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Key oppn leaders join govt's outreach team after Op Sindoor India's approach to terrorism tops the agenda

NEW DELHI, May 17: Opposition leaders Shashi Tharoor and Kanimozhi will join members of the ruling alliance, including Ravi Shankar Prasad and Sanjay Jha, in leading seven all-party delegations to key partner countries to convey India's message of zero tolerance against terrorism following Operation Sindoor.

The other MPs picked by the government to present India's "national consensus" in fighting terrorism before the world, including to UN Security Council members, are NCP-SP's Supriya Sule, BJP's Baijayant 'Jay' Panda and Shiv Sena's Shrikant Shinde.

A statement issued by the Parliamentary Affairs Ministry on Saturday said, "The all-party delegations will follow the project India's national consensus and resolute approach to combating terrorism in



all forms and manifestations. "They would carry forth to the world the country's strong message of zero tolerance against terrorism."

Sources said the delegations will be travelling to four of the five permanent Security Council members and not visit China, which has long

been a Pakistan ally.

While the delegation led by Congress MP Tharoor will visit the US, Panda's group, which includes AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi and BJP's Nishikant Dubey, will travel to western European countries such as the UK and France, both UNSC members.

The delegation led by DMK MP Kanimozhi will travel to Russia, another UNSC member.

The sources said the delegation led by BJP MP Prasad is expected to visit Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Algeria, while Sule's team of MPs will be travelling to Oman, Kenya, South Africa and Egypt.

The delegation led by JD(U) MP Jha is likely to visit Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population.

Shinde's team of parliamentarians are likely to visit some Gulf and African countries. Each delegation with six to seven MPs may visit around four to five countries, the sources said.

The government has made a careful selection of leaders who will head the delegations as they

come from parties across the political divide and are considered articulate voices.

The leaders -- four from the ruling National Democratic Alliance and three from the opposition INDIA bloc -- include seasoned lawmakers with long stints in public life.

The Congress, however, struck a discordant note, accusing the government of "playing games" with a "mischievous mindset" by announcing names of the heads of delegations from outside the four MPs suggested by the party.

With the party leadership turning wary of Tharoor, an eloquent voice who has been one of the staunchest champions of the government's tough response to Pakistan, senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh took a dig at his colleague. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Drop 'Assam MP' from Cong team for diplomatic outreach after Op Sindoor: Himanta to Rahul

GUWAHATI, May 17: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday urged Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to drop the state's MP from the list of four parliamentarians nominated by the grand old party for the delegations to be sent abroad to explain India's stance on terrorism from Pakistan.

Without naming Gaurav Gogoi, the Congress deputy leader in the Lok Sabha who is among the four MPs nominated by the party, the CM maintained that he should not be included in the all-party delegations "in the interest of national security".

Sarma has been making allegations against Gogoi over his alleged Pakistan links through his British wife Elizabeth Colburn, and has claimed that the Jorhat MP had stayed for 15 days in the neighbouring country without informing au-

thorities.

The Congress leader had dismissed the allegations.

"One of the MPs named in the list (from Assam) has not denied his prolonged stay in Pakistan—reportedly for two weeks—and credible documents show that his wife was drawing salary from a Pakistan-based NGO while working in India," Sarma alleged on X.

He also said, "In the interest of national security and beyond partisan politics, I urge leader of opposition Sri Rahul Gandhi not to include this individual in such a sensitive and strategic assignment."

Sarma's comment was a response to Congress leader Jairam Ramesh's post on social media.

Ramesh said the Congress nominated former Union Cabinet minister Anand Sharma, its deputy leader in Lok (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT BRIEFS

One held

JORHAT: One person was arrested on charges of drugs peddling here on a Friday. A police team arrested Uttam Das (36) from Borigaon area under Bhogdoi Police Outpost after 24.75 grams of suspected heroin was recovered from his possession. The police also recovered cash to the tune of ₹ 40,810, two mobile phones and a vehicle used to transport the narcotics substance. On Thursday, a lady identified as Usna Begum (35) was arrested from a rented house at Nazirani locality here after police recovered 46.08 grams of suspected heroin from her possession.

Passed away

TEZPUR: Naren Saikia, a prominent award winning teacher and a profound figure of the social life here passed away on Saturday at his residence in Tezpur's Prabatia area. He was 66. He retired as vice principal in 2023 from heritage Tezpur Government Higher Secondary School after his four decades of dedicated service. Born in 1958, he joined Tezpur Govt Higher Secondary School as Assistant Teacher in 1982. A born teacher Saikia remarkably continued teaching students of the school until the day before his demise. His untimely demise has been widely mourned here. Along with the people of Maina Chuburi and Saudar Chuburi of Parbatia, representatives of various organizations and individuals from Parbatia and Tezpur area including Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rabha, retired principal Atul Katak, Bijoy Saikia, retired teacher Naren Hazarika, Abul Husain, Jiten Bora, Hemanta Kishore Pathak, Lakshi Bora, Narendra Nath Barman, Thanewar Deka, Biraj Mohan Goswami, Abdul Mannan, Nipjyoti Saikia, teachers and students of the school visited his residence after getting the information of the passing away of the beloved teacher and paid their last respect to him.

Racket providing mobile connections to cybercriminals busted; 7 held

GUWAHATI, May 17: Seven people were arrested as the Assam Police on Saturday claimed to have busted an inter-state racket that provided mobile phone connections to cybercriminals, including Pakistanis, for opening WhatsApp accounts to dupe people.

Addressing a press conference, DGP Harmeet Singh said "Operation Ghost SIM" was launched based on information provided by military intelligence about a racket operating with bases in Assam, Rajasthan and Telangana.

"The Gajraj Corps' military intelligence wing had got the primary input about this fake SIM card racket. They worked on it, which led them to the Pakistan connection. This information was further developed into actionable inputs by the Special Branch and Special Task Force of the Assam

Police," he said.

The racket procured SIM cards in different names and dispatched them to criminals who used them for duping people and "anti-national activities", the DGP said.

"A case was registered by the STF on May 14 and the arrests were made since Friday afternoon in simultaneous raids in two districts of Assam, one district of Telangana and two districts of Rajasthan," he added.

Singh said that apart from helping cybercriminals in the country get new mobile connections, the racket provided criminals in Pakistan with WhatsApp accounts having Indian numbers.

Victims believed that they were receiving calls from Indian numbers, but in reality, those were made (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Shivraj Singh Chouhan praises Assam's NRLM efforts

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, May 17: Union Minister of Panchayati Raj and Agriculture, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, on Saturday thanked Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for implementing various developmental schemes under the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) and for supporting self-help groups.

The minister's remarks came during his visit to Samaguri in Nagaon district, where he interacted with over 50 women entrepreneurs from the Lakhpati Baideo and Mahalakpati Baideo initiatives at the "Kunhi Tea Bar" in the Bhelegouri

area.

Speaking on the occasion, Chouhan highlighted how women involved in NRLM groups have achieved self-reliance and benefited from state government initiatives. He also reviewed products made by the women and expressed satisfaction with their quality and innovation.

He further emphasised the need to empower Lakhpati Baideo participants to become Mahalakpati Baideo and encouraged more women to join self-help groups.

The National Rural Livelihood Mission aims to promote financial

independence and entrepreneurship among women in rural areas. Through the formation of self-help groups, the mission provides a platform for women to launch micro-enterprises and improve their livelihoods. The district administration played a key role in organising the event.

Self-help groups have been instrumental in empowering women across the state by helping them develop skills, access credit, and become entrepreneurs. According to an official press note, these groups have also contributed to poverty (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 17: Union minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan along with chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, presented 55,000 pucca houses to the rural beneficiaries at a central Grihapravesh ceremony held at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalkashetra here on Saturday.

"In the month of January this year in presence of Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the government gave 50 thousand houses to the eligible beneficiaries. Continuing the tempo, another 55 thousand beneficiaries have been endowed with the gifts of pucca houses today under PMAY-G in Assam," an official statement quoted the chief minister as saying.

Sarma also informed that for putting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of providing pucca houses to all in practice, State government has been taking all steps for the successful implementation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Grameen) in the state.



"In a historic move last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi dedicated 5,55,555 houses under PMAY (G) to the use of the people of Assam. In the month of July 2023, the state government distributed 3,08,640 houses on a single day to the eligible beneficiaries," he added.

Moreover, in the month of September last year, synchronizing with roll out of the PMAY-G 2.0, allotment letters were distributed to

1,71,593 new beneficiaries, he said.

Moreover, the chief minister said that under PMAY-G scheme, since 2016, Assam received a target of building 26,11,793 houses. Out of these, till 15 May, allotment of 25,73,325 houses have been given. Out of the total allotted houses, construction of 20,13,478 houses have already been completed. "Efforts have been made to ensure that all eligible families become entitled (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

New cricket stadium with int'l facilities to be ready by Feb next year: Himanta

GUWAHATI, May 17: A new cricket stadium at Amingaon, on the outskirts of Guwahati, with facilities to host international matches, will be ready by February next year, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday.

He emphasised that the government was creating infrastructure and providing competitive platforms for aspiring sportsperson, with the onus on the youth to utilise the opportunities to their best advantage.

Talking to reporters after reviewing the construction of the Amingaon cricket stadium, Sarma said, "Guwahati already has two big stadiums, at Sarusajai and Barsapara. This one at Amingaon, where 20,000 people will be able to watch cricket together, will be completed by February next year."

"It is a stadium with all modern facilities. Allied work related to the stadium will also be completed by

February... Work is on for adequate parking facilities, etc, so that ODIs, T20s can be hosted here also in the future," he added.

The Sarusajai stadium has multiple sporting facilities, including athletics track and football field, while the Barsapara one is a cricket stadium, the lone current venue for international cricket matches in North East.

Sarma also reviewed the progress of work of an under-construction swimming pool and witnessed a practice match at the National Centre of Excellence badminton stadium at Amingaon.

He maintained that when Assam goes on to host its next National Games, enough number of stadiums will be available. The state had hosted the Games in 2007.

These stadiums can also host mega musical shows, like the ones by leading national and international stars in Shillong, the chief (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Increasingly, these conditions are being diagnosed at younger ages'

Obesity silent tsunami of India's disease burden, say experts

NEW DELHI, May 17: Obesity has emerged as one of the most urgent and under-recognised health crises in India, with experts warning that it now functions as a silent tsunami sweeping through the population.

A study published in The Lancet projects that nearly one-third of Indians or approximately 449 million people could be obese by 2050.

This includes an estimated 218 million men and 231 million women.

The rising tide of obesity is closely linked to a surge in chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular ailments, fatty liver, hormonal disorders, infertility, and even certain cancers, experts said.

India already holds the global record for the highest number of people living with



diabetes, estimated at over 101 million. Increasingly, these conditions are being diagnosed at younger ages, they said.

An alarming rise in non-communicable diseases among individuals in their 20s and 30s, the most productive age group, a trend that is largely being driven by excess body weight, said Dr Neeraj Nischal, addi-

tional professor in the Department of Medicine at AIIMS.

"The obesity epidemic is quietly reshaping India's disease profile and, unless confronted with urgency, will place an unmanageable burden on the country's healthcare infrastructure and economic productivity," he said.

Dr Rajesh Upadhyay, direc-

tor and head of the Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Max Super Speciality Hospital, Delhi, and past president and dean of Association of Physicians of India, said that obesity is no longer a matter of personal choice or appearance.

It has become one of the most influential medical risk factors in the country today, he said.

"Obesity is not a cosmetic issue. It is a clinical, systemic concern that is driving a surge in diseases like fatty liver, diabetes, gastrointestinal complications, and heart disease. In my practice, I see its consequences every day. To address this, we must move beyond awareness campaigns and commit to deep-rooted preventive reforms across schools, offices, hospitals, and even the medical curriculum," (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India restricts entry of Bangladeshi consumer goods through land transit points in NE

NEW DELHI, May 17: India on Saturday decided to allow entry of ready-made garments from Bangladesh only through Kolkata and Nhava Sheva sea ports and barred imports of a range of consumer items through land transit points in the northeast -- a move that is set to significantly hit Dhaka's trade with New Delhi.

Besides ready-made garments (RMG), plastics, wooden furniture, carbonated drinks, processed food items, fruit flavoured drinks, cotton and cotton yard waste will not be allowed to enter India through land customs stations and check posts in Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura and Mizoram, and Phulbari and Changrabandha in West Bengal, according to a government notification.

The new restrictions for Bangladeshi consumer goods are coming over five weeks after New Delhi ended a nearly five-year-old arrangement for trans-shipment of Bangladesh export cargo to third countries via Indian airports and ports.

The new restrictions have been imposed with immediate effect.

India's fresh restrictions on limiting access to Bangladeshi exports appears to



be in response to Dhaka denying certain value added items from the Northeast to enter that country through the land transit points.

The friction in trade ties between the two countries came amid increasing strain in the overall relations after deposed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina fled Dhaka in August last year in the face of a massive anti-government protest.

The ready-made-garments and certain other Bangladeshi items now will only

be allowed access through Kolkata and Nhava-Sheva sea ports.

The notification on restrictions on Bangladeshi imports has been issued by director general of Foreign Trade.

Bangladesh is a major global exporter of ready-made garments, and the value of its exports in the sector was estimated at USD 38 billion in 2023.

Its annual RMG exports to India is estimated at around USD 700 million and 93 per cent of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'Purezento: Khushiyon ki Gifting' launched in Guwahati



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 17: A new premium gifting destination, Purezento: Khushiyon ki Gifting, has officially opened its doors in Guwahati, bringing a curated selection of healthy and high-quality gift items to the city.

K K Birla group sugar companies register rise in fourth quarter net profit

KOLKATA, May 17: Post-tax profits of K K Birla sugar companies - Avadh Sugar and Magadh Sugar - registered an increase during the fourth quarter of 2024-25. A joint statement by the two firms said that the net profit of Avadh Sugar during the fourth quarter of last financial year stood at ₹ 72 crore as compared to ₹ 55 crore in the similar previous period. The total income of the company in the fourth quarter of 2024-25 stood at ₹ 678 crore as against ₹ 621 crore in the previous similar period. For Magadh Sugar, net profit increased to ₹ 72 crore in the fourth quarter of last fiscal, as against ₹ 47 crore in the previous corresponding period. The total income of the company increased to ₹ 356 crore as compared to ₹ 288 crore in the previous similar period. (PTI)

Axis Bank partners with Antara Senior Care to boost senior citizens' well-being

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 17: Axis Bank has announced a partnership with Antara Senior Care, a wholly owned subsidiary of Max India Limited, to provide enhanced care and support for India's senior citizens. The move aims to uplift the quality of life for the elderly by integrating Antara's senior care services with Axis Bank's customer offerings.

According to an official statement, the collaboration will allow over 20 lakh customers enrolled in Axis Bank's Silver Linings Program to access Antara's range of senior care services. These include professionally managed Care Homes and personalized Care at Home services.

The Silver Linings Program is Axis Bank's dedicated initiative for customers above the age of 60, offering tailored banking solutions along with curated wellness, lifestyle, and travel benefits. Commenting on the develop-

ment, Munish Sharda, Executive Director of Axis Bank, said, "We are delighted to partner with Antara Senior Care with whom we share a common goal of serving the senior citizens of our country with best-in-class experience during their golden years. This partnership will enable the Bank to serve its customers beyond financial solutions and offer them much more in terms of care and support."

Rajit Mehta, Managing Director and CEO of Antara Senior Care, added, "We value Axis Bank's dedication to creating a bouquet of innovative offerings for senior care through its Silver Linings Program, and partner organizations. Together with Axis Bank, we are building comprehensive solutions that enhance quality of life and promote well-being for India's senior citizens." The partnership is expected to strengthen the support ecosystem for the elderly, bridging the gap between financial services and holistic senior care.

According to an official statement, the OPD services were inaugurated in the presence of Dr Ganesh Nagarajan, Director - Hepatobiliary Pancreatic & Gastrointestinal Oncosurgery, and Dr Gaurav Chaulba, Director - HPB Surgery, Liver and Multi-Organ Transplant, both from Nanavati Max Hospital, Mumbai.

As part of the new services, Dr Nagarajan will consult at Trinitas Medharbor Superspeciality Healthcare & Diagnostics, VIP Road, Six

graced by social media influencer Payal Jain and attended by founder Abhishek Agarwal, Shruti Agarwal, Pawan Agarwal, Rajani Agarwal, and other dignitaries. Abhishek Agarwal, founder of Purezento, explained, "Purezento is a Japanese word meaning 'gift'.

Mile, while Dr Chaulba will be available at Aaryan Gastrointestinal Clinic, Ganeshguri.

Both specialists will be accessible for consultations on the third Friday of every month from 3 PM to 4 PM. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Ganesh Nagarajan said, "Clinical observations show a rise in specific types of cancers in Guwahati, largely due to tobacco use, dietary habits, and environmental influences. Due to limited awareness and clinical expertise, many symptoms go unnoticed, leading to delayed diagnosis and poor outcomes. Our aim is to enable early detection and offer advanced treatment options to improve patients' quality of life."

Dr Gaurav Chaulba highlighted the growing burden of liver disease, stating, "Genetic predisposition, sedentary lifestyles, and environmental factors are contributing to a steady rise in liver disorders across India. If left untreated, these can lead to complications such as liver failure. Our new OPD services in Guwahati will allow timely screening, especially for high-risk individuals, and help raise the standard of care in liver and gastroenterology."

The doctors also urged the public to be aware of key warning signs of HPB and gastrointestinal cancers, such as jaundice, dark urine, pale stools, abdominal swelling, unexplained weight loss, fatigue, vomiting, and easy bruising—symptoms that demand immediate medical attention. This expansion is part of Nanavati Max Hospital's broader initiative to decentralise specialized healthcare.

The hospital has established over 17 OPDs in four states, including Maharashtra's Amravati, to bring advanced medical expertise closer to underserved regions.

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, May 17: Novotel has been awarded the prestigious National Pride Achievers Award 2025 for Excellence in Hospitality & Guest Experience (2024-25).

According to an official statement, the honour was presented at the Pragiyoti ITA Centre for Performing Arts in Machkhowa, Guwahati, during a high-profile ceremony attended by dignitaries and national celebrities.

The accolade, part of the 9th edition of the National Pride Achievers Awards curated by Sadak Production and Spotlight Global Productions, recognizes distinguished contributors across sectors.

Novotel Guwahati's recognition reflects its continued focus on guest-centric service, technological integration, and personalised hospitality.

Manmeet Singh, General Manager of Novotel Guwahati GS Road, expressed his gratitude, saying, "This award is a meaningful recognition of the standards we strive to uphold every single day. In a fast-evolving

We see this space as a one-stop destination for premium gifting, offering a wide assortment of dry fruits, healthy snacks, drinks and chocolates, baklava and dates, mouth fresheners, wedding boxes, return gift boxes, room hampers, and more."

Shruti Agarwal, a young entrepreneur and co-founder, added, "We're proud to showcase top-tier brands such as Snackables, Dhananjay Chana & Chikki, Sleepy Owl Coffee, Joyspoon Mouth Fresheners, MontNMan Kombucha, and Nam Nam Food's Cheesecake. To celebrate our launch, we're offering a flat 15% discount on all items for a limited period."

The store also caters to bulk gifting needs, with over 150 varieties of gift hampers and around 300 healthy food products. Customers can reach out for personalized gifting solutions and take advantage of the inaugural offers.

With its wide-ranging product lineup and modern approach to gifting, Purezento aims to become a go-to destination for festive, personal, and corporate gifting in the region.

Focus on exports, diversification to boost revenue growth: RITES CMD

NEW DELHI, May 17: Proactive efforts to secure export orders for rolling stock and diversify the client base have helped improve our revenue outlook for the coming years, RITES Ltd Chairman and Managing Director Rahul Mithal said.

A Navratna public sector undertaking and leading transport and engineering consultancy company, RITES this week reported a 4.3 per cent decline in its consolidated operating revenue in the March quarter to Rs 615 crore compared to Rs 643 crore in the year-ago quarter. Net profit rose by 3.4 per cent year-on-year to Rs 141 crore in the quarter.

Mithal told PTI that the company's rolling stock export business was impacted due to a lack of fresh

orders from many of its erstwhile African and South Asian clients during the pandemic and post-pandemic periods.

He added that the Quality Assurance segment also faced challenges as Indian Railways fixed four entities, for the first time, for the Quality Assurance work through an open tendering process, impacting both the volume and margins substantially.

However, according to him, the export outlook improved after nearly three years when we secured an export order from Mozambique for the supply of 10 locomotives - the first such order won through global competitive bidding -- driven by sustained and focused outreach to prospective countries. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

India's approach to terrorism

"Congress mein hona aur Congress ka hona mein zameen-aasmaan ka antar hai (There is a difference between being in the Congress and of the Congress)." An unfazed Tharoor said he is honoured by the government's invitation to lead an all-party delegation to five key capitals.

He added, "When national interest is involved, and my services are required, I will not be found wanting. Jai Hind!" The Parliamentary Affairs Ministry's statement said distinguished diplomats, including retired foreign secretaries, will be part of each delegation.

In a post on X, Parliamentary Affairs minister Kiren Rijiju said, "In moments that matter most, Bharat stands united. Seven All-Party Delegations will soon visit key partner nations, carrying our shared message of zero-tolerance to terrorism." Sharing the ministry's statement, he said, "A powerful reflection of national unity above politics, beyond differences." The statement said the proposed visits of the seven all-party delegations come in the context of Operation Sindoor and India's continued fight against cross-border terrorism.

MPs from different parties, including Anurag Thakur, Aparajita Sarangi, Manish Tewari, Amar Singh, Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Samik Bhattacharya, Brij Lal, Sarfaraz Ahmad, Priyanka Chaturvedi, Vikramjit Sawhney, Sasmit Patra and Bhuvaneshwar Kalita, will be part of these delegations, sources have said.

The government also tapped Trinamool Congress MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay to join the exercise but he declined due to health reasons. The expansive diplomatic drive is aimed at driving home in global capitals India's stand following the country's aggressive response to the Pahalgam terror attack, which left 26 civilians dead, amid Pakistan's efforts to skirt the issue of terrorism while putting Kashmir at the centre of its discourse.

Shinde said on X, "We will firmly convey to the international community that terrorism has no place in India, and that it is Pakistan which continues to nurture terrorism on its own soil. When it comes to matters of national interest, there is no division, only duty."

Pakistan with its long history of sponsoring terrorism has become a threat to humanity, Owaisi told PTI videos, affirming that this will be the heart of his message to the international community.

The government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made it clear that any future act of terror will be construed as an act of war, signalling India's resolve to target Pakistan if it continues to abet terrorism on Indian territory. India has also insisted that it has merely paused Operation Sindoor following days of conflict with Pakistan and its actions will depend on the neighbouring country's conduct. (PTI)

Drop 'Assam MP' from

Sabha Gaurav Gogoi, Rajya Sabha MP Syed Naseer Hussain, and Lok Sabha MP Raja Brar for the all-party delegations to be sent abroad to explain India's stance on terrorism from Pakistan.

The Congress on Saturday said it was asked by the government to submit the names of four MPs for the diplomatic outreach after Operation Sindoor. (PTI)

One more held for

that case, he was held under the stringent National Security Act. Sarma had earlier said that the state-wide crackdown on traitors will continue and "nobody will be spared". (PTI)

Union Agri minister, along

to pucca houses and as per Awaas Plus Survey, all eligible families will be brought under PMAY-G scheme," he asserted. He also said that the distribution of 55 thousand houses today would be considered historic as the launch of Lakhmi Mistri initiative constitutes an important part of PMAY-G houses.

According to Sarma, this initiative along with empowering the women folks will help them to become self-reliant. Moreover, this initiative will help in creating a skilled pool of work forces in the state.

Sarma also thanked Chouhan for approving a target of 3,76,075 houses for Assam during financial year 2025-26 under PMAY-G from the final Awaas Plus 2018 survey list. He said that the approval would saturate the waiting list of the state and will help in realising the vision of Prime Minister Modi that is 'Housing for All' in the rural areas and will enable all the economic disadvantaged people to sleep under pucca house and live with dignity.

Sarma further reaffirmed the government's commitment to continue driving the progress for a self-reliant and prosperous Assam. "Visible progress in rural transformation and the uplift of farmers are direct results of the government's focused initiatives of rural development. Our government has set a 100 per cent paddy procurement target and is on course to achieve it by June this year," Sarma said.

Panchayat and Rural Development minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, Agriculture minister Atul Bora, MP Bijuli Kalita Medhi, chief secretary Dr Ravi Kota, commissioner and secretary Agriculture Department Aruna Rajoria, Commissioner P&RD J Keerthi and host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Racket providing mobile connections

from Pakistan, he said. Fifteen people are being questioned, and among them are those in whose names the SIM cards were issued, the DGP said. A total of 948 SIM cards were seized, along with other electronic devices, he said. (PTI)

New cricket stadium with int'l

minister added. On potential for sportspersons to emerge from the state, Sarma said, "The players have to come forth themselves. We can give the infrastructure. We have been hosting 'Khel Maharan', taking the competition to the grassroots level. Determination to put in the effort has to come from the players." (PTI)

Shivraj Singh Chouhan

reduction and improved living standards in rural communities. Nagaon deputy commissioner Narendra Kumar Shah, Zila Parishad CEO Manoj Kumar Chikariya, and other officials from the district administration and allied departments attended the event.

Obesity silent tsunami

he said. Echoing this concern, Dr Mohsin Wali, senior consultant of Internal Medicine at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, noted that the crisis is growing quietly but with devastating consequences.

"This is India's silent tsunami. The burden of obesity is not always visible on the surface, but its impact is evident in hospital admissions, in the rise of chronic illnesses, and in the younger age of onset for lifestyle diseases. We must treat this as a National emergency. Prevention must begin at the institutional level -? what we serve in school and hospital canteens, what we teach young doctors, and how we screen for risk -? all must change," he said.

Health experts are urging immediate and coordinated action to treat obesity as a systemic public health challenge. They called for greater accountability in public institutions, widespread access to preventive screenings, nutritional reform in institutional food environments, and a fundamental shift in how India approaches medical education and policy. The rising prevalence of obesity is not confined to urban populations or high-income groups. It is increasingly visible in rural areas, among adolescents, and across various regions of the country. If no action is taken, experts cautioned that India could soon become the epicentre of a global obesity and non-communicable disease crisis. The long-term consequences could include a shorter lifespan for future generations, significant loss of workforce productivity, and unsustainable pressure on the nation's health system. (PTI)

India restricts entry of Bangladeshi

the RMG shipments enter India through land ports. There are 11 land transit points in northeast for trade between India and Bangladesh. Out of them, three are in Assam, two in Meghalaya and six in Tripura.

India had previously permitted export of Bangladesh goods through all land trading points and seaports without undue restrictions.

However, Bangladesh continued to impose port restrictions on Indian exports at Land Customs Stations (LCS) and Integrated Check Posts (ICP) bordering northeastern region, people familiar with the matter said. India had taken up the issue with Dhaka but there was no positive response.

Further, yarn exports from India across land-ports have been stopped by Bangladesh with effect from April 13. The people cited above said Indian exports are subjected to rigorous inspection on entry, and Indian rice exports are not allowed through Hili and Benapole ICPs since April 15, in addition to existing restrictions.

Industrial growth in the northeastern states suffered due to imposition of "unreasonably high" and "economically unviable" transit charges levied by Bangladesh, the people cited above said.

Bangladesh's approach resulted in denying access to the northeast from Indian hinterland. Due to land-port restrictions by Bangladesh, the northeastern states are suffering from lack of access to Bangladesh market to sell locally manufactured goods, restricting the market access to primary agricultural goods only, the people said.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, has free access to the entire northeast market, creating an unhealthy dependency and stymieing growth of manufacturing sector in the north-eastern states, they said.

In order to promote 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and support local manufacture in the Northeastern states, it is understood that India has decided to impose port restrictions across all LCSs and ICPs in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, they added. There has been a sharp downturn in India-Bangladesh relations after deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina fled Dhaka and took shelter in India in August last year in the face of a massive anti-government protest. The relations nosedived dramatically after the interim government headed by Muhammad Yunus failed to contain attacks on minorities, especially Hindus, in that country. (PTI)



Exter EX Hy-CNG duo launched at Meghna Hyundai Barpeta Road by Deepak Bansal (RSH - North East, HML) in the presence of all financiers, media people and esteemed customers. With ample boot space and mileage of 27.1 Km/kg the car is priced at only ₹7.51 L. "Space bhi, Mileage bhi!" -HT Photos

Civil society of Haflong organises Tiranga Yatra

HT Correspondent

HAFLONG, May 17: The civil society of Haflong organised the Tiranga Yatra on Saturday in Haflong to express gratitude to the Indian Armed Forces and the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. The 'Yatra' was widely participated by people from all walks of life.

The event dedicated to expressing gratitude and solidarity towards the Indian Armed Forces saw approximately one thousand people today which commenced from Cultural Institute Hall and culminated at the Council Parking Ground.

More than 150 security personnel from Dima Hasao are deployed at various levels of national security CEM said during the event. Hon'ble CEM, Shri. Debola Gorlosa, Hon'ble Assam Minister, Smti Nandita Gorlosa, Hon'ble Vice Chairman of District Planning Board and MAC Shri. Dhriti Thaoson, Executive Members, Members of Autonomous Council, Ex-servicemen, govt officials, conscious citizens, Student, teachers were seen actively taking part during the rally.

Launch of 'Lakhimi Mistri' initiative Griha Pravesh of 1,726 houses under PMAY-G in Chirang



HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, May 17: In a major boost to rural housing and women empowerment in Chirang district, a virtual Griha Pravesh (housewarming) ceremony under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Gramin (PMAY-G) and the launch of the 'Lakhimi Mistri' initiative was held today at the District Centre, Kajalgaon.

The event was conducted simultaneously across the three Development Blocks — Borobazar, Sidli, and Manikpur — covering a total of 1,726 beneficiaries who were handed over their newly constructed homes under PMAY-G.

705 houses were inaugurated in Borobazar Block, 918 houses in Sidli Block and 103 houses in Manikpur Block.

Prominent dignitaries including MLA Sidli Nirmal Brahma, MLA Bijini Ajoy Kumar Ray, and TCLCC Chairpersons Suresh

Daimari and Mawti Brahma attended the respective block-level functions. They interacted with the beneficiaries and praised the initiative for fulfilling the dream of rural families to own a dignified home.

Adding to the day's significance, the 'Lakhimi Mistri' programme was officially launched. This is a women-centric skill development initiative aimed at training women in masonry and construction work. The goal is to foster self-reliance among rural women while simultaneously enhancing the capacity of local communities in implementing housing schemes like PMAY-G.

Officials expressed optimism that this pioneering initiative will not only empower women economically but also ensure the quality and timely construction of rural homes under government schemes.

The twin initiatives — PMAY-G Griha Pravesh and Lakhimi Mistri — reflect the district administration's commitment to inclusive development and grassroots empowerment.

Mobile app revolutionises voter data collection

MORIGAON PANCHAYAT POLLS



HT Correspondent

MORIGAON, May 17: In a major step toward digital governance, the National Informatics Centre (NIC), Morigaon has developed a groundbreaking mobile application that has simplified and streamlined the collection of voter statistics during the 2025 Panchayat elections. The innovation, named the 'Voter Turnout' mobile app, was designed specifically for Presiding Officers to collect gender-wise voter turnout data in real time, ensuring accuracy and efficiency.

The initiative was spearheaded by Morigaon District Commissioner Shri Devashish Sharma, whose emphasis on technology-driven administration enabled the successful integration of this system in the district's electoral process.

The app was developed under the leadership of Manika Pathak, Technical Director and District Informatics Officer (Scientist-E), NIC Morigaon, with support from Additional District Commissioner Sulakshana Barpathragohain and technical assistance

from NIC Guwahati, led by Mrs. Hiranmoyee Goswami, Head of E-Prayuktisewa Services, NIC Assam. A dedicated team of 16 IT experts and data management professionals worked day and night to ensure flawless implementation.

One of the app's key achievements is its ability to collect real-time voter turnout statistics by gender (Male, Female, and Third Gender) directly from Presiding Officers on polling day. Previously, such data were collected verbally via mobile phones, a method prone to miscommunication and human error. This new digital approach ensures error-free, timely, and transparent reporting.

On polling day, May 7, the app was widely adopted across Morigaon, with approximately 94% of voter turnout data collected through it—an impressive figure demonstrating both the app's reliability and the successful training of 969 Presiding Officers by NIC.

Speaking to this correspondent, Manika Pathak expressed gratitude to the District Commissioner, NIC Assam, and the entire IT team for their support. She also commended the Presiding Officers for embracing the digital transformation within a short span of time.

"This app marks a milestone in the digital governance landscape," Pathak stated, adding that plans are underway to introduce new features and make the application even more user-friendly for future elections.

The success of this initiative stands as a model for other districts and states looking to modernize election-related processes through effective use of technology.

20th biennial session of Darrang District Higher Secondary Teachers and Employees Association

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, May 17: The 20th biennial session of the Darrang District Higher Secondary Teachers and Employees Association was held on Saturday with great fervor at PM Shri Mangaldai Town Girls' Higher Secondary School and the District Library Auditorium. The session brought together prominent educators, administrators, and stakeholders to deliberate on the National Education Policy 2020, secondary-level curriculum reforms, and issues related to professional ethics in teaching.

The open session and felicitation ceremony in the afternoon was inaugurated by Dr. Kamala Kanta Borah, Principal of Mangaldai College. In his keynote address, Dr. Borah provided an insightful overview of the NEP 2020, emphasizing, "Teaching is not just a job; it is a service. Those who treat it merely as a job are doing a grave injustice to the profession." He expressed pride that no examination in Darrang district has been marred by irregularities, and underscored the crucial role of parental involvement

in the education of children, stating, "Teachers guide students for eight hours a day, but parents influence them for the remaining sixteen."

Rukma Gohain Baruah, Vice-Chairman of the Assam State School Education Board, issued a stern reminder about ethical responsibilities in the teaching profession. Referring to the recent Class 11 examination paper leak incident, he stated, "The dignity of teachers is immense, but 45 individuals acted like termites, causing irreparable harm. Such negligence is a sin, equivalent to theft." He urged teachers to honor their role, as government education survives through their commitment.

The session was chaired by Nava Kumar Sharma, former Joint Secretary of the association. Ratul Kumar Das, the newly appointed Inspector of Schools for Darrang, spoke about the importance of preserving the integrity of the government education system, concluding his address with a musical tribute — a song by Parvati Prasad Baruah.

A cultural segment added warmth to the event, with a group performance by students and a solo performance by music teacher Malavika Deka Sharma. Notable attendees included Jatin Deka, Secretary of the All Assam Higher Secondary Teachers and Employees Association, and Shashanka Hazarika, National Outstanding Teacher Awardee.

Earlier in the day, tributes were paid to martyrs, and Parag Kumar Saharia, State Executive of ACTA, called upon the government to address systemic issues and shortages in educational institutions.

In the afternoon delegate and agenda session, presided over by former secretary Bimal Kumar Gogoi, members engaged in a spirited discussion over the secretary's report. A new committee was elected for the 2025-2027 term, with Deepak Kumar Nath as President and Hitesh Kakati as Secretary.

The session concluded with a unified pledge by educators to uphold professional integrity and actively contribute to shaping Assam's education landscape.

Storm disrupts traffic and power on Diphu-Manja Road Normalcy Restored

HT Bureau

DIPHU, May 16: A sudden storm accompanied by heavy rain and strong winds swept through the 9 Mile area of Diphu-Manja Road around 3 pm on Friday, causing widespread disruption to traffic and electricity services.

The intense winds uprooted trees and snapped large branches, several of which fell across the arterial Diphu-Manja Road, blocking movement in multiple locations. As a result, hundreds of vehicles were stranded on both sides of the road for several hours.

The storm also damaged at least one house in the Manja 9 Mile area, adding to the chaos caused by the sudden weather event.

Responding swiftly, personnel from the Manja Police Station, along with the help of an earth mover, undertook road clearance operations. By evening, the debris was removed, and normal traffic flow and electricity supply were restored.

Authorities have advised residents to remain alert as weather conditions remain unpredictable during the pre-monsoon season.

Month-long health drive to mark World Hypertension Day 2025

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 17: In a decisive step to confront the growing threat of high blood pressure, Cachar's District Commissioner, Mr. Dulal Yadav, on Saturday inaugurated a comprehensive health screening camp at the DC Office, officially launching the district's month-long campaign for World Hypertension Day 2025. Flanked by senior health officials and a dedicated team of medical staff, the District Commissioner presided over free screening for hypertension, diabetes, sickle cell anemia, and tuberculosis for all government employees, setting the tone for an ambitious outreach across the region.

Building on this momentum, similar camps will be rolled out at SM Dev Civil Hospital, all 41 Community Health Centres (CHCs) and Primary Health Centres (PHCs), as well as 271 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs and Sub-Centres throughout Cachar. In his address, DC Mr. Dulal Yadav urged every resident to take advantage of these free services, emphasizing that early detection of elevated blood pressure and glucose levels can be the difference between prevention and prolonged illness.

Dr. Khalida Sultana Ahmed, and Additional District Commissioner (Health), applauded the concerted efforts of the Health Department and underscored the campaign's timely launch during the high-stress election period. She noted that while cardiovascular diseases remain India's leading killer—with hypertension claiming over 1.6 million lives each year—the burden in Assam is particularly acute, affecting nearly one in five adults.

Running from May 17 to June 16, the initiative specifically targets individuals aged 30 and above, combining routine screenings with educational outreach to foster healthier lifestyles. Frontline health workers have been mobilized to ensure maximum participation, providing guidance on diet, exercise, and stress management. As the district rallies behind this vital public health endeavour, local authorities remain hopeful that increased awareness and proactive screening will curb the silent epidemic of hypertension in Cachar.

National Dengue Day Observed at Bijni

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, MAY 17: National Dengue Day was observed at Bijni Bandhab H.S. School on Friday with the theme, "Check, Clean, Cover: Steps to Defeat Dengue." As part of the observance, the district authorities organized a quiz competition for the students to engage them in learning about dengue prevention.

The quiz competition, along with the entire event, aimed to raise awareness about dengue prevention and inspire students to actively participate in measures to combat the disease.

The event was graced by the presence of Dr. Dwigen-dra Ramchary, District Surveillance Officer/District Malaria Officer (i/c), Dr. P.N. Patel, SDM&HO Ballanguri, the Principal of Bijni Bandhab H.S. School, the District Data Manager, District Media Expert, Epidemiologist, District Coordinator, and other school staff members.

Prajanmya Unmesh felicitates meritorious students

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, May 17: Prajanmya Unmesh, a noted socio-cultural organization of Assam, continues to make remarkable contributions beyond the cultural arena, earning appreciation from citizens for its multifaceted initiatives. The organization recently felicitated several meritorious students who passed the Higher Secondary examinations with distinction.

Among those specially recognized were Nilakshi Bhuyan in the Arts stream and Gaurav Sharma in the Science stream, both of whom were warmly felicitated for their exceptional academic achievements.

Led by Arup Saikia, Chief Executive of Prajanmya Unmesh and an internationally acclaimed Bhaona artist, the members of the organization visited the homes of several deserving students—especially those from underprivileged backgrounds—to personally offer their congratulations and encouragement.

Speaking to this correspondent, Arup Saikia said that the organization not only recognizes academic excellence but also identifies culturally active students to involve them in cultural showcases both in India and abroad. "We believe in nurturing talent that balances academic and cultural brilliance," he remarked.



One of Prajanmya Unmesh's unique initiatives is the performance of traditional Assamese Bhaona in the English language, aiming to bring Assam's rich cultural heritage to global audiences. These performances are directed by Arup Saikia himself.

The local community has expressed appreciation for Prajanmya Unmesh's continued efforts in promoting education, culture, and social welfare, praising the group for combining tradition with modern outreach.

The session concluded with a unified pledge by educators to uphold professional integrity and actively contribute to shaping Assam's education landscape.

Bisa Mung Dang Gam Singpho crowned new king of Bisa Gaon in Margherita

HT Correspondent

LEDO, May 17: In a momentous and culturally significant event, Bisa Mung Dang Gam Singpho was formally crowned as the new King of Bisa Gaon, a heritage-rich Singpho village in Ledo under the 83rd Margherita constituency of Tinsukia district, Assam, on Saturday.

The coronation follows the passing of Late King Bisa Nong Singpho on January 15, a revered leader whose legacy left an indelible mark across Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. In recognition of his contributions, the Assam government accorded him state honors during his last rites. As per Singpho tradition, the throne passes to the eldest son upon the demise of a king.

The coronation ceremony began with 'Smriti Tarpan' (ritual homage) in memory of the late king, followed by blessings from the Bhikkhu Sanghas. The ceremony drew a large gathering of dignitaries, community members, and well-wishers.

Among the prominent attendees were: MLA Bhaskar Sharma (83rd Margherita constituency), Tinsukia Deputy Commissioner Swapneel Paul, EAC Pritom Gogoi (Margherita Co-District Administration), Asom Gaurav Awardee Manje La Singpho, Singpho Development Society Chairman M.N. Singpho, Singpho National Council President Sengram Lebram & General Secretary Omio Ningda. Noted social worker, journalist and litterateur Jagat Changmai, Renowned poet and academic Dr. Ranjit Dutta, Tirap Autonomous District Council Demand Committee General Secretary Pal-

lab Shyam Wailung, Dr. Pannysara Mahathero & Pannashri Bhikkhu, Tai Phakey National Council President Saini Chakhap and Singpho Literary Committee Chairman Ongdu Singpho.

The event also witnessed participation from numerous organizations, including students' unions, tribal bodies, women's groups, business communities, and the Margherita Journalists Association, all of whom felicitated the new king with traditional honors.

Jagat Changmai, in an emotional tribute, shared his five-decade-long friendship with the late king, recalling his tireless efforts to uplift the Singpho community and highlight its cultural legacy to the world.

In his speech, MLA Bhaskar Sharma remembered Late King Bisa Nong Singpho as a figure known across the country for his honesty, kindness, and humility. He announced that a museum and statue in memory of the late king would be established in the Margherita region.

The newly crowned king, Bisa Mung Dang Gam Singpho, pledged to work for the overall development of the Singpho people in both Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. He emphasized the importance of unity, cultural preservation, and harmonious relations with other communities in the region.

A souvenir and photographic spotlight dedicated to Late King Bisa Nong Singpho, edited by Jagat Changmai, was also unveiled during the event by the esteemed guests.

Fifth edition of NE Vent Incubation Programme launched in Jorhat

Programme offers curated sessions on business model development, financial planning



HT Correspondent

JORHAT, May 17: The fifth edition of NE Vent — Entrepreneurship Incubation Programme was formally launched on Friday at Bosco Institute, Jorhat, by The Hub Jorhat. This marks the beginning of a six-month structured incubation training for the latest cohort of budding entrepreneurs from across Northeast India.

The NE Vent incubation programme offers curated sessions on business model development, financial planning, legal compliance, and pitching to investors. Selected entrepreneurs also receive seed funding to develop their ventures, with extended handholding support beyond the incubation period.

The event commenced with a wel-

come address by Father Jerry Thomas, Director of Bosco Institute, followed by the inaugural address by Dr. Virendra M. Tiwari, Director of CSIR-NEIST, Jorhat. Dr. Tiwari emphasized the need for sustainable ventures and urged the youth to become agents of innovative change aligned with global development goals.

Bidyut Bikash Rajkonwar, COO of NEATEHUB (Assam Agricultural University), delivered the keynote speech, highlighting the potential of government-led platforms like the Assam Startup Policy. He underscored the importance of self-awareness, values, and integrity in entrepreneurship.

A thought-provoking interactive ses-

sion was conducted by Pramatesh Borkotoky, Co-founder of Krafnn Home Décor India Pvt. Ltd. Sharing his personal journey, Borkotoky encouraged aspiring entrepreneurs to "start small and stay determined." He reflected on the challenges he faced after initially starting big, offering critical insights from his experiences.

Pranjal Konwar, COO of IIM Calcutta Innovation Park, delivered an inspiring motivational talk, while Pankaj Baruah, Chief Facilitator of NE Vent 5, showcased impact stories from earlier cohorts, highlighting the programme's tangible outcomes.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Kavita BorChetia, Networking Officer at The Hub Jorhat.

An entrepreneurial exhibition was also held as part of the event, featuring a wide array of products including jute and handicrafts, regional delicacies, food processing items, upcycled goods, and tech innovations. Entrepreneurs from Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, and Nagaland showcased their ventures, earning praise from guests and attendees for their creativity and enterprise.

It is noteworthy that The Hub Jorhat at Bosco Institute continues to play a significant role in nurturing entrepreneurship and creating a supportive ecosystem for start-ups in the region.

No.DE/BTC/Actts-382/S/D-Ci-Room/H.Scl/24/31

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

The undersigned invites sealed quotation affixing non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight and paise Twenty Five) only from the interested registered Firms/Suppliers for the following schemes as per specification mentioned in the Tender Papers shown against the items in details.

Sl. No.	Name of Schemes	A.A. Amount	A.A. No. & Date
1	Installation of Smart Class Room / Digital Teaching Device for Bodo Medium at Babhan High School in Baksa District.	8,49,600.00	BTC/EDN (HS)-156/2024-25/37, dated, 21 st March/2025.
	Installation of Smart Class Room / Digital Teaching Device for Assamese Medium at Babhan High School in Baksa District.	8,49,600.00	

Tender documents/papers including Terms & Conditions will be issued from 18/05/2025 to 07/06/2025 during office hours and will be received upto 2 P.M. on 07/06/2025 and the Tender box will be opened on the same day at 3.00 P.M. in presence of the bidders/representatives. If the receiving day of Tender happens to be bandh/holiday, the same will be received on next working day at the same time. The Tender document/papers should be dropped in Tender box in the office of the Director of Education, BTC, Kokrajhar.

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/377

Dated Kokrajhar the 16th May/2025

Sd/-
Director of Education,
BTC, Kokrajhar

S&T WORK IN CONNECTION WITH YARD REMODELING

Tender Notice No.: N-2025-26-TSK-NIT-05, Date: 10-05-2025. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work:
Tender No.: N-2025-26-TSK-T-05;
Name of Work : S&T work in connection with yard remodeling of Margherita station. **Tender Value:** ₹1,22,61,326/-; **Earnest Money:** ₹2,11,300/-; **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 05-06-2025 and opening after 15:00 hrs. on 05-06-2025.** For complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (S&T), Tinsukia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
Serving Customers With A Smile

INTEGRATED HOUSEKEEPING OF AVADH ASSAM EXPRESS

E-Tender Notice No. M-TSK-2025-26; Dated: 15-05-2025. **Tender No.:** M-TSK-2025-26. **Name of work:** Integrated Housekeeping of 15909/15910 Avadh Assam Express maintained at Coaching Depot, Dibrugarh of N.F. Railway for a period of one year. **Location of work:** Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, New Tinsukia, Ledo, Makum, Simaluguri, Mariani, Jorhat. **Tender Value:** ₹3,87,52,466.10. **Earnest Money:** ₹3,43,800.00. Last date and time for submission of tender: 08-06-2025 at 15:00 hrs. Date and time of opening of tender: After 15:30 hrs. of 08-06-2025. Website particulars where complete details of the tender can be seen and downloaded: www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. DME, Tinsukia
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY
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Future of Assamese print media - A matter of concern

By: HIMANGSHU RANJAN BHUYAN

The future of Assamese print media stands at a critical juncture, as it navigates a rapidly changing landscape shaped by digital transformation, evolving consumer habits, and economic pressures. Historically, Assamese print media has been the lifeblood of regional communication, deeply ingrained in the social, political, and cultural fabric of the state. It has played an essential role in shaping public opinion, facilitating discourse, and preserving the linguistic and cultural identity of Assam. However, as the digital age continues to redefine the media ecosystem, the survival and relevance of print media in Assam have come into question, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has accelerated several trends already in play.

One of the most significant factors contributing to the uncertain future of Assamese print media is the seismic shift in how people consume news. With the advent of smartphones and the widespread availability of high-speed internet, news consumption has transitioned from traditional, physical formats to digital platforms. Social media, news websites, and mobile applications offer readers instant access to breaking news, global developments, and personalized content, all tailored to their preferences. This shift is particularly pronounced among the younger generation, which increasingly prefers consuming news on digital platforms over traditional print. In Assam, as in the rest of the world, print media is losing its once-loyal readership to digital alternatives, with many opting for the immediacy, convenience, and interactivity offered by online platforms. Consequently, print newspapers in Assam have seen a significant decline in subscriptions, a shrinking customer base, and, ultimately, reduced circulation.

The COVID-19 pandemic only intensified these existing challenges. With lockdowns and restrictions on movement, physical newspapers faced distribution disruptions, and a substantial portion of the readership was either unable or unwilling to receive print editions. In many households, the habit of reading physical newspapers was replaced by the ease of accessing digital content. While print media struggled with these disruptions, the pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of traditional news outlets in a crisis. In contrast, digital platforms proved to be more resilient, as they

could deliver updates in real-time, without the logistical challenges faced by print media. The pandemic revealed the limitations of print in an increasingly digital world and underscored the urgency with which Assamese newspapers need to adapt to new modes of communication.

The decline in readership has had a direct impact on the financial viability of print media in Assam. Newspapers, which once thrived on advertising revenue, are now grappling with shrinking ad budgets. The rise of digital advertising, particularly on platforms like Google, Facebook, and Instagram, has siphoned off a significant portion of the advertising revenue that once sustained print publications. Advertisers increasingly favor digital channels because of the ability to target specific demographics with precision and track the effectiveness of their campaigns. Print media, on the other hand, lacks such targeted reach and the ability to provide instant feedback to advertisers. The result has been a steady loss of revenue, which has put immense financial pressure on Assamese newspapers, many of which have relied on advertising to offset the costs of printing, distribution, and editorial operations. Smaller publications, which have long been the backbone of regional journalism in Assam, are particularly vulnerable. These outlets, which focus on local news and community issues, are struggling to sustain their operations as the advertising revenue base shrinks.

As the financial outlook for print media continues to dim, the quality of journalism is also at risk. The pressure to adapt to the digital era and maintain a viable business model has led many newspapers to prioritize quantity over quality. The demand for instant news updates has driven a shift toward shorter, more sensational content that can attract clicks and traffic, often at the expense of in-depth reporting. This shift is evident in both national and local media, where there is an increasing emphasis on quick-hit stories and viral content, rather than thorough, investigative journalism. This shift threatens the core values of print media, which has long been a bastion of in-depth reporting, nuanced analysis, and fact-checked journalism. Assamese print media, which once set the standard for high-quality, investigative journalism, now finds itself competing in a media landscape that values speed and sensationalism over substance. As the demand for real-time updates



continues to rise, print publications are under increasing pressure to keep up with the fast-paced digital news cycle.

Moreover, the audience for traditional print media is aging. Younger readers, who have grown up in the digital age, are less inclined to engage with print newspapers. The internet offers a wealth of information at their fingertips, and they are more likely to engage with news through social media platforms, blogs, and podcasts, rather than through physical newspapers. The decline in print readership among younger generations presents a long-term challenge for Assamese newspapers, which must find ways to appeal to this demographic if they hope to secure their future. Without a robust strategy to attract and retain younger readers, Assamese print media risks becoming increasingly irrelevant.

In this context, Assamese print media faces a crucial crossroads. On one hand, it must embrace the digital revolution and adapt to the

changing preferences of its audience. On the other hand, it must find ways to maintain the integrity of its journalistic mission—delivering credible, in-depth, and locally relevant content. The future of Assamese print media depends on its ability to balance these competing demands. The hybrid model, which integrates both print and digital platforms, offers a potential solution. By adopting a digital-first approach while maintaining a physical presence, Assamese newspapers can cater to a broader audience. For example, many regional newspapers are already launching digital editions, mobile applications, and social media channels to expand their reach and engage with readers online. This shift requires significant investment in technology, training, and content creation, but it offers a way forward for print media in Assam to stay relevant in an increasingly digital world.

In addition to embracing digital platforms, Assamese print media must focus on preserving its

local identity and relevance. One of the core strengths of regional print media has always been its focus on local news, community issues, and cultural representation. Unlike national newspapers, which often have a broad, generalized approach, Assamese newspapers have historically provided in-depth coverage of local politics, social issues, and cultural events. This local focus has allowed Assamese print media to build a loyal readership base, grounded in the community. To survive in the digital age, Assamese print media must continue to prioritize local content, focusing on issues that directly affect the lives of people in Assam. By offering unique insights into local affairs, Assamese newspapers can differentiate themselves from national and international digital outlets, carving out a niche for themselves in the broader media landscape.

Another critical area for Assamese print media to explore is the diversification of its revenue model. In the face of declining advertising revenue, many newspapers are turning to digital subscriptions, paywalls, and premium content as alternative sources of income. While this shift may alienate some readers, it offers a potential solution to the financial struggles faced by print media. However, for this model to succeed, Assamese newspapers must offer high-quality, exclusive content that justifies the cost of a subscription. This might include in-depth investigative reporting, specialized coverage of regional issues, or multimedia content such as podcasts and video documentaries. Diversifying revenue streams through partnerships, events, and branded content could also provide financial stability.

The future of Assamese print media is not devoid of hope, but it requires significant adaptation. The industry must find a way to evolve without sacrificing the journalistic integrity that has long set it apart. By embracing digital tools, maintaining a focus on local issues, and diversifying revenue models, Assamese print media can continue to play a vital role in informing the public and preserving the cultural identity of Assam. The survival of Assamese print media is ultimately dependent on its ability to adapt to the changing media landscape, while staying true to its roots as a provider of trusted, local news. If it succeeds in this, it can carve out a place for itself in the future of journalism. *(The author can be reached at himangshur1989@gmail.com or 9954812261/9864000260)*

A Naga father's plea: End the silence that kills



By: Aga Rengma

On April 29, 2025, three young Naga soldiers of the NSCN (IM), fell to bullets fired by Indian security forces in Assam's Dima Hasao district. It happened during a declared ceasefire, in a territory that belongs to the Nagas, in our own homeland. The silence we had mistaken for peace was broken, yet again, by gunfire. And as three more lifeless bodies of Naga youths are returned to the soil, we must ask the most painful question of all: What value do these deaths add to the Naga aspirations? Was it all not in vain?

For us, the Nagas, it is deeply tragic to lose the lives of young soldiers not in the battlefield, but during a supposed ceasefire, caught in strategic traps set by the Indian state. Let us be honest with ourselves, these are not martyrs of war, but innocent victims of a failed and directionless peace process. Our leaders must urgently and sincerely reconsider the implications of this indefinite ceasefire and the silent erosion it has caused to our cause, our people, and our future.

This is not just about a single incident. This reflects the deep rot in a process that claims to be a peace negotiation but has neither delivered peace nor progress. It is about the human cost of waiting. About the illusion of calm that allows violence to persist under diplomatic cover. We have not forgotten the Oting incident where 14 innocent Naga youths were massacred without mercy on the 4th of Dec 2021 by Indian forces for no reason.

In 1997, the Naga people, tired of war, longing for a peaceful future, agreed to a ceasefire with the hope that it would pave the

road to lasting peace. Dialogue, not death, was to be our path forward. Yet nearly three decades later, what has that promise yielded? We have watched the years pass by, the graves multiply on both sides, and the peace talks spiral into stagnation. We have raised a whole generation under the banner of ceasefire only to show them that even silence has a body count.

Security forces claim the recent killings followed a "tip-off" and led to an arms recovery. But to me, this incident is no routine encounter, it is a rupture of faith. It is a brutal reminder that while we lay down arms in good faith, the other side may not see restraint as peace but as permission. The NSCN (IM) has called it a betrayal of the 1997 truce. Perhaps they are right. Perhaps we must admit that this ceasefire, meant to be a bridge, is now a brittle crutch.

The recent clash is not the first and will not be the last, so long as there is no political resolution, no mutual respect, and no clearly defined framework. Ceasefire is supposed to protect lives on both sides and give peace a chance to bring permanent resolution to conflicts without loss of lives. If a ceasefire cannot protect lives of soldiers, then what is it protecting, what is its purpose?

Worse, the language of "peace" is now being used to paralyze our collective will. We are told to be patient, to stay calm, to keep talking. But talking has its limits when the other side listens only to the sound of compliance. The peace process has become a performance of the government, and we are its silent audience, watching our youths die, our lands militarized, our dream of a Naga nation reduced to a shadow. These three fallen men were

not statistics. They were sons, brothers, neighbors and friends, and so are the many Indian soldiers who lost their lives trying to please the Indian government. Their deaths demand more than ritual mourning. They demand a reckoning. How many more lives must be lost while we wait? How many Naga and Indian mothers and fathers must bury their children before we ask whether there is going to be an end to this "mere management" of Naga political issue in the guise of ceasefire.

Let us remember: the ceasefire was never meant to be permanent. It was a breathing space, a fragile pause meant to lead to a just conclusion. If that conclusion remains elusive, and the pause itself becomes a new form of control, then we must confront an uncomfortable truth: this ceasefire, once a gesture of hope, now risks becoming a cruel deception for both Nagas and Indians.

The ceasefire, while reducing direct violence, has entrenched a political limbo that allows fragmentation, corruption, and moral decay to fester. It has weakened the legitimacy of both the armed movement and the state, creating a society stuck between unresolved history and a compromised present.

This is not just about Naga lives lost. Indian soldiers too have died or been wounded in these encounters, young men drawn into a conflict they did not start, tasked with enforcing policies they did not create. The state may declare them martyrs, but we must ask: what honor is there in dying while trying to suppress another people's right to self-determination?

These soldiers are not enemies; they are also victims, of a failed political system, of a historical injustice left unresolved. Like the

Naga youths, they bleed because of broken promises and political paralysis. And in this, we are all diminished. The longer this festers, the more it becomes a war without enemies, just humans on both sides caught in the machinery of a conflict that should have ended long ago.

What pride or honour is there in telling their families, their children, that their father died not defending their own land, but attempting to occupy someone else's? What comfort can be offered to sons and daughters who learn that their parent's life ended in the service of suppressing another people's rights, seizing ancestral lands that were never theirs to claim? These are not heroic deaths. They are just casualties of a morally bankrupt enterprise, of a state's policy that values domination over dignity, control over coexistence. Both Naga and Indian lives are being wasted in a conflict that should have been resolved through justice, not perpetuated through force.

To the families who lost their sons whether Indian or Naga, words offer little comfort. But to the rest of us, their deaths offer a final warning: we are living in the pause between betrayal and collapse. We cannot afford to be bystanders to our own tragedy. Let this incident not be buried in bureaucracy or forgotten in tomorrow's news cycle. Let it be the turning point.

Both the Government of India and the Naga national government must treat this issue with utmost seriousness and bring the peace talks to a conclusive end without further delay. It has already been over three decades, and it should not continue indefinitely at the cost of public suffering and inconvenience.

Let us honour the fallen not with slogans, but with a unified and fearless pursuit of a just future. Let us make their legacy not just about how they died, but what we did in their name.

Because if we cannot protect the living, then what did they die for?

As I write this from my son's hospital bedside, I'm reminded that every word I pen is also a promise to him. A promise that he will grow up in a land that chooses justice over control, unity over division, and peace with dignity, not silence born from fear. No child should inherit a broken future while we stand idle today. *(The author is the Interim Convenor, Western Naga Youth Front who can be reached at agatechs@gmail.com)*

The Western dream: An illusion or reality?

By: Shashanka Das

For generations, moving abroad in pursuit of a "better life" has been a deeply ingrained aspiration for many Indians. The allure of developed economies, higher wages, better infrastructure, and perceived superior living conditions has driven millions to seek opportunities in Western nations. However, a growing number of migrants are beginning to question whether the West truly lives up to their expectations or whether it is, in fact, an elaborate illusion sold to them. Recent discussions on social media have reignited this debate. A man who left India for a Western country took to the internet to voice his regret over his decision to migrate, calling the experience a "scam." According to him, the promised land of opportunity turned out to be a landscape fraught with disillusionment, cultural isolation, and a relentless struggle for survival.

The notion that life abroad is inherently better is reinforced by selective portrayals of Western lifestyles. Indian media and pop culture often depict foreign countries as places where wealth is easily accumulated, where work-life balance is optimal, and where social security nets ensure a stable future. However, reality paints a different picture.

For many, the initial phase of moving abroad is marked by financial strain. International students, in particular, find themselves burdened with exorbitant tuition fees, often taking loans to fund their education. Universities, as profit-driven entities, attract students with promises of employability, yet many discover that their degrees hold little value in the local job market. A significant portion of international graduates ends up working in low-paying jobs far removed from their field of study, just to make ends meet.

The high cost of living in cities like Toronto, London, and Sydney further exacerbates the challenge. Housing, transportation, and healthcare expenses consume a large chunk of earnings, leaving little room for savings. The very dream that compelled individuals to move—the promise of financial freedom—often turns into a never-ending cycle of bills, taxes, and debt repayment.

The perception that Western countries offer a superior work-life balance is often a misguided assumption. While certain sectors do provide structured working hours and paid leave, many immigrants find themselves working multiple jobs to cover basic expenses. The gig economy, a dominant force in countries like the United States and Canada, offers flexibility but at the cost of job security, benefits, and stability.

Long working hours, minimal social interaction, and the absence of close family networks contribute to mental and emotional distress. Many migrants experience profound loneliness, unable to assimilate into a society that, despite its outward inclusivity, often remains culturally distant.

One of the most underestimated challenges of migration is the emotional and psychological toll it takes. In India, individuals are deeply connected to their families, communities, and cultural roots. Festivals, social gatherings, and a sense of belonging play a crucial role in shaping a person's identity. However, in the West, immigrants often struggle with cultural displacement. The warmth of familial bonds is replaced by an individualistic society where people are expected to fend for themselves.

Many first-generation migrants express regret over missing out on key life moments—parents aging without their presence, family weddings celebrated over video calls, and children growing up disconnected from their heritage. The realization that professional success comes at the cost of personal and familial relationships makes many question the price they have

paid for their so-called "better life."

One of the primary reasons for migration has historically been the search for better economic opportunities. However, India's rapid economic growth, expanding job market, and increasing entrepreneurial avenues are compelling many to reconsider their decision to leave. The IT boom, thriving start-up ecosystem, and infrastructural advancements have significantly improved employment prospects at home.

Additionally, India offers a lower cost of living, access to domestic help, and a strong support system that many find invaluable. The growing realization that one can achieve professional success in India without sacrificing mental peace, family bonds, and cultural identity is driving a reverse migration trend. Many who once left in search of greener pastures are now returning, recognizing that the dream they chased abroad could have been built at home.

While some migrants regret their decision, others



staunchly defend it. For every individual who feels trapped in a cycle of unfulfilled expectations, there are others who thrive in their adopted countries. Some argue that the West still offers better governance, infrastructure, and professional opportunities. Others claim that adaptation and mindset play a crucial role in shaping one's experience abroad.

Critics of the "illusion theory" contend that those who struggle abroad often fail to conduct proper research before migrating. They emphasize that job prospects, degrees, and cost of living should be thoroughly examined before making such a life-altering decision.

On the other hand, those who have faced hardships insist that the Western dream is romanticized to an unrealistic extent. They argue that the true cost of migration is rarely discussed openly, leaving many unprepared for the challenges they will face.

The answer to whether leaving India for the West is worth it depends on an individual's priorities and adaptability. While Western nations undoubtedly offer opportunities, they also demand immense sacrifices. What one gains in financial prospects may be offset by emotional loneliness and cultural alienation. The West is not a utopia, nor is India a land of unending struggle. The decision to migrate should not be driven by illusions but by a clear understanding of reality.

For those considering migration, a thorough assessment of expectations versus reality is crucial. Instead of blindly following the narrative that the West is the ultimate destination for success, individuals must weigh their options carefully. India's growth trajectory, coupled with strong familial and social support systems, presents a compelling case for staying back and building a fulfilling life at home.

Ultimately, the dream of a "better life" is not location-dependent—it is shaped by one's ability to adapt, persevere, and find contentment in their surroundings. Whether in India or abroad, success is not a matter of geography but of mindset, effort, and perspective. *(The author can be reached at 9706619975 or shashankadasnov1@gmail.com)*

Kohli's Test journey: The end of an iconic era

By: Satyabrata Borah

Virat Kohli's announcement of retirement from Test cricket has sent ripples through the cricketing world, marking the end of an era defined by unparalleled talent, relentless determination, and transformative leadership. As one of the finest cricketers to grace the game, Kohli's journey in Test cricket is not just a tale of runs and records but a saga of passion, perseverance, and an indomitable spirit that reshaped Indian cricket. His career, spanning over a decade, is studded with moments of brilliance, both as a batsman and as a captain, leaving an indelible mark on the sport. This article delves into Kohli's Test career, his significant achievements, and the profound impact of his retirement on Indian and global cricket.

Born on November 5, 1988, in Delhi, Virat Kohli's love for cricket was evident from a young age. Growing up in a middle-class family, his early years were marked by a burning ambition to excel in the sport. His talent shone through in domestic cricket, but it was his leadership in guiding India to the 2008 Under-19 World Cup title that brought him into the spotlight. This triumph served as a springboard, earning him a call-up to the senior Indian team. Kohli made his Test debut in 2011 against the West Indies, a moment that marked the beginning of a remarkable journey. Though his initial performances were modest, his potential was undeniable, with glimpses of the greatness that would soon unfold.

The true ascent of Kohli's Test career began around 2014, a pivotal year that saw him evolve into a batting colossus and a leader of men. Appointed as India's Test captain during the tour of Australia in 2014, Kohli led from the front, scoring 692 runs in the series, including four centuries. His twin hundreds in Adelaide, despite India's loss, showcased his ability to dominate even in challenging conditions. This series was a turning point, establishing him as one of the world's premier batsmen. Kohli's batting style was a blend of technical precision and aggressive intent, with his cover drives, wristy flicks, and mastery against spin making him a formidable opponent in all conditions. His hunger for runs and ability to adapt to different pitches set him apart as a modern great.

Kohli's captaincy tenure, from 2014 to 2021, is regarded as a golden era for Indian Test cricket. Under his leadership, India transformed into a dominant force, particularly at home, where they remained unbeaten in Test series for several years. His aggressive approach, coupled with a focus on fitness and fast bowling, revolutionized the team's ethos. Kohli instilled a culture of excellence, emphasizing physical fitness as a cornerstone of performance. This shift



bore fruit as India developed a world-class pace attack, with bowlers like Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, and Ishant Sharma emerging as global stars. Kohli's leadership culminated in historic achievements, none more significant than India's first-ever Test series win in Australia in 2018-19. This victory, achieved on the back of a disciplined bowling unit and Kohli's own batting contributions, was a landmark moment in Indian cricket history.

As a batsman, Kohli's numbers in Test cricket are staggering. Over the course of his career, he amassed over 8,000 runs at an average above 50, with 27 centuries and 28 half-centuries. His consistency across formats and conditions is a testament to his skill and mental fortitude. One of his most memorable innings came in 2016 against England in Mumbai, where he scored a monumental 235, dismantling both spin and pace with equal ease. This knock exemplified his ability to anchor innings while maintaining an attacking flair. Kohli's prowess was not limited to home conditions; he thrived overseas, scoring centuries in

South Africa, England, and Australia, where conditions often tested the best batsmen. His 149 in Edgbaston in 2018, against a formidable English bowling attack, remains a masterclass in resilience and technique.

Kohli's career was not without its challenges. His form dipped in the early 2020s, a period marked by a prolonged century drought, which sparked debates about his place in the team. Critics questioned his approach, but Kohli's mental strength shone through as he battled back, silencing doubters with crucial performances. His decision to step down as Test captain in 2021, after seven years at the helm, was a surprise to many. Yet, he continued to contribute as a senior player, guiding younger teammates and delivering match-defining knocks. His retirement from Test cricket, announced in 2025, came at a time when he was still at the peak of his powers, a decision that reflects his desire to exit on his own terms.

The impact of Kohli's retirement on Indian cricket cannot be overstated. His departure leaves a void in the batting

line-up and the dressing room, where his intensity and leadership were infectious. As a captain, he led India to 40 Test wins, a record that places him among the most successful skippers in the format. His emphasis on building a robust pace attack has ensured that India remains a formidable force in Test cricket. However, replacing a player of Kohli's stature—both as a run-scorer and a talismanic figure—will be a daunting task. The likes of Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, and Rishabh Pant, who have grown under his mentorship, will now shoulder the responsibility of carrying forward his legacy.

Kohli's influence extends beyond statistics and victories. He redefined what it meant to be an Indian cricketer, embodying a fierce competitive spirit and a relentless pursuit of excellence. His fitness regime inspired a generation of players to prioritize athleticism, while his candidness about mental health challenges broke stigmas in a sport where such topics were rarely discussed. Off the field, Kohli's charisma and global appeal made him a sporting icon, transcending cricket to become a cultural phenomenon. His rivalry with bowlers, fiery on-field persona, and unwavering belief in his team endeared him to fans worldwide, while his humility and respect for the game earned him admiration from peers.

As Kohli steps away from Test cricket, the cricketing world reflects on a career that redefined the sport's benchmarks. His journey from a brash young talent to a statesman of the game is a story of growth, resilience, and triumph. While his absence from the Test arena will be keenly felt, his legacy will endure through the records he set, the matches he won, and the inspiration he provided. The Indian team, under new leadership, will strive to uphold the standards Kohli established, but his shoes will be hard to fill. For fans, his retirement marks the end of a chapter filled with unforgettable moments—be it his audacious stroke-play, his passionate celebrations, or his ability to rise to the occasion when the stakes were highest.

Virat Kohli's Test career is a testament to the power of dreams backed by hard work. From the streets of Delhi to the hallowed grounds of Lord's and the MCG, he conquered every challenge with grace and grit. His story is not just about the runs he scored or the matches he won; it is about the belief that greatness is achievable through dedication and discipline. As the curtains fall on his Test journey, Kohli leaves behind a legacy that will inspire generations to come. In the annals of cricket history, his name will forever be etched in gold, a symbol of excellence and an enduring reminder that true champions are defined not just by their triumphs, but by the impact they leave on the game and its followers.

Poem

PAHALGAM TERROR

By: Bipul Ch Kalita

Pahalgam, an earthly heaven
Gets gunned down
With twenty six solemn limbs shattered;
Blood shrouds their lifeless existence
Challenging spiritual civility
Defeating spiritual humanity!

Who invokes onto the heavenly earth
Devil's eyes of terrorism?
Words fail to define such terrorists,
Messengers of death,
Whose spiritual aprons are bloodstained!

Who gives the blood suckers shelters?
If love, peace and humanity should civilize man
The enemy of Iswar, God and Allah
Needs to be eliminated from geography!!!

No religion teaches terrorism
No terrorism patrons religion
Except pretenders
Whose backbones are nothing but superstitions!!!

O' global conscience!
Rise rationally
Move logically
To trash
The globe's most evil spirit!!!

Graves

By: Arti Rai

A peaceful resort
a tariffless dwelling in tranquility
to lay in oblivion
undisturbed unreachable
left in seclusion buried,
family and friends gather around
blow in flood of sentiments
come and go with flowers and tears
on the dull canvas of darkness
million sweet and sour memories
swing and hover around
shades gaze and blink.
alas , all keep a finger to administer
a sad hush on the face of utterance
a deadly quietness reigns
here flourishes a never ending
'Monarch' named as
DEATH

Those trees...

By: Ottory Selva Kumar

Tree Shades
Not watching
The sun is shadow
search

In that quest
Trees come to life in life..
Breath of trees
Oxygen in humans
to take

Yet....
Darakht...

All about it
Nothing to worry about
Factor...

Trees breathe naturally
Is natural and lives naturally
Therefore... Trees needed

Very little....
Just enough water?
If there is enough food
Produced in sunlight....
Spread the umbrella over the earth

From the heat
Preserving
Giving fruit to man
Shedding leaves

Fertilize the earth...
Firewood burned in the fire
Essential for Humans
Delivery of goods...
Human generation gap
Lets you live without

These trees...
Trees are just like that
Not trees...
The life of Mother Earth...

Precious Water

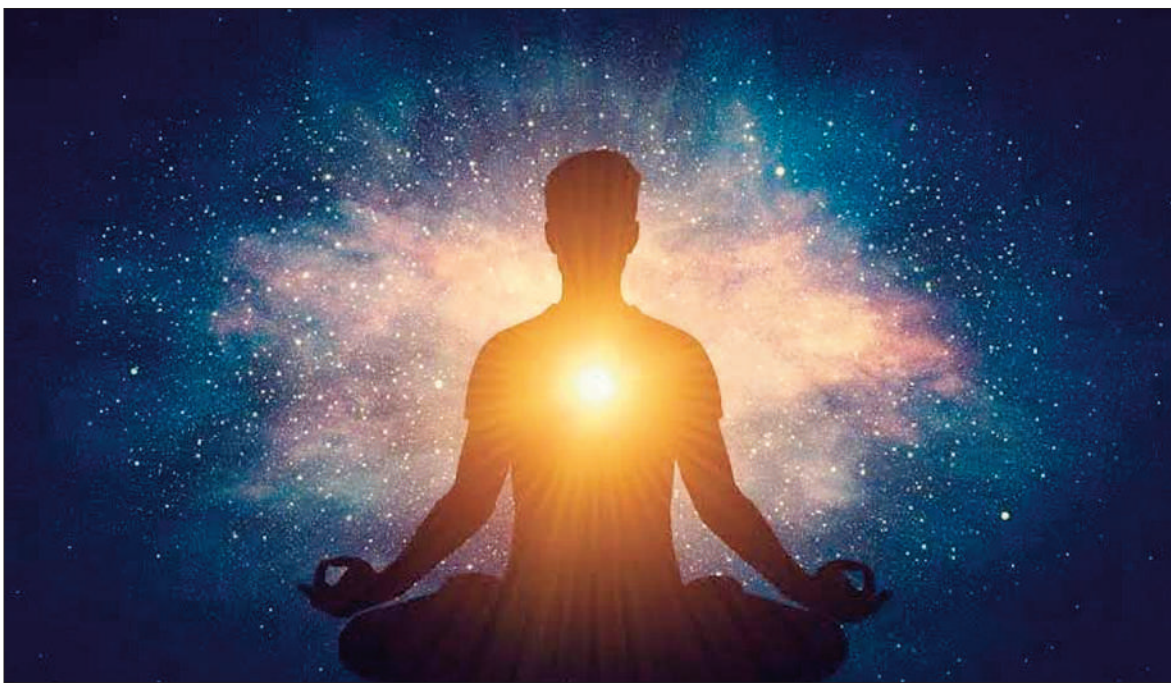
By: Khemu Parashar

No matter what kind of creature it is,
it needs water to survive,
don't mess with water,
no, this is not a fictional story,
even great scholars accepted this,
it has become a sign of nature,

Don't forget this thing at all,
geography of somewhere in the world,
water has no value,
no matter what the weight,
everything happens like hell,

Humans are destroying water,
he has a great pride,
treat water like a guest,
only then will the earth become like heaven,
definitely make this record.

In the shadow of the fall



By: Dipak Kurmi

“To err is human”—a phrase often recited to excuse mistakes, yet it alludes to a deeper and far more consequential truth of the human condition. If we trace the mythic origins of humanity, as narrated in many religious and philosophical traditions, we find that man's journey began with an error—a singular act of disobedience: tasting the forbidden fruit of knowledge. This act, symbolic or literal, represents the severing of man from a natural innocence and unity with the divine order. From that moment, punishment followed, not in the form of fire and brimstone alone, but as a long, unending estrangement from inner harmony and cosmic balance.

The legacy of that original error has grown manifold, weaving itself into the fabric of our modern civilization. In our relentless quest for mastery over the world, we have amassed knowledge, built institutions, and acquired wealth, but at what cost? The more we seek to justify and rationalize our actions, the more we seem to distance ourselves from a core ethical compass. The shadows of that primal transgression still haunt us, and the consequences manifest in our fractured societies, spiritual confusion, and declining moral integrity.

What began as the pursuit of enlightenment has, paradoxically, ushered in a darkening of the human essence. The decline of man is not just a philosophical lament—it is visible in the way individuals conduct themselves in society, in their treatment of fellow beings, and in their disregard for the natural world. Goodness, love, compassion, and kindness—these are not just spiritual virtues; they form the moral architecture of human civilization. Yet today, these ideals are increasingly marginalized. The ethical code that once guided civilizations has become a relic, archived

in books and buried in libraries, far removed from the pulse of daily life.

This degradation is not merely due to ignorance; rather, it stems from a dangerous overreliance on knowledge, stripped of wisdom. The sharpest irony of the human condition lies in the juxtaposition of man's intellectual capabilities with his lack of existential sensibility. Birds, animals, and other beings of nature—devoid of formal education—conduct their lives with an innate harmony, a kind of instinctual intelligence. They do not destroy their habitats, nor do they chase false ambitions. Their existence is governed by what might be termed as “original sensibility,” an intuitive alignment with the laws of nature.

Humans, on the other hand, are burdened by the very intellect that was once seen as our highest gift. We build schools, universities, and research institutions to educate ourselves in life's basic ethics—ironically, the same ethics that creatures of nature follow without instruction. Education, in many cases, alienates us from life's fundamentals. Rather than enhancing our understanding of the self and the world, it fosters ambition, egoism, and a sense of superiority. We begin to function within systems that celebrate wealth over wisdom, cunning over compassion. In such a system, the lines between good and evil blur until, as Shakespeare warned, “fair is foul, and foul is fair.”

Our perception is corrupted. Instead of being endowed with a heightened sense of right and wrong, modern man finds himself adrift in moral ambiguity. The very institutions that were once custodians of ethics—the family, the school, and the temple—are in disarray. These three pillars once formed the core of ethical conditioning, shaping individuals into responsible members of society. Now, they stand compromised, either hollowed out by materialism or distorted by ideology. In their absence, society suffers from

a grave crisis of values. Goodness is no longer practiced; it is theorized. Honesty is no longer lived; it is idealized. And morality is no longer demanded; it is deferred.

The velocity of modern life compounds this crisis. Civilization has become a race—breathless, relentless, and devoid of reflection. Wealth accumulates in the hands of a privileged few, while the rest struggle to keep pace. There is no time to stop and contemplate. To pause is to fall behind, and to think is to risk being labeled as weak or unambitious. The obsession with productivity and material success has rendered ethical introspection a luxury few can afford.

In this climate of spiritual starvation and moral chaos, we witness what might be called the “Rotten Era Syndrome.” The term aptly captures the decay that has infiltrated our institutions, relationships, and aspirations. This syndrome is characterized by a toxic blend of excessive ambition, detachment from nature, and an aversion to moral accountability. Like Macbeth, whose blinding ambition leads to his doom, modern man rushes headlong into a future that may offer wealth, but at the cost of his soul.

The true measure of a human being is not the wealth they accumulate, but the vacuum they leave behind when they are gone. History, in its infinite wisdom, does not remember those who merely amassed fortune. It remembers those who lived beyond themselves—who gave, who served, who loved. The legacies of such individuals endure not in bank balances or real estate portfolios, but in hearts touched, lives uplifted, and principles upheld. The lovers of humanity, the givers of joy, and the bearers of truth—they are the true architects of civilization.

That is not to say that all great men were saints. Even among the most controversial figures, we find flashes of moral character. Take Aurangzeb, often remembered for his cruelty, including the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Yet this same man lived a life of personal austerity, stitched caps to pay for his burial, and responded with humility to Guru Gobind Singh's Zafarnama. What do we make of such contradictions? They reveal a deeper truth: that humans are creatures of mixed values. We may not always reach the highest moral standards, but we must at least adhere to a minimum ethical baseline—one that restrains us from falling into complete depravity.

This minimum standard is not idealism; it is a practical necessity. It is the moral floor below which society cannot afford to sink. Without it, we descend into barbarism, cloaked in the garb of modernity. And maintaining that baseline requires character—something that can neither be bought nor taught, but cultivated through a life of discipline, empathy, and purpose.

The modern world stands at a crossroads. We have the tools, the technology, and the intellect to shape a future of abundance and harmony. But without ethical consciousness, these tools become instruments of destruction. We must rediscover the lost sensibility that once guided human action. We must reawaken the moral imagination that allows us to see the world not as a marketplace, but as a shared home. And we must remember that the true essence of being human is not to err indefinitely, but to learn, to grow, and to rise—again and again—toward the light. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

British Indian doctor joins Trump's Make America Healthy Again movement

LONDON, May 17: British Indian Consultant Cardiologist Dr Aseem Malhotra, who has long campaigned for a more evidence-based approach to all COVID vaccines, has been appointed as an adviser to US President Donald Trump's Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement.

Dr Malhotra, a long-term ally of MAHA leaders such as health secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr and National Institutes of Health (NIH) director Dr Jay Bhattacharya, joins MAHA Action – a grassroots non-profit dedicated to research, education and changing legislation that benefits public health.

He will be relocating to Washington to join the American movement with a focus on top three priorities in his new advisory role – revising dietary guidelines, cracking down on ultra-processed foods and pushing for a moratorium on mRNA COVID vaccines.

“We absolutely can make America healthy again in this electoral term. I'm not doing this for political reasons but to reflect the evidence,” Dr Malhotra said.

Dr Malhotra graduated with a degree in medicine from the University of Edinburgh in 2001 and a CCT Cardiology from the same university in 2013.

As Chief Medical Advisor to MAHA Action, the medic will not be formally employed by the US federal government but serve as a leading voice to advance its policy agenda.

It comes as he called for a halt in the use of mRNA COVID vaccines until serious health concerns are addressed. “There is a pandemic of the vaccine injured. We can't make America healthy again if we don't address this,” he said.

The president of the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (BAPIO), Dr Ramesh Mehta CBE, welcomed the move by a member of the organisation in the UK.

“Dr Malhotra, who is a long standing member of BAPIO, has held a proven track record of a campaign for the NHS [National Health Service] to adopt more healthier lifestyle policies in order to improve patients' lives,” said Dr Mehta.

“He has been a strong advocate of reducing the harms of overuse of medicines, causes of obesity, reducing sugars, fizzy drinks and processed foods in our diets and ensuring that the patient's voice is heard in evidenced based treatment of medical illnesses.

“His advocacy work is to be commended and it is in recognition of that, that he has been appointed to a role that has the potential to transform the lives of the American population,” he said. (PTT)

Leftist unity without ideological clarity can be counter-productive: Nepal PM Oli

KATHMANDU, May 17: Nepal's Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli on Saturday cautioned that uniting leftist forces without a shared ideological foundation could be detrimental to the communist movement.

“It will be meaningless to bring those who have turned to many directions into leftist unity without proper ideological understanding,” Oli said while addressing a programme organised here to mark the 32nd death anniversary of former CPN-UML general secretary Madan Bhandari.

He highlighted a persistent tendency within the communist movement to oppose even just initiatives and to create discord, noting that divisions often arise from personal in-

Arab leaders promise to work on reconstruction of Gaza, again press for ceasefire

BAGHDAD, May 17: Arab leaders meeting at an annual summit in Baghdad said Saturday that they were trying to reach a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip and promised to contribute to the reconstruction of the territory once the war stops.

In March, an emergency Arab League summit in Cairo endorsed a plan for Gaza's reconstruction without displacing its roughly 2 million residents.

The summit in Baghdad was attended by Arab leaders including Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. Among the guests were Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who called for the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza and the flow of aid into the besieged territory. He said that the UN rejects any “forced displacement” of Palestinians.

Saturday's summit comes two months after Israel ended a ceasefire reached with the Hamas militant group in January. In recent days, Israel has launched widespread attacks in Gaza and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed a further escalation to pursue his aim of destroying Hamas.



“This genocide has reached levels of ugliness not seen in all conflicts throughout history,” Iraq's Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said in a speech that called for allowing aid to flow into Gaza.

Al-Sudani added that Iraq will work on setting up an Arab fund for the reconstruction of the region in which Baghdad will pay USD 20 million for Gaza and a similar amount for Lebanon.

El-Sisi said that Egypt, in coordination with Qatar and the US, is “exerting intense efforts to reach a ceasefire” in Gaza, adding that the efforts led to the release of Is-

rael-American hostage Edan Alexander. He said that Egypt plans to hold an international conference for the reconstruction of Gaza “once the aggression stops.” Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on Hamas to abandon power in Gaza and along with other militant groups to hand over weapons to the Palestinian Authority. Hamas seized control of Gaza from Abbas' Western-backed Palestinian Authority in 2007, and reconciliation attempts between the rivals have repeatedly failed.

The Baghdad meeting was staged by US President Donald

Trump's tour in the region earlier in the week. Trump's visit did not usher in a deal for a new ceasefire in Gaza as many had hoped, but he grabbed headlines by meeting with new Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa — who had once fought against US forces in Iraq — and promising to remove US sanctions imposed on Syria.

Al-Sharaa did not attend the summit in Baghdad, where Syria's delegation was headed by Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani. Iraqi Shiite militias and political factions are wary of al-Sharaa's past as a Sunni militant and had pushed back against his invitation to the summit.

During Syria's conflict that began in March 2011, several Iraqi Shiite militias fought alongside the forces of former Syrian President Bashar Assad, making al-Sharaa today a particularly sensitive figure for them.

An Iraqi official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to media, said that Iran's Quds Force commander Esmail Ghaani had paid a visit to Baghdad prior to the summit and “conveyed messages of support for the Iranian-American negotiations” to reach a nuclear deal and lifting of crippling sanctions on Iran. (AP)

Iran says it will continue nuclear talks with US, shrugging off Trump's threats



TEHRAN, May 17: Iran's president said his country will continue talks with the United States over its rapidly advancing nuclear programme but will not withdraw from its rights because of US threats. “We are negotiating, and we will negotiate, we are not after war but we do not fear any threat,” President Masoud Pezeshkian said during a speech to navy officials broadcast by state television Saturday.

“It is not like that they think if they threaten us, we will give up our human right and definite right,” Pezeshkian said. “We will not withdraw, we will not easily lose honourable military, scientific, nuclear in all fields.”

The negotiations have reached the “expert” level, meaning the sides are trying to reach agreement on the details of a possible deal. But a major sticking point remains Iran's enrichment of uranium, which Tehran insists it must be allowed to do and the Trump administration increasingly insists the

Islamic Republic must give up. President Donald 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.

Earlier on Friday, Trump said Iran received a proposal during the talks, though he did not elaborate.

During his trip to region this week, Trump at nearly every event insisted Iran could not be allowed to obtain a nuclear bomb, something US intelligence agencies assess Tehran is not actively pursuing, though its programme is on the cusp of being able to weaponise nuclear material.

Mohammad Eslami, the head of Iran's atomic organisation, stressed the peaceful nature of the programme, saying it is under “continuous” monitoring by the UN nuclear watchdog, state TV reported Saturday.

“No country is monitored by the agency like us,” Eslami said, adding that the agency inspected the country's nuclear facilities more than 450 times in 2024. “Something about 25% of all the agency inspections” in the year.

Meanwhile, Israel routinely has threatened to strike Iran's nuclear facilities if it feels threatened, further complicating tensions in the Mideast already spiked by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. (AP)

Pakistan govt assures to rebuild Muridke's JuD headquarters destroyed in Indian strike

LAHORE, May 17: Pakistan government has assured to rebuild the mosques – the JuD headquarters – at Muridke destroyed in the Indian strike, the Pakistan Markazi Muslim League said on Saturday.

The Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) is a political wing of the banned Jamaat-ud-Dawah (JuD) and is a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) that has carried out terror strikes in many parts of India, including the horrific 26/11 Mumbai attack in 2008.

As part of the Operation Sindoor, Indian military carried out missile strikes on May 7 on nine terror targets in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir, including the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) stronghold of Bahawalpur and the LeT's base at Muridke in retaliation for the Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people.

Pakistan claims it was a mosque and an educational complex that were hit in the strikes at Muridke, located at about 40 kms from Lahore. Three JuD activists were killed and a controversy erupted when the Pakistan Army, police and civilian bureaucracy senior officers attended their funeral. “The government has announced to rebuild the mosques destroyed in the Indian attack. It is a welcoming step,” PMML president Khalid Masood Sindhu said in a statement.

Pakistan's armed forces had claimed to have “delivered precise and notch-up retributive strikes” through Operation Bunyanum Marsoos

in response to India's Operation Sindoor. “The success of Operation Bunyanum Marsoos sends a clear message to India that Pakistan knows how to defend its homeland,” Sindhu said. “We have not forgotten, nor will we ever forget, the martyrs of our nation. Every worker of the PMML stands vigilant and ever-ready to defend the country.”

India on Friday pressed the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to reconsider its USD one billion assistance to Pakistan, saying Islamabad could use a large part of it to fund the terrorist infrastructure. The IMF in its board meeting in Washington on May 9 had cleared a USD one billion tranche for Pakistan as part of its USD 7-billion funding programme for the country.

In his address to air warriors at Gujarat's Bhuj Air Force station, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Pakistan has again started trying to rebuild the terror infrastructure destroyed by India last week.

Islamabad will “spend the money collected from the common citizens of Pakistan to pay around Rs 14 crore to Masood Azhar, the head of the terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad” and a UN designated terrorist. “The Pakistan government has announced financial assistance to rebuild the terror infrastructure of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed located in Muridke and Bahawalpur. Certainly, a large part of IMF's USD one billion assistance will be used to fund the terror infrastructure,” Singh said. (PTT)

As political theatre took centre stage in Turkiye, war went on in Ukraine, Kyiv has few options

KYIV, May 17: Since US-brokered talks began in March, Ukraine's strategy has been to convince the Trump administration that Vladimir Putin is unreliable, and that Kyiv is serious about peace.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has few options, analysts and officials say, but to draw US President Donald Trump's ire against Putin while depending on the united and stalwart support of European allies.

In the latest round, Zelenskyy not only accepted Putin's offer to hold direct talks in Turkiye, after the United States endorsed the idea, but raised the stakes and challenged the Russian leader to a face-to-face. The gesture failed to move Putin and the Istanbul talks were demoted to a technical meeting on Friday that failed to yield substantial results on ending the war.

The US has expressed frustration with the stalled talks and threatened to withdraw if results aren't achieved. On Friday, Trump told reporters after boarding Air Force One to return to Washington from Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, that he may call Putin soon.

“He and I will meet, and I think we'll solve it, or maybe not,” Trump said. “At least we'll know. And if we don't solve it, it'll be very interesting.” All along, Zelenskyy's message, directed at the Trump administration, has been: The Russian leader cannot be trusted.

It's a rhetorical game of pingpong in which both Kyiv and Moscow try to outmaneuver the

other vis-a-vis the US. But the political theatrics are underscored by stark realities on the ground. In this war of attrition against Russia's invasion, Ukraine's position is poised to grow weaker as time goes on, unless powerful sanctions are imposed against Moscow and the US continues arms deliveries.

“He is in a difficult situation because behind him is a whole nation of people who are suffering,” said Oleksandr Merezhko, a lawmaker in Zelenskyy's party. “We are playing (along), we are trying to do everything we can because we don't want to lose the support of the US. We don't want to be accused that it was our fault.” Putin's no-show did not result in a strong reaction from Trump, which frustrated Ukrainian officials. “It looks surreal, weird when Ukraine is complying to everything required from us, and Putin ignores, rejects,” said Merezhko. “It looks very imbalanced, it looks unfair for Ukraine.”

Ukraine hopes for sanctions, while Russia stalls

Since March, Zelenskyy has made a point of showing Ukraine's willingness to acquiesce to US demands to avoid alienating Trump, his most powerful ally.

Kyiv hoped Russia's unwillingness to do the same would, in time, provoke the US to unleash powerful sanctions and cripple Moscow's war machine — the most likely scenario in which Ukraine can hope to weaken Russia and negotiate an advantageous peace deal, analysts

said. Russia's position has remained mostly consistent. The Kremlin kept repeating that it was ready for peace talks with Ukraine — while making demands that were politically untenable for Zelenskyy, and would require Ukraine to make territorial concessions, neutralize its army and vow never to join NATO.

Throughout the war, Moscow has also accused Kyiv and its Western allies of seeking to prolong the fighting and derailing peace efforts. Most recently, the Kremlin pushed back against a proposed 30-day ceasefire, countering with two brief unilateral ones, and then accused Ukraine of failing to stop the fighting, painting it as unwilling to silence the guns. At the same time, Russian officials underscore the effort to resolve the conflict is complex.

“We understand that Washington wants to achieve quick success in this process, but at the same time we hope that there is an understanding that the settlement of the Ukrainian crisis is too complicated, there are many questions and details that need to be addressed before the settlement,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters last month.

Ukraine is asking for an unconditional temporary ceasefire, during which time future diplomatic talks can take shape. Zelenskyy also asked for a trust-building gesture, such as the release of prisoners of war, something the two sides agreed to Friday. The exchange of 1,000 prisoners would be their largest swap yet. (AP)

Microsoft says it provided AI to Israeli military for war but denies use to harm people in Gaza

WASHINGTON, May 17: Microsoft acknowledged Thursday that it sold advanced artificial intelligence and cloud computing services to the Israeli military during the war in Gaza and aided in efforts to locate and rescue Israeli hostages. But the company also said it has found no evidence to date that its Azure platform and AI technologies were used to target or harm people in Gaza.

The unsigned blog post on Microsoft's corporate website appears to be the company's first public acknowledgement of its deep involvement in the war, which started after Hamas killed about 1,200 people in Israel and has led to the deaths of tens of thousands in Gaza.

It comes nearly three months after an investigation by The Associated Press revealed previously unreported details about the American tech giant's close partnership with the Israeli Ministry of Defense, with military use of commercial AI products skyrocketing by nearly 200 times after the deadly

Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack. The AP reported that the Israeli military uses Azure to transcribe, translate and process intelligence gathered through mass surveillance, which can then be cross-checked with Israel's in-house AI-enabled targeting systems and vice versa.

The partnership reflects a growing drive by tech companies to sell their artificial intelligence products to militaries for a wide range of uses, including in Israel, Ukraine and the United States. However, human rights groups have raised concerns that AI systems, which can be flawed and prone to errors, are being used to help make decisions about who or what to target, resulting in the deaths of innocent people.

Microsoft said Thursday that employee concerns and media reports had prompted the company to launch an internal review and hire an external firm to undertake “additional fact-finding.” The statement did not identify the outside firm or provide a

copy of its report.

The statement also did not directly address several questions about precisely how the Israeli military is using its technologies, and the company declined Friday to comment further. Microsoft declined to answer written questions from The AP about how its AI models helped translate, sort and analyze intelligence used by the military to select targets for airstrikes.

The company's statement said it had provided the Israeli military with software, professional services, Azure cloud storage and Azure AI services, including language translation, and had worked with the Israeli government to protect its national cyberspace against external threats. Microsoft said it had also provided “special access to our technologies beyond the terms of our commercial agreements” and “limited emergency support” to Israel as part of the effort to help rescue the more than 250 hostages taken by Hamas on Oct. 7. (AP)

Severe Midwest weather leaves 9 dead in Kentucky

ST LOUIS (US), May 17: Storm systems sweeping across the Midwest have left at least 16 dead, including nine people killed after a tornado sparked a mass casualty event in southeastern Kentucky.

Kentucky authorities said there were also severe injuries when a twister tore across Laurel County late Friday.

“The search is continuing in the damaged area for survivors,” the office of Sheriff John Root said in a statement posted on social media.

In Missouri, meanwhile, at least seven people died and authorities were searching from building to building for people who were trapped or hurt after severe storms including at least one possible tornado.

The storms were part of a severe weather system Friday that also spawned tornadoes in Wisconsin, left several hundred thousand customers without power in the Great Lakes region and brought a punishing heat wave to Texas.

In Missouri, the storms Friday afternoon tore roofs off buildings, blew out windows, ripped bricks off siding and yanked up trees and power lines. St Louis Mayor Carli Spencer confirmed five deaths in her city and said more than 5,000 homes were affected.

“This is truly, truly devastating,” Spencer said, adding that the city was in the process of declaring an emergency and an overnight curfew Friday had been put into place in the neighbourhoods with the most damage.

The number of people injured was not immediately known. Barnes-Jewish Hospital received 20 to 30 patients from the storm with some in serious condition and most expected to be discharged by Friday night, according to hospital spokesperson Laura High.

St Louis Children's Hospital received 15 patients with two of them expected to remain in the hospital into the weekend, she said.

National Weather Service radar indicated a tornado touched down between 2:30 pm and 2:50 pm in Clayton, Missouri, in the St Louis area. The apparent tornado touched down in the area of Forest Park, home to the St Louis Zoo and the site of the 1904 World's Fair and Olympic Games the same year.

At Centennial Christian Church, City of St Louis Fire Department Battalion Chief William Polihian told The Associated Press that three people had to be rescued after part of the church crumbled. One of those people died.

Stacy Clark said his mother-in-law Patricia Penelton died in the church.



He described her as a very active church volunteer who had many roles, including being part of the choir.

Jeffrey Simmons Sr, who lives across from the church, heard an alert on his phone and then the lights went out.

“And next thing you know, a lot of noise, heavy wind,” he said. He and his brother went into the basement. Later, he realised it was worse than he thought. “Everything was tore up.”

Downed trees and stop lights also caused traffic gridlock during the Friday afternoon commute and officials

urged people to stay home. The upper stories of the Harlem Taproom's brick building were demolished when the storm came through, leaving piles of bricks around the outside. About 20 people were inside, but they huddled in the back of the building and none were hurt, the St Louis Post-Dispatch reported.

John Randle, a 19-year-old University of Missouri-St Louis student, said he and his girlfriend were at the St Louis Art Museum during the storm and were hustled into the basement with about 150 other people.

They could hear tree branches and hail hitting the building's windows and Randle went up a flight of stairs to the main entrance for about 10 seconds, he said.

“You could see the doors flying open, tree branches flying by and people running,” he said. “A lot of people were caught outside.”

Christy Childs, a Saint Louis Zoo spokesperson, said in a text that the zoo would remain closed Saturday because of downed trees and other damage. Childs said all animals were safe and that there were no reports of significant injuries to staff, guests or animals.

“We can't definitively say whether or not it was a tornado - it likely was,” National Weather Service meteorologist Marshall Pfahler said.

A tornado struck in Scott County, about 209 km south of St Louis, killing two people, injuring several others and destroying multiple homes, Sheriff Derrick Wheelley wrote on social media.

“Our first responders acted swiftly, even while the tornado was still active, putting themselves in harm's way to provide immediate assistance and care to those injured,” he said.

Weather forecasters warned severe storms with possible tornadoes, hail and even hurricane-force winds could hobble parts of Appalachia and the Midwest on Friday.

The weather service warned of a rare tornado emergency around Marion, Illinois, on Friday evening, saying a tornado had been confirmed and was life-threatening. Reports of damage and injuries were not immediately available.

A dust storm warning was issued around the Chicago area Friday night. The weather service said a wall of dust extended along a 161-km line from southwest of Chicago to northern Indiana that severely reduced visibility.

The National Weather Service said residents in Kentucky, southern Indiana, southern Illinois, parts of Tennessee, Missouri, Arkansas and Ohio should brace for intense storms that could include baseball-sized hail.

The weather service's Storm Prediction Centre said “strong, potentially long-track tornadoes and very large hail” could be expected, and the threat for damaging winds in excess of 75 mph would increase into Friday evening as storms grew into larger clusters.

Ahead of Friday night's anticipated

storm, Appalachian Power, which serves 1 million customers in West Virginia, Virginia and Tennessee, said it requested 1,700 additional workers from neighbouring utilities along with sending its own crews from unaffected areas to assist with service restoration.

Faith Borden, a meteorologist in the National Weather Service Nashville office, said Friday that middle Tennessee could expect “all types of severe weather. Winds up to 70 mph. We're talking seriously large hail up to 3 inches, which for us is big hail.”

Texas hit by heat wave Texas faced searing heat. A heat advisory was issued for San Antonio and Austin, with temperatures at a blistering 95 F (35 C) to 105 (40.5 C). Parts of the southern East Coast, from Virginia to Florida, battled with heat in the 90s (32-37 C).

The National Weather Service Office for Austin/San Antonio said Friday the humidity coming in over the weekend was expected to make temperatures feel hotter.

“There are concerns of heat exhaustion for people that aren't taking proper precautions when they're outdoors,” meteorologist Jason Runyen said, advising those affected to take breaks and stay hydrated. (AP)

People of Arunachal Pradesh enjoy full political and economic rights as Indian citizens

Takam Sanjoy condemns China's renaming of Arunachal places

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 17: Former Member of Parliament and senior Congress leader Takam Sanjoy has strongly criticized China's recent move to rename 27 places in Arunachal Pradesh, calling the act unethical, arbitrary, and humiliating to the indigenous people of the state.

In a press statement issued on Friday, Sanjoy denounced China's renaming attempt as a deliberate provocation and an assault on Arunachal Pradesh's cultural and political identity. "The traditional and indigenous names of our places reflect our rich heritage and cannot be altered by external forces," he said.

Sanjoy asserted that the people of Arunachal Pradesh enjoy full political and economic rights as Indian citizens, and that their status is unquestionable. He urged China to cease its attempts to assert territorial claims through such symbolic actions.

Highlighting Arunachal's historical and political evolution, he pointed out milestones from the Chin Hills Regulation of 1896 to the state's recognition as a full-fledged state of India in 1987. He further noted that such actions by China are aimed at disrupting diplomatic relations and undermining India's sovereignty.



Sanjoy also lamented the division of communities across the Line of Actual Control, claiming that many ethnic Arunachalis remain in Chinese-occupied Tibet, inhabiting areas he said rightfully belong to India.

The statement reflects growing concern in Arunachal Pradesh over repeated attempts by China to assert its claims over the northeastern state through diplomatic and cartographic measures.

13th Itanagar Constituency Youth Association welcomes DC Talo Potom's transfer

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 17: The 13th Itanagar Constituency Youth Association (ICYAI) has formally welcomed the transfer of Deputy Commissioner Talo Potom, expressing gratitude to the state government for responding to public concerns.

At a press conference held at the Arunachal Press Club on Friday, ICYAI representatives thanked the administration for what they described as a "timely and responsive" decision. The association emphasized that the move reflected the government's attentiveness to grassroots voices and its willingness to uphold transparency and accountability in governance.

ICYAI further reiterated its commitment to fostering constructive civic engagement, urging authorities to continue consulting with local stakeholders in future administrative appointments and decisions that impact the constituency. "This transfer is not just about a



single official—it is about reinforcing the democratic principle that governance must be accountable and people-centric," an ICYAI spokesperson stated during the briefing.

The association also called for sustained efforts to ensure good governance, transparency, and community involvement in administrative processes within the Itanagar constituency.

Leader Engagement Workshop focuses on suicide risk reduction and mental health awareness



HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 17: The Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies (AITS), Rajiv Gandhi University, in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), successfully hosted a Leader Engagement Workshop on Friday at the Don Bosco Youth Center, Vivek Vihar, Itanagar.

The workshop was held under the ICMR-funded multi-state implementation research project titled "Suicide Risk Reduction and Improving Mental Well-Being among School and College Students."

This initiative seeks to address the growing concern of youth mental health and suicide prevention

through awareness, education, and community leadership. The one-day event witnessed active participation from educators, administrators, student leaders, healthcare professionals, and mental health advocates from across the region.

Speakers emphasized the importance of identifying early signs of mental health distress among students and advocated for the integration of mental well-being practices into academic institutions. The workshop aimed to empower leaders at the grassroots level with practical tools, research-backed strategies, and culturally sensitive approaches to reduce suicide risk and promote mental resilience among youth.

AITS Director and principal investigators of the project expressed gratitude to ICMR for supporting this vital cause and reiterated the university's commitment to fostering a safe and supportive academic environment.

Participants engaged in interactive sessions, shared field experiences, and contributed to developing a localized framework for mental health promotion tailored to the needs of Arunachal Pradesh's diverse communities.

The event concluded with a pledge by all stakeholders to continue working collaboratively in addressing mental health challenges among young people and to ensure that no student feels isolated or unheard.

Luminous Lummer Dai Literary Award 2025 to be conferred on Ramchandra Chutia and Dr Ashok Kumar Pandey



HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 17: The Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society (APLS) has announced the recipients of the Luminous Lummer Dai Literary Award (LLDLA) 2025, selecting two distinguished literary figures—Shri Ramchandra Chutia and Ashok Kumar Pandey—in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the literary and academic fields of Arunachal Pradesh.

The selection was made by a dedicated committee comprising Er H Rokom Bado (Chairman), Er Banta Natung, and Gumpi Nguso as members.

Instituted in 2016 in memory of Lummer Dai, the doyen of Arunachal literature, the LLDLA honors individuals who have significantly enriched the literary landscape of the state. Since its inception, 11 prominent writers have been conferred with the prestigious award. Previous recipients include Kaling Borang (2016), Mamang Dai (2017), Jogendra Nath (2018), Tagang Taki (2019), Chandra Kanta Borpatra Gohain and Ramendra Nath Koley (2020, jointly), Yumlam Tana (2021), Ajanta (2022), Jumsi Siram (2023), and Wangsam Zongsam and Thajam Aboh (2024, jointly).

Profiles of the 2025 Awardees

Ramchandra Chutia, born in Dhakuakhana, Assam in 1952, is a prolific author of 29 books, including 8 focused on the socio-anthropological aspects of Arunachal tribes. His literary repertoire spans poetry, novels, short stories, travelogues, articles, and memoirs in both Assamese and English. Mr. Chutia began his journey in Arunachal Pradesh in 1971 as a primary school teacher

at Sartam Village in the then undivided Subansiri District. After four decades of dedicated service, he retired in 2010 as the Principal of Government Higher Secondary School, Doimukh.

Ashok Kumar Pandey, born in Uttar Pradesh in 1967, has been residing in Arunachal Pradesh since 1992. Currently serving as an Associate Professor in the Department of Commerce at Dera Natung Government College (DNGC), Itanagar, he has authored 11 books, including 5 acclaimed academic texts. Pandey is known for his versatility, writing across poetry, short stories, and drama, and is widely respected as both a literary and academic voice in the state.

Award Ceremony

The Luminous Lummer Dai Literary Award 2025 will be formally conferred on June 1, 2025, during a grand function at Lummer Dai Bhawan, Tezpur, Assam, commemorating the 85th Birth Anniversary of Lummer Dai. The event is expected to witness the presence of eminent writers, scholars, cultural personalities, and literary enthusiasts from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, and beyond.

Fire incident in Gobuk Village, Yingkiong – immediate relief provided

HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 17: A fire broke out in Gobuk village, Upper Siang district, on the evening of May 16 around 5:00 pm. The fire, reportedly caused by drying fresh pork meat over a traditional fireplace during the Etor festival celebrations, completely destroyed a house belonging to Shri Dunge Tekseng.

Fortunately, there were no casualties. The local fire brigade, with prompt and active assistance from community members, responded swiftly to extinguish the flames and successfully prevented the fire from spreading to neighboring homes.

The next morning, Deputy Commissioner Talo Jerang and District Disaster Management Officer Anie Yangfo visited the affected family to verify the incident and assess the extent of the damage. Immediate relief was extended to the family, including Rs 5,000 in cash, clothing, and essential household utensils to address their urgent needs.

Further assistance in the form of final relief will be provided after the completion of official documentation.

186 Battalion leads plantation drive in Namsai to promote environmental awareness



HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 17: A significant step toward environmental sustainability was taken by the 186 Battalion with a tree plantation drive held at the Government Higher Secondary School, Jaipur, Namsai. The event saw active and enthusiastic participation from battalion officers, staff, students,

and local residents, reinforcing the message of collective responsibility towards environmental conservation.

The drive was aimed at raising awareness about the importance of ecological balance and the role of afforestation in combating pressing global challenges such as climate change, air pollution, and

loss of biodiversity.

Senior officers including Shri Dharmendra Kumar Singh (Commandant), Shri Bipin Kumar Singh (2.I/C Adm), Shri Sandip Sharma (2.I/C), Shri K.N. Haldhar (Deputy Commandant), Dr. (Smt.) Chundru Lakshmi Manasa (SMO), and Miss S. Seema Devi (Assistant Commandant) graced the occasion. In their speeches, they underlined the vital role trees play in purifying air, preventing soil erosion, conserving groundwater, and providing habitat to wildlife.

They also emphasized the social value of such initiatives, noting how they foster unity, civic responsibility, and stronger community engagement in sustainable development efforts.

A variety of saplings, including native species, were planted during the program. The 186 Bn also put in place measures to ensure their proper nurturing and long-term care, with an appeal to the community to take ownership of the green assets.

The presence of local villagers added to the spirit of the event, reflecting a shared commitment to creating a greener, healthier future. The 186 Battalion reiterated its dedication to environmental protection and pledged to continue similar initiatives in collaboration with the local population.

Team Tawang dominated the field with an emphatic 4-0 victory over Team Mogto 8th Hangpan Dada Memorial Trophy concludes with enthusiastic finale in Tawang



HT Bureau

NAMSAL, May 17: The 8th edition of the Hangpan Dada Memorial Trophy (HDMT), an annual Under-16 District Level Football and Volleyball Tournament for boys and girls, concluded today in a spirited finale at the Gyalwa Tsangyang Gyatso High Altitude Sports Stadium, Tawang. The event showcased youthful energy,

discipline, and sportsmanship, drawing participants and spectators from across the district.

The highlight of the final day was the boys' football final, where Team Tawang dominated the field with an emphatic 4-0 victory over Team Mogto, clinching the championship title.

MLA of Tawang, Namgye Tsering, graced the closing ceremony

as Chief Guest, accompanied by a host of dignitaries including Zila Parishad Chairperson Lekhi Gompu, Deputy Commissioner Kanki Darang, and representatives from Monpa Mimang Tsogpa, Tawang Monpa Employees Society, and local political parties.

In his address, MLA Namgye Tsering urged the youth to stay away from drugs and anti-social

behavior, encouraging them instead to channel their energy into sports. He emphasized the transformative power of athletics in shaping disciplined, focused, and responsible citizens. He also assured continued support for youth and sports development in the region.

Tournament Highlights:

Football (Boys) Winners: Tawang (4) vs Mogto (0), Best Footballer (Boys): Lekhi Phuntso (Mogto)

Football (Girls) Winners: Lungla (9) vs Tawang (1) Best Footballer (Girls): Dechin Yangton (Lungla)

Volleyball (Boys) Winners: Lungla

Best Player (Boys): Pam Phuntso (Lungla)

Volleyball (Girls) Winners: Lungla

Best Player (Girls): Tenzin Wangmu (Lungla)

The Hangpan Dada Memorial Trophy, held annually in honor of martyr Hangpan Dada, has become a beacon of inspiration for young athletes across Arunachal Pradesh. The tournament continues to serve as a platform to nurture sports talent, foster unity, and promote healthy lifestyles among the youth of the state.

Pakistan has become threat to humanity: Owaisi on message to world as all-party delegation member

HYDERABAD, May 17: AIMIM leader Asaduddin Owaisi said on Saturday that Pakistan with its long history of sponsoring terrorism has become a threat to humanity, affirming that this will be the heart of his message to the international community as a member of all-party delegations the government is sending to world capitals.

In an interview to PTI Videos, the Hyderabad MP said the world will have to be told about the slaughtering of innocent citizens by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists for a long spell of time.

"India has been a big victim of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. We all have seen the tamasha, slaughtering of people since the time of Zia-ul-Haq," he said in his most explicit and fiery condemnation of Pakistan.

He added, "You can never trust Pakistan as long as the Pakistani deep state, Pakistani ISI, Pakistani military's objective is to destabilise Bharat."

Owaisi, however, added that he is yet to be briefed by the government about the details of the diplomatic drive following the Pahalgam attack and Operation Sindoor.

One of the sharpest opposition voices against the BJP, the fifth-term Lok Sabha member has emerged as among the most vocal supporters of the government's tough stand against Pakistan.



drawing praise even from a section of people generally hostile to his politics.

"Politically, we (his party) will continue to fight the BJP's ideology. But when you come to the country and kill my countrymen, then where is the question of my religion coming in the way of my feelings."

Elaborating, he said everyone of the Indian citizens is sailing in the same boat.

"If anyone is creating a hole in the boat, we all sink together. No one will save us. It is obvious that we have to be together to fight every storm. We can sort out our issues internally."

Asserting that destabilising India, fomenting communal divide and stalling the country's economic rise is part of Pakistan's un-

written ideology, Owaisi said this has always been the objective of the Pakistani deep state and its military.

He said, "They have a stated ideology which is unwritten about the various ways in which they can destabilise India. How they can spread hatred in India? How can India's progress be stopped? They are working on it till today and will continue to do so tomorrow. These people are not going to stop."

The firebrand parliamentarian said it is necessary to call out Pakistan for projecting itself as the protector of Islam and Muslims in its confrontation with India. "This is nonsense. Nearly 20 crore Muslims live in India. This too must be conveyed."

India should have understood Pakistan's design long back when it had sent tribal invaders into Jammu and Kashmir after its independence in 1947, he said.

Pakistan has become a threat to humanity by arming, training and financing terrorists, he said.

However, India's patience ran out with the Pahalgam terror attack, he said.

The anguish that others are feeling, he is also feeling, Owaisi said, describing the killings of Pahalgam as "military style execution" in the most barbaric fashion, with men being shot at point blank range so much so that their faces were disfigured.

"Imagine the trauma that the relatives and wives faced. They will carry it with them for the rest of their lives," he said.

"There is no doubt that this was sponsored by Pakistan. How can there be any second opinion about this? Tell me. How can there be any second opinion? All the technical data with NIA shows that the terrorists came from Pakistan, so it is obvious that they were taking instructions from the Pakistani establishment," he said.

Owaisi cited the spontaneous and organic protests that erupted in Kashmir after the Pahalgam attacks to say that it showed there was no support left for Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in the region.

"In fact, it is a historic opportunity for the government, for Prime Minister Modi, for Home Minister Amit Shah. They should use this opportunity properly. You should definitely confront Pakistan but you should also adopt Kashmiris," he said.

As seven all-party delegations leave next week to different parts of the world, Owaisi said outside countries must be told about Pakistan's role in a number of terror incidents, be it the Indian Airlines plane hijack to Kandahar and how India had to release Pakistani terrorists, the 26/11 Mumbai attack, the Parliament attack and horrific incidents in Pathankot cantonment, Uri, and now Pahalgam. (PTI)

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Difference between 'Congress mein hona, Congress ka hona': Jairam Ramesh in dig at Tharoor



NEW DELHI, May 17: There is a difference between "being in the Congress and of the Congress", Jairam Ramesh said in an apparent swipe at party colleague Shashi Tharoor after a controversy over the government nominating him to lead a multi-party delegation abroad to put across India's stand against Pakistan on terrorism.

"The Congress is like the mighty Ganga, which has many tributaries... Some of them dry up and some get polluted," Ramesh, the Congress general secretary in-charge communications said but ducked questions on if there would be any action against Tharoor.

The government named Tharoor as a leader of one of the seven multi-party delegations to project India's national consensus and resolute approach to combating terrorism in all forms and manifestations and carry to the world the country's message of zero tolerance against terrorism.

Accepting the nomination to lead one of the delegations, Tharoor said in a post on X, "I am honoured by the invitation of the government of India to lead an all-party delegation to five key capitals, to present our nation's point of view on recent events."

"When national interest is involved, and my services are required, I will not be found wanting. Jai Hind!" he added.

Asked about Tharoor's inclusion as a representative of the Congress in the government's list of leaders to lead the delegations abroad, Ramesh told reporters, "Congress mein hona aur Congress ka hona mein zameen-aasmaan ka antar hai (There is a difference between being in the Congress and of the Congress)."

In a democratic system, when individual MPs are sent as part of an official delegation, MPs must

seek the concurrence of the party. If the government wants to send him as part of a delegation, the MP should be asking the party, he said.

"You (government) cannot include names of MPs (in delegations) without consulting the party," he said. "All of us belong to the party but they (government) need to consult the LoPs."

According to normal practice and a good democratic system, when MPs are sent on official delegations, they should seek the concurrence of the party concerned, he further said.

Asked if there would be any further action on the matter, Ramesh said the government had asked for four names from the Congress and it had sent those four names.

There will be no change of names from the Congress' side, he added.

"The ball is in the government's court now," he said, adding that no names were discussed during Union minister Kiren Rijiju's conversation with Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Rahul Gandhi.

The BJP, on the other hand, questioned the Congress' choice of leaders for the delegations, wondering if it did not nominate Tharoor because he outshone the party high command.

In a post on X on Saturday, Rijiju shared a government communication of names of leaders to head seven delegations to different countries that included Tharoor's name.

"In moments that matter most, Bharat stands united. Seven all-party delegations will soon visit key partner nations, carrying our shared message of zero-tolerance to terrorism. A powerful reflection of national unity above politics, beyond differences," Rijiju said in his post. (PTI)

Dissatisfied with AAP, 13 MCD councillors float new political outfit



NEW DELHI, May 17: In a new political twist at the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), 13 AAP councillors resigned from the party on Saturday and announced the formation of a breakaway outfit - Indraprastha Vikas Party - citing stalled development work and growing internal discontent.

Senior councillor Mukesh Goyal, who will serve as the president of the new party, told PTI, "In the two and a half years since our election, no development work has been carried out. The party was too busy with internal conflicts and blame games. We repeatedly raised our concerns with the leadership, but no one listened."

No immediate reaction from the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was available.

Goyal also alleged that elected councillors were not allotted budgets to carry out developmental work in their respective wards.

"We want to focus on real work for the people of Delhi. We want the House to function smoothly and ensure that the policies are implemented in public interest," he stressed while clarifying that the move was limited to MCD.

The new outfit will be led by veteran municipal figure Hemchand Goyal and includes other former AAP councillors such as Dinesh Bharadwaj, Himani Jain, Usha Sharma, Sahib Kumar, Rakhi Kumar, Ashok Pandey, Rajesh Kumar, and Anil Rana.

The anti-defection law does not apply to municipal bodies, including the MCD. (PTI)

Civic authorities raze 36 illegal bungalows on bank of Indrayani river near Pune

PUNE, May 17: Civic authorities in Pimpri Chinchwad near Pune on Saturday demolished 36 bungalows built illegally along the Indrayani River, an official said.

Acting on the orders of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), officials and personnel from the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation (PCMC), along with a heavy police cover, reached the River Villa project in Chikhali village in the morning, he said.

Municipal Commissioner Shekhar Singh said the civic body razed the bungalows as demolition drives cannot be carried out during the monsoon.

Activist Tanaji Gambhire, who had moved the NGT against the project, said the villas were constructed along the Indrayani river's blue flood line, where development activities are banned. A blue line represents the level of flood likely to occur in a river once in 25 years.

In July 2024, NGT had asked the civic body to

demolish all these 36 structures within six months. The green court had also ordered that Rs 5 crore be collected collectively from the bungalow owners as environmental damage compensation. The PCMC subsequently started the process and began hearings of the bungalow owners.

Meanwhile, 29 bungalow owners approached the Supreme Court, but the apex court rejected their appeal. The land and bungalow owners then approached the NGT to review its order. However, the NGT also rejected their review petition, said an official. After getting no relief from the NGT, the property owners again moved the SC.

The apex court on May 4 disposed of the appeal and ruled that PCMC should implement the NGT's order to pull down the bungalows and collect ₹ 5 crore towards damage to the environment. PCMC Commissioner Shekhar Singh told PTI that someone tried to create confusion that

the SC on May 4 had given six months to the corporation to take action.

"The Supreme Court just reproduced the NGT's order in its May 4 ruling. It was NGT that had given 6 months (to PCMC) when it ordered the demolition in 2024. Today (on May 17), complying with the orders, we demolished all 36 illegal structures," he said.

Singh said they will now implement the second part of the NGT order concerning the recovery of Rs 5 crore from the bungalow owners.

"I appeal to all the people in the city to check the zone, where a housing project is located, the layout, approval, and do due diligence before going for any purchase," he said.

One of the bungalow owners said he and others bought the plots from M/s Jare World and M/s V Square in 2018. "We got the plots transferred in our names by completing the registration process of the government," he said. (PTI)

SC order on retrospective environmental clearances a step forward but gaps remain: Experts

NEW DELHI, May 17: Policy experts on Saturday welcomed the Supreme Court's decision barring the government from granting retrospective environmental clearances but warned that loopholes in environmental laws still exist, and citizens must stay alert to protect their constitutional rights. In a landmark ruling on Friday, the apex court said the government cannot grant retrospective environmental clearances in the future. The court made it clear that projects started without mandatory prior environmental clearance cannot be legalised later. It added that violators who knowingly ignored the law cannot be protected.

The judgement came in response to petitions filed by the NGO Vanashakti and others, challenging two government office memorandums issued in July 2021 and January 2022 which had created a system to grant environmental clearance to projects that began operations without prior approval under the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006.

Stalin D, Director of Vanashakti, told PTI that citizens must now ensure the court's directions are followed. "The judgement clearly says the government cannot try and provide a safe haven for violators. So, we have to ensure that our constitutional framework is not violated in any way." "One more very pertinent thing in that order is that the people who violated this are not illiterate persons. They are educated, well connected, rich people who knew that they were engaging in a violation, which needs to stop now," he said.

Prakriti Srivastava, a retired Indian Forest Service officer, said while it is a good order, knowing the history of environment ministry and project proponents, they will find a way around. She said post-facto approvals mean the damage is already done before clearance is granted.

"Will these stop and the ministry obey the SC orders? Let's wait and watch. Though knowing the record of MoEFCC, they give two hoots for SC orders and may blatantly disregard them," she added.

Himanshu Thakkar, Coordinator of the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, said the decision is welcome but should have come earlier. He also raised concerns about enforcement. "This is welcome, but the directions could have come sooner. It shows that our system is very slow to react."

"Secondly, where is your credible monitoring system to ensure that this doesn't happen? The third thing is there is a bypassing of the law happening. For example, land acquisition is allowed, even when environment clearance is not there. If you have already acquired land, you are creating impacts, displacing people, you are making the project fait accompli," Thakkar said. "So, the Supreme Court also needs to put down more stipulations that you cannot acquire land without environmental clearance because once you acquire the land, then you get the right over the land and you can do what you want to do with it, which is again movement towards irreversibility. So, these kinds of loopholes are still there," he said. (PTI)

Haryana YouTuber held on charge of spying for Pakistan

CHANDIGARH, May 17: A Haryana-based YouTuber has been arrested on the charge of passing on sensitive information to Pakistani intelligence operatives, police said on Saturday.

Jyoti Malhotra, who runs a YouTube channel, Travel with JO, and hails from Hisar in Haryana, was arrested from New Aggarasain Extension, they said.

She has been booked under the relevant sections of the Official Secrets Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, said police. She was sent to a five-day police remand after being produced before the court.

Jyoti, whose YouTube channel and Instagram account have 3.77 lakh subscribers and 1.33 lakh followers respectively, allegedly was in contact with a Pakistani staffer working at the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi. On May 13, India had expelled that Pakistani official for allegedly indulging in espionage.

Her YouTube channel account shows some videos regarding her visit to Pakistan -- 'Indian Girl in Pakistan', 'Indian Girl Exploring Lahore', 'Indian Girl at Katas Raj Temple' and 'Indian Girl Rides Luxury Bus in Pakistan'.

She has made a total of 487 videos so far. She has described herself as a 'Nomadic Leo Girl', 'Wanderer Haryanvi + Punjabi' and 'purane khayalon ki modern ladi' on her YouTube channel.

In 2023, Jyoti came in contact with Ehsan-ur-Rahim alias Danish at the Pakistan High Commission where she went to seek a visa to visit the neighbouring nation, according to an FIR lodged at Civil Lines Police Station on May 16. Jyoti, who visited Pakistan twice, had met Danish's acquaintance Ali Ahwan who arranged her

stay there, the FIR read.

Ahwan arranged Jyoti's meeting with Pakistani Security and Intelligence officials and met Shakir and Rana Shahbaz. She saved Shahbaz's mobile number as 'Jatt Randhawa' to avoid any suspicion.

She was in contact with these persons through WhatsApp, Telegram and Snapchat, and passed on sensitive information to them, according to the FIR, which was registered on the complaint of sub-inspector Bijender Singh.

She met Danish several times at the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi and was found to be in touch with Pakistani Intelligence Operatives, it said.

Jyoti's arrest came days after Punjab Police arrested two persons, including a woman, from Malerkotla district for their alleged involvement in espionage activities linked to the Pakistani official posted at the High Commission.

The accused Guzala and Yameen Mohamad, both residents of Malerkotla had been receiving payments through online transactions in exchange of classified information.

On May 11, Punjab police said that Guzala had been arrested for leaking sensitive information regarding the Indian Army movements to a Pakistan-based handler.

Guzala revealed that she was doing it in lieu of money and the accused Pakistani official sent her ₹ 30,000 in two transactions -- ₹ 10,000 and ₹ 20,000 -- through UPI (unified payment interface).

On Friday, the Haryana police arrested a 25-year-old post-graduate student from Kaithal for allegedly having links with Pakistani intelligence operatives. (PTI)

Border dwellers devastated by Pakistani shelling demand shelter

KHOUR (AKHNOOR), May 17: Devastated by intense artillery shelling from across the Line of Control, several border residents of hamlets in the Khour-Pargwal sector of the Jammu district are pleading for government help after losing their homes, livestock, and livelihoods.

With homes damaged and livestock lost, they are now urging the government to provide immediate shelter - roof over their heads, and long-term rehabilitation. The shelling followed India's Operation Sindoor targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 civilian lives.

The recent shelling and drone strikes in Jammu killed 27 people and injured more than 70. Thousands have fled from the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border areas to seek refuge in government-run relief camps.

Kamla Devi, a resident of a border village, returned home with her brother only to find her house in ruins and their livestock dead. "Where would we live now? We were dependent on these animals. Now they are dead and our house is destroyed," she said tearfully.

"We demand war. I came back home forcefully, despite my husband saying no. There is no work here now. Please give us a place to live. We are homeless," she said.



Recounting the trauma of displacement, Kamla said, "Due to the tension on the border, we fled and took shelter at my father's house. The ceasefire was announced on May 10. My husband was home but left in the evening. That night, despite the ceasefire, Pakistan shelled our village heavily. Two shells hit our home, three of our bovines

were killed. We narrowly escaped."

Anger is mounting among villagers over the recurring shelling and the perceived failure of the ceasefire agreement over the years. Former panchayat member Joginder Lal, supported by other villagers, demanded a full-scale war.

"What is the point of a ceasefire when Pakistan

does not honour it? We want war to teach Pakistan a lesson. We cannot be hostages to any government policy that puts us in uncertainty," he said.

Deepak Kumar, who sustained a minor injury to his ear and suffered damage to his house, echoed similar sentiments how the artillery shells destroyed the house of his neighbour Karan Singh, triggering fear psychosis.

"It was like a war waged by Pakistan. If they carry out terror attacks in the future, we must give a befitting reply. But this (tit for tat) policy only brings more suffering to border residents. The only solution is war with Pakistan," he said.

Expressing the pain of losing homes, he said, "We want a roof over our heads. We urge Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ensure shelters and compensation. Most of us are now living with relatives."

Scars of the recent conflict are etched in the villages—damaged homes, splinter-pitted walls, shattered windows, bloodstains, and dead livestock reflect the destruction.

Lal reiterated his support for military action under Prime Minister Modi's leadership.

"We are with the Army and Prime Minister Modi. We want a full-fledged war, once and for all. We've been running since 1947, then again in 1965, 1971, and 1999. How long will we continue to suffer from Pakistani shelling? Only war will

bring us peace," he said.

Although people are slowly returning to their villages near the International Border, schools remain shut and farming activities are yet to resume.

To assess the ground situation, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo visited Akhnoor and Khour and inspected the damage to homes and public infrastructure and directed the administration to expedite relief and rehabilitation work immediately.

Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) working president and former deputy chief minister Tara Chand, who represented this Assembly constituency several times, demanded land and financial aid for the affected.

"We demand that 10 marla plots and ₹ 5 lakh be given to each family living along the border so they can relocate to safer areas," Tara Chand told PTI.

"There are over 80 villages in the Pargwal-Khour-Garkhal-Chhamb belt. The shelling has affected areas as deep as 10 kilometers. The damage is widespread," he added.

Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Sachin Kumar Vaishya, also toured the Chhamb sector to listen to public grievances. "The government will ensure all necessary support and measures for the affected people," he said. (PTI)

Day began with a Tiranga rally led by the CM from MG Marg to Paljor Stadium here 50th Statehood Day celebration reflects spirit of shared identity, collective pride: Sikkim CM

GANGTOK, May 17: Sikkim Chief Minister PS Tamang on Saturday extended gratitude to all who sent their greetings on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Statehood Day on May 16, and said the celebration was a reflection of a "shared identity and collective pride".

The chief minister also said the Sikkimese people's love and support made the celebration truly special.

"On behalf of the people of Sikkim, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all our esteemed leaders, friends, and well-wishers who sent us their warm greetings and best wishes on the occasion of our Golden Jubilee, 50 glorious years of Statehood.

"Your kind words and blessings



have touched us deeply and added meaning to this historic milestone," Tamang said on Facebook.

Sikkim celebrated its 50th Statehood Day on Friday, with Governor Om Prakash Mathur and

Tamang congratulating the people of the state on the occasion. The day began with a Tiranga rally led by the CM from MG Marg to Paljor Stadium here.

In a message to the people of the Himalayan state, Tamang said, "My dear fellow Sikkimese, thank you, from the bottom of my heart. Your love, support, and enthusiastic participation made this celebration truly special. You didn't just witness history; you lived it, celebrated it, and made it memorable."

Sikkim is not just a place - it is "a feeling, a shared identity, and a collective pride", the CM said.

"And this celebration was a beautiful reflection of that spirit. Thank you for being a part of this incredible journey," he added. (PTI)

Seven militants arrested in Manipur



IMPHAL, May 17: Security forces arrested seven militants from different districts of Manipur, police said on Saturday.

Two militants belonging to the KCP (PWG) and involved in extortion activities were arrested in Imphal East district on Friday, they said.

Security forces arrested one active cadre of Chin Kuki National Defence Force (CKNDF) from Tumbong in Churachandpur district on Thursday, they said, adding that the militant was involved in the recruitment of youth for armed insurgency for CKNDF group and cross-border arms and cadre movement as well as in extortion activities.

One active cadre of the banned PREPAK (Pro) involved in extortion activities was arrested from Wangkhel Ayangpalli area in Imphal East district on Friday.

Another militant of the outfit was arrested from Mayang Langjing area in Imphal West district on Thursday.

An active cadre of the banned United National Liberation Front (Pambel) involved in extortion activities was arrested from Sangaiyupham Cherapur Mayai Leikai area in Thoubal district.

Another militant of PREPAK (Pro) was arrested from Tronglaobi Makha Leikai in Bishnupur district on Thursday. He was involved in the recruitment of youths for PREPAK (Pro) to be sent to Myanmar.

Meanwhile, four firearms, including two bolt-action single-barrel rifles, one .22 bolt-action rifle, and one 9 mm pistol with a magazine, were seized from Senapati district on Friday, police added. (PTI)

Nagaland CM calls for balanced, inclusive legal system

KOHIKA, May 17: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio on Saturday called for a balanced and inclusive legal system that serves all sections of society, particularly rural and marginalised communities.

He also advocated the establishment of a separate high court for the state.

Speaking at a tree plantation programme, organised by the High Court Bar Association (HCBA) at the new high court complex in Meriema in Kohima district, Rio emphasised the importance of preserving customary law.

"Just as the wisdom of our forefathers has guided our communities, so too can it coexist with the formal legal system," Rio said, underscoring the value of traditional village and district-level justice mechanisms that are "quick, cost-effective, and rooted in community harmony".

He said that customary law, protected under Article 371(A) of the Constitution, continues to play a vital role in Nagaland's legal framework and should be respected alongside modern jurisprudence.

"If we look only at the courts, many of our farmers and villagers in rural areas will not be able to afford legal processes. They might give up their rights altogether," Rio said.

He said justice must be "done in spirit, not just in letter".

"When justice is delivered, peace and harmony follow. Injustice breeds division," he said.

The chief minister also highlighted the state's ongoing struggle to receive central funding and recognition for a separate high court in Nagaland.

Despite multiple appeals to the Union Ministry of Law and Justice and the Chief Justice of India, Rio



said that the state was yet to receive any financial support from the Centre for the establishment of a separate high court for Nagaland.

Nagaland now has the Kohima bench of the Gauhati High Court.

"So far, we have spent over ₹ 214 crore from the limited state's own resources. To complete the furnishing and staffing, we need an additional ₹ 300 crore," Rio revealed.

Despite all the efforts, including personal appeals and visits to national leaders, the state has received no grant from the Centre, he said.

Rio stressed that the infrastructure for a separate high court has already been developed, including courtrooms, judges' residences, and support facilities. "We will continue to press our demand for a separate," he stated, urging the legal fraternity to uphold high standards of justice delivery within the state. (PTI)

Hundreds join Tiranga Yatra in Dimapur

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, May 17: Hundreds of people, led by Nagaland PHE and co-operation minister Jacob Zhimomi, joined the Tiranga Yatra here on Saturday to show solidarity with the Indian armed forces and express gratitude to them for Operation Sindoor. The rally was organised by the Nagaland unit of BJP, led by its president Benjamin Yephthomi, under the banner of Concerned Citizens for National Security.

The yatra began at Supermarket and culminated at Dimapur district sports complex (DDSC), where leaders of various organisations and communities hailed the Indian armed forces for their valour and patriotism.

Before the start of the yatra, citizens of Dimapur from various communities, including students, ex-servicemen, youth, men and women and state BJP leaders, shouted anti-Pakistan slogans before marching to the DDSC, carrying a huge 170-meter Tricolour and holding the national flag in their hands.

Addressing the gathering before the start of the rally, minister Zhimomi said the whole nation, including Nagaland, is with the security forces.

He said, on behalf of Nagaland and chief minister Neiphiu Rio, everyone is participating in today's yatra of the Operation Sunny Hill.

CRPF pays tribute to officer killed by lightning in Jharkhand

IMPHAL, May 17: The body of CRPF officer Maharabam Prabho Singh, who was killed after being struck by lightning during an anti-Maoist operation in Jharkhand's West Singhbhum district, was brought here on Saturday afternoon.

Manipur Security Advisor Kuldeep Singh along with senior officials, legislators and family members paid tribute to the deceased officer during a wreath-laying ceremony at the airport. (PTI)

Manipur Police files FIR against Kuki student leader for threatening Meiteis

IMPHAL, May 17: The Manipur Police have filed an FIR against the president of Kuki Students' Organisation Delhi for his threats to not allow Meiteis to cross buffer zones to attend the upcoming 5th state-level Shirui Lily festival in Ukhrul district.

In a post on X, Police on Saturday said, "As regards to one Paojakphut Guite, Prez KSO Delhi threats (in a video) to the Meitei, to not allow to cross the buffer zone to attend the upcoming Shirui festival in Ukhrul,

media, said, "They are going to hold Shirui festival to promote Meitei Tangkhul brotherhood, and urged the public that any Meitei, whether man or woman, who comes to Shirui festival should not be allowed to leave alive."

Reacting to the statement, Indigenous Peoples' Forum Manipur president and popular Naga activist Ashang Kasar said, "During the President's rule in Manipur, why were such activities allowed? Where is the governor? Where is the chief secretary? Where is the DGP?"

The Shirui festival is held in honour of the state flower Shirui Lily, which is found in the hills of the Tangkhul Naga-majority Ukhrul district. The festival is scheduled from May 20 to May 24.

The nearly 80 km route from Imphal to the Ukhrul district headquarters passes through several Kuki villages.

Meanwhile, the Kuki chiefs in villages along the Imphal-Ukhrul road have assured Tangkhul Naga Long (TNL), an apex organisation of the Tangkhul Naga tribe, of maintaining a peaceful environment during the festival and reaffirmed their earlier decision not to check or frisk passersby within the jurisdiction of the TNL.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups, who are the majority in the hill areas, since May 2023.

The Centre imposed the President's rule in the state on February 13 after N Biren Singh resigned as chief minister. The assembly, which has tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation. (PTI)



which is circulated in social media since yesterday, Churachandpur police has registered an FIR and all efforts, including raid, are being made in nearby districts for his immediate arrest."

The police of neighbouring states of Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland and Meghalaya have been requested to arrest him as quickly as possible, the Manipur Police said. It said all necessary security arrangements would be made to ensure the security of people attending the Shirui festival.

Earlier, Guite, in a video widely circulated on social

Nagaland panel asks to ensure protection of child rights

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, May 17: The Nagaland State Commission for Protection of Child Rights called for strict vigilance and legal action to ensure the protection of child rights in the state. The commission issued an advisory, taking cognizance of rising cases of child abuse in Nagaland lately.

It reminded the citizens that safeguarding children is a collective responsibility, and no case should be resolved through compromise, as this undermines justice and emboldens offenders. The commission warned that offences under the POCSO Act, 2012, are non-bailable and cannot be settled privately. It urged everyone to report any instance of child abuse immediately to the child helpline 1098, special juvenile police unit, district child protection unit, child welfare committee or the nearest police station.

In its seven-point advisory, the commission said any form of child abuse by anybody, irrespective of parents/guardians, is highly condemnable and should be brought to the notice of the authority concerned to be tried as per the law.

It observed that some child abuse cases often conclude with negotiation or compromise between the two parties involved, saying that it indirectly encourages the offenders. Any form of offence has to be punished by any means as per the law, the advisory said.

It said the law should not be taken in one's own hands as it defeats the very purpose of the law adopted for delivering justice to victims against the perpetrators, pointing out that under the POCSO Act 2012, offences are non-bailable and cannot be settled through compromise.

The commission also advised the media/social media to uphold ethical standards and refrain from revealing the identities of the children involved in any child abuse case.

24x7 emergency centres in all districts in Sikkim

GANGTOK, May 17: The Sikkim State Disaster Management Authority (SSDMA) has set up a state emergency operation centre (SEOC) at the Tashiling Secretariat here and district emergency operation centres (DEOCs) across all six districts of the state.

These centres will function 24x7, providing real-time support and coordination during any disaster-related emergencies, a public advisory issued by Relief Commissioner-cum Secretary, Land Revenue and Disaster Management department, Mingma T Sherpa said on Saturday.

It said that the SEOC in Gangtok will be headed by Jigme Bhutia, deputy director of SSDMA. Citizens can reach the SEOC through the helpline numbers 03592-201145, 202461, or 202256, or contact directly at 8001553687. For email assistance, people can write to ssdma01@gmail.com.

At the district level, DEOCs have been activated with dedicated officers in charge. Each centre is equipped with a helpline number and email address to ensure easy public access during emergencies. (PTI)

PROTECTION WORK FOR VULNERABLE LOCATION OF BANK AND BRIDGES

Tender Notice No.: TSK/Engg/17 of 2025, Dated: 14-05-2025.

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

Item No.: 1; Brief Description of Item: At Tinsukia Division-Protection work for vulnerable location of bank and bridges (34 nos) under jurisdiction of ADEN/Silapathar (Br. nos. 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 708, 710, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 730, 731, 732, 733, 736, 737, 738, 739 and 741).

Tender Value: ₹12,24,69,697/-; Earnest Money: ₹7,62,400/-; Date & time of closing of above tender at 15:00 hrs. on 04-06-2025 and opening at 16:00 hrs. on 04-06-2025. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 04-06-2025 in the website www.irops.gov.in

DRM (W), Tinsukia

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

Serving Customers With A Smile

RECOUPMENT OF SUPPLY OF MONSOON RESERVE STOCK

E-Tender Notice No.: LMG/Engg/40 of 2025 Dated: 15-05-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Brief Description of Item: Recoupment of supply of monsoon reserve stock of boulder, unscreened single and empty cement bags including loading into wagon etc. in Maibang, Dikocherra & Mahur under Sr. DEN/III/Lumding (For one year).

Tender Value: ₹1,54,94,024/-; Earnest Money: ₹2,27,500/-; Date & time of closing of tender: 15:00 hrs. of 09-06-2025 & opening at: 15:00 hrs. of 10-06-2025. The complete information with the tender documents of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. of 09-06-2025 in website www.irops.gov.in

DRM (W), Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

Serving Customers With A Smile

Union Minister to send expert team to boost milk, fish production in Tripura

'Tripura has the potential to become self-sufficient not only in milk production but also in fisheries'

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, May 17: In a major push toward making Tripura self-reliant in milk and fish production, Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, and Panchayati Raj, Rajiv Ranjan Singh, on Saturday announced that a central expert team will visit the state in July.

The team, comprising officials from the Animal Husbandry department, National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), and National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), will chalk out a comprehensive strategy in consultation with the state government. The decision was announced during the inauguration of a 40 TLPD Milk Plant, Dairy Unit-II, at Bamutia in West Tripura.

Speaking at the event, the Union Minister said the Centre believes that Tripura has the potential to become self-sufficient not only in milk production but also in fisheries.

"In June, discussions will be held and a team including officials from Animal Husbandry, NDDB, and NFDB will visit Tripura along with me. We will meet the Chief Minister and state officials to deliberate on a roadmap. The Centre is committed to extending all possible support to help Tripura achieve self-reliance in these



sectors," Singh said.

Highlighting India's global leadership in milk production, the Minister credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's initiatives for consistent annual growth of around 6% in the sector.

He noted that Tripura has vast potential in animal husbandry and fishery, and called on Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha and ARDD Minister Sudhangshu Das to take proactive steps for further development.

The Minister also emphasized the importance of Artificial Insemination in

boosting milk yield and supporting farmers. "Tripura has conducted 2.7 lakh Artificial Inseminations so far, resulting in the birth of around 50,000 calves," he informed.

Praising the state government, Singh said the Tripura administration under Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha is doing commendable work for holistic development.

"Supporting farmers engaged in fishery and dairy farming will ultimately contribute to strengthening the state's economy," he added.

No.DE/BTC/Acctts-382/S/D-CI-Room/H.Scl/24/32

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

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Sl. No.	Name of Schemes	A.A. Amount	A.A. No. & Date
1	Installation of Smart Class Room / Digital Teaching Device for Bodo Medium at J.B. Hagier High School, Chaitanguri in Baksa District.	8,49,600.00	BTC/EDN (HS)-156/2024-25/39, dated. 21 st March/2025.
	Installation of Smart Class Room / Digital Teaching Device for Assamese Medium at J.B. Hagier High School, Chaitanguri in Baksa District.	8,49,600.00	

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Want to make a film in India, love Bollywood movies: Tom Cruise

NEW DELHI, May 17: Hollywood superstar Tom Cruise has a message for his fans in India -- "Main aap sab se bahut pyaar karta hoon". The actor went on to share his wish of making a Bollywood-style film, especially one with song and dance sequences. Cruise's latest film "Mission: Impossible - The Final Reckoning" released in Indian theatres on Saturday. Directed by Christopher McQuarrie, the film is the eighth installment of the "Mission: Impossible" franchise.

In a promotional video, released by Paramount Pictures India, Cruise, 62, interacted with actor-influencer Avneet Kaur, who asked him to say a few words for his fans in the country.

"Main aap sab se bahut pyaar karta hoon (I love you all very much)" Cruise said in Hindi.

He also recounted his memories of visiting India in 2011 during the promotions of "Mission: Impossible - Ghost Protocol", which also featured Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor in a cameo appearance.

"I feel so much love for India. India is an amazing country, people, and culture. I have to say the whole experience has been etched in my memory. Every single moment. From the moment I landed, going to the Taj Mahal, and spending time in Mumbai, I remember each moment quite vividly," he said.

Cruise further said he wants to make a film in India as he has been a fan of Bollywood movies.

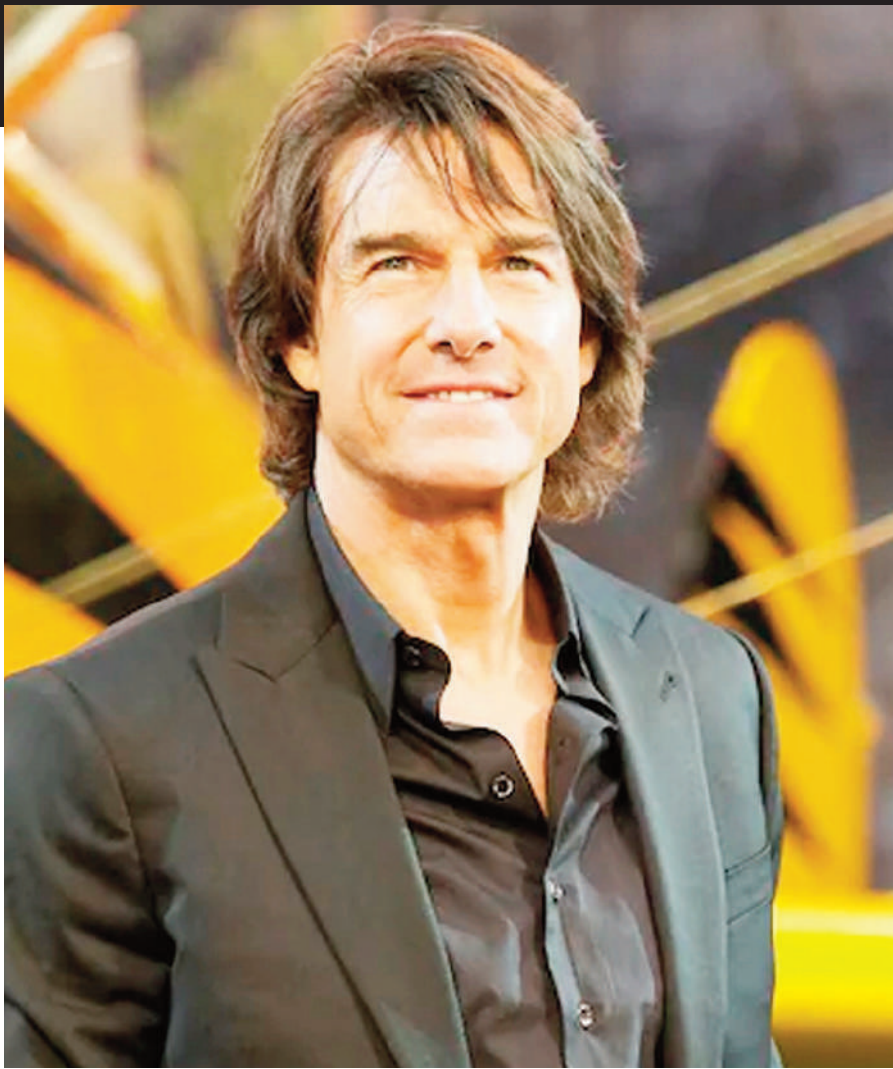
"I love it when in a scene someone suddenly breaks into a song. I love it. It's something that I have grown up watching—musicals from different countries. I love Bollywood movies. You can just break out into a song, it's so beautiful. I love the dancing, singing, and the actors. That is such a unique experience and craftsmanship of the actors to be able to sing, dance, and act," he said.

"I cannot wait to go back to India. I have so many friends there. I have met such amazing people there. I would love to make a Bollywood-style movie. It would be so much fun and amazing to do that. I love the dancing and singing, it would be so much fun to do that."

Towards the end, Kaur asked Cruise to recite the dialogue "I need you to trust me, one last time" from "The Final Reckoning" in Hindi.

"Mujh par bharosa karo, ek aakhri baar," Cruise said.

"Mission: Impossible The Final Reckoning" also stars Hayley Atwell, Simon Pegg, Esai Morales, Angela Bassett, Ving Rhames, Henry Czerny and Pom Klementieff. The film, directed by McQuarrie and co-produced by Cruise, released in India in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. (PTI)



Jacob Elordi, Lily-Rose Depp in talks to star in 'Outer Dark'

LOS ANGELES, May 17: Actors Jacob Elordi and Lily-Rose Depp are in talks to star in "Outer Dark".

According to the entertainment news outlet Deadline, the upcoming film is an adaptation of 1968's novel by Cormac McCarthy.

Described as a "dark fairytale", the film is directed by Hungarian filmmaker Laszlo Nemes, who is marking his English-language debut.

He is best known for directing "Son Of Saul", for which he got an Oscar in Best Foreign Language Film category.

"Set in Appalachia during the Great Depression, "Outer Dark" tells the story of a young woman who bears her brother's baby. The brother leaves the nameless infant in the woods to die, but tells his sister that the newborn died of natural causes and had to be buried.

"The sister discovers this lie and sets out to find the baby for herself. But as both brother and sister separately move through the countryside, three terrifying strangers are on their tails, wreaking death and destruction wherever they appear," reads the plotline.

The shooting of the film is slated to begin in 2026. (PTI)

Ali Fazal, Tillotama Shome to star in horror-thriller 'Beyond'

NEW DELHI, May 17: Actor Ali Fazal is set to star in a horror-thriller "Beyond" alongside Tillotama Shome.

Directed by Sumit Purohit, the film is set in a ghostly Himalayan town. It is written by Purohit and Saurav Dey, according to the entertainment news outlet Deadline.

The filmmaker said the narrative of the film is inspired by local legends and myths to some extent.

"Like many others from the region, my aspirations led me to move away in search of opportunities. This constant migration has left many hill settlements slowly turning into ghost towns and villages, deserted by their people. One such place, forgotten and frozen in time, is the setting for my film 'Beyond'," he said in a statement.

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"Local legends and myths also inspire the narrative. While it unfolds as a mystery horror, its essence lies in capturing the desolation of the place," he added.

"Beyond" is produced by Chippy Babu and Abhishek Sharma's Train Tripper Films and Mario Stefan's fieber.film. It will be shot in the Himalayas. (PTI)

Nancy Tyagi makes second Cannes red carpet appearance with self-designed outfit



NEW DELHI, May 17: Nancy Tyagi, the self-taught fashion designer from Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat, walked the red carpet at the Cannes Film Festival for the second consecutive year, wearing an outfit entirely designed and crafted by herself.

After capturing global attention in 2024 with her debut at Cannes, Tyagi returned for the film gala's 2025 edition in a custom couture ensemble she spent over 700 hours creating.

The turquoise outfit, inspired by a garden in full bloom, featured delicately hand-painted flowers, a structured corset bodice and a flowing floral silhouette, according to a press release.

"I walked here last year, and since then my life has completely changed. My outfit is inspired by flowers because I really love them. It took 700 hours to create this."

"Heartfelt thanks to everyone who has been a part of this beautiful journey. This moment would be incomplete without them," Tyagi said in a statement.

Tyagi, who once prepared for the civil services in Delhi, rose to fame through her digital content showcasing fashion made from scratch. She has over three million followers on Instagram.

Last year, Tyagi made headlines after she debuted on the Cannes red carpet in a beautiful pink gown. She designed four garments, which took her two months to put together. (PTI)

I want to diversify and become a producer: costume designer Pia Benegal

NEW DELHI, May 17: Costume designer Pia Benegal says she wants to diversify as a producer and take her filmmaker father Shyam Benegal's banner forward.

Known for her work on films such as "Zubeidaa", "Dil Se..." and "Aligarh", the costume designer recently finished work on the first season of Hansal Mehta's "Gandhi" web series.

Pia said she will continue to work in costume design even as she makes strides as a producer under Shyam Benegal Sahyadri Films (SBSF).

"I look forward to interesting projects as a costume designer. Other than that, I want to diversify beyond costumes. Since my father has left a legacy of films and series, I want to diversify and become a producer. I want to produce feature films, short films, TV series, etc. I'm meeting very interesting script writers and directors," she told PTI in an interview.

Pia had been a "silent partner" of SBSF for a long time with her father at the helm, but she wants to take it forward in a new direction.

Shyam Benegal, one of the giants of Indian cinema's parallel cinema movement, died on December 23 days after celebrating his 90th birthday.

"I will not be taking forward the Shyam Benegal footprint, because I can't be him. But I will do what makes me excited about stories

and what I feel really touches me..."

"If people are looking for Shyam Benegal's legacy being taken forward, his company is moving forward. But the exact footprint of Shyam Benegal, I'm not sure about that, because I want to move with the times and technology. I want to create a very exciting and interesting look for the future which will have a bit of me too," she added.

Pia, who served as a junior assistant to her father in both direction and production, started out as a costume designer "by accident" in the 1990s.

"He was working on a film called 'Antarnaad' (1991) which had not been titled yet. He had no money to hire somebody to do the costumes, so he came to me. He said, 'See, you're working as a junior production person. Why don't you do this for this film and give it a shot?'"

"I said but I don't know how to even stitch a hook or a button. How will I make and organise costumes for actors? So he said, 'Well, why don't you just read the script and try doing the costumes?' That's how I did the costumes for my first film which was 'Antarnaad'," she recalled.

Gradually, Pia said, she fell in love with costumes, so much so she enrolled herself at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, Delhi, for a one-year course in 1999.

"I wanted to brush up on my skills as a cos-

tume person. So I did that (course), and I got better at everything. That's what it was all about, just getting better and better at the skills... When I became a costume designer, I really enjoyed that whole process, learning on the job, and I did many, many films with my father. I am grateful that he gave me the opportunity, and I enjoyed working with him, so I had lots of fun times with his unit."

As a costume designer, she worked with Shyam Benegal on films such as "Sardari Begum", "Mammo", "Zubeidaa", "Suraj Ka Satwan Ghoda", "Hari Bhari", "Welcome to Sajjanpur", "Bose: The Forgotten Hero", "Well Done Abba", and his last "Mujib: The Making of a Nation".

Asked how her father was as a filmmaker, Pia said he would hand over a script to every department, ask them to have a look at it and come back if they needed help.

"He was very good at designating. He wasn't somebody who would want to handle everything and give instructions. I thank him for that because that gave me a lot of freedom to do my research, to read, to pay attention to details..."

"He gave me the freedom to do network, source, make mistakes and take the fall and then climb up and stand up... The whole thing was, 'You must learn on your own, it's not my job to help you and hold your hand'. He did the same for everybody," she added. (PTI)



More 90m throws to come this season: Neeraj Chopra

DOHA, May 17: It was a "bittersweet" outing for Neeraj Chopra at the Doha Diamond League as he finally breached the elusive 90m mark but had to settle for a second-place finish and, with his groin injury nearly healed, the star Indian javelin thrower vowed to deliver more 90m-plus throws this season.

The 27-year-old double Olympic medallist sent his spear to 90.23m in his third attempt to join the list of javelin throwers, led by his current coach Jan Zelezny of the Czech Republic, who have recorded 90m-plus efforts. He became the third Asian and 25th overall to achieve the feat.

However, Germany's Julian Weber turned the tables and took the top spot with his sixth and final throw, measuring 91.06m. Chopra was leading before Weber's final attempt.

With the monkey off his back, Chopra asserted that his best is yet to come and fans can expect more 90m throws this year from him, an elusive mark for him for the last five years.

Now, a confident and injury-free Chopra, is focussing on fine-tuning a few aspects under Zelezny's tutelage.

Zelezny was roped in as Chopra's coach in November last year. But Chopra said they have been working together since February only.

"I am very happy with the 90m mark



but it's a little bit of a bittersweet experience actually. But never mind, I and my coach are still working on some aspects of my throw. We started working together

only in February this year. I am still learning things," Chopra said after the event.

"He doesn't normally go to the Dia-

mond Leagues but he came with me because he told me that today is the day to achieve 90m.

"I was always feeling something in my

groin in the last few years. I did not give my best because of that. This year I feel much better, we will also work on some aspects and so I believe I can throw more than 90m in the upcoming events this year till the World Championships."

The World Championships will be held in Tokyo from September 13 to 21.

Asked about his next goal, now that the 90m mark had been broken, Chopra said, "My next goal remains 90m. I believe I am ready to throw farther. It's just the beginning of a long season."

"I am very happy that Jan Zelezny is my coach and we worked very hard in South Africa. We are still working on some aspects."

Chopra said the conditions here also helped him in finding big throws and Zelezny also told him that he could cross the 90m mark.

"When I was having warm-up throws my coach said, today is the day when I can throw 90m. After my 90m throw also, he told me I can throw 2-3m farther."

"The wind helps for sure and the weather is a little warm and that helps. It's the first competition of the year, so everyone came with a fresh mindset after a long time and had the hunger inside for the throwing part (sic)."

"I also told Julian (Weber) that we can throw 90m. I am also happy for him. We have tried very hard for 90m for so many

years, and so we are happy. It's like a good push between us and in the next competition we will push each other again and will throw farther," he said.

Chopra rued that when he breached the national record earlier, he had to finish second twice.

"It had happened earlier also. When I threw an NR with over 89m in Turku, I finished second (sic). In Stockholm DL, when I threw 89.94m, I was second again, so also here," Chopra said.

Weber, on his part, said he did not do anything extra but had a feeling that he can breach the 90m mark here.

"I did not know how it happened. I had a very good massage thanks to my physiotherapist. It was fun today. Neeraj threw his first 90m plus and I went past the mark in my last throw and that was just perfect."

"I was very happy for him. We have been fighting for the 90m throw for a long time and we both achieved that today. So, it was very special for us."

It was Weber's first 90m-plus effort as well, and he became the 26th javelin thrower to breach the coveted mark. His effort was the world leading mark this season so far.

Two-time world champion and Paris Olympics bronze medallist Anderson Peters of Grenada was third with his opening throw of 84.65m. (PTI)

Aston Villa and Chelsea win at home and raise Champions League hopes

BIRMINGHAM, May 17: Aston Villa and Chelsea won home games and strengthened their hopes for a top five Premier League finish and a place in next year's Champions League.

Ezri Konsa and Boubacar Kamara scored and gave Villa a 2-0 win over an under-strength Tottenham Hotspur, and Chelsea overcame a stuffy Manchester United 1-0 thanks to a second-half goal from Marc Cucurella.

The result left Chelsea in fourth with 66 points, and Villa in fifth on goal difference.

The other teams fighting for one of the four Champions League spots after league winner Liverpool all have two games left to play.

Arsenal has 68 points, Newcastle 66, Manchester City 65, and Nottingham Forest 62.

On a tense night at Villa Park, the home side had the better of the play but was forced to wait until the 59th minute to get the opener.

Ollie Watkins steered John McGinn's corner back across goal and an unmarked Ezri Konsa turned in the ball.

Boubacar Kamara doubled the lead with a low drive from the edge of the penalty area. It was his first Premier League goal in his 69th game.

"We knew today was a must win," the Frenchman told broadcaster Sky Sports. "We want to play Champions League football again. ... We had a taste of it this season and us as players it's a competition you want to play in."

Villa's final match is against Man United at Old Trafford on May 25. (AP)

Sinner to renew rivalry with Alcaraz in Italian Open final

ROME, May 17: Jannik Sinner has gone all the way to the final in his first tournament back from a three-month doping ban. And Carlos Alcaraz is waiting for him in the Italian Open title match.

"Normally when we play each other the level is very high, because we push each other to do things we don't normally do," Sinner said. "I'm curious to see what level I'm at."

The top-ranked Sinner rallied past No. 12 Tommy Paul 1-6, 6-0, 6-3 in the semifinals on Friday as he attempts to become the first Italian man to lift the Rome trophy since Adriano Panatta in 1976.

Earlier, Alcaraz advanced to his first Rome final by beating Lorenzo Musetti 6-3, 7-6 (4).

Sunday's final will mark the first meeting between Sinner and Alcaraz since October, when Alcaraz won the China Open final in a third-set tiebreaker. Alcaraz holds a 6-4 edge in their career meetings and has won three straight against his biggest rival.

But Sinner has not lost since that defeat to Alcaraz in Beijing and is on a 26-match winning streak. He's playing his first tournament since he won his third Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in January.

"He's playing great. I've been watching his matches," Alcaraz said. "His level is really high right now. Every time that I play against him is always a battle, always really, really tough. I kind of enjoy (those)

moments."

Sinner cranked up his level to near perfection in a rout of Casper Ruud in the quarterfinals on Thursday. Against Paul, Sinner made unforced errors in the first set while his American opponent hit shot after shot on the lines. But Sinner quickly turned the match around.

Sinner said cooler, heavier conditions made it more challenging and that getting broken in his first service game was a "punch in my face."

"But I tried to stay there mentally, trying to understand what might work a little bit better," Sinner said. "Tennis can change quickly."

Toward the end of the match, Sinner appeared to be grimacing at times and clutching his thighs.

"Since the third round I have a small blister under my feet which doesn't allow me that well to move in some moments," he said. "Leg-wise I'm not concerned, it's just a bit tight."

"There are no excuses. With the adrenaline there is just going to be a lot of energy on Sunday. I'm 100% not concerned."

Sinner is the first Italian man in the Rome final since 1978 when Panatta lost to Bjorn Borg, and Alcaraz noted that playing Sinner before his home crowd will be "even more challenging."

Sinner's fans have been out in full force for all of his matches, many of them wear-



ing wigs and hats in orange — his theme color. One fan held aloft a sign during the semifinal that translated from Italian to, "Sinner, we missed you."

In February, Sinner agreed to a settlement with the World Anti-Doping Agency that raised questions, since the three-month suspension conveniently allowed him not to miss any Grand Slams and come back at his home tournament.

Rome is the last big warmup before the French Open starts on May 25.

Alcaraz's run on clayIt's the third final in three clay-court events this season for Alcaraz, who won the Monte Carlo Masters and finished runner-up in the Barcelona Open. He withdrew from the Madrid Open because of injury.

The third-ranked Alcaraz withdrew from the Madrid tournament with an upper right leg issue and also had a left leg injury. In Rome, he has been wearing a long black brace covering the upper portion of his

right leg stretching down to just below his knee.

Musetti took the first set off Alcaraz in the Monte Carlo final but Alcaraz broke the Italian's serve in the first game of the rematch to silence the pro-Musetti crowd on Campo Centrale. Musetti didn't help himself with unforced errors and began pushing Alcaraz only at the end of the set.

Musetti was docked a point for misbehavior late in the second set after receiving a warning earlier for breaking his racket.

On a windy day at the Foro Italico, Alcaraz said it wasn't about playing "brilliant," but rather "smart tennis" was required.

"Waiting for your chances to play aggressive, so I think I did it pretty well," Alcaraz said. "I stayed strong mentally when things didn't went to my side."

Alcaraz is playing the Italian Open for the second time. During his Rome debut last year, he lost to then-135th-ranked Hungarian qualifier Fabian Marozsan in the third round.

Paolini in singles and doubles finalsThe women's final on Saturday features Coco Gauff against Jasmine Paolini.

Paolini and partner Sara Errani also advanced to the women's doubles final when they beat Russian pair Mirra Andreeva and Diana Shnaider 6-4, 6-4 in a rematch of last year's Olympic final also won by the Italians. (AP)

Not that easy to shift final: Ganguly hopeful of Eden keeping date with IPL summit clash

KOLKATA, May 17: Former BCCI president Sourav Ganguly on Saturday expressed optimism about the Eden Gardens keeping its date with the 2025 IPL final and said the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) shares an "excellent relationship" with the game's all-powerful apex body.

The BCCI is yet to officially confirm the venues for the IPL playoffs, even though it has announced the rescheduled league fixtures after the tournament was halted on May 8 due to the India-Pakistan conflict.

"No, no, we're trying -- talking to the BCCI," Ganguly said when asked about the possibility

of Eden Gardens hosting the final as per the original schedule.

"Eto sohoje sore jawa jay? (Is it that easy to shift the final). It's Eden's playoffs, and I'm sure everything will be sorted. I'm very hopeful," added Ganguly during the final of All India Invitation Inter-School Regetta here.

A section of people staged a protest outside the iconic venue on Friday, demanding that the IPL final be staged in Kolkata.

"Protest doesn't help much. BCCI has a very good relationship with the Cricket Association of Bengal," said the former India captain.

Responding to the delay in finalising playoff

venues, Ganguly said: "Kolkata has finished its league matches, so Eden is not there in the first list."

Eden Gardens was awarded the final for Kolkata Knight Riders' title-winning performance in the 2024 season.

The venue also hosted the opening match of the 2025 edition.

The tournament schedule was pushed back by a week, with the final now scheduled for June 3 instead of the originally planned May 25.

As per the original plan, Eden Gardens was to host Qualifier 2 on May 23 and the final on May 25. (PTI)

Indian juniors brace up for year's first World Cup in Suhl

NEW DELHI, May 17: A first batch of 40 Indian shooters and support staff will leave for the blue-riband event of the junior international shooting calendar, the ISSF World Cup, in Suhl, Germany, on Saturday.

The official arrivals are scheduled for May 19 while competitions begin from May 20 and will conclude on May 26.

India, who finished on top in two of the three ISSF junior events last year, have fielded the largest contingent of 57 shooters, who will be accompanied by 21 officials, including coaches and support staff.

A second batch of 38 members (28 shooters and 10 support staff) will leave for Germany on Sunday. Suhl, a small city with around 40,000 residents right in the centre of Germany, has long been the driving force of the junior international shooting circuit and attracts the best of the future stars in the sport.

Many Olympic and world champions have been unearthed in Suhl. After an absence in the Olympic year last year, the Suhl junior world cup is back with a bang attracting over 630 athletes from 59 countries, including all the strong nations of the sport.

The 50m rifle prone event for junior men and women kicks off the competitions on day one. The trap mixed team final will be the last medal event of the tournament.

Olympian Raiza Dhillon (skeet) and mixed team trap bronze medallist in the recently concluded Nicosia Shotgun World Cup, Sabeera Harris, will be among the most prominent names in the strong Indian side.

Others include Naamya Kapoor, who was a junior world champion at 13, reigning double junior world champion Divanshi (25m pistol), reigning junior world champion in the 25m pistol Mukesh Nellavalli, Asian junior champion Harnehar Lally (skeet) and multiple junior ISSF medallists Shubham Bisla (air pistol) and Abhinav Chaudhary (air pistol), among others.

India had emerged on top of the last Suhl Junior World Cup in 2023

year, have fielded the largest contingent of 57 shooters, who will be accompanied by 21 officials, including coaches and support staff.

with six gold, six silver and three bronze medals.

One of the coaches leaving on Saturday, double Olympian and multiple-time ISSF medallist Sanjeev Rajput, spoke about the squad's preparations. "The entire squad has been training very hard at the national camp and it is good that some of them are now seniors in the junior circuit."

"Their experience will help those who are making their first trip to such a big tournament and imposing venue. The youngsters are otherwise excited and raring to go," he said.

A total of 36 shooters are going on government costs while 21 will go at their own cost.

Each country can have only three shooters contending for a medal in an event while two teams each are allowed in mixed team competitions. The others will shoot for ranking points only. (PTI)



BERLIN, May 17: Norwegian grandmaster Magnus Carlsen is playing a single game of chess against 140,000 people worldwide in a mega-match that could overturn expectations by ending in a draw in the next few days.

Billed as "Magnus Carlsen vs. The World," the online match began April 4 on Chess.com, the world's largest chess website, and is the first-ever online freestyle game to feature a world champion.

While Chess.com had predicted Carlsen would win by a wide margin, his Team World opposition could force a draw if it checks Carlsen's king three times.

"Right now we're heading towards a draw by perpetual check," Carlsen said in a statement on Friday. "I felt that I was a little bit better, early in the opening, then maybe I didn't play that precisely. Honestly, since then, they haven't given me a single chance. So now, I think, it's just heading towards the

draw."

He added: "Overall, the world's played very, very sound chess from the start. Maybe not going for most enterprising options, but kind of keeping it more in vein with normal chess — which isn't always the best strategy, but it worked out well this time."

As a freestyle match, the bishops, knights, rooks, queen and king are randomly shuffled around the board while the pawns remain in their usual spots. Freestyle chess is popular because it allows players to be more creative and avoid memorization.

Team World votes on each move and each side has 24 hours to make their play. Carlsen is playing the white pieces.

"For most of the world, it is their first chance to say they've played a chess game against Magnus Carlsen," Mike Klein, senior journalist with Chess.com, told The Associated Press. "I think the world is going to be kind of tickled pink to be able to say, 'I was part of a draw against Magnus Carlsen.'"

Klein has played, and lost, to Carlsen twice in blitz matches in a hotel bar when the Norwegian was bored during some downtime in a world championship.

"He beat me twice without much effort, so I would have happily signed up for a draw in any of those games," Klein said.

Celebrity statusA grandmaster at 13, Carlsen enjoys celebrity status that few other chess players have.

The 34-year-old became the world's top-ranked player in 2011 and has won five World Championships. He achieved the

highest-ever chess rating of 2882 in 2014 and has remained the undisputed world number one for more than a decade.

Last year, he garnered headlines for quitting a tournament in New York after refusing to change out of the jeans he wore to the competition. He later accepted a \$200 fine and officials agreed to loosen the dress code.

Carlsen auctioned the jeans off for charity and donated the winning \$36,100 bid to Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, a national youth-mentoring charity that carries out its mission through local chapters across 5,000 communities nationwide.

Grandmaster vs. The WorldThis is the third "vs. The World" record-setting online game.

In 1999, Russian grandmaster Garry Kasparov played against more than 50,000 people on the Microsoft Network.

A few top-ranked players helped steer the world's moves, but Kasparov won after four months and hailed it as "the greatest game in the history of chess."

Klein was a summer camp chess teacher at the time.

"We would start class each day by checking out Kasparov's next move and talking about it and spending a few minutes each morning deciding what we'd reply," Klein said.

Indian grandmaster Viswanathan Anand won his "vs. The World" match last year against nearly 70,000 players on Chess.com.

The goal of the Carlsen match was to break Anand's 70,000-player mark, and ended up doubling it. (AP)

Punjab eye playoff spot as RR seek pride in final home game

JAIPUR, May 17: Punjab Kings will look to renew their bid for a playoff berth with another commanding performance here on Sunday against Rajasthan Royals, who have failed to rise above mediocrity despite possessing the resources this season.

As action returns to the Sawai Mansingh stadium after a week-long enforced break, Shreyas Iyer's side will hope to move past the nightmare on May 8, when their match against Delhi Capitals in scenic Dharamsala had to be called off due to India-Pakistan border tensions, forcing the players to return to their dressing rooms in pitch darkness.

As PBKS take the field on Sunday, comfortably placed at third spot on the table with 15 points from 11 games, there would be some scepticism with regard to the changes in the lineup owing to the enforced break.

Though Australians Marcus Stonis and Josh Inglis have agreed to rejoin the team, they would be missing PBKS' first game post IPL resumption, forcing the Punjab side to potentially rejigs their batting order.

The absence of the tall South African pacer Marco Jansen, who has been called back by Cricket South Africa, would hurt Shreyas' side the most as he had made quite an impact this season, scalping 11 wickets.

However, the fact that PBKS have a strong Indian core, including their skipper Shreyas, opener batter Priyansh Arya, Prabhsimran Singh and Nehal Wadhwa, the side has come out relatively unscathed from the exodus of foreign players following the Indo-Pakistan tensions.

On the bowling front too, PBKS have the services of frontline pacer Arshdeep Singh and in-form spinner Yuzvendra Chahal, who has so far taken 14 wickets in 11 games with



a best of 4/28 and an economy rate of below-10.

With New Zealand pacer Kyle Jamieson coming in place of the injured Lockie Ferguson, PBKS could well stitch together a well-balanced unit for the game against RR before Stoinis and Inglis join in from the next game onwards.

PBKS will once again rely heavily on their batters, who were on the verge of decimating the Delhi Capitals bowlers in Dharamsala, racing to 122 for one in just 10.1 overs, before the game was abandoned.

That display should give them enough confidence required against a down-and-out Royals.

The hosts have already been eliminated from the playoff race and currently languish in ninth place on the points table with just three wins from 12 matches.

The crestfallen Royals will hope to bow out on a high in front of their home fans, but for that, they will have to lift themselves from a slump, having lost four of their last five games.

Fourteen-year-old sensation Vaibhav

Suryavanshi's stunning 35-ball century was a rare moment of magic, but the Royals cannot rely on such individual brilliance every time.

The absence of regular captain Sanju Samson, who has missed most of the season due to injury, has left a massive void in their batting lineup. While Suryavanshi's heroics provided a brief spark, the team has struggled to build consistent momentum.

The batting burden now rests heavily on Yashasvi Jaiswal and Riyan Parag, and the duo will need to deliver if the Royals are to spring a surprise in their final home fixture.

Their bowling attack, too, has taken a hit, with express pacer Jofra Archer opting not to return for the remaining two matches, further thinning an already struggling unit.

Teams:

Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c, wk), Ashok Sharma, Nandre Burger, Tushar Deshpande, Shubham Dubey, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Wanindu Hasaranga, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwen Maphaka, Riyan Parag, Lhuan-dre Pretorius, Kunal Singh Rathore, Vaibhav Suryavanshi, Maheesh Theekshana, Yuvraj Singh.

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.

Match starts at 3:30 pm IST. (PTI)

Praggnanandhaa wins Superbet Classic after a tough tiebreak

BUCHAREST (ROMANIA), May 17: Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa defeated Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France to win his first-ever tournament on the Grand Chess Tour by showcasing his supremacy in the Superbet Classic here.

The Indian, after drawing with the Armenian-American GM Levon Aronian in the final round, was assured of a tie for the first place.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Alireza Firouzja also won to match Praggnanandhaa on 5.5 points. This led to a tiebreaker between the three, with five minutes and a two-second increment after every move.

In the first game with black pieces, Praggnanandhaa had to work hard in a slightly difficult position against Firouzja but the end result was a draw. In the second game Firouzja drew with Vachier-Lagrave.

In the last game of the event, Praggnanandhaa crashed through the defences of Vachier-Lagrave to earn the top prize. The Indian scored 1.5 points in his blitz games, half a point more than Firouzja and one more than the other French Grandmaster.

It was a sweet comeback for Praggnanandhaa after last year's debacle when he lost all his games in the play-offs.

"I didn't do so well last time. I guess getting to rest a few hours before the tiebreak certainly helps," Praggnanandhaa said at



the prize-giving ceremony.

After his relatively early draw with Aronian in the Classical game, the Indian had rested in his room for a few hours.

Praggnanandhaa also thanked his second for the tournament, GM Vaibhav Suri, and his permanent trainer Grandmaster RB Ramesh on the occasion. The Indian won a cash award of USD 77,667 (around ₹ 66 lakh) for his efforts.

Results (Round 9): R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 5.5) drew with Levon Aronian (USA, 4); Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rou, 4) lost to Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 5.5); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 5.5) beat Jan Krzysztof (Pol, 3); Wesley So (4) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 4.5); D Gukesh (Ind, 4) drew with Fabiano Caruana (USA, 5).

Tiebreak result: Praggnanandhaa drew with Firouzja; Firouzja drew with Vachier-Lagrave; Praggnanandhaa beat Vachier-Lagrave. (PTI)

Struggling DC take on formidable GT in reverse leg IPL game

NEW DELHI, May 17: Shaken by the abrupt suspension of their previous match due to the India-Pakistan conflict, a struggling Delhi Capitals will look to regroup and address bowling concerns when they face table-toppers Gujarat Titans in a reverse-leg IPL clash here on Sunday to keep their playoff hopes alive.

If three defeats and a no-result due to rain in their last five games weren't enough, DC's previous fixture was called off midway following air raid alerts in neighbouring Jammu and Pathankot, prompting a week-long suspension of the league.

Although the tournament has resumed, several overseas players have not returned to complete their commitments, forcing franchises to make major adjustments to their squads.

DC, currently just outside the top four with 13 points from 11 matches, suffered a major setback with premier pacer Mitchell Starc deciding not to return for the remainder of the season. The Australian left-arm is the team's leading wicket-taker with 14 scalps, and his absence is a significant blow to DC's already slim play-off hopes.

In a bit of relief, the Capitals managed to secure the services of Bangladesh pacer Mustafizur Rahman, who obtained the 'No Objection Certificate' from his national board on Friday. An experienced IPL campaigner with 38 wickets at an economy of 7.84 in as many matches, Mustafizur will be expected to spearhead a struggling pace attack against a batting-heavy GT lineup.

The Axar Patel-led side has endured a disappointing run at home, managing just one win — that too via a Super Over — at the Arun Jaitley

Stadium this season.

When the two teams last met on April 19, DC were blown away by Jos Buttler's 97 off 54 balls as GT chased down a 200-plus total with ease to win by seven wickets.

DC's problems have only deepened in recent outings. Their top and middle-order crumbled against Sunrisers Hyderabad in a rain-hit match, while their bowlers were hammered by Punjab Kings, who raced to 122 for one in just 10.1 overs before the game in Dharamsala was abandoned.

The pace attack, comprising Dushmantha Chameera and Mukesh Kumar, has struggled to deliver, making Mustafizur's role in providing early breakthroughs all the more crucial, especially against GT's in-form top order.

The batting unit has also been inconsistent. In their last completed outing, DC were reduced to 29 for five by SRH on May 5. They didn't get to bat in the Dharamsala match.

The return of veteran opener Faf du Plessis comes as a boost for DC, who will hope that the top order — including Abhishek Porel and Karun Nair — can put their recent struggles behind and fire against GT.

DC had experimented with Nair as an opener, but the move backfired as he was dismissed for a duck against SRH. Du Plessis and Porel have also failed to convert starts into substantial scores.

KL Rahul, the team's leading run-scorer this season, will have a crucial role to play along with skipper Axar. If the duo can lay a solid foundation, the likes of Tristan Stubbs, Vipraj Nigam, and Ashutosh Sharma can provide the late flourish in the death overs. (PTI)

HI names Indian junior women's hockey team for Four Nations Tournament in Argentina

NEW DELHI, May 17: Goalkeeper Nidhi has been named captain, while Hina Bano will serve as her deputy, as Hockey India on Saturday announced a 24-member Indian junior women's team for the upcoming Four Nations Tournament in Rosario, Argentina.

Scheduled to be held from May 25 to June 2, the tournament will feature four countries — Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, and India.

As part of their preparation for the Junior World Cup in December, the Indian team will play two matches against each of the participating nations to evaluate their performance, assess team combinations, and refine strategies.

"We are looking to identify our best players from this squad, especially with the Junior World Cup just six months away. This tour will provide valuable international exposure and experience for the players," Indian Junior Women's hockey team coach Tushar Khandker said in a release.

"In the long term, we are also preparing them for

a smooth transition to the senior team. That transition is only possible if they perform well in major tournaments like the World Cup, which makes this tour extremely important."

The selected team includes Engil Harsha Rani Minz as the second goalkeeper, while Vidyashree V has been named as a standby.

The defensive unit comprises Mamita Oram, Lalthantlangi, Manisha, Puja Sahoo, Parwati Topno, Nandini, and Sakshi Shukla. The midfield will feature Priyanka Yadav, Anisha Sahu, Rajni Kerketta, Binima Dhan, Khaideim Shileima Chanu, Sanjana Horo, Supriya Kujur, and Priyanka Dogra, with Huda Khan and Munmuni Das listed as standby midfielders.

The forward line includes Hina Bano, Sonam, Sukhvinder Kaur, Geeta Yadav, Lalrinpui, Kanika Siwach, and Karmanpreet Kaur, while Selestina Horo has been named as a standby forward.

India will face Chile in the opening match on May 25. (PTI)

Kokrajhar leg of Durand Cup to begin from July 18



HT Correspondent KOKRAJHAR, May 17: A coordination meeting was held on Saturday at the BTC Secretariat, here, between the Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), Pramod Boro, Col. Hari Thapa of the 107 Mountain Brigade, senior Army officials, and representatives of the BTR

government.

The meeting confirmed that the prestigious Durand Cup football tournament will return to Kokrajhar for the third consecutive year, running from July 18 to August 23.

Discussions focused on ensuring the smooth and successful conduct of the Kokrajhar leg of the tournament.

"We held an extensive coordination meeting with Indian Army officers today to review preparations for this year's Durand Cup," said CEM Pramod Boro. "Kokrajhar is gearing up for another thrilling season of football from 18 July to 23 August 2025, and I'm delighted we have finalised the dates with Col. Hari Thapa, Deputy Commander of the 107 Mountain Brigade, senior Army officers, and BTR officials."

Jeev tied fourth at Irish Legends golf

KILKENNY (IRELAND), May 17: India's Jeev Milkha Singh carded the joint-lowest round of the second day at five-under-par 67 and was placed tied fourth after two rounds of the Irish Legends golf tournament here. His rounds have been 70-67 and he is 7-under and four behind the leader Keith Horne (65-68) at 11-under.

A year ago, Jeev finished tied eighth at the same event.

"I am really happy with my game — I hit a lot of greens and holed a lot of putts," said the four-time DP World Tour winner.

"Overall I just managed myself really well and that's what you need on this golf course. It was tougher today, with the wind making club selection difficult. Tomorrow's game plan is to just go out there, take it shot-by-shot, stick to my routine, play the best I can and see what comes my way."

Horne extended his lead to a hard-fought second-round 68 that took him to 11-under and three shots clear of former Open champion Paul Lawrie and Legends Tour Order of Merit leader Scott Hend heading into the final round. (PTI)



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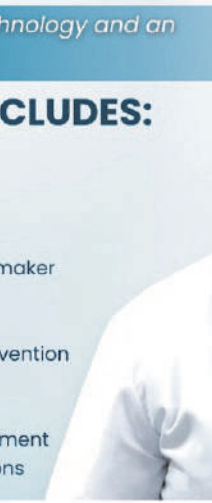
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