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Hagrama to be sworn in as BTC chief on Oct 5

Governor, CM likely to attend swearing-in ceremony

- *Open to support from UPPL, BJP: BPF chief*

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: Following a decisive victory in the recently concluded Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections, the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) on Sunday staked claim to form the next council, with party supremo Hagrama Mohilary set to take oath as BTC Chief on October 5 in Kokrajhar.

The newly elected BPF representatives, led by Mohilary, met Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at Raj Bhavan and formally invited him to attend the swearing-in ceremony as the Chief Guest. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is also scheduled to be present at the event. Mohilary, who was unanimously elected by the party's policy-making body to head the new council, said, "We met the governor and staked claim to form the next council. We also invited him to be a part of our oath-taking ceremony on October 5. He has given verbal assurance to attend it. The governor said it is his birthday on October 3. If he comes to the oath-taking, we will together celebrate his special day also."

The BPF, which had headed the BTC since its formation in 2005 before being ousted in the 2020 polls, won 28 out of 40 seats in the election. The United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the Bharatiya Janata *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Zubeen death: CID opens fresh probe against Shyamkanu

Event manager accused of involvement in financial crimes and money laundering

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: A separate investigation was initiated by the Assam Police against event manager Shyamkanu Mahanta, an accused in singer Zubeen Garg's death, for his alleged involvement in organised financial crimes and acquiring properties by money laundering, official documents showed.

Shyamkanu is the younger brother of former DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, who is presently the chief information commissioner of the Assam State Information Commission. His another elder brother is Nani Gopal Mahanta, who was the education advisor to CM Himanta Biswa Sarma before becoming the vice chancellor of Gauhati University.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) seized bundles of "incriminating" documents and items from Shyamkanu's home during the raid on Thursday and Friday, the documents showed.

Among them were multiple PAN cards in the name of one firm, nearly 30 stamp seals of different companies and government officials, and documents related to several benami properties.

After the search, CID's Senior SP Ashif Ahmed filed a detailed FIR, a copy of which is with PTI, listing all the recoveries, requesting a separate probe into the alleged financial irregularities of Mahanta by attaching and freezing all his properties.

After receiving the complaint, the CID headquarters registered a case on Saturday night under multiple sections of the Bhartiya Nyay Sanhtia (BNS), and appointed Additional SP Moramee Das as the investigating officer.

The CID is currently probing Garg's death after more than 60 FIRs were lodged across the state against Mahanta, the main organiser of the Northeast India Festival in Singapore where the singer had gone to perform, and almost 10 others, including the icon's manager Siddharth Sharma. "In the course of the search, several incriminating documents and articles were seized, which clearly point towards the commission of serious *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Massive rally held over demand for Motok's ST status

DIBRUGARH, Sept 28: Thousands of members of the indigenous Motok community took out a massive torchlight procession at Sadiya in Assam's Tinsukia district on Sunday evening, demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status and the upgradation of their autonomous council to the constitutionally protected Sixth Schedule framework.

Protesters hit the streets with banners, placards and raised their voices for "justice and recognition", and said the ST status was promised to them a decade ago.

"The rally centred on two critical demands -- ST status for the community and upgrading our autonomous council to the constitutionally protected Sixth Schedule framework," All Assam Motok Yuva Chatra Sanmilan (AAMYCS) general secretary Swaroop *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Zubeen Garg's family files complaint with Assam CID

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: The family of Assam's cultural icon Zubeen Garg filed a complaint with the state CID over his death by drowning in Singapore, seeking a thorough probe into the incident.

Garg's uncle Manoj Kumar Borthakur, a signatory in the complaint, told PTI that they had sent it to the CID through email on Saturday.

"We want a thorough probe into the circumstances leading to Zubeen's death," he said.

Garg's wife Garima and his sister Palme Borthakur are the other signatories.

"We have sought an investigation into those present on the yacht trip during which the fatal incident occurred, organiser of North East India Festival Shyamkanu Mahanta and others who may be associated with the incident," another family member of Garg said.

Garg was in the Southeast Asian country to participate in the festival and had drowned while swimming without a life jacket in the sea on September 19 during the yacht trip, organised by members of the Singapore Assam Association.

The singer's family also urged the police to take steps to secure the copyrights of the creative works of Garg.

A senior police officer said, "We have received a complaint from Garg's family and are examining it."

He said the Special Investigation Team (SIT) of CID is already probing the incidents surrounding the death of the singer-composer, and the complaint filed by the family will be taken up with it.

A SIT member visited Garg's residence in the Kahilipara area of Guwahati on Sunday, he said. "We wanted to *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Himanta inaugurates 100-bed district hospital in Hamren

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: In a significant boost to healthcare infrastructure in West Karbi Anglong, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday inaugurated the 100-bed West Karbi Anglong District Hospital at Hamren.

Built at a cost of around Rs 30 crore under the National Health Mission, the three-storied hospital is spread over 62 bighas of land with a built-up area of 81,055 square feet.

The facility offers comprehensive medical services, including emergency care, general medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, radiology, ENT, dermatology, dentistry, ophthalmology, psychiatry, and physiotherapy.

It also houses operation theaters, laboratories, a pharmacy, ECG, X-ray, ICU, a blood bank, general

wards for men and women, six private wards, two conference halls, and residential quarters for doctors and healthcare staff.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarma said he had laid the foundation of the hospital during his tenure as health minister and felt proud to dedicate it to the people as chief minister on the auspicious occasion of Maha Shasthi of Durga Puja.

He announced that a GNM Nursing School would soon be operational in Hamren to provide nursing education for local girls. Classrooms have already been constructed *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Pabitra Margherita refutes claims on Zubeen's body repatriation

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Sept. 28: Union Minister of State (MoS) for Textiles and External Affairs Pabitra Margherita today dismissed allegations made by AJP leader Lurinjyoti Gogoi that Zubeen Garg's body was brought from Singapore to India using funds collected by Assamese NRIs in Singapore.

Addressing the media at the Jorhat Circuit House on Sunday evening, Margherita said that chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had taken immediate steps to repatriate the singer's body after learning of his demise in Singapore.

He added that he and the chief minister had personally coordinated with Indian High Commissioner in Singapore, Shilpak Ambule, to ensure the body was sent back promptly, maintaining full dignity and honours.

The Union Minister noted that Assam chief secretary Ravi Kota had written to the Indian High Commission on September 20, assuring that the state government would cover all expenses related to the repatriation.

The letter also emphasized that no contributions or sponsorships from any other entity would be required.

Brushing aside Gogoi's claims, Margherita said, "The whole state is mourning the loss of the legend, and only a small section is trying to play politics over his death."

He urged people not to politicize the issue, pointing out that the state government has already constituted an SIT to investigate the cause of death.

The minister further reminded that Lurinjyoti Gogoi and his party had *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

4 dacoits killed in police encounter

GOALPARA, Sept 28: Four dacoits were killed in an encounter with the police in Assam's Goalpara district on Sunday, a senior officer said.

The incident took place in Ghiladubi area early on Sunday.

Goalpara Senior Superintendent of Police Nabaneet Mahanta said, "We had information for the last few days about the presence of an armed criminal gang in the area, which is on the inter-state border with Meghalaya. We had been carrying out search operations."

He said a specific input was received in the morning that the gang would attempt to carry out kidnapping or other criminal activities, and accordingly, coordinated checkpoints were set up by the police.

"The criminals were coming in a car when they spotted one of our checkpoints in Ghiladubi area. They tried *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Stellar effort from spinners as India restrict Pakistan to 146

DUBAI, Sept 28: A majestic Kuldeep Yadav, in the company of a wily Varun Chakravarthy and a parsimonious Axar Patel, literally ran through an inept Pakistan batting line-up as India bowled out the arch-rivals for a below par 146 for 19.1 overs in a highly volatile Asia Cup final here on Sunday.

Hamstrung by Hardik Pandya's absence and pushed back briefly due to a solid opening stand of 84 between Sahibzada Farhan (57 off 38 balls) and Fakhar Zaman (46 off 35 balls), the Indian spin troika of Kuldeep (4/30 in 4 overs), Axar Patel (2/26 in 4 overs) and Chakravarthy (2/30 in 4 overs) literally choked them in the back-10 to bring India right back in the match.

From 113 for one at one stage when Fakhar and Saim Ayub were batting, wickets fell like nine pins once Kuldeep got rid of the latter. India got the remaining nine wickets for 33 runs to take the upper-hand halfway into the final.

To rub it in, Jasprit Bumrah (2/25 in 3.1 overs), who was having another off day, yorked Haris Rauf and then made half a gesture of a crashing plane in a send-off that reminded one of the Pakistani pacer's controversial gesture to the Indian fans in the previous game.

So what changed between the front and the back-10? It was the lines that the Indian spinners bowled to the Pakistani batters apart from taking the pace-off deliveries.

All the spinners started bowling slightly slower deliveries outside the hitting arc of the batters and that did the trick. Salman Ali Agha and Hussain Talat once again tried to hit their way out of trouble and failed miserably.

However, Pakistan had started off in a brilliant fashion, punishing the loose balls as Hardik's absence was being felt in the Powerplay. Farhan lined *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Assam surpasses national average in decline in child marriages: Report

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: Assam has recorded a sharp decline in the number of child marriages, surpassing the national average, as per a report of a survey carried out by a non-governmental organisation in five states.

Legal deterrence, including police complaints and arrests, was identified as among the most effective tools in eliminating child marriage, the report based on the period April 2022 to March 2025 said.

Quoting the report, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday that the government's tough stand against child marriage is bearing results as evident from the survey findings.

"Assam's relentless fight against child marriage is bearing fruit as it marked the steepest drop in child marriage in India," he said in a post on X.

"On #Navratri, as we celebrate

the divine power of Maa Durga, we remain committed to protect & nurture our daughters' future. The stats speak for itself!" the chief minister added.

The report, 'Tipping Point to Zero: Evidence Towards a Child Marriage Free India', released recently at a side event at the United Nations General Assembly in New York, was prepared by the Centre for Legal Action and Behaviour Change for Children (C-LAB), an initiative of NGO Just Rights for Children (JRC) partner India Child Protection.

The report said Assam is leading the nation *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

Zonal Karbi Youth Festival gets underway

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 28: The 33rd Zonal Karbi Youth Festival 2025 commenced on Sunday across Karbi Anglong, West Karbi Anglong and Karbi-inhabited areas of Biswanath Chariali and Sonapur in Kamrup district. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma inaugurated the festival of the Dongkamukam Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) Zone at Waisong Stadium, Dongkamukam in West Karbi Anglong. The inauguration was marked by the traditional Karbi ritual of Bongkrok Arnam Kipu, invoking the blessings of the Almighty. Organised by the KCS Dongkamukam Zonal Committee, the festival aims to promote and preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Karbi community. Chief executive member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Tuliram Ronghang; MP Amarsing Tisso and several other dignitaries attended the inaugural programme.

Diphu comes alive as Durga Puja celebrations light up the town

Durga Puja festivities begin in Diphu with colourful celebrations

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 28: The festive spirit has gripped Diphu town as Durga Puja, one of the most significant festivals of the Hindus, commenced on Sunday with the observance of Shashthi.

The five-day religious and cultural celebration, beginning on Sunday, will conclude on October 2 with the immersion of idols of Goddess Durga on Vijayadashami.

Across Diphu town and Birla, puja pandals have been decked up with vibrant lighting and artistic decorations, drawing large numbers of devotees and visitors.

The day began with bodhon, or the consecration of the idol of Goddess Durga at the puja mandaps, followed by maha shashti puja, a special invocation dedicated to the goddess.

After the ritual prayers, the idols

were unveiled and devotees offered flowers, fruits and sweets, seeking blessings for peace and prosperity.

The atmosphere reverberated with the chanting of mantras and devotional songs, while in the evening traditional lamps were lit, symbolising the ushering in of festive light.

As dusk descended, crowds thronged the decorated pandals, soaking in the festive ambience.

Despite Sunday being a weekly closure for shops, the Greater Diphu Bazar Committee had requested traders to keep their establishments open for the convenience of festive shoppers.

Markets bustled with activity as families flocked to garment stores, selecting new clothes for the occasion, while children could be seen excitedly choosing toys, balloons and other play items displayed outside puja venues.

A distinctive feature of this year's celebrations is the prominent display of portraits of Assam's cultural icon and legendary singer, the late Zubeen Garg, at several mandaps.

Puja committees have installed his photographs as a mark of honour and remembrance, making his presence felt in the midst of the festivities.

At Dillaji Mithiphang, the Durga Puja mandap has drawn special attention as *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

PM pays tribute to Bhupen Hazarika, Zubeen in 'Mann ki Baat' programme

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tributes to legendary singer Bhupen Hazarika, emphasising how his songs connected different countries.

He also remembered singer Zubeen Garg, who recently died by drowning in Singapore, describing him as one of the brightest stars of Assam.

The PM also said Garg's music will inspire generations.

Modi mentioned the two musical stars from Assam during his monthly radio broadcast 'Mann ki Baat', and Tamil and Sinhala versions of a famous song of Hazarika were played during the programme.

"Friends, these sounds bear witness to how Bhupen Hazarika's songs connect different countries around the world," Modi said after playing a part of the song in the two languages.

He said it was a very commendable effort made in Sri Lanka by translating Hazarika's iconic song 'Manuhe-Manuhar Babe' into Sinhala and Tamil.

"I played the audio of these very songs. A few days ago, I had the privilege of participating in Hazarika's birth centenary celebrations in Assam. It was truly a memorable event," the prime minister added.

Modi also said, "Friends, amidst the celebration of the birth centenary of Bhupen Hazarika in Assam, a moment of sadness too descended a few days ago. People are mourning the untimely demise of Zubeen Garg."

He maintained that Garg, a renowned singer, made his mark across the country.

"Garg had a deep connection with Assamese culture. Zubeen Garg will *(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)*

CM remembers Bhagat Singh on freedom fighter's birth anniversary

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday remembered Bhagat Singh on the freedom fighter's birth anniversary.

"A symbol of revolutionary resolve, an inspiration for the power of youth, an immortal son of the motherland -- salutations a hundredfold to martyr Bhagat Singh on his birth anniversary," Sarma said in a post on X.

The flame of sacrifice, courage and freedom that they (freedom fighters) ignited will continue to illuminate the national consciousness for ages to come, he added.

Bhagat Singh was born on September 27, 1907 in Banga village in Lyallpur district in present-day Pakistan. On March 23, 1931, Bhagat Singh was hanged along with Raj Guru and Sukhdev. They were given the death sentence in the Lahore conspiracy case. *(PTI)*

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RBI may go for 25 bps rate cut as inflation likely to remain benign: SBI Research report

MUMBAI, Sept 28: A SBI research report has pitched for a 25 bps rate cut, saying it is the 'best possible option' for the RBI, though some other experts opined that the central bank's rate-setting panel may again opt for status quo in its bi-monthly policy to be announced on October 1.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra-headed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is scheduled to begin a three-day brainstorming on policy rate on Monday in the backdrop of the ongoing geopolitical tensions and the US imposing 50 per cent tariffs on Indian shipments.

The decision will be announced on October 1 (Wednesday).

The RBI reduced the key short-term lending rate (repo) by 100 basis points in three tranches beginning in February, amidst declining consumer price index (CPI) based inflation.

However, the central bank opted for a status quo in the August bi-monthly monetary policy, taking a wait-and-watch approach to assess the impact of US tariffs and other geopolitical developments on the domestic economy.

The SBI study stated that there is merit and rationale for the RBI to reduce the key benchmark lending rate by 25 basis points in the forthcoming monetary policy, as retail inflation is expected to remain benign even in the next financial year.

On expectations from the MPC, Madan Sabnavis, Chief Economist at Bank of Baroda said: "While we do believe that there is limited scope for any change in the repo rate in this policy, there is a market view that given the current environment, a rate cut would be warranted."

He further said that, as inflation is anyway well below the target of 4 per cent both before and after GST 2.0, this cannot be a primary consideration. Also, growth is expected to steady and be upwards of 6.5 per cent for the year and hence there is no imminent threat to this number even after taking into account the tariff effect.

"Under these conditions, we expect a status quo. A change of stance could probably be considered to assuage sentiment and bond yields. If at all, at a later point in time, there is a package for exporters against the backdrop of tariffs, a rate cut could be considered," Sabnavis said.

Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA, said the GST rationalisation could dampen the headline CPI prints by 25-50 bps during Q3 FY2026 - Q2 FY2027 relative to ICRA's pre-GST rationalisation estimates, taking the average for FY2026 to about 2.6 per cent. While October-November 2025 may mark a fresh low for the CPI inflation, the trajectory subsequently remains upward sloping.

"GST rationalisation is unambiguously set to moderate inflation. However, this is the outcome of a policy change and will likely be accompanied by stronger demand. This suggests a status quo for the repo rate in the October 2025 policy review, in what appears to be a close call," she said.

Effective September 22, Goods and Services Tax (GST) has become a two-tier structure of 5 per cent and 18 per cent. The earlier rates of 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent have been clubbed into two rates of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, resulting in a reduced price of 99 per cent of daily use items.

Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil Limited, said: "We expect that a repo rate cut could come as soon as October due to lower-than-expected inflation. Core inflation, which indicates excess demand pressure, remains low by historical standards despite the significant impact of rising gold prices."

The rationalisation of GST rates will also likely contribute to reducing inflation further, he said.

"Moreover, the recent decision by the US Federal Reserve to lower its funds rate by 25 basis points, along with an anticipated additional 50 basis points of cuts this year, provides the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee with some flexibility to make adjustments," Joshi said.

Mandar Pitale, Head - Financial Markets, SBM Bank (India) Ltd said MPC is expected to maintain "status quo" on policy rate in forthcoming meeting waiting for the full impact of CRR cut to unfold and also for any further proactive fiscal measures from government.

"In the near term, the baseline view thus remains that of prolonged pause with a small probability of residual rate cut in December MPC meeting depending upon the forward-looking growth inflation dynamics prevailing at that point," Pitale said.

According to a study published in the RBI's latest Bulletin, the pass-through of the cumulative 100 bps reduction in the repo rate during February to August 2025 to lending and deposit rates has been robust. *(PTI)*

HRAEI holds 64th annual general meeting

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: The Hotel & Restaurant Association of Eastern India (HRAEI), the apex representative body of the hospitality sector in Eastern India, convened its 64th Annual General Meeting at The Park Hotel, Kolkata, which witnessed the participation of a large number of hoteliers, restaurateurs and allied stakeholders from across the region.

The occasion was marked by the election of new office bearers of the Association as well as the selection of representatives to the Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) Committee.

Established on July 18, 1961, the HRAEI has, over the decades, emerged as the foremost organisation representing the interests of the hospitality industry across twelve states and a Union Territory in Eastern India. The Association works closely with state and central governments, as well as with allied industry organisations, to safeguard and promote the interests of hotels, restaurants and allied establishments.

In its long journey, it has played a pivotal role in shaping policies, supporting business development and fostering professional excellence within the industry.

During the meeting, the new leadership of the Association was elected with Sudesh Poddar taking charge as President, while Mohammad Azhar was chosen as Senior Vice President and Manoj Gowda as Vice President. The responsibilities of honorary secretary were entrusted to Pranab Singh, with Deepak Kapoor elected as Honorary Treasurer.

Souvik Raha was named Honorary Joint Treasurer, while Anil Venda was elected as Joint Honorary Secretary.

Alongside this, the Association also confirmed its representatives to the FHRAI Committee, which include Sudesh Kumar Poddar, Pranab Singh, Girish Arora, Ashok Singh, Sandeep Sehgal and Vijay Kumar Diwan, Executive Director of The Park Hotel.

In his address following the announcement of the new office bearers, President Sudesh Poddar underscored the importance of collective effort in strengthening the hospitality sector.

He stressed that proactive engagement with policymakers and continuous collaboration within the industry would be crucial to overcome challenges and harness opportunities for growth.

Pink Power Run 2.0 draws 20,000 in Hyderabad, global expansion planned for 2026

HYDERABAD, Sept 28: The second edition of the Pink Power Run, organised by the Sudha Reddy Foundation, brought together over 20,000 participants at Necklace Road on Sunday to raise awareness about breast cancer and promote early detection. The event was flagged off by philanthropist Sudha Reddy, MEIL Managing Director Krishna Reddy, Miss World Chairperson Julia Morley, and tennis legend Leander Paes, according to a statement by the organisers. Reigning Miss World 2025, Opal Suchata Chuangsri, also participated, alongside a global delegation of Miss World continental titleholders and Miss India World Nandini Gupta.

This year's run, themed 'Stride & Shine', featured 10 km, 5 km, and 3 km races, and included corporate leaders, students, senior citizens, and underprivileged women. Pre-event activities included fitness workshops, survivor stories, and social media campaigns. The 10K open category saw Ankit Gupta (30:52) and Seema (34:44) clinch top spots in the men's and women's divisions respectively. In the 5K open category, Harmanjot Singh (14:25) and Ankita (16:52) took first place. Winners received cash prizes of up to Rs 3.5 lakh.

Julia Morley was honoured with the Excellence in Mentorship Award 2025 for her long-standing contribution to women's empowerment and community health initiatives.

Speaking at the event, Sudha Reddy announced the global launch of Pink Power Run - Beyond Borders in 2026, which aims to engage participants across 140 countries. The initiative will include a 24-hour continental relay and feature Miss World's seven continent queens as global ambassadors. "This initiative is a symbol of hope, unity, and empowerment in the fight against breast cancer," Reddy said. "Beyond Borders will carry this message to a global audience."

The Pink Power Run is an annual initiative aimed at raising breast cancer awareness and promoting early detection through community participation and education. Julia Morley, Chairperson, Miss World Organization states, "Our collective efforts can create a powerful movement for breast cancer awareness, empowering individuals with the knowledge to take charge of their health.

"Breast cancer is the most common cancer among Indian women - early detection can save countless lives. The Pink Power Run promotes health screenings, self-check practices, and the crucial message that awareness equals empowerment."

Leander Paes said, "As a strong advocate for health and empowerment, I am proud to support the Pink Power Run. This initiative not only promotes physical fitness but also raises vital awareness about breast cancer. Together, we can inspire hope and encourage early detection, proving that every step contributes to a larger movement for change."

Sudha Reddy, Chairperson, Sudha Reddy Foundation said, "This initiative represents hope, resilience, and unity in the battle against breast cancer."

With the 'Pink Power Run - Beyond Borders', we are extending our mission globally to connect individuals in support of this crucial cause. The Pink Power Run remains a powerful platform for raising awareness, fostering community engagement, and highlighting the importance of early detection."

The Pink Power Run - Beyond Borders, set to debut in 2026, aims to unite millions across 140 countries, symbolising a shared commitment to breast cancer awareness worldwide. Key features include a 24-hour continental relay, where participants will symbolically 'pass the baton' across continents, along with the involvement of the seven continent queens from the Miss World Organisation serving as ambassadors to inspire global participation. *(PTI)*

Global, domestic firms to invest ₹ 1.02 lakh cr in Indian food processing sector: Govt

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: The government has signed agreements with 26 overseas and domestic firms during the 'World Food India' summit for investments worth ₹ 1.02 lakh crore in India's food processing sector. The summit, organised by the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, was held at Bharat Mandapam in the national capital from September 25 to 28.

In an official statement on Sunday, the ministry said the World Food India 2025 concluded on a historic note with investment commitments of unprecedented scale. "Over the course of the four-day event, 26 leading domestic and global companies signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) worth a total of ₹ 1,02,046.89 crore, marking one of the largest investment announcements in India's food processing sector," the ministry added. On the first day of the summit, inaugurated by the Prime Minister, Union Food Processing Minister Chirag Paswan had asserted that MoUs worth over ₹ 1 lakh crore would be signed during the four-day event. "These MoUs are projected to generate direct employment for over 64,000 people and create indirect opportunities for more than 10 lakh individuals," the statement said. *(PTI)*

Contd. from Page 1...

Zubeen death: CID opens

financial irregularities, forgery, and use of fraudulent means for unlawful financial gains," the CID FIR said.

From the search operation, the sleuths seized two PAN cards in the name of his event management company 'Trend MMS', bearing distinct PAN numbers, it said.

"The possession and use of multiple PAN cards in the name of the same entity prima facie establishes fraudulent intention and deliberate manipulation to conceal or project tainted money as untainted," it added.

Further, 28 stamp seals were recovered from the Mahanta's office premises. These included seals in the name of various companies and many government officials, according to the FIR.

"Such recovery strongly indicates the accused's involvement in forgery, impersonation, fabrication of official documents, and use of such forged instruments for financial transactions with the intent to cheat financial institutions, Government departments, and other stakeholders," it said.

"That the possession of multiple PAN cards and large numbers of forged seals prima facie reveals a well-structured conspiracy and organised financial crime, having cross-jurisdictional ramifications. The same amounts to creation and circulation of proceeds of crime, which squarely falls under the ambit of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002," it said.

Several documents were also recovered inside the residence and the office premises of Mahanta, pertaining to the construction of roads under the PMGSY scheme in various districts of Assam as well as in Arunachal Pradesh, it said.

"That in view of the above, it is humbly submitted that an independent investigation for misappropriation of government funds, cheating by forgery of government documents has been committed by Syam Kanu (sic) Mahanta and his associates and acquired huge properties out of the proceeds of crime," the FIR said.

It was requested to register the case on the charges of cheating, forgery, misappropriation of government funds and acquiring of "benami properties by laundering of money".

It was also urged to conduct a detailed financial investigation into Mahanta's assets, bank accounts, companies and transactions linked with the use of forged PAN cards and seals, attach and freeze his properties, accounts, and "proceeds of crime" identified during the course of the investigation, according to the FIR.

Subsequently, the CID headquarters registered the case and started a separate investigation.

DGP Harmeet Singh on Wednesday formed a nine-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe into the untimely death of Garg.

Garg died in Singapore on September 19 while swimming in the sea. He had gone to the Southeast Asian nation to attend the 4th edition of the NorthEast India Festival, organised by Mahanta's company. (PTI)

Hagrama to be sworn

Party (BJP), which had jointly run the administration for the last five years but contested separately, secured seven and five seats respectively.

Mohilary added that the BPF will welcome support from any party, including UPPL or BJP, if offered. "I have seen that the Chief Minister has said that we will work together as NDA allies. We welcome it," he said, adding that he will meet the Chief Minister later in the day to invite him to the oath-taking ceremony.

Earlier, outgoing BTC Chief Pramod Boro of UPPL met the Governor to submit his resignation. "As per the rule, I have met the governor and given my resignation. The new council will be formed soon. We are grateful to the people of BTC for giving us the opportunity to lead it for the last five years. We accept the mandate and will keep working for our people," he said.

The swearing-in ceremony on October 5 is expected to witness a grand gathering in Kokrajhar, marking the beginning of the new BPF-led administration in BTC. (With inputs from PTI)

Massive rally held

Gohain told PTI. An estimated 30,000 people from the Motok community joined the torchlight rally in Sadiya, he claimed.

The long-awaited ST status was a key electoral promise made by the BJP during its 2014 Lok Sabha poll campaign, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi pledging to grant it to six indigenous Assamese communities.

Assam's Moran, Motok, Chutia, Tai-Ahom, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea-Tribes communities have been demanding ST status for many years, while assurances for the reservation have regularly been given by many senior BJP leaders and ministers.

Apart from ST recognition, the protesters focused on securing greater autonomy.

They demanded elevation of the Motok Autonomous Council from its current statutory status to the Sixth Schedule area under the country's Constitution.

Gohain said, "Our patience after 10 years of waiting has been exhausted. We will intensify our agitation if the government continues to ignore our demands and pledge to sustain pressure on both state and central governments until our constitutional rights are secured." (PTI)

Pabitra Margherita refutes

previously made derogatory remarks about Zubeen Garg, prompting the singer's sharp response. Margherita warned Gogoi against making false allegations for political gain. Meanwhile, a 48-member committee, formed on Saturday under Assam minister Bimal Borah to organise the 13th-day mangalik programme of Zubeen Garg at Jorhat Stadium on October 1, met on Sunday to finalise arrangements.

Himanta inaugurates 100

within the hospital, and once the hostel is ready, the nursing institute will start functioning. The chief minister further stated that a CT scan machine will be operational by December. While a dialysis unit has already been installed at the Dongkamukam Community Health Centre, the government is ready to provide similar facilities at Hamren hospital upon public demand. Efforts are also underway to start caesarean delivery services at the hospital.

Sarma congratulated the doctors and nurses on the inauguration and urged the medical fraternity at the hospital to dedicate themselves to patient care.

Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Tuliram Ronghang; Sports and Youth Welfare Minister Nandita Garlosa; Karbi King Long Sing Ronghang; MLA Rupsing Teron; and several other dignitaries were present at the event.

Zubeen Garg's family

ask certain queries, and our officers met the family. Their complete statements will be recorded once the rituals are completed," he added.

Part of the 10-member SIT, the officer spent about 30 minutes with the family members of Garg.

The officer, however, did not reveal any details of the visit.

Meanwhile, three close associates of Garg - actor Nishita Goswami, singer Amritprava Mahanta and musician Shekharjyoti Goswami -appeared at the CID office here for the second consecutive day.

All of them were on the Singapore trip, with Goswami being present with Garg during the incident.

Their statements were also recorded by the investigators on Saturday.

Allegations of conspiracy and foul play behind Garg's death have been raised, with the government forming the SIT to probe all angles.

The SIT has issued notices to 10 people, including Mahanta, Garg's manager Siddharth Sharma and members of the Singapore Assam Association, to appear before it and record their statements.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said on Saturday that lookout notices through the Interpol have been issued against Mahanta and Sharma so that they cannot leave the country.

He also asked them to appear before the CID on October 6, after the Durga Puja.

Sarma had also said that the case could be handed to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) if the SIT failed to reveal the truth. (PTI)

4 dacoits killed

to flee but couldn't turn the car back. They opened fire on our team, which prompted the police personnel to fire in retaliation," Mahanta said.

All four criminals in the car were injured in the gunfight and taken to a nearby hospital.

"They were declared brought dead in the hospital," the SSP added.

He said four pistols, five mobile phones, two walkie-talkie sets and cartridges were seized from the vehicle used by the dacoits.

On the possibility of other members of the gang being present, Mahanta said, "Police are on alert to thwart any criminal activity. We will find out whether more members were there. Operations will continue." (PTI)

Stellar effort from

up Bumrah early as he had done in the previous two games even as Dube went for a couple of boundaries in his first two overs.

What Pakistan did well was to play within their limitations but make optimal use of the Powerplay which yielded 45 runs. But more importantly, the wickets were intact.

Farhan hit a six each off Varun Chakravarthy, Kuldeep and Axar while Fakhar slog swept the chinaman bowler for a flat six. Farhan completed his 50 off 35 balls but celebrations were muted this time around.

However things changed after the break as Chakravarthy, after being hit for a six off Farhan, got lucky that his half-tracker was pulled right into Tilak Varma's hands at deep mid-wicket.

Saim Ayub and Fakhar also had a steady stand as they took the score to 113 before the innings completely fell apart. (PTI)

Assam surpasses national

with the steepest decline in child marriage, recording an 84 per cent drop in cases among girls and a 91 per cent reduction among boys in the last three years.

It said that at the national level, child marriages declined by 69 per cent among girls and 72 per cent among boys.

In terms of decline in child marriages among girls in the five surveyed states, Assam is followed by Maharashtra and Bihar (70 per cent each), Rajasthan (66 per cent), and Karnataka (55 per cent).

The study attributed Assam's progress to the state government's 'zero tolerance' approach, strict legal action and coordinated efforts with the central government and civil society organisations over the past three years.

Recognising the state's success, JRC also announced the 'Champions of Change' Award for Sarma.

JRC is one of the largest networks with over 250 NGOs working for child protection, and in Assam alone, its eight NGO partners are working in 30 of the state's 35 districts. The findings revealed that while all respondents identified awareness campaigns as the most effective tool in reducing child marriages, 76 per cent cited prosecution through FIRs and arrests as the second most important factor behind Assam's sharp decline. However, knowledge of specialised mechanisms such as the child welfare committee and helplines remained low at 31 and 22 per cent, respectively.

The report also credited government schemes for this decline in child marriages.

"The Assam government has also initiated measures to counter child marriage, including the Nijut Moina 2.0 scheme, which provides financial support to girls pursuing education and strengthens incentives to delay marriage," the report said.

It said that 99 per cent of the respondents in Assam reported being aware of the child marriage laws, and credited television and NGOs as the top sources of their legal information at 92 per cent and 76 per cent, respectively.

Also, the report revealed an almost universal awareness (99 per cent) of the central government's 'Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat' campaign launched in 2024.

"Around 88 per cent of the respondents identified NGOs as the lead facilitator of the campaign and pledges against child marriage," the report said.

A total of 95 per cent of respondents also reported having taken the pledge against child marriage during the campaign in the state.

Key recommendations of the report included strict enforcement of child marriage laws, better reporting mechanisms, compulsory marriage registration and village-level awareness of the portal of the Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat for the elimination of the social menace by 2030.

The report also recommended designating a national day against child marriage.

The report was based on field data from 757 villages from five states selected zone-wise and adopted the Multistage Stratified Random Sampling.

In Assam, 150 villages were surveyed and frontline service providers such as ASHA, Anganwadi workers, school teachers, auxiliary nurse midwives, Panchayat Raj Institution members, etc., were engaged. (PTI)

PM pays tribute to

always remain etched in our memories, and his music will continue to captivate generations to come," Modi said.

The prime minister added in the Assamese language that Garg was a shining gem in Assam's cultural heritage, and he will forever live in the hearts of the people.

The 52-year-old singer died by drowning in the sea in Singapore on September 19, plunging the entire state into deep mourning as lakhs of people came out to pay last respects to him. (PTI)

Durga Puja festivities

the organisers celebrate the Silver Jubilee of hosting the festival. With this being the 25th year, the committee has gone the extra mile in lighting and decoration, creating an impressive attraction for devotees and visitors.

Organisers have also assured that proper arrangements have been made to accommodate the large footfall expected during the festive days and have appealed to people to join in the celebrations and offer prayers to Goddess Durga.

The Dharamnala mandap witnessed majestic adornment of Durga and her accompanying deities. Following the consecration ceremony, devotees offered flowers, sweets and prayers in a deeply devotional atmosphere. At Binapani, the committee has taken a different approach by constructing an eco-friendly mandap using bamboo and thatch, lending it a traditional village look.

"Our children are too accustomed to artificial structures and modern styles. To revive our traditional forms, we decided to use bamboo and thatches to give the mandap an authentic, eco-friendly appearance," explained Ajit Das, assistant secretary of the committee. As the evening progressed, families and groups of friends could be seen visiting pandals, enjoying roadside eateries, bargaining in clothing shops and gathering at toy stalls, further adding to the vibrancy of the town.

The festive fervour is expected to intensify tomorrow on Saptami, when a larger number of devotees will throng the mandaps to offer flowers, fruits and prayers to Goddess Durga and seek her blessings for happiness and prosperity.

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9 mm pistol recovered in Bilasipara

HT Correspondent

BILASIPARA, Sept 28: In a shocking incident during the Durga Puja festival, a 9 mm pistol was recovered from a young man in the Bilasipara area. The incident occurred near Futkibari during a road accident, causing widespread alarm among local residents. According to eyewitnesses, a young man met with a bike accident near the bridge at Futkibari road. Locals rushed to assist him, and a 9 mm pistol was found in his possession. The locals immediately informed the police, who arrived at the scene and took the young man along with his bike bearing number AS-01 DY 5582 to the police station. Police investigations have identified the man as Arun Kumar Tiwari, a resident of Fakiragram in Kokrajhar district. Preliminary suspicion suggests that the man was roaming the area with intent to commit an unpleasant act. Locals believe that the individual might have openly carried the 9 mm pistol to create a tense atmosphere in Bilasipara during the Durga Puja festival.

Hagrama to head BTC again after BPF triumph

The BPF plans to invite leaders of all autonomous councils, political parties

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: Bodoland People's Front (BPF) chief Hagrama Mohilary was unanimously elected as the party's leader to head the next Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) at the first meeting of its Policy Making Body (PMB) on Saturday, following the party's sweeping victory in the recently concluded elections.

The BPF secured 28 out of 40 seats, while the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the BJP, who had jointly governed the outgoing BTC, won only nine and seven seats respectively, down from 12 and 9 in the last polls.

Former minister Rihon Daimari was elected deputy leader, and Derhasat Basumatary was appointed as the chief whip of the party in the BTC.

"We plan to hold the swearing-in ceremony on October 3 in Kokrajhar. We will meet Governor Laxman Prasad Acharya on Sunday to stake claim to form the next

Council, and if he agrees, the ceremony will be held as scheduled," Mohilary said.

The party will also invite the Governor as the chief guest and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma as a special guest for the ceremony.

The PMB meeting was focused on the swearing-in arrangements and not on portfolio distribution, Mohilary clarified. Welcoming Sarma's statement that the BJP will support the BPF as an NDA ally, he said the BPF is open to support from all political parties and organisations to fulfill its poll promises.

"All sections of people are happy with our promises, which is why they voted us to power. We are committed to fulfilling all of them," he said.

Mohilary also alleged that outgoing BTC chief Pramod Boro failed to deliver on the promises he had made in the previous election.

The BPF plans to invite leaders of all autonomous councils, political parties, social and religious organisations across the state, and Tipra Motha chief Pradyot Bikram Manikya Debbarma of Tripura as guests of honour.

All major issues of the BTC will be discussed in the PMB before implementation, he added.

The meeting began with a minute's silence in tribute to singer Zubeen Garg and all martyrs of the Bodo movement. The BPF will also pay homage to Bodo leader Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma before the swearing-in. (PTI)

BJP did much better in BTC under Sonowal, than Himanta: Gogoi

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: Claiming that the BTC election result was a rejection of the BJP government, Congress president Gaurav Gogoi said the ruling party had performed much better in 2020 when Sarbananda Sonowal was the Chief Minister, while its tally has gone down under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

The Bodoland People's Front (BPF) swept the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) polls by winning 28 of the 40 seats. In contrast, the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and the BJP, which had jointly run the council for the last five years but contested separately this time, managed to secure only seven and five seats respectively.

The Congress, which had won one seat in the previous election, failed to open its account. In the 2020 polls, the UPPL had bagged 12 seats while the BJP had won nine. "I'm grateful to all the Congress party workers, leaders and supporters who worked hard during the recently concluded BTC elections. The result was a rejection of the BJP government, which has been in power at the state and Centre for the past ten years," Gogoi said in a post on X.

Gogoi, the deputy leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, also said the BJP's ally UPPL has been significantly weakened. "This was largely due to the interference and influence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma," he alleged.

On the poor performance of his own party, Gogoi said the road to revival is a slow and grinding path. "Over the past one-and-a-half months, the Congress built the foundation of our grassroots organisation. Our MLAs held meetings at the mandal level. Our candidates campaigned tirelessly," he said.

"We will continue to work hard in the BTR districts. The road to revival is always a slow and grinding path, but there are no shortcuts to success," he reiterated.

Gogoi also congratulated BPF chief Hagrama Mohilary for leading his party to a decisive victory.

Chief Minister Sarma, reacting to the results, said the outcome would have been different had the "unfortunate death of Zubeen Garg not happened." He said the BJP refrained from any election-related outreach during the last three days before the polls and had prioritised mourning over campaigning.

Sarma added that the BJP lost by very slim margins in several constituencies and could have won at least 10 to 11 seats.

In an apparent attack on Gogoi, Sarma said the people rejected the Congress as they have realised that its leader is "a Pakistani agent."(PTI)

Assam emerging as nerve-centre of India's tech growth: CM Sarma

CM highlights progress in telecom, semiconductor sectors and local job creation through BSNL and Tata projects in Assam

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said the state has positioned itself as a nerve-centre of the country's technological progress, particularly in areas such as telecom connectivity and semiconductor manufacturing.

Speaking at a programme held in Guwahati to mark the nationwide launch of BSNL's indigenously developed 4G Stack by Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Odisha, Sarma said this progress is translating into employment opportunities for local youth, enabling them to work within the state.

The event was attended by Union Communications Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran, BSNL CMD A Robert Jerard Ravi, and other senior officials.

Sarma said the Prime Minister's vision of a self-reliant India is evident in the development and deployment of BSNL's 4G technology, adding that the government's emphasis on indigenous technology also extends to semiconductor manufacturing.

"With the Tata Group working on the semiconductor unit at Jagiroad, Assam is fast emerging as a major hub in India's semiconductor ecosystem," he said.

He added that Assam is playing a central role in advancing data centres and semiconductor infrastructure under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and Minister Scindia.

The chief minister also highlighted BSNL's plan to set up five data centres across India, one of which will be in Guwahati. Construction work for the Guwahati data centre at the IT Park near Borjhar Airport has already begun, he said.

"These centres will create local employment opportunities, allowing educated youth of Assam to stay and work within the state instead of relocating to metros like Bengaluru," Sarma said.

He also mentioned that a promise made by Scindia during the Advantage Assam Business Summit 2.0 - to set up a 5G lab at Gauhati University- has been fulfilled. (PTI)

Pramod resigns as CEM, says committed to smooth transition and public service

UPPL appoints Kampa Borgoyari leader of opposition in BTCLA

KOKRAJHAR, Sept 28: The United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) has appointed Kampa Borgoyari as the Leader of Opposition and Wilson Hasda as the Chief Whip in the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly (BTCLA).

The decision was taken during a crucial meeting of elected Members of Council Legislative Assembly (MCLAs) of the UPPL, held on Sunday under the chairmanship of party president Pramod Boro. The appointments were made unanimously.

UPPL leaders said the move aims to uphold democratic values and ensure the voices of the people are effectively represented both within and outside the assembly.

Meanwhile, Pramod Boro has officially resigned from his post as Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). Boro submitted his resignation to Governor Laxman Prasad Acharya at Raj Bhavan in Guwahati. He was accompanied by BTC Speaker Katiram Boro and MCLA

Madhab Chandra Chetry.

Speaking after his resignation, Boro said, "I have formally submitted my resignation to the Hon'ble Governor, in accordance with constitutional protocol. I remain committed to serving the people and supporting the government in every possible way for a smooth transition."

Durga Puja begins with festive fervour

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Sept 28: The festive spirit has taken over Diphu town as Durga Puja, a major Hindu festival, begins on Shashti day. The five-day celebrations will conclude on October 2, Vijayadashami, with the immersion of goddess Durga idols.

Durga puja pandals across Diphu and Birla are beautifully decorated with lights and ornaments. The day started with bodhon, the consecration of the goddess's idol, followed by maha shashti puja, a special invocation.

After the puja, devotees offered flowers, fruits, and sweets to seek blessings, while chanting mantras and singing religious songs. Lamps were lit at dusk to symbolize the arrival of festive light.

Despite being a Sunday when shops are usually closed, the Greater Diphu Bazar Committee requested merchants to open their stores for the occasion. Shoppers flocked to garment shops, bargaining for new clothes for Durga Puja. Children were drawn to toy shops selling balloons and other play items.

A notable feature this year is the display of portraits of late Assamese cultural icon and singer Zubeen Garg in several puja mandaps, honoring his legacy.

At Dillaji Mithiphang Durga Mandap, celebrating its 25th year, special lighting and decorations were arranged, with organizers inviting everyone to visit and offer prayers. Dharamnala Durga Puja mandap also impressed with its majestic idol decorations.

AFSPA extended for six more months in 3 districts

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act or AFSPA was extended in three districts of Assam for six more months from October 1, according to a notification issued on Saturday.

The state government had recommended to the Centre that the 'Disturbed Area' status under the AFSPA be extended in Tinsukia, Charaideo and Sivasagar districts for an additional period of six months, according to the notification issued by the state's Political (A) Department.

The Union Ministry of Home Affairs agreed with the state government's view to retain the status in the three districts, and the extension was granted, it said.

The state government observed that the law and order situation in the state, in the context of extremist-related violence, has improved significantly due to "sustained efforts and proactive counterinsurgency measures of security forces".

Despite these improvements, there have been sporadic incidents (of violence) by suspected ULFA(I) cadres, the only militant group active in the state, along with movement of NSCN(K-YA) cadres, mainly for the purpose of extortion, subversive activities and recruitment of youth in these three districts, it said.

The AFSPA was withdrawn from the entire state on April 1, 2022, barring nine districts and a sub-division of Cachar district. Subsequently, it was withdrawn from the six districts in phases.

The state was declared a 'Disturbed Area' under AFSPA on the intervening night of November 27-28, 1990. Since then, the application of the law has been extended every six months after a review by the state government, with a report sent to the Union Home Ministry for consideration.

The act empowers security forces to conduct operations anywhere and arrest anyone without a prior warrant. It also gives a certain level of immunity to the security forces in case an operation goes wrong. Civil society groups, rights activists and even some political parties have demanded the withdrawal of the law from the entire Northeast, alleging violation of human rights by armed forces under its cover. (PTI)

Art contest promotes peace and unity

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 28: In a heartfelt initiative to promote peace and unity, the Nagaon Lions Club, in collaboration with the cultural organisation Kallol Sangskritik Gosthi, organised an art competition for children at Kallol Art School on Sunday last.

Themed "We are all one on this earth," the event encouraged young participants to express messages of global harmony through their artwork. The competition aimed to instill values of togetherness and understanding among children, urging them to look beyond boundaries and differences.

The event was attended by several notable personalities, including Tikendrajit Saikia, Principal of Kallol Art School, Noushad Akhtar Hazarika, General Secretary of Kallol Sangskritik Gosthi, Jeeten Agarwala, President of Nagaon Lions Club, Maharsi Vishal Bordoloi, Secretary of the Club along with Biswajit Mahanta, Hardarshan Singh, Mala Sarma Bordoloi, Sailen Das, Bijoy Bhuyan, Gurusharan Singha, Inamul Majid, Harbindar Singh Siddhu, Debendra Singh Sehmi, and other members of both organisations. Dhritiman Bora won first prize, followed by Nayeem Roj in second place and Rahat Ahmed in third. Winners were felicitated with prizes. The event concluded on a positive note, leaving participants and attendees inspired by the message of peace. The initiative was widely appreciated as a step towards nurturing harmony and understanding in the community.

MLA Siddhartha Bhattacharya inaugurates Kalibari Durga Puja

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: The Shree Shree Dakhineswari Kalibari Durga Puja Committee, one of Guwahati's oldest and most revered puja committees, marked the 72nd year of its Sarbajanin Durga Puja at Railway Kalibari Colony, Panbazar. This year's pandal, inspired by the Kedarnath Temple of Uttarakhand, was formally inaugurated on Sunday evening by East Guwahati MLA Siddhartha Bhattacharya.

During the ceremony, the MLA paid tribute to late beloved singer Zubeen Garg for his contributions to Assam's cultural heritage. As part of the Assam government's financial support initiative, he handed over a cheque of ₹ 10,000 to the puja committee. He also inaugurated the newly built Mandir Community Hall.

In his address, Bhattacharya spoke on the cultural and spiritual significance of Durga Puja, calling it an occasion that celebrates unity, culture, and tradition. He urged

devotees to worship Maa Durga with devotion and allow the spirit of the festival to foster positive habits and eliminate negativity.

He also encouraged the puja committee to maintain vigilance and cleanliness during the celebrations in line with the Swachhata mission.

The inauguration was attended by key members of the puja committee including President Badri Prasad Barbati, Secretary Biswajit Chanda, Treasurers Saptadip Das and Biswajit Debnath, Chief Patron Narayan Agarwal, and other respected members.

Over 400 Durga Puja pandals light up Nagaon

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Sept 28: Durga Puja festivities have begun in full swing across Nagaon district, with over 400 pandals set up, including more than 25 in tea garden areas. Despite the somber mood following the recent demise of iconic singer Zubeen Garg, the festive spirit remains strong.

In Nagaon town alone, more than 120 puja pandals have been erected, with several committees marking historic milestones. The Beltala Janaki Nath Sen Family's Durga Puja in Christianpatty and the Binapani Puja Samiti in Uttar Haiborgaon are among the oldest, celebrating their 176th and 156th years, respectively.

Other notable pujas include the 132nd celebration by the Nagaon Bengali Samiti, the 130th year of Amulapatty Puja Utsav Samiti, and the 128th year of Faujdaripatty Sarbajanin Durga Puja Utsav Samiti.

In the rural belt, the Silghat Sarbajanin Durga Puja Samiti at Kaliabor is observing its 125th year, while the Dakshinpat Anchalik Sarbajanin Binapani Durga Puja has completed 100 years. Other prominent celebrations are being hosted by Hindustanpatty Sarbajanin Thakur Bari, Haiborgaon Bengali Pujabari, and Nagaon Police Reserve Puja Committees. Budgets for the pujas range from ₹ 3 lakh to ₹ 16 lakh, with many pandals set to display modern themes, artistic designs, and vibrant lighting to draw crowds.

Meanwhile, the Srimanta Shankar Mission Path Sarbajanin Durga Puja marks its golden jubilee this year, adding to the festive significance.

TUTA demands removal of Tezpur University Vice Chancellor

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: The Tezpur University Teachers' Association (TUTA) on 27th September held a press interaction at the Council Hall of the University to expose serious financial and administrative irregularities that have eroded the academic and institutional integrity of Tezpur University.

Prof Kusum Kumar Bania, President of TUTA, addressed the gathering and raised deep concerns about the functioning of the University under Vice Chancellor Prof Shambhu Nath Singh.

The Association, in unison, strongly condemned the Vice Chancellor for making disrespectful remarks against the state's cultural icon, Late Zubeen Garg, which has deeply hurt public sentiments.

TUTA also informed that a detailed memorandum has already been submitted to the Chief Minister of Assam and the Governor of Assam (also the Chancellor of Tezpur University). The memorandum sets out the following grave allegations and demands the Vice Chancellor's immediate removal.

The memorandum emphasises alleged financial irregularities as the most pressing concern at Tezpur University. These include questionable practices in procurement of materials, awarding of contracts, disposal of scrap, and construction funded by Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) with multiple instances of poor-quality infrastructure such as newly built hostels already showing cracks, seepage, and malfunctioning amenities. Transparency and accountability are lacking in contract management, with re-

peated awards to the same vendors and undue pressure on faculty and wardens to certify work without access to proper documentation. The Finance Office itself, functioning under an extended officer without a regular appointment, has been accused of mismanagement, delays in fund disbursement, and unprofessional conduct toward faculty, creating a hostile environment and obstructing research and departmental activities.

Other serious problems included absence of a Pro-Vice Chancellor, irregular and ad hoc appointments to administrative positions, arbitrary suspension of administrative staff and vacancies in critical posts like Registrar. The Vice-Chancellor is also accused of creating unauthorised posts and granting excessive perks. Additionally, shortages of teaching and administrative staff have weakened academic standards, forcing research scholars into teaching roles and slowing institutional processes.

Over 10,000 women in Rongkhang receive ₹ 10,000 seed money under MMUA, CM also opens 100-bed hospital

CM distributes MMUA cheques, inaugurates hospital in KA

HT Correspondent

DONGKAMUKAM, Sept 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday distributed cheques of ₹ 10,000 each to beneficiaries under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) in No 111 Rongkhang Legislative Assembly Constituency. The cheque distribution ceremony, held at Waisong Stadium in West Karbi Anglong, was organised by the Panchayat and Rural Development (P&RD) Department.

The event was attended by Chief Executive Member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Tuliram Ronghang, Cabinet Minister Nandita Garlosa, MP Amarsing Tisso, and other dignitaries.

The seed money aims to empower women Self Help Group (SHG) members to start small businesses and fuel their entrepreneurial aspirations.

Addressing a large gathering,

mostly comprising women, CM Sarma advised the beneficiaries to avoid spending the money on consumer goods and instead invest in income-generating ventures like pickle-making, piggery, and goat rearing.

"If you earn from this amount, you will receive ₹ 25,000 in the second year and ₹ 50,000 in the third year. My dream is to make you lakhpati Baideu and eventually mahalakhpati Baideu," he said.

The Chief Minister said over 8 lakh women in Assam now run businesses with annual earnings exceeding ₹ 1 lakh, and another 1 lakh women earn over ₹ 10 lakh through ventures like selling Bihu pitha or clothes.

He praised the transformation brought about by the SHG movement, saying rural women who had never entered banks a decade ago are now availing loans and government schemes, thanks to initiatives under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

CM Sarma also announced that the Arunodoi 3.0 funds would be distributed on October 7, with an additional ₹ 250 to be provided for domestic LPG cylinders.

Before the event began, a tribute was paid to the late singer Zubeen Garg.

Later in the day, the Chief Minister visited Hamren, the district headquarters, where he inaugurated a newly constructed 100-bed district hospital, further strengthening healthcare infrastructure in West Karbi Anglong.

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QUOTE OF THE DAY

There are people who have money and people who are rich. -Coco Chanel

Film stars in South India politics

Kamal Haasan and Vijay Joseph are rivals on the big screen, but they parallel and therefore their films strike different notes with the movie crazy Tamil diaspora at home and abroad. Kamal Haasan is age-wise older and had a head start over Vijay, which also ensured that Haasan jumped into the political ring ahead of Vijay. Kamal Haasan founded the political party Makkal Needhi Maiam. It created ripples but time passed and the ripples vanished in the still waters of not much. Makkal Needhi Maiam can be termed a flop. Kamal Hassan's supporters did not turn into a sea of voters for MNM. Kamal Haasan the actor sat on his laurels and but for the 'MK-family' of MK Stalin and Udayanidhi Stalin, Haasan wouldn't have been Rajya Sabha MP. Now, says Kamal Haasan, just because a leader happens to attract huge crowds does not mean the turnout will convert into votes. Haasan is referring to Vijay Joseph, fellow actor and also fellow politician. Vijay is the latest actor kid on the block and he is the founder of the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), with the goal to upset political apple-carts left, right and centre. And Vijay Joseph is drawing massive crowds, young men and women, middle-aged women and aging women, grandmothers.

The "entire crowd will not get converted into votes," says Haasan about Vijay's rallies. "It is for sure, it will not get converted into votes, it is applicable to all leaders," said Haasan, with experience speaking. "When it is applicable to all leaders, how can we exclude Vijay? It is applicable to me and all the leaders in India, you have attracted crowd but that will not get converted into votes." For obvious reasons Kamal Haasan won't bet on Vijay; Hassan's loyalties are to the DMK. And Vijay Joseph's TVK is a clear and present danger to the ruling dispensation. The DMK is watching with bated breath and TVK cadres are taking over public thoroughfares and squares, climbing temple domes and hoarding scaffolds. The hooliganism on display is in itself something to wary of, what will come on voting day?

But politics has nothing to do with conscience. Which politician ever had a conscience? Not one and Kamal Haasan is inadvertently or deliberately misleading Vijay. Haasan has an axe to grind. May be some of the crowds at Vijay's rallies wouldn't vote for the maverick politician but the majority sound like they would. Kamal Haasan knows this as well as the late Vijaykanth's party and Rajnikanth, who too had ventured into politics but then thought otherwise.

Maha Saptami: Nature's sacred embrace

The rhythm of Durga Puja, with its blend of ritual precision and cultural splendor, rises into fullness with the arrival of Maha Saptami, the seventh day of the Navratri festival and the second day of Durga Puja proper. If Maha Shashthi is the ceremonial unveiling of the goddess through the Bodhon ritual, Maha Saptami is the morning when devotion takes on a distinctly earthy and elemental form. It is the day of the Nabapatrika Snan, when nine plants are ritually bathed, consecrated, and worshipped as a manifestation of Durga's divine energy. At the center of this ritual stands the Kola Bou, or the Banana Bride, draped in a red-bordered saree and placed beside Lord Ganesha. To the uninitiated, it may appear as a curious rite—an ordinary plant transformed into a veiled figure standing beside the deities. Yet within this gesture lies a profound symbolism of fertility, prosperity, and the eternal nurturing power of Mother Nature.

The dawn of Maha Saptami begins long before sunrise. Priests, clad in white dhotis, prepare for the Nabapatrika Snan beside rivers, ponds, or any nearby body of water. The nine plants—banana, turmeric, rice paddy, jayanti, colocasia, bel, pomegranate, arum, and ashok—are tied together in a bundle and taken for their ritual bath. Each plant, chosen with care, represents a form of the goddess, embodying her multiplicity as nurturer, healer, and sustainer of life. The ritual washing of the plants in sacred waters is a symbolic purification, aligning the cosmic energies of the natural world with the divine presence of Durga. Once bathed, the plants are draped in a fresh saree, their green leaves peeking out from the folds of red and white fabric, transforming the ensemble into the Kola Bou, who is then brought back to the altar and placed beside Ganesha.

The presence of Kola Bou has given rise to myths and interpretations that reveal the cultural depth of the ritual. In popular belief, she is often mistaken for Ganesha's bride, a misunderstanding that persists in folklore. Yet in ritual essence, Kola Bou is not a bride in the human sense but an embodiment of the goddess herself, a representation of fertility and vegetation. She embodies the maternal energy of the earth, sustaining life through grains, fruits, and plants. Her placement beside Ganesha is symbolic of harmony between wisdom and fertility, between prosperity and auspiciousness. In agrarian Bengal, where the rhythms of life have always been tied to the cycles of the land and the harvest, Kola Bou becomes a bridge between ritual worship and the soil's fecundity.

The Nabapatrika itself carries rich layers of symbolism. Each of the nine plants has its own significance within Hindu cosmology and folk tradition. The banana plant stands for prosperity and fertility, the turmeric plant for health and purification, the rice paddy for sustenance, and the bel plant for sanctity, often associated with Lord Shiva. The colocasia and arum reflect the agricultural staples of Bengal, grounding the ritual in the lived reality of the people. The pomegranate plant embodies fertility, the jayanti plant represents strength, and the ashok plant carries the promise of healing and joy. Together, these plants embody the nine forms of Durga, reinforcing the goddess's identity as the sum of natural abundance and divine protection. By bathing them in water, the ritual reaffirms the cycle of cleansing and renewal that sustains both nature and life.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

Historically, the Nabapatrika ritual reflects the deep agricultural roots of Bengal's society. Long before Durga Puja acquired its grandeur as an urban and artistic celebration, the festival was intimately tied to the rhythms of harvest and fertility. Autumn was the season of reaping and renewal, when the granaries filled and gratitude to the forces of nature took ritual form. Nabapatrika can be seen as a survival of pre-Vedic fertility rites, later absorbed into the worship of Durga. This continuity of agricultural symbolism within a highly evolved religious framework is a testament to the ability of Hindu rituals to integrate the sacred and the secular, the cosmic and the earthly.

Maha Saptami, therefore, is more than a day of ritual worship; it is a poetic reminder of humanity's dependence on the natural world. In an age where industrialization has distanced communities from the soil, the sight of priests carrying bundles of fresh green plants to water is a striking reconnection to the earth. It is as if the festival pauses amidst its lights and grandeur to pay homage to the elemental forces of life: water, soil, vegetation, and fertility. The Nabapatrika ritual sanctifies not only the goddess but also the ecological balance that sustains human existence. In its folds lies an ancient ecological wisdom, urging reverence for nature at a time when environmental degradation threatens the very cycles of life it represents.

The cultural landscape of Maha Saptami extends far beyond the ritual itself. After the consecration of the Nabapatrika, the day unfolds with worship, offerings, and the first major anjali, where devotees gather to offer flowers to the goddess while chanting mantras from the Chandi. Pandals, which were unveiled on Maha Shashthi, now come alive with full vibrancy. The fragrance of dhuno fills the air, the dhak resounds with accelerating rhythms, and streets swell with devotees dressed in traditional attire. It is a day when cultural programmes intensify—songs in praise of Durga, plays enacting episodes from the Devi Mahatmya, and dances that merge folk and classical traditions. Families, having fasted or prepared special dishes, come together to share food, laughter, and devotion. Maha Saptami thus embodies both intimacy and community, a day when devotion deepens and festivity blossoms.

Folklore and oral traditions often add texture to Maha Saptami. In rural Bengal, stories of Kola Bou are told to children, sometimes as Ganesha's bride, sometimes as a goddess in her own right. These stories, while deviating from ritual orthodoxy, sustain the imaginative bond between the people and the ritual. In Assam and Tripura, the Nabapatrika has its own local variations, blending with indigenous practices and seasonal rituals of fertility. In Odisha, similar rituals of invoking vegetation into goddess worship underscore the pan-regional resonance of this symbolism. Beyond India, diasporic communities adapt the Nabapatrika ritual with improvisations—using available plants or symbolic substitutes—yet the essence remains the same: an invocation of nature as an integral part of the divine.

From a philosophical perspective, the Nabapatrika ritual can be read as a reminder of the interdependence between humanity and the environment. By elevating ordinary plants into sacred embodiments of Durga, the ritual teaches reverence for the natural world and gratitude for its gifts. The Kola Bou, wrapped in a saree, humanizes the plant, bridging the distance between the vegetal and the human, the ecological and the cultural. It collapses the boundary between nature and divinity, reminding devotees that the goddess is not separate from the environment but immanent within it. Such insights acquire new urgency in an age of climate crisis, where rituals like Maha Saptami's Nabapatrika Snan remind us of ancient practices of ecological sanctity.

At the same time, Maha Saptami holds within it the emotional depth of Durga's visit to her father's home. The goddess, accompanied by her children, is welcomed not only as a cosmic power but as a daughter returning home. The Nabapatrika ritual, with its maternal symbolism, reinforces this intimacy, making the goddess not distant and austere but near, nurturing, and approachable. For devotees, Maha Saptami is thus both a cosmic invocation and a familial celebration, blending the mythic with the personal in ways that make Durga Puja unique among Hindu festivals.

As the day turns to night, the worship intensifies, lamps flicker, and the idol of Durga radiates under the lights of the pandal. The Kola Bou, silent and veiled beside Ganesha, becomes a reminder that the goddess's energy is everywhere—within the soil, the grain, the river, and the hearth. In her quiet presence, she embodies the sustaining rhythms of life, reminding the community that divinity is not only to be worshipped but also to be nurtured in daily acts of reverence toward the earth.

In the larger arc of Durga Puja, Maha Saptami is the affirmation of abundance. It is the goddess revealing herself not only in martial power against Mahishasura but also in her nurturing form as the sustainer of life. If Shashthi is the awakening, Saptami is the consecration of nature itself, the moment when the festival shifts from invocation to active celebration of life's bounty. It is a day where the rituals inscribe the truth that prosperity is not merely material wealth but the harmony of fertility, wisdom, and ecological balance.

Thus, Maha Saptami is more than a ritual day in the Durga Puja calendar. It is the festival's green heartbeat, a celebration of the earth's abundance, and a recognition of humanity's place within the larger cycles of life. In the Kola Bou draped in a red-bordered saree, in the Nabapatrika washed in sacred waters, in the chanting of mantras and the beating of dhak, lies a timeless dialogue between human devotion and nature's generosity. To witness Maha Saptami is to experience the sacred embrace of the earth itself, reminding us that in every leaf, grain, and drop of water dwells the eternal presence of the divine mother. ***(the writer can be reached at dipakkurmiglpltd@gmail.com)***

The Significance of Mahasaptami From Shailaputri to Siddhidatri: The Navadurga Tale

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Durga Puja is one of the major festivals of the Hindu religion, where the spiritual depth of human life is sought through the worship of the power, courage, and divine qualities of Maa Durga. Every day of this festival has its own significance, but the spiritual importance of the day of Mahasaptami is very special. This day is not only an indicator of external festive joy but also a symbol of the awakening of the divine power within human life. Through the worship on Mahasaptami, devotees receive the blessings of Maa Durga and gain strength and courage to face the challenges of their lives. This day inspires us to fight against the negative qualities within us and shows the way to make life more meaningful. The worship of Maa Durga's Chandi form reminds us that the presence of divine power is in every moment of our lives, and by embracing that power, we can find the purpose of our lives.

The day of Mahasaptami is celebrated as the seventh day of Navaratri, and the worship of Maa Durga's Chandi form holds special significance on this day. The spiritual significance of this day is a symbol of the struggle against the evil forces within our lives. Various negative qualities in our lives, such as anger, greed, jealousy, ego, etc., create obstacles on the path of our spiritual progress. Through the worship of Maa Durga on the day of Mahasaptami, we gain the strength and courage to fight against these negative qualities. Maa Durga's Chandi form reminds us that such power also exists within us, by which we can overcome our weaknesses and evil forces. This day offers us an opportunity for self-reflection, through which we can think deeply about the goals and purposes of our lives. Through worship, we invoke the power of Maa Durga so that she guides us on the right path and removes the darkness from our lives. Through this spiritual journey, we not only move towards external success but also seek inner peace and fulfillment. These spiritual practices of Mahasaptami inspire positive changes in every aspect of our lives. The worship and spiritual discipline of this day encourage us to think deeply about the meaning and purpose of our lives, as a result of which we can make our lives more meaningful and fulfilling.

An important aspect of the spiritual significance of Mahasaptami is the Navapatrika worship. Navapatrika is a combination of nine plants, which are worshipped as symbols of the nine forms of Maa Durga. Each of these plants has its own spiritual significance, and through this, the deep connection of human life with nature is expressed. The worship of Navapatrika reminds us that a part of the divine power resides within every element of nature. Through this worship, we can make our lives more harmonious by paying respect to nature. From a spiritual point of view, the worship of Navapatrika teaches us to be aware of all aspects of life. Our relationship with nature is not only external, but it is also connected with the power within us. On this day, we try to maintain the balance of our lives by drawing energy from nature. Through the worship of Navapatrika, we realize the truth that the presence of divine power is in every area of our lives, and by embracing that power, we can proceed on our spiritual path. This worship teaches us to become one with nature and explains the importance of maintaining harmony with nature in every area of our lives. This spiritual discipline encourages us to think deeply about the purpose of our lives and shows the way to make our lives more fulfilling.

Through the recitation of Chandi Path, we can learn about the divine story of Maa Durga and the manifestation of her power. Deep spiritual significance is hidden in every verse of this recitation, which makes us aware of various aspects of life. Through the Chandi Path, we pay homage to the power of Maa Durga and also try to awaken the divine qualities within us. Through this recitation, we gain mental and spiritual strength to face the challenges of life. Through Homa-Yajna (fire ritual) as well, we try to purify our negative thoughts and actions. Through fire, we can remove the impurity within us and make life more holy and purposeful. Through these rituals, we connect with the power of Maa Durga and proceed on the path of our lives. This process not only strengthens us externally but also opens the path to our inner peace and spiritual knowledge. This spiritual practice of Chandi Path and Homa-Yajna inspires positive changes in every aspect of our lives. These rituals encourage us to think deeply about the purpose of our lives and show the way to make our lives more meaningful.

Along with worship, meditation and self-reflection also hold special significance on the day of Mahasaptami. On this day, we get an opportunity to think deeply about the goals, purposes, and responsibilities of our lives. Through meditation, we calm our minds and connect with the power of Maa Durga. This process makes us aware of the divine qualities within us and gives us strength to face the challenges of our lives. Through the meditation and self-reflection of Mahasaptami, we try to maintain the balance of our lives. This day reminds us that the presence of divine power is in every moment of our lives, and by embracing that power, we can make our lives more meaningful. Through this spiritual discipline, we not only improve our own lives but also fulfill our responsibilities towards society and the environment. This process of meditation and self-reflection inspires positive changes in every aspect of our lives. This discipline encourages us to think deeply about the purpose of our lives and shows the way to make our lives more fulfilling.

On the day of Mahasaptami, people gather and express their devotion through worship. Through this, we awaken the feeling of unity and cooperation within society. The worship of Mahasaptami reminds us that unity and cooperation are necessary in every area of our lives. On this day, we become aware of our social responsibilities and gain inspiration to work for the betterment of society. Through the worship of Maa Durga's power, we gain the strength to fight against the negative forces of our society. Through this spiritual discipline, we not only improve our own lives but also fulfill our responsibilities towards society. The worship and spiritual practice of this day inspire positive changes in every aspect of our lives. This discipline encourages us to think deeply about the purpose of our lives and shows the way to make our lives more meaningful.

On the day of Mahasaptami, we pay homage to the power of Maa Durga and also strive to bring positive changes in every aspect of our lives. This day makes us aware of the qualities within us and gives us strength to face the challenges of our lives. Through the worship of Maa Durga, we gain the courage and strength to fight against the evil forces of our lives. Through this spiritual journey, we can make our lives more meaningful and fulfilling. The day of Mahasaptami reminds us that the presence of divine power is in every moment of our lives, and by embracing that power, we can make our lives better. The worship and spiritual practice of this day inspire positive changes in every aspect of our lives. This discipline encourages us to think deeply about the purpose of our lives and shows the way to make our lives more fulfilling.

Through the worship of Navapatrika, we become aware of our responsibility towards nature. This worship explains to us the importance of maintaining harmony with nature. The presence of divine power is in every element of nature, and by embracing that power, we can make our lives more fulfilling. The worship and spiritual practice of this day make us aware of our responsibility towards nature and give us inspiration to work for the conservation of the environment. This spiritual discipline inspires positive changes in every aspect of our lives. This discipline encourages us to think deeply about the purpose of our lives and shows the way to make our lives more meaningful.

The worship and spiritual practice of Mahasaptami make us aware of the qualities within us and give us strength to face the challenges of our lives. Through the worship of Maa Durga, we gain the courage and strength to fight against the evil forces of our lives. Through this spiritual journey, we can make our lives more meaningful and fulfilling. The day of Mahasaptami reminds us that the presence of divine power is in every moment of our lives, and by embracing that power, we can make our lives better. The worship and spiritual practice of this day inspire positive changes in every aspect of our lives. This discipline encourages us to think deeply about the purpose of our lives and shows the way to make our lives more fulfilling.

By: Satyabrat Borah

The Navratri festival, celebrated with fervor across India, is a nine-day ode to the divine feminine, where devotees honor the nine forms of Goddess Durga, collectively known as Navadurga. Each day of this vibrant festival is dedicated to a unique manifestation of the Goddess, embodying distinct virtues, powers, and aspects of life. These forms,Shailaputri, Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani, Kalaratri, Mahagauri, and Siddhidatri are not merely mythological figures but profound symbols of human experience, spiritual evolution, and cosmic energy. The stories behind each form weave a tapestry of devotion, strength, and transformation, guiding devotees through a journey of inner awakening. This article delves into the essence and narratives of each of the nine forms, exploring their significance and the lessons they impart.

The first day of Navratri is dedicated to Shailaputri, the daughter of the mountains. Her name derives from "Shaila" (mountain) and "Putri" (daughter), signifying her birth as Parvati, the daughter of King Himavan, the lord of the Himalayas. Shailaputri is depicted riding a white bull, holding a trident and a lotus, her serene presence embodying purity and groundedness. In her story, Parvati's determination to win Lord Shiva's love stands out. Born after Sati, Shiva's first wife, immolated herself in her father Daksha's sacrificial fire, Parvati represents resilience and devotion. Her penance to reunite with Shiva symbolizes the soul's yearning for divine connection. Worshipping Shailaputri on the first day sets the tone for Navratri, invoking purity of intention and the strength to overcome obstacles. She teaches devotees to remain steadfast, rooted like a mountain, in their spiritual and worldly pursuits.

On the second day, devotees revere Brahmacharini, the ascetic form of Durga. Her name combines "Brahma" (divine knowledge) and "Charini" (one who pursues). Brahmacharini is depicted as a meditative figure, holding a rosary and a water pot, symbolizing austerity and spiritual discipline. Her story is tied to Parvati's rigorous penance to attain Shiva as her consort. After her birth as Shailaputri, Parvati undertook severe ascetic practices, fasting and meditating in the forests for thousands of years, undeterred by physical hardships. Her unwavering focus transformed her into a beacon of spiritual resolve. Brahmacharini's worship inspires devotees to cultivate self-discipline, patience, and perseverance. She represents the power of tapas (austerity), reminding us that true strength lies in mastering the self, a lesson vital for navigating life's challenges.

The third day celebrates Chandraghanta, named for the crescent moon adorning her forehead like a bell ("Chandra" means moon, and "Ghanta" means bell). Riding a tiger, she carries weapons like a trident, mace, and sword, alongside a lotus and rosary, blending ferocity with grace. Her story emerges from Parvati's transformation after marrying Shiva. The crescent moon, a gift from Shiva, signifies her readiness to protect righteousness. Chandraghanta's ten arms symbolize her immense power, while her serene smile reflects inner peace. Legend recounts her fierce battles against demons, her bell-like roar instilling fear in evil forces. Worshipping her fosters courage and tranquility, teaching devotees to balance strength with compassion. Her presence reassures that divine protection is ever-present, guiding us to face fears with a calm heart.

On the fourth day, Kushmanda is worshipped, her name derived from "Ku" (little), "Ushma" (warmth), and "Anda" (cosmic egg). She is believed to have created the universe with her divine smile, bringing light and warmth to existence. Seated on a lion, holding weapons, a lotus, and a pot of nectar, Kushmanda radiates vitality. Her story narrates her role as the cosmic mother who birthed the universe from darkness, residing in the core of the sun to sustain life. Her eight arms signify her boundless energy, capable of nurturing creation while destroying negativity. Devotees seek her blessings for health, prosperity, and vitality. Kushmanda's worship emphasizes the creative power within each individual, urging us to harness our inner light to overcome darkness and foster growth.

The fifth day honors Skandamata, the mother of Skanda (Kartikeya), the war god. Seated on a lion, holding her son on her lap, she wields a lotus, bell, and water pot. Her story highlights her maternal aspect, as she nurtures Kartikeya, who was destined to lead the celestial armies against the demon Tarakasura. Skandamata's serene yet powerful demeanor reflects the unconditional love and strength of a mother. Her four arms symbolize protection and blessings, while her presence exudes wisdom. Worshipping Skandamata grants devotees strength, wisdom, and maternal care. She teaches the value of nurturing others while maintaining inner resilience, embodying the balance between love and discipline that defines parenthood and leadership.

On the sixth day, Katyayani, the warrior goddess, is revered. Born to the sage Katyayan, who prayed for a daughter to vanquish the demon Mahishasura, she embodies fierce determination. Mounted on a lion, wielding an array of weapons, Katyayani's fiery presence is awe-inspiring. Her legend recounts her battle against Mahishasura, who, granted a boon of near-invincibility, terrorized the heavens. Katyayani, born from the collective energy of the gods, defeated him, restoring cosmic balance. Her worship empowers devotees with courage, focus, and the will to confront challenges. Katyayani's story resonates with those facing injustice, reminding us that inner strength, fueled by righteousness, can triumph over seemingly insurmountable odds.

The seventh day is dedicated to Kalaratri, the fiercest form of Durga, whose name means "dark night." With a dark complexion, disheveled hair, and a thunderous presence, she rides a donkey, wielding a sword and iron hook. Kalaratri's story centers on her role as the destroyer of ignorance and evil. She annihilated the demons Shumbha and Nishumbha, her fiery breath and terrifying form decimating their armies. Despite her fearsome appearance, Kalaratri is benevolent, removing fear and granting liberation. Her worship purifies the mind, dispelling negativity and fear. Kalaratri teaches that confronting darkness,within or without,requires embracing our inner strength, even when it appears daunting, to emerge victorious.

On the eighth day, Mahagauri is worshipped, symbolizing purity and serenity. Her name, meaning "extremely radiant," reflects her luminous beauty. Dressed in white, riding a bull, she holds a trident and drum. Mahagauri's story traces back to Parvati, whose intense penance darkened her complexion. Pleased by her devotion, Shiva cleansed her with Ganges water, restoring her radiant form. Mahagauri represents purity of heart and the transformative power of devotion. Her worship cleanses devotees of past sins, fostering inner peace and spiritual clarity. She reminds us that true beauty lies in a pure heart, and through dedication, we can transcend our limitations to attain divine grace.

The ninth and final day celebrates Siddhidatri, the bestower of spiritual powers ("Siddhi" means accomplishment, "Datri" means giver). Seated on a lotus, holding a mace, discus, lotus, and conch, she is the source of all siddhis (spiritual powers). Her story describes her as the primordial energy from which the universe emanates. Siddhidatri granted the gods their powers and blessed Shiva with the eight siddhis. Devotees worship her to attain spiritual enlightenment and fulfillment. Her presence signifies the culmination of the spiritual journey, where devotion leads to divine realization. Siddhidatri teaches that true success lies in aligning with the divine, unlocking the infinite potential within.

The nine forms of Navadurga collectively narrate a journey of transformation—from grounding oneself in purity (Shailaputri) to attaining spiritual fulfillment (Siddhidatri). Each form embodies a facet of life, from discipline and courage to creativity and liberation. Navratri's nine days offer devotees a chance to reflect on these qualities, invoking the Goddess's blessings to cultivate them. The festival transcends mere ritual, becoming a celebration of the divine feminine's multifaceted nature, mirrored in every individual's potential. Through the stories of Navadurga, devotees are reminded that life is a balance of strength and serenity, action and introspection, destruction and creation. The worship of these nine forms fosters a deeper connection to the self and the cosmos, guiding humanity toward harmony and enlightenment. As the chants and lamps light up Navratri, the legacy of Navadurga continues to inspire, empowering devotees to embrace their inner divinity and navigate life's myriad challenges with grace and resilience.

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How to 'SHIELD' yourself from Alzheimer's disease and dementia

By: Donald Weaver

Alzheimer's disease is on track to become one of the defining public health challenges of our time. Every three seconds, somewhere in the world, someone is diagnosed with dementia, and it's usually Alzheimer's disease.

Currently, approximately 50 million people worldwide have Alzheimer's disease. By 2050, this number will exceed 130 million.

The human health and socioeconomic consequences of this are going to be immense. But perhaps it doesn't have to be this way.

Preventing Alzheimer's

A 2024 report from the influential Lancet Commission suggests that up to one-third of Alzheimer's disease cases could be prevented simply by avoiding certain risk factors. These 14 modifiable risk factors encompass: traumatic brain injury, hypertension, depression, diabetes, smoking, obesity, high cholesterol levels, low physical activity levels, too much alcohol consumption, too little education, vision loss, hearing loss, social isolation and air pollution.

While this comprehensive list is rooted soundly in science, it's not easy for members of the general public to monitor and manage 14 separate health targets – especially when prevention efforts need to start decades before symptoms appear.

This is a problem that needs addressing. Tackling this problem requires a prevention model that is simple and memorable – something the public can easily embrace, understand and follow.

There are successful examples that can serve as a template. Stroke prevention associations, for instance, have successfully adopted the FAST (Face, Arm, Speech, Time) mnemonic to teach stroke warning signs. Alzheimer's disease prevention needs a FAST equivalent.

SHIELD (Sleep, Head Injury prevention, Exercise, Learning and Diet) may fill that role. SHIELD brings together the most significant, overlapping dementia risk factors into five core pillars, offering a clear and effective strategy for prevention.

Sleep

Sleep is a foundational element of SHIELD. Maintaining healthy sleep habits is a key protective factor against dementia. Adequate sleep supports brain function, memory, mood and learning.

Insufficient (less than five hours per night) or poor-quality sleep (frequent awakenings), especially in midlife, increases the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Chronic poor sleep leads to build-up in the brain of amyloid-beta protein, which is implicated in the development of Alzheimer's disease.

Poor sleep also increases the likelihood of obesity, high blood pressure and depression, all risk factors for Alzheimer's disease. If you're currently sleeping four to five hours per night, consider changing this habit to avoid increasing your risk for developing dementia in later life. Sleep is a vital tool for brain protection and Alzheimer's disease prevention.

Head injury

Head injury prevention is, rather surprisingly, often overlooked in conversations about dementia. There are strong links between traumatic brain injuries, including concussions, and higher Alzheimer's disease risk.

Such head injuries can occur in a wide variety of settings, not just professional sports. Intimate partner violence, for example, is unfortunately common in our society and is a frequent, but neglected, cause of head trauma.

Head injury prevention should start early and continue throughout life, as damage can accumulate over time. Broader safety measures (such as improved helmet designs, stronger concussion protocols in youth and adult sports and efforts to prevent head injuries in all settings) can play a significant role in protecting long-term brain health and avoiding Alzheimer's disease.

Exercise

Exercise is perhaps the most powerful lifestyle habit for reducing the risk of Alzheimer's disease. Exercise directly addresses multiple major risk factors, including obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and depression. It also supports the growth of brain cells, memory and emotional health.

Despite this, physical inactivity remains common, especially in high-income countries, where it may contribute to as many as one in five cases of Alzheimer's disease. Exercise is not just "heart medicine," but "brain medicine" too. Regular movement, even in small amounts, enables better brain aging and can help avoid Alzheimer's disease.

Learning

Learning, both in and out of school, remains one of the strongest protective factors against dementia. Lower educational levels, such as not finishing secondary school, are linked to a significantly increased risk for dementia. Learning contributes to the brain's "cognitive reserve," which is the brain's ability to function well despite damage or disease.

Individuals with Alzheimer's disease maintained better mental function if they had continued learning throughout life. Public health messaging should promote life-long learning in all forms — from reading and language learning to engaging hobbies that keep the brain active. It's never too early (or too late) to learn another language or to challenge your brain. Boosting your cognitive reserve boosts your brain against Alzheimer's disease.

Diet

Diet also plays a major role in brain health and dementia prevention. No single food prevents dementia. Rather, a combination of nutrient-rich foods supports overall brain health. A healthy diet can lower dementia risk by emphasizing whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and fish, while restricting processed foods, red meat and sweets.

Adhering to dietary patterns like the Mediterranean diet has shown promising results in protecting against cognitive decline. The Mediterranean diet is a brain/heart-healthy eating style inspired by the traditional diets of people in countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. It emphasizes plant-based foods with olive oil as the primary fat source, while limiting red meat, processed foods and added sugars.

What we eat influences brain inflammation and brain vascular health — all of which are increasingly tied to Alzheimer's disease. A healthy diet shouldn't feel restrictive or like a punishment for trying to improve brain health. Instead, it can be framed as a positive investment in long-term independence, clarity and energy.

By simplifying the science, the SHIELD framework offers a realistic and research-backed approach to brain health. Until a cure is discovered, prevention is the strongest tool. Concepts like SHIELD provide a starting point for achievable prevention. ***(Courtesy: Scroll.com)***

Paracetamol use during pregnancy not linked to autism, our study of 2.5 million children shows

By: Renee Gardner, Brian Lee, Viktor H Ahlqvist

United States President Donald Trump recently claimed that using the common painkiller acetaminophen (also known as paracetamol and by the brand name Tylenol in the US) during pregnancy is fuelling the rise in autism diagnoses. He then went on to suggest pregnant women should "tough it out" rather than use the common painkiller if they experience fever or pain.

This announcement has caused alarm and confusion worldwide. But despite Trump's claim, there is no strong scientific evidence to back it up. Our study of nearly 2.5 million births in Sweden published in 2024 shows no evidence that acetaminophen use during pregnancy increases a child's risk of autism. This is the largest study conducted on the subject to date.

To understand whether acetaminophen really poses a risk in pregnancy, we turned to Sweden's national health registers, which are among the most comprehensive in the world. Our study followed nearly 2.5 million children born between 1995 and 2019, tracking them for up to 26 years.

Using prescription records and interviews that midwives conducted during prenatal visits, we could see which mothers reported using acetaminophen (about 7.5% of pregnancies) and which did not. We also made sure to account for any variables that may have affected the results of our statistical analysis – including controlling for health factors, such as fever or pain, which would have influenced whether or not a mother used acetaminophen during her pregnancy. This was to ensure a more fair comparison between the two groups.

We then looked at the children's neurodevelopmental outcomes – specifically whether they were diagnosed with autism, ADHD or an intellectual disability. The real strength of our study came from being able to compare siblings. This allowed us to compare children born to the same mother, where acetaminophen had been used during one child's pregnancy but not the other. We compared over 45,000 sibling pairs, where at least one sibling had an autism diagnosis.

This sibling design is powerful because siblings share much of their genetics and family environment. This allows us to tease apart whether the drug itself – rather than underlying family traits or health conditions – is responsible for any apparent risks for neurodevelopmental outcomes.

Acetaminophen use

When we first looked at the entire population, we saw a pattern that echoed earlier studies: children whose mothers reported using acetaminophen during pregnancy were slightly more likely to be diagnosed with autism, ADHD or an intellectual disability. But once we ran the sibling comparisons, that association completely disappeared. In other words, when we compared sets of siblings where one was exposed in the womb to acetaminophen and one was not, there was no difference in their likelihood of later being diagnosed with autism, ADHD or an intellectual disability.

Our study is not the only one to put this question to the test. Researchers in Japan recently published a study using a similar sibling-comparison design and their results closely matched ours.

Importantly, they replicated our findings in a population with a different genetic background and where patterns of acetaminophen use during pregnancy are quite different. Nearly 40% of mothers in Japan reported using the drug during pregnancy. In comparison, less than 10% of Swedish mothers had used it. Despite these differences, the conclusion was the same. When siblings are compared, there is no evidence that acetaminophen use during pregnancy increases the risk of autism or ADHD.

These findings mark an important shift from earlier studies, which relied on more limited data, used smaller cohorts and didn't account for genetic differences. They also did not fully account for why some mothers used pain relief during pregnancy while others didn't.

For example, mothers who take acetaminophen are more likely to also have migraines, chronic pain, fever or serious infections. These are conditions that are themselves genetically linked to autism or ADHD, as well as a child's likelihood of later being diagnosed with one of these conditions.

These types of "confounding factors" can create associations that look convincing on the surface, but may not reflect a true cause-and-effect relationship. That brings us to the real question on many people's minds: what does this mean if you're pregnant and dealing with pain or fever?

It's important to recognise that untreated illness during pregnancy can be dangerous. A high fever in pregnancy, for example, is known to increase the risk of complications for both mother and baby. "Toughing it out," as the president suggested, is not a risk-free option.

That's why professional medical organisations such as the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency continue to recommend acetaminophen (paracetamol) as the safest fever reducer and pain reliever during pregnancy when used at the lowest effective dose and only when necessary. This has been the guidance for decades.

Of course, if someone finds themselves needing to take acetaminophen regularly over a longer period of time, that's a decision best made in consultation with their doctor or midwife. But the idea that acetaminophen use during pregnancy causes autism simply isn't supported by the best available science. The greater danger is that alarmist messaging will discourage pregnant women from treating pain or fever – putting both themselves and their babies at risk. ***(Courtesy: Down To Earth)***

Medical myths: All about aging

By: Tim Newman and Maria Cohut

Around 300,000 generations agoTrusted Source, the human species split from an ancient ancestor that we share with chimpanzees. Since then, human life expectancy at birth has doubled.

Over the last 200 years, life expectancy at birth has doubled again. As animals go, humans perform well in longevity.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "between 2000 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will double from about 11% to 22%."

With these facts in mind, dispelling the many myths associated with aging seems more pressing than at any point in our evolutionary history. In this article, we will tackle myths associated with exercise, cognitive ability, sex, and more.

1. Physical deterioration is inevitable

This is not entirely untrue. As we age, our body does experience wear and tear from decades of use. However, physical deterioration does not have to be complete, and people can often slow it down.

Time and again, research has suggested that engaging in regular exercise and following and healthy diet can help people live longer lives by fighting or preventing the physical problems that appear with age.

Some research suggests that merely expecting physical deterioration increases the likelihood that someone will physically deteriorate.

In one studyTrusted Source, scientists surveyed 148 older adults about their aging, lifestyles, and general health expectations.

They concluded that expectations regarding aging "play an important role in the adoption of physically active lifestyles in older adults and may influence health outcomes, such as physical function."

So, although some deterioration is likely, managing expectations will help individuals make better life choices to maintain physical health and fitness later in life.

A 2024 review of the existing literature investigated how perceptions of aging influenced an individual's likelihood of seeking medical attention. The authors of the review, which included data from 12 studies totalling 3,664 participants between them, noted that:

"[O]lder adults with lower aging expectations would be less likely to believe that it is important to seek health care for age-associated conditions such as depression, memory impairment, and urinary incontinence."

At the same time, a studyTrusted Source looking at older adults in China, sought to investigate how individual attitudes to aging might influence death risk in this cohort.

The authors concluded that "a more positive [self-perception of aging] is associated with a lower risk of all-cause mortality," suggesting that "this association is partly mediated by healthy lifestyle behaviors and social participation."

In short, keeping active, eating right, having an active social life, and maintaining a positive outlook could help slow down the physical deterioration associated with older age.

2. Older adults should avoid exercise

Some people think that, once they reach a certain age, there is no point in exercising, as they believe that it will provide no benefit. This is another myth.

An increasing amount of evidence uncovered by recent studies supports the notion that keeping active as we grow older can maintain cardiometabolic fitness and brain health.

In one study, researchers divided 451 older adults into three groups:

- The first group underwent 1 year of heavy resistance training
- The second participated in moderate-intensity training for the same amount of time
- The third group did not exercise, acting as the control group.

The scientists found that the older adults who had undertaken heavy resistance training for 1 year were better able to maintain muscle strength than peers in the other groups, even 4 years after the initial study period.

There is also good evidence that regular exercise can reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia.

Two recent studies analyzed data from the EXERT studyTrusted Source, a clinical trial looking at the effects of regular low-intensity compared to moderate-to-high intensity exercise on cognitive function over 12 months in older sedentary adults with mild cognitive impairment.

The studies found that both low- and moderate-to-high intensity exercise regimens were associated with less brain volume loss over 12 months.

Nevertheless, people should consult their doctor before embarking on a new exercise regime if they have a medical condition.

For example, the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom indicate that people with a high fracture risk or spinal fractures linked to osteoporosis may wish to avoid some forms of high-impact exercise.

At the same time, the "Global consensus on optimal exercise recommendations for enhancing healthy longevity in older adults (ICFSR)", published in January 2025, indicates that some form of exercise is recommended to everyone who wants to live a healthy, longer life.

For example, the authors of the "Global consensus" note, "brisk walking for up to 75 min per week extended life expectancy by 1.8 years compared with no activity."

3. Older adults need less (or more) sleep

Some people believe that older adults need more sleep than younger adults, perhaps because of the stereotype that older people enjoy a nap. Others say that older adults need less sleep, which might stem from the stereotype that older adults rise early in the morning.

These myths are relatively difficult to unpick because there are many factors involved. It is undoubtedly true that older adults have more difficulty getting to sleep and that their sleep tends to be more fragmented.

This might help explain why some older adults need to nap in the day. As the human body changes with age, it can disrupt the circadian (daily) rhythms.

This, in turn, can impact sleep. The relationship is multifaceted, too: If a person's circadian rhythms become disrupted, it can influence other aspects of their physiology, such as hormone levels, which might also impact their sleep.

Aside from circadian disruptions, certain diseases that occur more commonly in older adults, such as osteoarthritis and osteoporosis, can cause discomfort, which might adversely influence an individual's ability to get to sleep or stay asleep.

Similarly, some conditions cause shortness of breath, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and congestive heart failure. These can also make sleeping more challenging. COPD, for instance, is known to cause fatigue.

According to existing researchTrusted Source, certain medications, including beta-blockers, bronchodilators, corticosteroids, some decongestants, and diuretics can also interfere with sleep. Older adults are more likely to be taking these types of medication, sometimes together.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention(CDC)Trusted Source state that people aged 61–64 need 7–9 hours, and people aged 65 or older need 7–8 hours of sleep each night. It just might be more difficult for them to get that all-important shut-eye.

As a silver lining, some research suggests that older adults can handle sleep deprivation better than young adults. A study published in the Journal of Sleep ResearchTrusted Source in 2018 found that older adults scored better following a sleep deprivation intervention than younger adults in a range of measures, including negative affect, depression, confusion, tension, anger, fatigue, and irritability.

4. Only women get osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a condition where bones gradually become weaker. Some people believe that it only affects women. This is not true; it can affect either sex and people of any age. However, osteoporosis is indeed much more common in older people, white people, and females.

According to International Osteoporosis Foundation estimates, globally, around one in three women over 50 have osteoporosis, and about one in five men will experience a bone fracture related to osteoporosis in their lifetime.

Another related myth is that osteoporosis is inevitable for women as they age. As the figures above attest, two-thirds of women over 50 do not have osteoporosis.

To minimize risks, the National Institute on AgingTrusted Source advise people to eat foods rich in calcium and vitamin D and exercise regularly.

5. As you age, your brain slows

The term "cognitive decline" refers to a gradual decrease in mental functioning with age, but before we tackle the facts of the matter, we dismiss a couple of associated myths:

Dementia is inevitable as you age

According to the WHO, the risk of developing dementia increases with ageTrusted Source but it does not affect all older adults. The latest available WHO data, from 2021, indicates that 57 million people around the world live with dementia.

Further, data from the Alzheimer's Society in the United Kingdom indicates that the prevalence of late-onset dementia in the U.K. population is of 0.9% for those aged 60–64 years, 1.7% for those aged 65–69 years, and 3% for those aged 70–74 years, meaning that a significant proportion of the aging population does not experience this condition.

According to a nationally representative study conducted by researchers from Columbia University and published in 2022, in the United States, approximately 10%Trusted Source of adults aged 65 and older have dementia, which means that around 90% are dementia-free.

Cognitive decline leads to dementia

Contrary to popular opinion, cognitive decline does not necessarily signal the start of dementia.

People who go on to develop dementia tend to experience cognitive decline first. However, not everyone who experiences cognitive decline will develop dementia.

The same nationally representative study from Columbia University found that approximately 22% of U.S. adults aged 65 or older have mild cognitive impairment.

Cognitive decline is inevitable

As the previously cited statistics show, cognitive decline is not inevitable, regardless of the long-held myth that older adults experience a mental slowing down. And, importantly, there are ways to reduce the risk.

In 2024, a Lancet CommissionTrusted Source report identified 14 modifiable risk factors for dementia and cognitive impairment. These are:

1. Education level
2. Existence of a head injury
3. Levels of physical activity
4. Smoking habits
5. Alcohol consumption
6. Hypertension (high blood pressure)
7. Cholesterol
8. Obesity
9. Diabetes
10. Hearing loss
11. Vision loss
12. Depression
13. Levels of social contact
14. Exposure to air pollution.

Acting to remove or mitigate the impact of these factors can help reduce a person's risk of cognitive decline, the Lancet Commission report indicates.

6. There's no point giving up smoking now

Whether this is a genuine myth or merely an excuse, some older adults say that there is no point in giving up smoking at "their age." This is not true. As the NHS clearly explain:

"When you quit smoking, good things start to happen. You'll begin to see almost immediate improvements to your health. It's never too late to quit."

7. Sex is rare or impossible as you age

Some people believe that older adults lose their ability to enjoy sex and that their sexual organs become unfit for purpose. This, thankfully, is a myth.

It is true that the risk of erectile dysfunction (ED) and vaginal dryness increases as people age, but for most individuals, these are not insurmountable problems.

Sildenafil (Viagra) and lubricants or hormone creams can work wonders in many cases. Before taking Viagra, though, it is essential to speak with a doctor, as it is not suitable for everyone.

An article published in the International Journal of Clinical PracticeTrusted Source in 2017 indicates that around 0.4% of men aged 18–29 experience ED, compared with 11.5% of men aged 60–69. However, flipping that statistic on its head makes it much less daunting — almost 9 out of 10 men in their 60s do not have ED.

Intercourse between older people may be less fast and furious, but that is not necessarily a bad thing. As one researcher writes, "growing old does not necessarily discontinue a healthy sexual life, but it does call for redefining its expression."

There are certain benefits, too. For instance, a male's penis often becomes less sensitive, helping them maintain an erection longer.

It is true that as some people grow older, they do not have the same sexual desire or drive as when they were young, but this is by no means the case for everyone.

However, according to a study conducted in the U.K. and published in 2016, which involved more than 6,000 adults, both female and male, aged 50 and over, 86% of male and 60% of female participants in the 60–69-year-old bracked reported being sexually active.

As many as 59% of men and 34% of women aged 70–79 years said the same, and 31% of men and 14% of women aged 80 years or older declared they still enjoyed an active sex life. ***(Courtesy: MNT)***

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MOBILE INTERNET SERVICES IN THE TOWN REMAINS SUSPENDED

CURFEW REMAINS IN FORCE FOR 5TH DAY IN LEH TOWN

LEH, Sept 28: Curfew remained in force in this violence-hit town for the fifth consecutive day on Sunday, with Lt Governor Kavinder Gupta set to hold a security review meeting to take a call on the relaxation in the restrictions, officials said.

The curfew was imposed on Wednesday evening following widespread protests during a shutdown called by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) to advance talks with the Centre on the demands for statehood and extension of the Sixth Schedule to Ladakh.

It was for the first time relaxed for four hours in a phased manner in the town on Saturday and the relaxation period passed off peacefully.

Four persons were killed and scores of others injured in the violence on Wednesday, while over 50 persons were taken into custody for their alleged involvement in rioting. Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk was also detained under the National Security Act and lodged in Jodhpur jail in Rajasthan.

"The situation remained by and large normal with no untoward incident reported from anywhere. The Lt Governor is scheduled to chair a security review meeting at Raj Bhawan shortly and a decision will be taken on the relaxation of restrictions during the day," an official said.

He said mobile internet services in the town remained suspended, while prohibitory orders banning assembly of five or more persons also remained in force in other major parts of the Union Territory including Kargil.

Police and CRPF personnel in full riot gear were seen deployed in strength in the curfew-bound areas, while ITBP personnel were also seen staging a flag march this morning.

The last rites of two of the slain persons are scheduled to take place later in the day.

Two Congress councillors were among several people, who were named in police FIRs following Leh violence, also surrendered in a local court on Saturday.

The two councillors –- Smanla Dorje Nurbo and Phutsog Stanzin Tsepak -- along with vice president of Ladakh Buddhist Association Savin Rigzin and village numberdar Rigzin Dorjey were sent to police custody, President of Ladakh Bar Association, Leh, Mohd Shafi Lassu said.

He said the police only sought the custody of these four men while rest of others who also include youth leaders of Leh Apex Body and Ladakh Buddhist Association, and students were remanded to judicial custody.

"The bar association has taken up all the cases pro bono and is seeking release of all the arrested persons facing charges under various sections of law. We even challenged the public prosecutor when he sought the custody of four persons. The court accepted our plea for their questioning in presence of their counsels and also mandatory checkup after every eight hours," the lawyer said.

He said all the persons, including the councillors, are innocent. Tsepak was not the masked person who was shown leading the unruly protesters in photographs or video clips, while Nurbo was in hospital taking care of two elderly persons from his constituency who have fallen seriously ill during the hunger strike on September 23 evening, the lawyer claimed. (PTI)

Ladakh's people, culture, traditions under attack by BJP-RSS: Rahul

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday alleged that Ladakh's people, culture, and traditions were under attack by the BJP and RSS, as he batted for inclusion of Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule.

His remarks came in the wake of last week's violence in Leh in which four people were killed in firing by the security forces and scores of others were injured. Fifty people have since been taken into custody for their alleged involvement in rioting.

Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, the main voice behind the demand for statehood for Ladakh, has been detained under the National Security Act and lodged in Jodhpur jail in Rajasthan.

In a post on X, Gandhi said, "Ladakh's amazing people, culture, and traditions are under attack by the BJP and RSS."

"Ladakhis asked for a voice. The BJP responded by killing 4 young men and jailing Sonam Wangchuk. Stop the killing. Stop the violence. Stop the intimidation," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said. "Give Ladakh a voice. Give them the 6th Schedule," he added.

Curfew remained in force in violence-hit Leh for the fifth consecutive day on Sunday, with Lt Governor Kavinder Gupta set to hold a security review meeting to take a call on the relaxation in the restrictions, officials said.

A violent confrontation between protesters and security forces took place on Wednesday during a shutdown called by the Leh Apex Body (LAB) to advance talks with the Centre on the issue for statehood and extension of the Sixth Schedule to Ladakh.

On Saturday, curfew was relaxed in Leh for four hours. (PTI)

Over 11,500 evacuated in Marathwada amid heavy rains; two killed in Dharshiv

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, Sept 28: More than 11,500 persons were moved to safer places in central Maharashtra's Marathwada on Sunday, with the authorities expecting more inflow into the Jayakwadi dam in the region, officials said on Sunday.

Two persons have died due to rain-related incidents in the Dharashiv district of the area, which also comprises Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Jalna, Beed, Latur, Nanded, Hingoli and Parbhani districts.

The situation turned grim, particularly in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and Nanded districts, after the water level rose in Godavari river due to discharge from the Jayakwadi dam, triggering the relocation of those living on its banks and low-lying areas, they said.

In Paithan town in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, 7,000 persons were evacuated after the water discharge from the Jayakwadi, the largest reservoir in the region, reached 2.26 lakh cusecs (cubic foot per second), an official said. These persons were relocated from Vadali, Naygaon, Maygaon, Navgaon, Apegaon, Kuran Pimpri, Navgaon, Hiradpuri and Ambad Takli villages, a revenue official said.

All 27 gates of the Jayakwadi dam, including nine emergency ones, have been lifted to a height of eight feet. The storage has reached 98.07 per cent. The situation might even worsen as the Nashik district, upstream of Godavari, is receiving heavy rains, amid a 'red alert' announced by the India Meteorological Department (IMD), he said. (PTI)

Chaitanyananda Saraswati, accused of sexually harassing 17 female students, held in Agra

NEW DELHI/AGRA (UP), Sept 28: Self-styled godman Chaitanyananda Saraswati, who allegedly sexually harassed 17 women students at a private institute in Delhi, was apprehended from Agra early Sunday and produced before a court here by Delhi Police for custody.

Officials said that a Delhi Police team traced Saraswati (62) to Agra, where he was staying at a hotel, and arrested him at around 3.30 am.

They also recovered one iPad and three phones from his possession. One of the phones had access to the CCTV footage of the campus and the hostel through which he monitored the student's movement.

Investigators said Chaitanyanand and his associates falsely projected proximity to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). His aides allegedly made calls to various people claiming he had links with the PMO, which enabled him to secure support and cooperation while evading the authorities, a senior police officer said.

While avoiding arrest, the accused allegedly kept changing places and hotels in Vrindavan, Mathura and Agra in Uttar Pradesh and used taxis to travel. To escape detection, he stayed in cheaper hotels, a police official said.

Police also found fake visiting cards from him showing him associated with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as its Permanent Ambassador and BRICS as Commission Member and Indian Special Envoy De' Premiere'.

"Multiple teams were formed to nab Saraswati. Based on inputs, we tracked him to a hotel in Agra's Taj Ganj area and caught him from there around 3.30 am on Sunday," a senior police officer said, adding that he fled Delhi on August 4 when the FIR was registered.

According to the hotel staff in Agra, Chaitanyanand registered at the hotel around 4 pm on September 27 under the name 'Partha Sarathi' and was assigned Room Number 101. He remained in the room throughout the night.

Earlier, police froze Rs 8 crore, linked to Saraswati, parked in multiple bank accounts and fixed deposits. According to the FIR, Saraswati, a former chairman of the management institute in southwest Delhi, allegedly forced female students to visit his quarters late at night and sent them inappropriate text messages at odd hours.

He allegedly kept track of the students' movements through his phone. During the investigation, it was revealed that the accused allegedly used different names and particulars to operate multiple bank accounts and withdrew over Rs 50 lakh after the FIR was registered against him, the officer added. He had allegedly submitted documents with varying particulars at the time of account opening. (PTI)

TVK cadres shell-shocked over TN stampede tragedy, toll mounts to 40

CHENNAI/KARUR, Sept 28: The stampede leading to the tragic death of 40 people, including nine children in Karur's Veluchamypuram has left the members of Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam party led by actor-politician Vijay shell-shocked.

The party came under sharp criticism from several quarters for the poor arrangement at the week-end political rally where the crowd continued to swell as Vijay's arrival from Namakkal district got delayed by many hours. And when he finally arrived at the venue at around 7 pm the tragedy was awaiting to unfold.

Though former Chief Minister and AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami blamed the police and administration for their inability to defuse the stampede and avert the tragedy through proper arrangement, police claimed that the situation went out of control as several thousands of persons far beyond the expected numbers gathered to see the actor.

Mounds of shoes and chappals, crushed water bottles, torn party flags, pieces of clothes, broken poles, shreds of paper sprayed from party poppers and striking garbage of sorts, at the venue only reminded of the tragic incident.

A young man, among the crowd at the stampede spot, who managed to safely get out, claimed that several people were pushed to a 'low-lying sewerage' close to the road margin as many tried to get out at the same time. He regretted that what began as a 'celebration time' to hail their beloved matinee idol ended in tragedy.

"As fans were chanting Vijay's name, several did not realize that it was a stampede and that people fell down. Many who happened to place their legs on people who fell down also got tripped and fell," he told reporters. Several people had their own claims about the cause for stampede, and it is not clear what went wrong; whether it was the choice of the venue or overcrowding, which is being witnessed ever since Vijay launched his state-wide tour on September 13. At the venue, people pushed away tin sheets used to barricade and make enclosure kind of spaces and many who climbed on to thatched roof structures nearby fell down and sustained injuries. Almost at the same time, police baton-charged to control the situation. However, people, including children, who were caught in the crowd and fell down, could not comprehend what was happening.

A senior citizen in his 70s said he has never seen so many people getting killed in a stampede at a political party's event and blamed the youths for their anxiety to somehow take a look at the actor.

Staff at the Karur government hospital themselves were rattled by the unceasing siren of ambulances bringing injured people and policemen pitched in by carrying the victims to the treatment ward. Visuals of young men and women crying by holding his motionless children shook hearts.

Police repeated lathi-charge nearly an hour following the stampede to chase away the remaining crowds from the venue. Following the stampede, Vijay left the venue and did not meet reporters waiting at Tiruchirappalli and Chennai airports.

"My heart has broken, I am in unbearable, inexplicable pain and grief, " he said in a social media post. The actor added that he prayed for speedy recovery of those being treated in hospitals. He extended his sympathies to the families of "my dear brothers and sisters killed in Karur."

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin rushed from Chennai to Karur and interacted with doctors on the treatment being provided to the affected people and comforted them and assured them of best care.

The fatalities in the stampede mounted to 40 (from 39) with a man succumbing to injuries at the government hospital here, a health official said on Sunday.

As the death toll rose, the TVK moved the Madras High Court Bench in Madurai seeking an independent probe into the Karur stampede.

Stopping short of alleging a conspiracy into the incident, TVK deputy general secretary Nirmal Kumar told media that the party had approached the high court Bench with a plea for an impartial inquiry into the incident.

"The judge agreed to hear the case tomorrow at 2.15 pm. We will make official our statement thereafter," he said.

Earlier in the day, Tamil Nadu Health Secretary P Senthil Kumar said 39 deaths have been reported--17 women, 13 men, 4 male children, and 5 female children in the unfortunate incident.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced an ex-gratia of ₹ 2 lakh from PMNRF to be given to the kin of each deceased in the unfortunate incident. The injured would be given ₹ 50,00, he said in a post on 'X'.

Tamil Nadu DGP G Venkataraman said Vijay arrived at 7.40 pm. The people waiting under the hot sun lacked sufficient food and water. While the organisers put the expected number at 10,000, about 27,000 people turned up to have a glimpse of the actor, he said.

Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin said the Commission led by retired judge Aruna Jagadeesan would arrive in Karur later in the day to probe the stampede incident. Chief Minister would take appropriate action based on the report submitted by the panel, he said. Udhayanidhi, who cut short his overseas trip, paid homage to the deceased and visited the injured at the hospital. He was accompanied by Cabinet colleagues, including Health Minister Ma Subramanian. (PTI)

SC says Allahabad HC 'illogically turned' down bail plea of 71-year-old woman in forgery case

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: The Supreme Court has come to the rescue of a 71-year-old woman, who was booked at the behest of a lawyer for the offence of forgery pertaining to a 1971 land sale deed in Uttar Pradesh.

Frowning upon the approach of the Allahabad High Court, a bench of Justices Surya Kant, Ujjal Bhuyan and N Kotiswar Singh, issued bailable warrant against the complainant advocate Daduram Shukla to the sum of ₹ 10,000 to secure his presence and show caused him as to "why exemplary cost be not imposed on him for lodging the FIR in 2023 alleging forgery of a sale deed on August 21, 1971".

The bench directed the Lucknow commissioner of police to execute the bailable warrants and stayed the arrest of the woman Usha Mishra, while also questioning the approach of the police in registering the case.

The bench said, "It is quite unfortunate that the Allahabad High Court has illogically turned down the prayer for grant of anticipatory bail to the petitioner who is a 71-year-old woman, and when she is neither seller nor purchaser nor a witness or the beneficiary of the sale deed dated August 21, 1971."

Deprecating the "casual manner" of the high court in passing the order rejecting the anticipatory bail of the woman, the bench said it does not want to say more at this stage but it "warrants introspection".

"The casual manner in which the impugned order has been passed warrants introspection. We will not say more than this at this stage," the bench said in its recent order.

The bench said there is no requirement of any counter affidavit from the State as it called for the original records of the case, leading to registration of the FIR.

It said, "The SHO of the police station is directed to produce the original record leading to registration of FIR No…and further show cause as to why such proceedings, prima facie being an abuse of process of law, be not quashed."

The bench posted the matter for further hearing on October 8.

On June 25, the top court agreed to examine the plea of the woman for anticipatory bail and issued notice to Shukla, while noting that she appeared before the investigating officer on May 26, 2025, on which date her statement under Section 161 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 was recorded.

The bench noted that Shukla has been evading service of the notice and directed the Lucknow commissioner of police that if he (Shukla) shows any reluctance in accepting notice, his presence before the apex court should be secured through non-bailable warrants.

The case against the woman was registered under Kotwali Nagar police station of Gonda district for offences of cheating and forgery on June 22, 2023. (PTI)

Govt striving to get 'Chhath Puja' included in UNESCO's cultural heritage list: PM

Spirit of selfless service, discipline are true strengths of RSS: Modi

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: Ahead of the RSS completing 100 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the spirit of selfless service and the lesson of discipline are the true strengths of the Sangh with 'Nation First' being the priority in every action of its countless volunteers.

In his 126th Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, the prime minister made another strong push for Swadeshi and urged people to buy a Khadi item on Gandhi Jayanti on October 2. Modi also said the government is working towards getting the 'Chhath mahaparv' included in the UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Hailing the RSS, Modi said, "In a few days from now, we are going to celebrate Vijayadashmi. This time Vijayadashmi is even more special for another reason. On this day, the RSS completes 100 years of its establishment."

This century-old journey is not only remarkable but inspiring, the prime minister said.

"One hundred years ago, when the RSS was established, our nation had been shackled in the chains of slavery. This centuries old slavery had inflicted a deep wound on our self confidence and self respect," he said

People of the country were starting to develop an inferiority complex, he said.

"Therefore, along with country Independence, it was also necessary that the country be freed from ideological slavery," Modi said.

He said KB Hedgewar then formed the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) for this purpose in 1925.

"After him, Guru Golwalkar ji took forward this 'maha yagna' of service to the nation," Modi said.

"The spirit of selfless service and lesson of discipline, these are the true strengths of the Sangh," he said. Today, the RSS has been tirelessly engaged in the service of the nation since the last 100 years without pause or rest, he said.

"That is why we see when there is a natural disaster, RSS volunteers are the first to reach there. In every action of the countless volunteers of the RSS, the spirit of

'Nation First' is always supreme," Modi said.

During the broadcast, the prime minister also spoke with women navy officers --? Lieutenant Commander Dilna and Lieutenant Commander Roopa -- for exemplifying true courage and unshakable resolve during the Navika Sagar Parikrama.

Asserting that our festivals keep our culture alive, Modi said Chhath Puja honours Surya Dev with offerings to the setting sun.

Once local, it is now becoming a global festival, he said

"The government is working towards getting the Chhat mahaparv included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. When this will happen, people in various corners of the world will be able to experience the festival's grandeur divinity," Modi said.

He pointed out that some time back due to the government's efforts Kolkata's Durga puja was included in the UNESCO list.

Noting that October 2 is Gandhi Jayanti, Modi said unfortunately the attraction for Khadi in India had gone down after Independence. However, "over the last 11 years, the attraction for Khadi has grown remarkably, with sales rising steadily," he said.

"I urge you to buy Khadi products on October 2. Say with pride, this is swadeshi," he said.

Modi also paid tributes to freedom fighter Bhagat Singh and noted singer Lata Mangeshkar on their birth anniversary.

"Amar Shaheed Bhagat Singh is an inspiration for every Indian, especially the youth of the country," the prime minister said.

Hailing the contribution of Lata Mangeshkar, Modi said she sang patriotic songs which inspired people a lot.

'Jyoti Kalash Chhalke', a song sung by Mangeshkar, was also played during the radio broadcast. (PTI)

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Union Minister launches healthcare and solar initiatives to boost grassroots development in Keyi Panyor

Kiren Rijiju lays foundation stones for key development projects

HT Correspondent

YAZALI, Sept 28: Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, on Sunday laid the foundation stone for three major infrastructure development projects under the Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK) in Keyi Panyor district.

The initiatives are aimed at strengthening healthcare facilities, promoting sustainable energy, and improving the quality of life for the people of the region.

The sanctioned projects include the Infrastructure Development of the Community Health Centre (CHC) at Yazali, which seeks to upgrade existing medical services and enhance healthcare access for the local population; the Installation of Solar Street Lamps at Peni Village (Yazali Circle), an initiative to provide sustainable lighting solutions, ensure safety, and promote renewable energy; and the Infrastructure Development of the Joram Primary Health Centre, designed to bring modern facilities to the people of Joram and surrounding areas.

As part of the programme, Rijiju also visited Yazali Market, where he interacted with local shopkeepers and traders in a special awareness session on the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The interaction highlighted the importance of easing compliance, strengthening small businesses, and extending government support to the trading community.

A formal programme was held at the Government Higher Secondary School Auditorium, Yazali, where Toko Tatung, MLA of the 16-Yachuli (ST) Constituency, extended a warm welcome to the Union Minister and other dignitaries.

On the occasion, the Market Welfare Association of Keyi Panyor presented tokens of love to all the guests.

In his keynote address, Rijiju reiterated the Government's unwavering commitment to the overall progress and prosperity of Arunachal Pradesh.

He emphasised that development projects under the PMJVK were carefully designed to meet the aspirations of the people and assured that he personally remains dedicated to ensuring their effective implementation.

"I have always stood by the people of Keyi Panyor, and I will continue to work for the district's growth and prosperity in the years ahead," the Union Minister said.

Rijiju further underlined his consistent efforts in facilitating development initiatives across the state and reaffirmed that meaningful projects would continue to reach the grassroots.

He stressed that the Centre's focus on inclusive development ensures that rural areas like Yazali and Joram are equally empowered to progress alongside urban regions.

The event witnessed the presence of several dignitaries, including Nabam Rebia, MP (Rajya Sabha) from West Arunachal; Tojir Koyu, MLA of the 36-Nari-Koyu (ST) Constituency, who attended as special guest; Toko Tatung, Local MLA of 16-Yachuli (ST) Constituency; Taba Tedir, Chairman of the Arunachal Pradesh Energy Development Agency (APEDA) and former Minister of Education, Cultural Affairs and Indigenous Affairs; Likha Sangcchore, Zilla Parishad Chairperson (ZPC); and Angad Mehta, IPS, Superintendent of Police, Keyi Panyor District.

Heads of Departments, PRI leaders, shopkeepers, traders, and members of the general public also attended the function in large numbers.

The programme concluded with a Vote of Thanks delivered by Shweta Nagarkoti Mehta, IAS, Deputy Commissioner of Keyi Panyor District, who expressed gratitude to the Union Minister, dignitaries, and the public for their participation.

The day ended with a community lunch, symbolising unity, togetherness, and the collective aspiration for shared progress.

Zunheboto meet affirms need for Nagas to unite under common ground

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Sept 28: A meeting of 15 Naga political groups (NPGs), 33 Naga tribal hohos (bodies) and the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) in Zunheboto affirmed the urgent need for all Naga civil and religious bodies to come together in support of the Naga machang (common ground) under the Council of Naga Cooperation and Relationship (CNCR).

Adopting a four-point resolution named 'Zunheboto resolution', the meeting on Saturday stressed the need for all Nagas to unite based on their historical and political rights.

"This is not merely an administrative task, it is a moral summon to unity with the resolve to judiciously act without delay," the resolution issued by the FNR read.

It was stated that the resolution was adopted in the spirit of unity and shared purpose towards keeping the Naga people together.

The meeting urged the NPGs to come together under one common ground without further delay and infuse life into the 'Naga machang' for collective pursuit of an inclusive solution.

It said the CNCR will continue to work towards bringing all the NPGs with renewed vigour.

The resolution pointed out that with the signing of the Covenant of Naga Reconciliation, factional violence among the NPGs has stopped and gave new hope to the Naga people.

"This Zunheboto meeting acknowledges the genuineness and sincerity of the Naga political groups and their expressed desire for reconciliation," it stated.

The meeting also called for genuine forgiveness among the NPGs, between Naga tribal hohos and across all sections of the Naga people for reconciliation to result in a relationship of cooperation.

"We declare that a Naga shared future is possible only through forgiveness and mutual respect," it stressed.

The meeting urged all NPGs and Naga tribal hohos to initiate processes of forgiveness within and among themselves so that Naga cooperation is achieved.

It requested all church and religious bodies of all faiths across the Naga areas to hold prayer sessions at their convenience during October 2025. "These prayers shall be offered for wisdom, healing, and courage as we walk together toward reconciliation and renewal," the resolution said.

Six militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, Sept 28: Six militants belonging to different banned outfits have been arrested from three Imphal Valley districts of Manipur, police said on Sunday.

One active cadre of the banned People's Liberation Army (PLA) was arrested from Kumbi Bazar in Bishnupur district on Friday.

He was identified as Nongmaithem Gyaneshwor Singh (49) and he provided logistical support to the organisation, an official statement said.

Another active cadre of the outfit was arrested from Lamdeng Mayai Leikai area in Imphal West district on Saturday. He was identified as Laishram Jiten Singh (56).

Another member of the outfit was arrested from Khurai Konsam Leikai in Imphal East district. Identified as Moirangthem Chaobi Singh (50), he was involved in instigating a mob against the security forces in the past.

Police also arrested a woman cadre of the proscribed NRFM outfit from Mantripukhri Friends Colony in Imphal East district. She has been identified as Khaidem Sunila Devi (55).

Two active cadres of the banned Kangleipak Communist Party (Noyon) outfit were arrested from their respective residences at Lilong in Thoubal district and Naorem Leikai in Imphal West district on Saturday. They were identified as Md Mujibur Rahaman (44) and Sorenshangbam Bungcha (44) and one .32 pistol with magazine was seized from their possession, it added. (PTI)

Mizoram's oldest person Lalneihsangi dies at 108

AIZAWL, Sept 28: Mizoram's oldest person, Lalneihsangi, died at a hospital here due to age-related ailments, her family said.

She was 108.

The centenarian died at Ebenezer Medical Centre in Aizawl around 7.55 pm on Saturday, they said. Her funeral will be held at her residence in Aizawl's Khatla neighbourhood around 1 pm on Sunday.

Lalneihsangi, who was fondly called 'Pi Buangi' by locals, was declared the oldest person in Mizoram by Social Welfare Minister Lalrinpuii on September 13. Born and raised in Aizawl's Venghlui locality, she turned 108 on April 14. (PTI)

PD Sona warns transferred teachers against seeking retention

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 28: Education and Tourism Minister P D Sona has reiterated a strong warning to teachers under transfer, asking them not to play politics with the future of students and to immediately report to their new places of posting.

Addressing the media on Saturday, the Minister cautioned that attempts to seek retention through political or public influence will not be entertained, except in genuine cases cleared by a medical board or on specific humanitarian grounds.

The minister clarified that the recent transfer and posting exercise in the education department was carried out in a fair and transparent manner, keeping in mind the shortage of teachers in many schools across the state.

"There is no standoff between the department, the teachers under transfer, and schools facing faculty shortages. The transfer exercise was not done hastily; it was a large and time-consuming process involving mobilisation of manpower across the state. Some issues may still arise, but those will be addressed systematically," he said.

Explaining the government's stand on special cases, Sona informed that a medical board has already been constituted to examine the requests of teachers who are undergoing treatment or facing serious medical conditions.

Decisions on their postings will be made based on the recommendations of this board.

"Only those under medical treatment, non-completion of tenure, joint posting cases, or other serious humanitarian grounds will be considered. No other request for reconsideration or retention will be entertained," he stressed.

The minister expressed displeasure over reports of some teachers approaching political leaders and influential persons to stall their transfer orders. He warned that such practices would not succeed.

"Teachers must understand that there is no personal enmity or vindictiveness in these transfers. Even two MLAs' wives, who are also teachers, have been transferred. This shows that the process is transparent. Everyone must cooperate for the larger goal of strengthening education in Arunachal Pradesh," Sona said. Calling upon teachers to act responsibly, the minister made a heartfelt appeal for compliance.

"There has been a hue and cry from various parts of the state for want of teachers. With folded hands, I appeal to all teachers to move to their places of posting for the promotion of education and welfare of the student community. Please do not test our patience. If teachers fail to comply, action will be initiated not only against the concerned teachers but also against controlling officers, Principals, and DDSEs who do not adhere to government orders," he warned. Sona also took the opportunity to acknowledge the support of the state leadership.

He thanked chief minister Pema Khandu and deputy chief minister Chowna Mein for extending generous funding to the education sector, which he said has enabled the government to strengthen academic infrastructure and undertake major reforms.

Reiterating the importance of discipline in the teaching fraternity, the minister reminded teachers that they are the backbone of the education system.

"Teachers should not compromise the future of students by seeking undue advantages in transfer and posting. They are the main pillars of education, and their dedication is crucial for the progress of our state. We urge the teaching community to cooperate fully with the department's initiatives to build a stronger academic environment in Arunachal Pradesh," Sona concluded.

Heavy rain may mar Dussehra celebrations in Sikkim

GANGTOK, Sept 28: Heavy rain is likely to mar the Dussehra celebrations in Sikkim this year, an official said on Sunday.

Gantok Met Centre's Director Gopinath Raha said the Himalayan town has been recording higher-than-usual temperatures over the last few days, with the mercury reaching 26.6 degrees Celsius.

"However, the current warm spell will soon give way to cooler, wetter days. A chain of low-pressure systems forming over the Bay of Bengal is drawing in moisture, which is likely to lead to a spell of widespread rain across the state," he said.

"While mornings may remain largely clear through September's end, cloud build-up is expected from October 1. From October 2 onwards, rainfall is likely to strengthen and persist for four to five days, overlapping with the height of Dusshera celebrations," he added.

Raha said sudden thunderstorms are also very likely, cautioning that even clear skies could quickly shift, leading to heavy downpours. (PTI)

IMD predicts heavy rainfall for Durga Puja in Tripura

HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Sept 28: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast intermittent rainfall and thundershowers across Tripura during this year's Durga Puja celebrations, placing the state under a yellow alert from September 28 to October 2.

According to a special weather bulletin issued by the Meteorological Centre in Agartala, heavy to very heavy rainfall is expected in parts of the state, particularly in Dhalai district, where thundershowers and lightning are likely to occur on September 27. On September 28, light to moderate rain accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning is expected in many places across Tripura.

The forecast further indicates that on September 30, several districts, including West Tripura, Sepahijala, Gomati, and South Tripura, may witness heavy rainfall measuring between 7 and 11 centimeters, along with thunderstorms and lightning. Similar weather conditions are expected to continue on October 1 and October 2, with widespread light to moderate showers and the possibility of heavy rainfall in the same districts.

The IMD has urged the public, along with Durga Puja organisers, to remain cautious and adopt necessary safety measures during the festivities. While the showers may bring some relief from humidity, authorities have been asked to stay prepared for any disruptions caused by the adverse weather.

Durga Puja is the most celebrated festival in Tripura, and with large gatherings anticipated across the state, local administrations are keeping a close watch on the weather to ensure public safety throughout the celebrations.

Governor extends warm greetings on Durga Puja and Dussehra

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Sept 28: The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, (Retd), has extended his warm greetings and best wishes to the people of the State on the auspicious occasions of Durga Puja and Dussehra.

Conveying his festive message, the Governor called upon the people to embrace the spirit of these celebrations, which signify the eternal triumph of good over evil.

In his message, the Governor reflected on the deeper significance of the two festivals.

He said that Durga Puja, which honours the victory of Goddess Durga over the demon Mahishasura, serves as a timeless reminder that courage, righteousness, and truth will always prevail over arrogance and evil.

He added that the festival also highlights the divine strength of women and their vital role as protectors, nurturers, and creators of life.

Speaking on the significance of Dussehra or Vijayadashami, the Governor explained that it commemorates Lord Rama's victory over Ravana, symbolising the triumph of Dharma over Adharma, virtue over vice, and light over darkness.

He pointed out that the traditional burning of Ravana's effigies, accompanied by vibrant community gatherings and festive cheer, is not only a cultural celebration but also a reminder to overcome the negativity within ourselves and in society at large.

"Together, Durga Puja, Navratri, and Dussehra inspire us not just to celebrate the victory depicted in our mythological tales but also to imbibe that spirit in our daily lives by choosing truth, compassion, and righteousness in all our actions," the Governor said in his message.

Extending his best wishes to the people of Arunachal Pradesh, the Governor expressed hope that these sacred celebrations would bring peace, harmony, and happiness to every home.

He wished that the festivals strengthen bonds within communities and inspire everyone to walk steadfastly on the path of virtue.

Mizoram's Dampa bypoll likely to be held along with Bihar assembly elections: Officials

AIZAWL, Sept 28: The bypoll to the Dampa assembly seat in Mizoram's Mamit district is likely to be held along with the Bihar elections, officials said on Sunday.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is set to announce the schedule of the bypoll soon, they said. In a statement, the commission announced the deployment of 470 officers as central observers for the upcoming assembly polls in Bihar and assembly by-elections in a Union Territory and six states, including Mizoram's Dampa seat, to ensure free and fair elections.

The move indicates that the Bihar assembly elections and the bypolls in several states will be announced soon, according to the officials.

The Election Commission said that of the 470 central observers, 320 are IAS officers, 60 are IPS officers, and 90 are from other services.

The Dampa assembly seat fell vacant after the death of Mizo National Front (MNF) legislator Lalrintluanga Sailo on July 21.

The ruling Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) has fielded Mizo singer and preacher Vanlalsailova, while the main opposition MNF nominated its senior vice president and former health minister Dr R Lalthangliana.

The Congress fielded its state unit vice president and former minister John Rotluangaliana. (PTI)

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Arunachal Pradesh University hosts first edition of 'YELAM' cultural festival

Adi students showcase heritage, traditions at Arunachal Pradesh University's first 'YELAM' cultural festival

HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, Sept 28: The Adi students of Arunachal Pradesh University, Pasighat, successfully organised the maiden edition of "YELAM," a cultural celebration dedicated to retracing the path of the ancestors and highlighting the rich traditions of the Adi community.

The inaugural event, held on Saturday, was celebrated under the theme "Solung-Lune."

The programme was graced by Tapi Darang, MLA of the 38th East Pasighat Constituency, who attended as the chief guest.

Prof Tomo Riba, vice chancellor of Arunachal Pradesh University, Pasighat, Tobom Dai, former General Secretary of the All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU), along with faculty members, scholars, and distinguished guests were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the gathering, Tapi Darang lauded the efforts of the students for successfully hosting the festival, describing it as a commendable initiative to showcase the culture and heritage of the Adi community.

He particularly appreciated the Adi students for their leadership in organising YELAM and urged faculty and scholars to conduct further research on the genealogy of the Tani tribes to enrich existing literature on indigenous traditions.

Prof Tomo Riba, in his address, observed that academic excellence must go hand-in-hand with the preservation of cultural roots.

"Along with academic learning, it is equally important to respect and honour the path shown by our ancestors. Such student-led initiatives contribute immensely to the promotion and preservation of our rich cultural heritage," he said.

Sharing his impressions, Tobom Dai remarked that YELAM stood out as one of the best events he had attended in recent times.

"It is heartening to witness students themselves taking the lead in celebrating our culture and traditions. We must preserve our roots, especially in today's era. Through such celebrations, our identity and culture remain alive for future generations," he said.

The festival showcased a vibrant array of programmes that reflected the unique cultural essence of the Adi community.

Traditional folk songs, a colourful cultural parade, folk dances, and a skit based on an Adi folktale were presented by the students.

The highlight of the event was the traditional Ponung dance, which brought the celebration to a close amid great enthusiasm, joy, and gaiety.

The inaugural edition of YELAM not only served as a cultural extravaganza but also emerged as a platform for the younger generation to reconnect with their ancestral roots and reaffirm their commitment to preserving the cultural identity of the Adi community.

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MITHUN MANHAS ELECTED AS NEW BCCI PRESIDENT UNOPPOSED DURING ITS AGM

MUMBAI, Sept 28: Former Delhi captain Mithun Manhas was elected the president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) unopposed along with other members, including board's secretary Devajit Saikia, during its 94th Annual General Meeting (AGM) at its headquarters here on Sunday.

The 45-year-old Manhas became the 37th president of the all-powerful cricket body after he succeeded former India cricketer Roger Binny, who resigned from the post last month after turning 70.

Manhas is the third consecutive First-Class cricketer to have taken over as the board's president after Binny and former captain Sourav Ganguly.

Manhas, who featured in 157 First-Class, 130 List A and 55 IPL matches between 1997-98 and 2016-17, had emerged as the frontrunner following an informal meeting of the board's power brokers in New Delhi on September 20 ahead of the final day of nomination.

He also served as the director of a three-member ad-hoc committee formed by the BCCI to manage the affairs of the Jammu and Kashmir State Cricket Association (JKCA) due to mismanagement.

Manhas, who has an impressive tally of 9,714 First-Class runs with 27 centuries to go with 4,126 runs in List A matches, said he would rely on his experience as a player and administrator.

"It's an absolute honour to be the president of the world's finest cricket board. It's a huge responsibility as well. I give my assurance that I'll be committed to do it to the best of my ability and dedication and passion," Manhas told the media here.

"Maybe my work, my credentials… both as an administrator, as well as a cricketer. For the past four years, I've been working with the JKCA, we have done reasonably well and it will certainly help," he said when asked about the factors that worked in his election as the board's president.

The AGM also confirmed a few other key appointments with BCCI secretary Saikia and IPL Governing Council chairman Arun Dhumal retaining their posts, while former India cricketer and Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) president Raghuram Bhat taking charge as the treasurer.

Veteran administrator Rajeev Shukla will continue as the board's vice-president while M Khairul Jamal Majumdar was named as one of the two representatives in the IPL GC along with Dhumal.

Prabhtej Bhatia moved from the post of BCCI's treasurer to joint secretary, replacing Rohan Gauns Dessai, and Saurashtra Cricket Association president Jaydev Shah became the apex council member as general body representative.

"There was no contestant against any of the candidates who had submitted their nominations for the apex council posts. They have got selected unopposed," Saikia said.

Former India internationals RP Singh and Pragyan Ojha were inducted into the men's selection panel, while ex-Tamil Nadu batter S Sharath returned to the junior selection committee. Sharath was a member of the senior selection committee till now.

The Ajit Agarkar-chaired committee now comprises former India players Shiv Sundar Das, Ajay Ratra, RP Singh and Ojha.

In the women's selection panel, former India cricketer Amita Sharma replaced Neetu David as its chairperson.

Sharma, a right-arm seamer who played five Tests, 116 ODIs, and 41 T20Is between 2002-2014, will be joined by former India players

Shyama Dey, Jaya Sharma and Sravanthi Naidu as new inductees. Shyama retained her position.

Their tenure will begin after the women's World Cup, which begins on Tuesday with co-hosts India and Sri Lanka facing off in the tournament opener in Guwahati.

"One of the main decisions taken during the AGM today were the appointments of senior men's and women's selection committee members, the process regarding the new appointees was underway. Those appointments were confirmed today with a full house," Saikia said. Jayesh George, the president of the Kerala Cricket Association, was appointed as the first-ever independent chairperson of the Women's Premier League committee.

The position was held by Binny since the league's inception in 2023. The Delhi & District Cricket Association president Rohan Jaitley was named the chairperson of the Infrastructure Committee. (PTI)

Mithun Manhas' ancestral village rejoices as he becomes BCCI president

JAMMU, Sept 28: Celebrations broke out in Mithun Manhas' ancestral village here on Sunday after the former Delhi captain's ascension to BCCI presidency, with the people terming it a moment of pride for the region.

The 45-year-old Manhas became the 37th president of the all-powerful cricket body after he succeeded former India cricketer Roger Binny, who resigned from the post last month after turning 70.

Manhas, a former Delhi captain and the first ever player from Jammu and Kashmir to play in the Indian Premier League, is the third consecutive former cricketer to become the BCCI president after Binny and Sourav Ganguly.

Celebrating the success of the "son of the soil", who had risen to the pinnacle of Indian cricket administration, the residents of remote Dossa village of Bhalessa in Gandoh tehsil of Doda district, recalled his family's connection to the place with pride.

"Our brother Manhas has made the entire village proud," Yog Raj Manhas told PTI, summing up the joy and sense of achievement that gripped the community.

He said the former player's appointment to the highest cricketing post in the country is a big achievement for the village, especially the Manhas family, in one of the remotest parts of the country.

"We know his father Dr. Amar Singh Manhas who is regularly visiting his roots in the village. The cricketer had grown up in Jammu and last visited the village long back. But we are hopeful that he will visit us one day and we will celebrate his elevation to the post of BCCI together," Raj Manhas said.

He said all the people are saying that there is a lot of talent in J&K and "we are hopeful that he will utilise his resources to work on that talent so that more cricketers emerge from our land".

"We want better infrastructure for our youngsters including stadiums." Manhas, who featured in 157 First-Class, 130 List A and 55 IPL matches between 1997-98 and 2016-17, also served as the director of a three-member ad-hoc committee formed by the BCCI to manage the affairs of the Jammu and Kashmir State Cricket Association (JKCA) due to mismanagement.

"There is a lot of backwardness in our village and we are very happy that one of our cousins became the president of the BCCI. It is not an ordinary achievement and we know he will shine and make the country proud," said Niha Manhas.

Union minister Jitendra Singh, who represents the Udhampur Lok Sabha constituency which also covers the Doda district, also expressed happiness over Manhas taking charge of the BCCI. (PTI)

Nepal stun West Indies for maiden win against a Full ICC Member

SHARJAH, Sept 28: Nepal etched their name in history books, defeating two-time world champions West Indies by 19 runs in the opening T20 International here for their first-ever victory against a Full ICC Member nation.

Nepal had earlier beaten Afghanistan in 2014, but the latter were still an Associate Member at that time.

Saturday's result, therefore, marked Nepal's biggest win yet on the international stage, and came in their maiden T20I clash against the Caribbean side and first bilateral series against a Full Member.

Sent in to bat, Nepal posted 148 for 8 and then returned to restrict West Indies to 129 for nine.

West Indies reduced Nepal to 12 for 2 in the fourth over after Akeal Hosein and Jason Holder struck early. But Nepal skipper Rohit Paudel (38) and Kushal Malla (30) steadied the innings with a 58-run stand before debutant Navin Bidaisee dismissed both in quick succession.

Malla provided the early impetus with two sixes, while Dipendra Singh Airee (24) and Gulsan Jha chipped in to keep the scoreboard moving.

Holder dented Nepal with three wickets in the 19th over, but some inconsistent catching from West Indies allowed Nepal to post a competitive 148 for 8. (PTI)

Raghuram Bhat, Jaydev Shah, Jayesh George: Seasoned administrators elevated to new roles

MUMBAI, Sept 28: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) on Sunday welcomed Raghuram Bhat and Jaydev Shah into its ranks as office bearers during its Annual General Meeting held here.

PTI explores the background of Bhat, the new BCCI treasurer, Shah, the latest entrant to the Apex Council, and new Women's Premier League chairman Jayesh George. Bhat's playing career for India lasted only two Tests in 1983 but the left-arm spinner was a domestic stalwart, taking 374 wickets in 82 first-class matches for Karnataka. After retirement, Bhat was actively involved in umpiring and coaching at various levels, including the head coach of Goa, before turning his attention to administration. After serving a stint as the chairman of the state senior selection committee, Bhat took over as the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) president in November 2022.

He has been leading the association deftly ever since and his tenure will end on September 30. Beyond his affable exterior, Bhat is a wise man aware of the nuances of administration and the intricate layers of rules, which will come handy in his new role.

Bhat was elected treasurer after incumbent Prabhtej Bhatia handed the new role of joint secretary.

Shah, son of veteran administrator Niranjan Shah, had a long domestic career, playing 120 first-class games for 5354 runs, averaging close to 30. But the 42-year-old shone as a captain and man manager, evidenced while leading Saurashtra to Vijay Hazare Trophy win in 2007-08, besides guiding them to the Ranji Trophy final in the 2012-13 and 2015-16 seasons. He retired after the 2017-18 season, and became the Saurashtra Cricket Association (SCA) president in September 2019. In July 2021, Shah was drafted into a BCCI working committee to oversee the conduct of the 2021-22 domestic season in the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. He had also played an influential role in BCCI introducing DRS in the Ranji Trophy in 2020. Last year, he accompanied the Indian team to Australia for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy as the manager.

George is precisely not a newcomer to the BCCI fold as the veteran administrator from Kerala was the board's joint secretary under Jay Shah. He is known for his efficient handling of situations and organisational ability, and it hardly offered a surprise when he was selected as the first-ever Women's Premier League (WPL) chairman. As the president of the Kerala Cricket Association (KCA), George played a leading role in setting up the Kerala Cricket League (KCL). "A big thanks to BCCI for giving me this responsibility and the KCA gave me all the support. I will use this opportunity to improve the WPL and give more opportunities to our women cricketers," George said after the BCCI AGM. Vinod Kumar, the KCA secretary, welcomed George's appointment. "We at the KCA congratulate Mr Jayesh George. His appointment comes as an encouragement for us at a time when the KCA is planning to start a women's league next year, and hopefully we can also stage some WPL matches and other high-profile women's matches," said Vinod Kumar. (PTI)

Musical tribute, free tickets in Zubeen's honour at women's cricket world cup opening ceremony

GUWAHATI, Sept 28: The opening ceremony of the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup at the ACA Stadium here will feature a special musical tribute to Assam's cultural icon Zubeen Garg, along with distribution of 5,000 free tickets for the inaugural match on Tuesday.

Prominent artistes of the state, including Angarag Papon Mahanta and Joi Barua, besides the Shillong Chamber Choir, will present the musical tribute, Assam Cricket Association (ACA) officials said.

It will be a 40-minute special presentation during the inaugural ceremony, they said.

The ACA has also arranged for distribution of 5,000 free tickets for Garg's fans for the opening match, to be played here between India and Sri Lanka on September 30.

The Guwahati Sports Association (GSA) will distribute the free tickets on behalf of the ACA here on Monday.

"To mark the spirit of unity through sport and culture, and to encourage enthusiastic public participation in global sporting events, the GSA will distribute 5,000 free tickets for Zubeen Garg fans for the inaugural match," an official said. The tickets will be made available at the GSA office in Nehru Stadium, Guwahati, from 10 am onwards, he said.

Garg (52) had died by drowning in the sea in Singapore on September 19, plunging the entire state into mourning for its beloved singer-composer.

He was also known for his love for sports, especially football, and participated in several friendly football and cricket ties. (PTI)

Street-smart, task-master, people-friendly: Manhas steps into challenging BCCI president's post

BENGALURU, Sept 28: Mithun Manhas' rapid ascension to the BCCI presidency, which was ratified at the AGM on Sunday, is symbolic of the decision-makers' desire to keep the highest cricket administration post in the country firmly in the hands of cricketers.

That Manhas was chosen ahead of some big names such as Sourav Ganguly and Harbhajan Singh might have added an element of surprise to the call, but the former Delhi captain is a canny operator, who can instantly gauge the ebb and flow of developments.

His body of work with the Jammu and Kashmir Cricket Association (JKCA) as its Director of Cricket Operations offers tangible evidence.

Generally, such posts are fancy in nature and the occupants just try to complete the stint without being at the wrong end of the powers that be.

But Manhas, 45, ensured that he was hands on with the job, and under his guidance the cricketing facilities in Jammu and Srinagar received a massive facelift.

Manhas played a big part in the pitches in the state getting relaid, which had a cathartic influence on its cricketers.

"The new pitches have certainly improved the playing standards of the state cricketers. They now have more confidence while facing bigger teams like Mumbai or Baroda.

"There are now several players from the area in the North Zone (for Duleep Trophy). Certainly, the administration has been working hard to improve things, and the presence of someone as experienced and task-oriented as Manhas has been quite helpful," P Krishna Kumar, the J&K bowling coach, told PTI.

Task-oriented is the key word here.

The BCCI's president post comes with heaps of responsibility and unparalleled visibility and scrutiny, which mandates a person of immense mental fortitude.

The two previous board presidents — Sourav Ganguly and Roger Binny — came with high reputations as players and commanded immediate respect from everyone around, and it, in a way, helped them stay above questions.

But Manhas does not have that luxury. He may be adept in administration at state-level but the BCCI officialdom is a tough place, and now the 45-year-old needs to construct his own space in the corridors of power among some veteran administrators.

Here Manhas' inherent diligence and the willingness to put in the hard yards will help him in that task.

"First couple of months will be rather easy for him, you know the honeymoon period. But things will get heated during later months as India is also scheduled to host a World Cup (T20 WC next year), and his administrative skills will be put under test," a former BCCI official cautioned.

However, there is another contour to the personality of Manhas.

He had a long first-class career across 157 matches scoring 9714 runs and during that nearly two-decade long journey the right-hander was part of the Delhi dressing room that had players like Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir, Ashish Nehra, Akash Chopra, Shikhar Dhawan, Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant etc at various times.

Manhas was also their captain for a number of seasons without really getting over-awed by the presence of stars, and generally keeping the dressing room in harmony.

Manhas has this lovely way of keeping relationships and it was reflected when he was associated with Punjab Kings and Gujarat Titans in the IPL when old mates Sehwag and Nehra moved to coaching roles.

"He was always a people's person. Don't forget he had been a Delhi captain in a team that had a lot of big stars, India players. They played under him and he managed them fairly well," Chopra had recalled when the news of Manhas getting the top post first emerged.

Manhas has also seen his share of rough days. When he shifted to Jammu and Kashmir in the later years of his career as a player-cum-coach, he had a tiff with some of the players including then skipper Parvez Rasool.

It led to Manhas making himself unavailable for a Ranji Trophy match against Rajasthan in 2017, revealing a tougher side.

"Yes, Manhas is quite friendly and approachable as a person. But at the same time, he will not stand down from a fight where he thinks the truth is on his side.

"He might be originally from Jammu, but he has learned the street smartness and tough nature of Delhi over the years," said former JKCA administrator. Street smart, tough, people friendly, Manhas will require each of those traits in his new role. (PTI)

Srihari Nataraj dazzles in 200m freestyle, wins Silver in Asian Aquatics

AHMEDABAD, Sept 28: Ace Indian swimmer Srihari Nataraj dazzled on the opening day of the 11th Asian Aquatics Championships, clinching the 200m freestyle silver medal in the elite continental competition in over 16 years, here on Sunday.

Srihari clocked 1:48.47 seconds to finish behind 17-year-old Chinese Xu Haibo, who timed 1:46.83 seconds and was 1.64 second faster than the tall 24-year-old Indian, who has represented the country at the 2020 Tokyo and 2024 Paris Olympics.

Hinata Ando of Japan finished with a bronze, clocking 1:48.73 seconds.

On Saturday, India's head coach Nihar Ameen had expressed confidence in his wards winning 3-4 medals in the showpiece continental competition, and the 24-year-old Srihari did not disappoint by setting the tone for the other Indians.

The two-time Olympian, who earlier this year set the 100m freestyle national record at the FISU Summer World University Games in Rhine-Ruhr, Germany, competed in Heat 2 in the morning session to qualify behind Iran's Mohammad Ghasemi, clocking 1:51.09.

The other Indian, Aneesh Sunil Kumar Gowda competing in Heat 4, could not make the grade finishing fourth in the race with a time of 1:52.62 seconds.

Srihari's sterling performance follows his superb showing in the 38th National Games in Uttarakhand where he won nine gold and a silver across a mix of individual and relay events.

A total of 40 swimmers including 20 men and 20 women from India are competing at the newly-built state-of-the-art Veer Savarkar Sports Complex in Naranpura here.

The Indian contingent has been based in Naranpura over the past month for the national coaching camp.

Over 1,100 swimmers, coaches and technical officials from 29 countries are here for the marquee event in the Asian Aquatics calendar, which will serve as a qualifying event for the Asian Games to be held in Nagoya, Japan next year.

Besides Srihari, Sajan Prakash in men's and Dhinidhi Desinghu and Bhavya Sachdeva in women's are India's top medal hopes. (PTI)

World archery para champion lost his leg in Naxal IED blast

NEW DELHI, Sept 28: Toman Kumar, the gold-medal winner at the World Archery Para Championships being held in South Korea, etched his success path from the scratch after he suffered a deadly IED blast injury in 2022 during an anti-Naxal operation in Chhattisgarh. The 30-year-old constable in the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has won seven medals till now in international and national para archery tournaments. He clinched the men's compound title on Saturday at the World Archery Para Championships being held in Gwangju in South Korea. Toman was part of a CRPF unit that was assigned to sanitise a "new target area" in the south Bastar area, one of the worst Naxal violence-affected areas in the country, in February, 2022 when a heavy gunfire ensued between the troops and Naxals. An improvised explosive device (IED) blast trapped Toman who was one among the two scouts of the patrol party. (PTI)

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