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- Rajnath Singh warns of rising 'ideological wars', sophisticated crimes
- South Korean opposition submits motion to impeach the country's acting president as strife deepens

**7 NORTHEAST**

- Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio elected NPF President
- Manipur's Somdal village ready to welcome NSCN(IM) chief to his birthplace after 50 years

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## Border unrest over paddy harvesting ends

Heartwarming scene: Karbi farmers help Pnars in harvesting

**HT Bureau SHILLONG/ DIPHU, Oct 21:** In a remarkable display of inter-village cooperation, Pnar farmers from Lapangap village in West Jaintia Hills District received assistance from Karbi farmers in harvesting their paddy, marking a significant return to normalcy in the area after recent clashes.

A video shared by the West Jaintia Hills district administration showcased the heartwarming scene, highlighting the spirit of cooperation between the two communities.

The development comes after the invention of the Chief Minister, CEM of KAAC and traditional leaders.

West Jaintia Hills Superintendent of Police, Jagpal Singh Dhanao, announced that police presence would be maintained in the area to provide security and

prevent any outsiders from disrupting the peace.

It may be mentioned that Meghalaya and Assam governments on Monday reached an agreement to allow paddy harvesting in Lapangap and Tapat in West Karbi Anglong district after weeks of delays due to tensions between Pnar villagers of Lapangap and Karbi villagers of Tapat.

The agreement was made during a meeting at the Assam Border Outpost in Khanduli, which was attended by officials from both districts, including West Jaintia Hills ADC and Border Magistrate G.H. Passah, and West Karbi Anglong's Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police R. Barua.

Prominent headmen and associations from both districts were also present. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



## Eight infiltrators sent back: CM

**GUWAHATI, Oct 21:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said that eight infiltrators have been sent back from the state.

He, however, did not specify the time or place from where they were sent back. "There are 7 wonders of the world and the 8th wonder is illegal infiltrators trying to sneak into Assam and capture our lands," Sarma said in a post on X.

"However, the good news is that we won't let these wonders wander around here in Assam anymore. 8 Alices in the Wonderland PUSHED BACK. Bye," the chief minister said, in a reference to Lewis Carroll's 'Alice in Wonderland'. The state government has been cracking the whip on illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, pushing back infiltrators from its borders with the neighbouring country. (PTI)

## NPF general convention ratifies NDPP's merger with it

**KOHIMA, Oct 21:** The Naga People's Front (NPF) on Tuesday unanimously ratified the merger of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) with it during the general convention held at the Indira Gandhi Stadium here.

Around 5,000 active party members participated in the convention, which approved the merger, confirming the resolutions earlier adopted by the Central Office Bearers (COB) and the Central Executive Council (CEC) on October 18, a party leader said.

The convention also unanimously elected a new team of COBs, the CEC, and office bearers of the frontals and cells for the 2025-2030 tenure to be led by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio as the new President, while retaining MLA

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 21:** In the wake of a recent law and order situation outside Baksa District Jail, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday visited Lakshimpur A Block village in Baksa district to meet affected residents and assess the situation on the ground.

The incident, which occurred during the transfer of two accused in the high-profile Zubeen Garg death case, led to unrest among locals and resulted in police firing to control the situation.

Two individuals, identified as Dipak Medhi and Bidyut Kalita, sustained injuries during the disturbance.

During his visit, Sarma personally met the families of the injured and handed over cheques of ₹ 2 lakh each to support their ongoing medical treatment.

He assured the families that the Government of Assam is fully committed to providing all necessary assistance and will extend additional financial support if required, underscoring the administration's concern for the welfare of citizens affected by unforeseen incidents.

The chief minister also paid respects at the Hari Mandir in Lakshimpur A Block, interacting with the villagers and commend-



ing their continued cooperation in maintaining peace and harmony in the region.

He emphasised that the government values the support of local communities in fostering a stable and secure environment, and

called upon them to continue participating actively in the state's development initiatives.

Addressing the issue of justice, Sarma reiterated that ensuring a fair and transparent

investigation into Zubeen Garg's death remains a top priority for the government.

He assured that the authorities are handling the matter with utmost seriousness and that all necessary steps are being taken to ensure accountability.

On the occasion, the chief minister announced a financial grant of ₹ 10 lakh for the development of the Hari Mandir and an additional ₹ 10 lakh for the local Shiv Temple.

These grants aim to support the upkeep, renovation, and enhancement of religious and cultural spaces in the village, reflecting the government's commitment to preserving heritage and fostering community welfare.

Guardian minister Jayanta Mallabaruah, MLA Phanidhar Talukdar, deputy commissioner, Superintendent of Police, and other senior officials accompanied the chief minister during the visit, highlighting the administration's collective effort to address citizen concerns promptly and effectively.

Sarma's visit has been widely appreciated by villagers, who lauded the chief minister's hands-on approach and assurance of continued support, reinforcing confidence in the government's dedication to public welfare and development.

## Permanent memorial for Zubeen Garg to be named 'Zubeen Kshetra'

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 21:** The committee tasked with establishing a permanent memorial for late singer Zubeen Garg has decided to name the site "Zubeen Kshetra."

The announcement came after a meeting in Guwahati, chaired by Garima Garg, confirming that the memorial at Hatimura, Sonapur, will function as a cultural hub dedicated to the artist's legacy.

Garima Garg stated that the name "Zubeen Kshetra" reflects a collective effort to preserve Garg's influence on Assam's music, art, and social identity. She emphasised that the memorial would go beyond mere remembrance, offering a public space where visitors can engage with the ideals, creativity, and artistic values that defined



Zubeen's life.

Constituted on October 16 following a Cabinet decision, the committee includes family members and cultural figures such as Palmee Borthakur, Shyamantak Gautam, Partha Sarathi Mahanta, Biren Singha, Anuradha Sarma Pujari, Pranjal Saikia, Pulak Banerjee, Dulal Manki, Tarali Sarma, and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## India upgrades technical mission in Kabul to embassy

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** India on Tuesday announced upgrading its technical mission in Kabul to the status of an embassy as part of broader efforts to deepen its bilateral engagement with Kabul.

The announcement came over a week-and-a-half after External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said during his meeting with Afghan counterpart Amir Khan Muttaqi that India will upgrade its diplomatic presence in Kabul.

India had withdrawn its officials from its embassy in Kabul after the Taliban seized power in August 2021. In June 2022, India re-established its diplomatic presence in the Afghan capital by deploying a "technical team".

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the Indian embassy in Kabul will further augment India's contribution to Afghanistan's comprehensive development, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building initiatives.

"In keeping with the decision announced during the recent visit of the Afghan foreign minister to India, the government is restoring the status of the technical mission of India in Kabul to that of the Embassy of India in Afghanistan with immediate effect," it said.

The MEA said the decision underscores India's resolve to deepen its bilateral engagement with the Afghan side in "all spheres of mutual interest".

"The Embassy of India in Kabul will further augment India's contribution to Afghanistan's comprehensive development, humanitarian assistance, and capacity-building initiatives, in keeping with the priorities and aspirations of Afghan society," it said in a statement.

The mission will be headed by a diplomat in the rank of Charge d'Affaires, it is learnt.

Muttaqi was in India this month for six days that signalled a new approach in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## India upheld righteousness, avenged injustice with Operation Sindoor: PM

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday penned a letter to the citizens of the country on Deepavali, highlighting the successes of Operation Sindoor and the fight against Naxalism and asserting that Bharat has emerged as a symbol of stability at a time when the world is beset with crises.

The prime minister listed the decision to lower Goods and Services Tax rates among the historic achievements of his government and said that citizens are saving thousands of crores of rupees during the 'GST Bachat Utsav'.

He also urged citizens to adopt swadeshi to promote the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat', to respect all languages, prioritise health and embrace yoga.

"All these efforts will rapidly take us towards a Viksit Bharat," Modi said in his letter, which he wrote a day after he celebrated Diwali with Navy personnel onboard the indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant.

"I extend my heartfelt greetings to all of you on the auspicious occasion of Deepavali, a festival filled with energy and enthusiasm. This is the second Deepavali after the grand construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya," he said.

"Lord Shri Ram teaches us to uphold righteousness and also gives us the courage to fight injustice. We have

seen a living example of this a few months ago during Operation Sindoor. During Operation Sindoor, Bharat not only upheld righteousness but also avenged injustice," the PM said.

He said that this Deepavali is particularly special because for the first time, lamps will be lit in many districts across the country, including remote areas.

"These are the districts where Naxalism and Maoist terrorism have been eradicated from the root. In recent times, we have seen many individuals abandoning the path of violence and joining the mainstream of development, expressing faith in the Constitution of our country. This is a major achievement for the nation," Modi said.

The prime minister said amid these historic achievements, the country has also embarked on next-generation reforms in recent days.

"On the first day of Navratri, lower GST rates were implemented. During this 'GST Bachat Utsav', citizens are saving thousands of crores of rupees," Modi said.

He said in a world going through multiple crises, Bharat has emerged as a symbol of both stability and sensitivity.

"We are also on track to become the third-largest economy in the world in the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## EU member nations support EU-India strategic agenda

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** All the 27 member nations of the European Union have unanimously backed the block's new strategic agenda with India that seeks to significantly ramp up two-way ties in several key sectors such as defence, trade and technology.

The new document was released by the European Commission and the EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy Kaja Kallas last month.

The European Council comprising representatives of all the EU member nations unanimously supported it on Monday, according to EU officials.

The new strategic agenda is expected to be adopted at the India-EU summit that is expected to be held in New Delhi early next year.

The new strategic agenda identifies five areas of shared interest that include security and defence, con-



nectivity and global issues, prosperity, sustainability, technology and innovation.

Beyond the bilateral dimension, the new strategic agenda highlights EU-India joint engagement on global issues and with third partners, reflecting India's growing global influence.

Under the defence pillar, the document identified maritime security, cyber defence, and counterterrorism as areas to expand cooperation.

The new strategic agenda also emphasised strengthening regional

connectivity initiatives, such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and advances Global Gateway and EU-India trilateral cooperation with and in third countries.

A European readout on the European Council also welcomed efforts to conclude a balanced, ambitious, mutually beneficial and economically meaningful free trade agreement with India, which both sides are aiming to finalise by the end of the year.

"Such agreement must include enhanced market access, removal of trade barriers, and provisions on sustainable development," it said.

"Against the backdrop of an increasingly complex geopolitical outlook, the Council also welcomes closer collaboration between the EU and India on security and defence matters based on the principles of (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'This programme will give young Indian scientists the same chance Ramanujan once had'

## New Ramanujan scheme to bring budding Indian scientists to London

**LONDON, Oct 21:** A new Ramanujan Junior Researchers programme, backed by India's Department for Science and Technology (DST), will bring some of the country's brightest young theoretical physicists and mathematicians to the London Institute for Mathematical Sciences (LIMS) for joint research.

Unveiled on the back of Prime Minister Keir Starmer's recent visit to India, the scheme is named in honour of celebrated Indian mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan's friendship with British mathematician G H Hardy.

That collaboration had brought Ramanujan to England in 1913, with their joint insights now occupying a central place in modern mathematics.

"Our Ramanujan Junior Re-



searchers programme will act as a bridge for the exchange of talents between two science superpowers," said Dr Thomas Fink, the Director of LIMS.

"The work Ramanujan did with Hardy transformed the mathemat-

ical sciences. This, along with the success of our fellowships for theorists from Russia and Ukraine, has inspired us to welcome some of India's brightest minds to join us in our rooms at the Royal Institution," he said.

The DST-funded phase one of the programme will consist of Ramanujan Junior Visitors or Indian PhD (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

The campaign to secure government backing was spearheaded by Indian High Commissioner to the UK Vikram Doraiswami, with the support of Professor Krishnaswamy Vijayraghavan, former principal scientific advisor to the Government of India.

"The story of Hardy and Ramanujan reminds us that science advances not through isolation, but through friendship and dialogue," said Doraiswami.

"This programme will give young Indian scientists the same chance Ramanujan once had — to test their ideas in the world's most stimulating environments," he said.

The DST-funded phase one of the programme will consist of Ramanujan Junior Visitors or Indian PhD (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

**LEH, Oct 21:** The Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) on Tuesday sought photos and video clips of the September 24 violence that left four persons dead and several injured, saying such material is critical for the ongoing investigation and in the pursuit of justice.

The association, which is part of the Leh Apex Body, also appealed to the community to hold weddings without music as a tribute to the slain persons.

The Centre, on October 17, moved to address a key demand of the LAB and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) by announcing a judicial inquiry headed by a retired Supreme Court judge into the September 24 clashes.

According to a notification issued by the Union Home Ministry, the judicial probe, to be headed by Jus-

tice B S Chauhan, a former judge of the Supreme Court, is mandated to investigate the circumstances leading to the serious law and order situation, the police action and the resultant unfortunate deaths of four people, including a 1999 Kargil war veteran.

"Anyone present at the scene (on September 24), and who possesses photos or video footage of the incident, should come forward and submit the material to the LBA office.

"These visuals are considered critical for the ongoing investigation and pursuit of justice," the association appealed to the public, while assuring them the identity of anyone sharing such evidence would be kept strictly confidential.

The LBA also addressed the community about upcoming weddings and ceremonies, many of

which are scheduled to take place in the coming days.

"While these events may continue as planned, people are strongly urged to avoid playing musical and traditional instruments such as the Daman and Surma, in solidarity with the victims (of violence)," the appeal said.

The LBA said those killed or injured in the incident made "sacrifices in support of Ladakh's demands, and respecting their memory is the collective responsibility of the community".

The widespread violence broke out during a shutdown called by a constituent of the apex body to advance talks with the Centre on the demands for statehood and safeguards under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Both LAB and KDA, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# China files complaint, says India's PLI schemes for auto, EV policy violate WTO norms

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** China has alleged that certain conditions in India's Production Linked Incentive schemes for advanced chemistry cell battery, automobiles and the policy to promote the manufacturing of electric vehicles violate global trade rules, and has filed a complaint against these measures at the WTO.

According to a communication of the Geneva-based WTO, China has sought consultations with India on these measures under WTO's dispute settlement mechanism.

Beijing has stated that measures adopted by India are contingent upon the use of domestic over imported goods and discriminate against goods of Chinese origin.

These measures appear to be inconsistent with India's obligations under the SCM (Subsidies and Countervailing Measures) Agreement, the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) 1994 and the TRIMS (Trade-Related Investment Measures) Agreement.

"...as a consequence of the foregoing, the measures at issue appear to nullify or impair benefits accruing to China, directly or indirectly, under the cited agreements," the WTO's communication dated October 20 has said.

China looks forward to receiving India's reply and to agreeing on a mutually convenient date for the consultations, it added.

This request concerns certain measures maintained by India that affect trade in the automotive and renewable energy technology sectors. Specifically, it relates to certain requirements that condition eligibility for, and the disbursement of, incentives under these programmes, it said.



In its complaint, China has mentioned three programmes - Production Linked Incentive, National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage; Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Automobile and Auto Component Industry; and Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Electric Passenger Cars in India.

Both India and China are members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). If a member country believes that a support measure under a policy or scheme of another member nation is harming its exports of certain goods, it can file a complaint under the dispute settlement mechanism of the WTO.

Seeking consultation is the first step of the dispute settlement process as per WTO rules.

If the consultations requested with India do not result in a satisfactory solution, the EU can request that the WTO set up a panel in the case to rule on the issue raised.

China is the second-largest trading partner of India.

In the last fiscal, India's exports to China contracted 14.5 per cent to USD 14.25 billion against USD 16.66 billion in 2023-24. The im-

ports, however, rose by 11.52 per cent in 2024-25 to USD 113.45 billion against USD 101.73 billion in 2023-24.

India's trade deficit with China has widened to USD 99.2 billion during 2024-25.

China's complaint about India's reported EV subsidies comes as Beijing seeks to boost exports of its electric vehicles to India. Considering the size and scope of India's auto market, Chinese EV automakers see it as a major source to expand sales.

According to recent reports, facing overcapacity with large production of EVs and declining domestic sales and profits amid price wars, Chinese hybrid car makers like BYD are looking for overseas markets, especially in the EU and Asia.

According to the data from China Passenger Car Association (CPCA), 50-odd EV builders of China exported a total of 2.01 million pure electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles overseas in the first eight months of the year, up 51 per cent from the same period a year earlier.

But the Chinese EV makers are facing push back abroad as the EU

has imposed a 27 per cent tariff on Chinese EVs to limit their sales in the bloc.

The Indian government has taken a host of measures, such as the electric-vehicle policy and the production-linked incentive scheme, to boost domestic manufacturing of EVs.

The government has approved the PLI ACC scheme under "National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage" in May 2021, with an outlay of ₹ 18,100 crore for 50 GW capacity for five years after a gestation period of two years.

The scheme aims to enhance domestic cell production, reducing reliance on imports and lowering the overall costs of cell manufacturing.

In September 2021, a PLI Scheme for Automobile and Auto Components with budgetary outlay of ₹ 25,938 crore was approved by the Centre.

The scheme envisages to overcome the cost disabilities to the industry for manufacturing and boost domestic manufacturing of Advanced Automotive Technology (AAT) products in India. The incentive structure is to encourage industry to make fresh investments for indigenous manufacturing of AAT products and create additional jobs.

Last year in March, the government approved a scheme to promote India as a manufacturing destination so that e-vehicles with the latest technology can be manufactured in the country. The policy is designed to attract investments in the e-vehicle space by reputed global EV manufacturers. (PTI)

# Mumbai metropolitan region set to emerge as one of world's leading urban economies: MMRDA

**MUMBAI, Oct 21:** The Mumbai metropolitan region is poised to emerge as one of the world's leading urban economies by 2047, with its gross domestic product (GDP) projected at USD 1.2-1.5 trillion and population expected to reach 3.6 to 3.8 crore, officials of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) said. The MMR, comprising Mumbai, Thane, Palghar, and Raigad districts, spans 6,328 square kilometres and is set for major economic and infrastructural transformation through a long-term plan focusing on sustainable and inclusive urban growth, they said.

Chief Town and Country Planning Officer, MMRDA, Shankar Deshpande, outlined the vision positioning MMR alongside global economic hubs such as Tokyo, London, and Singapore, with per capita income expected to exceed ₹ 33 lakh annually — equivalent to current levels in Japan and Italy.

"Going forward, by 2047, MMR could be transformed into one of the world's foremost economies with a

36-38 million population (3.6 to 3.8 crore), GDP of around 1.2-1.5 trillion US dollars (₹ 124 lakh crore to ₹ 155 lakh crore) - equivalent to Tokyo's GDP in 2023 and more than USD 38,000 (₹ 33,45,887 per annum) per capita income - equivalent to Japan and Italy today," Deshpande said.

Deshpande, who made a presentation before a media team from Jammu and Kashmir, said in the next five years, MMR aims to achieve a GDP of about ₹ 25 lakh crore, growing at a real compound annual rate of 10 per cent, with per capita income rising to ₹ 8-₹ 10 lakh by 2030.

"The population is projected to grow from 2.58 crore in 2023 to around 2.9 crore by 2030. By 2047, the region's economy is expected to grow nearly five-fold, driven by infrastructure expansion, job creation, and regional economic diversification," he said.

According to the economic masterplan, Greater Mumbai's population will stabilise at around 1.37 crore by 2047, maintaining a 55 per

cent share of the region's GDP due to high productivity levels.

"The remaining parts of MMR will see faster growth, with their population share increasing from 50 per cent in 2023 to 64 per cent in 2047, and GDP share rising from 40 to 45 per cent, driven by new business districts, logistics hubs, and townships." Elaborating on employment trends, Deshpande said MMR will have around 35 lakh youth entering the workforce by 2030, half of them women, necessitating 15 lakh new jobs.

"At least half of these jobs will be in high-productivity sectors such as IT, artificial intelligence, finance, media, and chip manufacturing," he said. Employment across the region is projected to rise from 1 crore in financial year 2023 to 1.3 crore by 2030 and touch 2 crore by 2047, they said. To match global benchmarks, MMR plans to expand its metro network to 450 km by financial year 2030 and enhance per capita open space from 1 square metre in Mumbai to 5-7 square metres regionally. (PTI)

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## New Ramanujan scheme to

students, selected in the first instance from the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), to spend several months working at the LIMS home at the Royal Institution in London's Mayfair.

These "visitors" will attend lectures and participate in research with scientists at LIMS.

The programme will initially offer up to six PhD students from JNCASR the opportunity to spend several months at LIMS, with plans for the scheme to be widened in subsequent years to attract the very best young theoretical physics and mathematics students from across India.

In phase two, the programme will expand to include the Ramanujan Junior Fellowships. Open to candidates from across India in the early years after their PhD, these positions will bring gifted young Indian physicists and mathematicians to work at LIMS. They will have the chance to forge links with their counterparts in Britain over the course of three transformative years.

LIMS, a research organisation dedicated to speeding up discovery, is in the process of raising funds for these Ramanujan Junior Fellowships.

The institute, based in the Royal Institution, is focussed on peak performance and full-time research and lays claim to several Nobel prizes and the discovery of 10 chemical elements and the principles of electromagnetism. (PTI)

## LBA seeks footage

spearheading the agitation for the past five years, are scheduled to hold talks with a sub-committee of the Ministry of Home Affairs in Delhi on Wednesday. The talks were agreed upon by the two sides to end the nearly five-month-long deadlock. (PTI)

## India upgrades technical

New Delhi's ties with Kabul though it has not yet recognised the Taliban set up. The foreign minister of the Taliban set-up had said Afghanistan will not allow any elements to use its territory against New Delhi's interests.

Muttaqi told a select group of journalists that Kabul will also send diplomats to India as part of step-by-step efforts to improve the bilateral ties.

"We will not allow any (element) to threaten anyone else or use the territory of Afghanistan against others. Daesh is a challenge for the region and Afghanistan is at the frontlines of this struggle," he had said. (PTI)

## EU member nations

mutual trust and respect," it added. The Council also took note of the "intention to pursue work towards the establishment of a Security and Defence Partnership, which could also facilitate defence industrial cooperation when appropriate".

The Council will continue to engage with India on all aspects of Russia's war of aggression against the Ukraine, the readout said.

It said the Council also emphasises the joint capacity and responsibility of the EU and India to safeguard multilateralism and the rules-based international order with the UN Charter at its core, as well as the multilateral trading system, in particular the WTO.

"The promotion and protection of democratic values and norms, international law and human rights, including the rights of women and children, is an intrinsic part of the EU-India strategic agenda," it said. (PTI)

## India upheld righteousness

near future," he said. The prime minister also underscored that the primary responsibility of the citizens is to fulfil their duties towards the nation.

Modi also urged citizens to adopt swadeshi and proudly say, "This is swadeshi."

"Let us promote the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat'. Let us respect all languages. Let us maintain cleanliness."

"Let us prioritise our health. Let us reduce the use of oil in our food by 10 per cent and embrace yoga. All these efforts will rapidly move us towards a Viksit Bharat," he said.

"Deepavali also teaches us that when one lamp lights another, its light doesn't diminish but it grows further. With the same spirit, let us light lamps of harmony, cooperation and positivity in our society and surroundings this Deepavali," the PM said. (PTI)

## NPF general convention

merger of the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) with the NPF as a "historic resurgence" and a "divine gift of unity", marking the party's return to strength after nearly eight years in opposition.

Addressing the NPF general convention at the Indira Gandhi Stadium in Kohima, Pongener said the event symbolised a "triumphant revival" of the party and called for unity to extend beyond politics into every section of Naga society and among all Naga political groups.

Welcoming Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, NDPP president Chingwang Konyak, and their colleagues into the NPF, he said the merger had forged "a single, strong regional political entity" representing the aspirations of Nagas and other tribes of the Northeast.

"This party embodies the very soul and identity of the Nagas," Pongener said, assuring his full support to Rio's leadership and expressing confidence that he would surpass his past achievements.

Tracing the NPF's history since 1963, Pongener said the party — Nagaland's oldest and India's second-oldest regional party after the DMK — remained rooted in all 17 districts despite electoral setbacks, including winning only two seats in 2023.

He reaffirmed the NPF's commitment to an "honourable, inclusive, and comprehensive" settlement of the Naga political issue and urged members to uphold Naga identity, culture, and unity.

"Let us reclaim our pride and transform this movement into an unstoppable wave of progress," he said.

NPF Secretary General and MLA Achumbemo Kikon, presenting the 2024-2025 report of the party, recalled the NPF's origins in 1963 under A Kevichusa and its evolution through seven name changes.

He termed the NPF-NDPP merger a "fulfilment of the people's long desire for one strong regional platform", and urged members to protect Naga faith, rights and land.

Kikon reaffirmed the party's consistent stand for a peaceful, inclusive and honourable solution to the Naga political issue "by faith, not by arms".

Kikon highlighted the party's protest rallies against the scrapping of the Free Movement Regime (FMR) and border fencing along Naga areas, reiterating that "Nagas are one and shall remain one".

The party also denounced President's Rule in Manipur, urging restoration of a popular government, he said.

The NPF opposed the "One Nation, One Election" proposal, warning it would threaten regional voices, and submitted memoranda to both the 16th Finance Commission and the High-Level Committee on ONOE, he said. (PTI)

## Permanent memorial for

Sudarshan Thakur. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has instructed the Public Works Department to prepare a detailed construction plan for the permanent samadhi at Kamarkuchi, Sonapur.

## Border unrest over

During the closed-door discussion, SP S.R. Sarma informed that both sides agreed to allow the harvesting of paddy to resume peacefully.

The dispute arose on October 9 when Khasi Pnar villagers from Meghalaya crossed into Assam to harvest paddy, raising concerns among locals.

The resolutions adopted in the meeting include three key points: both sides will maintain peace and mutual respect; the magistrate and officials from West Jaintia Hills assured that the culprits involved in the killing of Oriwel Timung, booked under BNSS, will be handed over; and the Khasi Pnar villagers will be allowed to harvest their paddy.

## Rajasthan to get its first e-bus manufacturing plant in Kotputli-Behror's Ghiloth

**JAIPUR, Oct 21:** The Rajasthan government has allotted around 65 acres of land to PMI Electro Mobility Solutions in Ghiloth Industrial Area, Kotputli-Behror district to set up a ₹ 1,200 crore electric bus manufacturing plant, which will be the first such facility in the state, according to a statement.

The allotment, made through the Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (RIICO), follows an MoU signed during the Rising Rajasthan Global Investment Summit, the Chief Minister's Office said in the statement on Tuesday.

PMI Electro Mobility Solutions will invest about ₹ 1,200 crore in the initial phase to establish the plant, which will manufacture e-buses, bus bodies, motors, batteries, wire harnesses, and other spare parts.

Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma, who met a delegation from PMI Electro Mobility Solutions at his residence, said the project would give a strong push to industrial development and employment generation in the state.

"This plant will be a major step toward realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Make in India vision," Sharma said. "It will help Rajasthan emerge as a key hub for electric vehicle manufacturing, while creating direct and indirect job opportunities for youth."

He added that the state government is committed to promoting green energy and sustainable urban transport, and the upcoming facility will accelerate the growth of the electric mobility sector in Rajasthan. (PTI)

## Key infrastructure sectors' growth at 3 pc in Sept

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** India's eight key infrastructure sectors' output stood at 3 per cent in September, slower than the 6.5 per cent expansion recorded in August, according to official data released on Tuesday. The core sectors' output growth was 2.4 per cent in September last year. In September this year, these eight sectors recorded the lowest growth in the last three months due to a fall in the output of coal, crude oil, refinery products and natural gas.

The growth rate in the production of fertiliser and cement slowed to 1.6 per cent and 5.3 per cent during the month under review against 1.9 per cent and 7.6 per cent, respectively, in September 2024.

However, steel and electricity output increased 14.1 per cent and 2.1 per cent, respectively, on a year-on-year basis in September.

During April-September of this fiscal year, the eight infrastructure sectors expanded by 2.9 per cent compared to a rise of 4.3 per cent in the same period of the last year.

The growth rate has implications for the country's Index of Industrial Production (IIP), as these core industries account for 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the index. (PTI)

## World markets are mostly higher after Wall Street rally

**BANGKOK, Oct 21:** Shares in Europe and Asia were mostly higher on Tuesday, with Japan's benchmark creeping closer to the symbolically important 50,000 level as conservative lawmaker Sanae Takaichi became the country's first female prime minister.

Germany's DAX edged 0.1 per cent lower to 24,228.07, while the CAC 40 in Paris was up 0.1 per cent at 8,214.58. Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.2 per cent to 9,422.48.

The futures for the S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average

were down 0.1 per cent.

The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo gave up earlier, bigger gains after Takaichi prevailed in a vote in Japan's parliament, rising just 0.3 per cent to 49,316.06. She is expected to support market-friendly policies such as low interest rates and more government spending.

The US dollar rose to 151.78 Japanese yen from 150.75 yen. If Takaichi gets her way in slowing interest rate increases by the Bank of Japan, the yen may remain relatively weak against the dollar. That

would hinder the central bank's efforts to curb inflation, which now stands above its target rate of about 2 per cent.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.7 per cent to 26,027.55, and the Shanghai Composite index was up 1.4 per cent at 3,916.33.

Expectations that US President Donald Trump will meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping later this month during a regional summit have raised hopes for an easing of trade tensions between the world's two biggest economies. (PTI)

## Sensex, Nifty end with modest gains in special Muhurat trading session



**MUMBAI, Oct 21:** Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty ended marginally higher in the special one-hour Muhurat trading session on Tuesday, marking the beginning of the new Samvat Year 2082 on a positive note amid firm global cues.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose 62.97 points or 0.07 per cent to close at 84,426.34. During the symbolic session, the benchmark hit a high of 84,665.44 and a low of 84,286.40.

The broader NSE Nifty went up by 25.45 points, or 0.10 per cent, to close at 25,868.60. As many as 25 Nifty stocks ended lower while 24 shares closed with gains and one remained unchanged.

Stock exchanges BSE and NSE conducted a special Muhurat trading session from 1345 hrs to 1445 hrs on Tuesday to mark the beginning of the new Samvat Year 2082, and the

opening of new accounting books for traders and investors.

In the last Samvat 2081 which ended on Monday the BSE Sensex jumped 4,974.31 points or 6.26 per cent and the Nifty climbed 1,637.8 points or 6.76 per cent.

Muhurat trading is a one-hour symbolic trading session conducted by stock exchanges on the occasion of Diwali, marking the start of the new Samvat year and new books of accounts by traders.

Among major Sensex gainers Bajaj Finserv rose the most by 1.42 per cent, Axis Bank gained 0.80 per cent, Infosys by 0.72 per cent, Mahindra & Mahindra by 0.60 per cent, Tata Motors by 0.55 per cent, Bajaj Finance by 0.53 per cent and Tata Steel by 0.52 per cent.

Kotak Mahindra Bank, ICICI Bank, HCL Technologies, Bharti Air-

**ENGINEERING WORKS**  
E-TENDER NOTICE NO. 44 of 2025, Date: 17-10-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Tender No.: DENGHY-57-2025, Name of work & Location: At Kamakhya - Upgradation of Kamakhya station building, PF 2, 3 & 4 executive lounge, concourse, circulating area, roads, internal drainage system and other ancillary works to improve passenger facilities. Tender Value: ₹ 12.75, 13, 181.35; Earnest Money: ₹ 7,87,600.00. E-tenders will be closed at 13:00 hrs. on 19-11-2025 and will be opened at 13:00 hrs. on 19-11-2025. For details please visit [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

Divisional Engineer/Guwahati, Maligaon  
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# Governor honours courage and sacrifice of Assam Police personnel at Kahilipara ceremony Acharya pays homage to fallen police personnel on Police Commemoration Day



**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Oct 21:** Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Tuesday paid rich tributes to the brave police personnel who made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty, marking the observance of Police Commemoration Day. The solemn ceremony was held at the 10th Assam Police Battalion Headquarters in Kahilipara, Guwahati.

Police Commemoration Day, observed across the country, serves as a solemn reminder of the extraordinary courage, dedication, and selflessness of police personnel who have laid down their lives while protecting the nation and its citizens. The day honours their unwavering commitment to maintaining law and order, often under extremely challenging and dangerous circumstances.

ment to maintaining law and order, often under extremely challenging and dangerous circumstances.

Addressing the gathering, Governor Acharya said, "Police Commemoration Day reminds us of the valour and selflessness of our police personnel who risk and often give their lives to protect ours. Their dedication to duty, even in the face of grave danger, inspires us all and strengthens our resolve to uphold the values they stood for."

The Governor remembered the fallen heroes with deep reverence and extended his heartfelt gratitude to their families for their sacrifices.

He also highlighted the crucial role of the police force in safeguarding internal security, maintaining public peace, and serving as a pillar of trust and stability in society.

The ceremony was attended by Director General of Police, Assam, Harmeet Singh, along with senior police officers and personnel from various units.

The attendees paid homage to the martyrs and reaffirmed their commitment to uphold the ideals of service, courage, and sacrifice that define the police force.

Governor Acharya's tribute served as a poignant reminder of the challenges faced by police personnel daily, and the enduring legacy of those who have laid down their lives in the service of the nation.

The observance underscored the public's respect and recognition for the tireless efforts of law enforcement officers in ensuring the safety and security of society.

# Assam Rifles celebrates Diwali with troops and local community



**HT Correspondent**  
**BISWANATH CHARIALI, Oct 21:** Assam Rifles celebrated Diwali with great fervour at the Battalion Headquarters in Lokra on Monday, bringing together troops, their families, and members of the local community in a festive atmosphere of joy and harmony. The celebration saw the participation of 677 unit personnel, along with their family members and children, and 40 residents from the Lokra area, making a total of 717 attendees. The event commenced with the

ceremonial lighting of diyas, symbolising the triumph of light over darkness and the victory of good over evil, setting a joyful tone for the festivities.

Cultural performances by the troops and local participants added vibrancy to the occasion, showcasing a blend of traditional music, dance, and theatrical presentations.

Sweets were distributed among attendees, further spreading the festive cheer and reinforcing the spirit of community togetherness. The Diwali celebration not only

provided an opportunity for Assam Rifles personnel to relax and enjoy the festival with their families but also strengthened the bond between the battalion and the local population.

The event highlighted the force's commitment to community engagement, fostering goodwill, harmony, and mutual respect between the armed forces and civilians. Through such celebrations, Assam Rifles continues to uphold traditions while promoting unity and cultural connection in the regions where it serves.

# Four criminals arrested in Kachua, Nagaon Police seize cash and ATM cards

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Oct 21:** In a significant breakthrough, the Nagaon Police successfully arrested four notorious criminals from the Kachua area, following a targeted operation on the evening of October 18.

The arrests were carried out at the Borghat bypass after a thorough investigation by a dedicated team of officers. The arrested individuals have been identified as Amir Uddin, Merajul Islam, Kudus Ali, and Sarif Uddin, all residents of Kachua.

During the operation, police seized several ATM cards and a substantial amount of cash from their possession, indicating the extent of their alleged criminal activities. The quartet is reportedly involved in multiple criminal incidents in the region, including an attempted kidnapping of a student named Adil Parvez, the robbery of an e-rickshaw driver, Mobarak Hussain, and the physical assault of a local journalist.

Their actions had caused significant concern and fear within the community. The arrests have been widely welcomed by residents of Kachua, many of whom expressed gratitude to the Nagaon Police for their swift action.

Locals have urged authorities to ensure that the accused face exemplary punishment for their crimes, sending a strong message against lawlessness in the area.

Sources from the police department stated that further investigations are underway to determine whether the accused have links to other criminal activities in the district. The successful operation underscores the Nagaon Police's continued commitment to maintaining law and order and ensuring the safety and security of the community.

# Indian Railways runs 12,011 special trains to manage festive rush; 620 trips by NFR zone

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Oct 21:** Indian Railways (IR) has ramped up operations to meet the surge in passenger demand during the ongoing festive season.

To ensure smooth travel during Puja, Diwali, and Chhath, the national transporter is operating 12,011 special trains this year, a substantial increase from 7,724 special trains during the same period last year.

In the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) zone, 48 special festival trains are running, covering a total of 620 trips across multiple routes between September and December 2025.

Special arrangements have been made at major stations, including Katihar, New Jalpaiguri, Guwahati, Joghani, and Kishanganj, with holding areas, passenger announcement systems, fans, additional ticket counters, and automatic ticket vending machines to ensure smooth passenger movement.

Round-the-clock war rooms and extra staff, including Railway Protection Force personnel, have been deployed for effective crowd management and passenger assistance.

These special trains connect important destinations such as Katihar, Kishanganj, New Jalpaiguri, Sonpur, Dauram Madhepura, Agartala, New Tinsukia, SMVT Bengaluru, Amritsar, Patna, Dibrugarh, Gorakhpur, Silchar, Naharla-

gun, Kolkata, Guwahati, Ranchi, Charalappalli, Mumbai Central, Agra Cantt, Joghani, Lumding, Howrah, Gomti Nagar, and Anand Vihar, among others. On Wednesday, October 22, 2025, trains scheduled include the Dibrugarh - Gorakhpur Weekly Special, departing Dibrugarh at 09:10 hours and arriving at Gorakhpur at 19:00 hours, the Katihar - Amritsar Weekly Special, departing Katihar at 21:00 hours and arriving at Amritsar at 09:45 hours, the Katihar - Dauram Madhepura Daily Special, departing Katihar at 19:00 hours and arriving at Dauram Madhepura at 22:00 hours, the Dauram Madhepura - Katihar Daily Special, departing Dauram Madhepura at 22:45 hours and arriving at Katihar at 02:30 hours, the Katihar - Manihari Daily Special, departing Katihar at 20:30 hours and arriving at Manihari at 21:30 hours, and the Manihari - Katihar Daily Special, departing Manihari at 05:00 hours and arriving at Katihar at 06:00 hours.

departing Dauram Madhepura at 22:45 hours and arriving at Katihar at 02:30 hours, the Katihar - Manihari Daily Special, departing Katihar at 20:30 hours and arriving at Manihari at 21:30 hours, and the Manihari - Katihar Daily Special, departing Manihari at 05:00 hours and arriving at Katihar at 06:00 hours.

Passengers have been advised to plan their journeys in advance, arrive at stations early, and cooperate with railway staff to ensure safe and comfortable travel during the festive season.

The extensive deployment of special trains and enhanced station arrangements reflect Indian Railways' commitment to providing uninterrupted and hassle-free travel for millions of passengers during the peak festive period.

# Kalang Kala Kendra observes 74th birth anniversary of Dr Abu Hanifa in Puranigudam

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Oct 21:** The Kalang Kala Kendra solemnly observed the 74th birth anniversary of noted scribe, academician, and social activist Dr Abu Hanifa at its Kalang Museum premises in Puranigudam, Nagaon on Tuesday.

The open session was chaired by Letugram Satra's Satradhikar Krishna Goswami and began with a floral tribute to Dr Hanifa's portrait by writer Gunindra Gayan.

In his address as the chief guest, Gayan, who was a childhood friend of Dr Hanifa, highlighted the late scholar's immense contributions to Nagaon's civil society.

He recalled Dr Hanifa's courageous role during the language movement and his lifelong efforts to foster social harmony.

Dr Hanifa's wife, Dr Rozleen

Jahan, spoke about his unwavering dedication to social work and his steadfast commitment to his family.

Noted writer Sibananda Kakati, delivering the keynote address, praised Dr Hanifa's multifaceted personality and his significant contributions to the field of journalism.

Other speakers, including artist Golap Bora and Hanifa Sultan, shared personal anecdotes and reflected on his achievements and lasting legacy.

In his welcome address, Chittaranjan Bora, Secretary of Kalang Kala Kendra, highlighted the organisation's long association with Dr Hanifa and spoke of how his participation had enriched the Kendra's events over the years.

In his presidential address,

Satradhikar Krishna Goswami emphasised Dr Hanifa's efforts to promote communal harmony in Puranigudam and his enduring influence on local society.

The programme witnessed the participation of representatives from various organisations, including Puranigudam Shatadal Shakha Sahitya Sabha, Bapuji Bhavan and Library, Puranigudam Press Club, and Anirban Gosthi, among others, reflecting the widespread respect and admiration for Dr Hanifa's life and work.

The observance of the birth anniversary served as a reminder of Dr Hanifa's lifelong commitment to social service, journalism, and community-building, leaving an indelible mark on the cultural and intellectual landscape of Nagaon.

# NFR observes Police Commemoration Day at Maligaon

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Oct 21:** The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) observed Police Commemoration Day 2025 with solemnity and reverence at the Reserve Line, Maligaon, on Tuesday.

The ceremony was held to honour and pay tribute to police personnel, including members of RPF and RPSF, who laid down their lives in the line of duty while safeguarding the lives and property of citizens. Senior officers, RPF and RPSF personnel, along with staff from NFR Headquarters and the Greater Guwahati area, attended the event in ceremonial attire to offer heartfelt homage to the martyrs. The Police Commemoration Day parade commenced at 07:20 hours, followed by the arrival of senior officers.

Paramshiv, Principal Chief Security Commissioner (PCSC) of NFR, was present on the occasion and received the General Salute.

The names of the martyrs were read out by the PCSC/NFR, followed by a wreath-laying ceremony to honour their supreme sacrifice. The band played the "Slow March" as the PCSC laid the wreath at the memorial, and the parade observed a two-minute silence in memory of the departed personnel.

The solemn observance also included the playing of the Last Post, Shok Shashtra, and the ceremonial unfurling of the RPF flag, which was lowered to half-mast as a mark of respect and later raised to full mast upon the completion of the silence. Police Commemoration Day is observed annually on October 21 across the country to remember and honour the bravery, dedication, and ultimate sacrifice of police personnel who served the nation with courage and commitment.

# Fire destroys three shops in Diphu market on Diwali morning



**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Oct 21:** Diwali celebrations turned grim in Diphu market as a major fire gutted three shops early on Monday morning.

Eyewitnesses reported that smoke was first seen around 6:30 am from a hardware shop, with preliminary reports suggesting a short circuit may have triggered the blaze.

The fire completely destroyed a hardware shop selling plastic chairs and other items, along with the popular 'Ramaji Pan Shop' and an adjacent bakery.

The 'Ramaji Pan Shop', run by a migrant family from Bihar for two generations, was a local favourite

among office-goers, businessmen, and residents. Eyewitnesses said the blaze spread rapidly, consuming items worth lakhs of rupees.

While the bakery sustained partial damage, Shree Mangal Showroom nearby also suffered, with eight exterior AC exhaust fans ruined.

Firefighters arrived promptly and eventually brought the fire under control, but not before significant losses were incurred.

Residents and shopkeepers expressed shock at the scale of the destruction, noting that the fire disrupted the festive spirit and caused substantial economic loss to the affected families.

# Karbi cultural troupe to showcase traditions at International Festival in Thailand

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Oct 21:** A 20-member Karbi cultural troupe from the Karbi Traditional Music and Cultural Research Institute (KTM-CRI), under the Art & Culture Department of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), will participate in the five-day 15th Cultural Olympiad of Performing Arts from October 25 to 29 in Pataya, Thailand.

The festival, organised by the Akhil Bhartiya Shankruti Shan (ABSS) Global Council of Art & Culture—an official UNESCO partner—will bring together artists and performers from across the globe.

The troupe, comprising 12 artists along with officials, is led by Executive Member Surya Rongphar (Art & Culture, KAAC), Tribal Culture Research Officer Dilip Kathar, and KTM-CRI Principal Bonsam Kathar.

Members of the Karbi Cultural Society including General Secretary Sunil Tokbi, Publicity Secretary Hingchong Tisso, and Office Secretary Suren Hanse are also part of the team. The group will perform a ten-



minute medley of traditional Karbi dances reflecting agrarian life and daily activities in the hills.

Performances will include Ritong Chingdi (cultivation dance), Han-Up Ahi Kebi (community bamboo shoot collection dance), Lengpum Sokchon (paddy pounding dance), and Hacha Kekan

(post-harvest dance), giving international audiences and judges a glimpse into the rich heritage and resilience of Karbi culture.

This morning, Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang flagged off the cultural troupe, wishing them success and appreciating the Art & Culture Depart-

ment's initiative in taking Karbi traditions to the global stage.

EM Surya Rongphar emphasised that the participation will help promote the identity, culture, and traditions of the Karbi tribe worldwide, highlighting their vibrant heritage to an international audience.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*A hospital bed is a parked taxi with the meter running.*  
- Groucho Marx

## Azam Khan looking for role in UP polls

Is veteran leader Mohd. Azam Khan, who was recently released on bail after being in jail for 23 months, indispensable for Samajwadi Party and its president, former chief minister Akhilesh Yadav? Ever since Mohd. Azam Khan who had been a Muslim face of Samajwadi Party was released, politicians from different parties are meeting him. All of a sudden, he has become the darling of the media where he is giving interviews and expressing views on political issues especially involving Muslim community. But the most awaited and significant meeting was between Mohd. Azam Khan and Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav at Rampur. The body language of Akhilesh and Azam Khan and the warmth shown during the meeting made sure they would remain together to fight BJP in 2027 assembly polls. But at the same time Mohd. Azam Khan made clear that he was very annoyed with the manner in which he was ignored during the selection of Samajwadi Party candidate for Rampur Lok Sabha seat. Much to discomfort to Azam Khan, Akhilesh Yadav brought Maulvi from the mosque from New Delhi Mubillah Nadvī and ensured his victory.

There is a perception that this alliance was formed to damage chances of INDIA alliance in crucial assembly polls in Bihar. Under these circumstances, what transpired between the two leaders during two hours meeting before Bihar assembly polls, has created a big interest. Mohd. Azam Khan has a habit of speaking in such a manner in which other persons start decoding the real meaning. Whether he will remain in Samajwadi Party or not or his open praise for BSP leader Mayawati or meeting with Congress leaders have created a suspense over his future move. There is no doubt ever since he came out of jail and his regular meetings with political leaders and workers at his residence at Rampur, Mohd. Azam Khan has succeeded in giving the impression that he will remain an important factor in Muslim politics in Western UP. People wonder whether with his actions, interviews and meetings with leaders from different political parties Azam Khan wants to bargain for an important position and number of tickets for his supporters in the 2027 assembly polls.

There is a realisation in Muslim community that the combination of Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi was sufficient to attract the maximum number of votes from Muslim community for 2027 assembly polls and any Muslim leader outside this, will have little backing. This combination of Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav during last Lok Sabha polls ensured victory of 37 candidates of Samajwadi Party and Congress also increased the tally. Now it is to be seen as to how Mohd. Azam Khan places himself in the political scene of UP and the response he gets from Akhilesh Yadav and Rahul Gandhi.

## Drivers of digital transformations have been shifting over time

By: Dr Gyan Pathak

Drivers of digital transformation have been shifting globally over time. Insights from 99 economies of the world now suggest that the world, especially those seeking to accelerate digital transformation must invest not only in connectivity but also in human capital, effective institutions, and inclusive strategies.

An Asian Development Bank (ADB) brief just released found that during the early breakaway phase (2010–2015), infrastructure and economic development played dominant roles. In the catch-up phase (2016–2021), institutional quality and digital skills became the most significant drivers. These findings carry important implications for development policy.

Digital technologies have spread rapidly, transforming economies and societies in unprecedented ways, the brief said. Yet this transformation has not occurred evenly, it warned. Between 2010 and 2015, a small group of economies surged ahead in digital adoption, forming a breakaway lead pack. From 2016 to 2021, a broader group began catching up, yet the important divides remain. Over the past 30 years, digital technologies—especially the internet—have rapidly reshaped societies around the world. Unlike earlier innovations such as electricity or the telephone, which took decades to reach a broad user base, digital technologies have spread at unprecedented speed.

Nevertheless, there are persistent gaps—commonly referred to as the “digital divide”. They are shaped by a variety of factors. Within economies, differences in income, education, and digital literacy help explain who gains access and who does not. Across regions, infrastructure and skills are typically stronger in cities than in rural or remote areas. At the national level, disparities in access and affordability reflect broader differences in economic development and policy support.

Despite the swift global uptake in mobile phone and internet usage, large gaps remain. According to the International Telecommunication Union, nearly 2.6 billion people—about one-third of the global population—still do not have internet access. This divide plays out not only in personal use but also in how businesses, governments, and civic institutions adopt and rely on digital infrastructure.

Digitalization itself can be understood both as a process (the rollout and use of digital tools) and an outcome (how deeply digital tech is embedded in society and the economy). As more economies integrate these technologies, the digital divide becomes more visible and urgent—not only among nations, but also within them.

Data from 2010 to 2021 paints a

striking picture. In 2010, internet use averaged just over 33% globally, with most economies falling below that line. Only a few stood out as early leaders with usage above 75%. By 2021, the average had jumped to nearly 70%, and a majority of economies had moved well past the 75% threshold. As a result, low-performing economies today are in a stark minority—and their lag is especially worrisome.

A pivotal moment came in 2015: for the first time, the typical economy (measured by median internet use) exceeded the global average. This marked a shift from digitalization being the domain of a few pioneers to becoming the global norm. The big question now is whether this turning point also helped close the digital gap—or if some economies are still at risk of being left behind.

Over the past 3 decades, digital technologies have reshaped how economies operate, governments function, and individuals connect. The internet, mobile phones, and digital platforms have penetrated societies at a pace unmatched by earlier technological revolutions. Yet, despite the speed of this digital proliferation, adoption levels vary significantly across economies. By 2021, global internet usage had reached nearly 70%. However, this average conceals stark differences. Some economies surpassed 75% penetration as early as 2015, while others lagged far behind even in 2021.

The study finds that in both the phases of digital transformation - Breakaway Phase (2010-2015) and the Catch-up Phase (2016-2021) - though the drivers dramatically shifted, there were also some Time-Stable drivers. Urbanization continued to play a vital role, providing favorable environments for infrastructure deployment and technology uptake due to population density and service centralization. Regardless of the phase, capable and responsive governments provided the institutional bedrock for rolling out digital initiatives and ensuring their uptake among the population.

Nevertheless, Dynamic Shifts in Drivers over time, have offered pressing challenge shifted from building access to enabling meaningful use. The study concluded, “Whereas infrastructure and GDP mattered most early on, today it is human capital and institutional strength that shape success. Effective digital strategies must therefore be adaptive, forward-looking, and inclusive.”

“Policymakers must now look beyond access and focus on capability. Sequencing matters: infrastructure enables access, but skills enable use, and institutions sustain impact. Economies that align their digital transformation agendas with broader governance and equity goals will be best positioned to thrive in the digital age,” the study concluded. (IPA Service)

## FAKE NEWS: Undermining the foundations of democratic discourse

The proliferation of fake news poses a grave threat to the integrity of democratic societies, eroding the trust, shared facts, and reasoned debate essential for their functioning. Defined as deliberately fabricated or misleading information presented as legitimate journalism, fake news manipulates public opinion, distorts electoral processes, and weakens confidence in institutions. With the advent of digital platforms, particularly social media, its reach and impact have grown exponentially, creating a crisis that demands urgent attention. This editorial examines the origins, mechanisms, and consequences of fake news, its detrimental effects on democratic discourse, and potential strategies to counteract its spread, all while navigating the delicate balance between curbing misinformation and preserving free expression.

Historically, misinformation is not a new phenomenon. Propaganda, yellow journalism, and sensationalism have long been used to sway public sentiment. However, the digital age has transformed the scale and speed of its dissemination. The internet empowers anyone with a device to create and share content, bypassing traditional gatekeepers like editors and fact-checkers. Social media platforms, driven by algorithms that prioritize engagement, amplify sensational or polarizing stories, regardless of their veracity. A single fabricated post can reach millions within hours, exploiting cognitive biases like confirmation bias or fear to ensure rapid spread. During the 2016 U.S. presidential election, for instance, false stories—such as claims about a candidate's health or illicit activities—garnered millions of views, shaping voter perceptions and highlighting the potency of fake news.

The mechanics of fake news are both sophisticated and deceptive. Fabricated stories often mimic the appearance of credible journalism, using professional-looking websites, fake bylines, and doctored images to lend authenticity. These narratives are crafted to provoke strong emotional responses, ensuring they are shared widely before being questioned. A notorious example is the 2016 “Pizzagate” conspiracy, which falsely alleged that a Washington, D.C., pizzeria was a hub for a child trafficking ring. The

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By: Dipak Kurmi

The relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan stands as one of South Asia's most persistently troubled bilateral ties, characterized by decades of mutual suspicion, recriminations, and periodic armed confrontations. Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, these two neighboring nations have struggled to establish a foundation of trust and cooperation, despite sharing religious bonds through Islam and extensive cultural connections. The sources of discord between them are multifaceted and deeply rooted in historical grievances, territorial disputes, strategic anxieties, and divergent national aspirations. This troubled relationship has endured through dramatic political transformations on both sides, including Pakistan's alternation between civilian and military rule, and Afghanistan's tumultuous journey through monarchy, communism, civil war, foreign interventions, and the rise and fall and resurgence of the Taliban. Understanding the complexities of this relationship requires examining the historical wounds, contested boundaries, economic pressures, ethnic tensions, and geopolitical calculations that continue to drive wedges between Islamabad and Kabul.

The historical trajectory of Afghanistan has been marked by extraordinary upheaval and transformation over the past five decades. The country witnessed the overthrow of its centuries-old monarchy in 1973, followed by a brief nationalist interlude before falling under communist control for eleven years until 1989. During this period, the Soviet Union launched its ill-fated intervention in 1979, attempting to prop up the communist government while fundamentally reshaping Afghan society and politics. Pakistan played a crucial role during this era by supporting the Mujahideen resistance fighters who ultimately forced Soviet withdrawal. Following the communist collapse, President Najibullah's nationalist government lasted merely three years before disintegrating in 1992, plunging Afghanistan into a devastating civil war. From this chaos emerged the Taliban movement in 1994, which, with substantial Pakistani assistance, rapidly conquered vast territories and captured Kabul in 1996. The Taliban's first reign ended abruptly in late 2001 when the United States invaded Afghanistan in response to the September 11 terrorist attacks orchestrated by Al-

story, born on obscure online forums, spread rapidly, culminating in a real-world incident where an armed individual entered the restaurant to ‘investigate.’ Such cases underscore how fake news can escalate from digital fiction to physical harm, threatening both individuals and societal stability.

The impact on democratic discourse is profound. Democracy relies on an informed citizenry capable of making rational decisions based on a shared understanding of facts. Fake news disrupts this foundation by flooding the public sphere with falsehoods, making it difficult for citizens to discern truth from fiction. During the Brexit referendum, misleading claims about the European Union's economic impact or immigration policies swayed voters, contributing to a polarized and contentious outcome. When citizens base their decisions on distorted information, the quality of democratic deliberation suffers, replacing reasoned debate with confusion and division. This erosion of a shared factual baseline undermines the ability to engage in constructive dialogue, fostering tribalism and mistrust.

Fake news also erodes trust in institutions, including the media, government, and scientific bodies. As false narratives compete with credible reporting, the public grows skeptical of all sources, creating a fertile ground for conspiracy theories. A 2021 Pew Research Center study found that nearly 60 percent of Americans believe news organizations frequently report inaccurate information, a perception fueled by the prevalence of fake news. This distrust extends to democratic institutions themselves. Misinformation about election integrity, for example, fueled the January 6, 2021, Capitol riot in the United States, where false claims of widespread voter fraud incited violence and challenged the legitimacy of the democratic process. Similarly, misinformation about public health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as false claims about vaccine safety, contributed to hesitancy and prolonged the crisis.

Economic incentives exacerbate the problem. In the digital economy, attention translates to revenue. Fake news sites, often operated by individuals or groups seeking profit, generate

income through advertising or clickbait schemes. During the 2016 election, Macedonian teenagers reportedly earned thousands of dollars by running websites that published inflammatory, fabricated stories. This profit motive incentivizes the creation of sensational content, regardless of its accuracy. Meanwhile, traditional newsrooms, grappling with declining revenues, face pressure to compete with the allure of fake news, sometimes resorting to sensationalism themselves, which further blurs the line between credible and false reporting.

Technology plays a central role in amplifying fake news. Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube rely on algorithms that prioritize content based on user engagement, not truth. A provocative falsehood often outperforms a factual but mundane story, as it elicits stronger emotional reactions. The echo chamber effect, where users are exposed prima-

ry to content that aligns with their beliefs, reinforces misinformation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, false narratives about treatments or vaccine conspiracies spread rapidly within skeptical communities, undermining public health efforts. The global reach of these platforms means fake news can influence elections and policies across borders, as seen in allegations of foreign interference in democratic processes.

The societal consequences are alarming. Fake news fuels polarization, deepening divisions and making compromise nearly impossible. In countries like India and Brazil, misinformation spread through messaging apps like WhatsApp has incited mob violence and communal tensions, demonstrating its capacity to destabilize societies. In democratic contexts, the erosion of trust and the rise of polarization weaken the social cohesion necessary for collaborative governance. When citizens no longer share a common understanding of reality, the public square becomes a battleground of competing narratives, rather than a space for reasoned discourse.

Combating fake news requires a multifaceted approach that respects free speech while address-

ing its harms. Media literacy is a critical starting point. Educating citizens to critically evaluate sources, verify information, and recognize manipulative tactics can reduce susceptibility to misinformation. Countries like Finland have implemented nationwide media literacy programs, teaching students and adults to question headlines and seek primary sources, with measurable success. Community organizations and media outlets can expand these efforts, empowering individuals to navigate the information landscape with greater discernment.

Technological reforms are equally essential. Social media platforms have taken steps to address misinformation, such as implementing fact-checking labels or removing harmful content, but these measures are often inconsistent. Platforms could refine algorithms to prioritize credible sources or reduce the visibility of unverified content, though such changes must be transparent to avoid accusations of bias. Collaboration between tech companies, governments, and civil society could lead to standardized guidelines for identifying and mitigating fake news. However, any intervention must be carefully designed to avoid stifling legitimate speech or empowering platforms to act as arbiters of truth.

Journalists and media organizations bear significant responsibility. Upholding rigorous standards of accuracy and impartiality is essential to rebuilding public trust. Investigative journalism that exposes fake news operations and their funding sources can deter bad actors. Media outlets can also adopt innovative storytelling to make factual reporting more engaging, countering the appeal of sensational falsehoods. Partnerships with fact-checking organizations, such as PolitiFact or Snopes, can enhance credibility and provide tools for the public to verify information.

Governments have a role, though their involvement must be cautious to avoid overreach. Legislation targeting the deliberate spread of harmful misinformation, particularly when it incites violence or undermines public safety, could deter malicious actors. Germany's NetzDG law, which requires platforms to remove illegal content within a specified timeframe, is one ex-

ample, though it has sparked debates about censorship. Governments can also support independent media and public broadcasters to ensure a steady supply of credible information. However, any regulatory measures must be narrowly defined to prevent abuse and protect free expression.

International cooperation is vital, given the global nature of fake news. Cross-border misinformation campaigns, often aimed at influencing elections, require collaborative efforts to track and counter. Organizations like the World Association of News Publishers have begun facilitating such cooperation, sharing best practices and technologies for detecting misinformation. Strengthening global resilience against fake news requires coordinated action and a commitment to upholding democratic values.

Despite these strategies, significant challenges remain. The sheer volume of online content makes comprehensive moderation difficult, and bad actors continually adapt to evade detection. Efforts to combat fake news must navigate the tension between curbing misinformation and preserving free speech. Heavy-handed measures risk stifling dissent or empowering authorities to suppress legitimate criticism, particularly in less democratic regimes. Public skepticism toward institutional efforts, fueled by years of distrust, further complicates the path forward.

The fight against fake news is ultimately a fight for the soul of democracy. A functioning democratic discourse depends on truth, reason, and mutual respect. While no single solution will eliminate fake news, a combination of media literacy, technological reform, journalistic integrity, and targeted regulation can mitigate its impact. Citizens must also take responsibility, approaching news with skepticism and a commitment to seeking diverse perspectives. The stakes are high: fake news threatens to unravel the trust and cooperation that sustain democratic societies, replacing informed debate with chaos and division. By confronting this challenge with vigilance and collaboration, we can strengthen the resilience of our democracies and ensure that the public square remains a space for reasoned discourse, not manipulation and deceit.

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## Between Borders and Brotherhood

## The fragile diplomacy of Pakistan–Afghanistan relations

By: Dipak Kurmi

Qaeda, which had found sanctuary under Taliban protection. The subsequent two decades saw the establishment of an Islamic Republic backed by American military might, but this system failed to establish legitimacy or stability. After twenty years of insurgency, the Taliban, once again supported by Pakistan, returned to power in August 2021 following the American withdrawal, this time achieving complete control over Afghan territory.

At the heart of the Pakistan-Afghanistan discord lies the contentious issue of the Durand Line, a 2,640-kilometer boundary that represents far more than a mere geographical demarcation for Afghans, particularly the Pashtun population. This border derives its name from Sir Mortimer Durand, the Foreign Secretary of British India, who in 1893 compelled Afghan ruler Amir Abdul Rehman Khan to accept a division of his territories. This agreement effectively split the Pashtun tribes, placing some under British control and others remaining under Afghan sovereignty. Afghan scholar Nabi Sahak has articulated what many Afghans believe: that the original purpose of the Durand Line was to define zones of British and Afghan spheres of influence rather than to create a permanent international border, contrary to the interpretation that dominates in Pakistan and Western capitals. However, British India treated this line as a permanent boundary, and Pakistan inherited this position upon its creation in 1947. Afghanistan has consistently rejected this interpretation, and before Britain's departure from the subcontinent, Afghan authorities urged the colonial power to relinquish the Durand Line Agreement, which would have returned all Pashtun lands to Afghanistan and effectively established the Indus River as the border between the two new nations. When Britain refused, Afghanistan became the sole country to oppose Pakistan's admission to the United Nations, setting the tone for decades of antagonism.

The Pashtunistan movement became a major flashpoint during the 1950s and 1960s when Daud Khan, cousin of King Zahir Shah and Prime Minister from 1953 to 1963, actively championed the cause of uniting all Pashtun territories under Afghan control. This advocacy led to armed hostilities in 1961, prompting Pakistan to close its land border with Afghanistan, creating severe shortages and pushing Afghanistan toward greater

dependence on the Soviet Union. When Daud deposed Zahir Shah in 1973 and assumed the presidency, he initially revived Pashtunistan ambitions but was forced to abandon them due to Pakistani pressure and renewed border closures. Although Daud and Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto normalized relations by 1976, the fundamental issue remained unresolved, as Daud, like his predecessors and successors, refused to recognize the Durand Line as a legitimate international boundary. Even in recent times, when Pakistan formally abolished the Tribal Agencies of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in 2018, then-Afghan President Ashraf Ghani lodged an official protest, demonstrating the continuity of Afghan claims over these territories.

Economic considerations add another layer of complexity to this troubled relationship. Afghanistan's landlocked geography makes it critically dependent on transit routes through neighboring countries, primarily Pakistan, Iran, and the Central Asian republics. While the Pakistani route offers the most efficient access to international markets and ports, Islamabad has weaponized this geographical advantage as an instrument of coercion. Afghan governments have consistently sought permission for India-Afghanistan trade to transit through Pakistani territory from the Wagah border crossing, but Pakistan has obstinately refused to allow Indian exports and aid to reach Afghanistan via this route. This obstruction generates considerable resentment in Afghanistan, but even more infuriating for Afghans is when Pakistan periodically blocks goods from entering Afghanistan through land routes or via Karachi port. These actions, which Pakistan employs as political leverage, have repeatedly created humanitarian and economic crises in Afghanistan, deepening Afghan bitterness toward their eastern neighbor.

The ethnic dimension of the Pakistan-Afghanistan relationship centers on the Pashtun-Punjabi divide, which reflects deeper cultural and political tensions. Although Pakistan has successfully integrated many Pashtuns into its state apparatus, particularly in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, and large Pashtun populations reside in cities like Karachi, fundamental differences persist between Pashtun ways of life and the dominant cultures south and east of the Indus River.

Pakistani Pashtuns, supported by their Afghan counterparts, viewed the 2018 extinction of the Tribal Agencies as an assault on their traditional lifestyle by the Punjabi-dominated Pakistani state and military establishment. This resentment manifests in support for the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, which Afghan Pashtuns regard as kinsmen rather than terrorists. This ethnic solidarity across the porous border represents perhaps the most immediate and dangerous source of contemporary tension between the two countries.

The question of gratitude forms a peculiar but significant element in this bilateral relationship. Pakistan maintains that it hosted millions of Afghan refugees and provided sanctuary to seven Mujahideen groups during the anti-Soviet jihad, thereby preventing Afghanistan from falling permanently under Soviet control. Pakistani officials further believe their assistance enabled the Taliban to defeat the United States, and therefore Afghanistan owes Pakistan profound gratitude. However, Afghans harbor bitter memories of their treatment in Pakistan and argue that Islamabad's policies during these periods primarily served Pakistani strategic interests rather than Afghan welfare. From the Afghan perspective, Pakistan's demand for gratitude is not only misplaced but insulting, as it ignores how Pakistan instrumentalized Afghan suffering for its own geopolitical objectives.

Finally, India's shadow looms perpetually over Pakistan-Afghanistan relations. Pakistan has consistently feared strategic encirclement by India and Afghanistan simultaneously, leading Islamabad to demand that Kabul limit its relationship with New Delhi. However, no Afghan government, regardless of its ideology or composition, accepts the notion that its foreign policy should be dictated by Pakistani preferences. This tension has intensified recently as Pakistan perceives the Taliban's warming relations with India as a betrayal and the ultimate demonstration of Afghan ingratitude. The India factor ensures that even when other issues might be manageable, the fundamental strategic distrust between Pakistan and Afghanistan remains intact, perpetuating a cycle of hostility that shows little sign of resolution despite changing governments, systems, and regional dynamics. (The writer can be reached at dipakurmipltd@gmail.com)



# Rajnath Singh warns of rising 'ideological wars', sophisticated crimes

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday emphasised the shifting landscape of country's security challenges, noting that while the nation grapples with border instability, society faces a new surge in sophisticated crimes, terrorism and "ideological wars".

Speaking on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day, Singh underscored the critical need to balance external and internal security to achieve the vision of a "Viksit Bharat" by 2047.

"Areas that were once known as the red corridor have now transformed into growth corridors," the defence minister said, highlighting the significant progress made against the Naxal problem, long a major internal security challenge, and credited the concerted and organised efforts of the police, CRPF, BSF and local administration in preventing the problem from escalating.

Police Commemoration Day is observed annually to honour the memory of 10 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel who were killed in an ambush by Chinese troops in Ladakh's Hot Spring area on this day in 1959.

Addressing an event at the National Police Memorial, Singh asserted that despite functioning on different platforms, the military and police share the singular mission of national protection.

The Defence Minister cautioned



that while there is instability on the borders, new types of crimes, terrorism and ideological wars are emerging within society, as he detailed the complex nature of modern internal threats.

"Crime has become more organised, invisible, and complex, and its purpose is to create chaos in society, undermine trust and challenge the stability of the nation," Singh said.

He commended the police for their dual role: carrying out their official duty of crime prevention while fulfilling the moral duty of maintaining societal trust.

"If people are sleeping peacefully today, it is due to their confidence in our vigilant armed forces and alert police," he added.

Exuding confidence, the Minister asserted that the Naxal menace

is "on the verge of becoming history," echoing the commitment of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who has declared that the threat will end by March 2026.

"Several top Naxalites have been eliminated this year... Areas that were once Naxalite hubs are now becoming educational hubs. Areas that were once known as the red corridor have now transformed into growth corridors," Singh said and acknowledged the significant contribution of security forces to this success.

A joint parade of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and Delhi Police was held on the occasion.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, chief ministers and governors paid tributes to the police personnel for

their role in thwarting internal security challenges and assured support to their families.

In a post on X, PM Modi said, "On Police Commemoration Day, we salute the courage of our police personnel and recall the supreme sacrifice by them in the line of duty. Their steadfast dedication keeps our nation and people safe."

Home Minister Shah conveyed his "warm greetings", recognising the police as first responders who have "scripted glory by thwarting crimes and threats to internal security, and by protecting citizens' rights with exemplary courage and commitment".

The defence minister also highlighted the Modi led government's commitment to bolstering national security and recognising the police forces and recalled that the government established the National Police Memorial in 2018 to honour their contributions.

He noted the various modernisation efforts, saying the police have been provided "state-of-the-art weapons and improved facilities", including modern equipment such as surveillance systems, drones, forensic labs and digital policing tools.

In a separate post, Home Minister Shah also paid tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the warriors of the Indian National Army (INA) on its foundation day, calling them an "eternal inspiration for the nation first ethos." (PTI)

# Nitish launches Bihar poll campaign, takes swipe at Lalu for doing 'nothing for women'



**MUZAFFARPUR (BIHAR), Oct 21:** Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on Tuesday charged his arch-rival Lalu Prasad with doing "nothing for women" while in power, and propping up wife Rabri Devi when the charge sheet in the fodder scam caused him to step down.

The JD(U) president, who is seeking a record fifth consecutive term in office, was addressing his maiden election rally in Minapur constituency of Muzaffarpur district, where he also said he was disillusioned with the RJD, headed by Prasad, after two short-lived alliances, and vowed to remain with the NDA.

Speaking about his government's thrust in women's empowerment, as witnessed in the

formation of self-help groups on a large scale and the recently launched Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgar Yojana, as part of which Rs 10,000 each have been transferred into accounts of more than one crore beneficiaries, Kumar drew a contrast with the previous regime.

"Did the ones in power do anything for women? They could not have cared less. Only when, after seven years of chief ministership, a situation came where stepping down could not have been avoided, the wife was installed," said Kumar, without mentioning his detractors by name.

Prasad, who became the Bihar chief minister in 1990, occupied the post till 1997 when his wife, a homemaker who was till then not

known to have an aptitude for politics, was appointed to the top post, in a move that had triggered a massive controversy in those days.

Kumar, who, in alliance with the BJP, defeated the RJD in 2005, also recalled his alliances with his arch-rival's party, first in 2015 and then again in 2022, both of which lasted for less than two years.

Prasad's son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav, who is currently the leader of the opposition and the NDA's principal challenger, had served as the deputy CM on both occasions.

Kumar said, "Because of circumstances, I had to tie up with those people, but it did not take me long to realise that they were good for nothing. Now I am back (in NDA) for good."

Kumar also spoke at length about efforts made by his government to improve infrastructure, education and healthcare in the state, while lauding the Narendra Modi government at the Centre for its cooperation.

He also underscored that "an atmosphere of terror" had prevailed in Bihar, because of poor law and order and alleged patronage to criminals by the powers that be, until he took over.

"But now, it is for all to see how much things have changed. Even disputes between Hindus and Muslims have come down because we were sensitive to needs like fencing of religious places of both faiths", said Kumar. (PTI)

## Use of term 'physical relations' without evidence not sufficient to establish rape: Delhi HC

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** Mere use of the term "physical relations" without supporting evidence is insufficient to establish rape or aggravated penetrative sexual assault, the Delhi High Court has held.

The court's observation came while allowing a man's appeal challenging his conviction and 10 years imprisonment in a rape case and acquitting him of the charges.

"In the peculiar facts and circumstances of this case, the use of the term 'physical relations', unaccompanied by any supporting evidence, would not be sufficient to hold that the prosecution has been able to prove the offence beyond reasonable doubt.

"The appellant's conviction under Section 376 IPC and Section 6 of the POCSO Act is unsustainable," Justice Manoj Kumar Ohri said in a judgment passed on October 17. The court, which termed it an unfortunate case, said it was bound to decide the matter on its own merits.

It said the child victim and her parents repeatedly stated that "physical relations" were established however, there was no clarity as to what was meant by this expression. (PTI)

## Increasing train parting, hot axle cases have safety implications: Railways

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** Rising cases of train parting and overheating of axle bearing leading to wheel jamming and derailments have serious safety implications and require detailed investigation as well as corrective measures, railway mechanical engineers have said.

Principal chief mechanical engineers (PCMEs) expressed concern over the issues while discussing operational safety in a conference held recently in Puri, Odisha.

According to the minutes of the conference circulated among senior officials recently by the Railway Board, a hot axle in rolling stock can cause blockage of railway lines, detachment of coaches and other issues.

The document said that these issues need to be investigated in details along with corrective actions such as improvement in design and maintenance aspects on priority.

"Hot axles and train partings should be addressed through a detailed review of both global practices and case-specific data, enabling identification of root causes and adoption of best practices," it said.

It added that the Indian Railways is experiencing an average three hot axle cases per day and train partings are also on the higher side.

"Objective and time bound action should be taken to eliminate team failures. Conditional monitoring of rolling stock using the latest technologies such as AI and related tools was emphasized. It was also decided that Hot Axle Box Detectors will be procured centrally, with Northern Railway designated as the nodal agency for this procurement," the document said. (PTI)

# TN rains: Weather system intensifies, red alert issued in 8 districts, CM reviews situation

**CHENNAI, Oct 21:** As the North-east monsoon intensified across Tamil Nadu, the regional weather office on Tuesday issued heavy rainfall alert to a number of districts, while Chief Minister M K Stalin reviewed the situation with officials and directed that precautionary measures be put in place in view of the downpour.

He also directed deputing IAS officers as Monitoring Officers to districts that have been issued heavy rain alerts.

A Low Pressure Area that formed over the Bay of Bengal intensified into a Well Marked Low Pressure Area, the Regional Meteorological Centre said in an update.

"Under the influence of an upper air cyclonic circulation over the South Bay of Bengal, a Low Pressure Area formed over Southwest Bay of Bengal at 0530 hrs IST of today, the 21st October 2025. It became a Well Marked Low Pressure Area over the same region at 0830 hrs IST of today, the 21st October 2025."

"It is likely to move west-northwestwards and concentrate into a Depression over Southwest & adjoining Westcentral Bay of Bengal off north Tamilnadu-Puducherry-Karaikal & South Andhra Pradesh coasts by afternoon of tomorrow, the 22nd October 2025. Thereafter, it is likely to continue to move west-northwestwards towards north Tamilnadu-Puducherry-Karaikal & South Andhra Pradesh coasts and intensify further during subsequent 24 hours," it added.

A 'red' alert was issued for 8 districts and an orange alert for Chennai for Tuesday, even as widespread rains lashed various parts of the state, according to the Met department.

A red alert was issued to Villupuram, Cuddalore, Mayiladuthurai, Nagapattinam, Tiruvallur, Thanjavur, Pudukottai and Ramanathapuram, an official from the RMC said. Similar alert was sounded for neighbouring Puducherry union



territory as well. "Heavy rain is likely in the entire north coastal belt, but extremely heavy rain is expected in the above districts," the official said.

According to him, an orange alert has been sounded for Chennai, Tiruvallur, Chengalpattu, Kancheepuram, Kallakurichi, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Thoothukudi, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari.

A red alert indicates extremely heavy rain of over 20 cm in 24 hours, while an orange alert means very heavy rain of 11 cm to 20 cm.

In Chennai, CM Stalin held a meeting with district collectors through video conference and instructed them to keep relief camps ready for people affected by rain.

All arrangements, including food, drinking water and medicine should be made for people, he said, according to an official release.

To mitigate the damage caused by rain, the CM advised the teams to be ready with necessary equipment like JCB machines, boats, motor pumps, trucks and saws.

An official release said the Monitoring Officers will coordinate the required work in the respective districts, including Kancheepuram, Chengalpattu and Tiruvallur in north TN, besides those in the Delta region such as Thanjavur and Tiruvallur.

Earlier in the day, Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin inspected the infrastructure development and

renovation works being undertaken in the south Chennai area to improve the waterways so that flood water can easily flow into the sea during the monsoon season.

These works include deepening, widening, constructing covered canals with concrete walls, stormwater drains as well as desilting the areas where the canals meet the sea and the estuarine areas.

Udhayanidhi visited Okkiam Madhavi canal, where the work is being undertaken at a cost of ₹ 27 crore. He also inspected the desilting work in Kannagi Nagar area, an official release said.

Relentless rains in and around Ambasamudram in Tirunelveli district for the past two days have affected thousands of acres of paddy crop harvesting, local farmers said.

Speaking to PTI Videos, farmer Subramaniam from Kakanallur village said that because there was no respite between south west and north east monsoons this year, there was no time to harvest paddy.

"Fields are still standing with ripe paddy. If it continues to rain, farmers here will be affected. One thing the government can do to relieve our burden is enable door-step procurement of rice as soon as we finish harvesting," he said.

According to him, even the paddy crop that some have managed to harvest could not be collected due to the early onset of northeast monsoon. (PTI)

# Lokpal wants seven BMW cars, floats tender

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** Anti-graft ombudsman Lokpal has floated a tender to procure seven luxurious BMW cars, collectively worth around Rs 5 crore.

The Lokpal at present has seven members, including a chairman and six members -- against its sanctioned strength of eight.

"The Lokpal of India invites open tenders from reputed agencies for supply of seven BMW 3 series 330Li cars to the Lokpal of India," read the tender.

It specified procurement of the "M Sport" model with "long wheelbase", and in white colour.

According to the BMW website, the 3 Series long wheelbase car is the longest and most spacious in the segment and is designed for outstanding comfort in an extremely luxurious cabin.

"Impressive in every way, the 3 Series LWB is the most powerful car in its segment with the most advanced technology," read the details of the BMW 3 Series long wheelbase cars on the website.

The on-road price of the said car is around Rs 69.5 lakh in New Delhi.

The selected vendor/firm shall be required to conduct a comprehensive practical, and theoretical training programme for the drivers and other designated staff members of the Lokpal of India to ensure efficient, safe and optimal operation of the BMW vehicles supplied, said the "training obligation" part of the tender document.

"The training shall be conducted for a minimum duration of seven (07) days, to be completed within 15 days from the date of delivery of vehicles. The exact schedule shall be finalised in consultation with the Lokpal of India," it said.

The training programme shall comprise both class-

room sessions and on-road practical sessions, covering "familiarisation with all controls, features and safety systems of the BMW 330Li M Sport", "hands-on operational training, including start-up, parking, and emergency handling" and "understanding of fuel efficiency parameters and driving modes", among others.

The training shall also cover "basic troubleshooting and interpretation of dashboard indicators", "emergency response and safety protocols" and "use of infotainment and in-vehicle electronic systems", read the request for proposal document dated October 16.

Each designated driver shall undergo driving practice for a minimum of 50 kilometres and up to 100 kilometres if needed, as case-to-case basis practical on-road driving under the supervision of qualified trainers provided by the vendor, it said.

A logbook shall be maintained and countersigned by the supervising trainer for each driver, the tender document said.

The training shall be conducted within the premises of Lokpal of India or at another suitable location mutually agreed upon, it said.

The Lokpal's office is in Delhi's Vasant Kunj Institutional Area.

All arrangements, including trainers, vehicles, equipment, fuel, training materials, refreshments and logistical support, shall be made by the vendor at their own cost, the document said.

"The entire cost of organising and conducting the training programme, including trainer honorarium, travel, accommodation (if required), fuel, materials and logistics, shall be borne exclusively by the vendor. No additional expenditure shall be incurred by the Lokpal of India," it added. (PTI)

## 4 killed, 10 injured in fire at building in Navi Mumbai

**MUMBAI, Oct 21:** Four persons were killed and 10 others suffered injuries after a fire broke out in a multi-storey residential building in Maharashtra's Navi Mumbai township shortly after midnight on Tuesday, police said.

Prima facie, the blaze started at around 12.30 am in a flat on the 10th floor of the Raheja Residency, MGM Complex, at Sector 14 in Vashi area, and spread to the 11th and 12th floors, an official said. Two women, a man and a 6-year-old girl were killed, while 10 others were injured, he said. The injured persons were rushed to two hospitals in Vashi. After being alerted, 40 fire brigade personnel along with 8 fire tenders and police rushed to the spot and the blaze was put out by 4 am, the official said. (PTI)

## Day after Diwali, Delhi gasps for air amid toxic haze

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** Delhi residents woke up on Tuesday to heavy grey haze darkening the city skies, reduced visibility and the air quality in the 'red zone' after many celebrated Diwali last night by bursting firecrackers beyond the two-hour limit set by the Supreme Court.

According to a Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) bulletin, Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) stood at 359, in the 'very poor' category, at 11 am. It was 352 at 8 am, 346 at 5 am, 347 at 6 am and 351 at 7 am.

An AQI between 0 and 50 is 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

Of the total 38 monitoring stations, 35 were in the 'red zone', indicating 'very poor' to 'severe' air quality.

While 31 were in the 'very poor' category, four were in the 'severe'



category, according to the CPCB's SAMEER app, which provides real-time AQI data from monitoring stations.

Jahangirpuri recorded an AQI of 409, Wazirpur 408, Bawana 432 and Burari 405 -- all in the 'severe' category.

Environmentalist Bhavreen Kand-

hari said this is a wake-up call for the city.

"With nearly every monitoring station in Delhi now in the red zone and the city's Air Quality Index soaring past 300... it is a wake-up call," she said.

"Today's smog isn't just clouding the sky, it is choking our children's

lungs," she said. In India, respiratory infections already account for nearly 70 per cent of all communicable diseases and the country leads the world in chronic respiratory illnesses, Kandhari said.

In an order passed on October 15, the Supreme Court allowed the use of green firecrackers in Delhi-NCR between 8 pm and 10 pm on Diwali, which was celebrated on Monday. However, many flouted the court's directions, with celebrations continuing late into the night.

On Monday, 36 of the capital's 38 monitoring stations recorded pollution levels in the 'red zone'.

Delhi's 24-hour average AQI on Monday, reported at 4 pm every day, was in the 'very poor' category at 345.

The air quality is expected to slip into the 'severe' category more widely on Tuesday and Wednesday. (PTI)

NOTIFICATION				
No. E/283/Elect/Re-engagement/2025		Dated: 16-10-2025		
<b>NOTIFICATION FOR RE-ENGAGEMENT OF RETIRED STAFF ON CONTRACTUAL BASIS IN ELECTRICAL DEPARTMENT AT LUMDING DIVISION/NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY</b>				
SCHEDULE				
(i)	Date of Publication of Notification	16 <sup>th</sup> October, 2025		
(ii)	Opening Date for Online Application	17 <sup>th</sup> October, 2025		
(iii)	Closing Date for Online Application	03 <sup>rd</sup> November, 2025		
1. In terms of Railway Board's RBE No. 98/2024, L/No. E(NG)/2024/RC-4/9 dated. 15.10.2024, RBE No. 115/2024, L/No. E9NG/2024/RC-4/9 dated. 31.12.2024, and GM(P)/MLG's L/No. E/228/O Pt. XV (C) dated. 17.06.2025, applications are hereby invited from retired Railway Employees (normal retired persons) for engagement under the scheme of 'Re-engagement of Retired Staff' in exigencies of service to work in <b>Loco Pilot Shunter category of Electrical Department at Lumding Division, N.F. Railway</b> on monthly remuneration basis against vacant posts as mentioned below:-				
SN	Department	Category	Pay Level	No. of posts to be filled up
1	Electrical	Loco Pilot Shunter	L-6	46
			<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>
2. Applications are to be submitted <b>ONLINE</b> only through the following link provided in <a href="https://forms.gle/b1ELU5M4mUciaW4WA">https://forms.gle/b1ELU5M4mUciaW4WA</a> .				
3. <b>Age Limit</b> : Must be below 64 years age as on 03 <sup>rd</sup> November, 2025. Maximum age limit for which re-engagement shall continue will be 65 years.				
4. The scheme will remain in vogue for an initial period of 2 years from the date of issue of instruction or till further orders, whichever is earlier. <b>Engagement period of an individual retired staff will be for a period of 01 year or till further orders, whichever is earlier.</b> However, based on satisfactory performance of a re-engaged retired staff, his/her period of engagement can further be extended for a further period of one year or till attainment of 65 years of age, whichever is earlier.				
5. Re-engaged staff shall be discharged immediately on joining of selected candidates from RRBs/RRC panels and department selections.				
6. The last date of submission of the application is <b>03rd November, 2025</b> . Applications received after the cutoff date i.e. 03 <sup>rd</sup> November, 2025 will not be accepted/entertained.				
7. For the purpose of re-engagement, <b>last 5 years APARs</b> of the retired employee seeking re-engagement shall be taken into consideration and only those having at least <b>"Good" Grading</b> in all 5 years shall be considered.				
Detailed notification is available at <a href="http://www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in">www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in</a> (general info-Departments-Personnel-Walk in interview).				
Divisional Railway Manager (P), Lumding				
<b>NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY</b>				
<b>"SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE"</b>				

**NDPP-NPF MERGER COMPLETED**

**Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio elected NPF President**

**KOHIMA, Oct 21:** Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio was elected as the new president of the Naga People's Front (NPF) on Tuesday, marking his formal return to the regional party he once led and later left to form the Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP).

Rio's election was announced during the NPF General Convention held on Tuesday, coinciding with the 63rd foundation day of the party — one of the oldest registered regional political parties in the Northeast.

The development follows the NPF's September 6 appeal urging Rio to return to the party he had nurtured and left in 2017 to launch the NDPP, which has been in power since the 2018 state elections.

The NDPP deliberated on the proposal on September 12, and its general convention on October 18 formally approved the merger with the NPF.

On the same day, Rio was elected as the leader of the NPF Legislature Party while he officially assumed charge as the NPF president during Tuesday's convention, completing the merger process.

In his acceptance speech, Rio expressed gratitude to the party and its members, calling his return a "joyous homecoming".

"The merger of our two parties



is more than an organisational decision — it is a reflection of our shared vision, mutual respect, and collective determination to work together for a stronger and more inclusive political future," Rio said.

He thanked NDPP president Chingwang Konyak and outgoing NPF president Apong Pongener for facilitating a "smooth and complete" merger, calling it "historic and unprecedented".

"A party with 32 MLAs has joined hands with a party with 2 MLAs — this reflects the spirit of

sacrifice and unity for the greater good of our people," he said, emphasising that "unity is the only way forward".

Rio also reaffirmed the party's commitment to resolving the Naga political issue, promoting inclusive development, and addressing youth aspirations.

"The youth today demand meritocracy, efficiency in governance, transparency in development, and timely delivery of their rights. Integrity, accountability, and a people-first approach must define leadership," he said, urging party

members to adapt to a fast-changing world shaped by technology and innovation.

Appealing for reconciliation and solidarity among all sections of Naga society, the new president said, "Let us send forth the strongest message of Naga unity and march forward as one".

Rio will lead the NPF for five years till 2030, along with a host of office bearers taken from both NDPP and NPF, including Chingwang Konyak as Emeritus President, four other working presidents, while MLA Achumbemo Kikon has been retained as the Secretary General.

Rio, who began his political career in 1973 as president of the Cock Party's Youth Wing in Kohima, has served in various capacities, including three terms as NPF chief minister and one as a Member of Parliament in the Lok Sabha.

He rejoined the NPF in 2002 after resigning as Nagaland Home minister from the then Congress government, reviving and rechristening the party as the Nagaland People's Front.

After leading the NPF for three consecutive electoral victories, Rio moved to national politics as an MP in 2014 and amid internal party rifts in 2017, he joined the NDPP in 2017 effectively ending the NPF's dominance in subsequent state elections. (PTI)

**Manipur's Somdal village ready to welcome NSCN(IM) chief to his birthplace after 50 years**

**UKHRUL/IMPHAL, Oct 21:** People of Somdal village in Manipur's Ukhrul district are ready to welcome NSCN(IM) supremo Th Muivah as he is scheduled to visit his birthplace on October 22 after a gap of 50 years, officials said on Tuesday.

Locals have put up posters in the village to welcome the 91-year-old Naga leader, who left the place more than five decades ago to join the insurgency, they said.

The Naga leader, who is the principal negotiator in the Naga peace talks with the Centre, since the NSCN (IM) entered into a ceasefire in 1997, is likely to stay in Somdal village for a week before departing for Dimapur, an official said.

His proposed visit comes at a time when Manipur is battered by ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in the strife.

Authorities in the Tangkhul Naga-majority village, student bodies, civil society organisations, as well as the church, are making coordinated efforts to make Muivah's visit a success, he said.

Several hoardings have been put up in the Ukhrul district headquarters and Tangkhul Naga-majority Somdal village to welcome the Naga leader.

Tangkhul Naga is the largest Naga tribe in Manipur. "Muivah is scheduled to arrive at Ukhrul district headquarters on Wednesday by a helicopter from Nagaland's Dimapur and will be welcomed by Tangkhul Naga people in traditional attire," the official said.

After the programme at the Ukhrul district headquarters, Muivah will head to his native village by road, he said.

The Naga people are excited and looking forward to the historic homecoming of Muivah, according to a local official.

"Unlike in 2010 when Muivah's planned visit to Ukhrul district was strongly objected to by the Manipur government and sections of communities, there is no objection this time. Various organisations from



non-Naga communities have welcomed his proposed visit," a Naga civil society leader said.

Local volunteers are also working in close coordination to ensure that no untoward incident occurs during Muivah's proposed visit.

The Naga leader had attempted to visit his native village in 2010. However, the then Congress government in Manipur, headed by Okram Ibobi Singh, prevented him from entering the state, leading to protests by Nagas.

Police forces were deployed along the Manipur-Nagaland inter-state boundary to prevent Muivah from entering the state.

Born in 1934, Muivah's name is synonymous with the contemporary Naga political movement, and he is one of the most influential Naga leaders.

Several organisations from Kuki, Zomi and Meitei communities in Manipur have welcomed Muivah's proposed visit. (PTI)

**Thank grandmother Laibi for supporting girls in football: Indian team member Nirmala Phanjoubam**



**IMPHAL, Oct 21:** Nirmala Phanjoubam, who is part of the Indian women's football team that would engage in a friendly match with Iran marking the commencement of Tri-Nation Cup in Shillong on Tuesday, thanked her mentor 'Ebo' (grandmother) Laibi for supporting her and other girls in playing the beautiful game.

Despite having no prior experience in managing a football club, Laibi Phanjoubam dedicated her life for the last 30 years to training local women from the Loi Scheduled Caste community in Andro, around an hour's drive from Imphal, in the game to wean them away from insurgency. She established Andro Mahila Mandal Association Football Club (AMMA FC) in 1993.

Standing barely four-feet-tall, Laibi, now 65 years old, said that her efforts have not only managed to prevent women from joining militancy in Andro, which was a hotbed in the early nineties, but also produced professional players who went on to represent the state and the country, like Nirmala.

Speaking to PTI, Nirmala said, "I have fond memories of 'Ebo' (grandmother) Laibi... We used to stay at her residence as well as the club during my time in the club from 2015 to 2020. She is more than a mentor... we could share all our personal issues with her."

Nirmala, who plays in a Tamil Nadu-based club, was also recently part of Manipur state team that won the 30th senior women's football championship in Chhattisgarh.

Laibi has been pouring her energy, money and time to run AMMA FC, giving women a chance to play the game outside the boundaries of Andro, a village of 1,000 people (as per Census 2011).

Speaking to PTI, Laibi said, "During the 90s, there was widespread political unrest in our village and many of our youth were tempted to join the insurgency movement. The club was raised to veer the young girls into sports, make them healthy, self-reliant and successful in the field."

"The biggest challenge in running the club has been lack of financial support. In the beginning, we used to hold charity shows and local programmes to raise funds. Now, we are trying to keep afloat the club by contributing in whatever personal capacity we can. Andro Mahila Mandal has also taken up equal responsibility to run the club," Laibi, a retired school teacher, said.

The club has been affiliated to All Manipur Football Association since 1999 and currently trains junior girls.

"In a village like ours which lacks modern amenities, football is loved. Our ultimate objective now is to train and nurture our girls so that they play the sport in national and international events," she added.

"Currently, 20 girls are being trained by a coach. Since all of them come from financially weaker families, the club takes care of their food and transportation during trials for tournaments or periodic camps and they would stay at my house too," Laibi added.

The girls now look up to Nirmala and hope to represent the state and the country in future.

AMMA FC also teaches computer, weaving and sericulture skills, she added.

Laibi's story has been featured in 2023 documentary 'Andro Dreams', which was screened at the prestigious 54th International Film Festival of India 2023. (PTI)

**87 cases filed, 112 arrested for drug trafficking during Jan-Sep in Mizoram's Champhai**

**AIZAWL, Oct 21:** Mizoram's Excise and Narcotics Department has registered 87 cases and arrested 112 people in connection with drug trafficking in Champhai district, which shares a border with Myanmar, during the January-September period this year, officials said.

These numbers exceeded the previous year's count.

In 2024, 71 cases were framed under the Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, and 95 people were arrested in connection with drug trafficking in the border district, they said.

While 304 cases were registered under the Mizoram Liquor (Prohibition) Act last year, 174 were framed during the January-September period this year, an official said, citing the department's data.

Altogether 220 people were arrested in alcohol-related cases in 2024 and the number was 129 this year, he said.

**Nagaland DGP pays tributes to 186 policemen**

**KOHIMA, Oct 21:** Nagaland Director General of Police Rupin Sharma on Tuesday paid tributes to 186 police personnel who laid down their lives across India in the line of duty in the one last year.

Addressing law enforcers during the Police Commemoration Day programme at the Nagaland Police headquarters here, he called upon security personnel to renew their pledge to serve the nation and make the supreme sacrifice when needed.

"Let us renew our pledge to serve our people, secure and maintain the integrity of our nation, and make the supreme sacrifice when needed," Sharma said.

He paid rich tributes to the 186 policemen who laid down their lives across India from September 2024 to August this year in the line of duty, including Constable Chandan Das of the 9th NAP (IR) from Nagaland.

Recalling the historical roots of the day, Sharma said that Police Commemoration Day traces back to the 1959 Aksai Chin ambush, in which 10 CRPF personnel were killed by Chinese troops.

Their sacrifice at Hot Springs, Ladakh, led to October 21 being designated as the day to honour all policemen who have fallen in service to the nation.

The DGP lauded the unwavering commitment and professionalism of the Nagaland Police, saying their tireless service in maintaining law and order has strengthened public trust and brought honour to the force.

"Today is not just a day of mourning but a celebration of the selfless spirit of our policemen and women who have become immortal through their deeds," Sharma said, urging all personnel to uphold the highest ideals of courage and service. (PTI)

**TMC destroyed human values in Bengal, says BJP leader Biplab Deb**

**AGARTALA, Oct 21:** Tripura MP and BJP's co-in-charge (saha prabhar) for West Bengal, Biplab Kumar Deb, on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on the Trinamool Congress (TMC), alleging that law and order has collapsed in the state and that "human values no longer exist" under the Mamata Banerjee-led government.

"There is no human value in Trinamool-ruled West Bengal. Rapes, murders and arson are happening frequently," Deb told reporters at Indranagar in West Tripura after offering prayers to Goddess Kali.

Taking a sharp dig at Banerjee, Deb accused her of lacking compassion. "The chief minister of the state behaves like a demon. Women are usually known for their soft nature, but she has changed that perception," he claimed.

Deb also raised questions about the alleged accumulation of property by Banerjee's relatives, though he did not mention her by name.

"She claims she lives in Kailash, but people know her relatives own around 32 houses. People are eagerly waiting to oust the present government," he said. (PTI)

**'Result not only optimises dosage strategy but also has significant clinical implications for future drug development' Nagaland University identifies natural compound with potential for diabetic wounds treatment**

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** Nagaland University researchers have identified a naturally occurring plant compound called "Sinapic acid" as a powerful therapeutic agent capable of significantly accelerating wound healing in diabetic conditions, according to officials.

The discovery marks a major advancement that could result in safe, natural and effective treatments for diabetic wound management, they said.

According to Panav Kumar Prabhakar, Head, Department of Biotechnology, Nagaland University, this is the first study globally to demonstrate that Sinapic acid, when administered orally, can accelerate diabetic wound healing in preclinical models. The research established that the compound works by activating the SIRT1 pathway, which plays a crucial role in tissue repair, angiogenesis and inflammation control.

The findings have been published in Nature Scientific Reports, a peer-reviewed, open-access journal from Nature



Portfolio (Springer Nature).

"This discovery not only highlights the strength of our scientific community but also reflects our commitment to addressing pressing health challenges through innovation rooted in nature. I congratulate the research team for their dedication and contribution towards improving healthcare solutions," said Jagadish K Patnaik, Vice Chancellor, Nagaland University.

Prabhakar explained that diabetes mellitus remains one of the world's most pressing chronic diseases, affecting hundreds of millions globally. "Among its serious complications is delayed wound healing, often resulting in diabetic foot ulcers, infection and in severe cases, amputation. Existing synthetic drugs have shown limited efficacy

and often cause undesirable side effects," he said.

"We set out seeking a safe, plant-based alternative — exploring how Sinapic acid, a naturally occurring antioxidant found in various edible plants, could accelerate tissue repair, reduce inflammation, and promote new blood vessel formation in diabetic wounds," he added.

The researchers explained that we found that a lower dose (20 mg/kg) was more effective than a higher one (40 mg/kg), a phenomenon known as "Inverted Dose-Response".

"This result not only optimises dosage strategy but also has significant clinical implications for future drug development. The key implications of this discovery include reducing the risk of amputation and accelerating recovery in diabetic foot ulcers and providing an affordable, natural oral therapy, improving accessibility for patients in rural and resource-limited settings," he said. (PTI)

**Tripura CM pays tribute to police personnel**



**AGARTALA, Oct 21:** Tripura CM Manik Saha on Tuesday paid tributes to the police personnel who laid down their lives in the line of duty.

Chief Secretary JK Sinha and DGP Anurag Dhankar were among the senior officers who were present at the programme, held on the occasion of Police Commemoration Day, at the AD Nagar Police Line in Agartala.

Addressing the programme, the CM hailed the bravery of security

personnel in protecting the nation. Saha said 191 police personnel gave their lives in the line of duty in the country between September 1, 2024, and August 31, 2025.

Among them, two were from Tripura — Sub Inspector David Darlong and Tripura State Rifles' jawan Milan Debbarma.

"I hope the security forces will continue to display their courage and valour to protect the nation," the CM said. He met the families of the two deceased policemen. (PTI)

# Women's WC: Unbeaten Australia, England to battle for supremacy before semifinals



**INDORE, Oct 21:** With semifinal berths already secured, defending champions Australia and familiar foes England will look to maintain their winning momentum when they face off in a top of the table clash at the ICC Women's World Cup clash here on Wednesday.

Both teams remain unbeaten so far, with four wins and a washout each, but Australia sit comfortably atop the points table owing to a superior net run rate of 1.818 as compared to England's 1.490.

A victory for either side will

offer more than just top-of-the-table bragging rights, it will also provide a crucial psychological edge heading into the knockouts which are just around the corner.

Alyssa Healy's Australia have been clinical, if not flawless, through the group stage. They began their campaign with two batting collapses, but rescue acts from Ashleigh Gardner and Beth Mooney steered them past New Zealand and Pakistan.

Since then, their top order, led by skipper Healy, who has notched back-to-back centuries,

and the dependable Phoebe Litchfield, has found its rhythm, making them the team to beat once again.

England have struggled against the fast bowlers and the likes of new ball specialist Megan Schutt would be keen to capitalise on that. Australia also hold a massive psychological advantage over across formats at home earlier this year. Having said that, England would be in high spirits following their thrilling win over India at the same venue couple of

nights ago.

England's bowlers held their nerve under pressure, with Lindsey Smith proving to be a revelation, claiming the key wicket of Smriti Mandhana before defending 13 runs in the final over.

Their bowling attack, disciplined and well-rounded, has been their standout feature. With world's no 1 bowler left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone and off-spinner Charlie Dean providing control, the unit has consistently bailed England out of tight situations.

However, concerns persist over England's batting unit. Much of the run-scoring burden has fallen on seasoned campaigners Heather Knight and Nat Sciver-Brunt, who have anchored multiple innings between them.

Amy Jones showed grit with a fifty against India, but alongside fellow opener Tammy Beaumont, has struggled to provide consistent starts.

The middle order, comprising Sophia Dunkley, Emma Lamb, and Alice Caspey, has endured a torrid tournament, averaging less than 10 between them.

Despite that, the experienced Danni Wyatt-Hodge continues to warm the bench, with head coach Charlotte Edwards remaining bullish about sticking with the same combination.

"We want to back the batting order that we selected at the start of the tournament because that's the one we feel will give us success," Edwards had said ahead of the clash against India.

Teams (from):

Australia: Alyssa Healy (c&wk), Phoebe Litchfield, Beth Mooney (wk), Georgia Voll, Ashleigh Gardner, Kim Garth, Heather Graham, Alana King, Tahlia McGrath, Sophie Mooney, Ellyse Perry, Annabel Sutherland, Darcie Brown, Megan Schutt, Georgia Wareham.

England: Nat Sciver-Brunt (c), Em Arlott, Tammy Beaumont, Lauren Bell, Alice Caspey, Charlie Dean, Sophia Dunkley, Sophie Ecclestone, Lauren Filer, Sarah Glenn, Amy Jones, Heather Knight, Emma Lamb, Lindsey Smith, Danni Wyatt-Hodge.

Match starts at 3pm IST. (PTI)

## Fit-again Pant to captain India A squad in red-ball series against South Africa A

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** The deadlock over the Asia Cup trophy, which is yet to reach champions India, continues to be unresolved as the Asian Cricket Council's Pakistani head Mohsin Naqvi has refused to part with it despite a fresh missive from the BCCI, backed by boards of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

A top ACC source told PTI that Naqvi has insisted that a BCCI representative collect the trophy from him at the body's headquarters in Dubai but the Indian board has rejected that stance. The BCCI has reiterated that it will raise this matter in an ICC meeting next month.

"The BCCI secretary (Devajit Saikia), BCCI's ACC representative Rajeev Shukla and representatives of other member boards including Sri Lanka Cricket and Afghanistan had written to the ACC president last week over handing the trophy to India," the ACC source said.

"But his response was that someone from BCCI should come to Dubai and take the trophy from him. So, that matter has still not moved. BCCI has made its stance clear that it won't be receiving the trophy from him. So, the matter will most likely be decided in the ICC meeting," he added.

The ICC is headed by former BCCI secretary Jay Shah.

The trophy has been at the ACC headquarters after the Indian team refused to accept it from Naqvi at the presentation ceremony, prompting him to walk



away with it in an unprecedented turn of events on September 28.

Naqvi is also the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board and his country's interior minister with a will-documented anti-India stance.

The Indians had refused to shake hands with their Pakistani counterparts during the entire Asia Cup as a mark of respect for the victims of Pahalagam terror attack.

On his social media account, which is withheld in India, he posted videos and memes mocking India's military action after the Pahalagam attack, throughout the Asia Cup.

The two teams played each other on every Sunday of the three-week tournament.

After the presentation fiasco, the two countries clashed at an ACC meeting as well where BCCI officials chided Naqvi for not handing over the trophy.

Sources have said that Naqvi, before leaving for Pakistan, instructed the ACC staff to not hand over or move the trophy without his instructions. (PTI)

## Shaheen Shah Afridi replaces Rizwan as Pakistan ODI captain

**LAHORE, Oct 21:** The Pakistan Cricket Board has appointed left arm pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi as their ODI captain, replacing Muhammad Rizwan ahead of the next month's ODI series against South Africa. The PCB on Monday said Shaheen will lead the Pakistan side in the upcoming three-match ODI series against South Africa in Faisalabad from November 4-8.

The PCB said the decision was taken in a meeting in Islamabad which was attended by the national selectors, advisory board members and the national team's white ball head coach, Mike Hesson. Shaheen was also named the national T20 captain back in late 2023 but was sacked after just one series in New Zealand with Babar Azam returning to lead in the last World T20 Cup. A reliable source said it was Hesson who had insisted on working with Salman Ali Agha and Shaheen as the white ball captains as he felt they had the potential to be successful long term captains and build their teams. Shaheen has played 66 ODIs and 92 T20s for Pakistan besides also featuring in 32 Tests. In the last two years the PCB has kept on changing the coaches and captains and no real reason was given for Rizwan's removal although he led Pakistan to ODI series wins in Australia, Zimbabwe and South Africa before facing a string of poor results including in the ICC Champions Trophy. (PTI)

## West Ham falls to another home loss with 2-0 defeat

**LONDON, Oct 21:** West Ham lost for the fourth home match in a row in the Premier League on Monday, with late goals in both halves giving Brentford a 2-0 win that could have been much bigger had the visitors taken more of their chances. Going into the game, West Ham had lost all three of its home games this season while Brentford had lost all three of its away games in the league, but the visitors dominated from the start at the London Stadium. Igor Thiago and Kevin Schade both missed good opportunities to score before Thiago finally broke the deadlock two minutes before halftime. Goalkeeper Alphonse Areola got a hand to his shot but could not stop it going over the line. Some West Ham fans boycotted the game in protest at what they say is mismanagement by the club's owners and there were more empty seats than usual at the former Olympic stadium, which became the club's home in 2016 after moving from Upton Park. (AP)

## Australia skipper Healy to miss England clash, McGrath to lead

**INDORE, Oct 21:** Australia captain Alyssa Healy will miss Wednesday's ICC Women's World Cup clash against England here due to a calf injury, with Tahlia McGrath set to lead the seven-time champions.

The Australian skipper, who hit back-to-back centuries in the previous two games, strained her calf at training on Saturday.

"Yeah, obviously really unfortunate there for her with just a slight calf strain," Australia head coach Shelley Nitschke said at the pre-match press conference here on Tuesday. The 35-year-old, who has battled injury in recent times, will continue to be monitored, but she could be in a race against time to be fit for the semifinals scheduled for next week. Before that, table toppers Australia face South Africa in their final league match here on Saturday. "We're just going to keep assessing her day by day and give her every opportunity to play the

next game against South Africa and just see how that plays out over the rehab, but just keep assessing and hopefully she gets up," Nitschke said.

Healy's latest injury comes at a frustrating time, as the wicket-keeper-batter had missed last year's T20 World Cup semifinal with a foot injury.

She also sat out the Women's Big Bash League, an ODI series against India, and T20 series against England and New Zealand.

With 294 runs from four innings, Healy has been in splendid form and is currently the leading run scorer in the tournament.

"I think it's (Healy's absence) two-fold. It's obviously a big loss for us, she's our captain, she's made back-to-back hundreds so she's certainly in some form with the bat but I think it also provides some opportunity and we sort of talk about our depth a bit and that's going to test it and provide some



opportunities for others to step into some role which I think we've got the ability to cover that."

"Whilst it's not ideal I think that's why you bring 15 players to be able to absorb when things like this arise," Nitschke said.

Georgia Voll is expected to open alongside Phoebe Litchfield against England, while vice-captain McGrath will lead the side and Beth Mooney is likely to take over wicketkeeping duties.

"We've got some options. Obviously, the one is Georgia Voll that's here and has filled that role before, but we'll sit down today and probably just make sure we're getting our matchups right and come to a final decision."

"But we've certainly got some depth there in our batting, so there is some opportunities outside of that move as well," Nitschke said, pointing Indian football team head coach Khalid Jamil for the upcoming CAFA Nations Cup in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It's unlikely that he was dropped on the basis of his form in the four matches he played after coming back from his international retirement.

However, it's also not known whether Chhetri himself requested not to consider him for the tournament, to be held later this month, or if he was rested as his Indian Super League (ISL) side Bengaluru FC is yet to start pre-season training. (PTI)

## Ponting says Australia series will indicate if Rohit, Kohli can carry on till 2027 WC



**DUBAI, Oct 21:** Australian great Ricky Ponting reckons the performance of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the ongoing ODI series Down Under will determine if the star India duo can carry on till the 2027 World Cup.

Playing their first game for India since March, Kohli and Rohit, who are now one-format players, did not last long against Australia's potent pace attack on a bouncy Perth track. Having said that, it was also a collective batting failure for India who lost by seven wickets.

The second ODI of the three-

match series takes place in Adelaide on Thursday, where conditions should suit the Indian batters a lot more compared to Perth.

Speaking on 'ICC Review' alongside former India head coach Ravi Shastri, Ponting said setting short-term goals is the way forward for the celebrated duo rather than only thinking about the 2027 ODI World Cup.

"The one thing I don't like hearing from anyone is that 'I've achieved everything in the game' because I think you still have to have some really short-term goals

and not just be hanging on to try and get through to the 2027 World Cup," Ponting said.

"Virat's always been a highly motivated person. And I'd like to think that he's probably sat down and even just given himself some goals and things that he can achieve in this series here in Australia and not be just waiting and killing time for that next World Cup to come around."

"What we know with both of those guys, at their absolute best, yes, of course they're in India's best team. But can they find their best between now and when that

World Cup rocks around?" he asked. "And that's only an answer that, like Ravi said, that we'll find out in a short period of time (during the series)," said the World Cup-winning bating great.

I am in no hurry to judge: Shastri. The performance of Rohit and Kohli in the first ODI was not up to the mark but Shastri feels more time should be given to the two white-ball greats who would expect to take time to get into the groove after being away from competitive cricket post the IPL.

"When you come back from a long layoff, you are obviously going to be rusty. It's not easy for any overseas team to land in Australia, say, two days prior to a game in Perth and adjust to those conditions straight away, especially when you have that extra bounce, and against quality fast bowlers. "But I think only time will tell...I'm in no hurry to judge...it's about how much you're enjoying the sport and how much hunger is there and passion is left in you to play the game."

"So if you tick the boxes in two out of those three, especially the enjoyment part of it, then you can give them both time because they've got class, they've got experience...I'd rather wait than jump and judge immediately," said the former India head coach. (PTI)

## BCCI gets SL, Afghan support on Asia Cup trophy fiasco

**NEW DELHI, Oct 21:** The deadlock over the Asia Cup trophy, which is yet to reach champions India, continues to be unresolved as the Asian Cricket Council's Pakistani head Mohsin Naqvi has refused to part with it despite a fresh missive from the BCCI, backed by boards of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka.

A top ACC source told PTI that Naqvi has insisted that a BCCI representative collect the trophy from him at the body's headquarters in Dubai but the Indian board has rejected that stance. The BCCI has reiterated that it will raise this matter in an ICC meeting next month.

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"But his response was that someone from BCCI should come to Dubai and take the trophy from him. So, that matter has still not moved. BCCI has made its stance clear that it won't be receiving the trophy from him. So, the matter will most likely be decided in the ICC meeting," he added.

The ICC is headed by former BCCI secretary Jay Shah.

The trophy has been at the ACC headquarters after the Indian team refused to accept it from Naqvi at the presentation ceremony, prompting him to walk away with it in an unprecedented turn of events on September 28.

Naqvi is also the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board and his country's interior minister with a will-documented anti-India stance. The Indians had refused to shake hands with their Pakistani counterparts during the entire Asia Cup as a mark of respect for the victims of Pahalagam terror attack. (PTI)

## Short expects Aussie pacers to target Kohli again with swing and nip

**ADELAIDE, Oct 21:** Australia batter Matthew Short believes his team's pacers will continue to exploit Virat Kohli's recent weakness outside off stump when India face Australia in the second ODI here on Thursday.

Kohli, who was dismissed for a duck in the series opener in Perth, will be eager to bounce back at the Adelaide Oval, his most successful overseas venue with five international centuries and an average of 65 across formats. "I'm not in the fast-bowling meetings, but that seems to be the way he has been getting out recently," Short told reporters.

"Some of the guys like 'Hoff' (Josh Hazlewood) and 'Starcy' (Mitchell Starc), they have bowled a lot against him, they know what they're doing."

"In Perth they sort of let the conditions do all the work, a bit of swing and nip on the wicket, so I'm sure they'll do the same again." India had overwhelming support from a 42,423-strong crowd at the Optus Stadium in the first ODI of the white-ball series, most of whom had turned up to watch Rohit and Kohli return to action after more than seven months.

Having retired from the game's other formats, the former captains returned to national duty for the first time since win-

ning the Champions Trophy on March 9.

Following that triumph, they had announced retirements from Tests while sticking to the ODI format, after also quitting T20Is post India's World Cup win last year. "When Rohit or (Shubman) Gill got out the other day (in Perth), and then Kohli came on, just the cheer when he was walking on -- you'd feel pretty bad as the batter walking off. It's just an amazing experience," Short added.

Both Rohit and Kohli looked rusty in their comeback game and were dismissed for 8 and 0 respectively, as Australia's stand-in skipper Mitchell Marsh led from the front with an unbeaten 46 to secure a seven-wicket win in the rain-hit Perth ODI. India trail the series 0-1, making Thursday's match in Adelaide a must-win to stay alive as the game will possibly be the duo's final outing Down Under.

"But it's going to be a cool way for him to go out, especially with so many fans here in Australia," Short said, as he hoped to make the most of sharing the field with the Indian greats. "It's pretty cool to share the field with such a legend of the sport," he said. "I'll definitely get the chance to have a chat to him at some stage throughout the series." (PTI)