


6 WORLD

- At least 6,000 killed over 3 days during RSF attack on Sudan's el-Fasher, UN says
- Bangladesh's new cabinet to take oath tomorrow

8 NATION

- 'Rahul Gandhi spreading lies over India's trade deals with US, EU'
- BJP, Cong workers pelt stones in Pune



Government of Assam
 Department of Industries, Commerce & Public Enterprise

জন্মেগৰ চৰকাৰ myGov মেৰা সৰকাৰ

**Empowering Youth
 Building Self-Reliance**

**Ceremonial Distribution of First Tranche
 Chief Minister's Atmanirbhar Asom
 Abhijan (CMAAA) 2.0**

for Karbi Anglong | Dima Hasao | West Karbi Anglong

Chief Guest

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
 Chief Minister, Assam

August Presence

Dr Tuliram Ronghang
 Chief Executive Member
 Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council

Smti Nandita Gorlosa
 Minister, Sports & Youth Welfare, etc., Assam &
 Guardian Minister, Karbi Anglong & West Karbi Anglong Districts

17 February 2026 1:30 PM KASA Cricket Stadium, Diphu, Karbi Anglong

Financial Assistance

General Category

₹2 lakh
 per beneficiary
 (50% Grant + 50% Interest-free Loan)

Professional Category
 (Engineering, MBBS, BDS, and other professional courses)

₹5 lakh
 per beneficiary
 (50% Grant + 50% Interest-free Loan)

Additional Support

- Skill training
- Access to markets

Encouraging Entrepreneurship

District	Potential Entrepreneurs
Karbi Anglong	1,002
Dima Hasao	487
West Karbi Anglong	457
Total	1,946

Professional Category: 8
 General Category: 1,938

Total Amount to be Disbursed
₹19 crore+

Statewide Potential Entrepreneurs

General Category: 74,238
 Professional Category: 206

Total Potential Entrepreneurs
74,444

Total Amount to be Disbursed
₹1,495 crore+

Documents to be carried along

- Original Photo Identity Proof** (any one of the following)
- PAN Card / Aadhaar Card / Voter ID / Passport / Driving License / Ration Card with Photo
 - Certificate of address with photo from Govt. recognized educational institutions
 - Photo identity certificate issued by Village Panchayat Head or equivalent authority
 - Current passbook of Post Office or any scheduled bank with photo

Printout of Application Form from CMAAA Portal

DIPR /D/HLT/301/16-Feb-26

AI Impact Summit: India gears up for global dialogue on Artificial Intelligence



NEW DELHI, Feb 15: India is set to host the AI Impact Summit, a high-profile gathering of global leaders and industry heavyweights in Artificial Intelligence - a technology widely seen as one of the biggest disruptors since the advent of electricity.

The summit, at the grand 'Bharat Mandapam' from February 16-20, will bring together policymakers, industry leaders and technology innovators at a time when nations are racing to define their AI agenda.

For India, the event is as much about signalling capability as it is about intent - showcasing its deep talent pool, expanding digital public infrastructure and growing startup ecosystem, while positioning itself as a key architect of responsible, scalable and inclusive AI solutions for the world.

Artificial intelligence or AI has moved well beyond research labs and boardroom buzzwords - it is reshaping healthcare delivery, transforming agriculture, recalibrating financial markets, redefining education systems and rewriting corporate strategy, even as it alters the very nature of work and, increasingly, everyday life.

For India, the global summit underlines the nation's intent to not merely be a participant, but a key architect in shaping the rules, standards and opportunities of the AI age.

At its core lies the ambition to secure a seat at the global high table of technology leadership and help shape the next phase of Artificial Intelligence development.

"The key message we want to send is that whatever happens with AI needs to be human-centric and inclusive. There needs to be democratic access to AI resources, and it needs to be done in a way where people are at the centre of this process," IT Secretary S Krishnan told PTI.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, many global leaders are scheduled to attend the AI Impact Summit, including French President Emmanuel Macron and Brazilian President Lula da Silva - the presence of these heads of state underscores the high-level international engagement and interest around the AI agenda.

Ministerial delegations from over 45 countries would be participating in the summit. The UN Secretary General and senior officials from several international organisations will also join the deliberations.

Prime Minister Modi will address the Summit, visit the Expo, and engage closely with the CEOs. The event will be closely watched globally as it unfolds, given that some of the biggest names shaping the tech narrative are slated to be part of it.

Why this summit matters:

While earlier global gatherings - including the UK's AI Safety Summit at Bletchley Park (2023), the Seoul Summit (2024), and the Paris

Tea industry seeks policy support

KOLKATA, Feb 15: India's tea industry is facing mounting financial stress due to rising input costs, stagnant prices, labour shortages and climate-related risks, prompting planters to seek policy support and structural reforms to sustain operations, industry representatives said.

"Many estates were being forced to sell tea below cost, leading to higher borrowings and financial strain. Unless we produce high-quality tea and fetch remunerative prices, sustainability is impossible," Uttam Chakraborty, Chairman of the Tea Association of India, said.

He noted that wages account for nearly 60 per cent of production cost, making the sector highly sensitive to wage revisions and input inflation. Costs of fertilisers, coal, pesticides and electricity have risen sharply in recent years, with power expenses alone estimated at about ₹ 10-11 per kg of made tea. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I, Sahabbar Ali (Old Name) SO-Late Kacham Ali resident of Vill- No. 1 NC Arimari, PO- Kharupetia, PS-Shyampur, Dist- Darrang (Assam) shall henceforth be known as Sahabbar Ali (New Name) as declared before the Notary Public Darrang Mangaldai on 14th Feb, 2026. Both Sahabbar Ali and Sahabbar Ali are the same and one identical person.

Sd/-
Sahabbar Ali

meet (2025) - placed significant emphasis on frontier risks, safety guardrails and voluntary commitments, India is widening the lens to foreground AI's developmental impact and real-world applications that can drive economic growth, social inclusion and sustainability. In essence, People, Planet and Progress.

India is the architect of one of the world's largest digital public infrastructures, which has drawn global recognition, and is home to a fast-growing startup ecosystem.

Backed by the IndiaAI Mission's push for compute capacity, datasets and skilling, the summit will signal New Delhi's strategy for harnessing Artificial Intelligence while balancing rapid innovation with appropriate safeguards.

Governments, captains of the global tech industry, researchers, startups, students and citizens from across the world will tune in to high-voltage deliberations for a peek into the future and what it would look like in the AI era.

The big themes to watch:
Seven thematic working groups, co-chaired by representatives from the Global North and Global South, will present concrete deliverables, including proposals for AI Commons, trusted AI tools, shared compute infrastructure, and sector-specific compendiums of AI use cases.

Power-packed sessions, over 700 planned over five days, will address AI safety, governance, ethical use, data protection and India's approach to sovereign AI, including the development of indigenous foundation models for strategic sectors.

The summit will have deep dives into how AI is impacting professions and industries, the new skill requirements for the evolving job market, and the role of AI in supporting farmers, small businesses and individuals.

AI and the future of work:
As automation reshapes industries, workforce readiness will come under the spotlight. India has one of the youngest workforces in the world, with over 65 per cent of the population under 35, giving the nation a substantial edge in the new era.

Given the favourable demographic profile, the tech-savvy talent base can be trained and adapted for AI-driven industries, creating a foundation for innovation, digital services, and future-ready jobs.

Technology stocks have, in recent months, turned volatile, even nervous, amid concerns that advances in Artificial Intelligence tools could disrupt traditional outsourcing and software services models.

Reskilling initiatives, AI-focused training programmes and the broader implications for India's vast IT services sector are likely to feature prominently in the discussions in the coming days.

India's AI rulebook - balancing innovation and regulation:

Recent amendment to IT rules and FAQs around AI-generated content and labelling is the huge talking point in the industry at the moment, as is increased accountability of social media platforms and AI tool providers.

The summit will offer insights into India's approach to tackling deepfakes and AI misinformation.

Unlike the EU's regulation-heavy AI Act or the US' market-driven approach, India has opted, and indeed advocated, for an innovation-first approach. A development-first model focused on scaling benefits across emerging economies.

"Concerns of each society and each country are different in where the negative impact could lie, and so we need to understand that our approach to regulate AI will depend on the objective situations we find ourselves in.

"If we need to legislate and regulate, we can do it quickly and do it in a way that does not impact innovation. Which is why we say innovation-first is the approach, we stand ready to regulate when the need arises, and to the extent possible, we will use existing legislation and regulations," Krishnan said.

Bringing the Global South to the AI high table:

The India AI Impact Summit 2026 will be the first global AI summit to be hosted in the Global South.

India has consistently championed the voice of developing economies in digital policy forums. The summit will push for equitable access to AI resources and fair rule-making.

Having cemented its reputation with digital public infrastructure like UPI and Aadhaar, the attention now shifts to the summit to see how the country can extend that storied legacy to the realm of Artificial Intelligence and set the global benchmarks for responsible AI at scale.

Host India expects that the event will build consensus on key issues around Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly spotlighting the inclusion agenda and democratisation of AI resources. A joint declaration, a framework for responsible AI deployment in developing economies, or a roadmap for shared research and compute infrastructure would be keenly watched.

The 'Power List' of tech CEOs:

The summit has a blockbuster lineup of CEOs headlined by Sundar Pichai (CEO of Google), Sam Altman (CEO of OpenAI), Demis Hassabis (CEO of DeepMind Technologies), Dario Amodei (Anthropic CEO), Brad Smith (Microsoft president) and many others.

The collective presence of these influential tech voices under one roof elevates the summit proceedings to a centre of gravity for global tech deliberations.

Audiences will keep a close eye on frontier AI labs (OpenAI, Anthropic) and leading players (Microsoft, Google) for cues and company-related updates and announcements.

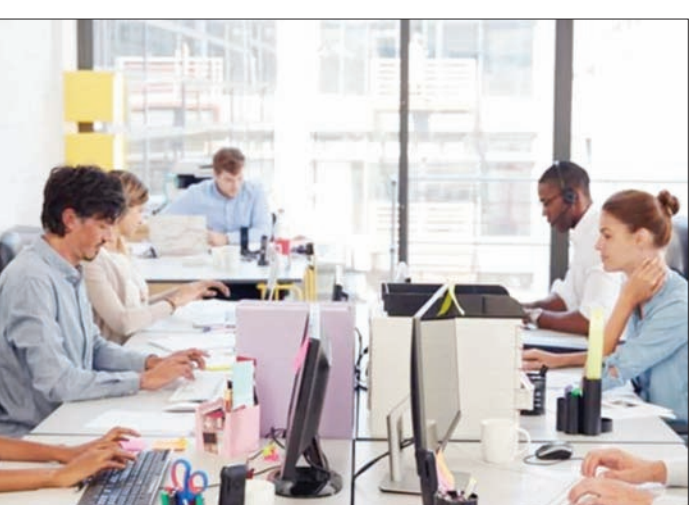
Indian startup founders building indigenous models will share the summit stage, highlighting the country's growing role in the AI stack.

Spotlight on Sovereign AI:
In preparation for the India AI Impact Summit 2026, 12 Indian AI start-ups selected under the Foundation Model Pillar recently engaged in a roundtable chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and presented their ideas and work.

These startups are working in a diverse set of areas, including Indian language foundation models, multilingual LLMs, speech-to-text, text-to-audio and text-to-video; 3D content using generative AI for e-commerce, marketing, and personalised content creation; engineering simulations, material research and advanced analytics for data-driven decision-making across industries; healthcare diagnostics and medical research, among others.

As the world navigates twin realities of AI's transformative promise and fears around disruptive potential, the India AI Impact Summit 2026 arrives as more than a global-scale event. The deliberations from Bharat Mandapam will influence how AI is built, governed and deployed across the world in the years ahead. (PTI)

AI adoption leading to moderation in entry-level hiring: Report



NEW DELHI, Feb 15: Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption has led firms to moderate hiring, primarily at the entry-level, according to a report.

According to a study by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) supported by OpenAI, AI adoption is reshaping hiring priorities across the sector.

The study finds that 63 per cent of firms reported increased demand for candidates with domain expertise and AI or data skills, pointing to a growing premium on hybrid skill sets as AI is integrated into core workflows.

Titled 'AI and Jobs: This Time Is No Different', the study repre-

senting the strongest growth in demand, indicating that gen AI is primarily functioning as a productivity-enhancing complement to technical and analytical work, rather than a substitute, it said.

Across the 1,900-plus business divisions identified as being most affected by AI, productivity gains significantly outnumber declines, the report said.

"On average, divisions reporting higher output with stable or reduced team sizes outnumber those experiencing productivity declines by a ratio of 3.5 to 1. Nearly one-third of divisions report both increased output and reduced costs, indicating that AI is enabling firms to scale output more efficiently without corresponding reductions in employment," it said.

More than half of surveyed firms report that they are already supporting AI adoption through awareness or training initiatives, with an additional 38 per cent planning to do so.

However, it said, training coverage remains limited, with only a small share of firms reporting that more than half of their workforce has received AI-related training in the past year.

Key challenges cited include difficulty finding qualified trainers, high costs and uncertain returns, ethical and legal concerns, and organisational readiness, it added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

Assam Govt seeks

viable to construct civilian airports at Majuli, Diphu, Umrangso and Manas. If we get a favourable response, we may see four new airports in Assam in the next five years," he added. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the PM, on Friday approved the construction of India's first 34-km-long twin-tube underwater road-cum-rail tunnel in the Brahmaputra river between Gohpur and Numaligarh in Assam at a total capital cost of ₹ 18,662 crore.

"The Union Cabinet has also approved a two-line rail network underneath the Chicken's Neck. The ELF, twin-tube tunnel, and underground rail network will position Assam on the strategic level. We will defeat the enemy from the soil of Assam," Sarma said. He termed the road-rail tunnel a game-changing project for the entire Northeast, considering its strategic importance, and said that land acquisition for it will begin within the next two-three days.

"In case of war, if the enemy bombs other bridges on the Brahmaputra at Bogibeel, Kaliabhomora and other locations, all connectivity will be lost. This tunnel will play a vital role then," Sarma said.

The CM stressed that the Indian Army has fully backed this tunnel as one of the main stakeholders. The other three stakeholders are the Assam government, National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) and Indian Railways. "Initially, there was a plan to construct a bridge to connect the two banks of the Brahmaputra in central Assam to bypass the Kaziranga National Park. I had met the then CDS Bipin Rawat and NSA Ajit Doval several times for this project. Later, a tunnel was proposed and the Ministry of Defence also got involved," he added.

Talking about the strategic importance of the Chicken's Neck corridor, a 22-km wide stretch connecting the Northeast with the rest of the country, Sarma said a section of people, during the anti-CAA movement, had threatened to cut off the corridor. "When I became the CM, I took the matter to the highest level. Although the sloganeering originated from JNU and Sharjeel Imam was arrested, this threat was taken very seriously. Our next effort is to construct a highway underneath the Chicken's Neck so that no bomb can hit it," he added.

Considering Assam's strategic position, many important infrastructures such as a military camp in Dhubri are being built to secure the northeastern region, which is surrounded by China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan, Sarma said. In 1962, the then PM had said "my heart goes with the people of Assam", and the state was left on its own. PM Modi is in no mood to say goodbye to Assam and he is giving all due importance to the region. All these projects will fortify the state," he added.

When asked about Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi's comment that the government should also focus on "exorbitant price of tea" at airports along with having ELFs, Sarma, without naming him, said those "hand-in-glove" with enemies cannot understand the depth of national security.

"India's internal and external enemies are comparing ELF with tea and snacks, because they are hand-in-glove with the enemy nation. They cannot understand the seriousness and depth of national security and its vulnerability. It's the Indian government that understands the role of the Northeast. All these strategic projects should have been implemented long ago," he added. (PTI)

Tender for Kamakhya

approved the construction of India's first 34-km-long twin-tube road-cum-rail tunnel underneath the Brahmaputra river between Gohpur and Numaligarh at ₹ 18,662 crore. (PTI)

Ambitious projects ridiculed

has focused on bold planning and execution. According to Sarma, projects such as the Kaziranga elevated corridor and the Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) at Moran stand as examples of how Assam is being prepared for strategic, economic and disaster-response challenges. He said that innovative infrastructure is crucial not only for connectivity but also for national security, tourism, and disaster management in a flood-prone state like Assam. "Assam is no longer confined to conventional thinking. We are building infrastructure that matches global standards," he said. Sarma further added that the government's approach has been to think ahead and act decisively, despite criticism.

He said the people of Assam are now witnessing visible change on the ground, which he described as the government's biggest validation. The chief minister reiterated that development initiatives would continue at a rapid pace, asserting that Assam's transformation story would be written through results, not rhetoric.

Nitin Nabin to

programme at Khanikar field on February 18 and is scheduled to visit Tinsukia the following day, where he will pay homage at the maidam of Matak king Sarbananda Singha.

He said this will be Nabin's first visit to Dibrugarh and Tinsukia after assuming charge as the BJP's national president. During the tour, he is expected to participate in several organisational meetings, including a BJP zonal meeting involving members from seven to eight districts, and an interaction with leading citizens of Dibrugarh. Saikia added that Union minister Sarbananda Sonowal and chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will also be present at the Prista Pramukh Sammelan. Party sources said that ahead of the upcoming Assam Assembly elections, Nabin's visit is significant as he is expected to hold discussions with mandal presidents from 18 mandals across six constituencies in Dibrugarh to chalk out the party's strategy.

The BJP has maintained a strong presence in Upper Assam since coming to power in the state and is aiming to consolidate its position in the region in the next Assembly polls.

PM Modi says

"I believe public life demands certain constructive restlessness. At the same time it is important to acknowledge the scale of progress achieved in the journey of Reform Express."

He was asked if India is ready to take the moonshot for Viksit Bharat and was it a now or never situation that led his government to create a Budget that was not typically a 'Bahi Khata' document.

"First of all I would respectfully say that none of our budgets has been made with an attitude of creating a run-of-the-mill Bahi Khata. if one takes a closer look at my approach in the last 25 years it becomes clear that our work does not happen in bits and pieces." The prime minister said there is a broader strategy, a plan of action and an effective implementation that reflects the 'whole of the nation' thinking, continuity of purpose and a long-term vision, progressively unfolding step by step, year after year.

"So, this is not a 'now or never' moment born out of compulsion. It is a 'we are ready' moment born out of preparation and inspiration. This (2026-27) Budget reflects this yearning to become a developed nation."

In the written interview, Modi also said his government has used its years in office to plug "structural gaps left behind by earlier administrations", pursued bold reforms and laid the foundations for a developed India.

India has in quick succession concluded landmark trade deals with the European Union and the United Kingdom, securing sweeping tariff reductions and expanded market access for goods and services, while also reaching an understanding with the United States to ease tariff frictions and deepen trade engagement. Together, the moves are seen as significantly improving access for Indian exporters in advanced markets and reinforcing New Delhi's push to integrate more closely with global supply chains.

"We now have FTAs with 38 partner nations, an unprecedented milestone in India's trade history. A remarkable feature of these trade agreements is that they span continents and include countries of varying economic strength," Modi said. "There is a new confidence in our nation. Our national character has revealed itself even in times of different kinds of challenges and we are a bright spot of growth even in difficult global circumstances."

Calling productive spending a hallmark of his government, Modi said the Union Budget deliberately avoided short-term populism and instead channelled record capital outlays into infrastructure to drive jobs and sustainable growth. "Taken together, Budget 2026 is all about strengthening the manufacturing ecosystem, expanding value addition and creating conditions for skill and scale to come together. The end result will be Atmanirbharta and massive job creation." Modi said the next leap toward Viksit Bharat by 2047 will depend on how boldly Indian enterprise invests in innovation, builds long-term capacity and positions itself as a globally competitive, technologically confident and socially responsible engine of growth.

The prime minister urged the dynamic private corporate sector to invest "more aggressively" in research and development, adopt frontier technologies, deepen supply-chain capabilities and compete on quality and productivity rather than on protected margins. "Policy can only create the enabling framework. The next phase of transformation requires a decisive response from the private sector. Incentives and tariff preferences can catalyse growth, but durable competitiveness must rest on innovation, efficiency and scale."

"Equally, as productivity rises, the gains must be shared fairly between workers, shareholders and owner-managers. Sustainable growth requires social legitimacy. Rising real wages, skill upgrading, and stable employment reinforce domestic demand and social cohesion, which, in turn, support long-term investment."

On the hike in Defence budget and military modernisation, Modi said the benefits of a decade of defence reforms were evident during 'Operation Sindoor', and asserted that India has to be prepared at all times to deal with security challenges. Leveraging fresh Budget incentives to turbocharge investments in data centres, Modi also pitched India as a global hub for digital infrastructure and artificial intelligence, saying the country is ready to host the world's data and lead the next wave of the technology revolution.

His pitch came a day before India hosts the global assembly of tech tycoons, AI business leaders, policy makers, investors and innovators.

The Global AI Impact Summit from February 16 to 20 will see a host of heads of state and government, including France's Emmanuel Macron and Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, along with representatives of more than 60 other countries, convene in New Delhi. (PTI)

Shah may visit

Villages Programme-II (VVP-II) in April 2025, as a Central Sector Scheme with a total outlay of ₹ 6,839 crore until 2028-29. The scheme was launched for the comprehensive development of select strategic villages located in blocks abutting international land borders (ILB), excluding the northern border already covered under VVP-I.

The VVP-II is being implemented in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, J&K, Ladakh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, officials said. The VVP-I was launched in February, 2023 for villages abutting the northern border in Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Ladakh.

The programme envisages focused areas of intervention in the selected villages for creating livelihood generation opportunities through the promotion of tourism and cultural heritage, skill development and entrepreneurship, development of cooperative societies, and cultivation of medicinal plants and herbs, they said.

The interventions also include providing road connectivity to unconnected villages, village infrastructure, health facilities, education infrastructure, television and telecom connectivity. (PTI)

Priyanka coming to

AIUDF 15 and CPI(M) has one MLA. There is one Independent legislator also. (PTI)

Taralungso gears up

stalls will primarily offer traditional Karbi cuisine. Officials expressed confidence that, despite financial constraints, the festival will be held with customary enthusiasm and cultural grandeur.

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Tender for Kamakhya Ropeway Project floated: CM

'Central projects worth ₹ 55,000 cr approved in last one year'

GUWAHATI, Feb 15: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said that central projects worth around Rs 55,000 crore have been sanctioned for the state in the last one year.

Addressing a press conference here, Sarma spoke about a range of approved and planned projects in Assam.

"The Centre had assured infrastructure projects worth ₹ 80,000 crore during the second Advantage Assam investment summit last year, and the state has already received approval for different projects worth ₹ 55,000 crore," he said.

The 'Advantage Assam 2.0 Investment and Infrastructure Summit' was organised by the state government in February 2025.

Sarma said that the government has already floated the tender for the Kamakhya Ropeway Project from Kamakhya rail station to Kamakhya temple.

"When the PM visits Assam next, he will lay the foundation for it," he said.

The Centre is likely to approve a ₹ 1,500 crore project in a day or two to construct an elevated corridor from Guwahati airport to Jalukbari, the entry point of the state capital, Sarma said.

"The ₹ 14,000-crore project for four-laning of the

national highway from Baihata Chariali to Tezpur is at last stages of approval. We hope for it very soon," he added.

The CM further said that work for the stalled Kamakhya corridor project is likely to resume soon after the expert committee report did not raise any adverse comments.

"After some people opposed the corridor, the Gauhati High Court asked IIT Guwahati and the National Institute of Hydrology to study if the project would have any ecological impact. They said there would be no impact," he claimed.

Besides, various works are ongoing at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital for ₹ 2,200 crore, and Assam Medical College and Hospital for ₹ 600 crore, Sarma said.

He also said that another highway project is being planned from the semiconductor plant at Jagiroid in Morigaon district to the Bhutan border via Udalguri by building another bridge over the Brahmaputra.

"This project is under active consideration of the Centre. These strategic assets will also be used by civilians," Sarma said.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the PM, on Friday (CONTD. FROM PAGE-2)

Feasibility study for airports at Majuli, Diphu, Umrangso and Manas on the anvil

Assam Govt seeks more ELFs from Centre

GUWAHATI, Feb 15: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said he has written to the Centre seeking more emergency landing facilities in the state, a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the Northeast's first ELF in Moran.

He also announced that the Assam government will ink a pact with the Civil Aviation Ministry next month to carry out a feasibility study to construct four more airports at Majuli, Diphu, Umrangso and Manas.

Addressing a press conference here, Sarma said more strategic assets are being planned, including a twin tube road-cum-rail tunnel under the Brahmaputra river and an underground highway underneath the Chicken's Neck corridor.

"The Moran ELF has extreme strategic importance for Assam and



the Northeast. The PM inaugurating it in the presence of the Air Chief Marshal yesterday has sent a very strong message that India is ready for everything on this front," he said.

A lot of highway and other

strategic projects are being constructed in Arunachal Pradesh, considering its border with China, but "Assam is being developed as a backup state in case of a war", Sarma said.

"We have written to the Centre

seeking more ELFs in the state. We need more such facilities for use during disasters such as floods. During a deluge, transport carriers such as C130 would be able to land at ELFs with relief materials," he added.

The CM said one more ELF has already been conceived in Assam apart from the Moran facility, and there is a possibility that four-five more such facilities would be constructed in the state.

Modi on Saturday made a historic landing at the Northeast's first ELF aboard the C-130J aircraft at Moran in Dibrugarh district.

Sarma also said the state government will sign an agreement with the Centre next month for carrying out a study to construct four more airports. "The agreement with the Civil Aviation Ministry will check if it is (CONTD. FROM PAGE-2)

PM Modi says Viksit Bharat in sight, urges pvt sector to do its bit

NEW DELHI, Feb 15: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday hailed the latest Budget and a spate of global trade deals signed by his government as foundations for Viksit Bharat, and urged the private sector to step in "more aggressively" and "boldly" now.

In a wide-ranging interview with PTI, Modi blasted the UPA government for failing to achieve substantial trade agreements, and asserted that women will play the "most important role" in Viksit Bharat.

He said political stability and predictability have restored investor confidence in India and

that stronger manufacturing, services and MSMEs have enabled it to negotiate free trade pacts with 38 countries from a "position of strength."

He listed three top priorities for the next three decades—more structural reforms, deepening of innovation in technology, manufacturing and services, and simpler governance so that citizens and businesses can operate with greater ease and trust.

Asked if he is satisfied with the progress made by India's Reform Express, he said "I must say that by temperament I am never fully satisfied..." (CONTD. FROM PAGE-2)

Nitin Nabin to visit Dibrugarh on Feb 18

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Feb 15: BJP national president Nitin Nabin will visit Dibrugarh on February 18 to participate in a Prista Pramukh Sannelan to be held at Khanikar.

Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia confirmed that Nabin will be on a two-day tour of Upper Assam from February 18. Saikia visited Dibrugarh on Sunday to review preparations for the visit.

Speaking to reporters, Saikia said Nabin will attend the Prista Pramukh (CONTD. FROM PAGE-2)

Ambitious projects ridiculed by Congress are becoming reality: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Feb 15: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said that many of the ambitious infrastructure projects announced by his government were initially ridiculed by the Congress, but are now turning into reality, underscoring what he described as a decisive shift in the state's development trajectory.

Speaking to reporters in Nagaon, Sarma recalled how the opposition had mocked him when he spoke about major connectivity projects, including the

Kaziranga elevated corridor, tunnels and the use of highways as emergency landing strips for aircraft.

"When I spoke about the Kaziranga elevated corridor, tunnels and aircraft landing on highways in Moran, they laughed at me," the chief minister said, referring to the Congress.

He added that opposition leaders had derided his announcements as unrealistic, claiming that "whatever the chief minister dreams at night, he says during the day".

Rejecting the criticism, Sarma as-

serted that his government has consistently delivered on its promises and taken infrastructure development in Assam to an unprecedented level.

"Leave roads aside, this time I am saying aircraft will land on the Brahmaputra," he said, hinting at futuristic transport and emergency response solutions being explored by the state.

The chief minister said the Congress had failed to envision or implement large-scale infrastructure projects during its long rule in Assam, while the present government (CONTD. FROM PAGE-2)

Shah may visit Assam on Feb 20

GUWAHATI, Feb 15: Union Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to visit Assam on a two-day tour from February 20 to roll out a programme and take part in a CRPF parade, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday.

Sarma said Shah will start his tour from Silchar in Cachar district of Barak valley, where he will launch the scheme under the second phase of the Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP).

"He (Shah) will reach Guwahati the next day and take part in the annual day parade of the CRPF. There will be an arms display and presentations on CRPF's operations in Chhattisgarh and Kashmir, among other things," he said.



Shah had last visited Assam, where assembly polls are due within two-three months, on January 30, to launch a series of projects and address two public meetings. Sarma also said NCC cadets will be en-

couraged to witness the CRPF parade so that they are motivated to join the force.

"Our youths give interviews for jobs in the Assam Police, but do not appear for the CRPF. We, therefore, plan to open a CRPF recruitment centre in Assam. We have already acquired land in Dhemaji district," Sarma said.

On the recent aerial shows of the Indian Air Force, he said, "Earlier, there were many Assamese in the IAF. However, that number dropped to almost zero during the last decade. The series of aerial shows in the state aim to motivate youths to join the forces."

The Union government had approved the Vibrant (CONTD. FROM PAGE-2)

Rhino attacks in KNP: Forest guard killed

JORHAT, Feb 15: A forest guard was killed and another injured in a rhinoceros attack at Kaziranga National Park in Assam on Sunday, a senior forest department official said.

The incident took place at Kohora range in the morning during patrolling, he said.

"When the forest guards were on routine patrolling near Bardalani camp, the rhino suddenly attacked them. One person was killed and another injured in the attack," the official said.

The deceased has been identified as Sahabuddin (54) and the injured as Ramen Bora, he added. (PTI)

Priyanka coming to Assam on Feb 18

GUWAHATI, Feb 15: Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is scheduled to visit Assam on a two-day trip starting February 18 to take part in a series of party meetings ahead of state assembly elections, a state leader said on Sunday.

Vadra, a Congress general secretary and parliamentarian, is the chairperson of the party's screening committee for the upcoming Assam assembly elections.

State Congress general secretary (organisation) Bipul Gogoi said in a statement that Vadra will hold a series of meetings with different office bearers of the Congress during the two days.

She will be holding separate meetings with the political affairs committee, MLAs, district presidents, frontal group heads, legislature party leader, working presidents,

MPs, different cell heads and booth committee chiefs, among others.

Vadra will leave for Delhi on the evening of February 19, Gogoi said.

The Assam Assembly elections for 126 constituencies are likely to take place in March-April this year, and the Congress is looking to contest the polls in an alliance with several other opposition parties.

Imran Masood and Saptagiri Sankar Ulaka, both Lok Sabha MPs, along with Sirivella Prasad, are the members of the screening committee.

Presently, the ruling BJP's strength in the 126-member Assam Assembly is 64, while its allies AGP has nine MLAs, UPPL has seven, and BPF has three members.

In the opposition camp, the Congress has 26 members, (CONTD. FROM PAGE-2)

KARBI YOUTH FESTIVAL

Taralangso gears up for 52nd Karbi Youth Festival

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Feb 15: The hills of Karbi Anglong are set to come alive as Taralangso prepares to host the 52nd edition of the Karbi Youth Festival (KYF), regarded as the largest ethnic festival in Northeast India, beginning Monday at the Karbi People's Hall.

Spread across more than 800 bighas, the venue is expected to witness large gatherings during the five-day celebration showcasing Karbi culture, traditions and community life.

Addressing a press briefing at Taralangso, Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) general secretary Sunil Tokbi acknowledged financial challenges facing this year's event, stating that although the festival



budget is around Rs 3 crore, organisers currently lack adequate liquid funds.

Despite this, he said preparations have been completed with strong community sup-

port, adding that the Central Reception Committee formed two months ago has successfully managed extensive logistical arrangements.

The opening ceremony will be led by Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council chief executive member Tuliram Ronghang, while Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is scheduled to visit the festival on February 17.

The event has also attracted international attention, with representatives from the embassies of Hungary, Nepal and Taiwan expected to attend, along with intellectuals, writers and political leaders from neighbouring states.

Organisers said this year's festival will emphasise both celebration and discipline, with strict monitoring on the sale and consumption of commercial alcohol, while indigenous brews will be permitted. Food (CONTD. FROM PAGE-2)

Ministry of Culture Government of India

Celebrating the Symbol of Santhali Culture, Heritage and Pride

Commemoration of 100 Years of the **Olchiki Script** created by Pandit Raghunath Murmu

Chief Guest **Smt Droupadi Murmu** Hon'ble President of India

"India is very proud of the Santhali culture and the contribution of Santhali people to national progress." - Narendra Modi Prime Minister

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Shri Jual Oram Hon'ble Minister of Tribal Affairs Government of India | Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat Hon'ble Minister of Culture & Tourism Government of India | Shri Mohan Charan Manjhi Hon'ble Chief Minister of Odisha

Program Highlights

Special Exhibition | Short Film on Olchiki Script | Release of Commemorative Stamp and Coin | Cultural Program

16 February, 2026 | ৬৫ ইস্তাফা স্মরণে ৪:০০ pm at 4:00 pm

Venue: Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi (২৩৩৩ ৩৩৩৩)

Watch the live broadcast on DD News

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

There are no strangers here; only friends you haven't yet met. - William Butler Yeats

Prez Macron's India visit

Indo-French relations will elevate to a higher level with the visit of French President Emmanuel Macron to India from February 17 to 19, 2026. The visit will underscore what both governments describe as a "maturing strategic partnership" that spans defense, technology, innovation and global diplomacy. The visit comes against a backdrop of intensifying geopolitical competition — from China's assertiveness in Asia to shifting Western alignments — and at a moment when New Delhi is fast emerging as a pivotal player in global commerce and security. President Macron's itinerary combines high-level bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, participation in the India-AI Impact Summit in New Delhi on February 19, and a joint launch of the India-France Year of Innovation 2026 in Mumbai. The summit — the first global AI forum hosted in the Global South — builds on the two leaders' co-chairmanship of an AI Action Summit in Paris last year and signals a mutual ambition to shape global norms on artificial intelligence and emerging tech. The Horizon 2047 Roadmap, a long-term strategic framework adopted by India and France to chart bilateral cooperation through India's centenary of independence, will form the conceptual anchor of their discussions. Topics will span defense, technology, trade, Indo-Pacific cooperation and multilateral coordination.

At the heart of the visit's strategic subtext is defense cooperation, especially a move toward a make-in-India production base for French military aircraft. In the run-up to Macron's arrival, India's Defense Acquisition Council (DAC) is expected to consider approval for a massive procurement of 114 new Rafale fighter jets from France — a deal valued at roughly ₹3.25 lakh crore — with around 80 percent of the aircraft to be manufactured domestically under India's defense industrialization drive. This planned acquisition, which would follow earlier purchases of 36 Rafale jets for the Indian Air Force and 26 naval Rafale M aircraft for the Indian Navy, could be among the most consequential defense deals between the two partners in decades. While details remain under negotiation and institutional clearance, the proposal exemplifies the convergence between India's strategic autonomy and France's interest in deepening defense industrial ties with New Delhi.

The decision to build most of these jets in India reflects New Delhi's intent to strengthen sovereign aerospace capabilities, create high-tech employment, and position itself as a regional hub for advanced military manufacturing. It also aligns with France's broader push to diversify supply chains in defense production and to establish overseas manufacturing bases in friendly but non-aligned capitals. India and France share one of New Delhi's oldest and most resilient bilateral partnerships. Diplomatic relations were established soon after India's independence in 1947, and strategic cooperation was elevated formally in 1998 — the first such Western partnership for India. France was an early Western partner willing to engage India across defense, nuclear energy and space technology when Cold War fault lines made other Western capitals cautious.

India's AI Summit: Shaping the Global South

By: Lalit Nath

When India prepares to host a major global summit on artificial intelligence, the event represents more than a routine diplomatic gathering. It signals an emerging effort to shape how rapidly advancing technologies intersect with development, governance and social equity. Artificial intelligence is no longer confined to laboratories or niche industrial applications, it is increasingly embedded in everyday decision-making, public administration and economic planning. Against this backdrop, India's initiative reflects a broader ambition — to align innovation with inclusive growth and long-term human priorities, particularly for developing societies.

Convened under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the summit brings together policymakers, researchers, industry leaders and multilateral institutions at a moment when global conversations about AI are intensifying. Nations are grappling with a central dilemma: how to harness technological acceleration without allowing it to outpace ethical safeguards or deepen structural inequalities. India's framing of the summit suggests a recognition that AI governance must extend beyond economic competitiveness and national security concerns to encompass social justice and developmental resilience.

Artificial intelligence holds transformative potential for emerging economies. In agriculture, predictive analytics can support climate adaptation and crop planning. Healthcare systems can benefit from AI-assisted diagnostics and data-driven disease surveillance, particularly in underserved regions. Education platforms can expand access to learning resources and personalize instruction at scale. Governance, too, stands to gain through improved service delivery and data-informed policymaking. These possibilities underscore why developing nations increasingly view AI not merely as a technological frontier, but as a development multiplier.

Yet the promise of AI coexists with tangible risks. Technologies deployed without careful oversight can reinforce economic concentration, amplify algorithmic bias, and erode privacy protections. Automation may generate productivity gains while displacing segments of the workforce that lack reskilling opportunities. Data governance challenges — including consent, ownership and accountability — remain unresolved across jurisdictions. For societies already managing inequality and institutional constraints, these risks carry

heightened consequences. Responsible innovation therefore requires regulatory clarity, ethical standards and mechanisms that ensure technology serves broad public interest rather than narrow advantage.

A defining feature of the summit is its emphasis on representing the developmental perspectives of the Global South. Historically, international standards and regulatory frameworks have often reflected the institutional capacities of advanced economies. While these models offer valuable lessons, they do not always align with the socio-economic realities of emerging nations. By elevating voices from diverse regions, the summit seeks to democratize global AI discourse. Col-



laborative governance — grounded in mutual learning — can help countries address shared challenges such as cross-border data flows, algorithmic transparency and interoperability without imposing one-size-fits-all solutions.

Equally important is the role of industry. Private technology firms remain central drivers of AI research, infrastructure and deployment. Their innovation ecosystems fuel rapid progress, yet public accountability must evolve alongside corporate influence. Constructive engagement between governments and companies is essential to balance innovation with safeguards. Transparent regulatory frameworks can provide certainty for investment while protecting competition, privacy and consumer rights. Encouraging open research collaboration, startup participation, and academic partnerships strengthens technological diversity and reduces overdependence on a small cluster of dominant platforms.

Human capacity remains the foundation of sustainable technological growth. AI readiness is not solely a function of computing power or capital investment; it depends on education, skills development and institutional competence. For a country with a large and youthful population, targeted investments in digital literacy, advanced research and workforce retraining are critical. Inclusive access to learning opportunities ensures that AI-driven transformation does not become the preserve of an elite minority. When citizens are equipped to understand and shape emerging technologies, innovation becomes a shared societal asset rather

than a distant abstraction.

Environmental sustainability is another dimension that cannot be overlooked. Energy-intensive data centers and computational processes contribute to carbon footprints that are particularly consequential for climate-vulnerable regions. Integrating sustainable computing practices into AI policy frameworks signals recognition that technological progress must align with ecological responsibility. Long-term credibility depends on demonstrating that innovation enhances — rather than undermines — environmental resilience.

The summit's broader significance lies in its attempt to link vision with implementation. International forums often generate ambitious declarations, but their impact is measured by continuity and institutional follow-through. Sector-specific demonstrations in healthcare, agriculture and public administration illustrate how AI applications can address real-world challenges. By grounding policy conversations in tangible outcomes, the initiative bridges the gap between aspiration and execution. Durable partnerships, shared research platforms and coordinated funding mechanisms will ultimately determine whether the summit catalyzes lasting progress.

Public trust remains central to AI's social acceptance. Transparent governance, participatory policymaking and credible oversight mechanisms are essential to build confidence in automated systems. When citizens perceive that innovation respects privacy, fairness, and accountability, adoption becomes more resilient. Conversely, opacity and unchecked deployment risk backlash that could slow beneficial technological integration.

At its core, India's convening effort reflects a strategic understanding: the future of AI will be shaped not only by technical capability, but by normative choices about equity, accessibility, and collective welfare. For developing regions navigating rapid transformation, this moment presents both opportunity and responsibility. If global cooperation yields frameworks that prioritize human-centered outcomes, artificial intelligence can become a powerful instrument of inclusive progress.

Ultimately, the success of such initiatives will not be judged by the scale of announcements, but by their ability to translate innovation into social benefit. A balanced approach — combining ambition with accountability — offers the most credible path forward. In that sense, the summit represents an important step toward a more representative global AI order, where technology strengthens institutions, expands opportunity and reflects the aspirations of societies striving for equitable development

Tarique Rahman and Bangladesh's turning point

The result in Bangladesh has landed with the weight of history. It is not merely an electoral outcome but a moment that forces a reckoning with the past and opens a narrow yet meaningful window to rethink the future. A decisive mandate, the political re-emergence of Tarique Rahman as a central figure in the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, and the clear defeat of Jamaat-e-Islami together signal a shift that goes beyond party arithmetic. For Bangladesh, it is about redefining democratic legitimacy after years of contested politics. For India, it is about recognising that a neighbour's internal political reset can become an opportunity for a more balanced, less anxious relationship.

Bangladesh's political story has long been shaped by legacies rather than programmes. The shadow of the liberation war, the trauma of military rule, the bitterness between the Awami League and the BNP, and the polarising role of Islamist forces have all combined to create a democracy that often feels trapped by its own past. Elections have repeatedly been framed not as moments of choice but as existential battles. In that context, the recent result matters because it breaks a pattern. The defeat of Jamaat is not simply the loss of seats by one party. It is a symbolic rejection of a politics that thrives on grievance, identity fear, and selective memory. It suggests that a large section of Bangladeshi voters are weary of extremes and are looking instead for a political centre that promises stability without suffocation and nationalism without exclusion.

Tarique Rahman's position in this moment is complicated and therefore significant. For years, his name has been associated as much with controversy as with leadership. Living in exile, burdened by legal cases and political allegations, he remained a distant yet powerful presence within the BNP. To his supporters, he represented continuity with the party's founding legacy and resistance to what they saw as authoritarian consolidation by the Awami League. To his critics, he embodied the very problems that had weakened democratic institutions in the past. The decisive nature of the mandate changes the terms of this debate. It does not erase questions about governance or accountability, but it does confer political

legitimacy that cannot be dismissed as accidental or marginal.

What stands out is that this mandate did not arrive through an alliance with Jamaat as a dominant force. On the contrary, Jamaat's defeat marks a clear boundary drawn by the electorate. This matters deeply for Bangladesh's internal cohesion. Jamaat has long been a polarising presence, both because of its role during the liberation war and because of its ideological position that often clashes with the country's constitutional commitment to secularism. Its marginalisation through democratic means, rather than bans or boycotts, strengthens the argument that Bangladesh's voters are capable of correcting their own political course without heavy-handed interventions.

For the BNP, this creates both an opportunity and a burden. The opportunity lies in redefining itself as a mainstream democratic party that draws legitimacy from popular support rather than from tactical alliances with extremist or unpopular forces. The burden lies in proving that it has learned from past mistakes. The party's earlier periods in power were marked by allegations of corruption, institutional weakening, and political intolerance. A decisive mandate raises expectations. It demands not only a change in tone but a change in practice. Tarique Rahman, if he is to truly lead rather than merely inherit, will have to articulate a vision that goes beyond opposition politics and grievance.

This internal transformation within Bangladesh has direct implications for India. New Delhi's relationship with Dhaka over the past decade has been closely tied to the Awami League and Sheikh Hasina. India viewed her government as a reliable partner on security, particularly in curbing insurgent groups in the northeast and countering Islamist extremism. This strategic comfort came at a cost. India was often perceived within Bangladesh as favouring one political party over others, and as being indifferent to concerns about democratic backsliding. Such perceptions fed resentment, especially among younger Bangladeshis who felt that their country's sovereignty was being quietly compromised in the name of stability.

The defeat of Jamaat alters this



equation. One of India's longstanding anxieties about Bangladeshi politics has been the rise of Islamist forces hostile to Indian interests. With Jamaat pushed to the margins by voters themselves, India has an opportunity to recalibrate its approach. It no longer needs to frame its engagement with Bangladesh primarily through the lens of fear.

Instead, it can acknowledge that Bangladeshi democracy, despite its flaws, has demonstrated an ability to reject extremism. This recognition is crucial if India wishes to build trust beyond the ruling elite and engage more broadly with Bangladeshi society.

A reset in ties does not mean erasing differences or ignoring hard realities. India and Bangladesh have unresolved issues that will not vanish with a change in political tone. Water sharing disputes, border management, trade imbalances, and concerns over migration remain deeply sensitive. What can change is the manner in which these issues are addressed. A Bangladesh led by a government that enjoys a decisive mandate and is not dependent on Islamist allies is in a stronger position to negotiate openly. Likewise, India can afford to be more flexible and less defensive when it is not constantly worrying about security threats emanating from ideological hostility.

There is also a broader regional context to consider. South Asia has suffered from a persistent deficit of trust. Too often, regional powers have preferred to deal with friendly regimes rather than with democratic processes. This approach may offer short-term predictability, but it breeds long-term resentment. The Bangladeshi result offers a chance to

break this cycle. If India can demonstrate that it respects the outcome of democratic processes regardless of which party wins, it will send a powerful signal not just to Bangladesh but to the entire region.

For Bangladesh, the challenge is to ensure that this decisive mandate does not become a pretext for majoritarian complacency. Democracy is not secured by one election, however emphatic. The treatment of opposition voices, the independence of the judiciary, the freedom of the media, and the integrity of institutions will determine whether this moment becomes a genuine turning point or merely another swing of the pendulum. Tarique Rahman's leadership will be judged not by how effectively he consolidates power, but by how willingly he accepts limits on that power. The absence of Jamaat as a kingmaker also reshapes the ideological landscape. It creates space for a more inclusive national narrative that does not constantly oscillate between secular authoritarianism and religious conservatism. This space can be filled by a politics that addresses everyday concerns such as employment, inflation, education, and healthcare. Bangladesh's impressive economic growth over the past two decades has not been evenly distributed. Rising inequality and youth unemployment pose serious risks to social stability. A government backed by a decisive mandate has the political capital to undertake difficult reforms, but only if it prioritises governance over vendetta.

India has a stake in this outcome that goes beyond geopolitics. Bangladesh is not just a neighbour; it is a cultural and historical partner with deep people-to-people ties. Millions of families straddle the border through language, kinship, and

memory. When relations are reduced to security calculations and transactional diplomacy, these human connections suffer. A reset in ties should therefore involve not only governments but also civil society, academia, media, and business communities on both sides. Easier travel, fairer trade practices, and cultural exchanges can do more to stabilise relations than any number of strategic dialogues.

The defeat of Jamaat also carries a lesson about the power of democratic choice. In an era where many governments respond to extremism by restricting freedoms, Bangladesh's voters have shown that ballots can be more effective than bans. This does not mean complacency about radical ideologies, but it does suggest that political inclusion combined with accountability can marginalise them over time. For India, which grapples with its own internal debates about secularism and pluralism, this is a lesson worth reflecting upon. None of this is automatic. A reset requires intention. It requires India to shed the habit of viewing Bangladeshi politics through a binary lens of friendly versus hostile regimes. It requires Bangladesh's new leadership to resist the temptation of settling old scores and instead focus on building institutions that can outlast individuals. It requires both sides to communicate honestly, even when conversations are uncomfortable.

The decisive mandate is therefore best understood not as an end point but as a beginning. It closes one chapter defined by polarisation and opens another filled with possibility. Whether that possibility is realised will depend on choices made in the coming months and years. Tarique Rahman stands at the centre of this moment, carrying both the weight of his past and the promise of a different future. The BNP has been given a chance to redefine itself. Jamaat's defeat has removed a long-standing obstacle to political normalisation. India and Bangladesh, freed from some of their mutual suspicions, have an opportunity to rebuild trust on firmer ground.

History will judge this moment harshly if it is squandered. But if approached with humility and foresight, it could mark a rare instance in South Asian politics where a decisive electoral outcome leads not to triumphalism or fear, but to renewal.

Constitutional morality and the institutional test before the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority

By: Dr. Aniruddha Babar

"Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated. We must realise that our people have yet to learn it."

-Dr B. R. Ambedkar

The establishment of the "Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority" represents a constitutional development whose true significance lies in its structure, its safeguards, and its disciplined operation. Democratic institutions derive durability from clearly defined powers exercised within lawful limits and supervised through enforceable accountability. For this reason, the formation of the Authority invites sustained examination through the lens of constitutional morality, which demands rule based administration, equality of citizenship, and continuous oversight. When these principles are embedded in design and practice, institutional endurance becomes possible.

Constitutional morality expresses civic discipline through respect for institutional boundaries and adherence to publicly known procedures. Authority acquires legitimacy when it flows from law and functions within precisely defined jurisdiction. Defined jurisdiction generates measurable responsibility. Measurable responsibility enables evaluation. Evaluation strengthens credibility. Credibility consolidates public confidence. Through this progression, statutory clarity emerges as the foundation of stable governance. Accordingly, the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority must operate within a legislative framework that clearly articulates executive competence, financial authority, and supervisory review.

Defined powers naturally carry defined obligations. Transfer of administrative subjects entails fiscal responsibility, transparent budgeting practices, and independent audit verification. Financial autonomy accompanied by disclosure of expenditure norms and performance targets promotes administrative discipline. Discipline fosters operational consistency. Operational consistency enhances reliability. Reliability reinforces institutional trust. Through this sequence, financial governance supports democratic legitimacy and anchors public faith in evidence based institutional conduct.

Administrative legitimacy further depends upon justice in allocation and representation, since fairness in practice sustains equality in principle. Objective indicators of development, documented socio economic data, and measurable planning benchmarks provide rational guidance for policy formulation. Allocation frameworks codified in publicly accessible instruments ensure consistency of application across regions and communities. Recorded reasoning for significant administrative decisions establishes reviewability. Reviewability secures equality in practice. Equality strengthens fairness. Fairness deepens legitimacy. Legitimacy, in turn, reinforces un-



compromising institutional stability.

As legitimacy grows, participation acquires depth, and participation gains meaning when structurally embedded within governance. Defined consultative mechanisms incorporating recognised tribal institutions, village councils, women's groups, and youth representatives can connect community deliberation with administrative planning. Documented proceedings and advisory protocols integrate civic input into policy execution in a systematic manner. Shared involvement generates collective ownership. Collective ownership enhances cohesion. Cohesion stabilises institutions and strengthens unshakable democratic confidence.

Within this continuum of structure and participation, leadership assumes decisive importance at the formative stage of institutional development. The constitution of an "Interim Body" therefore carries structural significance, since early standards shape long term administrative culture. Public articulation of eligibility criteria grounded in competence, integrity, and financial probity strengthens transparency in selection. Transparent selection supports credibility. Credibility ensures continuity across tenures. In this setting, leadership must reflect principled commitment to institutional purpose.

Only those leaders who regard the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority as higher than personal interest, who place institutional duty above private attachment, who uphold its mandate with dedication, and who defend its integrity with courage and sacrifice possess the moral fitness required for stewardship. Leadership that embodies devotion to constitutional principle, loyalty to public trust, and readiness to subordinate self to service strengthens institutional permanence. The Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority is bigger than any individual or tribe and more valuable than any individual or tribe and its durability rests upon leaders who internalise this conviction in conduct and decision.

Institutional durability, reinforced by principled leadership, further requires safeguards that regulate discretion. Structured review hierarchies, separation of financial sanction from implementation authority, documented conflict

of interest disclosures, and statutory grievance redressal mechanisms preserve administrative balance. Layered oversight reduces concentration of unchecked power. Reduced concentration supports procedural fairness. Procedural fairness reinforces public confidence. Public confidence strengthens institutional resilience which will ensure the grassroot justice.

Institutional resilience and strength deepens through openness, since transparency enables informed civic engagement. Periodic publication of development indicators, budgetary performance reports, and implementation timelines provides measurable references for evaluation. Structured review forums and written responses to representations cultivate reasoned dialogue. Evidence based discussion promotes correction. Corrective responsiveness enhances credibility. Credibility stabilises democratic practice and reinforces accountability which reflects the basic values upon which Frontier Nagaland Movement-A People's movement successfully endured and continued. From accountability and credibility arises unity grounded in fraternity and mutual respect. It is important for "Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority" to take everyone along in the developmental journey. All Frontier Nagaland tribes must advance together, walking hand in hand with integrity and clean hearts. Inclusive consultation, equitable distribution of initiatives, and participatory monitoring reinforce social harmony. Social harmony strengthens stability. Stability sustains development and consolidates public trust.

Through disciplined statutory design, accountable fiscal governance, equitable allocation, structured participation, principled leadership, and layered oversight, the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority can convert constitutional principle into measurable advancement. Measurable advancement consolidates trust. Consolidated trust secures institutional resilience. Institutional resilience ensures that governance remains anchored in justice, responsibility, and constitutional order. Institutions survive through discipline. Authority derives legitimacy from accountability. History honours those who build systems stronger than themselves.

History remembers!

What is tooth decay?

By: Anna Smith Haghigh

Tooth decay causes the destruction of enamel, which is the hard outer surface of a tooth. As tooth decay progresses, it can attack deeper layers of a tooth, leading to cavities. Treatments can include fluoride, fillings, crowns, and more.

If a person does not receive treatment for tooth decay, it can lead to more issues with the teeth and mouth. However, some treatments can help prevent or stop the spread of tooth decay.

This article will cover the causes, symptoms, and treatments for a person with tooth decay.

What is tooth decay?

Tooth decay, also known as dental caries or cavities, is a disease that causes the breakdown of tooth enamel.

Once tooth decay has eroded the enamel, cavities can start to form. According to the American Dental Association (ADA), a tooth consists of three layers:

- **Enamel:** Enamel is the hard outer layer that protects the inner layers of a tooth. Tooth enamel contains no living cells and is the hardest structure in the human body.

- **Dentin:** Dentin is the second layer of a tooth. When the enamel is damaged, it may expose the dentin. Small tubes within the dentin allow hot and cold food to stimulate the nerves of the tooth. The stimulation of these nerves can cause pain and sensitivity in the tooth.

- **Pulp:** The pulp is the center of the tooth. The pulp contains blood vessels, nerves, and connective tissue.

- Tooth decay can occur in varying degrees of severity. Damage from tooth decay can range from causing wear to the enamel to painful abscesses

within the pulp of the tooth.

Symptoms

Symptoms of tooth decay can vary depending on the severity of the damage caused.

According to the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), some people in the early stages of tooth decay may feel no symptoms. However, as tooth decay advances, a person may experience the following:

- Tooth sensitivity to sugary, hot, or cold food
- Constant tooth pain
- White or dark spots on the teeth
- Bad breath
- Loose fillings
- Cavities in teeth
- Food frequently trapped in teeth

- Difficulty biting certain foods
- Abscesses on teeth that cause pain, facial swelling, or fever

Causes

An article in the Journal of the American Dental Association (JADA) state that tooth decay occurs due to a buildup of plaque on a tooth.

Plaque is a sticky layer of bacteria that forms on teeth. When a person eats sugary or starchy food, the bacteria in the plaque produce acids that attack tooth enamel.

Over time, these acids leach out minerals from teeth, erode the enamel, causing tooth decay, and eventually, cavities.

Tooth decay can affect people of any age. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that around 20% of children aged 5–11 years have at least one untreated decayed tooth.

Older adults may experience gum recession, which is where the gums pull away from the tooth, exposing the root of the

tooth.

Cementum, which is softer than enamel, covers the root of the tooth. The ADA indicate that this may make the tooth more susceptible to decay.

A person may have a higher chance of developing tooth decay if they:

- Have a dry mouth
- Have weak enamel due to genetics or illness
- Do not brush their teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- Have an eating disorder, such as anorexia or bulimia
- Experience gastroesophageal reflux, also known as acid reflux, or GERD

Treatment

A dentist will be able to recommend treatment for a person with tooth decay, depending on its severity.

Treatment for tooth decay can include:

Early-stage fluoride treatments

Fluoride is a mineral that can help strengthen enamel. A dentist can use fluoride in various forms to help stop and even repair the damage that has occurred due to tooth decay.

A dentist can apply professional fluoride treatments directly to the teeth. These fluoride treatments are generally quick, taking only a few minutes. The fluoride comes in the form of a gel, varnish, foam, or solution.

Fillings

When cavities occur from tooth decay, a filling can be a treatment option. After drilling the tooth to remove any decay, the dentist shapes the cavity to fit the filling. The dentist then fills the cavity, using materials such as dental amalgam or composite.

Crowns

According to the ADA, larger

cavities that occur due to tooth decay may require a crown instead of a filling.

To place a crown, the dentist first removes the outer portion of the tooth, as well as any decay.

The dentist will take an impression of the tooth and fit a temporary crown until the permanent one is ready for fitting, usually 1–2 weeks later.

Root canals

A dentist can perform a root canal to help prevent the need for extraction when the pulp of the tooth is damaged.

According to the American Association of Endodontists (AAE), the dentist first numbs the tooth before removing the pulp. They will then clean and shape the root canal inside of the tooth.

The dentist may also apply medicine in the tooth to get rid of any bacteria. The dentist will then fill the root canals with a rubber-like substance and place a crown or filling on the tooth to restore and strengthen it.

Tooth extraction

A dentist may recommend a person has a tooth extraction if the tooth decay has caused severe damage.

The dentist will first numb the damaged tooth. Once they have removed the tooth, the dentist will recommend a post-extraction regime.

A person may notice swelling or pain after a tooth extraction, which is normal. However, if a person notices any of the following symptoms, they should call a dentist or seek medical attention immediately:

- Fever
 - Nausea
 - Vomiting
 - Severe pain, swelling, or bleeding
 - Pain that increases over time
- Is it reversible?



According to the NIDCR, tooth decay, if caught in the early stages, is reversible. However, once the enamel of the tooth has lost too many minerals and the tooth has a cavity, it is unable to repair itself.

A dentist can treat damage and prevent it from spreading further. A person can reverse tooth decay by cutting down on sugary and starchy foods and practicing good oral hygiene.

Diagnosis

A person who suspects they may have tooth decay should visit a dentist.

The dentist may ask the person questions regarding any pain or symptoms. The dentist may also take an X-ray of the mouth to spot any cavities.

Once the dentist has diagnosed tooth decay, they will discuss further treatment options.

Complications

The NIDCR note that without treatment, tooth decay can lead to a variety of problems, such as:

- Tooth pain
- Infection

- Loss of teeth
- Abscesses
- Abscesses can cause potentially life threatening infections, such as sepsis.

A person with the following symptoms should contact their dentist immediately:

- Fever
- Tooth pain
- Tooth sensitivity to hot and cold
- Swollen gums
- Swollen lymph glands in the neck
- Swollen jaw

According to the National Health Service (NHS), in the United Kingdom, abscesses can also cause:

- Bad breath
- An unpleasant taste in the mouth
- Pain that spreads to the ear, jaw, and neck

Tooth pain may also be worse when lying down and may wake a person up at night.

Prevention

The ADA recommend that people can prevent or stop tooth decay by:

- Brushing teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste
- Limiting snacking
- Eating healthy, nutritious meals
- Asking a dentist about fluoride supplements
- Visiting a dentist regularly for checkups and professional cleaning

When to see a dentist

A person experiencing any pain or discomfort from their teeth should contact their dentist.

A person should also visit their dentist regularly for checkups to prevent decay.

Summary

Tooth decay is a widespread condition, with 9 out of 10 adults over the age of 20 having some level of tooth decay.

Tooth decay can vary in severity, and a range of suitable treatments are available.

A person who has symptoms of tooth decay should contact their dentist. If left untreated, tooth decay can lead to tooth loss and more serious conditions. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

Food adulteration: Are we eating poison?

By: Surjit

Food adulteration is not a new problem. It is a long-ignored public health crisis.

More than that, it is not an isolated or merely technical failure of regulation. It is a deeply normalised social and economic practice rooted in what our elders called "Milawat". Over decades, this culture of mixing, cheating, and compromising on purity has silently evolved into a systemic crisis that now threatens the physical strength, trust, and future of Indian society.

Society did not suddenly discover this problem. Instead, it slowly normalised it, even as its scale and sophistication increased. The crisis is therefore not just about unsafe food. It is also about how everyday corruption reshapes our acceptance, our behaviour, and ultimately our health over time.

Growing up in the 1990s, I clearly remember my grandmother and later my mother, both of whom were largely illiterate, warning us against powdered packaged spices because they believed these contained brick powder. They did not have science, laboratories, or government reports, yet they understood the danger through lived experience and tried to protect the family in whatever way they could. The impact of this practice ran so deep that even children, while playing kitchen or pan stall games, used red brick powder as "spices" in their pretend shops, while in the real world, some adults were doing the same thing for profit. This shows how early the idea of Milawat entered our collective imagination.

Recently, a respected Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha raised serious concerns about food adulteration, describing it as a "raging health crisis" especially for children, the elderly, and pregnant women. He pointed to disturbing examples of everyday food

being contaminated, milk laced with urea and detergents, vegetables injected with oxytocin, spices adulterated with brick powder, and poultry treated with steroids. Such practices not only deceive consumers, but they also pose real risks, such as hormonal imbalance, organ damage, and long-term health problems, including cancer.

This makes us pause and ask a difficult question. For how long have we been consuming harmful substances without realising their scale? Our grandparents often used the word "Milawat" and taught us to identify it. They warned us about brick powder in red chilli, stones in rice, and watered milk. Over time, what was once called Milawat entered law and policy as Food Adulteration, but instead of disappearing, it only grew in scale and sophistication.

It is disturbing that society is still taking it casually, after more than 25 years, when millions have already been exposed and harmed. We have laws and regulations, yet something clearly went wrong. Did we slowly normalise Milawat and now suddenly feel shocked when it is called food adulteration? Many of us already doubt local weighing scales, question the purity of milk from vendors, and suspect everyday food, yet we continue to accept this as normal life.

Even today, some farmed fish look so unusual that they raise serious questions about production methods and chemicals being used. There are many such examples across our food system that could be quietly harming the health of future generations.

Data from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India shows how widespread this problem is. A significant share of food samples tested over the years have failed to meet safety standards, with tens of thousands of samples found non-conforming in just one recent year. These numbers confirm that adul-

teration is not a rare exception but a structural issue.

The implications are profound. Beyond immediate illness, adulterated food can lead to chronic diseases, weakened immunity, and developmental problems in children. It also creates a heavy burden on national healthcare and erodes public trust in what we eat.

It is good to see people growing their businesses and supporting their families. However, ignoring food safety can seriously damage national healthcare, physical well-being, and long-term development. Food adulteration is therefore not just a regulatory issue but a societal one that requires action from government, businesses, and citizens together.

The culture of Milawat has silently shaped our food, our bodies, and our mindset. Unless we confront this seriously, India risks compromising the health and strength of its people and its future.

This brings us to some important questions that cannot be avoided:

- For how long have we been eating adulterated food, and why has society allowed this to continue?
- How did Milawat become normal, casual, and socially acceptable?
- If we tolerate small everyday cheating, how can we be surprised when large systems do the same?
- What does this mean for the physical strength, health, and future of the next generation?
- If laws exist, why have they not protected people effectively?
- And finally, can an ordinary citizen truly trust what they eat anymore?

These are not just policy questions. There are questions about who we are, what we accept, and what kind of future we are building through the food we put on our plates.

Diabetes risk rises early for South Asians in US despite healthy lifestyle, researchers warn

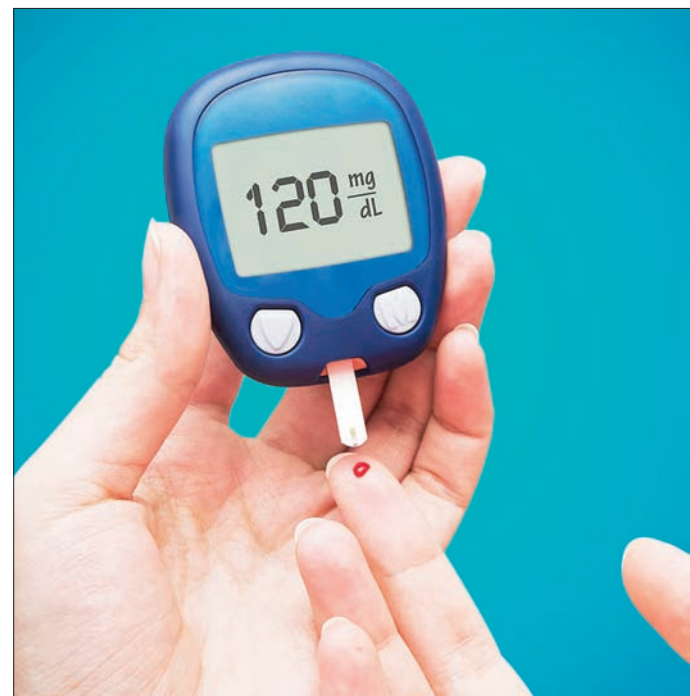
By: Nandita Banerji

South Asian adults in the United States face a markedly higher risk of diabetes by midlife, despite reporting healthier diets, lower alcohol use and comparable exercise habits.

The study, published on February 11, 2026 in the Journal of the American Heart Association, found that South Asians have more diabetes and hypertension than most other population groups by midlife. By age 45, nearly one in three South Asian men had pre-diabetes, and nearly one in five South Asian women were affected — roughly twice the rate seen among white, Black, Hispanic and Chinese women.

By age 55, both South Asian men and women were at least twice as likely to develop diabetes as white adults.

The findings come from a large long-term study of 2,700 adults aged between 45 and 55 at enrolment. Researchers combined data from two long-running cohort studies: MASALA, which focuses on South Asian adults, and MESA, which includes white, Black, Hispanic and Chinese adults. The



team examined how risk factors changed over a decade and how patterns differed by race, ethnicity and gender.

Participants with heritage from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka had some of the highest prevalence of risk factors for heart disease when compared to other population groups. Yet South Asian men and women reported healthier diets, lower alcohol use, comparable physical activity and lower average body mass index than most other groups.

"The mismatch between healthier lifestyle behaviors and clinical risk was surprising," said senior author Dr Namratha Kandula, professor of general internal medicine and epidemiology at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, as quoted in a press release. "This paradox tells us we're missing something fundamental to what is driving this elevated risk among South Asians."

Kandula said the study has identified "a critical window in the 40s when risk is already high, but disease is still preventable".

Prior data from MASALA show South Asians have more fat around their organs than other population groups, even at a normal or low BMI. This fat pattern, which may begin in childhood, is an important risk factor for heart disease and diabetes.

A growing global burden The elevated diabetes risk among South Asians in the US reflects a wider global trend. India is now home to 90 million adults aged 20–79 years living with diabetes, making it the country with the second-largest diabetes popu-

lation in the world after China, which has an estimated 148 million affected adults. The United States ranks third, with about 39 million adults living with the condition.

These figures come from the 11th edition of the IDF Diabetes Atlas, published by the International Diabetes Federation in the journal The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology in February 2026. The report warns that diabetes cases are rising rapidly across the globe.

Globally, diabetes affected 589 million adults or 11.11 per cent of the world's adult population in 2024, meaning roughly one in nine adults worldwide was living with the condition. If current trends continue, the number is projected to climb to 853 million by 2050, pushing prevalence close to 13 per cent of the global adult population. China, India and the United States together account for about 277 million adults with diabetes in 2024.

Against this backdrop, the Northwestern study's call for earlier and more proactive screening for South Asian adults takes on added urgency. Clinicians should begin looking for high blood sugar and other risk-enhancing factors before midlife, Kandula said, and provide culturally appropriate lifestyle counselling. "Ask your doctor about early screening — and get your blood pressure, fasting glucose (or A1c), cholesterol and lipoprotein (A) checked before middle age because early detection, treatment and control of these risk factors can prevent heart disease," the doctor stated. (Cour-

Mobile, drugs and stress, Three strikes at childhood "Who is Responsible for our Children's Danger?"

By: Dr Vijay Garg

Today's childhood is three unseen war-fighting—mobile addiction, the increasing prevalence of drugs and the untimely burden of stress. What was once a childhood of toys, playgrounds and open-mouthed laughter is shrinking today under the pressure of screen lights, social media competition and expectations. The question is, if our children are in danger who is responsible?

Mobile: From convenience to addiction

Mobile phones have become an integral part of modern life. It is a useful tool for education, information and communication. But when that same tool ends up in the hands of children without control, it becomes more a means to addiction than entertainment. Playing games for hours, comparing on social media, watching screens late at night—all have had effects on children's sleep, eyes, mental health and concentration. Real friendships are replaced by virtual relationships. As a result

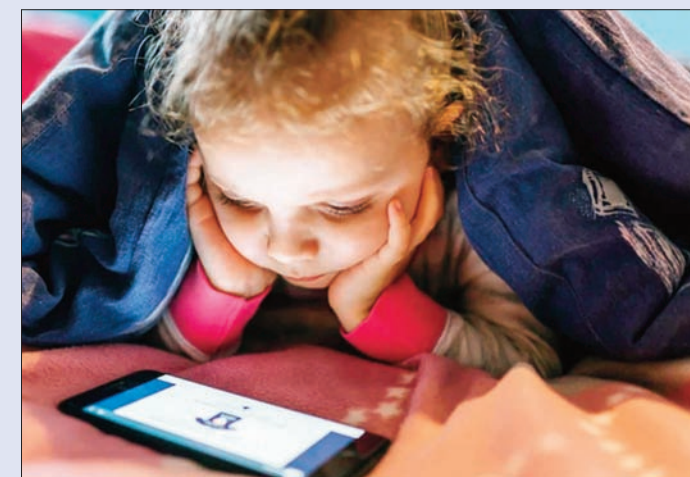
the child gradually becomes cut off from family and society.

Intoxication: From curiosity to destruction

The teenage years are a time of curiosity and experimentation. Children may be drawn to tobacco, alcohol or other drugs if they are not given the right guidance at this time. Many times it starts with "just one time", which becomes a habit going forward. Addiction not only weakens the body, but also affects confidence, character and future. It tears families apart and hollows out society.

Stress: A burden from childhood onwards

Today's kids are living under the pressures of studying, competition and expectations. Points and ranks have become his identity. The high expectations of parents and society sometimes put unbearable pressure on children. Stress can cause children to develop irritability, depression, lack of self-confidence and sometimes even suicidal thoughts. Childhood, which should be a time of ease and joy, is causing anxiety



and fear.

Who is responsible?

- **Family:** Silencing children with a mobile phone is an easy solution, but it has far-reaching ramifications. If parents themselves are immersed in screens, children will learn the same. Lack of communication and time can lead children in the wrong directions.
- **Society and the Friends:** The influence of peers is extremely

powerful. If the environment is not healthy, a child may be affected early.

- **Education system:** Education based only on marks increases competition among children, but the education of life skills, ethics and mental balance is left behind.
- **Technical and entertainment industry:** Apps and games are designed to make users spend more screen time. Adequate control is required, taking into account the

sensitivity of children.

Direction of the solution

- Digital discipline in the home fixed—screen time limited.
- Open communication and quality time with the children.
- Sports, music, books and creative activities should be promoted.
- Schools to have mental health education and counselling.
- Anti-drug awareness and strict social messages should be given.

Conclusion

Childhood is the foundation of a nation. If this foundation is weakened, the future will falter as well. Mobiles, drugs and stress—all three together are having a profound effect on children's minds and brains.

The only responsible thing is none—family, society, education system and all of us. If we are mindful in time, childhood may have the opportunity to smile again. Give children not just resources, but time, culture and sensibility—That way their future will be secured. (The author is a retired Principal Malout Punjab)

At least 6,000 killed over 3 days during RSF attack on Sudan's el-Fasher, UN says

CAIRO, Feb 15: More than 6,000 people were killed in over three days when a Sudanese paramilitary group unleashed "a wave of intense violence... shocking in its scale and brutality" in Sudan's Darfur region in late October, according to the United Nations.

The Rapid Support Forces' offensive to capture the city of el-Fasher included widespread atrocities that amount to war crimes and possible crimes against humanity, the UN Human Rights Office said in a report released on Friday.

"The wanton violations that were perpetrated by the RSF and allied Arab militia in the final offensive on el-Fasher underscore that persistent impunity fuels continued cycles of violence," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk.

The RSF and their allied Arab militias, known as Janjaweed, overran el-Fasher, the Sudanese army's only remaining stronghold in Darfur, on Oct. 26 and rampaged through the city and its surroundings after more than 18 months of siege.

The 29-page UN report detailed a set of atrocities that ranged from mass killings and summary executions, sexual violence, abductions for ransom, torture and ill-treatment to detention and disappearances. In many cases, the attacks were ethnicity-motivated, it said.

The RSF did not respond to an e-mailed request for comment.

The paramilitaries' Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo has previously acknowledged abuses by his fighters, but disputed the scale of atrocities.

'Like a scene out of a horror movie'

The alleged atrocities in el-Fasher, the provincial capital of North Darfur, mirror a pattern of RSF conduct in its war against the Sudanese military. The war began in April 2023 when a power struggle between the two sides exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum and elsewhere across the country.

The conflict created the world's largest humanitarian crisis with parts of the country pushed into famine. It has also been marked by heinous atrocities which the International Criminal Court said it was investigating as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The RSF was also accused by the Biden administration of carrying out genocide in the ongoing war.

The UN Human Rights Office said it documented the killing of at least 4,400 people inside el-Fasher between Oct. 25 and Oct. 27, while more than 1,600 others were killed as they were trying to flee the RSF rampage. The report said it drew its toll from interviews with 140 victims and witnesses which were "are consistent with independent analysis of contemporaneous satellite imagery and video footage."

In one case, RSF fighters opened fire from heavy weapons



on a crowd of 1,000 people sheltering in the Rashid dormitory in el-Fasher university on Oct. 26, killing around 500 people, the report said. One witness was quoted as saying that he saw bodies thrown into the air, "like a scene out of a horror movie," according to the report.

In another case, around 600 people, including 50 children, were executed on Oct. 26 while taking shelter in the university facilities, the report said.

The report, however, warned that the actual scale of the death toll of the week-long offensive in el-Fasher was "undoubtedly significantly higher."

The toll does not include at least 460 people who were killed by the RSF on Oct. 28 when they stormed the Saudi Maternity hospital, according to the World Health Or-

ganization.

Around 300 people were also killed in RSF shelling and drone attacks between Oct. 23 and Oct. 24 in the Abu Shouk camp for displaced people, 2.5 kilometers (1.5 miles) northwest of el-Fasher, the U.N. Human Rights Office' report said.

Woman and girls sexually assaulted

Sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, was apparently widespread during el-Fasher offensive, with RSF fighters and their allied militias targeting women and girls from the African Zaghawa non-Arab tribes over allegations of having links or supporting the military, the report said.

Türk, who visited Sudan last month, said survivors of sexual violence recounted testimonies that

showed how the practice "was systematically used as a weapon of war."

The paramilitaries also abducted many people while attempting to flee the city, before releasing them after paying ransom. Thousands have been held in at least 10 detention centers — including the city's Children Hospital which was turned into a detention facility — run by the RSF in el-Fasher, the report said.

The UN Human Rights Office also said it documented 10 detention facilities used by the paramilitaries in el-Fasher, including the Children's Hospital which was turned into a detention center. Several thousands of people remain missing and unaccounted for, the report said.

The pattern of the RSF offensive on el-Fasher was a mirror of other attacks by the paramilitaries and their allies on the Zamzam camp for displaced people, 15 kilometers south of the city, and on West Darfur's city of Geneina and the nearby town of Ardamata in 2023, the UN Human Rights Office said.

Türk said there were "reasonable grounds" that RSF and their allied Arab militias committed war crimes, and that their acts also amount to crimes against humanity.

He called for holding those responsible — including commanders — accountable, warning that "persistent impunity fuels continued cycles of violence." (AP)

Bangladesh's new cabinet to take oath tomorrow

DHAKA, Feb 15: The newly-elected Members of Parliament of Bangladesh are scheduled to take oath on Tuesday morning, followed by the swearing-in ceremony of the cabinet in the evening, local media reported.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) AMM Nasir Uddin is likely to administer the oath of office to the newly elected parliament members at 10 am, while President Mohammed Shahabuddin will administer the oath to the new cabinet of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), chairman Tarique Rahman at 4 pm.

According to the Election Commission (EC), the BNP led by Rahman has bagged 209 out of 297 seats, while right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami secured 68 seats.

"Most probably — I repeat, most probably — under the current circumstances, the oath will be administered by the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)," Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Adviser Asif Nazrul was reported as saying.

Rahman is set to become the prime minister for the first time. He will replace the interim government chief, Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, under whose tenure Dhaka's relations with New Delhi witnessed a significant downturn.

BNP has informed authorities that it will elect its parliamentary party leader immediately after the swearing-in, bdnnews24 quoted Nazrul as saying.

"We have been informed that the President will administer the oath of office (to the new cabinet) on

Tuesday at the Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) complex," a Bangabhaban (presidential palace) official said on the condition of anonymity on Saturday.

Bangladesh has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several other regional leaders to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the country's next prime minister, Tarique Rahman, on February 17, according to a BNP statement on Saturday.

According to the Third Schedule of the Constitution, the CEC is the third choice for the job in the absence of the outgoing parliament's speaker and deputy speaker.

"The speaker of the last parliament is supposed to administer the oath of office to the MPs, but she resigned and is living in an undisclosed location while the deputy speaker is in jail," he said.

In another development, the student-led National Citizen Party (NCP) is preparing to form a shadow cabinet, according to party spokesperson and former interim government advisor Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain, bdnnews24 reported.

The proposed shadow cabinet would act as a watchdog over the government, Asif posted on social media, it said.

Bangladesh held the significant 13th parliamentary election on February 12 after a period of tumultuous political vacuum, instability and fragile security situation, including widespread attacks on minorities after the student-led protests brought down the 15-year rule of Sheikh Hasina in August 2024. (PTI)

Crown prince urges world to stand with people of Iran as 250,000 rally in Munich

MUNICH, Feb 15: About 250,000 people demonstrated on Saturday against Iran's government on the sidelines of a gathering of world leaders in Germany, police said, answering a call from Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi for cranked-up international pressure on Tehran.

Banging drums and chanting for regime change, the giant and boisterous rally in Munich was part of what Pahlavi described as a "global day of action" to support Iranians in the wake of deadly nationwide protests. He also called for demonstrations in Los Angeles and Toronto. Police said in a post on X that the number of protesters reached some 250,000, more than the organisers had expected.

"Change, change, regime change," the huge crowd chanted, waving green-white-and-red flags with lion and sun emblems. Iran used that flag before its 1979 Islamic Revolution that toppled the Pahlavi dynasty.

At a news conference, Pahlavi warned of more deaths in Iran if "democracies stand by and watch" following Iran's deadly crackdown on protesters last month.

"We gather at an hour of profound peril to ask: Will the world stand with the people of Iran?" he asked. He added that the survival of Iran's government "sends a clear signal to every bully: kill enough people and you stay in power."

An estimated 350,000 people marched on the streets of Toronto as

part of the Global Day of Action Rally, Toronto Police spokesperson Laura Brabant said.

At the Munich rally, demonstrators sported "Make Iran Great Again" red caps, mimicking the MAGA caps worn by US President Donald Trump's supporters. Among those sporting the caps was US Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Republican from South Carolina who gave a speech to the crowd during which he was photographed holding up the headwear.

Many at the rally waved placards showing Pahlavi, some of which called him a king. The son of Iran's deposed shah has been in exile for nearly 50 years but is trying to position himself as a player in Iran's future. (AP)

'US, Iran to hold new round of nuclear talks in Geneva this week'

GENEVA, Feb 15: Iran and the United States will hold a second round of talks over Tehran's nuclear programme next week, the Swiss Foreign Ministry has said. Oman, which welcomed the first round of indirect talks on February 6, will host the talks in Geneva, the Swiss ministry said on Saturday, without specifying which days.

After the first discussions, US President Donald Trump warned Tehran that failure to reach an agreement with his administration would be "very traumatic".

Similar talks last year broke down in June as Israel launched what became a 12-day war on Iran that included the US bombing Iranian nuclear sites.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to use force to compel Iran to agree to constrain its nuclear programme. Iran has said it would respond with an attack of its own. Trump also has threatened Iran over its deadly crackdown on recent nationwide protests there.

Gulf Arab nations have warned any attack could spiral into another regional conflict.

Trump said Friday the USS Gerald R. Ford, the world's largest aircraft carrier, was being sent from

the Caribbean to the Mideast to join other military assets the US has built up in the region. He also said a change in power in Iran "would be the best thing that could happen".

The indirect talks on February 6 were between Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff. The top military commander in the Middle East was also present for the first time.

The Trump administration has maintained that Iran can have no uranium enrichment under any deal. Tehran says it won't agree to that.

Iran has insisted its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes. However, its officials increasingly threaten to pursue a nuclear weapon. Before the June war, Iran had been enriching uranium up to 60 per cent purity, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has said his nation is "ready for any kind of verification". However, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, has been unable for months to inspect and verify Iran's nuclear stockpile. (AP)

Families of Venezuelan prisoners stage hunger strike demanding quick liberation of dissidents

CARACAS, Feb 15: Relatives of Venezuelan prisoners went on hunger strike on Saturday to demand the freedom of their loved ones as politicians in the South American nation debate an amnesty law for dissidents imprisoned under President Nicolas Maduro's rule.

In a message posted on Instagram, the Committee for the Freedom of Political Prisoners said the hunger strike is being staged by 10 people and would last until the government frees all 33 political prisoners still being held at a prison known as Zona 7, according to the civil society group's estimates.

Earlier on Saturday 17 prisoners were released from the Zona 7 detention center in Caracas and held tearful reunions with their families.

Relatives of dissidents being held at the facility have been sleeping outside since Jan. 8, when Venezuelan officials had announced there would be significant prisoner releases aimed at promoting na-

tional reconciliation following a U.S. raid on the country in which Maduro was captured with his wife. But while hundreds of dissidents have been released from other prisons in Venezuela in recent weeks, liberations at Zona 7 have been scarce.

"We demand that National Assembly president Jorge Rodriguez keep his word and release all of the political prisoners," said Yessy Orozco, the daughter of a former legislator who was arrested in November.

Venezuela's authoritarian government has been under pressure from Washington to make political reforms even as the Trump administration eases sanctions on the nation's oil industry and officials from both nations meet to discuss ways to jump start oil production.

The National Assembly, which is still controlled by the ruling party, on Thursday debated a measure that could free hundreds of opposition members,

activists and human rights defenders who have been detained for months or years for political reasons. The debate in itself was a stark turn for Venezuela, where authorities have for decades denied the country has any political prisoners.

Although lawmakers approved portions of the measure, they ultimately voted to suspend the session to resolve some sticking points, including whether people who left the country to avoid detention can be granted amnesty.

The debate is expected to resume next week. Venezuela's exiled opposition leader, Maria Corina Machado, said on Saturday that she will continue to push for new elections to be held in the country as part of a transition to democracy.

She was speaking via video conference to a group of policy analysts who had attended the Munich Security Conference, an annual event that is attended by world leaders. (AP)

Four new astronauts arrive at ISS to replace NASA's evacuated crew

CAPE CANAVERAL, Feb 15: The International Space Station has returned to full strength with the arrival of four new astronauts to replace colleagues who bailed early because of health concerns.

SpaceX delivered the US, French and Russian astronauts on Saturday, a day after launching them from Cape Canaveral.

Last month's medical evacuation was NASA's first in 65 years of human spaceflight. One of four astronauts launched by SpaceX last summer suffered what officials described as a serious health issue, prompting their hasty return. That left only three crew members to keep the place running — one American and two Russians — prompting NASA to pause spacewalks and trim research.

Moving in for eight to nine months are NASA's Jessica Meir and Jack Hathaway, France's Sophie Adenot and Russia's Andrei Fedyaev. Meir, a marine biologist, and Fedyaev, a former military pilot, have lived up there before. During her first station visit in 2019, Meir took part in the first all-female spacewalk.

Adenot, a military helicopter pilot, is only the second French woman to fly in space. Hathaway is a captain in the US Navy.

"Bonjour!" Adenot called out once the capsule docked to the space station 277 miles (446 kilometres) up.

A couple of hours later, the hatches swung open and the seven space travellers hugged and exchanged exuberant high-fives. "Let's get rolling," Meir said. (AP)

India 'very successful' emerging economy; right place to host AI summit: UN Chief Guterres

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 15: India is a "very successful" emerging economy with a bigger influence in global affairs, and is the "right place" to host the AI summit, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said.

In an exclusive interview with PTI at the UN Headquarters ahead of the India-AI Impact Summit 2026, Guterres underscored that Artificial Intelligence should benefit the entire world and not just be a privilege reserved for developed nations or two superpowers.

"I strongly congratulate India for organising this Summit. It's absolutely essential that AI develops itself to the benefit of everybody, everywhere and that countries in the Global South are part of the benefits of AI," he said.

The high-powered event being held from February 16 to 20 will be the first-ever AI summit hosted in the Global South and is anchored in the three guiding principles of 'People, Planet and Progress'.

Guterres, who will be travelling to India to attend the Summit, asserted "it would be totally unacceptable that AI would be just a privilege of the most developed countries or a division only between two superpowers", an apparent reference to the US and China.

"It is absolutely essential that AI becomes a universal instrument for the benefit of humankind," Guterres said.

"The role of India, (which) is today a very successful emerging economy that is having a bigger and bigger role in not only the global economy but in its influence in global affairs, India is the right place to have this Summit and to make sure that AI (is) being discussed in depth, in all its enormous po-

tential and also in all its risks, but that AI belongs to the whole world and not only to a few," he said.

From world leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, to technology honchos, including Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai, Adobe CEO Shantanu Narayen and Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei, the Summit is bringing together leaders, policymakers and innovators from across the world for deep-dive discussions on the way forward for AI.

Guterres had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi late last year on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Johannesburg and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar when he was in New York.

Underlining his strong advocacy for multipolarity, Guterres highlighted India's contribution in a multipolar world, saying he looks forward to discussing this with the Indian leadership during his visit to New Delhi.

"There are two things we need to avoid in the world. We need to avoid the system in which there is total hegemony by only one power or a system in which the world is divided between two superpowers," he said.

Guterres added that he is a "very strong advocate" of the need for true multipolarity in the world.

For true multipolarity, it is important for emerging economies to have a "higher and higher" role and to establish a "stronger and stronger" network of trade, technological and international cooperation relations.

In this regard, he said the recent trade agreement between India and the European Union is a "good example". "India is one of the most relevant emerg-



ing economies," he said.

"We are seeing across the world, more and more, the creation of a network of, I would say, all developed countries but also, and very importantly, emerging economies creating a true multipolarity without any hegemony, and allowing, then, multilateral organisations to be effective," he said.

Emphasising the importance of multipolarity,

Guterres spoke about his "frustration" over the failure of the UN Security Council to address conflicts and maintain international peace and security.

"When one looks at the UN, you can imagine my frustration when I see the Security Council unable to take decisions, and it is clear that we need a fundamental reform of the Security Council, first of all, to represent the world as it is today and not after the

Second World War. And second, to be able to take effective decisions for peace and security around the world," he said.

Guterres added that for a "fair" multilateral system, both in the UN and international financial institutions, emerging economies need to have a stronger voice and be at the centre of this networking.

"I see India in the centre of those emerging economies, and this is something I would be delighted to discuss with Prime Minister Modi because I have a lot of hope for the role that India can play in shaping this multipolar world," he said.

At the Summit, Guterres will be joined by senior UN leaders, including UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk and Under-Secretary-General and UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology Amandeep Singh Gill.

Guterres further underlined that "it is always fantastic" to go to India, "a democracy with an enormous diversity and extraordinary civilisation and culture."

The UN chief elaborated that he is currently reading about how India, for centuries, has been the main factor of transformation of the world, "starting hundreds of years before Christ and going on for centuries, with an enormous influence of Indian culture, of Indian civilisation that we can see in China, Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean."

"Even in the time of the Roman Empire, there were very strong connections with India and a very important influence of Indian culture in what is today the Mediterranean area.

"So it is always an enormous pleasure to visit India," Guterres said. (PTI)

CM Himanta Biswa Sarma urges youth to embrace entrepreneurship First installment cheques under Atmanirbhar Assam 2.0 distributed in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Feb 15: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday ceremonially distributed cheques for the first installment of financial assistance under the CM's Atmanirbhar Assam 2.0 initiative among beneficiaries at a function held at Nehrubali Field in Nagaon.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Sarma emphasised the need for youth to channel their energy into positive endeavours, stating that they must transform themselves into ideal citizens by harnessing their inner strength.

He highlighted that government jobs are limited and it is not possible to provide employment to everyone, whereas entrepreneurship can generate job opportunities for many. He mentioned that under the initiative, 74,036 potential entrepreneurs across the state will receive financial assistance of ₹ 2 lakh each. A total of 7,969 beneficiaries from Nagaon, Hajo and Morigaon districts have benefited under the scheme this time.

The Chief Minister urged the youth to focus on self-employment and entrepreneurship, citing the ex-



ample of the Kumar Bhaskar Barma Bridge, where most workers are locals. He stressed that hard work and dedication are essential for the survival and growth of the Assamese nation.

Dr Sarma also underlined the importance of protecting Assam's

land and resources, stating that the state's land, markets and economy must be safeguarded. He announced plans to create employment opportunities for two lakh youth over the next five years and to reclaim five lakh bighas of land. The event was attended by min-

isters and officials, including Piyush Hazarika, Keshab Mahanta and MLA Rupak Sarma. The Chief Minister also inaugurated a life-size statue of Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala and the Shradhanjali Garden at Morikolung in Nagaon town.

Jorhat celebrates Maha Shivratri with fervour

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Feb 15: Celebration of Maha Shivratri, observed every year on the 14th day of the Krishna Paksha in the month of Phagun. From early morning, devotees thronged Shiva temples to offer prayers and perform rituals dedicated to Lord Shiva and the spirit of devotion was equally vibrant in Jorhat.

Among the prominent centres of worship, the historic Hatigarh Shiva Temple, a symbol of Ahom-era architecture and heritage, witnessed grand celebrations. Devotees offered incense, lamps and sacred offerings at the feet of Lord Shiva, seeking blessings with deep reverence.

Similarly, the ancient Gorkhya

Dol, believed to have originated through the sacrifice of a young shepherd boy, became a major spiritual gathering point. Devotees from different parts of the state arrived in large numbers to participate in the three-day Shivratri observance being held there.

From dawn, long queues formed as worshippers crowded the temple premises to offer prayers and receive blessings. At times, movement inside the temple became extremely congested. As part of the celebrations, a traditional religious drama titled "Jalandhar Upakhyan" will be staged tonight by local youths at Gorkhya Dol. The festival will conclude tomorrow with various religious and cultural programmes.

Free anti-rabies vaccination camp held in Morigaon

HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, Feb 15: A free anti-rabies vaccination campaign was organised by Tommy's Care, Morigaon, with support from the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department, Morigaon, on Saturday with the aim of making the district rabies-free.

Morigaon District Commissioner Anamika Tewari inaugurated the free anti-rabies vaccination camp at the premises of Morigaon Padum Pukhuri. Speaking on the occasion, the DC lauded the initiative of Tommy's Care, Morigaon, and thanked the organisation for conducting the camp. She stressed the need for rabies vaccination of pet dogs and cats and urged owners to arrange vaccination drives with the help of the Veterinary Department for stray dogs to prevent the spread of rabies.

Dhing seat: Cong faces pressure over Rajjor Dal move

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Feb 15: The upcoming Assembly elections have sparked intense political activity in the Dhing Assembly constituency, with parties like BJP, Congress, Rajjor Dal and AIUDF gearing up for a tough battle.

Congress insiders have questioned whether the party will abandon its grassroots workers who have toiled for 20 years. Several outsiders have joined the party, sparking concerns among locals.

Locals and party workers have urged the Congress high command to prioritise Manowar Hussain Farukhi, a popular and educated candidate who has resigned from his government job.

Meanwhile, the BJP has also received nominations from several candidates, including Namita Bora, Amarjit Goswami and Gautam Bora.

Obituary

Mridul Deka, senior chauffeur of the Kapili Green Valley Tourist Driver Association, Morigaon, passed away on Saturday. He was 52.

According to reports, Deka suffered a severe stroke due to high blood pressure while driving on his way to Nagaon on Friday evening. He was immediately admitted to Nagaon Mahkuli MCH, where he battled for life before breathing his last.

He is survived by his ailing wife, two children — Jjuu and Bubu — and a host of relatives. Members of the Kapili Green Valley Tourist Driver Association, Morigaon, expressed deep grief over his untimely demise. Known for his plain-speaking nature, Deka was affectionately called "Baba" in Ward No 2 of Morigaon town. His death is a major loss to the family as he was the sole breadwinner.

Tribal groups protest illegal land encroachment in Tirap Belt

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Feb 15: Several tribal organisations have strongly reacted to the incident of illegal land encroachment by non-Assamese community members in the Tirap Tribal Belt under the 83rd Margherita LAC in Tinsukia district.

The All Assam Sema Naga Council, All Assam Tangsa Student Union, Pan Singpho Student Union, All Man Tai Speaking Student Union and All Assam Mech Kachari Student Union jointly held a press conference on Saturday at the historic Longtong Sema village. The organisations alleged that the Sema Naga community has peacefully resided

on their ancestral land for over a hundred years while maintaining harmony in the area. However, they claimed that the land of Hotoshe Sema, a resident of 1 No Longtong Sema Naga village has recently been illegally encroached upon.

According to the allegations, Anil Kumar Sah, Krishna Sah and Rahul Sah, residents of 1 No Longtong in a 3-mile area under Lekhapani Police Station of Margherita Co-District, forcibly occupied the land. This has reportedly caused mental stress and tension for the Sema family.

The organisations stated that the land falls under the protected tribal belt, reserved under the Assam Land

and Revenue Regulation, 1886, Chapter 10, Sections 165(1) and 165(3), which prohibits non-tribals from occupying such land.

They said the incident constitutes serious offences including criminal trespass, intimidation, harassment, violation of tribal protection laws and atrocities against indigenous Scheduled Tribe communities. An FIR has already been filed at Lekhapani Police Station against the accused. The organisations demanded that the administration immediately arrest the guilty parties and take strict action. They warned that failure to act promptly by Margherita Co-District administration, Lekhapani police.

Time-bound, transparent procurement and service framework rolled out Cachar preps for Assembly Election 2026

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 15: The District Administration of Cachar, under the leadership of the Office of the District Commissioner & District Election Officer, has launched a comprehensive, transparent and time-bound procurement, empanelment and service engagement process to ensure smooth, accountable and efficient management of all logistical, technical and operational requirements for the forthcoming Assembly Election, 2026. Acting on directives from the Chief Electoral Officer, Assam, the administration has extended the validity of rates for election-related works and continued the empanelment framework for one year, ensuring continuity, administrative stability and procedural clarity for all stakeholders.

As part of this initiative, all empanelled suppliers have been di-

rected to submit their Expressions of Interest (EOIs) as per the notified zone-wise rates on or before 22 February 2026, promoting uniformity, fairness and transparency. Registered firms and individuals within Cachar district have also been invited to submit EOIs for election-related photography and videography services with clearly defined eligibility criteria, technical standards, documentation requirements, GST compliance and service delivery protocols. The deadline for submission is 25 February 2026 up to 3:00 PM, with opening at 4:00 PM the same day at the Election Office, Silchar in the presence of bidders or their authorized representatives.

The District Administration has further issued short-notice tenders for civil and electrical works, supply of essential materials, rate contracts for food and refreshments, mineral water supply, video

footage conversion, PA system hiring, IT and electronic equipment services and other critical logistical support for the Assembly Election. Key deadlines include:

Civil and electrical works and material supply: bids accepted from 7 February 2026 up to 20 February 2026, 11:00 AM; opening at 12:00 Noon same day.

Video footage conversion: submission by 25 February 2026, 3:00 PM; opening at 4:30 PM same day. PA system services: submission by 27 February 2026, 12:00 Noon; opening at 12:00 Noon same day.

Food supply and catering: submission by 25 February 2026, 4:00 PM; opening at 4:30 PM same day.

IT and electronic equipment hiring: submission by 26 February 2026, 4:00 PM; technical bids opened on 25 February 2026 at 4:00 PM; financial bids on 26 February 2026 at 11:00 AM.

All tender processes include

Smart cane and talking tactile map of India handed to visually impaired students

Innovative devices aim to enhance learning and mobility

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Feb 15: An innovative smart cane and a talking tactile map board of India, developed by Dr. Manabendra Bhuyan, rector of Tezpur Science Academy and retired professor of Tezpur University, were formally handed over to the Assam Blind School, Bihpuria. The ceremony was held on the school premises in a special programme jointly organised by the Sonitpur district unit of Karunadhara and the Tezpur Science Academy in the presence of students, teachers and guardians on Saturday.

Explaining the assisted devices, Dr Bhuyan said the talking tactile map of India enables visually impaired students to understand the country's geographical boundaries and locations by touch, while receiving detailed audio information about different regions. The sensitive smart cane emits sound alerts to warn users of obstacles ahead, enhancing mobility and safety.

Dr Bhuyan also shared his future plans to develop talking tactile models of scientific equipment, allowing visually impaired students to access complete information about learning tools through touch.



The meeting was presided over by Dr Bhubaneswar Saharia, Executive president of Karunadhara's Sonitpur district unit. Dr Bhuyan acknowledged Dr Saharia for bearing the cost of manufacturing ten smart canes. Among those present were Karunadhara Tezpur unit member Lipika Saharia, Dr Bhuyan's wife Arihana Bhuyan, retired Darrang College professor Manoranjan Sarma and Anu Devi.

The school's Primary Section Head Teacher Priti Goswami highlighted the shortage of teaching and learning resources for visually impaired students, while Principal Diganta Hazarika described the invention as "a new ray of hope" for the visually impaired community and expressed gratitude for the initiative. The event concluded on a cultural note with melodious songs presented by the students, enlivening the gathering.

Ceremonial paddy seed procurement held at Senchowa Seed Farm

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Feb 15: A ceremonial procurement of paddy seeds was organised on Sunday at Senchowa Seed Farm, Nagaon, marking a significant step toward strengthening climate-resilient seed systems in Assam under the AAU-Norway collaborative UPSCALE project.

The event was organised by Gram Bikash Uttar Assam Prant in collaboration with Assam Agricultural University, reinforcing the project's focus on improving access to quality seeds, promoting local seed production and enhancing farmer resilience to climate variability.

Delegates from the Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research (NIBIO), Dr Uday Shekhar Nagothu and Haane Sorlien, along with a representative from the Norwegian Embassy, Gauri Bandekar, attended the programme, demonstrating continued international support for resilient agricultural development in Assam. Representatives from partner organisations such as the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation and Odisha University of Agriculture & Technology were also present, reflecting the collaborative, multi-institutional approach of UPSCALE.

Dr Sanjay Kr Chetia, Director of Research (Agriculture), AAU, ad-



ressed the gathering and emphasised that strengthening decentralised seed production systems is essential for long-term agricultural sustainability, productivity and climate adaptation in the state. He noted that initiatives such as community-based seed multiplication and procurement directly contribute to UPSCALE's objective of building resilient farming systems.

Dr Niranjan Deka, Principal Scientist, AAU-ZRS, Shillongani, welcomed the delegation. Subsequently, all the dignitaries flagged off the procurement of the flood-tolerant paddy variety Ranjit-Sub1, underscoring the project's emphasis on climate-smart crop varieties

suitable to Assam's agro-ecological challenges.

The presence of state officials, including the Joint Director from the Department of Agriculture, the Branch Manager of Assam Seed Corporation Ltd., the District Agricultural Officer of Nagaon district and the District Project Manager from the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission, highlighted the institutional convergence fostered through UPSCALE. Such partnerships are crucial for scaling climate-resilient technologies, strengthening seed value chains and ensuring that quality seeds reach smallholder farmers in a timely manner.

Congress ramps up election strategy in West Karbi Anglong

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Feb 15: The Congress party has intensified its political activities in West Karbi Anglong, signalling robust preparations to challenge the ruling BJP in the upcoming assembly elections. In a strategic move to strengthen its grassroots presence, the party organised a series of election training camps across Kheroni, Donkamokam and Baithalango on Sunday.

The training sessions focused on drafting a winning roadmap for the No 111 Rongkhang and No 112 Amri Legislative Assembly constituencies, which have become the focal point of the party's regional strategy as it seeks to regain its lost foothold in the hill district.

The event saw the participation of high-level representatives, including Ankit Bagbahara, a trainer dispatched by the All India Congress Committee (AICC); Biswajit Roy Chowdhury, Secretary of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) and Augustine Enghee, president of the West Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee.

Addressing the gathering, District President Augustine Enghee launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led state government and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, claiming that the Chief



Minister is increasingly "speechless and directionless" in the face of the growing strength of the Congress.

"Unable to counter the rising influence of the Congress, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has resorted to a personal vendetta against leader Gaurav Gogoi. Having failed to defeat him politically, the CM is now attempting to malign Gogoi's reputation with baseless and nonsensical allegations," Enghee stated.

Congress leaders emphasised that the party is ready to present a formidable challenge to the BJP by highlighting local issues and the alleged failures of the state government. With the 2026 elections approaching, the atmosphere in West Karbi Anglong is heating up as both major parties gear up for grassroots-level battles.

ABSU celebrates 59th Foundation Day in Chirang

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Feb 15: The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) centrally observed its 59th Foundation Day on Sunday at Birhangaon Uzan Bazar playground in Chirang district, with day-long programmes.

Thousands of student union members, leaders and well-wishers attended the event, which began with the hoisting of the union flag by president Dipen Boro, followed by floral tributes to Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma.

Recalling the long journey of the organisation, ABSU leaders said that despite many struggles and obstacles, the union has continued to move forward over time for the cause of establishing Bodo identity, dignity and community rights. This progress has been guided by the vision of Upendra Nath

Brahma, popularly known as Bodofa, whose philosophy of "Live and Let Live" continues to inspire the movement. The organisation also reflected on the objective behind the founding of ABSU in 1967 at the Tribal Rest House in Kokrajhar by spirited Bodo youths, pledging to work with renewed determination for the causes of the people and to address pressing community issues in the near future.

ABSU president Dipen Boro said, "We salute our elders for their relentless contribution and reaffirm our determination to uphold unity, strength and a vibrant Bodo community, while nurturing brotherly relations with our neighbouring communities." The programme featured tributes to founding leaders, flag hoisting, cultural performances and speeches highlighting the organisation's future roadmap.



clear submission procedures, court fee and EMD requirements, eligibility norms, statutory compliance, documentation standards, evaluation mechanisms, quality assurance, service delivery conditions, payment proto-

cols and dispute resolution clauses.

Through this structured, transparent and time-bound framework, the District Administration of Cachar aims to ensure that every operational, technical and service

requirement for the successful conduct of the Assembly Election, 2026, is addressed efficiently and citizen-centrally. Interested bidders are advised to contact the District Election Office, Cachar, Silchar, for further information.

Witnessing betrayal of Indian farmers in name of US trade deal: Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI, Feb 15: Upping the ante against the government over the India-US interim trade deal, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday posed a string of questions to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and alleged that "we are witnessing a betrayal" of Indian farmers.

Gandhi, who has been attacking the government and accusing it of a sell-out through the deal, said this issue concerns the future and asked whether India is allowing another country to gain a long-term hold over India's agriculture industry.

"In the name of a US trade deal, we are witnessing a betrayal of Indian farmers," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said in his post in Hindi on X.

Posing questions to the prime minister, Gandhi asked what it means to import Dried Distillers' Grains (DDG). "Does it mean that Indian cattle will be fed distillers' grains made from GM American corn? Won't this effectively make our milk products dependent on the US agricultural industry?" he questioned.

Gandhi further inquired that if India allows the import of GM soy oil, what would its implications be on soy farmers in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and across the country? "How will they withstand another price shock?" he asked.

"When you say 'additional products', what does that include? Does this indicate pressure to open pulses and other crops to US imports over time?" he questioned.

He also asked, "What does it mean to remove 'non-trade barriers'? Will India be pressured in the

future to loosen its stance on GM crops, weaken procurement, or reduce MSPs and bonuses?"

Gandhi expressed concern that once the door is opened, it may be difficult to keep it from opening wider each year. "Will it be prevented, or will more crops gradually be put on the table each time?" Gandhi said, adding that farmers must receive this clarity.

"This isn't just about today. It's about the future too -- are we allowing another country to gain a long-term hold on India's agriculture industry?"

he stressed.

On Saturday, Gandhi accused the government of cheating cotton farmers and textile exporters in the country over the India-US interim trade deal, noting that the agreement could cause significant harm to both sectors.

He had also claimed that the trade deal, which now favours Bangladesh through zero per cent tariffs, will either finish the textile sector, the cotton farming or both, adding that the nation is aware of this. (PTI)

'You (Congress) misled farmers by giving a loan waiver only once in 70 years'

Rahul Gandhi spreading lies over India's trade deals with US, EU; farmers fully protected: Shah

GANDHINAGAR, Feb 15: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of spreading "lies" and misleading farmers over India's trade pacts with the US, UK and the EU, asserting the government has fully safeguarded the country's agriculture and dairy sectors.

He termed as "laughable" the Congress's allegations that trade agreements would harm Indian farmers.

"I feel like laughing when Congress's Shahzada Rahul Gandhi stands in Parliament and talks about protecting farmers. The Congress has a long history of misleading the country and now they are spreading lies about trade deals," Shah said.

He was addressing a gathering in Gandhinagar after launching India's first Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)-based Public Distribution System.

He asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government ensured full protection of farmers' interests in every agreement.

"Rahul Gandhi is spreading lies that trade deals with the European Union, England and America will damage our farmers and end our dairy sector. I want to assure the farmers, cattle-rearers and fishermen of this country that their interests have been fully protected in every agreement signed by PM Modi. There is no need to worry," Shah said.

During the previous regime,



agreements detrimental to Indian agriculture were signed. PM Modi reversed such provisions as soon as he assumed office in 2014, he said.

On Congress's criticism that the agreements would destroy India's dairy sector, Shah said Gandhi is "spreading lies" that PM Modi has finished India's dairy sector by signing these deals. "We are the people who expanded the dairy sector, not weakened it. In all the agreements, full protection has been given to dairy sector," he said. Shah challenged Gandhi to debate the issue publicly.

"Rahul Gandhi ji, decide any platform. Even the BJP Yuva Morcha president can come and debate with you on who has harmed farmers and who has worked for their welfare," he said.

Following a phone conversation between PM Modi and US Presi-

dent Donald Trump, both sides recently announced a reduction of US tariffs on Indian goods to 18 per cent from 50 per cent.

Last month, India and the European Union (EU) concluded negotiations for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA).

Defending the trade agreements, Shah said, "Through these agreements, our agricultural produce and fishermen's products will get access to world markets. At the same time, farmers' interests have been protected. The BJP and PM Modi can never compromise with farmers' interests," he asserted.

Shah said the Congress had spoken of "garibi hato" but failed to take concrete steps to eradicate poverty, while PM Modi provided houses, gas connections, toilets, drinking water, free foodgrains and health insurance of ₹ 5 lakh.

"In 10 years, 27 crore people have been lifted above the poverty line," he stated, adding that today, 81 crore people are receiving free foodgrains in a transparent manner.

Compare 10 years of the Manmohan Singh-led UPA rule and a decade of the Modi government, Shah said. "We have procured 15 times more foodgrains from farmers at MSP."

During the Congress government, the budget allocation for farmers was around ₹ 26,000 crore. Under PM Modi, it has been increased to over ₹ 1.29 lakh crore, said Shah. "You misled farmers by giving a loan waiver only once in 70 years. For the last 10 years, Modi ji has been directly transferring ₹ 6,000 every year into the bank accounts of farmers so that they do not need to depend on loans," he highlighted.

After launching India's first CBDC-based PDS and inaugurating a 'Grain ATM' facility, Shah said both initiatives would ensure complete transparency and eliminate corruption in foodgrain distribution. A "very big reform" was taking place in the field of food distribution and food security, he added. He expressed confidence that the CBDC-based system would be implemented across all states in the coming years, strengthening food security and safeguarding the rights of the poor.

Shah said that in several remote and aspirational districts, including in the North East and other back-

ward regions, 5 kg of foodgrains per person often did not reach beneficiaries.

"People of those regions did not even know that Modi ji was sending 5 kilograms of foodgrains from Delhi for them. Somewhere in the system, the grains were siphoned off. Now no one will be able to interfere. Through a fully digital system, every beneficiary will get their rightful share," he said.

Shah expressed happiness that Gujarat, particularly his parliamentary constituency, had been chosen for launching this pilot project. "This will ensure that every poor citizen gets rations such as wheat, rice, pulses, oil, salt and sugar in a fully transparent manner. There will be no place for middlemen," he said. Just as Direct Benefit Transfer introduced by the Modi government eliminated leakages worth over ₹ 15 lakh crore, this new step would ensure a transparent distribution system across the country, Shah said.

Using 'Annaapurti' Grain ATMs, PDS beneficiaries in Gujarat will receive one kg packets of toor dal, chana, salt and sugar through automated machines 24x7.

Union Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister Pralhad Joshi said that after Gujarat, the government is committed to implementing the CBDC-based PDS in Chandigarh, Puducherry and Dadra and Nagar Haveli, and gradually across the entire country. (PTI)

Shivaji-Tipu remarks row

BJP, Cong workers pelt stones in Pune

9 injured; cops to book both sides



MUMBAI/PUNE, Feb 15: BJP workers confronted Congress activists in Pune while protesting against Congress leader Harshwardhan Sapkal's remarks 'equating' Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj with Tipu Sultan, with the Opposition party alleging stone pelting during the agitation on Sunday.

Joint Commissioner of Police Ranjan Kumar Sharma told reporters that three Congress workers, two BJP workers, two police personnel, and two journalists sustained minor injuries in the melee, adding that the process of registering cases against both sides was underway.

"A protest was held near the Congress Bhavan, which saw sloganeering from workers of BJP and Congress. Workers of both parties climbed onto walls and there was stone pelting from both sides. Cases are being registered against workers of both sides," Sharma informed.

Pune city Congress chief Arvind Shinde said the party has submitted a written complaint to the police against BJP functionaries. A case should be registered against Mayor Manjusha Nagpure, BJP City president Dheeraj Ghate, Dushyant Mohol and other workers, Shinde added.

There was a heavy police deployment in the area as BJP workers protested outside the Congress Bhavan, condemning Sapkal's comments that have triggered a row in the state.

A controversy erupted on Saturday over a portrait of Tipu Sultan in the office of Malegaon Municipal Corporation deputy mayor Shan-e-Hind Nihal Ahmed, which was opposed by Shiv Sena corporators and Hindu outfits.

While pointing to the valour of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and the way he presented the idea of 'Swarajya', Sapkal gave the example of Tipu Sultan's call for battle against the British and claimed this was an ideal articulated on the same lines.

Earlier in the day, Maharashtra Congress leader Sachin Sawant accused the BJP of "double standards" and pursuing a polarisation agenda after Sapkal faced criticism

for the remark.

In a statement, the Congress spokesperson cited several instances to claim that BJP leaders had earlier supported or endorsed references to 18th-century Mysuru ruler Tipu Sultan in public spaces and official forums.

He referred to resolutions in civic bodies in Akola and Mumbai, as well as past instances where BJP leaders had allegedly praised or associated with the historical figure, to argue that the party's current opposition was politically motivated.

BJP workers staged a protest in Pune, condemning Sapkal's remarks.

Congress has alleged that two of its workers sustained injuries as activists from the saffron party indulged in stone pelting outside the Congress Bhavan.

Speaking to PTI, Mohan Joshi, vice-president of the Congress's Maharashtra unit, said that a large number of BJP workers, including the newly elected mayor, Manjusha Nagpure, gathered to protest outside Congress Bhavan.

"During the protest, stones were pelted at Congress workers and two sustained injuries. We are currently holding a sit-in protest outside the police station in Shivajinagar seeking action," he said.

Krishikesh Rawale, Deputy Commissioner of Police (Zone 1), said that the police intervened to prevent a flare-up.

BJP Pune city unit president Dheeraj Ghate has lodged a complaint against Sapkal with Parvati police station for allegedly hurting the sentiments of Hindus, and a first information report has been registered. Tipu Sultan remains a polarising figure of history, with some invoking his bravery in the battles against the British, while others have pointed to his religious bigotry and ill-treatment of non-Muslims.

Sawant, in his statement, has claimed that the BJP earlier admired Tipu Sultan, but now calls him bad for its polarisation agenda.

"What should this hypocrisy be called? Tipu Sultan used to wear a ring bearing the name of Lord Ram," he claimed. (PTI)

BJP's Suvendu Adhikari flags border security concerns

KOLKATA, Feb 15: Senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari on Sunday expressed concern over developments along the Bangladesh border following political changes in Dhaka after the election, and alleged that a "serious political consolidation" has emerged across the border that calls for heightened vigilance and stronger border infrastructure.

In a post on X, Adhikari claimed that Jamaat-e-Islami secured victories in 68 constituencies in Bangladesh's 2026 elections in districts from Sathkira to Rangpur, located opposite sensitive border areas with West Bengal.

The leader of the opposition in the West Bengal Assembly described the Siliguri corridor as a strategic lifeline connecting India's northeastern states with the mainland and asserted that any ideological consolidation in that belt would require increased alertness and robust security arrangements.

The BJP leader in his post in Bengali alleged that the ruling Trinamool Congress government in the state has repeatedly failed to extend full cooperation in land acquisition needed by the BSF for border fencing. (PTI)

Debate, vote on motion to remove Birla to be taken up on March 9: Rijiju

TAWANG, Feb 15: The debate and subsequent vote on the no-confidence motion moved by the opposition against Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla will be taken up on March 9, when the House reassembles after the recess, Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said here on Sunday.

Rijiju stated that the second part of the Budget Session, scheduled from March 9 to April 2, will be "interesting" as several "important" legislations and a "critical" bill will be presented in Parliament for debate and passage.

He warned that if opposition parties continue their protests as they did during the first part of the session, it would ultimately be detrimental to them.

"On March 9 in the Lok Sabha, we will have the debate on the no-confidence motion moved against the speaker. It is the rule to take it up on the first day. There will be a vote following the debate," he told PTI in an interview.

The Budget Session began with the president's address to the joint sitting of Parliament on January 28 and went on recess on February 12. The Union Budget for 2026 was presented on February 1, and the session will resume on March 9, concluding on April 2.

Rijiju, who is on a visit to his Lok Sabha constituency, Arunachal West, mentioned that during the second part of the session, the government plans to identify specific ministries for discussions.

"In the Lok Sabha, we will discuss the de-

mands for grants in five ministries and in the Rajya Sabha, we will discuss the working of five other ministries. In Rajya Sabha, it will not be on demands for grants but discussions on the ministries," he said.

The minister further informed that the government will select five ministries for discussions in the Rajya Sabha and then five ministries for the Lok Sabha.

Noting that the second part of the budget session will be interesting, he said, "If the opposition doesn't allow the House to function, we will go for the guillotine. It will be a loss for them," he said.

When asked why this part of the session would be particularly interesting, he noted that it coincides with the upcoming assembly elections in four significant states — West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Assam, and Kerala — as well as the Union Territory of Puducherry.

"We will bring some important bills, including one critical bill. We will not disclose now as to what the bill is, but we will bring up one very important business in the second part. We will pass all these bills," he said.

Regarding whether a bill on holding simultaneous elections would be introduced in the second part of the session, he said the government has not decided on it yet, as the Parliamentary committee constituted to examine the legislation has not yet finalised its report.

He also said that if the opposition doesn't participate in the debate, it will be their loss.

Hinting at a potential crack in the unity of the opposition, the minister said the Trinamool Congress did not sign the no-confidence motion against the speaker. "Most of the smaller parties are not in favour of stalling the House. They want to raise their issues, especially ahead of the assembly polls," he said.

During the first part of the session, the Lok Sabha experienced disruptions from February 2 onward, following Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's disallowance by the chair from quoting excerpts from former army chief M M Naravane's unpublished memoir, which referenced the India-China conflict in 2020.

On February 4, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was unable to respond to the debate on the Motion of Thanks due to protests by the opposition. In an unprecedented move, the Motion of Thanks was passed on February 5 without the customary speech from the prime minister. The Speaker read the Motion of Thanks to the president for her address, and it was passed by voice vote amid sloganeering from opposition members. Birla later stated that he received concrete information suggesting that several Congress MPs might carry out an "unexpected act" near the prime minister's seat, prompting him to advise Modi against attending the House for his address. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra refuted this claim.

Subsequently, eight opposition members were suspended for the remainder of the Budget Session for unruly behaviour in the House. (PTI)

'White-Collar' terror probe: Doctors formed terror group 'Ansar Interim' for J-K, hinterland attacks

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, Feb 15: The 'white-collar' terror module recently busted by the Jammu and Kashmir Police indicates that the doctors arrested in the case had been radicalised since 2016 and formed a new terror organisation named "Ansar Interim" to carry out subversive activities in the Union Territory as well as in the hinterland, officials said on Sunday.

The case, which is now being probed by the National Investigation Agency (NIA), also brings to light that Dr Umer-un Nabi -- the man behind the wheel of the explosive-laden car that exploded outside the Red Fort on November 10, killing over a dozen people -- had unsuccessfully attempted to join terror groups in 2016 and 2018, they said. Piecing together evidence gathered so far, officials said the accused doctors -- Muzamil Ganie, Umer-un Nabi (now dead), and Adeel Rather, along with his brother Muzaffar Rather (absconding), as well as Maulvi Irfan, Qari Aamir, and Tufail Gazi met at Eidgah in downtown Srinagar in April 2022.

During the meeting, they decided to form a terror organisation "Ansar Interim," with Adeel named as the 'Ameer' (chief) of the group, Maulvi Irfan as 'Deputy Ameer,' and Ganie as treasurer, officials said, adding that among militant groups, "Ansar" is commonly associated with the globally banned terror outfit Al-Qaeda.

The arrested doctors and preachers told the interrogators that the need to form a new group emerged because all their contacts with active terrorists had been severed, officials said. Roles and operational codes were assigned to the members during the meet-

ing. Umer assumed the role of coordinator and, along with Ganie, handled finances and procurement.

It was in 2023 that the group decided to acquire fertiliser from the Sohna and Nuh areas of Haryana. On the instructions of Umer, NPK (commonly known as Potassium Nitrate in this context) was also procured from a chemical shop in Faridabad.

During interrogation, the arrested doctors said Umer began watching online videos to learn rudimentary Improvised Explosive Device (IED) construction and had managed to prepare Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP), one of the most notable peroxide explosives, which has been used in several terrorist attacks as the explosive filling for IEDs.

According to officials, Adeel had started to look for members for the new terror group and roped in an individual named Danish, alias Jasir, from South Kashmir. Adeel took Danish to a rented accommodation within Al-Falah University in Faridabad, where both saw Umer and Ganie preparing TATP explosive materials. Umer later tried to persuade Danish to carry out a 'fidayeen' (suicide) attack, but he backed out at the last minute, citing his poor economic condition and the belief that suicide was forbidden in Islam.

Umer, a 28-year-old doctor from Pulwama, is believed to have been the most radicalised member and key operative in a network spanning Kashmir, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. Officials suspect he was planning a powerful Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) blast. (PTI)

India, UK have shared ambitions in education, culture sectors: British Council's country head

NEW DELHI, Feb 15: India and the UK have "shared ambitions and goals" in the fields of education, culture and creative economy, and both countries are able to walk together towards inclusive growth and opportunities for the youth, the British Council in New Delhi said.

In an exclusive interview to PTI ahead of the AI Summit held here, Alison Barrett, the British Council's India head, also said the last three years have seen a really "intense strengthening" of the bilateral partnership in a range of different sectors.

"We are the UK's cultural relations organisation, and at the upcoming AI Summit, a pavilion has been planned, and we will do its education and cultural components," she said, without elaborating. Several world leaders, heads of many global tech giants and delegations from various organisations working in the fields of technology, AI and creative economy are gathering in Delhi for the mega event, which will take place from February 16-20.



During the recent interaction held at the organisation's New Delhi centre, Barrett, Country Director India, British Council, had also shared that eight UK universities would be opening their campuses in India, starting this year.

"The University of Southampton has already opened it in Gurgaon (in July 2025), and it's the first university to have received

approval to open a campus under the University Grants Commission guidelines," she said.

And, the other eight UK universities have "received the letter of approval too."

"There are three UK universities opening up in GIFT City in Gujarat, two universities in Bengaluru in Karnataka, which is University of Liverpool and University of

Lancaster, and three in Mumbai -- the University of York, the University of Aberdeen and the University of Bristol," she told PTI.

According to the Council, the University of Aberdeen and the University of Bristol are likely to officially open the campuses by the summer of 2026.

British Council, in its 92nd year now, has had its presence in India since 1948, and its current building in Delhi, where it has been housed since 1992, was designed by famed Indian architect Charles Correa, while the iconic 'banyan tree' art on its facade was done by British artist Howard Hodgkin.

According to a plaque embedded on its wall, it was inaugurated on October 28, 1992, by the then Vice President K R Narayanan.

This building thus also showcases how Correa and Hodgkin's works represent the spirit of UK-India collaboration, by bringing art and architecture together, said Barrett, whose office is located in this modern edifice in the heart of Delhi. (PTI)

Manik Saha calls for status quo until indigenous script is developed

Tripura CM asks ABVP to oppose Roman script demand for Kokborok

AGARTALA, Feb 15: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday exhorted the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the student wing of the RSS, to raise its voice against the demand of Roman script for the Kokborok language.

The CM's statement came a day after thousands of Kokborok-speaking students formed human chains across Tripura to press their demand for the adoption of the Roman script for the language.

Kokborok, the second official language of Tripura is the mother tongue of most of the 19 tribes in the state. Addressing the first ABVP state tribal conference here, Saha said only a few people have raised the demand for Roman script for the language.

"There have been movements for the introduction of the Roman script for the Kokborok language. Those who are spreading the movement must try to develop an indigenous script for their mother tongue. If they fail, we will form a committee for the selection of a suitable script," he said. Saha alleged that those who have no issue are trying to confuse the indigenous people over the script.

"Our stand is clear: maintaining



the status quo on the script for the Kokborok language until an indigenous script is ready. But they are not ready to accept it," he said.

Urging ABVP leaders and workers to raise a strong voice against the demand of a 'hired script' for Kokborok, the CM said the present government has been working to ensure the welfare of indigenous

people. "Around 40 per cent of the state's total budgetary outlay, after deducting non-plan expenditure is being spent for the development of tribal areas. It shows the government's commitment to the welfare of indigenous people," he said.

Voicing concern over the drug abuse among the tribal youth, Saha asked the students' body to launch

a strong campaign against the problem in all colleges.

"Though drug addiction is a common problem, the prevalence of drug addiction among the tribal youth is relatively higher in the state, destroying generations. The ABVP must reach out to college students to address the problem," he said. (PTI)

Ricky Syngkon flags environmental, legal concerns in East Jaintia Hills

Shillong MP seeks halt to cement plant clearance



SHILLONG, Feb 15: Shillong MP Ricky A J Syngkon has sought an immediate freeze on the environmental clearance process for a proposed integrated cement plant in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district, highlighting his concerns regarding the project. In a representation to Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav, the MP urged authorities to suspend the ongoing proceedings related to the project proposed by Shree Cement Limited at remote Daistong village pending an independent review into alleged procedural irregularities and cumulative environmental impacts.

The project comprises a 0.95 million tonnes per annum (TPA) clinker unit, a 0.99 million TPA cement grinding unit, a 15 MW captive power plant, a 7 MW waste heat recovery system and associated infrastructure spread over 25.08 hectares.

Syngkon said East Jaintia Hills already has several cement and extractive industries and cautioned that evaluating projects in isolation without assessing cumulative regional impacts could undermine environmental safeguards.

He flagged potential risks to air quality, groundwater resources, river systems, agricultural land and forest cover, arguing that granting clearance without a comprehensive cumulative impact assessment would run contrary to principles of sustainable development and the precautionary approach recognised in Indian environmental jurisprudence.

The MP also cited representations from residents alleging serious deficiencies in the statutory public hearing conducted under the EIA Notification, 2006.

According to the letter, villagers claimed they were obstructed from participating and that the process lacked free

and meaningful consultation.

"If established, such irregularities would undermine the integrity of the environmental clearance process," he said, urging an independent examination before any further administrative progression.

Noting that Meghalaya comes under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, Syngkon stressed the need for heightened scrutiny over tribal land rights and customary tenure systems.

He called for verification of compliance with the Meghalaya Transfer of Land (Regulation) Act, 1971 and clarity regarding the issuance of no-objection certificates tied to the project.

Proceeding without addressing these aspects, he warned, could trigger constitutional complications and public unrest in the region.

The MP requested the ministry to immediately suspend further processing of the environmental clearance application and institute an independent review covering the public hearing process, cumulative environmental impact assessment and compliance with statutory land safeguards. He also urged authorities to ensure that no final clearance is granted until the findings of such a review are placed on record.

Invoking Article 21 of the Constitution, Syngkon said environmental protection and livelihood security form integral components of the right to life and that administrative prudence required precautionary action where serious allegations exist.

"As the elected representative of the affected constituency, I am duty-bound to convey the gravity of public concern," he said, adding that he may pursue parliamentary and institutional remedies if the matter proceeds without satisfactory review. (PTI)

Manipur CM assures support to Sainik School Imphal

Y Khemchand Singh promises early action on infrastructure and key grievances

IMPHAL, Feb 15: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Sunday assured authorities of Sainik School Imphal that their key grievances and infrastructural challenges would be addressed at the earliest.

The CM visited the school, during which Principal Col A Rajiv gave a detailed presentation on its functioning and highlighted several pressing concerns.

Among them was deteriorating infrastructure, irregular water supply, the need for strengthening the perimeter wall, pending construction of the girls' hostel and sound clarity issues at the Vikram Batra auditorium.

Col Rajiv also briefed the CM on the school's recent academic achievements, notable performances in competitive examinations and participation of cadets in various national-level events.

After the presentation, Singh said the issues raised would be taken up with the departments concerned for necessary action.

Emphasising that students are the pillars of society, he said their needs must be given due priority.

He appreciated the efforts of the school administration in maintain-



ing standards despite constraints and acknowledged the institution's contribution in nurturing disciplined and capable youth.

The CM also carried out an inspection of various sections of the campus to assess infrastructure requirements and identify areas requiring construction, renovation and repair.

During the visit, he interacted with members of the alumni association, staff and students, encour-

aging them to strive for excellence in academics and extracurricular activities.

He also met Memota Keisham, a student who participated in an interaction with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the ninth edition of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha'.

She was among 15 students selected from nearly 4 crore participants across the country.

Singh commended her confidence and achievement. (PTI)

Tamla-Du Festival celebrated with fervour in Tezu

Thousands join 56th edition to honour Mishmi traditions and pray for prosperity



HT Correspondent

TEZU, Feb 15: The 56th Tamla-Du Festival was centrally celebrated with immense enthusiasm and spiritual reverence at Tezu in Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh on Sunday, drawing thousands from across the region to honour the deep-rooted traditions of the Mishmi community.

The grand annual event, organised by the Digaru Mishmi community, saw participants converge at Khoraliang to offer prayers to nature deities for protection, prosperity and bountiful harvests in the year ahead. Chief Guest Mama Natung, Minister for Home & Inter State Border Affairs, Public Health Engineering & Water Supply and Indigenous Affairs, delivered an inspiring address emphasising the festival's timeless significance. "Tamla-Du is a living testament to our unbreakable bond with nature, our ancestors and one another. On this sacred occasion, let us renew our commitment to unity, peace and prosperity for every Mishmi family and the entire state. May Amik Matai Jawmalo bless us with good health, bountiful harvests and protection from all calamities," he said.

Natung urged younger generations to preserve their heritage whilst embracing

progress. "I urge our youth to carry forward these traditions with pride while embracing progress," he added.

Observed annually on February 15, Tamla-Du is among the most ancient festivals of the Mishmi tribe. Rooted in indigenous beliefs, the celebration centres on prayers to the God of Earth and the God of Water, seeking safeguards against natural disasters and ensuring communal well-being. According to Mishmi faith, only nature possesses the power to shield humanity from its fury, making these rituals essential not merely for the community but for global harmony.

The festivities featured traditional Tang-gong dances, vibrant attire, communal feasts and cultural performances that showcased the community's enduring spirit. Guest of Honour Dr Emi Rumi, president of the Indigenous Faith and Cultural Society of Arunachal Pradesh, commended the organisers for upholding cultural integrity.

Patron Dr Mohesh Chai, MLA for Tezu constituency, praised the event's contribution to social cohesion and heritage preservation across Lohit, Anjaw and neighbouring districts, marking another successful celebration of Mishmi cultural pride.

Chowna Mein urges stronger language education, documentation of heritage

Arunachal Dy CM calls for safeguarding indigenous identity

ITANAGAR, Feb 15: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein has stressed the need to preserve indigenous culture, language and historical legacy, asserting that communities must take the responsibility to safeguard their identity amid the growing influence of globalisation.

Addressing a gathering at the Shapawng Yawng Manau Poi festival at Miao in Changlang district on Saturday, Mein said the festival is not merely about dance and celebration but features sacred rituals that connect people to their ancestral roots.

He said such events should serve as platforms to reflect on society, heritage and the responsibility of passing cultural values to the younger generation.

Highlighting the challenges of modernisation, he said that while modern education, changing fashion and outside influences cannot be stopped, communities must ensure they do not lose their identity, an official statement said. "No one will come to preserve our culture; we must protect our culture ourselves," he said, stressing that language remains the strongest pillar of identity.

The deputy chief minister called for strengthening indigenous language education in schools so that preservation becomes meaningful rather than symbolic.

Mein also underscored the importance of documenting and digitising ancient manuscripts, oral traditions, folklore and archival ma-



terials using modern technology.

He said steps are being taken to digitise rare manuscripts and historical documents for future generations.

Mein also paid floral tributes at Martyr Hill to the unsung heroes of the Singpho community.

He said their sacrifices symbolise courage, dignity and resistance and stressed the need to document the contributions of local communi-

ties, including their role during World War 2. He also visited the tea and textile exhibition showcasing the rich legacy of the Singpho community.

Mein said the discovery of tea in India traces back to the Singpho tribe of the region, recalling that in 1823, Robert Bruce received tea plants and seeds from Singpho chief Beesa Gaum, which marked a turning point in the genesis of Assam Tea. (PTI)

Retired HC judge to head judicial probe into blast at Meghalaya's illegal coal mine

SHILLONG, Feb 15: Retired high court judge, Justice RS Chauhan, was appointed the head of the three-member judicial panel that will probe the February 5 blast at an illegal coal mine in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district in which 31 people were killed, according to a notification.

The panel has been tasked with fixing accountability and examining possible constitutional exemptions to central mining laws, said the notification dated February 14.

Retired IPS officer H Nongpluh and former IAS officer PS Dkhar are the other members of the panel, set up under the Commission of Inquiry Act 1952, it said.

Justice Chauhan was the chief justice of the Uttarakhand High Court and the Telangana High Court.

The commission will conduct a comprehensive fact-finding exercise into the explosion at the illegal mine in the remote Thangsku area of Mynsgat village, according to the notification.

"The Commission may submit its report embodying the findings and its recommendations thereon to the State Government within a

period of 6 (six) months from the date of the notification," it said.

The commission has been mandated to identify acts or omissions by authorities and examine whether lapses contributed to the disaster.

Beyond fixing responsibility, the panel will examine the root causes of illegal coal mining in Meghalaya and review the working conditions of labourers dependent on the industry, the notification said.

It will also recommend remedial measures, administrative reforms and financial rehabilitation schemes for those affected by the National Green Tribunal's 2014 ban on coal mining.

Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma had on February 9 announced the judicial inquiry into the blast.

Meanwhile, the government transferred East Jaintia Hills SP Vikash Kumar and posted him as the head of the Anti-Narcotics Task Force, according to another notification.

ANTF chief PK Rasgania will be the new SP of East Jaintia Hills. (PTI)

M'laya: Class 9 student develops smart gas leak detector, gets award

SHILLONG, Feb 15: A Class 9 student from Meghalaya's East Khasi Hills district won the jury award at the North East Science Fair & Innovation Festival for developing a system that detects gas leaks and initiates preventive measures to avert accidents, officials said on Sunday.

James Donald Kharkongor, a student of Mawngap District Christian Multipurpose HS School, received the recognition at the regional event organised by the National Science Centre, Guwahati, a unit of the National Council of Science Museums.

James, who hails from Laitpynter Synrangkan village, said his father is a school teacher while his mother works as a housekeeper. "I want to contribute my ideas to help build the nation," he said, explaining the motivation behind his innovation. The award was conferred in recognition of the project's practical relevance, technical integration and potential societal impact, officials said. The Smart LPG Safety and Hazard Prevention System uses advanced gas sensors to monitor air quality continuously and activates a buzzer alarm when gas concentration exceeds safe levels, they said.

An automated exhaust fan is simultaneously triggered to disperse accumulated gas and reduce the risk of ignition, they added.

A key feature of the device is an automatic solenoid valve that shuts off the gas supply upon detecting a leak, preventing further discharge and minimising the risk of fire or explosion, officials said.

The system is also integrated with IoT-based alerts for remote monitoring and real-time notifications, they said. The Innovation Hub of the Shillong Science Centre has been mentoring Kharkongor through hands-on training, technical guidance and exposure to scientific platforms. (PTI)

3 militants, including two women, arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, Feb 15: Three militants, including two women, belonging to different banned organisations have been arrested in two districts of Manipur, police said on Sunday.

The arrests were made in Tengnoupal and Imphal East districts on Saturday, a police statement said.

Security forces arrested two women cadres of the banned outfit People's Liberation Army (PLA) from the vicinity of Sunrise Ground in Tengnoupal district.

They have been identified as Akojiam Sakhenbi (23) and Chongtham Hembaby (17).

A militant belonging to the banned PREPAK (PRO) outfit was arrested from Napetpalli in Imphal East district. He has been identified as Ingudam Ingocha Singh (50) and a .32 pistol loaded with five cartridges has been seized from his possession.

Meanwhile, security forces seized a 10 kg IED near Sijang Kuki village in Churachandpur district on Friday. It was safely defused by the bomb disposal team, it added. (PTI)

ABSOLUTELY LOVED 'DHURANDHAR', CAST AND CREW SMASHED IT: RANBIR KAPOOR

Bollywood star Ranbir Kapoor heaped praises on filmmaker Aditya Dhar's blockbuster hit, "Dhurandhar", and called it his "current favourite" movie.

Released on December 5, 2025, the film featured Ranveer Singh in the lead role alongside Akshay Khanna, R Madhavan, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal, Sara Arjun and Rakesh Bedi.

The film broke many records and emerged as the highest-earning single-language Hindi film in India with India nett collections crossing a massive ₹1,000 crore.

Kapoor went live on Instagram on Saturday through the account of his lifestyle brand, Ark, during which he interacted with fans and followers. When asked about the film, Kapoor went on to praise the project and said the entire cast delivered a commendable performance.

"The last current favourite movie I saw was 'Dhurandhar', and I absolutely loved it. The entire cast and crew smashed it. Really good times at the movies," the actor said.

"My current favourite songs I'm listening to are all the amazing tracks from 'Dhurandhar', that's right up there," he added.

Set in Pakistan's Lyari town, it centres on an Indian spy, played by Ranveer Singh, who infiltrates a local gang of criminals and arms dealers. The makers are also set to release the sequel on March 19.

Kapoor also talked about his upcoming

releases and expansion plans of his brand. He said after a three-year wait period, he will have back-to-back movie releases, starting with "Ramayana" from Nitesh Tiwari this Diwali.

"My next release is 'Ramayana', which is coming out in Diwali, and after that will be 'Love & War'. That's what my next two releases are. I've been working very hard on the projects that I'm part of," he said.

Kapoor said working on "Love & War", which reunites the actor with the acclaimed filmmaker Sanjay Leela Bhansali, has been an "amazing experience" for him. "It blows my mind that a director for four decades is best at what he does. It is special," the 43-year-old actor said, without divulging the timeline of the release of "Love & War".

Billed as an ambitious cinematic event, "Ramayana" features Kapoor as Lord Ram, "KGF" star Yash as Ravana, Sai Pallavi as Goddess Sita, Sunny Deol as Lord Hanuman and Ravie Dubey as Lord Lakshman.

On a query about "Ramayana" releasing around his daughter Raha's birthday, Kapoor simply called it a "beautiful coincidence".

"Love & War" also features Kapoor's actor wife, Alia Bhatt, and Vicky Kaushal.

Speaking about the delayed release of his movies, Kapoor, whose last work was Sandeep Reddy Vanga's 2023 film "Animal", said "good things take time" and added that he is hoping audiences



will enjoy those films when they arrive on the big screen.

"It's my bad luck that when I start a movie usually people finish movies in four to six months but my films take a long time. I hope when it releases you forget all that time that it has taken. But I assure you that I'm working very hard for two-three years on the movies that I'm doing."

Kapoor also said he will soon begin

work on "Brahmastra" and "Animal 2".

"'Brahmastra 2' is in the works, should happen soon. We will start shooting very soon. 'Animal Park' will start mid next year," he informed.

Responding to a fan query about the possibility of "Rockstar 2" and "Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani 2", Kapoor said not every film can be turned into a sequel.

"Lots of you want part two of my

films, but there are newer stories and directors to work with," he said, adding, "I don't think we've cracked a script of 'Rockstar 2'. But if Imtiaz Ali (director) cracks a good to take forward the story of Jordan, it will be exciting."

On "Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani 2", Kapoor said, "The film had the perfect end, so I don't think it warrants part two. But maybe another film comes with a similar genre, which you guys

will hopefully love."

On his brand, ARKS, Kapoor said he hopes it becomes a popular and loved brand. "It's not easy to start a brand. It's been a year, the intention is to make it a global brand and target every kind of consumer who likes style, luxury and comfort. But opening a store is an expensive thing my team says so till then you all can buy online," the actor said. (PTI)

ANUBHAV SINHA ON WHY HE MADE 'ASSI': WAS SHOCKED TO READ ACCOUNTS OF SURVIVORS

A woman would have already been exploited somewhere in the country by the time we finish this conversation, says filmmaker Anubhav Sinha whose new film "Assi" explores the growing cases of sexual violence against women.

The courtroom thriller, starring Taapsee Pannu, Manoj Pahwa, Kumud Mishra, Kani Kusruti, Mohd Zeeshan Ayyub, Supriya Pathak, Revathi and Naseeruddin Shah, releases in theatres on February 20.

"Assi", which means 80 in Hindi, is the number of cases that are reported every day and Sinha believes while the figure is disturbing, it is just the tip of the iceberg.

"This is the number of cases that are reported every day. There is no count of those that are hidden on a daily basis. This number in itself was so shocking when we calculated it because every 18 to 20 minutes, something like this takes place. By the time you and I finish talking about it, a woman would have already been exploited," Sinha told PTI in an interview.

The filmmaker has tackled many contemporary issues plaguing the country in films such as "Mulk" (2018), "Article 15" (2019), "Thappad" (2020) and "Bheed" (2023).

"Assi", which reunites Sinha with his "Mulk" and "Thappad" actor Pannu and "Article 15" writer Gaurav Solanki, was born out of questions the director said he found himself grappling with while trying to understand why such cases continue to occur.



"I was going through this internal conflict and kept thinking 'What can I do?' Why are we not doing enough? Is the police not doing anything? What about the judiciary?" And then I realised that the problem is something else. It is easy to blame the police and judiciary, but difficult to blame yourself. This film was written while I was going through this 'antardwand' (inner conflict)," he said.

Sinha said he spent a lot of time reading the accounts of the women who had gone through such experiences.

"Even if there is a support system from all sides, a woman wrote that she used to look at herself in the mirror but thought it

was someone else. So, it is very disturbing. Because we as men just cannot fathom this. I read a lot of psychological analysis about perpetrators. 'Who are the people who do this? Where do they get the strength to do this?' So, there were a lot of shocking details," the filmmaker said.

Sinha said while the story is about trying to understand sexual violence against women in Indian society, he wanted to make it engaging and in the form of a fast-moving thriller.

"But, it certainly opens your eyes," he said.

Asked about the rising popularity of a certain kind of male hero who embodies all

the violent streaks normalised in patriarchal society, Sinha said such figures have always been aspirational in Hindi cinema.

"In our cinema, there is a hero, and when I say hero, I mean a male hero, and that has always been there because we are a patriarchal society, and we like heroes. But in our cinema, there are stories about Goddess Durga too.

"So that is how our mythology is, that is how our history is. And it is not going to change overnight, but the good news is that now, if you see, women's films are being made, and they are being successful. I truly believe that February is the month of women. Rani (Mukherji) is ruling the roost with 'Mardaani 3' and I am hearing a good buzz around 'Assi'."

Sinha said he has been travelling across north India for the past few months to understand the people and their stories. It is also an attempt to take the film first to Tier-II cities before moving the promotions to metro cities.

"In last four months, I've been to about 40 cities and that's only in the north. I have been to Ranchi, Raipur, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Jaipur, Amritsar, Mohali, Jamshedpur, Ahmedabad and Baroda. I want to travel to the south of Maharashtra next year.

"The thing is that the world is a book of stories. Every person is a story. There are so many stories. I meet 50 to 100 people every day. And, obviously, I hear about 100 stories every day. So, they will get stored somewhere in my subconscious and get recycled." (PTI)

Thank you for making this warrior live beyond the screen: Vineet Kumar Singh on 1 year of 'Chhaava'



Actor Vineet Kumar Singh shared a lengthy note on his social media as he celebrated one year of "Chhaava" and said it was nothing but a "journey of sweat, scars, silence, and roars of the audience".

Singh shared a note on his Instagram handle on Saturday alongside the video, which featured the comments praising the film. Directed by Laxman Utekar, it released on February 14, 2025 and was produced by Dinesh Vijan under his production banner Maddock Films.

"A journey of sweat, scars, silence, and roars of the audience. From rehearsals to roars, from lines on paper to lines remembered, thank you for making this warrior live beyond the screen," he wrote in the caption.

"A year ago, this roar echoed... and it still does. Your love, the media's words, the hours of practice, and those dialogues, every frame became history because of you. #Chhaava lives on," he added.

The film starred Vicky Kaushal and Rashmika Mandanna in the lead roles and revolved around Chhatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, the second ruler of the Maratha Empire and son of Shivaji Maharaj.

Actors Akshay Khanna and Sanjeev Jaiswal rounded off the cast of the film, which went on earn over Rs 800 crore at the worldwide box office.

Singh's latest work is "Tere Ishk Mein", which released in 2025. Directed by Aanand L Rai, the film featured Singh in the role of V Shekhawat and also starred Kriti Sanon. (PTI)

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Unconventional stories are on verge of becoming extinct species: Taapsee Pannu

Actor Taapsee Pannu believes women-led and unconventional films are on the verge of becoming "extinct" as there is a lack of support from audiences for such stories. Pannu, who has seamlessly balanced both mainstream and offbeat cinema, has built a reputation as a dependable performer and featured in a series of hard-hitting dramas such as "Thappad", "Mulk" and "Pink".

According to the actor, the battle to bring unconventional stories to the big screen has become harder.

"We are on the verge of becoming an extinct species, we mean films like 'Assi'. There is a certain template that our so-called commercial cinema abides by and we don't conventionally fall in that template of sorts," Pannu told PTI in an interview.

"Assi" is Pannu's new movie with acclaimed filmmaker Anubhav Sinha and marks their third collaboration after 2018's "Mulk" and "Thappad" in 2020.

The actor debunked the notion that such films will always find a home on digital platforms, saying that the streamers have shifted their focus to luring "massy" audiences.

"The reality is people think that these kinds of films will keep coming on OTT and we will keep watching it. But no, OTT's don't want these kinds of films either. They have clear mandates, that only the films that are working in the-

atres are the films that they want to pick.

"They want to take that theatre audience to their platform. They are like, 'We already have this kind of audience, we want those massy pot boilers audiences of our country to subscribe to the platform'. That's why I say we are on the verge of becoming extinct unless people realise that we need to watch it. Sometimes it's good to watch reality as well," Pannu added.

Comparing cinema to a range of cuisines, the 38-year-old actor said that while "Mughlai", which is the commercial cinema, has its appeal, the industry also needs its "dal chawal": stories rooted in everyday reality.

She also believes that the habit of waiting for a digital release of a film is "suicidal" for the future of meaningful cinema. "We should subscribe to all kinds of cinema. Only the audience can help us by going to theatres and watching (all kinds of) films. I hope they realise this before we lose this. Then we won't have the right to crib that our cinema cannot compete with world cinema, we only make a particular kind of film.

"We have a lot of people saying we don't make good and rooted stories. But when did you support rooted stories? By sitting at home and watching it on OTT is not how you support good cinema. If you like the

film, spread the word, let more people come into theatres."

Reflecting on her journey, Pannu said leading a film to release today feels like a "daily pain" and a constant "battle".

She believes the scenario changed post COVID-19 pandemic.

"Victories are way less than the battles that actors like me go through. One is the battle to get a film through. With this film, because he (Sinha) was there, I had to not think of a lot of things.

"There are scripts that I really like but I need someone to believe that it is going to work or it is the right film to do. It's difficult for a female actor who is headlining a film, no matter how many successful films you've given in the past," the actor added. Pannu struck a hopeful note as she said the success of Rani Mukherji's "Mardaani 3" feels like a "victory" for women across the industry.

"Any other female actor's victory helps me. So, that's why I'm celebrating 'Mardaani 3' success because I know it will open up windows for a lot of movies that are driven by female (actors)," she said.

The

actor hopes that "Assi", which explores the growing cases of sexual violence against women, will be well-received in theatres.

"By the virtue of being a woman, a lot of things (referring to her angst) will come naturally but on this I had to work on not making it obvious that I'm emotionally invested as I'm doing my job," Pannu said.

The courtroom thriller features the actor in the role of public prosecutor Raavi. To prepare for her role, Pannu visited Patiala House Court to observe the real-world legal proceedings and added that this exercise helped her to balance "professional coldness" with "emotional depth" that was required for her character.

"I did not come across a sexual assault case during my visit. I went with a bunch of lawyers and saw a female (public prosecutor), she was going through files diligently, and the lawyers told me that, 'She must be just studying the case now'."

"It's like how you are studying just



T20 World Cup: UAE eye middle-order fix against wounded Afghanistan

NEW DELHI, Feb 15: UAE will look to plug their middle-order frailties, particularly against spin, when they take on a hurting Afghanistan in a must-win Group D clash of the T20 World Cup here on Monday.

The two sides head into the contest after contrasting results in their previous outings. UAE scraped past Canada to register their first win, while Afghanistan suffered a heartbreaking defeat despite pushing their last game into two Super Overs in one of the greatest T20 matches.

With South Africa and New Zealand occupying the top two spots in the group with six and four points respectively, UAE's qualification hopes hinge on a combination of victories and favourable results elsewhere.

Afghanistan, meanwhile, are desperate to open their account after coming agonisingly close against South Africa. They not only need to win their remaining matches convincingly but also rely on other outcomes to stay in contention.

UAE were handed a 10-wicket thrashing by New Zealand earlier and appeared headed for another defeat when Canada reduced them to 66 for 4 in the 13th over while chasing 150. Their top and middle order struggled against spin before opener Aryanah Sharma (74 off 53) anchored the chase. Sohaib Khan's late surge (51 off 29) then helped them complete a remarkable turnaround.

However, UAE's batting will face a sterner test against Afghanistan's formidable spin trio of captain Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi.

"I think we have to improve our batting in the middle overs from 7 to 15, 16th over. I think



there we have to look after," UAE skipper Muhammad Waseem had said after the win over Canada.

"So, in the upcoming games, we will work on that and that is the one part of the game where we have to work."

UAE's bowling unit found rhythm against Canada with pacer Junaid Siddique claiming five wickets, but containing the likes of Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Gulbadin Naib and Azmatullah Omarzai will demand a collective effort.

The 23-year-old Gurbaz was outstanding in the last game, smashing 84 off 42 balls to take Afghanistan to 187 in regulation time. He then struck three sixes in succession in the second Super Over but fell short as Afghanistan ended up on the losing side. Omarzai also picked up

three wickets, while Rashid claimed two.

Teams (from): UAE: Muhammad Waseem (c), Alishan Sharafu, Aryanah Sharma, Dhruv Parashar, Haider Ali, Harshit Kaushik, Junaid Siddique, Mayank Kumar, Muhammad Arfan, Muhammad Farooq, Muhammad Jawadullah, Haider Shah, Rohid Khan, Sohaib Khan, Simranjeet Singh.

Afghanistan: Rashid Khan (c), Ibrahim Zardran (vc), Darwish Rasooli, Mohammad Ishaq (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Sediqullah Atal, Azmatullah Omarzai, Gulbadin Naib, Mohammad Nabi, Shahidullah, Abdollah Ahmadzai, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Noor Ahmad, Ziaur Rahman.

Match starts at 11 am. (PTI)

LA Olympics leader Wasserman will sell talent agency in wake of Epstein emails discovery

LOS ANGELES, Feb 15: Casey Wasserman, the chairman of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics organizing committee, is selling his eponymous talent agency in the wake of the release of emails between himself and Ghislaine Maxwell.

Wasserman's emails with Maxwell were revealed by his appearance in recently released government files on Jeffrey Epstein. Wasserman, whose agency represents some of the top pop music artists in the world, has not been accused of any wrongdoing.

The recently released documents revealed that in 2003 he swapped flirtatious emails with Maxwell, who would years later be accused of helping Epstein recruit and sexually abuse his victims. Wasserman said in a Friday evening memo to his staff that he has begun the process of selling the company, according to a company spokesperson who provided the memo to The Associated Press.

Wasserman's memo to staff said that he felt he had become a distraction to the company's work.

"During this time, Mike Watts will assume day-to-day control of the business while I devote my full attention to delivering Los Angeles an Olympic Games in 2028 that is worthy of this outstanding city," the memo stated.

The memo arrived days after the



LA28 board's executive committee met to discuss Wasserman's appearance in the Epstein files. The committee said it and an outside legal firm conducted a review of Wasserman's interactions with Epstein and Maxwell with Wasserman's full cooperation.

The committee said in a statement: "We found Mr. Wasserman's relationship with Epstein and Maxwell did not go beyond what has already been publicly documented." The statement also said Wasserman "should continue to lead LA28 and deliver a safe and successful games."

Wasserman has said previously that he flew on a humanitarian mission to Africa on Epstein's private plane at the invitation of the Clinton Foundation in 2002. Exchanges between Wasserman and Maxwell in the files include

Wasserman telling Maxwell: "I think of you all the time. So, what do I have to do to see you in a tight leather outfit?" His agency, also called Wasserman, has lost clients over the Maxwell emails. Singer Chappell Roan and retired U.S. women's soccer legend Abby Wambach are among them.

Wasserman said in his memo to staff that his interactions with Maxwell and Epstein were limited and he regrets the emails.

"It was years before their criminal conduct came to light, and, in its entirety, consisted of one humanitarian trip to Africa and a handful of emails that I deeply regret sending. And I'm heartbroken that my brief contact with them 23 years ago has caused you, this company, and its clients so much hardship over the past days and weeks," the memo said. (AP)

Shai Hope pleased with West Indies finding different players to excel in T20 World Cup

MUMBAI, Feb 15: West Indies captain Shai Hope on Sunday expressed satisfaction with different players stepping up to perform as the Caribbean side became the first team to qualify for the Super Eights in the T20 World Cup.

West Indies cantered to a nine-wicket victory over Nepal riding on Hope's unbeaten 61 and Jason Holder's 4/27.

"Form is one of those things... I'm not sure I'm a big fan of that word, because we are all international cricketers, we can get big runs one day and then the next day we can get a first ball (dismissal)," Hope replied when asked about his form and West Indies' three consecutive wins in the T20 World Cup.

"It's just about understanding what's really working for you on the day. As a team head, I define who's going well and try to support it, and vice versa. If someone's not going as well as they would like (to), the others pull them along."

"But it's good to see everyone chipping in in different and various ways. It's not the same person necessarily performing every game, so it's a good sign from the

team standpoint," Hope added.

Hope was full of praise for all-rounder Matthew Forde, whose mealy returns of 4-1-10-1 helped West Indies take control of the match.

"... that goes to show how strong our squad is when you call upon anyone in the team, you have someone who can fill a hole," he said about Forde, who had replaced Romario Shepherd in the playing eleven.

"He's (Matthew) been an incredible person in the last few series, all the way from New Zealand when he came back from that injury. It's great to have him back. He's been bowling really well, and then you can see what he can do in the back end with the bat as well," Hope added.

Hope said West Indies will look to attain their peak and build on a three-match unbeaten run.

"That's what we set out to do. We all want to lift the trophy, but there's a process to get there. Playing our best cricket, hopefully we can continue to peak and keep growing as a strong unit in all

departments and when those crunch times come, we can always seize those moments and ensure we'll be on top," he said.

Holder admitted West Indies have made the most of the scheduling where they got to play at the Wankhede Stadium — a venue where the Caribbean side has four T20I wins from five matches.

"We're building up quite nicely. I don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves. We've just taken it one game at a time. We've still got a very important game against Italy left and then we move into the Super Eights," he said.

On another note, Holder said the slower nature of pitches in the Caribbean is among the reasons why express pace bowlers are hard to find. "We don't quite get the quick pitches that we used to get on a consistent basis in the Caribbean (earlier), so that may have a bit to do with it," he said.

"You don't necessarily have to be (an) express (pacer) to be successful at this level. But if you're very accurate and skillful, you can get some good success here at this level." (PTI)

ASSAM RIFLES PUBLIC SCHOOL (HIGH), DIPHU (ASSAM)
(CBSE AFFILIATED SCHOOL)

VACANCY FOR TEACHERS/NON-TEACHING STAFF

1. Walk in interview will be conducted on **06 Mar 2026 (Friday)** at 8:00 AM at ARTC & S, Diphu to fill up the following vacancies in Assam Rifles Public School (High), Diphu, Assam:-

POST	VACANCIES	MIN QUALIFICATION REQUIRED
Principal	01	(i) Post Graduate from recognized university. (ii) M.Ed/ B.Ed. (iii) Min 05 Years Teaching Experience. (Fluency in written/spoken English)
TGT (Science/Bio)	01	(i) M.Sc/MA/Edvt PG degree. (ii) B.Ed from recognized university. (Fluency in written/spoken English)
TGT (Science/ Phy & Chem)	01	
TGT (Hindi / Sanskrit)	01	
TGT (English)	01	
TGT (Maths)	01	
TGT (Social Science)	01	
TGT Computer	01	(i) Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science/ IT (B.Sc, BCA, B.Tech/BE) with at least 50% marks or PGDCA qualified. (ii) B. Ed from recognized university. (iii) Working experience in min two High Level Languages. (iv) Proficiency in teaching in English.
PRT	08	(i) BA/B.Sc/Edvt Qualification with min 60% marks preferred. (ii) B.Ed/JBT/ETT/Similar Qualification. (iii) Fluency in written/spoken English.
PRT (Computer)	01	(i) Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science/ IT (B.Sc, BCA, B.Tech/BE) with at least 50% marks or PGDCA qualified. (ii) B. Ed from recognized university. (iii) Working experience in min two High Level Languages. (iv) Proficiency in teaching in English.
Art Teacher	01	(i) Graduate with Drawing and painting/ Art/ Fine Art with minimum two years full time diploma from a recognized institute.
Music Teacher	01	(i) Graduate in/ with Music from a recognized university OR (ii) The New Diploma/ Degrees awarded by the concerned agencies institutions.
PT Teacher	01	(i) Bachelor of Physical Education (B.P.Ed) Four Years Degree Course OR (ii) Three Years Gradation+ One Year B.P.Ed. Diploma OR (iii) B.Sc. Physical Education; Health Education & Sports + One Year B.P.Ed Diploma
Clerk	01	(i) Graduate or 1 year experience in a clerical work /minimum 1 year in Computer diploma. (ii) Typing with minimum speed of 40 WPM. (iii) Knowledge of Computer MS Office. (iv) Basic knowledge of tally and accounts.
Maid	04	(i) Min VIII th Pass.
Peon Cum Gardener	01	(i) Min VIII th Pass.
Safai Wala	01	(i) Min VIII th Pass.

2. Candidates who are willing to work in Assam Rifles Public School (High), Diphu to apply with resume, qualification certificates, additional certificates, experience certificate (if available), valid mobile number, E-mail and copy of Aadhar before **28 Feb 2026** at the following address:-

OIC
Assam Rifles Public School (High), Diphu ARTC&S
Karbi Anglong, Assam
PIN: 782480

3. For any queries, please contact 9957607131 (Admin Staff) or email at principalarhighschooldiphu@gmail.com.

4. All expenses will be borne by the candidates themselves.

5. Pay and perks will be as per prevailing scales in comparable institutions.

Note: All candidates are required to carry PAN Card / UID or any other valid Identity Card & original certificate for educational qualification during interview.

**GOVT. OF ASSAM,
OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL,
DIPHU GOVERNMENT COLLEGE, DIPHU,
KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT:: ASSAM**

Website: diphugovernmentcollege.com

Email: diphugovtc@gmail.com

No.DGC/Smartclassroom/2025-26/981

Dated Diphu the 14th February, 2026.

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tender affixing non refundable KAAC court fee stamp of Rs. 10.00 (Rupees Ten only) are hereby invited from registered APWD (Building) contractors of appropriate class preference shall be given from within the district for the following work:

Name of Work: Setting up Smart Classroom at Diphu Govt. College, Diphu

Estimated Amount: Rs. 29,50,000/-

Earnest Money: 2% of the estimated amount

Time of Completion: 90 days

Tender documents will be accepted from 16-02-2026 to 21-02-2026 during office hours up to 2:00 PM. Tender will be opened on the same day at 3:00 PM in the office of the undersigned by the competent authorities.

The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason thereof on the recommendation of the Finance Management & Infrastructure Management Committee.

The work shall be awarded to the lowest bidder.

Terms & Conditions:

- It should be quality work.
- The expenditure incurred shall initially be borne by the concerned party.
- The Infrastructure Development Committee shall inspect the work from time to time along with Technical person from the APWD.
- Any breach of contract will be dealt as per provision of law.
- Any dispute arising later on will be settled by the Infrastructure Development Committee of the College.

Sd/-

Principal i/c,

Diphu Government College

Memo. No.DGC/Smartclassroom/2025-26/

Dated Diphu the 14th February, 2026.

Batsmen struggle as Kishan razes Pakistani bowlers Kishan's power-packed 77 leads India to 175/7 against Pakistan

COLOMBO, Feb 15: Opener Ishan Kishan's supersonic half-century helped India ace a tacky pitch and post a competitive 175 for seven against Pakistan in their T20 World Cup match here on Sunday.

Kishan (77, 40b) shared an 87-run alliance with Tilak Varma in which the latter's contribution was a princely 11, after India were asked to bat first.

The match, which had several preceding dramatic weeks because of the admixture of sports and politics, started off in an unusual note as Pakistan skipper Salman Agha brought himself on for off-spin and accounted for Abhishek Sharma.

The off-spin continued through Saim Ayub (3/25) in the power play and it fetched the desired result initially.

Abhishek went for a loft off Agha but could not clear Shaheen Shah Afridi at the edge of the circle in the final ball of the first over.

For the next 7.4 overs, Kishan converted the Premadasa Stadium into his own little kingdom, shots flying all around the vast corners of this venue.

It seemed as if Kishan was batting on a different track altogether.



The left-hander started with an arrogant chin-high pull off pacer Afridi that thundered into the hoardings beyond the mid-wicket fence. But that was a mere appetizer. The Jharkhand man soon dismantled an armada of Pakistan spinners.

Agha and Ayub were dispatched for a four each, while leg-spinner Abrar Ahmed was carted for a six and four off successive deliveries.

The four was a spectacular shot. Despite the slowness of the deck, Kishan lent power and placement

to the late cut through his malleable wrists, as the ball sped to the third man fence.

Later, leg-spinner Shadab Khan too was clobbered for a six as Kishan raced to his fifty in just 27 balls, impressive considering the less than ideal conditions for shot-making and a skillful opposition, who has already played a couple of matches in this part of the world.

Tilak did not precisely struggle, but did not look entirely comfortable either as Kishan took it upon himself the duties of pushing the

score ahead.

But Kishan's attempt to give himself space and carve Ayub over mid-wicket had disastrous consequences.

The Indian opener missed the ball altogether to lose the bails as Pakistani players heaved a sigh of relief.

From there, they clawed back bit by bit, and Ayub was at the forefront of their revival.

The offie jettisoned Tilak (25, 24b) and Hardik Pandya (0) off consecutive deliveries as India suddenly slipped to 126 for four from 126 for two in the 15th over.

Skipper Suryakumar Yadav (32, 28b) and Shivam Dube (27, 17b) could not flex their whole muscle but did enough to add 33 runs to take India past the 150-run mark and eventually to a total that will take good chasing.

Dube also handled mystery spinner Usman Tariq, who was kept back till the 11th over, stealing a couple of boundaries. Tariq too had his moment when he priced out Suryakumar in the 19th over.

But a 15-run final over by Afridi in which Dube and Rinku Singh tore into him pushed India into the 170 territory. (PTI)

West Indies sail into Super Eights with nine-wicket hammering of Nepal in T20 World Cup

MUMBAI, Feb 15: Skipper Shai Hope led the way with an unbeaten 61 with Shimron Hetmyer in tow with 46 not out as the West Indies registered a nine-wicket victory against an insipid Nepal, becoming the first team to qualify for the Super Eights stage of the T20 World Cup, here on Sunday.

After Jason Holder returned fine figures of 4/27 to restrict Nepal to a modest 133 for 8 on the back of Dipendra Singh Airee's valiant 58 not out, West Indies cruised to 134 for 1 in 15.2 overs to win the match with 28 balls to spare in their Group C clash.

With three wins from as many matches, West Indies are at the top of the Group C and made it to the Super 8s.

West Indies captain Hope bounced back to form with 61 not out from 44 balls, studded with five fours and three sixes. On the other hand, the in-form Hetmyer remained unbeaten on 46 (32 balls; 4 fours, 2 sixes) in another significant contribution.

Airee's first-innings heroics was the only bright spot for the Rhinos and their fans who once against filled up the Wankhede Stadium's stands in large numbers, but returned disappointed with another massive defeat.

Brandon King (22) appeared to be hitting his strides when he smacked three fours off Sompal Kami in the fifth over of the chase but fell soon after, mis-hitting one to mid-over where Nandan Yadav had him caught by Kushal Bhurtel.

But that was the only success that came Nepal's way with the ball as once again their passionate crowd went silent as West Indies went about comfortably in the chase of a modest total.

Hope's half-century included a delightful drive down the ground early on, whereas Hetmyer began with a couple of fours in the seventh over but was left stranded four runs short of what would have been his second fifty of this T20



World Cup. Together, they put on an unbeaten 91 runs for the second wicket.

On their part, Nepal bowlers simply failed to apply any pressure as West Indies enjoyed another successful outing with the bat. Earlier, Airee (58) and Sompal Kami (26 not out) found a late surge to lift a struggling Nepal to 133 for 8.

Barring Airee, who struck three sixes and as many fours for his 47-ball 58, Nepal batters cut a sorry figure on a fresh Wankhede Stadium's deck which did not assist spin much nor was two-paced.

If not for Airee's dogged knock and Kami's late strikes, including three consecutive fours in the 18th over, Nepal would have finished at a far lesser total owing to an insipid show from their specialist batters earlier.

Unperturbed with ordinary cricket from others around him, Airee gave a fine display of application and aggression, punishing any loose delivery in his hitting arc while his running between the wickets was sharp.

Nepal had slipped to 46 for 5 in the 11th over, failing to find any momentum whatsoever on a batting-friendly track, with poor shots and lack of application continuing to haunt them.

The slide began for Nepal as early as the first over when Kushal Bhurtel (1) was cleaned up by Akeal Hosein. Hosein's arm ball

kept angling into the big-hitting right-hander who was cramped for room, playing a totally wrong line.

Nepal skipper Rohit Paudel (5) had only himself to blame when he missed connecting with a leg-side flick, with Matthew Forde's ball that was angled in crashed into his pads.

Paudel reviewed the on-field decision against him but the replays showed the ball would have grazed the leg-stump.

But perhaps the worst shot came from Nepal No. 5 Aarif Sheikh, who guided an outside leg-stump delivery from Jason Holder (4/27) straight to fine-leg, giving the former West Indies captain a first-ball wicket. From the other end, Forde continued to test Nepal batters outside the off stump but to his misfortune, he could not find an edge despite being persistent with his line and length.

At 22 for three after the end of the sixth over, Nepal had recorded the lowest powerplay score for this T20 World Cup.

Forde did, however, bowl a wicket-aided fourth over and took a fine catch at midwicket to dismiss Aarif Sheikh (2) off Holder with the sun in his eyes.

Nepal's hero in the clash against England, Lokesh Bam (13) fell cheaply again and Gulsan Jha (11) flopped as well. But a 54-run stand between Airee and Kami gave Nepal much-needed impetus, albeit late in the innings. (PTI)

Clinical India beat Australia by 21 runs in rain-hit 1st Women's T20I



SYDNEY, Feb 15: India were clinical with both bat and ball as they defeated Australia by 21 runs under the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method in the first Women's T20 International to start their tour Down Under on a resounding note here Sunday.

Seamer Arundhati Reddy (4/22) led an excellent bowling display as India packed off Australia for 133.

Such was the Indian bowlers' performance that Australia were bundled out with two overs to spare. In reply, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana was unbeaten on a 17-ball 16 with Jemimah Rodrigues giving her company, when the heavens opened up to force an interruption. Play could not resume after that and India, who were 50 for one in 5.1 overs, were declared deserving winners. The DLS par score after 5.1 overs was 29.

The big-hitting Shafali Verma played her part before being dismissed by Australia's new skipper Sophie Molineux, smashing her way to an 11-ball 21.

Asked to bat first, Australia were quick off the blocks and raced to 22 in 2.2 overs when Beth Mooney (5) got a leading edge while trying to loft a Renuka Singh delivery, but only managed to sky the ball for Smriti Mandhana to complete the catch at cover.

The other opener, Georgia Voll (18 off 10 balls) followed Mooney to the dressing room soon after as she got a thin edge while attempting to play the cut shot against a wide delivery by Kranti Gaud, and wicketkeeper Richa Ghosh did the rest comfortably.

Ellyse Perry (20 off 11 balls) and Phoebe Litchfield (26 off 19 balls) steadied the ship with a brisk 41-run partnership for the third wicket but just when their association was starting to threaten India, Arundhati struck thanks to some great work by skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who ran back to cover a lot of ground and pulled off a brilliant catch diving sideways.

It was a big break for India, and they had their tails up as they snared two more wickets in the form of Ashleigh Gardner (4) and Litchfield to reduce hosts Australia to 80 for five at the start of the 10th over. Georgia Wareham (30 off 19 balls) and Nicola Carey (12) added 41 runs for the sixth wicket to halt India's charge for a brief while before the former not just missed out on a poor Arundhati delivery but got out after miscuing a ball that was going down the leg side, leaving Australia at 121 for six in the 14th over.

The score remained the same as Carey was bowled by a quick Shree Charani delivery while the batter tried to play the cut shot. Renuka then had Annabel Sutherland brilliantly stumped by Ghosh who removed the bails in a jiffy. (PTI)

England eye Super Eights spot as fierce football rivals Italy stand in way

KOLKATA, Feb 15: Two-time champions England will look to seal their Super Eights berth when they take on T20 World Cup debutants and fierce football rivals Italy in their final Group C match here on Monday.

England and Italy share a fierce sporting rivalry on the football pitch, producing some unforgettable moments, including the former's penalty shootout win in the Euro 2020 final at Wembley.

On Monday, however, the rivalry will shift from football to cricket for the first time, adding an interesting sub-plot to this clash at Eden Gardens that witnessed a 35,000-plus crowd for the England-Scotland match on Saturday.

The 'Bazballers' come into the game with momentum after a pressure win over Scotland as they seem to be slowly finding their mojo in the tournament.

The biggest positive for England was Tom Branton's composed half-century at No. 4 during a tricky 153-run chase.

On a pitch that offered bounce and carry -- where six batters were dismissed attempting sweep shots -- Banton showed maturity by curbing his trademark reverse flicks.

He instead targeted straight boundaries, playing in the V-zone to produce one of the finest knocks of his career and keep England's campaign alive.

Despite being known for their aggressive 'Bazball' style, England have looked cautious so far, as was also admitted by captain Harry Brook after the defeat to West Indies.

"We haven't quite made it as easy as we'd have liked so far in this comp, but hopefully we can have a slightly easier run, starting with Italy on Monday," Brook said after the Scotland win.

"You don't want to start that too early in competitions like this, and hopefully that can be the start of it against Italy."

Phil Salt, Jos Buttler and Brook himself are yet to fire consistently.

Salt gave England a flying start with a quick 30 against West Indies but has managed only scores of 1 and 2 against Nepal and Scotland.

Having enjoyed success at Eden Gardens during Kolkata Knight Riders' IPL triumph, Salt will hope familiar conditions help him rediscover his explosive batting. Buttler also got starts (26, 21 and 3) without converting them into big scores, while Brook will want to lead from the front after modest returns in the last two games.

In bowling, England looked sharp against Scotland with Jofra Archer using pace and bounce effectively



in the powerplay, while the spin twins Adil Rashid and Liam Dawson choked the runs in the middle overs and they will aim to follow the same template against Italy. Italy on the other hand bring the unknown factor.

The debutants are high on confidence after a commanding 10-wicket win over Nepal, their maiden victory of the tournament.

The win came in the absence of their regular skipper Wayne Madsen who dislocated his shoulder in their debut match against Scotland here.

But Madsen is "optimistic" of his return and it remains to be seen if the 42-year-old makes a return for their clash against England.

The Mosca brothers -- Justin and Anthony -- struck unbeaten fifties in that game against Nepal and have been key to Italy's batting.

The Manenti brothers -- Harry and Ben -- have also played important roles both with the bat and ball.

Off-spinner Ben has opened with the new ball and has been effective, while Sri Lankan-origin leg-spinner Crislan Kalugamage has added variety to their attack and returned with four wickets against Nepal.

Italy will be pumped up for this contest against their football rivals, and an upset win could open up the Group C table, with Scotland also in contention.

Teams (from): England: Harry Brook (c), Rehan Ahmed, Jofra Archer, Tom Banton, Jacob Bethell, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran, Liam Dawson, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Jamie Overton, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Josh Tongue and Luke Wood.

Italy: Harry Manenti (c), Marcus Campopiano, Gian Piero Meade, Zain Ali, Ali Hasan, Crislan Jorge, Anthony Mosca, Justin Mosca, Syed Naqvi, Ben Manenti, Jaspreet Singh, JJ Smuts, Grant Stewart and Thomas Draca and Wayne Madsen. Match starts: 3pm. (PTI)

Sanjay's unbeaten 68 powers USA to record 199/4 against Namibia

CHENNAI, Feb 15: Sanjay Krishnamurthy smashed a stunning unbeaten 68 off 33 balls as the USA posted their highest-ever T20 World Cup total of 199 for four against Namibia, in a must-win Group C clash, here on Sunday.

The 22-year-old, who began dreaming of international cricket after watching India's 2011 World Cup triumph and began his cricketing journey in Bengaluru before moving to San Francisco during the COVID-19 pandemic, played a breathtaking knock studded with six sixes and four fours.

The 199/4 surpassed USA's previous best of 197 against Canada in the last edition.

After skipper Monank Patel laid the platform with a fluent 30-ball 52 (3x4, 3x6), USA suffered a brief middle-order wobble.

But Sanjay along with Milind Kumar, stitched an unbeaten 87-run stand for the fourth wicket to lift the innings. Sanjay had some luck early on as he was dropped on 18 when Namibia skipper Gerhard Erasmus attempted a fine running catch at long-off but lost control of the ball while rolling over and the reprieve proved costly.

The youngster then switched to

top gear, bringing up his maiden T20I fifty in style.

He took charge in the 17th over against Ruben Trimpelmann, smashing three sixes in a row including one off a waist-high no-ball to race to a 23-ball half-century.

Earlier, USA were off to a flying start with Monank and Shayan Jahangir adding 68 runs in just 6.5 overs. The pair went at nearly 11 runs per over in the powerplay.

Monank was at his attacking best, hammering three sixes, two of them off JJ Smit and reached his fifty in just 27 balls. He ended the powerplay with a flourish, hitting Smit for a six and two fours in a 19-run over as USA cruised to 65 without loss.

Jahangir also looked in good touch, striking a six and two fours before Namibia hit back through leg-spinner Willem Myburgh who made a comeback.

Myburgh dismissed Jahangir first, deceiving him with a slower delivery that resulted in a top edge to mid-on. In his next over, he dismissed the skipper as Namibia clawed back briefly, with Erasmus striking in his first over with his clever variations. (PTI)

Barnil Saharia secures FIDE rating of 1501

HT Correspondent
MANGALDAI, Feb 15: Promising young chess player Barnil Saharia has secured an international FIDE rating of 1501 after winning the National School Games competition held on January 31.

The event was organised under the aegis of the World Chess Federation, following which the International Chess Federation awarded Barnil a certificate recognising him as an emerging chess player in the under-13 category. A Class VII student of Mangaldai Holy Child Public School, Barnil is the son of Kabin Saharia and Anima Baruah of Ramgaon near Domoimoi.

He is currently training under academic coach Mukul Kalita at the Intensive Care Chess Academy.

Recently, Mangaldai Mahavidyalay hosted the state-level Assam chess competition, where the Intensive Care Chess Academy was felicitated with an official appreciation award for its contribution to the development of chess in the region.

Assam shines at 46th National Masters Athletics Championship

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Feb 15: The Assam contingent delivered an impressive performance at the 46th National Masters Athletics Championship 2026, winning a total of 98 medals and bringing laurels to the State.

The championship was held recently at the Chandrasekharan Nair Stadium and the Kerala University Stadium in Thiruvananthapuram and witnessed participation from over 3,500 veteran athletes representing recognised associations under the Masters Athletics Federation of India. A 127-member Assam team competed in the event and secured medals in both team and individual categories. The contingent excelled in relay events, winning podium finishes in the 4x100 metres and 4x400 metres races. In individual events, Assam athletes clinched 23 gold, 41 silver and 34 bronze medals, taking their overall tally to 98 medals. International veteran athlete Narayan Burhagohain led the Assam team as manager. Bidyut Bijoy Mahanta, executive member of the Masters Athletics Federation of India and general secretary of the Masters Athletics Association of Assam, said performances at the championship would be considered for selection to the Indian team for the upcoming World Masters Athletics Championship, scheduled to be held in July-August at Daegu in South Korea.

Afghanistan unlucky, need more games against top teams: Rashid

NEW DELHI, Feb 15: Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan said his side were unlucky to be starting at an early exit from the T20 World Cup and stressed the need for smaller nations to play regularly against top teams to make major tournaments more competitive.

After suffering a five-wicket defeat to New Zealand in their opener, Afghanistan endured a heartbreaking loss to South Africa after two Super Overs in their previous match, leaving them fourth in Group D and on the brink of elimination.

"I don't think much has gone wrong. We played good cricket and were a little unlucky. You saw the last match, we were very close, we were in the 2nd super over. I think it shows that we put in the effort," Rashid told reporters.

"You have seen all the games one-sided. I think that's something which, as a team, if you don't get a chance to play against a big team, that's what happens.

"If we played more T20s against South Africa, New Zealand, we would have had an idea of where we would have had an idea of where we this team can beat us and where we

can do better. If you play with them once a year, and that too in a World Cup event. And that is such a time where you have no choice of making a mistake."

Rashid said the lack of regular bilateral contests against leading sides makes World Cup encounters disproportionately high-stakes for teams like Afghanistan.

"If you play two matches in four days against New Zealand and South Africa, then your World Cup can end in four days, like it happened with us. We lost both the matches in four days; we are out of the World Cup mostly. So, this pressure is different. You have to be mentally and physically ready. If you make a small mistake, you're out of the competition.

"Whenever you play a World Cup match, you always put in the effort. Because the World Cup win is a big thing," he said.

"We played against them a lot, we played bilateral series in UAE, the boys have also played in ILT, so you never think that we will easily defeat UAE because we have played two super overs against South Africa.

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stay alive in the competition.

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of the game, first two games. And sometimes it doesn't go your way. And most important thing is like with what mindset we played and the effort we put.

"It's going to help us. It's not only the upcoming games, but upcoming cricket we have. So there are lots of positives we can take from those two games, but still you don't know anything can happen, the other day Zimbabwe beat Australia, so yeah, let's see if we get a little bit chance, but more importantly, if last two games, we have to put all the effort there."

Afghanistan had suffered a similar heartbreak against Australia in the 2023 World Cup when they had reduced the opponent to 91/7 before Glenn Maxwell's 201 not out dashed their hopes. However, they avenged the loss in the 2024 T20 World Cup.

"It's very hard to lose that game where we had it in our hand a couple of the time and then it just slips off your hand. It doesn't go away from your mind. Like, the game we played against Australia in 2023 World Cup, it never goes out of the mind, until we won against them in the 24 World Cup..." (PTI)