

**6** WORLD

**8** NATION

- Israel attacks Iran in series of pre-dawn airstrikes targeting military infrastructure
- Russian strikes on Kyiv and central Ukraine kill 2 teenagers and injure dozens
- First journey as public representative, but not as 'public fighter': Priyanka
- 'Restoration of statehood policy matter, not political issue'

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## Mischievous provocation and political propaganda: India slams Pakistan at UNSC

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 26: India slammed Pakistan's "mischievous provocation" and "political propaganda" during a Security Council meeting on women, peace and security, saying the condition of women belonging to minority communities, notably Hindus, Sikhs and Christians in the country remains deplorable.

"It is despicable yet entirely predictable that one delegation has chosen to indulge in mischievous provocation based on their tried and tested tactic of spreading misinformation and disinformation," India's permanent representative to the UN Ambassador P Harish said in the UNSC on Friday.

Harish delivered India's statement at the UNSC Open Debate on 'Women Building Peace in a Changing Environment'.

In a strong Right of Reply to Pakistan, which again raked the



issue of Kashmir at the debate, Harish said, "It's completely misplaced to indulge in such political propaganda at this important annual debate."

"We are well aware that the condition of women belonging to minority communities, notably

Hindus, Sikhs and Christians in that country, remains deplorable," he said.

Harish added that an estimated thousand women of these minority communities, as per data of Pakistan's Human Rights Commission, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## CM attacks Cong over Samaguri incident, warns of stern action

Pre-poll violence claims BJP worker's life

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Oct 26: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday aimed towards Congress alleging that the opposition party has been involved in hooliganism and political violence that led to the death of a BJP worker in Samaguri.

He targeted the grand old party claiming that the opposition leaders have been orchestrating violence and undermining democracy.

Sarma condoled the death of a BJP worker Bipul Saikia, who died due to pre-poll violence in Samaguri assembly constituency.

Taking to X handle, he wrote, "My deepest condolences to the family of our @BJP4Assam karyakarta from Samaguri, Late



Bipul Saikia, who was violently attacked and killed by goons of @INCAssam."

"Those responsible will be held

accountable. This crime is a grim reminder of the Congress' deception, those who chant "Samvidhan Bachao" are the very ones orches-

trating poll violence and undermining democracy. The sacrifice of our karyakartas shall not go in vain," Sarma added.

To recall, following pre-poll violence in Samaguri's Bajiagaon on Thursday, Bipul Saikia, a BJP cadre died on Friday at a hospital in Nagaon town.

After getting gravely injured in a fight between two groups, Saikia was sent to the hospital.

But on Friday, while receiving treatment at this hospital, he succumbed to his injuries, according to reports. They also stated that local police began looking into the entire incident after the youth's death. Five assembly constituencies in Assam will go for by-polls in the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Sumi Borah and others produced in court

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Oct 26: The controversial Assamese actress Sumi Borah, her husband Tarkik Borah and the prime accused in the multi crore only trading scam were produced in the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court in Kamrup (Metro) district in Guwahati on Saturday.

The trio was brought to the city from Dibrugarh central jail on Friday along with five other accused in the trading scam. A team of Assam Police escorted them from Dibrugarh to Guwahati.

Today, Sumi Borah, along with Tarkik, Bishal and other accused were brought to the Court in a bus amid tight security by police. They were not allowed to speak with the media persons present at the Court premises.

Meanwhile, a CBI team also conducted a search operation in Dibrugarh at a business premise owned by Sumi Borah's brother. The raid operation continued until late hours on Saturday night. The state government has handed over the 41 cases related to the online trading scam to the central agency.

Meanwhile, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Assam Police handed over key information (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Modi govt systematically throttling MGNREGA: Jairam Ramesh

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Saturday accused the Modi government of "systematically throttling" MGNREGA, and demanded a hike in its budget as it is the "lifeline" of crores of India's poorest communities.

"MGNREGA - the lifeline of crores of India's poorest communities - is being systematically throttled by the non-biological PM's government.

"Budget allocations are being cut relentlessly, and wage rates have been stagnant. Now, through an ill-conceived reliance on technology, workers are being denied their right to work and their right to fair payment," Ramesh said in a statement.

The Congress leader who served as the Union rural development minister in the UPA-2 government



said that in January 2024, the rural development ministry mandated the nationwide implementation of the Aadhaar-Based Payment System (ABPS) for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

To be eligible for ABPS, work-

ers must meet several conditions, including linking the Aadhaar to their job card with the name matching in both, and mapping the Aadhaar-seeded bank account with the National Payments Corporation of India, he said.

"Ten months later, we now have data on the catastrophic impact of this policy shift," he alleged.

As per an analysis of the public data available on the MGNREGA portal by Lib Tech, a consortium of academics and activists, 27.4 per cent of all registered workers (6.7 crore) and 4.2 per cent of active workers (54 lakh) remain ineligible for ABPS, Ramesh claimed.

"More worryingly, between April and September this year, 84.8 lakh workers registered under the MGNREGS found their names deleted from the programme." This deletion (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Elaborate arrangements including suspension of internet adopted Recruitment test for Grade IV posts today

GUWAHATI, Oct 26: Written examination for various categories of grade 4 posts of the Assam government will be conducted today amidst elaborate arrangements, including the suspension of mobile internet services across the state during the test hours.

The tests under the State Level Recruitment Commission (SLRC) will be held in two shifts in 28 districts, official sources said.

Altogether 8,27,130 candidates are eligible to appear in the recruitment examination to be conducted for HSLC level posts in the first shift from 9 am to 11.30 am at 1,484 centres.

A total of 5,52,002 candidates have applied to appear in the examination to be conducted for Class 8 level posts in the second shift from 1.30 pm to 4 pm at 808 centres.

The examinations in the two



shifts are being held for 5,023 posts, including 2,102 posts of read up to Class 8 level.

Mobile internet services will remain suspended across the state from 8.30 am to 4 pm, the third such instance in two months.

Mobile internet, mobile WiFi and mobile data services of all service providers will remain sus-

pending from 8.30 am to 4 pm "in the interest of holding free, fair and transparent written examination and also to prevent any law and order issues having a bearing on public safety", an order said on Friday.

It added that the voice calls and the broadband connectivity based on fixed (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## HT BRIEFS

### 6 injured

DIPHU: Six were injured in an accident at Kheroni Chariali, West Karbi Anglong at 6:30 pm. The accident occurred when a Tata Mobile pick-up truck, AS02 AC 3561, which was reversing, crashed into a Bolero pick-up truck, AS32 C 3186. The Tata Mobile pick-up truck was carrying bamboo, and the other pick-up truck was coming from Lanka to Kheroni which was ferrying vegetable traders. The injured six vegetable traders who are residents of Umkhermi Kuma Anglong, West Karbi Anglong have been identified as Kasang Hansepi, Prity Millikpi, Ruplin Hansepi, Pulin Bey, Presci Rongpharpi and Larsing Millik. All the injured have been brought to Diphu Medical College & Hospital for treatment.

### Drugs seized

GUWAHATI: In a series of co-ordinated anti-narcotics operations across Assam, the Nagaon Police made significant seizures of suspected heroin and arrested three individuals in connection with the contraband, the police officials informed on Saturday. In the first operation, a police team from Rupahi Police Station seized two soap boxes filled with suspected heroin, weighing a total of 110.8 grams.

### MSME programme

SHILLONG: The Directorate of Commerce and Industries in Meghalaya has launched a significant initiative to enhance the entrepreneurial landscape in the state by organizing a four-day MSME Mentor Development Programme in collaboration with the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Shillong.

## NGOs committed to eradicate child marriage in Bihar

PATNA, Oct 26: Despite measures by the Bihar government, it remains one of the top five states for child marriage prevalence, according to Just Rights For Children Alliance, a group of NGOs whose partners were petitioners in the case leading to the Supreme Court ruling that Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA) cannot be stunted by personal laws.

During a media interaction here on Saturday, JRCA convener Ravi Kant said, "The alliance is committed to assisting state governments in our collective effort to eliminate this heinous crime by 2030. Despite existing measures, Bihar still ranks among the top five states for child marriage. We stand firmly behind the state government in its quest to end child marriage, which robs kids of their rights and freedom."

NGO partners of JRCA, including the Association for Voluntary Action and Prayas JAC Society, met here to strategise on effectively eradicating child marriage in light (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## China says disengagement of troops going on 'smoothly' in eastern Ladakh

BEIJING, Oct 26: China has said that the disengagement of troops in eastern Ladakh by the Chinese and Indian armies is going on "smoothly" following a recent agreement between the two nations.

On October 23, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping endorsed the agreement on patrolling and disengagement along the LAC in eastern Ladakh during their bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the BRICS Summit in Kazan in Russia.

"In accordance with the resolutions that China and India reached recently on issues concerning the border area, the Chinese and Indian frontier troops are engaged in relevant work, which is going smoothly at the moment," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a media briefing here on Friday.

India announced the agreement to pull back troops from the fric-



tion points on October 21 and China confirmed a day later saying the two sides have reached "resolutions on relevant matters" and Beijing will work with New Delhi to implement these resolutions.

Following the agreement, the two countries have begun troop disengagement at the two friction points at Demchok and Depsang Plains in eastern Ladakh and this process is likely to be completed

by October 28-29, Indian Army sources said on Friday. The agreement was arrived at only for these two friction points, and "talks are still underway" for other areas, they said. The sources said that patrolling will begin at these points once the disengagement that began two days back is completed and both sides will move their respective troops (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Kuki apex bodies oppose fencing of India-Myanmar border

IMPHAL, Oct 26: Kuki Inpi and Kuki Chiefs Association opposed the proposed fencing of the India-Myanmar border and scrapping of the Free Movement Regime (FMR), claiming these "threaten to infringe upon the cultural, traditional and historical rights of indigenous communities".

The central government earlier this year decided to cancel the FMR, which allows people residing close to the India-Myanmar border to venture 16 km into each other's territory without a visa.

It also decided to erect a fence along the 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border, which passes through Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

The two apex bodies of the Kuki-Zo community, in a joint statement issued on Saturday, claimed that the movement of people across the India-Myanmar border is a vital lifeline for maintaining social, cultural and family ties across the border.

"The proposed fencing disregards the unique geographical and social conditions of this region, where borders cut across traditional lands and family networks. The imposition of artificial barriers risks fracturing our communities, isolating families, and erasing the continuity of cultural practices vital to our identity," the statement said.

The two bodies called upon the government to recognise the historical significance of the Free Movement Regime and its integral role in upholding the rights and cultural heritage of tribal communities.

"We urge the authorities to reconsider this fencing project and to ensure that any border-related measures are implemented with full consultation and respect for the rights and aspirations of indigenous people," it said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Need to document traditional knowledge of traditional plants: President Murmu

RAIPUR, Oct 26: President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday emphasised the need for documentation and standardisation of knowledge held by villagers and tribals about herbs and plants with medicinal values in order to save such information from going extinct.

Speaking at the third convocation of Pt Deendayal Memorial Health Science and Ayush University in Nava Raipur, the President said Chhattisgarh has a treasure of herbs and medicinal plants, of which villagers and tribals have immense knowledge.

"Documentation and standardisation of such knowledge is important to preserve them and save them from going extinct. By promoting research on the knowledge base of forest dwellers, such information can be used on a wide scale. It will also create employment opportunities," she said.

The President pointed out that infectious diseases such as malaria, filaria, and tuberculosis (TB) were yet to be fully eradicated from the country, adding that the Union government was making concerted efforts to wipe them out.

"Sickle cell anaemia is a major problem among tribal communities. The Union government has been trying to overcome it through the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Mission," Murmu said.

Speaking about climate change and global warming, the President said the food habits of people across the world have been making progress associated with these two aspects even more complex. The WWF's Living Planet Report 2024 has stated that India's food habits are considered the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'We are all inspired by Elon Musk's achievements' India needs revolutionary growth to become developed economy: ISRO chief

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: India must undergo a revolutionary transformation to rise as a developed economy, said ISRO Chairman S. Somanathan, stressing the importance of technological advancements and product development to drive economic growth.

He also praised tech mogul Elon Musk for his innovative work in the space sector, noting that Musk's achievements have inspired global efforts, including those within ISRO.

Somanathan made these remarks while addressing students at the 13th convocation ceremony of the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) in Delhi here on Saturday.

"If India aspires to become the third, second, or even the first-largest global economy, a revolutionary change is needed. Growth will not be driven by trade and resources alone.



We need to create value in technology that powers product development," he said.

Speaking about Musk, the ISRO chief said, "Elon Musk is making heads turn with his rockets. Every-

one, from Europe to Russia to China, is looking at what he is doing. He is a great man doing fantastic work, and we are all inspired by his achievements."

The ISRO chief also highlighted

India's recent strides in space, mentioning the country's successful lunar missions. However, he pointed out that continuous effort and innovation are essential to maintain momentum.

"We have reached a level where we are the fifth-largest global economy, but to move further up, we must build and improve upon our technology. We have to work hard to develop our own expertise in areas like propulsion, material sciences, and orbital dynamics," he said.

Somanathan applauded the government's recent initiatives to open the space sector to private players, saying it was a step in the right direction.

"The government has recognised the importance of private investment and participation in space. This will drive faster development cycles, reduce costs, and enhance our global competitiveness," (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# India's economic policies rooted in inclusive growth and social empowerment: Sitharaman

WASHINGTON, Oct 26: India's economic policies are rooted in inclusive growth and social empowerment, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Friday, telling the global financial leaders that India is committed to global collaboration even as it pursues its long-term vision of becoming a high-income economy by 2047.

"As India pursues its long-term vision of becoming a high-income economy by 2047, it remains committed to global collaboration. The government is working toward USD one trillion in merchandise exports by 2030, leveraging improved logistics, trade reforms, and deeper integration into global value chains," Sitharaman said in her remarks to the Development Committee of the World Bank here.

With synchronised efforts across sectors, India will continue to strengthen its resilience, manage inflation, and maintain policy continuity. By partnering with the World Bank and global stakeholders, India aims to contribute meaningfully to sustainable and inclusive growth—a path that benefits both the nation and the global community, she said.



Sitharaman told the Development Committee that India's economic policies are rooted in inclusive growth and social empowerment. Initiatives such as the PM Ujjwala Yojana, Swachh Bharat Mission, and the Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile trinity have significantly improved access to essential services, reduced financial exclusion, and minimised leakage through targeted Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT), she said.

India, she said, has witnessed sustained improvement in female labour force participation, which

increased from 23.3 per cent in 2017-18 to 37 per cent in 2022-23, contributing to both economic productivity and social development. This focus on inclusive development aligns with the government's commitment to leaving no one behind, she added.

Addressing that 50th meeting of the IMFC, separately, at the Annual Meetings, Sitharaman said looking ahead, India's growth story remains intact as its fundamental drivers—consumption and investment demand—are gaining momentum. Given healthy balance

sheets of banks and corporates, supply chain normalisation, business optimism, and robust government capital expenditure, the real GDP growth is expected at 7.2 per cent for 2024-25 and inflation at 4.5 per cent, Sitharaman said.

India, she said, has adhered to the budgeted gross fiscal deficit target of 5.6 per cent of the GDP in 2023-24, now set lower at 4.9 per cent for 2024-25 in line with the medium-term target. Central government revenue expenditure (net of interest payments and subsidies) grew by 9.6 per cent in July-August, after contracting by 1.5 per cent in the previous quarter.

Central government capex increased by 25.8 per cent in July-August 2024 after contracting by 35 per cent in Q1:2024-25. As in 2023-24, focus of the government budget continues to be on infrastructure development and capital expenditure, which are expected to crowd-in private investment, she said.

Private investment continues to gain steam on the back of expansion in non-food bank credit, higher capacity utilisation and rising investment intentions, the finance minister said. (PTI)

## Bandhan Bank's total business grows 24% to 2.73 lakh crore

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 26: Bandhan Bank's total business grew by 24% to close at ₹ 2.73 lakh crore, as announced by the Bank in its financial results for the second quarter of the financial year 2024-25.

The Bank's share of retail to total deposits currently stands at approximately 68%. The encouraging growth witnessed in the last quarter has been driven by its expansion in distribution, business efficiency, and the favourable operating environment.

The Bank now serves over 3.5 crore customers through nearly 6,300 banking outlets in India. The total number of employees working at Bandhan Bank is now nearly 80,000.

During Q2 FY25, the Bank's deposit book grew by 27% over the same period in the previous year. The total deposit book now stands at ₹ 1.43 lakh crore while total advances are at ₹ 1.31 lakh crore.

The current account and savings account (CASA) ratio is standing at 33.2% of the overall deposit book. Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR), an indicator of the stability of the Bank, is at 15.6%, higher than the regulatory requirement.

Speaking on the Bank's performance, Ratan Kumar Kesh, MD & CEO (Interim), said, "Bandhan Bank's strong performance in the second quarter reflects the momentum in quality growth with our focus on effective risk management and compliance. Our success is anchored in the trust of our customers and the dedication of our employees. By focusing on innovation in technology, refining our processes, and enhancing products and people capabilities, we are well-positioned to drive the next phase of growth for Bandhan Bank 2.0."

Meanwhile, in recent months, the Bank has launched a range of new products, including trade services, pension schemes, the Avni Savings Account, and a GST payment service.

## Sulagna Ghosh-operation manager at Amazon creating impact

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 26: Sulagna Ghosh, operations manager at Amazon's Virtual Contact Center (VCS) who is a testament to the power of teamwork, resilience, and the ability to embrace change while motivating others to do the same.

With over six years at Amazon India, Sulagna's journey includes key milestones such as her promotions to Group Manager and then Operations Manager. In 2024, she was honored with the Employee of the Year award for Amazon Stores Customer Service in India—a recognition of her commitment to the organization's mission and customers. However, it's her work beyond recognitions and achievements that truly captures the essence of her leadership.

Sulagna's career began at Amazon office in Pune before she transitioned to the Virtual Contact Service (VCS) in West Bengal. Amazon operates an All-women Virtual Customer Service center, which provides women—whether homemakers, new mothers, or single parents—with a

## Taiwan wants to join IMF to get financial protection from China

WASHINGTON, Oct 26: Taiwan, a major economy the size of Poland but absent from global organisations, is making a longshot push to join the International Monetary Fund, the 190-country organisation that offers members emergency loans and other financial assistance.

"Taiwan's membership at the IMF would help boost financial resilience," the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington said during this week's IMF and World Bank annual meetings. The office serves as Taiwan's de facto embassy in the US. The push is part of a wider effort to boost the self-governed island's global status. Taiwan also is seeking to participate in the UN World Health Organisation's annual World Health Assembly and join Interpol. The US and its allies are Taiwan's supporters.

But China, which sees Taiwan as a breakaway province and threatens to annex it by force, has blocked such efforts and insists it represent Taiwan in international forums. The island is now designated as "Taiwan Province of China" in IMF literature.

In 2020, then-President Donald Trump signed legislation making it US policy to advocate for Taiwan's membership or observer status in international organizations such as the IMF.

The US State Department said the world "stands to benefit from Taiwan's expertise and resources to address some of today's most difficult global challenges." It said it will continue to support Taiwan's membership in international organizations where statehood is not required and encourage Taiwan's meaningful participation in groups where its membership is not possible.

The IMF had no comment on Taiwan's efforts to gain membership. The US has the biggest say within the group, but China is also influential, having more

voting power than any other country except for the United States and Japan. Bo Li, who had worked as vice governor of the People's Bank of China, now serves as the IMF's deputy managing director.

The idea for Taiwan to join the IMF is to protect the democratically ruled island from a financial assault by China, which is determined to seize the island, by force if necessary.

While Washington is worried over a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait, analysts and observers have raised concerns that Beijing could wage an economic and cyber war to force a surrender from Taiwan.

In a report this month, the research group Taiwan Academy of Banking and Finance warned that China could try to destabilize the Taiwanese currency by placing big bets against Taiwan's stock market and manipulating foreign exchange markets. Joining the IMF would give Taiwan access to a rainy-day fund it could use to defend itself. The US House has approved a bill that would direct the United States to advocate for Taiwan's IMF membership. The legislation reflects growing concern from Republicans and Democrats alike over Beijing's rising threats to Taiwan, an island critical to the global supply of computer chips.

Rep. Patrick McHenry, a North Carolina Republican and chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, argued in January that the United States needed to look beyond Beijing's military threats and help Taiwan defend itself financially.

"As one of the world's most advanced and innovative economies, Taiwan should be included under the fund's activities," McHenry said.

Taiwan does not have a seat at the United Nations. But Rep. Young Kim, R-Calif., has noted that Kosovo in southeastern Europe is an IMF member even though it is not recognized by the UN. (AP)

## Rajasthan govt introduces new scheme to attract investment

JAIPUR, Oct 26: To promote private investment, the Rajasthan government has introduced the Rajasthan Investment Promotion Scheme (RIPS) 2024 to offer increased financial incentives to a wider range of sectors.

The new flagship scheme, which has been launched ahead of the 'Rising Rajasthan' Global Investment Summit 2024, improves upon RIPS 2022 by encompassing a wider range of sectors and offering increased financial incentives to support the establishment and operation of industries within these areas, an official release said.

RIPS 2024 expands its focus to include new sunrise sectors and manufacturing and services thrust

sectors, while also enhancing incentives for tourism businesses, IT/ITeS companies, and women-led startups, Principal Secretary (Industries) Ajitabh Sharma said.

In addition to the existing sunrise sectors in the previous policy, RIPS 2024 has added a series of new sectors on the sunrise sectors' list. New sectors added to the list include Aero & Space, Defence, Drones, Semiconductors, Agri-Tech and Waste Recycling.

The first three units in the sunrise sectors, classified as mega or ultra mega projects, will be eligible to avail 25 per cent additional sunrise booster over and above the capital subsidy, turnover-linked incentive or investment subsidy.

The new sectors will now be eligible to avail additional 10 per cent incentive over the asset creation incentive secured by the business unit. In manufacturing, the new areas added are Construction Equipment, Pumped Hydro Storage Manufacturing, Electrolyser Manufacturing and Metals. Similarly, the new areas added to the Service's Thrust Sectors' list include Higher Education, Knowledge-based Industries, Vocational Training and Skilling.

Recently, Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma said that Rajasthan has signed investment MoUs worth ₹ 15 lakh crore under the 'Rising Rajasthan' Global Investment Summit 2024. (PTI)

## ICICI Bank Q2 profit rises 14.5 pc to ₹ 11,746 crore

NEW DELHI, Oct 26: Private sector lender ICICI Bank on Saturday posted a 14.5 per cent growth in its standalone profit to ₹ 11,746 crore for the second quarter ended September 2024. The private sector lender had earned a net profit of ₹ 10,261 crore in the same quarter of the previous financial year. The total income increased to ₹ 47,714 crore during the quarter under review against ₹ 40,697 crore in the same quarter last year, ICICI Bank said in a regulatory filing. The bank reported an interest income of ₹ 40,537 crore during the quarter compared to ₹ 34,920 crore in the year-ago period. The net interest income (NII) improved by 9.5 per cent to ₹ 20,048 crore from ₹ 18,308 crore in the second quarter of the previous year. On the asset quality front, the bank witnessed improvement with gross non-performing assets (NPAs) declining to 1.97 per cent of the gross loans by the end of September 2024 against 2.48 per cent a year ago. (PTI)

## SBI, Exim Bank helping Africa's businesses by filling trade financing gap

JOHANNESBURG, Oct 26: The State Bank of India and the India Exim Bank are helping businesses in African countries to fill the gap in trade finance, the South African heads of the two organisations told the India Entrepreneurs Forum (IEF) here.

The event was initiated by Consul General of India Mahesh Kumar who said it is the first of a series of ongoing engagements with the IEF.

We did this to assist all companies doing trade or some form of other business with India in their capacity building because generally for bigger businesses they are able to sort out their trade financing needs. For smaller business, a lot of issues look very difficult and

insurmountable and they find the complexities of the trade world very bewildering sometimes, Kumar said.

CEO of State Bank of India (SBI) Ashutosh Kumar and Shyamshish Acharya, Resident Representative at the Johannesburg Representative office of India Exim Bank, both explained the benefits of using their services in dealing with import and export trade between India and the African continent.

SBI is enabling India's footprint in Africa, playing an important role in African trade by way of funding to South African banks through syndications, Kumar said, adding that the bank had invested fresh capital and retained its earnings for

the last 27 years in South Africa.

SBI's offerings include bilateral credit lines to multi-lateral institutions such as Afri-Exim, Africa Finance Corporation, and others. We also offer bilateral lines in the form of trade loans to the other major banks present in African countries, Kumar said.

The CEO said such funding indirectly reaches smaller corporates in the African nations whereas direct reach would have been difficult.

With various Indian corporates participating in the bid bonds in various project in Africa, we have ensured to establish reach in majority of the African nations through our correspondent bank, Kumar said. (PTI)

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## Mischievous provocation and

are subject to "abduction, forced religious conversions and forced marriages every year. Anyway, I could go on, but I'll end here." At the debate, India reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Harish stressed that sustainable peace requires women's full, equal, meaningful, and safe participation at all levels of decision-making including politics, governance, institution-building, rule of law, the security sector, and economic recovery.

Needless to say that economic and social well-being of the population in general and women in particular are integral to sustainable peace. Highlighting the significant strides in implementing the WPS agenda, Harish said that as the fifth-largest troop contributor, India deployed the first-ever all-female Formed Police Unit to Liberia in 2007, setting a precedent in UN peacekeeping. "Their work garnered tremendous appreciation within Liberia and in the UN," he said. He underlined that in a rapidly changing world, "we must harness new technologies to enhance women's participation while guarding against online threats and disinformation."

"We have leveraged digital technologies to minimise gender divide, enhance financial inclusion and empower women, especially in rural India. We call upon the international community to develop robust mechanisms to address these emerging challenges." (PTI)

## CM attacks Cong over Samaguri

November month as these seats got vacant following the election of five MLAs to the lower house of the parliament in this year's Lok Sabha polls.

Out of these five assembly seats, four were earlier held by the BJP and its allies. Congress has only one seat—Samaguri which is a bastion of former Assam minister Rakibul Hussain.

Hussain has been representing the Samaguri in the assembly since 2001. He has not lost a single election in the last 23 years. The senior Congress leader challenged AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal in the Dhubri Lok Sabha seat in the parliamentary elections. This seat was held by Ajmal since 2009.

Hussain pulled a spectacular win in Dhubri by a margin of more than 10 lakh votes putting a stop to Ajmal's hold in that seat. Now the Samaguri assembly seat is vacant and Hussain's son Tanjil Hussain was fielded by the Congress party to contest from this constituency in the upcoming by-poll.

However, the BJP has been eyeing to oust Congress from Samaguri this time. The ruling party has thrown its top leaders into the campaign for the bye-elections.

## Modi govt systematically throttling

coincides with the implementation of ABPS, and so far, estimates suggest that at least 15 per cent of these deletions were wrongful," Ramesh said.

According to the Congress leader, ABPS-related issues and deletions may be impacting MGNREGA as a whole. Also, the person days (total number of workdays a person registered under the programme completes in a financial year) generated in MGNREGA have fallen 16.6 per cent since last year, he claimed. Noting that the ABPS comes in conjunction with the National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS), he said both these policies are resulting in the violation of the right to work on demand and the right to timely payment of wages guaranteed under the MGNREGA. "The rural development must immediately put a stop to this insistence on ABPS and NMMS. Furthermore, the budget for MGNREGA and the daily wage of the workers should be increased," he said. (PTI)

## Recruitment test for grade 4

telephone lines shall remain functional during the period. Any violation of the promulgation will be punishable under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 and also under the relevant provision of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the order added. Tight security arrangements have been put in place in all the examination centres, including for frisking and checking of candidates.

The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) will be operating five pairs of examination special trains to facilitate and clear the extra rush of candidates appearing for the tests, an NFR release said.

These trains will be operated for one trip each in both directions, it added. Written tests for recruitment to grade 3 posts under the SLRC were held on September 15 and 29, during which also mobile internet services were suspended. About 18.50 lakh candidates have applied for the various classes of Grade III posts and 13.70 lakh for the different Grade IV posts, official sources said. In the first instance, mobile internet services were suspended for four hours in nearly all the districts on two days in August 2022 when written examinations for Grade 3 and 4 posts under SLRC were conducted for the first time. (PTI)

## Sumi Borah and others produced

regarding the online trading scam to the CBI officials. It is learned from police sources that a team of CBI officials will interrogate Sumi, Bishal, and Tarkik separately first and later they might be questioned together.

Earlier, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that the CBI would be investigating 41 cases pertaining to the multi-crore online trading scam. "We have filed 41 cases against the online trading fraudsters. The state government decided to hand over all of these cases to the CBI. I spoke with Union Home Minister Amit Shah about this, and he agreed to let the CBI probe the scam. I went to Delhi to apprise him about the latest development," he had said. To recall, an online trading scam amounting to Rs. 2,200 crores was busted in Assam in September after a kingpin of this fraud, Bishal Phukan was arrested from his Dibrugarh residence. The controversial Assamese actress Sumi Borah and her husband Tarkik Borah, accused in the multi-crore online trading scam surrendered before the police later.

## China says disengagement of

and dismantle temporary structures. Eventually, they added, the areas and patrolling status are expected to be moved back to the pre-April 2020 level. The ties between the two Asian giants nosedived following a fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. Foreign secretary Vikram Misri on October 21 said in New Delhi that the agreement was finalised following negotiations over the past several weeks and that it would lead to a resolution of the issues that arose in 2020. (PTI)

## NGOs committed to eradicate

of the Supreme Court's recent guidelines. On October 18, 2024, the Supreme Court ruled that the PCMA cannot be restricted by personal laws. The apex court emphasised the importance of a holistic strategy involving sex education, child empowerment, and community engagement to address child marriage, referencing the "Just Rights for Children Alliance vs Union of India" case. (PTI)

## Kuki apex bodies oppose fencing

"Any development proposed or executed against the will and sentiments of the Kuki people will be considered a threat to our culture and identity and will be befittingly responded by the Kuki people," it said. Manipur shares a 398-km-long border with Myanmar, of which only 10 km has been fenced and work on another 20 km were underway. Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh has long claimed that the porous border has led to a massive influx of illegal immigrants from Myanmar into the state, leading to demographic changes and the flourishing of illegal poppy plantations in the hills.

Singh also claimed that the porous border has led to a rise in smuggling of drugs. The Centre had earlier said that the idea behind the fencing is to not only stop the misuse of FMR, which is used by insurgent groups to carry out attacks on the Indian side and flee towards Myanmar, but also to put a halt to the influx of illegal immigrants, and paralysed drugs and gold smuggling networks. More than 200 people have been killed in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kukis in Manipur since May last year. (PTI)

## Need to document traditional

most sustainable in the economy, she said. "This underlines the importance of our traditional lifestyle, which we get from Ayurveda." President Murmu said.

She also said doctors must consider dedicating some tenure of their profession to rural areas. (PTI)

## India needs revolutionary growth

he said. He encouraged young engineers and scientists to innovate and build technologies that could propel the country forward. "The current knowledge and technology lifespan is so short that you must remain a student throughout your life. Be humble, honest, and willing to adapt. This is what will help you navigate the challenges ahead," he advised. The event was also addressed by Delhi LG VK Saxena, who serves as the chancellor of IIT Delhi. (PTI)

## Review meeting on developmental initiatives of BTR held



HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR, Oct 26:** A review meeting with the executive members (EMs) and Secretaries of government of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) on the progress of various flagship and developmental initiatives initiated by the BTR government, was held at the BTC Secretariat conference hall, Bodofo Nwgr in Kokrajhar on Saturday.

The meeting was chaired by Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region, and reviewed on the progress of various flagship programmes and developmental initiatives to initiate by the Govt of BTR to make vibrant future of Bodoland Territorial Region.

The meeting was graced by the deputy CEM of BTR, Gabinda

Chandra Basumatary, several EMs, and Secretaries of Govt of BTR, and reviewed at length towards the ushering of development of BTR, and the welfare initiatives initiated for the people of the Bodoland region.

Notably, the Govt of BTR so far initiated and launched more than 35 flagship programmes for bringing healthy welfare and uplift of the Bodoland region.

CEM Boro stated that the development of BTR, and the welfare of the people, remain top priority of the BTR government. He mentioned that the BTR government has been emphasizing for bringing ushering of the development and welfare of the people since its inception in the Bodoland Territorial Region. He said that the review meeting has reviewed at length to review progress of various flagship & developmental initiatives, and to plan for the vibrant future of Bodoland Territorial Region.

He said that the BTR government is committed to work for all round development and welfare of the common masses, and accordingly initiated various mission and visions initiatives.

## Cachar gears up for peaceful bye-election

### Election observers convene key review meeting in Silchar

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** In a determined effort to guarantee a peaceful, fair, and transparent bye-election for the 11-Dholai (SC) Legislative Assembly Constituency, a high-level review meeting took place on Saturday at the newly inaugurated conference hall of the District Commissioner's office in Silchar.

The meeting was chaired by esteemed election observers, including General Observer M Vijayalakshmi, Police Observer Pakela Cephas Kalyan, and Expenditure Observer Chanchal Kumar Tiwari, who underscored the importance of strict adherence to the guidelines set forth by the Election Commission of India (ECI). Their collective guidance aims to establish an election process that upholds integrity, transparency, and the democratic values fundamental to the election.

The session emphasized compliance with ECI's mandate, particularly focusing on the implementation of measures designed to maintain a free and unbiased election atmosphere.



Observers stressed that all officials involved in the election process must enforce protocols meticulously, ensuring that voters' rights are safeguarded and that the election outcome reflects the true will of the constituency. These efforts were further reinforced by clear directives from the Observers, who called on officials to enhance coordination and accountability in carrying out their responsibilities.

Cachar district commissioner Mrdul Yadav led the district's representation at the meeting, showcasing Cachar's readiness to deliver a smooth and credible election

process. He was joined by Pranab Kumar Borah, chief executive officer of Cachar Zilla Parishad, and Norsing Bey, district development commissioner, who each played an active role in addressing critical election protocols and operational details. Their participation, alongside Additional District Commissioners, the Election Officer, and other dedicated Assisting Officers from various Election Cells, demonstrated a unified commitment to support a seamless election process.

To further involve the public in

the election process, citizens of the 11-Dholai (SC) constituency are encouraged to stay informed and participate actively. Election officials emphasized the importance of public awareness, urging voters to stay updated on election-related announcements through the official page of the District Election Office, Cachar. The outreach initiative reflects a broader goal to ensure transparency, with regular updates that empower residents to be active participants in upholding a fair democratic process.

This initiative underscores Cachar's commitment to conducting a safe, efficient, and transparent election, fostering confidence among voters and ensuring their voices are fairly represented in this crucial bye-election.

The public is urged to take advantage of the resources provided by the district election office to stay engaged and informed as Cachar moves closer to polling day. This message was officially communicated through a press release from the Regional Office of Information & Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar, Assam.

## Karbi Anglong sets strict rules for Assam recruitment exam

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Oct 26:** In preparation for the Assam Direct Recruitment Examination (ADRE) scheduled for tomorrow, October 27th, a meeting was held on Saturday at the deputy commissioner's office to ensure a smooth and orderly process.

Attendees included Abhijit Baruah, IAS Observer for ADRE, Nirola Phangchopi, ACS, deputy commissioner of Karbi Anglong, along with officials from the police administration and education department. Deputy Commissioner Phangchopi emphasized the district's extensive preparations, prioritizing measures to create a peaceful and fair examination environment.

The Inspector of Schools shared the schedule: Paper-I for the HSLC level will take place from 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM, followed by Paper-II for the VIII level from 1:30 PM to 4:00 PM. Across Karbi Anglong's three sub-divisions, 39 centers will accommodate 17,331 candidates for Paper-I and 11,624 for Paper-II.

The Karbi Anglong administration has issued a prohibitory order, initially announced on 9th September 2024, which restricts unauthorized gatherings within 100 meters of examination centers. Mobile



phones, electronic devices, inflammable items, and programmable gadgets are strictly prohibited within exam halls, along with calculators, printed or written materials, pen drives, and other items that may facilitate cheating.

To maintain a calm atmosphere, loud music and sound systems near examination centers are also banned. Violations will result in strict action under the Assam Public Examination Act, 2024.

The administration calls upon the public to fully cooperate to ensure a fair and orderly examination process for all candidates.

## Nine candidates file nominations for 11-Dholai (SC) bye-election

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** With the 11-Dholai (SC) Legislative Assembly Constituency Bye-Election drawing closer, the political landscape in Cachar is heating up as nine candidates have filed nominations.

The nomination process, concluding on Friday, has brought forward a diverse mix of experienced party-backed candidates and ambitious independents, each ready to vie for the prestigious legislative seat in what is shaping up to be a highly competitive and spirited contest.

Confirming the nominations, Dr Dhruba Jyoti Hazarika, the Returning Officer, noted that contenders from major political parties as well as independents have thrown their hats in the ring, creating a vibrant, multi-faceted competition. Leading the candi-

date lineup for the Indian National Congress (INC) is Dhrubajyoti Purkayastha, while the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has fielded Nihar Ranjan Das. As key representatives of their respective national parties, these two candidates underscore the influence of major political powers within the constituency.

In addition to the INC and BJP candidates, the Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) has nominated Gour Chandra Das, bringing a left-wing perspective to the table. Additionally, six independent candidates—Amiya Kanti Das, Amalendu Das, Raju Das, Parimal Das, Dilip Kumar Dhubi, and Dhiraj Das—have also entered the fray, each aiming to capture the support of the constituency's electorate.

Returning officer, Dr Hazarika confirmed that all nomination

documents, including the required Forms A and B for candidates from recognized parties, are set to undergo thorough verification to ensure procedural compliance. This verification is an essential part of maintaining a transparent and orderly election process.

The upcoming steps in the election timeline will include the scrutiny of nominations scheduled for October 28, followed by the deadline for withdrawal of candidacy on October 30 at 3:00 PM. The Returning Officer will then assign official election symbols to the confirmed candidates, marking the final step toward their formal participation in the 11-Dholai (SC) bye-election.

This is stated in a press release issued from the Regional Office of Information & Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar, Assam.

## Doom Dooma son earns Ph.D



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** Suvam Nath Sharma has been awarded the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) by Assam University for his research on "Selected Retellings from the Mahabharata in English: A Study in Revisionist Mythology."

He completed his research under the supervision of Lalthakim Hmar, associate professor, English, Assam University, Silchar. He is son of Lopu Nath Sharma and Sudip Nath Sharma and a native of Doom Dooma.

## Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah reviews developmental activities in Tamulpur

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah, conducted a comprehensive review of the developmental activities undertaken in Tamulpur District on Saturday.

This review involved an assessment of the efforts from 26 departments aimed at accelerating the district's progress.

The Minister emphasized, "In our pursuit of progress, we must ensure that the benefits reach those who truly need them—our farmers and the community at large. It is imperative that we act swiftly and decisively to turn our plans into reality."

During the meeting, Minister Mallabaruah stressed the importance of timely completion of pending projects, particularly those designated as priorities. He expressed concern over the necessity of adequate staffing within the departments, highlighting that effective implementation hinges on having the right personnel in place.

A significant focus of the discussion was the agricultural sector, where the minister advised departmental heads to ensure that genuine farmers benefit from rice procurement processes. He pointed out that only brokers seem to be gaining from these transactions, urging a shift in focus towards the actual farmers.

In light of numerous applications for schemes such as "PM FME" being rejected by banks, the minister called for an immediate report from the department heads. He reiterated the importance of public welfare, stressing that the government must prioritize the needs of the community in all its initiatives.

The review meeting was attended by key officials, including local MLA Jalen Daimari, principal secretary of BTC Akash Deep, secretary of higher education Narayan Konwor, district commissioner Pankaj Chakraborty, superintendent of police Diganta Kumar Choudhury, and various departmental heads.

## Solar fence handed over to community at 3 Goalpara villages to mitigate HEC

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** Three stretches of solar-powered fence that were installed for mitigation of human elephant conflict (HEC) and facilitating coexistence of man and elephant were formally inaugurated on Saturday.

Later on it was handed over to local community-based solar fence management committees in three villages under Rongjuli Forest Range of Goalpara District of Assam recently.

These stretches of solar fence were, in fact, installed two months ago with community participation in the process at Ganeshpura 2 km, Borjuli 1.5 km and Bainpara 2 km villages under Rongjuli Forest Range by biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak with support of Goalpara Forest Division and in collaboration with local communities.

The Range Officer of Rongjuli Khalilur Rahman inaugurated all the three stretches of solar fence on October 18 last in three different programmes held at Bainpara, Ganeshpura and Borjuli.

The stretches of solar fence were then handed over to the respective fence management committees of Bainpara, Ganeshpura and Borjuli through signing of the necessary MoUs.

Pradeep Daimary of Chesapani moder-

ated all the three programmes in presence of Aaranyak team comprising Anjan Baruah, Swapan Das and Ripunjoy Nath.

These three stretches of solar fences will protect around 39 households of Borjuli, Bainpara and Ganeshpura villages.

It may be noted that almost 100 bighas of croplands have been damaged by wild elephants in Greater Chesapani area including Borjuli, Bainpara and Ganeshpura village in the last three years.

Around 15 persons died due to HEC in different adjacent villages of this area till date since the area has become affected by HEC.

Three of them died in the last three years. Around 20 houses were damaged in the area by wild elephants in the last 10 years. So far, 45.61 kilometres of solar-powered fence have been installed at the initiative of Aaranyak in Goalpara district of Assam around 20 HEC-affected villages and one school with support from multiple sponsors including Goalpara Forest Division and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

It may be noted that the type of electricity called Direct Current (DC) that powers a solar fence meant for mitigation of Human elephant conflict (HEC), is not lethal.

This DC current is produced by a solar-charged battery.

## NFR adds 6 festive special trains to ease holiday rush



HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** N F Railway has introduced six pairs of special trains on Saturday, each operating on specific schedules to provide relief to travelers. These festive trains are set to operate from October 26 through the end of November, connecting key destinations across the region. Key services include: Train No. 04680/04679 (Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Katra - Kamakhya Festive Special) will operate on select dates, helping travelers reach Kamakhya from Katra and vice versa.

Train No. 07540/07539 (Kathihar - Manihari Special) will run daily until November 20, 2024. Train No. 05740/05739 (New Jalpaiguri - Patna Special), operating every Saturday, will offer a direct link between New Jalpaiguri and Patna. Additional routes between Anasol, Kathihar, Dauram Madhepura, and Chhapra will also run as daily or semi-weekly specials, providing extensive travel options. Travelers can check the full details of schedules, stoppages, and timings on the IRCTC website or through N F Railway's social media platforms and newspapers. Passengers are advised to confirm schedules prior to their journey.

## Dr Chandra Prakash Thakur receives 'Vagbhata' award by AIIMS

### Hojai cardiologist honoured with academic excellence and dedication to service



HT Correspondent

**HOJAI, Oct 26:** Dr Chandra Prakash Thakur has been awarded with the Vagbhata Award by All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur (AIIMS).

He was awarded on Friday by the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Raipur at Raipur.

President of India Smt Droupadi

Murmu conferred this honor to him at the second convocation ceremony of the institute. He was extended this award for passing in first class in every department in his Doctor of Medicine, 2020.

It is worth noting that Dr Thakur is the son of retired teacher Manikant-Neelam Thakur, resident of Ramakrishna Mission Road, Hojai. He has completed his school-

ing from Gandhi Vidyapith High School in Hojai.

After that, he completed his higher secondary from Cotton College, Guwahati and MBBS from Guwahati Medical College. After that he served as a doctor in rural areas. After, serving in rural areas, he completed his MD from Silchar Medical College and recently he has received the degree of Doctor of Medicine from AIIMS, Raipur.

At the convocation ceremony on Friday, he was awarded the Gold Medal and Vagbhata Award. Presently, he is serving as a cardiologist at GNRC North, Guwahati.

Talking to our Correspondent, Dr Chandra Prakash Thakur expressed his happiness. He credited his success to almighty, his parents and teachers and to all the well wishers. He said his motto is to serve the society. Meanwhile, all the teachers of Gandhi Vidyapith High School, Hojai and alumni of GVPHS have congratulated him on his marvelous achievement.



HT Correspondent

**DIBRUGARH, Oct 26:** The Department of Anthropology, DHSK College, successfully organized a two-day national workshop on Saturday.

The workshop was on Contemporary Methods of Assessing Growth and Nutritional Status, sponsored by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR).

The workshop held on October 25 and 26 saw active participation from academicians, research scholars and post graduate students from

the department of Anthropology, DHSK College. Renowned resource persons included Prof D K Limbu from the department of Anthropology, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong; Dr Farida Ahmed Das and Dr Sarthak Sengupta, both retired professors from the department of Anthropology, Dibrugarh University; and Dr Mithun Sikdar from the Anthropological Survey of India, Mysore.

They emphasized the importance of understanding

growth patterns and nutrition in today's evolving health landscape.

The workshop featured lectures, hands-on demonstrations, and discussions on modern techniques used in anthropometric measurements and nutritional assessments.

Participants expressed enthusiasm for the in-depth knowledge shared, particularly the focus on contemporary approaches that blend traditional methods with modern technological tools.

The workshop marked a significant step toward advancing research and application in the field of anthropology and public health.

The workshop was coordinated by Dr Nitumoni Saikia, from the department of Anthropology, DHSK College, who ensured smooth conduct of the sessions.

# Sualkuchi: Weaving the golden legacy of Assam's silk industry

By: Dipak Kurmi

Nestled along the northern bank of the mighty Brahmaputra River, just 30 kilometers from Guwahati lies the quaint village of Sualkuchi, often referred to as the "Manchester of the East" or "Manchester of Assam." This picturesque village in the Kamrup district of Assam is a haven for silk weaving, a tradition that dates back centuries and continues to be the lifeblood of the region. Known for producing some of the world's finest silks, including the illustrious golden Muga, ivory Pat, and warm beige Eri, Sualkuchi has established itself as a cultural and economic hub, weaving threads of history, craftsmanship, and commerce into its vibrant fabric.

## The Historical Origins of Sualkuchi's Silk Industry

Sualkuchi's history as a weaving village stretches back to the 11th century when King Dharmapala of the Pala dynasty sponsored the silk weaving craft by bringing 26 weaving families from Tantikuchi to Sualkuchi. This marked the beginning of the village's journey toward becoming a major silk-producing center. Historical accounts suggest that the village, then known as Suvarnakudya, is mentioned in Kautilya's Arthashastra, an ancient Indian treatise, as a region known for producing high-quality silk.

The village took its current form as a weaving hub in the mid-17th century when the Ahoms defeated the Mughals and occupied Sualkuchi. Under the reign of Ahom King Swargadeo Pratap Singha (1603-1641), the weaving industry was revitalized, and Momai Tamuli Barbarua, a great administrator of the Ahom kingdom, established Sualkuchi as a dedicated silk-weaving village. During the reign of the Ahom kings, silk weaving was a luxury reserved for royalty and noble families, further enhancing the prestige and exclusivity of Sualkuchi's silk products.

## The Golden Threads of Assam: Muga, Pat, and Eri Silks

Sualkuchi is renowned for producing three distinct types of silk, each with unique qualities that have captivated silk lovers for generations:

**1. Muga Silk:** This naturally golden silk is produced by the *Antheraea assamensis* silkworm and is known for its durability, often outlasting its owners. Muga silk, exclusive to Assam, becomes glossier with each wash, making it highly prized in both domestic and international markets.

**2. Pat Silk:** Known for its pristine ivory white hue, Pat silk is produced by the Bombyx tenebrion silk worm. Pat silk has a delicate texture and is often used to create traditional Assamese garments such as the mekhela chador and gamosa.

**3. Eri (Ahimsa) Silk:** Also known as Ahimsa silk, it is produced by the *Samia cynthia ricini* silkworm. What makes Eri silk

unique is its ethical production process, where the silkworm is allowed to develop into a moth before the cocoon is harvested. Eri silk is prized for its warmth and softness, making it an ideal material for shawls and winter wear.

## The Art of Weaving: Craftsmanship Passed Down Through Generations

Weaving in Sualkuchi is not just an industry; it is a way of life. Every household in the village is equipped with a loom, and the rhythmic sounds of flying shuttles fill the air as artisans transform silk threads into exquisite fabrics. The craft of silk weaving is ingrained in the lifestyle of Sualkuchi's residents, with women often outnumbering men in this intricate art form.

The process of creating a silk fabric begins with the design of motifs, which are typically inspired by the rich flora and fauna of Assam. Popular motifs include the peacock, deer, rhino, and the iconic Jaapi, the traditional Assamese hat. These designs are first drawn on graph paper and then transferred onto punched cards that guide the loom in creating the intricate patterns.

The weaving process is labor-intensive, with a single saree taking up to six days or more to complete, depending on the complexity of the design.

Traditionally, golden zari (metallic thread) was used to embellish the motifs, adding an extra layer of opulence to the fabrics. However, as silk weaving became more commercialized, weavers began using silk and cotton threads to create more affordable yet equally beautiful designs.

## The Transformation of Sualkuchi's Weaving Industry

Over time, silk weaving in Sualkuchi evolved from a craft exclusive to the Tanti community to a broader village-wide enterprise. In the 1930s, other communities, including fishermen and Brahmins, took up weaving as their primary source of income. The industry received a major boost during World War II, as demand for silk increased, and soon, nearly every household in Sualkuchi was engaged in weaving.

Today, Sualkuchi's weavers produce a wide range of silk fabrics, from traditional mekhela chadors and gamosas to contemporary sarees and scarves. The weaving techniques passed down through generations have been preserved, although modern tools and methods have been introduced to increase efficiency and meet the growing demand for Assam silk.

## Challenges and Modernization

Despite its rich history and cultural significance, Sualkuchi's silk weaving industry faces several challenges. The rising cost of indigenous silks such as Muga and Eri has led some weavers to import cheaper silk yarns from regions like Mysore and Bhagalpur, diluting the quality of the products. This blending of imported yarns with native silks has made Sualkuchi's silk fabrics more affordable, but at the cost of knowledge, aiming to create citizens who are morally responsible, ethical, and compassionate. In Assam, like in other parts of India, moral education plays a vital role in building a society grounded in values like honesty, integrity, respect for diversity, tolerance, and environmental responsibility.

**1. Building Social Cohesion:** Assam's rich mosaic of ethnic communities, languages, and traditions requires a cohesive social framework where diverse groups coexist peacefully. Moral education fosters tolerance and understanding, essential for maintaining Assam's social fabric.

**2. Strengthening Family Values:** The traditional joint family system in Assam has been slowly replaced by nuclear families, especially in urban areas like Guwahati. This shift, compounded by busy lifestyles, has reduced the time families spend instilling values in children. Schools need to step in and ensure that moral teachings continue to be imparted.

**3. Curbing Juvenile Delinquency:** With growing access to digital technology and media, young people are more exposed to various influences, some of which are negative. Moral education is critical in helping them make responsible choices, discouraging behaviors that lead to delinquency,

of authenticity.

Furthermore, middlemen and traders often exploit weavers by paying them less than what their work is worth, limiting the income potential of this traditional craft. The lack of adequate infrastructure and government support has also hindered the growth of the weaving industry, despite its enormous potential to contribute to Assam's economy.

## Sualkuchi's Recognition as a Best Tourism Village

In a significant boost to Sualkuchi's global reputation, the Ministry of Tourism recently selected Sualkuchi as one of India's "Best Tourism Villages" in the craft category. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, whose constituency includes Sualkuchi, hailed this recognition, emphasizing the village's cultural heritage and silk-weaving tradition. He encouraged visitors to explore the village and experience its rich legacy firsthand.

The selection of Sualkuchi as a best tourism village highlights its contribution to both Assam's tourism and textile industries. The village's centuries-old silk weaving tradition, combined with its scenic location on the banks of the Brahmaputra River, makes it an attractive destination for both domestic and international tourists.

## The Future of Sualkuchi's Silk Industry

Sualkuchi's silk industry holds immense potential for growth, both in terms of economic impact and cultural preservation. To unlock this potential, the government and stakeholders must take steps to support the weavers and promote the village as a global destination for high-quality silk products. This includes providing financial assistance, improving infrastructure, and implementing fair trade practices to ensure that weavers receive a fair price for their work.

In addition to traditional silk weaving, Sualkuchi has the potential to tap into niche markets such as eco-friendly and sustainable fashion, particularly with the production of Eri (Ahimsa) silk, which aligns with ethical and cruelty-free consumer values.

Sualkuchi, with its centuries-old silk weaving tradition, stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Assam. The village's skilled artisans, who continue to produce exquisite silk fabrics using age-old techniques, are the heart and soul of this craft. With government support, infrastructure development, and a focus on sustainable practices, Sualkuchi can preserve its legacy while also meeting the demands of a modern, globalized world.

As one of India's best tourism villages in the craft category, Sualkuchi is poised to become a shining example of how traditional craftsmanship and cultural heritage can contribute to both economic development and tourism. For visitors, a journey to Sualkuchi is not just a trip to a weaving village - it is an immersion into the soul of Assam's silk heritage. *(The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)*

# Associated with the memory of Mahapurush Madhavadev-Dhekiakhwa Barnamghar

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Dhekiakhwa Barnamghar in Jorhat occupies a unique place in the Shankari art culture and religious sphere of Assam. The Dhekiakhwa Barnamghar is located about 12 km east of Jorhat city. According to legend, it was founded by Mahapurush Madhavdev in 1528. (1450 Shaka). Mahapurush Madhavdev lit a lantern at this place, which has been lit by the devotees for 494 years. The lantern has been recognized by the Asia Book of Records and the India Book of Records as the "longest burning lantern". Every year, especially in the Assamese month of Bhada, it is believed that the Dhekiakhwa Barnamghar becomes the heaven of mortals. The devotees contribute to the Namghar at their own discretion and the management committee uses it for social and cultural development.

The namghar is situated in a complex of facilities spread over 13 bighas of land. It has helped to maintain unity between Vaishnavism and the people of Assam. There are good transportation facilities to almost all parts of Assam as well as Jorhat district. The entrance to the Dhekiakhwa Barnamghar is located on the way from Jorhat city to Shivsagar on NH-37, crossing the Lahdaigaon police station. The temple is located in the village of Dhekiakhwa, about 3.5 km away.

According to the anecdote of the Dhekiakhwa Barnamghar, after the union of Sri Sri Sankardev and Madhavdev, while Sankardev was preaching with devotees including his beloved disciple Mahapurush Madhavdev and his son-in-law Harijowai, his opponents began to accuse the king of Assam. The king tried to arrest Sankardev and Madhavdevs at the instigation of the non-Vaishnavas. Later, the king ordered Sankardev's son-in-law to death and released Madhavdev. From prison he crossed the jungle hungry and arrived at this place (where the Barnamghar is now located) in the evening.

There was an old couple living in this place. They made their living by begging. They had only one bag of rice in their house that day. In the evening, the joy of having a beautiful gentleman as a guest was boundless. There is only enough food for two people. However,

they both went hungry and asked the Mahapurush to take a bath, thinking of serving the guests. The Mahapurusha went to the nearby stream called "Holonga" to bathe and there was a great tree by the water of the river. So he sat down, and washed his hands and feet, and took a bath. Before the Guru could arrive, the old woman said, "There are rice fields and no vegetables. Can anything be done for the vegetables now?" The old man said we should stay hungry and bring him some pumpkin vegetables, as he has come hungry and eat anyway.

According to the old man's words, his wife gave rice and vegetables and Madhavdev. He cooked the rice himself. But knowing that there was no rice in their house, then Madhavdev asked them, "Would it be wrong for you to take rice with us?" Then they said, "It is not wrong, but the rice is given for you. If you have half a box, we will go downstairs. You are a hungry man. Take it yourself." Madhavdev smiled and removed the lid. The old women were surprised to see enough rice. They thought then that this was not a man but God Himself. So he asked him to cook rice, and they ate with great joy. So he washed his face and talked and spent the night there.

Then, thinking of how to prepare breakfast, the old woman cut her hair and sent her husband to sell it at the market by a pond half a mile away. The name of the pond is still known as Hat-Jan Pokhuri Par. And it was in this market that the old woman bought rice, vegetables, and other foodstuffs. Then, when he got home with all the things, he arranged for Madhavdev to cook the rice and he cooked it.

Then Madhavdev said to the old man, "We wanted to put a lantern in this place". Then they agreed and Madhavdev called some people. And at that time the rice was cooked and the three of them ate happily. Madhavdev met the villagers and asked for their consent to put a lantern in this place. And they happily agreed. After getting the consent of the people, Madhavdev asked them to bring some branches of big trees.

After they brought it, he made eight pillars. He set up three pillars, north, south, and west, and lit a lamp in the place where he boiled rice and ate. Madhavdev told the people, "We

served in this place and three of us offered the rice to the Gurujana. So a lamp was placed in this place. If you light the lamp and keep it burning, it will burn forever. I named this shrine after the bridge made of palm wood used to cross this stream, the old woman arranged to sell her hair and feed her rice, so I named this stream Burhidaha. I was very satisfied with the Fern vegetable of this place. Therefore the name of this village shall be called "Dhekiakhwa."

Since then, the name of the area along with this namghar has been Dhekiakhwa. After Mahapurush Madhavadeva left the place, the old man died, and the people gave the name of The Old Namghar on that place and started singing Palanam on the pattern of Madhavdev in the Assamese month of Bhada every year. Later, this namghar became famous as the beautiful Dhekiakhwa Namghar.

There are several stories associated with Dhekiakhwa Barnamghar. It is said that the main pole of namghar is made of sal tree. One night one of the bhakats (monk) of the namghar saw in his dream that the river near the Barnamghar (known as Dhekiakhwa jaan) is flowing in opposite direction and is carrying a Sal tree mean to be for the construction of the Barnamghar. Next day when people saw that dream to be true, they made the main pillars of the Barnamghar from the tree.

Several festivals and sessions of special worship, besides the daily worships, are celebrated every year in certain months. These festivities are attended by lakhs of devotees. A month-long Palnam (festival of worship) in the month of Bhada (from mid-August to mid-September), Srimanta Sankardeva birth anniversary during the Assamese month of Aahin. Madhavdeva birth anniversary during the month of Jeth Bhaona Mohotsav in the month of Chota and Raas lila in the month of November. Countless devotees gather. There is a management committee to run this Namghar. The committee was established in 1959 and has undertaken several programs for the development of the Namghar. *(The writer is CRCC of Nabari Cluster, Biswanath Education Block, Education Department, Government of Assam. He can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com)*

# End of an era!

By: Satyabrata Borah

Today, the Assamese literary world has lost one of its most beloved figures, Sashi Phukan from Biswanath Chariali. He was the creator and editor of Bishmoi magazine, a publication that became well-known for thrilling stories filled with suspense, horror, and crime. His dedication to building a space for Assamese writers who brought thrilling stories to life shaped the magazine and made it special for so many readers.

Through Bishmoi, Sashi Phukan introduced readers to mystery-filled worlds and nail-biting plots, and he nurtured a place where Assamese readers could experience the excitement of thrillers and eerie tales.

Sashi Phukan's vision for Bishmoi was clear from the start: he wanted to create a magazine that would spark the imagination of readers with stories that kept them on the edge of their seats. He understood that Assamese readers wanted more of these tales of suspense, mystery, and horror. This insight led him to start Bishmoi, which soon found a loyal audience.

People from all walks of life loved the magazine's mix of mysterious tales, chilling horror, and exciting crime stories. Readers ea-

gerly waited for each new issue, and Bishmoi quickly became a favorite among those looking for thrilling stories.

Through Bishmoi, Sashi Phukan not only entertained readers but also opened doors for talented writers in Assam. His magazine gave a platform to emerging authors, allowing them to reach a larger audience.

Writers like Ranju Hazarika and Baidurjya Baruah gained popularity through Bishmoi, and their success helped make Assamese thriller and horror stories more widely known.

Sashi Phukan had a special gift for recognizing talent and encouraging writers to tell stories that connected with Assamese readers. He took pride in promoting local talent and understood the importance of supporting regional writers who could bring new and exciting stories to life.

Although his health had been failing recently, Sashi Phukan never lost his dedication to Bishmoi and to Assamese literature. Even during difficult times, he stayed focused on his work, making sure that the magazine continued to bring joy to readers.

His commitment to Bishmoi never faded, and he kept the publication alive and true to his vision. Bishmoi, a beloved Assamese entertainment magazine, has been



capturing readers' imaginations since its first publication in 1968.

Published by Bishmoi Prakash from Guwahati, the magazine has featured works by acclaimed Assamese writers, including Baidurjya Baruah and Ranju Hazarika, who shared their novels and short stories. The magazine was stopped following the death of Phukan's wife about two years ago. But it was published again from last month.

Today, the news of his passing has saddened readers, writers, and many others who appreciated his work. His contributions to Assamese literature have left a lasting impact, and people are remembering him with respect and gratitude for all that he did. Phukan was undergoing treatment at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) where he breathed his last aged 78.

Phukan was being treated at

GMCH for various illnesses for the past two months. He was admitted there following directions from the Chief Minister of Assam, where he passed away today at around 10.30 pm. Sashi Phukan will be remembered as more than an editor or publisher. He was a storyteller, a supporter of Assamese talent, and a man who believed in the power of stories to connect people.

His work through Bishmoi brought thrills, chills, and excitement to readers, and he helped create a space for suspense-filled tales in Assamese literature. His influence will live on, inspiring future writers and readers to explore the rich world of Assamese thrillers, mysteries, and horror stories. His legacy will remind people of the joy that comes from great storytelling and the importance of preserving and promoting local voices.

# Moral education in Assam: Nurturing values in the changing society

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Moral education has long been an essential pillar of holistic development in human societies. In Assam, a state enriched by its cultural diversity, natural beauty, and historical legacy, the need for moral education has only deepened in the face of rapid social changes. The rise of modern technology, increasing urbanization, and changes in family structures have led to the transformation of traditional moral values, creating a gap in character-building among the youth. While the state has shown significant progress in education, the infusion of moral values in formal education remains a crucial area requiring greater focus.

This article delves into the importance of moral education in Assam, its historical foundations, the current state of implementation, challenges, and potential solutions to bolster moral education in the region.

## Importance of Moral Education

Moral education refers to the teaching of values, ethics, and character development, helping individuals understand the difference between right and wrong, nurturing empathy, responsibility, and respect for others. It goes beyond textbook

substance abuse, or aggression.

**Historical Context of Moral Education in Assam**  
The roots of moral education in Assam can be traced back to the region's ancient traditions, which were influenced by Vedic culture, Buddhism, and later, the Bhakti movement led by Srimanta Sankardeva. The Vaishnavite tradition, which Sankardeva propagated, emphasized humility, compassion, honesty, and devotion to truth. These teachings had a profound impact on Assamese society and laid the foundation for values that the region continues to cherish.

The British colonial era saw the formalization of education, and Assam, like the rest of India, experienced a shift in focus toward Western academic subjects. However, the moral teachings of freedom fighters like Gopinath Bordoloi, and later, cultural icons like Bishnu Prasad Rabha, Hem Barua, and Bhupen Hazarika, kept moral values alive through their works in literature, music, and politics. The post-independence period saw a greater emphasis on the development of secular education systems, but the focus on moral education was somewhat diluted.

**The Current State of Moral Education in Assam**  
In contemporary Assam, moral education is often seen as a supple-

mentary part of the formal education system. While moral stories and ethical lessons are included in subjects like social science and languages, a dedicated moral education curriculum is lacking. Most schools in Assam, particularly government schools, do not have formal programs designed specifically for character-building or ethical education.

However, some private schools, particularly those run by religious or social organizations, include moral education as a core subject. These schools follow structured lessons on topics such as kindness, respect for elders, environmental consciousness, and civic responsibility. Religious institutions, especially in rural Assam, play an important role in imparting moral education outside of the formal school system, offering students lessons through community gatherings and festivals.

**Challenges Facing Moral Education in Assam**  
**1. Lack of Dedicated Curriculum:** One of the primary challenges in Assam is the absence of a well-defined curriculum for moral education in government schools. While moral values are touched upon in subjects like Assamese and General Knowledge, the lessons are often sporadic and insufficient to make a lasting impact.

**2. Teacher Training:** Teachers are central to the success of moral education programs. However, many educators in Assam are not formally trained to impart moral lessons or engage students in value-based discussions. A comprehensive training program is needed to equip teachers with the tools to nurture ethical reasoning and character development in students.

**3. Societal and Family Influence:** The declining emphasis on moral values within families due to busy work schedules, migration, and urbanization has shifted the responsibility to schools. However, schools alone cannot bear this responsibility. A collaborative effort between parents, teachers, and communities is necessary to effectively nurture moral values in children.

**4. Cultural and Linguistic Barriers:** Assam's diversity, while a strength, also poses challenges for moral education, especially in regions where communities have distinct cultural practices and values. For moral education to be effective, it must be adaptable to the unique cultural contexts of Assam's various ethnic groups, including the Bodos, Mishings, Karbis, and others.

## Strategies for Strengthening Moral Education

**1. Introducing a Structured Curriculum:** The Assam government should consider introducing a structured moral education curriculum in schools, from primary to secondary levels. Lessons on honesty, empathy, civic responsibility, respect for diversity, and environmental stewardship should be incorporated into the daily routine of students.

**2. Teacher Training Programs:** To ensure that moral education is effectively implemented, it is essential to train teachers in ethical reasoning, moral philosophy, and pedagogical methods tailored for moral education. In-service training programs and workshops should be conducted regularly for educators at all levels.

**3. Integration with Co-curricular Activities:** Moral education can be more engaging when integrated into co-curricular activities such as debates, storytelling, dramatizations, and service projects. Schools should encourage students to participate in social service initiatives that foster compassion and responsibility toward society.

**4. Community Involvement:** The success of moral education depends on the involvement of the entire community. Initiatives like parents-teacher associations (PTAs), local cultural bodies, and NGOs can collaborate with schools

to reinforce values and ethics through cultural programs, storytelling sessions, and awareness campaigns.

**5. Leveraging Technology:** While technology can often expose students to undesirable influences, it can also be a powerful tool for moral education. Schools in Assam can use digital platforms to provide engaging content on ethical issues, disseminate moral lessons, and create forums for students to discuss ethical dilemmas.

**Conclusion**  
Moral education is an indispensable part of the development of students and society as a whole. In Assam, where social harmony, environmental consciousness, and respect for diversity are of paramount importance, moral education must be given due emphasis. By fostering a culture of values and ethics, Assam can ensure that its young generation grows up to be responsible, compassionate, and morally sound citizens. The combined efforts of educators, parents, and communities will be essential in creating a system that truly reflects the ethical values upon which Assamese society has been built for centuries. *(The author is a poet, freelance science journalist and People's Science Activist. He can be reached at mowsam2000@yahoo.co.in)*

## SILENCE IN THE FIELDS

## How The Solitary Reaper echoes Romanticism's troubled gaze on women

By: Karan Chetri

**Introduction: The song that was never heard**

William Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper* has long been celebrated for its lyrical beauty and poignant imagery. The poem transports readers to a serene Highland landscape, where a lone woman sings as she reaps grain, her voice resonating through the valleys. This scene, rich with Romantic ideals of nature, solitude, and mystery, is a quintessential example of the movement's reverence for the natural world.

However, beneath the poem's seemingly simple admiration for a moment of rural life lies a complex web of gender dynamics that warrants critical exploration. From a feminist perspective, *The Solitary Reaper* raises crucial questions about how women are represented in literature, both in Wordsworth's time and today.

**A landscape of male gaze: Seeing, but not knowing**

Wordsworth's poem unfolds from the perspective of a male speaker who observes a young woman singing as she works alone in a field. The speaker describes the scene in detail, marvelling at the sound of her song, but crucially, he does not understand the language in which she sings. This ignorance is significant. Instead of attempting to decipher the meaning of her song, the speaker revels in its sound, reducing her expression to an aesthetic experience rather than a meaningful act of communication.

From a feminist standpoint, this scene highlights a familiar power dynamic: the male gaze. The woman, isolated and unaware of the poet's presence, be-

comes the object of his observation, a figure whose existence is meaningful primarily through its impact on him. This echoes a broader pattern in literature and art, where male observers define the reality of female subjects without engaging with their inner lives.

The poem's romanticism, in this sense, becomes an act of appropriation, one where the reaper's song is stripped of its specificity and moulded into an abstraction, existing solely for the pleasure of the poet's imagination.

**The mystery of the song: Silencing and projection**

Central to the poem is the mystery surrounding the reaper's song. Wordsworth's speaker wonders whether she sings of "old, unhappy, far-off things, / And battles long ago" or "some natural sorrow, loss, or pain, / That has been, and may be again."

Yet, he makes no effort to learn the truth. Instead, the speaker is content to allow the woman's song to remain an enigma, one that he can fill with his own interpretations and emotions. This dynamic mirrors a common critique in feminist literary analysis: the tendency to view women as canvases onto which male emotions and fantasies are projected.

The silence around the true content of the reaper's song can be read as a metaphor for the silencing of women's voices more broadly. The poet's interest lies not in what the woman has to say but in how her voice makes him feel, how it stirs his imagination and allows him to craft his own narrative.

Her personal story, her reasons

for singing, are left in the background, obscured by the poet's ruminations. This reflects a recurring theme in Romantic literature, where women are often celebrated for their mystery and emotional resonance rather than for their thoughts and experiences.

**The Romantic ideal and the burden of simplicity**

Wordsworth's depiction of the solitary reaper is emblematic of Romanticism's idealisation of rural life. The Highland lass, engaged in physical labour amidst nature, becomes a symbol of simplicity and purity. The poem paints her as a figure who is harmonious with the landscape, as if she herself were an extension of the natural world.

Yet, this idealisation is not without its complications. Romanticism's celebration of nature and simplicity often comes at the expense of a deeper understanding of the complexities of rural life and the individuals who inhabit it.

For the solitary reaper, working alone in the field is likely not a choice but a necessity. The poem's romanticisation of her isolation overlooks the socioeconomic realities of rural labour, especially for women in the 19th century. The backbreaking work of reaping, far from being a picturesque activity, would have been a strenuous and exhausting task. Yet, Wordsworth's poem glosses over these aspects, choosing instead to focus on the woman as an object of aesthetic contemplation. This erasure of the hardships of rural life serves to maintain the poet's vision of the reaper as a timeless symbol rather than a real person with her own struggles and agency.

**Women in the field: Compar-****ing Romanticism to today's gender dynamics**

The portrayal of the solitary reaper as an object of the male gaze is not just a relic of Romantic poetry, it reflects ongoing challenges in how women are represented and perceived today. In contemporary media, women are still frequently cast as passive figures, valued for their appearance or emotional resonance rather than their agency and individuality.

Films, advertisements, and even social media platforms often perpetuate a similar dynamic, where women's experiences are filtered through male perspectives, reinforcing a sense of otherness. Take, for example, the depiction of women in contemporary music videos, where their presence often serves to enhance the narrative of a male protagonist rather than to express their own stories.

Just as Wordsworth's speaker interprets the reaper's song without seeking to understand it, modern media often reduces women's voices to background elements that enrich male-centric stories. The aestheticization of

women's bodies and voices, whether in 19th-century poetry or 21st-century media, raises questions about who gets to speak and who remains unheard.

**The Romantic muse: A double-edged sword**

The notion of the 'muse' is central to Romanticism, with women frequently cast in this role as sources of inspiration for male poets. In *The Solitary Reaper*, the Highland lass fulfills this function, becoming the catalyst for Wordsworth's poetic reverie. Her song is not valued for its own sake but for the way it stirs the poet's imagination. This dynamic is double-edged. On the one hand, it acknowledges the power and

beauty of women's voices. On the other, it positions those voices as existing primarily for male consumption. A feminist critique would argue that the 'muse' trope reduces women to their ability to inspire rather than acknowledging them as creators in their own right. In the context of *The Solitary Reaper*, this means that while the woman's song is central to the poem, she herself is peripheral. Her voice, her labour, her existence are secondary to the emotional journey of the poet.



This aligns with a broader tradition in literature where women are written about rather than given the space to write their own stories.

**The subversion of silence: Reclaiming women's voices**

However, a more hopeful interpretation is possible. While Wordsworth may not fully engage with the reaper's perspective, his poem inadvertently highlights the limitations of the male gaze. The speaker's inability to understand the song and his decision to leave its meaning unexplored can be read as a recognition, albeit a limited one, of the woman's separateness and autonomy. Her song, mysterious and unknowable, resists complete appropriation by the poet's imagination.

In this sense, the reaper's silence becomes a form of resistance. She maintains a space that is her own, one that the poet cannot fully penetrate. This reading suggests that even within the constraints of Romantic idealisation, there is room for acknowledging the limits of male interpretation and the persistence of women's inner worlds beyond what is visible.

**Revisiting The Solitary Reaper in a new light**

In the 21st century, the themes explored in *The Solitary Reaper* resonate with ongoing debates about voice, representation, and power. The poem challenges us to think critically about how we interpret women's experiences and how often their voices are mediated through perspectives that may not fully understand them. It invites a re-evaluation of the Romantic tradition and its complex legacy concerning gender.

Today, as more female poets, writers, and artists reclaim their voices and craft their own narratives, the image of the solitary reaper singing in the field takes on new significance. No longer just a subject for male poets, the modern reaper might write her own poem, speak her own truth, and demand that her song be heard in its entirety. By confronting the silences of the past, contemporary readers can gain a deeper appreciation of how far we have come, and how far we still have to go.

**Conclusion: The enduring echo of a distant song**

*The Solitary Reaper* remains a powerful example of the complexities and contradictions of Romantic poetry. William Wordsworth's portrayal of the reaper captures the beauty of a fleeting moment but also reveals the gendered dynamics that shaped much of the literary canon. From a feminist perspective, the poem serves as a reminder of the ways in which women's voices have been both celebrated and constrained throughout history. It challenges us to look beyond the surface of poetic admiration and to ask more difficult questions about whose stories are being told, and who gets to tell them.

In revisiting Wordsworth's solitary reaper, we are reminded that the act of truly listening, to the voices of women, to those marginalised by society, requires more than passive appreciation. It demands a willingness to understand, to engage, and to recognise that every song, no matter how distant or mysterious, holds a story worth hearing. *(The author can be reached at karan.chetri75@gmail.com)*

## Han Kang fictionalised man's idyllic relationship



By: Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee

Han Kang is South Korea's first Nobel Prize in Literature winner. Her Nobel Prize rouses great expectation of Korean literature's global recognition. The award spotlights South Korean literature, already influenced by K-pop and 'Squid Game'. She loves to focus on historical traumas. Her novel 'The Vegetarian' won international acclaim. The Swedish Academy gave her recognition for "intense poetic prose that confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life." The composition of the novel has a long history. The Vegetarian was translated into English by the British translator Deborah Smith, and was published in January 2015 in the UK and February 2016 in the US, after which it received international critical acclaim; with critics praising Han's writing style and Smith's translation. In May 2016, it won the 2016 Man Booker International Prize. It is considered as Korean translated literature's biggest win.

Prior to it winning the prize, *The Vegetarian* however had sold close to 20,000 copies in the nine years since its first publication. In June 2016, *Time* included the book in its list of best books of 2016. The second and central part of the novel entitled "Mongolian Mark", was more accepted by the Korean people and was awarded the prestigious Yi Sang Literary Prize and was translated into at least thirteen languages, including English, French, Spanish, and Chinese.

In Korean literature nature refers to the depiction of the natural world serving as the source of inspiration, reflection and emotional experience. This connection is often characterised by an appreciation for the beauty and power of nature which is intimately tied to human experiences, thoughts and feelings. Han Kang in a broader sense fictionalised man idyllic relationship in her writings.

In a February 2016 interview with *The Guardian*, Han Kang said, "As a teenager I suffered typical questions: why pain, why death? I thought that books held the answers, but curiously I realized they contain only questions. Their writers were weak and vulnerable just like we were." Writing the book which was a three part novella was a difficult task according to Han. She wrote the entire novella in longhand. Han received help from Yeong-Hye, a part-time graphic artist and home-maker when researching the book.

In fact the second part of the book is primarily inspired by Han's experiences with, this video artist and a psychiatric hospital Han was motivated deeply by the decision of the artist to stop eating meat after a bloody nightmare about human cruelty whose body of work was extensively studied by her. Based on Han's 1997 short story "The Fruit of My Woman", *The Vegetarian* is finally set in modern-day Seoul that leads to devastating consequences in her personal and familial life. The book was published on 30th October 2007 in South Korea by Changbi Publishers. *The Vegetarian* is about a woman who believes she is turning into a plant.

The novel tells the story of Yeong-hye, a home-maker

who, one day, suddenly decides to stop eating meat after a series of dreams involving images of animal slaughter. This abstinence leads her to become distanced from her family and from society. The three parts of the novel are equally interesting - "The Vegetarian", "Mongolian Mark", and "Flaming Trees". The first section is narrated by Yeong-hye's husband, Mr. Cheong, in the first person. The second section is narrated in third person focusing on Yeong-hye's brother-in-law; the third section remains in third-person but focuses on her sister, In-hye, while sporadically speaking in the present tense. The collapse of the traditional Korean value system is a common theme in South Korean literature. In the post-war period, a traditionalist movement emerged: going back to the roots of traditional rhythms and folk sentiments.

The plot of the novel is fascinating. Han first got the idea of writing about vegetation or plants when, as a university student, she came across the work of the noted South Korean writer Yi Sang. In particular, she was struck by the quote, "I believe that humans should be plants." While writing *The Vegetarian*, I was harbouring questions about human violence and the (im)possibility of innocence. Mr. Cheong considers his wife to be "completely unremarkable in any way". He explains that when he first met her, he was not even attracted to her and that suited him just fine.

Mr. Cheong is content meandering through life; it seems as if his only goal is to live a conventional, unremarkable life. He chooses to marry his wife since he thinks she would prove to be a good, dutiful wife who would fit nicely into the kind of lifestyle he seeks.

After several years of relatively normal marriage, Mr. Cheong wakes up to find his wife disposing of all meat products in the house. The incredulous family rushes her to a hospital where she recovers and where Mr. Cheong admits to himself that she has become mentally unstable. As the section ends Yeong-hye manages to walk out of the hospital and when she is tracked down, she reveals a bird in her palm, which has a "predator's bite" in it, and she asks "Have I done something wrong?"

The storyline in the second part "Mongolian Mark" we see Yeong-hye agreeing to model for him and paint flowers across a woman's body in a studio rented from an art professor in the area. He follows up this project with a second piece of art, which involves recruiting a fellow artist to join Yeong-hye in a sexually-explicit film. When his wife discovers the film, she calls "emergency services", claiming that both he and Yeong-hye are mentally unwell. He contemplates jumping off of the balcony, most likely to his death, but remains "rooted to the spot" and is escorted out of the building by the authorities.

In "Flaming Trees" Yeong-hye's behaviour worsens and she is admitted to a mental hospital at Mount Ch'uk-seong, where, despite receiving high-level treatment for anorexia, nervous and schizophrenia she behaves gradually more plant-like. On one occasion she escapes the hospital and is found standing in a forest "soaked with rain as if she herself were one of the glistening trees". In-hye and Yeong-hye are driven to a different hospital by ambulance, and In-hye observes trees as they pass by, which is a hint at the possible inheritance of similar vegetal psyche, which affects her as well.

"This is a great achievement for South Korean literature and an occasion for national celebration" said President Yoon Suk Yeol. He was all praise for Han's ability to capture painful episodes from their country's recent history. Han Kang's "intense poetic prose confronts historical traumas and exposes the fragility of human life" for which she was awarded the Nobel Prize. Much of the post-war literature in South Korea deals with the daily lives of ordinary people, and their struggles with national pain. Han Kang somewhere in her writings accepts this traditional tenacity in her writing. *(The author is a former affiliate Faculty Virginia Commonwealth University USA. He can be reached at prof.ratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)*

## Music keeps us cheerful and happy

By: Vinod Chandrashekar Dixit

Recently I got an opportunity to attend "Life Management Programme for Retiring Officers" arranged by Bank of India in Mumbai. During our programme, we had two sessions of Music Clinic by Dr. Rahul Joshi who is widely known as a versatile singer and sings songs of almost all singers from Saigal to Sonu. His inspiring journey and valuable insights sparked a wave of motivation amongst all participants of Bank of India.

The Music Clinic session was really an eye-opener with various ragas and it guided the role of music in reducing the stress level of an individual. Dr. Joshi's dynamic personality, superb eloquence and ability to establish dialogue with every participant really impressed the audience. He initiated every participant to sing with him and we really enjoyed. There is no doubt that soft music and classical music have a long lasting effect on an individual's life. Music not only brings joy, peace of mind and fulfilment, but also helps us to work effectively and rejuvenates us.

A powerful force that evokes strong emotions, music brings back heart-warming memories, and provides a way to express

yourself. The Music Clinic session reveals the fact that Music can be highly motivating during any type of exercise, including walking, cycling, and working out with weights. The right music can encourage older adults of all ages and fitness levels to get more physical activity. The field of music therapy has grown tremendously in the past century. Older adults can especially benefit from listening to music, as it gives them an outlet for creativity, socialization, and mental stimulation.

Dr. Rahul Joshi is a well-known Homeopath by profession and also a qualified and passionate Classical Singer. He has conducted Music Clinics for various groups in Mumbai and India. He believes that Music, particularly Indian music, has a tremendous effect on the mental health of an individual, and can play a significant role in bringing about physical well-being, especially in bringing down high stress and blood pressure levels.

It is to be appreciated that over the last several years, Dr. Joshi has conducted hundreds of music clinics in Mumbai and outside, for a variety of audiences ranging from corporates to jail inmates, and number of people have benefited from the experience. He has learnt from Kalyanji bhai and O P

Nayyar as well. He has an amazing range of 3 Octaves and singing is his passion.

According to Dr. Joshi, "There are seven Chakras in our body that govern our personality. With the help of the basis seven musical swaras we can try to stimulate these chakras which are very beneficial for our body. If all these chakras are stimulated the person can lead a happy and peaceful life."

According to the National Institutes of Health, music has the power to evoke strong positive emotions and elevate your mood. Music can lower your body's level of cortisol, a hormone that can contribute to feelings of stress and anxiety. The right music can be an encouraging tool to help Senior Citizens to be more physically active.

More movement, whether that's walking, dancing, or stretching along with music. When Depression and dementia are common diseases among older adults, Music therapy's approach is better for the quality of life for older adults makes it a viable tool for treating depression.

There is no doubt that the two sessions of Music Clinic has prepared us for a successful transition into retirement by addressing key areas of concern with realistic strategies. *(The author can be reached at dixitpatrikar@yahoo.in)*

Poem

## In Game Changing Efforts...

By: Bipul Chandra Kalita

Going against the wind is not an act of rebellion  
If seeds do not germinate  
If the ground gets not wet with fertile thoughts and ideas  
To welcome dawns loaded with new hopes and bliss.

Breezes, winds or storms are as important as our dreams;  
Oft our dreams get shaken  
And struggles or fights start to change colours...

Colours change too.  
Colours gain or lose glazes in showers or sunshine...  
Sweats wash our dusty bodies as well as minds  
Reminding us to revitalize the weakest limbs;

Limbs rebel to warm up the body properly, If not, it will cease to function any more...

Wellwishers, good doers, foreseers etc. may or may not overlook  
What needy ones wants out of countless things  
But money boxes will zingle  
Painting colourful dreams in poor people's eyes...

Revolutions' side effects confuse easy going rebels  
If not properly handled  
If not reaped as sowed  
In game changing efforts of the so-called game changers...

## Childhood

By: Sumedha Bhattacharjee

Those flying dream that flit's in a child's eyes;  
with a lively smile  
flickering on the lips;  
brimming over with life and laughter.

Those silly play-fights  
with friends and companions;  
with an innocent mischievous face  
and a heart pure and true.

Those innocent wonders  
flying with the wings of imagination,  
paints each moment of childhood.



# Beyonce endorses Kamala Harris in joyful speech at Houston rally

HOUSTON, Oct 26: "I'm not here as a celebrity, I'm not here as a politician. I'm here as a mother," Beyonce said at a Houston rally for Kamala Harris' presidential campaign Friday night.

"A mother who cares deeply about the world my children and all of our children live in, a world where we have the freedom to control our bodies, a world where we're not divided."

"Imagine our daughters growing up seeing what's possible with no ceilings, no limitations," she

continued. "We must vote, and we need you."

At the end, Beyonce — who was joined onstage by her Destiny's Child bandmate Kelly Rowland — introduced Harris with, "Ladies and gentlemen, please give a big, loud, Texas welcome to the next president of the United States, Vice President Kamala Harris."

She did not perform — unlike in 2016, when she performed at a presidential campaign rally for Hillary Clinton in Cleveland.

Houston is Beyonce's hometown, and Harris' presidential campaign has taken on Beyonce's 2016 track "Freedom," a cut from her landmark 2016 album "Lemonade," as its anthem.

Harris first used the song in July during her first official public appearance as a presidential candidate at her campaign headquarters in Delaware. That same month, Beyonce's mother, Tina Knowles, publicly endorsed Harris for president. Beyonce gave permission to Harris to use the



song, a campaign official who was granted anonymity to discuss

private campaign operations confirmed to The Associated Press.

Arriving in the back-half of "Lemonade," "Freedom" samples two John and Alan Lomax field recordings, which document Jim Crow-era folk spirituals of Southern Black churches and the work songs of Black prisoners from 1959 and 1948, respectively. It also features Pulitzer Prize winner Kendrick Lamar.

Kinitra D. Brooks, an academic and author of "The Lemonade Reader," says the song "Freedom"

is so important because it shows that freedom isn't free. The freedom to be yourself, the political freedom ... it's the idea that you must fight for freedom, and that it is winnable." The Harris rally in Houston highlighted the perilous strict abortion ban and putting the blame squarely on Donald Trump.

Since abortion was restricted in Texas, the state's infant death rate has increased, more babies have died of birth defects and maternal mortality has risen. (AP)

## Georgia votes in election which could take it toward EU or into Russia's orbit



TBILISI (GEORGIA), Oct 26: Georgians go to the polls on Saturday in a ballot many citizens are treating as a make-or-break vote on the opportunity to join the European Union.

The pre-election campaign in the South Caucasus nation of 3.7 million people has been dominated by foreign policy and marked by a bitter fight for votes and allegations of a smear campaign.

Some Georgians complained of intimidation and being pressured to vote for the ruling party, Georgian Dream, while the opposition accused the party of carrying out a "hybrid war" against its citizens.

Ahead of the election Bidzina Ivanishvili — a shadowy billionaire who set up Georgian Dream and made his fortune in Russia — vowed again to ban opposition parties should his party win.

Georgian Dream will hold opposition parties "fully accountable under the full force of the law" for "war crimes" committed against the people of Georgia, Ivanishvili said at a pro-government rally in the capital Tbilisi Wednesday. He did not explain what crimes he believes the opposition has committed. Many Georgians believe the parliamentary election may be the most crucial vote of their lifetimes.

It will determine whether Georgia gets back on track to EU membership or if it embraces authoritarianism and falls into Russia's orbit. "It's an existential election," Georgian President Salome Zourabichvili said. Around 80% of Georgians favor joining the EU according to polls and the country's constitution obliges its leaders to pursue membership of that bloc and NATO.

But Brussels put Georgia's bid for entry to the EU on hold indefinitely after the ruling party Georgian Dream passed a "Russian law" cracking down on freedom of speech in June. Many Georgians fear the party is dragging the country towards authoritarianism and killing off hopes it could join the EU.

The opposition parties have ignored Zourabichvili's request to unite into a single party but have

signed up to her "charter" to carry out the reforms required by the EU to join.

Zourabichvili told the Associated Press she believed most Georgians would mobilize to vote "despite some instances of intimidation, in spite of use of state resources ... and the use of financial resources" by the government.

Georgian Dream took out billboards across the country contrasting black-and-white images of destruction in Ukraine with colorful images of life in Georgia alongside the slogan, "Say no to war — choose peace."

Both Georgian Dream and opposition parties told voters they will pursue membership of the European Union, even though laws passed by the ruling party have put that hope on hold.

"The EU decided to stop Georgia's integration process unilaterally," said Vakhtang Asanidze, who spoke to AP at a pro-government rally in Tbilisi. He said he saw no reason why Georgia could not join the EU in spite of the laws.

At the EU summit last week, EU leaders said that they were "serious concern regarding the course of action taken by the Georgian government."

While Georgian Dream has adopted laws which are similar to those used by the Kremlin to crack down on its critics, voters at the pro-government rally said they did not view the election as a choice between Russia or Europe.

"We remember everything about Russia, including Abkhazia and South Ossetia," said Latavra Dashniani at the rally, referring to Russia's occupation of 20% of Georgia territory after the two countries fought a short war in 2008.

Voting for the ruling party, she said, would ensure Georgia enters Europe "with dignity," alluding to its conservative values including opposition to rights for LGBTQ+ people. Polls will open in the parliamentary election at 8 a.m. local time and close 12 hours later. Georgians will elect 150 lawmakers from across the country Saturday, choosing from 18 parties. (AP)

## Justice Yahya Afridi sworn in as 30<sup>th</sup> Chief Justice of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Oct 26: Justice Yahya Afridi took oath as the 30th Chief Justice of Pakistan on Saturday in a ceremony attended by top government officials.

He replaced Qazi Faez Isa, who retired on Friday after reaching superannuation at the age of 65.

President Asif Ali Zardari administered the oath to the new chief justice as required under the Constitution of Pakistan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, cabinet ministers, services chief, other officials and leading civilians attended the ceremony held at the President's House.

Justice Afridi was nominated as chief justice by a Special Parliamentary Committee (SPC) formed after the recently adopted 26th Constitutional Amendment, which brought numerous changes to the judiciary. The SPC decided on the appointment against the previous rule by which the senior-most judge became the top judge under the seniority principle.

Under the old rule, senior puisne judge Justice Mansoor Ali Shah would have become the next chief. Justice Afridi was the third on the seniority list of the judges and was among the top three judges sent to the SPC to nominate one as the chief justice.

Afridi was elevated to the apex court in June 2018. He took oath as the youngest chief justice of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) in December 2016.

Born on January 23, 1965, and hailing from Kohat Frontier Region, he also has the distinction of becoming the first chief justice of the high court from the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas. He was elevated to the high court as an additional judge on March 15, 2010, and subsequently, was confirmed as permanent judge of the high court on March 15, 2012.

He was enrolled as an advocate of the High Court in 1991 and that of the Supreme Court in 2004. Justice Afridi did his LLB from Law College, Punjab University, in 1988 and his LLM from Jesus College, Cambridge University, UK, in 1990.

The new chief justice faces the daunting task of delivering justice as he steps into the role with the tag of being favoured by the government and the powerful military establishment.

Justice Afridi would be tested with several constitutional and political cases that he would have to tackle and decide on in the coming weeks and months. (PTI)

## The attack came as part of Israel's 'duty to respond' to attacks on it from 'Iran and its proxies in the region'

# Israel attacks Iran in series of pre-dawn airstrikes targeting military infrastructure

TEL AVIV, Oct 26: Israel attacked military targets in Iran with a series of pre-dawn airstrikes on Saturday in retaliation for the barrage of ballistic missiles the Islamic Republic fired upon Israel earlier in the month.

The Israeli military said its aircraft targeted facilities that Iran used to make the missiles fired at Israel as well as surface-to-air missile sites. There was no immediate indication that oil or missile sites were hit — strikes that would have marked a much more serious escalation — and Israel offered no immediate damage assessment.

Explosions could be heard in the Iranian capital, Tehran, though the Islamic Republic insisted they caused only "limited damage" and Iranian state-run media downplayed the attacks. Iran's army said two of its troops had been killed in the attack, Iran's Al-Alam television reported.

Still, the strikes risk pushing the archenemies closer to all-out war at a time of spiralling violence across the Middle East, where militant groups backed by Iran — including Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon — are already at war with Israel.

Following the airstrikes, Iran's Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying it had a right to self-defence, and "considers itself entitled and obligated to defend against foreign acts of aggression."

"Iran attacked Israel twice, including in locations that endangered civilians, and has paid the

price for it," said Israeli military spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari.

"We are focused on our war objectives in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. It is Iran that continues to push for a wider regional escalation." Photos and video released by Israel showed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, wearing a black casual jacket, and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant meeting with military advisers and others in a conference room at a military command and control centre in the Kirya military base in Tel Aviv.

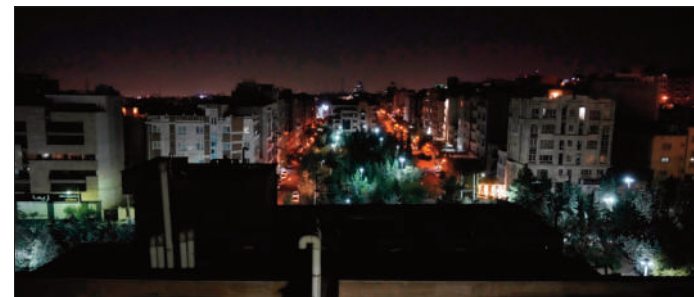
The strikes filled the air for hours until sunrise in Iran. They marked the first time Israel's military has openly attacked Iran, which hasn't faced a sustained barrage of fire from a foreign enemy since its 1980s war with Iraq.

Israel is also widely thought to have been behind a limited airstrike in April near a major air base in Iran in which the radar system for a Russian-made air defence battery was hit.

Saturday's attack came as part of Israel's "duty to respond" to attacks on it from "Iran and its proxies in the region," Hagari said.

"The Israel Defence Forces has fulfilled its mission," Hagari said. "If the regime in Iran were to make the mistake of beginning a new round of escalation, we will be obligated to respond."

Israel's attack effectively sent the message to Iran that it would not remain silent, while not taking out



highly visible or symbolic facilities that could prompt a significant response from Iran, said Yoel Guzansky, a researcher at Tel Aviv's Institute for National Security Studies who formerly worked for Israel's National Security Council.

At the same time, it also gives Israel room for further escalation if needed, and the targeting of air defence systems weakens Iran's capabilities to defend against future attacks, he said, adding that if there is Iranian retaliation, he expects it to be limited.

"There's more chances of Iranian restraint because of their interests, because of pressure from the outside, and because of the nature of the Israeli attack ... that allows them to save face," he said.

In the aftermath of the strikes, the streets of the Iranian capital were calm, children went to school and shops opened as usual, with the only sign of concern being long lines at the gas stations — a regular occurrence in Tehran when military violence flares or during natural disasters when people stock up on

fuel. Israel's opposition leader, Yair Lapid, criticised the decision to avoid "strategic and economic targets" in the attack.

"We could and should have exacted a much heavier price from Iran," Lapid wrote on X.

The United States warned against further retaliation, indicating that the overnight strikes should end the direct exchange of fire between Israel and Iran, and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said "Iran should not respond."

"We need to avoid further regional escalation and urge all sides to show restraint," he said while attending a summit in Samoa.

Saudi Arabia was one of multiple countries in the region condemning the strike, calling it a violation of Iran's "sovereignty and a violation of international laws and norms." The kingdom's foreign ministry said it rejected the escalation in the region and "the expansion of the conflict that threatens the security and stability of the countries and people of the region."

Iran-backed Hamas called the at-

tack "an escalation targeting the region's security and its people's safety." Nuclear facilities and oil installations were all seen as possible targets for Israel's response to Iran's October 1 attack, before US President Joe Biden's administration won assurances from Israel in mid-October that it would not hit such targets, which would be a more severe escalation.

Iran's military said the strikes targeted military bases in Ilam, Khuzestan and Tehran provinces, without elaborating.

It closed its airspace during the attack but Iran's Civil Aviation Organisation said flights were resuming at 9 a.m. Iranian state news agency IRNA reported.

Iran's state-run media acknowledged blasts that could be heard in Tehran and said some of the sounds came from air defence systems around the city. But beyond a brief reference, Iranian state television for hours offered no other details.

Iran's move to quickly downplay the attack may offer an avenue for it not to respond, averting further escalation.

Iran fired a wave of missiles and drones at Israel in April after two Iranian generals were killed in an apparent Israeli airstrike in Syria on an Iranian diplomatic post. The missiles and drones caused minimal damage, and Israel — under pressure from Western countries to show restraint — responded with a limited strike it didn't openly claim. (AP)

## Russian strikes on Kyiv and central Ukraine kill 2 teenagers and injure dozens

KYIV, Oct 26: A Russian drone strike killed a teenager in Kyiv during a nighttime barrage on the Ukrainian capital that lasted for hours, officials said, while four people were reportedly killed in a missile attack on central Ukraine that also left at least 21 injured.

According to Kyiv Mayor Vitalii Klitschko, the drone slammed into a 25-story apartment block Friday night in the city's west, killing a 15-year-old girl and injuring five others. Ukraine's Emergency Service said 100 people were evacuated following the strike, which damaged several apartments on the building's upper floors.

Serhii Popko, who heads Kyiv's local military administration, said that Russian



forces overnight pummeled the city for 7 1/2 hours. Air raid sirens wailed throughout the night, and Popko said that Ukrainian air defense shot down up to a dozen Russian drones.

Also late Friday, a Russian missile hit a residential area in the central city of Dnipro, killing a 14-year-old and three others, said regional Gov. Serhii Lysak, adding that at least 21 others were injured including an 8-year-old

and teenagers. The wife and teenage daughter of a local policeman were pulled dead from the rubble, police reported. The attack damaged over a dozen apartment buildings, private houses and a medical facility.

A man and woman died after a Russian drone dropped explosives on a village in the southern Kherson region, local prosecutors said, while a 61-year-old woman was killed by shelling in the northeast.

In the Kyiv province, which surrounds but does not include the capital, flying debris from a drone attack killed a woman, Ukraine's Emergency Service reported. A 13-year-old boy was wounded elsewhere in the region, it said. (AP)

## Attack on police convoy in restive southeastern province of Iran kills 10 officers

DUBAI, Oct 26: An attack on an Iranian police convoy on Saturday in the country's restive southern province of Sistan and Baluchestan killed at least 10 officers, authorities said. Details remain scarce over the attack in Gohar Kuh, some 1,200 kilometres southeast of the Iranian capital, Tehran.

Initially, reports simply described an attack by "miscreants" without more information. But shortly after, Iranian state media said 10 officers had been killed.

HalVash, an advocacy group for the Baluch people of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, posted photos and video of what appeared to be a disabled truck painted with the green stripe used by Iranian police vehicles. One graphic photo shared by the group showed what appeared to be the corpses of two police officers in the front seat of the truck.

HalVash said the attack appeared to target two security force vehicles and all those riding in them were killed. The truck appeared to have only damage from bullets, rather

than any explosive being used.

The state-run IRNA news agency said that Eskandar Momeni, the country's interior minister, ordered an investigation into the incident that it described as causing the "martyrdom of a number of police."

Authorities identified no immediate suspects for the attack, nor did any group claim responsibility. The assault came after Israel launched a major attack across Iran early Saturday morning.

The Baluch regions across the three nations have faced a low-level insurgency by Baluch nationalists for more than two decades. Verifying information remains difficult in Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan, which for decades has been home to violence involving heroin traffickers.

Meanwhile, the Taliban said they are investigating reports that Afghan migrants had been killed by Iranian security forces in the region earlier in October, an incident that threatened to further strain relations between the nations. (AP)

## Taiwan wants to join IMF to get financial protection from China

WASHINGTON, Oct 26: Taiwan, a major economy the size of Poland but absent from global organisations, is making a longshot push to join the International Monetary Fund, the 190-country organisation that offers members emergency loans and other financial assistance.

"Taiwan's membership at the IMF would help boost financial resilience," the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington said during this week's IMF and World Bank annual meetings. The office serves as Taiwan's de facto embassy in the US.

The push is part of a wider effort to boost the self-governed island's global status. Taiwan also is seeking to participate in the UN World Health Organisation's annual World Health Assembly and join Interpol. The US and its allies are Taiwan's supporters.

But China, which sees Taiwan as a breakaway province and threatens to annex it by force, has blocked such efforts and insists it represent Taiwan in international forums. The island is now designated as "Taiwan Province of China" in IMF literature.

In 2020, then-President Donald Trump signed legislation making it US policy to advocate for Taiwan's membership or observer status in international organizations such as the IMF.

The US State Department said the world "stands to benefit from Taiwan's expertise and resources to address some of today's



most difficult global challenges." It said it will continue to support Taiwan's membership in international organizations where statehood is not required and encourage Taiwan's meaningful participation in groups where its membership is not possible.

The IMF had no comment on Taiwan's efforts to gain membership. The US has the biggest say within the group, but China is also influential, having more voting power than any other country except for the United States and Japan.

Bo Li, who had worked as vice governor of the People's Bank of China, now serves as the IMF's deputy managing director.

The idea for Taiwan to join the IMF is to protect the democratically ruled island from a financial assault by China, which is determined to seize the island, by force if necessary.

While Washington is worried over a mil-

itary conflict in the Taiwan Strait, analysts and observers have raised concerns that Beijing could wage an economic and cyber war to force a surrender from Taiwan.

In a report this month, the research group Taiwan Academy of Banking and Finance warned that China could try to destabilize the Taiwanese currency by placing big bets against Taiwan's stock market and manipulating foreign exchange markets. Joining the IMF would give Taiwan access to a rainy-day fund it could use to defend itself.

The US House has approved a bill that would direct the United States to advocate for Taiwan's IMF membership. The legislation reflects growing concern from Republicans and Democrats alike over Beijing's rising threats to Taiwan, an island critical to the global supply of computer chips.

Rep. Patrick McHenry, a North Carolina Republican and chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, argued in January that the United States needed to look beyond Beijing's military threats and help Taiwan defend itself financially.

"As one of the world's most advanced and innovative economies, Taiwan should be included under the fund's activities," McHenry said.

Taiwan does not have a seat at the United Nations. But Rep. Young Kim, R-Calif., has noted that Kosovo in southeastern Europe is an IMF member even though it is not recognized by the UN. (AP)

## Suicide blast kills 8 people in northwest Pakistan

PESHAWAR, Oct 26: At least eight people, including six law enforcement personnel, were killed and many others injured on Saturday in a suicide attack targeting a police picket in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

The blast occurred at the Aslam Check Post in Mir Ali tehsil of the North Waziristan tribal district bordering Afghanistan, according to sources.

Riding three-wheelers, the bombers hit the check post and vehicles of the security forces, killing at least eight people, including four policemen, two soldiers and two civilians. Many others were also injured in the blast and were shifted to the Miran Shah Hospital. According to sources, the casualty figure may rise.

Pakistan has experienced a spike in terrorism since the Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021. Most terror incidents are reported in provinces bordering the neighbouring country — Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Around a dozen militants were eliminated during anti-terrorism operations by the security forces in the North Waziristan district this month.

A report published by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS) think tank earlier this month said that the third quarter of 2024

## Mizoram govt, Assam Rifles sign pact for relocating force's bases: CM

Assam Rifles will retain its 23 Sector headquarters, Mizoram range in Khatla (95.88 acres)

**AIZAWL, Oct 26:** The Mizoram government and Assam Rifles have formally signed an agreement for relocating the paramilitary force's bases from the heart of Aizawl to the designated battalion complex at Zokhawsang, about 15 km from the city, Chief Minister Lalduhoma said on Saturday.

Assam Rifles has bases at Zodin Square (Lammual) and Khatla areas in Aizawl.

Besides, it also has a DIG residence near Raj Bhavan at Tuikhuahtlang, a commandant bungalow (Loch House) and a church in Tuikual area near Zodin, and plots of land at Babutlang near the chief minister's bungalow and Chitte in the eastern part of the state capital, besides a war memorial and temple at Zodin, among others.

"The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to shift the Assam rifles bases from Aizawl to Zokhawsang was signed in New Delhi on October 23 with the



knowledge of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and in the presence of the chief minister, MLAs and important officials from both Mizoram government and Assam Rifles," Lalduhoma said in a press conference here.

It was signed by state General Administration Department Commissioner and Secretary Vanlalaina on behalf of the Mizoram government and Assam Rifles Director General Vikas Lakhera, he

said. Although the relocation will come into effect in April next year, the paramilitary force will hand over their lands or areas and properties at three locations -- Chitte River (62.8 acres), Tuikual church area (0.63 acres) and Babutlang (0.453 acres) -- to the state government within three months from the signing of the agreement, he said.

The chief minister said that it was not possible for the relocation to take place immediately as certain infrastructure and facilities at Zokhawsang Complex were yet to be completed.

After the end of the current academic session in April next year, the Assam Rifles will shift to Zokhawsang and vacate its main barrack complex, AR ground or Lammual, unit hospital and other facilities at Zodin (25.94 acres), Loch House and land at Tuikual (1.1 acres), Quarter Guard Hill Complex near Vanapa Hall (14.5 acres), school area (1 acre) and war memorial and temple in Zodin, he said.

As per the agreement, Assam Rifles will retain its 23 Sector headquarters, Mizoram range in Khatla (95.88 acres) and DIG residence near Raj Bhavan at Tuikhuahtlang (0.85 acre), the chief minister added.

He said that the Assam Rifles will be given depreciated costs for the lands and properties it will hand over to the state government before the end of April 2025. Such lands and buildings vacated by the Assam Rifles will be reserved for public use as per the Restriction of Use of Transferred Land Act, 2022, Lalduhoma added.

The demand for relocation of AR bases from the heart of Aizawl to Zokhawsang was raised by the erstwhile Mizo National Front (MNF) government headed by former chief minister Laldenga in 1988 after the paramilitary force allegedly killed 11 civilians in a violent clash.

In February 2019, the Union Home Ministry had directed the paramilitary force to shift its bases to Zokhawsang by May 31 that year.

However, the relocation was delayed after Assam Rifles alleged that certain infrastructure and facilities were yet to be completed.

The Zokhawsang complex was inaugurated by Shah in April last year. (PTI)

## Sikkim introduces odd-even traffic rule in Gangtok to tackle congestion



**GANGTOK, Oct 26:** Sikkim government is set to implement the odd-even traffic rule within Gangtok municipal area from November 5 to tackle congestion, officials said on Saturday.

Under the system, odd-numbered vehicles will be permitted to ply on odd dates, while even-numbered vehicles can operate on even dates from 9.30 am to noon and 3.30 pm to 6 pm.

An exemption period will be in place from 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm, they added.

The regulation covers Gangtok's municipal limits, specifically along the National Highway between Mayfair Fatak and GICI, Zero Point, but will exclude feeder roads. Emergency services, includ-

ing ambulances, police, and fire services, as well as essential services and certain government and media vehicles, are exempt from these restrictions.

To further alleviate traffic congestion, the government has announced changed school timings for both government and private schools in the city from the same day.

All government schools will begin at 8 am and end at 2.15 pm. Schools operating on a double shift, such as Sichey SSS, CS Rai Arithang SS, and Bojoghari SSS, will maintain their current schedules. Private schools are required to start at 8 am and end their sessions between 12.30 pm and 2.30 pm, officials said. (PTI)

## Movement of heavy motor vehicles restricted



**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Oct 26:** In a traffic advisory on Saturday, movement of heavy motor vehicles beyond three axles on the Chathe (Patkai) river bridge at Chumoukedima on National Highway between Dimapur and Kohima has been restricted.

Dimapur commissioner of police Kevithutho Sophie said "Movement of heavy motor vehicles from

the Chathe river bridge towards Kohima has been restricted because of the need for a road safety audit on the National Highway".

The restriction which came into force from 11 pm of October 25 will remain in place until clearance is granted by the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

Sophie said the advisory had been issued to ensure the safety and structural integrity of the bridge amid ongoing assessments.

The advisory urged travelers, especially those operating heavy vehicles, to take note of the restriction and plan alternative routes accordingly.

## Arms, explosive recovered in Manipur

**IMPHAL, Oct 26:** Arms and ammunition were recovered by security forces in Manipur's Bishnupur and Imphal West districts, police said on Saturday.

During a search operation in Ujungmakhong in Bishnupur district on Friday, a 7.62 mm self-loading rifle with a magazine, six grenades, four grenade arm rings, two tear gas grenades, three stinger grenades and an IED weighing 2.3 kg were among the items recovered, they said.

In a similar operation in Shantipur Makha Leikai in Imphal West district, a single-barrel gun, two 9 mm pistols with two magazines, a 7.62 LMG magazine and three M-67 hand grenades along with detonators were recovered, they added. (PTI)

## Silchar Municipal Board intensifies citywide sanitation drive

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** The Silchar Municipal Board (SMB), in collaboration with the Cachar District Administration, has launched an extensive sanitation and drainage operation across key city areas.

The drive was held on Friday. This large-scale initiative, targeting multiple wards, reflects SMB's intensified commitment to maintaining public hygiene and safeguarding residents from health and environmental hazards.

Safai Mitra teams, the backbone of Silchar's sanitation workforce, were deployed to tackle critical hotspots. In Ward No 16 along Link Road, SMB introduced advanced mini super sucker machines that efficiently cleared streets and drainage channels, enhancing water flow and reducing the risk of flooding. In Ward No 5 at Rongpur VIP

Road, a more robust super sucker machine was engaged to strengthen drainage infrastructure, aiming to curb persistent waterlogging issues and reinforce sanitation measures. These high-tech tools mark a significant leap in Silchar's approach to waste management and flood prevention.

The initiative, which underscores a unified approach by the Silchar Municipal Board and the Cachar District Administration, aims to sustain a cleaner environment, boost residents' health, and protect against seasonal floods. This announcement was made in an official release from the Regional Office of Information & Public Relations, Barak Valley Zone, Silchar, Assam, highlighting the city's ongoing dedication to a cleaner, safer, and more resilient future for all its residents.

## VPP demands action on ₹ 2,300-crore road scam

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** The Voice of the People Party (VPP) in Meghalaya has condemned the alleged ₹ 2,300-crore scam in the Shillong-Nongstoin-Tura road project and demanded accountability from those responsible.

VPP leader and Shillong MP Ricky Andrew J Syngkon emphasized the severity of the issue, stating that public money is at stake and contractors must deliver quality work. The project, approved in 2010 under the Centre's Special Road Development Programme-North East, initially valued at ₹

1,303.83 crore, ballooned to ₹ 2,366.77 crore after revisions.

Its original deadline was 2014. Nine individuals, including senior state engineers and officials from private companies in Telangana and Haryana, face allegations in the FIR.

Syngkon also called to address illegal coal mining and transportation with the central government, citing environmental harm and revenue losses for Meghalaya.

This concern echoes the Meghalaya High Court's previous warnings about the state's complicity in illegal coal mining.

## Sikkim MP appointed consultative committee member of food processing ministry



**GANGTOK, Oct 26:** Indra Hang Subba, Sikkim's sole Lok Sabha MP, has been appointed as a member of the consultative committee for the Union Ministry

of food processing Industries.

In a social media post, Subba expressed his gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Speaker Om Birla for the opportunity to contribute to the development of the country's food processing sector.

Subba emphasised the significance of his new role, saying, "It is an honour and a responsibility to be entrusted with this opportunity to serve. I am committed to advancing policies that will uplift our farmers, strengthen rural economies, and enhance India's agricultural value chain."

He underscored the importance of food processing in achieving the nation's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India) and expressed eagerness to collaborate with fellow committee members to drive meaningful change. (PTI)

## Potters preserved their legacy amid rising cost ahead of Diwali

**HT Correspondent**  
**MARGHERITA, Oct 26:** With Diwali just days away, the age-old tradition of lighting up homes with earthen lamps is seeing a revival across the state.

Potters, who have dedicated themselves to crafting these clay lamps, are now working tirelessly to meet the surging demand as families prepare to celebrate the festival of lights where among them is the Paul family of makum pathar in Margherita Co-District who continue to uphold the centuries-old craft passed down through generations.

Gopal Paul a traditional potter, has committed himself to producing approximately 5,000 clay lamps for the upcoming festival where his family has been engaged in this craft for generations, a legacy that dates back to their forefathers.

Despite the significance and cultural value of this artisanal work, the Pauls family faces a daunting struggle to keep the craft alive.

Gopal's efforts to sustain his five-member household through pottery have grown increasingly



challenging due to the rising cost of materials and living expenses.

The situation has become even more pressing as the cost of raw materials, such as clay and fuel, continues to climb putting pressure on potters like Gopal Paul who already operate on slim margins.

Though he remains committed to preserving the craft where Gopal Paul admits that sustaining the business is becoming harder with each passing year.

The family points out that without meaningful support or subsidies from the Assam government it

is becoming nearly impossible to continue this traditional occupation which has already seen a significant decline in recent decades.

As Diwali approaches, the Pauls are racing against time to fulfill the orders for their earthen lamps. However, questions linger about the future of traditional pottery, as potters across the region face similar economic hardships.

Under Margherita Co-District there are a total of 10 traditional potter families where more than centuries they are engaged in their traditional old occupation.

## BPF will not be in alliance with any party: Hagrama Mohilary

**HT Correspondent**

**GOSSAIGAON, Oct 26:** The BTC election is scheduled for April 2025, and the BPF will win at least 25-30 seats, forming the government alone and not allying with any party before or after the election. The UPPL's assertions about alliances are a scheme to mislead voters, and they should not be believed. BPF has made it clear to its supporters that it will not create an alliance with the Congress, AGP, BJP, or any other political party. "The BPF has controlled BTC peacefully for 17 years. "With a little patience, BPF will form a majority government in BTC again," stated Hagrama Mohilary, former BTC chief executive member and BPF president.

Speaking as the chief guest at the 6th triennial session of BPF's Guma Block held at Chakma in Guma constituency, Mohilary questioned UPPL's developmental achievements over the past four and a half years. He pointed out that UPPL, under Promod Boro, hasn't managed to maintain the roads completed during BPF's tenure. The only development UPPL has done, he said, is constructing speed bumps on the road from Kokrajhar to Karigaon. He criticized UPPL's governance, saying that BPF's 17 years in power brought peace and development to the backward BTAD region, while UPPL has failed to bring any change.

Mohilary highlighted that many people, especially the Bodo community, had trusted Promod Boro with hopes of change. However, Promod Boro has allegedly betrayed the Bodo community by displacing them three times. Mohilary further questioned how Promod Boro, who deceived his own community, could possibly work for others.



He added that only those residing in BTC before the BTC accord in 2003 are considered residents. Anyone without land will be provided land. Mohilary also made explosive remarks against a member of Promod Boro's cabinet, Ranjit Basumatary (Feringa), who, he claimed, is not a BTC resident, as he came to BTC only in 2008. He asserted that if BPF returns to power, it will review Feringa's residency and act if necessary. Mohilary claimed that BPF would also win the Sidli by-election.

In the session chaired by Guma Block BPF president and MCLA Rohindra Kumar Brahma, senior BPF leader and Central Vice president Bakhtar Ali Ahmed indirectly criticized BJP, saying, "Politics based on religion is not sustainable. BJP promotes divisive communal politics by inciting tensions between groups, but the people of Assam have stayed away from such divisive politics and continue to live together, upholding the values of Sankar-Azan and preserving Assam's dignity."

Ahmed again criticized the government led by Himanta Biswa Sarma for creating divides among people to gain political profit. He

urged everyone to stay alert against any conspiracy against BPF. As the BTC election approaches, Ahmed emphasized that BPF workers, leaders, and supporters should not engage in conflicts over candidacies and must stand united behind the candidate chosen by the high command, ensuring victory.

He called upon all communities to support Hagrama Mohilary's leadership, so that in 2025, BTC's governance can once again be handed over to BPF. Ahmed assured that BPF's return to power would bring balanced development to all communities, as in previous years.

The meeting saw a turnout of over five thousand people, including Sarabail constituency MCLA Mrityunjay Narzary, senior BPF leaders Dhruva Kumar Brahma Narzary, Billa Kumar Brahma, and potential Guma constituency candidate Intaj Ali. More than 500 people from other parties joined BPF during the session. The meeting concluded with the re-appointment of Rohindra Kumar Brahma as President and Makendra Narzary as the new General Secretary, establishing the new Guma Block Committee for BPF.

## Petition at green tribunal against railway line at Gibbon Sanctuary

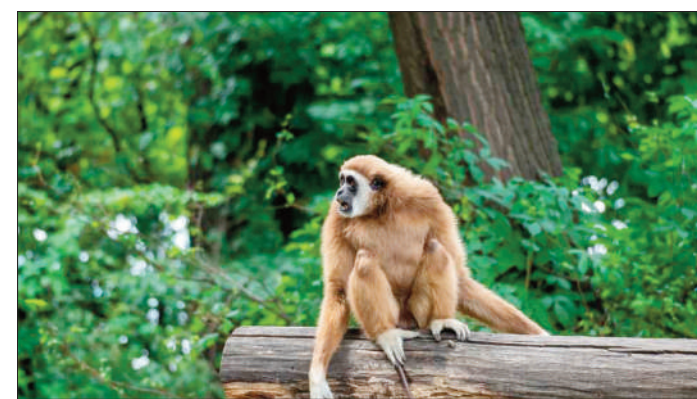
More than 500 prominent intellectuals, artists, individuals, organizations supported the initiative

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** The civil society of Greater Jorhat district filed two separate cases in the Green Tribunal through prominent Guwahati High Court advocate Shantanu Barthakur on Saturday for the protection of the Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary.

The petition was filed by the main signatories, president Pramod Chandra Mohanta and secretary Tridib Dutta, to protest against the electrification of the 1.6 km railway line passing through the Gibbon Sanctuary and to take it outside the sanctuary on the basis of a report by the Wildlife Institute of India. The second case is to cancel the crude oil exploration license obtained by Cairn Oil & Gas with the approval of the Government of India and the Government of Assam in the Dissoi Valley Reserve Forest and Gibbon Sanctuary declared as environmentally sensitive areas.

There is a lot of support from all over Assam for the appeal of the civil society of Jorhat district regarding the threat to the Gibbon



Sanctuary and Dissoi Valley Sanctuary. More than 500 prominent intellectuals, artists, individuals, organizations and social and environmental conscious persons involved in nature and wildlife conservation from different parts of Assam have sent messages of support to this appeal, a press release stated.

Activist Hiren Gohain fully supported the appeal which has been able to form a large public opinion and said that the government policies and those in government have

been taking the lead in the destruction of the environment in Assam.

"It is their character to do such destructive things for the business interests of large corporate groups. Therefore, they do not hesitate to act against the interests of the people, against the protection of nature.

I fully support the preventive measures taken by the civil society of Greater Jorhat District in this regard. There should be protests throughout Assam to further accelerate this struggle to protect nature

and protect Gibbon Sanctuary," he said.

There is no hope that the ruling government will respond positively to democratic protests and therefore a strong approach must be taken. Civil Society Secretary Tridib Dutta said civil society was not satisfied with the proposal taken at the Wildlife Board of India meeting held in New Delhi in October.

There is no clarity in the proposal to remove the railway line and the wildlife protection issues have already been tested but to no avail. Instead, the increase in rail traffic has led to increased conflict with humans as many wildlife have left the sanctuaries and entered the forest areas. On the other hand, the proposal to temporarily suspend the field study at the site of crude oil exploration in the Dissoi Sanctuary is not as expected. This is because there is no mention of consulting local residents as well as those involved in the struggle for nature conservation or the public. Therefore, the struggle will continue and intensify," he added.

# First journey as public representative, but not as 'public fighter': Priyanka to Wayanad people

Priyanka has filed her nomination papers from Wayanad after her brother Rahul quit the seat and retained Rae Bareilly

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Saturday said her first journey as a public representative of Wayanad is not her first as a "public fighter" as she asserted that fighting for democracy, justice and values enshrined in the Constitution is central to her life.

In an open letter to the people of Wayanad, after she filed her nomination papers from the constituency, she told them that she would work with them closely and help address their challenges.

Urging people to elect her as an MP in the November 13 bypoll, she promised that her work would serve to deepen the bond with them and that she would do all she could to fight for them and represent them in the way that they wish to be represented in Parliament.

She said the people of Wayanad will be "my guides and teachers" in this journey, which is her first as a public representative.

"You will be my guides and teachers in this journey which (I hope) will be my first as a public representative but not my first as a public fighter!"

"Fighting for democracy, for justice and for the values enshrined in our constitution is cen-



tral to my life. I look forward to carrying this battle for all our futures forward with your support and will be deeply grateful to you if you choose to make me your MP," she said in her letter.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has filed her nomination papers from Wayanad after her brother Rahul Gandhi quit the seat and retained Rae Bareilly. He contested two Lok Sabha seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha election. He has represented the seat from 2019 to 2024.

"My Dear Sisters and Brothers of Wayanad, A few months back, I travelled to Chooramala and Mundakkai with my brother. I saw the devastation brought by the

landslide and the depth of the loss you suffered. I met children who had lost everyone they loved, mothers who were grieving for their children and families whose entire lives had been washed away by the rage of nature.

"Yet, through the darkness of the tragedy that befell you, what shone through to me was your immense courage and fortitude as a community. You rallied together with a strength I have not seen before. Doctors, public representatives, volunteers, social workers, teachers, nurses, housewives, everyone was doing whatever they possibly could to help one another," she said.

No one was tearing into the other with blame or anger. No one was resorting to pettiness or greed. Even in the helplessness of an overwhelming tragedy, you were cooperating, comforting one another and rising to the highest standards of humanity. Your brave spirit deeply touched me, she said in her letter.

She said as she was returning home, she felt that it would be an honour to represent the people of Wayanad in parliament.

"It would be an honour to learn from you, to understand your lives and the challenges you face and to become part of this courageous community that knows how to respect each other and stand tall even in the most trying times.

"You have given my brother your love, and I know he reciprocates it fully. When he asked me to be the Congress candidate from Wayanad, he did it with a mixture of pride and sadness in his heart. Pride in your values, in your culture and in your genuinely deep bond with him and sadness for having to leave you.

"I promised him that my work here will serve to deepen this bond and that I will do all I can to fight for you and represent you in the way that you wish to be repre-

sented in parliament," Priyanka Gandhi said.

She said Rahul Gandhi explained to her the struggles of the people of Wayanad and briefed her about the issues that need attention and resolution.

He was especially concerned about the difficulties faced by the farming and tribal communities, she said, adding that she hopes to work closely with the people to face these challenges.

"Together we can work towards building upon your capabilities and creating new opportunities to strengthen your future. My sisters are most important to me, I feel deeply for the need to create opportunities for women and for their freedom to live their lives on their own terms," she said.

Noting that Wayanad is gifted with great natural beauty and uncountable resources, Priyanka Gandhi said she believes that protecting them and celebrating their culture of respect for the environment ought to be central to development.

"I truly look forward to hearing from you, to meeting as many of you as I possibly can and to listening to your views on how we can work together in the way that benefits you most," she said. (PTI)

## Restoration of statehood policy matter, not political issue: J&K BJP chief



**JAMMU, Oct 26:** Jammu and Kashmir BJP chief Ravinder Raina on Saturday said restoration of statehood to the Union Territory is not a political issue but a policy matter, and any haste on the subject should be avoided since J-K has already suffered immensely due to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in the past 35 years.

Raina was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a BJP event in Udhampur district to mark the anniversary of Accession Day when the last Dogra ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, signed the Instrument of Accession, a document which formalised Jammu and Kashmir's merger with India in 1947.

Extending his warm greetings to the people, Raina said every citizen of J-K will continue to work tirelessly for the unity and integrity of the nation and to uphold the tricolour with feelings of patriotism and dedication.

Responding to a question on restoration of statehood to the UT, Raina said J-K is a sensitive border region which bore the brunt of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism for the past 35 years with its people facing extreme difficult circumstances.

"Peace, harmony and prosperity have been restored in Jammu and Kashmir over the past 10 years under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and through the hard work of J-K's citizens, the army, police and the paramilitary forces. "Now that a newly-elected government has been sworn in following the Assembly elections, I feel the sensitive issues should be discussed and addressed through mutual cooperation without playing politics," Raina said.

"The decisions should not be

rushed, particularly on the crucial matters. Restoration of statehood is not a political issue but a policy matter and the UT government should continue its dialogue with the Centre. Any haste on the subject should be avoided," the BJP leader added.

He also said that terrorists carried out fatal attacks in Ganderbal and Gulmarg days after the swearing-in of the (National Conference) government on October 16 because the enemies of peace wanted the bloodbath to continue in J-K.

"The conspiracy to kill innocent people was hatched from across the border. J-K has already witnessed a lot of bloodshed as Pakistan-sponsored terrorism has created graveyards and cremation grounds here," he claimed.

Stating that the efforts of PM Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah along with the sacrifices of the security personnel have resulted in an improved situation in the Union Territory, Raina said, "In my opinion, the J-K government should coordinate with the Centre for the welfare of its people and avoid all sensitive issues, provocative actions or statements."

Meanwhile, the Yuva Rajput Sabha (YRS) and several other groups also celebrated Accession Day on Saturday, highlighting the "historic" role of Maharaja Hari Singh and the supreme sacrifice made by the Dogra warriors led by Brigadier Rajinder Singh.

While BJP workers paid floral tributes to the Maharaja at their party headquarters and offices across Jammu, YRS organised its main function at Tawi bridge where the statue of the Dogra ruler was garlanded. (PTI)

## Jharkhand Cong submits memorandum to EC

**RANCHI, Oct 26:** A Jharkhand Congress delegation on Saturday submitted a memorandum to the Election Commission demanding stern action against the BJP for allegedly tarnishing the image of Congress Minister Irfan Ansari.

On Friday, the BJP's state unit filed a complaint with the EC accusing Ansari of making derogatory remarks about party leader Sita Soren.

Soren shared a video of the alleged remarks on X, demanding an apology from the Congress minister. In response, Ansari referred to the video as "tampered."

The Congress delegation handed over a pen drive containing the "original" video of Ansari to Chief Electoral Officer K. Ravi Kumar. They claimed that the BJP is circulating a "misleading" and "distorted" version of the video on social media in an attempt to tarnish Ansari's image.

The BJP has nominated Soren to contest against Ansari in the Jamtara assembly seat, which will go to the polls in the second phase on November 20. Congress leader Rajesh Gupta said Ansari has consistently been a target for BJP leaders. "The allegations against Ansari are baseless. Since the BJP is lagging in the Jamtara assembly race, its leaders are resorting to such statements to remain relevant," Gupta said. The Congress requested the poll panel to take strict action to prevent such "false" and "misleading" propaganda in the future, ensuring that the electoral process remains fair and clean.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan condemned the alleged remarks made by Ansari about Soren, labeling them an insult to the women of Jharkhand. He urged Chief Minister Hemant Soren to immediately remove Ansari from his cabinet for such statements. (PTI)

## No formula fixed among MVA partners: Jayant Patil

**MUMBAI, Oct 26:** Maharashtra president of NCP (SP) Jayant Patil said on Saturday that no formula over seats has been fixed among MVA constituents for the assembly polls and that decisions are being made on the winnability of candidates.

Addressing a news conference, Patil also declared his party's candidates for 22 seats. The Sharad Pawar-led outfit had earlier announced candidates in 45 of the state's 288 assembly constituencies.

The Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) constituents, Congress, NCP (SP), and Shiv Sena (UBT), had previously said that they would contest 85 seats each in the November 20 Maharashtra elections. However, discussions on the final seat-sharing pact are still underway.

"Ninety or eighty-five seats — no formula has been fixed. Whoever can win, that party will be considered. Our effort is to put forth our best candidate," said Raut.

Asked about the '90-90-90' arrangement for MVA partners as

## Congress targets CM Vijayan over horse-trading allegations against LDF MLA

**MALAPPURAM (KERALA), Oct 26:** The Opposition Congress on Saturday targeted Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan over the horse-trading allegations that cropped up in connection with ruling LDF MLA Thomas K. Thomas and criticised him for not ordering an investigation into the serious charges despite having knowledge about it.

The grand-old party alleged that the Left veteran did nothing even after coming to know days ago that a ruling MLA had tried to woo two other LDF legislators into the Sangh Parivar-led front.

While speaking to reporters in this northern district, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, V D Satheesan, alleged that Vijayan would do only things that satisfy the Sangh Parivar leadership.

Accusing the chief minister of ruling with the fear of the Sangh Parivar, Satheesan said Vijayan is worried about cases being probed by the Central agencies.

"That's why he has sent ADGP Ajith Kumar as a messenger to the RSS leaders...and ensured the victory of the BJP in Thrissur by disrupting Pooram...that's why he does not feel there is anything wrong in meeting BJP leader Prakash Javadekar," the LOP alleged.

After all this, he would speak about secularism outside, the Congress leader further said. Satheesan asked Vijayan why he did nothing even after he came to know that the Kuttanad MLA had offered crores of rupees to two other legislators. Not even a probe has been ordered so far into the allegations, he said.

The Congress toughened its stand against the CM a day after a controversy erupted in Kerala over media reports claiming that an NCP MLA from the state, aligned with Sharad Pawar, offered Rs 50 crore each to two other Left legislators to join the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, an ally of the BJP.

The reports claimed that Thomas K. Thomas, an MLA of the NCP and an ally of the LDF, made the monetary offer to two Left MLAs Antony Raju (Janadhipathya Kerala Congress) and Kovoor Kunjumon (RSP-Leninist).

The reported allegations arose in the wake of Thomas's attempt to secure a Cabinet position in the Pinarayi Vijayan government by replacing his party colleague and Forest Minister Sasendran. (PTI)

## Maharashtra Assembly polls: Congress releases 2<sup>nd</sup> list of 23 candidates

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** The Congress on Saturday released its second list of 23 candidates for the November 20 Assembly elections in Maharashtra.

The list came after the party's Central Election Committee met and discussed the names of the candidates for the polls.

The Congress declared 48 candidates in its first list. With this list, the Congress has now announced 71 candidates.

The opposition party had retained 25 incumbent MLAs in its first list of nominees.

The Congress has also asserted that there were no differences in the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition and the final seat-sharing arrangement among its constituents will be out by Saturday evening.

Speaking to reporters after the CEC meeting on Friday, party leader Ramesh Chennithala said the Congress CEC held a discussion on the remaining seats of Maharashtra. "The MVA is contesting unitedly and we have no differ-

ences," Chennithala, who is the All India Congress Committee (AICC) in-charge for Maharashtra, said.

"We will fight together to realise the dreams of the people of Maharashtra. We are confident that MVA will form the government. People are ready to throw out this corrupt government," Chennithala said.

PCC chief Nana Patole said the MVA will perform better in the Assembly polls than in the Lok Sabha polls, and the MVA will form a full majority government.

"We, the MVA, are all set to sweep the upcoming assembly elections," Venugopal said in a post on X after the deliberations.

He also shared pictures of the CEC meeting on the microblogging platform.

The Congress announced its first list of 48 candidates for the Maharashtra polls on Thursday, fielding Patole from Sakoli, former chief minister Prithviraj Chavan from Karad South and Leader of Opposition in the outgoing Assembly Vijay Wadetiwar from Brahm-puri. (PTI)

## AAP alleges 'conspiracy' to kill Kejriwal

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Saturday alleged a "deep conspiracy" to eliminate its convener Arvind Kejriwal and warned that the BJP will be responsible if anything happens to him.

AAP leaders on Friday claimed Kejriwal was attacked by "BJP goons" during his 'padyatra' campaign in west Delhi's Vikaspuri. In a press conference, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh charged, "Police complicity in the incident clearly shows a deep conspiracy to kill Kejriwal. The BJP has become an enemy of his life."

No immediate reaction was available from the police or the BJP over Singh's allegations.

The AAP leader, however, said that despite the Vikaspuri incident, Kejriwal will continue to undertake 'padyatra' campaign as per the schedule.

When asked why the AAP has not filed any complaint in the incident, Singh said that the incident wouldn't have happened if the police were "impartial" and its officers did not do anything to stop the group of attackers who, he said, belonged to the BJP's youth wing.

The police can take cognisance of the incident and conduct its probe, he said, adding that the AAP is taking legal opinion for further action in the matter.

The AAP MP alleged that BJP leaders are supporting Kejriwal's "attackers" BJP leaders have rubbishised the AAP's claim, saying he was facing protests by locals over the supply of dirty water to their homes. (PTI)

## Jaishankar hails military and diplomacy for India-China LAC patrolling agreement

'Patrolling would resume how it used to be before'

**PUNE, Oct 26:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Saturday credited the breakthrough agreement with China on patrolling along the Line of Actual Control to the military which worked in "very very unimaginable" conditions and deft diplomacy.

Responding to a question during an interaction with students in Pune, Jaishankar said it is still a bit early for normalisation of relations which will naturally take time to rebuild a degree of trust and willingness to work together.

He said that when Prime Minister Narendra Modi met President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Russia for the BRICS summit, it was decided that the foreign ministers and National Security Advisors of the two countries would meet and see how to move forward.

"If today we have reached where we have...One is because of the very determined effort on our part to stand our ground and make our point. The military was there (at LAC) in very very unimaginable conditions to defend the country, and the military did its part and



diplomacy did its part," Jaishankar said.

Over the decade, India improved its infrastructure. Part of the problem is that in the earlier years, the border infrastructure was really neglected, he added.

"Today we have put in five times more resources annually than there used to be a decade ago which is showing results and enabling the military to actually be effectively deployed. The combination of these (factors) has led to where it is," he said.

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** Mallikarjun Kharge completed two years as Congress president on Saturday with a host of leaders led by Rahul Gandhi lauding his contribution to the party.

Kharge formally took charge as party president on October 26, 2022. He was the first non-Gandhi to be elected to the post in 24 years.

The 82-year-old Congress chief cut two cakes at his residence on Saturday in the presence of Rahul Gandhi and other senior party leaders who had gathered to greet him. During the two years of his presidency, Kharge led the party in the 2024 general elections, where the Congress improved its tally to 99 from 52 seats in 2019.

The Congress formed governments in Himachal Pradesh in 2022, Karnataka and Telangana in 2023, and is part of the ruling coalition in Jammu and Kashmir after the recent election. However, the Congress lost power in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan in 2023 and failed to get back to power in Haryana and Madhya Pradesh, under him.

Former party president Rahul Gandhi drove to Kharge's 10, Rajaji Marg residence, and felicitated him by presenting a bouquet. "Hearty congratulations and best wishes to Mallikarjun Kharge ji on completing two years as Congress President," Gandhi said in a post on X.

"Your leadership has strengthened the party's resolve to serve the people. Your struggle and experience inspire us.

"Your guidance is valuable for every warrior of justice in protecting the Constitution and public interests," the former Congress chief also said.

After Kharge cut the cake, Gandhi served him and then cut the cake into smaller pieces to serve to others present.

A host of Congress leaders including party treasurer Ajay Maken and AICC general secretaries Jai Ram Ramesh, Kumari Selja, Ramesh Chennithala and Tariq Anwar were present.

Mahila Congress chief Alka Lamba, Amritsar MP Gurjit Singh Aujla, K. Raju and other leaders were also present. (PTI)

aspects of this solution.

The pressing one is disengagement because troops are very very close to each other and the possibility of something happening existed. Then there is de-escalation because of troop buildup on both sides, he added.

"Then there is a larger issue of how you manage the border and negotiate the boundary settlement. Right now everything that's going is concerning the first part which is disengagement," he said.

He said India and China came to an understanding at some places after 2020 on how troops return to their bases but a significant segment was related to patrolling, the external affairs minister pointed out.

"There was blocking of patrolling and that is what we had been trying to negotiate for the last two years. So what happened on October 21 was that in those particular areas Depsang and Demchok we reached an understanding that patrolling would resume how it used to be before," Jaishankar added. (PTI)



# Amit Shah to inaugurate new passenger terminal at Indo-Bangla border crossing today

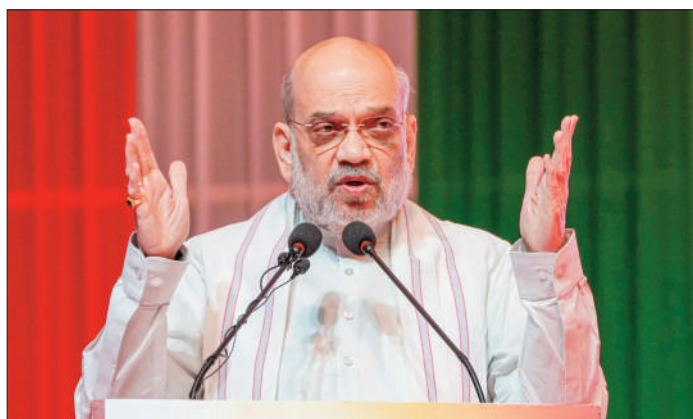
**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate the newly-constructed passenger terminal and a cargo gate named as 'Maitri Dwar' at the India-Bangladesh land border crossing in West Bengal on Sunday.

The crossing at Petrapole is the largest land port in South Asia and is a vital gateway for trade and commerce between India and Bangladesh.

The union home minister will inaugurate the passenger terminal building and 'Maitri Dwar' at land port Petrapole in West Bengal on Sunday, an official statement said.

Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh) is one of the most important land border crossings for India-Bangladesh both in terms of trade and passengers movement.

Nearly 70 per cent of land-based trade (by value) between India and Bangladesh takes place through this land port which is under the administrative control of the Land



Ports Authority of India, a wing of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

It is also the eighth largest international immigration port of India and facilitates movement of over 23.5 lakh passengers annually between India and Bangladesh.

The new passenger terminal at Petrapole is a significant addition to the region's infrastructure and it set to enhance the travel experi-

ence between India and Bangladesh, the statement said.

With its robust construction and advanced technological systems, the terminal promises safety, efficiency, and comfort for all users.

Designed to reflect the grandeur of international transport hubs, the terminal at Petrapole is equipped with all modern facilities such as VIP lounges, duty free shop, basic

medical facility, infant/baby feeding room, food and beverages outlets etc.

The terminal has a passenger handling capacity of 20,000 per day, and will house immigration, customs, and security services under one roof. Its built-up area is of 59,800 sq m.

The government has also implemented an automated entry and exit systems through flap barrier integration.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has provided the Land Ports Authority of India a new momentum, direction and dimension to take forward our cultural and trade relations with all South Asian countries," the statement said.

This ambitious project is set to redefine infrastructure and service standards, enhancing the travel experience between India and Bangladesh and positioning itself as a pivotal hub in Asia.

Maitri Dwar is a joint cargo gate at zero line agreed by both the

countries.

Shah had laid its foundation stone on May 9, 2023.

In response to the daily cross-border traffic movement at Petrapole, which sees approximately 600-700 trucks per day, the Land Ports Authority of India established the new common second cargo gate and named it as Maitri Dwar.

This dedicated gate for cargo movement is aimed at easing and streamlining the flow of goods between the two nations.

The introduction of Maitri Dwar is anticipated to significantly accelerate the release and clearance of goods at the border, thereby enhancing trade efficiency, the statement said.

The gate is equipped with modern day facilities such as automatic number plate recognition, boom barriers, facial recognition cameras and access-controlled entry and exit points for trucks from India and Bangladesh. (PTI)

## Gulmarg terror attack

### Police say 3-4 militants involved as search operation enters second day



**SRINAGAR, Oct 26:** Three to four militants are believed to have carried out the deadly attack on an Army convoy in the Gulmarg sector of Jammu and Kashmir that left four people, including two soldiers, dead, a senior police official said on Saturday.

The search operation, which entered the second day, was halted at the last light on Friday and was resumed on Saturday morning, the official said.

"According to the evidence we got from there, 3-4 militants were involved in the attack," Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Baramulla, Mohammad Zaid Malik told reporters in the north Kashmir district.

The police, Army and paramilitary forces are carrying out the search operation, which has been extended to Baba Reshi and forest areas in Gulmarg as well as the built-up area before it, the SSP said.

The SSP said security forces had been carrying out many input-based search operations on the militants in the Pattan-Kreeri area of

the Baramulla district in the days ahead of the attack.

Two soldiers and two Army porters were killed in the attack on Thursday, while another porter and a soldier were injured. Terrorists opened fire on an Army vehicle, 6 km from the tourist hotspot Gulmarg in the Bota Pathri area, when it was headed for the Nagin post in the Affarwat range.

On Friday, security forces deployed drones and helicopters for a massive search operation in the area and along the Line of Control (LoC) in the Gulmarg sector.

Security forces were also using human and technical intelligence inputs to aid the search operation launched to trace and neutralise the terrorists behind the attack, officials said.

Senior officers of the police and Army are overseeing the operation.

The area is completely dominated by the Army and there were reports recently that a terrorist group had infiltrated during early summer and taken shelter in the higher reaches of the Affarwat range. (PTI)

## Large area in Odisha's Balasore district hit by flash flood

**BALASORE (ODISHA), Oct 26:** A large area in Odisha's Balasore district was hit by flash flood due to cyclone Dana induced heavy downpour, an official said on Saturday.

Heavy rainfall in Similipal hills in neighbouring Mayurbhanj district led to rise in water level in Budhabalang, Sono and Kansabansa rivers in Balasore district.

The most affected blocks in Balasore districts are Oupada, Soro, Khaira, Simulia, Bahanaga, Remuna and Sadar according to a preliminary assessment by revenue officials.

The water level in rivers Budhabalanga, Sono, and Kansabansa in Balasore district is gradually rising due to heavy rain in catchment areas. About 20 villages in Nilagiri area were marooned for two days, but water receded on Saturday morning. Revenue and Disaster Management minister Suresh Pujari said: "So far there is no flood situation in any part of the state. River Budhabalanga is not flowing above the danger mark, but we are keeping a close watch."

The Odisha Fire and Emergency Services in a post on X said, "10 marooned persons were rescued - Katha Sangada, PS/Block-Remuna of Balasore by Balasore Fire Service rescue teams at about 12.30 hrs, 26/10/24."

Odisha Panchayat and Drinking Water minister Rabi Narayan Naik after a post-cyclone review meeting in Balasore on Saturday said, "The state government is trying its best to restore normalcy in affected areas and there is no casualty in Balasore district in the cyclone."

The minister said, "All efforts are being made to tackle the situation in affected areas."

Balasore District Collector Suryabansi Mayur Vikash said, "Damage assessment is going on but, the southern part of Balasore district namely areas like Khaira, Simulia, Bahanaga, Soro, Oupada and Nilagiri blocks have been most affected. Power supply to about 40,000 households were disconnected in these areas but restoration work is on a war footing and very soon we will be able to restore normalcy in the affected areas." (PTI)

## CRPF promotes 5,000 non-gazetted personnel in 'special drive'

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** About 5,000 jawans and sub-officers of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) have been promoted this month as part of a "special drive" conducted by the paramilitary force to lift the morale of its personnel who render hard duties in various internal security theatres of the country.

A senior officer of the force told PTI on Saturday that those promoted include personnel in the ranks of constables, head constables, assistant sub-inspectors and sub-inspectors working as barbers, band players, carpenters, motor mechanics, drivers, cooks and those in the general combat duty cadres.

The officer said a total of 4,959 personnel have been promoted as part of a special drive conducted in the force in October on the directions of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) director general.

Till now, these personnel were promoted after an "approved list" was prepared at the force headquarters level once a staffer passed the annual health and fitness test and had a clear service record from the vigilance point of view, he said.

The special measure was undertaken in the force as the Union home ministry directed all central armed police forces (CAPFs) including

CRPF to shun the old practice and promote non-gazetted personnel after holding departmental promotion committee (DPC) meetings from next year, he said.

The officer said a comprehensive list was prepared for the eligible personnel and they were issued promotion orders this month before the new system kicks in from January 1, 2025.

The aim of the move is to boost the morale of the troops who render hard duties in the three main internal security theatres of the country--anti-Naxal operations, counter-terrorist tasks in Jammu and Kashmir and anti-insurgency duties in the northeastern states. (PTI)

## Heavy downpour in 15 minutes brings TN's Madurai under swathes of water

**MADURAI (TAMIL NADU), Oct 26:** Unprecedented rain that lashed Madurai, especially the 4.5 cm rainfall received in a mere 15 minutes on Friday evening, brought several parts of the city under huge swathes of water.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin on Saturday said the state government was closely monitoring the rescue and relief activities being carried out on a war-footing to bring normalcy to Madurai and its neighbourhood.

He has deputed two ministers to carry out the rescue and relief work in the affected areas and has also advised the district collector to take necessary action.

"A team of engineers, workers and giant electric motors have been mobilised from the nearby municipalities to drain out the rainwater from the residential areas," Stalin said in a post on the social media platform 'X'.

Medical camps have been established at 20 places and people from the affected areas have been safely accommodated in three camps. The district monitoring officer has been deputed on October 25, while the Chief Secretary and disaster management commissioner were continuously monitoring the work, he added.

Speaking to reporters at Anna Arivalayam, the DMK state headquarters here, Stalin, said the rainwater was drained last night. Water entered the houses at eight places in Madurai. Precautionary measures were in progress as the IMD has forecast more rain today, he said.

The rainwater entered into the habitations, and knee-deep water



caused hardship to the residents. Amidst apprehension of the Kanmois (traditional waterbodies) getting breached, people found it difficult to safeguard their belongings as the water flooded their houses.

"All the Kanmois are safe and are brimming with water which is flowing into the Vaigai river. Efforts are now on to bail out the water," Madurai Corporation Commissioner C Dinesh Kumar said.

There were complaints of inundation in as many as 12 locations under Zone 1 and 6 under Zone 2. I was there when it rained heavily on Friday evening in Sellur. Now the water has receded by one foot and we hope it will be drained completely soon," Dinesh Kumar told reporters here.

The affected people have been lodged in four relief centres and were given food, water, and medicine, he added.

"Our workers and JCBs are on the job to clear clogging and ensure normalcy. All kanmois and channels are intact and no damage has been reported," Kumar said.

State Commercial Taxes Minister P Murthy and IT Minister Palanivel Thiagarajan visited the

flood affected areas and consoled the people.

"The Kanmois were originally constructed to conserve water for agriculture purpose and were connected to discharge into the Vaigai river," Thiagarajan said.

The unprecedented rain on Friday alone caused 10 cm rainfall. As the rain poured, Madurai received 4.5 cm rainfall from 3 pm to 3.15 pm on October 25, according to the India Meteorological Department. This has led to water-logging in several low-lying areas, including Athikulam, BB Kulam, Mullai Nagar, Kadachanenthal, LBT Nagar, Tamukkam, Thallakulam, Azhagar Koil Salai, Goripalayam, Simmakkal, Nelpettai, Keelavasal, and Yanaikkal bridge.

"There was no major loss as the administration has taken preventive measures," Murthy told reporters later.

According to the Commissioner, the city has experienced continuous rain for the last 25 days, recording 260 mm rainfall, which was 60 mm above the average.

The district collector, M S Sangeetha, visited the rain-hit areas and took measures to expedite the efforts to drain the stagnant rainwater. (PTI)

## Centre appoints 29 joint secretaries in different departments

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** In a major bureaucratic reshuffle effected by the Centre, 29 joint secretaries have been appointed in different government departments.

Officers from various central services, including the Indian Defence Accounts Service (IDAS), Indian Railway Service of Electrical Engineers (IRSEE), Indian Audit and Accounts Service (IA&AS) and Indian Revenue Service (IRS) among others have been appointed to these key joint secretary (JS)-level posts, as per an order issued by the Personnel Ministry.

IDAS officers Praveen Kumar Rai and Rakesh Kumar Pandey, and IRSEE officer Rajesh Gupta have been appointed as joint secretaries in the Home Ministry, said the order dated October 25. Raj Kumar, a 1999-batch IA&AS officer, has been named as Director (Finance) in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) under the Ministry of Home Affairs for a tenure of five years, it said.

Deepak Agarwal, a 2000-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Uttar Pradesh cadre, has been appointed as Managing Director (JS level), National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED), the order said.

IAS officers Chauhan Sarita Chand and P Bala Kiran have been appointed as Joint Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances and Department of Personnel & Training, respectively.

Bhavna Saxena, a 1996-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of Andhra Pradesh cadre, has been appointed as CEO, Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) under the Ministry of Women & Child Development, the order said.

Anjan Kumar Mishra, a 1998-batch Indian Ordnance Factories Service (IOFS) officer, has been named as Secretary, Petroleum & Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas. (PTI)

## Seven Punjab Police personnel suspended



**CHANDIGARH, Oct 26:** The Punjab Police has suspended seven personnel, including two deputy superintendent rank officers, in connection with an interview of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi while in police custody.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the state police, led by the special director general of police (human rights), found that one interview of Bishnoi was conducted when he was in Punjab Police's custody in Mohali's Kharar while the second was done in Rajasthan. The suspension came after the SIT found dereliction of duty on the part of the seven personnel.

According to an order of the Punjab home secretary issued on Friday, SP Gursheer Singh Sandhu, DSP Sammer Vaneet, sub-inspector Reena (CIA Kharar), sub-inspector Jagatpal Jangu, sub-inspector Shaganjit Singh, assistant sub-inspector Mukhtiar Singh and head constable Om Parkash have been suspended.

"Keeping in view the sensitivity of the case, all the above officers have been suspended," said the order.

The home secretary order referred to the SIT report which found that Bishnoi's interview, aired on a private TV channel, was conducted through video conference on the intervening night of September 3 and 4 2022.

In March last year, a private news channel ran two interviews of Bishnoi. The first interview was conducted on the premises of CIA (crime investigating agency) staff, Kharar which falls in the jurisdiction of SAS Nagar, Mohali.

The second interview was conducted when Bishnoi was lodged in Central Jail in Jaipur, according to the probe by the SIT, which submitted its report to the Punjab and Haryana High Court in July in a suo moti matter related to the use of mobile phones by inmates on jail premises. Bishnoi is one of the accused in the 2022 murder case of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala. (PTI)

# Changing climatic conditions reducing traditional fruit yields in Uttarakhand: Study

**DEHRADUN, Oct 26:** Warming temperatures, erratic rainfall and extreme weather events are reducing the yields of temperate fruit varieties like apples and peaches in Uttarakhand, prompting the farmers to switch to the cultivation of their tropical counterparts, a recent study by Climate Trends, a research consultancy on climate change, said.

Once a leading producer of pear, peach, plum, apricot and apple in the country, Uttarakhand has seen the yield of major fruits plummet significantly in the past seven years, said the study conducted jointly by Palak Balyan, research lead at Climate Trends, and research associate Debdatta Chakraborty.

The area under fruit cultivation in Uttarakhand dropped by 54 per cent between 2016 and 2023, while the total fruit yields fell by 44 per cent, it added.

The dip is particularly remark-



able for temperate fruits as compared to their tropical counterparts. Fruit crops, particularly perennials, are acutely vulnerable to climate change due to their long growth cycles and dependence on specific climate cues, the study noted.

Warmer winters, shifting rainfall patterns and increased frequency of extreme weather events have disrupted flowering, fruit set and ripening processes, leading to a drop in yield, the study said, adding that the decline is most apparent in temperate fruit varieties while trop-

ical fruits such as mango and guava show mixed trends.

With temperate fruit varieties like apple and peach seeing declining productivity in recent years, the farmers in the hill state are increasingly adopting tropical crops, including guava and dragon fruit, as part of their adaptation strategies, reflecting the region's move towards climate-resilient practices, the study said.

The farmers are now increasingly adopting climate-resilient practices such as high-density orchards, introduction of low-chill apple and peach varieties, besides shifting to drought-tolerant crops like dragon fruit and kiwi, it said.

These adaptations are aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of climate change and ensuring the sustainability of fruit cultivation in the region.

The challenges of changing climatic conditions extend beyond production, affecting supply chains,

marketability and storage which in turn impact the profitability of the farmers, the study said.

"The findings underscore the importance of continued research and investment in resilient farming techniques to sustain Uttarakhand's fruit cultivation in the face of climate adversity," Balyan said.

While the introduction of climate resilient crops shows promise, a holistic approach encompassing both technological and market-oriented solutions is essential for ensuring long-term sustainability in the region's horticultural sector, she said.

"Climate change is reshaping Uttarakhand's horticultural landscape. It has significant implications for fruit production and rural livelihoods. Innovative agricultural practices do offer pathways for adaptation, but the sector's long-term resilience will depend on continued research and strategic planning to combat the climate challenges," Balyan added. (PTI)

E-AUCTION FOR CATERING STALLS ASSETS OVER LUMDING DIVISION		
E-auction for 10 Nos. Assets of Catering stalls over Lumding Division for a period of 05 (five) years. Details are as under. Auction Catalogue No.: CATER-LMG-05-24; Auction Start Date & Time (All Lots): 10:00 hrs. on 11-11-2024; Auction Close Date & Time: 12:00 hrs. on 11-11-2024; Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee; Trips/Days: 1826.		
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Stations
AA/1	Catg-LMG-PASG-GMU-120-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Panisagar
AA/2	Catg-LMG-SHTT-GMU-52-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Silghat Town
AA/3	Catg-LMG-UDPU-GMU-115-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Udaipur
AA/4	Catg-LMG-JRNA-GMU-58-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Jirania
AA/5	Catg-LMG-BXG-GMU-102-23-1 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Bhanga
AA/6	Catg-LMG-ARCL-GMU-22-23-2 (Catering - General Minor Unit (GMU))	Arunachal
AB/1	Catg-LMG-GHY-SMU-123-24-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Guwahati
AB/2	Catg-LMG-MYD-SMU-34-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Manderdisa
AB/3	Catg-LMG-BPB-SMU-142-24-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Badarpur
AB/4	Catg-LMG-BXP-SMU-129-23-1 (Catering - Special Minor Unit (SMU))	Barpathar
Prospective bidders are requested to visit e-Auction leasing module of IREPS website <a href="http://www.ireps.gov.in">www.ireps.gov.in</a> .		
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## DELHI GEARS UP FOR DILJIT DOSANJH'S DIL-LUMINATI CONCERTS



**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** (PTI) The stage is set and anticipation is at an all-time high as actor-musician Diljit Dosanjh kicks off his "Dil-Luminati India Tour 2024" in the national capital with back-to-back performances this weekend at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium. The concerts, scheduled for Saturday and Sunday, have become one of the most awaited musical events of the year, marking the singer's return to India after the grand success of his shows in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. With gates opening at 5:30 pm, the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, which has a capacity of over 60,000 seats, is expected to be packed with fans eager to witness the unparalleled energy and star power of one of India's most beloved artists. Delhi's concert-goers are especially in for a treat, as the city will witness not just one but two shows. The second date was added after the first show sold out within minutes. It is almost sold out as well, with only lounge tickets available priced between Rs 32,000 and Rs 60,000. Organised by Ripple Effect Studios and Saregama India, with Zomato Live handling ticketing, the tour has already smashed records, becoming the fastest-selling and highest-grossing concert event in Indian history. Dosanjh, who has enthralled music aficionados globally with hit tracks such as "Jatt Da Pyaar," "Raat Di Gedi," "Patiala Peg," "Do You Know," "5 Taara Theka," and "Laembadgini," announced his arrival in Delhi in a post on Instagram on Friday. "Delhi Ka Mausam Kya Keh Raha Hai. DIL-LUMINATI TOUR Year 24," he posted alongside photos from the plane and at the airport. In another post on Saturday, the 40-year-old musician shared a video from outside the stadium, saying, "All set for tonight." Ahead of the shows, the Delhi Traffic Police issued an advisory on Friday for the general public. "In connection with the Diljit Dosanjh Live Concert 'Dil Luminati' on 26th & 27th October 2024 at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, New Delhi, significant traffic arrangements have been made due to the expected large gathering," the police said on X. "Adequate traffic arrangements have been made for diversion and regulation of traffic. The general public and motorists are also advised to use public transport to avoid congestion on the roads," they added. The shows in Delhi mark the beginning of a 10-city tour for Diljit that will take him across Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Pune, Kolkata, and more, before concluding with a grand finale in Guwahati on December 29. "I'm honestly overwhelmed. The love, the energy, it's truly humbling! I'm so grateful to everyone who managed to get a ticket. Trust me, this is going to be an experience like no other," Dosanjh said in a statement earlier this month. Sonali Singh, CEO of Ripple Effect Studios, stated that Dosanjh's tour will surely turn out to be a game-changer for Indian musicians. "The love and enthusiasm we've seen from fans are beyond anything we could have imagined. Diljit has set a new gold standard for Indian artists on tour," she said. Over the past few years, Dosanjh has successfully transcended cultural and language barriers to captivate audiences worldwide, making him one of the most prominent South Asian artists on the global stage. (PTI)

## WANT TO MAKE GOOD CINEMA ACCESSIBLE: MANOJ BAJPAYEE

**MUMBAI, Oct 26:** In a landscape dominated by tentpole films and commercial blockbusters, Manoj Bajpayee says his only motive is to make "good cinema accessible" to all.

The actor's recent works "Despatch" and "The Fable" received positive responses at the MAMI Film Festival 2024, affirming his belief that such stories can thrive alongside mainstream movies.

"For me, this is cinema (referring to independent films). Cinema is a medium of art, cinema is sound, VFX, and so many facets are adding up, and adding up not just to entertain but to delve into different stories and do it masterfully and artistically. If you want to entertain, entertain artistically," Bajpayee told PTI.

The actor said it is important to not be "too indulgent" when introducing them to a different kind of cinema.

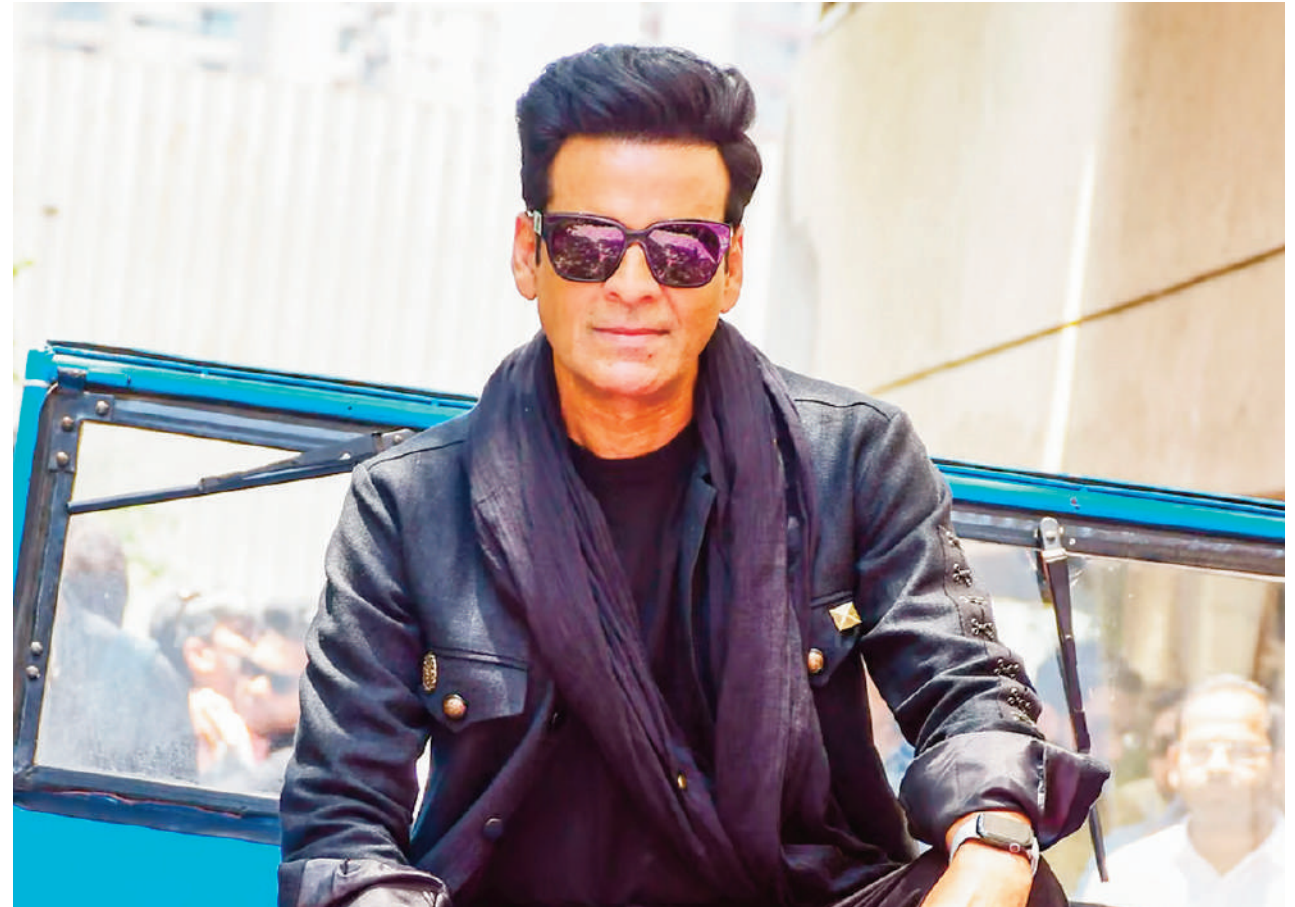
"So, let's make films accessible. That's how 'Joram' is, that's how 'Despatch' and 'The Fable' are. I don't know (if the audience will come to the theatres) but I want that (to happen). You make films, thinking people will watch them. Accessibility is important and it is important to get more audience members attracted to good cinema. That should be the motive," Bajpayee said.

In a career spanning three decades, the actor has built a filmography largely dominated by offbeat movies such as "Gulmohar", "Gali Guleyan", "Joram", "Gangs of Wasseypur", "Rajneeti", and "Satya" among others.

At the closing ceremony of the MAMI Film Festival last evening, a Special jury prize was presented to "The Fable".

"I was bombarded with people praising (both) the films ('Despatch' and 'The Fable'). It's a beautiful feeling when people love your work, I'm still grappling with everything that is happening," the 55-year-old actor said.

Despite his achievements, Bajpayee downplays the notion of bravery in his choices and says that his career is a mix of carefully curated decisions and a bit of luck. "There was clarity in my mind as to how I wanted my career to be in films. The luck factor is there, and I'm glad I'm getting those opportunities because it fulfills my desire as an actor. It's all about



the choices that you make because there are a great number of films out there, and your job is to pick the best one," Bajpayee said. "I do it because this is what I want to do, I want to dwell into all kinds of parts and do it successfully. How an audience is going to react is something I'm curious about, but I'm going to follow the same rule either way," he added. "Despatch" is directed by Kanu Behl of "Titli" fame. The investigative thriller, which is set in the world of crime journalism, features Bajpayee in the role of a journalist, who finds himself sucked into the murky underbelly of business and crime.

In "The Fable", the actor plays the character of Dev, who discovers mysteriously burnt trees in his sprawling estate of fruit orchards nestled in the Indian Himalayas. Despite all efforts, more fires break out, eventually leading him to see himself and his family for who they truly are. The film, which is a US-Indian co-production, is directed by Raam Reddy, best known for "Thithi".

According to Bajpayee, his role in "Despatch" is entrenched in the tangible pursuits of career and success, and in "The Fable" his character is struggling to detach from the responsibilities.

"They are opposite to each other and their search is very different," he said.

On a query whether "Despatch" is based on or inspired by the life of slain journalist J Dey, Bajpayee said the character is an amalgamation of the experiences and references from various industry journalists.

Additionally, fans of "The Family Man" can look forward to his much-anticipated return in the third season of the show, next year. The actor will reprise his role as Srikant Tiwari, a middle-class man leading a double life as an intelligence officer.

"I'm always looking forward to playing Srikant Tiwari, and that feeling shows on screen and it's only because of that I'm able to explore Srikant Tiwari in different facets. I'm excited to be back on 'The Family Man', and it is coming out next year." (PTI)

## I was scared, says Vidya Balan on rejecting 'Bhool Bhulaiya 2'



**MUMBAI, Oct 26:** Actor Vidya Balan says she rejected the offer to star in "Bhool Bhulaiya 2" as she feared that if she didn't perform well in the sequel, it would ruin the impact of her work in the original movie. Balan starred alongside Akshay Kumar in Priyadarshan's 2007 hit "Bhool Bhulaiya", playing the role of Avni/Manjulika. Fifteen years later, its sequel, "Bhool Bhulaiya 2", directed by Anees Bazmee and starring Kartik Aaryan in the lead, was released and became a huge blockbuster at the box office. "I was so scared because 'Bhool Bhulaiya' has given me so much. So I said, if I did something wrong, then everything will go in vain (sab par paani fir jayega). I told Anees ji that 'I can't take this risk,'" Balan told reporters. "But when they came back to me with the third part, I loved the script. I was dying to work on this with Anees bhai and Bhushan. And then it only kept getting better," Balan said.

The actor said she liked what the team did with the sequel, which helped her make the decision to say yes to "Bhool Bhulaiya 3", set to release on Diwali, November 1.

"And then the icing on the cake was working with Madhuri Dixit ma'am. So, I think it only kept getting better, and I accumulated the courage. I had a great time. He (Bazmee) is the king of entertainment. I had the opportunity to work with him," she added. Balan was speaking at a film event where a new version of the franchise's iconic song "Ami Jo Tomar" was unveiled. Besides her, Aaryan and Dixit were present. At the event, Balan and Dixit performed the song in perfect sync. At one point, Balan slipped and fell but handled the situation with grace.

Dancing alongside a legend like Dixit is no easy task, said Balan. "There is some kind of a tashan in that particular scene in the song. It was difficult for me because I was giving attitude to Madhuri. She is so generous... performing with her was not easy. Everyone supported me, but I think it was so nice of Madhuri ma'am as she realized that it was a big deal for me to be dancing with her. I told myself that it is an honour to share a stage with her, to be in the same frame with her," she said. (PTI)

## Learning how to use it: 'Heeramandi' singer Barnali Chattopadhyay on social media

**JODHPUR, Oct 26:** As Aditi Rao Hydari's Bibbo Jaan swayed to the beats of the tabla in period drama "Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar", social media influencers on Instagram and YouTube were quick to make it viral by reenacting the seductive gait. The song in the scene, "Saiyaan Hatto Jao", went viral for obvious reasons: Hydari's expressions, her proficiency in the dance form, and the husky voice crooning the tune. Barnali Chattopadhyay, a classical singer who trained under the likes of Girija Devi and Shobha Gurtu, looks back and credits Sanjay Leela Bhansali for introducing her to a larger audience through his Netflix show and appreciates social media for making her songs go viral. "I am also learning how to use it. But they (youngsters) are pro at it. It feels good. And if they are using social media to make a living, then why not? See what all youngsters are doing? They are reaching all the places because of social media. I am very glad

(about the popularity of her songs on reels)," Chattopadhyay told PTI on the sidelines of recently-concluded Jodhpur RIFF.

She became a part of "Heeramandi" thanks to a mutual connection who introduced her to Bhansali, who has painstakingly recreated the pre-Partition Lahore and its Heeramandi for his opulent period drama around the life of courtesans.

"I keep going to Mumbai. So one time I was visiting a friend's place and someone listened to my singing. They later told someone who told someone and Sanjay ji called me eventually," Chattopadhyay, 54, said.

The singer, who specialises in thumri, has sung two songs of the semi-classical genre, both filmed on Hydari -- "Saiyaan Hato Jao" and "Phool Gendwa Na Maaro".

"The selection of songs was by Sanjay Ji. He is a very knowledgeable person. He knows what is right and what is not. He decided everything," she said about her involvement in the

show, where Bhansali was also involved as a music composer.

The Kolkata-based singer started learning singing at the early age of three, inspired by the many artistes who would come from Lucknow to perform for her grandfather - a patron of Hindustani music.

"I was quite small, so I would just sit there and listen to them. And it occurred to me that I should learn and for some reason my parents also showed interest in this idea," Chattopadhyay said.

Her musical journey took her to learn under the tutelage of Girija Devi of Banaras Gharana and Shobha Gurtu from Jaipur-Atrauli Gharana. Chattopadhyay later learned thumri under Purnima Chaudhari in Banaras.

"I learned not only singing, but how to sit, talk, walk and etiquette. How to control anger, what to speak and where to speak. I learned everything I know from my gurus," she said, adding that she kept learning till the age of 42.

After spending a large portion of career in Hindustani classical music, Chattopadhyay gravitated towards Sufism and Sufi singer-poet Amir Khusrau in her 40s.

"It is only after 40 that you start understanding Amir Khusrau. You need to be a certain age to understand what he wants to say. My guru Haider Baksh in Lucknow taught me Sufi music and Urdu," she said.

"Through Amir Khusrau, I learned about the bond between a teacher and a disciple. At times, I can understand what a guru is through the connection Khusrau had with Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya," Chattopadhyay added.

Acknowledging the popularity of Sufi music, she said there's been a renewed interest in the genre because of its tranquility.

"Those who sing Sufi music have felt the tranquility it has. The words we are pronouncing have that feeling. The times we are living in are not of peace but Sufi is peaceful," the singer added. (PTI)



# India look for consistency from batters to seal series; NZ's Amelie Kerr ruled out of ODIs

**AHMEDABAD, Oct 26:** India will seek a better performance from batters in their quest to seal the series when they face New Zealand in the second women's ODI here on Sunday.

Even though India won the first match comfortably by 59 runs, batters squandered starts as their innings were littered with multiple 30s and 40s.

The hosts would want a change of script in this match, and skipper Smriti Mandhana will have to lead the charge, which in the last match was done by debutant Tejal Hasabnis.

The elegant left-hander got out for eight in the opening match, continuing her lean run over the last month or so.

She can fall back upon the memories of a fine run against South Africa earlier this July when she cracked runs for fun, including two big hundreds.

Along with Mandhana's form, the Indian camp will also keep an eye on the fitness of regular skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, who missed the previous match with an unspecified niggle.

On the bowling front, India will be delighted with debu-

tant pacer Saima Thakor's impressive performance the other night, along with left-arm spinner Radha Yadav's return to wicket-taking form in this format.

On the other hand, New Zealand's ambition to square the series received a severe blow as talismanic all-rounder Amelie Kerr was ruled out of the series with a left quadriceps muscle tear that she sustained in the first match.

Kerr, who will return home on Sunday, will require approximately three weeks to recover from her Grade One



injury. "We're really gutted for Melie," said White Ferns head coach Ben Sawyer.

"We know how disappointed she is to not be able to play these games. Everyone knows how much of an integral part of this team Melie is so we'll certainly miss her but we're wishing her a speedy recovery," said Sawyer.

Kerr was the standout performer for New Zealand in the first ODI with a four-wicket haul.

She will not be replaced in the squad with the final game of the series to be played in three days' time.

Teams (from): India: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, D.

Hemalatha, Deepthi Sharma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Yastika Bhatia, Uma Chetry, Sayali Satgare, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, Tejal Hasabnis, Saima Thakor, Priya Mishra, Radha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil.

New Zealand: Sophie Devine (c), Suzie Bates, Eden Carson, Lauren Down, Izzy Gaze, Maddy Green, Brooke Halliday, Polly Inglis, Fran Jonas, Jess Kerr, Amelia Kerr, Molly Penfold, Georgia Plimmer, Hannah Rowe, Lea Tahuhu.

Match starts at 1.30pm. (PTI)

# Ali and Khan earn Pakistan's series-clinching 9-wicket win in 3<sup>rd</sup> test

**RAWALPINDI, Oct 26:** Spinners Noman Ali and Sajid Khan suppressed England's batting attack inside three days and earned Pakistan a long-awaited and series-clinching nine-wicket win in the third and final Test on Saturday. The 38-year-old left-arm spinner Ali and off-spinner Khan, 31, had grabbed all 20 wickets on a recycled second Test pitch to level the series last week and yet again clipped the batters on an engineered dry surface by sharing 19 wickets as England was dismissed for 112 on Day 3.

It was England's lowest innings total in Pakistan, eclipsing its previous score of 130 all out in Lahore in 1987.

Pakistan, which got a meaningful 77-run first innings lead, reached 37-1 at the stroke of lunch to notch its first home series win since 2021 when it beat South Africa 2-0.

Skipper Shan Masood (23 not out), who lost six successive test matches as captain before England got beaten in the second test, sealed the win with a six over long-off against Shoaib Bashir after smashing four successive boundaries to Jack Leach. "It's special," Masood said. "The first win came after a long time and it was backed up by a series win... it's about character. To be here and standing as the winning team, it's the most special thing for us."

Leach grabbed the only wicket



to fall when he successfully went for an lbw television referral against Saim Ayub, who made eight. The win was a sweet revenge for the home team, which was knocked over by England 3-0 when it last toured Pakistan two years ago under the captaincy of Ben Stokes.

England's batting folded meekly against the spin duo for

the second time around as Ali followed his three wickets in the first innings with 6-42 on a wicket which was dried out by industrial-sized giant fans and outdoor heaters.

Khan grabbed 4-69 to add to his first innings six-wicket haul as England batters couldn't negotiate the variable bounce and the turn

Khan and Ali extracted of the

pitch. England won the first test by an innings and 47 runs before Pakistan succeeded in its ploy to reuse the same surface in Multan to counter England's aggressive batting and recalled both Ali and Khan for the remaining two test matches.

"Disappointing," said Stokes, who missed out on England's memorable win in the first test re-

covering from torn hamstring, but returned to lead the side in yougner conditions for his batters. "We got thrown some challenges over these last two games and weren't able to stand up to them, credit to Pakistan."

Resuming on a precarious 24-3, Joe Root (33) and Harry Brook (26) cut down the deficit to 11 runs before England lost wickets in cluster.

Brook got a thick edge when he tried to cut Ali and the left-arm spinner had Stokes lbw off an armed ball which the England captain awfully tried to leave. England was still trailing by two runs when Jamie Smith (3) charged down the wicket to Khan and had his off stump knocked over and England slipped to 6-75.

Khan then ended Root's grim resistance by finding the outside edge before England's tail folded quickly against the spin duo.

"The lads trained hard but when you get out in the middle it can be completely different," Stokes conceded.

The 2-1 series win was Masood's first series win since he was appointed test captain last year, but lost six test matches in a row. Australia routed Pakistan 3-0 under Masood's leadership and Bangladesh recorded a stunning 2-0 win in Pakistan before England racked up record-breaking 823-7 decl. to hand Masood another defeat. (AP)

# I don't doubt anyone's ability, but batters must trust their plans: Rohit Sharma

**PUNE, Oct 26:** Skipper Rohit Sharma chose not to place batters under the cosh for the series defeat against New Zealand but reminded them that they need to "trust their plans" to succeed against tough opponents.

New Zealand outclassed India by 113 runs in the second Test to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match Test series.

This was India's first Test series defeat at home since 2012-13 when they went down to England 1-2.

"I do not doubt anyone's ability. I won't do much postmortem of this, but

batters must come with their plans and trust on the plans like New Zealand batters showed," Rohit said during the post-match press conference.

"It's disappointing. It's not what we expected. We got to give credit to New Zealand as they played better than us. We failed to respond to those challenges."

Then Rohit touched in detail on the batting malfunction part.

"I didn't think we batted well enough to get runs on the board. You've got to pick 20 wickets to win, yes, but batters have to put runs on the board.

"It was a great fightback to restrict them to 250-odd (in the first innings) but we knew it was going to be challenging. It wasn't a pitch where a lot was happening. Things would've been slightly different had we got a bit closer in the first innings," he said.

Even though the series lost, Rohit promised a much better outing in third Test at Mumbai in a few days.

"We want to show up well at Wankhede and try and win that Test. It's a collective failure. I'm not somebody who would blame just the batters or the bowlers. We will come out with

better intent, better ideas and better methods at Wankhede," he added.

The series defeat also dented India's chances of progressing to the World Test Championship final despite keeping the top spot on the table.

Rohit accepted the consequences of a rare series defeat at home.

I am hurting because we lost the game. I can't think about what lies ahead and can it affect our chances (WTC Final). We didn't play well enough, and we lost the series and that is hurting. There are things we need to do as a unit," he added. (PTI)

# Sports unite society and build a strong India, says Sonowal at Badminton Tournament inauguration

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIBRUGARH, Oct 26:** Union Minister and Member of Parliament for Dibrugarh, Sarbananda Sonowal, attended the inauguration ceremony of the Yonex Sunrise All India Sub-Junior Ranking Badminton Tournament, organized by the Dibrugarh District Sports Association from October 25 to October 30.

Players, officials, and representatives from across India are participating in this competition for boys and girls under the age of 13. Sonowal expressed that hosting a national ranking badminton tournament in Dibrugarh for the first time is a source of great hope and joy.

He wished for the tournament's overall success, commended the efforts of the organizers, and extended his sincere wishes to the players. Sonowal further noted that the tournament would help produce high-quality players in

the state and strengthen the sports infrastructure.

In his speech, Union Minister Sonowal mentioned that sports have historically united human society. He emphasized that sports possess a unique power that fosters coordination and contributes to the physical and mental development of individuals.

He highlighted that, under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the past decade has seen a transformative shift in the sports sector across Assam and India.

The successful hosting of various national and international tournaments in Assam has positioned the state as a prominent center on India's sports map.

This comprehensive enhancement in the sports sector is playing a significant role in building a healthy and strong India. The sports environment in Assam has undergone an unprecedented transformation



over the last decade.

Assam has produced renowned athletes such as Dipankar Bhattacharjya, who represented India in the Olympics twice. The Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) has played a crucial

role in increasing India's medal count in the Olympics.

During Sonowal's tenure as Sports Minister, TOPS was implemented under Prime Minister Modi's robust leadership, providing quality training and helping create elite

athletes.

Assam has also produced young badminton talents like Ashmita Chaliha, who has enhanced the reputation of both Assam and India on national and international platforms.

During the government's tenure, continuous efforts have been made to create a high-quality sports environment. The Yonex Sunrise All India Sub-Junior Ranking Badminton Tournament in Dibrugarh is expected to further propel this journey toward strengthening sports. Alongside Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, dignitaries present at the event included MLAs Terash Gowala, Chakradhar Gogoi, and Taranga Gogoi; Chairman of the Assam Tourism Development Corporation, Rituparna Baruah; Mayor of the Dibrugarh Municipal Corporation, Saikat Patra; Deputy Mayor Ujjal Phukan; and other distinguished personalities.

## ALL ASSAM KARATE CHAMPIONSHIP

# Guwahati emerge champions with 136 medals



**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Oct 26:** The five-day All Assam Karate Championship, organized by the All Assam Karate Association (AKA) in collaboration with Karate Karbi Anglong (KKA), concluded on Saturday at the Sarsing Teron Multi-Purpose Sports Complex of the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA).

The Guwahati team emerged as the overall champions, securing the trophy with a total of 136 medals, including 51 gold, 40 silver, and 45 bronze. The team dominated the entire competition.

Dibrugarh district claimed the first runners-up position with a total of 47 medals, comprising 15 gold, 10 silver, and 22 bronze. Jorhat secured the second runners-up spot, winning 32 medals in total, with 9 gold, 7 silver, and 16 bronze.

Barpeta finished in fourth place, earning 8 gold, 8 silver, and 14 bronze, while Charaideo ranked fifth with 8 gold, 2 silver, and 7 bronze. Kamrup came sixth, collecting 7 gold, 6 silver, and 22 bronze. Lakhimpur followed in seventh with 6 gold, 15 silver, and 16 bronze. Sonitpur and Darrang both achieved 6 gold, 6 silver, and 12 bronze, placing eighth and ninth respectively, while Bongaigaon rounded out the top ten with 6 gold, 4 silver, and 4 bronze.

Presenting the Champion's trophy to the Guwahati team during the prize distribution ceremony, Chairman of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Raju Tisso, emphasized the importance of striving for excellence in life. "Our life is about playing, learning, singing, dancing, laughing, and enjoying. We learn by imitating our seniors," Tisso remarked, while also highlighting the power of a positive mindset and contributing to society. He encouraged the young participants to achieve even more in the future.

## Diphu's Gautam Dey bags Silver in yoga events at Titabor

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Oct 26:** In the recently concluded 6th Assam State Masters Games held at Titabor, Jorhat on October 20, Gautam Dey of Diphu has bagged silver medals

in various categories of yoga events held during the competition. Dey secured silver medals in Compulsory, Optional and All missed select events of the competition.

# India lose first series at home in 12 years, New Zealand complete historic win

**PUNE, Oct 26:** India crashed to their first Test series defeat at home in 12 years with Mitchell Santner yet again exposing their frailties against quality spin bowling as the crushing 113-run defeat in the second match enervated the team's pole position in the World Test Championship.

If the hosts endured their first defeat after 18 consecutive Test series victories, New Zealand celebrated their first ever series-victory on the Indian soil in nearly 70 years.

The Kiwis have been travelling to this part of the world since 1955 but Black Caps could never break the Indian citadel all these years.

Indian batters, once considered the best players of the spin bowling, danced to the tune of Santner, who dominated the home line-up with 13 wickets in the match, including seven in the first innings.

In pursuit of 359, Indian batters cut a sorry figure once again. They were bowled out for 245 with Yashasvi Jaiswal's 77 and Ravindra Jadeja (42) being the only ones to resist the Kiwis.

India's successive batting collapses, beginning with the historic low of 46 all-out in the first essay of Bengaluru Test which they lost by eight wickets, culminated with first series loss at home since 2012-13 when England van-

quished them. Kiwis broke India's string of 18 consecutive Test series wins at home. It was also India's only fourth Test series defeat in their own backyard since turn of the century.

The heavy defeat means that India stay on top in the WTC table with 98 points but their percentage points (62.82) got hit badly as Australia are now marginally behind at 62.50.

Before travelling to Australia for the Border Gavaskar Trophy, it was imperative for India to win the series at home and consolidate their top position to ensure that they make the WTC final.

India's task has only got tougher now because of the sheer challenge Australia are going to pose before them. On Saturday, facing an uphill battle to keep the series alive and safeguard their record, none of the specialist Indian batters barring the 22-year-old Jaiswal, who smashed a 65-ball 77, could withstand the challenge of Santner's orthodox left-arm spin.

Santner's (7/53 and 6/104) 13 wickets in the game heralded a remarkable triumph for New Zealand, who mastered the conditions and played better cricket than India to beat Rohit Sharma's team in their own game.

The Kiwis gave India a taste of their own medicine after putting



first-innings runs on the board and squeezing the oppositions.

The target could have been much bigger had India not fought back on the third morning to snaffle the remaining five wickets for 57 runs to keep New Zealand to 255. After losing the top and middle order, packed with greats of the game, India did not have much hopes left in the game but the pair of Ravindra Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin (18) did their best to delay the inevitable. It was a pitch where batters did not have any assurances unless they had a game plan — which Jaiswal showed on the final day of the contest.

Jaiswal waged a lone battle of sorts with nine fours and three

sixes but none of the famed Indian batters, including mainstays Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, could pose any challenge to the Kiwis.

From a promising 81/1 at lunch, the home team lost six wickets for 97 runs, struggling to negotiate Santner who yet again weaved his magic around the Indian batters.

Skipper Rohit, caught at short leg off bat-pad to defend as he charged down, was first to depart in the first session.

Jaiswal though took the Kiwi attack by the scruff of his neck, battling with confidence and aggression. With Shubman Gill (23 off 31) he added 62 runs for the second wicket.

The partnership broke when Gill

was squared up by Santner to edge to the first slip and Jaiswal, the best of the lot by a long margin, too edged one to the first slip soon.

Superstar Kohli (17) started off with a powerful flick for a four on the backfoot. He ran hard between wickets and batted with resolve until Santner forced him on the backfoot and trapped him in front of the wickets.

Santner kept chipping away at his tunes, getting some deliveries to turn away from the bat while some to straighten up while pitching them all in same areas.

Jaiswal, who was beaten by one from the left-arm New Zealander before he was dismissed, could not reach to the pitch of the ball before it kissed the bat's edge to settle in Daryl Mitchell's hands. India's misery compounded with Rishabh Pant (0) getting run-out after a miscommunication with Kohli.

In a final blow to India's resistance, Sarfaraz Khan (9) failed to read the turn of the ball which crashed onto his off-stump as he jarred his bat into the ground in defence. Washington Sundar's resistance lasted 47 balls for 21 and ended shortly before tea as Glenn Phillips (1/37) got his name added to the list of wicket-takers, getting the Indian all-rounder caught at short leg. (PTI)

# India one win away from U17 Asian Cup qualification, face Thailand in crucial clash



**CHONBURI (Thailand), Oct 26:** India are one step away from qualifying for the AFC U17 Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia, needing a crucial victory over hosts Thailand in their final Group D match here on Sunday.

With two wins from two games, the Ishfaq Ahmed-coached India Colts sit level on points with Thailand but trail on goal difference, making this clash a must-win to secure the top spot and an automatic berth in the tournament.

Friday's hard-fought 1-0 victory over Turkmenistan kept India's hopes alive and showcased their resilience, with a well-timed strike from Ningthoukhongjam Rishi Singh clinching the game.

However, Thailand's massive 19-0 rout of Brunei Darussalam later that day sent a clear signal, pushing them to the top of the group with an astounding goal difference. India had earlier defeated Brunei 13-0, while Thailand opened their campaign with a solid 2-0 win over Turkmenistan.

The group stakes are high: a draw will see Thailand qualify as group leaders, while only a win will guarantee India's direct entry to the final tournament.

However, there is a rider. India could still make it through as one of the five best second-placed teams, depending on results from other groups.

Head coach Ishfaq Ahmed, however, is keeping the team focused on a single goal -- victory.

"For us, that's the way. We just play for three points. We will give

our best as we do in every match. Whatever we have left in us, we will put that on the line," said the Indian coach. Rishi, who scored his second goal for India, adding to his header against Nepal in the SAFF U17 Championship semi-final, said, "I am very happy to score the winning goal and help the team. I'd like to thank my teammates and coaches. We are ready for the last game against Thailand."

Backed by an ardent home crowd, Thailand pose a considerable challenge. The hosts boast an unbeaten 2024 record, scoring 21 goals in the qualifiers and reaching the ASEAN Championship final, where they narrowly lost to Australia on penalties.

They also defeated the UAE 4-2 in a pre-qualifier friendly, making them a formidable team to face.

"We are both very good sides. And when you beat these are the kind of teams playing a good brand of football, only then you deserve to qualify for the final tournament," Ahmed said.

"Our biggest challenge is to recover since there's just a day's gap between matches and we've played twice in the heat and humidity of 4 pm here.

"But yeah, we even saw Thailand, who have only played at 8 pm, had a couple of players getting cramps in the first game.

"So, I'm extremely proud of my boys with the strength they've shown and I have no complaints. Hopefully, we get three points and qualify tomorrow," concluded Ahmed. (PTI)

# Shedge's 99 takes Mumbai to 248/6 against Tripura

**AGARTALA, Oct 26:** Suryansh Shedge missed a well-deserved hundred, scoring 99 runs as defending champions Mumbai reached 248 for six in their first innings against Tripura on the opening day of their Group A Ranji Trophy match here on Saturday.

The 21-year-old Shedge hit 10 fours and four sixes in his 93-ball innings, emerging as the top scorer for Mumbai after they won the toss and opted to bat at the Maharaja Bir Bikram College Stadium.

At stumps, Shams Mulani (38) and Himanshu Veer Singh (5) remained at the crease.

Placed fourth in the points table, Mumbai -- coming off a victory against Maharashtra in their previous match -- got off to a shaky start, losing two quick wickets: opener Ayush Mhatre (4) and Siddhant Addhatrao (5). They were struggling at 13 for 2.

Opener Angkrish Raghuvanshi (28) and skipper Ajinkya Rahane (35) formed a 54-run partnership, but

their successive dismissals reduced Mumbai to 87 for 4.

Shedge then shifted the momentum, adding 70 runs with Siddhesh Lad (29) and another 85 with Mulani.

For Tripura, Manisankar Mursingh (2/75) and Abhijit K Sarkar (2/30) each took two wickets, while Parvez Sultan claimed one.

At Ay Kotambi Stadium in Vadodra, table-toppers Baroda skittled out Odisha for 193 in 65 overs, riding on a five-wicket haul from spinner Mahesh Pithiya.

Pithiya, whose bowling action resembles that of R. Ashwin and who worked closely with the Australian team during the last edition of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, was in fine form, jolting Odisha's middle and lower order with his off-spin, taking five wickets for 61 runs in his 22 overs.

Biplab Samant was the top scorer for Odisha with a 132-ball 58, while Shantanu Mishra added 23 and Aasirwad Swain hit 37.

At stumps, Baroda, who have won both their matches so

far, reached 50 for one in 22 overs, with Shivalik Sharma (28) and Shashvat Rawat (17) remaining unbeaten at the crease.

At Sher-i-Kashmir Stadium in Srinagar, Shubham Khajuria (55) and Auqib Nabi (5/29) shone bright as Jammu and Kashmir bundled out Services for a paltry 71 and then reached 183 for 7 on the opening day.

**Brief Scores:** Mumbai: 248 for six in 60 overs (Suryansh Shedge 99; Abhijit K Sarkar 2/30) vs Tripura.

Odisha: 193 all out in 65 overs (Biplab Samant 58; Mahesh Pithiya 5/61) vs Baroda 50 for 1 in 22 overs (Shivalik Sharma 28 not out; Govinda Poddar 1/15).

Jammu & Kashmir 183 for 7 in 54.1 overs (Shubham Khajuria 55; Varun Choudhary 2/3) vs Services 71 all out in 25.1 overs (Nitin Tanwar 18; Auqib Nabi 5/29)

Meghalaya 274 for 8 in 86 overs (Balchander Anirudh 140 not out; Rajneesh Gurbani 3/43) vs Maharashtra. (PTI)

॥ ওম্ নমঃ কুম্ভগুৰু দেৱায় ॥

## কুম্ভগুৰু আন্তৰ্জাতিক আধ্যাত্মিক যুৱ সমাজৰ একবিংশতিতম দ্বি-বাৰ্ষিক অধিবেশনলৈ

### পৰম পূজ্যপাদ 'গুৰু' গুৰুকুম্ভ প্ৰেমানন্দ প্ৰভুৰ শুভাগমনৰ লগতে আয়োজন কৰা ধৰ্মালোচনী সভাত উপস্থিত থাকিব

<b>মুখ্য অতিথি</b> <b>শ্ৰীজগদীপ ধনখড়</b> <small>উপ-ৰাষ্ট্ৰপতি</small>	<b>সন্মানীয় অতিথি</b> <b>শ্ৰীলক্ষ্মণ প্ৰমাদ আচাৰ্য</b> <small>ৰাজ্যপাল, অসম</small>	<b>ড° হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শৰ্মা</b> <small>মুখ্যমন্ত্ৰী, অসম</small>	<b>বিশিষ্ট অতিথি</b> <b>শ্ৰীমৰ্বানন্দ মোগোৱাল</b> <small>কেন্দ্ৰীয় মন্ত্ৰী, বন্দৰ, জাহাজ পৰিবহণ আৰু জলপথ বিভাগ</small>
<b>শ্ৰীপ্ৰমোদ বড়ো</b> <small>বি টি আৰ প্ৰধান</small>			

ধৰ্মপ্ৰাণ ৰাইজৰ উপস্থিতি শ্ৰদ্ধাৰে কামনা কৰিলোঁ

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২৭ অক্টোবৰ ২০২৪, দেওবাৰ (৯০ কুম্ভগুৰু বৰ্ষ)

স্থান  
পশু চিকিৎসা বিজ্ঞান মহাবিদ্যালয় খেলপথাৰ  
খানাপাৰা, গুৱাহাটী

তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰচাৰিত

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অসম বাৰ্তা ছাবস্ক্ৰাইব কৰিবলৈ ৭৬৩৬৮৩৪৯৪৩ ত Assam লিখি ৱাটছএপ কৰক Janasanyog/D/7929/24/27-Oct-24