-



tre is also integrating digital systems for CITES and other mandatory permissions, allowing agar farmers to directly access international markets.

This move, he added, would

eliminate middlemen and ensure farmers receive the full value of their produce.

Highlighting recent development work in the state, Scindia said he had inaugurated and laid foundation

stones for several projects on Friday, including road infrastructure, solar power facilities, and health institutions.

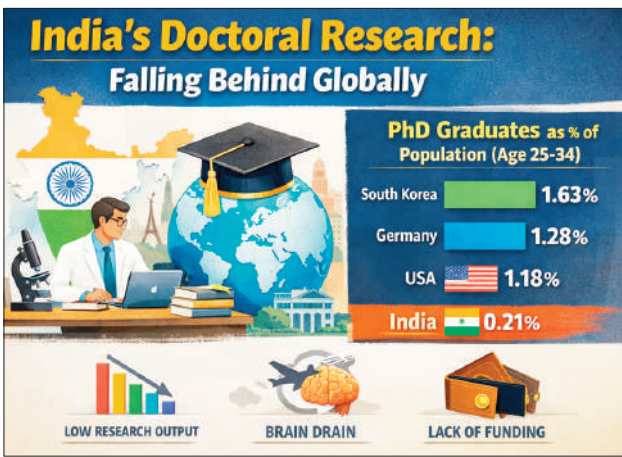
"I inspected two major projects in Agartala — the Government Dental College costing ₹ 152 crore and the Child and Maternity Hospital worth ₹ 200 crore," he said.

Later in the night, the minister said he would travel to Dumbur in Gomati district to inaugurate the Matabari tourism circuit project, valued at ₹ 290 crore.

"This tourism circuit has been jointly conceptualised by chief minister Manik Saha and myself," he added.

Scindia said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and with the support of the Tripura government, several policy and (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

India's doctoral research: Falling behind globally



By: R.K. Uppal

Doctoral research is widely regarded as the backbone of a nation's innovation ecosystem, intellectual leadership, and knowledge economy. Countries that produce high-quality doctoral research tend to lead in scientific discovery, technological advancement, industrial competitiveness, and policy innovation. While India has made significant progress in expanding higher education and increasing the number of PhD graduates, the global impact, quality, and influence of Indian doctoral research remain comparatively weak. This growing gap raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of India's research ecosystem and its readiness to compete in the global knowledge race. One of the most prominent reasons behind India's lag in doctoral research is the disparity in research funding. Developed nations such as the United States, Germany, and China invest heavily in research and development, often exceeding 2-3 percent of their GDP. India, by contrast, invests less than 1 percent of its GDP in R&D. Limited funding restricts access to advanced laboratories, high-quality research tools, global research collaborations, and competitive stipends for doctoral scholars.

As a result, many Indian PhD candidates struggle to conduct original, cutting-edge research, relying instead on incremental or repetitive studies with limited global relevance. Another major challenge is the uneven quality of supervision and mentorship. While India has some world-class scholars and institutions, a large number of doctoral programs suffer from inadequate faculty guidance, heavy teaching workloads, limited research training, and weak accountability systems. In many institutions, supervisors oversee too many research scholars, reducing the depth of mentorship and academic rigor. In contrast, top global universities emphasize close mentorship, structured research training, interdisciplinary exposure, and strong peer-review mechanisms, all of which contribute to higher research quality and impact.

The pressure to produce degrees rather than discoveries has further weakened India's doctoral research culture. In recent years, there has been a rapid expansion of PhD programs, particularly in private and lesser-regulated institutions. While this expansion has increased access, it has also led to degree inflation, diluted academic standards, and research output that prioritizes quantity over originality. In some cases, doctoral research becomes a procedural formality rather than a genuine pursuit of knowledge creation.

Additionally, India's research output suffers from limited global visibility and citation impact. Many Indian doctoral studies are published in low-impact or predatory journals that do not contribute meaningfully to global academic discourse. Poor academic writing, limited exposure to international publishing standards, and weak institutional incentives for high-impact research further compound this issue. By contrast, doctoral research in leading countries is often published in top-tier journals, widely cited, and integrated into global research networks. The lack of strong industry-academia collaboration also contributes to the limited real-world relevance of Indian doctoral research. In advanced economies, PhD scholars frequently work on industry-sponsored projects, applied research initiatives, and interdisciplinary problem-solving. This ensures that doctoral research contributes directly to innovation, commercialization, and societal impact. In India, however, industry engagement in doctoral research remains minimal, resulting in dissertations that are often theoretical, disconnected from market needs, and rarely translated into practical applications.

Another critical weakness lies in the research ecosystem and infrastructure. Many Indian universities lack modern laboratories, digital research databases, high-performance computing facilities, and collaborative research environments. Bureaucratic delays, limited research grants, and administrative burdens further discourage ambitious research efforts. In contrast, global research leaders provide scholars with cutting-edge infrastructure, research mobility programs, international exposure, and streamlined funding processes. Brain drain also plays a role in weakening India's doctoral research impact. Many of India's brightest research minds choose to pursue doctoral studies or academic careers abroad due to better funding, superior facilities, higher salaries, and greater research freedom. While international exposure can benefit India indirectly, the persistent outflow of top talent limits domestic research capacity and global influence.

Furthermore, academic culture and evaluation systems in India often fail to reward innovation, originality, and risk-taking. Promotion criteria and institutional rankings frequently emphasize publication counts rather than research significance. This encourages safe, repetitive, and low-risk research rather than transformative or disruptive ideas. In leading research nations, evaluation systems reward high-impact work, interdisciplinary innovation, patents, and real-world problem-solving.

Despite these challenges, India possesses enormous potential to strengthen its doctoral research ecosystem. The country has a vast pool of young talent, expanding digital infrastructure, growing international collaborations, and increasing policy attention toward research and innovation. Recent initiatives such as the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), increased research funding through national agencies, and the promotion of innovation hubs offer promising opportunities.

To bridge the global gap, India must prioritize quality over quantity in PhD programs, strengthen research funding, enhance supervisor training, improve research infrastructure, promote international collaboration, and establish stronger industry linkages. Encouraging ethical research practices, combating predatory publishing, and reforming academic evaluation systems will also be essential. Most importantly, India must cultivate a research culture that values originality, excellence, and global relevance over mere degree production. In conclusion, India's doctoral research is not lacking in talent but in systemic support, strategic investment, and global integration. If India aspires to become a global knowledge leader, it must transform its doctoral research ecosystem into one that fosters innovation, nurtures excellence, and produces research that shapes global thought, technology, and policy. Strengthening doctoral research is not just an academic necessity—it is a national imperative for India's future in the global knowledge economy. (The author is the Principal, GGS College of Management and Technology, Gilderbaha)

Celebrating the power of the ballot: National Voters' Day in India

By: Satyabrata Borah

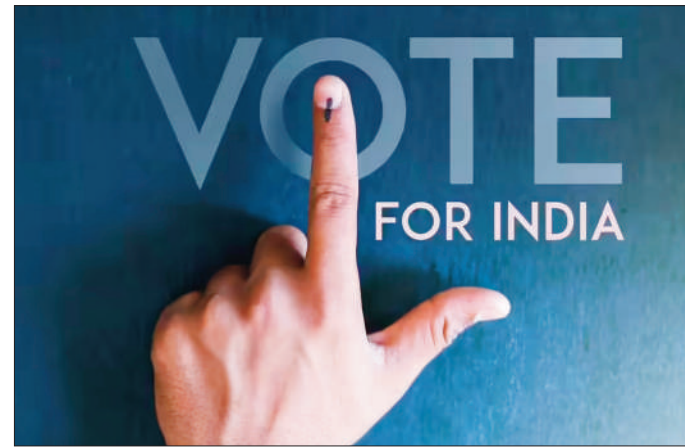
National Voters' Day holds a special place in India's democratic calendar, observed every year on January 25 to commemorate the foundation of the Election Commission of India. This date marks January 25, 1950, when the Election Commission was established under Article 324 of the Constitution, just one day before India formally became a republic on January 26. The creation of this independent body was a pivotal moment in ensuring that elections in the newly independent nation would be conducted in a free, fair, and impartial manner, laying the groundwork for the world's largest democracy to function smoothly. While Republic Day celebrates the adoption of the Constitution, National Voters' Day shifts the focus to the voter, the most essential participant in the democratic process, emphasizing the power each citizen holds through the ballot.

The idea of dedicating a specific day to voters emerged from the recognition that sustained efforts were needed to boost voter participation, particularly among the youth. Despite India's impressive electoral track record, with massive turnouts in general elections, challenges persisted in voter registration, especially in remote areas, among first-time voters turning 18, and in urban pockets where migration often led to deletions from rolls. Low awareness about the voting process, myths surrounding elections, and occasional apathy toward civic duties also hindered full engagement. To address these issues systematically, the Government of India, in consultation with the Election Commission, introduced National Voters' Day in 2011. The inaugural celebration aimed to encourage young people to enroll as voters and take pride in exercising their franchise. Since then, it has grown into a nationwide observance, blending awareness campaigns, enrollment drives, and motivational events to reinforce the idea that voting is both a right and a responsibility.

The significance of National Voters' Day extends far beyond a ceremonial occasion. It serves as an annual reminder of the foundational principles of Indian democracy, where sovereignty rests with the people. In a country as diverse as India, with multiple languages, religions, castes, and regional identities, the act of voting unites citizens under a common purpose. Every ballot cast contributes to shaping governance, policies, and the direction of the nation. The Election Commission, over the decades, has evolved into a robust institution that oversees not only parliamentary and assembly elections but also local body polls, ensuring transparency through measures like electronic voting machines, voter-verified paper audit trails, eVIGIL applications for reporting violations, and systematic voter education programs under the Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation initiative. National Voters' Day highlights these achievements while spotlighting areas that still require attention, such as increasing female voter turnout in certain regions, reaching out to persons with disabilities, and ensuring that migrant workers can vote without undue hardship.

One of the primary objectives of this day is to maximize voter enrollment. The Election Commission launches special registration drives leading up to January 25, setting up booths in schools, colleges, government offices, and public spaces. Eligible citizens who have attained the age of 18 are encouraged to apply for inclusion in the electoral rolls. On the day itself, newly enrolled voters often receive their Electoral Photo Identity Cards in formal ceremonies, symbolizing their entry into the democratic fold. These events instill a sense of empowerment and pride, particularly among first-time voters who may feel hesitant or uninformed about the process. The day also focuses on spreading awareness about ethical voting, the importance of rejecting inducements, and the need to make informed choices based on candidates' track records, party manifests, and national priorities rather than narrow considerations.

Themes play a crucial role in guiding the messaging each year. These themes evolve to reflect contemporary challenges and aspirations. For instance, early



years emphasized empowering young and future voters, recognizing that India's demographic dividend lies in its youthful population. Later themes promoted inclusivity, ensuring no voter is left behind, whether due to geographical isolation, disability, or socioeconomic barriers. Recent celebrations have carried forward powerful slogans like "Nothing Like Voting, I Vote for Sure," underscoring the unparalleled satisfaction and impact of participating in the electoral process. Such themes aim to build a culture where voting becomes a habitual and enthusiastic act rather than an occasional duty. They also align with broader goals of strengthening democracy by fostering informed, qualitative participation where voters understand issues, scrutinize promises, and hold elected representatives accountable.

Celebrations of National Voters' Day take place at multiple levels, from the national capital to the remotest villages. At the national level, the Election Commission organizes grand events, often graced by the President of India or other high dignitaries. These functions feature addresses highlighting the role of voters, distribution of awards to outstanding electors or civil society contributors, cultural performances promoting electoral messages, and pledges administered to large gatherings. State chief electoral officers coordinate similar programs, involving chief ministers, governors, and local leaders. In educational institutions, which form a key focus area, schools and colleges host quizzes, debates, poster-making competitions, and voter awareness rallies. Students take oaths to vote responsibly when they become eligible, and mock polling exercises introduce them to the mechanics of voting. Civil society organizations, media houses, and corporate entities partner with the Election Com-

mission to amplify the message through advertisements, social media campaigns, street plays, and door-to-door outreach.

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and transport facilities for the differently-abled, are highlighted to promote inclusivity. Urban celebrations often involve flash mobs, marathon runs, and digital campaigns targeting millennials and Gen Z, who engage through platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube.

The broader significance lies in how National Voters' Day reinforces the resilience of Indian democracy. In a world where democratic institutions face pressures from various quarters, India's commitment to regular, credible elections stands out. The Election Commission's independence, upheld through constitutional safeguards, enables it to navigate complex political landscapes while maintaining neutrality. By celebrating voters rather than politicians or parties, the day places the citizen at the center, reminding everyone that power ultimately resides with the people. As India continues its journey as the world's largest democracy, National Voters' Day remains a vital tool for sustaining and deepening democratic values. It encourages reflection on the progress made since 1950, when the first general elections were held amid immense logistical challenges, to the present day, where technology enhances efficiency and reach. The day inspires hope that future generations will inherit a vibrant, participatory democracy where every eligible citizen feels motivated to vote.

National Voters' Day is more than an anniversary; it is a call to action. It urges citizens to view voting not as a burden but as a privilege that shapes the nation's destiny. Through persistent efforts in education, inclusion, and motivation, it helps build an electorate that is informed, engaged, and empowered. As the country prepares for future elections, the spirit of this day ensures that the flame of democracy burns brightly, fueled by the collective will of its people. With each celebration, India reaffirms its dedication to a system where every voice matters and every vote contributes to building a just, equitable society.

In rural areas, where access to information can be limited, the day brings together panchayat leaders, anganwadi workers, and self-help groups to discuss voting rights. Special attention is given to marginalized communities, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, and transgender persons, ensuring their voices are amplified. Accessibility features, such as Braille on electronic voting machines

Assam at Davos: Claiming a place in the global conversation

By: Dipak Kurmi

Assam Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's departure for Davos, Switzerland, on January 18, 2026, to attend the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026 marked far more than a routine overseas visit by a state leader. It represented a carefully calibrated political and economic moment for Assam, a state that has long remained on the margins of global economic discourse despite its abundant natural resources, strategic geography and deep cultural history. Davos, often perceived as a distant enclave of global power and elite decision-making, became in this instance a platform through which Assam sought to articulate its aspirations, project confidence in its governance, and assert its relevance in a rapidly transforming global order.

The World Economic Forum itself has evolved well beyond the boundaries of a conventional international conference. It functions as a crucible where global narratives are shaped, where debates on growth, governance, technology, climate change, inequality and security converge, and where informal interactions frequently shape formal policy directions. Presidents, Prime Ministers, Chief Ministers, corporate leaders, economists, innovators and civil society actors gather in Davos not merely to exchange ideas but to influence the intellectual and strategic currents that guide global decision-making. For a Chief Minister from India's Northeast to participate in such a forum signals an intention to transcend regional isolation and engage directly with global processes of change.

Assam's participation at Davos must be understood against the backdrop of its complex and often paradoxical development trajectory. Endowed with oil and natural gas reserves, world-renowned tea plantations, fertile agricultural land, forests, mighty rivers and extraordinary biodiversity, the state has nevertheless lagged behind many other Indian regions in terms of industrialisation and per capita income. Historical neglect, challenging terrain, infrastructure deficits, prolonged political instability in earlier decades and limited integration with national and global markets have all contributed to this outcome. For decades, Assam and the wider Northeast were described in terms of latent potential rather than realised performance. Global platforms such as the World Economic Forum offer an opportunity to challenge this narrative and to present a state ready to convert promise into progress.

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's leadership style has been characterised by assertive governance, rapid administrative decision-making and a deliberate effort to project Assam as a state in transition. His visit to Davos aligns with this broader political approach of visibility and engagement. Over recent years, the Assam government has emphasised improvements in infrastructure, law and order, healthcare, education and urban development as markers of change. New highways, bridges over the

Brahmaputra, expanded airports, medical colleges and visible urban renewal projects have been projected as symbols of a state seeking to break from stagnation. Davos provided a global stage on which these narratives could be communicated directly to international stakeholders.

Investment attraction lies at the core of participation in forums such as the World Economic Forum, but for Assam this objective carries deeper significance. The state faces the pressing challenge of generating sustainable employment for a rapidly expanding youth population whose aspirations extend beyond subsistence agriculture and traditional livelihoods. While agriculture remains central to Assam's economy, it cannot alone absorb the demographic pressures of the coming decades. Diversification into manufacturing, services, renewable energy, tourism, healthcare, logistics and digital industries has become an economic imperative. Davos offers a rare environment where direct conversations with global investors, institutional funds and multinational corporations can take place, often accelerating interest that might otherwise take years to cultivate.

Yet investment in the contemporary global economy is shaped by factors far more complex than tax incentives or land availability. Investors increasingly assess political stability, governance credibility, regulatory transparency, environmental sustainability and social harmony before committing capital. A Chief Minister's personal engagement at the World Economic Forum allows these concerns to be addressed through direct dialogue, building confidence that policies are backed by political will and administrative capacity. Dr Sarma's presence at Davos therefore functioned not merely as representation but as reassurance, projecting Assam as a state capable of policy continuity and responsive governance.

Assam's strategic geographical location adds a further layer of significance to this global outreach. Positioned as the gateway to Northeast India and sharing proximity with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar and the wider Southeast Asian region, the state occupies a critical node in regional connectivity frameworks. As global supply chains undergo reconfiguration in response to geopolitical shifts and economic uncertainty, regions offering connectivity to emerging markets are gaining renewed importance. Assam's location aligns naturally with India's Act East policy and with broader conversations at Davos around resilient supply chains, regional integration and diversification of production bases. In this context, Assam can be projected not merely as a consumer market but as a logistical and manufacturing hub linking South Asia with Southeast Asia.

The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026 also unfolded against a backdrop of global economic uncertainty. Discussions around slowing growth, geopolitical fragmentation, climate risks, energy transitions and tech-

nological disruption dominated conversations in Davos. For a state like Assam, these themes are not abstract. Climate change directly affects its river systems, agriculture and flood patterns, while energy transitions open possibilities for renewable power and green investments. Engagement at WEF allows Assam to situate its local challenges within global frameworks, potentially accessing knowledge, partnerships and finance aligned with sustainable development goals.

From a political perspective, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's presence at Davos also carries symbolic weight within India's federal structure. Historically, global economic engagement has largely been the domain of the Union government or of economically dominant states. A Chief Minister from Assam participating in WEF reflects a more assertive subnational diplomacy, where states actively seek global partnerships to accelerate development. This trend aligns with a broader shift in India's political economy, where states increasingly compete and collaborate on the global stage to attract investment, technology and talent.

Critics may argue that global forums like Davos remain elite spaces with limited direct impact on grassroots realities. Such concerns are not without merit. However, visibility and narrative-setting are themselves powerful tools in a globalised economy. By placing Assam within global conversations, the state challenges stereotypes of remoteness and instability that have long constrained investor perception. Engagement at WEF does not guarantee immediate outcomes, but it lays the groundwork for relationships, credibility and long-term engagement that can translate into tangible benefits over time.

Ultimately, Assam's participation in the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2026 represents an effort to reimagine the state's place in the world. It reflects a desire to move from the periphery of economic discourse to a position of active engagement, from being a subject of development debates to becoming a participant in shaping them. Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's journey to Davos symbolises this transition, signalling that Assam is no longer content to wait for opportunity but is prepared to seek it on the global stage.

In a world marked by rapid change and uncertainty, the ability of regions to articulate their stories, ambitions and capacities has become increasingly important. Davos provided Assam with such a platform. Whether this moment translates into sustained economic transformation will depend on policy follow-through, institutional strength and social inclusion at home. Yet as a statement of intent, Assam at Davos marks a significant chapter in the state's evolving engagement with the global economy, one that underscores confidence, ambition and a willingness to claim a place in the conversations that shape the future. (The writer can be reached at dipakurmi@gmail.com)



By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The 'Barnam' theatre group from Biswanath Chariali—one of the prominent theatre-practising institutions of Upper Assam—has already succeeded in taking firm strides in the history of Assam's theatrical movement. Since its inception, the group has been engaged in regular theatrical practice and, for the past eleven years, has been consistently organising a national-level theatre festival with the participation of theatre groups from both national and international levels. Like the previous year, this year's "Barnam Mrinali Sharma National Theatre Festival" was held from 9 January to 12 January at the Kamalakantha Natya Kshetra in Biswanath Chariali—an event that is undoubtedly positive and encouraging news for the region as well as for the theatre field of Assam as a whole. In recent times, the theatre festivals that have emerged across the state have been carrying a distinctive significance.

National and international theatre festivals offer considerable opportunities for learning. Through the congregation of numerous theatre groups from across the country and abroad, such festivals facilitate the exchange of dramatic ideas, techniques, and thoughts on one hand, while on the other hand they enable the exchange of affection and sincerity among the theatre practitioners. Many leading professional theatre groups in various parts of Assam, with boundless effort, labour, and sincerity, organise such festivals every year and have been playing a pioneering role in bringing the creations and acting talents of theatre artists from India and

abroad to the people. 'Barnam' of Biswanath Chariali has also been organising this theatre festival uninterruptedly for the past ten years, thereby making a noteworthy contribution to the promotion of healthy theatrical thought, exchange of ideas, propagation and development of contemporary theatrical trends, as well as the creation of new theatre practitioners. This has been carrying a positive message in the field of Assam's theatrical movement. Every year, through 'Barnam' festival, several leading theatre groups provide the theatre-loving audience of Biswanath Chariali and adjoining areas with fresh nourishment for new theatrical thought.

This eleventh Barnam Mrinali Sharma National Theatre Festival, held at the beginning of the current year, presented the following plays on its stage.

On the first night, two plays were staged: "The Great Raja Master Drama Company", a production of the Central University of Punjab, directed by the eminent playwright and director Dr. Kulin Kumar Joshi and conceptualised by Joy Tiwari, based on Dinesh Bharati's work; and 'Barnam's own production of the timeless masterpiece 'Rambhijoy' Ankiya Nat, directed by Paplu Saikia Bayan and Angkumoni Kapil. "The Great Raja Master Drama Company" is a comedy full of humour, written in the style of a farce. In this play, a tailor, inspired by observing others' work, closes his twenty-year-old tailoring shop to pursue his dream of doing theatre. His naive assistant writes a play script, and eventually the play is presented on stage, but the story takes unexpected turns. Sometimes characters enter unexpectedly, sometimes 'Anarkali' from the

era of Akbar is added to the scene, sometimes Salim turns into Akbar, and many such absurd incidents—such as introducing the twin brother and sister of a character—create continuous confusion and chaos during the performance. Amid all this disorder, the play keeps the audience filled with laughter and holds their attention throughout. The story revolves around a character named Raja Master, an emotional and excessively dramatic director who dreams of creating a perfect play even amidst backstage chaos and unprepared actors. The special quality of this play is that it entertains the audience, fills them with laughter, and at the same time makes them realise that doing theatre is by no means an easy task. Along with humour, the play also conveys a profound message: "Work is done best only when it is done by someone who knows it—when others attempt it, everything falls apart." The play features excellent performances by skilled actors Aman Tiwari, Desh Raj, Sandeep Yadav, Supriya Singh, Devshmita Das, Rahul Raj, Akashdeep Singh, and Iqbal Singh.

Meanwhile, the Ankiya Nat "Rambhijoy" composed by the great Guru was performed by more than twenty child and young artists from Barnam Natya Training Centre, including Priya Bora, Yashraj Paudel, Himanta Hazarika, Prakriti Bora, Rituparna Devnath, Chinmoy Hazarika, Didriksha Sharma, Avinash Kashyap, and others. In truth, with a balanced blend of acting, dance, music, and lighting in every aspect, the two directors achieved complete success in the presentation of this Rambhijoy Ankiya Nat, which can be said in a single word.

On the second night, the first

play was "Chor", written by the renowned playwright Devesh Thakur and directed by the eminent director Shantanu Pal, presented by Bhabikal Theatre of Silchar. Although "Chor" appears humorous at first glance, it gradually unfolding portrayal of corruption reminds one of the famous words from Hamlet's opening soliloquy: "How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world." This play too presents a picture of a society where corruption and impurity have proliferated excessively without any apparent reason. Here we see a very vivid depiction of the corruption of the human soul—when Tarun Dutta steals his wife's gold jewellery with the intention of making himself richer. In reality, the play satirically and ironically portrays how our dreams, hopes, emotions, and above all our sense of humanity are being stolen. The play features outstanding performances by Madhury Choudhury, Chayanti Pal, Shantanu Pal, Anupam Sinha, and Pallav Bhat-tacharya.

The second play of the night was "Falgudhara", written by Dipen Mahanta and directed by Bishwajit Baruah, presented by 'Shailpi' of Biswanath Chariali. The theme of the play is love. Even in some corner of the mirror of the mind of Anup and Anuradha, whose age has declined while searching for the fragrance of scattered flowers, only each other's reflections still remain today. At every point of the cycle of their lives, the emotion of deep love remains ever alive. The promise of love they made during their college days, in the intoxication of youth, has taken on a different form with the flow of time. Though physically situated far apart, their mental worlds remain very close to each other. It is as if both are searching for the footprints of time that have begun to disappear. The two performers in the play are Dipen Mahanta and Babita Kumari Majumdar.

The third play of the night was 'Tritiya Prahar', presented by

Anushilan Natya Gosthi of Bihpuria, based on a story by Bobita Kalita, written by the renowned playwright Jintu Bhattacharya, and directed by Nipon Pujari. The central theme of this play is a modern analysis of a classical character. The characters created by Kalidasa five thousand years ago still live in our society today—only their form and mentality may have undergone some change. What would the form of those characters be in today's context? What decisions would such an environment have compelled them to take? How would Kalidasa have shaped the character of Shakuntala in 'Abhijnanashakuntalam' if he were writing in today's setting? With such analytical questions, the play 'Tritiya Prahar' has been composed. It depicts the troubled life of an unmarried, pregnant young woman and, on the other hand, the disappointing behaviour she receives from her lover. Facing such circumstances, the young woman repeatedly finds the character of Kalidasa's Shakuntala within herself. In the third watch of the night, she therefore opens the pages of 'Abhijnanashakuntalam' and sees the reflection of her true love and her lover's ultimate betrayal. Out of fear of public eyes and social norms, her parents' mental state and the responsibility of nurturing her unwanted physical condition fall entirely upon her. She alone endures all the wrongs and the blows of her lover's betrayal. Behind this endurance lies only a ray of hope for the future. In the third watch of the night, her only prayer and wish is that, like gold refined by fire, she may shine forever in her lover's mind like an eternal idol. "Tritiya Prahar" is a fusion form of modern Assamese drama and classical Indian drama. The play succeeded in attracting the attention of the audience through the excellent performances of Mridul Bora, Pankaj Jyoti Bhuyan, Geetarth Sharma, Sangita Hazarika Phukan, Jharna Rani Singh, and Darshana Bharali.

On the third night, three plays

of distinctly different flavours were staged. The first was "Meghmalar", based on a famous story by the renowned storyteller Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay, written and directed by playwright-director Barun Kar, presented by "Gobor Bhanga Mridangam" of West Bengal. The play featured performances by nearly twenty artists including Soumitra Dutta, Pranay Naskar, Barnali Halder, Sajal Biswas, and others.

The next play was 'Out, Damned Spot', presented by Nirvana Art Foundation of New Delhi. Written, directed, and performed by Sudeep Chakraborty, this dance-drama production is an adaptation of William Shakespeare's famous tragedy Macbeth, reflecting the cyclical journey of the hunger for power among human beings. The final play of the third night, which received special appreciation, was "Ami Meye", written by playwright Ashish Goswami and directed by Abhijit Sarkar, presented by 'Yuguni' theatre group of Murshidabad, West Bengal. The play featured performances by Tapan Chakraborty, Debashish Sanyal, Kallol Chattopadhyay, Bishwajit Ghosh, Subhankar Mukherjee, Supriya Mukherjee, Prasanta Adhikari, Shantanu Majumdar, Malay Chakraborty, Dilip Roy, Satyanarayan Ghosh, Brishti Chakraborty, Soumima Pal, Sayani Ghosh, Mallika Mandal, Mahitosh Mandal, Gaurav Roy, Anirban Ghoshal, and Mrinmoy Halder.

On the final night, the first play was 'Tadanta', written by the eminent Assamese litterateur Dr. Bhabendra Nath Saikia and directed by the renowned playwright-director Rafiqul Hussain, presented by 'Lalilang The Theatre Rhythm' of Morigaon. The central theme of the play is highly dramatic. Arrogance of aristocracy and crime are so intertwined that one becomes the complement of the other. Out of fear of tarnishing the facade of aristocracy, people are capable of doing anything—even pushing someone into the abyss of death

without hesitation. An illicit relationship leads to an unnatural death, and in its wake unfolds a breathless investigation. This theme forms the main substance of the play, in which the excellent performances by Rohini Kumar Deka, Ranjit Phukan, Jyotsna Basumatary, Sagar Nath, Ankita Bora, Hrishikesh Kaushik, and Hirakjyoti Saikia kept the audience spellbound.

The concluding play was 'Chukurmani', written and directed by Dr. Pranjal Buragohain, presented by the students of Bidya The Living School, Dhemaji. The play beautifully presents the life of tea garden labourers of Assam and the exploitation by the tea planters. Through the story, it symbolically depicts how, over the ages, the British tea planters not only exploited and oppressed these simple and innocent labourers of the tea gardens, but also cunningly used the women and girls as instruments to satisfy their physical desires. The audience was captivated by the performances of Bijoylaxmi Gogoi, Dibyanuj Baruah, Mriganka Nath, Barbie Gogoi, Akash Chutia, Hiramoni Phukan, Urbashi Chetia, Nikumoni Kowar, Lucky Baruah, Juli Gogoi, and Rupshree Bhakta.

Established in 2005, the Biswanath-based 'Barnam' theatre group has already earned a reputation by staging plays on various stages of Assam and the country, as well as abroad, under the direction and leadership of the eminent Assamese theatre personality and director Kushal Deka. Today, 'Barnam' stands as one of the brightest institutions of theatre practice in Assam. The journey of 'Barnam' is filled with the immense hard work and sacrifice of a group of young theatre enthusiasts from Biswanath. May this theatrical journey of 'Barnam' continue uninterrupted. May this journey become a victorious one. Our best wishes and support shall always remain with it. (The author is the recipient of the 'Yuba Lekhak Samman - 2025' from the Government of Assam)

Islamic monotheism and Neo-Vaishnavism

By Arup Saikia

It's a confusing and a little controversial matter. Some scholars sometimes consider the idea of monotheism to be taken from Islam. It's said because we have close affinity with Islamic culture in India. Islam is the second largest religion of India. If Christian had a dominant population, then the same narrative would have been applied to Christianity. Not only Islam, but also almost all the major religions of the world are monotheistic. The Jewish, Christian and Islam are Abrahamic religions. Abraham is spiritual and biological patriarch of above mentioned three religions. Monotheism is a simplified way of worshipping, therefore it's adorable for all religions. It's unlikely that it's imitated from Islam or other religions. Moreover there's basic differences with above-mentioned religions and others.

Paganism was also prevalent in Arabia during the pre Hajrat Mohammad era. The three hundred sixty numbers of idols existed in the kaba only. The kaba is the most sacred place or house of Islam. The family of prophet Mohammed oversaw the affairs of kaba. But the people of Mecca revolted against him. Prophet Mohammad eventually fled to Medina with his wife Khadijah and some close associates in 622 CE. The Islamic religion was genuinely born in Medina with some of his gradually increasing followers. The Islamic calendar started from the date of Mohammad's journey from Mecca to Medina. It's known as Hijri. Hajrat Mohammad attacked Mecca and reoccupied the holiest Kaba in 629 CE. As soon as Mecca was conquered, he demolished all the statues of kaba. He died after three years in 632 CE. Islam couldn't spread to Europe extensively. The geographical locations, internal divisions, strong military resistance, unity of Christian states and barriers in Constantinople are said to be main reasons.

The matter of similarities or dissimilarities as regards to monotheism appeared here itself. Hajrat Mohammad denounced the existence of other Gods and Goddesses. But Sankardeva accepted the existence of all Gods and Goddesses. Moreover Sankardeva urged his disciples to respect all sects or branches of Hinduism. The "Singhasaan" or "Guru Asana" is like a statue or form of God. Sometimes pictures of Gods are painted on pillars or boundaries for decoration. These are also like forms of God. Sankardeva also mentioned the names of many Gods and Goddesses in his writings. Sankardeva just justified the supremacy of Lord Krishna. Sankardeva never recommended demolishing the shrines of other sects like Mohammad of Islam. So Kamakhya temple and the Satras existed side by side even during monarchical sponsorship of Sankardeva in Koch kingdom. Sankardeva never tried to improper utilisation of his political power. He showed his disciples the path to attain ultimate spiritual satisfaction and urged not to defame other religions.

"Never defame the religion of others. You will have mercy on the living beings. Be calm minded and affectionate in all religions.

That is the religion of Bhagawat, know oh powerful."

(A substance of a verse from the Bhagawat)

There is no place for idol worship in the devotional religion preached by Srimanta Sankardeva. But Sankardeva's target of preaching was the illiterate and common people. No noble or upper class privileged were available among them. They won't understand anything without a tangible base. Therefore Srimanta Sankardeva gave the imagination of idols of the Lord for the convenience of worship. The form of God is allowed in the Mahapurusha sect, although it's in imagination. Sankardeva expected for the development of society to properly learn the concept of God. On the other hand, Srimanta Sankardeva did not even condemn those devotees who worship idols. He even saw among them sincerity and simplicity. Very lovingly called them "natural devotees" and said that they too would gradually improve.

Unlike Mohammad, Sankardeva was a good dramatist. As he has written many dramas and lyrics. The names of many Gods and Goddesses are mentioned in drama. They are displayed as different characters apart from the supreme Lord. The dramatic presentation of these characters are called Bhaona. This act justifies Sankardeva's admission of other Deities.

These whole systems are not compatible with Islam at all, but are completely against Islam. The concept of particular Lord's supremacy in Islam is not available like Hinduism. Islamic monotheism means that there can be no second Gods or Goddesses except one God. Similarly, since Islam does not practice dualism at all, no imaginative Gods also appear. So there can be no form of God. Therefore imagination of an idol of God in that religion is considered unreligious. There can't be any characters of other Gods in Islamic play. The religion of Sankardeva is based on Hinduism or vedantic philosophy. On the other hand Islam is a product of Abrahamic or semitic religion. Only common monotheism is not sufficient to connect with each other. Finally, the doctrine or philosophical trends of Hinduism can't reconcile the monotheism preached by Srimanta Sankardeva with Abrahamic monotheism. Moreover the creations of Sankardeva are not in Sanskrit language. So many non-Assamese scholars nurse a wrong conception regarding preaching and monotheism of Sankardeva.

Ancient Vedic religion

When did the practices of sacrifice (yagya), priesthood or casteism start? Was there worship or sacrifice in the beginning of Hinduism? The Rig Veda provides a detailed explanation of early Hinduism.

During the time of the Rig Veda, Lords or Gods were satisfied only by prayer

(Naam). How is the worship of Hinduism? Simply to say, the procedure of worship of Hinduism began in the same way as the Naamdharma. Naamdharma was introduced by Sankardeva in medieval times. According to Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the first stage of Hinduism is prayer.

"Prayer was the only offering made to Gods"

"Men had direct communion with Gods without any mediation." (Indian Philosophy Vol. I page 66 / 108, by Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan)

As Radhakrishnan mentioned, the devotee has a direct connection with God. This means that there is no intermediary Brahmin or priest in the Puja (worship) ceremonies. These intermediaries are of later creations. Dr Damodar Dharmananda Kosambi terms it as:

"There is no Brahmin caste as such with a monopoly of the priesthood."

(The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline, P.82.)

The word Brahman, which is repeatedly mentioned in the Rig Veda, refers to prayer. They pray and Brahman are synonymous.

"the word Brahman throughout the Rigveda ----- signifies without exception nothing more than prayer -----" (Outlines of Indian philosophy, page - 5) by Dr Paul Deussen (1845 - 1919).

He is a scholar of German origin with a mastery of Indian philosophy.

Then Gods were worshipped with household commodities without priests. A fire is lit and paddy, maize, rice, somrasa (liqueur), etc. are offered in the name of sacrifice (yagya). No animals or any living beings were offered there. Prayer and devotion are the essence of this sacrifice. The collective prayers of all were the sacrifices (yagya) of the ancient Hindus. Later, the sacrifice was done with pomp and grandeur with the inclusion of priests for their livelihood. This is followed by the emergence of newly created various religious classes.

"----- the original mode of worship contains a true element of bhakti." (Birth of Bhakti in Indian Religions and Art, page no = 9, by Dr Susmita Pandey.)

The mention of the word bhakti in the Rig Veda carries special significance. From the above discussion we can say that Hinduism, like many other religions, is based solely on prayers and devotion. The Neo-Vaishnavite religion that Sankardeva preached has no difference to it.

"The word 'bhakti' is found in a mantra of the RV (8.27.11) in which bhakti to the Visvadeva gods is mentioned: Id vamsya bhaktaye." (A Religious History of Ancient India, Vol. 2, P. 91) by Sita Ram Goel.

The rituals of the Vedic religion were so simple that even the common people could participate in it. Today, Vedic religion refers to idol worship, animal or other sacrifice etc. But this was not the religion of the Vedas in the beginning. (The author is a noted cultural enthusiast, writer, Bhaona artist and alumnus of the University of Delhi. He can be reached at arupsaikia07@gmail.com)

The relevance of democratic values in Assamese society

By: Lalit Nath

A glance through the pages of history makes it clear that the seeds of democratic consciousness are not a recent addition to Assamese society, rather, they represent a natural humanistic value that has flowed through social life across generations. The mindset of not confining power, decision-making and responsibility solely to an individual or a group, but entrusting them to the collective conscience of society, is vividly evident in Assam's traditions, folk life and social conduct.

Even before the advent of modern democratic systems, Assamese society had developed enduring traditions of consultation, consensus and participatory decision-making. These practices continue to lend renewed relevance and meaning to democratic values in the contemporary context. In the fifteenth century, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankardev initiated the Neo-Vaishnavite movement, leading to the establishment of the Namghar—one of his most enduring and transformative contributions. Far from being merely a place of worship, the Namghar evolved into a collective social institution where people from different castes, communities and social backgrounds participated equally in religious practices, cultural activities, dispute resolution and collective decision making. Principles of equality, tolerance and universal participation—core foundations of democracy—were naturally reflected within this institution. At the village level, traditional systems such as the Gaon Sabha and the Gaon Burha institution, particularly in tribal regions, have long played a crucial role in local governance, dispute settlement and community regulation. These mechanisms emphasized open dialogue, collective responsibility and consensus-based norms. There exists a significant conceptual overlap between these traditional practices and modern democratic principles.

Even during the Ahom period, elements of democratic governance were visible. The Ahom rulers decentralized authority by creating administrative positions such as the Borphukan, Borghain and Borbarua, who shared responsibility for governance and decision-making across different regions. This system enabled coordination among diverse ethnic and tribal groups and prevented excessive concentration of power. Following India's independence in 1947, Assam became an integral part of the Indian democratic framework, further deepening the relevance of democratic values. Under the leadership of Assam's first Chief Minister Gopinath Bordoloi, democratic governance took firm root. The Congress party's victory in the 1946 elections laid the foundation for Assam's post-independence administration, while Bordoloi played a pivotal role in safeguarding Assam's territorial and political integration with India. However, post-independence democracy in Assam also encountered complex challenges. The reorganization of the state led to the creation of new states such as Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. Although these changes occurred through democratic and constitutional processes, they intensified demands for autonomy and identity, particularly in tribal regions. These developments underscored the necessity of protecting minority rights—an essential democratic principle.

One of the most significant democratic movements in post-independence Assam was the Assam Agitation (1979-1985), led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP). The movement centered on demands related to the identification of undocumented migrants, reflecting widespread concerns over identity, resources and gover-

nance. Democratic methods such as peaceful protests, satyagraha, hartals and mass mobilization were employed to articulate public opinion. The culmination of this movement was the signing of the Assam Accord on August 15, 1985—an important example of democratic dialogue and constitutional resolution. At the same time, the emergence of armed movements in certain phases demonstrated that when democratic institutions fail to adequately address public aspirations, frustration can manifest in violent forms, threatening peace and stability. Nevertheless, the post-Accord period reaffirmed the centrality of democratic processes in restoring relative normalcy and political engagement in Assam.

The introduction of the Panchayati Raj system further strengthened democracy at the grassroots level. Through provisions such as reservations for women and tribal communities, the system expanded political participation and social inclusion. However, for this framework to function effectively, it is essential to revive the collective spirit and cooperative ethos inherent in traditional institutions like the Namghar and Gaon Sabha, which historically nurtured Assam's democratic consciousness.

In the contemporary period, democratic values continue to shape Assamese society. Democratic values are also indispensable in areas such as women's and youth participation in public life, environmental protection, development planning and the safeguarding of freedom of expression. In Assamese social life, democracy is not merely a political system; it represents a philosophy of living. From Sankardev's egalitarian vision to post-independence movements and accords, Assam has continuously endeavored to keep democratic consciousness alive. Democracy remains the only viable path for forging unity amid diversity, prioritizing dialogue over violence and safeguarding the dignity and rights of every individual. Today, Assam stands at the confluence of linguistic, cultural, ethnic, tribal and religious diversity, giving the state a distinct identity. Yet this richness is accompanied by significant challenges that have strained social relations and collective trust. Issues of migration, economic pressure and identity continue to generate complex social and political debates.

In such circumstances, rising intolerance, divisive narratives and the rapid spread of misinformation risk deepening suspicion and fear within society. Increasing self-centered attitudes have weakened empathy and shared responsibility, leading to a crisis of social trust. Amid these challenges, democratic values—tolerance, equality, respect for differing opinions and adherence to the rule of law—have become more essential than ever.

If democratic values are not confined merely to electoral processes or political competition, but cultivated as everyday practices of justice, restraint, responsibility and mutual respect, Assam's plural society can emerge as a model of peaceful coexistence. Democracy is not only a form of governance; it is a social culture that must be lived daily through conduct, mindset and humanity. The enduring tradition of the Namghar continues to remind society that true democracy lies in collective participation and shared responsibility. From Sankardev's ideals of equality to modern democratic movements and accords, Assam has consistently striven to preserve democratic values. There is no alternative to democracy for nurturing unity amid diversity, privileging dialogue over conflict and protecting the rights of all citizens. If these values are sustained in thought, action and decision-making, Assam will continue to shine as a healthy, prosperous, harmonious and truly democratic society.

MP Dilip Saikia lays foundation for ₹ 43.77 cr road project in Darrang

Reconstruction and upgradation of 15 km road to improve connectivity between Naharbari and Namkhala



HT Correspondent
MANGALDAI, Jan 24: The foundation stone for the reconstruction and upgradation of a 15-kilometre road connecting Naharbari to Namkhala under Sipajhar Assembly Constituency in Darrang district was laid on Friday. The project, estimated at approximately ₹ 43.77 crore, is being implemented under the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme for the financial year 2024-25.

the Deomorni Higher Secondary School premises, MP Saikia said that the BJP-led Central Government has consistently prioritised the overall development of the North East region and has been providing the necessary funds. He described the road construction project as a clear example of that commitment.

The road forms a crucial segment of the Mangaldai-Majikuchi road and serves as an important link at the border area between Darrang and Udalguri districts. The formal inauguration ceremony was held in the afternoon at Deomorni, where Darrang-Udalguri Lok Sabha MP Dilip Saikia performed the groundbreaking.

Addressing a public gathering at

The MP expressed hope that the project would be completed within the next one and a half years. Once finished, it would address the long-standing transportation difficulties faced by in remote areas.

The event was attended by Sipajhar MLA Dr Paramananda Rajbongshi, officials from the executing agency, the Assam Government's Public Works Roads Department, Mangaldai-Dalgawn-Sipajhar Territorial Circle and a large number of local residents.

Police seize Heroin and firearm in Bokajan crackdown

HT Correspondent
BOKAJAN, Jan 24: In a significant crackdown on narcotics and illegal arms trafficking, the Khatkhati Police Station intercepted a vehicle near the Lahorijan Nirmal Kumar Tea Estate on Saturday, seizing a substantial quantity of drugs and a firearm.

Acting on a specific tip-off, a police team led by Surjya Kumar Bora, Officer-in-Charge of Khatkhati Police Station, set up a checkpoint in the Lahorijan area. During the operation, officers intercepted a black Bolero (registration number NL 08 P 3324) traveling from the direction of Dimapur.

Upon conducting a thorough search of the vehicle, police discovered illicit items hidden in a secret compartment. The recovery included 12 soap cases containing suspected heroin, weighing approximately 156

grams and one .22 caliber pistol along with six rounds of live ammunition.

The driver of the vehicle, identified as Khehoto Aomi was immediately taken into custody.

During preliminary questioning, the accused revealed that he was transporting the consignment from Dimapur toward the Nuland area.

"We are committed to breaking the supply chain of illegal drugs and arms entering the region," stated OC Surjya Kumar Bora. "The accused has been booked under relevant sections of the law, and further investigations are underway to identify broader links in this smuggling network."

The seized contraband and the vehicle have been impounded and the suspect is currently being held for further interrogation at the Khatkhati Police Station.

Free medical camp held at District Jail Sonari, Charaideo

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Jan 24: A free medical and health check-up camp was successfully conducted on Saturday at District Jail Sonari, Charaideo under the National AYUSH Mission, Assam, organised by the Arogya Care Foundation, Nagaon.

As per a press note issued by Arogya Care Foundation, medical check-ups of prisoners were carried out, free medicines were distributed and medical counselling was provided to the inmates. The camp was conducted under the professional guidance of Dr Dhurba Lochan Nath, District Nodal Officer, AYUSH.

The programme was further supported by a dedicated team of paramedical staff from the Joint Director of Health Services, who extended active cooperation and assistance throughout the camp. Yoga instructors Bhargov Jyoti Gogoi and Rumi Phukon Borah also assisted in coordinating the event.

The initiative contributed significantly to assessing inmates' health status, early detection of ailments and promotion of overall physical and mental well-being among the prisoners.

NFR records 8.4% rise in freight loading

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Jan 24: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is working round the clock to serve its customers and ensure the prompt delivery of essential commodities. During December 2025, NFR achieved a total freight loading of 0.952 million tonnes (MT), marking an 8.4% increase over the corresponding period of the previous year. Cumulatively, up to December of the current fiscal, NFR loaded 8.250 million tonnes, surpassing last year's 7.729 million tonnes and registering a growth of 6.7%.

In December 2025, several commodities witnessed significant growth compared to the same month last year. Cement loading surged by 148.0%, while fertiliser loading rose by 350.0%. Dolomite loading increased by 14.6% and container loading recorded a jump of 13.3%. In the "Others" segment, stone chips rose by 92.6% and miscellaneous loading improved by 350.0%, reflecting higher demand and movement of construction-related materials across the region.

The consistent growth in freight loading reflects rising economic activity in the Northeast. This upward trend has strengthened the region's economic landscape and contributed significantly to NFR's revenue. Moving forward, NFR remains committed to technical advancements aimed at enhancing service reliability and efficiency, ensuring sustained growth in freight transportation.

National Girl Child Day observed in Dima Hasao

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Jan 24: The District Health Services, Dima Hasao, observed National Girl Child Day with a rally followed by an awareness programme, underscoring the importance of empowering the girl child and ensuring her rights, education and well-being.

The rally began from the office of the Additional Chief Medical & Health Officer (FW), Haflong and concluded at the Cultural Institute Hall, drawing participation from health officials and community members.

The awareness programme was graced by Probita Johori, EM, NCHAC, as the Chief Guest. The event was also attended by Dr Sarsing Rongpi, Joint Director of Health Services, Dr Marina Changsan, Additional C.M.&H.O (FW), Rijiit Kachari, SDIPRO, Maibang, along with other officials and participants.

Speakers at the programme highlighted the need to promote gender equality, education and health awareness, while stressing collective responsibility in building a safer and more inclusive society for girls.

Largest electrical expo in Northeast opens at Vrindavan Garden, Athagaon Gaushala

Minister Pijush Hazarika inaugurates Electrofest 2.0

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Jan 24: The Guwahati Electrical Merchants Association (GEMA) organised the second edition of Electrofest, the largest electrical expo in Northeast India, at Vrindavan Garden, Athagaon Gaushala, Guwahati. Minister Pijush Hazarika inaugurated the expo, emphasising the importance of quality in manufacturing and highlighting the role of such events in educating and connecting society.

In his inaugural address, Minister Hazarika said, "My family is involved in this industry and I've become indirectly involved as well. Such electrical expos give exposure from an electrician to a trader from a remote area. GEMA brings a common platform for all for organising this Electrofest Expo." He added, "We must focus on quality when manufacturing any product." The expo provides a platform for showcasing electrical solutions under one roof, attracting industry professionals and enthusiasts alike.

During the inaugural function, Guest of Honour Nipon Kumar Talukdar, Shashikant Bihani from Kolours India Pvt Ltd, GEMA president Nawal Kishore Sarda, Expo Chairman Gopal Pasari, Secretary Saket Raj Pugalia and Treasurer Naveen Sethia were present.



President Nawal Kishore Sarda said, "The four-day extravaganza is set to be the largest gathering of the electrical industry in the Northeast, showcasing the latest innovations and products shaping the future of energy and infrastructure." He added, "The second edition of Electrofest is a testament to GEMA's commitment to empowering the

electrical fraternity of the Northeast. With participation from industry stalwarts and innovative exhibitors, this expo will provide a unique platform to explore cutting-edge technologies and forge lasting business relationships." Expo Chairman Gopal Pasari informed that more than 140 stalls will feature a com-

prehensive range of electrical products with over 50 leading companies from across the nation exhibiting new innovations in switches, fans, lights, solar energy, transmission lines, switchgear and more.

Secretary Saket Raj Pugalia said, "APDCL and AREIDA are our strategic partners supporting this event, along with Title Sponsor Kolours India Pvt Ltd, Co-Sponsors Havells India Pvt Ltd and KEI Wires and Cables, Associate Sponsors Cama Electricals and Richa Electricals Pvt Ltd and Lucky Draw Sponsor Presto Plast India."

Expo convenors Abhishek Kejriwal, Deepak Agarwal, Rohit Surana, Saurabh Bothra and Naveen Sethia jointly said, "During this mega event, many leaders, officials from various government departments, builders, architects, interior designers, contractors, dealers, electricians and consumers from all over the Northeast will participate, making it a four-day event of networking, knowledge sharing and business opportunities."

Electrofest is the flagship event of GEMA, aimed at promoting growth in the electrical industry through exhibitions, product launches and knowledge sessions. The event provides a single platform for manufacturers, dealers and consumers to interact and explore new business avenues.

Akhil Gogoi lodges FIR alleging vote tampering in Kamrup

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Jan 24: Rajjor Dal president and Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi on Saturday lodged an FIR at the Jorhat Police Station against four BJP members and three government employees, including two officials of Boko district under Kamrup district, alleging an attempt to carry out "vote chori" (vote theft) by forged means.

After filing the complaint, Gogoi told newsmen that the FIR alleges that four BJP workers, including office bearers had illegally entered the office of the Boko co-district commissioner on Friday night and were meddling with

electoral data by accessing computers. He said local people informed his party and the media about the activities inside the office.

Gogoi submitted three video clippings of the alleged malpractice during the ongoing Special Revision (SR) of the electoral rolls ahead of the forthcoming Assembly elections. The four alleged trespassers named in the FIR are Prahlad Biswas, South Kamrup BJP and Chamaria Block Zila Parishad member, Mrinmoy Boro, secretary of South Kamrup district BJP; Budheswar Rabha, SC Morcha general secretary, South Kamrup BJP and Mrudul Talukdar, an

employee of a gas agency reportedly owned by a BJP leader.

The FIR also includes the chowkidar and officials for their alleged complicity with Gogoi stating, "Without their support, how could non-government persons gain access to computers inside a Co-District office?" The video clips submitted reportedly show BJP workers working on Form 7 and downloading several documents from the computers.

Replying to a query, the MLA said he was in touch with Congress and other opposition party leaders regarding alliance talks and hoped that the seat-sharing matter would be finalised by January 31.

Sivasagar pays tribute to Pradip Baruah

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Jan 24: Sivasagar Newspaper Hawkers Association on Saturday organised a meeting to pay tributes to Pradip Baruah, illustrious editor and publisher of the popular magazine Prantik, who died recently.

Hem Baruah, former president of Rangpur Sahitya Sabha, laid the ceremonial lamp before the portrait of Baruah and paid glowing tributes to the editor who preferred remaining away from media glare.

Dr Prakash Kotoky said that Pradip Baruah was a man of great self-esteem who did not want to live in the shadow of his illustrious father, RG Baruah. Gukul Mohan Hazarika, former Trade Adviser of Assam in Kolkata and Director of

Administrative Staff College, recalled Pradip Baruah's singular contribution in creating new writers in the Assamese language.

Dipali Bhattacharjya Baruah said that Prantik was like Pradip Baruah's son and he was emotionally involved in the magazine's well-being. Anoj Kumar Borthakur also paid tributes and said that Pradip Baruah's Prantik would remain the most sought-after Assamese magazine even in foreign countries. Mukul Nath described it as a rare magazine that has kept the light and breath of the Assamese community burning for decades. The event was also addressed by Pranjal Borpujari, Raju Nath, Krishna Goswami and JN Gogoi.

Sivasagar Commerce College Youth Fest concludes

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Jan 24: Addressing the Sivasagar Commerce College Youth Festival 2026 on Friday, Dr Mahadev Patgiri, Vice-Chancellor of Sibsagar University, said that man must strive to defeat AI in the unwarranted but inevitable contest in the new era. "People must be creative rather than artificial intelligence. The youth must move forward despite the challenges facing them," he added.

The event was moderated by Dr Kauranga Bargohain, Professor, Department of Commerce, who addressed the students on the relevance of the knowledge economy in the 21st century. The programme was also attended by former Principal of Sivasagar Girls' College Budhin Mishra, Principal of BLB College Dr Pankajyoti Hazarika and journalists Muktab Hussain, Bhairav Munda and Nazuillah Hazarika. In the festival, the Accountancy Department was adjudged the best department, while the Sociology Department won the Best Discipline Award. The event began with a cultural procession in the morning and concluded with a performance by prominent singer and social worker Manas Robin.

Minister Nandita Gorlosa emphasises cultural significance, thanks CM Sarma

Assam Darshan Scheme strengthens religious harmony in Dima Hasao

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Jan 24: In a significant step towards preserving religious and cultural heritage, cheques under the Chief Minister's Assam Darshan Scheme were distributed on Friday for the conservation of places of worship across 28 constituencies of Dima Hasao district.

The programme, held at the Haflong Municipal Board Ground, saw the distribution of cheques amounting to ₹ 1.5 lakh each to nearly 200 sacred worship sites. These include the traditional Madaikho of the Dimasa community, Hindu temples, Naamghars of various communities, gurdwaras, churches and other indigenous faith-based institutions such as Sonongs, Boljols and Kelumkis, reflecting the district's rich religious diversity.

The event was graced by State Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Nandita Gorlosa, along with Dima Hasao District Commissioner Munindra Nath Nagate, MAC Ngamrothang Hmar, Women Organisation president Kirang Jeme and several BJP party office-bearers. Representatives from various beneficiary committees and faith-based organisations were also present.



Addressing the gathering, Minister Nandita Gorlosa highlighted the deep religious and cultural importance of places of worship, stating that they are not only centres of faith but also pillars of social harmony and community identity. She informed that under the Assam Darshan Scheme, the Chief Minister has sanctioned ₹ 3 lakh for each

selected place of worship, of which ₹ 1.5 lakh is being released as the first instalment.

The Minister urged the managing committees to ensure that the funds are used strictly for renovation, preservation and development of the worship sites and not diverted for any other purpose.

Expressing her heartfelt gratitude, Minister Gorlosa thanked Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma for conceptualising and approving the Assam Darshan Scheme for the 113 Haflong (ST) Legislative Assembly Constituency, describing it as a visionary initiative that promotes inclusive development, religious harmony and preservation of Assam's cultural heritage.

The programme marked a meaningful milestone in strengthening communal unity and safeguarding the spiritual legacy of Dima Hasao district.

CM Pema Khandu addresses Startup Arunachal Day 2026 during Innovation Month celebrations Arunachal emerging as strong contributor to India's startup ecosystem: CM Khandu

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Jan 24: Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday said that India's startup ecosystem has witnessed transformational growth over the past decade, with Arunachal Pradesh emerging as a strong and competitive contributor, particularly from the North East region.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of Startup Arunachal Day 2026, organised as part of the Innovation Month marking 10 Years of Startup India by the Department of Planning and Investment, the Chief Minister recalled that the Startup India initiative was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2016 when the number of startups in the country was limited. He said that in the last ten years, the ecosystem has expanded to over two lakh startups nationwide with significant participation from Tier-II and Tier-III cities and a growing presence of women entrepreneurs. He also noted that startups have generated nearly 20 lakh direct jobs across the country.

Referring to Arunachal Pradesh's journey, Khandu said that the Arunachal Pradesh Innovation and Investment Park (APIIP) was launched in 2020 during the challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated that the state transformed the crisis into an opportunity through collective efforts led by Deputy Chief Minister

Chowna Mein, who also holds the Finance, Planning and Investment portfolio, along with the Planning Department and the APIIP team. He added that the programme has now completed five years and has produced several successful entrepreneurial stories from the state.

Citing examples, the Chief Minister referred to startups that overcame challenges related to finance and market access and later scaled up with institutional support. He said such success stories reflect the immense potential of the state's youth, who require proper hand-holding and the right platform.

He said that Arunachal Pradesh's youth have excelled in multiple fields over the past decade, including sports, music and entrepreneurship. Reiterating the government's commitment to nurturing startups, he said seed funding and mentorship have been provided under APIIP and announced that, based on its performance, the seed funding amount has been doubled. He also announced that the intake capacity for the upcoming Cohort 5.0 would be doubled.

The Chief Minister further informed that the Planning Department has been advised to identify a larger space for APIIP to strengthen its institutional capacity and added that the post of Director (Investment) has already been cre-



ated. He announced that APIIP would be converted into a Section 8 company under the Companies Act to facilitate access to venture capital, CSR funds, angel investments and national and international financial institutions. Emphasising collaboration, Khandu urged startups to work closely with universities, higher education institutions and research bodies, stating that many solutions to real-world problems already exist within academic institutions. He also highlighted the potential of drone technology in Arunachal Pradesh's mountainous terrain for logistics, healthcare delivery and infrastructure support. Speaking on broader economic challenges, he

should explore ancillary industries linked to large investments to enhance cost efficiency and project viability. Congratulating the APIIP team, Khandu said Arunachal Pradesh was recognised as a best-performing state at the national startup event held at Bharat Mandapam and chaired by the Prime Minister. He said the achievement demonstrates that the state can compete with larger states and serves as motivation to raise benchmarks further. He also informed that the government has signed MoUs with higher education institutions to establish startup cells and announced that budgetary provisions would be made to provide financial support to these institutions. Allocations under schemes such as the Deendayal Upadhyaya Swavalamban Yojana would also be enhanced to support more entrepreneurs.

Calling upon the youth to utilise the favourable national startup ecosystem, the Chief Minister urged them to remain focused, optimistic and responsible, including in their use of digital platforms and social media. He said the role of youth would be critical in achieving the vision of a developed India, developed North East and developed Arunachal Pradesh well before 2047, stressing that teamwork and synergy are essential to achieve development goals.

Education, girl child empowerment key to Arunachal's future: Dy CM Chowna Mein highlights inclusive education and women's empowerment on key national days



ITANAGAR, Jan 24: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy CM Chowna Mein on Saturday underscored the role of education and women empowerment in shaping a progressive and prosperous society. He said education is the foundation of progress and the key to unlocking the potential of every individual. He stressed the need for quality, inclusive and equitable education for all children in Arunachal Pradesh. "By empowering minds today,

we build a strong, enlightened and prosperous tomorrow," he said in a post on X, marking the International Day of Education.

In a separate post on the occasion of National Girl Child Day, Mein reiterated the government's commitment to the empowerment and welfare of girls, describing them as "a beacon of hope, a force of change and the promise of a brighter tomorrow". "It is our duty to protect her rights, nurture her dreams and empower her to rise," he said. (PTI)

3-day GST training programme concludes at Itanagar

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Jan 24: A three-day training programme on the GST Act and Rules was successfully conducted at the DK State Convention Centre, IG Park, Itanagar from January 21 to January 23, 2026. The programme was organised for Group 'A' and Group 'B' officers of the Tax, Excise and Narcotics Department, Government of Arunachal Pradesh with the objective of strengthening technical and practical understanding of GST administration.

The inaugural session was held on January 21 and began with registration of participants, followed by felicitation of the resource persons. A welcome address was delivered by Lobsang Tsering, Commissioner, Tax, Excise and Narcotics. The keynote address was delivered by Y.W Ringu, IAS, Commissioner (Finance/Tax and Excise), who highlighted the importance of continuous capacity building and updated knowledge for effective implementation of GST laws. The overall training programme was coordinated by the Course Director, Tapas Dutta, Deputy Commissioner, Tax, Excise and Narcotics.

During the three days, detailed technical sessions were conducted covering key GST-related topics, including GSTR-1, GSTR-3B, GSTR-9 and 9C, scrutiny of returns under Section 61, assessment proceedings under Sections 62, 63 and 64 and drafting of show cause notices. Sessions were also held on analysis of Profit and Loss Accounts and Balance Sheets, utilisation of Tally data during inspection proceedings under Section 67 and GST-related issues in the service sector, including real estate.

The officers were further trained on demand and recovery provisions under Sections 73, 74 and 74A, drafting of demand notices and conduct of GST audits as per the GST Audit Manual 2023. A special session on the use of Artificial Intelligence for information gathering and prompt writing was also included. Each day concluded with interactive question-and-answer sessions, enabling participants to clarify doubts and share practical experiences. The training programme aimed to enhance technical knowledge, improve practical skills and ensure uniformity in the implementation of GST laws across the state. Participants appreciated the programme and described it as highly informative and beneficial for their day-to-day official work.

Indian Army inaugurates Sarva Dharma Sthal at Migging

HT Correspondent
TUTING, Jan 24: The Spearhead Division of Spear Corps inaugurated a Sarva Dharma Sthal at the Migging Transit Camp to promote battlefield tourism under the Bharat Rann Bhoomi initiative and to foster communal harmony, mutual respect and confidence building between the security forces and the local community in the border areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

The event was organised in keeping with Arunachal Pradesh's rich cultural traditions and the New Year festive spirit, reflecting the region's long-standing values of unity, peaceful coexistence and respect for all faiths. The inauguration ceremony was attended by representatives of the civil administration, local governance bodies, security forces and community institutions. Prominent attendees included the Zilla Panchayat Member, Sarpanch of Migging, Fathers from Migging Church and personnel from GREF, ITBP and other civil defence workers. The Sarva Dharma Sthal is envisioned as a common spiritual space for people of all faiths and beliefs. It symbolises unity in diversity and is expected to further strengthen civil-military cooperation in this remote border region while supporting the Indian Army's efforts to promote battlefield tourism in the area.

Two students to attend R-Day function in New Delhi as special guests

ITANAGAR, Jan 24: Two students from Namsai in Arunachal Pradesh have been selected to attend the 77th Republic Day parade in New Delhi as special guests, an official report said. The beneficiaries are 10-year-old Nipul Modi and 13-year-old Samir Tati, it said. The two were formerly engaged in begging. Modi is currently studying in class II at government primary school, Nongtang Shyam and Tati is studying in class VI at government upper primary school, Kaisu.

The duo has been selected under the SMILE project with the support of Namsai district administration, Social Welfare department and the Dhamma Aid Foundation. The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has selected 100 individuals from across the country who have been freed from begging and rehabilitated under the SMILE-Begging scheme to attend the Republic Day parade in New Delhi as special guests. (PTI)

Mega labour awareness camp held at Yingkiong

AAPLU, APB&OCWWB sensitise workers on welfare schemes and labour rights

HT Correspondent
YINGKIONG, Jan 24: In order to raise awareness on labour laws and welfare benefits, the All Arunachal Pradesh Labour Union (AAPLU), Upper Siang Unit in collaboration with the Arunachal Pradesh Building & Other Construction Workers Welfare Board (APB&OCWWB), Itanagar, organised a Mega Awareness Camp for labourers of Upper Siang district at the Multipurpose Hall, Yingkiong. The programme was attended by Deputy Commissioner, Upper Siang district, Talo Jerang, Chairman, APB&OCWWB, Rolen Dagam, Zilla Parishad Chairperson, Upper Siang, Api Kombo, along with office bearers and members of AAPLU from the State, District and Block levels. Government officials from various departments, as well as organised and unorganised sector workers were also present in large numbers. During the programme, labourers were sensitised about various labour welfare schemes available under the Welfare Board. They were advised to perform their duties sincerely and responsibly, strictly adhere to duty hours and maintain discipline at the workplace. Labour Union members were urged to properly sensitise workers and make them aware of their rights, duties and responsibilities. The speakers strongly emphasised the impor-



tance of skill development and encouraged mandatory registration under the Welfare Board to enable labourers to avail their entitled benefits. Earlier, general secretary of AAPLU, Dunge Apang, highlighted the objectives of the awareness camp and stressed the role of the Union in safeguarding the welfare of workers. As part of the welfare initiative, kitchen sets were distributed free of cost to registered labourers of Yingkiong during the event.

200 youths receive appointment letters at 18th Rozgar Mela

ITANAGAR, Jan 24: As part of the 18th Rozgar Mela held across the country on Saturday, 200 youths in Arunachal Pradesh received appointment letters at a programme organised at the ITBP NE Frontier headquarters here. In all, more than 61,000 aspirants were offered job letters across the country. Inspector General of ITBP NE Frontier headquarters Amitabh Gupta handed over appointment letters to the 200 candidates, including 38 women, during the event, an official statement said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the job fair at 45 locations throughout the country via video conferencing. Addressing the event, Modi said connecting youth with skills and providing employment and self-employment opportunities has been a top priority of the government. He said the Rozgar Mela

National Voters' Day observed in East Siang

HT Correspondent
PASIGHAT, Jan 24: National Voters' Day was observed across East Siang district with citizens taking the Voters' Pledge, reaffirming their commitment to active participation in the democratic process and the exercise of voting rights. At the Deputy Commissioner's establishment, Additional Deputy Commissioner (HQ) Pebika Lego administered the Voters' Pledge on the theme "My Vote, My India: Citizens at the Heart of Democracy." The pledge carried a message to uphold the democratic traditions of the country and to perform the duties of responsible citizenship. The observance was marked by wide participation from government department offices at the district headquarters, sub-divisions and circles. Institutions including BPGH, Pasighat, Government Polytechnic College, Pasighat and other educational institutions also joined in observing National Voters' Day in the district. The event aimed to strengthen awareness about the importance of voting and to encourage citizens to actively engage in the democratic process.

Advocate Licha Sesa laid to rest at Doimukh



HT Correspondent
DOIMUKH, Jan 24: The last rites of late advocate Licha Sesa, former General Secretary of the Gauhati High Court Itanagar Permanent Bench Bar Association (GHCIIPBBA), were performed with full honours at Doimukh on Friday. Hundreds of people, including political leaders, advocates, social workers, PRI members and members of the public, gathered to pay their last respects to the veteran lawyer, who passed away on January 20 following a cardiac arrest. The last rites were performed by his sons in the presence of family members, relatives, friends, well-wishers and members of the legal fraternity. The gathering deeply mourned the untimely demise of the advocate and expressed heartfelt con-

dolences to the bereaved family. Late Licha Sesa, aged 52, was a prominent advocate of the Gauhati High Court Itanagar Permanent Bench and a well-known social worker. Born on February 2, 1973, to late Licha Rebia and late Licha Yaram, he completed his legal education from Jnanadabhiram Barooah Law College, Guwahati, in 1999. He enrolled as an advocate with the Bar Council of Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim on April 6, 2000. In 2003, he became a member of the Gauhati High Court Itanagar Permanent Bench Bar Association and later a lifetime member. Recognised for his leadership abilities, he was elected as the General Secretary of the Bar Association for the 2005-2008 term. During his tenure, he worked tirelessly for the welfare of legal professionals and played a significant role in strengthening the institutional framework of the Permanent Bench at Naharlagun. Beyond his professional life, late Sesa was a devout member of the Catholic faith and an alumnus of Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat and Government Higher Secondary School, Doimukh. He is survived by his wife, three sons and two daughters. His passing has left a significant void in the legal landscape of the state. He will be remembered not only as a dedicated and meticulous lawyer but also as a mentor to young advocates and a committed community leader. Among those present were Doimukh MLA and PPA State president Nabam Vivek, Nishi Elite Society (NES) president Prof Tana Shoren and general secretary Nabam Takar, Arunachal Pradesh Catholic Association president Nabam Pekhi, former minister Lechi Legi, former ZPC Nabam Rana, businessman Teji Tada, APHPDCL Chairman-cum-Managing Director Toko Onuj, Naharlagun SP Dr Nyelem Nega, officers and officials from Papum Pare district administration, representatives from RGU and NEEPCO, members of the business community, elected PRI leaders, locals and members of the general public. Condolence messages were also received from Sagalee MLA Ratu Techi, Licha Welfare Society, Doimukh Badminton Club, Rono Badminton Club and several other organisations.

DLMRC meeting reviews development projects in Tawang



HT Correspondent
TAWANG, Jan 24: The District Level Monitoring and Review Committee (DLMRC) meeting of Tawang district was held at the Conference Hall of the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Tawang, to review the progress of ongoing developmental works and planning initiatives in the district. The meeting was chaired by the Deputy Commissioner, Tawang, Namgyal Angmo, IAS and was attended by Additional Deputy Commissioner Jang Hakraso Kri, Assistant Commissioner-cum-District Planning Officer Sangey Wangmu Mosobi, Assistant Commissioner Tenzin Jambey, Circle Officer Jemeithang Deewan Mara, Executive Engineers from various work departments and Heads of Offices of Tawang district. During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner reviewed the progress of ongoing developmental projects across the district. Detailed deliberations were also held on the District Development Report (DDR) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators with emphasis on effective planning and outcome-based implementation. The executing departments made PowerPoint presentations highlighting achievements and the current status of projects being implemented under various centrally sponsored and state-funded schemes. Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner stressed the importance of timely completion of projects without compromising on quality. She urged all departments to intensify their efforts and encouraged officers to promptly bring forward issues requiring administrative intervention to ensure the successful achievement of development goals. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks by Assistant Commissioner-cum-District Planning Officer Sangey Wangmu Mosobi, who called for collective resolve and strengthened inter-departmental coordination for accelerated and sustainable development of Tawang district.

Djokovic secures 400th Grand Slam match win to extend record, ties Federer's Australian Open mark

MELBOURNE, Jan 24: An even 400 in Grand Slams and 102 in Australia. Novak Djokovic just keeps setting tennis records.

The 24-time major winner became the first player to reach 400 wins in Grand Slam singles when he beat Botić van de Zandschulp 6-3, 6-4, 7-6 (4) on Saturday night in the third round of the Australian Open. It improved his win-loss record to 102-10 at the Australian Open, too, equalling Roger Federer's career haul for the most-ever match wins at the season's first major.

Djokovic has won the Australian Open 10 times, more than anyone else. At 38, he's in Australia aiming for a 25th career major that would make him the most decorated tennis player of all time.

He was in control from the start against van de Zandschulp and was untroubled except for a few moments in the third set — when he tripped and tumbled to the court in the third game, and later when he faced two set points in the 12th.

A medical timeout at the changeover after the third, when the trainer taped the ball of his right foot, and a forehead winner down the line diffused the first two



of those issues.

As Djokovic faced his second set point, chair umpire John Blom had to urge the crowd — repeatedly — not to make noise between the first and second serves.

An animated Djokovic saved the next one, too, pretending to head the ball like a soccer player as the Dutchman's shot sailed over the baseline.

The crowd chanted "Nole, Nole,

Nole" in support before he produced a winning serve to force a tiebreaker, which he won.

Djokovic was happy to be playing a night match on a day when the tournament's extreme heat policy had to be invoked and two-time defending champion Jannik Sinner struggled before advancing in the afternoon conditions.

"I managed to have a good" fall if you can say so, I could protect

myself," Djokovic said of the tumble. "Things could have been pretty ugly."

He said his body is feeling good for this stage of the tournament, but he's not getting too far ahead of himself after semifinals at all four majors last year.

"I must say, it's been a great start of the tournament," he said. "Last year I learned a lesson. I got too excited too early in some of the Grand Slams ... getting injured three out of four."

Sinner and Carlos Alcaraz split the four majors between them and, while Djokovic concedes "they're playing on a different level right now," he added: "I'm still trying to give these young guys a push for their money."

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

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

ICC drops Bangladesh from T20 World Cup, brings in Scotland; informs all member nations

NEW DELHI, Jan 24: The ICC has pushed Bangladesh out of the upcoming T20 World Cup, bringing in Scotland after BCB refused to let its team travel to India citing security concerns in the wake of Mustafizur Rahman's ouster from the IPL.

Scotland's entry ended the month-long suspense after Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) repeatedly insisted that their matches be shifted to Sri Lanka and even suggested their group being swapped with Ireland.

The Irish Cricket board however categorically dismissed the suggestion. At the ICC Board meeting, Bangladesh were taken to the cleaners with an overwhelming 14-2 verdict in favour of the 'Tigers' travelling to India for their games.

The ICC gave the BCB a 24-hour deadline to change its stance but with Asif Nazrul being adamant, the cricket crazy nation's hopes of playing the T20 World Cup went up in smoke.

It has been learnt that top ICC officials including chairman Jay Shah were in Dubai on Friday and late evening an e-mail was sent to BCB chairman Aminul Islam Bulbul informing him about global body's decision. "An e-mail was sent last evening to Bangladesh Cricket Board chairman intimating him that his board didn't get back to ICC officially after the 24 hour deadline that was given to them to decide if they wanted to come to India," an ICC source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. "The BCB did a press conference in Dhaka before officially intimating the global body which is a violation of protocol. They have been categorically told that they are being replaced. Scotland is the new team in the World Cup."

The ICC also intimated all the participating member

nations separately about Bangladesh being dropped from the tournament. Bangladesh Sports Ministry advisor Asif Nazrul had advised against national team travelling to India, citing security issues despite being given repeated assurances by the ICC.

Scotland will thus play their four group league games against West Indies (February 7), Italy (February 9) and England (February 14) in Kolkata followed by a game against Nepal in Mumbai on February 17.

The BCB, in a desperate measure, had also approached the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) of the ICC, unaware about the terms of reference of the sub-committee which is not allowed to hear an appeal against a decision made by its own Board of Directors. While the mandatory independent security assessment threat for Bangladesh was "low to moderate", same for all teams, anti-India hardliner Nazrul issued a diktat as representative of the interim government that the team cannot be allowed to travel to India in these circumstances. In fact, the meeting between Nazrul and national team players turned out to be a one-way communication with Nazrul doing all the talking and telling the star cricketers that they won't be allowed to participate in the tournament.

Financial implication for BCB

The implications of this unceremonious ouster will also badly hit BCB's coffers. The board will lose USD 500,000 participation fee that each nation gets. But the bigger potential loss will be ICC's annual revenue.

The BCB annually receives close to USD 27 million (330 crore BDT) as a share of its revenue from the ICC and that itself constitutes around 60 per cent of its annual budget. (PTI)

Replacements in top form, SA well covered for T20 World Cup: Nortje

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 24: South Africa pace spearhead Anrich Nortje has played down the Proteas' injury concerns ahead of the T20 World Cup, saying the team has the depth and quality to absorb the setbacks, with replacement players performing strongly and ready to step up for the global event.

South Africa were forced to make two changes to their 15-man squad for the T20 World Cup with Ryan Rickelton and Tristan Stubbs included in place of the injured duo of Tony de Zorzi and Donovan Ferreira. While acknowledging the "sad and unfortunate" impact of injuries on the squad, the South Africa and Sunrisers Eastern Cape speedster backed the depth of the Proteas' T20 World Cup roster, stating that the replacement players are fully capable and currently in top form. Flamboyant batters David Miller and Dewald Brevis, along with fast bowler Lungi Ngidi, are also battling injuries.

"Obviously, it's sad to lose and it's unfortunate. I've been on that side as well with a few World Cups and ICC events. But I think all in all, the guys that are replacing have put their hand up. They've done really well," Nortje told select Indian reporters after Sunrisers booked a place in the SA20 League final with a seven-wicket win over Paarl Royals in the second qualifier on Friday.

"They've either played in previous World Cups or been

in the squad and they've put their hand up in the SA20 as well. So the replacements, it's not like it's guys who haven't played or guys who aren't performing. It's really proper players as well," he said.

"So it is unfortunate, but luckily we're in a fortunate position where we can replace them with good quality players. And that's exactly what's happened," the South African speedster said.

The Wanderers pitch has once again been slow in nature, with batters struggling to score runs, but Nortje believes this is not a concern given the variety of conditions on offer in South Africa.

"You're going to get different wickets wherever you go. In South Africa, there's a massive variety of conditions. Conditions change every venue. I'm just glad the boys really adapted as quickly as we did," said Nortje, who has so far played 66 limited-overs matches (22 ODIs and 44 T20s) for South Africa. He acknowledged that the schedule has been quite hectic over the past few months, but felt the workload has ensured every player has had enough match practice heading into the World Cup.

"The way the tournament has been and the amount of cricket played, the schedule has been quite hectic. There hasn't been a lot of time available. You have to travel on your

Ishan's fiery comeback puts Sanju under pressure as India look to seal series vs NZ

GUWAHATI, Jan 24: Ishan Kishan's sensational comeback will reignite debate over who should be Abhishek Sharma's preferred opening partner with Sanju Samson's increasing struggles as the hosts look to seal the five-match T20 series in the third game here on Sunday.

With just two weeks and three matches against New Zealand in the ongoing series left before the start of their T20 World Cup title defence, India's combination looks largely settled.

The batting and bowling units appear sorted and only a few spots remain under scrutiny and one such slot currently belongs to Samson.

Kishan's superb 76 off 32 balls, however, intensified the spotlight on Sanju.

Reinstated as opener alongside Abhishek Sharma at the expense of Test and ODI skipper Shubman Gill, Samson has been failing to make the most of his chances and he has got quite a lot of games.

Gill, despite his technical solidity, struggled to make an impact in T20s and was sidelined in a bold call to accommodate Sanju, who had scored three centuries in five matches late last year.

But back in his preferred slot, the Kerala man has not delivered, and time is running out with hardly any turnaround time before the T20 World Cup as the series would be a make-or-break for him.

His vulnerability against express pace has once again resurfaced.

During the England series earlier this year, he fell cheaply five times to fast bowlers, including three dismissals in a row to Jofra Archer.

Against New Zealand, he managed only 10 and 6, dismissed by Kyle Jamieson and Matt Henry respectively.

Former India opener and noted coach WV Raman summed it up on social media after his Raipur dismissal.

"Samson will be inconsistent as long as he doesn't adjust the speed of his bat on the downswing in relation to the pace of the ball. In simple terms one can't drive a car at the same speed all the time, everywhere," Raman posted on X.

Samson also looked untidy behind the stumps, failing to collect a wide yorker from Arshdeep Singh that ran away for four byes as New Zealand crossed the 200-run mark.

There were concerns over skipper Suryakumar Yadav's prolonged lean patch, but he silenced his critics in style, ending a run of



23 T20I innings without a fifty with a blazing 82 off 37 balls.

The seven-wicket win in the second T20, which gave India a 2-0 lead, was even more impressive as it came without much contribution from in-form Abhishek Sharma, the explosive in-form world No. 1 T20I batter, who fell for a golden duck.

Suryakumar seemed to have tweaked his approach in walking across the stumps to access the off-side and playing his trademark strokes over point and covers.

From 10 off 10 balls, he stepped on the gas in style smashing 72 from the next 27 deliveries as India chased down 209 with ease, reaching the target in just 15.2 overs.

However, before Suryakumar took charge, the platform was set by the diminutive left-hander Kishan, who blasted a 21-ball fifty.

India had slipped to 6/2 in 1.1 overs, but Kishan's counter-attack turned the game around as they completed their joint-highest successful T20I chase with 28 balls to spare.

It was the Jharkhand keeper-batter's second match since returning from the wilderness after being dropped from the contract list for skipping domestic cricket.

He worked his way back through the grind, led his state side to a domestic T20 title and grabbed his opportunity on recall.

With Kishan and Suryakumar in top form, India scored at a staggering 14.50 runs per over and lost just one wicket in the crucial overs seven to ten, effectively sealing New Zealand's fate.

On the bowling front, left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav and seamer Harshit Rana controlled the middle overs after Arshdeep leaked 36 runs in his first two overs.

India would hope Axar Patel's finger injury isn't serious ahead of

the global showpiece and gets more game time, while pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, rested for the second match, is expected to return. Since the turnaround time between games is too less with travel included, the team management decided to rotate the pacers.

For New Zealand, it remains to be seen how they bounce back after the walloping.

The Mitchell Santner-led side may look at tactical changes, possibly promoting in-form Daryl Mitchell, who has been their in-form batter hitting two centuries and a fifty in their 2-1 ODI series win.

Fielding, usually a New Zealand strength, was a major letdown. Santner and Ish Sodhi dropped catches, including a sitter offered by Suryakumar, allowing India to build momentum.

The visitors also faltered tactically, replacing Matt Henry with Zak Foulkes, who conceded 24 runs in his first over as Kishan launched an assault.

Instead of tightening the screws, they stuck to a rigid template and failed to apply the brakes at crucial moments.

Teams:

India: Suryakumar Yadav (captain), Abhishek Sharma, Sanju Samson (wk), Ishan Kishan, Shreyas Iyer, Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Jasprit Bumrah, Varun Chakravarthy, Rinku Singh, Arshdeep Singh, Ravi Bishnoi, Harshit Rana.

New Zealand: Mitchell Santner (captain), Devon Conway, Bevon Jacobs, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Tim Robinson, Jimmy Neesham, Ish Sodhi, Zak Foulkes, Mark Chapman, Michael Bracewell, Rachin Ravindra, Kyle Jamieson, Matt Henry, Jacob Duffy.

Match starts: 7pm. (PTI)

Pratika Rawal, Vaishnavi Sharma, Kranti Gaud in India's Test squad to face Australia

NEW DELHI, Jan 24: India's World Cup winning star Pratika Rawal along with left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma and seamer Kranti Gaud received their maiden long-format call-ups for the one-off Test against Australia to be held at Perth from March 6 to 9.

The 15-member squad will be led by Harmanpreet Kaur, and the Test will follow the white ball format matches (3 T20Is, 3 ODIs), beginning from February 15.

Pratika's inclusion was a formality after her stirring efforts in the ODIs, 1110 runs from 24 matches at an average of 50.45 with two hundreds and seven fifties.

It also meant that the opening batter had sufficiently recovered from her ankle injury that forced her to sit out of last year's women's ODI World Cup semifinal and final.

However, the 25-year-old is not a part of India's white ball trip to Australia.

Vaishnavi, who made an impression during India's U19 World Cup triumph in early 2025, made her senior team debut in December during the home T20I series against Sri Lanka.

The 20-year-old left-arm spinner has so far played five T20Is.

Pacer Kranti too has made her India debut last year and has so far played 15 ODIs and four T20Is and was particularly impressive in the 50-over format, taking 23 wickets.

Satgare, the 25-year-old Mumbai pacer, has played three ODIs against Ireland in January 2025, and her inclusion meant that seasoned Arundhati Reddy did not get a look in. Meanwhile, young wicket-keeper G Kamalini has been ruled out of India's Australia tour with an injury and the selectors have named Uma Chetry as her replacement in India's T20Is and ODI squads. (PTI)

Indian racing sensation Atiqa Mir secures drive with world karting champions Modena for WSK 2026

LA CONCA (ITALY), Jan 24: Indian racing prodigy Atiqa Mir has secured a coveted drive for reigning world champions Modena Racing Team for the 2026 season of the prestigious WSK championship, considered as the 'Formula 1' of karting.

Atiqa, all of 11, has taken the tougher route to the top by opting to race in the highly competitive junior category (age 12-14) this season.

On the back of her impressive performances in the mini category (age 8-12) last year, the Formula 1 Academy supported driver was signed for the entire season and will drive in the WSK Super Master Series, WSK Euro Series, WSK Final Cup amongst other championships.

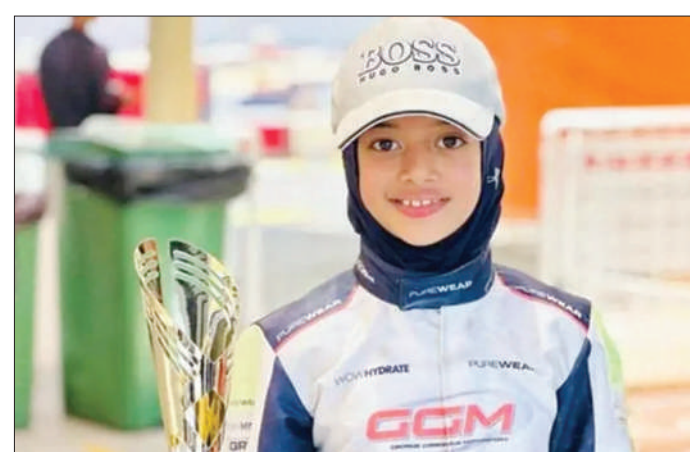
In the process, Atiqa will become the first Indian female ever

to drive in OKNJ category in WSK and remarkably will be the only female on the entire grid of 37 world class drivers.

The WSK series is the highest level of karting which attracts the best driving talent from around the world besides leading kart and engine manufacturers.

The WSK series is focused on developing young drivers by providing a platform for them to improve their race craft, technical knowledge, and understanding of motorsport. Formula 1 world champions including Lewis Hamilton, Max Verstappen and Sebastian Vettel have raced in WSK in their formative years.

Moving up to OKNJ junior category from mini is a big step up for Atiqa but she is up for the challenge. From 10 bhp engines to 29 bhp engines with speeds of



126kmph and much bigger karts attracting G forces of more than 2.5, Atiqa's physical fitness and adaptability will be tested against the best in the world.

"I am so excited and grateful for

Modena to sign me. To join such an elite team and reigning world champions in this class is a great honour. I will be tested against the best drivers in the world and am up for the challenge. The grids in

WSK are so close and the driving level is the best in the world. I hope to learn from them and improve myself," said Atiqa.

Atiqa's father Asif Mir, who is India's first National Karting Champion, said it was a conscious decision to fast track her into the junior class.

"We are putting Atiqa straight into the deep end. It is best for her development. She could have easily stayed in Mini and won races and championships, but our goal is Formula 1 and her development as a driver is of utmost importance. She has the fitness to cope with the added G Forces. I'm looking forward to a tough learning year for her," he said.

Atiqa begins her campaign on January 25 with WSK Super Master Series Round 1 in La Conca, Italy. (PTI)