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GUWAHATI, MONDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2025

BUSINESS



INDIA'S GEMS, JEWELLERY EXPORTS GREW 20 PC IN NOV

page 6

STATE



NIGHTFALL BRINGS ELEPHANTS, FEAR FOLLOWS IN PALASBARI, RANI

page 8

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HORIZON

- December 15, 2025
- Bollywood's South India problem
- P Bhattacharyya
- Ancient healing finds a modern voice
- Mamata Mishra
- The tennis revolution
- Sandeep Bhargava
- Trust your gut
- Tridiv Hazarika
- The dirt we live with
- Ronjoy Bordoloi
- Voyage to Varkala
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Doyen of Assam newspaper industry PG Baruah no more

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: A doyen of the newspaper industry in Assam and Chairman Emeritus and Editor of *The Assam Tribune*, Prafulla Govinda Baruah, breathed his last in a private hospital here due to old-age ailments at 9.30 pm today.

Baruah left behind his wife, two daughters, and a host of other relatives. His demise has cast a pall of gloom in the newspaper industry in Assam and the void created by his demise will never be filled. Baruah was awarded Padma Shri for his contributions to the field of journalism.

He took over as MD of the Assam Tribune group of newspapers in 1966. He had also been the Editor of *The Assam Tribune*, the oldest and the highest circulated English daily in the Northeast India, since 1997.

Born in Dibrugarh on July 26, 1932, Prafulla Govinda Baruah did his schooling in Dibrugarh and passed the matriculation examination from Gauhati University, securing First Division and letter marks in two papers in 1949. He passed his ISC from Cotton College in 1951 and graduated from Presidency College, Calcutta, with Honours in Economics in 1953. He passed MA from Presidency College in 1955 and was a Gold Medallist of Calcutta University in LLB in 1957.

In 1964, he got a scholarship to study journalism and printing technology at Thomson Foundation of the United Kingdom. He started working in newspapers in 1962 and took over as the Managing Director of the Assam Tribune group of newspapers in 1966. In addition to his responsibilities as the Managing Director of the group, he had also been the Editor of *The Assam Tribune*, the oldest and the highest circulated English daily in North-east India, since 1997. *The Assam Tribune* was founded by his illustrious father, Radha Govinda Baruah, in 1939 and since formally joining the organisation, Prafulla Govinda Baruah has been playing the role of a pioneer in the newspaper industry of the region.

Apart from Padma Shri for his "contribution to the field of journalism in this backward part of the country", Prafulla Govinda Baruah has been honoured by various prominent personalities and organisations. While attending the Platinum Jubilee celebration of *The Assam Tribune*

in 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had described the newspaper as "the voice of the people of the region" and said, "The people of the Northeast can live without their morning cup of tea but not without *The Assam Tribune*". This speaks volumes of the leadership quality and editorial skills of Prafulla Govinda Baruah.

To contribute to the field of literature in Assam, Baruah started publishing *Goriyasi*, a monthly literary magazine, from his publishing house, Sahitya Prakash. The magazine has been contributing towards Assamese literature by publishing books written by prominent literary personalities of the State. He also played a key role in laying the foundation of the RG Baruah College.

Besides a host of citations that he received for his contributions to the field of journalism, he was honoured by the late Kamala Saikia Trust. The trust has been formed in memory of journalist Kamala Saikia, who was shot dead by militants.

The Asam Sahitya Sabha felicitated Baruah for his contributions to the field of literature, art and culture. Dr B Borooah Cancer Institute presented an appreciation citation to Baruah for his role in creating awareness for control of cancer.

The most notable contributions of Baruah are the strong role played by the newspapers of the Assam Tribune group under his leadership on every issue concerning the people of the Northeast. These newspapers always raised the public voice to draw the attention of the Government of India. Whenever the Northeast region faced any crisis situation, be these the problems of infiltration of foreigners, Chinese aggression in 1962, war with Pakistan in 1971, etc, Baruah led from the front to ensure that the newspapers of the Assam Tribune group always stood by the people of the region and worked in the interest of the nation as a whole.

To encourage young talents, he founded Jyotirupa, a socio-cultural organisation, which not only organises annual drama festivals and competitions but also brings prominent artists from different parts of the country to perform in Assam so that the people of the State get an opportunity to enjoy the legends perform live.

To facilitate all-round economic development of Assam, Baruah and a few of his close associates organised a series of seminars under the banner of 'Assam Prakalpa'. Experts from various fields, including economists, attended the seminars and the outcome of the same were handed over to the government to help in formulating policies for the development of Assam.

He also sponsored a programme on 'Investment Opportunities in Northeast' which was attended, among others, by former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

For the employees of *The Assam Tribune*, Baruah was like a father figure. He always stood by his employees at the time of need.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, and the All Assam Students' Union have consoled the death of Baruah.

'Terrorists' kill 11 people on Sydney's Bondi Beach

SYDNEY, Dec 14: Two gunmen shot dead at least 11 people on Sunday during a Jewish holiday celebration at Sydney's Bondi Beach, Australian authorities said, declaring it a terrorist attack.

One gunman was fatally shot by police, and the second was arrested. The suspect was in critical condition, authorities said. At least 29 people were confirmed wounded, including two police officers, said Mal Lanyon, the police commissioner for New South Wales state, where Sydney is located.

The massacre at one of Australia's most popular and iconic beaches followed a wave of anti-Semitic attacks that have roiled the country over the past year, although the authorities didn't suggest those episodes and Sunday's shooting were connected. They said one of the gunmen was known to the security services, but that



Emergency workers transport a person on a stretcher after the shooting incident in Sydney on Sunday. —AP/PTI

there had been no specific threat. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese declared it "an act of evil, anti-Semitism, terrorism that has struck the heart of our nation".

"This attack was designed to target Sydney's Jewish community," the state's Premier Chris Minns said. The massacre was declared a terrorist attack due to the event targeted and the weapons

used, Lanyon said.

Hundreds had gathered for the gathering at Bondi Beach called Chanukah by the Sea, which was celebrating the start of the eight-day Hanukkah festival. Chabad identified one of the dead as Rabbi Eli Schlanger, assistant rabbi at Chabad of Bondi and a key organiser of the event.

» SEE PAGE 2

Nitin Nabin BJP's national working president

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Bihar minister Nitin Nabin was on Sunday appointed as the BJP national working president and is likely to eventually succeed JP Nadda as its national president, signalling a generational shift in the ruling party.

Nabin, 45, son of late Nabin Kishore Prasad Sinha — a veteran BJP leader and former MLA — is considered dynamic and ideologically rooted, and deeply committed to the organisation, party leaders said.

A five-time MLA, he represents Bankipur Assembly constituency in Bihar and has served twice as a minister in the Bihar government.

His tenures as a minister in Bihar and his role as the party incharge of Chhattis-



garh have been truly outstanding and marked by his effective organisational leadership, they said.

The BJP parliamentary board picked Nabin for the post.

"Bharatiya Janata Party's parliamentary board has appointed Nitin Nabin, a minister in the Bihar government, the Bharatiya Janata

Party's national working president with immediate effect," BJP national general secretary Arun Singh said in a notification.

Nabin, who belongs to the Kayastha community, is likely to succeed incumbent BJP chief Nadda and is one of the youngest leaders to occupy the post, the leaders said.

Nadda, 65, was appointed the BJP president in January 2020 and has already completed his full term. He was granted extensions to lead the party through the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has congratulated Nitin Nabin on being appointed as national working president of the BJP.

» SEE PAGE 2

PM Modi to visit Assam on Dec 21

To lay foundation stone for 4th fertiliser plant at Namrup

A CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Assam on December 21 to lay the foundation stone for the fourth fertiliser plant at Namrup.

The new brownfield ammonia-urea complex will be set up on the existing premises of Brahmaputra Valley Fertiliser Corporation Limited (BVFCL) with an investment exceeding Rs 10,000 crore. The project is widely seen as a landmark step towards strengthening Assam's industrial base and improving fertiliser availability across the Northeast and eastern India.

Meanwhile, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Wa-

terways Sarbananda Sonowal on Sunday visited the Namrup fertiliser complex in Dibrugarh district and reviewed on-ground preparations ahead of Modi's scheduled visit.

During the site visit, Sonowal assessed logistical arrangements, security preparedness and overall readiness for the Prime Minister's programme.

Sonowal also reviewed the progress of preliminary works and coordinated with officials to ensure that all preparations for the foundation-laying ceremony are completed smoothly and on time.

"This project represents the fulfilment of a long-standing aspiration of the people

of Assam," Sonowal said.

He added that the Prime Minister's decision to take up the project reflects the Centre's commitment for development of the Northeast and to strengthening India's agricultural and industrial ecosystem. "Under the visionary and decisive leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, a decade-old demand of the people of Assam has finally been fulfilled. The fourth fertiliser plant at Namrup reflects the Prime Minister's deep commitment to the Northeast and his resolve to strengthen India's agricultural and industrial self-reliance," Sonowal said.

Once operational, the new fertiliser unit is expected to

significantly expand the supply chain for urea and related products in the Northeast, reduce dependence on distant production centres and improve timely availability for farmers.

The plant will have an annual production capacity of about 1.25 million metric tonnes and is expected to generate substantial direct and indirect employment.

A Parliamentary Committee on Chemical and Fertiliser chaired by Trinamool Congress MP Kirti Azad Jha in a recent report also suggested the government to take concrete steps and provide support at all levels for the commissioning of the Namrup-IV plant.

3 more bodies found from Arunachal accident site

ITANAGAR, Dec 14: Three more bodies were retrieved on Sunday from the deep gorge in Arunachal Pradesh's Anjaw district, where a mini-truck with 22 labourers onboard from Assam fell, a senior official said.

So far 20 bodies have been recovered from the accident site since Friday, State Disaster Management Secretary Dani Salu said in a statement here. The bodies were handed over to the families.

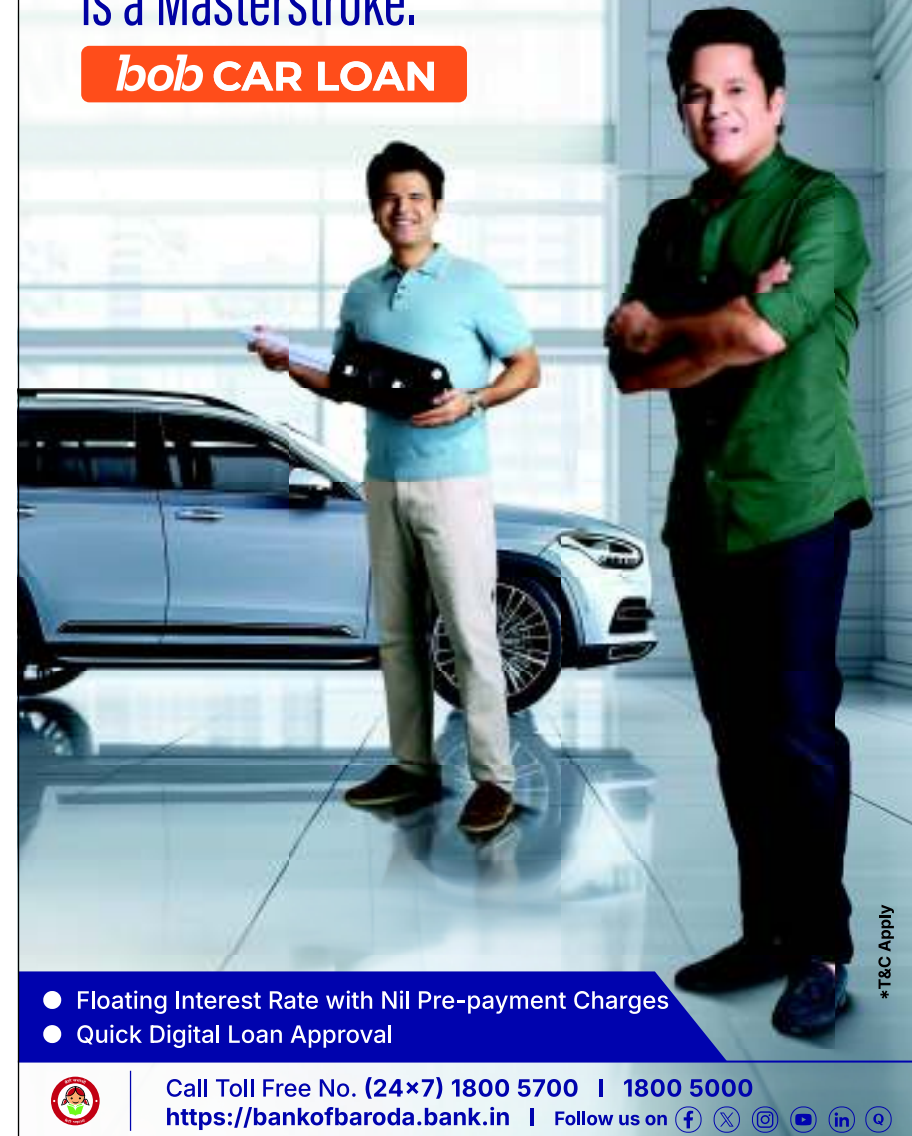
The accident happened on the evening of December 8, around 40 km from Hayuliang in the district.

» SEE PAGE 2



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Dikom Roy and Family
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On your 2nd Death Anniversary your love remains a light that never fades.

- Family Members.

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ADYA SHRADDHA

**Dhiraj Deka**

Born-14.11.1977

Death-05.12.2025

On your **ADYA SHRADDHA** we pray for eternal peace of your soul wherever you are.
Remembered by Family members.
Last Gate, Noonmati

CD/Adya. Shraddh./.../1

SHRADDHANJALI



With deep sadness, we announce the passing of **Mrs. Juti Tamuly, former Assistant Head Mistress of Duliajan Balika Vidyaapeeth, on November 15, 2025. She was 77. A pillar of social welfare and community service, she inspired many with her selfless work.**

We pray to the Almighty give her a prestigious seat in His Court.

Grief-stricken Family.

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ACHIEVEMENT



Neeharika Gogoi has been awarded the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) by Cotton University for her thesis titled "Study of Foraging Strategies of Capped Langur Trachypithecus pileatus in Forest Fragments of Varying Levels of Habitat Disturbance." She carried out her research work under the supervision of Dr Narayan Sharma, Assistant Professor, Department of Environmental Biology and Wildlife Sciences, Cotton University. Hailing from Duliajan, she is the only daughter of Surjya Kumar Gogoi and Mala Gogoi and the wife of Himangshu Konwar. Achieve/...../1



Neelav Sarma has been awarded the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree from Cotton University, Guwahati, for his thesis entitled "A Numerical Study on Heat and Mass Transfer of Non-Newtonian Hybrid Nanofluids through Some Conventional Geometries", completed under the supervision of Dr. Ashish Paul, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics, Cotton University. He hails from Tuls Gaon, Milan Nagar Lane C, Dibrugarh, and is the only son of eminent Kung-Fu Grand Master and employee of DDK Dibrugarh Mr. Rana Sarma and Mrs. Rita Sarma. Achieve/...../1

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Israeli President condemns attack on Jewish community event in Sydney

TEL AVIV, Dec 14: Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Sunday condemned the attack on the Jewish community in Australia's Sydney and offered condolences to the bereaved families of the victims.

At least 10 people, including one gunman, have been killed and 12 others are injured after a shooting incident near a Jewish gathering at Bondi Beach in Australia's Sydney on Sunday evening (local time), local media reported, citing police.

Taking to X, the Israeli President said, "Our hearts go out to our Jewish sisters and brothers in Sydney who have been attacked by vile terrorists as they went to light the first candle of Hanukkah."

He said he spoke to NSW Jewish Board of Deputies President David Ossip, who was the speaker at the event, and conveyed con-



Isaac Herzog

lences to the bereaved families and prayers for the wounded on behalf of Israel.

"Time and again, we called on the Australian government to take action and fight against the enormous wave of antisemitism that is plagu-

ing Australian society. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Jewish community of Sydney and the entire Australian Jewish community at this horrific time," he added.

A second shooter is among the injured and has

been taken into custody, ABC News reported.

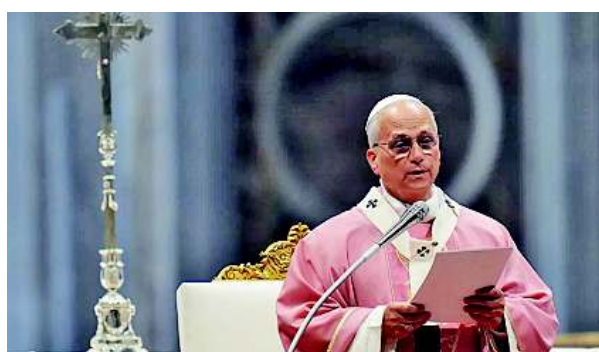
Police have said that people still need to avoid Bondi Beach, despite the two shooters having been neutralised. According to police, there is an ongoing bomb

threat in the area, and they are working to disarm what they have termed an improvised explosive device (IED), local media reported.

Reacting to the attack, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar said that he is "appalled" and called the incident the result of "an anti-semitic rampage" in the streets of Australia over the past two years.

"I'm appalled by the murderous shooting attack at a Hanukkah event in Sydney, Australia. These are the results of the anti-Semitic rampage in the streets of Australia over the past two years, with the anti-Semitic and inciting calls of 'Globalise the Intifada' that were realised today. The Australian government, which received countless warning signs, must come to its senses!" Gideon Sa'ar posted on X. - IANS

Pope slams prison overcrowding during special Mass



ROME, Dec 14: Pope Leo XIV criticised prison overcrowding and insufficient inmate rehabilitation programmes on Sunday as he celebrated a special Mass for detainees, guards and their families in the final event of the Vatican's 2025 Holy Year.

The Vatican said an estimated 6,000 people signed up to participate in the weekend pilgrimage, including representatives from big detention facilities in Italy and prison volunteers, wardens and prison chaplains from 90 countries.

Included were a few groups of inmates who received special permission to participate, according to the Italian penitentiary chaplain's association.

In his homily, Leo acknowledged the oftentimes poor conditions prisoners face even in wealthier countries.

He called for a sense of charity and forgiveness to prevail for prisoners and those responsible for guarding them.

"Here, we can mention overcrowding, insufficient commitment to guarantee stable educational programmes for rehabilitation and job opportunities," he said, adding that patience and forgiveness are needed.

"On a more personal level, let us not forget the weight of the past, the wounds to be healed in body and heart, the disappointments, the infinite patience that is needed with oneself and with others when embarking on paths of conversion, and the temptation to give up or to no longer forgive," he said.

As the last big event of the 2025 Jubilee, the Mass in many ways closed out the Holy Year that Pope Francis inaugurated Christmas Eve 2024, which had as its main thrust transmitting a message of hope especially for those on society's margins. - AP

NAME CHANGE

I, Rashida Begum, residing at Parijat Mansion, H. No.- A1, Amarawati Path, Christian Basti, Guwahati, Assam, PIN- 781005, have changed my name to Rashida Dewan. The change of name is for all future purposes and records. I have executed an Affidavit to this effect before a Judicial Magistrate, 1st Class, Kamrup Metro, Guwahati dt. 12.12.2025. All future documents, records and correspondence will bear the new name : Rashida Dewan. Name Change/P/NP006927/1

I, Rousanara Begum, residing at H. No. - 43/B, Dr. B. Baruah Road, P.S.- Paltan Bazar, Guwahati- 781007, Assam, have changed my name to Rousanara Ahad. The change of name is for all future purposes and records. I have executed an Affidavit to this effect before a Judicial Magistrate, 1st Class, Kamrup Metro, Guwahati dt. 12.12.2025. All future documents, records and correspondence will bear the new name : Rousanara Ahad. Name Change/P/NP006928/1

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Suspect held over Brown varsity shooting that killed 2, wounded 9

PROVIDENCE, Dec 14: Police in Rhode Island said early Sunday that they had a person of interest in custody after a shooting that rocked the Brown University campus during final exams, leaving two people dead and nine others wounded.

Col Oscar Perez, chief of the Providence police, confirmed at a news conference that the detained person was in their 30s and that authorities are not currently searching for anyone else. He declined to say where the person was arrested and whether the person was connected to the university.

The shooting erupted Saturday afternoon in the engineering building of the Ivy League school in Providence, Rhode Island, during final exams. Hundreds of police officers had scoured the Brown University campus along with nearby neighbourhoods and pored over video in pursuit of a shooter who opened fire in a classroom.

Armed with a handgun, the shooter fired more than forty 9 mm rounds, according to a law enforcement official. Authorities as of Sunday morning hadn't recovered a gun but did recover two loaded 30-round magazines, said the official, who spoke on the



condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to publicly discuss the investigation.

Providence leaders warned that residents will notice a heavier police presence on Sunday. Many local businesses announced they would remain closed and expressed shock and heartbreak as the community continued to process the news of the shooting.

"Everybody's reeling, and we have a lot of recovery ahead of us," Brown University President Christina Paxson said at the news conference. "Our community's strong and we'll get through it, but it's devastating."

Surveillance video released by police showed a suspect, dressed in black, calmly walk-

ing away from the scene.

Earlier, Paxson said she was told 10 people who were shot were students. Another person was injured by fragments from the shooting but it was not clear if the victim was a student, she said.

The search for the shooter paralysed the campus, the nearby neighbourhoods filled with stately brick homes and the downtown in Rhode Island's capital city until a shelter-in-place order was lifted early on Sunday.

Streets normally bustling with activity on weekends were eerily quiet. Officers in tactical gear led students out of some campus buildings and into a fitness centre where they waited. Others arrived at the shelter on buses without jackets or any belongings. - AP

Nitin Nabin BJP's national ...

(Contd from page 1)

Congratulating Nabin, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he has distinguished himself as a "hard-working Karyakarta" and expressed confidence that his energy and dedication will strengthen the party. "He is a young and industrious leader with rich organisational experience and has an impressive record as MLA as well as Minister in Bihar for multiple terms. He has diligently worked to fulfil people's aspirations.

"He is known for his humble nature and grounded style of working. I am confi-

dent that his energy and dedication will strengthen our Party in the times to come. Congratulations to him on becoming the BJP National Working President," PM Modi said on X.

Nabin has also worked extensively for Yuva Morcha. His appointment reflects the BJP's focus on capable leadership and signals a generational shift, the leaders said. BJP chief Nadda also greeted Nabin and said he was confident that the party would attain new heights under his leadership.

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations to the dy-

namic BJP leader from the sacred land of knowledge and culture, Bihar, and Minister in the Bihar Government, Shri Nitin Nabin ji on his appointment as the National Working President of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

"I am fully confident that under the guidance of the esteemed Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji and your leadership, the organisation will reach new heights with the sentiments of nation-building and public service. Heartfelt best wishes for your illustrious and successful tenure," he said on X. - PTI

'Terrorists' kill 11 people ...

(Contd from page 1)

Chabad is an Orthodox Jewish movement that is known for its outreach to non-religious Jews. It runs scores of centres around the world that are popular with Jewish travellers and often sponsors large public events during major Jewish holidays.

Video footage filmed by onlookers appeared to show two gunmen with long guns firing from a bridge. One dra-

matic clip, apparently filmed by a member of the public and broadcast on Australian television channels, showed someone appearing to tackle and disarm one of the gunmen, before pointing the man's weapon at him.

Police said emergency services were called to Campbell Parade in Bondi about 6.45 pm, responding to reports of shots being fired. Their operation was ongoing and officers were examining

a number of suspicious items, including several improvised explosive devices found in one of the suspects' cars.

Albanese told reporters in Canberra that he was "devastated" by the massacre. "This is a targeted attack on Jewish Australians on the first day of Hanukkah, which should be a day of joy, a celebration of faith, an act of evil, anti-Semitism, terrorism that has struck the heart of our nation," Albanese said.

World leaders expressed condolences. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned the "ghastly terrorist attack" and offered his condolences to the families who lost their loved ones.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was being updated on the "appalling attack". Police in London said they would step up security at Jewish sites following the attack in Australia. - AP

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GUWAHATI Mail

Letters (within 150 words) on issues concerning the city may be sent to the email ID: tribune.citymail@gmail.com for publication on the Guwahati page.

E-rickshaws: a boon for Guwahati's residents

Sir, – At a time when public commuting in Guwahati has become increasingly hazardous due to heavy traffic, e-rickshaws – popularly known as 'totos' or 'tomtoms' – have emerged as a boon for daily commuters. These battery-operated vehicles offer clear environmental and economic advantages and are rightly encouraged by the government through subsidies and incentives.

With zero tailpipe emissions, these vehicles help reduce air and noise pollution while lowering the city's carbon footprint. They have also created vital income opportunities, particularly for educated yet unemployed youth and marginalized sections, thereby addressing unemployment to some extent through self-employment.

Passengers prefer e-rickshaws for their affordable fares, comfort and efficient last-mile connectivity. Their easy manoeuvrability makes them ideal for congested roads and narrow lanes, filling gaps left by conventional public transport.

Instead of restricting their movement on busy roads, authorities should frame supportive regulations.

Phasing out polluting auto-rickshaws and promoting e-rickshaws can make Guwahati more sustainable and livable. – Yours etc., **Ashim Kumar Chakraborty**, Pandu.

Uzan Bazar market

Sir, – The historic GMC market at Uzan Bazar which is located by the side of the GMC head office is in a dilapidated condition. Vendors are occupying the footpath instead of using the market.

So, my humble request to the government is that when we can have a riverfront park, comparable to a park in Singapore or Thailand, why we cannot have a vegetable and meat/fish market like the ones in Bangkok. I request the authorities in charge of the Uzan Bazar GMC market to develop it to the standards of international markets. – Yours etc., **Dr Tapash Kumar Barman**, AEC, Guwahati.

Piped water

Sir – This is to draw the attention of authorities concerned that Parag Das Path and its bye lanes in Bamunimaidam

area are yet to be connected with piped water supply. So far no action for installation of piped water supply has been initiated in the area. The residents are dependent on private water carriers for their daily water requirement. Deep boring activity is also going on in the area to meet the needs of the residents. Many bore wells of the area have gone dry due to depletion of the ground water table and is causing huge amount of loss of the hard-earned money of the residents.

The concerned authority is requested to take immediate steps to install piped water supply in the area to solve the basic need of the residents before the dry season turns severe. – Yours etc., **Rhitooraj Sharma**, Parag Das Path, Bye lane 1, Bamunimaidam.

Pollution concerns

Sir, – Through your esteemed newspaper, I wish to highlight the severe air and noise pollution caused by the ongoing flyover construction in our locality. While improved infrastructure is welcome, residents are forced to endure dense clouds of dust

settling inside homes and affecting the lungs of children and senior citizens. Continuous noise has made peaceful living nearly impossible.

Development must not come at the cost of public health. I urge the authorities and contractors to implement immediate dust-control measures such as regular water sprinkling, install noise-reduction barriers, and restrict work to humane hours. Responsible construction practices are essential to ensure that the promise of a better future does not compromise the present well-being of the community. – Yours etc., **Barnika Ghosh**, Guwahati.

Foot overbridge

Sir, – I wish to draw attention to the urgent need for a foot overbridge connecting the two parts of GMCH located on either side of the busy GMCH Road. Patients, doctors, attendants, and pedestrians cross this stretch throughout the day, and the absence of a safe crossing point poses a serious risk.

Several near-miss incidents have already occurred. A foot overbridge

would enhance pedestrian safety and ensure smoother traffic flow. I request the authorities to initiate construction at the earliest. – Yours etc., **Dhrubajyoti Sarmah**, Bora Service, Guwahati.

Save the riverfront

Sir, – Through your esteemed daily, I wish to highlight concerns over public behaviour at the newly opened New Brahmaputra Riverfront – now among Guwahati's most loved public space.

Despite its beauty, visitors have already begun littering, throwing food packets, and damaging landscaped areas. Such irresponsible behaviour threatens to ruin the riverfront soon after its opening.

I urge the authorities to impose strict security measures, install clear instruction boards, and consider a minimal entry fee to ensure proper maintenance. Citizens must also cultivate a sense of responsibility so that this precious urban space remains clean and enjoyable. – Yours etc., **Sandhyamika Devi**, Panjabari.

Installation ceremony

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: Non-governmental organization JCI Guwahati Princess recently organized its 8th installation ceremony at Kumarpara here. The programme marked the formal installation of Asha Agarwalla as the president of JCI Guwahati Princess for the year 2026, along with other office bearers. The ceremony also featured the award banquet of the outgoing president, Binita Agarwal. The event was attended by Sumit Poddar, zone president of JCI for 2026, as the chief guest, Gunjan Harilalka, zone president for 2025, as the guest of honour, and Priya G Tiwari, zonal vice president of Region D for 2026, as the special invitee. – Staff Reporter





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AREIDA team completes course at CEPT University

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: A 21-member delegation of the Assam Real Estate & Infrastructure Developers' Association (AREIDA), led by its president, PK Sharma and Technical Committee chairman Anuj Bhajanka, has completed an advanced professional course at CEPT University, Ahmedabad. As part of the programme, the delegation undertook extensive field visits to study landmark development projects, including the Ahmedabad Redevelopment Model, GIFT City, the Sabarmati Riverfront Redevelopment Project, Adani Shantigram, and other transformative urban initiatives, a press release said.

One of India's most respected architects and urban planners, Dr Bimal Patel, delivered a detailed presentation on urban transformation and real estate development. He highlighted how several Indian cities, despite early unplanned growth, have achieved structured and sustainable development through scientific intervention and expert planning.

International urban planning expert and CEPT faculty member Dr Jignesh Mehta conducted a session on "Local area planning, transit-oriented development, and the statutory frameworks needed for effective urban renewal, with special reference to the future redevelopment and modernization of Guwahati."

AREIDA president PK Sharma made an appeal to the Government of Assam to involve the best of technical expertise available in the country for the urban development in Assam.



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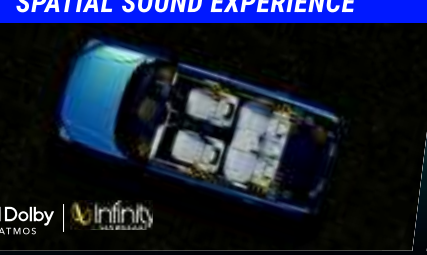
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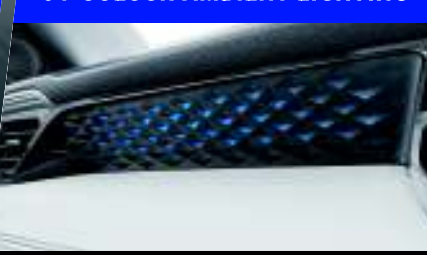
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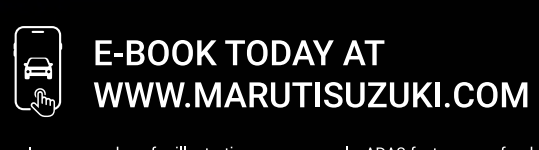
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Message for today

Justice cannot be for one side alone, but must be for both.
Eleanor Roosevelt

The Assam Tribune

Unprincipled tactics

During the week-long chaos caused to the Indian aviation sector by the IndiGo imbroglio, the cost of air travel by alternative carriers reached incredible heights. With passengers, whose flights had suffered cancellations but who had to travel anyway, struggling to find last-minute bookings in other airlines, the spike in demand led to a ripple effect on flight booking platforms, doubling and tripling the prices of air tickets, and imbuing the sector with an Alice’s Wonderland type of lunacy! Reportedly, at one time, between Delhi and Mumbai, one-way economy tickets, which normally cost around Rs 20,000, jumped to Rs 35,000, while return flights cost nearly Rs 60,000! With IndiGo flights being cancelled, there were no flights connecting Delhi with Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Jaipur, and Lucknow, which entailed that, for example, a ticket to Hyderabad the next day cost Rs 48,000 for an economy ticket that rarely costs over Rs 7,000. For Delhi-Kolkata, available flight prices reached nearly Rs 32,000 during that period, a round trip being priced at Rs 85,000. The cheapest flight between Mumbai and Chennai at one point of time was about Rs 60,000, with a stop in Delhi, whereas the same flight normally quotes less than Rs 4,500. In contrast, Delhi-London economy flights hovered around Rs 25,000, while Delhi-Paris prices remained below Rs 25,000, with a round-trip to both destinations costing less than Rs 60,000!

Air-ticket prices, of course, rise close to particular travel dates, since airlines use pricing algorithms that dynamically raise fares as seats sell out or as travel dates approach so as to maximise revenue from scarce airplane seats. However, to maximise air-ticket prices out of all proportions, as happened during the IndiGo crisis, was not only unprincipled, but also perhaps illegal. The lack of scruples that the other components of India’s aviation ecosystem betrayed, trying to make hay while the sun shone and take advantage of the misery and desperation of common people, marked a shameful episode in India’s aviation history. The Aviation Ministry was late off the mark, stepping into the picture only after hundreds of crores were siphoned off from helpless passengers. It did, belatedly, take note of the “unusually high airfares being charged by certain airlines” and “invoked its regulatory powers to ensure fair and reasonable fares across all affected routes” to “protect passengers from any form of opportunistic pricing.” But the price cap it imposed came only after the situation had limped back to normal, thereby making such a move somewhat redundant. It is imperative that the ministry learn a lesson from the IndiGo imbroglio and take immediate steps to rationalise the commercial aviation industry, so that a single airline does not attain a monopolistic size and prove to be a catalyst for potential disaster.

Illegal logging

Notwithstanding government rhetoric, forested landscapes across the State continue to vanish, thanks to flourishing syndicates of the timber mafia and the inertia of the authorities, especially the Department of Forest, police and administration. A case in point is the nefarious goings-on in the Rani reserve forest on the outskirts of Guwahati, which has been witnessing large-scale illegal felling of trees – reportedly perpetuated in connivance with corrupt forest officials. The modus operandi of the mafia is to smuggle truckloads of sawn timber at night to reach destinations in Palasbari, Barpeta and Guwahati. It is baffling how illegal timber can be transported under the very nose of different authorities, and that too for a prolonged period of time. All this is strongly indicative of a sinister nexus between the timber smugglers and different government authorities. The situation has resulted in widespread deforestation in Rani forests, depleting food sources for elephants, too, and triggering frequent elephant movement into nearby human habitations in search of food. While the government never spares an opportunity to tomtom its so-called accomplishments in the spheres of conservation, the ground reality, especially when it comes to according some semblance of protection to our reserve forests, presents a picture in stark contrast.

The operation of thriving timber smuggling rackets in the State is testified to in a most telling manner by our rapidly dwindling forests. This is happening largely because an invaluable asset like forests has never figured in the priority list of the State government, leaving them vulnerable to all sorts of depredations. Equally conspicuous by its absence has been a sustained crackdown on the flourishing timber mafia. Together with a foolproof protection mechanism to check the vandalism of forests, a hard crackdown on the timber smuggling racket is highly imperative. Greater coordination between the police, forest and customs departments is another requirement under the circumstances. Since it is the primary responsibility of the forest department to protect forests, it needs to be vested with more powers in matters of pre-empting forest crimes such as illegal felling of trees, besides in investigation and post-crime procedures. Most of our forest offices, especially those manning reserve forests, are abysmally lacking in the required infrastructure including vehicles, communication facilities, etc., which puts the timber mafia in an advantageous position. These issues need to be addressed at the earliest to protect forest resources. And we can only quantify in physical terms the magnitude of forest cover loss, as it is impossible to estimate the benefits that forests bestow on mankind. So brazenly insensitive has been the State government to the need to save forests that one would be tempted to construe the inaction on the part of the government as tacit approval to the vandalism perpetrated on forest wealth.

Roads, rails and rivers

The country’s transport is evolving with technology – smarter systems, predictive safety, unified ticketing, and integrated travel solutions.

PALLAB BHATTACHARYYA

India’s transport story is often told through images of new highways, gleaming metro coaches and ambitious bridges stretching across difficult terrain. Yet beneath this visible expansion, a quieter but far more consequential shift is underway. Mobility is no longer just about laying concrete and steel; it is about embedding intelligence into systems so that transport can anticipate problems, prevent accidents and integrate seamlessly across modes. This emerging philosophy was clearly articulated at the National Digital Innovation Residential Summit held recently in Guwahati, where policymakers, technologists and administrators reflected on what “smart, safe and integrated transport” should truly mean for a country as complex as India.

A striking takeaway from the deliberations was the recognition that India has moved from an era of information scarcity to one of data abundance. Cameras monitor intersections, sensors track the health of trains, ticketing apps log millions of journeys each day and enforcement systems record every violation. The challenge is no longer collecting data, but using it intelligently. The idea gaining currency is that of predictive governance, where technology helps authorities foresee failures and risks before they erupt into accidents, congestion or service breakdowns.

The railways and metro systems offer a telling example of this transition. Traditionally, maintenance followed a “fail and fix” logic, where action was triggered only after something went wrong. Now, artificial intelligence and Internet of Things sensors are being deployed to detect minute vibrations, acoustic anomalies and structural stresses long before they are visible to the human eye. Such predictive maintenance

can prevent derailments, reduce service disruptions and save enormous costs. For legacy systems like the Kolkata Metro, among the oldest in the country, the challenge is even more demanding. Retrofitting ageing infrastructure with modern signalling and communication-based train control systems is not merely an upgrade; it is a reinvention that allows more trains to run safely at higher frequencies without expanding physical space.

Road safety emerged as another domain where intelligence is redefining outcomes. India’s grim accident statistics are well known, and conventional enforcement has often relied on manpower-intensive checks that are uneven and prone to discretion. Experiences shared from States like Telangana demonstrate how automated enforcement backed by Artificial Intelligence can change behaviour at scale. Cameras that detect helmetless riding, seatbelt violations or dangerous driving and generate electronic challans without human intervention reduce both arbitrariness and evasion. More importantly, when accident data is mapped spatially to create heatmaps, enforcement resources can be deployed strategically in high-risk zones rather than spread thinly everywhere. This data-driven targeting marks a decisive shift from reactive policing to preventive safety management.

Equally transformative is the push towards unified digital ticketing. Urban commuters are all too familiar with the fragmentation of payment systems, where buses, metros and ferries each demand a different card or ticket. The vision articulated at the summit is of a single digital public infrastructure for mobility, where one card or app works seamlessly across transport modes. Initiatives like the Na-

tional Common Mobility Card and the expansion of mobile-based unreserved ticketing on the railways are early steps towards a “one nation, one ticket” ecosystem. If executed well, such integration can reduce friction, encourage public transport use and make daily travel significantly more predictable.

Nowhere are these ideas more tested than in Assam, a State whose geography poses unique challenges. The river Brahmaputra is both a lifeline and a barrier, its shifting channels and sandbars making navigation risky and seasonal. Yet the discussions highlighted how technology is enabling Assam to turn this challenge into an opportunity. Under the inland water transport modernisation programme, unsafe country boats are being replaced with mechanically sound, registered vessels that meet safety standards. This is not just a welfare measure but a structural reform that brings accountability and traceability into a sector long marked by informality.

Perhaps the most significant innovation on the river is the introduction of a River Information System, often compared to air traffic control for waterways. By combining hydrographic surveys, digital charts and real-time data, this system allows vessels to navigate even at night, something previously unthinkable on the Brahmaputra. The implications are profound. Round-the-clock navigation can integrate river transport into the region’s logistics network, reduce pressure on congested roads and create safer, faster passenger services for riverine communities.

Urban mobility in Guwahati presents a different but equally complex picture. The city has invested heavily in an integrated traffic management system covering doz-

ens of junctions, signalling a commitment to smarter traffic control. Yet implementation challenges remain, from signal failures to coordination gaps between agencies. The discussions underscored that technology by itself is not a magic solution. Its success depends on robust maintenance, institutional coordination and the integration of enforcement, traffic signals and public information systems. When traffic control systems are linked to enforcement databases and real-time public alerts, they can not only smooth traffic flow but also influence commuter behaviour.

The transition to green mobility added another layer to the conversation. Assam’s electric vehicle policy sets ambitious targets, including the electrification of public transport fleets. The induction of electric buses in Guwahati is a promising beginning, but the larger vision demands integration. Electric buses equipped with real-time tracking, reliable schedules and easy digital payments can offer commuters a viable alternative to private vehicles. Without this ecosystem, clean technology risks becoming an isolated showcase rather than a mass solution.

Running through all these discussions was a shared understanding that the future of transport lies in convergence. Data from different transport agencies must flow into unified platforms so that planners can see the entire system rather than fragments of it. Such integration can enable a commuter to plan a journey that begins with a ferry ride, continues on a city bus and ends on a metro, all coordinated through a single interface. In doing so, they can carry not just people and goods, but also the confidence that mobility in India is becoming safer, smarter and more humane.

Human rights and delivery of justice

DR BHUBAN CHANDRA BAROOAH

Justice and human rights depend on strong courts that turn legal promises into fair, real outcomes for everyone.

Human rights and the rights to justice are two sides of the same coin. Neither is a parallel track; they intersect, reinforce, and define each other. A nation’s claim to a high ‘political civilisation’ is tested by how faithfully it translates legal definitions of justice in a true sense for its citizens. This determines the nation’s position or rank in terms of how far justice, as defined by law, is actually realised in its administration.

Salmond, in his book *Jurisprudence* (first published in 1902), opined that “judicial administration is the firmest pillar of government.” Salmond and Roscoe Pound handed long-anchored law to the administration of justice, emphasising the importance of justice in their definition of law. Salmond further said that law may be defined as the body of principles recognised and applied by the State in the administration of justice. Pound, in his book *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Law* (1922 first edition, Yale University Press), observes that law is the body of principles recognised and enforced by public and regular tribunals in the administration of justice. Both jurists underscore that delivery of justice is the litmus test for the relevance of law. Blackstone wrote in his book of *Commentaries* about “the due ad-

ministration of justice”. He said that “Justice is derived from the king as his gift, but he is the steward of the public to dispense it to whom it is due.”

Human rights, being the product of substantive law, provide freedom of life, equality, dignity, etc. On the other hand, the rights to justice are procedural in nature and guarantee fair trial, access to courts, speedy trial and timely redressal, ensured through the independence of the judiciary, the rule of law, and efficient legal machinery, etc. Denial of remedy or erosion of trust in governance leads to the miscarriage of justice. It is pertinent to mention that human rights are protected under international covenants like the UDHR, ICCPR, etc., and are ensured by constitutional guarantees under Part III of the Constitution.

In India, the Constitution not only provides fundamental rights but also makes them justiciable. Article 13 reinforces that any law inconsistent with the provisions of the fundamental rights is void. The judiciary, being the guardian of the Constitution, is empowered to repeal any law found violative of fundamental rights (Article 13(2)): the State shall not make any law which takes away or abridges the rights conferred by this Part, and any law made in contravention of this clause shall, to the extent of the

contravention, be void).

The Preamble of our Constitution promises justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, assuring the dignity of the individual and the integrity of the nation. In this context, Article 13 acts as a watchdog of the Part III rights, and thereby the Rule of Law evolves into the Rule of Life, fostering the Rule of Justice. The courts interpret and evaluate these rights expansively (for example, privacy as a fundamental right in *KS Puttuswamy vs Union of India*, 2017 SC 4161). The court affirms that human rights cannot survive without a robust justice delivery system. The basic structure doctrine from *Keshavananda Bharati vs State of Kerala* (AIR 1973 SC 1461) ensures that even constitutional amendments cannot erode basic rights like equality, liberty and judicial review, etc.

Another landmark judgment in *Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India* (AIR 1978 SC 597) held that the procedure ‘established by law’ had broadened and it must be just, fair and reasonable, thereby linking procedural justice to human dignity. Similarly, speedy trial is an implicit right under Article 21, as held in *Hussainara Khatun vs State of Bihar* (AIR 1979 SC 1360), and free legal aid is a constitutional mandate as laid down in *Khatris vs State of Bihar* (AIR 1981 SC 928).

The words ‘justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity’ are words of passion and power – the last three were the watchwords of the French Revolution. One of the four objectives, which is directly incorporated not only in the Preamble, but in every Article, is ‘justice – social, economic and political’. The essence of justice is the attainment of the common good, as distinguished from the good of individuals.

The new world legal trend is blossoming to cater to the changing needs of the time. The Rule of Law becomes the Rule of Life, and promotes the Rule of Justice. Every individual and every human community must have the opportunity to unfold its personality in the social, cultural, political, and economic spheres, and that must become a reality.

A nation’s standing in political civilisation is truly reflected by the efficiency with which its judicial administration converts noble rights into pragmatic outcomes for its citizens. In this regard, Daniel Webster (*The Works of Daniel Webster*, 1851 edition) aptly said that “justice, sir, is the interest of man on earth. It is the ligament that holds civilised beings and civilised nations together.”

(The writer is Dean, Royal School of Law and Administration, Assam Royal Global University)



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Digital divide continues to plague rural Assam

Sir, – While cities like Guwahati are celebrating rapid technological growth, a vast majority of Assam’s population in rural and remote areas is being left behind, creating a “digital divide”. This gap is not just about having a smartphone; it’s about access to life-changing opportunities.

The core issue lies in three areas: infrastructure, affordability, and literacy. Many villages still lack stable, high-speed internet due to geographical challenges like rivers and hills. Even where connectivity exists, the cost of devices and data plans is prohibitive for low-income families. Crucially, without basic digital literacy skills, e-governance, online education, and telemedicine remain inaccessible.

The Covid-19 pandemic brutally exposed this disparity, with countless students unable to attend online classes. To ensure equitable progress, the government must invest in subsidised community internet access points, launch targeted digital literacy campaigns for older generations, and promote local, low-cost device manufacturing. The digital revolution must be an inclusive one.

Let us work to ensure that every citizen

of Assam, from the tea gardens to the river islands, has the means to connect and thrive in the modern age. Yours etc., **Barnika Ghosh**, Gauhati University.

Martyr’s memorial

Sir, – The ‘Swahid Smarak Kshetra’ inaugurated recently by the Chief Minister to honour those who sacrificed their lives during the Assam Agitation is a significant addition to Assam’s historical landscape and a commendable step by the Assam government. The souls of the martyrs will find peace and the hearts of their families will swell with pride. On the other hand, true recognition of the martyrs will happen only when the core purpose of the Assam Agitation is fully met. Yours etc., **Dipak Kumar Kalita**, Sapatgram, Dhubri.

Parallel investigations

Sir, – This refers to your editorial ‘Beyond chargesheet’ (Dec 14, 2025). The

people in Assam have been waiting anxiously to find out how their beloved icon Zubeen Garg passed away in Singapore. The chargesheet on the matter has been presented by the Special Investigation Team, while the Singapore police are also investigating the case, although their conclusions have not yet been presented. If the conclusions of the SIT and those of the Singapore police do not eventually match, then legal complications may arise. Yours etc., **Maheeswar Deka**, Rangiya.

Politics over probe

Sir, – The Special Investigation Team (SIT) constituted by the State government to probe Zubeen Garg’s unnatural death in Singapore has submitted its report a few days before the stipulated deadline, for which the government and the investigating team deserve kudos. The SIT report was awaited by lakhs of Zubeen’s fans who now expect that proper justice will finally be done by the judiciary. But will their expectations be fulfilled so easily?

Some leaders, driven by political survival, will try to keep the issue alive till the 2026 Assembly election by demanding a

CBI probe into the case, and the show will go on till it loses public traction. Yours etc., **Joel Goyari**, Tanga.

Dilapidated road

Sir, – Through your esteemed daily, I would like to draw the government’s attention to the inconvenience faced by the people residing in west Kamrup, east Goalpara and south Barpeta due to the dilapidated condition of the PWD Road connecting Nagarbera with Dhupdhara. Nagarbera is not only a centre for trade and commerce in western Kamrup but also a hub of several institutions including BPC College, Adarsha Vidyalaya, a paramilitary training centre, etc. But, unfortunately, the place has been deprived of proper roads even after 78 years of Independence.

Of the two PWD roads connecting NH-17, the road via Dhupdhara is more frequented. But, due to years of neglect, it has become unusable. Besides, the 26-km road is so narrow that it is impossible for two vehicles to cross each other. The people and several social organisations of the vast area have apprised the authorities of the Assam government of this matter many times, but to no avail. I request the authorities to look into the matter seriously and develop the road to a State highway without further delay. Yours etc., **Kulen Talukdar**, Nagarbera, Kamrup.

Articles (within **950-1000** words) and Letters to the Editor (within **150** words) for publication on the **Editorial Page** may be sent exclusively to the email ID: **editor@assamtribune.com**.

The views expressed in the articles, columns and letters published on this page are solely those of the authors, and do not represent the views of the newspaper.



A black-necked stork swims along with a heron at Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, on Sunday. — UB Photos

Lai khuta of Assam Book Fair laid

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: The *lai khuta* of the Assam Book Fair, Guwahati was laid at College of Veterinary Science playground here today. Commissioner of Guwahati Police Partha Sarathi Mahanta laid the *lai khuta* in the presence of other dignitaries. The book fair, scheduled to be held from December 24 to January 6, has been jointly organized by Publication Board Assam and All Assam Book Publishers' and Sellers' Association.

A number of eminent writers, including Amish Tripathi, Akshat Gupta, Ramesh Karthik Nayak, Gaurav Pandey and Parmita Satpathy, will take part in different programmes of the book fair. Vice-chairman of Publication Board Assam, Sumanta Chaliha, secretary Pramod Kalita, member Dr Saiful Islam and many others were present in today's programme.

OBITUARY

Dagar Ch Rabha



GUWAHATI, Dec 14: Dagar Chandra Rabha, retired Programme Executive of All India Radio left for his heavenly abode on December 14 due to old-age. He was 85.

He served various AIR Stations of the Northeast. A well-read person, he had a huge personal collection of books relating to Religion, Philosophy, Literature, History etc., in various languages like Assamese, English, Bengali, Hindi, Rabha and Bodo. The staff members of Akashvani Guwahati have expressed deep sorrow over his demise.

State well-positioned to lead SBM-G: Mission Director

Capacity-building workshop discusses ways to strengthen implementation measures

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: The Mission Directorate, Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G), recently conducted a two-day capacity-building workshop for sub-divisional officers, assistant executive engineers, and SBM-G nodal officers, at the Key Resource Centre, Betkuchi, here.

The workshop aimed to strengthen implementation, improve operational efficiency, and ensure long-term sustainability of sanitation outcomes under SBM-G.

Organized under the leadership of Keerthi Jali, Mission Director, SBM-G, and Commissioner, Panchayat and Rural Development Department, the event brought together engineers and officials from across Assam to enhance coordination and field-level strategy.

Senior officials including Palab Kumar Das, Chief Engineer (PHE), Sanitation, Sofur Rehman Mughal, Superintendent Engineer, PHED, and Khanindra Nath Sharma, Deputy Director, KRC, guided the technical discourse.

In his welcome address, Palab Kumar Das highlighted the essential role of engineers in sustaining sanitation outcomes.

"Sustaining sanitation re-

quires persistent teamwork and accountability. Our engineers must ensure every asset remains functional and community-responsive," he said.

He urged participants to align SBM-G infrastructure development with mission activities and leverage emerging technologies and available funds to strengthen solid and liquid waste management.

Addressing the gathering, Jali hailed the participants as 'PHE's proud warriors', applauding the dedication of Assam's engineering workforce. She reiterated that cleanliness must become a cultural practice and urged officers to adopt a holistic, community-driven approach that makes every village visibly clean.

Jali affirmed that with Assam's systems and committed officers, the State is well-positioned to lead SBM-G with confidence and on-ground leadership.

Across two days, participants engaged in detailed sessions on Solid Waste Management (SWM) operations, SWM asset maintenance, community composting, plastic waste management unit functioning, and mechanisms for effective issue resolution across Gram Panchayats and Blocks.

Innovative sanitation models such as the Swachhta

Green Leaf Rating for hotels, design of individual household latrines, and floating toilets were introduced.

Participants at the event also explored protocols for community managed sanitation complexes, Direct Benefit Transfer mechanisms for IHHLs, and monitoring of sanitary facilities in markets, schools, and health institutions.

Partner NGO, SAAHAS, shared district-level case studies demonstrating successful operation and maintenance (O&M) practices.

A key highlight was an interactive clay-modelling activity where teams built miniature village layouts showcasing IHHLs, drainage channels, community zones, SWM pathways, and green areas promoting experiential learning and teamwork.

The workshop concluded with a mission-mode action roadmap emphasizing Gaon Panchayat involvement, handing over assets to self-help group (SHG) networks for sustainable O&M, and expanding innovative sanitation infrastructure.

Monalisa Das, AEE (PHE), delivered the vote of thanks, appreciating the participants' engagement and reaffirming the State government's commitment to a cleaner and healthier rural Assam.

Certification to down town school

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: The down town school, Guwahati announced that it has been certified as an 'Institution of Happiness 2025-26' by QS I-Gauge, India's premier education rating institution.

The recognition highlights the school's commitment in creating a joyful, inclusive, and student-centric learning

ecosystem.

The certification ceremony was held in New Delhi on December 12, where the honor was formally received by the school's principal Maya Alfred Fernandes.

Speaking on the occasion, principal Fernandes said, "The certification is a reflection of our belief that happiness and well-being are fundamental to meaningful learning. At the down

town school, we strive to nurture not just academic excellence, but also emotional resilience, creativity, and a sense of belonging among our students."

The 'Institution of Happiness' certification by QS I-Gauge evaluates schools on parameters such as student well-being, positive school culture, supportive teaching practices, and an environment that encourages holistic growth.

PRADHAN MANTRI UJJWALA YOJANA

51.02 lakh LPG connections released in State till date

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: A total of 51.02 lakh LPG connections have been released in Assam till date under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY).

A press release issued by Food and Public Distribution, Consumer Affairs and Legal Metrology Department of Assam and State Level Coordinator, Oil Industry, Assam stated that the PMUY was launched in May, 2016 with an objective to provide deposit free LPG con-

nection to adult women from poor households across the country.

The total domestic LPG connection in Assam is 92.24 lakh with LPG coverage of 115.8 per cent household.

While the concentration of LPG users is high in city and urban areas, there is substantial opportunity in converting the rural and remote areas from conventional fuels.

In view of the same, the Government of India has approved 25 lakh additional free LPG connections under PMUY, reaffirm-

ing its commitment to providing clean, safe, and affordable cooking fuel to women from economically weaker households.

"Adult women belonging to poor households that do not have an existing LPG connection in the name of any family member (as per family composition records) are eligible for PMUY," stated the release.

It also added that eligibility is based on a Deprivation Declaration, which is subsequently verified by the District Ujjwala Committee (DUC).



WEATHER
GUWAHATI

Fog or mist in the morning and mainly clear sky later. Maximum and Minimum temperatures are most likely to be 27°C & 11°C respectively.

TEMPERATURE:

Max 26.5°C

Min 11.0°C

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Post Navy Day Celebration-2025 held at Dispur College

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: The 48 Assam Naval Unit NCC of Dispur College organized the Post Navy Day Celebration- 2025 at the NPB Conference Hall, Dispur College on Friday.

The programme was attended by Dr Navajyoti Borah, principal, Dispur College. In his address, Dr Borah emphasized the significance of unity and discipline in moulding responsible youth for the nation and the need for proper career guidance for NCC cadets for future. Dr Borah further announced to present a cash award of Rs 20,000 to any cadet of the college from the next academic session who secures the 'Best Cadet' title in NCC in the north-eastern region.

Marking the 25th year of the NCC Naval Unit at Dispur College, he proposed a grand celebration in the near future with former and current cadets and assured full support.

Indrani Choudhury Mahanta, vice principal and Dr Sashi Mohan Das, Students' Welfare and Community Officer were also present at the programme who applauded the achievements and growing discipline of the NCC Unit and extended best wishes to the cadets.

Kulajit Barman, CI and Nahkpanm Susil Singh, CPO (GW) of 48 ANU NCC addressed the gathering and shared technical insights about the Navy and its relevance in the North East India.

The cadets who participated in various national camps were also felicitated at the programme in order to recognise their dedication and achievements in the field of NCC.

The first edition of the wall magazine *EKTA* was also inaugurated at the programme which was prepared by the cadets of NCC Unit. The programme was coordinated by CTO (NCC) Dhruvajit Gogoi and hosted by Lima Kalita, assistant professor, Department of Assamese.



वस्त्र मंत्रालय
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Parl Panel for diversification of crude sources to cut geopolitical risks

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: A parliamentary committee has flagged India's heavy dependence on crude oil imports and rising geopolitical risks as major challenges for the country, and urged the government to step up diversification of supply sources and strengthen risk management mechanisms.

In its report tabled in Parliament last week, the Public Undertaking Committee noted that India imports nearly 89 per cent of its crude oil requirements, making the country vulnerable to global disruptions arising from conflicts, sanctions, civil unrest in oil-producing nations and disruptions in key shipping routes such as the Suez Canal and the Red Sea.

Recent events, including the Russia-Ukraine war and tensions in West Asia, have highlighted the fragility of India's energy supply chain.

The committee recommended that Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoPNG) and State-run oil companies intensify efforts to diversify crude oil sourcing both geographically and contractually, bolster strategic petroleum reserves and develop alternative import routes.

It also called for institutionalising risk management tools such as hedging and flexible term contracts to safeguard energy security against future geopolitical shocks.

"India meets about 89 per cent of crude oil requirements through imports and given the current geopolitical events such as Russia-Ukraine conflict, Israel-Hamas conflict, sanctions on some of the oil producing countries (like Iran, Venezuela, Russia), political/civil unrest/strikes in any oil pro-

The Public Undertaking Committee noted that India imports nearly 89 per cent of its crude oil requirements, making the country vulnerable to global disruptions arising from conflicts, sanctions

ducing country anytime, India could face risk of crude oil import uncertainty, which in turn could have an adverse impact on smooth supply of crude oil and its prices," the panel said.

Also, the oil and gas sector faces several environmental concerns due to the nature of their operations, which include greenhouse gas emissions, air and water pollution, and waste management.

"Recent global events, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and tensions in the Middle East, have underscored the vulnerability of India's energy supply chain and its dependence on international trade flows," its report said.

"In view of this, the committee recommends that MoPNG and CPSUs (central public sector undertakings) should intensify efforts to diversify crude oil sourcing both geographically and contractually, strengthen strategic petroleum reserves, and enhance alternative import routes," it added.

The report also drew attention to internal challenges faced by the sector, including ageing oil fields, delays

and cost overruns in projects, rising land acquisition costs, and crude production not keeping pace with capital expenditure. Environmental concerns such as greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and waste management were also highlighted.

While acknowledging steps taken by companies such as Indian Oil Corporation and ONGC Videsh to diversify supplies, the committee said sanctions, financial volatility and regulatory hurdles in host countries continue to constrain overseas investments.

It recommended closer coordination between MoPNG and the Ministry of External Affairs to strengthen diplomatic engagement with oil-producing nations, secure favourable investment terms, and address taxation and regulatory issues faced by Indian companies abroad. – PTI

Rich-poor gap narrowing as rural India drives growth: Goyal

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Union Minister Piyush Goyal on Sunday said that India is witnessing a silent but powerful transformation, where aspirations are rising across villages and small towns under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

In a social media post on X, Goyal said that rural India is no longer on the margins of growth and is now playing a key role in driving consumption.

"Aspirational India rising! Under PM Narendra Modi's leadership, the rich-poor divide is narrowing, and rural India is driving consumption on the back of development through empowerment," the Union minister said.

The minister said that items once seen as symbols of urban comfort, such as bikes, cars, refrigerators, television sets and mobile phones, have now become common in village households.

According to him, this change reflects the impact of development through empowerment, where people in rural areas have greater access to opportunities, income and basic facilities.

"What were once seen as symbols of urban comfort, like bikes, cars, fridges, TV sets, and mobile phones, have become staples in



homes in villages," Goyal explained.

He described this shift as a "silent revolution of prosperity" and said it shows how aspirational India is rising.

He added that development initiatives focused on empowerment have helped improve living standards and reduce inequality between urban and rural areas. Earlier, the Union minister had also spoken about financial empowerment through government initiatives.

Goyal had said that under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, the government is committed to ensuring that citizens receive what is rightfully theirs. – IANS

Inflation data, global trends to drive markets

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: WPI inflation data, trading activity of foreign investors and global cues would dictate trends in the stock market this week, analysts said.

Besides, movement of the rupee against the US dollar and crude oil would also be tracked by investors, they noted.

Markets remained volatile and ended the last week in negative territory. Last week, the BSE benchmark index declined by 444.71 points, or 0.51 per cent.

Foreign investors pulled out Rs 17,955 crore (USD 2 billion) from Indian equities in the first two weeks of this month, taking the total outflow to Rs 1.6 lakh crore (USD 18.4 billion) in 2025.

"Equity markets are likely to remain highly volatile in the coming week as a heavy slate of global inflation data shifts investor focus back to the future course of monetary policy. With 10-year bond yields already edging higher across major regions, upcoming inflation prints from the US, Eurozone, and others will be closely scrutinised to assess whether the global monetary easing cycle is nearing its end," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

The spotlight will firmly be on the US, where key macro releases, including consumer price inflation, retail sales, and non-farm payrolls, are expected to provide deeper insight into the underlying strength of the economy and the inflation outlook, he added.

Siddhartha Khemka, head of research (wealth management), Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said, "Overall, we expect markets to remain range-bound with bouts of volatility in the broader indices, while any formal breakthrough on the India-US agreement could trigger a meaningful market up-move." – PTI

BUDGET 2026-27

CII suggests reforms to drive investment-led growth

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Industry lobby Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has proposed a comprehensive set of reforms for the forthcoming Union Budget 2026-27 to drive sustained investment growth spanning public, private, and foreign investments and maintain India's momentum as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies.

The CII suggested increasing central capital expenditure by 12 per cent and capex support to states by 10 per cent in FY27; launching a Rs 150 lakh crore National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) 2.0 for 2026-32; offering incremental tax credits or compliance relaxations for firms achieving significant new investment, production, or tax contribution milestones; and establishing an NRI Investment Promotion Fund.

It also called for reinstating accelerated depreciation ben-

efits to further incentivise fresh capital expenditure and technology upgrades, particularly for MSMEs and manufacturing industries, provided the measure is structured to stimulate modernisation without triggering Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) obligations.

Besides, CII urged for strengthening the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) by forming a Sovereign Investment Strategy Council (SIFC) to align investments with national priorities.

The Union Budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year is expected to be presented on February 1.

According to CII, reinforcing fiscal stability through an economic-cycle-based public debt framework, in place of inflexible annual deficit rules, would also enhance resilience by allowing counter-cyclical

flexibility during global shocks and avoiding repeated breaches of yearly targets.

"The forthcoming Union Budget 2026-27 has to serve the dual role of stabiliser," CII director general Chandrajit Banerjee said.

The recommendations emphasise strengthening public capital expenditure as the backbone of infrastructure-led growth, while simultaneously unlocking private and foreign investment.

To strengthen project selection and execution, CII has proposed institutionalising a Capital Expenditure Efficiency Framework (CEEF) to prioritise high-impact projects, track physical and financial progress, and evaluate outcomes based on productivity and regional spillovers.

It suggested creating an NRI Investment Promotion



Fund, which can be a government-private holding company, with up to 49 per cent government stake, that channels NRI, FPI, and institutional investments into sectors such as infrastructure and AI.

The fund can raise capital through long-term convertible bonds benchmarked to FCNR rates, offering secure returns with equity upside, including special India Global Diaspora Bonds, the industry lobby said.

It also called for simplifying ECB (external commercial borrowings) processes. To deepen global investor engagement, it recommended establishing an India Global Economic Forum as a government-led platform that brings together MNCs, sovereign wealth funds, pension funds, private equity, and other institutional investors for structured dialogue with senior government leadership on emerging investment opportunities across sectors. – PTI

BMW to bolster Mini brand

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: German luxury carmaker BMW is looking to expand the Mini portfolio in India next year in order to cater to rising demand for the range beyond metro cities, according to the company's president and CEO, Hardeep Singh Brar.

The company, which now has Mini Cooper, Mini Countryman JCW and Mini Convertible in its portfolio, is looking to expand its sales network in smaller cities and towns as the brand gains acceptance beyond major cities.

"We are looking at a couple of more products under the Mini portfolio next year," Brar said.

The luxury carmaker will be expanding its sales network further next year, adding locations like Jaipur, Lucknow and Ranchi, and all these small towns where the company has no presence currently.

"We are present in about nine cities (for Mini). We want to double the number of cities next year, so that it has a pres-



ence beyond the metro cities. We are now slowly and gradually getting a lot of demand from the smaller markets as well," Brar said.

Being present in the local market also gives a lot of confidence in terms of after-sales, etc., he noted.

"So we want to enhance the product portfolio, sales network. Besides, we are looking to build the Mini community, and want to do a lot of events for them next year," Brar said.

Brar said that 40 per cent of the Mini customers in India are actually BMW

owners who already own a BMW car. The automaker imports the Mini range as a completely built-up unit (CBU). Since 2012, the company has sold around 7,500 Mini units in the country. The latest of the lot, the all-new Mini Convertible, is tagged at Rs 58.5 lakh (ex-showroom).

On the sales outlook for next year, Brar noted that the company is looking at the 'bare minimum' double-digit growth. The luxury car segment has been doing fairly well overall, he stated.

Even before the GST reforms, while the mass market cars were growing at about 2-3 per cent, the luxury segment was growing at 10 per cent, Brar said.

"We were growing at about 13-14 per cent. Our average growth rate post-Covid has been about 15 per cent, and we would like to continue with the momentum that has been built over the last four or five years, and would like to further grow on that," he said. – PTI

TVs may be costlier from January due to weak rupee

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Prices of televisions are expected to rise by 3-4 per cent from January next year on account of the rising cost of memory chips and depreciation of the rupee, which recently crossed the 90-to-a-dollar mark for the first time.

The falling rupee has put the industry in a precarious position, as the domestic value addition in an LED TV is around 30 per cent only, and major components like the open cell, semiconductor chips and motherboard are imported.

Moreover, this is coupled with the memory chip crisis, where a severe global shortage is driven by massive demand for

High-Bandwidth Memory (HBM) for AI servers, causing prices for all memory types (DRAM, flash) to surge. Chipmakers are focusing on high-profit AI chips, tightening supply for legacy devices like TVs.

Haier Appliances India president NS Satish said that prices of LED TV sets will increase by 3 per cent because of the shortage of memory chips and the weak rupee.

Some TV manufacturers have already communicated to their dealers about the expected hike in prices.

Super Plastronics Pvt Ltd (SPLL), a TV manufacturing company having licences of several global



brands including Thomson, Kodak, and Blaupunkt, said, "Memory chip prices have gone up by 500 per cent in the last three months."

According to its CEO Avneet Singh Marwah, there could be 7-10 per cent price hike in televisions from January, predominantly due to

memory chip crisis and the impact of depreciating rupee.

He also warned that if memory chip prices in the next two quarters remain the same, "then there could be a further hike in TV prices".

According to experts, this upcoming hike may mitigate the boost received

on sales of smart TVs, after the rationalisation of GST. The government has slashed GST on TV screens of 32 inches and larger sizes to 18 per cent from the previous 28 per cent, reducing the price by around Rs 4,500.

Similarly, Videotex, a homegrown ODM (Original Design Manufacturer) for several brands, and which has its own brand Daiwa, said, "Flash memory and DDR4 prices at the sourcing level have risen by up to 1,000 per cent, driven largely by supply being diverted to AI data centres."

This pressure is anticipated to continue until at least Q2 of the coming

year, after which some stability may return depending on global memory chip supply dynamics.

According to the latest report from Counterpoint Research, India's smart TV shipments decreased 4 per cent YoY in Q2 2025. The slowdown was driven by saturation in the smaller-screen segment, limited new demand catalysts, and weaker consumer spending.

India's TV market was valued at USD 10-12 billion in 2024 and is projected for strong growth, driven by smart TVs, increased disposable income, and demand for larger screens and OTT content. – PTI

Centre takes steps to boost MSMEs growth

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: The Centre is taking special steps to boost the growth of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises by easing rules to facilitate the ease of doing business and providing them better access to credit for expanding their business operations, according to an official statement issued on Sunday.

The Centre's Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), which implements Quality Control Orders (QCOs) issued by various ministries, gives special exemptions and relaxations for MSMEs, to ensure that the QCOs do not disrupt domestic production, the statement said.

Key relaxations and exemptions include an additional 3 to 6 months extension in time for Micro and Small Enterprises

(MSEs) and an exemption for imports by domestic manufacturers for producing export-oriented products.

The BIS has also implemented financial and technical relaxations to the MSME sector including concessions ranging from 10 to 80 per cent in the annual minimum marking fee. An additional concession of 10 per cent is also provided to enterprises, which are either located in Northeast region or women entrepreneur MSME units.

Besides, the requirement of maintaining an in-house laboratory has been made optional for MSME units. Banks have been advised by the RBI to link loans to MSMEs to an external benchmark. – IANS



Dinesh Bihani

North India, other internal destinations, Export enquiry was seen on the larger broken. The auction average price upto this week sale stands at Rs 211.12.

Top garden prices					
BOP	Price	BOPSM/BP	Price	OF/PF	Price
HALMARI	442	HATIMARA	451	TIZIT TEA	403
HATIMARA	441	HOOKHIMOL BOPSM	417	DECKIAJULI	396
JAMIRAH	336	HALMARI	415	HALMARI	384
DECKIAJULI	331	DECKIAJULI	401	HATIMARA	378
DEOHALL	321	TIZIT TEA	391	GHILLIDARY	377

Secretary, Guwahati Tea Auction Buyers Association (GTABA)

Air Quality Index (AQI)

December 14, 2025

(Average of past 24 hours)

City/Town	Index Value	Air Quality
Guwahati	137	Moderate
Nalbari	--	--
Nagaon	115	Moderate
Sivasagar	60	Satisfactory
Silchar	60	Satisfactory

Pollution Control Board, Assam

WEATHER

NorthEast

Forecast for NE: Dry weather likely to prevail over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura. No large change in Minimum Temperature very likely over the region. Shallow to Moderate fog very likely to occur at isolated pockets over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur & Tripura. **Warning:** Dense fog very likely to occur at isolated pockets over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura.

Dibrugarh	Max : 27.0	Min : 7.8	Tezpur	Max : 25.5	Min : 10.9
Silchar	Max : 28.5	Min : 13.5	Dhubri	Max : 25.1	Min : 13.3
Jorhat	Max : 26.2	Min : 7.5	N. Lakhimpur	Max : 28.2	Min : 7.8
Shillong	Max : 20.2	Min : 8.6	Kohima	Max : 15.0	Min : 6.6
Pasighat	Max : 26.5	Min : 13.4	Itanagar	Max : 21.8	Min : 11.2
Cherrapunjee	Max : --	Min : --	Aizawl	Max : 24.0	Min : 13.2
Imphal	Max : 23.8	Min : 5.5	Agartala	Max : 30.0	Min : 14.0

Duty Meteorological Officer,

Regional Meteorological Centre, Guwahati

Orchid Music Festival

GANGTOK, Dec 14 : British band 'Blue' and South Korean group 'Everglow' enthralled crowds at Gangtok's Paljor Stadium as Sikkim hosted 'Orchid Music Festival', organisers said.

The music festival was organised on Saturday by private groups with support from the Sikkim government, they said.

While the four-member British band enthralled the packed stadium with hits like 'All Rise' and 'One Love', the South Korean K-pop girl group sang their famous songs 'Dun Dun', 'La Di Da', and 'Adios', they said. – PTI

Mizoram, Assam agree to promote tourism sector

CORRESPONDENT

AIZAWL, Dec 14: Mizoram Tourism Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar on Sunday met his Assam counterpart Ranjeet Kumar Dass in Guwahati, with the two sides agreeing to work together to promote tourism and to sign a formal cooperation agreement at the earliest convenient time.

Hmar highlighted the recent increase in tourist footfall to Mizoram, noting that a majority of visitors come from Assam. Stressing the need for closer coordination with the neighbouring State to further strengthen tourism, he said deeper engagement with Assam would yield tangible benefits. Dass welcomed the proposal and discussed it immediately with officials.

"Mizoram is not a different state for us. In the past, we were one state," Dass said, adding that people from Assam are keen to visit Mizoram. With improved rail connectivity, he said, the number

Mizoram Tourism Minister Lalnghinglova Hmar and Assam Minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass during a meeting.

of visitors from Assam is expected to rise further.

Hmar said that while Mizoram is a small State with a limited population, efforts are under way to position it as a preferred tourist destination. He underlined the importance of strong partnerships, adding that collaboration with neighbouring states, rather than distant ones, would be more effective in advancing tourism.

The Mizoram Tourism Minister also requested that images and video visuals promoting Mizoram be showcased during major tourism events organised by Assam. Dass assured him that the request would be accommodated.

Also present at the meet-

7 militants held in Manipur

IMPHAL, Dec 14: Security forces in Manipur have arrested seven militants, including two women cadres, from different districts and recovered some arms and ammunition during the past 24 hours, officials said on Sunday.

A police official said that the five militants belonging to the outlawed United National Liberation Front (UNLF) and People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PRE-PAK) were arrested from different locations in Imphal West, Imphal East and Bishnupur district.

He said that the security forces comprising the central and state have arrested two active women cadres of UNLF (Koireng faction) from Moirangkampu Sajeb Makha Leikai area in Imphal East district. The arrested militants were identified as Takhellamb Sanathoi Chanu alias Loringkapi alias Sanathoi (19) and Kongbrailakpam Rameshori Devi alias Langlen alias Bem-ma alias Buchu (19) from Imphal East district. Two mobile phones were seized from their possession.

The Manipur Police arrested a drug dealer, identified as Baseimayom Yaibi (47), from the Porompat Pangal Leirak area in Imphal East district. Heroin, concealed in seven soap cases, was seized from his possession. The estimated value of the drugs was Rs 16 lakh.

Intelligence-based combing, cordon and search operations are being carried out extensively in different Imphal valley and hill districts to nab those involved in extortion and criminal activities in the state.

The security forces also recovered some arms and ammunition from the Kakch-

ing district. The recovered arms and ammunition include one Self-Loading Rifle (SLR) without a magazine, one locally made bolt action sniper rifle with an empty magazine, one double-barrelled bolt rifle, one single-barrelled bolt rifle, one locally made pistol with an empty magazine, and one 36 HE Hand grenade without a detonator.

The security forces comprising the central and state continue extensive crack-downs against militants, with search operations and area domination drives underway in fringe, mixed-populated and vulnerable areas across districts.

A total of 113 nakas/check-points have been set up across Manipur in both valley and hill districts, to curb the illegal movement of inimical elements and suspicious vehicles. – IANS

Manipur Governor highlights contribution of Ratan Thiyam

CORRESPONDENT

IMPHAL, Dec 14: A two-day national seminar on renowned theatre personality Ratan Thiyam was inaugurated at the auditorium of Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy (JNMDA) in Imphal. Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla along with the First Lady led the gathering in paying floral tribute to the portrait of the late cultural icon at the JNMDA campus.

The seminar is being jointly organised by Manipur State Kala Akademi (MSKA) and JNMDA. The Governor also felicitated the wife and other family members of Ratan Thiyam.

On the occasion, a journal of MSKA titled *Manipuri Culture and Literature*, dedicated to Ratan Thiyam, was released. A non-feature film titled 'Ratan Thiyam, The Man of Theatre' was also screened during the inaugural session.

Addressing the gathering, the Governor commended the Manipur State Kala Akademi and the Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy for jointly organising the seminar. He highlighted Ratan Thiyam's outstanding contribution to Indian and Manipuri theatre, noting that through iconic works such as Chakravayuha, Uttar Priyadarshi and Nine Hills One Valley, he conveyed enduring messages of peace, harmony and cultural continuity.

The Governor said that Manipur prominently on the global cultural map and remains an ambassador of the State's rich heritage.

He also recalled Ratan Thiyam's multifaceted genius as a director, playwright, designer, choreographer and writer.

Expressing confidence that the seminar deliberations would inspire young theatre practitioners, the Governor called upon everyone to carry forward Ratan Thiyam's message of peace and harmony through the arts.

Vice-Chairman (JNMDA) Longjam Joychandra, renowned Indian poet and writer Dr Udayan Vajpeyi also spoke on the life and contributions of the late cultural icon.

Tight security in place for Arunachal local bodies poll

CORRESPONDENT

ITANAGAR, Dec 14: Arunachal Pradesh is fully prepared for the general elections to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and two urban local bodies in Itanagar and Pasighat, scheduled to be held on Monday.

Polling will begin at 7 am and continue till 4 pm, the State Election Commission (SEC) said. A senior SEC official informed that voters standing in the queue at the closing time will be allowed to cast their votes after being issued voting slips.

Even before polling, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has secured a significant advantage with a record number of candidates elected unopposed. The party has won four of the 20 seats in the Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC), 58 of the 245 zila parishad constituencies, and 5,037 gram panchayat member (GPM) seats across the State without any voting. One zila parishad seat has been won unopposed by a candidate from the National People's Party (NPP).

The SEC confirmed that a large number of constituencies recorded only a single nomination. SEC Secretary Taru Talo said that 5,857 out of 8,182 Gram Panchayat constituencies received just one nomination, resulting

in unopposed elections after scrutiny and withdrawal of nominations.

Polling will be conducted on December 15 for the remaining PRI seats, the IMC, and the eight wards of the Pasighat Municipal Council (PMC). Counting of votes is scheduled for December 20.

A total of 440 candidates are contesting 186 zila parishad seats, while 39 candidates are in the fray for 16 IMC wards and 21 candidates for eight PMC wards.

Altogether, 8,31,648 voters – including 7,59,210 in rural areas and 72,438 in urban areas – are eligible to exercise their franchise across 2,171 polling stations for panchayat elections, 67 for the IMC and 12 for the PMC. Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) will be used for municipal polls, while ballot boxes will be deployed for Panchayat elections.

Meanwhile, Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt General (Retd) KT Parnaik has appealed to the people to actively participate in the Panchayat and Municipal elections and cast their votes on December 15.

The Governor said that Panchayati Raj Institutions, working at the grassroots level, are vital for meaningful public participation in development planning and implementation.

11 illegal coke plants demolished

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

SHILLONG, Dec 14 : All eleven illegal coke plants in East Jaintia Hills have been demolished following orders from the High Court of Meghalaya, officials informed here today.

According to the Deputy Commissioner, East Jaintia Hills District, Shivanish Awasthi, the demolition drive commenced from December 13 and as of date all the illegal plants have been demolished.

Awasthi added, in compliance with the directions of the High Court of Meghalaya, a joint team was constituted to undertake the demolition of unauthorised coke plants operating within the district.

The joint team was constituted under the supervision of the Sub-Divisional Officer, Manish Kumar and officials from the Meghalaya State Pollution Control Board and the Police department to carry out the demolition drive.

"The joint teams have successfully carried out the demolition of 7 out of the 11 unauthorised coke plants and for the remaining 4 coke plants, the team observed that they have already been demolished by the respective owners," the DC informed.

CPI (M) used tribals as vote bank: Tripura CM

AGARTALA, Dec 14: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday alleged that during its long rule, the CPI (M) treated the janajati (tribal) communities merely as a vote bank, while asserting that the BJP is committed to inclusive development and public welfare.

Addressing a party programme at the Rabindra Shatabarshiki Bhavan here, the Chief Minister said that the communists were so confident of their hold over tribal voters that they used to begin counting Assembly election results from 20 assembly seats reserved for the tribal in the 60-member house.

"But now they (CMI-M) are scared. We have learned from them. From the next Assembly election, whenever a BJP government is formed, we will also start counting from 20," he said.

Saha, former BJP state president, said that his party enjoys the blessings and guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the party's national President JP Nadda, and is working towards peace and development in the state.

He alleged that earlier politics was marked by fear, intimidation and violence, causing prolonged suffering among janajati communities.

During the Saturday's programme, Saha formally welcomed 5,050 voters from 1,706 families who joined the BJP.

Referring to past political practices, he said that markets were often shut and threats issued whenever leaders attended meetings.

BJP-led government is working with a clear focus on development and respects all those who have contributed to the state, including members of the royal family.

"Such politics will not continue. Wherever attacks are made, the BJP becomes stronger," he said, adding that the party follows Prime Minister Modi's vision of building a "New India" and is committed to creating a "New Tripura".

"The BJP is not a party of goons. It is a party that works for the people," the Chief Minister said.

Explaining the concept of 'Thansa' (a tribal word meaning unity), Saha said it sym-

bolises unity among jati (non-tribals), janajati (tribals), Manipuri and minority communities, which the BJP seeks to strengthen to build a developed Tripura.

He said the BJP-led government is working with a clear focus on development and respects all those who have contributed to the state, including members of the royal family.

The Chief Minister added that while new political parties emerge frequently, it is the BJP-led double-engine government that is genuinely working for the welfare of janajatis.

Saha said those who joined the BJP on Saturday had taken the right decision at the right time and expressed confidence that the party would emerge stronger in the upcoming Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) elections.

The meeting was attended by BJP State president Rajib Bhattacharya, general secretary Bipin Debbarma, Industries and Commerce Minister Santana Chakma, Tourism Minister Sushant Chowdhury, Youth Affairs and Sports Minister Tinku Roy, Tribal Welfare Minister Bikas Debbarma, BJP vice president and TTAADC member Bimal Chakma. – IANS

NEDFI

ISO 9001:2008

North Eastern Development Finance Corp. Ltd.

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Ph: 91 361 222 22 00, Fax: +91 361 223 77 33 / 223 77 34

E-Auction sale notice under SARFAESI Act 2002

Sale of immovable assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (hereinafter referred to as the Act)

LAST DATE TIME OF SUBMISSION OF EMD AND DOCUMENTS 07-01-2026 UP TO 4:00 PM

Whereas, the Authorized Officer of North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (hereinafter the Corporation) had taken physical possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued under Sec 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 for the following loan account/s with right to sell the same on "AS IS WHERE IS, WHATEVER THERE IS AND WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" for realization of under mentioned dues and applicable interest, charges and costs etc. as detailed hereunder and whereas consequent upon failure to repay the dues, the undersigned in exercise of power conferred under Section 13(4) of the said Act proposes to realize the said dues by sale of the said property/ies. The sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the website.

The details regarding E-Auction are mentioned below:

Name of the account	Details of the property	Demand notice date/ outstanding amount	Reserve price	EMD	Minimum bid increase amount	Date/time of e-auction	Inspection of property
M/s Rakshit Agro Food, Proprietress: Smt. Mistu Rakshit, Wife of Shri Sankar Rakshit, Factory Site: Limbuguri Road, Gujain, Tinsukia, Dist.: Tinsukia, Assam – 786147	An industrial plot of land measuring 3 Katha 10 Lessas covered by Dag No. 730 (New)/715 (old) of Periodic Patta No. 289 (New)/275 (old), Vill.: Gujain Gaon, Mouza-Rangagora, Revenue Circle – Tinsukia, District – Tinsukia, Assam standing in the name of Smt. Mistu Rakshit along with all the building and civil structures standing thereon both present and future, which is bounded by: On the North: Part of Dag No. 219 On the South: Public Road On the East: Part of Dag No. 218 On the West: Part of Dag No. 715 & 221	23-06-2025 ₹51,80,827/- (Rupees Fifty One Lakh Eighty Thousand Eight Hundred Twenty Seven Only) as on 20-06-2025 along with future interest and incidental expenses, costs etc.	₹25,70,000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Lakhs Seventy Thousand Only)	₹2,57,000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Thousand Only)	₹25,000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Thousand only)	22-01-2026 Between 11.00 Noon to 12.00 Noon with unlimited extension of 5 Minutes each.	26-12-2025 02-01-2026 1.00 PM to 4.00 PM.

The details regarding E-Auction are mentioned below:
(1) E-Auction is being held on "AS IS WHERE IS, WHATEVER THERE IS AND WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" and will be conducted online. The auction will be conducted through the Corporations' approved service provider M/s e-procurement Technologies Ltd. at the web portal (<https://sarfaesi.auctiontiger.net>), also on Auctiontiger Mobile App. E-Auction tender documents containing online e-Auction bid form, declaration, General Terms and conditions of online auction sale are available on <https://sarfaesi.auctiontiger.net>. The prospective qualified bidders may avail online training on e-Auction from M/s e-procurement Technologies Ltd prior to the date of e-Auction. Neither the Authorized Officer/ the Corporation nor M/s e-procurement Technologies Ltd shall be liable for any Internet Network problem and the interested bidders to ensure that they are technically well equipped for participating in the e-Auction event.
(2) The EMD shall be deposited through RTGS/NEFT/Fund Transfer to the credit of A/c: 10055610554, State Bank of India, GMC Branch, Bhangagarh, IFSC Code. SBIN0007700, before submitting bids online. EMD can also be paid by way of Pay order/Demand Draft in favour of North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFI) payable at GUWAHATI," drawn on any nationalized or scheduled bank in Guwahati, Assam along with the letter for participation in the bid including viz. i) Copy of the NEFT/RTGS Challan; ii) Copy of PAN Card; iii) Proof of Identification (KYC) iv) Proof of address by 4 p.m. on or before the last date of submission of bid and register their name at M/s e-procurement Technologies Limited (Auction Tiger). Contact Person: Ram Shamsa, Mobile: 8000023297 | Phone: 9265562818/9265562821/079-68136842/6869 Email: ramprasad@auctiontiger.net & support@auctiontiger.net and get user ID and password free of cost and get training on e-Auction from M/s e-procurement Technologies Ltd-Auction Tiger, B-705, Wall Street - II, Opp. Orient Club, Nr. Gujarat College, Ellis Bridge, Ahmedabad - 380006 Gujarat (India). No cheque will be accepted for EMD.
(3) The Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) of the successful bidder shall be retained towards part sale consideration and the EMD of unsuccessful bidders shall be refunded. The Earnest Money Deposit shall not bear any interest. The successful bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale price, immediately on closure of the e-auction sale proceedings, and the balance 75% of the sale price on or before 15th day of sale or within such extended period as agreed upon in writing by and solely at the discretion of the Authorized Officer. In case of default in payment by the successful bidder, the amount already deposited by the successful bidder shall be liable to be forfeited and property shall be put to re-auction and the defaulting borrower shall have no claim/ right in respect of property/ amount. For Sale Proceeds of ₹50 Lakhs (Rupees Fifty Lakhs) and above, the successful bidder will have to pay TDS at the rate 1% on the Sale Proceeds and submit the original receipt of TDS certificate to the Corporation. All charges for conveyance, stamp duty/GST registration, Charges etc., as applicable shall be borne by the successful bidder only.
(4) It shall be the responsibility of the bidders to inspect and satisfy themselves about the asset and specification before submitting the bid. The inspection of property put on auction will be permitted to interested bidders on the above mentioned dates with the permission of the Authorized Officer in this regard. For inspection, interested bidders are requested to contact Branch Manager, NEDFI, Tinsukia Branch (Mobile No. 9854028222).
(5) The Authorized Officer is not bound to accept the highest offer and the Authorized Officer has the absolute right to accept or reject any or all offer(s) or adjourn/ postpone/ cancel the e-Auction without assigning any reason thereof. For further details contact Shri Satyajit Nath, Authorised Officer, North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NEDFI), NEDFI House, GS Road, Dispur, Guwahati-781006 during office hours on any working day (Ph. No. 98540-28205) E-mail id: satyajit@nedfi.com.
(6) Particulars specified in respect of the said properties in above schedule have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorized Officer/Corporation, but Authorized Officer or the Corporation will not be answerable for any error, mis-statement or omission in this public notice.
(7) To the best of the knowledge and information of the Authorized Officer no other encumbrance exist on the properties. However, the intending bidders should make their own independent inquiries regarding the encumbrances, title of properties put on auction and claims/rights/dues/affecting the property, prior to submitting their bid. The e-auction advertisement does not constitute and will not be deemed to constitute any commitment of any representation of the Corporation. The property is being sold with all the existing and future encumbrances whether known or unknown to the Corporation. The Authorized Officer of secured creditor shall not be responsible in any way for any third party claims/rights/dues. The sale shall be subject to rules/conditions prescribed under the SARFAESI Act 2002.
(8) The bidders are advised to go through the detailed Terms & Conditions of e-Auction available on the Web Portal: <https://sarfaesi.auctiontiger.net>, before submitting their bids and taking part in the e-Auction.
(9) The Mortgagors/Guarantors/Borrower's attention is invited to the provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of the time available, to redeem the secured assets.

STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 9 (1) OF THE Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

This is also a notice to the borrower/guarantor/mortgagor of the above said loan/s about holding of this sale on the above-mentioned date if their outstanding dues along with up to date interest and ancillary expenses are not repaid in full within 30 days.

Place: Guwahati
Date: 15-12-2025

Authorized officer
NEDFI

Nightfall brings elephants, fear follows in Palasbari-Rani

Damage by wild tuskers mounts even as crop insurance cover expands

ABHIJIT KALITA

PALASBARI, Dec 14: Ramping herds of wild elephants, straying from neighbouring Meghalaya forests in search of food, have caused widespread devastation in the Palasbari and Rani areas, destroying hundreds of *bighas* of paddy fields and damaging homes, boundary walls and stored foodgrains. The recurring raids have intensified human–elephant conflict, leaving farmers, daily wage earners and villagers living in constant fear.

According to local residents, elephants have been moving in groups and entering agricultural fields and human settlements, flattening standing paddy crops, uprooting trees, breaking fences and walls, and consuming stored harvest. Rabi crops have also suffered damage, compounding losses for farmers already under financial stress.

On Friday night, a herd entered Kharapara village and broke into a cowshed where harvested paddy had been stored, consuming and trampling the grain. The sudden intrusion created panic, forcing villagers to flee in the dark. Retired schoolteacher Nripen Sharma, along with several farmers and daily labourers, narrowly escaped as the elephants moved through the settlement.

Residents said the animals are now venturing out as early as dusk, creating an atmosphere of terror in both Palasbari and Rani. Villagers have been lighting fires, beating tin sheets, bursting crackers and keeping night-

INSURANCE RULE CHANGE
➤ Wildlife damage added as fifth PMFBY add-on
➤ Covered under localised risk category
➤ States to identify damaging animals and vulnerable areas
➤ Crop losses to be reported within 72 hours
➤ Paddy inundation cover restored
➤ New norms effective from kharif 2026

long vigil to drive the elephants away, but these measures have failed to prevent repeated incursions.

Locals alleged that the Forest department's response has been inadequate and that elected representatives have not visited the affected villages to assess the damage.

The scale of the menace became more evident on Saturday when a large herd of over 40 wild elephants was seen moving through Parakuchi near Mirza. The herd passed through farmland, damaging standing paddy crops and forcing villagers to retreat indoors as fear spread across the area.

Amid growing distress among farmers, a recent decision by the Union Ministry of Agriculture has offered some relief. On November 18, 2025, the ministry approved revised modalities under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) to cover crop losses caused by wild animal attacks as well as paddy crop inundation.

Under the revised framework, crop



loss due to wild animal attacks will be recognised as the fifth add-on cover under the 'Localised Risk' category of PMFBY. States will notify the list of wild animals responsible for crop damage and identify vulnerable districts or insurance units based on historical data. Farmers will be required to report losses within 72 hours through the Crop Insurance App by uploading geo-tagged photographs. The new guidelines will be implemented from the kharif season of 2026.

For years, farmers living near forests, wildlife corridors and hilly regions have suffered increasing crop losses due to attacks by elephants, wild boars, nilgai, deer and monkeys, with such losses often going uncompensated as they were not covered under crop insurance. The revised norms are expected to bridge this long-standing protection gap.

The ministry has also restored coverage for paddy crop inundation, which had been removed from the localised calamity category in 2018

due to concerns over assessment and moral hazard. Its exclusion had left farmers in flood-prone areas vulnerable to repeated losses during heavy rains and overflowing rivers.

The renewed coverage is expected to benefit farmers in states witnessing frequent human–wildlife conflict, including Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand, as well as Himalayan and northeastern states such as Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh.

For farmers in Palasbari and Rani, who continue to face nightly threats from wild elephants, the policy move offers a measure of hope.

However, villagers insist that insurance coverage alone is not enough and have demanded immediate preventive measures, regular patrolling, early-warning systems and effective compensation to prevent further loss of crops, property and human lives.

16 years on, NHRC urged to act on Jogdal murders

A CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Demanding time-bound justice in the 16-year-old Jogdal murder case, the Dimoria Bikash Mancha on Saturday submitted a memorandum to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) here.

"Sixteen years have passed. However, justice has not been delivered in the Jogdal murder case that occurred in Jogdal village under Sonapur Police Station in the Dimoria tribal belt of Kamrup (Metro) on the midnight of December 12, 2009," said Dibyajyoti Medhi, chief adviser of the Dimoria Bikash Mancha.

Harakanta Doloi and five members of his family were brutally killed by miscreants in Jogdal village.

"It has been widely alleged that the investigation was deliberately weakened due to the suspected involvement of a then minister of the Assam government. The initial investigation conducted by the Sonapur po-

lice was allegedly neither impartial nor diligent. On the contrary, serious attempts were reportedly made to destroy crucial evidence, including the burning of the victim's house after the incident. Furthermore, the main accused, Arjun Bordoloi, was killed under mysterious circumstances on September 5, 2012, in front of his residence, raising further concerns about the integrity of the investigation," the memorandum said.

It said despite sustained protests, memoranda and representations submitted by numerous local ethnic and social organisations over the years, the authorities concerned have remained largely unresponsive.

"Subsequently, the case was transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) for further investigation. On December 7, 2017, two police officials—Pranab Kumar Deka and AM Choudhury—were arrested on charges of deliberately destroying evidence with the intention of shielding the actual perpetrators," Medhi said in the memorandum.

Checking of EVMs, VVPATs begins in Dhubri, Cachar

CORRESPONDENT

DHUBRI, Dec 14: As preparations gather momentum for the 2026 Assam Legislative Assembly elections, the administration in Dhubri has recently initiated the crucial first-level checking (FLC) of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units, marking an important step towards ensuring a free, fair and transparent electoral process.

The FLC is being conducted in accordance with directives of the Election Commission of India (ECI), following the schedule issued by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Assam, vide letter no. ELE.35/2025/74, dated November 27, 2025. The process began on December 11 and will continue till December 23, 2025, from 9 am to 7 pm daily, including holidays.

The checking process is underway at the EVM warehouse at Madhusoulmari Part II in Gauripur. In total, 1,939 ballot units (BUs), 2,094 control units (CUs) and 2,094 VVPATs are undergoing mandatory technical verification.

Election officials said all arrangements at the FLC



premises have been completed strictly in line with ECI guidelines. The checking is being carried out as per prescribed standard operating procedures (SOPs) and the approved flow chart for FLC of EVMs and VVPATs.

The District Election Officer (DEO), Dhubri, has appointed the Additional District Commissioner (Election) as the FLC supervisor to oversee the entire process. Technical verification is being conducted by 10 authorised engineers from the Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL), deputed specifically for the exercise.

To ensure smooth conduct, adequate manpower comprising officers, staff and unskilled

labour has been deployed. As per ECI norms, mock polls will be conducted on five per cent of the EVMs and VVPATs that successfully clear the FLC. The entire process is being carried out in the presence of authorised representatives of recognised national and state political parties, reinforcing transparency and public confidence in the electoral system.

Silchar staff correspondent adds: First-level checking of EVMs and VVPAT units commenced at the EVM–VVPAT warehouse on Club Road here as part of preparations for the 2026 Legislative Assembly elections.

A release issued by the DDIPR, Barak Valley region, said the process, being conducted from December 11 to 23 under strict security, is being carried out in accordance with Election Commission of India guidelines and in the presence of election officials and representatives of recognised political parties. Cachar District Election Officer Mridul Yadav said transparency and adherence to prescribed procedures were being ensured at every stage.

Children's book set in Kaziranga released



CORRESPONDENT

KAZIRANGA, Dec 14: A children's book titled *Miku and The Big Flood*, set in Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve and written by Bengaluru-based author Kabita Duarah, also a former journalist with *The Assam Tribune*, was formally released at a function held at a private resort here on Friday.

The book release was part of a three-day art workshop titled Jan Van Chitran, organised by the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve authorities in collaboration with WWF-India and Bhumi, an NGO. The event will conclude on Saturday.

The book has been illustrated by Sangeeta Dutta.

Releasing the book, Dr Sonali Ghosh, Director of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, lauded the author's efforts and said the book would help inculcate love, respect and understanding of nature, wildlife and the environment among children.

Speaking later to this correspondent, Kabita Duarah said the primary objective of writing the book, the sequel to an earlier publication, was to introduce children to the fascinating world of nature and wildlife.

"Assam is a treasure trove of natural wealth, with pristine forests and diverse wildlife. It is essential that our children develop love and respect for wildlife and grow up to be responsible citizens to meet the long-term goals of conservation. I thank the Kaziranga authorities, Dr Ghosh in particular, for providing me this platform," she said, adding that she plans to make an animation film based on her books in the future.

Minister lays foundation of science block at Jagiroad College

CORRESPONDENT

MORIGAON, Dec 14: Water Resources Minister Pijush Hazarika on Friday laid the foundation stone for a state-of-the-art science block at Vigyan Bhawan, Jagiroad College, and distributed scooters among meritorious students under the Pragyan Bharati scheme.

The newly sanctioned science building, to be constructed at a cost of Rs 5 crore, will cover an area of 14,000 square feet and house four modern laboratories de-

signed to provide a hands-on environment for scientific research and learning.

During the event, the minister also distributed scooters among 88 students of Jagiroad College under the Dr Bani Kanta Kakati Merit Award, 2025, under the Pragyan Bharati scheme.

Hazarika said the awards were aimed at empowering young scholars by easing their daily commute, and urged students to maintain academic excellence to remain eligible for welfare initiatives such as the Pragyan Bharati

and Nijut Moina schemes.

The minister also highlighted the broader transformation of the region under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, noting that four major road projects are currently under construction in Jagiroad under the Asom Mala initiative.

Hazarika announced plans to set up a new "green stadium" on the Jagiroad College campus to promote sports and physical well-being, alongside the ongoing modernisation of civic amenities in Jagiroad town.

Cheques distributed Entrepreneurship scheme

ANN SERVICE

GOSSAIGAON, Dec 14: Cheques under the Assam Chief Minister's Women Entrepreneurship Scheme were distributed among beneficiaries at Bodo UN Brahma Playground in Habrubil here, on Saturday.

State Cabinet Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah attended the programme as the chief guest.

Addressing the gathering, Baruah said women members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) were being provided financial assistance of Rs 10,000 each under the scheme to promote economic uplift and self-reliance.

He further informed that a total of 14,018 women SHG

members would benefit from the scheme and that an additional amount of Rs 25,000 would be provided to beneficiaries at a later stage.

The cheque distribution programme was also attended by BTC Chief Hagrama Mohilary, Executive Member Mritunjoy Narzary, Kokrajhar District Commissioner Masanda M Pertin, SDO (Civil), Gossaigaon, Mridul Shibhare, along with other officials and well-wishers.

The beneficiaries expressed gratitude to Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma for initiating the scheme aimed at strengthening women entrepreneurship and ensuring their future empowerment.

Special merit exam for HSLC students on December 20-21

ANN SERVICE

TIHU, Dec 14: A special merit examination, 2025, will be held on December 20 and 21 at Asom Keshari Jatiya Vidyalaya, Kaithalkuchi, under the auspices of the Uttar Dharmapur Anchalik Students' Union.

The examination will cover English, Mathematics, General Science and Social Science, and is aimed at enhancing the academic, intellectual and mental preparedness of students appearing in the forthcoming HSLC examination. The question papers will be set on the lines of the HSLC examination.

The examination fee has been fixed at Rs 51.

Students can fill up their application forms and submit them to the heads of their respective institutions on or before December 17.

To conduct the examination smoothly, an examination board has been formed with Akhil Chandramohan Talukdar as the chief controller.

The examination will be held on December 20 for English and General Science, and on December 21 for Mathematics and Social Science, informed Tanmoy Kr Sarma, president, and Jyotirmoy Sarma, secretary, of the students' union.

BJP dismisses Opp's criticism of women schemes

SIVASAGAR, Dec 14: BJP women cell president Nilima Devi on Saturday dismissed the opposition's criticism of the present government's beneficiary-oriented schemes, saying the allegations of misuse of taxpayers' money were baseless.

Addressing the media here, Devi said women beneficiaries had not "grown lazy," as alleged by the opposition, but had instead become economically self-reliant, with many women entrepreneurs entering the market.

On women's participation in the forthcoming elections, she said she would welcome more women candidates contesting from every constituency.

Under the Sal Tree theatre festival to be held as one-day event today

Three productions to be staged as the festival pauses for reinvention

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: Badungduppa Kalakendra, which marked its silver jubilee last year, has announced that the 16th edition of its Under the Sal Tree Theatre Festival will be held as a one-day event on December 15.

The theatre group from Rampur in Goalpara has built a reputation over more than two decades for its physical theatre style that relies on minimal dialogue and expressive movement. Its experimental work, including Retelling Legends Through Theatre, Performing Identity, Live Theatre and Rit-

ual Theatre, has drawn scholars and theatre enthusiasts from different parts of the world. The group has also taken its distinct theatre language to festivals across India and abroad.

The annual Under the Sal Tree festival is one of Badungduppa Kalakendra's most celebrated contributions to the cultural landscape of the State. Performances are staged in natural surroundings without artificial lighting, microphones or raised platforms. The festival usually draws visitors from across the country and overseas.

This year's decision to host a single-day edition marks a pause before

a new phase of work. Managing Director Madan Rabha said the team wanted a moment of reflection before introducing fresh concepts in the coming years. He added that the festival would return with greater energy from next year.

The December 15 event will feature three productions. The festival will open with *Ranjumuk*, a Badungduppa Kalakendra production written by Madan Rabha and directed by Dhananjay Rabha. The Rabha-language play will be staged after the inauguration by writer and senior journalist Dileep Chandan.

The one-hour production will be followed by *Edin Teu Ahibo* by Mirdan of Nagaon, directed by Anshuman Saikia, a 50-minute Assamese adaptation of *Waiting for Godot*, done by Hilloil Kumar Pathok.

The final production will be *Derh Inch Upur*, performed and directed by Anup Hazarika and produced by BA (A Cultural Organisation). The 40-minute performance is scheduled for 5:30 pm.

Madan Rabha thanked audiences and well-wishers for their support and said Badungduppa's journey would not have been possible without their goodwill.

TRIBUTE

Sujasa Choudhury

Sujasa Choudhury, my aunt, who passed away on December 4, was a woman deeply loved by all who knew her.

Throughout her life, she remained active in social circles and was admired for her deep empathy towards people. She studied at Handique College and Gauhati University, and worked at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Sonapur, and Maligaon.

As a young woman, Choudhury excelled in sports. She was an inter-college badminton champion and won prizes in Gauhati University's athletic competitions. She also distinguished her-



self later in life at Assam's veterans sports meets. She was a devoted and supportive wife to Dr Tarakeswar Choudhury, the well-known mathematician.

On her *svadha* today, I join her friends and family in praying for peace to her soul.

– PK Das

Tributes should not exceed 300 words

Bongaigaon substation at Salakati vulnerable to disruption due to flood

New substation at Bornagar to end Northeast's single-point power dependence

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: A new high-capacity transmission project is coming up at Bornagar under the North Eastern States Strengthening Scheme (NESS) to reduce the region's dependence on the flood-prone Bongaigaon substation.

At present, the Bongaigaon substation at Salakati functions as the primary gateway for electricity flow from the rest of India into the North Eastern Region, with nearly all ma-

major power connections routed through it. Officials say this concentration poses a systemic risk, as any disruption at Bongaigaon – located in a flood-prone zone – could severely affect power supply across the Northeast, particularly in Assam.

To mitigate this vulnerability and enhance grid reliability, a second major 765/400/220 kV power hub has been planned at Bornagar, spanning Gadaapith and Bhogpur villages under the Sarupeta circle in Bajali district. The project will be im-

plemented through NER Expansion Transmission Limited, a special purpose entity approved by the Centre.

Officials said the Bornagar facility will initially operate as a 400 kV switching station, with provisions for future upgrade. It will be connected to the national grid by re-routing sections of the existing Bongaigaon-Balipara and Alipurduar-Bongaigaon transmission lines, creating an alternative corridor for power flow from Eastern India into

the Northeast.

"The project will significantly improve redundancy and resilience of the regional grid," a senior power sector official said. "By creating an alternate entry point, it reduces the risk of large-scale outages and strengthens supply stability for both rural and urban consumers."

The initiative is part of the broader NESS framework, which focuses on reinforcing transmission infrastructure across the Northeastern states to meet rising demand,

improve reliability and lower technical losses. Assam's electricity requirement has been growing sharply amid infrastructure expansion, industrial activity and urbanisation, officials noted.

Reduced transmission losses will help lower the overall cost of power procurement, translating into savings for end consumers over time.

Land acquisition for the Bornagar substation is currently under way.

Akhil challenges Chief Minister to contest from Sivasagar



CORRESPONDENT

SIVASAGAR, Dec 14: Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi today threw an open challenge to the Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to contest from the prestigious Sivasagar LAC against him, and not let others to contest.

Gogoi said that there is no doubt in what Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said about the BJP as 'Vote chor, gaddi chor'. He urged the people to stop the BJP from capturing power again.

Gogoi welcomed the decision of the Sarma government that no one can have more than one wife, but he pointed out that the person the BJP was contemplating to pitch against him (Gogoi) has several wives.

Gogoi also railed at state BJP women wing chief for discrediting him as a potential challenge in the next elections. He said that if the BJP was so solicitous for women's welfare, let there be a woman candidate fielded against him this time.

'Retire Smart India' NPS awareness programme in Jorhat

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: The Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), along with the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), organized the 'Retire Smart India' – National Pension System (NPS) awareness programme recently in Jorhat.

The programme focused on strengthening public understanding of retirement planning and promoting wider participation in the NPS as part of the national objective of building a pension-inclusive society.

The session commenced with a welcome address by Prabhat K Bezboruah, co-chairman, NE Region, ICC, followed by a keynote address from Sivasubramanian Ramann, chairperson, PFRDA. Ramann outlined key developments in the pension sector, noting that the NPS currently serves over nine crore subscribers and manages assets of Rs 16.4 lakh crore. He also highlighted the reforms including an enhanced entry age of up to 70 years, simplified withdrawal processes, structured payout options, access to alternative investment funds and digital enhancements aimed at expanding pension coverage among gig workers, MSMEs, farmers, women and corporates.

PFRDA officials provided a detailed overview of the features and benefits of NPS for individuals and employers, while Gaurav Jain (ICAI) explained applicable tax advantages. The programme further included a question-answer session, a media interaction and vote of thanks delivered by Pranjal Barua, assistant director, ICC.

PFRDA has undertaken focused outreach initiatives to increase awareness about retirement planning through the NPS. As part of these efforts, PFRDA has recently launched 'NPS Quest 2.0', a media initiative aimed at enhancing NPS awareness among individuals in the northeastern region.

Body recovered near Mangaldai

MANGALDAI, Dec 14: A body was recovered on Sunday at Gadhiapara village under Mangaldai police station. The body was lying in a field before it was noticed by some local cattle rearers who had gone there for grazing of their cattle. Police rushed to the spot, recovered the body and sent it for autopsy. The victim was later identified as Ramu Murari of Chani Bagicha village under Mangaldai police station. A police investigation is on to ascertain the actual cause of death. – Correspondent

Sivasagar to host Brahmaputra Literature Festival in February

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: The Adharxila Trust, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Assam and Northeast India's literary and cultural heritage, has announced the Brahmaputra Literature Festival 2026 to be held in February 6 to 8, 2026 in Sivasagar.

The event will foster dialogue, creativity and community to bridge local traditions with global perspectives.

It will be formally inaugurated on February 5.

This year's theme, a confluence of Rhythm, Word & Spirit - Celebrating the Voice of Humanity, reflects the commitment towards honouring the region's artistic soul while building bridges across nations, languages and cultures.

Under the direction of eminent author Dr Rita Chowdhury, the chief trustee of Adharxila and the festival director, the upcoming Brahmaputra Literature Festival 2026 promises an immersive three-day experience



uniting music, poetry, cinema and oral traditions of art and culture.

The curtain raiser at Gauripur will celebrate the legacy of Raja Prabhat

Chandra Baruah, Pramathesh Baruah and the renowned women of Rajbari for their contribution to art, culture and tradition.

The festival will feature to celebrate the birth centenary of Dr Bhupen Hazarika, the bard of the Brahmaputra, and tribute to Zubeen Garg.

The festival will also feature speakers and performers from different parts of the country and also across the globe.

This edition of the Brahmaputra Literature Festival will put a spotlight on tribal heritage, multi-ethnic, multilingual, culturally united identities and indigenous storytelling traditions.

The festival will hold an award ceremony, constituting five awards to felicitate icons from diverse genres.

The revenue generated from the Zubeen Garg's special uncut interview in Dr Rita Chowdhury's podcast channel will be turned into fixed deposits for 20 years to fund budding artists.

This initiative will honour Zubeen Garg who made significant efforts during his lifetime to promote budding artists. The festival is open to all and will be held across multiple locations in Sivasagar.

Dibrugarh Circuit House bags FSSAI's Eat Right Campus certification

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

DIBRUGARH, Dec 14: The district here has received a remarkable recognition as the Abarta Bhawan (Circuit House) has been awarded a 4-star rating by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and certified as an Eat Right Campus. Notably, this achievement makes Abarta

Bhawan the first such facility in Assam to receive the Eat Right Campus certification.

The Eat Right Campus initiative, led by FSSAI, aims to promote the availability of safe, hygienic, and sustainable food across campuses nationwide, including universities, colleges, workplaces, hospitals, tea gardens, and other institutional settings. The initiative seeks to improve public health while

contributing to the country's broader social and economic development.

Under the Eat Right India movement, FSSAI has adopted a settings-based approach to ensure access to safe, healthy, and sustainable food regardless of where citizens live or work. Targeted programs have been designed for workplaces, educational institutions, and public dining environments, with a particular focus on campuses where people spend a substantial part of their daily lives.

The recognition of Abarta Bhawan as an Eat Right Campus marks an important milestone for the district and sets a benchmark for other institutions in Assam to follow in advancing food safety and nutrition standards, authorities here informed.

'Sundays on Cycle' prog in Kokrajhar

GUWAHATI, Dec 14: The Fit India Movement received a strong grassroots boost in the Kokrajhar district as veterans and their family members participated in a cycling programme titled 'Sundays on Cycle' on December 14, reinforcing the national call for healthier lifestyles through regular physical activity.

A press release said that the event was jointly organized by the Zila Sainik Welfare Office, Kokrajhar, and the Sports Authority of India (SAI), Kokrajhar, under the leadership of retired Army Honorary Captain Karna Kumar Brahma. Captain Brahma, who also serves as the Zila Sainik Welfare Officer, welcomed the participants and expressed appreciation to the SAI Kokrajhar in-charge for arranging bicycles and other equipment required for the programme.

Held under the theme 'Fight Obesity: Fitness Meets Fun on the Move', the cycling initiative highlighted the importance of simple, accessible forms of exercise in daily life. Participants rode together through designated routes, turning the activity into both a fitness drive and a public message encouraging citizens to adopt healthier habits.

The programme aligned with the objectives of the Fit India Movement, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 29, 2019, at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in New Delhi. The nationwide campaign urged people to integrate sports and physical activity into everyday routines and promotes a collective commitment to building a fitter and healthier India.

Geramari people demand RCC bridge over Gadadhar

CORRESPONDENT

GAURIPUR, Dec 14: The people of Geramari, Beguntoli and Asharikandi villages have demanded the construction of a pucca (RCC) bridge over the river Gadadhar, replacing the bamboo bridge presently being used by the locals.

A large number of people from these villages come to Gauripur town for their day-to-day work, crossing the river using the bamboo bridge. The school and college students, teachers and other office goers too have to cross the river to attend their daily work. During the summer season, they have to cross the river in country boats and in winter, the people of the area construct a bamboo bridge to come to Gauripur town. However, the temporary arrangement has failed to compensate for their needs. So, they have appealed to the authorities concerned to construct a pucca bridge over the river within a short time. The affected people have lamented that the local MLA has done nothing in this regard during his term of office in the last 10 years.



Raijor Utsav celebrated at Dusutimukh

CORRESPONDENT

DERGAON, Dec 14: 'Raijor Utsav' was celebrated with great joy and enthusiasm at Dusutimukh near Dergaon as a platform to promote education, nurture students' latent talents under the education department, bringing together teachers, students, parents and the community members.

Under the initiative of the

Dusutimukh Mandal Samal Kendra and hosted jointly by Dusutimukh Government Lower Primary School and Dusutimukh Higher Secondary School, with the cooperation of the local people, the Raijor Utsav was organized on the primary school premises on Friday with a daylong programme.

With the participation of teachers, students and parents from 12 schools of the

area and more than 2,000 people from the larger Dusutimukh area, the school premises transformed into a harmonious gathering place.

In the morning, the cleaning of the surroundings was followed by the flag hoisting of the 'People's Festival' done by Jatin Dole, president of the organizing committee. The presidents of the management committees of 12 schools hoisted their respec-

tive school flags. After the National Anthem was performed, president Jatin Dole welcomed everyone to the event and delivered the opening speech. Tree saplings were planted by Dr Arnab Baro, the health officer of the Dusutimukh State Health Centre; Sukanya Loring, president of the Dusutimukh Village Panchayat; Shashi Kumar Gogoi, principal of Dusutimukh Higher

Secondary School; Holdhar Pegu, president of Dusutimukh Village Guard; and Rudai Pathari and Kishore Pegu, presidents of the Dusutimukh and Bor Chapori Youth Associations, respectively. Tributes were paid to Zubeen Garg by teachers Niru Pegu and Mayuri Borai.

The cultural procession attended by the 12 school teams was inaugurated by the headmaster, Bipin Chandra Pati.

Chief Secretary reviews construction work

Batadroba cultural project

CORRESPONDENT

NAGAON, Dec 14: Chief Secretary Dr Ravi Kota reviewed the ongoing construction work of the Batadroba cultural project, a flagship initiative of the Assam government aimed at transforming the birthplace of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev into a world-class spiritual and tourism hub.

The project is slated for inauguration by Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the presence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma later this month.

Over 50,000 devotees and 2,000 artistes are expected to attend the inauguration ceremony.

During his visit, Dr Kota, along with senior officials, inspected the project site, reviewed the progress of work, and assessed the overall preparedness for the Home Minister's visit.

Dr Kota was accompanied by local MLA Rupak Sarma, IGP Akhilesh Kumar Singh, DC Debashish Sarma, Senior Superintendent of Police Swapnil Deka and other senior officials from the district and police administrations.

Journalist injured in Hojai hit-and-run case

ANN SERVICE

HOJAI, Dec 14: Hojai witnessed a shocking hit-and-run incident that left a local journalist critically injured, raising serious concerns over road safety and the response of law enforcement agencies.

According to information received, the incident occurred on Thursday at around 9.30 am, on the Tumpreng-Hojai New Market connecting road in Hojai town. The injured journalist has been identified as Samorjit Dutta (Bubai), a reporter

associated with a weekly newspaper published from Hojai.

Sources said that Samorjit was returning home riding his motorbike after completing his professional duties. A four-wheeler, driven at a high speed rammed into his motorcycle, leaving him lying on the road in a critical condition.

Local people rescued the seriously injured journalist and arranged for his medical treatment. A First Information Report (FIR) has been lodged at the Hojai police station in this regard.

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 At 11.00 am & 5.30 pm
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 Cast : Zubeen Garg, Joy Kashyap, Achuriya Borpatra etc.
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Never allowed territory for activities against Bangladesh's interests: India

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: India today asserted that it has never allowed its territory to be used for activities inimical to the interests of Bangladesh and pressed for holding the upcoming parliamentary polls in that country in a peaceful atmosphere.

India's reaction came hours after the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry summoned Indian envoy to Dhaka, Pranay Verma, and conveyed its concern over former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's "incendiary" statements from Indian soil.

According to a readout

released by Dhaka, the Foreign Ministry also brought to Verma's notice the activities of some members of Hasina-led Awami League while staying in India.

"India categorically rejects the assertions made by the interim government of Bangladesh in its press note," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

It said India has consistently reiterated its position in favour of free, fair, inclusive and credible elections in Bangladesh in a peaceful atmosphere.

"India has never allowed its territory to be used for activities inimical to the in-

MEA says India categorically rejects the assertions made by the interim government of Bangladesh in its press note

terests of the friendly people of Bangladesh," the MEA said.

"We expect that the interim government of Bangladesh will take all necessary measures for ensuring internal law and order, in-

cluding for the purpose of holding peaceful elections," it said in a statement.

The parliamentary elections in Bangladesh will be held on February 12. It will be the first general election after the collapse of the Hasina government in August last year following massive protests.

The Awami League has rejected the elections, saying the interim government led by Muhammad Yunus will not be able to hold the polls in a free and normal environment.

"It is now clear that the current occupying authority is entirely biased, and

that under their control it is impossible to ensure a fair and normal environment where transparency, neutrality, and the people's will can be reflected," the Awami League said in a statement on Thursday.

Last month, Hasina, 78, was sentenced to death by a special tribunal in Dhaka for "crimes against humanity" over her government's brutal crackdown on the student-led protests last year.

The Awami League leader has been living in India since she fled Bangladesh on August 5 last year in the face of the protests. – PTI

Congratulatory messages pour in for Nitin Nabin

Bihar Minister's appointment as BJP National Working President

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Congratulatory messages poured in from the BJP brass for Bihar Minister Nitin Nabin following his appointment as the party's National Working President with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah saying that Nabin's rich organisational experience will strengthen the party in the times to come.

Nabin, 45, was today appointed as the BJP National Working President and is likely to eventually succeed JP Nadda as its National President, signalling a generational shift in the ruling party.

In a post on X, the Prime Minister said, "Shri Nitin Nabin-Ji has distinguished himself as a hardworking *kar-yakarta*. He is a young and industrious leader with rich organisational experience and has an impressive record as MLA as well as Minister in Bihar for multiple terms."

Home Minister Shah praised Nabin for his work, saying he has fulfilled every responsibility with "complete dedication and success", be it serving as the National Gen-



Bihar Minister Nitin Nabin at a felicitation function, in Patna on Sunday. – PTI

eral Secretary of the BJP Yuva Morcha or party in-charge for Chhattisgarh.

"I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Nitin Nabin on his appointment as the National Working President by Prime Minister Narendra, BJP President JP Nadda and other senior leaders in the BJP Parliamentary Board," he said on X.

The Home Minister said that having served five times as a legislator and as a minister in the Bihar government, Nabin comes with an "extensive experience" of working among the people.

"His elevation today to the position of National Working President is an honour for every young BJP worker who toils day and night," Shah said, adding, "I extend my best wishes to him for his new responsibility and successful tenure."

Congratulating Nabin, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said he is a "diligent worker" and a person endowed with out-of-box thinking capacity.

"Heartfelt congratulations to the young and energetic leader from the soil of Bihar on being appointed as the National Working President of the BJP," Singh said in a post on X.

"Under the inspiring leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, he will surely succeed in taking the BJP to new heights of success," the Defence Minister added.

BJP President JP Nadda said he is fully confident that the party under leadership of Nabin and Prime Minister Modi's guidance will establish new dimensions functioning with spirit of service to the nation and people of the country. – PTI

Rahul vows to oust 'Modi-RSS' govt from power

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: Alleging that "vote chori" was in the BJP's DNA, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi today said his party stood with "satya" (truth) and vowed to remove the "Narendra Modi-RSS government" from power.

Addressing the party's 'Vote Chor Gaddi Chhod' rally at the Ramliha Maidan here, he launched a scathing attack on the Election Commission and mentioned the names of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi to allege that they were working for the BJP.

"We will stand with *satya* (truth) and will remove the Narendra Modi-RSS government from power. They have *satya* (power), and they indulge in *vote chori*," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

Claiming that truth is in the DNA of those following the Congress ideology, he alleged that there is untruth and "vote *chori*" in the DNA of the BJP-RSS.

"You should not fear, in the end we will remove Narendra Modi, Amit Shah and the RSS government from pow-



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leaders Rahul Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Abhishek Manu Sanghvi, Tariq Anwar, Ajay Maken, Devender Yadav and others during the party's 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' rally at Ramliha Ground, in New Delhi on Sunday. – PTI

er by following the path of truth," he said.

Asserting that it may take time, but truth will ultimately win, the former Congress chief said, "We'll work with truth and non-violence to defeat Modi and (Amit) Shah."

Rahul Gandhi was accompanied by Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi at the Ramliha ground, where party workers in large numbers gathered to protest against "vote *chori*".

The party has collected around six crore signatures against alleged vote theft from every corner of the

country, and will be presenting the same to the President of India.

Later, in a post on X, Rahul Gandhi said, "Theft is in the BJP's DNA."

"Money theft – land theft – institution theft – rights theft – employment theft – mandate theft – government theft – election theft – vote theft. Theft from the people is the ladder to power for the BJP," he said.

Referring to recent speech of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Rahul Gandhi said that "Mohan Bhagwat says the world does not see truth but power, and whoever has

power is regarded."

"*Vishwa satya ko nahi, shakti ko dekhta hai, jiske pas shakti hai, usko manta hai... bhale mann se nahi, par manta jaroor hai* (the world does not acknowledge only truth; it also acknowledges strength. It may not accept the strength from the heart, but it does accept it)," Bhagwat had said on Saturday.

Gandhi said, "Our ideology, our country's ideology and our Hindu religion and other religions say that truth is most important, but Mohan Bhagwat says truth has no significance, only power is important."

"This fight is between *satya* and *asatya*," he said.

Gandhi also claimed that the BJP transferred Rs 10,000 during Bihar elections, but the poll authority did not take any action against them. "In this fight between truth and untruth, the Election Commission is working with the BJP government," he claimed.

"(Prime Minister) Narendra Modi brought a new law to give immunity to EC... We are telling you clearly that this law is to protect you and we will change this law retroactively and take strict action against you," Gandhi said. – PTI

Bengal Governor calls for judicial inquiry

Messi event chaos

KOLKATA, Dec 14: A day after chaos erupted during Argentine football icon Lionel Messi's event at Salt Lake stadium here, West Bengal Governor CV Ananda Bose today visited the venue for a first-hand inspection and called for a judicial inquiry.

Bose also urged the government to frame standard operating procedures (SOPs) for managing such events in future.

The Governor, accompanied by Chief Secretary Manoj Pant and senior police officials, visited the venue for a first-hand assessment of the stadium chaos.

He also said all those re-

sponsible for the chaos must be arrested and the organisers must immediately refund ticket prices to spectators.

Notably, Satadru Datta, the chief organiser of the Lionel Messi football event at Salt Lake stadium, was arrested by the Bidhannagar Police on Saturday for "mismanagement" of the event.

Datta was picked up from the Kolkata airport, where he had gone to see off Messi and his entourage on their way to Hyderabad.

Bose said he would submit a detailed report containing recommendations to the State and Central governments after interacting with some of the victims. – PTI



Students of Institute of Hotel Management (IHM) prepare a 270-foot-long sandwich in an attempt to create India's longest sandwich, in Bhopal on Sunday. – PTI

Navy to commission 2nd MH-60R helicopter squadron on Dec 17

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: The Indian Navy will commission its second MH-60R helicopter squadron – INAS 335 (Ospreys) – on December 17, boosting its aviation capabilities, officials said today.

The advanced weapons, sensors and avionics suite make the helicopter a versatile and capable asset for the Navy, offering enhanced capabilities to address conventional as well as asymmetric threats, they said.

Accordingly, the Navy's second MH-60R helicopter squadron – INAS 335 (Ospreys) – will be commissioned on December 17 at

INS Hansa, Goa, in the presence of Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, a Navy spokesman said.

The occasion will mark a "pivotal moment" in the Navy's continued efforts towards modernisation and capability enhancement, he said.

The MH-60R helicopter has been fully integrated with fleet operations and has proven its worth on numerous occasions.

The Navy will receive a significant fillip in its integral aviation capabilities with the commissioning of the squadron, the official said. – PTI

ISRO lines up 7 launches by March 2026

LVM3 will soar into sky early next year carrying the first uncrewed mission of India's Gaganyaan project with a robot – 'Vyommित्रा' onboard the crew module

NEW DELHI, Dec 14: ISRO has lined up seven launch missions by March next year, including one to demonstrate home-built electric propulsion systems for satellite and quantum key distribution technologies, and the first uncrewed mission of the Gaganyaan project.

The first of the seven launches is expected to take place next week. India's heaviest rocket – LVM3 will place in orbit the Bluebird-6 communication satellite for US-based AST Spacemobile through a commercial agreement with ISRO's New Space India Ltd

(NSIL), Union Minister Jitendra Singh recently told Parliament.

The human-rated LVM3 will soar into the sky early next year carrying the first uncrewed mission of India's human spaceflight Gaganyaan with a robot – 'Vyommित्रा' onboard the crew module.

One more uncrewed mission is planned later next year before ISRO sends Indian astronauts into low earth orbit in 2027.

"First uncrewed mission of Gaganyaan to demonstrate end-to-end mission, including aerodynamics characterisation of human-

rated launch vehicle, mission operations of orbital module, re-entry and recovery of crew module," Singh said.

Next year will also see the launch of India's first industry-built Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) that will put in orbit Oceansat satellite. The PSLV will have two more passengers – Indo-Mauritius Joint Satellite and LEAP-2 satellite of Dhruva Space.

To increase commercial launches of satellites, NSIL had given a contract to a HAL-L&T consortium to manufacture five PSLV rockets, under a technology

transfer agreement signed in September this year.

An ISRO-built PSLV will put in orbit an earth observation satellite (EOS-N1) for a strategic user and 18 smaller satellites of Indian and international customers.

The GSLV-Mk II rocket is expected to launch the EOS-5 satellite or GISAT-1A, which will be a replacement for GISAT-1 which failed to reach the intended orbit in 2021.

The PSLV63 mission of ISRO will put in orbit the TDS-01 satellite to demonstrate technologies such as the high-thrust electric propulsion system, the quantum

key distribution, and indigenous travelling wave tube amplifier.

The high-thrust electric propulsion system will enable ISRO to launch all electric satellites in future. This technology will make satellites lighter and reduce the dependence of chemical fuels.

"The technologies and components, once proved in TDS-01, will be employed in navigation and communication missions in the near future," Singh said.

A four-tonne communication satellite carries more than two tonnes of liquid fuel, which is used to fire thrust-

ers to steer the satellite in space. But in case of electric propulsion, fuel requirement reduces to just 200 kg, an official said.

As fuel mass is reduced, the electric propulsion system-based satellite will not weigh more than two tonnes but will still have the power of a 4-tonne satellite.

The indigenous TWT (travelling wave tube amplifier) amplifier will enable self-reliance in critical technologies of satellite transponders.

The Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) will also launch a dedicated satellite before March 2026. – PTI

Raphinha scores 2 as Barcelona win to add pressure on Real Madrid

BARCELONA, Dec 14: Raphinha scored a brace as Barcelona beat Osasuna 2-0 to increase its La Liga lead and pile more pressure on beleaguered Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso.

The Brazil forward broke the deadlock with a shot from the top of the area in the 70th minute at Camp Nou. He then put the result beyond doubt by scoring from close range with six minutes remaining.

A seventh league win in a row left the defending champions seven points clear of Real Madrid before its game at Alaves on Sunday. That is likely a must-win game for Alonso after the powerhouse has won just two of its last eight games across all competitions.

Madrid had led Barcelona by five points in the Spanish league after winning a clasico match in late October. But a huge dip in form with just one win in five rounds, including a humiliating 2-0 defeat to Celta Vigo at home last weekend, has left Madrid reeling.

Relishing the trouble of Barcelona's top rival, the Camp Nou crowd chanted "Stay Xabi! Stay Xabi!" in Spanish at one point during the Os-



Barcelona's Raphinha and Lamine Yamal celebrate after a goal during the La Liga match against Osasuna in Barcelona. — AP/PTI

asuna match.

Raphinha, however, stayed focused on his team.

"We need to focus on ourselves and if we do our job then we won't have to worry about anyone else," Raphinha said. "We are playing better than before and the more points, the better."

Raphinha was key to Barcelona winning La Liga and Copa del Rey last season, when Hansi Flick's side also reached the Champions League semifinals.

Barcelona struggled to replace his speed and incisiveness when Raphinha was sidelined with a leg injury for six weeks earlier this campaign. But he has returned as strong as ever. He also assisted in a 3-1 victory over Alaves in late November and scored in a 3-1 win over Atletico Madrid earlier this month.

Sixteenth-placed Osasuna generated little in attack but its defence and goalkeeper Sergio Herrera frustrated Barcelona until Raphinha struck. Herrera saved a shot by Lamine Yamal while Marcus Rashford's goal-bound effort was blocked by a defender. — AP



Liverpool's Mohamed Salah (left) challenges for the ball with Brighton's Lewis Dunk during the English Premier League match in Liverpool. — AP/PTI

Salah returns to help Liverpool beat Brighton

Arsenal need 2 own-goals to see off Wolves

LIVERPOOL, Dec 14: The first stage of Mohamed Salah's rehabilitation at Liverpool is complete after the Egypt forward returned to the team for its 2-0 win over Brighton in the Premier League.

The question now as Salah heads off to the Africa Cup of Nations: Is there a future for him at Anfield when he comes back?

Salah, who let rip last weekend about his current frustrations at Liverpool, entered as a 26th-minute substitute to a big ovation and set up the second of Hugo Ekitike's goals as the defending champions jumped to sixth place and extended their unbeaten run to five games in all competitions.

"For me, there is no issue to resolve," Liverpool manager Arne Slot said of his star player's current situation at the club.

Arsenal are attempting to take Liverpool's title and opened up a five-point lead

by beating last-placed Wolverhampton 2-1 – but only thanks to two own-goals, the second of which came in stoppage time.

On a run of just one win in their previous three games, the leaders looked like dropping more points when Tolu Arokodare equalised for Wolves in the 90th minute, cancelling out an own-goal by goalkeeper Sam Johnstone in the 70th.

Then Yerson Mosquera headed into his own net from Bukayo Saka's cross to gift Arsenal the win.

Also on Saturday, Chelsea beat Everton 2-0 and was set on its way to victory by Cole Palmer's first goal in three months.

Rapturous welcome
Salah held talks with Liverpool manager Arne Slot on Friday in an effort to overcome their issues and the result was that Salah was recalled to the matchday squad for the Brighton game. He had been a substitute for the

last three Premier League matches before being left at home for the midweek Champions League trip to Inter Milan as a punishment for his explosive comments to reporters last weekend.

"It was an easy decision to put him in the squad," Slot said. "I have said many times before what has been said between us will stay between us."

Liverpool's fans demonstrated they are willing to excuse Salah for his show of anger and gave him a rapturous welcome when he came on as a substitute for the injured Joe Gomez midway through the first half.

By then, Liverpool was leading 1-0 thanks to Ekitike's rising shot inside the first minute and Salah showed glimpses of his class, especially on the counterattack. It was Salah's corner kick that was headed in by Ekitike for the second goal in the 60th, sparking another round of chants for the Egyptian. — AP

IMD SPORTS MEET

RMC Guwahati performs well

ANN SERVICE

AMINGAON, Dec 14: The 16th All India Meteorological Department sports meet was organised at Gachibowli Stadium in Hyderabad from December 8 to December 11, witnessing wide participation from across the country.

Around 500 participants from six Regional Meteorological Centres of the IMD namely Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Nagpur, Kolkata and Guwahati took part in the four-day event. Various indoor and outdoor sports competitions were organised as part of the meet.

The RMC Guwahati team, consisting of 30 participants, competed in volleyball, cricket, badminton, carrom, table tennis and chess. The team put up a strong performance and secured the runners-up position in men's volleyball and ladies' carrom singles, bringing recognition and pride to the Guwahati centre.

Apart from sporting achievements, the Guwahati contingent also made its presence felt during the cultural evening organised as part of the programme. The team presented the iconic Assamese song *Mayabini* and paid a heartfelt tribute to Assam's popular singer Zubeen Garg. The performance evoked an emotional response and was warmly appreciated by participants from other regions.

JAGIROAD INTER-SCHOOL CRICKET

Sanskriti Vidyapeeth Morigaon lift title

CORRESPONDENT

JAGIROAD, Dec 14: Sanskriti Vidyapeeth Morigaon girls' cricket team emerged champions in the final of the First Inter-School Girls' Cricket Competition under Jagiroad co-district.

The final was played on Sunday at the Jagi HS School playground under Mayong Circle. Sanskriti Vidyapeeth defeated Jagiroad HS School by seven wickets to clinch the title.

Individual awards were also presented at the conclusion of the match. Karishmita

Pator of Oasis Academy was adjudged best bowler while Masuma Begum of Sanskriti Vidyapeeth was named player of the match. Minati Debnath of Dungabori HS School received the best batter award while Minati Biswas of Burgaon HS School was declared player of the tournament.

State minister Pijush Hazarika attended the closing ceremony as chief guest. Jagiroad co-district Commissioner Hridoy Kr Das and Circle Officer of Mayong Priyanka Gogoi were also present and distributed trophies and prizes to the winning teams and outstanding performers.

The competition was organised by the Mayong Revenue Circle under the leadership of Circle Officer Priyanka Gogoi. A total of 24 schools from the Jagiroad co-district participated in the tournament, which aimed at promoting girls' cricket and encouraging young talent at the school level.

Barhungkha Club lift football title

ANN SERVICE

TIHU, Dec 14: Barhungkha Club of Kokrajhar lifted the Padmaram Das Trophy after defeating Global FC of Gosaigaon 2-0 in the final of the Padmaram Das and Kanak Ch Kalita Memorial Prize Money Football Championship at Nityananda Mini Stadium on Sunday.

Rublal Basumatary and Birkhwado scored a goal each for Barhungkha Club in the 43rd and 75th minutes to seal the title. With the win, Barhungkha Club also pocketed the winner's prize money of Rs 30,000.

Despite the loss, Global FC players earned individual honours. Bipul Soren was adjudged the best player of the final, while Moikhom Brahma was named the best player of the tournament. The runners-up team, Global FC, received the Kanak Ch Kalita Trophy along with prize money of Rs 20,000.

The final match was formally inaugurated by senior Assam Cabinet Minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass in the presence of a large gathering of football enthusiasts. The prize distribution ceremony was attended by several sports personalities, including Dilip Mahanta, president of the tournament committee.

The championship was organised by Nityananda Anchalik Krira Santha and witnessed keen competition, drawing enthusiastic support from local football lovers throughout the tournament.

Messi arrives in Mumbai for day 2 of 'GOAT Tour'



Sachin Tendulkar with Lionel Messi during an event as part of the 'GOAT India Tour 2025' at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Sunday. — PTI

MUMBAI, Dec 14: Football icon Lionel Messi arrived in Mumbai around noon under "World Cup level" security measures on Sunday, marking the second day of his four-city 'GOAT India Tour 2025'.

The World Cup-winning Argentine captain is scheduled to head to the Taj Colaba for a brief rest before proceeding to the Cricket Club of India (Brabourne Stadium), where he will attend a Padel GOAT Club event, followed by a celebrity football match later in the evening.

Accompanied by Inter Miami team-mates Luis Suarez and Rodrigo de Paul, Messi is expected to arrive at the iconic Wankhede Stadium around 5 pm for the main event of the 'GOAT India Tour'.

Mumbai Police have put in place stringent security arrangements, including restrictions on carrying water bottles, metal objects and

coins inside the venues, while watchtowers have also been set up to monitor the crowd.

Expecting heavy crowd near the stadiums during Messi's visit, the city police force has deployed more than 2,000 personnel in and around both the venues.

"Considering the chaos that prevailed in Kolkata and the security breach, we have deployed World Cup-level security arrangements at Brabourne and Wankhede stadiums," a police official said.

Messi had arrived in India in the wee hours of Saturday, but the opening leg of the tour in Kolkata quickly descended into chaos later in the day due to poor crowd management and security lapses.

However, his evening programme in the Hyderabad leg stood in stark contrast to the mayhem in Kolkata, proceeding smoothly and concluding on a positive note. — PTI

India outplay Pakistan in U19 Asia Cup

Brief scores:
India U-19: 240 all out in 46.1 overs (Aaron George 85, Kanishk Chouhan 46; Mohammad Sayyam 3/67, Abdul Subhan 3/42).
Pakistan U-19: 150 all out in 41.2 overs (Huzaifa Ahsan 70; Kanishk Chouhan 3/33, Deepesh Devendran 3/16).

striking thrice in a sharp opening spell.

Captain Farhan Yousaf (23) and Huzaifa Ahsan attempted to steady the innings, but Chouhan's incisive off-spin broke the resistance. Ahsan top-scored for Pakistan with 70 off 83 balls, but lacked support at the other end.

Chouhan finished with 3 for 33, while Devendran returned with figures of 3 for 16 as India maintained a firm grip on the contest throughout to register a dominant win in the marquee Group A clash.

The players of the two teams did not shake hands with each other at the toss and after the match, continuing the 'no-handshake' protocol observed by the Indian men's team during the recently concluded Asia Cup 2025, where they refused to receive the winner's trophy from PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi. — PTI

George then held the innings together, finding the gaps consistently and adding stability through the middle phase. Chouhan's late flourish, which included three sixes, helped India cross the 230-run mark despite losing wickets regularly.

For Pakistan, Sayyam (3/67) and Abdul Subhan (3/42) were the standout bowlers, while Niqab Shafiq chipped in with two wickets.

Pakistan's chase faltered early as they slipped to 30 for four, with Devendran

Young players shine as PSG beat Metz to return to top of Ligue 1

PARIS, Dec 14: Defending champions Paris Saint-Germain returned to the top of Ligue 1 with a 3-2 win at last-placed Metz that highlighted the strength of its flourishing youth academy.

Teenage forward Ibrahim Mbaye, who in September was taking a high school diploma exam, set up two goals. After coming through the PSG academy he made his Ligue 1 debut at the age of 16 years, 6 months, 23 days last season, making him the youngest PSG player to start a league game.

After Portugal striker Goncalo Ramos put PSG ahead in the 31st minute, Mbaye set up 18-year-old Quentin Ndjantou – another

player who came through PSG's academy – with a cross from the left to make it 2-0 in 39th.

It was Ndjantou's first goal for the club.

"Is this a big moment for me? Yes, absolutely. It's my first goal, I'm very happy to have scored it," Ndjantou said. "I thank the coach for having faith in me today."

Metz midfielder Jessy Deminguet pulled one back just before halftime, before Mbaye's pass sent 20-year-old Desire Doue sprinting through on a counterattack from deep to score PSG's third, midway through the second half.

Georgia midfielder Georgiy Tsitaichvili scored

with a brilliant curling strike from the left past goalkeeper Matvei Safonov to make it 3-2 in the 81st and give Metz hope.

But PSG held on to move two points ahead of surprise front-runner Lens, which can reclaim the lead if it beats struggling Nice at home on Sunday.

In Sunday's other games, third-placed Marseille takes on Monaco and fourth-placed Lille is at lowly Auxerre.

Lala lands Brest in trouble
Brest defender Kenny Lala made two big mistakes during a 3-1 loss at fifth-placed Rennes.

Lala was at fault for the first two Rennes goals after Brest had taken an ear-

ly lead through striker Mama Balde.

Rennes replied with goals in quick succession from top scorer Esteban Lepaul and Jordan winger Mousa Al-Taamari.

They had Lala to thank.

On the first goal, the right back got the ball stuck in his feet and lost his balance, allowing Al-Taamari to break down the left and whip in a cross for Lepaul to slide the ball home in the 24th minute.

One minute later, Lala tried a first-time back pass on the halfway line and mistimed the waist-high ball completely, with Al-Taamari profiting to race clear and finish confidently. — AP

SU DO KU

	3			9	4	5		8
7	2		8			9		6
4			5		2			
5						1	3	
1		9				4		2
	6	2						7
			4		6			5
2		6			8		1	3
9		7	2	1			8	

Solution of last problem

Originating from Japan, 'su do ku' is a mind game and a puzzle that can be solved with proper reasoning and logic. Fill the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3 x 3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9 without repeating any.

4	9	3	1	10	7	5	2	11	12	6		
7	12	6	2	3	9	4	11	1	8	10	5	
1	0	5	12	11	6	9	7	10	2	3	4	
5	7	4	6	8	10	3	2	9	12	1	7	9
3	11	9	5	12	4	7	1	8	6	2	10	
8	1	10	11	2	3	5	12	6	9	4	7	
2	6	12	9	7	1	11	10	4	5	6	3	
10	4	8	3	9	2	12	5	7	1	11		
10	4	8	3	9	2	12	5	7	1	11		
12	5	7	4	6	11	1	8	3	10	9	2	
9	2	1	7	5	8	10	4	11	3	6	12	
6	3	11	10	1	12	2	9	7	4	5	8	



“Is this a big moment for me? Yes, absolutely. It's my first goal, I'm very happy to have scored it

Quentin Ndjantou

Desire Doue of PSG celebrates his goal during the Ligue 1 match against Metz at the Stade Saint-Symphorien in Metz, France.

THIRD T20 INTERNATIONAL

India beat SA by 7 wickets to take 2-1 lead in 5-match series

DHARAMSALA, Dec 14: A clinical show by the pacers helped India beat South Africa by seven wickets in the third T20 International to take a 2-1 lead in the five-match series here on Sunday.

After the pacers produced a mesmerizing spell of swing bowling to bundle out South Africa for a below-par 117, the Indian batters chased down the target with 25 balls to spare.

Openers Abhishek Sharma and Shubman Gill contributed

35 and 28 respectively, while one down Tilak Varma made 26 not out as India reached 120 for 3 in 15.5 overs.

Earlier, the pacers produced a splendid spell of swing bowling as India bundled out the Proteas to a below-par 117.

Leading India's show with early wickets were Arshdeep Singh (2/13), Harshit Rana (2/34) and Hardik Pandya (1/23) after the hosts chose to bowl.

Skipper Aiden Markram

offered the lone spark for South Africa with a spirited 46-ball 61.

Undoubtedly, the brightest stars under a cool sky were India's quick bowlers, who procured lethal swing and lateral movement with the new ball.

It had its effect on the low-key power play effort of South Africa - 25 for three - and the phase contained just two fours.

Arshdeep, who had a hor-



Arshdeep Singh celebrates after taking the wicket of South Africa's Reeza Hendricks (front right) during the third T20 International at the HPCA Stadium in Dharamsala on Sunday. - PTI

Brief scores:
South Africa 117 all out in 20 overs (Aiden Markram 61; Arshdeep Singh 2/13, Harshit Rana 2/34, Hardik Pandya 1/23, Varun Chakravarthy 2/11, Shivam Dube 1/21).
India 120 for 3 in 15.5 overs (Abhishek Sharma 35, Shubman Gill 28, Tilak Varma 26 not out; Corbin Bosch 1/18).

ror outing at Mullanpur a couple of days back, redeemed himself with a dream first

spell (3-0-9-1).

He bowled three deliveries angled away from Reeza Hendricks and then jagged one back to trap the South African opener leg before with the help of DRS.

Rana did precisely the same to Quinton de Kock, a nip-backer, trapping the frozen-legged left-hander inside the crease.

Dewald Brevis was slightly unfortunate to get castled while attempting a release

shot off a wide delivery from Rana.

South Africa suddenly found themselves at 7 for 3 in 3.1 overs, and it was always going to be an uphill climb for them from there.

Markram crunched a couple of sweet drives in between to keep the board moving but Tristan Stubbs and Corbin Bosch departed in quick succession to further derail the South African innings. - PTI

ODISHA MASTERS

Unnati Hooda, Kiran George clinch singles titles

CUTTACK, Dec 14: Top seed Unnati Hooda and Kiran George delivered commanding performances to clinch the women's and men's singles titles respectively in the Odisha Masters Super 100 tournament here on Sunday.

Hooda was a picture of composure as she defeated compatriot Isharani Baruah 21-17, 21-10 in just over half an hour.

The 18-year-old controlled the rallies from the outset, denying Baruah the momentum that had powered her impressive run in the BWF World Tour event.

Despite the loss, Baruah capped a memorable week with a well-earned silver medal after a series of stand-out performances at the Jawahar Nehru Stadium.

The men's singles final witnessed a gripping contest with second seed George prevailing over Indonesia's Muhamad Yusuf 21-14, 13-21, 21-16 in a hard-fought battle that lasted 65 minutes.

George took the opening game before Yusuf fought back to level the match. Show-

Hooda was a picture of composure as she defeated compatriot Isharani Baruah 21-17, 21-10 in just over half an hour.

ing resilience and tactical clarity, George closed out the decider to secure the title.

Indonesia enjoyed success in the mixed doubles, where Marwan Faza and Aisyah Pratana defeated compatriots Dejan Ferdinansyah and Bernadine Wardana 21-15, 21-10.

In women's doubles, Bulgaria's top seeds Gabriela and Stefani Stoeva overcame Malaysia's Ong Xin Yee and Carmen Ting 21-19, 21-14.

The men's doubles crown went to Indonesia's Ali Faathir Rayhan and Devin Artha Wahyudi, who rallied past Malaysia's Khang Khai Xing and Aaron Tai 15-21, 21-12, 21-16. - PTI

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HORIZON

MONDAY,
DECEMBER 15, 2025

Bollywood's South India problem

Bollywood is once again facing criticism for its shallow, repetitive and inaccurate portrayals of South Indian cultures across states.

PRATIKSHA BHATTACHARYYA. pratikshabhattacharyya7944@gmail.com

Bollywood is facing renewed criticism for its long-standing habit of stereotyping South Indians, as viewers across Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh express frustration over shallow, repetitive portrayals. The debate has

intensified after several recent films, including *Param Sundari* (2025), *Chennai Express* (2013) and *Meenakshi Sundareshwar* (2021), once again reduced South Indian identity to a handful of clichés that lack cultural accuracy, emotional depth and linguistic authenticity. For decades,

Hindi cinema has relied on the same set of visual symbols to represent the South: women adorned with jasmine flowers, men wearing white *dhonis* in every scene, homes filled with brass lamps, people speaking in exaggerated accents, and cultural markers such as Vallam Kali boat races, Katha-

kali masks and classical dances like Mohiniyattam or Bharatanatyam used mainly for decoration. While these elements exist in real life, the repeated and careless use of such symbols makes it apparent that Bollywood is more interested in caricature rather than lived reality.

Param Sundari: burden of caricature



The controversy around *Param Sundari* is one of the strongest examples. The lead character appears with heavy gold jewellery, jasmine-filled hair and a noticeably broken accent — a combination critics say is used in Bollywood as a shortcut for “South Indian woman”. The choreography, loosely inspired by Mohiniyattam, was criticised for lacking the grace, depth, technique and storytelling that defines

Kerala's classical dance traditions. The Malayalam lines included in the sequence were described by Malayali viewers as broken and incorrectly pronounced, creating the impression that cultural accuracy was not a priority.

Janhvi Kapoor's character in *Param Sundari* delivers a powerful outburst listing the diversity of South India — “Kerala — Malayalam, Mohanlal; Tamil Nadu — Tamil, Rajinikanth; Andhra — Telugu, Allu Arjun; Karnataka — Kannada, Yash!” — and then calls out North Indians for reducing every South Indian identity to just “Madras”. The irony is sharp: while her dialogue criticises North Indian ignorance, Bollywood itself has repeatedly reinforced the same stereotypes. The same industry that now tries to “correct” the narrative has for decades mocked South Indians with broken accents, coconut-climbing jokes, exaggerated mannerisms, and caricatured clothing like wearing a saree while climbing a tree for no reason. The scene therefore unintentionally exposes Bollywood's own complicity in creating these clichés. Far from being the simplistic images the Hindi film industry once promoted, South Indians represent one of the most linguistically, culturally, and intellectually diverse regions of India, and the dialogue highlights how Bollywood's earlier stereotypes have never matched this reality. Many expressed that the misrepresentation felt disrespectful, especially in a film that had the resources to conduct proper research.



Chennai Express: humour that didn't age well

A similar pattern appears in *Chennai Express*, where Meena's heavily broken Tamil and exaggerated behaviour is used for comedic effect. While the film was commercially successful, many Tamilians felt the humour relied on mocking their language rather than celebrating it. The broken Tamil spoken by Meena's character in the film is still remembered as an example of Bollywood's tendency to treat South Indian languages as props. Viewers have argued that the joke repeatedly falls on Tamil identity itself, reinforcing stereotypes that have persisted for decades.

Meenakshi Sundareshwar: modern misrepresentation

Meenakshi Sundareshwar, despite its modern setting, also attracted criticism for mispronounced and forced Tamil words, blowing a *shankh* before marriage inserts a North-Indian ritual into a Tamil Brahmin wedding, showing a lack of basic cultural research, and a storyline that felt completely disconnected from real Tamil social life. Audiences pointed out that the film's representation felt like a “Bollywood version of Tamil culture”, shaped more by imagination than genuine understanding. The backlash highlighted how even newer films, which aim to be progressive, fall into the trap of oversimplifying South Indian identities.

Kerala: beyond the tourist brochure

Kerala's portrayal suffers similar issues. Bollywood often shows the state through predictable images—Vallam Kali boat races, lush backwaters, Kathakali and endless jasmine flowers—while ignoring the state's modernity, literature, cinema and everyday life. Malayalis argue that their identity is flattened into a tourist catalogue, and their emotions, humour, dialects and complexities rarely make it to Hindi screens.

As South Indian cinema continues to dominate national audiences with its authenticity and strong storytelling, many believe Bollywood must evolve. Viewers across India are calling for research-based, respectful and realistic representation — one that acknowledges the depth, diversity and everyday reality of South Indian life, rather than repeating stereotypes that no longer reflect the world.

Ancient healing finds a modern voice

An age-old Himalayan medical tradition steps into modern India with new institutes, research, and global relevance.

Mamata Mishra,
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High on the windswept plateaus of Ladakh, where the Himalayas touch the sky, an ancient science of healing continues to thrive. Known as Sowa Rigpa — literally “the science of healing” — this traditional system of medicine has quietly served communities for over 2,500 years. Once confined to Himalayan villages and monasteries, it is today gaining recognition as a global wellness tradition and India's sixth official medical system under AYUSH.

Popularly called Amchi medicine, Sowa Rigpa blends philosophy, spirituality, and science. Its roots trace back to Buddhist texts and centuries of Himalayan practice. It is still widely used in Tibet, Bhutan, Mongolia, Nepal, and across India's northern belt.

Healing through balance

At the heart of Sowa Rigpa lies a simple but profound idea: health is balance. The body, it teaches, is governed by three humors—air (*rlung*), bile (*mkrispa*), and phlegm (*padkan*). Together, they shape the body's seven constituents: blood, muscle, fat, bone, marrow, reproductive fluids, and nutritional essence — along with the three excretions.

A shift in this delicate balance, triggered by food, lifestyle, or environment, leads to disease. Healing means restoring harmony, not merely prescribing medicine. “Health in Sowa Rigpa is not just the absence of illness, but a state of inner balance,” explains Dr Padma Gurmet, Director of the National Institute of Sowa Rigpa (NISR) in Leh. **Amchi's art**

Unlike modern medicine's reliance on machines, the Amchi depends on keen observation and touch. Tongue and urine are examined for subtle changes. But the crown jewel of diagnosis is the pulse: by placing three fingers on the wrist, an experienced Amchi can sense dozens of conditions. Questions about lifestyle, emotions, and family history add depth to this intimate form of diagnosis.

Cupping, blood-letting and beyond

Treatment in Sowa Rigpa follows

a four-step ladder: diet, behaviour, medicine, and external therapies.

Dietary corrections and lifestyle adjustments come first, often supported by herbal formulations. For stubborn or chronic conditions, external therapies are used. These include massage, fomentation, moxibustion (burning herbs on specific points), and minor surgical methods.

Among the most distinctive practices are copper cupping and blood-letting. In cupping, heated copper cups are placed on the skin to draw stagnant blood, relieve pain, and improve circulation. Blood-letting involves the controlled removal of impure blood to clear toxins and reduce excess heat in the body. Despite their ancient origins, these methods are still applied effectively today, especially for arthritis, skin ailments, and chronic pain.

Rituals and mantras often accompany treatment — reminders that compassion and spirituality remain inseparable from healing.

From monasteries to modern institutes

For centuries, Sowa Rigpa was passed down orally or taught in monasteries, with Amchis serving remote Himalayan communities. Its formal journey began in 2010, when India recognised it under the Indian Medicine Central Council Act. A landmark followed in 2019 with the establishment of the National Institute of Sowa Rigpa in Leh, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Now functioning as an autonomous body under AYUSH, NISR is India's apex hub for education, research, and patient care. Undergraduate courses are offered through NEET, and the institute's first batch of students is due to graduate soon — trained Amchis for a modern age.

Bridging ancient wisdom and science

NISR's work reflects the system's evolution. The institute digitises centuries-old manuscripts, cultivates endangered Himalayan herbs, and validates formulations through clinical research. A 40-crore expansion project is underway, with new hospitals, academic blocks, and hostels in Leh. Similar facilities are planned in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim.

“We want to integrate this Himalayan wisdom with modern science so it benefits people not just here, but across India and the world,” says Dr. Gurmet.

A global healing tradition

Though Ladakh is its stronghold, Sowa Rigpa has always been transnational. It is practised in Tibet, Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal, and even parts of Russia and China. In India, it remains vibrant in Ladakh, Lahaul-Spiti, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Darjeeling.

Globally, interest in traditional medicine and wellness is booming. Scholars pore over its manuscripts, researchers analyse its pharmacology, and wellness seekers embrace its holistic lifestyle.

As the world grapples with stress, lifestyle diseases, and ecological disruption, Sowa Rigpa offers not only remedies but a worldview. By teaching that health depends on harmony between body, mind, and environment, it proposes a model of sustainable living with modern relevance.

The tennis revolution

Far from the academies of Mumbai or the spotlight of national circuits, a grassroots tennis movement is gaining momentum.

Sandeep Bhardwaj

On a humid December morning in this oil town of Digboi nestled amid Assam's tea plantations, the clay courts of the Zaloni Club came alive with the sharp thwack of balls and the focused footsteps of children as young as 9.

The occasion was the 47th OIL All Assam Junior Tennis Championship, held on 6th December. For nearly five decades, this event, organised under the All Assam Tennis Association, has served as a proving ground for the state's aspiring players, drawing entrants from Guwahati, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and smaller towns across the region.

Discipline in an age of distraction

In a country where cricket dominates and screens compete for every child's attention, these young athletes stand out for their commitment. A 10-year-old executes drills with mechanical precision; and teenagers approach the baseline with the calm of veterans.

They wake before dawn for practice, juggle school assignments with training sessions and forgo the easy pull of video games.

The parents who make it possible
Behind every promising stroke lies



a network of parental devotion. Families drive hours through rural roads, take unpaid leave from jobs and stretch budgets to cover coaching and travel. Some manage schedules for multiple children; others skip festivals to sit court-side through sun and rain.

One parent shared: “Tennis teaches my child more about life than any classroom ever could.” The maturity evident in these players — their humility in victory, grace in defeat — bears out that claim.

Coaching elevates the game

Assam's tennis infrastructure has improved markedly in the past decade, with certified coaches emphasising not

just technique but fitness, strategy and mental resilience. The shift shows: these juniors play with composure, analysing opponents and adapting mid-match.

Technical skill wins points, but mental toughness defines futures. Time and again at Zaloni, physically dominant players crumbled under pressure, while those with steadier nerves prevailed. In the solitary arena of tennis, a child who steadies herself at 5-5 in a third set learns a lesson applicable far beyond the baseline.

Lessons that last a lifetime

Junior tournaments like this one forge character. The sport demands discipline (no excuses for missed prac-

tice), accountability (no teammates to share blame), patience (points must be constructed) and courage (pressure is constant).

The ingredients are there: eager talent, dedicated families, improving coaching. What Assam's tennis needs next is investment — better-maintained courts, professional academies, sports science support, mental training and more opportunities for national exposure.

(The author served as the Chief Referee at the 47th OAAJTC 2025, held at the prestigious Zaloni Club, Duliajan from 6th Dec-10th Dec). The views expressed here are personal reflections based on observations during the event.)



Trust your gut



Every year during Bihu, my mother made a special *til pitha*. She had her own instinctive notion of the ratio of the ingredients. No calculator, no recipe card, just a quiet certainty in her hands. One year, I remember, a relative known for her culinary skills suggested she weigh the rice flour for “consistency.” *Ma* smiled politely, kept doing it by instinct, and those *til pithas* were—as always—perfect. The relative’s “measured” batch tasted like cardboard. The body knew. The scale didn’t.

That same body-knowledge saved my uncle’s life sometime in the winter months of 2019. He was driving from Jorhat to Kaziranga with my brother when, ten kilometres before the park gate, he suddenly felt a sudden heaviness in his chest—not pain, just wrongness. No reason: the road was clear, the car was fine, it was a bright April morning. Yet he turned the car around and went straight to GNRC in Guwahati. The doctor said he’d had a silent heart attack an hour earlier. One more hour on that highway and he wouldn’t have made it. Doctors still call it “patient intuition.” We call it the same thing our ancestors felt when they decided not to cross the river that day.

We like to pretend we’ve evolved past all that. We have iPhones, oat-milk lattes, and LinkedIn profiles that read like TED talks. Yet the firmware is still Pleistocene. The same neural wiring that once screamed “RUN!” when a bush rustled still whispers “don’t date him” when a guy’s dating profile has seventeen shirtless gym selfies and the word “entrepreneur” but no visible business. We just dress the instinct up in modern language: “red flags,” “vibes,” “something feels off.” Same smoke alarm, new ringtone.

Take relationships. We’re all raised on the same Assamese gospel: “adjust *koribo lagibo*.” So when the groom your parents dug up on assamesem matrimony.com shows up from Dibrugarh, quoting Xattriya values one minute and startup jargon the next, flashing a smile brighter than a Pan Bazaar LED hoarding, everything looks perfect on paper. But every time he opens his mouth your stomach knots itself tighter than a new *jaapi*. That’s not the duck curry repeating on you. That’s your body keeping score. It notices, long before your brain catches up, that he talks over you, checks his phone when you speak, and laughs a half-beat too late at your jokes. It’s the same quiet alarm that once told our grandmothers something was off when the neighbour suddenly started visiting too often during Bihu. Ignore it today and three years later you’ll be sitting in the Guwahati family court, wondering why that cold feeling in your chest had nothing to do with the December mist rolling in from the Brahmaputra.

“Adjusting” is a virtue, yes. But your gut didn’t get the memo that politeness now outranks survival. It still thinks betrayal is a matter of life and death, because for most of human history it was. Listen to it. It’s trying to save you from a lifetime of forced smiles over Sunday lunch.

Friendships are sneakier. We’re social creatures; exclusion once meant death by leopard. So, we’ll tolerate flakiness, subtle put-downs, chronic one-sidedness just to stay in the tribe. But that quiet unease when someone never asks how you are? When plans are only made on their terms? That’s your inner hunter-gatherer noticing the friendship is actually a tax you keep paying with no return. Real friends feel like sitting around the campfire. Energy vampires feel like you’re firewood.

Here’s the part nobody wants to hear: your gut is often smarter than your résumé, your therapist, and your group chat combined. It’s had sixty thousand generations of beta testing. It doesn’t get distracted by charm, status, or a good PowerPoint. It runs on pattern recognition faster than consciousness. The trick is learning to distinguish between actual instinct and fear dressed up as instinct. (Fear chatters. Instinct is usually quiet, physical, and annoyingly certain.)

I’ve developed a simple test. When the little voice pipes up, I ask: “If this person were a stranger on the prehistoric plains tomorrow, would I share my mammoth meat with them?” It’s shocking how quickly that clarifies things. We can’t go back to living in caves (although rent prices are making it tempting), but we can stop treating our instincts like embarrassing relatives we hide in the basement. So next time your gut flips during a handshake, a first date, try something radical: listen. Thank it for sixty thousand years of unpaid overtime. Then do what it says.

Faith

Faith is power.
A power like no other.
It will guide your way out through storms,
It will put you to tests, which you overcome too.
No matter how deep the darkness is,
It will be the light you’ll hold on to.
No matter how hard your hurdles are,
No matter how broken you may be,
It will keep you going.

Faith is the glazing fire of victory,
It is the warmth comforting you
It shall guide and lead you,
And make your way through the maze.

Faith is ‘the true power’,
It is rock solid and is impossible to defeat.

Shaheen Akhtar,
Guwahati.

In the Aftermath of Children’s Day

The day after the noise dies down,
soft steps fill the quiet room.
A child waits — not loud, not racing —
just hoping for a little room.
No need to be the fastest flame,
or shout the loudest from the crowd.
Some lights burn quiet, steady, sure,
in moments gentle, still, and proud.
They hold their own small universe,
not measured by a race or score.
A whisper, a smile, a hand held close —
these matter, always, evermore.
The world may rush and push for more,
but every heart deserves its space.
To grow in silence, in their time,
and feel the kindness of a warm embrace.
So here’s to every hidden spark,
each fragile hope, each quiet day.
Love them not just once a year —
but hold their light along the way.

David Haloi,
Guwahati

FEELINGS

The River Flows

The river is now calm
With a thin blanket of fog
Crossing the turbulence of youth and attaining emancipation

The river flows
From the snow-capped mountains to the vastness of the sea
They touch the happiness and sorrow of the valley along the way

The cows and goats come to the river bank
Far away from madding crowd
No violence and hatred they have
Looking for riparian grasses
They ask each other:
Where does the river always flow?
Does the river water return?
As we go back to the fold?

The grasses grow on the banks
The cows and goats return to the barn
And the river flows calmly.

Benjamin Kaman,
Dudhnoi



An Untold Autumn in the dusk

An ineffable yearning, smouldering
In the hearth of an Orphaned solitude...
A Redolence of an Azure dawn...
Wafting from the horizon....
But as if destiny cursed the Spring....
A Painful of Moonlight mossed
With the Dents of time...
Gingerly descend on a lonely Rock...
A Sombre-tinged Autumn,
Coffins its fragrance
In the shadow of the dry leaves jewelled
With the sun-illuminated dew beads...
On a starry night, the fireflies silently
Wandering here and there....
As if craving for something...
As if trying to exhume the grave of
An untold Autumn in the dusk...

Devajit Mahanta,
Via email

A Showpiece?

Isn’t it strange,
The books we once bought, beheld,
Excited to know what they held.
Flipping through the pages,
Thrilled to know the plot.

Isn’t it strange,
How life dwells on
Each and every page?
It’s definitely strange
How we could feel
Each and every stage.

It really amazes
How those books, that once were
A part of a phase,
Are now nothing more
Than wistful memories,
Being kept as a showpiece.

Jafrin Yasmin,
Via email

SCIENCE ZONE

Studies link harsh or negative parenting — marked by low warmth, high control, or indifference — to higher rates of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and poor emotional regulation in children and adolescents.

Strict upbringing

They say childhood shapes more than just memories — it can shape your very genes. A recent Belgian study suggests that children who grow up under harsh, authoritarian parenting may carry a higher risk of depression — not just psychologically, but biologically.

In the study by researchers at the University of Leuven, 44 adolescents (aged 12-16) were split into two groups: 21 who described their upbringing as supportive — with autonomy and warmth — and 23 who described it as harsh, marked by physical punishment, psychological manipulation, or excessive control.

The scientists measured “DNA methylation” across more than 450,000 sites in each child’s genome. Methylation is a biological process where small chemical groups attach to DNA, changing how genes are read — without altering the underlying genetic code. Importantly, higher variability in methylation is known to be associated with increased risk of depression.

They found that those who experienced harsh parenting showed significantly greater methylation variation, compared with their peers raised in supportive homes. Many in the “harsh parenting” group also displayed early — though not yet



clinical — signs of depression.

In other words, the effects of a strict or punitive upbringing may go beyond emotional scars — potentially altering the biological reading of genes in a way that predisposes children to depression. As lead researcher Dr Evelien Van Assche put it, harsh parenting could “hard-wire” an increased depression risk into a child’s DNA.

This may help explain findings from psychological research over decades. Studies link harsh or negative parenting — marked by low warmth, high control, or

indifference — to higher rates of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and poor emotional regulation in children and adolescents.

By contrast, children raised in nurturing “care + autonomy” environments — where parents combine warmth with reasonable boundaries — consistently show better mental health outcomes.

That said, the Belgian study was small, and not yet peer-reviewed. Researchers themselves caution that larger studies are needed to confirm whether changes in methylation directly lead to clinical depression

later in life.

Still, if these findings hold, they add biological weight to what child-development experts have long warned: that too much rigidity, harshness, or control can damage more than just childhood — it can shape lifelong vulnerability.

In the end, the take-away seems clear: discipline may be necessary, but kindness, empathy, freedom and respect may not just nurture happier children — they may help safeguard their very mental well-being.

— Agencies

When the Black Death Plague broke out in Europe, a strange bright object like a star (possibly a comet) was seen in the sky in 1348. People believed that this star brought bad omen to the people hence the pandemic broke out. Thus, they called it ‘dis-aster’ meaning ‘bad star’ in Latin. That is how we got the English word “disaster” meaning calamity or catastrophe.

The Black Death is estimated to have killed between 25 to 50 million people in Europe during the 14th century, potentially decimating up to 50 per cent of the population. (Information sent by Biswajeet Pujari, Golaghat)

Meanwhile, keep writing to us with quiz reports, questions (with answers and full postal address) and interesting bits of information to: Quizzone, Horizon, C/o The Assam Tribune, Maniram Dewan Road, Guwahati. SMS or WhatsApp me at: 98640-26322 and e-mail at: tosailen@gmail.com or quizzonesailen@gmail.com. To read Quiz Zone online, you can log on to <http://epaper.assamtribune.com>.

MASTER’S CHOICE

1. What was the name of the first edition of the world’s first Sunday Newspaper that was published in 1791?
2. What is the name of the AI actress who was revealed earlier this year (2025) that prompted heavy backlash from the acting community?
3. Which American President was the first American to be awarded a Nobel Prize when he was awarded the Peace prize in 1906?
4. Which 90s rock band reunited in 2025 for a tour and held their first performance since 2009?
5. Which heavy metal band became the first to perform live in each of the seven continents when they performed in Antarctica in December 2013?
6. Which central park in Moscow is named after a writer who was nominated five times for the Nobel Prize in Literature?
7. In 1901, which Italian inventor was the first to transmit a radio signal across the Atlantic between Cornwall and Newfoundland?
8. Ruling from 1644 to 1912, what was the name of the last imperial dynasty of China?

QUIZ ZONE

Sailen Baishya

19. PICTURE CLUE: He won the 2025 Formula 1 World Championship after finishing third in the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Identify him. (From the Quizmaster)



ANSWERS

1. The Observer, 2. Tilly Norwood, 3. Theodore Roosevelt, 4. Oasis, 5. Metallica, 6. Gorky Park (Named after Maxim Gorky), 7. Guglielmo Marconi, 8. Qing dynasty (It was preceded by the Ming dynasty), 9. UK (Not published in US until February 1885), 10. Bosman ruling, 11. Indigo, 12. Robert Louis Stevenson, 13. Ditwah, 14. Soviet Russia, 15. Jharkhand, 16. Alfa Romeo, an Italian brand, 17. Cooperative societies,

9. Mark Twain’s novel Adventures of Huckleberry Finn was first published in December 1884 in which country?

10. In 1995, the European Court of Justice ruled that footballers in the European Union are free to transfer from one UEFA Federation to another at the end of their contracts. What is the ruling known as?

READERS’ CHOICE

11. The Champaran Satyagraha (1917) was Mahatma Gandhi’s first major *satyagraha* in India. It was a peasant revolt in Bihar against the oppressive ‘Teen Kathia’ system where farmers were forced to grow a specific plant. Which plant am I talking about? (Rubul Kalita, Nalbari)

12. Which famous novelist who died in December 1894 wrote *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*? (Biswajit Doley, Nagaon)

13. What is the name of the cyclonic storm affecting the Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coast in late November 2025? (Chayanika Rabha, Goalpara)

14. In 1917, Finland declared its independence from which country? (Tapan Singha, Lumding)

15. Which state has been directed by the Supreme Court to declare the Saranda Forest as a wildlife sanctuary? (Sneha Goswami, Tezpur)

16. Which car manufacturer’s badge features a cross and a snake? (Md Iftikar Hussain, Rangia)

17. The 97th Amendment to the Indian Constitution granted constitutional status to what kind of entities? (Adish Agarwalla, Moranhat)

18. Who received the inaugural FIFA Peace Prize during the 2026 World Cup draw ceremony held in Washington, D.C.? (Bidyut Das, Guwahati)

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

20. Which country has become the first country globally to impose a generational ban on tobacco and vaping, making a historic step towards a smoke-free future. The law effective from November 1, 2025, prohibits anyone born after January 1, 2007, including tourists, from purchasing or using tobacco products? (Nayan Jyoti Neog, Lakshmi Nath Bezbaruah Road, Hatigaon, Guwahati)

THE ODD WORLD

Wandering goat

A wandering goat with a talent for garden invasions has prompted an unusual council warning in Herefordshire.



Residents of a quiet cul-de-sac in Herefordshire have been instructed to report sightings of a “serial snacker” goat after the council ruled that the animal’s daily food raids constitute a public nuisance.

The goat—affectionately, if exasperatedly, known as Inspector Nibble—belongs to a smallholder on the edge of Bromyard. For months, Inspector Nibble has been squeezing through hedges, trotting into gardens, and helping himself to whatever greenery he fancies. Victims have reported everything from decimated rose bushes to vanishing laundry, with one resident claiming the goat “ate half a T-shirt before I could chase him off”.

After receiving nine complaints in three weeks, Herefordshire Council issued a formal warning requiring the owner, Ellie Carmichael, to secure the goat “to prevent repeat incursions”. Carmichael calls the ruling “over the top”, insisting Inspector Nibble is “just curious” and “means no harm”.

But neighbours say they’ve run out of patience—and plants. “It’s like living next to a four-legged burglar,” said one. Another reported waking to find the goat perched on her picnic table “chewing triumphantly”.

Council officers confirmed they will monitor the situation and may escalate to enforcement action if the rogue goat continues his escapades.

— Agencies

TECH TRENDS

Devol Nath, devolnath@hotmail.com

Turning windows into solar panels



Sometimes innovation doesn’t announce itself with grand gestures, case in point: a new generation of transparent solar panels that can turn ordinary windows into clean-energy generators.

Researchers and startups have long chased the idea of solar glass, but recent breakthroughs in organic photovoltaic materials are pushing the concept from the lab toward real-world usability. Unlike traditional solar panels, which rely on bulky silicon cells, these transparent variants use light-absorbing dyes and ultrathin conductors that capture only ultraviolet and infrared wavelengths. The result: glass that looks almost ordinary but can generate electricity throughout the day.

The technology is still evolving. Efficiency remains modest compared to rooftop panels, and lifespan is a challenge — organic materials degrade faster in sunlight. But engineers have been making rapid progress. One team recently demonstrated window-sized panels capable of powering LED lighting and small appliances, while architectural firms are exploring ways to integrate solar glass into new office buildings to reduce energy loads.

The appeal goes beyond sustainability. Because the panels remain transparent, they don’t alter a building’s aesthetic or block natural light — an issue that has slowed adoption of other renewable technologies. They can also be retrofitted onto existing windows, offering an alternative for cities where rooftop space is scarce or overshadowed.

For now, transparent solar panels are more proof-of-concept than mass-market staple. But the trajectory is clear: as materials improve and manufacturing scales up, your future office or apartment may quietly harvest energy every time sunlight streams through the windows. It’s an elegant reminder that sometimes, the next big leap in tech is hiding in plain sight.

— Agencies



The dirt we live with

Our surroundings reflect our civic sense and the unchecked neglect of cleanliness exposes a deeper societal lapse.

Ronjoy Bordoloi

The walls of my office were freshly painted a warm, light pink, creating a vibrant ambience that lifted everyone’s spirits. But that joy was short-lived. The very next day, red and black stains — victims of careless spitting — marred the pristine surface. The mess extended beyond walls, contaminating floors, staircases, windows, doors, even electrical equipment, sometimes on top of “Don’t Spit” signboards.

This instance mirrors a larger societal problem. Our drains, streets, sanitation houses, and public spaces are daily reminders of neglect—neglect not only by the so-called lower classes but also by middle and higher classes. Too often, we blame others while remaining complicit in the dirt around us.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping civic habits. In both urban and rural areas, sanitation conditions remain poor despite government initiatives. Even schools and colleges often lack basic cleanliness—no running water, unattended restrooms, and uncollected waste. How can we teach children the value of hygiene when their daily environments fail to reflect it?

Clean habits begin at home. Children observe and imitate adults, who in turn mirror patterns set by previous generations. Our actions — or inactions — set precedents. Unless we actively demonstrate responsibility, unclean habits persist, becoming social norms that perpetuate neglect.

Change must start within individuals. Dirt is both a mental and physical hazard. By cultivating conscious habits, we can transform our environments and set positive examples for future generations. Every citizen has a role to play — refraining from spitting, disposing of waste properly, and keeping surroundings tidy are not just individual duties, but

civilisational ones.

Government action is essential too. Effective waste management, recruitment of more cleanliness personnel, enforcement of rules, and regular public cleanliness drives are necessary. Corruption and negligence must be addressed. Public amenities — spittoons, dustbins, and hygienic lavatories — need proper provision and maintenance. Technological and innovative solutions

In both urban and rural areas, sanitation conditions remain poor despite government initiatives. Even schools and colleges often lack basic cleanliness—no running water, unattended restrooms, and uncollected waste. How can we teach children the value of hygiene when their daily environments fail to reflect it?

can further support these efforts.

Ultimately, cleanliness is next only to godliness. Treating dirt as a disease — affecting both our external surroundings and inner well-being — is crucial. A cleaner, healthier environment is not just a matter of policy; it is a reflection of our collective mindset and moral responsibility.

By changing our habits, leading by example, and holding both ourselves and authorities accountable, we can create a culture where cleanliness is valued and sustained. The responsibility lies with each of us, regardless of background or circumstance. Only then can we hope to build a society that thrives in purity and civic consciousness.

MIND YOUR ENGLISH

Protim Sharma, protim.sharma@gmail.com

Rage Bait and more...

This year’s chosen words say more about our digital lives than we realise.

“You know, this time of the year is the time for Words of the Year!”
“Words of the Year?”
“Yes, towards the end of each year, especially in the month of December, several reputed dictionaries like Oxford English Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary, Collins Dictionary, etc., announce their Words of the Year.”
“Okay. What is the Oxford Word of the Year for 2025?”

“It is ‘rage bait’.”

“Did you say ‘rage’ and ‘bait’?”

“I said ‘rage bait’. This is used for online content deliberately designed to elicit anger or outrage by being frustrating, provocative or offensive — often with an aim to increase traffic to a particular website or social media account.”

“You mean, the more one feels angry with a content the more they are likely to engage with it?”

“Yes, you have got it right! Such engagement is driven by the ‘irrational anger’ you feel while scrolling through such content.”

“Interesting. It is like hijacking and influencing our emotions and how we respond.”

“Right. It is similar to its internet cousin ‘clickbait’, where a heading or a link is used to lure one to view a particular webpage. According to the president of Oxford Languages, Casper Grathwohl, the fact that the word ‘rage bait’ exists and has seen a dramatic surge in usage means we’re increasingly aware of the manipulation tactics we can



be drawn into online...”

“Hmm... By the way, isn’t ‘rage bait’ two words?”

“Yes it is, but a Word of the Year doesn’t have to be a singular word. The experts at Oxford consider expressions as a single unit of meaning. Like this year’s choice, last year’s Oxford Word of the Year — brain rot — was also two words.”

“I see. ‘Brain rot’ is mental decline due to mindless scrolling or too much exposure to low quality online content, right?”

“Absolutely. In fact, ‘brain rot’ happens as a result of such content consumption as in rage bait!”

“Okay... What about the Cambridge Word of the Year?”

“Well, it is ‘parasocial’. It refers to a connection one feels between themselves and a famous person they do not know — the person can be an influencer, a fictional character, a TV star, a musician...”

“Wait, wait. What about our beloved singer who died recently... many formed a parasocial relationship with the celebrity singer, didn’t they?”

“Yes, and there are millions who have experienced parasocial grief on his passing.”

“Parasocial grief?”

“It is a feeling of great sadness that someone feels when a famous person they do not know dies...”

“Yes, the people are most affected by his sudden death and have experienced parasocial grief most strongly... It is more like a personal loss.”

Note: Readers’ contributions and feedback are welcome at protim.sharma@gmail.com or on WhatsApp at 9435055497.

A TIME TO READ

Hareswar Borah

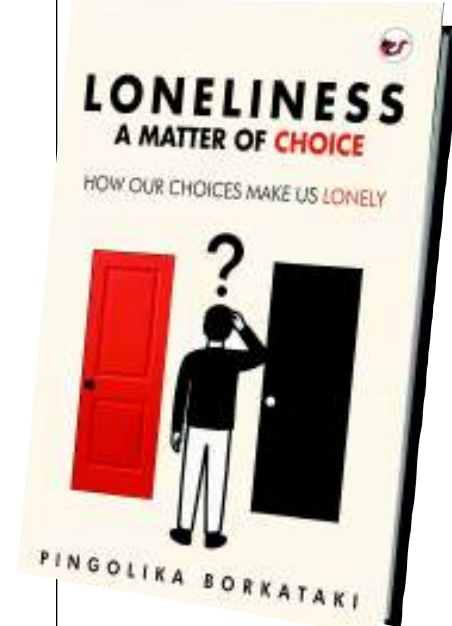
How our choices make us lonely

We live in an age of unprecedented connectivity. With a single tap, we can deliver a message across continents in seconds. Our devices ensure that we are never more than a notification away from contact with friends, colleagues, and even strangers. Yet, paradoxically, nearly one in three adults worldwide admits to struggling with loneliness. Researchers have called it a silent epidemic, warning that the impact of chronic loneliness rivals other major public health concerns. It affects not only mental well-being but also physical health, increasing the risks of depression, cardiovascular disease, and early mortality.

In *Loneliness: A Matter of Choice*, Pingolika Borkataki examines the roots of this growing crisis. Her book is not a simplistic attack on social media or technology. Instead, she makes a more nuanced argument. Technology, she suggests, is not solely to blame for our sense of disconnection. Rather, loneliness often emerges from the decisions we make as individuals and as a society. It is, at its core, a matter of choice.

This premise immediately distinguishes the book from many popular works that treat loneliness as an external condition inflicted upon us by digital culture. Borkataki acknowledges the role of the digital world in reshaping communication and relationships, but she resists easy scapegoats. The problem, she argues, is not that we have lost the ability to connect. It is that we have too often chosen superficial connection over meaningful interaction. Our priorities, habits, and societal structures shape the conditions in which loneliness thrives.

Borkataki interweaves personal anecdotes, cultural commentary, and psychological insights to show how loneliness



NAME:

Loneliness: A Matter of Choice

What’s it about:

It explores why loneliness persists in a hyperconnected world and how our everyday choices quietly deepen it.

manifests in different dimensions of life. Whether describing the emptiness that lingers after a night of endless scrolling or the isolation of living in crowded cities without community, she captures experiences that many readers will find familiar.

One of the most compelling aspects of the book is its insistence that loneliness cannot be solved with quick fixes. Self-help culture often promises instant solutions: new hobbies, new apps, new routines. Borkataki argues instead that overcoming loneliness requires deliberate choices sustained over time. She urges readers to choose authenticity over superficiality, empathy over judgment, solitude over distraction, and the quiet of nature over the noise of relentless scrolling. Even the smallest shift in perspective, she suggests, can become the first step toward meaningful change in a world where loneliness too often feels inevitable.

By emphasising choice, Borkataki does not deny that external forces such as globalisation, urbanisation, or technological change influence our experiences. She acknowledges their impact but insists that individuals still retain the power to respond differently. This framing encourages readers to take responsibility for their relationships and to think critically about the trade-offs they accept in daily life.

Whether you feel the ache of disconnection or are simply curious about the hidden forces shaping our social lives, this book deserves your attention. It offers something enduring: a reminder that each of us holds the power either to widen the distance between ourselves and others or to help close it.

WORDSPEAK

The story behind words

Bibekananda Choudhury



Sushi

The word sushi comes from an old Japanese term meaning “sour-tasting,” a reminder that this globally loved delicacy began as a method of preserving fish — not as the elegant art form we see today. Centuries ago, fish was packed into fermented rice, and the rice itself was thrown away. Over time, the technique softened, the fermentation shortened, and eventually the rice, seasoned with vinegar, became central to the dish. Modern sushi emerged in the bustling food stalls of 19th-century Edo (now Tokyo), where chefs began pressing vinegared rice with fresh fish to create quick, flavourful bites. Despite its reinventions, the name has always pointed to the rice, not the fish. In Japanese cuisine, it is the rice — its flavour, texture, and balance — that defines sushi.

When algorithms matched



Ananya had never believed in dating apps. As a software tester at a busy Bengaluru startup, she spent enough time debugging other people's code to trust algorithms with her love life. Still, one lonely Friday evening, curiosity won. She downloaded an app "just to see."

Across the city, Aarav, a data analyst who preferred books over bars, was also reluctantly giving the digital world a chance. His friends joked that if love were a dataset, he'd find it faster. But here he was, staring at profiles...

Their match happened on a quiet Sunday morning. No fireworks. Just a notification: *You and Aarav have matched!*

Ananya almost ignored it. But something about his bio — short, honest, slightly awkward — made her smile. She sent the first message: "So, have you found any statistically significant love yet?" Aarav replied within minutes: "Not yet. But I'm willing to run the experiment."

What began as playful banter soon grew into late-night conversations about everything from childhood memories to favourite street food. They discovered they had both lived in Guwahati as kids, both loved monsoons, and both secretly feared pigeons—though neither knew why.

A week later, they decided to meet at a small café near MG Road. Ananya arrived early, heart thudding with a mix of excitement and doubt. When Aarav walked in, tall, smiling like he wasn't sure if he should — her doubt melted.

Their first meeting wasn't perfect. Aarav spilled coffee on his shirt. Ananya dropped her fork, and the waiter mixed up their orders twice. But they laughed through it all, and somehow the imperfections felt right.

Over the next few months, their lives intertwined effortlessly. Morning texts. Weekend bookshop dates. Long walks after work.

One evening, as they watched the city lights from a rooftop, Aarav slipped his hand into hers.

"No algorithms," he said softly. "Just us."

Ananya squeezed his hand back.

"Maybe the algorithm only introduced us," she said. "The rest... we wrote ourselves."

WESTSIDE STORY

Swift unfiltered

TAYLOR SWIFT'S new six-part Disney+ docuseries *The End of an Era* offers an intimate, behind-the-scenes look at her record-breaking Eras tour. The series captures her emotional reflections on performing for over 10 million people and addresses serious incidents, including a thwarted terror plot in Vienna and a stabbing at a Swift-themed event in Liverpool. It also delves into the making of *The Tortured Poets Department* during the tour and showcases collaborators like choreographer Mandy Moore and dancer Kameron Saunders. A new concert film, *Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour – The Final Show*, launched alongside the series.

Festival winners

AKIO FUJIMOTO'S *Lost Land* won the Golden Yusr for best feature at the Red Sea International Film Festival in Jeddah. The Rohingya refugee drama, which has already earned global acclaim, received a \$100,000 prize. Cherien Dabis' *All That's Left of You* took the Silver Yusr, while Shahad Ameen's *Hijra* won both the Jury Prize and Best Saudi Film. Ameer Fakher Eldin's *Yunan* secured best director and best actor for George Khabbaz. Juliette Binoche won best documentary for *In-I: In Motion*. Seo Su-Bin was named best actress, and Zhang Zhongchen received the cinematic achievement award for *Nighttime Sounds*.

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Vidut debuts

SOCIAL MEDIA is buzzing over Vidut Jammwal's first look as Dhalsim in the upcoming *Street Fighter* film, marking his Hollywood debut. The teaser trailer, released at the 2025 Game Awards, shows Vidut in a striking mystic yogi avatar; fans applauded his lean, powerful look though some missed his hair. *Street Fighter* also stars Noah Centineo and Callina Liang; the film is set for release on October 16, 2026.

— Agencies

TRAVEL

Eikjyot Kour



Voyage to Varkala

This year Puja had come early. Instead of celebrating at home, I set out with my family to Varkala, a serene coastal town in Kerala. The thrill of the journey began the moment our flight touched down in Thiruvananthapuram, excitement bubbling within me. By the time we reached our resort on the South Cliff, night had already embraced the town. The place was serene, hushed, and almost magical in its silence. Breathing in the salty breeze, I felt a moment of calm and wonder.

The next morning proved me right. The first sight I saw was the endless stretch of the Varkala Sea, glowing under the sun. Our resort, perched high on the cliff, had its own staircase carved into the rocks leading straight to the beach. We couldn't resist. In moments, we were walking on the golden sand, the waves rushing to greet us with joy. That walk felt beautiful, with the sea and sky painting the perfect view.

Our journey then took us to the Jatayu Earth's Center. Riding Kerala's only cable car up to the colossal sculpture of Jatayu was an experience in itself. At 350 metres above sea level, the world unfolded beneath us—a vast expanse of hills, forests, and endless sky. Standing there, I felt a mix of awe and humility, as if Nature had gathered its beauty to gently remind me of how small we are in the grand design of life.

Later that day, we explored the North Cliff, a striking contrast to the calm of the South. While the south was serene and peaceful, the north was alive, lined with vibrant cafés, music spilling into the night, and a buzzing, joyful atmosphere. Over dinner, with the waves of Black Sand Beach crashing in the background, everything felt bright, colourful, and celebratory. The place had its own rhythm

— musicians strumming guitars, the aroma of food mixing with the salty breeze, and people from across the world sharing the same joy.

The next morning began with a hearty breakfast, after which we headed to Mangrove Island. The island offered various activities, but we chose a boat ride through the mangroves. The trees rose tall and quiet, their roots tangled in the clear waters, as if guarding a hidden world. It felt enchanting to see the lush green branches mirrored in the water beneath the wide open sky — a scene so perfect it could have been painted by Nature itself. We stopped for lunch near the island, where traditional Kerala cuisine was served with warmth and simplicity. The flavours were rich and authentic, and as local folk music played softly in the background, it felt like more than just a meal — it was a glimpse into the culture and hospitality of Kerala.

That evening, we returned to the beach to watch the sunset. As the sun dipped into the horizon, the sky turned into shades of orange, gold, and crimson, and the sea mirrored it all with graceful ease. I stood there quietly, feeling grateful and overwhelmed. It was as if time had paused just to let us savour the beauty of that moment. Later, we returned to the vibrant North Cliff for dinner, where good food and cheerful energy made the perfect close to the day.

The next morning, we boarded our flight back to Guwahati. The journey had come to an end, but the memories had settled into my heart like seashells collected along the shore — simple yet priceless. Varkala wasn't just a trip; it was an experience of peace, wonder, and joy with the people I love most.

Even now, whenever Puja arrives, my mind wanders back to those cliffs, those sunsets, and that laughter. And I know I will always carry a piece of Varkala with me.

(Fuel your wanderlust – Share your travel experiences with us and get them published in the Horizon. Word count: 800.)

CINEMASCAPE

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DIRECTOR: ADITYA DHAR
CAST: RANVEER SINGH, AKSHAYE KHANNA, R. MADHAVAN, SAPA ARJUN, ETC.

Dhurandhar, directed by Aditya Dhar, is an ambitious action-drama that attempts to weave together some of the most defining terror incidents in modern Indian history. Set against the backdrop of the Kandahar hijacking, the Parliament attack, and the Mumbai terror strikes, the film builds its narrative around a covert intelligence operation designed to dismantle networks working against India.

At the centre of the story is Hamza, played by Ranveer Singh, an Indian agent tasked with infiltrating Pakistan to uproot a dangerous nexus of mafia groups and hostile forces. His mission is overseen by Intelligence Bureau chief Ajay Sanyal, a character loosely inspired by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval.

The film follows Hamza's journey as he crosses borders, navigates layers of deception, and attempts to destabilise enemy bases from within. This premise gives the film a strong foundation, and the narrative remains gripping for the most part.

However, the long runtime weighs the film down. While the storytelling is engaging, the extended length occasionally affects the pace and reduces the overall impact. Despite this, the makers deserve credit for presenting a multi-layered story in a manner that remains accessible and easy to follow.

What truly elevates *Dhurandhar* are the performances. Ranveer Singh delivers a powerful portrayal of Hamza, bringing intensity and emotional depth to the role. Akshaye Khanna, R. Madhavan, and Sanjay Dutt offer solid support, each contributing significantly to the film's dramatic weight. Rakesh Bedi's performance is a delightful surprise and adds a memorable touch to the ensemble.

REVERSE SWEEP

Manish Goswami,

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The modern-day broker

They are just like all-weather friends. When in need, they can be truly indispensable. Though at times you may think it would be better to accomplish a task without them, after investing a lot of time and energy, the realisation often dawns that approaching them would have been a better idea.

In fact, they can fix almost anything and everything except perhaps broken hearts and limbs. As their range of activities is diverse, so are the names by which they are known—middleman, broker, fixer, facilitator or simply *dalal* in common parlance.

A yardstick to identify a successful politician, influential bureaucrat or official is the number of brokers assisting him in performing the official work assigned to them with perfection.

With middlemen these days becoming a full-time profession and a very lucrative career option without having to file annual tax returns, it is an irony that there is no institution worth its name that provides courses to train aspirants who want to make it big by becoming a facilitator. After all, proper guidance and training are a must to churn out a successful professional.



With my curiosity getting the better of me, I interacted with a leading broker and requested him to share with me the qualities and aptitude that go into the making of a successful fixer.

"It's a very challenging profession, I must say, and only those with true grit and determination can stick to it," Krishna Bora, who carved a niche for himself as a leading broker, commented. Eulogising the profession, he claimed it to be the best as hardly any investment is required to join it. "Show me any other career option where you need not pay any commission, qualifications and age being no bar, and you don't encounter any 'no vacancy' signs. Anyone with the right aptitude can join this profession and mint money."

Elaborating, Bora revealed that to be successful, one must have a tough skin like a rhino hide so that strong words or refusal by concerned parties cannot break the resolve of one joining this profession.

Strange as it may sound, to make a mark in this profession, honesty is the keyword. Though the fixer is the catalyst in all the murky dealings—from auctioning jobs to arranging contract orders, from building permissions to a lucrative posting—he must be honest while carrying them out. Like Caesar's wife, he must be above suspicion. He must have a strong character to remain honest in corrupt surroundings. An honest broker is always in great demand, Bora disclosed.

Carrying on, Bora pointed out that another prerequisite to making it big as a broker is hard work. "A successful broker is an epitome of work culture. Without being an employee in any office, he must be more regular and punctual than the employees themselves. His daily presence will make him an expert in tracing the route of a file and the speed breakers it faces. A broker comes very handy in regulating the speed of a file. With experience, when one becomes an 'A' grade broker, the fixer can dictate the terms and conditions."

"Of course, like other professions, now we too are facing threats to our existence," Bora said. "Seeing our success, a number of politicians and officers are doing the work that we do. But fortunately, unlike them, as we are also with the ruling side, we can make hay irrespective of the party that comes to power."

