

6 WORLD

- Russia thinks it can outsmart US during Ukraine peace talks
- Netanyahu is meeting with Trump this week to push for a far broader Iran deal

8 NATION

- 'Ugly scenes could have taken place had BJP MPs been allowed to confront oppn members in LS'
- Victory or PR-wrapped sacrifice of India's interests: Kcharge on US deal



Continuing the journey of Transparent and Merit-based Appointments

CEREMONIAL DISTRIBUTION OF
Appointment Letters to the 1694 Non-ADRE
candidates under various Government Departments
 and
185 Contractual Employees under
Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission



📅 11 February 2026 ⌚ 11 AM
 📍 Jyoti-Bishnu Antarjatik Kala Mandir, Khanapara, Guwahati

Chief Guest

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
 Chief Minister, Assam

In august presence of

Shri Ranjeet Kumar Dass
 Minister, Panchayat and Rural Development etc., Assam

Shri Atul Bora
 Minister, Agriculture etc., Assam

Shri Urkhao Gwra Brahma
 Minister, Handloom, Textiles and Sericulture etc., Assam

Shri Jogen Mohan
 Minister, Hill Area Development etc., Assam

Shri Pijush Hazarika
 Minister, Water Resources etc., Assam

Shri Prasanta Phukan
 Minister, Power etc., Assam

Shri Krishnendu Paul
 Minister, Fishery, Public Works Roads etc., Assam

Shri Rupesh Gowala
 Minister, Labour Welfare etc., Assam

Shri Charan Bodo
 Minister, Transport etc., Assam

Shri Kaushik Rai
 Minister, Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs etc., Assam

Department	Post	Recruited Candidates
PWRD	Junior Engineer (Mechanical)	75
Agriculture	Agriculture Development Officer	193
Fishery	Fishery Development Officer	65
Transport	Enforcement Inspector	25
PWD (Joint Cadre)	Junior Engineer (Civil)	642
Home & Political	Public Prosecutor	25
	Additional Public Prosecutor	75
	Assistant Public Prosecutor	140
PWD (B & NH)	Assistant Architect	4
Handloom Textiles & Sericulture	Sericulture Demonstrator	125
Water Resources	Junior Engineer	142
General Administration	Stenographer Grade II	8
Power	Assistant Accounts Officer under AEGCL	59
Skill, Employment and Entrepreneurship	Junior Instructor of ITIs	89
Labour Welfare	Law Assistant at the O/o the Chief Inspector of Factories, Assam	1
Transformation and Development	Junior Development Officer	9
	Inspector of Statistics	4
Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs	Inspector of Legal Metrology	13

Timeline of Recruitment

Till 12 January 2026 **1,56,679**

11 February 2026 **1,694**

Total Recruited

1,58,373

DIPR /D/HLT/295/11-Feb-26

India-US trade deal, global cues buoy buying in equity markets for 3rd straight session

MUMBAI, Feb 10: Stock market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty rallied for the third straight session on Tuesday buoyed by firm global cues and end of tariff uncertainties over India-US trade, even as investors booked profit at higher levels.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 208.17 points, or 0.25 per cent, to close at 84,273.92. During the session, the benchmark jumped 417.2 points, or 0.49 per cent, to hit an intraday high of 84,482.95.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rose 67.85 points, or 0.26 per cent, to finish at 25,935.15. In the intraday session, the index appreciated by 122.15 points, or 0.47 per cent, to hit a high of 25,989.45.

Among the Sensex constituents, Eternal, Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, PowerGrid, Tech Mahindra, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Consultancy Services, Maruti Suzuki India, Axis Bank, Titan and Hindustan Unilever were among the gainers.

On the other hand, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finance, Bharti Airtel, Asian Paints, HDFC Bank, UltraTech Cement, Adani Ports and ITC were among the laggards.

"Domestic equities continued their upward momentum, supported by the US trade agreement and positive cues from key Asian markets. A strong resurgence in FII inflows, coupled with rupee appreciation, is further bolstering the investor sentiment, although intermittent profit-taking was visible across sectors," Vinod Nair, Head of Research,



Geojit Investments Ltd. said.

He added that with tariff-related concerns largely easing, the near-term market trajectory is expected to hinge on Q3 earnings, which have been mixed and below expectations so far.

"Investors are now focused on the combined impact of recent fiscal and monetary measures to revive earnings momentum in the coming quarters," Nair said.

A total of 2,587 stocks advanced, while 1,675 declined and 145 remained unchanged on the BSE.

BSE Smallcap Select index rose 0.40 per cent, while Midcap Select index went lower by 0.31 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, auto rose the most by 1.35 per cent, followed by consumer discretionary (1.16 per cent), metal (0.83 per cent), and industrials (0.69 per cent). Utilities also gained by 0.62 per

cent, while Oil & Gas climbed 0.51 per cent. Focussed IT ended 0.50 per cent higher, while Information Technology as well as Telecommunication ended 0.35 per cent higher.

On the other hand, PSU Bank, Consumer Durables, Bankex and Private Banks Index were among the laggards.

Meanwhile, the latest data showed equity mutual funds attracted net inflows of Rs 24,028 crore in January, recording a slump of 14 per cent from the previous month, as investor sentiment remained cautious amid subdued market conditions and ongoing geopolitical concerns.

This was the second consecutive month of moderation in equity inflows.

On Tuesday, rupee pared initial losses and settled on a positive note, higher by 9 paise at 90.57 against

the US dollar, supported by positive cues from domestic equities and weakening of the American currency in the overseas market.

"Markets traded in a range-bound manner on the weekly expiry day but managed to end marginally higher, extending the rally seen over the past few sessions. The Nifty opened higher on supportive global cues and inched toward the 26,000 mark, but failed to cross the hurdle and moved sideways for the rest of the session, eventually closing at 25,935.15," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Sectoral trends were mixed, with auto, metal and realty among the top gainers, while pharma, banking and energy stocks remained subdued, he added.

In Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Hong Kong's Hang Seng, South Korea's Kospi and Shanghai's SSE Composite index closed in the positive territory.

European markets were mostly trading higher in mid-session deals. US equities market ended higher on Monday.

Meanwhile, foreign institutional investors bought equities worth ₹ 2,254.64 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

Brent Crude, the global oil benchmark, slipped 0.20 per cent to USD 68.89 per barrel.

On Monday, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 485.35 points to close at 84,065.75, while the 50-share NSE Nifty appreciated by 173.60 points to settle at 25,867.30. (PTI)

CM Naidu seeks ₹ 1,211 cr from Centre for agri schemes, pushes for Makhana board

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday met Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in the national capital and sought release of ₹ 1,211 crore funds pending under various central farm schemes and pitched for the establishment of a Makhana Development Board in the state.

During the meeting, Naidu pressed for immediate release of ₹ 216 crore funds under the PM PRANAM scheme, ₹ 200 crore central assistance for coconut cultivation development, ₹ 695 crore pending under the Per Drop More Crop scheme, and ₹ 100 crore as Centre's share under the Price Deficiency Payment System for mango farmers for 2025-26 season, an official statement said.

The CM held detailed discussions with Chouhan on strengthening agriculture and allied sectors in the state.

Informing the Union minister about the state's progress in reducing chemical fertiliser usage, Naidu said Andhra Pradesh has achieved a 2.28 per cent reduction during 2024-25 crop year (July-June).

He said the state government is aggressively promoting organic and natural farming with 18 lakh farmers already giving consent to adopt organic farming practices across nearly 8 lakh hectares.

Highlighting the state's flagship Community Managed Natural Farming programme, the CM requested release of funds under PM PRANAM scheme to expand the initiative further.

He also urged the Centre to extend PM PRANAM incentives for reduced chemical usage and sought release of ₹ 216 crore for 2024-25.

Seeking focused support for coconut sector, Naidu requested ₹ 200 crore central assistance for coconut cultivation development.

He proposed the establishment of coconut processing parks, modern tender coconut markets on the Karnataka model, training programmes for coconut farmers on advanced cultivation practices and expansion of nurseries.

The CM said these initiatives will benefit coconut farmers and generate employment for nearly 15,000 people.

The CM also urged Chouhan to release ₹ 695 crore pending under the Per Drop More Crop scheme.

On Totapuri mango farmers' issue, Naidu requested the release of ₹ 100 crore as the Centre's share under Price Deficiency Payment System for 2025-26 season.

He said the state government had already paid farmers even the Centre's share and that a total of ₹ 200 crore had been disbursed jointly by the Centre and state to support Totapuri mango farmers affected by falling prices.

The CM also sought the establishment of a Makhana Development Board in AP. He informed Chouhan that nearly 50,000 acres in Kolleru Lake region are suitable for makhana cultivation and requested necessary incentives and support to promote makhana farming in the state. (PTI)

Samsung India launches Galaxy A07 5G with 50MP camera and 6000mAh battery

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: Samsung,

India's leading consumer electronics brand, launched the Samsung Galaxy A07 5G. The smartphone comes equipped with a 50MP main camera, a 6000mAh battery and is designed for online entertainment, content creation and all-day uninterrupted use. It also introduces industry-grade data security features to provide users with peace of mind.

"At Samsung, we understand the needs of our young customers who are more aspirational - today the Gen Z is creating more social content, they are more into mobile gaming and they are consuming online content more than ever. The Samsung Galaxy A07 5G is designed to be 'More Awesome' by blending creativity, performance and entertainment with its MORE Powerful 50MP Camera, more

long-lasting 6000mAh battery and a more stunning 120Hz display. We are thrilled to introduce this complete package, tailored for Indian youth," said Aditya Babbar, Vice President, MX Business, Samsung India.

The Galaxy A07 5G is available in Light Violet, Light Green and Black. It weighs 199g, measures 8.2mm in thickness and features a sleek Key Island 2.0 flat side frame for enhanced grip. The smartphone sports a 6.7-inch HD+ display with a 120Hz refresh rate, offering smooth scrolling and transitions for videos and web browsing. Its high-brightness mode reaches 800 nits, ensuring clear visibility even under direct sunlight. For added durability, the display comes with a 2-step tempered glass protection and an IP54 rating for dust and water resistance, while the back is made from Glass Fibre Reinforced

Polymer (GFRP), a thinner yet stronger material than the previous generation.

On the photography front, the Galaxy A07 5G features an Ironic Track Camera Deco with a dual rear camera setup comprising a 50MP autofocus wide camera and a 2MP depth sensor. The F1.8 aperture and depth camera combine to create soft bokeh effects, keeping the subject in focus while blurring the background. The wide-angle setup is optimised for vibrant colours and crisp detail in both bright and low-light conditions, while the 8MP front camera delivers sharp selfies and videos with minimal noise.

The device is powered by a 6000mAh battery, 20% larger than its predecessor and supports 25W fast charging, ensuring day-long use for streaming, social media and work.

Reliance Consumer Products acquires Southern Health Foods

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Reliance Consumer Products Ltd (RCPL) on Tuesday announced the acquisition of Tamil Nadu-based Southern Health Foods for an undisclosed amount, a move which will help the FMCG arm of Reliance Industries in the growing millet-based food segment. Southern Health Foods owns the brand Manna and is a leading manufacturer of wide-ranging healthy foods for well over two decades, said RCPL in a statement.

This acquisition comes a week after RCPL, the country's fastest-growing FMCG firm, announced the acquisition of a majority stake in Australia-

based Goodness Group Global Pty Ltd, which owns the 'Better-For-You' beverage business.

About the acquisition of Southern Health Foods, RCPL said Manna adds further "strength to RCPL's foods and staples portfolio" that includes brands like Udhaiyam, Independence and SiL, through building a strong business vertical in the growing millet-based food segment.

"The acquisition reaffirms RCPL's commitment towards the company's core philosophy of offering the 'global quality at affordable price' to the millions of consumers across the country, while working towards a significant presence in the area

of health foods," it said.

Commenting on the development, RCPL Director T Krishnakumar said that Manna is one of the most trusted names in the health-focused foods market in Tamil Nadu with noticeable presence in the adjoining states.

"Apart from adding muscle to RCPL's packaged foods portfolio, Manna's addition will help us serve consumers the best nutritious foods," he said.

After the acquisition, RCPL will expand the Manna business and make the products available in other geographies. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

Number of Assam voters

can apply now, an official told PTI. "If they could not apply for shifting of their names before the deletion, they can now apply for inclusion at their new address under a provision of the RP Act," he said.

The CEO had issued a letter in this regard to all district election officers (DEOs) last week, a copy of which is available with PTI.

"In view of recent displacements in Assam due to various reasons or administrative actions, some electors were removed from the rolls as 'permanently shifted' but were unable to submit applications for shifting, as only one form can be processed during a single revision," the letter said.

It referred to provisions allowing an elector to appeal under Section 24 of the RP Act, 1950, within the prescribed time to the DEO against deletion of their name, or to submit Form 6 for inclusion of their name in the electoral roll during summary revision or continuous updation.

Form 6 is used for new voter enrolment and, in this case, can be used only by those electors whose names were deleted from their previous locations but could not submit Form 8 (shifting of residence or correction of entries) as a Form 7 (objection or deletion) was already in process against their names, the official explained.

The CEO has instructed DEOs to conduct "rigorous checks" while processing Form 6 applications under this provision to ensure that no ineligible voter is enrolled and all eligible electors are correctly included, he said.

The SR exercise had stirred much controversy in the state with opposition parties alleging that it was being used for "vote theft" and genuine citizens, particularly of a religious minority community, were being harassed during the process.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had indicated that only 'Miyas' were being served notice during the SR process as a tactic to "keep them under pressure", and said that more than five lakh complaints were filed by BJP workers against "illegal Bangladeshis".

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

Jalukbari sees deletion of over

The final voter list for poll-bound Assam was published on Tuesday with 2,49,58,139 electors, a decrease of 0.97 per cent compared to the draft rolls. Sarma, the second BJP chief minister of Assam, has been a five-time MLA from Jalukbari since 2001.

He had snatched the seat from AGP's Bhriugu Kumar Phukan as a Congress candidate and represented the grand old party three times. In 2016 and 2021, he won Jalukbari on BJP ticket. In the entire Kamrup Metropolitan Election District, comprising Dispur, Dimoria, New Guwahati, Guwahati Central and Jalukbari seats, 25,932 names have been deleted in the final list.

The district presently has 10,49,644 voters compared to 10,75,576 in the draft roll, a decline of 25,932 voters or 2.41 per cent.

Now, those whose names were deleted can appeal to the district magistrate within 15 days, while a window for a second appeal is available to the CEO within 30 days, an official statement said. The Assam Assembly elections for 126 constituencies are likely to take place in March-April this year.

This will be the first assembly election after the delimitation exercise, which was done in 2023. (PTI)

Final photo electoral rolls

a transparent and efficient democratic process.

The Special Summary Revision is a routine exercise undertaken to remove discrepancies in electoral rolls, delete names of deceased or shifted voters, and include eligible citizens who attained the age of 18 by the qualifying date.

AGP sounds poll bugle in

become marginalised in their own land. Criticising the Congress, he alleged that the party had once tried to undermine the Assam Movement but was rejected by the people's nationalist resolve. He claimed the opposition currently lacks unity and has lost much of its influence.

Referring to recent controversies, Bora questioned why people should vote for a party whose president allegedly maintains links with a hostile foreign nation, adding that remarks attributed to Gaurav Gogoi had raised serious suspicions.

He termed the allegations involving the son of former chief minister Tarun Gogoi as unfortunate and said he felt personally embarrassed by the issue. Also addressing the rally, AGP working president and minister Keshab Mahanta described Upper Assam as the heartland of regionalism and nationalism, saying the people of the state have always honoured the 860 martyrs of the Assam Movement.

He criticised the formation of a new regional party and termed its reported alliance with a party allegedly responsible for the deaths of the martyrs as deeply unfortunate. Mahanta said the AGP, along with its allies, has worked to preserve history by building memorials for the martyrs and asserted that the party has never compromised on its principles. While acknowledging the AGP's alliance with the BJP since 2016, he said the party has never compromised on self-respect.

He urged voters in Teok to uphold regionalism in the coming elections and expressed confidence that the AGP would increase its seat tally, calling for the Congress to be decisively defeated. The Sankalp Samroh was organised by the AGP Jorhat district unit in coordination with the Teok constituency committee and was chaired by district president Saurav Pran Bora.

Central committee leader Bikash Saikia delivered the welcome address. Several senior leaders, including central vice-presidents Hiranya Konwar, Putal Baruah, Tulsii Gogoi and Nurul Sultan, along with district representatives and party functionaries from across Upper Assam, were present.

Assam govt to free

Authorities say they have reclaimed vast areas of land that had been encroached upon, emphasising that prior notices are issued and operations carried out with support from security agencies.

However, the eviction drives have also generated controversy and criticism from political opponents, civil society groups and affected residents, who argue that the operations disproportionately impact certain communities and call for more humane rehabilitation measures.

Despite these debates, the Assam government continues to pursue its anti-encroachment agenda with commitments to enforce legality and protect key state assets.

Himanta files ₹ 500 cr

to them," Sarma added, showing his thumb to the camera. Congress MLAs Bora and Barman lodged the complaint at Dispur Police Station in Guwahati on Tuesday against the Assam BJP for a video on its official social media handle, which showed Sarma purportedly taking aim with a rifle and firing a shot at two people, one wearing a skull cap and the other with a beard, with "point-blank shot" as the caption.

The video, posted on Saturday, was deleted after a massive political backlash. Sarma had on Monday claimed ignorance of the video, even as Gogoi accused the CM of "inciting genocide" against Muslims through his videos, and urged the police to take suo motu cognisance. (PTI)

SC agrees to hear plea of Left

The pleas listed in chronological order alleged provocative speeches and statements made by Sarma.

Earlier, a separate petition was filed by 12 people on the issue, seeking directions to prevent divisive comments by persons holding constitutional posts. (PTI)

SC allows Assam to constitute

notice to vacate the unauthorised occupation. The action shall be taken to remove the unauthorised occupants only after expiry of the notice period, it said. The top court asked the parties to maintain status quo in respect of land in occupation till a speaking order is passed and till the expiry of the notice period of 15 days. "Occupation of a gaon panchayat in a forest is permissible if there is sufficient proof as per the Jambandi register maintained by the forest department or as provided under the Forest Rights Act.

"In our opinion, the course of action to be adopted by the state government while removing the encroachment from the reserved forest contains sufficient procedural safeguards. The process sought to be adopted by the state government for removal of encroachment conforms to the principles of fairness, reasonableness and due process," the bench said. The order came on pleas filed by Abdul Khaleq and other affected families. The top court said forests are not merely repositories of timber or land capable of alternate use, but complex ecological systems indispensable for maintaining environmental balance.

The state government had argued that the land in occupation is within the reserve forest, which they have no legal right to occupy.

According to the state government, the forest areas were notified as reserve forests in 1887 and 1888 under the forest laws then in force.

The forest department of the Assam government issued eviction notices to the petitioners on the ground that they were unauthorised occupants of reserve forest land and directed them to vacate the said lands within a period of seven days from the date of the receipt of the notices. (PTI)

Assam voters deleted after

the official explained.

The CEO has instructed DEOs to conduct "rigorous checks" while processing Form 6 applications under this provision to ensure that no ineligible voter is enrolled and all eligible electors are correctly included, he said.

Applicants will have to submit a copy of their previous EPIC card along with all standard documents required under Form 6. The "Receiving District", where the applicant currently resides, will forward the application to the "Verifying District", where the elector was earlier enrolled, for cross-verification, he added.

Applicants must also appear in person before the ERO (Electoral Registration Officer) for a hearing and furnish all requisite documents and details.

"The Receiving District will examine the documents and information provided by the Verifying District and dispose of the Form 6 application in accordance with law," the letter said.

The final voters' list was published on Tuesday, with over 2.43 lakh names deleted from the draft roll. It comprises nearly 1.25 crore men, 1.24 crore women and 343 third gender voters. (PTI)

Assam Cong files police

claimed ignorance of the video, even as state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi accused the CM of "inciting genocide" against Muslims through his videos, and urged the police to take suo motu cognisance. The Congress, in its complaint, said the video depicted "Sarma symbolically firing at Muslims at point blank range".

The opposition party claimed that the overlaid text in the video included phrases such as "foreigner free Assam" and "there is no forgiveness to Bangladeshis". It asserted that such phrases alluded to the "state's Bengal-origin Muslims, often derogatorily labelled as 'Miyas' or 'Bangladeshis'".

"The aforesaid content targeting a particular community is highly provocative and communal, which will definitely lead (to) social disharmony amongst the people," the Congress MLAs said in the complaint.

On Monday, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi had lodged a complaint with the Hyderabad Police, seeking criminal action against the Assam CM over the now-deleted video.

Reacting to it, Sarma had said he was not aware of such a video and added, "If any case has been filed against me, arrest me. I don't have any objection. I will be prepared to go to jail. I will always stick to my words. I am opposed to Bangladeshi infiltrators and will always remain so." (PTI)

Assam tiger population

has consistently maintained that conservation and development must go hand in hand. Infrastructure upgrades within protected areas, better facilities for forest staff, and sustained monitoring of wildlife corridors have been prioritised to ensure long-term ecological balance.

Sarma said the conservation gains were not limited to tigers alone, pointing out that Assam's protected forests have become safer habitats for elephants, deer, birds and other species.

He reiterated the government's commitment to strengthening conservation efforts further, underlining that protecting wildlife was essential for preserving Assam's natural heritage for future generations.

Karbi language standardisation

announced by Khorsing Teron, who said the standardisation committee has proposed moving beyond the traditional five-vowel system.

Based on detailed phonetic analysis, the committee has recommended adopting seven vowels, 18 consonants and four diphthongs, a proposal that has received approval from the KAAC.

Teron also confirmed that the Rongkhang variation from West Karbi Anglong will continue as the standard written form due to its wider clarity and acceptance.

The workshop also examined sociolinguistic challenges confronting the language. The ang Teron presented a paper on indigenous epistemologies, cautioning against the "museumification" of Karbi and warning that the language risks becoming a cultural artefact if it ceases to be actively spoken.

Similar concerns were raised in a presentation on code-switching by Sarbinong E Kathar and Habe Teron, who highlighted increasing code-mixing among Karbi youth, leading to difficulties in expressing complete thoughts in their mother tongue.

An international perspective was added by Dr Linda Konnerth of the University of Bern, who chaired the pre-lunch session.

Other contributors included Mirdom Teronpi and Prof Bidisha Som on linguistic landscaping, Kar'etso Rongpi on syllable structures and word stress, and Sikari Tisso and Khoyasing Hanse on tonal necessity and regional orthographic variations.

The day concluded with an intensive session on developing a Karbi glossary, chaired by Dr Dharamsing Teron, director of CKS.

Participants noted that as the workshop heads into its final day, there is growing consensus that language standardisation is not merely a linguistic exercise but a crucial step towards cultural preservation and continuity.

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THE HILLS TIMES 3

Number of Assam voters decreases by 2.43 lakh

Final voters list after EC's Special Revision released

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: After a Special Revision (SR), the Election Commission published the final voters list for poll-bound Assam on Tuesday, with over 2.43 lakh names deleted from the draft roll.

At the end of claims and objections, the final roll has been published with a total of 2.49 crore voters, a decrease of 0.97 per cent from the draft roll, a statement issued by the office of the Assam Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) said.

The final electoral roll comprises nearly 1.25 crore men, over 1.24 crore women and 343 third gender voters.

In the final list, over 2.43 lakh names were deleted from the draft roll, according to the statement. The draft list, published on December 27 last year, had 2.52 crore enrolled voters.

The statement added that, as per appeal mechanism, any decision by an electoral registration officer can be appealed to the district magistrate within 15 days, with a second appeal available to the CEO within 30 days.

The Assam assembly elections are due in a few months, which will be held on the basis of this list. The draft roll during the SR



Jalukbari sees deletion of over 4,300 voters

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: More than 4,300 names from nearly 2.11 lakh voters have been deleted from Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's Jalukbari constituency in the final voter list published on Tuesday after the Special Revision.

In Jalukbari, 2,06,314 electors found their names, a decline of 4,310 voters or 2.05 per cent, compared to the 2,10,624 listed in

the draft roll published on December 27 last year, according to the press release by Kamrup Metropolitan district authorities.

The final electoral roll has 1,08,654 women as against 97,653 men, while there are also seven third gender voters. It revealed that the names of 2,754 men, 1,555 women and one third gender were deleted from the draft list. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

process had registered a 1.35 per cent increase from the previous final roll published in January 2025.

During the SR exercise, 4,78,992 deceased electors and 5,23,680 shifted electors were

identified. Another 53,619 multiple entries were identified. The changes based on these were reflected only in the final roll, published after end of claims and objections process.

Eligible voters, whose names were deleted from the final roll on the grounds of having "permanently shifted", can apply for inclusion of their names under a provision of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1950.

Meanwhile, people who have shifted from their earlier places of residence due to various reasons, including eviction drives, and find their names excluded from the final rolls (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Final photo electoral rolls published for Rongkhang and Amri constituencies

HT Correspondent HAMREN, Feb 10: The District Election Officer of West Karbi Anglong on Tuesday announced the publication of the Final Photo Electoral Roll-2026 for the 111 Rongkhang (ST) and 112 Amri (ST) Legislative Assembly Constituencies.

The rolls, finalised with January 1, 2026 as the qualifying date, were released on February 10 following the completion of the Special Summary Revision exercise.

The publication has been carried out in accordance with a notification issued by the Election Department, Assam, Dispur.

To ensure transparency and easy access, the final electoral rolls have been made available at all polling stations through the respective Booth Level Officers, at the office of the District Election Officer, West Karbi Anglong, Hamren, and on the official website of the Election Commission of India.

Election officials have urged voters of the Rongkhang and Amri constituencies to verify their names and personal details either by visiting their local polling stations or through the online portal. They stressed that accuracy of voter information is essential for maintaining (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Nationalism always alive in hearts Assam people, says Atul Bora

AGP sounds poll bugle in Teok with Sankalp Samaroh

HT Correspondent JORHAT, Feb 10: The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) on Tuesday formally launched its election campaign in the Teok Assembly constituency with a Sankalp Samaroh (pledge ceremony), holding a massive public rally near the National Highway at Charingia that was widely viewed as a show of strength ahead of the forthcoming Assembly elections.

The rally, attended by the party's central leadership, made it clear that while the AGP's alliance with the BJP remains intact, the regional party will field its own candidate in the Teok constituency. Addressing the gathering, AGP president and Assam minister Atul Bora urged people to strengthen the regional party, saying this was essential to safeguard regionalism and ensure the security and identity of the Assamese nation.

Bora said the central pledge of the meeting was to reinforce the AGP, adding that empowering the party would strengthen regionalism and protect indigenous identity. He said the AGP has been striving to implement the Assam

accord in full, fulfil the aspirations of the martyrs of the Assam Movement and resolve the state's ethnic and national issues.

He also said unemployment cannot be addressed only through government jobs, and that the party is working on long-term plans to create income opportunities for every household.

Stressing that political power is necessary to realise such commitments, Bora said nationalism would always remain alive in the hearts of the people of Assam.

Recalling the legacy of late Assam Movement leader Lalit Rajkhowa, Bora pointed out that AGP candidates have been winning the Teok seat continuously since 2016.

He said that following constituency delimitation, Teok now comprises 14 panchayats from Dergaon and seven from Jorhat, making it a larger constituency, and called upon party workers to intensify campaigning with renewed enthusiasm.

Describing the AGP as a secular party, Bora asserted that indigenous people would never be allowed to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam govt to free encroached land in the first capital of Ahom era

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday asserted that the government will soon secure the historic land of Rojbari (Raj Darbar) located in Charaideo district, the first capital of the Ahom era, following concerns about encroachment and the establishment of madrasas on the site.

In a post on X, Sarma said the state administration is committed to freeing the historic heritage site from illegal occupation and ensuring its protection for posterity.

The announcement comes amid a backdrop of widespread eviction and anti-encroachment drives being carried out across Assam in recent months, aimed at reclaiming government, forest and reserve lands from unauthorised settlers.

Since mid-2025, the state government has launched several large-scale eviction operations in districts such as Golaghat, Hailakandi, Patharkandi and Dhubri, with authorities targeting encroachments on forest lands, reserve forest areas and wetlands.

In some of the latest actions, over 2,000 families were served eviction notices as part of an exercise to clear tens of thousands of hectares of encroached reserved forest land, with heavy deployment of police and forest personnel overseeing the drives.

Assam has been in the news for its aggressive land reclamation campaign under the Sarma-led government, which maintains that such drives are necessary to protect the ecological balance, uphold the rule of law, and preserve the identity and resources of indigenous communities. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Himanta files ₹ 500 cr defamation case against Cong leaders over 'land grabbing' charges

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday filed a ₹ 500 crore defamation case against Congress leaders for their "land grabbing" allegations against him and his family.

He accused Congress leaders Jitendra Singh, Bhupesh Baghel and Gaurav Gogoi of making "false, malicious and defamatory allegations" during a recent press conference, leading to the legal suit against them.

"Over the last few days, Congress leaders have been saying that I have benami land of 12,000 bighas (over 3,960 acres). I have filed a case in court so that they can submit the list before the court itself," Sarma told reporters on the

sidelines of an official event in Bongaigaon. He said that if they cannot provide the list, they have to pay him ₹ 500 crore, he added.

In a post on X earlier, the CM said, "Today, I have filed a defamation case seeking ₹ 500 crore in damages against Congress leaders Jitendra Singh, Bhupesh Baghel and Gaurav Gogoi for making false, malicious and defamatory allegations against me through a press conference."

Addressing a joint press conference here on February 4, state Congress president Gogoi had claimed that the party's "investigation" has revealed that "almost 12,000 bighas of land have been occupied by the CM and his family across the

state". Asked about Congress filing a police complaint in Guwahati against the BJP for circulating a controversial video featuring him on social media, Sarma said he will continue speaking up as he has been doing now.

"It is good that they have filed the case... What does communal mean? You all know who I am against," the CM said, in an apparent reference to his stand against "illegal Bangladeshis".

"What will happen to me if a case is filed? For me, white is white, black is black. They cannot frighten me. Sibani Bora, Diganta Barman, their malik Rahul Gandhi can file a case against me. My thumb (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SC agrees to hear plea of Left leaders against CM over 'shooting' video

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to consider listing a plea of Left leaders seeking action against Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over a viral video allegedly showing him taking aim and firing with a rifle at members of the Muslim community.

Referring to the upcoming assembly polls in Assam, the top court said that the problem is that a part of the elections is fought before it.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joydip Bagchi and N V Anjaria took note of the submissions of lawyer Nizam Pasha, appearing for a few CPI and CPI(M) leaders, against Sarma and said it

will consider listing the plea. "We seek urgent intervention of this court with respect to disturbing speeches made by the sitting CM of Assam, including a recent video posted where he is shown as shooting at members of a particular community. Complaints filed, but no FIR is registered," the lawyer said.

The CJI said, "The problem is, as soon as elections come, part of the election is fought in the Supreme Court. That is the problem. We will find out and will give a date."

The video of Sarma purportedly taking aim with a rifle and firing at two people, one wearing a skull cap and the other with a beard, was shared by the

Assam BJP on its official X handle on February 7.

The controversial post sparked widespread outrage and political condemnation. It was deleted by the BJP after it drew accusations of inciting violence and communal hatred.

Separate pleas have been filed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and CPI leader Annie Raja seeking the registration of FIRs against Sarma for alleged hate speech aimed at communal polarisation.

They also sought setting up of a special investigation team (SIT) by the top court on the ground that an independent probe was not expected from state and central agencies. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

SC allows Assam to constitute committee to decide unauthorised occupants in Golaghat

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Observing that forests constitute one of the most vital natural resources of the nation, the Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed the Assam government to constitute a committee of forest and revenue officials to look into unauthorised occupants in the Doyang reserved forest and its adjoining villages in Golaghat district.

The apex court said that encroachment upon forest land has emerged as one of the gravest challenges confronting environmental governance in the country.

A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Alok Aradhe said the committee will issue notices to the alleged unauthorised occupants and give them an opportunity to

adduce evidence to show that they have the right to occupy the land which is in their possession.

"The action for removal of encroachment shall be taken only if it is found that there is an encroachment in the reserved forest area. "In case the noticee is found to be within the revenue limits, outside the notified forest area, the details of the noticee shall be sent to the revenue department. In such cases, the revenue department shall decide the future course of action," the bench said.

The apex court said that if an unauthorised occupation is found in a reserve forest area, a speaking order shall be passed and served on the concerned person, giving him 15 days' (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam voters deleted after being marked 'permanently shifted' can reapply: Official

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: Eligible voters, whose names were deleted from the electoral rolls during the Special Revision (SR) in Assam on the grounds of having "permanently shifted", can apply for inclusion of their names, officials said on Tuesday.

Such electors will be eligible to apply under a specific provision of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1950, they said.

"People who have shifted from their earlier places of residence due to various reasons, including eviction drives, will find their names deleted from their previous polling stations or constituencies. If they could not apply for shifting of their names before the deletion, they can now apply for inclusion at their new

address under this provision," an official said.

Applications can be filed with the final electoral roll at the end of the SR exercise being published, he added.

The state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) had issued a letter in this regard to all district election officers (DEOs) last week, a copy of which is available with PTL.

"In view of recent displacements in Assam due to various reasons or administrative actions, some electors were removed from the rolls as 'permanently shifted' but were unable to submit applications for shifting, as only one form can be processed during a single revision," the letter said.

It referred to provisions allowing

an elector to appeal under Section 24 of the RP Act, 1950, within the prescribed time to the DEO against deletion of their name, or to submit Form 6 for inclusion of their name in the electoral roll during summary revision or continuous updation.

"Consequently, such applicants shall apply in Form 6 after the publication of the final electoral roll," the letter added.

Form 6 is generally used for new voter enrolment and, in this case, can be used only by those electors whose names were deleted from their previous locations but could not submit Form 8 (shifting of residence or correction of entries) as a Form 7 (objection or deletion) was already in process against their names. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam Cong files police complaint

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: The Assam Congress on Tuesday filed a police complaint against the ruling BJP for circulating a controversial video of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on social media.

Party legislators Sibamoni Bora and Diganta Barman lodged the complaint at Dispur Police Station in Guwahati.

The Assam BJP had posted the video on its official social media handle on Saturday, which showed Sarma purportedly taking aim with a rifle and firing a shot at two people, one wearing a skull cap and the other with a beard, with "point-blank shot" as the caption. The video was deleted after a massive political backlash. Sarma had on Monday (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Community involvement cited as a vital element in reducing human-wildlife conflict

Assam tiger population increased three times from 2006: CM

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday highlighted the state's significant achievements in wildlife conservation, noting that Assam's tiger population has risen from just 70 in 2006 to 227 in 2022, reflecting what he described as strong political commitment and sustained collective action.

In a post on X, Sarma said "Assam today stands among the safest habitats in the country not only for the one-horned rhinoceros but also for a wide range of wildlife species. Expressing gratitude to the people of the state, the Chief Minister credited public support and community participation as key factors behind the conservation success".

"From 70 tigers in 2006 to 227 in 2022, Assam's conservation ef-



forts reflect strong commitment and collective action. Today, our state stands among the safest habitats not only for rhinos but for diverse wildlife. My gratitude to the people for their heartfelt support in this journey," Sarma said. Over the past two decades,

Assam has emerged as a major stronghold for wildlife conservation in India, with protected areas such as Kaziranga National Park, Manas National Park, Orang National Park and Nameri National Park playing a crucial role in safeguarding endangered species.

Kaziranga, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is globally known for hosting the world's largest population of one-horned rhinos, while Manas has witnessed a revival of species like the tiger and the pygmy hog.

Officials attribute the rise in tiger numbers to a combination of measures, including stricter anti-poaching operations, improved intelligence networks, enhanced patrolling, use of modern technology such as camera traps and drones, and greater coordination between forest departments and security agencies.

Community involvement, particularly through eco-development committees and awareness programmes, has also been cited as a vital element in reducing human-wildlife conflict. The Assam government (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Karbi language standardisation workshop focuses on phonology, script reforms

HT Bureau DIPHU, Feb 10: Efforts to preserve and standardise the Karbi language gathered momentum on Tuesday as the International Workshop on Standardisation of Karbi Language entered its second day at the Arboretum-cum-Craft Centre in Matipung.

Organised by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council in collaboration with the Centre for Karbi Studies (CKS) and the Standardisation Committee for Karbi Language (SCKL), the three-day workshop aims to develop a definitive framework for the written and spoken forms of the Karbi language and move it from a largely oral tradition to a documented academic standard.

The day's sessions focused on the technical foundations of the language. Maggie Katharpi, deputy director of CKS, opened the proceedings with a presentation on



the phonological foundations of Karbi, explaining the sound systems that shape the language.

This was followed by a presentation from Dr Amallesh Gope of Tezpur University, who emphasised the importance of lexical tones in Karbi.

He noted that, like other Tibeto-Burman languages, Karbi possesses

rich tonal inventories and that tone plays a crucial role in conveying meaning at the word level.

Dr Gope stressed the need to train school teachers to help students recognise these linguistic features from an early age for effective standardisation. A major development concerning the Karbi writing system was (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Be faithful to that which exists within yourself.
—Andre Gide

Trade pact and Russian oil

It is becoming increasingly clear that the acclaimed trade deal between India and US is at best a high-profile theatrical. So far, it is not even on paper. It exists on sound waves. Experts are eagerly looking for the joint statement of the two countries on the trade agreement. So far, even that has not emerged, only promises of it. India has so far desisted from giving a formal statement on the deal, if ever any agreement of that kind been finalised. Nor has the United States made any detailed statement on the agreement. It is possible to figure out from different cues what might have been happening around Indo-US trade deal, both in India and in America. The American pressure tactics did not work on India and when stood out, Americans had got frustrated. This was clear from the various comments made by Trump officials, as well as Trump himself, about India and its economic prospects. A one point, Donald Trump had called Indian economy “dead”, along with his various marquee discourteous comments. These developed had alienated the Indian team as well as top leadership. Prime Minister Modi had expressly turned down receiving calls from Donald Trump. Against this background, the sudden conclusion of the Indo-EU trade deal and the diplomatic hype around the India-EU trade agreement had left United States looking rather left out in the cold.

The claimed trade agreement was too lucrative as a diplomatic rehabilitation for India to turn it down as only an announcement. India however did not say anything specific about a trade deal being in place, though the prime Minister welcomed the presidential announcement with diplomatic civility. Thus, what now remained were the tall claims from United States, specially from its president, Donald Trump. This is a face-saving high decibel claim from the US president about his personal achievement. Trump had asked for the moon from India. He wanted India to drop all tariffs on American goods entering India, against his own tariffs on Indian products entering United States. The Americans have claimed India has accepted this in full. That is spreading pure misinformation, at best.

On India's purchases of Russian oils, all that has come from the official briefings is that India was open to examining the possibility of importing Venezuelan crude oil. Indeed, if Venezuelan oil is lower priced than Russian crude, it would be welcome and profitable for India to shift its purchases. India had pre-existing arrangements with the Venezuelan public sector oil companies for purchase of its oil. The American coup in Venezuela was a much later development. The sole purpose of buying Russian oils was the price advantage. Russian crude costs cheaper with a heavy discount as Russian sales elsewhere were falling off. Russian oil purchases had helped bring down the oil import bill substantially.

Assam's Electoral Roll Recast Ahead of 2026 Polls

Assam unveiled its final electoral roll following the completion of a statewide Special Revision (SR), a process that election authorities describe as both exhaustive and foundational to the credibility of the 2026 Legislative Assembly elections. The publication marks a decisive administrative milestone at a time when political activity across the state is steadily intensifying ahead of polls expected in March or April. Unlike the Special Intensive Revision conducted in 12 other states and Union Territories, Assam's exercise was distinguished by its methodology: a door-to-door verification campaign rather than a system dependent primarily on form-filling or document submission. The scale of the operation was formidable, involving 29,656 Booth Level Officers who fanned out across towns, riverine belts, tea garden settlements, char areas and remote habitations to physically verify electors on the ground. In a state where questions of citizenship, migration and demographic change have historically intersected with electoral politics, the emphasis on field verification rather than paperwork carries unmistakable political and institutional significance.

The draft roll published after the Special Revision reflected a total of 2,52,01,624 electors, representing a 1.35 per cent increase from the previous final roll issued in January 2025. Between January 6 and December 27 last year, the exercise recorded 7,86,841 additions and 4,47,196 deletions, figures that illustrate both demographic dynamism and administrative scrutiny. Officials identified 4,78,992 deceased electors, 5,23,680 shifted electors and 53,619 multiple entries during the course of verification. However, the Election Commission clarified that these names would be processed for deletion or shifting only after formal applications are submitted during the claims and objections period, underscoring the legal safeguards embedded within the revision framework. The process thus balances corrective action with procedural fairness, ensuring that changes to the roll are neither arbitrary nor unilateral.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, commenting on the exercise, stated that an “extensive” Special Intensive Revision will be undertaken in Assam after the Assembly elections. His remarks suggest that the current SR is part of a broader, phased approach to electoral purification and consolidation. The announcement of a post-poll SIR carries political resonance in Assam, where electoral rolls have long been at the centre of contentious debates, especially in the aftermath of the National Register of Citizens process and earlier agitations over illegal migration. By sequencing an extensive SIR after the polls, the government appears to be signalling both administrative continuity and political caution, separating immediate electoral

preparations from more expansive verification drives that may entail deeper scrutiny.

Simultaneously, the Election Commission has undertaken a comprehensive review of Assam's preparedness for the upcoming elections. A two-day meeting was convened to assess district-level readiness, security arrangements and coordination with enforcement agencies, indicating that logistical and law-and-order considerations are receiving equal attention alongside roll finalisation. Assam's electoral landscape is geographically and socially complex, with districts varying sharply in terrain, connectivity and demographic composition. Ensuring that the updated roll translates seamlessly into smooth polling operations requires meticulous coordination between civil administration, police forces and central agencies. The Commission's review meetings therefore signal an integrated approach, one that recognises the interdependence of accurate voter lists and secure polling conditions.

The process has also unfolded at the district level with a visible emphasis on transparency and stakeholder engagement. In Dhubri district, the final electoral roll was officially released on February 10, marking a crucial checkpoint in the countdown to the 2026 elections. The publication followed the completion of what local authorities described as a Special Amendment process and was unveiled at a high-level meeting held at the office of the Dhubri District Commissioner. District Commissioner Nabadeep Pathak presided over the meeting, which was attended by Additional Commissioner Debajyoti Gogoi, Additional Superintendent of Police Deepjyoti Talukdar, representatives of recognised political parties and members of the media. The presence of political stakeholders and journalists at the release was intended to underscore openness, reflecting the Election Commission's broader insistence that electoral roll management must withstand public scrutiny.

According to the final figures, Dhubri district now has 12,17,797 registered voters. Officials stated that the numbers reflect an intensive door-to-door verification exercise carried out by Booth Level Officers, aimed at eliminating duplicate and ineligible entries while ensuring that all citizens who attained voting age on or before January 1, 2026 were included. The emphasis on those reaching eligibility by the cut-off date reinforces the forward-looking dimension of the roll, integrating first-time voters into the democratic process. In districts like Dhubri, which occupy a politically sensitive position due to demographic composition and cross-border proximity, the credibility of the voter list carries heightened weight. The administration's articulation of accuracy and

inclusivity appears calibrated to reassure both political actors and ordinary citizens.

The constituency-wise distribution of voters in Dhubri offers further insight into the district's electoral arithmetic. Golakganj, designated as Assembly constituency number 6, accounts for 2,03,876 voters. Gauripur, constituency number 7, has the largest electorate in the district with 3,10,594 electors. Dhubri constituency itself, numbered 8, records 2,31,136 registered voters, while Birsingh Jaria, constituency number 9, stands at 2,80,461. Bilasipara, constituency number 10, completes the district's tally with 1,91,730 voters. These figures not only shape campaign calculations but also influence resource allocation, booth management strategies and the deployment of security personnel. Political parties are likely to scrutinise the data closely, mapping demographic trends and recalibrating outreach accordingly.

Addressing the gathering at the roll's release, District Commissioner Pathak emphasised that the Special Amendment was carried out with the highest standards of accuracy and openness. He noted that the administration worked in close coordination with political parties at every stage to ensure that no eligible voter was excluded, while simultaneously safeguarding the integrity of the roll. Such assertions are particularly salient in Assam's political context, where allegations of wrongful inclusion or exclusion can quickly acquire communal or regional overtones. By foregrounding collaboration and transparency, district authorities aim to pre-empt controversy and anchor the process within institutional legitimacy.

With the final roll now published, Dhubri district moves formally into the next phase of election preparedness. Copies of the electoral roll have been provided to all political parties, enabling them to scrutinise entries and raise objections where necessary. Voters have been encouraged to verify their details at respective polling stations or through the official Election Commission portal, reflecting a hybrid model that combines physical verification with digital accessibility. The encouragement for citizens to cross-check their particulars underscores an important principle of participatory oversight, where electoral integrity is reinforced not solely by administrative vigilance but also by voter engagement.

At the state level, the completion of the Special Revision represents more than a routine bureaucratic exercise. Assam's electoral history is inextricably linked with movements over identity, citizenship and representation, from the Assam Agitation of the late 1970s and early 1980s to more recent controversies surrounding the NRC. In this context, the methodology of revision

assumes symbolic as well as technical importance. The choice to rely on door-to-door verification through nearly thirty thousand Booth Level Officers signals a deliberate attempt to ground the process in physical presence and direct interaction, rather than relying exclusively on documentation that may be unevenly accessible in rural and marginalised communities. This approach may also serve to build confidence among segments of the electorate that remain wary of bureaucratic opacity.

The 1.35 per cent growth in the electorate, while modest, reflects steady demographic change and the integration of new voters into the democratic fold. The substantial number of additions and deletions illustrates the fluidity inherent in any large and mobile population, particularly in a state marked by internal migration, seasonal labour movement and urban expansion. The identification of deceased, shifted and multiple entries indicates that the revision was not merely additive but corrective, seeking to refine rather than inflate the voter base. Yet the Election Commission's insistence on processing deletions or shifts only after formal claims during the objections period demonstrates adherence to due process, a safeguard against the risk of erroneous disenfranchisement.

As Assam inches closer to the Assembly elections, the updated roll is poised to influence both political narratives and campaign logistics. Parties will read into the data patterns of growth or contraction in specific constituencies, recalculating electoral prospects accordingly. Meanwhile, the Election Commission's parallel review of security arrangements and enforcement coordination suggests awareness that accurate rolls must be matched by orderly polling environments. The Chief Minister's announcement of an extensive Special Intensive Revision after the polls adds another layer to the unfolding electoral calendar, hinting at further scrutiny beyond the immediate contest.

Ultimately, the publication of the final electoral roll after the Special Revision consolidates the administrative groundwork for Assam's forthcoming democratic exercise. It is a procedural step, yet one freighted with historical memory and contemporary political stakes. In districts like Dhubri and across the state's diverse constituencies, the updated voter list becomes both a ledger of citizenship and a map of political possibility. As campaigns gather pace and rhetoric sharpens, the integrity of this foundational document will remain central to public confidence. In a democracy as vibrant and contested as Assam's, the quiet labour of nearly 29,656 Booth Level Officers may prove as consequential as the speeches delivered from campaign stages in the months ahead. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)*

India's inclusiveness: A civilization legacy, not a constitutional accident

By: MR Lulu

What should it mean to be an Indian? The term “Indian” can carry diverse attributes across multiple perspectives. Yet the definition that has gained the most traction in our social system is one that associates Indianness with undiluted pride in India's democratic ethos and in the glory and framework of its Constitution. Undoubtedly, such pride should be seen as the defining marker of a true Indian.

With India's deep-rooted cultural munificence being evoked and brought to the surface once again, and viewed through a conservative lens, one may also argue that a person with a comprehensive civilizational understanding of inclusion, both in principle and in practice, is a true Indian. Between the two, the latter, in my view, holds deeper meaning. Being harmonious while remaining diverse is the finest epithet with which we can define the civilizational entity called India. This vast landscape, shaped by centuries of relentless struggle to recapitulate and reclaim its lost essence, has now reached a stumbling point, one where the weight of its democratic policy is heavily questioning its attempts at cultural revival.

There is little reason to fundamentally contradict India's constitutional institutions and democratic principles, which ultimately shape its egalitarian character. However, the process of carving a civilizational state into one deeply embedded in constitutional principles came at a great cost. Independent India clearly witnessed a popular struggle in which hundreds of fragments of a cultural nation were diplomatically at times even forcefully gathered and brought together under the identity of political unanimity.

The history of India is the history of inclusion. And to mend and amend its historical distortions should be seen as a course correction. Swami Vivekananda made this clear while speaking in the West. The unique element that separates India from the rest of the world, he proclaimed, is its cultural affirmation. This, he argued, is the result of India's vast civilizational memory, which would not only strengthen the nation spiritually but also enrich the world at large. India, he said, is defined by its historical continuity, its relentless flow that nurtures diverse forms of social organization and polytheistic ethnicities.

Vivekananda warned India to be cautious with this element of cultural stewardship, insisting that it must be preserved in all possible forms. But he

firmly reminded this spiritual landscape not to alienate those diverse thoughts and philosophies that had sought asylum on its soil.

Obviously, India's civilization has never been monolithic. It accommodated all those persecuted religions and sects on its shores that came seeking asylum. It rejected exclusivist religious fanaticism while proclaiming that all paths lead to the same truth.

Today, there is a profoundly well-crafted sentimental outrage at the academic and political level that distinctively demands the nullification of India being treated as a civilization, an assertion, they argue, is deeply threatening its democratic ambience. Everything, including this anger, agitation, and disquiet within intellectual circles and liberal academia, became loud and pronounced after the political shift India witnessed in 2014, which was largely accused of being an outcome of the politicization of India's civilizational credentials. Majoritarianism they called it. The shift maintained its consistency, crossing a decade and entering its third term of governance and the disquiet, however, continues within the liberal intelligentsia, who describe it as alarmingly dangerous.

The same seasoned intellectuals sought to have their liberal narratives framed against our cultural self-discovery, heard louder and clearer when India, under its robust judiciary, settled a centuries-old dispute and reclaimed one of its holiest centers of worship in Ayodhya. The jubilation and celebration in the aftermath were termed a crude civilizational self-assertion, purposefully designed for political gain. Outcries for the revival and reclamation of more cultural symbols by a section of society often referred to as the majority, were seen as attempts to distort India's secular alignment. This, once again, has been described as an effort to evade reality, relying on emotionally gratifying narratives rather than hard facts.

Those who propagate this narrative rarely acknowledge the reality of India's glorious past. It was not merely the post-colonial democratic framework that made India an aspirational candidate for its Vishwaguru stature once again; rather, it was its ancestry, deeply rooted in a cultural paradigm that this great land had preserved for eons but was later forced to discard or deliberately bury under the ruthless impact of colonial impulses.

As a democracy, India's comprehensive growth will gain sustainable strength only if it does not forget its

civilizational past. That said, an increasingly prominent attempt is being made to portray our reclamation of its distorted past as a form of cultural predation against minorities especially Muslims by a majoritarian establishment.

Shashi Tharoor has recently observed (Indian Express, January 29) that while majoritarianism, the political shift that India has been passing through for a decade has evidently been on an outright civilizational self-assertion. He suspects that, in effect, attempts at such reclamation have never been inclusive enough. A divide, he calls it, has emerged so intensely damaging that its social structure is visibly divided into a Hindu-Muslim binary. Even though he hesitates to register his complete disregard for this self-assertion, his complaint is about its failure to use it as a tool for building a more inclusive and acceptable society wherein diversity flourishes. But this is mere speculation.

Tharoor observes that the vast tapestry of diverse faiths in India has been confined to a complex Hindu-Muslim binary, which he further claims to be the impact of a deliberate betrayal of the essence of India's civilization. All his hints and criticisms are indirectly targeting the government at the Centre. The present question concerns the revival of India's cultural legitimacy, its preservation and projection. In Shashi Tharoor's view, governance should not expend its power and resources on evoking historical wrongs. This admonition is directed primarily at the majority which, as noted earlier, enabled a decade long political shift in governance.

The same reasoning explains why India endures as a democracy of diversity. Historical experiences across regions suggest that societies structured around rigid theological authority often struggle with plural civilizational accommodation. We have bitter examples of Pakistan and Bangladesh around us.

Shashi Tharoor does not subscribe to this view. Despite India's diversity being a celebrated and defining theme, there remain pockets where monotheistic theocracy continues to control social institutions. Religious dogmas and rules, as emphasized in holy texts, are treated as sacrosanct. No authority, in any form, is permitted to question the imperious influence of the theocracy. An attempt for restorative justice, even though not fully, helps India to regain its cultural memory, strengthening its aspirations to grow globally with its benefits going to all Indians. *(The author is a freelance journalist and social worker)*

India-Russia: A bond forged in trust and mutual respect

By: Lalit Nath

In today's world, where international relations are often overshadowed by suspicion, conditional alliances, calculations of immediate self-interest and shifting geopolitical equations, the relationship between India and Russia stands out as a rare and reassuring beacon of consistency and goodwill. This is not a partnership built on short-term convenience or diplomatic opportunism. It is a bond that has been carefully cultivated over many decades, resting firmly on the foundations of mutual trust, genuine understanding and deep-seated respect between two sovereign nations.

This enduring quality was once again eloquently reaffirmed in the recent remarks of Ivan Fetsiov, Consul General of Russia in Mumbai. Addressing the “Advantage Vidarbha 2026” International Business Conclave in Nagpur on February 7, 2026, he made it clear that the India-Russia relationship has long outgrown the narrow boundaries of strategic or defence cooperation alone. It has evolved into a truly multifaceted partnership—one brimming with possibilities for deeper, broader and more resilient collaboration across diverse fields in the years to come.

Fetsiov highlighted the warmth and mutual positivity that marked the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin in September of the previous year. That interaction was far more than a ceremonial exchange, it served as a powerful demonstration of the relationship's inherent stability, continuity and forward-looking dynamism. Regular high-level engagements of this kind—conducted in an atmosphere of openness and sincerity—continue to reinforce and deepen the trust that has long been the cornerstone of ties between the two countries. One of the most significant and heartening aspects of the Consul General's address was his unequivocal and unconditional recognition of India's independent foreign policy. He stated with clarity that India's decision to build relations with the United States, Kazakhstan, Brazil, or any other nation is entirely a matter of India's sovereign choice. Russia does not view such engagements with suspicion, nor does it seek to obstruct them. On the contrary, Russia itself upholds the same principle—remaining fully open to pursuing free, independent and constructive cooperation with any country that shares common goals.

In his own words: “We have a truly good relationship built on trust and mutual respect. In today's complex world, these two qualities are of utmost importance.” With this simple yet profound observation, Fetsiov captured the very essence of what makes the India-Russia

partnership so distinctive and so resilient in an era of global uncertainty.

He went on to identify nuclear energy as one of the most promising and strategically important areas for future collaboration. Russia's State Atomic Energy Corporation (Rosatom) enjoys a well-earned reputation worldwide for its technological excellence, reliability and commitment to peaceful nuclear development. The Consul General spoke with optimism about the significant progress being achieved in Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)—innovative, safer and more adaptable nuclear power solutions that could play a vital role in meeting future energy needs. Importantly, he stressed that the true potential lies not merely in conventional buyer-seller arrangements, but in genuine technology partnership: joint research, co-development and shared innovation. Should India adopt a more open and collaborative approach in this vital sector, he suggested, it would open vast new horizons of mutual benefit, energy security and technological advancement for both nations. Fetsiov also expressed particular appreciation for platforms such as the Advantage Vidarbha conclave. He noted that such international business gatherings go far beyond academic or diplomatic discussion—they create real, actionable opportunities for practical cooperation. His own interactions during the event, including meaningful conversations with Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, brought to light promising prospects in infrastructure projects, investment flows and long-term economic partnership. Events of this nature serve as vital bridges, transforming diplomatic goodwill and shared vision into concrete outcomes that benefit both sides.

From these observations, one truth emerges clearly: the India-Russia relationship is neither transient nor transactional. Its strength derives from a foundation of trust that has been patiently built over decades—through shared challenges, consistent mutual support and an unspoken but steadfast commitment to each other's core interests and dignity.

Russia's full and respectful acceptance of India's multi-aligned, multi-vector foreign policy is especially meaningful. This recognition does not merely acknowledge India's autonomy, it actively strengthens and enlarges it. In an increasingly polarized world, such affirmation allows India to pursue its national interests with greater confidence and strategic independence.

Today's global environment is characterized by deepening divisions, persistent economic pressures and intensifying geopolitical rivalries that frequently test bilateral relationships. In such a landscape, partnerships rooted in genuine

mutual respect and unshakeable trust acquire an almost priceless value. They provide not just reliability, but a rare form of enduring stability that withstands the shifting currents of international politics.

Crucially, such a relationship does not demand complete agreement on every issue, nor does it breed suspicion toward either side's other friendships. On the contrary, the very freedom and openness that define this bond—each nation pursuing its legitimate interests without fear of reproach—lend it greater resilience and long-term sustainability.

The Consul General's visit to Nagpur and his thoughtful, affirming remarks serve as a timely reminder: relationships constructed on the solid bedrock of trust and mutual respect are the ones that endure the tests of time. Through continued cooperation in nuclear energy, meaningful dialogue on infrastructure and connectivity, vibrant business forums and the steady rhythm of high-level engagement, the friendship between India and Russia is poised not only to survive but to flourish—growing deeper, broader, and more significant with each passing year.

In an age too often dominated by short-term calculations, fragile alignments and fleeting interests, the India-Russia partnership stands as both an inspiration and a quiet but powerful lesson. When nations choose to build their relations on the enduring foundations of trust, sincerity and mutual respect, the result is a bond that remains stable, dependable and—above all—beneficial to both peoples across generations.

In celebrating this relationship we are reminded that true friendship between individuals, like true friendship between nations, is measured not by the absence of differences, but by the presence of unwavering respect and the courage to allow each other the freedom to grow and engage with the world on their own terms. That quiet strength has sustained India and Russia for decades—and it will continue to light the path forward for many more to come.

As the world navigates an increasingly uncertain future, marked by rapid technological change, shifting power balances and persistent global challenges, such time-tested relationships become even more valuable. They offer not only strategic reliability but also a moral compass for how sovereign nations can cooperate without compromising their independence. The India-Russia example shows that a genuine partnership built on mutual dignity can withstand any storm. It is a model worth following and a quiet reassurance that trust and respect remain the most enduring and valuable currency in international relations. *(The author can be reached at 954139493)*

What does ovulation pain mean?

By: Peter Morales-Brown

Ovulation pain describes a sudden, sharp pain when they ovulate. Also known as mittelschmerz pain, it does not necessarily indicate that something is wrong in the pelvic region.

Ovulation occurs when a follicle in an ovary ruptures, releasing an egg. The egg eventually travels down the fallopian tubes to the uterus.

Most researchers think mittelschmerz pain is due to the swelling or rupturing of the follicle. The pain can last anything from a few hours to a few days.

A 2013 study of 55 women found that 35 percent felt pain in the middle of their cycle, with 16.6 percent of them experiencing pain on one side of the body.

Doctors do not know why some people experience ovulation pain, and some do not, but there is no evidence that it is a sign of a serious problem.

However, it is easy to mistake other abdominal pain for ovulation pain, so anyone experiencing any pelvic pain symptoms should see a doctor.

Symptoms of ovulation pain

Pelvic pain is common. A 2014 review of previous research found that between 5.7 and 26.6 percent of women worldwide have chronic pelvic pain.

It can be hard to tell the difference between ovulation pain and other types of pain, especially if people do not track their menstrual cycles or know when ovulation is happening.

Some symptoms of ovulation pain include:

- Sudden pain, not pain that gets worse over several days or

hours

- Pain that appears in the middle of a cycle
- Pain on only one side of the body

The pain may be sharp or dull. It may feel like a stabbing sensation or cramp. Mittelschmerz is not typically severe enough to cause alarm. The pain usually occurs on its own; if it happens alongside other symptoms, however, it probably has another cause.

Signs that the pain might be due to something other than ovulation include:

- Pain on both sides of the body
- Pain that gets steadily worse
- Pain that lasts several days
- Pain with vaginal bleeding
- Pain following an injury
- Swelling or bloating
- Vomiting, nausea, or diarrhea
- Painful urination

Other causes of pelvic pain

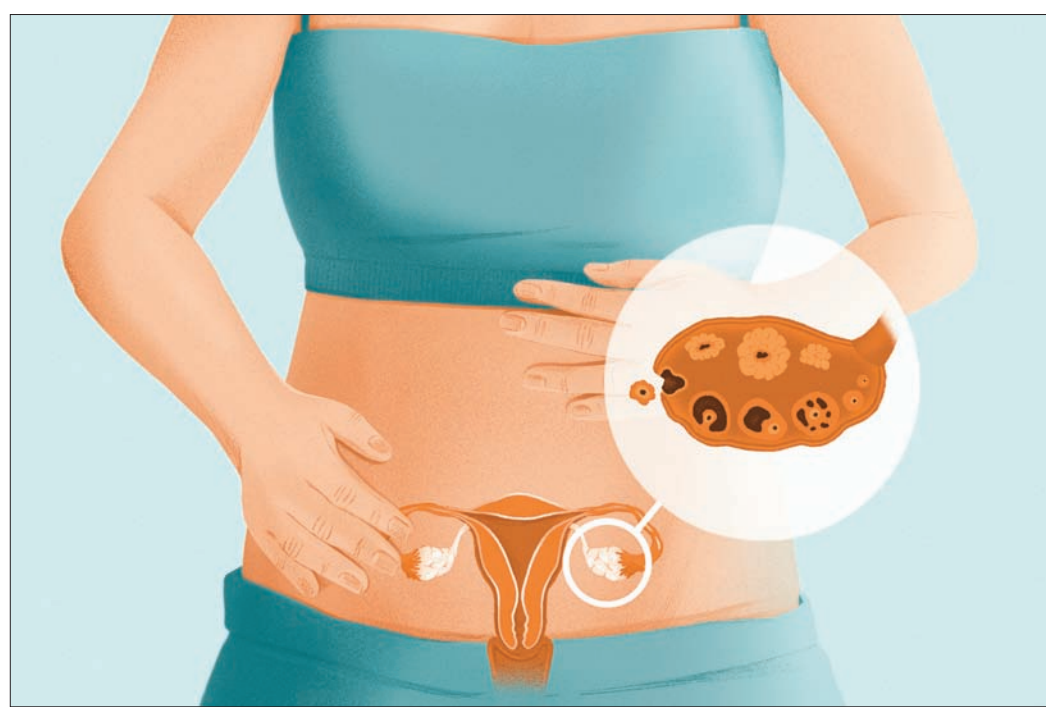
Many other conditions can cause pelvic pain, including pelvic pain around the time ovulation. Some of the most common causes include:

Pelvic relaxation syndromes
Pelvic relaxation syndromes, which are common in those who have given birth and in older women, happen when muscles in the pelvis weaken. They cause chronic pain that may also result in back or stomach pain.

Urinary disorders

A urinary tract infection can affect the urethra, bladder, or kidneys. It can make urination very painful, cause blood in the urine, and also cause fevers and back pain.

Pain in the lower stomach, especially if the pain occurs with urinary pain, may mean there is a urinary tract infection.



Endometriosis

Endometriosis is a condition that causes the tissue that lines the uterus to occur in other areas of the body. It causes chronic pelvic pain at the place where the endometrial tissue has developed.

Many people with endometriosis experience intense menstrual cramps or very heavy periods. Others have pain throughout their cycle or very irregular periods.

Menstrual cramps

Cramping right before or during a period is not ovulation pain. Many women experience menstrual cramps. If the pain is mild and does not interfere with daily tasks, there is probably no need for concern and treatment is not usually necessary.

However, intense pain or pain that has gotten steadily worse with each period requires the attention of a doctor.

Constipation

Constipation can cause a range of painful or unusual sensations in the stomach or pelvis. A person who has not had a bowel movement in several days, or who has strained to have a bowel movement, may have constipation. Chronic constipation may also be a sign of an underlying medical condition.

Appendicitis

Appendicitis occurs when the appendix becomes infected. It can be very dangerous without treatment. The pain usually starts in the middle of the stomach and may come and go. Typically, the pain travels to the lower right

side of the abdomen over several hours and becomes very intense. Anyone who suspects they may have appendicitis should see a doctor immediately.

Ectopic pregnancy

An ectopic pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg implants somewhere other than the uterus. An ectopic pregnancy cannot continue. If a doctor does not remove the fertilized egg, the fallopian tube could rupture, which may have a severe impact on fertility or even be fatal.

Pain on one side of the body late in the cycle, especially if a period is late, could be a sign of an ectopic pregnancy. If the pain gets worse over several days or fever develops, see a doctor immediately.

Ruptured ovarian cyst or

ovarian torsion

Most ovarian cysts go away on their own. Sometimes, however, they rupture or damage the ovary. An ovarian torsion happens when the ovary twists around the fallopian tube. It can cause dangerous bleeding and possibly cause the ovary to die.

A ruptured ovarian cyst or ovarian torsion is a medical emergency. The pain is intense and unrelenting and can happen at any time during the menstrual cycle.

Gastrointestinal problems

Sometimes, it can be difficult to tell the difference between stomach and pelvic pain. Many stomach and intestinal problems can cause pain, including pain on one side of the body. Problems with the pancreas or liver often cause pain in the upper right stomach.

Other gastrointestinal problems, such as diverticulitis, an infection, or another serious problem with the intestines, can also cause stomach pain.

Many people also develop other symptoms alongside pain, such as:

- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Bloating
- Changes in the color of the stool

When to see a doctor

See a doctor for ovulation or pelvic pain if:

- The pain is intense, interferes with daily functioning, or has gotten worse over time
- The pain occurs at a time other than the middle of the cycle or lasts for several days
- The pain occurs alongside heavy bleeding
- There are other symptoms

present, such as painful urination or fever

Go to the emergency room if:

- The pain is unbearable
- The pain occurs in a woman who is pregnant or who might be pregnant
- The pain results from a blow to the stomach, sexual assault, or other potential injuries to the pelvic organs

Home remedies

Ovulation pain is usually mild and does not require treatment. Those who find the pain too intense can try one of the following home remedies:

- Taking a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID), such as ibuprofen, at the first sign of ovulation pain. Women who chart their cycles may be able to predict the day of ovulation and might consider taking an NSAID before the pain begins.

• Stretching. Gentle stretches can help relieve muscle tension that may intensify the pain.

• Applying a hot pack to the area for 20 minutes at a time.

These mild remedies are suitable for people who do not have any health issues or concerns. Anyone in any doubt that their pain is not due to mittelschmerz should talk to a doctor.

Takeaway

Ovulation pain is common and not a sign of any specific problem. Many people are not sure when they ovulate, making it easy to confuse mittelschmerz with other types of pain.

A visit to a doctor can help with diagnosing the cause, in addition to offering reassurance to those with concerns that ovulation pain might signal a serious problem. (Courtesy: *Medical News Today*)

Seed keepers of the Himalayas

How mountain women protect India's food heritage

By: Nilakshi Moran

The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), stretching from Ladakh in the northwest to Arunachal Pradesh in the far east, is a landscape where agriculture is more than a livelihood. It is a way of life intertwined with ecology, culture and survival. In this mountainous terrain, where communities face climate uncertainties, fragile slopes, small terraced farms and limited market access, women play a crucial yet often overlooked role in sustaining traditional farming systems. They are the seed keepers, biodiversity custodians and holders of traditional ecological knowledge. From Uttarakhand's Garhwal and Kumaon to Himachal Pradesh's Kinnaur and Chamba, and from Sikkim's Lepcha heartland to Arunachal Pradesh's Apatani plateau, women conserve seeds and along with it, entire cultural landscapes.

Traditional Himalayan agriculture follows principles very different from industrial farming. It values diversity rather than monoculture, resilience rather than maximum yield and seed sovereignty rather than dependence on corporate seed systems. Women sit at the centre of this agro-ecological framework. Their work begins long before planting and continues well after harvest. They preserve and select seeds, manage soils, conserve water, cultivate mixed-cropping systems and secure household nutrition. Scientific research increasingly affirms these contributions. A 2023 study by Ramirez-Santos et al. shows that women globally—and particularly in mountain regions—are the primary conservers of agro-ecological knowledge.

Across the IHR, women safeguard hundreds of indigenous seed varieties, each adapted to specific microclimates, altitudes, soils and food traditions: red rice from Kangra, black rajma from Uttarakashi, buckwheat from Sikkim, millets such as mandua and jhangora in Uttarakhand, foxtail millet in Nagaland and hardy barley varieties in Ladakh. These seeds endure for generations, unlike hybrids that last only one season. They are drought-resistant, nutrient-rich, naturally pest-tolerant and climate-resilient—qualities essential for mountain agriculture in the climate crisis.

This knowledge passes through observation, participation and cultural inheritance. Elder women often say, "Bej hi jeevan ka bej hai" (seeds are the seeds of life). Seed selection involves judging colour, hardness, aroma, yield, taste, digestibility and cultural importance. The work carries emotional and ritual meaning. Women invoke local deities before sowing to ensure a good harvest. Seed exchanges at weddings and festivals reinforce social and ecological bonds.

Storage relies on deep ecological insight: ash, turmeric, neem, cow dung and smoke serve as natural preservatives. Uttarakhand's women use kholi and palm grass baskets; in Himachal's Kullu Valley, dry gourds and pine resin keep seeds viable; in Arunachal Pradesh, communities wrap millets in leaves and hang them near kitchen hearths; Ladakh stores seeds in insulated clay granaries. These sustainable, chemical-free practices remain largely invisible in mainstream agricultural policy.

Women also maintain Himalayan crop diversity through systems such as baranaja in Uttarakhand, an intercropping method where up to twelve crops—finger millet, amaranth, rajma, horse gram, cucumbers, flax and others—grow together. As watershed scientist PS Tiwari in 2000 noted, baranaja is a sophisticated risk-management strategy shaped and run by women. If one crop fails in unpredictable weather, others may survive, protecting food supplies. This diversity enriches soil, reduces erosion and stabilises fragile slopes.

A 2023 study in the journal *Environmental Development* shows that Himalayan women hold detailed knowledge of micro-ecologies. They predict crop performance by observing cloud movement, insect behaviour and soil texture. These skills are learned through generations, not manuals. Women also guide shifting cultivation (jhum) in Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, determining fallow cycles and forest regeneration. Yet state policies often blame jhum for deforestation, overlooking women's ecological stewardship.

Women's labour underpins Himalayan agriculture. With many men migrating to cities for work, women often become de facto farm heads. They plough fields, sow seeds, irrigate through traditional kulhs and gulhs, apply manure, collect fodder and harvest crops. They maintain kitchen gardens rich in vegetables, herbs and medicinal plants such as tulsi, nettle, rhododendron and wild amaranth. Research by Gautam et al. in 2022 estimated that women contribute 70-90 per cent of agricultural labour across the IHR. Yet they remain "invisible farmers", rarely owning land, with little access to credit, minimal representation in extension services and limited influence over decisions.

Gender-blind policies and technologies add to their difficulties. Most training programmes target men, assuming they are the primary farmers. Tools and equipment are seldom designed with women's ergonomics in mind, increasing physical strain. Climate change intensifies these burdens: drying springs, degraded forests and invasive species such as *Lantana camara* and *Parthenium hysterophorus* force women to travel longer distances

for water and fodder. Warmer temperatures bring new pests to previously unaffected crops.

Despite these challenges, women lead climate adaptation through mulching, mixed cropping, soil conservation and seed banking, yet receive little institutional backing. Commercial seed companies further threaten traditional seed systems by promoting hybrids unsuited to mountain conditions. Hybrids demand external inputs, degrade soil and erode seed sovereignty, pushing farmers towards dependency and debt.

In response, women across the Himalayas have revived strong seed sovereignty movements. Uttarakhand's Beej Bachao Andolan, launched in the 1980s, revived more than 120 indigenous varieties and restored millets as "grains of life." Women-led Self-Help Groups in Pithoragarh and Almora now operate seed banks that lend native seeds seasonally. In Sikkim, women in Dzongu and West Sikkim manage community seed libraries.

Ao and Angami women in Nagaland sustain millet festivals to preserve seed heritage. In Ladakh, women's cooperatives linked with LEHO and the Women's Alliance of Ladakh conserve traditional barley and pea varieties. These initiatives show that women protect more than seeds. They protect identity, resilience and ecological sovereignty.

But these efforts need structural support to grow. Many schemes—including the National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture, the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and the Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana—do not reach remote mountain women because of bureaucratic gaps and the absence of gender-sensitive design. Recognising women as farmers is essential to securing land rights, credit, insurance and access to climate finance.

Hill-region Farmer Producer Organisations must include women in leadership roles. Seed banks need support through biodiversity conservation programmes, and agricultural planning must integrate traditional seed systems. Documentation is urgent: the knowledge of older women is at risk of being lost. Partnerships between universities, Indian Council of Agricultural Research institutes and women farmers can help create community biodiversity registers and Himalayan seed atlases.

If India seeks climate resilience and long-term food security, supporting women seed conservers is essential. They safeguard genetic diversity that can withstand climate extremes, protect agro-biodiversity that corporations cannot replicate and practice sustainability more effectively than many current policy models. The future of Himalayan agriculture depends on recognising, empowering and learning from these women, the true seed keepers of the mountains. (Courtesy: *Down to Earth*)

Easy tips to get glowing skin on Valentine's Day

By: Shahnaz Husain

Looking to go glam on February 14? For couples in love and hopeful singles, February is the Paris of all months. Valentine's day is the most awaited time of the year, whether you've been together three months or three decades. Valentine day is the perfect opportunity for you to bond and reconnect with your partner, girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, or wife.

It doesn't matter if you are going on special date for a romantic night out, looking for one or just a walk with friends and family. It brings the biggest date night of the year and the restlessness that comes along to look one's best on the special day.

If you can't be with your sweetie in person this year, then you might as well send them something sweet through online store/e-commerce websites. There are a lot of valentine gift packs in the market containing chocolate truffle flavours: milk chocolate, milk chocolate caramel, and dark chocolate strawberry. You may choose desi Ladoo/mithai depending on the taste of your sweetie.

Especially impressive if you live apart, a surprise gift might be the perfect way to share the love this year. Not sure what to buy? Keep it classic—paintings, art objects and flowers like roses will always be well-received and create a sense of occasion. Twinned with a scented candle, Valentine's Day will be truly wrapped up.

Take advantage of sweater weather and escape into the wilderness, where you can relax by the fire and enjoy some hot chocolate. Take a scenic hike together and enjoy all the beautiful sights and the fresh air—it's a great way to bond while getting some much-needed time to unplug, too.

If you've got a new boyfriend, a hot date, or a tried-and-true love, Valentine day gives you the perfect excuse to pamper yourself to look romantic, sweet, presentable, attractive with flawless looking radiant skin with youthful glow.

Water based moisture is key for glowing skin. Moisturizers provide a good base before applying any makeup. Moisturizers which are formulated with shea butter,

dimethicone, ceramides, hyaluronic acid and aloe vera water help provide long-lasting hydration. Hydrate and nourish your skin every night before sleeping.

If your skin is clear, leave out foundation during the day. Use baby powder, or compact power. Pay more attention to the oily areas of the face, like nose, forehead and chin. Press the powder all over the face and neck, with a slightly damp sponge. This helps it to set and last longer.

If you want to use foundation at night, choose a water-based one. Add a drop of water for a lighter coverage. Before applying foundation, apply astringent lotion if your skin is oily, or moisturizing lotion for dry skin. Wait for a few minutes to allow the skin to absorb it. Next, use concealer to cover up pimples and scars, if any. Or, use two shades of foundation. One shade should be as close to your skin colour as possible. The other should be a shade lighter if the blemishes are dark. Take a little light coloured foundation and apply it directly on the pimple or pimple scar. Avoid rubbing or smearing. Pat it into the skin. Then apply your normal foundation on the face and using a moist sponge, spread it evenly, going outwards. Remember the neck too. Blending is important to achieve a smooth finish then apply tinted loose powder on top to "set" the foundation. Or, use compact powder.

Blusher comes next, or you can apply it at the end. Use powder blusher. Pink or peach blusher would suit most skin tones. Apply on the cheekbones and slightly below it. Use your finger tips to dot the area with blusher. Then, blend with the brush, outwards and slightly upwards. Apply highlighter on the cheekbones. Highlighters should not be white. Choose from ivory or pale pink. Blend well.

For the eyes, use a brown eye shadow on the eyelids. Use the same brown shadow under the lower lashes, instead of eyeliner or kajal. Take a darker brown eye shadow and apply it on the upper lid, close to the upper lashes. The entire effect will be natural. If you want to line the eyes, use an eye pencil. Give your eyes a light touch of mascara. Make sure the

lashes do not stick together. Brush them with an eyelash comb.

Wear a sun block for outdoor events during the day, this acts as a shield and also works as a good under base for your foundation accelerating its performance.

Take proper sleep for at least eight hours during night. Lack of sleep will show on your face no matter how well you fashion your appearance. Put a drop or two of lavender oil on your pillowcase and try to relax. Sandalwood and Clary Sage are other good options.

For the night and for a more dramatic effect, use a dark brown, or dark grey eye shadow on the eyelids close to the lashes and stroke it upwards and outwards. For the smoky eyed look, line the eyes with eyeliner close to the lashes and then smudge the eyeliner slightly with a sponge tipped applicator. It should not be a harsh line. Who ever heard of a Valentine's Day date ending without a goodnight kiss? Go with a soft pink or berry hue that are no more than two shades darker than your natural lip color is a good way to keep your lips colored without going overboard. Exfoliate your lips the night before date night with a gentle lip scrub to remove dead skin cells to soften your pucker and improve the look and application of your date night lipstick.

For the buttery soft and smooth lips, plain gloss can be enough for the day, or add a touch of gloss over light pink or mauve lipstick. Coloured gloss is also available. Avoid using lip liners and just brush the lips with lipstick, going for shades of pink, from pale pink, to rose or tawny pink. At night, go for rose, coral or bronze, or just stick to pink. Just don't forget to hydrate your lips with your favourite lip balm, salve, or conditioner after exfoliating. Wear a light flowery or lemony fragrance, nothing too overpowering. Always be kind and confident. I think these two traits together make someone beautiful. As the last step, touch up your nails, smooth your strands, and spritz on some perfume. You're ready to go! (The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called *Herbal Queen of India*)

Delhi's missing women are not a mystery- They are a governance failure

By: trivedi.ritwik91

In the first fifteen days of 2026, more than 800 people were reported missing in India's capital. Over 500 of them were women and girls. These are not speculative figures, nor are they the product of social media exaggeration. They emerge from official police data—data that should have triggered alarm bells at the highest levels of governance.

Instead, they have been met with a familiar response: silence, procedural language, and administrative indifference. This is not merely a law-and-order issue. It is a governance crisis—and more importantly, a moral one.

When Disappearance Becomes Bureaucratic Routine

An average of over 50 missing persons every day in the national capital is not a statistical anomaly. It is evidence of systemic breakdown. Yet the language of the state treats these disappearances as routine entries in a register rather than as emergencies demanding immediate, coordinated response.

What makes the situation particularly disturbing is the gendered nature of the crisis. Women and adolescent girls form the majority of the missing. A significant proportion of them remain untraced weeks later. In any functioning democracy, this would be grounds for urgent legislative scrutiny, executive intervention, and public accountability.

In Delhi, it has been normalised. The disappearance of women has been absorbed into bureaucratic inertia—filed, deferred, and quietly forgotten.

Safety as Slogan, Not Policy

Women's safety has become one of the most overused political slogans in contemporary India. Every government, regardless of ideology, claims commitment. Funds are allocated, schemes announced, apps launched, and CCTV cameras installed. Yet when women actually go missing, the state machinery responds with astonishing lethargy.

Families recount a familiar pattern: delays in registering FIRs, casual assumptions that women have "run away," and a lack of urgency in the crucial first 48-72 hours. These early hours are internationally recognised as decisive in missing-persons investigations. In Delhi, they are often wasted.

This is not just inefficiency. It reflects deep-seated institutional bias—where missing women are treated as questionable subjects rather than citizens entitled to immediate protection.

The Unspoken Fear: Trafficking and Exploitation

Large-scale disappearances of women and minors inevitably raise concerns about human trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced labour, and organised crime networks. Delhi's status as a transit hub—with its railway stations, inter-state bus terminals, informal labour markets, and shelter homes—makes it especially vulnerable.

Yet there is a conspicuous absence of public acknowledgement from authorities that trafficking networks may be operating at scale. There is no visible emergency task force, no publicly articulated strategy, no transparent disclosure of inter-state coordination mechanisms.

Denial, in this context, is not ignorance. It is a political choice—to avoid confronting an inconvenient truth that would demand accountability and expose institutional failure. (Courtesy: *Youth Ki Awaaz*)

'In his head, still thinks that he can actually militarily win (in Ukraine) at some point' Russia thinks it can outsmart US during Ukraine peace talks

LONDON, Feb 10: Russian officials have no desire to halt Russia's almost 4-year-old invasion of neighbouring Ukraine and think they can "outsmart" the United States during talks with Washington about how to end the war, a senior European intelligence official told The Associated Press.

Kaupo Rosin, the head of Estonia's foreign intelligence service, said Moscow is playing for time in the talks with Washington and "there is absolutely no discussion about how to really cooperate with the US in a meaningful way."

Rosin, who spoke at an online briefing with reporters ahead of the publication of Estonia's annual security report on Tuesday, said the findings were based on intelligence his country gathered from "Russian internal discussions." He did not elaborate on how the information was obtained.

Russian officials have publicly insisted they want a negotiated deal, but they show little willingness to compromise and remain adamant that their demands must be met.

US-brokered talks between envoys from Russia and Ukraine in recent weeks have been described by officials from both sides as constructive and positive, but there has been no sign of any progress on



key issues in the discussions.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, "in his head, still thinks that he can actually militarily win (in Ukraine) at some point," Rosin said.

A White House official responded to the Estonian intelligence chief's comments and said the president's negotiators had made "tremendous progress" on the talks to end the war in Ukraine. Although prisoner exchanges have happened sporadically since May, they pointed in particular to a recent agreement in Abu Dhabi among the US, Ukraine and Russia to release more than 300 prisoners.

That agreement was evidence that efforts to end the war are advancing, said the official, who was

granted anonymity because they did not have permission to speak publicly.

In an indication that US President Donald Trump wants to accelerate the momentum of peace efforts, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said last week that Washington has given Ukraine and Russia a June deadline to reach a settlement. Trump, over the past year, has set several deadlines that have come and gone without apparent consequences.

Fiona Hill, a Russia expert and adviser to Trump in his first term, said Trump and his officials are spinning a story that depicts the US president as a peacemaker and, for that reason, they are not interested in changing their assessment that

Putin wants to end the war.

Both leaders, she told the AP, "need their version of events to play out" and are hanging on to their version of the truth — Putin as the victor in Ukraine and Trump as the dealmaker.

It's unclear why US officials believe Putin wants peace.

Although Trump has repeatedly suggested that Putin wants peace, he has sometimes appeared frustrated with the Russian leader's lukewarm approach to talks.

From an intelligence perspective, Rosin said he doesn't know why US officials believe the Russian leader wants to end the war.

Hill, who served as a national intelligence officer under previous US administrations, said it's unclear what intelligence information Trump gets on Russia — or if he reads it.

He relies heavily on his lead negotiators, special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner, who Hill said may struggle to believe that the damage to the Russian economy caused by the war is a price Putin is willing to pay for Ukraine.

Referring to reports that Witkoff has attended meetings with Putin without a US State Department translator, she questioned if Trump's envoys understood what

was being said in meetings and suggested officials may be "selectively" looking for what they want to hear.

Being told what they want to hear

Putin is fixated on controlling all of Ukraine, and the idea "is so deep in his head" that it takes priority over anything else, including economics, Rosin said, suggesting that the conflict will continue in some form for several years.

He said Putin's position may change only if the situation in Russia, or on the front line, becomes "catastrophic," threatening his power. For now, the Russian leader still believes he can take Ukraine and "outsmart everybody," Rosin said.

One reason Putin thinks he can win militarily in Ukraine is that he is "definitely" getting some incorrect information from his officials, the Estonian intelligence chief said.

Not all Russian officials, however, believe they are winning the war in Ukraine, Rosin said.

"The lower you go in the food chain," the more people understand "how bad it is actually on the ground," he said, whereas higher up, officials are more optimistic because they are given more positive reports. (AP)

Netanyahu is meeting with Trump this week to push for a far broader Iran deal



TEL AVIV, Feb 10: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is heading to Washington on Tuesday to encourage President Donald Trump to expand the scope of high-stakes nuclear talks with Iran. The negotiations resumed last week against the backdrop of an American military buildup.

Israel has long called for Iran to cease all uranium enrichment, dial back its ballistic missile program and cut ties to militant groups across the region. Iran has always rejected those demands, saying it would only accept some limits on its nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.

It's unclear if Iran's bloody crackdown on mass protests last month, or the movement of major U.S. military assets to the region, has made Iran's leaders more open to compromise, or if Trump is interested in broadening the already difficult negotiations.

Netanyahu, who will be in Washington through Wednesday, has spent his decades-long political career pushing for stronger U.S. action toward Iran. Those efforts succeeded last year when the U.S. joined Israel in 12 days of strikes on Iran's military and nuclear sites, and the possibility of additional military action against Iran is likely to come up in this week's discussions.

Decisions are being made Netanyahu's visit comes just two weeks after Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and Middle East adviser, met with the prime minister in Jerusalem. The U.S. envoys held indirect talks in Oman with Iran's foreign minister on Friday.

"The Prime Minister believes that any negotiations must include limiting ballistic missiles and ending support for the Iranian axis," Netanyahu's office said over the

weekend, referring to Iran-backed militant groups like the Palestinian Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Years of nuclear talks have made little progress since Trump scrapped a 2015 agreement with Iran, with strong encouragement from Israel. Iran has shown little willingness to address the other issues, even after suffering repeated setbacks. But the meeting with Trump gives Netanyahu an opportunity to shape the process and may also bolster his standing back home. "Clearly these are the days when decisions are being made, America is expected to complete its force buildup, and it's trying to exhaust the prospect of negotiations," said Yohanan Plesner, head of the Israel Democracy Institute, a Jerusalem-based think tank.

"If you want to have influence on the process, only so much can be done via Zoom."

Israel fears a narrow agreement

Trump threatened a military strike against Iran last month over the killing of protesters and concerns of mass executions, moving a number of military assets into the region. Thousands were killed and tens of thousands detained at Iranian authorities crushed the protests over widespread economic distress. As the protests largely subsided, Trump shifted his focus to Iran's nuclear program, which the U.S., Israel and others have long suspected is aimed at eventually developing weapons. Iran insists its program is entirely peaceful and says it has the right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes.

Sima Shine, an Iran expert formerly with Israel's Mossad spy agency who is now an analyst at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies, said Israel fears that the U.S. might reach a narrow agreement with Iran in which it would temporarily halt uranium enrichment. (AP)

Yunus makes clarion call for 'Yes' vote for Bangladesh referendum

DHAKA, Feb 10: Bangladesh's interim government chief Muhammad Yunus late Monday made a strong appeal to people to vote 'Yes' in the February 12 referendum being held simultaneously with the general elections and back his proposed reform package.

"If the 'Yes' vote wins in the referendum, Bangladesh's future will be built in a more positive way," he said, addressing senior secretaries and top bureaucrats as the poll campaign ended at 12 midnight, 48 hours before the polls in line with election laws.

Yunus said a 'Yes' referendum would keep "misrule" away, after his administration actively campaigned to elicit public support for the complicated 84-point reform package the past several weeks.

In line with a Bangladesh Bank order, the commercial banks to display 'Yes' vote banners at government offices, while the central bank has also asked banks to use their CSR funds to support NGO campaigns for the referendum. State functionaries who would be involved in conducting the polls continued canvassing till January 29, when the election commission strictly debarred government officials from engaging in such a campaign, calling it a "punishable offence".

Several legal experts said that since the referendum asks voters to choose either "Yes" or "No", the interim government was expected to maintain an impartial position instead of adopting an openly partisan role, given the considerable amount of public money required for it.

Some jurists also questioned the legitimacy of the referendum, since the Bangladesh Constitution does not have any provision for such a referendum.

The referendum sought the people's consent on the reform proposals called "July National Charter-2025", which Yunus announced in a drummed-up ceremony on October 17, after a protracted consultation between

political parties and the National Consensus Commission that he headed.

Announcing the charter, Yunus said it represented a move toward a "civilised society from barbarism".

In a nationwide address last month, Yunus sought 'Yes' votes for his administration's reform package.

The referendum ballot features a single question covering four major reform areas of the July Charter, while voters are instructed to vote 'Yes' if they agree more strongly with the proposals and 'No' if they disagree.

But critics said the charter contains multiple complex reforms and so the referendum could be a complicated task even for informed voters who might support some changes but oppose others.

They said the referendum also seeks to make it obligatory for the next government to implement the charter and legitimise the Yunus-led regime, which was installed after a student-led street protest, dubbed the July Uprising, toppled then prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League government on August 5, 2026.

The interim government also got the proposal signed by President Mohammed Shahuddin and subsequently issued an official gazette on it.

Several legal experts, however, questioned the legitimacy of the referendum itself. "Most of the decisions taken in the July Charter, including those in the gazette, are contrary to the current Constitution," said Swadhin Malik, a leading jurist.

He said that since the Constitution was still in force, the President cannot legally sign this gazette, while it could have been acceptable if the Constitution had been annulled or suspended under martial law.

"Since neither has happened, everything should proceed according to the existing Constitution," Malik said. (PTI)

62-yr-old Hindu trader hacked to death inside his shop in Bangladesh

DHAKA, Feb 10: A 62-year-old Hindu trader was hacked to death by unidentified men inside his shop in Trishal upazila of Mymensingh in Bangladesh, a local media report said on Tuesday.

The incident took place on Monday night at the Bogar Bazar intersection in the Upazila, Trishal Police Station chief Muhammad Firoz Hossain was quoted as saying by news portal bdnews24.com.

The victim, identified as Susen Chandra Sarkar, was the owner of 'Bhai Bhai Enterprise' and a resident of Southkanda village, he said.

Hossain said the attackers hacked Sarkar with a sharp weapon, left him inside the shop, and closed the shutters. Sarkar's family was searching for him, and when they opened the shutters to the shop, he was found covered in blood.

Sarkar was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

"We have had a rice business for a long time. No one had any enmity with us. The criminals stole several hundred thousand taka from the store after they brutally killed my father," Sujan Sarkar, the victim's son, said. He demanded that his father's killers be identified quickly and given exemplary punishment.

Sarkar's murder is the latest incident of violence targeting the minority community.

The Hindu population in Bangladesh has been affected by a series of incidents after the killing of rad-



ical youth leader Sharif Osman Hadi in December.

Last month, the Bangladesh Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council alleged that as the date of the general elections draws nearer, communal violence is increasing at an alarming rate in the country. The Council said it recorded 51 incidents of communal violence in December 2025 alone.

Bangladesh will hold parliamentary elections on February 12 - the first since the ouster of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in massive country protests in August 2024.

According to the 2022 census, the Hindu population in Bangladesh is approximately 13.13 million, which accounts for about 7.95 per cent of the country's total population. (PTI)

Top Iran security official in Oman, site of talks with US

DUBAI, Feb 10: A top Iranian security official travelled on Tuesday to Oman, the Mideast sultanate now mediating talks between Tehran and Washington over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program aimed at halting a possible American strike.

Ali Larjani, a former Iranian parliament speaker who now serves as the secretary to the country's Supreme National Security Council, likely carried Iran's response to the initial round of indirect talks held last week in Muscat with the Americans.

Larjani's entourage shared photos of him meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi, the chief intermediary in the US-Iran talks, with what appeared to be a letter sheathed in plastic and sitting alongside the Omani diplomat. Iran has, in the past, communicated its positions in writing when dealing with the Americans. Iranian media had said Larjani would deliver an important message on the trip.

Larjani also met with Oman's Sultan

Haitham bin Tariq for nearly three hours, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. Neither Iran nor Oman offered any details on what had been discussed in Larjani's meetings.

Larjani was later to travel to Qatar, which hosts a major US military installation that Iran attacked in June after the US bombed Iranian nuclear sites during the 12-day Iran-Israel war.

Iran and the US held new nuclear talks last week in Oman. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking Sunday to diplomats at a summit in Tehran, signalled that Iran would stick to its position that it must be able to enrich uranium — a major point of contention with US President Donald Trump. That war disrupted earlier rounds of nuclear talks between Washington and Tehran. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is travelling to Washington this week, with Iran expected to be the major subject of discussion. (AP)

Drought leaves people hungry in Kenya as their livestock die

KAMPALA (UGANDA), Feb 10: Drought conditions have left over 2 million people facing hunger in parts of Kenya, with cattle-keeping communities in the northeast the hardest hit, according to the United Nations and others. In recent weeks, images of emaciated livestock in the arid area near the Somali border have shocked many in a region that reels from the effects of climate change.

In recent years, rainy seasons have become shorter for some communities, exposing them to drought. Normally, animals are the first to die. The livestock losses echo what happened between 2020 and 2023, when millions of animals died in the region that extends from Kenya into parts of Ethiopia and Somalia. At the time, a famine predicted for Somalia was averted by a surge in international aid.

Four consecutive wet seasons have failed in parts of the Horn of Africa, which juts into the Indian Ocean. The wet season from October to December was one of the driest ever recorded, according to the UN health agency.

Because the rains were brief, parts of eastern Kenya were the driest they have been during that season since 1981.

Some 10 counties in Kenya are experiencing drought conditions, according to the National Drought Management Authority.

The northeastern county of Mandera, bordering Somalia, has reached the "alarm" classification, which means critical water shortages have led to the death of livestock and the wasting of children.

The suffering extends into Somalia, Tanzania and even Uganda, where many are threatened by similar weather patterns and water shortages, the World Health Organization said in late January. In southern Somalia, an assessment by the Islamic Relief aid group found "shocking food shortages as families flee the region's worsening drought."

In Somalia, long vulnerable to drought conditions, over 3 million people have left their homes, seeking shelter in camps for the internally displaced. (AP)

Social media 'addicting brains of children,' plaintiff's lawyer argues in landmark trial

LOS ANGELES, Feb 10: Comparing social media platforms to casinos and addictive drugs, lawyer Mark Lanier delivered opening statements on Monday in a landmark trial in Los Angeles that seeks to hold Instagram owner Meta and Google's YouTube responsible for harms to children who use their products.

Instagram's parent company, Meta and Google's YouTube face claims that their platforms addict children through deliberate design choices that keep kids glued to their screens. TikTok and Snap, which were originally named in the lawsuit, settled for undisclosed sums. Jurors got their first glimpse into what will be a lengthy trial characterised by duelling narratives from the plaintiffs and the two remaining defendants.

Meta lawyer Paul Schmidt spoke of the disagreement within the scientific community over social media addiction, with some researchers believing it doesn't exist or that addiction is not the most appropriate way to describe heavy social media use.

Lawyers representing YouTube

will begin their opening statement on Tuesday.

Addicting the brains of children'

Lanier, the plaintiff's lawyer, delivered lively first remarks where he said the case will be as "easy as ABC" — which stands for "addicting the brains of children." He said Meta and Google, "two of the richest corporations in history," have "engineered addiction in children's brains."

He presented jurors with a slew of internal emails, documents and studies conducted by Meta and YouTube, as well as YouTube's parent company, Google. He emphasised the findings of a study Meta conducted called "Project Myst", in which they surveyed 1,000 teens and their parents about their social media use. The two major findings, Lanier said, were that Meta knew children who experienced "adverse events" like trauma and stress were particularly vulnerable to addiction; and that parental supervision and controls made little impact.

He also highlighted internal Google documents that likened some company products to a

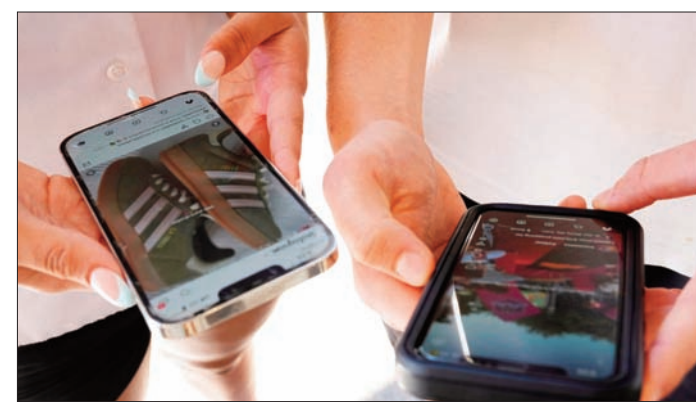
casino, and internal communication between Meta employees in which one person said Instagram is "like a drug" and they are "basically pushers."

At the core of the Los Angeles case is a 20-year-old identified only by the initials "KGM," whose case could determine how thousands of other, similar lawsuits against social media companies will play out. She and two other plaintiffs have been selected for bellwether trials - essentially test cases for both sides to see how their arguments play out before a jury.

Plaintiff grew up using YouTube and Instagram

KGM made a brief appearance after a break during Lanier's statement, and she will return to testify later in the trial. Lanier spent time describing KGM's childhood, focusing particularly on what her personality was like before she began using social media. She started using YouTube at age 6 and Instagram at age 9, Lanier said. Before she graduated from elementary school, she had posted 284 videos on YouTube.

The outcome of the trial could



have profound effects on the companies' businesses and how they will handle children using their platforms.

Lanier said the companies' lawyers will "try to blame the little girl and her parents for the trap they built," referencing the plaintiff. She was a minor when she said she became addicted to social media, which she claims had a detrimental impact on her mental health. Lanier said that despite the public position of Meta and YouTube being that they work to protect children, their internal docu-

ments show an entirely different position, with explicit references to young children being listed as their target audiences.

The attorney also drew comparisons between the social media companies and tobacco firms, citing internal communication between Meta employees who were concerned about the company's lack of proactive action about the potential harm their platforms can have on children and teens.

"For a teenager, social validation is survival," Lanier said. The defendants "engineered a feature

that caters to a minor's craving for social validation," he added, speaking about "like" buttons and similar features.

Meta pushes back

In his opening statement representing Meta, Schmidt said the core question in the case is whether the platforms were a substantial factor in KGM's mental health struggles. He spent much of his time going through the plaintiff's health records, emphasising that she had experienced many difficult circumstances in her childhood, including emotional abuse, body image issues and bullying.

Schmidt presented a clip from a video deposition from one of KGM's mental health providers, Dr Thomas Suberman, who said social media was "not the through-line of what I recall being her main issues," adding that her struggles seemed to largely stem from interpersonal conflicts and relationships. He painted a picture — with KGM's own text messages and testimony pointing to a volatile home life — of a particularly troubled relationship with her mother. Schmidt acknowledged that

many mental health professionals do believe social media addiction can exist, but said three of KGM's providers — all of whom believe in the form of addiction — have never diagnosed her with it, or treated her for it.

Schmidt emphasised to the jurors that the case is not about whether social media is a good thing or whether teens spend too much time on their phones or whether the jurors like or dislike Meta, but whether social media was a substantial factor in KGM's mental health struggles.

A reckoning for social media and youth harms

A slew of trials beginning this year seek to hold social media companies responsible for harming children's mental well-being. Executives, including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, are expected to testify at the Los Angeles trial, which will last six to eight weeks. Experts have drawn similarities to the Big Tobacco trials that led to a 1998 settlement requiring cigarette companies to pay billions in health care costs and restrict marketing targeting minors. (AP)

Voters can verify details online and locally Final Electoral Rolls out for Assam ahead of 2026 Polls

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Feb 10: The Final Photo Electoral Roll-2026, with January 1, 2026, as the qualifying date, has been published for five Kokrajhar district constituencies: 1-Gossaigaon, 2-Dotma (ST), 3-Kokrajhar (ST), 4-Baokhungri and 5-Parbatjhora, following the Election Commission of India's schedule (ECI Letter No 23/2025-ERS, Nov 17, 2025).

The final roll without photos is available on the CEO Assam website and the District Commissioner Kokrajhar website, while the photo rolls can be accessed at the offices of the Electoral Registration Officers of the respective constituencies, the DC office and Booth Level Officers (BLOs).

As per Section 24 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, appeals against ERO orders may be filed within 15 days with the District Magistrate, Kokrajhar and a second appeal within 30 days to the CEO, Assam.

Our Nagaon Correspondent adds: The Nagaon District Election Office released the final voter list for seven assembly constituencies ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections. At a press conference, DC Debashish Sharma stated that 15, 51,530 voters — including 7, 78,207 males, 7, 73,270 females and 52 transgender voters are eligible to exercise their franchise.

The final list includes 43,121 newly enrolled voters, while 43,867 names were removed through Special Revision (SR/2026). Additionally, 1, 73,942 voters were revised or transferred during the update process.

Our Biswanath Chariali Correspondent adds: The final Photo Electoral Roll for 70 Biswanath, 71 Behali (SC) and 72 Gohpur Assembly constituencies in Biswanath district was released on Tuesday, with January 1, 2026, as the eligibility base date. Biswanath DC and DEO Lakshminanda Saharia said a total of 5, 13,599 voters have been included.



Biswanath AC: 1, 87,821 voters (93,206 male, 94,615 female); 4,007 added, 6,813 deleted since draft.

Behali (SC) AC: 1, 54,199 voters (76,543 male, 77,656 female); 3,093 added, 6,962 deleted.

Gohpur AC: 1, 71,579 voters (86,609 male, 84,970 female); 4,295 added, 6,195 deleted.

The draft list, released on Dec 27, 2025, included 5, 22,174 voters. The release event, conducted by DEO Dhiman Hazarika, was attended by officials including Saharia, EROs of the three constituencies, ADC

Asim Bargohain, staff and political party representatives.

Our Morigaon Correspondent adds: In line with Election Commission of India directives, the final draft photo electoral rolls have been published for 52-Jagiroad (SC), 53-Laharighat and 54-Morigaon constituencies. The launch took place at the Morigaon District Commissioner's office, in the presence of DC Anamika Tewari, SSP Prakash Sonwal, Additional DCs Anusuya Sharma and Rakesh Deka and Election Officer Indrajit Das.

Official data shows a total of 7, 66,915 voters in the district — 3, 87,047 male, 3, 79,854 female and 14 third gender voters. The constituency-wise figures are: Jagiroad (2, 51,755), Laharighat (3, 09,141) and Morigaon (2,06,019). The voter list has increased by 5,224 new entries.

The public can access the voter rolls online at www.nvsp.in

or at local voter registration offices and Booth Level Officers' offices. District officials, political party representatives and journalists attended the meeting.

Our Haflong Correspondent adds: The Dima Hasao District Administration convened a press meet on Tuesday regarding the publication of the Final Electoral Roll under the Special Revision of Electoral Rolls for the 113-Haflong (ST) Legislative Assembly Constituency.

Additional District Commissioner (ADC) Shihaurya Sharma briefed media representatives on the significance and procedural aspects of the Special Revision. The Final Electoral Roll has been prepared with January 1, 2026, as the qualifying date, ensuring accuracy and inclusiveness in the electoral process.

The meeting, held at 11:00 AM in the Conference Hall of the Office of the District Commissioner, Haflong, was attended by representatives from various political parties and media houses.

ADC Sharma highlighted the efforts undertaken by the district administration to ensure a transparent, error-free and voter-friendly revision process. Media persons were also informed about the availability of the Final Electoral Roll for public inspection and the importance of voter awareness ahead of the upcoming elections.

The District Administration reaffirmed its commitment to strengthening democratic participation and urged all eligible citizens to verify their names in the Final Electoral Roll to ensure their right to vote.

Over 37,000 land ownership forms distributed to tea workers in Jorhat State initiative to grant land pattas to labour line residents launched across tea estates



HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Feb 10: A total of 37,133 forms seeking ownership of land were distributed to tea garden workers residing in labour line quarters across 84 tea estates in Jorhat district on Monday.

The distribution was carried out in line with the Assam government's initiative to grant land pattas to tea workers who have been living in labour quarters for generations. The process was formally launched by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma earlier in the day at a tea garden in Chabua, Dibrugarh district.

Kaziranga MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa attended the launching ceremony as chief guest at Cinnamara Tea Estate, while Mariani MLA Rupjyoti Kurmi was the chief guest at Teok Tea Estate. The Chief Executive Member of the Thengal Kachari Autonomous Council (TKAC), Kumud Kachari, attended the programme at Kusum Tea Estate and Chairman of Jorhat Zila Parishad Surajit Saikia was present as chief guest at Boloma Tea Estate.

It may be mentioned that the Assam government, in December 2025, passed a law in the Assam Assembly paving the way for granting land pattas to workers living in labour lines. The legislation aims to enable housing ownership for over 3.33 lakh families residing in 825 tea gardens across the state.

NFR GM conducts safety inspection of Dangtal-New Cooch Behar section

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), conducted a comprehensive safety inspection of the 123 km Dangtal-New Cooch Behar section under Alipurduar Division on Tuesday, accompanied by senior officials from Headquarters and the Division.

The inspection included detailed assessments of track conditions, minor and major bridges, signalling and telecommunication systems, traction installations, level crossing gates, station infrastructure, curves, points, crossings and ongoing maintenance works. The GM also interacted with officials and frontline staff to review operational preparedness, safety awareness and essential safety equipment at stations and work sites.

Station inspections were conducted at Kokrajhar, Fakiragram, Alipurduar and New Cooch Behar. Developmental works under the Amrit Station initiative, focusing on passenger amenities, station modernisation and service quality, were reviewed. Newly developed facilities—including waiting rooms, health units, crew lobbies, running rooms, traction substations, bridges and gang tool cum rest rooms—were inaugurated and inspected.

A speed trial between Kamakhya and New Cooch Behar assessed track and rolling stock performance, while a rear-window trailing inspection evaluated operational efficiency and track behaviour.

ABSU pushes for more KVs, JNVs and higher education institutions in Bodoland

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Feb 10: The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) demanded the establishment of additional Kendriya Vidyalayas (KV), Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNV) and higher education institutions including a Central University, NIT and Tribal University campuses across Bodoland in line with the Bodo Accord 2020 (BTR Peace Accord).

A four-member ABSU delegation led by vice president Khwrmndao Wary, along with Khanindira Basumatary, Swmaosar Basumatary and Kokrajhar MP Joyanta Basumatary, met Union Education Minister Dr Dharmendra Pradhan at Parliament House, New Delhi, on Tuesday.

The meeting addressed key educational issues, including the inclusion of Bodo as Language-1 in CTET, Bodo MIL in KVs and JNVs, Bodo question papers for All India Sainik School entrance exams, National Means-cum-Merit scholarships for Class VIII and setting up new KVs, JNVs and higher education institutions as per the accord.

ABSU president Dipen Boro said the discussions were fruitful, noting that some decisions have already been implemented, while remaining issues are in the pipeline for resolution.

Congress holds massive protest rally against drug abuse

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Feb 10: The Indian National Congress (INC) on Monday organised a protest rally in Jagun, led by the Margherita Block Congress Committee, against rampant drug abuse and illegal trade in the greater Margherita region.

Over 5,000 participants marched from Rampur to Jagun, carrying banners, placards and Congress flags. The rally was led by possible 2026 Assembly candidate Prateek Bordoloi, highlighting the alleged inaction of two-time BJP MLA Bhaskar Sharma in curbing the drug menace in the 83rd Margherita Legislative Assembly Constituency (LAC). Senior Congress leaders were present. Bordoloi said drug trade and abuse have surged across the constituency, but local authorities, including the MLA, police and district administration have failed to act.

Assam Development Initiative honours teachers and students in Guwahati



GUWAHATI, Feb 10: The Assam Development Initiative (ADI), a registered trust, organised an award ceremony for teachers and students at Sabhaghar in Silpukhuri. The event brought together principals, retired principals, teachers, students, authors and other eminent guests from across the state.

Welcoming the gathering, ADI president and Managing Trustee Upasha Boruah Phukan outlined the trust's objective of supporting development initiatives in Assam, with a special focus on child development. She said ADI is currently working to promote awareness of value-based education (VbE)

among school children and highlighted that the Value-Based Education and Child Development project, launched in mid-2018, has now become ADI's flagship programme. She described value-based education as a present-day necessity and said ADI is a pioneer in introducing this approach in Assam, distinct from conventional value education.

After several years of implementation, with a long pause during the COVID-19 period, ADI decided to recognise outstanding teachers and students from schools practising the VbE programme. ADI founder and Chairperson Hiren Sarma from Houston, USA—the key person behind the project—presented the

Sarangapani Awards to deserving teachers and students, along with ADI president.

Teachers Leena Sharma and Dipimoni Dutta from Guwahati Refinery High School and Kamal Kumar Sharma and Namita Das from Jalukbari High School, were honoured as Valued Teachers. Students Farhina Sultan and Amarjit Deka from Guwahati Refinery High School and Sibin Nath Das and Saurav Baishya from Jalukbari High School, were adjudged the most valued students.

ADI president also acknowledged the contribution of the VbE project team. Project Director Archana Borthakur, Senior Field Coordinator Kinkar Bora and Coordinator Nisha Das were recognised for their efforts. Sarula Tanti, VbE Field Coordinator working at Numaligarh Higher Secondary School and Dergaon Girls School, received the Sarangapani Award for Best Coordinator.

The programme featured inspiring addresses by Meenakshi Devi, Principal of Guwahati Refinery High School and Sarifa Ahmed, Principal of Jalukbari High School. Emotional messages from awardees and retired principals added warmth to the evening. The ceremony concluded with a musical tribute to Zubeen Garg by young singer Subir Bora, who performed a couple of the maestro's songs.

Five-day e-content development workshop for NE teachers

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 10: A five-day Workshop-cum-Capacity Building Programme on "e-Content Development for Teachers and Teacher Educators of North Eastern States" commenced on Tuesday at Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University (KKHSOU), Guwahati. Organised by CIET-NCERT, New Delhi, in collaboration with KKHSOU, the programme aims to enhance digital teaching competencies and create high-quality e-learning resources.

The inaugural session featured addresses by Dr Pranab Saikia, Prof Rajendar Pal, Dr Nirada Devi

and online Chief Guest Prof Amarendra P Behera, emphasising digital pedagogy, cyber security and quality e-content for diverse North Eastern classrooms. Dr Nripendra Narayan Sarma urged participants to contribute meaningfully to school education.

Forty-nine educators from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland are participating. The workshop includes 20 sessions on e-content scripting, storyboarding, audio-video production, editing and mobile-based content creation for dissemination via DIKSHA and PM e-Vidya Channels.

Karbi Anglong Congress holds protest against CM, KAAC CEM



HT Bureau

DIPHU, Feb 10: The Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee (KADCC) held a protest dharna in front of Rajiv Bhawan, Khorsing Terang Park on Tuesday in protest against the alleged corruption of the ruling dispensation led by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and the Chief Executive Member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Dr Tuliram Ronghang.

The KADCC members sitting in the dharna held placards of 'Dehotkoi Mami Dang-or Nohai', the 'Mami' referring to the wife of the chief minister of Assam.

The president of KADCC, Ratan Engti said, "The chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his family members have acquired property in the name of his wife, while evicting the poor and the underprivileged and bringing the land prices down. 12000 bighas of land is in the name of his wife. The BJP

government, whether the chief minister or the CEM (of KAAC), are deep in corruption, seizing land and are involved in 'syndicate'."

Engti also said that the press meet of the Chief Minister in Delhi is a 'flop'. He cannot do anything, that's why he has handed the matter of Gaurav Gogoi (APCC president) to the Home Ministry.

He also alleged that the BJP has no policy regarding anything in the country while claiming a large following among the people. The CEM of KAAC Tuliram Ronghang has converted a government building 'CEM Bungalow' into a BJP office by holding 'BJP Joining' there. Those who joined the BJP are just taking the money from the CEM, the money is from various departments of KAAC which belong to the people.

The KADCC president Ratan Engti and vice president Bidya Sing Rongpi along with others participated in the protest.

Hojai DC orders surrender of firearms ahead of Assembly Elections

HT Bureau

HOJAI, Feb 10: In view of the Assam Assembly Elections 2026, Hojai District Commissioner Bidyut Bikash Bhagwati has issued directives to maintain law and order and ensure peaceful polling in the district. The order invokes Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) 2023, Section 21 of the Arms Act 1959 and Section 134-B of the Representation of the People Act 1951.

All licensed arms holders must deposit firearms and ammunition at the nearest police station within 10 days. Carrying or displaying any firearm or lethal weapon in public areas, polling stations, or their vicinity is strictly prohibited until the conclusion of elections. Deposited arms will be returned after election results based on receipts issued by police stations.

Exemptions apply to Central Armed Police Forces, police personnel, security guards of banks and registered athletes of the National Rifle Association, who must obtain separate permission letters. Strict legal action will follow any violation.

Two-day Kisan Mela-2026 begins at Haflong to Empower Hill Farmers Agriculture department highlights scientific farming, animal husbandry and rural infrastructure



HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, Feb 10: The Department of Agriculture in collaboration with various allied sectors under the CSS-ATMA, on Monday kicked off a two-day Kisan Mela-2026 at Krishi Bhawan, Haflong in Dima Hasao district.

Scheduled to be held from February 10 to February 11, 2026, the event aims to empower local farmers by showcasing modern agricultural techniques and fostering regional agricultural growth. The inaugural ceremony was graced by Sameer Roy, Chairman of the Department of Agriculture, who attended as the chief guest.

Among others present at the programme were Laisringdi Naiding, ACS, Deputy Secretary of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC); Dhritiraj Alamyam, ACS, Assistant Commissioner; Dr Bhairab Kakati, in-charge Additional

Director (Hills) of the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department; the Fishery Development Officer; KVK scientist and the Assistant General Manager of NABARD.

Addressing the gathering, Chairman Roy emphasised the importance of integrating modern technology with traditional farming practices to enhance productivity across the district. He said the Kisan Mela features multiple stalls and interactive sessions aimed at providing farmers direct access to expert guidance and departmental resources.

Speaking to farmers, Dr Kakati stressed the need to shift from traditional to scientific methods of animal rearing, particularly in local poultry and piggery sectors. He assured that the department would facilitate training programmes to help farmers improve productivity.

Highlighting developments in rural infra-

structure, Dr Kakati also announced that several NABARD-funded projects under the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) are underway to reconstruct veterinary dispensaries across Dima Hasao, with the objective of improving animal health services. The programme also included interactive sessions between farmers and departmental resource persons, offering a platform to discuss challenges related to plantation, cattle rearing, livestock management and the implementation of various agricultural schemes.

The initiative forms part of a series of agricultural programmes in the region and reflects the continued commitment of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC) towards rural development, livelihood enhancement and food security. Farmers and other officials were also present at the event.

'The fact is, they are celebrating on their social media accounts, claiming that women MPs scared the prime minister'

Ugly scenes could have taken place had BJP MPs been allowed to confront oppn members in LS: Rijiju

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Union minister Kiren Rijiju on Tuesday said "very ugly scenes" could have taken place had the BJP MPs not been allowed to confront the Congress members who had come to the treasury benches on the day Prime Minister Narendra Modi was supposed to reply to the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address in the Lok Sabha.

Commenting on the video that showed opposition women MPs coming to the treasury benches on February 4, Rijiju asked who could justify the behaviour of the opposition members. He said the direction from the BJP leadership was very clear that members belonging to the ruling alliance must maintain the dignity of the House and no MP of the ruling party should get into physical confrontation with the "rude opposition MPs".

"The Congress party is proud of the most degrading behaviour by their MPs. If we had not stopped all the BJP MPs and allowed the women MPs to confront the Congress MPs, it would have led to very ugly scenes. We have very high consideration to protect the dignity and sanctity of Parliament," he told reporters here.

The parliamentary affairs minister accused the opposition MPs of disrupting proceedings in an un-



precedented manner and claimed that the BJP and NDA MPs were very angry because of the behaviour of their Congress counterparts.

"The Congress MPs crossed the treasury benches and even reached the prime minister's seat. The Congress has shown no respect for the dignity of the House.

"The fact is, they are celebrating on their social media accounts, claiming that women MPs scared the prime minister. This is utterly shameful," he said.

Rijiju said the BJP women MPs have submitted a letter to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla against the behaviour of the Congress members.

He said the Congress MPs even crossed the bench where the prime

minister sits and went inside a few rows of the treasury benches and almost laid siege on the entire area.

"We had to control the BJP and NDA MPs. The BJP women MPs were very agitated at this behaviour of the Congress MPs.

"We stopped our MPs from physical confrontation. After that, these opposition MPs went to the speaker's chamber and threatened the speaker. The BJP women MPs have submitted a petition. Let us see how the speaker acts and what steps he takes," he said.

The BJP's women MPs, in a letter, have urged the Lok Sabha speaker to take the strongest possible action against the opposition MPs who have committed "heinous acts" like moving deep

inside treasury benches, climbing the table and laying a siege on the prime minister's seat.

The Lok Sabha has been witnessing disruptions since February 2, after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was disallowed by the chair from quoting from an article based on excerpts of former Army chief M M Naravane's "unpublished memoir", which has references to the India-China conflict of 2020.

On February 4, Prime Minister Modi could not reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks due to opposition protests. In an unprecedented move, the Motion of Thanks was passed on February 5 without the customary speech by the prime minister. The speaker read out the Motion of Thanks to the President for her address, and it was passed by a voice vote amid sloganeering by opposition members. Birla said he received concrete information that many Congress MPs could carry out an "unexpected act" by reaching the spot where PM Modi sits and, therefore, he asked him not to come to the House to deliver his address.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra refuted this.

Eight opposition members were suspended for the remainder of the Budget session for unruly behaviour in the House. (PTI)

Victory or PR-wrapped sacrifice of India's interests: Kharge on US deal

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday said the Indo-US interim trade agreement sacrifices India's strategic national interests and exposes the betrayal of the Modi government.

Dubbing the deal as "trapped surrender", Kharge, in a post on X, alleged, "Fine print of the Indo-US trade deal has exposed how PM Modi mortgaged India's national interests."

He said the truth of the "trap deal" is now slowly coming out and listed four key objections to the pact.

Citing the issue of Russian oil and strategic autonomy, Kharge said, "We were told that the Indo-US Joint Statement said nothing on Russian oil, even though Mr. Trump publicly tweeted otherwise. Now the White House fact sheet clearly lists 'India's commitment to stop purchasing Russian Federation oil' as a condition for removal of an additional 25 percent tariff." He then asked, "The Modi Government agreed to this erosion of India's sovereignty. Why?"

Kharge said the Congress had already exposed the executive order placing India under US monitoring for direct or indirect oil imports. He alleged that India's farmers had been backstabbed, while claiming that for the first time in India's history, a government had completely opened agriculture to foreign goods.

"Now, we know what 'Additional Products' actually meant in the Indo-US joint statement agreed by Modi Government! 'Pulses' have been silently added in the newly released White House fact sheet on February 9, which was not part of the Indo-US Joint Statement issued on Feb 6, 2026. 'The utility of red sorghum imports to India was mentioned in the Joint Statement, but that utility pertaining to 'animal feed' has now mysteriously vanished in the White House fact sheet of February 9, 2026," he said.

Kharge accused the Union government of "betraying our gau-mata and dairy farmers" and said the trade deal calls for importing food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains (DDGs) and red sorghum for animal feed, from the United States.

The leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha claimed



that it was well known that if Indian cattle consume American feed, which is largely GM (genetically modified), it will alter the breed of our cattle and the taste of our milk. Kharge said that full-page ads are being published in newspapers, and Amul is being forced to whitewash this concession. But the truth is that, he said, the Modi government did not approve GM feed since 2017, and now it suddenly did.

"Two crore dairy farmers will suffer the consequences, but RSS-Sangh Parivar-BJP, who carry out lynchings in the name of the cow, are hell-bent on destroying our country's cattle population," he alleged. Kharge claimed that the trade deal also stands to hurt the apparel sector. He said that the 18 per cent tariff was no "historic win" and the US-Bangladesh deal reveals it as a "strategic surrender."

"By granting Dhaka zero-duty access for using American cotton, Washington has effectively incentivised Bangladesh over Indian farmers to save their own margins," he wrote in his post. As textile hubs like Tirupur and Surat are shackled by 18 per cent taxes, Bangladesh gains a 0 per cent fast-track, dealing a lethal "double whammy" to Indian cotton and garments alike, the Congress leader said.

"Conclusion: Is this a victory or a PR-wrapped betrayal that sacrifices India's strategic national interests and export engine at the altar of Epstein Files?" Kharge asked. (PTI)

Oppn submits notice against speaker, accuses Birla of acting in 'blatantly partisan manner'

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Opposition parties on Tuesday submitted a notice for moving a resolution to remove Om Birla from the office of Lok Sabha speaker, alleging that he had acted in a "blatantly partisan" manner in conducting the business of the House and "abused" the constitutional office he occupies.

The Opposition also accused the Speaker of making certain false allegations against members of the Congress.

Congress' deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi, chief whip K Suresh and whip Mohamed Jawed submitted the notice under Article 94 C of the Constitution to Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh on behalf of several opposition parties, including the Congress, Samajwadi Party and the DMK.

Sources said the notice was signed by around 120 MPs of the Opposition, including those of the Congress, DMK, Samajwadi Party, Left parties and RJD. Shiv Sena UBT and NCP-SP have also signed the notice.

The TMC is not a signatory to the notice. Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi has also not signed the notice, sources said.

"We, the undersigned, hereby give notice of a resolution for the removal of Shri Om Birla from the office of Speaker Lok Sabha, in terms of the provisions of Article 94(c) of the Constitution of India, because of the blatantly partisan manner in which he has been conducting the business of the Lok Sabha," the notice said, according to sources.

On several occasions, leaders of opposition parties have just not been allowed to speak, which is their basic democratic right in Parliament, the notice said.

The notice also cited that on February 2, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, was not allowed to complete his speech on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Ad-

dress. This is not an isolated instance. The Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha is almost invariably not allowed to speak, it claimed.

On February 3, eight opposition MPs were "arbitrarily suspended" for the entire Budget session and are being penalised merely for exercising their democratic rights, the notice said.

On February 4, a MP from the BJP was permitted to make wholly objectionable and personalised attacks on two former prime ministers without being reprimanded even once for disregarding established conventions and norms of propriety, it said, in an apparent reference to Nishikant Dubey's remarks.

"In spite of our request, no action has been taken against this particular MP, who is a habitual offender," they said.

The notice also referred to Birla's remarks that he had "concrete information" that many Congress members might move towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi's seat and carry out "some unexpected act" as a result of which he had requested him not to come to the House to reply to the discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address.

"The aforementioned remarks cast blatantly false allegations against the members of the Indian National Congress and are derogatory in nature. The Speaker, who is required to be the custodian of the Rules of Procedure and the norms of parliamentary decorum, chose the floor of the House to make such statements, which is indicative of an abuse of this constitutional office," the notice said.

"While we hold the Speaker, Lok Sabha, in personal regard, we are pained and anguished at the manner in which he has consistently prevented opposition members of Parliament from raising issues of legitimate public concern," the notice also said. (PTI)

Indo-US deal overturns principle of reciprocity: Tharoor

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: The India-US interim trade deal looks more like a "pre-committed purchase agreement" that overturns every principle of reciprocity, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said on Tuesday and slammed Union ministers S Jaishankar and Piyush Goyal for playing "ping pong" when questions are posed.

Initiating a debate in the Lok Sabha on the Union Budget, Tharoor said the government's claim that India has secured a "better deal" than China, Vietnam, or other Asian economies does not withstand scrutiny.

"While India may have obtained tariff reductions of one or two percentage points, no East Asian economy has agreed to deliberately dilute its trade surplus with the United States through guaranteed purchase commitments," he said. The Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram asked how one could speak of a "reciprocal tariff" of 18 per cent on one side and zero per cent on the other. "It looks less like a free trade arrangement and more like a pre-committed purchase agreement that overturns every principle of

reciprocity," he said.

At a time when India's total bilateral trade with the US stands at roughly USD 130 billion and a trade surplus of nearly USD 45 billion, the government has surprisingly promised to buy USD 500 billion worth of American goods over five years, he said.

Tharoor argued that this effectively converts a surplus into a long-term deficit by executive assurance rather than by market demand.

"No major economy has ever neutralised its own trade leverage in this manner. While the US continues to impose import tariffs of up to 18 per cent on Indian exports, we have committed ourselves to lower tariffs to near-zero levels, open agriculture, dilute data localisation, soften intellectual-property safeguards, and even redirect strategic energy imports, especially away from Russia, to meet purchase targets.

"This is not strategic balancing; it is economic pre-emption," the Congress MP said. He said Parliament has neither been told how farmers, MSMEs, and the domestic in-



dustry will be protected nor why India has "voluntarily surrendered" its negotiating power without securing proportional market access or policy space in return.

"I know the government will say wait for the final agreement, it is coming in mid-March, but let them be aware that these concerns exist right now," he said.

"The government's claim that India has secured a 'better deal' than China, Vietnam, or other Asian economies does not withstand scrutiny. While India has obtained tariff reductions of one or two percentage points as compared to them, no East Asian economy has agreed to deliberately dilute its trade sur-

plus with the United States through guaranteed purchase commitments," he said.

On the contrary, China, Vietnam, and several ASEAN countries have actually expanded their trade surpluses with the US, even amid heightened trade tensions, Tharoor said.

"This ambiguity has a direct bearing on the credibility of the budget itself. When both the minister of commerce and industry and the minister of external affairs were questioned on these commitments, they offered no clear explanation of their scale, timeline, or fiscal implications.

"The reason I mention this in the context of the Budget is that key budgetary assumptions, on trade balances, external financing needs, and overall macroeconomic stability, rest on information that Parliament does not possess and has not been given," he said. A Budget framed amid such uncertainty is not just incomplete, but it asks this House to approve numbers without knowing the obligations that may soon overtake them from this trade agreement, Tharoor said. (PTI)

Bihar's image changed since NDA came to power: BJP chief

PATNA, Feb 10: BJP national president Nitin Nabin on Tuesday asserted in the Bihar assembly that the state's image has improved substantially since the NDA, led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, assumed power, defeating the RJD-Congress combine.

Nabin, a former state minister who continues to represent the Bankipur seat, turned up at the House for the first time since he was catapulted to the top party post a month ago. "I remember my days as a student, when I had not dreamt of entering politics, and I can recall the image crisis Bihar suffered from. I note with satisfaction that under the leadership of the chief minister, the image has improved substantially and Bihar is now being treated with respect," the BJP chief said.

Incidentally, Kumar, who heads the JD(U), was not present inside the House during the nearly 45-minute period that Nabin spent among fellow MLAs.

The 45-year-old BJP leader was warmly received at the Vidhan Sabha entrance by state NDA bigwigs like Deputy CMs Samrat Choudhary, Vijay Sinha and minister Mangal Pandey (all BJP), minister Ashok Choudhary of JD(U), and MLA Raju Tiwari of LJP-RV. As Nabin entered the House and took his seat, members of the BJP, which is now the single largest party in the 243-strong assembly, erupted in slogans like "Jai Shri Ram" and "Bharat Mata Ki Jai". Speaker Prem Kumar, a veteran BJP leader himself, told the House that it was a matter of pride that Nabin, a young member, has made it to the top in national politics. (PTI)

Mandaviya hails trade deal with US, says it will significantly boost India's economy

INDORE, Feb 10: The interim trade agreement reached with the US after months of negotiations will significantly boost India's economy and provide "double benefits" to domestic entrepreneurs and exporters, Union Labour and Employment Minister Mansukh Mandaviya said on Tuesday.

India and the US announced last week they have reached a framework for an interim trade pact, under which both sides will reduce import duties on a number of goods to boost the two-way trade. Under the deal, Washington will bring down reciprocal tariff on Indian goods to 18 per cent from 25 per cent imposed last year.

"The trade deal with the US will significantly boost India's economy," Mandaviya told reporters in Indore.

He noted that despite the US imposing high tariffs on Indian goods before the two countries reached an agreement to reduce the duties, India's overseas shipments actually increased because domestic exporters used the situation as an



opportunity and found new markets for their products. The Labour and Employment Minister said, "Under the trade deal, the US has reduced tariffs on Indian goods. This has given our exporters access to the US market again."

Mandaviya maintained the long-awaited trade agreement will bring "double benefits" to Indian entrepreneurs and exporters as they now have access to new markets in addition to the US.

Citing India's trade agreements with the European Union (EU) and the US, the minister said these deals now include social security cover for Indian workers em-

ployed abroad, which was not done during the tenures of previous governments.

Mandaviya praised the Union Budget for 2026-27 presented in the Lok Sabha on February 1, saying it has been prepared in line with the goal of making India a developed nation by 2047.

He emphasised that budget's provisions focused on overall development and will accelerate India's economic growth, generate employment, and strengthen infrastructure.

Regarding perception that Madhya Pradesh will receive less funding in the Union Budget compared to previous years, Mandaviya affirmed that in accordance with the government's fiscal discipline, each state has been provided with appropriate allocation.

The minister, who also holds the Youth and Sports Affairs portfolio, parried questions about Pakistan withdrawing its decision to boycott the T20 World Cup match against India scheduled in Colombo on February 15. (PTI)

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
DIRECTOR CUM ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER,
P.W.D. (R&B), HILLS, ASSAM,
DIPHU.

No.ACEH/CS/AAP/93/2025-26/03 Dated. 10/02/2026.

PRESS NOTICE

The Additional Chief Engineer, PWD (R&B), Hills Assam, Diphu on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites Bids from registered Contractors Roads for the work "Construction of Road from Tarabasa to Sarthe Ronghang village Road" under Annual Action plan, 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. The Bidders must be registered with the E-tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam.

Sd/-
Director cum Additional Chief Engineer
PWD (R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu.

Memo No. ACEH/CS/AAP/93/2025-26/03-(A) Dated. 10/02/2026.

OFFICE OF THE HEADMASTER
SAMAGURI ANCHALIK HIGH SCHOOL
P.O.: SAMAGURI, P.S.: HOWRAGHAT
DIST.: KARBI ANGLONG, PIN: 782482

As per the SMDC Resolution No-1 (2026) dated 04/02/2026, applications are hereby invited for the post of **Assistant Graduate Teacher (Arts)** at Samaguri Anchalik High School. The post is purely on an **ad hoc** basis. Applications will be received from **12/02/2026 to 21/02/2026 till 2:00 PM** at the school premises. The **interview will be held on 22th February 2026 at 10:00 AM.**

Sl. No.	Name of Post	Qualification	No. of Post	Fixed Pay (per month)
1	Assistant Graduate Teacher	Graduate with MIL Bengali (in any recognized university)	1	12,600.00

S/d
Headmaster
Samaguri Anchalik High School
Karbi Anglong

Khemchand reiterates commitment to bridge divide, monitors health of Kuki-Zo MLA

Manipur CM assures safety of Kuki-Zo visitors to Imphal



IMPHAL, Feb 10: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Sunday stated that his government would take responsibility for ensuring the safety of people belonging to the Kuki-Zo community who visit Imphal, including access to medical treatment.

The chief minister made the assurance while speaking at the launching programme of a major road development project at Langthabal in Imphal West district. Since the outbreak of violence on May 3, 2023, members of the

Kuki-Zo community have been unable to enter the valley areas, while Meitei residents have largely been unable to travel to the hill districts of Manipur.

Notably, since assuming office a few days ago, Yumnam Khemchand Singh has been making consistent efforts to bridge the divide between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities.

In a significant gesture on Sunday, the chief minister received Kuki-Zo MLA Vungzagin Valte at Imphal Airport, where he interacted with Valte's family members

and wished the legislator a speedy recovery. "Pu Valte, please come back after you have fully recovered. I will wait for your return," Khemchand Singh said.

MLA Valte, who sustained grievous injuries during the May 2023 violence in Imphal, had been staying in Churachandpur following prolonged medical treatment in Delhi. According to reports, his health condition deteriorated on Saturday, after which he was rushed to Churachandpur Medical College Hospital and admitted to the ICU for stabilisation.

An official report said the chief minister monitored Valte's health condition throughout the night and sent an advanced life-support ambulance along with a team of doctors from Imphal to Churachandpur around midnight. Khemchand Singh also arranged an air ambulance, which flew Valte from Imphal Airport to Delhi on Sunday evening for further treatment.

Observers say the gesture by the new Manipur chief minister assumes importance at this critical juncture in the violence-hit state. (NNN)

Three militants held for 'involvement' in bomb explosion in Manipur

IMPHAL, Feb 10: Three militants belonging to a proscribed outfit were arrested for their alleged involvement in a bomb explosion in Manipur's Imphal West district three days ago, police said on Tuesday.

They were apprehended from Imphal East and West districts, the police statement said.

"Following an investigation into a case of bomb explosion at Lilong Chajing area in Imphal West district, three active cadres of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (Apunba) were arrested from different locations of Imphal West and Imphal East districts during the last two days," it said.

A pistol and ammunition were recovered from their possession, the police said.

Security forces have been conducting search operations in Manipur since May 2023, when the ethnic strife broke out between Meitei and Kuki-Zo groups.

So far, more than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in the ethnic violence. (PTI)

Judicial inquiry ordered into Jaintia Hills mining tragedy

CM Sangma announces inquiry commission as 27 workers die in illegal coal mine blast



SHILLONG, Feb 10: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Sunday announced that the state government has decided to constitute a Judicial Inquiry Commission to investigate the tragic mining incident in the Mynsgat-Thangsko area of East Jaintia Hills district, in which 27 mine workers lost their lives and nine others sustained injuries following a blast at an illegal coal mine.

Announcing the decision through a social media post, the chief minister said, "The government has de-

vised to constitute a Judicial Inquiry Commission under the Commission of Inquiry Act to investigate the recent tragic mining incident."

Following the incident, two mine owners, identified as Forme Chyrmang (36) and Shamehi War (42), have been arrested and remanded to three days' police custody. Authorities are currently verifying details, completing identification procedures and continuing search, investigation and legal proceedings in connection with the case.

According to a government statement, emergency response teams comprising the district administration, police, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) were immediately deployed at the site. Search, rescue and recovery operations were carried out under challenging conditions to ensure that all affected individuals were accounted for and that the injured received timely medical assistance.

Reiterating the government's stand, the statement said that in view of the seriousness of the incident, the chief minister has ordered the constitution of a Judicial Inquiry Commission under the Commission of Inquiry Act to probe the Mynsgat-Thangsko mining tragedy.

The government has also announced ex-gratia assistance for the next of kin of the deceased, while continued support and medical care are being extended to those injured in the incident.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong informed that the investigation will be handed over to the Judicial Inquiry Commission. "Once the chairman of the commission is appointed, I am very sure they will carry out the investigation accordingly," he said. (NNN)

Meghalaya govt calls off rescue ops at illegal coal mine where blast claimed 30 lives



SHILLONG, Feb 10: The Meghalaya government has called off the search and rescue operation at the illegal coal mine in East Jaintia Hills district, where a blast claimed 30 lives, officials said on Tuesday.

The blast had occurred at the illegal mine in the remote Thangsko area of Mynsgat village on February 5, they said.

East Jaintia Hills Deputy Commissioner Manish Kumar told PTI that the operation formally ended around 5 PM on Monday after assessment teams concluded that there was no further possibility of locating survivors.

The rescue operation involved the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), the district administration, police, Fire and Emergency Services and local volunteers.

Heavy machinery was pressed into service to clear debris, while specialised teams attempted to access narrow and unstable mine shafts under hazardous conditions, officials said.

Six victims who sustained injuries are still undergoing treatment in Silchar in Assam and state capital Shillong, they said.

Of the deceased, 26 persons have been identified, while four bodies remain unidentified, they added. (PTI)

Dimapur Police direct accommodation providers to report foreigners' stay

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Feb 10: The Dimapur police commissioner on Monday directed all accommodation providers, including hotels, homestays, hospitals, educational institutions and others, to report the arrival and stay of foreigners within 24 hours.

Dimapur Commissioner of Police-cum-Foreigners Registration Officer Aotula T Imchen, in a notification, warned that penal action will be initiated against any accommodation provider failing to comply with the directive under the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025. The notification stated that any failure, delay or inaccurate reporting would attract penal action as per the law.

It said the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025, along with the Immigration and Foreigners Rules, 2025, came into force with effect

from September 1, 2025, replacing four earlier laws governing the entry, stay and registration of foreigners in India.

Under the new consolidated legislation, it is the duty of keepers of accommodation—including hotels, guest houses, hostels, rented premises, homestays, religious and charitable institutions, hospitals, as well as tents and sarais—to report the presence of foreigners. The provisions also apply to educational institutions admitting foreign students and medical establishments providing indoor treatment or lodging to foreigners.

As per the Act and rules, every foreigner, including Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders is required to furnish personal particulars on arrival and departure. These records must be maintained electronically for at least one year and produced on demand to the

registration officer, district administration or police authorities.

The notification further stated that Form-III (earlier known as Form 'C') is a crucial statutory document and must be submitted electronically within 24 hours of a foreigner's arrival through the designated portal indianfro.gov.in or the mobile application 'Indian Visa Su-Swagatam'.

Hospitals, nursing homes and medical institutions have been specifically directed to ensure compliance for foreign patients and their attendants availing lodging or sleeping facilities, while universities, colleges and schools must report foreign students staying in hostels in the prescribed format.

The police said the reporting requirement is integral to effective immigration control and national security.

Houses torched, shots fired in Manipur's Ukhrul, internet services suspended

IMPHAL, Feb 10: In a fresh bout of violence over the alleged assault of a Tangkhul Naga community member in Manipur's Ukhrul, several abandoned houses were set on fire and shots fired on Tuesday morning, prompting the state government to suspend internet services in the district for five days, police said.

The fresh firing and arson in the Litan Sareikhong area comes a day after two Tangkhul Naga organisations restricted the movement of Kukis in Ukhrul and Kamjong districts.

"Armed men set ablaze abandoned houses and fired several rounds of bullets at Litan Sareikhong. The situation remains tense and security forces are trying to bring the situation under control," a police officer said.

The Manipur government on Tuesday ordered suspension of internet, including services through broadband, VPN and VSAT in the revenue jurisdiction of Ukhrul district for five days as a preventive and precautionary measure, he said.

Locals, who fled their residences, confronted security forces for their alleged failure to stop firing in the area.

A video clip that went viral on social media shows thick smoke engulfing the hill area.

Hundreds of Kuki and Tangkhul Naga villagers, mostly women, children and elderly persons, have been fleeing the Litan Sareikhong and neighbouring Kuki villages for the last two days to safe places in Kangpokpi and Ukhrul districts, another official said.

"Several villagers have taken shelter at Motbung and parts of Saikul in Kuki-majority Kangpokpi district," he said.

Manipur minister Govindas Konthoujam had on Monday said at least 21 houses had been burnt and the situation remained tense.

He also said additional security forces were deployed in the area to control the situation.

Meanwhile, two drivers, who were stranded at Lamlai Chingphei Kuki village under the Litan Police Station limits after their trucks broke down, were rescued on Monday, another police officer said.

Two Tangkhul Naga organisations, Katho Long and Katho Katamno Long, have banned the movement of Kukis in Ukhrul and the adjoining Kamjong district. (PTI)

Indian Army to conduct seminar on Arunachal Pradesh

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Feb 10: The Indian Army will organise a two-day seminar on 13 and 14 February 2026 at Dinjan Military Station on the theme "Arunachal Pradesh: India's Dynamic Frontier." The seminar aims to deepen understanding of Arunachal Pradesh's geopolitical, socio-cultural and security significance in India's eastern sector. Organised by Dao Division under the aegis of Spear Corps, the seminar will bring together distinguished panelists including security experts, academicians and policy makers.

The event will provide a comprehensive platform to deliberate upon understanding Arunachal Pradesh and its people, border dynamics and the developmental imperatives of the state. The seminar will feature three thematic sessions providing insights into the socio-cultural fabric of Arunachal Pradesh, the dynamics and challenges along its borders and development projects and related aspects.

Nagaland adhoc teachers' strike for service regularisation enters 6th day; decides to intensify stir



KOHIMA, Feb 10: The ongoing protest by the All Nagaland Adhoc Teachers Group (ANAGT)-2015 batch entered its sixth day on Tuesday, with the members warning to further escalate their agitation if their long-pending demand for service regularisation is not addressed.

The agitation, which began on February 4, has been continuing at Naga Solidarity Park here, where members have been gathering daily to press for implementation of earlier assurances and policy decisions related to the regularisation of the ad hoc teachers appointed in 2015.

ANAGT leaders said they have decided to launch a hunger strike and preparations are already in place for its commencement if the government does not respond positively by Tuesday.

According to sources within the group, around 20 volunteers have come forward and are ready to participate in the hunger strike.

The ANAGT-2015 batch stated that the decision reflects growing frustration over prolonged delays, despite multiple rounds of dialogue, representations and committee recommendations over the years.

They maintained that the issue of regularisation has been pending for far too long, causing professional uncertainty and financial hardship for teachers who have been serving in government institutions for years without job security. The protestors reiterated that their movement remains peaceful and democratic in nature, but stressed that continued inaction would leave them with no option but to escalate their agitation through more stringent forms of protest. On the sixth day, the sit-in continued with steady participation, placards and slogans calling for justice, accountability and immediate policy intervention.

Leaders also appealed to the government to resolve the matter through a clear administrative and political decision rather than prolonging it through procedural delays.

So far, there has been no official announcement from the government outlining a timeline or decision on the regularisation process.

However, the group said it remains open to dialogue and hopes for a positive response, while making it clear that the hunger strike will be launched without further delay if no meaningful development emerges today. The protest has now entered a critical phase, with rising public attention and increasing pressure on the authorities to resolve the long-standing issue through a concrete and time-bound solution. (PTI)

UNC, ANSAM, NWUM appeal for peace amid Naga factional violence

SENAPATI, Feb 10: The United Naga Council (UNC), the All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM) and the Naga Women's Union, Manipur (NWUM), stating that they represent "the collective conscience and voice of the Nagas in the present state of Manipur", have expressed their utmost concern and profound anguish over the factional violence between the Naga political groups—NSCN-YA and NSCN-AM—in Eastern Nagalim.

In a joint appeal for peace issued on Sunday night, the three Naga organisations said the unfolding situation represents a serious moral, political and historical crisis for the Naga people.

They stated that the Naga political struggle was conceived as a people-centred movement, sustained by unity, collective sacrifice and moral legitimacy. The movement, they said, drew strength from the shared suffering and unwavering resolve of generations who endured immense hardship in defence of Naga land, identity and historical and political rights. They cautioned that this collective conscience and struggle for Naga self-determination should not be reduced to internal warfare, fratricidal bloodshed and rivalry among

Naga brethren, which would ultimately imperil the cherished dream and sacred cause of the people.

The joint statement further said history has repeatedly demonstrated that factionalism is the most destructive adversary of the Naga political movement. Internal divisions, it noted, have weakened collective resolve, diluted political focus and rendered the shared movement vulnerable to continued sinister designs and repressive policies of adversaries. The present cycle of violence, the organisations said, recalls a dark phase in the history of the Naga struggle and accelerates the erosion of unity, credibility and moral authority. The UNC, ANSAM and NWUM unequivocally called for an immediate cessation of all violence and hostilities among Naga brethren, particularly between NSCN-YA and NSCN-AM and urged all sides to give peace a chance through forgiveness and empathy. They appealed to both groups to prioritise shared identity and a secure future over internal rivalries and assertions of supremacy, asserting that despite differences, collective effort and essential unity remains the only path forward to achieve the common Naga dream. (NNN)

Five key tourism destinations proposed for NE states; regional growth highlighted

Union Budget 2026-27 focuses on tourism, connectivity in Northeast: Kriti Vardhan Singh

KOHIMA, Feb 10: Union Minister of State for Environment, Forest and Climate Change and External Affairs Kriti Vardhan Singh on Sunday said the Union Budget 2026-27 proposes special attention to the North-Eastern states through the development of five key tourism destinations aimed at promoting heritage conservation and improving connectivity.

Addressing the media at the BJP office in Kohima, the Union minister outlined the key priorities and projected impact of the Union Budget 2026-27, stating that in an increasingly multi-polar world, regional priorities have assumed greater significance.

Singh said the Budget has been designed to sustain a consistent growth trajectory while strengthening regional cooperation with like-minded governments. He added that emphasis has been laid on economic integration, fostering a competitive workforce and enhancing India's global engagement through initiatives such as the Migration and Mobility Agreement.

Highlighting trade and security aspects, the Union minister said the proposed Free Trade Agreements would focus on facilitating market expansion, while simultaneously



moving towards technology-driven border management systems.

He said the Budget is anchored around the three "Kartavyas" outlined by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman—accelerating economic growth, building human capacity and ensuring inclusive development. Special focus, he added, has been placed on empowering youth by generating self-employment opportunities and addressing their aspirations.

Referring specifically to Nagaland, Singh mentioned the establishment of professional

institutions in Tier-1 and Tier-3 categories to strengthen educational and skill infrastructure in the state.

He further stated that Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) will play a crucial role in driving empowerment, boosting exports and promoting regional development.

Tourism has been identified as a priority sector with a pilot scheme proposed to train 10,000 tourist guides across the country to enhance ecotourism potential. The Budget also proposes the development of five key

tourism destinations in the North-Eastern states to support heritage conservation and improve connectivity.

Additionally, Singh said the formation of industrial corridors has been proposed to strengthen infrastructure and accelerate economic growth across regions.

Expressing confidence in the Budget's direction, the Union minister said the Union Budget 2026-27 would further consolidate India's growth momentum while ensuring balanced and inclusive regional development. (NNN)

They are playing heightened versions of themselves: 'The Wrecking Crew' director on Momoa and Bautista

Filmmaker Angel Manuel Soto, who directed Jason Momoa and Dave Bautista in "The Wrecking Crew", says he was attracted to the action story as it features the two actors with very different energies play off against each other.

Described as a buddy cop action-comedy, the film follows two half-brothers, a loose cannon cop and a disciplined Navy SEAL, who must work together to unravel a conspiracy behind their father's murder in Hawaii.

Written by Jonathan Tropper of "This is Where I Leave You" and "The Adam Project" fame, the film premiered on Prime Video on January 28. The movie has received good reviews for the way it tackles the story of two estranged brothers. Soto, 43, said both Bautista and Momoa were able to bring a lot of who they are in real life and that was a beautiful thing to experience.

"That's why those characters feel lived in, and their chemistry is so unique. It's because they're actually playing heightened versions of themselves. Dave brings his monk-like presence. He has this unique presence and he's very



rigid. And in real life, he's a very disciplined guy. And his character is not that different. It's almost like this is what the extreme version of yourself could be," Soto told PTI in a virtual interview.

"Jason, same thing... He brings that nihilistic, fun, explosive energy to the set. The same way that he's in real life and you see him on social media is not that different from the way he handles acting. He will come and he will explore and he will keep it spontaneous," he said.

Soto, who has directed "Charm City Kings" and "Blue Beetle" in the past, credited Tropper of writing a fun and yet sensitive story

around the two stars.

"The part that got me excited about the whole exploration of this genre was the fact that Tropper weaved in a very important part that is often left out of action movies -- which is having our heroes who are testosterone-driven, and the action is explosive. But there's a moment of vulnerability that is not just a payoff," Soto said.

According to the director, everything in the movie builds up to the moment where "two grown-a** men" finally have a moment where their walls come down and they are vulnerable with each other.

"A lot of times, we don't dive enough in these types of movies, because there's this misconception that real men don't ask questions, real men don't show emotions. And we believe that is the opposite. If you embrace that side of you, you're going to be able to be the man that you're meant (to be)," he added.

Setting the movie in Hawaii was also a deliberate choice as generally such high-octane action movies are shot in cities.

"Our biggest references and the shoulders that we know we stand on, like 'Lethal Weapon' or '48 Hours', everything takes place in downtown LA.

"For us, it was like, how can we embrace the homage of these films, but paint it on a tropical picture? You cannot hide the tropical landscape, you cannot hide the sun in Hawaii. So let's embrace it and make it part of it and give a different texture to a genre that embraces the cultural identity of a place."

The film also stars Claes Bang, Temuera Morrison, Jacob Batalon, Frankie Adams, Miyavi, Stephen Root, and Morena Baccarin. (PTI)



'GHOOSKHOR PANDAT' WILL BE RE-NAMED: NETFLIX TO DELHI HC

Netflix India on Tuesday informed the Delhi High Court that the Manoj Bajpayee-starrer film, 'Ghooskhor Pandat', will be renamed.

The statement was made before Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav, who was dealing with a petition seeking a stay on the release of the film on account of its "offensive" and "defamatory" title. "The producer has taken a conscious decision in light of the concern that has arisen to change the title of the film from 'Ghooskhor Pandat' to an alternate title which more ac-

curately reflects the film's narrative and intent," recorded Justice Kaurav.

Netflix's senior counsel further said the film, which is in editing stage, is a fictional police drama, and the title led to "unintended interruptions" which did not align with the film's content.

The court was informed that all promotional material has also been taken down.

In view of the stand taken by Netflix, the court closed the proceedings on the petition, observing that "nothing more was required to be adjudicated".

Netflix's announcement of

the film, directed by filmmaker Neeraj Pandey, earlier this month sparked a storm on social media, with many users terming the title 'casteist' and offensive.

Petitioner Mahender Chaturvedi, an acharya by vocation, claimed that the "malicious" association of "pandat" with corruption and bribery was an attack on the reputation and dignity of his community.

The title, the petition argued, insulted religious and cultural identity, and creative liberty could not be used as a shield to propagate defamatory narratives. (PTI)

Remembering Mir in the streets that were his home and muse

"Dikhai diye yun ki bekhd kiya" from the movie "Bazaar", "Patta patta buta buta" from "Ek Nazar" and "Yeh Dhuun Kahan se Uthta Hai" from "Pakeezah" -- these are odes to life, romance and love that were never to be.

Few know that the poetry made immemorable by Bollywood were actually written about 300 years ago by Mir Taqi Mir, a migrant to Delhi from Agra who was feted even by Mirza Ghalib a generation later.

Three centuries after Mir (1723-1810) walked the streets of Delhi's fabled Walled City his words wafted through again, perhaps at the very place he made his home and muse.

The wandering poet was celebrated at a soiree recently at the launch of translator, poet and academic Anisur Rahman's latest book "Essential Mir". The place: Chor Bizarre, the Delhi restaurant that recently reopened at Hotel Broadway on Asaf Ali Road at the edge of bustling, picturesque Old Delhi.

The launch was followed by a discussion on the poetry of Mir and his enduring resonance within the cultural fabric of the city that he lived in most of his life. Towards the end, he moved to Lucknow but always regretted it.

Ghalib, who came about seven decades later, wrote this about Mir: "Rekhta kay tumhi ustaad nahi ho Ghalib, Kehthe hain agle zamane me koi Mir bhi tha (Don't think that you are the only master of Urdu poetry, Ghalib. They say that there was also a poet called Mir in the past era)."

In the hour-long session, Rahman read out from his book while interacting with Darain Shahidi of the Dastangoi Collective to weave a poetic picture of Mir's life through verses that have survived the ages and remain relevant even today, especially his compositions that celebrate secularism.

Among the audience were lyricist Javed Akhtar and veteran actors Sharmila Tagore

and Shabana Azmi.

A rendition of Mir's 'nazms' and 'ghazals' was performed by vocalist Yusra Naqvi. Adding to the nostalgia was singer Inder Thakur's old Hindi film songs.

Rahman's book is a one-of-a-kind collection that presents 200 of Mir's best verses, which he has meticulously selected and translated and provided the critical commentary to help modern readers appreciate the context.

In his book, Rahman writes that "Mir creates a poetic universe entirely and peculiarly of his own. It is both terrestrial and extra-terrestrial; it is a macocosm composed of and constituted by



the skies, encompassing mysticism and eroticism, emperors and plebeians, bubbling romancers seeking sensual and carnal pleasures."

By an average estimate, Mir had over 50 disciples who learned the art and craft of poetry writing from him, and in his eight decades on this planet, Mir wrote six "diwans" or collections, writes Rahman.

His book is aimed at making Mir come alive for those who haven't read him.

Rahman says that in his book of memories, Zikr-e Mir, Mir interspersed his sense of personal time with his experiences of historical events. "This book is like a roving eye that captures people and places, blurring

the lines between the historical as personal and the personal as historical."

"It is a pathetic account of the cunning passages of history and politics and a sympathetic chronicle of culture and human conditions. We encounter both the kind and the cruel ones writing both happy and unhappy predicaments. There are references to human empathy and ingratitude, intrigues and politicking, skirmishes and wars, killings and blindings, throning and dethroning. In this tug of war are the Mughals, Afghans and Persians; the Jats, Sikhs and Marathas; and later the British jostling alongside."

Mir's poetry and songs at the event synced in nicely with the theme of Chor Bizarre itself. The chain is renewing its focus on building the restaurant into a culture and heritage salon for Delhi where patron can enjoy conversations around food, literature, culture and music.

"As Chor Bizarre completes 35 years, we are consciously shaping it into a culture and heritage salon for Delhi—one that brings together food, ideas, heritage, and shared memories," said Rohit Khattar, founder chairperson of the Old World Hospitality that runs the restaurant.

"As part of this vision, Chor Bizarre will host cultural conversations every Friday and heritage walks every Sunday Morning, reinforcing its role as a vibrant cultural address in the city. The celebrations also coincide with 70 years of Hotel Broadway, now reopening as part of the Alivaa Collection."

The restaurant was the first to begin 'Chor Bizarre's Memory Lanes', i.e. heritage walks of Delhi in the 90s, which have been revived. These will begin at 10 am from Chor Bizarre every Sunday morning, take people through the walled city or through Darya Ganj's Kitaab Bazaar and explore many other forgotten lanes. (PTI)



Festival on traditional folk music 'Phaag' organised in Andaman

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration has organised a festival to celebrate the traditional Phaag music.

Artists from the archipelago enthralled the audience with folk music that narrates tales from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and Krishna Leela.

"Andaman and Nicobar Islands is like mini India where you can find diverse cultures and traditions. The administration aims to protect and promote all such traditions and provide a platform to grow," Director Tourism, Vinayak Chamadia, said at the event held on Saturday evening.

"It is also aimed towards recognising the original Phaag traditions and songs of the islands that date back to pre-independence times," he said.

A large number of local people and tourists experienced the vibrant folk musical tradition.

"Our aim is to revive and preserve a rare folk tradition that is now gradually fading, while offering both residents and tourists an authentic glimpse into the islands' living cultural legacy," said Rohit Mohan Lal, general secretary of co-organiser Kalapani Phaag Mandali.

Phaag is a traditional form of folk songs brought to the Andaman & Nicobar Islands prior to the year 1900 and is closely associated with the festive period from Vasant Panchami to Holi, he said.

"The festival reflects the rich social and cultural fabric of the islands and has been an integral part of community celebrations in the past," Lal said.

He also thanked 80-year-old Ratan Bihari Lal, a veteran Phaag singer, who has been training youngsters on this form of traditional music for many years. (PTI)

Like Dharmendra and Dev Anand, Rannvijay Singha hopes to work for a long time

Rannvijay Singha says he has reached a stage where he can choose roles for creative satisfaction rather than money and draws inspiration from movie icons Dharmendra and Dev Anand, who continued to work till the very end.

The actor said when he is old, he would like to have had a varied career and great friendships, just like his favourite artists Dharmendra and Dev Anand.

"I love people like Dharmendra Ji who worked till his last film or Dev Anand Ji. We don't know if those last films that he did were released and became successful. But he was shooting at 90 on a hilltop wearing a sweater, that was something. So, if I can continue to do this for a long time, it'll be awesome," Singha told PTI in an interview.

Singha's first moment under the limelight was in early 2000s when he won the inaugural edition of adventure reality series "MTV Roadies". He then went on to host the show for many

seasons, while also making a foray in acting with movies such as "Toss: A Flip of Destiny" (2009), "London Dreams" (2009) and "Action Replayy" (2010).

At the beginning of his career as a performer, the actor said he was offered parts that mirrored his real-life persona - "Rocky, DJ, cool guy, biker guy".

But now, the actor has started getting opportunities to play different characters, whether it was the role of a teacher in the hit series "Mismatched" or an NRI in the upcoming second season of "Kohrra".

"Initially, I did a few films. I don't know if people saw them but the roles were mostly who I was in real life. I am still that guy. But it doesn't always translate into being a character in a film. So, when you do a different character, people say, 'It feels like Rannvijay has tried to act.' And it feels great when that happens."

Now, he is at a stage where he can say no to certain projects.

"The job that I do is adventure,

sports and hosting. So, I can actually choose a role where I feel like I'll get to act and I'll get recognition for that. I don't have to run the house with this. Maybe I'll say no to the one which I would only do for money."

In "Kohrra 2", which returns on Netflix on February 11 with a fresh story, Singha stars alongside Mona Singh and Barnn Sobti.

He plays one of the key suspects in the new investigation centred on the murder of a woman found dead in her brother's barn. Sobti reprises his role of Amarpal Jasjit Garundi from the previous season, while Singh joins him as his senior Dhanwant Kaur.

"I was really happy that I got this opportunity. And the role is different. Whenever I choose something to act in, I'm hoping that if a fan or someone who knows me sees it, then they say 'He did something different or he did a good job'," Singha said about his new role.

The actor said he was a fan of the

first season of the Sudip Sharma-created series and wanted to work with the writer.

"I was very excited when I got a call for it because I have been wanting to work with Sudip sir. All the work that he has done, it really resonated with me. We have similar sensitivities, the kind of stuff that we watch. I didn't know how big or small or what the role was but I had made up my mind that if I do well in the audition and I get an offer, I will 100 per cent say yes without seeing the script."

Even though the scenes and the show's subject were intense, the working environment was positive and fun, the actor added.

"It was after a couple of days, when my heavy scenes were over, that I felt instant satisfaction. The first two days were heavy for me. And I realized the



team is very efficient.

"They've already worked together. The first season was successful. So the team was very confident and joyous while doing serious, intense work."

Asked if he feels he is finally at the right place in the industry, Singha said, for him, every achievement feels like a little victory.

"I was going to the army in 2003. I was going to the academy. And the reason I didn't go is because I wanted to see if I could do an adventurous life, ride bikes and do that outside of

the army. That happened on the first season of 'Roadies'.

"Sometimes I bite my tongue when I say 'I can't believe that this is our life and our work. Hope it doesn't get jinxed.' So, am I at the right place? Am I in the right profession? Do I feel stuck? No, I feel I'm lucky that I was traveling the world at 21-22, getting paid for hosting shows. I'm getting to do a role, it's crazy. So, are we in the right place? 100 per cent. Have we made it? I think that's a continuous process." (PTI)

Kylian Mbappé's scoring streak for Madrid has some wondering if he'll overtake Cristiano Ronaldo



MADRID, Feb 10: Kylian Mbappé's latest impressive scoring run with Real Madrid has brought up comparisons to Cristiano Ronaldo.

After Mbappé scored his 23rd goal in 22 Spanish league games in Madrid's 2-0 win at Valencia on Sunday, coach Álvaro Arbeloa said the France striker could be well on his way to matching the success of Ronaldo at the Spanish powerhouse.

"What Cristiano achieved seemed extraterrestrial, something impossible to match and no one could come close," Arbeloa said.

"Mbappé has a long way to go because Cristiano was here for many years, but he has the conditions to follow in his footsteps, and you never know if he'll be able to surpass him. But if anyone can, it's Kylian."

The 41-year-old Ronaldo, currently playing in Saudi Arabia, played for Madrid from 2009-18, breaking nearly every club record.

The 27-year-old Mbappé joined the Spanish powerhouse last season and quickly matched some of the

numbers of the Portugal star. Mbappé scored 59 goals in 2025 to equal Ronaldo's club-record tally in 2013.

At the time, Mbappé called Ronaldo his "idol, the best player in the history of Real Madrid and a reference point in world soccer. It's an honor for me."

Mbappé started this year on a roll and with even better numbers, having scored nine goals in seven matches. He needed 11 games to reach nine goals last year. He has 43 goals in 35 appearances for club and country this season.

"It's a great fortune, because right now he's the best player in the world with what he's proving day in and day out, game after game," Arbeloa said of Mbappé.

Arbeloa, who took over the club's helm this year to replace Xabi Alonso, was a former Madrid defender who was a teammate of Ronaldo at Madrid, playing six seasons with him from 2009-2016.

Mbappé's France and Madrid teammate Aurélien Tchouaméni also was among those saying Mbappé has what it takes to surpass Ronaldo's numbers with Madrid, according to Spanish media.

Ronaldo left the Spanish club with 451 goals in 438 competitive appearances.

Mbappé criticizes referee

Television cameras caught Mbappé criticizing the officiating crew in the game against Valencia, with the France striker apparently using the word "clown" to talk about one referee. Mbappé seemed to be looking for an explanation for an offside call but the referee didn't appear to want to talk to the player.

Mbappé's Madrid has won seven in a row in the Spanish league and sits one point behind leader Barcelona after 23 matches. It will face José Mourinho's Benfica in the first knockout phase of the Champions League. (AP)

Spin-heavy Australia start as favourites against Ireland

COLOMBO, Feb 10: Their recent form has been far from convincing and the loss of two lead pacers has only added to Australia's woes but the former champions will still start as overwhelming favourites in their T20 World Cup opener against Ireland here on Wednesday.

Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood form one of most potent fast-bowling units of the modern game and Australia will miss their services in the showpiece event. While Cummins and Hazlewood were ruled out due to injuries, left-arm pacer Starc has retired from the format internationally.

In their absence, Nathan Ellis is expected to lead the pace attack but even he has an injury cloud hovering over him and is yet to play a game since missing the Big Bash League (BBL) final with a hamstring issue. Seasoned leg-spinner Adam Zampa is entering the tournament after overcoming a groin issue, which made it possible for him to be available for the group stage.

Considering the conditions across the sub-continent, Zampa will be critical to Australia's hopes in the tournament, which they last won in 2022. The team lost in the semi-finals of the last edition to India.

While leading the spin attack, the experienced Zampa will look to



form a fruitful partnership with fellow tweakers Cooper Connolly and Matt Kuhnemann with all four of the side's group stage matches to be played in Sri Lanka.

While the bowling unit no doubt wears a depleted look compared to their attacks of the past, Australia have the requisite firepower in batting and the team also features a long list of all-rounders, who can trouble most sides on their day.

Australian chair of selectors George Bailey had said they had the luxury of focusing on a player group likely to handle the conditions in India and Sri Lanka with aplomb, even as several players came into the tournament under a fitness cloud.

Their batting core remains more or less the same with Travis Head, skipper Mitchell Marsh, and Glenn Maxwell supported by the likes of Cameron Green, Josh Inglis and Marcus Stoinis.

Australia haven't won any of their past five completed matches, suffering a 0-3 whitewash in Pakistan though with a depleted squad before losing to tournament favourites India 1-2 at home last year. A good start against Ireland could go a long way in ensuring how they fare in the group stage.

Led by Paul Stirling, Ireland will have their task cut out against the Aussies after slipping to a 20-run defeat against tournament co-hosts Sri Lanka in their Group B opener.

Ireland played well in patches against Sri Lanka but against Australia, they will have to do a lot more than that to stand a chance.

As many as 12 members of the 15 Irish players announced for the mega event featured in its previous edition as well, with new additions such as Tim Tector, Ben Calitz and Matthew Humphreys.

This will be Ireland's ninth appearance at the marquee tournament with the best performance coming in the years 2009 and 2022 when they made the second round while taking down former champions West Indies and England.

Ireland will certainly take inspiration from those results as they gear up for a massive match.

Teams (from):

Australia: Mitchell Marsh (c), Xavier Bartlett, Cooper Connolly, Tim David, Ben Dwarshuis, Cameron Green, Nathan Ellis, Travis Head, Josh Inglis, Matthew Kuhnemann, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Renshaw, Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa.

Ireland: Paul Stirling (c), Mark Adair, Ross Adair, Ben Calitz, Curtis Campher, Gareth Delany, George Dockrell, Matthew Humphreys, Josh Little, Barry McCarthy, Harry Tector, Tim Tector, Lorcan Tucker, Ben White, Craig Young. (PTI)

Sharafu, Waseem help UAE post highest T20 World Cup total



CHENNAI, Feb 10: Alishan Sharafu and Muhammad Waseem laid a solid platform for the UAE with a 107-run stand off 77 balls before New Zealand put the brakes on the scoring to limit the opposition to 173 for six in the T20 World Cup here on Tuesday.

However, the UAE still managed to post their highest total in tournament history due to the gutsy efforts of Waseem (66 not out off 45) and Sharafu (55 off 4) at the top of the order. Waseem and Sharafu were able to get boundaries regularly in the powerplay despite Aryansh Sharma (8) falling to Jacob Duffy off a short ball in the second over.

Waseem was more aggressive than Sharafu in their partnership, employing a ramp off Duffy for a six before coming down the track to Rachin Ravindra for a straight six. Sharafu at the other end got to his fifty with a slog off a slower ball from Matt Henry towards the cow corner.

It took a special fielding effort from Mark Chapman at the deep midwicket boundary to break the partnership. Chapman parried the ball back to Dary Mitchell to complete a fine relay catch.

The boundaries dried up post the dismissal of Sharafu in the 15th over.

However, New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner decided to give the 18th over to Glenn Phillips who ended up leaking 27 runs in the over with Waseem and Mayank Kumar picking up a six each.

UAE managed 51 runs in the last five overs at the loss of four wickets including two in the final over. (PTI)

Asian Shooting C'ship: Aakriti wins silver, Anjum claims bronze

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: India's Aakriti Dahiya and Anjum Moudgil won the silver and bronze medal respectively in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the Asian Shooting Championship here on Tuesday.

Kazakhstan shooter Sofiya Shulzhenko set a new world record in the same event enroute winning gold at the Karni Singh Range.

Sofiya ended the 35-shot final with a score of 358.2, a whole four points clear of silver winning Aakriti. Aakriti's senior teammate Anjum, a world championship medallist, clinched bronze with a score of 340.4.

Sofiya's score also gave her three more records -- world junior, Asian and Asian junior.

Later in the junior women's 3P final, India's Prachi Gaikwad emerged triumphant with a score of 353.3. 14-year-old Kazakh shooter Tomiris Amanova won silver with 351.4 while Anushka Thokur bagged

another bronze for the hosts with an effort which ended after the 34th shot at 341.1.

Prachi, Anushka and Hazel also won the team gold in the event with a tally of 1748, seven clear of team Kazakhstan. In the senior women's 3P, the Kazakh shooters turned the tables on the Indians by four points, to win gold with a combined score of 1760.

Paris Olympian and bronze medalist in the Buenos Aires World Cup last year, Arina Malinovsky topped the women's 3P qualification field with a score of 588 after 20 shots each in the kneeling, prone and standing positions.

Anjum shot 587 to take second spot while Ashi Chouksey was fourth with 586. Aakriti took the sixth qualifying spot with a total of 583 while the winner Shulzhenko shot 587 to take third spot behind Anjum.

In the final, the three Indians were on top after the first kneeling position

with Aakriti in the lead, but Shulzhenko had a strong display in the second prone position to rise up to second.

Thereafter, she was the only shooter to log above 50 points in both the five-shot series of the standing position, to take a decisive lead, which kept stretching till the end as her challengers faded out.

Also on the day, Adarsh Singh of India took pole position after the first precision round in the 25m rapid-fire pistol men's competition, with a score of 291/300.

Favourite Anish Bhanwala shot 287 to remain in contention for a finals berth while Neeraj Kumar's 277 meant that he would have to work hard on Wednesday to make the finals cut, which will follow the second rapid-fire round.

India's medal tally currently stands at 39 gold, 15 silver and 12 bronze medals and they comfortably lead the standings. (PTI)

Thank ICC for this amicable solution to Pakistan impasse: Rajeev Shukla

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla on Tuesday praised the International Cricket Council (ICC) for "finding a very good solution" that prompted Pakistan to withdraw its boycott of the T20 World Cup match against India.

The high-profile India-Pakistan match on February 15 in Colombo will go ahead as scheduled after Pakistan's government, following persuasion from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, decided to withdraw its boycott call.

"I would like to thank the ICC chairman (Jay Shah) and its office-bearers on behalf of the BCCI for finding a very good solution. After discussions with the Pakistan Cricket Board and the Bangladesh Cricket Board, and after listening to all sides, this decision has been taken," Shukla told reporters.

"This decision is very important for cricket. Cricket must go and the

World Cup will now be a big success. This is a big achievement as far as ICC is concerned. Even Bangladesh Cricket Board has praised the ICC, so it has listened to all sides and arrived at the decision after taking into consideration the interests of everyone.

"Ultimately cricket is most important for everyone, international cricket is important for everyone," the veteran administrator, who is also a Congress leader, added.

It was clear that Pakistan would withdraw the boycott after Bangladesh Cricket Board chief Aminul Islam issued a statement in Dhaka urging the country to take the field for the greater good of the game.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also received a call from Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, who too urged him to allow the team to play the match. (PTI)

Bogey-free Tvesa takes first round lead in third leg of WPGA

PUNE, Feb 10: Indian golfer Tvesa Malik fired the only bogey-free round on the opening day of the third leg of the Women's Pro Golf Tour to take the sole lead here on Tuesday. Trying to get back the form and rhythm which made her one of the best players in India, Tvesa had one birdie on each side of the course.

A total of 44 players teed up at the ₹.17 lakh event.

Lying second was Anvitha Narendar (71), who after three birdies and two bogeys in the first eight holes, parred the last 10 holes.

Two amateurs Priya Kumari and Lavanya Gupta carded even par 72s to be tied third. Lavanya may well have been in shared lead but for the two closing bogeys on the 17th and the 18th. Tvesa, who is hoping to get some starts on the Ladies European Tour later in the season, birdied the Par-5 fourth and the Par-3 14th. She also missed a few other birdie chances as the putts did not fall. (PTI)

Miller says he brings in experience and calmness into SA squad

AHMEDABAD, Feb 10: Veteran South Africa batter David Miller believes he brings "experience and calmness" into the side as the Proteas look to win their maiden ICC T20 World Cup title.

The 36-year-old Miller is one of the most experienced players in the squad and knows the importance of passing on his knowledge to the younger lot. "Experience, but I think calmness as well. I mean, I feel like, yeah, I feel like just put back wherever I can, you know," Miller said on the eve of their second Group D match against Afghanistan here on Tuesday.

"There's a couple new guys in the squad, when I say new, younger guys, so it's just about making sure that they feel as comfortable as they can and then on the field, bring my expertise, whatever I can for the team and then off the field make sure that the ship is going in the right direction wherever I can assist and contribute."

South Africa started their T20 World Cup campaign with 57-run win over Canada here on Sunday.

After Afghanistan, South Africa will square off against New Zealand here on February 14.

"Yeah, it's definitely a step up but look we came into this World Cup not wanting to take things for granted at all in any game, so by all means today was a great start and yeah. So the next two games are re-

ally, really big.

"We're going to just take one game at a time, which is Afghanistan. I think it's 11 o'clock start, which is a bit different. The guys are really focused and really prepped really well. As you said, we feel like we've got home conditions," he said.

"We've been here for a couple of days and we are here for another week. So really just to look after that and make sure that we can actually be nice and strategic and tactical about it. But the guys are all playing really, really good cricket, so I think it's going to be great games," he said.

The left-handed batter said the Proteas have one goal in mind coming into the tournament -- stay calm and focussed and get the job done.

"Yeah, for sure. I think it is definitely calmness. I put it down to the squad's played a lot together for a number of years. So it's just having faith and trust in each other. It's not really necessarily trying to do too much out of the box. It's just making sure that you do your job and get it done properly.

"So I think that it comes with time - we've played a lot together and yeah, it kind of does feel calm guys are nice and focused as I said and we just take one game at a time and just make sure that build up from that 2024 final that we lost, just take a lot of confidence from

that," he said.

Miller said personally he felt the Ahmedabad wicket is a bit tricky.

"Yeah I think generally it is a really nice wicket so there was a little lull there I think nature of it like if you lose a couple wickets or one or two wickets you generally kind of this take one or two overs or one over to just kind of reassess and whatever and then go from there.

"So it was really nice to bat with (Tristan Stubbs) Stubbo at the back end. We were in there for a couple of overs and I actually personally found it a bit tough to strike the ball. I felt like just a bit out of rhythm and whatever," he said.

Miller is coming into the tournament on the back of an adductor muscle strain (groin injury) sustained during the SA20, but he feels he is at his best shape.

"Yeah, definitely it does add obviously we it was frustrating, you know finish there being so close but definitely, I mean we've got - like I said we've had a team now for a number of years and it's great to play with the guys.

"There's a real sense of belief and confidence and calmness. So it's great to be a part of a squad like that. I just want to represent my country as best as I can.

"I've been working really hard, been frustrated but learnt a lot over the last couple months and hopefully get it right," he said. (PTI)

Al-Nassr hopeful Ronaldo will return for Asian Champions League Two

RIYADH, Feb 10: Cristiano Ronaldo is yet to win a major trophy since arriving in Saudi Arabia, and Al-Nassr will be hoping the 41-year-old Portuguese star returns to action on Wednesday to help the Riyadh club move closer to silverware. Al-Nassr takes on Arkadag of Turkmenistan with a place in the quarter-finals of the Asian Champions League Two on the line. Ronaldo hasn't played any part in Al-Nassr's most recent two games in the Saudi Pro League amid reports he was unhappy with the way the club is being funded, particularly after watching rival Al-Hilal sign Karim Benzema in last month's transfer window.

Al-Nassr, Al-Hilal, Al-Itihad and Al-Ahli are all majority owned by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund. In a statement, the SPL outlined that no player is bigger than the club or the league.

"The Saudi Pro League is structured around a simple

principle: every club operates independently under the same rules," the league said. "Cristiano has been fully engaged with Al-Nassr since his arrival and has played an important role in the club's growth and ambition. But no individual — however significant — determines decisions beyond their own club." Despite the absence of the five-time Ballon d'Or winner, Al-Nassr beat reigning champion Al-Itihad 2-0 on Friday.

Itihad is the only one of three Saudi teams in the top-tier AFC Champions League Elite not to have secured a place in the round of 16, with two group games remaining. Despite losing star striker Karim Benzema last week to Al-Hilal, which has a history of making high-profile signings, including Neymar from Paris Saint-Germain in 2023, Itihad will advance to the next round if it defeats Al-Gharafa of Qatar on Tuesday. (AP)

From fringes to frontline: Dhakshineswar Suresh, India's new Davis Cup hero

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: In an era obsessed with flair, Dhakshineswar Suresh's rise has been defined by order. From meticulously placed kit bags and stern discipline to years of dawn-to-dusk grind, his journey to becoming India's newest Davis Cup mainstay has been forged quietly, patiently, and far from the spotlight.

His tennis roots trace back to family. His father, Suresh Ekka, was a club-level player from Dindigul, and it was through those early connections that Dhakshineswar found his way to coach Lakshman Chakravarthi in Chennai.

From those early days, the grind was relentless. Between 2010 and 2016, Dhakshineswar would travel nearly 16 kilometres daily by bus across Chennai.

"He was just nine then. There was no ego, no shortcuts. He had to travel from Surappet to Mogappair, then Mogappair to Anna Nagar, and from Anna Nagar to Loyola College, Nungambakka. I would pick him from the bus stand.

"The mornings were spent with fitness trainer Ranjit in Anna Nagar, followed by tennis sessions at Loyola College,"

Chakravarthi told PTI, sharing his ward's early struggles.

"He would play sets with everyone, and never shied away from working hard. He is very quiet, has a different attitude. He never drank Pepsi or Coke for years. He is very very disciplined."

Money was often an issue. Opportunities were limited. Yet progress came in flashes. In 2016, Dhakshineswar travelled to France for training and later that year won the U16 Nationals at DLTA -- the prestigious Fenesta Open -- a milestone that gave the world a peek into his potential.

"If he had sponsors earlier, things could have been very different. He is playing at a different level," his coach said.

Setbacks, however, kept interrupting momentum.

A back injury in 2019 cost him five to six months, and the COVID-19 pandemic that followed, dried up competition and sponsorship.

With options narrowing, former India player Somdev Devvarman advised a move to the United States, a decision that would re-define Dhakshineswar's career.



"We were short of money, so we sent him to the US on the advise of Somdev. The scholarship helped," Chakravarthi said.

"There, he improved a lot. College tennis not only provided structure but also sharpened his mental edge. The constant match play, the pressure of team

competition, and the professional environment toughened him in ways rankings alone could not."

That mental strength now shows on the Davis Cup stage. In India's recent Davis Cup tie against the Netherlands in Bengaluru, Dhakshineswar rose to the occasion, producing a composed and fearless performance under pressure to anchor the team when it mattered the most, winning all his three matches in India's close 3-2 win.

He will finish in May his studies at the Wake Forest University, where he is pursuing 'communication studies'.

At 65, Chakravarthi calls Dhakshineswar his finest pupil.

"He is my best student," he said without hesitation.

"Everything is organised about him. The dresses, shoes, kit bag. He keeps things in the same place always. His cap, racket, everything is kept at the same place always. He is very systematic. That is his quality. Small things make the difference."

The coach believed the next leap is close.

"He should travel more and compete

more. He can crack top-100 in six months. He should get wild cards. Playing more tournaments is the key."

More than the coaching, Chakravarthi underlined the physical demands ahead.

"Coaching is good in India. Fitness is where the difference comes. He did well in the US, but he still needs to work on his legs."

At home, pride remains understated. Suresh Ekka, a man of few words, summed up his emotions after his son's latest Davis Cup heroics simply.

"What to say, no words."

Suresh said after his heroic show against the Netherlands, Dhakshineswar didn't say a word to his family.

"There was no conversation, just a hug."

That quiet embrace mirrored Dhakshineswar's journey: uncluttered, disciplined, and built patiently over years of unseen effort.

As he now cements his place in India's Davis Cup plans, his story stands as a reminder that breakthroughs are often forged not in noise, but in routine, resilience and belief sustained over time. (PTI)

Netherlands keep Super 8 hopes alive with confident seven-wicket win over Namibia

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Bas de Leede hit an assured 72 as the Netherlands kept their Super 8 hopes alive in the men's T20 World Cup with a confident seven-wicket win against Namibia in their Group A match here Tuesday, bouncing back from a painful defeat to Pakistan from a strong position.

The Netherlands produced a tidy, disciplined bowling performance to restrict Namibia to a modest 156 for 8 in the clash between the associate nations despite a spirited middle-overs recovery from the African side.

This is Namibia's first outing of the tournament, and it showed in patches. Short of match time in recent weeks, with their last T20I being that last-ball win over South Africa in October 2025, they took time to find rhythm.

With the Indian team not involved, the stands were sparsely populated, but the cricket on display was of good quality. Jan Frylinck (30) and Jan Nicol Loftie-Eaton (42) revived the Namibian

innings with their steady 50-run stand after an early setback while JJ Smit (22) provided fireworks down the order. However, the late flourish did not come for Namibia as they settled for a modest total on a sporty wicket.

Bas de Leede, who remained unbeaten, and Colin Ackermann (32) did the bulk of scoring after opener Mochale Levitt (28) provided a quick start as Netherlands overhauled the target without fuss.

Netherlands next play the USA in Chennai on Friday while Namibia have a tough test against hosts India at the same venue on Thursday.

The Dutch, who had lost to Pakistan in Colombo after dictating terms for large parts of the match, showed far greater composure this time. After losing Max O'Dowd (7) early, Levitt provided early momentum with a brisk innings before falling in the powerplay.

Ackermann steadied the innings with



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a fluent 32, forging a vital stand with Bas de Leede.

De Leede anchored the chase with a measured knock off 48 balls, mixing caution with aggression. He hit nine boundaries, including four sixes.

Skipper Scott Edwards finished things off in style, scoring an unbeaten 18, as the Netherlands reached 159 for three in

18 overs. Namibia's bowlers struggled to contain the Dutch middle order once the platform was set.

Earlier, the Dutch set the tone early. Pacer Logan van Beek (2/13) hit the deck hard with the new ball, while off-spinner Aryan Dutt (1/13) bowled a probing, miserly spell that choked the scoring.

Dutt provided the first breakthrough when he lured Nikolaas Davin Steenkamp (6) down the track. Steenkamp walked forward to negate the spin but missed the line and length completely, allowing Scott Edwards to complete a sharp stumping.

The Netherlands largely controlled the powerplay, conceding just 29 runs in the first five overs. Namibia managed only one maximum in that phase, Frylinck briefly breaking the shackles by pulling Klaassen for six.

Seeing the impact Dutt was making, Dutch skipper Edwards introduced Colin Ackermann, but the off-break bowler was handled confidently. Loftie-Eaton (40) hammered him straight down the ground for six, while Frylinck followed up with a crisp cover drive for four.

The pair added a valuable 50-run stand, but with runs still at a premium, van Beek returned to break it, inducing Frylinck to edge behind.

Namibia skipper Gerhard Erasmus, fresh at the crease, then provided the spark the innings needed. He unfurled a fluent display against Tim van der Gugten, creaming 16 runs from one over to push Namibia past 100 in the 13th.

Edwards responded with smart captaincy, rotating his bowlers, mixing pace and spin, and using as many as eight bowling options to prevent momentum from building.

The Netherlands needed Loftie-Eaton to bat deep, and van Beek delivered again, removing the set batter to redeem himself after his expensive penultimate over against Pakistan earlier in the tournament.

JJ Smit (22) briefly threatened a late surge, lofting Roelof van der Merwe for back-to-back sixes, but Bas de Leede cut short the cameo, clipping the ball with a quicker delivery. Without a final flourish, Namibia were forced to settle for a below-par total, one the Netherlands will back themselves to chase. (PTI)

India-Pakistan T20WC match on after Pak govt withdraws boycott call

ISLAMABAD/DHAKA, Feb 10: The India-Pakistan match in the T20 World Cup will go ahead as scheduled after Pakistan's government decided to withdraw its boycott call following persuasion from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, ending an impasse that cast a shadow on the ongoing tournament.

The eagerly-anticipated and high-intensity game is scheduled to be held in Colombo on February 15.

"In view of the outcomes achieved in multilateral discussions, as well as the request of friendly countries, the Government of Pakistan hereby directs the Pakistan National Cricket Team to take the field on February 15, 2026, for its scheduled fixture in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup," the Pakistani government stated in a press release.

It was clear that the country would withdraw the boycott after Bangladesh Cricket Board chief Aminul Islam issued a statement in Dhaka urging Pakistan to take the field for the greater good of the game.

"...this decision has been taken with the aim of protecting the spirit of cricket, and to support the continuity of this global sport in all participating nations," the statement from Pakistan government added.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also received a call from Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, who too urged him to allow the team to play the match.

"The Sri Lankan President requested the Prime Minister to accord serious consideration to amicably resolve the current im-



asse". The government statement came after Pakistan Cricket Board chief Mohsin Naqvi briefed Sharif about his dialogue with the ICC that also involved Islam on Sunday.

Naqvi had earlier stated that it would take another day to reach a final decision.

"Bangladesh's stance was valid so we had to back them," he asserted.

Bangladesh were ousted from the tournament for refusing to play in India citing security concerns.

Islam issued a statement in Dhaka, expressing his gratitude towards Pakistan for backing his country but requested that the team show up for the high-profile game for the greater good of the sport.

"Following my short visit to Pakistan yesterday and given the forthcoming outcomes of our discussions, I request Pakistan to play the ICC T20 World Cup game

on 15 February against India for the benefit of the entire cricket eco system," he added.

Soon after, the ICC also issued a statement in Dubai, saying that it would not be penalising Bangladesh for its refusal to play in India. The country was ultimately replaced by Scotland in the tournament roster.

"It is agreed that no financial, sporting or administrative penalty will be imposed on Bangladesh Cricket Board in relation to the current matter," stated a press release from the world body.

"It is acknowledged that BCB retains the right to approach the Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC), should it choose to do so. This right exists under current ICC regulations and remains intact," it added.

In addition, the ICC also agreed to give the hosting rights of a global event to Bangladesh between 2028

and 2031. Naqvi brushed aside suggestions that the PCB was under pressure due to ICC's warning of punitive action.

"You know we are not ones to be afraid of these threats at all. Everyone knows our Field Marshall (Asim Munir). We are not worried about any sanctions," he said.

It is understood that during his meeting with ICC deputy chair Imran Khawaja on Sunday, Naqvi had placed a few demands, including resumption of Indo-Pak bilateral cricket and a tri-series involving Bangladesh.

This was meant to offset the losses that the BCB has incurred following the shocking ouster from the global event.

While Indo-Pak bilateral cricket isn't under ICC's purview, the demand for a tri-series was summarily rejected. India haven't played any tri-national tournament for more than a decade now. However, the ICC might consider awarding the next men's Under-19 World Cup to Bangladesh.

A PCB source said that during talks with Khawaja, Naqvi raised a number of grievances.

"He questioned Khawaja if the ICC had kept quiet if the Pakistan team had refused to accept the Asia Cup trophy at the presentation from any Indian board official," the source said.

The Asia Cup trophy lies locked at the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) headquarters in Dubai after Naqvi, who currently heads the body, made it clear that only he would carry out the presentation formalities in full media glare. (PTI)

Afghanistan look to bounce back against South Africa in T20 World Cup's group of death



AHMEDABAD, Feb 10: With only two teams slated to make the Super Eight stage from each group, Afghanistan find themselves in a must-win situation when they take on an in-form South Africa in their Group D match of the T20 World Cup, here on Wednesday. South Africa are perched at the top, head and shoulders above the rest as their 57-run victory over minnows Canada bolstered their Net Run Rate to 2.850 along with two points.

On the other hand, a five-wicket defeat to New Zealand (+1.162) saw Afghanistan slip to third with a Net Run Rate of -1.162, which they would have to improve in order to advance to the next round.

Therefore, the competition in Group D can be expected to be intense in the coming days as Afghanistan are among the teams to beat in the tournament.

South Africa, the last edition's runner-up, and the resolute Kiwis will heat up the battle as Group D is set to witness some tension in the first round. Afghanistan rode on Gulbadin Naib's 35-ball 63 and handy contributions from the other batters to put on a formidable score of 182 for six while batting first against New Zealand.

But the Afghans were left to rue their decision of leaving out Noor Ahmad, despite his experience of playing T20 cricket at Chepauk, in favour of fast bowlers who failed to execute their plans and bowled wayward. Afghanistan fast bowlers collectively failed to put pressure on the Kiwis and even their skipper Rashid had an off day, giving away 1/36 in his four overs.

Mujeeb Ur Rahman's 2/31 was the only bright spot for the Afghans with the ball, who will be determined to make significant improvements as they move to the world's biggest stadium.

Rashid's experience of playing here in the IPL will be crucial for Afghanistan, who need a win to

bounce back and resurrect their campaign. Additionally, their bilateral record against South Africa will also weigh heavily on the Afghans who have lost each of their three matches in history.

Afghanistan have played against the Proteas only three times and that too in T20 World Cups, losing by nine wickets in the 2024 edition, by 37 runs in the 2016 edition and by 59 runs in 2010.

South Africa will feel confident going into this clash having put up an all-round show against Canada. Skipper Aiden Markram (59) led from the front with a brisk half-century and the others also chipped in with valuable runs to push them beyond 200 in a one-sided game.

However, the young Dewald Brevis will have some attention on him after falling for a mere 6 against Canada. Brevis, considered among the brightest batting talents in the coming generation, has rather had a quiet time with the bat in T20Is with 31 being his highest score in last 14 matches.

David Miller's unbeaten 39 would also give the South African camp a lot of assurance after the experienced left-handed batter was in doubt to make the squad for the T20 World Cup.

Teams: **Afghanistan:** Rashid Khan (c), Ibrahim Zadran (vc), Darwish Rasooli, Mohammad Ishaq (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Sediqullah Atal, Azmatullah Omarzai, Gulbadin Naib, Mohammad Nabi, Shahidullah, Abdollah Ahmadzai, Faqalqah Farooqi, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Ziaur Rahman.

South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Dewald Brevis, Quinton de Kock (wk), David Miller, Ryan Rickelton (wk), Jason Smith, Tristan Stubbs, Corbin Bosch, Marco Jansen, George Linde, Keshav Maharaj, Kewna Maphaka, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada. Match starts at 11:00am IST. (PTI)

Cricket behind in running messages on field compared to other sports: Buttler



MUMBAI, Feb 10: Senior batter Jos Buttler said cricket is relatively behind other sports in relaying messages to on-field players, after head coach Brendon McCullum was seen communicating with England captain Harry Brook through a walkie-talkie during drinks break in their T20 World Cup clash against Nepal here.

But in some sports like Formula 1, Race Engineers direct drivers in real-time via radio, covering strategy, engine settings, tire management, and safety info. In football, managers are allowed to communicate with players from the sidelines.

"I think so, there's (been) walkie-talkies for a while to be fair. But then the communication from top to bottom has always been really good in the group," Buttler told reporters when asked if the motive behind using walkie-talkie was way for McCullum to have a more hands-on approach.

"Baz can sit with his feet up and his sunglasses on and look very relaxed, but he's as sharp a coach as I've ever worked with. He doesn't miss a beat," Buttler said.

"I think also for cricket in general, actually, coaches are getting more involved in real-time in cricket... I've played in the IPL, at Gujarat (Titans), Ashish Nehra is very active on the boundary rope.

"But it seems like cricket is a kind of sport where we are still a bit behind, maybe in that area where you look at other sports, the managers and coaches, and you think of rugby, running messages. So, maybe that will come more and more into cricket."

After the game on Sunday, McCullum's approach was described by England player Will Jacks as a "simple and effective way to pass on information" to the captain or batters in the middle.

The former England captain Buttler said a close finish against Nepal was another indication of the fact that T20 matches can get tighter than expected.

"In the T20 World Cups, (or) T20 cricket, generally the game is so close, one or two players can win games for their side on the day. Ultimately, we found a way to win, which is the most important thing," he said.

"Obviously, the consequences are different. So (we are) Learning how to manage those emotions. The cricket is the same, but the consequences and the pressures of that are then different. If you can hold your nerve and manage to still execute skills, knowing that the consequences are different, that's probably good learning," he added.

Buttler defended England bowlers Adil Rashid and Jofra Archer who gave away more than 80 runs collectively while managing only one wicket between them against Nepal.

"We're all accepting of how T20 cricket works. They were chasing 180 (185). (We) know, the batters are going to come after you and be aggressive. Credit to the Nepal guys, they played really, really well. They ran between the wickets well, found the boundaries when they needed to," Buttler said. (PTI)

Marsh backs Australia's inexperienced bowling attack to do the job

COLOMBO, Feb 10: Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh is confident that his side's relatively inexperienced bowling attack will rise to the challenge in the absence of frontline pacers Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood during the T20 World Cup.

This will be the first major ICC tournament since 2016 where Australia will not feature a single member of their famed pace trio.

While Starc retired from the format last year, Cummins and Hazlewood have been ruled out of the tournament due to injuries.

In their absence Nathan Ellis, Ben Dwarshuis and Xavier Bartlett will spearhead the pace department.

"Guys like Patty (Cummins) have played a lot for us over the last few years due to his hectic schedule and over the last 12 months guys like Benny Dwarshuis and Xavier Bartlett have played pretty much all of our games," Marsh said on the eve of their opening game against Ireland.

"We've got great confidence that they've been able to do a role for us, and they've excelled in some games. So we're confident with the group that we've got here. And we've built that for the last 12 months." (PTI)

Nepal have resilience and determination as a young cricket nation: Paras Khadka



MUMBAI, Feb 10: Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) secretary Paras Khadka said the lion-hearted performance against England in a T20 World Cup match was the symbol of the "resilience and determination" of a young cricketing nation.

Nepal fought bravely till the end but lost by a mere four runs against the two-time champions to give a fine account of themselves in their opening match of the ICC showpiece, here on Sunday at the Wankhede Stadium.

Making only their third appearance in the T20 World Cup, Nepal will now take on tournament debutants Italy in a Group C match here.

"For us to play the kind of cricket that we did, I'm very proud of the effort and we believe in our team. Our boys have the resilience (and) the determination, we're a young cricket nation, the emotions are part of it," Khadka, who played 10 ODIs and 33 T20Is for Nepal, said here at a CAN event.

Khadka noted that despite it being the time of general elections in Nepal, talks

about a cricket match dominated the Himalayan nation's topic chart.

"Nepal cricket has been blessed with great coaches and now playing at the Wankhede, (it) felt like home. We had around 17,000 supporters, almost everybody looked like a Nepali supporter, when we opened up social media during the game and after it, we are on the brink of elections back home," he said on Monday.

"...for the last 24 hours, it's only been cricket news of what could have been or what could have happened. But for us the most important thing is we are here, we're playing in Wankhede, we're playing in Mumbai, as we all know it's probably a centre stage for where Indian cricket is," Khadka added.

The 38-year-old said Nepal is beginning to make their mark in Asia after watching other giants in the subcontinent.

"I would say the game has now grown into a level where we're in the subcontinent but Nepal being a young cricket nation, we've grown watching all of the big cricketing giants around us," he said.

"But we are slowly making our mark towards where we want to head towards, the future is bright, there's a lot of prospects of where we're heading towards, a lot of support from the government, non-government, corporate sector back home and with the kind of performances (on Sunday) and with the three matches remaining, we believe that we can make it to the second round," Khadka added.

Former India cricketer Sanjay Manjrekar, who was among the panelists, said Nepal have an inherent fighting spirit.

"There is an inherent fighting spirit which is something Afghanistan has as well. Afghanistan never goes on the field as an emerging team or a weaker team and they don't feel anxious on the field," he said.

"It's inherent, something that is God given. I dare say India used to be nervous for a number of years. I used to be a part of a team in the 90s that was anxious when it went abroad.

"I don't see that anxiety in Afghanistan and I don't see that in Nepal, so that's a great start," Manjrekar added. (PTI)