



- Orunodoi 3.0 funds disbursed to beneficiaries
- Traffic curbs in Kokrajhar for PM visit
- PM Modi inaugurates '5,650 cr projects; says Centre fully committed to TN's growth
- Transfer excise policy case to an 'impartial' bench: Arvind Kejriwal




Government of Assam



Continuing the journey of a transparent and merit-based recruitment process

Ceremonial Distribution of Appointment Letters to 5,754 candidates



Chief Guest

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

August Presence

Dr Ranoj Pegu
Minister, Education, etc., Assam

Shri Prasanta Phukan
Minister, Power, etc., Assam

📅 12 March 2026 ⌚ 10:00 AM

📍 College of Veterinary Science Playground, Khanapara, Guwahati

Departments	Directorate/PSU	Post	Number of Candidates
Education	Elementary Education	Upper Primary School Teachers	3,515
		Lower Primary School Teachers	
		Provincialised (2017) Tutor promoted to Teacher	116
		Upper Primary Assistant/Science Teacher promoted to Headmaster	197
	Secondary Education	Promoted Headmasters of Provincialised High Schools	446
	Higher Education	Assistant Professor, Grade III & Grade IV	177
	Technical Education	Principal, Government Engineering Colleges	4
	State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT)	Lecturer	60
	Additionally, 1,175 contractual and state pool teachers working under Samagra Shiksha, Assam will be appointed to permanent posts under the Directorate of Elementary Education		
Power	Assam Power Distribution Company Limited	Assistant Accounts Officer	64



Recruitment Overview

Till 4 March 2026 **1,58,669**

12 March 2026 **5,754**



Total recruited
1,64,423

DIPR/D/HLT/313/12-Mar-26

Sensex, Nifty plunge nearly 2 pc on surging crude prices, intensifying West Asia tensions

MUMBAI, March 11: Market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended nearly 2 per cent lower on Wednesday after a day's breather as a spike in global crude oil prices amid growing tensions in West Asia unnerved investors.

Besides, sustained foreign fund outflows and selling in blue-chip bank stocks added to the pressure, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex tumbled 1,342.27 points or 1.72 per cent to settle at 76,863.71. During the day, it dropped 1,446.72 points or 1.84 per cent to 76,759.26.

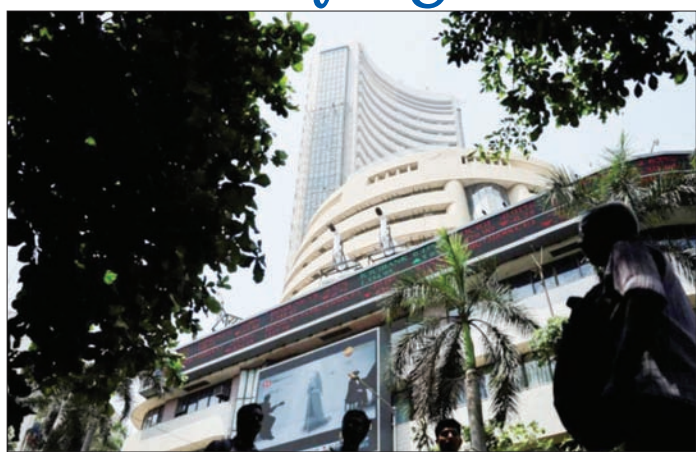
A total of 2,380 stocks declined, while 1,881 advanced and 153 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty tanked 394.75 points or 1.63 per cent to end at 23,866.85.

"Investor sentiment remained fragile as escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East continued to unsettle global markets and push volatility higher.

"Concerns over potential disruptions to crude oil supply, rising inflationary pressures, and the possible impact on economic growth kept participants cautious. Additionally, continued foreign institutional investor selling and weakness in the rupee further dampened risk appetite," Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Bajaj Finance was the biggest drag in the Sensex pack, sliding 5.01 per cent, followed by Axis Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra &



Mahindra, Maruti, Trent, Bharti Airtel and Kotak Mahindra Bank.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma and NTPC were the only gainers.

"...markets resumed their downward trajectory after a brief rebound in the previous session, as persistent foreign fund outflows and selling in banking, financial services and automobile stocks weighed on benchmark indices," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said. The BSE midcap select index tanked 1.55 per cent, and the small-cap select index declined 0.61 per cent.

The auto index declined about 3 per cent as the sector continued to face multiple headwinds, including higher raw material costs and persistent supply chain challenges, particularly semiconductor short-

rallies, rather than fresh long-term selling. However, the magnitude of the fall indicates that traders remain reluctant to carry aggressive bullish positions in the current uncertain macro environment," Hari Prasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, jumped 5.76 per cent to USD 92.86 per barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 4,672.64 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), however, bought stocks worth ₹ 6,333.26 crore.

In Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225 index jumped 1.43 per cent and South Korea's Kospi climbed 1.40 per cent. Shanghai's SSE Composite index also ended in positive territory, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled lower.

Markets in Europe were trading lower in mid-session deals.

The US market ended almost flat on Tuesday.

Looking ahead, markets are likely to remain cautious as investors await US and domestic inflation data and clearer macro signals before taking fresh directional bets, Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. In the previous session, the Sensex jumped 639.82 points or 0.82 per cent to settle at 78,205.98. The Nifty climbed 233.55 points or 0.97 per cent to end at 24,261.60. (PTI)

ages affecting production, Khemka said.

Among BSE sectoral indices, auto tumbled 3.06 per cent, bankex (2.06 per cent), Private Banks index (2.03 per cent), BSE Top 10 Banks (2.03 per cent), financial services (1.99 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.89 per cent) and PSU Bank (1.87 per cent).

In contrast, BSE energy, healthcare, utilities, oil & gas and power were the gainers.

"Indian equity markets witnessed a sharp sell-off today as heavy profit-booking wiped out the gains from the previous bullish session, reflecting growing caution among investors amid persistent global uncertainties.

"From a market behaviour perspective, Wednesday's decline appears largely driven by systematic profit-booking after short-covering

No need for panic, normal delivery cycle of 2.5 days maintained: Oil Ministry on LPG bookings

NEW DELHI, March 11: Amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, a senior Oil Ministry official on Wednesday said that there is no need for panic booking of LPG cylinders, and that the normal delivery cycle of two-and-a-half days is being maintained.

India's crude oil supplies remain secure, Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, told reporters at a briefing.

Crude oil is being sourced from non-Strait of Hormuz routes, she said.

Government measures have led to a 25 per cent rise in LPG production, according to the ministry.

She said that there is no need for panic booking of cooking gas cylinders and assured that the normal delivery cycle for domestic households remains at two-and-a-half days.

"Feedback suggests that some panic booking and hoarding behaviour by miss-information. I want to clarify that our normal delivery cycle for domestic LPG remains around two-and-a-half days, so I request...there

is no need for customers to rush-book the cylinders... there is no need for panic booking," she said.

State governments have been asked to take preventive actions to prevent hoarding and black marketing of fuel, according to the ministry.

"India's crude supply remains secure. Our daily consumption is about 55 lakh barrels...through diversified procurement, the volumes we have secured today exceed what would normally have arrived through the Strait of Hormuz during this period," she said.

India imports crude from nearly 40 countries.

The oil marketing companies have secured various crude cargoes from different sources, and as a result of this diversification, about 70 per cent of India's crude imports are now coming from routes outside the Strait of Hormuz, compared with about 55 per cent earlier, she added. "As I speak to you today, about two LNG cargoes are headed for India, and they will arrive within a few days, which will further strengthen the crude supply position in the country," Sharma said. (PTI)

28 Indian vessels with 778 seafarers onboard stuck in Persian Gulf: Official

NEW DELHI, March 11: As many as 28 Indian vessels with 778 seafarers onboard are stuck in the Persian Gulf, a government official said on Wednesday. Of these, 24 vessels are on the western part of the Strait of Hormuz with 677 seafarers, while 4 vessels with 101 persons are on the eastern side, Rajesh Kumar Sinha, Special Secretary in the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, said in a media briefing.

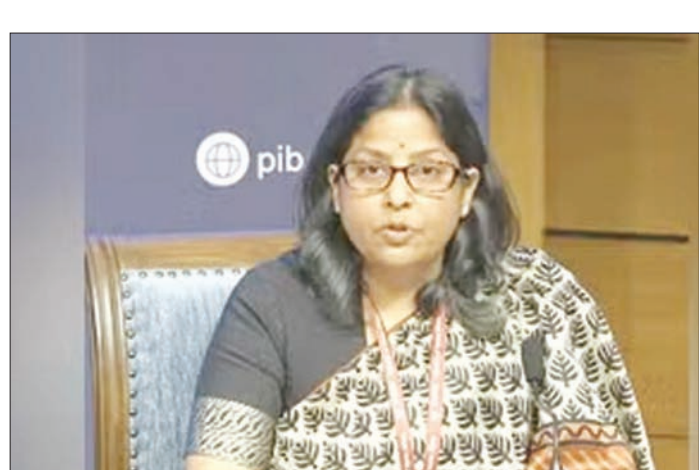
"We are monitoring all the vessels actively for their safety and security. Authorities, ship managers and recruitment agencies...are closely coor-

inating with Indian embassies and local authorities to ensure safety and render medical assistance to them," the official said. The ministry continues to closely monitor the prevailing and evolving maritime situation in the Persian Gulf region and has strengthened monitoring and preparedness measures in view of the evolving maritime situation in the West Asia region to ensure the safety of Indian vessels and seafarers, Sinha said.

Regular interaction with industry and stakeholders is being undertaken to provide all assistance to the industry and seafarers. Advisories have been issued by DG Shipping directing all Indian flag vessels and 778 Indian seafarers to adopt enhanced security measures and strictly comply with reporting protocols, including submission of real-time details.

Sinha further said that port operations across India remain stable. Major ports have implemented operational measures, including continuous monitoring of vessel movement in coordination with shipping lines and vessel agents, real-time assessment of developments in the region, and regular reporting of vessels and cargo status. (PTI)

Niti Aayog urges states to adhere to fiscal deficit norms



NEW DELHI, March 11: Government think tank Niti Aayog on Wednesday urged state governments to adhere to fiscal deficit norms under the FRBM Act through disciplined expenditure management, broadening the GST base, and enhancing their own tax capacity.

The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act aims to regulate the country's debt level by restricting fiscal and revenue deficits as a percentage of GDP.

Niti Aayog's 2026 Fiscal Health Index (FHI) for 2023-24 suggests that states with widening revenue deficits should prioritise aligning revenue expenditure with sustainable revenue growth. Odisha, Goa, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh have emerged as India's top 10 fiscally-wise states,

according to the latest fiscal health index for the financial year 2023-24. Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana showed a mild recovery, whereas Punjab, West Bengal and Kerala remained at the bottom of the index.

In the FHI of 2025, which ranked states based on their fiscal situation during 2022-23, Odisha was number 1, followed by Chhattisgarh, Goa, Jharkhand and Gujarat.

Overall, higher-ranked states display stronger fiscal discipline and resource mobilisation efforts, while lower-ranked states exhibit higher non-developmental expenditure and less sustainable fiscal patterns, the FHI 2026 report said.

Among north-eastern and Himalayan states, Arunachal Pradesh has topped in the index, followed by Uttarakhand, Tripura, Meghalaya, Assam and Mizoram.

The report was released by Niti Aayog Vice Chairman Suman Bery.

"We are seeing at the national level shocks that come from a number of sources. We are talking international shocks, but there are domestic shocks as well... so one important developmental consequence of maintaining strong fiscal health is, of course, to have a buffer when shocks hit," he said.

The FHI is a comprehensive framework for assessing and comparing the fiscal performance of states. It outlines each state's fiscal strengths, weaknesses, and overall profile.

"States should prioritise strengthening their fiscal frameworks by improving revenue mobilisation, primarily through broadening GST bases and enhancing own tax capacity by curbing committed expenditure to restore fiscal flexibility," the report said.

Rationalising subsidies, adopting standard expenditure heads, improving the quality and composition of capital spending, and adopting medium-term fiscal plans can help contain deficits and stabilise debt trajectories.

"States with persistent stress must undertake targeted consolidation measures, including tighter control of off-budget borrowings, and better cash and debt management," it added.

The FHI ranks states on five major sub-indices that include quality of expenditure, revenue mobilisation, fiscal prudence, debt index, and debt sustainability. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

Congress wrongly using

made there. He said photographs circulating on social media allegedly show instances where the singer's name was invoked in political settings.

The controversy comes amid ongoing political exchanges between the ruling BJP and the Congress ahead of the upcoming elections in Assam, with leaders from both sides accusing each other of politicising public figures and cultural icons.

Mortal remains of

in the Lok Sabha for multiple terms. Engti had also served earlier as the Chief Executive Member of the then Karbi Anglong District Council. Raton Engti, president of the Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee, said Engti's death was a monumental loss for the party, recalling him as a leader who upheld Gandhian ideals and played a foundational role in strengthening the Congress in the hill districts.

Howraghat MLA Bidyanshu Englu, who had earlier worked with Engti before joining the Bharatiya Janata Party, remembered him as a gentle and approachable leader respected across political lines.

According to family members, Engti's last rites will be performed at the Diphu public cremation ground on March 12 following traditional Karbi rituals.

UPPL hints at

that UPPL's organisational presence has expanded in districts such as Biswanath, Gohpur, and Sonitpur, where the party may field candidates in multiple constituencies.

A final decision on seat allocation will be taken during a party meeting scheduled for March 12. Boro said the alliance with the BJP still exists but added that political circumstances may change over time.

"If confidence in a partnership begins to weaken, parties must consider alternative paths to secure their political future," he said.

No shortage of

routes. India imports a significant portion of its LPG requirements, and any disruption in shipping lanes or supply from the Gulf region often raises concerns about domestic availability and prices. However, Sarma said the situation does not warrant panic buying or hoarding of cylinders.

He urged people to continue purchasing LPG as usual and avoid spreading rumours about shortages. Officials said that oil marketing companies have adequate stock and distribution systems remain fully operational across Assam.

The state government is also coordinating with central agencies and petroleum companies to ensure that supply chains remain stable.

Authorities have further appealed to the public not to create unnecessary panic, reiterating that there is currently no LPG crisis in Assam and normal supply is being maintained across the state.

CM inaugurates Swaraj

Assam, including the construction of a flyover in the town. On the upcoming Assembly elections, Sarma said the list of candidates for several constituencies would be announced on March 17 and that seat-sharing arrangements with the Asom Gana Parishad would be finalised through discussions.

The Jorhat Central Jail, constructed during the British colonial period between 1909 and 1911, holds a significant place in Assam's freedom movement history.

Several freedom fighters were imprisoned there, and noted freedom fighter Kushal Konwar was executed in the jail in 1943.

Officials said the creation of Swaraj Udyan aims to preserve this historical legacy and create a space where people can learn about the sacrifices made during India's struggle for independence.

Rajor Dal ready

dignity for the sake of any political arrangement," he added. Meanwhile, Gaurav Gogoi earlier stated that the Congress had made sincere efforts to build an electoral alliance with Akhil Gogoi ahead of the Assembly polls.

In a social media post, he said the party had attempted to form a united opposition platform in keeping with the aspirations of the people of Assam.

However, he noted that despite several rounds of discussion, the two parties were unable to create what he described as a "conducive and hopeful environment" for an alliance ahead of the elections.

No medical college

Dhubri and other places follow the geographical naming pattern," the Chief Minister said. He added that the cabinet therefore decided to rename the institution as BARPETA Medical College and Hospital to remove confusion and ensure consistency in the naming system.

Sarma also clarified that the state government would honour former President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed by naming a separate major project or institution after him in Guwahati.

"A special project in Guwahati will be named after Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to honour his legacy," the chief minister said.

The decision, however, drew criticism from opposition leaders.

AIUDF MLA Rafiqul Islam demanded that the government withdraw the cabinet decision, arguing that the name of the medical college should not be changed.

The development follows a cabinet meeting held on Tuesday where the Assam government approved the renaming of the institution located in BARPETA district.

Officials said that the medical college, established in 2011 and affiliated with Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences, currently offers undergraduate and postgraduate medical courses and serves as a major healthcare institution in western Assam.

The renaming decision has sparked a political debate with opposition parties questioning the move while the state government maintains that the change is purely administrative and intended to standardise the naming of public medical institutions.

Review meeting on

prevent rumours or misinformation regarding any shortage of LPG cylinders. Following the national-level meeting, a review meeting was held at Loksewa Bhawan under the chairmanship of Ravi Kota.

The meeting was attended by the Harmeet Singh, senior officials of the Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Department, and representatives of Oil Marketing Companies operating in the state.

Officials reviewed the stock position of LPG cylinders and other petroleum products, including Motor Spirit (petrol) and High-Speed Diesel.

Representatives of the oil marketing companies informed the meeting that there is currently no shortage of LPG cylinders in Assam and that sufficient stock is available to meet the requirements of domestic consumers.

The chief secretary directed all concerned authorities to closely monitor the situation at their respective levels and ensure smooth supply and distribution.

The meeting also appealed to consumers not to believe rumours or fake news regarding LPG availability.

Authorities warned that stringent action will be taken against individuals or agencies spreading misinformation through social media or other platforms.

It was further decided to constitute a Crisis Management Group comprising all stakeholders to monitor the situation, along with a Media Management Committee to keep close watch on social media as well as electronic and print media.

Officials were also instructed to take necessary measures to prevent hoarding, black marketing, unfair trade practices or price hikes of LPG and other petroleum products.

The administration emphasised strict regulatory enforcement, technological monitoring and surprise inspections related to production, import, marketing, transportation and supply of LPG, natural gas and petroleum products across the state.

BJP defends govt's

suspended Congress MLAs Sherman Ali of Bagbar and Abdul Rashid Mandal of Goalpara West. Taking a sharp dig at opposition leaders, he compared Akhil Gogoi to historical figure Badan Barphukan, while likening Gaurav Gogoi to Mughal commander Raja Ram Singh I.

Mahanta claimed that the opposition would face defeat in the 2026 political contest, citing what he described as a massive public response to the Jan Ashirwad Yatra led by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and state BJP president Dilip Saikia. He also said the BJP has recognised leaders across party lines, mentioning freedom fighter Chabhal Upadhyay.

Mahanta noted that an engineering college in Behali in Biswanath has been named Chabhal Upadhyay Engineering College Behali in his honour, and a life-size statue of the leader was unveiled in Dispur in 2020.

Concluding the briefing, Mahanta said the BJP remains committed to inclusive governance and to serving people across all sections of society.

Delhi was most

sustain disproportionately high exposure levels. "Ventilation efficiency emerges as the dominant determinant of inter-city variability. However, current NCAP evaluation frameworks primarily assess observed concentration changes without explicitly accounting for meteorological modulation, potentially leading to distorted interpretations of policy effectiveness," he said. The report proposed significant reform in NCAP Phase-III, including separate winter targets, meteorology-adjusted metrics, and dynamic weather-triggered action plans, alongside integrated airshed-based planning. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I Shariffuddin Laskar, aged about 56 years, S/O-Ayub Ali Laskar, R/O-Village-Nilbagan, P/O-Nilbagan, P/S-Murajhar, Dist-Hojai (Assam) That, my actual and correct name is Shariffuddin Laskar but in the passport vide no V4372427 of my daughter namely Benazir Sharif wherein my name has been inadvertently recorded as Sharif Uddin Laskar instead of Shariffuddin Laskar.

Shariffuddin Laskar

LOST

I have lost my HSLC Mark sheet, original certificate bearing Roll B11-736 No. 3242 of 2011, HS mark sheet, original certificate bearing Roll 0858 No10069 of 2015 and Assam State open school marksheet (HS level) bearing Roll No-1882021B018 of 2022.

Berona Horo
D/O- Pawel Horo
Vill- Borjuli T.E line no 17
PO- Borjuli Sonitpur Assam,

ELECTRICAL WORKS AT TINSUKIA DIVISION

E-Tender Notice No.: TSK/Elect/231
Date: 06-03-2026. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **SN.1. Tender No. LV-T-14-TSK-934-R. Name of work:** Augmentation and replacement of Electrical Assets of Electrical General Service Over Tinsukia Division. **Tender Value:** ₹1,47,37,885/-. **Earnest Money:** ₹2,23,700/-. **SN.2. Tender No. LV-T-14-TSK-938. Name of work:** At New Tinsukia-Construction of Transit Building(4 Unit). **Tender Value:** ₹17,64,128/-. **Earnest Money:** ₹35,300/-. **SN.3. Tender No. LV-T-14-TSK-939. Name of work:** Electrical Works for Dibrugarh- Upgradation and refurbishment of Pit lines no.6 & 7 at Dibrugarh Coaching Depot. **Tender Value:** ₹88,75,645.04/-. **Earnest Money:** ₹1,77,500/- **Date & time of closing of tender:** At 13:00 hrs. & opening at 15:00 hrs. on 27-03-2026. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 13:00 hrs. on 27-03-2026. on website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (Elect), Tinsukia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
"Serving Customers with a Smile"

CONSTRUCTION OF STAFF QUARTERS

E-Tender No. Engg-COR-RE-MLG-03-25-26; Dated: 05-03-2026, Name of work: At Barua Bamun Gaon: Construction of Staff Qtrs. (4 Nos Type-II and 4 Nos Type III), 01 Nos OHE & PSI Depot, 01 Nos 8-wheeler TWS, linking of track at TWS siding, RCC Road, Boundary wall, RCC drain, 20000 Litre Overhead RCC water tank and Iron removal plant with all other ancillary works at Barua Bamun Gaon in connection with the Railway Electrification works in Tinsukia Division of N. F. Railway. **Advertised Value:** ₹9,10,90,912.96; **Earnest Money:** ₹6,05,500.00. E-tender will be closed at 14:00 hrs. on 02-04-2026. The complete information and tender document of e-tender will be available at www.ireps.gov.in

By: Chief Engineer/RE/CON/Guwahati
Northeast Frontier Railway
(Construction Organisation)
"Serving Customers with a smile"

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THURSDAY, MARCH 12, 2026

THE HILLS TIMES 3

Major infrastructure, healthcare projects inaugurated in Diphu Himanta pats Tuliram for accelerating devp

HT Bureau DIPHU, March 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday inaugurated several major infrastructure and development projects during a day-long visit to Diphu, marking a significant boost for the hill districts.

Among the key projects inaugurated were the Khorsing Terang Flyover, the Diphu Cancer Institute and the new District Commissioner's Office at Biria.

According to officials, the chief minister inaugurated 54 completed development projects worth ₹8,116 crore implemented across Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, while also laying foundation stones for new projects valued at ₹1,293 crore.

The inauguration programme was held virtually from Rangsinga Sarpo Ahongjai at Taralansgo.

The newly inaugurated Diphu Cancer Centre, built at a cost of ₹270 crore, is expected to provide specialised cancer treatment in the region, reducing the need for patients to travel to cities such as Chennai and Bengaluru.

The 1.2-km Khorsing Terang In-garkap Flyover, constructed at a



cost of ₹228 crore, is expected to ease traffic congestion in Diphu town.

Other road projects inaugurated included the four-laning of Mahatma Gandhi Park Road to Lumding Road University Campus and the Kheroni-Zirikinding road.

The chief minister also inaugurated a Government Model Degree

College in West Karbi Anglong and a swimming pool at the Karbi Anglong Sports Association complex.

During the programme, Sarma laid the foundation stone for the second Sainik School in Assam at Langvoku with an investment of ₹365 crore.

Other proposed projects include

a 42 MW solar power plant at Bon-glong Terang village, a Hotel and Tourism Management Institute in Diphu, and the upgrading of the Kuthuri-Anjokpani-Dokmoka road to improve connectivity to interior areas.

The chief minister also oversaw the Phase-II distribution of financial assistance to Karbi traditional village heads, priests and others, and announced grants of ₹5 lakh each for the families of those who lost their lives during the Autonomous State movement and ethnic clashes.

Addressing the gathering, Sarma said the region has witnessed rapid development in recent years and highlighted the establishment of institutions such as a Central University campus, a medical college and the cancer centre in Karbi Anglong.

He also praised Tuliram Ronghang, chief executive member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, for accelerating development initiatives in the hill districts.

The event was attended by deputy speaker Numal Momin, Cabinet minister Nandita Garlosa, and several MLAs and dignitaries.

Congress wrongly using Zubeen Garg for electoral gain: Pijush Hazarika

Staff Reporter GUWAHATI, March 11: Cabinet Minister Pijush Hazarika on Wednesday accused the Congress of attempting to politicise the name of iconic Assamese singer Zubeen Garg, saying such actions reflect the party's "cheap mentality".

In a post on social media, Hazarika said Zubeen Garg is loved by people across Assam and holds a permanent place in the hearts of Assamese society.

"Zubeen Garg is dear to all of us. He lives and will always live in the hearts of every Assamese person," the minister said.

He added that the legal process related to the singer's death last year during a sea outing in Singa-pore is currently under consideration by the court and therefore should not be dragged into political debates.

"The process of delivering justice to Zubeen Garg is presently under the consideration of the honourable court. Those who love him certainly have the right to raise their voice and say #JusticeForZubeenGarg, but trying to use his name from a political platform for political gains reflects the Con-



gress party's cheap mentality," Hazarika wrote.

The minister alleged that the Congress has repeatedly attempted to bring the singer's name into political discourse for electoral advantage.

According to Hazarika, the opposition party has used the name of Zubeen Garg in several political contexts, including during election campaign songs and political gatherings.

"Why does Congress repeatedly try to drag Assam's beloved icon into politics? Sometimes through campaign songs during elections, and at other times Congress candidates gather their supporters and raise Zubeen Garg's name during political rallies," he claimed.

Hazarika also referred to incidents during recent political activities in places such as Tihu and Digboi, claiming similar attempts were (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

BJP defends govt's development record

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, March 11: Assam BJP spokesperson Devajit Mahanta on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on opposition leaders while highlighting what he described as a new culture of governance under the Bharatiya Janata Party.

Addressing a press conference in Guwahati, Mahanta said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, development projects are now both initiated and completed within the tenure of the same government.

He cited several examples, including the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu, whose foundation stone was laid by Modi in 2019 and later inaugurated in February 2026.

He also mentioned the recently inaugurated Maharaj Prithu Flyover, connecting Dighalipukhuri and Bamunimaidam, which he said was completed ahead of schedule.

Mahanta criticised Lurinjyoti Gogoi, president of the Assam Jatiya Parishad, for referring to the BJP's Jan Ashirwad Yatra as a "Jan Abhishap Yatra."

He alleged that Gogoi, who emerged from the Assam Movement and student politics, is now seeking to become an MLA with the support of the Indian National Congress.

He also questioned whether Gogoi had paid homage at the Swahid Smarak Boragoan, built in honour of the 860 martyrs of the Assam Movement.

Commenting on the opposition alliance, Mahanta criticised Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi, saying he had "assumed the role of Gandhari" from the Mahabharata, implying that he was deliberately ignoring political realities.

Mahanta alleged that Congress was reluctant to form an alliance with Rajior Dal after the party invited suspended Congress MLAs Sherman Ali of Baghbar and Abdul Rashid (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

UPPL hints at expanding electoral footprint in Assam; final decision today

HT Correspondent TEZPUR, March 11: The United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) has indicated that it may contest a larger number of seats in the upcoming Assam Legislative Assembly elections, signalling a possible shift in its political equation with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Speaking to reporters in Tezpur, UPPL president and newly elected Rajya Sabha MP Pramod Boro said that changing political circumstances could reshape alliances in the state.

"When closeness begins to fade, situations unavoidably change," Boro said, suggesting that the dynamics within the alliance may be evolving.

He said the party aims to strengthen its organisational base across Assam and eventually contest nearly 100 constituencies in the state by the 2031 Assembly elections, including 15 segments within the Bodoland Territorial Region.



For the forthcoming polls, the party is preparing a broader roadmap focusing on the development of all 146 communities in Assam and reviewing their progress since independence.

Boro recalled that the UPPL was founded in 2015 under the leadership of U G Brahma with the aim of ending armed conflict in the region and promoting development.

Responding to remarks by Hagrama Mohilary regarding alleged attempts to seek support from the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) during his Rajya Sabha election, Boro said criticism is a natural part of political life.

Quoting Greek philosopher Socrates, he said having critics helps individuals remain grounded and encourages self-reflection.

He added that democratic governance values criticism as an essential element of political discourse.

Referring to the history of the Bodo movement, Boro said the struggle for rights had continued for decades and claimed that nearly 8,000 people had lost their lives during the movement.

He emphasised that the demands were always pursued within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

He also stated that while governing the Bodoland Territorial Region, the party prepared a vision document for 26 communities living in the area.

On electoral strategy, Boro said the party is prepared to contest all 15 Assembly constituencies in the BTR. He added (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

Mortal remains of former MP Biren Singh Engti laid in Diphu

Condolences pour in



HT Bureau DIPHU, March 11: The mortal remains of veteran politician and former Congress MP Biren Singh Engti were laid in state at his residence in Rongmongve, Diphu, on Wednesday as hundreds of people gathered to pay their last respects.

Engti, one of the longest-serving tribal leaders from Karbi Anglong, passed away on March 10 at Guwahati Health City Hospital following a stroke. From early morning, fam-

ily members, supporters, political leaders and well-wishers from different communities and political backgrounds visited his residence to pay homage.

Leaders of the Indian National Congress, party workers and residents of the region described his passing as a major loss to the political landscape of the hill districts.

Among those who paid their respects was Tuliram Ronghang, Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, who offered prayers and expressed condolences to the bereaved family.

In his condolence message, Ronghang said Engti had dedicated his life to public service and described him as a distinguished parliamentarian who represented the region (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

CM inaugurates Swaraj Udyan at historic Jorhat Central Jail site

HT Correspondent JORHAT, March 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday inaugurated Swaraj Udyan, a memorial park dedicated to the country's freedom struggle, built on land adjoining the historic Jorhat Central Jail.

The park, developed as part of the state government's initiative to preserve sites associated with India's independence movement, has been constructed on a large tract of land near the jail, which has deep historical links with Assam's freedom struggle.

Speaking to the media after inaugurating the park, Sarma said Swaraj Udyan is not merely a public park but a place that preserves history and conveys important lessons to future generations.

He added that the park's historical significance would help keep alive the legacy of the freedom movement.

The chief minister noted that no other park in the state occupies such a vast area and expressed hope that Swaraj Udyan would serve as a model for similar initiatives in Assam.

Responding to questions from journalists, Sarma said the government's primary focus remains on development and reiterated that it would continue working toward that goal.

He also alleged that Gaurav Gogoi had opposed several development projects in Jorhat and Upper (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

Rajior Dal ready to take on Cong politically: Akhil



Staff Reporter GUWAHATI, March 11: Akhil Gogoi, president of the Rajior Dal, on Wednesday launched a sharp attack on the Indian National Congress, saying his party is prepared to confront the Congress politically

ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections.

Speaking to reporters in Sivasagar, Gogoi criticised Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi over recent developments surrounding alliance

discussions between the Congress and Rajior Dal.

Drawing a strong analogy, Gogoi said his party is ready to politically challenge the Congress if required. "As Iran attacked the United States, Rajior Dal is also ready to attack the Congress politically," he said.

The Rajior Dal leader asserted that his party is entering the elections with the objective of winning seats and expanding its political presence in Assam.

"We are not entering the elections to lose. We are contesting to win," he said.

Gogoi also stressed that his party would not compromise its political self-respect for any electoral arrangement.

"There is the blood of self-respect in us. We will not compromise our (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

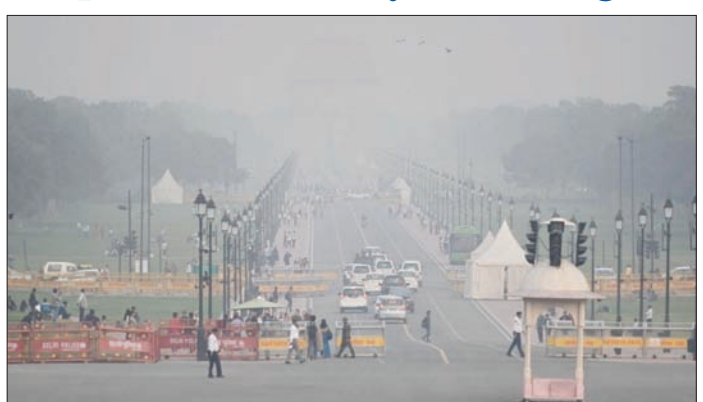
Delhi continues to face the most severe pollution crisis nationally

Delhi was most polluted city during 2024-25: Study

NEW DELHI, March 11: Delhi was the most polluted city during 2024-25, recording the highest annual PM2.5 levels and extended periods of "severe" air quality in winter while Patna was the second-most polluted city, according to a new analysis by Climate Trends.

Climate Trends is a research-based consulting and capacity-building initiative that aims to bring greater focus on issues of environment, climate change and sustainable development.

Based on Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) air quality monitoring data, this report analysed how meteorological conditions influence the persistence of PM2.5 pollution across six major Indian cities such as Delhi, Patna, Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru. Using CPCB air quality data (2024-2025) combined



with meteorological clustering, the study distinguished emission-driven pollution from weather-driven variability.

"Delhi continues to face the most severe pollution crisis nationally with the highest annual average PM2.5 levels and the longest

stretches of 'severe' or 'emergency' category air days, driven by local emissions and regional factors.

"Patna is confirmed as the second-most polluted city after Delhi, with persistently high PM2.5 concentrations driven by strong atmos-

pheric stagnation, highlighting an intensifying crisis in the eastern Indo-Gangetic Plain," the report said.

While historically less polluted, Bengaluru and Chennai showed signs of air quality deterioration during the winter months, a new vulnerability trend.

Both Mumbai and Chennai recorded an increase in their annual average pollution levels in 2025, signalling a growing year-round concern beyond just seasonal spikes.

Sagnik Dey, Head, Centre for Atmospheric Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, noted that persistence of PM2.5 exceedances is strongly associated with sub-1 m/s wind regimes and elevated relative humidity across northern cities, where stagnation episodes (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

No shortage of LPG in Assam: CM



Staff Reporter GUWAHATI, March 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday assured that there is no shortage of cooking gas in the state amid concerns over a possible supply disruption in India due to the escalating conflict between Israel and Iran.

Speaking to reporters here, Sarma said the state government has been closely monitoring the situation following reports of a potential LPG supply crisis triggered by the tensions in West Asia.

"There is no shortage of cooking gas in Assam. People should not panic," the chief minister said, adding that the situation remains

under control.

He noted that the Government of India is already in touch with several countries to ensure uninterrupted supply of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) to the country.

According to Sarma, India has a diversified energy import network and the Centre is taking necessary steps to prevent any disruption in supply chains.

"The Government of India has established communication with multiple countries regarding energy supplies. There is no immediate concern about LPG availability in Assam," he said.

The chief minister's remarks come amid growing speculation on social media and in some regions about a possible shortage of LPG cylinders following rising tensions in West Asia.

Energy markets have been volatile due to fears that a prolonged conflict between Israel and Iran could affect global oil and gas supply (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

Review meeting on fuel updates held

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, March 11: The Assam government on Tuesday reviewed the availability of LPG cylinders and petroleum products in the state following the evolving geopolitical situation arising out of the ongoing West Asia conflict.

The review followed a video conference convened by the Government of India, which was attended by Chief Secretaries and Directors General of Police of all states, along with senior officials from departments such as Home & Political, Consumer Affairs, and Information & Broadcasting.

The meeting discussed the current status of LPG and petroleum products across the country.

During the discussion, emphasis was laid on strict vigilance and monitoring of the stock, transportation, supply and distribution of LPG cylinders—both domestic and commercial.

Participants also stressed the need to (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

No medical college named after any individual in Assam: Himanta

Staff Reporter GUWAHATI, March 11: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday defended the state cabinet's decision to rename the Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College and Hospital, saying the move was taken to maintain uniformity in the naming pattern of government medical colleges across the state.

Speaking to reporters here, Sarma said most state-run medical colleges in Assam are named after their geographical locations, and the decision was made to bring the Barpeeta institution in line with that convention.

"None of the medical colleges in the state are named after individuals. Institutions such as those in Guwahati, (CONTD-ON PAGE-2)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

One who deceives will always find those who allow themselves to be deceived. -Niccolò Machiavelli

War and LPG crisis

Though the government of India has assured that there are enough oil and gas resources in the country, and there is no reason for public to panic, hotels and eateries in several cities in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and elsewhere have shut down causing great difficulties to those who depend on them for food – which included students, patients, travellers, and others. Some sort of panic has spread across the country after the Bengaluru Hotels Association said that hotels and eateries in the city will shut down from tomorrow. It has been reported that the supply of gas cylinders for commercial use has been stopped from March 9. Industry bodies have said that the shortage of commercial cylinder supply in already being felt in other cities too, such as Mumbai and Chennai, where eateries rely heavily on commercial cooking gas for their daily operation. Government has said that it has prioritized domestic LPG supplies for households to ensure that it remains available for them. However, for the hotels or restaurant industries, the government has formed a panel of three Executive Directors of Oil Marketing Companies to examine requests for LPG supply for them.

It is not only the food or cooking that is affected by the LPG crisis. It has widened to crematoriums run by LPG. In Pune, the municipal Commissioner, Naval Kishor Ram has said that out of 27 crematoriums in the city, 18 are temporarily shut due to break in supply of LPG. The crisis has impacted hospitality industry, since restaurants and hotels have heavily depended on commercial LPG. Industry bodies have warned of mass shutdowns if supply is not restored quickly. Small businesses are also affected which included street food vendors, dhabas, catering business, and bakeries. Food delivery ecosystem may be impacted soon along with the public utilities, such as gas based crematoriums and institutional kitchens. Given the penetration and the demography, high-risk states are – Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Rajasthan. Medium risk states are – Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. Gujarat, Delhi, and North East states are lower risk states. Gujarat has high PNG penetration, Delhi has PNG and electricity, and North East states have mixed fuel consumption.

In the meantime, Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has directed refineries to ramp up LPG production and divert the additional LPG specifically for domestic consumption. The gap between LPG refill booking has been increased from 21 days to 25 days to avoid hoarding and black marketing. The government insists domestic household supply is being protected, but the crisis has already caused disruptions in several states. LPG prices were raised by about ₹ 60 per 14.2 kg cylinder across major cities. Price increase for 19 kg commercial cylinder was between ₹114.50 to ₹115. The Centre has invoked Essential Commodities Act to control supply and prevent hoarding. Government is also exploring additional LPG imports from the US and Canada.

The hunger for followers and the auction of relationships

By: Dr Satyavan Saurabh

The digital age has opened new doors to expression. The internet and social media have given everyone the opportunity to reach the world. While previously limited sources of information and entertainment, today anyone can create videos, write blogs, and reach millions of people using their mobile phones. This change is both democratic and inspiring. But with every change comes new challenges.

Today, in the world of social media, popularity has a new definition—followers, likes, shares, and views. The higher these numbers, the more successful a person is considered. This competition has led many content creators to a path where even the confines of personal life are becoming part of their content.

In the past few years, a new trend has rapidly emerged—bringing family feuds and personal conflicts to the camera and sharing them on social media. Husband-wife disputes, sibling conflicts, mother-in-law-daughter-in-law squabbles, or even small internal family arguments—things that were previously resolved within the confines of the home—are now being broadcast to millions of viewers in the form of videos and posts.

Many YouTubers and bloggers call this "real life content." They argue that viewers want to see reality. But the question is: is it necessary to make every real event public? Is it appropriate to expose personal relationships to the curiosity of viewers?

In fact, social media algorithms also encourage this trend. Content that evokes controversy, emotional reactions, or sensationalism tends to go viral faster. People comment more on such videos, offering their opinions, and sometimes even arguing for or against them. This is why some creators deliberately choose topics that can stir up emotions. Unfortunately, sometimes these conflicts are genuine, and the privacy of family members is at stake. A minor dispute can be blown out of proportion by being exposed to the cameras. This not only compromises the dignity of relationships but can also negatively impact other family members—especially children. In some cases, it's been observed that disputes are deliberately exaggerated or even completely scripted. This means that the conflict isn't real, but an attempt is made to appear real to attract audience attention. This blurs the line between entertainment and reality. In this age of social media, going "viral" has become synonymous with success. When a video receives millions of views and thousands of new followers, the creator feels they've chosen the right path. But this popularity is often fleeting. A controversy that captured audience attention one day is overshadowed by another controversy the next. There's also a social aspect to this trend. When viewers repeatedly see such content, they gradually begin to perceive it as normal to bring personal relationships into the public arena and make them a topic of discussion. This can undermine the sense of privacy and decorum in society. In our society, the family has always been considered a strong institution. Family is not just a living arrangement, but also a foundation of emotional security, trust, and mutual understanding. When internal family problems are made a public spectacle, it undermines the trust that is the foundation of relationships.

Furthermore, young people and teenagers make up a significant portion of the social media audience. They are influenced by what they see. If they repeatedly see that it's normal to publicize personal conflicts in order to gain popularity, they may develop the impression that it's acceptable to go to any lengths to achieve success in life. It's also true that not all content creators are like this. There are many YouTubers, bloggers, and digital creators who produce informative, creative, and positive content. Many people working in education, science, art, culture, travel, and social issues are using social media as a positive platform. Their efforts prove that controversy and drama aren't the only path to popularity. The real question is one of responsibility. When someone has the power to reach thousands or even millions of people, it also carries a social responsibility. Content creators must understand that their content not only entertains but also influences people's thinking and perspectives.

Viewers also play a significant role in this. After all, they are the ones who decide what type of content gets watched and what gets ignored. If viewers only promote sensational and controversial videos, it's natural that such content will continue to grow. But if they give more support to constructive and positive content, the digital landscape could change.

Import-Dependent economy of Assam

If we dispassionately analyse the current economic context of Assam, one terrifying truth stares us in the face: the extreme import dependence of our state. Our state has today turned into a strange market where the number of consumers far exceeds that of producers by several times, and dependence on others seems to have gained an unwritten social acceptance over self-reliance. From the drop of milk put in the morning tea to the fish and meat eaten at night, vegetables, and even the flowers and betel leaves used in puja and festivals—almost everything has to be imported from other states today. This means that nearly eighty percent of the money earned through back-breaking labour by the people of Assam flows out of the state every day through one route or another. This is not merely a matter of financial shortage in one state; rather, it is an early warning of economic slavery. In a state that has no shortage of natural resources, where the soil is so fertile that a handful of seeds thrown on it yields crops, it is a most shameful aspect of our national character that its people live dependent on rice from Punjab, pulses and flour from Andhra Pradesh, fish, and onions from Nashik. The 'leakage' in our economy is so massive that through this hole all possibilities of our prosperity are slowly draining away, creating a void. Until we accept this import dependence as a national crisis and initiate a production-oriented revolution in opposition to it, no government package or financial assistance can truly make Assam self-sufficient. Our market is no longer in our hands; it has slipped into the grip of external big capitalists and distributors, and we have become mere passive consumers who look to others for even the smallest things. This dependence has completely crippled our economic independence and pushed us towards deep uncertainty.

The dismal state of the agriculture sector forms the strongest foundation of our import dependence. It sounds very good in textbooks or speeches to call Assam an agriculture-based state, but in reality our agricultural practices remain trapped in the old nineteenth-century plough-and-bullock system. Government records proudly show cultivation on thousands of hectares, yet when one goes to the market, hardly any local produce is found. Our farmers still depend on a single-season crop and sit idle the rest of the year, while other states of the country, using advanced technology and modern irrigation, produce three or four crops a year and capture the entire national market. The fact that formalin-laced fish travels a thousand kilometres from Andhra Pradesh in trucks and sells cheaper than the fresh fish from our local ponds proves that our production cost is much higher and the scale of production extremely low. Here a vicious cycle of middlemen buys

goods from farmers at very low prices and sells them in the market at ten times the price, reaping huge profits. As a result, the actual farmer remains perpetually poor and debt-ridden, while the common consumer bears sky-high prices. The competition to convert our precious agricultural land to non-agricultural uses is a suicidal decision for our future. In the name of urbanisation, cement buildings and warehouses are rising on fertile fields, making our food security completely dependent on the mercy of other states. The day a national highway closes for any reason, panic erupts in Assam's markets. This vulnerability keeps us weak both politically and psychologically, because an economy incapable of feeding itself can never assert its rights strongly on the world stage.

Observing the industrial sector, apart from the old industries of tea and oil, we have failed to build any new noteworthy production centres. Ninety percent or more of the essential household goods we use are manufactured outside Assam. From an ordinary matchbox or candle to the most advanced machinery and computers—everything we are compelled to buy from others. As a result, our state's valuable resources go out as raw materials at very low prices and return as finished products at exorbitant rates. There is no shortage of raw materials in our state, but what is lacking is the right initiative, courage, and modern infrastructure.

The bureaucratic complexities, red-tapism, and indirect corruption involved in setting up industries make local talented entrepreneurs afraid to step forward. Obtaining a bank loan remains a nightmarish ordeal for an ordinary local entrepreneur. Meanwhile, our current education system is geared solely towards producing secure government jobholders, which has prevented the new generation from developing a risk-taking attitude or the mindset to create something new. If the young people who waste ten to fifteen years waiting for a government job had instead invested that time and energy in some small enterprise, Assam's economic picture would be very different and brighter today. In our society, a small shopkeeper or small producer is looked upon with such contempt that the new generation has completely forgotten the dignity of physical labour. This mental decay has made us even more averse to production, and we are handing over our vast market as a gold mine to external businessmen.

The waste and misuse of human resources is perhaps the greatest damage to our crumbling economy. Visiting any village in Assam today, we see that able-bodied young men, lacking employment, are leaving Assam for Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Hyderabad, or Karnataka. There they work as dishwashers in hotels, security guards, or daily-wage construc-

tion labourers. Yet ironically, at the same time, Assam imports labourers from other states to do those very same jobs. What kind of economic logic is this? Our local youth feel ashamed to work on their own land or in their neighbourhood, but they have no objection to doing any kind of work a thousand miles away. As a result, a terrifying demographic change is taking place in our state, and all sources of economic earnings are slowly slipping out of the hands of our local people. The Assamese youth who earns fifteen to twenty thousand rupees a month working for some company in Bengaluru sends a small portion home, but that money too ultimately gets spent buying goods from Bengaluru or Mumbai. In other words, we are gifting our labour force to others, and then buying expensive goods from them, returning our hard-earned money straight into their pockets. This is a poisonous and endless cycle in which we face only losses. Thousands of degree-holders emerging from our universities and technical institutions do not understand what the actual market demands. There is a vast

needed a strong and corruption-free cooperative-based economy, which in our state fell victim to politics and was destroyed prematurely.

We often use transportation costs and our geographical location as an easy excuse for our economic backwardness. It is said that since Assam is connected to the Indian mainland only through the 'Chicken's Neck' corridor, bringing goods here incurs excessive costs. But why do we not think that if transportation costs for goods from outside are high, that itself is the biggest opportunity for our local goods to capture the market? Since our own produce incurs no transportation cost, it should be available at much lower prices than goods coming from outside. Yet the exact opposite is happening in reality. The sole reason is that there is no scientific system or discipline in production here. The production cost for raising ten chickens in someone's backyard is one thing; raising ten lakh chickens with modern technology brings the per-unit cost much lower. This is called 'economy of scale' in economic language. Other advanced states in India have large farms or factories producing more at lower costs, whereas here we have only scattered small individual efforts. If the government had used the vast sums it spends on vote-bank schemes to encourage our youth to build integrated clusters or production centres, the outcome today would have been very different. The severe shortage of cold storages in our state causes farmers' hard-earned produce—potatoes, onions, vegetables—to rot in the fields, while we buy the same items at high prices from Nashik or Punjab. This is a glaring example of lack of planning and governmental inefficiency. Infrastructure development does not mean only building large flyovers or colourful roads; true infrastructure development also means creating facilities for proper preservation and processing of agricultural produce in every sub-division.

It is evident that our present society has completely fallen into the grip of a terrifying 'consumerist' culture. Our production capacity is declining day by day, yet our luxury knows no bounds. Even without money in our pockets, we take bank loans to buy expensive luxury cars, the latest model iPhones, and spend lakhs like water in weddings and celebrations just to show off. The question arises: where does this huge amount of money actually come from? It has two sources—we either sell ancestral property or land, or we fund this luxury through government scheme money or corrupt earnings. But no nation can survive long this way. When a nation's expenditure far exceeds its actual productive earnings and that earning has no stable foundation, economic bankruptcy becomes inevitable. Most of the items used in our tra-

ditional festivals today—whether gamochas representing our identity or Muga cloth—are now made in power looms outside the state and brought to Assam. We proudly display artificial Mekhela-Chadors made in Gujarat or Banaras on Bihu stages. This is the biggest hypocrisy of our so-called nationalism. The immense potential of our local handicrafts was never given a large commercial form. Our weavers still depend on others for yarn, while the yarn mills in our state lie closed due to governmental neglect. This means we are deliberately and knowingly striking an axe at our own economic feet.

To completely free Assam's economy from the curse of this import dependence, we now need a very sharp, dispassionate, and effective strategy. We need not merely emotional nationalism, but an 'economic nationalism'. This does not mean hating others or expelling them, but giving maximum priority to our local production and bringing our market back into the hands of our own people.

Instead of distributing free money through beneficiary schemes and making people averse to work and lazy, the government must strictly channel that vast sum into production-oriented activities. Our education system must be completely transformed into a vocational and technical one so that a student emerges with a degree equipped with the knowledge and courage to produce something new. To increase local participation in the market, the government should enact special economic laws or protective measures to provide a safe environment for our local youth to do business on their own land. To solve transportation problems, the waterway and railway networks must be made stronger and more usable so that our production costs become comparable to those of other states in India. Most importantly, there must be a radical change in the mindset of our entire society. We must once again learn to give dignity to labour. If a young man, instead of waiting ten to fifteen years for a government peon's job, opens a dairy farm, poultry farm, or small production unit, society must accord him high status and respect. Until we change our identity from mere 'consumers' to skilled 'producers', Assam's economy will continue advancing towards a deep dark abyss. This is not a partisan political issue; it is a grave question of preserving the existence of our future generations.

If we cannot break this harsh chain of import dependence now, in the coming days we may become economic refugees on our own soil—where we will still have land, but no control over the crops that grow on it or over anything above it. Becoming aware while there is still time is imperative. (The author is the recipient of the 'Yuba Lekhak Sanman - 2025' from the Government of Assam)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

gap between the bookish education they receive and real market needs. This terrible mismatch has trapped us between educated unemployment on one side and a shortage of skilled technical labour on the other.

In the overall system controlling our market, the participation and dominance of local people is almost zero. In Assam's major wholesale markets—whether vegetable markets or large machinery markets—a particular group holds monopoly dominance. It is crucial to deeply understand how these businessmen have made our economy dance at their fingertips. They purchase huge quantities from other states and create artificial shortages in the market according to their convenience to fix prices. When some brave local producer tries to compete with them, they use various economic barriers to push him out of the market. For example, if a local Assamese youth produces ten thousand eggs with great effort, external wholesalers, through syndicates, bring in more eggs from other states and crash the price so that the local youth cannot even recover production costs and is forced to shut down in loss. Government market control committees exist only on paper; in practice, they have no influence or intervention.

This is the most ugly and ruthless form of our import-dependent economy. As mere captive consumers, we have no power to bargain or influence the market. What items appear on our plates and at what price is decided today by big businessmen in Delhi, Nagpur, or Kolkata. To free ourselves from this system, we

Initiative to protect childhood in the age of Social Media

By: Lalit Garg

In the digital age, the pace and nature of human life are changing rapidly. Communication, education, entertainment, and social relationships are increasingly being conducted through virtual platforms. While this transformation has brought many conveniences, it has also created new challenges, especially for the mental, educational, social, and emotional development of children and adolescents. In this context, the technologically progressive Indian state of Karnataka has taken an important and exemplary initiative by deciding to keep children below sixteen years of age away from social media platforms. In its 2026-27 budget session, the state government announced that strict regulations would be introduced to restrict the use of social media by adolescents. This decision addresses the growing concerns of parents who are troubled by the risks arising from uncontrolled digital activities, including cyberbullying and cyber fraud. The objective of this initiative is to protect children from the harmful effects of the virtual world and to ensure their healthy mental development. It is indeed a commendable step, and other states should draw inspiration from it and take meaningful measures to safeguard childhood from the dangers of social media.

Soon after this initiative by Karnataka, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, N. Chandrababu Naidu, announced in the state assembly that a law would be introduced within the next ninety days to prohibit children below the age of thirteen from using social media. With this decision, Andhra Pradesh is set to become the second state after Karnataka to adopt such a policy. These initiatives are not merely administrative decisions; they are also part of a growing global debate on safeguarding children in an increasingly virtual world. Many countries around the world are seriously deliberating this issue. For example, Australia

has already implemented a ban on social media use for children under sixteen, while countries such as France have also introduced strict regulations to enhance children's digital safety. Over the past few years, psychologists and child health experts have repeatedly warned that uncontrolled use of social media can have serious consequences for the mental and emotional development of adolescents. Problems such as lack of self-confidence, loneliness, anxiety, depression, reduced attention span, and aggressive behavior are increasing rapidly among young users. The constant culture of comparison and performance on virtual platforms often creates feelings of inferiority and dissatisfaction in children. This concern was also highlighted in the Economic Survey of India 2025-26, which pointed out the growing impact of excessive screen time on young minds. Various international studies indicate that the average daily screen time among adolescents is steadily increasing. Many surveys reveal that children in the 13-18 age group in several countries spend three to six hours each day on virtual platforms. This excessive engagement has a direct impact on their studies, sleep patterns, family interaction, and physical activities. Reduced attention and concentration affect the quality of learning. The natural childhood that should be enriched with outdoor play, friendships, and connection with nature is gradually shrinking into an artificial virtual space. Moreover, problems such as cyber harassment and online fraud are also increasing through digital platforms. Many children unknowingly fall into such traps, which can seriously affect both their mental well-being and personal safety. Exposure to inappropriate online content can also negatively influence their psychology. In view of these circumstances, it has become clear that awareness alone is not enough to address the growing influence of the virtual world; strong policy measures are also necessary to ensure children's safety.

Although the initiatives taken by Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh are commendable, several practical challenges remain in their effective implementation. In today's world, smartphones and digital applications have become an integral part of education and daily life. Many schools use digital platforms for assignments, communication, and information sharing. Therefore, it may be difficult to determine whether a child's online activity is for educational purposes or for social networking. Another important challenge is related to the process of age verification. Ensuring that a user is genuinely under thirteen or sixteen years of age is technically complex. If technology companies do not cooperate in this effort, implementing such regulations effectively may become difficult. In many families, a single mobile phone is shared by several members, making it even harder to completely restrict children's access to social media. Despite these challenges, the initiative remains extremely significant because it draws society's attention to a serious and growing problem.

In reality, protecting children from the harmful effects of virtual platforms requires more than just restrictions; it calls for a balanced and comprehensive approach along with widespread awareness. Governments, schools, technology platforms, and parents all have equally important roles to play. Governments should formulate clear policies for children's digital safety and collaborate with technology companies to develop effective systems for age verification. Schools should educate students about digital discipline and responsible use of technology. However, the role of parents is the most crucial, because children's habits and behavior are shaped primarily within the family. If parents themselves demonstrate digital restraint and maintain open communication with their children, the negative effects of virtual media can be greatly reduced. At the same time, it is essen-

tial to provide children with a creative and constructive environment. Activities such as sports, reading, music, art, and interaction with nature contribute significantly to the balanced development of a child's personality. When such positive habits are nurtured from an early age, children naturally develop a healthier relationship with technology and become less dependent on virtual platforms. Society must also take proactive steps to create a healthy and inspiring environment for children.

It has now become clear that alongside the digital revolution, there is an equally pressing need for digital discipline. Technology should enrich human life rather than push it toward psychological and social crises. The initiatives taken by Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh serve both as a warning and as an inspiration in this direction. If other states also draw inspiration from these measures and take concrete steps to protect children, and if the central government considers introducing a national law on this issue, it could prove highly beneficial for future generations. Given the rapidly deteriorating situation, the central government may eventually be compelled to introduce a nationwide law to regulate children's exposure to social media. It would also be important for the government to consult subject experts and representatives from different sections of society before formulating such legislation. At a time when children's screen time is increasing to the level of addiction and their declining concentration is affecting their education, addressing this challenge must become a priority for both the central and state governments. Ultimately, childhood is not meant to be lost in the virtual world. It should be filled with imagination, play, learning, and creativity. If society and governance together can ensure that children grow up in a safe, balanced, and creative environment, only then can we truly envision a healthy, sensitive, and empowered future.

The extreme:
By: Dr Priya
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Guwahati Science City: A landmark for curiosity and innovation

By: Satyabrata Borah

The morning sky over Sonapur carried a quiet excitement as people gathered to witness a moment many in Assam had waited for years. The inauguration of the Guwahati Science City marked more than the opening of a new building. It represented a dream taking shape, a space where curiosity, imagination, and knowledge could meet. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma formally opened the facility, calling it an important step toward strengthening science education in the state and inspiring young minds to explore the world through learning and discovery.

For generations, science museums and learning centres have played a special role in shaping curiosity among children and students. Many people remember their first encounter with science not through textbooks but through exhibits that could be touched, explored, and experienced. That sense of wonder is what the Guwahati Science City aims to create. Located on the outskirts of Guwahati in the Sonapur area, the campus spreads across about 250 bighas of land. The scale of the project shows the ambition behind it. The facility stands larger than the well-known Science City Kolkata, which has long served as a major centre for science education in eastern India.

The project came to life through a partnership between the Government of Assam and the National Council of Science Museums, which functions under the Government of India. The council has played a major role in building science museums across the country, helping states develop spaces that combine education with engaging experiences. The Guwahati Science City reflects that philosophy. Rather than presenting science as something distant or difficult, the complex invites visitors to see science as part of everyday life.

The construction of the campus required an investment of around Rs 288.13 crore. Such a large investment shows how the state government views science education as a key area for the future. Technology shapes nearly every aspect of modern life. Students who grow up understanding scientific ideas gain an advantage when they move into higher education and careers. Facilities like the Science City help bridge the gap between classroom learning and real world understanding.

Two main sections of the complex have already been completed. These sections are named

Eureka and Space Odyssey. Each of them focuses on a different aspect of scientific exploration. The Eureka section introduces visitors to the fundamental principles of science through interactive exhibits. Visitors can experiment with ideas related to physics, motion, sound, energy, and many other topics. The design encourages hands on learning. Instead of simply reading about scientific concepts, students can see how those ideas work through demonstrations and experiments.

The Space Odyssey section focuses on astronomy and space science. Interest in space has always fascinated children and adults alike. Exhibits in this section explore the solar system, planets, stars, and the technology used in space exploration. Visitors can learn how rockets travel into space, how satellites orbit the Earth, and how scientists study distant galaxies. Such experiences often spark a deep curiosity about the universe.

Walking through a science centre often feels like stepping into a world where questions lead to discovery. Children press buttons, spin wheels, watch lights flash, and see models come alive. That excitement encourages them to ask why things happen and how the world works. Teachers often say that curiosity forms the first step toward learning. When students feel inspired to ask questions, they begin a journey of understanding.

The Guwahati Science City has been designed with that idea in mind. The entire complex aims to serve as an edutainment hub. The word edutainment brings together education and entertainment. The goal is to make learning enjoyable and engaging. Visitors do not feel as if they are sitting in a classroom. They feel as if they are exploring a place filled with surprises.

During the inauguration ceremony, Himanta Biswa Sarma shared a personal memory from his childhood. As a young boy he had visited the science museum in Kolkata. That experience stayed with him for many years. The exhibits left a strong impression on his mind and made him imagine what such a facility could mean for students in Assam. The dream of building a similar centre in Guwahati remained with him for a long time. The opening of the Science City brings that dream into reality.

Personal experiences often shape the vision of leaders and policymakers. A visit to a museum or science centre can leave a lasting influence on a child. Many scientists, engineers, and innovators recall moments when

curiosity first sparked their interest in science. Such places can change the way children see the world. Instead of memorising facts from textbooks, they begin to see science as an adventure of discovery.

The Science City also reflects the growing importance of science and technology in modern society. Industries depend on scientific research and innovation. Medical advancements rely on scientific understanding. Environmental challenges require scientific solutions. Students who grow up with strong scientific knowledge gain opportunities to contribute to these areas.

Education experts often stress the need for practical learning. When students see scientific ideas in action, they remember them more clearly. Experiments and demonstrations help them connect theory with real life. Science museums play a powerful role in creating that connection. Exhibits allow visitors to explore ideas through observation and experimentation.

Apart from the two main sections already completed, additional components are planned for the campus. These include a Science Innovation zone and a Science Park. The Innovation section will focus on creativity and invention. It will encourage students to think about how new ideas turn into practical solutions. Exhibits may include demonstrations of robotics, engineering models, and emerging technologies.

The Science Park will extend learning into an open outdoor space. Parks designed around science themes often include large interactive installations. Visitors may encounter giant models, mechanical displays, and experimental structures placed across the landscape. Walking through such a park feels like a journey through science in motion.

The inauguration ceremony also included another important announcement. The Chief Minister virtually opened five district science centres located across Assam. These centres have been built in Amingaon, Majuli, Silchar, Kaliabor, and Bongaigaon. Each centre brings science learning closer to communities outside the capital city.

The development of these centres required an investment of about Rs 178.13 crore. The goal is to make science education accessible to students living in different parts of the state. Travel to Guwahati may not always be easy for students from distant districts. Local science centres give them a chance to experience



similar interactive learning opportunities.

Each of the district science centres includes science galleries designed to explain scientific concepts through visual displays and hands on models. A digital planetarium with sixty four seats forms another major attraction. Planetariums have always captured the imagination of visitors. Inside the dark dome, projections of stars and galaxies create a feeling of travelling through space. Children often sit in silence while watching the simulated night sky unfold above them.

An auditorium also forms part of each centre. Such spaces can host lectures, workshops, film screenings, and educational programmes. Teachers and scientists may use these facilities to conduct demonstrations or discussions. Students may attend science shows that explain complex ideas in simple language.

The creation of these centres shows a long term commitment toward nurturing scientific awareness across Assam. A network of science centres helps spread curiosity and learning across different regions. Students who visit these places may discover interests that guide their future careers.

Science education has grown rapidly across India during recent decades. Institutions and research centres have expanded across the country. Technology industries continue to grow. Young people entering these fields require strong foundations in mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and engineering.

Spaces like the Guwahati Science City support that foundation by making science visible and accessible. Students who visit such places often return with stories of experiments they saw and

ideas they explored. Teachers can connect classroom lessons with experiences from the museum. Parents who accompany their children also rediscover scientific ideas they once studied.

Another important aspect of science centres involves public engagement with science. Scientific thinking encourages people to question, analyse, and understand evidence. Societies benefit when citizens appreciate scientific knowledge. Understanding scientific principles helps people make informed decisions about health, technology, and the environment.

Museums and science centres act as bridges between scientists and the public. Exhibits translate complex research into understandable forms. Visitors gain insights into how scientific discoveries shape daily life. Such understanding encourages respect for research and innovation. The Guwahati Science City may also become a major attraction for tourists visiting Assam. Educational tourism has gained popularity in many parts of the world. Families travelling with children often include museums and science centres in their plans. Visitors from neighbouring states may travel to Guwahati to explore the new facility.

The location of the campus near Sonapur places it within reach of the city while providing enough space for a large complex. Wide grounds and open areas create a pleasant environment for visitors. School groups arriving on educational trips can spend several hours exploring the different sections.

Students often remember school excursions to museums and science parks with great excitement. Walking through exhibits with classmates creates a shared sense of discovery. Teach-

ers guide discussions while students explore displays. Such experiences often stay in memory for many years.

For Assam, the Science City also represents a symbol of progress and aspiration. The state has made efforts to strengthen its education infrastructure. Universities, research institutes, and technological centres have expanded. The Science City adds another dimension to that effort by promoting curiosity among younger students.

Curiosity stands at the beginning of every scientific journey. Children naturally ask questions about the world around them. Why does the sky change colour at sunset. How do airplanes stay in the air. What causes thunder during storms. When such questions meet thoughtful explanations, learning begins.

Science centres encourage children to keep asking questions. Exhibits provide answers while inviting new questions. A visitor might watch a demonstration about electricity and begin wondering about how power reaches homes. Another visitor might explore the solar system and start imagining what life might look like on distant planets.

Teachers often emphasise that science is not simply a collection of facts. Science represents a way of thinking. It involves observation, reasoning, and experimentation. Science museums help convey that spirit of exploration.

The opening of the Guwahati Science City may inspire future generations of scientists, engineers, doctors, and innovators from Assam. Some children visiting the complex today may become researchers tomorrow. They may remember the excitement they felt while exploring interactive exhibits.

Leaders and educators hope

that such facilities help build confidence among students. When young people see that their own state hosts advanced educational spaces, they feel encouraged to dream big. Opportunities no longer appear distant. Knowledge becomes accessible within their own communities.

The Science City also stands as a reminder of how collaboration between institutions can produce meaningful results. The partnership between the Assam government and the National Council of Science Museums shows how national expertise and regional vision can work together.

The coming years will reveal how the facility grows and evolves. New exhibits may appear as technology advances. Special programmes may invite scientists and educators to interact with students. Science festivals, workshops, and competitions may bring together young innovators from different districts.

What began as an idea inspired by a childhood visit has now become a landmark of learning in Guwahati. The large campus at Sonapur invites visitors to explore science through curiosity and imagination. Families, teachers, and students will walk through its halls discovering ideas that shape the modern world.

When children step into the interactive galleries, press buttons on experimental displays, watch stars appear inside the planetarium dome and ask questions about the universe, the purpose of the Science City becomes clear. Knowledge grows when curiosity finds a place to explore. The Guwahati Science City offers such a place, opening doors to discovery for countless young minds across Assam.

IRIS Dena: The Fragile Order of the Indian Ocean



By: Dipak Kurmi

The sinking of the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena near the emerald coast of Sri Lanka has resonated with a chilling frequency far beyond the immediate ripples of the Indian Ocean. This was not merely a localized military engagement or a fleeting tactical exchange; it stands as a stark, visceral reminder that the world's vast oceanic expanses urgently require a more robust and universally recognized rule-based order. When advanced warships clash in the proximity of the planet's most congested maritime corridors, the stakes instantly transcend the narrow confines of regional geopolitics. They bleed into the vital arteries of global trade, the sanctity of maritime security, and the very foundation of international law. The event marks a departure from the relative restraint of the post-Cold War era, signaling a return to a more volatile maritime environment where the distinction between exercise and engagement is dangerously thin.

On 4 March 2026, the IRIS Dena was reportedly torpedoed by a United States

submarine in the strategic waters adjacent to Sri Lanka. At the time of the incident, the Iranian vessel was transiting back from high-profile naval exercises hosted by India, having recently participated in a significant multinational naval event designed to foster regional cooperation. The attack occurred approximately 40 nautical miles off the Sri Lankan coast, a distance that places the violence within the socio-economic periphery of a sovereign coastal nation. In the immediate aftermath, rescue operations spearheaded by the Sri Lankan Navy managed to recover dozens of bodies and secure several survivors, yet the dark depths of the Indian Ocean continue to hold many sailors listed as missing. This human tragedy serves as the somber backdrop to a shifting geopolitical landscape where the ocean floor is once again becoming a graveyard for modern naval ambitions.

Strategically and historically, the destruction of the IRIS Dena is nothing short of a watershed moment in naval warfare. It represents the first instance since the conclusion of the Second World War that an American submarine

has successfully engaged and sunk an enemy warship in active combat. For decades, the Indian Ocean has been characterized by scholars as a theater of strategic competition, a chessboard for global powers to project influence without necessarily resorting to kinetic force. However, this incident has abruptly transformed that theater into a site of direct, lethal naval confrontation. Beyond the immediate shock of the torpedo strike lies a profound and unsettling question that challenges the current international status quo: who truly governs the oceans in an age of multipolar rivalry?

For centuries, the seas were viewed through the lens of the Grotian tradition as open highways for commerce and the unchecked projection of power. By the early twentieth century, US President Woodrow Wilson attempted to refine this chaotic reality by articulating the vision that the seas should belong to all of humanity rather than being the exclusive domain of dominant naval powers. This principle, known as the freedom of the seas, eventually became a cornerstone of international diplomacy and global liberal thought. However, the contemporary era has proven that freedom without a clear, enforceable set of rules often leads directly to miscalculation and violent confrontation. The absence of a shared interpretation of maritime rights creates a vacuum that is inevitably filled by the logic of "might makes right," undermining the stability of the global commons.

The modern world's most ambitious attempt to provide this missing legal framework is the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, commonly referred to as UNCLOS, which was adopted in 1982. This landmark convention was designed to establish a comprehensive legal order for the oceans, meticulously defining maritime zones such as territorial waters, contiguous zones, exclusive economic zones (EEZs), and the high seas. UNCLOS

provides the specific rules for navigation, the equitable use of resources, the protection of the marine environment, and the systematic settlement of disputes between states. In its essence, the convention functions as a "Constitution for the Oceans," providing the necessary backbone for maritime governance and clearly delineating the rights and responsibilities of states as they navigate and exploit the world's waters.

Yet, a glaring irony persists at the heart of this international legal architecture: the United States, which frequently champions the concept of a "rules-based international order," has never formally ratified UNCLOS. While Washington generally adheres to many of the treaty's customary international law provisions and uses its framework to justify freedom of navigation operations, its refusal to become a formal party to the treaty significantly weakens the global maritime legal structure. This internal contradiction complicates the enforcement of maritime norms and provides an opening for other nations to challenge the legitimacy of the current order. The sinking of the IRIS Dena illustrates precisely why these global rules matter; without a universal commitment to a single legal standard, every naval engagement becomes a subject of intense legal and diplomatic ambiguity that can spiral into a broader conflict.

The waters surrounding Sri Lanka and India are among the most strategically sensitive sea lanes on the globe, making any military escalation there particularly perilous. Nearly one-third of all global shipping passes through the Indian Ocean, including the vital energy flows that travel from the Persian Gulf to the industrial hubs of East Asia. Furthermore, immense volumes of container traffic move constantly between Europe and Asia through these routes, while the naval forces of multiple global powers operate in the region with increasing frequency. When a strike like

the one on 4 March occurs, it raises critical questions that UNCLOS was specifically designed to resolve. Was the engagement conducted in international waters or within the EEZ of a coastal state? What specific rights do neutral countries like Sri Lanka or India possess when military actions occur so close to their sovereign shores?

The relevance of these legal frameworks becomes even more apparent when considering recent history in the Indian Ocean, including reports of American vessels approaching sensitive zones near India's Lakshadweep region in prior years. These earlier episodes raised pointed questions regarding maritime jurisdiction and the precise limits of the "freedom of navigation" doctrine. Such incidents highlight the fragility of maritime stability in a region where the naval assets of competing powers are frequently operating in the same congested spaces. Without the stabilizing influence of UNCLOS and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, maritime power risks reverting to the archaic and dangerous practice of "gunboat diplomacy," where disputes are settled by the caliber of a ship's guns rather than the merit of a legal argument.

History offers a stern lesson on the consequences of ignoring maritime order. The influential naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan famously argued that sea power determines the fate of nations, and for centuries, the control of sea lanes defined the rise and fall of empires from Great Britain to the United States. In the twenty-first century, this principle remains as relevant as ever, continuing to shape the complex geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific. However, the modern era demands that sea power no longer exist in a vacuum; it must coexist with sea governance. The oceans are no longer merely arenas for naval competition; they are the literal lifelines of modern civilization. Nearly 90 per cent of all world trade travels by

sea, fisheries provide the primary protein source for billions of people, and an intricate web of undersea cables carries the internet traffic that sustains our digital world.

Consequently, any maritime conflict threatens not just the combatant states but the very functioning of the global economy and the stability of international society. This is why the strengthening of UNCLOS and the broader rule-based maritime order is not an academic exercise but a matter of existential importance. The treaty provides the mechanisms for peaceful dispute resolution and promotes a spirit of cooperation that is essential in an era of intensifying strategic rivalry. From the South China Sea to the depths of the Indian Ocean, legal norms must act as the stabilizing anchors that prevent geopolitical friction from igniting into a conflagration. The tragedy of the IRIS Dena should therefore serve as a definitive wake-up call to the international community.

As we move further into what many call the "Century of the Indo-Pacific," the future of international stability will depend on whether humanity can successfully transform the oceans from lawless arenas of rivalry into spaces governed by the rule of law. The message sent by the sinking of a warship within sight of busy commercial sea lanes is unmistakable: without robust and universally accepted rules, the oceans will inevitably revert to being theaters of unrestrained power politics. While Mahan reminded the world a century ago that those who control the seas shape history, the greater challenge for our time is not merely the control of the seas, but the sophisticated and peaceful governance of them. The path forward requires a transition from the era of the gunboat to the era of the gavel, ensuring that the high seas remain a shared heritage for all mankind. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Consolidated amount of ₹ 9,000 credited beneficiaries

Orunodoi 3.0 funds disbursed to beneficiaries

HT Correspondent

DEMOW, March 11: In the 95 No Demow Constituency, the Orunodoi 3.0 consolidated amount of ₹ 9,000 was disbursed to beneficiaries of the constituency on Tuesday.

Under the Demow Municipal Board, the programme was organised at the Demow Public Playground on Tuesday. The Orunodoi beneficiaries present at the programme sang Bihu songs and thanked Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma.

Under Orunodoi 3.0, the consolidated amount of ₹ 9,000 was disbursed into the accounts of 1,070 Orunodoi beneficiaries under the Demow Municipal Board.

In the programme, Lukumoni Borah, Co-District Commissioner of Demow, Pallabita Baruah Gogoi, Chairperson of Demow Municipal Board, Mrityunjay Bharali, Chief Executive Officer of Demow Municipal Board, along with other dignitaries and Orunodoi beneficiaries, were present.

Our Morigaon Correspondent adds: More than one lakh beneficiaries received the benefit of Orunodoi 3.0 in the district on Wednesday. In conjunction with the launch of Arunodoi 3.0, a meeting was held at Ja-



giroad Nakhula Namghar where Morigaon District Commissioner Anamika Tewari formally distributed cheques of ₹ 9,000 to the beneficiaries.

The programme was attended by minister Pijush Hazarika and CEO of MZP Ananta Kr Gogoi, along with other officials and dignitaries.

Our Tezpur Correspondent adds:

The ceremonial distribution of financial assistance under Orunodoi 3.0, one of the flagship welfare schemes of the Government of Assam, was formally launched on Wednesday through a central programme held at Jyoti-Bishnu Antarjati Kala Mandir, Khanapara, Guwahati in the presence of Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma. During the programme, the Gov-

ernment of Assam initiated the disbursement of a consolidated amount of ₹ 9,000 to each beneficiary, covering nearly 40 lakh beneficiaries across the state, marking a major expansion of social welfare coverage.

The central programme was simultaneously live-streamed across the state and similar ceremonial events were organised in Gaon Panchayats and urban wards throughout Sonitpur district from 10:00 AM onwards to facilitate beneficiary participation and awareness. Across the district, ceremonial distribution programmes were held at designated venues at the Block, Gaon Panchayat and Municipal Board levels, where beneficiaries gathered to witness the live telecast of the state-level event.

Among the Legislative Assembly Constituencies, Dhekiajuli LAC recorded the highest number with 39,762 beneficiaries, followed by Nadiar LAC with 34,895 beneficiaries, Barchalla LAC with 32,524 beneficiaries, Rangapara LAC with 29,779 beneficiaries and Tezpur LAC with 29,184 beneficiaries. The programmes concluded successfully across all venues with active participation from beneficiaries, public representatives and officials.

Traffic curbs in Kokrajhar for PM visit

Diversions and parking restrictions enforced from 10 AM to 5 PM



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 11: In view of the visit of the Prime Minister to Kokrajhar, the Assam Police has announced special traffic arrangements to ensure security, public safety and the smooth movement of the VVIP convoy. These measures were finalised during a special meeting of the District Road Safety Committee held on March 8, which was chaired by the District Commissioner Pankaj Chakravarty and attended by Senior Superintendent of Police, Kokrajhar. To facilitate the secure movement of the convoy and regulate vehicular traffic carrying participants to designated parking areas, temporary restrictions and diversions will be strictly enforced on specific routes.

The traffic restrictions will remain in effect from 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM. During this duration, movement will be temporarily regulated or halted during the passage of the VVIP convoy and until the scheduled program is completed. Restricted points include Kadamtola Point, Owabari, Titaguri, Bhatarmari Naka Point near Gaurang Bridge, Khargaon Tinali, the DTO Office, SAI Stadium, Aai Hotel point, Kashibari point, Dimalgaon Chariali and Don Bosco point. Motorists are specifically advised to avoid JD Road from Kadamtola to Titaguri and

Golden Jubilee Road from Owabari to Kashibari, and they must not park vehicles along the VVIP route.

Alternative routes have been established to assist commuters during these restrictions. Vehicles arriving from the Dhubri side will be diverted through Kokrajhar Police Station Tinali, DC Office rail gate, Shantinagar, Magurmari, Chandrapara, the Kokrajhar-Ramphalbil road to the national highway and the Kokrajhar-Dotma road toward the Dotma/Gos-saigaon side. Those coming from Karigaon will be directed via Balajan market, Kalipukhuri, Salakati, Charaikhola, RNB road and Kokrajhar town. Traffic from the Bahalpur and Charaikhola side will use RNB road, Habrabil, Hatimatha road and Kokrajhar town, while vehicles from Fakiragram will be diverted through Gaur Nagar (Astami Ghat), Circuit house, Bibekanda road and the Police point at Suman Patrol Pump. Vehicles traveling from the Salakati side to Kokrajhar will be rerouted through Charaikhola, Owabari, RNB road and Kokrajhar town.

The Assam Police emphasises that the movement of ambulances, fire tenders and other emergency services will be prioritised through coordinated arrangements with traffic personnel deployed along the restricted areas.

Lumding College concludes 'SURYAMITRA'

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, March 11: In a significant step toward boosting technical skill development and promoting renewable energy, the Information, Career Counseling and Students Progression Cell (ICCSPP) and IQAC of Lumding College successfully organised the closing ceremony of the

"SURYAMITRA" Solar PV Installer Programme on Tuesday last. The month-long intensive training programme was conducted in collaboration with the Central Tool Room & Training Centre (CTTC), Bhubaneswar, under the aegis of the Ministry of MSME, Government of India.

The program was held at the Seminar Hall of the college at 10:30 AM. After 30 days of rigorous technical learning, two participating students performed a live demonstration of a Solar PV Installation. The successful setup, which powered local equipment during the event, drew high praise from the faculty and technical experts present.

The event was graced by Anjan Dey, president of the governing body, Lumding College. Dr Anuradha Chaudhuri, Principal of Lumding College, Subrat Sibasis Rana, expert Trainer from CTTC, Bhubaneswar and other faculty members of the college.

The success of this batch at Lumding College marks a milestone for the region, providing local youth with the tools to pursue careers in sustainable technology.

The ceremony concluded with the distribution of certificates and a vote of thanks to the Ministry of MSME for bringing such high-level technical training to the students of Lumding.

Villagers in Tinsukia still depend on fragile bamboo bridge

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, March 11: Even after nearly eight decades of India's Independence, residents of several villages in Tinsukia district continue to rely on a fragile bamboo bridge for daily commuting, highlighting what locals describe as a glaring example of the lack of development in Margherita.

The issue has come to the forefront in Toklong village under Ledo, where residents have been demanding the construction of a permanent bridge for years. The bamboo structure, which currently serves as the only connecting route, links several villages under the Khum-chai Gaon Panchayat, including Ledo 1 No Toklong, Hawaii Pathar, Bisagaon and Hasak.

Villagers alleged that the situation reflects administrative neglect. They claim that multiple applications and memorandums have been submitted to Bhaskar Sharma, the MLA of the Margherita constituency, urging immediate intervention. However, residents say their pleas have received little attention.

Animal health awareness and check-up camp held at Khayerghutu

HT Correspondent

GOSSAIGAON, March 11: Under the banner of Haraputa Regional Artificial Insemination Centre of Kokrajhar district, an animal health awareness and veterinary check-up camp was organized at No 1 Khayerghutu village under Gossaigaon subdivision on Wednesday.

The camp was conducted under the Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme (LHDPC) 2025-26 of the Central Government to create awareness among livestock rearers about various infectious diseases affecting animals and the importance of timely treatment and preventive measures. During the programme, Veterinary Officer Dr Anjali Das of the Haraputa Regional Artificial Insemination Centre highlighted the symptoms, preventive measures and the importance of timely vaccination against several serious livestock diseases, including Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) affecting goats and sheep, Brucellosis and the highly contagious Classical Swine Fever in pigs.

Laboratory assistants Dibyajyoti Das and Kalishankar Ray, along with field assistants Biju Mahat, Harnam Ray, Maitreyee and Bhoj Kumar Chettri, were present at the camp. They conducted free health check-ups of livestock, provided treatment and distributed medicines among the animal rearers. Informative leaflets on animal diseases and proper livestock care were also distributed among the participants.

Rain-invoking Botor Kekur ritual held in West Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 11: The annual Botor Kekur, a traditional Karbi ritual to invoke the rain gods was performed on Wednesday at Ronghang Rongbong, West Karbi Anglong, the seat of the Karbi traditional King. The ceremony is an annual sacrificial worship intended to ensure a bountiful sowing season and a successful harvest.

In the morning, Kathar Bura Rupsing Engti Kathar, assisted by his aides, performed the sacrificial worship at the backyard of the royal residence. Three fowls were offered to Botor Sarpo (the rain god) to pray for favorable weather. Following the ritual, the Kathar Bura remarked that the omens from the offering were positive, indicating a year of abundant rainfall. Providing immediate validation to the ritual, light rain was reported in parts of West Karbi Anglong by Wednesday evening.

Following tradition, the Kathar sang the legendary ballad of the heroine Hai-i-mu, pleading for mercy and rain. The event was attended by the Karbi King (Karbi Recho) Longsing Ronghang, along with the Lindokpos of Rongpi, Rongkecho, Killing, Amri and Chinthong. Other traditional officials, including the Dilli, Miji and Senot, were also in attendance.

National Service Scheme Special Camp at Bodoland University

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 11: With an ambition of Vikshit Bharat 2047, the NSS cell of Bodoland University has organised 7-day long Special Camp in the university campus with various events. The NSS team has performed a street play in front of the gate of the university in presence of the VC Prof B L Ajuha. The street play which was jointly scripted and directed by Jayanta Narzary and Siddharth Roy was witnessed by public on the road depicted against the corruption, superstition and evil of the society.

The Special camp which has been started since 9th March 2026 will be continuing till 14th March 2026 having various agenda. On

the same day, motivational lecture on 'Small-to-Medium-scale Wind Power Harvesting System—Indigenous Design' by Acharya Adibandhu alias Prof M Rafiqul Awal (former Kerr-McGee Professor of Petroleum Engineering, Texas Tech University, Lubbock USA). On the second day, Dr Anandaram Burhagohain, president of Yogaprajna Assam, delivered lecture on Yoga science and demonstrated and taught some mudras and asanas.

There will be a Blood Donation camp in collaboration with Kokrajhar Medical College Hospital on 12th March 2026, where Dr Ghanashyam Thakuria, Assistant Professor and Dr Partha Pratim Barman, Medical Officer,

KMCH along with their team will be taking part in Salma Sultana, Independent Researcher and Filmmaker, Co-founder, BON-ROU Nature Conservation Society will be teaching Wildlife Photography and documentary making on 13th March 2026. The NSS team of the BU will be led by the Programme Officers Dr Hemaprabha Saikia and Dr Joydip Narzary along with the Programme Coordinator Prof Hillojyoti Singha on 14th March 2026 to do a schedule survey to Saralpara on the 'people perception regarding tourism'. On the same day evening the Special Camp will come to an end with valedictory function.

Rima Das interacts with Tezpur University students

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, March 11: The Department of Mass Communication and Journalism (MCJ), Tezpur University on Tuesday began its Silver Jubilee celebrations with a series of film-focused sessions, workshops and interactions featuring acclaimed filmmakers and scholars. The celebrations commenced on a symbolic and historic note, coinciding with March 10, the 91st anniversary of the release of Joyoti, the first Assamese film directed by legendary cultural icon Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, widely regarded as the father of Assamese cinema.

Noted filmmaker Rima Das interacted with the students in an engaging session where she spoke about her journey as an independent filmmaker and the evolving landscape of regional cinema. Known for internationally acclaimed films such as Village Rockstars, Bulbul Can Sing and Tori's Husband, she shared insights into storytelling, filmmaking with limited resources and the importance of authenticity in cinema. Encouraging aspiring filmmakers, she added, "Believe in your story and have faith in yourself." Das who never attended film school, emphasised that cinema is a universal language and encouraged students to listen to the "quiet voice of their heart" while creating films. Reflecting on the future of Assamese cinema on the global stage, she emphasised the importance of discipline, artistic commitment and audience support for regional filmmakers. "Even if a film is made on a mobile phone, it can reach the Oscars if the storytelling is powerful.



What matters is authenticity and honesty in the craft," she said.

The Department also organised a workshop on documentary filmmaking by noted filmmaker and film scholar Parthajit Baruah. He introduced students to the craft and practice of documentary filmmaking.

The session explored research methodologies, narrative structures, ethical storytelling and the role of documentaries in interpreting social and political realities. The inaugural session began with a tribute to Assam's cinematic heritage. The audience was also shown a rare visual clip depicting Agarwala's return from Shillong to Tezpur during the final days of his life, honouring his wish to return to his hometown. The moment served as a moving homage to the pioneer whose artistic vision laid the foundation of Assamese cinema. Dr Manoj Deori, Head of the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism, said the programme noted that launching the celebrations on a day that holds historic significance in Assamese cinema made the occasion particularly meaningful.

581 degrees awarded in 26th convocation of AAU

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, March 11: The 26th Convocation of Assam Agricultural University was held on Wednesday at the Madhab Chandra Das Memorial Auditorium in the university's main campus in Jorhat. On the occasion, renowned herbal medicine practitioner from Arunachal Pradesh and Padma Shri awardee Yanung Jamoh Lego was conferred a Doctor of Science (honoris causa) degree.

Addressing the convocation, the Chancellor of the university and Governor of Assam, Lakshman Prasad Acharya, said that India's civilisation and culture are deeply rooted in agriculture. He noted that agriculture has been the foundation of Indian society for thousands of years. Referring to history, he said the Indus Valley Civilisation demonstrated advanced agricultural practices, water management systems and grain storage methods, reflecting the long-standing tradition of agricultural knowledge

and harmony with nature. He further stated that in the Indian knowledge tradition, agriculture has always been regarded as the foundation of prosperity. The great economist Kautilya, in his treatise Arthashastra, clearly described agriculture as the fundamental pillar of a state's prosperity. According to the Governor, this idea remains equally relevant even today.

Highlighting recent developments, he said the agricultural sector is undergoing rapid transformation with the integration of science, technology and innovation. "Agricultural technologies such as drones, artificial intelligence, data-driven farming and start-up innovations are opening new avenues for the sector. In the future, agriculture will emerge not only as a production sector but also as a powerful field for entrepreneurship and innovation," he added.

He also pointed out that North-

east India, particularly Assam is rich in natural resources and biodiversity. Sectors such as tea cultivation, horticulture, spices, fisheries, livestock and natural farming hold immense potential. With effective scientific research and modern technological application, these sectors could elevate the country's agricultural economy to new heights.

Earlier, welcoming the gathering, the Vice-Chancellor of the university, Dr Bidyut Chandan Deka, highlighted the initiatives and achievements of the institution in the fields of agricultural education, research and extension.

Assam Chief Secretary Ravi Kota, delivering his convocation address online, said he felt encouraged to participate in the event as he was an agriculture graduate. He noted that the recent progress in agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries and allied sectors in the state has generated optimism about Assam's development.

'Assam Gaurav Sanman 2026' to Bishnu Ram Nunisa

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 11: Dr Bishnu Ram Nunisa, General Secretary Assam Sepak-Takraw Association, Former Joint Secretary, Assam Cricket Association and Member Senior Tournament Committee, ACA have received the "Assam Gaurav Sanman 2026", presented by Sadhana Sahitya Samaj in collaboration with Assam Prahari, at the Guwahati Town Club Press Club, Guwahati.

The recognition, conferred on the occasion of International Women's Day, makes the moment even more special as the day celebrates the strength, achievements, and invaluable contributions of women in our society.



Premendra Mazumder receives first Dr Bhupen Hazarika Lifetime Achievement Award

Assam Film Society confers honour at JB University ceremony in Jorhat

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, March 11: The Assam Film Society presented the first Dr Bhupen Hazarika Lifetime Achievement Award to film critic, curator, author and organiser Premendra Mazumder at a ceremony held at JB University on Tuesday.

The award, which carried a cash prize of ₹ 1 lakh, a trophy and a citation was conferred on the commercial release anniversary of Assam's first film, Joyoti, by Jyoti Prasad Agarwala.

Vice president of the Federation of Film Societies of India and General Secretary of FIPRESCI-India, Mazumder said he was honoured to be the first recipient of the award and considered it a recognition of his contribution to the film society movement, not as an indi-



vidual but as part of a collective effort that has been a part of his journey.

Jayanta Madhab Dutta, founder and general secretary of Assam

Film Society, said it was a privilege for the society to honour a personality of such stature in the film world. Dutta said Premendra Mazumder, who is based in

Kolkata has written extensively on cinema. "He has served on the jury of more than forty important international film festivals worldwide," Dutta added.

Dutta, who directed the award-winning Missing short feature film Yakasik Omede, said the award would be a biennial one and its jurisdiction would cover the entire Asia.

Among other portfolios held by Mazumder are editor of E-CineIndia (Quarterly Film Journal) and Artistic Director of SIGNS Short and Documentary Film Festival, Kerala. He is also the Programme Director of the Third Eye Asian Film Festival, Mumbai; Founder and Coordinator of the South Asian Short Film Festival, Kolkata; Founder and Coordinator of the World Film Festival,

Kolkata and Chairman of the Bengal International Short Film Festival, Kolkata.

He also serves as Advisor to the Jaffna International Cinema Festival, Sri Lanka and Advisor to the Nepal International Film Festival, Kathmandu.

The event was organised in association with the JB University Campus Film Society. Vice-Chancellor of the university Professor Jyoti Prasad Saikia attended as the chief guest. Surajit Sharma, vice president of Assam Film Society and Academic Registrar of JB University and Pranjal Borah, Executive Member and Member of FIPRESCI-India, also attended the ceremony. The event was anchored by Deepanjali Baruah, while the vote of thanks was offered by Mushrif Ibrahim.

Changlang deputy commissioner and SP to coordinate with their counterparts in Assam Arunachal CM to raise Changlang boundary row with Assam post Assembly polls

ITANAGAR, March 11: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday informed the Assembly that the state government will take up the issue of alleged violation of the status quo along the inter-state boundary in Changlang district with the Assam government after the Assembly elections in the neighbouring state.

Responding to a question by BJP MLA Laisam Simai during Question Hour, Khandu said he would also direct Changlang deputy commissioner and SP to coordinate with their counterparts in Assam's Dibrugarh district to prevent any escalation of law-and-order problems in the disputed areas.

Simai alleged that despite Arunachal Pradesh maintaining status quo in the disputed area, officials from the neighbouring state had made unauthorised visits to the zone on 17 occasions and had even assaulted local residents.

Responding to a supplementary question from BJP MLA Wanglin Lowangdong regarding the unresolved boundary row in Tirap district despite the Namsai Declaration of July 15, 2022, the chief minister said that according to the report of the Survey of India,



the dispute between Arunachal's Tirap district and Assam's Tinsukia district has already been settled. "Even if there are any discrepancies, we can look for out-of-the-box solutions through discussion with Assam, but officially we cannot do anything," Khandu said. Earlier, replying to Simai's question, Inter-State Border Affairs Minister Mama Natung informed the House those five villages in Changlang district did not figure in the Namsai Declaration as the regional committee constituted for

the district was kept in abeyance due to initial objections raised by Assam. He said no disputed villages from Changlang district were reflected in the report of the local commission submitted in 2014, and consequently, no conclusive resolution has yet been reached regarding the Changlang-Tinsukia sector. Natung further said that the Tarun Chatterjee Committee had recommended that the five villages fall under Assam, a finding that was also reported by the then

deputy commissioner of Changlang. He added that the villagers had approached the court over the matter and the case remains sub judice, preventing both state governments from arriving at an amicable solution.

The Namsai Declaration, signed by the chief ministers of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, marked a major step towards resolving the decades-old boundary dispute between the two states.

The agreement aimed to address disputes involving 123 villages along the inter-state boundary, which was later reduced to 86 villages following negotiations and joint verification.

Arunachal Pradesh, which became a Union Territory in 1972 and attained statehood in 1987, has maintained that several forested tracts in the plains traditionally belonged to hill tribal communities and were transferred to Assam earlier without consultation.

Following statehood, a tripartite committee recommended that certain territories be transferred from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh, but Assam contested the recommendation and the matter remained pending before the Supreme Court for a long period. (PTI)

Meghalaya: No fresh violence in West Garo Hills, curfew extended for 2 days

SHILLONG, March 11: A day after the death of two persons in police firing during clashes between two groups in Meghalaya's West Garo Hills district, the situation remained calm but tense in the region on Wednesday, with the local administration extending curfew for two days, officials said.

The suspension of mobile internet services in the district will continue, while curfew will remain in force till midnight on Thursday, even though no fresh violence was reported in the region, they said.

"The situation remains calm but tense. Additional security forces, including the Army have been deployed to prevent any fresh violence," one of the officials said.

Two persons were killed in police

firing on Tuesday during clashes between tribal and non-tribal groups over the nomination process for the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) elections, prompting the government to impose curfew and call in the Army.

Superintendent of Police Abraham T Sangma said the incident took place in the Chibinang area during the nomination process for local council polls.

"Security has been strengthened in the region to maintain the law and order situation. Curfew has been extended till 12 AM on March 13," District Deputy Commissioner V Aggarwal told PTI.

Five columns of the Army have been deployed in a bid to help the

administration in West Garo Hills district, another official said.

Three Army columns have been stationed in Tura town, the divisional headquarters, while two others were deployed in Chibinang, where the two youths were killed in the police firing, he said.

Personnel of the Rapid Action Force (RAF) and additional state police forces have also been deployed at sensitive locations across the Garo Hills region, a district official said.

"No fresh violence was reported since Tuesday night. The situation in the affected areas of West Garo Hills remained under control. Regular patrolling is being carried out to ensure law and order," a senior police officer said. (PTI)

Meghalaya CM announces postponement of April 10 polls to Garo Hills council due to violence

SHILLONG, March 11: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday said his government has decided to postpone the April 10 elections to the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council in view of recent violence that claimed two lives in the region.

He said the decision was taken after reviewing the current law and order situation in the Garo Hills and considering the difficulties being faced by the people.

"Dear friends, looking at the current situation in Garo Hills and understanding the difficulties people are facing at the moment, the Government of Meghalaya has decided to postpone GHADC elections," the

chief minister said in a video clip.

The situation in West Garo Hills remained calm but tense on Wednesday, with the district administration extending the curfew till midnight of March 13 and continuing the suspension of mobile internet services, officials said. Two persons were killed in police firing on Tuesday during clashes between tribal and non-tribal groups over the nomination process for the GHADC elections in the Chibinang area.

Superintendent of Police Abraham T Sangma said the incident occurred during the nomination process for the local council polls. (PTI)

Arunachal Assembly passes bill to regulate teachers' transfers

ITANAGAR, March 11: The Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly on Wednesday passed a government bill to regulate and rationalise the transfer and posting of teachers and other employees of the state education department.

The Arunachal Pradesh Transfer and Posting of Employees of Education Department (Regulation and Management) Bill, introduced by Education Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona on March 6, was passed by voice vote in the House.

Replying to suggestions from members during the discussion, Sona said the legislation aims to ensure equitable distribution of teachers across the state and address longstanding issues in the education sector. He said once the bill becomes an Act, it will also help minimise legal complications arising from teachers approaching courts to obtain stays on transfer orders, citing various reasons.

"The Education department carried out rigorous exercises before framing the bill, including extensive consultations with stakeholders and visits to all districts to identify the loopholes in the system," the minister said. Sona said the department had identified key gaps affecting the functioning of the education sector, including deficiencies in infrastructure such as school buildings and teachers' quarters. He added that the government has already initiated steps to address these infrastructure gaps on a priority basis.

Another major challenge, the minister said, is the shortage of human resources and uneven distribution of subject teachers in several schools. "We have many teachers, but the education scenario is still not satisfactory as many teachers are reluctant to move from their present places of posting," he said. Sona also informed the House that although 17 schools in the state have been upgraded, several of them faced a shortage of teachers, making it necessary to introduce the legislation to streamline the system.

The minister thanked the members for their constructive suggestions and said their inputs reflected a shared commitment to improving the education sector, which he described as the backbone of society. (PTI)

37 of 42 PMGSY nano-tech roads failed in Arunachal: Minister



ITANAGAR, March 11: Arunachal Pradesh Rural Works Department (RWD) Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona on Wednesday informed the Assembly that 37 out of 42 Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) roads constructed using nanotechnology in the state have failed due to difficult terrain and climatic conditions.

Responding to a short-duration discussion initiated by BJP MLA Laisam Simai in the Assembly, the minister said the roads were taken up under PMGSY-I as a pilot project using the new technology of which only five projects were found to be successful.

Sona said the technology faced serious challenges in Arunachal Pradesh because of fragile hill terrain, steep slopes, unstable geology, heavy monsoon rainfall, landslides and erosion-prone conditions. As a result, several roads deteriorated rapidly, suffered extensive damage or remained incomplete.

He informed the House that the state government has repeatedly taken up the matter with the Centre through various platforms seeking gap funding for restoration of the affected PMGSY roads, but no positive response has been received so far.

The minister further said he has requested Chief Minister Pema Khandu to raise the issue during the next plenary session of the North East Council (NEC) so that a concrete solution can be worked out.

Initiating the discussion, Simai, the legislator from Nampong constituency in Changlang district, said PMGSY has been one of the most important rural connectivity programmes for the state as it links villages with markets, schools, health centres and district headquarters.

However, he said the use of nanotechnology in PMGSY road construction has not been successful under the local conditions of Arunachal Pradesh and urged the government to provide immediate gap funding for restoration and completion of such projects. Simai pointed out that in a hill state like Arunachal Pradesh, road durability depends not only on surface technology but also on proper drainage, slope protection, retaining structures, breast walls, culverts and timely maintenance. "Where these are absent or underfunded, the roads cannot survive," he said.

The lawmaker also noted that earlier apprehensions had been raised about the feasibility and sustainability of nanotechnology in the state due to the long rainy season, damp structures, difficult topography, hilly terrain and short working season, adding that conventional construction methods were considered better suited to local conditions.

The MLA further said that the introduction of the technology reduced the use of locally available materials such as Random Boulder Masonry (RBM), Water Bound Macadam-II (WBM-II) and Water Bound Macadam-III (WBM-III), which are otherwise available in districts like Longding and other parts of the state.

This, he said, weakened local economic participation and deprived local youth of engagement in road construction works.

"The problem before us today is not merely technical. It is developmental and humanitarian," Simai said, adding that when PMGSY roads fail, entire habitations suffer as villagers face difficulties accessing hospitals, schools, markets and other essential services, while developmental gains are reversed and public funds already spent are put at risk.

He urged the government to undertake an immediate review of all failed and badly affected PMGSY roads constructed under nanotechnology, identify infrastructure gaps and adopt hill-specific and climate-suitable engineering practices along with stronger monitoring and adequate maintenance provisions for future projects. (PTI)

Arunachal CM assures improvement of Longding-Nokjan road connecting Nagaland

ITANAGAR, March 11: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday assured the Assembly that the vital NEC road connecting the state's Longding district with Nokjan in neighbouring Nagaland will be taken up for improvement under the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund.

Responding to a question by NPP MLA Thangwang Wangham during Question Hour, Khandu informed that a proposal for improvement of about 22 km of the road, excluding the highway portion has been included in the priority list for CRIF funding from the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) during the current financial year.

He said the estimated cost of the proposed work is around ₹60 crore.

The chief minister informed that the total length of the strategic road is 28.82 km of which 9.81 km was taken up in 2011 under funding from the North Eastern Council (NEC).

Of the remaining stretches, about 7 km now falls under National Highway-215, around 12 km is under the state Rural Works Department (RWD), while the remaining portion is under the state Public Works Department (PWD).

Khandu said the PWD Longding division has already carried out technical inspections and assessments of the road and submitted the estimated requirements to the Director (Project Coordinator) of the Planning and Investment Department and the nodal authority concerned for further action. (PTI)

Senior Cong leader calls for deferment of census in restive Manipur till restoration of normalcy

IMPHAL, March 11: Congress Legislature Party leader Keisham Meghachandra Singh on Wednesday urged the Manipur Assembly to adopt a resolution to defer the census in the restive state till normalcy is restored.

Singh told the House that conducting a headcount "without the resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced families and without identifying illegal immigrants would not reflect a true demographic reality in Manipur".

"I would like to state that the census is deferred until proper resettlement and verification processes are ensured," the opposition leader said in the House.

The Congress leader also appealed to the state government to defer the census

via a cabinet decision.

"As many displaced people are not staying in their homes, the conduct of census would lead to inconveniences to people in the state. We believe that now, there cannot be a true census. The people also want a deferment of the exercise," Singh said.

During the April-September period, a housing census is to be taken up, he said.

"The number of houses is to be counted as part of this exercise. How the houses of those displaced persons would be listed during the exercise?" he asked.

More than 260 people have been killed in Manipur and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since

May 2023.

The Wangkhem constituency legislator also said the second phase of the census would be done in February-March 2027, when the actual number of the population would be counted.

"The problem we would be dealing with is not just for one community but for all communities. Therefore, I called for deferment of the census by way of a resolution in the House or by a cabinet decision."

Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh told the assembly that after the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls and completion of house listing, the census would be conducted.

"It will take time," he added. (PTI)

Intercity train service would commence tomorrow Tripura transport min thanks Centre for Narangi-Agartala intercity train

AGARTALA, March 11: Tripura Transport Minister Sushanta Chowdhury thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw for an intercity train between Narangi near Guwahati and Agartala.

The Northeast Frontier Railway, in a notification on Tuesday, announced that the intercity train service would commence on March 13. The train would halt at several important stations, including Jagrajol, Hojai, Lumding, New Haflong, Badarpur, New



Karimganj, Dharmanagar, Kumarghat and Ambassa. "A train service between Narangi and Agartala is set to

be flagged off on March 13. The train service will boost the connectivity significantly," Chowdhury said in a Facebook post on Tuesday.

"I thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Chief Minister Manik Saha for the move," he added.

The service is expected to benefit passengers travelling between Assam's Barak Valley and the hill districts and Tripura by providing improved connectivity and convenient travel options. (PTI)

No.TDB/15th FC/106/2024-25/1550 Date 10/03/2026

INVITATION FOR BIDS

The Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block, Dist.- Tamulpur, BTC, Assam invites bid affixing non-refundable Court fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight and Twenty Five Paise) only from the approved and eligible contractor Class-I (A, B, C), Class-II or Class-III category registered with Assam PWD (R&B)/Irrigation Deptt. for the following work under P&RD Deptt. under 15th FC during 2025-26. Tender Box will be available for dropping tender in the Office of the Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block from 11/03/2026 up to 2.00 PM on 03/04/2026 (if any holidays or Bandh falls then the subsequent day) and the tender box will be opened at the same day on 3.00 PM in same office.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Tender value (In Lakh)	Time of Completion	Tender Cost & Earnest Money & Date of Tender
1	Const. of Community Toilet at Kadanga Kela Palashguri Bathou Thansai	11.00	180 days from the date of issue of final work order	1. Tender cost @ 0.03% of A/A amount to be pledged by Bank draft in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC. 2. Earnest money @ 2% (In case of ST/SC 1%) of estimated value to be pledged by demand draft/FDR in favour of B.D.O., Tamulpur Development Block 3. Bidders are specifically requested to inspect the field and study the working condition before submitting their offer/bid.
2	Const. of Boundary Wall at Bhakatpur Milan LP School	15.00		
3	Const. of CC Block road from Kumarikata Senior Secondary School to Bahbari village road	15.00		
4	Const. of CC Block road from Giren Boro house to Katarbari village	18.00		

Detail NIT may be seen at Office of the BDO, Tamulpur Development Block, Tamulpur, Dist.- Tamulpur.

Sd/-
Block Development Officer,
Tamulpur Dev. Block, Tamulpur

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/4435

PM Modi inaugurates ₹ 5,650 cr projects; says Centre fully committed to TN's growth

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI (TAMIL NADU), March 11: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated, dedicated and laid the foundation stone for multiple development projects across Tamil Nadu worth about ₹ 5,650 crore, on Wednesday and said these projects would create thousands of jobs for the youth of the state.

Clad in traditional shirt and dhoti, Modi after unveiling the projects said, "It is great to be here in the wonderful city of Trichy. Today's programme is an important one for the future of Tamil Nadu. It is related to projects worth ₹ 5,600 crore. These projects are about infrastructure, for clean energy, petroleum-related manufacturing, highways, railways and rural roads. They will boost energy access, connectivity and create thousands of jobs for the youth of Tamil Nadu," he said.

The Prime Minister on the occasion flagged off two Amrit Bharat Express trains -- the Nagercoil-Charlapalli Amrit Bharat Express and the Podanur (Coimbatore)-Dhanbad Amrit Bharat Express, two express trains - the Rameswaram-Mangaluru Express and the Tirunelveli-Mangaluru Express, and a new train service between Mayiladuthurai-Thiruvallur-Karaikkudi, strengthening rail connectivity between Tamil Nadu and other regions, including Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and eastern India.

Flanked by Union Minister Piyush Goyal, L Murugan, AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami, BJP Tamil Nadu Chief Nainar Narendran, Modi laid the founda-



tion stone for Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited's City Gas Distribution Network in Nilgiris and Erode districts at an investment of more than ₹ 3,680 crore.

The project will provide PNG connections to over 8.8 lakh households, supply gas to more than 200 commercial establishments and establish over 201 CNG stations.

Modi also dedicated to the nation the ₹ 1,490 crore IOCL Lube Plant with a capacity of 672 Thousand Metric Tonnes Per Annum at Manali in Chennai. The plant will strengthen India's lubricants manufacturing capacity.

"You would be proud to know that this is one of the world's largest facilities of its kind. This plant will fulfill the demand of many important industries both in Tamil Nadu and outside. The increase in local production of lubricants also reduces imports and saves money for the nation," he said. After unveiling all the projects, Modi said, "Our goal is to

create a developed Tamil Nadu for a developed Nation. The central government is fully committed to the welfare of the people of Tamil Nadu. We are working day and night for the State progress and we will continue to do so." On the occasion, Modi inaugurated 89 rural roads spanning 370 km in Tamil Nadu, under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, that would significantly improve the connectivity to markets, schools and healthcare facilities in rural areas.

"Each of these roads is not just a piece of infrastructure, patients can access better healthcare, students can travel to schools and colleges comfortably, farmers can travel to different places to sell their produce or to buy inputs overall, each roads lift the rural economy and increases ease of living," he said.

On the foundation stone laid for a greenfield bypass near Gangaikonda Cholapuram on NH-81, Modi recalled his visit to Gangaikonda Cholapuram for the Aadi

Thiruvathirai festival last year. "We celebrated 1,000 years of the beginning of the construction of the Grand Temple by Emperor Rajendra Chola. It is an UNESCO recognised site that are visited by tourists across the world. Today, we are laying the foundation stone of an important highway project there. The existing highway is very close to the temple causing safety concern to the pilgrims. With the construction of a new bypass, other vehicles will now be diverted away from the temple. This means better safety for everyone," he said.

Modi said he was happy to note that the Bharat Petroleum City Gas Distribution project would provide piped natural gas to nearly nine lakh families and hundreds of commercial organisations. "Piped gas will flow directly to the home, boosting ease of living. Thousands of jobs will be created directly and indirectly. Natural gas is an environmentally friendly fuel that plays an important role in reducing air pollution."

Noting that natural gas is an environment friendly fuel that plays an important role in reducing air pollution, he said he had been informed that the positive environmental impact of this project over just 8 years would be equivalent to planting 4 crore trees.

Observing that the Indian Oil Corporation's Lube blending plant in Chennai is one of the world's largest facilities of its kind, Modi said, "This plant will fulfill the demand of many important industries both in Tamil Nadu and outside. The increase in local production of lubricants also reduces imports and saves money for the nation." (PTI)

Transfer excise policy case to an 'impartial' bench: Arvind Kejriwal

NEW DELHI, March 11: Former Delhi chief minister and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal, along with other accused in the excise policy case, on Wednesday urged the Chief Justice of Delhi High Court, D K Upadhyaya, to transfer CBI's plea against their discharge in the case by the trial court from Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma to another judge, according to the party.

In a representation to the chief justice, Kejriwal claimed he has a "grave, bona fide, and reasonable apprehension" that the hearing in the matter would not be impartial and neutral.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders, including Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, have, in separate representations submitted in the High Court through their lawyers, sought the transfer of the case to an "impartial" bench of the High Court, the party said in a statement on Wednesday.

On February 27, the trial court discharged Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others, pulling up the CBI by saying its case was wholly unable to survive judicial scrutiny and stood discredited in its entirety.

On March 9, Justice Sharma's bench stayed the trial court's recommendation on the initiation of departmental action against the CBI's investigating officer in the liquor policy case.

Issuing notice to all 23 accused on CBI's plea against their discharge, Justice Sharma said certain observations and findings of the trial court at the stage of framing of charges prima facie appeared erroneous and needed reconsideration.

"It is respectfully prayed that Cr. Rev. Petition No. 134 of 2026 (CBI v. Kuldeep Singh & Ors.) may be transferred from the Bench presided by Hon'ble Dr. Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma to any other appropriate Bench, as deemed fit, in the interest of justice and to maintain the confidence of litigants and the public in the fairness of the process," the representation by Kejriwal said.

He claimed his apprehension was based on the judge's past conduct and said that on the very first day of the CBI's revision petition against his discharge, Justice Sharma proceeded to record a prima facie view that the trial court's detailed order was "erroneous", even without hearing the other side.

Justice Sharma, Kejriwal's representation contended, did not disclose any "specific perversity" when she stayed the trial court's directions against the CBI official. He also objected to Justice Sharma's di-



rection on deferring the trial proceedings in the connected ED case.

Interim interference with an order of discharge is an extraordinary course, which could be exercised only in the rarest of circumstances on clear grounds of illegality or perversity, the representation asserted.

It emphasised that Justice Sharma has decided multiple cases arising from the CBI FIR, including Kejriwal's petition against his arrest and bail applications by AAP leaders Manish Sisodia and Sanjay Singh as well as Telangana Jagruti president K Kavitha, and "not even once" given relief to any of the accused.

The representation added that Justice Sharma, while dealing with these earlier pleas, has already recorded "elaborate prima facie observations accepting the prosecution theory on critical questions".

It informed the chief justice that three of the judgments have been set aside by the Supreme Court and one has been referred to a larger bench.

In the representation, Kejriwal said the case against him was politically motivated and his request to transfer the pending matter to another judge was "not directed at any personal predilection, but at the objective test of reasonable apprehension in the mind of a fair-minded and informed litigant seeking justice."

"The undersigned, Sh. Arvind Kejriwal, Respondent No. 18 respectfully seeks administrative intervention for the transfer of Cr. Rev. 134/2026, presently listed before the Bench presided by Hon'ble Dr. Justice Swarna Kanta Sharma, on the ground of a grave, bona fide, and reasonable apprehension that the matter may not receive a hearing marked by impartiality and neutrality."

"The concern is not only personal, it is institutional -- justice must not only be done, but must be seen to be done," it said. (PTI)

Efforts being made by Centre, Bihar govt to ensure adequate LPG supply: DyCM



PATNA, March 11: Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Wednesday said efforts were being made by the Centre and the state government to ensure adequate supply of LPG cylinders to the people.

Amid the nationwide constraint in the supply of cooking gas in view of the West Asia crisis, he asserted that the Bihar government is taking action to check black marketing of the fuel. Talking to reporters here, Choudhary said, "The central government has issued special guidelines to officials to control the situation. The government has also ordered a 10 per cent increase in domestic LPG production. LPG production, CNG, and piped cooking gas will take precedence over all other sectors using natural gas as the Centre rejigged allocation to ensure uninterrupted supply for households and transport sectors.

As the widening West Asia conflict disrupted 30 per cent of India's gas supply, the oil ministry, in a gazette notification, ordered available gas to be diverted from non-priority sectors to key users.

Choudhary said, "Efforts are being made to ensure adequate

supply of LPG cylinders to the people, and any form of black marketing will not be tolerated." Describing the present LPG supply constraint as a "special situation", BJP state president Sanjay Saraogi said that the central government has taken the matter seriously.

"The West Asia crisis has been continuing for around two weeks. This is a special situation. The manner in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken up the matters is commendable," he said.

Saraogi said the Bihar government has also written to district officials to ensure that there is no shortage of LPG cylinders and hoarding or black marketing is strictly checked. "The Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) has been imposed. PM Modi directed ministers during a cabinet meeting on Tuesday that people should not be left to suffer on account of the conflict in West Asia," he said. The BJP leader claimed that the situation is "under control", but if need be, "restraint should be exercised" in the use of LPG cylinders.

Meanwhile, Congress workers in Patna staged a protest on Wednesday against the alleged shortage of LPG cylinders.

Former president of Bihar Congress's Minorities wing, Parvez Hasan, urged the Central government to come up with transparent data on the present stocks.

"The government says there is no shortage. If there is no shortage, then why has it come up with a notification announcing a 25-day gap period for refill of commercial and domestic LPG cylinders? Commercial cylinders, in particular, are required to be refilled every second or third day," he said.

At the same time, people queued up at cooking gas agency outlets in several districts, including Patna, Kaimur, Motihari and Darbhanga, to buy LPG cylinders, while distributors said that customers have turned up in large numbers due to panic over short supply rumours.

Hotel and Restaurant Association of Eastern India assistant manager Sanghamitra Mukherjee said that the organisation has written a letter to the central government, highlighting the impact of LPG cylinder supply disruption on eateries. "We have to wait and watch for some time. The association has sent a letter to the concerned ministry of the central government, but we are yet to receive a response," she said.

Meanwhile, talking to reporters in Patna, Director General of Police (DGP) Vinay Kumar acknowledged that the shortage of LPG cylinders "is a problem".

"There is a problem, and the state government has been very sensitive in its handling. Meetings and deliberations are being consistently held under the leadership of chief secretary," he said. The DGP said that there are certain aspects of the problem which are "not under our control", but efforts are being made to ensure "there is no serious fallout and basic requirements are covered". (PTI)

Book row: SC says perturbed by NCERT's stand that chapter 'duly rewritten'

NEW DELHI, March 11: The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it is perturbed by the NCERT's stand that the controversial chapter in class 8 social science book, which contained "offending" contents on corruption in the judiciary, has been "duly rewritten".

The apex court referred to the affidavit filed by the NCERT's director which said the revised chapter shall be incorporated in the forthcoming academic session 2026-27 and shall be used for classroom transactions in schools in accordance with the applicable curriculum and academic framework. "We are equally perturbed with the stand taken by the Director NCERT in paragraph 15 of the affidavit," a bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant said.

"We direct that if at all chapter 4 of the subject textbook has been rewritten, the same shall not be published unless it is approved by a committee comprising domain experts," the bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi, said.

The bench said it has not been apprised either through affidavit or otherwise as to who are the alleged subject experts/domain experts who have "rewritten" the chapter again and who has approved its incorporation in curriculum of academic session 2026-27.

It observed that such act was likely to create more complexity with reference to an objective, transparent, honest and dispassionate information that ought to be incorporated in the curriculum with respect to judiciary or for that matter any other institution.

The bench was hearing a suo motu case concerning NCERT's class 8 social science book, which contained "offending" contents on corruption in the judiciary.

The affidavit filed by the NCERT director said that in light

of the directions issued by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, through a letter dated February 27 to the NCERT, the "concerned chapter 4 of the subject textbook has been duly rewritten".

During the hearing, the bench observed its worry is that the affidavit has said the chapter has been "duly rewritten". "Who has done it?" the bench asked.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta assured the bench that the chapter would not go into textbook unless the committee of domain experts examines not only this chapter but everything.

The bench questioned how and in what manner the chapter was rewritten after the concern expressed by it. "I can assure nothing will go without being vetted by the committee of domain experts," the law officer said.

In his affidavit filed in the court, professor Dinesh Prasad Saklani, Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), has tendered an unconditional and unqualified apology for inclusion of controversial chapter in the social science textbook for class 8.

He said the chapter was drafted by textbook development team under the chairmanship of professor Michel Danino and consisting members Suparna Diwakar and Alok Prasanna Kumar. "I state and submit that the above referred individuals shall not be associated with any activity of NCERT hereafter," the affidavit said.

It said the chapter was to be looked into by members of National Syllabus and Teaching Learning Material Committee (NSTC) which consists of 19 members.

The affidavit said it has emerged that textbook which included the

chapter was not placed before the committee and the members of textbook development team had circulated the same only amongst few members digitally.

"I state that this is a major and unpardonable lapse and shall be ensured that the same is not repeated hereafter," the NCERT director said.

The affidavit gave the status of printed copies of the textbook seized and sealed.

It said total 82,440 copies of the textbook were printed and the number of books sold to retail customers was 38 which have been retrieved.

The affidavit said 82,425 books were seized and sealed and were kept in NCERT warehouses.

It further said 15 books were available with the ministry and office of NCERT Director.

It said total 82,440 copies were tracked and the total number of computer-to-plate (CTP) plates were six, which have been destroyed, seized and sealed and kept in publication division of NCERT.

"It is humbly stated that in view of the above, the deponent in the capacity of being Director, NCERT has taken all necessary and urgent steps to implement the order as passed by this court concerning immediate seizure and sealing of textbook in both physical and digital form within the premises of NCERT," it said.

The affidavit said the textbook has not been circulated by NCERT to any schools and teaching institutions for imparting pedagogical instructions either in physical or digital form.

It also said in terms of the order passed on February 26, the NCERT issued a media advisory recalling the textbook and imposed blanket ban on any further publication, reprinting or digital dissemination of digital textbook. (PTI)

Speaker serves as neutral custodian, House cannot run by rules of a party: Shah

NEW DELHI, March 11: Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Wednesday that the Lok Sabha speaker serves as a neutral custodian, representing both the ruling party and the opposition, and asserted that the House will be run by its own rules and not by the rules of a party, as he slammed the no-confidence resolution brought against Om Birla.

Responding to a discussion in the Lok Sabha on the resolution moved by the opposition for the removal of Birla as the speaker, Shah said it is not an ordinary occurrence as after nearly four decades, such a motion has been brought against the speaker.

He said it was unfortunate for Parliamentary politics that some opposition parties were questioning the integrity of the speaker. Shah said the BJP has been in opposition for the longest period of time, but the party has never brought a no-confidence motion against the speaker.

He said it was unfortunate for Parliamentary politics that some opposition parties were questioning the integrity of the speaker. Shah said the BJP has been in opposition for the longest period of time, but the party has never brought a no-confidence motion against the speaker.

"According to the established history of this House, its proceedings are conducted on the basis of mutual trust. The speaker serves as a neutral custodian, representing both the ruling party and the opposition. It is unfortunate for parliamentary politics that a resolution for the removal of the speaker has come," he said.

Shah said the opposition raised questions on Birla's integrity and contended that it was akin to questioning the country's democratic processes.

"We can speak of our rights, but no one can violate the rules of the House. We may not agree with the speaker's ruling, but it is binding and cannot be doubted. When the BJP was in the opposition, it never brought a no-confidence motion against the speaker," he said. (PTI)

Chandrayaan-5 to have heavier lander with longer mission life: ISRO Chief

BENGALURU, March 11: India is planning to collect samples from the Moon and bring them back to Earth under Chandrayaan-4, while Chandrayaan-5 will involve a heavier lander with a longer mission life, ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said on Wednesday.

He also spoke about ISRO's future missions including the one to study Venus and the other on Mars landing mission.

"Now we are working on the continuation of the Chandrayaan programme. In Chandrayaan-4, we plan to collect samples and bring them back. Chandrayaan-5 will involve a heavier lander with a longer mission life," he said at the inaugural ceremony of ISRO's fourth edition of the Space Science and Technology Awareness Training (START 2026) programme here. He recalled that in Chandrayaan-3, the lander's mission life was only 14 days.

"In the future mission, we are talking about a life of around 100

days. The rover will also be heavier. Chandrayaan-3 had a rover of about 25 kg, while the future mission will have a rover of about 350 kg," Narayanan said.

Referring to ISRO's future programmes like the Venus Orbiter Mission, he said, "We have already accomplished the Mars Orbiter Mission, and now we are working on a Mars landing mission."

"These are some of the projects being discussed for government approval. So there is a lot of interest in the science area."

He noted that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the vision of the space programme has been expanded and said, "We are currently working on the Gaganyaan programme and are planning to send our own astronauts into space and bring them back safely, possibly within the next two years."

"We are also planning to build our own space station by 2035. Additionally, we are working on landing Indians on the Moon and

bringing them back safely by 2040. Brainstorming activities have already begun. So there are many activities happening in the space sector. Apart from application-related activities that ensure food security, water security, communication, and safety for citizens, there are many initiatives planned in the science area as well," he added.

Narayanan noted that India's space programme has accomplished 10 scientific missions so far, including AstroSat, which recently completed a decade in orbit and was still functioning very well.

He also highlighted India's various lunar exploration missions -- Chandrayaan-1, Chandrayaan-2, and Chandrayaan-3 -- saying they led to many scientific discoveries. "We are progressing in a big way," he added.

Highlighting the successful Chandrayaan-3 mission in the year 2023, the ISRO chairman said that India became the first country to



successfully achieve a soft landing near the south pole of the Moon.

"Not only did we achieve the landing, but many discoveries were made. Around eight minerals were identified, seismic activity was studied, and the thermal profile of the Moon's surface was understood. Electron clouds were also studied. So many discoveries have come from that mission," he added.

Referring to the launch of

Aditya-L1, the ISRO chairman said, "India is the fourth country to successfully place a satellite to study the Sun, and a large amount of data has already come out, and we have released the data as well."

Emphasising India's Space Vision 2047, he recalled that the country, which started with very humble beginnings, has developed significant capabilities.

"Today, we have the capability

to conceive, design, and build our own launch vehicles, as well as conceive, build, and place satellites in orbit. Fifty years ago, we did not have this capability. Today, we can build satellites and the payloads required for them," Narayanan said. Citing an example, he said that earlier optical cameras used lenses that were only about one inch in diameter.

"But today, in ISRO, cameras with optics of about 1.7 metres in thickness are being developed. These optics are being built at the LEOS (Laboratory For Electro Optics Systems) laboratory in Bengaluru for space observation. Many such activities are happening in the space sector," he noted.

He pointed out that the US, after 1969 and almost after 50-55 years, has again shown interest in landing on the Moon. "The Artemis programme is already a very vibrant programme, with many activities going on. An accord was signed in

2023, and India is also a signatory to that accord," he said.

Speaking about China and Russia leading efforts to build the International Lunar Research Station (ILRS), the ISRO chairman noted, "When we talk about such space stations, one aspect is technology development. The second aspect is the large number of scientific experiments that will take place there. There is also a lot of competition today." "There was a time when only government organisations across the world carried out space activities. Today, companies like SpaceX have advanced significantly. In fact, they have overtaken many others in terms of launches," he added.

He said that the main idea behind programmes like START 2026 is to encourage the next generation of youngsters to develop interest in this field and to build scientific temper so that they can become great leaders in building the nation. (PTI)

'YOU CAN CHALLENGE MISOGYNY OR PROFIT FROM IT': SONA MOHAPTRA SLAMS BADSHAH OVER NEW SONG

Singer Sona Mohaptra on Wednesday criticised rapper Badshah for using misogynistic tropes in his latest songs "Tateeree", which has caused a huge controversy due to its objectionable lyrics and visuals.

Badshah landed in controversy after the Haryana song was released on March 1. The track faced severe backlash due to obscene lyrics and inappropriate visuals, leading to an official police complaint against it and a summons from a state commission.

The rapper, whose real name is Aditya Prateek Singh, apologised for the song and took it off from social media following the uproar.

Now, Mohaptra has called him out for objectifying women in his songs.

"Not the first time we've seen this template. A man puffing up his chest, flexing masculinity, objectifying women, and projecting himself as some irresistible hero while women exist merely to drool around him. 'Tu mujhe marti hai, mujhe jaan chidakti hai' type of flights of rubbish swag... This isn't creativity. It's the laziest trope in pop culture," she said in a post on Instagram.

Referring to his apology

video, where Badshah called himself "son of Haryana", Mohaptra said it just does not cut it.

"Haryana already battles some of the country's worst gender ratios, violence against women and honour killings. Cultural influence carries responsibility? Artists shape imagination. You can challenge misogyny or profit from it. BADSHAH & this lot, do better," she added.

Last week, the Haryana Police registered an FIR under various provisions of law based on a complaint lodged by a Panchkula resident, alleging the use of objectionable lyrics and visuals



in Badshah's recently released music video.

Sections 3 and 4 of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, and BNS Section 296 (obscene acts and songs) have been slapped against the rapper.

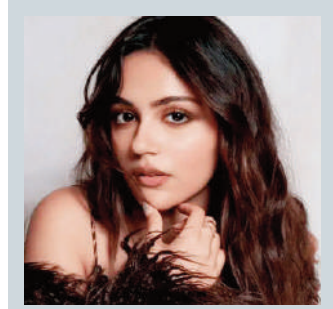
After the case was filed, the 40-year-old singer, known for tracks such as "Abhi Toh Party Shuru Hui Hai" and "Genda Phool", shared a video on his Instagram handle and apologised for the song.

"My new song has released and I am seeing that the lyrics and the visual representation has caused a lot of people, especially from Haryana, a lot of hurt. Firstly, I want to say that I am from Haryana. Those who know me will vouch for the fact that my entire identity rests on it. I am a proud Haryanvi," he said.

Badshah said he has always intended to uplift the culture of Haryana and never meant to hurt anyone with the track.

"I never had the intention or the aim to speak of any women or children of Haryana in this manner. I am from the hip hop genre so the lyrics are often added on to show the competition down, for the competitor. This was never meant for the women or the kids," he added. (PTI)

Aneet Padda not attached to Madhubala project, says YRF Talent spokesperson



A spokesperson of YRF Talent on Tuesday dismissed reports that "Saiyaara" star Aneet Padda has been cast in the role of cinema icon Madhubala in an upcoming movie.

There have been reports claiming that Padda, who broke out with YRF's 2025 romance blockbuster, will be starring in the biographical movie from filmmaker Jasmeet K Reen, known for Alia Bhatt Vijay Varma-starrer "Darlings".

A spokesperson of YRF Talent, the management agency of the actor, issued a clarification and said the reports are "untrue".

The Madhubala project was announced by Sony Pictures International Productions in March 2024. It is a co-production between Sony Pictures International Productions, Brewing Thoughts Pvt Ltd and Madhubala Ventures, which is headed by Madhubala's younger sister Madhur Brij Bhushan, and Arvind Kumar Malviya.

Madhubala, one of the leading actors from Hindi cinema's golden era, appeared in classics like "Mr. & Mrs. 55" (1955), "Chalti Ka Naam Gaadi" (1958), "Kala Pani" (1958), and "Howrah Bridge" (1958), during her brief lifetime, becoming one of the highly regarded personalities in the industry.

Her career defining role was as Anarkali in the 1960 historical epic drama "Mughal-e-Azam" where she featured alongside Dilip Kumar's Salim and Prithviraj Kapoor's Akbar.

Madhubala died in 1969 at the age of 36.

Padda is set to headline "Shakti Shalini", the next instalment of producer Dinesh Vijan's ambitious Maddock Horror Comedy Universe (MHCU). Her entry was announced with the release of Ayushmann Khurrana's 2025 film "Thamma", which is also a part of the MHCU.

"Shakti Shalini" will release in cinema halls on December 24. (PTI)

Kathryn Hahn to star as antagonist Mother Gothel in 'Tangled' live-action remake

Actress Kathryn Hahn has confirmed that she will portray the villain Mother Gothel in The Walt Disney Company's upcoming live-action remake of Tangled.

The Tiny Beautiful Things star announced the casting in a playful video posted on Instagram. In the clip, Hahn revealed the news while wearing a t-shirt decorated with several images of the animated villain Mother Gothel.

During the video, Hahn also joked that she



had only recently discovered what the abbreviation "OOTD" means—"Outfit of the Day". The reveal had an added humorous twist, as her Instagram username since joining the platform has been @motherhahn. Mother Gothel serves as the primary antagonist in Tangled. The manipulative character keeps Princess Rapunzel locked away in a remote tower, so she can exploit the magical healing power found in the princess's long golden hair. The live-action adaptation will feature Teagan Croft as Rapunzel.

Meanwhile, Milo Manheim—known for his role in the Zombies series—has been cast as Flynn Rider, the charismatic thief who becomes

Rapunzel's partner on her journey. The project will be directed by Michael Gracey, who previously helmed the musical hit The Greatest Showman. The screenplay is being written by Jennifer Kaytin Robinson, whose past work includes Do Revenge and Someone Great. Production will be overseen by Kristin Burr through Burr! Productions, while Lucy Kitada will serve as executive producer.

Earlier reports had linked the role of Mother Gothel to two-time Academy Award nominee Scarlett Johansson. However, scheduling conflicts—including commitments to projects such as The Batman Part II and a new reboot of The Exorcist—prevented her from taking on the part.

The original animated Tangled was released in 2010 and directed by Nathan Greno and Byron Howard. The film became a major box-office success, earning over \$590 million worldwide.

It featured voice performances by Mandy Moore as Rapunzel and Zachary Levi as Flynn Rider, with Donna Murphy voicing Mother Gothel. Inspired by the classic Rapunzel story from Brothers Grimm, the film also earned an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Song for I See the Light, written by composer Alan Menken and lyricist Glenn Slater.

The new Tangled remake is part of Disney's broader strategy of producing live-action versions of its animated classics. Another film in that lineup is the live-action adaptation of Moana, which will star Dwayne Johnson and Catherine Laga'aia and is scheduled to arrive in theatres in July. (PTI)

WIF India announces scholarship for women producers to attend Cannes Film Market's impACT Lab

Women in Film India (WIF India) has announced a scholarship for emerging women producers from India to participate in the impACT Lab programme at the Marche du Film, held alongside the Cannes Film Festival.

Launched in collaboration with impACT Lab, the initiative is open to India-based women producers who have produced at least two short films and are currently developing their first feature.

Two selected candidates will participate in a hybrid programme comprising online workshops in April and May this year, followed by on-site sessions in Cannes from May 13 to 18, a press release said.

The programme culminates with access to the producers network, offering entry to industry breakfasts, networking events and workshops with global decision-makers.

The initiative builds on WIF India's inaugural presence at Cannes in 2025, when the organisation launched the Cannes Producers' Fellowship and introduced its first delegation of Indian women producers to the Producers Network.

Guneet Monga Kapoor, founder

of Women in Film India, said the scholarship was a fulfilment of the promise made at Cannes last year - to create real access for women producers from India to global platforms.

"At Women in Film India, every day is Women's Day... International festivals have been transformative spaces in my own journey as a producer, and this scholarship is about ensuring that more women get the chance to bring their stories, their voices and their projects into those rooms," the Oscar-winning producer said.

Led by Monga and backed by Women in Film Los Angeles (WIF LA), WIF India is part of a global coalition of over 50 chapters across six continents working to advance gender equity in the entertainment industry.

Alexandra Zakharchenko, Head of Industry Programs at the Marche du Film, called the partnership an

important step in ensuring the presence of emerging women producers from India on the global stage.

"Beyond this opportunity, impACT Lab also aims to bring together a new generation of like-minded producers who are committed to developing films in a more sustainable way—both in their production practices and in the stories they bring to the screen—while navigating an increasingly complex and challenging global landscape," she said.

Rabia Chopra, Programming and Development Head at WIF India, said meaningful engagement with the international co-production ecosystem remained limited for many women producers in India.

She expressed hope that the programme would help create "visibility, open doors and connect impact-driven stories" from Indian women producers. (PTI)



'Homebound', 'Black Warrant' lead Critics' Choice Awards 2026 nominations

Neeraj Ghaywan's "Homebound" and Vikramaditya Motwane's crime thriller "Black Warrant" have emerged as the front-runners at the 8th Critics' Choice Awards, with six and seven nominations respectively, the Film Critics Guild announced on Tuesday.

The annual awards, presented in association

with WPP Motion Entertainment, cover feature films, web series, short films, and documentaries, with voting conducted by 56 film critics from across the country.



In feature films, "Homebound" leads with six nominations, followed by Rohan Parashuram Kanawade's Sundance-winning "Sabar Bonda" and Raam Reddy's "Jugnuma" with three nominations each.

Anusha Rizvi's "The Great Shamsuddin Family", Mari Selvaraj's "Bison Kaalamaan", and the BAFTA-winning Manipuri film "Boong" received two nominations apiece.

The Best Film category features ten contenders including "Homebound", "Boong", "Sabar Bonda", "Jugnuma", "Sthal", "Ponman", "Su from So", and "The Great Shamsuddin Family", among others.

On the acting front, Vishal Jethwa ("Home-

bound"), Mammootty ("Kalamkaval"), Basil Joseph ("Ponman"), Mounish Nataranga ("Hebbuli Cut") and Abhishek Banerjee ("Stolen") compete for Best Actor, while Priyanka Bose ("Agra"), Geetha Kailasam ("Angammal"), Yami Gautam Dhar ("Haq"), Anruta Subhash ("Jarann"), and Sharmila Tagore ("Puratann") are in contention for Best Actress.

The Best Director race features Lakshmi Priya Devi ("Boong"), Ghaywan ("Homebound"), Aranya Sahay ("Humans in the Loop"), Reddy ("Jugnuma"), and Jayant Digambar Somalkar ("Sthal").

For Best Supporting Actor, Pasupathy ("Bison Kaalamaan"), Akshaye Khanna ("Dhurandhar"), Dhritiman Chatterjee ("Putlacher Itikatha"), Dileesh Pothan ("Ronth"), and Boman Irani ("The Mehta Boys") are in the running.

The Best Supporting Actress category sees Shalini Vatsa ("Homebound"), Anita Date ("Jarann"), Lijomol Jose ("Ponman"), Sandhya Arakere ("Su From So"), and Shreya Dhanwanthary ("The Great Shamsuddin Family") competing for the honour.

In the web series category, "Black Warrant" dominates with seven nominations, trailed by "Paatal Lok Season 2" with five and Aryan Khan's "The Ba**ds of Bollywood" with four.

Jaideep Ahlawat ("Paatal Lok" S2) and Manoj Bajpayee ("The Family Man" S3) headline the Best Actor race alongside Zahan Kapoor ("Black Warrant"), Roshan Mathew ("Kankhajura"), and Amit Sial ("The Hunt - The Rajiv Gandhi Assassination Case").

The Best Actress field includes Shabana Azmi ("Dabba Cartel"), Surveen Chawla ("Criminal Justice" S4), Monika Panwar ("Khauf"), Girija Oak Godbole ("Perfect Family"), and Priyamani ("The Family Man" S3).

In the Best Director category, Motwane and his co-directors "Black Warrant", Pushkar Sunil Mahabal ("Black, White & Gray - Love Kills"), Pankaj Kumar and Surya Balakrishnan ("Khauf"), Avinash Arun Dhaware ("Paatal Lok S2"), and Aryan Khan ("The Bads of Bollywood") are nominated.

The Best Supporting Actor field includes Anurag Thakur, Paramvir Singh Cheema, and Rahul Bhat - all from "Black Warrant" - alongside Manoj Pahwa ("Perfect Family") and Raghav Juyal ("The Bads of Bollywood").

For Best Supporting Actress, Nimisha Sajayan ("Dabba Cartel"), Geetanjali Kulkarni and Shalini Vatsa (both from "Khauf"), Tillotama Shome ("Paatal Lok S2"), and Seema Pahwa ("Perfect Family") are nominated.

The documentary category features "Chaar Phool Hain Aur Duniya Hai", a portrait of late Jeanpith Award-winning author Vinod Kumar Shukla, alongside Hot Docs winner "I, Poppy".

In short films, "Aasmaani Jhoola" and "Maaya-baapche Aashirvaad" lead with five nominations each.

The ceremony, which will broadcast on Sony LIV, will also confer the Extraordinary Contribution to Cinema Award on veteran actor Farida Jalal.

Guild Chairperson Anupama Chopra said the range and ambition of submissions this year made deliberations "both challenging and immensely fulfilling."

"Each year, the Critics' Choice Awards offer a snapshot of where Indian storytelling truly stands, beyond box office numbers or algorithms. From intimate personal narratives to bold, genre-defying work across films, series, documentaries, and short films, these nominations reflect voices that are pushing the medium forward and reminding us why criticism, curiosity, and conversation matter," she said. (PTI)

Screenplay of Arundhati Roy's 'In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones' to release in revised edition

A revised and updated edition of the screenplay of 1989 film In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones, written by award-winning author Arundhati Roy, is set to release this month, Penguin Random House India (PRHI) announced on Wednesday.

Set in 1974 in a school of architecture, the film, directed by filmmaker and environmentalist Pradip Krishen, follows a group of "dope-smoking, bellbottom-wearing and vaguely idealistic" final-year students racing to complete their theses.

Thirty-eight years after the film was made, its damaged negative was recovered and restored in 4K by the Film Heritage Foundation, led by its founder Shivendra Singh Durgapur.

The restored version will hit the theatres on Friday.

"If not for the Film Heritage Foundation and Shivendra Singh Durgapur's several years' long dogged perseverance and stubborn love for the film, and if not for Pradip's carefully archived material, 'In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones' would not have had the opportunity to take a bow in the real world before retiring to a resting place in some dim archive," writes Roy in the book's introduction.

The new edition of the screenplay commemorates the restoration and the film's continuing cultural resonance.

It includes new introductions by Roy, Krishen, and Durgapur, offering readers insights into the making of the film, the loss and recovery of its negative, and its remarkable afterlife.

"Why does this small, scrappy little film, made 38 years ago, keep surfacing from its life underground? It's what certain films and books and songs do. And we'll never really know why. In Annie's case, I believe it's because all of us, every single person in the cast and crew, worked on it with joy."

"Together we were a band, jamming together, jiving to the same drumbeat. There really are no stars. It was all of us. It's what gives the film its irreverence, its lightness of touch," the 64-year-old author added.

The Delhi-based author is known for her award-winning novels like The God of Small Things and The Ministry of Utmost Happiness and her essays compiled in The End of Imagination, The Doctor and The Saint, and The Algebra of Infinite Justice.

Roy's latest book, Mother Mary Comes to Me, was recently conferred the 'Mathrubhumi Book of the Year Award' 2026. (PTI)



Bayern Munich and Atletico Madrid win big in Champions League

Liverpool loses, Barcelona held

PARIS, March 11: Bayern Munich and Atletico Madrid took giant strides toward the Champions League quarterfinals with big wins Tuesday. Liverpool and Barcelona still have work to do.

Bayern thrashed Atalanta 6-1 without top scorer Harry Kane in the starting lineup. And Atletico made under-pressure Tottenham coach Igor Tudor pay for his bold call to drop first-choice goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario by racing to a 3-0 lead inside 15 minutes. The Spanish giant eventually won 5-2.

Liverpool needs to overturn a 1-0 defeat to Galatasaray in next week's second leg at Anfield and Barcelona needed Lamine Yamal's penalty with the last kick of the game to rescue a 1-1 draw at Newcastle.

Goals galore

Even without the prolific Kane, Bayern all but sealed its place in the last eight with a dominant win at Atalanta.

England captain Kane has

scored 47 goals this season for club and country but was only fit enough to make the bench and in his absence Michael Olise scored twice. Serge Gnabry and Nicolas Jackson each scored and set up goals. Josip Stanic and Jamal Musiala were also on target for the German champion.

Tottenham endured a nightmare start in Madrid, with backup keeper Antonin Kinsky substituted in the 17th minute after his mistakes led to two of Atletico's three early goals.

Spurs coach Tudor had opted to leave out first choice Vicario — a decision that backfired spectacularly. Kinsky was making his Champions League debut and his slip and miskick in the sixth gave Marcos Llorente the chance to open the scoring.

Antoine Griezmann made it 2-0 for Atletico before Kinsky miskicked again and Julian Alvarez slotted into an empty net. Kinsky looked inconsolable



when he was replaced by Vicario, who conceded just five minutes after coming on — Robin Le Normand scoring Atletico's fourth.

"We knew how to take advantage of our opponents' mistakes to gain a good lead, and now we go into the second leg with a three-

goal advantage," Alvarez said. Spurs rallied, but it will take an unlikely comeback in the second leg to avoid elimination.

"We gave away three goals at the start, and then it became very difficult for us," Tudor said. According to stats provider Opta,

this was the first time in Tottenham's history that it has lost six games in a row.

Barcelona leaves it late

Five-time European champion Barcelona was seconds away from defeat when Malick Thiaw brought down Dani Olmo in the box.

Referee Marco Guida pointed to the spot and 18-year-old Yamal had the composure to beat Aaron Ramsdale with the home fans buying for him to miss. His goal was timed at 96 minutes and the full-time whistle was blown immediately after his spot kick.

"It wasn't a great game from us, but we have a young team," Barcelona coach Hansi Flick said. "We have to improve, but we have a lot of potential. We have to make things better, and we will."

Newcastle led through Harvey Barnes' close-range effort in the 86th. The forward had also hit the post with a curling effort earlier.

"It's tough. You score and it's an amazing feeling — you can feel the fans. We'd played really well," Barnes said. "To concede late on is really hard to take, but the score is level and we have a second leg to come."

Galatasaray holds advantage against Liverpool

First it was Juventus, and now Liverpool. Galatasaray is cutting a swath through European soccer's giants.

A 1-0 first-leg win in Istanbul gave the Turkish champion the advantage in this round-of-16 tie.

Mario Lemina's seventh-minute header secured the win for Galatasaray, which stunned Juventus with a 7-5 aggregate victory in the playoffs.

The second leg is next Wednesday.

"We want to win there too, we want to reach the quarter-finals," Lemina said.

It is the second time Galatasaray has beaten Liverpool this season, having won by the same scoreline in the league phase.

It had chances to take an even bigger lead to Merseyside, with Victor Osimhen's second-half strike ruled out for offside. Liverpool saw Ibrahim Konate's effort disallowed by VAR for handball.

"What I do know is now it's halftime," Liverpool coach Arne Slot said. "We've lost here twice with 1-0 and the good thing is the next game is not played here. It is played at Anfield and our fans can create a similar atmosphere." (AP)

Kinsky gets support from goalkeeper community after Champions League debacle



MADRID, March 11: There was no arm around the shoulder from his manager as Tottenham goalkeeper Antonin Kinsky trudged off the field after being substituted just 17 minutes into his calamitous Champions League debut.

Instead, support for the 22-year-old Czech came from the goalkeeper community.

"No one who hasn't been a goal-

keeper can understand how difficult it is to play in this position," Fiorentina's David De Gea wrote on social media after Kinsky was taken off the field after making two mistakes leading to goals early in Tottenham's 5-2 loss at Atletico Madrid in the round of 16 on Tuesday.

"Keep your head up and you will go again."

Former Manchester United and Denmark goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel said in his role as a pundit for CBS Sports that he felt "really, really sorry" for Kinsky, who miskicked twice when attempting passes out from his area — leading to goals for first Marcos Llorente and then Julian Alvarez.

Schmeichel then had strong words for Tottenham manager Igor

Tudor, who didn't even acknowledge Kinsky as the young keeper walked off the field and straight down the tunnel. Tudor just continued looking straight out onto the field.

Schmeichel said Tudor should have kept Kinsky on, at least until halftime.

"That's going to have ramifications for the rest of his career," Schmeichel said. "This will be a moment that everybody in football will always remember every time they see and hear his name."

"What he's done there, for me," he added, "he's absolutely killed his career. That's going to take something to get over that."

Former Tottenham goalkeeper Paul Robinson, working at the match for the BBC, said being withdrawn so early would be "confidence destroying" for Kinsky.

"I've never seen that on a football pitch," Robinson said, in thoughts echoed by former England goalkeeper Joe Hart — also at the game for broadcaster TNT Sports.

"My heart is absolutely broken for him," Hart said.

Tudor said he spoke to Kinsky after the match, and took him off to "preserve the guy."

"He understands everything," the Croatian coach said. "It's a big lesson, unfortunately it happened in this big game." (AP)

World Cup winning India receive ₹ 25 crore as prize money

DUBAI, March 11: Champions India received USD 2,639,423 (approx ₹ 25 crore), the biggest share from the prize money pool after winning the men's T20 World Cup at home as the ICC on Wednesday announced the distribution of a record USD 11.25 million players' prize fund following the tournament's conclusion.

India beat New Zealand by a comprehensive 96-run margin to lift their second successive trophy.

The total purse reflects the significant increase in ICC tournament prize money introduced in 2024, aimed at boosting financial rewards for players and supporting the global growth of cricket.

Runners-up New Zealand national cricket team earned USD 1,422,692 (₹ 13 crore approx), while semi-finalists South Africa and England received ₹ 9.24 crore and USD 8.96 crore respectively. (PTI)

Infantino says he's talked to Trump and was assured that Iran can come to US for World Cup

MIAMI, March 11: FIFA said Tuesday night that it anticipates Iran's national team will be allowed to come to the United States, even with war going on between the countries, and compete in the World Cup that begins in about three months.

Iran is scheduled to play in Inglewood, California, against New Zealand on June 15 and Belgium on June 21 before finishing group play against Egypt in Seattle on June 26. The U.S. is hosting the tournament with Canada and Mexico from June 11 to July 19.

Iranian officials have suggested recently that its country's participation is in some doubt because of the war.

FIFA President Gianni Infantino said he met with

President Donald Trump on Tuesday night "to discuss the status of preparations" for the tournament and received assurances that Iran would be permitted to come to the U.S.

"We also spoke about the current situation in Iran, and the fact that the Iranian team has qualified to participate in the FIFA World Cup 2026," Infantino said. "During the discussions, President Trump reiterated that the Iranian team is, of course, welcome to compete in the tournament in the United States."

Infantino has a close relationship with Trump, who was given FIFA's inaugural peace prize — an award that many believe the soccer governing body created with Trump in mind. (AP)

It's uninformed & unhelpful: ICC hits back at criticism

DUBAI, March 11: The ICC on Wednesday expressed sympathy for the international players stranded in India after the T20 World Cup but lambasted "uninformed and unhelpful" suggestions that "anything other than safety" is driving the travel plans that have been thrown haywire by the West Asia conflict.

The war, which began with the American and Israeli bombing of Iran last month, has led to closure of the air space over Gulf, leaving flight schedules in chaos.

The ICC said it empathises with the stranded players, specifically from South Africa and the West Indies, but "safety, feasibility and welfare" of the teams is being carefully considered while drawing up alternate routes.

Giving details of the travel schedule, the ICC said the South African contingent had begun departing for home on Wednesday with "four players and five family members having boarded the flight".

"...all 29 remaining members of their contingent (are) scheduled to depart in the next 24 hours," said ICC in a statement.

"Of the West Indies contingent, nine members have departed for the Caribbean, while the remaining 16 are booked on flights departing India in the next 12 hours."

This was after their charter flight scheduled to take off from Kolkata was cancelled due to logistical issues.

The ICC drew criticism from former England captain Michael Vaughan and South



African star David Miller insinuated that England players were given better travel arrangements as they were able to leave within a day of their semifinal ouster. Before this, West Indies coach Darren Sammy had expressed frustration at the lack of updates from the world body.

The ICC hit back without naming anyone specifically.

"The ICC rejects any suggestion that these decisions have been driven by anything other than safety, feasibility and welfare. Suggestions otherwise across a variety of media platforms from people uninformed of the situation

are as unhelpful as they are incorrect," said cricket's world governing body.

"There is no link between arrangements made in the cases of South Africa and the West Indies and those made previously for England or any other nation, which arose from separate circumstances, routing options and different travel conditions," it added.

West Indies and South Africa played their final games in Kolkata on March 1 and March 4 respectively. The ICC's airline partner is Emirates and they are unable to operate due to shutdown of the Dubai airspace.

"We understand that players, coaches,

support staff and their families who have completed their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 campaigns are anxious to return home.

"That they have not yet been able to do so is a source of genuine frustration, and the International Cricket Council shares that frustration," the world body said.

"The delay is the direct result of the ongoing crisis across the Gulf region, which has caused widespread and continuing disruption to international air travel, including airspace closures, missile warnings, re-routing constraints, as well as the cancellation and rescheduling of both commercial and charter flights at short notice," it added.

The ICC said due to the current situation, which is outside its control, each travel solution has become significantly more "complex and time-consuming than under normal circumstances."

The ICC said it is continuing to liaise with tour operators and airlines to ensure that all players reach home safely.

"Throughout this period, the ICC's overriding priority has been the safety and welfare of everyone affected, including players travelling with spouses and young children. We will not move people until we are satisfied that the travel solution in place is safe, and that commitment will not change," it said.

The ICC also urged the respective cricket boards and players to remain patient as they manage the flights back home and find the best possible solutions amid the evolving situation in West Asia. (PTI)

Mexico grants visas to some Iraq players for WC qualifier

MEXICO CITY, March 11: Mexico's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has begun granting visas to players from Iraq's national team ahead of the World Cup intercontinental qualifier scheduled March 31 in Monterrey.

The Iraqi team is facing logistical issues because of disruptions caused by the Iran war.

"On March 8, some players were processed at the Mexican Embassy in Saudi Arabia, and tomorrow other people are scheduled to be processed at the Embassy in Qatar," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported in a statement late Monday.

The government did not specify the names or how many players were granted visas.

Iraq is set to face the winner of the match between Suriname and Bolivia for a spot in the World Cup — to be in the group with France, Norway and Senegal.

Mexico, the United States and Canada are co-hosting the World Cup, which begins June 11.

Iraq head coach Graham Arnold has asked FIFA to postpone the intercontinental qualifier. With Iraqi airspace closed, Arnold's squad — containing predominantly players from the domestic league — is unable to fully gather. Mexico does not have an embassy in Iraq.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs added that it is in contact with the Iraqi Embassy in Mexico and that they are willing "to provide all necessary assistance in documenting the members of the Iraqi national team." (AP)

Canada star Alphonso Davies distraught after injury playing for Bayern in Champions League



MUNICH, March 11: Alphonso Davies covered his face with his shirt as he left the field with an injury in Bayern Munich's game against Atalanta in the Champions League on Tuesday, raising questions about the Canadian star's availability for the World Cup.

That and other injuries to forward Jamal Musiala and goalkeeper Jonas Urbig overshadowed a statement 6-1 win for Bayern and left coach Vincent Kompany facing difficult tactical decisions.

Kompany suggested Davies' injury might be "not so bad" in post-game comments on TV and expressed faith in Bayern's depth. "It's a shame but I told the guys I have full trust in our squad," he told broadcaster Prime Video, adding of Davies, "we'll have to get through some games without him."

The night started with doubts whether Bayern could get the job done without a fully fit Harry Kane. That answer was clear as Michael Olise, Nicolas Jackson and Serge Gnabry ran riot and left Kane an unused substitute.

Instead, Kompany will have to solve the potential absence of his first-choice left back, a key forward and Bayern's top two goalkeepers.

Davies in distress ahead of World Cup

Davies sank into a squatting position on the field after an apparent non-contact injury while playing the ball with Bayern leading 6-0 in the 70th minute. He seemed in distress immediately, covering his face and waving his arms in a gesture of frustration.

Teammates gathered around the Canada left-back to shield him from view before he was helped off the field by Bayern Munich staff, the neck of his shirt pulled up

to cover his face. Davies seemed to be in tears on the sideline as he was comforted by Kompany.

Davies was a key player for Canada at its return to the World Cup in 2022 and captained the team at the 2024 Copa America but has struggled with injuries. He didn't play for Bayern until December this season after tearing an ACL in March 2025 in his most recent game for Canada.

Canada is co-hosting the World Cup in June and July with the United States and Mexico.

Musiala and Urbig injuries could pose Bayern problems

Bayern was cruising after Musiala scored the sixth goal and it threatened to test the all-time records for biggest wins in Champions League knockout games when Dayot Upamecano headed against the post soon after.

The game ended with more concerns for Kompany as Musiala, who only returned to action in January after a broken leg at last year's Club World Cup, limped off in added time after earlier seemingly struggling with an ankle issue.

Kompany had already used all his substitutions so Bayern was down to 10 players when Atalanta launched a counterattack to score a consolation goal. That came with more pain for Bayern as Urbig, in for injured first-choice goalkeeper Manuel Neuer, collided with Atalanta's Nikola Krstovic and seemed badly shaken as he left the field.

The one bright spot was a sign Kane may return soon ahead of Bayern's game against Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga on Saturday. Kane was "very close" to starting against Atalanta, Kompany said, "but then it was 5-0 and he was very far away." (AP)

India's Puligilla and Sherif set for iconic WRC Safari Rally 2026

NAIVASHA (KENYA), March 11: Ace Indian rally driver Naveen Puligilla and co-driver Musa Sherif are gearing up for their toughest challenge as they aim to repeat their WRC3 podium finish in the third round of the FIA World Rally Championship (WRC), the iconic WRC Safari Rally Kenya 2026.

The celebrated duo, who secured a podium in their class at the WRC Rally Saudi Arabia last November, will tackle the rough terrains around Naivasha for a third consecutive time when the demanding African event runs from March 12 to 15.

Fresh from his victory at the Nashik rally that secured him the 3T class National championship title, Hyderabad's Puligilla will compete in the WRC3 category driving a Ford Fiesta Rally3 prepared and serviced by Africa Eco Sports Nairobi.

Seasoned navigator from Kasargod, Sherif, who has over 33 years of rally experience, will handle pace notes for the Indian driver. The pair made history in 2025 by becoming the first Indian duo to score a podium finish in any WRC class when it finished second in WRC3 at Rally Saudi Arabia. (PTI)



Government of India



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32,000+ km rural roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, strengthening last-mile connectivity

₹18,600+ crore for 4-lane project with **India's first road-cum-rail underwater tunnel** below the Brahmaputra to boost Gohpur–Numaligarh connectivity

₹6,950+ crore Kaziranga Elevated Corridor in Kaliabor, strengthening connectivity and ecological protection

Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu inaugurated across Brahmaputra, boosting connectivity, comfort, and commerce, along with easier access to Kamakhya Devi Temple

₹740+ crore Smart City projects transforming urban infrastructure, improving quality of life in cities

Flight routes expand from 7 to nearly **30** since 2014; **new terminal** at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport boosting Assam's air connectivity

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