

ASIDC-DICC Dima Hasao Launch 7-Day State-Level MSME Expo at Haflong to Promote Local Industry

Haflong, Feb 23: A seven-day State Level MSME Expo aimed at boosting local entrepreneurship and market linkages was inaugurated on Sunday at Sengya Sambudhan Mlaoyam (Railway Field), Haflong. The exhibition has been organized by the Assam Small Industries Development Corporation (ASIDC) in collaboration with the District Industries and Commerce Centre (DICC), Dima Hasao. The exhibition-cum-sale event has brought together as many as 105 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) units from across the state. Entrepreneurs and producers from Dima Hasao, Hojai, and Guwahati are participating in the expo, showcasing a diverse range of locally manufactured



goods, traditional handicrafts, handloom products, and innovative enterprise models. Officials stated that the primary objective of the expo is to provide a robust marketing platform for local MSMEs, enhance visibility of indigenous products, and create direct interaction between producers and consumers. The

initiative is also expected to encourage self-employment and strengthen the district's emerging enterprise ecosystem. The expo has been designed as a strategic bridge between traditional heritage and modern commerce, highlighting the rich craftsmanship of the region while promoting contemporary

Historic Step Towards First Airport in Dima Hasao: Assam Govt, AAI Sign MoU for Greenfield Project

Haflong/Umrangso, Feb 28: In a major development that could mark the beginning of the first airport in Dima Hasao district, the Government of Assam has signed a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Airports Authority of India to conduct a pre-feasibility study for a proposed Greenfield Airport in the state. The initiative has been taken under the leadership of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and is being viewed as a transformative step for the hill district, particularly for Umrangso and the wider Dima Hasao region. If the project progresses positively, the proposed airport is expected to significantly enhance air connectivity, boost



tourism, attract investment, and open up new avenues for trade and employment in the district. The move is being widely seen as the beginning of a new development chapter for the hills. Welcoming the development, Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC) Chief Executive Member Debolal Gorlosa termed the initiative as "good news for the people of Dima Hasao and Umrangso." He expressed gratitude to the Chief Minister for his

visionary leadership and continued commitment towards the progress of the district. Officials stated that the pre-feasibility study will assess technical, economic, and environmental viability before the project moves to the next stage. With the signing of the MoU, hopes have risen across Dima Hasao that long-awaited air connectivity may soon become a reality, ushering in faster growth and greater opportunities for the region.

Dima Hasao Strengthens Disaster Preparedness Ahead of Monsoon 2026

Haflong, Feb 26: With the monsoon season fast approaching and potential disaster risks looming over the hill district, the District Administration of Dima Hasao convened a crucial Disaster Preparedness Meeting on Thursday at the Conference Hall of the District Commissioner's Office in Haflong.

The meeting highlighted the administration's proactive and coordinated approach to ensuring the safety of residents, protection of infrastructure, and uninterrupted delivery of essential services in anticipation of Flood 2026.

The session was chaired by Munindra Nath Nagtey, ACS, District Commissioner and Chairman of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA). Among those present were Shaurya Sharma, ACS, Additional District Commissioner and Chief Executive Officer of DDMA; representatives from the N.C. Hills

Autonomous Council; the Assistant Revenue Officer; and Ricky Phukan, District Project Officer, DDMA, Dima Hasao. Heads and officials of various line departments also attended, along with representatives from Assam Rifles, Dalmia Cement, NEEPCO, NHA, and NHAIDCL.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on strengthening disaster preparedness mechanisms across the district. Key focus areas included enhancing inter-departmental coordination, ensuring adequate resource mobilization, and finalizing contingency plans to effectively manage flood-related emergencies.

Officials reviewed departmental preparedness, availability of rescue and relief equipment, communication systems, and emergency response protocols to guarantee swift mitigation measures during any crisis.

(To be continued in page- 9)



BJP Holds Major Organizational Drive in Haflong with Sakti Kendra Sammelan and Mahila Morcha Meet



Haflong, Feb 23: In a significant push to strengthen its grassroots machinery in the hill district, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) organized the first-ever Sakti Kendra Sammelan at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan in Haflong, followed by an intensive Mahila Morcha Interaction Meeting. Both programmes witnessed enthusiastic participation from party leaders and workers across Dima Hasao. Sakti Kendra Sammelan Focuses on Booth-Level Strength. The historic Sammelan was attended by BJP Dima Hasao District President and MAC Dhriti Thaoson, district Vistarak Vinod Tiwari, DHAC Executive Member Donpainon Thaoson, Vice President Liton Chakrabarty, and General Secretaries Kehungsamyng Riame and Konjit Kemprai. Mandal Presidents, General Secretaries, Shakti Kendra In-charges, and hundreds of party karyakartas were also present. In his keynote address, District President Dhriti Thaoson stressed that the party's suc-

cess in hill districts like Dima Hasao depends heavily on the strength of its grassroots network. He called upon workers to maintain close contact with the public and ensure effective delivery of government welfare schemes to the last-mile beneficiaries. DHAC EM Donpainon Thaoson highlighted ongoing development initiatives in the district and urged cadres to act as a strong bridge between the administration and the people. He emphasized that infrastructure growth, better connectivity, and social welfare implementation must remain top priorities. District Vistarak Vinod Tiwari spoke on organizational discipline and the need for coordinated teamwork at the Sakti Kendra level. He encouraged workers to intensify community engagement and maintain regular interaction with voters to build public confidence. The convention centered on community outreach, local development strategies, and detailed discussions on infrastructure projects and

flagship schemes. Interactive sessions enabled participants to share ground realities, propose solutions, and prepare future action plans. Leaders expressed confidence that such structured conventions would further energize the cadre base and strengthen efforts toward inclusive development in Dima Hasao. The Sammelan concluded with a collective pledge to work unitedly for organizational expansion and district progress. Mahila Morcha Interaction Strengthens Women's Wing. Later, a Mahila Morcha Interaction Meeting was successfully held at the same venue, focusing on empowering women workers and expanding grassroots outreach. The meeting was graced by Mahila Morcha President Ripa Hojai, Dima Hasao Vistarak Vinod Tiwari, Vice President Liton Chakrabarty, and Haflong Mandal President Dilota Langthasa. Mahila Morcha members from across the district participated actively. In her address, Ripa Hojai

emphasized the crucial role of women in organizational growth and social transformation. She urged members to proactively connect with women at the grassroots and spread awareness about welfare schemes meant for women and families. Vinod Tiwari highlighted the importance of disciplined organizational work and encouraged members to take leadership in community initiatives. Liton Chakrabarty and Dilota Langthasa also stressed unity, coordinated action, and sustained public engagement. During the interactive session, members reviewed ongoing activities, discussed responsibilities, and charted future plans. Participants shared field experiences and suggested measures to further strengthen the Mahila Morcha network in the district. The meeting concluded on a positive note with members reaffirming their commitment to work in unity for women empowerment, social welfare, and the overall development of Dima Hasao.

DM-32/5/2025-DDMA-DH

I/458314/2026



Govt. Of Assam.
Office Of The District Commissioner
District Disaster Management Authority

Dima Hasao, Haflong-788819.
Tele-03673-236324,10779435530412 Email:deochafong@gmail.com



सत्यमेव जयते

ECF No.143336/PDNA/533722

Dated: 23rd February 2026**EMPANELMENT NOTICE**

In pursuance of Government guidelines and in connection with the Recovery & Reconstruction activities under the Post-Disaster Need Assessment (PDNA)-2022, the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Dima Hasao, invites applications from APWD (Building) registered Contractors / Firms / Individuals/Vendors for empanelment to undertake repairing, renovation and reconstruction works of the 2022 flood/Storm/Landslide-affected Hospitals under Dima Hasao District.

Eligibility Criteria:

- The applicant must be a registered APWD Building contractor/vendor/firm/individual with valid registration.
- Must possess:**
 - Valid PAN
 - GST registration
 - Trade License
 - Bank Account details
 - Necessary work experience of a minimum 05 years and technical/financial competency certificates (where applicable)
- Scope of Empanelment:**
The empanelment will be for undertaking works related to:
 - Structural repairing
 - Renovation
 - Reconstruction
 - Other associated civil, electrical and allied works as per technical specifications and directions of the competent authority.
- Important Conditions:**
 - Empanelment does not guarantee award of work.
 - The works will be as per PDNA Guidelines funding limited to the highest ceiling as specified in the guidelines.
 - Plan & estimate for the works will be prepared by the respective Dept.
 - Execution will be implemented under strict supervision of the respective Dept. and bill and other documental works will be carried out by the Dept. & will submit to DDMA for physical verification and further processing.
 - All works shall be allocated as per prescribed procedure, availability of funds and priority of restoration works and subject to the approval of the District Implementation Committee.
 - Execution of works shall strictly follow Government norms, technical specifications and approved estimates.
 - Payments will be released subject to availability of Government funds, as and when received.
 - PDNA norms are available in the NDMA / MHA website.

DM-32/5/2025-DDMA-DH

I/458314/2026



Govt. Of Assam.
Office Of The District Commissioner
District Disaster Management Authority

Dima Hasao, Haflong-788819.
Tele-03673-236324,10779435530412 Email:deochafong@gmail.com



सत्यमेव जयते

Submission Timeline:

Interested eligible applicants may submit their complete application along with Court Stamp Fee Rs. 8.25 & all necessary documents to the Office of the District Disaster Management Authority, Dima Hasao on or before **15/03/2026** during working hours (10:00 AM to 5:00 PM). Application received after the deadline or found incomplete shall be summarily rejected. For further details, applicants may contact the DDMA Office during official working days or visit the notice section of the Dima Hasao, District Administration website.

Digitally signed by
MUNINDRA NATH NGATEY
Date: 23-02-2026
Time: 17:07:58
Chairman
District Disaster Management Authority
Dima Hasao, Haflong, Assam

Memo No.143336/PDNA/533722-A

Dated: 23rd February 2026**Copy of Information:**

- The Addl. Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Assam, CEO, ASDMA, Ancillary Block, Assam Secretariat, Dispur, Guwahati-6 for kind information.
- The MD, SSA, Guwahati, Assam for kind information.
- The Director, Health Services, Hengrabari, Guwahati for information.
- The JDHS, Dima Hasao for information.
- The DDIPR, Dima Hasao for information and directed to publish the notice in 2 (two) local dailies of the District for wide dissemination of the notice.
- All Office Notice Board (State Govt. Offices), Dima Hasao district for wide dissemination of the notice.

e-signed
District Commissioner
Cum
Chairman
District Disaster Management Authority
Dima Hasao, Haflong, Assam

DM-32/5/2025-DDMA-DH

I/458314/2026



Govt. Of Assam.
Office Of The District Commissioner
District Disaster Management Authority

Dima Hasao, Haflong-788819.
Tele-03673-236324,10779435530412 Email:deochafong@gmail.com



सत्यमेव जयते

APPLICATION FORM FOR EMPANELMENT
(For Repairing / Renovation / Reconstruction Works under PDNA-2022)
District : Dima Hasao, Assam

I. GENERAL INFORMATION:

Sl. No.	Particulars	Details (To be filled by Applicant)
1.	Name of the Applicant / Firm / Contractor	
2.	Type of Entity (Tick)	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Firm <input type="checkbox"/> Agency <input type="checkbox"/> Company
3.	Registration Category (Mandatory registration of PWD Building is required)	<input type="checkbox"/> APWD (Building) <input type="checkbox"/> CPWD <input type="checkbox"/> Other Govt. Registered Body
4.	Registration Number with Validity	Reg. No. _____ Valid up to : _____
5.	PAN No.	
6.	GST Registration No.	
7.	Udyam / MSME Registration No. (If applicable) (Not mandatory)	
8.	EPF / ESIC Registration (If Applicable)	

2. COMMUNICATION DETAILS:

Sl. No.	Particulars	Details
1.	Registration Office Address	
2.	Correspondence Address (If different)	
3.	Name of Authorized Contact Person	
4.	Mobile Number	
5.	Email ID	

3. FINANCIAL DETAILS (LAST 3 YEARS)

Financial Year	Annual Turnover (₹)	Profit / Loss
2021 - 2022		
2022 - 2023		
2023 - 2024		

DM-32/5/2025-DDMA-DH

I/458314/2026



Govt. Of Assam.
Office Of The District Commissioner
District Disaster Management Authority

Dima Hasao, Haflong-788819.
Tele-03673-236324,10779435530412 Email:deochafong@gmail.com



सत्यमेव जयते

2023-2024
(Attach copy of audited balance sheet/ITR acknowledgment)

Sl. No.	Natures of Work	Dept. / Organization	Year of Completion	Project Value (₹)	Status (Completed / Ongoing)

(Attach Work Orders/Completion Certificates/Experience Certificate)

5. TECHNICAL RESOURCES (OPTIONAL)

Sl. No.	Resource Type	Quantity	Remarks
1.	Skilled Manpower		
2.	Unskilled Manpower		
3.	Machinery / Tools / Equipment		

6. DECLARATION:

- I, _____ hereby declare that:
- The information provided above is true to the best of my knowledge.
 - I have read and agree to abide by the empanelment terms and conditions issued by District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Dima Hasao.
 - I understand that empanelment does not guarantee award of work, and engagements will depend upon availability of funds and work requirements under PDNA - 2022.
 - Any false information may lead to rejection / cancellation of empanelment.

7. DOCUMENTS TO BE ATTACHED (Self - Attested)

Sl. No.	Required Document	Tick
1.	Contractor / Firm Registration Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	PAN Card	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	GST Registration Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Address Proof	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Bank Account Details with Cancelled Cheque	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Work Completion Certificates / Experience Certificate/ Work Orders	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Latest 4 Years ITR / Financial Statements / Financial Competency Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>

DM-32/5/2025-DDMA-DH

I/458314/2026



Govt. Of Assam.
Office Of The District Commissioner
District Disaster Management Authority

Dima Hasao, Haflong-788819.
Tele-03673-236324,10779435530412 Email:deochafong@gmail.com



सत्यमेव जयते

8.	MSME / Udyam Registration (If applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Any other relevant document	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Signature of Applicant)

Name : _____
Designation (if applicable) : _____
Address : _____
Date : ____/____/2025
Place : _____

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Parameter	Status	Remarks
Document Verification	<input type="checkbox"/> Eligible <input type="checkbox"/> Not Eligible	
Empanelment Category (to be decided by the committee)	<input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C	
Approved / Rejected	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Rejected	
Validity of Empanelment	From: ____/____/2025 to ____/____/2027	
Signature of Screening Committee member (s)		
Date		



Govt. Of Assam.
Office Of The District Commissioner
District Disaster Management Authority

Dima Hasao, Haflong-788819.

Tele-03673-236324, 03673-1077, +91-9435530412, Email:deochaflong@gmail.com



ECF No. 34650/534608

Dated:24th February 2026

ADVERTISEMENT

The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) invites **community volunteers** to enroll as members of the **Circle Quick Response Teams (CQRTs)** in every Revenue Circle of Assam. These teams will act as **first responders** during disasters and emergencies, supporting the Circle Disaster Management Committees (CDMCs) in saving lives and protecting communities.

Interested individuals are encouraged to participate in the screening test scheduled for 2nd March 2026 at the Circuit House in Haflong, starting at 11:00 AM for the Maibang Revenue Circle.

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be a **citizen of India** and a **permanent resident of Assam**.
- Age: **18-55 years** (with relaxation up to 3 years).
- Minimum education: **Primary level (Class IV)**, relaxable by authority.
- Physically fit and mentally alert.
- Knowledge of **swimming is essential**.
- Preference for ex-servicemen, NCC/NSS participants, sports enthusiasts, and those with prior volunteering experience.
- Both **men and women** eligible; each team will include **female and transgender representation**.
- Persons in regular service may apply only with employer's consent.

How to Apply

- Collect and submit **Form-A (Enrollment Application)** at your **DDMA, Dima Hasao**.
- Applications will be screened by the Circle Disaster Management Committee (CDMC).
- Selected candidates will undergo physical and cognitive tests before final enrollment.
- Successful applicants will receive a **Membership Certificate (Form-B)** and an official ID card.

Digitally signed by
MUNINDRA NATH NGATEY
Date: 25.02.2026
16:49:16 &

Chairman,
District Disaster Management Authority,
Dima Hasao, Haflong.

Mizoram CM Lalduhoma Defends Amended Customary Law Amid Social Media Debate

Aizawl, Feb 27: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Friday defended recent amendments to the state's marriage and property inheritance laws, stating the changes were based on broad consensus rather than unilateral government action, even as debate intensified on social media. The Mizo Marriage and Inheritance of Property (Amendment) Bill, tabled by Lalduhoma—who also holds the law portfolio—was passed by the Mizoram Assembly earlier this month. The amendment codifies customary practices under the 2014 principal Act, bans polygamy, clarifies rules on inter-community marriages, and grants women 50 percent rights to matrimonial property.

However, controversy has emerged over a clause inter-



preted by some groups as removing the tribal identity and Scheduled Tribe (ST) status of Mizo women who marry non-Mizo men. The state's largest women's organisation, Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (MHIP), on Friday demanded withdrawal of the provision, describing it as unsafe for women.

Speaking in the Assembly during discussion on a private

member's resolution, Lalduhoma said the provision was derived from the 2014 Act, which treats such women as joining their husband's family and losing Mizo customary rights. He said that if a Mizo woman marries a non-tribal man, she loses her tribal status and her children cannot obtain a Tribal Certificate under customary interpretation. The chief minister noted that a 1977 circular of the Union Home Ministry allows Tribal Certificates for children raised within tribal communities by Mizo mothers, subject to proof of community acceptance and social disadvantages. He added that a 2019 circular from the Social Justice Ministry and a recent Supreme Court ruling also support case-by-case evaluation rather than blanket

eligibility.

Acknowledging that inter-community marriages are increasing in what he described as a "global village," Lalduhoma urged society to move beyond what he called an insular mindset. He cited examples of Mizo women married to non-Mizos in India and abroad who continue to support the community. To address the issue, he proposed forming a new committee to examine the status of such women and their children. The amendments were based on recommendations of the Mizo Customary Law Review Committee, which included representatives from MHIP, the Central Young Mizo Association, experts from Mizoram University, and members of law colleges.

Sarma Launches BJP 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra'



Dhekiajuli, Feb 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma launched the Assam BJP's 'Jan Ashirwad Yatra' from Dhekiajuli in Sonitpur district on Saturday, kicking off a campaign to secure a third consecutive term in the upcoming Assembly elections. Accompanied by state BJP president Dilip Saikia, Union Minister Pabitra Margherita, and other senior leaders, Sarma led the procession from an open van amid enthusiastic crowds lining the roads. Supporters greeted him with traditional scarves and flowers as he waved to cheering gatherings.

In his pre-launch address, Sarma recalled public support for Narendra Modi in 2014, the BJP's first Assam government under Sarbananda Sonowal in 2016, and their 2021 victory. "We've worked

tirelessly for the state's development, creating a secure and progressive Assam today," he said, acknowledging possible shortcomings but emphasizing commitment. He urged voters to back the BJP for continued progress. Earlier, Sarma offered prayers at the Gupteswari temple.

The Yatra covers Borsola, Tezpur, Naduar, and Rongpara constituencies on day one, aiming for 70-80 km daily and reaching nearly one lakh people. The first phase, ending March 9, spans 34 Assembly segments. 'Jan Ashirwad Sabhas' are planned for uncovered areas. State Cabinet Minister Ashok Singhal serves as chief convener, with Margherita and others as co-convenors. The initiative highlights the party's vision, achievements, and goals ahead of polls.

Sikkim CM Joins National HPV Immunisation Drive For Adolescent Girls



Gangtok, Feb 27: Chief Minister of Sikkim Prem Singh Tamang on Saturday said the nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination campaign for girls aged 14 years was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to the Chief Minister, he joined the launch event through video conference and formally initiated the HPV vaccination drive in the state. He stated that the

programme is expected to benefit around 1.15 crore girls annually across all States and Union Territories. The vaccine will be provided free of cost at designated government health facilities.

Tamang also appealed to the public to spread awareness about the importance of HPV vaccination, encourage eligible girls to avail the service, and address misconceptions related to the vaccine.

Editorial

MSME Expo Signals a Promising Economic Turn for Dima Hasao

The inauguration of the MSME Expo at Sengya Sambudhan Ml-aoyam (Railway Field), Haflong, marks more than just a routine exhibition—it represents a meaningful step toward reshaping the economic narrative of Dima Hasao. Organized by the Assam Small Industries Development Corporation (ASIDC) in collaboration with the District Industries and Commerce Centre (DICC), the event reflects a growing institutional focus on grassroots entrepreneurship and local market development. With participation from 105 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises across Assam—including units from Dima Hasao, Hojai, and Guwahati—the expo demonstrates the expanding footprint of small-scale enterprise in the hill district. The diversity on display—from traditional handicrafts and handloom to locally manufactured goods and innovative business models—underscores a crucial reality: the region possesses both cultural capital and entrepreneurial potential. What makes this initiative particularly significant is its clear emphasis on market linkage. For too

long, many talented artisans and small producers in hill districts have struggled not because of lack of skill, but due to limited access to buyers, branding support, and distribution networks. By creating a direct interface between producers and consumers, the expo attempts to address this structural gap. If sustained and scaled, such platforms can gradually shift MSMEs from survival mode to growth mode. Equally important is the psychological impact of events like these. Visibility matters. When local entrepreneurs see their products displayed alongside peers from larger commercial centres like Guwahati, it builds confidence, competitiveness, and aspiration. For youth in Dima Hasao—where government employment has traditionally been viewed as the primary pathway—this expo quietly promotes an alternative narrative: that self-employment and enterprise are viable, respectable, and potentially rewarding. However, exhibitions alone cannot transform the MSME landscape. The real test will lie in continuity. Stakeholders must

ensure follow-up support in areas such as credit access, digital marketing, packaging, logistics, and quality certification. Without these, the momentum generated by the expo risks dissipating once the stalls are dismantled. There is also an opportunity here for deeper integration with tourism. Haflong and the surrounding hill areas attract visitors for their natural beauty; coupling tourism circuits with curated local product markets could create a sustainable demand pipeline for indigenous goods. Such convergence would truly position MSMEs as engines of local economic resilience. The MSME Expo in Haflong should therefore be viewed not as an isolated event, but as an encouraging signal of policy intent. If backed by consistent institutional support, infrastructure, and market intelligence, Dima Hasao could gradually emerge as a vibrant hub of hill entrepreneurship. The foundation has been laid. What is needed now is persistence, policy follow-through, and sustained encouragement for the region's enterprising spirit to fully flourish.

Budget boosts needed in 2026 for Viksit Bharat by 2047

Developing human capital will be at the heart of India's journey towards a Viksit Bharat at 2047. As we approach the Union Budget for 2026-27, a coherent strategy linking education, health, employment and skill development is essential. These pillars form the architecture of a productive, resilient and inclusive society, one that can sustain high growth and global competitiveness over the coming decades.

A healthy and skilled population is central to realising India's potential as a knowledge-driven, innovation-led economy. Strengthening the health system is a natural starting point. A more decentralised, outcome-linked financing model where central transfers are tied to measurable improvements would allow states greater autonomy while ensuring accountability and real-time monitoring. This approach can help ensure that every rupee spent on health yields tangible results on the ground.

Equally important is addressing the acute shortage of healthcare professionals. Enforcing quality standards under the Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010 through certified professionals supported on an interim basis by the central health regulators NABH and NHA can help raise standards nationwide. At the same time, India must make healthcare careers more aspirational. Structured path-

ways for task-shifting, where routine clinical responsibilities are re-assigned to trained doctors, nurses, and allied health practitioners can alleviate specialist shortages. This should be complemented with civil services-recognised upskilling routes and expanded opportunities for senior secondary students and graduates to enter the healthcare ecosystem through clear progression ladders.

Modernising regulatory frameworks is also essential. A single national licence for online healthcare players covering e-pharmacies, e-diagnostics, and digital clinics would bring long-needed clarity. Updated provisions under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act for telemedicine and digital therapeutics, alongside tax parity for e-hospitals, will ensure that India's evolving health-tech ecosystem is supported by contemporary rules. On the education front, India needs a predictable, long-term expenditure roadmap. A phased increase in public spending from 4.6 percent of GDP in 2026-27 to 6 percent by 2030-31 would provide the financial foundation needed to strengthen schools, teacher training and research. A national task-force on education technology and inclusion can accelerate the adoption of public-private partnership models for platforms such as DIKSHA and SWAYAM, while also helping modernise curriculums and expand high-quality digital content.

Bookended by melas and fests

William Dalrymple recently sputtered like a lit fuse on X at an "irritating and ignorant article" in The Guardian that had asked why India has over 100 literary festivals but low book sales and no culture of reading. Is it because entertainments like Bollywood are included in festivals? Why did Dalrymple feel irritated when the argument about poor sales and low readership has been around for decades?

The article by Amrit Dhillon only added the contrast between the smallness of the publishing industry in India and the boom in literature festivals, led by the Jaipur Literature Festival that Dalrymple co-founded. She offered supporting quotes from authors, booksellers and publishers. All of them affirm that the book trade moves slowly, but Indians like a nice jamboree. This rather harmless allegation burst like an inflamed boil.

Blame the name. The literature (or literary) festival is a British creature of post-war provenance—the oldest is at Cheltenham, an annual feature from 1949, and the best-known is at Hay-on-Wye, established in 1988, which exported

the concept and the name overseas. In India, JLF adopted the format in 2006, grew exponentially and encouraged entrepreneurs with literary leanings—and organisations which understand that literariness works like angel dust—to get in on the game. Writing became performance.

In the beginning, there were book fairs, not literary festivals. In medieval Europe, trade fairs at commercial centres like Leipzig attracted booksellers and printers, who then launched book fairs. The Frankfurt fair, the biggest business-to-business book expo, is purely a trade fair for the sale of international rights. It lets in retail buyers only as an afterthought. Interaction of readers with writers and publishers, a hallmark of literary festivals, is limited to the weekend. In India, book fairs preceded literary festivals. The New Delhi World Book Fair opened in 1972 in conjunction with the Asia 72 trade show. Both were held at the Pragati Maidan exhibition complex, a classic design by architect Raj Rewal that the present government has demolished in a random act of vandalism to make

room for Bharat Mandapam.

India's biggest book event is the International Kolkata Book Fair, started in 1976, which draws over 20 lakh visitors. It's a very serious fair—rare titles like Revelations of Divine Love by the 13th century anchoress Julian of Norwich can be found there (I know, I bought a copy). The fair also features literary entertainments like readings and discussions by prominent writers and publishers, and Kolkata's significant set circulate freely. So do phalanxes of pamphleteers selling crank treatises proposing a geocentric universe or divination by observing crows (Kak Charitra). It's a mixed bag, like a country mela, which is where it gets its Bengali name from—Boi Mela.

A mela suggests not a trade fair for bookish audiences and writerly stars, but rural harvest festivals. There's the Poush Mela in nearby Santiniketan, for instance, where highbrow and lowbrow mingle in a strangely uplifting cloud of food, music, poetry, handicrafts, activism and pot. In India, the traditions of the deadly-serious book fair and the entertaining festival have merged. People who don't

like this say it devalues books. The rest say that it brings more people into the fold of readers. These are opinions, not facts.

The older allegations which started this thread—books don't sell in India and there's hardly a culture of reading—must be inconclusive because, invariably, the discussion is about publishing in English, which is a fraction of the Indian publishing landscape. The whole vista is very varied, from risk-averse publishers who print textbooks to offset speculative losses in literary publishing, specialists like Amitav Ghosh's publisher Ravi Dayal and Vikram Seth's publisher P Lal, and idealists running small presses, usually into the ground. Besides, in Indian publishing, for every fact there's an alternative. The industry formalised only recently and it is still normal for writers to submit a manuscript without a contract and to hand over rights during a casual phone call, with no written record. Frames of reference also matter. In response to the article in The Guardian, which stated that Indian print runs are low and that 10,000 copies make a bestseller (a fact in English publishing), Harp-

erCollins India CEO Anantha Padmanabhan pointed out that the Malayalam novel Ram C/O Anandhi by Akhil P Dharmarajan and Too Good to be True by Prajakta Koli sold 3 lakh and 2 lakh copies in a year (an alternative fact). The context: both are young social media phenomenons and Koli works in OTT cinema. Of course they'd have the numbers. Amish pioneered that strategy when he embraced digital media promotion.

Beyond English, on which the spotlight is fixed, Indian publishing is a vast landscape. If you consider sellers of used books—who often participate in trade fairs—you'll find the numbers climbing fast. And if you look into the darker corners of this world where the pirates are silently at work, you'll find hoards that go uncounted. That's why, when no one's looking, many writers ask the bootleggers at traffic lights how their novels are doing. The pirate estimate can be more revealing than formal sales figures. A market with such varied cultures of reading, and so many languages, styles and niches, can't be treated as a single, orderly entity bound by universal rules.

Jayant Chaudhary launches 'Badhna Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai' campaign to boost digital skilling via SIDH



Guwahati: Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and Minister of State for Education Shri Jayant Chaudhary on Saturday launched a nationwide awareness campaign titled “Badhna

Hai Toh Yahan Judna Hai” to strengthen India’s digital skilling ecosystem. The campaign was unveiled on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026 and aims to expand participation in the Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH). Legendary

actor Amitabh Bachchan has been roped in to amplify the campaign’s outreach and encourage citizens to register on SIDH, which has already onboarded more than 1.5 crore candidates. Positioned as a key digital public infrastructure platform, SIDH integrates multiple government skilling initiatives and offers AI-enabled, mobile-first learning solutions. The platform provides industry-aligned courses, personalized learning recommendations, digitally verified credentials, QR-enabled digital CVs, Aadhaar-based eKYC registration and access in over 21 Indian languages. Addressing the launch, Chaudhary said SIDH builds on India’s digital strengths such as India Stack and aims to empower citizens to upskill and reskill in an era shaped by AI and automation. In Guwahati, training institutes and education consultants say digital skilling demand is rising among youth and working professionals. Local stakeholders believe the campaign could drive higher registrations from Assam and the Northeast, especially as awareness spreads through digital and QR-enabled outreach.

Royal Stag BoomBox Season 4 opens in Kolkata with Armaan Malik, Fossils, Dino James lighting up the stage



New Delhi: Seagram’s Royal Stag kickstarted the fourth edition of Royal Stag BoomBox – The Original Sound of Generation Large – with a high-voltage opening night in Kolkata on February 21 at Aquatica Ground. Setting off on a four-city tour, the festival brings together Bollywood melodies and hip-hop beats along with immersive art, culture and gaming experiences. Thousands of fans gathered as the venue turned into a multi-sensory playground

featuring vibrant installations, curated food experiences and interactive zones. The evening began with a live gaming face-off led by Payal Dhare, followed by DJ Sahil Gulati’s energetic opening set. Rapper Dino James raised the tempo with a powerful performance, while legendary rock band Fossils delivered a thunderous set on their home turf. Headliner Armaan Malik closed the night with a soulful finale, performing his chart-topping hits. Armaan Malik said

the platform celebrates music that unites people across genres and generations. Fossils called the event a representation of India’s evolving sound where genres collaborate. Dino James described the Kolkata crowd as electric, while DJ Sahil Gulati and Payal Dhare highlighted the fusion of music and gaming as a defining feature of Season 4. The festival will next travel to Vizag on March 7, Mumbai on March 21 and Mohali on March 28.

Mahindra-Manulife Life Insurance JV appoints Suresh Agarwal as MD & CEO designate

Guwahati: Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. (M&M) and Manulife have appointed Suresh Agarwal as the MD & CEO designate of their proposed 50:50 life insurance joint venture, subject to regulatory approvals. The partnership to set up the life insurance business was announced in November last year, marking the companies’ entry into India’s fast-growing insurance sector. Suresh brings nearly 30 years of experience across life and general insurance, and corporate and retail lending. He earlier played a key role in building Kotak’s life insurance operations and later led the transition of Kotak General Insurance into a joint venture with Zurich Insurance. Since September 2025, he has been serving as MD & CEO of Mahindra Insurance Brokers Limited. He will step down from this role on April 30, 2026, and as-



sume his new position from May 1, 2026.

The joint venture aims to provide long-term savings and protection products aligned with India’s “Insurance for All” vision by 2047. While Mahindra will leverage its strong rural and semi-urban reach, Manulife will bring global expertise and underwriting capabilities.

In Guwahati, the move is expected to strengthen insurance penetration in Assam and the wider Northeast. With rising financial awareness in Guwahati and surrounding districts, industry observers believe the JV could tap growing demand for structured savings and protection products in the region.

Modi announces India–France aviation skilling hub at Kanpur under PM-SETU

Guwahati: The Government of India has announced the establishment of an India–France National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) for Skilling in Aeronautics and Defence at the National Skill Training Institute (NSTI), Kanpur, under the PM-SETU scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The announcement was made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a joint press statement with the President of France, marking the inauguration of the India–France Year of Innovation. A Letter of Intent was exchanged between MSDE and the French government to collaborate on the project, building on the India–France Strategic Partnership and the 2025 MoU on skill development. The proposed centre will offer advanced training in aeronautics, MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul),

airport operations and defence manufacturing. It will feature co-designed curricula, trainer development programmes, language training and structured mobility pathways. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary said the initiative will create globally competent aviation professionals and strengthen India’s strategic partnership with France. With an outlay of ₹60,000 crore, PM-SETU aims to upgrade 1,000 ITIs nationwide, with additional Centres of Excellence planned in Ludhiana, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bhubaneswar. In Guwahati, the move could boost aviation-linked skilling demand in the Northeast, especially as regional airports expand and defence-related activities gain traction, creating opportunities for trained youth in Assam and adjoining states.

JM Financial initiates ‘Buy’ on Physicswallah, sees 23% upside

Mumbai: JM Financial Institutional Securities has begun coverage of Physicswallah with a ‘Buy’ rating, expecting the firm to record robust revenue growth powered by its online operations. The firm gave a target price of ₹110, indicating an upside potential of 23.2% from the previous closing of ₹89.30. As of 11:25 AM, Physicswal-

lah shares were trading 0.5% higher at ₹89.75, with 3.3 million stocks changing hands on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Physicswallah has a leading market position in the online category, with a paying user base of 4.37 million in the first nine months of the current fiscal year (9MFY26), according to JM Financial.

NSE said to invite investment banks to pitch for \$2.5 billion IPO

New Delhi: National Stock Exchange of India Ltd. has issued a request for proposals to investment banks, inviting them to pitch for roles on its long-awaited initial public offering, according to people familiar with the matter. The exchange plans to select advisers by mid-March, according to some of the people, who asked not to be identified as the information is private. A spokesperson for NSE said that the company’s board approved the IPO, without further comment. NSE this month formed a committee and appointed Rothschild & Co. as an independent adviser to oversee the listing process. Rothschild is leading the selection of lead bankers, legal counsel and other intermediaries. The move signals renewed momentum for what could rank among India’s largest ever share sales. The IPO had been stalled for several years amid regulatory and legal challenges. The exchange operates the world’s busiest derivatives market by number of contracts traded. The planned share sale will be entirely an offer for sale, with existing shareholders expected to divest about 4% to 4.5% of the company’s equity, Bloomberg News has reported.

Nissan Unveils GRAVITE MPV at Rs. 5.65 Lakh, Signals Growth Drive in India



Bangaigaon Nissan Motor India has introduced the all-new Nissan GRAVITE, a seven-seater MPV launched at an introductory price of ₹5.65 lakh (ex-showroom). The model marks the first step in the company's renewed product strategy and underscores its ambition to accelerate growth

in the Indian market. Built at Nissan's Chennai facility, the GRAVITE is tailored for Indian families, offering flexible seating for two to seven occupants and class-leading luggage capacity of up to 625 litres. Safety is a key highlight, with more than 30 standard features including six airbags, Electron-

ic Stability Control, Traction Control, Hill-Start Assist, and Brake Assist. The MPV adopts Nissan's signature 'C' design language, featuring LED lighting, a bold grille, roof rails, and modular interiors. Premium touches include suede-leatherette seating, multi-row AC vents, and advanced connectivity such as wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, a digital instrument cluster, and wireless charging. Powered by a 1.0-litre petrol engine with manual and AMT transmission options, the GRAVITE delivers fuel efficiency of up to 19.6 km/l. Customers can choose from five colour options, alongside a limited launch edition equipped with premium accessories. Nissan confirmed that it is expanding its dealer footprint across Tier-I and Tier-II cities, reinforcing its long-term commitment to accessibility and enhanced customer experience in India.

Retirement dreams rise, but savings gap persists: IRIS 5.0 flags 'Rs 1 crore illusion'

Guwahati: India's approach to retirement is undergoing a shift, with more people viewing their later years as a "Second Innings" focused on travel, entrepreneurship and personal passions. However, a new study warns that financial preparedness still lags behind aspirations. According to IRIS 5.0 released by Axis Max Life Insurance Limited, the national retirement readiness score has improved to 48. Yet, 63% of urban Indians fear their savings may not last beyond 10 years after retirement. The study also highlights that 7

out of 10 Indians still consider ₹1 crore as sufficient for retirement — a belief described as the "₹1 Crore Illusion," given rising medical inflation of 10–12% and increasing living costs. The report notes a significant execution gap. While awareness of the National Pension System (NPS) and annuities is high, only 37% of Indians have achieved even a quarter of their retirement target corpus. The study stresses three pillars for a resilient strategy — financial readiness, health protection through insurance buffers,

and emotional independence, with 71% fearing loneliness and 72% seeking financial autonomy in old age. In Guwahati, financial advisors say interest in SIPs, pension products and structured retirement plans is rising, particularly among young professionals and women. However, consistent long-term investment discipline remains a challenge. The study concludes that retirement planning must move beyond wealth accumulation to sustainable income generation, backed by disciplined and diversified action.

Axis Max Life logs strong 9M FY'26 growth; VNB jumps 30%, market share rises to 9.8%

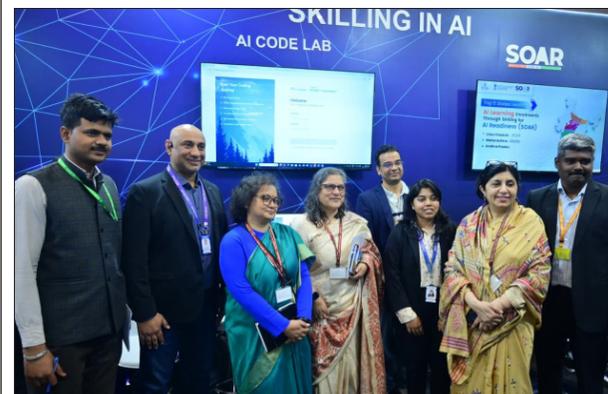
Guwahati: Max Financial Services Limited reported robust financial performance for the first nine months of FY'26, with consolidated revenue excluding investment income rising 18% year-on-year to ₹24,625 crore. Including investment income, consolidated revenue stood at ₹36,891 crore, while profit after tax was ₹137 crore. Axis Max Life Insurance, the group's life insurance arm, continued to outperform the private industry, reporting a 20% year-on-year increase in Individual Adjusted First Year Premium (FYP) to ₹6,396 crore and

gaining 53 basis points in private market share to reach 9.8%. Gross Written Premium grew 18% to ₹25,195 crore, while renewal premiums rose 17% to ₹15,551 crore. The company's profitability indicator, Value of New Business (VNB), increased 30% to ₹1,633 crore, with new business margins improving to 23.6%. Assets under management expanded 12% to ₹1.93 lakh crore, and Embedded Value grew 16% to ₹28,110 crore. Managing Director and CEO Sumit Madan said the company's "sustained double-digit growth" was driven



by strong proprietary channels, digital innovation, and expansion of partnerships, including 51 new business alliances. The steady growth in protection and savings products is also reflected in north-eastern markets, including Guwahati, where rising financial awareness and increasing agency networks are contributing to stronger demand for life insurance products, supporting the company's regional expansion strategy.

Human-centric AI takes centre stage at AI Impact Summit 2026, sets roadmap for skill India



Guwahati: The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship organised a high-level session on "Human-Centric AI: How India Can Power the World through Talent, Trust and Technology" on the sidelines of the India AI Impact Summit 2026, described as the largest AI gathering in the Global South. The session, held under the Expert Engagement Group discussions, focused on building

a responsible, inclusive and talent-driven AI ecosystem. Delivering the keynote, Prof. Bhaskar Chakravorti of The Fletcher School, Tufts University, said AI leadership will depend not only on technology but also on trust frameworks, digital public infrastructure and strong talent pipelines. He noted that India's experience in building large-scale digital systems gives it an advantage in shaping equitable and

trusted AI. The panel, moderated by Sidharth Madaan of BCG, included Yolynd Lobo of Google Cloud India, Arunkumar Pillai of NSDC, Rakesh Kaul of EY and Dr. Neena Pahuja of NCVET. Speakers discussed AI-driven skilling, institutional readiness and workforce transformation. NSDC highlighted AI-enabled delivery through the Skill India Digital Hub and the SOAR initiative, which has crossed two lakh registrations. A live demonstration by Sunil Kumar of Google showcased AI-powered creative tools. In Guwahati, the focus on AI skilling and digital infrastructure could open new opportunities for startups, training institutes and IT-enabled service providers in the Northeast, especially as demand grows for AI-trained professionals and technology-driven enterprises.

Medanta strengthens neurological care with advanced 'Brain Pacemaker' surgery



Guwahati: As neurological disorders continue to rank among the leading causes of disability worldwide, contributing nearly 10% to India's overall disease burden, Gurugram-based Medanta – The Medicity has enhanced its advanced neurological care services through its specialised Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) programme, pop-

ularly known as 'Brain Pacemaker' surgery. Recognised as an international destination for DBS, Medanta has been named Best Private Hospital in India by Newsweek for six consecutive years.

The therapy is known to provide meaningful relief to patients suffering from advanced-stage Parkinson's disease, dystonia, refractory epilepsy (adult onset), essential tremor, and advanced obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). The procedure is led by Dr. Anirban Deep Banerjee, Director, Neurosurgery, Institute of Neurosciences at Medanta Gurugram. He said DBS involves implanting electrodes

in specific brain areas to regulate abnormal signals, restore motor function and significantly improve quality of life, particularly when medicines fail to control symptoms. Dr. Banerjee has performed over 300 DBS procedures in the past 15 years with consistently high success rates. The programme combines advanced imaging for precise brain targeting with innovations such as directional leads, real-time brain-sensing biomarker feedback, AI-guided precision targeting and remote programming, enabling personalised and symptom-responsive treatment for patients.

Sarda Energy shares rally 8% as SC clears acquisition of SKS Power

Mumbai: Sarda Energy & Minerals' stock price rose more than 8% on Friday after the Supreme Court cleared the way for the acquisition of SKS Power Generation. The scrip reached an intraday high of ₹561, the highest level since October 30, 2025, on the National Stock Exchange. As of 2:25 PM, Sarda Energy & Minerals shares were trading 6.07 percent higher at ₹550.80 apiece, while the Nifty50 index fell 0.71 percent. On the NSE, around 5.2 million shares of the firm were trad-

ed, with an average price of ₹550.05, compared to 0.3 million shares in the previous session. The firm has a market capitalization of ₹19,391.54 crore.

After the Supreme Court overturned all legal impediments to its acquisition of SKS Power Generation, the counter experienced a surge in buying demand. A strong buying interest emerged in the counter after the Supreme Court struck down all legal obstacles against its takeover of SKS Power Generation.

NPCI flags rising cyber frauds targeting seniors, urges caution in digital payments

Aizawl: National Payments Corporation of India has intensified its digital safety awareness campaign to protect senior citizens amid growing adoption of digital payments. The payments body warned that elderly users are increasingly being targeted by cyber-criminals through digital arrest scams, fake investment schemes, phishing and vishing calls, tech support frauds, and fraudulent refund links. NPCI said fraudsters often pose as law enforcement officials threatening arrest, or impersonate financial experts promising extraordinary returns. In phishing and vishing attempts, scammers disguise themselves as banks or government agencies to extract OTPs and login details. Tech support frauds involve calls about fake viruses, pushing victims to install remote access apps. Fraudulent refund links redirect users to fake pay-

ment pages that steal sensitive data. The organisation advised seniors never to share UPI PINs, OTPs, passwords or bank details, and to avoid clicking unknown links or downloading apps from strangers. It stressed verifying investment firms through SEBI or RBI websites and ignoring urgent messages about KYC, SIM blocking or pension suspension.

Suspected fraud should be reported immediately to the national cybercrime helpline 1930 or to banks. In Aizawl, where digital payments are steadily expanding across retail stores and local markets, traders say awareness among senior citizens remains crucial. With QR-based transactions becoming common, financial literacy and timely verification can help prevent fraud while ensuring safe participation in the city's growing digital economy.

BHIM launches 'UPI Circle' to enable controlled digital payments for families and small businesses

Kohima: The BHIM Payments App has introduced a new feature, 'UPI Circle', aimed at making authorised UPI transactions safer and more structured for households and small businesses.

The feature allows a primary user to extend controlled payment access to trusted individuals, ensuring convenience without compromising security. UPI Circle enables a primary user to add up to five secondary users who can make

UPI payments from the primary user's linked bank account within preset limits. Secondary users can generate their own UPI ID under the circle and transact independently within permissions defined by the primary user. The primary user can set a monthly spending cap of up to ₹15,000 and choose an authorisation validity ranging from one month to five years. All transactions remain visible to the primary user, ensuring transparency and a clear audit

trail. The feature is designed to eliminate unsafe practices such as sharing UPI PINs, passwords or device access. Users can review transactions, adjust limits or unlink access at any time. In Itanagar, traders and small business operators say the feature could be particularly useful for delegating routine expenses like fuel, toll payments and local purchases, while maintaining spending control and accountability in day-to-day operations.

Assam taps Walmart Vriddhi power MSME innovation, targets 1 lakh enterprises by 2028



Guwahati: In a move aimed at accelerating grassroots innovation, Walmart Vriddhi, through its programme partner Ideas to Impact Foundation, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Industries, Commerce and Public Enterprises, Government of Assam to strengthen the state's micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The collabora-

tion aligns with Walmart Vriddhi's national ambition to empower an additional 100,000 MSMEs in India by 2028. Under the initiative, Assam's entrepreneurs will gain access to free training, mentoring and business tools to modernise operations and scale digitally, including onboarding to e-commerce platforms such as Flipkart. The state government will enable structured outreach through

District Industries Centres to deepen ecosystem participation.

The programme will prioritise high-potential sectors such as bamboo, cane, handloom and food processing, with rollout across Kamrup, Sonitpur, Cachar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Jorhat. Commissioner M.N. Dahal said the MoU reflects a shared commitment to strengthening market access and entrepreneurial capacity. Jason Fremstad of Walmart International said the partnership will help local enterprises innovate and compete in the digital economy. Launched in 2019, Walmart Vriddhi has trained over 70,000 MSMEs across India.

Nissan Unveils GRAVITE MPV at Rs. 5.65 Lakh, Signals Growth Drive in India

Bangaigaon: Nissan Motor India has introduced the all-new Nissan GRAVITE, a seven-seater MPV launched at an introductory price of ₹5.65 lakh (ex-showroom). The model marks the first step in the company's renewed product strategy and underscores its ambition to accelerate growth in the Indian market. Built at Nissan's Chennai facility, the GRAVITE is tailored for Indian families, offering flexible seating for two to seven occupants and class-leading luggage capacity of up to 625 litres. Safety is a key highlight, with more than 30 standard features including six airbags, Electronic Stability Control, Traction Control, Hill-Start Assist, and Brake Assist. The MPV adopts Nissan's signature 'C' design language, featuring LED lighting, a bold grille, roof rails, and modular interiors. Premium touches include suede-leatherette seating, multi-row AC vents, and advanced connectivity such as wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay, a digital instrument cluster, and wireless



charging. Powered by a 1.0-litre petrol engine with manual and AMT transmission options, the GRAVITE delivers fuel efficiency of up to 19.6 km/l. Customers can choose from five colour options, alongside a limited launch edition

equipped with premium accessories. Nissan confirmed that it is expanding its dealer footprint across Tier-I and Tier-II cities, reinforcing its long-term commitment to accessibility and enhanced customer experience in India.

Sai Life soars 25% in 5 weeks, hits record high in weak market

Mumbai: Shares of Sai Life Sciences (SLS) hit a new high of ₹992, surging 3 per cent on the BSE in Friday's intra-day trade in an otherwise weak market. In comparison, the BSE Sensex was down 0.61 per cent at 81,749.18 at 10:06 AM. In the past two trading days, the stock price of the pharmaceutical company has soared 7 per cent. Further, in the past five weeks, it zoomed 25 per cent, as against less than 1 per cent rise in the BSE Sensex. SLS is a pure-play fully integrated, innovator focused contract research, development and manufacturing organisation (CRDMO) providing end-to-end services across the discovery, development and manufacturing value chain for small molecule NCEs. The discovery services generate 35-40 per cent of the company's revenues, while the remaining is generated by contract development and manufacturing (CDMO). SLS has a strong business profile with an integrated presence that enables it in providing end-to-end services across the drug discovery, development, and manufacturing value chain, for small molecule new chemical (NCEs) entities to global innovators and biotech companies. The company has established long relationships with more than 300 innovator clients, including 18 of the leading 25 big pharma companies.

Modi announces India-France aviation skilling hub at Kanpur under PM-SETU

Guwahati: The Government of India has announced the establishment of an India-France National Centre of Excellence (NCoE) for Skilling in Aeronautics and Defence at the National Skill Training Institute (NSTI), Kanpur, under the PM-SETU scheme of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). The announcement was made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a joint press statement with the President of France, marking the inauguration of the India-France Year of Innovation. A Letter of Intent was exchanged between MSDE and the French government to collaborate on the project, building on the India-France Strategic Partnership and the 2025 MoU on skill development. The proposed centre will offer advanced training in aeronautics, MRO (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul), airport

operations and defence manufacturing. It will feature co-designed curricula, trainer development programmes, language training and structured mobility pathways. Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary said the initiative will create globally competent aviation professionals and strengthen India's strategic partnership with France. With an outlay of ₹60,000 crore, PM-SETU aims to upgrade 1,000 ITIs nationwide, with additional Centres of Excellence planned in Ludhiana, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bhubaneswar. In Guwahati, the move could boost aviation-linked skilling demand in the Northeast, especially as regional airports expand and defence-related activities gain traction, creating opportunities for trained youth in Assam and adjoining states.

Bitcoin and Ethereum demonstrate resiliency as skeptical mood persists despite turmoil

New Delhi: Bitcoin and Ethereum are showing indications of resiliency, despite the fact that the crypto market remains volatile. While Bitcoin has yet to definitively recapture the \$70,000 barrier, it has managed to stay above crucial support levels despite recent fluctuations. After falling below \$2,000, Ethereum has recaptured that level, but it continues to find resistance at

higher levels, confirming investors' cautious approach.

Analysts say the recent volatility has not caused systemic stress, with spot demand helping to mitigate the downside. However, they warn that near-term uncertainty remains owing to derivatives expirations, macroeconomic uncertainties, and ongoing linkage with wider risk assets.

Bengal Polls: Post-SIR Electoral Rolls Out Saturday

Kolkata, Feb 27: The Election Commission is set to publish West Bengal's post-Special Intensive Revision (SIR) electoral rolls on Saturday, marking a crucial stage in the voter list overhaul ahead of the 2026 assembly elections. According to officials, all 7.08 crore names that figured in the draft rolls will appear in the updated list, categorised as 'approved', 'deleted' or 'under adjudication/under consideration'.

The names can be checked on eci.gov.in, ceowestbengal.wb.gov.in, and the ECI net app. Draft rolls published on December 16 saw the state's electorate shrink from 7.66 crore to 7.08 crore, with over 58 lakh names deleted due to death, migration, duplication or untraceability. The second phase covered hearings for 1.67 crore electors -- 1.36 crore flagged for "logical discrepancies" and 31 lakh lacking mapping. Around 60 lakh voters remain under adjudication. The publication follows months of scrutiny, hearings and political sparring over the statewide revision -- the first such exercise since 2002. Supplementary rolls are expected to be issued in phases as adjudication of pending cases continues. The rolls will be made available at district and sub-divisional offices, polling booths and on the commission's website.

Mumbai court gives clean chit to Ajit Pawar family in Rs 25k crore Maharashtra Co-operative Bank scam

Mumbai, Feb 27: A Mumbai special court on Friday accepted the closure report filed by the Maharashtra government's Economic Offences Wing (EOW) in the case related to an alleged Rs 25,000 crore scam at the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB), giving a clean chit to Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar, late Ajit Pawar and other accused. The Court also dismissed protest pleas filed by activist Anna Hazare and others, as well as an intervention plea by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Special judge Mahesh Jadhav accepted the EOW's C-summary report, which said that no criminal offence was made out in the alleged loan and recovery irregularities involving coop-



erative sugar factories.

The order also endorsed EOW's finding that there was "no criminal offence" in the transactions related to Ajit Pawar, Sunetra Pawar, their relatives and other entities. The case originated after the Bombay High Court in 2019 ordered registration of FIRs on allegations that MSCB and district cooperative banks issued inter-

est-free loans to sugar factories to create loan accounts in favour of players linked with bank officials and politicians. The firms were also alleged to have sold unit assets at rock-bottom prices later. The EOW's 35-page closure report examined three key transactions and found no criminal irregularities in sanctioning loans or selling sugar factories,

including the Jarandeshwar Sugar Sahakari Karkhana in Satara. It was alleged that the factories were found to be unviable, then declared as non-performing assets, and sold at throwaway prices to companies linked with relatives of bank officials and politicians, including those owned by the Pawar family.

The EOW has now stated that there was no loss to the bank, and added it had recovered over Rs 1,343 crore from loans under investigation. After this closure report, a money laundering case filed by the ED against Ajit Pawar, Sunetra Pawar and 70 other people will have a negative impact. Earlier, ED had filed two charge sheets on the basis of the EOW FIR.

Bihar BJP MLAs seek strict law to stop conversion



Patna, Feb 27: The demand for a stricter anti-conversion law was raised on the concluding day of Bihar legislative assembly on Friday. The issue was raised by several members of the NDA during the calling attention motion. Eighteen MLAs including Maithili Thakur, Mithilesh Tiwari, Janak Singh, Sanjay Kumar Singh, and Baidyanath Prasad called for a law similar to that in other states like Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Gujarat. Speaker Prem Kumar assured the House that government would review anti-conversion laws of states that ban forced religious conversion and inter-faith marriage and "if required, would implement it in Bihar as well". He said that government is concerned over the issue raised by members in the House. "Adequate steps will be taken to deal with the situation," he said.

The legislators contended that several states have provisions for severe punishment, including imprisonment upto 20 years in such cases. BJP MLA from Buxar Mithilesh Tiwari said that in Buxar district, over 1,000 Dalit families had converted. Tiwari said that the state should adopt a law similar to Uttar Pradesh.

Shah in Odisha March 5: CISF & NFSU Events Slated

Bhubaneswar, Feb 27: Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to arrive in Odisha on a two-day visit beginning March 5. According to an official statement issued on Friday, a high-level preparatory meeting was held on Thursday under the chairpersonship of Chief Secretary Anu Garg in view of the union minister's state visit. Official sources further revealed that HM Shah will reach Odisha on the evening of March 5 by a special Indian Air Force aircraft from New Delhi. On March 6, he will attend the

Foundation Day programme of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) at Mundali in Cuttack district. Later in the afternoon, he is scheduled to visit Jatni in Khurda district to lay the foundation stone for the Bhubaneswar campuses of the National Forensic Sciences University and the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL). He will also virtually inaugurate the National Forensic Sciences University Transit Campus in Bhubaneswar. In the afternoon, the Union Minister will inaugurate the 'Naveen Nyaya Sanhita' exhibition at

the IDCO Exhibition Ground in Bhubaneswar. He is also slated to lay foundation stones and inaugurate several projects related to the Cooperation Department and other state departments. Keeping in view the Minister's participation in the CISF Foundation Day event, officials have been directed to undertake black-topping of roads from Godisahi to Mundali, along with street lighting, sanitation, cleanliness, and necessary beautification works. During the meeting, the officials reviewed in detail the Union Minister's itinerary,

security arrangements, traffic and route planning, and other logistical preparations at the programme venues. The Chief Secretary directed all departments to ensure close coordination and complete preparations within the stipulated timeline to ensure the smooth and successful conduct of the visit of the Home Minister. Additional Chief Secretary of Home, Industries, and Information & Public Relations Department, Hemant Sharma, briefed the meeting on the preparatory measures being undertaken by the State Government.

IAF recreates Operation Sindoor playbook in Pokhran during Vayu Shakti 2026

Pokhran, Feb 27: The Indian Air Force on Friday recreated key elements of Operation Sindoor at Pokhran during the Vayu Shakti-2026 exercise, laying out how it carried out strikes and countered aerial threats during last year's hostilities with Pakistan. President Droupadi Murmu, in her capacity as the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, flew a sortie in the indigenous Prachand before witnessing the Fire Power Demonstration (FPD). The sortie was undertaken as a two-aircraft LCH formation, with IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal AP Singh flying the second helicopter. With a deafening supersonic boom, a Rafale under the call sign "Brahmastra" opened the FPD, signalling its key role in the IAF's future force structure after the government's nod earlier this month for 114 additional aircraft. The sequence began with ISR inputs from RPAS, which identified and tracked targets in real time, with simulated

terror camps and radar installations adding operational realism. This was followed by simulated suppression and destruction of enemy air defences (SEAD/DEAD), overseen by the IAF's Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) and executed using loitering munitions.

The integrated air defence grid was demonstrated through coordinated firings by Akash surface-to-air missiles, the Spyder system and upgraded L-70 guns, mirroring the layered approach adopted during the conflict. The IAF had played a central role in the early hours of May 7, striking two of the nine designated targets and subsequently countering Pakistan's aerial incursions using a mix of legacy Soviet-origin systems and modern indigenous and imported platforms, including Akash, MR-SAM, Pechora and Osa-AK. During the hostilities, the S-400 system carried out the longest-range ground-to-air kill in military history, taking down a SAAB

2000 Erieye. The force inflicted damage on at least 11 Pakistani air bases, after which Islamabad desperately reached out for a ceasefire despite initially declining a call from Indian DGMO Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai on May 7.

The indigenous Tejas MK-1 LCA was missing from the FPD after the entire fleet was grounded following a runway incident earlier this month. Rafale, Su-30MKI, Jaguar, Hawk and Mirage 2000 formed the fighter package, with Rafale and Su-30MKI demonstrating air-to-air engagements. A C-295 transport aircraft carried out a night assault landing, while a C-130J Super Hercules landed on a short strip, inserted Garud commandos into a simulated combat zone and took off within minutes, as attack helicopters secured the area. The FPD also, for the first time, featured the SPIKE NLOS missile being fired from a Mi-17 helicopter. Other helicopters included Rudra, Prachand, Chetak, ALH Mk-IV, Chinook and



Apache.

Army elements were also part of the display, with M-777 ultra-light howitzers and upgraded L-70 guns showcasing ground-based firepower alongside aerial operations. Sources added that Army air defence units remained on constant watch during the exercise, underlining close coordination between air and ground forces. Long-range stand-off weapons used during Op Sindoor were not demonstrated due to safety considerations

and the presence of foreign observers, with the focus instead on precision targeting and integrated air defence operations. Around 25 foreign journalists were present to watch the FPD as part of an outreach by the Ministries of External Affairs and Defence to showcase India's military might and indigenous defence ecosystem. The delegation had also covered the Navy's International Fleet Review (IFR) and the Army's integrated exercise Agni Varsha this month.

CEM Debolal Gorlosa Inaugurates Railway Colony Durga Mondop in Haflong



Haflong, Feb 22: The Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, Debolal Gorlosa, formally inaugurated the Railway Colony Durga Mondop on Saturday evening. The structure has been constructed under the Special Grant for the financial year 2025–2026. The inaugural programme was attended by Donpainon Thaosen, Executive Member of DHAC; Ajoy Chakraborty, Nominated MAC, DHAC; Liton Chakraborty, Vice President of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Dima Hasao;

and Vinod Tiwari, Vistarak. The event witnessed a large gathering of community members and local residents. On the auspicious occasion, utensils for the Durga Mondop were also distributed to support upcoming religious and cultural programmes. The ceremony showcased strong community unity, devotion, and collective spirit. Local residents lauded the initiative and expressed their gratitude to CEM Debolal Gorlosa for his continued welfare-oriented activities in the district.

Education Push in Dima Hasao: CEM Debolal Gorlosa Inaugurates School Building, Issues 200+ Teacher Appointments

Haflong, Feb 26: In a significant initiative to strengthen the education sector in Dima Hasao, Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the N.C. Hills Autonomous Council, Debolal Gorlosa, on Wednesday inaugurated the newly constructed multi-storied building of Gopinath Bordoloi Model LP School and ceremonially distributed appointment letters to more than 200 teachers. The programme marked an important milestone for the district's education system. During the event, appointment letters were handed over to 240 selected teacher candidates across categories, along with 307 Anganwadi Helpers in Dima Hasao district. The teacher appointments comprised 6 Higher Secondary teachers, 124 High School teachers, 10 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) teachers, and 100 contractual teachers. On the occasion, the CEM also formally launched the application software E-Dima 1.0. The digital platform has been developed to streamline attendance management and facilitate official procedures for teachers working under the normal education sector, reflecting the council's move toward digital governance. Addressing the gathering, CEM Gorlosa described the day as "a new chapter in the education sector of Dima Hasao," reaffirming the council's commitment to quality education. He



urged the newly appointed teachers to perform their duties with sincerity and utilize their knowledge and skills to shape the future of students. As part of the programme, recently selected achievers of the Assam Public Service Commission were felicitated. The CEM also honoured members of the Dimasa Text Book Preparation Committee for their contribution to developing school-level textbooks in the Dimasa language. Inaugurating the new school building, Gorlosa termed the infrastructure a major step toward improving the learning environment and expressed hope that the institution would emerge as a centre of excellence in the district. Among other dignitaries who addressed the gathering were NCHAC Chairman Mohet Hojai; Executive Member in-charge of Primary Education and Finance; Member of Autonomous Council Rupali Langthasa; and Dhriti Thaosen, MAC as well as BJP Dima Hasao District President and Vice Chairman of the District Planning Board. Executive



Members, MACs, CDC Chairmen, the Joint Secretary of DHAC, and departmental officials were also present. The programme began with a welcome address by Principal Secretary, NCHAC, Partha Sarathi Jahari, ACS. A retired ACS officer and former Principal Secretary of NCHAC, who is also President of Lairdim Mel, spoke in detail about the council's achievements and challenges. The event witnessed the presence of Executive Members, MACs, and senior council officials. A large number of teachers, students, local NGOs, apex bodies, and departmental representatives attended, reflecting strong public interest in the district's educational advancement. Later in the day, power tillers were also distributed to beneficiaries under the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM) at Krishi Bhawan, Haflong, in the presence of BJP Dima Hasao District President Dhriti Thaosen, EMS, MACs, CDC Chairmen, the Principal Secretary, Joint Secretary of DHAC, and other officials.

Dima Hasao Police Issue Advisory to Curb Fake News Ahead of Assembly Polls

Haflong, Feb 23: The Dima Hasao Police has issued a public advisory urging citizens to stay alert against fake news, rumours, disinformation, and offensive messages circulating on social media and messaging platforms in the run-up to the upcoming General Assembly Election. Police authorities have appealed to the public to promptly report any misleading or objectionable content via WhatsApp at 9678922271, which will remain operational 24x7. The initiative is aimed at enabling swift verification and preventing the spread of misinformation that could disrupt the electoral atmosphere. Emphasizing the importance of public cooperation, the police stated that citizen participation is vital to maintaining transparency, peace, and public confidence during the election period. People have been strongly



advised not to forward unverified messages and to rely only on authentic and official sources of information. Reaffirming their commitment to democratic values and peaceful polling, the police called upon voters, political workers, and civil society groups to work collectively to ensure a free, fair, and orderly election. Citizens have also been urged to use social media responsibly and to immediately report any suspicious or false content to help authorities take timely action in the district.

Dima Hasao Boosts 2026 Monsoon Readiness

The progress of works under the PNDA and SDMF schemes in the district was also assessed. Addressing the gathering, the District Commissioner emphasized the importance of advance planning, timely dissemination of information, and coordinated field-level action to minimize potential loss of life and property. He reaffirmed the administration's commitment to maintaining a high level of alertness and ensuring that all stakeholders remain fully equipped to respond promptly and efficiently to any disaster situation. The meeting concluded with clear directives to concerned departments and agencies to expedite pending preparedness measures and maintain close coordination in the days ahead, reinforcing Dima Hasao's resolve to face the monsoon season with readiness and resilience.



Under-Construction Bridge Segment Collapses in Dima Hasao, No Casualties Reported

Haflong, Feb 22: An incident of structural failure has raised concern in Assam's Dima Hasao district after a portion of an under-construction bridge under the Silchar-Saurashtra East-West Corridor project collapsed late Sunday night. The mishap occurred at Dalaisung area, triggering panic in the vicinity. Fortunately, no casualties or injuries have been reported so far.



According to available information, the East-West Corridor connecting Silchar to Saurashtra is currently under construction, with significant works underway in the hill district. As part of the project, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has been executing the construction of a four-lane national highway stretch from Harangajao to Jatinga in Dima Hasao. The 25-kilometre four-laning work in this stretch has been entrusted to Gujarat-based Dinesh Chandra R. Agrawal Infracon Private Limited. However, the sudden collapse of a bridge segment during the ongoing construction has created widespread concern and drawn attention to the quality and reliability of the executing agency. The incident has also sparked questions regarding construction standards and monitoring mechanisms. It may be recalled that the project authorities had earlier planned to complete the 25-km stretch between Harangajao and Jatinga and open at least the two-lane carriageway to traffic by January 31, later revised to February 15. The opening, however, was deferred

due to technical issues and the incomplete status of three flyovers along the route. Following the latest bridge collapse, fresh uncertainty has emerged over the timeline. Notably, the four-laning work of the Silchar-Saurashtra East-West Corridor in Dima Hasao has been ongoing for more than two decades, with no firm completion date in sight. The project had recently gained momentum following the intervention of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and a deadline was reportedly set to expedite completion ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections. In the push to meet deadlines, construction activities had been continuing round the clock. Several local observers have alleged that the pressure to finish the project quickly may have led to substandard work—an allegation that the latest incident appears to reinforce. The exact cause behind the collapse of the bridge segment will be known only after a detailed technical investigation. As of the time of filing this report, no official statement has been issued by the concerned departmental authorities regarding the incident.

Delhi HC Orders Fresh EFI Polls Under Ad-Hoc Panel

IOA Panel To Run Daily Affairs

New Delhi, Feb 27: The Delhi High Court has ordered the initiation of fresh elections for the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) following the expiry of its existing Executive Committee's tenure. The decision was delivered after deliberations in Court 14 by Justice Kaurav, responding to an application from the Union of India seeking the appointment of an ad-hoc administrative committee for the EFI.

The request for an ad-hoc administrative committee came after the executive committee, which had been reinstated for the Paris Olympics, completed its tenure. The Rajasthan Equestrian Association emphasised the urgency of the situation, stating that the elections were long overdue. The Delhi High Court responded by outlining concrete steps to ensure the federation's compliance with the latest regulatory framework. A significant factor in the court's directive was the enactment of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025, and the



notification of the National Sports Governance (National Sports Bodies) Rules, 2026. Rule 18 of these new rules requires all National Sports Federations to amend their bye-laws in accordance with the 2025 Act, making compliance a legal obligation for continued operation. Under the court's order, the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) will appoint an independent ad-hoc committee. The current Executive Committee has been instructed to transfer control to the ad-hoc committee within seven days to avoid any administrative gaps and ensure a smooth transition. After the con-

stitutional amendments are completed, the court has mandated that fresh elections be conducted within one month. The newly elected General Body will then be required to ratify the constitutional amendments, solidifying the federation's compliance with the new legal framework and establishing its governance structure for the future. This decision follows an earlier order on May 29, 2024, in which a Division Bench of the Delhi High Court stayed the appointment of an ad-hoc administrative committee and restored control to the 20-member Executive Committee elected in 2019.

Jammu and Kashmir dominate Karnataka to end 67-year wait for maiden Ranji title

Hubballi: "It is not a dream anymore but a reality. It has taken us nearly seven decades to be called 'National Champions' and finally the wait is over." Parvez Rasool didn't need dramatic language in his recent PTI column. That one line captured everything Jammu and Kashmir cricket had waited 67 years to say. For decades, Jammu and Kashmir turned up in the Ranji Trophy hoping for a good week. This time, they stayed for five days and finished the job. Sixty-seven years after entering India's premier domestic competition, Jammu and Kashmir finally scripted history by overpowering Karnataka in the 2026 Ranji Trophy final to claim their maiden title. It wasn't a nervy finish or a last-day scramble. A massive 291-run first-innings lead ensured the trophy was already theirs, even though the match itself ended in a draw. They did not stumble into control. They took it early and held on to it. The tone of the game was set when they piled up 584 in the first innings. It came through partnerships and patience rather than one standout knock. Captain Paras Dogra anchored the effort with a steady fifty, Shubham Pundir laid the early platform, and when Karnataka looked to claw back on Day 2, Sahil Lotra's unbeaten half-century stretched the total beyond reach. By stumps on Day 2, Karnataka were already playing catch-up. Their reply began cautiously but soon ran into a disciplined attack. Auqib Nabi removed KL Rahul early and later returned to dismantle the middle order, reducing the hosts to 57 for 4. Mayank Agarwal fought hard with a superb century and stretched it into 160, but the support around him never truly arrived. When Karnataka were bowled out for 293, Jammu and Kashmir walked away with a 291-run first-innings lead that effectively sealed the title. Instead of enforcing the follow-on, J&K chose to bat again and dictate the tempo, allowing Qamran Iqbal and Sahil Lotra to take the game further away from Karnataka across Days 4 and 5. Across five days, Jammu and Kashmir were simply sharper with bat, ball and decisions. And this time, there was no slipping away. After Jam-

mu and Kashmir piled up 584, it was Auqib Nabi who ensured the advantage became decisive.

The right-arm pacer produced a match-shaping five-wicket haul to bowl Karnataka out for 293 and hand J&K the commanding 291-run first-innings lead. His breakthroughs came at key moments, removing KL Rahul early and later striking twice in quick succession to derail Karnataka's middle order before returning to end Mayank Agarwal's resistance. It was another standout performance in a remarkable season. Nabi finished with 60 wickets, ending as the tournament's leading wicket-taker and becoming only the third pacer in Ranji Trophy history to cross that mark in a single season. Having already secured an IPL contract with Delhi Capitals worth Rs 8.4 crore for 2026, his impact in the final now feels like the performance that has pushed him into a bigger conversation. From domestic spearhead to potential India contender, Nabi's Ranji season has begun to fuel chatter about whether he could soon emerge as a new pace option for the national side. While the bowlers built the platform, it was Qamran Iqbal and Sahil Lotra who made sure Karnataka never found a way back. After early setbacks left J&K at 11 for 2 in the second innings, Qamran absorbed the pressure and rebuilt patiently before shifting gears. On Day 5, he carried that effort forward into a commanding 160, while Lotra matched the moment with a century of his own, finishing on 101. Together, they took Jammu and Kashmir to 342 for 4, pushing the lead well beyond Karnataka's reach. Their dominance was such that Karnataka even handed the ball to KL Rahul in search of something different, but the contest had already slipped away. Moments after lunch, J&K declared, and Karnataka effectively acknowledged what the scoreboard had been saying for hours — the game was already gone. Across the five days, Karnataka had phases where they hinted at a fightback through Mayank's resistance or brief bursts with the ball, but each time they looked to build momentum, Jammu and Kashmir found a response.

Nervous New Zealand will have eyes on PAK vs SL: Mitchell Santner on semi-final hopes

Colombo, Feb 27: New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner admitted that his side will be watching Pakistan's final Super 8 clash against Sri Lanka with nerves after missing the chance to seal a semi-final spot themselves following their defeat to England on February 27. England's four-wicket win over New Zealand in Colombo confirmed their unbeaten march into the semi-finals as Group 2 toppers.

The result left New Zealand stuck on three points from three games with a strong net run rate of +1.390, while Pakistan stayed alive with one point from two matches and a mathematical route still open. Speaking at the post-match press conference, Santner

acknowledged that New Zealand's chances of qualifying for the semi-finals were no longer in their own hands. "Pretty nervous. But yeah, I mean, it's out of our control. We can't really do much. Just kind of wait and see, and we either get on a plane to India or New Zealand," Santner said. "Yeah, I guess we had it in our control. It would have made things a lot easier if we won tonight. But yeah, there'll be some nervous watching probably tomorrow just to see what happens," he added. With England already through, the spotlight now shifts to Pakistan's clash against Sri Lanka in Pallekele, which will determine whether New Zealand stay alive or are knocked out. New Zealand

had their fate in their own hands heading into the final Super 8 game but could not get past England in a high-pressure encounter. England restricted the Kiwis to 159, with Will Jacks playing a key all-round role by picking up 2 for 23 and later guiding the chase with an unbeaten 32 off 18 balls.

The loss proved costly. A win would have guaranteed New Zealand a semi-final berth, but instead, they now depend on Pakistan slipping up in their final match. Santner admitted that the team had done several things right through the tournament but fell short in key moments. "It's always those little moments at the end or throughout an innings where you can be



a little bit sharper whether it's execution or in the field," he said. Pakistan's path is open but challenging. They must beat Sri Lanka convincingly to overtake New Zealand on net run rate. A victory by 65 runs or a chase complet-

ed within 13 overs could be enough to swing the equation in their favour. With no rain forecast in Pallekele and Sri Lanka entering the match on the back of three consecutive defeats, Pakistan have a realistic opportunity to stay

in contention. For New Zealand, it now comes down to watching and waiting. The next semi-finalist from Group 2 will be decided not by their own performance, but by the outcome of Pakistan's final push.