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10 MARCH 2025

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The Statesman

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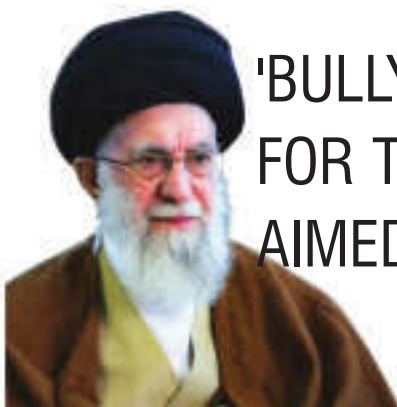


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PEOPLE'S PARLIAMENT, ALWAYS IN SESSION



'BULLYING POWERS' CALL
FOR TALKS WITH IRAN NOT
AIMED AT SOLVING ISSUES'

P9



'INDIA WILL ALWAYS BE
AT THE FOREFRONT OF
PROTECTING ANIMALS'

P5



'MEDIA MONITORING
INITIATIVE NOT AN ATTACK
ON PRESS FREEDOM'

P8

JENEATH WONG
FIRST MALAYSIAN
TO WIN WAAP

P12



WEATHER

Generally clear. Hazy in the evening.
Maximum and minimum temperatures
likely to be around 34°C and 23°C
respectively.

RAINFALL: NIL

RELATIVE HUMIDITY

Max. 63% Min. 55%

TEMPERATURE

Max: 34.2°C Min: 23.2°C

SUN RISES 05:49 hrs SUN SETS 17:43 hrs

MOON RISES 14:18 hrs MOON SETS 03:18 hrs

Full Moon on 14 March

THUMBNAILED



Devotees break their fast (Roza) with Iftar during the ongoing Ramadan, at Jama Masjid in New Delhi on Sunday. ■ ANI

VP Dhankhar admitted to AIIMS: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar was admitted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi in the wee hours of Sunday. Sources said the 73-year-old was rushed to AIIMS after he complained of chest pain and uneasiness. "He is stable and under observation," the sources added. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the AIIMS to inquire about the health of the Vice-President. He also prayed for his good health and speedy recovery.

India beat NZ by 4 wickets for 3rd Champions Trophy title

Rohit Sharma leads from front as batters, spinners put on all-round stellar show

TRIDIB BAPARNASH
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The ICC Champions Trophy final between India and New Zealand at the Dubai International Stadium delivered all the hallmarks of a classic. The packed crowd was treated to a thrilling contest, with the two sides swapping control before India's batting and spin brilliance sealed a four-wicket victory for their third Champions Trophy title, cementing their dominance in white-ball cricket after winning the T20 World Cup last June.

Rohit Sharma spearheaded India's chase of 252 with a commanding half-century, forging a crucial 105-run opening stand alongside his deputy Shubman Gill. While Rohit dominated the scoring, Gill played the perfect supporting role, ensuring a solid foundation for India's pursuit.

However, just as the duo seemed poised to take the game beyond New Zealand's grasp, Glenn Phillips plucked a sensational catch off Mitchell Santner's bowling to dismiss Gill.

The arrival of Virat Kohli was met with thunderous applause from the packed



India's captain Rohit Sharma hits the ball to the fence during the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 final against New Zealand, in Dubai, UAE, on Sunday. ■ UNI

stadium, but the excitement was short-lived. Off-spinner Michael Bracewell struck first ball, trapping Kohli leg-before.

Despite the setbacks, Rohit remained untroubled, keeping India on course. However, the Kiwi spinners tightened the screws, slowing the scoring rate. In an attempt to break the shackles, Rohit charged down the track against Rachin Ravindra, aiming to loft him over cover, only to be beaten in flight and stumped by Tom

Latham. The Indian captain walked back after a sublime 76 off 83 balls, including seven boundaries and three towering sixes.

With India needing stability, Shreyas Iyer and Axar Patel took charge, stitching together a 61-run partnership for the fourth wicket. Shreyas played aggressively, dispatching the spinners for a couple of sixes and fours. However, after surviving a chance on 45, he failed to capitalise, falling soon after Santner reintroduced himself

into the attack.

Joined by KL Rahul, Axar Patel rotated the strike efficiently, ensuring India stayed within sight of the target, before he miscued one to William O'Rourke off Bracewell after scoring 29.

The pair of Rahul (34 not out) and Hardik Pandya (18) almost took India near the winning mark, before Pandya was undone by Kyle Jamieson. Thereafter, Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja completed the formalities. Earlier, New Zealand

won the toss and elected to bat. Rachin Ravindra and Will Young gave their team a flying start, putting together a 57-run opening stand in just eight overs. However, India's spinners soon took charge, systematically dismantling the top order. Kuldeep, Varun, Jadeja, and Axar collectively dismissed the top five batters, including key players like Ravindra, Young, Kane Williamson, Tom Latham, and Glenn Phillips, slowing the scoring rate as the Kiwis found themselves struggling at 200/5 in 44 overs. Daryl Mitchell shouldered the responsibility of holding the innings together by stitching crucial partnerships while Michael Bracewell ensured his side edged past the 250-run mark with a late flurry.

Brief Scores: New Zealand 251/7 (Daryl Mitchell 63, Michael Bracewell 53 not out, Rachin Ravindra 37, Glenn Phillips 34; Kuldeep Yadav 2/40, Varun Chakravarthy 2/45, Ravindra Jadeja 1/30) lost to India 254/6 (Rohit Sharma 76, Shreyas Iyer 48, KL Rahul 34 not out, Shubman Gill 31, Axar Patel 29; Michael Bracewell 2/28) by 4 wickets.

Sitharaman says GST rates to be reduced further, rationalised

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has said that Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates will be reduced further as the process of rationalising tax slabs is nearing completion.

Mrs Sitharaman said that the revenue neutral rate (RNR), which was 15.8 per cent when GST was introduced in July 2017, has now come down to 11.4 per cent in 2023 and will decrease further.

Speaking at a media event in the national capital, Mrs Sitharaman said that the work on simplifying GST slabs is almost finished. The GST Council, which is led by the Finance Minister and includes state finance ministers, is expected to take a final decision soon.

"Now, at this stage, there is one more look that I would (take). The groups (GoM) have done excellent work, but I still have taken it upon myself to, once more, completely review each of the groups' works, and then probably take it to the Council to see if we can come to a final conclusion on this," the Finance Minister stated.

The GoM was set up in September 2021 to suggest



changes in GST rates and slabs. This committee consists of finance ministers from six states and has been working on making the tax system more efficient.

The rationalisation process includes reducing the number of tax slabs, streamlining rates, and addressing key concerns raised by different industries. The Union Minister emphasised that a final review is underway before presenting the proposal at the next GST Council meeting.

"We'll take it to the next council (meeting). We are very close to coming to a final call on some of the very critical issues, reduction, rationalisation of rates, looking at the number of slabs and so on," FM Sitharaman said.

However, the Opposition Congress has called for a complete overhaul of the GST system, saying that mere rate reductions are not enough.

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Trinamul Congress to meet EC over 'ghost voters' Issue

The issue of fake voters has been a significant point of contention in Bengal's political landscape

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

The Trinamul Congress (TMC) is set to approach the Election Commission of India (ECI) regarding allegations of 'ghost voters' in the electoral rolls. The party has secured an appointment with the commission's full bench on Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

A 10-member TMC delegation, including Rajya Sabha MP Derek O'Brien, MPs Kalyan Banerjee, Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, Sagarika Ghosh, Kirti Azad, Sajda Ahmed, Asit Kumar Mal, Abu Taher Khan, Prakash Chik Baraik, and Saket Gokhale, will meet the officials to present their concerns.

The issue of fake or duplicate voters has been a significant point of contention in West Bengal's political landscape in recent days. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had earlier announced



the formation of a special committee to identify and address the problem. Since then, TMC leaders have been actively inspecting voter lists across various constituencies.

The controversy escalated when the Election Commission acknowledged discrepancies,

including multiple names being linked to the same Electors Photo Identity Card (EPIC) number. In response, the commission issued a statement confirming that corrective measures would be implemented within three months. It also

announced plans to introduce a National Unique Voter ID Number for all voters in the future.

Last Thursday, a TMC delegation comprising senior leaders Subrata Bakshi, Firhad Hakim, Chandrima Bhat-tacharya, and Aroop Biswas

met with the Chief Electoral Officer of West Bengal to raise concerns over alleged voter list manipulations. The party accused the BJP of benefiting from duplicate voter entries, claiming that voters from other states were being illegally registered in Bengal's electoral rolls.

Meanwhile, the opposition BJP has also approached the State Election Commission, accusing the ruling TMC of influencing voter lists to its advantage.

The upcoming meeting between the TMC delegation and Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar on Tuesday is expected to be a pivotal step in the party's campaign against electoral irregularities. With the Lok Sabha session also set to discuss the EPIC issue, the TMC has positioned itself as the first political party to formally escalate the matter to the national election authorities.



Multiple protests in Kolkata over Jadavpur University, R G Kar incidents

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

Kolkata witnessed massive protest rallies organised by civil society groups and opposition parties on Sunday. Citizen groups condemned both the recent Jadavpur University incident in which several students were injured after an attack on the state education minister's car, and the brutal rape and murder of a postgraduate trainee doctor from RG Kar Medical College. Several protest marches, originating from different parts of the city, converged at Rabindra Sadan. Another major rally was led by BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari.

The unrest at Jadavpur University began after an attack on Education Minister Bratya Basu's car last Saturday, which left several students injured and triggered widespread protests. Students have demanded discussions with the Vice-Chancellor, escalating tensions on campus.

During today's protests, renowned actor Chandan Sen voiced his concerns, stating: "The public has risen in protest because the real culprits behind the RG Kar incident have not been punished. The attack on Jadavpur student Indranuj Roy was extremely alarming and could have cost him his life. That is why people are standing in solidarity with the victims."

As protests intensify and political tensions rise, the



People participate in a 'Nagarik Michil' in Kolkata on Sunday. ■ SNS

demand for justice continues to grow. The parents of the RG Kar postgraduate trainee doctor expressed their dissatisfaction with the CBI investigation and stated their desire to meet the Prime Minister of India. A public convention was also organised near Ranu Chhaya Mancha, close to the Academy of Fine Arts. Processions from Hazra More, Maidan, and Esplanade converged at the Academy of Fine Arts.

CPM state secretary Mohammed Salim, without carrying any political flag, walked several kilometres demanding justice for the parents of the RG Kar doctor and for injured student Indranuj Roy. The Pradesh Congress Committee also organised a procession demanding justice for the injured Jadavpur student.

Meanwhile, Jadavpur University's interim Vice-Chancellor, Bhaskar Gupta, was discharged from a private hospital near the EM Bypass on Sunday afternoon. He had been admitted due to high blood pressure and other health issues. Although released, doctors have advised him to rest for the next 15 days. Gupta was hospitalised on Wednesday after suddenly falling ill amid the ongoing unrest at Jadavpur University. While his condition stabilised after treatment, he continued to experience dizziness and balance issues, requiring physiotherapy sessions before his discharge.

His wife, Dr. Keya Gupta, stated: "Bhaskar was reluctant to stay in the hospital and insisted on going home. The doctors have discharged him, but he needs complete rest for the next two weeks."

Youth killed in dispute over music at wedding ceremony

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DURGAPUR, 9 MARCH

A dispute over a song being played at a wedding ceremony in Durgapur last night resulted in the death of a young man, leading to the arrest of three others on murder charges.

The incident forced the cancellation of the wedding, and police took the bridegroom, his father, and other family members into protective custody, officials said. Samra Pashi, the bridegroom, had travelled from Barakar, on the Bengal-Jharkhand border, with his family and friends to marry Sundara Baid of Vambay Colony in Durgapur.

The bride's family had organised music and dance for the young attendees. Friends of the bridegroom also joined in. The conflict

began when the bridegroom's friends requested the DJ to play a specific song, a request opposed by local youths.

During the ensuing argument, the allegedly intoxicated guests attacked Artist Baid, 18, and beat him severely, according to police reports.

Assistant Commissioner of Police, Durgapur, Subir Roy, stated: "The youth was fatally attacked. We found evidence of sharp cutting wounds on the deceased's body."

Jadukar Baid, the bride's father, alleged: "The intoxicated youths accompanying the bridegroom killed Artist simply because he refused to change the song."

He added: "We have cancelled the wedding and demand severe punishment for the perpetrators."

Planning elaborate agitation on JU crisis after higher secondary examination: Bengal LoP

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

The BJP is planning an elaborate and larger agitation over the ongoing crisis at Kolkata's Jadavpur University (JU) in the coming days after the ongoing higher secondary examinations are over, West Bengal Leader of the Opposition Suwendu Adhikari said on Sunday.

"On 16 March, we will conduct a citizen's convention at Jadavpur. After the higher secondary examination is over, we will be having programmes outside the campus. We will be organising programmes to make people aware of the anti-national activities going on," he said while leading a protest rally against the March 1 ruckus within the university in which two students were severely injured and hospitalised after being allegedly hit by the car of the West Bengal education minister Bratya Basu.



Leader of Opposition in West Bengal Assembly and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Suwendu Adhikari during a protest procession called 'Dhikkar Michil' over the Jadavpur University incident, in Kolkata on Sunday. ■ SNS

Adhikari said that they will continue with their demands for the arrests of Bratya Basu and his accompanying Trinamool Congress leader Om Prakash Mishra. He claimed that both CPI(M) and Trinamul Congress are responsible for the ongoing crisis at Jadavpur

University.

His comments come in the wake of doubts raised by a section of the BJP leaders that the March 1 chaos at Jadavpur University was nothing but a drama scripted jointly by Trinamool Congress and CPI(M).

2 INTTUC leaders injured in separate attacks

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

Political tensions have escalated as two separate incidents of violence left two Trinamul Congress (TMC) trade union leaders injured.

The incidents, occurring in Kolkata's Bowbazar and North 24 Parganas' Belgharia, have intensified the ongoing political turmoil in the state, particularly as elections approach.

INTTUC leader Sharik Aman was brutally assaulted in Bowbazar's Colootola area.

The attack, allegedly orchestrated by supporters of an Independent councillor, exposed the deepening factionalism within the ruling TMC. According to sources, Aman, a leader of TMC's 'shawkers' union, had criticised the alleged illegal activities of Ward

43's Independent councillor Ayesha Naz through a Facebook post.

Following the post, Aman reportedly received multiple threats. On Saturday evening, Ayesha Naz's husband, Irfan Ali, along with his associates, allegedly attacked Aman with rods and choppers, leaving him seriously injured. Aman claimed that his attackers had planned to throw him off a rooftop and stage it as a suicide.

He has since lodged a complaint with the police. Aman's father also alleged that his son was being pressured to delete his social media post. "He was repeatedly threatened over the phone to remove the video," he said.

However, Irfan Ali denied the allegations, claiming that Aman was a suspect in a kidnapping case and was causing

unrest in the neighbourhood.

"Local residents caught him. I was unwell and had gone home. When I heard about the incident, I immediately informed the police," Ali stated.

Police have arrested four persons after monitoring the CCTV footage.

In another episode, bullets were fired in Belgharia's Kamarhati area on Saturday evening, injuring INTTUC leader Bikash Singh and another youth, Santu Das. Eyewitnesses reported that three assailants arrived suddenly and opened fire, targeting Singh. Das, who was at a tea stall with his wife, was also hit. Das's wife, Ria Karmakar, recounted the terrifying moment: "We were having tea after visiting a doctor when three men arrived and started firing. My husband was shot in the crossfire."

NIT's Gestrocar tops Delhi Toy Hackathon among govt institutions



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
DURGAPUR, 9 MARCH

Gestrocar, a gesture-controlled toy car developed by students at the National Institute of Technology, Durgapur, won third best innovative work at the three-day All India Electronics Toy Hackathon, organised by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology. The event concluded yesterday at CDAC, Noida.

The NIT, Durgapur team, comprising Rik Mondal, Puja Kumari, and Dawlat Kanungo, under the guidance of Mechanical Engineering Professor Shibendu Shekhar Roy, emerged as the top performer among the IITs and NITs participating in the Hackathon. The team designed and developed Gestrocar, an innovative robotic toy intended as a learning aid for disabled children.

As Professor Roy explained,

"It's an innovative gesture-controlled toy car that makes learning interactive and fun. It includes a car, a speaker, and a remote. The speaker asks a question, and the child uses hand gestures to guide the car to the correct location on a map. The speaker then provides instant feedback on whether the answer is correct."

This engaging tool is designed to be inclusive for disabled children and is highly versatile, capable of teaching a wide range of subjects, from state capitals to regional dances and foods, the team claimed. "With a low prototype cost of just ₹30 (approximately Rs 3000), Gestrocar offers a cost-effective way to blend play with learning," Professor Roy said. Professor Arvind Choubey, Director of NIT, said, "It's truly fascinating that our team topped among the government institutions."

Painful cancer fails to subdue Sujali; writes Higher Secondary Board Examination from hospital bed

HEMANT JACOB
HOOGHLY, 9 MARCH

Sujali's life has been one of remarkable resilience. From a young age, she faced profound adversity. Raised in her maternal uncle's home near KMDA Park in Chandannagar, she lost her mother just 11 days after birth. Her father remarried and chose to live elsewhere, leaving Sujali in the care of her maternal uncle, Satyajit Ray, a retired jute mill worker.

Sujali's story is a testament to perseverance and has become an inspiration for women striving against life's challenges.

A student at Chandannagar Lalbagan Balika

Vidyalaya, Sujali's struggles deepened when she was diagnosed with a cancerous tumour in her ovary while in Class Eleven. Undergoing chemotherapy meant she had to defer her higher secondary board examination last year. Despite the setback, she remained determined, preparing herself for another attempt this year.

Her determination was tested again when, after writing her Bengali first-language paper at Chandannagar Krishna Bhavani Nari Siksha Mandir, she became severely unwell. Plagued by intense pain, she struggled to continue but managed to complete her second paper. On medical advice, she was urgently hos-

pitalised.

The headmistress promptly informed the higher secondary board's district convenor of Sujali's condition. Swift measures were taken to allow her to complete the remaining examinations from her hospital bed at NRS Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata.

Despite the challenges, Sujali, aspiring to become a schoolteacher, refused to be subdued by her painful cancer. She continued writing her examination papers, proving her indomitable spirit.

Reflecting on her journey, Sujali shared: "From birth, I lost my mother and was deprived of my father's love

Sujali's story is a testament to perseverance and has become an inspiration for women striving against life's challenges.



and care. My kind-hearted maternal uncle raised me within his limited means. Life's hardships have taught me to fight against odds. Even when cancer threatened my future, I kept my spirit high. My uncle, teachers, and neighbours encouraged me, and I am moving forward with determination and perseverance."

ESTATE OFFICER
SYAMA PRASAD MOOKERJEE
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(Appointed by the Central Govt. Under Section 3 of Act 40 of 1971-Central Act)
Proceedings No. 2037, 2037D OF - 2023
Order No. 95 Dated 25.02.2025

To:
Mrs. Ananya Wood Pvt. Ltd.,
67/27, Strand Road (Cross Road-13),
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AND at:
3A, Ramnandan Mullick Garden Lane,
Room No. 10, 4th Floor, "RAIKVA"
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AND also at:
Bamannari, Delhi Road,
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Pin - 712 250
AND Any person's interested in the property
As mentioned herein
Whereas proceedings against Mrs. Ananya Wood Pvt. Ltd., the O.P. herein, have been initiated u/s 4 & 7 of the P.P. Act for adjudication of the prayer of Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata (SMPK) for eviction and damages alongwith interest in respect of Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port's land measuring about 6520 Sq.m. (Under Plate No. D-782) situated at near Sickline adjacent to GOD Yard at Paharpur.
Whereas the next date of hearing/filing reply to show cause etc., is fixed on 18.03.2025 at 4 PM at Office of the Estate Officer, Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata, at the 1st Floor of 'Fairlie Warehouse', 6 Fairlie Place, Kolkata-700 001, failing which the matter would be decided ex-parte, without further reference. For further details please refer to SMPK's website <https://smp.smpmkolkata.in>
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First body recovered in Srisaillam Left Bank Canal tunnel accident

Body of one of the workers was found trapped in TBM; three more suspected to be buried nearby

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 9 MARCH

In a breakthrough, the body of one of the eight trapped workers was found trapped in the tunnel boring machine (TBM) at the accident site of the Srisaillam Left Bank Canal (SLBC) tunnel in Nagarkurnool district of Telangana, 16 days after the roof collapsed, leaving it waterlogged and filled with slush. The cadaver dogs of the Kerala police were brought in once again today, and the body was found with their assistance.

Rescuers late in the night out the body and sent it for postmortem examination at Nagarkurnool hospital. The body is suspected to be of Gurpreet Singh, the tunnel



boring machine operator. According to an official, only the right hand of the dead body was visible, and

rescue workers cut through the TBM machine to retrieve the body. A DNA test will be conducted to confirm his

identity. Family members of the trapped workers are anxiously waiting at Achampet, a nearby town in the Nagarkurnool district.

Three more workers are suspected to be buried nearby, as indicated by the cadaver dogs as well as the images from the ground penetrating radar.

However, digging out the remains poses tough challenges not only because of the advanced state of decomposition of the bodies but also because the last 50 metres of the tunnel is quite unstable due to the seepage of water. The scientists from the Geological Survey of India warned the rescue team about the risk posed by the tunnel. The metal debris, slush, and lack of oxygen

made rescue difficult.

Rat miners and workers of the Singareni Colliery were engaged in the task of retrieving the bodies buried under slush and metal debris of the TBM machine. Two engineers and six workers were trapped when the accident occurred on 22 February inside the 14-km-long tunnel.

Two cadaver sniffer dogs, Maya and Murphy, of the Belgian Malinois breed, along with 157 rescue team workers and technical experts, went into the tunnel this morning. The dogs were flown in on an army helicopter on 7 March from Kerala after all efforts to trace the trapped workers proved futile since they can sniff out decayed remains buried deep under the earth.

Karnataka govt to step up security at tourist spots after gang rape of foreign tourist

LAKSHMANA VENKAT KUCHI
BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

Aware of the adverse impact of the horrific rape of a foreign national and a domestic homestay owner in Koppal on tourism, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Sunday said security will be stepped up at all tourist attractions in the state. The government will also be coming out with a detailed advisory for the tourists, containing the dos and don'ts to help them stay safer.

The ghastly incident, in which three inebriated youth, attacked a group of domestic and foreign tourists stargazing on the banks of Tungabhadra left bank canal—attacking three men and throwing into the canal before raping two women, an Israeli tourist and a domestic homestay owner—has left people shocked.

The murder and rape took place on Thursday night on the road to Jangli village, near

Sanapura Lake—a tourist destination in Gangavathi taluk—adjacent to Tungabhadra's left bank canal, located some 350 km from Bengaluru.

While the American and Maharashtra tourists climbed out of the canal, another tourist, Bidash, could not be found and later his body was recovered.

The incident has not only shaken up the people at large, but has also damaged the image of Karnataka as one of the peaceful tourism destinations in the country.

Disturbed by the incident and its negative impact, the government reacted swiftly. State Home Minister Parameshwara told media persons that the government has taken the matter seriously and decided to increase security at all tourist spots in the state.

"The state will reassess security measures and strengthen them at tourist

places like Hampi. Moving forward, tourists visiting Karnataka will be briefed on the dos and don'ts to ensure their safety," Parameshwara said.

Violent crime undoubtedly has an adverse impact on tourism, the minister said. "On the one hand, we are trying to attract tourists from across the world, while on the other, incidents like this deter them from visiting our country," Parameshwara said.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said his government was committed to ensuring the safety of tourists coming to the state. It is a heinous crime and the state government will take all steps to ensure that such incidents do not recur, he said.

"My government is committed to ensuring the safety of everyone, including tourists visiting Karnataka. We will take necessary measures to ensure that no such incidents occur in the coming days," he said in a post on X.

COLOURS OF SUNSET



A view of the illuminated Charminar and Makkah Masjid during the ongoing month of Ramadan, in Hyderabad. ■ ANI

Telangana CM alleges conspiracy to block 42 pc quota for BCs

AGENCIES
HYDERABAD, 9 MARCH

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday alleged that there is a deliberate conspiracy to block 42 per cent reservations for backward classes.

Stating that caste census data has been collected to strengthen policies for backward communities, he criticised opposition parties for attempting to distort caste-based statistics.

Addressing the All India Padmashali Mahasabha here on Sunday, he said his government acted with transparency in conducting caste census.

"We will not allow anyone to suppress the rights of backward communities. There is a deliberate conspiracy to



block 42 per cent reservations for BCs, but we will stand firm against it," he declared.

He assured the Padmashali community that the government is committed to ensuring justice and fair representation

for them.

Reiterating his government's focus on empowering marginalised communities, the Chief Minister pledged unwavering support to provide economic, political, and

employment opportunities for Padmashalis.

Revanth Reddy also assured all support to the handloom sector and the weavers. He announced awarding Rs 600 crore worth of handloom orders for 1.3 crore sarees to support weavers and promote the handloom sector. These sarees will be distributed among women's self-help groups.

He also announced establishing the Indian Institute of Handloom Technology in Telangana and naming it after former minister Konda Laxman Bapuji.

Paying rich tributes to the late leader and recalling his immense contributions to the Telangana movement, the CM announced renaming the Asifabad Medical College after Konda Laxman Bapuji.

The Chief Minister expressed disappointment that the previous government failed to honour Bapuji's legacy upon his passing, a slight that the Padmashali community has not forgotten. Acknowledging the contributions of Tiger Ale Narendra, another prominent leader in the Telangana movement, CM Reddy criticised past political manipulations that led to his marginalisation. He assured that under his leadership, Padmashalis would receive their rightful recognition and opportunities.

The state government will also support the construction of the Markandeya Bhavan in Sholapur with an allocation of Rs 1 crore to uphold Padmashali heritage, Reddy added.

TN BJP slams Minister Sekar Babu for 'unwanted criticism' of Annamalai

AGENCIES
CHENNAI, 9 MARCH

Tamil Nadu BJP spokesperson and senior leader ANS Prasad slammed DMK leader and state minister Sekar Babu for his "unwarranted criticism" of state BJP president Annamalai.

The BJP leader in a statement on Sunday said that like the character Shakuni from the Mahabharata - who constantly plotted to destroy the Pandavas and Krishna - Sekar Babu was engaged in political chess to "hinder" the growth of the BJP in Tamil Nadu and "suppress the rise" of Annamalai.

He said that such "devious politics" will ultimately backfire.

The BJP senior leader said: "Just as a stork, waiting for the ocean to dry up so it can feast on dried fish, perishes due to starvation, DMK and Chief Minister Stalin, who are desperately waiting to block the BJP's grand alliance for the 2026 Assembly elections, will meet their political downfall."

He said Sekar Babu was directing his message to the



BJP instead of conveying it to Stalin.

ANS Prasad said that Tamil Nadu Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, Sekar Babu, has been continuously making "uncivil" and "degrading" remarks against Tamil Nadu BJP and its leader Annamalai.

He said: "This must stop immediately and added that DMK's political drama - where anyone who criticises the party's corruption or government failures is falsely accused, slandered, or framed in fabricated cases - will now be put to an end by the BJP."

"Praising those who criticise BJP and Prime Minister

Narendra Modi, awarding them in the name of Periyar (E.V. Ramasamy), and resorting to cheap political tactics to suppress dissent will no longer be tolerated," Prasad said.

Tamil Nadu BJP spokesperson said Sekar Babu, who once claimed that Annamalai is an "imported" leader, must not forget that he was expelled from AIADMK for betraying former Chief Minister Jayalalithaa and later "imported" into DMK.

Prime Minister Modi's vision for uplifting India's underprivileged sections is inspired Annamalai to join the cleanest nationalist move-

ment, the RSS, he said.

Prasad said that trained in service and discipline, he joined BJP, a national party working for the country's welfare.

He added: "Today, Annamalai stands as the pillar of Tamil Nadu BJP, a beacon of hope for the oppressed, and is carrying out public welfare initiatives with honesty."

He said: "Under the so-called Dravidian Model of DMK's governance, Tamil Nadu is turning into a state plagued by "corruption, casteism, separatism, religious extremism, and terrorism".

The BJP leader said that the state was witnessing an alarming rise in crime, including murder, robbery, rape, and drug culture.

"Even as women, especially school-going girls, face increasing sexual violence and lack of safety, the DMK government remains indifferent," he said.

The BJP leader said that Sekar Babu, who should be in jail for his "unlawful activities" in North Chennai, is instead resorting to "cheap political theatrics" against

Annamalai.

Prasad, however, said that in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the DMK received 10,500 fewer votes in Chief Minister Stalin's Kolathur constituency compared to the 2021 Assembly elections and asked whether Sekar Babu could explain this.

Prasad said people were now questioning whether Sekar Babu was truly a "Hindu Religious Endowments Minister" or just a "grocery store manager".

Sekar Babu, who mockingly calls Annamalai a "Karnataka duplicate police officer," should be prepared to face the consequences, he warned.

He said that BJP will reveal details about Sekar Babu's "corrupt" dealings, including the illegal constructions in North Chennai under benami names, the "misuse" of temple properties, and "unauthorised buildings" without Chennai Corporation approval.

Even within DMK, many recognise that he is merely playing "second-rate political drama", hoping to retain his ministerial post, the BJP leader said.

Aerospace sector to witness unprecedented growth: Rajnath

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh today asserted that the aerospace sector is going to witness an unprecedented growth in the times to come and it will be pivotal in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Government's vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

"The sector is going to play a crucial role in deciding technological advancements, national security, and economic growth. In addition, it will be central in achieving milestones such as satellite launching, inter-planetary missions and commercial space services," he said.

Mr Singh was visiting the Institute of Aerospace Medicine (IAM) of the Indian Air Force (IAF) in Bengaluru, Karnataka. He is the first defence minister to visit the institute. He was briefed about the unique role of IAM in pilot training, their medical evaluation and aeromedical research.

In his address, he highlighted the growing need for



expertise in aerospace medicine in view of the continuous increase in air and space traffic.

"From the defence perspective, space has emerged as a major domain in warfare. We have taken a step forward in this direction and mastered the most-advanced technologies such as anti-satellite. India has also become the fastest growing aviation market in the world. As we are touching new heights in space, we need to explore more possibilities in aerospace medicine. There is a need for increased R&D as research in any high-end complex technology provides benefits to many fields," the minister said.

Mr Singh underscored the importance of aerospace medicine, terming it as critical for

dealing with challenges such as micro-gravity, radiation, and isolation faced by a human being in space, while also addressing physical and mental changes. "Whether it is an issue related to neurons, bone loss or mental problems, it is the responsibility of aerospace and space medicine to tackle these challenges. The field must prepare itself for bigger responsibilities in the future," he said.

He commended IAM's contribution towards achieving self-reliance in the aerospace sector. "Apart from aerospace medicine, IAM provides aeromedical consultancy in various aspects of crew module design and development. Its contribution in cockpit design is noteworthy. The institute has contributed significantly in the design and development of Advanced Light Helicopter, Light Utility Helicopter, Light Combat Helicopter and Light Combat Helicopter Tejas. It is also providing advice in the design and development of the country's most-modern Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft," he said.

MV Govindan retained as CPM Kerala secretary for another term

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 9 MARCH

The 24th CPI-M Kerala state conference which concluded in Kollam on Sunday, has elected incumbent MV Govindan as the state secretary of the party.

The 71-year-old Govindan would lead the party for the next three-year period, which may witness the local body polls this year and the assembly election towards the beginning of 2026.

Govindan, who is also a member of the CPI-M Politbureau, had first assumed the role of state secretary on August 28, 2022, after the late Kodiyyeri Balakrishnan stepped down due to health concerns.

The state conference elect-

ed an 89-member state committee and 17-member state secretariat. The state leadership has included more youngsters while women representation remained the same. A slew of senior leaders including A K Balan, P K Sreemathy, Anavoor Nagappan, Gopi Kottamurickal, P Nandakumar, NR Balan and MK Kannan were dropped from the state committee due to the 75-year-age cap.

Former state health minister and senior women leader KK Shailaja, who's already a central committee member, is the surprise entry into the secretariat. Two other new faces who made it to the state secretariat include Kan-nur district secretary MV Jayarajan and Ernakulam district secretary CN Mohanan. Senior leaders AK

Balan, PK Sreemathy and Anavoor Nagappan were dropped from state secretariat. It was expected that senior party leader P Jayarajan, who was overlooked in 2022 for allegedly attempting to form a personality cult around him would be elevated to the Secretariat this time. But it did not happen; he would have to remain content with his place in the state Committee. In the 89-member CPI-M state Committee, 17 are fresh faces.

Of the 17 new faces, two are women-higher education minister R Bindu and CPI-M's Kongad MLA K Shan-thakumari. Though health minister Veena George has not been included, she has been inducted as a special invitee to the state committee.

First rear fuselage for LCA Mk1A handed over to HAL by Indian private industry in Bengaluru

AGENCIES
BENGALURU, 9 MARCH

The first rear fuselage for Light Combat Aircraft Mk1A, produced by Indian Private Industry, Alpha Tocol Engineering Services Private Ltd, was handed over on Sunday to Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh at Aircraft Division in Bengaluru.

In his address, the Defence Minister termed the handing over as a milestone in the historic journey of India's defence manufacturing.

The ceremony is a testimony to India's progress towards Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance) in defence and the government's commitment towards enhanced public-private partnership, he said.

According to the Defence



Ministry, Singh commended HAL and the private sector for constantly strengthening the Armed Forces with the latest platforms & technologies. He stated that HAL, through its integrated model and strategies, is not only bolstering the strength of soldiers but is also opening new dimensions of manufacturing and R&D by collaborating with the private sector.

A fuselage is the main body section of the aircraft, which holds the pilot, passengers and cargo, while the rear fuselage supports the tail section and its associated components.

The Defence Minister described HAL as the fuselage of the country's defence and aerospace sector, with private companies such as L&T, Alpha Tocol, Tata Advanced Systems

and VEM Technologies playing the role of rear fuselage, supporting HAL.

"Together with these Indian components, the aircraft which is being manufactured in our defence and aerospace sector will reach greater heights in the times to come," he said.

Singh credited the bravery and dedication of the air warriors as well as the equipment being manufactured by the Indian public and private sectors for the growing strength of the Indian Air Force (IAF). "While our courageous air warriors have made an invaluable contribution, the equipment being manufactured indigenously is providing them the added strength, with which they protect our borders," he said, exuding confidence that HAL and the private sector will continue to overcome

every challenge and bolster the Armed Forces in every way.

HAL had placed orders on various Indian private companies such as L&T, Alpha Tocol Engineering Services, Tata Advanced Systems Ltd (TASL), VEM Technologies and Lakshmi Mission Works (LMW) for supplying major modules for the 83 LCA Mk1A contract, the ministry further said.

HAL has already manufactured 12 LCA Mk1A rear fuselages, which are on the aircraft in the manufacturing line. With this supply, a major structure module produced by an Indian private partner will be integrated into the LCA Mk1A aircraft, enabling HAL to meet additional delivery commitments for IAF from 2025-26 onwards.



Budget Session: Fireworks on cards over delimitation, Trump tariffs, Waqf Bill

The first part of the Budget session of Parliament took place from 31 January to 13 February

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The second leg of the Budget session of Parliament is set to resume on Monday and is expected to be a stormy one with both the Opposition and the government ready to outdo each other on multiple issues.

While the Opposition will seek to take on the Centre over the issue of Duplicate Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) numbers, delimitation row and reciprocal tariffs threat by the United States, the govt is expected to push through the contentious Waqf bill through the Parliament and would be ready to walk an extra mile if needed, said sources.

The TMC and DMK are expected to lead the Opposition's attack on the Centre as the respective parties have

raised strong reservations about, respectively, bogus voters and alleged imposition of Hindi language on Southern states.

The controversy over EPIC broke out after Trinamul Congress leaders claimed that the voter lists were manipulated in Bengal, to allow people from other states to cast ballots in the TMC-ruled state. The poll panel was quick to rubbish the charges and went on to clarify that the EPIC numbers of some voters are identical in some cases, but other details show dissimilarities pertaining to constituency, polling booths, and demographic information.

Opposition parties refused to buy the EC's arguments on EPIC numbers and are now set to create a fresh furore in the House over it. Congress and TMC both are expected to raise the issue collectively in the House.



Another issue that is likely to reverberate strongly in the House—includes delimitation and the three-language policy.

The DMK MPs are likely

to escalate their opposition on multiple matters including delimitation and three-language policy. While Congress has remained largely neutral on the issue, the DMK is likely

to up the ante and corner the dispensation, claiming that it was the Centre's 'cruel' attempt to impose Hindi on the state.

In a meeting of MPs led

by DMK chief MK Stalin on Sunday, the party also passed a resolution against the delimitation exercise, which it said should be at the centre of debate in the Parliament, starting on Monday.

However, for the government, the passage of the Waqf bill remains its top priority.

The concern was echoed by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, who recently said that the bill will address many problems of the community and make their lives easier. The JPC report on the Waqf Bill was submitted in the first half of the Budget Session, amid vociferous protests by the Opposition.

The first part of the Budget session of Parliament took place from 31 January to 13 February.

The second leg of the Budget session will commence on Monday (10 March) and conclude on 4 April.

India will always be at the forefront of protecting animals: Narendra Modi

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH



Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that blessed with wildlife diversity, India would always be at the forefront of protecting animals and contributing to the sustenance of the planet.

The prime minister made the statement on social media quoting a post of Union Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav that informed that the country added its 58th Tiger Reserve with the latest entrant from Madhya Pradesh's Madhav Tiger Reserve.

"Amazing news for wildlife lovers! India is blessed with wildlife diversity and a culture that celebrates wildlife. We will always be at the forefront of protecting animals and contributing to a sustainable planet," Modi wrote on X.

Earlier in a post on X, the Environment Minister said: "58th roar and counting. With historic emphasis laid

on restoring the ecological diversity on planet Earth by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, India continues to make great strides in environmental protection and wildlife conservation. Thrilled to announce that the country has added the 58th Tiger Reserve to its tally with the latest entrant being Madhya Pradesh's Madhav Tiger Reserve."

He said this is Madhya Pradesh's 9th Tiger Reserve. Congratulating all wildlife lovers and conservationists, Yadav said the development is a testament to the relentless efforts of the forest officials who are selflessly working towards the cause.

India condemns vandalism at temple in California, seeks stringent action

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

India on Sunday termed as 'despicable' the vandalism at a Hindu temple in California and asked the local enforcement agencies to take stringent action against those responsible for it.

In a statement, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "We have seen reports regarding the vandalism at a Hindu temple in Chino Hills, California. We condemn such despicable acts in the strongest terms. We call upon the local law enforcement authorities to take stringent action against those responsible for these acts, and also ensure adequate security to places of

worship."

His statement came following reports that a BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, one of the largest Hindu temples, located in Chino Hills, California, was vandalised with "anti-India" messages on Sunday.

The official page of BAPS for the United States shared the details of the incident on the social media platform X, saying that they will "never let hate take root" and that peace and compassion shall prevail.

In a post on X, BAPS Public Affairs wrote: "In the face of another Mandir desecration, this time in Chino Hills, CA, the Hindu community stands steadfast against hate. Together with the community in Chino Hills and Southern California,

we will never let hate take root. Our common humanity and faith will ensure that peace and compassion prevail."

Notably, the Chino Hills Police Department has yet to issue an official statement regarding the incident. The Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA), also shared details of the incident on X, and said the desecration of the iconic BAPS Temple in California comes ahead of the "so-called Khalistan referendum" in Los Angeles.

The 'anti-Hindu' messages included phrases such as 'Hindus go back', 'alarming the local Hindu community. In response, the community expressed its commitment to standing united against hatred.

Jaishankar inaugurates new Indian Consulate in Manchester

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Inaugurating a new Consulate General of India in Manchester, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said the mission symbolises the importance of the growing Diaspora in the region and a sign of things to come, including an India-UK Free Trade Agreement.

"We look at the free trade agreement not simply as a trade or even investment understanding between us, but as something much bigger, really a game changer, a symbolic shift to a higher orbit of relationship," he said.

Mr Jaishankar said his first visit to Manchester, in a formal way, is an acknowledgement of how much the India-UK relationship has matured in the last four

decades.

He said he sees the new Consulate as preparing for a very big pickup in bilateral ties. "This is not just an office we have opened, it is really an investment in a relationship on which we have very high hopes. We certainly hope it would spur more trade and investment and education and technology related activities," he added.

The minister, who also addressed the Indian community in Manchester, said he does not think any Prime Minister has invested as much in the relationship with the Diaspora as Mr Narendra Modi has done. "The importance, the concern, the value that we put on the Diaspora as a connect to the world, this wonderful term living bridge, I think is something



really extraordinary. And it's not just an emotion, I think there is a deep understanding behind that and understanding that in many ways it is the diaspora which shapes the image of India across the world," he added.

Mr Jaishankar told the Diaspora that a lot is hap-

pening in India. Some of it also gets reflected in India's relationships abroad. "One of the developments with respect to the UK, incidentally, is we set up centres to help those in difficulties. It is called Pravasi Bharatiya Sahayata Kendras. And the first one, which we are doing

actually in this part of the world, is in the UK. I think we are officially inaugurating it today, or maybe by announcing it," he added.

Mr Jaishankar said the Diaspora is one of India's priorities. "The other thinking has really been in the field of trade. That trade in a larger sense, trade, technology, exchanges of people, that we today understand the importance of globalising. We are not always happy about globalisation. We would like to make it fairer. But at the end of the day for us, the world is full of opportunities than of challenges. When India looks at the world, it looks at the world confidently. That may not always be the case for everybody else, but that's their problem," he added.

As Hindutva's trinity gathers in Bihar, RJD returns to Mandal politics

IMRAN MOJIB
PATNA, 9 MARCH



As the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is trying to set the political battlefield through visits of Hindutva leaders ahead of Bihar assembly elections, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) has given clear indication of returning to Mandal politics to counter the BJP's plan.

The simultaneous presence of three big faces of Hindutva, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat, Bageshwar Baba Acharya Dharendra Shastri and Sri Sri Pandit Ravi Shankar in Bihar hasn't gone unnoticed. The Mahagathbandhan leaders have called it politically motivated, while the BJP is not seeing politics in it. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal (United) is silent.

To counter it, the RJD leaders have decided to raise the reservations issue more forcefully. The party has been blaming the NDA government in Bihar of depriving the unemployed youth of backward, extremely backward, Dalit and the tribal society by ignoring their legitimate demand to increase the reservation limit to 65 per cent.

On Sunday, the RJD organised a day-long dharna in

Patna to protest against the NDA government's policy.

Addressing the protestors, Leader of Opposition Tejashwi Prasad Yadav said that the 17-month-old Mahagathbandhan government had increased the reservation limit from 49.5 per cent to 65 per cent. The Mahagathbandhan government had also sent a proposal to include it in the 9th Schedule of the Centre.

He said: "The BJP-led central government did not include it in the 9th Schedule, consequently unemployed youth of the backward, extremely backward, Dalit and the tribal society have been deprived of 16 per cent reservation. By ignoring our demand, they have been stealing the fortune of these youth. The BJP-Nitish government has deprived people of about 50,000 jobs so far."

The RJD leader said that his party has been closely monitoring the issue which is currently pending in the Supreme Court. He said: "But we will not sit silently waiting for the court's decision indefinitely. We will raise the issue everywhere, from the roads to the House, and will not let the NDA government steal the rights of our youth."

WSDS 2025 calls for collaborative and inclusive approach for climate action

ASHA RAMACHANDRAN
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH



An urgent collective action, leading to partnerships among various stakeholders is the need of the hour to address the multifaceted challenges facing the world today, an international summit organised by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) here this week has underscored.

Living up to its theme, "Partnerships for Accelerating Sustainable Development and Climate Solutions", the three-day World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) 2025 that concluded on Friday (7 March), highlighted the critical role of collaborative partnerships in addressing complex sustainability challenges and environmental concerns.

The challenges confronting the world are complex and interconnected, necessitating collective action on an unprecedented scale, the summit underscored. Part-

nerships hold the key to addressing the issues by accelerating problem-solving and fostering implementation, the participants felt.

"Sustainable development serves as a bridge between two epistemic communities—the development community and the environmental community," said Mr Nitin Desai, Chairman, TERI, as he underscored the necessity of sustained dialogue among diverse stakeholders to drive long-term environmental and developmental impact. "This, in essence, is the real challenge of sustainability: How can we achieve development while also protecting the environment? It's not an easy task."

In his inaugural address,

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupendra Yadav reaffirmed India's commitment to environmental stewardship and sustainability. He reiterated the need to confront the issue of speciesism, which, like racism, prioritizes human interests over the well-being of other species and ecosystems.

"True sustainability can only be achieved when all forms of life are considered equally important and when environmental policies account for the protection and restoration of wildlife and biodiversity," he emphasised. Collaborations for fostering environmental sustainability is not an option,

rather it is a necessity. The time to act is NOW."

Speaking along the same lines, the Prime Minister of Guyana, Brigadier (Retd) Mark Phillips, underscored the pivotal role of international partnerships in addressing sustainability challenges. Delivering the keynote address at the inaugural session, he stated, "Guyana stands as a testament to leadership, partnerships, and convergence in the pursuit of sustainability. In Guyana, growth does not come at the expense of environmental sustainability."

Brazil's Minister of Environment and Climate Change Marina Silva also stressed the urgency of global cooperation in tackling climate change. She commented in her keynote address, "As we move towards COP30, we must accelerate the implementation of the commitments made in Dubai and Baku. We must advance on our transitions from fossil fuels while stepping up on climate finance."

T E N D E R

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-TENDER NOTICE
E-Tender Ref No. : WBIDC/IP/Daks/ SDF/2025/2
E-tender Id-2025_WBIDC_824656_1
WBIDCL invites e-tender for Selection of consultant for a new SDF building at Gems & Jewellery park, Ankurhati, Howrah regarding preparation of detailed project report with master plan, architectural and structural design, drawings, bill of quantities, vetting, building sanction, preparation of bid document for selection of contractor and PMC during construction through e-tendering and bid evaluation by quality & cost based selection procedure. Details are available at www.wbtenders.gov.in ICA-TS2423/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Tender Notice of DH&FW Dept
Memo No. of NIT-DH&FW/HPH/DPMU/570 dt. 05-03-2025 and
Tender ID-2025_HFW_824304_1
e-Tender is hereby invited from intending bidders for the "Vehicle on hire basis." Bid submission closing date: 24.03.25 at 01:00 pm. Other details may be seen from the website: <https://wbtenders.gov.in> and office notice board. Sd/- CMOH & Member Secretary, DH&FWs, Rampurhat HD, Govt. of West Bengal. ICA-TS2321/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-TENDER NOTICE
The Superintendent of Raghunathpur Subsidiary Correctional Home, WB for and on behalf of the Governor of WB, invites e-tender for supply of dietary articles at Raghunathpur Subsidiary Correctional Home for the period from 01.04.2025 to 30.09.2025. Tender Inviting Notice No. 02/RAGHUNATHPUR/TN-2025 dated 19.02.2025. Date of documents download starts: 10.03.2025 at 11:00 hrs. Last date of submission of tender: 17.03.2025 by 18:00 hrs. Full particulars may be had from the website www.wbtenders.gov.in "The ADG & IG of Correctional Services, West Bengal reserves the rights to cancel any or all the tenders without showing any reason" Sd/- Raghunathpur Subsidiary Correctional Home, W.B. ICA-TS2202/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
Abridged Tender Notice
e-NIT No-WBIM/EE/ADP/NT-136el/2024-25
Online Tenders are hereby invited by the undersigned on behalf of the Governor of W.B. from the bonafide agencies for 10 nos work related to repairing of RCC/wooden/tubular truss bridge, construction of pump well, temporary barricade, restoration of damaged embk. etc. under Madhyamgram, Kamarhati, Panihati, Khardak, Halisahar & North Dum Dum Municipalities, Bidhanagar Municipal Corporation and Barasat-II, Barrackpore-I, Rajarhat Block amounting from Rs. 1,31,958.00 to Rs. 7,70,109.00. Last date of online Bid Submission for Tender is 17.03.2025 till 2:00 pm. Other details may be seen in the websites: www.wbtenders.gov.in & www.wbmlwd.gov.in and also the office of the undersigned. Sd/-Supratim Roy, Executive Engineer, Urban Drainage Divn., I&W Dte., Govt. of W.B. ICA-TS2182/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
KMDA TENDER NOTICE
e-NIT No. KMDA/GAP/SE(N)/NIT-04/2024-25
Online e-Tender is invited by The Superintending Engineer, North Circle, GAP Wing, W&S Sector, KMDA, Block-D, 1st Floor, Unnayan Bhawan, Kolkata-700091, from reliable, resourceful, bona fide and experienced firms / companies / individual contractors, for the work, Name of Work, Estimated Amount, Earnest Money, Time of Completion, Construction of approach Road for disposal of sludge generated in Sewage Treatment Plants of Bhatapara Municipal Area in the new dumping ground located at Mouza-Madrail near 10 MLD, WSP STP of the Bhatapara Sewerage project work and BMVA playground., Rs.49,62,550/-, Rs.99,251/-, through online as per the System, 03 Months, Last date & time of online Bid submission: 19.04.2025, Time: 15:00 hrs., for details contact the above office or visit both websites. www.kmda.wb.gov.in (KMDA-1255) www.wbtenders.gov.in ICA-TS2130/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation Limited.
(A Govt. of West Bengal Undertaking)
NOTICE INVITING e-QUOTATION
NIQ No. 63/WBTDCL OF 2024-25
(Technical)
Tender ID-2025_WBTDCL_825231_1
WBTDCL invites e-Tender for the work: "Supply and installation of 43 inch and 55 inch LED Color Television including necessary arrangements at Moorti Tourism Property, in the dist. of Jalpaiguri." From the reputed, bonafide and experienced agencies in similar works. Start date & time of documents download: 08.03.2025 - 16:30 Hrs. Last date & time of Bid Submission: 26.03.2025 - 15:00 Hrs. Details are available in website: wbtdcl.wbtourism.gov.in / wbtenders.gov.in Sd/- Superintending Engineer, West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation Limited ICA-TS2434/2025

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
THE DURGAPUR PROJECTS LIMITED
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
CIN No. U40102WB196150025250
NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)
Date Extension NIT No.(1) WBIDL/PP/T/GM/PP-12013(12)/79/2024/BMD/ E/306 Dated 14.02.2025 Tender ID: 2025_DPL_815985_1. Bid Submission end date 18.03.2025 Bid Opening Date 21.03.2025. Date Extension NIT No.(2) WBIDL/PP/T/GM/PP-12013(12)/86/2024/BMD/E/308 Dated 14.02.2025. Tender ID: 2025_DPL_816002_1. Bid Submission end date 18.03.2025 Bid Opening Date 21.03.2025. Tender ID: 2025_DPL_816035_1. Bid Submission end date 18.03.2025. Bid Opening Date 21.03.2025. Date Extension NIT No.(4) WBIDL-12018(12)/47-2025-GM-POW(DPL)-DPL/TS/E-316. Dated 20.02.2025. Tender ID: 2025_DPL_817997_1. Bid Submission end date 13.03.2025 Bid Opening Date 20.03.2025 Bid Opening Date 20.03.2025. Date Extension NIT No.(5) WBIDL-13.059/11/2025-GM-POW(DPL)-DPL/WWE/E-317 Dated 20.02.2025. Tender ID: 2025_DPL_818035_1. Bid Submission end date 13.03.2025. Bid Opening Date 20.03.2025. Visit <https://wbtenders.gov.in> or www.dpl.net.in ICA-TS2212/2025

WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION COMPANY LIMITED
(A Govt. of West Bengal Enterprise)
Regd. Office: Vidyal Bhawan, Block-DJ, Sector-4, Bidhanagar, Kolkata - 700 091
CIN: U40109WB1907500113472. www.wbsecl.in
WBSECL invites e-Tender as follows:
NIT No.: WBSECL/TCFHP/e-Tender/2024-25/15 (Sl. No.2). Dt.: 04.03.2025 of the Project Manager, TCFHP, WBSECL. Estimated Cost: ₹ 9,42,636/- for 'Repair & maintenance of glass windows with Aluminium glazed fixed and sliding windows of Powerhouse building of Power Station-4, TCFHP at Lousipukur, WBSECL'. ICA-TS2281/2025
For details, visit <https://wbtenders.gov.in> & www.wbsecl.in

WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY TRANSMISSION COMPANY LIMITED
(A Government of West Bengal Enterprise)
Registered Office: Vidyal Bhawan, Block-DJ, Sector-4, Bidhanagar, Kolkata-700 091
CIN: U40109WB1907500113474 • web: www.wbsecl.in
NIT No.: BAO/Tender/Civil/06/2024-25 Date: 10.03.2025
E-Tender is invited for construction of boundary wall (rest portion) with allied works at Berhampore 132 KV sub-station colony complex under Berhampore Area Office. Bid documents can be downloaded from 10.03.2025, 06:00 P.M. and bids shall be submitted online up to 03:00 P.M., 21.04.2025. ICA-TS2122/2025
Visit the following websites- www.wbtenders.gov.in, www.wbsecl.in for details.

GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL
e-TENDER NOTICE
1) Bid reference no. - WBMSCL/NIT-191/2025, dated - 05/03/2025; West Bengal Medical Services Corporation Ltd. is inviting online bids for "Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of extension work of Medical Gas Pipeline System (MGPS) at Gynae OT - 1, 2, 3 & 4 including patient triage area and Labour HDU in NBMCH of West Bengal." Last date of submission of bid (online) - 24.03.2025 up to 02.00 pm. The tender document can be downloaded from www.wbtenders.gov.in on or after 02.00 pm on 08.03.2025. Clarification requests, if any may be sent to cme@wbmsc.gov.in 2) Bid reference no. - WBMSCL/NIT-192/2025, dated - 05/03/2025; West Bengal Medical Services Corporation Ltd. is inviting online bids for "Design, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of Medical Gas Pipeline System (MGPS) at Surgical & Trauma Care building in Alipurdur DH of West Bengal." Last date of submission of bid (online) - 24.03.2025 upto 02.00 pm. The tender document can be downloaded from www.wbtenders.gov.in on or after 02.00 pm on 08.03.2025. Clarification requests, if any may be sent to cme@wbmsc.gov.in 3) Bid reference no. - WBMSCL/NIT-193/2025, dated - 05/03/2025; West Bengal Medical Services Corporation Ltd. is inviting online bids for "Design, Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation & Maintenance of Medical Gas Pipeline System (MGPS) at new covid building in Coochbehar District Hospital, Coochbehar." Last date of submission of bid (online) - 24.03.2025 upto 02.00 pm. The tender document can be downloaded from www.wbtenders.gov.in on or after 02.00 pm on 08.03.2025. Clarification requests, if any may be sent to cme@wbmsc.gov.in Sd/- General Manager, WBMSCL. ICA-TS2330/2025

Market Reckoning

The Indian middle class has witnessed a financial revolution in recent years. Encouraged by a booming stock market, low-cost digital platforms, and aggressive financial influencers, millions of households have moved their savings from traditional bank deposits to equities. But the recent stock market downturn – wiping out nearly a trillion dollars in investor value – has exposed the risks of this shift. For many first-time investors, the dream of high returns has turned into an uneasy reality of losses and uncertainty. This market correction is not just a temporary dip; it reflects deeper structural issues. Foreign investors have pulled back, valuations have been stretched, and corporate earnings have been weaker than expected. The shifting global economic climate – marked by geopolitical instability, shifting trade policies, and capital outflows – has only compounded the problem. Unlike previous market crashes that had clear recovery paths, today’s uncertainty makes the middle-class investor particularly vulnerable. At the heart of the crisis is a fundamental misunderstanding of risk. India’s middle class has historically relied on conservative savings methods – fixed deposits, provident funds, and gold. The rapid adoption of stock market investments, driven by the rise of Systematic Investment Plans (SIPs) and social media influencers, has exposed many investors to volatility without adequate knowledge of how markets function. For years, stocks delivered strong returns, reinforcing the belief that equities were a guaranteed path to wealth. But markets do not move in a straight line. Many new investors, lured by the excitement of financial influencers and WhatsApp stock tips, entered the market without fully understanding the risks involved. Some even borrowed money to invest, chasing short-term gains. Now, as stocks decline, they face painful choices – either exit at a loss or wait in hope of a recovery that may take years. For those who have staked their retirement savings or their children’s education funds on the market, this downturn has been a rude shock. India’s economic challenges have further aggravated the impact of this correction. Middle-class incomes have been under pressure due to slow wage growth and rising inflation. White-collar job opportunities are not expanding fast enough and private investment remains sluggish. In such a scenario, stock market losses are harder to absorb. Unlike wealthier investors who can ride out the volatility, the middle class does not have a financial cushion. This crisis should serve as a lesson in financial literacy. Stock markets are not a shortcut to riches; they require long-term discipline and risk management. Investors must understand that equity investments should only involve surplus funds that are not needed in the short term. Regulatory bodies must step up efforts to curb reckless financial advice on digital platforms that promote high-risk investments to inexperienced investors. Despite the turmoil, there is hope. Market cycles are natural, and corrections eventually give way to recoveries. But for India’s middle-class investors, this moment should prompt a more cautious and informed approach to wealth-building. The focus must shift from speculation to security.

Tariff Chaos

The recent back-and-forth on tariffs imposed by the US on Canadian and Mexican goods underscores the unpredictability of President Donald Trump’s trade policies. Within days of enforcing sweeping duties, the administration has rolled back significant portions, offering targeted exemptions. While this move provides temporary relief for businesses struggling with supply chain disruptions, the strategy remains chaotic, raising concerns about long-term economic stability. At the heart of the issue is Mr Trump’s belief that tariffs serve as a tool to protect American industries and bolster domestic manufacturing. However, history has shown that protectionist policies rarely produce intended results. Instead of revitalising local production, tariffs often lead to higher costs for businesses and consumers alike. With complex supply chains crisscrossing North America, duties on raw materials and finished goods inevitably raise prices, making American industries less competitive rather than more resilient. The exemptions granted under the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) reflect an implicit acknowledgment of this economic reality. Critical imports such as automobiles, agricultural products, and potash have been spared from the harshest tariff measures, likely in response to lobbying from industry leaders. Yet, this selective approach does little to dispel the uncertainty surrounding US trade policy. If businesses cannot predict whether tariffs will be imposed or lifted at a moment’s notice, planning for the future becomes nearly impossible. Canada and Mexico have responded differently to Mr Trump’s maneuvering. Canadian leaders have signaled frustration, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau warning of a prolonged trade conflict. Mexico, under President Sheinbaum, has taken a more diplomatic stance, opting to engage in negotiations while addressing shared security concerns. These contrasting approaches reveal how Mr Trump’s tariff policies are reshaping diplomatic relations in North America. While the US retains economic leverage, its erratic decision-making weakens trust and could push its neighbours to seek alternative trade alliances. The economic consequences of these policies are already visible. Trade volumes between the three nations remain high, but businesses are adjusting their strategies to minimise exposure to sudden tariff hikes. Some firms are accelerating import shipments ahead of anticipated restrictions, while others are exploring ways to claim duty-free exemptions under USMCA. In the long run, these disruptions could incentivise companies to diversify supply chains away from the US, reducing American economic influence rather than strengthening it. Beyond North America, Mr Trump’s tariff strategy signals a broader return to economic nationalism. His administration has hinted at expanding trade barriers beyond Canada and Mexico, with promises of “reciprocal” duties on other nations. If this pattern continues, it risks triggering wider retaliatory measures, ultimately harming the very industries tariffs are meant to protect. In the short term, businesses may welcome the recent exemptions as a reprieve from economic turmoil. However, the fundamental problem remains – trade policy driven by political calculation rather than economic logic creates instability. As the US moves ahead with its agenda, it must recognise global economic leadership is built on trust and consistency.

Curse of Capitalism

Where once senior doctors on grand rounds held up patient charts for groups of students to scrutinize and learn from; we now have hospital administrative staff holding up excel sheets with graphs depicting departmental earnings and ‘educating’ doctors, nudging them to not ignore fiscal responsibilities to the hospital

Capitalism, the ‘saviour of the free world,’ was touted as an economic paradigm that incentivised effort, encouraged barter and most crucially, brought power back into the deserving hands of the masses of regular, hard-working people. Sadly, many of these objectives have not been achieved. Moreover, capitalism has generated some popular narratives and engendered ways of living and thinking that bear significant re-examination.

Power has once again become concentrated in fewer hands than ever before. A handful of corporate megaliths use their economic clout to stifle competition, effectively discouraging diversity. Additionally, the non-level playing field thus created even blunts the pace of their own research, turning innovators into mere mass producers.

For example, a well-known chip manufacturer, once admired for dynamically improving computer processing speeds, lazily plateaued into monotonously releasing slightly better versions of the same chip every year once they gained a sizable monopoly. Some tech mega brands that dominate the market coast comfortably every quarter more on the class consciousness of their loyal users rather than genuine upgrades of their products over time.

Even revolutionary technology like the large language models of AI was deeply influenced by market forces. A small cartel controlled the research which was as expensive as it was exclusive. It took a small start-up from China to shake things up. By providing a version that was a fraction of the cost and freely available to everyone, they totally changed the narrative.

Capitalism justifies its own ideas and actions, while blaming others:

The key ingredient to a fruitful business idea, as many executives will say, is ‘solving a common problem.’ Capitalism sometimes can create a problem, partially solve it to feign progress, and generate a new problem along the way. We notice how big firms in developed nations outsource production to third world countries, availing cheap labour rates and thus increasing their profits. They are welcomed by the officialdom in these countries on the premise that jobs are being created locally. However, these jobs are quite basic and often exploitative (underage workers, unsatisfactory working conditions etc.).

Ironically, these profit-hungry megaliths are not accused of taking away valuable jobs from their own country by outsourcing. Rather, the spotlight falls on foreign immigrants to their country – these are blamed for usurping local jobs. In fact, much of the employment taken up by these immigrants is that which local people shy away from doing.

The lenses and metrics capitalism chooses to view overall economic progress ignores important nuances. One would think, rationally, that the indicator of a strong economy is the ability of the common man to sustain himself financially. When we look at India’s economic prosperity through the lens of GDP growth, it is easy to think that we are doing extremely well –



due to the huge turnover of corporate powerhouses. However, this measuring tool masks the pitiable living circumstances for the myriad poor and thus is not very reliable.

Capitalism has somehow normalised the discrepancy between senior managers of companies on business trips being put up at five-star hotels after journeying by business class and masons and bricklayers not getting even a decent dormitory to sleep in when they cross state boundaries to work.

The narratives spawned by the big fish portray themselves in glowing terms while being a little derogatory about the smaller players. Robust small size enterprises are pejoratively termed ‘mom and pop’ shops. On the other hand, big conglomerates confer on themselves epithets like ‘unicorns,’ when they could well be labelled ‘King Kong’ enterprises (that destroy others in their path) for example. Likewise, NGOs sourcing funds (to help others) are dismissively deemed to be ‘begging’ for funds yet regular business companies pitching for funds (for their personal growth and profits) are painted as brave warriors who tamed the ‘sharks.’

Capitalism weaves itself into processes and subverts healthy trends: Capitalism is slowly seeping into various professional ecosystems and modifying them in ways that could be unsuitable. Take the world of medicine for example. Rather than concentrating mainly on professional excellence and service with a smile, corporate hospitals are increasingly focusing on going deluxe. The outcome of hospitals simulating destination resorts comes at the cost of raised tariffs, out of the reach of many.

The content of medical literature is also changing, with the incorporation of heavy amounts of (to my mind) unnecessary economic data. When we were young medical students, the articles written focused chiefly on the disease entity itself. Nowadays, there seems to be a requirement to write about the economic implications of diseases and interventions. Is this necessary? Is the impact on the GDP an appropriate focus for students reading journals to learn the medical nuances of diseases?



ing disease is not on a list of pre-approved conditions. Doctors who take conservative approaches to diseases or choose gentler cures that take longer may well be blacklisted by insurance companies who prefer a quick solution or surgery. When did society agree that black suits should hold more power over healthcare decisions than white lab coats?

Capitalism insists that the financial net worth of an individual overrides everything else: Well-wishers and professional psychologists alike tell us of the overriding importance of investing time and effort in nourishing our souls, minds, bodies and becoming self-aware. Then along comes capitalism and persuades you that your bank balance overrides everything else. Many companies have a ruthless professional ethos that dictates employees must first and foremost be robust cogs in the professional wheel – and family, life, health, and liberty are lower on the rung of importance, firmly below corporate targets. Clearly, capitalism has managed to trick us into believing that a rich slave is somehow freer than a poor one.

Gullible executives grossly neglect their personal life and family chasing higher packages and designations in the corporate world. This often does not end well; the executives discover they are professionally dispen-

sable when the company happens to downsize and the people who they have neglected at home for years are not exactly waiting for them with open arms. Capitalism persuades you that you must keep putting the details of your life out there on social media, to build your personal brand.

The bigger the ‘influencer’ you become, the more wealth you could attract. Slowly and surely, rather than products, it is humans who have become the advertisement. We have been persuaded to change our perspective from ‘I think, therefore I am’ (cogito ergo sum) – to ‘I influence therefore I am.’

Focus on money/profits contributes to severe lapses of judgement:

Recent news carried stories of immigrants from third world countries deported back from the US. Amongst these were fellow Indians who sold valuable land, gave staggering sums of money to unscrupulous agents, got into debt, risked getting arrested or killed – all in the belief that it would improve their monetary prospects in the future in the US.

Such is the illusion of success created by capitalism that it makes people leave the priceless comfort of home, family, and friends, and take a difficult gamble on making it big in a foreign land – likely after years of more sacrifice and struggle.

What is not clearly thought out, is that if the same vast sums of money were invested in the home country itself, the immigrant would have a likely chance of economic success here itself, in some form or another, while simultaneously being on more predictable and familiar territory along with the benefit of familial support.

It is a similar desperation for profit that has often brought out the inhumane side of supervisors in charge of factory or agricultural workers. In Beed, Maharashtra, for example, you may have read of the harrowing tales of women workers forced by their contractors to undergo hysterectomies (often in unhygienic, unsafe conditions) just so that they do not have to take a day or two off from work during their periods.

Rather than promote true merit as envisioned, capitalism has instead somehow spawned an environment where the act of generating profits (by hook or by crook) is itself deemed excellence. There seems to be no end goal with capitalism.

Considering the failings of capitalism, it is important to question some of its entrenched narratives. At an individual level, we can surely try and lead our lives on a much broader scale than that envisioned through the narrow pecuniary confines of Capitalism.

As far as governments are concerned, they must put humans before banknotes. Much like the land ceilings which got rid of the Zamindari system, regulatory adjustments can put healthy limits on mega capitalism (e.g. no single entity can own more than 10 per cent market share) to encourage other players and strictly monitor monopolies and restrictive trade practices. Not getting unduly influenced by the profit-oriented outlook of capitalism is what will truly enrich mankind.

ASIAN VOICES

Preparing for a zombie attack

In the United States in 2011, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued an instructional guide for how to prepare for a “zombie apocalypse.” Coincidentally in April 2011, the US Defense Department issued a “secret” document titled CONOP 8888 otherwise known as “Counter-Zombie Dominance” that provided strategic instructions for how to survive a zombie attack.

You might think that these were produced for fun, but it turns out that preparing for a zombie attack is remarkably similar to preparing for other natural and human-caused disasters. Given the rise in natural disasters due to climate change, continued conflict between North and South Korea and the destabilization of the political climate in the US and globally, it’s a good time to review these recommendations.

In terms of the military document, according to a 2011 article in the news publication Foreign Policy, planners in the US Strategic Command in Omaha, Nebraska, wanted to produce a guide for the military to protect civilians in the event of any type of attack.

However, for fear of offending any existing nation or group, they decided to avoid any hypothetical situations involving real entities and opted for planning for a zombie attack. The only risk is that zombies might get mad at the US military. Six phases of military actions are listed. The zero phase is

The Korea Herald

“Shape,” where the military learns about zombies and supports civil authorities. Phase 1, which is actually the second phase, is “Deter.” Phase 2 is “Seize Initiative.” Phase 3 is “Dominate.” Phase 4 is “Stabilize.” Finally, Phase 5 is “Restore Civil Authority.” Each of these phases have sections that offer an offensive strategy, defensive strategy and support to civil authorities.

Moreover a variety of plans are offered for different type of zombies including: (1) pathogenic zombies (virus or bacteria or other types of contagion); (2) radiation zombies; (3) evil magic zombies (occult experiments); (4) space zombies (those from outer space or from some type of contamination of our planet); (5) weaponized zombies (created for weapons); (6) symbiant-induced zombies (zombies formed by a symbiotic life form that latches onto a host); (7) vegetarian zombies (zombies that might be destructive but no direct threat to humans; and (8) chicken zombies (apparently this is a real thing). What might be more useful to the average citizen is the CDC guide to how to survive a zombie attack. Its full title is “Preparedness 101: Zombie Pandemic.”

First, one should prepare an emergency kit with water, nonperishable food, a first aid kit, medications and other supplies that would support you and your family for a few days. This includes supplies for our furry family members. It is also useful to have extra cash, your passport and driver’s license. A hand-crank radio is a must if the power goes out. Next you should have an emergency plan and a meeting place in the event that you and your family become separated. One of these can be in a location in your house perhaps the basement?

Another might be one that is in your neighborhood. An evacuation plan is also important and multiple routes out of danger are even better. My tip would be to keep your car with a full tank of gas or full battery.

Of course, sometimes the safest place is inside your house. Certainly, we’ve learned this from movies where the victims lock themselves in a house (“Night of the Living Dead,” 1968), missile silo (“Day of the Dead,” 1985), shopping mall (“Dawn of the Dead,” 2004), apartment building (“Happiness,” 2021 or “Sweet Home,” 2020), or school (“All of Us are Dead,” 2022). Of course, sometimes they are stuck on a train, as in the classic “Train to Busan” (2016).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Conundrum

SIR, I refer to the three-part article “Fatuous Sagacity” by Parimal Brahma published in these columns. I am neither an academic nor an economist. Over the last 40 years many tasks done



by human workers was largely attributable to men without college degrees but today those jobs are done through automation. Companies interested in being competitive in international trade are investing heavily in machines and AI technologies to replace workers, benefitting a tiny number of people. Economists talk of “trickledown economics” but that has been upended as “Vacuum up” economics.

Earlier the claim was that technological progress created far more jobs than it destroyed. With the rise of robots and AI technologies more and more jobs are being gobbled up.

Today’s jobs pay inadequately and do not offer reasonable

security. If people lose jobs and are uncertain of the jobs they now hold or the incomes they earn, how does that benefit society at large on whom the whole manufacturing or service industry depends. Our erudite economists should be addressing this conundrum.

To quote the late Robert Fuoss, ex-Magazine Editor of the now defunct Saturday Evening Post: “An economist is person who lectures on Capital and labour. And the baffling thing that most of them qualified for this career by having no capital and having done no labour”.

Yours, etc.,
H N Ramakrishna,
Bengaluru, 7 March.

PRESS FREEDOM

SIR, The Madras High Court did well to pass an interim order, directing the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to temporarily unblock the website of the popular Tamil weekly Ananda Vikatan, since the magazine had recently carried a cartoon in its online issue featuring a shackled Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting with the US President Donald Trump. In fact, the move to block the website of the magazine was widely criticized by the media fraternity, as it was done reportedly without issuing any notice.

As the media is the voice of the people, the satirical cartoon only reflects public sentiment at large on Mr. Modi’s apparent silence over the treatment of Indian nationals deported by the Trump administration. Taking such an action on a prestigious media group on the basis of a mere political complaint is certainly an attack on press freedom.

Yours, etc., Ranganathan Sivakumar,
Chennai, 8 March.



Trade with Pakistan can help achieve 2047 goal

SUNIL SHARAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants India to become an advanced nation by 2047, exactly a hundred years after Independence. He came to power in 2014 promising double-digit economic growth in India, which is what he had achieved when he was the chief minister of Gujarat. Ironically, it was the previous government of Manmohan Singh, which over its tenure of 10 years had achieved a 10 per cent average annual growth rate.

But the Singh government dissolved into a miasma of scams and corruption. Growth in 2014, its last year in office, was only about 6 per cent. This is about the average annual growth rate that Modi has been able to achieve in his own 10 years in office.

For the purposes of our analysis, the benchmark advanced country is presumed to be the United States. The United States current nominal GDP per capita (taken as an average of IMF and World Bank figures) is about \$90,000. Because the US economy is utilized as the basis to calculate PPP (purchasing power parity, which takes into account cost of living), its PPP GDP per capita is also \$90,000. It is assumed for this analysis that the US GDP per capita will stay the same, i.e. \$90,000 in 2047.

India's current nominal GDP per capita is \$2,500, and its PPP GDP per capita is \$11,000. If India grows at its current growth rate of 6.5 per cent, then its nominal GDP per capita in 2047 will be approximately \$10,000. Its PPP GDP per capita will be nearly \$44,000.

Clearly, a 6.5 per cent growth rate is not enough to catapult India into the league of an advanced nation such as the United States.

At an 8 per cent growth rate, India's nominal GDP per capita in 2047 is about \$14,000 and its PPP GDP per capita is about \$60,000.

Therefore, at an 8 per cent growth rate, India is getting there.

At a 10 per cent growth rate, India's nominal GDP per capita in 2047 jumps to just above \$20,000 while its PPP GDP per capita balloons to approximately \$90,000, catapulting it into the big leagues.

One will note that even a one or two percentage point change in the growth rate has a tremendous effect on the GDP per capita (both nominal as well as PPP). According to various reports, if India fully resumed trade with Pakistan, it could potentially add a significant amount to India's GDP, with estimates ranging from a one to two per cent boost due to increased job creation, reduced costs, and enhanced trade potential, potentially reaching a bilateral trade volume of up to \$37 billion between the two nations, according to the World Bank.

The current level of trade between the two countries is \$1.35 billion, which is minimal when compared to its true potential. We have in effect frozen trade ties between the two countries. The US and Canada are today erecting trade barriers. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has pleaded with the American people that Canadians love them.

That is being economical with the truth. I have lived in Canada, and almost to a man (and woman), I have heard Canadians express their utter disdain for Americans. Yes, Canadians and Americans do not sow terror in each other's territories, nor do they have nukes pointed at each other.

India and Pakistan share a like-hate (as opposed to love-hate) relationship. There is much liking for people on both sides of the border, especially in the two Punjabs, but there is intense hatred between the people as well. We have fought wars, have nukes pointed at each other, and Pakistan instigates terror in India. Pakistan claims that India does the same in Pakistan without giving substantive proof.



If India resumes trade fully with Pakistan, then it should increase its growth rate to about 8 per cent. Of course, Pakistan must ensure that there will be no more 26/11s or Pulwamas. Trade will benefit Pakistan a lot. Cost of living will go down substantially, and Pakistanis will gain access to the vast market that is India. It should also defang the hawks in Pakistan who want to destroy India. Both countries should focus purely on the bottom line. China and India are at loggerheads, yet they trade with each other. Trade has kept tensions at bay.

As noted earlier, Modi has only been able to achieve a 6 per cent growth in office as prime minister. Gujaratis are relentless entrepreneurs, focused only on the bottom line. With the right guidance from Modi, they were able to achieve double-digit growth rates. But much of the rest of India is a contented lot, believing firmly in karma. Modi should completely overhaul his government, including the politicians as well as the bureaucrats, if he wants to achieve a 10 per cent growth rate and thereby make India an advanced country.

Much of the effect of the economic reforms established by Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh has been stunted by creeping over-regulation. Modi must ensure that he gets the best people in positions that concern the economy. If he can leave power by attaining double-digit growth, his legacy in Indian history would be cemented.

(The writer is an expert on energy and contributes regularly to publications in India and overseas.)

100 YEARS AGO

OCCASIONAL NOTE

ON all personal grounds there could be no more popular appointment as temporary Governor of Bengal than that of Sir John Kerr, who is so well known to the province. But presumably the Governor of Assam's leave of absence in England was accorded to him for serious reasons, and in any case his presence in England would have been an advantage both to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State at the time when we are told that the Cabinet will be devoting special consideration to India. There will, therefore, be general surprise that it should have been thought necessary to cancel His Excellency's leave in order that he should act temporarily as the Governor of Bengal. Bengal is not a service Governor's province, and the normal procedure would have been for the Senior Member of the Executive Council to act as Governor at Darjeeling during Lord Lytton's short absence at Simla. As the Senior Member of the Executive Council is an Indian, the Government must be aware that the departure from routine will be deeply felt. On behalf of the European community of Calcutta we think it may be said at once that if this exceptional course has been taken with some idea of meeting its wishes, there is no justification for such a belief. Political leaders of the European community in Calcutta are certainly amongst the staunchest defenders in India of European interests, but they do not like privilege at the expense of an Indian loyalist. It is not by their wish that Sir Abdur Rahim has been ignored. But we must end as we began by saying that Sir John Kerr is an ideal appointment.

NEWS ITEMS

HIGHEST PATRIOTISM

NOT TO DIE BUT TO LIVE FOR ONE'S COUNTRY

Continuing, His Excellency said: — "The young men who are doing work of the kind referred to in this and other reports, are learning the lessons of the highest patriotism, which is to serve. They are laying the firmest foundation on which to build a nation, that is self-reliance. In the literature of all countries in the past, to die for one's country has been represented as the highest patriotism, but there is a higher which has yet to be learnt, and that is to live for one's country. To give health and happiness and life to others may be both more difficult and more honourable than to surrender one's own. A nation cannot be composed exclusively of leaders, for leaders without followers can accomplish nothing. The practical application of this obvious truth must be learnt at school and at college if it is to be learnt at all. What India needs above all to-day is a widespread knowledge of what the nation needs for its health and happiness, and a plentiful supply of men competent to minister to those needs without waiting for direction from above.

"Since I had the pleasure of conferring with the members of your organizations last year, I have myself become more intimately acquainted with two valuable movements which are having a most far-reaching effect upon the public health of the districts in which they operate. The first is the admirable work of the anti-malarial co-operative health societies organized throughout the Province under the inspiration and direction of Rai Gopal Chandra Chatterjee, and the other is the equally remarkable work of the Asansol Mines Board of Health under the direction of Dr. Tomb. I commend these two movements to the special notice of your social service students. If you will study their methods, and learn all you can of the remarkable results which they have achieved, you will, I am sure, derive, as I did, both great enlightenment, and immense encouragement.

"I am tempted here to develop somewhat the topic which I dealt with in my convocation address at Calcutta a fortnight ago. I said then that the University would not be doing its duty to the nation to the full, unless the urge of its stimulus reached right down through the school to the villages, and I pointed out that the nationhood of Bengal could not be built on a foundation of widespread illiteracy. I should like to elaborate my meaning here. Is there one person in Bengal who, honestly facing the facts, can believe that, on the present scale of local and provincial taxation, any real advance in either primary or secondary education is possible? I doubt whether any complete system of education, primary, secondary and university, can be introduced at a much less cost than a sum approaching Rs. 300,00,000 per annum, and, even then, it will be far below the level of the advanced countries of the West, or of Japan.

HIMALAYAN HUNTERS

ROOSEVELT'S SONS TO VISIT INDIA

THEODORE and Kermit, sons of the late President Roosevelt will start on a visit to India in April to explore the Himalayan regions with the object of securing for the Field Museum, Chicago, as many specimens as possible of rare Himalayan birds and mammal's.

IT CAME TO MIND | MANISH NANDY

A fruit to share

My favourite uncle was a country doctor who lived in a large house next to his clinic. He had a large brood of rambunctious children. He also had a large orchard not far from his home that supplied us with an ample harvest of fruits, apples and peaches, oranges and pears – and mangoes. Mangoes! Delicious, divine mangoes, large and small, yellow and orange and red, the food of gods.

My uncle also had a chef who presided over a big kitchen. Aziz was tall and goodlooking, with graying temples. He shaved irregularly, looking rugged and handsome with a two-day growth. I built a good rapport with him. When I visited him in the kitchen, I was rewarded with a sample of whatever he was cooking. To my disappointment, however, he would never let me try the water-pipe he smoked every evening. His unbending dogma: kids and smoking don't go together.

I loved Aziz's kabobs but what I remember most are the afternoons Aziz would unravel from a large crate that arrived from the orchard a profusion of orange-red mangoes. I and my many cousins would sit around on the floor on mats – not to mess with the dining table – and would be served a snack of three to four mangoes, with the assurance of replenish-

ment the moment we had consumed our share. Invariably, I asked and got more. No words can adequately capture the joy of eating those sweet, succulent mangoes, with the benign assurance that one could have more just by waving a hand.

I have gone round the world eating all kinds of fruits. From apples and apricots, grapes and guavas to pears and peaches, tangerines to watermelon. Even the exotic ones I hadn't tasted in my salad days, cherimoya to canary melon, loganberry to loquat, mamoncillo to minneola, pommelo to pulasan, satsuma to soursop, tamarillo to tangelo. But I must confess to my tribal bias: I am yet to find a fruit that can hold a candle to a true-blue mango.

Admittedly, there are mangoes and mangoes. I am told that mangoes, *magnifera indica* as it is technically called, is of two broad types, the Indian type and Southeast Asian type. I am no one to talk knowledgeably about their typology, but my inclination is strongly in favor of the Indian variety produced in West Bengal and Bihar in India and Bangladesh. I remember spirited debates with my World Bank colleague, Tom Pereira, who insisted that Alfonso mangoes from his Goan homeland were the best in the world – many agree with him and there are popular ice-cream

brands named after the fruit – but I find its taste initially tempting but cloyingly sweet in the end. My loyalty was reserved for Langra mangoes from eastern India which have a delicious touch of tanginess along with their sweet allure. These golden delicacies were reportedly blessed by a famous priest who was walking-disabled and came to be called Langra, which in Indian languages means a person who cannot amble. My friend Tom claimed that my choice was 'lame' because I chose a fruit with a distinctly inferior taste.

In any event, my dream of Langra mangoes remained a pipe dream for thirty years since no grocery store in Washington, where I lived, had ever heard of decent mangoes. The first time I saw a decent-looking mango in an elite Georgetown store and quickly bought two specimens. I tasted the first slice with great anticipation, then quickly consigned both mangoes to the trash can, so abhorrent was their taste. I had mentioned my longing to a Bangladesh police chief while we were working together in Haiti in the nineties. Ten years later I was returning home to the US from Singapore, but during the stopover in Dhaka four security officers entered our plane and started a search. When I heard my name, I surrendered and was quickly escorted to the airport security office.



Illustration by Debabrata Chakrabarty

There I found the same police chief inviting me with a broad smile.

"When I saw your name in the flight manifest, I remembered your love for Langra. I had a bunch of the best in my office refrigerator, and I felt I must give you a taste the best that Bangladesh has to offer. Don't worry, my staff will reach you back to your plane in time for your flight to Washington."

On a plate in front of me were four shiny golden mangoes, carefully sliced and artfully arranged. They were indeed divine.

I must say that, in a fast-evolving society like the US, tastes are evolving forever and fast. Now that I live in the gastronomically less-adventurous south, I was amazed to find in a pop-

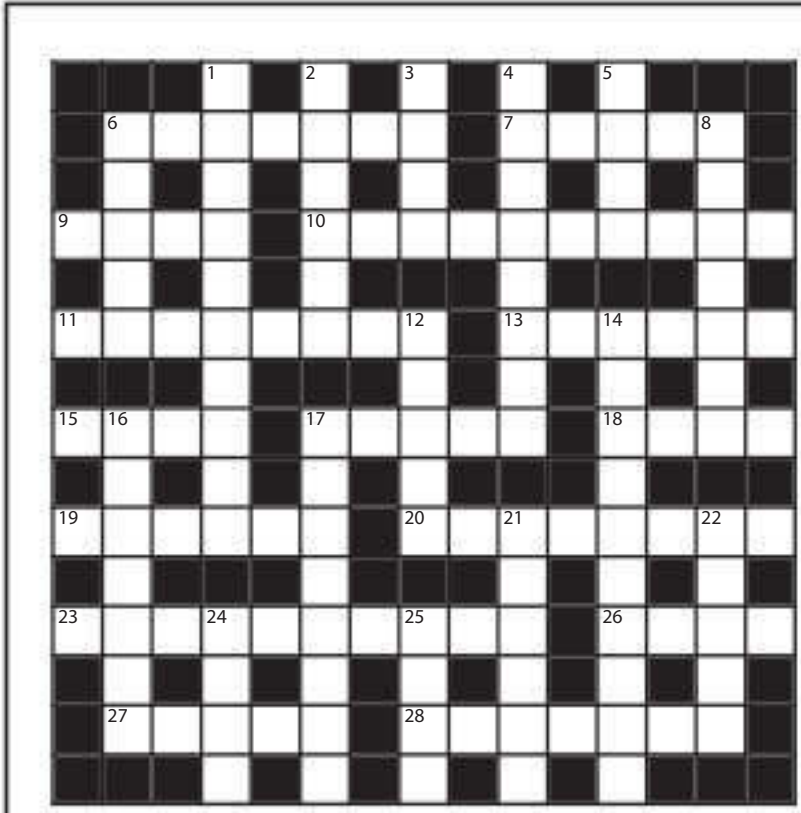
ular store a collection of gorgeous Ataulfo mangoes. I took a chance and bought two dozen of them.

The next morning, I cut open one and tried the first piece with great trepidation. In an instant, my Charleston living room seemed miraculously transformed. I was once again sitting on the floor in my uncle's home, surrounded by noisy cousins, while tall, handsome Aziz stood guard nearby, tasting the miracle of the best fruit in the world. What a lame priest had blessed was still the most moving experience a child and his aging successor could happily share.

(The writer is a US-based international development advisor and had worked with the World Bank. He can be reached at mnandy@gmail.com)

CROSSWORD

NO-293072



SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

SNOBBERY ABSORB
TITAOXYUA
RELICSPECTATOR
IPKEERRRI
DRAUGHTOXINEPT
EITRTAEATO
INJOKE SILLICON
WITUOAH
ARSENIC SUNLIT
SHEDYH
HOKUM PROSECUTE
EUEURIPRAE
DAMPSOUIB REHAB
UPITSOOUL
PUTSCH STARGAZE

ACROSS

- 6 Boom created by this new electronic device (7)
- 7 Crew playing cards (5)
- 9 Obscure Britpop band (4)
- 10 Resort by North Sea where drinkers need to be upright (7,3)
- 11 Terribly phony sibling's alternative therapy (8)
- 13 Final word before one gets shot? (6)
- 15 Simple fellow getting drunk outside (4)

- 17 That lady will shortly launch an attack (5)
- 18 Conservative Minister lacking some guts – he'll be moving sideways (4)
- 19 Indicates number of imperial units (about zero) (6)
- 20 Father guarding old castles on a permanent basis (3,5)
- 23 Pet ate in RSPCA compound (7,3)
- 26 Top of chimney pot caught bird of prey (4)
- 27 Long story: ear needs boxing (5)

- 28 Gary, Indiana football player missing taxi back (7)

DOWN

- 1 Where to see Stanley wince endlessly when visiting Acton (10)
- 2 Head leaves, disparages answers to crossword clues (6)
- 3 Desperate character kidnapping English churchman (4)
- 4 Wicked Caliphs incarcerate Yankee corporal (8)

- 5 Experience uncharitable emotion when taking over from diplomat (4)
- 6 Like a latte? Kind Knut's round! (5)
- 8 Sickly-looking sons touring each city in Wales (7)
- 12 Small hotel, eastern France, pocketing a bundle (5)
- 14 Beccy (bless!) unwrapped cracknel – oddly a Lancs speciality (6,4)
- 16 Oscar and Roger (not Romeo in the end) covering New York's

- peak creative event (7)
- 17 Props up Marx reportedly propping up leaders of Soviet Union (8)
- 21 One helps to observe sulphur being removed from resinous wine (6)
- 22 Might wartime captive start to escape with support from Resistance? (5)
- 24 With which to clean top of orange juice cans (4)
- 25 Battery where bird is served? (4)

NOTE: Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required. (By arrangement with The Independent, London)

Tensions escalate in Manipur amid shutdown in Kuki-dominated areas

The unrest followed clashes between protesters and security forces that left one dead and over 40 injured

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
IMPHAL, 9 MARCH

Violence continued in Manipur for the second day in a row with Kuki-dominated regions of the state witnessing widespread disruptions on Sunday as protesters enforced an indefinite shutdown.

The unrest, particularly intense in Kangpokpi district, followed violent clashes between demonstrators and security forces on Saturday that left one protester dead and over 40 injured.

Demonstrators blocked key roads in Churachandpur and Tengnoupal districts by burning tyres and placing boulders, forcing security personnel to intervene and clear obstructions.

The shutdown left marketplaces deserted, businesses shuttered, and residents confined to their homes as agitators called

for complete participation in the protest.

Additional security forces were deployed in Gangphai and along NH-2 (Imphal-Dimapur Road) to prevent further violence.

The protests were fuelled by discontent over Union Home Minister Amit Shah's recent directive asking the state authorities and security forces to ensure unrestricted movement across Manipur, including regions affected by the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki communities.

Protesters argue that the directive endangers the safety of Kuki-dominated areas, and claim it could escalate hostilities rather than ease tensions.

The situation took a violent turn on Saturday with security forces and demonstrators clashing after the latter attacked a state government bus heading from Imphal towards Senapati



Protesters argue that Amit Shah's directive to ensure free movement endangers the safety of Kuki-dominated areas, and claim it could escalate hostilities rather than ease tensions.

under security escort, resulting in multiple injuries on both sides.

Security officials reported incidence of stone-pelting, catapult attacks, and even gunfire from among the protesters, leading to injuries to 27 personnel, including

two critically wounded. In response, authorities resorted to tear gas and other crowd-control tactics, intensifying the chaos.

The Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF) has voiced strong support for the shutdown, backing the

Kuki-Zo Council in condemning the government's handling of the crisis. It accused security forces of using excessive force to suppress what they described as "legitimate dissent."

The broader ethnic conflict in Manipur that erupted in May 2023 has so far claimed over 260 lives and displaced thousands. The imposition of President's Rule in February was aimed at stabilising the region, yet the violence persists, driven by deep-seated divisions over territorial integrity, resource distribution, and security concerns.

In a bid to curb escalating violence, Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla had extended the deadline for surrendering looted arms until 6 March. The move was part of broader efforts to foster reconciliation, but with tensions running high, achieving lasting peace remains an uphill battle.

Union home secy reviews security in J&K, LG orders enquiry after killing of 3 civilians by terrorists



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, 9 MARCH

In a bid to formulate the strategy to counter the new wave of terrorism in the Jammu region of the union territory of J&K, the Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan chaired high-level meetings with security forces officers here on Sunday.

In a meeting with the top brass of security forces, paramilitary forces and intelligence agencies, he assessed the security situation particularly in the Kathua district that has witnessed a series of terror strikes and civilian killings in recent times.

Kathua district was declared terrorism free a few years ago and revival of militant activities was causing concern among the people and the government.

The Home Secretary's visit follows yesterday's killing of a minor and his two uncles after reportedly being abducted by terrorists from a marriage function in the upper reaches of Bani-Billawar.

On the other hand, Lt. Governor Manoj Sinha ordered a thorough and transparent investigation into the brutal killing of Varun Singh (14) and his uncles Yogesh Singh and

Darshan Singh. "Justice will be ensured and accountability fixed," he wrote on social media platform X.

The Resistance Front, which is an offshoot of the Pakistan based Lashkar-e-Tayaba (LeT) outfit, has reportedly claimed responsibility for the killings.

A complete shutdown was observed today in Bani, Billawar and other adjoining areas of Kathua where the security situation has deteriorated in recent months amid reports that a group of Pakistani terrorists was operating in the higher reaches of the Kathua, Udhampur and Doda districts.

Angry youths on Saturday heckled the independent MLA of Bani, Rameshwar Singh who went to meet the bereaved families at the hospital in Billawar.

This was Home Secretary Govind Mohan's first visit here after taking charge of the Home department. He held two rounds of meetings with the security and intelligence officers engaged in anti-terror operations in J&K.

NIHFW frontrunner in conducting training, research, capacity-building activities: Nadda

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda said here on Sunday that the National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW) is the frontrunner in conducting training, research, and capacity-building activities for the public health professionals, policy makers and administrators in the country.

Addressing the 48th Annual Day celebrations of the NIHFW virtually, the minister said that the institute's commitment to capacity-building is evident through its introduction of doctoral and master's programs in public health, addressing the urgent need for qualified professionals.

He said the NIHFW's research initiatives and assess-



ment of various government programs have significantly contributed to evidence-based policymaking.

The minister lauded NIHFW for its relevant research activities and the

online platform, SAKSHAM-Media Lab for Digital Learning for creating content related to health which reflects the Institute's commitment to modernize healthcare education outreach.

He added that this facility will be a 'game-changer' in enabling digital learning and making healthcare knowledge accessible across the country."

Highlighting the importance of the National Cold Chain and Vaccine Management Resource Centre (NCCVMRC) in the Institute, Nadda said, "The Centre is doing a tremendous job of capacity-building of professionals related to providing the services. It is being upgraded into an international centre for excellence. This expansion is a testament to India's leadership in immu-

nization and supply-chain, not just within the country but globally also."

"Let us all reaffirm our commitment to ensure 'health for all' and strengthening our public health institutions," the Minister said.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister of State for Health Anupriya Patel praised the NIHFW's robust training models that also include strengthening the healthcare landscape through training of healthcare professionals and preparing them for complex challenges like epidemic and emergency preparedness, anti-microbial resistance and climate change.

She also commended the institute for continuously updating its faculty with the knowledge of newest technologies and trends in education and research.

Media monitoring initiative not an attack on press freedom: Maharashtra government

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

The Maharashtra government on Sunday categorically rejected the Mumbai Press Club's characterisation of its media monitoring initiative as a "regime of surveillance" or an attack on press freedom.

The government in its response to the Mumbai Press Club's statement has clarified that this initiative is neither about monitoring journalists nor suppressing criticism, but about systematically identifying and correcting misinformation that undermines public understanding.

The government said that the media monitoring centre would analyse news content, not journalists. Its purpose is to identify factual inaccuracies about government activities, not to monitor per-



sonal communications or target media houses.

"When we refer to 'negative' reporting, we mean content that is factually incorrect, misleading, or intentionally distorted. Constructive criticism based on facts will never be categorised as negative. Our classification system has clear guidelines based on verifiable facts, not subjective interpretation. Also, the infor-

mation, constructive criticism based on facts, will be carried out to the government as before," said the government in a release.

Elaborating its role in correcting misinformation, the government said: "When false claims circulate about government programs, it is our responsibility to provide accurate information to citizens. This initiative creates

a mechanism for timely clarification, not for controlling narrative."

Unlike the previous Fact Checking Unit (FCU) proposal, the initiative operates within constitutional boundaries with clear procedural guidelines.

"We have structured this initiative to respect freedom of expression while combating misinformation, learning from previous judicial rulings," said the government.

It further added: "We regularly prepare detailed responses to correct factual inaccuracies in media reports, yet many outlets simply ignore these corrections. This initiative formalises our existing efforts to ensure accurate information reaches the public, regardless of media outlets' willingness to publish corrections."

Jharkhand shaken by NTPC officer's murder; organised crime again under scrutiny

SHASHI SINGH
RANCHI, 9 MARCH

The murder of NTPC Deputy General Manager Kumar Gaurav in Hazaribag has raised serious concerns about law and order in Jharkhand. The incident has not only created fear among NTPC employees but has also intensified concerns about the growing influence of organised crime in

the state's coal industry.

Following Gaurav's murder, coal dispatch operations at NTPC's Hazaribag project have come to a complete halt. Mine workers are refusing to return to their workplaces, demanding improved security. This situation is expected to directly impact the state's power production and coal-based economic activities.

The organised crime in

Jharkhand has now emerged as a challenge comparable to the state's long-standing Naxalite insurgency. BJP state spokesperson Pratul Shah Deo blamed the state government's failure for the incident, claiming that criminal networks are no longer confined to Jharkhand but are now linked to international mafia groups targeting the state's coal industry.

He stated that in recent months, crimes have significantly increased in six to seven districts involved in coal production and transportation. These areas have become hubs for organized crime. Groups such as Aman Sahu, TPC, and JPC are reportedly active in these regions, notorious for extorting levies from coal traders and officials.

Dreaded criminal shot dead in a police encounter in UP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
MATHURA, 9 MARCH

The Uttar Pradesh police have gunned down a dreaded criminal, with a reward of Rs one lakh of his head, in an encounter early on Sunday.

Mathura DIG/SSP Shailesh Pandey, who led this action, said criminal Farh alias Asad, a native of Garh Mukteshwar in the Hapur district was rounded up under the Highway police station area and was critically injured in police firing after the criminal opened fire on the police. The injured criminal was rushed to the hospital where doctors declared him dead.

Free livelihood skill development courses for youth in southern Chhattisgarh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
HYDERABAD, 7 MARCH

The NMDC, under its CSR program, has partnered with the Central Institute of Petrochemicals Engineering & Technology (CIPET) to provide free skill development training courses for 500 youth from Dantewada and Bastar districts.

The programme is designed to generate employment opportunities in the region by equipping young individuals with industry-relevant skills. NMDC will be fully funding the course fees of all 500 students to ensure that students can participate in these skill development course.

The courses offered under this initiative cover multiple



levels of qualification. For 8th pass students, courses include Machine Operator –Plastics Processing, Injection Molding, Blow Molding, Plastic Extrusion, Plastic Recycling, FRP Operator, and more, with a total of 400 seats available. Similarly, 10th pass students can enroll in Diploma in Plastic Technology (DPT) and Diploma in Plastic Mold Technology (DPMT), with 80 seats in total. For graduates in science, a PG Diploma in Plastics Processing & Testing

(PGD-PPT) is available, offering 20 seats.

After completing these courses, students will have the opportunity to earn between 15,000 – 25,000 per month, as CIPET guarantees 70% placement for successful candidates. This ensures financial stability and career growth for youth in the region.

Enrollment for these free courses will begin from March 10 onwards for students from Dantewada and Bastar districts. Candidates from Dantewada can enroll on March 10 and 11 at Mangal Bhawan, Kirandul, while students from Bastar can enroll on March 12 at Gram Panchayat, Nagarnar and March 13 at Gram Panchayat office, Chokawada.

UP govt's MDA campaign sees 90 per cent participation, converts 93 pc of initial refusals



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
LUCKNOW, 9 MARCH

The Mass Drug Administration (MDA) campaign for filariasis eradication, spearheaded by the Uttar Pradesh government, concluded successfully with the administration of medicine to 90 per cent of the targeted population.

A significant achievement of the campaign was its success in convincing 93 per cent of those who initially

refused to take the medicine.

State Programme Officer for Filaria Dr AK Chaudhary reported here on Sunday that the campaign was conducted in 45 blocks across 14 districts of Uttar Pradesh from 10 to 25 February. In several districts, a follow-up round was conducted to provide medication to those who initially refused or were unavailable during the main drive.

The campaign aimed to

cover 1.10 crore people, of which 98,95,981 were successfully administered the medicine. Except for Jaunpur, all districts reported a medicine intake rate of over 80 per cent. In the final rankings, Barabanki secured the top spot, followed by Bareilly, Jalaun, and Lucknow.

Dr. Chaudhary said a major breakthrough was achieved in addressing refusal cases. Of 1.58 lakh people who initially refused, 92.7 per cent were convinced to take the anti-filaria medicine. "Only children below one year, pregnant women, seriously ill patients, and those who were outside the district were exempted. PSP played a crucial role in this success, with filariasis patients and other PSP members actively contributing to the refusal conversion," he added.

Annpurna Devi to lead India at UNCSW session starting from Monday in New York

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

An Indian delegation, led by Union Minister for Women and Child Development (WCD) Annpurna Devi, will participate in the 69th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW), which is starting from Monday at the UN Headquarters in New York.

The Indian minister will deliver the National Statement at the Commission, and participate in the Ministerial Roundtable, wherein the path-breaking and transformative initiatives of the Government of India for holistic development and empowerment of all women and girls, will be highlighted.

Two days of clashes, revenge killings in Syria leave over 1,000 people dead

The clashes marked a major escalation in the challenge to the new government in Damascus

ASSOCIATED PRESS
BEIRUT, 9 MARCH

The death toll from two days of clashes between Syrian security forces and loyalists of ousted President Bashar Assad and revenge killings that followed has risen to more than 1,000, a war monitoring group said Saturday, making it one of the deadliest acts of violence since Syria's conflict began 14 years ago. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said in addition to 745 civilians killed, mostly in shootings from close distance, 125 government security force members and 148 militants with armed groups affiliated with Assad were killed. It added that electricity and drinking water were cut off in large areas around the city of Latakia. The clashes, which erupted Thursday, marked a major

escalation in the challenge to the new government in Damascus, three months after insurgents took authority after removing Assad from power. The government has said that they were responding to attacks from remnants of Assad's forces and blamed "individual actions" for the rampant violence. The revenge killings that started Friday by Sunni Muslim gunmen loyal to the government against members of Assad's minority Alawite sect are a major blow to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, the faction that led the overthrow of the former government. Alawites made up a large part of Assad's support base for decades. Residents of Alawite villages and towns spoke to The Associated Press about killings during which gunmen shot Alawites, the majority of them men, in the streets



or at the gates of their homes. Many homes of Alawites were looted and then set on fire in different areas, two residents of Syria's coastal region told the AP from their hideouts. They asked that their names not be made public out of fear of being killed by gunmen, adding that thousands of people have fled to nearby mountains for safety.

Residents of Baniyas, one of the towns worst hit by the violence, said bodies were strewn on the streets or left unburied in homes and on the roofs of buildings, and nobody was able to collect them. One resident said that the gunmen prevented residents for hours from removing the bodies of five of their neighbors killed Friday at

close range. Ali Sheha, a 57-year-old resident of Baniyas who fled with his family and neighbors hours after the violence broke out Friday, said that at least 20 of his neighbours and colleagues in one neighbourhood of Baniyas where Alawites lived, were killed, some of them in their shops, or in their homes. Sheha called the attacks "revenge killings" of the Alawite minority for the crimes committed by Assad's government. Other residents said the gunmen included foreign fighters, and militants from neighboring villages and towns. "It was very very bad. Bodies were on the streets," as he was fleeing, Sheha said, speaking by phone from nearly 20 kilometers (12 miles) away from the city. He said the gunmen were gathering less than 100 meters from

his apartment building, firing randomly at homes and residents and in at least one incident he knows of, asked residents for their IDs to check their religion and their sect before killing them. He said the gunmen also burned some homes and stole cars and robbed homes. The Observatory's chief Rami Abdurrahman said that revenge killings stopped early Saturday. "This was one of the biggest massacres during the Syrian conflict," Abdurrahman said about the killings of Alawite civilians. The previous figure given by the group was more than 600 dead. No official figures have been released. A funeral was held Saturday afternoon for four Syrian security force members in the northwestern village of Al-Janoudiya after they were killed in the clashes along Syria's coast.

Israel will send a delegation to Qatar to try to 'advance' ceasefire negotiations

ASSOCIATED PRESS
DEIR AL-BALAH, 9 MARCH



Israel said that it would send a delegation to Qatar on Monday "in an effort to advance the negotiations" around the ceasefire in Gaza, while Hamas reported "positive signals" in talks with Egyptian and Qatari mediators on starting negotiations on the truce's delayed second phase. The statement from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office gave no details except to say it had "accepted the invitation of U.S.-backed mediators." Hamas spokesman Abdel-Latif al-Qanouna also gave no details. Talks on the second phase should have started a month ago. There was no immediate comment from the White House, which on Wednesday made the surprise confirmation of direct U.S. talks with Hamas. Over the past week, Israel has pressed Hamas to release half of the remaining hostages

in return for an extension of the first phase, which ended last weekend, and a promise to negotiate a lasting truce. Hamas is believed to have 24 living hostages and the bodies of 35 others. Israel last weekend cut off all supplies to Gaza and its more than 2 million people as it pressed Hamas to agree. The militant group has said that the move would affect the remaining hostages as well. The ceasefire has paused the deadliest and most destructive fighting ever between Israel and Hamas, sparked by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on 7 October 2023.

Russian forces walked inside a gas pipeline to strike Ukrainian troops from the rear in Kursk

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KYIV, 9 MARCH



Russian special forces walked inside a gas pipeline to strike Ukrainian units from the rear in the Kursk region, Ukraine's military and Russian war bloggers reported, as Moscow moves to recapture parts of its border province that Kyiv seized in a shock offensive. Ukraine launched in August a daring cross-border incursion into Kursk, in what marked the largest attack on Russian territory since World War II. Within days, Ukrainian units had captured 1,000 square kilometers (386 square

miles) of territory, including the strategic border town of Sudzha, and taken hundreds of Russian prisoners of war. According to Kyiv, the operation aimed to gain a bargaining chip in future peace talks, and force Russia to

divert troops away from its grinding offensive in eastern Ukraine. But months after Ukraine's thunder run, its soldiers in Kursk are weary and bloodied by relentless assaults of more than 50,000 troops, including

some from Russia's ally North Korea. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers run the risk of being encircled, open source maps of the battlefield show. According to Telegram posts by a Ukrainian-born, pro-Kremlin blogger, Russian operatives walked about 15 kilometres (9 miles) inside the pipeline, which Moscow had until recently used to send gas to Europe. Some Russian troops had spent several days in the pipe before striking Ukrainian units from the rear near the town of Sudzha, blogger Yuri Podolyaka claimed.

'Bullying' powers' call for talks with Iran not aimed at solving issues: Khamenei

INDO-ASIAN NEWS SERVICE
TEHRAN, 9 MARCH



Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that certain "bullying" powers' insistence on holding talks with Iran is not aimed at resolving issues but rather at imposing their own expectations. Khamenei made the remarks during a meeting in Tehran with government officials on Saturday, responding to calls, notably from US President Donald Trump, for negotiations on Iran's nuclear program, according to footage released by the leader's office. "Their negotiation is not for resolving issues, but for dominating and imposing

what they want on the other side," said the Iranian leader. He warned that if the other side refuses to negotiate, those powers will create an uproar, accusing it of "distancing itself from and abandoning the negotiating table." Iran's nuclear issue is not those powers' sole focus, and "they are raising new expectations, which will definitely not be met by

Iran," Khamenei said. He cited Britain, France and Germany accusing Tehran of failing to meet its 2015 nuclear deal commitments, noting those countries have also neglected their obligations under the same agreement from day one. Following the US withdrawal from the deal, the Europeans promised to compensate but broke their pledges, Khamenei added. Iran signed the nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, with six world powers in July 2015, accepting restrictions on its nuclear program in exchange for lifting sanctions.

Thousands in Nepal want abolished monarchy back as public frustration with politics grows

ASSOCIATED PRESS
KATHMANDU, 9 MARCH



Thousands of supporters greeted Nepal's former king in capital Kathmandu on Sunday and demanded his abolished monarchy be reinstated and Hinduism brought back as a state religion. An estimated 10,000 supporters of Gyanendra Shah blocked the main entrance to Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport as he arrived from a tour of western Nepal. "Vacate the royal palace for the king. Come back king, save the country. Long live our beloved king. We want monarchy," the crowds chanted. Passengers were forced to walk to and from the airport. Hundreds of riot police blocked the protesters from

entering the airport and there was no violence. Massive street protests in 2006 forced Gyanendra to give up his authoritarian rule, and two years later the parliament voted to abolish the monarchy as Gyanendra left the Royal Palace to live the life of a commoner. But many Nepalis have grown frustrated with the republic, saying it has failed to bring about political stability and blaming it for a struggling economy and widespread corruption. Nepal has had 13 governments since the monarchy was

abolished in 2008. Rally participants said they were hoping for a change in the political system to stop the country from further deteriorating. "We are here to give the king our full support and to rally behind him all the way to reinstating him in the royal throne," said Thir Bahadur Bhandari, 72. Among the thousands was 50-year-old carpenter Kulraj Shrestha, who had taken part in the 2006 protests against the king but has changed his mind and now supports the monarchy.

entering the airport and there was no violence. Massive street protests in 2006 forced Gyanendra to give up his authoritarian rule, and two years later the parliament voted to abolish the monarchy as Gyanendra left the Royal Palace to live the life of a commoner. But many Nepalis have grown frustrated with the republic, saying it has failed to bring about political stability and blaming it for a struggling economy and widespread corruption. Nepal has had 13 governments since the monarchy was



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES & DR. RML HOSPITAL
NEW DELHI

File No.: eGov-11014/1/2023-E-Gov. Dept.-Dr. RMLH

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

ABVIMS & DR. RML HOSPITAL invite Expression of Interest (EOI) from all experienced Central PSUs for IT Security Expert / Information Security Officer. The last date for submission of proposal is **20-03-2025 by 4-00 P.M.**

The detailed EOI / Advertisement is available on Dr. RML website (<https://rmlh.nic.in>) Interested Participants may please refer to Dr. RML Hospital website for further details.

**For Director & Medical Superintendent
Chairman, E-Governance**

CBC-17147/11/0014/2425

2. You are hereby directed to pay the above sum within 15 days of the receipt of the notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1953 and Rules framed thereunder. 3. You are hereby ordered to declare on an affidavit the particulars of your assets on or before the next date of hearing. 4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 17/04/2025 at 10:30 a.m. for further proceedings. 5. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay: a) Such interests as is payable for the period commencing immediately after this notice of the certificate/execution proceedings. b) All costs, charges and expenses incurred in respect of the service of this notice and warrants and other processes and all other proceedings taken for recovering the amount due. Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this date: 21.02.2025. Sd/- Recovery Officer Debts Recovery Tribunal Kolkata (DRT-2)

LEISURE
10 MINUTE CROSSWORD



ACROSS
1 Central part (4)
3 Solid-fuel product (4)
7 Free from restraint (7)
8 Bungle (5)
10 Long seat (5)
11 Fist fight (informal) (5-2)
12 Become less serious (7,2)
16 Thieving bird (7)
18 Helicopter blade (5)
20 Spacious (5)
21 Diamond shape (7)
22 Blood vessel (4)
23 Sea bird (4)

DOWN
1 Punctuation mark (5)
2 Selfish driver (Informal) (4,3)
3 Room on a ship (5)
4 Tomato sauce (7)
5 Sport (5)
6 Union official (4,7)
9 Be optimistic (4)
12 Milk sugar (7)
13 English county (7)
14 Slightly open (4)
15 Attire (5)
17 Senior member (5)
19 Leg bone (5)

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD
ACROSS
1 Peer,
3 Sing (Piercing),
7 Glue,
8 Hoarding,
9 Unlawful,
10 Ever,
11 Tidily-winks,
14 Used,
16 Canister,
19 Jumbo jet,
20 Girl,
21 Stow,
22 Lyre,
12 Lockjaw,
13 Nosegay,
15 Debut,
17 Nett,
18 Eerie.

By arrangement with The Independent. Figures in parentheses denote the number of letters in the words required.

BEETLE BAILEY/Mort Walker


RED EYE/Bill Yates & Mel Casson


DADDY DAZE/John Kovalieski


NEED TO KNOW
Ambulance
FD Block Association (Amb) 9830452536, 9830181286
Happy Calculators 24400160
City Point Nurses Centre 2567-4113, 9831142623
People's Relief Committee 2280-4943/9444
24 hrs Medical Oxygen Delivery
BOC India Ltd. 9831277777
Blood Banks
Ashok Laboratory 24720333
Central Blood Bank 23510619
Life Care 2284-6940
Peoples Blood Bank 2495-5164/5557
RK Mission Seva Pratishthan 2475-3636/39
Police/Fire
Lalbazar (Police Control Room) 22143230
S. P. (North 24-Pgns) 25423005
S. P. (South 24-Pgns) 2479-3333/1311
Bhawani Bhawan 24791761/9, 24791933
Fire Service Station Salt Lake: 2357-5293;
Howrah 2666-8111; Behala 2497-6285
Civic Services
Kolkata Municipal Corporation: 2286-1000
Water: 2543-1602
Calcutta Telephones
Changed Number Announcement 1951,1952,1953
Taxi Refusal
SMS 575756: Complaint and registration
Police Toll Free No. 1073
Transport Deptt. No. 6451-6718
CESC Fault Reporting
1912 and 4403-1912
Trains
Howrah Station Old Complex: 1331/1332 (Auto Telephone Numbers), 1310, 2638-7412/3542/2581 (manual).
Sealdah: 2350-3535/3536-3537
Shalimar Station: 2668-1121, Eastern Railway and South-Eastern Railway: 139.

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FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN.
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SUDOKU Concepts Sudoku By Dave Green


Difficulty Level ★★
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that no row, no column and no 3x3 box contains the same number. The difficulty level increases through the week.



C M Y K

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India, EU to hold next round of trade talks on 10 March

The EU wants India to lower tariffs on cars, wine, and whisky as well as some agricultural products

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

India and the European Union are scheduled to begin the next round of talks for a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) from Monday in Brussels with the aim of concluding the talks by the end of this year, a senior official said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had agreed to expedite the conclusion of the India-EU free trade agreement (FTA) by the end of the year at their meeting in Delhi last month.

"A free trade agreement between the EU and India would be the largest deal of this kind anywhere in the world. I am well aware it will not be easy. But I also know that timing and determination count and that this partnership comes at the right moment for both of us," Von der Leyen, said during her two-day visit to India.

Her statement came in the backdrop of massive tariff hikes proposed against all countries by US President Donald Trump under his 'America First' policy which is threatening to disrupt global trade and heighten uncertainty in the global



economy.

PM Modi and the European Commission President committed to task their respective negotiating teams to pursue negotiations for a

balanced, ambitious, and mutually beneficial FTA. Officials were asked to work as trusted partners to enhance market access and remove trade barriers. They were

also tasked to advance negotiations on an Agreement on Investment Protection and an Agreement on Geographical Indications.

Reaching a deal will be complex, however, with significant concessions wanted on both sides in areas ranging from cars and whisky to pharmaceuticals and textiles.

The EU wants India to lower tariffs on cars, wine, and whisky as well as some agricultural products. India, on the other hand, wants greater market access and lower tariffs for key exports, including pharmaceuticals, textiles, and apparel.

Market valuation of seven of top 10 most valued cos surges by over ₹ 2 lakh crore



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The combined market valuation of seven of the top 10 most valued companies surged by Rs 2,10,254.96 crore last week.

Reliance Industries and Tata Consultancy Services emerged as the biggest gainers.

The market capitalisation (mcap) of Reliance Industries surged by Rs 66,985.25 crore to Rs 16,90,328.70 crore while the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) market valuation climbed by Rs 46,094.44 crore to Rs 13,06,599.95 crore.

With this sharp rise in its market valuation, the TCS again rose to the second rank

With this sharp rise in its market valuation, the TCS again rose to the second rank in the top-10 most-valued firms' chart.

in the top-10 most-valued firms' chart.

Reliance Industries remained the most valued company, followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Infosys, State Bank of India, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.

The mcap of State Bank of India zoomed by Rs 39,714.56 crore to Rs 6,53,951.53 crore.

ICICI Bank surged Rs 7,939.13 crore to Rs 8,57,743.03 crore, and the mcap of HDFC Bank plunged by Rs 31,832.92 crore to Rs 12,92,578.39 crore.

FIPIs withdraw ₹ 24,753 crore in first week of March

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

Foreign investors continue to pull back money from the Indian equity market, withdrawing Rs 24,753 crore in the first week of March. This development comes amid escalating global trade tensions and lacklustre corporate earnings.

According to the data with the depositories, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) offloaded shares worth Rs 24,753 crore from Indian equities this month (till 7 March). The total outflow by FPIs has reached Rs 1.37 trillion in 2025 so far.

Notably, the sustained selling by overseas investors is chiefly due to a combination of global and domestic factors. This also marks the 13th con-



secutive week of net outflows. Since 13 December 2024, FPIs have offloaded equity shares to the tune of \$17.1 billion.

It came following an outflow of Rs 34,574 crore from equities in February and Rs 78,027 crore in January.

On the other hand, FPIs invested Rs 2,405 crore in the debt general limit and withdrew Rs 377 crore from the debt voluntary retention route.

The overall trend indicates a cautious approach by foreign

investors, who scaled back investments in Indian equities significantly in 2024, with net inflows of just Rs 427 crore.

The foreign investors' trend contrasts sharply with the extraordinary Rs 1.71 trillion net inflows in 2023, driven by optimism over India's strong economic fundamentals.

In 2022, foreign investment saw a net outflow of Rs 1.21 trillion amid aggressive rate hikes by global central banks.

Market outlook: Retail inflation, FIIs data, Holi break and Trump tariff policy key triggers for next week

AGENCIES
MUMBAI, 9 MARCH

The market outlook for next week will be guided by several domestic and international factors such as India's retail inflation data, FIIs activities, dollar to Rupee activity and Trump tariff policy.

India's retail and wholesale inflation data will be released on March 12, and the stock market will be closed on March 14 on account of Holi.

Last week, the stock market witnessed sharp gains. After three consecutive weeks of decline, Nifty rose by about two per cent to 22,552.50, and the Sensex rose by 1.55 per cent to 74,332.58.

Between the March 3 - 7 trading sessions, buying was seen in smallcap and midcap stocks. During this period, the Nifty Midcap 100 index surged 2.66 per cent, and the Nifty Smallcap 100 index rallied 5.47 per cent.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said that the domestic market recovered from its oversold levels; however, a decisive upward momentum will be based on the recovery in corporate earnings and an ease in tariff uncertainty.

Among the sectoral indices, metal, energy, media and PSE performers of the week. Nifty Metal surged by 8.61 per cent, Nifty Media rallied



7.36 per cent, Nifty PSE increased by 7.36 per cent, and Nifty Energy gave a return of 5.90 per cent.

Meanwhile, a sharp decline in the US dollar index, lower crude oil prices, and strength in the Indian Rupee against

the greenback provided further support to equities.

On the institutional front, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) recorded net outflows of Rs 15,501 crore in the cash segment, whereas Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) injected Rs 20,950 crore, offering stability to the market.

Puneet Singhania, Director at Master Trust Group, said, "Nifty rebounded nearly two per cent this week from its 100-week EMA at 22,051 after hitting its lowest level since mid-May 2024. The immediate resistance stands at 22,700, aligning with the 21-day EMA, and a sustained move above this level could push Nifty toward 23,100."

Govt extends duty-free import of yellow peas to keep inflation in check

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Government has extended the duty-free import of yellow peas by three months till the end of May and clamped a duty of 10 per cent duty on imports of lentils (masur) with immediate effect, according to an official notification.

The government has imposed a 10 per cent import duty on lentils (mosur) and extended the duty-free import of yellow peas by three months till 31 May this year to increase domestic availability of the pulses and keep prices in check.

The government has levied a 5 per cent basic customs



duty and 5 per cent Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess (AIDC) on lentils with effect from Saturday.

The government has been tuning its tariff policy on pulses to keep inflation in check in the case of shortfalls and at the same encouraging domestic production.

The government had allowed the duty-free import of yellow peas in December 2023 to control local prices as the domestic production of 'chana' was falling short. This relaxation was extended from time to time till the end of February.

India's yellow peas imports

stood at 30 lakh tonnes out of 67 lakh tonnes of overall pulses imported during 2024.

The Centre has also been procuring pulses at MSP from domestic farmers after approval for the continuation of the integrated Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) Scheme during the 15th Finance Commission cycle up to 2025-26. The scheme is aimed to help farmers get higher prices for their produce.

The Government is committed to purchasing 100 per cent of Tur produced by farmers through central nodal agencies namely NAFED and NCCF, according to the official statement.

Khadi products achieve record 12 cr sales at Mahakumbh-2025

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC), under the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), organized a national-level exhibition during the Mahakumbh from 14 January to 27 February, 2025.

The exhibition recorded historic sales of Khadi products worth 12.02 crore.

Manoj Kumar, Chairman of KVIC, stated that the exhibition featured 98 Khadi stalls and 54 village industry stalls, generating sales of 9.76 crore in Khadi products and 2.26 crore in village industry products.

As part of the 'New Khadi for New India' movement, Kumar distributed 2,050 bee boxes, honey colonies, and



toolkits to 205 beekeepers across six states via video conference from KVIC's Rajghat office in Delhi.

KVIC Chairman Kumar emphasised that, in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of expanding the 'Sweet Revolution' across rural India, the 'Honey Mis-

sion' has been launched to provide bee colonies and bee boxes to beekeepers.

Addressing artisans, he recalled that in 2016, from Deesa in Banaskantha, Gujarat, PM Modi had called for a 'Sweet Revolution' alongside the 'White Revolution.'

Inspired by this vision,

KVIC introduced the 'Honey Mission' in 2017, under which over 20,000 beneficiaries have received two lakh bee boxes and bee colonies to date.

Highlighting the achievements of the Khadi sector over the past decade, Kumar stated that sales of Khadi and village industry products have grown fivefold, from 31,000 crore to 1,55,000 crore.

Khadi garment sales alone have surged sixfold, from 1,081 crore to 6,496 crore, while 10.17 lakh new jobs were created in the last financial year.

He also noted that the income of Khadi artisans has increased by 213 per cent over the past decade, with over 80 per cent of employment in the sector being generated for women.

‘Way forward will be an ideal marriage between ancient Indian knowledge system & evolving technology’

RITWIK MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA, 9 FEBRUARY

Since its inception, the IEM-UEM group has surpassed innumerable benchmarks of achievements and accreditations. Today IEM flaunts a colossal network of expansive operations led by an awe-inspiring student force who are the torchbearers of a better tomorrow. The Kolkata-headquartered education group has set sublime standards in addressing the technical and managerial resource shortage in the new era of dynamic globalisation. The IEM group has risen to fame for its strong foundation in teaching and R&D in multifaceted areas. It aims to serve the future generation as well as the Nation through its commitment towards self-sufficiency and unmatched excellence. Speaking to The Statesman, Prof Dr Satyajit Chakrabarti, Director, IEM-UEM Group, explains why and how the education group has become what it is today - the 3rd best engineering college in West Bengal after IIT Kharagpur and NIT Durgapur by NIRF (National Institutional Ranking Framework), Union Ministry of HRD, his take on NEP and the way forward.

Excerpts:

Q: 36 years indeed is a long time. So how has been the journey of IEM, UEM so far?

A: Yes, you are right. We have also gone through many turns and twists and through many growth phases. My father and founder of the group started Institute of Engineering and Management (IEM) at Salt Lake in the IT hub of Bengal in 1989 as the first self-financed engineering college of the state and since then IEM has been socially accredited as the best self-financed engineering institute of West Bengal and admitting the best students from the top engineering merit list of WBJEE and JEE Main. Over the years we have been offering courses like PG Diploma, MBA, Engineering-B.Tech, IT, Electronics and so on.

Subsequently, UEM Jaipur was established in 2011 by Ordinance 11 of 2011 and Act No 5 of 2012 of Govt of Rajasthan. UEM Jaipur has achieved the awards of "Best Private University in North India" and "Best Emerging University in North India".

Three years down the road, UEM Kolkata was established in 2014 by Act No 25 of 2014 of Govt of West Bengal. Being located in New Town, the Smart City of Eastern India, the students of the University are exposed to the top cor-

porates. UEM Kolkata has stood as one out of the top 10 institutes of India including all IITs and all NITs of the country in the NPTEL programme ranked by IIT Kharagpur and IIT Chennai.

In 2023, IEM was merged under UEM and started functioning as a degree-giving university.

Q: What have you done to become what you are today?

A: Over the years, we always kept our doors open for young minds, who dare to dream. We have always encouraged the spirit of free enquiry and imagination. In this temple of learning, dreams take shape and we have ensured that by all means. Our educational group attempts to inculcate the sense of human values and discipline in students to make them respectable human beings. We also encourage learners to learn, to realize their potential and imbibe the best practices. We have all along introduced right disciplines at the right time. We have focussed on personality developments, development of presentation skills, life skills, development of employability and laying thrust of placements and at the same time entrepreneurship. Having said all these, our utmost focus has always

been on making our students good human beings. And that's the reason why we could become what we are today. Remember, we grew at a time when for the major part there was no policy for private university or private engineering college. Now there are such policies.

Q: Recently, the Institute of Engineering & Management (IEM) and the University of Engineering & Management (UEM), Kolkata, successfully hosted Innovación 2025, one of India's premier techno-management festivals. Organized in collaboration with SMART Society, US, and the Rotary Club of Salt Lake Silicon Valley, the landmark event brought together global innovators, industry leaders, and academic pioneers to showcase cutting-edge technology and entrepreneurship. What is the basic purpose and objective of such an event?

A: Innovación has consistently evolved into a world-class festival, drawing participation from top-tier institutions and industry professionals. The enthusiasm and creativity showcased here reaffirm our commitment to nurturing future leaders in technology and management. Innovación is more than a festival; it is a catalyst for



transformative ideas. The projects showcased this year and each year, for that matter, have real-world potential to revolutionize industries. Innovación 2025 (and every year) is a testament to our commitment in promoting young innovators. We take pride in providing a platform that transforms ideas into impactful solutions.

Q: So, it seems, you lay huge thrust on promoting entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystem. What do you do towards this goal?

A: We have a state-of-the-art incubation centre to promote start-ups. As many as 200 start-up ideas are promoted each year, which is higher than the national average and also higher than the

average figure in the US. We let our student participate in 500 events to let them have global exposures. We have high-end labs to develop campus products for corporates. We earn hundreds of patents in the process also. We also send our students to different foreign universities and colleges, which, in turn, help them get international perspectives and exposures.

Our best in class faculty help our students and handhold them in their journey to become butterfly from Carterpillar.

It is also pertinent to mention here that alumni play an important, in fact, a crucial role. More than 50,000 of our alumni work in top positions in different corporate across the world. They not only help

making our students employable, but also help our students identify the pain points of the corporate and eventually help them develop campus products for companies and overcome those pain-points. Our guardians who are well placed in different places, also come forward in this regard. IEM has been successfully organizing international conferences for the last few years including:

- IEEE IEMCON at University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada (<http://ieeemcon.org>) since 2015
- IEEE UEMCON at Columbia University, New York, USA (<http://ieee-uemcon.org>) since 2016
- IEEE CCWC, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (<http://ieee-ccwc.org>) since 2017
- IEEE IEMANTENNA, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada (<http://iemantenna.org>) in 2019
- IEEE IEMTRONICS at University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada (<https://iemtronics.org>) since 2020

Q: What is your take on

the much-hyped New Education Policy (NEP)?

A: I would say, the NEP has been truly a game changer in more ways than one. The NEP provides a student the flexibility to choose subjects of one's choice and major and minor. Just to give an example, a student who has economics as his major, can jolly well, has film making as his minor.

Let me point out here that the NEP also advocates promoting traditional ancient Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which is a very good thing. We already have an IKS Centre of Excellence. We are doing lot of things in this regard, adopting and using AI and other latest technology. We have also carefully developed curriculum weaving IKS. The way forward would be an ideal marriage between IKS and most modern and evolving technology. And we are doing exactly that.

Q: Any plans to branch out beyond borders?

A: We are actively looking at and exploring options in countries like the USA, Singapore, Australia, Japan, to mention a few. All I can tell you that once we move beyond boundaries, we will go there with the curriculum that harmoniously blends IKS with modern technology.



Imphal National Institute of Technology in recruitment flux



YAMBEM LABA

The National Institute of Technology (NIT), Imphal is one of the 32 such institutes in India. It was established in 2010. The NITs came into being under an Act of Parliament. The NITs, although primarily engineering institutes, offer job-oriented courses and have 50 per cent of the seats reserved for the host states. Initially attached to the campus of the State Government Polytechnic, the NIT Manipur soon set up its own campus at Lamphelpat.

But over time, the powers to be controlling the affairs of the NIT, Manipur, began adopting an ad-hoc-ish policy towards recruitment of its staff both in the teaching and non-teaching sections. For instance, 30 faculty members have been employed for more than 10 years in a row. There have been no moves to absorb them through a policy decision, but rather adopted a “we don’t care”

attitude and have asked them to appear as fresh candidates, the only relaxation being given that of upper age relaxation.

But again recently when the NIT advertised for the post of assistant professor, it clubbed management and economics together where the questions were divided 50:50. But management and economics are two different disciplines, although there may be sections that overlap each other. However such lapses cannot be condoned since many different faculty members exist in the institute, and how the post was advertised as economics/management is something that the NIT authorities would have to explain.

At the moment, there are a total of 30 faculty members functioning on a contractual basis at the NIT. 15 of these teachers have gone to seek solace from the High Court citing rulings of the Supreme Court inter alia regularisation of contractual employees after prolonged

service on ad-hoc basis.

Speaking to The Statesman, one of the contractual teachers said that after having spent 10 years at the NIT and in the process, she has also completed her Ph.D, if she is to be treated as a fresher when it comes to regular appointments, then where is the justice? Also speaking to The Statesman Prof. Tomba Singh, Registrar of the NIT, said that decisions about appointments and recruitments are vested in the hands of the authorities in the Centre and that the panel of selectors includes top echelons of the NIT and from the IITs also meaning that there can be no room for any discrepancies in the selection process. He also added that at the moment there are eight disciplines at the NIT, Manipur, and has a total of 1,500 students on rolls. He also added that there were 800 applicants for 13 posts which were advertised and as such had to resort to a written test followed by a

presentation before the selection board.

When asked if there is any interference from the non-state actors who are active in Manipur and have their fingers in the running of all educational establishments, he said that since construction work ended in 2015, there have not been many disturbances but they do come once in a while to dictate their point of views.

The good news is that the NIT, Manipur unlike other centrally run educational institutions in Manipur has not become a den of corruption inviting CBI cases but is failing in its recruitment of its staff both academics as well non-teaching staff many of them who have been languishing for many years and it would be a cardinal crime if the NIT would just throw them into the dustbin.

The writer is a senior journalist with The Statesman

Saffron blooms in the north-east: A new dawn for farmers

ABHIJIT DEB

For years, saffron cultivation in India has been synonymous with the Kashmir Valley, but the North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR) has changed the narrative. Through innovative technology, scientific planning and farmer training, NECTAR has successfully cultivated saffron in the north-east, opening new doors of opportunity for local farmers.

NECTAR's journey into saffron cultivation began in 2021-22 with a pilot project spanning Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Sikkim.

Using geospatial technology, NECTAR identified 17 potential cultivation sites where saffron could thrive. The initiative, which trained farmers in optimum cultivation practices, has now scaled up to larger projects in Mechukha (Arunachal Pradesh) and Yuksom (Sikkim), where the high-altitude, cold climate closely mimics the traditional saffron-growing conditions of Kashmir.

“Through satellite imaging, we have found many patches in the north-east where saffron can be grown. We started a few pilot projects, and they were successful. Now, per kilogram of saffron is priced at Rs 3 lakh in the international market,” said Dr Arun Sharma, director general of NECTAR, in an interview with The Statesman.

Why is the north-east ideal for saffron?

Climatic conditions in the north-east have proven to be exceptionally favorable for saffron cultivation. The high-altitude regions of Mechukha and Yuksom provide the necessary cold temperatures required for the delicate saffron crocus to bloom. This success story has the potential to make the north-east a prominent saffron-producing region in India, reducing dependence on imports and boosting local economies.

The project not only addresses the growing demand for saffron but also provides a sustainable livelihood option

for farmers in the region. “NECTAR is helping farmers with value addition to their crops and devising innovative methods to maximise their returns,” Dr Sharma added.

Waste to wealth: Banana and pineapple fibre extraction

Beyond saffron, NECTAR has also initiated a project titled “Waste to Wealth – Pineapple and Banana Fiber Extraction”, aimed at transforming agricultural waste into valuable resources. Launched officially on 8 September 2022, the project seeks to extract eco-friendly and biodegradable fibers from harvested banana and pineapple plants, reducing environmental impact and providing employment opportunities.

“With NECTAR’s technological intervention, we have successfully extracted fibres of standard quality from banana and pineapple plants, which are now being used to weave attractive pieces of clothing, rugs, sarees and more. Additionally, banana water, a by-product of the process, is used as an organic fertiliser,” Dr Sharma explained.

This initiative has already provided direct employment to around 40 individuals and indirectly benefited nearly 250 people, including local artisans and entrepreneurs engaged in the value chain. By encouraging eco-friendly fiber production, the project also minimises deforestation caused by industries reliant on wood and cellulose-based materials.

NECTAR’s initiatives highlight the immense agricultural potential of the north-east. From saffron cultivation to waste-to-wealth projects, these programmes empower farmers with new income streams, boost India’s self-reliance in high-value crops and promote environmental sustainability. With continued research, innovation, and investment, the Northeast could soon emerge as India’s newest hub for premium saffron and eco-friendly textile fibers.

As Dr Sharma rightly puts it, “We are not just cultivating crops; we are cultivating futures.”

Unwanted controversy embraces a city press club

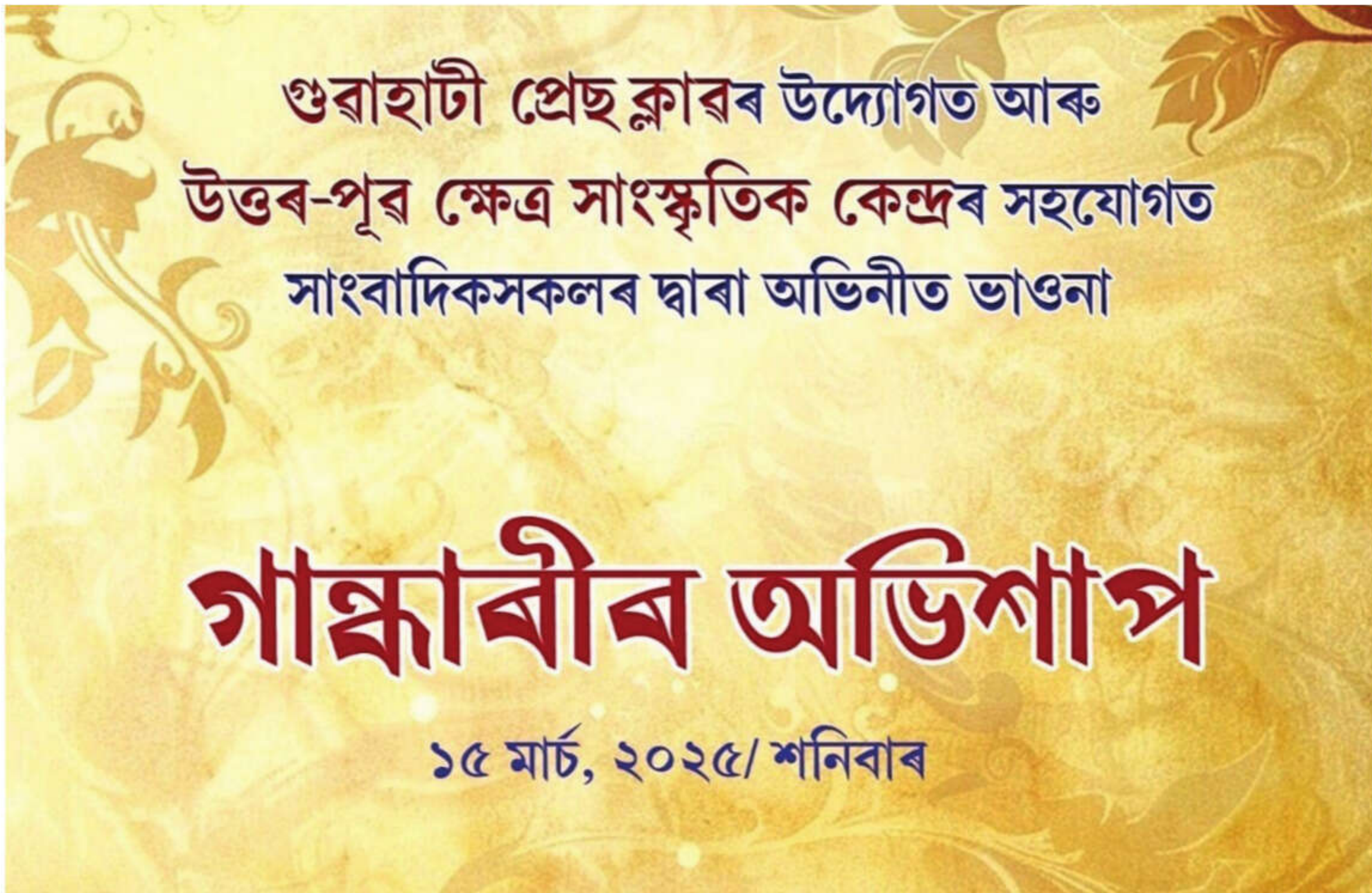
NAVA THAKURIA

Inviting a minister for a cultural programme by Gauhati Press Club (earlier Guwahati Press Club) seemingly touched the wrong chord, as the issue has gone out of proportion, where a sizable number of social media users questioned the press club committee why the particular minister was invited even though he is not in charge of IPR or cultural ministry? Moreover, why did the GPC delegation approach the concerned minister at his residence in the evening hours (but not in the Secretariat) and what was the problem in approaching him at the premise of the state legislative assembly, where the budget session (17 February to 25 March 2025) was going on?

The controversy erupted following a social media post by a television journalist, associated with the news channel owned by the state government chief’s family, where the scribe claimed that the Assam health and family welfare minister disrespected a delegation from GPC, which went to invite Singhal for a forthcoming Bhaona performance in the city. During the brief interaction, the minister allegedly questioned the necessity of a press club to organise a Bhaona. Moreover, he termed the native traditional performing art form as not being secular in nature.

The issue suddenly went viral as many individuals, outfits, media outlets and opposition political leaders started making a hue and cry demanding an apology from the minister. Some even termed Singhal as a ‘non-Assamese’ who has no idea about the religious performing art form (Ankiya Bhaona), developed by the sixteenth-century Vaishnavite saint, scholar and philosopher Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev and his prime disciple Madhavdev to enact plays primarily with mythological characters.

The excitement, however, lasted for a short period, as the state chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma opined that he did not believe his cabinet colleague Singhal could make such an immature comment. Sarma also stated that if invited he would also enjoy the show (thus he cleverly indicated that till then CM was not invited). It was followed by a formal clarification from Singhal denying the allegation that he made such derogatory remarks regarding the Bhaona. In a social media post, Singhal stated that it was completely ‘false and fabricated’ after acknowledging that a group of scribes visited



him to invite him to the cultural programme, which is scheduled for 15 March 2025 at Shilpagram premises in the city. Singhal expressed his annoyance that a fictitious story was generated and made public by a particular journalist.

“We are devoted followers of Sankardev and always embrace Gurujona’s creations with deep reverence. Needless to mention, Sankardev’s immense contributions and creations continue enriching the great Assamese society,” said Singhal, adding that the journalist involved with the episode should tender an apology to the people of Assam. He even threatened to take legal action against the journalist and GPC.

The GPC, however, hit back and asserted that Singhal actually made those negative comments. So it wanted the minister to change his mindset regarding Sankardev or Bhaona. Finally, Singhal made another social media post stating that he sought an apology if anyone’s sentiment was hurt by the controversy. Singhal, however, stuck to his stand that he never made any derogatory remark about Bhaona, but a section of media outlets reported misleading stories over the issue. “I don’t want any unnecessary debate over the matter and hence I apologize if it hurts anyone’s emotion,” stated Singhal.

Seemingly happy with the apology of Singhal, the GPC has not made

any further statement even though it was half-hearted. Meanwhile, a volley of questions was poured on the city press club as to why a minister would make derogatory comments just to receive an invitation letter for any event. Was there any instigation and it was none other than a demand for some hefty donations from the minister, but somehow it was materialised? A senior television journalist, while speaking publicly, asked the GPC to clarify its stand as the Bhaona titled ‘Gandharir Abhishap’ was supported by the NEZCC and if needed to apologise to the media fraternity.

The media club, currently functioning from an important archaeological site, claims that it has nearly

one thousand members, but many city-based senior scribes publicly stated that they are not associated with the GPC. Many of them were denied general membership (who can vote in the polls unlike associate and patron members) and some intentionally opted to disassociate with the press club, which celebrated the golden jubilee year of its existence. Nonetheless, the press club organised the inaugural function of the yearlong celebration, with CM Sarma as chief patron, at the end of 2022, but the GPC is yet to organise the closing function till date (which was due by the end of 2023).

Days back, the Journalists’ Forum Assam (JFA) urged the government

to allot an alternative plot so that the rich Ambari archaeological site could be accommodated for necessary preservation and research works. Situated in the heart of Kamrup (metro) district, the site has been excavated several times since 1968 to find more archaeological remains. The archaeology department claims that the ruins of Ambari reflect the period of the Sunga-Kushana dynasty. The JFA also appealed to every conscious citizen to come forward, making the Ambari site (which attracts visitors from different parts of India every day) an encroachment-free area as early as possible.

The writer is a Guwahati-based special representative of The Statesman



Jeneath Wong first Malaysian to win WAAP, tame finish for Indian golf trio



AGENCIES
DA NANG (VIETNAM), 9 MARCH

Jeneath Wong, who moved to Australia when she was ten years old and now plays at Pepperdine University in college golf in the United States, became the first Malaysian to win the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific Championship (WAAP).

She turned in a superb finish which included a clutch par putt on the 16th, a perfect tee shot to within six inches on the 17th and a great pitch for a 8-foot birdie on the 18th for a round of 68.

Wong, who now gets to play three Women's Majors and a host of other iconic events, totalled 18-under, and won by one shot over Korea's Soomin Oh (66), who made a great charge with a bogey free 66, but fell short by in the face of a nerveless finish from Wong.

Wong finished 18th in her only previous experience in 2022, when she also had a hole in one on the second day. In the final round here in Vietnam, she almost had another one on the Par-3 17th, when her tee shot came inside six inches.

I-League: Real Kashmir keep pressure on title race with 2-1 win over Aizawl

AGENCIES
SRINAGAR, 9 MARCH

Real Kashmir FC moved to within two points of the top of I-League 2024-25 with a hard-fought 2-1 win over relegation-battling Aizawl FC at the TRC Turf Ground in Srinagar on Sunday.

Real Kashmir's fifth straight home win and fourth in the last five overall took their tally to 32 points in 18 matches, two behind both Churchill Brothers and Inter Kashi. With just four matches to go, the title race is set to go down to the wire. On the other hand, Aizawl missed the chance to climb out of the relegation zone. The Reds remained in 11th place with 16 points, one behind SC Bengaluru.

Senegalese Karim Samb put the Snow Leopards ahead before Lalrinzuala equalised for Aizawl with his ninth goal of the season. Brazilian Paulo



Cezar, on as a substitute, scored the winning goal for the hosts, who also saved a penalty late on to grab all three points.

It was an end-to-end start with both goalkeepers making some routine saves in the early minutes. Gradually, Real Kashmir began to boss possession and took the game to the visitors. In the 21st minute, Aizawl almost scored an own goal as Samuel Lalmuanpuia, intending to clear an Ocran Idan corner, flicked a header that went just wide

of the far post.

The breakthrough for the hosts arrived through a defensive mix-up from Aizawl in the 31st minute. Karim Samb capitalised on it, burst into the box and slotted it past Md Rafique Ali Sardar to score his fifth goal of the season.

The Reds' high defensive line meant that Real Kashmir tried to play long balls over the top for players on the wings to latch on to. In the 37th minute, right-back Shahid Nazir got on the end of one such delivery and entered

the box from the right, but the angle was narrow and his shot went straight at Sardar, who parried it out.

Soon, Nazir was on his usual defensive duties. Lalrinzuala pumped in a low cross into the six-yard box that he hacked clear before Lalbiakdikha could arrive. However, in the process, Nazir suffered an injury and had to be replaced by Basit Ahmed Bhat at half-time.

Aizawl began the second half better and were deserving of the equaliser in the 58th minute despite it coming due to a goalkeeping error. Laltanzova cut inside from the left but shot directly at Mohd Arbaz.

What should've been a routine save was spilled by the Real Kashmir custodian and Lalrinzuala, the top Indian scorer of the I-League, was on hand to tap it in from two yards out and restore parity.

Khelo India Winter Games 2025 to kick off in Gulmarg

AGENCIES
GULMARG, 9 MARCH

Gulmarg, March 9 IANS) The 'Khelo India Winter Games 2025' will kick off here on Sunday with the snowclad peaks of Gulmarg providing the perfect backdrop.

Jammu and Kashmir Lt. Governor, Manoj Sinha, who is arriving here from Jammu, is scheduled to preside over the inaugural function.

Sunday's final phase of Khelo India Winter Games 2025 is set to deliver electrifying performances and further elevate the status of winter sports in India.

Khelo India Winter Games (KIWG) are the national-level multidisciplinary grassroots winter games of India. Events include skiing, alpine skiing, nordic skiing, snow rugby, icesport, snowbaseball, mountaineering, snowshoe running, ice hockey, figure skating and speed skating.



It was decided to hold the first Khelo India Winter Games in 2020 after the success of multiple editions of the Khelo India Youth Games.

The first leg of the KIWG-

2025 competitions saw UT of Ladakh emerge as the overall leader securing seven medals, including four golds.

Tamil Nadu followed with

five medals, including three golds, while Maharashtra won a total of 10 medals, but with only two golds finishing third.

Now, with the final leg set in Gulmarg, the Army is determined to bounce back and defend its overall title.

With over 350 athletes representing 11 states, two Union Territories, and central forces such as the Army, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the stakes are high.

The competition features four key disciplines: Alpine Skiing, Nordic Skiing, Ski Mountaineering, and Snowboarding.

Delayed earlier due to insufficient snowfall, the event now returns with pristine white slopes setting the stage for a grand spectacle.

The inauguration of the event scheduled from February 22 to 25 had to be postponed due to the absence of sufficient

snow in Afarwat slopes and the main bowl in Gulmarg.

Local athletes will also compete across four disciplines - alpine skiing, nordic skiing, ski mountaineering, and snowboarding.

The first leg of the games was successfully held in Ladakh from January 23 to 27, where ice hockey and ice skating events took place at NDS Sports Complex and Guphuk Pond.

A multi-layered security arrangement has been put in place to ensure safe, smooth and successful conduct of the event.

Athletes and officials from different parts of the country are participating in the games while security forces, including Jammu and Kashmir Police, paramilitary CRPF and sleuths from other security forces have been deployed in and around Gulmarg under a well-coordinated multi-tier security plan.

ISL: Mohun Bagan Super Giant bamboozle FC Goa with 2-0 win

AGENCIES
KOLKATA, 9 MARCH

Mohun Bagan Super Giant edged past FC Goa with a 2-0 victory at the Vivekananda Yuba Bharati Krirangan in the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 on Saturday.

It was a gripping affair, with both teams getting a flurry of chances. However, the Mariners secured their 17th win of the season courtesy of an own goal from Boris Singh and a late strike from Greg Stewart, a press release by the ISL stated.

With this victory, they remained unbeaten at home this season throughout the league phase. They also mustered 56 points this season, which is the most in a single ISL campaign.

Mohun Bagan Super Giant were off the blocks pretty quickly as they made several inroads into FC Goa's defensive third early on in the game. Both Greg Stewart and Dimitrios Petratos had an opportunity to put them ahead in the game within the first 10 minutes.

However, FC Goa almost caught the opposition off-guard on a fast break when Rowlin Borges released Borja Herrera in space with a pinpoint long ball. The Spaniard found Iker Guarrotxena in company and played the ball in behind. However, the latter's attempt was way off target.

Minutes later, Udanta Singh made a surging run



down the left channel, but Tom Aldred was in a position to thwart the danger.

While the hosts started brightly, FC Goa grew into the game as they had more meaningful chances. Guarrotxena kept the Mohun Bagan Super Giant defenders on their toes with his exceptional movement. He came close to scoring on a couple of occasions, but Aldred and others did enough to keep the scores level.

In the 31st minute, Borja tried his luck from a distance, but Dheeraj Singh Moirangthem in the goal punched away the danger. In the 37th minute, a similar sequence happened again, this time from a free kick, but Dheeraj did his best to keep out Borja's attempt, and the defence later cleared the ball.

Early in the second period, Udanta Singh made a sensational move down the left flank but was recklessly stopped by Ashish Rai, who also received a yellow card

for the infringement. Later, Jose Molina replaced him with Dipendu Biswas in the 57th minute.

MBSG eventually took the lead in the 62nd minute, courtesy of errors from Boris Singh and Hrithik Tiwari. The duo had some miscommunication as Boris' headed ball bounced into the net leaving Hrithik wrong-footed. After the goal, the hosts became even more dominant as Liston Colaco and Stewart came close to scoring in quick succession. Later, Jason Cummings and Dejan Drazic were introduced by their respective coaches after the drinks break.

The final phase of the game saw the MBSG playing percentage football as they had already secured the lead. Later the hosts doubled their lead when Cummings played Stewart through on goal, and the Scotsman slotted it past Hrithik in goal to close out the match as MBSG went on to lift the ISL League Shield in front of 61,591 supporters.

Women's Day special Fit India Sundays on Cycle organised across nation

AGENCIES
NEW DELHI, 9 MARCH

The national capital witnessed a surge of energy and enthusiasm as over 400 riders gathered at the Major Dhyanchand National Stadium for the special Women's Day pink cyclothon edition of Fit India Sundays on Cycle on Sunday.

Indian boxer Manisha Moun, former tennis player Ankita Bhambri, and 13 Indian international cyclists who competed recently at the Asian Track Cycling Championships in Malaysia joined in, as per a SAI Media press release.

The morning's event was held in partnership with the Sports, Physical Education, Fitness and Leisure Skills Council (SPEFL-SC) and the Cycling Federation of India (CFI).

The athletes took part in a 3 km joyride after being

felicitated by Meeta Rajiv Lochan (IAS), Secretary, Youth Affairs, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), who was the chief guest.

Lauding the achievements of young athletes and coaches, Meeta Lochan said, as quoted, "All our young athletes are getting so many medals internationally, and we have more competitions to come, including multiple World Championships. I am hopeful the Indian flag will continue to be unfurled in all these events. The young champions are our country's future. India has embraced you openly, and now I want the world to recognize the merit these kids have." Manisha Moun, Bronze medalist at the Boxing World Championships 2022 in Istanbul, spoke passionately about the event's impact.

"The motivation that I saw today from the young participants and mostly the women here who have led

from the front, perfectly aligns with our Prime Minister's vision of Fit India. Cycling in both the morning and evening is perfect for addressing obesity. It's not only essential for us boxers but also important for all," she said.

Prominent cyclist Ronaldo Singh, hailing from Imphal, spoke about the tremendous pan-India reach the cycling drive has reached in the last few months.

"The Fit India Sundays on Cycle has reached every location in the country. People from my state Manipur, people from my teammates David Beckham's and Esow Alben's hometown Andaman and Nicobar Islands are taking part as well. I also see that people from Trivandrum and multiple remote parts of India also participating," said the 4-time medalist at the Asian Track Cycling Championships.

Speaking about the huge number of youngsters who

turned up at the event, Ronaldo added, "The kids here remind me of my childhood when I used to cycle to go for my tuitions back home. I started from there. I feel this young generation also can become like me and my teammates if they continue pursuing cycling dedicatedly and take it up as a competitive sport in the long run."

The Fit India Sundays on Cycle event, initiated by Union Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, has now reached over 4200 locations across the country since December 2024.

In commemoration of Women's Day 2025, the event was organised across various SAI Regional Centres (RCs), which saw significant participation of women cyclists. A pink cyclothon took place at SAI Training Centre Kokrajhar, under RC SAI Guwahati, in collaboration with Bodoland University.

Barcelona match postponed after death of club doctor; Celta, Alaves, Valencia win

AGENCIES
MADRID, 9 MARCH

FC Barcelona's La Liga game at home to Osasuna that was scheduled to be played on Saturday night was postponed after a member of the FC Barcelona medical team Carles Minarro died.

Minarro passed away on Saturday afternoon at the team hotel prior to the game, leading to La Liga postponing the league leaders' match, reports Xinhua.

"La Liga laments the death of the FC Barcelona first team doctor, Carles Minarro, and informs that for this motive the game between FC Barcelona and Osasuna scheduled for today (Saturday) has been postponed," read the communication from the competition's organising body.

Osasuna also sent their condolences to Barcelona,

The postponement of the match denies Barca the chance to open a four-point lead over Atletico Madrid at the top of the table and Atletico could become leaders if they win away to Getafe on Sunday.

with a "strong hug in these difficult moments for all the FC Barcelona staff."

The postponement of the match denies Barca the chance to open a four-point lead over Atletico Madrid at the top of the table and Atletico could become leaders if they win away to Getafe on Sunday.

In the games that were played, Celta Vigo is starting to look towards a possible place in Europe next season

after coming back from a goal down to win 2-1 at home to Leganes.

Leganes opened the scoring in the 18th minute after excellent work from Juan Cruz saw him pull the ball back for the unmarked Valentin Rosier to score from about eight meters out.

Celta equalized eight minutes later when Alfonso Gonzalez pulled the ball back for Oscar Mingueza to side-foot home and Gonzalez put Celta ahead on the stroke of halftime with a smart finish after being slipped through on goal.

Deportivo Alaves claimed three vital points at home to Villarreal with a dramatic 1-0 win, while Valencia beat Valladolid 2-1 at home.

Sunday will see Real Madrid entertains Rayo Vallecano, while Atletico Madrid travels to Getafe.

