



Observers Engage Political Parties and Media in Dima Hasao Ahead of Assembly Elections
CEM Debolal Gorlosa Inaugurates Boys' and Girls' Hostels at Two Schools in Dima Hasao

₹100 Crore Haflong Town Water Supply Project under AMRUT 2.0 Launched with Bhumi Pujan



Haflong, Mar 15: In a major step towards addressing the long-standing water scarcity in Haflong, the Bhumi Pujan ceremony for the Haflong Town Water Supply Project under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0 was held on Sunday at Lal Field, Haflong. The programme was organized by the Department of Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of Assam, marking a significant milestone in strengthening urban water infrastructure and ensuring safe drinking water for the residents of the hill town. Speaking on the occasion, Executive Member of the North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC) Donpaignon Thaosen highlighted the persistent water shortage faced by the people of Haflong for many years. Recalling his own experiences from earlier days, he expressed hope that the new project would finally provide a lasting solution to the town's water crisis. He stated that water scarcity has been a common challenge for all Haflong residents and expressed confidence that the project would bring much-needed relief. Despite heavy downpour during the programme, the ceremony continued smoothly and concluded successfully. Mission Director of AMRUT, Samprity Goswami, ACS, informed that the project has an estimated cost of around ₹100 crore and is designed to generate 7 million litres of water per day, which will significantly enhance the town's water supply capacity. The Haflong Town Water Supply Project under AMRUT 2.0 has been planned with a comprehensive approach to provide House Service Connections (HSCs) to 10,086 households, ensuring 24x7 access to safe and reliable drinking water.

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BJP Fields Rupali Langthasa for Haflong Seat as Assam Polls Near

Haflong, Mar 19: With the Assam Legislative Assembly elections scheduled for April 9 in a single phase and counting on May 4, political activities across the state have intensified, generating excitement among voters and party workers. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has announced Rupali Langthasa as its candidate for the reserved 113-Haflong (ST) Constituency in Dima Hasao. Ruplai Langthasa the young and energetic known for her grassroots connect, Langthasa has been actively involved in education, community development, and youth empowerment initiatives, earning recognition as a committed leader of the region. The party leadership has ex-



pressed confidence in her candidature, backed by Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma and senior leader Debolal Gorlosa. The BJP aims to strengthen its base in the district while promoting inclusive development under its "Viksit Assam" vision. Meanwhile, the party's central election committee, in

a meeting chaired by Nitin Nabin and attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, and Home Minister Amit Shah, approved the list of candidates for the upcoming polls. As the election date approaches, enthusiasm continues to rise, with the BJP focusing on mobilizing support and securing a strong mandate across Assam. The Dima Hasao district in Assam consists of one MLA constituency, which is Haflong (ST). It is a Scheduled Tribe reserved constituency and is part of the Autonomous District (ST) Lok Sabha seat. The previous MLA for this constituency was Nandita Gorlosa.

CEM Debolal Gorlosa Inaugurates Boys' and Girls' Hostels at Two Schools in Dima Hasao

Haflong, Mar 15: In a significant step towards strengthening educational infrastructure in Dima Hasao, the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, Debolal Gorlosa, inaugurated a 50-bedded Boys' Hostel and a 50-bedded Girls' Hostel at Wadrendisa High School under Maibang East Constituency and at Kalachand High School under Kalachand Constituency. The hostels were constructed under the DAJGUA Scheme. Speaking on the occasion, Debolal Gorlosa stated that the initiative would greatly benefit students from remote and rural areas by providing them with safe accommodation and a conducive environment for education and overall development. He emphasized that improved hostel facilities will help students continue their studies without the challenges of long-distance travel. The inauguration programme was attended by several dignitaries including Mohet Hojai, Chairman of the Dima Hasao Auton-



omous Council; Monjoy Langthasa, Member of Autonomous Council (MAC); Ratan Jarambusa, MAC; Pronen Haflongbar, CDC Chairman of Kalachand Constituency; Pronin Jidung, President of Bharatiya Janata Party Maibang Mandal; and Monjoy Thaosen, Chairman of Maibang Municipal Board. Apart from that Gaon Buras (GBs), Mujari, and village elders were also present during the programme, expressing appreciation for the initiative aimed at improving educational facilities for students in the hill district.

Observers Engage Political Parties and Media in Dima Hasao Ahead of Assembly Elections



Haflong, Mar 19: A crucial meeting with representatives of various political parties was held today at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner, Dima Hasao, in view of the forthcoming Assam Legislative Assembly Election 2026 for the 113-Haflong (ST) Legislative Assembly Constituency. The meeting was attended by General Observer Patel Dhavalakumar Kiriti Kumar, Expenditure Observer Dhedhen Wangmo Bhutia, and Police Observer Dr. Davinder Kumar Chaudhary, who interacted with party representatives and reviewed preparedness for the elections. District Election Officer Gayatri Devidas Hyalinge and Senior Superintendent of Police Ripunjoy Kakati were also present, along with officials engaged in various election-related cells. During the meeting, the General Observer briefed political parties on the guidelines and protocols to be followed throughout the election process, stressing adherence to established norms for ensuring free and fair polling. The Expenditure Observer highlighted key technical aspects related to election expenditure and

emphasized the importance of maintaining proper records by contesting candidates. Officials informed that the General Observer is stationed at Haflong Circuit House (Room No. 3) and can be contacted at 9181623755, while the Expenditure Observer is available at Room No. 5 with contact number 8822134291. Addressing the gathering, the Police Observer spoke on law-and-order arrangements and urged all stakeholders to ensure that the elections, often described as the "festival of democracy," are conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner. He is stationed at the Police Guest House, Haflong, and can be reached at 9181868689. Later, the observers also held a press meet with media persons of the district, seeking their cooperation in ensuring smooth conduct of the elections. The General Observer encouraged media representatives to responsibly report election-related developments and advised that any matter of public interest may be brought directly to the notice of the District Election Officer or concerned authorities.

Daniel Langthasa Files Nomination for Haflong (ST) Seat; BJP, Congress, and NPP Set for Triangular Contest

Haflong, Mar 20: The political atmosphere in Dima Hasao has intensified as Daniel Langthasa officially filed his nomination for the upcoming Assam Legislative Assembly Election 2026 from the 113-Haflong (ST) constituency, representing the National People's Party (NPP). Following the filing of his nomination, Langthasa led a massive rally through the main streets of Haflong, accompanied by a large number of supporters and party workers. Earlier, he held a brief meeting with NPP members, where discussions focused on safeguarding tribal rights, protecting the provisions of the Sixth Schedule, and addressing concerns over development in the district.

Langthasa's entry marks a significant moment, as he becomes one of the prominent NPP candidates in Dima Hasao, with considerable influence in Haflong and other parts of the district. His strong grassroots connection, particularly among the youth, is expected to make the contest highly competitive. The upcoming election is shaping into a triangular battle, with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (Congress) also fielding their candidates. While the BJP is banking on its organizational strength and governance agenda, the Congress aims to regain its traditional support base in the hill district. With NPP entering the fray with momentum, the



stage is now set for a high-voltage electoral contest in Haflong, as all three parties gear up for a decisive political showdown.

Nitish 5.0: Unopposed Return as JD(U) President

No challengers: Nitish set for unopposed re-election

Patna, Mar 20: Nitish Kumar is set to retain the post of president of the Janata Dal (United) after filing his nomination papers on Thursday for the 2025–28 term. As he is the sole candidate to have filed nominations for the top party post, Kumar is expected to be declared elected unopposed after the withdrawal deadline. While March 22 is the last date for withdrawal of nominations, the formal announcement is likely on March 24. The election to the party president's post was announced on March 16, the day Nitish Kumar was declared elected to the Rajya Sabha.

Before Nitish Kumar assumed the position in December 2023, Union Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh (Lalan Singh) was serving as the party's national president. On Kumar's behalf, JD(U) working president Sanjay Kumar



Jha, Bihar Rural Development Minister Shraavan Kumar, party MLC Sanjay Gandhi, and other leaders submitted the nomination papers to the party's returning officer and former MP Aneel Prasad Hegde at the party's central office in New Delhi.

Nitish Kumar first assumed charge as JD(U) national president in April 2016, succeeding senior leader Sharad Yadav. He was re-elected in 2019 but stepped down in 2020, mak-

ing way for RCP Singh. Jha said that party members were keen on Nitish Kumar taking charge once again and added that he would visit the party office in Delhi more frequently. The post of national working president may also fall vacant, as Jha is likely to be elevated as Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. The term of the incumbent, Hariवंश Narayan Singh, ends on April 9, and he has not been renominated to the Upper House.

SpiceJet Delhi–Fujairah Flight Makes Safe Emergency Landing

New Delhi, Mar 20: In an incident involving a Spicejet aircraft on Tuesday (March 17) which has just come to light, its plane carrying 141 passengers with six crew members from Delhi to Fujairah (in UAE) encountered a pressurisation issue inside the cabin while carrying out the descent before landing. The flight SG 5011 landed safely at Fujairah airport with no injuries to crew or passengers. The aircraft was grounded for a day at Fu-



jairah and resumed operations on Wednesday (March 18) after necessary checks. Auto pressurisation is a system that

regulates the pressure inside the cabin of a plane so that passengers can breathe easily at high altitudes.

The issue in the plane boiled

down to repeated warnings received by the cockpit crew regarding the failure of the auto pressurisation system.

A source of the aviation regulator, DGCA, told this reporter, "While this flight was descending from Flight Level 360 to FL 260, an amber auto light fail message was received. Again when passing an approximate altitude of 14,000 feet, a warning stating 'Auto fail' cropped up." The cockpit carried out the mandated steps and the flight landed safely, he said.

Selfishness, Dominance Fuel Global Conflicts

Nagpur, Mar 20: Selfish interests and the desire for dominance were the root cause of conflicts in the world, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said on Friday, asserting that lasting peace can only be achieved through unity, discipline and adherence to dharma. Addressing a gathering in Nagpur, Bhagwat said that for 2,000 years the world has experimented with various ideas to resolve conflicts with little success. Religious intolerance, forced conversions and ideas of superiority and inferiority still exist, he pointed out.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief was speaking at the gathering after laying the foundation stone for the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's office in the city. Bhagwat said that India's ancient wisdom teaches that "all are connected and one", and called for a shift from conflict to harmony and cooperation. He further noted that even modern science is gradually moving towards this understanding.

The RSS chief noted that selfish interests and the desire for dominance were the root cause of conflicts in the world, and said lasting peace can only be achieved through unity, discipline and adherence to dharma. Highlighting the importance of conduct, Bhagwat said dharma cannot remain confined to scriptures, but must be reflected in people's behaviour. Discipline and adherence to moral values require sustained practice and often involve personal hardship, he said. While India believes in humanity, others believe in the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest, he said, reiterating that the world needs harmony, not conflict.

Kathua Case: Lawyer Alleges Safety Risk After Security Cut

Srinagar, Mar 20: Jammu-based lawyer Deepika Pushkar Nath, who represented the family of the eight-year-old victim in the 2018 Kathua rape and murder case, has alleged that her security has been downgraded despite persistent threats, forcing her to stop her daughter from attending school. Speaking to TNIE, Deepika said that about three months ago, one of the two PSOs assigned to her was withdrawn by the police. She had originally been provided security after facing open threats for taking up the high-profile case.

She said that in November 2025, she approached the IGP (Security) seeking replacement of one PSO. "Instead of replacing the PSO, it was withdrawn, leaving me with only one," she said, adding that repeated representations to police officials, including a recent meeting with the IGP, yielded no result. Deepika said she has faced continued threats and even attacks since representing the victim's family. Referring to Farooq Abdullah, she remarked, "When someone like Farooq Abdullah can survive an assassination attempt despite Z+ security, what does it mean for some-

one like me?" She said earlier one PSO accompanied her daughter, a Class 8 student, to school, while the other stayed with her. "Since the security was scaled down, I am not sending my daughter to school out of fear. She only went to appear for exams," she said, adding that she fears sending her alone or with strangers. The lawyer, who briefly joined and later returned to the Indian National Congress, said she has faced social and professional isolation since the Rasana case. "If anything happens to me or my family, the responsibility lies with the IGP Jammu Security. There are no proper SOPs for threat assessment," she said, adding that she has written to the Chief Justice of India and the Chief Justice of the J&K High Court seeking intervention.

In her letter, she stated that since 2018 she has faced organised hate campaigns, public vilification and protests for standing with a victim of sexual violence. She urged the court to take cognisance of the "arbitrary withdrawal" of her security and direct its immediate restoration. Deepika said she would move the J&K High Court if her full security cover is not reinstated.



Sujoy Ghosh Wins 'Kahaani 2' Copyright Battle in Supreme Court

Challenging the lower court: Ghosh appeals 'Kahaani 2' copyright ruling

New Delhi, Mar 20: The Supreme Court on Friday quashed the proceedings pending before a Jharkhand court against filmmaker Sujoy Ghosh in an alleged copyright infringement case over his movie 'Kahaani 2'. A bench of Justices P S Narasimha and Alok Aradhe allowed Ghosh's plea, challenging a Jharkhand High Court's order (dated April 22, 2017), which had refused to quash the proceedings pending against him. "The summoning order dated June 7, 2018 passed by the CJM (Chief Judicial Magistrate) and order dated April 22, 2025 passed by the high court are quashed and set aside," the bench said, while allowing Ghosh's plea. In July last year, the top court issued notice to the Jharkhand government on Ghosh's plea to quash the case pending before the court of CJM, Hazaribagh.

The filmmaker had moved the high court against the CJM



court's order holding a prima facie case of copyright infringement against him under Section 63 of the Copyright Act, 1957.

The high court dismissed Ghosh's plea, observing it would not conduct a "mini-trial" at the quashing stage, and the issues could be tested during trial.

The complainant, Umesh Prasad Mehta, had written a script for the film "Sabak" which was certified by the Notary Public of Hazaribagh for obtaining its copyright. It was alleged that the complainant met Ghosh and obtained a recommendation letter, which was essential for obtaining the copyright of a film script. Ghosh allegedly kept a photocopy of the script of the complainant and knowingly infringed the copyright of the complainant by producing a film 'Kahaani 2'. The film was watched by the complainant in a film hub at Hazaribagh.

After watching the film, the complainant alleged that Ghosh violated his copyright by committing theft of his script and infringed its copyright.

₹100 Crore Haflong Town Water Supply Project under AMRUT 2.0 Launched with Bhumi Pujan

The project will draw water from surface sources and will be supported by a Water Treatment Plant (WTP) with a capacity of 7.0 MLD. To ensure efficient distribution across the town, a 70.25 km pipeline network will also be laid under the project. The event was attended by several dignitaries including Executive Member Probita Johori, MAC Pronath Rajiyung, Principal Secretary Partha Jahari, ACS, Chairman of Haflong Municipal Board Ripa Hojai, Joint Secretary NCHAC Rebecca Changsan, along with heads of various departments and other officials. The project is expected to significantly improve the drinking water supply system in Haflong and bring long-awaited relief to thousands of residents who have faced water shortages for decades.

Voting on April 9; Assam Assembly Elections 2026 to be Held in Single Phase on April 9; Counting on May 4

Guwahati, Mar 15: The schedule for the upcoming Assam Legislative Assembly Elections 2026 has been officially announced by the Election Commission of India. As per the notification, polling for all 126 Assembly constituencies across Assam will be conducted in a single phase on April 9, 2026, marking a crucial democratic exercise for the state.

According to the detailed election programme released by the Commission, the formal process of the election will begin with the issue of the Gazette Notification on March 16, 2026 (Monday). Following the notification, candidates intending to contest the elections will be able to file their nomination papers.

The last date for filing nominations has been fixed for March 23, 2026 (Monday). After the submission of nominations, the scrutiny of the nomination papers will take place on March 24, 2026 (Tuesday) to verify the eligibility and compliance of candidates with election rules and regulations.

Candidates who wish to withdraw



SCHEDULE FOR ASSAM (All 126 Assembly Constituencies)	
Poll Events	Date and Day
Date of Issue of Gazette Notification	16.03.2026 (Monday)
Last Date for making Nominations	23.03.2026 (Monday)
Date for the scrutiny of Nominations	24.03.2026 (Tuesday)
Last date for the withdrawal of candidatures	26.03.2026 (Thursday)
Date of Poll	09.04.2026 (Thursday)
Date of Counting	04.05.2026 (Monday)
Date before which election shall be completed	06.05.2026 (Wednesday)

their nominations will have the opportunity to do so until March 26, 2026 (Thursday), which has been designated as the last date for withdrawal of candidatures. Once this process is completed, the final list of contesting candidates in all constituencies will be published.

The polling across Assam will take place on April 9, 2026 (Thursday), when voters in all 126 Assembly constituencies will exercise their democratic right to elect representatives to the State Legislative Assembly. The polling process will be conducted under strict supervision and security ar-

rangements to ensure a free, fair, and peaceful election.

Following the voting process, the counting of votes will be held on May 4, 2026 (Monday), when the results of all constituencies will be declared. The entire election process is scheduled to be completed by May 6, 2026 (Wednesday), as mandated by the Commission.

The Assembly elections are expected to witness intense political activity across the state, with major political parties and independent candidates preparing to contest in all constituencies. Election authorities have begun

making necessary logistical and administrative arrangements to ensure smooth conduct of the polls.

With the announcement of the schedule, the Model Code of Conduct has come into immediate effect across Assam, regulating the conduct of political parties, candidates, and government authorities during the election period.

The upcoming elections are considered significant for the political landscape of the state, as voters across Assam will decide the composition of the next government through this single-phase electoral exercise.

Security Intensified in Dima Hasao Ahead of AE-2026



Haflong, Mar 18: In view of the upcoming Assembly Elections 2026 (AE-2026), extensive area domination exercises are being carried out across Dima Hasao district as part of confidence-building measures. The operations are being conducted by Dima Hasao Police in close coordination with various Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and commando units. The initiative aims to ensure a secure and peaceful environment in the district ahead of the elections, while also instilling confidence among the public. Security forces have intensified patrolling in sensitive and remote areas, maintaining a strong presence to deter any untoward incidents and uphold law and order during the pre-election period.

New District Commissioner Takes Charge in Dima Hasao, Holds Meeting on Election Preparedness

Haflong, Mar 16: Gayatri Devidas Hyalinge, IAS (RR-2019), formally assumed charge as the new District Commissioner of Dima Hasao on Monday, March 16, after taking over from outgoing DC Munindra Nath Ngatey, ACS. Ngatey has been transferred and posted as Additional Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Health & Family Welfare Department. Prior to her posting in Dima Hasao, Hyalinge served as Junior Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Finance Department. Soon after assuming office, the new District Commissioner held a meeting with representatives of various political parties to discuss preparations for the forthcoming Assam Legislative Assembly elections. She also interacted briefly with media personnel and later convened a meeting with different cell in-charges to review the district's preparedness for the upcoming polls. During her interaction with the media, Hyalinge expressed optimism about working in the district and described the people of Dima Hasao as warm and welcoming. She sought the cooperation of all stakeholders to ensure the smooth and peaceful conduct of the upcoming elections.



The new District Commissioner further said that she is pleased to be posted in the scenic hill district and looks forward to working closely with the people and administration for its development.

Hailstorm Damages 76 Houses in Umrangso Area; Relief Materials Distributed to Affected Families

Haflong, Mar 16: A severe hailstorm that struck the Umrangso area of Dima Hasao district on March 12, 2026 caused significant damage to residential properties, affecting a total of 76 houses across three villages. According to official reports, the villages of Puralangso, Chirilangso, and Boro Larpheng were the worst affected by the hailstorm. Soon after the incident, teams carried out house visits and conducted detailed damage assessments in the affected villages to evaluate the extent of the losses. As part of the immediate relief measures, tarpaulins were distributed to the affected families. A total of 79 tarpaulins were provided at the respective villages on March 13 to help residents temporarily cover and protect their damaged homes. Further assistance was extended on March 15 at the District Commissioner's Office in Haflong, where 672 GI roofing sheets were distributed to 42 severely affected households to support the repair and restoration of their homes. The distribution programme was carried out in the presence of the Additional District Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer of

the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), along with the District Project Officer of DDMA, field officers of DDMA, members of the District Disaster Response Force (DDRF), CQRT members, and Gaon Burahs (village headmen) of the affected villages. The district administration has assured continued support to the affected families and stated that necessary steps are being taken to assist residents in recovering from the damage caused by the hailstorm



Haflong Mourns Passing of Sportsman and Social Worker Rathindra Dey at 65



Haflong, Mar 19: Rathindra Dey, a well-known sports personality and respected social worker of Haflong, passed away in the early hours of Thursday at Holy Spirit Hospital. He was 65. According to family sources, he breathed his last at around 4:50 AM after battling a prolonged terminal illness. He is survived by his wife and son. Late Rathindra Dey was widely admired for his active involvement in social, cultural, and religious activities in the town. He played a significant role in community development initiatives and earned the respect of people across different sections of society. He was a senior member of the Sri Sri Jagannath Bari Management Committee, Haflong, and was associated with several organizations, contributing selflessly to various social causes over the years. His demise has left a deep void in the community, with many remembering him for his dedication.

Editorial

A Defining Electoral Moment for the Hills

As the hills of Dima Hasao move closer to the forthcoming Assam Legislative Assembly Election 2026, the political climate has unmistakably turned charged, layered, and deeply consequential. What is unfolding in the 113-Haflong (ST) constituency is not merely an electoral contest—it is a reflection of shifting loyalties, evolving aspirations, and a renewed assertion of regional identity. The recent entry of a key contender under the banner of the National People's Party has added a new dimension to the electoral landscape. The show of strength through public mobilization signals that the party is no longer a peripheral force in the hills, but an emerging player capable of shaping the outcome. Its emphasis on safeguarding tribal rights and protecting constitutional provisions under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India resonates deeply in a district where identity, autonomy, and self-governance remain central concerns. What makes this election particularly noteworthy is the triangular nature of the contest. The

Bharatiya Janata Party enters the race with the advantage of organizational strength and a governance-driven narrative. Its focus is expected to remain on infrastructure, connectivity, and a broader development agenda aligned with both state and national priorities. On the other hand, the Indian National Congress seeks to regain lost ground by reconnecting with its traditional support base in the hill district. The challenge before the party lies not only in reviving its legacy appeal but also in presenting a credible and forward-looking vision that aligns with the aspirations of a younger and increasingly aware electorate. Amid these established forces, the rise of the NPP introduces an element of unpredictability. Its regional positioning and focus on localized issues could disrupt conventional voting patterns, particularly if it succeeds in consolidating tribal sentiment and youth support. This shifts the contest from a conventional binary to a competitive three-cornered battle, where margins are likely to be narrow and outcomes

uncertain. However, beyond party strategies and campaign optics, the electorate in Dima Hasao appears increasingly discerning. Issues such as sustainable development, employment opportunities, preservation of cultural identity, and effective grassroots governance are expected to dominate voter priorities. The hills are watching closely—not just who makes promises, but who can deliver tangible results. The coming weeks will test not only the strength of political machinery but also the credibility of leadership. Campaign rhetoric will intensify, alignments may evolve, and voter engagement will deepen. Yet, the true measure of this election will lie in its ability to strengthen democratic participation and address the long-standing aspirations of the people. As the contest gathers momentum, one thing is clear: the Haflong constituency stands at a political crossroads. The outcome will not merely decide a representative—it will shape the future direction of the hills for years to come.

Siu-ka-pha's legacy & rise of Ahom kingdom across Brahmaputra valley

In the 13th century, Assam witnessed the arrival of a visionary prince who went on to establish the Ahom kingdom and pave the way for a 600-year rule by the Ahoms—a grandeur so alluring that one cannot stop praising the legacy it upholds. The land of Mung-dun-sun-kham, as it was called by the Tai-Shans later, witnessed the coming of Siu-ka-pha, a shrewd diplomat and a mature politician, who was accompanied by 300 horsemen, 1,080 soldiers, numerous officials, royal priests, and so on. The Ahoms did not bring their wives along with them, but took one from the country they conquered. When Siu-ka-pha invaded the land of Saumar, it was inhabited by the Morans, Mataks, Borahis, and small ruling parties. Eventually, they were conciliated by dint of Siu-ka-pha's might and brilliance. Apart from introducing numerous rituals, Siu-ka-pha also showed respect for the indigenous languages. Instead of imposing his own language, he chose to respect the language of the people, while using his own language only in religious scriptures and selected books. Had Siu-ka-pha not stepped into Assam, the land would not have witnessed the valour of the Ahoms in the battle of Saraighat in 1671 against the Mughals under Lachit Borphukan, whose bravery won the praise of even the then Mughal general Ram Singh. Had Siu-ka-pha not founded the Ahom kingdom here, Assam would not have witnessed the architectural marvels that are still standing tall, bearing the imprints of the glorious Ahom rule. Born in Maulung, Upper Burma, Siu-ka-pha left his homeland in 1215 AD and reached the Brahmaputra Valley on December 2, 1228. He called their small kingdom Mung-dun-sun-kham, meaning, a country

full of golden gardens. He hailed from the Shan dynasty of South-east Asia. The Shans first inhabited a land named Tyai-Shan on the bank of the river Tarim, which flowed to the north of Mongolia and China. They migrated to China in the 5th century AD and then to Mungrimungram in the Yun-nan province of China. The Ahoms claim that it was in Mungrimungram that Khunlai, their youngest progenitor, ruled his kingdom. Siu-ka-pha finally Charaida in 1253 and made it his capital. After ruling for 39 years, he died in 1268. Between 1228 and 1819, as many as 39 kings ruled Assam except for two brief periods from 1376 to 1380 and again from 1389 to 1397 - when 'Borgohain' and 'Buragohain', the counsellor posts created by Siu-ka-pha for administrative efficiency, had to rule in the absence of a king. It is interesting to note that Siu-ka-pha did not come as a conqueror but as a noble in search of agricultural tracts. SL Baruah in A Comprehensive History of Assam notes Siu-ka-pha's negotiation attitude in the way he addressed the local communities. "You are the hosts, the natives of the land; and we, the guests, are coming from the upcountry. You should introduce us to the local people." Such amiable behaviour requires political acumen, visionary insight and an indomitable spirit, which Siu-ka-pha possessed aplenty. He integrated numerous tribes under his rule in a harmonious manner, although he resorted to extreme measures when necessary. Siu-ka-pha has given us the historical chronicles or Buranjis, without which past events would have remained shrouded in mystery. The Ahom marriage system chaklang is a time-honoured part of Assam's heritage, taught by Siu-ka-pha.

Measure impact to award PhD

Scientific journal Nature recently reported about a PhD in which an engineering doctorate was assessed primarily on an implemented solution rather than a traditional dissertation. The defence focused on a field-tested innovation documented in use. The evaluation centred on demonstrable contribution in practice. The work was judged for usefulness and implementation.

Many top-ranked universities today offer industrial or application-oriented PhDs. The University of Cambridge, for example, offers a PhD in industrial engineering in which research is pursued primarily in an industrial setting while maintaining the expectation of original contribution. The University of Warwick's engineering doctorate programme is designed around company-sponsored problems. It follows a system of dual academic and industrial supervision. The final submission is explicitly framed as a portfolio rather than a single project.

The National University of Singapore offers an industrial postgraduate programme in which students conduct doctoral work in partnership with companies. In this programme,

co-supervision and the requirement that the student spend substantial time in the company setting are mandatory.

These examples raise a pertinent question. Why can't such innovative work in Indian institutions lead to a practice-oriented or practical PhDs, making validated application the primary evidence rather than the usual publication-plus-thesis requirements? In current PhD programmes in India and most parts of the world, we follow a traditional path. Supervisors and students optimise research for publishable pieces; paper counts are invariably the goal. Such outcomes are a direct result of the processes we have adopted in recruitment, promotion and graduation. So there is hardly any effort to promote outcomes that address real constraints, manufacturability and adoption in live systems.

The traditional PhD pathway will remain in many disciplines. But, at least in engineering, it is now time to introduce pragmatic reforms in the form of a carefully-gov-

erned, practical PhD track. Established Indian institutions must reorient doctoral programmes to train young scholars who can convert their doctoral work into robust products and processes.

How can we evaluate practical PhD programmes based on product or process development? In a conventional thesis evaluation, two external examiners, who are invariably academicians, examine the thesis and give their recommendations. The process includes, if required, a revision of the thesis and a mandatory oral defence. It is not designed to judge whether the thesis represents a real-world product or process.

For a practical PhD, the examination panel should bring together academic examiners and experienced industry practitioners to ensure both scholarly and applied

What could be the risks? Quality dilution is one. To safeguard, the award panel must ensure that the work demonstrates originality through novel design, method, algorithm or process. The practical PhD work should improve performance, safety, cost or reliability. This rigour can be validated through independent tests.

Conflict of interest is a risk if examiners from industry fail to disclose conflicts of interest. IP disputes are a risk when universities and firms negotiate ownership at the end of the PhD; its safeguard is standardised IP and revenue-sharing agreed at admission. Confidentiality is at risk if students are blocked from presenting evidence; its safeguard can include limited patent embargoes and a preserved audit trail. Supervisor quality is a risk if the industry



evaluation. We can adopt an India-specific approach in which the panel treats the doctoral output as a rigorously audited technical dossier. This dossier should document research contribution, engineering trade-offs, experimental evidence and path to deployment. Since a practical PhD is more relevant in the engineering discipline, we can measure the maturity of the presented work through technology-readiness milestones, third-party testing and field trials. The National Education Policy 2020 makes this reform timely. The University Grants Commission's PhD regulations should now include a practical PhD pathway in engineering and applied domains with clear rules on supervision, work evaluation and intellectual property. It does not mean that we replace the classical PhD, which remains essential for foundational science and long-horizon discovery. Both can coexist in the way NEP 2020 envisions differentiated, flexible and learner-centric higher education.

mentor is not strong enough; its safeguard is mentor certification based on experience and professional contributions. What should India do? The best policy answer is to pilot, measure and scale with proper safeguards. We can launch a pilot practical PhD programme in a small set of top technical institutes. Pair them with engineering firms and public-sector users. Measure the success based on patents and designs filed, certifications completed, deployments achieved and doctoral graduates placed in high-impact R&D and manufacturing roles. The economic case is ultimately the strongest for starting these programmes—practical PhDs can turn frontier knowledge into better products and processes, enhancing India's self-reliance.

India needs a doctoral system that values both fundamental research and solutions to real industrial problems. NEP 2020 provides the policy foundation to implement this logic. We can do it in a distinctly Indian way without compromising rigour.

Renault launches new Duster in India, prices start at Rs 10.49 lakh; hybrid bookings sold out for 2026

Guwahati: Renault India on Tuesday launched the all-new Duster in the country, with introductory prices starting at ₹10.49 lakh (ex-showroom). The company also announced a limited R-Pass offer at ₹10.29 lakh valid until March 31, 2026, as dispatches begin nationwide.

Built on the Renault Group Modular Platform (RGMP), the SUV is designed for Indian driving conditions, combining structural strength with improved ride and handling. The turbocharged TCe 160 engine delivers 163 PS and 280 Nm torque, paired with either a 6-speed manual or DCT gearbox. Renault said



over 90% of petrol bookings are for the higher-powered turbo variant.

The SUV comes in five trims — Authentic, Evolution, Techno, Techno+ and Iconic — offering features such as a panoramic sunroof, Google-integrated in-

footainment, ventilated seats, 360-degree camera and 17 ADAS features. The company is also offering flexible subscription plans and a 7-year 'Renault Forever' warranty.

Renault said demand for the E-Tech strong hybrid variant

has been particularly strong, with nearly 40% of customers in metro cities opting for it. The company confirmed that its entire hybrid allocation for 2026 has already been sold out, with bookings expected to reopen closer to Diwali.

In Guwahati, the launch is expected to intensify competition in the mid-size SUV segment, where demand for high ground clearance and rugged vehicles remains strong due to road conditions. Dealers indicate growing interest in turbo and hybrid variants among urban buyers, especially as fuel efficiency and performance gain importance in Northeast markets.

Ambuja Cements, Adani Foundation strengthen rural connectivity in Assam's Umrangso

Umrangso: Ambuja Cements, the world's ninth largest building materials solutions provider and part of the diversified Adani Portfolio, along with the Adani Foundation, has improved rural connectivity in Umrangso in Assam's Dima Hasao district by restoring a key connecting road between Tharvelangso and Borolokhindong villages.

The initiative involved the restoration of a 2.5-km stretch that had severely deteriorated over the years, making travel difficult and affecting mobility, safety and livelihoods of local residents. The poor condition of the road had posed challenges for daily commuting, access to essential services and the transportation of agricultural produce.

Responding to the needs of the community, the Adani Foundation undertook critical patchwork restoration of the road to improve accessibility and ensure smoother movement for villagers.

With the improved infrastructure, residents are now experiencing safer and more reliable all-weather travel. Schoolchildren can commute more comfortably, villagers are able to access nearby services more efficiently and farmers can transport their produce to markets with greater ease. Around 157 villagers are currently benefiting from the improved connectivity, which has also strengthened access to essential services and market linkages.

CDSL-KPMG report pushes data-driven overhaul of India's securities market with '3C' framework

Guwahati: Central Depository Services (India) Limited (CDSL), in collaboration with KPMG in India, has released the third edition of its "Reimagine" thought leadership report, calling for a data-led transformation of India's securities market. Titled "Reimagine: Securities Market through Data Synergy," the report introduces a Creation-Control-Culture (3C) framework to strengthen governance, innovation, and transparency across the ecosystem.

The report stresses that "data risk is market risk" and proposes a structured approach to build shared data

infrastructure, strengthen cyber safeguards, and promote responsible data practices. It also suggests a central regulatory operating model to improve interoperability, align regulatory expectations, and enhance investor protection in a rapidly evolving market.

CDSL MD & CEO Nehal Vora said data synergy can enable a resilient and trust-driven market, adding that it supports India's vision of a self-reliant investor base. KPMG's Akhilesh Tuteja highlighted that intelligent use of data will drive the next phase of economic growth.

With household participation in securities markets at

around 20%, the report sees strong potential for expansion. It identifies four key areas of opportunity: better price discovery, personalised investor experiences, improved risk and fraud detection, and agile regulation through RegTech and SupTech. In Guwahati, the push for data-driven systems is expected to improve access for retail investors in Assam, where participation in equity markets is steadily rising. Enhanced digital infrastructure, multilingual investor education, and stronger safeguards could help build trust among first-time investors in the region.

East India tops retirement readiness index, scores above national average: Axis Max Life IRIS 5.0

Guwahati: Axis Max Life Insurance Ltd., formerly Max Life Insurance Company Ltd., has released the East Zone findings of the fifth edition of its India Retirement Index Study (IRIS 5.0), conducted with Kantar. The report shows East India leading the country in retirement preparedness with a score of 52, well above the national average of 48.

The study highlights strong financial and health preparedness in the region. The Financial Preparedness Index remains steady at 52, reflecting disciplined savings and early planning, while the Health Preparedness Index has improved from 46 to 49. However, the Emotional Preparedness Index has dipped slightly to 59, indicating growing concerns around post-retirement life.

Anurag Gupta, Director and Chief Business Officer & Retirement Head,

Axis Max Life Insurance, said the findings reaffirm East India's leadership, driven by early investments, higher insurance adoption, and proactive health behaviour, while also stressing the need for emotional wellbeing.

Nearly 75% of respondents in the region have started investing for retirement, the highest in India, with term plan ownership rising to 60% and ULIP adoption to 46%. Around 69% feel secure about retirement, and 52% believe their savings will last over 10 years post-retirement.

Health awareness is also high, with 55% opting for annual check-ups and 53% covered by health insurance.

However, emotional concerns persist, with 70% worried about dependency on children and 69% fearing loneliness.

In Guwahati, financial advisors say awareness around retirement planning

is steadily increasing, with more individuals opting for insurance and long-term investment products. The trend aligns with East India's strong performance, as investors in the city show

growing interest in early financial planning and health security, although experts note that emotional preparedness remains an area that needs more attention.

HSBC Mutual Fund launches first Gold ETFs in India; NFO opens this week



HSBC Mutual Fund

Guwahati: HSBC Mutual Fund has announced the launch of its maiden Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) offerings in India with the introduction of the HSBC Gold ETF and the HSBC Gold ETF Fund of Fund (FoF), marking the company's entry into the ETF segment in the country. The New Fund Offer (NFO) for the schemes opens this week.

The HSBC Gold ETF NFO will remain open for subscription from March 16 to March 18, 2026, while the HSBC Gold ETF Fund of Fund will accept investments from March 19 to March 25, 2026. Both schemes will be managed by Dipan Parikh of HSBC Mutual Fund.

The HSBC Gold ETF will invest primarily in physical gold or gold-related instruments and its performance will be benchmarked against the domestic price of gold. Meanwhile, the HSBC Gold ETF FoF will invest mainly in the units of the HSBC Gold ETF. During the NFO period, investors can participate with a minimum investment of Rs 5,000 and in multiples of Rs 1 thereafter.

Commenting on the launch, Kailash Kulkarni, CEO of

HSBC Mutual Fund, said gold has long been an important asset in Indian households and is increasingly being viewed as a key pillar of asset allocation and portfolio diversification. He noted that gold ETFs enable investors to gain exposure to gold without the complexities of physical storage or handling.

Venugopal Manghat, CIO - Equity at HSBC Mutual Fund, said gold's low correlation with equities makes it an effective hedge during periods of market volatility and can help investors manage portfolio risk and maintain long-term stability.

In Guwahati, investor interest in gold-linked investment products has been rising steadily in the region, particularly among young investors and salaried professionals seeking diversification beyond traditional gold purchases. With gold continuing to hold strong cultural and investment value in Assam, the launch of digital gold investment options such as ETFs is expected to attract investors in the Guwahati market, offering them a regulated and convenient route to participate in gold price movements without buying physical bullion.



75.8% Indians now active dairy consumers, multi-product dairy basket driving household nutrition: Godrej Jersey Report

Guwahati: A new Lactography Report released by Godrej Jersey has revealed that 75.8% of Indians are now active dairy consumers, indicating that milk and dairy products have become deeply embedded in everyday household nutrition across the country. The report highlights that Indian households increasingly consume multiple dairy products alongside milk, including curd, paneer, ghee, butter, lassi, yogurt and cheese.

According to the findings, Indian homes are gradually building what the report calls a “dairy basket”, where several dairy products are consumed regularly rather than relying solely on milk. Among active dairy consumers, curd leads with 80% preference, followed by paneer (76%), butter (74%) and ghee



(71%). Other widely consumed items include lassi (63%), cheese (58%), yogurt (57%) and traditional milk-based sweets (55%), reflecting dairy's role across cooking, snacks and festive dishes.

Commenting on the findings, Shantanu Raj, Head of Marketing at Godrej Jersey, said India has moved beyond the idea of “just a glass of milk,” with dairy evolving into a value-added nutrition category

spanning traditional staples and modern high-protein beverages. He added that the company is focusing on delivering products that combine taste, protein and convenience for modern consumers.

The trend is also visible in Guwahati, where demand for paneer, curd, yogurt and packaged dairy beverages has grown steadily in recent years. Retailers report increasing consumer preference for ready-to-consume dairy products, protein drinks and flavored milk, particularly among young urban consumers and fitness-focused buyers. The city's expanding supermarket and café culture has further boosted dairy consumption beyond traditional household use, aligning Guwahati with the broader national shift toward a diversified dairy basket.

Air India and Air India Express operations shift to Guwahati's new T2, boost to connectivity and passenger experience

Guwahati: Air India and Air India Express on Wednesday began flight operations from the newly inaugurated Terminal 2 of Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport, marking a key development in Assam's aviation infrastructure.

The first Air India aircraft to land at the new terminal was flight AI 879 from Delhi. It later operated the return journey as AI 880, becoming the airline's first departure from Terminal 2. Air India Express also launched its ser-

vices from the terminal with flight IX 1517 arriving from Kolkata and continuing onward to Imphal.

Air India currently runs two daily return flights on the Delhi-Guwahati route. Air India Express connects Guwahati with nine cities, operating 17 flights every day. Officials said the move to Terminal 2 is expected to ease passenger movement and improve overall airport operations.

The launch was marked by simple cultural gestures

reflecting Assam's identity. Passengers on the inaugural Air India flight were served narikolor laru, a traditional Assamese sweet. The first check-in passenger at the new terminal was welcomed with a gamusa, highlighting local customs.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma set social media abuzz after sharing the video of Air India's inaugural flight landing at the newly built Terminal 2 of LGBI airport.

Sharing the video on X, the

Chief Minister said, “Air India's inaugural flight landed at the new terminal of LGBI Airport, where the hospitality reflected Assam's culture, language, and the taste of traditional Narikolor Laru.”

Using the hashtag #AwesomeAssam, Sarma invited travellers to discover the state's diverse tourism offerings. “Plan a holiday, explore lush forests, rich flora and fauna, tea gardens, and experience the vibrant culture and cuisine of #AwesomeAssam,” he wrote.

Coffee emerges as Gen Z's preferred gifting choice, signalling shift in consumer trends

Guwahati: The culture of gifting is undergoing a noticeable transformation, with Gen Z increasingly opting for thoughtful and experience-driven presents over conventional options. Among the emerging trends, coffee is gaining prominence as a preferred gifting choice, reflecting a shift towards more intentional and personality-led gestures.

Unlike traditional last-minute gifts, Gen Z consumers are prioritising meaning and emotional value. Coffee, often associated with shared moments and daily rituals, is being seen as more than just a beverage. It plays a role in conversations, creative sessions, and leisurely weekends, making it an immersive and experiential gift.

Gifting coffee aligns with the generation's preference for individuality. Variations in blends and flavours rang-

ing from strong and bold to smooth and balanced allow consumers to select options that reflect personal tastes and moods. Curated coffee hampers, paired with stylish mugs, are also gaining traction as they promote shared routines and lasting connections.

In Guwahati, the trend is gradually taking shape, particularly among urban youth and young professionals. Local retailers and café outlets report rising interest in premium coffee blends and gifting hampers, especially during festive seasons and personal occasions. The growing café culture in the city, coupled with increased exposure to national trends, is influencing buying behaviour. Market players believe that as awareness and accessibility improve, coffee-based gifting could become a significant niche segment in Guwahati's evolving consumer landscape.

Bandhan Mutual Fund expands northeast presence with new branch in Guwahati



Guwahati: Bandhan AMC Limited has expanded its footprint in the Northeast by opening a new branch office in Guwahati, aimed at strengthening services for investors and mutual fund distributors (MFDs) in the region. The new office is located on the first floor of Ganapati Enclave at Bora Service, Ulubari, Guwahati (PIN: 781007).

According to the company, the branch has been designed to enhance customer engagement and investor outreach. It includes a fully equipped meeting-cum-training room that will be used for investor awareness initiatives and training sessions for distributors. The facility is expected to support the company's efforts to improve financial literacy and expand mutual fund participation in the region. Commenting on the launch,

Bandhan AMC Chief Business Officer Gaurab Parija and Bandhan Group Founder Chandra Shekar Ghosh said Guwahati has emerged as a high-growth market for the fund house. “We are happy to have received strong feedback and support from our partners and investors over several years. Our new office strengthens our commitment to this key market and will help increase financial awareness and interest in mutual funds,” they said.

In Guwahati, the expansion reflects the growing appetite for mutual fund investments in the city and across the Northeast. With rising investor participation and increasing financial awareness, Guwahati is emerging as an important hub for asset management companies looking to expand their presence in the region.

Ai+ Smartphone ties up with Mumbai Indians, KKR ahead of IPL season

Guwahati: Ai+ Smartphone has signed on as the Official Smartphone Partner for two leading IPL franchises; Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders for the upcoming T20 season, in a move aimed at expanding its brand reach across India's cricket audience.

The partnership places Ai+ Smartphone at the centre of one of the country's biggest cultural platforms, enabling direct engagement with millions of fans. The company will roll out exclusive fan experiences including player meet-and-greet opportunities, match tickets, signed merchandise, and access to exclusive player content shot on Ai+ devices.

Madhav Sheth, CEO of Ai+ Smartphone and Founder of NxtQuantum Shift Technologies, said, “Sport has a unique ability to bring peo-

ple together... Our partnership with Mumbai Indians and Kolkata Knight Riders allows Ai+ Smartphone to connect with millions of fans

where India's energy is most visible and alive.” A Mumbai Indians spokesperson said the brand's focus on accessible, high-perfor-

engagement and enhance fan experiences.

The collaboration will see Ai+ Smartphone integrated across team platforms, fan experiences, and digital activations throughout the season, positioning the brand at the intersection of technology, culture, and sport.

In Guwahati, IPL-linked partnerships typically drive strong consumer interest in cities like Guwahati, where cricket holds high engagement. The visibility from associations with top teams is expected to boost Ai+ Smartphone's brand recall and sales traction, particularly among youth and first-time smartphone buyers seeking value-driven devices.



mance technology aligns with fan expectations. Binda Dey, CMO, Knight Riders Sports, said the collaboration will help create meaningful

Smartphone's brand recall and sales traction, particularly among youth and first-time smartphone buyers seeking value-driven devices.

Within India's Emerging Comfort Food Movement

Food has long possessed the ability to provide comfort; however, in contemporary times, it is increasingly acknowledged for its potential to heal, invigorate, and enhance mood. Throughout India, consumers are redefining the concept of comfort food by replacing greasy treats with colorful, nutrient-rich dishes that benefit both the body and the mind. Welcome to the age of mood food, where scientific principles converge with culinary pleasure, and each bite is crafted to promote well-being. The Science Of Feeling Good At its essence, mood food focuses on incor-



porating nutrient-rich ingredients that promote emotional stability and mental health. "Mood food pertains to items that enhance mental wellness by elevating mood, alleviating stress, and aiding cognitive performance. Dishes such as poke bowls, acai bowls, and steel-cut oats are becoming increasingly popular among young Indians who are emphasizing both emotional and physical health," states Chef Ashu Chugh, Executive Chef at Jaypee Greens Golf and Spa Resort, Greater Noida. These bowls are not only aesthetically pleasing but are also supported by nutritional research. Packed with omega-3 fatty acids, complex carbohydrates, lean proteins, and antioxidants, they provide enduring energy, balanced nu-

trition, and a feeling of lightness that is frequently absent in conventional heavy meals. From Comfort To Conscious Eating According to Chef Arjyo Banerjee of Compass Group India, "Food influences not just physical health, but mood and overall well-being. Poke bowls, with their vibrant mix of fresh vegetables, proteins, grains, and superfoods, deliver both balance and comfort." The shift is visible across India's premium dining spaces as well. "The idea of comfort food is evolving. Today's diners are increasingly mindful of how food affects their well-being," says Chef Anuj Mathur, Executive Chef at Taj Surajkund Resort & Spa, Delhi-NCR. The focus is on wholesome bowls that combine proteins, grains, and superfoods with seasonal produce. "It's comfort reimagined for a generation that values both flavour and mindful eating," he adds. Wellness On The Plate Chef Gagandeep Singh Sawhney, Executive Chef at Shangri-La Eros New Delhi, sees mood food as part of a larger wellness philosophy. He highlights how mindful eating has moved from trend to table, shaping the way modern kitchens approach comfort food. At the heart of this philosophy are unprocessed ingredients, lean proteins, and whole grains, which are cooked with minimal intervention to retain their natural goodness. "The idea is to let ingredients speak for themselves – fresh, balanced, and nourishing without being heavy," he says. Japanese-inspired meals such as poke bowls and sashimi platters have become the new mood food, offering light, nutrient-dense comfort. Mediterranean-style dishes, built around seasonal vegetables and protein-rich salads, follow the same ethos: simplicity, freshness, and balance that uplift both body and mind.

Paneer Lababdar Recipe: Indulgent, Creamy, and Absolutely Delicious

Whether you are commemorating a festival or entertaining guests at your residence, paneer dishes consistently serve as a dependable favorite among crowds. Due to its adaptability and rich taste, paneer can be utilized to create a range of cherished recipes. If you desire a creamy and luxurious curry, Paneer Lababdar stands out as a superb option. This luxurious dish features soft paneer cubes in a rich, creamy tomato and onion-based gravy. Perfectly balanced spices and a touch of cream make it both flavourful and visually appealing. Despite its rich taste, it's surprisingly easy to prepare and pairs wonderfully with roti, naan, or rice. It's a dish that's sure to leave a lasting impression on family and guests alike. Prepare the Paneer: Cut the paneer into cubes and set aside. Make the Gravy Base: In a saucepan, combine tomatoes, garlic, ginger, cardamom, cloves, cashews, and salt. Add 1 cup of water and cover. Simmer for about 10 minutes or until the toma-



atoes have softened. Allow to cool slightly, then blend into a smooth purée. Set aside. Prepare the Masala: In a large pan, heat the butter and oil. Once hot, add the bay leaf, cinnamon stick, green chilli, and kasuri methi. Sauté until aromatic. Cook the Onions: Add the finely chopped onions and sauté until golden brown. Add the Spices: Stir in turmeric, red chilli powder, cumin powder, and cook for a minute until the spices are well incorporated. Add the Gravy and Paneer: Pour in the prepared tomato-cashew purée and cook for a few minutes. Add the paneer cubes and fresh cream. Stir gently to coat the paneer in the sauce. Final Touches: Sprinkle in garam masala and garnish with freshly chopped coriander leaves. Serve: Serve hot with naan, roti, or jeera rice for a truly satisfying meal.

Korean Flavors Are Captivating Indian Tastes

Korean cuisine is currently experiencing a surge in popularity in India. K-pop concerts are selling out within minutes, K-dramas are the go-to choice for weekend binge-watching, and cafés are increasingly offering ramyeon and corn dogs. Events such as K-Town are highly anticipated by fans and K-enthusiasts, providing a comprehensive 360° experience of all things Korean. However, when it comes to exploring Korean food beyond the well-known options, many individuals remain hesitant. The flavors may seem unfamiliar, the names can be difficult to pronounce, and no one wants to take a risk on a dish they cannot clearly envision. That hesitation makes sense, after all, food is personal. We like to know what's on our plate before we dive in. This guide is here to bridge that gap. By pairing iconic Korean dishes with their closest Indian counterparts, we show how your palate might already be halfway there. Consider it a friendly roadmap for anyone curious but cautious, an invitation to explore a new cuisine that feels surprisingly familiar once you take that first bite. Pickle Nation: When Kimchi (kim-chee) Meets Achaar Kimchi is to Korea what achaar is to India: fermented, fiery, and fiercely personal. Just like every Indian household has its signature pickle, mango with mustard oil in the north, lime and chili in the west, or prawn pickle along the coast, Korean families guard their kimchi recipes closely. Napa cabbage, chili, garlic, and ginger are tucked into clay pots to ferment just right. Both kimchi and achaar are more than condiments; they're cultural signatures, telling stories about geography, family pride, and memory. Black Gold: Jjajangmyeon (jja-jang-myun) Meets Indian Kadhi or Dal Makhani Jjajangmyeon's thick noodles smothered in a rich black bean sauce are the Korean equivalent of a com-

forting bowl of dal makhani or kadhi, hearty, flavorful, and soul-soothing. It's heavy, filling, and best enjoyed with friends. While dal makhani simmers with cream and spices, jjajangmyeon simmers with savory black bean paste, but both deliver that deep, umami punch we crave in comfort food. Roll With It: Kimbap (kim-bap) Meets Indian Litti K i m b a p is K o r e a ' s r i c e



roll, wrapped seaweed with vegetables, eggs, or meat inside. Think of it as a more refined litti, portable, bite-sized, and filled with surprises. Where litti hides sattu, kimbap hides pickled radish and seasoned spinach, but the joy of unwrapping and discovering flavors is just the same. It's perfect for a festival picnic or a quick snack on the go. Soft, Warm, and Eggy:

Gyeran Bbang (gyer-an bang) Meets Indian Egg Bhurji Pav Gyeran bbang, soft bread baked with a whole egg inside, is Korea's answer to a simple breakfast or snack. Imagine the comfort of egg bhurji tucked into a warm pav, with each bite soft, slightly sweet, and satisfying. It's humble, but once you try it, you realize how perfect the combination of bread and egg can be. Bold and Meaty: Tteokgalbi (tuhk-gal-bee) Meets Indian Seekh Kebabs Tteokgalbi are Korean short rib patties, grilled to smoky, juicy perfection. Think seekh kebabs with a Korean twist, spiced, minced, and expertly grilled. Rich and flavorful, they satisfy anyone craving a meaty, indulgent bite and showcase the depth of Korean grilling traditions. Chewy and Sweet: Japchae (jap-chay) Meets Indian Vegetable Hakka Noodles Japchae, stir-fried sweet potato noodles with vegetables and sometimes meat, is Korea's noodle dish that feels like a cousin to vegetable Hakka noodles. Chewy, colorful, slightly sweet, and versatile, it can be served hot or cold. It's approachable, healthy, and perfect for festival-goers looking for something light yet flavorful. Both India and Korea share a love for flavour, community, and tradition. Korean food might look different at first glance, but its focus on spice, comfort, and indulgence makes it feel instantly familiar. For beginners, newer fans, or those already fully immersed in all things K, K-Town 3.0 festival powered by Black & White Ginger Ale Non Alcoholic Carbonated Beverage, on November 1st is the ultimate one-stop shop from iconic dishes to a glamorous lineup featuring Taemin, SUPER JUNIOR-D&E, ONEWE, Yedam, and J.E.Y. It's the perfect chance to taste the culture that's capturing hearts across the country.

The Significance of Posture and Spinal Health in Contemporary Living

The spine serves as the main support framework of the human body. It consists of a series of vertebrae, nerves, and muscles that enable us to carry out fundamental bodily activities like standing straight, bending, and twisting. Additionally, it safeguards the spinal cord, which plays a crucial role in relaying signals between the brain and the remainder of the body. Dr. Ilavarasan S, M.B.B.S, D.Ortho, Dip.N.B (Ortho), Apollo Spectra Hospital, Chennai, shares all you need to know: Life, in general, has become increasingly stagnant for everyone. Technological advancements have made tasks easier, leading to a noticeable decline in physical activity. Food and grocery delivery apps, convenient commute options, and online shopping have all contributed to a sedentary way of living. What once required a 100–200 meter walk to the grocery store has now been replaced by a 10-minute delivery, no effort, no movement. Good posture and spinal health go hand in hand. Maintaining proper posture reduces strain on the spine, mus-

cles, and ligaments. Neck sprain, back pain, and structural changes in the spine are common problems caused by poor posture. Simple habits such as keeping your shoulders aligned while walking and avoiding high heels

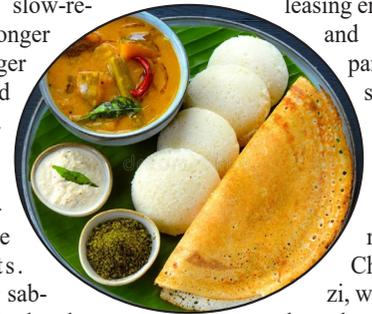
which places additional pressure on the spine. This can lead to back pain and other spinal issues at any age. To prevent such problems, it is important to follow a balanced diet rich in vitamins and nutrients that enhance bone health and strengthen muscles. Posture and spinal wellness should never be taken for granted. A healthy spine ensures proper coordination between the spinal cord and the brain, supporting vital functions such as movement, sensation, breathing, and digestion. However, prolonged inactivity can exert pressure on the spine, increasing inflammation and leading to chronic pain and a sedentary lifestyle. Adapting to a modern lifestyle is not inherently harmful, but it is essential to make conscious efforts to stay active. Incorporating movement into daily routines and maintaining proper posture are key to keeping the spine healthy and ensuring overall well-being.



for long durations can help maintain good posture. Our dietary choices also have a direct impact on spinal health. Consuming foods high in sugar and unhealthy fats promotes weight gain,

Kids can eat healthy tiffin options like idli and chapati

Parents always struggle to pack the proper school lunch. It must be easy to consume in between classes, nutritious, and satisfying. Idlis and chapatis are two popular options in Indian homes. While both are vital, which is the superior school tiffin? Let's make a comparison. A fermented batter of rice and urad dal is used to make idli. It is easy to digest, light, and fluffy. Probiotics that are good for the gut are produced through fermentation, which also improves nutrient absorption. Idli is a good option for kids who require a mild yet stimulating supper because a typical serving is low in calories and fat. Chapati, on the other hand, is made from whole wheat flour and is rich in complex carbohydrates and fibre. It provides slow-releasing energy, keeping children full longer and preventing mid-morning hunger pangs. Chapatis are also a good source of iron and B vitamins. For school lunches, practicality matters. Idlis are bite-sized, non-messy, and easy for children to eat. Chapati usually requires a curry or sabzi, which may spill or turn soggy in the lunchbox, though dry curries or a roll-style chapati can work well. While chapati is more filling, it may feel heavy for some children, especially if eaten in a rush. Idlis, being steamed and soft, are lighter on the stomach and easy to digest even when eaten cold. For very active kids who need sustained energy, chapati might be more suitable, but for younger ones, idli is often the easier choice. Both idli and chapati have their place in a healthy school lunch. If you want a light, gut-friendly, quick-to-eat meal, idli is the winner. But if your child needs a filling, energy-packed option to stay full till afternoon, chapati works best. A smart way is to alternate between the two. Pack idlis with chutney or podi for one day and chapati rolls with vegetables the next. This not only balances nutrition but also keeps your child's tiffin exciting.



The Rising Prevalence of Arthritis Among Young Individuals in India

For many years, arthritis was commonly viewed as an unavoidable aspect of aging, a condition that gradually emerged with the passage of time, accompanied by joint discomfort, stiffness, and diminished mobility. However, this viewpoint is swiftly evolving in India. Medical professionals throughout the nation are now observing a concerning increase in arthritis cases among individuals in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, indicating a notable change in the country's health challenges. Dr Ashraf Khan, Consultant Orthopaedic and Joint Replacement Surgeon, Ruby Hall Clinic, Wanowrie, believes this trend is closely tied to how modern lifestyles have evolved. "Arthritis has long been associated with older adults, but today, we are diagnosing it in individuals as young as their 20s and 30s. This is an ominous change," he says. One of the biggest contributors is a sedentary way of life. Long hours spent sitting at desks, excessive screen time, and minimal physical activity weaken the muscles that are meant to support the joints. When muscles fail to absorb everyday stress, the burden shifts directly onto the joints. Over time, even routine activities such as walking, climbing stairs, or standing for long periods accelerate joint wear and inflammation, paving the way for early-onset arthritis. Dr Vijay Shetty, Director, Orthopaedic and Joint Replacement, Dr L H



Hiranandani Hospital, Powai, echoes this concern, noting that he has seen a marked rise in young patients aged 25–45 presenting with early arthritis, particularly in the knees and hips. "Prolonged sitting, reduced activity, and poor muscle conditioning overload the cartilage and hasten degeneration," he explains. Compounding the problem is India's growing obesity epidemic among young adults. Excess body weight places disproportionate stress on weight-bearing joints such as the knees and hips. Dr Khan points out

that even modest weight gain can significantly accelerate cartilage damage. Diets rich in processed foods, refined sugars, and unhealthy fats further worsen the issue by increasing low-grade inflammation throughout the body, which in turn aggravates joint degeneration. Dr Shetty adds that obesity often overlaps with metabolic syndrome, intensifying chronic inflammation and speeding up cartilage breakdown. At the same time, he highlights another modern paradox: while many young people

are inactive, others are engaging in high-intensity fitness routines without proper conditioning or technique. "Untreated ligament injuries, meniscal tears, and cartilage damage from sports or workouts can accelerate post-traumatic arthritis in young adults," he says. Nutritional deficiencies are another silent driver. Both specialists underline the widespread lack of vitamin D, calcium, and protein among young Indians, largely due to indoor lifestyles and limited sun exposure. These nutrients are vital

for bone strength, muscle function, and cartilage repair. Deficiencies weaken the musculoskeletal system, making joints more vulnerable to early degeneration and pain. Beyond lifestyle and nutrition, other factors are also at play. Dr Shetty notes that genetic predisposition, autoimmune conditions like early-onset rheumatoid arthritis, smoking, and even post-COVID complications are contributing to the rise. "Post-COVID, we are seeing a sharp increase in avascular necrosis of the hip, which often progresses to hip arthritis at a young age," he explains. The consequences of arthritis in younger adults extend far beyond physical discomfort. Dr Khan warns that early arthritis can lead to reduced mobility, chronic pain, emotional stress, and long-term dependence on medication significantly affecting productivity and quality of life during the most active years. In severe cases, it may even result in joint replacement surgeries much earlier than previously seen. Despite the growing concern, both experts stress that arthritis in the young is largely preventable. Early identification, timely medical consultation for persistent joint pain, and proactive lifestyle changes are critical. Strength training to support joints, maintaining a healthy weight, balanced nutrition, ergonomic workspaces, and proper rehabilitation after injuries can all delay or even prevent the progression of the disease.

Prohibitory Orders Imposed in Dima Hasao Ahead of Assam Assembly Elections

Expenditure Observer Arrives in Dima Hasao

Haflong, Mar 17: As per the directives of the Election Commission of India, Dhedhen Wangme Bhutia, IRS, the Expenditure Observer to the Assam Assembly pertaining to 113-Haflong (ST) LAC has arrived Haflong, Dima Hasao on today i.e. 17th March, 2026. She has taken accommodation at Circuit House, Room No. 5, ground floor and can be contacted at her official mobile number, 8822134291 and email id expndtobserverdhd@gmail.com

General Observer Arrives in Dima Hasao

Haflong, Mar 17: As per the directives of the Election Commission of India, Patel Dhaval Kumar Kiriti-Kumar, IAS, the General Observer to the Assam Assembly pertaining to 113 Haflong (ST) LAC has arrived at Haflong, Dima Hasao today on 17th March, 2026. He has taken accommodation at Circuit House, Room No. 3, ground floor and can be contacted at his official mobile number, 9181623755 and email Id dhdgenobserver@gmail.com.

CM Khemchand Greets CRPF on Raising Day

Manipur, Mar 19: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand extended warm greetings to all personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force on the occasion of its 87th Raising Day. Online Newspaper Subscription

In his message, the Chief Minister paid heartfelt tribute to the martyrs of the force, stating that their supreme sacrifices continue to inspire the nation and guide collective efforts toward peace and security. He highlighted the pivotal role played by the CRPF in safeguarding the unity and integrity of the country, noting its steadfast presence on the frontlines of internal security with courage and dedication.

Khemchand also called for renewed commitment to supporting the security forces and strengthening the bonds of trust, resilience, and national unity. He further conveyed his best wishes to all ranks of the force for continued strength, honour, and success in their service to the nation.

Haflong, Mar 16: In view of the upcoming Assam Legislative Assembly Election 2026 scheduled to be held on April 9, the District Administration of Dima Hasao has imposed prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita to maintain peace, security and public order across the district. The order was issued by District Magistrate Gayatri Devidas Hyalinge, who stated that the restrictions are necessary to prevent any breach of peace and to ensure a smooth and peaceful electoral process in the district. As per the order, several activities have been prohibited in public places across Dima Hasao district. These include the assembly of five or more persons without prior permission from the District Magistrate. Carrying of lethal weapons and arms such as lathis,

daggers, sticks, spears and swords in public places has also been banned. The order further prohibits the holding of rallies, meetings, demonstrations, strikes, dharnas, processions or any public gathering without prior permission from the competent authority. Activities that obstruct public roads, highways, footpaths or disrupt the normal movement of traffic have also been restricted. In addition, road show campaigns involving the display of animals, participation of children or bursting of firecrackers have been banned. The use of loudspeakers or microphones without permission is not allowed, and the use of loudspeakers near hospitals, educational institutions and religious places at high volume has also been restricted. Loudspeakers will not be permitted between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM.

The order also strictly prohibits inflammatory speeches, communal or anti-state slogans, objectionable banners, posters, wall writings or any defacement of religious places, government or semi-government buildings. Any act likely to spread communal tension or disturb peace and harmony among communities has also been banned. Further, the administration has warned against the circulation of objectionable messages through SMS or social media platforms that could disrupt the electoral process. However, the order clarifies that certain gatherings will remain exempted. These include normal activities such as voting, marketing and shopping in marketplaces, sports activities in playgrounds, attendance at cinema halls and entertainment venues, academic activities in educational institutions,

gatherings at bus stations, as well as social and religious functions including marriage ceremonies. The prohibitory order will also not apply to police and army personnel, magistrates, judicial officers, government officials on duty, individuals engaged in government or election-related work, and candidates conducting door-to-door campaigning. The order has been issued ex-parte due to the urgent situation and has come into force with immediate effect. It will remain in force until the declaration of the election results. Authorities have warned that any violation of the order will invite legal action under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. The administration has also stated that anyone aggrieved by the order may approach the competent authority for modification or relaxation.

CBRN Emergency Mock Drill Conducted at Dalmia Cement Industry in Umrangso

Agartala, Mar 20: Haflong, March 14, 2026: A Level-1 Mock Exercise on CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) emergency response was successfully conducted at the Dalmia Cement Industry located in Umrangso under Dima Hasao district. The exercise was carried out by the National Disaster Response Force (1st Battalion) and the National Disaster Management Authority in active collaboration with the District Disaster Management Authority. The mock drill was conducted under the leadership of Prithvi Singh, Inspector and Commander of the 1st Battalion NDRF, along with Vivek

Sharma, Sub-Inspector of the same battalion. During the simulation exercise, specialized safety procedures and emergency response protocols designed to tackle industrial hazards involving chemical or radiological incidents were demonstrated. More than 200 employees of the cement plant actively participated in the exercise, which aimed to strengthen preparedness and ensure that workers and management are equipped to respond effectively in case of any emergency situation within the industrial premises. Officials of the cement industry extended full cooperation during the



drill, displaying strong coordination and synergy with the disaster response teams. Such exercises are expected to significantly enhance preparedness

and response capability for industrial hazards, thereby helping reduce potential risks to life and property in the region in the future.

Dedicated Voter Helpline 03673-1950 Launched to Assist Citizens Ahead of Assembly Elections

Haflong, Mar 18: In view of the upcoming Assam Legislative Assembly Election 2026, a notification has been issued informing all concerned departments, institutions, local bodies, and the general public about the introduction of a dedicated Voter Helpline Number — 03673-1950. The helpline, established by the Election Commission of India, aims to provide prompt assistance and guidance to citizens on a wide range of voter-related queries and grievances, ensuring greater accessibility and awareness during the electoral process. Through this helpline, voters can seek support on several important matters, including voter registration and inclusion of names in the

electoral roll, correction of voter details such as name, address, and age, and obtaining information regarding polling stations and election procedures. Additionally, the platform enables citizens to lodge complaints related to any aspect of the electoral process. The initiative is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen voter engagement and facilitate a smooth, transparent, and participatory election process. Authorities have urged all citizens to make full use of the service for any assistance required. Reiterating the importance of voter participation, the message accompanying the notification reads: "Your Vote, Your Voice — For Any Help, Dial 03673-1950."

Small Hydro, Big Gains: CM Khandu on Cabinet's Power Move

Itanagar, Mar 19: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday welcomed the Union Cabinet's approval of the Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme for 2026-31, highlighting its potential to promote clean energy and support rural economies in the Northeast. In a post on X, Khandu noted that the scheme could help harness the state's untapped river resources. He stated that it would provide enhanced financial support for hilly and border areas, facilitating decentralized energy generation in remote regions.

The Chief Minister also pointed out that small hydro projects are expected to create local employment, improve infrastructure, and promote sustainable development without causing large-scale displacement. He added that proper planning could strength-



en rural economies and position Arunachal Pradesh as a significant player in hydropower development.

Sam Curran set to miss IPL 2026 for Rajasthan Royals due to groin injury

Curran's 2025 CSK Run: 114 Runs, 1 Wicket

Jaipur, Mar 20: Sam Curran, England's charismatic all-rounder, is set to miss the upcoming Indian Premier League season for Rajasthan Royals due to a suspected groin injury, with the franchise exploring replacement options. Curran, who was part of England's T20 World Cup side that recently lost to India in the semifinals, was traded by Chennai Super Kings to Rajasthan Royals last year along with Ravindra Jadeja in exchange for India wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson.

However, the 27-year-old all-rounder, who has previously represented Punjab Kings



and Chennai Super Kings, and was the most expensive buy ahead of the 2023 Indian Premier League season at Rs 18.5

crore, has been sidelined by injury. Curran, who played for Chennai Super Kings in 2020 and 2021 and rejoined the side

ahead of last season for Rs 2.4 crore, finished the 2025 campaign with 114 runs and one wicket in five matches for the Chennai franchise.

In fact, former India pacer Lakshmipathy Balaji had expressed surprise that Rajasthan Royals did not appoint either of the experienced Ravindra Jadeja or Sam Curran as captain, opting instead for Riyan Parag as skipper. Rajasthan Royals could be exploring several options to replace Curran.

Apart from Jadeja, the franchise also has all-rounder Donovan Ferreira, a big-hitting batter who can contribute with handy off-spin.



Saurav Ghosal to Helm Premier Squash

New Delhi, Mar 19: India's squash icon Saurav Ghosal was on Thursday appointed as the sports commissioner of the World Premier Squash, a new global professional competition scheduled to be held later this year. Ghosal is India's only male player to reach the top 10 in the PSA World Rankings, Ghosal boasts 11 titles, nine Asian Games medals, and two decades of elite competition. He has also served as the men's president of the Professional Squash Association (PSA) and as co-chair of the joint Athletes Commission of the PSA and World Squash, the sport's global governing body. "As Sports Commissioner for World Premier Squash (WPS), Ghosal will set and oversee the league's complete sporting framework, spanning competition formats, player qualification pathways, and officiating standards," said a WPS statement on the league whose inaugural edition will be held in August. "WPS combines elite professional competition with an open global pathway using multi-modal AI on the edge. Of the 24 players in the league, including reserves, eight will be elite professionals."

Through AI-enabled challenges hosted on the Future of Sports Platform (FSP), competitors worldwide can qualify for up to 16 of the remaining spots -- requiring no agents, no ranking history, and no geography. It is a direct, merit-based entry point," the release added. Ghosal said the league has the potential to give the sport, which will make its debut at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, its next big player. "The best squash players in the world came through communities, clubs and courts far from the spotlight. World Premier Squash honours that by using AI-enabled challenges on the FSP platform to connect every corner of the global squash family, and giving the sport's next great player, wherever they are, a genuine path to the top," said Ghosal. for Riyan Parag as skipper. Rajasthan Royals could be exploring several options to replace Curran. Apart from Jadeja, the franchise also has all-rounder Donovan Ferreira, a big-hitting batter who can contribute with handy off-spin.

Star Aussie pacers to miss start of IPL: Report

Melbourne, Mar 20: Four leading Australian pacers, including Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood, are set to miss the start of the upcoming Indian Premier League season later this month, dealing an early setback to their respective franchises. According to a report in cricket.com.au, Starc, Cummins and Hazlewood will miss at least the start of IPL while Nathan Ellis is set to be ruled out of the tournament completely. The report said Cricket Australia (CA) is taking a cautious approach with their pacers ahead a busy schedule from August that includes 21 Test matches in a 12-month period. Australia will tour South Africa, India and England before defending the ODI World Cup title in 2027. "The trio's availability will depend on progress in their return to play protocols over the next few weeks," the report said.

Test captain Cummins has featured in only

one Test last summer due to a back stress injury, while Hazlewood missed the entire series due to hamstring and Achilles issues. The duo also missed the T20 World Cup. Starc played all five Ashes Tests and the back-end of the Big Bash League, but not the T20 World Cup as he has retired from the format. Australia selector Tony Dodemaide had said that Cummins and Hazlewood's availability for the IPL purely was a "timing issue". "If it was in reverse, the IPL was first and the World Cup was second, then they'd be missing the IPL to play in the World Cup," said Dodemaide. "It's not going to be frustrating for us at all. We know their commitment to want to play and succeed for Australia." Cummins is the captain of Sunrisers Hyderabad, while Starc plays for Delhi Capitals and Hazlewood for Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

India to Host 2028 World Indoor Athletics



Bhubaneswar, Mar 19: India is set to host the World Athletics Indoor Championships in Bhubaneswar in 2028. This was revealed by Athletics Federation of India (AFI) president Bahadur Singh Sagoo on Thursday. He said that the World Athletics council has allotted the 2028 Championships to India. "India will host the 2028 World Athletics Indoor Championships in Bhubaneswar," the AFI president added. "The global competition will be held at Kalinga's Indoor Stadium." The AFI chief said that the decision was taken during the WA meeting in Torun, Poland, which is the venue for the 2026 edition of World Athletics Indoor Championships scheduled to be held from March 20 to 22. WA vice president Adille Sumariwalla too was part of the meeting in Poland along with a former AFI president. Earlier in January 2026, members of the WA inspected Bhubaneswar's Kalinga Indoor Stadium and were satisfied with the facilities. Odisha is one of the main destinations for track and field in the country, Sagoo said. The inaugural edition of the National Indoor Athletics Championships will be held at Kalinga's Indoor Stadium on March 24 and 25.

"Boycott US, Not World Cup," Says Iran Football Chief

Paris, Mar 19: Iran will "boycott the United States" but "not the World Cup", Iranian football federation president Mehdi Taj said in a video released by the Iranian press agency Fars. Iran is currently scheduled to play its group matches in the US in this year's tournament. "We will be preparing for the World Cup. We will boycott the United States but not the World Cup," Taj said in the video released on Wednesday. Iran's football federation says it has opened talks with FIFA about potentially relocating its matches from the United States, though the global governing body has so far maintained that the tournament's schedule remains unchanged.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Tuesday that her country is prepared to host Iran's first-round matches if required, due to the conflict in the Middle East. Iran's participation at this summer's finals in the United

States, Canada and Mexico has been in doubt since the war began last month, with President Donald Trump warning that the safety of Iranian players would be at risk if they travelled to the US.

Asked directly if Mexico was open to hosting the matches, Sheinbaum told a press conference on Tuesday: "Yes." "Mexico maintains diplomatic relations with every country in the world, therefore we will wait to see what FIFA decides," she added. FIFA president Gianni Infantino initially said that Trump had given assurances that the Iranian team -- scheduled to face New Zealand and Belgium in Los Angeles, followed by Egypt in Seattle -- would still be welcome. But the Republican president then triggered uproar last week after stating that Iran's football team should not travel to the tournament "for their own life and safety".

Iran hit back at Trump's comments saying that "no one can exclude Iran's



national team from the World Cup". Iran were the second Asian team after Japan to qualify for the World Cup, securing their place almost a year ago as they topped their qualifying group. The Iran team's base camp for the tournament is currently slated to be in Tucson, Arizona. Abolfazl Pasandideh, Iran's ambassador to Mexico, on Monday

denounced "the US government's lack of cooperation regarding visa issuance and the provision of logistical support" for the Iranian delegation ahead of the World Cup, in a statement published on the embassy's website. Should Iran not take part in the World Cup, it is not yet clear which country would replace them.