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- Israel says it struck Hezbollah weapons smuggling sites in Syria
- Poland's PM visits defensive fortifications on border with Russia

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- BJP does not follow rules, democratic norms: Priyanka
- Misuse of power, money to control election mechanism seen during Maha polls: Pawar

*'Ironic that Kharge questioned EVMs on Priyanka's oath-taking day'*

# BJP dares Congress leaders to resign on EVM issue

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** The BJP on Saturday hit back at the Congress for questioning the electoral process, including EVM's integrity, saying its Chief Ministers and other elected representatives like Rahul Gandhi should first resign and announce that they will contest only after the ballot papers are brought back.



Such a stand will underscore their trust in the issues being raised by them, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia told reporters, adding that their allegations will otherwise be nothing but empty words.

The Congress should move the courts over the issue too, he said, while stressing that the Supreme Court has quite a few times en-

dorsed the transparency of the electoral process and the integrity of Electoral Voting Machines.

He then added, "You want elections on ballot papers. First of all, Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, Revanth Reddy and Siddaramaiah should resign. They should say they were elected through EVMs, which is full of scandals and that they will not take part in the electoral process (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## India's growth over last decade propelled by advancement in science, tech: Singh

**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** Union minister Jitendra Singh on Saturday asserted that the country's growth over the last decade was propelled by advancement in science and technology, and innovation.

## Stop atrocities on Hindus, release ISKCON monk: RSS to B'desh interim govt

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) on Saturday appealed to the Bangladesh interim government to ensure the atrocities on the Hindus are stopped and ISKCON monk Chinmoy Krishna Das is released from jail immediately.

opinion in its support "as soon as possible". "The attacks, murders, looting, arson as well as inhuman atrocities by Islamic fundamentalists on Hindus, women and all other minorities in Bangladesh are extremely worrying and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh condemns this," he said.

## Tripura-Kolkata bus attacked in Bangladesh

**HT Correspondent AGARTALA, Nov 30:** Tripura Transport Minister Sushanta Chowdhury has strongly condemned a recent attack on a Shyamoli Paribahan bus travelling from Agartala to Kolkata. The incident occurred on the Bishwa Road in Brahmanbaria, Bangladesh, causing panic among Indian passengers on board.

## Goyal interacts with tea industry stakeholders in Guwahati



**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Saturday interacted with representatives of the tea industry, and assured them that the Centre will take necessary steps to resolve the issues faced by the sector.

## Maharashtra govt to be sworn in on Dec 5

**MUMBAI, Nov 30:** The new Maharashtra government in Maharashtra will be sworn in at Azad Maidan here on the evening of December 5 in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's presence, the state BJP announced on Saturday.

While there was no announcement yet on who would be the chief minister, BJP sources said Devendra Fadnis, who has been chief minister twice and was deputy CM in the last Eknath Shinde-led government, was the frontrunner for the top post. Shinde, who is holding the charge as caretaker chief minister and who headed to his native village Dare in Satara district a day before amid speculation that he was not happy with the way the new government was shaping up, has taken ill, an aide said. He was running temperature of 105, the aide said. The swearing-in ceremony will take place at 5 pm at the Azad Maidan (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 'How can this govt be part of probe into itself': Cong's dig at MEA

**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** The Congress on Saturday took a swipe over the Ministry of External Affairs' statement that the Indian government is not part of the US probe into Adani Group in any manner, asking how can this government be part of a probe into itself.



How can this Government be part of a probe into itself?" (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Government of Assam  
Department of Health & Family Welfare

**Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma**  
Chief Minister, Assam

**WORLD AIDS DAY**  
1 December 2024  
Theme of the year  
**'Take the Rights Path: My health, my right!'**

**CENTRAL EVENT**

Chief Guest  
**Shri Keshab Mahanta**  
Minister of Transport, IT etc

Venue: **Nehrubali Playground, Nagaon**

📅 1 December 2024 ⌚ 10:30 am

Organised by  
Assam State AIDS Control Society  
in collaboration with District Administration, Nagaon

**Know your HIV status**  
by visiting Integrated Counselling & Testing Centre (ICTC)  
at your nearest government hospital

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## CEM meets Defence Minister in New Delhi Pramod Boro proposes Special Army Regiment for BTR

**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, Nov 30:** Pramod Boro, the chief executive member of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) has proposed Special Army Regiment for BTR.

The said proposal was made after Boro met Union defence minister Rajnath Singh in New Delhi.

During the meeting held on Friday, Boro highlighted the active and spirited participation of the youth from the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) in the recruitment rallies and other initiatives organised by the Indian Armed Forces.

Further, the BTC chief submitted a memorandum to the defence minister, proposing the creation of a special regiment named the "Territorial Army Home and Health Battalion" for BTR.

He stated that this initiative would offer a dedicated platform for the region's youth to join the defence forces and contribute to the nation's security.

"The proposal aims to inspire greater participation while fostering a deep sense of patriotism and national pride among the youth of Bodoland region," Boro said.

The defence minister appreciated the commitment of the BTR



government to encouraging the region's youth and assured due consideration of the proposal.

The meeting marks a significant step toward fostering the region's integration with national defence initiatives.

CEM Boro, was accompanied by Lok Sabha MP, Joyanta Basumatary, BTR executive member, Wilson Hasda and BTC MCLA and Political Secretary to CEM, Madhab Chandra Chetry.

"The creation of special regi-

ment for Bodoland region will inspire the youth of BTR to join National Defence forces and contribute to nation building in days to come ahead," Boro added.

He mentioned that a huge number of youths from BTR actively participated in various programs and recruitment rallies conducted by the Indian Armed Forces in Bodoland region.

"It was a pleasure moment to meet Adarniya Shri Rajnath Singh Ji, in New Delhi and briefed him

about the active participation of the youth of BTR in various programs and recruitment rallies conducted by the Indian Armed Forces in BTR. We submitted a memorandum to the Honourable Defence Minister, requesting the formation of a special regiment, the 'Territorial Army Home and Health Battalion' for BTR. This will further inspire and support the youth of BTR in joining the Indian Defence Forces and serving the nation", CEM Boro said.

## Swasthya Sewa Utsav-3 to be held from Dec 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** Swasthya Sewa Utsav Phase 3.0 will be held from December 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> across all health facilities in Dima Hasao district.

This was announced in a press meet which was chaired by Dr Paban Kr Ganju, joint director of health services and member secretary of the District Health Society.

During the press meet, Dr Paban Kr Ganju announced that the third round of the Swasthya Sewa Utsav aims to assess and address the shortcomings in health institutions, its infrastructure, human resources, and the quality of services.

"Assessment will be conducted by independent assessors," he added.

This initiative seeks to achieve a higher level of quality in services of each health facility and address any gaps that are identified, in all district hospitals, sub-divisional civil hospitals, Community Health Centres (CHCs), and Primary Health Centres (PHCs).

In Dima Hasao district, the programme will be conducted in 20 health facilities, including one district hospital, three community health centres, eleven primary health centres, and five sub-centres.

**Our Kokrajhar correspondent adds:** Along with rest of the state, the third edition of the Swasthya Sewa Utsav is set to be organised



in Kokrajhar from December 3 to 5, focusing on assessing the quality of health institutions, its infrastructure, human resource and quality of services rendered across the district.

Speaking to the media persons at a press conference held at the DC office conference hall, on Saturday, district commissioner Masanda Magdalin Pertin stated that the Swasthya Sewa Utsav phase 3 will be held on December 3 to 5.

She said that the initiative aims to evaluate the infrastructure, human resources, and service quality at healthcare facilities. The assessments will be conducted by independent evaluators to ensure unbiased and accurate reviews.

She informed that the best performing health institutions will be awarded cash prizes as well performing citations from the state

government.

She has urged the district health institutions including block, PHC and other health related institutions to render best services for the welfare of the humanity in the district.

**Our Morigaon correspondent adds:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of Swasthya Sewa Utsav will take place from December 3 to 5, across 47 hospitals in the district.

The event will be organised under the leadership of CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, aims to evaluate and enhance healthcare services.

At a press meet held on Saturday, district commissioner Debashis Sarma, along with health officials, announced the completion of preparations for the Utsav. Joint Director of Health Dr Arun Nath stated that trained teams will assess health institutions to ensure quality standards are met.

## Track maintenance disrupts train services from December 1-8: NFR

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** As part of track-safety maintenance work between Dihakho and Mupa stations in the Lumding-Badarpur Hill section, several train services will be cancelled, rescheduled, and regulated from December 1 to 8, an official statement said on Saturday.

The cancelled trains are Train no 15888/15887 (Guwahati – Badarpur) on December 4 and 7, Train no 15615/15616 (Guwahati – Silchar) from December 1 to 8, Train no 15617 (Guwahati – Dullabcherra) on December 2, 4 and 7, Train no 15618 (Dullabcherra – Guwahati) on December 3, 5 and 8, Train no 05698 (Guwahati – New Jalpaiguri) on December 3 and 5, Train no 05697 (New Jalpaiguri

– Guwahati) on December 4 & 7, Train no 05639 (Silchar – Kolkata) on December 5 and Train no 05640 (Kolkata – Silchar) on December 6

The rescheduled trains are Train no 12504 (Agartala – SMVT Bengaluru) on December 3 and 7, rescheduled to 07:00 hours, Train no 12515 (Coimbatore – Silchar) on December 1 and 8, rescheduled to 03:00 hours of December 2 and 9

And the regulated trains are Train no 12507 (Thiruvananthapuram – Silchar) on December 3, Train no 14038 (New Delhi – Silchar) on December 5 and Train no 14620 (Firozpur Cant. – Agartala) on December 2.

Passengers are advised to check for updates regarding train services.

## Former AASU leader Duldul Borkataky passes away

**HT Correspondent**  
**BISWANATH CHARIALI, Nov 30:** Duldul Borkataky, former assistant general secretary of All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and a prominent social worker, passed away at the age of 47.

He passed away on Friday evening at Guwahati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) after a brief illness.

Borkataky, hailing from Pabhoi in Biswanath Chariali, was a popular leader in his community and played a significant role in various socio-cultural organisations. He later joined the Asom Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and contested the 2021 Assam Legislative Assembly elections from the Biswanath constituency.



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** In a swift and coordinated effort, a rescue operation was conducted on Saturday to remove children

engaged in child labour from the construction site at Holy Spirit Hospital.

"The operation, prompted by a call to the Child Helpline Unit

(1098), was carried out with the support of the District Labour Department and the district-level Child Labour Task Force," an official statement said.

A total of three children were rescued from the working site and FIR has been lodged against the employer in the matter.

The team was led by the asst commissioner Diritraj Alamyam, ACS; Sonali Hojai, labour inspector; protection officer (NIC) Susanta Langthasa, DCPU; district project coordinator Pausiding Panme, Child Help Line and sub-inspector Monita Pator, Child Welfare Police Officer SJPU, Haflong PS.

## Governor attends fourth convocation of Royal Global University



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya attended the fourth convocation of Royal Global University here on Saturday.

Addressing the students at the convocation of Royal Global University, the Governor asked the Royal Global University to develop a model of inclusive education which have the element of compassion for all living beings and take a leading role in educating all students, especially those belonging to unprivileged section of the society.

He also asked the university to develop a curriculum which is helpful in building creativity, entrepreneurship and ethical leadership among the students and become the role models in the society. The Governor also called upon the students to nurture three most important qualities in life which are knowledge, passion and compassion.

"A centre of higher learning should not only be a centre of academic excellence and technical knowledge, but also a place for personality building and promotion of moral values," he said.

A university's objective should encompass giving knowledge of the subject and making a student responsible and sensitive citizen.

"Today is the time of global competition and technological revolution. A new chapter of this technological revolution has started in the form of 'Industry 4.0'. In this fourth industrial revolution, Artificial Intelligence (AI), data science, digital technology and other technologies are being used by the industries," he added.

He, therefore, asked the students to develop their skills in artificial intelligence, data science etc and remain relevant in the evolution of knowledge.

Acharya moreover said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India is moving forward very convincingly. In this context, institutions like Royal Global University should also em-

power its students so that they can lead the country in its journey towards Amrit Kaal. The Governor said that students are future of India. Therefore, their education and degrees should not be limited to job purposes only, rather they should create attitude of social responsibility, nation building and service to humanity among the students.

Speaking on the National Education Policy 2020, the Governor said that NEP 2020, which is the third major reform in India's education structure since independence aims to make India a Global Knowledge Superpower. This vision of this education policy is to create an education system rooted in the Indian ethos that contributes directly to the transformation of India by providing high quality education to all, and helping India becoming a Viswa Guru.

The Governor also said that the National Education Policy 2020 focuses on key reforms in higher education that will enable the next generation to compete in the new digital age and comprehensively outlines the vision of India's new education system, which also inspires the promotion of ancient high ideals.

He concluded by urging the graduates to have the courage to think differently, to have the courage to invent, to have the courage to walk on unseen paths, to have the courage to discover the impossible and to overcome problems, become successful and become a potential contributor to Viksit Bharat.

The convocation which witnessed presence of Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal, education minister Dr Ranaj Pegu, State's Industry and Commerce Minister Bimal Bora, Chancellor Royal Global University Dr A K Pansari and others saw award of degrees to 1502 students, including 25 PhD, 651 Post Graduate, 771 Under Graduate degrees and 55 Diplomas.

## Mission Hospital celebrates centenary with inauguration of new building

**HT Correspondent**  
**JORHAT, Nov 30:** Jorhat MLA, Hitendra Nath Goswami on Saturday unveiled a monolith commemorating the centenary of Jorhat Christian Medical Centre (JCMC), more commonly known as Mission Hospital, and inaugurated its new centenary.

Speaking at the event on the second day of the hospital's centenary celebrations, Goswami honoured the legacy of doctors who had served at the hospital with dedication, particularly acknowledging the contributions of Dr Kenneth Dotson and Dr Ajit Goldsmith.

The MLA highlighted Mission Hospital's renowned nursing services, which were once considered the best in Jorhat. He recalled a time when, with only two hospitals in the town—the Civil Hospital and Mission Hospital—critical patients were often rushed to Mission due to its reputation for saving lives.

Deepjyoti Das, the hospital's administrator, also addressed the gathering, noting that Goswami had been

closely associated with the hospital for many years, notably contributing to the improvement of the roads within the Mission compound through the Public Works Department (PWD).

While CM Sarma was invited as the chief guest, he could not attend the centenary due to unavoidable circumstances. The event featured a Scripture reading by Neipinng Kipgen, Mahima Kawa, and a message from Ranjit Doley, Pastor of Rengam Baptist Church. The Eastern Theological College choir sang the theme song, and a brief history of JCMC was presented by Mridul Bhengra and Dr Sajib Baruah.

Dr Dipak Sarma, Senior Consultant in Cardiology at JCMC, shared anecdotes about the hospital's history, and the event concluded with a cultural performance by the hospital staff, celebrating the rich culture of Assam. This centenary celebration marks a significant milestone for the institution, which has been serving the community for over a century, making substantial contributions to healthcare in the region.



## Advanced systems ensure clean, eco-friendly and superior quality bedrolls NFR and Indian Railways set benchmark in passenger linen care

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** NFR and Indian Railways will provide clean, hygienic, well ironed good quality linen/bedrolls to all passengers travelling in air conditioned (AC) sleeper classes by using latest state-of-the-art technology for good passenger experience, an official statement said on Saturday.

Linen provided to the passengers during train journey is washed in mechanised laundries/ washing facilities after every single use. Blankets provided to passengers during train journey are normally washed at least once in a month and it gets further reduced to 15 days or further depending upon necessity.

An additional bed sheet is also provided in bedroll kit to each AC passenger – one for spreading over the berth and second to use as cover to the blanket. Reservation against cancellation (RAC) passengers is also provided with complete linen set at par with other bone-fide passengers travelling in the coach.

The temperature of the AC coaches is kept around 24 degree centigrade so that it would not require blanket and bed sheet is more than sufficient.

NFR has also taken several steps to provide clean linen/bedrolls to passengers. Several state-of-the-art laundry care centre are



functioning at important locations spreading all over NFR.

Another new laundry care centre has been set up at Guwahati which has a production capacity of 16,000 bedroll packets per day. This will cater the growing linen requirements of Guwahati based trains.

The state-of-the-art laundry at Guwahati is a tunnel-based system which has numer-

ous features, including the capability to handle large volumes of linen while optimising usage of water, power, steam and chemicals along with automatic transfer to subsequent stages.

Indian Railways has taken several initiatives to provide clean and hygiene bedrolls for the comfort and safety of passengers during train journey. Railways initiatives also

## Rezum Water Vapor Therapy for prostate enlargement launched

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Nov 30:** A groundbreaking treatment for prostate enlargement, Rezum Water Vapor Therapy, has been officially launched at the Asian Institute of Nephrology and Urology (AINU), an official statement said on Saturday. The new therapy offers a minimally invasive alternative to traditional treatments for benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), a condition that affects many men, especially older individuals.

Dr C Mallikarjuna, managing director and chief consultant urologist at AINU, explained that current treatments, including medications and surgeries, often come with undesirable side effects like erectile dysfunction and ejaculation problems, which are particularly distressing for younger, sexually active men. "While medications can delay surgery, the results diminish over time, and surgery can cause significant sexual health issues," Dr Mallikarjuna said.

"Rezum Water Vapor Therapy provides a solution by targeting and shrinking excess prostate tissue using steam, which gradually removes the tissue, relieving pressure on the urinary tract."

The procedure is performed under local anesthesia and typically requires just one session, with results becoming visible in 15 days to a month. In rare cases, a second session may be needed. The therapy is highly effective, with only 10 percent of patients needing traditional surgery 10–15 years after treatment.

The launch event also featured contributions from Dr Syed Md. Ghouse and Dr Vijay Kumar Sarma Madduri, both senior consultants at AINU, who emphasised the treatment's benefits for men with BPH, especially those who have concerns about preserving their sexual health.

















## Xavier Samuel, Sonal Sehgal to star in 'The Great Departure'

Shot entirely in India, the film is currently in the post-production stage, reported entertainment news outlet Deadline.

"Growing up in a patriarchal society and yet with a set of parents who encouraged my fiercely independent streak, I often found myself in a dichotomy of how I was brought up and what society expected of me and hence took to cinema as a form of expression," Sehgal said in a statement. Samuel said he was "very moved" by the script of the film.

LOS ANGELES, Nov 30: "The Twilight Saga" fame Xavier Samuel and "Aashaycin" actor Sonal Sehgal will headline the upcoming film "The Great Departure". Originally titled "Travellers", the script of the film has been penned by Sehgal and explores patriarchy in the society through the prism of a man and woman who meet in Varanasi and have very different experiences while on the same road trip as they fall in love.

Produced by Arvind Reddy's KVR Productions, "The Great Departure" is directed by Pierre Filmon, known for directing "Long Time No See" and "Le Silence, D'abord".



Growing up in a patriarchal society and yet with a set of parents who encouraged my fiercely independent streak, I often found myself in a dichotomy of how I was brought up and what society expected of me and hence took to cinema as a form of expression - Sonal Sehgal

"The theme of patriarchy, the road trip genre, and the script that struck a cord," Reddy added.

Filmon shared his experience of shooting the film and called the entire unit a "dream team". (PTI)

## 180 FILMS FROM 29 COUNTRIES TO BE SCREENED AT 30<sup>TH</sup> KOLKATA INTERNATIONAL FILM FEST

NEW DELHI, Nov 30: Actor Divyenndu of "Mirzapur" fame will share screen space with "RRR" star Ram Charan in filmmaker Buchi Babu Sana's upcoming Telugu film, the makers said on Saturday.

The film, which marks Ram Charan's 16th project, also stars Janhvi Kapoor.

Production house Vriddhi Cinemas shared Divyenndu's casting announcement in an Instagram post. "Our favourite 'Munna Bhayya' will light up the big screens in a spectacular role tailor made for him," the banner said in the post, referring to the actor's fan-favourite character Munna from Prime Video series "Mirzapur". "Team #RC16 welcomes the incredibly talented and the compelling performer @diestival, which will be held from December 4-11. "Around 180 films will be screened, including shorts and documentaries from India and other countries," West Bengal minister and KIFF organising committee member Aroop Biswas told reporters here on Friday.

There will be 42 feature films in four competition sections.

It will include international competition (innovation in moving images) where the coveted Royal Bengal Tiger Trophy will be given in the Best Film and Best Director categories. A total of 14 films will vie for top honours under the international competition section.

The competition in Indian languages section will have 12 films vying for the Hiralal Sen Memorial Trophy and Award. There will also be nine films in the Asian Select (NETPAC) Award category and seven in Bengali panorama section, Ghosh said.

There will also be a centenary tribute section for Tapan Sinha, Marlon Brando, Marcello Mastroianni, Mohammad Rafi, Talat Mahmood and Madan Mohan, among others. A special tribute section will be for Manoj Mitra, Kumar Sahani and Utpalendu Chakraborty who died this year.

Tapan Sinha's Bengali comedy film 'Galpo Holeo Satti' (1966) will be the inaugural film at Dhono Dhanyo Auditorium on December 4.

The annual Satyajit Ray Memorial Lecture will be delivered by popular Bollywood director R Balki on November 6 while actress Vidya Balan will have an interaction with the audience on December 6. One of the subjects for panel discussion is 'Intolerance, Global Justice and the Media', scheduled on December 7. The venues will be Nandan I, II, III apart from Sisir Mancha, Rabindra Sadan, Nazrul Tirtha and Radha Studio.

Three cineplexes — Navina, New Empire and Ajanta Cinema — will also screen movies.vyenndu on board. #RamCharanRevolts Global Star @AlwaysRamCharan @nimmashivarajkumar @janhvikapoor @buchibabu\_sana @iamjaggubhai @arrahman @rathnaveludop @kollaavinash @venkatasatishkilaru @vridhcinemas @SukumarWritings @MythriOfficial," the caption further read.

Also produced by Sukumar Writings and Mythri Movie Makers, the upcoming film also stars Shiva Rajkumar. AR Rahman will score music for the project. Divyenndu will next be seen in action thriller film "Agni", set to premiere on Prime Video on December 6. (PTI)

## Zoya Akhtar joins fellow jury members Luca Guadagnino, Andrew Garfield at Marrakech Film Festival

NEW DELHI, Nov 30: Filmmaker Zoya Akhtar, who serves part of the jury of the 21st Marrakech Film Festival, walked the red carpet alongside panel head, director Luca Guadagnino and Hollywood stars Andrew Garfield and Jacob Elordi. In a video shared by the official X page of the festival, Akhtar was spotted posing for the shutterbugs at Friday's opening ceremony of the gala in Marrakech, Morocco.

Iranian filmmaker Ali Abbasi, Hollywood actor Patricia Arquette, Argentine director Santiago Mitre, Belgian-French actor Virginie Efira and Moroccan actor Nadia Kounda were also part of the jury panel.

"The jury of the 21st edition competition, presided by Luca Guadagnino, and joined by Ali Abbasi, Zoya Akhtar, Patricia Arquette, Virginie Efira, Jacob Elordi, Andrew Garfield, Nadia Kounda, and Santiago Mitre. - Opening Ceremony of the #MarrakechFestival," read the caption of the post shared by Marrakech Film Festival. According to the festival's website, its main aim is to promote and develop the art of cinema and the film industry in Morocco.

Marrakech Film Festival opened with "The Order", directed by Justin Kurzel, who returned to the gala after winning the Jury Award in 2011 for "Snowtown". The gala will come to a close on December 7. Akhtar's last directed film is "The Archies", which was released on Netflix last year. (PTI)



## Vimal Chandra Pandey on Bhojpuri's first sci-fi film 'Maddhim': Wanted to tell a cinematic story in my mother tongue

NEW DELHI, Nov 30: "Bhojpuri and science fiction? Who is going to watch it?" Those were the questions that writer-filmmaker Vimal Chandra Pandey encountered when he decided to adapt Bob Shaw's famous 1966 short story "Light of Other Days" for his Bhojpuri film "Maddhim".

Pandey, who made his film debut with 2017's critically-acclaimed film "The Holy Fish" and is awaiting the release of his second movie "Dhatura", says it all began with a desire to tell an interesting story in the language that he grew up speaking.

"Bhojpuri is my mother tongue and I always wanted to do something in it. The desire to do something in it kept growing. My model to tell this story was the independent cinema in the south where filmmakers are telling culturally specific stories with limited resources and they are resonating world over. I thought, 'Why not do something similar in Bhojpuri?'" Pandey told PTI in an interview.

According to the film's official plotline, "Maddhim" follows inspector Pratyush and constable Chaube who are investigating the death of a famous pulp fiction writer called Raman Rastogi. "Circle officer and SP are convinced that it is a case of adultery and murder by his wife but inspector Pratyush is continuously looking for appropriate answers. Finally, he comes to know about Raman Rastogi's past. An unbelievable but mind-blowing scientific invention helps Pratyush catch the killer red handed," it read. Pandey, an established Hindi writer with novels such as "Bhale

Dino Ki Baat Thi", "Lahartara" and "Dasasmedh" and story collections "Dar", "Mastulon Ke Ird-gird" and "Maaran Mantra", said while he was keen to tell a story in Bhojpuri, the idea to make it in the sci-fi genre came from his co-writer Vaibhav Mani Tripathi.

Tripathi, a sci-fi enthusiast, initially approached Pandey to translate one of his stories for a Bhojpuri storytelling audio app. He was also keen for

Pandey, who already has an Audible audio series to his credit, to do something similar for his audio app.

"He also wanted me to write an audio series. But I was more keen to make a movie in the language. He came up with the idea to make it a sci-fi project and we read a lot of literature before settling on Bob Shaw's story, which was written in the 1960s. We took the concept of slow glass from the story and wove a murder mystery around it," Pandey added.

The filmmaker thought the production on "Maddhim" would finish early but ended up spending more than two years on the project, encountering many hurdles and prejudices along the way.

Bhojpuri cinema, which was once known for hits such as "Ganga Maiya Tohe Piyari Chadhaibo", "Nadiya Ke Paar" and "Ganga Kinare

Mora Gaon Ho" and attracted the top writers, directors and even actors and musicians, has come to be associated with obscurity even though there are efforts to change the perception from within the industry.

According to Pandey, it is also widely believed that independent filmmakers tend to stick to a format where there has to be a downtrodden hero or heroine at the centre of the story.

"I faced challenges in casting. We thought we will not cast Bhojpuri actors but Hindi artists from the Bhojpuri region. But some of the big artists were like 'Science fiction and Bhojpuri? Who is going to watch it?'. The assumption is that a Bhojpuri film has to be set in a village and tell a story about their condition. Why can't it be a murder mystery and science fiction?"

My story belongs to this genre," the filmmaker said, adding that he is not averse to heartland stories. "I have the rights to one of writer Yogendra Ahuja's stories. I initially wanted to make it in Hindi but while I was finishing 'Maddhim', I realised that the story would lend itself beautifully to Bhojpuri. It can be a reference point for Bhojpuri cinema. The story's title is 'Kushti' and it revolves around caste issues. My screenplay is ready. It can be a wonderful movie in Bhojpuri." (PTI)

## Ed Sheeran set to be first international artist to perform in Bhutan



NEW DELHI, Nov 30: British musician Ed Sheeran is set to make history in January by becoming "the first international artist" to perform in Bhutan.

The "Shape of You" singer, who announced a series of 'Mathematics Tour' shows on Friday, will be performing on January 24 at the Changlimithang Stadium in the Himalayan kingdom's capital, Thimphu. It will be followed by an expansive tour in India and the Middle East, running till May 2025.

"Having launched his record-breaking Mathematics Tour in Dublin in 2022, Sheeran, 33, has captivated audiences worldwide with over 134 electrifying performances to date. This upcoming run, alongside the European leg, marks the concluding chapter of his celebrated Mathematics era," said the organisers.

Each performance promises an intimate experience with the British artist in his purest form armed with only his guitar and Loop-station.

The tour will draw from all of his albums since 2011, starting with "Plus", "Multiply" (2014), "Divide" (2017), "Equals" (2021) and "Subtract" (2023). The tour also includes a song from 2019's "No. 6 Collaborations Project" ("Blow").

The tickets, starting at USD 10, are available for purchase on TiXbt.

The first major international concert in Bhutan is promoted by Gelephu Mindfulness City and AEG Presents in arrangement with One Fiinix Live. (PTI)

## Divyenndu joins Ram Charan-Buchi Babu Sana's film

NEW DELHI, Nov 30: Actor Divyenndu of "Mirzapur" fame will share screen space with "RRR" star Ram Charan in filmmaker Buchi Babu Sana's upcoming Telugu film, the makers said on Saturday.

The film, which marks Ram Charan's 16th project, also stars Janhvi Kapoor.

Production house Vriddhi Cinemas shared Divyenndu's casting announcement in an Instagram post. "Our favourite 'Munna Bhayya' will light up the big screens in a spectacular role tailor made for him," the banner said in the post, referring to the actor's fan-favourite character Munna from Prime Video series "Mirzapur".

"Team #RC16 welcomes the incredibly talented and the compelling performer @divyenndu on board. #RamCharanRevolts Global Star @AlwaysRamCharan @nimmashivarajkumar @janhvikapoor @buchibabu\_sana @iamjaggubhai @arrahman @rathnaveludop @kollaavinash @venkatasatishkilaru @vridhcinemas @SukumarWritings @MythriOfficial," the caption further read.

Also produced by Sukumar Writings and Mythri Movie Makers, the upcoming film also stars Shiva Rajkumar. AR Rahman will score music for the project. Divyenndu will next be seen in action thriller film "Agni", set to premiere on Prime Video on December 6. (PTI)



## Table-toppers Bengaluru FC seek to breach Odisha FC's 'fortress' in ISL match



**BHUBANESWAR, Nov 30:** Buoyed by their impressive all-round form, table-toppers Bengaluru FC will hope to breach Odisha FC's 'fortress' when the two sides square off in an Indian Super League (ISL) match at the Kalinga Stadium here on Sunday.

Bengaluru FC have been rolling seamlessly ever since their campaign got going. The entire team has been function-

ing like a well-drilled unit and hence they are gradually taking the home-away factor out of consideration this year, succeeding across venues.

The Blues have won two of their four away matches this season, and it's only the second time in their history they have achieved this tally in the first four away games.

The Bengaluru side sit at the top, boasting six victories and a

couple of draws. The Blues defeated Mohammedan SC 2-1 in their last away outing.

Odisha FC have also momentum swaying in their favour as they are coming into Sunday's match on the back of an impressive 6-0 win over Hyderabad FC, having climbed to sixth in the ISL table with three wins and draws each.

Odisha FC have gradually begun finding their feet after an

indifferent start to the season and they can hope for home advantage on Sunday.

The Juggernauts are unbeaten in their last two encounters with Bengaluru FC in the ISL -- one win and one draw. They also have won each of their two previous ISL games against Bengaluru FC at the Kalinga Stadium.

Bengaluru FC have netted multiple goals in each of their

last two ISL matches. Their frontline has been boosted by the presence of former India captain Sunil Chhetri, who came off the bench to bag a brace against Mohammedan SC in the last game.

Odisha FC head coach Sergio Lobera stressed on the need of getting on to a positive rhythm and securing wins that can help them seal their fate towards the end of the campaign.

"The first step is the next game. For sure, we know we have six points in play in the coming couple of matches. Getting points is important to get in a good position, which will help us in the final leg of the competition," Lobera said.

Bengaluru FC head coach Gerard Zaragoza understands that good summer acquisitions and a formidable pre-season have been central to their success so far this year.

"We made some really good signings. We worked hard to find the best players for our style. We did a good pre-season. I don't know if we are contenders or not. The only thing we want is to play games and win them now," Zaragoza said.

Odisha FC and Bengaluru FC have faced off 10 times in the ISL. The Blues hold the upper hand with five wins, while the Juggernauts have claimed three victories, and two matches have ended in draws. (PTI)

*WC medal hasn't come for long time, I want to achieve it in my career:*

*Harmanpreet*



**NEW DELHI, Nov 30:** India men's hockey team captain Harmanpreet Singh has two Olympic bronze medals in his cabinet, but rues missing out on World Cup glory, an anomaly that he wants to set right in the next edition of the mega event in 2026.

India have till date won three World Cup medals -- bronze in 1971 (Barcelona), silver in 1973 (Amstelveen, Netherlands) and gold in 1975 (Kuala Lumpur) under Ajitpal Singh's leadership.

Harmanpreet, who won back-to-back Olympic bronze in Tokyo and Paris, the second one under his leadership, however, had won the Junior World Cup in Lucknow in 2016.

"The goal will always be to bag Olympic gold and a World Cup medal. The way we performed in Paris shows that we can compete with top teams and win," Harmanpreet told PTI.

"Our immediate target is next FIH Pro League matches and then win the Asia Cup and qualify directly for the World Cup. A World Cup medal hasn't come for a long time and I want to fulfil that in my career," said Harmanpreet, one of the best defenders and drag-flickers of the world right now. "...Hope we can relive those golden days during our career. We will not surrender till we achieve that," he added.

From a personal point of view, Harmanpreet wants to better his drag-flick skills and remain fit to

prolong his career.

"Drag-flick is getting tough day-by-day and the goal is to work on how to improve myself, bring in more variations and remain fit."

Harmanpreet credits current Indian women's hockey team coach Harendra Singh for shaping his career and believes the women's side drag-flicker and star forward Deepika is in good hands.

"Deepika is doing great. She produced a great performance in the Asian Champions Trophy in Rajgir, Bihar. She is a good drag-flicker and a forward who can score. She is in safe hands under Harry (Harendra) sir," he said.

"I will never forget those days and the help Harry sir provided me."

By his own admission, hockey was a coincidence in his life as Harmanpreet never aspired to play the sport.

"Hockey has chosen me as in my family there was no player, neither I had interest in hockey. I had interest in many sports like volleyball, football, athletics, basketball," he said.

"A coach in my school said try hockey and from the day I started hockey, I became a fan of it. I started the sport at 7-8 years."

Harmanpreet was the toast of the revamped Hockey India League auction recently, bagging Rs 78 lakh bid from Soorma Hockey Club of Punjab. (PTI)

## Rajasthan United beat Namdhari 3-1 with stunning comeback win



**SRI BHAINI SAHIB (PUNJAB), Nov 30:** Rajasthan United FC staged a stunning second-half comeback to beat hosts Namdhari FC 3-1 in the I-League here on Saturday.

Namdhari took a fortunate lead in the 18th minute when Rajasthan defender Wayne Vaz, under pressure from Akashdeep Singh, scored an own goal.

The hosts dominated early, with Akashdeep coming close to dou-

bling the lead in the 34th minute, only for Rajasthan goalkeeper James Kithan to deny him with a superb save.

Rajasthan grew into the game and equalised in the 51st minute after William Neihial was fouled in the box and Alain Oyazun converted the resultant penalty with ease.

Namdhari nearly regained the lead in the 70th minute, but Cledson Dasilva's header drifted nar-

rowly wide.

Three minutes later, Seim-mang Manchong dribbled past multiple defenders and fired in a low shot that eluded goalkeeper Jaspreet Singh, putting Rajasthan ahead.

Namdhari's hopes faded after a red card in the 80th minute, and Wayne Vaz redeemed himself in the 85th minute, tapping in from close range to seal Rajasthan's victory. (PTI)

*Statues of stars like Kane and Ronaldo don't always deliver, Sculptors offer advice*

**LONDON, Nov 30:** One art critic compared the new Harry Kane bronze statue to a bulging-jawed comic strip character.

In Miami, observers say the Dwyane Wade sculpture looks more like actor Laurence Fishburne than the former basketball star. Of course, the infamous Cristiano Ronaldo bust in 2017 gave the chiseled soccer star a chubby face and goofy smile.

A statue of Mohamed Salah in 2018 depicted the Liverpool star with a disproportionately large head. In 2011, a terracotta warrior statue of Andy Murray at a Shanghai tennis tournament drew chuckles, including from the star himself: "I thought I was better looking than that."

It wasn't always this way. In classical times, sculptors "had absolutely no interest in depicting people accurately," explained Lucy Branch, a London-based sculptural conservator.

"What they ended up doing quite often, they recycled sculptures so when another athlete became more prominent, they just changed the name on the plaque," said Branch, host of the "Sculpture Culture" podcast.

"There's this idea now, in this era, that commemorative sculpture should be like portraiture — it should look exactly like the person they are commemorating. But actually that's a really new idea in sculpture."

To avoid pitfalls, here are some tips from sculptors:

Do your research: London-based sculptor Hywel Pratley studied countless images of Queen Elizabeth II to create a memorial statue in the East Midlands town of Oakham. "A good portrait sculpture is evidence of 1,000 decisions after 10,000 observations," Pratley said. In addition, Yorkshire county sculptor Steve Winterburn recommends getting close with a sub-

ject's family and friends to help find characteristics.

"You don't want it looking like a Madame Tussauds," said Winterburn, who created a statue of five Rugby League greats at Wembley Stadium. "It still needs a bit of art in it, a bit of soul. That's what makes art really sing."

Smile at your peril: The Ronaldo bust depicted the Portugal star smiling crookedly. Likewise, the Salah sculpture features the Egyptian smiling while celebrating a goal. In Miami, Wade's mouth is open in the statue representing the moment the player famously jumped onto a court-side table and yelled "This is my house."

It's probably best avoided. "It's really difficult to do teeth looking good in sculpture," Pratley said.

Get the profile right: Start "by understanding the profile" before moving on to determine widths from the front view, Pratley said.

"Get the profile right and you will have won half the battle, because then you can have something at least that you can trust," he said. "When you're lost, you can say, well I knew where I was then, — and you will get lost as a sculptor in the forms."

"There's so many to understand. It's not two dimensions, it's three. There's an exponential opportunity for everything to go wrong. If you've got the profile, then you can go forward with more confidence."

The eyes have it? Winterburn tries to make the eyes "come alive" in his work.

"The eye is the soul of the person that carries it," he said. "If you look at a lot of public work, I'm not being funny, they're dead. There's nothing in them, they're just featureless, soulless. With a painting, if in doubt, fade it out. With sculpture, there is nowhere to hide." (AP)

## Let's drop Labuschagne for Adelaide Test against India: Johnson



**ADELAIDE, Nov 30:** Former pacer Mitchell Johnson reckons that Australia should drop out-of-form Marnus Labuschagne from the playing eleven for the day-night Adelaide Test against India, starting December 6.

Labuschagne got out for two (52 balls) in the first innings and 5-ball three in the second essay during the Test.

"Marnus Labuschagne — after a lengthy poor run with the bat — should be replaced for the second Test in Adelaide. And that's not for the sake of having someone pay the price for the thrashing in Perth," Johnson wrote in 'Nightly.'

Johnson said it will help Labuschagne to go back to domestic cricket and rediscover his form.

"It (dropping) would give him a chance to play some Sheffield Shield and club cricket away from the pressure of playing for your country. I feel he would benefit from that more than going out there trying to survive against Jasprit Bumrah and co.," he added.

Johnson said dropping Labuschagne, who has collected 4119 runs at an average of 48 from 51 Tests, should not be viewed as the end of the road for the top-order batter.

"In his past 10 Test innings, he's passed 10 just once. He's trying to fight through it in the middle but it's not currently working. Dropping Labuschagne, 30, would not mean he doesn't still have a long future in the Test team or that he's the wrong player

to bat at three.

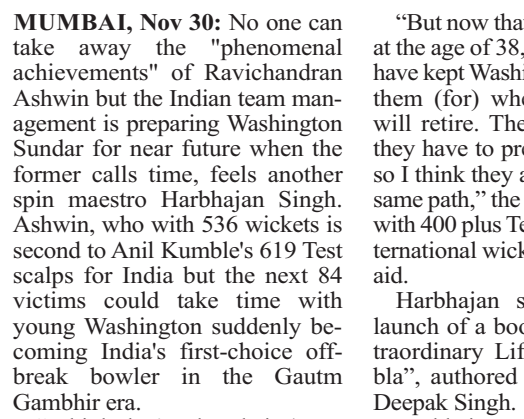
"For the time being in this form slump though, we need him to be better — which means making big runs, not bowling bouncers and risking the potential of injury when that's the job of the bowlers in the team," he added.

Johnson was referring to Labuschagne getting used as a back-up seamer after injury concerns to all-rounder Mitchell Marsh at Perth.

Johnson, who took 313 wickets with his left-arm pace and made 2065 runs from 73 Tests, said veteran batter Steve Smith too looked jaded.

"Steve Smith's form is a serious concern. He looks like he has lost his sharpness we are used to, missing balls on his pads that in the past were easy runs," he added. (PTI)

## Ashwin has been phenomenal but team wants to prepare Washington for future: Harbhajan



**MUMBAI, Nov 30:** No one can take away the "phenomenal achievements" of Ravichandran Ashwin but the Indian team management is preparing Washington Sundar for near future when the former calls time, feels another spin maestro Harbhajan Singh. Ashwin, who with 536 Test wickets is second to Anil Kumble's 619 Test scalps for India but the next 84 victims could take time with young Washington suddenly becoming India's first-choice off-break bowler in the Gautm Gambhir era.

"I think that's what their (team management and selectors') long term plan is. Ravichandran Ashwin has done a phenomenal job playing for India in taking all those wickets in his career," Harbhajan told PTI in an exclusive interview when asked if he sees Ashwin's younger Tamil Nadu state-mate taking over the mantle of lead spinner.

Ashwin's age is certainly a factor that is being kept in consideration. "But now that he is at that stage, at the age of 38, so that's why they have kept Washington Sundar with them (for) whenever R Ashwin will retire. The team thinks that they have to prepare Washington, so I think they are working on the same path," the former off-spinner with 400 plus Test and 700 plus international wickets across formats said.

Harbhajan spoke during the launch of a book titled "The Extraordinary Life of Kiran Dembla", authored by filmmaker Dr Deepak Singh.

Harbhajan, who didn't play the WACA Test in 2008, said the win in the series opener at the Optus Stadium "doubled the joy".

"It was (the) most important win for India because Perth has always been a very happy hunting ground for Australia," he said. "To beat them in their backyard is always very difficult, but this is a ground where the happiness of winning doubles because here they (Australia) consider themselves (to be) very strong at this venue." "So,



well done to team India, they played phenomenal cricket and I hope this will continue and India (would) go on to win this series 4-1," he added.

Harbhajan said winning the first Test notwithstanding, another Test in the series will set India on the path to the World Test Championship final but added that merely getting there would not be enough. "If they win another game, I think India will definitely go into the

WTC (final) but it's not important to reach there, it's important to win we will reach there," he said.

Harbhajan heaped praise on India's stand-in captain for the Perth Test, Jasprit Bumrah, saying he commands a lot of respect in the dressing room for the man that he is. "Bumrah is an amazing player, and of course, he has got a great mindset. I have been a huge supporter of Bumrah from Day One and he has got that very calm

kind of personality," he said. "He knows his game and he is one of those guys who is a very likeable person in the dressing room. He commands a lot of respect in the dressing room so when such a person leads you from the front, the team obviously follows," he added.

The former India player said while Bumrah was at the forefront, he singled out KL Rahul for his formidable batting at Perth in the first Test along with Yashasvi Jaiswal for India's triumph. "To give credit, Jassi did a great job but along with that, Jaiswal (too)," he said.

"KL Rahul... we talk so much about him, that KL is not making runs, this is not happening for him or that is not happening but in the end, you see, if you give a (long) run to a player — he is a quality player, KL Rahul — and I am so happy for him." Harbhajan hoped India will continue their momentum from Perth as they prepare for the next assignment in a day-night Test at Adelaide. (PTI)

