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THE HILLS TIMES

PUBLISHED SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM GUWAHATI & DIPHU

Voice of the hills people

Vol. No. II

Issue No. 82

RNI-ASSEN/2023/86488

GUWAHATI, SATURDAY, MAY 24, 2025

PAGES 12

PRICE ₹ 8

Govt to accelerate NE's growth story: PM

Mukesh Ambani, Gautam Adani, Anil Agarwal among others attend NE Investors Summit



NEW DELHI, May 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the Northeastern region is witnessing unprecedented progress and the government is determined to accelerate its growth story.

Addressing the 'Rising North East Investors Summit' here, he also said that diversity of the Northeast is its biggest strength and that the region is emerging as the frontrunner of growth.

"The Northeast is witnessing unprecedented progress. We are determined to accelerate its growth story," he said while inaugurating the two-day event which is being attended by chief ministers of the region, union ministers, bureaucrats, diplomats among others.

Top industry leaders Mukesh Ambani, Gautam Adani, Anil Agarwal among others attended the inaugural session.

Modi said for his government, EAST means - "Empower, Act, Strengthen and Transform".

"There was a time when Northeast was only called frontier, now it is the frontrunner of growth," he said.

He said the Northeast was earlier synonymous with bombs, guns and blockades which took away many opportunities from youths there.

"Over 10,000 youths in the Northeast have given up violence in last decade," he said.

Welfare measures for Safai Karmacharis in KA reviewed

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 23: Welfare measures for Safai Karmacharis in Karbi Anglong were reviewed on Thursday during a meeting at the Circuit House, Diphu, an official statement said on Friday.

As per the statement, the meeting was chaired by Nirola Phangchopi, ACS, deputy commissioner of Karbi Anglong.

The meeting focused on uplifting the social, economic, and educational standards of Safai Karmacharis and their dependents, and on reviewing their access to government welfare schemes and entitlements.

The meeting was attended by Heads of Departments (HoDs), representatives from banking institutions, the Additional Superintendent of Police, Diphu, and Safai Karmacharis from various government institutions. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Modi also said that his government follows a zero tolerance policy, be it terrorism or Naxalism.

The summit is being organised with an aim of highlighting the Northeast region as a land of opportunity, attracting global and domestic investment and bringing together key stakeholders, investors, and policy-makers on a single platform, officials said.

The event is the culmination of various pre-summit activities, such as series of roadshows, and states' roundtables, including ambassador's meet and bilateral chambers meet organised by the central government with active support from the state governments of the Northeastern region.

The summit will include ministerial sessions, business-to-government sessions, business-to-business meetings, start ups and exhibitions of policy and related initiatives taken by state governments and central ministries for investment promotion, officials said.

The main focus sectors of investment promotion include tourism and hospitality, Agro-food processing and allied sectors, textiles, handloom and handicrafts, healthcare, education and skill development, information technology and information technology enabled services, infrastructure and logistics, energy, entertainment and sports. (PTI)

Police detain Bir Lachit Sena leader Shrinkhal Chaliha, others ● Akhil, Lurinjyoti condemn police action

Bandh affects normal life in Duliayan

DIBRUGARH, May 23: Normal life was affected in Duliayan town in Assam's Dibrugarh district on Friday due to a 12-hour bandh called by several organisations.

The bodies demanded action against proprietors of a petrol pump involved in a recent row with former student leader Sankar Jyoti Baruah, and against police personnel for handcuffing Baruah while producing him before a court earlier this week.

Several bandh supporters, including leaders of regional outfit Bir Lachit Sena, were detained in Dibrugarh and other eastern districts during the bandh, officials said.

No untoward incident, however, was reported, they said.

Several private educational institutions and business establishments remained closed in Duliayan,



although government offices and institutions were open, police said.

The dawn-to-dusk Duliayan bandh was called by several local student, youth and regional organisations, including Bir Lachit Sena.

Among the demands by the groups was action against the po-

lice personnel who had handcuffed Baruah while he was being produced in the court earlier this week.

They also sought action against owners of a petrol pump in Duliayan for alleged misconduct, besides other demands.

Operation Sindoor: Stop 'undermining' armed forces' valour, BJP tells Rahul

NEW DELHI, May 23: The BJP on Friday launched a scathing attack at Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and asked him to stop "undermining" the Indian Armed Forces' valour and "jeopardising" the country's security by making "irresponsible remarks" about the ongoing Operation Sindoor.

Calling Gandhi "Nishan-e-Pakistan", BJP national spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia alleged the Congress leader's remarks on the India-Pakistan conflict were being used by Islamabad to "defame" India. "Rahul Gandhi, you decide which side you are on. You have to decide whether you are India's leader of opposition or Pakistan's Nishan-e-Pakistan," Bhatia said at a press conference.

The BJP's charge came a day after Gandhi accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of having



"compromised" India's "prestige" and asked him why he sacrificed the nation's interests by agreeing to halt military hostilities against Pakistan.

"Rahul Gandhi, stop undermining the valour and commitment of our brave armed forces, stop asking questions which shouldn't be asked. They jeopardise national se-

curity," Bhatia urged the Congress leader.

He said Gandhi's remarks could not be dismissed as "juvenile behaviour". "It has been the core character of Rahul Gandhi to intentionally ask such questions, taking forward the agenda of nations which are inimical to our country," he alleged. (PTI)

5 Assam hospitals certified for surrogacy clinics

GUWAHATI, May 23: Health Minister Ashok Singhal on Friday handed over certificates for establishing surrogacy clinics to five hospitals in the state, asserting that it is a step towards bringing the process of surrogacy under government regulation.

Singhal said the Assam government is dedicated to creating a transparent and accountable system that guarantees access to advanced reproductive services for couples in need.

The certificates for establishing Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) clinics, ART banks and surrogacy clinics were provided to Apollo Fertility, Down Town Hospital, GMCH Fertility and IVF Centre, and The Institute of Human Reproduction - all in Guwahati - and Swasti Hospital in Rangia.

The minister said the certification reflects the government's

commitment to ensuring safe, ethical and high-quality reproductive care, an official statement said.

It follows the implementation of the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021 and the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 by the Union government, along with their corresponding rules notified in 2022.

In alignment with these national regulations, the Assam government established the State Assisted Reproductive Technology and Surrogacy Board and the Appropriate Authority for ART and Surrogacy in December 2023.

To facilitate the application process for institutions seeking to establish ART and surrogacy services, the Appropriate Authority launched a state-wide drive through newspaper advertisements on January 30, 2025.

Once verified, the institutions are (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Op Sindoor exposed Pakistan sponsoring terrorism in India: Amit Shah

NEW DELHI, May 23: The Operation Sindoor undertaken by the Indian armed forces in retaliation for the Pahalgam terror attack has "completely exposed" the fact that terrorism in India is sponsored by Pakistan, Union Home minister Amit Shah said on Friday.

Shah also said that the operation showed the "firm" political will of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the "precise" intelligence inputs from agencies, and the "lethal" capabilities of the armed forces.

India hit as deep as '100-km' inside Pakistan after they dared to target a few Indian civilian and military setups following Operation Sindoor (on May 7), when nine terrorist camps were decimated, he said.

Shah made the remarks while delivering the annual Rustamji

Memorial Lecture organised by the Border Security Force (BSF) alongside its 22nd investiture ceremony.

Raised in 1965, the BSF guards the over 6,000-km-long Indian borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh. K F Rustamji was the founding chief of the BSF.

"The terrorists undertook an extreme attack in Pahalgam as they selectively chose innocents, asked their religion and killed them brutally in front of their families, including women and children," Shah said, adding that this "sin" was committed by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists.

"India's response under Operation Sindoor was different," he said.

Nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir

(PoK) were "destroyed" within a few minutes, out of which two were the headquarters of terror outfits, Shah said.

"We did not attack their military installations or air bases. We only hit the terrorist bases in Pakistan. Those who committed a criminal act on our land -- the Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Toiba -- their bases, houses, training camps and launchpads used against India were destroyed," Shah said.

The home minister added, "We thought it was enough that we hit the terrorists but Pakistan proved that it was sponsoring terrorism, as they took the Indian strikes as an attack on themselves and targeted civilian locations and military bases in India." But the Indian air defence (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam govt starts handing over financial aid to kin of victims

GUWAHATI, May 23: The Assam government on Friday handed over ex gratia to families of two victims of the Pahalgam terror attack.

The state cabinet had earlier announced providing financial assistance of ₹ 5 lakh each to families of the 26 people killed in the April 22 attack.

Cabinet ministers visited the residence of N Ramachandran in Kerala and J S Chandramouli in Vishakapatnam to hand over the assistance to their family members, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on X.

"A month has passed since the tragic Pahalgam massacre but the victims will always remain in our hearts & their families in our prayers," he said.

"My colleague Shri @jKaushikRai visited the family of Late N Ramachandran in Kerala to extend a token of support and

solidarity to the family," the CM said.

Rai, in another post on X, said he handed over the financial aid and a condolence letter to Sheela Ramachandran, the wife of N Ramachandran from Ernakulam, Kerala.

"Smt Sheela Ramachandran Ji, along with her daughter Smt Arathi Ramachandran and son Shri Aravind Ramachandran, expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma Ji over the phone for standing by them in this difficult time," he added.

Sarma, in another post on X, said, "We stand firmly with the families of the victims of #PahalgamTerroristAttack. In Vishakapatnam, my cabinet colleague Shri @Pras21758Phukan offered prayers from the people of Assam and a token of support to the family of Late J.S Chandramouli." (PTI)

ASDMA urges landslide zones to identify shelters

GUWAHATI, May 23: The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) has asked authorities of landslide-prone districts to identify safe shelters or relief camps for relocating people residing in vulnerable areas for the rainy season.

It also urged the people living in areas with possibility of landslide to move to safer locations for the monsoons, a statement said on Thursday.

In view of the ensuing flood and rainy season in the state, the ASDMA has directed all the landslide-prone districts to pre-identify safe shelters (relief camps) for the people living in vulnerable areas.

The ASDMA has also asked the district authorities to relocate vulnerable population to safe shelters to reduce the possibility of life loss due to any incident of landslide. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Funds to boost oil & gas, critical minerals, and infrastructure sectors across region

Vedanta to invest ₹ 30,000 cr in Northeast

NEW DELHI, May 23: Vedanta Group on Friday said it will invest ₹ 30,000 crore in the Northeast in fields of oil and gas, critical minerals, refining facilities, power, optical fibre, system integration, renewable energy, transmission sectors and data centres.

Earlier this year, Vedanta had committed an investment of ₹ 50,000 crore in Assam.

On Friday, the group announced investment of ₹ 30,000 crore across Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram, at Rising North East Investors Summit here.

The investments will be made in the fields of oil and gas, critical minerals, refining facilities, power, optical fibre, system integration, renewable energy, transmission sectors and data centres in the six Northeastern states, Vedanta said in a statement.

Vedanta is undertaking one of



the largest exploration and development programmes to unlock the hydrocarbons in the Northeast.

The investment will potentially generate up to 1 lakh jobs and enable socio-economic development of the region.

Vedanta is also committed to expanding its social impact initiatives such as Nand Ghars (modernised

anganwadis that function as holistic centers for women & child development), handloom skill centers, digital classrooms for women and children, and promoting sports to ensure a brighter, more inclusive future for the youth of the region.

"Today, the states of the Northeast are growing in double digits.

The opportunities are growing even faster. Under Prime Minister's leadership, this region has become a key engine of growth for Viksit Bharat. Vedanta is fully committed to investment in the region which has the most amazing natural resources potential, from oil and gas to critical minerals and an exceptional pool of talented human resources," Vedanta Group chairman Anil Agarwal said.

Assam holds nearly 27 per cent of the country's crude reserves. Cairn Oil & Gas, part of Vedanta Group, has been producing from the Hazarigaon field in Assam, the first DSF (Discovered Small Field) block to go under production in the Northeast.

Arunachal Pradesh is home to the country's highest graphite reserves, substantial vanadium and rare earth deposits, and nearly 40 per cent of the country's hydro power (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Bangladesh's interim govt chief Yunus mulls resignation: Report

DHAKA, May 23: Bangladesh's interim government chief Muhammad Yunus is mulling resignation as he is finding it difficult to work in view of political parties failing to reach a common ground to bring a change in the country, according to a media report.

Student-led National Citizen Party chief Nhid Islam was quoted by BBC Bangla Service that Yunus is apprehensive over the evolving political situation in the country and whether he will be able to carry on with his work.

"He (Yunus) said he is thinking about it (resignation). He feels that the situation is such that he cannot work," Islam said on Thursday night after he met with the 84-year-old leader. Islam said he went to meet chief adviser Yunus after hearing throughout the day about the speculation of his resignation.

"Sir (Yunus) said, 'If I can't work... I was brought here after a mass uprising to bring change and reform to the country. But in the current situation, with mounting pressure from movements and the way I'm being cornered, this isn't how I can work,' Islam told the BBC Bangla.

Another media report referring to unnamed sources close to Yunus said he actually threatened to resign if

political parties do not give him their backing and expressed his desire to quit at a cabinet or advisory council meeting earlier on Thursday.

It said the other advisers, effectively ministers, however, persuaded him not to do so.

Islam told the BBC that he urged Yunus "to stay strong for the sake of the country's security, and future and to meet the expectations of the mass uprising" (and) I hope everyone will cooperate with him".

Islam, one of the key coordinators of the Students Against Discrimination (SAD), who previously served as one three representatives of the platform in the interim government's advisory council or cabinet, quit his office to lead the NCP that emerged in February this year visibly with Yunus's blessings.

The SAD led the July uprising last year forcing the ouster of prime minister Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime on August 5, 2024.

Three days later Yunus, a Nobel Peace Prize winner for experiment of microfinance, flew from Paris to take charge. The development of Yunus's resignation came amid reports of some discord between the military and the interim government over the possible timeline for holding the parliamentary (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Goyal meets US commerce secy for 2nd time in a week to discuss proposed trade pact

Meeting assumes significance as both the countries are looking at finalising an interim trade pact

NEW DELHI, May 23: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday met US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in Washington, their second meeting within a week, to discuss the proposed bilateral trade agreement currently under negotiation between the two countries.

On May 20 also, Goyal held a meeting with Lutnick to expedite the talks on the first phase of the trade pact.

"Held a constructive meeting with Secretary @HowardLutnick for a mutually beneficial trade agreement. Committed to enhancing opportunities for our businesses and people," Goyal said in a post on X.

The meeting assumes significance as both the countries are looking at finalising an interim trade pact by July 9, the day America's 90-day suspension of reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods comes to an end.

The US on April 2, imposed an additional 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods but suspended it for 90 days. However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed by America remains in place.

The four-day discussions between the chief negotiators of both the countries have also concluded



in Washington on May 22.

In the interim trade deal, New Delhi is pushing for full exemption from the 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods.

Due to the 90-day suspension of the 26 per cent additional import duty, Indian exporters are at present paying just 10 per cent baseline tariffs, instead of 26 per cent earlier proposed.

At present, the Trump administration requires approval from the US Congress to bring tariffs below the MFN (most favoured nation) rates. But the administration has the authority to remove the reciprocal tariffs imposed on a number of

countries, including India.

India may look at certain commitments from the US on the duty concessions for its labour-intensive sector in the first tranche of the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA). Both countries have fixed a deadline to conclude the first phase of the pact by fall (September-October) of this year to more than double bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from the current USD 191 billion.

To boost bilateral trade, India is seeking duty concessions for labour-intensive sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemi-

cals, shrimp, oil seeds, chemicals, grapes, and bananas in the proposed pact with America.

On the other hand, the US wants duty concessions in sectors like certain industrial goods, automobiles (electric vehicles in particular), wines, petrochemical products, dairy, and agriculture items such as apples, tree nuts and GM (genetically modified) crops.

While the import of GM crops from the US continues to remain a non-starter due to regulatory norms in India, New Delhi is open to import of non-GM products like Alpha alpha hay (a kind of cattle feed).

The US remained India's largest trading partner for the fourth consecutive year in 2024-25, with bilateral trade valued at USD 131.84 billion. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in the country's total merchandise trade.

With America, India had a trade surplus (the difference between imports and exports) of USD 41.18 billion in goods in 2024-25. It was USD 35.32 billion in 2023-24, USD 27.7 billion in 2022-23, USD 32.85 billion in 2021-22 and USD 22.73 billion in 2020-21. The US has raised concerns over this widening trade deficit. (PTI)

IHR among first in Assam to receive ART and Surrogacy Clinic Certification

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 23: In a significant step towards strengthening reproductive healthcare in Assam, the Institute of Human Reproduction (IHR), Guwahati, has been officially certified as a Level 2 ART (Assisted Reproductive Technology) Clinic, ART Bank, and Surrogacy Clinic.

The recognition was conferred during a state-level certificate distribution ceremony held at Janata Bhawan, Dispur, as part of an initiative led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Health Minister Ashok Anand Singh.

According to an official statement, IHR is among the first batch of institutions in Assam to receive these certifications, which are granted under the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021.

The Act mandates strict compliance with national standards concerning infrastructure, documentation, qualified personnel, patient consent, and ethical medical practices in ART services.

The certification affirms IHR's adherence to the stringent regulatory framework laid down by the Government of India.

It further reinforces the institute's reputation for delivering ethical, transparent, and high-quality fertility care.

Established in 1980, IHR has long been a pioneer in reproductive medicine in Northeast India.

In 1995, it made history by performing the region's first successful IVF procedure under the leadership of the late Dr. M.L. Goenka.

Since then, the institute has remained at the forefront of fertility treatment, offering comprehensive solutions to thousands of couples.

Currently led by Dr. Deepak Goenka, Director and Senior Fertility Specialist, IHR has completed over 30,000 IVF cases.

Dr. Goenka's commitment to combining scientific innovation with compassionate care has earned the institute recognition from patients across the country and abroad.

higher-than-budgeted expenditure in the fiscal.

"This provides some comfort on the fiscal front," she said. The Board also reviewed the global and domestic economic scenario, including risks to the outlook. It also discussed the working of the Reserve Bank during the year April 2024 – March 2025 and approved the central bank's Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year 2024-25.

Giving details about the revised ECF, the RBI said the computation of market risk buffer requirement to adopt an integrated approach, wherein the off-balance sheet portfolio is also reckoned, together with the on-balance sheet portfolio.

The computation of market risk buffer requirement may also include investments in Foreign Currency Assets in minor currencies, it said. Further, with respect to the surplus distribution policy, any available equity in excess of 7.5 per cent of balance sheet (B/S) size (after considering shortfall in market risk buffers, if any) may be written back from the Contingency Fund to income. (PTI)

Rupee snaps 3-day losing streak, gains 70 paise to settle at 85.25 /USD

MUMBAI, May 23: The rupee snapped its three-day losing streak and settled for the day higher by 70 paise at 85.25 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, on a sharp fall in the dollar index and surge in domestic equities, amid rise in risk appetite for riskier assets.

Forex traders said, the rupee which had lost 53 paise in the last three trading sessions, settled with significant gains on Friday largely supported by the weakness of the American currency in the overseas market.

However, a slight recovery in crude oil prices and foreign fund outflows capped the appreciation bias in the local unit to some extent.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee witnessed heavy volatility. It opened at 85.95 then touched an intra-day high of 85.11 and a low of 86.10 against the US dollar.

The domestic unit settled for the day at 85.25 (provisional), higher by 70 paise over its previous close.

On Thursday, the rupee depreciated 36 paise to close at 85.95 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a positive bias

on underlying weakness in the US dollar index and improved global risk sentiments. However, selling pressure from foreign investors may cap sharp upside movement," said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

Choudhary further noted that traders may take cues from existing home sales data from the US. "USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 85 to 85.70," he said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading lower by 0.60 per cent at 99.36, on rise in risk appetite in global markets and strength in riskier currencies. Easing of US treasury yields also pressurised the greenback.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, fell 0.22 per cent to USD 64.30 per barrel in futures trade.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex advanced 769.09 points, or 0.95 per cent, to close at 81,721.08, while the Nifty rose 243.45 points, or 0.99 per cent, to 24,853.15. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Bandh affects normal life

Duliajan police station on Thursday to call off the bandh, failing which legal action would be taken against him. Sivasagar MLA and Rajior Dal chief Akhil Gogoi condemned the police action against Chaliha and demanded his immediate release. Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) president and former AASU leader Lurinjiyoti Gogoi also demanded the release of Chaliha, terming the action against the Bir Lachit Sena leader and others an attempt to stifle democratic voices. (PTI)

Himanta meets Shah

held Panchayat polls," Sarma later wrote on X. "On the occasion, I also complimented him on the gigantic gains being made in eliminating Red Terror," he said. (PTI)

5 Assam hospitals certified

inspected by the Appropriate Authority before receiving certification. Earlier this year, the first certificate was issued to an intending couple and surrogate mother after evaluation by the District Medical Board in Dibrugarh, marking the beginning of regulated surrogacy services in Assam, the statement added. (PTI)

ASDMA urges landslide zones

Taking into consideration the casualties in the last three years in the landslide vulnerable districts, ASDMA CEO Gyanendra Dev Tripathi has requested all the people living in landslide-prone areas to move to safer places of their choice for the rainy period. The instructions have been issued to the most landslide-prone districts of Cachar, Dima Hasao, Hailakandi, Kamrup, Kamrup Metropolitan, Karbi Anglong, Sribhum and West Karbi Anglong.

The ASDMA has asked authorities of these districts to pre-identify the landslide-prone areas immediately and notify the safe shelters so that affected people can shift to these relief camps, if required. (PTI)

Op Sindoor exposed Pakistan

displayed "marvellous strength" as Pakistan could not touch any of India's installations, Shah said.

"After this, we hit their air bases and gave a strong response by introducing them to our fire power and exposing their hollow air defence," he said. "We did not hit (Pakistan's) civilian installations. Operation Sindoor and the incidents that followed completely exposed the fact that Pakistan is sponsoring terrorism in India because it was the Pakistan Army that replied after we hit their terror bases," Shah said.

The home minister said Operation Sindoor "exposed" this fact as top Pakistan Army officers were seen offering namaz and shouldering the coffins of the terrorists who were killed.

The operation was successful as it used the correct firepower and achieved its aims besides "showing the reality" to Pakistan, Shah said. The home minister also said that global experts and the world were "praising" the bravery and firepower of the Indian armed forces.

The operation also brought to the fore the fact that the 'Aatmanirbharta' (self-reliance) achieved by India in defence production was successful, he said. Lauding the BSF for carrying out its duties during the operation, Shah said the force "proved its mettle" by not allowing the Pakistani forces to move even an inch.

The home minister also paid condolences to the two BSF troopers who were killed during the operation along the International Border in Jammu. Shah recalled that India has been facing Pakistan-sponsored terrorism for many decades but a "befitting reply was not given" until the Modi government came to power (in 2014).

"We were defensive... Our police force and BSF did their best to protect the people but a befitting reply was not given. After 2014, when Prime minister Modi took charge, the biggest attack took place in Uri (2016) where our jawans were burnt alive. "We conducted a surgical strike (across the border) and hit the terrorists by entering their hideouts for the first time. We thought that terrorism will stop but it did not, and the Pulwama attack happened (in 2019)," Shah said. The Modi government gave a "stronger" response than Uri as it demolished terror bases across the front, Shah said. Lauding the BSF, Shah said, "The bravery shown by the BSF in the 1971 war that was imposed upon us, and the contributions made by the force (in the creation of Bangladesh) cannot be forgotten by India and neither should Bangladesh ever forget it."

The BSF played a "significant" role in the creation of Bangladesh and set an "exemplary" standard of bravery by standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the armed forces in fighting against injustice, Shah recalled.

The home minister said the 2.75 lakh personnel-strong BSF was working in some of the most difficult conditions marred by geographical challenges along the two borders (with Pakistan and Bangladesh).

"I want tell you that the Modi government is standing behind you like a rock and the Ministry of Home Affairs will soon implement some technology solutions and models to strengthen border security in areas where it is not possible to erect fences," Shah said.

The home minister also awarded gallantry and other service medals to BSF personnel during the event, which was attended by Union Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Intelligence Bureau Director Tapan Kumar Deka, and BSF Director General Daljit Singh Chawdhary. (PTI)

Welfare measures for Safai

Earlier in the day, Bajinath Basfore visited several government and private institutions in Diphu, including Diphu Medical College, schools, and the Municipal Board, to assess the working conditions of Safai Karmacharis.

The review meeting was convened based on his observations. During the meeting, the deputy commissioner emphasised the vital role of Safai Karmacharis in maintaining institutional hygiene and cleanliness. She urged all officials to ensure that these workers receive the respect and benefits they rightfully deserve.

Basfore directed all departments to report the number of Safai Karmacharis employed under them and to verify whether they are receiving the minimum wage — ₹10,097 for unskilled and ₹18,000 for skilled workers — or salaries in line with government norms for permanent employees. He also stressed the importance of providing safety kits, biannual health checkups, and coverage under relevant insurance and welfare schemes.

Departments without Safai Karmacharis were advised to submit proposals to the District Administration or the Government of Assam for further action.

Bangladesh's interim govt chief

elections and a policy issue related to Bangladesh's security affairs involving a proposed humanitarian corridor of aid channel to Myanmar's rebel-held Rakhine state. Army chief general Waker-Uz-Zaman along with the navy and air force chiefs met Yunus three days ago and reportedly reiterated their call for election by December this year to allow an elected government take charge and conveyed their reservation about the corridor issue.

The next day, Zaman called a senior officers meeting at Dhaka Cantonment to review the situation and reportedly informed them that he was in the dark on several strategic policy decisions though it was extending its service as a law enforcement agency in the current turmoil.

During the last year's street protests, the army preferred not to launch a crackdown on protesters despite being called out to tame the uprising but extended its hand for Hasina's safe exit to India using an air force plane.

The army also facilitated installation of Yunus as the chief adviser, effectively the prime minister, in line with the demand of the SAD, a large part of which now emerged as NCP.

Yunus's administration recently disbanded Awami League sending many of its senior leaders, including former ministers, to jail to face trial for charges like crimes against humanity while ex-prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) emerged as the main actor in the political arena.

Yunus's reported threat to resign came a day after the BNP rallied thousands of supporters to stage a large-scale protest for the first time with election being held at the earliest being one of their demands while the NCP and several Islamist groups preferred Yunus's reform agenda to be implemented first ahead of the polls.

The BNP this week demanded removal of the remaining student representatives from the cabinet while the NCP in response called for ouster of two advisers alleging that they were serving BNP's purpose by staying in the government. The interim government on May 12 officially disbanded Hasina's Awami League under an overnight revised anti-terrorism law, two days after it slapped a ban on its "activities" under the previous version of the law.

Yunus has been facing calls from the political parties, including the BNP, to announce a date for the next elections. The South Asian nation of some 170 million people has been in political turmoil since the ouster of the past regime but it escalated in the past several days with rival parties and trade unions or pressure groups protesting on the streets of the capital Dhaka with a string of competing demands.

Chief of Bangladesh's main Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami, which opposed the country's 1971 independence from Pakistan, Shafiqur Rahman urged Yunus to call an all-party meeting to address the crisis. (PTI)

Vedanta to invest

potential. Recently, Vedanta secured vanadium and graphite mineral blocks in Arunachal Pradesh through critical mineral auctions. Nagaland, Tripura, and Meghalaya also have immense natural resources that can be responsibly harnessed for the growth of the region and the country.

Vedanta and its sister entities have also invested in the commissioning of 300 circuit kilometer transmission system network which allows transfer of 1,000 MW power from Assam to Meghalaya. This project significantly improves power reliability and accessibility in Meghalaya and Assam, supporting the region's industrial, commercial, socio-economic growth and overall quality of life. (PTI)

Airtel Payments Bank reports 81% surge in FY25 net profit

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 23: Airtel Payments Bank has reported a strong financial performance for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2025, with net profit rising 81.4% year-on-year to ₹63 crore. The bank's annual revenue climbed to ₹2,709 crore, marking a 47.5% increase over the previous year. The bank also posted an EBITDA of ₹299 crore for FY25, up 64% year-on-year, and saw customer balances grow 30.6% to ₹3,659 crore. Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) reached ₹3,808 billion for the year, underscoring the bank's growing transaction base.

In the fourth quarter alone, Airtel Payments Bank earned ₹726 crore in revenue, up 34.7% from the same period last year. Quarterly profit more than doubled to ₹26 crore, registering a 138% year-on-year increase. Over the last four years, the bank has maintained a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 44% in revenues.

Managing Director and CEO Anubrata Biswas attributed the performance to customer trust and the bank's diversified operations. "The rapid adoption of our Safe Second Account offering highlights the rising demand for secure, alternative banking solutions. Today, we handle one in two domestic remittances and one in every five Aadhaar-enabled payments in India," he said.

The bank has seen increased traction in its Safe Second Account product, becoming a go-to option for everyday digital payments, especially in tier-3 towns and rural areas. With a network of 500,000 active banking points—most operated by women—the bank is expanding financial inclusion in underbanked regions.

Airtel Payments Bank is also gaining momentum in the B2B segment, offering omnichannel digital payment solutions and facilitating transit payments in five major metro rail systems, including Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC). The bank's RuPay NCMC On-The-Go cards now serve over 2.5 million users.

Markets rebound nearly 1 pc; Sensex surges over 760 pts as FMCG, IT shares gain



MUMBAI, May 23: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty rebounded sharply by nearly 1 per cent on Friday, propelled by buying in market heavyweights Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank and ITC.

Besides, hopes of a record dividend from the RBI and easing US treasury yields bolstered investor sentiment, traders said.

After a flat start, the 30-share BSE benchmark bounced back and surged 769.09 points or 0.95 per cent to settle at 81,721.08. During the day, it jumped 953.18 points or 1.17 per cent to 81,905.17.

As many as 2,361 stocks advanced while 1,589 declined and 156 remained unchanged on the BSE. The NSE Nifty rallied 243.45 points or 0.99 per cent to 24,853.15.

On a weekly basis, the BSE benchmark dropped 609.51 points or 0.74 per cent and the Nifty declined 166.65 points or 0.66 per cent.

"The domestic market has recouped nearly half of the week's losses, supported by gains in FMCG and IT stocks. FMCG benefited from the early and above-normal monsoon forecast, while IT stocks saw a rebound following a healthy correction.

"Optimism around a potentially record-high dividend from the RBI is boosting hopes for fiscal consolidation, reflected in falling Indian bond yields," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

From the Sensex firms, Eternal, Power Grid, ITC, Bajaj Finserv, Nestle, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Adani Ports were among the biggest gainers.

payout was taken at the 616th meeting of the Central Board of Directors of Reserve Bank of India held here under the Chairmanship of Governor Sanjay Malhotra.

The central bank had transferred ₹ 2.1 lakh crore dividend to the government for the fiscal 2023-24. The payout was ₹ 87,416 crore for 2022-23. In a statement, the RBI said the transferable surplus for the year (2024-25) has been arrived at on the basis of the revised Economic Capital Framework (ECF) as approved by the Central Board in its meeting held on May 15, 2025.

The revised framework stipulates that the risk provisioning under the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) be maintained within a range of 7.50 to 4.50 per cent of the RBI's balance sheet.

During accounting years 2018-19 to 2021-22, owing to the prevailing macroeconomic conditions and the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Board had decided to maintain the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) at 5.50 per cent of the Reserve Bank's Balance Sheet size to support growth and overall economic activity. The CRB was in-

creased to 6 per cent for FY2022-23 and to 6.50 per cent for FY 2023-24. Based on the revised ECF, and taking into consideration the macroeconomic assessment, the Central Board decided to further increase the CRB to 7.50 per cent, the RBI said.

"The Board thereafter approved the transfer of ₹ 2,68,590.07 crore as surplus to the Central Government for the accounting year 2024-25," it said.

The government has estimated ₹ 2.56 lakh crore as dividend/surplus for FY26 from the Reserve Bank of India, nationalised banks and financial institutions. The government aims to bring down the fiscal deficit during 2025-26 to 4.4 per cent of the GDP from 4.8 per cent estimated for the preceding fiscal.

Commenting on the RBI's decision, Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist with Iera, surplus transfer is about ₹ 0.4-0.5 lakh crore (equivalent to 11-14 bps of GDP), higher than the amount that was likely assumed in the FY26 Union Budget, implying an equivalent upside to non-tax revenues, which would provide some buffer to make up for a miss in taxes or disinvestment receipts, or

ENGINEERING WORKS IN TINSUKIA DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: TSK/Engg/18 of 2025, Dated: 19-05-2025.

E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work:

Item No. 1: Brief Description of Item : At New Tinsukia-Construction of Transit building (4 units). **Tender Value:** ₹1,73,50,476/- **Earnest Money:** ₹2,36,800/- **Date & time of closing of above tender at 15:00 hrs. and opening at 16:00 hrs. on 10-06-2025.** The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 10-06-2025 in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (W), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

Serving Customers With A Smile

Shrinkhal Chaliha detained en-route to Duliajan



HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, May 23: Shrinkhal Chaliha, Administrative Secretary of Bir Lahit Sena, a vocal critic of non-Assamese traders in Assam, was taken into temporary police custody on Thursday while on his way to Duliajan. Chaliha's vehicle was intercepted by a combined team of Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, and Moran police at Sepon along NH-37, following which he was swiftly taken to Dibrugarh.

Confirming the development, Sivasagar SP Subhrajyoti Bora told this correspondent that Chaliha had not been arrested but was being held temporarily as a preventive measure. He is expected to be released by the evening.

The action is believed to be in response to heightened tensions in Duliajan following the BN Singh Petrol Pump incident. The incident had sparked widespread protests after former AASU General Secretary Sankarajyoti Baruah was arrested based on an FIR filed by Tanu Shahi and Navnet Shahi on May 17. In retaliation, several youth and student organizations had called for a Duliajan Bunder today.

Activists have raised concerns over perceived police bias, pointing out that despite multiple FIRs filed against the petrol pump owner's family, no arrests have been made on their end, while protest leaders and indigenous activists have faced police action.

Meanwhile, Rajior Dal President and Sivasagar MLA Akhil Gogoi strongly condemned the police's move against Shrinkhal Chaliha. Speaking to the media, Gogoi urged Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma to immediately and unconditionally release Chaliha.

Gogoi further alleged that under the BJP regime, the indigenous Assamese population has been systematically "assaulted and insulted" by non-Assamese traders. He criticized the administration for what he termed as selective enforcement of law, which he claimed favors outsiders at the expense of local voices.

As tensions simmer in Duliajan and across upper Assam, all eyes are now on how the state government navigates the growing unrest among indigenous rights groups and youth organizations.

NH-315 in Margherita left in ruins: AJYCP warns of escalated agitation

HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, May 23: The persistent deterioration of National Highway 315 (NH-315) in the Margherita Co-District has become a dire concern for residents and commuters, with large stretches of the road lying in a dilapidated condition for months. Despite repeated calls for action, including a recent protest by the Asom Jatiyotabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), no substantial repair work has been initiated, sparking frustration and warnings of intensified agitation.

The issue is particularly acute within the 83rd Margherita Assembly Constituency, where vital segments of NH-315 passing through Ledo, Bargolai, Itakhola, and Tirap Colliery have become severely damaged. Kanchan Borah, Vice President of AJYCP Tinsukia District Committee, highlighted the plight of thousands who use this highway daily—including students, patients, workers, and pregnant women—who now face life-threatening risks due to the road's condition.

The AJYCP staged a protest on May 15, marching from Ledo College Road to Ledo Bazaar, demanding immediate restoration of the highway. The protest, led by AJYCP Tinsukia District President Prabin Tamuly and Vice President Kanchan Borah, was a direct appeal to the government and Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma. Protesters decried the in-

action of the Assam Government, NHIDCL, and Margherita Co-District Administration, warning of larger agitations if their demands are ignored.

Borah noted that the road's deterioration—marked by deep potholes and large craters—has rendered sections of the highway nearly impassable. The situation worsens during rains, when waterlogging makes the hazards indistinguishable, significantly increasing the risk of accidents. Several mishaps involving two-wheelers and smaller vehicles have already been reported, with no official assurance of remedial measures forthcoming.

"Even a single spell of rain transforms NH-315 into a stretch of waterlogged, crater-ridden traps," said Borah. "Despite its strategic connectivity and high daily traffic volume, the highway continues to be neglected by those in power."

While the BJP government promotes a narrative of development, locals argue that the inaction over NH-315's condition belies this claim. The AJYCP has now vowed to launch a grand agitation in Margherita unless authorities—including the NHIDCL, local administration, and MLA Bhaskar Sharma—take urgent steps to restore the highway.

As public patience wears thin, all eyes are now on the administration and state leadership to respond before the situation spirals further into public unrest.

Ananta Gour, a standout performer from the Adivasi community, exemplifies the growing reach of Bodo-medium education

ABSU confers 19th Kamal Kumar Brahma Derhashat Award on top Bodo-medium HSLC achievers

HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, May 23: The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) honoured 13 high-achieving students on Friday with the 19th Kamal Kumar Brahma Derhashat Award at Bishnu Rabha Bhawan, Goreswar, Tamulpur district. The annual ceremony recognises pupils from Bodo-medium schools who secured Top-10 positions in the 2025 HSLC (High School Leaving Certificate) examinations.

Presiding over the event, ABSU President Dipen Boro underscored the union's ongoing mission to foster quality education among Bodo youth. "The award is meant to encourage and motivate students across Assam to strive for academic excellence," he said, noting that the union has hosted the felicitation every year since its inception.

Among this year's awardees was Ananta Gour, a standout performer from the Adivasi community, whose success exemplified the growing reach of Bodo-medium education.

The ceremony was attended by



an array of educational leaders: Rukhma Gohain Baruah, Vice-Chairman, Assam State Secondary Education Board, served as chief guest, while Dilip Kumar Dutta Choudhury and Ghanashyam Medhi of Assam Jatiya Vidyalaya,

Noonmati, Guwahati, graced the occasion as special guests. Representatives from districts across the state joined parents, teachers, and community members in applauding the honourees.

Speakers highlighted how

recognition, mentorship, and sustained community support are critical to shaping bright futures. The ABSU reiterated its commitment to championing "mission quality education" for Bodo students throughout Assam.

Leadership turmoil in Nagaon District Drug Dealers' Association

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, May 23: Tensions have escalated within the Nagaon District Drug Dealers' Association following the controversial ousting of its General Secretary, Simanta Saikia, during an emergency executive meeting held last Thursday at a roadside restaurant near the Borghat bypass.

The meeting, chaired by association president Jiban Bonik, reportedly ended with Saikia being relieved of his duties—an action that has since triggered widespread backlash from local civic and youth organisations.

Simanta Saikia has condemned the decision, calling it

"illegal" and accusing certain factions within the association of orchestrating a "deep conspiracy" to discredit him. He maintained that the internal disagreement stemmed from the recent launch of a free ambulance service by the association, an initiative he claims was manipulated for political motives.

In response to Saikia's removal, several prominent regional organisations—including the Asom Jatiyotabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP), All Assam Students' Union (AASU), and Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS)—have issued a joint ultimatum de-

manding his immediate reinstatement within 24 hours.

These organisations have strongly criticized president Jiban Bonik, alleging interference by "outsiders" aiming to "undermine the interests of indigenous business communities." They warned that if Saikia is not reinstated, they will launch mass protests across the district and ensure that "no external forces are allowed to dominate Assam's local business ecosystem."

As the deadline looms, observers are closely watching the association's next move amid mounting public pressure and the threat of large-scale agitation.

DC orders immediate measures to prevent urban flooding in Jorhat

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, May 23: With the arrival of the monsoon season and the increasing threat of urban flooding, District Commissioner Jay Shivani, in his capacity as the Chairman of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), has issued a stringent order to undertake critical flood mitigation measures in Jorhat district. The directive mandates the cleaning and de-silting of all drains within the Municipal and Development Authority areas to prevent artificial flooding—a recurrent problem exacerbated by clogged drainage systems.

The order specifically highlights a recurring issue: silt removed from drains is often dumped alongside them, which ends up re-entering the drainage systems during rainfall, rendering the entire de-silting process ineffective. Furthermore, this practice has led to unhygienic conditions, causing inconvenience to pedestrians and contributing to the deterioration of public health and cleanliness.

In a decisive move, the DC's order, which comes into immediate effect, states that all concerned municipal boards, departments, agencies, and contractors must ensure that silt and debris are cleared within 10 hours of extraction. Failure to comply will be treated as a public service obstruction, and legal action may be taken under Sections 41(C), 51(b), 55(1)(2), and 58(1)(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. This urgent intervention follows years of disruption where sharp showers have flooded residential areas and critical office campuses, including the DC and SP offices, paralyzing daily life for hours.

The administration hopes this proactive measure will significantly reduce waterlogging and improve resilience against monsoon-related challenges in Jorhat.

Rare Bengal Monitor Lizard rescued in Tinsukia

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, May 23: A rare Bengal Monitor Lizard was rescued from a residential area in Tingrai-Digboi, located in the Tinsukia district of eastern Assam, on Friday. The unusual sighting took place at the home of Kamal Das around 4 PM, prompting a swift response from local environmentalist Debajit Moran. Upon being alerted, Moran arrived at the residence, carefully captured the monitor lizard, and ensured its safe transport. The reptile was later released into the Lakhpathar Reserve Forest, a nearby protected area, restoring it to its natural habitat.

"We have rescued a rare Bengal monitor lizard from the residence of Kamal Das. I reached the spot, caught the lizard, and kept it in a box. It was later released in Lakhpathar Reserve Forest," said Moran, who is known for his work in local wildlife conservation. Bengal Monitor Lizards, part of the Varanus genus, are among approximately 80 recognized species of monitor lizards globally. They are primarily native to Africa, Asia, and Oceania, although one species has also established itself as an invasive species in South America.

While the IUCN Red List categorizes most monitor lizard species as of "Least Concern", their global populations are declining due to threats like habitat loss and poaching.

Key Land Advisory Committee meeting held in Tinsukia



HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, May 23: In a significant administrative development, an important meeting of the Tinsukia District and Co-District Land Advisory Committees was convened on Friday at the conference hall of the Tinsukia District Commissioner's office. The meeting was presided over by Swapneel Paul, Deputy Commissioner of Tinsukia, and saw the participation of Tinsukia MLA Sanjay Kisan, along with representatives from other assembly constituencies.

In a notable move, Assam Government Minister for Labour Welfare, Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare, Rupesh Gowala, joined the meeting virtually. The minister extended his support to the agenda and offered insights during deliberations. Following extensive discussions, several key proposals related to land allocation in Tinsukia district were approved, aimed at streamlining land management and addressing long-pending land-related issues across various parts of the district.

The meeting brought together a wide spectrum of administrative officials and stakeholders. Notable attendees included: Chairpersons of the Municipal Boards of Digboi, Doomdooma, Sadiya, and Margherita, Leena Pawe, Additional Commissioner of the Revenue Department, Nuzahat Nasrin, Doomdooma Co-District Commis-

Drug peddler apprehended in Biswanath during joint police operation

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, May 23: In a major breakthrough in the ongoing crackdown on drug trafficking, a joint police team from Biswanath and Sootea successfully apprehended a key member of a drug peddling network during a late-night raid on Thursday.

Acting on information provided by two previously arrested peddlers, Jamir Ali and Ikramul Hussain, the team conducted an operation at Kekukali village, Khanamukh, under the Chariduar Police Station. With support from the Khanamukh outpost, police apprehended Nurjama, identified as the mastermind of the drug distribution network.

During the raid, police recovered: 8 containers with 10.69 grams of illegal drugs, an Alto car (Reg. No. AS12A G0659), ₹ 1,07,400 in cash and a mobile phone.

The accused was brought to the Sootea Police Station for further interrogation, confirmed Trilochan Das, Officer-in-Charge of Sootea PS. Investigations are ongoing to uncover the full extent of the network and possible accomplices.

It is noteworthy that minority-dominated areas have been increasingly identified as hotspots for drug trafficking in the region. Local residents and concerned citizens have urged law enforcement agencies to dismantle the entire supply chain and intensify surveillance to curb the growing menace.

World Turtle Day reminds us of our responsibility toward these ancient, often-overlooked creatures

World Turtle Day observed with enthusiasm at Nagsankar Temple

HT Correspondent
BISWANATH CHARIALI, May 23: In a meaningful celebration of World Turtle Day, the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, in collaboration with the Nagsankar Temple Management Committee, TSA Foundation India, WWF, and Aranyak, hosted a vibrant day-long event at the guest house of the historic Nagsankar Temple.

The programme commenced with a soulful Borgeet by Jitashree Ojha Hazarika, followed by a devotional dihanaam by members of Agnigarh Natghar. The welcome address was delivered by Ritu Pawan Bora, AFS, Divisional Forest Officer, Biswanath Wildlife Division, who set the tone for the conservation-centric proceedings.

Rajib Barua, secretary of the Nagsankar temple committee, and Lochan Bora, president of Agnigarh Natghar — both key figures



in turtle conservation at the temple — delivered informative lectures highlighting the types and diversity of turtles sheltered at Nagsankar. The temple, known as a sanctuary for turtles, currently houses 19 distinct turtle species.

Sonali Ghosh, IFS, Field Director of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, underscored

the urgent need to preserve turtle habitats and acknowledged the temple's unique role in conservation efforts. "World Turtle Day reminds us of our responsibility toward these ancient, often-overlooked creatures," she noted.

Gracing the occasion as chief guest, Padma Hazarika, MLA of Naduar, lauded the collaborative

conservation efforts and unveiled a leaflet detailing the various turtle species found at the temple. He called for collective action to protect turtles, citing the success of ongoing hatching and preservation projects in the region.

The event drew attendance from local dignitaries, wildlife enthusiasts, and students from Dakshin Nagsankar and Nagsankar High School. Participation certificates were distributed to students, recognizing their involvement and awareness.

Pallab Hazarika coordinated the programme, while Sushmita Kar, Project Coordinator of TSA Foundation India, offered the vote of thanks, marking a thoughtful close to the event.

The historic Nagsankar Temple, revered not only for its spiritual legacy but also as a natural haven for turtles, remains a symbol of community-driven conservation in Assam.

Rabindranath Tagore University celebrates 75 years of the Indian Constitution

HT Correspondent
HOJAI, May 23: The Department of Political Science at Rabindranath Tagore University, Hojai, organised a commemorative seminar on Friday titled "Samvidhan Ka Amrit Mahotsav: Celebrating 75 Years of the Indian Constitution". The event was part of the ongoing nationwide celebration of the Constitution's 75th anniversary and aimed at highlighting its enduring legacy and relevance.

The seminar was inaugurated with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by Prof. Manabendra Dutta Choudhury, Vice Chancellor of the University, followed by the rendition of the State Anthem. In his inaugural remarks, Prof. Dutta Choudhury paid tribute to the Constitution's framers and lauded the document's resilience. "The Constitution of India has emerged as the most vibrant document governing a nation as vast and diverse as ours. It stands as a guarantee of life and security for our 1.5 billion citizens," he said. "Over the past 75 years, it has matured into an unparalleled guiding force that will continue to lead us through the centuries



ahead." The event commenced with a welcome address by Dr. Prem Sagar Prasad, Head of the Department of Political Science, who elaborated on the seminar's objectives. The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Dijamoni Samrah of the university, offering a foundational perspective for the deliberations that followed.

Seven research scholars presented papers during the technical session, which explored various dimensions of the Indian Constitution. The session was chaired by Dr. P.S. Prasad, and co-chaired by Dr. Akshayjyoti Sarma, Associate Professor in the department. The presentations prompted vibrant

discussions and intellectual engagement among participants.

The seminar drew an audience of approximately 100 attendees, including faculty members, students, and scholars, creating a dynamic academic environment. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Ms. Aprilly Timungpi, followed by the National Anthem. The proceedings were skillfully compered by Dr. Jesmine Ahmed.

This seminar stands as a tribute to the enduring spirit of the Indian Constitution and the university's continued commitment to fostering constitutional literacy and civic awareness among its academic community.

Astronauts as a career choice

By: Ranjan K Baruah

We should always remember that Rakesh Sharma, the first Indian in space, responded to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's inquiry about how India looked from space with the phrase "Saare jahaan se achcha," meaning "better than the rest of the world". In recent years many Indians have been to space but Rakesh Sharma became the first Indian citizen to enter space on 3rd April 1984. He was from the Indian Air force and his rank was Squadron Leader when he went to space.

We are aware that recently NASA's astronauts Sunita Williams, along with her colleague Butch Wilmore have returned to the earth after living and working aboard the International Space Station for 286 days. On 4 October 1957 the first human-

made Earth satellite Sputnik I was launched into outer space, thus opening the way for space exploration. On 12 April 1961, Yuri Gagarin became the first human to orbit the Earth, opening a new chapter of human endeavour in outer space. Valentina Tereshkova became the first woman to orbit the Earth on 16 June 1963, Neil Armstrong becoming the first human to set foot upon the surface of the Moon on 20 July 1969.

The United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/65/271 of 7 April 2011, declared 12th April as the International Day of Human Space Flight "to celebrate each year at the international level the beginning of the space era for mankind, reaffirming the important contribution of space science and technology in achieving sustainable development goals and increasing the

well-being of States and peoples, as well as ensuring the realization of their aspiration to maintain outer space for peaceful purposes."

The General Assembly expressed its deep conviction of the common interest of mankind in promoting and expanding the exploration and use of outer space, as the province of all mankind, for peaceful purposes and in continuing efforts to extend to all States the benefits derived there from.

From the very beginning of the Space Age, the United Nations recognized that outer space added a new dimension to humanity's existence. The United Nations family strives continuously to utilize the unique benefits of outer space for the betterment of all humankind.

Today, the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) is the United Nations

office responsible for promoting international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space. UNOOSA serves as the secretariat for the General Assembly's only committee dealing exclusively with international cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space: the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS).

Careers as astronauts or related to space are always rewarding. Becoming an astronaut in India, particularly with Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), requires a combination of strong academic qualifications, relevant experience, and physical and mental fitness. Aspirants must be from science background. One may also study subjects like Astrophysics apart from engineering to join in space careers like astronauts.

An astronaut is a person who is



trained, equipped, and deployed by a human spaceflight program to serve aboard a spacecraft. Aspirants who opt for a career as an astronaut are a type of scientist who studies primarily on space, which includes topics such as the stars, the planets, and galaxies. Astro-

nauts come from a variety of fields, train for a year or two on the chance of being chosen as a member of a shuttle crew, and then return to their original jobs. In ISRO, we have seen that some of the best officers from the Indian Air Force are chosen as they al-

ready have experience of flying. *(The author is a career mentor and skill trainer and currently Adviser of Skill Employment and Entrepreneurship Department of Bodoland Territorial Council, Kokrajhar and can be reached at 8473943734 or bkranjan@gmail.com)*

Oil India Limited Recruitment 2025 – 7 Contractual Graduate Teacher Posts

Last Date: 5/06/2025 & 6/06/2025

Oil India Limited (OIL) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 7 Contractual Graduate Teacher Vacancy in contractual basis for immediate engagement at Oil India Higher Secondary School (OIHSS), Field Headquarters, Duliajan and Moran. Interested and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Contractual Graduate Teacher (Performing Arts-Dance)
No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification:

(i) Must have passed Bachelor's degree in Performing Arts/Bachelor's degree in Music with specialization in Dance from a Government Recognized University/Institute with minimum 50 % marks.

Desirable: Must have the proficiency of teaching in both English and Assamese medium.

Age Limit:

Minimum: 18 years

Maximum age limit: General: 45 years

Contractual Emolument per month:

Fixed emolument: ₹21,450.00 (Rupees Twenty-One Thousand Four Hundred and Fifty) only per month based on attendance including paid leave, holiday, if any.

Variable emolument: ₹825.00 (Rupees Eight Hundred and Twenty Five) only per day for each working day.

Date and Time of Registration: 05/06/2025, 07:00 A.M. to 09:00 A.M.

2. Contractual Graduate Teacher (Performing Arts-Music)

No of posts: 1

Educational Qualification:

(i) Must have passed Bachelor's degree in Performing Arts/Bachelor degree in Music with specialization in Vocal Music from a Government Recognized University/Institute with minimum 50% marks.

Desirable: Must have the proficiency of teaching in both English and Assamese medium.

Age Limit:

Minimum: 18 years

Maximum age limit: General: 45 years

Contractual Emolument per month:

Fixed emolument: ₹21,450.00 (Rupees Twenty-One Thousand Four Hundred and Fifty) only per month based on attendance including paid leave, holiday, if any.

Variable emolument: ₹825.00 (Rupees Eight Hundred and Twenty Five) only per day for each working day.

Date and Time of Registration: 05/06/2025, 07:00 A.M. to 09:00 A.M.

3. Contractual Graduate Teacher (Physical Education)

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification:

(i) Must have passed Bachelor's degree in Physical Education with minimum 50 % marks from Government Recognized University/Institute.

Desirable: Must have the proficiency of teaching in both English and Assamese medium.

Age Limit:

Minimum: 18 years

Maximum age limit: General: 45 years

Contractual Emolument per month:

Fixed emolument: ₹21,450.00 (Rupees Twenty-One Thousand Four Hundred and Fifty) only per month based on attendance including paid leave, holiday, if any.

Variable emolument: ₹825.00 (Rupees Eight Hundred and Twenty Five) only per day for each working day.

Date and Time of Registration: 06/06/2025, 07:00 A.M. to 09:00 A.M.

4. Contractual Graduate Teacher (Fine Arts)

No of posts: 2

Educational Qualification:

(i) Must have passed Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Government Recognized University/Institute.

Desirable: Must have the proficiency of teaching in both English and Assamese medium.

Age Limit:

Minimum: 18 years

Maximum age limit: General: 45 years

Contractual Emolument per month:

Fixed emolument: ₹21,450.00 (Rupees Twenty-One Thousand Four Hundred and Fifty) only per month based on attendance including paid leave, holiday, if any.

Variable emolument: ₹825.00 (Rupees Eight Hundred and Twenty Five) only per day for each working day.

Date and Time of Registration: 06/06/2025, 07:00 A.M. to 09:00 A.M.

How to Apply for Oil India Limited Recruitment ?

On the above scheduled date of registration, the candidate(s) will have to register themselves for the Walk-in Practical/Skill Test cum Personal Assessment(s) at the venue compulsorily between 07:00 A.M. to 09:00 A.M. Under no circumstance, candidate(s) will be allowed to register beyond the timings stated herein above.

Interested candidate(s) should fill the Personal Bio-Data (given on the last two pages of this advertisement) and bring it along with the following documents on the above scheduled date for the Walk- in-Practical/Skill Test cum Personal Assessment:

(i) 01 (One) recent 3cm X 3cm coloured photograph.

(ii) Original and self-attested photocopy of documents/certificates/testimonials as under:

Valid Identity Proof and valid Address Proof from Competent Government Authority.

Admit Card, Marksheet and Pass Certificate of Class 10 issued by the concerned Government

Recognised Education Board; Document(s)/Certificate(s)/Testimonial(s) of essential qualification, as applicable; relevant Work Experience Certificate; valid Caste Certificate (SC/ST/OBC) from Competent Government Authority, if applicable; valid Non-Creamy Layer Certificate from Competent Government Authority, if applicable; valid Income and Asset Certificate to be produced by Economically Weaker Sections issued by the Competent Government Authority,

if applicable; valid Disability Certificate from Competent Government Authority, if applicable; valid Discharge Book/Service and Release Certificate for Ex-Servicemen (Pages containing Personal Particulars and Service Particulars), if applicable and any other documents/certificates/testimonials from Competent Authority in support of candidature.

(iii). No-Objection Certificate from concerned employer, in original, in case the applicant is working in any organisation.

Gauhati University Recruitment 2025 – 7 Non Teaching Posts

Last Date: 31/05/2025

Gauhati University has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 7 Non Teaching Posts in Gauhati University . Intending and eligible candidates may apply.

1. Principal University Law College

No of posts: 01 Post

Scale of Pay: ₹ 1,44,200 – ₹ 2,18,200 Academic Level 14 plus other allowances as admissible under the rules of the University.

Educational Qualification & Experience:

LL.M, Ph.D. in Law (as per Legal Education rules 2008 of B.C.I.) Rule-16.

Professor/Associate Professor with a total service/ Experience of fifteen years of teaching/research/administration in Universities, Colleges and other institutions of higher education.

A minimum of 110 Research Score as per Appendix II, Table 2 of UGC Notification, New Delhi, the 18th July, 2018.

Age Limit: Should not be below 45 years of age and not more than 55 years of age as on 31/03 /2025.

2. Superintending Engineer

No of posts: 01 Post

Scale of Pay: ₹ 30,000 – ₹ 1,10,000 + GP ₹ 16,900 plus other allowances as admissible under the rules of the University.

Educational Qualification & Experience:

Degree in Civil Engineering or equivalent and serving under Central Government/State Government/ Union Territory Administration.

Holding analogous posts or experience as Dy. Engineer/Executive Engineer for 10 years in regular service in recognized institution.

Experience in Planning, Architecture, Urban Designing/ Management Supervision/ Construction of multi-storied buildings, lecture theatres, laboratories, auditorium, residential quarters/hostels, roads, water supply, sanitary installations etc. is/are desirable.

Age Limit: Not below 45 years and not above 55 years on as on the last date of receipt of application.

3. Information and Statistical Officer

No of posts: 01 Post

Scale of Pay: Pay Band: ₹ 30,000 — ₹ 1,10,000 + Gp ₹ 13,900 plus other allowances as admissible under the rules of the University.

Essential Qualification: Must be a 1st Class Master's degree holder in Statistics/ Mathematics / Data Science / Computer Science or a related field having good academic record with adequate knowledge in computer application, experience in working with statistical software.

Experience:

Experience (2-5 years) in data analysis, research, or statistical reporting within an academic, government or corporate environment.

Experience in data visualization and report generation using tools like Excel, SPSS, & Python, SAS, Power BI or similar.

Experience in handling university-level statistical data, accreditation reports, or institutional research is an advantage.

Age Limit: Below 45 years as on 31/03 /2025.

4. Assistant Librarian

No of posts: 01 Post

Scale of Pay: Pay Band: ₹ 30,000 — ₹ 1,10,000 + Gp ₹ 13,900 plus other allowances as admissible under the rules of the University.

Educational Qualification & Experience:

The candidate for the post must hold at least a Master's degree in Library Science /Information Science / Documentation or an equivalent professional Degree with at least 55% of marks or its equivalent grade with consistently good academic record.

At least five years of working experience in College/University Library System.

Age Limit: Below 45 years as on 31/03 /2025 which may be relaxed in case of internal candidate.

5. Assistant Treasurer

No of posts: 01 Post

Scale of Pay: Pay Band: ₹ 30,000 — ₹ 1,10,000 + Gp ₹ 13,900 plus other allowances as admissible under the rules of the University.

Educational Qualification & Experience:

A post-graduate degree in commerce from a recognized University with at least 55% of marks or its equivalent grade with consistently good academic record.

At least 5 (five) years' experience in the Finance and Accounts department in a responsible post in Govt/Semi Govt. Or Recognized Public Institutions/ Undertakings.

Knowledge of handling financial software.

OR

A graduate degree in commerce from a recognized University.

At least 15 (Fifteen) years' experience in the Finance and Accounts department in a responsible post in a State University of which at least 3 years at Superintendent level with Pay Band: ₹ 30,000 – ₹ 1,10,000 GP ₹ 12700.

Knowledge of handling financial software.

Age Limit: Below 45 years as on 31/03/2025 which may be relaxed in case of internal candidate.

6. Assistant Controller of Examinations

No of posts: 01 Post

Scale of Pay: Pay Band: ₹ 30,000 — ₹ 1,10,000 + Gp ₹ 13,900 plus other allowances as admissible under the rules of the University.

Educational Qualification & Experience:

A post-graduate degree in Arts/ Science/ Commerce of a recognized University with at least 55% of marks or its equivalent grade with consistently good academic record.

At least 2 (Two) years; experience in examination related work in a responsible post in Govt/Semi Govt. Or Recognized Public Institutions/ Undertakings.

Knowledge of examination management systems and software.

Age Limit: Below 45 years as on 31/03 /2025 which may be relaxed in case of internal candidate.

7. Assistant Registrar

No of posts: 01 Post

Scale of Pay: Pay Band: ₹ 30,000 — ₹ 1,10,000 + Gp ₹ 13,900 plus other allowances as admissible under the rules of the University.

Educational Qualification & Experience:

A Post Graduate Degree in Arts/ Science/ Commerce of a recognized University

with at least 55% of marks or its equivalent grade with consistently good academic record.

At least 2 (Two) years' administrative experience in a responsible post in Govt/Semi Govt. Or Recognized Public Institutions/ Undertakings.

Experience in dealing with Establishment, General Administration, Personnel and Financial matters.

Age Limit: Below 45 years as on 31/03/2025 which may be relaxed in case of internal candidate.

Application Fee and Mode of Payment: Applicants for the post will be required to pay an amount of ₹ 1500 (Rupees One Thousand Five Hundred Only). For SC/ST candidates, the application fee is ₹ 750 (Rupees Seven Hundred Fifty) only. The payment mode is online. No other mode of payment will be accepted. Fee once paid shall not be refunded under any circumstances.

How to Apply for Gauhati University Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy through online mode by visiting official GU Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process by clicking "New User ? Register Now".

In the next stage, click on "Online Application Form" Link and Login.

Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.

Make payment of application fee as per your category and submit the form.

After submission of the ONLINE application in the portal a duly signed hard copy (pdf) of the completed application(s) must be submitted to "The Registrar, Gauhati University, Guwahati-781014, Assam" along with all necessary enclosures including the proof of submission of application fee and "No Objection Certificate (NOC)", wherever applicable, by the last date. The envelope containing the application should be superscribed "Application for the post of Principal, University Law College/ Superintending Engineer/ Information and Statistical Officer/Assistant Librarian/Assistant Treasury/Assistant Controller of Examinations/ Assistant Registrar, G.U. (Whichever is applicable) Advt. No. NTS-5/2025".

Important Dates of GU Non-Teaching Posts Recruitment 2025

Starting date of submission of online application: 10th May, 2025

Last date of submission of online application: 31st May, 2025

Last date of submission of hard copy of the application: 6th June 2025 (5:00 pm)

SBI CBO Recruitment 2025 – 2964 Circle Based Officer Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 29/05/2025

State bank of India (SBI) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 2964 Circle Based Officer (CBO) vacancy on regular basis for its various circles across the country. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online.

Name of post: Circle Based Officer

No of posts: 2964 posts

No of posts @ North Eastern Circle: 130 posts

Pay: Presently, the starting basic pay is 48,480/- in the scale of 48480-2000/7-62480-2340/2-67160-2680/7-85920 applicable to Junior Management Grade Scale-I plus 2 advance increments (For work experience of 2 years or more in officer cadre in any Scheduled Commercial Bank/Regional Rural Bank).

Advertisement No: CRPD/ CBO/2025-26/03

Helpdesk: In case of any problem in filling up the form, payment of fee/ intimation charges or receipt of Admission/ call letter, queries may be made at telephone no. 022-22820427 (between 11:00 AM to 05:00 PM on working days) or lodge their query on <http://cgrs.ibps.in>.

Eligibility Criteria of SBI CBO Recruitment

Age Limit: Candidate age should not be below 21 years and Not above 30 years as of 30.04.2025 i.e. candidates must have been born not later than 30.04.2004 and not earlier than 01.05.1995 (both days inclusive).

Age Relaxation: The category wise age relaxation is as mentioned below.

SC: 5 years

ST: 5 years

OBC: 3 years

PwBD/ UR-EWS: 10 years

PwBD/ OBC: 13 years

PwBD/ SC-ST: 15 years

Educational Qualification: Graduation in any discipline from a recognised University or any equivalent qualification recognised as such by the Central Government including Integrated Dual Degree (IDD). Candidates possessing qualifications such as Medical, Engineering, Chartered Accountant, Cost Accountant would also be eligible.

Experience: Minimum 2 years' experience (Post Essential Academic Qualification Experience) as on 30.04.2025 as an officer in any Scheduled Commercial Bank or any Regional Rural Bank as listed in Second Schedule of Reserve Bank of India.

Local Language: The candidates applying for vacancies of a particular Circle, should be proficient (reading, writing and understanding) in any one of the specified opted local language of that Circle (mentioned against each Circle). The test of knowledge of specified opted local language of the applied circle will be conducted as a part of selection process. It will be conducted for provisionally selected candidates (based on performance in online test, Screening and interview) before joining the Bank. Candidate who fails to qualify this test will not be offered appointment. Candidates who produce 10th or 12th standard mark sheet/ certificate evidencing having studied the specified opted local language of the applied circle as one of the subjects will not be required to undergo the language test.

Application Fee:

| Category | Fee |
|--------------|-------|
| UR/ OBC/ EWS | ₹ 750 |
| SC/ ST/ PwBD | Nil |

How to Apply for SBI Recruitment ?

Interested and eligible candidates can apply online through the SBI Career website <https://bank.sbi/careers> or <https://www.sbi.co.in/careers> starting from 9th May 2025 onwards. To apply online they may follow below mentioned steps.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section .

Click on Online Application Form link .

A new webpage will be opened.

Enter all your personal and educational details as required .

Upload your passport sized photograph and signature and other required documents.

Pay the application fee as per your category and at the end click on submit button

Don't forget to take a print of submitted application form .

Important Dates of SBI CBO Recruitment 2025

Starting date of online application submission: 9th May 2025

Last date of online application submission: 29th May 2025

Iran, US hold fifth round of nuclear negotiations in Rome with enrichment key issue

ROME, May 23: Iran and the United States began a fifth round of negotiations over Tehran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme Friday in Rome, with enrichment emerging as the key issue.

US officials up to President Donald Trump insist Iran cannot continue to enrich uranium at all in any deal that could see sanctions lifted on Tehran's struggling economy. Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi early Friday insisted on-line that no enrichment would mean "we do NOT have a deal."

"Figuring out the path to a deal is not rocket science," Araghchi wrote on the social platform X. "Time to decide."

The US is again represented in the talks by Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff and Michael Anton, the State Department's policy planning director. Oman's Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi is mediating the negotiations as the sultanate on the Arabian Peninsula has been a trusted interlocutor by both Tehran and Washington in the talks.

Multiple convoys arrived at the Omani Embassy in Rome's Camilluccia neighborhood just after 1 pm. The embassy previously served as the site of another round of talks. Iranian media just before 2 pm announced the talks had begun, without elaborating.

Enrichment remains key in negotiations

The talks seek to limit Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions the US has imposed on the Islamic Republic, closing in on half a century of enmity.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's programme if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels.

"Iran almost certainly is not producing nuclear weapons, but Iran has undertaken activities in recent years that better position it to produce them, if it chooses to do so," a new report from the US Defence Intelligence Agency said. "These actions reduce the time required to produce sufficient weapons-grade uranium for a first nuclear device to



probably less than one week."

However, it likely still would take Iran months to make a working bomb, experts say.

Enrichment remains the key point of contention. Witkoff at one point suggested Iran could enrich uranium at 3.67%, then later began saying all Iranian enrichment must stop. That position on the American side has hardened over time. Asked about the negotiations, State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said "we believe that we are going to succeed" in the talks and on Washington's push for no enrichment.

"The Iranians are at that table, so they also understand what our position is, and they continue to go," Bruce said Thursday.

One idea floated so far that might allow Iran to stop enrichment in the Islamic Republic but maintain a supply of uranium could be a consortium in the Mideast backed by regional countries and the US.

There also are multiple countries and the International Atomic Energy Agency offering low-enriched uranium that can be used for peaceful purposes by countries.

However, Iran's Foreign Ministry has maintained enrichment must continue within the country's borders and a similar fuel-swap proposal failed to gain traction in negotiations

in 2010.

Meanwhile, Israel has threatened to strike Iran's nuclear facilities on their own if it feels threatened, further complicating tensions in the Mideast already spiked by the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Araghchi warned Thursday that Iran would take "special measures" to defend its nuclear facilities if Israel continues to threaten them, while also warning the US it would view it as being complicit in any Israeli attack. Authorities allowed a group of Iranian students to form a human chain Thursday at its underground enrichment site at Fordo, an area with incredibly tight security built into a mountain to defend against possible airstrikes.

Talks come as US pressure on Iran increases

Yet despite the tough talk from Iran, the Islamic Republic needs a deal. Its internal politics are inflamed over the mandatory hijab, or headscarf, with women still ignoring the law on the streets of Tehran. Rumours also persist over the government potentially increasing the cost of subsidised gasoline in the country, which has sparked nationwide protests in the past.

Iran's rial currency plunged to over 1 million to a US dollar in April. The currency has improved with the talks, however, something Tehran hopes will continue as a further collapse in the rial could spark further economic unrest.

Meanwhile, its self-described "Axis of Resistance" sits in tatters after Iran's regional allies in the region have faced repeated attacks by Israel during its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The collapse of Syrian President Bashar Assad's government during a rebel advance in December also stripped Iran of a key ally.

The Trump administration also has continued to levy new sanctions on Iran, including this week, which saw the US specifically target any sale of sodium perchlorate to the Islamic Republic. Iran reportedly received that chemical in shipments from China at its Shahid Rajaei port near Bandar Abbas. A major, unexplained explosion there killed dozens and wounded over 1,000 others in April during one round of the talks. (AP)

Pakistan met all conditions: IMF on financial assistance to Islamabad

WASHINGTON, May 23: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said its executive board granted USD one billion in assistance to Pakistan this month after finding out that the country met all conditions and targets for it.

The IMF carried out a review of its extended fund facility (EFF) granted to Pakistan in September last year and based on it, the board approved the amount on May 9, said Julie Kozack, a director at global body's communications department.

The IMF executive board approved the fresh assistance to Pakistan notwithstanding New Delhi's apprehensions that the funds could be used for cross-border terrorism. India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on May 16 pressed the IMF to reconsider the financial assistance, saying Islamabad could use a large part of it to fund the terrorist infrastructure.

At a media briefing Kozack, answering a question, said the IMF executive board approved Pakistan's EFF programme in September last year and the first review at that time was planned for the first quarter of 2025.

The fresh assistance was granted following completion of the review, she said.

At the same time, Kozack said any deviation from the established programme conditions would impact future reviews under the Pakistan programme.

"What I want to emphasise here is that it is part of a standard procedure under programs that our executive board conducts periodic reviews of

lending programmes to assess their progress," she said.

"And they particularly look at whether the programme is on track, whether the conditions under the programme have been met, and whether any policy changes are needed to bring the programme back on track."

"And in the case of Pakistan, our Board found that Pakistan had indeed met all of the targets. It had made progress on some of the reforms, and for that reason, the board went ahead and approved the programme," the IMF official said.

On the use of funds, Kozack said the IMF financing is provided to the IMF for the purpose of resolving balance of payments problems.

Generally explaining the case of Pakistan, she said all of the disbursements received under the EFF are allocated to the reserves of the central bank.

"So, those disbursements are at the central bank, and under the programme, those resources are not part of budget financing. They are not transferred to the government to support the budget," she said.

Kozack said the EFF programme provides additional safeguards through "our conditionality".

"And these include, for example, targets on the accumulation of international reserves. It includes a zero target, meaning no lending from the central bank to the government," she said.

"And the programme also includes substantial structural conditionality around improving fiscal management." (PTI)

North Korea denies warship was severely damaged as full investigation underway on its failed launch

SEOUL, May 23: North Korea is seeking to arrest those responsible for the failed launch of its second naval destroyer, as it denied the warship suffered major damage — a claim quickly met with outside skepticism.

A statement from North Korea on its handling of the botched launch came after leader Kim Jong Un expressed fury over an incident that he said was caused by criminal negligence. The main military committee said Friday that those responsible would be held responsible for an "unpardonable criminal act."

Satellite imagery on the site showed vessel lying on its side and draped in blue covers, with parts of it submerged. North Korea says it'll take about 10 days to repair its damage, but outside observers question that timeframe because damage to the ship appeared much worse than what North Korea claims.

Here is what you need to know about the failed ship launch:

How much damage was there to the ship

North Korea's state news agency, KCNA, said Friday that the severity of the damage to the 5,000-ton-class destroyer was "not serious" as it cancelled an earlier assessment that the bottom of the hull had been left with holes.

It said the hull on the starboard side was scratched and some seawater had flowed into the stern section. But it said it'll take a total of 10 days to pump up the seawater, set the ship upright and fix the scratches.

It's almost impossible to verify the assessment because of the extremely secretive nature of North Korea. It has a history of manipulating or covering up military-related setbacks, policy fiascoes and other mishaps, though it has periodically acknowledged some in recent years. Lee Illwoo, an expert with the Korea Defense Network in South Korea, said the North Korean warship likely suffered much worse damage, including the flooding of its engine room located in the stern section, and holes in the starboard. He said North Korea could simply set the ship upright, paint it and claim the ship has been launched, but that repairs could take more than a year as the replacement of an engine requires cutting the hull.

Why the ship's launch failed

According to the North Korean account, the destroyer was damaged when a transport cradle on the ship's stern detached early during a launch ceremony at the northeastern port of Chongjin on Wednesday.

Moon Keun-sik, a navy expert who teaches at Seoul's Hanyang University, said North Korean workers are probably not familiar with launching a 5,000-ton-class warship, which is nearly three times heavier

than its existing main navy ships.

Observers say North Korea tried to launch the destroyer sideways, a method it has never used for warships, although it has previously employed it with big cargo and passenger ships.

Compared with those non-military vessels, Lee said it would be more difficult to maintain balance with the destroyer because it's equipped with heavy weapons systems. He suspected North Korean scientists and workers likely did not factor that in.

How Kim has reacted

The damaged ship is assessed as the same class as North Korea's first destroyer, launched with great fanfare last month with a floating dry dock at a western shipyard. It is North Korea's biggest and most advanced warship to date, and Kim called its construction "a breakthrough" in modernizing North Korea's naval forces to cope with what he calls US-led security threats.

Subsequently, a failure to launch the second destroyer was an embarrassment for Kim. But by disclosing it to both internally and externally, Kim could be trying to show his resolve in modernizing naval forces and boost discipline at home. He ordered officials to thoroughly investigate the case and repair the warship before a high-level ruling Workers' Party meeting in late June.

North Korea said Friday the country's Central Military Commission summoned Hong Kil Ho, manager of the Chongjin shipyard, as it begun its investigation of the failed launch.

"No matter how good the state of the warship is, the fact that the accident is an unpardonable criminal act remains unchanged, and those responsible for it can never evade their responsibility for the crime," the commission said, according to state media.

Kim Dong-yub, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said North Korea appears to be using the failed launch as a chance to strengthen the ruling party's control over science and technological sectors. Lee Choon Geun, an honorary research fellow at South Korea's Science and Technology Policy Institute, said that North Korea's handling of the damaged warship could have long-term consequences for its defense science sector, especially if military scientists face harsh punishment.

"If scientists are held severely accountable, I would say the future of North Korea's defense science doesn't look very bright, as it would be a sign that political responsibility is being prioritized over technical accountability," Lee wrote on Facebook. (AP)

UK agrees to hand the Chagos Islands to Mauritius in a deal it says protects a key US base

LONDON, May 23: Britain signed an agreement Thursday to hand sovereignty over the contested Chagos Islands to Mauritius, a move the government says ensures the future of a U.S.-U.K. military base that is vital to British security.

The Indian Ocean archipelago is home to a strategically important naval and bomber base on the largest of the islands, Diego Garcia.

Under the agreement, the U.K. will pay Mauritius an average of 101 million pounds (USD 136 million) a year to lease back the base for at least 99 years.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that base, operated by U.S. forces, is crucial for British counterterrorism and intelligence and is "right at the foundation of our safety and security at home."

"By agreeing to this deal now on our terms, we're securing strong protections, including from malign influence, that will allow the base to operate well into the next century, helping to keep us safe for generations to come," Starmer told reporters at a U.K. military headquarters in Northwood, near London.

Critics of the deal, which must be approved by Parliament, argue that giving up the islands, which have been British territory for two centuries, puts

them at risk of interference by foreign powers such as Russia or China.

Conservative defense spokesman James Cartledge called the deal a "total, abject surrender of our territory and a fundamental betrayal of the U.K. national interest."

The agreement was struck in the face of opposition from some of the islands' original residents, who were expelled decades ago to make way for the base.

The agreement was due to be signed by Starmer and Mauritius leader Navin Ramgoolam at a virtual ceremony on Thursday morning. But signing was delayed for several hours after a U.K. judge imposed a last-minute injunction blocking the transfer at the behest of two Chagossian campaigners. The injunction was later lifted by another judge.

Displaced islanders have fought unsuccessfully in U.K. courts for years for the right to go home. Chagos-born Bernadette Dugasse and Bertrice Pompe, who brought the latest legal challenge, fear it will become even harder to return to their birthplace once Mauritius takes control.

The deal establishes a trust fund to benefit the Chagossians and says "Mauritius is free to imple-

ment a program of resettlement" on the islands, other than Diego Garcia. But it does not require the residents to be resettled.

Pompe said it was "a very sad day," but vowed to continue fighting.

"The rights we are asking for now, we have been fighting for for 60 years," she said outside the High Court. "Mauritius is not going to give that to us."

One of the last remnants of the British Empire, the Chagos Islands have been under U.K. control since 1814. Britain split the islands away from Mauritius, a former British colony, in 1965, three years before Mauritius gained independence.

Britain evicted as many as 2,000 people from the islands in the 1960s and 1970s so the U.S. military could build the Diego Garcia base, which has supported U.S. operations from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan. It has facilities to accommodate nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers and large airplanes, and plays a key role in U.S. intelligence-gathering.

Mauritius has long contested Britain's claim to the archipelago, and the United Nations and its top court have urged Britain to return the Chagos to Mauritius, around 2,100 kilometers (1,250 miles) southwest of the islands. (AP)

All party delegation in Japan highlights India's unified stance

TOKYO, May 23: An Indian Parliamentary delegation on Friday highlighted India's unified and determined stance against terrorism, as it met members of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party. The all-party delegation led by JD(U) MP Sanjay Jha is in Japan to sensitise global leadership about terror emanating from Pakistan, a month after the Pahalgalam attack that left 26 people dead. "All-Party Delegation from India met Mr Yasuhiro Hanashi, Acting Chairperson of the Research Committee on Counter-terrorism of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Former Minister of Justice, India's unified and determined stance against terrorism in all its forms was highlighted. Both sides reiterated their zero-tolerance approach to terrorism," the Embassy of India in Japan posted on X.

The delegation also held fruitful interaction with Minoru Kihara, Former Defence Minister of Japan, and Shinako Tsuchiya, Director General of the International Bureau, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). "India's strong resolve to fight every form of terrorism was reiterated," it said.

The delegation that Jha is leading is one of the seven multi-party delegations to 33 global capitals to reach out to the international community on Pakistan's designs and India's response to terror, especially in view of the April 22 Pahalgalam terror attack that killed 26 people. On Thursday, the delegation met Japan's Foreign Minister Takeshi Iwaya. The Japanese Foreign Minister reiterated Japan's support to India's fight against terrorism and expressed appreciation for the restraint shown by the Indian side, it added.

The delegation later met Yoshihide Suga, former prime minister of Japan, currently Vice President of the Liberal Democratic Party and chairman of the Japan-India Association. The MPs also met Takashi Endo, chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on National Security, Japan. The delegation also interacted with leading Japanese think tanks and briefed them on India's zero tolerance policy on terrorism, the Embassy said and added, the participants at the interaction expressed strong support for India's efforts to combat terrorism. (AP)

Congo lifts immunity of ex prez Kabila over his alleged support of rebels

KINSHASA (CONGO) May 23: Congo's senate has voted overwhelmingly to lift former President Joseph Kabila of his parliamentary immunity, paving the way for his prosecution over his alleged support of a rebel insurgency in the country's east. "The Senate authorizes the prosecution and lifting of Joseph Kabila's immunity," Senate speaker Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde said Thursday after the vote.

Kabila has not commented on his immunity being lifted. Justice Minister Constant Mutamba said the former president is accused of "treason, war crimes, crimes against humanity and participation in an insurrectional movement" in the country's east.

Earlier this month the attorney general of Congo's army asked the Senate to revoke the lifetime immunity from prosecution that Kabila enjoyed because of his honorific title as senator for life.

The decades-long conflict in eastern Congo escalated in January when the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels advanced and seized the strategic city of Goma, followed by the town of Bukavu, which they took in February. (AP)

Trump administration revokes Harvard's eligibility to enrol foreign students, impacting students from India, elsewhere

NEW YORK, May 23: The Trump administration has revoked Harvard University's eligibility to enrol foreign students, raising concerns over the legal status of thousands of students, including nearly 800 from India, currently enrolled at the varsity.

In an unprecedented development, the Trump administration on Thursday ordered the Department of Homeland Security to terminate Harvard University's Student and Exchange Visitor Programme (SEVP) certification.

"This means Harvard can no longer enrol foreign students and existing foreign students must transfer or lose their legal status," the federal agency said.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said in a letter dated May 22 to Harvard University that "I am writing to inform you that effective immediately, Harvard University's Student and Exchange Visitor Programme certification is revoked."

The development also threatens to impact the students from India, who are studying at Harvard University. Currently, Harvard hosts a total of about 10,158 students and scholars from around the world across its schools.

According to statistics on the website of Harvard International Office, there are 788 students and scholars from India at all schools under Harvard University for the 2024-25 academic year.

The Harvard Global Support Services said on its website that each year, anywhere from 500-800 Indian students and scholars study

at Harvard.

Ajay Bhutoria, former advisor to President Joe Biden on the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Commission told PTI in a statement that as an Indian-American committed to fostering opportunity for the community and a strong advocate for immigration policies under the Biden administration, he is "deeply outraged" by the Trump administration's decision.

He said Indian students contribute over USD 9 billion annually to the US economy and strengthen the cultural and economic ties between the two nations, often going on to lead innovation in tech, medicine, and beyond.

"This policy directly threatens over 500 Indian students at Harvard, forcing them to transfer or leave the US before the next academic year begins. These students, who represent the brightest minds from cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru, have invested their dreams, finances and futures in a Harvard education—only to have their aspirations shattered by a politically motivated attack," Bhutoria said.

He added that the additional demand by the Department of Homeland Security for protest footage and disciplinary records is a "blatant attempt" to intimidate and silence students, particularly those engaged in activism.

"This is not the America we stand for—an America that should be a beacon of opportu-



nity, not a place of fear for young scholars," Bhutoria said. He added that the termination of Harvard's SEVP certification sends a "chilling message" to Indian students and the broader South Asian diaspora that "your contributions are not valued."

"By targeting Harvard, the Trump administration risks driving talent to countries like Canada and the UK, weakening US-India relations at a time when collaboration is more critical than ever," he said.

Bhutoria called on the administration to reverse this decision immediately and urged the Biden-era allies in Congress to "fight for our students' rights. To the Indian government and our community: let us unite in advocacy, amplify these students' voices, and ensure that education remains a bridge, not

a barrier, between our nations."

Noem said in the letter that the revocation of Harvard's Student and Exchange Visitor Programme certification means that Harvard is prohibited from having persons on F or J non-immigrant visa status for the 2025-26 academic school year.

"This decertification also means that existing aliens on F or J non-immigrant status must transfer to another university in order to maintain the non-immigrant status," she said.

The F-1 Visa (Academic Student) allows individuals to enter the United States as a full-time student at an accredited college, university, academic high school or other academic institution. J visas are nonimmigrant visas for individuals approved to participate

in exchange visitor programmes in the United States.

Harvard said that the University is aware of the US Department of Homeland Security order to terminate Harvard's Student and Exchange Visitor Programme (SEVP) certification for the 2025-26 academic year.

"Harvard is committed to maintaining our ability to host our international students and scholars, who hail from more than 140 countries and enrich the University and this nation," it said.

The announcement comes just days before thousands of foreign students are set to graduate at Harvard. The new academic session will begin in the fall.

Noem said in the letter that if "Harvard would like the opportunity of regaining" its SEVP certification before the upcoming academic school year, it "must provide all of the information requested" within 72 hours.

Harvard is required to provide any and all records, whether official or informal, in its possession, including electronic records and audio or video footage regarding illegal activity, dangerous or violent activity, threats to other students or University personnel, deprivation of rights of other classmates or University personnel, whether on or off campus by a nonimmigrant student enrolled in Harvard University in the last five years.

The university is also required to provide any and all disciplinary records of all non-immigrant students enrolled in Harvard University in the last five years and any and all

audio or video footage in the possession of Harvard University of any protest activity involving a nonimmigrant student on a Harvard University campus in the last five years.

DHS further said that Harvard's leadership has created an "unsafe campus environment by permitting anti-American, pro-terrorist agitators to harass and physically assault individuals, including many Jewish students, and otherwise obstruct its once-venerable learning environment."

"Many of these agitators are foreign students. Harvard's leadership further facilitated and engaged in coordinated activity with the Chinese Communist Party, including hosting and training members of a CCP paramilitary group complicit in the Uyghur genocide," it said.

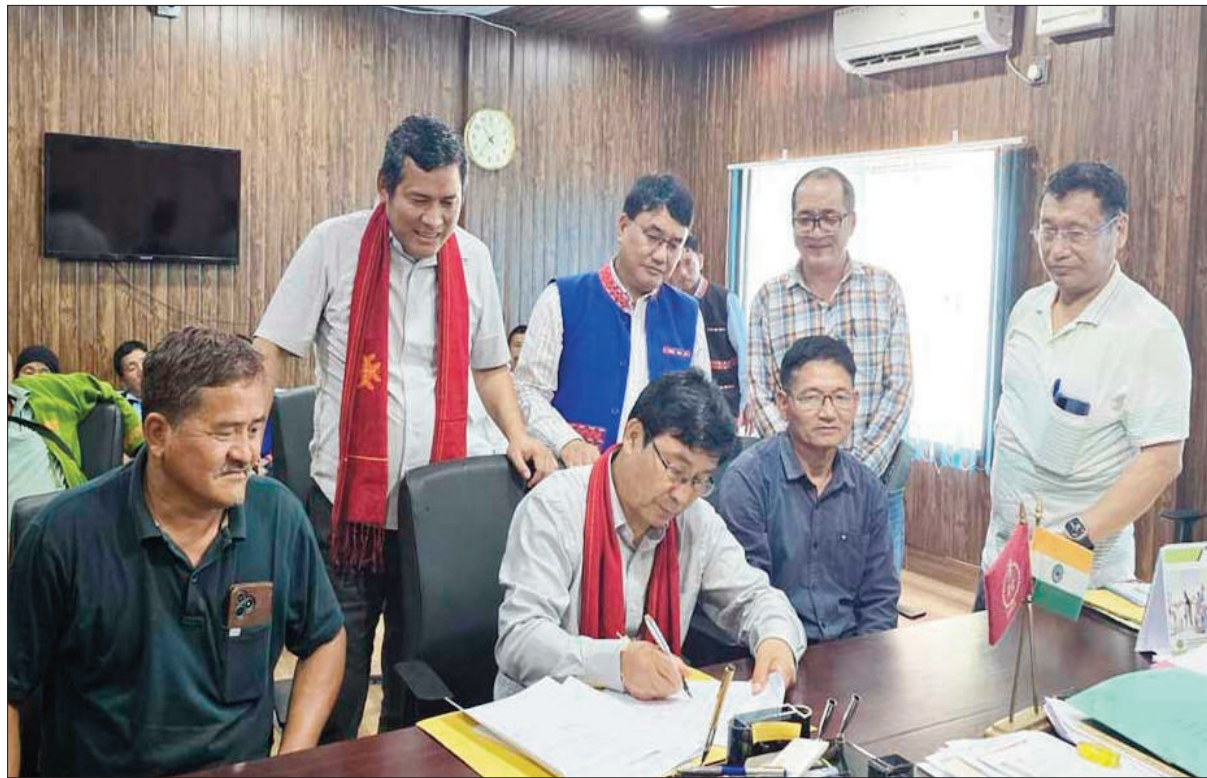
Noem said the Trump administration is holding Harvard accountable for fostering violence, antisemitism, and coordinating with the Chinese Communist Party on its campus.

"It is a privilege, not a right, for universities to enrol foreign students and benefit from their higher tuition payments to help pad their multibillion-dollar endowments," she said.

"Harvard had plenty of opportunities to do the right thing. It refused. They have lost their Student and Exchange Visitor Programme certification as a result of their failure to adhere to the law. Let this serve as a warning to all universities and academic institutions across the country." (PTI)

Landmark step towards water security and strategic sovereignty

Villagers embrace visionary Siang Upper Multipurpose Project



HT Bureau
NAMSAL, May 23: In a significant stride towards ensuring water security, regional development, and national

strategic resilience, the villagers of Pangkang (Kumku) in Siang District have formally partnered with the Government of Arunachal Pradesh through

the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to initiate the Preliminary Feasibility Report (PFR) for the ambitious Siang Upper Multipurpose

Project (SUMP).

The ceremony, set against the pristine natural beauty of the Siang Valley, was more than a procedural formality—it symbolized a landmark moment in government-community collaboration. The event underscored the collective vision for long-term socioeconomic development, while also serving as a strategic move in response to broader regional challenges related to water governance and national security.

The signing of the MoU was witnessed by several dignitaries and senior officials. Among those present were Minister for Panchayati Raj, State Transport and Cooperation, Ojing Tasing, Joint Secretary for Hydro Power, Hage Lailang, Chief Engineer of Hydropower, Atek Miyu, and BJP Arunachal Pradesh General Secretary and Special Emisary of the Government, Nalong Mize. Representing the local community were village leaders Taba Tamut and Bakin Tali, who signed the MoU on behalf of the people of Pangkang (Kumku), reflecting the consensus and support of the majority of villagers.

The Deputy Commissioner of Siang District, P N Thungon, signed the MoU on behalf of the state government. Speaking on the occasion, DC Thungon praised the villagers for their vision,

wisdom, and maturity, emphasizing that their cooperation represents a new chapter in participatory development and responsible stewardship of natural resources. "This is not only about power or water. It is about harnessing the potential of River Siang for the collective prosperity of the local area, the state, and the nation," he stated.

According to the provisions laid out in the MoU, the government will roll out a development package worth ₹5 crore over a period of three years. A Village Development Committee (VDC), comprising members from families likely to be affected by the proposed project, will be constituted to manage and implement various welfare schemes under this package. These initiatives are aimed at enhancing village infrastructure, improving health services, and generating sustainable livelihoods, ensuring that the community remains at the heart of the development process.

Importantly, the MoU guarantees continued engagement with local stakeholders throughout the progression of the project. This reflects the government's commitment to inclusive planning, where the voices, concerns, and aspirations of the local population are incorporated into all stages of project development.

While the project remains in the feasibility assessment phase, the SUMP is

widely regarded as a multi-dimensional initiative. It holds the promise of not only clean and sustainable hydroelectric energy but also regional economic upliftment. In addition, it is strategically conceived to counterbalance the rapid construction of dams by China on the upstream Yarlung Tsangpo (known downstream as the Siang River in India). With growing concerns over the geopolitical implications of upstream water infrastructure in Tibet, the SUMP is envisioned as a critical buffer—helping to mitigate the risks of sudden water discharges, regulate seasonal river flow, and support agricultural productivity, drinking water supply, and ecological stability in India's Northeast.

The signing of the MoU marks a vital step in exploring the viability of what could become a transformative project for Arunachal Pradesh and beyond. It demonstrates the potential of government-community cooperation in tackling both local development challenges and strategic national concerns through responsible and visionary planning.

As preparations for the PFR commence, the mood in Pangkang (Kumku) is one of cautious optimism, rooted in the belief that development, when inclusive and transparent, can bring sustainable prosperity without compromising community interests or environmental values.

Closing ceremony of State Level School Games in Lathao

HT Bureau
NAMSAL, May 23: The closing ceremony of the 2nd edition of the State Level School Games Kho-Kho Championship 2025, for both Under-17 Boys and Girls categories, was held with great enthusiasm and fanfare at the Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Ground, Lathao, marking a grand culmination of days of spirited sporting competition among school teams from across Arunachal Pradesh. The event was graced by a host of dignitaries, with Member of Legislative Assembly (HMLA) from Namsai, Chau Zingnu Namchoom, attending as the Chief Guest. Zilla Parishad Chairperson (ZPC) of Namsai, Nang Urmila Manchehykhun, was present as the Guest of Honour, adding significance to the closing ceremony with her presence.

Also attending the event as Special Guests were Tanyang Tatak, Joint Director of School Education, Itanagar, and Anuradh Mantaw, General Secretary of the Tai Khamti Development Society (TKDS). The dignitaries were joined by Deputy Commissioner of Namsai, CR Khampa, as well as Heads of Departments (HoDs), District Deputy Director of School Education (DDSE), Gaon Burah (GB) of Lathao, and other local officials and stakeholders, whose presence underscored the importance of sports in

youth development and education. The championship, which saw participation from multiple districts across the state, concluded with East Siang district emerging as the overall champion in both the boys and girls categories of the Under-17 Kho-Kho competition.

In the U-17 Boys category, the team from East Siang secured the first position, showcasing excellent teamwork, agility, and sportsmanship. The second position was clinched by Lohit district, followed by Namsai district, which took the third place.

Similarly, in the U-17 Girls category, East Siang continued its dominance and secured the top position, reaffirming its status as a strong contender in school-level sports. Namsai district claimed the second position, while Lohit district secured the third spot in this highly competitive category.

The dignitaries lauded the efforts of all participating teams, coaches, and organizers for making the event a success. They also emphasized the role of sports in fostering discipline, teamwork, and physical fitness among school-going children. The presence of senior officials from the education department and local administration served to inspire the young athletes and reinforced the commitment of the state towards encouraging youth participation in sports.

Memo to Labour Minister demanding retired casual/contingency workers family members engagement

HT Bureau
NAMSAL, May 23: The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), Arunachal Pradesh unit, on Thursday submitted a memorandum to the Minister of Labour & Employment, raising a significant demand on behalf of casual and contingency workers across various government departments. The organization urged the state government to mandate the compulsory engagement of family members of those casual or contingency workers who have retired without receiving any retirement benefits.

In the memorandum, the BMS expressed concern over the difficulties and hardships faced by individuals who had served under casual or contingency employment schemes and have since retired. The union pointed out that these retired workers are not entitled to the retirement benefits typically extended to regular employees, which places them in an even more vulnerable financial position post-retirement. According to the BMS, many such workers, after years of service, are now living in worse financial conditions than they did during their employment due to the absence of any pension or post-retirement security.

The BMS emphasized that these workers, despite contributing significantly to their respective departments and the functioning of the state government over many years, are left without a safety net once their services are terminated upon reaching retirement



age. The organization highlighted that the issue is widespread and has become a source of deep concern among departmental workers and their families.

In response to this ongoing problem, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, on behalf of the affected workers, has requested the government to adopt a cabinet resolution that would ensure the automatic and compulsory appointment of family members—such as sons or daughters—of the retired casual or contingency workers to vacant casual or contingency (MTS) positions. This measure, the BMS argued, should be applied particularly in cases where the retiring workers have not received any form of retirement benefit or pension under existing schemes.

The BMS stated that such a policy would bring much-needed relief to the families of

the retired workers and would help maintain continuity of livelihood for those who have devoted their lives to public service under less secure employment categories.

Speaking to the media, BMS President Ringu Chapo revealed that the organization had also submitted a two-point charter of demands along with the memorandum. One of the demands calls for the enhancement of the current retirement benefit of ₹3,00,000 (Three Lakhs), which was recently announced by the state government, to a more substantial amount of ₹10,00,000 (Ten Lakhs).

While the BMS welcomed the recent government order (No. SE/APEC-I/E-V/WC-52/2015-16/5559-62) dated 31/03/2016, which formally fixed the superannuation age of casual and contingency

workers at 60 years, it maintained that the currently sanctioned retirement benefit of ₹3 lakh is grossly inadequate. The union emphasized that, considering the long years of hard service rendered by these workers—often under challenging conditions—the sum of ₹3 lakh is not enough to provide any meaningful financial support post-retirement.

In its statement, the BMS further reiterated that many of these retired workers have served the departments and the state government with commitment and loyalty throughout their working lives. Yet, the lack of proper retirement security leaves them financially helpless once they step down from service. The organization contended that an enhanced retirement benefit of ₹10 lakh would enable these individuals to start a small business or support themselves and their families in their remaining years.

The BMS concluded by urging the state government to consider its demands seriously and act promptly to address the issues faced by retired casual and contingency workers. It also expressed gratitude for the state's current initiatives and extended appreciation to the dynamic leadership that has been steering the government, while calling for more robust and inclusive welfare measures for irregularized workers who form a significant part of the state's workforce.

Empowering women farmers and strengthening agro-enterprises in Arunachal Pradesh

Kenna Women FPC delivers 8 MT of Ginger to X5 Agrotech, cumulative supply reaches 29 MT

HT Bureau
NAMSAL, May 23: In a progressive stride toward women-led agribusiness and rural empowerment, Kenna Women Farmer Producer Company Ltd. (Kenna WFPCL), Pasighat, successfully delivered 8 Metric Tonnes (MT) of high-quality ginger to X5 Agrotech Farm Producer Company Ltd., Namsai, on May 21, 2025. With this latest consignment, Kenna WFPCL has now delivered a total of 29 MT of ginger, underscoring its growing role in fostering sustainable agricultural value chains in Arunachal Pradesh.

The initiative, spearheaded by Mimbar Basar, CEO of Kenna WFPCL, is being efficiently managed by a dedicated team, including Lee Ete (Procurement Manager), Mipi Doko (Area Procurement Officer, East Siang District), Jacob Midak Basar (Area Procurement Officer, Leparada District), and Bege Gara (Area Procurement Officer, Siang District). Their coordinated efforts are supported and guided by Jarbom Taipodia, District Mission Manager, DMMU Pangin, under the Arunachal State Rural Livelihoods Mission (Ar-



SRLM).

This recent supply chain success has had direct economic benefits for 11 women members from Self-Help Groups (SHGs) based in Mebo and Mariyang, contributing to the creation of sustainable livelihoods and enterprise opportunities for rural women through collective farming and market integration.

The delivery highlights the growing impact of women-led farmer producer companies (FPCs) in

strengthening agricultural economies and expanding market access for tribal farmers. By focusing on high-value crops like ginger, orange, and pineapple, Kenna WFPCL is not only enhancing income generation but also contributing to the development of robust farm-to-market ecosystems across the region.

Kenna WFPCL is implemented under the aegis of Arunachal Pradesh State Rural Livelihoods Mission (APSRLM) in collaboration with the Foundation for Development of Rural Value Chains (FDRVC), which acts as a technical support agency. The company aims to empower women farmers and their SHGs by providing assured market access, fair pricing mechanisms, and capacity building support, thereby ensuring that rural communities can participate effectively in the agri-value chain.

This latest milestone reinforces the commitment of Kenna WFPCL and its partners to the vision of inclusive, community-driven development and sets a model for scalable rural enterprise initiatives across the state and beyond.

AMSU felicitates school toppers at Zomkhang Hall with support from MLA Namgay Tsering

HT Bureau
NAMSAL, May 23: In an inspiring celebration of academic excellence and student achievement, the All Monpa Students Union (AMSU) organized a grand felicitation ceremony at the Zomkhang Hall in Tawang on Friday honoring top-performing students from Classes V, VIII, X, and XII. The event, held amidst much enthusiasm and community pride, saw participation from students across both government and private educational institutions.

The initiative, sponsored by MLA of Tawang, Namgay Tsering, aimed to recognize and reward young achievers for their outstanding performance in the recent State and CBSE board examinations, while also serving to encourage a culture of academic diligence and aspiration among students across the district.

The awardees were presented with trophies and cash prizes as tokens of appreci-

ation for their hard work, commitment, and excellence in studies. The ceremony was attended by several eminent personalities and dignitaries, including Dy SP Tawang Taso Kato, DDSE Tawang Hridar Phuntso, Secretary General of Monpa Mimang Tsogpa (MMT) Rinchin Norbu, President of MMT Tawang Pema Chowang, Secretary General of the Tawang Monpa Employees Society (TMES) Kesang Norbu, and District BJP President Lhundup Choising, among others. Also present were officers, student union leaders, parents, and members of the wider student community.

In his keynote address, MLA Namgay Tsering extended his heartfelt congratulations to the toppers and their proud families. Commending the students for their remarkable accomplishments, he emphasized that hard work, sincerity, and discipline are the foundational pillars of success. "There are no shortcuts to success. Your ef-

forts today lay the groundwork for a promising tomorrow," he stated.

The MLA also took the opportunity to express his appreciation for DDSE Tawang and the teaching fraternity, applauding their dedication and tireless efforts in shaping the intellectual and moral foundations of the region's youth. Recognizing the broader challenges faced by students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, he pledged continued support for their pursuit of higher education, assuring that no deserving student should be left behind due to financial constraints.

Apart from academics, Tsering encouraged holistic development, urging students to actively participate in sports and games, both for physical wellness and as potential professional avenues. "A well-rounded education includes not only intellectual pursuits but also physical, emotional, and social growth," he remarked.

| E-AUCTION FOR MULTIPURPOSE STALLS ASSETS OVER LUMDING DIVISION | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E-Auction for 4 nos. Multipurpose Stalls (MPS) Assets at Haibargaon Railway Station over Lumding Division. Rate Unit: Annual Licensing Fee. Trips/Days. 1826. | | |
| Auction Catalogue No. MPS-LMG-03-25 | | |
| Seq No. | Lot No./Category | Description |
| AA/1 | MPS-LMG-HBN-MPS-97-25-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls) | Provision of Multi Purpose stall (Stall No. HBNMPS-1) at Platform No. 1 of Haibargaon Railway station for a period of Five (5) years only (Unreserved category). |
| AA/2 | MPS-LMG-HBN-MPS-100-25-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls) | Provision of Multi Purpose stall (Stall No. HBNMPS-4) at circulating area of Haibargaon Railway station for a period of Five (5) years only (reserved for Women). |
| AA/3 | MPS-LMG-HBN-MPS-98-25-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls) | Provision of Multi Purpose stall (Stall No. HBNMPS-2) at Platform No. 1 of Haibargaon Railway station for a period of Five (5) years only (Unreserved category). |
| AA/4 | MPS-LMG-HBN-MPS-99-25-1 (MPS - Multi Purpose Stalls) | Provision of Multi Purpose stall (Stall No. HBNMPS-3) at circulating area of Haibargaon Railway station for a period of Five (5) years only (Reserved for Minorities). |
| Auction Start Date & Time: 11.00 hrs. of 03-06-2025. Auction Close Date & Time: 12.00 hrs. of 03-06-2025. Prospective bidders are requested to visit E-Auction Leasing Module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in | | |
| Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager, Lumding | | |
| NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY Serving Customers With A Smile | | |

No. TDB/6* FCI/108/2024-25/241

Date- 22/05/2025

INVITATION FOR BIDS

The Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block, Dist-Tamulpur, BTC, Assam invites bid affixing non-refundable Court fee Stamp of Rs.8.25(Rupees Eight and Twenty Five Paisa) only from the approved and eligible contractor Class-I (A,B,C), Class-II or Class-III category registered with Assam PWD (R&B)/Irrigation Deptt. for the following work under P&RD Deptt. under 6th FC for the year 2023-24 during 2025-26. Tender Box will be available for dropping tender in the Office of the Block Development Officer, Tamulpur Development Block from 23/05/2025 up to 2.00 PM on 13/06/2025 (if any holidays or Bandh falls then the subsequent day) and the tender box will be opened at the same day on 3.00 PM in same office.

| Sl. No. | Name of work | Tender value (In Lakh) | Time of Completion |
|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 | Construction of Slab culvert at Hazong Basti under No.2 Dakhin Kumarkata. | 7.00 | 90 days |
| 2 | Construction of Slab culvert at Dakhin Kumarkata near Radha Gobinda under No.1 Dakhin Kumarkata VDC. | 7.00 | |
| 3 | Construction of Slab Culvert at Dakhin Kumarkata Village under No.1 Dakhin Kumarkata VDC. | 6.00 | |
| 4 | Construction of Slab Culvert at Dindangpan (Bwithiman) village under No.1 Dakhin Kumarkata VDC. | 5.00 | |
| 5 | Improvement of Road Durga Bhoonet House to Khairani Sub-Centre under 2 No. Paschim Kumarkata VDC. | 7.00 | |

- Tender cost @ 0.03% of A/A amount to be pledged by Bank draft in favour of Principal Secretary, BTC.
- Earnest money @2% (Increase of ST/SC 1%) of estimated value to be pledged by demand draft/FDR in favour of B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block.
- Bidders are specifically requested to inspect the field and study the working condition before submitting their offer/bid. Details NIT may be seen at Office of the B.D.O Tamulpur Development Block, Tamulpur, Dist- Tamulpur.

Sd/-Block Development Officer
Tamulpur Development Block, Tamulpur

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/473

Ensuring social justice Cong's ideological commitment, not poll issue: Kharge to party spokespersons

'Want the central government to also adopt a similar public-oriented and transparent model'

NEW DELHI, May 23: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday urged party spokespersons to take the message of social justice to the people fearlessly and treat it as an ideological commitment and not an election issue.

In a message to the spokespersons at their workshop on social justice, he said it is their responsibility to take the issue to the grassroots and create awareness on it among the masses.

Calling the party spokespersons as the voice of our thoughts, he said today, when the country is becoming aware of the caste census, it is our responsibility to take this topic to the public with facts, with sensitivity, and without fear.

"This is not only a fight for social justice but also a fight to protect the soul of the Constitution. I appeal to you not to consider this campaign as just an election issue, it is our ideological commitment. Today's dialogue is a proof of our unity in this direction," Kharge said in his video message.

"My best wishes to all of you for this historic effort. Let us together build an India where the identity, dignity and rights of every citizen are equally respected," he stressed.

"This workshop is not just a program, it is a continuation of our thoughts and struggle. Today, when the country is talking about caste justice, it is the responsibility of the



Congress party to give direction to this discussion, take it from slogan to policy, and make 'Jitna Aabadi Utina Haq' not just a slogan but a national resolution," the Congress chief also said.

He said the issue of caste census is not new and the Congress has constantly raised it, in our manifestos, in Parliament, on the streets, and on every platform where social justice should be talked about.

He said he himself had written a letter to the Prime Minister in April 2023 reiterating the demand that caste census should be started immediately. In that letter, he said he had clearly said that "until we have the correct data, no government can claim that it is providing justice to everyone".

"Today we have to ask, what is the participation of OBC, Dalit and Adivasi communities in the power structures of the country? Are they represented in proportion to their population in the media, bureaucracy, judiciary, corporate sector and higher education institutions? If not, what is the reason for this? And what is the solution?"

"The solution is to bring out the truth, make the data public, and then rebuild policies. This is why we consider caste census not just a statistical exercise but a moral obligation of Indian democracy," he said.

Kharge also said the party also has to clearly demand that Article 15 (5) of the Constitution be implemented immediately, so that OBC,

Dalit and Adivasi students get reservation in private educational institutions.

Today, when a large part of education is concentrated in the private sector, denying these communities that access is a form of exploitation, he noted, adding that the Congress believes that no society can be equal without equal opportunity in education.

"We must also ensure that the 50 per cent reservation limit is now reconsidered in the light of new data. When social realities have changed and data is presenting a new picture, our policies must also change accordingly. The current limit of reservation should be seen with a balance of both data and justice, so that OBC, Dalit and tribal communities can get their real rights," he also asserted.

He said the caste survey conducted in Telangana presented a model in which society, experts and the government all participated.

"We want the central government to also adopt a similar public-oriented and transparent model. We are ready to cooperate in this process," Kharge noted.

The central government has already announced that it will conduct the caste enumeration as part of the next census exercise, coming ahead of the Bihar assembly elections slated later this year, where caste is a dominant issue. (PTI)

Rahul takes swipe at Jaishankar, says India's foreign policy has collapsed



NEW DELHI, May 23: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday claimed that India's foreign policy has "collapsed" and asked External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar to explain why India has been hyphenated with Pakistan and who asked US President Donald Trump to "mediate" between the two South Asian neighbours.

Gandhi tagged a post by the Congress which carried a video clip of Jaishankar answering questions on the Pahalgam terror attack and the subsequent tensions between India and Pakistan, during an interview with Dutch broadcaster NOS.

"Will JJ explain: Why has India been hyphenated with Pakistan? Why didn't a single country back us in condemning Pakistan? Who asked Trump to 'mediate' between India & Pakistan?" Gandhi said.

"India's foreign policy has collapsed," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha claimed.

Gandhi on Thursday had accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of having compromised with India's prestige and asked him why he sacrificed the nation's interests by agreeing to halting of military hostilities against Pakistan.

"Modi ji, stop giving hollow speeches. Just tell: Why did you believe Pakistan's statement on terrorism? Why did you sacrifice India's interests by bowing to Trump? Why does your blood boil only in front of cameras? You have compromised with the prestige of India!," he had said in a post on X.

Congress leaders have been hitting out at the Exter-

nal Affairs Minister, calling him "Jaichand Jaishankar".

The reference is from the epic poem 'Prithviraj Raso' in which Jaichand, a Rajput ruler, is said to be allied with Muhammad Ghori against another Rajput ruler Prithviraj Chauhan.

AICC secretary in the office of the Congress president Gaurav Pandhi said, "Every single day that Jaichand Jaishankar continues as the Minister of External Affairs, he remains not just a liability but a serious threat to India's national interests. He should be removed from office without delay, and an independent inquiry must be instituted to investigate his failures.

The Congress has been questioning the government for halting Operation Sindoor at a time when the armed forces were going strong and taking decisive action against terror camps in Pakistan.

The war of words between Congress and BJP over their leaders' statements on the Indo-Pak conflict has intensified this week, with the ruling party calling Rahul Gandhi "modern age Mir Jafar" and the opposition party describing Jaishankar as "new age Jaichand".

The two parties traded barbs over their remarks on Operation Sindoor and also posted memes on social media, each suggesting that the other has betrayed the nation.

The Congress and Rahul Gandhi have attacked Jaishankar, alleging he had forewarned Pakistan about Operation Sindoor.

The US President has been repeatedly claiming that he helped settle the tensions between India and Pakistan.

India carried out precision strikes under Operation Sindoor on terror infrastructure early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10. The Indian forces launched a fierce counter-attack on several Pakistani military installations.

India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the military confrontation after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

On May 10, Trump had announced that India and Pakistan agreed to a full and immediate ceasefire after a long night of talks "mediated" by Washington. (PTI)

India's 'Akashteer' system shines in Ops Sindoor, DRDO chief foresees international demand

NAGPUR, May 23: India's top defence scientist is confident that the success of the indigenously-developed 'Akashteer' air defence system during Operation Sindoor will draw interest from other countries.

'Akashteer', the fully automated air defence control and reporting system, emerged as the invisible force of new war capabilities during Operation Sindoor, launched against nine terror sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

"Definitely, our air defence system has performed exceedingly well, and I am sure there will be interest from other countries," Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) chief Samir V Kamat told PTI on Thursday evening.

The DRDO chairman spoke about India's march for 'Atmanirbhar' (self-reliance) in the defence sector, saying that while substantial advancements have been made, more work is necessary to become completely self-reliant.

"I think we have achieved a very signif-

icant level, but we still have some work to do. And I am sure in the coming years, we will become totally Atmanirbhar," he said.

Kamat expressed optimism regarding the future of India's defence technology during a visit to Nagpur, where he toured facilities focused on manufacturing drones, missiles, and rockets.

The 'Akashteer' system enables detection, tracking, and engagement of enemy aircraft, drones, and missiles by integrating various radar systems, sensors, and communication technologies into a single, mobile, vehicle-based framework, making it easier to handle in hostile environments.

Replying to a question whether conventional weapons will take a back seat in future conflicts as warfare shifts to domains where drones and signal jamming take centre stage, Kamat said future warfare will blend traditional equipment with emerging technologies, such as drones and electronic warfare. "Future warfare will be a combination of the traditional equipment as well

as these new things...We have to be prepared for both," he said.

Kamat ruled out the potential for robots to play the role of soldiers on the battlefield in future conflicts and said, "There will be a day when that may happen, but not in the near future."

To a question about the progress in the development of indigenous 5.5 generation stealth fighter aircraft - Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), Kamat said, "Our project for developing AMCA started last year, and we are hopeful that it will be completed by 2034 and then it should go into induction by 2035." A full-scale model of the AMCA was unveiled at Aero India 2025 held in Bengaluru in February.

The Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA), a division of DRDO, is actively working on cutting-edge technologies, including AI-powered pilots, net-centric warfare systems, integrated vehicle health management, and internal weapon bays. (PTI)

Army Chief presents Badge of Sacrifice, Certificate of Honour to next of kin of fallen heroes

NEW DELHI, May 23: Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi on Friday presented the Badge of Sacrifice and the Certificate of Honour to the next of kin of several army personnel, who have laid down their lives in the line of duty.

The awards -- a deeply symbolic tribute to valour and supreme sacrifice -- were conferred to honour officers, junior commissioned officers and other ranks who were killed in enemy and terrorist action while serving the nation, a senior official said.

Instituted in July 1999, the Badge of Sacrifice and Certificate of Honour have since been bestowed upon the families of bravehearts from conflicts dating back to 1947. The first official presentation was held on Vijay Diwas on December 16, 1999, marking a significant milestone in the army's continued commitment to remembering its bravehearts, he added.

The presentation ceremony at the Manekshaw Centre took place a day after the formal Defence Investiture Ceremony, which was conducted at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. (PTI)

Have donated money to National Herald, says Karnataka DCM Shivakumar

BENGALURU/VIJAYAPURA, May 23: Amid reports of his name figuring in the ED charge sheet in the National Herald case, Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Friday said he and his brother D K Suresh have donated money to the Congress-run newspaper. Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah backed his deputy, saying there is nothing wrong in donating money.

"Me and D K Suresh donated Rs 25 lakh each to National Herald. What is wrong in that. We have donated to a newspaper run by our party. What's wrong in that," Shivakumar told reporters in Kolhar village in Vijayapura district.

He was responding a question by a journalist that his as well as his brother D K Suresh's name figures in Enforcement Directorate charge sheet in the National Herald case.

When he was told that Rs 2.5 crore was donated, he said, "Yes we

have given to the Trust. We are not denying it. Did we give it stealthily. No. We have openly given from our income."

Asserting that he has donated money, the DCM said he will continue to do the same in future as well.

He alleged that there is politics behind mentioning his name in the ED charge sheet.

Shivakumar's brother Suresh said, "We have donated about Rs two crore to Rs 2.5 crore to the trust. We have answered all the questions raised by the (ED) officers. We are not saying that we have not donated money. We have no information whether donating was wrong," Suresh said in Bengaluru.

He alleged that the charge sheet has been filed in a manner to fix the Congress leaders. The charges which will be questioned in the court, Suresh said. (PTI)

Internal audit flags ₹ 709 crore irregularities in Jal Shakti ministry schemes

NEW DELHI, May 23: An internal audit review of the Jal Shakti ministry for 2023-24 has flagged financial irregularities amounting to over ₹ 709 crore across key water and sanitation schemes.

The report highlighted blocked funds, unauthorised spending, idle machinery, and violations in procurement procedures.

According to the Annual Internal Audit Review, ₹ 525.96 crore worth of government funds remain blocked.

These include unspent balances under the Atal Bhujal Yojana in Maharashtra and Haryana, as well as issues like excess expenditure, irregular expenditure in states such as Kerala and Bihar.

The audit also revealed ₹ 23.56 crore in irregular expenditure, largely due to overspending beyond approved limits for administrative and IEC (Information, Education, Communication) activities under SBM-G.

In multiple instances, funds were diverted for ineligible expenses, and several purchases were made without following government e-marketplace (GeM) or tender procedures, leading to further unauthorised purchases worth ₹ 10.82 crore.

The audit report said the non-recovery of government dues from central government department/state government/government bodies and private parties stood at ₹ 19.05 crore.

In total, the internal audit wing of the ministry reported financial irregularities worth ₹ 70,925.02 lakh (₹ 709.25 crore) across its departments, including non-recovery of dues, irregular expenditures, and unutilized funds.

Idle and damaged machinery valued at Rs 1.32 crore was also discovered lying unused across several field offices.

At the end of the financial year, 3,752 audit paras remained outstanding, up from 3,417 the previous year - even after special camps were held in June and July 2023 to settle pending cases.

In auditing, "audit paras" or "audit paragraphs" refer to specific findings or observations identified by auditors during an audit process. These are detailed statements that highlight irregularities, non-compliance, or areas needing improvement within an organization's operations or financial records.

The Internal Audit Wing also cited staff shortages and lack of specialised training as key challenges, recommending targeted capacity building in risk-based audit methods to ensure more effective oversight in future.

The total budget allocations for three schemes are ₹ 7,192 crore for SBM-G, ₹ 1,000 crore for Atal Bhujal Yojana, and ₹ 500 crore for the National Hydrology Project. (PTI)

In name of IPL people betting, gambling: SC on PIL for regulation of online apps

NEW DELHI, May 23: The Supreme Court on Friday said people were betting and gambling in the garb of Indian Premier League and sought the Centre's response on a PIL seeking to regulate betting applications.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh issued notice to the Centre on a plea filed by K A Paul, who claimed many children had died suicide after using online betting and gambling applications.

The petitioner alleged several on-line influencers, actors and cricketers were promoting such online apps, luring children in the process.

Paul said in case of cigarettes, packs had pictures indicating the ill-effects of smoking, but in case of betting apps, no such caution was publicised and even former Indian team cricketers promoted the applica-

tions during the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL).

The bench said, "In the name of IPL, a lot of people are betting and indulging in gambling. This is a serious issue."

Paul claimed of representing "millions of parents" whose children have died in the past couple of years.

"More than 1,023 people died by suicide in Telangana, as 25 Bollywood and Tollywood actors/influencers played with the lives of the innocents," he said.

Paul said an FIR was lodged in Telangana against influencers, as the matter violated fundamental rights.

The bench expressed its helplessness in the situation as "aberrations of society" and said the enactment of law cannot stop people from betting voluntarily. (PTI)

Banker, baker, then mountaineer: Kerala woman's journey to peak of Mt Everest

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 23: "Jack of all trades" is how Kannur native and a resident of Qatar, Safrina Latheef, the first woman from Kerala to scale the Everest peak, likes to describe herself.

Latheef was a banker and a baker before she turned to mountaineering, a long-term desire of hers.

Describing the momentous feat as one of the "toughest" things she has done in her life till now, Latheef said that not just physical fitness, but mental strength was also very important to make the climb.

"The dead bodies shake you up. You could be the next body on the line -- that thought crosses your mind. You have to fight all that to reach the summit," she said in a voice note shared with PTI from Nepal.

She reached the Everest base camp on April 19, began the climb on April 28, started the final push for the 8000-foot summit on May 12 and reached the top on May 18.

"It is a mental struggle, as we see a lot of unexpected things like avalanches, rock falls and dead bodies

of climbers who tried to scale the summit with the same aspirations and dreams as us.

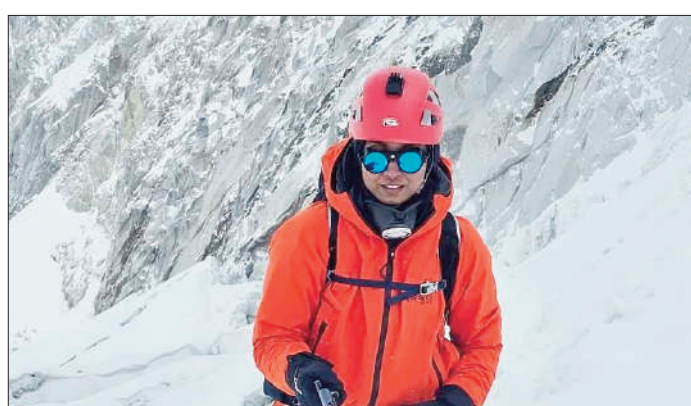
However, reaching the peak is worth all that gruelling effort because of the view from there, said Safrina Latheef, who is in her late 30s.

"You are on top of the world, the clouds. There is nothing above you that is the feeling you get. It is difficult to describe it. You have to experience it."

But, her decision to take off her goggles to experience the view with her naked eyes proved a bit costly as she got blinded by the snow and had to make the descent with poor vision and was subsequently, briefly hospitalised for it, she said.

Earlier in the day, speaking to a news channel from Nepal, Latheef said that she did not realise the heights she was climbing while scaling the summit, but on the way down "I came to realise the enormity of it".

"I am excited with the experience and happy that I got back alive," she added.



Giving details of the effort she put in to achieve the feat, she said that it was during the COVID-19 pandemic that she and her husband realised the importance of health and physical fitness.

"We became health conscious, joined a gym and began running. It was a long-term desire of mine to do adventure trekking. So, after we became healthier, when we had time, we climbed Mt Kilimanjaro (5,895 meters) in Tanzania with some friends," she said in the voice note.

Since then, her only thought was to climb the highest peak on Earth -- Mount Everest which stands at 8,849 meters.

"For that, we have been training for the last four years. We found a trainer and asked him to train us specifically to climb Everest. We planned to scale Everest last year, but, unfortunately, my husband suffered a training injury.

"This year again he suffered a training injury, but I said I cannot wait any longer and decided to climb it alone. However, my wish

was to climb it together with my husband," she stated in the voice note.

As part of the training to climb Everest, the couple climbed Mt Aconcagua in Argentina which is close to 7,000 meters, but it was a rocky mountain.

"In order to understand how it was to climb a snow mountain like Everest, we climbed Mt Elbrus (5,642 meters) in Russia. We also went to the Everest base camp in Nepal to understand the trekking culture," she said.

She said she was lucky to have a life partner like her husband -- Dr Shameel Musthafa -- who is a surgeon at Hamad Medical Corporation in Doha, Qatar, as they both think alike and have the same priorities.

Latheef said that he was supportive of her decision to make the climb without him and she went for it.

On what was important to survive the arduous climb to the summit of Everest, she said it was physical and mental fitness and appropriate clothing.

"Proper clothing is important to combat the weather conditions at that altitude. Physical fitness is also very important in order to make the gruelling climb to the top. But most important is mental fitness as without it, one might give up halfway," she said.

Latheef said that each day of her trek, she questioned why she was spending so much money to torture herself physically like this.

"It is very hard to keep our aim in mind because of the amount of physical torture. So, we have to be mentally strong if we have to reach the top," she said.

Now that she has returned alive from Everest, she has no immediate plans to climb any other high peaks.

"But, I want to complete the seven summits sometime," she said, referring to the highest mountains on each of the seven traditional continents.

Latheef, who has been residing in Qatar for the last 25 years, said, "We need to find our own happiness and we cannot depend on others for that". (PTI)

121 Bangladeshi nationals residing illegally in Delhi to be deported

NEW DELHI, May 22: The Delhi Police has detained 121 Bangladeshi nationals for allegedly residing unlawfully in India with their deportation process being initiated through the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO), an official said on Friday.

The illegal immigrants were rounded up in a week, the official further stated, adding that five Indians were interrogated in the case.

"A case has also been registered at the Narela Industrial Area police station to probe a suspected syndicate allegedly involved in facilitating the illegal entry and stay of foreign nationals in the country," Deputy Commissioner of Police (outer north) Nidhin Valsan said.

Five Indians have been interrogated in connection with the case, one of whom has been served a notice under Section 35(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), he added.

A police team carried out an extensive verification drive over the last week, during which documents of 831 suspected Bangladeshi nationals were scrutinised. "As many as 121 individuals were found residing in the country without valid documentation," the DCP said.

A case has been registered under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), along with Sections 14 (penalty for contravention of provisions of the Act, etc.) and 14C (penalty for abetment) of the Foreigners Act, 1946, to investigate the syndicate responsible for facilitating illegal entry and residence of immigrants, the officer added.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) is probing the matter.

Preliminary investigations revealed that the five Indians involved were renting properties to the undocumented immigrants, the police said. The officer further informed that authorities are also probing the alleged fabrication of government documents, including Aadhaar cards, voter IDs, and electric meter connections, reportedly used by these immigrants to establish local identity.

"Notices have been issued to the concerned departments. Legal action will be taken against all individuals, including government officials, if found complicit in the facilitation of these forged documents," the DCP said, adding that further investigation is underway. (PTI)

Tripura capable of meeting fish demand without Bangladesh imports: Minister

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, May 23: Tripura Fisheries Minister Sudhangshu Das on Friday asserted that the state will not suffer from any fish shortage despite the absence of imports from Bangladesh, thanks to robust domestic production and supplies from other Indian states.

"Due to recent restrictions imposed by the central government on the import of certain items, fish imports from Bangladesh have halted. However, there is no cause for concern," Das told reporters after a departmental review meeting.

"Our current fish production is sufficient to meet 100% of the state's demand. Moreover, we are sourcing additional fish from West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh, which ensures there is no deficit."

The minister was speaking after chairing a review session of the Animal Resource Development (ARD) Department to evaluate the implementation of the 2025-26 financial year's budget. The meeting was attended by ARD Director Neeraj Kumar Chanchal and senior officials from both state and district levels.

Das said the meeting aimed to strategize optimal use of the newly allocated budget while reflecting on the achievements and shortcomings of the previous financial year. "We have reviewed last year's performance and discussed how to bridge existing gaps. Our focus remains on achieving self-sufficiency not only in fish but also in milk, eggs, and meat production, while ensuring veterinary care and welfare," he added.

He also informed that action has already been taken on the resolutions from the previous review meeting. "District-level meetings are underway, and we have successfully utilized around 99% of last year's budget. There are no unspent funds remaining," the minister said.

Govt forms special NIA court in Manipur for trial of cases related to ethnic violence

Jurisdiction of the special court shall extend throughout Manipur



NEW DELHI, May 23: A sessions court in Manipur's Churachandpur has been designated as a special NIA court for the trial of cases related to ethnic violence being investigated by the National Investigation Agency (NIA).

In a notification on Thursday, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) said the court of district and sessions judge, Churachandpur district, has been designated as a special court under Section 11 of the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008 (34 of 2008). "In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 11 of the National Investigation Agency Act, 2008 (34 of 2008), the Central government, in

consultation with the chief justice of the High Court of Manipur hereby designates the court of district and sessions judge, Churachandpur district, as the special court for the purpose of Sub-section (1) of Section 11 of the said Act, for the trial of the scheduled offences investigated by the National Investigation Agency," the notification said.

The jurisdiction of the special court shall extend throughout Manipur.

The NIA has taken over three key cases related to ethnic violence that began on May 3, 2023. These cases include the abduction and killing of six women and children

in Jiribam, as well as other violent incidents.

The NIA registered these cases in November 2024 after the MHA decided to hand them over to the agency for probe due to the severity of the crimes and the escalating violence in Manipur.

Manipur witnessed violence for several months since May 3, 2023. It started after Kuki-Zo tribals living in the hill districts protested over a high court recommendation for granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to Meiteis. At least 260 people were killed and thousands rendered homeless in the ethnic violence between Imphal valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups.

Manipur is currently under the President's Rule, which was imposed on February 13 after the then chief minister N Biren Singh resigned on February 9.

The state assembly, which has tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation.

After the imposition of the President's Rule, Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla took a number of steps to restore peace and bring back normalcy. There were also efforts from the central government to open the state's roads for normal traffic. However, it did not fruitfully due to various reasons. (PTI)

Tripura allots land for Data Centre to power digital revolution in NE: CM



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, May 23: In a landmark move to position Tripura as a technological leader in the Northeast, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday announced the allocation of land in Agartala for the establishment of data centers, including a state-of-the-art facility poised to serve as a digital hub for the entire eastern and northeastern region of India.

The announcement came during his address at the Rising Northeast Investors Summit 2025 in New Delhi, at a special session titled "IT for Ashtalakshmi: Beyond the Bits and Bytes, Into AI and 5G."

Saha emphasized that the Tripura government is committed to building robust digital infrastructure to support the convergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and 5G technologies—paving the way for transformative governance and innovation in the region.

"The eight northeastern states, fondly referred to as 'Ashtalakshmi', embody nature's abundance and untapped potential. Much like the goddess they are named after—symbolizing prosperity, knowledge, and

strength—this region stands at the cusp of a digital renaissance," the Chief Minister said.

He highlighted that Tripura now boasts comprehensive 5G connectivity across all towns and 583 villages, making it one of the best-connected states in the region. These advancements are supported by the state's forward-looking policies, including the Information Technology Policy 2022 and the Data Center Policy 2021.

Saha underscored the synergistic relationship between AI and 5G, noting that while 5G enables ultra-fast, low-latency communication, AI introduces intelligent automation and data-driven decision-making.

"It's not just about speed—it's about unlocking innovation across sectors. Whether through edge computing or real-time analytics, the AI-5G fusion will redefine possibilities in healthcare, agriculture, education, and beyond," he added.

Reaffirming the state's proactive approach, the Chief Minister noted that Tripura recently hosted a high-level workshop titled "AI for Good Governance" in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the National e-Governance Division.

The workshop showcased how AI is being harnessed to streamline public services. A notable success story is Tripura's move towards paperless administration, which has reduced file processing time from nine days to just three—yielding annual savings of over Rs 50 crore.

"These reforms are more than just digital upgrades. They are about creating a governance model built on transparency, accountability, and efficiency," Saha said.

Looking ahead, he announced that the state will soon launch department-specific AI pilot projects and a single-window digital platform to enhance citizen services.

"This is just the beginning. As Tripura leads the charge, we envision a future where the Northeast shines as a digitally empowered region," he concluded.

Former Tripura CM Biplab Deb criticises CPI (M) for opposing killing of 27 Maoists

AGARTALA, May 23: Former Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb on Friday strongly criticised the CPI(M) for opposing the recent killing of 27 Maoists—including their general secretary Nambala Kesavarao—in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh.

In a video message, Deb, the BJP MP from the West Tripura constituency, said the CPI(M) Politburo's condemnation of the Maoist killings revealed the party's "real character".

"This only proves that they are against our country, against our territory and anti-social. Even during Operation Sindoor they also organised programs in West Bengal supporting China and Pakistan. BJP vehemently opposes their stance," Deb said.

He said the Maoists had annihilated thousands

of people, including political leaders and security forces, but when they were killed in an encounter with the security forces, the Marxists were condemning the killing.

"I hate them unequivocally. They are working as a white colour political party and supporting the Maoists," he said.

In one of the biggest strikes on Maoists, security forces gunned down Nambala Keshav Rao alias Basavaraju, the general secretary of the outlawed Communist Party of India (Maoist), and 26 other cadres during an encounter in the forested Ahujmad along Bijapur-Narayanpur inter-district border on Wednesday.

Two jawans of the District Reserve Guard (DRG) of the state police also lost their lives during the operation. (PTI)



Tripura unlikely to be affected due to closure of traffic in Assam's Badarpur on NH-6: Official



AGARTALA, May 23: The maintenance of a key bridge in south Assam's Badarpur is unlikely to affect movement of vehicles to Tripura, an official said on Friday.

The NHIDCL has suspended vehicular movement for two months due to major maintenance and rehabilitation of the bridge, locally known as Gammon Bridge, at Badarpur, the official said.

"Tripura is unlikely to be affected by the major bridge repairing work over the Barak river in Assam's Badarpur even as National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) announced the suspension of vehicular movement on the Assam-Agartala national highway," Tripura Transport Secretary C K Jamatia told PTI over phone from New Delhi.

"As per the latest report, vehicles are returning to the state as scheduled. An alternative route, Silchar-Kalain-Guwahati, is open for vehicular movement," he said.

He added that traffic movement on the na-

tional highway has not completely stopped yet, as per the latest report received by the state administration.

The Managing Director and Highway Administration of NHIDCL, Krishan Kumar, in an official order on Tuesday (May 20), announced the suspension of vehicular movement at Badarpur for undertaking major bridge repair works over the Barak river.

Under section 31 and section 33 of the Control of National Highways (Land & Traffic) Act, 2002, the Highway Administration has ordered temporary closure for undertaking repair and rehabilitation of a major bridge, locally known as Gammon Bridge, over Barak river on the National Highway 6 in Assam's Cachar district for vehicular for a period of 60 days (From May 21 to July 20, 2025), Kumar said in the order.

The NH-6, popularly known as the Assam-Agartala national highway, connects Tripura with the rest of the country via Meghalaya and Assam. (PTI)

Top officials effigies burnt in Manipur

IMPHAL, May 23: Tensions escalated in Imphal West district on the second day of the 48-hour general strike called by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), as protestors burned effigies of top officials, intensifying demands for their resignation.

Effigies of Manipur Chief Secretary, PK Singh, Director General of Police, Rajiv Singh, and Security Advisor to the Manipur Government, Kuldip Singh were set ablaze at multiple protest sites, including Sagolband Bijoy Govinda and Lilong Chajing. The protestors, defiant despite police presence, chanted slogans such as "Kuldip Singh must resign," "P.K. Singh must resign," and "Rajiv Singh must resign."

The demonstrations were part of a broader civil response to an incident involving central forces reportedly instructing a Manipur State Transport (MST) bus to remove the word "Manipur" from its signage on May 20. The bus, carrying a team of journalists, was en route to Ukhrul for the 5th Shirui Lily Festival when the incident reportedly took place at Guwalatibi along the Imphal-Ukhrul road.

The COCOMI, condemning the act as an insult to the state's identity, has held the top officials responsible and demanded that the Governor issue an apology to the people of Manipur. The committee also called for the immediate resignation of the three officials whose effigies were burned.

Despite attempts by Manipur Police to prevent the effigy burning, especially at Lilong Chajing, protestors succeeded in staging their demonstrations without major confrontation. No incidents of violence were reported, aside from the symbolic act of burning effigies.

The general strike is set to conclude at midnight on Friday. However, the COCOMI is yet to announce further steps in continuation of the strike. (NNN)



Public screening of 'Because we did not choose' today

Screening is generously powered by the Government of Meghalaya

SHILLONG, May 23: The public screening of the critically acclaimed documentary film titled "Because we did not choose" directed by Wanphrang D. Diengdoh will be held at the Tura district auditorium on May 24.

"This powerful film explores the untold stories of indigenous labour corps from Northeast India who were recruited by the British during World War I. Among them were the Garo Labour Corps, whose sacrifice and service in foreign lands have been largely forgotten in historical discourse. The screening aims to bring these narratives to the forefront and promote historical awareness among citizens, particularly the youth," said social activist Cherian Momin on behalf of the Joint NGOs Forum, Tura.

He said the event also serves as part of a collective cultural movement to commemorate the Garo Labour Corps and respond to

the recent demolition of their memorial cenotaph in Tura. By reclaiming history through visual storytelling, the film offers a platform for intergenerational reflection and honour.

"This screening is generously powered by the Government of Meghalaya, whose support has made this event possible. We express our heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Minister and concerned departments for their commitment to preserving and promoting indigenous histories," Cherian Momin added.

He also urged the general public, students, elders, educators, researchers, and the media to attend this historic screening. The program will include an interaction session following the film.

"Let us come together to remember, honour, and stand in solidarity with the legacy of our forebears," Momin said. (NNN)



No.CHD/UDD/2/6th ASFC/1st Inst./Devolution/2025/NIT-CS/5350(a) Date 30/04/2025

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing court fee of Rs. 8.25 (rupees eight and paise twenty five) are invited by CHD, Urban Development Department from experienced & competent contractors for the works under **6th ASFC 1st Installment for the year 2023-24**.

Detail tender document may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours till 23rd May, 2025 up to 3.00 pm. on payment of prescribed Bid Cost (non-refundable) for each work in the form of demand draft in favour of 'Principal Secretary, BTC, payable at 'Kokrajhar'.

The last date for submission of the completed tender is 26/05/2025 upto 2.00 pm and shall be opened on the same day at 3.00 pm.

Sd/- CHD,
Urban Dev. Department,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/491

BAJAJ FINANCE LIMITED

Registered Office: Bajaj Finance Limited, C/o Bajaj Auto Limited Complex Mumbai Pune Road Akurdi Pune 411035
Branch Office: Bajaj Finance Limited, 1st Floor Om Plaza Near Bank Lawkhova Road Haibargan Bazar Dist Nagaon 782002 Assam

POSSESSION NOTICE (FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY)

(As per Appendix IV read with rule 8(1) of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Bajaj Finance Limited (BFL), under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Sec.13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand by registered post ("Notice") calling upon the Borrowers/Co-borrowers mentioned hereunder to repay the amount mentioned in the notice U/s. 13(2) of the said Act within a period of 60 days; from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors named below having failed to repay the said amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Mortgagors/ Guarantors and public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on me under Sec.13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The borrowers in particular and public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the said property and any dealing with this property will be subject to the charge of the Bajaj Finance Limited. For the amount mentioned herein below along with interest thereon at contracted rate.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

| Loan Account No./Name of the Borrower(s)/Mortgagor(s)/Guarantor(s) | Description of Secured Immovable Property | Date of Notice U/s.13(2) and U/s.13(2) Notice Amount and Date of Possession |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| LAN: PX65PBL/983327 | All the piece and parcel of Dag No. 472 Patta No. 173 Vill. Garjajam Mouza Garub Circle Kampur Dist. Nagaon Assam 782426 along with proportionate share in common areas (Area adm 2484 Sq.Ft.) | 17.02.2025 |
| 1. Aliya Hardware thr its Prop. Dilwar Hussain R/o. Rangulu Basti Kachua No 1 Kachua B O Kachua No 1 Nagaon 04 Assam 91 Nagaon Assam 782426 Also at: R/o. Dag No. 472 Patta No. 173 Vill. Garjajam Mouza Garub Circle Kampur Dist. Nagaon Assam 782426 | | Rs.26,66,999/- (Rupees Twenty Six Lakhs Sixty Six Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety Nine Only) |
| 2. Shahnaz Parveen D/O Nurul Islam W/o Dilwar Hussain R/o. Rangulu Basti Kachua No 1 Nagaon Assam Nagaon Assam 782426 | | 19.05.2025 |
| 3. Dilwar Hussain S/o Subed Ali R/o. Rangulu Basti Kachua No 1 Nagaon Assam Nagaon Assam 782426 | | |

Place : Assam
Date : 21.05.2025

Sd/-Authorized Officer
M/s Bajaj Finance Limited

No.CHD/UDD/3/15th FC/2nd Inst./Tied/2025/NIT-CS/5664 Date 30/04/2025

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing court fee of Rs. 8.25 (rupees eight and paise twenty five) are invited by CHD, Urban Development Department from experienced & competent contractors for the works under **15th FC 1st Installment for the year 2023-24**.

Detail tender document may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours till 23rd May, 2025 up to 3.00 pm. on payment of prescribed Bid Cost (non-refundable) for each work in the form of demand draft in favour of 'Principal Secretary, BTC, payable at 'Kokrajhar'.

The last date for submission of the completed tender is 26/05/2025 upto 2.00 pm and shall be opened on the same day at 3.00 pm.

Sd/- CHD,
Urban Dev. Department,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/494

No.CHD/UDD/3/15th FC/2nd Inst./Tied/2025/NIT-CS/5664 Date 30/04/2025

PRESS NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing court fee of Rs. 8.25 (rupees eight and paise twenty five) are invited by CHD, Urban Development Department from experienced & competent contractors for the works under **15th FC 1st Installment for the year 2023-24**.

Detail tender document may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during office hours till 23rd May, 2025 up to 3.00 pm. on payment of prescribed Bid Cost (non-refundable) for each work in the form of demand draft in favour of 'Principal Secretary, BTC, payable at 'Kokrajhar'.

The last date for submission of the completed tender is 26/05/2025 upto 2.00 pm and shall be opened on the same day at 3.00 pm.

Sd/- CHD,
Urban Dev. Department,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/497

AISHWARYA RAI BACHCHAN WEARS CUSTOM GAURAV GUPTA OUTFIT FOR 2ND CANNES 2025 APPEARANCE

NEW DELHI, May 23: For her second appearance at the 78th Cannes Film Festival red carpet, Bollywood star Aishwarya Rai Bachchan chose a custom couture ensemble by designer Gaurav Gupta.

Gupta, who recently dressed actor Kiara Advani for the 2025 Met Gala in New York, shared pictures of Aishwarya on his official Instagram page on Thursday night.

The ensemble, titled "Heiress of Clam", blended celestial design with Indian heritage and spiritual symbolism. It featured a sculptural gown in draped form, intricately hand-embroidered with an abstract rendition of the cosmos. The design included bursts of silver, gold, charcoal, and black, accentuated with micro glass crystals to reflect light.

Complementing the futuristic gown was a Banarasi brocade cape, hand-woven in Varanasi, and bearing a Sanskrit shloka from the Bhagavad Gita. Gupta said the couture look was "imagined in draped form and spiritual detail".

Aishwarya made her red carpet debut at the 2025 edition of the film gala on Wednesday. She wore an ivory handloom Banarasi saree by designer Manish Malhotra.

The 78th Cannes Film Festival is witnessing a significant Indian presence this year with filmmaker Payal Kapadia being part of the main competition jury.

Bollywood icons Sharmila Tagore and Simi Garewal attended the world premiere of the newly restored version of Satyajit Ray's 1970 classic "Aranjati Din Ratri" On Wednesday, director Neeraj Ghaywan presented his film "Homebound" at the film gala under the Un Certain Regard segment. He was accompanied by actors Janhvi Kapoor, Ishaan Khatter and Vishal Jethwa as well as producer Karan Johar. (PTI)



SEEING MY IDOLS DENZEL WASHINGTON, SPIKE LEE AT CANNES A DREAM COME TRUE: KARAN TACKER

NEW DELHI, May 23: Actor Karan Tacker, best known for shows such as "Ek Hazaaron Mein Meri Behna Hai" and "Special Ops", says he is happy that he got an opportunity to see his idols Hollywood star Denzel Washington and filmmaker Spike Lee up close at the ongoing Cannes Film Festival.

He attended the screening of Lee and Washington's "Highest 2 Lowest", which had its world premiere out of competition of Cannes earlier this week.

Tacker said watching Washington, star of films such as "Malcolm X", "Remember The Titans", and "The Equalizer" trilogy, receive the honorary Palme d'Or was an emotional moment for him.

"Being at a one-arm distance with both my idols was just a dream come true... Believe me I shed a tear or two when I watched Denzel receive the honorary Palme d'Or award right in front of my eyes. It was historic," Tacker told PTI in an interview.

The actor attended the 78th edition of the festival for the screening of his upcoming film "Tanvi the Great", which was showcased at Marche du

Cannes last week.

Asked to describe his experience at the prestigious film festival, Tacker said it was "extremely amazing and very chaotic".

"It was also tiring but that's what made it really special because you get to interact with so many people in such a short time from all around the world."

"And, of course, taking my film 'Tanvi the Great' and doing interviews for that was a lovely experience and an unforgettable one because this is the first time for me at Cannes," he added.

The actor stars in "Tanvi the Great" alongside debutante Shubhangi Dutt. Directed by Anupam Kher, the film will be released in theatres on July 18.

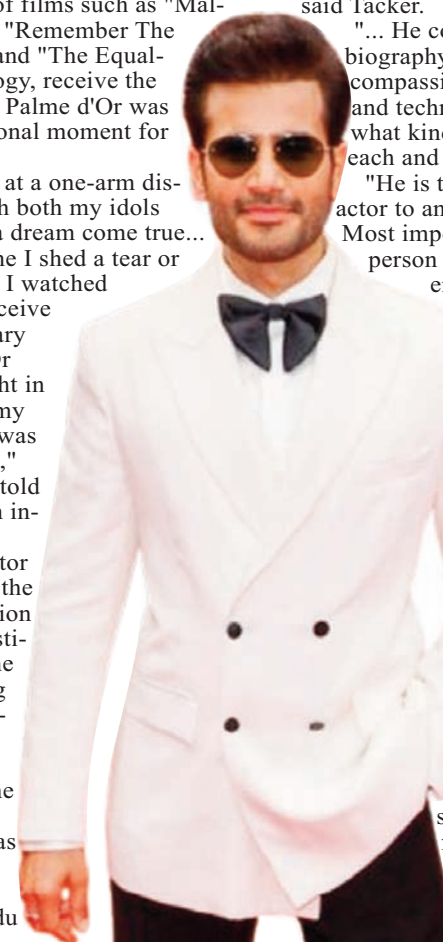
Kher, who is returning to direction after 2002's "Om Jai Jagadish", is an "empathetic and passionate director", said Tacker.

"... He comes from such a great biography as an actor. He's really compassionate towards his actors and technicians. He understands what kind of emotional parenting each and everyone needs."

"He is truly there for you as an actor to answer all your questions. Most importantly, he's such a fun person on set because he has his entire life experience that he loves to share all the time," said the actor, who previously featured in a small role in the 2008 film "Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi".

Besides "Tanvi the Great", Tacker is looking forward to his other upcoming projects, such as "Bhay" and the second season of "Special Ops".

"I am extremely nervous, but at the same time, I am thrilled for the audience to see what my last one-and-a-half years have been all about," he added. (PTI)



ALIA BHATT LEAVES FOR CANNES FILM FESTIVAL

NEW DELHI, May 23: Bollywood star Alia Bhatt is on her way to France to attend the 78th edition of the Cannes Film Festival.

The actor is set to make her Cannes red carpet debut this year as the global ambassador

for beauty brand L'Oreal Paris, which is celebrating its 28th anniversary at the gala.

"Off we go @lorealparis," she wrote on Friday in the caption of her Instagram Story, along with a plane emoji.

According to videos circulat-

ing on social media, Alia is entering the airport wearing a beige blazer, white top and a pair of denims. She completed her look with a pair of sunglasses.

The Cannes Film Festival will conclude on May 24. (PTI)



Oscar nominee Taraji P Henson opts for Gaurav Gupta ensemble at Cannes 2025

NEW DELHI, May 23: American actor Taraji P Henson, best known for "Hidden Figures" and "Empire", appeared on the red carpet of the AmFAR Gala at the Cannes Film Festival in a custom-made outfit by Indian couturier Gaurav Gupta.

The gala, organised by the Foundation for AIDS Research, every year to raise money for AIDS research.

The Oscar-nominated actor opted for a moonstone celestial saree gown from the Jyotirgamaya (from darkness to light) collection, the label said in a press release.

According to the brand, the gown is sculpted in shimmering "moonstone ivory" and reimagines the traditional Indian saree through a futuristic lens.

"It features sheer architectural drapes, tonal sequin embroidery, and an abstract sculptural palla — the flowing end of the saree traditionally draped over the shoulder — reconceived here as a celestial extension of the body. A high slit and asymmetric cutouts bring movement and bold femininity to the silhouette," the release stated.

Gupta, who also dressed Indian star Aishwarya Rai Bachchan for her second appearance at the Cannes 2025 gala, was all praise for Henson.

"Taraji is a luminous force — magnetic, unapologetic, and unforgettable. We wanted the gown to feel like it was carved from light itself. Sculpted, but not rigid. Sensual, but powerful. This look was about channeling energy and turning it into form," the Delhi-based designer said in a statement.

This placement was made possible by global luxury communications firm Maison Bose.

"For Taraji to wear this at Cannes felt like a perfectly aligned moment. As the host of the evening, she brought both presence and purpose to the red carpet. It was an honour to collaborate with her for such a meaningful night," added Hena Bose, founder, Maison Bose.

Henson's look was styled by Wayman and Micah. (PTI)



No guarantee a horror comedy will work at box office, says Tusshar Kapoor

MUMBAI, May 23: A film should offer a novel experience to audiences, regardless of genre, says actor Tusshar Kapoor, who is awaiting the release of his horror comedy "Kapkapiii".

The genre of horror comedy has become increasingly popular in recent years, with films such as "Stree 2", "Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3", and "Munjya" enjoying massive box office success in 2024.

Asked whether the genre guaranteed success at the ticket window, Kapoor said it depends on the story.

"Each film has its own destiny. If it's good, then it will work. There's no guarantee that a horror comedy film will work. The film should be good. It should have something new. The script and presentation should be good. We hope people like our film. But, without any biases, this is quite a 'paisa vasool' film," the actor told PTI in an interview here.

"Kapkapiii" follows the story of a group of friends who use an ouija board to connect with a ghost for fun. But they soon realise that their house has become haunted by a female spirit. It is directed by Sangeeth Sivan, best known for comedies such as "Kya Kool Hain Hum" films and "Apna Sapna Money Money".

Kapoor revealed the director, who died last year at the age of 65, had plans to turn "Kapkapiii" into a franchise.

"He had plans to make a sequel or prequel, either of the two, I don't know what it is. I hope they materialise in some way or the other, just to honour him and his legacy. But, let's see how this film goes, and we'll take it from there," he said.

"Kapkapiii" marks the second collaboration between Kapoor and Sivan after their 2005 adult comedy feature "Kya Kool Hai Hum".

The 48-year-old actor, also known for the "Golmaal" films, "Shootout at Lokhandwala", and "Shor in the City", said he and Sivan wanted to reteam on various occasions.

"Many a time, we discussed another 'Kya

approach me. So, we had to wait, and when the right opportunity came (to) do this movie, I did it," Kapoor said.

The actor said he feels a deep sense of gratitude for being a part of Sivan's final film.

"Unfortunately, we won't be able to work together again. But, the body of work that we've done, hopefully with 'Kapkapiii' also coming out, I hope it lives on," he added.

"Kapkapiii" also features Shreyas Talpade, Siddhi Idnani, and Sonia Raheem. For Idnani, it's a "bittersweet" moment that the film is releasing in Sivan's absence.

"It is bitter that he is not around us, but it also feels, we are all grateful because of his blessings that it is releasing, it is releasing at the right time. It is coming at a time where people really want to have a good time, they want to laugh. I feel it is all happening because of his blessings, so I think bittersweet is the right word to describe it," Idnani of "The Kerala Story" fame said.

Ratheem, known for the web series "Broken and Beautiful", echoed similar sentiments.

"He (Sivan) was there for the final edit and dubbing of the film. There is so much of him and his creative genius in it. I'm grateful that it is getting the light of day. We get to celebrate him through this," she added. (PTI)



Koolu', or even something else. But he got busy with 'Apna Sapna Money Money', 'Yamla Pagla Deewana', and many other films. Destiny never got us together. I don't think Sangeeth would cast somebody because of association.

"He was not someone who would come back (to me) just because I did 'Kya Kool Hai Hum' with him. He would find the right script, and if it would come to him, if the role was something that he would see me fit, then he would

Mairaj, Ganemat top second shotgun nat'l trials



NEW DELHI, May 23: Olympian Mairaj Ahmad Khan and Ganemat Sekhon finished on top in the men's and women's skeet finals respectively of the second shotgun national trials at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range on Friday.

Mairaj shot 55 in the men's final, edging out Paris Olympian Anantjeet Singh Naruka, who scored 54, by a single shot.

Ganemat also secured victory by a one-shot margin, finishing with 53 ahead of Maheshwari Chauhan's 52 in the women's event.

Angad Vir Singh Bajwa and Parinaaz Dhaliwal finished third in the men's and women's categories, respectively.

Earlier, in the final two rounds of qualification, Bhavtegh Singh Gill shot 22 and 24 to add to his 73 from Thursday, qualifying in first place.

Mairaj totalled 118, while Smit Singh with 117, Angad with 116, and Anantjeet with 115 completed the top six qualifiers.

In the women's category, Ganemat topped the qualification round with 114 shots, followed closely by Maheshwari with 113.

Parinaaz also shot 113, while Oshmi Shrivastava, Darshana Rathore, and Mansi Raghunathan rounded out the top six with scores of 108, 107 (SO-3), and 107 (SO-2), respectively.

A separate selection trial was not conducted for junior athletes and as a result, Oshmi and Mansi were also placed first and second in the junior category with the same scores. Agrima Kanwar was placed third with a score of 104.

In the men's junior category, Yuvaan finished on top with a score of 110, while Yashwardhan Singh Rajawat and Anjaneya Singh Mandawala finished second and third with scores of 108 and 106, respectively.

The selection committee will consider the scores from the ISSF Junior World Cup in Suhle, Germany, for junior athletes participating in that event, as selection trials 2 coincides with it. Scores of such shooters will not be marked as "zero," the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI) said. (PTI)

REAL MADRID BID FAREWELL TO 'TRUE LEGEND' CARLO ANCELOTTI

MADRID, May 23: Real Madrid made it official on Friday that Carlo Ancelotti is leaving the club after the end of the Spanish league this weekend.

Ancelotti had already been announced as the next Brazil coach but the Spanish club had yet to make any announcement about his departure. Ancelotti had another year left on his contract.

"Real Madrid and Carlo Ancelotti have reached an agreement to bring an end to his time as Real Madrid coach," the club said in a statement. "Our club wishes to express its gratitude and appreciation for a man who is a true legend of both Real Madrid and world football."

Madrid will pay tribute to Ancelotti on Saturday during the team's final match of the league season against Real Sociedad in the Spanish league at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium. Also bidding farewell on Saturday will be veteran midfielder Luka Modric.

"Carlo Ancelotti will forever be part of the great madridista family," Madrid club president Florentino Pérez said. "We feel incredibly honored to have had the chance to enjoy a coach who has helped us achieve so much success, but who has also embodied our club's values in such exemplary fashion."

Madrid had not released any reaction or statement about its



coach since Brazil's announcement.

The official announcement of Ancelotti's departure opens the way for Madrid to announce its next coach, who is widely expected to be Xabi Alonso. The former Madrid player recently confirmed he is leaving Bayer Leverkusen.

Ancelotti is leaving after four mostly successful years in his

second stint with Madrid, which won both the Champions League and the Spanish league last season. Ancelotti also coached the club from 2013-2015. In total, he was in charge of Madrid in more than 350 matches and helped it win three Champions Leagues, three Club World Cups, two Spanish leagues, two Copa del Reys, three UEFA Super Cups and two Spanish Super Cups.

Madrid began the season by winning the UEFA Super Cup title but has mostly struggled since then. Many Madrid fans blamed Ancelotti for its relatively poor season, saying he lost control over the squad and wasn't able to get the team ready for the clásicos against Barcelona, which won the league. Madrid lost all four matches against the Catalan club this season. (AP)

From borrowing money to beach glory: Prasanna Bendre's hard work finally pays off

DIU, May 23: His sporting aspirations were once powered by borrowed money and crowdfunding campaigns. But now, Prasanna Bendre has emerged as a breakout star with a hat-trick of medals at the Khelo India Beach Games.

At the inaugural edition of the games, Bendre has won two gold and a bronze in pencak silat, a traditional martial art form with roots in the Indonesian and Malaysian civilizations and which was part of the 2018 Asian Games.

Prior to this moment of glory, his father knocked on doors, sent messages, and even turned to reluctant relatives to seek support for his son's passion for a sport most in India have not heard of.

"I don't remember the schedule of my events anymore," a smiling Bendre told PTI after his final medal -- a bronze in the ganda (doubles) event with partner Sudhanshu to cap a successful week.

"It's been non-stop matches since Monday. But I'm not tired. I'm just grateful."

The 23-year-old's journey began on a difficult note.

Hailing from Daman, a coastal town in the union territory of

Dadra and Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu (DNHDD), Bendre's choice of the sport didn't make things easy for him and his family. It wasn't cricket or badminton. There were no sponsorships, no fanfare. Only questions.

"People used to ask, 'Isse kya ho jayega?' (What will you even achieve with this?)," he recalled.

"But once I started winning medals, their attitude changed. All the negatives turned into positives. Meri mehnat rang layi hai (my hardwork has paid off)."

To support his sporting dreams, Bendre's family went to extraordinary lengths.

His father spearheaded crowdfunding campaigns, knocking on doors and sending messages to raise money for his international travel. They even borrowed from reluctant relatives, managing whatever little they could.

"To compete internationally, we had to do crowdfunding. We belong to the Maharashtra community, and even they stepped in to help," he said. "Some relatives were reluctant at first. But now, they are so proud -- my phone hasn't stopped ringing with congratulatory messages," he said.

Bendre struck gold in tanding (45kg combat), followed it up with another in tunggal (solo demonstration), and ended with a bronze in ganda (doubles), keeping hosts DNHDD ahead of giants such as Maharashtra and Haryana in the pecking order midway into the games.

"It's a proud moment. To win three medals and be the top performer from a small UT is something I'll always cherish," he said. "I hope it is there in the Asian Games next year and I get to win a medal."



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Barcelona seek 3-peat of Women's Champions League titles when it face Arsenal in Lisbon final

LISBON, May 23: Barcelona is aiming to complete a three-peat of Women's Champions League titles and win its fourth European crown in five years when it faces Arsenal in Lisbon on Saturday.

Barcelona is out to reaffirm its status as the dominant force in European women's soccer after it finally beat Lyon and successfully defended its title in last year's final. Its possession-hungry and high-scoring attack is led from the midfield by Ballon d'Or winners Aitana Bonmatí and Alexia Putellas and several other members of Spain's World Cup-winning team that beat England in the 2023 final.

Barcelona will be play its sixth Champions League final in seven seasons and a record-equaling fifth in a row at Lisbon's 50,000-capacity Estádio José Alvalade. The Catalan club has the chance to become the only team other than Lyon to lift the European Cup in three consecutive years.

Standing in its way is an Arsenal team that has excelled as a spoiler this campaign and hopes it can pull off another upset and win its second European title.

"They're a fantastic team and they've obviously got the recent history to prove it," Arsenal defender Leah Williamson said about Barcelona in the buildup to the final.

"We respect them a lot, but it's a final, so everybody turns up and everybody gives their best." First-year Barcelona coach Pere Romeu has a side that can hit from all angles with multiple scoring op-

tions. It leads all the major team statistics in attack: most goals scored with 44 -- to Arsenal's 25 -- the highest possession, best pass accuracy and most shot attempts.

Barcelona forward Claudia Pina leads the competition in scoring with 10 goals, ahead of Arsenal pair Mariona Caldentey, who joined from the Spanish club last summer, and Alessia Russo with seven each. Bonmatí and teammate Patri Guijarro lead the competition with five assists each.

Barcelona added to its winning squad in the offseason by signing Poland striker Ewa Pajor, who went on to lead the Spanish league with 23 goals. Pajor, 28, is seeking her first European title after losing four finals with former club Wolfsburg, including the 2023 final to Barcelona after leading 2-0. "The final is played in the details and we can prepare the details before the game," Pajor said. "What I have also learned -- because I've played in four finals -- you have to be there in the first minute until the end."

Barcelona has rolled to a sixth consecutive Liga F title and has reached another Copa de la Reina final, but at the same time it has proven beatable.

Barcelona's home unbeaten run in Liga F came to an end after a record 64 games this season, and it lost to Real Madrid for the first time in 19 clásicos since its top rival founded a women's team. It also started the Champions League with a rare group stage loss to Manchester City. (AP)

Assam Sepak Takraw team shine in Khelo India Beach Games 2025



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, May 23: Team Assam delivered a stellar performance at the Khelo India Beach Games 2025, held at Dumas Beach, Union Territory of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, from May 19 to 24.

In a thrilling Regu Event final, Assam clinched the Gold medal by defeating Delhi with scores of 17-14, 15-13, 15-11. In the Team

Event, Assam put up a valiant fight against Delhi and secured the Bronze medal, with match scores of 15-4, 15-13, 15-11, 15-9.

MLA and President of ASTA, Bhabesh Kalita, and General Secretary Dr. Bishnu Ram Nunisa, along with all members of the Assam Sepak Takraw Association, extended their heartfelt congratulations to the outstanding athletes for bringing glory to the state.

F1 hopes extra pit stops bring more excitement in the glamorous but dull Monaco Grand Prix

MONACO, May 23: The Monaco Grand Prix may be "the jewel in Formula 1's crown" but the race itself is rarely must-see TV. Sometimes, it's downright dull.

F1 and its governing body, the FIA, hope a rule change for Sunday's race will change that. Drivers will be forced to change tires at least twice in the hope that more pit stop strategy could shake up an event where Saturday qualifying -- and the resulting grid position -- is often more important than race day. "I guess it can go both ways," champion Max Verstappen said Thursday. "It can be quite straightforward, or it can go completely crazy because of safety cars coming into play or not making the right calls. I think it will spice it up probably a bit more."

The change is designed to stop a repeat of last year, when a first-lap crash brought out the red flag, allowing everyone to make their one mandatory tire change.

With overtaking all but impossible on the twisty Monaco streets, the rest of the race was a procession. Home driver Charles Leclerc took the win for Ferrari and all of the top 10 finished in grid order.

How Sunday's race shakes out could depend on whether teams get creative with their strategies.

"Normally, with one stop, once you have a good pit stop and everything is fine, then you drive to the end and just stay focused and not hit the barrier," Verstappen said. "But

maybe with a two-stop it can create something different, people gambling, guessing when the right time is to box."

McLaren's Monaco pedigree Monaco was once McLaren territory. It could be again.

It's the most successful team with 15 wins in Monaco, but none since Lewis Hamilton took the victory in 2008 on his way to his first championship.

Verstappen's win at the Emilia-Romagna Grand Prix last week tightened up a title race which was increasingly dominated by McLaren.

Oscar Piastri leads the standings, but now only by 13 points ahead of his teammate Lando Norris and 22 from Verstappen.

Monaco could favor McLaren because its car tends to be easier on its tires and, as Verstappen said last week, because his Red Bull dislikes low-speed corners.

Verstappen skips movie night ahead of the Monaco Grand Prix, all but two of the 20 F1 drivers were pictured at a private screening Wednesday of the upcoming movie "F1," starring Brad Pitt and produced by Lewis Hamilton.

Not Verstappen, though, who became a father for the first time a few weeks ago.

"I wanted to spend more private time," said Verstappen. "There was the opportunity to watch it, but if I watch it now or in three or four weeks, that's fine as well." (PTI)

What to know ahead of the final round in the Premier League

LONDON, May 23: Here what's to look out for heading into the final round of the Premier League on Sunday:

Fight for the Champions League: Five teams -- Manchester City, Newcastle, Chelsea, Aston Villa and Nottingham Forest -- are bidding for the remaining three Champions League qualification spots alongside already-crowned champion Liverpool and second-place Arsenal.

City is in third place on 68 points. Fourth-place Newcastle, fifth-place Chelsea and sixth-place Villa each have 66, and seventh-place Forest has 65.

City is away to Fulham and, because of its superior goal difference (+26) compared to its rivals, knows a draw is all but certain to secure a top-five finish.

Indeed, Newcastle (+22) and Chelsea (+20) have a much better goal difference than Villa (+9) so are virtually sure of getting into the Champions League with victories.

Chelsea has the toughest match -- away to Forest -- while Newcastle hosts Everton and Villa visits Manchester United, which is coming off losing the Europa League final.

Forest must beat Chelsea and also needs one of Newcastle and Villa to lose or draw their games to secure Champions League qualification. It would be a huge achievement, given Nuno Espirito Santo's team was fighting relegation last season.

A sixth-place finish guarantees a place in the Europa League.

Farewells: Man City star Kevin



De Bruyne heads the list of players bidding farewell to their teams on the final day.

De Bruyne already had a big Etihad Stadium sendoff on Tuesday after the win over Bournemouth but this will be the last game in his 10-year career with City.

Elsewhere, Trent Alexander-Arnold's goodbye to Liverpool hasn't been so celebrated by some Reds fans unhappy at him leaving his boyhood team on a free transfer. His last game for Liverpool is against Crystal Palace at Anfield and Liverpool manager Arne Slot said Friday he hasn't decided if Alexander-Arnold will start.

Others heading into the final games for their clubs include Victor Lindelöf and Christian Eriksen (Man United), Jorginho and Kieran Tierney (Arsenal), Abdoulaye Doucoure (Everton) and Lukasz Fabianski (West Ham).

On the managerial front, there's

still plenty of speculation about the future of Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou despite leading the team to the Europa League title. What he says -- or how he behaves -- after the home game against Brighton will be telling. It could also be Ruud van Nistelrooy's final game in charge of relegated Leicester.

Trophy lift and records: Liverpool's players will finally get their hands on the Premier League trophy after closing their title-winning campaign against Palace, the FA Cup winner -- a dress rehearsal of sorts for the season-opening Community Shield in August.

Mohamed Salah, who has 28 goals and 18 assists this season, heads to Anfield with a couple of records in sight. He is one goal or assist away from the Premier League's single-season goal contribution record of 47 -- held jointly by now-retired strikers

Alan Shearer and Andrew Cole -- and two assists short of the record for most assists in a Premier League season, held by De Bruyne and Arsenal great Thierry Henry.

Salah looked likely to break both of those records but has just one goal and one assist in his last eight matches.

Former Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp will be at Anfield on Sunday.

Playoff final: Before the last round of Premier League games, there's a huge match at Wembley Stadium on Saturday to discover which team will be playing in the top flight next season.

Sunderland and Sheffield United meet in the Championship playoff final for the right to join Leeds and Burnley in getting promoted from the second tier.

The playoff final is the most lucrative one-off match in world soccer, with Sunderland -- last in the Premier League in 2017 -- in line to get an estimated revenue uplift of around 200 million pounds (\$260 million) in projected matchday, broadcast and commercial revenue in case of promotion, and much more if the team was to survive the first season back in the top flight.

For Sheffield United, the uplift would be an estimated \$180 million as the club is still benefiting from parachute payments from the last time the team was in the Premier League -- in the 2023-24 season. Sunderland's team contains Jobe Bellingham, the younger brother of Real Madrid star Jude Bellingham. (AP)

Inaugural Hockey India Masters Cup to begin from June 18 in Chennai

NEW DELHI, May 23: The first-ever Hockey India Masters Cup 2025, a tournament for veteran players, will be held in Chennai from June 18 to 27.

Hockey India (HI) on Friday officially announced the venue and dates of the event that will see both men and women players in action.

The league marks a new chapter in Indian hockey, offering a dedicated platform for veteran players. According to the rules of the league, a player must be aged 40 and above to compete in the men's category, and 35 and above in the women's division.

The names of the teams for both the categories will be released shortly, and to participate in the event, players must register through their respective state member units, HI said in a statement. The competition will follow a league-cum-knockout format with pool structure based on the final number of participating teams. Former Indian women's hockey team captain Asunta Lakra expressed her excitement about the tournament. "Being part of the first-ever Hockey India Masters Cup is a deeply emotional and exciting moment for me. Hockey has shaped who I am, and to have the chance to return to the field, surrounded by fellow veterans who've shared similar journeys, is truly special," Lakra said. (PTI)

LET THE TRANSITION BEGIN

Gill front-runner as India decides on new Test captain for England tour

MUMBAI, May 23: India's cricket selectors will set the ball rolling for the team's long transition journey in the longest format when they pick a new Test captain and finalise the squad for what is expected to be a challenging five-match series in England, here on Saturday.

The 25-year-old Shubman Gill is a clear favourite to land the high-profile job as India embarks on a new World Test Championship cycle following the retirement of stalwarts Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in a span of one week.

By simple logic, Jasprit Bumrah was the vice-captain on the previous tour of Australia and he should be elevated to the leadership role but question marks over his long-term fitness and workload management are likely to go against him on the discussion table.

Rishabh Pant has had a forgettable IPL but he remains a vital part of India's transition phase in the Test format. The selectors are likely to make him vice-captain.

Barring the leadership conundrum, no major shake-up is expected.

Though Rohit and Kohli's exit leaves a massive void, the likes of K L Rahul can provide much-needed experience in the batting department.

Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal are expected to open in the first Test beginning in Leeds on June 20 but hot on their heels will be Sai Sudharsan, who is likely to be picked as a reserve opener.

It remains to be seen if one among Karun Nair, Sarfaraz Khan or Shreyas Iyer make it as an additional specialist batter.

Following the retirement of another stalwart, R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja will be lead spinner in the squad and it would be interesting to see if the selectors go with two or three



spinners in English conditions.

If the number is two, then Washington Sundar may get the nod ahead of Kuldeep Yadav, who is a proven match-winner across formats.

Pant is the leading wicket-keeper batter and the choice for a reserve too his rather straight forward with Dhruv Jurel set to be retained.

Chief selector Ajit Agarkar is expected to address the media after squad announcement and talk about the road ahead for the team undergoing a rebuilding process.

There is enough experience in the pace department led by Bumrah but will he last the rigours of a five-match series? There are also

concerns over Mohammed Shami's fitness.

Can his ageing body recover fast enough in between a long series? Mohammed Siraj is set to be the third pacer in the squad. If the selectors decide to pick five fast bowlers then Prasidh Krishna, Akash Deep and Arshdeep Singh, who is yet to play Test cricket, will also be in the mix.

If the five wicket men go for a left-arm pacer, Arshdeep will have competition from Khaleel Ahmed.

The squad will be made public a week before India A begin their tour of England. Any last minute replacement to the Test squad is likely to come from that shadow tour comprising two four-day games. (PTI)

Eyeing first top-two finish in 11 years, PBKS face ousted Delhi Capitals

JAIPUR, May 23: Riding a wave of success after a decade of pain, a full-strength Punjab Kings will fancy their chances of securing their first top-two finish in 11 years, when they face Delhi Capitals in the Indian Premier League here on Saturday.

Apart from the 2014 season when they topped the league table and finished runners-up, PBKS have only made one other playoff appearance in a competition that has been in existence for the past 18 years.

Having ended an 11-year drought, PBKS are now relishing the prospect of not just finishing in the top two, but also enter the summit clash and then make a dash for a maiden title.

A squad that is already brimming with confidence was shored up further when their overseas quartet of Marcus Stoinis, Josh Inglis, Aaron Hardie and Kyle Jamieson joined their extremely talented Indian teammates in the Pink City three days ago.

All four will be available for selection as PBKS look to book a top-two finish with a win over their beleaguered opponents who were knocked out of the playoffs reckoning after a big defeat to Mumbai Indians on Wednesday.

These foreign players left the team after the BCCI had to suspend the tournament for a week due to the military conflict between India and Pakistan that led to the abandonment of the match between these two teams midway through the first innings in Dharamsala on May 8.

The match was called off after 10.1 overs of play after a blackout in the picturesque hill town.

The PBKS think tank did well to promptly bring back their overseas contingent after the tournament's resumption, and the squad now resem-



bles a band of men determined to make up for the years of disappointment the franchise faced in the widely watched event. PBKS skipper Shreyas Iyer, who has recently made history by becoming the first captain to lead three franchises to IPL playoffs, has been the key to their success and for the side to go all the way, the stylish batter will need to continue in similar vein in the remaining matches.

Prior to his triumphant campaign with Kolkata Knight Riders last year, Iyer had led Delhi Capitals to the playoffs in 2019 and 2020, including their only IPL final appearance in 2020.

He is also the second highest run scorer this season with 435 runs in 12 matches, and he is gunning for more.

Thanks to the performance of players such as Prabhsimran Singh (458 runs), Priyansh Arya (356 runs), Arshdeep Singh (11 wickets) and Yuzvendra Chahal (13 wickets), PBKS have emerged as the most consistent side this season, accumulating 17 points from 12 matches to secure a playoff berth with two games to spare.

As far as Delhi Capitals are concerned, they have had their chances this season but the lack of big runs in the powerplay consistently and the ab-

sence of lead pacer Mitchell Starc towards the end has had an adverse impact on their prospects. They will look to end to end their disappointing campaign on a high note, but up against an in-form opponents like PBKS, it is easier said than done.

Teams:

Punjab Kings: Shreyas Iyer (c), Arshdeep Singh, Priyansh Arya, Pyla Avinash, Azmatullah Omarzai, Xavier Bartlett, Yuzvendra Chahal, Praveen Dubey, Aaron Hardie, Harnoor Singh, Harpreet Brar, Josh Inglis, Kyle Jamieson, Marco Jansen, Musheer Khan, Mitchell Owen, Prabhsimran Singh, Kuldeep Sen, Shashank Singh, Marcus Stoinis, Suryansh Shedge, Vishnu Vinod, Vijaykumar Vyshak, Nehal Wadhwa, Yash Thakur.

Delhi Capitals: Axar Patel (c), Mustafizur Rahman, Abhishek Porel, Karun Nair, KL Rahul (wk), Tristan Stubbs, Ashutosh Sharma, Vipraj Nigam, Mitchell Starc, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohit Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Sameer Rizvi, Darshan Nalkande, Tripurana Vijay, Dushmanta Chameera, Faf du Plessis, T Natarajan, Ajay Yadav Mandal, Manvath Kumar L, Madhav Tiwari. Match starts at 7:30 PM. (PTI)

There were times when we had our chances to make the playoffs: Pant

AHMEDABAD, May 23: Luc-know Super Giants skipper Rishabh Pant has admitted that while his side showed promise at various stages of the 2025 IPL season, the inability to cash in on their chances ultimately led to their early exit from the playoffs race. LSG's campaign was marked by inconsistency and narrow losses that derailed their momentum.

"We talk about playing good cricket, we've shown on occasion we can do that. There were times in the tournament where we had our chances to make the play offs. (but didn't make it), but it's part and parcel of the game," Pant said after LSG's 33-run win over Gujarat Titans on Thursday.

Pant reiterated the impact of injuries, especially to key bowlers, which left the attack thin on fire-power. LSG began the tournament without the services of Mohsin Khan, Avesh Khan, Akash Deep, and Mayank Yadav. While Shardul Thakur was signed mid-season and Avesh and Akash made returns, Mayank featured in just two games before being ruled out again.

"Coming into the tournament, there were lot of injury concerns. We made sure it's something we wouldn't talk about it."

"The whole batting unit has played, we lacked a bit on the fielding side. We can't make excuses, just want to learn and move on."

Against table-toppers Gujarat Titans, however, LSG produced a complete performance. Mitchell Marsh led the way with a blistering 117 off 64 balls, powering his team to 235/2. The bowlers then dismantled GT's much-vaunted top order inside the first 10 overs to seal the win. (PTI)

Angelo Mathews to retire from Tests after first game against Bangladesh next month



COLOMBO, May 23: Veteran Sri Lankan all-rounder Angelo Mathews on Friday announced that the first Test against Bangladesh next month will be his last five-day game as he makes way for younger talent in the traditional format with a "grateful heart and unforgettable memories."

The 37-year-old will, however, continue to play white-ball cricket for his country. His final Test appearance will be in Galle from June 17 to 21.

"With a grateful heart and unforgettable memories. It is time for me to say goodbye to the most cherished format of the game, International Test Cricket!...The first Test match against Bangladesh in June will be my last red-ball appearance for my country," he posted on 'X'.

"Whilst I bid adieu to the Test format, as discussed with selectors I will remain available for selection for the white ball format,

if and when my country needs me.

"I believe this Test team is a talented side with many future and present greats playing the game. Now seems like the best time to make way for a younger player to take the mantle to shine for our nation," he added.

Since making debut in 2009, Mathews has turned up in 118 Tests, scoring 8167 runs -- the third-highest tally in Sri Lanka's history, behind Kumar Sangakkara (12,400) and Mahela Jayawardene (11,814).

He has a fairly good average of 44.62 and has so far smashed 16 hundreds and 45 centuries with a 200 not out being the best of his lengthy career. He also has 34 wickets to his credit.

"A true servant of Sri Lanka Test Cricket. Thank you...for 17 years of unwavering dedication, leadership, and unforgettable moments in the red-ball format. Your commitment and passion have inspired a generation," Sri Lanka Cricket stated in its tribute.

"We wish you all the very best as you step away from Test cricket and look forward to seeing your continued contributions in white-ball cricket," it added.

Mathews, who was Sri Lanka's all-format captain from 2013 to 2017, said he has considered playing the format the highest honour.

"Nothing can match that feeling of patriotism and servitude when one dons the National Jersey. I have given my everything to cricket and Cricket has given me everything in return and made me the person that I am today," he said.

Mathews said he is grateful for the support that he has got over the years, from his family, his coaches and Sri Lanka Cricket.

"A chapter ends, but the love for the game will always remain," he signed off. (PTI)

It'll be tough without Rohit and Virat but also an opportunity for others, says Gambhir

NEW DELHI, May 23: India head coach Gautam Gambhir has admitted that dealing with the absence of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma will be a significant challenge for the team but their Test retirement has also opened the door for others to step up and take responsibility.

Kohli and Rohit bid farewell to Test cricket within a week of each other earlier this month. The announcements came ahead of the marquee five-match series in England next month, the squad for which will be announced on Saturday in Mumbai.

"I think, when you start the game and when you want to finish, it's a very individual decision. No one has the right. Be it the coach, the selector, be it anyone in this country has any right to tell someone when to retire and when not to retire. So it comes from within," Gautam Gambhir told CNN-News18.

With their exit, India will not only need a new Test captain but will also be without two of their most seasoned players, a leadership and experience void, Gambhir admits, won't be easy to fill.



"And yes, we've got to be without two senior players to really experience players. And sometimes I believe that it's the opportunity for some other people to put their hand up and say, 'Okay, I am ready for it'."

He drew a parallel with India's Champions Trophy triumph, which came despite the absence of pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah.

"So yes, it will be tough, but then there'll be people putting their hand up

for sure because this question was asked to me before. Champions Trophy as well.

"When Jasprit Bumrah wasn't there and I said exactly the same thing, someone missing out might give another person an opportunity to do something special for the country, hopefully, there'll be other guys waiting for that opportunity," he said.

While Kohli and Rohit have bid adieu to the Test and T20 format, they will still be available for India in the 50-over game.

Asked if the two can make the team for the 2027 ODI World Cup, Gambhir said "Look, it's still a long way away. We still have a T20 World Cup before that, and that is again a huge tournament that is going to happen in India, which is in February-March," he pointed out.

"So the entire focus at the moment, after England, will be on the T20 World Cup, and November-December 2027 is still two-and-a-half years away. And I've always said one thing -- if you keep performing, age is just a number," he added. (PTI)

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