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- After talks, 'close friends' Xi and Putin say China
- US military says Gaza Strip pier project is completed

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- Priyanka's campaign sets up Gandhis' virtual 'grudge match' against Irani in Amethi
- Nearly 67 per cent voter turnout in first four phases of LS polls: EC

ED has enough evidence to show that Delhi CM demanded ₹100 crore bribe: Additional Solicitor General

## ED to file complaint against Kejriwal shortly, Supreme Court told

**NEW DELHI, May 16:** In potential trouble for Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Enforcement Directorate on Thursday told the Supreme Court it will soon file a prosecution complaint against him and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise policy scam.

Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, told a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta that the agency proposed to file a prosecution complaint (charge sheet) against Kejriwal and the AAP. "We will do it shortly. It is in the pipeline," he told the court.



The ED made the statement when the court was hearing Kejriwal's challenge to his arrest in the money laundering case arising from the alleged Delhi excise policy. Raju claimed the probe agency has enough evidence to show that Kejriwal demanded Rs 100 crore bribe which was used by AAP in the Goa assembly poll campaign.

"We have direct evidence that Kejriwal stayed in a seven-star hotel, whose bills were partly paid by an accused in the case," Raju

submitted, adding Kejriwal played a key role in the formulation of the now scrapped Delhi excise policy. He alleged that Kejriwal, as the national convenor of the AAP, was vicariously responsible for the alleged scam. Kejriwal, despite being the chief minister, does not hold any departmental portfolio.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who also appeared for the ED, questioned the maintainability of the pe-

tion, saying that barring the first two occasions when Kejriwal opposed the remand orders, he virtually "consented" to judicial custody. He submitted the court cannot hold a mini-trial at the remand stage and examine material and other evidence available with the investigating officer.

"The court can only see whether there is any material for arrest and not what material is there. In this

case, the materials were seen by the trial court and the high court. The high court had summoned the case files and perused the material. Mini-trial, which this court is called upon to do, is what we are opposing," he submitted.

Mehta said that if this court starts interfering at the remand stage, it will open the doors for powerful people to approach the apex court directly, without following the procedure prescribed under the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

"There are certain in-built safeguards provided under section 19 of PMLA, which deals with powers of arrest of ED officer. More rigorous the provision of arrest, the less scrutiny by courts," he said.

The bench, however, did not agree with the submission of Mehta and said that if there is a violation of section 19 conditions, the courts can interfere.

"There are several petitions filed directly in the Supreme Court under Article 32 and this court has nullified arrests or granted bail. Yes, the remedy cannot be excluded (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## This election is to choose PM who can highlight India's strength globally: Modi

**JAUNPUR (UP), May 16:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Thursday that this Lok Sabha election is an opportunity for the country to choose a leader who can run a strong government which "makes the world aware of India's strength".

Modi was addressing an election rally organised at a college ground here in support of BJP candidates Kripashankar Singh from the Jaunpur parliamentary constituency and B P Saroj from the Machhlishahr (reserved) seat.

"This election is an opportunity to choose the prime minister of the country. Such a prime minister who runs a strong government which cannot be dominated by the world but which makes the world aware of India's strength," he said.

"Therefore, when you vote for our Kripashankar ji from Jaunpur, B P Saroj ji from Machhlishahr, your vote forms a strong government. The votes given to them will go directly into Modi's account," the prime minister said. Amid slogans of 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Har Har Modi', the prime minister said, "Your enthusiasm shows that you have made it difficult for the INDI alliance to win even a single seat in Uttar Pradesh."

"We got the Ram temple after a wait of 500 years.

The entire country is happy. Every Indian living across the world is happy. But these parivarvadis (dynasts) are hurling abuses. The shehzade (prince) of the SP and his uncle call the Ram temple useless (bekar)."

Modi was apparently referring to a recent statement of Samajwadi Party (SP) general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav who had said the Ram temple has not been built in a useless manner but not as per 'Vaastu'.

Attacking SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, Modi said, "SP's shehzade also makes fun of Kashi. They are crossing every limit to please their vote bank. I am surprised that it is the 21st century and they are roaming around with the flag of triple talaq."

Accusing the leaders of the INDIA bloc of advocating reservation on the basis of religion, Modi said, "They advocate reservation on the basis of religion. They want to take away the right of reservation of the SCs, STs and OBCs by changing the Constitution of the country."

Modi announced, "As long as I am alive, they will not be able to take away the reservation of the OBCs, SCs and the tribal people. As long as I am alive, I will not let them do this politics." (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## One held with fake notes in Guwahati

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, May 16:** In a swift and decisive operation this morning, the Special Task Force (STF) of Assam executed a targeted raid in the Puberun Path area under the jurisdiction of Hatigaon, Guwahati.

"Acting on reliable intelligence regarding the circulation of counterfeit currency, the STF apprehended a suspect and seized significant evidence implicating him in the illicit trade," said an official statement on Thursday.

The prime suspect, identified as Md. Shazarul Islam, aged 30 and hailing from village named Daulatpur of Lakhimpur district, was taken into custody during the operation.

His father's name is Lt. Abdur Rahman.

The raid yielded substantial evidence, including Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) with a face value of ₹ 1,85,500, consisting of 371 notes of denomination 500. Additionally, two mobile phones were confiscated (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Nagaland govt urges ENPO to participate in civic body polls

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIMAPUR, May 16:** The Nagaland government on Thursday appealed to the Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO) and its constituent bodies to participate in the upcoming urban local body elections in the state, slated for June 26.

Addressing a press conference on the issues of public emergency declared by the ENPO in eastern Nagaland areas and its decision to abstain from central and state elections at the secretariat conference hall in Kohima, Nagaland power and parliamentary affairs KG Kenye said the state cabinet earlier held a meeting to deliberate on the sequence of events that took place and also the organisation's latest statement to abstain from the civic body elections.

The ENPO boycotted the April 19 Lok Sabha elections in the state against the delay by the Centre to settle the offer for creation of Frontier Nagaland Territory before the announcement of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Kenye said no quarters have any misunderstanding or misconception on the issue of ENPO's demand for Frontier Nagaland Territory. He clarified that the state government recommended the case to the Union ministry of home affairs.

Kenye explained that the elections to the urban local



bodies are being conducted at the direction of the Supreme Court after a prolonged legal battle involving the women's reservation in the civic bodies in the state in the larger interest of the public and their welfare. He said the urban local bodies are semi-autonomous bodies for local self-governments to manage their own affairs at their own local levels.

Reiterating the appeal to the ENPO and its constituent bodies to actively participate in the upcoming elections to bring in more funds from the Centre for further develop the town councils, Kenye said the civic body elections are for grassroots-level developments and upliftment of our citizens.

## 'The concerned department has taken no notice of it so we are doing it' Diphu villagers rally to repair hazardous roads

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, May 16:** In a display of community solidarity and resilience, residents of Rongtharve, Rongbarim, Rongchingdon, and Rongchingri, situated under Ward No. 14 of Diphu town, came together on Wednesday to address a pressing issue plaguing their locality.



The focus of their attention was the stretch of road near Rongbarim Tinali, which had been left riddled with large potholes, posing a hazard to commuters and pedestrians alike. This road, serving as a crucial link to Jawaharlal Navodya Vidyalaya (JNV) and Taralango, had long been neglected, prompting the villagers to take matters

into their own hands. Despite being a connecting road of considerable importance, the condition of the thorough-

fare had deteriorated to such an extent that it had become treacherous, particularly during inclement weather. The worn-out surface, compounded by rainwater runoff, had rendered the road dangerously slippery, posing a significant risk to motorists, especially two and three-wheelers.

Faced with the imminent dangers and the lack of action from the concerned authorities, more than 20 villagers, accompanied by their respective headmen, rallied together to initiate repair works. Armed with sand gravel, they diligently filled the gaping potholes in a bid to alleviate the immediate dangers posed by the dilapidated road conditions. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

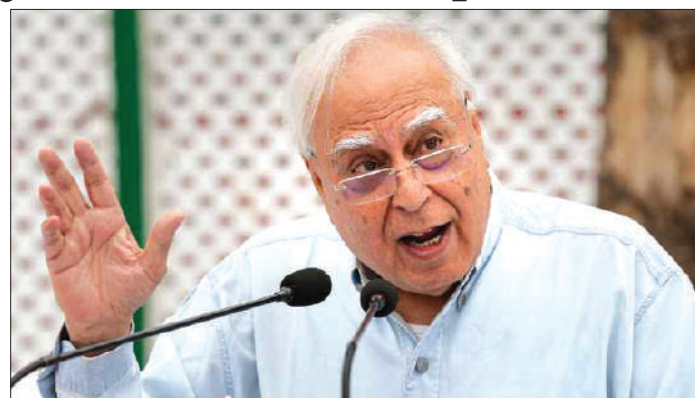
## SC directs Union to deport 17 foreigners languishing in Assam detention centre

**NEW DELHI, May 16:** The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the Union of India to deport 17 foreigners languishing in an Assam detention centre, noting there is no offence registered against them.

A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan noted a report submitted by the State Legal Services Authority which stated that there are 17 declared foreigners detained in the detention centre in Assam. "We are of the view that Union of India must take immediate steps for deporting these 17 foreigners as there is no offence registered

against them," the bench said. Noting that a number of foreigners have been languishing in detention centres for years, the top court in April had asked the State Legal Services Authority of Assam to apprise it about the foreigners detained for more than two years.

It had also directed the legal services authority to constitute a team to visit the detention centres to find out the facilities made available to foreigners. The top court was hearing a plea seeking the release of persons who have completed more than two years in detention centres in the state. (PTI)



## Shah's statement on bail to Kejriwal 'objectionable': Kapil Sibal

**NEW DELHI, May 16:** Rajya Sabha MP Kapil Sibal on Thursday hit out at home minister Amit Shah over his reported "special treatment" remarks on the interim bail to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, saying it was an "objectionable statement" that questioned the intention of the Supreme Court judges.

Sibal's remarks came after Shah, while referring to the interim bail granted by the Supreme Court to Kejriwal, reportedly said many in the country believed he was given special treatment. The Supreme Court on Thursday steered clear of the political talk about it having made an exception for Kejriwal in granting him interim bail for campaigning in the Lok Sabha polls but said "critical analysis of the judgement is welcome".

Addressing a press conference in the national capital, Sibal said, "Shah has made an objectionable

statement and questioned the intention of the Supreme Court judges."

Shah has stated very cleverly that many people are saying the Supreme Court's decision to grant interim bail to Kejriwal in the excise policy case is akin to him getting special treatment, he added. "He (Shah) has said 'people are saying'. If people are saying and

you don't believe in it, then why say it? If people say and you believe it, then only you have made the statement," said Sibal, who is also a senior advocate. Sibal said it is important to spell out the laws in light of the statement.

"If someone is convicted but gets a stay from the court, he or she can file a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Over 30% Covaxin takers reported adverse events: BHU study

**NEW DELHI, May 16:** Nearly one-third of the individuals who received Bharat Biotech's anti-Covid vaccine Covaxin reported adverse events of special interest, or AESI, according to a one-year follow up study conducted by a team of researchers at BHU.

Nearly 50 per cent of 926 study participants in the study complained of infections during the follow-up period, predominated by viral upper respiratory tract infections.

Serious AESI, which included stroke and Guillain-Barre syndrome, were reported in one per cent of individuals, the study, which looked at long-term safety of the BBV152 vaccine in adolescents and adults, claimed.

Published in the journal Springer Nature, the study comes in the wake of UK pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca admitting its Covid vaccine can cause rare side-effects of

blood clotting and lowering of platelet count in UK court.

"Close to one third of the individuals developed AESIs. New-onset skin and subcutaneous disorders, general disorders, and nervous system disorders were the three most common disorders observed in adolescents after receiving the vaccine," the study, conducted from January 2022 to August 2023, said.

The study involved 635 adolescents and 291 adults, who received the BBV152 vaccine. The participants were interviewed telephonically about long-term adverse events of special interest after 1 year of vaccination.

New-onset skin and subcutaneous disorders (10.5 per cent), general disorders (10.2 per cent), and nervous system disorders (4.7 per cent) were the common AESIs in adolescents. General disorders (8.9), (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Lekha Jain crowned Mrs India, 2024

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, May 16:** In a dazzling spectacle orchestrated by Roli Tripathi, the spotlight shone brightly on Mrs. Lekha Jain from the picturesque locale of Diphu, nestled in the heart of Karbi Anglong, Assam. Amidst a sea of contenders, Mrs. Jain emerged as the epitome of grace and resilience, clinching the highly coveted title of Mrs. India 2024.



The crowning moment, graced by the esteemed presence of Dr. Aditi Govithkar, a luminary in the realm of wellness, added an extra layer of prestige to Mrs. Jain's achievement. Dr. Govithkar, renowned for her expertise and discerning eye, bestowed the crown upon Mrs. Jain, acknowledging her outstanding dedication to fitness, health, and overall well-being.

Mrs. Jain's journey to the pinnacle of success serves as a beacon of inspiration to women everywhere, proving that with determination and perseverance, any dream is attainable. Through her

platform, Indie Royal Ms and Mrs. India 2024, Mrs. Jain pledges to champion the cause of women's empowerment, urging individuals

to prioritize their health and embrace a fit and fabulous lifestyle. As the nation celebrates Mrs. Lekha Jain's triumph, her victory res-

onates not only as a personal achievement but also as a testament to the indomitable spirit of women across the country.

### HT BRIEFS

#### Missing body

**GUWAHATI:** The Assam Police force mourns the loss of Mintu Roy, a dedicated jawan from the 1st Assam Police Battalion (APBN), whose body was recovered after he went missing during election duty in Bihar. Roy's disappearance occurred on May 14 while he was on duty alongside two fellow jawans, bathing in the River Ganga. Despite valiant efforts from locals, Roy was swept away by the river's powerful currents and could not be saved. The unfortunate incident unfolded when Roy and his colleagues decided to refresh themselves in the river during a break from their duties.

#### Broker held

**GUWAHATI:** The Guwahati Police has taken a significant step towards curbing fraudulent land acquisition by apprehending a land broker from Narengi's Housing Colony. The arrest follows diligent operations conducted by the Narengi Police on Wednesday, prompted by a case filed at the Noonmati Police Station. The individual in question, identified as Jogeshwar Nath (49), stands accused of unlawfully acquiring a plot of land belonging to a political party, CPI. The CPI promptly lodged a complaint with the Noonmati Police Station, leading to Nath's arrest.

#### One dead

**GUWAHATI:** Amidst soaring temperatures in the region, Assam's Cachar district witnessed a tragic incident as one individual succumbed to heat stroke on Thursday. Identified as Chayan Dey, the deceased was a temporary employee at Satya Ranjan College in Cachar, according to reports. Sources indicate that the unfortunate event occurred while Dey was heading home after completing his duties. Overwhelmed by the intense heat, he suddenly collapsed on the road, unable to withstand the effects of heat stroke.



UPPL Women's Wing organises shraddhanjali programme

## Kokrajhar pays homage to social reformer Birubala Rabha



**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, May 16:** A shraddhanjali program on the demise of eminent social reformer Padmashri (Dr) Birubala Rabha was organised at Mahatma Gandhi Park in Kokrajhar town on Wednesday evening. Hundreds of people from different corners of Kokrajhar town and its adjoining areas participated in the shraddhanjali program, which was organised by the Women's Wing of the UPPL party to pay homage to the de-

parted soul of eminent social reformer Birubala Rabha. Notably, Dr Birubala Rabha passed away on May 13 after a prolonged illness at a hospital in Guwahati. She was regarded as a crusader against witch hunting and was instrumental in the Assam government passing the Prevention of and Protection from Witch Hunting Act, 2015. Dr Birubala Rabha was conferred the Padma Shri for social work in 2021. She received the 12th Upendranath

Brahma Soldier of Humanity Award, 2014, and the Sati Sadhani Award in 2017. Rabha was felicitated by Reliance Industries Limited in Mumbai in 2008 under their 3rd edition of Real Heroes — ordinary people, extraordinary service, and was featured in the Switzerland 1,000 Women Peace Project, which celebrates 1,000 peace women advocates from across 150 countries worldwide. Raju Kumar Narzary, UPPL general secretary, Women's Wing

president of UPPL, Pratibha Brahma, several senior party leaders, well-wishers, and citizens thronged at the program and lit candles followed by floral tributes to Birubala Rabha on the occasion. A one-minute silence condolence was also observed to pay respect and honour to the departed soul of Rabha. The chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro, has extended his deep condolences and mourning on the demise of Dr Birubala Rabha. He recalled the contributions and dedication of Rabha to humanity welfare services, stating that the society in the state of Assam has lost a great social worker with her demise. He said that Rabha's lifelong crusade for women empowerment, social justice, and upliftment of the underprivileged has left an enduring mark on our society. She will forever remain a shining beacon of inspiration for us.

"In memoriam, on Thursday evening, the UPPL paid solemn tributes to eminent social activist Padmashri Dr Birubala Rabha, at a memorial ceremony organised by UPPL's Women Wing, at the Mahatma Gandhi Park, Kokrajhar. Late Dr Rabha will remain an eternal guiding light for us all, and her memory will always inspire us to work devotedly for the upliftment and empowerment of the underprivileged. I pray to the Almighty to grant eternal peace to her soul," Boro added.

## National Dengue Day spurs awareness campaigns

Health officials and community leaders join forces to educate public on dengue

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 16:** In alignment with the nationwide observance, 'National Dengue Day' was observed in Dima Hasao district to raise awareness about dengue, a viral disease spread by mosquitoes. The event was organised by the National Centre for Vector-Borne Diseases Control (NCVBDC), Dima Hasao, and held at the Urban Health Centre (UHC) in Halflong.

Chief medical officer Dr Paban Kumar Ganju provided an overview of dengue symptoms and causes. He also discussed the treatment facilities available in the district to combat the disease. Dr Ganju urged health workers and accredited social health activists (ASHAs) to closely monitor the situation and educate the public on preventive measures against dengue.

Joint director of health services, Dr Duleswar Gogoi, highlighted that a total of 852 dengue cases were reported in the district last year, a significant increase compared to previous years. This underscores the importance of public awareness regarding the causes, symptoms, and prevention of dengue.

The program was attended by NHM district media expert John Aao, district malaria consultant Debajit Saikia, as well as ANMS,



ASHAs, health workers, and medical officials.

**Our Jagirood correspondent adds:** The National Dengue Day was organised on Thursday by the National Centre for Vector-Borne Disease Control, Morigaon, with an awareness meeting at Morigaon HS School on the theme 'Connect with Community, Control Dengue'. The meeting was chaired by Dibyajyoti Tamuli, principal, Morigaon HS School, and was held in the presence of Dr Arun Kr Nath, joint director of health services, Morigaon, Dr Tapan Kr Saikia, additional CM&HO (FW), Supriya Das, DMO, Gunendra Saikia,

DVBDC, and other health officials, teachers, and students of class 9. The objective of the meeting was explained by Supriya Das, district malaria officer. Awareness speeches on dengue, its causes, symptoms, prevention, and control measures were addressed by joint DHS, followed by other officials. Moreover, National Dengue Day was also observed in the entire district by health officers and workers by organising different activities viz. fever surveillance, house-to-house awareness, bed net impregnation camps, miking, and source reduction survey for Aedes mosquito larvae.

## Advocacy group campaign restricted by govt

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 16:** Over the past two years, more than 100 NGOs, including Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust headed by former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, and Oxfam India, have lost their Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) licenses on charges of alleged misuse of foreign grants. The Government of India (GOI) has recently placed the US advocacy organisation, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CFTK), under the prior reference category (PRC) - indicating that international donations in India will have to be vetted and approved by the authorities before being utilised. The Union Home Ministry indicated the influence of domestic NGOs against the tobacco industry as one of the main reasons to restrict funding for

CFTK. CFTK is being funded by American philanthropist and former mayor of New York City, Michael Bloomberg. It provides legal, communication, and research support to governments and non-governmental organisations around the world to assist in promoting, adopting, and implementing tobacco control. It has been recently reported that one of the NGOs associated with CFTK, The Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAD), was found in violation of FCRA, and their license to operate was withdrawn in March this year by the Union Home Ministry. If any donor organisation is put under the 'prior permission category', it is barred from funding any Indian NGO without a nod from the government. In February this year, VHAH held a National Conference on Tobacco or Health where discussions ranged from the economics of tobacco production

and control in India, governance in tobacco control, environment, and tobacco control, & digital interventions in tobacco control. In 2017, another powerful US-based Christian donor, Compassion International (CI), was put under the prior permission category. The same year, the US-based NGO founded by Michael Bloomberg, Bloomberg Philanthropies, came under the home ministry's scanner over concerns that the foundation was running an anti-tobacco campaign and aggressively lobbying against the sector. The FCRA license is granted by the home ministry to NGOs and think tanks for five years, and their applications are reviewed based on annual returns and foreign grants received for the purpose it is meant for. Any misuse or diversion of foreign funds by NGOs is considered a violation of the FCRA Act, said officials.

## Train services suspended

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 16:** Due to operational exigencies within the Tinsukia division of NF Railway, train services for DEMU train no 07904 (Makum Jn - Dangari) and train no 07905 (Dangari - Makum Jn) will be suspended from May 16 to May 31, 2024.

## Demise of social worker

**HT Correspondent**

**SIVASAGAR, May 16:** Tragedy struck on Wednesday night near Hazarika Petrol Station on NH37 as Tulshi Kumar Das, a beloved social worker hailing from Mathadung GGS Chariali, succumbed to severe injuries in a road accident. His scooter was struck by a speeding vehicle, resulting in his untimely demise.

Tulshi leaves behind his grieving wife and a son, leaving a void in the hearts of his community and loved ones.



**HT Correspondent**

**MANGALDAI, May 16:** The long-awaited 'bhumi puja' ceremony for the permanent offices of Mangaldai Media Circle (MMC) and Crystal Vision was successfully conducted in Mangaldai on Thursday. This significant event marks the realisation of a cher-

ished dream for MMC, a prominent organisation representing media professionals in Darrang district since its establishment in 2007. The ceremony also extended to the NGO Crystal Vision's office complex.

Under the guidance of eminent Pandit Mano Ranjan Sarma, the

traditional vedic rituals were performed at both sites, attended by dignitaries from MMC, Crystal Vision, and the local administration. Nirmali Devi Sarma, chairperson of the Mangaldai Municipality Board, graced the occasion with her presence, adding significance to the auspicious ceremony.

The district administration's allocation of land, with one katha allotted to MMC and two kathas to Crystal Vision near the town's parade ground, reflects their support for the endeavours of both organisations. Notably, Crystal Vision has been at the forefront of promoting voluntary blood donation since 2011, showcasing their commitment to social welfare.

With the Bhumi Puja completed, the groundwork is laid for the construction of the office spaces, heralding a new chapter of growth and service for MMC and Crystal Vision in Mangaldai.

## Cleaners at Morigaon Civil Hospital stage indefinite strike

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, May 16:** Cleaners at Morigaon Civil Hospital have taken a stand against the state government's indifference towards their grievances, launching an indefinite strike on Thursday. Their demands include job regularisation, salary increments, and timely payment of wages.

Recruited under the National Health Mission (NHM) in 2017, these cleaners currently receive a monthly salary of ₹ 7,722, which they argue is insufficient to cover their families' expenses. They are adamant about salary adjustments to meet their basic needs and are pressing for the regularisation of their contractual positions, along with consistent payment of salaries.

Despite their repeated appeals, authorities have neglected their requests for essential protective gear like masks, gloves, and sanitisers. Assistant Matron Das has joined in protesting against the mistreatment of the cleaners.

In a concerning development, although Morigaon Civil Hospital has been recognised in the Assam-'Kayakalpa' competition three times, securing the fourth position, the cleaners allege that they have not received their fair share of the prize money. They insist that 25 percent of these funds should be allocated for their welfare facilities, yet they have not seen a single rupee of it.

This disparity has left the striking cleaners questioning the whereabouts of the allocated funds and highlights the urgent need for authorities to address their legitimate concerns.

## Jorhat mourns loss of renowned doctor

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, May 16:** Dr Shankar Jyoti Parashar, a distinguished former assistant professor at Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH) and a revered physician in Jorhat, passed away unexpectedly at a private hospital in Guwahati on Thursday, succumbing to a sudden illness.

At the age of 52, Dr Parashar leaves behind his grieving wife, daughter, mother, two sisters, and a large circle of relatives. Hailing from the Darangichuk area of Jorhat, he fell ill while attending to patients at a private hospital in the city on Tuesday evening. Despite immediate medical attention, his condition deteriorated rapidly, leading to his transfer to a hospital in Guwahati for specialised care, where he breathed his last on Wednesday.

Dr Parashar was not only renowned for his medical expertise but also actively involved in various socio-cultural activities. Known for his amiable nature and willingness to extend help to those in need, he earned widespread respect and admiration from the community.

His untimely demise has deeply saddened numerous organisations and individuals who benefitted from his dedicated service and compassionate demeanor.



## Diphu marks National Dengue Day

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, May 16:** National Dengue Day (NDD) with the theme 'Connect with the community, control Dengue' was observed to create awareness and intensify preventive measures and preparedness for controlling the viral disease before the transmission season begins.

As part of the program, health workers, including National Health Mission staff, National Centre for Vector-Borne Disease Control (NCVBDC) ASHA workers, etc., joined by ward commissioners of Diphu Municipal Board, took out a procession in Diphu town. They held placards and shouted slogans such as 'Stop spreading Dengue diseases', 'Stop mosquitoes', 'Stop Dengue', 'Stop Malaria', etc. The procession started from the joint director's office and proceeded towards the members' hostel and returned to the starting point.

Speaking at the event, Dr Borsing Rongpi, joint director of health services in Karbi Anglong, said, "We organised National Dengue Day to raise awareness

among the masses. The health department alone cannot combat the dreaded Dengue disease; it requires community participation to stop the virus from spreading. Health workers tirelessly visit households to eliminate Dengue sources. Dengue is caused by the Aedes Aegypti mosquito, which mostly lives in jungles. Following the Dengue outbreak in Karbi Anglong the previous year, 13069 people were tested, with 6047 confirmed positive. In the current year, from January until now (May), only 15 people have tested positive out of 228 tested, whereas by this time last year, it was over 1000."

Dr Rongpi appeals to individuals to cooperate with health workers when they visit their homes and localities to prevent the spread of the Dengue virus to neighboring districts and states.

The program was attended by Rajeshan Terang, secretary in charge of Health & Family Welfare, KAAC; Dr Rupsing Hanse, SDM & HO, Manja PHC; Dr N Rajkhowa, SDM & HO, ward commissioners Sagar Chetri, Diganta Gogoi, Dhiren Tokbi, and others.

## THB College hosts workshop on solid waste management

**HT Correspondent**

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, May 16:** A day-long workshop on solid waste management was held on Thursday at Tyagbir Hem Baruah College under the initiatives of the Eco Club and Botany department of the college with the participation of more than one hundred students from the higher secondary and high schools of the greater Naduar area. The program was presided over by Dr Bipul Kumar Borah, president of the Governing Body of the college.

Delivering the welcome address, Dr Ajit Hazarika, principal of the college, said, "The generation of waste materials and lack of proper knowledge of the ways of managing it have caused great damage to our environment. We must adopt ways of generating less quantity of solid waste so that the green environment of the earth may be preserved for future generations."

Dr Chinta Mani Sharma, principal Biswanath College, acting as a resource person, spoke extensively on the topic and explained how the general population is polluting their surroundings and creating a threat to the ecosystem by producing tons of non-degradable waste every day. Another resource person, Bipul Saikia, as-



sistant professor of Chemistry, conducted hands-on training for the students and explained that the problems arising out of the generation of non-biodegradable solid waste are unavoidable, and there is no way out to escape more alarming situations in days to come as man will keep generating waste

until the end of life on this planet. He said that nature has generously bestowed upon us abundant resources for our benefit, yet we, in our ingratitude and short-sightedness, are squandering these gifts. The lack of proper waste management, spanning from inadequate collection systems to inefficient dis-

posal methods, is resulting in air pollution, water contamination, and soil degradation. He emphasised the urgent need for prudent action to halt the ongoing pollution of our planet. Through wise decision-making and the implementation of well-designed solid waste management systems, we can strive to mitigate further environmental contamination and preserve the integrity of our ecosystems.

Dr Tulsi Upadhyaya shed light on the objectives of the workshop, mentioning the Mission Life initiative in Assam aimed at raising awareness about environmental issues. The workshop, organised in collaboration with the Assam Science Technology and Environment Council and sponsored by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Government of India, aimed to educate students about the global garbage crisis and their role in addressing it.

Rupa Kalita, assistant professor in the department of Botany, facilitated the program, ensuring its smooth conduct. Through such initiatives and collective efforts, the workshop aimed to instill a sense of responsibility among the youth towards environmental conservation and sustainable waste management practices.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Silence is the sleep that nourishes wisdom. -Francis Bacon

Russia's Nuclear Energy Strategy

In a world grappling with energy security and environmental concerns, Russia's nuclear energy strategy emerges as a beacon of innovation and efficiency...

India's nuclear footprint boasts 24 operational reactors across 7 plants, with a capacity of 8.18 gigawatts. These reactors play a crucial role in curbing carbon emissions...

India's nuclear trajectory reflects a nuanced blend of progress and challenges, highlighting both the potential and the limitations of nuclear energy adoption...

Iran's diplomatic surge in South Asia and its impact on India

Over the span of eight months, Israel has faced significant challenges in its efforts to subdue Hamas and quell unrest among the Palestinian population...

Notably, Iran has made headlines by launching a direct aerial attack on Israel, a rare occurrence in the region's recent history...

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi recently embarked on a strategic journey to nations neighboring India, a move that carries significant weight given Iran's current strong position on the global stage...

While Iran has been deeply wounded by these actions, it has chosen not to voice its grievances publicly. However, behind closed doors, Iranian officials have reportedly been candid in expressing their discontent...

First and foremost, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has strained its relations with Iran nearly to the breaking point. This tension stems from the government's decision to prioritize its relationship with Washington over its longstanding alliance with Tehran...

While Iran has been deeply wounded by these actions, it has chosen not to voice its grievances publicly. However, behind closed doors, Iranian officials have reportedly been candid in expressing their discontent...



New Delhi's substantial economic aid to Sri Lanka in 2022-23, tensions continue to escalate, highlighting the complexities of regional dynamics.

Positioned within India's sphere of influence, Raisi extended offers of cooperation and assistance to Pakistan and Sri Lanka, both of which are facing economic challenges and seeking support from the International Monetary Fund...

During his visit to Islamabad, Raisi extended an olive branch, particularly significant following the cross-border strikes between Pakistan and Iran in January. It's evident that any military tensions between Tehran and Islamabad align with New Delhi's interests...

During his visit to Colombo, Raisi inked a Memorandum of Understanding for the \$514 million Uma Oya hydropower and irrigation project, vowing to provide technical and engineering support. This marked a significant milestone...

with Iran when it was closely aligned with Saudi Arabia in 2016. However, the geopolitical landscape shifted in September 2023 with the detente between Tehran and Riyadh brokered by Beijing...

Indeed, Tehran's alignment with Beijing has grown significantly stronger, particularly following a strategic agreement forged in 2021. This close alliance with China means that any increase in Iran's influence in Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Bangladesh...

Raisi's assertive rhetoric against Washington and Tel Aviv during his visits to Colombo and Islamabad not only advances Iran's global objectives but also aligns with China's interests. In Islamabad, Raisi even issued a strong warning to Israel, signaling Iran's unwavering stance...

Further, Tehran took significant steps to reestablish diplomatic ties with the Maldives last year, following a seven-year hiatus. This diplomatic thaw came after a period of strained relations between Riyadh and Tehran, which had led the Maldives to sever ties...

The contract value, totalling \$370 million, awarded to IPGL, will be solely dedicated to the enhancement and expansion of the Shahid Beheshti terminal. INSTC: A Vision for Seamless Connectivity: Additionally, Chabahar Port plays a role in the envisioned International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)...

Special on World Hypertension Day

High Blood Pressure : The curse of modern life

By: Lalit Garg

World Hypertension Day is celebrated every year on 17th May to raise awareness about high blood pressure and encourage its prevention, detection and control...



People are getting attracted towards processed foods without any care. Such food items are especially appealing to the new generation...

Although the sector's growth rate declined to 5.50 percent during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was a temporary phase. After this, their availability started becoming easy again...

Some population studies show an inverse relationship between dietary protein and blood pressure levels. Drinking coffee regularly increases blood pressure in high blood pressure patients...

The concern is that India does not have a strong mechanism to remove food items that are becoming dangerous from the market. There is no concrete policy even to control intoxicants like alcohol and smoking...

It is true that the Central and State governments have launched many programs for the nutritious diet of the people, but there is no concrete policy to control the items being sold in the market...

Alluring advertisements are promoting these products. No one can be allowed to play with people's health. It is important that the government not only formulates a strict advertising and marketing policy regarding harmful food items...

Various types of research have been revealing that the amount of sugar, fat and salt in such canned foods is very high, while fiber and other nutrients are less. That's why processed food items increase the health problems associated with high blood pressure.

India and Iran's 10-year deal on Chabahar port development is a strategic gain for Delhi

By: Girish Linganna

On Monday May 13, the Indian government, led by Narendra Modi, announced the signing of a 10-year agreement with Iran to enhance cooperation in the development and operation of the port of Chabahar...

The Indian government has been actively involved in the development of the Chabahar port, located on Iran's southeastern coast along the Gulf of Oman. The port serves as a crucial transportation route for goods destined for Iran, Afghanistan, and countries in Central Asia...

Despite this, the port holds immense importance beyond being a simple link between India and Iran. It serves as a crucial trade route connecting India with Afghanistan and Central Asian countries...

The establishment of this connection has opened up fresh opportunities for trade and strengthened the resilience of supply chains in the region...

Indian Ports Global Limited (IPGL) and the Port & Maritime Organization of Iran have officially signed a long-term agreement, as confirmed by authorities from both nations...

The partnership between Iran and India regarding the strategic port can be traced back to 2003 when New Delhi agreed to enhance the port's development along with the necessary infrastructure connections during the visit of former President Muhammad Khatami to India...

The agreement, signed in Tehran with the presence of the Indian and Iranian shipping Ministers, has officially replaced the initial framework agreement that was signed back in 2016 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Iran...

According to Mehrdad Bazrpash, the Iranian Minister of Roads and Urban Development, the agreement entails an investment of approximately \$120 million from IPGL, accompanied by an additional \$250 million in financing. This brings

the total value of the contract to \$370 million. Under the terms of the agreement, India has committed to acquiring various types of equipment...

Since assuming control of port in late 2018, IPGL has successfully managed the handling of container traffic exceeding 90,000 TEUs (Twenty Foot Equivalent Unit) and bulk as well as general cargo surpassing 8.4 million tonnes...

Chabahar's Role in Humanitarian Aid and Regional Connectivity: Chabahar has played a crucial role in providing humanitarian aid, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic...

Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar expressed this sentiment during a press conference in Mumbai on Monday, 13th May, emphasizing the positive impact of the port's operations...

According to Jaishankar, India anticipates that the project will enhance its connectivity with an international transport corridor that is being established in collaboration with Iran and Russia...

Located at the entrance of the Gulf of Oman, Chabahar is Iran's first deepwater port, strategically positioning the country on the international maritime trade route...

Chabahar holds significant strategic value for both Iran and India. For Iran, the port serves as a potential means to mitigate the impact of Western sanctions. Mean-

while, it provides India with an alternative trade route that circumvents Pakistan, which restricts India's land access to trade with Afghanistan and Central Asia...

The Chabahar project comprises two separate ports, namely Shahid Beheshti and Shahid Kalantari terminals. Each of which has five berth facilities. However, India's investment is specifically limited to the Shahid Beheshti port...

The contract value, totalling \$370 million, awarded to IPGL, will be solely dedicated to the enhancement and expansion of the Shahid Beheshti terminal. INSTC: A Vision for Seamless Connectivity: Additionally, Chabahar Port plays a role in the envisioned International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)...

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) consists of a total of thirteen member countries. These countries include India, Iran, Russia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Ukraine, and Syria...

The INSTC project envisions a logistics route that involves transporting goods from Mumbai, India, to Shahid Beheshti Port in Chabahar, Iran, primarily by sea. From Chabahar, the goods are then transported by road to Bandar-e-Anzali, an Iranian port located on the Caspian Sea...

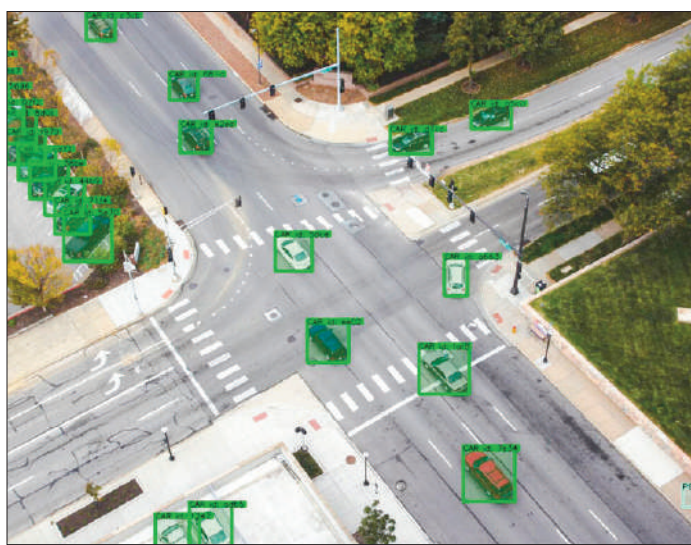
Subsequently, they are shipped across the Caspian Sea to Astrakhan, a port in the Russian Federation. Finally, the goods are transported from Astrakhan to various regions within Russia and further into Europe using the Russian railway network...

The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) is anticipated to significantly reduce transit time by 40%, resulting in a shorter duration of 25-30 days compared to the current 45-60 days. Moreover, the corridor is expected to reduce freight costs by 30% when compared to the expenses incurred when using the Suez Canal route. (IPA Service)





## AI-driven traffic management system to go live in Sikkim from May 25



**GANGTOK, May 16:** The Sikkim transport department on Thursday announced the launch of an artificial intelligence-driven traffic management system across the state from May 25.

The system aims to modernise traffic management and improve regulation efficiency by automatically verifying documents and detecting violations.

"With a view to modernise traffic management and enhance the efficiency and accuracy of traffic

regulation, Sikkim government is introducing artificial intelligence-driven traffic management system," the transport department said.

According to a notice by the department, "All vehicle owners (including government vehicles) are therefore informed to keep all their vehicle documents up to date. Any discrepancies arising out of the issue of E-challan may be brought to notice of the SPs/RTOs of the district." (PTI)

## One held in Arunachal's illegal teacher appointment case

**ITANAGAR, May 16:** The Special Investigation Cell (SIC) of the Arunachal Pradesh police has arrested one more person related to the illegal appointments of primary teachers and other staff members within the education department in Lower Siang district.

The arrest was initiated following a case registered by the SIC on February 3 this year, based on a report submitted by the director of elementary education about the illegal appointment of primary teachers and other staff in the Siang education department, a police officer said here on Thursday. The man was arrested after meticulous scrutiny of documents, interrogation of suspects, and technical

analysis, the Superintendent of Police of SIC (Vigilance), Anant Mittal, said.

The arrested individual, identified as Mikjar Ngulom alias June Lendo (32), is a native of New Bomte village in Lower Siang district, he said. At least eight people have been arrested by the SIC so far in the case.

The SIC investigation into the illegal appointments is ongoing, and all facets of the case are being investigated in detail, Mittal added.

Earlier, the SIC arrested a former deputy director of school education (DDSE) over alleged illegal appointments of primary teachers (PRT) and multi-tasking staff (MTS) in the Siang district of the

## Rallies organised by Zoro, which seeks reunification of Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi tribes from India, Myanmar, Bangladesh

# Rallies held in Mizoram to protest against fencing of India-Myanmar border

**AIZWAL, May 16:** Thousands of people participated in rallies in Mizoram on Thursday to protest the Centre's decision to fence the India-Myanmar border and withdraw the free movement regime with the neighbouring country.

The peaceful rallies, organised by Zo Re-Unification Organisation (Zoro), were held in Zokhawthar and Vaphai villages in Champhai district bordering Myanmar and many people from the neighbouring country also took part in the processions, a leader of the organisation said.

Zoro is a Mizo group which seeks the reunification of all Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi tribes of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar by bringing them under one administration.

The rally in Vaphai began at 7 am and ended around 10 am while another procession in Zokhawthar, where the India-Myanmar Friendship Gate is located, commenced at 11 am and is underway, Zoro general secretary L. Ramdiniana

Renthle told PTI.

"Thousands of people took to the streets in Vaphai while around 7,000 protestors participated in the Zokhawthar rally. Hundreds of people from Myanmar took part in the two rallies, while several could not enter India as the authorities concerned had to close the Friendship Gate to prevent any untoward incident," he said.

Across the India-Myanmar Friendship Gate in Zokhawthar, people waved at each other and raised slogans against the Indian government's decision to scrap the free movement regime and fence the international border between the two countries.

Protesters also held placards and banners, demanding the continuation of free movement in border areas and asserted that they belong to the Zo ethnic group and have been living together for ages.

The free movement regime (FMR) allows people to cross up to 16 km on both sides of the international border.



Mizoram shares a 510-km-long border with Myanmar's Chin state and the Mizos share ethnic ties with the people belonging to the Chin community.

All government offices and schools in the two villages re-

mained closed on Thursday, Renthle said.

He claimed that such a protest was also held in Manipur's Tengnoupal district.

"Rallies are peaceful and there is no law and order issue so far," a

senior police officer said.

The protesters demanded that the Centre must review its decision to fence the India-Myanmar border and scrap the FMR with the neighbouring country, Renthle said.

More than 34,000 people from the Chin state of Myanmar are currently taking shelter in different parts of Mizoram, according to the state home department.

The Chin people fled their homes following a military coup in the neighbouring country in February 2021.

The Mizoram government, civil society organisations and student bodies have strongly opposed the Centre's decision to fence the India-Myanmar border and lift the FMR because they believe that it will "disturb" close contact between ethnic communities of the two countries.

The Mizoram assembly had on February 28 passed a resolution, opposing the Centre's decision to fence the India-Myanmar border and abolish the FMR. (PTI)

## Member of Railway Board inspects ongoing NFR projects



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 16:** Anil Kumar Khandelwal, member of the Infrastructure, Railway Board recently inspected some important on-going railway projects of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR).

The Indian Railways is significantly contributing towards transforming the connectivity scenario of the northeastern states by executing several railway projects under its 'Capital Connectivity' projects and 'Act East Policy' of the central government.

Projects inspected by the member from May 13 to 15 include Bhairabi - Sairang New Line Project, Jiribam - Imphal New Line Project and Agartala - Akhaura International Rail Connectivity Project.

Khandelwal on May 13 in-

spected the construction work of Bhairabi - Sairang New railway line project which aims to connect the North-eastern state of Mizoram with the rest of the country through stable rail connectivity and at an advance stage of completion. About 93 per cent of the project works have already been completed. The project aims to add 51.38 km of railway track in Mizoram that comprises of 55 major bridges and 87 minor bridges.

The total length of the tunnels in the project is 12853 meters. The project consists of four railway stations. The tallest pier of the bridge number 196 of the project is of 104 meter, which is 42 meter taller than the Qutub Minar.

The member of the board also inspected the construction work of Jiribam - Imphal New Line Project

on May 14. This projects aims to connect Manipur with the rest of the country and is at an advance stage of completion. The project is of 111 km long that consists of 52 tunnels, 11 major bridges, 129 minor bridges. The tallest pier railway bridge of the world with a height of 141 meters is being constructed in this project. About 77% of the project works have already been completed.

These projects will provide enhanced connectivity to the people of the hilly states of Mizoram and Manipur respectively. Once completed, it will help grow small scale industries in the area boosting socio economic growth. People of these states will get long distance train access across the country with uninterrupted supply of essential goods at a much lower cost.

Khandelwal also inspected the Agartala - Akhaura International Rail connectivity Project on May 15, which will link Bangladesh's Akhaura station through international immigration station at Nischintpur (Tripura). It will be a dual gauge station for both passenger and goods interchange between India and Bangladesh. This rail link will provide a great boost to the tourism sector, increase the trade and commerce and will bolster the socio economic development of the two countries.

## Centre not serious about Manipur's ethnic crisis: COCOMI

**IMPHAL, May 16:** Coordination Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), in a statement on Thursday, alleged that Union home minister Amit Shah's whimsical remarks showed that the centre does not take seriously the ongoing ethnic crisis in Manipur. The statement signed by COCOMI media coordinator, Yumkhaibam Surjitkumar Khuman also questioned the intention of the central government in the ongoing violence. It said that the people of the state were surprised when the Union home minister stated in an interview with a national daily on May 9 that the violence in Manipur is not terrorism. (NNN)

## Raj Bhavan, Assam celebrates Sikkim's Statehood Day

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 16:** As a part of the EK Bharat Shreshtha Bharat initiative, Raj Bhavan Assam celebrated the Statehood Day of Sikkim at the conference hall of Raj Bhavan on Thursday. Governor of Sikkim, Lakshman Prasad Acharya conveyed his warm wishes on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, the chief guest of the event Brigadier Ranjit Borthakur, SM (retd.) underscored the pivotal role Sikkim plays in the country's strategic landscape, given its geographical proximity to international borders. He also spoke on the burgeoning tourism industry which according to him led to the surge in tourist footfalls and the consequent rise in revenue collection.

He also said that the work on railway connectivity is also going on a fast-track manner, which will certainly enhance Sikkim's connectivity along with boosting the socio economic landscape of the state.

Furthermore, he also commended the admirable qualities of the Sikkimese people, highlighting their humility and unwavering support to all especially outsiders. He emphasised the significance of civilian backing in achieving national objectives, stressing that victory in any conflict isn't solely determined by military might, but also the solidarity and cooperation of the people. In this regard, he lauded the Sikkimese people for their role in bolstering the collective defence and progress of the country.

## BJP will win 32 Lok Sabha seats out of 42 in Bengal: Tripura CM

**AGARTALA, May 16:** Tripura chief minister Manik Saha on Thursday said the BJP will win 32 Lok Sabha seats out of 42 in West Bengal.

"I had the opportunity to join the party's campaign trail in West Bengal during which I saw great enthusiasm among voters for the BJP. I am sure the party will win 32 out of the 42 Lok Sabha constituencies," he told reporters here.



In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had won 18 seats out of 42 Lok Sabha constituencies, the best show by the saffron party in Bengal so far.

On BJP's prospects, Saha said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set the goal of 400-plus seats for the NDA.

"We all are working to achieve the target. I have already visited West Bengal and campaigned for the party. I will go again to Bengal to canvass for the party. We are confident that the BJP-led NDA will win more than 400 Lok Sabha seats (out of 543 seats)," he said.

The chief minister is scheduled to leave for Kolkata later in the day to join the party's campaign for the last three phases.

He dismissed the opposition's claim that the BJP would secure fewer than 200 seats, stating that it was merely an attempt to rally their party's supporters. (PTI)

## Sikkim became 22<sup>nd</sup> state of India on May 16, 1975 PM, Guv, CM greet people of Sikkim on 49th Statehood Day

**ANGTOK, May 16:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya and chief minister Prem Singh Tamang on Thursday greeted the people of Sikkim on the 49th Statehood Day.

Sikkim became the 22nd state of India on May 16, 1975.

"Greetings to the people of Sikkim on their Statehood Day," Modi wrote on X.

"This state is known for its scenic beauty and hardworking people. Over the years, Sikkim has made a mark in organic farming. Our government will keep working for the welfare of Sikkim in the times to come", Modi said, adding, "I pray that the people of this state are always healthy and prosperous."

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya also greeted the people of the state on the occasion.

"Today marks Sikkim's completion of 49 years in the democratic system. The journey from voluntary integration into the world's largest democracy on 16 May



1975 until today has been profoundly memorable and meaningful for Sikkim and its people," he said.

"Sikkim has achieved remarkable development in various sectors, including social, economic, cultural, and infrastructure, under the democratic system, setting an example for other states and strengthening democracy," Acharya added.

In a Facebook post, Tamang said, "It marks a pivotal moment in history when Sikkim embraced democracy, embarking on a journey of progress and prosperity that has deeply intertwined its fate with that of our nation. Over the past 49 years, Sikkim has carved out a distinct identity and made remarkable advancements."

"As we celebrate this milestone, let us reaffirm our unwavering dedication to safeguarding our rich cultural heritage, traditional values, and the spirit of unity while striving to enhance the quality of life for all our citizens," the chief minister said.

Meanwhile, President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday greeted the people of Sikkim on their statehood day and said they have made significant contributions to the country's development through sustainable lifestyle and hard work.

"Greetings to the people of Sikkim on Statehood Day! Sikkim is blessed with sublime natural beauty manifested by snow-laden peaks, dense forests and waterfalls.

"Preserving their rich cultural heritage, the people of Sikkim have made significant contributions to the country's development through sustainable lifestyle and hard work. May the people and the state continue to prosper and go from strength to strength," Murmu said on X. (PTI)

## APOLOGY LETTER

This is hereby published with a pure intention to seek apology from the reputed Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council as well as the other respondents appearing in PIL 47/2020 that a notice dated 04.12.2020 was published in the newspaper without going through the Registry of the Hon'ble Gauhati High Court in the name of the Judge of the Hon'ble Gauhati High Court. It is therefore published to seek sincere apology from the respondents appearing in the Public Interest Litigation. Jeevan Munda Vs Union of India and others.

Sd/-  
Jeevan Munda









## This is a beautiful moment in my life: Chhaya Kadam on her journey from 'Laapataa Ladies' to Cannes

**NEW DELHI, May 16:** Growing up, she wanted to be a Kabbadi player and then the dream shifted to opening a gym. Chhaya Kadam, who is winning hearts with her stellar performances as Manju Mai in "Laapataa Ladies" and gangster Kanchan Kombdi in "Madgaon Express", says she came to acting late and by chance.

Kadam is now looking forward to attending the 77th Cannes Film Festival for the premiere of Payal Kapadia's "All We Imagine As Light", which is part of the main competition. She is also excited about "Sister Midnight", a film to be screened in the film gala's sidebar section Director's Fortnight.

"I am very happy. This is a beautiful moment in my life and I am enjoying it without thinking too much about what's next," she said about the audience appreciation for "Laapataa Ladies" and

"Madgaon Express" as well as the Cannes selection of her two movies.

Kadam said she grew up in a Mumbai suburb called Kalina in a housing board colony and had different dreams at different points of time.

"I was a state-level Kabbadi player, so I thought about going in that direction. After some time, it shifted to owning a gym or joining the police force because I had the physique... People start their journeys in schools and college by doing theatre, but I entered the profession quite late," Kadam told PTI in an interview. The actor credits a workshop she did with theatre veteran and former National School of Drama director Waman Kendre in 2001 for changing the course of her life.

"I started enjoying the process while doing the workshop. That was the beginning for me. People

think it is easy to break into acting but it took me six years to do my first play. It wasn't easy even after that but whatever came my way, I worked on it with complete honesty."

After becoming an actor, Kadam said she dreamed about getting a National Film Award and featuring in a variety of roles but a festival like Cannes was not even on her wish list.

Manju Mai, a fiercely independent teaseur with a soft corner for one of the two heroines who gets lost in Kiran Rao's "Laapataa Ladies", has become something of a social media sensation with viewers sharing screenshots and dialogues on X and in reels on Instagram.

Kadam said she is surprised the character has resonated with not just the youth but also women of different age groups.

"I recently spoke to Sneha Desai, the writer of 'Laapataa Ladies', when the film released on OTT. She asked me, 'Kaisa lag raha hai? (how do you feel?) I told her that whenever I receive any praise, she comes to my mind because Manju Mai's thoughts were shaped by her and Kiran," she added.

Rao had seen Kadam in Nagraj Manjule's 2013 film "Fandry" and the director remembered her during 'Laapataa Ladies'. Similarly, "Madgaon Express" director Kunal Kemmu spotted Kadam in a role in the 2022 Marathi film "Kaun Pravin Tambe?" starring Shreyas Talpade.

"Kiran really liked 'Fandry' and wanted to work with me. Kunal told me that when he saw me in 'Pravin Tambe', he felt he had found his Kanchan Kombdi. He reached out to Shreyas Talpade to ask about

me. I am grateful to both the directors because people are connecting to these roles."

While Manju Mai was a well-formed character, Kadam said Rao left it on her actors to improvise and bring something of their own to the characters. Kadam said she picked up one of the character traits of Manju Mai from a Uttar Pradesh woman who lived next door.

"Characters come ready-made to an actor. You have a sense of costume, status and nature by the script but you have to find its soul. It is easy but also difficult because you have to put yourself in their shoes and at the same time, make it truthful to the audience," said the actor, who has also featured in films such as "Andhadhun" and "Gangubai Kathiawadi".

Manju Mai from "Laapataa Ladies" and her first major role in "Fandry", a film on caste discrimination, are characters that left a mark on her, said Kadam.

"Sometimes, I feel Manju Mai was written for me. I have that woman inside me. I didn't marry, somehow never got around to it and now I am enjoying living on my own. I felt Manju Mai was also teaching me. I receive so many calls from women who were confused but now feel inspired by Manju Mai.

"Similarly, 'Fandry' was a film that shook me from inside and gave me a sense of what's right and wrong," she said.

Kanchan Kombdi, a scorned wife who one-ups her gangster husband by running a bigger, all-women smuggling cartel in Goa, was, however, the other end of the spectrum and fun to play, she said. (PTI)

## Hansal Mehta announces third chapter of 'Scam' series on Subrata Roy

**MUMBAI, May 16:** Filmmaker Hansal Mehta on Thursday announced the third edition of his smash hit series "Scam", titled "Scam 2010 - The Subrata Roy Saga", which will be based on the life of businessman Subrata Roy.

Based on the book, "Sahara: The Untold Story by Tamal Bandyopadhyay", the Sony LIV series will be produced by Applause Entertainment, in association with Studio Next and helmed by Mehta.

"Scam 2010" is the dust-to-diamonds story of Roy. In the early 2000s, Roy was caught in a whirlwind of accusations ranging from chit-fund manipulations to fake investors, ultimately leading to his arrest in 2014. With approximately Rs 25,000 crore still lying unclaimed with government authorities, the repercussions of the scam continue to reverberate even today," according to the press release issued by the makers. "Scam is not just a franchise for me. It is a chronicling of our times. I'm thrilled to collaborate again with Applause and Sony LIV to bring this larger-than-life story alive," Hansal Mehta said in a statement. Sameer Nair, Managing Director, Applause Entertainment, said, Scam series has become a pop cultural phenomenon.

"With Scam 2010: The Subrata Roy Saga, we are poised to raise the bar even higher, offering audiences an immersive journey into the life and times of one of the most audacious and ambitious minds in Indian business history," Nair said.

Danish Khan, SonyLIV, said they are delighted to collaborate with Mehta and Applause Entertainment for the next Scam series. "The series has consistently been the most viewed franchise on Sony LIV and we are confident that the third edition will create newer benchmarks in compelling storytelling," he said. (PTI)



## Netflix renews '3 Body Problem' for additional episodes, series to end

**LOS ANGELES, May 16:** Netflix has greenlit additional episodes of sci-fi series "3 Body Problem" to conclude the story, created, executive produced and written by David Benioff, D B Weiss and Alexander Woo.

Based on the Hugo Award-winning Chinese novel "The Three-Body Problem" by Liu Cixin, the first season of the show premiered on the streamer in March.

Returning creators Benioff, Weiss, and Woo in a joint statement said they are looking forward to telling the story through to its "epic conclusion".

"Three Body Problem has been renewed! We're thrilled that we get to tell this story through to its epic conclusion. Ever since we read the last page of Cixin Liu's magnificent trilogy, we hoped we'd be able to



bring the audience to the end of the universe with us. Here we go!" the trio said in a statement shared on Netflix's official X page.

"The extraordinary '3 Body

Problem', brought to life with the deft hands of Benioff, Weiss and Woo, will soar to never-before-seen heights as they tackle the rest of the mind-blowing journey through Death's End. Their brilliant vision as storytellers is matched by their amazing partnership — and, just like the fans, we can't wait to see what they have in store," added Peter Friedlander, vice president of scripted series at Netflix.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, "Game of Thrones" creators Benioff and Weiss have renewed their overall deal with the streamer to write, produce and direct new series and films. Besides the continuation of "3 Body Problem", the duo are working on "Death by Lightning" series. (PTI)

## Kavita Krishnamurthy conferred with Lifetime Achievement Award in UK

**LONDON, May 16:** Well-known playback and classical singer Kavita Krishnamurthy has been conferred with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to music by the annual UK Asian Film Festival (UKAFF) in London. The 66-year-old singer behind several Bollywood box-office hits from films like 'Mr India' and 'Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam' received the Golden Flame Lifetime Achievement Award at a glittering ceremony over the weekend, followed by a celebration event on Monday.

She was honoured for her achievements over a career spanning four decades, having recorded over 50,000 songs in nearly 45 Indian languages.

"I was always very clear that any film song that my brother or mother would feel embarrassed listening to, I would not be singing," Krishnamurthy said during a special Rendezvous interaction at London's Taj Hotel.

It followed the closing gala of UKAFF 2024 where the singer was felicitated for her dedication to Indian music through concerts worldwide and the Subramaniam Academy of Performing Arts in Bengaluru, which she founded with her celebrated violinist husband L. Subramaniam.

"We are thrilled to have had the opportunity to honour her extraordinary career journey at the UK Asian Film Festival. Her talent and dedication have left an indelible mark on the industry," said UKAFF Founder and Director Dr Pushpinder Chowdhry. (PTI)

## If you give me right roles and right directors, I can do magic: Sonakshi Sinha

**MUMBAI, May 16:** Actor Sonakshi Sinha says she decided to change her career trajectory almost a decade ago to focus on roles that challenged her and that's what has led her to projects like "Dahaad" and now "Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar".

While she played no-nonsense small town cop in Keema Kagi's critically-acclaimed "Dahaad", Sonakshi is being praised for her turn as the vengeful Fareedan in Sanjay Leela Bhansali's pre-Partition era Lahore-set drama about courtesans. The actor said it was not easy to pull off dual roles of mother-daughter Rehana and Fareedan in the eight-part Netflix series but she managed it thanks to Bhansali's trust in her capabilities. Bhansali had earlier produced Sonakshi's 2012 movie "Rowdy Rathore". "If you give me the right roles and right directors, I can do magic," Sonakshi told PTI in an interview. The actor also credits former col-

laborators Kagi, Vikramaditya Motwane ("Lootera") and "Akira" director A R Murugadoss for imagining her in a different light. "I'm just looking for parts that truly challenge me and help me reach my potential... Once I changed my trajectory into doing the kind of roles that really challenged me, I ended up becoming a better actor. And all those experiences have brought me to where I am today," she added.

Sonakshi, who made her debut with "Dabangg" opposite Salman Khan in 2010 and featured in many films opposite Akshay Kumar and Ajay Devgn before taking on roles in "Lootera", "Akira", "Happy Phir Bhag Jayegi" and "Khandaani Shafakhana", is happy that films led by women are doing well commercially. Citing the example of "Crew", the actor said she called up its lead actors Tabu, Kareena Kapoor Khan and Kriti Sanon to congratulate them for making a "super cool" film.

"I've been choosing movies that are led by a female protagonist for a while now and I'm really enjoying them. The success and failure of those movies haven't really set me back in any way. It's been about seven-eight years since I've been doing that so I haven't stopped. "I'm going to keep trying until it works... The time is right for movies like that. It's amazing to be a part of an industry which is finally coming around to you, projecting and showcasing women-led films in this manner. I enjoy being the hero of my own films," she added.

Sonakshi, 36, said directors such as Imtiaz Ali, Rajkumar Hirani, Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Ashutosh Gowariker, Rohit Shetty and Priyadarshan are now on her wish list. "I want to be that actor which a filmmaker can cast in any genre, and in any role... I can play a police officer from rural Rajasthan (in 'Dahaad') and I can also play a courtesan from Lahore (in 'Heeramandi'), who's exquisite in every way.

"I can also play an action role as 'Akira' or play a hopeless lover like I did in 'Lootera', or do the song and dance as in 'Rowdy Rathore', 'Dabangg' or 'Son of Sardar', I can do all of that. I don't want to put myself in any box." While Sonakshi's role has earned her acclaim, the show has received polarising reviews.

Addressing the varied reactions of viewers and critics, the actor said, "Everybody's entitled to their opinion and you can't please everyone. I got to learn that early in my career that there will always be someone who will have a different taste. So, that's fine, you can't hold that against anyone. We are very happy to focus on the positives. On Instagram, it's all about 'Heeramandi', the girls are imitating fashion, makeup, jewellery and making reels on the songs." (PTI)





