



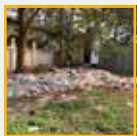
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GUWAHATI'S OWN ENGLISH WEEKLY

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# In Soap Boxes - The 'Narcos' Style Heroin Movement Across Assam

Indrani Chakrabarty  
@\_bhindeshi\_tara

**D**rug smugglers have always gone to extreme lengths to ensure that their illegal cargo avoids detection and reaches its intended destination. The 90s pop culture showed us how contraband was always exchanged by shady men wearing dark glasses in vacant places, in a brown-black suitcase, which the smugglers could identify by tasting a pinch of the white-coloured powder. But, gone are those days today.

One could only hope that smugglers would be that naïve these days. The entire industry has been trying to come up with innovative and unique ideas to move their products across the state and country lines.

From fitting the drugs inside a toupee to transferring them in soft toys, even raw fish, smuggling drugs is a risky and innovative business. That takes us to the drugs that have been travelling within the state of Assam.

During the last few months, it has been noticed that drugs have been travelling across Assam in boxes, packets, cartons, sometimes concealed in something as unusual as soap boxes or just packed together using brown tape.

One of the drugs that has caught everyone's attention is Heroin. The opium-based drug is mostly

discovered concealed in soap boxes which most of the time bear the brand markings of Myanmar.

When the packets are seized, they are found in a sealed form which tells us that it has been travelling from the neighbouring country and has been crossing country and state lines in that concealed form. Because these are soap boxes, people most of the time do not pay attention or think that there could be some ulterior motive behind transporting soap boxes.

These boxes are then supplied to Guwahati and other areas as per the demand where a network of peddlers distribute them in smaller vials and supply them.

While talking to the Joint Commissioner of Police, Parthasarathi Mahanta, he said, "Soap boxes can carry small quantities in a concealed form which are easily transported from one part to another. The items are packed in polythene bags in small quantities for easy supply. It is also preserved well if transported using this method. Brown sugar and heroin are both transferred in soap boxes but in a majority of the cases heroin is found."

Heroin is an opioid drug made from morphine, a natural substance taken from the seed pod of the various opium poppy plants grown in Southeast and Southwest Asia.

The substance is mostly found in white or brown powder form, or sometimes in a black sticky form



Heroin is being smuggled concealed in soap boxes | File Photo

also known as black tar heroin. Heroin is a central nervous system depressant which slows down a person's brain function and affects their breathing (which can slow down or even stop), lowers the body temperature and blood pressure, and the heartbeat can become irregular.

It is said that people who use heroin report feeling a "rush" (or

euphoria) and long-term effects may include collapsed veins, infection of the heart lining and valves, abscesses, and lung complications.

As per the latest report, drugs worth 407 crore have been seized in the year 2022 by Guwahati police. Diganta Borah, the Guwahati Commissioner of Police informed that the ratio has

increased to 167.2% in 2022 from 104.18% in 2021.

A seizure worth 548.53 crore was done by Assam police in the year 2021. Among the total drugs caught in 2022, more than 200 crore worth of drugs included psychotropic tablets. Several drug smugglers and peddlers got apprehended by the police from varied regions across the state.

## Long Due City Beautification In Progress After Three Years

Drishti Swami  
@guwahatiplus

**A**s Guwahati gears up to play host to the delegations of various different countries who are members of the G20 for the series of meetings to be held here, the State Government and the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) are seen rushing to give the city a facelift.

The first meeting is set happen on February 2 next month and so the beautification of the city is happening in full-swing. A fresh coat of paint is being applied to every divider and all the flyovers of the city. All the cracks on walls in public places are being repaired and fresh murals are being drawn by artists. Construction activities are ongoing as officials rush to

finish building places like the Fancy Bazaar foot-over bridge or the new bus stop at Pan Bazaar.

The walls of the cities could be seen covered in murals and graffiti made by the youth depicting the life in Guwahati as we live and breathe. The walls outside the Dispur Fire Station showcased beautiful murals of a life of a firefighter rescuing people from dangerous situations. The colours splashed across has rejuvenated the city in the process.

The last time Guwahati saw beautification at such a large-scale was in 2019 when Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was set to visit the city to hold summit talks with Prime Minister Modi. The Fancy Bazaar ghats and parks were beautifully constructed and renovated and even a red carpet was laid out. However, the visit had to be called



Guwahati is getting decked up ahead of G 20 Meet | G Plus Photo

off a week before it was scheduled to occur as Guwahati was hit with widespread protests due to the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) that was passed in the

parliament. The government had to impose a curfew upon the city in order to curb the protests.

Since then, minor works have been done to redecorate the city



every time an important functionary visits but nothing of this sort. Over the past few weeks, major works were seen especially near the Secretariat at Dispur, the capital of Assam. Many murals have been painted by young artists.

Around five G20 meetings will be held in Assam in the year of 2023, with four being held at Guwahati between February to March. The meetings are set to occur in almost 50 cities across the country as India assumed the Presidency of G20 for a year from December 1, 2022 till the end of November 2023.

# Multiple Accidents Mar Republic Day, Saraswati Puja Celebrations

Nitish Sarmah

@sarmah\_nitish

**T**hough the government is attempting to make Assam an accident-free state, on Republic Day which was also marked this year as Saraswati Puja, several deadly road accidents were reported in many places of the state. Amidst the festivities of Republic Day and Saraswati Puja, several people lost their lives across the state and many people are fighting with death in hospitals.

On January 26, two severely injured accident victims were referred to Guwahati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) after an accident in Gaonburapara, Mangaldoi. The youths are Manirul Hauque and Idul Hauque from Nagarbari area. Locals said that both of them were on a motorcycle and hit a four-wheeler when the vehicle crossed the road.

Another accident was reported from Mancachar's Pipulbari area. A tempo fell into a pond with the passengers. Locals said that one person died and 3 were critically injured in the incident.

One pedestrian died after he was hit by a two-wheeler in Jakhlabandha area of Nagaon district. Police said that they took both of them to the nearest hospital. The man riding the two-wheeler was critically injured.

A four-wheeler met with an accident in Nagarbera area of Kamrup district. There were 6 people including a child in the vehicle when it hit an electric post, 3 were critically injured and sent to GMCH.

One more accident was caught on CCTV when two motorcycles collided in Dudhnoi, Goalpara. Three persons were seriously injured and sent to the hospital.

Two injured people were



sent to Assam Medical College Hospital from Dhemaji. Kalyan Bora and Dipak Karmakar were seriously injured in an accident at Nolongipam, Dhemaji.

Similarly, two persons were seriously injured in an accident at Kamargaon, Golaghat.

In a dangerous accident at Gauripur, Dhubri a vehicle lost control and hit two motorcycles and a truck parked on the roadside.

Talking to *G Plus* Dhubri Traffic Police said that two deceased

persons in the accident have been identified as Subangi Roy (14) and Nirmali Chaudhary (16). Both of them were from ward number one of Gauripur.

Among those seriously injured are Riyat Hussain, Zahidul Haque, Riya Saha, Jennifer Yasmin and Moidul Islam.

It needs to be mentioned that the Chief Minister of Assam Himanta Biswa Sarma in December directed the Deputy Commissioners and Police heads of all districts to take strong action for the enforcement of road safety protocols in the state.

He asked them to take action against bike stunts, speed and drunken driving and intensify patrolling on National Highway and important roads across the state.

He directed the Deputy Commissioners to conduct a regular review of road accidents and identify spots where accidents

take place on a regular basis. He had said that the District Road Safety Committee must visit all such spots to get a first-hand understanding of the situation. While directing the Transport Department to prepare an analytical report of all accidents that have taken place during the year, the Chief Minister instructed the DCs to take up repairing and other road related matters with state PWD and NHIDCL on a priority basis.

Further making a call to ensure an 'Accident-free New Year', the Chief Minister directed the districts to set a target to reduce accidents by a minimum of 20% during this period in the coming year. He also directed to carry out strict vigilance at picnic spots to ensure that nobody indulges in drunken and speed driving.

Just a month after the government took drastic steps, people have not been able to take so many accidents in a single day easily.



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# Organisers Leave Behind Piles Of Garbage At Chandmari Field

Indrani Chakrabarty  
@\_bhindeshi\_tara

The Assam Engineering Institute's ground in Chandmari remains in terrible condition even after a month of the Assam Book Fair being held in Guwahati.

The 2nd edition of the Assam Book Fair in Guwahati was held from December 29, 2022, to January 9, 2023. Jointly organised by the Assam Prakashan Parishad and All Assam Book Publishers and Sellers Association, the fair was held at five places across the state. Post the book fair, a photography exhibition was also held at the venue.

While talking to *G Plus*, one of the shop owners who sit outside the ground said, "The fair ended almost two weeks ago but the place has still not been cleared. All the leftovers of the fair lie there openly. No one has taken any action against it."

The corners of the ground were seen covered in filth that was left behind after the structures of the fair were taken down. The administration hasn't cleared out



Multiple events held at Chandmari ground left the place in a dismal condition | G Plus Photo

the area even after two weeks of the Assam Book Fair. Moreover, other functions were held on the grounds after the Book Fair, which has only left the area dirtier.

While talking to the students of the Assam Engineering Institute,

this is what they have to say. "We do not get time to use the ground at all. Every now and then there is some event that takes place there. When the contracts are given out to these groups to hold events on the ground, it should be made

clear that they clear the ground out after their event gets over. It rarely happens that we find the ground to be found in clean and pristine condition post any event."

The students further said that the AEI also do not take any steps

to clear out the area after events. The area of the field where the food stalls were set up is the worst part. The people dumped all the leftover food and perishable in the field and went away. Now that area emits a such pungent smell that we cannot pass by area.

While talking to a Senior Administrative Officer of the AEI about the poor condition of the AEI ground on condition of anonymity said, "It is the responsibility of the organisers who hold the event that they clean it after the event is over. After Book Fair also cleaned it out to a certain extent."

Assam Prakashan Parishad Secretary, Pramod Kalita while talking to *G Plus* said, "We clear out the area every time after we hold a fair in the AEI ground. This time too, we planned to do the same but there was another event that was scheduled right after the book fair and we couldn't clean out the area. Now that the event is over, we will clear out the area at the earliest."

The AEI ground in Chandmari which is a popular place where various events are held over the year awaits to be cleaned so that the students can make use of it.

# Footpaths Of Guwahati Not Pedestrian Friendly

Rahul Chanda  
@RahulChanda1405

The elderly and disabled residents of the city are concerned about the situation and the government lacks the plan to make the footpaths pedestrian friendly

In cities like Pune, there are concepts of smart footpaths for all especially emphasising the requirements of the elderly and the disabled. Talking about Guwahati none of the footpaths is 100% elderly or disabled friendly and many residents feel that the footpaths are neither normal nor pedestrian friendly.

A city-based architect and member of the Association of Architects, Assam (AAA), Ranel Das talking to *G Plus* said, "It is worrisome that it is very difficult to walk on the footpaths in Guwahati." He said it is not only for the disabled or elderly even normal people face difficulty walking on the footpaths. He questions if the city which was declared as an upcoming smart city has any plans for making the footpaths friendly for all.

Disability rights activist Arman Ali talking to *G Plus* echoed the same concern as Das saying that



the footpaths in Guwahati are violating The Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWD) Act, 2016. He said, "It's not only about disabled people but roads in Guwahati are not fit for anyone." He added that ramps, proper signage, and proper footpaths are basic amenities which roads should have but are missing.

Ranel Das also raised another issue related to the footpaths; he said that the Public Works Department (PWD) – Roads are constructing a new drainage system on roads like B Borooah

and BK Kakati. They are increasing the height of the footpath; he questioned whether that will increase the height of the footpath end water logging issue. The drains are connected to the rivers but for the easy flow of drain water the drain bed has to be sloping towards the connecting river, is it happening? Moreover, the RCC drains thereafter have footpaths on top, are the footpaths smooth for pedestrians, elderly people and disabled people?

Answering the questions a senior official of PWD talking to *G Plus* on condition of anonymity said, "It is mostly not pedestrian friendly because of the mistake of the workmanship of our department (PWD)." Talking about the new drainage system the official explained that many times the contractors and the labours involved in the construction work do not give appropriate finishing on top making the footpath unfriendly for disabled and elderly



people. Many times due to time constraints, the senior officials do not pressurise the contractors to do so. "While cleaning the drains, the RCC slab which

covers the manhole, after being removed are not fitted properly back on the same place," said the official adding that these are a few reasons because of which the footpaths are not friendly to many.

Another official from the PWD said that a few footpaths near Chandmari Road (near the Assam Tribune building around a kilometre) are pedestrian-friendly footpaths with tiles on top. He said that in Christian Basti also there are one or two footpaths which are pedestrian friendly.

"There is a will of the government to gradually make all the footpaths pedestrian-friendly, especially for the disabled and elderly but it will take time," said the official.

According to the smart city plan when it was announced in 2016, it was a requirement of a city to make footpaths pedestrian-friendly, said a source in Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) who was in a team which pitched for the smart city contest after which the Centre selected Guwahati as one of the 1st smart cities in the country. Ironically, Guwahati Smart City Ltd (GSCL) do not have any such plan or project to make the city footpath pedestrian-friendly, revealed a source in Dispur.

## SNIPPETS

### Bohag Bihu To Be Celebrated On International Level This Year

While delivering the Republic Day speech on January 26, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced a slew of schemes and claimed that Bohag Bihu will be celebrated at the international level.

On April 14, around 10 to 15 thousand people will sing Bihu in Guwahati which will be recorded in the Guinness Book of World Records, said the Chief Minister.

He also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Guwahati during Bohag Bihu this year.

After celebrating Bir Lachit Barpuke's 400<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary at an international level, the Assam government want to promote Bohag Bihu internationally.

He also said that ₹300 crore will be sanctioned to develop Kamakhya Temple.

### Assam To Get New Sports Policy By Aug 15

With various schemes and announcements, the Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma while delivering the Republic Day speech on January 26, announced that the state will get a new Sports Policy by August 15 this year.

The Chief Minister said that sports competitions will be organised in every revenue village and gradually the state will produce more international sports persons.

He also said that during the upcoming budget session, the government will sanction Rs 3000 crore for youth development.

### All Govt. Services To Be Made Available On New Portal

Trying to eradicate the loopholes in manually providing government services to the public, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma addressing the gathering at Khanapara field after hoisting the national flag on January 26 said that very soon Right to Public Service Portal will be functional.

The Chief Minister said that gradually all government departments will start providing government services through this portal.

By 2026 all government services of all the departments will be provided through this portal.

# Sahitya Sabha Accuses GMDA Of Encroaching 50 Bighas Of Land

G Plus News  
@guwahatiplus

Assam Sahitya Sabha alleged that Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) has occupied 50 bighas of land owned by the Sahitya Sabha today, January 27 in a press meet.

In a press conference held in Chachal, Guwahati on January 27 Sahitya Sabha members alleged that it is unfortunate the administration is interfering with the 50 bighas of land in their possession.

The convener of the Dr Bhupen Hazarika Cultural University project, Asam Sahitya Sabha Pabitra Kumar Deka said that the GMDA has dug up the ground owned by the Asam Sahitya Sabha and filled the water bodies with soil brought from other places without their permission.

"We are sad about GMDA's illegal and forceful work. I request the government to take action and prevent the 50 bighas of land given to the Asam Sahitya Sabha from being forcefully occupied by the GMDA. Otherwise, the central committee of the Asam Sahitya Sabha and the people of Assam



Assam Sahitya Sabha accuses GMDA of occupying the land owned by the body | G Plus Photo

will be forced to take up various programs," he added.

Assam Sahitya Sabha also said that after a request made by the organisation, the state government allotted 50 bighas of land in 1993. At that time Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia allotted this land. After that Sahitya Sabha thought of establishing a

cultural university in the name of Dr Bhupen Hazarika on the plot of land but due to a lack of funds, the work is not progressing, as per Assam Sahitya Sabha statement.

While speaking to G Plus, Kausar Hilaly, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the GMDA said, "It is not about illegally occupying the plot of land. Assam Sahitya Sabha was

actually allotted a plot of land in the Silsako Beel. Now the problem is that we cannot give permission for any construction on a beel which is protected by an act and that land is protected by the Guwahati Water Bodies (Preservation and Conservation) Act. So, we will not be able to give them permission for any construction there."






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एनटीपीसी - विद्युत क्षेत्र में अग्रणी / Leading the Power Sector

# Guwahati's Ground Water Extraction At Semi-Critical Level

Rahul Chanda

@RahulChanda1405

**T**he residents across the city are complaining of decreased ground water levels; wells and boring wells are drying; authorities not enforcing any norms for ground water use

A major concern has cropped up for the residents of Guwahati as according to a study conducted by Dynamic Ground Water Resources Assessment Of India - 2022, Guwahati's ground water extraction level is semi-critical. The ground water assessment units are categorised based on the stage of extraction (SoE) as 'Safe' if SoE is less than 70 %; semi-critical if SoE is more than 70% and critical if SoE is less than 90%; 90 to 100 per cent is considered as exploited over 100% is known as overexploited.

"Out of 28 assessment units, 27 have been categorized as 'Safe' and one assessment unit of Kamrup (Metro) Urban is in semi-critical condition," said the report of the study after analysing 28 districts in Assam.

Talking about the country, the study said that out of the total 7089 assessment units (Blocks/ Taluks/ Mandals/ Districts/Firkas/Valleys), 1006 have been categorised as 'Over-exploited', 260 as 'Critical', 885 as 'Semi-critical', and 4780 units as 'Safe'.

With the completion of the ongoing water supply project remaining a dream, the scarcity of water has hit the Guwahati residents hard. There is an alarming

decrease in the water level across the city and many residents are not getting water from their wells and water tube wells.

Krishna Mandal, a resident of Jyotikuchi talking to *G Plus* said, "I spent around 7 lakh to extract water from a tube well last year in my house. For one year we received a good amount of water from the tube well but suddenly now the tube well has dried up creating a water crisis for us," adding that the tube well was fitted 1000 feet down where he received water last year.

According to sources in the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), the city is witnessing a rise in the use of groundwater for various purposes, and cumulatively, the groundwater level is going down. The authorities do keep an eye on the use of underground water, but still, there are people in the city who are using the groundwater without any limit, and in many areas, it is seen that underground water is sold off after digging it up through bore-wells. "We will be very strict against people who use ground water without permission from CGWB," said the source.

At the beginning of 2022, Kamrup (Metro) administration seemed caught off guard by the decision on groundwater extraction in Guwahati. The administration initially banned all forms of groundwater extraction, but later revoked the ban quoting public requests. Meanwhile, for a few days, many residents of Guwahati were unable to purchase water as people selling underground water were scared because of the ban.



The ground water level has significantly dropped in Guwahati | Internet Photo

Guwahati is witnessing a rise in the use of groundwater for various purposes, and cumulatively, the groundwater level is going down. People selling groundwater transport it through auto vans. Even if just 100 to 150 auto vans transport water for one day, it translates to around 15,000 litres of water being extracted in one day. One direct impact of this unrestrained extraction is that arsenic levels of underground water go up, said a CGWB source. In Assam, however, the pattern of groundwater depletion is not similar to that of other parts of India which could be understood by its rate of groundwater development value which is only 14% in Assam against the national average value of 62%, said the

source.

Guwahati and other cities and towns where the population is significantly high, economic development is fast and monitoring of groundwater utilization is lacking, the underground water depletion is always a concern during the dry season, said the source.

This year the issue is major, said a resident of Christian Basti adding that not even a single well in Christian Basti has water. The same issue is faced by people across the city raising concerns about the groundwater issue.

Groundwater depletion at the present pace will also influence its surrounding environment by disturbing the soil-atmospheric continuum subsequently

contributing to changing the inherent properties of soil. The soil will not be able to maintain the normal soil moisture at the upper surface because of the restricted upward movement of soil water from a deeper groundwater depth affecting the grossly microbial population in the soil. If this trend continues, the soil practically will die leading to reduced natural decomposition of city garbage along with poor growth of vegetation and fruit-bearing ability of crops, said the CGWB source.

It needs to be mentioned that the water supply project is getting postponed every year and till the water supply project is not complete the illegal extraction and sale of underground water will continue. The sale of water cannot be banned as people are not getting water from any other option. Many depend on wells and tube wells but as the level is decreasing, it is vital for them to purchase underground extracted water.

According to CGWB sources, the sale of untreated underground water is illegal and if noticed the authorities can prosecute. The underground water can be used after proper treatment to be sold in proper drinking water bottles, but if that happens it will turn into a bottling plant the source also said for bottling plants people require NOCs from the department which provided with proper scrutiny but in Guwahati city, there are no such NOCs issued till date, which means there is no bottling plant and whatever underground water is being sold is untreated which is illegal.

## IIT-G's Entrepreneurial Summit Concludes

IIT Guwahati concluded its 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Entrepreneurship Summit: UDGM 2023: Vortex of Ventures on January 22, 2023.

The summit was organized as a part of the continued efforts to develop the spirit of entrepreneurship among the youth of North-East India from January 19-22.

Under the event, the inaugural North East Startup Expo was conducted to provide an opportunity for about 50 startups in the region to showcase their products or services, receive customer feedback, and connect with investors.

UDGM'23 had a series of insightful sessions led by the legendary Narayan Murthy, Co-Founder of Infosys; Ashneer

Grover, former MD and Co-Founder of Bharat Pe; Ankush Singla, Founder of Coding Ninjas; Krishnan V, Co-Founder of JustDial, and Rishabh Shekhar, Co-Founder of Pepper Content.

North East Entrepreneurial Drive (NEED), an initiative to help North East colleges build Entrepreneurship Cells, saw multiple regional colleges present their work and strategy.

The finals of Disrupt, North East's largest pitching battle, was conducted in a hybrid mode this year, with investment opportunities, mentorship, incubation, and business tools awarded to the winners. A school-level pitching competition called Sparkle was also organized to promote the spirit of entrepreneurship among the students.

## Fancy Bazar Foot Over Bridge To Be Inaugurated On February 1

G Plus News

@guwahatiplus

**T**he foot-over bridge (FOB) at the Mahatma Gandhi (MG) Road in Fancy Bazar will be inaugurated on February 1 which is also Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's birthday. The FOB was planned to clear the massive vehicular and foot traffic congestion in the area.

One end of the foot over-bridge is in front of the PWD campus and the other end is at the Brahmaputra Riverside.

A source in the Public Works Department (PWD) said, "The FOB is constructed in a budget of 16.60 crore," adding that the construction will be completed in less than a year.

On enquiring why is it being

inaugurated on the day of the Assam Chief Minister's birthday, the source said that it is "coincidental" as the entire work will be completed by January 31 and hence it can be inaugurated on February 1 which is also Chief Minister's birthday.

Anil Das is the contractor who has constructed the FOB who earlier also constructed the Super Market Flyover, said the source.

The length of the FOB is 73.93 metres, the length of the deck from the median towards the river side is 11 metre, the length of the deck from the median of the FOB towards the PWD campus side is 9.65 metre and the length of the deck along the median is 53.28 metre.

Talking about the width the source informed that the width of the FOB at deck level is 3.10 metre, and the top height of the FOB at



roof level (above ground level) is 10.9 metre, said the source.

Talking about other features the source informed that the FOB will have elevators (up and down) and staircases on both sides for people with disability. It has CCTV cameras for protection, diesel generating (DG) set for uninterrupted power supply, special granite cladding in the elevator shaft, aluminium composite panelled (ACP) ceiling, special roofing, special illumination and stainless steel railing.

Gplus  
**Guwahati  
 food  
 Awards  
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*The Great Guwahati*  
**Bake Off**

**A GLIMPSE OF THE GREAT GUWAHATI  
 BAKE OFF**

The 'Bake Off' is one of the most sought after recognitions where the winner is adjudged the 'Home Baker Of The Year.'

The event was organised at Botanee on January 23, 2023, for home and professional bakers of Guwahati, to showcase their talent and win the prestigious title at Guwahati Food Awards. The Gala Award Night will be held on January 28 at Vivanta, Guwahati.



**Guwahati Food Awards To  
 Recognize 'Chef Of The Year'**

The 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the Guwahati Food Awards is set to be held on January 28, 2023, at Vivanta, Guwahati.

This year, the organizers of the Guwahati Food Awards have also instituted the 'Chef Of The Year Award' with Association with Sister Masala.

This year, Guwahati Food Awards will accord the title of 'Chef of the Year' at the Guwahati Food Awards 2022. This accolade will recognize the 'Chef' of an establishment who with their skills have won the hearts and tantalized the taste buds of the jury.

The jury evaluation took place on January 23, 2023 at Botanee, Guwahati where the nominated chefs presented their respective signature dishes. Based on the cumulative scores received by the jury members, the winner will be announced and the award will be presented to the chef on January 28, 2023 at Vivanta, Guwahati.

The Guwahati Food Awards



is an annual event that takes place in the city to celebrate and recognize the contributions of the food industry. It aims to enrich

the city's culinary experience and provide a platform for food outlets to do better for their patrons.

**'Most Accessible Restaurant'  
 Award Introduced At GFA**

The 8<sup>th</sup> edition of the Guwahati Food Awards is an annual event that takes place in the city to celebrate and recognize the contributions of the food industry will be held on January 28, 2023, at Vivanta, Guwahati. It aims to enrich the city's culinary experience and provide a platform for food outlets to do better for their patrons.

This year, the organizers of the Guwahati Food Awards will award the title of "Most Accessible Restaurant" in Guwahati. This accolade will recognize the establishment's commitment to providing an inclusive and

welcoming environment for all patrons, including those with disabilities.

The award will be based on a variety of factors, including the restaurant's accessibility features such as wheelchair ramps, Braille menus, and audio announcements, as well as the staff's level of sensitivity and expertise in accommodating customers who have disabilities.

The survey and assessment of the participating outlets have been conducted by 'Young Indians (Guwahati Chapter) in association with Sishu Sarothi who evaluated the participating outlets in various parameters as mentioned above.



# Green Signal To Dismantle, Redesign Rebuild Guwahati's Iconic Nehru

The RG Baruah Sports Complex including the guest house which is now Hotel Landmark will be dismantled and a multipurpose sports complex of international standard will be constructed

As Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is gearing up to draft a new sports policy, the iconic Nehru Stadium of Guwahati, which was once the nerve centre of sports activities in the state, will be dismantled.

The Assam government has given a green signal to dismantle the first international stadium in Guwahati, which was built in 1962 on an area of 50 bigha land in downtown Guwahati.

In the first phase, the Nehru Stadium in R G Baruah Sports Complex will be dismantled, redesigned and reconstructed to a state-of-the-art modern stadium of international standards.

And in the second phase, the R G Baruah Guest House, which is now known as the Landmark Hotel, will also be dismantled, official sources confirmed, adding that the new sports complex will be of international standard. The guest house (hotel Landmark), was given to a private operator on a 20 years lease, said the official, adding that the lease ended in 2021.

Nehru Stadium is a multi-purpose stadium in Guwahati, which was built in 1962 and holds a capacity of 15,000 spectators. Well-known sports organiser Radha Govinda Baruah, who was known as the Singhapurush (Lion Man), had supervised, constructed, and named it Nehru Stadium.

The Nehru Stadium hosted 13 One Day Internationals matches and many matches of domestic cricket tournaments like Ranji Trophy, Duleep Trophy and Deodhar Trophy.

In addition to cricket, the stadium is also a venue for major football tournaments. It regularly used to host the prestigious Bordoloi Trophy and GSA Super Division Football League.

The stadium has also hosted Santosh Trophy and Federation Cup, two top-level domestic football tournaments in India.

A senior official in the Directorate Of Sports And Youth Welfare talking to *G Plus* on condition of anonymity said, "A 50,000 capacity stadium will be reconstructed in place of Nehru Stadium."

In addition to the Nehru Stadium, the RG Baruah Sports Complex has Kanaklata Indoor Stadium (for badminton), ABITA Indoor Stadium (for table tennis), Deshbhakta Tarun Ram Phookan multipurpose stadium, Bimala Prasad Chaliha Swimming Pool, Nurul Amin Tennis Court and a Squash Court.

While dismantling the Nehru Stadium, offices of 36 different sports associations will also be dismantled. The new complex which will be built will have offices for all 36 sports associations.

Other than that office for the Board of Sports, Sports Authority of Assam, the District Sports Officer, and Office of the Director, Sports and Youth Welfare will also be constructed in the new complex.

"There will be a 500-capacity transit hostel which will be constructed in the sports complex," said the official, adding that a multi-level parking is also in the plan.

The official said that a survey is ongoing, for which Larsen & Toubro in association with the Public Works Department (Buildings) are jointly working.

The construction work for the Nehru Stadium, after all approvals, is expected to start after five to six months, said the source. Regarding the estimated budget for the redesign and reconstruction of the stadium project, the source said it is not yet calculated.

It needs to be mentioned that RG Baruah Sports Complex has made invaluable contributions toward the promotion of sports in Assam. It was the heart and soul of Assam's sports till the 33<sup>rd</sup> National Games were held in Guwahati in 2007.

Though the officials of the Assam Sports Directorate still don't have many details on the dismantling, redesign, and reconstruction plan of the Nehru Stadium complex.

At present, Guwahati has an international standard cricket stadium at Barsapara. Named after Bharat Ratna Bhupen Hazarika, the cricket stadium is now a venue for international T20 and One-day matches.

Similarly, The Indira Gandhi Stadium at Sarusajai in the southern periphery of Guwahati is one of the finest venues to host football matches. In addition to hosting Indian Super League (ISL) matches, the football stadium at Sarusajai also hosted the U-17 FIFA World Cup matches.

Sources said the Assam government is going to hire an architect of international repute to redesign the new state-of-the-art international standard stadium in place of Nehru Stadium.

The Assam Government is apparently eyeing to develop a new stadium complex more advanced than the existing cricket and football stadium in Guwahati.

There is every possibility that the new stadium complex will have some touch of the rich Ahom architecture.

Moreover, there are also reports that the new stadium which will come up in place of Nehru Stadium is likely to be renamed.



# Design & Stadium

Rahul Chanda  
@RahulChanda1405

in phased manner and a

The stadium was built in 1962 with a seating capacity of **15,000** spectators.

Under the supervision of Radha Govinda Baruah, the stadium was constructed and it was named as Nehru Stadium. The stadium is operated by the Board of Sports of Assam, Government of Assam and was used both for football and cricket matches earlier.

The stadium has hosted 13 One Day International matches and many matches of domestic cricket tournaments like Ranji Trophy, Duleep Trophy and Deodhar Trophy. Nehru Stadium which was a premier stadium back in the day was used for both cricket and football matches. In football, it hosts prestigious Bordoloi Trophy and GSA Super Division Football League. The stadium has also hosted Santosh Trophy and Federation Cup, two top level domestic football tournaments of India.



**First ODI**

---

India v West Indies on December 17, 1983

**Last ODI**

---

India v New Zealand on November 28, 2010

**First Women's ODI**

---

India v England on November 14, 1995

**Last Women's ODI**

---

India v England on December 4, 2005

**Highest Score set in ODI**

---

333/6 between India v Zimbabwe on March 19, 2002; 306/6 between West Indies v New Zealand on November 1, 1994

**Lowest Score set in ODI**

---

135 in 41.3 over between India v West Indies on December 23, 1987 ; 136 in 40.1 overs between Sri Lanka v South Africa on November 19, 1993



E D I T O R I A L

## Replicating 'Manipur Mantra' Must For Successful Sports Policy In Assam

**A**ssam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Republic Day announced that the state will get a new sports policy, and it will be ready on or before Independence Day.

The announcement to have a new sports policy for Assam is definitely a positive step, especially because the Integrated Sports Policy of Assam, which was introduced on January 1, 2018, expired on December 31, 2022.

The Assam government on January 23 announced to set up two modern Sports Training and Rehabilitation Centres at Guwahati and Jorhat. The two centres will be built at an estimated cost of 23.78 crore.

Similarly, the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government is also planning to dismantle the historic Nehru Stadium in Guwahati, and rebuild a modern stadium, which at one point, was the nerve centre of multi-disciplinary sports activities of Assam.

While the Assam government has embarked on major sports infrastructure development and is also bringing in a new sports policy, it needs to understand that infrastructure and new policies alone cannot help win Olympic medals.

There is a need to create a totally different ecosystem in Assam, where young boys and girls will grow up playing different formats of competitive sports at every level. If the Assam government is eyeing Olympic medals, the entire of Assam should be passionate about sports.

While drafting the new sports policy, the Assam government should take lessons from Manipur. The tiny Northeast India state, which has almost one-tenth of the population of Assam, is branded as the 'Powerhouse of Sports' in India.

Though polo is the traditional game of Manipur, athletes of the state have exhibited superlative performances in hockey, football, weightlifting, judo, wrestling, boxing, karate, badminton and cycling in India and abroad.

Despite infrastructure challenges, Manipur has earned the distinction of the 'Powerhouse of Sports' because it has produced 19 Olympians, including three medal winners at the Olympic Games.

There is no dearth of sports talent in Manipur, many of whom have already carved their niche at the national and international level tournaments and championships.

Over the years, sportsmen from Manipur won 19 Arjuna Awards, two Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Awards, five Padmashree Awards, one Padma Bhusan, one Padmavibhusan, and one Dronacharya Award.

The Olympic Games movement in Manipur began to gather steam

after Nongthombam Maipak Singh won the overall 5th position in the international bodybuilding championship in 1972 in Paris. His achievement became a stepping stone for the youths of Manipur.

It began to produce Olympians in Manipur. From the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games to the Tokyo Olympics, the state has produced 19 athletes to represent India. Some of them even represented the country two to three times at the Olympics.

Men, women, and children of Manipur are passionate about sports. Even the state Chief Minister N Biren Singh is also an acclaimed football player, which is one of the reasons why sport is top on the agenda of the BJP-led government in Manipur.

Because of the success of the sportspersons of Manipur, India's first National Sports University has been set up in the state. As the permanent campus of the international standard National Sports University is coming up at Koutruk in Imphal West district, organizers are optimistic that the institute will soon start producing more and more Olympians.

Unfortunately, the sport has always been a low priority for the Assam government. It never felt that children growing up in the cities and towns of Assam don't have public playgrounds, where they could play.

Even in Guwahati, there is hardly any open space for children to play. As a result, children grow up resembling – all work, and no play. The government should understand that play deprivation during the first 10 years of life appears to be linked to poor early child development, and later leads to depression.

While drafting the new sports policy, the Assam government should ensure that it plays a proactive role in creating enough open spaces in every town and city of the state for the children to play.

As the children grow up playing cricket, football or any other format of sports in the neighbourhood, it would be easy for the local coaches and sports organizers to identify inborn talents.

And once the talents are identified at the grassroots level, they can be subsequently motivated and sent to different academies (even outside Assam) for advanced professional training level, they can be subsequently motivated and sent to different academies (even outside Assam) for advanced professional training.

Without sustained professional training, the young boys and girls of Assam will not be able to compete at the international level.

Anirban Roy  
@anirban1970

## Being Independent In A Republic

**T**hat being said, me alongside my generation here in Assam grew up during the formative years of the popular uprising – The Assam Agitation or the Anti-Foreigners Agitation (1979- 1985) and stained civil disobedience and ethnic violence. Taking a small step forward, the United Liberation Front of Asom, (ULFA) emerged from the All Assam Students Union (AASU) anti-immigrant agitation which took shape cheek to cheek and officially took birth on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April, 1979 in Sivasagar, as an armed separatist organization. The Government of India banned the organization in 1990 citing it as a terrorist organization.

We as budding youths of the state were not allowed to participate in public celebrations during that period by our seniors more because of the tension that prevailed and less out of fear. At least I vouch for that in my family residing in # 6 Bhuyan Howely of Fatick Chandra Road, Uzanabazar, Guwahati with a PIN CODE that I proudly boast of being 1- I mean 781001. Guwahati was a smart stylish town with sensitive residents and everyone knew each other in their localities, unlike today.

My father Dhuru Bhuyan apart from being a theatre activist and filmmaker was a broadcaster with the All India Radio (AIR), officially known since 1957 as Akashvani (literary meaning "Voice from the Sky"), the national public radio of India and a division of Prasar Bharati. Our residence was gheraoed many times, especially during the Nation Celebrating Days like 26th January and 15th August, especially from the protestors despite being closely associated with him, as a mark of protest. Moreover, during the agitation period, the Guwahati Public Hall later renamed Kumar Bhaskar Natya Mandir – the hub of cultural activities of the city, bang opposite our residence was converted into a designated CRPF camp. Blackouts and protests marching with flaming torches

were a regular feature which alarmed my newlywed mother who hailed from the peaceful hills of Shillong, Meghalaya, the then capital of Assam.

Government officials took part in these celebrations from what I remember arriving in their official white ambassador cars with the mini tri-colour attached to the front bonnet flag rod. Moreover, in today's scenario, things are different with festive flavours, festivities and patriotic fervour all around the state, especially in all official parade grounds. Bike and vintage car rallies are seen with happy participants taking immense pride in making the most out of this Red Letter Day!!!

I saw more of these actions from close proximity as the official field for these celebrations in Guwahati was then the Judges Filed near the High Court in our neighbourhood. For the record, the historic ground had been organizing both Independence Day (August 15) and Republic Day (January 26) since independence. Moreover, in 2008 the Assam Government decided to reserve the Judges' Field exclusively for sporting delights. The celebrations then came closer to home at the Latasil Playground which also is our official Police Station. However, celebrations of Independence Day and Republic Day were later shifted to the playground of the College of Veterinary Science at Khanapara situated on the outskirts of the city. This declaration was made by Additional Advocate General Devajit Lon Saikia on the behalf of the State Government in connection with a Writ Petition. The same was filed by a group of citizens, representing the Latasil Playground Development Committee, pleading for judicial intervention to shift the venue of the Independence Day and Republic Day celebrations from the Latasil Playground as well towards the interest and blooming of sporting activities.

Interestingly, and likewise surprisingly, on the contrary,

### OPINION

Sattyakee D'com Bhuyan



every Indian can't fly the National Flag on their motor cars and bikes. There are only some dignitaries in our country allowed to do so as the Flag Code of India, 2002 has listed the name of the dignitaries who can fly the National Flag on their cars, whenever they consider it necessary or advisable. Isn't that a sweet violation or let's say offence?

Besides, celebration today is altogether a different practice. Everything has to be loud and noisy and goes without saying songs are an integral part of the same. And here in this context I mean popular Hindi Bollywood songs, which at least for me dampens the grand eclectic flavour of our Nation standing tall. Nonetheless, this year India will be celebrating its 73rd Republic Day. Although India became a free nation on 15th August 1947, it enjoyed the true strength of Independence on 26th January 1950 when the Indian Constitution finally came into force. It gave us Indians the power to opt for our government.

Furthermore, to commemorate the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, several special activities are initiated in the run-up to the celebrations. It's worth mentioning here that the main component of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav is to connect the youth to our rich cultural heritage and the purpose of the activities is to find out the best talents across the country. On that good note, I wish everyone a glorious 73rd Republic Day 2023!!!

(All views and opinions expressed in the article are the author's own)

### → Water Scarcity Remains A Crucial Problem In City

Letter to the Editor

**T**he Editor,

Through the esteemed columns of your newspaper, I would like to draw the attention of the authorities to the problem of water scarcity in different places in the Guwahati area. As, it is the season of winter, usually a dry month and there's barely any rainfall across the city. The rivers, wells, and lakes in the city are almost drying up, and so, people here are suffering from the shortage of water. They have to buy water to drink, wash clothes, utensils and for other necessary purposes, per litre, tankers every single day. It becomes difficult to adjust to this lifestyle and also to buy day-to-day litres of water while some are still unable to afford it daily.

Water is one of the important sources of living. It is required in every part of our life from cooking to drinking to cleaning, etc, without water it will be hard for one to survive. So, I request the authorities to kindly look into this matter and take some quick serious action. It will be a huge help to thousands of houses and they'll live at little ease apart from other issues going on in their respective lives.

Jevitoli Sema  
Ulubari, Guwahati

# 90 Seconds To Doomsday

**O**n January 24, the Atomic scientists reset the “Doomsday Clock”, moving its hands 90 seconds to midnight. It is the closest to the threat of annihilation.

The Doomsday Clock is a symbolic timepiece showing how close the world is to the end. Midnight marks the theoretical point of annihilation. As per theories, apocalyptic threats could arise from political tensions, weapons, technology, climate change or pandemic illness and the hands of the clock are moved closer to or further away from midnight based on the scientists’ reading of existential threats at a particular time.

It is the first time, the hands moved since it was set at 100 seconds to midnight in 2020. More than 75 years ago, the clock started ticking at seven minutes to midnight.

The Clock’s original setting in 1947 was seven minutes to midnight. It has since been set backward eight times and forwards 17 times for a total of 25, the farthest from midnight being 17 minutes in 1991, and the nearest being 90 seconds, set on January 24, 2023.

At 17 minutes to midnight, the clock was furthest from doomsday in 1991, as the Cold War ended and the United States



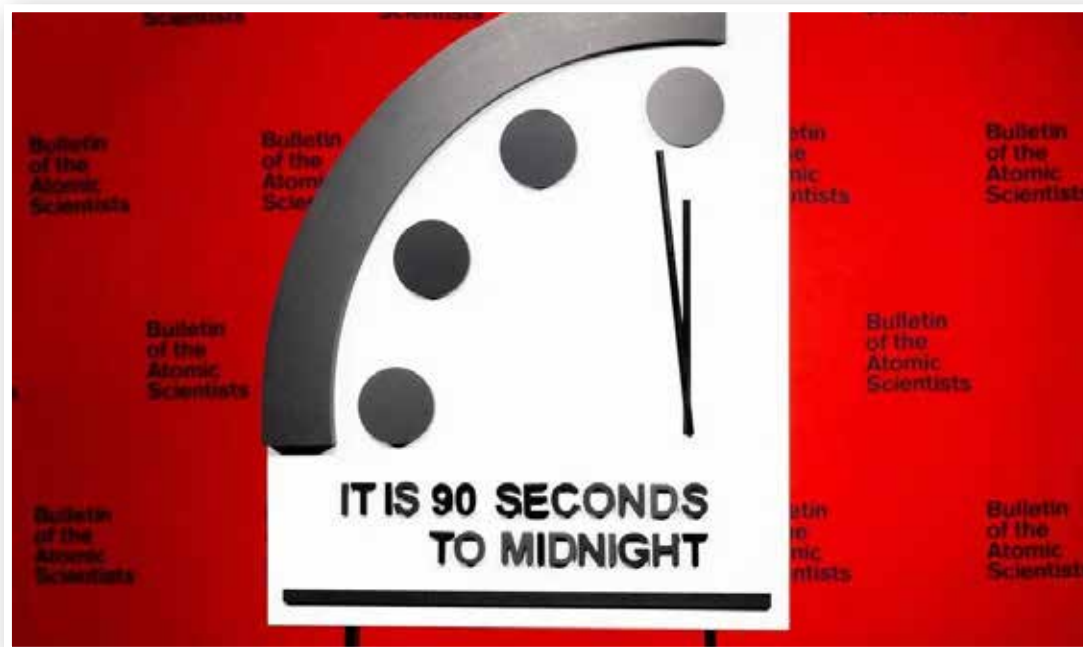
*The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists was founded in 1945 by Albert Einstein and scientists from the University of Chicago who helped develop the first atomic weapons for the Manhattan Project.*



and Soviet Union signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty that substantially reduced both countries’ nuclear weapons arsenals.

The clock was moved to two and a half minutes in 2017, then forward to two minutes to midnight in January 2018, and left unchanged in 2019. In January 2020, it was moved forward to 100 seconds before midnight. The clock’s setting was left unchanged in both 2021 and 2022. In January 2023, it was moved forward to 90 seconds before midnight. Since 2010, the clock has been moved forward four minutes and thirty seconds and has changed by five minutes and thirty seconds since 1947.

“Midnight” though for the Doomsday clock has a deeper



meaning besides the constant threat of war. When the scientists from The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists decide what Midnight and “global catastrophe” really mean in a given year, they take a number of factors into account. They might include “politics, energy, weapons, diplomacy, and climate science.” Nuclear threats, climate change, bioterrorism, and artificial intelligence are potential sources of threat. The board members decide on Midnight by discussing how close they believe humanity is to extinction. The Clock was set to seven minutes past midnight in 1947, the year that marked the beginning of the Cold War.

The setting of the clock is determined without a predetermined start time. It is not set and reset in real-time as events take place; The Science and Security Board meets twice a year to deliberate on global events rather than responding to each crisis as it arises. The 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the closest nuclear war threat, reached crisis, climax, and resolution before the clock could be set to reflect that potential end of the world.

The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists was founded in 1945 by Albert Einstein and scientists from the University of Chicago who helped develop

the first atomic weapons for the Manhattan Project. Two years later, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists made the Doomsday Clock, which used the imagery of the apocalypse (midnight) and the modern idiom of nuclear explosion (countdown to zero) to convey threats to humanity and the planet. The Bulletin’s Science and Security Board and its Board of Sponsors, which includes ten Nobel laureates, collaborate to set the Doomsday Clock each year. The clock is now widely acknowledged as a sign of the world’s susceptibility to global catastrophe brought on by man-made technologies.

A board of scientists and other



Indrani Chakrabarty

experts in nuclear technology and climate science, including 13 Nobel Laureates, discuss world events and determine where to place the hands of the clock each year.

This year, the Science and Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moves the hands of the Doomsday Clock forward, largely because of the mounting dangers of the war in Ukraine. The Clock now stands at 90 seconds to midnight, the closest to global catastrophe it has ever been.

Rachel Bronson, the bulletin’s president and CEO talking to the media said, “Russia’s thinly veiled threats to use nuclear weapons remind the world that escalation of the conflict by accident, intention or miscalculation is a terrible risk. The possibilities that the conflict could spin out of anyone’s control remains high.”

It is said that the new clock time was also influenced by continuing threats posed by the climate crisis and the breakdown of global norms and institutions needed to mitigate risks associated with advancing technologies and biological threats such as COVID-19.

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# SRK Took It Up A Notch In Blockbuster 'Pathaan'

**MOVIE**  
**REVIEW**

*If you are someone who has been anticipating the release of the movie and have been planning to watch it, there are spoilers ahead, so please read at your own discretion*

The hype around the film with the controversies and the protests has intrigued almost everyone to rush to the theatres in order to watch SRK's latest release, "Pathaan". Everybody just wanted to find out what all the fuss was really about. From the release of the song, 'Besharam Rang' people have gone haywire over the movie's proceedings to the point that people were even unsure if the film would even make it to the theatres.

But to ease the fans out of their misery, the movie did make it to the theatres but it wasn't only that, the movie debuted at the theatres with a bang with the movie grossing the second highest number after Baahubali 2. Halls were extremely packed and people drooled over SRK, Deepika and John.

Even if the movie is definitely worth it, it is a little hard to comprehend what all fuss with the movie is about.

The multi-starrer movie with Shah Rukh Khan as the Protagonist and John Abraham as the antagonist also had casts like Dimple Kapadia, Ashutosh Rana, Salman Khan and of course, our leading actress, Deepika Padukone.

Directed by Siddhant Anand,

the movie is a high-octane spy thriller that adds to the Yash Raj Films' (YRF) 'spy universe'.

For everyone who thought this movie would be different from the other spy movies that YRF has come up with, I have some bad news.

Set in a background of rising tension between India and Pakistan (where have we heard this before), a RAW agent is betrayed by an ex-ISI agent, who later realises that she was on the wrong side all along and falls in love with the RAW agent (Alexa play Deja Vu by Olivia Rodrigo).

Even if the plot of the story is typical, the movie is a treat for all the die-hard Bollywood fans (and the theatre was proof enough with the entire audience roaring after every four minutes).

The movie is action-packed that does not give you even one single disappointing blow. Every fight scene is so well choreographed that you almost want to be on the scene and beat up the bad guys.

It is always a treat to see the women in these genres of movies, put on the highest heels and



Poster of the film 'Pathaan'

kick ass like the badasses they actually are, and Deepika does not disappoint a bit. All her fight scenes were just mind-blowing and the finesse with which she delivers every scene has just left every person sitting at the theatre in utter awe.

The cinematography of the movie was really awesome and the mood, the colours, and everything contributed to the entire feel of the film. A major

takeaway from the movie was its cinematography which made it so visually appealing.

It is worth mentioning that even with a very generic plot, the storyline had certain elements in it that made the movie a tad bit more interesting and different from the rest of the 'spy' movies in Bollywood.

The entry of Salman Khan in the movie though was one of the highlights and even though the audience is torn in two with the duo working together, a majority still thinks that it is definitely a treat to watch the Khans together on screen.

The entry of 'Tiger' in "Pathaan" might also be a hint that we might be able to witness the presence of "Pathaan" in the next movie of the "Tiger" franchise.

Dimple Kapadia's performance in the movie was also phenomenal and her death did make everyone's eyes a little misty. Her character was one of the most important elements to bind the story together.

Even with John Abraham's character, you cannot really hate it. Yes, he has done some pretty nasty things and yes, he wanted the extinction of the entire



Agarata Dutta Roy

country of India with a deadly mutated virus that could kill you in a matter of minutes but hey, he was a good man and he lost his family too. He just chose to deal with it a little differently. Brownie points for the character arc.

In conclusion, even though the movie sometimes lacks logic, and has a generic plot, it is a complete experience on its own. And in all honesty, a great Bollywood movie demands drama, action, love and an equally great villain along with songs that keep playing in your head for days, and 'Pathaan' has all of that. It is not completely a hit but also not at all a miss. A great one-time watch and an amazing movie to watch with friends and family.

## Things You Can Do This Week

Indrani Chakrabarty

Here are the things you can do in the coming week

### 1. Go Watch A Movie

The long-awaited and the much talked about film was released on January 25.

SRK and Deepika Padukone starrer, 'Pathaan' threw the lids off the box office across the world. If you haven't yet, go watch 'Pathaan' this weekend.

Monjul Baruah's 'Anur' was also released this Friday, January 27. Starring Rajat Kapoor, Boloram Das, Jahanara Begum and Udayan Duarah among others, the Assamese film follows the account of an aged and retired teacher's life who struggles with loneliness and insecurities following the death of her husband.

### 2. Attend A Dog Show

Get ready for Furry Friends Fashion Show! You can register your dogs to walk the ramp at the fashion show! The event will

be held on January 29, at Latasil Field from 10 AM onwards!!

### 3. Alcheringa'23 - Pledge To Persist

IIT Guwahati is back with Alcheringa - the largest student festival in Northeast India. Alcheringa'23 will be held from February 2-5. With more than a hundred events to participate in, participants from across the country come down to be a part of the exclusive event.

PS - The Pro-nites are only bonus.

Get your alcher card at card.alcheringa.in

### 4. Attend AR Rahman LIVE Concert For Peace

The great maestro is set to step on stage here in Guwahati. AR Rahman will be performing at



the ACA Stadium, Barsapara in Guwahati on February 1.

Get your tickets today at BookMyShow or insider.in

### 5. Attend Winter Music Carnival

The Winter Music Carnival is Here! And there is nothing more exciting than seeing your fav artists on the stage Shrutu Tawde and When Chai Met Toast.

Enjoy the Carnival on January 29 at Lake view from morning onwards at Umiam Water

Sports Complex, Barapani and experience - ethnic food and local beverages, Art Exhibition and Stalls.

Lake view carnival with live music, Dj and Srushti's performance will start at 4 PM and When Chai Met Toast at 6 PM followed by after party DJ.

Tickets are available on Insider. Use Coupon Code GPLUS5 and avail 5% Discount.

### 6. Learn Something New

If you have been wanting to learn something new, the time is NOW! Take some time off from

your hectic schedule, learn something new, or sharpen your skills.

Suggestion:

1: Free online session on Digital Marketing & Communication Education  
Date: 31 Jan, 12 PM Onwards

2. Free online Session on Data Science

Date: 31 Jan, 12 PM Onwards

3. Monali Thakur Teaches Singing - All age groups

Date: Jan 28- 31

Register yourself on BookMyShow

### 7. Attend Jeevan Kite Festival

Last day to attend the Jeevan Kite Festival. The fest is ongoing at Fancy Bazar Ghat.

The festival was being held from January 22-29

# The Sheep Farm In Dirang

The Sheep farm in Dirang is probably not known to many who visit this small town nestled in the valley that links mighty Tawang with Bomdila, two mountain tops that stand tall in the history of this ancient land. This is the land of the Monpas which has centuries-old links with Tibet, and a culture rich with the teachings of Buddha. I was very fortunate to be able to visit these places camping on the Sheep farm located in the Sangti valley about thirty years ago. An enterprising nephew took our extended family to stay in the Inspection Bungalow of the Sheep farm developed by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) when he was auditing various Government Departments in Arunachal Pradesh. We were all keen on the outdoors and liked to enjoy angling, camping and exploring wild places and our next generation was being inculcated on getting to enjoy Nature from close quarters. That was indeed a most memorable visit in early November around the year 1990 when we stayed there for four nights, including a day visit to Tawang. On my more recent trip to Dirang, I went there with my wife, eldest grandson and his father. The roads had improved vastly and from Guwahati, we reached our hotel there well within eight and a half hours. But the weather conditions were the same with sudden fogs enveloping the mountains as if they wanted to restrain our journey in fear that we would pollute the sheer pristine beauty of this majestic land. This hide-and-seek pattern occurred about six times but, in the end, we were exhilarated by the fantastic approach to the valley and the small river singing along its epic journey to the sea.

We walked around in the nearby market area after tucking into our lunch carried from home and I was amazed at the way this sleepy twenty-odd dwelling house village I had known turned into a sprawling town very much like the long drive in the Shillong Polo ground area. On both sides of the river rows of houses have sprung up and, on the hillsides, also many buildings and resorts have come up with a number of quaint homestays too. No doubt there has been a concerted move to promote ecotourism with activities like horse riding, trekking, and camping coming up soon. The valleys are quite fine for exertion as it is only on heights above 8 to 10 thousand feet that breathing difficulties may occur. Our main purpose for this sudden visit to Dirang was for our eldest grandson to come here to play in the snow which he had seen extensively on his phone with his friends in the cold countries. He wanted to have

this experience and I grabbed the chance to build a snowman in the snow we expected to find in the Sela Pass area to complete one more item on my bucket list. I had checked the weather report for Dirang and Sela which reported that snowfall would occur for two days i.e., Tuesday and Wednesday so we moved out from Guwahati on Tuesday itself. So, with hope and determination, we started for Sela after breakfast and started climbing passing many small army depots on the way, encouraged by the misty conditions and some light rains with snowflakes falling on the ground. When we crossed a place called Baisakhi the driving conditions became very difficult with some heavy snowfall and we could see the sides, parked vehicles and roofs of houses becoming piled with snow. In fact, we crossed some cars which had stopped due to the poor visibility. At one point some border road workers were there who stopped us and advised that we put on the rope/steel chains on the tyres to be able to cut through the snow as the conditions at Sela, a kilometre away were risky to drive without these chains to prevent skidding. However, as we were not going onwards to Tawang we decided to stop there and let our grandson out to play in the snow and also try and build our snowman. The first thing he did was to make some snowballs and let them fly at us and I too could not resist this chance. We were above 10,000 feet and with the exertion my son complained about some breathing difficulty as he had been running after his son in the snow so we got him to come and sit down in the car for a

while. In the meantime, the conditions were getting worse and so we all pooled in, and mainly our driver helped to scrape and pile up the snow to make the torso, arms and head of our snowman. It was smaller in size but we were freezing so I told them to call it our Chinese snowman and with a flourish, I took out one of the two carrots

we had carried from home and inserted it in the face for the nose. The weight of the head made the snow slip down a bit but it was done, dusted and photographed as proof of our achievement, and happily, we turned around for our descent to the valley. As it was lunch time by then we went down below the snow level and found a small restaurant where we had hot maggi, into which

“  
Major Prem was an astute man totally committed to the army brooking no indiscipline in his men who all looked up to their leader as he was no doubt tough on them, but also very fair to the extent that in the face of any danger, he would always be with them in the front.”

we cut the second carrot as a garnishing. We saw quite a few vehicles which had also returned and later in the hotel at night, we were informed that the

the town had developed on that side also. The drive to the sheep farm after the bridge was over rough terrain and it seemed that the development had not reached here. It was a very special moment for my wife and me to see the old guest house that we had stayed in for three nights over thirty years ago. It was definitely improved and modified with an extra wing extension and now there was a full complex of quarters for the veterinarians, staff, workers and officers. The pasture was in fact extended and well maintained with lush grass available even now in winter. Besides, there were also modern stalls built for the sheep to be kept indoors from the cold and another more open complex probably used in the summer months. We were lucky to see the sheep flock being gently guided from the open pasture outside a fence back to their stalls by three men whom I stopped to find out more details. It was wonderful to see the sheep running around us with the little kids trying to keep up with their mothers and the herdsmen informed us that now the total productive sheep were 195 numbers not counting the small kids. I told them about our visit and stay there thirty-odd years ago for which they were thrilled but they did not know that this breed of Merino sheep had come all the way from Australia. This project was started around the time of our



first visit there more than three decades ago and the original flock of around twenty-five sheep was the nucleus; I believe disease and leopards had killed many sheep over the years but now the farm was stable. Shearing for the wool was done twice a year and all the wool was sent to Bomdilla for sale to the weavers; many small sheep farms had also come up in the Sangti valley as the Government wanted the local people to take up this livestock farming. The Monpas were the original herders in these valleys rearing goats, horses, cattle, yak



Ranjan Kumar Choudhury

and local sheep so it was easy for them to take to rearing sheep.

While we were there admiring the scenic view around the sheep farm two cars drove up to the vehicle we had parked on the top of a hill. It was a group of young men and women all coming for a trip there from the town of Rupa about an hour's drive away. One youth who actually talked a lot with me had done his education at an Assam University specializing in wildlife. I thought that he was into the conservation of Tigers or the elusive Snow Leopards and I never expected his admission that his subject was frogs!! He was ecstatically telling me about a new frog species called Adi Cascade Frog (*Amolops Adicola*) and it was imperative for this species to survive and multiply as it ate the insects that decimated the delicate flora on the bare mountain slopes in the high mountain regions of their state. I called my son over to meet this impressive young man who could have joined service in a more hospitable place but his love for his own state motivated him to do something for his own land and people. When I talked about the endangered Black Neck Crane, we had seen in their nesting grounds in this very Sangti valley on our last visit he got very excited as his ancestral home was in the village which was given the responsibility to guard these grounds. His own father was a very adept hunter who knew the topography of this area very well and I mentioned that we had probably gone to his village to sit up for some wild pigs which were destroying their cornfields and the best hunter was our guide. It was so long ago that I have forgotten his name but it could very well have been the father of the young man standing in front of us. It was indeed a very interesting reunion with the past and I remember that one of my nephews did not come to Tawang with us and instead walked around in the forest behind the Sheep Farm with this hunter in search of a deer or mountain goat. Some things by luck or chance do hit the target quite well when the Government of India makes elaborate plans for development and I think that this sheep farm was indeed a very apt fit for this lonely valley; indeed, a bull's eye!  
(The article is purely fictional. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead or actual events is purely fictional)

# Who Was Your Hero?

Navneet Hrishikesan

“Who was your hero when you were 10”?

The question took me a bit off guard. “You, of course,” I responded. “Then, now you understand,” he said, “If policemen beat a father so mercilessly in front of a 10-year-old, then what do you think that boy would have felt?”. This conversation from 1997 has remained with me. I was in my early 20s on vacation from law school and the person I was speaking to was my father.

My father’s name was Kizhoor Hrishikesan, and he was a policeman, in many ways an old-school one, but this conversation showed a different side to him. Within the hard-faced, tall, straight-backed, khaki-clad officer with all the silver epaulettes and generally uniformed grandeur, was someone surprisingly sensitive and thoughtful.

At the time of our little talk, dad (or Accha, as I called him) was the DGP of Assam. We were discussing why he had ordered the withdrawal of a special police unit from Guwahati which he had himself previously deployed. They had beaten a father in front of his young son and my father felt that was going too far.

Assam, at that time, a state he had spent 30 years serving, was in a state of utter chaos. Various insurgent groups were on the ascendant, and the grip of the government was extremely fragile. It would not be an overstatement to say, that India came close to losing Assam in those days. The day my father was appointed as DGP, a Superintendent of Police was killed in broad daylight in Tinsukia. One thing that alarmed everyone was that the insurgents had used a mortar (a light weapon classified as artillery) to attack his convoy. Many senior government officers had fled the state fearing for their lives and the general view was that things were slipping out of control.

My father, who had never been popular with the establishment, had a tough time finding a uniform that fit him when the order came to take charge. He needed the uniform to carry out his first order of business, which was to attend the funeral.



Assam Police officers from the yesteryear



When I look back at this conversation today, this context makes the conversation even more extraordinary. Here was a police officer worried about the long-term mental health impact on a child even while his force was literally battling for its life. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why people like a former Union Home Secretary called him an “oddball” in the press. It was a term he rejoiced in, especially as he didn’t have a high opinion of that particular IAS colleague.

Despite having an Army background, my father had always seemed more relaxed while handling matters focused on civil society rather than the more martial parts of armed

policing (“Anybody can command a battalion, it’s handling civil society which is difficult”). So, it was quite ironic that a man, who preferred ‘civil dress’ to the uniform, whose doors would be open to anyone with a complaint, a man who continued staying in a locality outside Jorhat terrorized by elephants because the residents requested him (to ensure they felt safe, he said), would suddenly find himself a wartime DGP.

It fell to him to reenergize a police force which was utterly ill-equipped and demoralized. True to his nature, he went about it in his own quiet way. The women and men of the Assam Police including my father, braved assassination attempts and ambushes while

trying to do their duty and the memories from those dark, dark days still haunt many. While the journey to peace has been long, it wouldn’t have been possible without the first brave steps taken by these heroes from that period.

This January, it will be 20 years since my father left us.

Sophocles teaches us- “We have an instant now to please the living, but all eternity to love the dead” and in my own way, I have held onto my memories to continue to honour him. In particular;

I remember his generosity. I remember him lending money to people in need. I remember him opening his well-stocked bar to everyone who came home to celebrate Holi (Holi at our place used to be the most popular event in the social calendar of the Assam Police).

I remember his love for animals. At different times we had various dogs and cats sharing our beds (his favourite dog Caesar is still buried behind the bungalow on the banks of the Brahmaputra). My parents had also adopted a deer, numerous rabbits and even considered an owl.

I remember his intrinsic ability to generate loyalty. Often his entire staff and security detail would volunteer to stay with him even after he had been transferred. Years after his death, officers who had served with him would keep in touch. I particularly remember a sentry at his funeral at the Ulubari Police HQ, quietly

stepping out of the bunker (away from all the lights and dignitaries), to present a personal salute to the wagon carrying his body and then slipping away.

I remember his frustration with the system. More than once threatened to resign because he was being blocked from doing something or wringing his hands at cases filed under statutes like TADA against people, he believed were innocent.

I remember the cold anger in his eyes when colleagues or families were killed or injured. I remember him keeping in touch with the family members of slain officers and the warm affection with which he would speak about ‘Mr. Seva’ or ‘my Daulat Singh’.

My father was ultimately human with all his strengths and weaknesses. He was feared as well as respected and his bluntness made him as many friends as enemies. If there are some lessons, I have learnt from him, they are:

- try to do the right thing however difficult the situation and you will have peace. As Allan MacDonald said: “Regret for things we did is tempered by time but regret for things we did not do is inconsolable”; and

- one should never lose one’s sense of humour whatever the situation. He often remembered a former DGP who at his farewell parade found that there was no sugar-less tea kept aside for him. The officer turned to dad and laughingly said, “Till yesterday there were people who ensured I got tea only from the tea garden I preferred and today they have forgotten that I have diabetes”.

Ultimately, I suspect it’s our memories that keep people alive.

While we lost him way too young for me to get many of my more existential questions answered (like why he never used his caste surname) if today I had the same conversation with my father, I suspect my answer to the first question would be: “Some fathers are heroes to their children even long after they are 10”.

(The author is a lawyer by profession. All views and opinions expressed in the article are the author’s own)

## Weather Report For The Week

Guwahati	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
SATURDAY						
Sunny	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy
25°-12° C	25°-12° C	26°-13° C	27°-13° C	28°-14° C	29°-15° C	29°-16° C

# Catching Up With The World

## 8 Dead After Cargo Ship Sinks Off Coast Of Japan

**E**ight people including several Chinese nationals have died after a cargo ship sank in Japan's waters, say Chinese authorities. Rescue workers have been searching for survivors since the Jin Tian went down on Tuesday, January 24 evening.

Multiple vessels and aircraft from Japan's coast guard and military, South Korea's coast guard, and private ships have been involved in the search. Five people who have been rescued are said to be in a stable condition.

The Jin Tian, a cargo ship that had a crew of 22 people, sent a distress signal from a position around 110km (68 miles) west of the remote and uninhabited Danjo Islands in far southwestern Japan, near the maritime border with South Korea.

Six of the dead were Chinese nationals, according to Lu Guijun, China's Consul General in the

Japanese city of Fukuoka.

"We express our deepest condolences to the unfortunate victims," Mr Lu told Chinese state broadcaster CGTN.



## Israeli Troops Kill 7 Palestinian Gunmen, 2 Civilians In Clash

**I**sraeli commandos killed seven gunmen and two civilians in a raid on a flashpoint town in the occupied West Bank on Thursday, Palestinian officials said, stirring fear of further flare-ups after the largest single death toll in years of fighting.

The Palestinian Authority said it was ending its security coordination with Israel, which is widely credited with helping to keep order in the West Bank and preventing attacks against Israel. It has frozen the cooperation numerous times in a sign of protest.

U.N. and Arab mediators spoke with Israel and Palestinian factions to try to keep the clash in Jenin, among areas of the West Bank that have seen intensified Israeli operations, from sparking a broader confrontation.

During the three-hour clash, gunfire echoed through the camp's

cramped alleys, as well as occasional explosions from improvised bombs set off by militants. Youths pelted army vehicles with rocks. There were no Israeli casualties.



## EU Sends Migrants Away As Arrivals Grow

**E**uropean Union ministers on Thursday, January 26 sought ways to curb irregular immigration and send more people away as arrivals rose from pandemic lows, reviving controversial ideas for border fences and asylum centres outside of Europe.

EU border agency Frontex reported some 330,000 unauthorised arrivals last year, the highest since 2016, with a sharp increase on the Western Balkans route.

Denmark, the Netherlands and Latvia were among those to call for more pressure through visas and development aid towards the roughly 20 countries - including Iraq and Senegal - that the EU deems fail to cooperate on taking back their nationals who have no right to stay in Europe.

Only about a fifth of such people are sent back, with insufficient resources and coordination on the EU side being another hurdle, according to the bloc's executive.



## FBI Brings Down Hackers By Hacking Them

**T**he FBI revealed on Thursday it had secretly hacked and disrupted a prolific ransomware gang called Hive, a maneuver that allowed the bureau to thwart the group from collecting more than \$130 million in ransomware demands from more than 300 victims.

At a news conference, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, FBI Director Christopher Wray, and Deputy U.S. Attorney General Lisa Monaco said government hackers broke into Hive's network and put the gang under

surveillance, surreptitiously stealing the digital keys the group used to unlock victim organizations' data.

News of the takedown first leaked on Thursday morning when Hive's website was replaced with a flashing message that said: "The Federal Bureau of Investigation seized this site as part of coordinated law enforcement action taken against Hive Ransomware."

Hive's servers were also seized by the German Federal Criminal Police and the Dutch National High Tech Crime Unit.



### 3 Movies To Watch This Weekend

**Mission Majnu (2023)**

★★★★☆

Streaming on Netflix



**Narvik (2022)**

★★★★☆

Streaming on Netflix



**Jung\_E (2023)**

★★★★☆

Streaming on Netflix



Guwahati **GYAN** Did you know?

Jawed Akhtar

# Iconic House Of The Baruas In Guwahati's Heart

In stark contrast to a story which speaks of rapid strides entailing urbanisation, some old-school elements remain unchanged. This is the story of the iconic Assam-type house which is located on the eastern side of the Latasil Playground which recently turned 100 years old as far as its history goes.

The 100-year-old house yielded 29 Assamese movies, eight actors, four movie directors, three singers, two composers, two Ranji Trophy-playing cricketers, a footballer and a politician.

House of Baruas, constructed in 1923 with a mix of materials sourced locally as well as imported from the U.K. Also, the story of the house is being told through 'Baruar Xongxar' (Barua's Family), an Assamese

documentary directed by Utpal Borpujari.

Interestingly, the Baruas are the only family in Assam, and perhaps in India, that has produced so many noted personalities in fields as diverse as cinema, music, sports and politics. The idea behind the film is to audio-visually document the family's contributions to these fields and present them before the world.

The House of Baruas was constructed by engineer Chandranath Barua of Bihdiya village near Guwahati. The house became associated with arts and culture in 1955 when family member Nip Barua directed the film Smitir Parax ('Touch of Memory'). He was a footballer, flautist and painter besides being a filmmaker.

The house has been home to some of Assam's most famous personalities such as filmmaker-actor-musician Brajen Barua, singer-turned-composer Ramen Barua, filmmaker Dibon Barua, cricketer turned singer Dipen Barua, cricketer-pilot-entrepreneur-politician Girin Barua and radio broadcaster Niren Barua.

Girin Barua, who captained the Assam cricket team in the Ranji Trophy, had been a leader of the anti-foreigners Assam Agitation of 1979-85 and had formed the now-defunct Asom Jatiyatabadi Dal.

Some of the Assamese blockbuster films that the Barua family produced included 'Dr Bezbarua', 'Ajoli Nabow', 'Toramai and Kokadeuta Nati aru Hati'.



Guwahati decks up ahead of G 20 Meet | Photo: Ranjan Jyoti Sarma

## KAMUR OF THE WEEK

### Guwahati Footpaths! Where Art Thou?

Guwahati is a big city indeed but the sad truth is there is no place in this city for common pedestrians. Every turn you make, the footpaths which are supposed to be of use to us, the common man walking by are taken over by either the street vendors or they have just been carved out from existence.

Piles of sand and other construction materials lie in heap by the side of the main road so there is no space for the vehicles also to move around freely.

In such condition, we really ask Footpaths, where art thou?



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