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## Gaurav issue: Police quiz Ripun Bora for six hours

**Investigators tried to puzzle him with different questions, says Cong leader**

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** Senior Congress leader and former Rajya Sabha MP Ripun Bora was on Thursday questioned by Assam Police in connection with a case related to party colleague Gaurav Gogoi's alleged links with Pakistan, officials said.

A police officer told PTI that the Bora reached the CM's Special Vigilance Cell (SVC) office at around 11 am and the questioning continued for about six hours.

He, however, declined to share any further details saying the case is under investigation.

Coming out of the SVC office, Bora told reporters that the investigators tried to puzzle him with different questions, but he fully cooperated with them.

"They asked me about my statements in the press conference and if I had made those remarks, I replied accordingly. They said they might call me again if there is any need, and I will come then," he added.

Bora also said that he suggested the investigators to call two more persons for questioning -- Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and BJP MLA Diganta Kalita.

"Both Sarma and Kalita spoke as if they knew everything about Gogoi's visit. CM



has been claiming that he has concrete proof. So, he should be called for questioning," he added. The Congress leader also referred to Sarma's statement that the Special Investi-

gation Team (SIT) formed to probe the case had contacted Pakistan to get information on Gogoi's visit to the neighbouring nation. "India was at war with Pakistan over ter-

ror activities. How can you contact that nation when we are fighting against them? Therefore, the CM should be called for an interrogation on the issue," he added.

Bora also said that BJP MLA Kalita too addressed the media sharing "many details" of Gogoi's media-talked-about visit to Pakistan.

"Kalita referred to Gogoi's visit in 2013. He was there in Congress then. So, did he accompany Gogoi to Pakistan? If not, then how could he know so much detail? The SIT must call him also for questioning," he added.

The SIT is probing a case of alleged interference of Pakistani national Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, who is claimed to have links with Gogoi's British wife Elizabeth Colburn, in India's internal affairs.

Sheikh, an advisor of the Pakistan Planning Commission and a former colleague of Colburn, was charged under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). On Sunday, Bora in a press conference claimed that Sarma was trying to make Gogoi an ISI agent (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

## Talks and terror cannot go together: India on Pakistan PM Sharif's call



**NEW DELHI, May 29:** India on Thursday once again made it clear that talks with Pakistan can only happen if it stops cross-border terrorism.

New Delhi's comments came in response to Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressing willingness to hold peace talks with India to resolve all outstanding issues, including Kashmir, terrorism, water and trade.

"We would like to reiterate that terrorism and talks cannot go together," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

His assertion came when asked about Sharif's comments in Tehran this week that Pakistan wants to hold peace talks with India.

Jaiswal also emphasised that India will only hold talks with Pakistan on the issues of handing over of Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) and on terrorism. Pakistan needs to hand over to India the terrorists, whose list we submitted to them some years ago, he said.

"As far as the Indus Water Treaty is concerned, it will remain in abeyance till the time Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its

support to cross-border terrorism just like Prime Minister Narendra Modi said: 'terror and talks cannot go together, terror and trade cannot go together, and water and blood cannot flow together.'

India on April 23 announced a raft of punitive measures against Pakistan including suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty.

The measures were announced a day after the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

India carried out precision strikes on nine terror infrastructures early on May 7 in response to the Pahalgam terror attack.

Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10.

The Pakistani attempts were strongly responded to by the Indian side by inflicting heavy damages to a number of key Pakistani military installations including air bases, air defence systems, command and control centres and radar sites.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on May 10 announced that India and Pakistan reached an understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect. (PTI)

## Assam govt trains over 10.5 lakh schoolgirls in Martial Arts: Himanta

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday highlighted the state government's efforts to empower young girls through martial arts training, under the ambitious Rani Lakshmbai Atma Raksha Prashikshan scheme.

Taking to social media platform X, Sarma emphasised the importance of education, empowerment, and bravery among girls, stating, "Our girls should be educated, empowered & brave. They should be able to take up any challenge and our Govt is working towards ensuring this. The Rani Lakshmbai Atma Raksha Prashikshan program has provided martial arts training to over 10.5 lakh schoolgirls across Assam".

Girls from Classes VI to XII have received three months of intensive instruction in disciplines such as Karate, Judo, and Tae Kwon Do. The initiative is aimed at equipping young women with the skills and confidence to protect themselves and face challenges both within and beyond the classroom.

According to official figures from the 2024-25 program cycle, the government has invested ₹20.39 crore into the scheme, covering 13,367 schools across the state. The program is part of a broader push by the Assam government to improve safety and build resilience among adolescent girls. The initiative has been widely appreciated for not only promoting physical fitness and self-defence but also for instilling a sense of confidence and discipline among young participants. As Assam continues to invest in youth-centric development, this program stands out as a key pillar in its strategy to empower the next generation of women.

## Gauhati HC receives bomb threat; turns out hoax

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** A bomb threat was received by Gauhati High Court on Thursday, which turned out to be a hoax, police said.

An officer of Guwahati Police told PTI that a mail landed at Gauhati High Court's official email id in the morning threatening to carry out a blast in the building.

"We carried out a thorough search of the premises and found nothing. It was a hoax," he added. An official of the high court said there has been no hampering in the functioning of the court and different judges heard cases in a routine manner. On April 22, a similar bomb hoax mail landed at Gauhati HC's official email id. The threat had come from an unknown organisation, named 'Madras Tigers'. (PTI)

## Cong calling MPs in all-party delegations 'terrorists': BJP on Jairam Ramesh's remarks

**NEW DELHI, May 29:** The BJP on Thursday accused the Congress of equating the parliamentarians, who are out on a foreign mission to expose Pakistan, with terrorists and demanded "strict action" on this issue.

This came after senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, while attacking the government with his claim that a special session of Parliament was being considered for June 25-26 to mark the 50th anniversary of the Emergency to divert attention from the real and more urgent issues, reportedly remarked "our MPs are roaming and terrorists are also roaming".

Latching on to the Congress leader's remarks, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said, "Jairam Ramesh says the elected MPs in the all-party delegations who



are exposing Pakistan abroad are actually like terrorists." "When Pakistan is being cornered by diplomatic strike, the Congress once again comes out to speak for Pakistan and calls out parliamentarians terrorists," he charged and asked the Congress if DMK MP Kamimozhi, NCP (SP) MP Supriya Sule and Sama-

jjwadi party MP Rajeev, part of the all-party delegations visiting abroad, are terrorists.

There was no immediate reaction from the Congress or Ramesh to the BJP's charge.

The BJP spokesperson alleged that Ramesh's remarks were an "insult" to India's "diplomatic strike" against Pakistan and demanded that Parliament take strict action on this issue. The Congress leader's remarks reflected the "mindset" of his party as its leaders are engaged in giving "clean cheat" to Pakistan on the April 22 Pahalgam terror strike, he charged.

"Shame on Congress party, The Congress is speaking the language of Pakistan's DG ISPR (Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry) and Pakistani YouTubers," Poonawalla charged. (PTI)

## Poacher killed in encounter in Kaziranga National Park

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** A man, suspected to be a poacher, was killed in an encounter with forest guards and police in Assam's Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, an official of the park said on Thursday.

Firearms and ammunition were also recovered from the encounter spot, the official said.

Acting on specific information of a possible armed attack by poachers on the frontline staff stationed at Balidubi camp in the Agorotoli range of the park, a joint operation was launched by the police and the forest department on Wednesday night. All forest camps near the area were put on high alert and additional security personnel deployed in the area, the official said. At around 10.30 pm, the joint team detected suspicious movement near the Dhanbari area and issued a warning to the poachers who in turn fired at the security personnel.

The security personnel retaliated and the exchange of fire continued for nearly half an hour before the poachers fled the spot.

During the search operation following the encounter, an unidentified and injured individual was found and immediately taken to Swahid Kamala Miri Civil Hospital in Bokakhat, where he was declared dead on arrival by the medical officer.

The security personnel recovered an AK-56 rifle and 11 rounds of live ammunition, a .303 rifle with three rounds of live ammunition, a bag containing an axe, food items, and a torch were recovered from the spot.

The official said that search operations were on to apprehend the remaining suspects involved in the incident. (PTI)

## Arunachal's agri push targets innovation, inclusion

**ITANAGAR, May 29:** Arunachal Pradesh Agriculture minister Gabriel D Wangsu on Thursday underscored agriculture and allied sectors as the cornerstone of the state's development strategy, citing significant progress achieved over the past five years. Launching the Vikshit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan 2025 here, the minister announced that the state has allocated ₹2,000 crore under the Atma Nirbhar Scheme, with 50 per cent contributed by the state government, benefiting over 52,000 individuals and self-help groups (SHGs).

This investment, he said, is driving widespread prosperity across rural Arunachal.

Wangsu also flagged off the Krishi Rathis, mobile outreach vehicles that will traverse villages to directly engage with farmers and deliver agricultural knowledge, technology, and information on government schemes at their doorstep.

Terming the occasion 'proud and historic', the minister said Arunachal Pradesh was actively joining the national agricultural transformation campaign under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visionary leadership. "The Vikshit Krishi Sankalp Ab-

hiyan is not just a campaign; it is a Jan Andolan (people's movement), whose success lies in the hands of our scientists, field officers, financial institutions, SHGs, FPOs, and above all, our hardworking farmers," Wangsu said.

He also thanked Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chaudhan for conceptualising the initiative and acknowledged the leadership of chief minister Pema Khandu and deputy chief minister Chowna Mein in driving the state's agricultural readiness.

The state aims to reach over 3.25 lakh farmers across 1,380 villages during the intensive two-week campaign.

The mission involves integrated coordination across the departments of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry and dairy development, and fisheries, alongside Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), SHGs, and financial institutions.

Highlighting a strategic goal, Wangsu reiterated the state's ambition to be recognised as the 'Orchid Capital of India', led by the horticulture department. He noted that a new integrated processing unit at Wakro is poised to revolu-

tionise value addition and agri-processing, ensuring fair pricing for farmers and creating job opportunities.

"The agricultural transformation is evident through 46 FPOs now working closely with the Arunachal Pradesh Agriculture Marketing Board (APAMB). Over 20,500 hectares have been certified for organic production, placing Arunachal Pradesh at the forefront of sustainable agriculture," he said.

Wangsu also spotlighted Mission Arun Himveer, launched last year in collaboration with APAMB and ITBP jawans, which is rapidly gaining traction across border villages. The mission is backed by a dedicated ₹4 crore revolving fund to support farmers in remote areas.

Strategic infrastructure projects include the development of perishable cargo centres at Donyi Polo Airport and Tezu Airport, aimed at enabling swift national and international market access for the state's agri-products.

The marketing board, he added, is working on a comprehensive roadmap to promote the state's eight GI-tagged products, ensuring they gain national recognition and reach a broader consumer base. Wangsu also (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

## Union minister calls on Himanta, discusses implementation of govt schemes

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Nimbun Jayantibhai Bambhaniya, on Thursday called on Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and discussed the implementation of key government schemes.

Sarma also apprised the minister about the decision to distribute free rice entitlements under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) for the months of June, July and August in June itself, the Chief Minister's Office (CMO) posted on X. "They discussed the implementation of key government schemes, with a focus on ensuring welfare benefits reach BPL families," it said.

The Union minister arrived here on Thursday after concluding a three-day visit to Hailakandi district in Barak Valley, where she assessed the implementation of various government schemes under the Aspirational Districts Programme. She directed district officials to expedite all pending development (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

**'The number of CAMs was less in 2024 compared to the previous year'**

## ISRO carried out 122 Collision Avoidance Manoeuvres in 14 years

**BENGALURU, May 29:** ISRO has said it has carried out 122 Collision Avoidance Manoeuvres (CAM) for its Earth Orbiting Satellites in the last 14 years.

In its Space Situational Assessment Report, the Indian Space Research Organisation said it regularly carries out analyses to predict close approaches by other space objects to Indian space assets.

In case of any critical close approach, CAMs are carried out for the operational spacecraft to mitigate the collision risk, it said.

The space agency said that more than 53,000 alerts issued by the Combined Space Operations Center (CSpOC) of the US Space Command for ISRO's earth orbiting satellites were analysed using more accurate orbital data from



flight dynamics.

Data shows that since 2010 to 2024, 122 CAMs were conducted and the maximum 23 were carried out between 2022 and 2023. Between 2023 and 2024, 10 CAMs were conducted.

"The number of CAMs was less in 2024 compared to the previous year. This is because improved close approach analysis methodology with larger conjunction screening volume and usage of more accurate ephemerides helped

to meet collision avoidance requirements by adjusting orbit maintenance manoeuvres on several occasions and avoiding exclusive CAMs," ISRO explained.

ISRO also said that a total of 136 Indian spacecraft, including those from private operators or academic institutions, were launched in Earth-orbit till December 31, 2024. The number of operational satellites owned by the Government of India is 22 in Lower Earth Orbit (LEO) and 31 in Geo-synchronous Earth Orbit (GEO) by the end of 2024.

In addition, two Indian deep space missions, namely, Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter (CH2O) and Aditya-L1 at Sun-Earth Lagrange point were also active. "The propulsion module of the Chandrayaan-3 (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)

## India shares terrorism concerns with Saudi Arabia's security experts

**RIYADH, May 29:** An all-party Indian delegation on Thursday visited the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences and think tank Gulf Research Centre here to share strong concerns about cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

The delegation, led by BJP MP Baijayant Panda, is visiting Saudi Arabia from May 27 to 29 to convey India's firm stance against terrorism and its continued efforts to combat this global menace in all its forms and manifestations.

At the Naif Arab University for Security Sciences, the Indian MPs "shared strong concerns with cross-border terrorism and the position of zero tolerance against terrorism," said a post on X by the Indian Embassy here.

Panda shared a post on X that the Indian team had a "meaningful exchange with university President Dr Abdulmajeed bin Abdullah Al-Bunyan, discussing India's firm zero-tolerance approach to cross-border terrorism and shared opportunities in security education and research."

A member of the delegation, Satnam Singh Sandhu, described the institution as a "brilliant platform to exchange the best practices to stop terrorism and benefit mutually" in a post on X.

The delegation also had a "frank & productive exchange of views" with the Gulf Research Centre chair-



man Dr Abdulaziz Sager.

"The Indian delegation shared India's resolve & approach towards terrorism with zero tolerance policy & the new normal in light of #OpSindoor."

"The discussions also focused on strong India-Saudi Arabia partnership across all domains, including security & defence cooperation," the Embassy said in another post on X.

"India and Saudi Arabia continue to deepen ties across security, defence & global affairs, united by a shared resolve to combat terrorism. Our all-party delegation had a candid & insightful exchange at Gulf Research Centre with Chairman Dr Abdulaziz Sager," Panda said in another (**CONTD. ON PAGE-2**)



## India to remain fastest-growing economy, RBI's balance sheet increases to ₹ 76.25 lakh crore

**MUMBAI, May 29:** The balance sheet of the RBI increased to ₹ 76.25 lakh crore, aided by nearly 33 per cent gains in foreign exchange transactions, as of March 2025, leading to a bumper ₹ 2.7 lakh crore dividend to the central government, said the central bank's annual report released on Thursday.

The keenly watched report said the Indian economy is poised to remain the fastest-growing major economy in 2025-26 by leveraging its sound macroeconomic fundamentals, robust financial sector and commitment towards sustainable growth.

The economy exhibited resilience during 2024-25, supported by strong macroeconomic fundamentals and proactive policy measures, amid protracted geopolitical tensions and geoeconomic fragmentation, said the RBI's Annual Report for the Year 2024-25. "The strength of the financial sector, reflected in improved asset quality and well-capitalised banks, further supported economic activity. Amidst multiple global headwinds, the Indian financial markets demonstrated resilience and orderly movements," it said.

It also flagged global financial market volatility, geopolitical tensions, trade fragmentation, supply-chain disruptions and climate-induced uncertainties as factors posing downside risks to the growth outlook and also upside risks to the inflation outlook.

However, factors like easing of supply-chain pressures, softening global commodity prices and higher agricultural production on above-normal south west monsoon augur well for inflation outlook, the Reserve Bank said.

Shifts in tariff policies may result in sporadic episodes of volatility in financial markets, it said, adding that exports may encounter



headwinds on "inward-looking policies and tariff-wars".

The trade pacts being signed and negotiated by India will help ensure that the impact is limited, the RBI said, adding that services exports and inward remittances will help ensure that the current account deficit is "eminently manageable" in the new fiscal.

The RBI, which has already lowered key policy rates in two consecutive reviews, said in the annual report that there is now a "greater confidence" on durable alignment of headline inflation to the 4 per cent target over a 12-month horizon.

Considering the dynamic nature of the interest rate risk, banks need to address both trading and banking book risks, especially in light of moderation in net interest margins, it recommended.

Giving details about its accounts for 2024-25, RBI said the size of the balance sheet as on March 31, 2025 increased by 8.20 per cent year on year.

While income for the year increased by 22.77 per cent, expenditure increased by 7.76 per cent.

The year ended with an overall surplus of ₹ 2,68,590.07 crore as against ₹ 2,10,873.99 crore in the previous year, resulting in an in-

crease of 27.37 per cent.

"The size of the balance sheet increased by ₹ 5,77,718.72 crore, 8.20 per cent from ₹ 70,47,703.21 crore as on March 31, 2024 to ₹ 76,25,421.93 crore as on March 31, 2025," the report said. Increase on assets side was due to rise in gold, domestic investments and foreign investments by 52.09 per cent, 14.32 per cent and 1.70 per cent, respectively.

Exchange gain from foreign exchange transactions increased by about 33 per cent to ₹ 1.11 lakh crore as on March 31, 2025 from ₹ 83,615.86 crore a year ago.

The Reserve Bank spent ₹ 6,372.82 crore on printing of currency notes in the last fiscal, an increase of 25 per cent from ₹ 5,101.4 crore in the preceding financial year.

The report said that the value and volume of banknotes in circulation increased by 6 per cent and 5.6 per cent, respectively, during 2024-25.

"During 2024-25, the share of ₹ 500 banknotes at 86 per cent, declined marginally in value terms," it said.

In volume terms, ₹ 500 denomination at 40.9 per cent, constituted the highest share of the total banknotes in circulation, followed by

₹ 10 denomination banknotes at 16.4 per cent.

The lower denomination banknotes (₹ 10, ₹ 20 and ₹ 50) together constituted 31.7 per cent of total banknotes in circulation by volume.

The withdrawal of ₹ 2000 banknotes from circulation, initiated in May 2023, continued during the year and 98.2 per cent of ₹ 3.56 lakh crore in circulation at the time of announcement have returned to the banking system up to March 31, 2025.

The value and volume of coins in circulation increased by 9.6 per cent and 3.6 per cent, respectively, during 2024-25.

Also, the value of e-rupee in circulation increased by 334 per cent during 2024-25. The supply of notes increased by 24.69 per cent from 2,43,000 lakh pieces during the year 2023-24 to 3,03,000 lakh pieces during 2024-25.

Currency in circulation includes banknotes, central bank digital currency (CBDC) and coins. Presently, banknotes in circulation comprise denominations of ₹ 2, ₹ 5, ₹ 10, ₹ 20, ₹ 50, ₹ 100, ₹ 200, ₹ 500 and ₹ 2000.

The Reserve Bank is no longer printing banknotes of denominations of ₹ 2, ₹ 5 and ₹ 2000.

Coins in circulation comprise denominations of 50 paise and ₹ 1, ₹ 2, ₹ 5, ₹ 10 and ₹ 20.

On counterfeit notes, the report said that during 2024-25, out of the total Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICNs) detected in the banking sector, 4.7 per cent were detected at the Reserve Bank.

The counterfeit notes detected in the denominations of ₹ 10, ₹ 20, ₹ 50, ₹ 100 and ₹ 2000 declined during 2024-25, while those in ₹ 200 and ₹ 500 denominations increased by 13.9 and 37.3 per cent, respectively, as compared with the previous year. (PTI)

## Sakra World Hospital appoints Tandem Healthcare to build 500-bed Hospital

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** Sakra World Hospital, India's first 100% FDI Tertiary Care Hospital, has announced the appointment of Tandem Healthcare to design and build its second state-of-the-art hospital in North Bengaluru.

"We are thrilled to partner with Tandem Healthcare to bring our vision of a world-class healthcare facility to life," an official statement quoted Yuichi Nagano, managing director, Sakra World Hospital.

"This collaboration combines Japanese precision with Tandem's healthcare facility expertise, ensuring a hospital that sets new benchmarks in clinical excellence and patient care," he added.

Spanning 6.8 lakh square feet, this 500-bed facility will be one-of-its-kind green biophilic hospital, incorporating garden lounges, green balconies, planters, arrival

canopy and serene lake views to create a healing environment inspired by nature. Set to be completed and operational within 30 months. This landmark project, valued at ₹ 1,000 crore, marks a significant milestone in Sakra's mission to deliver world-class healthcare powered by Japanese innovation and technology through its collaboration with Secom Medical System and Toyota Tsusho. The new facility will feature G+9 floors and the design will integrate Indo-Japanese architectural elements, blending tradition with modernity. Alok Sharma, founder and director of Tandem Healthcare said that Tandem believes that healthcare infrastructure must go beyond functionality to inspire healing and trust.

"This partnership with Sakra will reflect our shared commitment to building not just hospitals, but

holistic healing ecosystems that combine cutting-edge technology with sustainable, patient-centric design," he added.

The new Sakra World Hospital in Bengaluru will deliver cutting-edge healthcare through advanced clinical programs, including a Comprehensive Cancer Treatment Program with LINAC, MR-LINAC, Gamma Knife, Brachytherapy, and state-of-the-art nuclear medicine, alongside specialized Interventional Neuro & Rehab, Cardiology, and Mother & Child Programs with a premium C-Suite. Designed for future-ready care, the facility features a paperless system, RFID tracking, pandemic-preparedness, modular OTs integrated with the Building Management System for precise environmental control, and comprehensive indoor air quality monitoring, ensuring superior clinical outcomes and patient safety.

## India's job market to grow 2.8 pc in H1 FY26 amid cost-conscious hiring: Report

**MUMBAI, May 29:** India's job market is expected to grow 2.8 per cent in the first half of 2025-26 amid economic complexity and cost-conscious hiring, a report said on Thursday. This marks a measured decline from 7.1 per cent in October-March FY25, signalling a deliberate pivot toward demand-sensitive and cost-conscious hiring, according to TeamLease Services' 'Employment Outlook Report'.

The TeamLease Services' report forecasts a 2.8 per cent Net Employment Change (NEC), down from 7.1 per cent in H2 FY25, as 47 per cent of employers interviewed indicated plans for workforce expansion, 28

per cent opting for stability, while 25 per cent expect to reduce. The 'Employment Outlook Report' is based on extensive primary and secondary research, drawing insights from over 1,263 employers across 23 industries and 20 cities across the country.

It further revealed that there is a growing trend of flexi-staffing, with 69 per cent of employers embracing flexible workforce models to manage cyclical demand and seasonal peaks. By allowing organisations to scale quickly without the burden of long-term costs, flexi-staffing is proving crucial, especially during the leaner H1 period, said the report. (PTI)

*Contd. from Page 1...*

## Gaurav issue: Police quiz Ripun

only because the BJP leader knew that the ruling government will decisively lose the 2026 assembly elections if the parliamentarian was made the CM candidate of the opposition party.

Regarding Gogoi's British wife, Bora had said: "She might have visited Pakistan or got a salary for her work from Pakistan, what's the problem in that? Likewise, many Pakistani people are working in India legally."

Following this, Sarma claimed that Bora made a "startling confession" that his party MP Gogoi's wife has been on the "payroll of the Pakistan government".

The Assam CM and the BJP have been attacking Lok Sabha MP Gogoi over his wife's alleged connection with Pakistan's spy agency ISI. He had claimed that Gogoi's British wife Elizabeth Colburn had travelled 19 times between India and Pakistan.

Sarma also alleged that Gogoi had visited Pakistan on an invitation from its spy agency ISI and undergone training there and that he worked closely with the establishment of the neighbouring nation.

He further claimed that Colburn was collecting various classified government documents, mainly IB reports, on behalf of the Pakistani climate lobby.

Hitting back hard, Gogoi slammed Sarma over his accusation of the MP's alleged Pakistani links and questioned his mental state due to issues at the home front. He even said the CM's remarks were "ridiculous, baseless, insane and nonsense" and that he was behaving like an "IT cell troll" without talking with facts. (PTI)

## Arunachal's agri push targets

announced that the Agriculture and Horticulture Policies 2025-2035 have been finalised.

These long-term policies will guide the state's sectoral development for the next decade, setting clear priorities for growth and farmer welfare, he pointed out.

As part of the current financial year's state action plan, the government launched the Arunachal Millet and Buckwheat Mission, aiming to revive traditional crops that suit the region's climate and terrain, the minister said. On the oil palm front, expansion is underway across nine districts, with farmer participation supported by processing plants established by 3F Oil Palm Ltd and Patanjali Food Limited at Roing and Niglok, creating a robust value chain, Wangsu disclosed.

The minister added that for the 2024-25 financial year, the state has received ₹ 96.44 crore under PM-RKVY, and is awaiting allocation under the centrally sponsored Krishonnati scheme.

Under the PM-KISAN initiative, he said, the state has achieved cent per cent farmer registration, with 1,14,670 farmers enrolled. ₹ 22.64 crore was released in the last instalment (February 2025), with the next scheduled for June.

Wangsu further emphasised that the Centre's push for natural farming aligns well with the state's traditional methods.

"Our farmers have been practising natural farming by default. This national recognition will motivate and empower our agricultural community," he said.

Calling for collective action, Wangsu urged all stakeholders to come together to ensure the success of the Vikshit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan. "The fields of the state are ready for transformation. Our farmers are eager to learn, adopt, and excel, and our government machinery is committed to delivering results that will make Arunachal proud," he added. (PTI)

## Union minister calls on Himanta

work to facilitate Hailakandi's transformation from an aspirational district into a developed one, an official release said.

She emphasised the importance of leveraging Hailakandi's abundant natural resources to launch new livelihood-generating projects and boost local incomes.

Bambhaniya also interacted with beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), local artisans and members of self-help groups (SHGs). She expressed satisfaction over the active participation of women-led SHGs in promoting socio-economic development in the region, the release said.

The minister also reviewed departmental efforts in education, healthcare, agriculture, animal husbandry, rural development, public health engineering and the Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission. (PTI)

## ISRO carried out 122 Collision

spacecraft continued to operate in a high Earth orbit (more than 1 lakh km away) after being relocated from its lunar orbit since Nov 2023," the statement said. ISRO said 34 rocket bodies re-entered the Earth's atmosphere till 2024 end, and five of such re-entries took place in 2024.

"A total of 31 Indian satellites have re-entered the atmosphere till the end of 2024. In 2024 alone, nine Indian satellites re-entered the atmosphere. Among them was Cartosat-2, which re-entered the atmosphere on February 14, 2024," the space agency said. (PTI)

## India shares terrorism concerns

post on X. Earlier on Wednesday, the delegation members met Saudi Arabia's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Adel Al-Jubeir; visited the Shura Council, a governmental body with regulatory authority, and met Deputy Speaker Mishal Al-Sulami and Maj Gen Abdulrahman Alharbi, Chair of the India-Saudi Friendship Committee, and also met Mushabab Al-Qahtani, DG, Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute of Diplomatic Studies.

The delegation members also offered floral tributes to Mahatma Gandhi on Embassy premises, honouring his timeless message of peace, non-violence and tolerance.

"In all the meetings, the Indian delegation underlined that India has received unwavering support from Saudi Arabia on issues related to counterterrorism. Both countries will continue to work together in their efforts towards de-radicalisation and curbing extremism," a statement from the Indian Embassy said on Wednesday.

The Embassy hosted a dinner interaction with the participation of distinguished personalities from Saudi civil society, which gave an opportunity for further discussions countering terrorism as well as broader topics related to India-Saudi bilateral partnership, the statement added.

Besides Panda and Sandhu, other members of the delegation are AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey, former chairperson of the National Commission for Women and Rajya Sabha MP Rekha Sharma, BJP MP Phangnon Konyak apart from former Ambassador Harsh Shringla.

Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, who was also a part of the delegation, was admitted to a hospital after the Bahrain leg of the multi-country visit.

The delegation had visited Bahrain and Kuwait before arriving in Riyadh on Tuesday. The delegation is one of the seven multi-party delegations India has tasked to visit 33 global capitals to reach out to the international community to emphasize Pakistan's links to terrorism.

Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after the Pahalgal terror attack, with India carrying out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the early hours of May 7. Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9, and 10. The Indian side responded strongly to the Pakistani actions.

The on-ground hostilities ended with an understanding of stopping the military actions following talks between the directors general of military operations of both sides on May 10. (PTI)

## Infinity Heights unveiled at RAI North East Retail Summit 2025

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** The Retailers Association of India's North East Retail Summit 2025 brought together leading retail minds from Assam and neighbouring states where Infinity Group made a significant impact, showcasing Infinity Heights, Guwahati's tallest and most premium residential resort.

Located in Kalapahar, Infinity Heights stands at 362 feet above sea level, offering panoramic views of Guwahati and the Brahmaputra River.

As per an official statement, the Infinity Heights strategically situated near schools, hospitals, the airport, and major landmarks, the project blends serene living with urban convenience.

"Infinity Heights is more than a residence—it's a statement of elevated living," the statement quoted Pulak Chamarla, director, Infinity Group as saying.

Also on display was Krishna Bhumi Arcade, a unique mall in Vrindavan that fuses spirituality with modern retail, reflecting Infinity's philosophy of integrated, culturally conscious development.

Das also moderated a key panel discussion titled "Business Strategy to Drive Real Outcomes", featuring retail leaders from Jubilant Foodworks, NEXT Electronics, The Grocer Supermarket, and Sheriff Fashions.

## Stock markets rebound after 2-day fall as US court blocks reciprocal tariffs

**MUMBAI, May 29:** Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded on Thursday after two days of decline, mirroring a rally in global markets as a US court blocked President Donald Trump's reciprocal tariffs.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 320.70 points or 0.39 per cent to settle at 81,633.02 in a volatile session amid monthly expiry in derivative contracts. During the day, it jumped 504.57 points or 0.62 per cent to 81,816.89.

The 50-share NSE Nifty went up by 81.15 points or 0.33 per cent to 24,833.60. The index swung sharply in both directions on the monthly expiry day before ending with gains. Metal, realty, pharma and IT sector indices were major gainers.

Among Sensex firms, IndusInd Bank climbed 2.41 per cent a day after markets regulator Sebi barred its former CEO, Sumant Kathpalia, and four other senior officials from accessing the securities markets in connection with an alleged insider trading in the bank's shares.

Sun Pharma, Adani Ports, Eternal, Tata Steel, Tech Mahindra and Axis Bank were also among the gainers.

Bajaj Finance, ITC, Bajaj Finserv and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

Investors rejoiced a US federal court's decision to block President

Donald Trump's sweeping reciprocal tariffs on imports.

"Global sentiment improved after a US court struck down Trump's reciprocal tax policy. However, the domestic market remained mostly rangebound during the day due to rising oil prices and higher US 10-year bond yields. Some recovery was seen toward the end of the session, driven by F&O expiry-led covering."

"Export-focused sectors like IT and Pharma performed well, supported by hopes of easing trade tensions," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.48 per cent and smallcap index went up by 0.39 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, realty jumped the most 1.21 per cent, followed by metal (0.89 per cent), BSE Focused IT (0.79 per cent), services (0.69 per cent), tech (0.65 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.55 per cent) and commodities (0.53 per cent).

FMCG emerged as the only laggard. As many as 2,022 stocks advanced while 1,954 declined and 135 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"While markets witnessed sideways movement in the first half, key indices rebounded on selective buying amid short covering on the monthly derivatives expiry day,

Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Strong Asian and European cues also aided sentiment, even as investors await the release of the minutes of the US FOMC (Federal Open Market Committee) meeting," Tapse said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in positive territory.

Markets in Europe were trading higher. US markets ended lower on Wednesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹ 4,662.92 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Also, the Reserve Bank said that the country is poised to remain the fastest-growing major economy in the world even in FY26.

India's industrial production growth slowed to 2.7 per cent in April 2025 due to poor performance of manufacturing, mining and power sectors, according to official data released on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude jumped 1.42 per cent to USD 65.82 a barrel.

The 30-share BSE barometer declined 239.31 points or 0.29 per cent to settle at 81,312.32 on Wednesday. The Nifty dropped 73.75 points or 0.30 per cent to 24,752.45. (PTI)

better. "Our problem is our low level of labour productivity, not only with respect to the US but also with respect to some of our peers, such as China and other peers in ASEAN," he said. Noting that rising labour productivity leads to faster growth in real incomes, Bery said the fact that that has not been happening as fast as people's aspirations, is what is leading to the skewing for government jobs.

Bery pointed out that India has maintained an average growth rate of 6.5 per cent for the 30 years since 1991 reforms to the COVID period in 2021, suggesting that the roots of resilience in India are as much in our institutions as they are in our policies. Deep institutional sources of resilience are in place, but we mustn't be complacent, because we need to up our game for all kinds of reasons, he said.

According to Bery, industrialisation is another challenge facing the country and policy lessons could be drawn from countries such as China, Japan and South Korea even though each country must work out its own path and productivity trajectory. (PTI)



ing markets and building skills.

The NITI Aayog vice chairman also emphasised that the states should utilise opportunities of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) which were signed by the Union government. He said competitiveness should not only be restricted to manufacturing but should extend to services as well.

Bery said India's labour productivity is the lowest among the G20 nations and a sustained rise in productivity of labour is crucial for India to leverage its demographic dividend. India's track record has not been bad in terms of growth productivity, but it needs to get

purchased with one unit of the reference economy's currency.

"There has been a lot in the newspapers about our being the fourth largest economy. Those are all measured at market prices, but the real way of measuring productivity is purchasing power parity."

"And while we are USD 4 trillion GDP at market prices, at PPP term, we are USD 15 trillion economy," Bery said while addressing the Annual Business Summit 2025 of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). He said that economists tend to measure labour productivity at purchasing power parity as PPP measures the real size of the economy of countries against the size of the US economy.

"And so while we (the size of India economy in PPP term) are at USD 15 trillion, the United States is at USD 29 trillion."

"So we are roughly half the world size of the US economy," he said. Bery said India needs to diversify its sources of supply, so the country would not have to depend on a particular supplier.

He also suggested that India should leverage global knowledge and innovate locally, while reform-

### NAME CORRECTION

The name of my daughters are Pooja Boro (elder) and Manisha Boro which were recorded as Puja Boro and Monisha Boro in my Records BDE of the Guards/Service records of the Indian Army.

The name Pooja Boro is the same person Puja Boro and Manisha Boro is the same person Monisha Boro.

Molen Chandra Boro,  
S/o Late Thubla Boro,  
Vill- Thelamara, Ghatgaon,  
Dist- Sonitpur, Assam  
PIN- 784 149



Assam districts unite under to empower farmers ahead of Kharif season

# Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan launched across state

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI/DIPHU, May 29:** The nationwide Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan, a pre-Kharif agricultural awareness and outreach campaign initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India, was launched with enthusiasm across multiple districts of Assam on May 29.

The campaign is scheduled to run until June 12, 2025, aiming to empower farmers through scientific knowledge, government schemes, and direct engagement with experts.

In Dima Hasao, the flag-off ceremony took place at the Cultural Hall, Haflong, with Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Dima Hasao, leading the campaign in collaboration with district line departments.

Chief Executive Member Debolal Gorlosa emphasized the importance of coordination among the Departments of Fishery, Forest, and Irrigation for better farmer support.

He urged diversification into organic vegetable cultivation such as potatoes, brinjals, and chillies to ensure food qual-

ity and self-sufficiency.

Assam Minister for Sports and Youth Welfare Nandita Gorlosa also addressed farmers, highlighting the importance of modern agricultural practices to enhance productivity and income.

Agriculture Extension Officer Rasmitha Saikia detailed the campaign's approach, where expert teams will visit six villages to directly interact with farmers and provide solutions.

Officials also informed farmers about key government schemes like PM-KISAN, PMMSY, and PMKSY.

Meanwhile in Diphu, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Karbi Anglong, launched the campaign at the Farmers Growth Centre.

Member of Parliament Amarsing Tisso inaugurated the event by flagging off an awareness vehicle and stressed the significance of organic farming and oilseed cultivation.

Organised in partnership with Assam Agricultural University, ICAR institutes, and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, the campaign involves several line departments and banking institu-



tions. The initiative focuses on raising awareness about government schemes and collecting farmers' feedback to guide future policies.

The campaign covers five development blocks and will engage around 200 farmers daily through expert teams, particularly targeting tribal and geographically challenging areas.

**Our Dhubri correspondent adds:** Dhubri district officially launched the campaign under the leadership of KVK Dhubri in coordination with various agricultural and allied offices.

The launch event included dignitaries such as Additional District Commissioner (Agriculture) Shantana Bora and senior scientists from local agricultural

institutions.

The campaign aims to empower farmers in rural and border areas with sustainable technologies, balanced fertilizer use via Soil Health Cards, and awareness of government schemes.

Bora highlighted the region's potential for millet cultivation and praised local women's entrepreneurship in mushroom farming and value-added products.

A demonstration of drone spraying technology showcased modern farming tools' efficiency. The mobile "Krishi Rath" will conduct outreach sessions across ten development blocks.

**Our Kokrajhar correspondent adds:** The campaign was inaugurated at the East Maligaon VCDC Office, Kokrajhar district, with participation from MLA Lawrence Islay and MLA Jiron Basumatary.

Implemented by KVK Kokrajhar in collaboration with Assam Agricultural University and district departments, the programme aims to foster direct communication between farmers, scientists, and officials across all development blocks.

The initiative seeks to raise awareness of agricultural challenges and government schemes.

District Agriculture Officer Diganta Thapa and ASRLM Scheme Officer Bichitra Birjaj Narzary attended, alongside a large gathering of farmers.

**Our Morigaon correspondent adds:** Morigaon district commenced the 13-day campaign with an inauguration by Chief Executive Officer Ananta Gogoi of the Morigaon Zila Parishad, attended by District Agriculture Officer Ashok Sharma and other officials.

The programme focuses on farmer awareness about government schemes, registration drives, and crop insurance. Demonstrations of drone technology and nano urea were conducted to promote modern agricultural methods.

The campaign's mobile "Krishi Rath" was showcased to disseminate information.

Over 200 farmers participated, with support from agricultural officers and insurance representatives. The campaign will continue in Morigaon for 13 days.

## 47<sup>th</sup> TOLIC meeting held successfully at OIL in Duliagan

**HT Correspondent**

**DIBRUGARH, May 29:** The 47th meeting of the Town Official Language Implementation Committee (TOLIC), Duliagan, was successfully held on Wednesday at the field conference room of Oil India Limited (OIL), under the chairmanship of Madhuriya Barua, Executive Director (Human Resources & Field Administration), OIL.

The meeting served as a significant step towards strengthening the implementation of the Official Language policy in the region.

Devanand Das, Assistant Director (Implementation), Regional Implementation Office (North-East), Guwahati, Department of Official Language, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, attended the meeting as the official representative from the Department.

Also present were Diganta Kumar Borah, General Manager (Public Affairs), OIL, and Diganta Deka, Senior Officer (Official Language), OIL, who also serves as the Member-Secretary of TOLIC, Duliagan.

The meeting saw active participation from Heads of Departments, Official Language Officers, and In-Charges of various central government offices, public sector undertakings, and banks located in and around Duliagan, highlighting a shared commitment to promoting the use of Hindi in official work.

## Demow Youth Society launches Green Campaign

**HT Correspondent**

**DEMOW, May 29:** The Demow Youth Society launched a Green Campaign in Demow on May 26, with the aim of promoting tree plantation and environmental awareness.

The campaign began at the residence of Hamida Begum, Retired Head of the Sociology Department at Demow College and Adviser to the Demow Youth Society, where the first sapling was planted. The event was attended by Hamida Begum and Umesh Chetia, President of the Demow Press Club and Adviser to the Society.

The Green Campaign emphasizes responsible tree planting and care, and is planned to continue in the coming days.

## CM calls for effective implementation of student welfare schemes

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday held a video conference with college principals and district commissioners across the state to review the implementation of various student welfare schemes.

The interaction, held from his office at Lok Sewa Bhawan in the presence of Education Minister Ranaj Pegu, focused on ensuring a seamless admission process for the academic year 2025-26 and strengthening key education initiatives.

According to an official statement, the Chief Minister took stock of the undergraduate admission process, the execution of the free admission scheme, the progress of the Nijut Moina scheme, and preparations for the Dr. Banikanta Kakati Merit Award under the Pragyan Bharati Scheme.

He stressed the need for timely and coordinated implementation of these initiatives to enhance access to education and overall academic performance.



Sarma urged college principals to ensure that the free admission process is conducted exclusively through the Samarth Portal, with the ration card serving as the primary proof of income.

He clarified that if a student does not

possess a ration card, an income certificate indicating an annual household income below ₹4 lakh will be accepted to qualify for free admission.

The Chief Minister also emphasized the importance of the Nijut Moina scheme for the 2025-26 financial year and called for full cooperation from principals to ensure its smooth rollout.

He reviewed the number of students eligible for the Dr. Banikanta Kakati Merit Award, which recognises higher secondary students who score 80 percent or more.

Under the Pragyan Bharati scheme, these meritorious students will receive scooters, which the government plans to distribute beginning October 2025.

To ensure effective execution, Dr. Sarma directed principals and district commissioners to work in close coordination in preparing accurate beneficiary lists for the merit award scheme.

Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister K K Dwivedi, Secretary of Higher Education Narayan Konwar, and other senior officials also attended the conference.

## Bhupen Borah slams Assam cabinet's arms licence policy, warns of return to 'gun culture'

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** Former Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Bhupen Borah on Thursday launched a sharp critique of the Assam Cabinet's decision to implement a state-specific arms licence policy, cautioning that the move could reignite a "culture of fear" reminiscent of the state's violent past.

Addressing reporters, Borah drew on personal memories from his days as a Youth Congress leader to highlight the dangers of normalizing

firearm ownership.

"There was a time when a single gunshot would send entire neighbourhoods into panic and sleepless nights," he recalled grimly.

Referring to the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, Borah described his own experience campaigning under heavy security.

"I had a bulletproof vehicle, jacket, and helmet provided by Assam Police. Our collective goal back then was to leave the gun culture behind. Today, Assam has made progress — we cannot af-

ford to turn back the clock," he asserted.

Borah also questioned the legality of the Cabinet's move, arguing that arms licensing is governed by central legislation.

"I, too, have a licensed firearm — but only after a credible threat assessment and following due process," he said.

Taking a direct swipe at chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Borah accused him of mimicking the United States' controversial relationship with firearms.

## 2,054 new members join UPPL in Kokrajhar

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, May 29:** In a significant political development, more than 2,054 individuals from various parties, including the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) and Gana Suraksha Party (GSP), joined the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) during a programme held at Rup Nath Brahma Field in Ramfalbil, Kokrajhar, on Thursday.

The large-scale induction marks a notable boost to the UPPL's grassroots strength in the region. The joining event was organised by the Dotma Block Committee of the UPPL in association with the Kokrajhar District Committee of the party.

Pramod Boro, Chief Executive Member of the Bodoland Territorial Region and president of the UPPL, was present at the event, along

with Assam Cabinet Minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, Lok Sabha MP Joyanta Basumatary, UPPL General Secretary Raju Kumar Narzary, MLA Lawrence Islay, and several other dignitaries. The party leaders extended a warm welcome and felicitated the new members. Addressing the gathering, CEM Boro said the UPPL is witnessing a surge in popularity across the Bodoland region. He stated that people from diverse communities are increasingly expressing support for the party and joining its ranks in large numbers.

"UPPL's strength lies in the trust of the people. And today, that trust grew even stronger. I'm delighted to address a massive gathering at Dotma and welcome 2,054 new members who've joined our collective journey of peace, unity, and progress," Boro said.



track, ensure alignment accuracy, and maintain structural safety.

NFR stated that it continues to undertake proactive measures to improve track conditions across its network.

These include the elimination of Permanent Speed Restrictions (PSRs), comprehensive track renewal, and regular maintenance activities. As part of these

ongoing efforts, NFR has successfully removed 15 PSRs so far, reflecting its commitment to enhancing train punctuality and overall passenger service.

The removal of the speed restriction in the Tinsukia division is part of NFR's broader strategy to ensure safer, faster, and more reliable rail travel throughout the region.

## NFR removes speed restriction in Tinsukia, enhances rail efficiency

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved a key infrastructure milestone by successfully removing a permanent speed restriction in the Simaluguri-Moranhat section under the Tinsukia division.

According to an official statement issued by NFR, this development follows the completion of a major track realignment project aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and increasing train speeds. The engineering work involved replacing an existing 3-degree curve, which was 290 meters long and had required trains to reduce speed between Km 22/8 and Km 23/1.

This curve has now been redesigned into a 2-degree curve, extended to 420 meters, allowing trains to run at the sectional speed limit of 110 kmph.

The realignment significantly improves both line capacity and running efficiency.

The project required a major slew of 5,772 mm, demanding high levels of precision and technical expertise.

Following the alignment, machine packing was conducted to stabilize the

### WALK-IN INTERVIEW OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

It has been decided to conduct "walk-in-interview" for filling up the following post in the Central hospital, N. F. Railway, Maligaon on contractual basis (Part time). The terms and condition mentioned as under:

Required ( 1 ) one occupational therapist - having qualification of Bachelor or Diploma in Occupational Therapy (OT) from recognized University or Institute and registered from Rehabilitation Council of India.

Date, Time & venue of interview: 11.06.2025 at 10.30 hrs at Central Hospital/ N. F. railway, Maligaon. Details are available in N. F. railway website.

General Manager (P), Maligaon  
**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
Serving Customers With A Smile

### GOVT. OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY CONTROLLER OF LEGAL METROLOGY(ZONAL):: DIPHU::

#### NOTICE INVITING TENDER

In pursuance of the Administrative Approval from the authority of KAAC, Diphu vide letter No.KAAC/L&M/AAP-2012/14-15/87 Pt-IV/4895 Dated 27/05/2025. Sealed tender affixing non refundable KAAC Receipt of Rs.10/- (Rupees Ten) only are invited from local intending Contractor/Firm and will be received by the undersigned up to 3.00 PM of 06<sup>th</sup> June'2025 and subsequently open on the same day in presence of the intending tenderers or their authorized agent if anv.

Sl. No.	Item of Works	Estimated amount (In Lakh)	Earnest Money 2% for General & 1% for ST/SC	Time for completion of work
1	Repairing/renovation of VIP/EM quarter occupied by Mrs Tiluttoma Hansu EM, i/c Legal Metrology, KAAC, Diphu	Rs. 15.00	Rs. 30,000/- for General & Rs.15,000/- for ST/SC	60 Days
2	Repairing of DCLM office chamber washroom/toilet.	Rs. 03.50	Rs.7,000/- for General & Rs. 3,500/- for ST/SC	60 Days

In case if the opening day happens to be holiday, the tender will be opened on the next day. The undersigned reserve the right to accept or reject one or all tender without assigning any reason thereof. Tender paper & Notice will be received at the office premises, during office hours.

#### TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- The rate to be quote as % (percent) as per schedule of rate for all works.
- Earnest money should be deposited in favour of "The Deputy Controller of Legal Metrology (Zonal), Diphu" in the form of Call Deposit/Bank Draft and should be attached with tender papers.
- Technical Supervision of work will be executed by the Executive Engineer(Works), KAAC, Diphu.
- The following documents should be attached with tender papers.
  - Photocopy Professional Tax Clearance Certificate.
  - Photocopy GAST Registration (Contractor).
  - Upto-date GST Clearance Certificate.
  - Photocopy Pan Card and Caste Certificate (for SC/ST) only.
  - Photocopy of First page of Bank Pass Book.

Tender paper without Earnest money and other documents as referred above will be summarily ejected.

Sd/-  
Deputy Controller of  
Legal Metrology(Zonal), Diphu.  
Dated Diphu the 27<sup>th</sup> May'2025.

Memo No. DCLM/DPU/ E-12/2025-26/ 68-72



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*Contented with little, yet wishing for more.*  
-Charles Lamb

## Who pays for trade war?

By the time Washington and Beijing released their latest joint statement on May 12 - ostensibly pressing pause on a spiralling tariff war - much of the world exhaled in cautious relief. But beneath the performative diplomacy and sterile communiqués, a quieter suffering has gone largely unheard. For the world's most vulnerable economies, the damage is neither paused nor negotiable. It is metastasizing. At the centre of the storm lies the United States' renewed enthusiasm for tariffs - an economic instrument once discarded by the apostles of neoliberal globalization, now being redeployed with almost missionary zeal. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has sounded the alarm: America's recent wave of tariff hikes, far from being a targeted effort to recalibrate great-power competition, threatens to rupture the already fragile prospects of the least developed countries (LDCs) and small island states. Rebecca Greenspan, the head of UNCTAD, has put it bluntly: the poorest nations on earth - those who have played little to no role in ballooning the U.S. trade deficit - should be exempt. Her case is unimpeachable. The 44 least developed countries contribute less than 2% to America's trade imbalance. Their exports are, in most cases, inconsequential in value and unthreatening in scope. Take Madagascar, whose prized export is vanilla. Punitive tariffs on such economies amount not to economic policy, but economic vandalism.

But the ideology of economic nationalism, like its military counterpart, rarely pauses to interrogate the collateral damage. The numbers speak with a clarity that policymakers prefer to ignore. According to UNCTAD, vulnerable economies currently account for just 0.3% of the U.S. trade deficit. Yet in the next round of planned tariff escalations - set to take effect by July 2025 - some of these very nations are slated to face rates exceeding 25%. Seven of them are LDCs. Many are in Asia and the Pacific, regions already groaning under the triple burden of climate crisis, debt overload, and post-pandemic recovery. Even the arithmetic of injustice is startling. In April alone, the average U.S. tariff on LDCs in Asia and Oceania doubled, with projections suggesting it may triple by July. Tariffs on Latin American and Caribbean nations have surged more than 40-fold. The worst hit? Agriculture and textiles - the sectors that not only anchor these economies but also employ the largest swath of their working populations.

One might ask, what rationale underpins this? Officially, Washington claims it is "protecting domestic industries." But in practice, it resembles an exquisitely precise sniper attack on economies too weak to retaliate. These are not the high-tech sectors threatening Silicon Valley's dominance. They are the labour-intensive, low-margin industries that are the difference between subsistence and survival for millions. Nowhere is the contradiction more grotesque than in America's expectations from the very nations it punishes. As Washington tightens its own trade borders, it insists that others dismantle theirs. The asymmetry is breathtaking. This hypocrisy is neither accidental nor new. As Joseph Stiglitz - one of the few economists in the West willing to pierce the veil - once observed, "Those who build walls will eventually be surrounded by them." That moment may be closer than many in Washington dare admit.

## Pak PM's outreach to Iran fails to produce desired results

By: Sushil Kuttly

One good thing coming out of India's "4-Day War", aka "Operation Sindoor", is the thaw in relations between Pakistan and Iran, two Islamic countries which share a border and often end up trading fire across the same border. Iran is a country worth cultivating or left to its own devices. Pakistan, on the other hand, can be left to its own devices only at India's peril.

India and Pakistan can be neighbours but Indian 'netas' should stop parroting that Indians and Pakistanis share the same dna. It's an insult even if politicians from both sides of the Wagah share traits. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif carried with him several sheafs of olive leaves, including one for Iran. It's been a year since Iran and Pakistan conducted cross-border airstrikes and Shehbaz Sharif wanted to bury the hatchet deep in Iran soil. Watching Shehbaz Sharif appease Iranians was Field Marshal Asim Munir, newly promoted and hailed as Pakistan's saviour in the "4-Day War". Shehbaz Sharif's mistake is carting Munir to wherever he travels to in the world. The only world leader who sees promise in Field Marshal Asim Munir is United States President Donald Trump whose enduring interest is "cryptocurrency" and he thinks Pakistan is a promising country for 'trade in crypto'.

India's decisive victory over Pakistan didn't impress Trump and he has started hypenating India with Pakistan, almost like a child delighted at getting the spellings and pronunciations of 'but' and 'put' right!

And Iran is neither Turkey nor China, which Pakistan should not forget when engaging with Iranian leadership and Donald Trump. It wasn't surprising when Iran made the Iran-Sharif meeting look like thanksgiving for Pakistan remaining on Gaza's side and not on the Israeli bandwagon like so many in the OIC. Fact is, in a battle between 'good' and 'evil', Pakistan will always choose to be with Iran. And Gaza remains Iran's top concern even if 'Kashmir' is Pakistan's eternal muse. In a trade-off between Gaza and Kashmir, Pakistan will dump Gaza without a stray thought. The 'Pahalgam terror attack' happened even as Israel upped its children-killing "brutal strikes" on Gaza. But, unconcerned by the mayhem in Gaza, Pakistan chose to up its conflict with India over Kashmir. Pakistan's teary-eyed concern for Gaza's children is crocodilian!

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif mentioned 'Kashmir' in Iran's Supreme leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's ear but Khamenei let it out the other ear, saying Iran hoped India and Pakistan would resolve their disputes. If that isn't 'Mr. Cool', Shehbaz Sharif is 'Superman'!

Khamenei knows Pakistan is an untrustworthy ally if at all an ally! That said, Shehbaz Sharif will not ask for sustenance money from Iran. For that Sharif, or for that matter, even Asim Munir, will have to traipse across to Saudi Arabia!

But whether or not Khamenei agrees with Pakistan, for Shehbaz Sharif, talks with India will be something to crow about. He said so much in Teheran, eager like one of those fancy poodle ladies carry in their totebags at Cannes! But is Prime Minister Narendra Modi listening? Of course, not. Sharif is not the only politician from the subcontinent out to impress the rest of the world. Dozens of Indian MPs are on a similar recce to expose Pakistan And one of them is AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi, who has opened a second front against Pakistan.

The first, of course, is the one Prime Minister Modi is manning. Modi on Monday sent out a message to Pakistan's children, asking them to learn what their parents had told them about Pakistan! Remember Gen. Asim Munir's speech to overseas Pakistanis, where he asked Pakistani parents to teach their children the "reality of Hindu-Muslim"?

On Tuesday, PM Modi went about systematically dismantling Pakistan's "proxy war", saying there was no proxy war to begin with and that it was always a full-fledged war. Modi said 'Operation Sindoor' didn't need "proof" as all the action was "recorded on camera", including that of the destroyed Pakistani air bases.

This despite the Pakistani belligerence to accept the reality in front of their eyes. Monday night Pakistan's super-hack Hamid Mir released a video in which he claimed that Pakistan Air Force had no equal in the world and that talk of "Chinese technology being superior to Pakistani technology is a big lie Indians are spreading."

Fact is, Pakistan didn't like an American study's conclusion that China was India's Enemy No.1 while Pakistan was only an "ancillary", a choice of word which didn't sit well with Pakistan's journalistic community at all. Pakistan's "defence expert" Dr. Qamar Cheema is angry for another reason, India and Indians for forever taunting Pakistan as "Bhikaristan". Dr. Cheema says if that's so, where does India stand in the league of top nations, the United Kingdom and Germany? Modi, meanwhile, is bent on reminding Pakistan of its "third defeat" and why "post-May 6, we can no longer make the mistake of calling it a proxy war." (IPA Service)

## Bangladesh as a pawn in Pakistan's anti-India game

Pakistan's strategy of using Bangladesh as a conduit to destabilize India represents a complex and sensitive dimension of South Asian geopolitics. This approach aims to undermine India's internal security, economic stability, and regional influence through indirect means, leveraging Bangladesh's geographical proximity and socio-political dynamics. The roots of this strategy lie in the historical animosity between India and Pakistan, compounded by Pakistan's inability to achieve its objectives through direct confrontation. By exploiting Bangladesh as a strategic buffer, Pakistan seeks to create instability in India's northeastern states, foster communal tensions, and weaken its economic and political fabric. This article explores the historical context, mechanisms, consequences, and India's responses to this strategy, analyzing its implications for regional stability.

The India-Pakistan rivalry has been a defining feature of South Asian politics since the partition of 1947. The division of the subcontinent along religious lines created deep-seated mistrust, with disputes like Kashmir becoming flashpoints of conflict. Pakistan's repeated failures in direct military engagements with India, notably in the wars of 1947, 1965, and 1971, prompted a shift toward asymmetric warfare. The 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War was a pivotal moment in this context. India's support for Bangladesh's independence from Pakistan, culminating in the creation of a sovereign Bangladesh, dealt a severe blow to Pakistan's national pride and territorial integrity. The loss of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) intensified Pakistan's hostility toward India, setting the stage for a long-term strategy of destabilization through proxy means.

Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has been the primary architect of this strategy, employing Bangladesh as a staging ground to orchestrate activities against India. The porous India-Bangladesh border, spanning over 4,000 kilometers, offers a strategic advantage due to its geographical complexity, including dense forests, rivers, and hilly terrain. This border has been exploited for activities such as illegal infiltration, arms smuggling, and the movement of terrorist operatives. Pakistan's objective is to create instability in India's northeastern states, including Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya, which share borders with Bangladesh. These states are ethnically diverse and have historically grappled with insurgencies, making them vulnerable to external manipulation.

One of the key tactics in Pakistan's strategy is the support of terrorist and insurgent groups operating in Bangladesh and India's northeast. Reports from Indian intelligence agencies have repeatedly pointed to ISI's links with militant outfits in Bangladesh,

such as Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), which have been involved in anti-India activities. These groups are allegedly provided with funding, training, and logistical support to carry out operations across the border. In India's northeast, insurgent groups like the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA-Independent) have reportedly received assistance from Pakistan through bases in Bangladesh. During the 1990s and early 2000s, ULFA leaders were known to operate from safe havens in Bangladesh, allegedly with ISI backing. This support enabled these groups to conduct attacks, disrupt governance, and create a climate of fear in the region.

The India-Bangladesh border's permeability has facilitated the movement of individuals, including trained operatives, into India. This has led to demographic shifts in states like Assam and West Bengal, fueling social and political tensions. The issue of illegal immigration has been a contentious one in Assam, where the influx of Bangladeshi migrants has sparked debates over identity, resources, and citizenship. The 1980s saw the rise of the Assam Movement, driven by fears of demographic change, which culminated in the Assam Accord of 1985. Pakistan has allegedly exploited these tensions by encouraging infiltration to exacerbate ethnic and communal divisions, thereby weakening India's internal cohesion. The presence of undocumented migrants has also strained India's security apparatus, as distinguishing between economic migrants and potential operatives remains a challenge.

The ISI has been accused of fostering radical ideologies among certain religious groups in Bangladesh to create an anti-India sentiment. This involves funding madrasas and organizations that propagate extremist views, which can then be channeled into subversive activities against India. In states like Assam and West Bengal, where religious diversity is pronounced, such efforts risk igniting communal violence. For instance, propaganda targeting India's Muslim population, portraying India as antagonistic to their interests, has been used to sow discord. The 2012 riots in Assam between Bodo tribes and Bengali-speaking Muslims, while rooted in local issues, were allegedly amplified by external actors seeking to exploit communal fault lines.

The smuggling of counterfeit Indian currency through the India-Bangladesh border has been a persistent issue. These counterfeit notes, often traced back to printing operations in Pakistan, are funneled into India to destabilize its economy. By flooding the market with fake currency, Pakistan aims to undermine public confidence in India's financial system, increase inflation, and strain law enforcement resources. Additionally, the smuggling of arms and narcotics through Bangladesh further

compounds India's security challenges, as these activities fund insurgent and criminal networks operating within its borders.

India has adopted a multi-pronged approach to counter Pakistan's strategy. On the security front, it has strengthened border management along the India-Bangladesh frontier. The construction of a border fence, though incomplete in some areas, has been a significant step toward curbing illegal crossings. The deployment of advanced surveillance technologies, such as drones and thermal imaging cameras, has enhanced monitoring capabilities. The Border Security Force (BSF) has been bolstered with additional personnel and resources to patrol the border effectively. Joint operations with Bangladeshi authorities have also been initiated to dismantle terrorist networks and curb smuggling.

India has deepened its engagement with Bangladesh to neutralize Pakistan's influence diplomatically. Since the mid-2000s, India-Bangladesh relations have seen significant improvement, particularly under the leadership of Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Bilateral agreements on trade, connectivity, and security cooperation have strengthened ties. India has provided economic assistance, including lines of credit for infrastructure projects, to foster goodwill and reduce Bangladesh's reliance on external actors. The extradition of ULFA leaders from Bangladesh to India in the late 2000s was a testament to the growing cooperation between the two nations. By aligning Bangladesh's interests with its own, India has sought to limit the space for Pakistan's maneuverability.

In the northeastern states, India has pursued a combination of development and dialogue to address the root causes of insurgency. Investments in infrastructure, education, and healthcare have aimed to integrate the region more closely with the Indian mainstream, reducing the appeal of separatist ideologies. Peace talks with groups like ULFA and Bodo factions have led to accords that have significantly reduced violence. The Bodo Peace Accord of 2020, for instance, brought a degree of stability to Assam's Bodoland region. These efforts have weakened the ability of external actors like Pakistan to exploit local grievances.

On the international stage, India has worked to isolate Pakistan diplomatically by highlighting its role in sponsoring terrorism. At forums like the United Nations, India has presented evidence of Pakistan's involvement in cross-border terrorism, seeking to garner global support. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has placed Pakistan on its grey list for failing to curb terror financing, imposing economic penalties that limit its ability to fund subversive activities. India's growing global influence has also enabled it to rally support from major powers like the United States and European nations, further pres-

suring Pakistan to rein in its intelligence agencies.

Bangladesh's internal political dynamics, including periodic instability and the influence of religious hardliners, provide fertile ground for Pakistan's activities. The rise of opposition groups in Bangladesh, some of which have historically been sympathetic to Pakistan, could complicate India's efforts. Moreover, the India-Bangladesh border's terrain and the socio-economic disparities between the two countries make it difficult to completely seal off illicit activities. The persistence of poverty and unemployment in Bangladesh also creates vulnerabilities that external actors can exploit.

The broader implications of Pakistan's strategy extend beyond India-Bangladesh relations. It undermines the prospects for regional cooperation in South Asia, where organizations like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have struggled to function effectively due to India-Pakistan tensions. The perpetuation of instability in India's northeast hinders economic development and connectivity projects, such as the India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway, which aim to integrate the region with Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the use of Bangladesh as a proxy risks drawing it into the India-Pakistan rivalry, potentially destabilizing its own political and social fabric.

To address these challenges comprehensively, India must continue to strengthen its partnership with Bangladesh. Expanding economic cooperation, particularly through initiatives like the Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal (BBIN) framework, can create shared stakes in regional stability. Enhancing intelligence-sharing and joint counter-terrorism operations will be crucial to dismantling networks supported by Pakistan. At the same time, India must sustain its focus on developing its northeastern states, addressing grievances that could be exploited by external actors. Public diplomacy efforts to counter extremist propaganda and foster communal harmony will also be essential.

Pakistan's use of Bangladesh as a tool to destabilize India is a multifaceted strategy rooted in historical grievances and geopolitical ambitions. While India has made significant strides in countering this threat through security, diplomacy, and development, the challenge remains formidable. The interplay of regional dynamics, internal vulnerabilities, and global geopolitics necessitates a sustained and coordinated response. By deepening ties with Bangladesh, addressing domestic fault lines, and leveraging international support, India can mitigate the impact of Pakistan's strategy. Ultimately, fostering peace and prosperity in South Asia requires collective action among regional actors to transcend the zero-sum logic of conflict and build a framework for mutual cooperation.

## Exports, its prospects in the economy of Assam

(... continued from last edition)

By: Diganta Barooah

✓Provide cold storage infrastructure and reefer containers for transportation : Since ICD Amingaon facilitates trade for the entire NER, reefer container services may be made available on the route from ICD to Kolkata port as well as on routes connecting the ICD to other North Eastern states. Access to reefer services in these routes will facilitate exports of agriculture products from the entire region.

✓Harmonise standards across all Land Customs Stations between India and Bangladesh : Different LCSS have their own list of negative items which are not allowed in cross-border trade. For instance, Hilsa fish is not allowed to be imported through ICP Sutarkandi, but imports are allowed through Manu LCS. Removal of such inconsistencies are required to ensure uniform standards and practices at all border points for ease of trading across borders.

✓Deepen and ensure maintenance of Inland Waterway Transportation (IWT) network :

A seamless IWT network would provide access to Assam and NER, in general to the Mongla port in Bangladesh and Kolkata ports through which goods can be exported to far off destinations. Currently, out of the 15 national waterways present in the State, only two are in use. Other routes need to be explored to strengthen integration in the region. Besides, rivers along the IBP route are mid-stream and require regular dredging. To ensure regular dredging of rivers along the IBP route for Inland Waterway Connectivity, India and Bangladesh need to formulate an agreement, specifying cost sharing and other clauses.

✓Incentivize Participation of Women in Trade : The female labour force participation rate of Assam as estimated in the Periodic Labour Force Survey, January - March 2021 was 18.8%, a drop from 20.2% in the previous quarter. Engaging in both trade and trade facilitation activities can provide a stimulus to employment of women in the State. Thus, identification and training of potential women traders is required. Government of Assam through its various agencies, may also like to conduct workshops towards educating women about the various advantages and processes pertaining to exports so as to make them better equipped. Further, since women run enterprises may face challenges in getting trade financing, the State Government may like to explore suitable financial structures to incentivize commercial banks to come up with products that prioritize financing to women led export enterprises. The strategies as outlined at above focus on boosting exports of goods and services, strengthening trade facilitation, enhancing connectivity, and ensuring better utilization of present trade infrastructure. These can help the State in harnessing its true economic potential and in transforming Assam into a vibrant hub for trade and commerce. The Government of Assam has various initiatives to promote exports, including recognizing export excellence, supporting cluster-based exports, and promoting value-added exports. They also offer financial assistance for participation in trade fairs, both within and outside India. Furthermore, they are developing an Export Promotion Industrial Park (EPIP) to facilitate export business.

✓Export Promotion & Facilitation Strategies :

✓Recognition of Excellence : The government provides awards and certificates for outstanding export performance, especially in key sectors.

✓Cluster Development :

They focus on establishing export-oriented clusters to improve standardization and meet export demands.

✓Value-Added Exports : The policy promotes the export of products with higher processing and branding, including non-forest produce, herbs, handicrafts, and more.

✓Research & Development :

The government encourages research to develop new exportable products and strengthen branding efforts.

✓Financial Assistance for Trade Fairs : Within India: Reimbursement of stall rent (up to 75%), railway travel fare, and daily food and lodging expenses for two participants. Outside India: Reimbursement of stall rent (100% on a sharing basis), air travel fare, and daily food and lodging expenses for one participant.

✓Infrastructure Development :

Export Promotion Industrial Park (EPIP) :

The government has established an EPIP in Amingaon, Guwahati, to facilitate export-related activities.

✓Other Initiatives :

✓Handicraft Policy:

A separate policy focuses on supporting artisans, providing training, market linkage, and export facilitation.

✓Ethanol Production Policy : There's a policy to promote ethanol production for blending in fuel, offering incentives to eligible units.

✓District Export Promotion Committees :

The government has established committees at the district level to address export-related bottlenecks and provide support.

✓Collaboration with other agencies : The government collaborates with organizations like the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Development Authority (APEDA) to promote agricultural exports.

✓Inland Waterway Transport : The government is working to strengthen inland waterway transport to improve connectivity for export activities.

✓Districts as Export Hubs Initiative :

The Districts as Export Hubs (DEH) initiative of the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Department of Commerce came about with the aim of targeting export promotion, manufacturing and employment generation at the grassroots level. It builds on the policy impetus of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat Mission, vision of Make in India for the world and the clarion call of Vocal for Local given by the hon'ble Prime Minister by involving States and Districts as meaningful stakeholders and active participants in order to synergise export promotion efforts in India. He envisioned that each district in the country holds economic potential comparable to that of a small country. As a result, the DEH initiative was launched in August 2019 to foster balanced regional development across all districts of the country. With the advent of Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023, DGFT has legitimized this cause through the inclusion of 'Districts As Export Hubs initiatives' under the Chapter 3 of FTP 2023. It aims to channelize the potential and diverse identity of each District of the country to make them Export Hubs. Towards this goal, the products or services (including GI products, agricultural clusters and toy clusters) with export potential in all the districts of the country have been identified and institutional mechanism in the form of State Export Promotion Committees (SEPC) at State/UT level and District Export Promotion Committees (DEPCs) at the district level has been created in all districts of the country to provide support for export promotion and address the bottlenecks for export growth in the Districts. District Export Action Plans are being prepared for identified products and services, to benefit both producers and manufacturers- addressing challenges to export, identifying infrastructural bottlenecks, supply chain gaps, improving market accessibility

and providing handholding for increasing exports.

✓Other Export Promotion Initiatives under DEH :

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) is enhancing e-commerce exports through its Districts as Export Hubs initiative, collaborating with various e-commerce companies. These platforms are identifying districts across India for capacity-building and outreach activities in partnership with DGFT Regional Authorities. The initiative focuses on educating MSMEs about e-commerce exports, enabling them to sell globally, and includes training on imaging and digital cataloging of products. As part of this effort, DGFT has signed MoUs with Amazon India, Shiprocket, and DHL to support local exporters, promote e-commerce exports, and conduct capacity-building sessions, training on packaging, branding and marketing, and workshops for MSMEs in 20, 16, and 76 districts respectively. In order to create more awareness around exports in all the country's regions, DGFT Regional Authorities have been organizing "Outreach Events" under "Districts As Exports Hubs" to promote the products/services with export potential as identified under the Initiative. These events are designed to emphasize e-commerce exports and to provide dedicated support to exporters in the districts to onboard the manufacturers or sellers or exporters into e-commerce platforms. As a result of these collaborations 10 outreach events were organized in Districts export outreach events in Faridabad, Moradabad, Ludhiana, Jodhpur, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Jamshedpur and Varanasi over a period from March-June 2024. These events, organized with leading e-commerce platforms, provided valuable hand-holding, capacity building, and training sessions for participating businesses, offering key insights and support to help them succeed in global markets. Various ecosystem players like ECGC, EPCH, FIEO, MSME, India Post and various Banks like HDFC, ICICI, SBI and Exim Bank have also collaborated and contributed in successful completion of these outreach events. The events have provided insights about the concerns of the exporters and built awareness about the issues faced in e-commerce adoption, for instance, payment issues, trust and buyer verification, etc. DGFT has also partnered with Exim Bank to boost exports under the ODOP-DEH initiative (One District, One Product and Districts as Export Hubs). This collaboration stems from an Exim Bank study that identified 59 middle exports districts with export potential. Under the collaboration, DGFT selected 6 districts (Anantapur, Raipur, Solan, Tirupur, Kanpur, Kolhapur) from a list of 20 proposed by Exim Bank. These districts will receive support through Exim Bank's GRID program (Grassroots Initiatives for Development). The program aims to address sector-specific challenges and identify suitable beneficiaries for support. Exim Bank aims to prepare a detailed proposal outlining challenges and solutions for collaborative implementation. Returning to our state Assam, we can say that there exist incredible export opportunities in the state of Assam, especially given its geographical location and being the largest state in the northeastern part of India. As the recent trends point towards India's increasing economic engagement with its immediate neighbours as well as other countries to its east, building Assam's export capabilities gains even more importance. Assam is also uniquely located to serve as trade hub for other North Eastern States. Thus, enhancing the trade competitiveness of the state would translate to greater gains for the whole North Eastern part of India. (The author is the Assistant Development Officer Transformation and Development Department, Govt of Assam. He can be reached at 9678785439 and 7002699011 ordigantaraju@gmail.com and digantabarooah@yahoo.com)



# Bangladesh's 1971 Apology Demand Geopolitics, justice, and the Assam dilemma

By: **Dipak Kurni**

In a dramatic and historically poignant diplomatic overture, Bangladesh has once again raised its long-standing demand for an official apology from Pakistan for the atrocities committed by the Pakistani military during the 1971 Liberation War. The demand, presented during a foreign secretary-level meeting in Dhaka on 17 April 2025, marks a renewed assertion of national memory and historical justice amidst a significant political transition in the South Asian country. The discussions — the first Foreign Office Consultation between the two countries in 15 years — also included Dhaka's claims for USD 4.32 billion in compensation as part of the undivided Pakistan's assets, along with a share of foreign aid intended for the victims of the 1970 Bhola cyclone. The current developments, however, transcend mere diplomacy; they intertwine with the internal political turbulence in Bangladesh, evolving Indo-Bangla dynamics, and the persistent ghost of illegal migration that continues to trouble India's northeastern frontier.

The renewed push came from Bangladesh's interim government, headed by Nobel laureate

Professor Muhammad Yunus, who assumed charge on 8 August 2024 following the dramatic ousting of long-serving Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Hasina, who had remained in power for 16 years, was forced to resign after a mass student-led uprising rocked the country in July–August 2024. Fleeing the political storm, she sought temporary refuge in India, triggering a cascade of legal and diplomatic complications. A staunch proponent of justice for the victims of the 1971 genocide, Hasina had consistently demanded an unconditional apology from Pakistan — a stance now echoed by the very interim regime that replaced her, despite its prior opposition to her leadership.

At the recent bilateral meeting, Bangladesh's foreign secretary Md Jashim Uddin presented a series of historical and humanitarian claims to his Pakistani counterpart Amna Baloch. Chief among them was the demand for a formal apology for what Dhaka estimates to be the killing of three million people and the rape of over 200,000 Bengali women by the Pakistani army during the Muktiuddha. Bangladesh also revived its demand for the repatriation of nearly three lakh Pakistani nationals who refused

Bangladeshi citizenship and remained stranded in Bangladesh for decades. The financial compensation claim of USD 4.32 billion, along with a demand for Bangladesh's share in the pre-1971 foreign aid fund of USD 200 million, underscores the country's insistence on material as well as moral restitution.

This resurgence of memory politics occurs amidst a politically fragile environment in Bangladesh. Professor Yunus — a globally celebrated microfinance pioneer and recent inductee into TIME magazine's list of the 100 most influential people — has faced immense challenges in governing the country. His administration inherited a battered economy, dysfunctional state institutions, and a populace fractured along ideological and ethnic lines. Despite these daunting realities, Yunus has expressed his vision for an egalitarian and inclusive Bangladesh, one in which citizens are treated fairly regardless of faith or ethnicity.

Yet, his diplomatic overtures, especially toward Pakistan and China, have not gone unnoticed by India. The Indian establishment remained conspicuously silent when Yunus extended an invitation to Pakistani dignitaries, including Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, who

is scheduled to visit Dhaka on 27–28 April — the first such visit by a Pakistani foreign minister since 2012. More alarming for New Delhi, however, was the reported proposal by Yunus to grant China access to develop an airfield in northern Bangladesh, perilously close to India's strategically sensitive Siliguri Corridor. Often dubbed the "Chicken's Neck," this narrow strip connects the Indian mainland with its northeastern states and is considered a geostrategic choke point. Even Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma publicly condemned Yunus for what was perceived as a move jeopardising regional security.

India's concerns have also been amplified by growing reports of minority persecution in Bangladesh during the political transition — including temple vandalism, targeted killings of Hindus, and the marginalisation of secular voices. The cultural ramifications of these developments became apparent when the iconic Mangal Shobhajatra, a UNESCO-recognised New Year procession, had its name changed to Barshabaran Ananda Shobhajatra due to Islamist sensitivities. In Chittagong, the cultural procession was cancelled altogether, citing security threats — an unsettling signal of

the shrinking secular space in Bangladesh.

For India, and particularly the state of Assam, the political flux in Dhaka is more than a distant concern — it is a matter of domestic anxiety. The scars of the 1971 war are etched deep in Assam's collective memory. The influx of Bengali-speaking refugees from East Pakistan during and after the conflict strained local resources, altered demographic balances, and laid the foundation for a protracted and violent anti-immigrant movement in the 1980s. Despite the historic Assam Accord of 1985, which set 25 March 1971 as the cutoff date for legal entry, illegal migration remained an unresolved challenge. While the accord legally sanctified pre-1971 migrants, it left Assam to bear the disproportionate burden of resettlement without any national redistribution mechanism. The rest of India did not step forward to share the humanitarian load, leaving the Assamese people to grapple with the socio-economic and cultural fallout alone.

The demand for updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) on a nationwide scale — a proposal that has gained momentum in the wake of the recent Pahalgam terror attack — draws its historical urgency

from precisely this regional experience. For Assam, the NRC is not just a bureaucratic exercise but a long-overdue attempt at demographic rectification. However, political opportunism, administrative lethargy, and a lack of cohesive national policy have stalled any meaningful resolution. Despite repeated electoral promises, governments in both New Delhi and Dispur have failed to curb the continuous inflow from across the porous Indo-Bangla border.

Professor Yunus's attempts to reset Bangladesh's diplomatic priorities while simultaneously reconciling with Islamabad — without adequately addressing historical injustices — strike a discordant note. The bonhomie between Yunus and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, reinforced through their meetings in New York and Cairo, may signal a strategic realignment. But it also raises legitimate concerns in India about Dhaka's potential drift toward an Islamic bloc orientation. In this context, Yunus's appeal to New Delhi for the repatriation of Hasina — now facing multiple arrest warrants on charges including genocide and enforced disappearances — remains diplomatically sensitive. While India has refrained from

direct interference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made it clear during his recent meeting with Yunus at the BIMSTEC summit in Bangkok that India expects the protection of minorities and a return to democratic stability in Bangladesh.

The future trajectory of Indo-Bangla relations will largely depend on the outcome of the next general elections in Bangladesh, which Yunus is expected to facilitate. While he currently enjoys international acclaim, his ability to deliver a credible, free, and fair electoral process will determine not only his domestic legitimacy but also the stability of South Asia's geopolitical equilibrium.

For the people of Assam, and indeed for the Indian state as a whole, the hope remains that Dhaka's reawakening to the truths of 1971 will not only lead to justice with Islamabad but also lay the foundation for a comprehensive and humane resolution to the issue of illegal migration. As history continues to cast a long shadow over the subcontinent, it is accountability, inclusivity, and regional cooperation — not denial, appeasement, or authoritarian populism — that must guide the way forward. *(The writer can be reached at [dipakkurni@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurni@gmail.com))*

## India's diplomacy helps Mauritius regain Chagos Archipelago after 60 years

By: **Sanjay Saxena**

The end of Britain's 60-year-old occupation of the Chagos Archipelago marks a historic moment that erases one of the darkest remnants of colonial rule, which continued to shadow several parts of the world even decades after independence. On 22 May 2025, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Mauritian Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam signed a landmark agreement in a digital ceremony, officially transferring the Chagos Archipelago — including strategic and militarily significant islands such as Diego Garcia back to Mauritius. Behind this historic deal stood another silent yet pivotal force in India. Particularly, the role of Prime Minister Narendra Modi was crucial and decisive in this diplomatic development, although he always remained behind the scenes.

The story of the Chagos Archipelago is not just about geography or strategy, but also about justice, sovereignty, and self-respect. In 1965, just as Mauritius was on the verge of gaining independence from Britain, the British separated the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius and retained it under their control. Subsequently, thousands of local residents were forcibly evicted from their homes, and the island of Diego Garcia was developed into a massive military base for the United States, a base that remains an essential part of America's global strategic framework to this day. Since then, Mauritius has been fighting for the return of this land, a battle that has finally reached its conclusion.

Under the terms of the agreement, Britain has returned sovereignty over the archipelago to Mauritius, although Diego Garcia will continue to be used jointly by Britain and the U.S. under a 99-year lease. In return, Mauritius will receive approximately £101 million annually. This arrangement also maintains the strategic military balance considered essential by the U.S. and its allies in the Indian Ocean. Yet, the most significant aspect of this

development is that a deep wound of colonialism has finally begun to heal.

This agreement did not happen overnight. It was the result of years of negotiations, debates on international platforms, and quiet diplomacy. India's role in this context is especially noteworthy. Since 2019, when the International Court of Justice issued an advisory opinion declaring Britain's occupation illegal, India has consistently supported Mauritius' claim. Whether in the United Nations General Assembly or in regional groupings of Indian Ocean countries, India has made it clear that the Chagos Archipelago is an integral part of Mauritius and that its return was only a matter of time.

PM Modi viewed this issue not merely as helping a friendly nation but as a moral initiative to strengthen the voice of the "Global South" and confront the legacy of colonial history. That is why India's role in this entire affair remained significant but was never used for publicity or political gain. India did not release any grand official statements, nor did it present this as a diplomatic victory. But Mauritius wholeheartedly acknowledged the support, explicitly thanking PM Modi.

Mauritian PM Navin Ramgoolam stated during the digital ceremony that India's consistent diplomatic support and trust were instrumental in bringing this struggle to fruition. According to him, the return of Chagos is not just the return of territory, but the restoration of dignity and India's role in this was invaluable. India's Ministry of External Affairs called the agreement a "historic resolution" and said it would serve as a milestone for stability, cooperation, and peace in the Indian Ocean region.

There was, however, a minor but sensitive hurdle along the way. A Chagos native, Beatrice Pomp, filed a petition in a British court expressing concern that if the islands were handed over to Mauritius, she might not be allowed to return. The court temporarily halted the agreement, but the injunction was

lifted after the hearing concluded, clearing the way for the final signing. As for Diego Garcia, it remains an extremely important outpost for the U.S. military, particularly in terms of monitoring Afghanistan, Iran, and China. Therefore, the agreement was not merely historical or emotional; it had multiple layers of strategic and security concerns. Striking a balance here was crucial and India played a significant role in achieving that. This agreement also offers a glimpse into a "New World Order." Today, as Western powers begin to dismantle their old colonial footprints, countries like India are stepping forward not only to forge partnerships but also to define their role based on justice and moral values. This is not just about geography — it signals a transformation in global consciousness. This entire episode has once again proven that although justice may be delayed, it is achievable provided there is strong will, consistent diplomatic effort, and international cooperation. The return of Chagos is not just a victory for Mauritius but also a ray of hope for millions whose lands, identities, and rights were taken away through colonial conspiracies.

For India, this is both an opportunity and a responsibility. An opportunity because its influence in the Indian Ocean has become more stable and widely accepted. A responsibility because as India aspires to become the voice of the Global South, it must continue to stand on the side of justice and morality whether the issue concerns a small African nation or an island state in South Asia. The return of the Chagos Archipelago is no ordinary event. It is a turning point in history where the door on colonialism has been closed, and a new chapter of global justice has begun. In this victory, India's role has been that of a quiet but firm foundation and it demonstrates that true diplomacy doesn't always make noise, but it does change history. *(The author is a Senior Journalist who can be reached at [sksko28@gmail.com](mailto:sksko28@gmail.com) or [9454105568](tel:9454105568), [8299050585](tel:8299050585))*

## Decoding the ways of living in the next 40 years and beyond amidst surge in AI

By: **Devasis Chattopadhyay**

With all our chatter about AI, social tensions, war and humanity, I was wondering, while I am in between books, where will we be by 2065, in the next 40 years? Will life on Earth be unrecognisable? Youngsters and oldies, like me, are all so excited or acting up, but let's look at the issue rationally.

From self-driving cars and talking machines to climate pressures and staying under a dome on Mars, humanity stands at a turning point. Here's what researchers say the next 20, 30, and 40 years might look like, and why the decisions we make today could shape the future for our generations to come.

**The Next 20 Years: The Tech-Driven Tipping Point (2025–2045)**

In just two decades, the world around us will feel very different. You might commute in a driverless electric car while a smart assistant schedules your day. Virtual reality could become as common as smartphones, and robots may work alongside you, or even take your job away.

Behind the scenes, powerful artificial intelligence (AI) will handle everything from customer

service to surgery. Some experts believe up to half of today's jobs could be automated by 2045.

But it's not all smooth sailing. Urban-rural divide and climate change are expected to hit us very hard, with more heat waves, food shortages, and extreme weather. That would lead to more political tension and waves of migration as some regions become harder to live in.

On the bright side, clean energy, like solar and wind, will have enough opportunities to replace most fossil fuels by then. However, if our economies keep chasing endless and mindless pecuniary growth, we might push Earth's resources to the breaking point. A famous model from MIT even warns of a possible societal collapse by mid-21st-century unless we shift toward a more balanced, people-focused system.

**30 to 40 Years Ahead: Reinventing the Way We Live (2045–2065)**

Imagine cities filled with green buildings, rooftop gardens, and streets where electric buses glide silently through traffic. Homes might run entirely on renewable energy, and almost everything we use, from clothes to gadgets, could be a part of a recycling loop, thanks to circular economies. Researchers are

working on futuristic materials and nanotechnology that could revolutionise everything from construction to medicine. AI will be deeply woven into daily life, not just helping, but collaborating and competing with humans. In some limited parts of the Middle East, such things are happening. But, overall, they are good for movie scripts and fantasy novels; in our daily lives, all such activities will be possible if we are responsible and caring.

When it comes to energy, we're making slow but steady progress. Scientists rate our civilisation on the Kardashev scale, which measures how much energy a civilisation can use. Right now, we're at about 0.73 out of 1. By 2065, we might reach 0.75, getting closer to using all the energy our planet can offer.

But while our technology improves, our social challenges remain. The global population may stop growing and even shrink, especially as climate stress affects birth rates and food supply. Old power centres may fade away, and new ones could rise as countries adapt to this fast-changing world.

**Beyond 2065: Merging Man and Machine?**

By the second half of this century, the line between human and

machine might blur. With advances in biotechnology, it could become possible to repair, enhance, or even radically extend human life. Some researchers even imagine future humans living beyond 120 years with their brains supported by AI systems to create a new kind of intelligence.

We may also go beyond Earth. NASA, China, and private companies like SpaceX are actively planning Moon and Mars missions. By 2070, humans might live and work in space, under a 'dome' on Mars. However, we'll need to solve many of our challenges on Earth first.

**But, alongside all this excitement, serious risks remain. Scholars warn of possible disasters, such as:**

- 1) A very high risk of AI going out of control.
- 2) Our climate on Earth is hitting irreversible tipping points.
- 3) Repeated pandemics from engineered viruses.
- 4) Large-scale wars or nuclear deployment.

Unlike past civilisations that collapsed quietly in one part of the world and grew in another, ours is a deeply interconnected one. A collapse today could be global, devastating and complete. *(IPA Service)*

## Russia's balancing act: Navigating the Indo-Pak rift post-Pahalgam

By: **Aleksei Zakharov**  
& **Rajoli Siddharth Javaprakash**

The Russia-India partnership is a unique one.

With converging geopolitical interests and an absence of bilateral disputes, the two countries have forged a long-standing relationship with minimal friction. Therefore, the Kremlin's response was unsurprising when Pakistan-funded terrorists launched attacks in Pahalgam, claiming the lives of 26 civilians. Russian President Vladimir Putin offered his condolences to the victims of the attack and reiterated Moscow's readiness to step up cooperation with India in the fight against terrorism. Similar sentiments were echoed in subsequent Russian statements. However, the incident also signals a slight shift in Moscow's approach to the Indo-Pak calculus, suggesting a marked neutrality in Russia's diplomatic stance between New Delhi and Islamabad. This shift appears to be influenced by the growing Russia-West contestation as well as regional geopolitical realignments, which have elevated Pakistan's importance in Russia's strategic outlook.

It may be tempting to view Russia's neutrality in the latest flashpoint between New Delhi and Islamabad as a new development. Following this logic, one might even draw a parallel with India's nuanced stance — "on the side of peace" — regarding the war in Ukraine. However, Moscow's careful and balanced navigation of India-Pakistan tensions is not new. In 2019, Russia struck a similar balance following the terrorist attacks in Pulwama. Much like after the Pahalgam attack, Russia was deliberately cautious in its choice of words. The content of Russian press statements following the Putin-Modi phone calls on 28 February 2019 and 5 May 2025 was notably similar, with both parties condemning terrorist attacks and reaffirming their commitment to combating terrorism together. On both occasions, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov offered to mediate the conflict.

However, in the latter case, any prospective talks with his Pakistani counterpart, Ishaq Dar, hinged on the condition that both sides were "willing" to accept such mediation. Missing in both cases was explicit support for India's actions and an acknowledgement of New Delhi's right to self-defence. Since 2019, Russia has also refrained from criticising Pakistan for its links to cross-border terrorism. A careful reading of Moscow's statements might even suggest that India is up against unidentified global terrorist groups in Kashmir with no discernible regional base or connection to Pakistani soil.

The shift towards a more pragmatic approach to India-Pakistan divergences also stems from Moscow's efforts to strengthen its relationship with Islamabad. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia's foreign policy has become more flexible, opening up new avenues for engagement with Pakistan. Although high-level exchanges were sporadic during the 1990s and 2000s, the past decade has witnessed a steady expansion of Russia's security dialogue with Pakistan. Political consultations on counter-terrorism and joint anti-terrorism drills have assumed increasing importance. Moscow has also prioritised its partnership with Islamabad in the context of developments in Afghanistan, operating on the assumption that Pakistan wields considerable influence over Afghan affairs. On 22 April 2025, Moscow hosted a meeting of the Russia-Pakistan working group on counter-terrorism and other security challenges, where both sides acknowledged "the proximity of key approaches in the fight against terrorism." This was followed by a visit from Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Rudenko to Islamabad, where he co-chaired inter-ministerial consultations that reviewed the "positive dynamics" of bilateral cooperation across various domains. That said, Russia-Pakistan ties continue to face several structural limitations, ranging from Pakistan's financial and political instability to payment issues and logistical hurdles. Despite regular political and diplomatic engagement between the two sides and the stated intention to upgrade their economic relationship, several ambitious projects — such as the Karachi-Lahore gas pipeline, dubbed the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline — have not moved forward. The bilateral trade remains modest, barely exceeding US\$ 1 billion, and is primarily composed of Russian agricultural exports.

The growing Pakistan-Russia cooperation and their convergence on security issues should not be misconstrued as New Delhi losing prominence in Moscow's strategic calculus. Since the Russia-Ukraine war began, India has gained greater salience in Russia's foreign policy, with New Delhi emerging as Russia's second-largest trading partner, and bilateral trade reaching a record US\$ 66 billion in 2024. The two countries have also made notable strides in enhancing international transit and logistics, collaborating on key trade corridors such as the International North-South Transport Corridor and the Eastern Maritime Corridor. Even with their bilateral military-technical partnership on a progressive decline — given India's diversification of military acquisitions — New Delhi continues to express interest in procuring additional weapons and platforms from Russia. Given that the S-400 air de-

fence system and BrahMos missiles played a key role in shaping India's posture during the latest crisis, India and Russia are likely to intensify efforts to co-produce new equipment.

In Russia's calculus, its bilateral cooperation with India and Pakistan is not directed against a third country. Since the 2019 Pulwama attack, Russian experts have argued that Moscow seeks to avoid being coerced into taking sides in the Indo-Pakistani conflict. Rather, it aims to de-escalate tensions and foster trust through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). Russia's balancing act between India and Pakistan has become more complicated since 2017, when both New Delhi and Islamabad joined the SCO. Despite its modest track record in addressing security threats across Eurasia, Moscow continues to invest considerable effort in promoting the SCO as a flagship regional organisation. Given that both India and Pakistan are members of the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), regularly participating in SCO Peace Mission exercises, Moscow is compelled to maintain a delicate balance between the two whenever new tensions arise. The recent conflict between New Delhi and Islamabad has underscored the fragility of the SCO's expanded membership. Although the organisation is not mandated to intervene in bilateral disputes, strained relations between India and Pakistan will inevitably spill over into its agenda. The post-Pahalgam dynamics make it clear that no consensus on regional security can be reached under the SCO umbrella unless Pakistan begins to address the issue of cross-border terrorism effectively. Until then, multilateral forums will remain mired in discord, placing Russia, a principal proponent of the SCO, in a tough spot.

However idealistic Moscow's vision of Eurasia as a zone of stability and cooperation may appear, it remains a consistent feature of its regional policy. Both New Delhi and Islamabad hold distinct significance in Russia's approach to the broader region. India's prominence stems not only from its historical ties with Russia and the scale of its market, but also from Moscow's longstanding advocacy for trilateral cooperation between Russia, India, and China (RIC) on regional affairs. Pakistan, on the other hand, is viewed as a key player in efforts to forge a regional consensus on Afghanistan, an objective Russian diplomacy pursues through various multilateral initiatives, including the "Moscow Format". Russia's far-reaching ambitions for Eurasia suggest that it will remain inclined to maintain a neutral stance in future confrontations between India and Pakistan. *(Courtesy: ORF)*



# Elon Musk leaving Trump administration after leading effort to slash federal govt

WASHINGTON, May 29: Elon Musk is leaving his government role as a top advisor to US President Donald Trump after spearheading efforts to reduce and overhaul the federal bureaucracy.

His departure, announced on Wednesday evening, marks the end of a turbulent chapter that included thousands of layoffs, the evisceration of government agencies and reams of litigation.

Despite the upheaval, the billionaire entrepreneur struggled in the unfamiliar environment of Washington, and he accomplished far less than he hoped.

He dramatically reduced his target for cutting spending — from USD 2 trillion to USD 1 trillion to USD 150 billion — and increasingly expressed frustration about resistance to his goals.

Sometimes he clashed with other top members of Trump's administration, who chafed at the newcomer's efforts to reshape their departments, and he faced fierce political blowback for his efforts.

Musk's role working for Trump was always intended to be temporary, and he recently signalled that he would be shifting his attention back to running his businesses, such as the electric automaker Tesla and the rocket company SpaceX.

But administration officials were often vague about when Musk would step back from his position spearheading the Department of Government Efficiency, known as DOGE, and he abruptly



revealed that he was leaving in a post on X, his social media website. "As my scheduled time as a Special Government Employee comes to an end, I would like to thank President @realDonaldTrump for the opportunity to reduce wasteful spending," Musk wrote. "The @DOGE mission will only strengthen over time as it becomes a way of life throughout the government."

A White House official, who requested anonymity to talk about the change, confirmed Musk's departure.

Musk announced his decision one day after CBS released part of an interview in which he criticised the centrepiece of Trump's legislative agenda by saying he was "disappointed" by what the president calls his "big beautiful bill".

The legislation includes a mix of tax cuts and enhanced immigration enforcement.

Musk described it as a "massive spending bill" that increases the federal deficit and "undermines the work" of his Department of Government Efficiency. "I think a bill can be big or it could be beautiful. But I don't know if it could be both," Musk said.

Speaking in the Oval Office on Wednesday, Trump defended his agenda by talking about the delicate politics involved with negotiating the legislation.

"I'm not happy about certain aspects of it, but I'm thrilled by other aspects of it," he said.

Trump also suggested that more changes could be made.

"We're going to see what happens. It's got a way to go," he said.

Republicans recently pushed the measure through the House and are debating it in the Senate.

Musk's concerns were shared by some Republican lawmakers.

"I sympathise with Elon being discouraged," Wisconsin Senator Ron Johnson said.

Speaking at a Milwaukee Press Club event on Wednesday, Johnson added that he was "pretty confident" there was enough opposition "to slow this process down until the president, our leadership, gets serious" about reducing spending. He said there was no amount of pressure Trump could put on him to change his position.

Speaker Mike Johnson asked senators to make as few changes to the legislation as possible, saying that House Republicans reached a "very delicate balance" that could be upended with major changes.

The narrowly-divided House will have to vote again on final passage once the Senate alters the bill. On Wednesday, Johnson thanked Musk for his work and promised to pursue more spending cuts in the future, saying "the House is eager and ready to act on DOGE's findings".

The White House is sending some proposed rescissions, a mechanism used to cancel previously authorised spending, to Capitol Hill to solidify some of DOGE's cuts.

A spokesperson for the Office of Management and Budget said the package will include USD 1.1 bil-

lion from the Corporation of Public Broadcasting, which funds NPR and PBS, and USD 8.3 billion in foreign assistance.

Musk occasionally seemed chastened by his experience of working in the government.

"The federal bureaucracy situation is much worse than I realised," he told The Washington Post.

"I thought there were problems, but it sure is an uphill battle trying to improve things in D.C., to say the least."

He also recently said that he'll reduce his political spending, because "I think I've done enough".

Musk had previously been energised by the opportunity to reshape Washington. After putting at least USD 250 million behind Trump's candidacy, he wore campaign hats in the White House, held his own campaign rallies, and talked about excessive spending as an existential crisis. He often tended to be effusive in his praise of Trump.

"The more I've gotten to know President Trump, the more I like the guy," Musk said in February. "Frankly, I love him."

Trump repaid the favour, describing Musk as "a truly great American".

When Tesla faced declining sales, he turned the White House driveway into a makeshift showroom to illustrate his support.

It's unclear what, if any, impact Musk's comments about the bill would have on the legislative debate, especially given his departure from the administration. (AP)

## Tharoor slams 'zealots'; says was clearly speaking only about reprisals for terrorist attacks



PANAMA CITY, May 29: Amid Congress leaders' swipes at him over his 'surgical strike' remarks, party leader Shashi Tharoor on Thursday said that for those "zealots" fulminating about his supposed ignorance of Indian valour across the LoC, he was "clearly and explicitly" speaking only about reprisals for terrorist attacks and not about previous wars.

Tharoor said his remarks were preceded by a reference to the several attacks that have taken place in recent years alone, during which previous Indian responses were both restrained and constrained by India's responsible respect for the LoC and the IB.

The Congress leader, who is leading a multi-party delegation to five countries, while speaking here, reportedly said that when "for the first time" India breached the LoC between India and Pakistan to conduct a surgical strike on a terror base that was something we had not done before.

The Congress had taken swipes at him over the remarks with party colleague Udit Raj saying he should be made a "super spokesperson of the BJP".

Responding to the criticism, Tharoor said, "After a long and successful day in Panama, I have to wind up at midnight here with departure for Bogota, Colombia in six hours, so I don't really have time for this 'but anyway: For those zealots fulminating about my supposed ignorance of Indian valour across the LoC in the past - I. I was clearly and explicitly speaking only about reprisals for terrorist attacks and not about previous wars."

"My remarks were preceded by a reference to the several attacks that have taken place in recent years alone, during which previous Indian responses were both restrained and constrained by our responsible respect for the LoC and the IB," Tharoor said.

"But as usual, critics and trolls are welcome to distort my views and words as they see fit. I gen-

uinely have better things to do. Goodnight," he added.

Tagging Tharoor's remarks on surgical strikes, Raj had said on Wednesday, "My dear Shashi Tharoor, Alas! I could prevail upon PM Modi to declare you as super spokesperson of BJP, even declaring (you) as foreign minister before landing in India. How could you denigrate the golden history of Congress by saying that before PM Modi, India never crossed LoC and International border."

"In 1965 Indian Army entered Pakistan at multiple points, which completely surprised the Pakistanis in the Lahore sector. In 1971, India tore Pakistan in two pieces and during UPA government several surgical strikes were unleashed but drum beating was not done to encash (it) politically," he said.

"How could you be so dishonest to the party which gave you so much," asked Raj, who is the chairman of the Unorganised Workers and Employees Congress Other Than Professionals.

Raj's post on X was also reposted by Congress general secretary in-charge of communications Jairam Ramesh and the party's media and publicity department head Pawan Khera.

Taking a swipe at Tharoor, Khera had posted a picture which shows officers of the 4 Sikh Regiment posing outside a captured Pakistani police station in Burki, Lahore district.

"This image is from the Battle of Burki (also known as the Battle of Lahore, 1965), a significant engagement during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, fought between Indian infantry units and Pakistani armoured forces," Khera had said.

"Burki is a village located south-east of Lahore, near the India-Pakistan border, approximately 11 km from Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport, connected to the city by a bridge over the Bambawali-Ravi-Bedian (BRB) Canal. CC @ShashiTharoor," Khera posted. (PTI)

## Israel authorises more settlements in the occupied West Bank

JERUSALEM, May 29: Israel said Thursday it would establish 22 Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank, including the legalisation of outposts already built without government authorisation. Israeli strikes on the Gaza Strip meanwhile killed 12 people overnight, health officials said.

Israel captured the West Bank, along with Gaza and east Jerusalem, in the 1967 Mideast war, and the Palestinians want all three territories for their future state. Most of the international community views settlements as illegal and an obstacle to resolving the decades-old conflict.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said the settlement decision "strengthens our hold on Judea and Samaria," using the biblical term for the West Bank, "anchors our historical right in the Land of Israel, and constitutes a crushing response to Palestinian terrorism."

He added it was also "a strategic move that prevents the establishment of a Palestinian state that would endanger Israel."

Israel has already built well over 100 settlements across the territory that are home to some 500,000 settlers. The settlements range from small hilltop outposts to fully developed communities with apartment blocks, shopping malls, factories and public parks.

The West Bank is home to 3 million Palestinians, who live under Israeli military rule, with the Western-backed Palestinian Authority administering population centers. The settlers have Israeli citizenship.

Israel has accelerated settlement construction in recent years — long before Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack ignited the war in Gaza — confining Palestinians to smaller and smaller areas of the West Bank and making the prospect of establishing a viable, independent state even more remote. During his first term, President Donald Trump's administration broke with decades of US foreign policy by supporting Israel's claims to territory seized by force and taking steps to legitimise the settlements. Former President Joe Biden, like most of his predecessors, opposed the settlements but applied little pressure to Israel to curb their growth.

The top United Nations court ruled last year that Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territories is unlawful and called on it to end, and for settlement construction to stop immediately. Israel denounced the non-binding opinion by a 15-judge panel of the International Court of Justice, saying the territories are part of the historic homeland of the Jewish people.

**Calls for settlements in war-ravaged Gaza**

Israel withdrew its settlements from the Gaza Strip in 2005, but leading figures in the current government have called for them to be re-established and for much of the Palestinian population of the territory to be resettled elsewhere through what they describe as voluntary emigration. (AP)

## US will begin revoking visas of Chinese students: Marco Rubio

WASHINGTON, May 29: Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Wednesday the US will begin revoking the visas of some Chinese students, "including those with connections to the Chinese Communist Party or studying in critical fields".

Rubio said in his announcement posted on X that the government will "aggressively" revoke visas for students from China, which is the second-largest country of origin for international students in the United States, behind only India.

In the 2023-2024 school year, more than 270,000 international students were from China, making up roughly a quarter of all foreign students in the United States.

On Tuesday, Rubio halted the scheduling of new visa interviews for international students as the department prepares guidelines for increased vetting of their activity on social media.

The announcements from the State Department added to the uncertainty for America's international students, who have faced intensifying scrutiny from President Donald Trump's administration.

University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh student Vladyslav Plyaka was planning to visit Poland to see his mother and renew his visa, but he doesn't know when that will be possible now

that visa appointments are suspended.

He also doesn't feel safe leaving the US even when appointments resume.

"I don't think I have enough trust in the system at this point," said Plyaka, who came to the US from Ukraine as an exchange student in high school and stayed for college.

The announcement came days after the Trump administration moved to block Harvard University from enrolling any international students, a decision that has been put on hold by a federal judge, pending a lawsuit.

On Wednesday, Trump said that Harvard, whose current student population is made up of more than a quarter of international students, should limit that percentage to about 15 per cent.

"I want to make sure the foreign students are people that can love our country," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

Earlier this year, the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested and tried to deport students who had been involved in campus protests against the Israel-Hamas war.

The Trump administration abruptly terminated the legal status of thousands of international students before reversing itself and then expanding the grounds on which students can

lose permission to study in the US.

**International students see new reason for caution**

The uncertainty raised by the suspension of visa appointments will do further damage to the US reputation as a destination country, said Fanta Aw, CEO of NAFSA, an association that represents international educators.

Students generally commit to their programme of study in late spring, meaning now would be the peak time for students to schedule their visa interviews.

"International students and scholars are tremendous assets that contribute to US preeminence in innovation, research, and economic strength," Aw said in a statement.

"Undermining their ability to study here is self-defeating."

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the climate of uncertainty led one international student to cancel a trip home to Vietnam this summer. He emails the school's international office frequently to make sure his legal status is secure.

"There's just this constant unease. It's quite stressful, really," said the student, who spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear of being targeted. (AP)

## UK flags new Indian market for Scottish salmon trade after FTA

LONDON, May 29: The UK government has flagged the unlocking of the Indian market for Scottish salmon following the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India, finalised earlier this month and expected to be formally signed off in the coming weeks.

Downing Street has this week been highlighting benefits of the India-UK FTA and other trade pacts struck in its wake with the US and European Union (EU) in an effort to showcase the sectors and regions across the United Kingdom set to benefit.

"These trade deals deliver long term security for people in Scotland. They will create opportunities for more seamless trade and attract inward investment to grow the economy, making a difference to people's lives," Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a statement.

"These changes will be felt everywhere, whether it's lower food prices at the checkout, more choice for consumers and higher living standards that will improve livelihoods across Scotland," he said.

Downing Street noted that the FTA had "unlocked a new salmon market through our deal with India, with tariffs dropping from 33 per cent to 0 per cent".

"Securing frictionless access to key markets such as the EU, along with expanding opportunities in India, is crucial to protect our producers from unnecessary barriers like tariffs and red tape," said Tavis

Scott, chief executive of Salmon Scotland, the key representative of the sector.

"Ministers rightly recognise salmon as the jewel in the crown of our world-class produce and its vital role in the economy of coastal communities and across the UK," he said.

However, in Scotland, the spotlight remains on the whisky industry which is set to see tariffs for exports to India slashed significantly over the next decade following what the UK has dubbed as a "landmark deal" — agreed on May 6 and expected to add an extra GBP 25.5 billion annually in the long run to the current two-way trade of GBP 41 billion.

Under the pact, Scottish distillers will immediately see tariffs halved from 150 per cent to 75 per cent and eventually to just 40 per cent over the next decade.

UK Business and Trade Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said: "The three landmark deals secured this month with the US, India, and the EU have shown this government is serious about striking the deals that our businesses want and need."

"For Scottish businesses, these deals will mean stability and jobs protected as they seize new opportunities to sell to some of our biggest trading partners."

"From our world-renowned whisky distilleries to our cutting-edge green energy sector, Scotland has so much to offer international markets..." (PTI)

## All-party delegation in Italy underscores India's firm stance against terrorism

ROME, May 29: An all-party delegation led by BJP MP Ravi Shankar has met senior Italian officials to reaffirm India's "zero-tolerance" stance on terrorism and New Delhi's resolve to combat all forms of terror.

The eight-member team is one of the seven multi-party delegations India has tasked to visit 33 global capitals to reach out to the international community on Pakistan's designs and India's response to terror.

The group, which arrived in Rome on Tuesday, had a "productive" meeting with former foreign minister Giulio Terzi on Wednesday.

"Led by Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Delegation, had a productive meeting with Senator @GiulioTerzi, President of the India-Italy Parliamentary Friendship Group and its Members," the Indian embassy in Rome said in a post on X.

"The Indian delegation voiced India's resolute stance on combating terrorism and zero tolerance for all forms of terror," it said.

Both sides also reaffirmed the significance of India-Italy strategic partnership and the potential for elevating bilateral cooperation.

The delegation also held an interaction with Italy's Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Maria Tripodi.

"Constructive exchange with the Indian parliamentary delegation visiting the @SenatoStampa. Italy and India united by strategic partnership, work together to address the common challenges of our time," Tripodi said in an X post.

"She reiterated commitment for the India-Italy strategic partnership and for countering terrorism," the embassy said.

The group also met the Committee on Foreign Affairs and European Commission and its president, Senator Giulio Tremonti.

"The Indian side highlighted India's unwavering commitment to combat terrorism and the national consensus on zero tolerance against terrorism," the embassy said in a separate post, adding that Tremonti "appreciated" the outreach and spoke about the "shared positions on terrorism".

"He underscored the need for a regular dialogue about terrorism," it added.

The delegation also interacted with a cross-section of the Indian community here and shared the national resolve to "counter-terrorism and take firm actions against cross-border terrorism," the embassy said.

"We also expressed our appreciation for the valuable contributions of the Indian diaspora and their deep-rooted connections to their homeland," Prasad said in a post on X. (PTI)

## Diplomats in Indonesia echo India's urgent call for united global efforts to counter terrorism

JAKARTA (INDONESIA), May 29: The leaders of the National Mandate Party (PAN) of Indonesia on Thursday conveyed to the Indian all-party delegation that they stand with New Delhi and categorically stated that "religion and race cannot serve as a basis for exporting terrorism."

The Resident Ambassadors of friendly countries in Indonesia that the Indian all-party delegation met with strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and echoed the urgent need for united global efforts to counter this menace.

The all-party parliamentary delegation, led by JD(U) MP Sanjay Kumar Jha, is here with a mission to convey New Delhi's unequivocal stance about India's fight against terrorism to local political and diplomatic leadership, think tanks and media.

The delegation met with Na-

tional Mandate Party (PAN) leaders including Eddy Soeparno, Vice Chairman of PAN, also Deputy Speaker of Indonesian People's Assembly; Viva Yoga Mauladi, Vice Chairman of the Party and also Deputy Minister for Transmigration Republic of Indonesia, and other leaders and Members of Parliament from PAN.

The Indian parliamentarians shared views on India's stance on zero tolerance for terrorism, a post on X by the Indian Embassy in Jakarta said.

"The PAN party leadership expressed condolences to the victims of the gruesome terror attack in Pahalgam, India. PAN leadership conveyed that they stand with India and categorically stated that religion and race cannot serve as a basis for exporting terrorism," the post on X added.

The Members of Parliament



joining the meeting from PAN also included Dessy Ratnasari, Farah Putri Nahlia, Okta Kumala Dewi, Dr. Dradjad Wibowo, Slamet Ariyadi and A Bakrie.

The delegation interacted with Resident Ambassadors of friendly countries in Indonesia and shared their insights on India's calibrated

and uphold regional peace and international security."

The Indian team also held an insightful interaction with scholars and researchers from Indonesia-based think tanks and academia and conveyed a strong and unified message of zero tolerance for cross-border terrorism to maintain peace and regional stability.

The team "sought to jointly explore ways to combat the menace" of terrorism, the Indian Embassy said in another post on X.

Earlier on Wednesday, the delegation met Indonesian Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Arief Havas Oegroseno and ASEAN Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn. The Indian team also interacted with Muhammad Husein Fadlulloh, Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation, and Muhammad Rofiqi, Chairperson of the Indonesia-India

Parliamentary Friendship Group, to sensitise them on India's strong commitment against terrorism.

Besides Jha, the delegation comprises MPs Aparajita Sarangi (BJP), Abhishek Banerjee (TMC), Brij Lal (BJP), John Brittas (CPI-M), Pradan Baruah (BJP), Hemang Joshi (BJP), former external affairs minister Salman Khurshid and former ambassador of India to France and Bahrain Mohan Kumar.

The delegation is one of the seven multi-party delegations India has tasked to visit 33 global capitals to reach out to the international community to emphasize Pakistan's links to terrorism.

Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after the Pahalgam terror attack, with India carrying out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in the early hours of May 7. (PTI)



# Pema Khandu meets Arunachal Governor to discuss 'Rising Northeast' initiative

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 29: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu called on the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd.), at Raj Bhavan, Itanagar, on May 29, 2025.

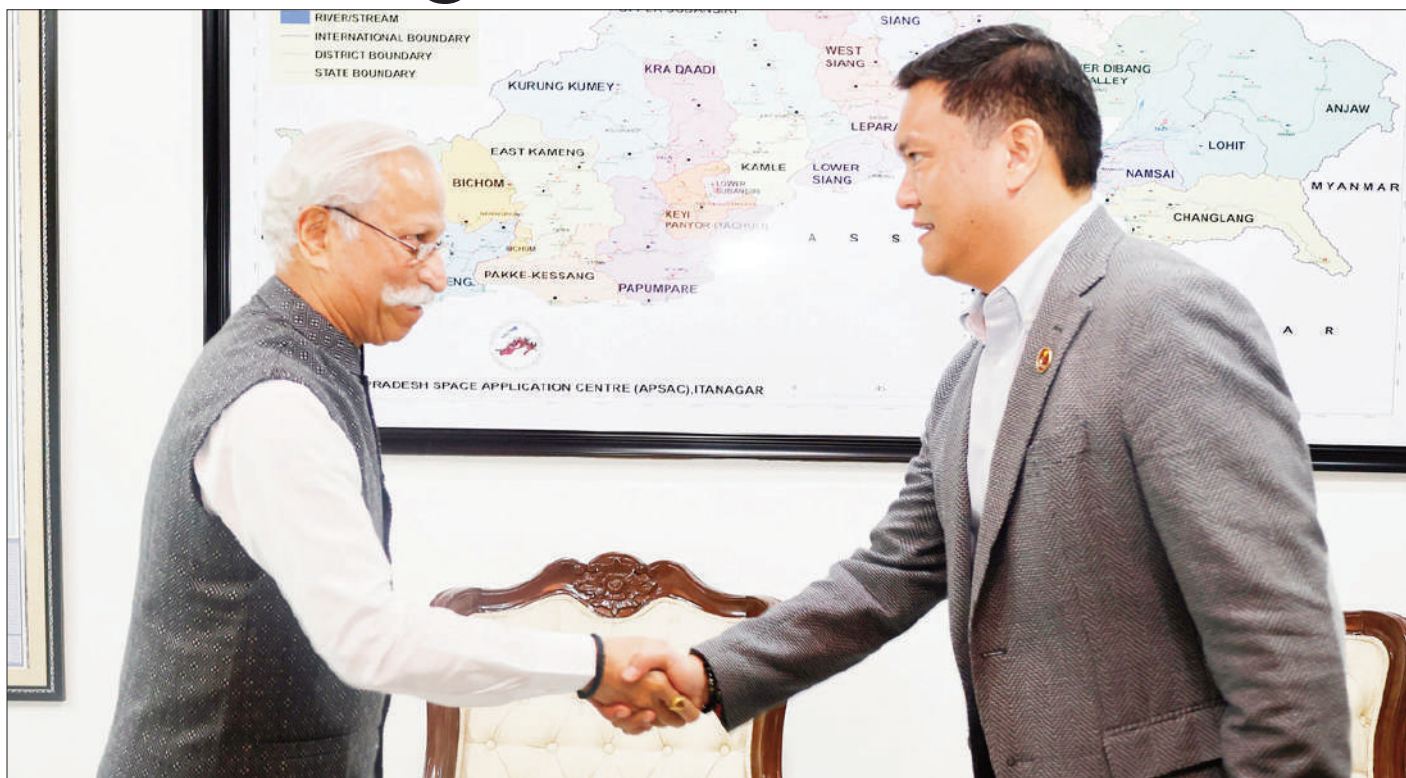
The meeting highlighted a shared commitment toward the sustainable prosperity and development of Arunachal Pradesh and the wider North-eastern region.

According to an official statement, the discussions prominently focused on the recently concluded 'Rising Northeast' initiative, organized by the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER).

The Governor praised the vision behind the event, describing it as a significant milestone in the region's developmental trajectory.

He emphasized that the initiative successfully showcased the Northeast's vast potential in manufacturing and services sectors and provided a crucial platform for forging meaningful partnerships across various industries.

Congratulating Chief Minister Khandu and deputy chief minister Chowna Mein for securing multiple memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with prominent business houses and enterprises, the Governor urged the State government to continue exploring further opportunities to expand business activities and attract new investments into



Arunachal Pradesh.

He underscored the importance of capitalizing on this unique moment to build new alliances and foster long-term collaborations that can lead to transformative, ground-level improvements in the State's socio-economic landscape.

A key point raised during the meeting was the significance of

youth engagement, skill development, and entrepreneurship as foundational pillars for the future growth of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Governor remarked that the ultimate goal extends beyond job creation to nurturing entrepreneurs and job creators who can make meaningful contributions both within local communities and to

the broader national economy.

Chief minister Pema Khandu shared valuable insights from his interactions during the Rising Northeast event, noting the enthusiastic response from industry leaders and the tangible outcomes that have already started to materialise as a result of the initiative.

The meeting concluded with a

renewed commitment from both the Governor and the Chief Minister to continue working collaboratively in harnessing the developmental opportunities presented by such platforms, thereby accelerating Arunachal Pradesh's socio-economic progress and integration within the regional and national growth framework.

## Upper Siang district holds review meeting to strengthen routine immunisation

Meeting focused on comprehensive vaccination strategies, data integrity, and outreach in remote areas

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 29: In a concerted effort to bolster immunization efforts across Upper Siang district, Deputy Commissioner and Chairman of the District Health Society, Talo Jerang, chaired a high-level District Task Force on Immunization (DTFI) meeting on Thursday.

The session reviewed and strategized around multiple public health initiatives, including the Zero Dose Implementation Plan (ZIP), Special Vaccination Campaign (SVC), Measles-Rubella Elimination (MRE), the Routine Immunization (RI) microplan for 2025, and Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPD) Surveillance.

According to an official statement, the meeting was convened with the primary objective of strengthening the RI microplanning mechanism to ensure that every child, especially in the remotest parts of the district, receives timely and complete immunisation.

The session brought together medical officers, programme officers, health officials, and heads of departments from allied sectors for a detailed performance review and future planning.

Addressing the gathering, Deputy Commissioner Talo Jerang expressed appreciation for the efforts of healthcare workers serving in various facilities across the district.

He stressed the importance of sincerity, precision in data collection, and a strong commitment to reaching the unreached, particularly in geographically challenging areas.

"No child should be left behind in our immunization drive," he emphasized.

Dr Nabho Borang, Medical Officer - Routine Immunisation, presented a comprehensive PowerPoint briefing on the ZIP, MRE, RI, and VPD Surveillance initiatives.

He outlined current progress, identified existing challenges, and highlighted strategies for increased outreach and data monitoring.

Medical Officers In-Charge (MO ICs) from District Hospital Yingkong, CHCs Tuting, Jengging, and Mariyang, and PHCs Jeying and Katan shared block-wise reports on RI performance for the financial year 2024-25 up to May 2025.

They also presented detailed microplans under the Special Vaccination Campaign, tailored to local demographic and geographic needs.

Ajit Taron, District Coordinator of Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI), provided updates on ZIP progress through community engagement models, citing increasing participation from local stakeholders.

As part of the broader health awareness campaign, Dr. Ahik Miyu, District Tuberculosis Officer, led a sensitization workshop on the ongoing "100 Days TB Campaign," urging frontline workers to prioritise tuberculosis screening and reporting.

Earlier, the objectives of the meeting were laid out by Dr Andeng Sitek, District Reproductive and Child Health Officer, who emphasized the integration of data-driven planning and inter-departmental collaboration for effective implementation of immunization programmes.

The meeting was attended by District Medical Officer Dr Gepeng Litin, programme officers from across departments, MO ICs, and staff from health and allied departments.

Officials stated that the insights and strategies emerging from this session would be crucial in refining the district's immunisation roadmap, ensuring both improved health outcomes and compliance with national targets for disease elimination and control.

## East Siang and Siang storm into HDMT Semis with strong wins

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 29: In a thrilling display of youth football at the Hangpan Dada Memorial Trophy (HDMT), East Siang and Siang districts secured their spots in the semifinals of the boys' football category after defeating West Siang and Kurung Kumey respectively in the second day of quarterfinal matches held on Thursday.

According to an official statement issued by the organisers, the clash between East Siang and West Siang proved to be one of the tournament's most closely contested and emotionally charged encounters so far.

West Siang drew first blood at the 28th minute through a penalty kick calmly converted by Mirok Loyi. However, the lead was short-lived as East Siang's Mohan Boni responded with a spectacular long-range strike in the 34th minute, levelling the score at 1-1.

Just after halftime, West Siang regained the advantage when Kijo Ete found the net in the 46th minute.

But East Siang kept their composure, equalising once again through Panam Tasung in the 59th minute.

The deadlock continued into stoppage time before Geni Tayeng struck the decisive blow in the 73rd minute (70+3), sealing a dramatic 3-2 victory for East Siang and sending their supporters into jubilation.

In the day's second quarterfinal match, Siang district delivered a clinical performance to defeat Kurung Kumey 3-1. Goals for Siang came from Abhas Tasing (41'), Hanu Tari (55') and Dubom Tamin (61'), showcasing the team's attacking prowess and coordinated teamwork.

## NITI Aayog official visits Atoizu under aspirational block programme

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 29: As part of the Government of India's Aspirational Block Programme (ABP) for Akhuaito Block in Zunheboto district, Atoizu town welcomed Ngayapam A Shimray, Young Professional from NITI Aayog, on an official visit aimed at evaluating grassroots-level development.

The visit, conducted on May 29, was jointly organised by the office of the MLA Er Picto Shohe (32 A/C Atoizu) and the District Administration of Zunheboto.

According to an official statement, the event was hosted at Jubilee Hall in Atoizu and was chaired by Dr Samuel Akho Konyak P, NCS, Extra Assistant Commissioner of Atoizu and the designated Nodal Officer for the Aspirational Block Programme.

The programme opened with a prayer by Pastor Khekiye Achumi of the Atoizu Town Baptist Church, followed by a welcome address from Nukutulu S Venuh, Additional Deputy Commissioner of Atoizu.

In a series of brief but impactful remarks, several dignitaries addressed the gathering, including MLA Er Picto Shohe, Anatoly Suu, Deputy Chief Medical Officer of Zunheboto, and Kitoli Naje, Chairperson of the Atoizu Town Council.

Each speaker emphasized the need for sustained collaboration between government departments and the local community to ensure that the Aspirational Block framework delivers measurable improvements in quality of life.

Ngayapam A Shimray delivered the keynote address, where he elaborated on the vision and objectives of the Aspirational Block Programme.

He underscored the importance of data-driven governance and encouraged transparent, community-driven implementation of welfare schemes.

Shimray also led an interactive session

with representatives from various departments, fielding questions and discussing region-specific developmental challenges and best practices.

The programme featured PowerPoint presentations from several key departments showcasing sectoral achievements and initiatives.

Presentations were made by officials from the Departments of Health (Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Zunheboto), Social Welfare (District Programme Officer), Education (Sub-Division Education Officer), Public Health Engineering (Executive Engineer, PHED), Roads and Buildings (SDO, PWD R&B), and Rural Livelihoods (District Representative & BPM, NSRLM Akuhaito).

Additionally, officers from the Agriculture, Veterinary, and Soil Conservation departments shared updates on ongoing schemes and interventions in the block.

The session concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Dr Gihuka Chishi, Medical Officer at Atoizu PHC, followed by a benediction from Shri Khetoi Chopi, Pastor of the NCRC, Atoizu Town. Refreshments were later served to all attendees.

Significantly, as part of the visit, Shimray and accompanying officials carried out extensive field inspections across the Atoizu Sub-Division over two days.

These visits covered government offices, healthcare centres, schools, and other public institutions.

The on-ground engagements aimed to offer first-hand insights into local implementation hurdles and assess the impact of central and state interventions.

Officials confirmed that the findings from these field visits will contribute to a more nuanced evaluation of Akhuaito Block's performance and help guide future developmental priorities under the Aspirational Block Programme.

## VKSA launched in Dibang Valley

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 29: In a determined push towards agricultural self-reliance and sustainable development, Minister for Women and Child Development, Dasanglu Pul, launched the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA) in Gipulin village of Dibang Valley district on Thursday.

The campaign, a nationwide initiative under the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, seeks to equip farmers with awareness, technology, and access to government schemes.

According to an official statement, the launch programme was attended by Anini MLA and Advisor to the Tourism Minister, Mopi Mihu, ZPC Theko Tayu, Deputy Commissioner Pagli Sora, senior scientists from Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Anini, along with officials from various line departments.

Speaking at the event, Minister Pul emphasised that empowering farmers through education, accessibility, and modern tools is the cornerstone of building a resilient agricultural economy.

"This campaign is about reaching the last-mile farmer and ensuring that the benefits of schemes like PM Fasal Bima Yojana, Kisan Credit Cards, and soil health initiatives are delivered directly to their doorsteps," she said.

As part of the campaign's field-level implementation, soil health cards and hybrid seeds were distributed among local farmers to promote scientific agricultural practices and enhance crop productivity.

## Tawang launches Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan to promote scientific and sustainable farming

Krishi Rathes flagged off from Khartooth and Jemeithang to spread agricultural awareness

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 29: In a concerted effort to empower farmers and promote scientific and sustainable agricultural practices, the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA) was formally launched in Tawang district on Thursday.

The campaign was inaugurated by Tawang Deputy Commissioner Kanki Darang at Khartooth village, marking the beginning of an intensive district-wide outreach programme under the national initiative of the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

According to an official statement, the event also included the ceremonial flagging off of the Krishi Rath, a mobile awareness unit designed to traverse the district, educating farmers on best practices in agriculture and allied sectors.

A second Krishi Rath was flagged off from Jemeithang by I/C Extra Assistant Commissioner Deewan Mara from the local administrative headquarters.

The VKSA campaign will run from May 29 to June 12, 2025, and is part of the Government of India's larger Viksit Bharat @2047 vision to transform Indian agriculture into a modern, inclusive, and economically robust sector.

Addressing the gathering at Khartooth, DC Kanki Darang stressed the importance of organic farming in preserving soil fertility and achieving sustainable crop yields.

He urged farmers to adopt integrated farming systems—including pisciculture and livestock—to improve income diversification and build resilience against economic shocks. "Sustainable agriculture is the backbone of rural prosperity. We must balance tradition with innovation to secure food and livelihood for future generations," he remarked.

The event witnessed the participation of officials and experts from a range of allied departments, including Agriculture, Horticulture, Veterinary, and Fisheries, as well as the National Research Centre on Yak (NRC Yak), Dirang, and the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Tawang, which has been designated as the nodal agency for VKSA implementation in the district.

Representatives of Farmer Producer Companies, Panchayat leaders, Gaon Burahs, and a large number of local farmers attended the launch event.

Their active participation highlighted a shared commitment to improving agricultural productivity through innovation and knowledge-sharing.

The programme featured interactive sessions where scientists from KVK Tawang, NRC on Yak, and allied departments engaged directly with farmers.

These sessions focused on educating participants about soil health, improved crop varieties, modern cultivation techniques, animal husbandry, and access to government schemes such as PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Kisan Credit Card (KCC), and input subsidies.

Officials stated that through the Krishi Rath and hands-on demonstrations, the campaign aims to reach farmers even in remote villages of the district, ensuring last-mile delivery of knowledge and support services.

Information will be disseminated via audio-visual tools, printed materials, and field visits, allowing real-time problem-solving and feedback from the farming community.

The VKSA initiative is expected to lay a strong foundation for long-term agricultural transformation in the region.

By bridging gaps in awareness, technology adoption, and institutional support, it seeks to equip farmers with the tools needed for a resilient, climate-smart, and self-reliant agricultural economy.

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No.: MLBC/Adv/2024-25/002

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Sl. No.	Post	No. Of Post	Qualification
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	Assistant Professor Hindi		a) PG in concerned subject with 55% marks and B.Ed/M.Ed with 55% masks. b) NET/SLET
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# 'Pakistan should understand that we have entered your house and killed you three times' 'Operation Sindoor' not over yet, we have hit Pakistan thrice inside its home: Modi

**ALIPURDUAR (WB), May 29:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said 'Operation Sindoor' was far from over and warned that India would continue to exact a heavy price on those who sponsor terrorism, asserting that Pakistan has already been hit "three times inside its home."

Addressing his first rally in West Bengal since the launch of 'Operation Sindoor' earlier this month, the PM invoked the region's deep cultural and emotional connection with 'sindoor', referring to the traditional ritual of 'Sindoor Khela' observed by Bengali women during Durga Puja, to reinforce India's hardened stance against terrorism.

"Now that I am standing on the sacred land of 'Sindoor Khela', it is only right that we speak about a new resolve against terrorism 'Operation Sindoor'," Modi said to loud cheers.

He added, "On April 22, the brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgal shook the nation. The pain and anger felt across West Bengal were deeply understood. I could feel your outrage. The terrorists dared to wipe off 'sindoor' from the foreheads of our sisters. But our brave soldiers made them realise the power of that sindoor."

"From this land of Bengal, I, on behalf of 140 crore Indians, declare



that 'Operation Sindoor' is not over yet," Modi said.

"There was a lot of anger in West Bengal, too, after the barbarity committed by terrorists in Pahalgal. I understood very well the anger and rage that was within you. The terrorists dared to wipe away the 'sindoor' of our sisters. Our army made them realise the power of 'sindoor'," he reiterated.

'Operation Sindoor' was launched by India on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgal terror attack.

The operation involved precision strikes on terror infrastructure across the border in Pakistan.

Asserting India's zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism, Modi said,

"After the Pahalgal attack, India has told the world that if there is a terrorist attack on India, the enemy will have to pay a heavy price for it. Pakistan should understand that we have entered your house and killed you three times."

While the PM did not spell out the details of the three instances, his remarks are being widely interpreted as a reference to the 2016 surgical strikes following the Uri terror attack, the 2019 Balakot air strikes after the Pulwama bombing, and the recent cross-border strikes as part of 'Operation Sindoor'.

"We destroyed cross-border terror infrastructure, which Pakistan had never thought of. We have hit Pakistan thrice inside their homes,"

he said.

In a direct rebuke to Islamabad's military establishment, the PM accused Pakistan of institutionalising terrorism.

"Terrorism and mass murder are the biggest expertise of the Pakistani army, because whenever there is an open war, they face defeat," he added.

Modi also invoked historical wounds, linking Pakistan's legacy of terrorism to the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War.

"Ever since it came into existence, Pakistan has only nurtured terror. Pakistan, the country that nurtured terrorism since its inception, has been a breeding ground for terror and violence. It has carried out terrorist attacks on India ever since Partition in 1947. The terror it spread in our neighbourhood — present-day Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) — is also unforgettable," Modi said.

"No one can forget the way the Pakistan Army committed rapes and murders in East Pakistan (present day Bangladesh) and the terror it had unleashed there," he added.

Modi concluded with a stern warning, saying India would relentlessly pursue terrorists across the border and ensure that enemies of peace face the consequences. (PTI)

## People of PoK part of Indian family, day not far when they will return to India: Rajnath



**NEW DELHI, May 29:** People of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) are part of India's "own family" and the day is not far when they will return to the Indian mainstream by listening to their inner voice, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Thursday.

Laying out India's policy approach towards Pakistan, Singh said New Delhi has "redesigned and redefined" its strategy and response to terrorism and that possible dialogue with Islamabad will be only on terrorism and PoK.

In an address at the CII Business Summit, he said 'Make-in-India' in the defence sector has been an essential component in the country's national security and it played a key role in India's effective action against terrorism during Operation Sindoor.

In the remarks, Singh appeared to be largely attempting to reach out to people of PoK saying India considers them to be part of its "own" family and exuded confidence that they will return voluntarily.

"I believe that the people of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) are our own, part of our family," he said.

"We are committed to the resolution of 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' (One India, Best India) and we have full faith that those of our brothers who are geograph-

ically and politically separated from us today, will also return to the mainstream of India someday or the other with self-respect, listening to their voice of soul," he said.

Most of the people there feel a deep connection with India, there are only a few who have been misled, he said.

The defence minister said the unification of the PoK with India depends on "the cultural, social and economic prosperity of this country".

He said most of the people in PoK feel a "deep connection" with India and only a few of them have been "misled".

"The situation of our brothers and sisters living in PoK is similar to that of Shakti Singh, the younger brother of brave warrior Maharana Pratap."

"Even after separation, the confidence and faith of the elder brother towards his younger brother remains intact," Singh said.

"India always talks about connecting hearts, and we believe that by walking on the path of love, unity and truth, the day is not far when our own part, PoK, will return and say, I am India, I have returned," he said.

In a clear message to Pakistan, Singh also said the business of terrorism is not cost effective and it will come with a heavy price as Islamabad has realised now. His comments came three days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said it is for the youth of Pakistan to step forward and "free Pakistan from the disease of terrorism".

The defence minister described 'Make-in-India' as crucial for national security and prosperity, stating that the use of indigenous systems during Operation Sindoor has proved that India has the power to penetrate any armour of the enemy.

"We destroyed the terrorist hideouts and then the military bases. We could have done a lot more, but we presented a great example of coordination of power and restraint," he said. In his remarks, Singh also highlighted India's domestic defence capabilities.

India's defence export was less than Rs 1000 crore 10 years ago but it has now reached a record figure of ₹ 23,500 crore, he said. (PTI)

## Congress accuses BJP of trying to take political advantage of Operation Sindoor



**NEW DELHI, May 29:** The Congress on Thursday accused the BJP of trying to take political advantage of Operation Sindoor with its reported plans to distribute vermilion among women across the country and said that the drive was a "shield" to hide the Modi government's "political and diplomatic failure".

Congress spokesperson Ragini Nayak referred to reports that have claimed the Modi government is preparing to take the success of Operation Sindoor to every household under which 'sindoor' will be given to women as a gift from June 9, when the Modi government completes one year of its third term.

"It is a matter of great shame that the Modi government wants to use the vermilion as a shield to hide its political and diplomatic failure. How low will the Modi government stoop to take credit for the valour and bravery of the armed forces?" she asked at a press conference at the party's headquarters at 24, Akbar Road here. The BJP has officially not shared any details of its plans for

its anniversary celebrations to mark one year of 'Modi government 3.0'. There was no immediate comment from the ruling party on the Congress' claims.

"When Narendra Modi was not satisfied with putting up big posters of Operation Sindoor in every district and every corner of the country with his photo on it and by dressing up in army uniform... Now, the BJP has announced that it will go door-to-door and distribute 'sindoor'," Nayak claimed.

If the BJP wants to go door-to-door and distribute vermilion, then it should first answer for whom and for what will this 'government vermilion' given by strangers be useful, the Congress spokesperson asked. "Don't the self-proclaimed 'contractors of Hinduism' know that the sindoor (vermilion) in the parting of a Hindu Sanatani married woman's hair is applied by her husband or she gets it from her in-laws or from a Shakti Peeth/temple as a blessing for good fortune?" Nayak asked.

"How can the BJP-RSS people distribute vermilion among women when terrorists who ruined the married life of the women (in the Pahalgal terror attack) have not been killed yet?" she asked. Nayak claimed the box in which the vermilion will be kept will also have Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photo printed on it.

"BJP MLA Ranveer Singh Pathania says, 'The Air Force is useless because they were sleeping when Pakistan was attacking'. All this is happening, but Narendra Modi is silent. Madhya Pradesh Deputy CM Jagdish Devda has also said that the whole country, the entire army bows at the feet of Narendra Modi," she claimed. (PTI)

## PM Modi slams TMC over Murshidabad violence, teacher scam; describes Bengal govt as 'nirmam sarkar'

**ALIPURDUAR (WB), May 29:** Launching a blistering attack on the TMC government in West Bengal, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday accused it of fostering violence, corruption and lawlessness, and asserted that the people in the state are yearning for change to get rid of the 'nirmam sarkar' (cruel government).

Addressing a public rally in north Bengal's Alipurduar, Modi cited the recent incidents of communal violence in Murshidabad and Malda as grim reminders of the TMC regime's "cruelty and indifference" towards the ordinary citizens.

"Today, West Bengal is grappling with a series of crises. People don't want 'Nirmam Sarkar'. They want change and good governance. That is why the whole of Bengal is saying that they don't want cruelty and corruption anymore," the prime minister said, exactly a year ahead of the assembly elections in the state.

Criticising the Mamata Baner-

jee-led TMC government for the recent communal violence in Murshidabad and Malda, Modi said the allegation was that lawbreakers were allowed to operate unchecked under the guise of "appeasement", while the police stood by helplessly, failing to act.

"Look at what happened in Murshidabad and Malda — clear examples of the government's cruelty. In the name of appeasement, lawlessness was allowed to flourish. Just imagine the horror: members of the ruling party mark out homes and set them on fire, while the police stand by and do nothing," he said.

"I want to ask the poor people of Bengal — is this how a government is supposed to function? Here, the courts, in almost every matter, have to step in because nothing gets resolved otherwise. The people have lost faith in the TMC government. There's an outcry across Bengal — 'Bengal mein machi cheekh pukar, nahi chahiye nirmam sarkar' (Outcry in Bengal

is to oust cruel government)," the PM claimed.

This is Modi's first visit to the state since violent clashes broke out in parts of Murshidabad—including Samsarganj, Suti, and Dhulian—in April following protests over the contentious Waqf Amendment Act.

At least three people were killed and several others injured in the communal riots.

Modi listed five major crises that are allegedly "plaguing" Bengal under the TMC rule.

"First is the widespread violence and lawlessness that are tearing apart the fabric of society. Second is the growing sense of insecurity among mothers and sisters, compounded by horrific crimes committed against them," the PM alleged.

He also claimed that the third crisis is the despair among youth due to unemployment and lack of opportunities, while the fourth is the "corruption that destroyed the system and eroded public trust" in the state government. (PTI)

## VP Dhankhar continues to be ignored when he raises concerns of farmers: Cong

**NEW DELHI, May 29:** The Congress on Thursday cited Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar's remarks on farmers to take a swipe at the Modi government, saying he should be listened to seriously by those throwing out slogans and filmi dialogues thinking that theatrics is governance.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said sadly, Dhankhar continues to be ignored when he raises concerns of farmers. Ramesh's remarks came after Dhankhar said Viksit Bharat does not mean the rank of the country's economy and to make it a reality, the income of people needs to increase eightfold. Speaking to reporters after paying homage to former prime minister Charan Singh on his birth anniversary, Dhankhar said, "Today, when we talk about Viksit Bharat, it doesn't mean what the rank of our economy is. To define Viksit Bharat and make it a ground reality, the income of everyone needs to be increased by eight times."

"This will happen but the farmers need to be farsighted. Today, our farmers are limited only to production. It is my request to farmer brothers that this is the time to increase their involvement in the country's biggest trade which is related to agriculture or animal husbandry," he said. (PTI)

## Pune teen student, held for Op Sindoor post and later granted bail, appears for exam: HC told

**MUMBAI, May 29:** The Pune teen student, arrested for her social media post criticizing the Indian government over Operation Sindoor and later released on bail, has appeared for her semester examination under requisite security, her lawyer told the Bombay High Court on Thursday.

The high court had on Tuesday slammed the Maharashtra government for its "absolutely shocking" and "radical" reaction to the engineering student's post and for arresting her.

The court ordered immediate release of the 19-year-old, originally from Jammu and Kashmir, from Pune's Yerwada Central Jail, noting the police were "bent upon ruining her life" and turning her into a "hardcore criminal".

The court had also suspended the rustication order issued by the student's college Sinhgad Academy of Engineering, and permitted her to appear for ongoing second year semester examinations. Her advocate Farhana Shah informed a vacation bench of Justices Gauri Godse and Somasekar Sundaresan that pursuant to the court order, the student was released from jail on Tuesday night.

"The college issued her the admit card on Wednesday and she has appeared for the exam scheduled on Thursday," Shah said.

The student had missed two papers and as many practical exams while she was in custody, she said. The court said the teenager can make

necessary application to the college and the Savitribai Phule Pune University, to which the academy is affiliated, seeking special permission to reappear for the missed exams.

"No further directions are required now. The matter shall be placed before the regular bench on June 9," the bench said. The college said as per HC's directives, special arrangements have been made for the student to appear for exams.

"The girl will be giving her exams in a separate classroom. A separate supervisor will be assigned for her exams and two security guards, one male and one female, will accompany her on the campus for her safety," the college's principal, Kishor Patil, said. (PTI)

## Historic first: Maiden batch of 17 female cadets graduates from NDA; Passing Out Parade on May 30

**PUNE, May 29:** Marking a historic moment for women in Indian armed forces, the first batch of 17 female cadets graduated from the National Defence Academy (NDA) here on Thursday and were conferred degrees along with more than 300 male cadets.

The convocation ceremony of 148th NDA course was held at the academy, widely known as the "cradle of leadership", which provides officers to the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force.

NDA Commandant Vice Admiral Gurcharan Singh hailed the graduation of the maiden batch of female cadets and expressed hope that they will carve out names for themselves as exemplary leaders.

A total of 339 cadets, including the female cadets, were conferred degrees from the Delhi-based Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). Of them, 84 cadets were

awarded with the BSc degree, 85 with Computer Science degree, 59 with Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree and 111 with BTech degree.

Prof Poonam Tandon, Vice Chancellor of the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University, who was the chief guest at the event, said, "...I have been informed that over the decade, the NDA has produced more than 40,000 officers who went on to bring glory to India, both in times of war and in peace. They have carved an illustrious path, upheld the highest traditions of the law and service, and written chapters of courage in golden letters."

"Today, I had the privilege of conferring degrees upon the cadets of the 148th course and awarding deserving individuals with honours and trophies," she said.

She congratulated all the cadets for achieving this significant milestone. (PTI)

## 'Only those who don't understand the budget can make such a charge' No funds diverted from other departments for Ladki Bahin, read budget rules: Fadnavis

**PARBHANI, May 29:** Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday clarified no funds have been diverted from other departments for the government's flagship scheme for women Ladki Bahin and said those who do not understand budget are making unsubstantiated claims.

Money disbursed for the scheme, which under eligible poor women get a monthly stipend of Rs 1,500, through Tribal Affairs and Social Justice Departments was as per budgetary norms, he insisted.

Talking to reporters here in central Maharashtra, Fadnavis explained budgetary rules stipulate funds should be reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Maximum funds should be earmarked for personal benefit schemes and some kept aside for infrastructure develop-

ment.

"The charges (by opposition that funds were diverted from other departments for Ladki Bahin Yojana) are wrong. Only those who don't understand the budget can make such a charge. Rules say funds should be reserved for SCs/STs. Maximum funds should be reserved for personal benefit schemes and some for infrastructure development."

"Ladki Bahin Yojana falls under the category of giving personal benefit to beneficiaries. So, if you give money to this scheme, then as per budgetary rules, it has to be shown under the Tribal Affairs Department and the Social Justice Department," the CM stated.

He emphasised Deputy CM Ajit Pawar, who holds the finance portfolio, has already clarified in this matter.

Fadnavis noted the budget of



Tribal Affairs and Social Justice departments has been hiked nearly 1.45 times in 2025-26.

"This (Ladki Bahin funds disbursed through other departments) is a type of accounting. No money has been diverted. There is no

wrongdoing in this," the CM asserted.

The state Women and Child Development Department runs the scheme, which is credited with playing a key role in the BJP-led Mahayuti's massive assembly

election win in November last year.

Under the yojana, women in the 21-65 years age group with an annual family income of less than Rs 2.5 lakh are eligible for the monthly stipend.

Earlier this month, Maharashtra Social Justice Minister Sanjay Shirsat had expressed displeasure and accused the Ajit Pawar-led Finance Department of high-handedness in what he termed as illegal diversion of funds from his department without his knowledge.

He had acknowledged that the state was facing financial constraints due to the women-centric welfare scheme launched last year ahead of the assembly polls.

The Shiv Sena minister had said the state government should better "shut" the Social Justice Department instead of periodic diversion of the allocated funds. (PTI)



## Forty eight years is enough

## Five Naga tribes stage rally demanding review of job reservation policy in Nagaland



**KOHIMA, May 29:** Five major Naga tribes of Nagaland on Thursday held protest rallies in various districts, demanding a review of the state's job reservation policy.

The coordinated action was led under the banner of the 5 Tribes Committee on Review of Reservation Policy (CORRP), a body formed in 2023 as mandated by the apex tribal organisations of the five tribes — Angami, Ao, Lotha, Rengma and Sumi.

Despite inclement weather, members of tribes, attired in traditional dress, marched from multiple locations to their respective Deputy Commissioners' office, and submitted an "ultimatum reminder", citing the Nagaland government's "failure" to respond to two key communications: a memorandum dated September 20, 2024, and a 30-day ultimatum served on April 26, 2025.

"Left with no other option, we are undertaking this democratic form of agitation by holding protest marches to draw the atten-

tion of the state government and highlight our demands," the memorandum said.

They also threatened to intensify the agitation in various forms until their grievances are addressed as brought out in the CORRP memorandum of September 20, 2024.

The memorandum asserted that while reservation for backward tribes is constitutionally valid, the blanket continuation of the policy without periodic review has led to systemic inequality, undermining merit and fairness.

It emphasised the original provision under which the job reservation policy introduced in 1977 was to be reviewed every ten years, a mandate that was "never fulfilled".

They urged the government to treat the matter with urgency and also expressed hope that the government would take the demands seriously to avoid further escalation.

The CORRP conducted the rally in Dimapur. Addressing the gathering, CORRP member secretary

G K Zhimomi said if the government is not serious enough to review the reservation policy citing lack of data from the census, then either scrap the policy or reserve for the five tribes as well.

"Our message should be loud and clear 48 years is enough. It's time for a comprehensive review. Five tribes have come for the first time on this platform to put our grievances to the government and the policymakers," he said.

In the state capital - Kohima, the protest was spearheaded by the Angami Public Organisation (APO), alongside Ao Senden, Lotha Hoho, Rengma Hoho, and Sumi Hoho—collectively represented under the 5 Tribes CORRP. Rallies were also held in Chukoumedima, Mokochung, Niuland, Tseminyu, Wokha and Zunheboto district headquarters.

APO vice president Vikeheli Victor said, "This public protest rally is organised to express our resentment against the state govern-

ment's indifferent attitude to our genuine demand for a review of the job reservation policy."

Meanwhile, the Nagaland government on May 7 formed a committee to examine and submit its findings on the policy for reservation in government employment within three months.

The CORRP reportedly received the letter with a request to reconsider the agitation only on Wednesday but decided to go ahead with the protest as planned.

The reservation policy for Backward Tribes (BT) in Nagaland implemented since 1977 was initially 25 per cent for seven tribes in non-technical and non-gazetted posts for a period of 10 years.

These tribes were designated as 'backward' based on their educational and economic disadvantage and limited representation in state services.

However, over the years, the quota has since increased to 37 per cent, of which 25 per cent is for seven eastern Nagaland tribes and 12 per cent for four other BT tribes.

Meanwhile, in response to CORRP demand, the state government has convened a meeting with the CORRP and the five tribes on June 3 in Kohima.

The meeting, to be chaired by the Deputy Chief Minister (Home), will discuss the 'Policy on Reservation in Government Employment', stated a notification from the Home Department, Nagaland.

However, acknowledging the receipt of the invitation, the CORRP also announced a 'peaceful dharna' outside the Nagaland Civil Secretariat in Kohima on June 2. (PTI)

## Pahalgam terror strike was attack on India's soul, our response decisive: PM in Sikkim



**GANGTOK, May 29:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said the Pahalgam terror strike last month was an attack on the soul and unity of India, and subsequent Operation Sindoor was a "decisive response" to terrorists.

He asserted that the country was united in its fight against terrorism, adding that India gave a befitting reply and destroyed terror infrastructure and several airbases in Pakistan.

Describing the Pahalgam attack as a "deliberate attempt" to create a rift in India on religious lines, Modi said, "We sent out a clear message that India is united despite the terror strike which erased sindoor of some of our sisters."

At least 26 people, mostly tourists, died in the April 22 terror attack in Pahalgam. The execution-like killing by terrorists after reportedly asking about the victims' faith left the entire country grieving and outraged.

Addressing the 50th anniversary of Sikkim's statehood function at Paljor Stadium here, Modi said the Himalayan state is the "pride of the nation" and its people believe in democracy.

The prime minister regretted that he could not at-

tend the function at the statehood celebrations due to inclement weather, but assured that he would visit the state in future.

"Operation Sindoor against terrorists in the wake of the Pahalgam attack was a befitting reply to those who unleashed terror in India. What terrorists did in Pahalgam was an attack on humanity, and we are now united in the fight against terrorism," the PM said virtually from Bagdogra in West Bengal.

The PM inaugurated a slew of infrastructure projects and laid the foundation stones of several others.

The projects inaugurated by Modi included a 500-bed District Hospital in Namchi, 'Swarna Jayanti Maitreya Manjari' (at White Hall, Ridge Park), a passenger ropeway at Pelling to Sangacholing Monastery, a 'gaushala' at Mamring and a statue of former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Gangtok district.

He also laid the foundation stones for a district hospital at Pakyong, a visitor experience centre at Nathula, and the conversion of Singshore Bridge into a glass skywalk.

He also unveiled the Bhaleydunga Skywalk project, a working women's hostel at Gangtok (Tadong), Swarna Jayanti Convention Centre at Namli, and Swarna Jayanti Sports and Cultural Centre near Gangtok.

The prime minister congratulated the people of Sikkim on the completion of 50 years of statehood and said he was glad that the people of the Himalayan state chose to join a democratic India to be part of development and prosperity.

Modi hailed Sikkim for being a "shining example of the blending of biodiversity and spiritualism".

Sikkim is rich in biodiversity and has set examples in nature conservation, he added.

The state has also become a big tourist destination despite being small in size and welcomes around 10 lakh visitors annually, he said.

Recalling the contributions of great sportspersons Bhaichung Bhutia, Tarundeep Rai and Jaspal Pradhan, he said that Sikkim has the potential to become a hub of sports activities.

The prime minister said the NDA government was dedicated to making India a sports superpower.

"We want Northeast, including Sikkim, to move in this direction. Sikkim has the potential to become a hub of adventure sports," he added.

The prime minister said Sikkim was increasing organic exports, which was a big achievement for the state.

He added that connectivity was the main focus of the Centre, and the Sevoke-Rangpo project will link the Himalayan state with the country's rail network. (PTI)

## Manipur govt will ensure Gwalitabi incident does not occur in future: Chief Secretary



**IMPHAL, May 29:** Manipur Chief Secretary Prashant Kumar Singh on Thursday said that the government will ensure that the incident at Gwalitabi, where security forces allegedly covered the state's name written in the windshield of a bus with a white paper, does not occur in future.

He said the administration is committed to the integrity of the state of Manipur.

Addressing a press conference with Security Advisor Kuldip Singh, the chief secretary said the recently concluded Shirui festival at Ukhrul district attracted about 1.70 lakh people and people of all communities travelled with families from valley areas and other parts of the state as well as from outside the state.

Singh acknowledged that an unfortunate incident happened at Gwalitabi on May 20 when a Manipur State Road Transport Bus ferrying journalists to the festival was stopped and the name of the state written in the windshield was reportedly covered with a white paper, leading to widespread criticism.

Over the last week, protests over the Gwalitabi incident have rocked the Meitei-inhabited Imphal Valley.

Singh said, "That there had been no instructions whatsoever or even remote thought of covering the name of the state, as has been alleged. This has been amply clarified by the state government as well as by the responsible political leadership. What transpired on the ground, would be revealed after a thorough inquiry only."

Expressing regret over the incident, Singh also said the state administration has taken the reported untoward incident with utmost seriousness and the Governor has constituted an Inquiry Committee which will submit its report in a timebound manner.

Urging all to maintain public order, Singh also assured all concerned that "Once the report is submitted and those responsible for the lapses, if any, are identified, strict action would be taken."

"The state government will also ensure that such incident does not occur in future. The administration is committed to the integrity of the state of Manipur and the only aim of all these efforts is to establish lasting peace in the state," Singh added. (PTI)

## NEHU associations urge EC members to boycott today's meeting in Delhi

**SHILLONG, May 29:** The North-Eastern Hill University Teachers' Association (NEHUTA), North-Eastern Hill University Non-Teaching Staff Association (NEHUNSA) and North-Eastern Hill University Students' Union (NEHUSU) have requested members of the Executive Council (EC) of the university to refrain from attending the upcoming meeting to be held in Delhi on May 30.

"As an esteemed member of the Executive Council — the principal executive body of the university, who is responsible to oversee the administrative affairs of the University as per Act, Statutes and Ordinances and Government of India CCS Rules, the three statutory associations would like to appeal to you not to attend the aforesaid meeting of the EC in Delhi on 30/5/2025," said a joint statement of the three associations on Wednesday.

"The three statutory Associations/Unions makes it clear that any member who chooses to proceed against this appeal and disregards the position taken by the associations/unions will be regarded as acting in opposition to the interests of the students, teachers, non-teaching staff and their associations/unions and the university as a whole. Looking forward to your kind cooperation," it added.

The statement said that the three associations are deeply concerned with the affairs of the university in the current times after the regular Vice Chancellor went on Earned Leave as per the advice of the Director, Higher Education, Government of India from November 15, 2024 which he has extended till March 2, 2025 and till date he has not joined physically after the expiry of his leave in the Headquarter at NEHU Campus, Shillong.

"This amounts to continuous absence from duty in the Headquarters at NEHU, Shillong for more than 193 days (or more than 6 months) at a stretch. The three Associations have noted that the Inquiry Committee Report on the conduct of Prof Shukla has not been made public by the Ministry of Education, Government of India," the associations said.

They also referred to the recent statement made by Prof Shukla as undermining the discussions and agreements that the stakeholders of NEHU had with the members of the visiting team of the Ministry of Education on May 22 in NEHU, Shillong which could have resulted in normalizing the situation in NEHU.

"Moreover, Prof Shukla has again attempted to disrespect more than 135 members of the Academic Council who attended the meeting held on 21/5/2025 which was chaired by Prof SM Sungho (Acting Vice Chancellor) as per NEHU Statute by his baseless statements. It is to be noted that Prof Shukla is on leave and has not joined his duties in the headquarter of NEHU at Shillong for more than 6 months now in violation of NEHU Act and Statutes and Government of India leave rules, the EC meeting convened in Delhi by him is, therefore, illegitimate," the three associations stated further. (NNN)

## NFR completes girder launching on world's tallest railway pier bridge in Manipur

**GUWAHATI, May 29:** The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has achieved a major engineering feat with the successful completion of girder launching on the iconic Bridge No 164, popularly known as the Noney Bridge, in Manipur.

The information was shared through an official statement from NFR.

The Noney Bridge, part of the 111-km-long Jiribam-Imphal railway project, is acclaimed as the world's tallest railway pier bridge, with piers P3 and P4 each standing at an impressive height of 141 meters.

The final span of the bridge was recently erected, completing the launch of all eight spans and marking a significant milestone in the project.



Featuring a configuration of 1x71.5m + 5x106m + 1x71.5m + 1x30m steel spans, the bridge's design is tailored to withstand the region's complex terrain and climatic challenges. It traverses hilly landscapes and deep valleys, underscoring the engineering innovation and meticulous planning behind its construction.

The NFR highlighted that the suc-

**AGARTALA, May 29:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday flagged off 'Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan' in Sepahijala district and emphasised on technology-based agricultural practices to enhance productivity.

Addressing a programme in Bishramganj, he said Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants the country to make progress in agriculture through the intervention of technology, especially Artificial Intelligence (AI).

"Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan is part of the prime minister's dream of the 'Viksit Sankalp Yatra'. The PM wants farmers to practice agriculture by the opinions of scientists for more productivity," he said.

Asserting that the people showing interest in the northeastern state, Saha said Tripura attracts around 50 per cent of the memoranda of understanding, worth Rs 30,000 crore, signed in the recently



concluded 'Rising Northeast Conclave' in New Delhi.

Citing examples of how farmers can benefit from using AI, the chief minister said the pineapple growers get accurate weather forecasts in advance and can take precautionary measures to save their crop.

"Pest infection in rubber plan-

tations can be checked if drones are used. It will give immense benefits to rubber planters. Under the 'Digital Krishi Mission', farmers can get seeds which are suitable for a particular area. We must focus on the quality of products," he said.

The government has been relentlessly trying to provide bene-

## Tripura braces for extreme rainfall; Govt issues advisory, emergency depts on alert

## HT Correspondent

**AGARTALA, May 29:** The Tripura government on Wednesday has issued a high-alert advisory in anticipation of extremely heavy rainfall across the state from May 28 to 31, as predicted by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). District authorities and emergency services have been directed to remain on standby, with evacuation and relief measures to be initiated as necessary.

In an official order signed by Deputy Secretary C.K. Malsom, the government cited a Special Weather Bulletin from the IMD's Agartala Meteorological Centre, warning of "heavy to very heavy rainfall, with isolated instances of extremely heavy showers accompanied by squally and gusty winds" during this period.

The adverse weather conditions are attributed to a low-pressure area that has developed over the north-west Bay of Bengal, off the Odisha coast.

"All District Magistrates have been instructed to closely monitor the situation and ensure readiness of all disaster response units, including the NDRF, SDRF, Tripura State Rifles (TSR), Fire and Emergency Services, and trained volunteers," the order stated. Authorities have also been asked to identify vulnerable locations, maintain surveillance on rivers, embankments, and catchment areas, and to initiate timely evacuations from low-lying regions to designated shelters.

"Rescue equipment such as boats, life jackets, and other flood-relief tools must be kept in readiness. If the situation demands, immediate deployment of response teams is essential," the advisory added.

Damage assessments are to be conducted without delay, with all districts required to report their findings and the actions taken to the State Emergency Operation Centre (SEOC) by 2:00 PM daily.

fits to farmers that will lead to an increase in their income.

"The monthly income of farmers has increased to Rs 13,590 in 2025-26 from Rs 6,580 in the 2015-16 financial year. The government has pumped in Rs 848.64 crore under the PM Kisan Yojana till now, while Rs 446 crore has been given to farmers by way of producing paddy."

The northeastern state has 4,72,000 farmers, mostly marginal. Noting that agriculture is the priority sector for the government, the chief minister said steps have been taken to modernise the agri-product markets across the state.

"Rs. 303 crore has been spent to modernise 144 agricultural markets in the state so that farmers can sell their crop without any trouble," he said.

Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Minister Ratan Lal Nath was also present at the inaugural function. (PTI)

## Rape accused who escaped from police custody in Sikkim, arrested again

**GANGTOK, May 29:** A man, who was accused of sexually assaulting a teenager and escaped from the custody of Rangpo police station in Sikkim, was arrested again from a village bordering West Bengal, a police officer said on Thursday. The accused was located and apprehended after an extensive search operation in a forested area near the Singlabong village on the Rangpo-West Bengal Border, the police officer said.

The police combed the area and the accused rapist was arrested within 19 hours, the Station House Officer (SHO) of Rangpo police station, Dichen Tshomo, said. (PTI)

## NOTICE INVITING REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

This RFP is issued by the undersigned inviting "Request for Proposal" from eligible Reputed Institutes for empanelment of bidders in the RFP process for selection to provide necessary courses for (i) Coaching for Entrance Exam for UPSC/APSC, (ii) Diploma in Medical Laboratory Technology (DMLT), (iii) Diploma in Medical Radiography Technology (DMRT), (iv) Bachelor of Physiotherapy (BPT) and (v) General Nurse Midwifery (GNM) under SOPD for the scheme year 2024-25. Details will be available at e-procurement portal i.e., <https://assamtenders.gov.in>.

Sd/-  
Director,  
Assam Minorities Development Board  
R.G.B. Road, Ganeshguri, Guwahati-6

DIPR /CF/HLT/434/30-May-25





## Ajay Devgn, Kajol support eight-hour shift for mothers in the film industry

**MUMBAI, May 29:** In an industry known for its unpredictable schedules and long hours, Bollywood actor couple Kajol and Ajay Devgn on Thursday backed for an eight-hour shift, particularly for working mothers, during movie shoots.

At the trailer launch of "Maa", Devgn and Kajol were asked to comment on the demand for an eight-hour shift for working mothers.

"I love the fact that we can work less," Kajol told reporters here.

Devgn said "honest" filmmakers in the industry are open to the idea of an eight-hour shift.

"It's not that it's not going well (the demand for eight hour shift); people understand it. Most of the honest filmmakers will not have a problem with this (demand). Apart from working mothers, many others have usually started working for eight to nine hours. So, it is person-to-person, and most of the industry understands this," the actor-producer said.

Actor Deepika Padukone's alleged exit from Sandeep Reddy Vanga's "Spirit" after the two did not agree over an eight-hour working shift among other conditions has sparked a discussion around shooting hours

in the industry.

Padukone and Vanga never officially announced that they were collaborating but Vanga recently accused an unknown actor for playing "dirty pr games" and revealing key plot details in media. He later announced Triptii Dimri as the heroine of the movie.

"Maa" features Kajol in the titular role and is directed by Vishal Furia, who is known for his work on "Lapachhapi", "Criminal Justice" and "Chhorii".

Devgn, who is producing "Maa", said he was instantly attracted to the idea of making a mythological horror movie, and thought of roping in his actor wife Kajol for it.

"When Saiwyn (Quadrass, writer) narrated to me the thought of this film ('Maa'), I realised a lot of films in the horror genre are being made, like horror-comedies, but no one has attempted mythological horror.

"Hollywood often makes characters despite not having a mythological reference, but we don't use it. It was a great idea, and we decided to do it. The character of the mother was so strong, so who else could we think of apart from her (Kajol)," the

superstar said.

Kajol said she is happy to feature in a horror movie.

"For the first time, a mythological horror is attempted, and I'm happy to be part of it. I'm excited," the actor said, adding, "I've never been approached for a horror film. This time, the casting was in-house."

When asked about similarities between "Maa" and "Chhorii", Furia said the only common thread between them is that they both narrate the ordeal of a mother trying to protect their daughter.

"The only similarity is that both stories are about mothers. But in this film, we are talking about Kali Maa, which is a bigger entity; this world is much bigger. It is a cinematic experience, and you can't watch it at

home. The vision is of sir (Devgn), and the script is Saiwyn sir (Quadrass)," the director said.

Devgn, who has been a part of horror movies like "Bhoot" and "Shaitaan", said he fails to understand why the horror genre was not popular in the past. "I don't know why the horror genre was not attempted with a bigger star cast before. It was not done for many years. I've always felt that it is a strong genre," he said.

Slated to be released in cinema halls on June 27, "Maa" also stars Indraneil Sengupta, Kherin Sharma and Ronit Roy.

Presented by Jio Studios and Devgn Films, "Maa" is produced by Ajay Devgn and Jyoti Deshpande and co-produced by Kumar Mangat Pathak. (PTI)

## I really want to go to India: South Korean star Park Bo Gum

**NEW DELHI, May 29:** Actor Park Bo Gum, a popular name for K-drama fans across the globe for shows such as "Reply 1988", "Love in the Moonlight", "Encounter" and "When Life Gives You Tangerines", says he would love to travel to India and meet his admirers.

Bo Gum's next show is the much-anticipated Prime Video drama "Good Boy", which features a group of high-level athletes who become police officers through a special recruitment process.

Asked what would be his message to fans in India, who have followed his career closely, the 31-year-old actor thanked them in Hindi.

"To my Indian friends, dhanyavaad (thank you). Is that right? Thank you for your support and love. I really want to go to India. I don't know when, but if I have a chance to go to India, I really want to meet and greet you all. I hope so. So thank you a lot.

Dhanyavaad," Bo Gum responded to a question posed by PTI during a media roundtable. The actor also said that he would love to be part of an Indian production, preferably a musical, if given a chance.

The actor, who completed his mandatory military service in February 2022, said he is keen to explore more interesting stories. "I am drawn towards things that are entertaining to read. I think I'm drawn to stories that make you think and stories that you can talk about with your family members after watching it together.

"After finishing my military service, I find that there are more stories that I want to tell and more roles that I want to take on. So beginning this year,

I'm going to really do my best to tell the most number of stories I can and also take on the most number of roles that I can," he responded to another question by PTI.

In "Good Boy", Bo Gum plays the character of Yoon Dong-ju, a gold medal winning boxer.

Kim So-hyun stars opposite Park Bo Gum as Ji Han-na, an award-winning shooter. The cast also includes popular South Korean stars such as Lee Sang-ye, Oh Jung-se, Heo Sung-tae and Tae Won-seok.

Bo Gum said "Good Boy" was the first project he joined after his military service concluded and trained for over six months to authentically portray his character.

"I actually trained in real-life boxing with physical contact. And I also worked out a lot because I had to grow my muscle percentage. I remember when we were on set and on location, we would work out together, and I actually learned a lot from these guys (other cast members)," he said.

Asked if his character of Dong-ju from "Good Boy" shares any similarity to his role of Gwan-sik from the highly-successful drama "When Life Gives You Tangerines", the actor said they both had "a very healthy mindset".

"If I were to compare the two characters, Gwan-sik and Dong-ju, what's similar with the two of them is that they are always action-first and they are very proactive. They also both know how to truly love one person, and they also both have a very healthy mindset," he added.

"Good Boy" will start streaming on Prime Video from May 31. (PTI)



## 'He's done with it': Tusshar Kapoor says father Jeetendra has no plans to return to acting

**MUMBAI, May 29:** Actor Jeetendra, one of the top stars of the 1960s and 70s, has no plans to be back on the screen, says son Tusshar Kapoor. Jeetendra, who gave hits like "Geet Gaya Patharon Ne", "Gunahon Ka Devta", "Farz", "Humjoli" to "Caravan", "Dharam Veer", "Parichay" and "Nagin". He continued to be in top form till the '80s with credits like "Himmatwala", "Tohfa" and "Mawaali", but stopped acting by the mid-1990s and has since made only cameo or minor appearances in films post-2000. Kapoor said his father has no desire of being on a film set ever again.

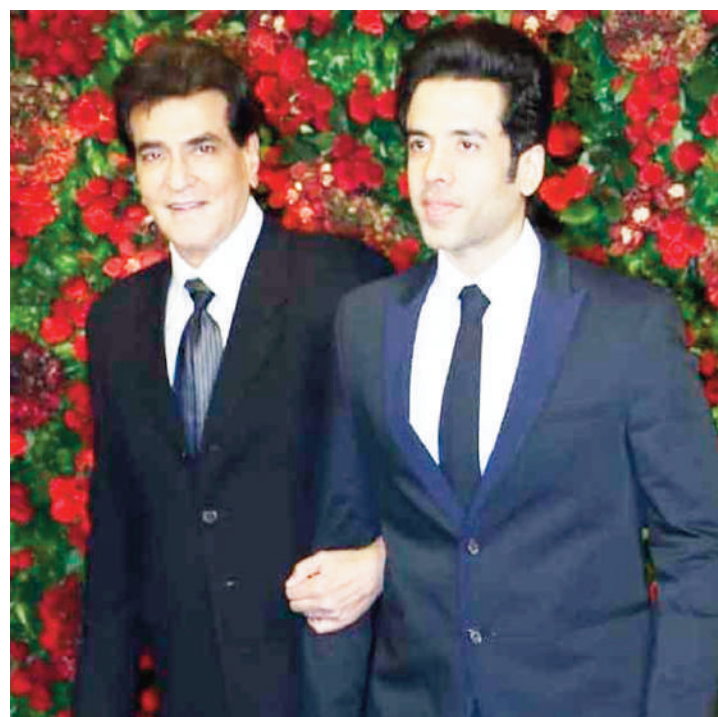
"He tracks today's cinema. But he's not really interested in going on sets. He said, 'I've done somewhere 200 films'. He started so young, when he was just 20. So, he's done with that. I don't think he was ever interested in doing character roles," the actor told PTI.

Kapoor said when his father called it quits on acting, he and many other senior actors were being offered only "stereotypical" roles.

"The roles that were offered to senior actors were very stereotypical. Today, there are a lot of very diverse characters. But that wasn't the case back then. He decided to ease out of it. Now, he's more of a businessman," he added.

Kapoor hopes his father's legacy is explored through a docudrama series. And not just Jeetendra, a project honouring Dharmendra's career should also be made. "I think dad deserves one, actors like Dharam ji and him, they don't really go out and market themselves," he said, giving the example of "Elvis", the 2022 biographical film about legendary musician Elvis Presley.

"Our legends here also deserve that kind of a tribute. That generation of actors, they have such great work, we've learned from those experiences of theirs. So, I think it will be very 'masaledar' to have a docudrama of either of these icons from the 60s," he said. The actor currently stars in the movie "Kapkapiiii", which was released in theatres on May 23. (PTI)



## We missed Irrfan Khan while filming for 'Metro... In Dino': Anurag Basu and Konkana Sen Sharma

**MUMBAI, May 29:** Filmmaker Anurag Basu and actor Konkana Sen Sharma, who have reunited for "Metro... In Dino", said that their late actor friend Irrfan Khan's absence was keenly felt throughout the shooting process.

The upcoming film is a spiritual sequel to Basu's 2007 movie "Life in a... Metro".

"There were many moments in the film when we missed him (Irrfan) during the shooting. There was a scene that we were shooting with Konkana, and the tone of the scene was something that we had shot before. There was a silent moment, we exchanged looks, and Koko started crying. We miss him. We miss Kay Kay very much, cameraman Bobby Singh, art director and other people who were an integral part of the film, and are not part of it, so we miss them," Basu told reporters here last evening.

Konkana, who played Khan's love interest in the first part of the film, echoed similar sentiments.

"Yes (I missed him). 'Zamaana

Lage' (a song that is a heart-touching ode to lost love) to forget him. But that happened many times, I don't want to say what and when, you will watch the film, you will know when," she said.

Konkana said reuniting with Basu for "Metro... In Dino" felt like a homecoming.

"It was homecoming (working on 'Metro... In Dino'). I was so happy when Anurag called me. It's so nice to meet people who have their own playful attitude towards life because everyone has some or the other problem.

"I've deep admiration for his (Basu) craft; it is unfathomable how he does what he does. I was like, 'Oh my god, we can get to do this again, what a fun'. I don't know how the film got made. I just had to trust him and not worry about anything," Konkana said.

"Metro... In Dino" will also feature an ensemble cast of Aditya Roy Kapur, Sara Ali Khan, Anupam Kher, Neena Gupta, Pankaj Tripathi, Ali Fazal and Fatima Sana Shaikh.

The film is produced by Bhushan Kumar of T-Series and Anurag Basu Productions Pvt Ltd.

It has music by Pritam, who earlier collaborated with Basu on films "Gangster", "Life in a... Metro", "Barfi!", "Jagga Jasoos", and "Ludo".

Reflecting on their creative dynamic, Basu, on a lighter note, said, "We fight like old married couples".

"Till the time our music doesn't create a love story, we keep fighting. That's how we work. We fight a lot. We don't know how we create music; we talk a lot, eat, and music happens," the director said.

Pritam added, "Sometimes, not always (we fight)." The musician credited Basu for giving him the freedom to explore.

"Anurag finds the correct route, and he gives me the space. He knows how much space to give. We keep on throwing ideas. In any film, a director, music director and lyricist are the trio of a successful film album. He manages the lyrics also; he takes charge of it. Our collabora-

tion is more like a partnership."

"I've had the best time creating music with Pritam. He understands the pulse of the script. I'm not a good narrator, but despite that, he understands things and sets the sur of the film. We wanted to make a song that has poetry, we wanted to touch a chord through the song, and he did it with 'Zamaana Lage', the first song from the movie," the director added.

Pritam also praised Bhushan Kumar for his support.

"I've been working for more than 20 years, and I haven't seen anyone as passionate as him (Kumar) about music. He is the most passionate person. He is always awake when you reach out to him, even whether it is at 2:00 am or so. This is his reason for the success," he said.

The song, "Zamaana Lage" is sung by Arijit Singh and Shashwat Singh, composed by Pritam and lyrics by Indian poet Qaisar U1 Jafri and Sandeep Shrivastava.

"Metro... In Dino" will be released in theatres on July 4. (PTI)





# Hasan and Agha lead new-look Pakistan to 37-run win over Bangladesh in T20

**LAHORE, May 29:** Fast bowler Hasan Ali grabbed a 5-30 and led a new-look Pakistan T20 cricket team to a thumping 37-run win over Bangladesh in the opening game of their three-match series.

Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha made a career-best 56 as Pakistan posted a competitive 201-7 after Agha won the toss and elected to bat in Mike Hesson's first assignment as Pakistan's new white-ball head coach.

Hasan, playing only his second Twenty20 international in more than 2-1/2 years, dismissed both

openers with the new ball and claimed three more wickets in the death overs to bowl out Bangladesh for 164 in 19.2 overs.

Pakistan dropped seasoned batters Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan in a bid to look for youngsters, who could bat aggressively — especially in the power play.

The selectors also overlooked fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi for the home series despite the left-arm fast bowler leading Lahore Qalandars to their third Pakistan Super League title in four years last Sunday.

Hasan rocks BangladeshIn the absence of Afridi, Hasan provided Pakistan early breakthroughs despite Tanzid Hasan smashing three sixes and two fours in his brisk 31-run knock off 17 balls.

Parvez Hossain Emon, who scored a century against United Arab Emirates in a T20 last week, could score only four as he mistimed a pull shot against Hasan and was caught on the edge of the circle.

Tanzid's aggression was also cut short by Hasan's knuckle ball as the left-hander got deceived by

slowness of the delivery and was clean bowled in the fourth over.

Skipper Litton Das (48) and Towhid Hridoy (17) combined in a 63-run stand off 48 balls but the asking rate always kept creeping as Shadab Khan bowled a tidy four-over spell of 2-26.

Das was smartly caught at point by Fakhar Zaman as he tried to square cut Shadab in the 12th over and Hridoy was out plumb leg before wicket when he tried to play across the line against left-arm spinner Khushdil Shah in the next over.

Jaker Ali countercharged briefly with 36 off 20 balls that included three sixes and a boundary but was caught at short fine leg as he tried to play Hasan's short ball but top-edged to Abrar Ahmed.

Hasan also took a brilliant running catch to dismiss Tanzim Hasan Sakib before he finished off Bangladesh innings when No. 11 Shoriful Islam was caught at long-off.

Agha and Shadab spur Pakistan-Pakistan had a bumpy start when Saim Ayub and Fakhar Zaman, both returning to international

cricket after injuries, fell inside the first eight balls.

Saim offered a tame return catch off the first ball he faced against Mahedi Hasan and Zaman played Shoriful across the line and was adjudged leg before wicket.

But Mohammad Harris, replacing wicket-keeper batter Rizwan, didn't hold back and counter-punched in the power play with a brisk 31 off 18 balls.

Fast bowler Tanzim intelligently varied his pace and dismissed Harris soon after the powerplay before Agha and Pakistan's new T20

batting sensation Hasan Nawaz took charge.

Agha smashed eight fours and a six while Nawaz, who was adjudged PSL player of the tournament, smashed four sixes and a two fours in his belligerent 44 runs off just 22 balls.

Agha fell to a soft dismissal when he chipped an easy catch to extra cover of Mahmud's high full toss while Nawaz smashed Rishad Hossain for two fours and a six before offering a straightforward catch to the spinner in the 14th over. (AP)

## Norway Chess: Gukesh beats Nakamura to get campaign back on track

**STAVANGER (NORWAY), May 29:** World champion D Gukesh brought his campaign back on track on his 19th birthday, defeating world No.2 Hikaru Nakamura of the USA in the third round to open his account even as Arjun Erigaisi suffered his first defeat in the Norway Chess Tournament here on Thursday.

Gukesh, who suffered back-to-back defeats to world No.1 Norwegian Magnus Carlsen and compatriot Arjun Erigaisi in the first two rounds, put Nakamura — one of the best Rapid and Blitz players — under time pressure to win the game in 42 moves and collect three points.

Playing with white pieces, Gukesh, who was constantly under time pressure in the last two games, was the one who got Nakamura staring at the clock in round three of the six-player double round-robin tournament.

"I feel quite good (about the win). I think my time management was much better today than before. He (Nakamura) had some drawing chances, but I guess, overall, it was good," said Gukesh as he moved to fifth spot on the points table ahead of Chinese No.1 Wei Yi.

Nakamura realised soon after the start of the game that something had gone wrong early on in a Giuoco Piano opening. He decided to reverse the situation by switching to a kingside attack that could exploit Gukesh's vulnerability after a difficult start.

However, the Indian wasn't vul-



nerable.

Though Nakamura came agonisingly close to a draw, he admitted to relaxing too soon. When the American offered a draw on move 30, he was instead met by a move, which sent him on a downward spiral.

It was a remarkable fightback for Gukesh after two successive defeats and he acknowledged that the previous two days had been tough for him. "Yeah, obviously the last two

games were kind of tough. But today, I just tried to play it as a fresh tournament. Glad I played (like that)," said Gukesh.

Asked if the win on Thursday was a direct consequence of managing the clock better than previous days, he conceded it was "clearly horrible" time management by him in the last two games.

"Glad my time management and my game were pretty good (today),"

he added.

Gukesh, whose core strength lies in Classical chess, was also asked if he would be comfortable in the Armageddon tie-break as the tournament progresses.

"Yeah, I mean at some point it will come for sure. But right now, I'm just happy with this (win)."

After a superb start, Erigaisi suffered a setback as he went down to Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana,

while defending champion Carlsen lost the Armageddon tie-break to China's Wei Yi.

Caruana jumped into sole lead after logging in three more points to take his tally to six, while Carlsen was second on five points and Erigaisi and Nakamura tied for the third position with 4.5 points each.

Caruana began the game with a very rare 7.h4 in the French Defence and Erigaisi, playing with black pieces, said later he was optimistic he could pull off a win as "white is a bit underdeveloped" move in French Defence.

However, Caruana said after the match that his Indian opponent's optimism was the reason behind his loss. "I was kind of mentally preparing for a draw at some point when he knew the opening very well and we reached an equal endgame, but he thought he was slightly better, and maybe that optimism led him a little bit wrong," said Caruana.

It has been a remarkable turnaround for Caruana, who now leads the tournament after two classical wins in a row, despite starting with a loss to Nakamura. He also wrested back his world No.3 position on the live rating list from Erigaisi following the win.

In the women's competition, two-time World Rapid champion Koneru Humpy, playing with white pieces, emerged joint leader with Ukraine's Anna Muzychuk on six points following a win over Iranian-Spanish Woman Grand Master Sara Khadem in the third round. (PTI)

## Bajrang tenders unconditional apology for sullyng coach Dahiya's name

**NEW DELHI, May 29:** Olympic medallist Bajrang Punia has tendered an unconditional apology to wrestling coach Naresh Dahiya for sullyng his name during their protest against the then WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

The Tokyo Games bronze medallist Bajrang, along with Vinesh Phogat and Sakshi Malik, had led a protest against Singh, accusing him of sexual harassment of several junior women wrestlers.

During the sit-in at Jantar Mantar, in a press interactions on May 10, 2023, Bajrang had said that Naresh Dahiya himself was a rape accused, so he had no right to question their protest. Dahiya had dragged Punia to court, filing a defamation case, saying he has already

been cleared of any wrong doing by the court. Punia was issued summons by the court which also granted him bail in the case in the fourth hearing.

On May 17 this month, Bajrang tendered his apology to the coach and regretted his action. "I tender my unconditional apology to Mr Naresh Dahiya, for the wrong and insensitive statement made by me against him during the press conference held at Jantar Mantar during agitation in public view," Bajrang said in his apology statement, a copy of which is in possession of PTI. "That I deeply regret for the pain and damage caused to the image of Mr Naresh Dahiya, besides pain and hurt caused to the near and dear ones due to the wrong and insensitive statement made by me against him."

"That I say that Mr Dahiya is a distinguished coach and has provided his best to the nation. That I once again reiterate my regret and issue a heartfelt apology to Mr Dahiya and his loved ones," the statement read.

Dahiya runs an akhara (training centre) for male wrestlers in Delhi's Shahbad Dairy area by the name of Chhotu Ram Vyayamshala.

He has trained CWG gold medallist Vinod (55kg) and wrestlers like Ramesh Guliya (74kg), who had beaten the likes of Sushil Kumar in 2005.

Ravindra (65kg) and Abhishek (61kg), who have performed well at the international level, have also been trained by him. "Two or four months before the protest, these very wrestlers were praising the WFI

President. Then suddenly, all this happened. There was this allegation by a random guy against me and it was mentioned by Bajrang in his address. I took an exception to that and dragged him to court."

"Now that he has tendered apology, I have accepted it. His lawyer had contacted my lawyer to convey the apology. I did not have much to do with Brij Bhushan. I only went to office 3-4 times because you have to go to federation office for work-related things. I just told them that at that time that they will go away from scene gradually but there will be consequences for kids involved. That's it, nothing else."

An FIR was lodged against Brij Bhushan and matter is still in court. (PTI)

## French Open 2025: Casper Ruud is bothered by a painful knee and loses to Nuno Borges

**PARIS, May 29:** Clearly hampered by a bad left knee, two-time French Open finalist Casper Ruud dropped 13 of the last 14 games and lost 2-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-0 to Nuno Borges in the second round at Roland-Garros, then revealed he had been playing in pain off-and-on throughout the clay-court season. The seventh-seeded Ruud reached at least the semifinals each of the past three years in Paris — he was the runner-up to Rafael Nadal in 2022 and Novak Djokovic in 2023 — and this exit is his earliest at the tournament since bowing out in the second round in his debut in 2018.

He's been taking pain-killing and anti-inflammatory pills the past several weeks, and did so again Wednesday. But Ruud said the knee began bothering him in the first set against Borges, who is ranked 41st and became the first Portuguese man to get to the French Open's third round.

Ruud said the worst shot for his knee is an open-stance backhand,

in which he slides on his left foot, so he's been avoiding it in practice. "Certain movements out there are kind of what makes it painful. Certain shots are painful to do. When you're playing matches, you can't really control it in the same way (as in practice). You do everything you can to get to every ball," said Ruud, who also reached the final at the 2022 U.S. Open. "Sometimes you kind of forget that this is a shot I shouldn't go for."

He was visited by a trainer and took some pills during Wednesday's match, but nothing seemed to help. "It's a Slam. I love this tournament," Ruud said. "Looking back, I tried my best to continue (and tried) to avoid the shots that are hurting. But towards the end, there were also other movements that started hurting, so it wasn't ideal."

He said the problems began in his first clay event of the pre-French Open stretch, at Monte Carlo in April, and that he had medical exams a couple of weeks

later in Madrid — where he went on to win the title. Ruud pulled out of the Geneva Open, which was played last week.

Now he'll have more tests done. "I took five days completely off at home. It wasn't enough to make the pain go away," Ruud said. "I wish I could stay here longer."

What else happened at the French Open on Wednesday?

Both defending champions were in action at Court Philippe-Chatier. Carlos Alcaraz overcame a one-set blip to defeat Fabian Marozsan 6-1, 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, and Iga Swiatek had far less trouble dispatching 2021 U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu 6-1, 6-2 to extend her French Open winning streak to 23 matches. Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka won 6-3, 6-1 against Jil Teichmann.

Other women's winners included 2024 runner-up Jasmine Paolini, Olympic gold medalist Zheng Qinwen and 18-year-old Canadian qualifier Victoria Mboko. Olympic silver medalist and Wimbledon

semifinalist Donna Vekic lost to unseeded American Bernarda Pera 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (10-3). No. 10 Holger Rune of Denmark beat unseeded American Emilio Nava 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-3 and No. 12-seeded American Tommy Paul rallied from two sets down to beat Marton Fucsovics. Other men advancing included No. 8 Lorenzo Musetti and No. 25 Alexei Popyrin. But No. 20 Stefanos Tsitsipas, the 2021 French Open runner-up, lost to unseeded Matteo Gigante.

Who is playing at Roland-Garros on Thursday?

The second round concludes with 24-time major champion Novak Djokovic taking on France's Corentin Moutet in Court Suzanne-Lenglen in a match that could feature a raucous atmosphere. French fans are likely to make a lot of noise at Court Philippe-Chatier, too, because another one of their own, Richard Gasquet, could be playing the final match of his career when he takes on No. 1 Jannik Sinner. (AP)



**FORT LAUDERDALE (USA) May 29:** Lionel Messi scored twice and had an assist, and Inter Miami broke out of its slump with a 4-2 victory over Montreal.

Messi scored in the 27th and 87th minutes and set up Luis Suárez's goal with some nice dribbling in the 68th. Suárez added another in the 71st on Wednesday night.

The win gave Messi's Inter Miami team just its second victory in its past eight matches. Miami last won on May 3, going 0-2-2 since then and dropping to sixth in the Eastern Conference.

It has been a surprising plunge for a team that went 22-4-8 during the regular season in 2024 to set MLS records for points (74) and winning percentage (.765) and captured the Supporters Shield — so puzzling that Messi spoke recently of the group's need to stick together despite the difficulties.

His pep talk seemed to work.

In its last match, Miami rallied from a two-goal deficit to tie Philadelphia, which leads MLS with 10 wins this season. And that momentum carried over against Montreal, which is last in the Eastern Conference with only one win.

"We know in what situation we are (in)," said Miami coach Javier Mascherano. "Sometimes you have to analyze not just the result, you have to analyze the game, how we play. I think in some games we didn't get the result that we wanted. We deserved it a little bit more, but in (soccer), you

don't deserve, you have to do."

Messi's first goal on Wednesday was set up by Sergio Busquets, who delivered a pass to his former Barcelona teammate and set the screen that freed up Messi for his seventh goal of the MLS season.

Messi then linked up with Suárez to give Miami a two-goal cushion midway through the second half, and iced the win on a pass from Suárez just before the end of regulation.

It was a much-needed goal for Suárez, who finished last season tied for the second-most goals in MLS with 20, but had just two entering Wednesday's match.

It was also the offensive performance Miami needed before it begins Club World Cup play. The Herons have another MLS match at home on Saturday against Columbus before their first contest of the tournament against Al Ahly of Egypt on June 14.

Miami could be without three defenders on Saturday, including veteran left back Jordi Alba, who went down with a lower-body injury in the first half. Mascherano said the team would need to gather more information to find out the extent of the injury.

Gonzalo Luján and Toto Aviles also left with lower-body injuries.

Miami allowed two late Montreal goals by Dante Sealy and Victor Loturi, both lapses that Mascherano was not happy about.

"That is something that is unacceptable," he said, "that we have to improve." (AP)

## Satwik-Chirag in quarters; Prannoy, Sindhu bow out in Singapore Open

**SINGAPORE, May 29:** The Indian men's doubles team of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty entered the quarterfinals, while former world champion PV Sindhu suffered an early exit in the Singapore Open badminton tournament here on Thursday.

Satwiksairaj and Chirag rallied to beat seventh-seeded Indonesian duo of Sabar Karyaman Gutama and Moh Reza Pahlevi Isfahani 19-21 21-16 21-19 in a gruelling contest that lasted one hour and 14 minutes.

They will face the second seeded Malaysian team of Goh Sze Fei and Nur Izzuddin in the next round.

It was a commendable performance by the Indian duo, which is making a comeback after battling fitness issues for the last few weeks.

Double Olympic medallist Sindhu went down to world No. 5 Chen Yufei of China 9-21, 21-18, 16-21 in 65 minutes in a hard-fought second-round match.

Sindhu, who recently slipped to world No. 17, showed glimpses of her old form, especially in the second game where she led 19-12 before closing it out 21-18.

However, the decider saw her struggle to match Chen's sharp smashes and court control.

It was Sindhu's seventh loss to Chen in 13 meetings, highlighting her inconsistency this season.

Despite a dominant 21-14, 21-9 win over Canada's Wen Yu Zhang in the opening round, the 2022 Singapore Open champion failed to build momentum.

While Sindhu sparked in patches, her sluggish reflexes and lack of control in rallies allowed the Chinese star to dictate terms in the final set.

There was disappointment for India in the men's singles competition as H S Prannoy bowed out following a 16-21 14-21 loss to Frenchman Christo Popov in the pre-quarterfinals.

The eighth seeded Indian pair of Treasa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand also bowed out after losing 8-21 10-21 to Chinese combination of Ji Ya Fan and Zhang Shu Xian in the second round.

The mixed doubles combo of Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde couldn't get past Hong Kong's Tang Chun Man and Tse Ying Suet, losing 10-21 16-21 in 31 minutes. (PTI)



## Yes, definitely: Jadeja on captaincy dreams



**NEW DELHI, May 29:** He may not be among the names considered for the job but veteran all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja says he would love to be India's Test skipper at some point, having understood the role under different captains throughout his long career. Young batter Shubman Gill was recently appointed as India's Test captain for the tour to England with wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant designated to do the duty of his deputy.

"Yes, definitely! Over the years, I have played under different captains. I know the mindset of every single captain whom I have played under and I also understand what players need and their mindset," the 36-year-old Jadeja told his former India teammate Ravichandran Ashwin in a YouTube chat when asked whether Test captaincy was among his ambitions.

Jadeja, who played his first Test back in 2012, detailed some of the leadership lessons he picked up from the iconic Mahendra Singh Dhoni, under whom he made his debut in all three formats for India, besides playing together for Chennai Super Kings in the IPL.

"Every captain has a different mindset on how he wants to run the team. I have played under MS Dhoni in every format and his thinking is very simple. If he feels that a batter can hit shots in a particular region, he keeps the fielder there to make the batter uncomfortable," said Jadeja.

It may be recalled that Ashwin had also supported Jadeja for India's Test captaincy once Rohit Sharma called it quits from the red-ball format.

"Why do we forget about Ravindra Jadeja? If you are willing to go for a new person as captain, I would say why not make him an understudy of an experienced guy for two years before handing him the job on a full-time basis?" Ashwin had wondered on his YouTube channel in support of the 80-Test veteran.

Breaking down the leadership requirements in different formats, Jadeja admitted that leading in T20s can take much more out of a captain than doing that job in Test cricket.

"In Test cricket, you have to change two or three fielders as per the need of the bowler and you don't need to change the field as per batsmen.

"Captaincy in Test cricket is way more different. It's simple, but calculative. It's not complicated like IPL or T20s, where every ball is an event," said Jadeja. The premier all-rounder said he never thought of having such a long Test career.

"Honestly, when I started to play for India, I never thought I would play so many Tests. I always thought white-ball cricket was my forte and I wanted to establish there," he said.

"I was also fascinated by those coloured jerseys, numbers and names written on the back, the crowd and playing under lights, it was interesting for a young cricketer. All these were not in Test cricket then," said Jadeja.

"I also thought that Test cricket is such a long format and only those sincere players like Sachin paaji and Rahul paaji could play that format," he chuckled.

The spin-bowling all-rounder admitted that Dhoni has played an influential role in his cricketing career. They first met in 2005 during the Challenger Trophy.

"I was a kid then, so it was like he was MS Dhoni and when I saw him on the flight, he had long hair. Our manager said that we have to go with Dhoni from the airport to the team hotel.

"I was hesitant and thought, how can I go with him?" he recalled.

"Luckily, his phone got dropped on the floor and he had to wait. I thought this was the chance to get out of there, at that time I used to think about what I would talk to him, he is MS Dhoni," he quipped. (PTI)

## IPL Eliminator: Gill's fumbling Titans up against might of Mumbai Indians

**MULLANPUR, May 29:** Among the title favourites but battling a loss of momentum, Shubman Gill's Gujarat Titans will be up against the mighty Mumbai Indians, who also have issues to be addressed, in the winner-takes-all IPL Eliminator here on Friday. It is a knock-out game but both sides are used to the stage with Mumbai Indians being the five-time champions. Titans have made the play-offs thrice in the last four seasons, including the trophy-winning run on their debut in 2022.

However, both Shubman Gill and Hardik Pandya, have a point to prove. Gill, the newly appointed India Test captain, would build up his leadership credentials immensely if Titans go all the way.

Hardik has got the love of the fans back after being booed on his return to the team last year and an IPL trophy will cement his place in the list of the fabled greats of the franchise.

But in their pursuit of glory, both leaders must find a way to address the issues at hand.

Titans have more to be worried about as they have lost momentum going into the play-offs. Having conceded 465 runs in their last two defeats, they need to up their game with the ball.

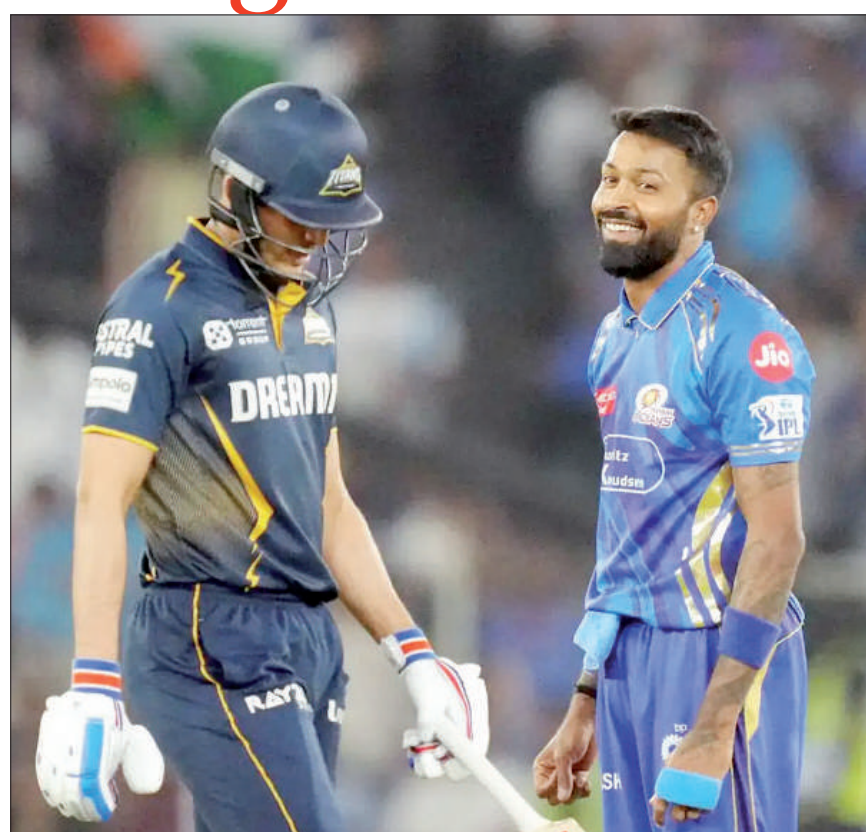
Mohammed Siraj, the de facto leader of the pace battery, will need to provide breakthroughs in the powerplay.

The struggles of left-arm pacer Arshad Khan with the new ball has added pressure on the likes of Prasad Krishna who has been the Titans' trump card this season with 23 wickets.

In addition to the shortcomings in the pace department, the ineffectiveness of spin all-rounder Rashid Khan has aggravated their bowling woes.

On the batting front, the top three, including Sai Sudharsan, Gill and Jos Buttler contributed massively to their play-off journey.

Considering that, the absence of Buttler,



who left for national duty after the league stage, is bound to be felt.

Kusal Mendis has been roped in as Buttler's place but it remains to be seen if he can inspire the same level of confidence.

The middle-order comprising Shahrux Khan and Sherfane Rutherford is not the most reliable, making Titans vulnerable against Mumbai Indians who would have that at the back of their mind.

Like Titans, Mumbai Indians too have been impacted by the loss of foreign players.

Ryan Rickelton had done a fine job for them at the top of the order alongside Rohit Sharma but the South African has now reported for national duty. The same goes for English batter Will Jacks.

Out of favour England batter Jonny Bairstow is one of the replacement players for Mumbai Indians alongside Richard Gleeson and Charith Asalanka.

Bairstow could open alongside Rohit Sharma at the top of the order.

The Englishman would surely be expected to start the game, having agreed to join

the franchise in the middle of the domestic season back home.

The quiet run of Titak Varma is another concern facing the team.

Suryakumar Yadav has been doing the heavy lifting in the batting department with a record 640 runs in a season. In case he fails, Mumbai Indians will have a real task at hand.

Batting first, the pace at which Mumbai batters score has also been questioned and that is another area Hardik will have to focus on.

However, their strong bowling attack always poses a bigger threat to the opposition.

"Batting, we'll figure out what is the right template on right tracks and if we bat first, what is the pace we want to bat. (There are a) couple of things which we need to identify, but I don't think there is panic," Hardik had said after the loss to Punjab Kings in their final league game.

**Squads:**

**Gujarat Titans:** Shubman Gill (captain), Sai Sudharsan, Kumar Kushagra, Anuj Rawat, Rashid Khan, Rahul Tewatia, Shahrux Khan, Nishant Sindhu, Ravishrinivasan Sai Kishore, Gerald Coetzee, Jayant Yadav, Arshad Khan, Karim Janat, Sherfane Rutherford, Mahipal Lomror, Washington Sundar, Manav Suthar, Gurnoor Brar, Ishant Sharma, Kagiso Rabada, Prasad Krishna, Kulwant Khejroliya, Mohammed Siraj, Dasun Shanaka, Kusal Mendis, Jos Buttler.

**Mumbai Indians:** Hardik Pandya (captain), Suryakumar Yadav, Rohit Sharma, Tilak Varma, Bevon Jacobs, Robin Minz, Krishnan Shrijith, Naman Dhir, Raj Bawa, Mitchell Santner, Jasprit Bumrah, Arjun Tendulkar, Ashwani Kumar, Reece Topley, Karn Sharma, Trent Boult, Deepak Chahar, Satyanarayana Raju, Mubeen Ur Rahman, Raghu Sharma, Jonny Bairstow, Richard Gleeson, Charith Asalanka.

Match starts: 7.30pm IST. (PTI)

## Test players hope to understand English conditions in India A's 1st 'Unofficial Test' against Lions

**CANTERBURY (ENGLAND), May 29:** A clutch of front-line Test players, including opener Yashasvi Jaiswal and all-rounder Nitish Kumar Reddy, will be eager to acclimatise to English conditions during India A's first four-day unofficial Test against the England Lions, beginning here on Friday. Apart from Jaiswal and Nitish, the India A side has Abhimanyu Easwaran, Dhruv Jurel, Karun Nair, pacers Akash Deep and Shardul.

Thakur who will want to have a feel of the pronounced swing on offer here, ahead of the Test series against England, starting from June 20. It's imperative too because these players, except Karun, are on their maiden tour to England.

It starts with Easwaran. India will require an opener to partner Jaiswal at the pole position after the retirement of Rohit Sharma and a batter at No. 4 slot which was left vacant by Virat Kohli. In the context of an opener, the performance of Easwaran, who has extensive experience in the position through his 101-match-old First-Class career, will come under scrutiny. The Bengal man had come close to breaking into the first eleven on a couple of occasions in the past, but failed to get an eventual look in. Now there is an open space to explore after Rohit's departure and Easwaran will certainly want to produce a stellar effort to lock his place either as an opener or No. 3 in the five-match Test series.

The right-hander, who has a compact technique, can be used as No. 3 as well if the selectors want to make KL Rahul

the opener. In that case, newly-appointed skipper Shubman Gill can be slotted in at No. 4.

Karun's outings too will be in focus after forcing his way back to the India team after eight years on the back of a stellar run in the domestic circuit since the 2023-24 season.

The experienced batter is a favourite to find a place in the middle-order, and he also has considerable experience of English conditions while playing County cricket for Northamptonshire. Nitish Reddy was very impressive in the 2024-25 Test series against Australia, having made 298 runs from five Tests at an average of 37 including a gutsy hundred. But the inclusion of Thakur, himself a capable lower-order batter, in the Test squad as well as in the 'A' team is an indication that the Indian management is in the hunt for some more firepower in bowling.

Therefore, Reddy will be keen to stay ahead of the competition with a fruitful outing both with bat and ball.

Dhruv Jurel, who is also a part of the Test outfit, and Sarfaraz Khan, who missed out on Test selection, will like to keep themselves ready if a call comes their way at some stage of the five-match series.

Ishan Kishan, Tanush Kotian, who joined the India squad after R Ashwin's abrupt retirement after the Brisbane Test last year, and Harshit Rana, who made his Test debut against the Aussies, too will be eager to exhibit their skills to remain on the selectors' radar for future needs. (PTI)

## World Cup Tune-up: India Women to host Australia Women for three ODIs in September

**NEW DELHI, May 29:** India Women will play their counterparts from Australia in a three-match ODI series at home in September as part of the preparations for the ICC World Cup which the country is hosting later this year, the BCCI said on Thursday. The board also said the men's 'A' teams from Australia and South Africa will be touring the country from September-November during which they will play multi-day and limited overs cricket matches.

"The Australian Women's team will tour India for a three-match One Day International series, serving as crucial preparation ahead of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025," the BCCI said in a statement.

The three matches of the women's series will be played at the M. A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. The games are scheduled on September 14, 17 and 20.

The 50-over Women's World Cup is scheduled to be held across multiple venues in India from September 29 to October 26. Around the same time, the Australian men's A team will also be touring India for a series featuring two four-day matches and three One-day games.

The tour will begin with a four-day match in Lucknow from September 16-19 with the second game also being scheduled at the same venue from September 23-26.

The three one-day matches will be held from Kanpur on September 30, October 3 and 5. The contests against the Aussies will be followed by matches against the visiting South Africans in October-November. (PTI)

## Performance of uncapped players instrumental to our success: Ricky Ponting



**MULLANPUR, May 29:** Ricky Ponting, who is getting major credits for Punjab Kings' massive turnaround in the IPL after years of disappointment, feels their radical auction strategy and the performance of uncapped players allowed him to execute his coaching philosophy of playing "differently" this season.

Punjab Kings are in their first play-offs since 2014 but considering his world-conquering achievements, the Australian legend is not satisfied with finishing at the top of the league stage.

He has won the IPL title as player and head coach of Mumbai Indians but could not get his hands on the trophy while coaching the Delhi Capitals for seven seasons.

Before he signed up for the job at Punjab Kings, he made it clear to the owners that he wanted complete control over the running of the team.

The free hand given to him has produced instant results, starting from his auction strategy to retain only

the uncapped duo of Prabhsimran Singh and Shashank Singh. In an interview to PTI ahead of the IPL play-offs, Ponting covered all areas that got the franchise much-needed success. Excerpts from the interaction.

**Q. This has been a massive turnaround for this team after years of under-performance. What would you put that down to?**

A. When you say this team, it's really this franchise, it's not this team, this team is brand new. Once I got the job, I wanted to make sure that things were different around this team, around this franchise and, we went with a slightly different passage into the auction with just retaining the two younger uncapped players and we copped a bit of criticism for that at the time.

People thought we got that strategy wrong, but I was very clear on the vision that I had where I wanted this franchise to go and we picked the appropriate players to give me the best chance of attaining the vision that I set out with. So far it's been a good season...The fact that I think (in the) last game against Mumbai Indians, we had six uncapped players on our side, all of which are playing exceptionally good cricketers.

This whole season so far hasn't been about qualification. We've talked a bit about giving ourselves the best chance to finish 1-2, and we know now that we've actually finished in first position on the table after the league stage. I've got a good feeling. This group's been terrific and not just the 25 players, we've all been in this together.

**Q. Did you have a point to prove after not being able to win a trophy at Delhi Capitals for seven years though you did win one at Mumbai Indians?**

A. I'm not sure if I had a point to prove. With the good squads that I had in DC, it was pretty evident to see where we made it with good players in that squad. We had three years in a row where we made the play-offs. One of those was into a final that Mumbai beat us in.

I made it pretty clear that when I accepted the head coach's job (with Punjab Kings) that I wanted to have pretty much full autonomy over the way that we go about the coaching staff and the way that we go about putting the strategy together with the auction, our scouts do the terrific job.

We got the players that we wanted, whether they'd

be younger players or more experienced overseas players. And that's been shown so far that, with (Glenn) Maxwell and Lockie Ferguson getting ruled out early in the tournament, we've hardly skipped a beat.

Our Indian core has been terrific for us. And, our captain (Shreyas Iyer), as a leader he has been magnificent. So a lot of it revolves around that, the dynamic that he and I have together.

**Q. You spoke highly about your uncapped players (Priyansh Arya, Prabhsimran, Nehal Wadhwa, Shashank, Harpreet Brar, Vijaykumar Vyshak). Can any of them go on to play for India in the near future?**

A. There is four of them who can. You look at Priyansh Arya. He has been a revelation for us at the top of the order. I must have watched, I don't know how many hours of video I watched on him going into the auction, but he was the one that I wanted to make sure that we got.

Prabh is probably the obvious one when you talk about playing for India. Still only 24 years of age. I read somewhere the other day that he's now got the most runs for an uncapped player in IPL history.

Wadhwa is someone that I think could play for India as well in the middle order. And Shashank, you've only got to look at the cold, hard numbers with him. His strike rate and boundary percentage at the end of innings is as good as anyone going around.

So again, this year, he struck at 185 or something like that (in the league stage). All four of those guys could play. As I said, Brar's been outstanding for us. Vyshak is also on the radar (for the national selectors).

**Q. Following your chats with the owners and the management, were there any lessons learned from the failures of the past?**

A. I did speak to the management. My big mantra this year was to be different, to make this place feel different, look different from the outside, you know, be really daring with the way that we play our cricket, be really dynamic and not sit back and wait for opportunities to arise to go and create opportunity and create momentum in games for ourselves.

I'm not a big media reader. I don't look at social media a lot. But what I've been hearing and the vibe I've been getting is that what we've been able to create around this team has been pretty cool. (PTI)

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