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'Assam preparing workforce for AI-driven future'

Himanta addresses World Economic Forum meet at Davos



STAFF REPORTER
GUWAHATI, Jan 20: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said the state is proactively preparing its workforce for an increasingly automated and Artificial Intelligence (AI)-driven future, leveraging its young demographic advantage and focusing on industry-aligned skill development.

Speaking on the second day of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting here, Sarma shared how Assam is reshaping its skilling ecosystem to meet the demands of emerging technologies and future-ready industries.

In a post on social media platform X, the chief minister said

Assam is "rewriting the training playbook" to ensure that its workforce remains competitive in a rapidly evolving global economy.

Highlighting key initiatives, Sarma said the Assam Skill Development University, along with several complementary programmes, has been positioned at the centre of the state's skilling strategy.

He noted that industry-friendly curricula and practical, employment-oriented training modules are being embedded across programmes to align human capital development with market needs.

"Given our young demography, it is imperative that we equip our youth with relevant skills for an AI-enabled (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Clashes erupt in Kokrajhar after Monday's attack claims one life ● Internet services suspended in Kokrajhar, Chirang

RAF deployed; CM indicates Army deployment

KOKRAJHAR/GUWAHATI, Jan 20: Fresh clashes erupted allegedly between Bodos and Adivasis in Assam's Kokrajhar on Tuesday, a day after mob violence left two persons dead, following which the Rapid Action Force (RAF) was deployed, internet/mobile data services were suspended in two districts and prohibitory orders imposed, officials said.

One of the four persons injured in the mob violence in Karigaon area succumbed to injuries at the Kokrajhar Medical College on Tuesday.

The police have so far detained 18 people in connection with the mob violence and subsequent clashes.

Chief Himanta Biswa Sarma said that arrangements are in place to deploy the army, while the Rapid Action Force (RAF) is already on the ground to quell the unrest in Kokrajhar district.

On Monday night, a vehicle with three Bodos on board had hit two Adivasi persons at Mansingh Road under Karigaon outpost, a home department official said.

The three Bodos were beaten up



by neighbouring Adivasi villagers, and the vehicle was torched. One person died then, while another succumbed to his injuries on Tuesday.

The situation flared up on Tuesday with both Bodo and Adivasi communities blocking the National Highway adjacent to Karigaon outpost, burning tyres and a few houses while setting ablaze a government office and attacking the Karigaon police outpost, he said.

The police baton-charged the protesters and fired tear gas shells to disperse the crowd, in which several people, including a few police personnel, were injured.

The RAF has been deployed to contain and prevent further deterioration of the law and order situation.

An army column has already reached the district while another was on its way, a defence spokesperson said.

A flag march was likely to be held on Wednesday in the affected areas as a confidence-building measure, a district official said.

Kokrajhar District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty has imposed prohibitory orders across Kokrajhar district under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.

Assembly of more than four persons in any public place, any form of procession, rally, demonstration, march, gherao, blockade or sit-in without permission is strictly prohibited.

The chief minister said that internet/mobile data services have been suspended in Kokrajhar and neighbouring Chirang district.

He appealed to the people to maintain peace and help the government in ensuring that peace returns to the district at the earliest.

The chief minister, who is currently in Davos to attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) meet, said in a post on X that he was in constant touch with senior officials of the state government and district administration to ensure that the situation returns to normal soon.

He also appealed to leaders of political parties and civil society organisations to give their full cooperation in bringing normalcy to the district.

Director General of Police Harmeet Singh, along with senior police officials, has rushed to Kokrajhar, which is under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).

The Assam police in a post on X said, "The situation in #Karigaon, Kokrajhar is completely under control. We urge all sections of society to remain calm and not fall for rumours or misinformation that is being spread by anti-national elements."

"These Anti-National elements that are attempting to disturb harmony and create panic are identified and will be dealt with strictly. We remain fully committed to maintaining peace and public safety for every citizen," the police said.

Apprehending that social media and the internet may be used to further spread inflammatory messages and rumours, the home department has (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

KAAC orders relocation of government offices from grazing reserve land in Kheroni

HT Correspondent
KHERONI, Jan 20: In a move aimed at restoring protected grazing land, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) has directed the immediate relocation of several government offices and institutions operating from Professional Grazing Reserve (PGR) land in Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong.

The directive was issued by the Secretariat of the KAAC Land and Revenue Department, reaffirming the Council's strict stand against the use of grazing reserves for non-agricultural or administrative purposes.

According to the order, 11 major departments and services currently located on the Kheroni PGR land have been asked to vacate the area within 15 days.

These include the Kheroni Police Station, Post Office, banking institutions, the Electricity Department, the Irrigation Department and other government establishments.

The decision comes amid an intensified anti-encroachment drive by the KAAC across the region.

Recently, a similar eviction exercise was initiated against illegal occupation of Irrigation Department land at Bakaliaghat.

Official records indicate that around 265 government offices and state-run schemes are functioning within the Kheroni PGR area.

However, the Council has clarified that educational institutions have been temporarily exempted from the present relocation order to avoid disruption of academic activities. The 15-day deadline has placed (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam BJP congratulates Nitin Nabin on his election as National President

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Jan 20: The Assam Pradesh Bharatiya Janata Party has congratulated senior party leader Nitin Nabin following his election as the National President of the BJP.

The formal announcement was made by the National Returning Officer for the BJP's organisational elections, Dr K Laxman.

The election witnessed overwhelming support for Nitin Nabin, with 33 out of the party's 37 organisational state units backing his candidature.

Senior BJP leaders Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and J P Nadda also filed nomination papers in his support, underscoring the broad consensus within the party.

In a press release, Assam BJP spokesperson Kalyan Gogoi said that at the time of filing Nitin Nabin's nomination, several senior leaders from Assam were present, including State BJP president Dilip Saikia, Union ministers Sarbananda Sonowal and Pabitra Margherita, along with ministers, Members of Parliament and party office-bearers. Their presence, he said, reflected strong organisational unity and enthusiasm.

Following the announcement, Assam Pradesh BJP president Dilip Saikia extended his heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected national president and wished him success in leading the party.

Nitin Nabin, born in Ranchi in

1980, has served as a minister in the BJP-Janata Dal (United) coalition government in Bihar under the leadership of Nitish Kumar.

He has also been elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for five consecutive terms, gaining extensive administrative and legislative experience.

Highlighting his organisational journey, Kalyan Gogoi said Nitin Nabin's leadership has been shaped by years of grassroots work and party-building efforts.

He expressed confidence that under Nabin's capable and visionary leadership, the Bharatiya Janata Party's organisational base would be further strengthened across the country in the coming years.

PM's focus on NE opportunity for region's youth: Union minister

GUWAHATI, Jan 20: Union Minister Jayant Chaudhary on Tuesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's sustained focus on the North-East has created opportunities for the region's youth and boosted their confidence.

Asserting that the North-East has immense talent and aspiration, he said youths from this region are ready to lead India's skilled workforce and contribute meaningfully to the nation's growth.

Chaudhary inaugurated the IndiaSkills Regional Competition 2025-26 for the North-East at Gauhati University here on Tuesday.

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), along with the National Skill Development Corporation



(NSDC) as its implementation partner, is bringing India's premier skilling championship to the North-East region for the first time.

"IndiaSkills is not merely a competition, it is a celebration of excellence, discipline, and the dignity of work", Chaudhary said.

The minister of state (Independent Charge) for skill development (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Two rhinos translocated from rescue centre to KNP

GUWAHATI, Jan 20: Two male rhinos, injured and rescued during floods, were translocated on Tuesday from the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) to Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, an official said.

Five-year-old Chandra and Kanai (4), were rescued in August 2020 and August 2021, respectively, and they were undergoing treatment at the CWRC since then.

The Park authorities followed the internationally accepted conservation translocation protocol in which after obtaining the requisite permissions from the Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam, under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, a site election committee was constituted

to look for possible locations ideally suited for the pre-release enclosures.

The rhinos have been moved to a pre-release enclosure, where they will be habituated to living under wild conditions before their final release to roam freely in the park, the official said.

The translocation operation was supervised by a team of veterinarians led by CWRC Centre-in-charge Bhaskar Choudhury along with experienced animal keepers.

Officials of Kaziranga National Park -- Field Director Sonali Ghosh, DFO Arun Vignesh and range officers, subject matter experts Rathin Barman, Kaushik Barua and Anupam Samrah -- were present. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nitin Nabin my boss in party matters: PM Modi

NEW DELHI, Jan 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday congratulated Nitin Nabin on his election as the BJP national president and declared that the young leader will be his boss in matters related to the party.

Addressing a gathering at the party headquarters here, Modi described 45-year-old Nabin as a "millennial" with youthful energy and vast experience in the organi-



sation, which will prove to be of immense help for the party.

In his 40-minute speech, the prime minister repeatedly referred to Nabin as 'mananiya' (honourable) and listed out the achievements of his government over the last 11 years, which he described as giving an account of his work to the party president.

"Every word of his will give us a new direction. His guidance will be a priceless asset that will chart our future course of action," the prime minister said, addressing the gathering attended by senior leaders like Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Amit Shah, J P Nadda, along with Union ministers, chief ministers of BJP-ruled states, and scores of party workers.

"I, too, as a party worker, was giving an (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Eviction drive clears 350 bighas at Bakaliaghat

HT Correspondent
HOWRAGHAT, Jan 20: The district administration recently carried out a large-scale eviction drive to recover government land under the Bakaliaghat Irrigation Department, removing long-standing illegal encroachments from the area.

Officials said around 350 bighas of land had been unlawfully occupied, where more than 755 houses had come up over the years, sheltering a population of over 2,000 people.

As part of the operation, a mosque situated within the encroached zone was also demolished.

The eviction exercise was conducted using 10 JCB excavators, while stringent security arrangements (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam archives three endangered languages as lone Khamyang speaker battles extinction

We need to preserve endangered languages: Bhogeswar Thomung

GUWAHATI, Jan 20: An 84-year-old man is the last known barrier between one of Assam's indigenous languages and its complete extinction, as audio, video and textual records of three critically endangered tongues of the state have now been digitally preserved.

Bhogeswar Thomung, a resident of Assam's Tinsukia district, is believed to be the only person fully proficient in the Khamyang language — able to speak, read, write and comprehend it in its entirety.

The digital preservation has been carried out under the 'Endangered Language Programme' (ELP), aimed at preventing vulnerable languages from vanishing altogether, those associated with the project said here on Tuesday.

"Language is a big asset. It brings people together and binds



them like a family. We need to preserve languages that are fading away," Thomung said while speaking at the unveiling of the digitised archives.

Besides Khamyang, the first phase of the initiative has documented Tai Phake and Singpho — all belonging to the Tai linguistic family — under 'Digitising Assam', a community-driven digital archiving programme led by the

Nanda Talukdar Foundation with institutional support from an Assam Jatiya Bidyalay-run trust.

Sponsored by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), the programme focuses on digitising manuscripts, vocabulary, oral traditions and visual records to preserve these languages for future generations.

"The ELP is a movement to safeguard languages facing extinction. Similar digitisation exercises will be undertaken for other languages after consultations with community leaders and stakeholders," AASU chief advisor Samujjal Kumar Bhattacharyya told a press conference.

AASU president Utpal Sarma said all three languages are vulnerable, with UNESCO listing Khamyang as 'Critically Endangered'. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Indian CEOs more confident than global peers on GDP, revenue growth: PwC survey

DAVOS, Jan 20: Amidst a subdued global outlook, Indian CEOs are a lot more optimistic than their global peers on growth of their economy as well as their company revenues, a new survey showed here.

Also, India has moved to the second place after the US among global CEOs as a potential destination, up from fifth last year, as per the annual PwC CEOs survey released during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

It said just over half of global CEOs are expecting growth, but India stands out as an exception.

The survey found that striking 77 per cent of India CEOs anticipate stronger domestic growth, and 57 per cent express high confidence in near-term revenue growth, nearly double the number of their global peers.

In a world defined by uncertainty, India's ascent on the global investment map also stood out.

PwC said India is now among the top investment destinations. While 46 per cent of global CEOs are not planning any investments, of those planning to invest beyond borders, 35 per cent would like to invest in the US, while 13 per cent each said they would like to invest in India, Germany, and the UK.

Last year, India was in the fifth spot along with France on the list of territories global CEOs would

like to invest in.

For India CEOs, the leading investment destinations are the US, UAE and the UK, a trend reinforced by trade agreements such as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with UAE and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with the UK.

Global CEOs identified macroeconomic volatility, cyber risks and inflation as the most significant threats over the next 12 months.

For Indian CEOs, the top risks are macroeconomic volatility, cyber risks and tech disruptions and availability of key skills.

With cyberattacks escalating in scale and sophistication, cybersecurity has overtaken inflation to become the second-most critical risk for both global and India CEOs.

The survey found that 66 per cent of Indian CEOs are more concerned about keeping pace with tech and AI, compared to 42 per cent globally.

Moreover, while 54 per cent of global CEOs apply AI for demand generation to a moderate or large extent, 37 per cent of Indian CEOs say they do so.

Additionally, 36 per cent of Indian CEOs (versus 52 per cent globally) reported using AI in products, services, and experiences to at (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Dyson opens its first exclusive store in Guwahati



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Jan 20: Global technology company Dyson has expanded its retail footprint in the Northeast with the launch of its first Dyson Store in Guwahati.

The new outlet, located at City Centre Mall, one of the largest shopping destinations in the region, is Dyson India's 35th store nationwide and its first in Assam.

Designed as an immersive and interactive space, the Dyson Store allows consumers to experience the brand's problem-solving technologies firsthand through live demonstrations conducted by trained Dyson experts.

The launch reflects Dyson's focus on bringing its latest innovations closer to consumers through personalised, hands-on experiences across its home, beauty and audio product categories.

At the Guwahati store, visitors can test the advanced performance of Dyson vacuum cleaners on multiple floor types and fine debris, replicating real-life cleaning conditions.

Live air-quality visualisations highlight Dyson's emphasis on creating healthier home environments, while interactive digital displays explain the science and engineering behind each product.

The store also features dedicated Dyson styling stations offering complimentary expert-led styling sessions.

Consumers can experience Dyson's latest beauty technologies, including the Dyson Airstrait™ straightener, Dyson Airwrap i.d.™ multi-styler and dryer, and the Supersonic Nural™ hair dryer. Trained stylists provide customised consultations tailored to individual hair types and styling needs.

Complimentary in-store styling appointments and masterclasses conducted by Dyson experts can be booked through the company's official website at www.dyson.in.

Sensex sinks over 1,000 pts on geopolitical worries; slips below 83K

MUMBAI, Jan 20: Equity benchmark index Sensex on Tuesday plunged over 1,000 points to sink below the 83,000 level due to widespread selloff tracking sluggish global markets amid escalating geopolitical tensions.

Besides, continued weakness in the rupee and persistent foreign fund outflows dented investors' sentiment, traders said.

Extending its previous day's decline, the 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,065.71 points, or 1.28 per cent, to settle at 82,180.47. During the day, it dropped 1,235.6 points, or 1.48 per cent, to 82,010.58.

A total of 3,503 stocks declined while 780 advanced and 119 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty tanked 353 points, or 1.38 per cent, to end at 25,232.50.

"Markets extended their weakness on Tuesday and ended lower amid broad-based selling and weak global cues. Market sentiment remained subdued due to mixed corporate earnings and renewed concerns surrounding geopolitical tensions and global trade developments.

"Persistent foreign institutional selling, along with a weaker currency environment, further weighed on investor confidence and kept risk appetite restrained throughout the session," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Eternal declined by 4.02 per cent, followed by Bajaj Finance (3.88 per cent), Sun Pharma, InterGlobe Aviation, Trent, Asian Paints, Mahindra & Mahindra and Bajaj



Finserv.
HDFC Bank emerged as the only gainer from the pack.

The BSE smallcap gauge tumbled 2.74 per cent, and the midcap index dropped 2.52 per cent.

Realty dived 5.21 per cent, services tanked 2.89 per cent, capital goods (2.76 per cent), consumer discretionary (2.73 per cent), consumer durables (2.71 per cent), telecommunication (2.42 per cent), auto (2.36 per cent) and power (2.23 per cent).

"Investor sentiment was weighed down by escalating global trade tensions and continued foreign capital outflows. Concerns resurfaced after US President Donald Trump threatened fresh tariffs on several European nations, reviving fears of renewed global trade disruptions.

"At the same time, sustained selling by foreign portfolio investors added to the downside pressure in domestic equities. Heightened global uncertainty and falling equity markets prompted investors to shift towards safe-haven assets, with gold and silver trading at record highs," according to Ashika Institutional Equities.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi index, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang

Seng index settled lower.

Markets in Europe were trading over 1 per cent lower.

US markets were closed on Monday for a holiday.

"The aggressive and often unpredictable use of tariffs by the US administration as a foreign policy tool is creating widespread unease among global market participants, triggering sharp volatility across financial markets. This has weighed heavily on risk assets while pushing safe-haven gold and silver prices higher.

"Fresh threats by US President Donald Trump to impose additional tariffs on European nations opposing the US move to take control of Greenland have triggered another bout of global equity selling, with Indian markets also witnessing broad-based pressure," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

The Indian equity market ended today's session on a decisively negative note, reflecting a combination of weak global cues, cautious investor positioning, and subdued risk appetite, he added.

Foreign institutional investors offloaded equities worth ₹ 3,262.82 crore on Monday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) remained buyers as they bought stocks worth ₹ 4,234.30 crore, according to exchange data.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, went up by 0.09 per cent to USD 63.91 per barrel.

On Monday, the Sensex declined 324.17 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 83,246.18. The Nifty dropped 108.85 points or 0.42 per cent to 25,585.50. (PTI)

Barrier-free tolling: NOC for vehicles only after clearing pending toll dues

NEW DELHI, Jan 20: In a run-up to a barrier-free tolling system, the government has amended rules to make it mandatory for vehicle owners to clear all toll plaza dues before selling their vehicle or obtaining a fitness certificate.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has notified the amended 'Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 2026' to ensure that all unpaid user fees at toll plazas are cleared by the vehicle owners.

"These amendments are aimed at improving user fee compliance, enhancing the efficiency of Electronic Toll Collection and discouraging user fee evasion on National Highways.

"These amendments will also help in user fee collection after the implementation of the Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) system that will enable barrier-less tolling on the National Highway network," the ministry said in a statement.

The ministry added that no NOC will be given for vehicle transfer, fitness renewal and permits with pending toll dues.

Under the amended rules, a new definition of 'unpaid user fee' has been introduced, and it refers to the user fee payable for the use of a Na-

tional Highway section, where the Electronic Toll Collection (ETC) system has recorded the vehicle's passage, but the applicable fee has not been received in accordance with the National Highways Act, 1956.

"These amendments will help NHAI in fostering transparent and technology-driven tolling systems for sustained development and maintenance of the National Highway network across the country," the ministry said.

Corresponding changes have also been made to 'Form 28', which now requires applicants to disclose whether any demand for an unpaid user fee at a toll plaza is pending against the vehicle, along with relevant details, it added.

Promoting digital processes, the rules also enable the electronic issuance of relevant portions of 'Form 28' through the designated online portal.

'Form 28' is an application for a No Objection Certificate (NOC), a key document required for transferring vehicle ownership to another state or district, confirming the vehicle has no pending taxes, challans, or legal issues.

The amendments have been is-

sued after the publication of draft rules on July 11, 2025, vide a Gazette Notification, which invited suggestions from stakeholders and the general public.

Copies of the draft notification were made available to the public on July 14, 2025. After careful consideration of the feedback received, the government has finalised and notified the amended rules.

Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari had told PTI earlier that the implementation of seamless, barrier-free tolling on national highways across the country would be the top priority in 2026.

"We plan to put up several seamless barrier-free tolling systems on national highways across the country. Initially, we have come out with 10 tenders for that. The cost of tolling will significantly come down from around 15 per cent currently to 3 per cent of the total toll collection," he added.

This new system facilitates barrier-free tolling using integrated technologies, including Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) with AI analytics and RFID-based Electronic Toll Collection (FASTag). (PTI)

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RAF deployed; CM

suspended the internet/mobile data service of all mobile service providers temporarily in Kokrajhar and Chirang districts until further orders. Voice calls and broadband connectivity based on fixed telephone lines shall remain functional during this period. BTC chief Hagrama Mohilary said that the situation was "unfortunate and serious; there should not be any misunderstanding between the Bodos and the Adivasis who both live in the area". He alleged instigation by a "third-party" and appealed for peace and harmony.

He said that law and order was not under the control of the BTC, and efforts are being made by agencies concerned to bring the situation under control. "People have a right to protest, but it should be done in a democratic manner. People should not resort to violence," Mohilary said. (PTI)

'Assam preparing workforce

and automated environment," Sarma said, adding that the state is moving beyond traditional training models to adopt future-focused approaches. The chief minister also pointed to Assam's growing strength in advanced manufacturing, stating that the state hosts one of the most digitally advanced manufacturing facilities in the world. He said such uses demonstrate Assam's readiness to integrate cutting-edge technology with industrial growth, while simultaneously generating skilled employment opportunities.

The session witnessed an engaging exchange of ideas among global leaders and policymakers. Sarma was joined on the panel by Kevin Stitt, Gretchen Whitmer, Benjamin Haddad, and Kiva Allgood.

According to Sarma, the discussion focused on preparing workforces for technological disruption, the role of governments in skill transformation and the importance of collaboration between industry, academia and policymakers. Assam is attending the World Economic Forum for the first time this year. Officials said the state's participation has generated considerable interest among global stakeholders, particularly in areas such as skilling, manufacturing, semiconductors and digital transformation, positioning Assam as an emerging destination for future-oriented investments.

PM's focus on NE

and entrepreneurship also emphasised the growing importance of integrating skilling with formal education in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. "Closer alignment between education and skill development expands pathways for employability, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning, while making young people future-ready for a rapidly evolving economy," he said. Beyond the competition itself, this regional event reflects the strengthening of the skilling ecosystem in the North-East region under the Skill India Mission. Students from the Directorate General of Training (DGT) institutions, including industrial training institutes (ITIs) and national skill training institutes (NSTIs), are participating across several skill categories, demonstrating the growing alignment between long-term vocational education and national-level competitive platforms. The North East Regional Competition with 162 competitors from all eight regional states spans a diverse range of contemporary and traditional skill areas, including automobile technology, cloud computing, mobile applications development, software and web technologies, digital interactive media, electronics, CNC milling and turning, welding, electrical installations, fashion technology, bakery and patisserie, hotel reception, restaurant service, health and social care, retail sales, and visual merchandising.

The skill mix at the competition highlights the increasing participation of women in core technical and traditionally male-dominated trades such as automobile technology, electronics, CNC, electrical installations, and welding, an official said. It also reflects a strong convergence of digital skills with manufacturing and services, preparing youth for Industry 4.0-linked roles, he said. Chaudhary said that platforms such as IndiaSkills play a critical role in aligning regional talent with industry demand and national development priorities. The IndiaSkills competition follows a structured, multi-tier evaluation process, designed to identify and nurture the best talent across the country. Candidates are first assessed at the district level, followed by state-level competitions, after which shortlisted participants advance to regional competitions. (PTI)

KAAC orders relocation

pressure on the affected departments to identify alternative locations for their operations. Local observers view the move as part of a broader policy shift by the KAAC to restore and protect Professional Grazing Reserve and Village Grazing Reserve lands, which are legally earmarked for cattle grazing and ecological balance. The Land and Revenue Department has warned that failure to comply with the order within the stipulated time may result in forceful eviction and further legal action.

Two rhinos translocated

The rhino transfer is a testimony to the established rehabilitation protocols being followed in KNPTR, where every wild animal, especially the one-horned rhinoceros, is given a chance to return to its natural home in the wild, even after experiencing severe stress due to calamities such as floods, the official said.

The CWRC was established in 2002 as a collaborative initiative between the Assam Forest Department, Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), and International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW).

Its primary role involves rescuing flood-distressed and orphaned wild animals—especially in Kaziranga—providing emergency care, hand-raising them, and rehabilitating fit individuals back into the wild through protocols like pre-release enclosures. CWRC has rescued and handled over 7,397 animals across 357 species till date, with approximately 4,490 successfully released in the wild after treatment. Earlier, 25 hand-raised rhinos were released after treatment – 23 in Manas National Park and two in Kaziranga. (PTI)

Nitin Nabin my

account of my work to the new president. I have given an account of my work. He will now write my CR. I am awaiting his guidance," Modi said, referring to the work of the BJP-led NDA government.

Nabin was declared the BJP national president at the party headquarters at the conclusion of the Sangathan Parv, which saw elections to various party posts from the booth level to the national level.

"When it comes to party matters, mananiya (honourable) Nitin Nabin ji... I am a worker, and you are my boss," Modi said. "Now, honourable Nitin Nabin ji is the president of all of us, and his responsibility is not just to manage the BJP, but also to ensure coordination among all NDA allies," the prime minister said.

Modi said the new BJP chief belongs to an era in which people heard the news on the radio in childhood and are now well-versed in using Artificial Intelligence. "Nitin ji has both youthful energy and a great deal of experience," he said. The prime minister said infiltrators pose a very serious threat to country's security and stressed that identifying them and sending them back is extremely necessary.

Targeting the Congress, the prime minister urged BJP workers to learn from the mistakes committed by the grand old party and not to repeat them. He said in 1984, the Congress had won more than 400 seats in the Lok Sabha elections with more than 50 per cent of the votes. "But today, the Congress is yearning to cross the 100-seat mark," the prime minister said. He asked BJP workers to identify the bad qualities of the Congress that have brought them to the brink of self-destruction.

"We have to save ourselves from these bad qualities. We have to ensure that we do not embrace these bad qualities. Wherever we have maintained distance from such qualities, we have emerged invincible," Modi said.

The prime minister said the Congress never reviewed its catastrophic decline, fearing it would raise questions about the very family that has captured the party. "That is why they keep finding excuses. They have even lost the courage to find the real reason for the decline," Modi said.

Modi said the BJP conducts a dispassionate review of its performance even after winning elections and tries to improve in regions where it faces a loss. He cited the recent victory of the BJP in the civic bodies polls in Maharashtra and asserted that the party was not resting on its laurels, but has started work on the next round of elections. "The BJP is a tradition. The BJP is a family. We value relationships more than membership. The BJP is such a tradition that functions not by a post but by process. Here, holding a post is an arrangement, and carrying out the work is a lifelong responsibility," Modi said. "In the BJP, presidents change, but ideals do not change. Leadership changes, but the direction does not change," he said. The prime minister said under the leadership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Lal Krishna Advani and Murali Manohar Joshi, the BJP saw a journey from zero to the summit. (PTI)

Eviction drive clears

were put in place to prevent any untoward incident. More than 500 security personnel were deployed to maintain law and order throughout the operation. Authorities stated that eviction notices had been served earlier to the occupants, asking them to vacate the land before the drive. The action, they said, forms part of a wider administrative effort to reclaim and safeguard government and department-owned land from unauthorised occupation. The administration indicated that similar drives may continue in other areas as part of its ongoing anti-encroachment campaign.

Indian CEOs more

least a moderate extent. However, among Indian CEOs who have applied AI to business functions to at least a moderate extent, 32 per cent said AI has boosted their revenues.

The annual global CEO survey, based on insights from 4,454 respondents including nearly 50 from India, showed Indian CEOs are increasingly cautious amidst mounting global risks and persistent macroeconomic volatility. "This caution persists even as India strives to be self-reliant (Atmanirbhar), underscoring the need for decisive leadership to turn aspiration into action," PwC said. (PTI)

We need to preserve

"Khamyang is in the most precarious condition. Today, Thomung is the only person fully proficient in it," Sarma said. He noted that while the Khamyang population is estimated at 1,000-1,400, Tai Phake at around 2,000 and Singpho at nearly 9,000, functional use of these languages has declined sharply, particularly among the younger generation. Chief advisor of the ELP and linguist Palash Kumar Nath said dwindling numbers of speakers inevitably lead to shrinking vocabularies. "It is essential to preserve these languages at the earliest," he said, citing the extinction of the Ruga language spoken by a section of the Garo tribe. "I began working on Khamyang in 2014, when there were four proficient speakers. Now, only Bhogeswar Thomung remains," Nath added.

A Buddhist 'pathek' (priest) from Pawaimukh village near Margherita, Thomung said the language is not difficult to learn. "Two hours of study for three months is enough," he said, expressing willingness to teach, but lamenting the lack of interest. He had once run a school where Khamyang was the medium of instruction.

Bhattacharyya said the ELP would go beyond documentation to explore ways of reviving the languages. "Keeping these languages alive and in use is also part of our mission," he added.

The eight-month-long programme combined field documentation with laboratory-based digitisation, and the archived material is now available on the website assamarchive.org. For Khamyang, 650 manuscript leaves have been digitised, along with 250 curated photographs capturing cultural practices, lifestyle and community memory. Audio documentation covers around 540 high-frequency words and phrases. In Tai Phake, nearly 19,950 manuscript leaves were digitised, including classical texts such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana, along with 350 curated photographs and audio records of over 675 core lexical units. For Singpho, old books and printed literature were digitised as original manuscripts no longer exist. The archive also includes 450 curated photographs and over 350 recorded speech units encompassing vocabulary, narratives and contextual oral knowledge. (PTI)

ENGINEERING WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION
Tender Notice No.: LMG/Engg/83 of 2025. Dated: 06-01-2026. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work:
SN-1: Brief Description of Item: Rebuilding of existing damaged earthenware/pipe Hume pipe Br. No. 225, 245, 248, 273 & 303 by constructing 1x2.0m RCC box installed by air pushing method in Lumding-Furkating section under jurisdiction of ADEW/Dimapur (Two Packet System). **Tender Value:** ₹ 14,75,06,905.32/- **Earnest Money:** ₹ 8,87,500/- **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 11-02-2026 and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 12-02-2026.** Complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 11-02-2026 in the website www.ireps.gov.in
DRM(W)/Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

Cancellation Notice

The NIT No.- 5 of 2025-26 called by the undersigned vide no. ACE (M)/NIT-5/2025/3, Dated 05-12-2025, is hereby cancelled due to some technical issues.

Sd/-
Addl. Chief Engineer
Mechanical, Irrigation, Assam
Guwahati-3

Cancellation Notice

The NIT No.- 6 of 2025-26 called by the undersigned vide no. ACE (M)/NIT-6/2025/3, Dated 05-12-2025, is hereby cancelled due to some technical issues.

Sd/-
Addl. Chief Engineer
Mechanical, Irrigation, Assam
Guwahati-3
DIPR/CHL/278/21-Jan-26

MISSING



The above photograph is of Smt. Disha Das, D/o Smt. Swapna Das R/O Q-Lane, Milan Nagar, PS & Dist - Dibrugarh who has been missing from home since 17/01/2026 afternoon at 12:30 pm. This refers to Dibrugarh PS C. No. 11/26 u/s 137(2) BNS, 2023.

The Descriptive roll of the missing person.

- Complexion - Swarthy.
- Age: 16 yrs
- Body Built: Healthy
- Wearing: Yellow Kurty and White Pant

All our efforts may be taken to trace out the family members of the missing person at the earliest and result thereof may be intimated to the EO SI Tapan Boruah (M/No.7002576321) for further necessary action.

Sd/-
Addl. Superintendent of Police (Crime),
Dibrugarh, Assam.
DIPR /D/HLT/279/21-Jan-26

Realty investment surges 53 pc to ₹ 69,000 crore in UP: State RERA Chairman

NEW DELHI, Jan 20: Investments in Uttar Pradesh's real estate sector have surged 53 per cent to ₹ 69,000 crore in 2025, as developers from all over the country continue to show interest in the state, UP RERA Chairman Sanjay R Bhoosreddy said on Tuesday.

The state is also witnessing a rise in RERA applications for real estate projects, driven by investor-friendly policies of the government, he said at the ICC Real Estate Summit 2026 in the national capital.

"In 2023, it was ₹ 29,000 crore of investment in the real estate sector, which is basically by the promoter (of real estate company), which increased in 2024 to ₹ 45,000 crore, and this year it has increased to ₹ 69,000 crore," he said while addressing the industry stakeholders.

Against an expectation of 300, RERA approvals were given to 308 real estate projects in the state in 2025, around 20 per cent higher than 259 projects sanctioned by the regulatory body in 2024, he noted.

In calendar year 2023, RERA had sanctioned 197 projects, Bhoosreddy added.

The number of units which have been constructed in 2023 is around 25,500 units. In 2024, it was 65,500 units to 70,000 units, and this year it is 85,000 units, he said.

"...let me tell you now promoters from South India, from Maharashtra, from Karnataka and all the big national companies. You name it, they are now in Uttar Pradesh," he said, citing reasons for the rise in investments.

Bhoosreddy said the state also has a minimum timeframe of 4 days for providing RERA registration if all details are provided by a developer, while the maximum is 30 days.

The official said that real estate development is happening across the state and not just in areas of Delhi-NCR.

Real estate Developers are showing interest in Agra, Barcilly, Moradabad, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Ayodhya, Jhansi, Kanpur, Aligarh, Gorakhpur, Azamgarh, Devi Patan and Mirzapur, and projects are coming up in huge numbers here.

The most costly rate of land in Ayodhya has reached ₹ 1 lakh per square foot, he stated.

"It is our UP RERA's understanding is that the next two decades are of the real estate sector, especially in accelerating the GDP, whether it is the national GDP or state GDP.

"The government of India has determined to take the economy to USD 5 trillion. And our CM has taken the vow to ensure that UP goes and jumps to a 1 trillion economy very soon. And we are all working for that..." Bhoosreddy added.

In his address, Rajeev Singh, Director General, Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC) said, "a structural shift in demand is evident as affordable housing gives way to luxury segments, driven by higher incomes and evolving lifestyles. Tier I cities lead, Tier II markets gain traction, and larger, wellness-focused, amenity-rich homes redefine residential preferences". (PTI)

Bicycles distribution under CM's special scheme brings smile to students

Initiative aims to boost school attendance at PM Shri Tilapara High School

HT Correspondent

BILASIPARA, Jan 20: Under the Chief Minister's special scheme, bicycles were distributed among Class IX students of PM Shri Tilapara High School in Bilasipara on Monday, with the objective of improving access to education and encouraging regular school attendance, particularly for students from remote and economically backward areas.



Addressing the gathering, Dr Singhi said that the Chief Minister's Special Scheme reflects the state government's strong commitment to strengthening the education system and ensuring that no student is deprived of learning opportunities due to the lack of basic facilities. The students expressed happiness and gratitude after receiving the bicycles, stating that the initiative would greatly help them reach school on time and continue their studies without interruption.

The bicycle distribution programme was organised to facilitate easier transportation for students who have to travel long distances to attend school. The initiative is expected to significantly reduce commuting difficulties, increase students' interest in education and extend vital support to financially weaker families.

Former BJP MLA and present Chairman of the Assam Government Marketing Board, Dr Ashok Kumar Singh, formally distributed the bicycles to the students in the presence of members of the School Management Committee, teachers, guardians and several distinguished guests.

Akhil Gogoi challenges CM Sarma, targets AIUDF MLA at Juria Dagaon rally

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Jan 20: State president of Rajgor Dal and Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi addressed a massive public gathering at Juria Dagaon in Rupahihat assembly constituency on Tuesday, strongly criticising Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam. Gogoi urged local voters to boycott Aminul Islam in the upcoming 2026 assembly polls.

During his speech, Gogoi challenged CM Sarma to a face-off in Moriani, stating that if the Chief Minister could not come to Sivasagar, he should come to Moriani constituency to confront him directly.

Gogoi also announced that he would act as Congress's brand ambassador in the forthcoming assembly elections, urging people to vote for Congress. He emphasised that

while Rupahihat constituency would support Congress in minority-dominated areas, there would be no compromise in Dhing constituency.

Further criticising Aminul Islam, Gogoi alleged that his presence in the assembly enables CM Sarma to exploit Hindu-Muslim politics. He also predicted internal conflicts within the BJP alliance and potential clashes between BPF and UPPL ahead of the polls.

Husband-Wife duo arrested in Itakhola for drug peddling

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, Jan 20: Acting on a tip-off, a joint team led by ASP (Crime) Biswanath, along with Sootea and Itakhola police, apprehended a husband-wife duo in connection with drug peddling on Monday evening in the Itakhola area.

The couple, identified as Narbu Thengdok and Chiring Dema, were found in possession of six containers of drugs. Narbu Thengdok is currently posted as Head Constable at the 3rd IRBN. Police investigations are ongoing.

The Itakhola region, which shares a boundary with Arunachal Pradesh, has reportedly become a hotspot for illegal trading, including drug and illicit liquor dealing. Officials noted that while small-time peddlers are being caught, the masterminds behind the drug network remain at large.

Authorities emphasised that dismantling the larger network is crucial to curb addiction and mitigate its socio-economic impact on affected families.

NFR upgrades Railway HS School at Maligaon

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Jan 20: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has undertaken a comprehensive upgradation of the Railway Higher Secondary School at Maligaon, reaffirming its commitment to strengthening educational institutions under its administrative care. As part of the upgradation, several infrastructure and academic facilities have been enhanced. These include the construction of two new classrooms, development of a new playground, renovation of the entry gate and prayer hall, up-graded toilet facilities, installation of granite on staircases, strengthening of the boundary wall, renovation of doors and windows and construction of a new corridor. The improvements are aimed at creating a safer, cleaner and more student-friendly learning environment.

Established in 1959, the Railway Higher Secondary School at Maligaon is one of the oldest educational institutions under Northeast Frontier Railway with a

legacy spanning more than six decades. The school has played a significant role in imparting quality education to generations of students, particularly wards of railway employees and the surrounding local community, while consistently promoting academic excellence, discipline and holistic development.

The newly upgraded school was inaugurated on Tuesday, by Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, General Manager, Northeast Frontier Railway in the presence of senior railway officers, school authorities, teachers and staff members. The initiative aims to preserve the institution's rich legacy while aligning it with modern educational standards.

The inauguration of the up-graded facilities marks a significant milestone in the long-standing journey of the Railway Higher Secondary School, Maligaon, integrating its historic heritage with modern infrastructure for the overall benefit of students.

Camera trap captures historic presence, brings cheer to conservationists and locals

First-ever Royal Bengal Tiger sighted in Dibru-Saikhowa National Park

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Jan 20: In a historic development, a Royal Bengal Tiger has been sighted and captured on camera traps for the first time in Dibru-Saikhowa National Park at Salibari in the Kundaghat area under Tinsukia Wildlife Division of eastern Assam. The rare sighting has brought joy and excitement among nature lovers, environmentalists and wildlife enthusiasts across the region.

Assam Forest Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary shared the development on social media, stating that Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and Biosphere Reserve has created history with the first-ever recorded sighting of a Royal Bengal Tiger within the park area.

The news of the tiger's presence has generated widespread enthusiasm, as Dibru-Saikhowa is not traditionally known as a tiger habitat. Nature enthusiasts have welcomed the development as a positive sign for biodiversity and conservation efforts in the region.

Expressing happiness over the sighting, nature enthusiast Devojit Moran said that although details are limited, the confirmation from the

Forest Minister's statement has brought excitement among wildlife lovers.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Tinsukia Wildlife Division, Bibison Tokbi, confirmed that the first photographic evidence of the Royal Bengal Tiger was obtained on December 14, 2025. He added that another photographic record was captured again on January 1, 2026, confirming the continued presence of the animal inside the park.

"For the last one month, camera trapping has been carried out inside the park by a joint team of the forest department and Wildlife Trust of India (WTI). Around 60 camera traps have been installed and the tiger has been recorded twice. This is the first confirmed photographic evidence of a Royal Bengal Tiger in Dibru-Saikhowa National Park after it was notified as a national park," Tokbi said.

He further added that logistical support was provided by WTI and the joint team has been working tirelessly to document wildlife presence in the park. "There were claims earlier that Royal Bengal Tigers existed in Dibru-Saikhowa, but no photographic evidence was



available until now," he said.

Local resident and nature enthusiast Niranta Gohain termed the sighting as good news for everyone, while recalling that as per earlier records, around 27 Royal Bengal Tigers were reported in the Dibru-Saikhowa area in 1997, but they gradually vanished over time.

The confirmed presence of the Royal Bengal Tiger is being seen as a significant milestone for wildlife conservation in Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and a hopeful sign for the revival of apex predators in the fragile ecosystem.

Alumni reunion rekindles nostalgia at historic Darrang College



HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Jan 20: The historic campus of Darrang College, Tezpur was steeped in nostalgia on Sunday as former students from different generations came together for an alumni reunion organised by the Darrang College Alumni Association.

Among those present were 93-year-old Mahendra Nath Keot and Dr Biswaranjan Kalita, 92-year-old Gokul Goswami and senior former students including retired professor Joy Narayan Luitel, Ananda Barua, Minu Devi and Purneswar Nath. Former Education Minister and ex-student leader Brindaban Goswami, veteran actress Krishna Das Nath, noted singer Loknath Goswami, popular artists Chetana Das, Arun Nath and Jyoti Bhuyan of Birkodar Barua Biya fame, senior journalist Atanu Bhuyan, Jayanta Deka, noted writer Binita Bora Dev Choudhury, along with former minister and present Mangaldoi MLA Basanta Das were also among the distinguished alumni who attended the programme.

The reunion was marked by emotional moments as former classmates met after decades, exchanging warm embraces and sharing memories from their college life. The college auditorium came alive with songs, recitations and cultural performances presented by the alumni themselves. The formal programme began with the hoisting of the Alumni Association flag by its president, retired administrative officer Dhruvajyoti Das. Senior alumni Mahendra Nath Keot and Dr Biswa Ranjan Kalita paid homage to national martyrs by lighting lamps at the martyrs' altar. As a symbolic gesture of remembrance and continuity, saplings were planted on the campus by former students including retired professor Dr Khageswar Borkakati, Minu Devi, Aswini Sharma and Hemanta Goswami.

The main session at the auditorium was inaugurated by retired professor Ananda Barua through the ceremonial lighting of the lamp. The programme opened with a soulful rendition of Rupkonwar Jy-

otiprasad Agarwala's song "Tore More Alokore Jatra... Swagat Satirha", led by noted musician Simanta Kakati and collectively performed by the alumni.

In his welcome address, Alumni Association president Dhruvajyoti Das spoke about the enduring bond between the institution and its students. The present principal of the college, Dr Palash Moni Saikia, also addressed the gathering. A commemorative volume titled Smriti Lekha, edited by Mahendra Kumar Nath, Dwijen Nath and Dr Dulal Chandra Das was formally released by senior alumni on the occasion. Several noted alumni, including Gokul Goswami, Mahendra Nath Keot, Biswa Ranjan Kalita, Brindaban Goswami, retired professor Purneswar Nath and Dr Gahan Chandra Mahanta, shared nostalgic reflections on their college days. An interactive session moderated by Pankaj Barua, Rashmirekha Hazarika, Mayur Gopendra Das and Rupam Jyoti Nath, under the guidance of Shantanu Mahanta, added warmth and intimacy to the gathering.

The evening cultural programme featured group renditions of Borgeet, Jyoti Sangeet and songs of Bishnurasad Rabha, Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg, conducted by alumnus and singer Pranjal Barua.

New Co-District Commissioner interacts with Demow media

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, Jan 20: An exchange of views with the new Co-District Commissioner and media persons of Demow was organised at the Co-District Commissioner's Office, Demow on Monday afternoon. The interaction aimed at strengthening coordination between the administration and the local media while discussing issues concerning the Demow area.

On behalf of the Demow Press Club, Prasanta Gogoi, vice-president of the club, felicitated Lukumoni Borah, the new Co-District Commissioner of Demow Co-District, with a traditional phulam gamosa. The introduction programme was anchored by Shekhar Jyoti Dowari, Secretary of the Demow Press Club.

Following the felicitation, an interactive session was held during which Lukumoni Borah sought to understand the various problems and concerns faced by the people of Demow. Media persons present at the meeting highlighted several civic and administrative issues affecting the area and shared their views with the Co-District Commissioner.

Addressing the gathering, Lukumoni Borah stated that efforts would be made to give a new and more people-friendly structure to the Demow Co-District Commissioner's Office so that citizens feel comfortable approaching the office with their grievances. She said the administration stands with the people and emphasised the need for active and responsive governance.

Recalling her earlier experience as Moran Circle Officer, she noted that the administrative environment has changed over time and stressed that the present situation calls for greater commitment and proactive work for the welfare of the people. She added that the residents of Demow should feel assured that there is a Co-District Commissioner's Office ready to listen to them and address their concerns.

Subhajit Khound, Assistant Commissioner, along with media persons from Demow was present during the programme.

Obituary

Dipak Bardoloi, a prominent leader of the Assam Movement and former General Secretary of the Inter-Mangaldai Students' Union, passed away on Monday night at a private hospital in Guwahati due to a liver-related illness.



Known as Diju, Bardoloi was imprisoned several times during the six-year Assam Movement and served nine months under the National Security Act. He later authored 'Karagar Bahire Bhitare' (Inside and Outside the Prison) and devoted himself to apolitical social service. He is mourned by the All Assam Students' Union, local organisations and residents of Darrang district. His last rites were performed at Bhebarghat public crematorium in Mangaldai.

Upper Deopani villages move towards traditional governance model

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Jan 20: A significant coordination meeting was held recently involving village heads (Rong Asar) and residents from the 24 Deopani Constituency, focusing on the development and preservation of local picnic spots and traditional governance.

The gathering took place near the scenic Athak Arnam Langpi Bohakantui picnic spots, stretching between Rong Asar and Servankep. The primary objective was to foster better communication and unity among the villagers regarding the management of these local landmarks.

The meeting was led by Ajay Sing Bey, the Executive Member (EM) for the Deopani Constituency. Several prominent local leaders were in attendance to show their support and provide guidance, including Hunaram Tisso, District Committee Member; Haison Tisso, Rong Asar and Chandra Teron, vice president of the Karbi Rong Asar Amei (KRAA). Representatives from over 25 nearby villages participated, ensuring that the voices of the grassroots community were heard.

A major highlight of the discussion was the implementation of the Traditional Village Development Committee (TVDC). Chandra Teron addressed the crowd, emphasising the importance of following official rules and regulations to ensure effective local administration.

The leaders shared a promising update regarding the commitment of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC).



Following a decade of persistent appeals from the Rong Asar, CEM of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Dr Tuliram Ronghang has reportedly assured the community that the TVDC will be officially recognised and established.

The transition to the TVDC model is expected to bring several advantages to the Upper Deopani area, including direct financial resources from the Central Government to the TVDC, increased autonomy for village heads and residents over local projects and improved management of tourism and picnic spots to boost the local economy.

The meeting concluded on a high note, with the Rong Asar and the residents of the 25 participating villages expressing their joy and optimism for the future of their traditional administration and regional development.

Karbi post-harvest festival reflects rich heritage and communal harmony

Hacha Kekan festival celebrated with fervour in Kheroni

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Jan 20: The vibrant cultural tapestry of West Karbi Anglong came alive on Monday night as the Karbi community celebrated Hacha Kekan, the traditional post-harvest festival, at Kheroni Chariali with great enthusiasm and traditional fervour.



transformation over the years. Under the leadership of the Karbi Cultural Society (KCS), concerted efforts have been made to bring the festival onto public platforms with the aim of preserving indigenous heritage and showcasing Karbi culture on a wider stage. This transition to public celebrations has significantly increased the popularity of Hacha Kekan across both hill

districts, where it has emerged as a major cultural event and a symbol of regional identity.

In keeping with age-old customs, the main celebrations were held after nightfall. The atmosphere at Kheroni Chariali resonated with vibrant folk songs, rhythmic drumbeats and vibrant energy as community members performed synchronised traditional dances in colourful ethnic attire.

The festival also witnessed participation from people belonging to different castes and religious backgrounds, highlighting a growing sense of unity and communal harmony in the district.

The celebration at Kheroni Chariali stood as a testament to the Karbi community's commitment to preserving and nurturing their ancestral traditions while adapting to the modern world.

NOTIFICATION

Notification No. DRHS/DMV/Contractual/PL/2026 Date: 12-01-2026

WALK-IN-INTERVIEW FOR ENGAGEMENT OF PART TIME SCHOOL TEACHERS ON CONTRACTUAL BASIS IN RAILWAY HIGH SCHOOL UNDER NFR, LUMDING DIVISION

SCHEDULE			
(i)	Date of Publication of Notification on Website	12 January, 2026	10:00 hrs
(ii)	Opening Date for Online Application	12 January, 2026	10:00 hrs
(iii)	Closing Date for Online Application	31 January, 2026	17:30 hrs
(iv)	Date of Walk-in-Interview	2 February, 2026	11:00 hrs

1. It has been decided to conduct "WALK-IN-INTERVIEW" for filling up the following vacant posts of Teachers in DIMAPUR RAILWAY HIGH SCHOOL/DIMAPUR by engaging suitable candidates, purely on contract basis. The engagement will be on a part time basis on fixed consolidated monthly remuneration for a period not more than 200 Working Days (Two Hundred working days) subject to any further instruction/policy on increase/decrease in no. of working days or appointment of regularly selected candidates from Railway Recruitment Board or availability of regular railway employee whichever is earlier or as per further instructions issued by Railway Board from time to time.

2. The details of vacancies of Teachers for part time engagement on contract basis are indicated below:

Sl. No.	Categories of Teachers, Subject and School	Community break-up					Total Vacancies	Date, Time & Venue of Interview
		UR	SC	ST	OBC	EWS		
1.	TRAINED GRADUATE TEACHER (TGT)	5	1	1	-	1	8	2 nd February 2026 (Monday) Reporting Time for Document Verification 09.30 Hrs. Interview Time 11.00 Hrs. Venue of DV and Interview DRM (P)/Lumding, Assam, N.F. Railway
(i)	TGT (BENGALI)						1	
(ii)	TGT (ENGLISH)						1	
(iii)	TGT (HINDI)						1	
(iv)	TGT (SOCIAL SCIENCES)						2	
(v)	TGT (SCIENCE)						1	
(vi)	TGT (MUSIC)						1	
(vii)	TGT (COMPUTER)						1	
2.	PRIMARY RESOURCE TEACHER (PRT):	3	-	-	-	-	3	
(i)	PRT (GENERAL)						3	
Total Posts		8	1	1	-	1	11	

NOTE: If the number of candidates is more, then the interview may extend to another day as per necessity.

3. **REMUNERATION:** Consolidated monthly remuneration for teachers on contract basis will be as under:

(i) Trained Graduate Teacher (TGT) all subjects - ₹ 26,250/- per month

(ii) Primary Resource Teacher (PRT) all subjects - ₹ 21,250/- per month

4. **AGE LIMIT:** The candidate should be between the age of 18 and 65 years (as per KVS rules) as on date of interview and selected candidate shall not be eligible to continue their contract services beyond 65 years.

5. **RESERVATION FOR SC/ST CANDIDATES:** SC/ST candidates seeking benefit of reservation must upload their caste certificate. These certificates must be produced in ORIGINAL during document verification.

The willing candidates who fulfill the prescribed qualifications may fill up the Application form enclosed herewith duly signed by candidate and pasting latest coloured Photographs.

The notification has already been published in the N.F. Railway website www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in (general info-departments-personnel-walk in interview).

After filling up the application form, candidates are advised to upload the scanned copy of the signed Application alongwith requisite certificates mentioned above in the ONLINE APPLICATION FORMAT available in the website address given above. On date of the Walk-in-Interview, please bring the original Certificates along with one set of photocopies of all documents including application form mentioned in the check list for verification.

All candidates who will apply are hereby advised to attend the walk-in-Interview at the specified venue on the above mentioned date, along with all the requisite certificates/testimonials in original.

Note: After filling up this form, please upload this application & certificates online on the website of email to drhsdmv@gmail.com the scanned copy.

Divisional Railway Manager (P)/Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

QUOTE OF THE DAY

A great work is made out of a combination of obedience and liberty. -Nadia Boulanger

Cong needs to settle Karnataka power struggle

Karnataka's political crisis is rooted in an intensifying power struggle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar. The unresolved question of a rotating chief minister system has deepened the crisis, making it critical for the Congress High Command to act decisively to stabilize the state. The origin of this power struggle could be traced to May 2023, when speculation surfaced about a possible leadership-sharing deal that remains unresolved. Congress won the majority and formed the government. To address internal rifts, the High Command appointed Siddaramaiah as chief minister and Shivakumar as his deputy, amid rumours that Shivakumar would take over after 2.5 years. After Siddaramaiah completed 2.5 years in office on November 20, 2025, Shivakumar's supporters demanded a leadership change, but Siddaramaiah insisted on serving out his full term. DKS may have publicly stepped away from any talk of replacing CM Siddaramaiah, but his camp hasn't backed off. The push for a leadership change in Karnataka has been very much alive for the past few weeks. The Congress High Command's continued indecision heightens the political stalemate and further endangers state stability. The result is maladministration for the people. The BJP is also accusing the Congress of failing to provide proper governance. When there is an open fight between the chief minister and his deputy, the party is divided into two camps.

Recent developments show Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar as distinct yet complementary Congress leaders—one with mass voter appeal, the other as a troubleshooter. DKS is an organisational man. Siddaramaiah is a veteran leader with a direct connection to voters, particularly with a strong hold over AHINDA communities (Kannada acronym for minorities, backward classes, and Dalits). He is said to be an able administrator. Both the contenders may try to get the better of each other, but the Congress in Karnataka is a divided house. The Siddaramaiah camp has revived its demand for the appointment of deputy chief ministers from other castes and a new state party chief. The Shivakumar camp has called for the chief minister's replacement, reminding the high command of the power-sharing formula. The high command, meanwhile, is buying time to make a decision. Either of the leaders is capable of splitting the party. Any decision has to be taken after careful consideration.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had talks with both leaders again. The outcome of talks with Rahul Gandhi remains unclear as both leaders are expected in Delhi for further dialogue. After meeting with Rahul Gandhi, both leaders said at that time they would follow the leadership's decision. Leadership delays have revealed deep divisions within the high command, with Rahul Gandhi seen as favouring Siddaramaiah while others support Shivakumar, risking public backlash over ongoing uncertainty.

Kaziranga Elevated Corridor: Where infrastructure meets ecology

On 18 January 2026, Prime Minister Narendra Modi formally inaugurated the historic Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project at Kaliabor in Assam's Nagaon district, marking a decisive moment in India's evolving approach to infrastructure development. The ceremony, which involved laying the foundation stone for one of the most ambitious highway projects in the Northeast, symbolised a conscious attempt to harmonise economic growth with ecological preservation. Drawing national attention, the project highlighted Assam not merely as a strategic geographical gateway to the Northeast, but as a region where biodiversity, culture and development aspirations intersect in complex and meaningful ways.

The Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project, with an estimated investment ranging between Rs 6,950 crore and Rs 6,957 crore, is designed to fundamentally transform the Kaliabor–Numaligarh stretch of National Highway-715. This corridor is a critical arterial route that links central Assam to Upper Assam and further connects the state to the wider Northeastern region. Spanning approximately 86 kilometres, the project integrates multiple infrastructure components, including a 35-kilometre elevated wildlife corridor passing through Kaziranga National Park, 21 kilometres of bypasses around Jakhlabandha and Bokakhat, and the widening of nearly 30 kilometres of the existing highway from two lanes to four lanes. Together, these elements aim to address long-standing challenges of congestion, safety and environmental conflict along one of Assam's busiest road networks.

Kaziranga National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site of global ecological significance, has long stood at the heart of this challenge. Renowned as the stronghold of the greater one-horned rhinoceros, the park also supports a rich mosaic of biodiversity that includes elephants, wild buffaloes, swamp deer, tigers and a wide array of bird species. Its geographical position, flanked by human settlements and intersected by vital transport routes, has historically made it vulnerable to the pressures of development. During the annual monsoon floods, large numbers of animals migrate towards higher ground across traditional corridors that often intersect with national highways, making the region particularly prone to ve-

hicle-animal collisions. For decades, this stretch of road has been associated with tragic losses of wildlife and disruptions to natural migratory behaviour.

At the core of the Kaziranga project lies the elevated wildlife corridor, an engineering solution shaped by ecological sensitivity and global conservation thinking. By raising the highway several metres above ground level through the most sensitive stretches of the park, planners have ensured that animals can move freely beneath the structure without encountering vehicular traffic. This design significantly reduces the risk of collisions, minimises human-wildlife conflict and preserves natural migration routes that are essential for the survival of several species. In adopting this approach, India aligns itself with international best practices in sustainable infrastructure, positioning the project as a benchmark for environmentally conscious development in biodiversity-rich landscapes.

Beyond its ecological rationale, the project promises substantial improvements in everyday mobility and road safety. The widening of the highway to four lanes is expected to ease chronic congestion that has long plagued the Kaliabor–Kaziranga stretch, especially during peak tourist seasons and festive periods. Travel time between major destinations in Upper Assam and Guwahati is likely to be reduced considerably, enhancing both passenger comfort and freight efficiency. The construction of bypasses around towns such as Jakhlabandha and Bokakhat will divert heavy through-traffic away from urban centres, allowing local communities to benefit from safer streets, reduced noise pollution and improved urban mobility.

The economic implications of the elevated corridor extend far beyond the immediate region. Assam serves as the principal economic gateway to the Northeast, functioning as a conduit for trade, investment and tourism. Improved connectivity along National Highway-715 is expected to strengthen this role by facilitating smoother movement of goods and people across the state. Kaziranga itself is one of India's most prominent wildlife tourism destinations, attracting visitors from across the country and abroad. Enhanced road infrastructure will improve accessibility to the park and surrounding destinations such as Jorhat and Sivasagar, thereby boosting the tourism ecosystem and

generating new opportunities for local entrepreneurs, transport operators and hospitality providers.

Improved logistics infrastructure will also have a multiplier effect on Assam's traditional and emerging economic sectors. The state's agricultural produce, tea gardens, oil and gas installations, timber trade and small-scale industries depend heavily on reliable road connectivity for efficient distribution. With reduced travel times and lower transportation costs, producers will be better positioned to integrate with national supply chains and expand their market reach. Such developments are likely to attract further investment, stimulate industrial growth and contribute to long-term economic resilience in the region.

From a social standpoint, the project carries significant promise for local communities. During the construction phase alone, it is expected to generate substantial employment for local labourers, engineers, technicians and ancillary service providers. These opportunities can help strengthen livelihoods, reduce seasonal out-migration and build skills within the regional workforce. In the longer term, improved highways will enhance access to essential services such as healthcare and education, particularly for residents of remote and rural areas who often face challenges due to poor road conditions and long travel times. Safer and faster connectivity can thus play a crucial role in improving quality of life and social inclusion.

The elevated corridor is also closely aligned with the Government of India's broader vision for inclusive and sustainable development in the Northeast. Historically, the region has grappled with infrastructural deficits arising from difficult terrain, dispersed populations and ecological sensitivity. By prioritising connectivity upgrades while embedding environmental safeguards into project design, the Kaziranga initiative reflects a more nuanced development philosophy. It underscores the idea that economic integration of remote regions need not come at the expense of environmental degradation, but can instead be pursued through innovative and context-sensitive solutions.

The cultural dimension of the project's inauguration further reinforced this integrated vision. On 17 January 2026, a day before the foundation stone was laid, Prime Minister Modi attended BagurumbaDwhou 2026 at Guwahati's Sarusajai Stadium,

where more than 10,000 artists from the Bodo community performed the traditional Bagurumba dance in a synchronised display. This historic cultural event served as a symbolic prelude to the infrastructure milestone, highlighting the importance of celebrating indigenous heritage alongside developmental progress. It emphasised that infrastructure is not merely about roads and bridges, but about connecting people, cultures and identities within a shared national framework.

Despite widespread optimism, the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project has also generated debate among conservationists and environmentalists. While many acknowledge the project's innovative design, some have urged sustained vigilance during construction and operation to ensure that ecological impacts are carefully managed. Concerns have been raised regarding noise, pollution and potential disturbances to animal behaviour, prompting calls for transparent monitoring, scientific assessments and adaptive mitigation measures. Such scrutiny is both necessary and constructive, as it helps ensure that the project remains true to its stated goal of ecological preservation while delivering developmental benefits.

In its essence, the Kaziranga Elevated Corridor Project represents a comprehensive and forward-looking vision of sustainable infrastructure. It seeks to balance ecological protection with economic expansion and social well-being, recognising that these objectives are not mutually exclusive but deeply interconnected. If implemented successfully, the project could serve as a model for future infrastructure initiatives across India and other biodiversity-rich regions of the world. It demonstrates that with thoughtful planning, advanced engineering and respect for natural heritage, development can proceed without eroding the environmental foundations upon which long-term prosperity depends.

As Assam stands on the cusp of a new era of connectivity and growth, the foundation stone laid in January 2026 marks more than the beginning of a highway project. It signifies a broader commitment to a development paradigm that values nature, culture and human progress in equal measure. The Kaziranga Elevated Corridor thus emerges not only as a feat of engineering, but as a statement of intent, pointing toward a future where infrastructure elevates both landscapes and lives. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmi@gmail.com)*

Guwahati's endless traffic nightmare

By: Satyabrata Borah

Traffic congestion in Guwahati has evolved from an occasional inconvenience into a persistent daily ordeal that affects nearly every resident of the city. As the largest urban center in Northeast India and the capital of Assam, Guwahati serves as a major commercial, educational, and administrative hub, drawing people from across the region and beyond. This rapid growth, however, has overwhelmed the city's infrastructure, particularly its road network, leading to severe and frequent traffic jams that disrupt commutes, increase pollution, raise economic costs, and diminish the overall quality of life. What was once manageable now feels like a chronic problem, with commuters spending hours stuck in gridlock on major routes, side streets, and even newly constructed flyovers.

The roots of this crisis lie in the explosive increase in the number of vehicles on Guwahati's roads. The city has seen a dramatic surge in vehicle registrations over the past decade, with figures approaching or even nearing the total population in some estimates. Around 13 lakh vehicles were registered in the city by recent counts, including a high proportion of two-wheelers and private cars. This growth stems from rising incomes, easier access to financing, urbanization, and the limited availability of reliable public transport alternatives. Every year, thousands of new vehicles join the roads, adding pressure to an already strained system. The population of Guwahati has also expanded significantly, with the metropolitan area projected to reach well over 20 lakh in the coming years according to various planning documents. This demographic shift has concentrated more people and economic activity in a relatively compact urban space, where narrow roads, unplanned development, and geographical constraints limit expansion possibilities.

Geographically, Guwahati faces unique challenges that exacerbate congestion. Nestled along the southern bank of the Brahmaputra River, the city is bordered by hills to the south, restricting outward growth in certain directions. Many older parts of the city feature winding, narrow lanes originally designed for much lower traffic volumes. Major arterial roads like GS Road, Assam Trunk Road, and sections of NH-37 bear the brunt of daily movement, connecting residential areas, markets, offices, educational institutions, and transport hubs. These corridors often become bottlenecks during peak hours, with vehicles crawling at speeds far below acceptable levels. Commercial zones such as Fancy Bazar, Paltan Bazar, and Ganeshguri see intense activity from shoppers, vendors, and delivery services, while areas near educational institutions like Gauhati University experience heavy student commuting. The influx of inter-state vehicles, goods carriers, and tourists further compounds the issue, especially on highways passing through or near the city. Poor traffic management and enforce-

ment contribute significantly to the worsening situation. Violations such as illegal parking, wrong-side driving, and haphazard stopping by public transport vehicles are common, often turning intersections into chaos. On-street parking in busy markets reduces effective road width, forcing vehicles into single-file movement. Heavy vehicles and slow-moving e-rickshaws sometimes occupy lanes meant for faster traffic, creating additional delays. During festivals, events, or high-profile visits, such as security drills or concerts, temporary restrictions and diversions lead to sudden snarls in unexpected areas. Recent reports highlight gridlocks in places like Chhatribari, Athgaon, Fatasil, Ulubari, and near Maligaon flyover due to breakdowns, unannounced exercises, or festive rushes. Even New Year celebrations or major events at venues like Barsapara Stadium trigger widespread restrictions that spill over into normal traffic flow.

Construction activities, intended as long-term solutions, ironically add to short-term misery. Guwahati has witnessed a flurry of infrastructure projects in recent years, including multiple flyovers at locations such as Noonmati-Ambari, Jalukbari, Six Mile, and Bharalumukh. These structures aim to separate conflicting traffic streams and reduce surface-level congestion. However, ongoing construction disrupts traffic for extended periods, with narrowed lanes, diversions, and heavy machinery blocking paths. Commuters often find themselves stuck beneath or beside half-built flyovers, where the promise of relief feels distant amid the dust and delays. Some completed flyovers, like those at Jalukbari or Six Mile, have not delivered expected improvements because of inadequate enforcement, makeshift bus stands underneath, or induced demand where more vehicles simply shift to the new route until it too clogs.

Environmental and health impacts compound the frustration of traffic jams. Prolonged idling in congestion leads to higher fuel consumption and elevated emissions, worsening air quality in an already polluted urban environment. Noise from honking horns and engines creates constant stress, while exposure to fumes increases respiratory issues among residents. Time lost in traffic translates to lost productivity, with professionals, students, and business owners arriving late or exhausted. Economic estimates suggest significant daily losses from wasted hours, though precise figures for Guwahati vary. For many families, the daily commute becomes a source of anxiety, with parents worrying about children stuck on school buses or workers fearing missed deadlines.

Public transport inadequacies play a central role in perpetuating private vehicle dependency. Despite efforts to introduce CNG and electric buses under smart city initiatives, the fleet remains insufficient for the city's needs. Commuters often complain of overcrowded, irregular services, uncomfortable conditions, and limited coverage in peripheral areas. Without a robust, attractive alternative, more people

opt for personal vehicles, feeding the vicious cycle of congestion. Intermediate options like auto-rickshaws and e-rickshaws help in short distances but add to disorder when unregulated.

The government and authorities have recognized the severity of the problem and initiated several measures. Guwahati Smart City Limited has pursued projects like the Integrated Traffic Management System, involving intelligent traffic signals, CCTV surveillance, and adaptive controls to optimize flow. A more advanced Intelligent City Surveillance System is underway to enhance monitoring, enforce rules, and manage crowds. Traffic police deploy personnel at key points, issue e-challans for violations, and coordinate during events. Infrastructure pushes include flyover completions, road widenings, junction redesigns, and grade separators. Recent announcements highlight progress on projects like the Noonmati-Ambari flyover nearing opening and alternative routes bypassing congested stretches, such as a new short road linking areas near Dibrugarh University to reduce reliance on NH-37. Broader regional initiatives, like elevated corridors elsewhere in Assam, aim to divert through-traffic and ease pressure on urban networks.

Despite these steps, challenges persist in implementation and coordination. Projects face delays due to funding, land acquisition, or environmental clearances. Public skepticism remains high, with many viewing flyovers as temporary fixes that induce more vehicle use rather than addressing root causes. Experts argue for a multimodal approach emphasizing public transport expansion, non-motorized facilities like cycle lanes and pedestrian paths, stricter parking regulations, and better urban planning to discourage unnecessary trips. Promoting carpooling, remote work where feasible, and staggered office hours could help distribute peak demand. Long-term vision requires integrating land use with transport, preventing further ribbon development along highways, and preserving green spaces to avoid heat island effects that worsen livability.

In essence, traffic jams in Guwahati represent more than mere inconvenience; they symbolize the tension between rapid urbanization and inadequate planning horizons. The city stands at a crossroads where continued reliance on vehicle-centric growth risks entrenching the problem deeper. Yet opportunities exist through technology, policy innovation, and community participation to reclaim smoother mobility. Residents endure the daily grind with resilience, hoping that ongoing and future interventions will eventually transform the narrative from one of endless gridlock to manageable movement. Until comprehensive, sustained action matches the scale of the challenge, traffic congestion will remain a defining feature of life in this vibrant yet strained metropolis. The path forward demands collective commitment from authorities, citizens, and planners alike to prioritize sustainable, inclusive solutions over piecemeal remedies.

How Trump's Arctic gambit is rewriting the rules of power in Europe

By: Ashok Nilakantan Ayers

US President Donald Trump's threat to take over Greenland did not come wrapped in diplomatic language or buried in briefing papers. It arrived bluntly, as his foreign policy often does: Greenland, he said, was too important to be left where it was. The Arctic island — vast, sparsely populated, strategically located — should be under American control.

What followed was not merely another Trumpian provocation. It became a test of sovereignty, alliance politics, and truth itself — pitting Washington against Copenhagen, unsettling Europe, angering Greenlanders, and drawing wary reactions from Moscow, Beijing, and beyond. At the heart of the crisis lies a fundamental question: Was this about security — or something else entirely? Trump had floated the idea of acquiring Greenland once before, during his first presidency, when it was dismissed as an eccentric real-estate fantasy. This time, the tone was different. The language was sharper. The stakes are higher.

According to U.S. officials familiar with internal discussions, Trump framed Greenland as "essential" to American national security, citing its Arctic position, proximity to North America, and alleged foreign encroachment. When Denmark rejected any discussion of a transfer of sovereignty, the rhetoric escalated. Trump warned of economic consequences, including tariffs on European allies, should they "block U.S. security interests." European diplomats privately described the move as coercive diplomacy — a dramatic departure from post-war norms governing relations among NATO allies. The European response was swift and unusually united. Denmark, backed by France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Nordic allies, reaffirmed that Greenland's status was non-negotiable. European leaders warned that economic threats against allies over sovereign territory crossed a red line.

Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni — often described as one of Trump's closest ideological counterparts in Europe — reportedly placed a direct call to Trump, urging de-escalation and warning that the episode risked fracturing NATO unity at a moment of global instability. While Meloni stopped short of public condemnation, Italian officials later signalled that sovereignty could not be bargained away under pressure. Behind the scenes, European defense planners accelerated coordination on Arctic security — not against Russia or China, but to prevent the crisis itself from spiralling into something worse. Lost in the early stages of the confrontation was the voice of Greenland itself.

Home to just over 55,000 people — the majority Indigenous Inuit — Greenland enjoys broad autonomy within the Kingdom of Denmark. Its leaders reacted with anger and disbelief. "We are not for sale," Greenlandic officials said repeatedly, echoing a sentiment that spread quickly across the island. Public demonstrations, statements from local lawmakers, and opinion surveys all pointed in the same direction: Greenlanders overwhelmingly preferred remaining within Denmark's framework rather than becoming a U.S. territory. Many viewed Trump's remarks as dismissive of their identity, history, and right to self-determination. For a population already navigating the pressures of climate change, economic transition, and cultural preservation, the idea that their homeland could be traded between powers felt like a return to a colonial past they had not consented to revisit.

Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen was unequivocal. Any attempt to force Greenland's status, she warned, would damage transatlantic relations and undermine the very alliance structures the United States claimed to defend. Danish officials stressed that the U.S.

already maintains a military presence in Greenland under longstanding agreements — including the Thule Air Base — and that security cooperation had never been in question. What was at issue, they argued, was ownership, control, and precedent. If Greenland could be pressured, they asked privately, what would stop similar tactics elsewhere? Central to Trump's justification were claims that Chinese ships and Russian vessels were increasingly active around Greenland, posing a strategic threat that demanded American intervention.

But intelligence officials in Europe and independent Arctic analysts challenged those assertions. While Russia maintains a strong Arctic presence — largely along its own northern coastline — there was no evidence of hostile Russian naval manoeuvres near Greenland at the scale implied. Chinese activity, meanwhile, has been largely confined to research, commercial interest, and long-term mineral exploration proposals — none of which amounted to military encirclement.

Several media investigations found no corroboration for claims that Chinese or Russian forces were "circling" the island. NATO officials privately described the narrative as "exaggerated," if not misleading. That raised a more uncomfortable question: What was the real objective. Was Arctic ice recedes, Greenland's strategic value is changing. New shipping routes are opening. Untapped reserves of rare earth minerals — critical for advanced electronics, defense systems, and green technologies — are drawing global interest. Oil and gas potential, while politically sensitive, remains significant.

Analysts say the U.S. concern is less about imminent military threats and more about long-term strategic positioning — ensuring access to resources, preventing rivals from gaining influence, and securing Arctic dominance in a warming world.

Trump has denied that minerals or oil motivated his stance. But his own advisers have acknowledged privately that Greenland's resource potential features prominently in internal assessments. Russia reacted with thinly veiled sarcasm. Commentators in Moscow mocked Washington's rhetoric, portraying the episode as American hypocrisy on sovereignty. Officially, the Kremlin urged restraint while reiterating that Arctic stability required cooperation, not coercion.

China took a measured tone. State-linked analysts framed the dispute as evidence of Western disunity and warned that unilateral pressure tactics undermined global norms. Beijing avoided direct involvement, but its commentary underscored how the episode weakened U.S. moral authority on territorial integrity.

India, consistent with its diplomatic tradition, refrained from overt commentary. Indian officials emphasized respect for sovereignty and international law, principles New Delhi has increasingly highlighted amid its own regional challenges. Across the Middle East and Latin America, reactions were muted but telling. Diplomatic analysts in those regions cited the Greenland episode as another example of great-power unpredictability — reinforcing skepticism toward power politics dressed up as security imperatives.

What began as a provocative statement became something more consequential: a stress test for NATO, for Europe's political spine, and for the credibility of American leadership. Rather than isolating Denmark or Greenland, Trump's gambit strengthened European unity, emboldened Greenlandic identity, and fuelled global doubts about Washington's respect for sovereignty — especially when inconvenient.

The crisis remains unresolved. But one outcome is already clear. In the icy expanse of the Arctic, the world has been reminded that power still tempts, alliances still strain, and truth still matters. (IPA Service)

Why the dismantling of MGNREGA disproportionately impacts rural women

By: Seema Kulkarni,
Navsharan Singh, Anupama Uppal
and S. Seethalakshmi

The replacement of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, with the new Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin (VB-GRAM-G), 2025, is being projected as a reform aimed at efficiency, rationalisation and alignment with agricultural cycles. In reality, this shift represents a fundamental rollback of one of India's most significant rights-based employment programmes.

For rural women, who are already confronting shrinking employment, rising indebtedness, pervasive harassment and the collapse of social security, this transition threatens to exacerbate precarity rather than alleviate it.

Findings from a recent three-state study done by the authors covering Maharashtra, Punjab and Telangana expose the fragility of women's livelihoods in rural India.

From rights to discretion

The shift from MGNREGA to VB-G RAM G is not merely a change in name but also a change from a rights-based, demand-led entitlement into a budget-capped, supply-driven scheme.

Under MGNREGA, employment was legally guaranteed upon demand, with wages and most costs borne by the central government. VB-G RAM G, in contrast, limits employment to selected seasons, selected works, and selected regions, with a significantly higher financial burden placed on state governments through a 60:40 cost-sharing formula.

The government claims that VB-G RAM G will provide 125 days of employment, up from MGNREGA's statutory 100 days. However, official data shows that MGNREGA has struggled in recent years to provide an average of 50 days of work per household. During COVID-19 nearly 72 lakh households (2020-21) were provided 100 days of employment but in the year 2024-25, it has come down to merely 41 lakh households which is also lower than 45 lakh households in the previous year.

The number of households completing 100 days of work has steadily declined, from 10% in 2020-21 to just 7% in 2024-25, with only 1.5% achieving this threshold so far in the current year. So, to suggest that a more restricted, underfunded scheme will outperform MGNREGA is implausible.

The study findings from the three states largely corroborate these data. In Maharashtra, for example, of the total number who held job cards for MGNREGA, only 9% said they received any work despite demanding it. In Telangana, the average days of work available for job card holders was 39 in Nalgonda district and 27 days in Medak district.

More worryingly, chapter 2, section



6 of VB GRAM-G explicitly prohibits employment during peak agricultural seasons for up to 60 days. This provision rests on the flawed assumption that agriculture provides adequate work during these periods. Evidence from the study shows that this assumption does not hold, especially for women agricultural labourers.

Flawed narrative of labour shortage vs. reality of women's work in rural India

The three states study surveyed nearly 3,000 rural women using extensive focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and survey tools. Across all three states, women's paid work was overwhelmingly concentrated in agriculture primarily as wage labourers, but employment availability was both seasonal, informal, poorly paid and caste segregated with the average number of work days rapidly declining over time.

Over 65% of women agricultural labourers reported a decline in work availability in recent years. This decline was sharper among landless women, who are entirely dependent on wage labour. Mechanisation, monocropping, the spread of weedicides, changes in cropping patterns and acquisition of agricultural land for various public purpose projects have systematically displaced women's labour, even as male-dominated mechanised work expands.

In Maharashtra, women agricultural labourers received a low average of just 123 days of work annually, with daily wages rarely exceeding Rs 200. In Punjab, the situation was even more severe: women reported receiving barely 35 days of agricultural work in an entire year with the wages ranging from Rs 300-350.

In Telangana, women labourers received an average of around 134 days of work annually with daily wages not exceeding Rs 300 for most works in agriculture.

In both Maharashtra and Telangana, paid agricultural work is concentrated in a short peak season, lasting roughly four months each year. In the areas studied in Maharashtra, this peak coincides with the harvest of soyabean and the cotton-picking season.

In Telangana, employment is similarly limited to the paddy and cotton season with women workers reporting only around 60 days of work during the peak agricultural season.

For the rest of the year, work availability drops sharply, leaving women agricultural labourers with few local employment options. In Punjab, majority of the women agricultural labourers get employment in paddy season only – for 36 days during paddy seeding. As the wheat cultivation and harvesting is highly mechanised, hardly 6% reported getting employment during wheat harvesting season, and that too, for 20 days only.

The study shows that a majority of women agricultural labourers relied on the MGNREGA scheme to cope with the declining availability of work in agriculture even during the peak agricultural season.

Denying access to this work for 60 days during the so-called peak agricultural season will further weaken the already limited work available to them. Contrary to official narratives of labour shortages, it is not MGNREGA that pulls workers away from farms; it is agriculture itself that no longer provides sufficient employment.

Public employment through MGN-

REGA has therefore functioned as a compensatory mechanism, not a competing one. This is evident from the official data which shows that women account for 45%, 68% and 61% of total person days for Maharashtra, Punjab and Telangana, respectively.

Exploitation, debt and harassment: The gendered costs of informal labour

A majority of women from the study sites reported delayed wage payments, and more than a third were compelled to work extra hours without compensation. Such practices were particularly prevalent among landless women and those from Scheduled Castes, Nomadic Tribes, and Denotified Tribes, revealing the intersection of caste and gender in labour exploitation.

Delayed or denied wages force women to borrow for daily survival. Many take advances against future labour from the same employers who exploit them, locking them into cycles of debt and dependency. These interlocking labour-credit arrangements sharply reduce women's bargaining power and expose them to coercion.

Economic exploitation inevitably leads to different forms of violence in the non-economic domain as well. Verbal abuse, caste-based discrimination and harassment at worksites was a common experience. Single, widowed, and deserted women faced particular hostility, often being discouraged or prevented from accessing work altogether. For migrant women workers, especially sugarcane cutters from Maharashtra, conditions were even more harrowing with long working hours, lack of housing, sanitation or healthcare, and everyday verbal and physical violence.

Collapse of social security

Social protection schemes, introduced with the intention to offset labour insecurity have largely failed to reach rural women. Less than half of the women surveyed had benefited from the Ujjwala cooking gas scheme, and many could not afford refills. Health insurance coverage was negligible despite widespread indebtedness due to medical expenses. Pension coverage among widowed and single women remained extremely low.

As social security fails, women absorb the shock through intensified unpaid work, distress migration, and self-exploitation. Public employment under MGNREGA has therefore played a critical role, not as a substitute for social security, but as one of the few reliable sources of cash income and dignity.

Why VB-G RAM G will hurt women the most

Against this backdrop, the components of VB-G RAM G are particularly damaging for women. By restricting employment during so-called peak agricultural seasons, the scheme assumes the availability of farm work that women themselves report no longer exists. In states like Punjab, where women already receive less than 30 days of MGNREGA work per year, denying access during these months will further erode their livelihoods.

The large farmers who employ large-scale wage labour for farm operations have been lobbying for disruption of MGNREGA work during the peak season to keep the wages depressed. The VB-G RAM G provisions which the officials claim as striking a balance between the welfare of farmers and labourers, will severely weaken the bargaining power of agricultural labour for better wages and working conditions, especially women wage workers forcing them to accept whatever is offered, reversing the demands for higher wages and gender equality in farm wage which the agricultural labour unions have been fighting for.

Importantly, wage suppression is not limited to the peak season alone. In Maharashtra, sugar factories and contractors have ensured that MGNREGA remains dysfunctional during the lean agricultural months as well, compelling workers into distress migration for sugarcane harvesting.

Together, these practices reveal a co-ordinated labour-control regime which suppresses wages during peak seasons by denying alternative employment, and disciplines labour during lean seasons by quashing public work, leaving workers with no choice but to submit to exploitative terms.

The increased financial burden on states is equally troubling. Under MGNREGA, wages were fully funded by the Union government. VB-G RAM G's cost-sharing framework places greater responsibility on states already facing fiscal stress. This will inevitably lead to uneven implementation, with

poorer states generating fewer work days. Given that women consistently account for around 58% of total person-days under MGNREGA, they will be the first to lose out when employment is rationed.

Finally, by replacing a legal guarantee with administrative discretion, VB-G RAM G strips women of one of their few enforceable rights. The ability to demand work, receive unemployment allowances and access grievance redressal mechanisms was central to MGNREGA's emancipatory potential.

Its removal pushes women back into informal, unregulated labour markets where exploitation is the norm.

Whose development does VB-G RAM G serve?

MGNREGA was never merely an employment scheme. It was a legal guarantee that recognised work as a right, enabled demand-driven access to employment, and provided bargaining power to the most marginalised workers, particularly rural women.

Unlike most welfare programmes, it acknowledged women as workers, enabling women's participation in unions and collective bargaining processes. Women became workers with enforceable entitlements rather than as residual labour or passive beneficiaries.

Evidence from the study shows that even limited public employment produced tangible benefits. It reduced women's dependence on exploitative employers, curbed distress migration, enabled collective and relatively safer worksites and provided a degree of income predictability during lean agricultural seasons.

More importantly, it strengthened women's voice and bargaining power in everyday social and economic life, which continues to be structured by entrenched relations of caste and class.

The case for bringing MGNREGA back is, therefore, grounded in the lived realities of rural women navigating agrarian distress, gendered labour displacement, and the steady withdrawal of the state from social protection. If even minimal guarantees of work are withdrawn, rural women will be forced to absorb the crisis through their bodies, labour, and silence at the cost of rising debt, deteriorating health, increased violence and intergenerational poverty. VB-G RAM G is another crushing blow to women's work, bargaining power and entitlements in the labour market which are already undermined in the Labour Codes regime – be it longer shifts, diluted state enforcement of safety standards or definition of wage work.

By reversing the basic right to work that was guaranteed through the MGNREGA, it is clear that the Union government has now embarked on a vision of 'Viksit Bharat' that involves wilful abdication of the state from its constitutional obligation of protecting the interests of the most marginalised section of its citizens. (Courtesy: The Wire)

Reclaim the night: Where 24 hours become an illusion of equality

By: Ambika Sharma

It might seem on surface that everyone has 24 hours in a day and they can spend it safely and freely but the reality seems to be different for women in India as they have to live in a restrictive and conditioned manner due to fear of violence and crimes that could occur on streets, raising question on safety of women on roads.

Almost a month ago, on 16 December 2025, students and activists gathered at Allahabad University for a Reclaim the Night March, a march which focused on talking about pushing back against systems that restrict women's movement on roads, time and freedom to pursue anything.

The march wasn't just a form of protest, it was a collective and united demand for autonomy, equality and freedom over time and space. It also reminded us that women's movement and freedom isn't just shaped by social aspects but also by gender, cultural, mathematical and economic aspects.

Spaces shaped by gendered social and cultural aspects:

Women's presence in public areas is often framed as conditional or something which is necessary only when needed from childhood.

Society, family and systems caution and warn women about streets being unsafe for late-night travel and social outings, often putting restrictions on their movement through labelling it as a measure necessary for their "protection" and "personal safety".

With time, these limitations have become an internal part of women's lives as going out at night has been tagged as unsafe, leading to them putting several restrictions on their daily routines and movements on roads.

Reclaim The Night March challenged these pre-defined societal and cultural notions about movement, time and safety for women directly. By taking over the streets, women clearly asserted that everyone has 24 hours and

they deserve to spend it equally and freely without any societal restrictions.

They also argued that autonomy and freedom over time and space is not privilege but a birthright which is given to all genders equally.

Marches like this create a social effect as they throw light upon the weight of restrictive norms and constant surveillance imposed upon women by the society and bring conversations on why only women have to negotiate and assert their autonomy and freedom to pursue anything freely as opposed to men who don't have to do it.

This issue is further aggravated by the high prevalence of gender-based violence. According to NCRB, there was a 15.3% increase in crime against women in 2021 compared to 2020, showing why fear of violence and crime on streets affect women's daily lives along with societal and cultural norms imposed on women in reality.

By marching together, women not only reclaimed their freedom and right over space and time but also asserted that the night belongs to everyone.

The Mathematical and Economic Aspects of Spaces:

Mathematical-wise, everyone has 24 hours to spend every day, social factors along with calculated mathematical factors often shrink women's productive time.

Several hours are spent in calculating safe routes, modes of transportations, avoiding "deemed unsafe" streets or cutting short from social events, being the hours which are deducted from leisure, education and career progression.

In the theoretical world, it might seem that equality and freedom exist for women but in practical life, autonomy over time seems inconsistent and almost non-existent in women's lives.

The hidden subtraction of hours shows that numerical and mathemati-

cal equality does not always convert into autonomy or freedom over movement, space and time.

Restrictions imposed on movement and time also carry economic outcomes as most educational, networking events, internships and late-night classes often take place post-presumably "dark hours".

Women who often restrain from the "late" timings and participate in these arenas are systematically excluded from public events and experiences that could have made their educational path and careers much smoother as opposed to not taking part in them.

This reduces women's individual potential to excel and succeed in their careers, and it has societal implications as the economy and labor market might miss out on the talent, innovation and professional contributions made by the women towards the society.

Henceforth, the march is an indicator that bringing measures that ensure freedom and equality over movement, space and time is necessary for not only the social and economic development of women's lives but also development of the global society.

The Bottomline:

Reclaim The Night March at Allahabad University was more than a protest against fear but it was a critical review on the systems that often restrict women's time and limit autonomy over space and movement.

Numerical and Economic Equality is not beneficial for women if it is not accompanied by freedom and autonomy to spend the 24 hours freely and safely. Women should be able to navigate space and time without any necessity of negotiation or fear of late-night streets. Until that becomes the reality, equality remains limited to being aspirational, not lived with dignity, freedom and accessibility to all sorts of life opportunities. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

Is the zero ticket bus travel scheme for women in Tamil Nadu a boon or a bane?

By: S Indrakant & A Mahendran

In recent years, it has become a popular strategy of political parties in India to provide free public bus services to women or to a certain section of the population and hope to secure votes and thereby win elections.

Indian politicians grant 'boons' to potential voters without voters asking for or dreaming about them. Women voters do not demand them. But politicians have provided free bus services, not out of generosity but due to self-interest and to impress upon the voters that they are interested in their welfare and pretend as if they are paying the amount out of their pockets. Incidentally, free bus services may benefit women traders who commute to the nearby urban centres from their villages to sell their homemade and home-grown products like vegetables and flowers. It may help students who commute to urban centres to attend coaching classes to prepare for competitive examinations, thereby hoping to secure government jobs.

But as is well-known, every coin has two faces. A 'boon' given to a section of the population is likely to become a curse to many others. As a result of free bus services to women passengers, the business of private auto-rickshaw and taxicab drivers, who are generally poor, is adversely affected. In addition, this, it adversely affects the receipts of the government and at the same time increases its expenditure. To reduce the subsidy burden, the government may hike the bus fare for other sections of the population. In other words, men have to pay for women passengers.

It is like robbing Peter to pay for Paul. In other words, a boon for some can become a curse for others. Providing subsidy to only a section of a population can be justified only

when the gains of the beneficiaries outweigh the loss incurred by the non-beneficiaries.

To reduce subsidy burden, the government may either impose new taxes or hike the tax rates. In this connection, it is worth recollecting the views of Kautilya on taxation:

As a gardener plucks the flowers and fruits from a tree without damaging the tree: as a bee sucks the honey from the flower without harming it, so also a king should collect taxes from the people without increasing their suffering.

Taxation should not be so heavy to make firms bankrupt resulting in their closure. It may be noted that by killing a goat one may at the best may have one meal. Instead, if the goat is fed well, it gives milk for several years.

Will people protest if there is a reduction in bus fare? The question itself may appear to be ridiculous. An incident in Scotland would throw light on this issue. A long time ago, it is said that the residents of a community in Scotland, in spite of the availability of bus facility, used to walk to their workplace and return home on foot. Bus operators had fixed bus fare as 2 shillings per trip. But no one availed the bus facilities. So, to encourage people to utilise bus services, the bus operators reduced the bus fare to 1 shilling per trip. In response, the residents protested and demanded that the bus fare should be restored to the original level. The argument of the residents was that by daily walking to their workplace and returning home they could save 2 shillings. Now, with the reduction in the bus fare, they would be able to save only one shilling daily. Further, the people argued that their health improved by walking.

In this context, it may surprise one to know that Luxembourg is the only

country which provides free public transport services (i.e. buses, trams and trains) to all its people and foreign tourists. The main reason for such a move is to motivate private vehicle owners to avail public transport instead of using their personal vehicles and thereby reducing traffic congestion and carbon emission. It also boosts tourism and retail business at tourist places. Such activities are likely to bring additional revenue to the government and thereby compensate the government expenditure for providing free transport.

It may work well in an economy like India, where all households own private vehicles and are used to traveling in their own vehicle. Air pollution has reached alarming proportions in Delhi. Some states of India like Telangana are encouraging the use of electric battery-driven vehicles to reduce air pollution by exempting life tax on such vehicles. As a result, the number of battery-driven two-wheelers has considerably increased. To motivate the general public, the government-owned road transport corporation is purchasing substantial numbers of electric buses. Further, charging points are being opened at important places to encourage the use of electric vehicles. To discourage the use of a second vehicle by a household, the tax on such vehicles has been enhanced. Such measures, no doubt, would curtail the comforts enjoyed by people traveling in their own vehicles.

Thus, free transport policy for a certain section of population is a boon for some but a bane for many others. Food to some may become poison to many. So, one has to take a comprehensive view while designing a public policy. People at the helm of affairs should have a long-term vision and not crave for short-term benefits. (Courtesy: Down To Earth)

Cine

I did learn a lot from this scene, came out of Indian cinema. I showed does not children they befriend. As with n a life cl chasing n't just frustrat gave a i Even human teenage far bey that nee kindne: cinema cally m hardest Then

Syrian interior ministry: 120 Islamic State group members escape from prison amid clashes

RAQQA (SYRIA), Jan 20: Syria's ministry of interior said Tuesday that 120 Islamic State members escaped from a prison in northeast Syria a day earlier, amid clashes between government forces and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which guards the prison.

Security forces recaptured 81 of the escapees, "while intensive security efforts continue to pursue the remaining fugitives and take the necessary legal measures against them," the statement said.

The SDF and the government have traded blame over the escape at a prison in the town of Shadadeh, amid the breakdown of a ceasefire deal between the two sides.

Also Tuesday, the SDF accused "Damascus-affiliated factions" of cutting off water supplies to the al-Qatn prison near the city of Raqqa, which it called a "blatant violation of humanitarian standards".

The SDF, the main US-backed force that fought IS in Syria, controls more than a dozen prisons in the northeast where some 9,000 IS



members have been held for years without trial. Many of the detained extremists are believed to have carried out atrocities in Syria and Iraq after IS declared a caliphate in June 2014 over large parts of Syria and Iraq.

IS was defeated in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria two years later, but the group's sleeper cells still carry out deadly attacks in both countries.

Under a deal announced Sunday, government forces were to take over control of the prisons from the SDF, but the transfer did not go smoothly. On Monday, Syrian government forces and SDF fighters clashed around two prisons housing members of the Islamic State group in Syria's northeast.

The clashes came as SDF chief commander Mazloum Abdi was

said to be in Damascus to attempt to solidify a ceasefire deal reached Sunday that ended days of deadly fighting during which government forces captured wide areas of northeast Syria from the SDF. Abdi issued no statement after the meeting and the SDF later issued a statement calling for "all of our youth" to "join the ranks of the resistance", appearing to signal that the deal had fallen apart.

Interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa postponed a planned trip to Germany Tuesday amid the ongoing tensions in northeast Syria.

Since toppling Bashar Assad in December 2024, Syria's new leaders have struggled to assert their full authority over the war-torn country. An agreement was reached in March that would merge the SDF with Damascus, but it didn't gain traction.

Earlier this month, clashes broke out in the city of Aleppo, followed by the government offensive that seized control of Deir el-Zour and Raqqa provinces, critical areas under the SDF that include oil and gas fields, river dams along the Euphrates and border crossings. (AP)

Bessent says US-Europe relations have 'never been closer' despite Greenland crisis

DAVOS, Jan 20: US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Tuesday said America's relations with Europe remain strong and urged trading partners to "take a deep breath" and let tensions driven by the Trump administration's new tariff threats over Greenland "play out."



"I think our relations have never been closer," he said, speaking on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

On Saturday, US President Donald Trump announced a 10 per cent import tax starting in February on goods from eight European nations that have rallied around Denmark in the wake of his stepped up calls for the United States to take over the semi-autonomous Danish territory of Greenland.

Trump has insisted the US needs the territory for security reasons against possible threats from China and Russia.

Trump's threats spark diplomatic flurry across Europe

The American leader's threats have sparked outrage and a flurry of diplomatic activity across Europe, as leaders consider possible countermeasures, including retaliatory tariffs and the first-ever use of the European Union's anti-coercion instrument.

The EU has three major economic tools it could use to pressure Washington: new tariffs, suspension of the US-EU trade deal, and the "trade bazooka" — the unofficial trade deal's Anti-Coercion Instrument, which could sanction individuals or institutions found to be putting undue pressure on the EU.

Earlier Tuesday, Trump posted on social media that he had spoken with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte. He said "I agreed to a meeting of the various parties in Davos, Switzerland," which is hosting the World Economic Forum's annual meeting this week.

France's Macron suggests G-7 meeting in Paris this week

Trump also posted a text message from Emmanuel Macron in which the French president suggested a meeting of members of the Group of Seven industrialised democracies in Paris after the Davos gathering.

Later, however, Trump posted some provocatively doctored images. One showed him planting the US flag next to a sign reading "Greenland, US Territory, Est. 2026." The other showed Trump in

the Oval Office next to a map that showed Greenland and Canada covered with the US Stars and Stripes.

In a sign of how tensions have increased in recent days, thousands of Greenlanders marched over the weekend in protest of any effort to take over their island. Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen said in a Facebook post Monday that the tariff threats would not change their stance. "We will not be pressured," he wrote.

In his latest threat of tariffs, Trump indicated that the import taxes would be retaliation for last week's deployment of symbolic numbers of troops from the European countries to Greenland — though he also suggested that he was using the tariffs as leverage to negotiate with Denmark.

Danish minister called for a stronger Europe in the face of Trump's threats

Denmark's minister for European affairs called Trump's tariff threats "deeply unfair." He said that Europe needs to become even stronger and more independent, while stressing there is "no interest in escalating a trade war."

"You just have to note that we are on the edge of a new world order, where having power has unfortunately become crucial, and we see a United States with an enormous condescending rhetoric towards Europe," Marie Bjerre told Danish public broadcaster DK on Tuesday. Speaking on the sidelines of Davos, California Gov. Gavin Newsom slammed Europe's response to Trump's tariff threats as "pathetic" and "embarrassing," and urged European leaders to unite and stand up to the United States.

"It is time to get serious, and stop being complicit," Newsom

told reporters. "It's time to stand tall and firm, have a backbone."

European markets open sharply lower

European markets opened sharply lower on Tuesday and US futures fell further as tensions rose over Greenland. Benchmarks in Germany, France and Britain fell about 1 per cent. The future for the S&P 500 lost 1.5 per cent and the Dow future was down 1.4 per cent.

With US trading closed Monday for a holiday, financial markets had a relatively muted response to Trump's threat to put a 10 per cent extra tariff on exports from eight European countries that have opposed his push to exert control over Greenland.

Jonas Goltnerman of Capital Economics described the situation as a lose-lose one for both the US and the targets of Trump's anger. He said, "It certainly feels like the kind of situation that could get worse before it gets better."

UK replies to Trump's Chagos Islands criticism

In another sign of tension between allies, the British government on Tuesday defended its decision to hand sovereignty of the Chagos Islands to Mauritius after Trump attacked the plan, which his administration previously supported.

Trump said that relinquishing the remote Indian Ocean archipelago, home to a strategically important American naval and bomber base, was an act of stupidity that shows why he needs to take over Greenland.

The United Kingdom signed a deal in May to give Mauritius sovereignty over the islands, though the UK will leave back the island of Diego Garcia, where the US base is located, for at least 99 years. (AP)

'Switzerland committed to rules-based global order, free trade'

DAVOS, Jan 20: Switzerland on Tuesday said it supports a rules-based international order, international law, human rights, and free trade and these values have always defined the country.

In the opening plenary address at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting here, Swiss President Guy Parmelin said Switzerland wishes to further diversify its international relations, particularly in the trade and scientific fields.

"Even in the current climate of protectionism, we believe in the success of free trade and want to expand our network of agreements in this area," he said.

To achieve this, we must be able to conduct negotiations on equal footing, negotiations that yield positive results for the benefit of all parties, he underlined.

"Such mutually advantageous agreements don't just appear out of thin air, but we have the capacity to build them step by step. Personal contacts and a willingness to engage in dialogue are essential for this. We possess these qualities," he said.

The president said the WEF has always contributed to this dialogue and thanked the Forum for offering the country, once again this year in Switzerland, this extraordinary international platform for exchange.

He said such a large turnout of global leaders in Davos takes on a special significance this year, which began tragically for Switzerland and thanked the countries concerned for the support and solidarity they showed us during the Crans-Montana tragedy. The year 2025 revealed a number of these challenges and experienced geopolitical, economic, and digital upheavals on a global scale, he said.

"The year 2026, barely begun, already hints at the upheavals to come, and the hotspots of crisis as well. The difficult situations in Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan have been compounded by those in Venezuela and Iran, to name just a few," he said.

"In terms of economic policy, protectionism has intensified globally. Furthermore, numerous unanswered questions concerning the role and control of artificial intelligence remain unresolved," he said. (PTI)

Trade and tariff wars have no winners: China at WEF

DAVOS, Jan 20: Calling for greater cooperation and dialogue in the global economy, China on Tuesday said trade and tariff wars have no winners.

In a special address here at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, China's Vice-Premier He Lifeng said, "China will open its door wider to the world."

He said that the country plans to expand its market, particularly in the services sector.

He called for increased cooperation and dialogue in the global economy.

"While economic globalisation is not perfect, countries cannot completely reject it and retreat to self-isolation," he said.

He also detailed economic progress in China, noting that the country has put domestic demand at the top of its economic agenda in 2026 in an effort to boost consumption while maintaining its production process. (PTI)

Australia's Parl passes gun laws, debates anti-hate speech bill after Sydney attack

MELBOURNE, Jan 20: Australia's Parliament on Tuesday passed new gun restrictions and began debating draft anti-hate speech laws proposed after two shooters killed 15 people at a Jewish festival in Sydney last month in an attack that authorities say was inspired by the Islamic State group.

The gun laws create new restrictions on gun ownership and create a government-funded buyback programme to compensate people forced to hand in their firearms.

Anti-hate speech laws would enable hate groups that don't fit Australia's definition of a terrorist organisation, such as Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir, to be outlawed. Hizb ut-Tahrir is already outlawed by some countries. The government had initially planned a single bill, but separated the issues into two bills introduced to the House of Representatives on Tuesday.

Both bills passed the House, and the firearms bill had been passed by the Senate by late Tuesday. The anti-hate speech bill is expected to pass into law by Wednesday.

Earlier Tuesday, Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke told Parliament that alleged gunman Sajid Akram, 50, and his 24-year-old son Naveed Akram wouldn't have been allowed to possess guns under the proposed laws.

The father, who was shot dead by police during the attack on Jewish worshippers during Hanukkah celebrations at Bondi Beach on December 14, legally owned the guns used.

His son, who was wounded, has been charged with

dozens of offenses, including 15 counts of murder and one of committing a terrorist act over the attack.

Burke said that the Indian-born father would have been barred from gun ownership under the proposed laws because he wasn't an Australian citizen.

The Australian-born son would also be banned, because he had come under surveillance from the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation, or ASIO, spy agency in 2019 over his association with suspected extremists.

"In responding to the antisemitic terror attack, we need to deal with the motivation and we need to deal with the method," Burke told Parliament.

"We are dealing with two people there who had horrific antisemitic bigotry in their minds and in their hearts. And they had weapons they should not have had," Burke added.

ASIO would also have a role under the proposed anti-hate speech laws in deciding which hate groups should be outlawed. Neo-Nazi group National Socialist Network has announced plans to disband rather than have its members targeted under the laws.

Parliament had been scheduled to resume for the year in February, but was brought back early to respond to Australia's worst mass shooting since 1996.

A lone shooter killed 35 people in Tasmania state that year, in a massacre that galvanised the nation into introducing tough gun laws that drastically reduced the number of rapid-fire weapons in public ownership. The government then bought back almost 7,00,000 guns. (AP)

UK approves 'mega' Chinese Embassy in London despite criticism of security risks

LONDON, Jan 20: Britain's government on Tuesday approved a huge new Chinese Embassy in central London despite heavy pressure from lawmakers over its potential security risks.

Local Government Secretary Steve Reed formally signed off on plans for the building near the Tower of London after a series of delays and legal challenges.

Critics have long expressed concerns that the proposed super-sized embassy, set to be the biggest Chinese Embassy in Europe, will be used as a base for espionage as well as pose a heightened threat of surveillance and intimidation of Chinese dissidents in exile.

But the government said it had worked "with policing, and other relevant partners, to ensure that the breadth of national security issues associated with this planning application have been considered and addressed".

Plans for the embassy have been plagued by objections and protests since 2018, when China's government bought the site at Royal Mint Court, near the Tower of London, for 225 million pounds (\$301 million.) Opponents say the huge site sits too close to underground fiber optic cables carrying sensitive financial information between London's two main financial districts.

British media have reported that the 20,000 square metre (215,278 square feet) complex would include 208 secret basement rooms close to the data cables. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government has repeatedly postponed its decision in recent months after multiple cases of alleged Chinese spying and political interference underlined alarms about the proposed embassy.

Dissidents have been among those who have protested the plans, saying a mega-embassy housing large numbers of officials would further China's repression of activists abroad.

Kemi Badenoch, the leader of the opposition Conservative Party, joined hundreds of protesters who chanted "no China mega embassy" at the site Sunday. Conservative foreign affairs spokeswoman Priti Patel said, "Keir Starmer has sold off our national security to the Chinese Communist Party with his shameful super embassy surrender." (AP)

Karachi shopping plaza fire death toll reaches 28, another 80 missing

KARACHI, Jan 20: At least 28 people have died in the fire at a shopping plaza in Pakistan's Karachi with another 80 missing as rescue operations continued to locate them in the rubble of the old building on Tuesday.

Police Surgeon Summaiya Syed confirmed on Tuesday that so far 28 bodies had been brought to the Jinnah and civil hospitals while another 20 were still under treatment but in stable condition.

"Since Saturday night when the fire broke out, 28 bodies have been brought to the hospitals," she said.

Syed said so far 18 bodies had been identified while DNA tests were also being carried out to confirm the identity of the others.

The fire broke out at a shop in the basement of the Gul Shopping Plaza, a wholesale and retail market, and quickly spread to the rest of the building.

Rescue 1122 Chief Operating Officer (COO) Abid Jalal said due to the intensity of the fire, which was only brought under control after nearly 34 hours, many portions of the dilapidated structure had collapsed.



"We have been given a list of some 80 people who are believed to be missing in the fire," he said.

He added that some of them could be on the list of dead sent to hospitals since Saturday.

"The rescue operations are progressing slowly because of the condition of the building and there were around 1200 shops on all floors," he said.

Relatives and families of the missing people have refused to leave the site of the building as

they wait anxiously for news while the authorities have closed the M A Jinnah Road for all traffic.

Business owners and traders observed a one day mourning on Monday in remembrance of those who perished in the fire.

Tanweer Pasha, a senior official of the Gul Plaza shop owners association, estimated that the fire has caused losses of at least 3 billion PKR. He said that the exact figure would only be known once the rescue operations are completed. (PTI)

Global players seeing GIFT City as pathway to India, base for Asia-Pacific: MD Sanjay Kaul

DAVOS, Jan 20: Showcasing India's own international financial services centre, GIFT City, before the world, its chief, Sanjay Kaul, has said global players are seeing it as a pathway to access Indian markets and as a base for the Asia-Pacific.

Kaul, who has more than 40 bilateral meetings and several round-table meetings lined up during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting here, said the world needs to know that there is a smart city and an international financial services centre in our part of the world.

Speaking to PTI, GIFT City's MD and group CEO said the Indian economy is growing in leaps and bounds, and therefore, it is also very important for the country to be an economic powerhouse for

global financial transactions. "GIFT City is an answer to that with strong macro and microeconomic stability and stable governance," he said.

"We need a strong financial system where India talks to the world and the world talks to India. So GIFT City is the answer to that," he added.

Kaul said that in a short time, he is seeing immense interest from global players who would want to set up operations in GIFT City for various reasons.

"One is India has got a very big market, a very strong economy which is growing leaps and bounds. So naturally, they would want to be here, and they see GIFT City as an opportunity or a path to enter India for financial transac-



tions. That's how we are positioning, and that is what we are here for," he said.

"We are seeing here that global

reach out to our part of the world, or say the Asia Pacific markets. That is number two.

"And of course in the long run, we become a centre where we have global transactions also happening within India's jurisdiction but with regulations that are at par with other financial services centers of the world," he said.

Asked about the top reasons he would give global players to come to GIFT City, he said everyone requires stability, both in terms of political governance and policies, and that India offers it.

"Number two, the economic growth of India is something that attracts everyone. And no one wants to be left out of India's growth story. So that is what we are telling them," he said. (PTI)

Karnataka strong pillar of India growth story: Min Patil

DAVOS, Jan 20: Asserting that Karnataka is a strong pillar of India's economic growth story, the state's senior minister MB Patil said India's strength lies in its federal structure, and the southern state is a prime example of the country's cooperative federalism.

Speaking after inaugurating the India pavilion here, along with union ministers and leaders from other states, the minister said he is delighted to see the scale of Indian presence in Davos with confidence and unity.

"This is a clear message to the world that India is not just participating in the global growth, but it is helping shape it, he said.

"Our message is very clear: a stronger Karnataka and a stronger India," he said.

Today's India truly reflects the story of a nation on the move, aspirational, ambitious, and globally engaged, Patil said.

"This momentum is the result of consistent efforts over many years, our reforms of resilience and of collaboration. I'd like to invite the attention of everyone here."

The great Indian growth story journey started with PV Narasimha Rao and was followed by Manmohan Singh, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and now Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he said.

Patil said he would like to acknowledge that this is a collective success where India's strength lies in the federal structure, where states and the Centre work together.

He said Karnataka is the IT capital of the country, but it doesn't end up over there.

"We are also the aerospace and defence capital, with 65 per cent of the contribution of the country coming from Karnataka, and we are the machine tools capital and startup capital as well," he said.

"What makes Karnataka special is not just our policies, but our people, institutions and culture of innovation too. We believe in partnerships between the centre and the state, between government and the industry, and between India and the world," he noted. (PTI)

State police can probe corruption case under PC Act against central govt employees: SC

Apex court's order came while upholding a Rajasthan High Court order that had refused to quash a corruption case against a central government employee



NEW DELHI, Jan 20: The Supreme Court has ruled that state police authorities can investigate and file a chargesheet against central government employees when it comes to the offences of bribery and corruption under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The court has also made it clear that no prior permission from the CBI is required before registering a case against a central government employee by the state police.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and Satish Chandra Sharma said on Monday that offences

under the PC Act can be investigated by a state agency or a central agency or any police agency, as can be seen from section 17 of the Act, with the qualification that the police officer shall be of a particular rank.

"Section 17 does not exclude or prevent the state police or a special agency of the state from registering a crime or investigating cases relating to bribery, corruption and misconduct against central government employees.

"It is for convenience and to avoid duplication of work that the

Central Bureau of Investigation -- a specialised investigating agency under the Special Police Establishment -- is entrusted with the task of investigation of the cases of corruption and bribery against the employees of the central government and its undertakings and the Anti-Corruption Bureau -- a specialised investigating agency of the state -- is entrusted with the task of investigation of the cases of corruption and bribery against the employees of the state government and its undertakings," the bench said.

The offences under the PC Act are also cognisable and can, therefore, be investigated by the state police, it added.

The apex court's order came while upholding a Rajasthan High Court order that had refused to quash a corruption case against a central government employee.

The high court had ruled that the Rajasthan ACB had jurisdiction to register the criminal case under provisions of the PC Act, despite the fact that the accused was a central government employee.

"The high court has taken the correct view while saying that it is incorrect to say that it is only the CBI who could have instituted the prosecution," the top court said. (PTI)

New BJP chief Nitin Nabin exhorts youth to enter politics, make active contributions

'There is a need to defeat such forces that try to obstruct our traditions'



NEW DELHI, Jan 20: Newly elected BJP president Nitin Nabin on Tuesday exhorted people, especially youth, to enter politics to fulfil Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve of making India developed and assured party workers of due recognition of their work, saying the BJP's "watchtower" is strong enough to take note of everyone's efforts.

Addressing an event at the BJP headquarters after announcement of his name as the party's 12th national president here, Nabin also asked the party leaders and workers to make an all-out effort to ensure the BJP's success in the upcoming assembly polls in five states, including West Bengal, to protect the "Sanatan traditions and faith" and the country from demographic changes.

"On August 15, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called upon the country's youth to enter public life. I want to ask the country's youth that keeping distance from politics is not the solution but making active contributions," he said.

Nabin said there is a need for the youth to come forward and participate in "positive politics" to fulfil Prime Minister Modi's resolve of making India a developed country.

"At the same time, I would also like to point out to the youths that there is no shortcut in politics. Politics is not a 100-metre race but a marathon where one's stamina and not speed is tested. Come forward and let's work on this political pitch keeping our roots strong," he added.

Nabin, 45, was declared the BJP national president on Tuesday at the party headquarters following the conclusion of the Sangathan Parv, which saw elections to various party posts from the booth to the national level. He is a five-time

MLA from Bihar and was the minister for law and justice, urban development and housing in the state government before being appointed working president of the BJP on December 14.

The BJP chief asked the party workers to continue working at the booth and mandal levels with complete dedication and commitment. "The BJP's watchtower is strong enough to keep a close watch on every minute detail and take you one day to the position you deserve," he added.

The new BJP president said that

discussions are happening on "demographic changes" in states ahead of the upcoming polls in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry.

"We have seen how things have changed there due to demographic changes which is a challenge before us. But I am confident that with all strength, the BJP workers will provide a strong leadership in these five states with their struggle and hard work," he added.

Nabin also took on the DMK, Congress and other opposition parties in the INDIA bloc, while referring to the recent Karthigai Deepam row in Tamil Nadu.

"Recently, we saw how attempts were made by the opposition parties to stop Karthigai Deepam (lighting of the traditional lamp in Tamil Nadu) and impeach the judge (of Madurai High Court). The opposition parties also have a problem when we talk about Somnath and celebrating Sambhram Parva.

"There is a need to defeat such forces that try to obstruct our traditions, deny the existence of Ram Setu and oppose Karthigai Deepam. We have to make efforts to ensure that these kinds of forces do not find any place in Indian politics," he said. (PTI)

MP govt sets up panel to probe Indore water contamination

BHOPAL, Jan 20: The Madhya Pradesh government on Tuesday constituted a state-level committee to investigate the Indore water contamination incident and submit its findings and recommendations, an official said. The committee, led by the Additional Chief Secretary of the General Administration Department, Sanjay Kumar Shukla, will examine the actual causes and key facts of the water contamination in Indore's Bhagirathpura area and analyse administrative, technical, and management deficiencies.

It will determine accountability of the officers/employees responsible for the incident, make necessary recommendations to prevent such recurrence in the future, and include other matters deemed necessary or incidental to the matter under investigation, the official said.

The committee will obtain necessary records, reports, and information from the departments concerned and, if necessary, conduct on-site inspections. It will submit the investigation report to the state government within one month, the official said.

Besides Shukla, the other members of the committee include Principal Secretary, Public Health Engineering, P Narhari, and Commissioner, Directorate of Urban Administration and Development, Sanket Bhodave. Indore Divisional Commissioner Sudam Khade has been designated as member-secretary, the official said.

The state government, in its status report before the Madhya Pradesh High Court, has pegged the water contamination tragedy death toll at seven, including a five-month-old infant.

However, an audit report prepared by a committee of the government-run Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Medical College indicated that the deaths of 15 persons in Bhagirathpura could be linked to the outbreak in some manner.

Residents of Bhagirathpura claimed that 24 persons have died so far of a vomiting and diarrhoea outbreak in the locality last month.

The administration has paid compensation of Rs 2 lakh each to the families of 21 persons who died after the outbreak.

Officials have claimed that while some deaths had occurred due to other illnesses and causes, authorities provided financial assistance to all bereaved families on humanitarian grounds. (PTI)

Noida techie death: Developer accused of negligence arrested

NOIDA, Jan 20: Police on Tuesday arrested the director of a real estate group in connection with the death of a 27-year-old software engineer, whose car had plunged into a water-filled pit at a construction site in Noida's Sector 150, officials said.

"Abhay Kumar, director of MZ Witzown Planners and one of the accused in the case, has been arrested from Sector 150," Additional Commissioner of Police (Greater Noida) Hemant Upadhyay said.

Yuvraj Mehta was killed in the early hours of Saturday after his car skidded in dense fog, broke a drain boundary and fell into a deep, water-logged pit, dug for the basement of an under-construction commercial complex near a drain.

The police had filed an FIR against two real estate developers -- MZ Witzown Planners and Lotus Greens -- on a complaint by the victim's father, Raj Kumar Mehta, who alleged negligence by local authorities and sought accountability.

While Kumar of Witzown Planners has been arrested, there was no official update as of Tuesday afternoon from the police on action against the other accused firm.

The arrest came on a day a Special Investigation Team (SIT) headed by the Additional Director General

(ADG), Meerut Zone, Bhanu Bhaskar visited the accident site to examine the circumstances leading to the incident.

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had on Monday evening ordered the constitution of the three-member SIT to probe the case, amid public outrage and allegations of negligence by officials and developers.

The state government also removed senior IAS officer Lokesh M as the Noida Authority CEO on Monday, putting him on "waitlist".

The FIR has been lodged under Sections 105 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder), 106 (causing death by negligence) and 125 (act endangering life or personal safety of others) and other relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the police said. Investigations are continuing, the police added.

The incident has sparked allegations of negligence, inadequate safety arrangements and delays in rescue efforts, with the victim's father saying he had reached the spot along with police and other rescue personnel were also there but could not save him. "If expert divers could have gone in, then maybe my son would have been saved. Yuvraj kept crying for help as the car drowned," he told reporters. (PTI)

TN Assembly: Guv skips delivering customary address, CM calls 'walkout' regrettable

CHENNAI, Jan 20: Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi on Tuesday walked out of the state Assembly without delivering his customary address to the House in its maiden session of the year, alleging among others, "inaccuracies" in the DMK government prepared text. This was the fourth such walkout in a row by Ravi ever since he assumed office in 2021.

After the Governor left the House, Chief Minister M K Stalin slammed the Governor for "walking out yet again in violation of rules, traditions and ethos," and it was unbecoming of the high office Ravi holds. It was an insult to the House and its dignity, he said.

The CM asserted that his party would make efforts to delete from the Constitution, by way of an amendment, the provisions mandating governor's address at the start of the year.

The chief minister moved a resolution which said the House does not accept the Governor's behaviour of not reading out the customary address. Also, it said that only the government prepared text read out by Speaker M Appavu in Tamil would go on record.

After the House adopted the resolution, Stalin thanked the MLAs for it and said it is not good that the Governor refuses every year to read out the government prepared speech. Governors posing trouble happens in several states and it does not happen only in Tamil Nadu.

At the beginning of the year, Governor reading out the government's policy statement is a practice being followed. When a governor repeatedly violates such a practice, a question naturally arises "as to why such a rule/practice should exist."

Hence, the chief minister said his party, the DMK would make efforts in the Parliament with the support of like-minded parties to drop provisions mandating governor's address at the start of the year from the Constitution by way of an amendment.

The CM said that according to Article 176 of the Constitution the customary address is prepared by the state government and it should be fully read out by the governor.

"There is no scope for the Governor to express his personal opinion on the address or omit content from the state government prepared address," he told the House.

It was regrettable that the Governor has repeated his behaviour of walking out of the House, which reflected the sentiments of the 8.5 crore Tamil people.

"A Governor must be concerned about the state's welfare, interested in the people's development, and must speak the truth. He must cooperate with the government which has come to power with massive public support and a majority, on its decisions," the CM said.

"The Constitution expects the same from the person who holds that office. However, he acts against it and spreads slander by speaking politics in public and tries

to scuttle the state administration. He is making a similar attempt here (in the Assembly and this) is unacceptable."

When Ravi left the House, MLAs belonging to the ruling party and its allies stood up and raised their voice and nothing could be comprehended due to the din.

The CM said that on April 10, 2023, he had recalled DMK founder CN Annadurai's statement that "neither does a goat require a beard, nor does a state require a governor," and late DMK patriarch endorsing it. However, governors have always been shown due respect.

In 2022, when Ravi made his maiden address to the House, the main opposition AIADMK had walked out.

The next year, Ravi walked out of the House abruptly while CM Stalin pointed to deviation from the government prepared text as the Governor avoided references like the Dravidian model of governance. The chief minister piloted a resolution to have on House record only the pre-approved, state prepared text and it was adopted.

In 2024, Ravi declined to read out the customary inaugural address of the House, prepared by the DMK government, and also walked out of the Assembly. The Lok Bhavan later said the address had numerous passages with misleading claims far from truth and and "reading them would have amounted to the Governor's address becoming a constitutional travesty."

The Governor's office had also said Speaker M Appavu had launched a tirade against Ravi and called him a "follower of Nathuram Godse and more."

In 2025, Ravi walked out of the House without reading the address and the Lok Bhavan had said: "When the national anthem was not sung or played at the commencement of the Governor's address, the Governor respectfully reminded the House of its Constitutional duty and fervently appealed to the Chief Minister and Speaker for singing or playing the national anthem."

The Bhavan had said the request was not complied with. Not singing or playing the national anthem at the beginning of the Governor's address was a blatant disrespect to the Constitution and the national anthem. "In deep anguish, Governor left the House," the Governor's office had said.

Ravi, who has locked horns with the DMK regime over several issues, assumed office as the 26th Governor of Tamil Nadu on September 18, 2021, and the DMK assumed power that year after being in opposition for a decade (2011-21).

According to officials, traditionally, in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, the "Tamil Thai Valthu", the invocation to Mother Tamil is sung at the commencement; following which the Governor would read out the address and the national anthem is played at the end. (PTI)

EC appoints 12 senior central officers as special roll observers for SIR in West Bengal

KOLKATA, Jan 20: The Election Commission appointed 12 senior central officers as Special Roll Observers (SROs) to oversee the SIR of electoral rolls in West Bengal, an official said on Tuesday.

The observers will ensure that the exercise is conducted strictly in accordance with the EC's directions, he said.

Ministry of Home Affairs Joint Secretary Gaya Prasad has been appointed the SRO of Murshidabad district, while Devesh Deval, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Food

Processing Industries, has been assigned Paschim Medinipur.

Nishtha Upadhyay, Additional CEO of the Government e-Marketplace, will initially be stationed at the office of the Chief Electoral Officer in Kolkata, with districts to be allotted later. Venkateswamy S, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, has been appointed SRO for Birbhum, and V Kiran Gopal, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, for Uttar Dinajpur.

Ministry of Power Joint Secre-

tary Shashank Misra has been assigned the Paschim Bardhaman district. Ravi Shankar, Joint Secretary in the Department of Food and Public Distribution, and Prasana R, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, have been appointed as SROs for the North 24 Parganas district.

National Medical Commission Secretary Raghav Langer has been assigned to the Dakshin Dinajpur district. P Bala Kiran, Joint Secretary in the Department of Personnel and Training, has been assigned to

Nadia district.

MyGov CEO Nand Kumarum was named SRO for Hooghly, and Harsh Mangla, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, was assigned Purba Medinipur district.

EC had earlier appointed observers at various levels to oversee the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. These observers will monitor field-level implementation of the exercise to ensure accuracy, transparency and compliance with EC's directions. (PTI)

TN asks Centre to scrap VB-G RAM G, restore MGNREGA to reduce financial burden

CHENNAI, Jan 20: The Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday urged the Centre to withdraw the recently passed VB-G RAM G act and restore UPA-era rural employment scheme, MGNREGA, thereby easing the state's financial burden.

The discontinuation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has not only hindered development in rural areas but also increased the financial strain on the state government, it said.

"Due to the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) VB-G RAM G, the financial burden on Tamil Nadu will further increase by approximately Rs 5,000 crore per annum," Tamil Nadu Assembly Speaker M Appavu said while reading out Governor's address to the Assembly. The governor had walked out of the state Assembly without delivering his customary address during the maiden session of the year, citing "inaccuracies" in the text pre-

pared by the DMK government.

Reading the Tamil version of the governor's address, Appavu said the new scheme VB-G RAM G undermined the fundamental objective of the MGNREGA, a programme designed to ensure wage employment for crores of poor and underprivileged people in rural areas, particularly women and Adi Dravid communities.

He noted that through MGNREGS, which provides social security to the rural poor, numerous projects such as infrastructure development, natural resource conservation, greening and watershed management have been successfully implemented in rural areas.

Tamil Nadu has consistently received several national awards for the successful implementation of this scheme.

"Considering that the state government is already facing significant challenges in implementing its own schemes due to the increased state share under various Centrally Sponsored Schemes, the introduc-

tion of this new scheme must be viewed as part of the Centre's adverse intent," he said.

He added that the new scheme should be withdrawn and the Central government should restore and allocate additional financial resources to MGNREGA.

On language policy, the state government reaffirmed that the Tamil Nadu State Education Policy continues to follow the two-language formula of Tamil and English, a policy maintained since 1968.

"We have been safeguarding the two-language education policy formulated by former Chief Minister C N Annadurai as dear as our own eyes. When it comes to protecting the Tamil language, which is inseparable from our life and emotions, there can be no room for compromise," he said.

The government added that under no circumstances will it, under the leadership of Chief Minister M K Stalin, accept any alteration to this policy. (PTI)

From begging to marching band: Sambhal children to march at Lucknow R-Day parade

SAMBHAL (UP), Jan 20: As many as 30 children from Sambhal district, many of whom once survived by begging on the streets, will participate in the Republic Day parade in Lucknow on January 26, marking a rare journey from deprivation to national recognition.

The children will take part in the marching band contingent during the parade and perform before Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, officials said on Tuesday, adding that the initiative is the result of a joint effort by the Sambhal district administration and the non-governmental organisation Umeed.

Umeed programme head Raina Sharma told PTI that a district-wide survey conducted on the directions of District Magistrate Rajendra Pensiya identified 268 children engaged in begging. Of them, 30 children who stopped begging and had completed basic documentation, including Aadhaar cards, were en-



rolled in government schools and selected for the parade.

"These children are between seven and 14 years of age. They have been trained at the Bahjo police lines, and all band instruments were provided by the district administration," she said, adding that

efforts were underway to complete documentation for the remaining children and bring them into the formal education system.

Sharma said the selected children would represent Sambhal in the Lucknow parade and were likely to be considered for participation in

the Republic Day parade in New Delhi next year.

District Magistrate Rajendra Pensiya shared that the initiative, titled "Bheekh Se Seekh", aimed at rehabilitating families dependent on begging.

"With the support of Umeed and Venus Sugar Mill, around 650 families were identified and relocated. Children are being enrolled in schools, while adult members are being linked with skill-based and other employment," he said.

Officials noted that some children from these families were chosen for parade training, which began in Sambhal and is currently ongoing in Lucknow.

The administration mentioned that the initiative had not only helped rehabilitate vulnerable families but also opened new opportunities for children who will now participate in one of the country's most prominent national ceremonies. (PTI)

'Weakening financial models, corporate ownership, political interference and erosion of editorial independence'

Pisharoty on contemporary challenges of journalism

KOHIMA, Jan 20: President of Press Club of India (PCI), Sangeeta Baroah Pisharoty, while drawing from her long experience in journalism, said the profession has never been easy, but the challenges today are far more complex due to weakening financial models, corporate ownership, political interference and erosion of editorial independence.

She warned that the line between journalism and public relations has increasingly blurred, weakening public trust and accountability.

The PCI president was speaking at the Kohima Press Club (KPC)'s 25th anniversary on Tuesday with the theme 'traversing 25 years of storytelling: Inspiring the future' at the Capital Convention Center in Kohima.

Sangeeta Baroah Pisharoty, while delivering the keynote address in the event, lauded the club for marking its 25 years through meaningful engagement with journalists from neighbouring states, describing it as a timely and reflective exercise for the profession. She congratulated KPC members for organising the event seamlessly, noting that even with a small membership base, the club had demonstrated exceptional dedication and professionalism.

She expressed concern over recent laws and regulations, including the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, which she said have diluted journalistic exemptions and weakened the Right to Information (RTI) framework, thereby restricting access to information vital for public interest reporting.

Highlighting technology as both an opportunity and a threat, she said while digital platforms have expanded reach and speed, they have also disrupted jobs and created new vulnerabilities for journalists, especially those working in smaller towns who face legal pressure and institutional insecurity. Calling for public participation in sustaining credible journalism, Pisharoty urged citizens to subscribe to and financially support independent media platforms. "Even a small monthly contribution can strengthen democracy and ensure journalism remains accountable only to the people," she added.

As the president of the Press Club of India, she said her priorities include protecting journalists facing legal challenges, establishing legal support cells, organising training workshops on technology and digital security, and building a federation of elected

press clubs across the country.

She invited the Kohima Press Club to join the proposed national federation to strengthen collective advocacy for press freedom.

Pisharoty also highlighted the growing leadership of women in journalism in the Northeast, noting that the region has long broken gender barriers in newsrooms and press clubs.

She acknowledged senior journalists such as Monalisa Changkija for their pioneering role and said the Northeast continues to set examples in inclusive media leadership.

She concluded by reiterating that only independent, credible journalism can safeguard democratic values and called on journalists and citizens alike to work together to protect press freedom.

Meanwhile, the inaugural event was followed by the Northeast Media Conclave themed "Reimagining Truth: Northeast Journalism for a Changing World" which brought together leading journalists and media professionals from across the region to deliberate on the evolving challenges facing journalism in the digital age.

The first session focused on "Evolving Nature of Media: Ethics under Pressure and

Strengthening Credibility in the Age of Misinformation".

Moderated by Medolenuo Ambrocia Louci of the Kohima Press Club, the session featured speakers Monalisa Changkija (Nagaland), Pradip Phanjoubam (Manipur), Geetarth Pathak (Indian Journalists Union), Karma Paljor (Sikkim), and Raymond Kharmujai (Meghalaya), who highlighted the need for ethical journalism and public trust amid the rise of misinformation.

The second session explored "Journalism as Peace Work: Navigating Divides, Building Bridges and Strengthening the Media Ecosystem in the Northeast", Moderated by Dhiren A Sadokpam (Manipur), the panel included Vanlalrema Vantawl (Mizoram), Utpal Parashar (Assam), Ranju Dodum (Arunachal Pradesh), and Debraj Deb (Tripura), who emphasized the role of media in fostering peace, dialogue, and regional cohesion.

The conclave served as a platform for cross border collaboration among journalists of the Northeast, reaffirming the media's responsibility in promoting truth, accountability, and social harmony in a rapidly changing information landscape. (NNN)

NSCN (IM) accuses Indian leaders of dishonouring Framework Agreement

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Jan 20: The NSCN (IM) on Tuesday alleged that the apparent lack of political will and insincerity on the part of the Indian leaders and their constant attempt to reduce the Indo-Naga political issue to a mere domestic problem of India has been posing a serious threat in its earnest quest for an honourable and acceptable solution based on the mutually agreed Framework Agreement.

Stating that the Indian and Naga leaders have been engaging in political dialogue as two entities for nearly the last three decades, the NSCN (IM), in a release, said labelling such misnomers as insurgents, rebels, terrorists and secessionists does not bring us any closer to the core issue.

"It only goes to indicate the immaturity and double-standard nature of Indian leaders," it alleged.

Reiterating that "ours is a case of invasion and forced occupation of Nagalim by India and Myanmar", the NSCN said as such the question of secession from them does not arise when there was no consensual union.

It said the Nagas have rejected the past bogus accords and false peace imposed on them, stressing that the Government of India should know that repeating the past mistakes will be too costly.

GOVT OF ASSAM

DIRECTORATE-CUM-ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER

PWD(R&B), HILLS, ASSAM, DIPHU.

No.ACEH/CS/AAP/75/2025-26/9,

Dated. 20/01/2026.

PRESS NOTICE (RE-TENDER)

Director-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer, P.W.D.(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu, on behalf of Governor of Assam invites Item Rates bids from registered contractors of Class-I (A&B) category for the work "Construction of ICBP Road from Diphu Matipung via Mensing Ronghang to Hemari Bey under AAP (KAAC) for the year 2025-26" Details may be seen at e-procurement portal website www.assamtenders.gov.in and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 21/01/2026 to 30/01/2026. The Bidders must be registered with the E-Tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam.

Sd/-

Director-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer,
P.W.D.(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu.

Memo No.ACEH/CS/AAP/75/2025-26/9-(A),

Dated.20/01/2026.

GOVT OF ASSAM

DIRECTORATE-CUM-ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER

PWD(R&B), HILLS, ASSAM, DIPHU.

No.ACEH/CS/AAP/75/2025-26/8,

Date.20.01.2026.

Cancellation Notice

It is for information to all concerned that the Bid for "Construction of ICBP Road from Diphu Matipung via Mensing Ronghang to Hemari Bey under AAP (KAAC) for the year 2025-26" under Diphu Road Division, published vide Press Notice Inviting No. ACEH/CS/AAP/75/2025-26/6, Dated.26/12/2025 is hereby cancelled due to non received of required no of bid and Re-tender notice will be floated for the same shortly.

Sd/-

Director-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer,
P.W.D.(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu.

Memo No ACEH/CS/AAP/75/2025-26/8-(A),

Date 20/01/2026.

OFFICE OF THE

DISTRICT PRIMARY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL:: DIPHU

No. KAAC/PED/SIU-198/208/Pt-File/Appt/2025-26/1668

Dated 20/01/2026

ADDENDUM

In reference to this office letter No.KAAC/PED/SIU-198/208/Pt-File/Appt/2025-26/1647 Dated 16/01/2026, published in the local dailies on 17th and 18th January, 2026 the following eligible candidates applied for the post of Assistant Teacher of Lower Primary Schools were added in the list.

Sl. No.	Name of Candidates	TET ROLL NO.	Group	Date
1102	CLIMBERSON KRO	0503174 6th SCHEDULE TET	A	24-01-2026
1103	SERLIN TOKBIPI	0501403 6th SCHEDULE TET	A	24-01-2026
1104	RUPMILY TISSOPI	0501302 6th SCHEDULE TET	B	24-01-2026
1105	HUNMILI RONGHANGPI	0502667 6th SCHEDULE TET	B	24-01-2026
1106	BANTI CHOWDHURY	0501704 6th SCHEDULE TET	C	24-01-2026
1107	ALISHA TERANGPI	0502547 6th SCHEDULE TET	C	24-01-2026
1108	AMIT SINGH	06000851 6th SCHEDULE TET	D	24-01-2026
1109	MANOJ CHAUHAN	0601181 6th SCHEDULE TET	D	24-01-2026
1110	SANGITA CHAUHAN	220211706050174 CTET	E	24-01-2026
1111	BHARGABI BORUAH	0500143 6th SCHEDULE TET	E	24-01-2026
1112	RAHUL CHAUHAN	107004413 CTET	F	24-01-2026
1113	RAJESH KRO	0601342 6th SCHEDULE TET	F	24-01-2026
1114	RONGMILI BEYPI	0501235 6th SCHEDULE TET	G	24-01-2026
1115	SURESH KRO	0601503 6th SCHEDULE TET	G	24-01-2026
1116	MOLINA TISSOPI	0500790 6th SCHEDULE TET	H	24-01-2026
1117	HEMOLOTA PHANGCHOPPI	0502659 6th SCHEDULE TET	H	24-01-2026
1118	SUMAN CHANDRA DAS	0502465 6th SCHEDULE TET	I	24-01-2026
1119	GANESH SUNAR	0601048 6th SCHEDULE TET	I	24-01-2026

Therefore, the above eligible candidates are requested to appear for physical verification of original documents etc. as per the date mentioned above. Time and venue will be same as notified earlier.

[This addendum is issued only to include the above eligible candidates which are left out from the earlier list due to clerical error and does not imply any change in the contents, entries, status, applicability or validity.]

Sd/-

District Primary Education Officer
Primary Education Department
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council
DIPHU

Memo No. KAAC/PED/SIU-198/208/Pt-File/Appt/2025-26/1668 (A)

Dated 20/01/2026

18 Bangladeshi nationals held

SHILLONG, Jan 20: As many as 18 Bangladeshi nationals, five drivers and two Indian touts were arrested in West Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya on Tuesday, according to police.

West Jaintia Hills district police chief, Jagpal Singh Dhanao said the West Jaintia Hills police special team, assisted by the headman and Village Defence Party (VDP) of Demthring village, conducted a successful operation in the early hours of January 20, apprehending four Bangladeshi nationals and one vehicle driven by Vishal Dkhar of Dawki at around 3 am.

The vehicle was chased from Lad Demthring and intercepted near Sanmala Guest House, Amlarem, the police officer stated.

During the operation, two Indian touts, Meban Dkhar and Melari Rasmus, were also detained from Lad Demthring along with their vehicle, he stated.

Further investigation revealed that three additional vehicles carrying Bangladeshi nationals were en route from Jowai to Dawki, he added.

Acting on this information, police set up a naka checking point at Amlarem market, and intercepted three vehicles driven by Blessing Pamthied of Jarain village, Twel Rongngi of Shkentalang village and Rimi Lyngdoh of Shkentalang village.

These vehicles were found ferrying 14 Bangladeshi nationals, the police officer further disclosed.

"As a result of the operation, 18

Bangladeshi nationals, two Indian touts and five drivers were apprehended and five vehicles were seized," Dhanao said, adding that a case has been registered under the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, and all individuals involved have been taken into custody for further legal action.

The police further reiterated their commitment to safeguarding the border, urging all headmen and VDPs to assist in preventing crime and protecting communities.

"We earnestly request all headmen and VDPs across the district to come forward and actively assist the police in preventing crime and safeguarding our communities," he stated. (NNN)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

POLITICAL(A) DEPARTMENT::DISPUR

2nd Floor, I Block, Assam Secretariat, Dispur, Guwahati-6

Telefax No.0361-2261421:: e-Mail: home.assam@gov.in

NOTIFICATION

Dated Dispur the 20th January, 2026

No eCF 551356/100: Whereas, the Government of Assam through the District Magistrate of Kokrajhar District received report regarding serious Law & Order situation that has arisen in the District on 19.01.2026 during the night, when one Scorpio vehicle with 3 Bodo individuals hit 2 Adivasi persons at Mansingh Road under Karigaon outpost of Kokrajhar PS. The Bodo individuals were beaten by neighbouring Adivasi villagers and the Scorpio was torched

Whereas this incident has flared up involving both the Bodo and Adivasi communities blocking the National Highway adjacent to Karigaon outpost, burning tyres and few houses and setting fire to an Office building and also attacking the Karigaon outpost

Whereas Rapid Action Force is being deployed to contain the situation and prevent further escalation of Law & Order.

Whereas, there is serious apprehension of a breach of public peace and tranquillity in the district of Kokrajhar, and

Whereas, the Government of Assam is apprehending that social media and internet may be used to further spread inflammatory messages, rumours etc. that may lead to further aggravation of the situation,

Therefore in the interest of maintaining greater public peace and tranquillity and to prevent any deterioration of the present situation, I, Sri Ajay Tewari, IAS, Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, Home & Political Department, hereby promulgate this Notification under the provision of Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 read with the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017 to prohibit the Internet/Mobile Data Service of all Mobile Service Providers in the district of Kokrajhar with immediate effect and until further orders.

It is however clarified that the voice calls and the broadband connectivity based on fixed telephone lines shall remain functional during this period.

Any violation of the promulgation will be punishable under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and also under the relevant provision of the Indian Telegraph Act. 1885.

BY ORDER AND IN THE NAME OF THE GOVERNOR OF ASSAM

Sd/-

Additional Chief Secretary to the Govt of Assam,
Home & Political Department.

Memo eCF No. 551356/100-A

Dated Dispur the 20th January, 2026

Season two of hit Netflix series 'Kohrra' to debut on February 11

Streaming service Netflix on Tuesday announced that its acclaimed police procedural series "Kohrra" will return for a second season on February 11. After a critically acclaimed first season that was widely praised for its nuanced character-driven storytelling, the new instalment promises a fresh investigation set once again against Punjab's bleak, wintry landscape, where silences often reveal more than confessions.

Actor Barun Sobti will return as assistant Sub-Inspector Amarpal

Garundi with Mona Singh joining the franchise in a key new role, a press release said.

Season two will see Garundi leaving Jagrana behind and taking charge at the Dalerpura Police Station, where he reports to a new commanding officer, Dhanwant Kaur, played by Singh.

"Different as they may seem, both share the same passion to throw

Created and written by Gunjit Chopra, Diggi Sisodia and Sudip Sharma, "Kohrra" is produced by A Film Squad Production in association with Act Three.

The second season marks a creative evolution for the show, with Sharma, also known for his work with Prime Video show "Paatal Lok", stepping into the director's role alongside Faisal Rahman.



scape, where silences often reveal more than confessions.

Actor Barun Sobti will return as assistant Sub-Inspector Amarpal

themselves into a case- even as the walls they've built to escape their pasts crumble right before their eyes," read the official logline.

"It's quite exciting to be back. Season one allowed us to explore quieter tensions between people, between past and present. This season



as well, we've tried to bring forth as authentic a portrayal of Punjab as possible, with the characters rooted in a universal reality we've seen play out across the country.

"The show's an emotional roller-coaster. Barun and Mona have done a fantastic job, and I can't wait for people to see it for themselves," Sharma said.

Tanya Bami, series head, Netflix India, described Kohrra as a "cult classic" that has earned awards and critical acclaim for its understated storytelling.

"What makes it unique is its honest simplicity, the unassuming backgrounds that expose deep layers of complexity as the fog lifts episode on episode. Set in a new city against the backdrop of a new crime and new partnership, season two is even more riveting.

"I completely credit the expert craftsmanship of Sudip Sharma, who is not only the creator & showrunner, but is also making his directorial debut with season two. For all crime fans, this is an unmissable crime drama thriller," she added.

Sharma has also produced "Kohrra" season two alongside Saurabh Malhotra, Manuj Mitra and Tina Tharwani. (PTI)

AJAY DEVGN ANNOUNCES AI-POWERED FILM 'BAL TANHAJI' FROM LENS VAULT STUDIOS



Bollywood actor Ajay Devgn and producer Danish Devgn on Monday announced the upcoming AI-powered film "Bal Tanhaji" from their next-generation entertainment studio Lens Vault Studios (LVS).

Rooted in the legacy of the blockbuster "Tanhaji: The Unsung Warrior", which released in 2020, "Bal Tanhaji" pushes the universe into unexplored narrative terrain, reimagining the franchise for a generation that engages with stories far beyond theatrical screens.

The project reflects Lens Vault Studios' core ambition: to create enduring story worlds that live across platforms, formats, and technologies, according to a press release.

Ajay said the film represents the studio's beginning into future-ready content creation. "Lens Vault Studios was created to move beyond conventional boundaries of storytelling. Our focus is on discovering formats and media that are still largely untapped, while applying the discipline and scale of mainstream cinema. 'Bal Tanhaji' represents the beginning of this journey into future-ready content creation," he said in a statement.

"With 'Bal Tanhaji', we are redefining how legacy narratives can evolve through technology. Generative AI allows us to expand story universes in ways that were previously impossible, making them more immersive, scalable, and relevant for new-age audiences. This is the foundation on which Lens Vault Studios is being built," Danish, founder and CEO of Lens Vault Studios, added. (PTI)

Filmmaker Atlee, wife Priya Mohan expecting second child

Filmmaker Atlee and his wife Priya Mohan on Tuesday that they are expecting their second child together.

The "Jawan" director and Mohan, also a film producer, shared the news on their respective social media accounts.

"Our home is about to get even cozier with the addition of our newest member!

Yes! We are pregnant again. Need all your blessings, love and prayers," they wrote on Instagram.

Atlee and Mohan got married in 2014 and the two welcomed their first child, son Meer, in January 2023.

Atlee, whose real name is Arun Kumar, is known for directing blockbuster movies "Raja Rani", "Theri", "Mersal" and "Bigil". His last venture was "Jawan", featuring superstar Shah Rukh Khan. He is currently working on an untitled movie, starring Telugu superstar Allu Arjun and actor Deepika Padukone. (PTI)



Turn Monday Blues into Movie Magic

As the spirit for nationalism comes near, it is time to brighten your screens with stories that shine with emotion, courage, and freedom. It's the perfect time to unwind with a meaningful binge-watch in addition to flag hoisting, family dinners, and a well-earned day off.

With Airtel IPTV, you can enjoy these cinematic experiences on the big screen from the comfort of your home. Bringing together 29+ top streaming apps, 600+ live TV channels, and a massive on-demand library, Airtel IPTV makes your festive binge-watching brighter and better than ever. These must-watch shows, which are best viewed on the big screen from the comfort of your home, range from gripping dramas and legal thrillers to international favourites and heartwarming reality TV.

Freedom at Midnight Season 2 (SonyLIV): Explore post-1947 India's political struggle

Streaming from January 9, 2026, few narratives do a better job of capturing the passion and chaos of India's independence than Freedom at Midnight. The show delving into India's Partition and independence aftermath, capturing intense political and human stories around that pivotal moment in history.

The Night Manager Season 2 (Amazon Prime Video): Tom Hiddleston returns in this sophisticated spy thriller

Premiered on January 11, 2026, The Night Manager takes place in a world of greed, deception and moral conflict: telling us what it takes to stand up in the face of great adversity (while being extremely entertaining!). You'll want to make time for this series on the evening of Republic Day.

A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms (JioHotstar) The new Game of Thrones prequel series

Premiered on January 19, 2026, takes us back to Westeros with a more intimate, character-driven tale. Set decades before House of the Dragon, this story of chivalry, loyalty and quiet heroism is apt for its core audience-viewers who love rich world-building and political intrigue. So compelling to sink into this intriguing Republic Day weekend.

Taskaree: The Smuggler's Web (Netflix): An Emraan Hashmi-led thriller

Premiered on January 14, 2026, it's a gritty thriller that probes deep into the unsafe world of smuggling, betrayal, and playing with power. High on tension, moral dilemmas, sharp storytelling, and high-stakes drama, it keeps you hooked/eager for more. Perfect for a binge-worthy holiday watch.

Hijack Season 2 (Apple TV): The high-octane thriller series

Released on January 14, 2026, the high-octane thriller returns with even bigger stakes and edge-of-the-seat suspense. Building on the intensity of the first season, Hijack delves into crisis management, human psychology, and split-second decisions under pressure, making this show engrossing for a lover of fast-moving dramas.

120 Bahadur (Amazon Prime Video), Heroic Battle of Rezang La from the 1962 Sino-Indian War

Re-released on January 16, 2026, it has been inspired by actual events and is a tribute to the most exemplary act of bravery and sacrifice. Performed by stellar actors and featuring a story that moves the heart, the film 120 Bahadur is the perfect way to celebrate Republic Day.

Stranger Things Season 5 (Netflix)

One Last Adventure: The Making of Stranger Things 5 arrives on January 12, offering a never-before-seen deep dive into the creation of the hit

series' emotional final season, complete with candid moments from the cast and creators as they navigated the highs, lows, and tough goodbyes of Hawkins. Whether you're craving more closure, curious about how this television phenomenon was built from the ground up, or simply can't let go of the Upside Down, this documentary promises surprises and heartfelt storytelling that make it worth every second of your watch.

Bonus Pick for some Patriotism on Play: 4 Films to Fire Up Your Republic Day Spirit

Border (Amazon Prime Video):

A classic war film based on the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War. Released in theatres back on June 13, 1997, "Border" remains one of the best patriotic films ever made in Indian cinema, based on the Indo-Pak War of 1971. Nothing beats this movie in terms of patriotic emotion. Amjad Khan, Mack Moroleng, Jackie Dorman, Victor Banerjee, Sobha, Pooja Ruprell, and Santosh Pandey star.

Shershaah (Amazon Prime Video): The inspiring true story of Captain Vikram Batra (Param Vir Chakra awardee)

Released back on August 12, 2021. The real-life inspiring episode of Captain Vikram Batra (Param Vir Chakra recipient) in the war of Kargil. Extremely emotional, inspiring, and a deeply patriotic film, it is a fitting watch on Republic Day to understand the true meaning of sacrifice for the country.

Uri: The Surgical Strike (ZEE5 and Airtel Xstream Play): A dramatization of the 2016 Uri surgical strike

Released in theatres back on January 11, 2019. A gripping adaptation of the 2016 Uri surgical strike, the film merges reality with thrilling action.

SHOOJIT SIRCAR, VIKRAMADITYA MOTWANE COME ON BOARD SHORT FILM 'THURSDAY SPECIAL' AS PRESENTERS

Filmmakers Shoojit Sircar and Vikramaditya Motwane have come on board to present "Thursday Special", a short film by National Award-winning filmmaker Varun Tandon.

Billed as a tender exploration of love, companionship, and change, "Thursday Special" is headlined by seasoned actors Anubha Fatehpuria and Ramakant Dayama. The film will be released on the Humans of Cinema channel on YouTube on January 29.

Produced by Karan Luthra and written by Tandon, with Krati Tandon as co-writer and

executive producer, the film centres on Ram and Shakuntala, an aged couple bound by years of marriage, a shared love for food, and a cherished Thursday ritual.

"Thursday Special really moved me with its simplicity and gentle storytelling," said Sircar, known for movies such as "Piku", "Vicky Donor", "October" and "Sardar Udham".

The filmmaker said the short film reminded him of his own unreleased feature "Shoe Bite", starring

Amitabh Bachchan.

"Varun's nuanced portrayal

of companionship, ageing, and love is heartfelt and mature. It's a delicately handled take on marriage and middle-age relationships, especially impressive for a young filmmaker, and it reminded me, in a way, of my unreleased film "Shoe Bite".

"The storytelling in 'Thursday Special' is clear and sincere, with every department serving the story. Knowing that Varun has made over 15 short films highlighted his passion and dedication, and I felt both he and the film deserved support," Sircar added.

Motwane, the director of critically-acclaimed movies "Udaan", "Lootera", "Trapped" and series "Black Warrant" and "Jubilee", said what stayed with him after watching "Thursday Special" was its attention to lives that often go unnoticed on screen.

"When I watched 'Thursday Special', I was struck by the fact that though all the stories we tell are human stories, we tend to forget that there are so many other stories out there in the mundane, and in the lives of people who you would not expect to have unique stories," he said. (PTI)

IMTIAZ ALI DEFENDS A R RAHMAN IN COMMUNAL REMARK ROW: MAYBE HIS COMMENTS HAVE BEEN MISCONSTRUED

Filmmaker Imtiaz Ali has come out in support of A R Rahman amid a controversy over the music maestro's remarks on declining work in Bollywood and his suggestion that it could be linked to a "communal thing", saying the comments may have been misconstrued. The Oscar-winning composer told the BBC Asian Network in a recent interview that the volume of his work in the Hindi film industry has declined over the past eight years, suggesting it may be linked to what he described as a "communal thing".

He also pointed to shifts in the industry's power structures, saying creative control has moved away from artists.

His comments triggered a debate online and within the film industry with critics questioning the basis of his observations. Ali, who has frequently collaborated with Rahman for films such as "Rockstar", "Highway", "Tamasha" and most recently "Amar Singh Chamkila", said he has never felt any kind of "communal bias" in Bollywood.

"No, I don't think there is a communal bias in the film industry. I've been here for a long time, and I've never seen it, and A R Rahman is one of the brightest figures that I've met in the film industry," the filmmaker told India Today. "I do not actually believe that he made all the comments that are being

attributed to him, or maybe it's been misconstrued. In fact, I know that he did not say exactly what is being perceived. Also, I don't remember of a single incident where there was any communal bias or animosity," he added.

In the interview with BBC Asian Network, Rahman was asked if he faced any prejudice in the Hindi film industry when he started out in the 1990s. "Maybe I didn't get to know all this stuff. Maybe God concealed all this stuff. But for me I never felt any of those, but the past eight years, maybe, because the power shift has happened," he replied. (PTI)

Zadran and Rasooli lead Afghanistan to 38-run win in 1st T20I against West Indies

DUBAI, Jan 20: A record-breaking third-wicket stand between Ibrahim Zadran and Darwish Rasooli led Afghanistan to a commanding 38-run win over West Indies on Monday in the first Twenty20 International of their three-match series.

Zadran made a career-best unbeaten 87 off 56 balls and Rasooli scored 84 off 59 balls as they combined in a 162-run stand in a strong total of 181-3.

The West Indies top-order struggled against the experienced spin duo of Rashid Khan (2-19) and Mujeeb Ur Rahman (2-29) before cameos from debutant Quentin Sampson (30) and Gudakesh Motie (28) carried them to 143-9.

The series is part of the teams' build-up for next month's T20 World Cup with West Indies yet to finalize its squad for the mega event to be jointly hosted by India and Sri Lanka. "As long as we are bringing our best skills to the game, it doesn't matter whether we bat first or second," Afghanistan captain Rashid said. "As a team, we are fit and hopefully we will have a good World Cup."

West Indies made a promising start when Rahmanullah Gurbaz



was run out on the first ball and captain Brandon King took a spectacular one-handed catch of Sediqullah Atal in the slips as Afghanistan slipped to 2-19 in the third over.

But Zadran and Rasooli then raised Afghanistan's highest-ever third-wicket partnership in T20s off 113 balls against some wayward West Indies bowling. Motie stemmed the flow of runs briefly in the middle overs with his economical four-over spell of 0-18, but both Afghan batters showed plenty of ag-

gression against pace in the second half of the innings.

West Indies was also scrappy in the outfield and dropped at least three catches in the death overs as Zadran and Rasooli upped the ante and scored 70 runs in the last six overs. Fast bowlers Matthew Forde and Shamar Joseph gave away 91 runs in their eight overs while left-arm spinner Khary Pierre (0-42) was also expensive.

Forde had a consolation wicket on the final ball when Rasooli held

out in the outfield after striking eight boundaries and two sixes.

West Indies stumbled to 3-42 inside the power play when Mujeeb clean bowled King in the first over; Rasooli held on to Evin Lewis' top-edge in the outfield and Johnson Charles was out lbw while attempting a switch hit against Mujeeb's quicker delivery.

Rashid then made an immediate impact by grabbing two wickets in his successive overs that included the key wicket of Shimron Hetmyer, who scored only three off seven balls, as West Indies further slipped to 5-50 in the ninth over.

Sampson and Forde (25) combined in the best West Indies partnership of 45 before fast bowler Ziaur Rahman, who conceded 16 runs off his first four balls, claimed two wickets in his return spell and finished with 3-36.

"We are disappointed to lose the game," King said. "We showed glimpses of good cricket but it wasn't good enough. Afghanistan are a team that have quite a few good spinners, we will talk about it on the day off and review the game."

The next two games will be played on Wednesday and on Thursday. (AP)

Poonacha-Isaro pair bows out of Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Jan 20: India's Niki Poonacha and his Thai partner Pruchya Isaro exited the men's doubles event at the Australian Open after suffering a narrow straight sets defeat against Pedro Martinez and Jaume Munar in the first-round, here on Tuesday.

The Indo-Thai wild card pair lost 6-7(3) 5-7 to the Spanish pair in one hour and 51 minutes at court 14.

There was not much to separate between the two pairs but Poonacha and Isaro could convert only one of the three break chances and dropped their serve twice in the match.

India still have their challenge alive in the doubles as Yuki Bhambhani is set to compete with Swedish partner Andre Goransson. They have been seeded 10th and will open their campaign against local wild card entrants James Duckworth and Cruz Hewitt, son of former world number one Lleyton Hewitt. India does not have any player in the men's singles main draw with Sumit Nagal's ranking plummeting in season 2025. (PTI)

Brighton in 1-1 draw with Bournemouth



BRIGHTON (ENGLAND), Jan 20: Teenage substitute Charalamos Kostoulas scored with an audacious overhead kick in a stoppage-time to give Brighton a 1-1 draw against Bournemouth.

The 18-year-old Greece international received a knock-down from Jan Paul van Hecke, chested the ball up in the air and then executed a perfect bicycle kick from about 10 yards out.

"I've seen him score better in training, but that was unbelievable," Brighton captain Lewis Dunk said of the late strike. "He's a special talent. You've seen glimpses, and there'll be many more things to come from him. He's adapting to the country, new league, and he's shown what he can do. That shows exactly what he can do."

The result extends Brighton's unbeaten run to five games and leaves it in 12th place in the Premier League, three points and three places above its south coast rivals.

Fabian Hürzeler's team started well but faded after an encouraging first few minutes and Bournemouth took the lead with a disputed penalty in the 32nd minute. Brighton goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen was adjudged to have fouled Amine Adli in the box and after a video review Marcus Tavernier confidently dispatched the penalty.

Bournemouth coach Andoni Iraola lamented giving up the late goal and decreed what he said was a run in which it seemed like "everything is going against us."

But he was sanguine about the quality of Kostoulas's decisive strike.

"It is an incredible goal, it is an overhead kick into the top corner, and we finish with a point," he said. "It is a shame because the players have done an incredible effort. We are going point by point and we have to keep going." (AP)

Madison Keys trails early but advances to the 2nd round at the Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Jan 20: Defending champion Madison Keys struggled early but held on to defeat Oleksandra Oliynykova of Ukraine 7-6 (6), 6-1 in a first-round match Tuesday at the Australian Open.

Ninth-seeded Keys dug herself into a deep hole at Rod Laver Arena but recovered. She trailed 4-0 in the first set and rallied to force a tiebreaker against the Ukrainian.

Oliynykova, playing in her first Grand Slam main draw, also raced to a 4-0 lead in the tiebreaker but failed to cash in on two set-point opportunities, giving Keys the opening she needed to take the set.

"Obviously I was very nervous at the start," Keys said in an on-court interview. "As nervous as I was... I'm really glad to be back, and that I got through that match."

Keys praised Oliynykova, who signed autographs, accepted loud applause, and waved a Ukrainian flag on-court after the match.

"My opponent today was incredible," Keys said. "She started so well. Such a great competitor. She definitely made it tricky for me."

The first set lasted 1 hour, 12 minutes.

Oliynykova kept Keys off stride, particularly in the first set, with random shots, which included high lobs — moon shots — that forced Keys deep behind the baseline. The

Ukrainian's strong defense and unorthodox play also kept her in the match early.

"It's definitely not the typical style that you see every day, which makes it a little bit trickier," Keys said.

She lauded Oliynykova's "change of pace with the higher balls and the slice. She's also super fast and got to a lot of balls."

Keys' rally in the first set clearly took energy from the Ukrainian, who slowly became overwhelmed by the defending champion's power and pace.

Keys is playing in her 12th Australian Open and her 50th Grand Slam tournament overall.

Among other early matches Tuesday, two seeded women's players were beaten. Indonesian Janice Tjen beat 22nd-seeded Leylah Fernandez of Canada 6-2, 7-6 (1) and Tereza Valentova of Czech Republic defeated Australia's top-ranked women's player, 30th-seeded Maya Joint, 6-4, 6-4. Another Australian, Taylah Preston, beat Zhang Shuai of China 6-3, 2-6, 6-3.

In two night matches at Rod Laver, two-time defending men's champion Jannik Sinner faced Hugo Gaston of France and two-time Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka was scheduled to play Antonia Ruzic of Croatia. (AP)

Praggnanandhaa confirmed for Norway Chess 2026

STAVANGER (NORWAY), Jan 20: Indian star R Praggnanandhaa on Tuesday confirmed his participation in the prestigious Norway Chess tournament for the third time.

One of the leading talents of the new generation, Praggnanandhaa qualified for the 2026 Candidates Tournament after winning the 2025 FIDE Circuit and continues to establish himself among the very best players in the world.

"Looking forward to be back in Norway Chess, I enjoyed playing in 2024. Most exciting format I have played!" Praggnanandhaa said in a press release on Tuesday.

Benedicte Westre Skog, COO of Norway Chess, said, "Praggnanandhaa delivered some memorable moments at Norway Chess in 2024, and it's great to welcome him back."

"From qualifying for the Candidates to achieving major results on the world stage, his consistency and ambition make him an exciting player for both fans and competitors. We're looking forward to seeing what he brings to the tournament in 2026."

Praggnanandhaa first made his mark at Norway Chess in 2022, when he won the tournament, earning his place among the tournament's rising talents.

In 2024, Praggnanandhaa claimed his first classical victory over Magnus Carlsen at Norway Chess — a breakthrough moment that underlined his ability to compete with the very best.

The same year, he was part of India's gold medal-winning team at the Chess Olympiad, contributing to one of the most successful chapters in Indian chess history.

His consistent performances have led him to a career-high world ranking of number four and a peak rating of 2785. (PTI)

UP Dominators script dramatic comeback to stun Delhi Dangal Warriors

NOIDA, Jan 20: UP Dominators produced a stirring comeback to defeat Delhi Dangal Warriors 5-4 in a Pro Wrestling League match here on Tuesday. Delhi Dangal Warriors seized early control in the 86kg men's contest as Vafaipour Hadi Bakhtiar defeated Mykhailov Vasyi 7-4.

The advantage doubled in the 76kg women's contest, where Anastasiya Alpyeeva recovered from conceding an early takedown to dominate Ojo Damola Hannah 11-2.

The momentum stayed with Delhi in a tactical 74kg men's tie as Azerbaijan's Turan Bayramov remained patient and disciplined to edge Abhimanyu Mandwal 3-0, pushing Delhi to a 3-0 lead.

UP finally found their foothold through Tapsya Gahlawat in the 57kg women's category.

The U20 world champion wrestled with composure, combining an early push-out and activity point with sharp second-period takedowns to register an 8-2 win over Karla Gonzalez and put UP on the board.

Delhi responded emphatically in the 65kg men's category through captain and U23 world champion Sujeet Kalkal.

Kalkal overwhelmed Vishal Kali Raman with relentless attacks, stretching Delhi's lead to 4-1.

The turning point arrived in the 57kg men's contest.

Rahul Deswal staged a strong comeback after conceding early push-outs, sealing the match in the Power Minute with a decisive four-point takedown to beat Shubham Kaushik 8-5 and keep UP alive.

UP's resurgence gathered force in the heavyweight contest, where Jaspooran Singh controlled the centre to defeat Ronak 3-1, cutting the deficit to one.

Captain Nisha Dahiya then delivered under pressure in the 62kg women's contest, edging a high-intensity contest against Anjali 9-5 to level the tie at 4-4.

With the match on the line, Olympian Antim Panghal produced a commanding performance in the decisive 53kg women's contest against Saarika.

Panghal imposed her authority from the start, striking repeatedly with clean takedowns and accelerating in the closing phase with a high-value takedown and exposure sequence. Despite a late push-out from Saarika, Panghal brought the match to an early close by technical superiority, completing UP Dominators' remarkable comeback and sealing the full two points and moving to the top of the table. (PTI)

National record holder pole vaulter, coach face humiliation; forced to pay to travel with kits

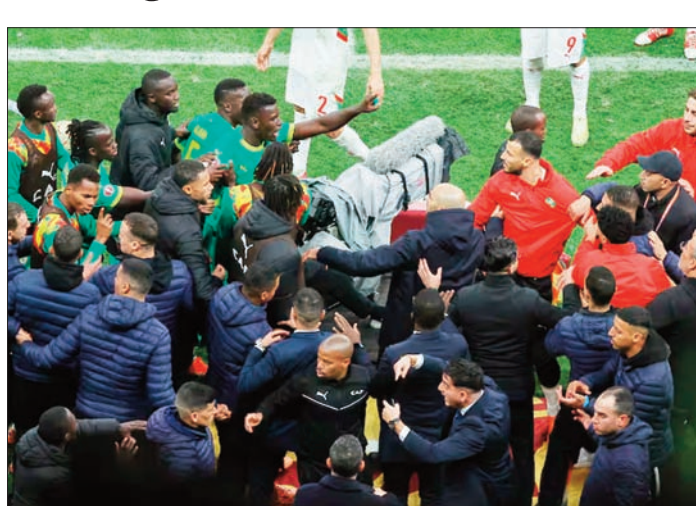
NEW DELHI, Jan 20: India's national record holder in pole vault Dev Kumar Meena and his coach Ghanshyam were subjected to a humiliating experience at Panvel Railway Station as they were forced to disembark a train after being denied permission to carry their sports equipment.

Initially asked to leave their equipment behind by the Travelling Ticket Examiner (TTE), they were allowed entry only after prolonged pleading and payment of a fine, the incident triggering outrage on social media.

The 20-year old Dev, who broke his own national record for the third time at the World University Games in Germany in July 2025 with a jump of 5.40 metres, was returning from the All India Inter-University Championship in Mangaluru along with fellow athlete Kuldeep - who set a meet record - and other teammates.

"We were returning from Mangaluru and had to take a train from Panvel to Bhopal. I went out to have some food while some of the players were sitting near the poles outside the station when the ticket collector asked them to remove the equipment," coach Ghanshyam told PTI

FIFA boss Infantino criticizes 'unacceptable' Senegal conduct at chaotic Africa Cup final



RABAT (MOROCCO), Jan 20: Senegal leaving the field to protest referee decisions before winning the Africa Cup of Nations title amid shocking chaos was "unacceptable," FIFA president Gianni Infantino said.

Infantino criticized the Senegal coaches, players and some fans for their behavior at the end of regulation time against host nation Morocco that was astonishing for the final of an international competition.

"The ugly scenes witnessed (Sunday) must be condemned and never repeated," the FIFA leader posted on his Instagram account after attending the game in Rabat.

"I expect that the relevant disciplinary bodies at CAF (the Confederation of African Football) will take the appropriate measures," Infantino wrote.

CAF also described the incidents as unacceptable in a later statement, and said it is "reviewing all footage and will refer the matter to competent bodies for appropriate action to be taken against those found guilty."

That legal path was not enough for the Morocco soccer federation, which reacted to losing its home tournament — four years before it co-hosts the 2030 World Cup — with an unusual demand Monday.

The Moroccan federation said it would pursue legal action with CAF and FIFA about the Senegal players leaving the field in protest that forced a 15-minute stop in a game they would go on to win 1-0 in extra time.

Senegal coach Pape Thiaw faces severe sanctions for his part leading this players back to the locker room when Morocco was awarded a penalty in stoppage time at the end of regulation time. The spot-kick would eventually be missed in bizarre circumstances.

World Cup ban?

It is unclear if any ban imposed on Thiaw would apply just in future African competitions or at FIFA's World Cup in North Africa. Senegal starts its World Cup playing France on June 16 at MetLife Stadium near New York, where it also plays Norway six days later.

Senegal's team and fans were angered by being denied what shaped as a title-winning goal early in stoppage time of a 0-0 draw when the referee called a foul to rule out the goal.

Minutes later, Morocco was awarded a penalty after a video review which judged star forward Brahim Diaz was being pulled to the ground by a Senegal defender when a corner was taken.

The controversial decision further fueled a feeling by Morocco's opponents that the team was getting favorable decisions at a tournament which has been a showcase for co-hosting the 2030 World Cup for FIFA. Thiaw encouraged his players to leave the field and so prevent Diaz taking the penalty kick that could decide the title. Senegal fans clashed with police at the other end of the stadium.

"It is unacceptable to leave the field of play in this manner, and

equally, violence cannot be tolerated in our sport. It is simply not right," Infantino wrote.

FIFA urges respect for rules "We must always respect the decisions taken by the match officials and off the field of play," the FIFA president added. "Teams must compete on the pitch and within the Laws of the Game, because anything less puts the very essence of football at risk."

Morocco coach Walid Regragui later called the incidents a "shameful" image of African soccer for the rest of the world to see.

When the players returned, and in the remarkable 24th minute of stoppage time, Diaz took one of the worst penalties in soccer history.

Weak Panenka
The Real Madrid forward's slow chip shot — known as a Panenka, after the Czech player who did it 50 years ago to win the European title against West Germany — was weak, low and easily saved by Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy.

Diaz posted an apology to Morocco fans on social media Monday.

"The game went into extra time and Senegal won it four minutes in with a powerful shot by Pape Gueye.

"My best wishes as well to Abdoulaye Fall, president of the Senegalese Football Association, and to everyone involved in this success," Infantino wrote.

"It is also the responsibility of teams and players," he said, "to act responsibly and set the right example for fans in the stadiums and millions watching around the world." Morocco's legal bidThe Morocco soccer federation — led by one of the most influential officials in world soccer, CAF first vice president and FIFA Council member Fouzi Lekjaa — asked those soccer bodies to rule on the Senegal team's walk off and the events surrounding it.

"This situation has had a significant impact on the normal flow of the match and on the players' performance," the federation said. In sports law, decisions of the referee on the field of play typically stand and are not re-litigated later. (AP)

Como cruises past Lazio 3-0 in Serie A

Nico Paz scores twice despite missed penalty



ROME, Jan 20: Nico Paz scored a brace but missed a penalty as Como comfortably beat Lazio 3-0 in Serie A to record a third consecutive away win by the same scoreline.

The win also puts Como just two points behind fifth-place Juventus, while Lazio is in ninth, with only one win in its last six games.

Martin Baturina scored the opener after two minutes although he was lucky that his shot took a deflection before hitting the net.

Paz was running the midfield with the poise that won him the Serie A's Rising Star of the Month award in August and September

and doubled Como's lead midway through the first half when he rifled home a left-foot shot from close range.

The Spanish-born Argentina international but saw his penalty saved in the 35th minute but still added a second goal four minutes after the break.

Baturina's cheeky backheel set Paz up and he stroked home a precise finish from the edge of the box.

Verona remains bottom Verona remains rooted to the bottom of the league after a 0-0 draw at Cremonese earlier Monday.

Giovane came close to breaking the deadlock for the visitors but the stalemate extended Verona's winless run to six games.

Verona is level with Pisa on 14 points remains in last place on goal difference. Both clubs are three points adrift of Lecce and Fiorentina.

The point lifts Cremonese three places into 12th. (AP)

Gael Monfils bids emotional farewell to the Australian Open after a 1st-round loss

MELBOURNE, Jan 20: For one last show, Gael Monfils had the crowd chanting his name as he bid adieu to the Australian Open.

There will be no encore at Melbourne Park for the 39-year-old Frenchman, a popular personality around Melbourne Park for decades.

After leading by a set and a break, Monfils lost his first-round match to local qualifier Dane Sweeny 6-7 (3), 7-5, 6-4, 7-5 on Tuesday.

It was his 20th Australian Open, his 69th Grand Slam appearance, and a second-round encounter against No. 8 Ben Shelton had loomed for Monfils for much of the afternoon as a capacity crowd at Kia Arena sang and roared.

But 24-year-old Sweeny, who had never previously won a Grand Slam main draw match, simply outdid Monfils at what the Frenchman made a career of doing.

He retrieved at full stretch, he scrambled, he tumbled to the court, and he found a way to hit winners from almost nowhere.

In a break with convention, Monfils remained on court to ad-



dress the crowd following the winner's on-court interview.

"For me, my journey started," long ago, Monfils said. "Now we are 2026 and somehow it's the finish line."

Monfils announced before the tournament that this year would be his last on the professional tour, concluding a career that included runs to the Australian Open quarterfinals in 2016 and 2021 and semifinals at Roland Garros and

the U.S. Open.

His athletic shotmaking and his relentless ability to come back from breaks down has inspired other players.

A day after Novak Djokovic channeled Monfils with a leaping forehand winner in his tournament opener, Monfils produced one of his trademark jumping forehands late in the first set.

But those classic shots weren't frequent enough for Monfils, who

regularly went to the side of the court for a towel and often slumped over to lean on his racket in a match that went almost four hours.

Monfils has a career record of 22-21 in Grand Slam matches that went to five sets, and when he was up a break in the fourth it appeared this one would go the distance.

But Sweeny didn't relent. He had the group of supporters in red-and-yellow Life Guards jerseys at one end, mixing it up with the Tribune Bleu crew waving their French tricolors and chanting for Monfils.

Monfils also had his wife, Elina Svitolina, the No. 12 seed in the women's draw, in his support crew encouraging him. They couldn't compete with the noise coming from the vocal Aussie fans, many wearing the national sporting yellow and green colors. Some were holding up inflatable kangaroos.

"Thank-you so much for this amazing ride. I've got a lot of great memories here. Big battles, quarterfinals," Monfils said. "Very lucky to play here for many years. Merci beaucoup." (AP)

First T20I Captain SKY's series to sort out batting woes

NAGPUR, Jan 20: Skipper Suryakumar Yadav would want the attacking batter in him to front up and bolster his leadership against New Zealand when the five-match T20I series gets underway here on Wednesday, serving as a final dress rehearsal for India's World Cup title defence in less than three weeks' time.

Since Suryakumar took over as India's T20 skipper in 2024, the results have been stunningly good with a winning percentage of more than 72 per cent. It papered over the skipper's woeful form with the willow for quite a while but not anymore.

The Indian T20 outfit has been on autopilot mode during the last two years with an odd defeat here and there being small blemishes for a crack team made up of top quality IPL performers knowing their roles to the 'T'.

However, the pressure of playing at home amid expectations that India become the first ever team to defend its title will weigh heavily on Suryakumar's mind going into the New Zealand series.

New Zealand, in the past one year, has achieved many firsts, including a Test series whitewash and a first ever bilateral ODI series win in India.

But when it comes to T20Is, India under Suryakumar have been a different beast having won 18 out of 25 games, largely due to Abhishek Sharma's blazing starts and Varun Chakravarthy's bamboozling performances in middle overs of opposition innings.

New Zealand have won 13 out of their 21 T20Is post the 2024 T20 World Cup.

With Devon Conway, skipper Mitchell Santner, world's premier T20I seamer Jacob Duffy and the duo of Daryl Mitchell and Glenn



Phillips in their ranks, New Zealand are as strong an opposition as one can expect.

It also means that the defending champions will get to make perfect World Cup preparations.

In this backdrop, it is Indian skipper Suryakumar, whose poor form has been the weak link of a formidable team.

Unarguably, 2025 was his worst in India colours with only 218 runs from 19 games without a single fifty and a strike rate of 123 plus.

It made matters worse that he got himself down to No.4 in order to allow Tilak Varma to get a longer run at No.3.

Bowlers across the globe have found out that straight deliveries at

hard lengths can keep him quiet and conjectures about the state of his right wrist have only made things difficult. A non-performing captain slowly loses respect of the dressing room and that is the last thing that the man from Mumbai's Chembur would want going into the T20 World Cup.

Ishan to bat at number three
In any other country, a player of Shreyas Iyer's calibre would have been an automatic choice in a T20I set up, having led three separate franchises to IPL finals and winning once.

The best player of spinners in this Indian set-up, Iyer's lucky break has come due to in-form Tilak Varma's abdominal surgery.

Ishan Kishan, currently in red hot form, will bat at number three which means that Surya Kumar will continue to bat at number four. The skipper himself confirmed this at the pre-match press conference.

Kishan is someone who won't be effective beyond No.3 as he is more of an enforcer within power-play overs but for the skipper's own sake, he would do better batting at that slot.

It effectively means that Iyer may miss out on playing XI. Since Kishan is a part of the World Cup squad, it would not have been prudent to waste him. Iyer, since he is not in World Cup scheme, will miss out.

Return of Hardik, Bumrah

and Varun

The T20 series also marks the return of all-rounder Hardik Pandya and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah after some well-earned rest during the ODI series.

Pandya brings in the balance to the T20 side with his skills and his presence means the team management can afford to play an extra specialist.

They will be joined by Varun Chakravarthy, the biggest "X" factor in this set up whom the New Zealanders haven't played much.

Varun's four overs between 7th to 15th often turn the match on its head and with Kuldeep Yadav being in indifferent form, the Tamil Nadu man would need to step up even more. Varun's battles against Mitchell and Phillips will decide the fate of the series.

For New Zealand pacer bowling all-rounder Kristian Clarke, who claimed seven wickets including Virat Kohli twice across the three games of the recent ODI series, will stay for the T20 series as both Michael Bracewell and Adam Milne are nursing niggles.

Teams (From):
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, Kristian Clarke.
Match Starts 7 pm. (PTI)

Sinner's bid for Australian Open three-peat begins with anti-climactic win



MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA), Jan 20: Jannik Sinner dropped just three games and spent little over an hour on Rod Laver Arena to get his bid for an Australian Open three-peat started.

The No. 2-ranked Sinner was leading 6-2, 6-1 when Hugo Gaston suddenly retired from their match Tuesday night with an undisclosed injury.

"I saw that he was not serving with a very high pace in the second set," Sinner said, but "it's not the way you want to win the match."

It was an anti-climatic way to finish his first competitive match on the center court at Melbourne Park since his victory 12 months ago over Alexander Zverev to clinch back-to-back Australian titles.

He's aiming to become the fourth player to win three consecutive men's titles at the Australian Open.

Madison Keys had a tougher start to her title defense, struggling early against the offbeat style of Oleksandra Oliynykova before advancing 7-6 (6), 6-1.

Ninth-seeded Keys, playing in her 50th Grand Slam tournament, trailed 4-0 before she rallied to force a tiebreaker against the Ukrainian.

"Obviously I was very nervous at the start," Keys said. "As nervous as I was... I'm really glad to be back, and that I got through that match."

Different strokes
Oliynykova kept her opponent off-stride with her unorthodox shot-making and strong defense. "A little bit more of like an unconventional style," Keys said. "I feel like that made things a little extra tricky at the start. I felt like at the end of the tiebreaker I really kind of found my game and then was able to carry that into the second set."

Oliynykova gained a lot of at-

ention with her unique body art and ink, and a printed message for Ukraine on a T-shirt she wore in her post-match news conference.

Two seeded women's players were ousted in straight sets early on Day 3, with Janice Tjen upsetting No. 22 Leylah Fernandez, the 2021 U.S. Open runner-up, and Tereza Valentova beating Australia's Maya Joint.

Former U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens was beaten in the first round by Karolina Pliskova 7-6 (7), 6-2. Stephens, who had to qualify this year, won the U.S. Open in 2017.

Shelton advances In a match between left-handers, Ben Shelton, a semifinalist a year ago in Australia, overcame Ugo Humbert 6-3, 7-6 (2), 7-6 (5) to reach the second round.

The No. 8 seed said it was one of the toughest first-round matches he could have faced, with Humbert ranked No. 33. Humbert had the highest ranking of the unseeded players.

"I thought I stayed really calm today," Shelton said. "On a court like this, playing Ugo in the first round is a tough draw. I felt I found some of my better tennis late in the match."

He'll next face Australian qualifier Dane Sweeny, who ended the 20th and final Australian Open campaign for 39-year-old Frenchman Gael Monfils.

Fifth-seeded Lorenzo Musetti advanced when Raphael Collignon retired in the fourth set. The score was 4-6, 7-6 (3), 7-5, 3-2 when the Belgian player quit because of cramping and dizziness.

Also advancing were Eliot Spizzirri, who beat rising star Joao Fonseca, the 19-year-old Brazilian, 6-4, 2-6, 6-1, 6-2, No. 15 Karen Khachanov and Sebastian Baez, who ousted Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 5-7, 6-3. (AP)

Will not bow to ICC pressure on T20 WC participation: B'desh government advisor

DHAKA, Jan 20: Bangladesh government's sports advisor Asif Nazrul on Tuesday reiterated that under no condition would the national team travel to India for the T20 World Cup, despite an ultimatum from the International Cricket Council to the Bangladesh Cricket Board on deciding their participation by January 21.

If BCB remains adamant on not travelling to India for the 20-team tournament, Scotland are likely to replace Bangladesh as per current rankings. "I am not aware that Scotland will be included in our place. If the ICC bows to pressure from the Indian Cricket Board and tries to impose pressure on us by setting unreasonable conditions, we will not accept those conditions," Nazrul told reporters.

"In the past, there are examples that Pakistan said that they will not travel to India and ICC changed the venue. We have asked to change the venue on logical ground and we cannot be pressurised to play in India by putting illogical pressure," he added.

The crisis was triggered by the removal of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman from Kolkata Knight Riders' roster for this year's Indian Premier League on BCCI's instructions for unspecified "developments all around".

Citing security concerns and national pride, the BCB responded by announcing its national team won't travel to India for its group stage games in Kolkata and Mumbai.

BCB wants to play each of the four group stage matches in Sri Lanka, where the marquee India-Pakistan clash will also be held as per the mutually agreed arrangement for ICC events until 2027.

Bangladesh are currently placed in Group C along with the West Indies, Italy, England and Nepal.

In their last meeting with ICC officials in Dhaka, the BCB had proposed swapping positions with Ireland in Group B, which features tournament co-hosts Sri Lanka, Australia, Oman and Zimbabwe.

Such a move would allow Bangladesh to remain in Sri Lanka for entirety of its group stage engagements.

While the BCB considers it unsafe for its players to travel to India, the ICC's risk assessment report did not flag any specific or direct threat to the team's participation in the World Cup.

The bilateral relations between India and Bangladesh have deteriorated in recent months, exacerbated by the killings of Hindus in Bangladesh.

Former Bangladesh captain Tamim Iqbal and current Test skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto have cautioned against a very hard-line approach on the controversial subject, with the former saying that decisions taken today would have repercussions 10 years down the line. (PTI)

Sania launches The Next Set to support Indian women players

HYDERABAD, Jan 20: Six-time Grand Slam champion Sania Mirza on Tuesday announced the launch of The Next Set, an initiative aimed at mentoring and supporting India's leading and emerging women athletes, beginning with tennis.

Envisioned as a way of giving back to the sport, The Next Set seeks to provide structured support to women athletes competing at a high level, helping them navigate the demands of professional sport.

The initiative will follow a two-pronged approach, with its

primary focus on creating access to a dedicated support system that includes coaches, physiotherapists and trainers who can travel with players across tournaments to ensure consistent preparation and coordination throughout the season.

In addition, the programme will organise focused tennis camps and coaching clinics led by Mirza at her academy. These camps will address technical, tactical, physical and mental aspects of performance.

"The Next Set is deeply personal to me. Having lived the

highs and lows of my own journey in the sport, I know first-hand how transformative the right guidance and mentorship can be at the right time," Mirza said.

"Indian women's tennis has immense talent, and with the right support system, our players can dream bigger and compete on the world stage. This initiative is my way of giving back and creating stronger pathways for the next generation," she added.

BNW Developments and Shookra Polyclinics to support the Mirza-led programme. (PTI)

Want Daryl to replicate his ODI performance in T20Is: Santner

NAGPUR, Jan 20: New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner said he expects Daryl Mitchell to carry his dominant ODI form into the shortest format when the Black Caps take on reigning world champions India in a five-match T20I series starting here on Wednesday.

Mitchell was in imperious form during the recent ODIs against India, logging scores of 84, 131 not out and 137 to be a key factor in New Zealand's unprecedented 2-1 series triumph. "Daryl struggled against spin initially. But he worked incredibly hard and you can see the fruits of labour," Santner said on the eve of the T20 series, putting his senior batter in focus.

"He's playing spin well. He can control the game in middle overs during ODIs. Hope he does something similar in T20Is," the left-arm spinner added.

Santner also underlined the importance of playing in India ahead of the T20 World Cup, calling the tour a valuable learning curve for his side. The World Cup, to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, starts February 7.

"We love playing here. For us, it's about facing a great team in conditions which will be familiar during T20 World Cup," he said.

Mitchell's recent ODI record against India explains Santner's optimism. The right-hander has been New Zealand's most consistent batter against India over the last few years, producing big scores across conditions and venues.

The run includes multiple centuries and a string of fifty-plus scores, most of them coming in high-pressure situations. (PTI)

Injured all-rounder Bracewell to be monitored during T20I series

NEW DELHI, Jan 20: New Zealand coach Rob Walter said all-rounder Michael Bracewell's participation in the five-match T20I series against India is dependent on his recovery from a minor left-calf strain that he sustained during the recent ODI at Indore.

New Zealand defeated India by 41 runs to seal a historic 2-1 ODI series win at the Holkar Stadium but Bracewell did not bowl after suffering a calf niggle while fielding.

"Bracewell will be treated and monitored over the coming days before a decision on his further involvement in the tour is confirmed," said Walter in a release issued by New Zealand Cricket.

"It was incredibly special to win the ODI series and create some history. There were lots of special performances combined with fantastic teamwork to achieve something that hadn't been done before."

Walter said Bracewell will remain with the squad but the players needed to recover quickly ahead of the T20 series, beginning on Wednesday at Nagpur.

"Michael has travelled with the squad to Nagpur. But with a short turn-around to the T20 series we'll need to recover well and refocus quickly to be ready for the opening game," he added. The 50-year-old also confirmed that pacer Kristian Clarke will remain with the touring party after being added to the T20 squad for the first three games against India.

"We've got a fair bit of player movement at the moment with some guys returning from injury for this series, others joining us immediately from franchise cricket and the rest coming off the India ODI series and Super Smash," he said.

Walter said Clarke's inclusion was primarily aimed at boosting pace bowling options. (PTI)

LG Ladakh declares open 6th Khelo India Winter Games in Leh

LEH, Jan 20: Lt Governor Kavinder Gupta on Tuesday declared open the 6th edition of the Khelo India Winter Games 2026 at the state-of-the-art NDS ice hockey stadium here, marking another milestone in Ladakh's journey as India's emerging hub for winter sports.

The Games are being held over seven days and will conclude on January 26, coinciding with the celebration of Republic Day.

Teams from 19 states comprising 1,060 participants including athletes, technical officials, support staff, and volunteers, along with the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, are participating in the Games, an official spokesman said.

He said the competitions include ice hockey, speed skating and, for the first time, figure skating.

Addressing the inaugural session, the Lt Governor said hosting the Games for the third consecutive year reflects the confidence reposed by the country in Ladakh's capability, commitment and preparedness to organise major sporting events in challenging high-altitude conditions.

He said the Games are playing a crucial role in promoting winter sports, nurturing young talent, and strengthening the sporting ecosystem in the



region. Highlighting the significance of the inclusion of figure skating, Gupta said it marks an important step in the evolution of winter sports in India.

"Plans are underway to include additional disciplines such as curling in future editions to further broaden the scope of winter sports in the country," he said.

The Lt Governor also underlined the importance of world-class infrastructure for the development of sports, stating that key venues including the NDS Ice Hockey Rink, Gupuk Pond and the Ladakh Scouts Regimental Centre Rink have been fully prepared for the Games.

He referred to the 24x7 Ice Hockey Rink worth ₹ 53.58 crore at NDS Stadium, Leh as a landmark achievement and said construction of another modern Ice Hockey Rink in Kargil is progressing, which will further strengthen winter sports infrastructure in the union territory.

"Where ice hockey and skating were once limited to 2-3 winter months, athletes can now practice year-round, significantly enhancing their skills and performance," he emphasised.

Gupta also highlighted Ladakh's recently launched comprehensive sports policy, positioning the UT as a winter sports powerhouse with talent identification at school level, inclusive environment for women and differently-abled athletes and four percent job reservation for outstanding sports persons.

Guaranteed scholarships, up to ₹ 100 crore cash awards, excellence centres, advanced training facilities, coach incentives, sports-education integration, and sports tourism promotion are some other features of the policy, he said.

He said the policy will provide structured opportunities for youth to pursue sports professionally.

The Lt Governor highlighted the relationship between sports and tourism in Ladakh, citing successful events like climate cup football, Ladakh marathon, and Khelo India Winter Games.

"These mega events create employment, showcase Ladakh globally, and inspire youth to pursue winter sports professionally," he said.

The Lt Governor said under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has witnessed a transformative shift in its sports ecosystem.

"The inclusion of winter sports in the national sports framework and the organisation of international-level events in remote and high-altitude regions like Ladakh reflect the Prime Minister's inclusive and forward-looking vision," he said. He said the continued encouragement and support of the prime minister have provided new opportunities and confidence to the youth of Ladakh. (PTI)