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## Mineral-rich Balochistan remains underdeveloped: Himanta



**GUWAHATI, May 20:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said Pakistan's Balochistan province is mineral-rich but most "neglected and underdeveloped", and has been witnessing decades of "systematic economic and political exploitation".

In a post on X, Sarma late on Monday said Balochistan is a land of wealth but represents a "legacy of neglect".

"Despite being the largest and most resource-rich province of Pakistan, Balochistan remains its most neglected and underdeveloped region — a contradiction that reflects decades of systematic economic and political exploitation," he added.

The Assam CM claimed that Balochistan holds over 80 per cent of Pakistan's total mineral wealth, including the colossal Reko Diq copper-gold deposit, one of the world's largest untapped reserves with an estimated 5.9 billion tonnes of ore, containing 41.5 million ounces of gold and 35 million tonnes of copper.

"Balochistan is also home to the historic Sui gas field, discovered in 1952, which at its peak supplied over 56 per cent of Pakistan's natural gas — yet as of 2020, Balochistan consumes less than 6 per cent of the gas it produces, and a majority of households still rely on firewood for cooking," he added.

Sarma also said that while the Gwadar port and 770-kilometre Makran coastline offer immense geostrategic and economic potential under CPEC, local communities remain largely excluded, lacking access to clean drinking water, electricity and basic infrastructure.

The province contributes "less than four per cent to (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Rainwater accumulates in hundreds of houses in the 'smart' city • Several schools declared closure

## Heavy rain inundates Guwahati, normal life hit hard

**GUWAHATI, May 20:** A spell of heavy rain overnight inundated several roads and residential areas in Assam's Guwahati, disrupting vehicular movement and causing inconvenience to residents of the city on Tuesday.

People were seen wading through knee-deep waters in some areas of the city while the water level reached up to the chest in several localities.

Inundation was reported from Zoo Road, Nabin Nagar, Hatigaon, Ganeshguri, Gita Nagar, Maligaon, Hedayetpur, Guwahati Club, Ulubari, Lachit Nagar, Chandmari and Panjabari.

The overnight downpour also led to waterlogging in GS Road Jorabat, Tarun Nagar, Jatia, Jyotikuchi, Ghoramara, VIP Road, Rukmini Gaon, Survey



and Chatribari, among others.

Many schools, where internal examinations are going on, have announced closure in the morning due to "flooded" campus and roads across the city, as most of the school buses have stopped their services.

A number of vehicles were stuck on the waterlogged roads

in several places while ambulances with patients on board became immobile.

As the day progressed, traffic jams were reported from almost all localities in the city with vehicles stranded due to waterlogging on roads.

Rainwater accumulated in hundreds of houses in the

'smart' city, and there were reports of power cuts in many areas.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted inclement weather over Assam for the next 2-3 days, with heavy to very heavy rainfall expected across various parts of the state.

"As per rainfall data recorded on May 20, 2025, several locations in and around Guwahati have already received substantial precipitation, including 112.5 mm at the Guwahati AWS station," an official release said.

The weather pattern suggests that both western and southern parts of Assam are likely to witness more intense rainfall episodes over the coming days, potentially reaching up to 200 mm in isolated locations.

"In Guwahati city, continued downpours could aggravate water logging, slow vehicular movement, and increase the risk of tree falls and localised landslides in vulnerable pockets," it added.

The civic body authorities are closely monitoring the situation, and emergency response systems are being kept on alert, the statement said.

"The public is advised to take all necessary precautions and remain vigilant. Daily commuters and long-distance travellers are requested to plan their routines accordingly, avoiding unnecessary movement during periods of intense rainfall," it added.

The government also advised the residents in low-lying and hillside areas to stay alert for any (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## HT BRIEFS

### Scribe arrested

**NAGAON:** Photojournalist Navajyoti Laskar was arrested at Kamrup in Nagaon district after uploading a video on Facebook containing the slogan "Pakistan Zindabad." The video, reportedly from a "Tiranga Yatra" rally organised by ex-servicemen on May 18 and attended by local MLA Jitu Goswami, sparked widespread outrage. The controversial slogan was allegedly shouted by a participant during the rally. Following the upload, a group of people took Laskar to the police station, where, in the presence of the MLA, an FIR was filed under the National Security Act. He was later transferred to Nagaon Sadar police station. The arrest triggered strong reactions from the journalism community in Kamrup and across the district. Journalists convened at the Kamrup Ummati Sadhani Sabha Griha, condemned the attack on Laskar, and demanded action against those who took the law into their own hands. They also called for the identification of the person who raised the slogan. Wearing black ribbons in protest, journalists announced a boycott of political news coverage until justice is served. They further demanded a forensic examination of the video to determine the source of the slogan. The Nagaon District Journalists' Union (APKU) has called for a thorough investigation. APKU President Apurba Hazarika and Secretary Samarendra Narayan Borah urged authorities to ensure a fair inquiry and justice for Laskar.

### Man held

**JORHAT:** Ujjal Borah (30) was sent to judicial custody on Tuesday after being arrested for allegedly assaulting Dr Ranjit Mazumdar, a radiologist at Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH), on Monday night. Borah, an attendant of a patient, reportedly attacked the doctor after being asked to wait in a queue for a test, dislocating the doctor's shoulder. He has been booked under Sections 120(2) and 351(2) of the BNS, and Section 4 of the Assam Medicare Act, following an FIR filed by Dr Mazumdar.

## Himanta-Gaurav in social media duel over posts on Pakistan's 2022 flood

**GUWAHATI, May 20:** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi engaged in a social media duel on Tuesday over an old post by the Jorhat MP expressing sympathy to the victims of the devastating flood in Pakistan in 2022.

Amid Sarma's relentless attacks on Gogoi, alleging that he and his family have links with Pakistan, state Information and Public Relations Minister Pijush Hazarika dug out the old post on X.

Referring to India's victory over Pakistan in an Asia Cup T20 match in Dubai, Gogoi in a post on X on August 29, 2022, said, "While celebrate the victory of our Indian cricket team over Pakistan, we must not forget the humanitarian disaster that has claimed 1000 lives in our neighbouring country. Unprecedented flooding has destroyed towns and homes. Pakistani people need urgent relief and support."

Sharing a screenshot of this post, Hazarika said that while the entire nation rejoiced in India's glorious victory over Pakistan, some chose to divert attention

and sympathy toward a country that breeds terror against India.

"This is not just misplaced empathy -- it's a pattern. From escorting students to the Pakistan High Commission, to standing with narratives that weaken India's resolve, Gaurav Gogoi has repeatedly positioned himself closer to Pakistan than to patriotic sentiments. Let's be clear: India first. Always," he posted on X.

Terming it unfortunate, the CM shared his cabinet colleague's post and said that some individuals enjoy "every privilege India offers -- salary, power and position -- yet their loyalty lies across the border".

"They draw everything from Bharat but work only for Pakistan's interests. This is betrayal," he added.

Reacting to this, Gogoi then shared a screenshot of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's X post on the Pakistan floods, expressing grief and condolences.

"I am worried about the Chief Minister of Assam. In his desperation he is calling the position taken by PM Modi in 2022 as a betrayal. Is he the right person for the chair of Chief Minister?" asked the Congress leader.

In a post dated August 29, 2022, Modi said on X, "Saddened to see the devastation caused by the floods in Pakistan. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, the injured and all those affected by this natural calamity and hope for an early restoration of normalcy."

After some time, Sarma again made a standalone post without naming Gogoi and said that only a certain section of Indians finds itself restless and frustrated every time the country defeats Pakistan in cricket.

"Only a select few dare to visit Pakistan with formal approval from the Interior Ministry. Even fewer draw salaries from Pakistani-funded NGOs. And the rarest -- and most disgraceful -- are those who go so far as to surrender their minor child's Indian passport."

"Unfortunately, we have a Member of Parliament from Assam who fits into all these categories. But let it be clear -- our laws know how to deal with such individuals. The (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Centre re-extends tenure of Intelligence Bureau chief Tapan Kumar Deka



**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Counter-terrorism expert Tapan Kumar Deka was on Tuesday given an additional one-year term till June 2026 as the chief of the Intelligence Bureau (IB), the second such extension for him.

This comes amid the evolving security situation in the wake of India's strike on May 7 on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir in retaliation against last month's Pahalgam terrorist attack.

Deka (62), a 1988-batch Indian Police Service (IPS) officer of the Himachal Pradesh cadre, was in June 2022 appointed as the IB chief for two years. His term was extended by one year in June last year.

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved Deka's extension as the Director, Intelligence Bureau, for a period of one year beyond June 30, 2025, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

His extension is "in relaxation of the provisions of FR 56 (d) and Rule 16 (1A) of All India Services (Death cum Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958", said the order that comes over a month ahead of completion of his extended term.

The rules allow the central government to extend in "public interest" the services of the chiefs of IB and Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary and others, beyond the superannuation age of 60 years.

Known as a crisis manager in the power corridors and intelligence fraternity, Deka is considered an expert in "operations" especially in Jammu and Kashmir as well as in the Northeast region of the country.

He served as the head of the operations wing of the IB for over two decades before finally taking over the reins of the agency. Deka was also in charge of the (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Mizoram declared India's first fully literate state

**AIZAWL, May 20:** Chief Minister Lalduhoma on Tuesday declared Mizoram as the country's first fully literate state.

Lalduhoma made the announcement in the presence of Union Minister of State for Education Jayant Chaudhary at a function in Mizoram University (MZU).

"As we celebrate this achievement, we also renew our commitment to sustaining literacy through continuous education, digital access, and vocational skill training," the CM's Office quoted him as saying in a post on X.

"Let us now aim higher: digital literacy, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial skill for all Mizos," he added.

Chaudhary congratulated the state government and the people for the achievement.

"Today, we proudly declared Mizoram as the first fully literate state under the visionary Ullas --



Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram. Congratulations to the people of Mizoram and Hon'ble CM @PuLalduhoma for this achievement," he posted on X.

"Special thanks to Hon'ble Education Minister Dr. Vanlalhlana for championing this cause. The Chief Minister was gracious in commending the work of previous State Governments as well in the remarkable journey of progress Mizoram has undertaken. May the Northeast continue to lead the way in building a Shikshit, (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## 73 'Pak agents' arrested in Assam

**GUWAHATI, May 20:** Two more people have been apprehended from various parts of Assam for allegedly working as "Pakistani agents", taking the total number of such arrests to 73 after the Pahalgam terror attack, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Tuesday.

In a post on X, Sarma said one person each was arrested from Chirang and Hojai districts.

"Like #OperationSindoor, our mission to track and punish Anti-nationals is going on... 73 Pakistani agents are behind bars now," he added.

Earlier, opposition AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam was arrested on sedition charges for allegedly defending Pakistan and its complicity in the Pahalgam terror attack.

After getting bail in the case, Islam was (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## BJP state executive meet in Jorhat to focus on 2026 assembly poll strategies

**HT Correspondent**  
**JORHAT, May 20:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, accompanied by his Cabinet colleagues, Members of Parliament, Members of the Legislative Assembly, and district presidents of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), is scheduled to attend the extended executive committee meeting of the party's Assam unit on Wednesday.

The high-level gathering will be held in Jorhat with a clear focus on chalking out strategies for the upcoming 2026 Assembly elections.

According to party sources, the resounding victory of the BJP in the recently concluded panchayat elections across the state has necessitated a comprehensive review of the current political landscape.

The momentum generated by the panchayat poll results, where the

BJP registered sweeping wins in numerous districts, has prompted the party to hold strategic discussions on consolidating its gains and expanding its grassroots presence.

Key among the agenda items for the meeting will be the formulation of action plans aimed at further strengthening the party's organisational structure.

The leadership is expected to deliberate on outreach mechanisms that will enhance the BJP's connect with voters, from rural panchayat areas to urban constituencies.

Sources indicated that resolutions may be adopted during the session to guide the party's roadmap towards the Assembly elections next year.

The extended executive committee meeting is being organised in Jorhat, a decision seen as symboli-

cally significant given the BJP's sweeping performance in the recent panchayat elections in Jorhat and three adjoining districts—Majuli, Sivasagar, and Charaideo.

These four districts together constitute the Jorhat Lok Sabha constituency, which comprises 10 Assembly segments.

Currently, the seat is held by Gaurav Gogoi of the Indian National Congress.

In addition to the strategic discussions during the day, Chief Minister Sarma and Assam BJP President Dilip Saikia, along with several senior party leaders, will participate in a "Tiranga Yatra" rally on Wednesday evening.

The rally, to be organised by the Jorhat district BJP with support from local citizens, is intended to celebrate (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Geeta Samota becomes first CISF personnel to conquer Mt Everest



**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Sub Inspector Geeta Samota has become the first CISF personnel to conquer the world's tallest peak Mount Everest in the 56-year-long history of the force, a spokesperson said Tuesday. She summited the 8,849 m tall

mountain on Monday. "Geeta stood on the 'roof of the world', a triumphant moment symbolising not just a personal victory, but the incredible resilience and strength fostered within the CISF and the Indian nation," the

spokesperson said in a statement.

The 35-year-old subordinate officer joined the paramilitary force in 2011 and is currently posted at the Udaipur airport unit of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF).

The mountaineer hails from the Chak village in Rajasthan's Sikar district and had initially started as hockey player in her local college. Her upbringing was traditional in a house that had five daughters including her.

An injury led her to move away from hockey and upon joining the force she found CISF did not have a mountaineering team then and she saw a sporting and adventure opportunity here, the spokesperson said. Samota went on to undertake specialised training in mountaineering and in (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said the future of a healthy world depends on inclusion, integrated vision and collaboration, as he asserted that India's approach offers replicable, scalable and sustainable models to meet health challenges of the Global South.

In his video message during the 78th Session of the World Health Assembly in Geneva, he highlighted this year's theme, 'One World for Health' and emphasized that it aligns with India's vision for global health.

Modi recalled his address at the 2023 World Health Assembly, where he had spoken about 'One Earth, One Health' and pointed out that the future of a healthy world depends on inclusion, an integrated vision, and collaboration.



Emphasizing that inclusion is at the core of India's health reforms, he highlighted Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest health insurance scheme, which covers 580 million people and provides free treatment. The programme was recently ex-

panded to cover all Indians above the age of 70 years.

He noted India's extensive network of thousands of health and wellness centres that facilitate early screening and detection of diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and hyper-

tension. Modi also underlined the role of thousands of public pharmacies that provide high-quality medicines at significantly lower prices.

Highlighting the role of technology in improving health outcomes, Modi underscored India's digital initiatives like the digital platform that tracks the vaccination of pregnant women and children and the unique digital health identity system, which is helping integrate benefits, insurance, records, and information.

He said that with telemedicine, no one is too far from a doctor.

He highlighted India's free telemedicine service, which has enabled over 340 million consultations. Reflecting on the positive impact of India's health initiatives, he noted a significant decline in out-of-pocket (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

'Health of the world depends on how well we care for the most vulnerable'

## Global South impacted by health challenges, India's approach offers sustainable models: PM



## Delays in regulatory clearances can lead to uncertainty, says FM

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Delays in regulatory clearances can lead to uncertainty and disrupt commercial timelines, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Tuesday as India negotiates trade deals with various countries, including the US.

According to Sitharaman, also the Corporate Affairs Minister, it is imperative that regulatory frameworks, while maintaining rigorous oversight, also facilitate swift and seamless approvals for combinations that pose no harm to competition.

At the function to mark the 16th Annual Day of the Competition Commission of India (CCI), Sitharaman said the regulator has emerged as a key institution in safeguarding the spirit of liberalisation while checking its excesses and stressed that competition drives efficiency, nurtures innovation, and benefits consumers.

Delving into the aspects of competitive markets, the minister said that not only business conduct but also government policies, laws and regulations should not influence competition as she mentioned that entry barriers, licensing norms or procurement rules can also create distortion.

In today's interconnected and fast-paced global economy, Sitharaman said delays in regulatory clearances can lead to uncer-



tainty, disrupt commercial timelines, and potentially erode the intended value of transactions.

"Globally, it has an impact even as we negotiate free trade agreements with different countries because the ability, the nimbleness and the readiness of regulators is very keenly watched by investors. There is no need for me to underline the importance of that, but that has a very serious connotation when you are looking at fairly within a reasonable time, agreeing on some free trade agreements."

"So, whether it is litigation, whether it is time consumed in litigation or when regulators are less transparent, negotiations can get complicated," the minister said.

India is negotiating trade deals with various countries and blocs,

including the US and the European Union.

While pitching for regulatory frameworks to facilitate swift and seamless approvals for combinations that pose no harm to competition, Sitharaman also mentioned about the Green Channel mechanism that has been put in place by CCI.

The mechanism, which is a trust-based, risk-calibrated approach, allows for automated approval of combinations that are deemed to have no appreciable adverse effect on competition in order to reduce transaction costs and timelines for benign mergers and acquisitions, she added.

"Prices fall not due to charity, but because someone else is willing to offer the same product for

less. Quality improves not due to a sense of ethics, but because mediocrity is punished by market forces," the minister said.

For a country like India, Sitharaman said that ensuring free and fair markets is not merely an economic need, it is a democratic one.

"In an export-challenged, environment-challenged, energy-challenged, and emissions-challenged world, the increased reliance on domestic growth levers requires ensuring the right balance of regulation and freedom," the minister said.

Further, she said the country's ongoing structural reforms -- asset monetisation, disinvestment, and digital public infrastructure -- are all geared towards unlocking market potential and deepening competition. "As India integrates further with global value chains and digital ecosystems, maintaining open and contestable markets will be crucial to our competitiveness," she added.

CCI works to ensure fair competition and curbs anti-competitive practices in the marketplace.

The Commission has emerged as a key institution in safeguarding the spirit of liberalisation while checking its excesses. "Competition drives efficiency, nurtures innovation, and benefits consumers," Sitharaman said in the national capital. (PTI)

### Around 65pc of IPL fans want new winner this year, RCB favourite: Survey

**MUMBAI, May 20:** Around 65 per cent of fans of T20 cricket league IPL polled expect to see a new trophy winner this year with Royal Challengers Bangalore emerging as the favourite, according to a survey.

The survey of more than 5,000 cricket fans, including Gen Zs, till May 5 found that 12 per cent of fans want to see Delhi Capitals as winner while 7 per cent rooted for Punjab Kings, the 23 Watts Insights Studio, which conducted the poll, stated.

The survey, The IPL Pulse, explores how India's Cricket fandom, especially Gen Zs, are engaging with the league, reacting to its evolving format, and rallying behind both legacy icons and new talent, it said.

The 23 Watts stated that a majority of fans surveyed want M S Dhoni to keep playing, showing his lasting presence in the game.

When asked about Dhoni's retirement, an overwhelming 73 per cent said they want him to continue, highlighting the strong support Thala still receives from fans all over the country, the survey said. Around 37.77 per cent believe that Dhoni is struggling but is still valuable while 35.13 per cent say that he is the soul of CSK.

On rising talent, fans voted Vaibhav Suryavanshi of Rajasthan Royals as the most impressive IPL 2025 debutant with 31.4 per cent of the consensus wooed by his cricketing skills. (PTI)

## Sensex, Nifty tumble 1 pc in third day of decline; RIL, HDFC Bank major drag

**MUMBAI, May 20:** Falling for the third day in a row, benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled 1 per cent on Tuesday dragged down by profit taking in blue-chips such as HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank.

Retreating from early highs, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 872.98 points or 1.06 per cent to settle at 81,186.44 as 27 of its constituents closed lower and three with gains. During the day, it dropped 905.72 points or 1.10 per cent to 81,153.70 as profit taking emerged in auto, financials and defence stocks.

The broader NSE Nifty tumbled 261.55 points or 1.05 per cent to 24,683.90.

Analysts said investors opted for profit-booking as they awaited more clarity on the India-US trade agreement.

From Sensex firms, Eternal dropped the most by 4.10 per cent. Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Power Grid, Nestle, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Asian Paints were also among the laggards. HDFC Bank dropped by 1.26 per cent and index major Reliance Industries by 1.13 per cent. Tata Steel, Infosys and ITC were the gainers.

"With the lack of major positive triggers and prevailing uncertainty over US fiscal stability, investors opted for profit-booking and adopted a cautious stance. Selling pressure was widespread as participants awaited more clarity on the



India-US trade agreement," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

"Given the current premium valuations and delays in the trade deal, we foresee a phase of short-term consolidation, which may lead FIIs to scale back their positions in the domestic market," he added.

The BSE midcap gauge tanked 1.65 per cent and smallcap index dropped 0.96 per cent.

All sectoral indices ended lower. Auto declined 2.13 per cent, consumer discretionary (1.81 per cent), utilities (1.64 per cent), services (1.53 per cent), industrials (1.36 per cent) and telecommunication (1.35 per cent). As many as 2,531 stocks declined while 1,438 advanced and 135 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"While markets had witnessed a pullback rally over the past week

due to Indo-Pak ceasefire, US-China heading towards a tariff understanding and strong FII fund inflows, the mood is reversing back to caution with a negative bias. The current situation shows that markets will see bouts of optimism followed by a volatile phase as global economic uncertainty remains a key challenge for investors," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

Among Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled in the positive territory while South Korea's Kospi ended marginally lower.

Markets in Europe were trading in the green. US markets ended higher on Monday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.11 per cent to USD 65.47 a barrel. (PTI)

## Govt procures over 290 lakh tons of wheat so far, may hit 320-325 lakh tons: Pralhad Joshi

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday said the government has procured more than 290 lakh tonnes of wheat so far this year and the figure may reach 320-325 lakh tonnes on record production.

Total wheat purchase stood at 265.9 lakh tonnes in the 2024-25 marketing year (April-March). Bulk of procurement takes place during April-June period.

"We have procured more than 290 lakh tonnes of wheat so far. Procurement operations are still under-going. We may reach the figure of 320-325 lakh tonnes," Joshi told reporters on the sidelines of a conference here.

The government has set a wheat procurement target of 312 lakh tonnes for 2025-26 marketing year.

India is estimated to have harvested a record wheat crop of 115.3 million tonnes in 2024-25 crop year (July-June).

Asked about allowing wheat exports, Joshi said he will consult other ministries on the issue after assess-

ing the stock situation once the procurement season ends.

State-owned Food Corporation of India (FCI) and state agencies procure wheat at a minimum support price for the central pool.

FCI data shows all five major wheat procuring states -- Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh -- have procured more wheat in the current year, as compared to last year.

As of May 16, Punjab has procured 11.57 million tonnes, followed by Madhya Pradesh 7.40 million tonnes, Haryana 7.01 million tonnes, and Rajasthan 1.64 million tonnes.

About ₹ 62,346.23 crore in minimum support price payments have been made, benefitting 2.27 million farmers, the data showed.

Wheat harvesting has been fully completed in Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, with partial harvesting remaining in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Heavy rain inundates Guwahati

signs of flooding or soil erosion. "The public is also urged to stay tuned to official weather updates and follow advisories issued by local authorities to ensure safety during this prolonged spell of rain," it said.

Earlier in the morning, Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah visited some flooded areas by riding a two-wheeler.

"Guwahati witnessed a heavy spell of rain last night, and it is predicted to continue today also. We have witnessed added problems in the city due to rainwater coming down from the adjoining Meghalaya hills. We have some sluice gates, but these are not adequate to control such a huge flow of water," he told reporters.

The government is trying to pump out flood waters from residential areas, but it is not very effective as of now, Baruah said. He also reiterated Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's stand that Meghalaya-based University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) carried out a "flood jihad", resulting in massive inundation in the state capital.

In August last year, Sarma had claimed that the varsity was "cutting" the hills inside its campus to construct new buildings to open a medical college.

The USTM is promoted by Mahbubul Hoque, the owner and chancellor of the varsity, and is located at 9th Mile in Ri-Bhoi district of Meghalaya on the outskirts of Guwahati.

The Gauhati High Court, in August last year, had said that the time had come to deal with the problem of flooding in the state capital, and the government was required to take steps to resolve this problem permanently, asking to submit a plan to mitigate the crisis.

Stating that the Assam government was "not serious" in solving perennial waterlogging problems in the state capital, the Gauhati High Court had come down heavily for not responding to its repeated notices and slapped a fine of ₹ 1,000 each to four departments concerned. (PTI)

## Mineral-rich Balochistan remains

Pakistan's industrial output", and its share in federal public sector employment remains "disproportionately low", he claimed. "With poverty rates exceeding 40 per cent - the people of Balochistan live amid abundance turned into neglect and deprivation. This is not a story of natural scarcity, but of state neglect, extractive politics, and decades of broken promises," the BJP leader said.

Following the Pahalgalam terror attack, Sarma has been regularly making comments on Pakistan's various areas, including the armed conflict in Balochistan. (PTI)

## Himanta-Gaurav in social

nation will not tolerate betrayal," the CM said. Hazarika then responded to Gogoi's post, which referred to Modi's post on the Pakistan flood, and asserted that the statements by the Congress MP and the PM are completely different. "Only a student of Pak Propaganda will claim both the tweets are same. Loss of life is tragic. But, you were trying to derail the celebration of India's win in the name of 'humanity' for Terroristan. Are we not allowed to celebrate and empathize at the same time? Or is 'humanity' now just a convenient weapon to shame Indians into silence? #JustAsking, why didn't you congratulate India in the recent Champions trophy when then won against Pakistan. Right now, you are sounding desperate," the minister said.

Sarma and the BJP have been attacking Gogoi, the deputy leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha, alleging that he and his British wife Elizabeth Colburn have links to Pakistan's ISI. (PTI)

## Centre re-extends tenure of

counter-assaults during the 26/11 Mumbai attack in 2008. Adept in handling terrorism and Islamic radicalisation related cases, Deka had also led the operations against the terror group Indian Mujahideen, which was behind a series of subversive activities across the country in the 2000s.

He was also deputed in his home state Assam to handle the volatile situation that arose following large-scale violence after the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2019. Deka has been the go-to man for the government on the affairs of Jammu and Kashmir as he has vast experience in handling Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in the Union Territory. (PTI)

## BJP state executive meet

the successful execution of 'Operation Sindoor', an initiative hailed as a decisive strike against terrorism. The extended State executive meet in Jorhat is expected to play a pivotal role in shaping the BJP's electoral blueprint for 2026, reflecting both on its recent successes and future ambitions.

## 73 'Pak agents' arrested

detained under the National Security Act (NSA). On May 2, Sarma had threatened to take stringent action against those who raised the 'Pakistan zindabad' slogan in the aftermath of the Jammu and Kashmir terror attack.

Terrorists struck at a prime tourist location in Pahalgalam in south Kashmir on April 22, killing 26 people, mostly tourists, and injuring several others. (PTI)

## Mizoram declared India's first

Kushal, and Atmanirbhar Bharat," he said. As per the 2011 Census, the state had a literacy rate of 91.33 per cent, ranking third in the country. Building on this foundation, the ULLAS -- Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society -- and Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram were implemented to identify and educate the remaining non-literate individuals, officials said.

Based on projections from the 2011 census data, surveys were conducted, and 3,026 illiterates were identified. Out of them, 1,692 were found to be potential learners. A total of 292 volunteer teachers, among whom were students, educators, resource persons, and Cluster Resource Centre Coordinators, stepped forward to lead this mission, officials said. The collective efforts, dedication, and community mobilisation have resulted in Mizoram achieving full literacy, they said. (PTI)

## Geeta Samota becomes first

2019 she became the first woman from any Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) to scale Mount Satopanth (7,075 meters) in Uttarakhand and Mount Lobuche (6,119 meters) in Nepal, he said.

In early 2021, the CAPF contingent for a Mount Everest expedition of which Geeta was part, was unfortunately called off due to technical reasons.

She then set an ambitious goal-- the "Seven Summits" challenge, which involves climbing the highest peak on each of the seven continents. Between 2021-2022, she summited four of these formidable peaks: Mount Kosciuszko (2,228 m) in Australia, Mount Elbrus (5,642 m) in Russia, Mount Kilimanjaro (5,895 m) in Tanzania and Mount Aconcagua (6,961 m) in Argentina. The CISF official achieved this feat in a "remarkable" span of just six months and 27 days, making her the fastest Indian woman to do so, he said.

Samota, the spokesperson said, also became the first and fastest woman to climb five peaks in Ladakh's Rupshu region in just three days, including three peaks over 6,000 m and two over 5,000 m.

"The CISF director general and force members have extended their profound congratulations to Samota. Her extraordinary journey and successful summit, shine as a beacon of inspiration for the youth of India and stand as a moment of immense pride for the entire CAPFs fraternity," he said.

The about 2 lakh personnel strength force guards vital installations in the government and private domain including airports, nuclear power centres and historical monuments. (PTI)

## Global South impacted by health

expenditure as a percentage of total health expenditure. Simultaneously, he emphasized that government health expenditure has increased considerably. "The health of the world depends on how well we care for the most vulnerable," the Prime Minister asserted.

Noting that the Global South is particularly impacted by health challenges, Modi stressed that India's approach provides replicable, scalable, and sustainable models.

He expressed India's willingness to share its learnings and best practices with the world, especially with the Global South. Looking ahead to the 11th International Day of Yoga in June, the prime minister encouraged global participation and highlighted this year's theme, 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health'.

He extended an invitation to all countries, emphasizing India's role as the birthplace of Yoga. Modi congratulated the World Health Organization (WHO) and all member states on the successful negotiations of the intergovernmental negotiating body (INB) treaty. He described it as a shared commitment to fighting future pandemics through greater global cooperation.

The prime minister emphasized the importance of building a healthy planet while ensuring that no one is left behind. Concluding his address, Modi invoked a timeless prayer from the Vedas, he reflected on how, thousands of years ago, India's sages prayed for a world where all would be healthy, happy, and free from disease. He expressed hope that this vision would unite the world. (PTI)

## Mango irradiation operations normalised at Mumbai facility after brief data error

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** India's mango exports to the US are registering healthy growth, and irradiation operations at a key mango treatment facility in Mumbai have been normalised after a brief disruption due to a data recording error earlier this month, an official said on Tuesday.

The Mumbai-based irradiation facility, which handles the highest volume of mangoes destined for the US, faced an issue during the irradiation process conducted on May 8 and 9, 2025.

The error led to the rejection of 12 mango consignments by US authorities due to discrepancies in treatment data.

"While the error and its cause are being examined at the senior level by the facility management, the mango irradiation process and its clearance were normalised at the impacted facility with effect from May 10, with no impact on the other two approved facilities,"



the official said.

The exports of mangoes to the US are done under the Cooperative Service Agreement between APEDA (Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

The actual procedure and the terms and conditions for operationalising mango exports come under the purview of the "Irradiation operational work plan" signed between USDA-APHIS, the National Plant Protection Organisation (NPPO), under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare and APEDA, as the Co-operator.

As per the work plan, procurement of mangoes is done from registered farms, which are then

graded and sorted at APEDA and NPPO (National Plant Protection Organisation) recognised pack-houses, then followed by fungicidal treatment of hot water and finally irradiated at USDA approved irradiation facilities, which are three, in the current year.

"All such treatment facilities have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) addressing irradiation of commodities for the mitigation of plant pests," the official said.

In the 2024-25 period (as per First Advance Estimates), India produced about 22.66 million metric tonnes of mangoes, marking a 9 per cent increase over the previous year. The country contributes around 43 per cent of global mango production.

Major mango producing states

### NAME CHANGE

I have Changed my name from ILIYAS ALI to MOHAMMED ILIAS ALI by swearing a notarial affidavit at Sankardevnagar Hojai(Assam)



# Chief Minister undertakes an inspection of Co-operative Sugar Mill in Golaghat

Following Advantage Assam 2.0 many industrial groups have come to Assam: CM



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, May 20:** As part of the ongoing efforts of the Assam Government to develop industrial infrastructure and facilitate land availability for investors, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma undertook an inspection of the site of the erstwhile Assam Co-operative Sugar Mill located at Barua Bamungaon under the Khumtai constituency in Golaghat district today.

Speaking to the media during the visit, Sarma stated that following the conclusion of the Advantage Assam 2.0 summit, many industrial groups have come to Assam and have requested land from the state government for setting up industries. He referred to the recent approval of two industrial projects in Numaligarh and said that land allocation for these projects has already been made.

He also noted that additional industrial ventures are expected in Assam, and the state government has initiated appropriate measures to allocate land for these as well. Furthermore, he said that the government is working to prevent encroachment on government vac-

cant land and is in the process of converting such land into industrial parks.

The Chief Minister identified the vacant land of the former sugar mill as a key site for future industrial development. He stated that once legal and administrative issues concerning the land are resolved, it would be made available for industrial use.

The approximately 500 bighas of land could potentially be developed into an industrial park, which he said would contribute to the state's industrial capacity.

He added that the government would take steps to construct a boundary wall around the site, with work scheduled to begin shortly.

He also mentioned that the state has already implemented measures to safeguard vacant government land, with district commissioners instructed accordingly.

Sarma was accompanied by MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, MLAs Mrinal Saikia and Biswajit Phukan, Chief Secretary Dr. Ravi Kota, Deputy Commissioner of Golaghat Pulak Mahanta, and other senior officials.

## NTPC Bongaigaon celebrates Annual Day with cultural Fervour



**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, May 20:** Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, in collaboration with Bal Bhawan, NTPC Bongaigaon, Salakati, celebrated its Annual Day with great enthusiasm and cultural vibrancy on Tuesday at the township premises in Kokrajhar. Themed "ऋतु का त्योहार" (Festival of Seasons), the event was a colorful celebration of India's diverse seasonal traditions, blending art with community engagement.

The event was graced by Arnab Maitra, Head of Project, NTPC Bongaigaon, as the Chief Guest. Also present were Kasturi Maitra, President of Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club; Debabrata Kar, GM (O&M); Soumya Kar, Vice President of the Club; along with other departmental heads, employees, and their families.

Organised by Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club and supported by NTPC's women employees, the celebration began with traditional welcome rituals and interactive games. The evening's performances captivated the audience, including a touching tribute to Lata

Mangeshkar, a captivating "Krishna Lila," and a reflective children's presentation on Pancha Tatwa — the five elements of nature.

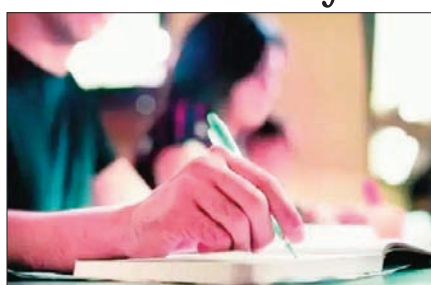
In her welcome address, Kasturi Maitra emphasized the Club's inclusive ethos and its focus on fostering harmony, creativity, and wellness within the NTPC community. Treasurer Smt. Amrita Singh presented the Annual Report, outlining the year's key welfare initiatives, skill-building programmes, and outreach efforts.

A major highlight of the event was the thematic segment "ऋतु का त्योहार", which brought the essence of Indian seasons to life through music, storytelling, and visual artistry.

In his keynote address, Arnab Maitra praised the Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club for its evolving role as a catalyst for positive social change. He commended the Club's initiatives in women's empowerment, education, health awareness, and its broader impact on the community. "Such platforms go beyond cultural expression—they reflect the social conscience of NTPC Bongaigaon," he remarked, encouraging continued collaboration between employees and their families.

The evening concluded with prize distribution and a heartfelt vote of thanks, leaving the audience inspired and united. The celebration reaffirmed the Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club's mission of blending culture with cause and highlighted its growing contribution to NTPC's vision of inclusive and sustainable development.

## Nagaon medical student cheated of ₹7 Lakh in Haryana



**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, May 20:** A NEET-qualified student from Nagaon, Assam, has alleged being defrauded of ₹7.18 lakh by a private medical college in Haryana, and has now sought the intervention of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to recover the funds.

Debjit Biswas, son of retired planning officer Bijoy Biswas of the Itachali area in Nagaon, cleared the NEET 2024 examination but was unable to secure a seat in a government medical college. In search of alternatives, he applied for admission to a private medical institution in Haryana and paid ₹1 lakh as a security deposit in May 2024.

In October, the college authorities informed him that he had been selected for admission to Al-Falah Medical College. Subsequently, Debajit's parents paid the first installment of ₹7,18,750 as academic fees. However, due to personal reasons, they later decided not to proceed with admission and formally requested a refund.

Initially, the college agreed to process the refund. However, despite multiple follow-ups, the money was not returned. The family then filed an application under the Right to Information (RTI) Act to determine the status of the refund. Shockingly, the RTI reply revealed that the refund had been deposited into the account of an unknown individual named Ritesh Kumar.

Debjit's father approached the Chief Minister of Haryana and the District Commissioner for help, but received no satisfactory response. In January, he escalated the matter to the Prime Minister, and now has turned to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for support and justice.

The incident has raised serious concerns about alleged malpractices in private educational institutions outside Assam, and underscores the vulnerability of students and their families in such situations. Biswas has urged authorities to take strict action and ensure safeguards to protect the interests of aspiring students across the country.

## Gaurav Gogoi counters Himanta's remarks

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Congress leader Gaurav Gogoi on Tuesday strongly countered Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's remarks against him for his visit to Pakistan, saying many BJP leaders, including party stalwart L.K. Advani, visited the neighbouring country and even eulogised Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Gogoi also said that even Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Lahore "to attend the birthday celebration" of former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Sarma on Sunday accused Gogoi of visiting Pakistan on an invitation from its spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), claiming that the Congress leader worked closely with the establishment of the neighbouring country.

Gogoi, the deputy leader of Congress in the Lok Sabha, said the government of India was fully aware of his visit to Pakistan, adding that he even deposited a copy of his passport and there was nothing to hide about his travel.

"Many BJP leaders visited Pakistan over the years. L.K. Advani visited Pakistan in 2005 and offered a 'chadar' at the grave of Pakistan's



founder Muhammad Ali Jinnah. He even eulogised Jinnah," Gogoi said. He also referred to Modi's visit to Lahore in 2015 and former external affairs minister late Jaswant Singh's book on Jinnah.

"The Modi government even invited a Pakistani team for conducting an inquiry into the terror attack at the Pathakot air base. The team had an ISI officer," he said.

Referring to his visit to the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi along with a delegation of youth in 2015, the Congress leader said the claim of Sarma that the Indian youth were "brainwashed" was nothing but a "big lie".

"The fact is the youth grilling the then-Pakistan high commissioner on Pakistan's links with terrorists. I wrote articles saying I had no faith in

the Pakistani establishment since its army had close links with terrorists. I also wrote that Pakistan's military, intelligence agencies and terrorists had a close nexus," Gogoi said.

The Congress leader also said he was ready for the probe being carried out by an SIT constituted by the Assam government for his alleged Pakistan links through his wife Elizabeth Colburn.

"Sarma has been telling everyone that the SIT will submit its report in September. Why do you need to wait till September given the kind of allegations levelled against me?"

"He (Sarma) is not willing to complete the probe soon, so he is trying to drag it till September. But nothing will come up," Gogoi said.

Sarma earlier alleged that Gogoi had Pakistan links through his wife Colburn.

The chief minister also said that the government has "documentary evidence" to support the claim, and every proof will be presented to the public by September 10 after proper verification.

"The chief minister has a habit of telling thousands of lie. He also did not give details of his own visit to Bangladesh," Gogoi said. (PTI)

## Mass political joining in WKA

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, May 20:** In a significant show of political consolidation, leaders and workers from multiple parties including the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHL), Congress, and Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC) formally joined the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) during a mass joining programme held at the Hornbill Auditorium, Boksong, West Karbi Anglong on Tuesday.

The event was organized by the Duar-Amla BJP Mandal Committee and was graced by Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Shri Tuliram Ronghang, as the Chief Guest.

Welcoming the new members into the BJP, CEM Ronghang emphasized the importance of supporting the ruling government, citing numerous welfare schemes aimed at uplifting individuals and families. "From free housing and ration cards to healthcare and student scholarships, the government is delivering

benefits directly to the people," he said. He also lauded Member of Parliament Amarsing Tisso for raising the long-standing demand for Article 244(A) — the call for an Autonomous State — in Parliament, fulfilling a key aspiration of the hill communities. Addressing the gathering, CEM Ronghang urged everyone to pursue development and the demand for an autonomous state simultaneously, but through peaceful and democratic means. "We must not repeat the chaos of the past. Let us move forward constructively," he remarked.

CEM Ronghang further stated that more leaders and workers from APHL, particularly from the Lumbajong constituency, are expected to join the BJP in the coming days, indicating a growing momentum in the region in favor of the saffron party.

The event marks a notable shift in the political landscape of West Karbi Anglong, underlining the BJP's expanding influence and grassroots consolidation in the hill districts.

## KSYC demands immediate suspension of illegal land pattas in violation of Mikir Hills Act

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, May 20:** The Karbi Students & Youth Council (KSYC) on Monday submitted a memorandum to the Secretary in-charge of the Land and Revenue Department of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), demanding immediate suspension and revocation of land pattas issued in violation of the Mikir Hills District (Transfer of Land) Act, 1959.

In the memorandum, KSYC—representing the indigenous youth and tribal communities of Karbi Anglong—expressed deep concern and strong opposition to the alleged illegal issuance of land pattas to non-tribal individuals without proper approval from the KAAC Executive Committee. The organization described the practice as a "direct and serious breach" of the legal framework designed to protect tribal land rights.

The memorandum warned that the growing frequency of such violations undermines not only the 1959 Act but also the constitutional protections enshrined under the Sixth

Schedule of the Indian Constitution. KSYC stated that the consequences are already manifesting in the displacement of indigenous communities, deterioration of their economic base, and erosion of cultural heritage.

"If the situation is left unchecked, it could lead to irreversible damage to tribal autonomy and inter-community relations," the KSYC cautioned. "This is not just a legal violation—it represents a collapse of institutional responsibility and a betrayal of public trust placed in the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council." The student body made the following key demands:

Immediate and unconditional suspension of all land pattas issued in contravention of the Mikir Hills District (Transfer of Land) Act, 1959. Revocation of all land pattas granted to non-tribals without prior Executive Committee sanction.

Strict enforcement of Section 5 (Ejectment) and Section 6 (Penalties) to hold violators accountable, irrespective of their position or influence.

## Book released

**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, May 20:** A new book titled Sahitya Nahay, authored by Hem Baruah, former president of the Rangpur Sahitya Sabha, was formally released on Sunday in a special session of the Sabha held in Sivasagar. The book is a collection of thought-provoking articles that reflect on pressing societal issues.

The release ceremony was graced by 'Sivasagar Ratna' awardee and former principal of Sivasagar Girls' College, Prof. Sonaram Baruah, who officially released the book. In his address, Prof. Baruah lauded Hem Baruah as a serious and committed writer whose works focus on vital aspects of society.

The session was presided over by Amitabh Baruah, president of Rangpur Sahitya Sabha. Prasanta Gogoi, secretary of the Sabha, spoke about the objectives of the meeting and the significance of the publication.

The event was well attended, with notable figures including Mukul Nath, former president of the Asom Kabi Sammilan; Rajiv Borpujari; Manoj Gogoi, secretary of Sivasagar Jila Sahitya Sabha; Pranoti Bora Bhuyan; Minoti Dutta; Santosh Dutta; and several others.

## Nagaon police seize drugs, arrest dealer

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, May 20:** The Nagaon Morikolung Outpost police conducted a raid in Bengenati last night and seized 20,000 Nitrazepam tablets and a large quantity of cough syrup bottles. One drug trafficker identified as Mainun Haque (38), was arrested during the operation.

According to reports, Mainun Haque, also known as Bhai, had been involving school and college students, as well as young men and women, in drug trafficking in the Bengenati area.

This arrest comes after a young man died due to drug overdose in Bengenati a few days ago, highlighting the growing concern of drug abuse in the area. The police are likely to investigate further to uncover the entire network of drug trafficking in the region.

## Meritorious students felicitated DPS, Khanapara, students shine in AISSE, AISSCE board exams



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, May 20:** Delhi Public School, Khanapara, held a felicitation ceremony to celebrate the achievements of its students in the AISSE (Class X) and AISSCE (Class XII) Board Examinations for the academic year 2024-25.

In the AISSE, Mannat Bawri led the Class X batch with a phenomenal 97.4%. An impressive

17 students scored above 90%, while 45% of the cohort secured more than 85%, reflecting the school's academic strength and focused guidance.

In the AISSCE, A.S. Michael Khaying topped all three streams with an exceptional 97.2% in Humanities. Bhumi Sharma topped the Science stream with 95% and Tarang Agarwal led the Commerce stream with 94.2%.

Overall, 35% of Class XII students scored above 85%, and 11 students achieved an aggregate of 90% and above.

Adding to the accolades, five students scored a perfect 100 in Psychology, Fine Arts, and Information Technology, highlighting the school's commitment to both academic excellence and holistic development.

The event was graced by the Pro-Vice Chairman, Ram Awtar Agarwal, who congratulated the achievers and motivated them to keep striving for greater heights.

The Principal Monmoyee Borkotoky reiterated that the school remains committed to nurturing future-ready citizens who excel not only in academics but also in character and creativity.

"With each passing year, it reaffirms its position as one of the leading educational institutions in the North East," she said.

The school has come with a hostel facility to accommodate students coming for study there from other state, she further added.

## Redeveloped Haibargaon Railway Station mesmerises people prior inauguration

Originally built in 1887, the station has now been transformed into a world-class facility



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, May 20:** As part of the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS), the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, will virtually inaugurate 103 redeveloped railway stations across the country on May 22 including Haibargaon Railway Station under Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR). Situated in Assam's Nagaon district, Haibargaon holds historical importance,

once serving as a key node during British rule due to Nagaon's prominence in tea cultivation and modern education. Originally built in 1887, the station has now been transformed into a world-class facility, drawing admiration for its beautiful architecture and modern amenities.

On May 20 a team of NFR senior officials, accompanied by members of the local media, visited the station to inspect and showcase the

redeveloped and upgraded passenger facilities on the to-be-inaugurated railway station. The public response was overwhelmingly positive. Elderly visitors recalled the days of coal-powered steam engines and a modest station layout, expressing amazement at the vast improvements, including spacious areas and a wide array of passenger-friendly features.

Travellers like Shahil Kumar Rai from Guwahati, who had come to visit the nearby Mahamrityunjay Temple, were particularly impressed by the station's transformation. He remarked that the station, once considered ordinary, now boasts a grand entrance, spacious concourse area, organized parking, modern waiting halls, modular and accessible toilets, ramps and user-friendly ticket counters. He added that despite being a small station, Haibargaon now surpasses many others in terms of infrastructure and passenger convenience.

The station has also been adorned with murals and thematic sculptures that beautifully depict Assamese culture and heritage, adding to its visual appeal. NFR remains committed towards meeting public aspirations and enhancing travel experiences. Redevelopment work at 50 railway stations over Assam under ABSS is progressing rapidly, ensuring that the people of Assam will soon be benefitted from upgraded, efficient and culturally rich railway infrastructure, making connectivity over NFR a modern enhanced approach.



## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*There is no influence like the influence of habit.*  
— Gilbert Parker

## Mayawati gets her successor

It has been a little more than two months when Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati expelled her nephew Akash Anand from the party. But it has been a month when he returned to BSP and has now been appointed the party's chief national coordinator. The post has been created especially for Anand, making him virtually the party's second in command. The decision to elevate Anand was taken by Mayawati at the party's meeting of coordinators in the national capital on Sunday. Blood has turned out to be thicker than water. For the new post, created for the first time in BSP, is a notch above that of national coordinator which Anand held before his expulsion. The axe has obviously buried between the aunt and the nephew. And if Anand harboured any resentment, the new post whose responsibility entails looking after the game plan of the party in all state units, ought to mollify him. Three national coordinators namely Raja Ram, Ramji Gautam and Randhir Singh have been sidelined by the decision of elevating Akash. But never mind as the bloodline has to be retained. More signs of favours showered on Anand followed. Mayawati called upon party elders to give their blessings and support to Akash in the party work and he would accompany her to every function. Akash's elevation leads to his outranking of three national coordinators who are more experienced than him. But keeping an age old tradition of Indian politics where political experience is elbowed by family ties, Mayawati has ignored intra-party democracy.

It is family first for her. His elevation marks Akash Anand bring groomed as a leader and his aunt's successor once again. A message has been doing the rounds that Akash is to be told of his mistakes in private. No public dressing down for the heir apparent. To trace back the reason why aunt and nephew fell out was Akash was reported to be working under the influence of his father-in-law Ashok Siddharth, a former Rajya Sabha MP of BSP. Siddharth has been expelled for allegedly "indulging in factionalism and anti-party activities". Akash was booked for promoting enmity during a speech in Sitapur during last Lok Sabha polls. He was removed by Mayawati as the national coordinator and her successor. In a post on X, Anand thanked Mayawati for bringing him back into the BSP organisational set-up. "I express my heartfelt gratitude to behen ji. She has forgiven my mistakes and has given me an opportunity to contribute in strengthening the Bahujan mission and movement," he said. Anand was taken back into the party fold last month after he issued a public apology and asserted that he considers Mayawati as her only political guru.

Akash's return to BSP was preceded by a public apology in April. The party supremo decided to give him "another chance" provided he "respected his seniors and did not give in to his father-in-law's advice". So, a family connect continues to be a clause which is an essential pre-requisite of Akash Anand's political rehabilitation. Blood ties are here to stay overriding political experience.

# Trump's tariff plan targets India, China

In a bold and polarizing move, U.S. President Donald J. Trump has introduced a sweeping new tariff system targeting imports from numerous countries, including major economies like India and China. Announced in April 2025, this policy, dubbed the "Fair and Reciprocal Plan," imposes a baseline 10% tariff on nearly all foreign imports, with higher "reciprocal" tariffs applied to specific nations based on their trade practices and deficits with the United States. The tariffs, which have sparked global economic turbulence and fears of a trade war, aim to address what Trump describes as decades of unfair trade practices that have disadvantaged American workers and industries. This article explores the details of Trump's tariff system, its implications for countries like India and China, and the broader economic and geopolitical consequences of this aggressive trade policy.

The new tariff system is rooted in Trump's long-standing belief that tariffs are a powerful tool to protect American manufacturing, reduce trade deficits, and restore economic sovereignty. During his 2024 presidential campaign, Trump pledged to impose tariffs far exceeding those of his first term, including 60% on China, 100% on Mexico, and 20% on all other countries. The current policy, while slightly moderated, reflects this vision. Effective April 5, 2025, a 10% baseline tariff was applied to most foreign goods entering the U.S., with exemptions for specific items like copper, pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, and energy products. On April 9, additional "reciprocal" tariffs ranging from 11% to 50% were briefly imposed on 86 countries, though these were paused for 90 days for all but China due to market volatility. China faces a staggering 104% tariff, combining a 20% existing levy with an additional 84% reciprocal rate, later adjusted to 125% by Trump. India, a key U.S. trading partner, is subject to a 26% reciprocal tariff, significantly lower than China's but still substantial. These tariffs are calculated based on a formula that divides the U.S. trade deficit in goods with a country by the value of U.S. imports from that country, halved to determine the "reciprocal" rate. For India, this translates to a trade barrier value of approximately 52%, halved to 26%.

The rationale behind Trump's tariffs is multifaceted. The administration argues that large and persistent U.S. trade deficits—\$1.2 trillion in goods in 2024—have hollowed out American manufacturing, undermined supply chains, and made the U.S. defense-industrial base dependent on foreign adversaries. The White House cites disparities in tariff rates, noting that the U.S. has one of the lowest average most-favored-nation (MFN) tariff rates at 3.3%, compared to India's 17%, China's 7.5%, and Brazil's 11.2%. Non-tariff barriers, such as India's stringent certification requirements for chemicals and medical devices or China's non-market policies, are also blamed for restricting U.S. exports. Trump's team, led by Senior Counsel for Trade and Manufacturing Peter Navarro, views these tariffs as a response to a "national emergency" caused by trade imbalances, currency manipulation, and policies that suppress foreign wages to boost export competitiveness. By invoking the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), Trump has bypassed Congressional approval, framing the tariffs as essential for national security and economic stability.

For India, the 26% tariff poses both challenges and opportunities. India's economy, heavily reliant on domestic demand, is less vulnerable to export disruptions than export-driven nations like China or Vietnam. The U.S. accounts for only 18% of India's merchandise exports, with sectors like IT services and pharmaceuticals less affected due to their service-oriented nature or tariff exemptions. Economists estimate that the tariffs could shave 0.5 percentage points off India's economic growth, translating to a modest \$28 annual impact per household. However, India's textile, electronics, and engineering goods sectors, which face the 26% duty, could see reduced competitiveness in the U.S. market. Conversely, the significantly higher tariffs on China (104%) and Bangladesh (37%) create opportunities for Indian textile manufacturers to capture U.S. market share. India's strategic alignment with the U.S., coupled with ongoing trade negotiations, further cushions the blow. Since February 2025, India has made concessions, including scrapping a 6% digital ad tax, reducing tariffs on U.S. bourbon and luxury cars, and pledging \$25 billion in U.S. energy imports. These efforts aim to secure a favorable trade deal and potentially lower the 26% tariff.

China, however, faces a far more severe impact. The 104% tariff (later raised to 125%) on Chinese goods is among the highest in modern trade history, targeting a country that accounted for \$440 billion in U.S. imports in 2024. China's Ministry of Commerce has condemned the tariffs as "unilateral bullying," warning of damage to global supply chains and U.S. interests. Beijing has retaliated with a 34% tariff on U.S. products, later escalated to 84%, and imposed restrictions on rare earth exports critical for electronics and electric vehicles. The U.S.-China trade war, already intensified during Trump's first term, risks further escalation, with analysts from Capital Economics deeming a near-term resolution unlikely. Chinese state media argue that past U.S. tariffs failed to reduce bilateral trade volumes or China's trade surplus, suggesting resilience to the new measures. However, the tariffs could disrupt China's manufacturing dominance, prompting companies like Apple to shift production to India and Vietnam, where tariffs are lower.

Trump's tariffs have triggered alarm and volatility globally. The European Union, facing a 20% tariff, is preparing retaliatory duties on €100 billion of U.S. imports, including aircraft, cars, and medical devices. Canada and Mexico, though exempted from the latest reciprocal tariffs, still face 25% levies on steel, aluminum, and automobiles, prompting countermeasures. Stock markets plummeted following the April 2 announcement, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average losing nearly 4% before recovering slightly after the 90-day pause. A Reuters/Ipsos poll in April 2025 found that 73% of Americans expect price surges due to the tariffs, with 57% opposing the policy. Economists, including 23 Nobel Prize winners, warn that the tariffs will raise consumer prices, widen deficits, and exacerbate inequality. The Tax Foundation estimates an average tax increase of \$1,200 per U.S. household in 2025, with long-term GDP reductions of 1.3% if retaliatory tariffs persist.

Critics argue that Trump's tariff calculations are flawed. The "reciprocal" formula, which bases tariffs on trade deficits, oversimplifies complex trade dynamics and ignores services, where the U.S. often holds a surplus. For instance, India's service exports, particularly in IT, are significant but excluded from the formula. Economists like Mark Zandi of Moody's Analytics predict that sustained tariffs and retaliatory measures could plunge the U.S. and global economies into recession. The inclusion of small territories like Norfolk Island (29% tariff) and the British Indian Ocean Territory (10%) in the tariff list has also raised questions about the policy's coherence.

Furthermore, the use of IEEPA to justify tariffs is unprecedented and legally contentious, potentially inviting challenges in U.S. courts or the World Trade Organization (WTO). Trump remains steadfast, framing tariffs as a path to American wealth and industrial revival. In a Truth Social post, he urged retailers like Walmart to "eat the tariffs" rather than raise prices, asserting that the policy would generate unprecedented revenue. The administration sees tariffs as a negotiation tool, a punitive measure against unfair practices, and a macroeconomic strategy to reshore manufacturing. The 90-day pause for most countries reflects a willingness to negotiate, with over 75 nations, including India, engaging in talks to avoid higher duties. The U.K. and U.S. have reached a deal exempting certain goods, such as U.K. cars and steel, from higher tariffs, suggesting that strategic concessions can yield results.

For India, the tariff regime underscores the need for deft diplomacy. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned visit to Washington in 2025 aims to strengthen bilateral ties and address trade tensions. India's relatively low export dependence and diversified markets provide leverage, but negotiators must balance domestic interests with U.S. demands for relaxed import rules on dairy, pork, and intellectual property. China, facing steeper tariffs, is less likely to secure concessions without significant reforms, which Beijing has resisted. The broader risk is a fragmented global trade system, with coalitions forming to counter U.S. tariffs. The EU, for instance, is exploring alliances with India, Indonesia, and Vietnam to stabilize WTO-based trade rules.

Trump's new tariff system represents a high-stakes gamble to reshape global trade in America's favor. While India is better positioned than China to navigate the fallout, both nations face economic pressures that could reshape supply chains and bilateral relations. The policy's success hinges on whether it forces trade partners to lower barriers or triggers a spiral of retaliation and recession. As global markets brace for uncertainty, the coming months will reveal whether Trump's tariffs fulfill his vision of a "wealthy America" or deepen economic divides at home and abroad. The world watches as this bold experiment unfolds, with India and China at the heart of its consequences.



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## Mehbooba Mufti's tirade and the politics of appeasement

By: Shashanka Das

In the ever-turbulent landscape of Jammu and Kashmir's politics, former Chief Minister and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief Mehbooba Mufti has once again invited controversy, not through a policy stance or a vision for development, but by echoing the language and logic that suspiciously aligns with Pakistan's long-standing narrative. Her latest outburst, triggered by a seemingly innocuous and development-centric post by Omar Abdullah regarding the Tulbul Navigation Project, has starkly exposed the widening chasm between nationalist development goals and the deeply entrenched politics of appeasement.

Omar Abdullah, the current Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, had shared a video of the majestic Wular lake in North Kashmir, drawing attention to the incomplete civil infrastructure—remnants of the long-forgotten Tulbul Navigation Barrage. His post was factual, forward-looking, and based on the pragmatic realities of reviving navigation in the region, especially after the temporary suspension of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) by India. Omar's contention was simple: if the IWT, which Pakistan has often used as a leverage tool, is under reconsideration, then why should Jammu and Kashmir not benefit from its own waters to facilitate better navigation, year-round economic activity, and increased hydropower generation in the downstream areas?

However, Mufti's response was swift, scathing, and predictably Pakistan-centric. Rather than engaging with the merits of the project or its potential to uplift North Kashmir's economy, she accused Omar of warmongering and irresponsibility. Her claim that such development plans were "provocative" and could lead to war with Pakistan sounded less like a seasoned Indian politician and more like a spokesperson from across the border. She lamented that in times of "tensions between India and Pakistan," such statements could risk "internationalising" the matter—ironically doing just that by dragging the spectre of war into what is essentially an internal development initiative.

One cannot help but question: since when did the revival of a navigation project on Indian soil, within India's territory, involving Indian water resources, become an act of war-mongering? Mufti's reaction appears to be yet another desperate attempt to cling to political relevance by pandering to the old, tired rhetoric of victimhood and subjugation, rather than empowering the people of Jammu and Kashmir with ideas of self-reliance, development, and strategic autonomy. It is not Omar Abdullah's post that was provocative—it was Mufti's response that sought to provoke the imagination of fear and instability, holding development hostage to the whims of Pakistan.

The Tulbul Navigation Project is not a new scheme cooked up for political gain. Conceived in the early 1980s, it was designed to ensure year-round navigation on the Jhelum river, particularly during the winter months when water levels drop drastically. The project proposed the construction of a barrage at the mouth of Wular Lake to regulate water flow, thus enabling a consistent navigable depth of 4.5 feet between Baramulla and Srinagar. This would not only ease the movement of timber, apples, and agricultural produce but also boost

tourism and cut logistical costs for the region's economy. Importantly, the structure was never meant to store water in a manner that would violate the Indus Water Treaty, which allocates the waters of the Jhelum, Chenab, and Indus rivers to Pakistan. It was a regulating structure, not a consumptive or storage dam.

Nonetheless, Pakistan objected, alleging that the project violated the treaty. It used this as yet another pressure point in its long-standing policy of keeping Jammu and Kashmir underdeveloped, unstable, and ripe for radicalisation. After protracted negotiations and increasing threats from Pakistan—including acts of sabotage and terrorism near the project site—the Indian government, under Rajiv Gandhi in 1987, decided to abandon the project with only 30% of the work completed. In hindsight, this stands as a tragic capitulation to external pressure, and one that left the people of Kashmir poorer and more dependent.

Omar Abdullah rightly pointed out in his rebuttal to Mufti that the IWT has been a historical betrayal of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, denying them their rightful control over natural resources. His assertion that the treaty deserves reconsideration is not a declaration of war, but an act of political courage—an effort to reclaim agency over the economic future of the region. His statement that "opposing a blatantly unfair treaty is not warmongering" underscores a truth that Mufti and her ilk seem unwilling to acknowledge: development and self-determination are not acts of aggression; they are constitutional guarantees.

It is indeed unfortunate that Mehbooba Mufti continues to indulge in fear-mongering and misplaced moralism, painting legitimate development efforts as incendiary. In doing so, she not only weakens India's internal coherence but also provides ideological ammunition to Pakistan's propaganda machine.

Her stance reveals a pattern that has defined her politics for some time—an eagerness to prioritise appeasement over advancement, victimhood over vision, and rhetoric over results. Her party's devastating loss in the recent assembly elections perhaps explains this desperate turn toward inflammatory statements that might garner attention but do little for the common Kashmiri.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir have suffered enough. Their dreams have long been deferred by political opportunism, cross-border terrorism, and misplaced allegiances. What they now seek is not protectionism rooted in fear, but empowerment anchored in growth. The Tulbul Navigation Project, if revived, can be a beacon of that hope—a symbol of reclaiming the region's economic autonomy and dignity. It's time that leaders like Mehbooba Mufti realise that the future of Jammu and Kashmir cannot be dictated by Pakistan's insecurities. It must be shaped by India's developmental will and the Kashmiri people's right to progress.

In the final reckoning, history will judge not just those who built and revived, but also those who obstructed and appeased. As Kashmir finds itself at a crossroads, one can only hope it chooses the path of self-belief over self-denial, of nationhood over narratives spun across borders. (The author can be reached at shashankadasnov1@gmail.com or 9706619975)

## The red lines of diplomacy: Trump, Kashmir, and the crisis of credibility

By: Dipak Kurmi

The recent controversy surrounding U.S. President Donald Trump's bold and baffling assertion that Washington brokered the May 10 ceasefire between India and Pakistan has sparked a diplomatic firestorm in South Asia. Trump's claims—categorically denied by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and refuted by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar himself—have not only strained New Delhi's diplomatic patience but also reopened a historically sensitive debate over Kashmir's international status and the sanctity of bilateral agreements. At stake is not merely the credibility of an American president with a penchant for hyperbole, but the foundation of India's long-standing foreign policy doctrine vis-à-vis Pakistan.

President Trump, ever keen to place himself at the center of global affairs, was among the first world leaders to call Prime Minister Narendra Modi to condemn the brutal Pahalgam terror attack that killed dozens of civilians. However, in the tense aftermath of India's retaliatory Operation Sindoor, which targeted terrorist infrastructure across the Line of Control, Washington pivoted from solidarity to shuttle diplomacy. Alongside countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Iran, the United States began pushing for de-escalation between the nuclear-armed neighbors. Just thirty minutes before Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri formally announced the ceasefire, Trump prematurely claimed on social media that the U.S. had brokered the truce—an assertion that stunned Indian officials.

What followed was a series of deeply problematic remarks. From lavishing praise on both India and Pakistan to offering unsolicited mediation on Kashmir, Trump doubled down in interviews, investor conferences in Riyadh, speeches to U.S. troops in Doha, and a string of public addresses. Most notably, he erroneously described Kashmir as "a thousand years old" dispute—historically inaccurate, as the conflict dates to 1947 following Partition and the accession of the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir to India.

More recently, the 2019 con-

These statements violated all the cardinal principles of India's diplomatic framework regarding Pakistan and Jammu & Kashmir. India's red lines are well-known and unequivocal: no third-party mediation; no hyphenation with Pakistan; no internationalisation of the Kashmir issue; and recognition that terrorism, not territory, is the core concern. Trump's repeated transgressions of these principles have not only angered Delhi but also threatened to dent the carefully managed contours of India-U.S. bilateral relations, especially under a government in New Delhi that guards its strategic autonomy with zeal.

The controversy also revives an old and contentious debate—what does internationalisation really mean? It is often argued that India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, inadvertently set the ball rolling by taking the Kashmir issue to the United Nations Security Council in December 1947, following Pakistan's aggression and illegal occupation of what is today called Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). While Nehru insisted he sought international help only to end the invasion, the UN's involvement expanded the scope of inquiry far beyond Delhi's expectations. As diplomat Rajiv Dogra notes in his book *India's World: How Prime Ministers Shaped Foreign Policy*, Nehru had no intention of questioning Kashmir's accession to India or inviting arbitration.

Over the decades, bilateral engagements replaced the UN route. The most definitive of these was the 1972 Simla Agreement signed between Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistan's Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, after Pakistan's defeat and the creation of Bangladesh. Bhutto, in an implicit acknowledgment of India's position, assured that all issues, including Kashmir, would be settled bilaterally. However, Pakistan never fully honoured that commitment. In response, the Indian Parliament in 1994 passed a unanimous resolution declaring Jammu and Kashmir an integral part of India and demanding that Pakistan vacate all areas it occupies illegally.

More recently, the 2019 con-

stitutional reorganisation of Jammu & Kashmir, following the abrogation of Article 370, brought a fresh push from Pakistan to internationalise the issue. While the global community largely remained neutral or sympathetic to India's sovereign decision, Pakistan managed—with China's backing—to initiate a closed-door UNSC meeting on Kashmir for the first time in 50 years. The Narendra Modi government responded with a hardened stance: future India-Pakistan talks on Kashmir would only pertain to the return of PoK, not the status of J&K within India.

This assertive posture reflects India's deep frustration with Pakistan's duplicity on cross-border terrorism and LoC violations. Even when India agreed to certain engagements—such as the Kartarpur Corridor talks or the 2021 LoC ceasefire—it did so while drawing sharp boundaries. In this context, Trump's grandstanding is viewed not just as meddling, but as deeply insensitive to India's hard-earned strategic consensus.

Third-party mediation, while consistently rejected by India, has occasionally crept into the margins. The most prominent example was the Soviet Union's role in the 1965 war, which resulted in the Tashkent Declaration. During the 1999 Kargil conflict, U.S. President Bill Clinton reportedly tried to bring Indian and Pakistani leaders together, but was rebuffed by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Clinton later clarified in a radio address in Islamabad that the U.S. would not mediate in Kashmir, reinforcing the bilateral framework. Between 2003 and 2008, the U.S. quietly supported backchannel talks between India and Pakistan aimed at "making borders irrelevant," but Washington deliberately kept its role understated to respect Indian sensitivities.

Trump, by contrast, has been anything but discreet. In 2019, after India's Balakot airstrike and the capture of Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman by Pakistan, Trump claimed credit for securing his release. That same year, during a press conference with then Prime Minister Imran Khan, he once again offered to mediate the

Kashmir issue—only to be summarily dismissed by India. Such rhetoric, while perhaps aimed at domestic audiences or diplomatic vanity, has a corrosive effect on the very processes it purports to support.

The prospects of direct dialogue between India and Pakistan remain dim. Since External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj's visit to Islamabad in 2015, formal engagement has largely ceased. The suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty dialogue and the temporary closure of the Kartarpur Corridor during the latest crisis underscore Delhi's strategic disengagement. While National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has maintained a limited backchannel with Pakistani counterparts—used during emergencies like the Pathankot terror attack or the accidental missile firing in 2022—these interactions are tactical, not political.

Recently, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's overtures for renewed talks were met with a firm rebuff from India. Prime Minister Modi's "new normal" explicitly frames the terms: any future negotiations will address only terrorism and the return of PoK. Given Islamabad's entrenched positions, these preconditions are unlikely to be met in the foreseeable future.

Yet history shows that perpetual silence is not a solution either. The absence of dialogue creates a vacuum, and in that void, external actors—be it Washington, Riyadh, or Beijing—often attempt to fill the space. While India's present focus is on globalising its campaign against terrorism, it must do so without letting the Kashmir issue become an international football. Preserving its red lines while navigating the pressures of great-power politics will be Delhi's enduring foreign policy test.

Trump's bombastic diplomacy, for all its bluster, has inadvertently reminded New Delhi why its policy of bilateralism remains essential. The lesson is clear: in matters as sensitive and sovereign as Kashmir, there is no room for careless words, especially when spoken from powerful podiums. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)



# What is a molar pregnancy?

By: Beth Sissons

A molar pregnancy is when there is a problem with a fertilised egg, causing an abnormal cluster of cells inside the womb. It means a baby and a placenta will not develop normally.

Molar pregnancy is rare, but it can occur due to a genetic issue affecting fertilization. This causes an abnormal growth to form in the uterus. A molar pregnancy is not a viable pregnancy, and a normal embryo will not develop.

Another name for a molar pregnancy is a hydatidiform mole. Molar pregnancies are a form of gestational trophoblastic disease (GTD).

A doctor can remove the molar pregnancy from the uterus, and people may be able to have healthy pregnancies in the future.

## Content warning

This feature mentions pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or both. Please read at your own discretion.

## Types of molar pregnancy

During fertilization, a sperm has 23 chromosomes, and an egg has 23 chromosomes. When the sperm fertilizes the egg, the fertilized egg then has 46 chromosomes, half from each parent.

With molar pregnancies, there is an abnormal fertilization process that causes changes in the number of chromosomes.

There are two types of molar pregnancies: complete molar pregnancy and partial molar pregnancy.

## Complete molar pregnancy

A complete molar pregnancy occurs when one or two sperm fertilize an egg that does not contain any chromosomes, or the chromosomes are not working.

This means there are no copies of maternal DNA, and all 46 chromosomes

are paternal. With a molar pregnancy, there is no placental tissue or embryo.

## Partial molar pregnancy

In a partial molar pregnancy, the chromosomes in the egg are present but two sperm fertilize the egg. This means the embryo has an extra set of paternal chromosomes, resulting in 69 chromosomes rather than the usual 46.

## Signs and symptoms of a molar pregnancy

Symptoms of a molar pregnancy can include:

- Vaginal bleeding in the first trimester, the blood is usually dark rather than bright red
- Grape-like cysts, which are fluid-filled sacs, passing from the vagina
- Severe nausea and vomiting
- Pelvic pain or pressure
- A uterus which is larger than expected for the stage of pregnancy

- Changes in thyroid hormone levels, which may cause tremors or fast heartbeat
- Preeclampsia, which causes high blood pressure and protein in urine
- In some cases, pregnancy loss

## Diagnosing molar pregnancy

Doctors will use an ultrasound to diagnose a molar pregnancy, which can show signs of a molar pregnancy in the first trimester.

Doctors will also test human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) levels with a blood test. During a healthy pregnancy, levels of hCG, a pregnancy hormone, rise but in a molar pregnancy, hCG levels may be abnormally high.

## Causes and risk factors for molar pregnancy

Molar pregnancy occurs due to abnormal fertilization, which results in an issue with the chromosomes



that pass from the parents to an embryo.

In a molar pregnancy, the chromosomes from the maternal side are either missing, or an embryo has an extra set of paternal chromosomes.

Having a history of molar pregnancies is the most significant risk factor for developing GTD.

## Other risk factors for molar pregnancy include:

- Being pregnant over the age of 45 or under the age of 15
- Ethnicity, as molar pregnancies are more common in Asia compared to other parts of the world, which may be due to genetic differences
- Having had two or more miscarriages

## Treatments for molar pregnancy

The first-line treatment for molar pregnancy is dilation and curettage (D&C). D&C involves dilating the cervix to insert a surgical instrument into the uterus.

A doctor will use a curette or suction tool to remove the molar tissue from the uterus. A laboratory may then examine the tissue for a definitive diagnosis. Following D&C, a doctor will monitor hCG levels every month for 6 months to 1 year to check there is no molar tissue in the uterus.

Becoming pregnant alters hCG levels which can make it more difficult to detect any molar tissue during this time, so a doctor may advise people to wait until after this time period before becoming pregnant.

Persistent GTD, or invasive mole, is a condition in which

molar tissue continues to grow in the uterus after D&C treatment. To treat persistent GTD, people may require a hysterectomy to remove the uterus, or treatment with chemotherapy.

In some cases, molar tissue may become cancerous, and can cause a tumor called choriocarcinoma. Cancer treatments can help treat choriocarcinoma through killing cancer cells or preventing their growth.

## Possible complications of a molar pregnancy

Most molar pregnancies are benign, which means they are non-cancerous, but in some cases a molar pregnancy can become cancerous and may spread to other areas of the body.

Molar pregnancies can progress to gestational trophoblastic neoplasia (GTN) which is a type of GTD

which is usually cancerous. This includes invasive moles and choriocarcinoma. Invasive moles grow into the muscle layer of the uterus and can spread.

Complete molar pregnancies have an increased risk of becoming invasive or developing to choriocarcinoma, compared to partial molar pregnancies.

## Psychological impact

Molar pregnancy may have a significant psychological impact on people, and may cause anxiety, depression, and distress. The emotional and mental impact of molar pregnancy may include:

- Grief of pregnancy loss
- Health concerns and fears
- Fears over future reproductive health and childbearing

People may want to talk with friends and family, their healthcare professional, a support group, or a mental health professional to help them navigate the psychological impact of a molar pregnancy.

## People may also find the following resources helpful:

- Miscarriage Association – Molar Pregnancy
- March of Dimes – Bereavement Booklet
- Share – Support

## Frequently asked questions

### Does molar pregnancy affect future pregnancies?

According to a 2022 study, research has not found any link between molar pregnancy and infertility, and most people go on to have future pregnancies with no complications.

### What happens if you don't remove a molar pregnancy?

Without treatment, a molar pregnancy may cause serious health problems. Molar pregnancy may progress to GTN which can be

fatal without proper treatment.

Early diagnosis and treatment of molar pregnancy can help reduce severe and life-threatening complications.

## When to contact a doctor

People will need to contact a doctor straight away if they have any symptoms of a molar pregnancy. This can include vaginal bleeding or intense nausea and vomiting.

It is important to get treatment for a molar pregnancy as soon as possible to help prevent serious complications.

## Outlook for molar pregnancies

In most cases, GTD is curable. Around 15 to 20% of complete molar pregnancy cases and 0.5 to 5 % of partial molar pregnancy cases may progress to GTN, but outcomes are favorable even with widespread disease.

Most people will be able to have healthy future pregnancies with no complications. Molar pregnancies can recur in future pregnancies, and although this risk is low, it is important to attend regular follow-ups after treatment and to monitor any future pregnancies.

## Summary

A molar pregnancy is a rare condition in which abnormal tissue grows in the uterus instead of a normally developing embryo. A molar pregnancy occurs due to a genetic issue which causes abnormal fertilization.

People will need treatment for a molar pregnancy as soon as possible to prevent serious complications. Treatment involves removing the molar tissue from the uterus, and in most cases, it is curable. Many people can go on to have healthy pregnancies in the future. (Courtesy: Medical News Today)

# Media, women, and sensationalism: 'Girl problems' to 'group chats': Are we doing justice? On memes and womanhood

By: Dr. Satvawan Saurabh

In this fast-paced world of information and communication, the influence of the media has become as widespread as it is deep. Today, reporting an incident is not limited to merely giving information, but it also gives rise to a narrative, an image, and sometimes a prejudice. When it comes to incidents related to women, especially when they are controversial—like cheating, false accusations, or blackmailing—the media's attitude becomes much more sensational and biased. It is a matter of concern that since when we started putting an entire class in the dock instead of reporting incidents?

## Women and Ambiguity: Constructing the Narrative

In the last few years, we have seen many such incidents where women were accused of trapping men in false cases. In some cases, these allegations were proved to be true. But the question is, is it justified to develop a thinking like "not every woman is trustworthy" on the basis of these few cases? Is it right that the media presents these incidents in such a way that the entire society starts doubting the intentions of women?

In fact, this thinking is part of a long-standing mindset that either worships a woman as a goddess or rejects her as a villain—there is no room in between.

## The language of the media and the game of headlines

Whenever you see newspaper headlines or listen to news channel headlines, one thing is clear—incidents related to women are presented in a more provocative, emotional, and attractive manner. For example—"The lover turned out to be the murderer of the co-wife!" "The female teacher had physical relations with the student!" "The wife got her husband killed in collusion with her lover!" Such news strengthens a particular thought in the society that women are deceitful, clever,

and opportunistic. Whereas the reality is that crimes committed by men are not shown with such sensationalism. There, reasons like "mental stress," "family pressure," or "social rejection" are found.

## 'Victim' or 'Villain': The dual image of a woman

The media often portrays women either as complete victims or complete perpetrators. But the reality is much more complex. Not every woman who cheats is inherently 'bad,' and not every woman who is a victim is inherently 'pure.' Human behavior is shaped by many social, mental, and emotional factors. When the media ignores these aspects and shows only a sensational face, it distorts the truth.

## Introduction to some famous examples

In recent years, many such cases have come to light, which have made this subject more complex. Such as cases of blackmailing by making false allegations of sexual harassment, a woman's attempt to trap her husband and get a divorce and property, and exploitation of public sentiments using 'feminism' on social media. These incidents were widely publicized in the media, but the legal process related to them, the findings of the investigation, or an in-depth investigation of the woman's side were rarely shown.

## Are men completely innocent?

It would be wrong to believe that men are always the victims. Hundreds of thousands of women are still victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, and mental abuse. Every year, statistics related to women's safety present a horrifying picture. In such a situation, if women are found guilty in some cases, then putting all the women in the dock is not only unjust but also dangerous for social balance.

## The role of the media: Responsibility versus business

Media has been called the fourth pillar of democracy, but when this pillar forgets moral-

ity in the race for TRP, the foundation of society starts shaking. The job of journalism is to give information, not to create opinions. But today media often creates "mood," forms "opinions," and pronounces "verdicts." This trend claims to go beyond the justice system as well, which we call 'media trial.'

## Social media: Fuel to the fire

While mainstream media has its limitations, social media has made everyone a judge. WhatsApp forwards, Twitter trends, and Instagram reels—everywhere, questions are being raised on the character and intentions of women. Phrases like "every woman is a gold digger" and "women love only for benefits" have become common on social media. This environment is harmful not only for women but also for young men who bring suspicion into relationships instead of trust.

## The foundation of justice: Institutional thinking, not individual thinking

The biggest weakness of our society is that we draw conclusions for an entire class from one incident. If a woman cheated, it does not mean that every woman is untrustworthy. Similarly, if a man turns out to be a rapist, then every man cannot be looked at with suspicion. We will have to develop the habit of looking at the incident and the person in their socio-cultural context.

## An urge toward balance

Today, when the media is determining the thinking of the society, the responsibility of journalists, editors, and newsrooms is much greater. They have to decide whether they are 'showing the truth' or 'selling the truth.' At the same time, we—the viewers, readers, and citizens—also have to take the responsibility that we do not blindly believe every news story. Society will remain balanced only when we consider both men and women as human beings—with virtues, faults, emotions, and limitations. If the media does not understand this balance, then it will become not a carrier of information but a disseminator of prejudice.

By: Samriti Dhatwalia

Modern womanhood is a wild ride—equal parts empowering, exhausting, and, let's be honest, laugh-out-loud hilarious. In an age where memes have become the digital shorthand for shared experiences, women are using humor to spotlight the unique, sometimes absurd, and often universal challenges they face. From wardrobe woes to workplace juggling acts and the relentless balancing of expectations, memes and mishaps offer a window into the everyday LOL moments that define contemporary female life.

## The Meme-ification of Modern Womanhood

Scroll through any social feed and you'll find memes that perfectly capture the daily realities of being a woman today. These aren't just jokes—they're a form of solidarity, a way to say, "You're not alone in this!" Whether it's the struggle to find jeans that actually fit, the mystery of vanishing hair ties, or the bittersweet triumph of removing your bra at the end of a long day, these memes distill complex emotions into bite-sized, relatable images.

The popularity of Instagram accounts and online campaigns dedicated to "female problems" shows just how widespread these shared experiences are. With millions of followers, these platforms unite women through laughter, poking fun at everything from beauty standards to the myth of effortless multitasking.

## Mishaps: When Life Gets Messy (and Funny)

Everyday life is full of mishaps that, while mortifying in the moment, become the stuff of group chats and viral content. Take, for example, the classic bathroom blunder—accidentally walking into the wrong restroom or having your makeup smudge at the worst possible time. One YouTube recounting highlights the embarrassment of realizing you're the one in the wrong spiral, only to have the situation bloom into awkward hilarity. Wardrobe malfunctions are another universal theme: bras that dig in, hair caught in zippers, or the eternal quest for pockets that actually hold things. These little disasters are so common they've become comedic shorthand for "girl problems," inspiring memes and jokes that resonate across generations.

## The Art of the LOL Moment

What makes these moments so funny—and so important—is the way they cut through the pressure to be perfect. Modern women are expected to juggle careers, relationships, self-care, and social lives, all while projecting an image of effortless competence. Memes and LOL moments offer a much-needed release valve, allowing women to laugh at the chaos rather than be overwhelmed by it.



Consider the meme that shows a woman balancing a coffee, a conference call, and a crisis of confidence, with the caption: "Ah, the joys of womanhood in the modern era." It's sharp, witty, and instantly relatable, highlighting the absurdity of modern expectations while also creating a sense of camaraderie.

## Breaking Stereotypes, One Meme at a Time

Humor isn't just a coping mechanism—it's a tool for social change. Many memes deliberately subvert gender stereotypes, using irony and satire to challenge outdated notions about what women can or should do. Campaigns like "Real Life Superheroes" use memes to reclaim narratives, featuring real women who defy clichés and break barriers in their everyday lives.

These memes start with a stereotypical statement—"Women can't drive," for instance—then flip the script with an unexpected twist, celebrating real achievements and individuality. By turning the joke on its head, these memes encourage women to take pride in their quirks and accomplishments, rather than conform to narrow expectations.

## The Invisible Load: Multitasking and the Never-Ending To-Do List

Behind the humor lies a deeper truth: modern women are often stretched thin by the demands of daily life. The myth of multitasking persists, with many women feeling pressure to handle work, family, and personal obligations all at once. But as productivity experts point out, multitasking is myth—even computers don't actually do it. The result? Overwhelm, exhaustion, and a never-ending to-do list that never seems to shrink.

Memories about the "never-ending to-do list" or the chaos of trying to do everything at once are funny because they're true. They validate the frustration of feeling like there's never enough time, while also encouraging women to set

boundaries and prioritize what matters most.

## Beauty, Body, and the Pressure to Perform

No discussion of modern women's problems would be complete without mentioning the beauty standards that still loom large. From the sensory overload of wearing makeup all day to the discomfort of ill-fitting clothes, these issues are fodder for countless memes and LOL moments. The simple act of removing makeup or taking off a bra at the end of the day is celebrated as a small victory, a moment of relief that every woman understands.

## Finding Solidarity through Laughter

At the heart of all these memes, mishaps, and LOL moments is a sense of solidarity. Humor brings women together, helping them navigate the ups and downs of modern life with grace—and a healthy dose of sarcasm. It's a reminder that, while the challenges are real, so is the strength and resilience of women everywhere.

Each meme, each shared laugh, is a step toward chipping away at old barriers and building a more inclusive, understanding world. "Little by little, women are chipping away the patriarchy. The fact we have not been able to replace it yet doesn't mean we have failed; it means that the job is monumental. But it's not impossible." — Isabel Allende

## Laughing Through the Chaos

Modern women face a unique blend of pressures and possibilities, and humor is one of their greatest tools for survival. Memes and everyday mishaps aren't just entertainment—they're a way to process, connect, and push back against the impossible standards of modern life. So the next time you find yourself in a ridiculous situation, remember: if you can't fix it, at least you can laugh about it—and chances are, millions of other women are laughing right along with you. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

# Natural sunscreen: Exploring safe alternatives

By: Shahnaz Husain

Our skin goes through a lot of changes during summer. Hot sun rays and UV radiation harm skin, causing acne, blemishes, severe tanning, and wrinkles. Dermatologists recommend applying sunscreens with a minimum of SPF 30, and the market is flooded with high SPF sunscreens.

When it comes to sun protection, Ayurveda offers powerful solutions with natural ingredients that have inherent SPF properties. These natural sunscreens are gaining popularity as people seek to protect their skin from harmful UV rays while avoiding synthetic chemicals.

There are so many benefits to using homemade sunscreen over store-bought products. First of all, when you make it yourself, you know exactly what is in it. You aren't using any chemicals that could be harmful to your body or your skin.

Unlike chemical sunscreens, natural sunscreens don't get

absorbed into the skin, making them ideal for sensitive skin and those looking to avoid synthetic compounds. Homemade sunscreens are easy to make with ingredients like sandalwood, sesame oil, coconut oil, jojoba oil, Aloe Vera, etc. that nourish and care for the skin.

They're typically free of parabens, as well as the ingredients oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate, and octinoxate.

Coconut Oil: Coconut oil is one of the most used natural oils in India. It is widely used across the country because of its health benefits. But not many people know that it is a great way to protect against sun's rays –

Coconut oil offers multiple skin benefits, including SPF protection.

1. Take half a cup of virgin coconut oil, 2 Tablespoons of Non-Nano Zinc Oxide, 1 Tablespoon of Red Raspberry Seed Oil

Optional: 10 Drops of Essential Oils. Whip coconut oil up in a mixer. Carefully add

the zinc oxide, red raspberry seed oil, and essential oils. Once the oils and zinc oxide are mixed well, pour them into a small container.

2. Take a cup of coconut oil, add half a cup of Shea butter. Add water and mix well. Apply every morning to prevent the skin from sun damage.

3. Take 50 ml mineral water and add 1 tsp pure glycerine or aloe vera gel, and ½ tsp sunflower oil. Mix well to make a lotion and then add 3 to 4 tsp zinc oxide. You can also add 4 drops of vitamin E oil if the skin is normal to dry.

4. Take 10 drops of lavender essential oil, 1 tablespoon Pomegranate oil, 3/4 cup Coconut oil, 4 tablespoons Zinc Oxide, 2 tablespoons Arrowroot flour, 2 tablespoons Shea butter, and 4 capsules of Vitamin E.

Combine all ingredients except zinc oxide and arrowroot flour in a jar. Start a saucepan with 2 inches of water on the stove over medium/low heat. Place the jar in the saucepan and stir the contents until the

ingredients start to melt. When all ingredients have melted and combined, add in zinc oxide and arrowroot flour, a tablespoon at a time. Store in a cool place.

5. Wheat germ oil is equally effective as many great sunscreen options on the market. If you want to get the full benefit of wheat germ oil, you must apply it 30 minutes before leaving the house. If you have a long day of the sun ahead of you, carry the oil and reapply every 2 hours.

Always remember to apply homemade sunscreen at least 20 minutes before every period of direct exposure to sunlight. This is because you want the sun protection ingredients in your DIY sunscreen lotion to have enough time to bind properly onto your skin. The best way to figure out how much you should be using is by considering how much SPF you want for your DIY sunscreen. (The author is an internationally famous beauty expert and is called the herbal queen of India)



# Strikes on Gaza kill at least 60 people, local officials say

*‘Two strikes in the southern city of Khan Younis kills 10 people’*

**DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP), May 20:** Israeli strikes pounded Gaza overnight and into Tuesday, hitting a family home and a school-turned-shelter, and killing at least 60 people, Palestinian health officials said, as Israel pressed its war against Hamas despite mounting international condemnation.

Israel launched another major offensive in the territory in recent days, saying it aims to return dozens of hostages held by Hamas and destroy the militant group.

More than 300 have been killed in since the start of the latest onslaught, Israel says it aims to seize Gaza and hold on to territory there, displace hundreds of thousands of people and secure aid distribution.

As the new offensive ramps up, Israel agreed to allow a limited amount of aid into the war-ravaged territory after a 2 1/2 month blockade that prevented the entry of food, medicine and fuel, among other goods. The blockade prompted warnings from food experts of a risk of famine.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he made the decision to let in minimal aid after pressure from allies, who he said couldn't support Israel so long as "images of hunger" were coming



out of Gaza. Criticism of Israel's conduct intensified Monday when allies Canada, France and the United Kingdom threatened "concrete actions" against the country, including sanctions, and called on Israel to stop its "egregious" new military actions in Gaza.

Netanyahu rejected the criticism, saying it was "a huge prize" for Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack that would invite more such violence.

So far, just a handful of trucks have been sent into Gaza, which UN agencies say is nowhere near enough to meet the massive need. Some 600 trucks a day had entered during a ceasefire earlier this year.

**Israeli politician criticizes killing babies as a 'hobby'**

Criticism against Israel's conduct in Gaza came also from inside the country, with a leader of Israel's centre-left politics saying on Tuesday that Israel was becoming an "outcast among nations" because of the government's approach to the war.

"A sane country doesn't engage in fighting against civilians, doesn't kill babies as a hobby and doesn't set for itself the goals of expelling a population," Yair Golan, a retired general and leader of the opposition Democrats party, told Reshet Bet radio.

His comments were rare criticism from within Israel of its wartime conduct in Gaza. Many Israelis have criticised Netanyahu throughout the war, but that has been mostly limited to what opponents argue are his political motives to continue the war. Criticism like Golan's, over the war's toll on Palestinian civilians, has been almost unheard.

Netanyahu swiftly slammed Golan's remarks, calling them "wild incitement" against Israeli soldiers and accusing Golan of echoing "disgraceful antisemitic blood libels" against the country.

Golan, who donned his uniform during Hamas' 2023 attack to join the fight against the raiding militants, previously sparked an uproar when as deputy military chief of staff in 2016, he likened the atmosphere in Israel to that of Nazi-era Germany.

**Strikes pound Gaza**

Over recent days, strikes have pounded areas across Gaza and Israel has issued evacuation orders for Gaza's second-largest city, Khan Younis, which endured a previous offensive that left vast destruction. In the latest strikes, two in northern Gaza hit a family home and a school-turned-shelter, killing at

least 22 people, more than half of them women and children, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

A strike in the central city of Deir al-Balah killed 13 people, and another in the nearby built-up Nu-seirat refugee camp killed 15, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital.

Two strikes in the southern city of Khan Younis killed 10 people, according to Nasser Hospital.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which says it only targets militants and blames Hamas for civilian deaths because the group operates in densely populated areas.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting 251 others. The militants are still holding 58 captives, around a third believed to be alive, after most of the rest were returned in ceasefire agreements or other deals.

Israel's retaliatory offensive, which has destroyed large swaths of Gaza, has killed more than 53,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count. (AP)

# Taiwan's Prez downplays tariff tensions with US as 'frictions between friends'



**TAIPEI, May 20:** The Taiwanese president said Tuesday that trade tensions between the United States and Taiwan are just "frictions between friends" in a show of optimism as tariff negotiations are underway with Washington.

US President Donald Trump imposed 32% tariffs on all imports from Taiwan as part of sweeping duties levied against all US trading partners last month. The tariffs on Taiwanese goods were subsequently lowered to 10% for 90 days to allow for trade negotiations. Officials from both sides held a first round of talks last month, to be followed by another one in the coming weeks.

In a speech marking his first year as president and focusing on Taiwan's strategies to defuse the effects of US tariffs and military threats from China, Lai Ching-te struck an accommodating tone despite the tariff pressure.

The US and Taiwan have long "co-operated and have also encouraged each other to grow," he said. "There are bound to be frictions between friends, but they can eventually be reconciled."

"Even if there are differences of opinion, as long as there is a foundation of trust and sincere dialogue, they can understand each other better and deepen their friendship," he added.

The U.S. has traditionally been Taiwan's strongest unofficial ally in the face of military threats by China, which considers the self-ruled island its own territory, to be retaken by force if necessary. Washington is bound by its own laws to provide Taipei with the means to defend itself.

Lai said Taiwan would continue to strengthen its national defense capabilities, both through foreign military

procurement and domestic arms development, and stand "shoulder to shoulder" with its allies "to exert deterrent power."

"We will prepare adequately to avoid war and achieve the goal of peace," he said. He kept open the possibility of talks with Beijing, saying that "Taiwan is very willing to engage in exchanges and cooperation with China" as long as there is mutual respect and dignity.

Taiwan's economy is supported by massive semiconductor firms that supply microchips globally as well as other electronics, advanced manufacturing and green tech makers.

Lai said he would continue to encourage foreign investment in Taiwan, citing Monday's announcement by American technology company Nvidia about opening a new office in northern Taipei.

Nvidia's Taiwan-born CEO Jensen Huang also announced his company would build an artificial intelligence supercomputer on the island in partnership with TSMC, tech firm Foxconn and the Taiwanese government.

He also backed increased investments by Taiwanese firms in the US. In March, the island's largest chipmaker, TSMC, responded to Trump's tariff threats by pledging a new \$100 billion investment in the US, in addition to earlier commitments to invest more than \$65 billion in three factories in Arizona, one of which began production late last year.

However, Lai's controversial proposal to completely remove tariffs on US goods "on the basis of reciprocity," in addition to bumping up procurement of US products, triggered protests last week by Taiwanese farmers. (AP)

# EAM Jaishankar thanks Dutch Prime Minister for his country's firm stance against terrorism

**THE HAGUE, May 20:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday called on Dutch Prime Minister Dick Schoof and thanked him for the Netherlands' firm and resolute stance against terrorism.

Jaishankar is here on the first leg of his three-nation trip that will also take him to Denmark and Germany.

It is Jaishankar's first foreign visit after the four-day-long military confrontation between the Indian and Pakistani armed forces following the Pahalgalam attack.

"Delighted to call on PM Dick Schoof today in The Hague. Conveyed the warm greetings of PM @narendramodi and thanked him for the Netherlands' firm and resolute stance against terrorism," Jaishankar posted on X.

"Appreciate his commitment to taking the India-Netherlands partnership to newer heights. Assured that our teams will work hard to achieve these goals," he posted.

Schoof said he was happy to receive Jaishankar at the Catshuis, the official residence of the Prime Minister of the Netherlands.

"First of all, I expressed my support for India's fight against terrorism after the terrible attack last month in Pahalgalam. It is good for all parties that the violence between India and Pakistan has not escalated further," he said on X.

India carried out precision strikes under 'Operation Sindoor' on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgalam terror attack that killed 26 people.

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

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

Schoof said he discussed the bilateral strategic partnership during his talks with Jaishankar.

"This concerns long-term cooperation between the Netherlands and India in areas such as trade, innovative technology, agriculture and security. In a changing world, it is important for both the Netherlands and India that we can continue to count on each other," he added.

He said he looks forward to welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Netherlands soon to discuss this further.

Jaishankar on Monday met his Dutch counterpart, Caspar Veldkamp, and Defence Minister Ruben Brekelmans. (PTI)

# Slow progress, no major breakthroughs dampen hopes for Russia-Ukraine peace deal

**KYIV, May 20:** US President Donald Trump's phone calls with the leaders of Russia and Ukraine deepened expectations that progress might soon be made on ending those countries' more than three-year war, though frustration at the slow pace of negotiations and the absence of any significant breakthrough kept hopes low.

"It is obvious that Russia is trying to buy time to continue the war and occupation," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday on Telegram. "We are working with partners to put pressure on the Russians to behave differently," he added in an apparent reference to further international sanctions on Russia.

Ukraine has offered a comprehensive 30-day ceasefire, which Moscow has effectively rejected by imposing far-reaching conditions, and Zelenskyy proposed a face-to-face meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin but the Russian leader spurned that offer.

Trump said his personal intervention was needed to push peace efforts forward, and on Monday he held separate talks over the phone

with Zelenskyy and Putin.

Russia and Ukraine will "immediately" begin ceasefire negotiations, Trump announced, though there was no detail on when or where such talks might take place.

"The status quo has not changed," Mykhailo Podoliak, a senior adviser to Zelenskyy, wrote on the social platform X on Tuesday.

US officials have for the past few months urged Russia and Ukraine to reach a settlement, as Trump sought a swift end to Europe's biggest conflict since World War II.

Trump said his talks with Putin on Monday were "excellent," but European officials were sceptical about Russia's intentions.

"Putin has never changed his position," Estonian Defence Minister Hanno Pevkur said in Brussels on Tuesday. "Russia actually doesn't want to end this war."

The European Union's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said Russia's failure to negotiate in good faith should trigger threatened US sanctions.

# Chinese small boats landings on Taiwan a new source of concern

**TAIPEI, May 20:** China has long sought to intimidate Taiwan with its massive navy, air force and the world's largest standing army, but it's mere dinghies that are now causing the most consternation.

Taiwan's coast guard has documented five cases totalling 38 Chinese citizens crossing the 160-kilometre (100-mile) wide Taiwan Strait separating the self-governing island democracy from the authoritarian Chinese mainland, according to the body's deputy director-general Hsieh Ching-chin.

That includes at least one case posted to Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, in which a man speaking with a strong mainland Chinese accent is seen planting a Chinese flag on what he says is a Taiwanese beach. Scenes in the background appear to show a stretch of coastline south of the capital Taipei.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory, to be conquered by force if necessary. The man has not been found or publicly identified, and Taiwanese authorities are seeking to ascertain whether he received help from anyone on the island.

Another case involved a father and son who were apprehended shortly after reaching land, along with a man who came ashore at a fishing port in a popular tourist area north of Taipei.

The small size of the boats, some just inflatable for having fun at the beach, makes it difficult for Taiwan's radar to pick them up. More cam-

eras and other detection devices and manpower would be needed to cover the vast spaces of inhospitable coastline surrounding the island, but the terrain would make a Chinese D-Day-type landing highly challenging.

While such cases are not unheard of, they come amid a rise in tensions between the sides, with Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te designating China as an enemy to be defended against, and China holding frequent military exercises seen as a rehearsal for an invasion or boycott of Taiwan.

Those entering Taiwan illegally are liable to a fine of 500,000 Taiwan dollars (USD 16,666) and five years in prison, but such penalties are usually waived as long as no one is hurt and there is no property damage. In the 1990s, there was a wave of hijackings by Chinese to Taiwan, but the perpetrators were sent home after serving brief prison terms in Taiwan.

In addition to facing China's formidable military, Taiwan faces a range of so-called "gray area" strategies, including in the media and among entertainers hoping to grab a share of the massive Chinese market. Taiwan has also deported the Chinese wives of Taiwanese men for posting videos supporting a takeover of the island.

The small boat landings may be a further attempt to confuse and undermine confidence among the public, Hsieh said. (AP)

# Netherlands sees great opportunities to take bilateral cooperation with India to next level: Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp

**THE HAGUE, May 20:** The Netherlands sees great opportunities to take its bilateral cooperation with India to the next level and looks forward to establishing a long-term strategic partnership with it, including in key areas such as security and critical emerging technologies, the country's Foreign Affairs Minister Caspar Veldkamp has said.

Veldkamp's comments came after he met visiting Indian counterpart S Jaishankar on Monday. During their meeting, the two leaders also discussed the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Pahalgalam on April 22.

"After meeting in #India last month, I was delighted to welcome

@DrSJaishankar to The Hague. We discussed the aftermath of the heinous terrorist attack in Pahalgalam, and the current halt of hostilities with Pakistan as a step towards de-escalation," Veldkamp posted on X.

"In this rapidly changing world, I see great opportunities to take our bilateral cooperation to the next level. We look forward to the establishment of our long-term strategic partnership, which includes key areas such as security and critical emerging technologies," he said.

Jaishankar, who is here on the first leg of his three-nation trip that will also



take him to Denmark and Germany, appreciated the Netherlands' strong condemnation of the Pahalgalam attack and support for zero tolerance against terrorism. It is Jaishankar's first foreign visit after the four-day-long military confrontation between the Indian and Pakistani armed forces.

India carried out precision strikes under 'Operation Sindoor' on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgalam terror attack that killed 26 people.

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

India and Pakistan reached an understanding on May 10 to end the conflict

after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

In a post on X after his meeting with Veldkamp, Jaishankar said, "Thank FM Caspar Veldkamp @ministerBZ of the Netherlands for hosting me today in The Hague. Appreciate the Netherlands' strong condemnation of the Pahalgalam attack and support for zero tolerance against terrorism."

"Had wide-ranging discussions on deepening our bilateral partnership and engagement with the EU. Exchanged views on the global situation in an era of multi-polarity."

Jaishankar also met Dutch Defence Minister Ruben Brekelmans, who, after the meeting, said, "In these turbulent times, close cooperation with India is more important than ever. Great honour to receive Minister of Foreign Affairs @DrSJaishankar."

"We discuss security challenges in Asia/Europe and our Defence partnership. Looking forward to deepening our cooperation!" he said.

Jaishankar also interacted with representatives of the Indian community on Monday. "Value the contribution of the community to building a stronger relationship between India and the Netherlands," he said. (PTI)

# Senate advances legislation to regulate stablecoins, a form of cryptocurrency

**WASHINGTON, May 20:** The Senate has voted to move forward with legislation to regulate a form of cryptocurrency called stablecoins, two weeks after Democrats blocked the measure.

Monday's 66-32 procedural vote keeps one of President Donald Trump's top legislative priorities on track for passage and highlights the growing political strength of the cryptocurrency industry, which spent heavily in last year's election and has amassed a large war chest for next year's midterms. Several Democrats reversed and voted to move forward with the legislation after negotiations with Republicans in recent days. The fate of the legislation, which would regulate how stablecoin issuers operate in the U.S., had been uncertain in recent weeks despite early bipartisan support. Senate Democrats blocked it earlier this month in part over concerns about how Trump and his family were benefiting from private crypto endeavors, including a newly launched stablecoin.

Republicans won support from Democrats after strengthening regulations on foreign issuers, beefing up enforcement and barring large tech companies like Meta and Google from issuing their own stablecoins. The Senate will now consider the bill and could vote on final passage as soon as this week, depending on the number of amendments offered

by Democrats and Republicans. Still, Democrats were divided on the legislation. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren and others have said the bill could help Trump enrich himself and needs stronger protections.

"Unfortunately, the final bill does nothing — nothing — to rein in the President's crypto corruption," Warren said ahead of the bill's passage. She said the legislation would "accelerate Trump's corruption by supercharging the size of the stablecoin market" and make Trump "the regulator of his own financial product."

Negotiators added tougher ethics rules for members of Congress and the executive branch, including preventing members of Congress from issuing stablecoins. But Warren and several other Democrats said it wasn't enough. "This Congress should be a check on the president," Warren said. The bill would aim to create a federal framework to regulate the stablecoin industry, which is currently governed by a patchwork of existing federal and state laws.

Stablecoins are a fast-growing corner of the cryptocurrency industry that have produced enormous profits for some of the major players involved. They offer a buffer from cryptocurrency's notorious volatility because they are pegged to real-world assets, like U.S. dollars or gold. Typically, that means a single stablecoin is worth USD 1, making them

a much more reliable digital asset for commercial transactions than other forms of crypto.

The move to regulate the industry has been bipartisan, but Trump's involvement in the crypto industry complicated the legislation's path. Trump launched a meme coin earlier this year that has generated more than USD 320 million in fees for its creators, according to the blockchain analysis firm Chainalysis. And he is set to attend a dinner May 22 that's open to almost anyone who buys enough of the coins.

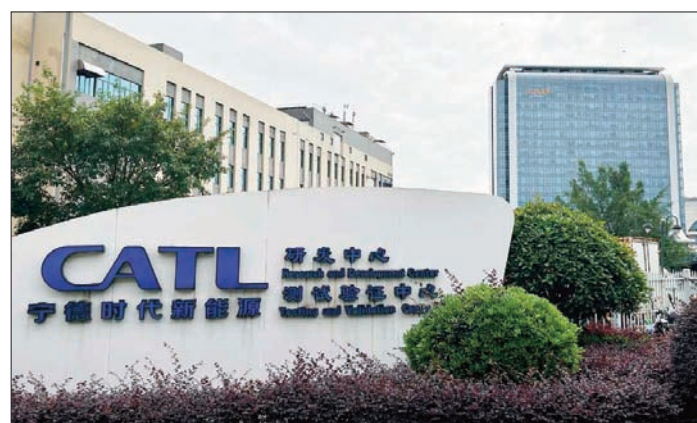
Another Trump-family linked crypto venture called World Liberty Financial recently announced that it was issuing its own stablecoin, called USD1. The stablecoin got a huge boost when World Liberty Financial announced last week that an investment fund in the United Arab Emirates would be using USD 2 billion worth of USD1 to purchase a stake in Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange. A former skeptic turned zealous promoter, Trump has promised to usher in a golden age for the cryptocurrency industry. His administration has already taken many early actions without Congress to boost crypto, including establishing a strategic bitcoin reserve and undoing previous enforcement actions. But Trump needs Congress to get some of his and the deep-pocketed industry's top priorities passed, including enacting the stablecoin legislation. (AP)

# Shares in China's CATL, world's biggest EV battery maker, surge in Hong Kong after USD 4.6 billion IPO

**HONG KONG, May 20:** Shares in CATL, the world's largest maker of batteries for electric vehicles, jumped about 17 per cent Tuesday in its Hong Kong trading debut after it raised about USD 4.6 billion in the world's largest initial public offering this year. The solid reception for Chinese company, Contemporary Amperex Technology Co., in Hong Kong suggests there is still an appetite among international investors for leading Chinese manufacturers despite trade tensions between Beijing and Washington.

It sold more than 135 million shares at their maximum offer price, 263 Hong Kong dollars (USD 33.6) each. Its shares rose after they started trading at 296 Hong Kong dollars (USD 37.80), 12.5 per cent higher than their offer price. They were up about 17 per cent by mid-afternoon local time. CATL also has shares listed in Shenzhen, a business hub neighbouring Hong Kong. They initially fell but then edged 0.9 per cent higher on Tuesday.

CATL held a nearly 38 per cent global market share for EV batteries in 2024, its listing documents showed. It supplies automakers like Tesla,



Volkswagen, BMW, Mercedes-Benz, Ford, Toyota and Honda.

The company has faced pressure from the US. In January, the US Defence Department added it to a list of companies it says have ties to China's military, an accusation that CATL denied. It called the inclusion a "mistake."

In April, John Mooleenaar, chairperson of the US House Select Committee on China, wrote to the CEOs of JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Bank of America to demand that the two

American banks withdraw from their work on CATL's IPO. But the two banks stayed on.

In the US, Ford Motor Co. is licensing technology from CATL to build batteries, but the plan faces resistance from some Republican lawmakers, who have expressed concern that the Chinese company could benefit from US tax dollars.

Because the US has listed CATL as having ties to the US military, the share offering excluded onshore US investors. However, many large US

institutional investors have offshore accounts that allowed them to participate. The company said it plans to use most of the net proceeds from the IPO to build its factory in Hungary, meant to bring it closer to the manufacturing facilities of its main European customers.

Government officials, including Hong Kong's Financial Secretary Paul Chan, attended its gong-striking ceremony in the city's vibrant business district, Central, on Tuesday. The company's chairman Robin Zeng said his business is committed to becoming a zero-carbon technology company.

"Listing in Hong Kong means we are more broadly integrated into the global capital markets, and it's also a new starting point for us to promote the global zero-carbon economy," Zeng said.

CATL recorded a profit of 55.3 billion yuan (USD 7.6 billion) in 2024, up 16.8 per cent from 2023. Its listing surpassed JX Advanced Metals' USD 2.9 billion IPO in Japan in March, which was previously the largest this year, according to Renaissance Capital, a provider of pre-IPO research and IPO-focused ETFs. (AP)



## WCD director visits Upper Siang, reviews women and child welfare initiatives



HT Bureau

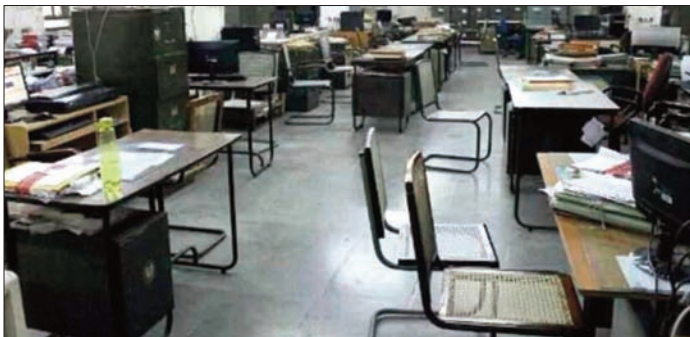
**NAMSAL, May 20:** D Shankar, Director, Ministry of Women and Child Development (WCD), Government of India, concluded a three-day visit to Upper Siang district as part of his inspection of projects under the Vibrant Villages initiative of the Jengging Project.

During his visit, Shankar toured several Anganwadi Centres (AWCs) and inspected the newly constructed One Stop Centre (OSC) building in Yingkong, aimed at supporting women in distress. He also visited the Women Help Desk at the local police station and the Pahung Jino Rural Mart, which plays a key role in promoting local entrepreneurship and livelihood opportunities.

While engaging with members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and staff of the WCD department, the Director commended their dedication and discussed ways to further enhance women and child welfare services in the region.

A scheduled visit to the Vibrant Villages of Tuting and Siang was unfortunately cancelled due to inclement weather and persistent road blockades. Before concluding his visit, Shankar held a review meeting with Deputy Commissioner Talo Jerang and heads of various line departments. The meeting focused on the progress of the Vibrant Villages Programme and addressed implementation challenges, while reaffirming the Centre's commitment to holistic rural development and gender empowerment in the region.

## DC issues strict attendance order for government officials in Kurung Kumey



**KOLORIANG, May 20:** Taking strong exception to the increasing trend of unauthorised absences among government officials, Kurung Kumey Deputy Commissioner Vishakha Yadav has issued an executive order making it mandatory for all Heads of Offices (HoOs) to remain present at their respective workplaces during prescribed office hours.

The directive, issued on Monday, comes in response to reports of rising instances of unauthorised and unreported absences by government officers and staffers across the district—an issue that has severely hampered governance, disrupted public service delivery, and eroded trust in the administrative machinery.

In her order, the DC warned that no officer or official shall leave their headquarters or place of posting without prior written permission from the competent authority, stating that any such unauthorised movement would be considered “wilful dereliction of duty.”

Further tightening the framework, the DC instructed all Drawing and Disbursing Officers (DDOs) and controlling officers to maintain daily attendance records and report habitual absenteeism to her office for swift action under the CCS (CCA) Rules.

She cautioned that future violations would trigger formal disciplinary proceedings under the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964, particularly Rule 3(1)(ii), which mandates devotion to duty and absolute integrity from all government servants.

In a proactive move to engage public oversight, DC Yadav also urged citizens to report absences of government officials with geotagged photographs to the DC office for prompt action. (Agencies)

## ‘Shaurya Samman Yatra’ prayer meet held in Pasighat Honouring Pahalgam victims and brave soldiers

HT Bureau

**NAMSAL, May 20:** A solemn prayer meet titled ‘Shaurya Samman Yatra’ was held at Gandhi Chowk, Pasighat, on Tuesday to express solidarity with the Indian Armed Forces and pay homage to the 26 innocent lives lost in the Pahalgam terror attack, reportedly perpetrated by Pakistan-sponsored terrorists. The event also honored the memory of brave soldiers who lost their lives during “Operation Sindoor”, the retaliatory action against the attackers.

Organised by Samvardhinee Nyas, Pasighat, the event drew a large gathering, including members from Self Help Groups (SHGs), IRBN Women, Kali Mandir Women Group, and the Nepali Women's Group, all united in their message of patriotism and resilience.

Speaking on the occasion, Smt. Jaya Tasung Moyong, Convener of Samvardhinee Nyas, delivered a passionate address:

“Though I may not fight on the border or console a grieving soldier's family, I can offer my heartfelt prayers for the Shakti, Atmabal, and Suraksha of our Indian Army. This gathering is a symbol of our unwavering patriotism.”

Religious leaders representing Donyi Polo, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim communities led interfaith prayers for the departed souls and for the strength of the nation.



## Over 50 people from Haryana arrested in Arunachal for cheating in recruitment exam

NVS routinely holds recruitment exams to fill vacancies in its schools and offices

**ITANAGAR, May 20:** Over 50 people from Haryana were arrested in Arunachal Pradesh for allegedly cheating in a recruitment examination conducted by the Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS), police said on Tuesday.

They were arrested for allegedly using electronic devices to cheat in the examination, held on Sunday, for the recruitment of lab assistants and junior secretariat assistants (JSA), Superintendent of Police (Capital) Rohit Rajbir Singh said, addressing a press conference.

The NVS routinely holds recruitment exams to fill vacancies in its schools and offices.

“A total of 53 candidates have been arrested for attempting to use advanced electronic devices, including GSM-enabled gadgets and micro earpieces, to cheat during the exams. From them, 29 devices were seized, and many of those arrested have already confessed to their crimes,” Singh said.

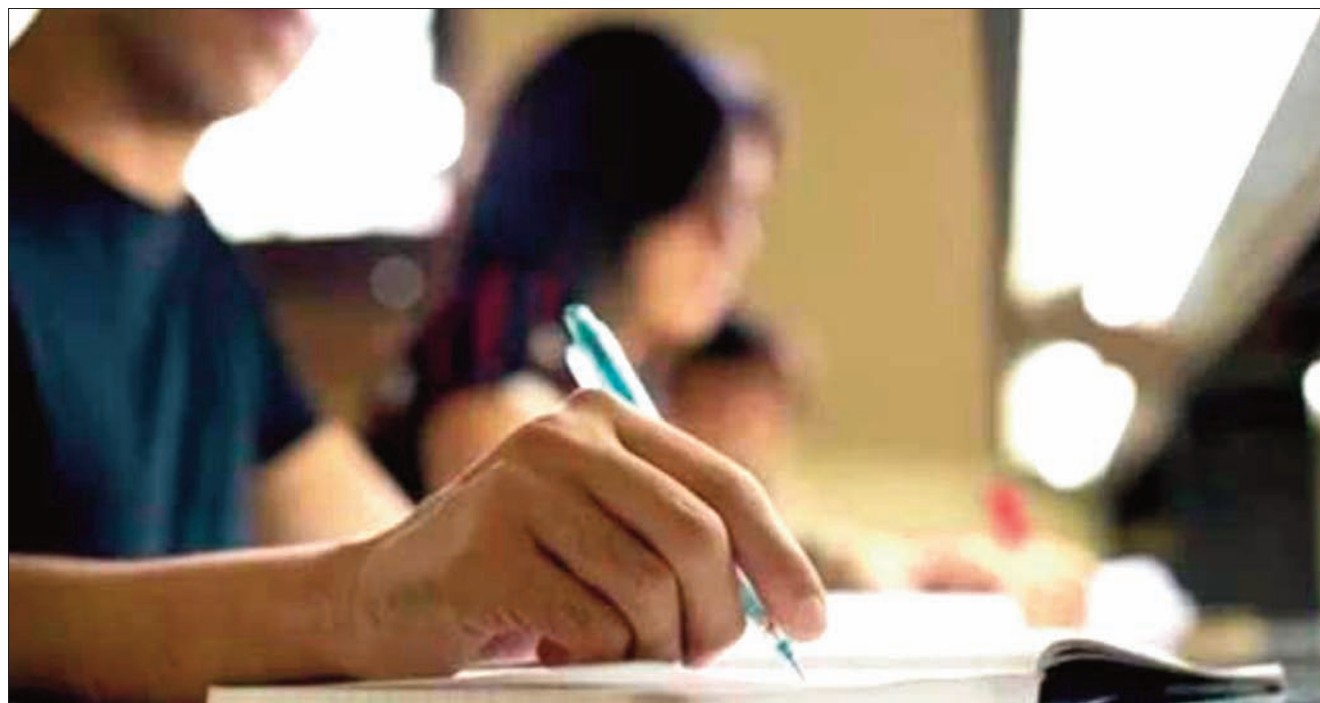
The syndicate allegedly coordinated by a Haryana-based network targeted exam centres in remote locations, like Itanagar and Dimapur, which were chosen deliberately to exploit perceived security lapses, he said.

Acting on credible inputs, 23 candidates were apprehended during pre-exam frisking at the Kingcup Public School, he said.

Another suspect was caught from the Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya, he said.

Subsequent investigations led to the arrest of the rest of the accused, he added.

All of them have been booked under multiple sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, IT Act, and the Public Examination



(Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, the SP said.

Separate FIRs have been registered at the Niti Vihar and Chimpu Police Station, he said.

Singh said the preliminary investigation revealed that the racket approached candidates and their families, promising guaranteed selection in exchange for large sums of money.

The gang manipulated exam centre choices to divert candidates to distant locations, reducing the risk of detection. Once admit cards were issued, candidates were supplied with GSM-based devices and trained in their discreet use, he said.

“On exam day, the gadgets, hidden in undergarments and ears, enabled real-time communication with external handlers. Candidates whispered the question paper code

into the device, and answers were relayed back immediately,” he said.

“The CBSE has been officially notified, and investigation teams have been sent to Haryana to apprehend key handlers and mid-dlemen,” Singh said.

Similar incidents were also reported for Gangtok, Chandigarh, and Shimla, which suggests a nationwide racket, prompting a deeper probe into its scale and reach, he said. (PTI)

## AAPWU demands immediate cancellation of casual staff transfers in Arunachal Pradesh



HT Bureau

**NAMSAL, May 20:** The All Arunachal Pradesh Workers' Union (AAPWU) has submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister and Chief Secretary of Arunachal Pradesh, demanding the immediate cancellation of recent transfer orders of casual/contingency staff from departments including PHED & WS, PWD, and Power.

In a press briefing, AAPWU president Tadar Chai criticised the transfer of workers from areas such as Sangram, Nyapin, Sango, and Phassang without valid justification. He emphasised that these workers face severe hardships, such as lack of accommodation, transportation, and the absence of new projects in the transfer locations.

“Most of these workers are nearing retirement and cannot commute 50-60 km daily. Government guidelines clearly state that casual staff should not be transferred unless under project-based requirements,” said Chai.

The union fears that such decisions disregard the welfare of low-income workers. AAPWU has warned that if their demands are not met, they may initiate democratic protests from the district to the state level.

“We are forming a team to visit Sangram for a ground report and will meet officials and workers. We seek the intervention of CM Pema Khandu, who has always stood for employee welfare,” Chai added.

The union expressed gratitude for the recent salary hike for casual staff but urged the government to uphold the workers' dignity and livelihoods by canceling unjust transfer orders.

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## Arunachal records highest-ever monthly GST collection in April

**ITANAGAR, May 20:** In a significant fiscal milestone, Arunachal Pradesh has recorded its highest-ever monthly Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection, amounting to Rs 332 crore in April 2025, reflecting a 66% increase compared to the same period last financial year.

According to a release from the CGST & CX Commissionerate (Anti-Evasion Unit), this growth in GST revenue mirrors the national trend, with India's total GST collection reaching an all-time high of Rs 2.37 lakh crore in April 2025—a 12.6% year-over-year increase.

Since the rollout of GST in July 2017, Arunachal Pradesh has seen a

sharp rise in its taxpayer base, which currently stands at approximately 20,000 registered taxpayers, the release noted.

To mark this achievement and to promote GST awareness ahead of its eighth anniversary, the Central GST Itanagar Commissionerate organized a cyclothon on May 18 under the theme ‘Sunday on Cycles’.

Despite rainy conditions, around 45 participants gathered at Bank Tinali, where the rally was flagged off at 8 am, culminating at Indira Gandhi Park. The event also aimed to encourage physical fitness and healthy living among the public. (Agencies)

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## MP Rebia inspects Naharlagun Railway Station Flags Key Concerns

**NAHARLAGUN, May 20:** Rajya Sabha MP Nabam Rebia paid a surprise visit to the Naharlagun railway station on Monday to assess its condition and services. He was accompanied by Roger Nabam Hina, member of the Divisional Railway Users Consultative Committee (Rangia Division).

During the inspection, Rebia expressed serious concern over the lack of cleanliness at the station and urged both railway authorities and passengers to maintain hygiene and ensure the station remains clean and welcoming.

Highlighting increasing passenger demand, Rebia called for the daily operation of the Shatabdi Express between Itanagar and Guwahati. He also urged the Railways to provide halt stations at Gumto for both the Shatabdi Express and the Vistadome train, noting the potential benefits for commuters from surrounding areas.

Additionally, Rebia pressed for the urgent introduction of a new long-distance train connecting Naharlagun to southern India, to im-



prove regional connectivity.

Interacting with the station master, Rebia assured that he would personally raise these issues with the Union Minister of Railways. He also expressed dismay over the dilapidated condition of the road connecting the railway station to the national highway, calling for its immediate repair. The visit underscored Rebia's commitment to addressing public infrastructure challenges and enhancing travel convenience for the people of Arunachal Pradesh. (Agencies)



# Rahul Gandhi's 'khata-khat' economics crushing under its own weight in Karnataka: BJP

## 'Where is the Congress leadership'

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Rahul Gandhi's "khata-khat economics" is crashing under its own weight in Karnataka, the BJP said on Tuesday, alleging that the Congress' poll promises of cash doles in the state have turned out to be "hollow and false" when it comes to delivery.

This came after Gandhi alleged that the BJP follows a model under which select rich people get all the money and resources, whereas in the Congress model, money is put into the bank accounts and the pockets of the poor.

The Congress leader was speaking at an event in Hosapete to mark two years in office of the Congress government in Karnataka during which over one lakh title deeds were distributed to eligible beneficiaries, whose "undocumented habitations" have been declared as revenue villages.



Hitting back, BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari wrote on X, "Rahul Gandhi's 'khata-khat' economics is crashing under its own weight."

"He loudly claims that crores have been transferred to women in Karnataka under the Gruha Lak-

shmi Yojana. But reality bites — his own Congress government admits there's no money and delays are inevitable," Bhandari said.

"False promises, hollow claims — typical Congress model. Just noise, no delivery!" he charged. During Karnataka assembly

polls, Gandhi had promised that financial assistance under various schemes would be credited to the beneficiaries' accounts "khata-khat, khata-khat (timely and swiftly)."

Bhandari also slammed the Congress for celebrating its government's two years in office in Karnataka at a time when heavy downpour in Bengaluru for the past 36 hours has thrown life out of gear in the city.

"Three lives lost in the devastating Karnataka floods and the state is drowning in severe waterlogging and civic chaos. But where is the Congress leadership?"

"Instead of addressing the crisis, they're busy attending a celebratory anniversary event — completely disconnected from the ground reality," the BJP spokesperson charged. (PTI)

## Abhishek Banerjee to represent Trinamool in all-party delegation on Op Sindoor

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Trinamool Congress national general secretary and Lok Sabha MP Abhishek Banerjee will represent the party in the multi-party delegations that would visit different countries to convey India's stand post Operation Sindoor, the party announced on Tuesday.

The decision came after Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju called Trinamool supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, a source said.

"Smt Mamata Banerjee nominates Shri Abhishek Banerjee to represent us in the all-party delegation for India's global stand against terrorism. His voice will echo India's commitment to peace, justice and global cooperation," Trinamool said in a post on X. The source claimed Rijiju called Mamata Banerjee to "pacify" her and seek her suggestions for a representative to the multi-party delegations from her party.

Earlier, the Centre named Trinamool MP and former India cricketer Yusuf Pathan as a member of one of the seven diplomatic delegations that will travel to different foreign countries to put across India's stand on tackling terrorism against the backdrop of Operation Sindoor.

However, Yusuf later opted out.

On Monday, both Mamata Banerjee and Abhishek Banerjee said the Centre should not decide who the party nominates for the multi-party delegations.

The Centre on Sunday announced the names of the members of the seven delegations, comprising political leaders, parliamentarians and former ministers from various parties.

The seven delegations are being led by Baijayant Panda and Ravi Shankar Prasad (both BJP), Sanjay Kumar Jha (JD-U), Shrikant Shinde (Shiv Sena), Shashi Tharoor (Congress), Kanimozhi (DMK) and Supriya Sule (NCP-SP). The delegations will visit 32 countries and the EU headquarters in Brussels, Belgium. (PTI)

## 3/4th of India's population at 'high' to 'very high' heat risk: CEEW study

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** About 57 per cent of Indian districts, home to 76 per cent of India's total population, are currently at 'high' to 'very high' heat risk, according to a new study.

According to the study published on Tuesday by Delhi-based climate and energy think-tank Council on Energy Environment and Water (CEEW), the 10 states and union territories with the highest heat risk include Delhi, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

It also found that the number of very warm nights has increased faster than that of very hot days in the last decade.

Very warm nights and very hot days are defined as periods when minimum and maximum temperatures rise above the 95th percentile threshold, i.e., what was normal for 95 per cent of the time in the past.

As part of the study, CEEW researchers developed a Heat Risk Index (HRI) for 734 districts, using 40 years of climate data (1982-2022) and satellite images to study heat trends, land use, water bodies and green cover.

They also included data on population, buildings, health and socio-economic factors, along with night temperatures and humidity, for a comprehensive picture of heat risk.

"Our study found that 417 out of 734 Indian districts fell in the high and very high risk categories (151 under high risk and 266 under very high risk). A total of 201 districts fell in the moderate category and 116 fell in either the low or very low categories.

"This does not mean that these districts are free of heat risk but that it is relatively lesser than that of other districts," Vishwas



Chitale, senior programme lead at CEEW, said.

According to the study, the number of very hot days is increasing in India, but concerning, the number of very warm nights is increasing even more, creating health risks.

High night temperatures are considered dangerous because the body does not get a chance to cool down. Increasing nighttime temperature is more common in cities because of the urban heat island effect, in which the metro areas are significantly hotter than their surroundings.

"The rise in very warm nights is most noticeable in districts with a large population (over 10 lakh), which are often home to Tier-I and Tier-II cities. In the last decade, Mumbai saw 15 additional very warm nights per summer, Bengaluru (11), Bhopal and Jaipur (7 each), Delhi (6), and Chennai (4)," the report said.

The study revealed that even in the traditionally cooler Himalayan regions, where heat thresholds are lower than in the plains and coasts, both very hot days and very warm nights have increased.

This could severely impact the fragile mountain ecosystems.

For example, in the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, the number of very hot days and very warm

nights rose by over 15 days and nights each summer.

The study also showed that north India's summer humidity climbed from 30-40 per cent to 40-50 per cent in the last decade, worsening heat stress, especially in the Indo-Gangetic plain where farm workers toil outdoors.

Also, early mornings now feel hotter due to humid conditions. Cities like Delhi, Chandigarh, Jaipur and Lucknow have seen a 6 to 9 per cent rise.

CEEW researchers said cities like Mumbai, Delhi and much of the Indo-Gangetic plain face the highest exposure as high population density, dense buildings and existing socio-economic and health issues worsen heat risks.

Built-up areas grew rapidly between 2005 and 2023, especially in Tier-II and Tier-III cities, trapping heat.

Districts in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and others face greater vulnerability due to high temperatures and health factors.

In contrast, districts in Odisha with more green cover and water bodies are better able to cope, they said. Extreme heat broke all records in 2024, the hottest year on record in India and globally. This year, the country recorded its first heatwave on February 27-28, much earlier than April 5 last year.

Severe and frequent heatwaves are further burdening low-income households in the country, which often have poor access to water and cooling, and testing the endurance of outdoor workers toiling in the searing sun, forcing them to take frequent breaks.

Studies show India could lose the equivalent of 35 million full-time jobs and experience a 4.5 per cent reduction in GDP by 2030. (PTI)

## After Rijiju's phone call to Uddhav, Sena (UBT) extends support to all-party delegations

**MUMBAI, May 20:** Days after it raised a call for boycotting all-party delegations, the Shiv Sena (UBT) on Tuesday said the party would support India's global outreach on terror in the "national interest" after Union Minister Kiren Rijiju called up Uddhav Thackeray.

The Sena (UBT) also stated that the Centre should follow the protocol of informing parties about these delegations to avoid "chaos and mismanagement".

"Union Minister Kiren Rijiju spoke to Uddhav Thackeray over the telephone on Sunday to discuss his party's participation in the all-party delegations visiting various countries," the Sena (UBT) stated on X.

The party said it was reassured that the delegations are about articulating India's stand against terrorism and not about politics. "On being reassured, we have also assured the government that we will do what is right and what is needed for our country via this delegation," the Sena (UBT) said. It said the party's Rajya Sabha member, Priyanka Chaturvedi, will be a part of delegations with other MPs nationwide.

Notably, Sena (UBT) spokesperson Sanjay Raut on Sunday said constituents of the INDIA bloc should have boycotted the Union government's move to send all-party delegations to different countries, claiming they will defend the "sins and crimes" committed by the government. India is sending all-party delegations to the capitals of various countries to explain its position on terrorism emanating from Pakistan against the backdrop of the Pahalgam terror attack and Operation Sindoor.

Fifty-one political leaders, parliamentarians and former ministers cutting across party lines will be part of the seven delegations. Sena (UBT) said all political parties have expressed support to the Prime Minister in the fight against terrorism, especially Pakistan-based terrorism, to destroy their infrastructure and bases.

"We all are united in the armed forces' action against terrorism; there must be no two ways about it," the party stated. Though it would continue to seek explanation about the "intelligence failure" in the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 persons were killed, the Sena (UBT) also stressed that Pakistan-based terrorism should be exposed.

"We do have our opinions about the diplomatic situation and the failed intelligence/security apparatus on Pahalgam, and we will keep asking questions in the best interest of our nation, within our country. However, we must rally globally to expose Pak-based terrorism, to isolate and destroy it," it said.

The Sena (UBT) has communicated to the Union government about its support to the cause, even as it pointed out that "a protocol of better informing the parties could be followed about these delegations, to avoid chaos and mismanagement".

"We have reaffirmed our support for any such action in the national interest. We have also demanded an all-party meeting which should be chaired by the Prime Minister at the earliest, to discuss (developments ranging from) Pahalgam to Operation Sindoor," it stated. (PTI)

## 'Nuclear power stations testimonies to his contributions': Ramesh condoles Srinivasan's demise

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Tuesday condoled the passing away of former Atomic Energy Commission chairman M R Srinivasan and said the nuclear power stations at Kalpakkam, Rawatbhata, Kaiga, Kakrapar, and Narora are shining testimonies to his yeoman contributions to nation-building. Srinivasan, who played a key role in the country's indigenous nuclear energy programme, died in Udhagamandalam, Tamil Nadu, on Tuesday, his family said.

He was 95 and is survived by his wife and daughter.

"India's legendary nuclear technologist Dr. M. R. Srinivasan has just passed away. Picked by Homi Bhabha himself, he played a pivotal role in the setting up of India's very first nuclear power plant at Tarapur in the late 60s. Later, he led the team that established India's extensive nuclear power complex at Kalpakkam," Ramesh said in a post on X. It was under his inspiring leadership that India resolutely and successfully withstood the withdrawal of Canadian association

after India's nuclear test of May 1974, the former environment minister said. "The nuclear power stations now operating at Kalpakkam, Rawatbhata, Kaiga, Kakrapar, and Narora are all shining testimonies to his yeoman contributions to nation-building," Ramesh said. "He was a man of varied interests and in later years became deeply concerned with environmental issues. His 2002 memoir is essential reading and tells the story of India's nuclear programme from his unique perspective," he said.

Srinivasan had been the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission from 1987 to 1990 and also a member of the Planning Commission between 1996-98, Ramesh pointed out.

"It has been my good fortune to have known him for a long time and he is someone who has left a deep and lasting impression on me by the strength of his commitments, his deep appreciation of the larger social functions of science, and his profound understanding of India's rich cultural traditions," Ramesh said. (PTI)

### KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR OF SERICULTURE, DIPHU

No. Addl.DSDG.192/Pt/2021-2022/34,

Dated Diphu the 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2025

#### SHORT TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tender in plain paper affixing non-refundable KAAC money receipt of Rs. 10.00 (Rupees Ten) only are hereby invited from PWD/KAAC registered Contractors and will be received on 21/5/2025 to 30/5/2025 upto 3:00 P.M. and subsequently open on the same day in presence of Tenderers or their authorized agencies if any.

In case the opening day of Tender happened to be any Holiday/Bandh, the Tender will be received and opened on the next day.

The undersigned reserve the right to accept or reject one or all Tenders without assigning any reason thereof and will not bound himself/herself to accept the lowest one.

#### GROUP-A. UNDER THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF SERICULTURE, DIPHU:

Sl. No	Name of works	Tender Value (in lakh)	Earnest SC/ST-1% 2%	Money Others-	Time completion	of
1.	Repairing of Rearing House at CMG, Bithiphang, Diphu	12.00	SC/ST=12,000.00	Others=24,000.00	30 days	

#### GROUP-B. UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SERICULTURE, DIPHU

Sl. No	Name of works	Tender Value (in lakh)	Earnest SC/ST-1% 2%	Money Others-	Time completion	of
1.	Repairing Office building of SS, Diphu at Seri. Complex	10.00	SC/ST=10,000.00	Others=20,000.00	30 days	

#### GROUP-C. UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SERICULTURE, Hamren :

Sl. No	Name of works	Tender Value (in lakh)	Earnest SC/ST-1% 2%	Money Others-	Time completion	of
1.	Repairing of Rearing House ECC, Kolonga	10.00	SC/ST=10,000.00	Others=20,000.00	30 days	

#### TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- The rate should be quoted as % (Percent) scheduled of rate works for all division under CPWD for the year 2021.
- Earnest Money should be deposited in favour of the undersigned in the form of call deposit and should be attached along with Tender, without which no Tender will be allowed.
- The following documents (Xerox) should be attached along with the Tender:
  - KAAC Professional Clearance Certificate.
  - Sale Tax Clearance Certificate/GST Registration No. along with PAN Card.
  - Caste Certificate for ST/SC.
  - Personal Bank Passbook with A/C no.
- Payment will be made subject to availability of fund.

Sd/-

i/c Additional Director of Sericulture, Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

No. Addl.DSDG.192/Pt/2021-2022/34-A,

Dated Diphu the 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2025



## Communities bordering Nagaland and Assam hold cultural exchange programme

**KOHIMA, May 20:** The Phom community of Nagaland bordering Sivasagar district of Assam held a cultural exchange programme on May 16 at Yonglok under Tamu sub-division of Longleng district of Nagaland, an official statement said recently. MLA and Leader of Opposition, Government of Assam, Debabrata Saikia, graced the occasion as the special guest, while MLA A Pongshi Phom of Nagaland graced the occasion as guest of honour, and MLA, B Bangtick Phom was the chief host. The programme commenced with an invocation pronounced by Pastor Longleng Town Baptist Church Rev H Beau Phom.

The highlights of the day long programme included cultural dance performed by Tamu village men (Nagaland), Bura Namsang women (Nagaland), Bamboo dance by Shetep village (Nagaland), Jeng Behu (Assam), Husori Behu (Assam), Kangching village men (Nagaland) and Pongo cultural troops (Nagaland).

Debabrata Saikia, in his address said that since June 6, 1962, the day has been celebrated as Phom Day, a day dedicated to peace and harmony in their land. As this special day approaches, he extended his warm congratulations to the Phom community.

On the occasion, Saikia said that he was very happy to see that the traditions and cultures passed down by their ancestors are still being preserved and practiced today. Historically, he said the Ahoms and the Nagas have shared a deep friendship. When Assam was going through turmoil under an autocratic ruler, the king came to Nagaland and married the daughter of the Wangshu king. In Assam, she is known as Dalimi, Saikia added. "We all belong to India and are proud citizens of a democratic country. But at the same time, we should never forget our own cultures and traditions, and must always respect and uphold them", he also said.

Saikia also called upon the people of both the communities of Assam and Nagaland to support each other in time of difficulty, and asserted that "our work and efforts should benefit both Assam and Nagaland". Saikia also said that

though "we each have our own laws, we must not take the law into our own hands. Instead, we should allow the administration to resolve any misunderstandings that may arise". While encouraging everyone to take advantage of the various government schemes available, Saikia said although "we may come from different political parties, we must work together for the betterment of our society, unite for development and share our challenges. In doing so, we can bring prosperity to our states".

Saikia then said that this cultural exchange program will promote greater unity and contribute to lasting peace and prosperity in the region. Therefore, he urged both the communities to continue to preserve the rich cultures and traditions, and move forward as a united team, to ensure peace, prosperity, and progress. "This is possible only through cooperation from all sides", he added.

Also speaking on the occasion, MLA B. Bangtick Phom said, with great pride and humility, "we stand together today, not merely as a representative of the Nagas and Phoms, but as a voice carrying forward the centuries-old bond between our lands a bond forged through shared struggles, collaboration, and mutual respect".

He said when the Ahoms first entered Assam in the 13th century, crossing the Patkai Hills under the leadership of Sukaphaa, they did not march into emptiness. They entered into a world of thriving hill societies among them, the Namsangia guardians of these ridges and rivers.

Bangtick then appealed to the gathering not to forget this shared legacy, not merely of culture, but of conscience. "While we celebrate our shared legacy, we must also acknowledge present-day concerns. There are growing anxieties among our people about land boundaries disputes in the Namsang region. These are not just disputes over terrain, but reflections of a deeper need for dialogue, clarity, and respect. Let this occasion mark not just cultural unity, but also a commitment to resolve such matters in a spirit of trust and fairness, just as our ancestors did in the past," he added. (NNN)

## Indefinite business shutdown in 9 Nagaland dists called off

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, May 20:** The indefinite voluntary business shutdown called by the respective District Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) in nine districts of Nagaland from Monday has been called off.

The nine DCCIs called the shutdown to press the Nagaland government to nominate their one representative each in the district headquarters urban local bodies. Confederation of Nagaland Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CNCCI) president Khekugha Muru at a press conference here on Monday evening informed about the decision of the DCCIs to call off the strike with immediate effect. The CNCCI is the parent organisation of all DCCIs in the state.

Muru, in the presence of the officials of the CNCCI and the DCCIs, said the decision to withdraw the protest was taken after consultation with the nine DCCIs following a written communication from the state government to meet their demand through a cabinet meeting, to be held as early as possible, or in the next session of the state assembly.

He claimed the shutdown in the nine districts of Dimapur, Chumoukedima, Nuland, Peren, Wokha, Zunheboto, Phek, Tseminyu and Meluri was almost 100% successful. He added that the shutdown passed off peacefully without any untoward incident. Muru, however, warned that if the government fails to keep its assurance, a total business shutdown would be called in all 17 districts of the state.

He said the near-total success of today's shutdown demonstrated the support of the public and the business community for the DCCIs' endeavour to work for their benefit by being part of urban local bodies.

In Dimapur and Chumoukedima, the bandh was near total, with a few shops remaining open during the day. However, government offices, schools, and banks functioned as usual.

## NU researchers develop technology to recover valuable resources from wastewater

**Bio-based soft technologies for resource recovery from wastewater are operated through natural processes**

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, May 20:** Nagaland University researchers have developed a nature-inspired technology to recover valuable resources like nutrients, biofuels, biogas, and clean water from wastewater.

The research was led by Prof Prabhakar Sharma, head of department of agricultural engineering and technology, Nagaland University. The study synthesises innovations like algae-based systems, microbial fuel cells, and constructed wetlands that facilitate circular economy integration. The researchers have published their findings in the reputed, peer-reviewed journal Current Opinion in Environmental Science and Health (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.coes.2024.100587).

They have advanced the concept of bio-based soft tech-



nologies — a class of nature-inspired, energy-efficient systems that utilise plants, algae, microbes, and ecological interactions — to simultaneously treat wastewater and recover valuable resources, a varsity release said on Monday.

Adoption of these soft technologies can reduce environmental pollution and improve

water quality, enable sustainable agriculture via nutrient recovery and advance India's circular economy and climate resilience goals.

This research created a roadmap for future applied research, pilot implementations, and technology integration with national sanitation and water reuse programs of the

Nation. The release said the resource recovery from wastewater in bio-based production processes offers significant economic and environmental benefits while industries can improve sustainability and profitability by considering established separation technologies and focusing on high-value compounds like biofuel, biogas, nutrients, energy and water. Bio-based soft technologies for resource recovery from wastewater are operated through natural processes such as microbial action, plant uptake, and ecological interactions to break down pollutants and extract nutrients. The transition from concept to implementation, supported by advancements in process systems engineering, requires careful techno-economic evaluation and process optimisation.

## Tripura traders asked to follow port restrictions on imports from B'desh: Official

*Central govt had on May 17 imposed port restrictions on the import of a few Bangladeshi goods*

**AGARTALA, May 20:** The Tripura government has asked traders, who have been operating their businesses through integrated check posts in the state, to adhere to the port restrictions imposed by the Centre on imports of certain goods, such as readymade garments, from Bangladesh, an official said on Tuesday.

During a meeting with the exporters and importers from Agartala, Dharmamagar and Sonamura, state Industries and Commerce Department Director Sailesh Kumar Yadav has instructed them to follow the port curbs on inbound shipments of a few Bangladeshi products, he said.

The meeting was held at the Agartala Integrated Check Post (ICP) on Monday.

The central government had on May 17 imposed port restrictions on the import of a few Bangladeshi goods, such as readymade garments and processed food items, in response to similar



curbs placed by Dhaka on certain Indian products last month.

However, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), in its notification, said the port restrictions will not apply to Bangladeshi goods transiting through India but destined for Nepal and Bhutan.

"Two days after the notification, the director held a meeting with all the stakeholders at Agartala ICP. He asked them to adhere to the restriction," Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI) Manager, Agartala ICP, Debashish Nandi said.

He said the exporters and importers expressed their concern

over the future of bilateral trade between the two countries.

An organisation of businessmen and traders in Tripura on Monday welcomed the Centre's decision to impose port restrictions on imports of certain goods from Bangladesh and said the national interest comes first above anything else.

Bangladeshi exporters, who send goods in substantial quantities through land ports, will be the losers in view of the Central government's move, Tripura Chamber of Trade and Business (TCTB) general secretary Rajat Paul said. Nandi said the movement of immigrants has been reduced substantially through the Agartala ICP after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina government in Bangladesh following the unrest there.

"Before August 1, 2024, around 1,500 immigration clearances were given at Agartala ICP, but now it has come down to 150 per day," he added. (PTI)

## Additional police forces at Star Cement premises

**SHILLONG, May 20:** Additional police forces have been deployed at Star Cement in Lumshong, East Jaintia Hills district following the setting ablaze many trucks by an angry mob at the factory's premises on Sunday night.

"Following the incident, additional police forces have been stationed at Star Cement and administrative officers are on high alert to prevent further escalation," district additional Superintendent of Police said today. "In this regard, a case has been registered and is being investigated," he added.

The incident had taken place on Sunday after a local individual was tragically run over and died on the spot.

Immediately, police officers and staff from Lumshong police station arrived at the spot and additional forces were deputed.

During enquiry, it was learnt that in the evening, a road traffic accident occurred near Wahiajer village, NH-06 involving a Star Cement truck and a pick-up truck. The Star Cement truck driven by a local, reportedly, fled the scene after the collision. The pick-up truck, along with others pursued the cement truck up to the Star Cement premises, police said.

Upon arrival, the pick-up driver, who is also a local, climbed onto the Star Cement truck and assaulted the driver and in an attempt to flee or drive forward, the cement truck ran over the pick-up driver, who died on the spot, they said.

Following the incident, approximately 300 individuals armed with daos and other weapons from nearby locality, gathered at the Star Cement compound and started destroying the sentry post, CCTV equipment, and attacking the Security Guard.

The agitated crowd blocked the removal of the deceased's body, which was later managed and sent to Civil Hospital, Kliehriat. In a few minutes, the said mob managed to set a number of trucks ablaze in the parking lot and in other premises of Star Cement.

Immediately, fire tenders were requisitioned, but the said mob started attacking the Star Cement fire brigade personnel too and attempted to damage the fire tender. In the process, police attempted to stop the mob from burning down the fire tender and attacking security personnel, but the mob started attacking police personnel who were trying to control the situation and protect life and property, the additional SP said. (NNN)

## MPYC opposes scheduling of exams on Sundays

**SHILLONG, May 20:** The Meghalaya Pradesh Youth Congress (MPYC) has demanded the state government to stop scheduling state-level exams on Sundays. This came after the alleged decision of the government to continue scheduling of the Meghalaya Police recruitment examination on multiple Sundays.

"The first such exam was conducted on May 18 - a day of profound religious significance for the Christian-majority population of the state," MPYC general secretary Chireng Peter Marak said in a statement. "I call upon the government to immediately cease scheduling state-level exams on Sundays, issue a public explanation, and adopt a policy that respects the deeply held beliefs of the people it serves," he said while adding that the MPYC will

hold the government accountable until such thoughtless decisions are replaced by policies that reflect the true spirit and identity of the people of Meghalaya.

He said Meghalaya is not just a state with a Christian presence - it is a state where Christianity is woven into the very fabric of everyday life. "Sunday is a holy day, a time set apart for worship, spiritual reflection, community fellowship and rest. For generations, this day has held unparalleled religious and cultural importance. It is when families attend church, gather in prayer, and renew their faith as a core part of their identity", the MPYC leader added.

"The decision of the NPP-led state government to schedule not just one, but a series of recruitment exams on Sundays, is a clear and repeated act of insensitivity." (NNN)

## 'Youth Migration Monitoring & Safety' launched in Nagaland

**KOHIMA, May 20:** In a significant step towards ensuring the safety and well-being of young citizens venturing outside Nagaland for work or education, the Mon district police launched the "Youth Migration Monitoring & Safety" programme at the SP office, Mon town on May 17, an official statement said recently.

This landmark initiative, also known as "Mon Migration Trail", was formally inaugurated in the presence of distinguished dignitaries including Member of Rajya Sabha, S. Phangnon Konyak, Deputy Commissioner, Mon, Wennyei Konyak and Superintendent of Police, Mon district, Kanchan Kumar Kandpal. The event was chaired by Bendangwati Ao, SDPO Mon, with a welcome address by H. Pongloi, SDPO Tizit, and concluded with a benediction by John, Assistant Commandant, Village Guard, the statement also said.

S. Phangnon Konyak officially launched the programme who lauded the effort as a timely and much-needed intervention for the youth of the region. She spoke of the challenges faced by young individuals migrating out of the state and emphasised the need for compassionate, community-based solutions. She praised the initiative for addressing these concerns in a structured and meaningful way, combining technology with local collaboration.

DC Mon, Wennyei Konyak in his address, commended the collaborative approach of the programme and urged all stakeholders—particularly village leaders and civil society—to actively contribute to its success. He stressed the importance of keeping the database current and using it to extend timely support to those in need, adding that the district administration would continue to lend full support to the initiative.

While giving detailed explanation and demonstration of the system, Superintendent of Police, Kanchan Kumar Kandpal, shared the vision behind the initiative. He noted that the Mon district has long witnessed a steady stream of youth migrating in search of better opportunities. While many succeed, others often fall into distressing circumstances being underpaid, defrauded, or subjected to abuse. These cases often go unreported due to the absence of any formal tracking mechanism.

The programme, he explained, is designed to bridge this gap by establishing a proactive and inclusive safety net. By collaborating with village councils, church leaders, and community organisations, the system will maintain updated records of individuals who have migrated detailing their destination, occupation, and the agent or reference, who facilitated their departure. This information will be securely stored at the SP's office and accessed only by authorised personnel, the statement added.

## Five militants arrested in Manipur

**IMPHAL, May 20:** Five cadres, belonging to various proscribed outfits, were arrested from Manipur's Imphal West district for allegedly being involved in extortion activities, police said on Tuesday.

All the arrests were made on Monday, a senior officer said.

The police apprehended an active cadre of the banned People's Liberation Army from Meitei Lamkhai Chajing area in the district. The arrested militant hails from Jiribam district, the officer said. A woman member of the proscribed Kangleipak Communist Party (PWG) was arrested from Wahengkhum Maning Leikai area for her alleged involvement in extortion, police said.

Three cadres of the outlawed KCP (PWG) were also apprehended from a rented house in Sagolband Thingom Leikai area, the officer said, adding that they were also "involved in extortion" in the Imphal Valley. Besides, four people were arrested in Imphal West district in connection with a case of kidnapping and extortion. "Two individuals from Delhi and Jaipur were lured to Manipur under the pretext of providing training for a networking business. They were kidnapped and threatened upon arrival in Imphal by perpetrators, who demanded ransom," the officer said. (PTI)

## Dimapur Dist Cong alleges anomalies in PMAY implementation

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, May 20:** The Dimapur District Congress Committee (DDCC) on Monday accused certain BDOs (block development officers) of three districts of Dimapur, Chumoukedima and Nuland of demanding money from the beneficiaries of the Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY). Addressing a press conference at Congress Bhavan Dimapur, DDCC president Kutoho Chishi said his office received several complaints from the PMAY beneficiaries in the three districts that the BDOs demanded ₹18,000 in some villages and ₹27,000 in some others from each beneficiary, for availing the housing scheme of the central government. He said the beneficiaries were asked to give the money by withdrawing it from their accounts after they received the first installment under the PMAY. Highlighting the RTI reply on the implementation of PMAY in the three districts, Chishi said some beneficiaries were shown to have been given one installment of ₹60,000 and some others the second installment of ₹60,000 out of three installments, but the beneficiaries complained of not receiving the money in their accounts.

No. MHRB/66/Faculty/2025/4561

### CORRIGENDUM & NOTICE

In partial modification of the advertisement No. MHRB/66/Faculty/2025/4527 dated 02/04/2025 and Notice No. MHRB/66/Faculty/2025/4541 dated 22/04/2025,

- The age of posts in respect of recruitment to the posts of Registrar/Demonstrator etc. in Government Medical College Hospitals under Medical Education & Research Department may be read as follows—  
"A candidate should not be less than 21 years and not more than 45 years as on 01/01/2025, irrespective of category of applicants."

- The reservation of posts in respect of recruitment to the posts of Registrar/Demonstrator etc. in the department of Pathology may be read as follows—

UR		OBC/MOBC		SC		ST(P)		ST(H)		Total	
Total	RFW	Total	RFW	Total	RFW	Total	RFW	Total	RFW	Total	RFW
13	4	7	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	24	6

The number of vacancies may vary due to administrative exigencies in due course of time.

Sd/-  
Secretary  
DIPR /D/HLT/15/21-May-25  
Medical and Health Recruitment Board, Assam

### ENGAGEMENT UNDER SAMAGRA SHIKSHA AXOM

No. SSA/Esst/Engagement/SPE/441/2024/4665

Applications are invited from the eligible candidates for the below mentioned position under Samagra Shiksha on contractual basis. The post is temporary in nature and the selected candidate will be initially engaged for a period of 11 (eleven) months only. The contractual engagement will neither be regularized under Samagra Shiksha nor will be absorbed under any job/programme of Government of Assam in future.

Sl No	Name of the Post	Essential Qualification and Experience	Pay in Pay Band in Rs.	Grade Pay in Rs.	Age limit
1	State Project Engineer (01 position at State Mission Office)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BE in Civil Engineering with minimum working experience of 03 years as Executive Engineer /Superintending in Govt. Deptt/undertaking/PSU.</li> <li>Or</li> <li>BE in Civil Engineering with minimum working experience of 04 years as Project Engineer in Pvt. Ltd. Company.</li> <li>Knowledge of Computer Operation</li> </ul>	30000-110000/-	13300/-	Should not less than 45 years and not more than 62 years of age
			In case of retired person fixed salary will be paid as per Govt. norms.		

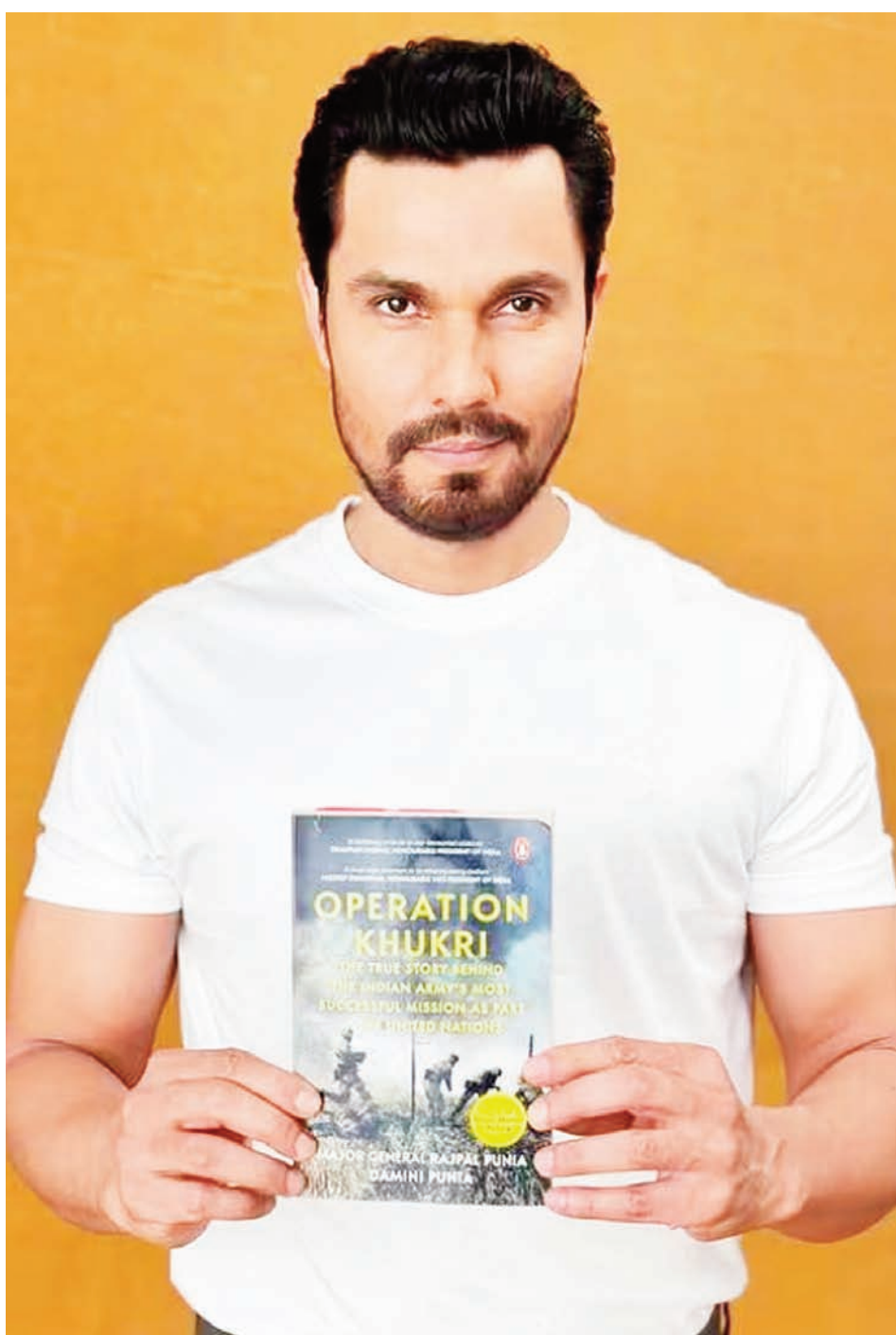
- Application in plain A4 paper stating clearly (i) Name of Applicant (in capital letter), (ii) Name of the post, (iii) Permanent Address, (iv) Address for communication, (v) Contact Mobile No./Telephone No., (vi) e-mail (vii) Age on 1st January, 2025, (viii) Details Educational Qualifications, (ix) Other Qualification (x) Working Experience with one self attested copy of passport size recent photograph and self attested copies of Certificates/testimonials relating to Educational Qualifications and Experience certificates should be submitted to the Mission Director, Axom Sarba Siksha Abhiyan Mission (Samagra Shiksha), Kahilpara, Guwahati-19 latest by 05.06.2025. No application will be accepted beyond 05.06.2025, 5.00 pm.
- Only short-listed candidates will have to appear in test/interview, the exact date of which will be communicated separately.
- Marking pattern will be on General Awareness, Personality & Aptitude, Subject matter in relevant field, Relevant Experience, etc. for the post. The applicant has to obtain minimum 50% of the total marks on the above in the interview and only then the candidates will be short-listed.
- The office will not be responsible for any lapse in submission of application due to any postal delay or other problem.



Sd/-Mission Director  
Samagra Shiksha Axom  
Kahilpara, Guwahati-19

DIPR /DF/HLT/253/21-May-25





## RANDEEP HOODA TO PLAY LEAD ROLE IN 'OPERATION KHUKRI'

**MUMBAI, May 20:** Actor Randeep Hooda is set to headline the upcoming military drama movie "Operation Khukri" based on one of Indian Army's most daring peacekeeping missions abroad.

Inspired by the real-life events of 2000, The film tells the story of 233 soldiers who were held hostage in Sierra Leone in West Africa by rebel forces and the high risk rescue mission undertaken.

In the movie, Hooda will portray Major General Raj Pal Punia, then a young Company Commander of the 14th mechanised infantry who navigated the stand-off and subsequently the extraordinary rescue amid intense jungle warfare. Hooda said the movie will definitely inspire and move every Indian.

"Operation Khukri" is a story that moved me deeply. It's not just a tale of guns and glory, but of sacrifice, brotherhood, and unyielding courage in the face of insurmountable odds. To step into the shoes of Major General Punia, a man who led his men out of a 75-day siege in an unknown land, is an honour and a responsibility.

"Our aim is to bring to life a chapter of Indian military history that deserves far more recognition — not just for the spectacle, but for the spirit of our soldiers who would rather die than surrender," the actor-filmmaker said in a statement. "Operation Khukri" is based on Penguin Random House India's bestseller 'Operation Khukri: The Untold Story of the Indian Army's Bravest Peacekeeping Mission Abroad'. The book's rights have been secured by filmmaker Rahul Mittra and Hooda.

The makers are yet to announce the key details of the movie, including the director and other cast members. (PTI)

## HRITHIK ROSHAN, JR NTR FACE OFF IN OFFICIAL TEASER OF 'WAR 2'

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Yash Raj Films on Tuesday unveiled the official teaser of "War 2", the studio's sixth entry in the ambitious spy universe that pits Hrithik Roshan and Jr NTR against each other.

Directed by Ayan Mukerji, the movie is a sequel to the 2019 film "War", which featured Roshan in the role of RAW agent Major Kabir Dhalwal.



The teaser begins with a voice-over of NTR, who is making his Bollywood debut with the movie.

"I have been watching you for a long time, Kabir. India's best soldier, RAW's best agent, but not anymore. You don't know me, but soon will, get ready for the war," he says.

The teaser features high-octane visuals, intense action sequences and a gripping face-off between the two leads. Also starring Kiara Advani, "War 2" promises to deliver six major action sequences shot across five countries over 150 days.

The movie is scheduled for release in Hindi, Tamil & Telugu on August 14, 2025. The YRF Spy Universe also includes Salman Khan's

"Tiger" movies and Shah Rukh Khan's "Pathaan". The next instalment in the franchise is

"Alpha", starring Alia Bhatt and Sharvari. (PTI)

## Benji has grown as a person and agent: Simon Pegg on his 'Mission: Impossible' journey

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** British star Simon Pegg says he has nothing but gratitude for being a part of a blockbuster franchise like "Mission: Impossible" for 20 years.

Pegg has appeared in six "Mission: Impossible" movies so far since 2006's "Mission: Impossible III".

His character of Benji Dunn had an interesting journey in the world of MI where he started as a technician at the Impossible Task Force (IMF), providing crucial technical support to Tom Cruise's Ethan Hunt.

Over the years, Benji transitioned into a field agent role, actively participating in high-stakes operations alongside Hunt in movies like "Ghost Protocol" (2011), "Rogue Nation" (2015), "Fallout" (2018), "Dead Reckoning" (2023) and "The Final Reckoning", which released in India on May 17.

"It's been such an amazing 20 years. I filmed my first scene for 'Mission: Impossible' 20 years ago... I know it makes me feel old because I am. But I think about the journey from Benji in 'Mission: Impossible III' to Benji in 'The Final Reckoning'."

"If you put those two characters to-

gether, you get two completely different people. That is because he's grown as a person and as an agent," Pegg told PTI in a virtual interview.

While the character has definitely evolved, there has also been a personal evolution in him, Pegg noted.

"I have (grown) as well, just getting to be part of these films and see how they're made and meeting people that have changed my life, so I feel very grateful," he added.

"The Final Reckoning", the eighth and presumably the final instalment, sees Hunt racing against time to stop a rogue AI known as "The Entity" from gaining total control over the world's digital infrastructure and starting a nuclear war among the nations.

It is a direct sequel to 2023's "Dead Reckoning".

Actor Pom Klementieff, who reprises her role of assassin Paris in "The Final Reckoning", said a franchise like "Mission: Impossible" is physically demanding but she liked the challenge.

"The best thing in this franchise is that I get to do everything myself, all the fighting myself, and we have the time to really push ourselves, train and work in

detail and get the best physical performance ever. So I feel really grateful for that," the actor, best known for playing Mantis in many Marvel movies, said.

Klementieff said the cast was well-supported by an impeccable crew of stunt people.

"So many memories, bruises, being sore and all of that, but it's part of the fun too. And we got to shoot some amazing fights together too. So that was cool," Klementieff said.

Directed by Christopher McQuarrie, "The Final Reckoning" also features Hayley Atwell, Esai Morales, Ving Rhames, and Angela Bassett. It is presented by Paramount Pictures and Skydance Productions. (PTI)



## Kiran Rao part of Shanghai Int'l Film Festival's jury

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Filmmaker Kiran Rao will be part of the international jury of the 27th Shanghai International Film Festival (SIFF).

Rao, whose "Laapataa Ladies" (Lost Ladies) was

India's official entry for the Best International Feature Film category at the 96th Academy Awards, will join a jury led by Italian director and screenwriter Giuseppe Tornatore, best known for the Oscar-winning "Cinema Paradiso".

The jury also includes a diverse lineup of celebrated film professionals including Argentine filmmaker Iván Fund; Chinese actor and director Huang Bo; Greek producer Thanassis Karathanos; Chinese director and documentary filmmaker Yang Lina; and acclaimed Chinese actress Yong Mei.

Kiran expressed her gratitude and excitement about joining the jury, stating, "It's an honour to be part of a festival that champions international cinema and storytelling. I look forward to experiencing the wide range of voices and perspectives on screen, and to engaging with my fellow jurors from around the world."

The 27th edition of SIFF will take place from June 13 to June 22, 2025, in Shanghai, China. (PTI)

## Sharmila Tagore, Simi Garewal attend Cannes screening of Satyajit Ray's 'Aranyer Din Ratri'

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Veteran actors Sharmila Tagore and Simi Garewal relived their memories of working on Satyajit Ray's 1970 classic "Aranyer Din Ratri", now immortalised through a 4K restoration that was screened at the Cannes Film Festival.

The 4K restored version of the Bengali-language film, based on author Sunil Gangopadhyay's novel of the same name, was showcased at the 78th edition of the prestigious gala under the Cannes Classics section on Monday evening.

Tagore made an appearance on the red carpet in a classy teal and gold saree along with her daughter and jewellery designer Saba Pataudi, who opted for an all-yellow ethnic ensemble.

Pataudi shared multiple photos from her Cannes on Instagram and wrote, "Let the party begin...! Moments before the Red carpet .... scene... #Cannes #2025."

Garewal was dressed in a gown by Indian couture label Karleo in her signature white colour. She later shared photos from the red carpet on her Instagram Stories.

They were joined on the red car-

pet by the film's gala presenter and Hollywood filmmaker Wes Anderson, a long-time admirer of Ray who spearheaded its six-year restoration.

The restored version of "Aranyer Din Ratri", titled "Days and Nights in the Forest" in English, is presented and restored by Martin Scorsese's The Film Foundation through its World Cinema Project initiative at L'Imagine Ritrovata in collaboration with Shivendra Singh Dungarpur's Film Heritage Foundation, Janus Films, and the Criterion Collection.

Anderson, known for movies such as "The Royal Tenenbaums", "The Darjeeling Limited", "Fantastic Mr. Fox", "Moonrise Kingdom", "The Grand Budapest Hotel" and "The French Dispatch", introduced the movie ahead of its screening.

According to videos circulating on social media from the screening, Tagore said she was excited to watch the movie once again.

"All those people became very close friends. I'm really looking forward to seeing the film and seeing them on the screen because sadly, most of them... actually Simi and I are the only survivors. Everybody



else has passed on. So I will see my old friends on the screen and relive those lovely moments," said Tagore.

Tagore started her career with Ray's 1959 masterpiece "Apar Sansar" and later collaborated on

"Devi" (1960), "Nayak" (1966), "Aranyer Din Ratri" and "Seemabaddha" (1971).

Garewal thanked Anderson, Scorsese and Dungarpur for their work towards preserving old classics and ensuring that they are not "forgotten".

"The young generation will get the opportunity to experience and appreciate great cinema. Gentleman, you have not only restored Ray's masterpiece, you have made it immortal," she added.

"Aranyer Din Ratri", which explores themes of alienation, class, and modernity, follows the story of four city-bred men who escape to the forests of Palamau (now in Jharkhand) for a carefree holiday, only to undergo a journey of self-discovery.

In the film, Tagore plays Aparna, a cool and elegant city woman, whereas Garewal essays the role of a tribal Santhal girl named Duli. It also featured Soumitra Chatterjee, Subhendu Chatterjee, Samit Bhanja, Robi Ghosh, and Aparna Sen.

In an earlier statement, Anderson had praised "Aranyer Din Ratri" as a "special gem" and compared Ray's

work as a filmmaker with American movie legend John Cassavetes.

"Anything signed by Satyajit Ray must be cherished and preserved; but the nearly-forgotten 'Days and Nights in the Forest' is a special/particular gem... Made in 1970. Modern and novelistic..."

A clash/negotiation between castes and sexes. Urbans and rurals. Selfish men and their hopes and cruelties and spectacular lack of wisdom. Women who see through them. The great Soumitra Chatterjee: lost but searching. The great Sharmila Tagore: mysterious, cerebral, mesmerizing. From the master, another masterpiece," the filmmaker said.

Also part of the screening were producer Purnima Dutta and Margaret Bodde, executive director of The Film Foundation.

Last year, a 4K restored version of Shyam Benegal's "Manthan" (1976) was screened in the same section at Cannes.

Arifam Syam Sharma's Manipuri film "Ishanou" (1990) and 1978 Malayalam movie "Thamp" by G Aravindan were showcased under Cannes Classics in 2023 and 2022, respectively. (PTI)



## Javelin thrower Shivpal fails dope test, stares at maximum 8-year ban

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Olympian javelin thrower Shivpal Singh has failed a dope test for the second time in his career, a development which may see him being banned for a maximum period of eight years if found guilty.

The 29-year-old, who competed at the Tokyo Olympics, is learnt to have returned positive for a banned substance when his urine sample taken out of competition earlier this year was tested. He was training at the NIS Patiala then.

He has been provisionally suspended by the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA).

"Yes, he has tested positive for a banned substance. It's his second dope offence," a source privy to the development told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

If proven guilty and handed a lengthy ban, Shivpal's career will be as good as over.

Under the NADA and WADA rules, an athlete can be banned for a maximum eight years for a second doping offence.

Shivpal's best achievement in his career is the silver medal he had won at the 2019 Asian Championships in Doha, where he had thrown his personal best of 86.23m.

Earlier in 2021, Shivpal's dope sample had tested positive for a steroid in an out-of-competition test. The Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel of NADA, in August 2022, had handed him a four-year ban beginning from 2021, holding him guilty of committing a doping offence.

He was to serve the ban till 2025 but was able to argue successfully before the Appeal Panel of the NADA that "contaminated supplements" were behind his flunked dope test.

The Appeal Panel, in January 2023, accepted his contention and reduced the ban period from four years to just one.

He returned to action in April 2023 and won a bronze at the National Inter-State Championships in Bhubaneswar in June that year. He also won gold in the 2023 National Games in Goa. (PTI)

## EUROPA LEAGUE FINAL

# IT'S ALL OR NOTHING FOR MAN UNITED AND TOTTENHAM



**BILBAO, May 20:** It's all or nothing when Manchester United and Tottenham meet in the Europa League final on Wednesday.

For the winner of the all-English showdown in Bilbao there is the mother of all get-out-of-jail-free cards with entry to the Champions League.

For the loser, the abyss of no European soccer next year, the indignity of so many unwanted records broken, and uncertainty hanging over the futures of those who have presided over such a spectacular fall.

That's what's on the line at Estadio de San Mamés when two English soccer giants get one last shot at salvaging the season.

Long gone are the days when United dominated the Premier League and challenged the summit of European soccer on a regular basis. But even after 12 years without winning the English title, this season has represented a new low.

United is 16th out of 20 in the standings after a club-record 18 defeats in a single campaign since the

Premier League began in 1992. It is also certain to register its worst-ever points total in the era, as well as its lowest finish.

"We know this season has been nowhere near good enough for this club and for our standards," United defender Harry Maguire says.

Tottenham is one place below United having lost 21 times in the league — also a club record in the modern era. Spurs — Champions League runner-up in 2019 — are aiming for a first trophy since the 2008 English League Cup.

It is rare that such a major final has so much riding on it beyond the trophy itself.

Neither team has looked capable of challenging for a top five position in the Premier League, which would secure Champions League qualification. But in a season when both teams occupy the last safe spots before relegation, they have a mind-boggling lifeline to the Champions League via the Europa League.

The Champions League offers the prestige of playing beside teams like Real Madrid and Barcelona, draws

prospective signings, and comes with huge financial rewards.

Real Madrid earned almost \$154 million from winning the competition for a record-extending 15th time last season. Total prize money has increased from \$2 billion last season to \$2.7 billion in this expanded season.

United, in particular, could do with some of that money at a time of job losses and cuts under new co-owner Jim Ratcliffe, while coach Ruben Amorim hopes to rebuild his squad in the offseason.

"We are supposed to be in the Champions League. Europa League here is not enough and you have that feeling here," Amorim says.

"The best way to help us get in the top in a few years is the Champions League — it's not (winning) the cup (Europa League)."

While a return to the Champions League is also enticing for Tottenham, the chance to end its trophy barren run may be even more appealing. Not even top class managers like Mauricio Pochettino, Jose Mourinho or Antonio Conte ended

Spurs' wait for major silverware. It could be destiny that Ange Postecoglou is the man to end the drought, having boldly predicted early in the season that he always wins a trophy in his second year.

That was true at previous clubs Brisbane Roar, Yokohama F Marinos and Celtic — but it would be remarkable if he continued that run on the back of such a desperate campaign. "It's not for the want of world-class players. This club has had world-class players," Postecoglou says. "It's not for the want of world-class managers. They've had world-class managers. It's something else that's going to change this club."

By contrast, United has continued to win trophies despite its failure to win the Premier League since former manager Alex Ferguson retired in 2013.

This could be the third straight year United ends the season with silverware after winning the 2023 League Cup and the 2024 FA Cup.

Amorim replaced Erik ten Hag as United coach in November but has not been able to turn its form around.

He's lost 14 of his 26 league games, including six of the last eight.

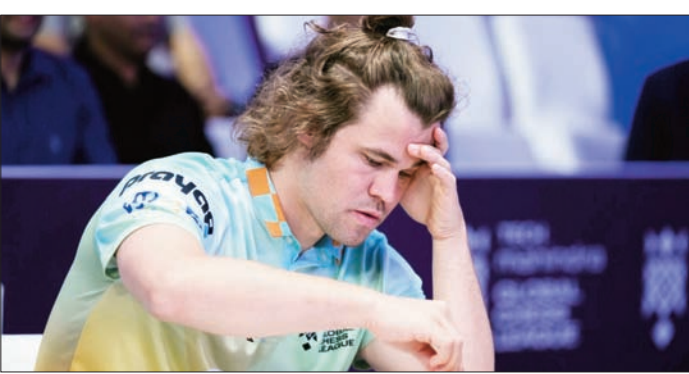
While there has been no suggestion his job is under immediate threat, he has raised doubts about his position, admitting he is embarrassed by his team's form.

Postecoglou is two years into the job at Spurs and became the club's fourth permanent manager in four years when joining from Celtic in 2023. A major trophy would put a different complexion on a season in which Spurs have dramatically fallen since he led them to a fifth-place finish in his first year.

He and Amorim have spoken of the similarities about their positions.

"I guess from an emotional standpoint and the noise around the club," Postecoglou says. "We're kind of dealing with similar things of something that is so fantastic in terms of a European run, and also something that's obviously the opposite of that, the other extreme in the league." (AP)

## Carlsen is forced into a draw in a showdown against 'the world'



**BERLIN, May 20:** Norwegian chess grandmaster Magnus Carlsen was forced into a draw Monday by more than 143,000 people worldwide playing against him in a single, record-setting game.

Billed as "Magnus Carlsen vs. The World," the online match began April 4 on Chess.com, the world's largest chess website, and was the first-ever online freestyle game to feature a world champion.

The mega-match ended after Team World checked Carlsen's king a third time, a stunning outcome after Chess.com had predicted Carlsen would win by a wide margin.

Team World voted on each move and each side had 24 hours to make their play. Carlsen played the white pieces.

The world won on move 32 after checking Carlsen's king three times in the corner of the board where it could not escape. The rule is called "threefold repetition," meaning all of the pieces on the board are in the exact same position three times to prompt a draw.

Very, very sound chess/Carlsen, 34, became the world's top-ranked player in 2010 aged 19 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.

"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," Carlsen said in a statement Friday as Monday's draw seemed imminent.

Because it was a freestyle match, the bishops, knights, rooks, queen and king were randomly shuffled around the board while the pawns remained in their usual spots. Freestyle chess is popular because it allows players to be more creative and avoid memorization.

"We made history! This was 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 and won after four months.

Last year, Indian grandmaster Viswanathan Anand won his "vs. The World" match against nearly 70,000 players on Chess.com.

In the Chess.com virtual chat this week, players appeared split on whether to force the draw — and claim the glory — or to keep playing against Carlsen, even if it ultimately meant a loss.

"Don't Draw! Let's keep playing Magnus," one user wrote. "This is an opportunity that won't come along again. I'd rather play the Master all the way to the end and see if we can battle it out another 20 or 30 moves! Let's have some FUN!!!"

Another added: "Thanks Magnus for such a great game. We made history." (AP)

## Eventually you wake up...and the nightmare gets over: Aakash Chopra on Pant

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Former India cricketer Aakash Chopra believes Rishabh Pant will need to reassess his approach in T20 cricket after enduring a "nightmare" IPL season, squandering a vital opportunity to stake a stronger claim for a spot in India's T20 set-up.

Pant, who is not a regular in India's T20 squad, was expected to make a mark this season. However, the Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) skipper managed only 135 runs in 12 matches after being bought for a mammoth Rs 27 crore.

LSG bowed out of the playoff race following their defeat to Sunrisers Hyderabad on Monday night. "Success might teach you a few things. Failures, however, truly change your mindset — and often for good. He isn't a regular in the Indian T20 side, so this season was crucial. A chance to make a mark, to build a strong

unit," Chopra, a former India opener, told 'JioHotstar'.

"It hasn't gone that way. His own form has been inconsistent — another lesson in itself. Does he stick to this approach in T20s or adapt?"

"When you're in a bad patch, it feels like nothing works. The nights seem longer, the days even more so. That's when you learn — and bounce back. This has been a nightmare. The good thing about nightmares is that you eventually wake up."

Former India pacer Varun Aaron echoed Chopra's view, saying Pant appeared tentative and must revisit his approach to regain form.

"LSG were relying on him, especially in the middle order. Except Marsh, nobody really scored. Pant looked tentative from the start and never really got going this season. It's a sign of a player out of form," he said. (PTI)

**PARIS, May 20:** Breaking with tradition at the Tour de France is stirring controversy. Since race organizers announced plans last week to climb the iconic Montmartre hill in Paris during the final stage in July, the cycling world has been abuzz. Could the climb actually decide the Tour winner? Or disrupt the final sprint by injecting tactical uncertainty into what is usually a celebratory day?

Well, that remains to be seen. But one thing seems certain: The stage will be a spectacle.

At last year's Olympics, massive crowds lined the streets of Montmartre — the area in the northern part of Paris that is popular among artists and offers grand vistas of the city — to cheer on riders.

Inspired by the frenetic atmosphere and willing to build on the momentum, Tour organizers said this month that riders competing in cycling's biggest race this summer would climb the Montmartre hill and pass beneath the Sacré-Coeur

basilica before "battling it out on a stage that may break from the traditions established over the past 50 years in the heart of the capital."

Traditionally, the Tour final stage is largely processional until a sprint decides the day's winner on the Champs-Élysées. Last year's final stage was held outside Paris for the first time since 1905 because of a clash with the Olympics, moving instead to Nice. The world famous avenue is back on the program this year for the conclusion of the 3,320-kilometer (2,060-mile) race.

The inclusion of the steep Montmartre climb could dramatically change the dynamics of the stage. If the hill features just a few kilometers from the finish line, or is climbed several times, pure sprinters will likely be dropped before they can compete for the stage win. And if the general classification remains tight ahead of the final stage, the yellow jersey itself could be decided in Paris.

Full details of the route will be



presented at a news conference on Wednesday. With a peloton roughly twice as big as it was at the Olympics, organizers are working with Paris authorities and the Prefecture of police to ensure the security of the race on the narrow and cobbled streets of the area. But some top riders have already expressed their lack of enthusiasm about the addition.

being more stress than they want to have."

Even Remco Evenepoel, who won the Olympic men's road race in Paris last year and the gold medal in the time trial, is also opposed to the idea.

"There will be enough battle for positioning in the first week of the Tour," he told sports media Spozza. "With Montmartre added, that would mean we have to do the same on the last day. We will be tired enough by then."

Evenepoel also lamented the fact that sprinters would be robbed of a rare chance to claim a prestigious win on the world famous avenue.

"They get a big chance every year to sprint for a stage win on the Champs-Élysées," he said. "That chance is then taken away from them. In my opinion, Montmartre is an unnecessary obstacle."

Marc Madiot, who manages the Groupama-FDJ team, said bad weather on the final day could make the stage more treacherous. (AP)

## Tour de France's new Montmartre climb could be a game changer

# ENGLISH SUMMER: Last selection panel members select 'their squads', pick Bumrah as skipper

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** There might be an air of doubt about Mohammed Shami's ability to last a five-Test series but erstwhile national selection committee members MSK Prasad, Devang Gandhi and Jatin Paranjpe are unequivocal that the 'Amroha Express' is a must-pick for the tour of England.

Shami has played nine IPL games this season for Sunrisers Hyderabad with only six wickets in his kitty and has gone for over 11 runs per over.

However it has been learnt that Shami has already started bowling with the red Dukes at the SRH nets with an eye on England tour, now that SRH's play-off qualification hopes have been dashed.

The Indian squad, which is expected to comprise 16 members, will be one of the trickiest ones in recent times as there is a debate around who the new captain

should be.

While the erstwhile committee members differed on their choice of vice-captaincy, they were unanimous that one can't look beyond Jasprit Bumrah even though there remains a question mark on his fitness status.

The PTI now lists the "squad selected" by Prasad, Gandhi and Paranjpe individually and some of their insights into what made them pick their players.

MSK Prasad (former chairman of selectors)

"My captain would be Jasprit Bumrah as he has already proven himself as a leader. As far as my vice-captain is concerned, I would like Shubman Gill to gain some experience as Bumrah's deputy. In case you have a problem with Bumrah's fitness then my choice is KL Rahul," Prasad said.

"As far as my assessment goes,

Nitish Reddy's bowling will be more effective in England than it was in Australia. If we are taking 16, then I would want a left-arm swing bowler and my choice is Arshdeep Singh. I would like KL Rahul to bat No. 4 and my reserve opener would be Abhimanyu Easwaran."

MSK Prasad's India Team  
1. Yashasvi Jaiswal 2. KL Rahul 3. Sai Sudharsan 4. Shubman Gill (vc) 5. Rishabh Pant 6. Ravindra Jadeja 7. Nitish Reddy 8. Kuldeep Yadav 9. Jasprit Bumrah (captain) 10. Mohd Siraj 11. Mohd Shami 12. Prasidh Krishna 13. Dhruv Jurel (wk) 14. Washington Sundar 15. Arshdeep Singh 16. Abhimanyu Easwaran.

Devang Gandhi (Former National Selector)  
"I think it is surprising that there is a debate whether Mohammed Shami would make it to the Indian team. Unless he is carrying



an injury. And IPL is not an indicator of someone's Test match form. You need someone of Shami's calibre in England. Obviously if he is not performing then you look at other options," Gandhi said.

"For captaincy, it would be unfair if you don't consider Bumrah

for leadership. As far as Bumrah deputy goes, this is the time to show faith in Rishabh Pant as he has the best Test average in the current set-up. I would carry six specialist pacers in UK knowing that I have enough back-up for a five-match series.

"My extra batter will be

Shreyas Iyer. Iyer has played a few Tests and at this point is in prime form. His technique and temperament both have undergone sea change. In my opinion, Iyer's selection is a no-brainer and he should also be a part of playing eleven. We need to play six (including Rishabh Pant) specialist batters at the start of the series."

Devang Gandhi's India Squad:  
1. Yashasvi Jaiswal 2. KL Rahul 3. Sai Sudharsan 4. Shubman Gill 5. Rishabh Pant (wk and VC) 6. Ravindra Jadeja 7. Nitish Reddy 8. Kuldeep Yadav 9. Jasprit Bumrah (captain) 10. Mohd Siraj 11. Mohd Shami 12. Prasidh Krishna 13. Harshit Rana 14. Arshdeep Singh 15. Dhruv Jurel (wk) 16. Shreyas Iyer.

Jatin Paranjpe (Former National Selector):  
"There is no one more ideal than Jasprit Bumrah to lead the national team in traditional for-

mat. My vice-captain would be Rishabh Pant, who has had a good record in SENA countries. Pant and KL Rahul are the two batters with two Test hundreds on English soil on their previous tours," Paranjpe said.

"I feel in a five-Test series, it is better to carry an extra batsman and an extra all-rounder who can bat, hence Sarfaraz Khan and Shardul Thakur will be my picks."

Jatin Paranjpe's India Squad:  
1. Yashasvi Jaiswal 2. KL Rahul 3. Shubman Gill 4. B Sai Sudharsan 5. Shreyas Iyer 6. Sarfaraz Khan 7. Rishabh Pant (wk) 7. Shardul Thakur 8. Ravindra Jadeja 9. Kuldeep Yadav 10. Jasprit Bumrah (captain) 11. Prasidh Krishna 12. Mohammed Shami 13. Mohammed Siraj 14. Nitish Reddy 15. Arshdeep Singh 16. Dhruv Jurel (second wk). (PTI)



# Mumbai Indians look to seal IPL playoffs spot against fallible Delhi Capitals

**MUMBAI, May 20:** Fighting for the only available play-off spot, Mumbai Indians will take on Delhi Capitals in a potentially decisive showdown here on Wednesday with the five-time champion home team better-placed to advance against the erratic visitors.

Sunrisers Hyderabad's six-wicket thrashing of Lucknow Super Giants on Monday ended the latter's chances of making the final four, leaving Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals to fight it out. Gujarat Titans, Punjab Kings and Royal Challengers have taken the first three knockout phase spots.

Both Mumbai Indians (14 points) and Delhi Capitals (13 points) are in control of their destiny for now, but it is the host side which starts favourite at the Wankhede Stadium. While MI's win will take them to 16 points and beyond the reach of the Axar Patel-led side, Delhi Capitals need to win both their remaining contests, the last being against Punjab Kings, to sail through. Mumbai Indians' form and all-round depth tilt the scale in their favour even though they are coming off a narrow loss to Gujarat Titans nearly a fortnight ago. This

was after recording six consecutive wins prior to emerge as one of the most formidable teams in the competition.

While a win will carry MI into the playoffs, a defeat will leave their fate on the outcome of the contest between DC and PBKS on May 24, and thus the Mahela Jayawardene-coached side will be eager to put its best foot forward.

Mumbai superstar Rohit Sharma will be the cynosure of all eyes as this will be his first game since announcing his retirement from Test cricket. The veteran batter would be extra motivated to fire on all cylinders and carry his team through. MI would also want to make the most of their current combination, which features Ryan Rickelton and Corbin Bosch in their playing XI with prominent roles. The two South Africans will leave for national duty before the playoffs, which would be a headache for another day.

Suryakumar Yadav will look to carry on with his prime form with the bat, but MI would need Tilak Varma to rediscover his mojo. The left-handed batter has gone through a quiet phase with the bat



which includes three outings for single-digit scores in his last five matches. The break would have given fast bowlers, including Jasprit Bumrah and Trent Boult in particular, some extra time to rest and recover but it also saw Delhi Capitals' ace pacer Mitchell Starc (14 wickets) deciding against joining his IPL side. Starc's absence is a huge void for any side to fill. With the contest being a do-or-die affair without the Australian speedster, who has in the past exploited conditions here at the Wankhede Stadium with the

white ball effectively, DC will have to find other ways to succeed.

A lot hinges on KL Rahul's (493 runs) performance, who struck a valiant century against Gujarat Titans but ended on the wrong side of a 10-wicket hammering. It exposed Delhi Capitals' frailties with the ball even though Starc's replacement, Mustafizur Rahman, returned a tight spell.

DC began the IPL with five wins in the first six matches, but wheels have come off their faltering campaign. Kuldeep Yadav (12 wickets)

has provided control from one end, but this season has largely been a disappointing one for skipper Patel, whose 263 runs and five wickets so far do not inspire much confidence either.

**Teams (from):**

**Mumbai Indians:** Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Robin Minz (wk), Ryan Rickelton (wk), Shri-jith Krishnan (wk), Bevon Jacobs, Tilak Varma, Naman Dhir, Will Jacks, Mitchell Santner, Raj Angad Bawa, Raghu Kumar, Corbin Bosch, Trent Boult, Karn Sharma, Deepak Chahar, Ashwani Kumar, Reece Topley, VS Pannetsa, Arjun Tendulkar, Mujeeb Ur Rahman, Jasprit Bumrah.

**Delhi Capitals:** Axar Patel (c), Mustafizur Rahman, Abhishek Porel (wk), Karun Nair, KL Rahul (wk), Tristan Stubbs (wk), Ashutosh Sharma, Vipraj Nigam, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohit Sharma, Mukesh Kumar, Sameer Rizvi, Darshan Nalkande, Tripurana Vijay, Dushmantha Chameera, Faf du Plessis, T Natarajan, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Manvanth Kumar L, Madhav Tiwari. Match starts at 7:30pm IST. (PTI)

## LSG spinner Digvish Rath handed one-match suspension for 'notebook celebration'



**LUCKNOW, May 20:** Lucknow Super Giants leg-spinner Digvish Singh Rath has been handed a one-match suspension after another instance of his "tick the notebook" celebration following his dismissal of Sunrisers Hyderabad opener Abhishek Sharma during an IPL match here.

Abhishek was also reprimanded for the same incident and received a 25 percent fine along with one demerit point for what was his first offence.

For Digvish, this was his third Code of Conduct breach and he has been suspended from LSG's next encounter against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad having accumulated five demerit points after three separate offenses of same nature.

"Digvish Singh, Bowler, Lucknow Super Giants (LSG) has been fined 50 per cent of his match fees for breaching the IPL Code of Conduct during his team's match against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH)," the IPL release stated.

"This was his third Level 1 offence under Article 2.5 this season and hence, he has accumulated Two Demerit Points, in addition to Three Demerit Points he had accumulated earlier - One Demerit

Point against Punjab Kings on April 01, 2025 and Two Demerit Points against Mumbai Indians on April 04, 2025.

"As he now has Five Demerit Points this season - which result in a one-game suspension - Digvish will now be suspended for LSG's next game - against Gujarat Titans on May 22, 2025 in Ahmedabad."

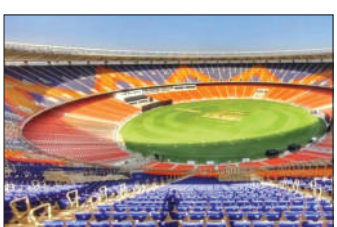
For Level 1 breaches of the Code of Conduct, the Match Referee's decision is final and binding," it further stated.

The 25-year-old has been LSG's only silver lining in an otherwise disastrous campaign with 14 wickets from 12 games at an economy rate of 8.18 per over.

However, he appears to have learned little from previous incidents. His now customary "tick in notebook" celebration has gone viral on social media but match referees haven't taken too kindly to it. Most of the time, his celebrations come after being blasted by the opposition batters. In this instance, it came after India opener Abhishek had smashed 59 off 20 balls, including half a dozen sixes.

LSG were completely outclassed by SRH and the defeat ended their chances of IPL qualification. (PTI)

## Ahmedabad host IPL final; Mullanpur to stage 1st two play-offs



**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Ahmedabad will host the Indian Premier League's final on June 3 along with Qualifier 2 while Mullanpur will stage the first two play-off games this month, the BCCI announced on Tuesday.

Considering the monsoon, the BCCI has also shifted the May 23 fixture between Royal Challengers Bengaluru and Sunrisers Hyderabad in Bengaluru to Lucknow. The last match at the Chinna-swamy Stadium was washed out.

Hyderabad and Kolkata were supposed to host the play-offs as per the original dates but the IPL schedule had to be revised in the wake of the India-Pakistan military conflict that halted the event for a week.

The BCCI has also taken the monsoon season into consideration before deciding on the venues.

"The new venues for the Play-offs were decided by the IPL Governing Council keeping in mind the weather conditions and other parameters," said the BCCI in a statement.

"Similar to the playoffs stage, an additional one hour will be allocated to the playing conditions for the remaining matches of the league stage, starting Tuesday, 20 May," the statement added.

Qualifier 1 and the Eliminator will take place in Mullanpur on May 29 and 30 while Ahmedabad will stage Qualifier 2 and final on June 1 and 3. Ahmedabad had earlier hosted the IPL final in 2022 and 2023. (PTI)

## 2nd All Kamrup District Inter-School Swimming C'ship: Gurukul Grammar School crowned champion

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, May 20:** The 2nd All Kamrup District Inter-School Swimming Championship, organised under the aegis of the Assam Swimming Association by the All Kamrup District Swimming Association, was held in a grand manner on Sunday at the Dr. Zakir Hussain Aquatic Complex in Sarusajai, here. The event witnessed the participation of around 250 student-athletes from 41 schools across Kamrup Metropolitan and Rural districts.

The competition was inaugurated at 8:00 am with a flag hoisting ceremony followed by a synchronized school march-past. The opening ceremony was led by Bhaskar Ranjan Das, General Secretary of the Assam Swimming Association. Alongside swimming events, diving and water polo — which are gaining popularity — were also held.

At the end of the competition, Gurukul Grammar School was declared the "Best Champion School" for its outstanding performance.

St. Francis de Sales School earned the "Second Runners-Up Trophy" for their commendable efforts.

The winners were felicitated by Bhaskar Ranjan Das (General Secretary, Assam Swimming Association), Mukuteswar Goswami (Publicity Secretary), coaches Babul Gurung, Momi Barman, and David Chetia, Brother James (Principal of Monfort School), Dr. Dibyajyoti Dutta (Vice President, Rhino Aquatic Club), and other distinguished guests and sports personalities.

## Ministry gets into micro-managing national competitions; discomfort in IOA

**NEW DELHI, May 20:** Citing the "prime importance" of national events in the context of India's bid to host the 2036 Olympics, the sports ministry has unveiled directives on the procedure and timeline for the conduct of marquee domestic competitions which has caused some discomfort in the Indian Olympic Association (IOA). In a six-page directive issued to the IOA, the Paralympic Committee of India and the National Sports Federations (NSFs), the ministry said it is imperative that the National Games and the Championships "honour their national character."

"Towards this end, the IOA/PCI/NSFs shall adopt a system of Olympic and Paralympic Cycle planning and publish in advance their respective annual calendars, so that all the stakeholders have a clear idea and opportunity to plan interventions and allocate and deploy resources," the ministry stated. "Compliance with the above-mentioned procedure and requirements will be reviewed at the time of annual recognition process in terms of the Sports Code," it added in the missive.

The ministry said the Games Technical Conduct Committee, list of disciplines in the National Games, and eligibility criteria for participants should be communicated to it at least six months prior to the showpiece. It then goes on to direct the IOA and the NSFs to submit a schedule of the events to be held at least 45 days before the actual commencement.

The IOA and NSFs have also been told to

provide a "written description of all measures that will be undertaken in respect of anti-doping, age-fraud, match integrity, prevention of sexual harassment and athlete welfare and safety... whistle-blower and reporting protocols and grievance redressal measures."

Although no official response was forthcoming from the IOA, it is reliably learnt that the body is not happy to these directives as they are being seen as government interference in what has purely been a domain of the NSFs and the IOA.

The ministry said speedy dispute resolution is an essential aspect of well-organised events and all national competitions must have a robust ad-hoc panel to handle complaints from athletes and officials. Government interference in the day-to-day functioning of the NSFs and the national olympic committee is viewed as violation of Olympic Charter by the International Olympic Committee.

The ministry, on its part, acknowledged that the Olympic Charter, the Paralympic Charter and the National Sports Development Code "provide for the autonomy and responsibility of the IOA, the PCI and the NSFs for conduct of events such as the National Games and National Championships in association with their affiliate units." But it then went on to state that the ministry too has a role as these events also enable the medal winners to "enjoy the benefits of different government policies and programmes..." (PTI)

## HIL 2026 to start from January 5: HI secretary general Singh

**NOIDA, May 20:** The 2026 edition of the Hockey India League (HIL) will begin from January 5, the national federation's secretary general Bhola Nath Singh said here on Tuesday.

The HIL, which was revived after a gap of seven years, was last held from December 28 to February 1 this year.

"The HIL window is fixed and the men's HIL will continue to be an eight-team competition but the women's HIL will be of six teams from four from next year. The venues are yet not decided but we are in consultation with all stakeholders and soon we will have an update," Singh said after a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between HI and Amity University Online Education.

"Looking into the sentiments of foreign players and their Christmas celebrations, we have decided the next HIL will be from January 5," he added.

Singh also refuted reports that some national and foreign players haven't got their dues from franchises for their services in the last HIL.

"We will follow the guidelines of HIL, if a franchise wants to keep the same setup, they are free to do that. There is also a guideline that a franchise can keep their top 12 players and release rest for auction, then they will go into auction list."

"All dues of players are cleared, it's a false news," he said. As per the MoU signed on Tuesday, hockey players of the country will get academic scholarships from Amity University to pursue any professional or undergraduate course.

"The hockey players who want to study and build a career beyond the game can now do that because it's an online course. They can do the course from anywhere, while during national camp, or from abroad. It's a facility that Amity University has provided them," Singh said. Amity University Online chairman Ajit Chauhan elaborated on the MoU.

"Hockey is pride of India and we wanted first to sign with hockey to transform lives of players through quality online education." (PTI)

## Rishabh would be first one to admit that he didn't have a good season, says Marsh

**LUCKNOW, May 20:** Rishabh Pant couldn't live up to his reputation of being a bonafide match-winner despite his staggering Rs 27 crore billing and the Lucknow Super Giants skipper would be the first one to admit that he didn't have a great IPL season, teammate Mitchell Marsh said after his team's ouster from the cash-rich league.

LSG lost to Sunrisers Hyderabad by six wickets and are now officially out of play-offs race with two more matches left. Pant, on his part, has scored 134 runs in 12 games and at a strike-rate of below 100 in what has been his worst IPL season since he made his debut for Delhi Capitals in 2016. "He would be the first one to say that he hasn't had a season that he would have liked, but I know for myself personally that that's the way cricket goes sometimes," Marsh, who has tallied 443 runs so far with five half-centuries told reporters.

Marsh hoped that Pant will turn a corner in the last two



games for LSG even though it would count for little in the larger context.

"We know that he's a fantastic player, highly skilled and highly talented, so he will be back, but yeah, hopefully the last two games."

Asked about the positives for the season, Marsh said that the balance sheet could be

checked after the end of the 14th league game.

"I think the time for reflection is probably after the season and for me personally just focus on trying to contribute to winning the next two games for our team and for our franchise. Like I said, the IPL is a beast of a tournament and the margins are really small. "We

lost a couple of close games throughout the season that now have come back to bite us, but yeah, it's all about finishing off the season as strong as we possibly can now."

Sunrisers Hyderabad had changed the template of T20 batting last season with their attack-only philosophy but it didn't work during this season where they have been knocked out of the play-offs race with two matches still left, head coach Daniel Vettori accepted after winning the inconsequential game.

"People have talked about it, that obviously we came into the year with a reputation of being aggressive, and then the first game we made 280, and there was talk of that continuing on. I think for us it's just learning about conditions and understanding how we play in those certain conditions, and a few times we've been tripped up by them," Vettori said.

Adaptability became a key issue for the 'Orange Army', the legendary former left arm spinner said. (PTI)

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