

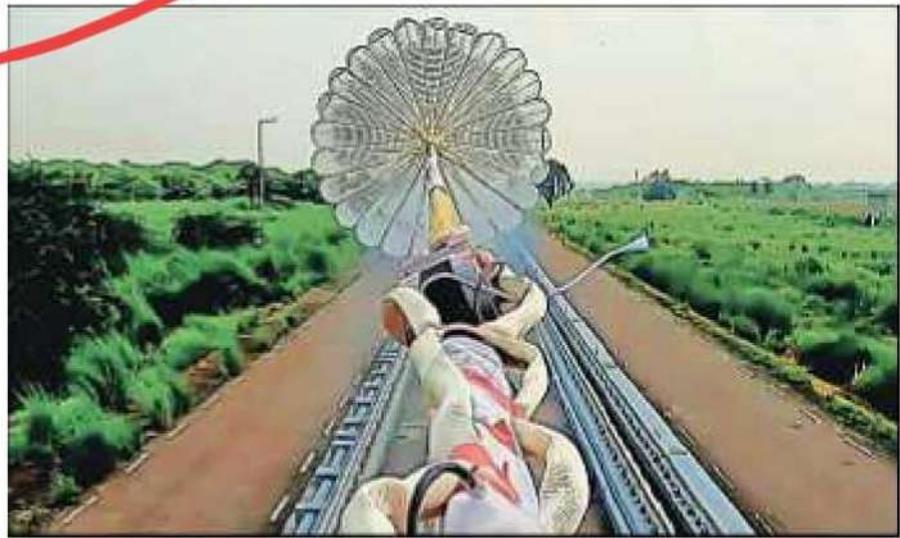
# Drogue parachute deployment tests for Gaganyaan mission successful: ISRO

BENGALURU, Dec 20 (PTI)

A SERIES of qualification tests for drogue parachutes, which have been carried out to develop a deceleration system for ISRO's Gaganyaan crew module, were successful, the space agency said on Saturday.

These tests were completed at the Rail Track Rocket Sled (RTRS) facility of the Terminal Ballistics Research Laboratory (TBRL) in Chandigarh, on December 18 and 19, the ISRO said. The deceleration system of the Gaganyaan crew module comprises a total of 10 parachutes of four types, the agency said in a statement.

According to ISRO, the descent sequence begins with the separation of two apex cover separation parachutes, which remove the protective cover from the parachute compartment. This is followed by the deployment of two drogue parachutes that stabilise and decelerate the module. "Upon release of the drogues, three pilot parachutes are



deployed to extract three main parachutes, which further slow down the crew module to ensure a safe touchdown," ISRO said.

The space agency said that a crucial component of this system is the deployment of drogue parachutes, which play a pivotal role in stabilising the crew module and reducing its velocity to a safe level during re-entry.

"The objective of this specific test series was to rigorously evaluate the performance and reliability

of the drogue parachutes under extreme conditions. Both the RTRS tests on drogue parachutes were successfully conducted on December 18 and 19, 2025. Achieving all the test objectives and confirming their robustness even under the situation of significant variation in flight conditions," ISRO stated. The successful completion of these tests marks another significant step toward qualifying the parachute system for human spaceflight.

# 'IMFA to become India's largest Ferro Chrome producer with Tata Steel plant acquisition'

CUTTACK, Dec 20 (ANI):

INDIAN Metals and Ferro Alloys (IMFA) is set to become India's largest and the world's sixth-largest ferro chrome producer following its acquisition of Tata Steel's Kalinganagar ferro chrome plant, which is expected to be completed by January 2026, Subhrakant Panda, Managing Director of Indian Metals and Ferro Alloys (IMFA) told ANI.

Panda said the strategic acquisition, funded entirely through internal accruals, will take IMFA's total capacity beyond 500,000 tonnes per annum, significantly enhancing its competitive positioning in the global ferrochrome market.

"We signed the definitive agreement for the strategic acquisition in November 2025. We are in the process of seeking neces-

sary permissions and approvals as well. We expect sometime in January 2026 to close the deal," Panda said.

The acquisition aligns perfectly with IMFA's ongoing expansion plans.

"We were already one of the leading producers of ferro chrome in the country. We are also putting up a greenfield project in Kalinga Nagar, so the proposed acquisition is a very nice strategic fit," Panda explained.

He added that the combination of existing capacity, greenfield expansion, and the acquisition takes the company beyond the half-million-tonne mark, making it the largest producer in India and the sixth largest globally.

The Kalinga Nagar plant's strategic location offers significant logistical advantages.

## To participate in auction for critical minerals blocks

CUTTACK, Dec 20 (ANI)

INDIAN Metals and Ferro Alloys (IMFA) is gearing up to enter the critical minerals sector by participating in upcoming auction processes for mineral blocks in the country, the company's Managing Director, Subhrakant Panda, has said.

"Critical minerals are a key focus area for the nation. They are very significant from our manufacturing ambitions and our focus on self-reliance and Atmanirbharta," Panda told ANI in an interview.

The company views critical minerals as a natural extension of its existing expertise. "In terms of skill sets, it is quite adjacent to what we do, which involves mining as well as processing of industrial minerals," Panda explained.

IMFA is closely monitoring the auction process for various critical mineral blocks being offered by the Government. "We are evaluating those closely. We will be identifying a few and participating in the auction process to make our entry into critical minerals," the MD said.

# PM opens India's 1st nature-themed international airport at Guwahati

GUWAHATI, Dec 20 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday inaugurated the Rs 4,000-crore new terminal of Guwahati's Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi International Airport, which has been designed to reflect Assam's natural heritage and cultural ethos.

Touted as the country's first "nature-themed airport", the new terminal will be able to handle 13.1 million passengers per annum, officials said.

The total cost of the project is Rs 5,000 crore, including Rs 1,000 crore earmarked specifically for Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facilities, they said. The project has been developed by Guwahati International Airport Ltd, with operations led by Adani Airport Holdings Limited (AAHL), they added.

Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani said the new terminal will serve as a catalyst for



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Union Minister of Civil Aviation K Ram Mohan Naidu, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Adani Group Chairperson Gautam Adani and others during the inauguration of a new terminal of the Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi International Airport, in Guwahati, Assam. (PTI)

regional and industrial development, strengthening Guwahati's role as an emerging economic gateway beyond its tourism potential. After the inauguration, Modi toured the new terminal. He also examined the model of

the airport, the Kaziranga-inspired landscape and other key aspects of the facility.

The PM also interacted with the workers involved in the construction of the airport.

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## 'Will end maha jungle raj in WB'

KOLKATA, Dec 20 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched a scathing attack on the Mamata Banerjee Government in West Bengal, comparing the situation in the State to Bihar's past "lawlessness" and calling it a "maha jungle raj". He also accused the Trinamool Congress of "corruption and nepotism" that prevented the state's development.

With the Assembly polls in West Bengal due in less than six months, Modi, while virtually addressing a massive gathering at Taherpur in Nadia district from Kolkata, referred to the NDA's landslide victory in the recent Bihar Assembly elections, stating that the results in

the neighbouring state will positively impact the party's fortunes in the State.

"The election results in Bihar have opened up the doors for BJP's victory in West Bengal because, like I have said before, the Ganga flows into West Bengal through Bihar," the PM said. Modi urged the people to provide a chance to the BJP in the 2026 Assembly polls to form a "double engine Government" in the state, a term used by BJP leaders to refer to the party being in power at the Centre as well as in a State.

Earlier in the day, dense fog at Taherpur prevented the Prime Minister's helicopter from landing at the makeshift helipad and forced him to

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# Ex-Agniveer quota for BSF constable post now 50 pc



NEW DELHI, Dec 20 (PTI)

**THE** Union Home Ministry has increased the quota for ex-Agniveers for constable recruitment in the BSF to 50 per cent from 10 per cent, according to a gazette notification. The increase has been made by amending the Border Security Force, General Duty Cadre (Non-Gazetted) Recruitment Rules, 2015.

The first batch of ex-Agniveers will also get upper age-limit relaxation up to five years, while the rest of the ex-Agniveers will get three years' relaxation.

The ex-Agniveers shall also be exempted from Physical Standard Test and Physical Efficiency Test, said the notifi-

cation issued on Friday. By direct recruitment (including fifty per cent), vacancies shall be reserved for ex-Agniveers in every recruitment year, ten per cent for ex-Servicemen, and up to three per cent for Combatised Constable (Tradesmen) in absorption of annual vacancy, the notification said.

In the first phase, the recruitment shall be conducted by the Nodal Force for 50 per cent vacancies earmarked for ex-Agniveers, and in second phase recruitment shall be conducted by the Staff Selection Commission for candidates other than ex-Agniveers for the remaining forty-seven per cent vacancies (including ten per cent ex-Servicemen), alongwith the unfilled vacancies of ex-Agniveers in a specific category in the first stage, it said.

The Centre had amended the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961, by the gazette notification in June this year, inserting a new point in the second schedule under the Department of States of the Union Home Ministry, "coordinating activities for

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