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- Mojtaba Khamenei takes on Iran's reins
- Waste mound collapse kills at least 5, leaves several missing
- LS fails to take up resolution on Birla's removal as Speaker amid oppn protests
- EC hears parties as Bengal poll battle sharpens



Government of Assam

Science & Technology Department



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No immediate hike in petrol, diesel prices; adequate stock to meet any contingency: Sources

NEW DELHI, March 9: Petrol and diesel prices will not be increased for now despite international crude oil rates crossing USD 100 per barrel, government sources said on Monday, even as authorities stepped up efforts to maintain uninterrupted fuel supply lines across the country.

As the conflict in West Asia entered the tenth day, world markets plummeted, and Brent crude oil, the international standard, surged to nearly USD 120 a barrel, about 65 per cent higher than when the war started, before retreating.

Top government sources said the government is closely monitoring global oil markets, but there is no immediate plan to raise retail fuel prices. Oil marketing companies are expected to absorb the current cost pressure for the time being.

While the country has adequate stocks of both raw material (crude oil) and finished products (fuels) to meet requirements for the next 6-8 weeks, the government has tweaked the policy for ordering a cooking gas LPG refill.

The minimum gap for booking a domestic LPG refill has been increased to 25 days from the current 21 days, a move aimed at preventing hoarding and ensuring equitable distribution of cylinders.

Sources said the minimum waiting period for booking a domestic LPG cylinder refill increased from 21 days to 25 days to prevent hoarding.

Average households consume 7-8 LPG cylinders of 14.2 kg in a year and should normally not need a refill in less than 6 weeks, they said, adding the refill booking period has been increased to prevent hoarding and creation of artificial scarcity in the market.

The oil companies have an ade-



quate stock of LPG, they added. Sources said the government is closely monitoring the evolving global energy situation and has taken steps to ensure that supply chains remain stable.

The widening conflict in the Middle East, which began on February 28 when the United States and Israel carried out strikes on Iran, followed by retaliatory attacks from Tehran, has disrupted energy flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

The narrow shipping corridor is a crucial artery for India's energy supplies, with about 40-50 per cent of the country's crude oil imports and nearly 85-90 per cent of its LPG shipments from Gulf nations passing through the route.

Sources said that while there is enough crude oil available from alternative sources, such as Russia, replacing any loss of LPG supplies is more time-consuming, as other alternative sources are largely located in the United States and Canada.

To ensure uninterrupted sup-

plies, the government has ordered refineries to maximise LPG production and not use any of its streams for making petrochemicals.

On petrol and diesel, the situation is "very comfortable", one of the sources said.

"Every petrol pump in the country is functioning, every piped natural gas (to household kitchens) is operational, every CNG station is open," he said. "There is no cause for panic."

For India, which imports 88 per cent of its requirement of crude oil, which is turned into fuels like petrol and diesel at refineries, higher global prices translate into a larger import bill and potential inflationary pressures.

However, retail fuel prices are not expected to be raised immediately, as the government continues to follow a calibrated policy of allowing companies to build margins when international prices are low and cushioning consumers when rates rise, sources said.

Retail petrol and diesel prices have been on a freeze since April 2022, with fuel retailers like Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) absorbing losses when crude prices are high and making profits when rates are low.

This meant that when global fuel prices went up in response to elevated crude prices, prices were stable in India. And when softening of crude prices pushed down fuel rates globally, rates in India remained unchanged.

The government wants to continue to shield consumers, and the same policy will continue unless there is a huge spike in crude prices, they said.

India imports 88 per cent of its crude oil needs and roughly half of its natural gas requirement. These mostly come via the Strait of Hormuz.

As India scouts for more LPG and gas supplies, some recalibration in supplies to different sectors is being done.

Following the US and Israeli attacks on Iranian government, military and nuclear facilities, Iran warned shipping away from the strait, and insurers withdrew coverage, effectively halting tanker movements.

"They (oil companies) have enough cushion to sustain this kind of price spike," a source with direct knowledge of the matter said.

"We have seen prices rise to USD 119 per barrel in June 2022 in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. That year, they had nominal profits, but in FY24, they posted record ₹ 81,000 crore profit." This year, the three companies have posted ₹ 23,743 crore profit in the December quarter alone. (PTI)

Solex Energy says its 3.78-GW solar module facility gets ALMM approval

NEW DELHI, March 9: Solex Energy on Monday said its 3.78-gigawatt solar module manufacturing facility in Surat has got approval under the government's ALMM framework, which ensures the reliability of its products in the domestic market.

The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) has introduced the Approved List of Models & Manufacturers (ALMM) for solar PV modules

and cells. The mechanism ensures the reliability of the producer and protects the users' interest, while ensuring the larger energy security of the country.

Solex Energy has got ALMM approval from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy for its 3.78 gigawatt solar module capacity. The facility located at Surat (Gujarat) has become an enlisted solar PV module manufacturing capacity, the company said

in an exchange filing.

"The approval reinforces our commitment to strengthening India's domestic solar manufacturing ecosystem while accelerating the transition towards clean and sustainable energy," the company's CMD Chetan Shah said.

Gujarat-based Solex Energy looks to increase its module manufacturing capacity to 15 GW, which is expected to cost Rs 8,000 crore. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

Seat sharing formula

intensified its political outreach across Assam ahead of the upcoming elections, with senior leaders participating in the yatra and interacting with people across several districts of the state.

165 militants surrendered

of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) surrendered, along with 14 of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Reformation), five of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khango-Nonny), four of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Unification).

Two each from the United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent), the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang-2) and the Eastern Naga National Organisation (ENNO), and one rebel from the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang-Ang).

The minister said that surrendered cadres are provided benefits under the government's Surrender and Rehabilitation scheme, including financial assistance amounting to Rs 1.4 crore in the last six years.

He said that a rehabilitation camp at Bhismaknagar in Lower Dibang Valley district has been operational since January 9 last year and the surrendered cadres are currently staying there.

Vocational training programmes are also being conducted for the skill development of the surrendered militants.

During the current fiscal, short-term vocational training was provided to 26 cadres, the minister said, adding that the scheme has no provision for direct employment or housing.

He further stated that under the provisions of the Surrender and Rehabilitation scheme, cases relating to minor offences against successfully rehabilitated cadres may be considered for withdrawal in accordance with government policy.

However, Nating clarified that cadres involved in heinous offences such as murder, rape, abduction and other serious crimes will face due process of law and surrender will not be treated as amnesty from criminal liability.

The minister added that the reintegration and livelihood status of surrendered militants are regularly monitored under government supervision.

He also said the government has taken steps to strengthen the Surrender and Rehabilitation scheme by sanctioning an additional stipend of Rs 6,000 per cadre and approving Rs 109.10 lakh for improvement of rehabilitation infrastructure. (PTI)

Hundreds join BJP

"double-engine" government and would further strengthen the party's position in the Socheng Dhenta Member of Autonomous Council constituency.

ED attaches assets

Laundering Act (PMLA) to attach six immovable properties, including one located on Zoo Road in Guwahati, worth Rs 5.64 crore, it said.

Kalita, the ED alleged, acquired several immovable properties, either in his own name or in the names of his wife and other family members who "lacked" corresponding income sources.

"This was done to obscure the true beneficial ownership and origin of the funds. The properties were purchased by deliberately understating the consideration amounts in registered sale deeds to conceal the actual cash deployment," the agency claimed. (PTI)

ONOE in nation's

had been in campaigning mode for years together," he said.

Chaudhary said governance does not get priority when elections are held at different times, and members too have realised that 'one nation one election' initiative is in the interest of the country, not for any political party.

"Rising above party lines, all political parties should work for this," he said.

Chaudhary said former Union law minister and former chief minister of Karnataka M Veerappa Moily was supposed to appear before the committee on Monday but could not do so as he was indisposed.

The Joint Committee on the Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024, and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2024 was constituted after the two proposed legislations were introduced in the Lok Sabha in December, 2024.

The joint committee has met constitutional experts, economists and the Law Commission chairman among others since it was constituted.

The bills were introduced following a report submitted by a high-level committee on simultaneous elections, headed by former president Ram Nath Kovind.

The Kovind committee was constituted by the government of India on September 2, 2023. Its primary objective was to explore the feasibility of conducting simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies.

It solicited extensive public and political feedback, and consulted with experts to analyse the potential benefits and challenges associated with this proposed electoral reform.

This report presented a detailed overview of the committee's findings, its recommendations for constitutional amendments, and the anticipated impact of simultaneous elections on governance, resources, and public sentiment. (PTI)

Assam deprived in

the Centre in accelerating development across sectors such as healthcare, infrastructure, connectivity and education.

Officials have also stated that several other projects in Assam are currently progressing at a faster pace due to enhanced central support and improved implementation mechanisms.

Sarma's remarks come amid continuing political exchanges between the ruling alliance and opposition parties over the pace and distribution of development initiatives in the state.

Ex-AGP leader

that Himanta is acting arbitrarily and bringing forward such unqualified people into politics who are mired in corruption," Gogoi said.

In his remarks, Singh said Khaund began his journey as a young leader and has done a great deal of work to protect the culture of Assam.

"Since the Himanta government came to power in the state, they have started to eliminate regional parties, but Jayanta ji has always stood firm on his values. Your joining the Congress has strengthened us. We extend a very warm welcome to you," the Congress general secretary said. (PTI)

No-fly zone, parking

drone operators and vehicle owners to cooperate with the restrictions to ensure the programme is conducted safely and smoothly.

5 nabbed for

regulations, forming part of a larger interstate syndicate, Saikia said.

During the raids, police seized KYC documents of over 1,000 people, signaling potential large-scale identity theft and misuse, the statement said.

The personnel also recovered 54 bank passbooks and around 1,000 unissued SIM card covers.

"Preliminary findings show that several of the seized SIMs were linked to cyber fraud cases already registered in other states. Usage analysis points to their involvement in SIMBOX operations — a technique used to route fraudulent international calls through local networks, helping scammers evade detection and traceability," the SSP said.

"They collected personal identification documents of women under the guise of enrolment, and fraudulently used those to activate mule SIM cards and open mule bank accounts — tools commonly used to launder proceeds of cybercrime," Saikia said.

Investigation is in full swing, he added. (PTI)

BJP MP Tapir

citizens of Bharat," he said. People hailing from one region may appear different in their looks from those belonging to other regions in the country but all are Indians, he said. (PTI)

Assamese film 'Moi

theatre actor Gunomoni Baruah, while several senior and junior artistes of the Assamese film industry have enacted other important characters.

Based on a true story written by senior journalist Anuradha Sharma Pujari, the film has been produced by the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) and 'red river & blue hills'. (PTI)

World shares tumble as Iran war pushes crude prices over \$110 a barrel

BANGKOK, March 9: World shares tumbled on Monday, with Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index plunging more than 5%, after oil prices spiked at nearly \$120 a barrel, casting a shadow over economies heavily dependent on imports of oil and gas from the Middle East.

The futures for the S&P 500, Nasdaq composite index and the Dow Jones Industrial Average were trading more than 1% lower after dropping more than 2% late Sunday.

A Chinese special envoy to the Middle East, Zhai Jun, called for an end to the attacks and said strikes on non-military targets and civilians should be condemned. Meanwhile, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung warned against hoarding, panic buying and collusion between refiners and gas stations.

"Please respond proactively to the growing volatility in the financial and foreign exchange markets, which are the lifeblood of our economy," Lee said. He said the government would cap fuel prices.

Oil prices rocketed higher after both sides in the war struck new targets over the weekend, including civilian ones.

Bahrain accused Iran of hitting one of the desalination plants that are crucial for drinking water in Gulf countries. Its national oil company declared force majeure after the country's sole oil refinery was attacked. Israel struck oil depots in Tehran, sending up thick smoke and causing environmental alerts.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX dropped 2.6% to 22,983.67 and the CAC 40 in Paris lost 2.7% to 7,779.46. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 1.9% to 10,089.05. The only market to show gains was in oil exporter Norway, where its benchmark edged 0.1% higher.

During Asian trading, Japan's Nikkei 225 plunged more than 7% early in the day but regained some of those losses to close 5.2% lower at 52,728.72. South Korea's Kospi sank 6% to 5,251.87.

Chinese markets, which tend to be less affected by global trends, saw more moderate losses. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 1.4% to 25,408.46 and the Shanghai Composite index lost 0.7% to 4,096.60.

Taiwan's benchmark dived 4.4% and India's Sensex lost 2.3%. Other regional markets also swooned.

As of 0900 GMT, the price for a barrel of Brent crude was \$106.61 a barrel. US benchmark crude rose to

\$103.20. Both were about 15% above their closing prices Friday.

Crude prices have spiked to their highest levels in at least 14 years as the war, now in its second week, ensnares countries and places that are critical to the production and movement of oil and gas from the Persian Gulf. They last rose above \$100 shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

"The market woke up to the sound every macro trader dreads. The oil alarm bell. And this time it was not a polite chime. It was a fire siren," Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

Surging oil and gas prices, if they persist, could ripple across the globe, further complicating matters for countries still adjusting to higher tariffs on exports to the United States under President Donald Trump.

Senior officials of Southeast Asian countries were meeting this week in Manila, the Philippines, where they were expected to discuss ways to counter the shock from higher energy costs.

"Oil prices will reach a peak at some point — maybe they already have, maybe there's more to come — but they are likely to fluctuate at elevated levels for weeks, perhaps months," Ipek Ozkardeska of Swissquote said in a commentary.

"Eventually — even if the war persists — energy prices will likely come down. But during this period, high energy prices will revive inflation globally and weigh notably on growth."

On Friday, the S&P 500 dropped 1.3% after a report showed US employers cut more jobs last month than they created and after oil prices shot above \$90 per barrel.

The combination of a weak economy and high inflation is a worst-case scenario for investors because the Federal Reserve has no good tool to fix both problems at the same time.

The Dow plunged as many as 945 points before finishing with a loss of 453, or 0.9%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.6%.

Early Monday, the US dollar, which retains its status as a safe haven for investors bracing against uncertainty, gained against other major currencies. It was trading at 158.55 Japanese yen, up from 158.09 yen late Friday. The euro rose to \$1.1539, up from \$1.1556. (AP)

NFR installs women's hygiene vending machines at Guwahati, Kamakhya stations

Initiative aims to enhance women's health, dignity and comfort in public spaces, say officials



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 9: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) marked International Women's Day by installing multi-product women's hygiene vending machines at Guwahati Railway Station and Kamakhya Railway Station to improve access to essential hygiene products for women passengers.

As part of the initiative, six vending machines have been installed—four at Guwahati station and two at Kamakhya station—to ensure convenient availability of hygiene products for women travellers.

The machines were inaugurated by Shalini Shrivastava, president of the NFR Women's Welfare Organisation (NFRWFO), in the presence of NFR

General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava. Officials said the initiative aims to enhance women's health, dignity and comfort in public spaces.

Guwahati and Kamakhya stations are among the busiest railway hubs in the Northeast, catering to thousands of passengers daily, including pilgrims and tourists.

The project has been implemented in collaboration with Sirona and Priya Communication.

The vending machines provide a range of hygiene products at specially discounted prices for railway passengers, ensuring affordability and accessibility during travel.

NFR officials said the facility will be expanded to other stations across the Northeast in phases.

The initiative also seeks to promote awareness about menstrual hygiene and encourage open discussions on women's health while strengthening inclusive and women-friendly public infrastructure within railway premises.

Raymond Realty inks JV to build ₹ 3,000-cr housing project in Mumbai

NEW DELHI, March 9: Raymond Realty Ltd has entered into a joint venture to develop a housing project in Mumbai with an estimated revenue of about ₹ 3,000 crore.

In a regulatory filing on Monday, the company informed that it has "signed definitive documents to develop a prestigious residential project in a prime location of Kandivali, Mumbai". Raymond Realty did not mention the name of the landowning entity with whom it has signed the joint development agreement (JDA), nor the total size of the land parcel. This upcoming project is estimated to have a gross development value (sales value) of about ₹ 3,000 crore, it added.

This is the company's seventh joint development project.

Mumbai-based Raymond Realty Ltd, which got listed last year on stock exchanges, is one of the leading real estate developers in the country. The company, part of the Raymond Group, has 100 acres of owned land and seven JDAs. These upcoming projects would help the company to generate a total revenue of around ₹ 43,000 crore. (PTI)

Rupee falls 39 paise to close at all-time low

MUMBAI, March 9: The rupee crashed to its all-time closing low of 92.21 against the US dollar on Monday, losing 39 paise during the session, as global crude oil prices saw a sharp spike, and the greenback strengthened amid worsening conflict in the Middle East. Forex traders said heightened geopolitical uncertainty risks driving energy costs higher, which could widen the trade deficit and stoke inflationary pressures. Moreover, withdrawal of foreign funds amid intense selling in domestic equity markets further pressured the rupee, they added. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 92.22 and rose briefly to 92.15 but kept losing ground through the session and recorded an intraday low of 92.35. (PTI)

AFFIDAVIT

I, Laxman Rana, S/O Top Bahadur Rana, resident of Centre of Excellence, Assam Rifles Training Centre & School (ARTC & S) Diphu, P.O. & P.S., Diphu, district, Karbi Anglong, Assam, do hereby solemnly affirm and declare before the Notary Public in Diphu Judicial Court on this day of 9th March, 2026, that the date of birth of my wife Dil Maya Rana is 14/11/1976, but in my service record, the date of birth of my wife has not been included till date.

This affidavit is required as a piece of evidence to submit before the concerning authority declaring the date of birth of my wife Dil Maya Rana is 14/11/1976 and to keep record of her date of birth in my service record too.

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TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026

THE HILLS TIMES 3

BPF to contest 11 seats and BJP to contest 4 seats in the Bodoland region Seat sharing formula with AGP finalised: CM



Staff Reporter
GUWAHATI, March 9: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that seat-sharing talks between the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ally Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) for the upcoming elections have been finalised, with the proposal sent to the party's central leadership in New Delhi for approval.

Speaking to reporters here, Sarma said that the final agreement on seat distribution has already been worked out at the state level and the details have been forwarded to the BJP's national leadership.

"The seat-sharing talks with the Asom Gana Parishad have been finalised. Everything has been sent to Delhi for approval," the chief minister said.

He also informed that Assam BJP president Dilip Saikia will soon travel to the national capital

to meet the party's central leadership regarding the finalisation of the arrangements.

According to Sarma, discussions have also been concluded regarding seat distribution in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

He said that the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) will contest in 11 seats in the region, while the BJP will field candidates in four constituencies.

"In Bodoland, the BPF will contest in 11 seats and the BJP will fight in four seats," Sarma stated.

The chief minister further indicated that the BJP is in the final stages of selecting its candidates and that the party's candidate list will be announced shortly.

Sarma also expressed satisfaction over the response to the BJP's ongoing 'Jana Ashirwad Yatra', stating that the public turnout has been overwhelming.

"People have come out tremendously in the Jana Ashirwad Yatra. The response from the public has been overwhelming," he said. The BJP has (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

165 militants surrendered in Arunachal in last six years: Minister

ITANAGAR, March 9: One hundred and sixty-five militants belonging to various insurgent groups have laid down their arms in the insurgency-affected districts of Tirap, Changlang and Longding in Arunachal Pradesh during the last six years, state Home minister Mama Natung informed the assembly on Monday.

Natung, replying to a written question by NPP MLA Thangwang Wangham, said that between January 2020 and December 2025, a total of 47 militants surrendered before security forces in Tirap district, 41 in Changlang district and 77 in Longding district.

The minister said 50 cadres of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) surrendered in the three districts. Another 37 militants belonging to the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khango-Yung Aung) laid down arms.

Besides, 35 rebels of the Eastern Naga National Government (ENNG) also surrendered during the period. Natung further said that 27 cadres (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Biswanath administration clears 75 bighas of VGR land in Sootea eviction drive



HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, March 9: The district administration of Biswanath carried out an eviction drive on Monday in three locations under Sootea to clear alleged encroachment on Village Grazing Reserve (VGR) land.

The drive was conducted in Milanpur, Sorajonia and Solahola areas under the Biswanath Legisla-

tive Assembly Constituency, where authorities said around 65 families had encroached approximately 75 bighas of VGR land.

According to officials, 34 families were residing in Milanpur, 16 in Sorajonia and 15 in Solahola.

The operation was conducted by the administration of Sootea under the supervision of Naduar Revenue Circle officials.

Circle Officer Dr Akashdeep Kakaty said eviction notices had been served earlier and public announcements were made on Sunday evening.

As a result, many occupants vacated the land before the drive began. The eviction operation proceeded peacefully without any law-and-order issues.

Nearly 200 personnel from the police and the Central Reserve Police Force were deployed in the area as a precautionary measure.

Officials used 17 bulldozers and several excavators to clear the encroachments.

During the drive, about 25 bighas, 1 katha and 7 lechas of land under Dag No. 325 in Solahola were cleared, along with 25 bighas, 3 kathas and 9 lechas under Dag No 14 in Sorajonia.

In Milanpur, 24 bighas, 4 kathas and 13 lechas of VGR land under Dag No. 196 were also freed.

Local residents welcomed the action and urged the district administration to continue such drives to free other government lands from encroachment.

Assam deprived in getting due share of development during Congress regime: Himanta

Staff Reporter
GUWAHATI, March 9: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said that the state is now receiving priority in development projects and that major infrastructure initiatives are being completed in record time under the "double-engine" government.

In a post on social media platform X, Sarma alleged that Assam did not receive its due share of development projects during the tenure of the Indian National Congress and that many projects sanctioned earlier faced significant delays.

"During the Cong era, Assam never got its due share in development projects and whatever projects we got were delayed," the chief minister wrote.

He further said that the situation has changed under the double-engine government, referring to the same party being in power both at the Centre and in the state.

"Under the Double Engine Govt, not only is Assam prioritised, it's getting projects delivered in record time," Sarma said.

Highlighting the healthcare sector, the chief minister cited the establishment of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences Guwahati as a major example of rapid project execution in the state.

According to Sarma, the premier healthcare institute reflects the Centre's commitment to strengthening medical infrastructure in Assam and improving access to advanced healthcare facilities in the region.

The AIIMS in Guwahati was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in April 2023 and has since begun offering a range of specialised medical services. The chief minister has frequently highlighted the role of coordinated efforts between the state government and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

ONOE in nation's interest: GN Azad Former Congress leader says it could curb the suffering of students

NEW DELHI, March 9: Former Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad on Monday strongly supported the proposal of simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies and said such a move will be in the interest of the country, will save time, improve governance and expedite development.

Appearing before the Joint Committee of Parliament examining the bills seeking to introduce simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, Azad also said that he has been a supporter of simultaneous polls since 1983, when the Indira Gandhi government was in power.

"I have been a supporter of the one nation one election for a long time. In 1983, when the Indira Gandhi government was in power, the Election Commission had suggested that the issue of simultaneous elections could be considered. I have supported that idea," he told reporters after appearing on the panel, which is headed by BJP member P P Chaudhary.

The former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir said the number of elections has increased many old since then and as the general secretary in-charge of many states of the Congress, he had to get involved with the series of elections in the states.

"It often had happened that when one election came to an end, another election would come. The election process

was unending. It was very difficult," he said. Azad said simultaneous elections would be in the interests of the country.

"Lakhs of officials are involved in elections. If simultaneous elections are held, offices will function, time will be saved, and there will be development and improvement in governance," he said.

Chairman Chaudhary said Azad had spoken "in the interest of the country" and suggested that everyone should come together for the initiative keeping aside party lines. He said time will be saved and government resources will be saved if a single election for both the assembly and the Lok Sabha is held with a single voters' list.

"When elections are held at different times, government employees and teachers are deployed. They are given training and that results in suffering of the students as the teachers can not teach the students," he said.

Chaudhary said even some opposition members sought a single voters' list.

"Today's meeting was held in a very cordial manner. I want to thank Azad Sahab," Chaudhary said.

He said Azad has a long experience. He shared his legal and political experience with the members. He cleared many doubts of the members, Chaudhary said. "He (Azad) told us that during his time, he (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Ex-AGP leader Jayanta Khaund joins Congress ahead of assembly polls

NEW DELHI, March 9: Ahead of the assembly elections in Assam, former Asom Gana Parishad leader Jayanta Khaund joined the Congress on Monday with Assam Congress chief Gaurav Gogoi hailing his entry into the party.

Days after resigning from the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), Khaund joined the Congress in the presence of Gogoi, AICC general secretary in-charge of Assam Jitendra Singh and senior observer for Assam D K Shivakumar at a press conference here. Several associates of Khaund also joined the Congress.

"Today is a very important day related to the Assam Legislative Assembly elections. The people of

Assam know Jayanta Khaund ji very well. Jayanta ji works for the people—this is known to everyone. For the past few months, Jayanta ji has been in touch with us and had expressed his desire to join the Congress party," Gogoi said at the press conference.

The people of Khaund assembly constituency are very happy with this decision, he said.

"In the upcoming assembly elections, Jayanta ji will fight strongly alongside us. Several other associates have also come to Delhi with Jayanta ji, who will join the Congress party," he said.

"There is anger among the people in Assam against Himanta Biswa Sarma. The people understand (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

No-fly zone, parking curbs imposed in Cachar ahead of PM's Silchar visit

HT Correspondent
SILCHAR, March 9: The Cachar district administration has imposed a temporary no-fly zone and traffic restrictions ahead of the proposed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Silchar on March 14.

Acting on security inputs and a communication from the Senior Superintendent of Police, Cachar, District Magistrate Aayush Garg issued prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita.

According to the order, the entire district will remain a no-fly zone for all types of aerial devices—including drones, remotely piloted aircraft systems (RPAS), UAVs, paragliders and micro-light aircraft—from

March 10 to March 15. Authorities said the restriction has been imposed to ensure tight security arrangements during the Prime Minister's visit.

Private and commercial operators have been directed not to operate any such aerial devices within the district during the specified period. Exceptions will be allowed only with prior written permission from the competent authority following security clearance.

In a separate order, the district administration has also imposed no-parking restrictions along key routes from March 10 to March 14 to facilitate smooth movement of VVIP vehicles.

The restrictions will apply on the

stretch from ISBT Point to Mangal Pandey Statue Point (Silchar Bypass-Hailakandi Road junction) and from ISBT Point to the ONGC campus at Srikona.

Officials have instructed vehicle owners and drivers not to park along these routes during the specified period to prevent traffic congestion.

The public meeting during the Prime Minister's visit is scheduled to be held at Ambicapur Part-III along the Silchar Bypass.

The administration has warned that any violation of the orders will attract legal action under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

Authorities have appealed to citizens, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

5 nabbed for 'involvement' in interstate cyber crimes

GUWAHATI, March 9: Five people have been arrested for their alleged involvement in interstate cyber crimes, from Kamrup district of Assam, police said on Monday.

Saurav Jyoti Saikia, SSP at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), said police arrested the accused on Sunday during coordinated raids across multiple locations in the district.

"The operation targeted an organised network involved in cyber fraud, illegal procurement and distribution of SIM cards, and misuse of personal documents to create mule accounts for financial fraud," he said in a statement.

Investigations revealed that the suspects were illegally handling around 200 SIM cards that violated telecom (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BJP MP Tapir Gao demands law to protect people of NE from discrimination outside their states

NEW DELHI, March 9: BJP MP Tapir Gao on Monday demanded that the Centre bring a law to safeguard people of the northeast from "discrimination and atrocities" outside their states in the country.

The Arunachal East MP's demand came after a Manipuri woman was allegedly assaulted in south Delhi on Sunday evening. She and her friend were taking a walk in a park in Malviya Nagar when the alleged incident took place, according to the police.

The police said on Monday that they have arrested four juveniles in connection with the case.

A senior police officer said the minors allegedly made comments at the two women, and when one of them objected, a verbal argument ensued. One of the accused then allegedly assaulted the woman, the officer added.

Expressing anguish over the alleged attack on the Manipuri



woman, Gao said this comes days after three women from Arunachal Pradesh were allegedly mistreated in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar.

"Such incidents are sending out a very negative message... That's why I would like the Government of India to bring a law, the Prevention of Atrocities against North East

citizens Act, in the country and enforce," the BJP MP told PTI Videos in the Parliament House complex.

"Because such incidents are increasing everywhere, be it in Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Delhi or Chandigarh... Our people from the northeast should also feel that they are (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

WorldFest-Houston festival Assamese film 'Moi Eti Nixhasor' selected

GUWAHATI, March 9: Assamese feature film 'Moi Eti Nixhasor' has been chosen at the 59th Annual WorldFest-Houston International Film Festival in the USA as 'Official Selection', its filmmaker said on Monday.

National Award-winning filmmaker Bidyut Kotoky told PTI that the movie has also been nominated to receive one of the prestigious WorldFest Remi awards at the festival, to be held from April 24 to May 3.

"It is a matter of immense pride to get selected to such a reputed film festival in the world. The film crew put immense hard work into making the movie, and it is being recognised now," he added.

"Moi Eti Nixhasor", a film about a thief's life against the backdrop of the state's social and political landscape, recently won the



'Award of Excellence Special Mention' at the Accolade Global Film Competition in the USA.

The Mumbai-based filmmaker said that the film was earlier se-

lected at Covellite International Film Festival 2026 of the USA.

The movie revolves around Koduwa -- a cunning village thief who navigates social unrest and

prejudice with wit and heart.

Kotoky said that the recognition at the WorldFest 2026 reinforces the belief that human emotions speak the same language, without showing any respect towards the man-made boundaries.

"Although based in a remote village of Assam and in the not-so-distant past, this story reminds us time and again of the social and political challenges we all face in nearly every country in the time we are living in today," the director said.

'Moi Eti Nixhasor' (Koduwa the Nightbird) is on the life of Koduwa, a village thief known for his cunning and wit but whose honest attempts to improve his life are constantly frustrated by the whims and dictates of the local powers-that-be. The lead cast is played by noted (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Success is the sum of small efforts repeated day in and day out. - Robert Collier

Impacts of Iran war

The geopolitical convulsion in Iran has led to panic buying in Brent crude as Saudi Arabia's largest refinery Ras Tanura and Qatar's LNG mega complex at Ras Laffan shut production even as tanker traffic in the Straits of Hormuz comes to a halt amid soaring war risk, insurance premia, IRGC attacks on oil tankers and a 3X spike in VLCC/LNG freight costs. This is a disaster for India, the world's third largest crude oil importer at 5-MBD, of which no less than 2.6-MBD originates from the Gulf states and Iran via the Straits of Hormuz maritime choke point. A protracted war in the skies above Iran or a blockade of Hormuz would have a disastrous impact on India's current account deficit and set the stage for the Indian rupee, the worst performing currency in Asia despite Modi's (56 inch) chest beating propaganda to inexorably depreciate to 100 against King Dollar, the planet's resurgent FX safe haven. Higher inflation in India amid a widening current account deficit at fiscal pressures would ignite capital outflows from Dalal Street in Asia's most expensive stock market. The GCC is the destination for 15 percent of Indian exports and its entrepôt Dubai is the transshipment hub for Indian exports to Europe and Asia. The 10 million Indian workers in the GCC also account for 40% of \$135 billion in global remittances it attracted last year.

There are 3.8 million Indians living, working in the UAE, which is also the second largest market after the US for Indian electronics exports. The end of the Dubai property bubble and the escalation of US-Israeli aerial attacks on Iran are thus a financial, trade, diplomatic and human disaster for the Indian diaspora. India's high-net worth elite will increasingly favour Singapore/Hong Kong, Switzerland and even Malta as safer hubs for their offshore nest eggs than the UAE, Bahrain or Qatar since geopolitical and logistics risk in the Gulf have just skyrocketed.

The Indian rupee has fallen 10% against the US dollar in the past 2-years. The Indian rupee was 58 when Modi was first elected prime minister in May 2014 and has now fallen to 92, a horrific 48% depreciation in a decade when the BJP supposedly delivered an economic miracle. This 48% fall in the Indian rupee since 2014 is one reason why so many Arab ultra high net worth family offices I know in the Gulf refuse to invest in Indian private equity apart from the usual complaints of dodgy sponsors, manipulated IPOs, high taxation, onerous bureaucracy and politicised securities regulator. All these trends will be magnified by the Iran crisis and inevitable fallout on the Indian rupee, inflation, current account deficit and a steeper INR yield curve.

Global energy volatility and India's strategic resilience

The global energy landscape was thrust into a state of profound instability this Monday as crude oil prices experienced a dramatic thirty percent surge, briefly touching nearly \$120 per barrel. These figures represent a threshold of fiscal tension not witnessed since the peak of the 2022 energy crisis, primarily driven by the intensifying conflict in Iran which ignited on February 28. While prices saw a marginal retreat later in the day following signals from the G7 nations regarding a potential coordinated release of strategic petroleum reserves, the market remains on a knife-edge. By 12:30 IST, Brent crude maintained a staggering sixteen percent gain, trading at approximately \$108 per barrel. The geopolitical premium on oil is currently fueled by the appointment of Mojtaba Khamenei as Iran's new Supreme Leader, succeeding the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. This transition signals a firm continuity of the existing regime, directly countering the US-Israel strategic objective of forced leadership change and suggesting that the regional friction is unlikely to dissipate in the near term.

At the heart of this price explosion lies the effective analysis of the Strait of Hormuz, a maritime artery that serves as the most critical chokepoint for the global transit of liquid petroleum and liquefied natural gas. The waterway, a narrow passage between Oman and Iran connecting the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea, facilitates the movement of one-fifth of the world's total oil consumption. Current reports indicate that maritime traffic has virtually ceased as Iran issues stern warnings against transit and targets vessels attempting the passage. This high-risk environment has forced trading houses and insurers to abandon the route, leaving approximately fifteen million barrels of crude stranded daily. While bypass pipelines exist within various Gulf states, their combined capacity is insufficient to offset a total closure. Even at maximum utilization of these terrestrial routes,



nearly nine million barrels per day—roughly nine percent of global demand—remain structurally at risk, creating a supply vacuum that the global market is struggling to price.

The repercussions of this maritime blockade extend beyond mere transit delays; they are fundamentally restructuring production cycles in West Asia. As tankers remain unable to navigate the Strait, oil inventories in the region have ballooned to their physical limits, forcing major producers to implement drastic production cuts. Iraq and Kuwait have already initiated these reductions due to a lack of available storage, with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia expected to follow suit shortly. This forced scaling back of output is compounded by intensifying physical attacks on oil infrastructure throughout the weekend, which have introduced new variables of supply outage risks. For India, the stakes are exceptionally high, as nearly half of its total crude imports—approximately 2.5 to 2.7 million barrels per day—historically transit through this specific corridor. With these flows from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait currently compromised, the Indian economy faces a dual challenge of both escalating costs and physical procurement hurdles. India's inherent vulnerability to such volatility is a direct consequence of its eighty-eight percent

dependency on imported crude oil, a metric that ties its national economic health to the fluctuations of the global energy market. The surge in oil prices has already sent tremors through Indian financial markets, with the Nifty and Sensex indices plummeting nearly three percent and the rupee hitting record lows against the US dollar. Economic modeling by the Ministry of Finance suggests that every ten percent increase in the

price of oil typically widens India's current account deficit by 0.4 percent of the GDP. Furthermore, with an annual import volume of 1.8 to 2 billion barrels, every single dollar increase in the price per barrel adds an estimated \$2 billion to the national import bill. This puts immense pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves and complicates the broader inflation outlook, even as the government attempts to shield the domestic consumer from the immediate impact of these global price hikes.

In a move to maintain social and economic stability, the Indian government has signaled that it has no immediate plans to hike petrol or diesel prices at the pump. This strategy follows a precedent established since April 2022, where public sector oil marketing companies absorb losses during price spikes and recover them during periods of market cooling. By maintaining a freeze on retail fuel

prices, the administration aims to blunt the inflationary impact on the general populace, particularly as the Ministry of Finance warns that crude sustained above \$100 per barrel could strain macroeconomic aggregates. While India's current inflation remains near the lower bounds of its target range, the Ministry acknowledges that the weakening rupee and rising fuel costs could eventually feed into imported inflation, creating a complex policy environment for the Reserve Bank of India in its management of interest rates and liquidity.

Beyond the financial metrics, the immediate strategic priority for New Delhi is the continuous physical availability of crude oil and finished fuels. Government sources have revealed that Indian refiners are aggressively pivoting their procurement strategies, ramping up purchases from non-Hormuz regions which already account for sixty percent of the country's imports. This diversification includes tapping into Russian crude already in transit and engaging with large-scale international traders like Vitol, Trafigura, and ADNOC Trading to secure additional volumes from their global portfolios. Currently, India possesses a strategic buffer of six to eight weeks of crude and fuel stocks. These reserves are being managed as a rolling inventory, constantly replenished by supplies from outside the Persian Gulf to ensure that refineries continue to operate at capacity and that the ef-

fective coverage of the national energy demand remains extended despite the regional blockade.

The crisis has also necessitated the invocation of emergency powers under the Essential Commodities Act to safeguard the supply of cooking gas to millions of Indian households. Given that over eighty percent of India's liquefied petroleum gas imports typically pass through the Strait of Hormuz, the government has directed domestic refiners to maximize LPG production. This mandate requires that all produced gas be diverted exclusively to domestic consumers rather than being utilized for petrochemical manufacturing. Similarly, natural gas supplies for industrial sectors are being reprioritized as more than half of India's LNG imports are also affected by the Hormuz disruption. The government is preparing for a worsening scenario where sectoral gas allocation may be strictly rationed to ensure that critical infrastructure, such as fertilizers and power generation, remains functional, with non-essential industries encouraged to switch to alternative fuels where possible.

As the conflict shows no signs of an immediate resolution, the global economy is watching the G7's next moves with bated breath, hoping that a coordinated release of strategic reserves can provide a temporary floor for the market. However, for a nation like India, the situation serves as a stark reminder of the geopolitical risks embedded in energy dependency. The resilience of the Indian economy is currently being tested not just by the price of a barrel, but by its ability to navigate a world where the most vital energy arteries can be severed in an instant. Through a combination of strategic inventory management, diplomatic engagement with global traders, and domestic regulatory interventions, the country is attempting to weather a storm that has far-reaching implications for its growth trajectory and fiscal health in 2026. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

Storms in West Asia and India's Strategic Challenge

By: Satyabrata Borah

The world is passing through a tense and uncertain phase. Conflicts in many regions are shaping the direction of global politics and the daily lives of ordinary people. Among these regions, West Asia stands as one of the most sensitive and strategically important areas. For India, the developments in this part of the world carry deep significance. The connection between India and West Asia is not limited to diplomacy or trade statistics. It touches energy security, the livelihood of millions of Indians working there, cultural ties that go back centuries, and the stability of the wider international system.

When violence rises in West Asia, India feels the tremors almost immediately. The reason is simple, India's economic life remains closely linked with the energy resources of this region. A large share of India's crude oil and natural gas comes from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. Any disruption in supply or sudden rise in prices sends shock waves through India's economy. Transport costs rise, inflation increases, and the pressure reaches households that already struggle with daily expenses.

Energy remains the most visible connection. Yet the relationship between India and West Asia carries many layers. Millions of Indians live and work in the Gulf region. They are doctors, engineers, drivers, technicians, nurses, shopkeepers, and construction workers. They send billions of dollars every year to their families in India. These remittances support education, housing, healthcare, and small businesses across many Indian states. For families in Kerala, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and Assam, money sent from the Gulf often forms the backbone of household income.

This large Indian community has also become a bridge between societies. Indian food, language, music, and culture have found a natural place in cities like Dubai, Doha, Riyadh, and Muscat. At the same time, Indians working in these countries have helped build roads, airports, skyscrapers, and hospitals. The connection is human, emotional, and economic all at once.

When war clouds gather in West Asia, concern spreads across India for this very reason. Families worry about the safety of their relatives. The government prepares evacuation plans. Airlines watch airspace closures. Companies track supply chains. Financial markets respond to every new development with nervous energy.

History has shown that India cannot remain distant from crises in this region. During the Gulf War in 1990, India conducted one of the largest civilian evacuations ever seen. More than 170,000 Indians were airlifted from Kuwait and Iraq. The operation became a symbol of determination and logistical strength. Similar evacuations have taken place in later years from Yemen, Libya, and other conflict zones. Each event reminded policymakers that protecting Indian citizens overseas remains a national responsibility.

The current global environment feels more complex than before. Conflicts are not isolated anymore. A confrontation in one area can influence political decisions, shipping routes, and financial systems across continents. In such a world, India must prepare for crises that affect not only oil supply but the entire network of connections linking economies and

societies.

One important factor lies in maritime security. A large portion of India's trade passes through sea routes near West Asia. The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the busiest oil corridors in the world. Any disruption in this narrow passage would influence shipping traffic moving toward Indian ports. Tankers carrying energy supplies as well as cargo vessels transporting goods depend on safe navigation through these waters.

Piracy, missile attacks, drone strikes, and naval confrontations have already shown how fragile maritime routes can become during conflicts. Insurance premiums for ships increase when risk grows. Shipping companies may change routes, leading to longer journeys and higher costs. These changes eventually reach consumers who pay more for fuel, food, and everyday products.

India has already taken steps to strengthen its maritime presence. The Indian Navy regularly patrols the Arabian Sea and nearby waters. Naval ships escort merchant vessels when security risks rise. Cooperation with friendly countries also plays a role in keeping sea lanes safe. These efforts demonstrate how economic stability often depends on quiet and persistent work carried out far from public attention.

Energy diversification has become another major goal for India. For decades, dependence on a small group of suppliers created vulnerability. Any political crisis in those regions could threaten supply chains. Indian policymakers now focus on widening the network of energy partners. Imports from countries in Africa, the Americas, and Russia have grown in recent years. Strategic petroleum reserves are also being expanded so that emergency stocks remain available during disruptions.

Renewable energy forms another part of this long-term vision. Solar power, wind energy, and green hydrogen promise a future where dependence on imported fossil fuels gradually decreases. India's ambitious solar projects and investments in clean technology aim to protect economic stability while also addressing environmental challenges. This transition requires time and massive investment. Still, the direction signals that India wants greater control over its energy future.

Another aspect of preparation involves diplomacy. India maintains relations with many countries that hold differing positions in global conflicts. This balanced approach has helped India keep channels of communication open across West Asia. Friendly ties with Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar allow India to act as a trusted partner for dialogue and cooperation.

Such diplomacy requires patience and sensitivity. Every country in the region has its own historical concerns, security calculations, and alliances. India seeks to avoid choosing sides in regional rivalries. Instead, it promotes stability, economic cooperation, and peaceful dialogue. This strategy reflects the understanding that peace in West Asia benefits India as much as it benefits the region itself.

Human security remains equally important. The welfare of Indian workers in foreign lands requires constant attention. Embassies and consulates monitor local conditions and provide support during emergencies. Registration systems help track citizens living in different countries. Digital communication allows governments to share information quickly with communities overseas.

Education and awareness also play a role. Workers traveling abroad need information about local laws, cultural expectations, and safety procedures. Governments and recruitment agencies have started offering orientation programs before departure. These steps reduce misunderstandings and protect workers from exploitation.

Financial planning becomes essential when discussing crises. Remittances sent by Indians working overseas contribute billions of dollars to the Indian economy every year. These funds support rural development, banking deposits, and local businesses. A sudden decline in overseas employment could affect many households. Preparing alternative economic opportunities within India remains important so that returning workers can reintegrate smoothly if needed.

Technology may offer new solutions. Digital payment systems allow families to receive money quickly and safely. Online education programs help returning workers gain new skills. Startups in sectors like logistics, renewable energy, and healthcare create fresh employment possibilities. A resilient economy gives the country greater confidence during global uncertainty.

Public awareness in India also shapes national preparedness. Citizens must understand that international crises carry domestic consequences. Responsible discussion in media and public forums encourages informed debate rather than panic. Balanced information allows people to grasp the complexity of global events and the importance of measured responses.

India's experience as a diverse democracy also provides a unique perspective. The country has communities connected to almost every part of the world through migration, trade, and cultural exchange. This network of relationships encourages empathy and cooperation. When tensions rise in distant lands, people in India often feel the emotional impact through personal connections.

West Asia holds a special place in this web of relationships. Ancient trade routes linked Indian ports with cities across the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf. Merchants carried spices, textiles, pearls, and ideas across the sea. Religious pilgrims traveled in both directions. Cultural influences blended through centuries of contact.

These historical ties continue in modern form. Airlines connect Indian cities with Gulf capitals through some of the busiest routes in the world. Students pursue higher education in universities across the region. Medical tourism flows in both directions. Economic partnerships expand through infrastructure projects and technology cooperation.

A crisis in such a closely linked region cannot remain distant from India's daily life. Fuel prices, airline routes, shipping schedules, and employment opportunities all depend on stability there. This reality encourages policymakers to think carefully about long-term resilience. Strategic planning requires coordination among many institutions. Ministries responsible for energy, commerce, foreign affairs, defense, and finance must work together. State governments also play a role since many overseas workers come from specific regions. Cooperation between central and state authorities helps deliver support quickly when emergencies arise.

International partnerships strengthen this ef-

fort. India collaborates with countries in Europe, Asia, and the Americas on maritime security, energy innovation, and crisis management. Multilateral forums provide platforms for discussion and joint action. Shared challenges often bring countries together even when political differences exist.

Economic diversification inside India also supports resilience. A strong manufacturing sector, vibrant services industry, and growing technology ecosystem reduce dependence on external factors. Domestic production of renewable energy equipment, electric vehicles, and advanced materials contributes to energy security and economic independence.

Education and research remain powerful tools in this journey. Universities and research institutes explore new energy technologies, climate solutions, and security strategies. Young scientists and engineers contribute ideas that may shape the next phase of India's development. Knowledge builds confidence in facing uncertain futures.

The human spirit of adaptability has always guided India through periods of global turbulence. The country has faced oil shocks, financial crises, and geopolitical tensions in earlier decades. Each experience offered lessons that influenced policy decisions and institutional reforms.

Today's generation of leaders and citizens inherits that accumulated wisdom. They recognize that preparation does not mean predicting every event. Preparation means building systems capable of absorbing shocks and continuing to function. Energy reserves, diplomatic networks, economic diversity, technological innovation, and public awareness all form parts of this protective structure.

The Indian diaspora in West Asia remains a central element of this story. Their work, dedication, and resilience contribute to the prosperity of both regions. They represent the living bridge connecting societies separated by thousands of kilometers of sea. Protecting their safety and dignity remains a moral duty for the nation. Families across India follow news from West Asia with deep interest. A father working in Dubai, a nurse in Riyadh, a technician in Doha, or a driver in Kuwait becomes the link through which global events touch everyday life. When peace prevails, families feel secure. When conflict rises, anxiety travels across oceans.

India's response to such challenges must combine empathy with strategy. Governments manage diplomacy and security. Communities provide support and solidarity. Businesses adapt supply chains. Citizens remain patient and informed.

In a world marked by shifting alliances and unpredictable conflicts, stability cannot be taken for granted. Careful preparation, balanced diplomacy, and economic resilience offer the best protection. India's relationship with West Asia carries immense value. It represents energy security, shared prosperity, and human connection.

Safeguarding this relationship requires vigilance and wisdom. Through thoughtful planning and cooperative spirit, India can face crises with confidence while protecting the interests of its people at home and abroad. The path demands patience, creativity, and unity. With these qualities, India can navigate uncertain times while strengthening the bonds that link it with one of the most vital regions of the world.

Eid-ul-Fitr: A Festival of Gratitude, Compassion and Unity

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Eid al-Fitr, one of the most significant festivals of the Muslim community, marks the joyful conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan. It is a time of celebration, gratitude, and spiritual reflection for millions of Muslims across the world. After a month of fasting, prayer, charity, and self-discipline, Eid-ul-Fitr arrives as a day of happiness and thanksgiving to the Almighty.

The month of Ramadan holds profound religious importance in Islam. During this sacred month, Muslims observe fasting from dawn to sunset, abstaining from food, drink, and other worldly comforts. However, the fast is not merely about physical restraint; it is a spiritual exercise aimed at cultivating self-control, patience, humility, and compassion for the less fortunate. Through fasting, believers strengthen their faith and deepen their connection with God.

Eid-ul-Fitr, literally meaning the "festival of breaking the fast," is celebrated on the first day of the Islamic month of Shawwal, following the sighting of the new moon. The day begins with special congregational prayers held in mosques and open fields known as Eidgahs. Muslims gather in large numbers to offer prayers, express gratitude to God, and seek blessings for peace and prosperity. The prayer also symbolises equality, as people from all walks of life stand shoulder to shoulder, reflecting the core Islamic values of unity and brotherhood.

An essential aspect of Eid-ul-Fitr is the act of charity known as Zakat al-Fitr. Before offering the Eid prayers, Muslims are required to give a specific amount of charity to the poor and needy. This ensures that even the most underprivileged members of society can participate in the joy of the festival. The practice highlights the strong emphasis that Islam places on social justice, compassion, and the welfare of the community.

The festival is also a time for family gatherings, sharing meals, and strengthening social bonds. Homes are cleaned and decorated, and people wear new or special clothes to mark the occasion. Delicious dishes and sweets such as Sheer Khurma are prepared and shared with relatives, neighbours, and friends. The spirit of Eid encourages generosity, forgiveness, and goodwill, as people visit one another and exchange greetings of "Eid Mubarak."

In a diverse and multicultural country like India, Eid-ul-Fitr represents not only a religious festival but also a symbol of communal harmony. People from different faiths often join in the celebrations, reflecting the country's long tradition of cultural coexistence and mutual respect. The festival thus serves as an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of unity and understanding among communities.

In the present-day world, often marked by divisions and conflicts, the message of Eid-ul-Fitr remains profoundly relevant. The values of empathy, charity, patience, and unity promoted during Ramadan and celebrated on Eid offer an important reminder of the principles that can help build a more compassionate and harmonious society.

Eid-ul-Fitr is therefore much more than a religious celebration. It is a festival that reinforces faith, renews human relationships, and spreads the universal message of peace, kindness, and brotherhood. As families and communities come together to celebrate this joyous occasion, the spirit of gratitude and generosity continues to illuminate hearts and inspire hope for a better world.

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From Heartbreak to Glory India Celebrate a Historic T20 Triumph

By: Satyabrata Borah

The night air over Ahmedabad carried a strange mixture of tension and hope. The massive Narendra Modi Stadium, one of the largest cricket arenas in the world, had witnessed many dramatic evenings. Yet this night felt different. It felt like a moment waiting to be written into memory long before the first ball was bowled. For more than a lakh spectators packed into the stands, and for millions watching across India, this was not just another cricket final. It was a chance for redemption, a chance for healing, and a chance for history.

When Tilak Varma settled under the high ball at long on, time seemed to slow. Jacob Duffy had struck the ball high into the night sky, perhaps hoping for a miracle, perhaps knowing it was only a matter of seconds before the inevitable would happen. The stadium fell into a brief hush as Varma tracked the ball. Then it landed safely in his hands. As he tried to fling the ball into the sky in celebration he slipped on the grass, but the moment had already exploded into joy. His teammates rushed towards him. Blue jerseys flooded the outfield. The stadium erupted in a thunder of sound that seemed powerful enough to shake the steel and concrete of Motera.

India had defended their T20 World Cup title. For a few seconds the players themselves appeared unsure how to react. Some laughed. Some shouted. Some simply stood still, letting the emotion sink in. After months of preparation, weeks of matches

efficiency and the Indian dream dissolved into silence.

That memory had lingered in the stands of the Narendra Modi Stadium like an unfinished story. Fans had carried the wound quietly. Every time the team returned to the ground, echoes of that disappointment seemed to float in the air.

This night changed that story. As fireworks burst over the stadium and blue confetti drifted down from the sky, the crowd found the closure it had waited for. The roar was not only for a cricket victory. It was the sound of a collective release. The pain of 2023 had finally been washed away.

Players gathered in small circles, hugging each other, laughing and shaking their heads in disbelief. Cameras chased them across the ground. Words did not come easily. Tilak Varma spoke with a smile that seemed almost shy.

The next couple of days will be a big party with the boys. Arshdeep Singh sounded equally overwhelmed. He called the team a group full of match winners and said the trophy felt like a cherry on the cake. Sanju Samson, who had been named player of the tournament, simply said it felt like a dream.

For Jasprit Bumrah the moment carried a personal emotion. He had once played a World Cup final at his home venue and walked away empty handed. This time he stood with the medal around his neck and a quiet sense of satisfaction in his eyes.

Around them the celebrations unfolded like a festival. Hardik Pandya turned to the stands and blew kisses to the fans who had



son and held him close. Suryakumar crouched down to play with Axar Patel's toddler. In those simple moments the scene felt less like a sporting event and more like a family celebration.

On the other side of the field the New Zealand players gath-

ered quietly. They had fought hard throughout the tournament. Yet they knew that on this particular night they had been outplayed by a team operating at a different level.

India's dominance had become clear long before the final wicket fell. Once the scoreboard showed 255 runs for India the task ahead of New Zealand looked almost impossible. T20 cricket often produces surprises, yet chasing such a towering target in a World Cup final requires something extraordinary.

The pressure began to work almost immediately. The New Zealand openers tried to attack early. Tim Seifert and Finn Allen struck a few clean blows and briefly threatened to lift the mood in their camp. For a moment the crowd fell quiet, remembering how quickly fortunes can change in this format.

Then the Indian bowlers took control. Axar Patel produced a clever delivery that ended Allen's promising innings. Soon the scoreboard read 47 for 3. A few overs later it became 72 for 5. The chase had begun to collapse.

Jasprit Bumrah delivered the decisive blows. The fast bowler, known for his calm demeanor, suddenly broke into a playful dance after dismissing two batters in quick succession. The crowd loved it. It felt like the final act of a story that had already been written.

New Zealand were eventually bowled out for 159. The margin of victory was 96 runs. It reflected the scale of India's superiority that night.

Every great sporting triumph carries a deeper narrative. This one carried many. For years India had been regarded as a powerhouse in T20 cricket. The country hosts the richest cricket league in the world. The Indian Premier League has become a breeding ground for fearless young players. Stadiums across the country echo with cheers every season as new talents announce themselves.

Yet international trophies had not always matched the strength of that system.

India had won the first T20 World Cup in 2007 under the leadership of a young team. After that triumph, years passed without another title. Fans waited patiently. New generations of players emerged. Still the crown remained out of reach.

The drought lasted seventeen years.

Then came the breakthrough in 2024 when India finally reclaimed the T20 World Cup. That victory had felt like the closing of a long chapter. Two years later the team achieved something even more impressive. They defended the title.

Winning a single tournament can sometimes be the result of favourable circumstances. A team may find momentum at the right moment. A few close matches may go their way. Success may arrive through a combination of skill and luck.

Winning consecutive titles requires something deeper. It requires consistency, adaptability and mental strength. T20 cricket is famous for its unpredictability. A single over can transform the direction of a match. A single mistake can undo weeks of effort.

India managed to navigate all of those challenges. Throughout the tournament the players carried a heavy burden of expectations. Every opponent saw them as the team to beat. Every crowd expected victory. Every mistake was analysed and debated by millions of fans.

Yet the squad handled the pressure with remarkable calm. The batting unit displayed a blend of elegance and aggression. The bowlers operated with sharp coordination. Fielding remained energetic and disciplined. When one player had a quiet day another stepped forward.

Watching this team felt like listening to a well rehearsed orchestra. Each instrument played its part while contributing to the harmony of the whole.

The field itself demonstrated that harmony perfectly. India began their innings with a sense of purpose that was clear from the first few overs. There was no hesitation. The batters attacked from the start, sending the ball racing to the boundary again and again.

Abhishek Sharma led the charge with an explosive burst of

strokes. His innings reminded fans of the fearless style that has become a hallmark of modern Indian T20 cricket. Even after his departure the momentum continued.

Ishan Kishan walked in and started striking boundaries almost immediately. He did not wait to settle in. One of his early fours was a remarkable stroke that drew gasps from the crowd. By the time he completed his innings he had smashed 54 runs from only 24 balls.

Among the new generation of Indian batters Kishan perhaps represents the most aggressive spirit. His approach reflects the changing philosophy of the format. Modern T20 cricket encourages creativity and freedom. Players are willing to attempt audacious shots that once seemed risky.

The top three batters together produced 195 runs from just 92 balls. It was a display of raw power combined with remarkable skill.

Seventeen sixes soared into the stands. Nineteen fours raced across the grass. Yet the numbers alone do not capture the feeling of the innings. The strokes were not merely attempts to accumulate runs. They were expressions of confidence.

The pitch helped as well. The mixed soil surface offered consistent bounce and pace. It invited batters to swing through the line. The ground dimensions were manageable, encouraging players to aim for the ropes.

Still the brilliance of the batting came from execution. Timing was precise. Footwork was sharp. Every player seemed to understand the rhythm of the match.

For spectators the experience felt almost unreal. The scoring rate climbed rapidly, as if someone had pressed a fast forward button on a video game.

The crowd responded with waves of noise that rolled across

the stadium like thunder. Thousands of fans wearing blue jerseys jumped and danced in the stands. Drums beat. Flags waved. Cameras captured faces shining with excitement.

At times the sound became so loud that commentators struggled to hear themselves. Only two brief moments of quiet interrupted the celebration. One arrived when India lost a few wickets late in the innings while chasing the dream of reaching 300 runs. The other came when Seifert and Allen began their attacking start during the chase.

Apart from those moments the stadium felt alive with constant energy. When the final wicket fell and the victory became official, the arena seemed to transform into a giant festival ground.

This night also marked the beginning of something larger than a single tournament triumph. Many observers described it as the launch of a dynasty.

In sports the word dynasty carries a special meaning. It refers to a period when one team rises above all others and maintains dominance across seasons. Achieving such status requires depth of talent and a strong culture within the squad.

India's current team appears to possess both. Young players have entered the side with confidence. Experienced stars continue to guide the group. Coaching staff have created a structure that encourages innovation while maintaining discipline.

The system that produces cricketers in India has grown stronger over the years. Domestic tournaments provide opportunities for emerging talents. The IPL exposes players to high pressure environments where they learn from international teammates and opponents.

All those elements combine to create a powerful pipeline of skill. The triumph in Ahmedabad symbolised the success of that entire ecosystem.

It also gave the Narendra Modi Stadium its own defining moment. Until now the arena had sometimes been described as a magnificent structure waiting for a legendary story. This victory provided that story.

Future generations of fans will remember the night when India defended their T20 crown at Motera. They will recall the fireworks lighting up the sky and the echoing roar of more than a hundred thousand voices.

For the players it will remain a memory of unity and belief. As the celebrations continued deep into the night, many of them lingered on the field long after the official ceremony ended. Some sat on the grass and spoke quietly with teammates. Others walked around the boundary rope, waving to supporters who refused to leave their seats.

Cricket in India has always been more than a sport. It is a shared emotion that connects people across languages and regions. On this night that emotion reached a special intensity.

India had not only won a match. They had carried the hopes of millions and turned them into a joyful reality.

The dynasty had begun. The legacy had started to take shape. And somewhere above the bright lights of the stadium, the echoes of celebration drifted into the Ahmedabad night, promising that this story of Indian cricket was still unfolding.



and years of expectation, the dream had turned real once again.

The victory carried a deeper emotional meaning for the stadium itself. This was the same arena that had hosted the heart-breaking finale of the 2023 ODI World Cup. That day India had arrived at the final in unstoppable form. Every match had gone their way. The team had looked destined to lift the trophy in front of their home crowd. Yet cricket has its own script. Australia produced a performance of ruthless

supported them through every moment of the tournament. Suryakumar Yadav walked towards coach Gautam Gambhir and embraced him tightly. It was a brief but powerful moment. Gambhir, known for his intense focus, allowed himself a rare smile. Surya then moved from teammate to teammate, hugging each one. His eyes appeared moist as he thanked the support staff who had worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

Children ran onto the field. Varun Chakaravathy lifted his

ered quietly. They had fought hard throughout the tournament. Yet they knew that on this particular night they had been outplayed by a team operating at a different level.

India's dominance had become clear long before the final wicket fell. Once the scoreboard showed 255 runs for India the task ahead of New Zealand looked almost impossible. T20 cricket often produces surprises, yet chasing such a towering target in a World Cup final requires something extraordinary.

India's T20 World Cup Win: A Celebration of Team Effort

By: Dr Vinod Chandrashekar Dixit

India won the T20 World Cup 2026 title by defeating New Zealand by 96 runs in a thrilling final match. This victory marks India's third T20 World Cup triumph, making them the first team to win the tournament on home soil. The Indian team, led by captain Suryakumar Yadav, posted a record 255/5, powered by brilliant half-centuries from Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson. New Zealand's T20 World Cup 2026 campaign ended in heartbreak as they fell short against India in the final. Despite a strong run to the final, the Black Caps couldn't replicate their semi-final form.

In a nail-biting final, India emerged victorious against New Zealand, securing the T20 World Cup title. The match, held at Ahmedabad's Narendra Modi Stadium, saw India post a mammoth total of 255/5, thanks to Sanju Samson's blistering 89 off 46 balls and Abhishek Sharma's 52.

Suryakumar Yadav's captaincy has been a highlight of India's T20 World Cup 2026 campaign. Leading the team with a calm and composed demeanor, he's emphasized freedom and individuality, allowing players to express themselves on the field. It showed that Suryakumar focuses on mentorship, encouraging players to take ownership and share ideas. He scored 242 runs in 8 innings, with a strike rate of 137.50, including a match-winning 84* against the USA. His strategic approach and ability to handle pressure situations have been crucial

in India's success. There is no doubt that India's journey to the final under Suryakumar's leadership has been impressive, with wins against top teams like Pakistan and England. His captaincy has been instrumental in India's quest for a second consecutive T20 World Cup title.

Samson's explosive innings, featuring eight sixes and five fours, set the tone for India's dominant performance. Ishan Kishan's 54 and Shivam Dube's unbeaten 26 off 8 balls further bolstered India's total.

New Zealand's chase was spearheaded by Finn Allen, but Axar Patel's crucial wicket and Jasprit Bumrah's precision bowling kept India in the game. James Neesham's three-wicket haul wasn't enough to propel New Zealand to victory.

Sanju Samson continued his incredible form, scoring 89 off 46 balls, with 5 fours and 8 sixes. His selfless and smart batting anchored India's innings, making him a candidate for Player of the Tournament. Ishan Kishan's explosive opening partnership was a key factor in India's T20 World Cup success. He scored 272 runs in 8 innings, with a strike rate of 132.03, including a match-winning 89 against Pakistan. Kishan's aggressive batting style and ability to take the game away from opponents made him a vital part of India's lineup. Kishan's performance in the T20 World Cup has cemented his position as one of India's top T20 batsmen. His ability to handle pressure and score big runs will be invaluable to India in future tournaments. Abhishek silenced critics with a blistering

52 off 21 balls, featuring 6 fours and 3 sixes. His 18-ball fifty is the fastest in a T20 World Cup final, setting the tone for India's dominant batting display.

Dube's explosive cameo of 26 off 8 balls, including 3 fours and 2 sixes, propelled India to 255/5. His clutch performance under pressure showcased his big-match expertise. Bumrah's precision bowling and crucial wickets kept India in the game. His masterly skill of constriction and extraction was evident, making him a key player in India's victory. Axar played a vital role with his wickets and smart fielding. His all-round performance contributed significantly to India's win. Hardik Pandya the all-rounder has been instrumental in India's campaign, scoring 199 runs in 8 innings at a strike rate of 163.11, including two fifties. With the ball, he's taken 8 wickets in 8 innings, with best figures of 2/16. Arshdeep has taken 9 wickets in 7 innings, with best figures of 3/24. However, there's been a slight dip in his powerplay wicket-taking numbers, with Irfan Pathan suggesting he focus on inswingers to regain his form.

This win is a testament to India's dominance in the T20 format, and they're now the first team to retain the T20 World Cup title and it marks India's third T20 World Cup title, cementing their status as a cricket powerhouse. This triumph is a testament to India's growing strength in the shortest format and sets the stage for an exciting era in Indian cricket.



Project to introduce international-standard luxury hospitality infrastructure at Barak Valley

Assam Cabinet clears first five-star hotel project in Silchar

HT Correspondent

SILCHAR, March 9: The Assam Cabinet has approved the construction of Silchar's first five-star hotel, to be developed by the Polo Hotels Group with an investment of around ₹103 crore.

Announcing the decision, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the project would mark a major step in strengthening hospitality infrastructure in the Barak Valley.

"This will be the first five-star hotel in Silchar and the Polo Hotels Group will invest approximately ₹103 crore for the project," the chief minister said.

The proposed luxury property will feature around 100 premium rooms and suites and will introduce international-standard hospitality facilities to the region.

Planned amenities include specialty restaurants and bars, a resort-style swimming pool, a spa and wellness centre, a modern fitness facility, and banquet and conference spaces designed to host corpo-



rate events, exhibitions and large social gatherings.

Industry observers say the project could significantly strengthen Silchar's capacity to host business travellers, conferences and

tourism activities, as the town serves as the commercial and administrative hub of southern Assam.

The project forms part of the expansion strategy of Polo Hotels Group across eastern

and northeastern India.

The company is currently developing 10 additional hotels across Meghalaya, Tripura, West Bengal and Nagaland.

Deval Tibrewalla, Chief Executive Officer of Polo Hotels Group, said Silchar is an important gateway city in the Northeast and requires modern hospitality infrastructure to support its growing economic and institutional significance.

He added that the project reflects the company's commitment to expanding tourism and hospitality infrastructure across the region.

Officials said the project is also expected to generate employment and boost local economic activity through supply chains, transportation services and event-related businesses.

Once completed, the hotel is expected to enable Silchar to host national-level conferences, policy meetings and corporate events, strengthening the region's tourism and business travel ecosystem.

Hagrama Mohilary lays foundation stones for hostels at KMC



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 9: Hagrama Mohilary, Chief Executive Member of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), on Monday laid the foundation stones for several hostel projects at Kokrajhar Medical College & Hospital to strengthen residential infrastructure for students, nurses and medical residents.

The projects include the construction of a 100-bedded girls' hostel, a 100-bedded boys' hostel and a 100-bedded nurses' hostel, each estimated to cost ₹6.66 crore.

The hostel buildings will be constructed with G+2 floor provisions and will include single and double-bedded rooms, kitchen and dining areas, waiting lounge, common rooms, toilet blocks and internal pathways along with site develop-

ment works.

Mohilary also laid the foundation stone for a residents' hostel with a capacity of 100 beds, comprising two buildings of 50 beds each, at an estimated cost of ₹9.91 crore.

The G+1 structure will include double-bedded rooms with attached toilets, kitchen facilities and internal pathways.

BTC Executive Member Derhasat Basumatary, Prakash Basumatary, Secretary Karmadev Brahma and other officials were present on the occasion.

The hostel facilities are expected to significantly improve accommodation infrastructure for students, nurses and resident doctors at the medical college and strengthen medical education and healthcare services in the region.

Bilasipara admin reviews flood preparedness measures

HT Correspondent

BILASIPARA, March 9: The Bilasipara co-district administration has initiated extensive preparations to deal with possible floods and other natural disasters in the coming months.

A preparedness meeting in this regard was held at the auditorium of the Bilasipara Co-district Administration Office on Monday under the chairmanship of Co-district Commissioner Dr Pritilekha Deka.

Senior officials from various departments participated in the meeting and discussed measures required to handle any potential flood situation.

During the meeting, emphasis was laid on strengthening rescue operations for people and domestic animals in flood-affected areas. Officials also reviewed plans for setting up relief camps and ensuring proper supply, storage and distribution of essential food grains for affected residents. The administration further discussed arrangements for medical camps in vulnerable areas, including ensuring adequate treatment facilities and maintaining sufficient stock of essential medicines to protect public health during emergencies.

Measures for the protection of livestock were also reviewed, including storage and distribution of fodder, deployment of mobile veterinary camps and vaccination drives during flood situations.

Officials stressed the need to maintain transportation connectivity during floods, highlighting the importance of timely repair and construction of roads, bridges and river embankments.

JBP, JMM to hold election rally in Biswanath

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, March 9: The Jai Bharat Party and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha will jointly organise an election rally at Mijikajan Tea Estate in the northern part of Biswanath on March 10.

According to party sources, the meeting will be attended by Hemant Soren, who is scheduled to address the gathering at the tea estate field.

The northern part of Biswanath is known to have a significant tea-tribe population, and the rally is expected to focus on mobilising support among voters in the region ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections.

Political observers believe the visit of the Jharkhand chief minister and his participation in the rally may add momentum to the election campaign in the area.

The development is also expected to draw attention from other political parties in the state as the campaign season intensifies.

Veteran educationist Rajat Chandra Goswami passes away at 96

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 9: Veteran educationist and recipient of the Governor's Distinguished Teacher Award Rajat Chandra Goswami passed away at his residence at Baghjan Adhar Satra under Hatigarh Mouza in Jorhat on Sunday morning. He was 96.

Born in 1931, Goswami devoted his life to education and social service, inspiring generations of students during his long teaching career.

He retired from Dipholu Primary School and was widely respected for his contributions to the academic and cultural life of the region.

A recipient of several honours, Goswami was awarded the State's Distinguished Teacher Award by Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Teachers' Day in 2025. The governor had personally visited his residence to confer the honour.

Goswami also played an active role in social and literary organisations.

He served as the founding principal of Maghai Oja Sishu Niketan



and was associated with the Assam Sahitya Sabha as the founding secretary of the Hatigarh Mouza branch.

Over the years, he held several positions in educational, cultural and social institutions in the region.

In recognition of his contributions, he received the Hatigarh Gaurav Award in 2013, the title of Samaj Shiromoni in 2015 and the Maghai Oja Award in 2017.

During the early years of the Assamese daily Daimik Janambhumi, he also served as a news contributor from the Hatigarh area.

Despite his advancing age, Goswami remained active in intellectual pursuits and continued reading newspapers regularly.

Family members said he had been feeling physically weak in recent days but had dinner as usual on Saturday night before retiring to bed.

As news of his demise spread, a large number of admirers, students and well-wishers gathered at his residence to pay their last respects.

Representatives of the district administration, educational institutions and several social and cultural organisations attended the condolence meeting held in his memory.

His mortal remains were taken to Hatigarh High School and Maghai Oja Sishu Niketan, where teachers, students and community members bid a final farewell.

Goswami is survived by a son, a daughter-in-law, three daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren and other family members.

Body of missing JNV teacher from Jorhat found in Nagaland

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, March 9: The decomposed body of Abhijit Saikia, a resident of the Bibijan area under Titabar co-district of Jorhat and a teacher at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya Chukitong, was found in a remote area of Wokha district in Nagaland, sources said.

According to family sources in Titabar, Saikia, a mathematics teacher at the school, had been missing for nearly a month.

After he went untraceable, the school authorities informed his family and lodged a First Information Report with the local police.

Police, along with local residents, carried out search operations but initially failed to locate him.

His decomposed body was later spotted by a group of fishermen on March 7 beside a stream in a remote and rugged area about 10 kilometres from the school premises.

Following the recovery, Saikia's family members were informed and his relatives brought the body back to his native village on Sunday.

Further details regarding the cause of death were not immediately available.

Dr Hemari Kro receives Assam Samaj Gaurav Samman-2



HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 9: Dr Hemari Kro, an education official from Karbi Anglong, has been conferred the 'Assam Samaj Gaurav Samman-2' for his contributions to social upliftment through educational service and charitable initiatives. The award was presented at a function organised by Sadhana Sahitya Samaj in collaboration with Assam Guard at the Guwahati Town Club Hall on Sunday, coinciding with the observance of International Women's Day. As part of the event, 101 women from across the state who have excelled in various fields were honoured with the 'Assam Mahasati Samman-2026' for their achievements and contributions to society.

In addition, 31 socially active men, including Dr Kro, received the Assam Samaj Gaurav Samman-2 award. Speaking to the media, Dr Kro said he was pleasantly surprised to receive the honour.

"I am glad to receive the award. I was not aware of it earlier, but the organisers informed me through a letter after reviewing my work," he said.

Dr Kro has been actively involved in supporting education for underprivileged students. He voluntarily taught at a school for two years without pay and has also assisted needy students through tutorial support and other educational initiatives.

Earlier, he was awarded an honorary doctorate (Honoris Causa) in Education and Social Welfare by the Advisory Selection Board of the Bharat Virtual Open Education University. On March 21, 2025, he received the 'Samaj Sewak Prerona Award' from the Uttar Purvanchal Prerona Samanay Unnayan Charitable Trust, and on January 24, 2026, he was presented a 'Special Award' jointly by the Assam Sports Association and the Assam Socio-Cultural Association for his contribution to education and social service. Dr Kro currently serves as Head Assistant in the office of the Inspector of Schools (Karbi Anglong District Circle) and is also the Superintendent-in-Charge for the Additional Director of Education under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. The award ceremony was attended by several dignitaries, including Assamese actor Jatin Bora.

Three specialised cancer centres to be inaugurated tomorrow

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 9: In a major boost to healthcare infrastructure in the state, the Medical Education and Research Department of the Government of Assam, in collaboration with the Assam Cancer Care Foundation (ACCF), will inaugurate three specialised cancer facilities on March 11.

The main ceremony will be held at the Diphu Cancer Centre, marking a significant step toward providing tertiary cancer care to residents of Karbi Anglong and neighbouring districts and states. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma will attend the programme as the chief guest and inaugurate the Diphu Cancer Centre. The event will also be attended by Tuliram Ronghang, Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC). On the same occasion, the Golaghat Cancer Centre and the Tinsukia Cancer Centre will also be inaugurated virtually.

The expansion forms part of the state government's distributed cancer care model aimed at making advanced treatment more accessible and affordable while reducing the need for patients to travel to major metropolitan centres for specialised care.

KVK Karbi Anglong launches 15-day training programme for agri input dealers

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 9: The Krishi Vidyayan Kendra Karbi Anglong organised the inaugural ceremony of a 15-day Self-Financed Input Dealers Training Programme at Amlokhi on Monday with the objective of enhancing the knowledge and skills of agricultural input dealers.

The programme aims to equip dealers with better understanding of agricultural inputs so that they can provide accurate guidance and services to farmers.

A training manual titled 'Hatupathi' was also released during the inaugural session for the benefit of participating dealers.

Delivering the welcome address, Dr Monuj Kumar Doley, Senior Scientist and Head of the KVK, explained the objectives of the training programme and highlighted the crucial role of trained input dealers in guiding farmers on the proper use of seeds, fertilisers and plant protection chemicals.

He said that improving the technical knowledge of dealers would help farmers apply inputs correctly, thereby increasing crop productivity and ensuring sustainable agricultural practices.

Dr K D Singha, chief scientist of

the Zonal Research Station, Diphu, attended the programme as an invited guest and interacted with the trainees.

He encouraged participants to actively engage in the training sessions and emphasised the importance of proper knowledge on safe and efficient use of agricultural chemicals and fertilisers.

Among other dignitaries present was Dr S Maibangsa, Professor of Crop Physiology at Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, who will also serve as a resource person during the training sessions.



Altogether 24 trainees from different parts of Karbi Anglong are participating in the programme, which will focus on strengthening their technical understanding of agricultural inputs and improving advisory services for farmers.

The inaugural session concluded with a vote of thanks.

NTPC Bongaigaon marks Int'l Women's Day

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, March 9: NTPC Bongaigaon celebrated International Women's Day on Sunday with a series of events highlighting women's empowerment, leadership and participation.

The programme, organised at NTPC Bongaigaon in Salakati, witnessed active participation from women employees of the power station, members of the Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, women personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), and teachers from Notre Dame School and Ankur Tiny Tots School.

The event was held around the themes 'Give to Gain' and 'She Leads Bharat'.

Addressing the gathering, Anurag Gupta, General Manager (O&M), NTPC Bongaigaon, appreciated the dedication and achievements of women employees and acknowledged their contribution to the organisation's growth.

He stressed the importance of building an inclusive work environment that encourages women to excel and contribute to organisational progress.

Amit Kumar Asthana, Head of Human Resources at NTPC Bongaigaon, delivered the welcome address and highlighted the vital role played by women in strengthening workplace culture.

One of the highlights of the event was a session on financial planning by Priyanka Nahata from IntyGritty MoneyTree, an AMFI-



registered mutual fund distributor based in Bongaigaon.

She spoke on financial awareness, investment planning and the importance of financial independence for women.

The programme also included an experience-sharing session where participants spoke about their personal and professional journeys.

A Women's Day quiz added an interactive element to the celebrations.

As part of the event, a Women's Premier League Cricket Tournament was launched for women employees, family members and members of the Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club in association with the NTPC Bongaigaon Sports Council.

Four teams—Brahmaputra Brigade, Champa Challengers,

Manas Mavericks and Aie Aces—named after rivers of Assam will compete in the tournament, which will continue for the next ten days.

The sports event began with a cake-cutting ceremony and the release of multi-coloured balloons by the participating teams in the presence of the general manager.

A 'Shakti Walk' was also organised to promote the spirit of unity and women's leadership.

Another attraction of the programme was a demonstration by an electric vehicle manufacturer showcasing electric scooters and promoting sustainable mobility.

The celebrations concluded with gift distribution, a group photograph and lunch.

More than 100 women from the NTPC Bongaigaon township took part in the programme.

Filmmaker Rima Das emphasises documenting life, culture through cinema

Filmmaking for Das, not solely about commercial success but also about personal expression and inner fulfilment



HT Correspondent

JORHAT, March 9: Internationally acclaimed filmmaker Rima Das said her passion for cinema lies in documenting contemporary life, art, culture and nature through films.

Speaking at an interaction programme titled Guest of the Month at the Jorhat Press Club on Monday, Das said she had been drawn to films since childhood.

After completing her post-graduation, she moved to Mumbai to pursue acting but returned to her hometown Chhaygaon after struggling for several years to establish herself in the industry.

She then began making her own films, drawing inspiration from the everyday lives, folk culture and natural surroundings of rural Assam.

Das, who gained international recognition with her film Village Rockstars, recently released the second part of the film in theatres on March 2 and visited Upper Assam as part of its promotion.

She said she was deeply inspired by nature and the artistic and cultural traditions of local communities, which she attempts to portray through the daily experiences of ordinary people.

According to her, films that

capture the routine activities and lifestyles of people serve as a form of documentation of a region's heritage.

Das also stressed the importance of preserving contemporary art, culture and artefacts, noting that societies constantly undergo transformation over time.

Calling for dignity of labour, the filmmaker said no work should be considered small or insignificant and that all professions deserve respect.

Citing the example of daily wage earners, she said their children should never feel ashamed of their parents' occupations, as every individual

contributes to society and every life carries a story worth telling.

Das also recently received the Crystal Bear Special Mention for Best Film in the Generation Kplus category at the Berlin International Film Festival for her film Not a Hero.

She said filmmaking for her is not solely about commercial success but also about personal expression and inner fulfilment.

Speaking about her production house Flying River Films, Das said the name reflects her hope that her films would travel widely across the world like a river in motion, carrying stories rooted in the lives and landscapes of her homeland.

Mojtiba Khamenei takes on Iran's reins

Trump downplays spike in oil prices as global economic concerns grow

DUBAI, March 9: Iran named Mojtaba Khamenei, a son of the country's late supreme leader, the Islamic Republic's next ruler on Monday, putting a hard-line cleric in charge as the war spreading across the Middle East sent oil prices skyrocketing with Iran launching new attacks on regional energy infrastructure.

With Iran's theocracy under assault by the United States and Israel for more than a week, the country's Assembly of Experts chose the secretive, 56-year-old cleric with close ties to the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard as the new supreme leader. The Guard has been firing missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf Arab states since the younger Khamenei's father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed Feb 28 during the war's opening salvo.

Iran's stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz has also all but stopped tankers from using the shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman through which a fifth of the world's oil is carried. Brent crude oil, the international standard, surged to nearly USD 120 a barrel on Monday, about 65 per cent higher than when the war started, before retreating slightly.

As global economic concerns grew, US President Donald Trump downplayed the spike in prices.

"Short-term oil prices, which will drop rapidly when the destruction of the Iran nuclear threat is over, are a very small price to pay for the USA, and world safety and Peace," Trump wrote on social media.

Iran has targeted Israel and American bases in the region since the start of the war, and has also been launching missiles and drones at energy and water infrastructure.

On Monday, a fire broke out at an oil facility in Fujairah, United Arab Emirates. Bahrain's only oil refinery was apparently also hit, and Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted several drones attacking its Shaybah oil field.



Iran, meanwhile, claimed strikes on targets in Iran's city of Isfahan, saying it hit command centres for the Revolutionary Guard and its volunteer Basij force, as well as a rocket engine production facility and missile launch sites. There was no immediate confirmation from Iran.

In Israel, sirens blared multiple times across the country as Iran's drones and missiles were unrelenting. A woman was wounded by debris in central Israel.

New Iranian leader seen as even more hard-line than his father: The younger Khamenei, who has not been seen in public since the war started, was long considered a potential successor — even before the Israeli strike killed his father. His wife, Zahra Haddad Adel, was killed in the same Israeli strike that killed the 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Political figures within Iran have criticised handing over the supreme leader's title based on heredity, thereby creating a clerical version of the rule of the shah, who was toppled during the 1979 Islamic Revolution. But top clerics in the Assembly of Ex-

pers likely wanted the younger Khamenei to prosecute the war. Khamenei, who is seen as even harder-line than his late father, will now be in charge of Iran's armed forces and any decision about Tehran's nuclear program.

While the country's key nuclear sites are in tatters after the US bombed them during the 12-day Israel-Iran war in June, there's still highly enriched uranium in Iran that's a technical step away from weapons-grade levels. Khamenei could choose to do what his father never did — build a nuclear bomb.

Israel has already described him as a potential target, while Trump had called him "unacceptable."

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

Both the Revolutionary Guard and the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah issued statements in support of Khamenei.

Top Iranian security official Ali Larjani, speaking to Iranian state television, praised the Assembly of Experts for "courageously" convening even as airstrikes continued in Tehran. He said the younger Khamenei had been trained by his father and "can handle this situation."

Regional anger grows as energy infrastructure is hit and oil prices spike: Saudi Arabia lashed out at Iran following a thwarted drone attack on its massive Shaybah oil field, saying Tehran would be the "biggest loser" if it continues to attack Arab states.

The Foreign Ministry said Iranian attacks mean "further escalation which will have a grave impact on the relations, currently and in the future."

In addition to energy facilities in the UAE, authorities there said the capital of Abu Dhabi was targeted by Iranian missiles, and two people were hurt by shrapnel from interceptions.

Iran attacked Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, where it hit a residential area, wounding 32 people, including several children, according to authorities. Another attack appeared to have started a fire at Bahrain's only oil refinery, sending thick plumes of smoke into the air.

Bahrain has also accused Iran of damaging one of its desalination plants, though its electricity and water authority said supplies remained online. Desalination plants supply water to millions of residents in the region and thousands of stranded travellers, raising new fears of catastrophic risks in parched desert nations.

On Monday, Bahrain's state oil company declared force majeure for its oil shipments, the state-run Bahrain News Agency reported, a legal manoeuvre releasing a company of its contractual obligations because of extraordinary circumstances. It insisted that local demand could still be met.

In Iraq, air defences downed a drone as it attacked a US military compound inside the Baghdad International Airport, a security source told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the press. No injuries or damage were reported. It was not immediately clear who was behind the attack, but Pro-Iranian Iraqi militias have previously targeted the base.

Elsewhere, the US military said a service member died of injuries from an Iranian attack on troops in Saudi Arabia on March 1. Seven US soldiers have now been killed.

The US State Department early Monday ordered nonessential personnel and families of all staff to leave Saudi Arabia following the escalation in attacks. Eight other US diplomatic missions have ordered all but key staff to leave: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the consulate in Karachi, Pakistan. (AP)

Waste mound collapse kills at least 5, leaves several missing



JAKARTA, March 9: A massive avalanche of garbage at Indonesia's largest landfill killed at least five people and left several others missing after heavy overnight rain triggered a rubbish dump collapse, officials said Monday.

More than 300 search-and-rescue personnel, using heavy machinery and sniffer dogs, were deployed to the sprawling dump site late Sunday at the Bantargebang Integrated Waste Treatment Facility in Bekasi, a city just outside the capital of Jakarta.

Rescuers worked cautiously amid unstable heaps of waste, said Desiana Kartika Bahari, who heads Jakarta's Search and Rescue Office. She said the victims included two garbage truck drivers and two food stall sellers who had been working or resting near the landfill, while four people managed to escape the disaster.

Rescuers, including police, soldiers and volunteers, were still searching for at least three people reported missing, Bahari said.

"We had not ruled out the possibility of more victims," she said. "We are still gathering data to confirm how many vehicles and workers were caught beneath the debris."

Photos and videos released by the National Search and Rescue Agency showed excavators digging through the collapsed mound, where several garbage trucks and small food stalls were buried.

The National Disaster Management Agency's spokesperson, Abdul Muhari, urged strict safety protocols during the ongoing

search, noting that weather forecasts for the next two days indicate potential rain across Jakarta and its nearby satellite cities.

He warned that the unstable collapsed material could trigger additional ground movement, putting rescue teams at further risk.

Sunday's deadly collapse renewed scrutiny of Bantargebang, a critical but overwhelmed landfill that receives most of Greater Jakarta's daily household waste.

The site has faced repeated warnings about capacity, prompting national efforts to overhaul Indonesia's waste management system.

In January, a similar collapse of garbage and debris buried or trapped workers in low-slung buildings at a landfill in the Philippines, killing at least four people, injuring a dozen and leaving more than 30 others missing.

In 2005, 31 people were killed and dozens went missing after a 7-metre rubbish dump collapsed following heavy rain, triggering a landslide that buried or damaged 60 houses in two West Java villages near the Indonesian city of Bandung.

Late last year, the government announced a two-year deadline to clear Bantargebang through an accelerated waste-to-energy project aimed at reducing chronic over-reliance on open dumping.

The initiative, backed by a new presidential regulation intended to streamline licensing and encourage investment, calls for converting refuse into electrical or thermal energy. (AP)

Nepal polls: RSP wins 124 seats followed by NC with 17

KATHMANDU, March 9: The Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) is heading towards a two-thirds majority in Nepal's parliamentary polls, securing 124 seats under direct voting and over 40 lakh votes under the proportionate-voting system as on Monday morning.

The RSP has won 124 seats under direct voting and is leading in one, whereas the Nepali Congress (NC) has won 17 seats.

The CPN-UML has won eight seats, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) seven, and the Shram Sanskriti Party (SSP) three, while the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and an Independent candidate have won one seat each.

So far, the results for 161 of the 165 seats have been declared under direct voting. The outcome on the remaining four seats is expected to be declared in the afternoon.

Under proportionate voting, the RSP has secured 4049,604 votes, followed by the NC at 13,60,281, the CPN-UML 1150,679, the NCP 591,940, the Shram Sanskriti Party 291,965, the Janata Samajwadi Party 1,16,463 and the Rastriya Parivartan Party 276,931.

With more than 40 lakh votes under the proportional representation system, the RSP is expected to secure at least 40 additional seats, taking its tally to around 164 seats in the 275-member House of Representatives, which is well above the 138 needed for a simple majority, political observers said. (AP)

Japan prepares for deployment of its first home-developed long-range missile

TOKYO, March 9: Japan is preparing to deploy its first batch of domestically developed long-range missiles, with their launchers arriving at an army camp Monday as the country accelerates its offensive capability in response to rising challenges in the region.

The upgraded Type-12 land-to-ship missiles will be deployed at Camp Kengun in Japan's southwestern prefecture of Kumamoto by the end of March, completing the process of deployment, Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said.

Army vehicles carrying their launchers and other equipment arrived early in the morning in a highly secretive mission criticized by local

Starmer speaks to Trump after criticism of UK's response to Iran strikes

LONDON, March 9: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has spoken to Donald Trump to discuss the situation in West Asia after the US President had been extremely critical of the UK's response to the strikes on Iran.

Trump took to social media to dismiss Starmer's plan to send aircraft carriers to the region as an attempt to join wars "already won".

Downing Street released a read-out of the Trump-Starmer call on Sunday, seen as an effort to smooth over the so-called UK-US "special relationship".

"The leaders began by discussing the latest situation in the Middle East and the military cooperation between the UK and US through the use of RAF (Royal Air Force) bases in support of the collective self defence of partners in the region," a 10 Downing Street spokesperson said.

"The Prime Minister also shared his heartfelt condolences with President Trump and the American people following the deaths of six US soldiers. They looked forward to speaking again soon," the spokesperson said.

It came after the Ministry of Defence (MoD) confirmed that one of the UK's two aircraft carriers has been placed on advanced readiness, with the crew of HMS Prince of Wales docked in Portsmouth told they must be ready to leave within



days. "The United Kingdom, our once Great Ally, may be the Greatest of them all, is finally giving serious thought to sending two aircraft carriers to the Middle East," Trump wrote on Truth Social soon after.

"That's OK, Prime Minister Starmer, we don't need them any longer — But we will remember. We don't need people that join wars after we've already won!" he wrote.

Later, speaking on Air Force One in response to a question about the use of UK bases in the joint Israeli strikes on Iran, he added: "We don't need them (aircraft carriers). It's not the right time. It would have been nice to have them two weeks ago."

Starmer has firmly defended his decision to take a more defensive stance in the conflict, reiterating on Monday that his Labour Party government was "working round the clock to keep British citizens safe".

"I know that people are worried sick for friends and family as the conflict in the Middle East continues," he said.

"Staff are on the ground to support those in need, government provided flights are helping people get home, and our tireless Armed Forces are flying across the region to defend our allies and our interests," he said.

Downing Street said booking has opened for British nationals in Dubai wanting to access UK gov-

ernment-provided flights, alongside further commercial flights available to return to the UK amid the ongoing conflict.

Four additional Typhoon jets have now arrived in Qatar, and a Merlin helicopter is en route to RAF Akrotiri to bolster our defences in Cyprus, it said.

Meanwhile, HMS Dragon, which has air defence capabilities, is set to sail for the Mediterranean by next week to bolster security around the RAF base in Akrotiri in Cyprus.

The US-Israel strikes on Iran have divided views across the UK, with the Opposition Conservatives accusing Starmer of a weak response by not joining the American war efforts and for being "too scared" of upsetting a section of the Labour electorate.

Meanwhile, Liberal Democrat leader Sir Ed Davey has called for a scheduled State Visit by King Charles III to the US next month to be called off. "At a time when Trump has launched an illegal war that is devastating the Middle East and pushing up energy bills for British families, it's clear this visit should not go ahead," he said.

"A State Visit from our King would be seen as yet another huge diplomatic coup for President Trump, so it should not be given to someone who repeatedly insults and damages our country," Davey said. (PTI)

HRW accuses Israel of using white phosphorus in southern Lebanese town

BEIRUT, March 9: The human rights group Human Rights Watch said in a report on Monday that the Israeli military "unlawfully" hit a village in southern Lebanon with shells containing white phosphorus, a controversial incendiary munition.

Through geolocating and verifying seven images, Human Rights Watch said Israel fired white phosphorus using artillery at residential areas in the southern Lebanese village of Yohmor. It happened hours after the Israeli military warned the residents of the village and dozens of others in southern Lebanon to evacuate.

Human Rights Watch said it couldn't independently identify if any residents were still in the area or if anyone was harmed.

Human rights advocates say the use of white phosphorus is illegal under international law when the white-hot chemical substance is fired into populated areas. It can set buildings on fire and burn human flesh down to the bone. Survivors are at risk of infections and organ or respiratory failure, even if their burns are small.

"The Israeli military's unlawful use of white phosphorus over residential areas is extremely alarming and will have dire consequences for civilians," said Ramzi Kaiss, Lebanon researcher at Human Rights Watch.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. In the past, it has been maintained that it uses white phosphorus as a smoke screen and not to target civilians.

Organisations like Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International said the munition was used in Israel's last war with Hezbollah, over a year ago, on numerous occasions in southern Lebanon, while civilians were still present. (AP)

US urged India to buy Russian oil already at sea to ease supply fears: Energy Secy

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON, March 9: The US has urged India to buy Russian oil already floating at sea and redirect it to Indian refineries to "tamp down" fears of supply shortages and price spikes amid the ongoing West Asia conflict, Energy Secretary Chris Wright said Sunday.

However, the move, he said is a short-term, pragmatic effort to stabilise the market and did not signal any change in Washington's policy towards Russia.

In an interview to CNN on Sunday, Wright said he, along with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, had spoken to Indian authorities about buying Russian crude cargoes currently waiting to be unloaded at Chinese refineries.

"India has been a great partner through this. I did call up the Indians, as did Treasury Secretary (Scott) Bessent, and said there's a whole bunch of oil floating waiting to unload at Chinese refineries."

"Instead of having it wait six weeks to unload there, let's just pull that oil forward, have it land in Indian refineries and tamp this fear of shortage of oil, tamp the price spikes and the concerns we see in the marketplace," he said.

However, the US policy towards Russia has not changed at all, Wright said, adding that "India is very clear on that".

Responding to a question on whether the



Treasury Department's 30-day waiver allowing Indian refiners to purchase Russian oil amid the US-Israel war against Iran undermined the Trump administration's goal of isolating Moscow, he said, "It is not."

"It's just a pragmatic effort that has a short time span. No change in policy towards Russia," he said.

Wright also said India has "displaced" all Russian oil imports and is raising its imports from the US, Venezuela and other nations. US Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz also defended the decision, saying it was a temporary and practical measure.

"I have to push back on that premise...

It's a 30-day pause to allow the millions and millions of barrels of oil that are sitting out on ships to go to Indian refineries," Waltz said in an interview with NBC News on Sunday.

"But at the end of the day, this is going to be a temporary issue. This looks like a bit of short-term pain for the long-term gain of Iran no longer being able to hold the world's energy supplies hostage. We have taken out that capability," he said.

Waltz was responding to a question on why the Trump administration is "helping" Russia by giving the go-ahead to its oil sales to India.

Last week, the US said it had given "permission" to India to buy Russian oil already on ships already floating on waterways with a view to easing global supplies amid the conflict in West Asia.

"The world is very well supplied with oil. Yesterday, the Treasury (Department) agreed to let our allies in India start buying Russian oil that was already on the water," Treasury Secretary Bessent said in an interview with Fox Business on Friday.

He said India had earlier stopped buying sanctioned Russian oil after Washington urged New Delhi to do so and was expected to substitute those supplies with American crude.

"The Indians had been very good actors.

We had asked them to stop buying sanctioned Russian oil this fall. They did. They were going to substitute it with US oil. But to ease the temporary gap of oil around the world, we have given them permission to accept the Russian oil. We may sanction other Russian oil," Bessent had said.

He added that there are "hundreds of millions of barrels" of sanctioned crude on the water, and by "unsanctioning" them, the Treasury can effectively create additional supply for the market.

"We are going to keep a cadence of announcing measures to bring relief to the market during this conflict," Bessent said. According to a statement issued by the Treasury Department, the licence authorises transactions necessary for the sale, delivery or offloading of crude oil or petroleum products of Russian origin loaded on vessels on or before 12:01 am eastern standard time on March 5.

The authorisation remains valid until 12:01 am eastern daylight time on April 4, "provided the delivery or offloading occurs at a port in India" and the purchaser is an entity organised under Indian law.

The licence, however, does not authorise any transactions involving Iran or Iranian-origin goods or services that remain prohibited under existing US sanctions regulations. (PTI)

The House was adjourned for the day shortly after it reassembled at 3 pm LS fails to take up resolution on Birla's removal as Speaker amid oppn protests

NEW DELHI, March 9: The Lok Sabha on Monday could not take up a notice seeking to move a resolution to remove Speaker Om Birla from office amid disruptions as opposition members demanded a debate on the West Asia situation. The opposition's resolution is now likely to be taken up on Tuesday, at noon, soon after the Question Hour.

While the Constitution gives the Speaker the right to defend himself or herself in the House, it is learnt that Union Home Minister Amit Shah would respond to the debate on the resolution against Birla.

The opposition has alleged that Birla acted in a "blatantly partisan" manner while conducting the proceedings of the House.

The government, meanwhile, is unlikely to accede to the opposition's demand for a discussion in Parliament on the present crisis in West Asia as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has already briefed both the Houses on Monday.

In the Lok Sabha, the government and the Chair accused the opposition of holding the House proceedings "hostage" to its demands.

The House was adjourned for the day shortly after it reassembled at 3 pm, following an earlier adjournment due to relentless protests by opposition members.

As proceedings resumed, opposition MPs continued raising slogans. Jagadambika Pal, who was chairing the proceedings, urged



them to maintain decorum and allow the House to take up the resolution against Birla.

Pal reminded the opposition that the no-confidence resolution against the Speaker was already on the House agenda, and their adjournment notice seeking debate on the West Asia crisis could not be taken up. He accused the opposition of wasting taxpayers' money - about ₹ 9 crore per day - by holding the House "hostage" to its demands. Pal described the opposition behaviour as "immature and irresponsible".

He said the government and the Chair were willing to take up the resolution, but the opposition was creating obstacles, even as Birla was not presiding over the House until the no-confidence motion against him was settled.

Around 12 noon, as soon as Jaishankar rose to make a statement in the lower house on the "situation in West Asia", opposition members started raising slogans against the government and demanded a full-fledged discussion on the ongoing crisis in West Asia.

Pal, chairing the proceedings, said the questions being raised by the opposition through their placards were being elaborately answered by the government.

He said that while a resolution to remove Birla as the Lok Sabha Speaker is already on the agenda, the Opposition was pushing for a notice for adjournment of the proceedings to discuss West Asia.

Pal wondered how the opposition wanted to discuss the two issues on the same day.

After Jaishankar completed his statement, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju accused the

opposition of not following the ethics of the House.

Rijiju said their notice to remove Birla from office has already been accepted, and the government is willing to discuss it, but the opposition was disrupting the proceedings.

Outside the House, opposition MPs, including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, staged a protest demanding a discussion on the West Asia conflict and slamming the government for its "silence" on critical issues related to it.

Sources said the government is keen to have the discussion on the no-confidence motion against Birla as early as possible. Birla has not been chairing the House ever since a notice was given by 118 opposition MPs on the motion in the first part of the Budget session.

The motion will be moved by three Congress members -- Mohamed Jawed, K Suresh and Mallu Ravi.

The proposed motion questioned the conduct of the Speaker in disallowing the leader of the opposition and other opposition leaders to speak and in "making unwarranted allegations against women MPs belonging to the Opposition".

It also referred to the suspension of opposition MPs for an entire session for raising issues of "public concern and not rebuking ruling party members for making wholly objectionable and derogatory remarks against former PMs". (PTI)

SC approves Centre's proposal extending term of tribunal members

NEW DELHI, March 9: The Supreme Court on Monday approved a proposal of the Centre extending the term of chairpersons and members of various tribunals in the country and are due to retire soon, till September 8.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi approved the proposal after Attorney General R Venkataramani said that the Union government was mulling bringing in a new tribunal bill related to their functioning and appointments of their members either in the ongoing Budget session or the Monsoon session of Parliament.

He submitted that currently, deliberations are going on at various levels of the government. To avoid any confusion or problem in the functioning of tribunals, it has been decided to give an extension of tenure to all members who are set to retire in the interregnum till September 8 of this year.

"The Government is working on a proposal. A bill is being contemplated. We don't want any interruption in the meantime.

"Everybody who was appointed under the Tribunal Reforms Act of 2021 will continue. By next September, either this Budget session or the Monsoon session, a new law is likely to be enacted," the AG said, adding that about 21 members are due to retire in the meantime.

In November 2025, the top court had struck down the provisions of the Tribunals Reforms Act, 2021 on appointment and tenure of tribunal members, for being violative of its earlier judgments on the issue.

Venkataramani said that the new bill will be in accordance with last year's verdict and smoothen the functioning and appointments of members in various tribunals.

CJI Kant once again flagged the lack of accountability of tribunals and said they should be responsible to some authority.

"They are not accountable to the government and they are not accountable to us. Who is going to evaluate their integrity and performance?"

"Instead of granting extension alone by a sweeping order, we have to consider their accountability. To whom are they accountable? There should be some mechanism. If their work is not upto the mark, why should their tenure be at all extended?," the CJI said.

Senior advocate Sanjay Jain, appearing for the CAT Bar Association, said that the Madras Bar Association judgment of last year mandated a minimum tenure of five years for the members and around 31 members are set to superannuate soon.

He said that another concern is that administrative members are allowed to act as acting chairperson of the tribunal when the judicial members superannuate. CJI Kant said this concern was shared by the bench earlier in another matter related to the functioning of tribunals.

"There should be a comprehensive law which fixes accountability of members of tribunals. You can't keep tribunals under government control, since there will be criticism. "You can't keep them under judicial control also. Then where?" CJI said.

Jain submitted that the issue of whether administrative members can act at all preside over the bench was also arising in some cases before the court. (PTI)

Experts emphasise integration of 112 emergency number with ambulance, hospitals

NEW DELHI, March 9: Public health experts, clinicians, administrators and representatives from state governments on Monday called for strengthening pre-hospital emergency response systems, integration of the 112 Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) with ambulance services and hospitals to ensure timely response and effective patient management.

At a post-Budget webinar breakout session on "Strengthening of Emergency and Trauma Care Centres", experts noted that India faces a significant burden of emergency medical conditions including road traffic injuries, heart attacks, strokes, poisonings, burns, snake bites and the likes which require timely intervention within the "golden hour" to prevent deaths and long-term disability.

Experts noted that emergency cases account for a substantial proportion of hospital visits and admissions, while emergency beds constitute only a small share of total hospital bed capacity in many district hospitals, highlighting the need for strengthening emergency care infrastructure and systems.

The discussion also highlighted the role of implementation research and data-driven approaches in identifying gaps and improving emergency care systems at the district level.



During the session, discussions focused on strengthening pre-hospital emergency response systems, integration of the 112 Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) with ambulance services and hospitals to ensure timely response and effective patient management.

Participants also emphasised the need for better coordination among emergency services and for strengthening the operational capacities of emergency response systems.

Panelists also deliberated on the need to strengthen infrastructure at district hospitals by transforming existing casualty wards into fully functional emergency care departments with triage areas, resuscitation facilities, ambulance bays, diagnostics and emergency operation theatres.

Rapid construction of emergency and trauma care centres and procurement of essential equipment were also discussed. The importance of improving facility readiness and strengthening clinical gov-

Iran sought permission for docking of 3 ships in Indian ports: EAM Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, March 9: Iran had sought India's permission for three of its ships to dock at Indian ports and the approval was granted the next day, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday, amid tensions in the Indian Ocean region following the sinking of an Iranian warship by the US last week.

In a statement in the Parliament, Jaishankar said one Iranian vessel, IRIS LAVAN, docked in Kochi on March 4 and its crew members are currently staying in Indian naval facilities.

It was for the first time a senior minister said that Iran requested for docking of three of its ships in Indian ports.

"The Iranian side requested permission on February 28 for three ships in the region to dock at our ports. This was accorded on March 1. IRIS LAVAN actually docked on March 4 in Kochi. The crew is currently in Indian naval facilities," he said.

"We believe that this was the right thing to do and the Iranian Foreign Minister has expressed his country's thanks for this humane gesture," Jaishankar said.

One of the three warships was IRIS Dena that was torpedoed and sunk by a US submarine on March 4.

The sinking of the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena by the US off the coast of Sri Lanka triggered concerns about the expansion of the conflict in West Asia to the Indian Ocean region.

The warship was returning home after participating in the Milan multilateral naval exercise as well as International Fleet Review hosted by India. At least 87 Iranian sailors were killed in the attack.

Another Iranian warship was allowed to dock by Sri Lanka at its eastern port of Trincomalee.

The vessel, IRIS Bushehr, had sought permission to enter Sri Lankan waters, citing an engine failure.

In his remarks, Jaishankar also said that the government is fully committed to ensure the country's energy security.

The global energy supplies have witnessed some disruptions in view of the escalating conflict in West Asia. "In view of the implications of this conflict for our energy security, I also seek to address that particular concern. The government remains committed to ensuring that fully, taking into account the availability, costs and risks of the energy markets," Jaishankar said. (PTI)

TMC flags SIR harassment, BJP seeks fewer phases EC hears parties as Bengal poll battle sharpens

KOLKATA, March 9: The simmering political battle over SIR in West Bengal spilt into the EC's pre-poll consultations on Monday as parties met the election panel separately, with the TMC alleging voter harassment and the BJP pressing for fewer phases in the elections.

The interactions, held at a hotel in New Town on the eastern fringes of Kolkata, saw delegations from the ruling Trinamool Congress, BJP, CPI(M), Congress and other parties meeting the EC's full bench led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar to place their concerns before it.

The consultations come amid an intensifying political confrontation between the ruling TMC and the BJP and the EC over the ongoing SIR exercise, which has triggered allegations of voter exclusion and counter-claims about infiltration and electoral integrity.

Emerging from its meeting with the commission, the TMC alleged that the revision process had led to harassment of ordinary citizens and claimed its concerns were not adequately heard during the interaction. Senior party leader and state minister Chandrima Bhattacharya said she was asked not to "shout" while raising objections about the exercise.

"I am a woman, and I was told 'don't shout'. Why should I not raise my voice when we are speaking about people's rights?" Bhattacharya told reporters after the meeting.

She said whenever the party attempted to raise concerns over the SIR process, the commission responded by saying the matter was sub-judice in the Supreme Court, where the TMC has challenged the exercise.

"Whenever we spoke about SIR, they said the matter is in the Supreme Court. If that is the case, why did they call us for the meeting? When they have invited us, they must listen to what we have to say," she said.

Defending the party's move to approach the apex court, Bhattacharya said it was the responsibility of the ruling party to protect the rights of citizens.

The SIR exercise has become one of the most contentious political issues in the state in recent months, with the TMC alleging that the revision is aimed at removing genuine voters from electoral rolls, a charge rejected by the Election Commission.

According to official data released on February 28, around 63.66 lakh names, about 8.3 per cent of the electorate, have been deleted since the revision began in November last year, bringing down the voter base from about 7.66 crore to a little over 7.04 crore.

Additionally, more than 60 lakh electors have been placed under the "under adjudication" category, meaning their eligibility will be decided through legal scrutiny in the coming weeks, a development that could potentially reshape electoral equations in several constituencies.

Kolkata Mayor and senior TMC leader Firhad Hakim alleged that the exercise had forced ordinary citizens to repeatedly prove their nationality.

"The BJP has created a perception that this state is a place for Rohingyas and infiltrators, and the commission framed policies accordingly. But in the two-month-long process, you did not find any proof of that. Instead, Indian citizens were harassed," Hakim said. He also claimed that many people were being forced to stand in long queues to complete verification procedures.

"People are leaving their work and daily livelihood just to prove they are citizens. Hundreds have fallen ill, and some have died while standing in queues," he alleged. The BJP delegation, however, raised a different set of issues during its separate meeting with the commission, focusing on the security environment and the conduct of the polls.

The party demanded that the upcoming assembly elections be conducted in not more than three phases, arguing that a prolonged polling schedule could facilitate the movement of anti-social elements.

"We demanded a one, two or three-phase election, but not more," BJP leader Jagannath Chattopadhyay said after the meeting.

The BJP also expressed dissatisfaction over the utilisation of central forces deployed in the state, alleging that the state police was influencing their deployment and that route marches were being conducted in relatively peaceful areas instead of sensitive locations. "If a violence-free and fearless environment is to be created, the Commission must take action against state police and government officials who prevent voters from casting their own ballots," a BJP leader said. (PTI)

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, S.E.. WORKS,

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No. KAAC/S.E. -W-168 (Pt) /2025-26/ 240 (A)

Dtd.25/02/2026.

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender affixing non refundable KAAC court fee stamp (receipt) Rs. 10.00 (Rupees Ten) only eventually to be drawn up in form are hereby invited from KAAC registered contractor/reputed firms of works department and will be received by the undersigned up to 4 P.M. on 11/03/2026. and will be opened on the same date, place and the hours in presence of the tenderer or their authorized agent if any.

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

SL No.	Name of Works	Tender Amount (Rs)	A/A Amount(Rs)	Earnest money	Time allowed for completion
1	Construction Of Paver block road from Jaluri Terang VII. To Sarthe Ronghang, VII. Lage under Mohamaya Constituency.	Rs. 90,00,000.00	Rs. 90,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC = 1% General = 2%	90 days
2	Construction Of Paver block road at Bahar Rongpi, VII. Sildharampur under Mohamaya Constituency.	Rs.52,00,000.00	Rs.52,00,000.00	ST/SC/OBC = 1% General = 2%	90 days

Terms & Condition

N.B

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

Sd/-

Superintending Engineer (SE), Works.
Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council,
DIPHU.

'The matter has been raised with the central government at various levels' 1,254 of 1,309 PMGSY roads completed in Arunachal: Minister

ITANAGAR, March 9: Arunachal Pradesh Rural Works Department (RWD) Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona on Monday informed the Assembly that 1,254 out of the 1,309 roads sanctioned for the state under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), have been completed, while the remaining projects are yet to be finished due to various challenges.

Responding to a Zero Hour discussion raised by Congress MLA Kumar Waii, the minister said the government has been prioritising the construction and upgradation of rural roads to strengthen connectivity in remote and interior parts of the state.

Sona said that the incomplete roads under PMGSY Phase-I are mostly located in remote and difficult areas where several constraints have affected the pace of construction. He pointed out that Arunachal Pradesh experiences a prolonged monsoon season, leaving a limited window for carrying out construction activities.

The minister further said that the state's rugged and mountainous terrain poses additional challenges, including landslides, heavy rainfall and other natural factors. He also stated that local issues such as land compensation disputes often delay road construction works, though compensation is not a component under the PMGSY scheme.

Appealing for public cooperation, Sona said that roads are meant for the benefit of the people and therefore local communities should support construction activities rather



than creating hurdles.

He also urged villagers to monitor road construction works in their respective areas to ensure transparency and quality.

Highlighting another issue, the minister

said the use of nano technology in road construction introduced by the Centre has not been successful in Arunachal Pradesh due to the state's unique terrain and climatic conditions. "The matter has been raised with the

central government at various levels," he said, adding that no positive response has been received so far.

Sona further said that the Centre has declined to extend the deadline for completion of unfinished roads under PMGSY Phase-I. However, the state government has requested the Centre to allow an extension till March next year to enable completion of the remaining works. He added that the state government has also submitted a proposal to the Centre seeking relaxation of the population criteria under PMGSY so that more habitations in Arunachal Pradesh can be connected with all-weather roads.

The minister added that apart from the centrally sponsored PMGSY projects, the state government is also undertaking additional road construction works under the state plan to bridge connectivity gaps in areas that are not covered under the scheme.

He said road projects are also being taken up under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive State Rural Development Programme (CMCSRDP) as a stop-gap arrangement to improve rural connectivity.

PMGSY-I, the first phase of the centrally sponsored rural road scheme, was launched to provide all-weather road connectivity to eligible unconnected habitations. In Arunachal Pradesh, the programme has played a crucial role in linking remote villages with district headquarters and improving access to essential services such as healthcare, education and markets. (PTI)

MLAs express concern in Nagaland Assembly over police constable recruitment criteria



KOHIMA, March 9: Several Nagaland legislators on Monday expressed concern in the Assembly over the recruitment criteria for state police constables, with some suggesting a review of the balance between physical and written tests.

The MLAs raised the issue during Question Hour over the recent Nagaland Police constable recruitment drive conducted in January 2026 to fill 1,176 posts, during which 80 posts remained unfilled after candidates failed to qualify in the physical efficiency tests.

Raising the issue, NPF MLA Tongpang Ozukum welcomed the government's decision to conduct the recruitment after a long gap, stating that it was a significant opportunity for unemployed youths in the state. However, he pointed out that out of the 1,176 posts advertised, 80 posts remained unfilled across five districts.

According to the data cited by Ozukum, the highest number of unfilled posts was from Mokokchung district with 43 vacancies, followed by Tuensang with 32, while Tsemnyu had three and Longleng and Wokha had one each.

While acknowledging that it was not the fault of the department, Ozukum suggested that another opportunity be given to the districts concerned through a separate recruitment drive or by adding the backlog posts to future recruitment.

Replying to the query, Deputy Chief Minister in charge of Home Y Patton, confirmed that 80 posts remained vacant. He clarified that there would be no immediate separate recruitment solely for those posts but assured the House that

the vacancies would remain reserved for the respective districts and tribes and would be carried forward as backlog vacancies in the next recruitment drive.

During the discussion, MLA Kuzholuzo Nienu appreciated the fairness of the physical and medical tests but raised concerns over the written examination. He noted that candidates with basic qualifications had to compete with highly educated graduates, making the competition uneven. He suggested that the department examine ways to review the system to ensure fairness for candidates from less advantaged areas.

MLA Achumbemo Kikon also suggested reducing the weightage of written marks and placing greater emphasis on physical tests, stating that constabulary duties require more physical strength and field work.

Responding to the suggestions, Patton said that the views expressed by the members would be examined and the recruitment system reviewed.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio also stressed that police service primarily requires physical fitness, and candidates must prepare themselves accordingly. He suggested that unfilled posts of the respective districts should be given a second chance, but cautioned that vacancies should not remain indefinitely.

Patton further informed the House that while the minimum educational qualification is Class 8 for forward tribes and Class 6 for backward tribes, the department would review the recruitment process, particularly the balance between written and physical tests, in the next recruitment exercise. (PTI)

Heroin worth ₹ 2.74 lakh seized

ITANAGAR, March 9: Police arrested two persons after heroin worth Rs 2.74 lakh was seized from their possession in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district, an officer said on Monday.

Changlang Superintendent of Police (SP) Kirli Padu said the two persons were arrested near Wagon Ponthai tri-junction on NH-215 under Bordumsa circle in the district on Sunday.

Acting on credible intelligence, the anti-drug squad team led by Bordumsa police station officer-in-charge Tomai Wangpan intercepted a vehicle heading from Jagun in Assam towards Bordumsa.

A thorough search led to the recovery of 42.93 gm of heroin worth around Rs 2.74 lakh hidden beneath the steering box, along with two mobile handsets, and Rs 4,900 in cash.

An NDPS case has been registered at Bordumsa Police Station, and further investigation in the case is on, police added. (PTI)

Meghalaya: Garo Hills council elections today

SHILLONG, March 9: The election for the Garo Hills Autonomous District Council (GHADC) in Meghalaya will be held on April 10, according to a notification issued on Monday.

The last date for filing nomination papers is March 16, while March 17 has been set as the last date for the withdrawal of candidatures, as per the notification issued by the District Council Affairs Department.

The final list of valid nominations along with the allocation of symbols will be published on March 18, it added.

The polling will be held from 7 am to 4 pm on April 10, and the counting of votes will take place on April 14.

The National People's Party (NPP) is in power in the 30-member council, with 19 seats. The TMC is in opposition with nine members. There are two BJP members as well. While one is on the ruling side, the other is in the opposition. (PTI)

Arunachal govt taking steps to uplift Puroik community: Minister

ITANAGAR, March 9: The Arunachal Pradesh government has taken several initiatives to uplift the Puroik community and integrate them into the mainstream through welfare schemes, vocational training and educational support, Social Justice, Empowerment and Tribal Affairs (SJETA) Minister Jini informed the state Assembly on Monday.

Replying to a question raised by BJP MLA Hayeng Mangfi, the minister said the state government constituted the Autonomous Puroik Welfare Board (APWB) in 2017 under the SJETA department to study the socio-economic condition of the community and ensure effective implementation of central and state welfare schemes. The board is headed by the principal secretary of the state government, he said.

Jini said that the government has introduced various measures for the welfare of the community, including vocational training programmes, financial assistance for self-employment, construction of hostels for Puroik students and opportunities for professional education such as



nursing courses. He said these initiatives are aimed at improving education, livelihood opportunities and social security for the community while addressing long-standing issues of marginalisation.

The Puroik tribe, earlier known as Sulung, is one of the Scheduled Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh and is considered among the most marginalised communities in the state.

Members of the community mainly inhabit districts such as East Kameng district, Kurung Kumey district, Kra Daadi district, Papum Pare district and Upper Subansiri district.

Arunachal CM condemns incident at Santal culture event in West Bengal

ITANAGAR, March 9: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Sunday strongly condemned the manner in which events unfolded during a programme related to Santal culture in West Bengal, saying the episode that led to anguish being expressed by President Droupadi Murmu has saddened people across the country.

He said it has also raised serious questions about the conduct of the All India Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal.

In a post on X on Sunday, Khandu said the situation was particularly painful as the President herself comes from a tribal community and had to publicly express disappointment during an event meant to celebrate Santal culture.

"I strongly condemn the manner in which events unfolded during the programme related to Santal culture in West Bengal. The anguish expressed by Hon'ble President of India Smt Droupadi Murmu Ji has deeply saddened people across the country and raises serious questions about the conduct of the All India Trinamool Congress government," he said in the post. Khandu said it was especially distressing that the President had to voice her disappointment at an event celebrating tribal heritage.

"It is especially painful that the President of India, who herself comes from a tribal community, had to publicly express disappointment during an event meant to celebrate Santal culture," he said.

The chief minister added that the episode reflected a lack of sensitivity towards tribal communities and towards the constitutional protocol attached to the highest office of the country.

"Such a situation reflects an unacceptable lack of sensitivity towards both the dignity of tribal communities and the constitutional protocol owed to the highest office of the Republic," he said.

Emphasising the importance of respecting the constitutional position of the President, Khandu said the office symbolises the unity and democratic spirit of the nation.

"The office of the President stands above politics and symbolises the unity, dignity and democratic spirit of our nation. Any action or negligence that undermines the sanctity of this office deserves the strongest condemnation," he said. (PTI)

Nagaland Assembly discusses encroachment of railway land in Dimapur

KOHIMA, March 9: The issue of modernisation of the 123-year-old Dimapur Railway Station and large-scale land encroachment rocked Question Hour on the third day of the ongoing Budget session of the Nagaland Assembly on Monday.

Raising the issue, NPP MLA Nuklutoshi said the modernisation project has become controversial, with different stakeholders blaming each other.

He said the railway authorities have blamed the state government, the state government has blamed landowners and encroachers, while encroachers in turn have blamed the administration for issuing land pattas. Nuklutoshi alleged that the issue stemmed from prolonged negligence, stating that the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) remained silent despite illegal constructions coming up over the years on railway land.

He said there was no formal complaint earlier from the railway authorities, even as structures continued to be built. He further pointed out that according to available data, around 614 illegal occupants are residing on railway land and about 30,283 hectares out of the total 53,806 hectares have been encroached.

He also claimed that over 1,100 illegal structures—including houses, shops, hotels, religious buildings and schools—have come up in the area.

The MLA said the situation could affect the proposed development of the station into a world-class facility. Citing discussions with stakeholders, he said three options were being considered: paying around ₹ 132 crore for a resettlement plan, carrying out eviction of illegal occupants, or shifting the railway station to another location, such as Sukhovi or Tuli if land issues remain unresolved.

Responding to the issue, Minister for Transport P Paiwang Konyak said the matter is not a controversy and that the department, state government and NFR are working together to resolve it at the earliest.

He informed the House that the Government of India has sanctioned ₹ 283 crore under the Amrit Bharat Scheme for upgrading Dimapur Railway Station into a world-class station. The minister also said Dimapur is the second-highest revenue-earning railway station in the Northeast.

Konyak said surveys were conducted in December by the department and district administration, which confirmed the presence of landowners and structures within the railway station area.

He said the state government has written to the General Manager of NFR, while the landowners have also submitted representations to the Ministry of Railways seeking compensation for land and structures.

He added that the landowners have demanded compensation at double the amount, and the government is awaiting a response from the Centre.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, while intervening in the discussion, said many developmental projects in Nagaland are delayed due to land-related issues.

He noted that Dimapur Railway Station, inaugurated in 1903, is the only railway station in the state and it has been selected for world-class development under the Amrit Bharat Scheme.

Rio said that over the years encroachments had taken place while the railway authorities remained silent and some administrative officers later regularised certain areas by issuing land pattas. He stressed the need for an amicable settlement between the government, the railways and the landowners. (PTI)

Mizoram registered 9.4 pc average GSDP growth from 2011-12 to 2024-25: Economic Survey

AIZAWL, March 9: Mizoram registered an average annual growth rate of 9.36 per cent in Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) over the 13-year period between 2011-12 and 2024-25, according to the state's 2025-26 Economic Survey.

The survey, presented by Chief Minister Lalduhoma in the assembly on Monday, noted that the tertiary (services) sector continued to drive the state's economy in 2024-25, accounting for the lion's share of the Gross State Value Added (GSVA) at 50.37 per cent, an increase from 46.87 per cent in 2023-24. Trade, hotels, restaurants, and other services were identified as the primary drivers within this sector.

The secondary sector, fueled primarily by electricity, gas, water supply, utility services, and construction, remained the second-



largest contributor to the state's economy, representing 32.91 per cent of the GSVA.

The contribution of the primary sector, which comprises agriculture and allied activities, decreased to 16.72 per cent in 2024-25 from 20.45 per cent in the previous fiscal year.

The GSDP at constant prices

rose from ₹ 7,25,869 lakh to ₹ 23,22,292 lakh during 2011-12 to 2024-25, the survey showed.

"This reflects a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 9.36 per cent, indicating robust growth in economic activity after adjusting for inflation," it said.

The GSDP at current prices rose from ₹ 7,25,869 lakh to ₹

36,03,066 lakh with a CAGR of 13.12 per cent.

The report highlights that the Mizoram economy has undergone a significant structural transformation over the past decade, evolving from an agriculture-centric framework to a more diversified economy, led by the industrial and service sectors.

According to the Economic Survey, the state's per capita income over the 13-year period rose from ₹ 57,654 in 2011-12 to ₹ 2,51,593 in 2024-25. Lalduhoma had on February 26 presented a ₹ 17,469.91 crore budget for the 2026-2027 fiscal in the state assembly, with focus on improving social infrastructure, connectivity and the agriculture sector.

The chief minister also presented the supplementary demands for grants for the current fiscal, amounting to ₹ 3,724.25 crore. (PTI)

Arunachal Assembly passes five bills

ITANAGAR, March 9: The Arunachal Pradesh Assembly on Monday passed five key government bills by voice vote after discussions in the House, strengthening provisions related to fire safety services, regulation of education department postings, GST amendments, urban planning and anti-defection rules for local bodies.

The bills were introduced in the House on March 6 during the ongoing budget session and were taken up for consideration and passage on Monday. Among the major legislations, Home Minister Mama Natung moved the Arunachal Pradesh Fire and Emergency Services Bill, which seeks to ensure the maintenance and effective functioning of fire and emergency services in the state. The proposed legislation also aims to strengthen fire prevention and safety measures in different types of buildings and premises, while enhancing the overall preparedness of emergency response mechanisms. Education Minister Pasang Dorjee Sona introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Transfer and Posting of Employees of Education Department (Regulation and Management) Bill.

The bill is intended to establish a comprehensive legal framework for regulating the transfer and posting of both teaching and non-teaching staff within the education department, with the objective of ensuring transparency, efficiency and better management of human resources. Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein also introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Goods and Services Tax (Amendment) Bill, which was subsequently passed by the House. Urban Affairs Minister Balo Raja introduced the Arunachal Pradesh Urban and Country Planning Bill seeking amendments to the existing legislation governing urban development and planning in the state. Similarly, Panchayati Raj Minister Ojing Tasing moved the Arunachal Pradesh Local Authorities (Prohibition of Defection) (Amendment) Bill to amend the Local Authorities (Prohibition of Defection) Act, 2003. (PTI)

Four minors apprehended for assaulting Manipuri woman in south Delhi

NEW DELHI, March 9: Four juveniles were apprehended in connection with the alleged assault of a Manipuri woman who objected to harassment by them at a park in south Delhi, police said on Monday. The incident took place on Sunday evening, when the woman and her friend were taking a walk in the park in Malviya Nagar, near the Saket District Court Complex, they said.

According to a senior police officer, the minors allegedly made comments at the two women. "When one of them objected, a verbal argument ensued, after which the accused allegedly assaulted the woman," the officer said.

The woman sustained minor injuries in the attack and was taken to Safdarjung Hospital for medical examination and treatment, he said. Following the incident, police teams were formed to identify and trace the suspects. In the subsequent raids conducted by the police, all four accused were apprehended.

Police are in constant touch with the victim, the officer said.

The incident comes days after a married couple -- Harsh Singh and Ruby Jain -- was arrested in Malviya Nagar for allegedly hurling racial slurs at three women from Arunachal Pradesh in their neighbourhood. (PTI)

2 militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, March 9: Two militants were arrested from different parts of Manipur, police said on Monday. A member of the proscribed SOREPA was arrested from Kongpal Chingangbam Leikai in Imphal East district on Sunday, they said.

He was accused of extorting local small businesses, they added.

A cadre of the PREPAK was apprehended from Prajatantra Galli in Imphal West district, police said.

In a separate operation, three suspected drug smugglers were nabbed from a hotel in the border town of Moreh in Tengnoupal district.

They were identified as Letminlun Khongsai (35), Jangoulun Haokip (28) and Deikholam Chongloi (57), police said. (PTI)

Assamese film 'Moi Eti Nixhasor' wins Special Mention at US competition



us time and again of the social and political challenges we all face in nearly every country in the time we are living in today," the director said.

'Moi Eti Nixhasor' is on the life of Koduwa, an enigmatic village thief known for his cunning and wit, but

whose honest attempts to improve his life are constantly frustrated by the whims and dictates of the local powers-that-be.

"By the time our story ends, the audience is confronted with a poignant question who is actually the real thief?" Kotoky said.

The Mumbai-based filmmaker further said that the film has also been selected at Covellite International Film Festival 2026 of the USA.

"After watching 'Moi Eti Nixhasor' at Covellite, filmmakers described it as a 'delightful little celebration' with strong audience

engagement. While it is not a major festival like Cannes or Sundance, it is highly regarded for its quality, diversity and dedication to showcasing independent work from around the world," he added.

Although he did not share any timeline, but Kotoky said that once the film is commercially released in Assam a few months down the line, the people of the state will shower similar love toward it.

The lead cast is played by noted theatre actor Gunomoni Baruah, while several senior and junior artistes of Assamese film industry have enacted other important characters.

Based on a true story written by senior journalist Anuradha Sharma Pujari, the film has been produced by the National Film Development Corporation and red river & blue hills. (PTI)

Assamese feature film 'Moi Eti Nixhasor' on a thief's life on the backdrop of the state's social and political landscape, has won the 'Award of Excellence Special Mention' at the Accolade Global Film Competition, its filmmaker said on Sunday.

Directed by National Award-winning filmmaker Bidyut Kotoky, the movie revolves around Koduwa a cunning village thief who navigates social unrest and prejudice with wit and heart.

The 'Award of Excellence Special Mention' is a significant achievement within the US-based Accolade Global Film Competition, which Movie Maker Magazine has named one of the top 25 festivals worth the entry fee, Kotoky said.

"We are deeply honoured by this recognition from such a prestigious global platform. This award belongs to the entire creative team that brought Koduwa's world to life," he told PTI.

This rare distinction places the film among the top 10 entries of the entire competition, a feat reserved for projects that set the highest standard for artistry and technical brilliance, Kotoky emphasised.

The recognition just reinforces the belief that human emotions speak the same language, without showing any respect towards the man-made boundaries, he added.

"Although based in a remote village of Assam and in the not-so-distant past, this story reminds

BAFTA WIN FOR 'BOONG' PUTS MANIPUR IN GLOBAL SPOT-LIGHT: LAKSHMIPRIYA DEVI

The BAFTA award for her Manipuri language film Boong is a reminder to the world about a place called Manipur and it is now up to audiences to "take that knowledge forward", says Lakshmipriya Devi, adding disarmingly that she now wants to go back "under the radar".

"With film festivals like BAFTA at least the first step of awareness has been created, which is like giving people the idea that, 'Hey, there's a place called Manipur and films like this are outside of Bollywood indie' but beyond that it's up to the audiences to take that knowledge forward and apply it," she told PTI in an interview.

Boong, about a young boy searching for his father in conflict-scarred Manipur, is the first Indian film to win a trophy at the awards gala, organised annually in London by the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA).

The 2024 coming-of-age drama was announced as the winner in the Best Children's and Family Film category last month. The filmmaker, who grew up in Imphal, is still coming to terms with the incredible win and the moment she got it.

"I was in a daze. The only thing I told myself, 'Oh my God, this is so heavy. How much will the excess baggage cost?'" she laughed.

And because she's a low-budget director, Lakshmipriya said she's still not getting that "Wow, something has changed" feeling.

"I'm still the same. In fact, I want to go back more under the radar after this and not let this get to me," she said. The filmmaker said it takes her a lot of time to process things.

"The moment we got back here, there's been a constant rush of work happening, so I haven't had a moment just to myself. I think that's when it will really hit me," the director said. Though the film came about relatively easily, post-production took a long time because of tensions in the northeastern state, grappling with societal polarisation and political unrest in her homeland, she said.

"I could not edit the film for a very long time. I would break down every time I would see the footage. Knowing that the entire second half of the film was shot in places that were now in rubble... it affected me. It took a couple of months before I could look at the footage objectively from a distance," Lakshmipriya told PTI in an interview.

Set against the racial tensions of Manipur, her film follows Boong, a resilient schoolboy determined to bring his absent father home to surprise his mother. Produced by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani's Excel Entertainment, it stars Gugun Kipgen and Bala Hijam in the lead roles. (PTI)



'Champions once again': Celebrities hail India's T20 World Cup victory

Celebrities erupted in joy and pride after India clinched the ICC Men's T20 World Cup for the record third time, with stars such as Amitabh Bachchan, Shah Rukh Khan, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Alu Arjun and Alia Bhatt hailing the men in blue for their comprehensive and dominant victory over New Zealand in the final.

India produced a batting spectacle of rare ferocity to overwhelm New Zealand by 96

runs in the summit clash at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Sunday and defend the T20 World Cup title after posting a record total.

Bachchan shared a series of pictures from the match on his personal blog on Monday and captioned it simply, "Says it all."

Shah Rukh congratulated the team for a "comprehensive victory".

"What a comprehensive victory!! Well done to our men in blue!!! You guys are champions,

and watching you on the field has made us all very proud. Take a bow. Jai Hind," he wrote.

Haasan wrote, "Our Men in Blue, back-to-back ICC Men's T20 World Cup champions! Men's ICC Cricket World Cup runners-up. Women's ICC Women's Cricket World Cup champions. A testament to India's deep domestic ecosystem, from the Ranji Trophy to the IPL.

@BCCI. Imagine what India could achieve if every sport had such a domestic ecosystem. The

potential of India's youth is limitless. From gullies to grand stadiums, from childhood dreams to world champions - India rises."

Chopra Jonas wrote on her Instagram Stories, "Let's goooooo @indiancricketteam," she wrote, while Bhatt posted, "World champions. Congratulations team India... what a victory."

Arjun posted, "Heartiest congratulations to Team India for winning back-to-back T20 World Cups. A proud moment for the entire nation. Jai

Hind." Ajay Devgn said Team India has "made billions of hearts beat with pride tonight".

"My throat is gone from all the shouting, but my smile isn't going anywhere all week... #TeamIndia CHAMPIONS once again," he wrote on X. Anushka Sharma also congratulated Team India for their "back-to-back World Cup wins".

"Heartiest congratulations to this brilliant team for this phenomenal victory," she added. (PTI)



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DIPR /DF/HLT/2289/10-Mar-26

From Barbados to Ahmedabad: India's era of unparalleled dominance

NEW DELHI, March 9: If Barbados was about breaking a curse, Ahmedabad was about building a kingdom. Simply put, India's current stranglehold on the shortest format is without precedent in cricketing history.

The home team's 96-run thrashing of New Zealand in Sunday's final didn't just secure a historic first-ever title defence, it also signalled a ruthless new era of Indian supremacy in the T20 format.

More importantly, the on-field brilliance also moved the spotlight away from the diplomatic tensions that overshadowed the tournament's buildup thanks to Bangladesh's withdrawal due to "security concerns" and Pakistan's threat to boycott their big-ticket group league fixture against India.

Given that India is the first team to win three T20 World Cups and clinch consecutive titles (2024, 2026), this claim of unparalleled strength makes perfect sense.

Add to this the BCCI -- the game's financial behemoth -- and their incredible bench strength, and it becomes a heady cocktail of power and performance.

Besides emerging as the standout team of this World Cup, this Indian squad may well be the finest T20 side ever assembled internationally since the advent of the shortest format more than two decades ago.

India's supremacy is a throwback to the time when the West Indies of the mid-1970s to 80s and the Australians in the first decade of this millennium called the shots, winning a bagful of global titles and series across the world.



Such has been India's dominance that they have left the rest of the top-tier teams to fight for second place, something that is not good for the global game as it points to a lack of competition.

While the manner and margin of India's victory conveys the team's superiority in the short format, evaluating the true depth of their cricket will require looking at the players who didn't even

make the squad for this tournament.

Even as the likes of Sanju Samson, Ishan Kishan, Jasprit Bumrah, Axar Patel, Hardik Pandya and Shivam Dube bask in the glory of their achievements, it would be wise to take look at those who missed the cut.

If one were to glance through the records of men like Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shreyas Iyer, Shubman Gill, Ruturaj

Gaikwad, and the precocious 14-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, one would realise the frightening depth of Indian cricket at the moment.

One cannot find fault with the game's experts when they say that India could very easily field a 'B' team and still win the World Cup, because they are stating facts.

The onus is now on the other major

teams to stop India from dominating world cricket for years to come.

A combination of factors have contributed to India's success, including the think tank's adoption of a high-risk, high-reward strategy that prioritised rapid scoring over wicket preservation, near-perfect execution of plans on the field and clinching the key moments of the game.

And when a team is packed with a dazzling array of talents, including a certain Bumrah, the job gets much easier as they can singlehandedly change the direction of matches in a matter of few balls.

New Zealand the new chokers
With yet another abject surrender in the knockouts of an ICC white-ball tournament, New Zealand seemed to have inherited the tag of chokers from South Africa. The Kiwis have reached six finals in 13 ICC events since 2015, winning only the 2021 World Test Championship.

Some of the decisions made by skipper Mitchell Santner in the final were highly questionable, including the move to bowl first after winning toss instead of focussing on putting scoreboard pressure in the tournament's biggest game.

Despite India's top order showing vulnerability to off-spin throughout the tournament, New Zealand left out specialist off-spinner Cole McConchie, who had taken two key wickets in the semi-final against South Africa, for pacer Jacob Duffy.

Furthermore, Glenn Phillips was only given one over early on -- despite conceding only five runs -- and was not brought back.

Pakistan's decline

The tournament also saw Pakistan cricket continuing its prolonged slump brought about by frequent captaincy shifts, lack of unity in the team and a lack of player development programme. The Pakistan Cricket Board, highly influenced by the country's ruling establishment, also played its part in the team's terminal decline in recent years.

Criticism around pre-seeding

The ICC's pre-seeding system for the tournament, which locks Super 8 spots based on pre-tournament rankings rather than performance in the group stage, has drawn heavy criticism for favouring India and few other top teams.

This structure, which is designed for commercial broadcasting benefits, resulted in imbalances as all four group winners (India, South Africa, West Indies, Zimbabwe) were placed in one group, while the runners-up got an easier path.

The whole process eliminated the traditional suspense and fairness one associates with a global event in any sport, prioritising commercial gains over real action on the field.

Associates make a mark

Associate teams made a mark in the tournament though they are still a long way from closing the gap with full member nations. Highlights included the USA stretching India, the Netherlands nearly beating Pakistan, England's close shave against Nepal, and Canada's Yuvraj Samra scoring a century against New Zealand. Also, Zimbabwe beating Australia to knock the out in the group stage. (PTI)

Iraq coach urges FIFA to delay his team's WC playoff because of the Iran war

BAGHDAD, March 9: Iraq head coach Graham Arnold has issued an urgent plea to soccer's international governing body to delay his team's intercontinental qualifier for the World Cup because of disruptions caused by the escalating Iran war.

The Iraq squad faces major logistical issues ahead of a winner-takes-all playoff against either Suriname or Bolivia, scheduled for March 31 in Monterrey, Mexico.

With Iraqi airspace closed until April 1 due to the escalating conflict, Arnold's squad -- containing predominantly players from the domestic league -- is unable to fully gather.

Players haven't secured visas for the playoff tournament in Mexico due to foreign embassy closures, and Arnold is stranded in the United Arab Emirates due to the conflict.

"Please help us with this game because right now we are struggling to get our players out of the country of Iraq," Arnold, a former coach of Australia's national team, told the Australian Associated Press.

The turmoil has already forced the postponement of a planned training camp in Houston. Arnold said fielding a team comprised only of overseas-based players is not a viable option.

"It wouldn't be our best team and we need our best team available for the country's biggest game in 40 years," he said.

Arnold has proposed a strategic delay to the playoffs schedule, suggesting FIFA allow Suriname and Bolivia to play their preliminary match this month but postponing the final playoff until a week before the World Cup begins.

"In my opinion, if FIFA were to delay the game it gives us time to prepare properly," Arnold said. "In my opinion, it also gives FIFA more time to decide what Iran is going to do."

"If Iran withdraws we go into the World Cup, and it gives the UAE, who we beat in qualifying, the chance to prepare for either Bolivia or Suriname. (AP)

Port Vale, Southampton stun Premier League opponents in the FA Cup to advance to quarterfinals

LONDON, March 9: This season's FA Cup just keeps on delivering shocks.

Third-tier Port Vale pulled off a massive upset on Sunday by beating Premier League Sunderland 1-0 to advance to the quarterfinals of the historic competition. That was after Championship side Southampton knocked out another top-flight team with a 1-0 win against Fulham.

Port Vale is bottom of League One and 57 places below Sunderland. But the West Midlands team booked its place alongside giants Liverpool, Arsenal, Manchester City and Chelsea in the last eight courtesy of Ben Waine's looping first half header.

It was the latest giant-killing in a season that already saw sixth-tier Macclesfield eliminate titleholder Crystal Palace in what was officially the biggest upset in FA Cup history.

Port Vale - the lowest ranked team left in the competition - is situated less than 20 miles from Macclesfield and proved every bit as inhospitable for Premier League opposition.

"It probably hasn't sunk in reality. I'm in a little bit of shock about that result today," Port Vale



manager Jon Brady told TNT Sports. "Not that I didn't believe we could do it, but you need a lot of things going your way."

Brady and his players only secured their place in the fifth round by beating Championship side Bristol City five days earlier, with Waine scoring the winner in that match as well.

"I know it wasn't pretty to watch, probably not the best game to watch, but we dug in so hard and I think we deserved it," said Waine, who headed in from close range in the 28th minute. "We stuck to the

game plan - as simple as that." The draw for the quarterfinals is on Monday.

Late drama for Southampton
Ross Stewart's 91st-minute penalty sealed victory for Southampton at Craven Cottage.

The game was heading to extra time when Joachim Andersen brought down Finn Azaz in the box late on. Stewart stepped up and blasted past Fulham goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte.

Fulham coach Marco Silva paid the price for making nine changes to his starting lineup and leaving

out star players like Raul Jimenez, Antonee Robinson and Alex Iwobi. Victory continues Southampton's impressive surge under coach Tonda Eckert, who has transformed the club's fortunes since taking charge in November.

The team, which was relegated from the Premier League last season, was battling for survival in the Championship when former coach Will Still was fired. Under Eckert it has risen up the standings and is competing for a place in the playoffs.

"Overall, in the 90 minutes it's deserved that we go to the next round," he told the BBC. "(We) just need to use this game as fuel for the games coming up."

Leeds advances
Leeds broke the sequence of upsets by beating Norwich 3-0 at Elland Road.

For Leeds coach Daniel Farke it was a reunion with his former club, which he twice led to promotion to the Premier League.

First-half goals from Sean Longstaff and Gabriel Gudmundsson put the home team in control by the break, with Joel Piroe adding a third in the 85th.

West Ham plays Brentford in the last match of the fifth round on Monday. (AP)

Jammu and Kashmir Ranji triumph to inspire youth across region: Dy CM Choudhary

JAMMU, March 9: Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary has said their cricket team's historic Ranji Trophy triumph will inspire aspiring sports persons across the Union Territory and prove that the youth of the region can excel at the national level.

Choudhary, along with J&K Sports Minister Satish Sharma, on Sunday felicitated the members of the Jammu and Kashmir cricket team at the Maulana Azad Stadium.

Led by domestic stalwart Paras Dogra, the side clinched their maiden title after holding eight-time champions Karnataka to a draw and securing a massive 291-run first-innings lead in the final at Hubballi on February 28.

"This historic victory will serve as a major inspiration for aspiring sports persons across Jammu and Kashmir. The success of our cricket team proves that with determination

and hard work, the youth of the region can achieve excellence at the national level," Choudhary said. The Sports Minister also hailed the players and the coaching staff for their performance throughout the tournament.

"This victory is not just a cricketing achievement but a moment of pride for the entire Jammu and Kashmir. Our players have demonstrated that with dedication, discipline and the right support, athletes from J&K can excel at the highest level.

"The government remains committed to strengthening sports infrastructure and creating more opportunities for our youth to showcase their talent," Sharma said.

The event followed a victory march and was attended by sports lovers, officials and prominent personalities who gathered to celebrate the team scripting history by winning the prestigious title. (PTI)

Werder Bremen beats Union Berlin 4-1 to leave Bundesliga's relegation zone

BERLIN, March 9: Berlin-born teenager Patrice Covic scored his first Bundesliga goal as Werder Bremen beat 10-man Union Berlin 4-1 away to escape the relegation zone.

The 18-year-old Covic, who progressed through Hertha Berlin's youth setup, entered in stoppage time with the game already won, and he scored with an easy finish two minutes later.

The goal will likely have been cheered by Hertha fans. Covic's father, Ante Covic, coached him through youth teams and he also coached the senior team during a tumultuous period in 2019 before he was replaced by Jürgen Klinsmann. Hertha is now in the second division.

Bremen won its second straight match for the first time this season after new coach Daniel Thioune started with three defeats.

"We as a team had to endure a lot. The fans had to endure a lot too," Thioune said. (AP)

Is it India's 'White Ball Era'? No, else we wouldn't have lost 2 out of 3 series, says Gambhir



AHMEDABAD, March 9: The Indian T20I team is Gautam Gambhir's baby and it made quite a statement by becoming the first to defend the World Cup trophy.

Does it mean that India is in its era of dominance in white-ball cricket?

Not quite, according to the straight-talking head coach as he dropped elaborate hints that the 50-over side, which is the only national team that features senior batters Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, hasn't got the results to call it the age of white-ball domination by the country.

With three ICC trophies in three successive years (2024 T20 World Cup, 2025 ICC Champions Trophy and 2026 T20 World Cup), it was inevitable that someone would ask whether India's white-ball domination was comparable to that of Australia between 1999 and 2007 (they won three successive

ODI World Cups). Gambhir came up with a rather loaded response.

"See, I won't talk about white-ball cricket, because in white-ball cricket, we've lost two out of the last three series in one-day format. If it was an era, we wouldn't have lost two series," said Gambhir with a wry smile.

He didn't take names but it wasn't particularly hard to guess who all played in the series defeats to Australia (away) and New Zealand (home) last year.

While he agreed that the Indian team's record in recent ICC tournaments has been good, but to him "eras" don't matter.

"I don't believe in these eras. You have to turn up every day, whichever match you're playing. When you're playing for your country, you want to win each and every game.

"So, there's no if and but about this -- it's not that this is a bilateral, or an ICC trophy,

or the World Cup. So, I can't differentiate between bilateral and ICC -- because it's the same. Everything exactly remains the same," he asserted after the 96-run win over New Zealand in the final here on Sunday.

For him wearing the India jersey carries responsibility and no one can take that for granted.

"I think, the people in the dressing room are very privileged who get the opportunity to represent their country. There are thousands of people who want to be in my position. There are millions of kids who want to come in the position of Surya (India T20 captain Suryakumar Yadav) and the players in the dressing room," he said.

"So, we can never take anything for granted. And when you wear this jersey, you can never afford to take anything for granted." (PTI)

India ready for must-win game against Chinese Taipei in AFC Women's Asian Cup



SYDNEY, March 9: India women's football team face a must-win clash as they take on Chinese Taipei in their last Group C match of the AFC Women's Asian Cup here on Tuesday.

India are currently bottom of the group at fourth place with zero points from two matches after having lost against Vietnam (1-2) and Japan (0-11).

Japan are at the top of the group with six points from two games, while Chinese Taipei and Vietnam are second and third, respectively, with both sides tied on three points apiece.

However the Blue Tigresses still have a chance to make it to the quarter-finals, should they defeat Chinese Taipei by a margin of two goals or more, and if Japan defeat Vietnam on Tuesday in the simultaneous kick-off.

Even a victory by a margin of one goal may be enough, should the match between Bangladesh and Uzbekistan on Monday, end in a draw. The top two teams from each of the three groups, along with the two best third-place finishers will make it to the last eight.

India head coach Amelia Valverde highlighted the importance of putting the past results behind, after the last two matches.

"The two matches (against Vietnam and Japan) were very different. The first thing we have to do is try to turn the page on what has happened as quickly as possible. We need to prepare well for this match, and we have no doubt about that," said Valverde.

For the Blue Tigresses, the clash against Chinese Taipei is akin to a virtual final.

"We are aware of the importance of the match. We have already turned the page from our previous game, and now have this opportunity, which we must approach with the seriousness it deserves," she said.

"The players are focused, and we are working on finishing our chances. We know that it is like a final for us," said Valverde.

"They have been working hard to create history for their country for many months. So we must be aware that we have a clear opportunity to qualify and a clear opportunity to finish this phase well and hopefully achieve it."

While the India head coach wants her side to play a certain brand of football, she is aware of the threats that Chinese Taipei pose.

"If we reproduce the version of football we showed in the second half of the first match, we will be very close to achieving success. On the other hand, Chinese Taipei are well organised in their style of play," she said.

"They had a very strong defensive phase in their first match and adjusted their formation slightly, but they played a very intelligent game against Japan."

"We need to bring intensity, be a team that want the ball, and try to take it forward into attack. That is one of our advantages, especially considering the abilities of our players, and we will try to make the most of that," said Valverde.

India midfielder Shilky Devi Hemam echoed the coach's feelings.

"We have learned our lessons from the last game, and I think this (Chinese Taipei) will be a special match for us," said Shilky.

"It's a great opportunity for us, and we have to make the most of it."

Chinese Taipei, on the other hand, have a much easier task. A draw will be enough for them to seal progression to the knockout stage. Head coach Prasobchok Chokemor, though, is egging his side for a win.

He said, "The team are more confident after bouncing back in the last match, but I must make sure they don't end up being over-confident."

"Of course, while we have a good chance of qualifying even with a draw, we will still go on the pitch and play to win the match and not worry about other factors in the other matches." (PTI)



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CBC 01101/13/0025/2526