

Adani-Total Gas triples industrial gas price as West Asia conflict disrupts LNG supplies

NEW DELHI, March 5: Adani Total Gas Ltd, the city gas joint venture of Adani Group and France's TotalEnergies, has nearly tripled gas prices for large industrial consumers after disruptions to LNG supplies triggered by the West Asia conflict halting shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, sources said.

The company raised industrial gas prices to about Rs 119 per standard cubic metre from Rs 40, according to a company memo cited by sources, as it tapped costlier alternative supplies following curbs in contracted LNG availability.

Shipping through the Strait of Hormuz -- the narrow sea lane that carries about one-fifth of the world's oil and large volumes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) -- has slowed to a near halt following US and Israeli attacks on Iran and Tehran's retaliatory strikes.

Qatar shut down the LNG plant after it came under drone and missile attack. Indian buyers could not send ships to Qatar because shipping through the Strait of Hormuz -- the narrow waterway between Iran and Oman -- remains effectively shut.

With LNG supplies from QatarEnergy, India's largest gas supplier, disrupted, supply cuts have been imposed on several industrial users and city gas distribution companies. Consumers affected by the curbs have increasingly turned to alternative fuels that cost more than twice the normal rate.

"Due to recent geopolitical developments impacting LNG supply routes, ATGL has received upstream gas curtailment, leading to operational constraints," the com-



pany said, explaining the steep price increase.

Countries in the Middle East account for roughly 30 per cent of global crude oil and 20 per cent of global LNG production, most of which transits the Strait of Hormuz.

India imports about 88 per cent of its crude oil and around half of its LNG, with 40-50 per cent of crude oil and 50-60 per cent of LNG shipments routed through the corridor, which is roughly 21 nautical miles wide at its narrowest point, with the shipping lanes even narrower -- two 2-mile-wide channels separated by a 2-mile buffer.

Energy prices have already surged amid the conflict. Brent crude has climbed to around USD 84 per barrel from an average of USD 66-67 in January-February 2026, while Asian spot LNG prices have jumped from about USD 10 per million British thermal unit to USD 24-25 per mmBtu.

India, which relies on long-term LNG contracts with Qatar for a large share of its gas needs, has seen cargo deliveries temporarily

suspended, forcing supply cuts of up to 40 per cent for several industrial consumers and city gas distributors.

While some industrial users can switch to costlier alternative fuels, the city gas sector has warned of severe stress. Operators say replacing contracted Qatari LNG with spot cargoes priced at more than double could erode the cost advantage of compressed natural gas (CNG) and potentially push consumers toward electric vehicles.

Supplier QatarEnergy has issued a force majeure notice to its Indian buyer, Petronet LNG Ltd, citing hostilities in the region that have prevented it from fulfilling supply commitments. Petronet has, in turn, declared force majeure to downstream buyers, who have begun curtailing supplies to customers such as Adani Total Gas Ltd (ATGL).

State-run GAIL (India) said on Thursday it will assess curtailing supplies to natural gas customers after a force majeure notice from long-term supplier Petronet.

The allocation of LNG from Petronet to GAIL has been reduced to zero with effect from March 4, GAIL said, adding that the potential impact from the force majeure could not be quantified.

Sumit Ritolia, analyst at Kpler, said India sits among the most exposed buyers in the region. As per Kpler tracking, more than half of its LNG imports come via Hormuz (Qatar and the UAE), making the country particularly vulnerable to both physical supply disruptions and price shocks.

"This dependence matters because many of India's long-term LNG contracts are linked to oil prices, while any additional volumes typically need to be sourced from the spot market -- often at significantly higher prices during supply disruptions," he said. "The current situation is already tightening regional balances and increasing replacement costs."

If the disruption through Hormuz persists, Indian buyers may need to procure higher-priced spot cargoes or reduce consumption. Price-sensitive sectors, particularly industrial users and smaller gas distributors, could shift toward alternative fuels such as oil products, naphtha or petroleum coke.

He said replacement LNG volumes could come from the US, West Africa, Australia or Russia, but longer shipping distances mean higher freight costs and slower delivery times.

"In the near term, India's priority will likely be ensuring supply security for critical sectors, particularly fertilizers with the sowing season approaching, as well as cooking gas and power generation," he added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Preeti Kumari to

transferred to the General Administration Department as its Secretary. BTC Secretary Gakul Chandra Brahma will be the new Chirang DC.

The Assam Assembly elections for 126 constituencies are expected to take place in April this year. This will be the first assembly election after the delimitation exercise, which was done in 2023. (PTI)

Sonowal lays base

Authority of India (IWAD), a senior official said.

"Cargo traffic on NW-2 has been growing consistently, and the Brahmaputra corridor is now integral to supply chains serving Assam's tea, coal and fertiliser industries, in addition to carrying passenger and tourism traffic."

"The new lighthouses will enable 24x7 safe navigation, accommodate weather observation sensors and provide the navigational infrastructure necessary for the sustained growth of both freight and passenger movement on the river," he added.

Each lighthouse is scheduled for completion within 24 months of the award of contract, following geotechnical investigation, topographic survey and detailed design.

A Memorandum of Understanding between IWAI and Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL) was signed in April 2025, covering all four sites.

The sites were formally transferred to DGLL under Right of Use agreements executed in June 2025, after a technical proposal placed before the Central Advisory Committee for Aids to Navigation.

The DGLL, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, is the statutory authority responsible for providing aids to navigation across India's 11,098 kilometre coastline and now its inland waterways. (PTI)

Iran calls for

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

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

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

The war keeps expanding

Israel announced multiple incoming missile attacks and air sirens sounded in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, while Gulf countries also reported coming under fire.

In Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, a drone was shot down near the Al Dhafra Air Base, which hosts US forces, and shrapnel fell to the ground, authorities said. Six people were wounded.

Qatar evacuated residents near the US Embassy in Doha as a temporary precaution and later reported a missile attack on the city. Saudi Arabia said it destroyed a drone in its province bordering Jordan.

Israel appeared to be preparing to step up its attacks on Lebanon, where it is targeting the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militant group.

The Israeli military also said a wave of strikes on Iran hit long-range ballistic missile launch sites and other targets.

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev accused Iran of carrying out "a groundless act of terror and aggression" after a drone crashed Thursday near the airport in Nakhchivan, a region bordering Iran that is separated from the rest of the country by Armenia.

Another drone fell near a school and two civilians were injured, Azerbaijan's Foreign Ministry said.

Aliyev said the military had been instructed "to prepare and implement retaliatory measures."

Iran's general staff of the armed forces denied it had launched drones toward Azerbaijan. The denial comes as Iran has repeatedly denied targeting oil infrastructure and other civilian targets during the war, despite its drone and missile fire hitting those sites.

A tanker apparently came under attack off the coast of Kuwait early Thursday, expanding the area where commercial shipping was in danger, according to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Centre run by the British military. It said there was an explosion but did not offer a cause.

Since the war began Saturday, ships have been attacked in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world's oil is shipped. That has caused oil prices to soar -- though they briefly came down Wednesday, before resuming their climb Thursday.

Israel issues evacuation warning for Beirut suburbs

Israel issued an evacuation notice calling for all residents of Beirut's southern suburbs to "save your lives and evacuate your homes immediately," apparently signalling plans for heavy bombardment of the area.

Since the resurgence of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah militant group, which struck Israel in the opening days of the war, Israel has hit sites in Beirut's suburbs and issued a blanket warning for residents of southern Lebanon to evacuate. But it had not issued such a warning for areas near the country's capital.

Among the 80 targets in Lebanon the Israeli military said it hit over the past 24 hours were "several command centres" used by Hezbollah in Beirut. It showed video footage of a building being hit, but provided no further details. (AP)

DGP's fake video

online scam, the police said. "Assam Police is initiating strict legal action against those creating or circulating such digitally manipulated content," they added.

The video has a phone number and a UPI ID for monetary transactions. (PTI)

DYFI questions handling

Service Commission (APSC) examinations for 2013 and 2014.

While the report into the 2013 exam was submitted to the government by the panel on March 21, 2022, the second one into the 2014 exam was submitted on October 12, 2023.

The government submitted the report in Assam Assembly on February 17 last year, while the Action Taken Report (ATR) was tabled on February 16 this year.

Nath said, "The report had recommended cancellation of all appointments made during the concerned years after finding substantial evidence of large-scale corruption. However, shockingly many officers clearly identified as beneficiaries of this scam continue to serve in important administrative positions under the present BJP government."

Some of the officers, who were later suspended for allegedly securing their appointments through unfair means, are now attempting to mislead the court by concealing crucial facts, and even challenged the legality and validity of the enquiry commission report, he alleged.

The DYFI further alleged that for years, no decisive action was taken against the tainted officers identified by the Commission and in some cases, they were even promoted.

"In one instance, a candidate accused in the scam was reportedly issued a clean character certificate by the Home Department for consideration by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). We are compelled to believe that the entire episode reflects a deliberate conspiracy by the Himanta Biswa Sharma government," Nath claimed. (PTI)

Three NDA candidates

Council (BTC), will be the United Peoples Party Liberal's second MP in the Rajya Sabha.

The other members of the Upper House include Union minister Pabitra Margherita and Kanad Purkayastha of the BJP, Asom Gana Parishad's Birendra Prasad Baishya and UPPL's Rwngra Narzary.

The 126-member Assam assembly comprises 64 from the BJP, while its allies AGP has nine members, UPPL seven and the Bodo Peoples' Front (BPF) three MLAs.

The opposition Congress has 26 members, the AIUDF 15, while there is one from the CPI(M) and an independent MLA. (PTI)

BJP's earning accounted

and the BSP's income decreased by 9.56 per cent (₹ 6.19 crore).

AAP's income witnessed a significant growth of 73.20 per cent (₹ 16.60 crore).

In FY 2024-25, national parties declared a total income of ₹ 7960.09 crore, of which 85.08 per cent (₹ 6772.53 crore) came from donations/contributions and 14.92 per cent (₹ 1187.56 crore) from other sources.

The BJP derived 90.48 per cent of its total income from donations amounting to ₹ 6124.85 crore, while AAP received 99.85 per cent (₹ 39.22 crore) and NPEP received 97.74 per cent (₹ 2.14 crore) of their total income through contributions.

In contrast, the BSP reported 100 per cent of its income (₹ 58.58 crore) from other sources with no donations, whereas INC received 56.86 per cent (₹ 522.13 crore) from donations and 43.14 per cent (₹ 396.15 crore) from other sources, and CPI(M) received 48.77 per cent (₹ 84.17 crore) from donations and 51.23 per cent (₹ 88.42 crore) from other sources.

National parties that received the highest income from donations/contributions include the BJP (₹ 6124.85 crore), Congress (₹ 522.13 crore), CPI(M) (₹ 84.17 crore), AAP (₹ 39.22 crore) and NPEP (₹ 2.14 crore).

The collection from issuing coupons, ₹ 350.12 crore declared by the Congress, formed 38.12 per cent of its total income during 2024-25.

The report said the most common and popular items of expenditure for national parties are the election expenses and administrative/general expenses.

The BJP spent ₹ 3335.36 crore on election/general propaganda, followed by ₹ 323.05 crore for administrative costs.

The Congress spent ₹ 896.22 crore on election expenditure, followed by expenses towards administrative and general expenses of around ₹ 159.68 crore.

CPI(M) spent ₹ 78.11 crore on administrative and general expenses followed by ₹ 51.03 crore on Employee Cost. (PTI)

CJI Surya Kant

Tobgay reaffirmed that strong cooperation between India and Bhutan, anchored in shared values, institutional collaboration, and people-to-people engagement, would continue to play an important role in addressing the emerging challenges while advancing development and justice in the region.

During the deliberations, CJI Kant offered to facilitate internship opportunities for students from the JSW School of Law in Bhutan.

"These internships would provide exposure to the functioning of courts, legal drafting, pleadings and advocacy, as well as insights into how senior lawyers prepare and argue cases," the release said.

The statement on the CJI's meeting with the king of Bhutan said both leaders also deliberated on the emergent proliferation of cybercrimes and how India and Bhutan can make joint efforts to prevent and prosecute such offences.

"The conversations reaffirmed the cultural, spiritual and intellectual bond between the two countries and the resolve to sustain the exchange of ideas, philosophies and support," the statement said. (PTI)

Tension over Strait of Hormuz threatens India's tea exports

KOLKATA, March 5: Indian tea exports could face significant disruption if tensions in West Asia escalate further and shipping through the Strait of Hormuz is affected, according to the Tea Association of India. The association said a substantial portion of India's tea shipments to key markets in the Persian Gulf region, including Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, pass through the strategic strait. Iran said it will not allow vessels through this strait except for Chinese cargo. In 2025, India exported about 280 million kg of tea, of which nearly 41 per cent, 115 million kg, was shipped collectively to the UAE, Iran and Iraq, the association said. "Therefore, any disruption or suspension of trade through the Strait of Hormuz due to the ongoing war will have a serious impact on Indian tea exports," Tea Association of India President Shailja Mehta said in the statement.

NAME CHANGE

INARZINA KHATUN (Old Name), D/O - NASIR UDDIN AHMED, Mother of SUFIA KHATUN, Wife of ZULFIKAR ALI, Resident Of VIII-Ghoramara, P/O - Rainadabri, P/S & Dist - Kokrajhar BTR, Assam PIN-783370. Shall henceforth be known as new Name NARZIMA BEGUM declared before the NOTARY PUBLIC GOVT. OF INDIA Affidavit vide No-02, Serial No-2670, Page No-31, Dated-01/08/25 NARZINA KHATUN (old Name) and NARZIMA BEGUM (New Name) both are same and identical person. Your's faithfully NARZIMA BEGUM

AFFIDAVIT

By an Affidavit sworn before the Notary Public, Dipu Judicial Court I have declared and affirmed that my name is Mukesh Singh which is recorded in Aadhaar Card vide no. 4552 3407 2157. But in the our Family Details Book, vide PTO No. 3/1274/0054/2018 where my name has been wrongly recorded as Mukesh Singh Quari instead of Mukesh Singh. The name of "Mukesh Singh" and "Mukesh Singh Quari" is the same and single person but not different individual. Mukesh Singh S/O :- Triloki Singh Vill:- Sikaripather, Bakaliaghat P.O.+P.S:- Bakalia Dist- Karbi Anglong (Assam)

No. SMED/DMCH/Misc./2019/04/PT-5/

NOTICE

This is for general information to all concerned that the Walk-In Interview scheduled to be held on 06.03.2026 (Thursday) for engagement to the post of **Temporary Electrician** for operation and maintenance of the **33/11 KV Substation of Dipu Medical College & Hospital**, Dipu, as per Advertisement No. **SMED/DMCH/Misc./2019/04/PT-5/2200 dated 24.02.2026**, is hereby postponed until further notice due to unavoidable circumstances.

The revised date and time will be notified in due course. All eligible candidates are requested to keep themselves updated and follow further notifications regarding the rescheduled interview.

Sd/-
Principal cum Chief Superintendent
Dipu Medical College & Hospital, Dipu

DIPR /D/HLT/310/6-Mar-26

Blenders Pride Packaged Drinking Water launches 'The One And Only' campaign

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 5: Blenders Pride Packaged Drinking Water has unveiled its new campaign titled "The One And Only", presenting a fresh narrative that celebrates the idea of success through distinction.

The campaign highlights the brand's belief that true success lies in standing apart rather than simply achieving visible milestones.

In a world where markers of success have become increasingly common, the campaign emphasises individuality, influence and the ability to command admiration.

The concept is portrayed through three protagonists—Avanti Nagrath, Kirandeep Chahal and Mahieka Sharma—each representing a different dimension of the brand's message.

Avanti Nagrath is depicted as embodying fearless confidence and individuality, Kirandeep Chahal symbolises bold presence and magnetism, while Mahieka Sharma represents poise and quiet admiration.

According to the company, the campaign reflects the brand's longstanding association with aspirational success and cultural influence in modern India.

Over the years, Blenders Pride has positioned itself around style and innovation through several initiatives, including fashion platforms and lifestyle experiences.

Debasree Dasgupta, chief marketing officer of Pernod Ricard India, said the campaign introduces a renewed idea of success driven by distinction and individuality.

She noted that today's youth aspire not only to achieve success but also to stand out with confidence and influence.

The campaign has been rolled out as a 360-degree marketing initiative across digital and social platforms, front-page newspaper advertisements and outdoor displays in major cities.

It is also being promoted alongside major sporting events such as the ICC T20 World Cup to maximise nationwide visibility.

Yezdi Unveils Chrome-Styled Roadster 'Red Wolf'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 5: Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles has announced the release of a special edition motorcycle, the Yezdi Roadster 'Red Wolf', was launched on March 3, 2026, coinciding with the Red Moon night.

The model draws inspiration from the brand's iconic motorcycles of the 1970s and features a retro-styled deep red finish complemented by extensive chrome detailing. The new Roadster Red Wolf retains the company's 350 Alpha2 liquid-cooled engine paired with a six-speed gearbox along with an assist and slipper clutch.

Designed as a long-haul roadster, the motorcycle combines vintage styling with modern performance features including dual-channel ABS, LED lighting and touring-friendly ergonomics.

The motorcycle features a sculpted fuel tank, wide rear and hugger fenders, and the widest-in-segment rear tyre to enhance its road presence. A rich brown seat, modular solo-pillon configuration and bobber-style tail design contribute to its retro aesthetic.

The twin-barrel exhaust produces the signature sound associated with the Yezdi Roadster range.

Anupam Thareja, Co-founder of

Jawa Yezdi Motorcycles, said the Red Wolf continues the legacy of Yezdi as one of the few classic motorcycle brands with deep roots in India's motorcycling history.

He noted that the model blends the brand's vintage design cues with modern engineering built for contemporary riders and Indian road conditions.

The motorcycle is equipped with a 12.5-litre fuel tank offering a range of over 350 kilometres. Centre-forward footpegs are designed to create a relaxed riding posture, while telescopic front forks and dual rear shocks aim to provide stability and comfort on long rides.

Bengal building circular economy, pushing green energy transition

KOLKATA, March 5: West Bengal is emerging as a model for green development through a combination of circular economy initiatives, renewable energy expansion and water conservation programmes, Principal Chief Advisor to Chief Minister & Finance Department Amit Mitra said on Thursday.

Speaking at the Bengal

Chamber of Commerce and Industry summit on sustainability, Mitra said the state government has been pursuing a range of initiatives aimed at sustainable development while addressing climate change challenges and livelihood generation. Citing the global climate crisis that has caused damages worth USD 2.8 trillion over the past two decades, he said West Bengal has attempted to build a "circular economy" model combining ecological protection with economic activity.

One of the initiatives includes the excavation of around 800 kilometres of creeks designed to trap rainwater and create a "sweet water" ecosystem that supports shrimp cultivation.

"We planted mangroves along these 800 kilometres of creeks... the leaves fall into the sweet water, and that becomes feed for the shrimps," Mitra said.

Circular economy initiatives have helped women self-help groups engaged in shrimp farming, he said. According to Mitra, the initiative has also supported exports, noting that "the export of shrimps from West Bengal is USD 500 million."

The state has also made progress in green transport and renewable energy, he said, adding that West Bengal currently has 2,62,620 registered green vehicles supported by 805 charging stations.

Nearly 75,000 two-wheelers and around 1,63,000 solar three-wheelers are operating in the state's EV space, while solar power projects with a combined capacity of 3,763 MW are nearing completion, including a project supported by Germany's KfW bank, he said.

"I do see green (number) plates, but I didn't know how many are registered," Mitra remarked,

adding that the state is "systematically working in different elements of this value chain" under the leadership of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

He also highlighted land and water conservation initiatives such as 'Matir Srishti' and 'Jal Dhoro Jal Bharo'. Under the Matir Srishti programme, around 42,000 acres of arid land have been converted into productive horticulture zones benefiting tribal communities and women, he said. The state has also dug about five lakh small ponds to preserve the water table.

"Many of them help in the sweet water. So you don't have to go into the water table to reduce the water table," Mitra said.

Mitra further said forest cover in the state has increased by 2,688 sq km, while around 15 crore mangroves have been planted along the coastline. (PTI)

UPPL president files nomination from Assam Citizens welcome Pramod Boro's Rajya Sabha nomination



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, March 5: Marking a significant political development for the Bodo community with the opportunity of having three Members of Parliament (MPs) under the banner of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), the president of UPPL and former BTC Chief Executive Member (CEM),

Pramod Boro, filed his nomination for the Rajya Sabha elections from Assam on Thursday.

Remarkably, three Rajya Sabha seats from the state are falling vacant following the retirement of Bhubaneswar Kalita and Rameswar Teli of the BJP, along with Independent MP Ajit Kumar Bhuyan, whose

terms conclude in April.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has approved the names of Terash Gowala, sitting MLA and Jogen Mohan, Cabinet Minister of Assam, as its candidates for the Rajya Sabha from Assam.

The last date for filing nominations is March 5. Scrutiny of nominations will take place on March 6, while March 9 is the deadline for withdrawal of candidatures. Polling and counting of votes will be held on March 16, with counting scheduled to begin at 5 PM. The entire election process will be completed by March 20.

During the nomination filing, he was accompanied by Union Cabinet Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, MPs Rungwa Narzary and Joyanta Basumatary, NDA leaders, MLAs and senior UPPL leaders.

The UPPL party extended warm congratulations and felicitations to its president and former CEM of BTR, Pramod Boro, for filing his nomination for the Rajya Sabha elections from the state of Assam. The party expressed its gratitude and sincere thanks to all NDA alliance partners and like-minded MLAs who extended their support during the filing of the nomination.

Citizens cutting across communities have expressed their welcome and goodwill over the opportunity for the Bodoland region to have another Rajya Sabha member from Assam in 2026. The opportunity has paved the way for three MPs from the region, including two in the Rajya Sabha and one in the Lok Sabha.

After filing the nomination, Pramod Boro, UPPL president and former CEM of BTR, stated that he filed his nomination as UPPL's candidate for the Rajya Sabha elections. He said he is committed to strengthening the voice of BTR and Assam in Parliament and to working for peace, unity and inclusive development across the region. He also extended his gratitude and thanks to the NDA alliance partner leaders.

"I filed my nomination today as UPPL's Rajya Sabha candidate from Assam in the presence of senior leaders of our National Democratic Alliance (NDA). I'm deeply grateful for the trust and blessings bestowed on me by the people. With renewed resolve, I remain committed to strengthening the voice of BTR and Assam in Parliament and to working for peace, unity and inclusive development across our region," he added.

Central minister holds meeting from Guwahati; set to inspect projects in Dima Hasao



HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, March 5: The Minister of State for Home Affairs, GoI, Bandi Sanjay

Kumar, on Thursday held a review meeting of various schemes and projects under different departments through video conference from Guwahati. Principal Secretary Partha Sarathi Jahari, ACS made the power point presentation of all the departments during the VC. All the departmental heads, APEX bodies and representatives of various organisations were also present during the meeting.

An overall view of some key departments such as P& RD (Panchayat & Rural Development, Education, Health, Social Welfare, Agriculture departments, etc were done by the Minister.

It is to note that MoS Bandi Sanjay Kumar is scheduled to visit Dima Hasao on 6 March and review various projects physically in and around the district quarters. Inspection of some schemes such as PMGSY roads, Aganwadi centre, ME/ LP school, Fair Price shop, Health Sub-centre, JIM Project, PMAY-G etc. He is also scheduled to visit Civil Hospital, PM Shri Govt Girls' Higher Secondary School. The Minister will also visit Sampardisa village and interact with the villagers and beneficiaries there.

No shortage of petrol or diesel in Cachar

Administration urges public not to panic

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, March 5: The Office of the Superintendent of Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, Cachar has clarified that there is no shortage of petroleum products in the district, even as queues have been noticed at a few petrol pumps in recent hours.

According to an official press note issued on Thursday, the district administration has observed that some people have been lining up at certain fuel outlets to purchase petroleum products such as petrol and diesel. However, authorities have categorically stated that there is no supply disruption or scarcity of fuel in Cachar district.

The department has confirmed that all petrol pumps across the dis-

trict are adequately stocked with petrol and diesel and the supply of petroleum products is continuing smoothly without any difficulty.

In view of the situation, the Superintendent of Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, Cachar has urged the esteemed citizens of the district not to panic or indulge in unnecessary rush at fuel stations. The public has been requested to remain calm and continue their normal purchasing habits, as there is sufficient availability of petrol and diesel throughout the district.

The district administration reiterated that there is no cause for concern and adequate arrangements are in place to ensure uninterrupted supply of petroleum products across Cachar.

Mishap claims one life at Sejusa

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARIALI, March 5: In a tragic road accident that took place at Sejusa on Wednesday night a youth lost his life. According to information, a speedy dumper approaching from the Arunachal Pradesh side hit a motorcycle bearing registration number AS 32 A 0711 near the entry point to the neighbouring state resulting in the instant death of the youth who was identified as Ishan Basumatary (20 years). The dumper managed to flee away from the site due to the night. Based on an input, a team of Itakhola outpost reached the accident site and traced the identity of the owner of the motorcycle. Yet the motorcycle belonged to one Ranjan Ramsiyari, a resident of Jaisidhhi, Baljuri of Itakhola outpost under Biswanath district but Ishan Basumatary had taken the motorcycle that day who met the fatal death. The dumper which was deployed in a construction work in Arunachal Pradesh had surrendered at the Itakhola outpost this morning. The body of the deceased was sent for autopsy.

KVK holds awareness programme for Kuleng Valley Farmer Producer Company

HT Bureau

DIPHU, March 5: In a strategic move to bolster the local agricultural economy, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Karbi Anglong organised a comprehensive awareness and mobilisation programme on Thursday for the Kuleng Valley Farmer Producer Company Limited (FPC) at the Umswai Cultural Hall.

The event served as a critical platform for addressing the logistical hurdles faced by rural producers and outlining the financial roadmap for the FPC's future.

The programme commenced with a welcome address by Dr Monuj Kumar Doley, Senior Scientist & Head of KVK. Dr Doley highlighted that the success of the Kuleng Valley FPC relies entirely on the collective strength of its members.

"There is an urgent need to strengthen the FPC structure," Dr Doley stated, urging farmers to transition from individual farming to a more active, collaborative participation within the company to achieve better bargaining power.

Attending as a special guest, K Vaiphei, District Development Manager of NABARD, provided expert insights into the institutional



framework of Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs). He detailed the various financial support schemes available through NABARD, emphasising that institutional strengthening is the first step toward securing credit and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Voices from the Field
Local entrepreneurs Edmund Timung and Goldeep Timung shared their personal journeys, offering practical advice on navigating the challenges of agri-entrepreneurship in the region.

However, the interactive session revealed several systemic "pain

points" that continue to hinder local progress. Farmers collectively identified four major barriers like: A lack of nearby banking facilities makes daily transactions difficult; the long distance to primary markets erodes profit margins; the total absence of storage facilities in the vicinity and the lack of a regulated market in the area, leaving farmers vulnerable to price fluctuations.

The programme concluded with a commitment from KVK officials to document these grievances and work alongside NABARD to bridge the infrastructure gap for the Kuleng Valley community.

Asom Yuva Parishad Sonitpur takes 'Sankalpa Yatra'

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, March 5: At the call of the central committee of the Asom Yuva Parishad, the youth wing of the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) a motorcycle rally under the title "Sankalpa Yatra" was organised in Tezpur on Thursday. The programme was organised jointly by the Sonitpur district unit of the Asom Yuva Parishad and the Tezpur Legislative Assembly Constituency unit.

Among those who participated in the rally were central president of the Asom Yuva Parishad Jitu Borgohain, working president Hrishikesh Sarma, AGP vice-president Apurba Kumar Bhat-tacharya, Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rava and Sonitpur district president of the AGP Ratul Kumar Nath. Participants in the Sankalpa Yatra said that Tezpur has remained a stronghold of the AGP and that the party's organisational base in the area continues to be strong.

Leopard killed by angry residents in Duliajan



HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, March 5: A leopard was killed by an angry resident of Duliajan in Dibrugarh district on Wednesday after it allegedly attacked a man.

According to reports, the incident occurred in the Tipling Gutbari locality of Duliajan on Wednesday afternoon when the leopard attacked a local resident identified as Rubul Dutta.

"Rubul Dutta sustained injuries in the attack and was immediately

rushed to the Oil India Hospital in Duliajan. He is currently undergoing treatment," said a source.

Following the attack on Dutta, panic spread across the locality and a agitated section of residents retaliated and killed the leopard.

Yet again a leopard was killed by humans after forest department failed to trap the animal after repeated appeals from the local residents.

For months, several areas of Duliajan, including Madhuting

Borkola and Tipling have reportedly witnessed frequent leopard movement, particularly after dusk.

"We have addressed the incident to forest department but they failed to take any step to trap the animal. We have no other option to save ourselves. The agitated residents killed the leopard," said a local resident.

Earlier, killing of leopard in villages of Assam has been reported but the forest department has failed to address the issue.

"The forest department should take cognisance under wildlife act against the people who killed the animal. The rate of conviction is less against wildlife crime. We urged the department to act swiftly to arrest the people involved in such crimes," said Devojit Moran, an environmentalist.

Man-leopard conflict has been rising in village areas after leopard has been venturing in village areas for food. Due to shrinking of forest covers the animals has moving in village areas resulting in conflict.

Conference on 'Key Issues of Child Rights' held in Sonitpur

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, March 5: The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) in collaboration with the District Administration, Sonitpur, organised a District Level Conference on "Key Issues of Child Rights" on Thursday at the Tezpur Convention Centre, Dolabari, here chaired by District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das accompanied by Assistant Commissioner and In-Charge DCPO Chayanika Hazarika, Inspector of Schools Prabhat Das, Joint Director of Health Services Dr Biman Sharma and other concerned officials. The conference aimed at strengthening awareness and improving the implementation of child protection laws and institutional mechanisms at the district level.

The programme commenced with the inaugural session, where officials of the District Administration and representatives of child protection institutions highlighted the need for coordinated action among all stakeholders to safeguard the rights and welfare of children. Following the welcome address and objective briefing by the District Commissioner Ananda Kumar Das, an audio-visual presentation was screened high-

lighting key child protection concerns including child marriage, child labour, child trafficking and other forms of exploitation of children. The presentation also created awareness about the Child Helpline number 1098, which provides immediate assistance and support to children in distress and informed participants about the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) official adoption portal (<https://cara.wcd.gov.in/>) for promoting transparent and legal adoption procedures in the country.

Dr Gitanjali Ghosh, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Law, Tezpur University, delivered a session on "Bullying and Cyber Bullying in Schools: Identification, Prevention and Response Mechanisms." The session emphasised the growing risks associated with cyber spaces and the need for schools, parents and authorities to develop effective response mechanisms to address bullying and online harassment among children. In another session, Abha Borah, former Chairperson of the Child Welfare Committee, Sonitpur, spoke on "Building a Safe Environment - Empowering Teachers, Children and Parents." The session highlighted the importance of awareness, sensitisation and capacity

building among teachers, parents and school authorities in creating a protective environment for children within schools and communities. The conference also featured a session on "Issues Related to Prevention of Child Trafficking" delivered by Hemanta Dahal, Deputy Chief Legal Aid Defence Counsel (LADC) and representative of the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Sonitpur. The discussion focused on identifying vulnerable situations, strengthening preventive measures and ensuring timely legal and institutional support for victims. Senior officials emphasised the importance of effective implementation of key legislations including the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

The conference brought together major stakeholders including officials from the Departments of Education, Health, Police, Women and Child Development, members of Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), officials from the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), representatives of Child Care Institutions (CCIs), school principals and teachers and representatives from civil society organisations.

OIL conducts Level-III mock drill at Secondary Tank Farm-Madhuban

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, March 5: As a part of assessing emergency preparedness to tackle any disaster, Secondary Tank Farm Madhuban of Oil India Limited (OIL) successfully conducted a Level-III

Mock Drill at around 10:00 AM on 04th March 2026 under Dibrugarh District, Assam. The Drill was successfully conducted by joint efforts of various departments of OIL, external stakeholders such as District Administration, DDMA, NDRF, CISF, Civil defense and Mutual Aid Partners like HOEC, BCPL.

The scenario for the drill was leakage from crude oil inlet line connected to storage tank T-003 which resulted in ignition and fire due to lightning, followed by injuries to personnel working inside the plant.

The situation demanded immediate activation of emergency response mechanisms and coordinated firefighting and rescue operations with the assistance of NDRF teams.

As per the laid down procedure of ERDMP under PNGRB, the Site Incident Controller immediately activated the Emergency Shutdown switch as per isolation plan. Immediately, the Security, Fire Service and Medical authorities were put on high alert and emergency response procedures were activated. The Fire Services of OIL and Mutual-Aid Partners successfully tackled the fire disaster.

Rescue & relief operations were jointly carried out by NDRF, Civil Defence, CISF & OIL Medical Teams. The drill was completed after receiving clearance from Kulbhushan Pegu, ACS, District Administration representative at around 11:08 AM. Tara Shankar Barman, CGM (Central Fields), represented RCE & Agent of PSS Mine. The drill ended with a formal de-briefing session where the observations and areas of improvement for such mock drill were discussed. The overall participation and response by the concerned stakeholders were found to be encouraging towards developing confidence to face real time emergencies.

Governor inaugurates two new school buildings in Haflong

Focus on value-based education and preservation of local heritage

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, March 5: The Governor of Assam, Lakshman Prasad Acharya, accompanied by the First Lady of Assam, Kumud Devi on Thursday inaugurated the new school buildings of Vivekananda Vidyalaya and Saraswati Vidya Mandir Secondary School at Haflong, marking a major milestone for education in the Dima Hasao district.

The ceremony was held in the presence of Chief Executive Member (CEM) of NCHAC, Debolal Gorlosa and Minister of Sports and Youth Welfare, Nandita Gorlosa. Other notable attendees included Executive Members (EMs), MACs, the District Commissioner and other senior officials.

During the inauguration, Governor Acharya emphasised the vital role of value-based education and character building in shaping the nation's future. He commended the local administration's efforts in prioritising academic excellence



and infrastructure development in the hill district. He specifically highlighted the importance of incorporating the ideology of Swami Vivekananda into the curriculum, urging students and educators to draw inspiration from his teach-

ings on strength, service and self-reliance.

During the event, CEM Gorlosa shared a message on social responsibility. Reflecting on the human experience, he stated that human beings are guests for a

short period of time in this world and that individuals living in society have a moral obligation to perform good deeds and leave a positive legacy. He underscored that the survival of a community relies heavily on the preservation of its mother tongue, traditions and heritage.

He further emphasised that the upcoming generation must remain rooted in their heritage, asserting that young people must know their own mother tongue, culture and tradition. In a major move to bolster linguistic heritage, Gorlosa announced that the Dimas language has officially been introduced as a Modern Indian Language (MIL) subject in schools to develop and sustain the region's cultural identity.

The inauguration concluded with an inspection of the new facilities, which are expected to serve as vital hubs for both academic and cultural learning in the region.

2 dead bodies found at Nagaon railway station

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, March 5: A shocking incident unfolded at the Nagaon railway station this morning where two bodies were found, sending shockwaves through the local community.

According to eyewitnesses, the first body, believed to be that of a young man, was found near the station's counter around 8:30 AM. The Railway Police took the body into custody and initiated an investigation. Sources suggest the deceased, identified as Chandra Mani, was a drug addict and his death is suspected to be linked to an overdose. In another separate incident, a woman's body was found approximately 100 meters from the station. Witnesses claim she had alighted from the Chennai - Shilghat Tamaram train and was conversing with some locals when she collapsed and died.

The area is gripped in grief, with both incidents sparking widespread concern. The Railway Police have sent the bodies for post-mortem examination at Nagaon Medical College Hospital. The woman's identity is yet to be ascertained till the time of filing this report, sources added further.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see a shadow. - Helen Keller

Opposition to targeted cash transfers

Recently, a sharp and categorical statement by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) to the effect that cash transfers to certain sections of beneficiaries have to be foregone, has rightfully drawn sharp criticism. He opined that governments should instead focus on creating permanent assets. One would like to recall that the very idea of welfare state emerged as a post war response of capitalist democracies to take on the initiatives of socialist governments for people's welfare. This is the crux of the notion of welfare state across modern democracies, particularly in the West. Targeted cash transfers evolved within that scheme of things. In some instances, it has assumed certain distortions; however, that is despite the general acceptance of such cash transfers. In post war democracies it has been accepted that such cash allocations is an integral part of the budgetary process. Within the constitutional scheme of the capitalist states there is clear separation of powers between the three organs - executive, legislature and judiciary. Precise separation of powers is an essential prerogative of the constitutional scheme as these organs ensure the principle of checks and balances. In the Indian Constitution, which was written in the backdrop of the outcome of the Second World War, budget making is an exclusive power of the legislature, subject to its endorsement as proposed by the political executive. Therefore, it is beyond the judiciary to interfere with the exclusive prerogative of the executive and the legislature. It is apparent that the CJI has transgressed that line.

With the policy direction and extreme centralisation of the communal-corporate nexus which governs us at this moment, it is apparent that such a transgression cuts through the constitutional scheme and disrupts the mutual separation and balance of powers of the constitutional arrangement. The observation of the CJI, therefore, does deliver a similar body blow on the constitutional scheme. This is quite typical of what is being witnessed now. As a result of the overwhelming encroachment of Hindutva ideas, such transgressions are being experienced on a daily basis. In fact, due to the pressures of the Hindutva offensive, the executive, in particular, is straining and eroding the other two organs. It is this process which is leading to the weakening, if not dismantling, of all independent constitutional entities, including the judiciary.

The current observation of the CJI stands in sharp contrast to the apex courts argument of staying insulated from the decision of the Election Commission of India (ECI) to proceed with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Today, newspapers have reported that as a result of the design and method adopted by the SIR process, 1 crore 70 lakh names of voters have been deleted from the final electoral rolls of six states and three union territories. This is an indication of the total number of voters that will stand deleted when the entire exercise is completed.

Assamese language in higher education: Importance and Relevance

Language serves as the bedrock of human cognition, cultural heritage, and societal progress. For any nation aspiring to intellectual sovereignty, the medium through which knowledge is imparted holds profound significance. In the context of Assam, where the Assamese language has recently been elevated to classical status, the debate over its role in higher education transcends mere pedagogy. This recognition, bestowed by the Indian government in 2024, marks a pivotal moment, underscoring Assamese's antiquity, richness, and potential as a vehicle for advanced learning. Yet, amid globalization's relentless push toward English dominance, the integration of Assamese into university curricula and research remains underutilized. This editorial delves into the multifaceted importance and relevance of Assamese in higher education, arguing that its promotion is essential not only for preserving linguistic identity but also for fostering genuine intellectual growth, social equity, and innovative contributions to global knowledge.

The essence of higher education lies in nurturing critical thinking, innovation, and the creation of new ideas. Psychological studies, including those from UNESCO and cognitive linguists like Benjamin Lee Whorf, emphasize that learning in one's mother tongue enhances comprehension and retention. When students engage with complex concepts in a familiar linguistic framework, neural pathways form more efficiently, allowing deeper assimilation rather than superficial memorization. For Assamese speakers, who constitute the majority in Assam and parts of the Northeast, this means that subjects like quantum physics or macroeconomic theory could be grasped with greater intuition if taught in Assamese. Historical precedents abound: nations like Japan, Germany, and South Korea have thrived by prioritizing their native languages in higher education, translating technical terms and developing indigenous curricula. In contrast, India's colonial hangover has perpetuated a myth that English alone equips students for modernity. This fallacy has led to a paradoxical outcome in Assam—rising enrollment in colleges but stag-

nant innovation, as evidenced by low patent filings and research output compared to states like Maharashtra or Karnataka.

The classical status of Assamese, aligning it with Tamil, Sanskrit, and others, validates its historical depth. Tracing back over 1,500 years through texts like the Charyapada and the works of Srimanta Sankardev, Assamese boasts a sophisticated vocabulary for philosophy, science, and governance. This heritage refutes claims of linguistic inadequacy for higher studies. Consider Sankardev's Boragets and Ankiya Naats, which encapsulate metaphysical ideas akin to those in Western philosophy; or the Buranjis, chronicles that demonstrate analytical historiography. By leveraging this status, Assam can access central funds for language promotion, potentially establishing dedicated Assamese departments in universities like Gauhati University or Tezpur University. Such initiatives could fund translations of seminal works—from Einstein's relativity to Amartya Sen's economics—into Assamese, creating a robust academic ecosystem. Moreover, this recognition opens doors to interdisciplinary research, blending ancient Assamese manuscripts on astronomy with modern astrophysics, thereby enriching global scholarship with unique perspectives from the Brahmaputra valley.

Beyond academic efficacy, the relevance of Assamese in higher education ties directly to cultural preservation and national identity. In a region as diverse as Assam, with over 40 ethnic groups, Assamese has historically served as a lingua franca, fostering unity amid plurality. Higher education in Assamese would democratize access, particularly for students from rural and tribal areas where English proficiency is low. Data from the National Sample Survey Office indicates that dropout rates in higher education spike among non-English medium students due to language barriers. By contrast, mother-tongue instruction could bridge this gap, empowering marginalized communities like the Bodos, Mising, or Karbis who often bilingual in

Assamese. This inclusivity aligns with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which advocates multilingualism and regional languages in higher education. Imagine medical students at Assam Medical College learning anatomy in Assamese, incorporating local ethnobotanical knowledge from ancient texts like the Hastividya. Such an approach not only preserves indigenous wisdom but also innovates, perhaps leading to breakthroughs in herbal medicine tailored to Assam's biodiversity.

Social equity forms another cornerstone of this argument. The current English-centric system perpetuates elitism, dividing society into those who attend convent schools and those confined to vernacular mediums. In Assam, this manifests in urban-rural disparities: Guwahati's elite institutions produce graduates fluent in global discourse, while rural colleges struggle with underprepared faculty. Promoting Assamese would level the playing field, reducing the mental tax of code-switching and allowing students to focus on content mastery. Research from the World Bank highlights that countries investing in native-language education see higher GDP contributions from educated workforces. For Assam, this could translate to better-prepared professionals in agriculture, tea industry, or disaster management—fields intrinsic to the state's economy.

Furthermore, classical status facilitates international collaborations; for instance, partnerships with institutions studying Indo-Aryan languages could position Assamese as a bridge between South and South-east Asian studies, attracting scholars and funding.

Critics often cite the scarcity of Assamese resources in higher education as a barrier. Indeed, textbooks in advanced subjects are sparse, and technical terminology lacks standardization. However, this is a solvable challenge, not an insurmountable one. The classical tag unlocks grants from the Ministry of Education for corpus development, similar to those for Kannada or Telugu. Assam could establish a Language Commission to coin neologisms—drawing from Sanskrit roots or local di-

allects—for terms like "quantum entanglement" or "blockchain." Digital tools amplify this potential: AI-driven translation software, bolstered by platforms like Google Translate's recent Assamese enhancements, can accelerate content creation. Universities could mandate bilingual theses, where Assamese summaries accompany English abstracts, gradually building a repository. This mirrors successful models in Finland, where Finnish dominates higher education despite English's global role. In Assam, initiatives like the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council's push for vernacular options in competitive exams could extend to UGC-NET or civil services, incentivizing Assamese-medium graduates.

The digital era further underscores Assamese's relevance. With AI and machine learning reshaping education, languages with classical roots like Assamese are prime for digitization. Projects under the Digital India initiative could digitize ancient palm-leaf manuscripts, making them accessible via apps for students. Semantic web technologies could link Assamese terms to global databases, enabling seamless research. For example, a student analyzing climate change impacts on the Majuli river island could use Assamese interfaces to query satellite data, blending local narratives with scientific rigor. This integration counters the risk of linguistic extinction; UNESCO warns that without active use in education and technology, regional languages fade. By embedding Assamese in MOOCs or virtual labs, Assam can nurture a generation of digital natives who innovate in fields like bioinformatics or renewable energy, drawing from cultural motifs like the Xorai or Bihu rhythms for creative problem-solving.

Implementation, however, demands concerted action. Policy-makers must prioritize faculty training, offering incentives for professors to adopt Assamese pedagogy. Collaborations with bodies like the Sahitya Akademi could curate curricula that infuse classical literature into modern disciplines—teaching ethics through Madhavdev's Namghosa alongside Kantian philosophy. Community involvement is crucial: NGOs

and literary societies in towns like Jorhat or Dibrugarh could host workshops, fostering a grassroots movement. Economic viability cannot be overlooked; employers in Assam's public and private sectors should recognize Assamese-medium qualifications, perhaps through affirmative policies in recruitment. The state government, under Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's administration, has already signaled support post-classical status, but sustained investment is key. Challenges like dialectal variations—between Upper and Lower Assamese—require inclusive standardization, ensuring no subgroup feels alienated.

Globally, the push for linguistic diversity in education gains momentum. The United Nations' International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032) advocates protecting tongues like Assamese from marginalization. In higher education, this means resisting homogenization; Assamese can contribute unique insights, such as eco-spirituality from Vaishnavite traditions, to discourses on sustainability. Students educated in Assamese would embody hybrid identities—rooted yet cosmopolitan—capable of navigating international forums while advocating for regional issues like flood management or biodiversity conservation. This relevance extends to diaspora communities in the US or UK, where Assamese programs in universities could preserve heritage while promoting cultural diplomacy.

Ultimately, the importance of Assamese in higher education rests on its power to humanize learning. Education devoid of cultural resonance breeds alienation; in Assamese, it cultivates belonging. As Assam stands at this crossroads, embracing its classical language promises a renaissance—where knowledge flows not as imported wisdom but as an organic evolution. Failure to act risks consigning Assamese to folklore, eroding the very soul of Assamese identity. The time is ripe for bold reforms: let higher education in Assamese become the catalyst for a vibrant, self-assured Assam, contributing meaningfully to India's mosaic and the world's intellectual tapestry. (The author is the recipient of the 'Yuba Lekhak Sanman - 2025' from the Government of Assam)

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Advancing connectivity: Assam's greenfield Airport initiative

By: Dipak Kurmi

The recent signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Assam and the Airports Authority of India marks a significant moment in the region's long and uneven journey toward aviation-led development. At a time when connectivity is increasingly synonymous with economic vitality, the decision to undertake a prefeasibility study for five new Greenfield airports signals both ambition and strategic foresight. Assam, with its complex terrain, dispersed population centres, and vast tourism potential, has long required a more robust aviation network. The proposed initiative, if executed with clarity and discipline, could reshape regional mobility, invigorate tourism circuits, and strengthen the Northeast's integration with the national and global economy.

The five proposed sites — Manas National Park, Umrangso, Diphu, the river island Majuli, and Charaideo — have not been chosen arbitrarily. Each location reflects a distinct developmental logic. Manas National Park represents Assam's high-value eco-tourism potential; Majuli embodies the state's unique cultural geography; Diphu and Umrangso serve the underserved hill districts; and Charaideo carries historical and heritage significance as the cradle of Ahom civilisation. Together, these sites sketch a map of inclusive regional development rather than mere aviation expansion. Should these airports materialise, they would not only reduce travel time but also unlock new circuits of investment, hospitality growth, and local employment.

The renewed attention to aviation infrastructure in Assam must also be read against the broader geographical realities of the Northeast. Surface connectivity in the region, though improving, still faces structural limitations imposed by fragile terrain, seasonal disruptions, and long travel distances. Air connectivity therefore assumes a strategic importance that goes beyond convenience. Greenfield airports, in this context, are not simply transport projects; they are instruments of spatial integration. The Centre's recent policy thrust toward expanding Greenfield aviation infrastructure reflects an awareness that the Northeast's economic take-off depends substantially on reliable air links. The Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture had, in fact, emphasised this nearly two-and-a-half years ago, urging the government to accelerate new airport development where Brownfield expansion faced structural bottlenecks.

Alongside the five proposed Greenfield projects, the call to upgrade the historic Rupsi Airport in Dhubri district adds an important complementary dimension to the state's aviation roadmap. Once among the oldest operational airstrips in the region, Rupsi carries considerable historical weight. Its strategic relevance during World War II underscores how aviation infrastructure in Assam has long been intertwined with broader geopolitical considerations. Yet, for decades, the airport languished in neglect, a casualty of limited policy focus on the Northeast's aviation sector. The recent resumption of commercial flights connecting Dhubri with Guwahati and Kolkata therefore represents more than a routine operational revival; it symbolises a belated recognition of the region's connectivity deficit. However, sustained

investment and modernisation will be necessary if Rupsi is to function as a viable regional hub rather than merely a symbolic reopening.

Understanding the significance of the current initiative requires clarity about what distinguishes a Greenfield airport from its Brownfield counterpart. A Greenfield airport is built from scratch on undeveloped land where no prior aviation infrastructure exists. This fundamental distinction offers planners a degree of freedom rarely available in Brownfield expansion projects. Runways, terminal buildings, air traffic control systems, cargo facilities, and access infrastructure can be designed holistically rather than retrofitted into spatially constrained environments. In contrast, Brownfield projects typically involve expanding or modernising existing airports, often within tight land boundaries and legacy design limitations. These constraints frequently lead to execution delays, cost escalations, and compromised capacity planning.

Another defining feature of Greenfield airports is their emphasis on sustainability and future-readiness. Modern Greenfield designs increasingly incorporate energy-efficient terminals, solar power integration, advanced waste management systems, and noise-minimisation strategies. For a biodiversity-sensitive region like Assam, such environmentally conscious planning is not merely desirable but essential. The proximity of proposed sites like Manas National Park and Majuli to ecologically fragile zones makes it imperative that environmental safeguards are embedded at the planning stage rather than treated as regulatory afterthoughts. If executed with scientific rigour, Greenfield airports in Assam could set new benchmarks in balancing infrastructure growth with ecological stewardship.

The policy momentum behind Greenfield development has been building at the national level. The parliamentary Standing Committee had earlier flagged significant constraints in revamping and expanding Brownfield airports, particularly in terms of site expansion, design rigidity, and execution risks. Many existing airports in India's congested urban centres simply lack the physical space for meaningful runway extension or terminal augmentation. The committee therefore recommended that the government evolve a clear, criteria-based policy to determine when Greenfield development should be preferred over Brownfield expansion. The Assam initiative appears to be aligned with this broader policy thinking, suggesting that the state is positioning itself to benefit from the Centre's aviation modernisation push.

Yet the promise of Greenfield airports has historically been tempered by implementation challenges. Coordination between the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation and state governments has often proved to be a persistent bottleneck. Land acquisition remains the single most formidable hurdle. In many cases across India, projects have stalled for years despite receiving in-principle approval from the Centre. The Standing Committee's observation is telling: although 13 Greenfield airports had obtained preliminary clearance, only four became operational within a decade, while one took nearly twenty years to materialise. Such timelines dilute investor confidence and inflate project costs, ultimately undermining the very purpose of rapid connectivity expansion.

The committee had therefore recommended the creation of a robust coordination mechanism among stakeholders, along with a transparent system to track land acquisition progress and enforce project deadlines. For Assam, the success of the newly proposed airports will hinge less on visionary announcements and more on administrative discipline. Timely land allotment, environmental clearances, rehabilitation frameworks for affected communities, and seamless Centre-state coordination will determine whether these projects become functional assets or remain trapped in the cycle of prolonged gestation that has plagued earlier infrastructure initiatives in the Northeast.

There is also an important strategic dimension that deserves attention. The Northeast occupies a sensitive geopolitical corridor bordering multiple countries, and aviation infrastructure inevitably carries dual-use potential for both civilian and defence logistics. Greenfield enclaves can enhance rapid mobility in times of emergency, disaster response, and strategic deployment. However, the commercial viability of these airports must remain a central consideration. Several regional airports in India have struggled with low passenger volumes and limited airline interest, leading to underutilised infrastructure. For the Assam projects to succeed, they must be integrated into realistic traffic forecasts, tourism circuits, and regional economic planning rather than developed as isolated prestige projects. Tourism, in particular, could emerge as the most immediate beneficiary if the proposed airports are implemented thoughtfully. Destinations like Manas National Park and Majuli have long suffered from access constraints despite their global appeal. Improved air connectivity could shorten travel time dramatically, encourage high-value eco-tourism, and stimulate hospitality investment in surrounding districts. At the same time, planners must guard against the ecological risks of over-tourism. Sustainable visitor management, carrying-capacity assessments, and community participation will be essential to ensure that increased footfall does not erode the very natural and cultural assets that make these destinations attractive.

Ultimately, the MoU between Assam and the Airports Authority of India represents an opportunity window rather than a guaranteed transformation. The state has, in the past, witnessed ambitious infrastructure announcements that faltered during execution. What distinguishes the present moment is the convergence of policy intent at both the state and central levels, combined with a growing recognition that the Northeast's development story cannot advance without reliable air connectivity. If Assam can overcome the familiar hurdles of land acquisition delays, inter-agency coordination gaps, and funding uncertainties, the proposed Greenfield airports could indeed become catalysts of regional renewal.

The runway to that future, however, will demand sustained political attention, administrative competence, and environmental prudence. Aviation infrastructure, once built, shapes regional geography for decades. Assam now stands at a threshold where careful planning could transform connectivity into a powerful engine of inclusive growth. Whether this promise is fulfilled will depend not on the signing of memoranda but on the discipline of execution that follows. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmi@rediffmail.com)

Decoding the Post-Ayatollah Khamenei transition in war-torn Iran

By: Asad Mirza

The latest Israeli-US war on Iran began with airstrikes on the home and offices of the Late Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. Apparently, the strategy behind this stemmed from the wishful thinking that Khamenei's sudden elimination would pose a dire threat to the current ruling system of Iran and after his elimination the country would be thrown in chaos. Further, these chaos would be exploited by anti-Iran elements present in the country to foment anti-government mass movement, resulting in the formation of a new government in Iran.

These calculations might have been supported by what happened earlier in Libya or Syria, after the elimination of Muammar Al-Qaddafi and Bashar al-Assad, respectively. However, the point of difference between them and Iran is that while in those countries, the state's future was tied to a single person, in Iran the situation is completely different. Few contemporary governments concentrate as much visible authority in a single office as Iran does in that of the supreme leader. Religious legitimacy, command of the armed forces, and ultimate political arbitration converge in this one post.

According to Iran International, Mojtaba Khamenei, the son of the late Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been chosen to be Iran's next supreme leader, but these have not been corroborated by other Iranian sources, though the rumours of Mojtaba being appointed to the top post are very strong. "The Assembly of Experts elected Ali Khamenei's son Mojtaba as the next Supreme Leader," Iran International reported, citing informed sources. Fifty-six-year-old Mojtaba, the second-eldest son, has long been seen by observers as a potential successor. He is known to wield significant influence among the administrators and the IRGC, the most powerful military body.

However, Khamenei's lineage was the biggest barrier he faced. Late Ayatollah Khamenei was reportedly opposed to the father-to-son succession. It is also frowned upon in Iran, particularly after the US-backed monarchy of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was toppled in 1979.

Immediately in the aftermath of Khamenei's death, top surviving regime officials appointed a three-person Leadership Council consisting of President Masoud Pezeshkian, Chief Justice Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei and Alireza Arafai, a cleric and member of the Guardian Council—the powerful 12-person body that vets political candidates and can veto legislation passed by parliament.

Subsequently, the Leadership Council will step into the role of supreme leader until the next one is chosen. Iran's Assembly of Experts - an elected group of 88 clerics whose candidacies were approved by the Guardian Council, will then be tasked with choosing the next supreme leader. In 2024, the Guardian Council barred former Iranian

President Hassan Rouhani, a moderate whose administration signed the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, from election for the Assembly of Experts. Additionally, the clerics from Qom will also hold the key to the election of the next supreme leader.

Qom is a historical city in central Iran, and is considered to be one of the most important religious cities in Iran. The city of Qom, its seminaries, clerical networks, and religious institutions, play a key role in Iran's theological circles.

Qom is home to one of the largest and most influential Shia seminaries (hawza) in the world, the Hawzah 'Ilmiyya Qom'. This network of religious schools includes hundreds of institutions that train tens of thousands of clerics, jurists, and scholars from Iran and across the Islamic world.

The city's religious prominence is tied to the Shrine of Fatima Masumeh, a major pilgrimage site. Qom acts as the ideological brain and leadership pipeline of Iran's theocratic state. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, clerics trained in Qom have shaped the Islamic Republic's ideology and guided its system of governance.

Many of Iran's political elite, including Supreme Leaders (from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei), spent crucial years of their training or teaching in Qom's seminaries.

The title Ayatollah (Sign of God) is not elected by public vote. It is a scholarly honorific awarded through recognition by peers and religious authorities, often within centres like Qom's seminaries. A cleric must show exceptional mastery of Islamic law, ethics, and jurisprudence.

Under Iran's political system, the Supreme Leader holds the ultimate authority over all branches of government, including the military, judiciary, state media, and key policy decisions. Presidents and parliamentary bodies operate within limits set by the Leader's guardianship.

This comes from the doctrine of Velayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist), a principle put forth by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini that places a senior cleric at the top of both religious and state authority. Originating from the Arabic and Persian languages, the term Ayatollah symbolises a sign of god or religious authority. The title is granted to high-ranking clerics in Shia Islam to demonstrate their advanced theological knowledge and moral authority in the community.

The title emerged in the late 19th century and became more prominent due to the Safavid dynasty in Iran, which made Shia Islam the state religion. Notable personalities like Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi helped cement the status of scholars, leading to the formalisation of the title.

Ayatollah Khomeini gained immense influence in the 1970s, particularly during the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which led to the establishment of a theocratic government in the country. (IPA Service)

The Alarming rise of attacks on atomic infrastructure

By: Satyabrata Borah

The modern world has learned to live with nuclear power as both a promise and a fear. Nuclear technology can light cities, power industries and help nations reduce their dependence on fossil fuels. At the same time it holds the terrifying possibility of destruction if something goes wrong. The existence of nuclear facilities therefore carries a responsibility that goes far beyond ordinary infrastructure. These places must remain safe, protected and insulated from war or political conflict. Yet recent events around the world show that this protection is slowly weakening. Military strikes, drone attacks and cyber intrusions are bringing nuclear installations into the middle of geopolitical confrontations.

The danger of this trend cannot be overstated. A nuclear facility is not just another building that can be repaired after a bombing. It contains materials and systems that require careful control every moment. If these systems fail because of explosions, fires or sabotage, the consequences could extend across borders and generations. Radiation does not recognize national boundaries. A damaged nuclear plant can poison land, water and air far beyond the place where the attack occurs. For this reason the international community once agreed that nuclear installations should remain off limits during conflict. Today that principle appears to be weakening under the pressure of strategic rivalry.

The war in Ukraine offered the first clear warning. When Russian forces captured the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in 2022, the world watched with alarm. Zaporizhzhia is the largest nuclear power station in Europe. Six large reactors stand along the banks of the Dniro River. For decades the plant produced electricity that powered millions of homes. When fighting moved close to the facility, artillery shells and drones began appearing in its surroundings. Images of smoke rising near reactor buildings spread across global media. Engineers continued to work inside the complex even while explosions echoed nearby. The fear was simple and immediate. If a shell struck a sensitive part of the plant or damaged its cooling systems, a nuclear accident could unfold in the middle of a war zone.

Nuclear reactors rely on constant cooling to prevent their fuel from overheating. Even when a reactor stops producing electricity the fuel inside continues generating heat. Pumps, pipes and power lines must keep working so that water can circulate

through the reactor core. When these systems fail the temperature rises rapidly. If the heat cannot escape, the fuel may melt and release radioactive substances. The disaster at Chernobyl in 1986 and the accident at Fukushima in 2011 both showed how devastating such events can be. The difference today is that military conflict increases the chances of damage at the very moment when stability and careful management are most needed.

Zaporizhzhia has endured repeated warnings from international observers. The International Atomic Energy Agency has sent teams of experts to monitor conditions. Their reports often describe fragile safety arrangements. External power lines have been damaged several times by nearby fighting. Backup generators have been used to keep cooling systems running. Each time such an event occurs the world is reminded how vulnerable nuclear infrastructure becomes when war surrounds it. Even when reactors are shut down, the presence of spent nuclear fuel means that danger still exists. At the same time another confrontation has drawn attention to nuclear installations in the Middle East. Israel has long considered Iran's nuclear program a threat to its security. Iranian officials say their nuclear activities are designed for peaceful energy and scientific purposes. Israel fears that the program could eventually produce nuclear weapons. Tensions between the two states have created a shadow conflict that includes cyber operations, covert actions and air strikes. During recent years these tensions have moved closer to open attacks on nuclear related sites.

Since 2024 several Iranian facilities associated with nuclear development have been targeted. Among them are the uranium enrichment plants at Fordow and Natanz, which are essential parts of the fuel cycle that allows uranium to be processed for reactor fuel. There is also the large nuclear complex at Isfahan where fuel processing activities take place.

In 2025 the United States carried out targeted strikes against these locations. The operation was presented as an attempt to slow Iran's nuclear progress. American leaders claimed that the strikes had destroyed the installations. Later assessments suggested that some damage had occurred but important materials remained intact.

One particularly important detail concerned enriched uranium stored at Isfahan. Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency reported that much of this material had survived the at-

tacks. Enriched uranium is the substance that makes nuclear fuel possible and also raises concerns about potential weapons development. Its presence after the strikes illustrated the complexity of military action against nuclear sites. Even a powerful bombing campaign cannot easily eliminate nuclear materials once they exist. Instead the attack may scatter dangerous substances or damage facilities in ways that create new safety risks.

Another site that has drawn attention is the Bushehr nuclear power plant along the Persian Gulf. Bushehr is Iran's only operating nuclear reactor used for electricity production. The plant was built with Russian assistance and has been under international monitoring. The International Atomic Energy Agency reported early in March that the Bushehr reactor and the research reactor in Tehran had not been struck directly. Shortly afterward new reports surfaced suggesting damage near the airport at Bushehr and renewed attacks around Natanz.

Each report generated fresh anxiety among experts who worry about the consequences of military operations near such sensitive facilities. The troubling aspect of these developments is not only the damage that may occur today but the example they set for the future. When powerful nations treat nuclear installations as legitimate targets, others may follow the same path. A world where nuclear facilities become routine objectives during conflict is a world where catastrophic accidents grow more likely. The protective barrier that once surrounded these sites begins to erode.

International humanitarian law has long recognized the unique danger posed by nuclear facilities. The Geneva Conventions include provisions that prohibit attacks on installations containing dangerous forces such as dams, dikes and nuclear power plants. The reason is simple. Destroying such structures can release massive harm on civilians who have no connection to the conflict. Radiation leaks can contaminate farmland, water supplies and entire cities. The victims may suffer health effects for decades. Children not yet born at the time of an accident may still carry the consequences.

Yet legal principles do not always prevent action during periods of intense rivalry. Strategic calculations often overshadow humanitarian concerns. Military planners sometimes argue that striking nuclear infrastructure could delay an adversary's weapons program or weaken its technological capabilities. Political leaders may view these at-

tacks as necessary demonstrations of strength. Each decision may appear justified in the narrow logic of competition. The cumulative effect however is a gradual normalization of behavior that was once considered unacceptable.

Another dimension of the problem involves cyber security. Modern nuclear systems rely heavily on digital networks. Computers monitor reactor temperatures, control pumps and regulate safety mechanisms. While these systems bring efficiency and precision they also create vulnerabilities. Hackers who gain access to nuclear related networks could disrupt operations or steal sensitive information. Several incidents have already shown that nuclear institutions are attractive targets for cyber intrusions.

At least one attempt reportedly breached the National Nuclear Security Administration in the United States. This agency oversees the management of the American nuclear weapons stockpile. Even though officials said the breach did not compromise classified material, the incident demonstrated that sophisticated cyber actors are willing to probe nuclear organizations. Ransomware groups have also targeted energy companies and nuclear operators around the world. Brazil's state nuclear enterprise faced such attacks, raising concerns about how criminals might exploit weaknesses in digital defenses.

Cyber threats differ from traditional military strikes but they carry their own risks. A well designed cyber operation could disrupt cooling systems, disable monitoring equipment or create confusion during emergencies. Engineers might struggle to understand what is happening while computer screens display false information. In complex technological environments even small disruptions can cascade into larger failures. The possibility that hackers could interfere with nuclear safety systems adds another layer of anxiety to an already fragile landscape.

Accusations and mistrust complicate the work of international oversight bodies. Iran has accused the International Atomic Energy Agency of providing information to Israel. Such claims undermine cooperation between inspectors and the countries they monitor. The agency's ability to verify nuclear activities depends on access and transparency. When trust erodes, inspections become more difficult and suspicion grows on all sides. Political disputes begin to overshadow technical assessments.

The global nuclear system was built on the idea that trans-

parency and cooperation could reduce the chance of catastrophic mistakes. Inspectors travel across continents to examine reactors and fuel processing facilities. Cameras and sensors transmit data about uranium enrichment levels. Countries share information through international agreements. All of these mechanisms aim to create a common understanding of what is happening inside nuclear programs. When warfare and espionage intrude into this system, the delicate balance of trust becomes harder to maintain.

Another factor that heightens concern is the spread of drones and precision guided weapons. These technologies allow states and even non state actors to strike targets with increasing accuracy. A small drone carrying explosives can approach sensitive infrastructure without warning. Traditional defenses may struggle to detect or intercept such devices. Nuclear facilities were once protected mainly against large scale attacks from aircraft or missiles.

The rise of smaller and more agile weapons introduces new security challenges. Imagine a scenario in which a drone strike damages the external power supply to a nuclear plant during a conflict. Engineers would have to rely on emergency generators to keep cooling systems running. If another strike followed shortly afterward and damaged those generators, the situation could become critical. Each layer of backup exists to protect against accidents, not repeated deliberate attacks.

The margin for safety shrinks when warfare repeatedly tests these systems. The environmental consequences of a nuclear accident extend far beyond the immediate explosion or fire. Radioactive materials released into the atmosphere can travel long distances with wind patterns. Contaminated rain may fall hundreds of kilometers away. Rivers can carry radioactive particles into seas and oceans. Agriculture suffers when soil becomes unsafe for cultivation. Communities may be forced to abandon homes and livelihoods. The psychological trauma of displacement can persist for decades.

History already offers painful lessons. The Chernobyl disaster transformed large areas of Ukraine and Belarus into exclusion zones where human habitation remains restricted. Fukushima forced thousands of residents to leave coastal towns in Japan. Each event demonstrated how a nuclear accident reshapes landscapes and societies. When military conflict threatens nuclear installations the same patterns could unfold again, pos-

sibly under conditions that make emergency response far more difficult.

During wartime emergency teams may struggle to reach damaged facilities. Roads may be blocked by fighting. Communication networks may fail. Authorities may hesitate to share information for fear of revealing strategic vulnerabilities. Civilians may already be fleeing violence and lack clear guidance about radiation risks. The combination of war and nuclear accident could overwhelm local capacities and require international assistance at a scale rarely seen.

Some analysts argue that attacking nuclear infrastructure may actually increase the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation. When states feel that their civilian nuclear programs are vulnerable to strikes, they may choose to conceal or harden their facilities. Underground enrichment plants like Fordow illustrate this trend. Nations may invest in deeper tunnels, thicker concrete and dispersed installations. These measures make verification more difficult for inspectors. Suspicion grows as transparency decreases.

Diplomacy offers the only durable path toward reducing these dangers. Agreements that limit nuclear activities and establish inspection regimes can ease tensions when they are respected by all parties.

Dialogue allows rivals to address security concerns without resorting to force. Yet diplomacy requires patience and political courage. Leaders must be willing to compromise and acknowledge the fears of their adversaries. In an era of rising nationalism and strategic competition such efforts often struggle to gain support. Public awareness also plays an important role. Citizens around the world have a stake in nuclear safety. Radiation released from a damaged reactor does not remain confined within national borders. The health and environmental consequences can affect entire regions. When people understand the risks they may pressure governments to treat nuclear facilities as protected spaces even during conflict.

Scientists and engineers who work in the nuclear field frequently emphasize the importance of a safety culture. This concept refers to a mindset where every decision prioritizes the prevention of accidents. Workers are encouraged to report problems without fear. Managers carefully evaluate even small anomalies. The same philosophy could guide international politics regarding nuclear installations. States might recognize that short term military advantages are not worth the possibility of catastrophic contamination.

The world now stands at a moment when technological power has outpaced the mechanisms designed to control it. Nuclear energy remains a valuable tool for many societies seeking reliable electricity and lower carbon emissions. At the same time geopolitical rivalries continue to intensify. When these two realities intersect, the result can be a dangerous erosion of norms that once protected humanity from its own inventions.

The attacks and threats directed at nuclear facilities during recent conflicts reveal a troubling shift in behavior. Military planners are increasingly willing to consider these sites as part of strategic calculations. Cyber intrusions show that even distant actors can interfere with nuclear operations. Accusations and mistrust weaken the institutions meant to monitor and regulate nuclear activities. Each development adds another layer of uncertainty.

People living near nuclear plants often describe them as quiet neighbors. Massive concrete structures rise above the landscape while engineers monitor complex systems inside. For most residents daily life continues normally as electricity flows through transmission lines into cities and towns. The thought that these facilities might become targets during military confrontation rarely enters everyday conversation. Yet recent events suggest that this sense of normalcy may be more fragile than many imagine.

The challenge facing the international community is therefore not only technical but moral. Nations possess the power to unleash forces capable of contaminating entire regions. With such power comes responsibility. Recognizing the shared vulnerability of all societies to nuclear accidents could encourage a renewed commitment to protecting these installations. Respect for humanitarian law, stronger cyber defenses and revived diplomatic engagement would all contribute to that goal.

Human history often moves through cycles of tension and cooperation. Periods of rivalry sometimes produce new agreements designed to prevent disaster. The presence of nuclear technology demands exactly this kind of collective wisdom. The alternative is a world where every conflict carries the shadow of radioactive catastrophe. The choice between caution and recklessness will shape not only the safety of nuclear facilities but the health of the planet itself and the lives of countless people who simply hope to live without fear of invisible poison drifting through the air.

West Asia Crisis: A potential political turning point in India

By: Dipak Kurni

In politics, moments occasionally arise when a ruling power appears so entrenched that its dominance seems almost permanent. Electoral victories accumulate, opposition parties fragment, and the governing leadership projects an image of inevitability. Yet history repeatedly demonstrates that such peaks of power often contain the seeds of sudden disruption. Political theorists sometimes describe these disruptions as "Black Swan" events, rare and unexpected crises capable of altering the trajectory of seemingly stable systems. In the context of contemporary Indian politics, the dangerous and controversial military escalation in West Asia following the alleged joint strike by the United States and Israel on Iran, culminating in the assassination of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, may represent such a moment. While the geopolitical consequences of this development are still unfolding, its ripple effects have already begun to intersect with India's strategic, economic and political landscape in ways that could challenge the aura of political invincibility surrounding the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

The strike on Iran has triggered a cycle of retaliation that analysts had long predicted but few expected to materialise with such speed. Iran responded with a barrage of counterattacks targeting Israel and several Gulf nations that host American military bases. According to official sources, Iran has fired 189 missiles and 941 drones at the United Arab Emirates alone. The scale of the response underscores the dangerous reality of modern warfare in which relatively inexpensive drone technology can threaten infrastructure and investments worth trillions of dollars. For the Gulf region, which

has built its global reputation on stability, financial security and technological ambition, this sudden vulnerability has generated profound anxiety. Cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi, which symbolise economic confidence and international connectivity, now find themselves exposed to the strategic fallout of a widening regional war.

For India, the implications are particularly severe because of the immense expatriate presence across the Gulf. Nearly one crore Indians live and work in countries such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait. Their labour sustains entire sectors of the Gulf economies while their financial contributions sustain families and communities across India. Every year, these expatriates send back tens of billions of dollars in remittances that strengthen India's foreign exchange reserves and support domestic consumption. Beyond remittances, the Indian diaspora in the Gulf has also become a powerful investment engine, channeling funds into Indian real estate, stock markets and start-up ventures. The UAE's Golden Visa programme has attracted many new-age Indian entrepreneurs, technology innovators and investors who reside in Dubai while running companies in India. This intricate web of economic interdependence means that any disruption in the Gulf reverberates directly through India's financial system.

The sudden outbreak of hostilities therefore came as a profound shock to the expatriate community. The possibility that Gulf cities was once considered unthinkable in the everyday lives of millions of workers, professionals and business owners who had built their futures there. Yet the events following the strike on Iran have demonstrated that geopolitical conflict can rapidly

destabilise even the most prosperous environments. Air travel across parts of the region has already been disrupted, leaving thousands of travellers stranded. As the conflict intensifies, the sense of uncertainty among Indian expatriates has grown steadily. Their concerns extend beyond immediate safety to the fate of their investments, businesses and long-term residency in the Gulf.

The political dimension of this crisis is equally complex. Prime Minister Narendra Modi enjoys immense popularity among affluent and expatriate Indians, particularly those living in the Gulf and the United States. His outreach to the Indian diaspora has been one of the most visible aspects of his diplomatic strategy over the past decade. Large public events with expatriate communities, along with high-profile engagements with Gulf monarchs and Western leaders, have helped cultivate an image of India as a confident global power under his leadership. Just forty-eight hours before the war erupted, the Prime Minister was in Israel, where he reportedly met key decision makers. Simultaneously, senior members of his cabinet were engaged in discussions with the United States administration over the shaping of an India-US trade arrangement that has already sparked debate among economic observers.

These diplomatic interactions highlight how closely India's leadership has been connected with the major actors involved in the current conflict. The Prime Minister has also invested considerable political capital in building personal rapport with Gulf rulers and crown princes. His government frequently emphasises these relationships as evidence of India's growing international influence. Yet the unfolding crisis has raised uncomfortable questions about



preparedness and communication. Despite India's extensive diplomatic engagement with the United States, Israel and the Gulf states, nearly one crore Indian expatriates appear to have received no prior warning about the potential escalation that now threatens their security and livelihoods. Such silence has become a central point of criticism among political commentators. The perception that those in positions of authority were aware of rising tensions but did not alert citizens abroad creates a sense of betrayal among those most affected. In political terms, this is precisely how a Black Swan event operates: the disruption strikes suddenly, those impacted are caught unprepared, and those who might have mitigated the impact appear inactive. The resulting erosion of trust can have consequences that extend far beyond the immediate crisis. The economic implications further in-

tenhance the political stakes. Financial markets have already shown signs of volatility amid fears of a broader regional war. A sell-off in Indian markets could trigger cascading effects across sectors ranging from banking to real estate. Oil prices, historically sensitive to instability in West Asia, have begun to rise sharply. For an import-dependent economy like India, sustained oil price shocks can translate into inflation, currency depreciation and slower economic growth. The rupee, already vulnerable to global financial fluctuations, could face additional downward pressure if capital flows reverse or if remittances from the Gulf decline due to economic disruption in the region.

For millions of ordinary Indians, these macroeconomic shifts translate into tangible hardships. Homebuyers struggling with long-term loans could find themselves trapped in rising interest cycles. Investors who placed

their savings in stock markets or real estate may witness sudden losses. Workers in export-oriented industries could face job insecurity if global demand weakens. In such circumstances, the language of politics inevitably shifts. Economic distress tends to erode the emotional loyalty that voters may once have felt toward a particular leader or party. The metaphor of the Titanic striking an iceberg captures this moment when confidence collides with reality.

Beyond economics, there is also a diplomatic dimension that shapes international perceptions of India's role in the conflict. Reports of the Iranian warship IRIS Dana sinking in the Indian Ocean have drawn particular attention. The vessel had recently participated in the MILAN 2026 naval exercise hosted by India and carried around 150 Iranian naval personnel. Combined with the attacks on Tehran's Gandhi Hospi-

tal and a girls' school during the conflict, the broader humanitarian impact of the war has deepened global concern. Yet India's response has largely been characterised by restraint and cautious language. Critics argue that this silence risks being interpreted internationally as acquiescence to the actions of Israel and the United States. India has historically positioned itself as an advocate of strategic autonomy, balancing relationships across competing geopolitical blocs. From the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War to contemporary multilateral diplomacy, New Delhi has often emphasised its independence in global affairs. However, closer ties with Israel and the United States in recent years, along with negotiations over trade arrangements, have led some observers to question whether India's diplomatic flexibility has narrowed. The perception that India cannot speak decisively on issues involving its strategic partners could weaken its credibility as a mediator in international conflicts.

Ultimately, the unfolding crisis in West Asia illustrates how distant geopolitical decisions can reverberate through domestic politics thousands of kilometres away. For a government that has built its legitimacy partly on strong leadership and international stature, the consequences of this conflict may extend well beyond foreign policy debates. If expatriate distress grows, if markets tumble, and if economic uncertainty spreads, the political narrative within India could shift dramatically. Black Swan events are rarely predictable in their timing, but when they occur they often reshape the political landscape in ways that no strategist could fully anticipate. The escalation in Iran may yet prove to be one such moment. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurni@gmail.com)*

Voting concludes peacefully in Nepal

Counting to start immediately after the ballot boxes are collected

KATHMANDU, March 5: Tens of thousands of Nepalese voted on Thursday in the crucial parliamentary elections to elect a new prime minister, six months after violent Gen Z protests toppled the K P Sharma Oli-led coalition government.

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

The voting, which began at 7 am, concluded in a peaceful and orderly atmosphere at 5 pm, officials said.

Election Commissioner Janaki Kumari Tuladhar said voters who had already queued at polling centres by 5 pm were still allowed to cast their ballots. The counting will start immediately after the ballot boxes are collected.

The newly formed Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) led by former rapper Balendra Shah, who was also the mayor of Kathmandu, is posing a tough challenge to two traditional political parties - the Nepali Congress party and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist).

The RSP, formed in 2022, has received significant support during the campaign, and Shah is said to be a strong candidate for prime minister. On the other hand, the Nepali Congress and CPN (UML) were part of the government toppled by the Gen Z last year.

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

Around 39 per cent of voters exercised their franchise till 3 pm, officials said.

There were some minor incidents reported in a few places, Election Commissioner Sagun Shumsher Rana was quoted as saying by The Kathmandu Post newspaper.

Nepal's 18.9 million voters are eligible to elect 275 members of the House of Representatives. They will elect 165 HoR members through first past the post (FPTP) or direct voting system, and 110 members through proportionate voting.

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

Nepal Police confirmed that apart from minor disagreements at a few locations, no serious problems had occurred.

"Some jostling is expected during elections, but no major issues have arisen. We are ensuring that the voting process remains peaceful throughout the day," Police spokesperson Abi Narayan Kafle said.

"Voting started in all the constituencies, including the southern plains, hilly area and the mountain region at 7 am," Election Commission spokesperson Narayan Prasad Bhattarai said.

"The election started in a peaceful environment across the country," he added.

In Kathmandu, the weather was fine, the sky was clear, and people were enthusiastically queuing up to cast their votes.

Interim Prime Minister Sushila Karki cast her vote from Kathmandu-5 constituency at



Dhapasi on the outskirts of Kathmandu on Thursday morning.

"I have cast my vote, I am happy that people are casting their votes, participating in the general election," she said.

Nepali Congress president Gagan Thapa cast his vote from Kathmandu-4 constituency in Maitidevi in the morning. "This election was needed to bring the Constitution back on the right track," he said.

Thapa is contesting the election from Dhanusha-4 constituency.

RSP president Ravi Lamichhane cast his vote from the Chuchepati area on the outskirts of Kathmandu. Shah cast his vote from Gairegaun, Kathmandu. He is contesting the election from Jhapa-5.

Ousted premier Oli cast his vote from Balkot in Bhaktapur district.

The Gen Z youth, through their two-day intensified protests on September 8 and 9, ousted Prime Minister Oli, chair of the Com-

munist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) -- CPN-UML -- who was heading a coalition government with the backing of Nepali Congress that enjoyed nearly two-thirds majority support.

The CPN-UML, led by ousted PM Oli, has emerged as the hardliner force. Though former premier Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda-led NCP claims to have addressed the issues raised by the Gen Z, they have not handed over the party leadership to the younger generation.

RSP and the reformed Nepali Congress are voicing the issues raised by Gen Z, while CPN-UML and Nepali Communist Party, led by 'Prachanda', are known as the traditional forces.

Ujyalo Nepal Party, led by Kulman Ghising, and Shram Shakti Party, led by former Dharan Mayor Harka Sampang, are also emerging forces but enjoy support in limited pockets only.

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

The major issues raised by Gen Z are anti-corruption, good governance, an end to nepotism, generational change in political leadership, etc.

Starting Wednesday, Nepal has declared a three-day holiday for the polls.

There are a total of 10,967 polling booths and 23,112 polling centres, the Election Commission data showed. As many as 65 political parties are taking part in the election. (PTI)

China lowers economic growth target to 4.5-5% amid global, domestic uncertainties



BELJING, March 5: China on Thursday lowered its GDP target to 4.5 to 5 per cent for this year in the face of Trump's trade tariff war, the worsening global crisis following the US-Iran war and headwinds in the domestic economy, owing to property market slump and unemployment crisis.

The target close to that of last year was announced by Chinese Premier Li Qiang in his work report presented to the annual National People's Congress (NPC), the country's parliament, which opened here on Thursday.

China has been setting a five per cent target for the GDP for the last three years amid growing domestic economic challenges.

This year, the target is lowered to 4.5 per cent to 5 for the first time.

China's economy grew by 5 per cent last year to USD 20.01 trillion, riding high on the robust exports despite US tariffs, while domestic consumption, its bugbear, remained sluggish.

Thursday's opening session is being attended by President Xi Jinping and over 2,000 deputies.

Presenting his work report, an annual feature, Li said the government targets an economic growth of 4.5 per cent to 5 per cent this year and will strive for better in practice.

Main targets for development this year also include: a surveyed urban unemployment rate of around 5.5 per cent, creation of over 12 million new urban jobs and an increase in consumer price index of around 2 per cent.

Li also spoke of growth in personal income in line with economic growth, basic equilibrium in the balance of payments, stable grain output of around 700 million tonnes and a drop of around 3.8 per cent in carbon dioxide emissions per unit of gross domestic product.

On the domestic demand, which remained stagnant for years, making China dependent more on its exports for its GDP growth, Li said China will actively boost consumption and implement an income growth plan for urban and rural residents.

The country will advance special initiatives to bolster consumption, with the roll-out of a range of practical measures to boost the earnings of low-income groups, increase property income, and refine the remuneration and social security systems in 2026.

A total of 250 billion yuan (USD 36.17 billion) in ultra-long special treasury bonds will be earmarked for consumer goods trade-in programmes, and a special fiscal-financial coordination fund of 100 billion yuan will be created to facilitate domestic demand expansion, he said.

China on Wednesday commenced its annual parliament session amid international turmoil over the US-Iran war, massive military purges carried out by Xi and ambitious plans to develop new productive forces like AI to revitalise the slowing-down economy.

Xi, 72, who is into his unprecedented third term in office, with little indication of any organised political challenge from within the ruling Communist Party and the powerful military, on Wednesday attended the opening session of the national advisory body of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), comprising over 2,500 civil society, party and military officials.

He also attended the NPC opening session on Thursday, flanked by the top leadership of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC).

The two sessions marked the beginning of a fortnight-long China's annual political season during which the leadership appears in public and takes part in internal debates.

Xi's presence was regarded as significant as he appeared for the first time along with party officials of all ranks besides PLA members and sat through the proceedings after the recent massive purges of the Chinese military.

In his work report, Li also outlined plans to boost elderly care services as the country has a fast ageing population. (PTI)

Modi 'very focused' on delivery, bringing 'hundreds of millions' into formal economy: Carney

SYDNEY, March 5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is "very focused" on delivery of welfare programmes to the common people and has been successful in bringing "hundreds of millions" of them into the formal economy through "financial reforms" in India, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has said.

Carney was speaking on Wednesday during an interaction at the Lowy Institute, Australia's leading think tank, where he was asked to speak about his assessment of Prime Minister Modi, days after the two leaders met in New Delhi.

The Canadian prime minister was in India from February 27 to March 2, during which India and Canada sealed key pacts on supplies of Uranium and critical minerals and agreed to conclude a comprehensive economic partnership agreement soon.

"... just on a personal level the impressions which is, he is a person who is very... and I have known this from before, but it is interesting just the interaction over time... very focused on delivery to, I would say, the rural household," he said and invoked a French phrase to say, "to the person on the street."

"So a huge motivation for the financial reform transformations, the payment system transformation, the UPI and other things... was to get money directly to individuals without leakage... shall we say, in the system in real time, and to bring people, hundreds of millions of people, into the formal economy," Carney said.

Modi has been successful in delivery of welfare programmes to the common people despite challenges, he said. (PTI)

Pak considering weekly petroleum price revision, mandatory work from home to 'keep markets liquid'

ISLAMABAD, March 5: Pakistan is considering various measures, including weekly petroleum price revision, compensating oil companies and mandatory work from home, to "keep markets liquid" amid the disruption of trade following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a media report said on Thursday.

A summary is being submitted to the Federal Cabinet's Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) in this regard for action without delay as petroleum prices appeared to surge, the Dawn newspaper reported citing sources.

However, even before the ECC takes these decisions, the state-run Pakistan State Oil (PSO), after the government's approval, has launched two import tenders each for petrol and diesel outside the Strait of Hormuz as a precaution.

The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway, connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman, through which about a fifth of the world's oil passes.

The Strait was effectively closed following several attacks on ships by Iran in retaliation to joint US, Israel strikes.

Both petrol and diesel have over 500,000 tonnes of stocks, enough for 26 and 25 days' cover, the Dawn reported.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has already been requested to provide oil supplies through an alternative Red Sea route, it said.

According to officials, the government had directed all provincial chief secretaries to attend the meeting of the newly-created 18-member cabinet committee to monitor petroleum prices scheduled for Thursday.

The meeting will consider mandatory work from home

wherever possible for the public and private sectors. The meeting could consider other measures as well, with the co-ordination of the provinces.

While petrol imports continue to be in the safe zone, diesel imports are not; Pakistan heavily relies on long-term supplies from Kuwait with PSO and all those cargoes have to move through the Strait of Hormuz.

Additionally, more than 20 per cent of global oil cargoes are reportedly stuck inside the Strait, creating a shortage of ships for diesel.

The officials further said insurance costs for oil companies have surged from around USD 30,000 to USD 400,000 per ship, in addition to import premiums for petroleum products.

The current pricing is around USD 3-5 per barrel, the prices at which the PSO had booked cargoes in February but which is no longer the case as fresh orders are placed.

As a result, freight costs have also surged as the ship rate has gone beyond USD 4 million, which was available for no more than USD 900,000 before the crisis, the report said.

The combination of these three factors is exponential and could not be expected of the oil marketing companies (OMCs) and refineries to absorb.

Therefore, a summary to the ECC would provide a mechanism for payment of these additional exigencies to keep OMCs afloat and, in return, maintain their supply chain down to the retail stage.

The fortnightly price revision is also being shifted to a weekly basis immediately to avoid a fiscal bulge on OMCs and the government by recov-

ering the true costs of fuel supplies from consumers on a continuous basis and ensuring smooth supplies as well.

One official said that the price gap has risen to PKR 45-50 for diesel and around PKR 25-26 for petrol in the first week of the crisis and could grow over the next 15 days, and hence needed to be nipped in the bud.

Notwithstanding hue and cry from dealers over limited supplies, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) and OMCs have jointly decided to provide petrol and diesel supplies to dealers and retailers on the respective 8-month track record and have stopped unlimited supplies to avoid supply disruptions.

"Still, there was no shortage of petrol or diesel anywhere in the country," a senior government official said.

In response to dealers' complaints that OMCs were not honouring product orders, OGRA said that to ensure the uninterrupted availability of petroleum products and to discourage hoarding during periods of extreme price volatility, the companies may temporarily regulate supplies to retail outlets based on their historical sales patterns.

"This measure is a standard supply management practice aimed at maintaining stability in the distribution system," the authority said.

It reassured the public that the country currently had adequate stocks of petrol and diesel, well within the required limits.

"There is no shortage of petroleum products. Citizens are advised not to pay attention to rumours and to rely only on information issued through official channels," it said. (PTI)

Sri Lanka says second Iranian ship awaits entry

COLOMBO, March 5: Sri Lanka on Thursday said it is deliberating appropriate action after a second Iranian ship has sought entry to its territorial waters, a day after a frigate belonging to the Islamic country was attacked near the island nation.

Sri Lanka on Wednesday said it had recovered over 80 bodies of Iranian sailors killed after a US submarine attack sank the Iranian frigate - IRIS Dena - off Galle, the island's southern coastal town.

Government spokesman and minister Nalinda Jayathissa was on Thursday responding to a query by the main opposition leader Sajith Premadasa in parliament about the second Iranian ship.

"We are aware of it and are contemplating action to safeguard all lives on board," Jayathissa said. "We are intervening to resolve this issue to safeguard regional peace."

The ship, according to Jayathissa, awaits in Sri Lanka's Extended Economic Zone (EEZ) but is out of its territorial waters.

Sources said the ship had requested emergency assistance. Meanwhile, in Galle, the crew of the ship torpedoed by the US were receiving treatment. Their injuries are not of serious nature, the hospital sources said.

The inquests on the 84 bodies of the perished Iranian sailors would be conducted Thursday at the Karapitiya hospital in Galle where the injured are receiving treatment.

The ill-fated ship was returning home from Visakhapatnam after a naval fleet review exercise.

While the Sri Lanka Navy refused to give reasons as to what caused the vessel to make a distress plea, US War Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Wednesday that it was a US submarine that sank the Iranian warship in international waters. (PTI)

War with Iran to cost Israel USD 3 billion a week under current limitations: Finance Ministry

JERUSALEM, March 5: The ongoing war with Iran could cost Israel an estimated NIS 9.4 billion (USD 3 billion approximately) per week under current restrictions on economic activities, the Israeli Finance Ministry has warned.

"In a letter sent to the Home Front Command chief, Maj. Gen. Shai Klapper, Finance Ministry Director General Ilan Rom asked to ease restrictions to allow for a gradual, partial reopening of businesses and workplaces as early as Thursday," the Times of Israel reported.

"There is no dispute about the need to preserve a defence policy adapted to the security situation, but at the same time, shutting down the economy on a broad scale carries heavy economic costs," Rom warned.

"We need a solution that addresses both the security needs of the Home Front and the needs of the economy, after two and a half years in which the economy has been paying a heavy economic price in light of the increase in security needs and the repercussions of the war," the top Finance Ministry executive reportedly said.

Rom asked Klapper to shift Home



Front Command restrictions from allowing only essential activity to allowing limited activity, known as the orange alert level, instead of the current red level.

Under the current restrictions, the weekly loss to the economy is estimated at NIS 9.4 billion, taking into account the closure of educational institutions, workplace prohibitions, and mobilization of reserve soldiers, the Finance Ministry was quoted as saying.

Under limited activity restrictions (orange level alert), workplace and economic activities are permitted, subject to close proximity to protected spaces, while educational institutions remain closed.

Rom is said to have emphasised that the weekly damage to the economy under limited activity restrictions is estimated to be about NIS 4.5 billion (USD 1.5 billion), less than half the cost of activity under the red level.

"This policy will enable the expansion of economic activity while maintaining Home Front security, in a manner that meets both economic and security needs," the Finance Ministry executive said. (PTI)

Krithi Karanth becomes first Indian to win major UK conservation prize

LONDON, March 5: Dr Krithi K Karanth, CEO of the Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS), became the first Indian to win a prestigious conservation prize from the Royal Geographical Society in London on Thursday.

Bengaluru-based Karanth was named the joint winner of the 2026 Esmond B Martin Royal Geographical Society Prize for her crucial contributions to human understanding of the world's ecosystems and work to protect the planet's biodiversity.

She was praised as a major player in changing the narrative around conservation projects in India and beyond, creating holistic interventions that build support networks.

"I am deeply humbled and profoundly honoured to be the first Asian recipient of the Esmond B Martin Prize," said Karanth.

"At this critical moment for our planet, the need for science-based conservation - grounded in evidence, collaboration, and courage - has never been greater. We must nurture a growing community of stewardship - people who care deeply, act boldly, and work collectively to safeguard our shared future," she said.

Esmond B Martin was a renowned American geographer and conservationist who left an endowment to honour outstanding achievement by individuals in the pursuit and/or application of geographical research across the breadth of the discipline, typically in the field of wildlife conservation and environmental research studies. "To be associated with a legacy shaped by Esmond's courage, curiosity, and unwavering commitment to wildlife conservation is both a privilege and a responsibility," said Karanth.



Throughout her career, she has helped to bridge the gap between academic research and the public, empowering scientists to participate in efforts, to focus on expanding pathways for low-income communities and women working in this space, it noted.

"This prize is a catalyst; it strengthens our resolve at CWS to innovate, to scale our efforts, and to deepen partnerships across the world. Together, we will continue working to conserve India's extraordinary wildlife and wild places - ensuring they thrive for generations to come," said Karanth. She shares the 2026 prize with Professor Alexandre Antonelli, Executive Director of Science at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in London.

Antonelli has been honoured for his work to advance human understanding of the biogeography, evolution and conservation of biodiversity around the world, with a focus on plants and the interactions between human geography and nature.

"I am deeply touched by this award and see it as a recognition for the power of science in helping us heal our planet," he said.

Both winners will receive their awards at a ceremony hosted by the Royal Geographical Society on April 13, when they will also deliver a public lecture discussing their research and career journeys. (PTI)

No. KDB/BTC/15/FC/NIT/2025-26/ Dated Kokrajhar the 21st Feb., 2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing a non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs.8.25 (Rupees Eight & Twenty-Five Paise) only with a validity period of 180(one hundred eighty) days. Which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the APWD's printed F-2 forms are invited from the registered contractors of class-II and Class-I (A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads & Building) and BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting tenders for the following work under 15th Finance Commission fund for the year 2024-25 during 2025-26. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 2.00 P.M. on 16.03.2026 and will be opened on the same date & place at 2.30 P.M. Against the scheme shown below:-

Sl. No.	Name of Scheme	Estimated Amount	Earnest Money	Cost of Tender	Time for completion
1.	Const. of Community Toilet at Madhya Kalugaon Community (Near Kalugaon LP School)	11,00,000.00	(ST, SC, OBC-1% & Gen-2%)	330/-	3 months
2.	Const. of Community Toilet at Boro Bazar	11,00,000.00	(ST, SC, OBC-1% & Gen-2%)	330/-	3 months
3.	Const. of Community Toilet at South Bishmuri UBLC	11,00,000.00	(ST, SC, OBC-1% & Gen-2%)	330/-	3 months
4.	Const. of Community Toilet at Bodoland Martyr's Memorial Community Hall at Debagarong.	11,00,000.00	(ST, SC, OBC-1% & Gen-2%)	330/-	3 months

Details NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractors or their authorized agent from 21-02-2026 to 16-03-2026 in the office of the undersigned on payment of cost of Tender paper in the form of demand draft/Banker Cheque from any Nationalized Bank, duly pledged in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar, payable at Kokrajhar.

Sd/-Block Development Officer,
Kokrajhar Development Block, Titaguri.

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/4330

Tripura govt signs agreement with GNRC for super-speciality hospital: CM

State to strengthen healthcare infrastructure and reduce referrals

AGARTALA, March 5: Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said the state government has signed an agreement with the Guwahati Neurological Research Centre to set up a superspeciality hospital at Hapania in West Tripura district.

Earlier, the government had signed a pact with Srija Hospitals and Research Institute, an Imphal-based medical institution, to set up a super-speciality hospital and medical college at RK Nagar in the same district.

"We have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with GNRC, a Guwahati-based medical institution, to set up a superspeciality hospital at Tripura Jute Mills Ltd's vacant land. A team from our department has already visited Guwahati to check the infrastructure and facilities available at GNRC," he told reporters.

However, the chief minister, who also holds the health portfolio, declined to elaborate further on the MoU with GNRC. Saha also said initiatives were taken to strengthen healthcare infrastructure and manpower at the government-run Govind Ballabh Pant Hospital and Agartala Government Medical College.

"We have already signed a MoU with AIIMS, New Delhi to streamline the healthcare services at GBP hospital. According to their recommendation, we have decided to increase ICU beds from 156 to 326. Besides, the GBP hospital is directly connected with AIIMS, New Delhi, through telemedicine to provide better medical facilities to patients of the state", he said. Saha said a 16-bed dedicated ICU for patients with severe respiratory problems and a well-equipped ICU in the trauma centre were made operational at the GBP hospital on Thursday.

"The state Cabinet has already discussed setting up a medical university to regulate medical colleges and other medical institutions in the state", he said, adding that the government wants to reduce referral cases by utilising and revamping existing medical facilities in the state.

Currently, the northeastern state has three medical colleges which offer as many as 450 MBBS seats and 119 PG courses. (PTI)



Meghalaya CM distributes appointment letters to nearly 3,000 newly recruited police personnel

TURA, March 5: Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Thursday said law and order is fundamental for development while distributing appointment letters to nearly 3,000 newly recruited personnel of the Meghalaya Police at the 2nd MLP Battalion.

Addressing the programme, Sangma described the occasion as a historic and memorable moment for the state, noting it could be the largest distribution of appointment letters in recent years, if not in the state's history.

"This must be the largest distribution of appointment letters that I have seen in the recent past and perhaps even in the history of the state. Therefore, for us as a government, this is a moment of great pride," he said.

The chief minister said the recruitment exercise was a major undertaking, with more than 1.7 lakh candidates applying for the posts.

"Over 1, 70,000 people had applied for these posts and today close to 3,000 individuals will receive appointment letters and join the force. That in itself must bring a deep sense of satisfaction and happiness to the police department," he said.

The recruitment drive covers 2,968 vacancies across various technical and service-oriented posts in the police department, officials said.

Of the total posts, 1,494 are for Armed Branch Constables and associated roles, followed by 720 Unarmed Branch Constables, 205 MPRO Operators and 195 Firemen.

The remaining vacancies include posts



such as UBSI, Driver Fireman, Driver Constable and several operator and mechanic positions.

Emphasising the role of the police in governance and development, Sangma said maintaining law and order was essential for

progress.

"For any society and for any government, development is extremely important. But without law and order, development cannot survive. Without law and order, nothing can move forward," he said.

He also urged the recruits to uphold discipline, fairness and integrity once they don the police uniform.

"Very soon you will wear the uniform. But remember, this uniform is not just clothing. When people see that uniform, they should feel respect, confidence and trust," he said.

The chief minister also said the present government would complete eight years in office on Friday, during which nearly 11,000 appointments and recruitments have been made.

Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong congratulated the recruits and emphasised that the selection process was conducted in a transparent and merit-based manner.

"You have emerged as the best performers in this recruitment process. You represent the hopes and aspirations of the state of Meghalaya," he said, urging them to serve the people with sincerity and humility.

Earlier, Director General of Police Idashisha Nongrang welcomed the dignitaries and the newly recruited personnel along with their families.

The programme began with a ceremonial salami and felicitation of dignitaries, after which appointment letters were distributed to the recruits in the presence of senior government and police officials. (PTI)

Manipur govt dedicated to welfare of every citizen: CM Khemchand Singh



IMPHAL, March 5: Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Thursday said the state government remains dedicated to building a stronger and more progressive state for the welfare of every citizen.

The chief minister made the remark following a Cabinet meeting, a day after portfolios were distributed to the two deputy chief ministers -- Lossii Dikho and Nemcha Kipgen -- along with ministers Govindas Konthoujam and K Loken Singh.

Sharing details of the meeting on X, Singh said, "Chaired the Cabinet meeting today at the Secretariat, where we held comprehensive deliberations on key matters of administration and governance with a firm commitment to delivering a more citizen-centric system founded on transparency and accountability."

"Several important administrative decisions were adopted for implementation, reflecting our government's continued resolve to strengthen policies and practices that promote peace, security and inclusive development. These efforts remain essential to advancing stability, sustainable growth and the overall prosperity of our state," he added.

The BJP leader also said the government remains "dedicated to building a stronger and more progressive Manipur for the welfare of every citizen." (PTI)

NSF condemns Nagaland legislator's comment on Vande Mataram

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, March 5: The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) on Thursday expressed strong displeasure and condemnation over the recent statement of Nagaland BJP legislator and minister Temjen Inna Along on recitation of Vande Mataram in the Nagaland legislative assembly.

In a statement, the federation said it is deeply regrettable that Along continues to justify and normalise the imposition of the Indian national song in institutions within the state despite its unequivocal opposition expressed on February 20.

"By advocating for the normalisation of Vande Mataram within the assembly, he risks undoing what generations of Nagas have sacrificed so much to defend the preservation of our identity, our faith and our rights," the federation stated.

It stressed that no individual or political representative has the mandate to dilute or compromise



the hard-earned rights of the Naga people.

The NSF said it had earlier categorically opposed the instructions issued by the ministry of home affairs mandating playing or singing of Vande Mataram before the Indian national anthem Jana Gana Mana during specific high-level official functions and further attempting to extend such directives to educational institutions.

According to the federation, Vande Mataram carries strong and

undeniable religious connotations rooted in the worship of Hindu deities.

"Any attempts to enforce or institutionalise the recitation of such a song within the Nagaland legislative assembly or any public institution in the Naga homeland directly violates the spirit and safeguards enshrined under Article 371(A), which protects the unique religious and social practices of the Naga people," the NSF said.

It said the attempt to portray the song as purely secular and historical deliberately ignores the legitimate concerns raised by communities whose faith and cultural identity do not align with its religious imagery.

The federation said it is extremely unfortunate that Along has chosen to publicly defend such a position.

It said he appears to be more concerned with pleasing his political bosses in Delhi rather than safeguarding the rights and sensitivities of the Naga people.

Tourist from West Bengal caught stealing Buddha idol from Tawang Monastery

ITANAGAR, March 5: A tourist from West Bengal was apprehended in Arunachal Pradesh for allegedly stealing religious items from two prominent sites, including the Tawang Monastery, an official said on Thursday.

Tawang Deputy Superintendent of Police Kato Tasso said the 54-year-old man was traced and detained after CCTV footage of the theft went viral on social media.

A Buddha idol was stolen from the Tawang Monastery, the country's largest monastery. A pair of Tingsha cymbals and two metal butter lamps were taken from the Giant Buddha Statue Park, he said.

"The footage showed the tourist taking a Buddha idol and other sacred articles from the premises, following which an investigation was launched," the officer said.

A police team tracked down the accused on Wednesday morning and recovered all the stolen items, valued between ₹ 15,000 and ₹ 20,000 from his possession, the DSP said.

However, no formal case was registered as the Buddha Park Gumpa administration decided not to pursue the matter after the recovery of the articles. The caretaker monk and the management pardoned the tourist after he assured them that such an act would not be repeated, the officer said.

Police obtained a written undertaking from the tourist in which he admitted his mistake and promised not to repeat such behaviour. He was also warned of legal consequences and advised to respect religious sentiments at sacred places, the officer added.

The man had arrived in Tawang along with his wife on March 2 for a vacation. (PTI)

Cong panel flags environmental, policy violations at ferro-silicon plant in East Siang



ITANAGAR, March 5: A fact-finding committee of the Congress' Arunachal Pradesh unit on Thursday alleged serious environmental, procedural and labour welfare violations at a ferro-silicon factory in East Siang district following a site inspection and discussions with protesting villagers.

At a press conference, Arunachal Pradesh Congress Committee members alleged that the factory's operations have caused pollution and health problems among residents and called for strict action, including possible relocation or closure if violations are confirmed.

The committee members visited the factory premises on March 1 and also met a group of mothers who had been on a hunger strike for days, demanding action against the plant.

One killed, three injured as coal laden truck overturns in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills

SHILLONG, March 5: One woman died, and three others were injured after a coal-laden truck skidded off the road and overturned onto two vehicles in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district, police said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Wednesday evening along National Highway 6 when the truck, carrying coal, lost control and overturned onto a car and a jeep travelling along the highway.

Superintendent of Police Pankaj Kumar Rasgania said the truck was moving from Khliehriat towards Lumshong when the driver reportedly lost control of the vehicle at Byndihati village.

"The truck skidded off the road and overturned onto the two light motor vehicles," the SP said.

All occupants of the vehicles sustained injuries and were rushed to Khliehriat Civil Hospital for treatment, police said.

Authorities later confirmed that one woman succumbed to her injuries at the hospital. Police said the coal was being transported to a cement factory as per the Standard Operating Procedure (SoP).

An investigation into the incident is underway, officials added. (PTI)

The panel was headed by Yane Dai with Tami Pangu as vice-chairman and Daniel Gao as member secretary, along with other members.

According to the committee, villagers alleged that the factory has caused environmental damage, including air and water pollution, deforestation and biodiversity loss, affecting local ecosystems and agriculture.

"Residents also reported health problems such as respiratory ailments, throat and eye irritation and skin issues which they attribute to toxic fumes and dust from the plant," it alleged.

The committee also raised concerns over alleged procedural lapses, claiming that proper public hearing and Environmental Impact Assessment were not conducted before the project began.

45 villages yet to be electrified in Mizoram: Minister

AIZAWL, March 5: Forty-five villages in Mizoram have remained classified as un-electrified or de-electrified, Power and Electricity minister F Rodingliana informed the state Assembly on Thursday.

In a written reply to queries from opposition BJP member Prova Chakma, the minister said that efforts are on to provide electricity to households in these villages under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS).

He said that sanctions have been secured and three contractors, including two from outside have been finalised for the electrification of these remote villages.

"The Guaranteed Technical Particulars (GTP) drawings for supply of materials have already been approved and initial supplies have already begun reaching some of the designated sites," Rodingliana said.

He said that there are reports of many transformer damage across the state and 71 are awaiting allotment for repair.

While several villages and neighbourhoods still house unrepaid units, the minister maintained that power supply in most of these areas has not been completely cut off.

In most cases, many affected areas are being back-fed from nearby functioning transformers to maintain a continuous supply for residents, he said.

Addressing the frequent delays in transformer maintenance, Rodingliana detailed a multi-step repair process that relies heavily on logistics.

Distribution Transformers (DT) must undergo a formal survey and receive Head Office approval before being transported to a specialised contractor's workshop in Assam's Silchar town, he said.

He said that manpower shortage has slowed the preparation of Survey Estimate Reports and the poor condition of the Aizawl-Silchar road over the past year significantly delayed the transport of DT.

However, he noted that when road conditions are stable and staff are available, a backup stock of repaired units is typically maintained to speed up the process.

Responding to public concern regarding safety, Rodingliana confirmed plans to replace severely corroded electric poles that pose a collapse risk. He said that ₹ 2.70 crore has been sanctioned in the 2025-26 financial year for replacement of such rusted poles.

The minister further said that the demand for Low Tension (LT) line extension is high and work is being prioritised based on the availability of additional funds from the government. (PTI)

Stakeholder meet highlights traditional crafts and textiles for protection

24 Nagaland products identified for GI registration

HT Correspondent
DIMAPUR, March 5: A total of 24 products from Nagaland have been identified for geographical indication (GI) registration.

This was stated at a stakeholder meeting on GI initiatives for traditional crafts and handloom products of Nagaland held at the Nagaland Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation office in Dimapur on Thursday.

The North Eastern Handicrafts and Handlooms Development Corporation Limited (NEHDC) in collaboration with the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region, organised the meeting.

The initiative aimed to identify, document and facilitate the filing of GI applications for traditional crafts and handloom products of Nagaland.

During the meeting, several potential GI products from different tribes of Nagaland were highlighted, including Pochury textile of Nagaland, Pochury shawl of Nagaland, Zeliang textile of Nagaland, Sumi shawl of Nagaland, Sumi tex-



tile of Nagaland, Ao textile of Nagaland, Tikhir jewellery of Nagaland and Tikhir textile of Nagaland.

The applicant authorities for these products include Pochury Hoho, Zeliang People's Organisation, Sumi Hoho, Ao Senden and Tikhir Council.

During the meeting, Monmayuri

Rengma, Sangtam and Yimkhung are also in the process of identifying suitable traditional products for GI registration through their respective tribal organisations.

It was highlighted that GI tagging carries numerous benefits and is important not only from a commercial perspective but also for preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of indigenous communities.

According to data presented during the meeting, the northeastern region currently has 89 registered GI products with handicrafts forming the largest share with 48 products, followed by 28 agricultural products, eight manufactured products and five food products.

The meeting emphasised the importance of collective efforts by tribal organisations, government agencies and stakeholders to protect traditional knowledge and promote indigenous products through GI registration, while also strengthening collaboration to improve market opportunities for artisans and weavers of the state.

She said other tribal communities of Nagaland such as Angami, Chakhesang, Chang, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Lotha, Phom,

The 90-member Haryana Assembly, the ruling BJP has 48 MLAs, Congress 37

RS poll in Haryana: BJP's Sanjay Bhatia, Congress' Karamvir Boudh file nominations

CHANDIGARH, March 5: BJP candidate Sanjay Bhatia and Congress' Karamvir Singh Boudh filed their nominations here on Thursday for the Rajya Sabha poll from Haryana.

The nominations were filed on the last day of filing.

Two RS seats from Haryana are falling vacant as BJP members Kiran Choudhry and Ram Chander Jangra are set to complete their terms on April 9.

BJP candidate Bhatia was accompanied by Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, Haryana BJP president Mohan Lal Badoli and other party leaders. Prior to that Bhatia met CM Saini at his residence here, Saini congratulated Bhatia for being declared as the Rajya Sabha candidate.

"I met senior BJP leader and former MP from Karnal, respected Sanjay Bhatia ji at Sant Kabir Kutir and extended my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to him on being declared the Rajya Sabha candidate from Haryana. Your vast experience and dedication towards public service will play an important role in furthering the interests of the state in the Upper House," Saini posted on X.

Bhatia, while thanking the party leadership for selecting him as a Rajya Sabha candidate, said he will try to live up to the expectations of the people and his party.

Speaking to reporters before filing his nomination, Boudh thanked party leader Rahul Gandhi for showing faith in him.

He said he will try to live up to the expectations of the people and



raise people's issues in Rajya Sabha. He was accompanied by Leader of Opposition Bhupinder Singh Hooda, Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala, State Congress President Rao Narendra Singh and Congress general secretary in-charge of Haryana B K Hariprasad. On the last day of filing nominations, the Congress announced Boudh's name.

Surjewala said by nominating such a person to the Rajya Sabha, the Congress has again proved that it not only stands by the exploited and deprived section but also gives priority to a person who is working at the ground level.

Boudh, a retired Haryana government employee, has also been a Dalit activist who has raised issues pertaining to the community on various platforms. He is currently the coordinator of the National Scheduled Castes department of the party.

Boudh was an aspirant for the

president Mallikarjun Kharge, for the nomination.

He also thanked the state leadership, including Hooda, Kumari Selja, Birender Singh, Randeep Singh Surjewala, state unit chief Rao Narendra Singh and party general secretary in-charge of Haryana Hariprasad.

Boudh said that the party leadership has expressed their confidence in a common worker and entrusted him a big responsibility. He said Rahul Gandhi and the entire Congress always stand with farmers, labourers, Dalits, poor and weaker sections and raise their voice.

In the 90-member Haryana Assembly, the ruling BJP has 48 MLAs, Congress 37, the INLD has two, while three Independents support the ruling party, with 31 votes each required for the two candidates to make it to the Rajya Sabha from Haryana.

BJP's Bhatia (58) is considered a confidant of Union Minister and former Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar. Notifications for the polls were issued on February 26. Polling, if required, will be held on March 16 between 9 am and 4 pm, and votes will be counted from 5 pm the same day.

The last date of filing nomination is March 5. Scrutiny of nominations will be held on March 6, while the last date for the withdrawal of candidature is March 9.

According to the Election Commission's poll schedule issued recently, 37 Rajya Sabha seats fall vacant on April 2 and 9, from 10 states, including Haryana, Maharashtra, Himachal, and Tamil Nadu. (PTI)

Congress ticket in the 2024 Haryana Assembly polls from Mullana reserve assembly segment. However, at that time the party gave the ticket to Pooja Chaudhary, wife of party's Ambala MP Varun Chaudhary, and she went on to win the seat.

Sources said that by fielding Boudh for the RS polls, the party has tried to balance caste equations.

In the Congress' Haryana unit, Leader of Opposition and former chief minister Hooda comes from the Jat community while State Congress chief Rao Narendra Singh is from the OBC community. Boudh had also served as chairman of the SC/ST confederation of employees. He had also been appointed the coordinator for Dalit outreach for previous assembly elections in the state by Congress.

Besides Gandhi, Boudh also thanked the Congress leadership, including K C Venugopal and party

Bihar CM, BJP chief among 5 NDA candidates for Rajya Sabha polls in Bihar

PATNA, March 5: Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and BJP president Nitin Nabin filed their nomination papers for Rajya Sabha elections on Thursday, besides three other candidates of the NDA, which is hopeful of grabbing all five seats going to the polls despite the opposition RJD throwing its hat in the ring.

Kumar, who heads the JD(U), and Nabin, a regional leader who got catapulted to the top post in the BJP in January, filed their nomination papers in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who had flown down from Delhi.

Besides Nabin and Kumar, other NDA candidates were Union Minister Ram Nath Thakur of the JD(U), who aims at a hat-trick, RLM president Upendra Kushwaha, who seeks a second consecutive term, and BJP state general secretary Shivesh Kumar, a former MLA who hopes to make a debut in Parliament.

Kumar announced his decision to enter the Rajya Sabha earlier in the day, bringing the curtains down on his 20-year tenure as the longest-serving CM of the state. Asked about the development, Union Minister Giriraj Singh said, "Nitish Kumar had expressed his desire to move to the Rajya Sabha three years ago. Now that he has decided to go, he is doing so of his own will. Whatever government is formed in the future will be under his leadership."

Nomination papers were also filed by RJD's Amarendra Dhari Singh, a sitting MP and businessman turned politician, who was accompanied, among others, by the party's national working president, Tejashwi Yadav, to the Vidhan Sabha secretariat.

IRAN CONFLICT

Congress slams govt's 'criminal silence', questions timing of PM's Israel visit



NEW DELHI, March 5: The Congress on Thursday questioned the Modi government's "criminal silence" on the "trampling upon" the rules-based order by the US and Israel, and said the impact of the West Asia conflict will be felt by the people of India as recession will set in in the coming times.

Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera said Prime Minister Narendra Modi often speaks of terms like 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' and 'Atithi Devo Bhava', but not even a trace of these words is visible in his work style and foreign policy.

"There is another statement, 'Maunam Swikriti Lakshnam', meaning silence is a sign of consent/agreement. Much is being heard in the prime minister's silence as well, which has left the entire world stunned upon hearing it. Today, the prime minister's criminal silence is emerging like an ugly stain on the entire country and its heritage," Khera said at a press conference here.

Alleging that Prime Minister Modi is "compromised", Khera said with the PM is under pressure due to the Epstein Files issue or the Adani case in the US. "What happened just a few days ago is beyond anyone's comprehension. Why, after all, did Narendra Modi go to Israel a few days ago? Within 48 hours of Narendra Modi returning from Israel, the illegal war between America-Israel and Iran broke out, and a head of state was assassinated," Khera said.

"Narendra Modi became a puppet in this entire sequence. America-Israel had some other preparations behind the scenes, and something else was shown through Narendra Modi's visit," he claimed.

While attacking the government over the US submarine sinking an Iranian warship in international wa-

ters off Sri Lanka's coast, Khera recalled that in 2018, a yacht was seized in international waters beyond Goa, which had Dubai's Princess Latifa on board.

"At that time, we were the guardians of the Indian Ocean. But when a ship from Iran arrived as our guest at our invitation, we could not protect it. Often in such exercises, ships do not come armed, but that same unarmed guest was sunk by America in the Indian Ocean," he said.

"The shocking thing is that in this joint naval exercise, America had refused to send its ship at the last moment and had only sent its officers. Did India know that America was going to do this in the Indian Ocean? If it did, what did we do about it? And if it didn't, what steps did the Indian government take to protect its guest?" he asked. "When this happened, why does the Modi government still claim that we are the guardians of the Indian Ocean? In reality, these are the pawns of the 'Gangs of Epstein'," the Congress leader said, taking a swipe at the government.

Noting that Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz, Khera said only ships from Russia and China can pass through there and India is not on this list.

"Due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, Indian goods worth Rs 10,000 crore, 38 ships, and 1,100 sailors are stranded. The Indian National Ship Owners Association has requested assistance from the Government of India. But the government is not in a position to help because it has shut down all avenues of dialogue with Iran," he said.

Due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the people of the country will have to bear the consequences as LPG and LNG come through that route, he said.

"The impact of the war will be felt on our people along with several sectors of the country, including fertilizer, transport, mining, railway, power, and agriculture. We cannot even imagine the extent to which inflation will rise and recession will set in in the coming times," Khera said. "There should be rules, and countries should operate on the basis of those rules. India has been the biggest flag-bearer of the rules-based order, which Narendra Modi has trampled upon. Narendra Modi remains silent on the assassination of Khamenei and the illegal war," he alleged.

"Even those protesting in the country are facing FIRs. People cannot express their anger, cannot mourn. Narendra Modi has brought Indian democracy to such a state," Khera said. (PTI)

'Silence not right': Sachin Pilot urges govt to take stand on West Asia conflict

JAIPUR, March 5: Senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Thursday said the ongoing conflict in West Asia should end soon and urged the government of India to uphold its tradition of diplomatic neutrality while taking a clear stand on developments affecting its strategic region.

Pilot said India has historically maintained a balanced and mature position in global affairs and should continue to do so. "I hope the ongoing violence ends soon and the loss of lives and property stops. The developments have unfolded very rapidly. India has always maintained neutrality and globally its position has been that of a sensible, serious and mature nation," he said.

Referring to a US strike on an Iranian vessel in international waters off the Sri Lankan coast, Pilot said India should not remain silent when such incidents occur close to its area of influence.

"America has carried out an at-

tack and a ship has been sunk. I believe our government and the country should take a stand on this. If a war is happening elsewhere but such one-sided activity takes place in our area of influence, then remaining silent is not right," he said. Pilot pointed out that the ship had come to participate in a military exercise with Indian forces and was destroyed very close to India. He said the country must "stand up and say what is right and what is wrong," adding that the silence of the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Defence is being watched by the world and is not in the national interest.

The Congress leader also said that India has historically spoken clearly on global issues and maintained relations with multiple countries. "Whether it is Iran, Afghanistan, Europe or Russia, India has had long-standing cultural and historical bilateral relations with many countries." (PTI)

After filing his nomination papers, Union minister Thakur said, "The JD(U) has trusted me, sent me to Rajya Sabha thrice. I served as MLC for 12 years and as MLA for 10 years. I am indebted towards the party's leadership. I wish to play a role in Nitish Kumar's endeavours to make Bihar developed."

Kushwaha said it is a matter of great joy for him that Kumar will also be going to the Rajya Sabha, giving him the opportunity to work "alongside our elder brother". Asked who would be the next CM of Bihar, he said, "Nitish Kumar is still the chief minister of the state and hasn't resigned yet. This question will arise only when he submits his resignation."

The RJD held two of the five Rajya Sabha seats in Bihar for which polls are being held. But in view of its decimation in the 2025 assembly polls, in which it managed only 25 seats, it has chosen to contest only one, dropping Prem Chand Gupta, a former Union minister and key aide of party supremo Lalu Prasad.

The NDA enjoys a brute majority in the assembly, though its tally of 202 in the 243-member House falls three short of the number needed to bag all five Rajya Sabha seats. The RJD enjoys the backing of 10 other MLAs, all owing allegiance to the Mahagathbandhan, and hopes to make up for the deficit of six votes with the help of Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati's BSP, though neither party has, so far, declared its support to any of the Rajya Sabha candidates. (PTI)

PM's silence on America-Iran war dangerous signal for India: Sisodia

NEW DELHI, March 5: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on the America-Iran war sends a "dangerous signal" at a time when global tensions are escalating, former deputy chief minister of Delhi, Manish Sisodia, alleged on Thursday.

The AAP leader also questioned the implications of this stance for India's interests and energy security. "As an Indian citizen, several extremely serious questions are arising in my mind today. Exactly one month ago, Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi entered into a trade deal with the US," Sisodia said in a post on X. "In that deal, one key condition of the US was accepted, i.e., India will not import oil from Russia. India does not produce most of the oil it needs," he added.

Stating that India purchases a large portion of oil for daily use from foreign countries, Sisodia said, "Therefore, shutting down one or two sources is not merely a diplomatic decision. It is directly linked to whether the country's oil supply will remain stable, whether

prices will remain under control, and whether the country will have options available in times of crisis. This is what is called energy security." In a significant escalation of the West Asia crisis, a US submarine on Wednesday torpedoed and sank an Iranian warship in international waters off Sri Lanka's coast when it was returning after participating in the Milan naval exercise, a multi-lateral wargame hosted by India.

"Yesterday, the United States brought this war almost to India's doorstep. Twenty-four hours have passed, but not a single word has come from the mouth of India's prime minister. This silence is a dangerous signal," Sisodia said.

"What message is going out to the world? That anyone can come and wage a war near India's borders, and India's prime minister will remain silent? Whose interests does this silence ultimately serve," the AAP leader asked.

The US and Israel launched military strikes on Iran on February 28, killing Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. (PTI)

GOVT. OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS::

KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT CIRCLE,

DIPHU

No. IS/Sec. Teacher/Apptt/2025/14217

Dated Diphu the 4/3/2026.

NOTICE

It is for information of all candidates who have applied for the post of Subject Teacher (PGT) (Assamese/English/ Political Science/Economics/History/Education/ Sanskrit/Mathematics/Accountancy/Commercial Mathematics & Studies/ Business Studies/Zoology/Botany/Physics) under Secondary Education Department, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu in response to the advertisement issued from the Office of the Inspector of Schools, Karbi Anglong District Circle, Diphu vide memo no. IS/Sec. Teacher/Apptt/2025/03 Dated 24th December, 2025 that the TET Cum Recruitment Written Test Examination is scheduled to be held on 14th March, 2026 (Saturday) from 09:00 AM to 11:30 AM.

Therefore, all candidates are informed to collect their calling letters for appearing the said TET Cum Recruitment Written Test Examination for the post of Subject Teacher (PGT) under Secondary Education Department, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu w.e.f., 06th February, 2026 to 13th February, 2026 during office hours in the O/o the Inspector of Schools, Karbi Anglong District Circle, Diphu.

Letter. Candidate should bring 02 (two) copies of Passport Size Photograph for collection of Calling

Sd/-
Inspector of Schools,
Karbi Anglong District Circle, Diphu.

GOVT. OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS::

KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT CIRCLE,

DIPHU

No. IS/Sec. Teacher/Apptt/2025/1182

Dated Diphu the 05/03/2026.

CORRIGENDUM OF NOTICE

In continuation of this office Notice no. No. IS/Sec. Teacher/Apptt/2025/14217 Dated 04-03-2026, It is for information of all candidates who have applied for the post of Subject Teacher (PGT) (Assamese/English/Political Science/Economics/History/Education/ Sanskrit/ Mathematics/Accountancy/Commercial Mathematics & Studies/ Business Studies/Zoology/Botany/Physics) under Secondary Education Department, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu in response to the advertisement issued from the Office of the Inspector of Schools, Karbi Anglong District Circle, Diphu vide memo no. IS/Sec. Teacher/Apptt/2025/03 Dated 24th December, 2025 that the TET Cum Recruitment Written Test Examination is scheduled to be held on 14th March, 2026 (Saturday) from 09:00 AM to 11:30 AM.

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Sd/-
Inspector of Schools,
Karbi Anglong District Circle, Diphu.

The third digital platform is the Self-enumeration portal, which will, for the first time Amit Shah unveils mascots, soft launches 4 digital tools to power Census-2027

NEW DELHI, March 5: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday soft-launched four digital tools that will drive the country's first fully digital Census, with the first phase starting April 1.

Shah launched the Houselisting Block Creator (HLBC) web application for digital mapping using satellite imagery, which will ensure standardised geographic coverage across the country; the HLO mobile application, which is a secure offline mobile app for enumerators to collect and upload houselisting data; a Self-enumeration (SE) portal that will for the first time allow users to submit their household information online before field operations; and core of the Census, the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) – a dedicated digital portal engineered to orchestrate one of the largest administrative exercises in the world.

Shah also formally unveiled the mascots for Census-2027 – 'Pragati' (female) and 'Vikas' (male).

"These mascots symbolise equal participation of women and men in fulfilling the resolve to make India a developed nation by 2047. Through these mascots, information, objectives and key messages related to Census-2027 will be disseminated in an effective and citizen-friendly manner across diverse sections of society," a government statement said.



The four digital platforms that will be at the centre of the Census exercise have been developed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) to facilitate enumeration operations across the country, it said.

In a list of firsts, the ₹ 11,718 crore mega exercise for conducting the 16th head count of the country will include caste enumeration, a fully digital exercise offering citizens the option of self-enumeration. Originally scheduled for 2021, the decadal exercise was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Census will be conducted in two phases – houselisting and housing census from April to September 2026, and population enu-

meration (PE) in February 2027.

The houselisting and housing census will systematically list all structures, houses and households throughout the country to provide a sound framework for the conduct of the population enumeration.

The set digital platforms include the HLBC web application, which will provide officials with a web-map application, enabling them to digitally create houselisting blocks using satellite imagery, ensuring standardised geographic coverage across India.

The second crucial application is the HLO mobile application, replacing clipboards and carbon copies with handheld devices equipped with this secure, offline mobile application to collect and

upload houselisting data.

"Only enumerators registered on the CMMS portal can access the application. The app enables direct field-to-server data transmission, eliminating traditional paperwork.

All houselisting data will be collected through this app, which can only be operated using registered mobile numbers. The application is compatible with Android and iOS platforms, and can be operated in 16 regional languages," the statement said. The third digital platform is the Self-enumeration portal, which will, for the first time, give the citizens the option of self-enumeration.

"The SE portal is a secure web-based facility that allows eligible respondents within a household to submit their household information online before field operations.

"Upon successful submission, a unique self-enumeration ID (SE ID) will be generated. This SE ID will be shared with the enumerator, based on which enumerator will be able to verify the information," the statement said.

The self-enumeration option will be available for a 15-day window preceding the 30-day houselisting and housing census.

At the heart of the exercise will be the CMMS – a dedicated portal engineered to orchestrate one of the largest administrative exercises in the world. (PTI)

PM Modi calls for swift end to West Asia, Ukraine conflicts

NEW DELHI, March 5: With West Asia on the brink of a wider regional war, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday called for a "swift end" to the escalating conflict in the region saying no issue can be resolved through military confrontation.

Modi's remarks following his wide-ranging talks with Finnish President Alexander Stubb came as the United States and Israel's war with Iran entered the sixth day with both sides launching fresh strikes, significantly heightening tensions across the region. Stubb strongly backed India's bid for a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, arguing that it is of "utmost importance" along with larger reform of the global multilateral system to reflect the current geopolitical realities.

In his media statement, Modi said the India-Finland relationship in the digitalisation and sustainability is being given the shape of a strategic partnership that will give rise to cooperation in many high-technology areas including AI, 6G telecom, clean energy and quantum computing. The two sides also agreed to deepen cooperation in key sectors such as defence, space, semiconductors, and critical minerals. The crisis in West Asia figured prominently in the Modi-Stubb talks. "India and Finland, both, believe in the rule of law, dialogue, and diplomacy. We are in agreement that no issue can be resolved through military conflict alone," the prime minister said.

"Be it Ukraine or West Asia, we will continue to support the swift end of conflicts and every effort towards peace," he added.

Modi also made a mention of the upswing in India-Europe relations. "The world is going through a period of instability and uncertainty. Conflict persists in many parts of the world, from Ukraine to West Asia. In such a global environment, India and Europe – two of the world's major diplomatic powers – are entering a golden period of their relations," he said.

"Our growing cooperation is providing new strength to global stability, growth, and shared prosperity," he said. The Finnish president said both sides deliberated on the conflict in West Asia and Russia's "war of aggression" against Ukraine.

"We agreed that ending the war is in everyone's in-



terests. A lasting peace can only be one that respects the principles of the United Nations," he said. In his remarks, Modi said the India-European Union free trade agreement will help deepen ties between New Delhi and Helsinki.

"This agreement will further strengthen trade, investment, and technology cooperation between India and Finland. India and Finland are important partners in areas such as digital technology, infrastructure, and sustainability," he said. The prime minister also highlighted Finnish telecom giant Nokia's operations in India. "Nokia's mobile phone and telecom networks have connected millions of Indians. In collaboration with Finnish architects, we built the world's tallest railway bridge over the Chenab river," he said.

"Inspired by such significant examples, we are transforming India-Finland relations into a strategic partnership in digitalisation and sustainability during President Stubb's visit," Modi said.

"This partnership will accelerate and energize our cooperation in many high-tech areas, from AI to 6G telecom, from clean energy to quantum computing," he said. Modi said both sides will also deepen partnership in key sectors such as defence, space, semiconductors, and critical minerals.

"This strategic partnership between democratic and responsible countries like India and Finland will contribute to ensuring trustworthy technology and supply chains for the entire world," he said. (PTI)

Nitish announces Rajya Sabha foray, ending tenure as Bihar's longest-serving CM

PATNA, March 5: JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar on Thursday announced that he will be contesting the Rajya Sabha polls, bringing the curtains down on his tenure as the longest-serving CM of Bihar.

Kumar, who has been the chief minister for a record 10 terms since 2005, said the new government that will be formed in the state will have his full cooperation and guidance.

"For more than two decades, you have consistently placed your trust and support in me, and it is on the strength of that trust that we have served Bihar and all of you with complete dedication. It was the power of your trust and support that has enabled Bihar today to present a new dimension of development and dignity," he said in a post on X, expressing gratitude to the people of the state. Kumar said that from the very beginning of his parliamentary journey, he wanted to become a member of both Houses of the state legislature as well as both Houses of Parliament.

"In keeping with this aspiration, I seek to become a member of the Rajya Sabha in the elections being held this time," he said.

"I want to assure you with complete honesty that my relationship with you will continue in the future as well, and my resolve to work together with you to build a developed Bihar will remain steadfast. The new government that will be formed will have my full cooperation and guidance," he added.

With Kumar stepping down after leading the ruling NDA to a landslide victory in the assembly

elections held in November last year, a BJP leader is expected to take over the top post.

If that happens, Bihar will get its first BJP chief minister -- the only Hindi heartland state where the party has not held the office so far. Five Rajya Sabha seats from the state will go to the polls on March 16, and the filing of nomination papers will close on Thursday.

Kumar's election to the Upper House of Parliament is all but certain, as per the tally in the state legislature.

Since morning, a large number of JD(U) workers have been demonstrating outside the CM's residence, protesting Kumar's decision. State Sunni Waqf Board chairman Alhaj Mohammad Irshadullah, a JD(U) leader, said, "Party workers are not happy with Nitish Kumar's decision to leave Bihar politics and go to Rajya Sabha. When I came to know about it, it was a shocker for me. He should have remained the CM". Reacting to Kumar's announcement, RJD leader Manoj Jha told PTI Video, "After reading the tweet, it is guaranteed that he has not dictated or written this. It came from Delhi. The core of JD(U) is hurt by this...."

The development comes two days after JD(U) leaders said the CM's son, Nishant Kumar, will enter active politics.

"On the eve of Holi, I have some good news to share with the people of Bihar. It has been some time since there have been demands, from within the JD(U) as well as from among the state's youth, that

Nishant, the son of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, join politics. Decks have been cleared for that, and a formal announcement will be made in a day or two," Rural Development Minister Shrawan Kumar told PTI on Tuesday.

Speculations are rife that Nishant, an engineering graduate in his 40s, will join the new government as the deputy CM.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary, one of the contenders for the CM's post, congratulated Kumar on his decision. "Your visionary leadership, unwavering commitment to good governance, and your continuous efforts for the all-round development of Bihar are an inspiration to all of us. I am confident that with your experience and leadership, the dignity of the Rajya Sabha will be further strengthened," the BJP leader said in a post on X. The Rajya Sabha elections will be held as the tenures of JD(U)'s Hari-vansh Narayan Singh and Ram Nath Thakur, RJD's Prem Chand Gupta and Amarendra Dhari Singh, and RLM's Upendra Kushwaha are ending. First preference votes of 41 MLAs are needed to win a Rajya Sabha seat. At present, the NDA has 202 seats in the 243-member assembly, with the BJP at 89 and the JD(U) at 85.

The BJP has named its newly-appointed president Nitin Nabin, a member of the legislative council, and state general secretary Shivesh Kumar as its candidates, besides backing Kushwaha, who entered the House in 2025, for another term. (PTI)

Sena (UBT) couldn't field Chaturvedi for RS seat due to lack of numbers: Raut

MUMBAI, March 5: Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut on Thursday said unfavourable political arithmetic and the candidature of NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar were the key reasons why the party could not field Priyanka Chaturvedi again for the Rajya Sabha election.

Raut said that although there was a strong desire within the Shiv Sena (UBT) to see Chaturvedi re-elected to the Upper House of Parliament, the party lacked the required numbers and the entry of a senior leader like Pawar into the fray made it difficult to contest the seat.

"There was a wish in the party that Priyanka Chaturvedi should return to the Rajya Sabha, but the required numbers were not there. With a senior leader like Pawar saheb in the fray, we had to take this decision," Raut said while explaining the development.

"Had the political arithmetic worked out and Pawar did not contest, then the Sena (UBT) would have 100 per cent fought the seat and given Chaturvedi another opportunity," he said.

Seven Rajya Sabha seats from Maharashtra are falling vacant next month. On Wednesday, the Congress declared support to NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar as the Opposition bloc's

candidate for the lone Rajya Sabha seat from Maharashtra. The decision ended days of speculation about the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) candidate as all three allies - Congress, NCP (SP) and Shiv Sena (UBT) - had staked claim to the seat.

The ruling BJP has fielded four candidates, including its general secretary Vinod Tawde and Union minister Ramdas Athawale, for the biennial polls.

The filing of nominations for these seats will close on March 5. Commenting on the BJP's list of four Rajya Sabha candidates from Maharashtra, Raut said the renomination of Athawale was expected, while the candidature of Tawde was noteworthy.

Tawde's nomination could be seen as recognition of his organisational work for the party over the last six to seven years after he was denied a ticket to contest the 2019 Maharashtra assembly elections, the Sena (UBT) MP said.

Raut said Tawde had worked for strengthening the party organisation during that period and his nomination to the Rajya Sabha appeared to be a reward for those efforts. (PTI)

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

DIPHU-782460

No. KAAC/S.E. -W-HRN-165 (Pt)/2025-26/242(A)

Dtd.26/02/2026.

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 07/03/2026. 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	Paver block road at Mailoo Rampur Gaon under Amereng Constituency.	Rs.1,40,80,000.00	Rs.1,40,80,000.00	ST/SC/OBC=1% General = 2%	120 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.
- 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
 - c. 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.

'Bridgerton' season five to focus on hunt for new Lady Whistledown: Jess Brownell

Season five of the hit period romance series "Bridgerton" will centre on the hunt for a new Lady Whistledown, the anonymous gossip columnist who has been an integral part of the series for four seasons, says showrunner Jess Brownell.

The show's fourth chapter, which arrived on Netflix in two parts, saw Penelope Bridgerton (Nicola Coughlan) retire as the mysterious scribe midway through the season and later a new Lady Whistledown step up in the explosive finale, leaving everyone including Penelope shocked.

Brownell said veteran actor Julie Andrews, who has voiced the character throughout the series, will return for season five but has subtly altered her performance to signal the change in authorship.

"It is definitely something we can tease for season five... We have a whole new Whistledown," Brownell told PTI in an interview.

"You might have noticed at the end of season four, Julie Andrews is still the voice, but she's changed her vocal performance just slightly to suggest that this is a different writer. This is perhaps a writer who has a different moral code and different ethos. We are going to see that play out in season five and see the way the hunt for this new Whistledown shakes up all of society," she added.

Asked whether the next installment would centre on Eloise, the fifth Bridgerton sibling, the showrunner said the team would announce the new lead in due course.

"I wish I could answer that, but we want to focus on giving Yerin Ha her celebratory moment," Brownell said, referring to the fourth season's lead actor, whose Cinderella-style romance with Luke Thompson forms the heart of the latest chapter.

Season four, which concluded on Netflix on February 26, centres on Benedict Bridgerton (Thompson), the second Bridgerton sibling who has long resisted his mother's

(Lady Violet Bridgerton) wishes to settle down.

However, it all changes at a ball hosted by his mother, where he becomes captivated by a mysterious attendee known only as the Lady in Silver, who later turns out to be Sophie Baek, a young maid.

Adapted from "An Offer from a Gentleman", the third book in Julia Quinn's Bridgerton series, the season follows Benedict as he struggles with his feelings for Baek.

The story also explores their class divide, as Sophie comes from a much humbler background.

"We were incredibly lucky to have Julia Quinn's book as a guide and with Yerin Ha and Luke Thompson on board, I feel like they bring so much brilliance to their roles. But the upstairs/downstairs divide is definitely something new for the show.

"And there were a lot of discussions about how we were going to tackle that, what the tone of the show would be. And we did try to find a line between making sure to really go into the fact that these people have difficult lives while still allowing moments of joy and an aspirational wish fulfillment love story with Benedict and Sophie," Brownell said.

After multiple seasons of big, sweeping romantic speeches, the showrunner said it has been a challenge to come up with grand declarations of love "Bridgerton" style.

"With the love confessions, it does get harder season after season to recreate the magic of some of these love confessions. But I think what we try to do is keep it really grounded and who these characters are and in what way specifically should they be seen by the person who loves them," she said.

As Sophie comes from a lower social class, she's often judged by position in society but what she truly wants is to be "seen for every part of her," Brownell added.

"And also for her to feel very deep love from Benedict in a way in which he's willing to be really committed. I would say what's



more important this season than any of the love confessions, though, is Benedict's willingness to be with Sophie, but in its own sense," she said.

In earlier seasons, characters, especially the men, had visible transformations, which signaled that they were ready for marriage.

With Benedict, the "glow up" is not just about shiny clothes and being well groomed, it is also about growth on the inside.

"It really is about him recognizing the kind of man he needs to be to be worthy of someone like Sophie," Brownell said, adding that Sophie also gets her fair share of "glow up" towards the end of the season.

"She gets to dress up for the ball. But something I'm so excited about for season five is just getting to see Yerin Ha portray a lady in society. Yerin's so stunning. And to get to put her in some incredible gowns is going to be really, really fun in season five," she added.

Prepping for a show like "Bridgerton" is nothing short of "nerve wracking", said Brownell, adding that she relies a lot on her amazing team.

"I feel like when we're in the writing stage, I really trust my writing staff. When we're in the

production stage, I really trust our department heads and crew. And it takes a village, especially for a show this gigantic. I have to delegate things. And I just have magnificent people who work with me on this show," she said.

According to Brownell, the USP of the show is the balance between its old-fashioned setting and the modern energy.

She credited Chris Van Dusen, Shonda Rhimes and Betsy Beers for setting the tone with the earlier seasons which made the show feel fresh and modern but still rooted in classic romance.

"I think for me stepping in at season three, it's just been every season about focusing on the characters and what story comes naturally from them. We always try to stick to class and gender roles because I think those are the obstacles that form our world. And beyond that, we have a little fun with costumes. We have a little fun with language.

"And for the people living in that time period, it didn't feel like they were in olden times. It felt like they were super modern. And I think that's how audiences get to perceive the show because of some of those slight tweaks," she added. (PTI)

'SCARED GAMES' ACTOR RAJSHRI DESHPANDE DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER



Actor Rajshri Deshpande on Wednesday revealed she has been diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer and said she is now recovering well following a successful surgery.

The actor, known for her critically acclaimed work in "Sacred Games" and "Trial by Fire", shared the news in a post on Instagram alongside a photo from the hospital.

The actor said the post comes after she found the "courage" to tell her parents that she has been diagnosed with Infiltrating Ductal Carcinoma (NOS), a Grade 1 breast cancer.

"We fortunately caught this early in a routine checkup which gave us a fighting chance. Tons of tests and surgery felt like a rollercoaster ride, but trust me it was everyone's love and warmth that carried me through," Deshpande wrote.

"And seeing my Aai and papa's faces after surgery melted my fears into unbreakable strength. With everyone's support I feel I'm ready to take on the world," she said.

The actor, also known for featuring in films such as "Manto", "The Sky is Pink", "Joram", further said she has been recovering "beautifully" and expects to be home soon. She praised the doctors at Kokilaben Hospital for their expert care in making her journey gentler.

"...Your love truly is my greatest medicine. Here's to healing, hope and all the brighter days ahead," Deshpande said.

In her off-screen life, the 43-year-old actor is a dedicated social worker who has adopted several drought-prone villages in Maharashtra.

Through her Nabhanan Foundation, she has also worked towards restoring water supplies, building toilets, providing education for girls, and empowering women.

Deshpande assured that her plans remain on track, and stated that 2026 began with ambitious goals for building more school, river revival, and that her diagnosis hasn't stopped her.

"...I felt unstoppable, full of purpose and dreams. But nothing will change all this will happen. And in even more beautiful ways, I promise," she said.

"I'm walking into this adventure with faith, courage and a heart full of love. I know it's just a chapter, not my whole story. My energy, compassion and fierce determination to serve, create and stand by those who need a hand. Now as a survivor, social worker and human it's all become even more important. As Lots of work needs to be done on ground about breast cancer awareness too," the actor added.

Deshpande's friends and colleagues from the film industry, including filmmaker Kiran Rao, actors Adarsh Gourav, Tilotama Shome, Chhaya Kadam and Shahana Goswami, sent wishes and messages of strength.

"Wishing you a smooth recovery, and hoping you're back to health and being the champion that you are as soon as possible. All my love," Rao commented.

Gourav wrote, "Speedy recovery and prayers." (PTI)

Yash's 'Toxic' postponed to June 4, averts clash with 'Dhurandhar'

The release of the much-anticipated movie, "Toxic: A Fairytale for Grown-Ups", starring Yash, has been postponed to June 4 owing to rising tension in the Middle East.

The Geetu Mohandas-directed movie is billed as an action-thriller saga that unfolds in Goa between the early 1940s and the 1970s. In the film, which was originally scheduled for worldwide release on March 19, Yash plays the role of Raya, a gangster.

Production banner KVN Productions and Yash's Monster Mind Creations shared the news in a statement on social media.

The two companies said the film was "conceptualised with the vision to create cinema for a global audience" and that the decision to postpone was driven by "the current uncertainty, especially in the Middle East" which has "created a situation that impacts our goal to reach and connect with the widest possible audience."

"Therefore, in the interest of our partners and our audience, we have made the difficult but carefully considered decision to reschedule our release. We thank you for your understanding and patience and look forward to your continued love and support," the statement read. The Gulf region is a key market for the film's multi-language global rollout.



Tensions in the Middle East escalated sharply after the United States and Israel launched a coordinated offensive against Iran on February 28. Tehran responded by firing drones and missiles at Israel, US military installations across the Gulf region, and the global business hub of Dubai.

The new June 4 date also sees "Toxic" avert a box office clash with part two of Aditya Dhar's "Dhurandhar", which had also been lined up for release on March 19.

Yash also serves as the co-writer with Mohandas on the film, which marks his first project since the blockbuster success of "KGF: Chapter 2" in 2022.

Actors Nayanthara, Kiara Advani, Huma Qureshi, Rukmini Vasanth, and Tara Sutaria round out the cast of "Toxic".

The film has been shot simultaneously in Kannada and English, with dubbed versions in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam. (PTI)



Konkona Sensharma says she receives few offers for featuring in theatrical projects

Actor Konkona Sensharma has a desire to return to the big screen with a theatrical film, saying such offers have become rare for her.

For the actor, the rise of streaming platforms has helped bridge that gap. She has earned critical acclaim for her performances in series "Mumbai Diaries" and "Killer Soup" as well as the anthology film "Ajeeb Daastaans".

"By and large I've to say that these (offers) are usually web series. Thank God I'm so happy. I've been a part of wonderful web series, working with absolutely wonderful people. So, I've

been very lucky. But it is true that very few offers come for theatrical nowadays to me," the actor told PTI in an interview.

Early in her career, the 46-year-old actor made a mark with her off-beat theatrical films like "Mr. and Mrs. Iyer", for which she won the National Award, followed by diverse range of films such as "Page 3", "Life in a Metro", "Omkaara", "Wake up Sid", "Talvar", Zoya Akhtar's debut movie, "Luck by Chance" and ensemble film "Lipstick Under my Burkha".

Speaking on the current state of the industry, Sensharma said that for a

healthy cinematic ecosystem a variety of films should be made.

"I feel these kinds of films (women-led) should be in theatres, why should we only watch epic action based or war films. I would've loved to watch all kinds of films in theatres, even more intimate family dramas or comedies, how it used to be. Unfortunately, that is not the trend right now. But I hope that things will change," the actor said. Sensharma believes that due to commercial pressures, women-led stories and intimate dramas are getting sidelined today.

"I feel that all kinds of films should

exist and make it to the theatres, and that is what is best for the audience as well as they can pick and choose (what they want to watch).

"Unfortunately, a lot of decisions that are taken, are not just for what is best for a cause or for films or society or for women, a lot of these decisions are economic. Those are the factors which determine these things and that is the unfortunate reality," she said.

The actor currently stars in the Netflix movie "Accused". The movie is directed by Anubhuti Kashyap and also stars Pratibha Ranta of "Laapataa Ladies". (PTI)

India Women bank on recent Test form to upstage Australia in pink ball game

PERTH, March 5: Hammered in the ODIs, the Indian women's cricket team would expect the senior players to step up with inspiring performances when it faces Australia in a day-night Test for the first time in nearly five years, starting here on Friday.

India would be brimming with confidence having remained unbeaten in their last five Tests. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side won three consecutive Tests between December 2023 and July 2024 defeating England, Australia and South Africa respectively, but all those wins came on home soil.

India's last two overseas Tests ended in draws against England and Australia in 2021. The game against Australia in September-October of that year was a day-nighter that the visitors drew. A major highlight of that match was Smriti Mandhana, who scored the second of her two Test hundreds at that time.

The pink ball Test will conclude the multi-format series between the two rivals. India won the T20Is before being blanked in the ODIs, giving Australia an 8-4 lead in the points tally.

While two points each were on offer for T20 and ODI wins, the winner of the Test will get four points for an outright win. Australia would walk away with the overall honours if they are able to draw the match, but for India a win would be needed to sign off level in the final standings.

The Indians would take confidence from the fact that they created history by winning their first-ever Test against Australia by eight wickets at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai in December 2023.

While the onus would be on the likes of seniors Harmanpreet, her deputy Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Varma, Jemimah Rodrigues and Deepti Sharma to share the responsibility in the batting department, focus would also be on stylish right-hander Pratika Rawal, who is expected to make



her Test debut on Friday. Rawal is one of the seven uncapped India

players named for the day-night Test at the WACA Ground.

The Indian squad is a mix of youth and experience with seven uncapped players in the Test line-up, including 20-year-old left-arm spinner Vaishnavi Sharma, Kranti Gaud, Sayali Satghare, and Kashvee Gautam to name a few.

Both Kranti Gaud and Amanjot Kaur were a part of India's World Cup-winning ODI team and could make their Test debuts on Friday.

But the visitors will miss the services of experienced medium pacer Renuka Singh, who has been rested as part of her workload management. In her place, young quick Kashvee Gautam has been included.

Australia, on the other hand, will look to give a grand farewell to their captain Alyssa Healy, who will be playing her 299th and final international match.

Australia too have included a few uncapped

players in Rachel Trenaman and Maitlan Brown in their squad following the quad injuries to Kim Garth and Ellyse Perry, and the back problem of Sophie Molineux.

While both Garth and Molineux have been ruled out of the match, Australia are hoping that Perry will recover in time.

Teams:
India: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Shafali Varma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Deepti Sharma, Kashvee Gautam, Sneha Rana, Amanjot Kaur, Uma Chetry (wk), Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Kranti Gaud, Vaishnavi Sharma, Sayali Satghare.

Australia: Alyssa Healy (c&wk), Darcie Brown, Maitlan Brown, Nicola Carey, Ashleigh Gardner, Kim Garth, Alana King, Phoebe Litchfield, Beth Mooney, Tahlia McGrath, Ellyse Perry, Annabel Sutherland, Rachel Trenaman, Georgia Voll, Georgia Wareham.

Match starts at 10:50am IST. (PTI)

It wasn't a choke but a walloping: SA coach Conrad after semis defeat to NZ

KOLKATA, March 5: Not the one to mince words, South African head coach Shukri Conrad said his team's nine-wicket defeat to New Zealand in the T20 World Cup semifinal here was "not a choke but a walloping".

Chasing a tricky 170, New Zealand cantered home in 12.5 overs, powered by their openers on Wednesday night here. While Finn Allen's 100 not out off 33 balls was the fastest century in the event's history, equally explosive was Tim Seifert with a 33-ball 58.

The ouster added to South Africa's growing list of heartbreaks in ICC world tournaments. The 2024 runners-up had entered the semifinal as the tournament's only unbeaten side with seven wins on the trot including handing out defeats to New Zealand (group stage) and home favourites India (Super Eights).

"I don't know if tonight was a choke. I thought it was a bloody walloping," Conrad said bluntly when the 'C' word was brought up given South Africa's past record of imploding in high-pressure games. "In order for you to choke, you must have had a sniff in the game. We didn't have a sniff. In South Africa, we'd say we 'got moered (violent assault)'," he added in his inimitable style.

He then used his native Afrikaans to best sum up the defeat.

"Tonight, we got a proper 'snotklap' -- that's an Afrikaans



word for a real hiding, a smack you don't see coming. That's what it felt like," said Conrad, who had courted controversy during last year's Test series in India with fiery comments about wanting the Indian team to "grovel".

The literal meaning of Afrikaans term "snotklap" is "snot smack", referring to a blow to the face or nose, so severe that it knocks the 'snot out of the nose.

The New Zealand bowlers set up the contest nicely with Cole McConechie removing Quinton de Kock (10) and Ryan Rickelton (0) in consecutive deliveries in the second over after they won a good toss.

Later, Rachin Ravindra and Matt Henry stifled South Africa in the middle overs as none of their star batters -- Aiden Markram (18 off 20), David Miller (6), Dewald

Brevis (34) -- could swing their bats.

It was Marco Jansen (55 not out; 30 balls) and Tristan Stubbs (29) who lifted their total in the death overs.

"We recovered nicely with Stabo and Marco but I thought New Zealand were excellent. They exploited conditions really well with their spinners up front and we just never got out the block. So, yeah, full marks to them," Conrad conceded.

"They were a hell of a lot better than us tonight. We just spoke about it, that it seemed like everything went right."

With their dream run crashing in the semifinal, he said South Africa did everything right but "chose a really crappy time to have a bad night."

However, he brushed aside sug-

gestions that playing bulk of their previous matches in Ahmedabad had left them under-prepared for a different venue.

"There's obviously a lot to be said about playing all our games at Ahmedabad and then not having played anything in some of the other states. But again, that's no excuse," he said.

"They strangled us up front, lost wickets, didn't get any sort of momentum going. And yeah, a hell of a lot didn't go right tonight. But that was probably enforced because they were so good and they never gave us a sniff."

Asked how would the team overcome such a big defeat after a dream run in the preliminaries, Conrad quipped, "Hopefully we've got a carrier to pick us up to take us home. Look, I mean, the guys will be hurting and they obviously are, but it's not a hell of a lot. You get judged on World Cups and winning it."

Despite the crushing defeat, Conrad took pride in his side's seven-match winning run enroute the semifinals.

"I thought we did some exceptional stuff throughout the tournament. Played some really good cricket. I am incredibly proud of these guys," he said.

"Not many people gave us a chance of making the semifinals when we left home, given our form before the World Cup. But that's no consolation right now," he signed off. (PTI)

Top Indian shooters to compete in Selection Trials 3



NEW DELHI, March 5: The country's top shooters will vie for national squad spots for international competitions in the second-half of the year at the National Selection Trials 3 (Group A) to be held at the Dr Karni Singh Shooting Range here from Friday.

Almost all of India's leading shooters will compete across 10 events, including the eight Olympic disciplines along with the rifle prone competitions for men and women, in the trials that will run till Tuesday.

Rifle and pistol Selection Trials 3 and 4 for Group B athletes will also begin on Friday at the MP State Shooting Academy in Bhopal and will run till March 22.

Following the trials, selected national squad athletes will attend a coaching camp in New Delhi from March 10-21, the National Rifle Association of India stated.

The national camp for shotgun shooters also started on Thursday in New Delhi with the skeet shooters reporting first. The trap shooters will report for the national camp on March 8.

The national camp will be followed by the pre-event camp prior to the ISSF World Cup Shotgun, the first World Cup of the calendar year, which will be held in Tangier, Morocco from March 21-April 3.

The Indian teams for the first two Rifle/Pistol (Granada and Munich) and Shotgun (Tangier and Almaty) ISSF World Cup stages of the year, have already been announced.

The new Olympic cycle leading up to the 2028 Los Angeles Games begins this year, with the first quota places set to be decided at the ISSF World Championship in Doha in October-November.

The season will also feature the Asian Games Aichi-Nagoya 2026. (PTI)

Arjun Tendulkar ties the knot with Saaniya Chandhok

MUMBAI, March 5: Cricketer Arjun Tendulkar, son of legend Sachin Tendulkar, married entrepreneur Saaniya Chandhok in a star-studded ceremony at The St. Regis Mumbai on Thursday.

The high-profile event drew a diverse crowd of luminaries from the worlds of sports, entertainment, and politics.

Arjun has played for India at the U-19 level and in the Indian Premier League for the Mumbai Indians. He represents Goa in the domestic circuit.

Saaniya is a granddaughter of industrialist Ravi Ghai and is an entrepreneur herself in veterinarian field.

Public figures included former BCCI secretary and incumbent ICC chairman Jay Shah, former India captain and coach Rahul Dravid, ex-India cricketers Harbhajan Singh, Venkatesh Prasad and as well as commentator Harsha Bhogle.

Also in attendance were former India player and senior men's selection committee chief Ajit Agarkar, selector Pragyan Ojha, Mohammad Kaif, Piyush Chawla, ex-cricketer and TMC MP Yusuf Pathan, and BCCI vice-president Rajeev Shukla.

Bollywood legend Amitabh Bachchan and wife Jaya, Abhishek Bachchan and wife Aishwarya as well as Shah Rukh Khan and family, Aamir Khan, Asha Bhosle, Sonu Nigam were among those present at the venue.

Mukesh Ambani and wife Nita Ambani, their son Akash and wife Shloka Ambani and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief Raj Thackeray were also present at the wedding. (PTI)

J&K's Ranji Trophy win reflects impact of sustained investment in the region: Jay Shah



NEW DELHI, March 5: ICC chairman Jay Shah on Thursday said Jammu and Kashmir's recent triumph in the Ranji Trophy reflected the impact of "sustained investment" in developing cricketing infrastructure in the Himalayan region.

Jammu and Kashmir bagged their maiden Ranji Trophy title, holding eight-time champions Karnataka to a draw in which the former gained a 291-run first innings lead at Hubballi last week.

"Congratulations to the entire J&K team and the cricket fraternity for scripting a remarkable chapter in Indian domestic cricket. Their progress reflects the positive impact of sustained investment in grassroots cricket and infrastructure in the region," said Shah after meeting members of the victorious J&K outfit.

Shah had taken a special interest in developing the cricketing landscape in the valley during his tenure as BCCI secretary, often visiting the region to assess the progress.

The J&K team acknowledged Shah's contribution to the development of cricket in the region.

"We sincerely thank Mr. Shah for taking the time to meet the team and for sharing his words of encouragement with the players as they celebrate this historic achievement."

"The interaction highlighted the progress made by the team and the growing opportunities for players from Jammu & Kashmir in domestic cricket," the team said in a release.

Earlier, BCCI president Mithun Manhas had highlighted Shah's role in developing cricket in J&K.

"We are very thankful to Jai bhai and his vision, the way he made this committee, keeping in mind the administration part, the cricketing part, and involving the right players."

"He was the first secretary in the history of J&K in 67 years to come to Jammu and see the facilities himself. Once he was there and he showed us his full support, things started moving in the right direction," he had said. (PTI)

Theegala and Bhatia back for Signature event

BAY HILL (US), March 5: Sahith Theegala and Akshay Bhatia will look to put up a good show when they tee up at the USD 20million Arnold Palmer Invitational, the third Signature Event of the 2026 season.

Theegala, who lost out a good part of 2025 season due to injuries, is trying to make a comeback and secure his place in the top events, while Bhatia has done well after a couple of missed cuts.

Bhatia was T-3 at Phoenix Open and T-6 at AT&T Pebble Beach and T-16 at Genesis. Theegala had Top-10 finishes in the American Express and Farmers Insurance and T-18 a Phoenix.

Bhatia plays with former Open winner, Brian Harman and Theegala plays the first round with Chris Kirk.

The stars of show at the Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club & Lodge are world No. 1 Scottie Scheffler and seven-time PGA TOUR winner Collin Morikawa, and a returning Justin Thomas. Thomas is teeing it up post-surgery. (PTI)

First batch of Zimbabwe players leave India after ICC works out alternate air route

NEW DELHI, March 5: Stranded here due to the closure of Gulf airspace, a batch of Zimbabwe's cricketers left for home following the end of their T20 World Cup campaign after the ICC reworked their travel arrangements to avoid the region immersed in conflict right now.

Zimbabwe, who had a memorable T20 World Cup, beating Australia and Sri Lanka to make it to the Super Eights, couldn't progress beyond that and were eliminated last week.

They were scheduled to leave on March 2 but were stuck in Delhi owing to the closure of air-

space in the Gulf region following the US and Israeli strikes on Iran. The first batch of players finally left for home on Wednesday in alternate flights.

"Zimbabwe Cricket confirms that the Zimbabwe senior men's team participating in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 are on their way home from India after the International Cricket Council secured alternative travel arrangements following recent transit disruptions," the board said in a statement on 'X'.

"Due to flight availability and revised rout-

ing, the squad will return to Harare in batches. The first group of players departed India today, Wednesday, while the final group is scheduled to leave on Friday afternoon," it added.

Zimbabwe's original travel route was via Dubai on an Emirates flight but it had to be altered. It has been learnt that Zimbabwe are now travelling to Harare via Adis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The West Indies cricket team was also stranded in India due to same reason, but there has been no update on its travel plans yet. (PTI)

Baby joy, NZ's T20 World Cup final entry make it 'special' week for pacer Matt Henry

KOLKATA, March 5: From celebrating the birth of his son back home to delivering a crucial final over in the T20 World Cup semifinal, New Zealand pace spearhead Matt Henry capped a whirlwind week of emotions as the Black Caps stormed into the title clash with a nine-wicket demolition of South Africa here.

Henry, who had returned home after New Zealand's match against England on February 27 for the birth of his child, rejoined the squad in Kolkata just hours before the semifinal against South Africa on Wednesday.

Despite the exhausting travel, the pacer delivered when it mattered most, returning figures of 2/34, with both wickets coming in the final over to ensure the Proteas were restricted to 169 for 8, a total that New Zealand chased down with ease.

"Pretty special to be able to get home for that (child birth)," Henry said of the extraordinary week in a media interaction after their win.

"Obviously Holly's doing really well and Jack's really good as well and Annabelle's enjoying being a big sister so it's all good. So yeah, no, it was pretty special to be home for that."

Getting back to India in time for the semifinal needed a gruelling travel schedule, which was complicated by global travel disruptions amid tensions in the West Asia.

"Yeah, there was a lot of sleep happening on the way back, to be honest... So for me just focusing on obviously my family to get home -- that was important for me and then if it worked out that I could get home in time. I was always going home but to get back for the semifinal, it's great to be here."



Having played second fiddle to Trent Boult and Tim Southee, Henry now has become one of New Zealand's best all-format bowlers in the last three years with 179 international wickets since January 2023, which is the most by any bowler in that period and eight ahead of India's Jasprit Bumrah.

Henry barely had any preparation time for the semifinal but said he relied on experience and trust in his skills.

"We've had lots of cricket so I think at this point it's trust. Obviously if there's rain you can't train either so just going for that approach where making sure they're mentally fresh, mentally ready and just being confident in your skills that you possess. So for me it was getting here and doing a job for the team and thankfully we did that."

Henry had endured heartbreak last year

when injury ruled him out of the Champions Trophy final, but this time he was determined not to miss out.

"No, yeah, it's pretty special to be able to obviously reach another final... The guys are really excited but for now it's to enjoy this. I think the guys have been playing some really good cricket and some special innings from Finn (Allen). Just unbelievable so enjoy that and then we can move on and get ready for what's to come," he said.

Despite early setbacks, South Africa threatened to post well beyond 170 with No 7 Marco Jansen smashing a fifty.

Having leaked 15 runs in the 17th over, Henry returned in the final over after a long chat with skipper Mitchell Santner. The strategy worked as he struck in successive deliveries in the final over and conceded just

six runs.

"Yeah obviously the powerplay is so important especially here and to restrict runs and take wickets is what you're trying to achieve and to restrict that side to that total of 169 was a brilliant job," he said.

"I think we'd be taking that any day here at Kolkata and Eden Gardens obviously it's tough when you've got a small side like that as well to protect."

"It can be really dangerous with the power hitters, so I think we did a great job of controlling that. Also wrestling some momentum into our batting innings which is obviously really good as well."

New Zealand would be back at the venue where they had lost to South Africa in the group stage, but this time they are determined to make the most of the final in Ahmedabad.

"Yeah obviously it's a good wicket. Obviously a lot of runs scored there in Ahmedabad as well so it's pretty exciting to be there. It'll be a huge crowd as well. It's just a great place to play cricket so for us as a group we've been there earlier as well."

The Kiwis will take on the winner of Thursday's semifinal between India and England, who had defeated them on a controversial boundary-count to lift the 2019 ODI World Cup title.

Are they looking for a revenge should England make through, he said: "No, we don't really look too far into those things. It's a different format. We're here in a different tournament with a different group as well."

"We're just enjoying our cricket as a group and we're looking forward to the final." (PTI)

Gukesh held by Maghsoodloo in Prague International

PRAGUE (CZECH REPUBLIC) March 5: World Champion D Gukesh's hunt for a win continued as Iran's Parham Maghsoodloo held the Indian ace to a draw in the seventh round of the masters section of the Prague International chess festival here.

With just two rounds remaining, Gukesh sits on the last spot with two points.

The four draws have come alongside three painful defeats and this could well be the time for the youngest ever world champion to look for certain reforms in his game.

Meanwhile, the other Indian in the event, defending champion Aravinth Chithambaram, drew with Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan to remain on a fifty percent score after seven games.

The lone winner of the day was Vincent Keymer of Germany who defeated David Anton Guijarro of Spain leaving Dutchman Jorden van

Foreest half a point ahead of his closest rivals David Navara of Czech Republic and Nodirbek Ab-



dusatorov of Uzbekistan.

Gukesh employed the Berlin defense and got a solid position with his black pieces against Maghsoodloo.

The Iranian was happy to keep

the position intact for a long time and once black's queen side pawns were mobilized white was not too far away to take adequate measures in the centre.

The game was drawn after 49

moves.

In the challengers' section, Grandmaster Divya Deshmukh had another good result, holding Jonas Buhl Bjerre of Denmark to a draw while Grandmaster Surya Shekhar Ganguly finally scored his first victory at the expense of Jiner Zhu of China.

Results: Round 7 Masters: Parham Maghsoodloo (Iri, 3.5) drew with D Gukesh (Ind, 2); Aravinth Chithambaram (Ind, 3) drew with Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 3); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 3.5) beat David Anton Guijarro (Esp, 3.5); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 4.5) drew with Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 5); David Navara (Cze, 4.5) drew with Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 2.5).

Challengers: Thomas Beerdsen (Ned, 3.5) lost to Daniil Yuffa (Esp, 4); Surya Shekhar Ganguly (Ind, 2.5) beat Jiner Zhu (Chn, 2); Finek Vanclav (Cze, 5) drew with Benjamin Gledura (Hun, 3.5) Nemej Jachym (Cze, 4) beat Hrbeek Stepan (Cze, 3.5); Jonas Bjerre Buhl (Den, 3.5) drew with Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 3.5). (PTI)

Lakshya enters quarterfinals of All England Championships



BIRMINGHAM, March 5: A relentless Lakshya Sen produced a gritty performance to beat Hong Kong's Ng Ka Long Angus and storm into the men's singles quarterfinals of the All England Open Badminton Championships here on Thursday.

World No. 12 Lakshya, a finalist at the 2022 edition, looked razor sharp as he fought through intense rallies and physical exchanges to outlast Ng Ka Long, a former world top 10 player, 21-19, 21-23, 21-10 in a pulsating round-of-16 contest.

Lakshya, a 2021 World Championships bronze medalist, will face either China's sixth seed Li Shi Feng or Ireland's Nhat Nguyen next.

Lakshya came into the match after losing all three encounters against his opponent and fell behind initially in the opening game. He fought back from 4-6 down to establish a 15-11 lead, keeping the pressure on his opponent with aggressive returns and sharp placement.

He extended the advantage to

17-13 with a well-timed overhead attack, but Ng Ka Long refused to fade away and narrowed the gap late in the game.

At 15-17, Lakshya left one at the backline but it was judged out. The Indian had no video challenges left and had to let it go. The Indian then produced a sharp smash to reach 19-17, but Ng Ka Long clawed back to 19-19 with a cross-court winner.

Another jump smash gave Lakshya a game point and he sealed it when Ng Ka Long hit wide.

Lakshya slammed down a cross court smash to start the second game to continue the momentum. He kept his shot quality consistent and mixed his power with precision to take a 11-4 lead at the interval. Lakshya dished out another phenomenal straight smash to make it 14-7.

At 12-17, Ng Ka Long engaged in yet another superlative rally, stretching the Indian to the limit to keep himself afloat. Ng Ka Long then produced a spirited fightback. He stepped up his

game and managed to win five of the last five points to move to 17-19.

Another incredible cross-court smash brought up three match points for Lakshya.

But Lakshya missed one, and then Ng Ka Long found the line by a millimetre before saving another to make it 20-20.

Lakshya grabbed another match point, only to give it away and then Ng Ka Long earned a game point with a smash and forced the match into the decider after the Indian found the net.

Lakshya had to reset his mind and start afresh after Ng Ka Long snatched the second game away and then showed great mental strength as he surged to 6-2 with some exciting shots. His defence was robust as Ng Ka Long couldn't get past anything.

Another precise cross-court took the Indian to 10-4. Soon he had a six-point cushion at the interval after producing an incredible cross-court net deception.

The rallies started growing shorter as Lakshya drew errors from the Hong Kong shuttler, who trailed 6-14 at that stage.

Ng Ka Long tried to cause problems for Lakshya but the Indian managed to wriggle out of position with his superb defence, diving at will to keep the rallies alive.

Lakshya then upped the speed and injected pace into the rallies to move to 18-7. He pounced on another weak return at the net to move just two points away.

Lakshya soon earned 11 match points when Ka Long found the net. He wasted one before another shot from the Hong Kong shuttler sailed out. (PTI)

Sri Lanka Sports Minister hints at revamp in SLC after poor T20WC show



COLOMBO, March 5: Sri Lanka's dismal performance in the T20 World Cup might trigger an overhaul of the country's cricket board with Sports Minister Sunil Kumara saying on Thursday that an interim committee to "rebuild" the game is under consideration.

Sri Lanka were knocked out of the tournament after losing all their Super Eight games.

"Discussions are underway with the ICC (International Cricket Council) to hand over the administration of SLC (Sri Lanka Cricket) to an interim committee to rebuild the sport," Gamage told reporters.

Current SLC chairman Shammi Silva's tenure is till May 2027. Prior to their Super Eight crash, Sri Lanka had lost to lower-ranked Zimbabwe in the preliminary round. The SLC headquarters saw a public protest last week demanding the resignation of the Silva administration.

The Minister said President Anura Kumara Dissanayake is also involved in the ongoing talks with the ICC.

"We can't risk having a ban again from the ICC so must do everything in concurrence with the ICC," Gamage said referring to the past sanctions that the country has copped. (PTI)

NZ took 'bull by horns' to stop SA juggernaut: Finn Allen

KOLKATA, March 5: The recipe to halt the South African juggernaut was simple: win the toss and "take the bull by the horns", said explosive New Zealand opener Finn Allen after powering the Kiwis into the T20 World Cup final with the fastest ever hundred of the tournament.

South Africa had entered the semifinal as the form side of the tournament, being the only unbeaten team in the competition with seven successive wins. The Proteas had even defeated New Zealand in the group stage and also toppled tournament hosts and favourites India in the Super Eights.

But New Zealand were at their ruthless best as they knocked out the last edition's runners-up from the semifinal with a nine-wicket win that came with 43 balls to spare at Eden Gardens here on Wednesday.

"We just hoped (skipper Mitchell) Santner would win a toss to start and he did that so that was the first part done and from then onwards it was just take the bull by the horns... Take the game on and not shy away from any challenge," Allen, who slammed a 33-ball unbeaten 100, said in the post-match media interaction.

Put in, South Africa failed to get going in the powerplay with off-spin all-rounder Cole McConchie taking the wickets of Quinton de Kock and Ryan Rickelton in successive deliveries in the second over.

Thereafter, it was the turn of Rachin Ravindra and Matt Henry to tighten the noose to restrict South Africa to an under-par total at a venue where India chased down West Indies' 196 the other day.

"The bowlers...set the tone for us and taking early wickets on what we thought was going to be a really good batting wicket, was extremely important.

"They've (South Africa) got an incredibly powerful batting line-up and hats off to the boys. They set it up for us with the bowl and as I said we didn't really have a plan..." said Allen.

The Kiwis also analysed their group stage defeat to the Proteas in Ahmedabad and built on the positives. "We looked closely at that first game against them," he said.

"They've been outstanding all tournament, backing up performances. But playing them earlier gave us a bit of insight into their plans and we tried to use that to our advantage."

Allen said while the Eden Gardens had a largely neutral crowd, his parents were likely among the few watching live back home in New Zealand, where the semifinal was being played in the wee hours.

New Zealand is seven and half hours ahead of IST. "I'm sure my parents were up watching the whole



game. Hopefully they're proud," Allen said.

The win will be a big morale-booster for the Kiwis ahead of the summit finale on Sunday, said Allen. The Black Caps will play the winner of the India-England clash in Mumbai.

"It's a new opposition, different conditions and all that so for us we just look to take the positives out of this game and get a flight to Ahmedabad tomorrow (Thursday) and start again," he said.

"We've got a lot of momentum going into the weekend. I think if we play our best cricket we can beat anybody so we'll be watching tomorrow night. Either way I think hopefully we get up for Sunday. It'll be a spectacle."

"Obviously, (it's a) difficult time for people to watch back home, but I'm sure you know people were keeping tabs on the game and hopefully they can get up and have a Monday off at work and watch the final."

The 34-year-old all-rounder McConchie, who was a not part of their original squad, has been a revelation after he was drafted in as travelling reserve following an injury to Michael Bracewell.

McConchie got his chance when skipper Santner fell ill ahead of their Canada game to play his first match for New Zealand after April 2024.

The all-rounder seized his chance against Sri Lanka with an unbeaten 31 to lift New Zealand to a competitive 168 for seven.

"It's been done a lot this World Cup and Cole's really nice with that new ball too so for him to get two wickets... To come in halfway through the tournament and have a big impact on the team. It's great momentum for him to take into Sunday," Allen was all praise for McConchie. (PTI)

Charter flight arranged for West Indies team to return home

KOLKATA, March 5: A charter flight has been arranged for the West Indies team to return home after the Caribbean side remained stranded in the city for more than four days due to international airspace restrictions triggered by the US and Israeli strikes on Iran.

"A charter has been arranged for the West Indies to fly home," a source told PTI on Thursday.

"Got an update. That's all WI wanted," West Indies coach Daren Sammy tweeted.

The development came few hours after Sammy voiced his frustration on social media.

The West Indies, who were knocked out of the T20 World Cup after losing to India in the Super Eight match on Sunday at Kolkata, were not able to fly back home as flight operations through parts of the Gulf region were disrupted.

Expressing his frustration, Sammy had earlier posted on X: "I just wanna go home."

Four hours later, the former West Indies captain followed it up with another post seeking clarity on their travel plans.

"At least an update, tell us something. Today, tmw, next week. It's been 5 days," Sammy wrote.

Considering the situation in the



Gulf region, several West Indies players are expected to remain in India as their respective IPL franchises are set to begin preparatory camps in the coming weeks.

Rovman Powell is part of Kolkata Knight Riders, whose camp begins on March 18, while Sherfane Rutherford represents Mumbai Indians. Shimron Hetmyer plays for Rajasthan Royals and Romario Shepherd is with Royal Challengers Bengaluru, who is expected to start training from March 15.

An official of the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) said the International Cricket Council was handling the matter.

"It is completely handled by ICC. We have no update on the West Indies team's movement but as per the latest update they are still here and looking for a chartered flight," the official had told PTI earlier in the day. (PTI)

Anirban Lahiri tied 16th at Liv Golf

HONG KONG, March 5: India's Anirban Lahiri closed with a birdie-birdie finish to end at 4-under and tied for 16th in the LIV Golf Hong Kong, where soft conditions led to low scores at the par-70 layout here on Thursday.

Torque GC's Carlos Ortiz ended the round on top after firing a 10-under 60. The Mexican made nine birdies, one eagle and one bogey on the way to the lowest round on LIV Golf.

Close on Ortiz's heels is Dean Burmester, who finished runner-up last year in Hong Kong to Sergio Garcia. The Southern Guards GC star shot an 8-under 62, making only one bogey on the day.

Garcia is also off to a strong start in his bid to win the tournament in back-to-back seasons. The Fireballs GC captain shot a stress-free and bogey-free 63, hitting every green in regulation in the process.

Garcia has holes at completed 63 consecutive noes at Fanling without making a bogey.

Garcia is currently in a tie for third alongside Smash GC captain Tador Gooch, Korean Golf Club's Younghoon Song and wildcard player Scott Vincent. (PTI)

Diksha is best Indian after first day at Australian Women's Classic

MAGENTA SHORES (AUSTRALIA), March 5: Diksha Dagar carded three-under 69 to lie tied 20th as the best-placed Indian at the Australian Women's Classic that got underway on the Ladies European Tour here.

The top Indian star had two bogeys on her first nine as she started from the back nine of the Magenta Shores course.

She had a bogey start but recovered with three birdies in the next four holes, and bogeyed the 18th to turn in 1-under. On the second nine, she birdied twice to finish with a 69.

Czech Republic's Sara Kouckova fired the course record 64 (-8) at Magenta Shores on Thursday to storm into the round one lead.

Among the other Indians, Pranavi Urs (72) was the next best at T-52 and she had a roller coaster of a round with two birdies, an eagle, a bogey and a double bogey.

Avani Prashanth (77) at T-118 and Hitaashee Bakshi (82) struggled in the first round.

Kouckova, a two-time Ladies European Tour (LET) winner made good the calm conditions in New South Wales carding eight birdies and dropping no shots to lead by two after 18 holes of action.

Kouckova hit all 18 greens and missed just one fairway on Thursday at Magenta Shores Golf & Country Club.

Two back in a tie for second on six-under par sit New Zealand's Momoka Kobori, Ecuador's Daniela Darquea and Australia's Kelsey Bennett.

The former, Kobori, got off to the hottest of starts at Magenta Shores playing her first nine holes in just 30 shots, six-under par.

Five players sit in a tie for fifth on five-under par following the first round of action.

This includes Thai duo Trichat Cheenglab and Sasikarn Somboonsup, France's Celine Herbin - who had two eagles on day one - Denmark's Sofie Kibsgaard and LET Access Series (LETAS) graduate Katharina Muehlbauer from Austria. (PTI)

Prepping athletes for Japan's 'Tiny Living' in Asiad 2026

NEW DELHI, March 5: With shipping containers repurposed into housing units awaiting them as accommodation in this year's Asian Games, makeshift containers are being installed at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centres in Patiala and Bengaluru to help the athletes familiarise with the concept and "avoid being shocked" when they land in Japan.

The Games are set to be held in Aichi-Nagoya from September 19 to October 4 and in a bid to make the event accommodation cost-effective and eco-friendly, the organisers have done away with the traditional concept of an athletes' village.

Instead, a docked cruise liner will act as a floating accommodation while several others would be housed in shipping containers converted into housing units.

India has already requested that its athletes be placed in on-land accommodation to avoid any pre-competition discomfort for those competing in disciplines like shooting and weightlifting.

"The makeshift container units are already in process of being installed in both Patiala and Bengaluru and the plan is to have athletes bound for the Games spend at least one night in them to get an idea of how the actual accommodation in Japan would be like," a Sports Ministry source told PTI.

"The ones we are installing are not actual shipping containers but somewhat similar to a container unit. This is to ensure that they are not shocked by this new style of accommodation when they reach there," he added.

SAI's Container Labs



The Games will follow a five-cluster competition model with venues spread across Aichi, Gifu, Shizuoka and the Airport-Expo zone.

The ongoing installation of the container units at SAI centres was discussed during a meeting that Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya chaired at the SAI headquarters to review India's preparations for the Games.

Over 700 Indian athletes in more than 40 disciplines are expected to compete in the event. The final contingent size is likely to be locked on March 20 when the 15-member committee constituted for the Games preparation meets next.

The panel includes Sports Secretary Hari

Ranjan Rao, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha, Asian Games Chef-de-Mission Sahdev Yadav and Deputy Chef-de-Mission A Sharath Kamal.

In addition to the contingent size, travel arrangements and operational readiness will also be taken up for discussion as India moves into the decisive phase of its preparations for the continental sporting spectacle.

In Thursday's meeting, senior officials from the Ministry, SAI, and other stakeholders briefed Mandaviya on the country's readiness ahead of the event.

"Our athletes are our top priority. Every possible support, from training and sports science to logistics, kit support, food support

and medical care, will be provided so that they can prepare without distractions and deliver their best at the Asian Games," Mandaviya said during the meeting, according to a release from the ministry.

"Our aim is not to make them suffer at any cost and ensure they remain focused in increasing our medal tally at the competition."

As part of the preparations, a Nodal Officer has been designated for Asian Games Technical Handbook by each National Sports Federation (NSF) to "understand and educate" players, coaches and support staff.

"Teams will be finalised well in advance to allow athletes adequate time for focused preparation and efforts are also being made to strengthen the capacity of support staff, including medical teams, while ensuring seamless coordination with Indian embassies abroad for logistical facilitation," the ministry stated.

Federations have been given the freedom to plan exposure tours and competition schedules in advance.

India are aiming to surpass the historic 106-medal haul achieved at the previous Hangzhou Asian Games.

Several athlete-focused measures were discussed to ensure smooth preparation in the months leading up to the Games.

"These include appointing a head medical doctor for the contingent, finalising Indian food options for athletes with the help of designated SAI culinary staff, and ensuring athletes receive their official kits well in advance." (PTI)