

6

WORLD



- Balendra Shah's Rastriya Swatantra Party heading towards landslide victory in Nepal's elections
- Trump says he wants to be involved in picking Iran's next leader as war ripples across the region

8

NATION



- BJP hails 30-day waiver to purchase Russian oil
- Congress demands short duration discussion on West Asia conflict in Parliament



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सत्यमेव जयते
Government of India

UPLIFTING THE POOR IN ASSAM

2.4+ crore people receive free ration every month under PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, ensuring food security

59+ lakh tap water connections and **51+ lakh** Ujjwala gas connections transforming everyday life with dignity, health and smoke-free kitchens

Nearly **31 lakh** pucca houses under PM Awas Yojana, turning dreams of home-ownership into reality

2.55+ crore Jan Dhan accounts opened, expanding financial inclusion and transparency

Nearly **1.45 crore** people covered under PM Suraksha Bima Yojana and **58+ lakh** covered under Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, strengthening accidental protection and life insurance

Nearly **1.30 lakh** street vendors supported with loans under PM SVANidhi Yojana, boosting self-reliance and livelihoods

100% household electrification achieved under Saubhagya Yojana, lighting every home

**DEVELOPED ASSAM
DEVELOPED BHARAT
PM MODI'S VISION**

“From the self-confidence of Assam, the potential of Assam, and the progress of Assam, India's growth story is getting new strength. Today Assam is making its identity among the fast-growing states”

-Prime Minister Narendra Modi



CBC 4410113/0017/2526

AFFIDAVIT

I, Miss Hasina Parveen, daughter of Md. Joydul Haque and Mrs. Salma Begum, resident of Diyun, P.O. Diyun, P.S. Diyun, District Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh-792103, do hereby inform the general public that due to a clerical error in my academic records, my father's name was wrongly recorded as "Md. Joydul Haque" instead of the correct name "Md. Joydul Haque", and my mother's name was wrongly recorded as "Salma Parveen" instead of the correct name "Salma Begum".

That "Md. Joydul Haque" and "Md. Joydul Haque" refer to one and the same person, and "Salma Begum" and "Salma Parveen" also refer to one and the same person, who are my parents.

Henceforth, the correct names of my parents shall be read and written as Md. Joydul Haque (Father) and Salma Begum (Mother) in all records.

Sd/-
Miss Hasina Parveen
Diyun, Changlang District
Arunachal Pradesh

AFFIDAVIT

I, Achalal Chouhan aged 52 years son of Lt. Raghunath Chouhan resident of jengkh No. 2, PS- Kheroni, West Karbi Anglong District would like to mention that my name and surname wrongly recorded in my Voter ID and pan card as Akshaylal Chauhan instead of correct name and surname that is Achalal Chouhan. Therefore, through court Affidavit, I made correction and my original name is Achalal Chouhan, this is True.

UPGRADATION AND REFURBISHMENT OF PIT LINE AT TINSUKIA DIV.

E-Tender Notice No.: TSK/Engg/08 of 2026 Date: 03-03-2026. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Brief Description of Item:** At Tinsukia Division: Upgradation and refurbishment of Pit line No. 6 & 7 at Dibrugarh Coaching Depot. **Tender Value:** ₹3,08,03,007/- **Earnest Money:** ₹3,04,000/- **Date & time of closing of tender:** At 15:00 hrs. & opening at 16:00 hrs. on 25-03-2026. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. on 25-03-2026 in website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (W), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

Serving Customers With A Smile

NAME CORRECTION

My wife's actual name is "Sanjogita", my daughter's actual name is "Shalu Mainval", my son's actual name is "Pankaj Kumar" and my actual and correct address is village Chandeanamal, PO- Jalalabad, PS- Thanabhawan, Tehsil-Shamli, in the district of Shamli, State- Uttar Pradesh, Pin No. 247772. But in Field Service documents my wife's name has been recorded as "Sanyogita Devi" instead of "Sanjogita", my daughter's name was recorded as "Shalu Devi" instead of "Shalu Mainval" my son's name was recorded as "Pankaj Singh" instead of "Pankaj Kumar" and my address was recorded as village Chandeanamal, PO- Jalalabad, PS- Jalalabad, Tehsil-Shamli, in the district of Shamli, State-Uttar Pradesh, Pin No. 247772 instead of village "Chandeanamal", PO- Jalalabad, PS- Thanabhawan, Tehsil-Shamli, in the district of Shamli, State-Uttar Pradesh, Pin No. 247772. Therefore, the names "Sanjogita" and "Sanyogita Devi" belong to the same and single person, the names "Shalu Mainval" and "Shalu Devi" belong to same and single person and the names "Pankaj Kumar" and "Pankaj Singh" belong to same and single person. And, for all intent and purposes they will be used as such.

Jasvir Singh,
Rank- Sub Maj (GD), No.- JC-153468K, C/o- Kanan Singh, Village- Chandeanamal, PO- Jalalabad, PS- Thanabhawan, Tehsil- Shamli, Dist- Shamli, Uttar Pradesh, PIN- 247772. Presently residing at Assam Rifles Training Centre and School (ARTC&S), Diphu, PO and PS- Diphu, Dist- Karbi Anglong, Assam

E-AUCTION FOR THE CONTRACT OF OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT OF PAY & USE TOILET & 1ST CLASS WAITING HALL

E-Auction for the contract of Pay & Use Toilet and Management of 1st Class Waiting Hall at following Railway station under Lumding Division. Details are as under: **Auction Catalogue No.:** PNU-LMG-01-26; **Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots):** 10:00 hrs. on 17-03-2026; **Auction Close Date & Time:** 10:40 hrs. on 17-03-2026; **Rate Unit:** Annual Licensing Fee; **Trips/Days:** AA/1 : 1096 and AA/2 : 3653.

Seq No.	Lot No/Category	Description
AA/1	PnU-LMG-DPU-WRL-74-26-3 (Pay and Use - Lounges / Waiting/Retiring/Cloak Rooms)	Tender for work of up-gradation, maintenance and manning of 1st Class AC waiting rooms with modern facilities, amenities like multipurpose stalls and Tourist Kiosk at DIPHU (DPU) Railway station under Lumding Division.
AA/2	PnU-LMG-CPK-WRL-76-26-1 (Pay and Use - Lounges/ Waiting /Retiring/Cloak Rooms)	E-auction for Awarding of Right for Operation & Maintenance of Pay & Use Toilet inside Waiting Hall at PF-1, Beside PF-1 & PF-2 at Lumding end, First Class Waiting at PF-2, Urinal & Toilet at Circulating Area & Toilet for Divyangjan at Lumding end beside PF-2 at Chaparmukh Railway Station.

Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction leasing Module of IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in.

Divisional Railway Manager (C), Lumding
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"

Indian refiners snaps up Russian oil cargoes at sea after US waiver; seeks legal clarity

NEW DELHI, March 6: Indian refiners have begun snapping up millions of barrels of Russian oil floating in Asian waters after the US granted a waiver allowing purchase of cargoes stranded at sea, but are seeking legal opinion on whether the exemption also permits buying from sanctioned entities, sources said.

The US has issued a 30-day waiver allowing India to buy Russian oil currently stuck at sea in an effort to keep global supplies flowing and temper further price increases.

Indian refiners have snapped up some 20 million barrels of Russian oil, mostly from non-sanctioned entities, they said, adding that the companies are seeking legal opinion if the waiver permits purchase of oil from even sanctioned entities.

They started buying Russian oil even before the US waiver came in as supplies from the Middle East were disrupted.

India had emerged as the largest buyer of Russian seaborne crude after Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, but its refiners began scaling back purchases in January amid pressure from Washington.

The reduction helped New Delhi avoid a proposed 25 per cent tariff on its exports and clinch an interim trade deal with the United States.

A top oil ministry official said New Delhi never completely stopped buying oil from Russia as part of its policy to source energy needs from diversified sources. At February end, before the US and Israel attacked Iran to trigger a wider conflict in the region, India bought some 1.04 million barrels per day of Russian oil.

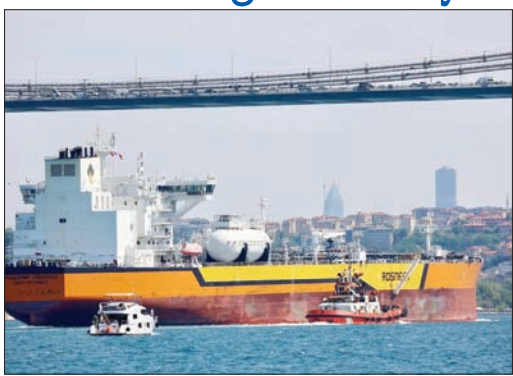
This was lowest since November 2022 and half of peak 2.15 million barrels a day hit in May 2023.

The purchases, the official said, were from entities not sanctioned by the US.

As the widening West Asia conflict led to blockage of the crucial oil and gas transit route through the Strait of Hormuz and energy prices sources, the US gave a waiver to allow purchase from Russia.

The US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has issued a licence allowing the delivery, sale and offloading of Russian-origin crude oil or petroleum products that were loaded on vessels before March 5, 2026, to buyers in India.

The licence authorises transactions related to the sale, delivery, and offloading of such cargoes at Indian ports until April 4, 2026, provided the purchaser is an entity organised under Indian law.



While the order says the licence is valid for buying crude available at sea, including on sanctioned vessels, it does not explicitly state if purchases can be made from sanctioned entities, another ministry official said.

The refiners will seek legal opinion if such purchases are allowed, the official said.

Sources said Indian refiners have stepped up purchases of Russian oil floating around.

About 15 million barrels of Russian crude are currently floating on tankers in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, while vessels carrying another 7 million barrels are idling near Singapore, cargoes that can reach Indian refiners within days. Additional tankers loaded with Russian oil are in the Mediterranean Sea and near the Suez Canal and could arrive at Indian ports within a month.

Sources said Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd (MRPL), which hadn't purchased Russian oil since December, are back in the market. Reliance Industries Ltd, too, is seeking Russian oil deliveries.

With the widening West Asia conflict blocking shipments through the Strait of Hormuz and raising concerns over oil and LNG supplies from the Middle East, Indian refiners are balancing purchases from both Russian cargoes at sea and other sources to ensure an uninterrupted domestic fuel supply.

"President Trump's energy agenda has resulted in oil and gas production reaching the highest levels ever recorded," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said.

"To enable oil to keep flowing into the global market, the Treasury Department is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil." (PTI)

Sensex, Nifty dive over 1 pc on Middle East conflict, boiling crude oil prices

MUMBAI, March 6: Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled over 1 per cent on Friday after a day's breather as the conflict in the Middle East entered the seventh day, driving crude oil prices higher.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,097 points, or 1.37 per cent, to settle at 78,918.90. During the day, it sank 1,203.72 points, or 1.50 per cent, to 78,812.18.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 315.45 points, or 1.27 per cent, to end at 24,450.45.

Weakness in the US equities, subdued trend in European markets and relentless foreign fund outflows also dampened investor sentiment, analysts said.

From the Sensex pack, Eternal, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, UltraTech Cement, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finserv, and Larsen & Toubro were among the major laggards.

Bharat Electronics, Reliance Industries, Sun Pharma, NTPC, Infosys, and HCL Tech were the gainers.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 2.53 per cent to USD 87.57 per barrel.

"Indian equity markets extended their decline following the prior session's relief rally, as escalating US-Iran tensions disrupted key Middle Eastern oil and gas supplies, driving crude prices higher. A sustained rise in oil prices could weigh on investor sentiment and adversely affect India's twin deficits, inflation trajectory, and the RBI's monetary stance," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

"Indian equity markets ended the session on a bearish note, with investors maintaining a cautious stance amid intensifying geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. Mar-

ket volatility also increased sharply, with India VIX rising more than 11% from the previous close, reflecting growing nervousness among investors and a clear shift toward risk-averse positioning," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

The BSE midcap select index dropped 1.10 per cent and smallcap select index dipped 0.43 per cent.

BSE top 10 banks tanked 2.37 per cent, private banks index by 2.25 per cent, bankex by 2.14 per cent, financial services by 2.12 per cent, BSE PSU bank by 1.99 per cent and services by 1.35 per cent.

Capital Goods, industrials and power were the gainers. A total of 2,304 stocks declined while 1,895 advanced and 175 remained unchanged on the BSE.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark tanked 2,368.29 points or 2.91 per cent, and the Nifty declined 728.2 points or 2.89 per cent.

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

Markets in Europe were trading in negative territory. The US market ended lower on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 3,752.52 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DII) bought stocks worth ₹ 5,153.37 crore, according to exchange data.

On Thursday, the Sensex rebounded 899.71 points, or 1.14 per cent, to settle at 80,015.90, snapping its four-day decline. The Nifty climbed 285.40 points, or 1.17 per cent, to end at 24,765.90, ending its three-day falling streak. (PTI)

Fertiliser stocks at record high: Govt

NEW DELHI, March 6: India's fertiliser inventories have surged to their highest level ahead of the kharif (summer) crop season, the government said on Friday, seeking to reassure farmers and markets that domestic supplies remain unaffected by geopolitical tensions roiling West Asia and the Strait of Hormuz.

Total fertiliser reserves stood at 177.31 lakh tonnes as of Friday, up 36.5 per cent from 129.85 lakh tonnes a year earlier, the Department of Fertilizers said in a statement.

"Farmers are the priority of the government, and their interests will not be compromised under any circumstances," the department said.

Farmers have been urged to proceed with kharif preparations without panic. Sowing of kharif crops like rice begin with the onset of southwest monsoon from June.

Stocks of urea — the most consumed fertiliser and one heavily dependent on natural gas feedstock — stood at 59.30 lakh tonnes. Diammonium phosphate (DAP) inventories were at 25.13 lakh tonnes, while

NPKS fertilisers reserves reached 55.87 lakh tonnes.

The government said it has imported 98 lakh tonnes of finished fertilisers up to February 2026. A further 17 lakh tonnes of shipments are already lined up for delivery over the next three months.

Indian companies have also secured long-term supply agreements with major international producers for phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers to guard against regional pricing and supply volatility, the statement said. (PTI)

Gold declines ₹1,100 to ₹1.64 lakh/10g; silver slips to ₹ 2.71 lakh/kg

NEW DELHI, March 6: Gold prices declined ₹ 1,100 to ₹ 1.64 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday as traders booked profits at elevated levels for the second straight session, while silver also slipped to ₹ 2.71 lakh per kilogram.

According to the All India Sarafa Association, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity depreciated ₹ 1,100, or nearly 1 per cent, to ₹ 1,64,100 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). Silver also fell ₹ 600 to ₹ 2,71,700 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) in the bullion market.

Analysts said traders locked in gains after the recent sharp rally in precious metal prices, even as global trends remained mixed.

"After opening with a gap up earlier in the week, both gold and silver gradually declined this week as a stronger US dollar and rising Treasury yields, along with reduced expectations for interest rate cuts by Federal Reserve, outweighed safe-haven demand stemming from the escalating Middle East conflict," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC

Securities, said. He added that investors continued to exit gold-backed exchange traded funds (ETFs) this week, indicating softer investment demand.

"ETFs reduced their gold holdings by 93,479 troy ounces in the latest session, marking the fourth consecutive day of outflows — the longest losing streak since February 6," Gandhi said.

However, in the international markets, bullion prices were trading higher on renewed safe-haven demand, with spot gold gaining USD 14.70, or 0.29 per cent, to USD 5,095.81 per ounce, while silver increasing 1.4 per cent to USD 83.40 per ounce.

Traders said escalating tensions in the Middle East continued to support precious metals, though profit-taking limited gains in the domestic markets.

"Gold and silver prices experienced notable fluctuations on Friday, driven primarily by ongoing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and robust safe-haven buying," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

India on verge

development cannot be imagined without the CISF, Shah said his ministry has recently decided to entrust the security of all ports to the force.

In the coming days, the force will also provide security to private industrial groups in hybrid mode, the union home minister added.

The Prime Minister has placed these resolutions before the people — to make India a fully developed nation by 2047, to achieve the top position globally in every sector, and to make the country the world's third-largest economy by 2027, he pointed out.

He stated that CISF is playing the role of a catalyst in achieving these goals.

Shah inaugurated two residential projects and laid foundation stones for three reserve battalions with a total cost of Rs 890 crore on virtual mode.

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and others were present at the programme. (PTI)

Two pilots killed

Ltd (HAL) for the IAF. The IAF operates a fleet of over 260 Su-30MKI jets. The multi-role aircraft has been in service with the IAF for over two decades and nearly 10 Su-30MKIs have been lost so far.

In recent years, a Su-30 MKI fighter plane had crashed in Nashik district of Maharashtra in June 2024.

Another Sukhoi-30 jet had crashed in January 2023 after taking off from the Gwalior airbase.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed profound grief over the deaths of the two pilots and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved families.

Sarma added that the entire nation stands with the bereaved families.

"Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr. @himantabiswa is deeply saddened by the tragic crash of an Sukhoi Su-30MKI in Karbi Anglong, which claimed the lives of Sqn Ldr Anuj and Flt Lt Purbesh Duragkar," the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said in a post on X.

"Expressing profound grief, Hon'ble CM extends his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families, stating that the entire nation stands with them in this moment of immense grief and loss," it added.

Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Friday condoled the death of the two pilots of a Sukhoi-30 MKI of the IAF in a crash.

He said the sacrifice of the pilots will be remembered with pride and gratitude.

"Deeply saddened by the tragic crash of the Su-30MKI on a training mission in Karbi Anglong, about 60 km from Jorhat. We mourn the loss of Sqn Ldr Anuj and Flt Lt Purbesh Duragkar, who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the nation," Gogoi said in a post on X. (With inputs from PTI and Our Correspondent)

No clarity yet

to be consolidated. "The chief minister's hate politics have embarrassed us before the country, and we need to change it," he added.

In the 126-member Assam assembly, the ruling BJP has 64 MLAs. Its allies, AGP, UPPL and BPF have nine, seven and three members, respectively.

The Congress has 26 MLAs, the AIUDF has 15, and the CPI(M) has one legislator, besides one Independent member. (PTI)

No other nation

we never buckle under any pressure. Our government has always been very categorical that we will buy oil from wherever it is available. The energy needs of the citizens are the priority, not what words you pick to infuse life into your failed political narrative," the functionary said.

This US waiver, in fact, yet again mirrors the success of India's strategic oil diplomacy that has seen the country's basket of suppliers grow from 27 to 40 over the last decade.

This has ensured that there has been no shortage of energy for Indian consumers, even during global turmoil or pandemic.

The Congress government also adjusted oil imports under US sanctions. In 2013, the US State Department publicly stated that India had reduced crude purchases from Iran to qualify for sanctions exemptions under Section 1245 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The official cited a statement of the then US Secretary of State John Kerry, who had said: "I am pleased to announce that China, India, Malaysia, Republic of Korea, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and Taiwan have again qualified for an exception to sanctions outlined in section 1245 of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2012, based on additional significant reductions in the volume of their crude oil purchases from Iran or for reducing those purchases to zero and remaining there." (PTI)

Justice HN Sarma

Post so as to reach the office on or before March 26, 2026.

Submissions may also be routed through the office of the District Commissioner, Kokrajhar, via Assistant Commissioner Subham Sinha for onward transmission to the Commission.

RS polls: 3 NDA

the assembly. Gowala is the MLA of Dulaijan. Boro, a former chief executive member of the Bodoland Territorial Council, will become the second Rajya Sabha MP from the UPPL. (PTI)

Govt sources deny

there as guests. They were unarmed," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said.

"Attacking such a ship is a war crime," he said.

Hours after the strike on the warship, the Pentagon released a short video of the sinking of the frigate.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said at a Pentagon media briefing on Wednesday that it was the first sinking of an enemy warship by a torpedo since World War II.

IRIS Dena participated was part of Indian Navy's premier multilateral maritime exercise Milan.

The mega exercise last month saw participation of 42 warships and submarines, including 18 ships from friendly foreign countries.

The warship had also featured in the International Fleet Review hosted by the Indian Navy in Vishakhapatnam last month. (PTI)

No Hike in Power

cumulative revenue surplus of ₹5.41 crore, which would result in a minimal tariff reduction of about 0.4 paise per unit, the Commission decided to retain the existing tariff structure for all consumer categories.

For the generation sector, the Commission approved an overall tariff of ₹6.29 per kWh for APGCL and recorded a revenue surplus of ₹23.33 crore from the true-up of FY 2024-25.

AEGCL's annual revenue requirement for FY 2026-27 was approved at ₹636.98 crore, while transmission charges were fixed at ₹0.45 per kWh. SLDC's annual revenue requirement was approved at ₹13.58 crore with charges of ₹120.31 per MW per day.

The Commission also retained the time-of-day tariff structure introduced earlier.

Under this structure, electricity used between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm (solar hours) will be charged at 80 per cent of normal energy charges, while usage during peak hours between 5:00 pm and 10:00 pm will be billed at 120 per cent of normal rates.

The green energy tariff has been maintained at ₹1 per kWh for consumers opting for renewable energy consumption.

In addition, the Government of Assam has committed to continue category-wise subsidies for consumers during FY 2026-27.

The tariff orders ensure that the interests of both consumers and utilities are balanced while maintaining financial sustainability of the power sector in the state.

Indian airlines cancel

services to and from Jeddah and Muscat, Air India said in a statement on Thursday.

Air India group's scheduled operations to and from other points in West Asia have been suspended until March 10 due to the continuing airspace closures over multiple other countries in the West Asia.

Meanwhile, the ministry has advised passengers to keep a close watch on the latest flight updates and remain attentive to communication shared by their respective airlines through registered contact details.

The Passenger Assistance Control Room (PACR), at the ministry, is coordinating with airlines and other stakeholders to address issues.

"So far, 1,881 passenger grievances have been addressed through AirSewa, social media platforms and helpline calls," the ministry said in the statement. (PTI)

Artworks worth ₹ 30

such events, many artists said that tribal art, which was once confined to villages and forests, is now reaching major art galleries in global cities and paintings created by tribal artists are now finding admirers abroad.

The exhibition at Travancore Palace in Delhi features artists from 16 states and showcases more than 30 forms of tribal art. These include traditional styles such as Warli, Gond, Bhil, Dhokra, Sohrai, Koya, Kurumba, Saura, Bodo, Oraon, Mandana, and Godna, along with bamboo craft from Northeast India.

"The government believes that events like these are helping tribal art gain national and international recognition. They are also opening new opportunities, larger markets, and sustainable livelihoods for tribal artists," officials said.

"Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, such initiatives are being promoted to give India's traditional art forms a global platform," they added.

Art enthusiasts in Delhi can visit the exhibition until March 13 and view more than 1,000 artworks by 73 artists at one venue. (PTI)

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THE HILLS TIMES 3

India on verge of eliminating Maoists: Amit Shah

MUNDALI (ODISHA), March 6: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday asserted that the country is on the verge of eliminating Maoists by the end of this month, and said security forces will defeat those who dream of building a red corridor from Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh to Pashupati in Nepal.

Addressing a function marking the 57th Raising Day of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) at Mundali in

Odisha's Cuttack district, he said the force acts as a catalyst for the country's economic growth by providing security to major establishments.

"Today, I want to assure the nation that the country will be Maoist-free by March 31. Our forces will defeat those who dream of building a red corridor from Tirupati to Pashupati," he said.

It will be a big achievement for the country's security forces under the vi-

sionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to uproot Maoists from the country, Shah said.

"Our security forces have reached the expectations, and the country is now on the verge of eliminating the red rebels," he said.

In order to achieve the goal of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, as aimed by the Prime Minister, the forces have ensured internal security, the most important ingredient

for the growth of a nation, the union home minister said.

Noting that the CISF has been providing security to major installations, ranging from reservoirs and industries to Parliament, Shah said the force "played the role of a catalyst for the economic growth of the country".

Shah emphasised that higher economic growth is achieved when peace exists, and said, "Our security personnel have

effectively implemented their resolutions to maintain industrial peace".

He said that the vision of building a strong national economy and making India the world's largest economy cannot be realised without industrial development, and providing a secure environment for industrial growth requires a national-level industrial security force.

In his address, Shah said that after completing 56 years today, the CISF has

risen from zero to the pinnacle in the field of industrial security, which is a saga of the force's dedication and valour.

He said that by combining courage, sacrifice, and dedication with the rich traditions of India's history, and equipping itself with modern weapons, CISF has demonstrated the resolve to face every kind of challenge.

Stating that the vision for India's industrial (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

No clarity yet on seat-sharing deal

Assam polls: 4 Oppn parties announce joint campaign
● Jones Ingti Kathar-led APHLC part of Oppn group

GUWAHATI, March 6: Four opposition parties in Assam, led by the Congress, on Friday announced that they will campaign jointly for the upcoming assembly elections, practically sealing their alliance.

They said they are also in talks with other parties, including the Rajior Dal led by Akhil Gogoi, and expressed hope that the grouping will expand soon.

"From now on, we will undertake joint campaign meetings across the state. Discussions on some probable locations in Upper Assam have already taken place, and we will discuss other parts as well," state Congress president Gaurav Gogoi said at a press conference.

He was joined by CPI(M) state secretary Suprakash Talukdar, Assam Jatiya Parishad president Lurinjyoti Gogoi and All Party Hill Leaders' Conference chief Jones Ingti Kathar.

The opposition grouping is yet to announce its seat-sharing arrange-

ment, with friendly contests likely in a few constituencies. The Congress has, however, named candidates for 42 seats.

The Congress leader said the elections are likely to be held before Bohag Bihu in mid-April, making the coming weeks crucial for the parties.

He noted that although opposition parties had earlier discussed contesting the polls together, they had been occupied with organisational work, the special revision of electoral rolls and related activities.

"We felt that it was time we took our views together to the public. Hence, we will launch the joint campaign from now on," said Gogoi, who has been named the party's candidate from the Jorhat assembly segment.

Asked whether other parties would join the grouping, Gogoi said discussions were still underway.

"We are sending a clear message that from today, we are coming to-

gether. But our doors are open, and we are in talks with others also," he said.

The BJP president said the four parties had joined hands to send a "clear message to the people that we are united in our journey to oust the communal BJP".

"We are hopeful that other opposition parties will join us along the way. Our united journey has started," he said.

He alleged that the BJP-led government had failed to address the state's core issues, resulting in inflation and corruption.

Kathar claimed the people in the state, particularly in the hill areas, were being deprived of equal opportunities in education and employment.

"That is why we have decided to fight united. Our objective is to remove the BJP," he said.

Talukdar said the alliance marked a "good beginning" that now needed (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Russian-origin aircraft was training sortie ● Rajnath, Himanta, Gaurav condole death of air warriors

Two pilots killed in Su-30MKI fighter crash in KA

NEW DELHI/GUWAHATI/ DIPHU March 6: Two pilots of the Indian Air Force (IAF) were killed in a crash of a Su-30 MKI multi-role fighter jet in Assam's Karbi Anglong district.

The IAF confirmed on Friday the deaths of Squadron Leader Anuj and Flight Lieutenant Purvesh Duragkar, a day after the Russian-origin aircraft went missing.

The jet was on a training sortie and disappeared from radar shortly after taking off from Jorhat airbase on Thursday.

The IAF headquarters ordered a court of inquiry into the crash.

"The IAF acknowledges the loss of Sqn Ldr Anuj and Flt Lt Purvesh Duragkar, who sustained fatal injuries in the Su-30 crash," the IAF said in a brief statement.

"All personnel of the IAF express sincere condolences, and stand firmly with the bereaved family in this time of grief," it said.

Communication with the aircraft was lost at 7:42 pm on Thursday, of-



ficials had said.

At approximately 1:00 am on Friday, the IAF confirmed that the Su-30MKI which disappeared from radar on Thursday has crashed.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said he is "deeply saddened" by the deaths of Squadron Leader Anuj

and Flight Lieutenant Duragkar in the "tragic Su-30 crash".

"Their courage and service to the nation will always be remembered with pride and gratitude. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The nation stands firmly with them in this hour of grief," he

said on social media.

It is learnt that the jet was part of a squadron based in Tezpur city in the northeastern state.

Flight Lt Duragkar had come to his home in Nagpur 10 days ago for a family get-together, his grief-stricken father Ravindra Duragkar said, adding he had the last telephonic conversation with his son on Wednesday.

His also said his 28-year-old son had taken part in Operation Sindoor. In Gurugram, friends and relatives of Squadron Leader Vashisht gathered at his house in Sector 22B after receiving news of his death.

According to a family friend, Vashisht was originally from Bhiwani district of Haryana and his family was preparing for his wedding.

The Su-30MKI is a two-seater multirole long-range fighter jet developed by Russian aircraft manufacturer Sukhoi. It is now built under licence by Hindustan Aeronautics (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

RS polls: 3 NDA nominees' papers found valid

GUWAHATI, March 6: The nomination papers of all three NDA candidates for the Rajya Sabha polls in Assam were found valid during scrutiny on Friday, making their election certain, officials said.

BJP's Jogen Mohan and Terash Gowala, and UPPL's Pramod Boro filed their nomination papers on the last day, Thursday.

"The papers of all three candidates are valid. Their victory will be formally declared only after the last date of withdrawal," Returning Officer Rajib Bhattacharya told reporters.

He said there will be no polling, which was scheduled on March 16, as there are only three candidates for the three seats going to the polls.

Gowala was present during the scrutiny process, while Mohan and Boro were represented by their nominees.

The opposition parties did not field any candidate as they lack the required numbers in the state assembly to secure a win.

The terms of BJP's Bhubaneswar Kalita and Rameswar Teli, and opposition-backed Independent Ajit Kumar Bhuyan will end on April 9.

Mohan is at present the state minister for transport, hill area development, and indigenous and tribal faith. He represents the Mahmora seat in (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Justice HN Sarma to head probe panel

Inquiry into Nov 29 BTC Secretariat incident ordered

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 6: A one-man Commission of Inquiry headed by Justice HN Sarma, former judge of the Gauhati High Court, has been constituted under Section 3 of the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952 to examine the facts and circumstances surrounding the incident that occurred at the Bodoland Territorial Council Secretariat in Kokrajhar on November 29, 2025.

The Commission will investigate the circumstances leading to the protest by student organisations of Bodoland University, including the sequence of events during the march towards the

BTC Secretariat and the alleged breach of barricades, forcible entry and vandalism.

The inquiry will also assess the adequacy of the response by the district administration, police and BTC Secretariat authorities, and examine whether there were any lapses in anticipating or managing the situation.

In addition, the Commission will evaluate the extent of damage caused to public property and the disruption of official functioning.

The Commission has invited written statements or representations from the Government of Assam, the Bodoland Territorial Council, Bodoland University, ag-

grieved individuals, organisations and members of the public familiar with the issues related to the incident.

Submissions may be made individually or collectively and must include the full name, postal address and contact number of the person submitting the statement.

Supporting documents and a list of witnesses, if any, should be attached along with an affidavit supporting the statement of facts.

The written statements must be submitted in triplicate to the office of the Commission either personally during office hours or through Registered Post or Speed (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

No other nation determines India's oil purchase: Officials

NEW DELHI, March 6: India has never been dependent on permission from any nation to buy Russian oil and though the US sanctions' waiver allowing refiners to purchase it removes friction, it does not define the country's policy, a senior government functionary said, dismissing opposition charges.

Russian oil continued to flow into India even after the US objected to it and imposed sanctions, the functionary said, citing a 2013 adjustment done by the then Congress government in oil imports under US sanctions.

Amid the escalating conflict with Iran, the US on Thursday said it was issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil.

The message from the Centre to every Indian household is clear that the country's fuel supply is fully secure. The government is continuously monitoring the situation and will act, as it always has, in the interest of every citizen, the government

functionary said.

"No petrol pump has run dry in 12 years. What certain voices are calling a crisis is, in fact, the proof of preparation. India's energy governance has given us the insulation we need," the functionary said.

The US waiver of sanctions removes friction. It does not define India's policy, which is governed by the energy trilemma -- affordability, availability and sustainability -- for every Indian household, the functionary said.

India currently holds over 250 million barrels of crude oil and refined products - 7 to 8 weeks of buffer -- distributed across strategic reserves, storage tanks, pipelines, terminal facilities and vessels already in transit to the country's ports.

The country sources oil from 40 countries and the refineries are running.

Petrol and diesel prices have not increased in four consecutive years, and that commitment stands.

Dismissing the opposition's criticism of the US waiver, the functionary said their allegations are bereft of any substance and that it is "not surprising that they are nit-picking on selective words".

"Clearly shows the opposition is unaware of how countries frame statements and use bombast keeping their domestic audiences and politics in mind.

"India will buy oil from wherever it is available. Our oil purchases will not be governed by any hollow slogans. India has never depended on permission from any country to buy Russian oil," another senior government official said.

Russian oil continued to flow into India even when the US imposed sanctions and raised objections after the Russia-Ukraine war began. In fact, India increased its purchases of Russian oil during this period despite pressure from the US and the EU, the functionary said.

"However hard the opposition may mock Bharat, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Govt sources deny providing intel to US for sinking Iranian frigate

NEW DELHI, March 6: Top government sources on Friday described as "baseless and preposterous" claims that the Indian Navy provided intelligence to the US on an Iranian frigate that was sunk by a US military submarine two days ago off the coast of Sri Lanka.

There is no question of providing any input to the US and the claims are completely baseless, the sources said.

The US sank the Iranian warship IRIS Dena off the coast of Sri Lanka on Wednesday when it was returning home after participating in the Milan multilateral naval exercise hosted by India.

At least 87 Iranian sailors were killed in the attack, which marked a major escalation in the conflict between the US and Iran outside of the Persian Gulf.

There were reports that alleged

that the Indian Navy provided some inputs on the frigate to the US military.

The claims are completely "baseless and preposterous", the sources said.

Iran reacted sharply to the sinking of the ship.

"IRIS Dena was a training ship. It was invited by the Indian Navy to take part in an exercise. They went (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

No Hike in Power Tariff in Assam for FY 2026-27

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 6: The Assam Electricity Regulatory Commission has approved the annual revenue requirements and tariffs for state power utilities for the financial year 2026-27, retaining electricity tariffs at the existing levels with no hike for consumers.

The Commission issued tariff orders on March 6 for Assam Power Distribution Company Lim-

ited (APDCL), Assam Power Generation Corporation Limited (APGCL), Assam Electricity Grid Corporation Limited (AEGCL) and the State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC), which will come into effect from April 1, 2026.

According to the orders, APDCL had sought approval for truing up of FY 2024-25, annual performance review for FY 2025-26 and revised tariff proposals for

FY 2026-27.

After examining the petitions, stakeholder submissions and public hearing feedback, the Commission approved a revenue gap of ₹407.91 crore for APDCL against its claim of ₹467.03 crore.

The Commission determined the average cost of supply for FY 2026-27 at ₹9.06 per unit.

However, considering the nominal (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

TRIBES ART FEST 2026

Artworks worth ₹30 lakh by indigenous people sold within 4 days

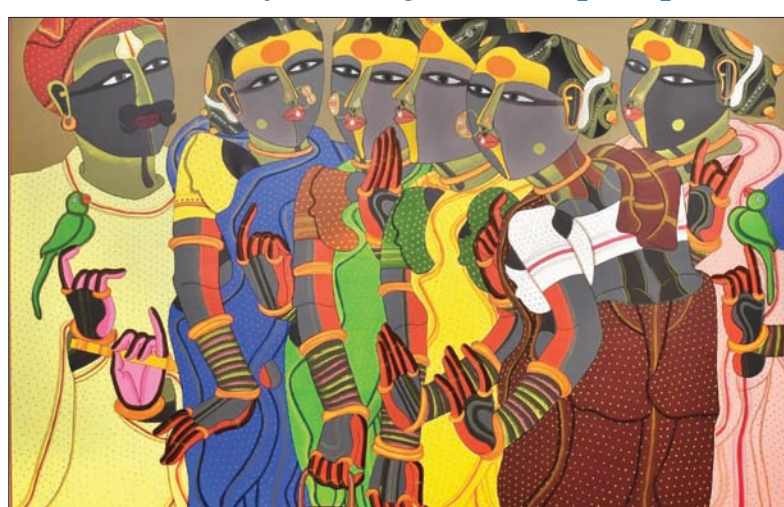
NEW DELHI, March 6: Artworks of tribal artists, who have come from far-flung villages and forest areas to participate in the Tribes Art Fest 2026 in New Delhi, have received an overwhelming response, fetching nearly Rs 30 lakh in the first four days, officials said on Friday.

The exhibition, which began on March 3, will remain open to the public until March 13, said Ranjana Chopra, Secretary, Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

"The exhibition has already recorded the sale of artworks worth nearly Rs 30 lakh. Several paintings displayed at the event are also receiving demand from countries such as Australia, Canada, Germany, and Switzerland," Chopra said.

A total of 73 artists, including over 45 women, are participated in the event as the government aims to provide a larger platform to these artists and connect their work with international markets, the officials said.

Citing instances of some of the promising artists, they said 50-year-old



Putli Ganju from Hazaribagh in Jharkhand, who is known for her traditional Sohrai art, has displayed her paintings in the event. She earlier exhibited her artwork abroad and is gradually gaining recognition among art lovers in Euro-

pean countries.

"Similarly, Santoshi Shyam (32) from Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh is a Gond artist. Earlier, Santoshi used natural colors and painted entirely by hand, but she has now begun using acrylic paints and

brushes to present Gond art in a modern style," a senior official said.

"One of her paintings is priced at around Rs 1,20,000, and her work is in demand in countries such as Australia and France," he said.

Highlighting the most expensive painting at the exhibition, which has been priced at Rs 15 lakh, officials said that it has been created by Ravi Kumar Tekam, an artist from Madhya Pradesh.

"The Gond art painting, titled Triyaphool, took him nearly two-and-a-half to three months to complete," an official from the Tribal Affairs Ministry said.

"Forty-year-old Ravi has been a Gond artist for the past 30 years. He shared that one of his earlier paintings was purchased by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Department for Rs 25 lakh. That artwork depicts a dramatic scene of a lion and a wild boar fighting in the forest," she added.

Appreciating the government's initiative to hold (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Indian airlines cancel 278 int'l flights; scheduled to operate 96 services to Middle East on Friday

NEW DELHI, March 6: Domestic airlines are scheduled to operate 96 flights to and from the Middle East on Friday while the carriers have cancelled 278 international services for the day, the government said on Friday amid the conflict in the region.

The situation in the Middle East has disrupted flight operations as there are restrictions as well as closure of airspace. Some airlines have commenced limited operations to and from the region, where the conflict involving the US, Israel, and Iran has escalated in the last few days.

The civil aviation ministry on Friday said due to the ongoing developments in West Asia and the resulting airspace restrictions, flight operations have been impacted across several sectors.

"A total of 96 flight operations were scheduled today by Indian domestic carriers to and from destinations in the Middle East. As of 6 March, 278 flights scheduled to be operated today by Indian domestic carriers have been cancelled," it said in a statement.

Earlier in the day, officials said more than 140 international flights were cancelled in Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore, and Kolkata air-

ports on Friday due to the Middle East crisis.

They said at least 142 flights were cancelled at the four airports, with 39 departures and 34 arrivals cancelled at the Mumbai airport.

While the total flight cancellations at the Bangalore airport were 33, including 15 departures and 18 arrivals, at the Delhi airport 15 departures and 14 arrivals were cancelled.

A total of seven flights -- four departures and three arrivals -- have been cancelled at the Kolkata airport, according to the officials.

Akasa Air said it would operate the Mumbai-Jeddah-Mumbai flight on Friday. The airline, on Saturday, would operate flights from Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Kochi to Jeddah, it said in a post on X.

SpiceJet said it will operate 14 special flights from the UAE to bring back stranded passengers.

With the airspaces over Saudi Arabia and Oman remaining open and assessed as safe for operations, Air India and Air India Express have resumed (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Happiness is the only thing that multiplies when you share it. - Albert Schweitzer

India's reassessed GDP growth

India's 7.6 per cent real GDP growth in FY26, as per the Second Advance Estimates released under the rebased national accounts with 2022-23 as the base year, is being widely read as confirmation of macroeconomic strength. In a global environment where most large economies are struggling to sustain even 3 per cent growth, such a number commands attention. Yet, a rigorous reading of the data suggests that this expansion is being driven by a shrinking set of sectors, a rising dependence on capital formation, and a weakening consumption and rural income base, making the growth trajectory far more fragile than the aggregate suggests. The estimates, released by the Government of India through the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) and the National Statistics Office (NSO), reveal not just how fast the economy is growing, but how unevenly that growth is being produced and distributed. And it is this unevenness — not the headline number — that should be the focus of policy concern. Re-basing GDP to 2022-23 has done more than update weights; it has reshaped the architecture of India's growth narrative. Under the revised series, Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) is estimated at 31.7 per cent of GDP, among the highest ratios seen since the mid-2000s. By contrast, Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) now accounts for just 56.7 per cent of GDP, down sharply from the 58-60 per cent range seen consistently under the previous series.

This shift is not trivial. In a \$3.5-trillion economy, a 1 percentage-point change in the consumption share represents demand worth over ₹3.5 lakh crore. The new series therefore implies that India's growth engine is now far more dependent on investment momentum than on household purchasing power, a configuration that historically has proven less resilient in the face of shocks. Equally revealing is the fact that GVA growth has exceeded GDP growth in both FY25 and FY26. In FY26, while real GDP grew 7.6 per cent, real GVA grew 7.7 per cent, implying a negative contribution from net indirect taxes. In absolute terms, this suggests that tax growth has lagged output growth despite nominal GDP expanding by 8.6 per cent. This weak tax-growth linkage undermines the assumption that high GDP growth automatically translates into stronger fiscal capacity.

However, the employment and demand implications of this surge remain limited. Manufacturing today accounts for less than 18 per cent of total employment, while absorbing a disproportionately high share of incremental capital. The implied capital-output ratio of manufacturing has risen, indicating that each unit of output growth is being generated with less labour intensity than in earlier industrial phases. There is no denying that high growth is an achievement and broad growth is a necessity.

West Asian Turmoil and the uncertain future of India's Tea exports

India's tea industry, one of the country's oldest and most globally recognised agricultural sectors, is facing a new wave of uncertainty as tensions intensify in Iran and the wider Middle East. While conflicts in distant regions often appear detached from domestic economic concerns, the tea trade demonstrates how deeply interconnected global markets have become. For the Indian tea sector, particularly the production centres of Assam, developments in West Asia are not distant geopolitical events but direct determinants of commercial stability. The escalating conflict has therefore triggered widespread concern among exporters, traders, and plantation owners who fear that prolonged instability could severely disrupt established export channels. The anxiety is particularly acute in Assam's orthodox tea segment, which relies heavily on demand from Iran and neighbouring Middle Eastern markets.

The scale of this dependency is striking. Nearly fifty per cent of Assam's orthodox tea production is consumed in Iran and the broader Middle East, making the region one of the most critical overseas markets for the industry. This longstanding trade relationship has evolved over decades through cultural preferences, historical trade networks, and well-established distribution channels. Iranian consumers, in particular, have long favoured the flavour profile of Assam's orthodox tea, which is characterised by its distinctive aroma and brisk taste. Consequently, any disruption in that market immediately reverberates across the production centres of northeastern India. With tensions in the region intensifying, industry leaders are increasingly worried that declining demand, logistical obstacles, and financial uncertainties could lead to a sharp contraction in exports.

The immediate effects of the conflict are already visible in the operational difficulties faced by exporters. Airspace closures across parts of West Asia have complicated transportation routes, while intermittent internet suspensions in conflict-affected regions have made communication between traders and buyers unreliable. Exporters report that shipments of tea are currently stranded at various stages of the supply chain. Some consignments remain stored in exporters' warehouses awaiting clearance, while others are stuck at Indian ports or have been delayed at destination ports across West Asia. These logistical disruptions create uncertainty not only for exporters but also for shipping companies, insurance providers, and port authorities involved in the tea trade.

Financial risks associated with exports to Iran have also intensified. Even before the current escalation of conflict, payment channels between India and Iran were complicated due to international sanctions. Traders had de-

veloped alternative mechanisms to manage transactions, often involving indirect routes or intermediary financial arrangements. The current instability, however, has made these already fragile systems even more precarious. Exporters fear the possibility of delayed payments, contract cancellations, and even outright defaults if the conflict continues to escalate. For businesses that operate on narrow margins and rely on timely payments to maintain cash flow, such uncertainties represent a significant commercial threat.

The vulnerability of the tea sector becomes even clearer when one examines the broader structure of India's export market. The Middle East collectively accounts for approximately forty-five to fifty per cent of India's total tea exports, making it one of the most important destinations for Indian tea. This dependence means that any geopolitical upheaval in the region has the potential to disrupt a substantial portion of the country's tea trade. In 2025, India achieved a record export volume of 280 million kilograms of tea, reflecting a strong recovery for the industry after earlier global disruptions. Even during the earlier months of that year, between January and September alone, exports had already reached 254.19 million kilograms, highlighting the scale of India's engagement with international tea markets.

A closer look at country-wise import figures illustrates how deeply embedded Indian tea is within the Middle Eastern trading network. Iraq imported 48.88 million kilograms of Indian tea, while Iran purchased 10.69 million kilograms. The United Arab Emirates emerged as another crucial market, importing 45.66 million kilograms during the same period. The role of the UAE extends beyond simple consumption, as Dubai functions as a major re-export hub for tea shipments destined for other parts of West Asia and Central Asia. Much of the tea that ultimately reaches Iran is routed through Dubai, where it is redistributed through established commercial networks. Similarly, other regional markets such as Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Iraq also depend heavily on the UAE's logistical infrastructure for redistribution.

The type of tea exported to these regions also matters greatly for the economic health of India's tea sector. Out of the total 280.4 million kilograms of tea exported by India, orthodox tea accounts for 128.47 million kilograms. West Asian countries alone purchase approximately 122.49 million kilograms of this total, and the overwhelming majority of that quantity consists of orthodox varieties. Unlike CTC teas, which are widely consumed

in domestic markets, orthodox teas are often regarded as premium products in international trade due to their distinctive flavour, traditional manufacturing methods, and higher production costs. As a result, the weakening of demand in West Asian markets could have particularly severe consequences for growers and exporters who specialise in these premium varieties.

Industry representatives warn that a significant decline in demand from Iran and neighbouring markets could trigger a chain reaction across the sector. If export volumes fall sharply, large quantities of unsold tea could accumulate in Indian warehouses. Without alternative markets capable of absorbing the surplus, the excess supply would likely push prices downward in domestic auctions. Such a scenario would be especially damaging for producers who had only recently begun to recover from earlier economic pressures. During the previous year, tea prices had shown encouraging signs of improvement, rising by approximately Rs 25 per kilogram. Orthodox teas in particular were commanding higher rates compared with CTC varieties, providing much-needed relief to plantation owners and exporters after several years of fluctuating prices.

Compounding the uncertainty surrounding market demand are growing concerns about maritime trade routes. The Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical shipping corridors, lies at the heart of the region currently experiencing geopolitical tension. A significant portion of global energy shipments as well as commercial cargo passes through this narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea. Any disruption or closure of the strait would have far-reaching consequences for global trade, including India's tea exports to the Middle East. Exporters are therefore closely monitoring developments in the region, aware that even temporary disruptions could delay shipments and increase transportation costs.

The economic implications of such disruptions are already beginning to emerge. Exporters report rising freight charges as shipping companies adjust routes and risk assessments in response to the evolving security situation. Marine insurance premiums have also increased, reflecting the higher risks associated with transporting cargo through potentially volatile waters. Longer transit times have further complicated logistics, as ships are sometimes required to take alternative routes or wait for clearance before entering sensitive zones. These factors collectively raise the overall cost of exporting tea, thereby reducing profit margins for traders and plantation owners.

Reports of cargo being struck or damaged in conflict-affected zones have added another layer of uncertainty to the situation. Although the full extent of financial losses remains unclear, the mere possibility of such incidents has heightened anxiety within the industry. Exporters must now factor in the risk that shipments could be delayed, damaged, or even lost entirely while en route to their destination. In a sector where contracts are often time-sensitive and dependent on maintaining consistent supply, such uncertainties can disrupt long-standing commercial relationships.

The timing of this geopolitical crisis is particularly unfortunate for India's tea industry. The sector had only recently begun to stabilise after navigating a series of external challenges, including uncertainties related to tariff issues in the United States and fluctuations in global demand. Improved export volumes and stronger prices during the previous year had generated cautious optimism among stakeholders. Plantation owners were hopeful that the industry might finally be entering a period of renewed stability and growth. The resurgence of geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, however, threatens to undermine that fragile recovery.

In response to the unfolding situation, industry stakeholders have largely adopted a cautious wait-and-watch approach. Exporters continue to monitor developments closely while exploring the possibility of diversifying their markets to reduce dependence on any single region. At the same time, they remain hopeful that diplomatic efforts and international negotiations will succeed in de-escalating tensions before the conflict produces deeper economic consequences. For Assam's tea industry in particular, the stakes are exceptionally high. The livelihoods of thousands of workers, plantation managers, and small growers depend on the uninterrupted functioning of international trade networks that connect distant tea gardens to consumers across the globe.

The unfolding crisis therefore serves as a reminder of how vulnerable agricultural export sectors can be to geopolitical shocks. While tea is often perceived simply as a daily beverage, its production and distribution are embedded within complex global systems of trade, logistics, finance, and diplomacy. When instability arises in one part of the world, the effects can ripple across continents, affecting farmers and workers far removed from the conflict itself. For India's tea industry, and especially for Assam's celebrated orthodox teas, the hope now rests on the swift restoration of stability in the Middle East so that this historic trade relationship can continue without disruption. (The writer can be reached at dipakurmigpltd@gmail.com)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Decline of Ideology in Politics

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Politics has historically been guided by powerful ideological frameworks that offered societies a clear direction, moral justification, and long-term vision. Ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, conservatism, and nationalism once shaped political movements, defined policy priorities, and mobilized large sections of the population. Political leaders and parties aligned themselves with specific ideological traditions, and voters often chose representatives based on those clearly articulated principles. Ideology functioned not merely as an intellectual framework but also as a mechanism that organized political debate and structured public expectations from governments. However, contemporary politics across many democratic and non-democratic systems reveals a gradual but visible decline in the centrality of ideology. Instead of ideological clarity, politics today frequently revolves around electoral strategy, personality-driven leadership, short-term governance priorities, and tactical alliances. The erosion of ideology has altered the nature of political competition and weakened the philosophical foundations that once distinguished political parties. In the modern political environment, ideological distinctions between parties often appear blurred, and policy positions are increasingly shaped by pragmatism, public opinion surveys, media narratives, and electoral calculations rather than doctrinal commitments. This transformation reflects a deeper structural change in how political systems operate in an era dominated by globalization, digital communication, and rapid economic transitions. As ideological rigidity declines, politics becomes more fluid and adaptable, but it also risks losing its normative compass. The question of whether ideology still matters in politics is therefore not merely academic; it is directly linked to the health of democratic debate, the coherence of public policy, and the long-term stability of political institutions.

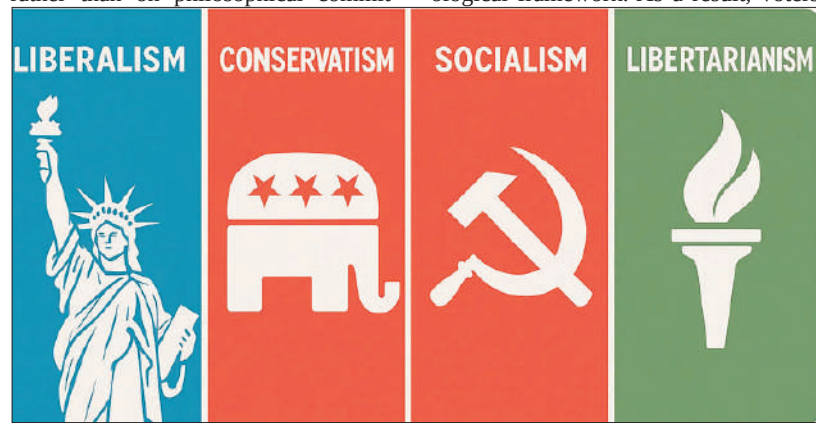
One of the most significant factors behind the decline of ideology in politics is the transformation of electoral competition. Political parties today operate in an environment where winning elections often depends more on strategic messaging than on ideological commitment. Modern campaigns rely heavily on data analytics, opinion polling, targeted communication, and image management. These tools encourage parties to modify their policy positions according to voter preferences rather than adhere to fixed ideological doctrines. In earlier decades, political parties typically represented identifiable social groups—workers, farmers, industrialists, or particular cultural communities—and their ideological orientation reflected the interests of those constituencies. For example, socialist parties represented labor movements, while

conservative parties aligned with traditional institutions and market-oriented economic policies. Over time, however, the social bases of politics have fragmented due to economic modernization, urbanization, and the expansion of the middle class. As a result, political parties have increasingly transformed into broad electoral coalitions that attempt to attract diverse voter groups with different and sometimes conflicting interests. This shift encourages ideological moderation or even ambiguity, as rigid ideological commitments could alienate sections of the electorate. In contemporary democracies, political success often depends on appealing to a large "floating" group of voters who are less ideologically committed and more concerned with governance performance, economic stability, and immediate welfare benefits. Consequently, political parties frequently adjust their policies to match public mood rather than defend ideological purity. This pragmatic approach to politics may improve electoral competitiveness, but it also dilutes ideological consistency and weakens the intellectual foundations of party politics.

Globalization has also contributed significantly to the weakening of ideological divisions in politics. In the twentieth century, many ideological conflicts were closely tied to economic models and geopolitical alignments. The rivalry between capitalism and socialism shaped domestic politics as well as international relations. Governments adopted ideological economic policies that emphasized either state control or market freedom. However, the expansion of global trade, financial integration, and technological interconnectedness has limited the policy autonomy of national governments. Today, most countries operate within a global economic system that imposes certain structural constraints on economic decision-making. Fiscal discipline, investment attractiveness, regulatory stability, and international competitiveness have become shared priorities across political systems, regardless of ideological orientation. Even governments that come to power with strong ideological rhetoric often adopt pragmatic economic policies once confronted with the realities of global markets and international institutions. This convergence of economic policies across ideological boundaries reduces the practical differences between competing political platforms. For instance, parties that once advocated radical economic transformation now frequently support market-oriented reforms, private investment, and global trade participation. Similarly, traditionally pro-market parties may endorse welfare policies to address inequality and maintain social stability. The result is a form of ideological convergence where economic policy debates focus more on technical management than on fundamental ideological alternatives. While globalization has increased eco-

nomonic efficiency and interconnectedness, it has simultaneously reduced the ideological diversity that once defined political competition. Politics increasingly revolves around administrative competence and economic management rather than ideological transformation.

Another factor contributing to the decline of ideology is the rise of personality-centric leadership in modern politics. In many contemporary political systems, individual leaders have become more influential than the ideological traditions of their parties. Political campaigns frequently focus on leadership qualities such as decisiveness, charisma, administrative capability, and communication skills rather than on philosophical commit-



ments. Media coverage further reinforces this trend by emphasizing personal narratives, leadership styles, and political controversies surrounding individual figures. As a result, voters often evaluate political choices based on their perceptions of leaders rather than the ideological frameworks those leaders represent. This personalization of politics weakens institutional party structures and reduces the importance of ideological debate within political organizations. Leaders who dominate their parties can redefine policy positions according to strategic considerations without facing significant ideological resistance. Furthermore, modern political communication through television and social media amplifies the role of individual personalities by allowing leaders to communicate directly with voters. This direct communication bypasses traditional ideological intermediaries such as party intellectuals, think tanks, and grassroots organizations that once played a crucial role in shaping ideological discourse. The shift toward personality-driven politics also encourages short-term political decision-making aimed at maintaining popularity rather than pursuing long-term ideological goals. While strong leadership can provide stability and decisive governance, it can also erode ideological clarity by transforming politics into a competition between individuals rather than between ideas.

The changing nature of public opinion has also played a role in reducing ideolog-

ical commitment in politics. In earlier political environments, ideological identities were often transmitted through social institutions such as labor unions, religious organizations, educational institutions, and community networks. These institutions helped individuals develop consistent political beliefs and maintain long-term ideological loyalties. However, contemporary societies have experienced a gradual weakening of these traditional structures of ideological socialization. Increased mobility, technological communication, and diversified information sources have produced a more fragmented political culture in which individuals are exposed to multiple perspectives rather than a single ideological framework. As a result, voters

often hold complex and sometimes contradictory political views that cannot easily be categorized within traditional ideological labels. A person may simultaneously support market-oriented economic policies, welfare programs, cultural conservatism, and environmental protection. This ideological hybridity encourages political parties to adopt flexible policy positions that accommodate diverse voter preferences. At the same time, the influence of social media and digital information ecosystems has transformed how political narratives are constructed and consumed. Political debates are frequently shaped by short-term controversies, viral narratives, and emotional reactions rather than systematic ideological reasoning. The rapid pace of digital communication encourages simplified political messaging that focuses on immediate issues rather than long-term ideological arguments. Consequently, ideological discourse becomes less prominent in everyday political engagement, and public attention shifts toward practical governance concerns, identity issues, and media-driven narratives.

Populism represents another dimension of contemporary politics that reflects the decline of traditional ideological structures. Populist movements often claim to represent "the people" against established political elites, bureaucratic institutions, and economic power centers. While populist rhetoric may incorporate elements from different ideological traditions, it typically avoids strict ideological classi-

fication. Instead, populism focuses on broad themes such as national sovereignty, economic fairness, anti-corruption, and cultural identity. These themes resonate with voters across ideological boundaries, enabling populist leaders to build diverse coalitions without adhering to a coherent ideological doctrine. Populist politics tends to prioritize emotional mobilization and symbolic representation rather than detailed ideological programs. This approach can be politically effective because it simplifies complex policy debates into easily understandable narratives about popular will and elite betrayal. However, the populist style of politics also contributes to the erosion of ideological consistency within political systems. Traditional ideological debates about economic structures, social organization, and institutional reform are replaced by broader narratives about national identity, governance efficiency, and political accountability. Populism therefore reflects both a response to the perceived failure of ideological politics and a factor that further accelerates the decline of ideology itself. While populist movements may achieve significant electoral success, their flexible ideological positioning often makes long-term policy coherence more difficult to maintain.

Despite these trends, the decline of ideology in politics does not necessarily mean that ideological thinking has completely disappeared. Instead, ideology has evolved into more subtle and less rigid forms. Political debates still involve disagreements about the role of the state, the distribution of economic resources, the balance between individual freedom and collective responsibility, and the relationship between national sovereignty and global cooperation. These disagreements are fundamentally ideological, even if they are not always expressed through traditional ideological labels. In many cases, ideology operates implicitly through policy preferences, institutional reforms, and governance priorities rather than through explicit doctrinal statements. Furthermore, ideological revival occasionally occurs during periods of crisis or structural transformation when societies seek clear conceptual frameworks to interpret complex challenges. Economic inequality, environmental sustainability, technological disruption, and geopolitical competition may eventually generate new ideological movements that redefine political debates. The decline of traditional ideology therefore represents a transitional phase in the evolution of political systems rather than a permanent disappearance of ideological thinking. However, the current political environment suggests that future ideological frameworks may be more flexible, pragmatic, and adaptive than the rigid ideological doctrines that dominated twentieth-century politics.

The implications of ideological decline for democratic governance are complex

and often contradictory. On one hand, the weakening of rigid ideological divisions can promote political moderation and reduce extreme polarization. Governments may find it easier to implement pragmatic policies that address practical problems rather than defend ideological orthodoxy. Political compromise becomes more feasible when parties are less constrained by doctrinal commitments. This flexibility can improve policy innovation and allow governments to respond more effectively to rapidly changing economic and technological conditions. On the other hand, the absence of strong ideological foundations can also weaken political accountability and reduce the clarity of democratic choices. When political parties adopt similar policy positions and rely primarily on leadership personalities or short-term electoral promises, voters may find it difficult to distinguish meaningful alternatives. Ideology historically provided voters with a conceptual framework to evaluate political options and understand the long-term consequences of policy decisions. Without such frameworks, democratic debate may become more superficial and reactive. Political discourse may focus on immediate controversies rather than structural challenges that require sustained ideological reflection. The decline of ideology can therefore create a paradox in which politics becomes more flexible but also less intellectually grounded. Maintaining a balance between pragmatic governance and principled political vision remains one of the central challenges of contemporary democratic systems.

Ultimately, the decline of ideology in politics reflects broader transformations in society, economics, technology, and global governance. Political systems today operate in an environment characterized by rapid change, complex interdependence, and diverse public expectations. In such conditions, rigid ideological frameworks may appear less relevant to the practical demands of governance. Yet the complete disappearance of ideology would leave politics without a guiding philosophy capable of shaping long-term national direction. The challenge for modern political systems is therefore not to restore the rigid ideological conflicts of the past but to develop new forms of ideological thinking that are capable of addressing contemporary realities. Such frameworks must reconcile economic efficiency with social justice, technological progress with ethical responsibility, and national sovereignty with global cooperation. The future of politics will likely involve a dynamic interaction between pragmatic governance and evolving ideological visions. Whether political leaders and institutions can successfully navigate this balance will determine the quality of democratic governance in the decades ahead. (The author is the recipient of the 'Yuba Lekhak Samman - 2025' from the Government of Assam)

Oath ceremony held at BTCLA auditorium in Kokrajhar BTC Executive Council expanded with 3 new Executive Members



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, March 6: The BTC Executive Council was expanded with the swearing-in of three MCLAs as Executive Mem-

bers (EMs) at a ceremony held on Friday at the auditorium of the BTCLA, Bodofa Nwgr, Kokrajhar.

The newly inducted EMs are

Maheswar Basumatary representing the Goreswar (ST) constituency, Lakhi Das representing the Nagriuli (Non-ST) constituency and Karmeswar Roy, a government-nominated member. With their induction, the strength of the BTC Executive Council has increased to 17 members.

The oath of office and secrecy was administered by Mukesh C Sahu, Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam and Principal Secretary, BTC.

EMs Derhasat Basumatary and Moon Moon Brahma, MCLA Jubiraj Basumatary, Additional Principal Secretary Pranjit Kr Wary, secretaries and other officials of BTC were present on the occasion.

NFR extends special train services to ease festive rush

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 6: To clear the additional rush of passengers during the festive season, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has extended the services of weekly special train No 04654/04653 (Amritsar-New Jalpaiguri-Amritsar) and will also operate a one-way special train between Guwahati and Delhi.

The weekly special train No 04654 (Amritsar-New Jalpaiguri) will run every Wednesday from March 4 to March 25, 2026. In the return direction, train No 04653 (New Jalpaiguri-Amritsar) will operate every Friday from March 6 to March 27, 2026. The train will run with the existing schedule, timings, composition and stoppages.

In addition, a one-way special train No 05699 (Guwahati-Delhi) will operate on March 8, 2026. The train will depart from Guwahati at 9:30 PM and is scheduled to reach Delhi at 1:00 PM on March 10. It will halt at major stations including Rangiya, New Jalpaiguri, Begusarai, Chhapra, Varanasi and Prayagraj Junction, among others.

The train will run with AC 2-tier, AC 3-tier, Sleeper Class and General coaches to accommodate passengers. NFR stated that these special services will help manage heavy passenger demand and ease congestion on busy routes. Passengers have been advised to check detailed schedules and stoppages on the IRCTC website and NFR's official social media platforms before undertaking their journey.

Pramod Boro warm welcome by supporters UPPL holds press conference in Kokrajhar



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 6: A press conference was held by the UPPL in Kokrajhar. The press meet, organised on Friday afternoon at the party's central office, was addressed by UPPL Central General Secretary Raju Kumar Narzary.

Raju Kumar Narzary commented on the Rajya Sabha election and thanked the MLAs of AGP, Congress and AIUDF for supporting UPPL president Pramod Boro in the Rajya Sabha election. At the same time, he also expressed gratitude to the BJP and Congress MLAs for their support. He said that it is a historic moment for the Bodo community.

For the first time, the Bodo community has been able to get three Members of Parliament.

He further stated that through the 125th Constitutional Amend-

ment, the number of council constituencies in BTR could be increased from 40 to 60 and through the amendment related to Article 282, direct funding from the Centre to BTR could be ensured. These matters can be logically presented on the floor of the Parliament.

He said that getting three MPs from UPPL has created history for the Bodo community.

Narzary also informed that the list of UPPL candidates for 15 Assembly constituencies has already been prepared. The party is likely to announce the list of Assembly candidates within the next week.

He further stated in the press conference that apart from the 15 Assembly constituencies within BTC, the party is also considering fielding candidates in six Assembly constituencies outside BTC in the upcoming Assembly elections. A festive atmosphere was seen

After 50 Years, Dibrugarh Press Club gets a permanent address, CM lays foundation



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, March 6: The historic Dibrugarh Press Club, which has crossed its golden jubilee year, has finally secured a permanent address. The permanent office of the Dibrugarh Press Club will be constructed at the South Jalan Tea Estate in Chowkidangee, Dibrugarh.

The foundation stone of the state-of-the-art office was jointly laid by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Friday. Both leaders completed the foundation stone ceremony by performing the Bhumi Pujan according to religious rituals.

Following the ceremony, CM Sarma stated, "Today is a historic day for the Dibrugarh Press Club. After 50 years, the club will have

a modern building. We hope that this building will be completed within the scheduled timeframe. We extend our best wishes to all the officials of the Dibrugarh Press Club."

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal added, "The historic Dibrugarh Press Club, which has already completed 50 years, will finally have a permanent address. To facilitate the journalists who have played a strong role in strengthening the foundation of the fourth pillar of democracy through quality news service from Dibrugarh, I have laid the foundation stone and performed the Bhumi Pujan today alongside Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. We are hopeful that through this integrated effort, journalists will continue to serve with dedication,

providing momentum to the world of news and contributing to the excellence of society."

The event was moderated by vice president Anil Poddar and presided over by president Manash Jyoti Dutta. Speaking at the occasion, Minister Bimal Borah remarked, "When the media—the fourth pillar of democracy—is strong, the foundation of the country becomes strong. The Dibrugarh Press Club has been playing a robust role in nation-building socially, culturally and holistically through the media. I hope that once the new office is built, journalists will benefit significantly."

It is noteworthy that this model building for the Dibrugarh Press Club will be constructed at an estimated cost of approximately ₹ 8.70 crore.

World Hearing Day observed in West Karbi Anglong

HT Correspondent

HAMREN, March 6: Prioritising auditory health among the youth, an extensive awareness program was organised at Borkok ME School in West Karbi Anglong on Thursday. The event was held in observance of World Hearing Day under the aegis of the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Deafness (NPPCD), supported by the National Health Mission (NHM).

This year's global theme, "From Communities to Classrooms: Hearing Care for All Children," served as the cornerstone of the day's activities, emphasising that early detection is the first line of defence against lifelong hearing impairment.

The program moved beyond standard lectures, utilising interactive formats to capture the interest of the students. Students participated in quiz and drawing contests centred on the mechanics of hearing and health. Local performances were integrated to foster community spirit. Health officials conducted sensitisation sessions on the "dos and don'ts" of ear care, such as avoiding the use of sharp objects and protecting ears from excessive noise.

Beyond awareness, the event provided immediate clinical value. A dedicated health check-up was conducted for all attending students by medical professionals. This screening aimed to identify underlying auditory issues or infections that might otherwise go unnoticed in a classroom setting.

To ensure the message reached home, informative "Ear Care" leaflets were distributed to both students and faculty, providing a permanent reference for maintaining ear hygiene and recognising early warning signs of hearing loss.

Key attendees and organisers included Pakeeza P Barbhuyan, District Community Officer (DCO); RBSK Mobile Health Team (MHT) members and local ASHA supervisors and school faculty.

The event concluded on a high note with a prize distribution ceremony, celebrating the winners of the day's competitions and reinforcing the community's commitment to ensuring no child is left behind due to preventable hearing loss.

143rd Jorhat Races begin at Gymkhana ground

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, March 6: The 143rd edition of the Jorhat Races began on Friday at the historic Jorhat Gymkhana Club ground. The Jorhat Races are considered one of the oldest horse racing events in Assam.

In the early years of the competition, Europeans were seen participating with their high-breed horses, which they usually used for their work purposes. Before 1947, the race meet used to be held in February and its schedule coincided with the annual camp of the Assam Valley Light Horse.

Following India's independence in 1947, Missing riders and ponies were invited to participate in the races and since then the Jorhat Races have continued without interruption. For more than 75 years, Missing jockeys have been riding in their distinctive style—bareback and without saddles or homemade stirrups.

The continuity of the Jorhat Races has been ensured by the stewards of the races, members of the Jorhat Gymkhana Club, tea planters, the armed forces and the government.

Over the years, the Jorhat Races have remained a vibrant annual event and continue to hold a place of pride in society.

On the first day of the races, a total of 10 races were held, which were conducted over distances of 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 furlongs and prizes were awarded to the winners after each race.

OBITUARY



Dr Sanjeeb Borthakur, noted entrepreneur of Tezpur passed away on Thursday while undergoing treatment at a private Hospital in Guwahati. He was the only son of the founding president of the Sadou Asom Lekhiika Samaroh Samiti, Late Dr Sheela Borthakur. He was 65. Dr Borthakur, a resident of Kamachuburi, was battling liver-related ailments for nearly a month.

He earned a PhD from Oxford University. Dr Borthakur was regarded as one of the pioneering Assamese entrepreneurs in the field of computer education and business. He had started a computer business in Guwahati during the early days of the introduction of computer education in Assam.

Various organisations and individuals have expressed deep grief over his demise and conveyed condolences to the bereaved family.



Mahananda Deka, a well-known businessman of Barpujia Tinali passed away at the age of 60, in his residence at midnight on Thursday. He died suddenly while undergoing treatment for liver problems a few days ago.

He was a life member of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, a member of the religious organization Shankari Kalyan Nidhi, the founder of the Chahi Dubi Shiva Temple, a member of the Barpujia cultural group and a good actor. He is survived by his mother, a brother, a sister, wife, a son and a daughter, relatives and many others.

North East Conference 2026 focuses on culture and development Discussion highlights national integration and Northeast's future growth

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, March 6: The North East Conference-2026, organised by North East Sanstha, Delhi, concluded successfully at the historic Constitution Club of India, bringing together eminent thinkers, policy experts, academicians, social leaders and cultural practitioners to deliberate on diverse dimensions of Northeast India.

The day-long conference featured engaging thematic sessions focusing on the region's rich cultural heritage, customary traditions, developmental trajectory, policy perspectives, social harmony and future opportunities. Participants held meaningful discussions highlighting both the historical significance of the Northeastern region and the transformative developments taking place in recent years.

In the inaugural session, Madan Prasad Bezbaruah, retired IAS and former Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India and a distinguished administrator from Assam, emphasised the unique sensitivity of the Northeast and its gradual integration and exposure to the rest of the country. Advocate Bikram Banerjee, Additional Solicitor General of India, underlined the distinctiveness of the region's customary laws and their impor-

tance in preserving indigenous identity and maintaining social balance. Narendra Thakur, Akhil Bharatiya Sah Prachar Pramukh of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), reflected on the glorious civilisational history of the Northeast, tracing its cultural continuity from the era of the Mahabharata to the present day. Samudragupta Kashyap, Chancellor of Nagaland University and a renowned journalist-scholar from Assam, highlighted the immense contributions of freedom fighters from the region whose sacrifices strengthened India's national movement.

In another session, Delina Khongdur, Member of the National Commission for Women (NCW) from Meghalaya, spoke about distinguished personalities from Meghalaya who enriched the region's cultural landscape. Premananda Sharma, a noted social worker from Manipur, emphasised the Northeast's remarkable contribution to India's sporting excellence and the global recognition earned by its sportspersons. Dr Oinam Bhagat, Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, examined the colonial legacy that distorted historical narratives of the Northeast and stressed the need for corrective scholarship. Arun Sharma, Director General of the North East Centre for Technology Ap-



plication and Reach (NECTAR), presented the region's recent growth story and developmental progress, highlighting opportunities emerging from infrastructure expansion, improved connectivity and policy initiatives.

The valedictory session was graced by veteran journalist and Padma Bhushan awardee Ram Bahadur Rai, president of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), who shared valuable historical insights shaping present-day North-

east India and highlighted the growing developmental focus being accorded to the region. Dr Poonam Gunindra, Vice-Chancellor of Manipur University of Culture, spoke about expanding connectivity through road, rail and air networks that are linking the Northeast more closely with the rest of India and the world. Dr Sunil Mohanty, Northeast Prachar Pramukh, RSS, emphasised the importance of strengthening social harmony in enabling economic growth and underscored the

strategic and civilisational importance of "Ishanya Bharat" in India's overall developmental journey.

A special felicitation ceremony honoured individuals from different Northeastern states for their exemplary contributions across diverse fields including arts, agriculture, education, cultural preservation and social service. The North East India Achievers 2026 awards were conferred upon: Tana Yami from Arunachal Pradesh for her outstanding contribution to sustainable agriculture and rural livelihoods, Ananya Talukdar from Assam for promoting and teaching Satriya dance among underprivileged communities in Guwahati, Leimapokpam Lakpati Singh from Manipur for his remarkable contributions to the performing arts, Lalitanzauva from Mizoram for his work in preserving and promoting indigenous Mizo (Zo Hnam Sakhua) cultural traditions, Yose Chaya Angami from Nagaland for his efforts in safeguarding and promoting indigenous Angami Naga cultural heritage and Dhammapia from Tripura for his outstanding contribution to education and community development.

The conference concluded with a collective resolve to further strengthen national integration.

Balendra Shah's Rastriya Swatantra Party heading towards landslide victory in Nepal's elections

We look forward to working with the new Govt of Nepal to further build on the robust multifaceted ties between our two countries and peoples for mutual benefit: Delhi

KATHMANDU, March 6: Rap-per-turned-politician Balendra Shah's newly formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) was on Friday heading towards a landslide victory in Nepal's first general elections since the violent Gen Z protests toppled the K P Sharma Oli-led government in September.

According to the Election Commission, the RSP is leading in 70 out of 94 constituencies where counting was underway as of 2 pm, while the Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, and Nepali Communist Party were each leading in six constituencies.

The election was being closely watched by India, which hopes for a stable government in the politically fragile Himalayan nation to take forward the developmental partnership between the two sides.

"We look forward to working with the new Government of Nepal to further build on the robust multifaceted ties between our two countries and peoples for mutual benefit," Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said in Delhi on Thursday.



He said India has "consistently supported peace, progress and stability in Nepal and in keeping with our commitment, provided logistical supplies as per request from Government of Nepal for these elections".

Balendra Shah, who was the Mayor of Kathmandu till recently, is leading in Jhapa-5 constituency against four-time prime minister and CPN-UML chair Oli in the latter's stronghold. Shah, popularly known as Balen, received 6,090

votes, while Oli got just 1,248 votes till 10 am.

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party, Progressive Democratic Party, Shram Sanskriti Party, and independent candidates were each leading in one constituency.

So far, the Election Commission has declared that the RSP and the NC have won one seat each. Ranju Darshana of the RSP won from Kathmandu-1 with 15,455 votes, while Yogesh Gauchan Thakali of the NC won from Mustang with

3,307 votes.

According to an official, Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda has so far received 5,924 votes and is ahead of his rivals in Rukum East.

The RSP, headed by Ravi Lamichhane, is leading in all 10 constituencies of Kathmandu, according to media reports.

Nepal witnessed about 60 per cent voter turnout during the elections to the House of Representatives on Thursday. The counting of votes started late Thursday night and is expected to be completed by Friday night, according to the Election Commission.

The RSP, formed in 2022, had projected Balen as its prime minister candidate. The party received significant support during the campaign. On the other hand, the Nepali Congress and CPN (UML) were part of the government toppled by the Gen Z last year.

Nepali Congress president Gagan Thapa is the prime ministerial candidate of his party, whereas the CPN (UML) has projected Oli as its PM face.

Nepal's 18.9 million voters were

eligible to elect 275 members of the House of Representatives. They will elect 165 HoR members through first past the post (FPTP) or direct voting system, and 110 members through proportionate voting.

Around 3,400 candidates are vying for 165 seats under direct voting, and 3,135 candidates for 110 seats through proportionate voting.

The Gen Z youth, through their two-day intensified protests on September 8 and 9, ousted Prime Minister Oli, who was heading a coalition government with the backing of Nepali Congress that enjoyed nearly two-thirds majority support.

After Oli's ouster, President Ramchandra Paudel dissolved the House of Representatives on September 12 and appointed Sushila Karki as the caretaker PM.

The major issues raised by Gen Z are anti-corruption, good governance, an end to nepotism, generational change in political leadership, etc. Nepal has had 14 governments in the last 18 years, indicating the fragile nature of the Himalayan nation's political system. (PTI)

Trump says he wants to be involved in picking Iran's next leader as war ripples across the region

DUBAI, March 6: US President Donald Trump said Thursday he should be involved in choosing Iran's next supreme leader as the US and Israel hammered the country for a sixth day. Iran kept up retaliatory attacks on Israel, American bases and countries around the region.

Trump ruled out Mojtaba Khamenei, a front-runner to replace his father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the opening strikes of the war. Trump's comments to the American news website Axios were likely to renew questions about whether the US and Israel seek the overthrow of the Islamic Republic or just a change in its policies, as the conflict has appeared increasingly open-ended.

The war has escalated each day, affecting an additional 14 countries across the Middle East and beyond. On Thursday, Azerbaijan accused Iran of drone attacks, which Tehran denied. Iran said the US would "bitterly regret" torpedoing an Iranian warship near Sri Lanka a day earlier.

Israel issued a mass evacuation warning for Beirut's southern suburbs as the fighting escalated with Iran-allied Hezbollah militants. UN peacekeepers reported ground combat in southern Lebanon as more Israeli troops crossed the border.

All the while, the US and Israel have battered Iran with nationwide strikes, targeting their military capabilities, leadership and nuclear program.

Iran's attacks have targeted its Arab neighbours, disrupted oil supplies and snarled global air travel. The war has killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, more than 120 in Lebanon and around a dozen in Israel, according to officials in those countries. Six US troops have been killed.

Trump's decision to strike Iran won enough support from Republican lawmakers in the US House on Thursday to defeat a resolution to halt the bombardment. The Senate voted down a similar measure a day earlier.

Trump compares Iran to Venezuela: In the Axios interview, Trump derided the 56-year-old Mojtaba Khamenei, who has never been elected or appointed to a government position, as "a lightweight."

"We want someone that will bring harmony and peace to Iran," Trump said.

"I have to be involved in the appointment, like with Delcy in Venezuela," said Trump, referring to the acting president in the South American country. Delcy Rodriguez took power in January after a US military operation cap-

tured Nicolás Maduro and whisked him to the US to face federal drug conspiracy charges.

Israel's defense minister, Israel Katz, said this week that Iran's next supreme leader — if he continues to threaten Israel, the US and others — "will be a target for elimination."

Iran remains defiant: Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Thursday denied reports that Tehran has been in contact with the US to push for a ceasefire.

"We don't see any reason why we should negotiate with the US," Araghchi told NBC News. "When we negotiated with them twice, and every time they attacked us in the middle of negotiations."

Araghchi also accused the US Navy of committing "an atrocity at sea" for sinking the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena in the Indian Ocean, killing at least 87 people.

"The US will come to bitterly regret (the) precedent it has set," he said on social media.

The Iranian ship was returning from an exercise hosted by the Indian navy that the US also joined. Sri Lankan authorities said 32 crew members were rescued. Araghchi said it had been carrying "almost 130" crew.

An Iranian cleric later called on state television for the shedding of both Israeli and "Trump's blood."

The statement from Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi Amoli represented a rare call for violence by an ayatollah, one of Shiite Islam's highest clerical ranks. There are dozens in Iran.

Sri Lanka said another Iranian warship was anchored near its coast on Thursday, and more than 200 sailors were being escorted to a naval base on the outskirts of the capital, Colombo. The ship will be taken to a Sri Lankan port, said Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake.

The war keeps expanding: The Israeli military carried out a wave of strikes on Iran's ballistic missile launch sites, and its top general said that 80 per cent of Iran's air defences and 60 per cent of its missile launchers had been destroyed.

Still, Lt Gen Eyal Zamir said: "The threat has not yet been removed."

Israel said holy sites in Jerusalem's Old City would be closed on Friday after air sirens warned of missile attacks on Thursday in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Closures include Christianity's Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Judaism's Western Wall. They will also affect tens of thousands of Muslims who pray at the compound on Fridays during Ramadan. (AP)

London police say 4 men arrested on suspicion of aiding Iran by spying on Jewish community

LONDON, March 6: London police said Friday that four men have been arrested on suspicion of aiding Iran by spying on the Jewish community. In a statement, the Metropolitan Police said the suspects — one Iranian and three dual British-Iranian nationals — were taken into custody on suspicion of assisting a foreign intelligence service. The men, who were arrested at addresses in and around north London shortly after 1 am, are suspected on spying on locations and individuals.

Police said the men arrested are aged 22, 40, 52 and 55 and that searches are ongoing at the addresses as well as other properties nearby. Six other men were also arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender and have been taken into custody, the force said.

"We understand the public may be concerned, in particular the Jewish community, and as always, I would ask them to remain vigilant and if they see or hear anything that concerns them, then to contact us," said Commander Helen Flanagan, who is in charge of counterterrorism policing in London.

The arrests come as the US and Israel continue to strike Iran, which has kept up retaliatory strikes on Israel, US bases and across the region. Britain is not involved in offensive operations but is assisting in regional defence.

The Campaign Against Antisemitism said it is grateful to police "for foiling this alleged plot" but accused the British government of not taking the threat from Iran seriously. "The UK may not be acting against Iran but Iran is acting against us," it said in a statement.

"The government's failure to keep its promise to proscribe the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps — the main instrument that the Islamic Republic uses to foment antisemitic violence worldwide — has sent the message that support for the brutal Iranian regime and its Jew-hating and West-hating ideology is perfectly acceptable in Britain," it added. (AP)

Pakistani Shiites rally to denounce US-Israeli strikes on Iran as US Embassy issues security alert



ISLAMABAD, March 6: Hundreds of minority Shiites rallied Friday in Pakistan's capital and elsewhere in the country to denounce the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes, as the US Embassy in Islamabad issued a security alert warning Americans of possible violence.

Amid heavy police presence, about 300 protesters staged a sit-in in Islamabad, holding posters of Khamenei and chanting "Death to America" and "Death to Israel." Islamabad police had parked shipping containers on roads leading to the US Embassy in Islamabad to prevent any potential escalation.

Pakistani authorities said the protesters had agreed not to march toward the embassy in Islamabad, located about 3 kilometres from the sit-in. The protesters planned to end their sit-in later Friday.

Khamenei, who ruled Iran since 1989, has

long been a central religious and political figure for Shiites worldwide, including in Pakistan. His death in a joint US-Israeli operation at the start of the war last week sparked outrage among many Shiites.

Security was also beefed up in the port city of Karachi, where hundreds of Shiites stormed the US Consulate on Sunday, smashing windows and attempting to set the building on fire. Police used batons, tear gas, and live fire to disperse the crowd. The violence left 10 protesters dead in Karachi, and at least 13 were killed in northern cities, including Skardu and Gilgit.

In Karachi, Shiite protesters gathered on Friday some 4 kilometres from the consulate.

Separately, smaller groups of Sunni protesters also rallied in Islamabad and Karachi on Friday against the US-Israeli war with Iran. The protests were held far from the US diplomatic missions. No violence was reported.

In a security alert ahead of the demonstrations, the US Embassy in Islamabad urged Americans in the country to limit their movement outside. Also, an updated advisory warned US citizens against travel to Pakistan's southwestern Balochistan province, northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir due to risks of "terrorism and kidnapping".

Shiites make up roughly 15 per cent of Pakistan's population of about 250 million, the majority of whom are Sunni Muslims. (AP)

Kosovo president moves to dissolve Parliament

PRISTINA, March 6: Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani on Friday said she was dissolving Parliament to pave the way for an early election after lawmakers failed to elect her successor.

The development marks a new crisis in the Balkan country that already went through a snap vote in December after a nearly yearlong political deadlock.

Kosovo's assembly had a deadline of midnight Thursday to elect a new president to replace Osmani, who took office in 2021. A vote late on Thursday failed due to a lack of a quorum in the 120-member assembly.

Prime Minister Albin Kurti has blamed the failure on the opposition's boycott of the session. His ruling Vetevendosje, or Self-Determination, party has asked the Constitutional Court to temporarily suspend the deadline for the process to resume.

It was not immediately clear when the court will rule and whether it could affect Osmani's decision to dissolve the Parliament.

Osmani said in an address Friday that the situation was "completely avoidable" and lawmakers had enough time to choose a president.

"It is a great misfortune for this state that they did not choose the interests of the Republic of Kosovo," Osmani said. "I have issued the decree for the dissolution of the assembly, and through this decree I am fulfilling the constitutional obligation that is clearly defined." Vetevendosje swept the early vote in December and made an alliance with ethnic minority groups to form a new government in February.

The same party won an election in February 2025 but could not muster a parliamentary majority, which led to a stalemate and snap vote in December. (AP)

US issues 30-day waiver allowing Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil amid Iran war

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, March 6: Amid the escalating conflict with Iran, the US said it is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil. "President Trump's energy agenda has resulted in oil and gas production reaching the highest levels ever recorded. To enable oil to keep flowing into the global market, the Treasury Department is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Thursday.

He said this "deliberately short-term measure" will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government, as it only authorises transactions involving oil already stranded at sea. "India is an essential partner of the United States, and we fully anticipate that New Delhi will ramp up purchases of U.S. oil. This stop-gap measure will alleviate pressure caused by Iran's attempt to take global energy hostage," Bessent said in a post on X. US President Donald Trump had imposed 25 per cent punitive tariffs on India for buying Russian oil, with the administration asserting that Delhi's purchases were helping fuel Russia's war against Ukraine. Last month, the US and India announced they had reached a framework for an Interim Agreement on trade, and Trump issued an Executive Order removing the 25 per cent

punitive tariffs on India, noting the commitment by New Delhi to stop importing energy from Moscow and increase purchasing American energy products.

A statement from the Department of Treasury titled 'Authorizing the Delivery and Sale of Crude Oil and Petroleum Products of Russian Federation Origin Loaded on Vessels as of March 5, 2026 to India' said that "all transactions prohibited...that are ordinarily incident and necessary to the sale, delivery, or offloading of crude oil or petroleum products of Russian Federation origin loaded on any vessel, including vessels blocked under the above listed authorities, on or before 12:01 a.m. eastern standard time, March 5, 2026 are authorized through 12:01 a.m. eastern daylight time, April 4, 2026, provided that the delivery or offloading of such crude oil or petroleum products occurs at a port" in India and the purchaser of such crude oil or petroleum products is an entity organised under the laws of India. The general license issued by the Treasury Department said it does not authorise any other transactions or activities prohibited by any other Executive order, including any transaction or activity involving Iran, the Government of Iran, or Iranian-origin goods or services that is prohibited by the Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations. (PTI)

Ukraine says Hungary seized USD 80 million from armoured cars, detained 7 bank employees

BUDAPEST (HUNGARY), March 6: Hungarian authorities have detained seven Ukrainian citizens, including a former Ukrainian intelligence officer, and seized two armoured cars carrying large amounts of cash across Hungary on suspicion of money laundering, officials said Friday.

Ukraine accused Hungary of taking the Ukrainians hostage and illegally seizing millions of dollars in cash. "This is state terrorism and racketeering," Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiba wrote on X late Thursday.

The seven were employees of the Ukrainian state-owned Oschadbank, and they were travelling in two armoured cars that were carrying the money between Austria and Ukraine when they were detained, Sybiba said.

The armoured cars were carrying cash as part of regular services between state banks, he said, adding that the status of the employees was unknown.

In a separate statement, Oschadbank wrote that 40 million US dollars as well as 35 million euros and 9 kilograms (19.8 pounds) of gold — worth around USD 1.5 million at current prices — had been apprehended by Hungary.

Hungary's National Tax and Customs Administration confirmed Friday that it had detained seven Ukrainian citizens and seized the two armoured cash-transport vehicles. It added it was conducting criminal proceedings on suspicion of money laundering.

Hungary's Interior Ministry, Foreign Ministry and Counter-Terrorism Centre did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

GPS data showed the vehicles were in the centre of Budapest near one of Hungary's law enforcement agencies, but that the location of the bank employees remained unknown, the Ukrainian bank said.

The incident further inflamed tensions between Hungary and Ukraine, which are embroiled in a bitter feud over Hungary's access to Russian oil through a pipeline that crosses Ukrainian territory.

Oil shipments through the Druzhba pipeline have been interrupted since January 27. Ukraine says a Russian drone strike damaged the pipeline's infrastructure, and that repairing it carried risks to technicians. It said that even if restored, it would remain vulnerable to further Russian attacks.

Hungary's government, however, has accused Ukraine of deliberately holding up supplies of Russian crude, and has vowed to take countermeasures against Kyiv until oil flows resume.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, who has maintained close relations with the Kremlin while escalating an aggressive anti-Ukraine campaign ahead of crucial elections next month, has called Ukraine Hungary's "enemy," and accused Ukrainian President



Volodymyr Zelenskyy of seeking to provoke an energy crisis in order to sway the April 12 vote.

Orbán did not directly mention the detention of the bank vehicles but alluded to the incident in statements to state radio Friday, saying: "We will stop things that are important to Ukraine passing through Hungary until we get the approval of the Ukrainians for oil shipments."

"The Ukrainians will run out of money sooner than we will run out of oil," he added.

Trailing in most polls behind a popular centre-right challenger, the populist Orbán has staked the election on convincing voters that Ukraine poses an existential threat to Hungary's security.

In office since 2010, the EU's longest-serving leader has claimed that if he loses the election, the European Union will force Hungary into bankruptcy by cutting Russian energy imports, and that Hungarian youth will be sent to their deaths on the front lines in Ukraine.

Hungary, along with neighbouring Slovakia, have defied EU efforts to wean off Russian fossil fuels, and continued to purchase them despite Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. Orbán previously ceased diesel shipments to Ukraine, vetoed a new round of EU sanctions against Russia and blocked a major, 90-billion-euro (USD 106-billion) loan for Kyiv in retaliation for the interruption in oil shipments. He's also deployed military forces to key energy infrastructure sites across Hungary, accusing Ukraine of plotting disruptions.

On Thursday, Orbán told an economic forum that Hungary would use "force," including "political and financial tools," to compel Ukraine to resume oil shipments. On his post on X, the Ukrainian foreign minister took issue with Orbán's comments, writing: "If this is the force" announced earlier today by Mr Orbán, then this is a force of a criminal gang," Sybiba wrote.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry on Friday urged Ukrainian citizens to abstain from visiting Hungary, saying their security could not be guaranteed amid "arbitrary actions by the Hungarian authorities."

The Ministry also called for Ukrainian and European businesses to take into account "the risk of arbitrary seizure of property" in Hungary. (AP)

Indonesia to ban social media for children under 16

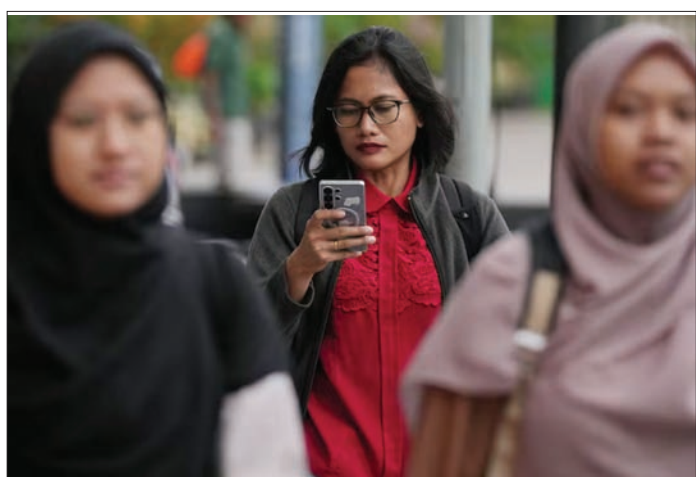
JAKARTA (INDONESIA), March 6: Indonesia will ban social media for children under 16, Communication and Digital Affairs Minister Meutya Hafid said Friday.

Hafid in a statement to media said that she just signed a government regulation that will mean children under the age of 16 can no longer have accounts on high-risk digital platforms, including YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Threads, X, Bigo Live and Roblox.

The implementation will start gradually from March 28, until all platforms fulfill their compliance obligations.

"The basis is clear. Our children face increasingly real threats. From exposure to pornography, cyberbullying, online fraud, and most importantly addiction. The government is here so that parents no longer have to fight alone against the giant of algorithms," Hafid said.

She added that the government is



taking this step as the best effort in the midst of a digital emergency to reclaim sovereignty over children's futures.

"We realize that the implementation of this regulation may cause some discomfort at first. Children

may complain and parents may be confused about how to respond to their children's complaints," Hafid said.

Earlier this week, Indonesia's Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs conducted a surprise

inspection of Meta Platforms' Jakarta office over concerns about the handling of harmful content on its platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

The ministry in a statement said that through this inspection, the Minister of Communication and Information Technology issued a stern warning regarding Meta's low level of compliance with national regulations.

The Associated Press has sent email requests for comment to TikTok and Meta, but has not yet received a response.

Indonesia will be the first country in Southeast Asia to restrict the access of children to social media.

The restriction of social media access for teens began in Australia in December 2025. Social media companies have revoked access to about 4.7 million accounts identified as belonging to children in Australia. (AP)

Seven Bills, including GST amendment, introduced in Arunachal Assembly

Key legislations on fire services, education transfers, fiscal management and local governance

ITANAGAR, March 6: As many as seven important Bills were introduced in the Arunachal Pradesh Assembly on Friday.

Home Minister Mama Natung introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Fire and Emergency Services Bill, which seeks to provide for the maintenance of fire and emergency services and strengthen provisions for fire prevention and safety measures in buildings and premises across the state.

Education Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Transfer and Posting of Employees of Education Department (Regulation and Management) Bill aimed at creating a comprehensive legal framework for regulating the transfer and posting of both teaching and non-teaching staff in the department.

Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Meina,



who also holds the Finance, Planning and Investment portfolios, introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill to amend the state GST

Act, 2017.

He also introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (Amendment) Bill to amend the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2006.

Panchayati Raj Minister Ojing Tasing introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Local Authorities (Prohibition of Defection) (Amendment) Bill to amend the Local Authorities (Prohibition of Defection) Act, 2003.

Urban Affairs Minister Balo Raja introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Urban and Country Planning (Amendment) Bill, while Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Salaries, Allowances and Pension of Members of Legislative Assembly (Amendment) Bill.

Both the bills seek to amend the respective existing acts. (PTI)

Tripura CM congratulates Jishnu Dev Varma on being appointed governor of Maharashtra



AGARTALA, March 6: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday congratulated Jishnu Dev Varma on his appointment as the new Governor of Maharashtra.

Varma, the governor of Telangana, has been appointed Maharashtra governor. Himachal Pradesh governor Shiv Pratap Shukla has been named as the new governor of Telangana, replacing Dev Varma, according to an official notification on Thursday.

Varma hails from Tripura.

The chief minister said, "Heartiest congratulations to Jishnu Dev Varma ji on your appointment as governor of Maharashtra. His vast experience and dedication to public service will surely guide the state towards progress and prosperity."

"Wishing him every success in this new role," he wrote on Facebook.

Tripura's Food & Civil Supplies minister, Sushanta Chowdhury, also hailed the appointment of Jishnu Dev Varma as the new governor of Maharashtra.

"Proud moment for Tripura again as Jishnu Dev Varma ji, governor of Telangana, has been appointed as the governor of Maharashtra! Heartiest Congratulations!" he posted on Facebook.

Speaker (In-charge) of Tripura Assembly, Rampada Jamatia, also greeted Varma for being appointed as the new governor of Maharashtra. "Karta (Varma), move forward with the blessing of the almighty. I pray for your well-being, and my sincere congratulations go to you," he wrote on Facebook.

Dev Varma was deputy chief minister in Biplab Kumar Deb government in Tripura. (PTI)

6 candidates from Manipur clear UPSC civil services exam

IMPHAL, March 6: Six candidates from Manipur have cleared the Civil Services Examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).

They are Calvin Ginnimlien Zou, Wahengbam Renudhar Singh, Th Vapani John, Rahul Moirangthem, Liangousang Vualnam and Ningthoujam Rishikant Singh.

Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh said it was a matter of pride that six candidates from the state have qualified in the examination.

"Heartiest congratulations to the successful candidates for their remarkable achievement. As they embark on their public service journey, we wish them all the best and anticipate their valuable contributions to the nation," he said in a post on X.

A total of 958 candidates qualified in the examination, the results of which were declared on Friday. They have been recommended for appointment to different central civil services.

The civil services examination is conducted annually in three stages -- preliminary, main and interview -- to select officers for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), among others.

Anuj Agnihotri topped the examination, while Rajeshwari Suve M and Akansh Dhull bagged the second and third ranks, respectively. (PTI)

Arunachal govt taking steps to address shortage of principals in HS schools: Minister

ITANAGAR, March 6: The Arunachal Pradesh government is taking steps to address the shortage of principals in higher secondary schools in the state, Education minister Pasang Dorjee Sona informed the Assembly on Friday.

Replying to a question raised by NPP MLA Thangwang Wangham during Question Hour, the minister said that under the existing Recruitment Rules, 2010, headmasters and vice-principals require eight years of qualifying service to be eligible for promotion as principals. However, at present, none of the officers from the feeder posts meets the required eligibility.

"As a stop-gap measure, the government is arranging posting of vice-principals as principals till the Recruitment Rule is rectified and once it is rectified, the department will post principals in various schools," Sona said. He said that the department has initiated a proposal seeking a one-time relaxation in the recruitment rules, particularly in the qualifying service period for headmasters and vice-principals.

"The proposal is currently under process and regular postings of principals will be taken up after the Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC) meeting," he said.

The minister said that the state currently

one-time financial assistance of ₹ 2 lakh to candidates clearing national-level examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission, including NDA, CDS, Indian Forest Service and Indian Engineering Service.

In addition, he said, tribal students securing admission to premier institutions such as IITs, IIMs, AIIMS and National Law Universities are also provided one-time assistance of ₹ 2 lakh.

The minister said the government has established career counselling facilities in all colleges of the state and has also conducted language enhancement courses for tribal students in collaboration with the British Council of India. (PTI)

has 110 higher secondary schools with 100 sanctioned posts of principals. Responding to the concern raised by Wangham, who represents the Longding-Pumao constituency, Sona acknowledged that the higher secondary school in Longding district has been functioning without a principal for a considerable period.

"The matter has been duly noted, and steps are being taken to fill the vacant post," he said, adding that the delay is mainly due to non-availability of eligible officers fulfilling the required eight years of qualifying service under the existing rules. (PTI)

Vice Prez urges Nagaland's youth to become responsible leaders, contribute to nation-building

KOHIMA, March 6: Vice President C P Radhakrishnan on Friday urged graduates of Nagaland University to become responsible leaders and contribute to nation-building, while stressing that peace, unity and character are essential for development.

Addressing the university's eighth convocation ceremony in Lumami in Zunheboto district, the Vice President said a university's true success lies not only in the knowledge it imparts but also in the leaders it produces.

"Convocation is not the end of the road but the beginning of a new journey," he told the graduates, urging them to adapt to a rapidly changing world, set clear goals and move forward with purpose.

Radhakrishnan, who said it was his first visit to Nagaland, praised the state's vibrant traditions and described it as a place where nature, culture and courage blend in harmony.

He noted that India's diversity remains united by common ideals and encouraged Nagaland's youth to appear for national services such as UPSC and serve the country.



Emphasising that unity is the nation's greatest strength, he said a 'Viksit Nagaland' will contribute to a 'Viksit Bharat'.

Referring to the Frontier Nagaland Territorial Authority (FNTA) agreement, he noted that peace and mutual respect are essential for the overall development of Nagaland.

He also acknowledged the contributions of the governor towards the development of the state.

Highlighting development initiatives in the Northeast, he referred to the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) launched by PM

Narendra Modi, and noted that the Union Budget 2026-27 has allocated over ₹ 6,800 crore for the region.

The Vice President appealed to the young people to stay away from drugs and encourage their friends and families to remain free from substance abuse.

During the convocation, Nagaland University awarded degrees to 6,884 students, including 107 PhD scholars, 825 postgraduate students, 846 graduates from professional programmes and 5,106 undergraduate students, while 54 gold medals were presented for outstanding academic performance.

Governor of Nagaland and

Chief Rector of the University, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, said the convocation celebrated not only academic success but also perseverance, discipline and commitment to knowledge.

He said that as the only central university in the state, Nagaland University has a special responsibility to serve as a centre of higher learning, research and innovation.

Bhalla encouraged graduates to uphold values of integrity, compassion and responsibility and to use their knowledge for the greater good of society.

Deputy Chief Minister T R Zeliang described the occasion as inspirational for students and urged the youth to become ambassadors of peace and contribute to the progress of the state and the nation.

Vice Chancellor Jagadish K Patnaik presented a report on the university's academic and research achievements. He highlighted the institution's expanding research ecosystem, including 53 externally funded research projects supported by national agencies. (PTI)

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, S.E. WORKS, KAAC SECRETARIAT DIPHU-782460

No. KAAC/S.E.-W-957 (Pt)/2023-24/239 A-B

Dtd. 13/02/2026.

TENDER NOTICE

Seated tender affixing non-refundable KAAC court fee stamp (receipt) Rs. 10:00 (Rupees Ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor/reputed firms of works department and will be received by the undersigned up to 4 P.M. on 10/03/2026. and will be opened on the same date, place and the hours in presence of the tenderer or their authorized agent if any.

If the day of the opening of tender happens to be a holiday/non-working days, the tender will be opened in the next day. The undersigned has the right to accept, reject any tender without any assigning reason thereof and will not be bound to accept the lowest tender quoted rate.

SL No	Name of Works	Tender Amount (Rs)	A/A Amounts (Rs)	Earnest money	Time allowed for completion
1	Construction of Retaining Wall at Chamhari Sarpo Killing Vill, Diphu.	Rs.72,00,000.00	Rs.72,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC 1% General 2%	90 days
2	Construction of Retaining Wall at Matipung Ronghithi, Diphu	Rs.82,47,600.00	Rs.82,47,600.00	ST/SC/OBC 1% General 2%	90 days

Terms & Condition

NB

- The rate to be quoted as % (Percent) above/below as per schedule rate for building/sanitary works for all division under CPWD-2020-21.
- Earnest money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of call deposit/bank draft & should be attached with the tender without which no tender will be accepted.
- The Contractor shall repair/re-Construction if the works executed failed due inferior quality of works, The KAAC Authority will take legal action if the contractor refuse to repair/re construction the works.
- The work must be carried on as directed by the EE (W), Branch Secretariat, Hamren.
- The following up to date documents should be enclosed with the tender.
 - Professional Tax Clearance Certificate.
 - Sale Tax Clearance Certificate/GST
 - Council Registration
 - Call Deposit
 - Council receipt
 - Caste Certificate
 - Pan Card/Adhaar Card
 - Account number
 - Payment will be made subject to availabilities of fund
 - The undersigned is not bound to accept the lowest quoted rate.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer (SE), Works.
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,
Diphu

'Success of PM's strategic oil diplomacy'

BJP hails 30-day waiver to purchase Russian oil

NEW DELHI, March 6: After the US announced that it is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil, the BJP on Friday termed the development a success of the "strategic oil diplomacy" under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and said it's a "big egg on the face of anti-India Rahul Gandhi and the Congress".

The BJP also accused the Congress and Gandhi of creating panic by spreading "fake news on oil shortage".

"Rahul Gandhi and Congress hate seeing India act with strategic restraint and strategic clarity under Prime Minister Narendra Modi," BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said in a post on X.

Amid the escalating conflict with Iran, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Thursday, "President (Donald) Trump's energy agenda has resulted in oil and gas production reaching the highest levels ever recorded. To enable oil to keep flowing into the global market, the Treasury Department is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil."

"India is an essential partner of the United States, and we fully an-



Congress leader Jairam Ramesh for his comments on the US waiver, and said the main opposition party's "conspiracy" to provoke India to make a mistake will not succeed.

Taking a swipe at the Modi government after the US announced the temporary waiver, the Congress asked till when this "American blackmail" will continue.

In a post in rhyming in Hindi on X, Ramesh said, "Trump ka naya khel, Dilli dost ko kaha, Putin se le sakte ho tel, kab tak chalega ye Ameriki blackmail? (Trump's new game; told his friend in Delhi you can take oil from Putin; how long will this American blackmail continue?)"

Hitting back, Bhandari asked Ramesh to stop spreading "fake news".

"You have a history of selling sovereignty. That's what Gandhi-Vadra and compromised Congress did for 70 years," the BJP spokesperson said in a separate X post.

"Facts: India has been buying Russian oil; there has been no disruption! You should answer why in 2013 you begged the United States for an exception to sanctions for the purchase of Iranian oil," Bhandari added. (PTI)

tipitate that New Delhi will ramp up purchases of US oil. This stop-gap measure will alleviate the pressure caused by Iran's attempt to take global energy hostage," Bessent said in a post on X.

This "deliberately short-term measure" will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government, as it only authorises transactions involving oil already stranded at sea,

Bessent said.

Welcoming the development, Bhandari said, "A big egg on the face of anti-India Rahul Gandhi and Congress, which wanted to create panic by spreading fake news on 'oil shortage'!"

"Yet again India's strategic oil diplomacy under PM Narendra Modi succeeds!" the BJP spokesperson added.

Bhandari also lashed out at

Rahul Gandhi says 'Kerala Story-2' not being watched is 'good news'



IDUKKI (KERALA), March 6: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said that "it was good news" that the movie 'Kerala Story-2 Goes Beyond' was not being widely watched.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha was interacting with students at Marian College in Kuttikkanam.

Responding to a student's question about movies being used as propaganda, Gandhi shared his views on 'Kerala Story-2 Goes Beyond'.

"While the good news is that 'Kerala Story' seems to be empty, and no one is watching it. It also shows that there are people, a majority of them, who haven't understood what Kerala is and its traditions and culture," he said.

According to Rahul, movies, television and media have increasingly been "weaponised".

"It is used precisely for that purpose—to vilify people, eliminate them and create divisions in society so that certain people benefit while others are harmed. India has become very much like that," he said.

He said such developments were extremely damaging for the country, and large amounts of money were being spent on that purpose.

Speaking about his personal interests, he said he reads quite a lot on subjects he wants to learn about, but does not watch many movies.

"As hobbies, I like playing chess and doing martial arts. I swim, run and exercise to keep fit," he said.

Rahul said that although he represented Kerala in Parliament for five years, he could not fully under-

stand the state in depth, but had learnt a great deal from the people of Wayanad.

"I was very surprised when I first arrived there. There was a big landslide that claimed several lives, but I was impressed by how people responded. Even after such a tragedy, they were helping others. It didn't matter what community or financial background a person belonged to," he said.

He said Kerala has very old and valuable traditions and advised students to remain rooted in the state's culture while also learning from other places.

Gandhi also alleged that the country's education system was under pressure from a particular ideology.

"If you look at vice-chancellors in universities, a large number of them were appointed simply because they are part of the RSS or a particular ideology. There is ideological pressure on the education system. Education should not be limited to any particular way of thinking, especially not to the RSS' divisive view," he said.

On artificial intelligence, Rahul said India has not yet reached the level of the United States or China.

"At an AI summit, there was a Chinese robot masquerading as an Indian robot," he said.

He said that if India wants to be powerful in AI, it should control its own data.

He claimed that while the United States has access to global data, China controls its own data, which strengthens its position in AI.

"The recent deal with the US has handed over our entire data to America. US companies can keep Indian data wherever they like and will not be taxed. So we have damaged our potential in AI in the last couple of weeks," he alleged.

On the ongoing conflict in West Asia, Gandhi said that on the surface it appears to be a war involving the United States and Israel against Iran, but the larger geopolitical players were the US, China and Russia.

"The US is trying to ensure it remains the dominant superpower, while China is advancing closer to it. That is the broader picture," he said.

He added that the Middle East is the centre of global energy production and conflicts there have wider consequences. (PTI)

US 'waiver' to India for buying Russian oil humiliating: CPI leader in letter to PM

NEW DELHI, March 6: Left leaders on Friday questioned the Centre over the US' announcement of a "waiver" to Indian refiners for purchasing Russian oil, terming it a "humiliation" of sovereign India.

CPI leader P Sandosh Kumar in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India's foreign policy appears to have "drifted away from its foundational principles of non-alignment".

The Rajya Sabha MP said at a time when the war against Iran by the US and Israel threatens to embroil West Asia into wider and dangerous conflict, many across India are concerned that India's foreign policy posture appears to have drifted from principles of non-alignment, strategic autonomy and respect for sovereignty.

He said in recent years, India has increasingly been perceived as aligning itself with interests of the US and Israel rather than firmly pursuing its independent strategic priorities.

"This perception has been reinforced on several occasions, including during the negotiations surrounding the India-US trade arrangements which left large sections of our farmers vulnerable to imports from the United States, and by repeated claims by US President Donald Trump that he pressured India to reduce purchases of Russian oil, even though a diversified and affordable energy basket clearly serves India's national interest," Kumar said in his letter.

He said the remarks made by US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent - who announced a "30-day waiver



to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil" - are humiliating for a sovereign nation like India.

"Such a statement raises a fundamental question before the nation: since when has the United States begun 'allowing' India to decide from whom we buy energy or with whom we conduct trade?" Kumar said.

"When Iran, one of India's important historical partners and a key source of energy, is under attack and regional stability is under grave threat, this patronising declaration appears to suggest that India's energy choices are now subject to American approval," he said.

Kumar said this situation is "deeply disturbing for our people and represents a grave embarrassment for India's foreign and trade policy".

"India is a proud and independent republic of 140 crore citizens, not a subordinate state expected to adjust its sovereign decisions according to the preferences of Washington. I therefore urge you to raise this matter firmly in the ap-

propriate diplomatic forums and make it unequivocally clear that India's energy security and foreign policy choices will be determined solely by India's national interest," he wrote to the prime minister.

He also demanded a "clear explanation" over the "demeaning public assertions" about India. "The nation expects its leadership to speak with clarity, defend our sovereignty and ensure that India's dignity is not subjected to such public humiliation."

CPI(M) Rajya Sabha MP John Brittas too, expressed a similar sentiment.

"US 'grants' India a 30-day waiver to buy stranded Russian oil amid Middle East chaos? Is this 'facilitation' or pure humiliation for a sovereign nation like India?" he wrote on X, asserting that it is time to break free from US diktats on India's energy choices.

Amid escalating conflict with Iran, the US has announced that it is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver on Russian oil purchases.

"President Trump's energy agenda has resulted in oil and gas production reaching the highest levels ever recorded. To enable oil to keep flowing into the global market, the Treasury Department is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver to allow Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said on Thursday.

Bessent said this "deliberately short-term measure" will not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government, as it only authorises transactions involving oil already stranded at sea. (PTI)



important issue for us and we will certainly demand an urgent discussion on the West Asian situation," Ramesh said.

Referring to a US submarine torpedoing and sinking an Iranian warship in international waters off Sri Lanka's coast, he said this was extraordinary and has never happened before.

He asserted that suo motu statements by the government are meaningless because then no clarifications allowed.

"We want a full-fledged short duration discussion. It should not be a suo motu statement on behalf of the government because just to demand a statement is meaningless as the minister would come, make a statement and go. You are not allowed to ask any questions. So we need a full-fledged short duration discussion on the West Asian situation caused by the aggression of the US and Israel on Iran and the subsequent attacks by Iran on Gulf countries, the activities of the US navy in the Indian Ocean," Ramesh said.

Referring to the US statement that it is issuing a temporary 30-day waiver on Russian oil purchases, the Congress leader said, "Today's statement by the US treasury secretary (Scott Bessent)...he is doing us a favour by saying that he will give us a 30-day waiver. What does it show, the language that is used in an official US treasury secretary statement, it shows India as a supplicant and that it does India a favour". (PTI)

Cannot revert to nations believing might is right: Kapil Sibal

NEW DELHI, March 6: Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Friday said there has been a "slow dismantling" of the rule-based global order in the last couple of years, which is not good for global peace.

Days after Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed in a joint strike on Tehran by the US and Israel, Sibal visited the Iranian Embassy here and signed the condolence book.

Speaking with reporters, the Independent Rajya Sabha MP said, "I've come here to pay my heartfelt, deepest condolences over the manner in which Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was assassinated."

"I personally believe, and I'm sure every nation believes, that conflicts should be resolved through dialogue and not through the use of weapons of mass destruction, and that it is necessary to do so to preserve the global order," Sibal said.

In fact, after World War-II, the global community decided to forge a rule-based global order, he said.

"But I think, unfortunately, in the last couple of years, there has been a slow dismantling of that rule-based global order. That's not good for global peace, or for any nation, because we cannot revert to a situation where nations believe that might is right, that is the law of the jungle," Sibal said.

"I am sure the global community will come together, no matter what their differences are, to enter into a dialogue, resolve the issues and let global peace be maintained," he added. (PTI)

Had Gyanesh Kumar not been CEC, I would've chopped his finger for raising it at Mamata: TMC MP

KOLKATA, March 6: TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee on Friday triggered a political controversy after saying he would have "cut the finger" of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar had the latter not been holding the constitutional post, alleging that the poll panel chief had behaved "very badly" with West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The senior TMC leader and lawyer remarked while addressing supporters at a rally in Kolkata during protests by the ruling party against alleged arbitrary deletions in the electoral rolls following the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR).

Referring to an alleged exchange between Kumar and Banerjee last month when the CM had gone to New Delhi to meet him and register her protest against SIR, the Serampore MP said, "CEC behaved very badly with her. He dared to raise his finger at the CM. If he had not been the CEC, I would have cut his finger that day."

His comment drew sharp reactions from political circles, with opposition leaders criticising the language used against a constitutional authority.

"The remarks reflect the mindset of the TMC, which has no regard for democracy or constitutional institutions," BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari said. (PTI)

'Government pursuing 'balanced' development strategy'

Siddaramaiah presents record 17th budget

BENGALURU, March 6: In his record 17th budget tabled in the Assembly on Friday, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah proposed a social media ban for children aged under 16 years, and made a slew of announcements that included upgradation of schools, initiating and completing various water projects including the Mekedatu reservoir which neighbouring Tamil Nadu objects to, and an infrastructure push for the capital city.

Presenting the Budget with a total outlay of ₹ 4,48,004 crore, he stressed that the government was pursuing a development strategy that balances welfare programmes with investments in infrastructure and long-term economic transformation. It was developing a Karnataka-specific economic framework described as the "11G model" to guide the state's growth.

Key budget announcements include filling up 56,432 vacant posts across various departments, "Vasudhamruta" programme to promote environmentally friendly and sustainable farming, 800 new Karnataka Public Schools, development of 40 degree colleges and 11 polytechnics, implementation of the Rohith Vemula Act to prevent caste-based educational and social discrimination against students, student union elections in colleges and universities, 40 new residential schools, ₹ 5,000 crore action plan for Kalyana Karnataka development and ₹ 7,000 crore allocation for Bengaluru infrastructure.

For 2026-27, the revenue deficit is estimated at ₹ 22,957 crore. The fiscal deficit is estimated at ₹ 97,449 crore, which is

2.95 per cent of GSDP, and total liabilities at the end of the year are estimated at ₹ 8,24,389 crore, amounting to 24.94 per cent of GSDP. Gross borrowings is estimated at ₹ 1.32 lakh crore.

"Both the fiscal deficit and total liabilities are within the limits prescribed under the Karnataka Fiscal Responsibility Act, this reflects the state's continued commitment to responsible fiscal management," Siddaramaiah said. The opposition BJP staged a "Khaali Chambu" (empty vessel) protest saying that the budget has nothing to offer to the people.

"This budget is bland. It has no new projects. The only new project is more and more borrowing," Leader of Opposition R Ashoka said.

Lashing out at the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre, Siddaramaiah said that by not adhering to the federal system of governance as per the Constitution, the former was doing "injustice" to Karnataka.

His government was pursuing a development strategy that balances welfare programmes with investments in infrastructure and long-term economic transformation, and urged the Union government to be more sensitive to the state's demands.

Among others, he reaffirmed the state's commitment to pursue the Mekedatu dam project on river Cauvery and announced a social media ban for children below 16 years. Although he did not elaborate on the matter in the House, he late told a press conference that children below 16 years can keep a mobile phone,



but they cannot use social media.

A programme was being finalised for the implementation, he added.

"Our state is at the forefront in all sectors of the nation's development; it is one of the key states that contributes the highest tax revenues," he said.

The Budget along with providing for five guarantee schemes also focuses on capital investment, employment generation, infrastructure creation, addressing regional imbalances.

He proposed an IT Park in Mangaluru, developing Mysuru as second IT city of Karnataka, establishing Bangalore Robotics and AI Innovation Zone, providing free

insulin pens to improve the health of all children up to 18 years with Type-1 diabetes, among several others.

Drawing an analogy from the epic tradition, the chief minister said, "The cow that yields abundant milk requires proper care. It is Bheeshma's philosophy that if it becomes weak, the entire cowherd suffers." Centre should recognise this and respond sensitively to the state's demands.

About the "11 G model", he said it includes components such as a guarantee economy promoting welfare and gender equality, good public education aimed at universal access to quality education, good

health for all through comprehensive healthcare, a grassroots economy focused on agriculture and rural development and good governance through people-friendly administration.

He also said that the model incorporates gig economy initiatives for labour welfare, geographical equality to reduce regional disparities, a global trade economy to promote trade and industry, a tourism-driven, globe-trotting economy, a green economy encouraging renewable energy and environment-friendly activities and a growing urban economy supporting sustainable urban growth.

"These economic principles form the basis on which we are steering the chariot of the state's development," Siddaramaiah said, adding that the finance department's budget documents elaborate on how the framework defines Karnataka's unique development model.

Siddaramaiah accused the Centre of treating Karnataka unfairly by disregarding the constitutional principles of cooperative federalism.

He also said that rate restructuring resulted in reduced GST collections by ₹ 10,000 crore for the current fiscal year in Karnataka, and there will be a reduction of ₹ 15,000 crore next year.

Siddaramaiah further said that Karnataka continues to demonstrate strong fiscal performance and robust revenue mobilisation capacity. Despite structural challenges due to the Centre's tax policy changes, Karnataka's own revenue collection exhibited resilience, he claimed. (PTI)

TOTAL 958 CANDIDATES QUALIFY

AIIMS graduate Anuj Agnihotri tops civil services exam

NEW DELHI, March 6: Anuj Agnihotri, an AIIMS graduate, has topped the coveted civil services examination 2025, results of which were declared by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) on Friday.

Rajeshwari Suve M and Akansh Dhull have got the second and third ranks, respectively.

Agnihotri secured the first rank, with medical science as his optional subject, in his third attempt.

He has done MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

"I am extremely happy at this achievement. It's an incredible feeling," Agnihotri told PTI from his residence in Rawatbhata under Chittorgarh district of Rajasthan.

He credited his success to family members saying they have been his biggest source of inspiration.

"They (family) prioritised me and my efforts, and ensured that I focused on the exam. I dedicate this achievement to my family," Agnihotri said.

Second rank holder Rajeshwari, who has a Bachelor of Engineering (BE) degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from Anna University, Chennai, had chosen sociology as her optional subject.

Akansh, a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) graduate from University of Delhi, bagged the third rank with commerce & accountancy as his optional subject.



Among the finally qualified candidates, top five comprises one woman and four men.

Raghav Jhunjhunwala and Ishan Bhatnagar have got the fourth and fifth ranks, respectively.

Jhunjhunwala, who has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Economics from University of Delhi, secured the fourth position with economics as his optional subject.

Bhatnagar, who holds BA LLB (Hons) from National Law University, Delhi, got fifth rank with sociology as his optional subject.

The top 25 candidates comprise 11 women and 14 men.

A total of 958 candidates -- 659 men and 299 women -- have qualified the examination and are recommended for appointment to different central civil services, the Commission said, adding that the candidature of 348 recommended candidates has been kept provisional.

"The UPSC has declared the final results of the CSE 2025 today. Congrats to all successful candidates as you begin a career of service to the nation. For those who did not make it - the learning from this journey will guide you in the paths ahead," UPSC chairman Ajay Kumar said in a post on X.

The civil services examination (CSE) is

conducted annually in three stages -- preliminary, main and interview -- by the Commission to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others.

The civil services (preliminary) examination, 2025 was conducted on May 25, last year. A total of 9,37,876 candidates applied for this examination, out of which 5,76,793 actually appeared in the test, the UPSC said in a statement.

As many as 14,161 candidates qualified for appearance in the written (main) examination which was held in August, 2025. Of these, 2,736 candidates qualified for the personality test (interview) of the examination.

Educational qualifications of the top 25 successful candidates range from graduation in engineering, humanities, science, commerce, law, medical science and mass media from premier institutions of the country such as Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), National Law University (NLU), AIIMS, Delhi Technological University (DTU), Anna University, University of Delhi and University of Mumbai among others.

Top 25 successful candidates have opted for subjects like anthropology, commerce & accountancy, chemistry, economics, electrical engineering, history, mathematics, medical science, philosophy, political science & international relations, public administration and sociology as their optional choice in the written (main) exami-

nation.

The UPSC said the recommended candidates also include 42 persons with benchmark disability -- 10 orthopedically handicapped, 14 visually challenged, nine hearing impaired and nine with multiple disabilities.

As many as 258 other candidates have been put on a reserve list, the statement said.

Of the total qualified candidates, 317 belong to the General category, 104 from Economically Weaker Section (EWS), 306 from Other Backward Class (OBC), 158 from Scheduled Caste (SC) and 73 from Scheduled Tribe (ST) categories.

The result of two candidates has been kept withheld, the Commission said.

The central government had reported 1,087 vacancies to be filled through the 2025 examination.

The UPSC has a "facilitation counter" near the examination hall in its campus.

Candidates can obtain any information/clarification regarding their examinations/recruitments on the working days between 10 am to 5 pm in person or over telephone numbers 23385271/23381125/2309854, the statement said.

"Marks will be available on the website within 15 days from the date of declaration of result," it added.

Banaras Hindu University's postgraduate Shakti Dubey had bagged the first rank in the civil services examination 2024. (PTI)

CISF to oversee security of sea ports across country: Amit Shah



MUNDALI (ODISHA), March 6: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday announced that the Central Industrial Security Force will now oversee the security of various sea ports across the country.

In his address at the 57th Raising Day of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) here, Shah said the force already protects 361 critical installations, including 71 airports, the Parliament complex, and the Statue of Unity near Kevadia in Gujarat.

"The CISF undertakes such a variety of tasks. You are securing the grand monument of Sardar Patel, you are protecting our Parliament complex, the largest panchayat of our democracy, and elsewhere you are securing dams and critical railway installations," Shah said.

The home minister also detailed the strategic shift toward maritime and aerial defence, saying that, along with these established roles, the government has worked to include the security of ports for the CISF.

Shah announced that the CISF has been designated as the nodal agency for drone security and said that the Ministry of Home Affairs has decided to create a new vertical for this purpose.

Highlighting the force's growing footprint over the past year, Shah listed several new locations approved for CISF protection, including the Kartavya Bhavan, Seva Teerth, Noida International Airport, Navi Mumbai Airport, and various critical energy and mining projects such as the Talpaipalli coal mine project in Chhattisgarh.

"After the CISF takes over the security of the ports, our maritime safety will improve in tandem with the country's economic growth," Shah said.

The announcement follows a decision by the Centre to designate the CISF as a Recognised Security Organisation (RSO) under the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code, effectively making it the new safety regulator for approximately 250 facilities along India's maritime borders.

This role was previously managed by the Indian Register of Shipping, but the government identified a need for a professional paramilitary agency to handle core functions such as counter-terrorism and anti-sabotage operations at all export-import ports. (PTI)

Switzerland made anticipatory science diplomacy priority in its foreign policy: Swiss official



NEW DELHI, March 6: Science and technology have become a "core currency" in international affairs, influencing sovereignty and security on a global scale, prompting Switzerland to make anticipatory science diplomacy a priority in its foreign policy, a top Swiss official said on Friday.

At an event hosted by the Swiss Embassy here, Alexandre Fasel, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, also said, "Our collaboration with India reflects a shared vision between two global innovation leaders, combining cutting-edge excellence with India's unparalleled ability to scale innovation for millions."

The embassy hosted an 'Anticipatory Leadership Lab' in collaboration with the Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator (GESDA) and the office of the principal scientific advisor to the government of India.

The Lab brought together around 60 leaders from the fields of science, governance, diplomacy, business and civil society in a structured, multistakeholder dialogue to strengthen their col-

lective capacity to anticipate and govern emerging scientific and technological breakthroughs, officials said.

GESDA's engagement with Delhi builds on a series of exchanges with Indian counterparts over the past years, including interactions during the 2024 and 2025 GESDA summits, an official statement said.

The GESDA Science Breakthrough Radar -- an annual report that maps the research advances expected to transform society and the planet over the next 5, 10 and 25 years -- was also discussed at the event.

The New Delhi engagement is part of a growing long-term partnership between the GESDA and India to deepen collaboration around the Science Breakthrough Radar and anchor anticipatory science diplomacy capacities locally, the statement said.

Fasel said, "For the Swiss government, anticipating and understanding scientific breakthroughs is no longer a luxury, but a diplomatic necessity."

"Science and technology have

become a 'core currency' in international affairs, influencing prosperity, sovereignty and security on a global scale," the statement quoted Fasel as saying.

Switzerland has, therefore, made anticipatory science diplomacy "a priority in our foreign policy," he said.

"Our collaboration with India reflects a shared vision between two global innovation leaders, combining cutting-edge excellence with India's unparalleled ability to scale innovation for millions," he added.

At the event, the participants collaborated to explore how frontier technologies could impact India and the world across various timeframes, identify opportunities and risks for public policy, diplomacy and industry, and suggest actionable steps for cooperation, the statement said.

It underlined that India has played a "pioneering role" as a member of the advisory committee of the Open Quantum Institute -- GESDA's anticipatory governance initiative designed to address the societal implications of quantum technologies before they reach full maturity and widespread deployment.

Recent discussions led to engagements in New Delhi in March 2025, including bilateral meetings with the office of the principal scientific advisor and participation in initiatives such as the Raisina Young Fellows Forum and the newly-created Raisina Science Diplomacy Initiative (SDI), announced a day ago. (PTI)

ED attaches Rs 441-cr worth assets in Andhra liquor 'scam' case

AMARAVATI, March 6: The Enforcement Directorate on Friday said it has attached assets worth more than Rs 441 crore of various accused involved in the Andhra Pradesh liquor 'scam' case, which allegedly took place during the previous YSRCP regime in the state.

The attached properties consist of bank balances, fixed deposits, land parcels and other immovable assets belonging to the prime accused Kessireddy Rajasekhara Reddy, his family members and related entities, other accused like Booneti Chanakya and his related entities and relatives and entities of Donthireddy Vasudeva Reddy apart from some others. The ED said in a statement that after the 2019 assembly elections, the newly formed state government (led by chief minister and YSRCP leader Jagan Mohan Reddy) "monopolised" retail liquor outlets through government retail outlets (GROs) operated by the Andhra Pradesh State Beverages Corporation Limited (APSBCL).

The YSRCP stated that all such allegations were baseless.

As part of a criminal conspiracy, the automated system was deliberately disabled and replaced with a manual system, thereby vesting unfettered discretionary powers with APSBCL officials in the issuance of orders for supply (OFS). According to the ED, the alleged scam caused the state government a loss of ₹ 4,000 crore. The federal probe agency registered a PMLA case in September 2025 to investigate the alleged scam, taking cognisance of an Andhra Pradesh Police SIT complaint. (PTI)

DMRC eyes overseas metro projects, sets up Delhi Metro International Ltd

NEW DELHI, March 6: The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has set up a new subsidiary, the Delhi Metro International Limited (DMIL), as it looks to bid for metro-rail projects in foreign cities and expand its consultancy and related urban-transport services abroad.

The new company has been created as part of the DMRC's efforts to expand its expertise in metro-rail planning, construction and operations beyond India, and explore business opportunities in international markets, an official said.

He said the subsidiary will enable the DMRC to directly participate in bidding for metro-rail projects in foreign cities and undertake consultancy work related to urban-transport systems.

"The corporation has already been exploring opportunities abroad and is currently associated with a metro-related project in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where it is providing technical support and consultancy," the official told PTI.

According to the Delhi Metro, it has qualified in the pre-bid process for the construction of the Tel Aviv Metro Project in Israel. In addition, the DMRC is also in the process of bidding for other international metro projects, such as those in Alexandria in Egypt, Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam and Mauritius.

According to the official, to streamline the overseas projects, the DMIL will mainly focus on consultancy services, Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS)-related activities and last-mile-connectivity business operations linked to metro and urban-transport projects.

He said the move will help the Delhi Metro utilise its experience in building and operating one of the country's largest metro networks and offer its expertise to cities abroad.

To operationalise the subsidiary, the DMRC plans to extend its existing enterprise resource planning system based on "Systems, Applications and Products in Data Processing" (SAP), which is currently used to manage various administrative and operational functions, he said.

The official said this will involve creating a separate company code for the DMIL within the existing SAP framework, allowing the new company to function independently, while remaining connected to the DMRC's central system.

The system will support operations related to finance, human resources, procurement and project management, while ensuring smooth coordination between the parent organisation and the subsidiary, according to the official.

The proposed framework will also ensure statutory compliance for the DMIL under laws, such as the Companies Act, and requirements related to the GST, TDS, payroll management and auditing processes, he said, adding that as part of the project, the contractor handling the work will create the new company code and configure statutory details, such as the registered address, PAN, TAN, GSTIN and financial year settings. (PTI)

MHA allows enhanced 7-yr deputation for central police forces, Assam Rifles personnel joining NSG

NEW DELHI, March 6: The Centre has granted an enhanced seven-year tenure to central armed police forces and Assam Rifles personnel joining the counter-terrorist commando force NSG on deputation, considering the 'Black Cat' force's special combat requirements.

The Union home ministry approved the decision after the National Security Guard (NSG) requested an extension of the deputation tenure for these personnel from the current five-year period (extendable by one year twice) to seven years to preserve "institutional memory" and the skill sets of its trained commandos.

The NSG is the federal counter-terrorist force and its commandos are called 'Black Cats' because of the black-colour overalls they wear during combat.

The force undertakes special counter-terrorist operations and provides security cover to high-risk VIPs, in addition to conducting anti-hijack tasks.

The force draws its entire strength from deputations sent by the central armed police forces (47 per cent) and the Army (53 per cent).

An official told PTI that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had issued an order on March 5 stating that personnel from central armed police forces (CAPFs) and Assam Rifles joining the NSG on deputation will be allowed a full seven-year stint "at the time of initial appointment," keeping in mind the

"specialised nature of the job" of the commando force.

Until now, such personnel had a five-year fixed deputation in the NSG, extendable twice by one year.

Officials felt that the five-plus-one-plus-one tenure resulted in lost time for administrative clearances and only a handful of commandos were able to get clearance from their parent forces because those forces also required their service.

They suggested that NSG should have a longer deputation period similar to that prevalent for the National Investigation Agency (NIA), Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

Officials said that, according to the latest MHA order, the approved 7 year deputation period in the NSG will not be extendable.

Each commando is trained in specialised tasks like house intervention, close-quarter combat, precision firing, sniping, drone and counter-drone surveillance, communications and unarmed fighting. A senior officer said that a five-year tenure was too short and that commandos should serve for seven years so their skills could be utilised for the NSG's duties and tasks.

The 1984 raised NSG is establishing a new commando hub at Ayodhya in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. It plans to enhance its counter-terror drills to combat terrorists and resolve hostage situations aboard cruise liners, trains and in various urban locations. (PTI)

Tree cover up, forests shrinking, pollution rising in rivers in Maharashtra: Economic Survey

MUMBAI, March 6: Maharashtra's ecological outlook reflects a mixed picture, with gains in tree cover and wildlife conservation, contrasting with signs of degradation in core forest ecosystems and worsening pollution in major rivers, according to the state's Economic Survey 2025-26.

The survey was tabled in the state legislature on Thursday.

It indicates that while targeted conservation programmes and social forestry initiatives have improved certain environmental indicators, forest degradation, rapid urbanisation and inadequate sewage treatment continue to strain the state's ecological systems.

As per the survey, Maharashtra's total forest cover stands at 50,859 sq km, accounting for 16.5 per cent of its geographical area of 3,07,713 sq km. This remains significantly below the 33 per cent benchmark set under the National Forest Policy.

Compared to the 2021 assessment, the state registered a reduction of 54.47 sq km in forest cover, the survey report said, explaining that "forest area" and "tree cover" represent distinct categories and cannot be used interchangeably while assessing environmental health.

Forest area refers to land that is legally notified by the government as forest, including Reserved or Protected Forests. Such areas may not necessarily have dense vegetation and can include landscapes with little or no tree growth, such as alpine pastures, wetlands or degraded tracts.

Tree cover, on the other hand, refers to small patches of trees less than one hectare in size or scattered trees outside recorded forests. These include plantations, roadside



trees and linear patches along canals or fields that do not form part of a natural forest ecosystem.

The survey notes that Maharashtra ranks first in the country in tree cover outside forests. According to the India State of Forest Report 2023, the state has 14,525 sq km of tree cover, representing 4.7 per cent of its geographical area.

This figure has risen steadily over the past decade, from 10,806 sq km in 2019 to 12,108 sq km in 2021, then to 14,525 sq km in 2023. The growth has largely been attributed to social forestry programmes, urban greening drives and plantation initiatives, it said.

However, environmental analysts cited in the survey caution that a rise in tree cover does not necessarily offset the ecological loss caused by degradation of natural forests, which support more complex biodiversity

and play a more significant role in carbon storage and ecosystem stability.

In terms of canopy density, 19.4 per cent of Maharashtra's forests are classified as very dense, 42.4 per cent as moderately dense and 38.2 per cent as open forests, according to the latest assessment cited in the survey.

The survey also notes that environmental pressures such as industrialisation, urban expansion and deforestation are contributing to climate anomalies in the state, including rising temperatures and changing rainfall patterns.

However, certain ecological indicators show improvement.

Maharashtra has 315.09 sq km of mangrove cover, accounting for about 6.3 per cent of India's total mangrove area. To strengthen protection, the state has notified 11,548 hectares of mangroves as reserved

forests.

Wildlife conservation efforts have also yielded positive results. The tiger population in Maharashtra increased from 312 in 2018 to 444 in 2022, according to the survey.

Despite these gains, the survey highlights serious concerns regarding water pollution and waste management.

Major rivers in the state continue to experience severe ecological stress. Data from the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board cited in the survey shows that the Mithi river in Mumbai records extremely high pollution levels, with "biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) measured at 101.8 mg per litre and faecal coliform levels at 1,882.2 mg per litre".

Similarly, the Mula-Mutha river in Pune continues to record high BOD and faecal coliform levels, indicating sustained contamination from untreated sewage and urban discharge.

A major factor behind river pollution is the gap in sewage treatment capacity. According to the survey, only 51.4 per cent of the sewage generated in the state was treated during 2025-26 up to December, meaning nearly half of the wastewater continues to be discharged untreated into rivers and other water bodies.

The state has performed relatively better in managing solid waste. Out of 5.44 lakh metric tonnes of solid waste generated daily in 2024-25, about 81.8 per cent was treated, the survey notes.

The government has launched initiatives such as the 'Majhi Vasundhara Abhiyaan', which involves more than 27,000 gram panchayats, to promote environmental awareness and expand green cover. (PTI)

PAWAN KALYAN-STARRER 'USTAAD BHAGAT SINGH' TO RELEASE ON MARCH 19



The makers of "Ustaad Bhagat Singh", featuring Pawan Kalyan in the lead role, have announced the new release date for the film, which will hit the big screen on March 19.

Directed by Harish Shankar, it is produced by Mythri Movie Makers. It was previously slated to release on March 26.

Production banner shared the announcement with a post on its official X handle on Thursday.

"Our USTAAD arrives a week early to spark Massive celebrations at the box office. #UstaadBhagatSingh GRAND RELEASE WORLD-

WIDE ON 19th MARCH, 2026. #UBSONMarch19th. POWER STAR. @PawanKalyan @sreeleela14 #RaashiiKhanna @ThisIsDSP @rparthiepan @DoP_Bose #AnandSai @Venupro @MythriOfficial @SonyMusicSouth @UBSthefilm" read the caption.

The film features Raashii Khanna and Sreeleela alongside Kalyan and revolves around an IPS officer and his daughter, who fake their deaths following his family's murder by former foes. It will clash with Aditya Dhar's directorial "Dhurandhar 2" at the box office. (PTI)

Exhibitors' body opposes release of Mammootty-Mohanlal film 'Patriot' over revenue sharing dispute

The Malayalam film "Patriot", featuring actors Mammootty and Mohanlal, has run into uncertainty after the Film Exhibitors United Organisation of Kerala (FEUOK) opposed its theatre release following a dispute over revenue sharing.

Members of FEUOK said theatres under the organisation would not screen the movie, as its producer, Anto Joseph, has demanded a 60 per cent share of the theatre collection during the first two weeks.

The movie is scheduled to hit theatres on April 23.

A FEUOK member told PTI that the usual practice for Malayalam

films released in theatres under the body is a 60:40 collection ratio in the first week, which later shifts to 55:45 in the second week. "However, the producer is demanding that the 60:40 ratio continue for the first two weeks. As theatre operators are already reeling under a severe financial crisis, such an agreement on revenue sharing cannot be accepted," he said.

FEUOK maintained that if such a revenue-sharing arrangement is accepted, given that it is a big-budget film, other producers may demand the same in the future.

Producer Anto Joseph told the media that he had also learned of FEUOK's decision and that further

discussions would be held on the issue.

He said the demand was made as the film is a big-budget project featuring leading actors Mammootty and Mohanlal.

He expressed confidence that there would be no issues with the film's release and said the matter would also be taken up with the Producers Association.

"Patriot" is directed by Mahesh Narayanan. Mammootty and Mohanlal had earlier appeared together in the 2008 film "Twenty20", while Mohanlal made a cameo appearance in "Kadal Kadannu Oru Maathukutti", starring Mammootty in 2013. (PTI)



Peter Jackson to receive honorary Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival



Filmmaker Peter Jackson, known for directing acclaimed projects such as "The Lord of the Rings" and "The Hobbit" trilogies, will be honoured with honorary Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival.

The filmmaker will be awarded for his "body of work that blends Hollywood blockbusters and films d'auteur with extraordinary artistic vision and technological audacity", according to the festival's official website. Jackson will be honoured at the opening cere-

mony of the 79th Cannes Film Festival, which will take place on May 12.

The director said it is one of the greatest privileges of his career to be presented with the award.

"To be honoured with an Honorary Palme d'Or at Cannes is one of the greatest privileges of my career," he said in a statement.

"Cannes has been a meaningful part of my filmmaking journey. In 1988, I attended the Festival Marketplace with my first movie, Bad Taste, then in 2001

we screened a preview sequence from The Fellowship of the Ring, both of which were important milestones in my career.

This festival has always celebrated bold, visionary cinema, and I'm incredibly grateful to the Festival de Cannes for being recognised among the filmmakers and the artists whose work continues to inspire me," he added.

The festival will start on May 12 and conclude on May 23. (PTI)

YAMI GAUTAM SAYS HER LIKE ON REEL CRITICISING KRITI SANON'S BEST ACTRESS WIN WAS ACCIDENTAL



Actor Yami Gautam Dhar said she has never resorted to cheap PR tactics following the accidental like on the post criticising Kriti Sanon's Best Actress win for her performance in "Tere Ishk Mein".

Yami shared a post on her X handle on Friday and said as an actor, she gets tagged in several posts daily and at times, the clicks are unintended.

"It has come to my notice that I apparently 'liked' a reel that is condescending toward another actor. We get tagged in multiple things every day, and this appeared during an award-function reference like any other tag. It isn't true and was definitely not done consciously; if anything, it may have been clicked accidentally. Never in my life have I resorted to cheap PR tactics. I have always focused on my work and moved on," she wrote.

The 37-year-old actor said she prefers to remain focused on her work. "In the world of clickbait, it's tempting for even dignified social media portals to harp on this and turn it into coffee-table gossip. But I would hope they would consider that I have earned a better reputation than that. I have no PR team, have respectfully cleared my stance on entertainment award shows long ago, and remain focused on my work," she added.

Her statement comes days after a like was registered from her profile on an Instagram post, which featured a clip of Kriti celebrating her Best Actress award win at the Zee Cine Awards 2026.

The video was combined with a clip of Yami from an old interview, where she noted she stopped seeking validation from the industry.

Following Kriti's win, several users said Yami deserved the award for her performance in the 2025 drama film "Haq".

After the actor unintentionally liked the reel, many pointed out the same, which led to Yami issue a clarification. (PTI)

HABITAT INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL TO SCREEN 67 FILMS WITH HUNGARY AS FOCUS COUNTRY

The seventh edition of the Habitat International Film Festival will open here on March 13 with 67 films from 18 countries, across nearly 20 languages, and Hungary as the focus country.

The curated selection includes contemporary award-winning films, landmark retrospectives, major international festival winners, NETPAC selections, and a strong presence of women directors, with 24 films helmed by women filmmakers, the organisers said in a statement.

The festival opens with "Manch", a documentary from Tanuja Shankar Khan chronicling a theatre workshop conducted with children from Delhi's MIMA NGO, adapting Hungarian folk tales into Hindi stage performances.

The film serves as a symbolic cultural bridge between Hungary and India.

With Hungary at its centre, the HIFF will feature 21 Hungarian films, including 11 contemporary features and 10 retrospective classics honouring two of the country's most celebrated post-war masters: Istvan Szabo and Zoltan Fabri. Szabo, whose "Mephisto" won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film in 1982, is known for his psychologically rich explorations of ambition, power, and moral compromise, while Fabri's morally engaged dramas, including "The Boys of Paul Street" (Academy Award nominee in 1969) and "The Fifth Seal", established Hungarian cinema as a force on the global stage.

These retrospectives trace Hungarian cinema's engagement with war memory, totalitarian regimes, national identity, and moral crisis.

Other films from Hungary include the country's official Oscar submission "Semmelweis", "I Accidentally Wrote a Book", "Or-

phan", and "Pelikan Blue".

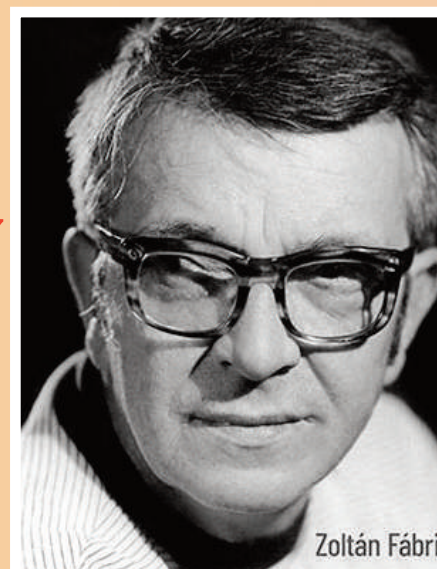
"This curated selection brings together a vibrant constellation of contemporary voices alongside timeless international classics. Though rooted in diverse cultural landscapes, the films are united by a shared sensitivity to memory, identity, displacement, and the fragile yet enduring bonds that shape human experience. Together, this selection invites audiences into a rich cinematic dialogue across cultures, reminding us that while stories emerge from specific soils, their emotional truths travel far beyond borders," Vidyun Singh, creative head - programmes, said.

The festival also features some of the most talked-about films from the international festival circuit, including Cannes 2025 Palme d'Or winner "It Was Just an Accident", Cannes Jury Prize 2025 winners "Sirat", "The Sound of Falling", Berlinale 2025 Grand Prix winner "The Botanist", Venice 2025 Orizzonti Award winner "Hiedra/IVY" and BAFTA Scotland 2025 winner "Four Mothers".

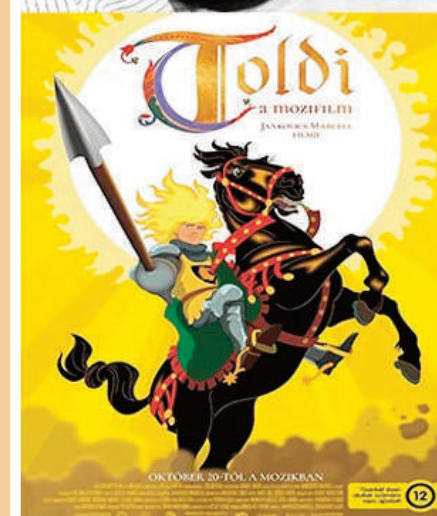
Marking the centenary of legendary Polish filmmaker Andrzej Wajda, recipient of the Honorary Oscar, the HIFF will present a special six-film retrospective celebrating his contribution to world cinema, including "Ziemia Obiecana / The Promised Land" (1975), "Człowiek z Marmuru / Man of Marble" (1977), "Panny z Wilka / The Maids of Wilko" (1979), and "Tatarak / Sweet Rush" (2009).

The festival will come to a close on March 22 with "Chopin, A Sonata in Paris" (2025), directed by Michal Kwiecinski.

The Polish-language biographical drama revisits the life and artistic exile of legendary composer Frederic Chopin, tracing his years in Paris against the backdrop of 19th-century European political upheaval. (PTI)



Zoltán Fábi



In-form Sanju Samson eyes one more match-winning innings

MUMBAI, March 6: Sanju Samson is relieved to have produced two superlative innings to carry India into the final of the T20 World Cup, but he is not done yet and aims to play another match-winning knock to help India win the trophy for a record third time.

Samson, who had lost his spot in the Indian team due to lack of runs not long ago, has come back roaring with scores of 97 not out in a virtual knockout against the West Indies followed by 89 against England in the semifinal, especially when Abhishek Sharma is going through a lean patch.

Samson said while he is grateful, his toil must help the defending champions India lift yet another title with a win over New Zealand in the summit clash on Sunday in Ahmedabad.

"It feels really great or relieved that I have been actually, from (a) few years, trying to do something like this for my country," Samson told reporters after India beat England by seven runs in the second semifinal here Thursday night.

"(I was) just waiting with lot of patience, lot of inner work, lot of training, lot of practice. Definitely, I should be very grateful, but I feel that we have one more step to go. If we do that, then I think all the work, everything, was worth it."

"... that one more innings should be really good."

Samson bludgeoned seven sixes



T20 World Cup final

and eight fours to make 89 off only 42 balls to provide India the momentum as they notched up the highest-ever score of 253/7 in a T20 World Cup knockout match.

The right-handed batter credited his 97 not out against the West Indies in Kolkata for providing the momentum and said it was important to continue with his form.

"(The) last innings definitely

played a good role in this innings. I was timing the ball really well (and) taking good decisions. I thought 'if you are in form, you should definitely contribute for your team in this game as well'," he said.

"It means really one of the best moments in my life," he said on the prospect of playing the final after sitting out in the summit clash of

2024.

Once again, Samson credited his experience of playing a lot of T20 matches, including in the IPL, for the maturity that he brings to his game.

"I have been playing this format for a very long time. I (must) have played around 300 or 400 T20s (329), so I have played from top (Nos.) one to six. I have (also) captained a franchise. So, I have the experience of knowing what does a team demands at the moment and what is my exact role at this level."

"... that clarity definitely helps you to score runs the way you want to."

Samson said Jasprit Bumrah was brought in the 18th over for the ace pacer's last six deliveries as India wanted to finish the game early. He described Bumrah as a once-in-a-generation bowler.

"The game was going neck-to-neck and they were trying to actually get 13s, 15s (runs) in an over. We knew that if we take the game till the end, they might actually get heavy on us, so we just wanted to finish off the game a bit earlier," Samson said.

"... that is where we tried to bowl Bumrah and Arshdeep (Singh) and Hardik (Pandya) in those three overs and that played well to us."

Samson stood firmly behind his struggling opening partner Ab-

hishek who once again fell cheaply.

"We are taking care of all our players. We have a really great environment in the dressing room. Both of our leaders, G G bhai (Gautam Gambhir) and Surya (Suryakumar Yadav), have a lot of faith and confidence in Abhishek and we try to actually help him in the way he actually requires," Samson said.

"He has definitely gone through lots of ups and downs in his career. He is also trying to find a way out and we all are with him and I think it is just a matter of a couple of sixes -- he hits from the middle -- and everything can change (quickly) in this format."

"We feel that final is going to be his day. I feel that he is definitely going to come out really great on the last day," Samson said.

The 31-year-old Samson also stood strong in support of another struggling member in Varun Chakravathy, who gave away 64 runs for one wicket in his four overs.

"It is a very hard job for a spinner to bowl the sixth over in the powerplay where there is nothing much in the wicket and batsmen are trying to swing and get maximum out of that in the powerplay," Samson said.

"I think credit has to go to Varun to take up that challenge and still be positive and do what he does actually," he added. (PTI)

AFC WOMEN'S ASIAN CUP India face formidable Japan after gritty show against Vietnam



PERTH, March 6: A gritty performance in their previous group game would have certainly boosted their confidence but India's task would be cut out when they face a formidable Japan in their second match of the AFC Women's Asian Cup here on Saturday.

India conceded an injury time goal, just three minutes before the final hooter to suffer 1-2 defeat to Vietnam and lose a valuable point in their opening Group C match on Wednesday.

Vietnam featured in the 2023 FIFA World Cup, and a gutsy fight against them and an equalising goal through debutant Sanfida Nongrum would instil confidence among Amelia Valverde's wards.

But world number eight and two-time champions Japan will be a totally different side, vastly superior than the Indians. Valverde's task could be more of maintaining compactness and working on defensive resilience, while looking to hit on the counter.

Winners of FIFA World Cup in 2011, Japan made 87 entries into Chinese Taipei's penalty area in their previous match, and the Indian defence, marshalled by captain Sweetie Devi, will be extremely busy on Saturday.

India would also look to limit the number of goals from Japan as goal-difference could play a role in deciding the third-ranked team in the group. Vietnam and Chinese Taipei face each other in another match on Saturday.

The top two sides from each of the three groups, along with the two best third-placed teams, will progress to the quarter-finals. The four quarter-final winners will qualify for the 2027 FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil.

The losing quarter-finalists will contest the play-offs for the two remaining direct spots allocated to the AFC for the World Cup. The two play-off losers will have another chance of qualifying for Brazil via the play-off tournament.

India and Japan will meet at the AFC Women's Asian Cup for the third time and the first since the group stage in 1999. Japan have won both the encounters by 7-0, and 1-0 margins.

Valverde, however, expects her side to maintain the intensity it showed in the 1-2 defeat to Vietnam.

"The team is feeling very good. We had the advantage of taking two days to recover and to prepare for this big game against a good team like Japan," said Valverde ahead of Saturday's match.

"We know Japan like to dominate possession and play dynamically. We need to prepare our own game and aim to put on a strong performance, remaining competitive like we were against Vietnam."

She admitted that Japan would be a completely different side from Vietnam and her players must learn to adapt to situations.

"The game may demand tactical flexibility and we'll try to adapt accordingly so we need to focus our team's energy on controlling the match while adapting to what the situation demands, taking into account the characteristics of our opponents."

Japan were left frustrated for long periods against Chinese Taipei before scoring two goals in the second half and head coach Nils Nielsen expects his players to be sharper.

"We tried to build on the first match and focus on what areas can be better. We are still in the process of building up as a team. Our focus is on concentrating on each game and continuing the good work we showed in the first match," said Nielsen.

"I'm confident we can create chances against India. They are a strong team with great spirit, and although they were unlucky in their last game, we believe we can put them under pressure. To score, we must really commit and fight for every ball." (PTI)

Rajasthan Regals win inaugural PGTI's 72 The League title

NEW DELHI, March 6: Rajasthan Regals emerged champions at the inaugural DP World PGTI's 72 The League with a commanding 12-3 win over table-toppers UP Prometheans here on Friday.

After qualifying for the finale from the league stage as the second-placed team, Regals got their revenge over Prometheans for their crushing 4-10 loss against them in the fifth round of the league.

The winning team received a stunning trophy and Rs one crore as prize money. The runner-up team took home Rs 50 lakh.

Prometheans put together their two strongest players -- unbeaten captain Shaurya Bhattacharya and Arjun Prasad -- in the singles up-front.

However, Regals demolished that plan with Jaiiraj Singh Sandhu, who beat Bhattacharya 48-3, and Akshay Sharma, who defeated Prasad 28-1.

With only one win required from the remaining three matches on the field, Regals sealed the deal when Aryaman Mohan and Yuvraj Singh beat Joshua Seale and Arjun Sharma on the 18th hole.

Young Mohan had the honour of making the winning putt for his team, when teams tied the final hole.

In the remaining fourball matches, Regals captain Ajeetesh Sandhu lost his first match of the tournament in the company of Michele Ortolani, while Chikkarangappa S and Dhruv Sheoran completed the 12-3 margin with an inconsequential 28-1 win over Gaurav Pratap Singh and Pranav Mardikar.

"It's been an incredible honour to lead this bunch of players. From the moment of the auction, I knew we had a lot of depth in the team. However, more importantly, when we got together for the first time, everyone jelled with each other. The chemistry has been fantastic," Sandhu said.

Charminar Champions won the Plate Championship. (PTI)

India have a worsening Varun problem but Axar says he is still 'X-factor'

MUMBAI, March 6: The mystery seems to have unravelled and though his teammates still consider Varun Chakravathy the 'X-factor', the leg-spinner knows that he is racing against time to arrest what has been a stunning slide.

The world's top-ranked bowler would be a weak link for India going into the T20 World Cup final against New Zealand on Sunday if the team management chooses to persist with him.

The steady dip in his form since the Super Eight phase of the tournament can't be brushed aside and Chakravathy would need to clear the doubts in his mind after being taken to the cleaners in the business end of the tournament.

The hammering he received at the hands of England swashbuckler Jacob Bethell on Thursday night in a narrow seven-run win for India could well prove to be the last straw.

India vice-captain Axar Patel has had conversations with Chakravathy of late and stressed on the importance of sticking to plans even when things are not going one's way.

"We have talked about it (about Chakravathy's ongoing issues), we have played a lot of knockout games at this moment, so it is very important to have a mindset, yes, there is skill and all, but what we

talk to them is, when you go for runs, don't change your plan even if the batter is targeting," Axar said on Thursday.

"You have a plan to put it in the stumps first, and then suddenly you change the line. Yes there could be mistakes in the pressure situations, we keep telling him, yes, you are the X Factor, trust yourself, and when it comes to the ball, it is all about confidence."

The mystery spinner put in the hard yards at the nets ahead of the semifinal but wasn't able to find his lengths after being introduced in the powerplay. He ended with forgettable figures of 64 for one in four overs to be the most expensive of the five front-line bowlers on a belter of a track.

England had done their homework against Chakravathy and he was not allowed into settle any sort of rhythm by the left-handed Bethell, who smashed him for three sixes in his opener.

Guilty of bowling too short or too full over the past fortnight, Chakravathy was pulled over long-on for a maximum on his very first ball.

The 34-year-old expectedly tried to bowl fuller the next ball which was dispatched down the ground by the highly-rated English batter.

The third hit was the most impressive, a reverse hit over back-



ward point, denting the bowler's confidence further.

Bethell ended up smashing Chakravathy for 42 runs off just 13 balls on way to a special hundred that could not take England all the way in a high-scoring affair.

His first over went for 23 runs and every time he was brought back into the attack, Chakravathy was not able to keep the batters in check.

"If you look at it, even after being hit for a few sixes, he got the wicket of Jos Buttler. He is the number one T20 bowler, he knows what he is doing. It is a matter of mindset. We have one more match, maybe he will give a match-win-

ning performance in the final," asserted Axar.

India off-spin great Harbhajan Singh feels Chakravathy is bowling a lot quicker than he should.

"He is a match-winner but any bowler would be under pressure after being attacked from the get go. Besides the higher speeds, he is not able to find the right length. It is either too short or too full."

"Targetting the stumps is his strength but at times, he has deviated from that stock strategy and gone wide. He is under pressure. All he can do is go back to the nets and put in the effort," Harbhajan told PTI after the game at Wankhede. (PTI)

Samson among eight nominees for T20WC Player of the Tournament announced by ICC

DUBAI, March 6: In-form India opener Sanju Samson figured in the eight-man shortlist for the T20 World Cup Player of the Tournament announced by the ICC on Friday.

The other nominees are England all-rounder Will Jacks, Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan, South Africa's pacer Lungi Ngidi and captain Aiden Markram, New Zealand's all-rounder Rachin Ravindra and batter Tim Seifert, and American bowler Shadley van Schalkwyk.

Samson, who did not play in the early part of the tournament, lit up the T20 World Cup with consecutive player-of-the-match performances.

The opener smacked a 42-ball 89 against England in the semifinals to be the hero of India's seven-run win on Thursday. Before that, his 50-ball 97 laid the foundation of the defending champions' five-wicket win over the West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal. (PTI)

Mentally tougher Samson has come of age, says Shastri

MUMBAI, March 6: All praise for Sanju Samson's mental fortitude, former India head coach Ravi Shastri said the seasoned batter seems to have "come of age" in the ongoing T20 World Cup after realising the need for consistency and wiser shot selection.

The opener smacked a 42-ball 89 against England in the semifinals to be the hero of India's seven-run win on Thursday here. Before that, his 50-ball 97 laid the foundation of the defending champions' five-wicket win over the West Indies in a virtual quarterfinal.

"I think (he is) finally realising and coming to terms with the fact that he needs to be more consistent. He's got to be wiser with his shot selection and he's got to back his strengths. The thing with Sanju is he's got every shot in the book, but

lapses in concentration," Shastri said on "The ICC Review".

"I think he's toughened up mentally and there's never anyone who's doubted his skill or talent ever since he made the side. What people have been disappointed is that the run of consistency that should have been there by now isn't there, but he's come of age now," he added.

India will clash on New Zealand in the summit clash in Ahmedabad on Sunday. Samson was ignored in the early part of the tournament when Ishan Kishan was preferred as opener and Rinku Singh too got the nod ahead of the Keralaite.

But he eventually got his place in the playing XI and lit up the tournament with two consecutive match-winning player-of-the-match per-

formances.

Shastri believes Samson's best is yet to come. "He's still just 31 years of age and a genuine match-winner," the cricketer-turned-commentator noted. "And when you see shots like (Thursday) that is being played, there's class, there's touch there, there's power there, there's brute force. It's just unbelievable."

'Stick with Abhishek'

In complete contrast to Samson's run, his opening partner Abhishek Sharma's form is a cause of concern going into Sunday's final.

Abhishek has managed to score just 89 runs from seven innings at the T20 World Cup, but Shastri believes India should persist with the No.1 ranked T20I batter. (PTI)



MUMBAI, March 6: England captain Harry Brook described Jasprit Bumrah as the "best of all time at the minute" after the India pace spearhead squeezed a tight over with a barrage of accurate yorkers towards the fog end of the T20

World Cup semifinal, which the co-hosts won by seven runs here.

Brook said it's tough to beat India as they also have some extremely good batters "coming out of everywhere".

Defending champions India piled up a record 253/7, thanks to a stunning 42-ball 89 from Sanju Samson, before restricting England to 246 for 7 for a seven-run win in the T20 World Cup semifinal here Thursday night. Bumrah returned with figures of 1/33 from his four overs.

"Yeah, it's tough. They just have batsmen coming out of everywhere. They've got some extremely good players (and) they're clean ball-strikers. If you miss, you go for (a) six or (a) four," Brook told the media after the match.

"Unfortunately, we didn't probably execute as well as we could have done and that's cost us slightly alongside with some drop catches in there as well."

Brook dropped Samson while on 15 in the third over of the Indian innings and the missed opportunity had a big impact on the outcome of the game.

England, nevertheless, staged a spirited response in perfect batting conditions to remain in the game till the end. They needed 45 runs from 18 balls at one stage with centurion Jacob Bethell (105) going strong.

But Bumrah squeezed a tight 18th over to allow only six runs nailing his yorkers with pin-point accuracy, which left England with the improbable task of 39 runs to score from the final two overs.

"He's a very good bowler, arguably the best of all time at the minute," Brook said of Bumrah.

"He's been a very good bowler for a long time. The Indians (also) fielded extremely well, that catch (of Axar Patel to dismiss him) is arguably one of the best catches I've seen as well so yeah, hats off

to them."

Brook said England can be proud of their "amazing campaign".

"Disappointed, but extremely proud. Couldn't ask for much more as a captain to be honest. I think we've had an amazing campaign," he said.

"As I said the other day, we're never out of games and that's proven again tonight (Thursday). We were in the game all the way until the last over. I'm just extremely proud of the boys and all the boys should be extremely proud of themselves as well."

Brook lavished praise on the 22-year-old Bethell, whose century gave England a lot of hope for the future.

"He's a phenomenal player. As we've seen tonight in a high pressure situation against India on their home turf as well. The way that he played that innings there was just phenomenal," he said.

"He's going to have a hell of a career

with England. I'm looking forward to hopefully spending a lot of time with him in the future," Brook said.

With Varun Chakravathy conceding 64 runs for one wicket in his four overs for the joint second-highest for any Indian bowler in T20Is, England garnered a total of 99/2 in seven overs of spin from India.

Brook said while it was "funny" to be complimented about their achievement against spinners, it also was cricket "smarts".

"It's funny because every time we get asked about spinners you are usually slugging us off, so it's nice to have a compliment about it for once," he said.

"We identified that Chakravathy's is (bowling) probably short and Bethell put him away early on and as every bowler does, he tried to go a bit fuller and he hit him to (a) six back over his head.

"It's just the cricket smarts and just

trying to figure out what their bowling attack is trying to do and the match-ups as well."

Brook also stood firmly behind England head coach Brendon McCullum, who has been under fire since their poor show in the Ashes. Asked if he would back the former New Zealand captain to continue as England head coach, Brook replied "125 per cent".

"I've said plenty of times he's the best coach I've ever had (and) the best head coach I've ever had," Brook said.

"The way that he speaks to everybody -- he's got an aura in the dressing room -- everybody looks up to him and the things that he did in the game as a player was unbelievable and he just carried that into his coaching."

"The things that he's done over the four years that he's took over, has changed English cricket for hopefully the best," the England skipper added. (PTI)

Team should believe in Abhishek and he should believe in himself: Kapil

NEW DELHI, March 6: Legendary former captain Kapil Dev on Friday said the Indian team management should retain Abhishek Sharma for the T20 World Cup final against New Zealand despite his failure to get going in the high-profile tournament so far. Abhishek has scored just one half century, against minnows Zimbabwe, in the mega-event and is being looked upon as a potential weakness for India if persisted with in the summit clash on Sunday in Ahmedabad.

"Just believe in your team and the management should believe in the player. And Abhishek should believe in himself that 'I can perform and I will perform'. Still one game is there - the final," Kapil said on the sidelines of a golf event here.

India defeated England by seven runs in a thrilling semifinal clash on Thursday night in Mumbai.

Despite posting a mammoth 253, the Indians were in a spot of bother due to the counter-offensive launched by Jacob Bethell (105 off 48 balls) and Will Jacks (35 off 20 balls). Kapil said he did not expect the match to be this close. "I didn't think that it would become this difficult, when India score 250-plus, it was a brilliant game. Yes, India won, congratulations to them, but in the end it was cricket's win. I enjoyed it a lot, not as a bowler though," the pace great quipped. (PTI)

Former Roommate Priyank Recalls: Even at Ranji practice, Jassi would bowl bouncers at will



AHMEDABAD, March 6: Priyank Panchal vividly remembers the buzz around a teenage Jasprit Bumrah, who was feared for his sharp and mean bouncers during his school cricket days.

As the Indian team gears up for another momentous ICC summit clash at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Sunday, the former India

A and Gujarat skipper Panchal took a trip down the memory lane to tell stories about the early days of India's greatest ever fast bowler, who is the biggest cricketing icon from this part of India.

Panchal, a domestic run-machine in his own right, has 29 first-class centuries and was a part of India's Test squad for the 2021-22

series in South Africa.

"I was a few years senior to Jassi (Bumrah) and by the time he made it to the Gujarat team, I was already playing Ranji Trophy. But as it happens about any talented kid, we heard that this teenager is making waves in school cricket," Panchal told PTI in an interaction.

"During those days, school tournaments were played on matting (artificial mat) wickets so the ball would travel quicker than natural turf pitches. But at school level, you don't hear about 15-16-year olds scaring the daylight out of other boys of his age with consistent and accurate bouncers. He had an aura about him even before he made his Ranji debut," Panchal fondly recalls.

But Panchal's first proper interaction with Bumrah was when Gujarat went for a pre-season trip to Pune ahead of the Ranji Trophy season.

"Although there was an age-gap between me and him, he was one of the best roommates I had. He was a quiet boy, who just believes in sheer hard work and wouldn't like to make a song and dance about it. Obviously, if he considers you a friend and opens up to you,

he is like a house on fire and fun company."

Like the whole world, Panchal agrees that Bumrah is a "genius" but having seen an artist at work first hand and played hundreds of deliveries at training during early days, he would vouch about the kind of work Bumrah puts in his craft.

"When he started playing first-class cricket, with that action of his, he had a mean bouncer, an effective inswinger and the yorker was developing. At that point, he didn't have an outswinger. That is one delivery that he learnt on the job. Hours of practice, fantastic understanding of technical aspects and fine-tuning it has now made him a master of outgoing delivery too.

"If you see, his outswing starts on leg-middle line and finishes on off-stump which makes it so difficult for the batter to negotiate," Panchal explained.

For Panchal, what separates Bumrah from others is his intensity, which is unmatched apart from his peerless game sense.

"If I talk about Test matches, the intensity while bowling the first over and may be the 16th

over at the end of the day, there won't be any sharp drop in pace. Yeh isliye ki Jassi kabhi bhi yeh soch ke cricket nahi khela ki 'mu-jhko apni body bachani hai'. He has always pushed the limits of his body without caring that he can get seriously injured. For him, whether it is match or practice, it's 'all or nothing'."

In fact, Panchal has witnessed first hand how angry Bumrah could get if he was driven on the up even at the practice session.

"God forbid, if you a batter who has driven Jassi on the rise or he has bowled slightly fuller in the nets, be rest assured, the next ball could either be a chin music or a toe crusher," he laughs, adding, "Often at the nets, we would jokingly tell him that go easy on certain batters, who aren't comfortable against short ball and could get injured."

After facing him at the Ranji Trophy nets, Panchal understood how Bumrah has entered the different league when he faced him in the nets during India's tour of South Africa back in 2021-22 where he was one of the reserve openers.

"By that time, he had become a

complete bowler. His homework and reading of conditions was very different. At the Ranji level, most of the fast bowlers you face go a bit fuller in search of swing and do not hit the deck. At the international level, the key is to hit the deck and change lengths as per conditions," Panchal stated.

He then cited an example of a Test match which India won at the Centurion and Bumrah got five wickets (2 in first and 3 in second).

"In the second innings, he bowled one over and hit the lengths that he had hit in the first. It took him six balls to understand that he needed to change the length and he did it promptly. Look at the semi-final at Wankhede yesterday. It was getting tricky and look at the lengths he bowled on a batting paradise."

Bumrah is 32 years old and still plays all three formats with 500 international wickets in his kitty. Panchal wants Bumrah to continue playing for years.

"It is a pure joy watching him operate. I want him to play for at least eight more years across formats. You just don't wish that he stops." (PTI)

Will India drop Abhishek for final? Looks unlikely as of now

AHMEDABAD, March 6: The murmurs of concern have turned into full-blown criticism but despite his prolonged lean patch, India are likely to keep faith in Abhishek Sharma for the T20 World Cup final against New Zealand given their well-documented unwillingness to disturb a winning combination.

In many ways, the tournament has seen a reversal of fortunes when it comes to the Indian opening pair.

When the competition began, Abhishek was expected to be the batting mainstay at the top while questions lingered over Sanju Samson's place with many predicting that the event could well decide the course of his international career.

But since the must-win Super Eight clash against the West Indies, the narrative has changed significantly.

Samson's assured performances have silenced many doubters while the spotlight has increasingly shifted towards Abhishek's struggles.

If Samson's form dominated discussions at the beginning, the decibel levels have now risen around Abhishek's wretched run in the business end.

The aggressive left-handed opener has struggled for rhythm through the tournament, managing scores of 0, 0, 0, 15, 10 and 9 in his last six outings. Barring a half-century against Zimbabwe, he has nothing spectacular to show for in an event he was tipped to dominate.

However, the team management is understood to be reluctant to make a change at the top with the summit clash approaching on Sunday in Ahmedabad.

"We are taking care of all our players. GG bhai and Surya have a lot of faith and confidence in Abhishek," his opening partner Samson said after the England game.

The dip in Abhishek's form coincided with a difficult phase for him physically. Following the league game in Mumbai, he was drained by a stomach infection and had to be hospitalised, which resulted in noticeable weight loss and disrupted his rhythm during a crucial stage of the competition.

On the field, rival teams also seem to have worked out a clear method to keep him quiet.

Captains have repeatedly used slow bowlers early against him, particularly off-spinners and slow left-arm orthodox tweekers, denying him the pace he prefers to work with at the start of the innings.

The pattern of his dismissals has also been similar. Against Pakistan he tried to take on the off-spinner inside the powerplay and ended up mis-timing a lofted stroke. Against Netherlands, an off-spinner got him with a quicker delivery that angled into him, cramping him for room and forcing a mis-timed stroke.

In the semifinal against England, he was again early into the shot against a slower delivery and failed to get the elevation he wanted.

Abhishek has often been forced to manufacture strokes against spin, struggling to manoeuvre the field when bowlers take pace off the ball.

Another technical aspect that has been tested is the speed of his bat's downswing. When the surface offers pace-off conditions, the quick downswing can make it difficult for him to adjust late to slower deliveries.

Bowlers have used this to good effect by varying their pace and forcing him to commit early to attacking strokes. One option could have been to bring in Rinku Singh, but that creates another structural issue in the batting order.

With the current top order and middle order combination, adding another middle-order batter could once again leave Rinku batting as low as No.7 or even No.8, limiting the impact he can make.

For now, the Indian team management appears ready to back Abhishek's attacking intent at the top and avoid disturbing a combination that has taken them to the final. (PTI)



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Department of Pharmaceuticals



Jan Aushadhi A Symbol of Quality Generic Medicines



Heartiest wishes on the occasion of the 8th Jan Aushadhi Diwas

7 March 2026

Affordable and 100% tested Medicines



Jan Aushadhi has helped citizens save approximately **₹40,000 crore**



18000+ Jan Aushadhi Kendra operational across the country



Jan Aushadhi medicines are priced **50% to 80% lower** than branded medicines



Sanitary pads for women at just **₹1 per pad**



2,110 Quality Medicines and **315** Medical Devices and Consumables are available



Manufactured as per **WHO-GMP** standards and certified by **NABL** laboratories

"Jan Aushadhi Diwas reflects our commitment to provide high-quality and affordable medicines to the citizens, leading to a healthy and fit India."

Prime Minister, Narendra Modi



For more information, please visit: www.janaushadhi.gov.in,
Dial Helpline No.: **1800-180-8080**
or download the Jan Aushadhi Sugam Mobile App

Scan the QR Code to download the App



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