

6 WORLD

● Gaza peace deal 'landmark' step towards stability in Middle East: India

● Iraq faces elections at delicate moment in Middle East

8 NATION

● NDA will break all electoral records: Modi

● 20 killed as Bengaluru bound private bus catches fire in Andhra's Kurnool

Zubeen death case: Garima, sister Palme Borthakur record statements at CID hq Singapore Police to provide crucial evidence: SIT chief

GUWAHATI, Oct 24: Singapore Police Force (SPF) is likely to provide crucial evidence, including CCTV footage and statements of eye witnesses, related to the death of Zubeen Garg within the next 10 days, a senior official said on Friday.

Addressing a press conference, CID Special DGP Munna Prasad Gupta said the Assam Police has requested their counterparts in the Southeast Asian nation to provide all relevant information to complete the ongoing investigation in a timely manner.

Gupta and Titabor Co-District SP Tarun Goel, who had gone to Singapore four days ago to probe the unnatural death of the singer, returned on Thursday. Gupta is heading the SIT, while Goel is a member of the nine-member group formed to probe the case.

"We met the Indian High Commissioner in Singapore and discussed all legal assistance required. We also had a discussion with a five-member high-level delegation of SPF, and it was a very fruitful meeting," Gupta told reporters here.

The two police forces deliberated on the investigation being carried out in the two countries and exchanged information related to the case, he added.

"We sought the statement of the yacht pilot and one member of Assam Association Singapore. As they are citizens of Singapore, it will have to be done through a legal process. They have assured us to provide us with the statements in the next 10 days," Gupta said.

The Assam Police team also sought the CCTV footage of the hotel and other places visited by Garg, and the SPF will try to provide the same within the next 10 days, he added.

"We emphasised that we need assistance from them to complete the investigation in a timely manner. The way SPF is looking to complete the probe in 90 days, we will also have to submit the chargesheet within three months. They have assured us of all help," Gupta said.

A Special Investigation Team (SIT) under the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Assam Police is currently probing Garg's death case after more than 60 FIRs



were lodged across the state.

"We could visit the place of occurrence and even the locations Zubeen Garg had visited during his stay in Singapore. We also visited the yacht, which was hired by the Assam Association Singapore. International cooperation usually takes a long time, but in this case, we are getting quick assistance," Gupta said.

He said the report of the first autopsy, conducted immediately after Garg's death, was handed over to Assam Police team through the Indian High Commission.

Talking about the ongoing probe in Guwahati, Gupta said: "It is going on in the right direction. Although I cannot say much, we have recorded statements from more than 70 people so far."

Garg's wife Garima and sister Palme Borthakur reached the CID headquarters earlier in the day to record their statements, he added.

"I want to appeal to the people who have any relevant information of Zubeen Garg or any chats with him prior to his death to come out and share those information with us," Gupta said.

The celebrated singer died

under mysterious circumstances in Singapore on September 19 while swimming in the sea. He had gone to the Southeast Asian nation to attend the 4th edition of the North East India Festival.

The Indian government had earlier invoked the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) with Singapore, seeking cooperation in the investigation into the death of the singer in the Southeast Asian country.

Singapore Police Force (SPF) is also carrying out an independent investigation into the incident of Garg's alleged drowning in sea.

In a statement on October 17, the SPF said that the preliminary investigations have not indicated any foul play in Garg's death.

It also said that investigations into the death of the popular Indian singer-songwriter-composer may take up to another three months, after which the findings will be submitted to the State Coroner for further proceedings. The Assam Police has interrogated 10 Assamese expats from Singapore out of 11, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Veteran journalist Baikuntha Goswami passes away

Condolences pouring in



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 24: Veteran journalist Baikuntha Nath Goswami died on Friday due to old-age-related ailments at his home in Guwahati, his family said.

He was 79, and survived by his wife, a son and a daughter. "Though he had some health-related issues earlier, he was fine in recent times. He died in his sleep," his daughter, Sushmita, said.

In a post on X, Chief Minister's Office said CM Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed deep sorrow over the passing of the veteran journalist and eminent writer.

"HCM prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family," it added.

Assam Jatiya Parishad President Lurinjyoti Gogoi too condoled the demise of Goswami and said his contribution in the

field of journalism will always be remembered.

"Goswami's writings gave a direction to Assamese journalism. In this hour of grief, I offer my deepest condolences to the family of the deceased," he added.

All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) President Badruddin Ajmal, in a statement, said Goswami's passing away has left a void in Assamese journalism.

"This is an irreparable loss to society and journalism," he added.

The National Union of Journalists India (NUJI) and the Journalists Association of Assam (JAA) have mourned his demise, calling it an irreparable loss for Assamese journalism.

In a joint statement, JAA president Dharendra Nath Chakraborty, chief advisor of JAA and NUJI national vice-president Bhuben Goswami, and JAA general secretary Dalim Phukan said that Baikuntha Goswami played a crucial role in drawing the attention of the government to issues affecting Assam since the 1970s through his journalistic work.

They noted that he worked to unite journalists across the state for media rights and upheld journalistic values with dedication throughout his life.

The journalist fraternity stated that Goswami created a distinct trend in Assamese (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Steps taken to ensure dignity of women: CM

18,745 SHG members receive cheques under Mukhyamantrir Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 24: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday ceremonially launched the distribution of cheques to 18,745 members of women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under the Mukhyamantrir Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan in Ramkrishna Nagar LAC of Sribhumi district.

The beneficiaries include 17,425 women from rural areas and 1,320 from urban areas.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chief Minister said the scheme aims to make women financially self-reliant.

Each beneficiary in the constituency is being provided a cheque of ₹10,000 as entrepreneurship capital to support small-scale income generation activities.

He said that around 40 lakh women in Assam are associated with nearly 4 lakh SHGs engaging in various livelihoods through gov-

ernment-provided revolving funds and bank support.

The chief minister stated that beneficiaries may use the funds collectively through SHGs or individually for activities such as dairy, poultry, piggery, tailoring or by investing in existing family-run businesses.

Utilisation of the funds will be evaluated, and those who use it productively will receive ₹25,000 next year and ₹50,000 in the third year, he said, adding that the goal is to create more "Lakshpati Baideus".

He cited examples of successful women entrepreneurs from the constituency, including Sangeeta Singha of Tulsigangra who became a "Lakshpati Baideu" through weaving and tailoring, and Niyati Bala Baishnab of Deep SHG who achieved the same through dairy farming.

The chief minister said that along with financial empowerment, the State Government is working to protect women's dignity.

He said that after taking steps against child (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Two sentenced to 7 years rigorous imprisonment in drug trafficking case

DIPHU, Oct 24: A local court in Assam's Dima Hasao district has sentenced two persons to seven years rigorous imprisonment in a drug trafficking case.

The court of district and sessions judge Md. Yusuf Azad handed down the judgment in a 2023 case, additional public prosecutor Sanjay Kumar Jadav said on Friday.

"The two accused, both hailing from Nagaon district, were held guilty by the honourable court in its judgment delivered on Wednesday," Jadav said.

The court also imposed a fine of Rs 40,000 on each of them, failing which they will have to undergo an additional three months in jail. Jadav said the case was registered in Khatkhati police station in 2023 under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. A third accused in the case was acquitted by the court, the additional public prosecutor added. (PTI)

Opposition using Zubeen Garg to 'weaken' Hindu society: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Oct 24: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday alleged that the opposition is using the issue demanding justice to Zubeen Garg to "weaken the Hindu society".

He also criticised eminent author and Sahitya Akademi awardee Rita Chowdhury, wife of state Parliamentary Affairs minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, for condemning a government SOP restricting the visiting hours at the cremation site of Zubeen Garg.

"The opposition is keeping this issue (demanding justice for Zubeen Garg) alive against Hindu society. Akhil Gogoi and the opposition say Zubeen did not have caste or religion. Was Zubeen not Assamese?" asked Sarma.

Garg, a rebel singer, had popularly proclaimed that he had no religion-caste, and he was free and just a human.

On October 10, in a rare ges-

ture of breaking the caste barrier, a fan of Zubeen Garg tore his 'lagun', the sacred thread worn by Brahmins, at the singer's cremation site and announced that he would live only like a human.

"There is no point using it against the BJP, because we will anyway win. It is being done to weaken the Hindu society," Sarma claimed.

The celebrated singer died under mysterious circumstances in Singapore on September 19 while swimming in the sea. He had gone to the Southeast Asian nation to attend the 4th edition of the North East India Festival.

Sarma, however, supported the 'Nyay Yatra' being taken out by BJP in different districts and said: "I will also hit the street and demand justice on the next day police files the chargesheet. I am the CM, not the Chief Justice. So I will demand justice. We all must keep faith in the judiciary." (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM vigilance team conducts surprise visit to Zubeen Garg's PSO's residence

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 24: A team from the Chief Minister's Vigilance, Assam, on Thursday visited the residence of Nandeswar Bora, a Personal Security Officer (PSO) of noted singer Zubeen Garg, at Nonoi Uriageon in Nagaon.

During the visit, the team reportedly conducted a surprise raid and examined the property along with other related documents and belongings.

In the absence of Bora's wife, members of the vigilance team also questioned his father as part of the inquiry, local sources said.

Officials from the vigilance team did not make any detailed statement to the media regarding the purpose or findings of the visit.

After completing their inspection, the team is said to have returned to Guwahati.

Further details are awaited.

Pramod Boro, two others take oath as MCLAs in BTCLA

UPPL president vows constructive opposition role in the Council

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Oct 24: Former Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and UPPL president Pramod Boro, along with two other newly elected members, took oath as Members of the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly (BTCLA) at a brief ceremony held at the BTCLA complex at Bodofa Nwgrw here on Friday.

BTCLA Speaker Tridip Daimary administered the oath of office in the presence of senior officials.

Pramod Boro, elected from the Goibari Constituency, took his oath in the Bodo language.

Rakesh Brahma of Mushalpur also took

oath in Bodo, while Rekha Rani Das Boro of Baganpata took oath in Assamese.

In the recently concluded BTC elections, the BPF emerged as the single largest party with 28 seats and formed the Council, while the UPPL and BJP secured 7 and 5 seats respectively.

Speaking after the ceremony, Boro said he reaffirmed his commitment to the welfare and progress of the people of BTR.

He added that the UPPL would play a constructive opposition role in the Council and emphasised the implementation of the clauses of the BTR Peace Accord, 2020, which he said remains key to the region's progress.

KAAC holds 252nd session, approves supplementary demands and appointments



HT Bureau

DIPHU, Oct 24: The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) held its 252nd session on Friday at the KAAC Session Hall,

with Chairman Raju Tisso presiding.

The session began with an obituary reference to late Zubeen Garg, where the members observed a one-minute silence in memory of the noted singer, regarded as the voice and pride of Assam.

Chief Executive Member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang placed several key resolutions and supplementary budget proposals before the house for final approval.

In the meeting, the Executive Committee approved appointments under the Personnel Department.

Sarthe Ronghi has been appointed as District Council Judicial Officer, while Dhoni Son Lekthe and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Security forces bust ULFA-I supply chain in Nampong; four arrested



HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Oct 24: In a joint operation based on specific intelligence inputs, security forces have busted an alleged supply chain of the ULFA-Independent (ULFA-I) in Nampong under Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh, arresting four individuals and seizing a large quantity of medical supplies and essential goods near the Myanmar border.

The arrested have been identified as Jitu Moran alias Moina (50), Julie Gogoi (38), Dipak Gogoi (52), and Yanshay Sokrang. According to police, Julie Gogoi has been running a grocery shop in Nampong since 2001 and is suspected to have been involved in facilitating supplies.

Officials stated that the operation was launched after credible intelligence suggested that ULFA-I's self-styled Major General Arunodoi Dohutia had demanded medicines and other provisions from a resident of Tinsukia, Assam.

"We have also detained four

Myanmarese nationals for allegedly transporting goods to ULFA camps across the border," said an official.

A substantial quantity of medical supplies and essential items, meant for delivery to militant hideouts, was seized from the spot. Investigation is underway.

In a separate counter-insurgency operation on Tuesday night, one ULFA-I militant was neutralised in a gunfight with security forces led by Assam Rifles personnel at 6 Mile area under Namsai police station in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh.

"Assam Rifles had received a tip-off regarding the presence of six to seven ULFA-I cadres in the 6 Mile Lekang Khampti area.

Based on the information, a joint team launched an operation during which one cadre was killed," a police official said.

Security forces have intensified surveillance and combing operations in the Arunachal-Assam border region following the incident.

Project to harness the monsoon flow of Son river

Centre issues fresh ToR for major irrigation project in Son Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: The Centre has granted fresh terms of reference (ToR) for the Sitapur-Hanumana Micro Irrigation Project in Madhya Pradesh, a major inter-state water scheme proposed across the Son river that aims to irrigate over 1.29 lakh hectares of rain-fed land but falls within the Son Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary.

According to the minutes of a meeting of the environment ministry's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) on River Valley and Hydro-electric Projects held on October 13, the project is being implemented by the Madhya Pradesh Water Resources Department to



improve irrigation intensity and agricultural productivity in Rewa, Maunjanj, Sidhi and Singrauli districts.

The project will harness the monsoon flow of Son river by constructing a barrage at Parsauna Khurd village in Sidhi district.

It is designed for a gross storage of 268.9 million cubic metres (MCM) and a live storage of 255.7 MCM at a full reservoir level of 234 metres above mean sea level.

The proposed barrage will be 1,589 metres long, including a 725-metre earthen dam and a 784-metre spillway fitted with 39 gates. Water will be lifted using seven vertical turbines with a combined power requirement of 108.6 megawatts.

The project will bring 1,29,060 hectares of land under micro irrigation during the Rabi season mainly for wheat and gram crops, and supply five MCM of water each for drinking and industrial

use.

It is expected to benefit 653 villages and increase annual crop production by nearly 39 lakh quintals.

The total land requirement is 3,639.7 hectares, of which 22.36 hectares is forest land. About 4,198 families from 44 villages in Sidhi district are likely to be affected by land acquisition.

The EAC recorded that the process of land acquisition and Resettlement and Rehabilitation is under way and the updated status will be incorporated in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report. The estimated project cost is ₹ 41,679.3 crore. It will generate direct (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Stock markets halt 6-day rally, Sensex falls 344 pts amid profit-taking, foreign fund outflows

MUMBAI, Oct 24: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty declined on Friday amid profit-taking in FMCG and banking shares following a six-day rally and fresh foreign fund outflows.

Snapping its six-day winning streak, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 344.52 points or 0.41 per cent to settle at 84,211.88. During the day, it fell by 599.25 points or 0.70 per cent to 83,957.15.

A total of 2,323 stocks declined while 1,853 advanced and 166 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 96.25 points or 0.37 per cent to 25,795.15 as 34 of its constituents closed lower and 16 with gains.

In a holiday-shortened week, the BSE benchmark climbed 259.69 points or 0.30 per cent, and the Nifty went up by 85.3 points or 0.33 per cent.

Profit-taking emerged after a six-day rally, during which key indices soared by around 3 per cent on strong festive demand and foreign fund inflows. Both Sensex and Nifty hit their 52-week highs on Thursday.

Sentiment was further dampened after Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Friday said India does not do trade agreements in a hurry or with a "gun to our head".

Among Sensex firms, Hindustan Unilever dropped the most by 3.20 per cent. UltraTech Cement, Kotak



Mahindra Bank, Adani Ports, Titan, HDFC Bank and Axis Bank were also among the laggards.

However, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Bharat Electronics and Sun Pharma were among the gainers.

"We are in active dialogue with the EU. We are talking to the US, but we do not do deals in a hurry and we do not do deals with deadlines or with a gun to our head," Goyal said at the Berlin Dialogue in Germany. The minister is in Berlin to participate in the dialogue.

"Equity markets ended the week on a subdued note after Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's remarks that India will not rush into trade agreements with restrictive conditions dampened hopes of an early India-US trade deal, leading to profit-taking across sectors following a strong rally earlier in the

week," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

The BSE midcap gauge dipped 0.26 per cent, and the smallcap index went lower by 0.19 per cent.

Bankex dropped 0.77 per cent, FMCG declined 0.71 per cent, financial services (0.51 per cent), power (0.47 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.40 per cent), services (0.38 per cent) and consumer durables (0.38 per cent).

Metal surged 1.02 per cent, telecommunication jumped 1.01 per cent, oil & gas (0.25 per cent), realty (0.24 per cent) and energy (0.22 per cent).

Indian equity benchmarks declined nearly half a per cent on Friday as investors booked profits and foreign funds turned sellers. Profit-taking in banking, FMCG, IT, and auto stocks weighed on

sentiment, while uncertainty over reports of a potential India-US trade deal further dampened investor enthusiasm, Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng settled higher.

Markets in Europe were trading on a mixed note. US markets ended in positive territory on Thursday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,165.94 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), however, were net buyers, purchasing equities worth ₹ 3,893.73 crore on a net basis in the previous trade.

"Nifty ended lower by 96 points to close at 25,795, snapping a 6-day run-up. Markets were pressured by US sanctions on Russian oil companies and profit-taking by investors," Siddhartha Khemka - Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude dipped 0.24 per cent to USD 65.83 a barrel.

Rising for the sixth straight session on Thursday, the Sensex climbed 130.06 points or 0.15 per cent to settle at 84,556.40. The Nifty ended 22.80 points or 0.09 per cent higher at 25,891.40. (PTI)

Make life easier for honest taxpayers, provide no comfort to dishonest ones: FM tells GST officers

GHAZIABAD, Oct 24: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday asked GST officers to be polite and make life easier for honest taxpayers, but deal firmly with dishonest ones.

Speaking at the CGST building inauguration here, the minister flagged the need for "timely conclusion" of disciplinary proceedings against officers, and said by doing so the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) would send a clear message that misconduct, dereliction of duty or unethical behaviour will not be tolerated.

Asking field officers to use technology for faster registration approvals and grievance redressal, Sitharaman also tasked them to "proactively" undertake trade facilitation measures. "There is no iron wall between you and trader, there is thin air. You can understand where the difficulty is, rather than muddying it up any further."

She said GST officers need to show greater empathy and courtesy while dealing with honest taxpayers and make them feel that they are honourably treated under the next-generation GST.

"If there are people who are bad sheep among taxpayers, follow the protocol to get hold of them. But don't look at everybody with suspicion," she said.

"It is important that you remain polite. The next-generation GST is

not just about rates, slabs, simplification. It should make the taxpayer feel different," she said, adding that politeness, however, should not be seen as a compromise on enforcement.

"Keep up the good work, maintain the momentum of reforms, and always remember that our ultimate goal is to make life easier for the honest taxpayer. Don't give comfort to the dishonest taxpayer in any way. If we do that, economic growth and prosperity will surely follow," she said.

She said that tax officers need to be "subjective" while dealing with dishonest taxpayers, and only follow the laid down protocol or SoP.

On the issue of disciplinary proceedings against departmental officers, Sitharaman said swift conclusion of such proceedings reinforces accountability within the organization.

"Prolonged proceedings unfairly affect the morale and reputation of the officers involved - particularly the innocent. For those wrongfully accused, early closure brings relief and restoration of dignity. The Motto for disciplinary matters should be: Galat kiya hai toh khair nahi, sahi kiya hai toh koi bair nahi (If you do wrong, you won't be forgiven, if you are right, there would be no ill feeling against you)," Sitharaman said.

The minister also nudged Goods

and Services Tax (GST) officers to make use of technology to reduce the compliance burden on taxpayer seeking GST registration.

"Technology and risk-based parameters must do the heavy lifting and not the taxpayer. We do not want anybody from the field formation adding one little more burden or onus on the taxpayer. Technology should be used. You do smart inquiry into the situation and if necessary the taxpayer may be approached for something. But no shifting of onus on him saying give me more papers, give me this, give me that," she said.

She also asked officers to map the recurring grievances in Central GST (CGST) zones and reach at the "root cause" of the problem.

The minister also said that the pending Central GST investigations must be closed expeditiously with quality orders that are well-reasoned, evidence-based and cut down litigation cost.

"Officials must be trained and encouraged to conduct quality investigations," she said.

From November 1, 2025, the Simplified GST Registration Scheme will grant automatic registration within 3 working days in two cases: applicants whom the system identifies based on data analysis, and those who self-assess that their output tax liability will not exceed Rs 2.5 lakh per month. (PTI)

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Singapore Police to

against whom summonses were issued, while the remaining one is a citizen of the Southeast Asian nation. A yacht was booked by a few office bearers of the Assam Association Singapore, and these 11 people were present when Garg allegedly drowned near an island in the sea.

Earlier, North East India Festival chief organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, the singer's manager Siddharth Sharma, and his two band members -- Shekhar Jyoti Goswami and Amrit Prabha Mahanta -- were apprehended.

Later, Garg's cousin and Assam Police DSP Sandipan Garg was arrested in connection with the singer's death in Singapore last month.

Zubeen Garg's PSOs Nandeswar Bora and Prabin Baishya were also arrested after police found huge financial transactions, worth over Rs 1.1 crore, from their accounts.

All the seven arrested people are now in judicial custody. They were booked under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for murder, culpable homicide not amounting to murder, criminal conspiracy and causing death by negligence. (PTI)

Condolences pouring in

journalism and will be remembered for his contribution and commitment to the profession.

Goswami was associated with 'Asom Bhumii' newspaper as its Editor. He was also regularly writing columns in different publications on diverse topics in society. Earlier, Goswami had worked in different capacities in the editorial departments of various leading newspapers like 'Dainik Agradoot', 'Dainik Janambhumi' and 'News Star'. He was also the Editor of the now-defunct weekly 'Saptahik Nilachal'.

Goswami had also worked in the news agency GUNI for a long time and retired as the Bureau Chief of Patna unit.

The veteran journalist had written several books in Assamese language. Some of the prominent published books were Jnanamala I Folk tale, Jnanamala II Folk tale, Nibandha Chayan, Asomiya Jatiyatad aru Asomiyar Sangina and Sangbad Madhyamar Swadhinata. (With inputs from PTI)

Opposition using Zubeen

The state government on Thursday issued an order and the cremation ground of Garg shall remain open for visitors to pay homage to the legendary singer from 6 am to 10 pm daily. No visitors shall be allowed beyond these hours.

Author Chowdhury criticised this move in a Facebook post and warned that the situation might turn worse due to mass sorrow on account of the untimely death of Garg.

Condemning the post, Sarma said: "I have seen Rita Chowdhury's post and I did not like it. She said that the situation would worsen from here. That means she is instigating people. The government will be strict against all people and forces who are trying to instigate."

"Why should people visit after 10 pm? Nobody goes to Kamakhya temple after 10 pm. No college, university takes place after 10 pm. Local people stay in Sonapur. They have left their land. There are neighbours and we should not disturb people," he added.

Meanwhile, the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee in the evening organised a candlelight procession in support of 'Justice for Zubeen Garg' movement.

The procession started from Cotton College and returned to the same venue after making a round of Dighalipukhuri pond.

It was led by APCC President Gaurav Gogoi and other senior leaders also took part in it.

"The CM is doing everything for his own interest, not for Zubeen's justice. He is doing everything to protect his own chair. His actions and statements in the last few weeks show that," he added.

Reacting to the procession, CM Sarma said: "In 2026 elections, if anyone votes in the name of Zubeen Garg, then BJP will get all the votes. We will try to keep him away from politics. But if anyone does politics, then we will benefit the most. But I will never seek votes in the name of Zubeen." (PTI)

Steps taken to ensure

marriage, the government will soon enact a law banning polygamy in the state.

He also highlighted welfare initiatives like the Orunodoi Scheme, under which beneficiaries currently receive ₹1,250 per month, and announced an additional ₹250 for LPG purchase from January next year.

He further informed that while free rice is being provided under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, the State Government will provide lentils, salt and sugar at subsidised rates to all ration-card-holding families from November 7. He also announced that legislation to grant land pattas to members of the tea tribe community residing in labour lines will be introduced in the upcoming Assembly Session.

Sarma said several major infrastructure projects have been sanctioned for the Ramkrishna Nagar constituency, including ₹100 crore for road construction under Asom Mala, ₹12 crore for a stadium, ₹31 crore for a girls' college and ₹20 crore for higher secondary school infrastructure.

He added that a medical college is being constructed in the constituency at a cost of ₹600 crore.

The meeting was attended by Ministers Kaushik Rai and Krishnendu Paul, MP Kripanath Mallah, MLAs Bijoy Malakar and Siddique Ahmed, Mission Director of ASRLM Kuntalmani Sharma Bordoloi and other dignitaries.

KAAC holds 252nd session

Belcham Teron have been appointed as Additional Judicial Officers. Micky Teron has also been appointed as Additional Judicial Officer (Crime & Criminology).

The house approved supplementary demands including ₹1,012 lakh under Land Revenue for the Purthimi Akemang Programme, ₹651.10 lakh under Pension and Retirement Benefits (token provision), ₹641.93 lakh under Road Transport for salaries of regularised drivers and ₹1,004.08 lakh under Public Works for salary and vehicle maintenance at ISBT, 5th Mile.

These supplementary grants aim to ensure smooth administration and continued implementation of key development programmes across Karbi Anglong.

Centre issues fresh

and indirect employment opportunities during construction and operation phases.

The EAC noted that the project site lies within the Son Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary, which has the presence of gharials, a Schedule-I species under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

It said the environmental implications related to biodiversity and wildlife will be evaluated in detail during the EIA and EMP studies. As the site falls within a protected area, the project has been classified as Category A and will be appraised at the central level by the environment ministry.

The committee was informed that the project has been approved by the Madhya Pradesh government and that an inter-state agreement has been signed between Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar for sharing the river's waters. The project will require 1,550 kilolitres of water per day during construction. During operation, it will use 268.9 MCM annually for irrigation and five MCM each for drinking and industrial purposes.

The demographic study of the 10-km radius of the project area shows a total population of 57,887, with Scheduled Castes comprising 11.74 per cent and Scheduled Tribes 21.97 per cent.

The committee granted fresh terms of reference for conducting a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment and Environmental Management Plan before the project is considered for environmental clearance. (PTI)

ICAI to offer free advisory services to MSMEs

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: The chartered accountants' apex body ICAI will start offering free advisory services to MSMEs, including on compliance and finance issues.

The initiative from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), which has more than four lakh members, also comes at a time when high US tariffs and global trade uncertainties are adversely impacting the country's MSME sector.

With the ICAI-MSME initiative clinic, which will be available at close to 183 branches of the institute, the aim is to empower such entities as part of the Viksit Bharat vision, ICAI President Charanjit Singh Nanda said on Friday. (PTI)

India does not do trade deals in hurry or with gun to our head: Goyal

BERLIN/NEW DELHI, Oct 24: India does not do trade agreements in a hurry or with a "gun to our head", Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday.

He said India is actively negotiating trade pacts with countries and regions, including the European Union (EU) and the US.

"We are in active dialogue with the EU. We are talking to the US, but we do not do deals in a hurry and we do not do deals with deadlines or with a gun to our head," he said at the Berlin Dialogue in Germany.

The minister was in Berlin to participate in the dialogue, a meeting of leaders and German businesses to discuss ways to boost bilateral trade and investments.

He added that a trade deal should be viewed with a long-term perspective.

India, he said, never takes decisions in a rush or in the heat of the moment.

Goyal added that India is looking at newer markets to deal with the high tariffs.

Asked if India is getting a fair trade deal that is long term with conditions attached, Goyal said, "I do not think India has ever decided who its friends will be based on any other considerations other than national interest... and somebody tells me you can't be friends with the EU, I won't accept that or somebody tell me tomorrow, I can't work with Kenya, it's not acceptable." The decision to buy a particular product from a country is something that the entire world will have to take a call on, he said.

"I was reading in today's paper, Germany is asking for an exemption from US sanctions on oil... The UK already has sorted or probably got an exemption for procuring oil from the US... so then why single out India," he wondered.

These remarks assume significance as the US is putting pressure on India to stop buying crude oil from Russia. The US, on October 22, imposed sanctions on Russia's two largest crude oil producers, Rosneft and Lukoil, barring all American entities and individuals from conducting business with them.

The US has imposed 25 per cent tariffs on India as a penalty for purchasing oil from Russia. It is over and above the 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs on Indian goods entering American markets. Overall, Indian goods are attracting a steep 50 per cent additional import duties in the US.

New Delhi has described these duties as "unfair, unjustified and unreasonable".

Goyal also said that a country should not look at trade deals in a short-term perspective.

"Trade deals are for a longer duration. It is not only about tariffs or access to goods and services, it is also about trust and relationship... Trade deals in a longer context are far more than just tariffs and we are just focused on the current day issues and tariffs," he added.

India and the US have been negotiating a bilateral trade agreement since March this year. So far, five rounds of talks have been completed. (PTI)

Hyundai opens bookings for all-new VENUE compact SUV

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 24: Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) has opened bookings for the all-new Hyundai VENUE, its latest compact SUV offering. Customers can book the model at any Hyundai dealership across India or through the "click to buy" platform with an initial amount of ₹25,000.

The company today unveiled the new VENUE through a promotional film inspired by the precision and power of a fighter jet.

The film features Hyundai's brand ambassador Deepika Padukone, whose association is aimed at reflecting the model's modern, confident and progressive appeal.

According to HMIL, the new VENUE comes with bold exterior styling, a tech-rich interior, enhanced comfort features and a longer wheelbase.

The company said the SUV has been designed for customers seeking more style, comfort and innovation in the compact SUV segment.

Tarun Garg, Whole-Time Director and Chief Operating Officer of HMIL, said, "The Hyundai VENUE has been one of the most loved SUVs in India, with over 7 lakh customers choosing it for its blend of design, technology and performance. With the all-new Hyundai VENUE, we are redefining bold design and modern premium-ness while integrating advanced technology that resonates with the aspirations of today's new-age customers."

(e-139063)
GOVERNMENT OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH
DIRECTORATE OF CIVIL AVIATION
NAHARLAGUN

NO.DCA-14011(16)/1/2023 Dated Naharlagun, the 24th October, 2025

NOTICE INVITING BIDS

The Department of Civil Aviation, Government of Arunachal Pradesh invites **ONLINE BID OFFERS** under **TWO BID SYSTEM** from commercial permit holders under **DGCA, India (Non-scheduled category)** having tendered type of helicopter, for **WET LEASE of one twin engine large MI-172 helicopter of latest technology / version, subject to approval of the version by DGCA**, for passenger flight service etc., in Arunachal Pradesh and adjoining areas under 75% subsidy scheme of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

- The Bids are to be submitted ONLINE under Two Bid systems in Central Public Procurement Portal i.e. <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>. The Tender document will be available in the CPP Portal w.e.f. 30.10.2025 and Bids offer can be submitted online up to closing date / time **20.11.2025, 1300 hours**. Original copies of Tender fee Rs. 15,000/- (Rupees fifteen thousand) only in the form of Demand Draft in favour of "Director of Civil Aviation, Govt. Of Arunachal Pradesh, Naharlagun" payable at Itanagar and Bid Security (EMD) amounting to **Rs.3,38,35,000.00 (Rupees Three crore Thirty-Eight lakh Thirty five thousand)** only in the form of Bank Guarantee or Bid Security Declaration as per format annexed in the Tender document along with other documents shall be deposited in the office of the under signed by **1200 hours on 20.11.2025** and **Scanned copies of the same shall be submitted online** along with other documents in **Technical Bid**. Bids shall be opened at **1400 hours on 20.11.2025** for evaluation of Technical Bids and Financial Bids of qualified Bidders shall be opened at **1400 hours on 21.11.2025** or as notified in the portal. Other terms and conditions, technical parameters, etc. have been described in the detailed Tender documents uploaded in the CPP Portal.
- Digital Signature**- Bidders shall be required to encrypt and sign their online Bid using own Digital Signature Certificate (DSC). Prospective Bidders may procure DSC before participating in the Tender. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh reserves the right to reject any or the entire bid offers without assigning any reasons thereof.

Sd/
Director (Civil Aviation)
Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh: Naharlagun
Dated Naharlagun, the 24th October, 2025

Memo NO.DCA-14011(16)/1/2023

AFFIDAVIT

I, Smt. Kanaklata Das, W/O :Ratan Das, Resident of Village :Satsgaon, P.O-Satgaon, P.S - Baithalangso, District: West Karbi Anglong, Assam do hereby solemnly affirm and declare via an notarial affidavit executed at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar,Hojai that my daughter's actual and correct name is Priya Das which is recorded in her Birth Certificate Vide Registration No. B202518902920000692. But due to some bonafide mistake in her Aadhaar Card Vide No. 5671-5004-6924 wherein her name has been wrongly recorded as Rupa Das instead of her actual and correct name Priya Das. Both, Priya Das and Rupa Das are the names of one and same person i.e. my daughter.

AFFIDAVIT

I changed my name from Nang Siliija Mungyak as in Aadhaar Card bearing No. 6231 1474 6969 to Nang Siliija Lungphong. Therefore both Nang Siliija Mungyak and Nang Siliija Lungphong are the names of one and the same single person.

Nang Siliija Lungphong, D/o- Chow Khaming Lungphong Vill.- Chongkham-I, PO & PS- Chongkham, Dist.- Namsai, State- Arunachal Pradesh

NAME CORRECTION

I, Swapna Moni Das Hazarika aged about 51 years, wife of Bhuben Hazarika, R/O Vill: Pahukata Panigaon, P.O: Borpanigaon, P.S: Samaguri, Pin: 782141, Assam have corrected my name from "Swapna Moni Hazarika" to "Swapna Moni Das Hazarika" through a Notary Public at Nagaon District Court. "Swapna Moni Hazarika" and "Swapna Moni Das Hazarika" is the same and one person.

NAME CORRECTION

I, Renu Das aged about 67 years, wife of Late Nityananda Hazarika, R/O Vill: Pahukata Panigaon, P.O: Borpanigaon, P.S: Samaguri, Pin: 782141, Assam have corrected my name from "Renu Das Hazarika" to "Renu Das" through a Notary Public at Nagaon District Court. "Renu Das Hazarika" and "Renu Das" is the same and one person.

Hospital to feature six advanced clinical departments with JICA support, boosting healthcare and medical education in Barak Valley

CM lays foundation for 208-bedded super specialty hospital



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 24: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday laid the foundation stone for a new 208-bedded Super Specialty Hospital at Silchar Medical College and Hospital during his two-day visit to Barak Valley.

The hospital, to be built on 16 bighas of land with financial assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), will have six clinical departments: Cardiology, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Neurology, Neurosurgery, Nephrology and Urology. The total project cost is estimated at around ₹ 300 crore, covering infrastructure development and advanced medical equipment procurement. Construction is expected to be completed within 30 months. The facility will include 20 beds each for the six super-specialty departments, 14 emergency beds,

27 ICU/CCU beds, 24 post-operative care beds, 16 pre-operative care beds, 10 dialysis beds and 25 paying cabins. Speaking at the event, the Chief Minister highlighted the growth of medical education in Assam, noting that MBBS seats have increased from 360 in 2006 to 2,000, while postgraduate seats have grown from 150 to 1,500. He said this has reduced the need for students to study outside the state and con-

tributed to notable improvements in healthcare delivery, including declines in maternal and infant mortality rates.

CM Sarma emphasised the special focus on Silchar Medical College, one of Assam's three oldest medical colleges. Under the Assam Health System Strengthening Project, the government is constructing super specialty hospitals in various medical colleges to provide advanced care, particularly in cardiac and neurological surgeries.

The Chief Minister also announced plans to reconstruct Silchar Civil Hospital at an estimated cost of ₹ 150 crore and highlighted ongoing construction of a 500-bedded hospital building on the Silchar Medical College campus, slated for completion by year-end. The old main college building will be replaced with a new 1,500-bedded structure, giving the hospital a unified, modern look.

In addition, CM Sarma revealed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone for a new highway connecting Barak Valley to Guwahati within the next 3-4 months, with an estimated cost of ₹ 35,000 crore, enhancing the region's connectivity. He also noted the unprecedented announcement of ₹ 1,000 crore for Silchar's development on the same day.

The foundation-laying ceremony was attended by several dignitaries, including Ministers Kaushik Rai and Krishnendu Paul, MPs Parimal Suklabaidya and Kanad Purkayastha, MLAs Dipayan Chakraborty, Mihir Kanti Shome, Nihar Ranjan Das, Kamalakhya Dey Purkayastha, Medical Education Secretary Siddhartha Singh and Principal of Silchar Medical College Prof Debabrata Sinha.

Sahitya Akademi hosts 'Yuva Sahiti and Asmita' at Darrang College

HT Correspondent
TEZPUR, Oct 24: The Sahitya Akademi's special literary event "Yuva Sahiti and Asmita," organised in collaboration with the Department of Assamese, Darrang College (Autonomous), Tezpur, concluded on Wednesday at the NEC Conference Hall of the college.

The event began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by Dr Palashmoni Saikia, Principal of Darrang College, followed by a floral tribute to artist Zubeen Garg by Dr Binita Bora Devachoudhury, Member of the Assamese Advisory Board, Sahitya Akademi. Convener of the Assamese Advisory Board, Diganta Biswa Sharma, delivered the inaugural address as the Chief Guest.

In the first session titled "Yuva Sahiti," writer Abhijit Bora read his short story "Deshher Shese." Dr Jyotishman Das, Assistant Professor, Department of Assamese, Tezpur University, spoke on environmental awareness and poetic expression. The session, conducted by Dr Sanjay Kumar Deka of the Department of Botany, Darrang College, also featured readings by young writer Kaushik Nandan Baruah from his books Saraphul, Niribili, and Radha, and a short story "Matir Manuh" by noted writer Nayanjyoti Sarma.

The second session, "Asmita," was chaired by Dr Binita Bora



Deva Choudhury Professor, Department of Assamese, TU. Dr Dalima Kakoti of Lokanayak Omeo Kumar Das College presented a paper on the concept of "Thiridness," while actress and physician Dr Jahanara Begum discussed aspects of drama. Dr Swapnali Kakoti of the English Department, Darrang College, spoke on the relevance of translation and writer Rinjumoni Neog Bora shared insights on children's literature and recited her poems.

Dr Pallabika Sarmah, Assistant Professor, Department of Assamese, Darrang College, coordinated the event, and Khagendra Kumar Kalita, Assistant Professor of the same department, offered the vote of thanks.

Demow Press Club to host 13th Sudhakantha Divas

HT Correspondent
DEMOW, Oct 24: The Demow Press Club will organise the 13th annual Sudhakantha Divas at the Demow Jyoti Bishnu Cultural Building (Demow Public Hall) on November 4 and 5, 2025.

The event will begin on November 4 with flag hoisting followed by a tribute. On the same day, the fourth annual All-Assam Bhubendra Sangeet Competition will be held in two categories, with registration costing ₹ 400 by October 31, 2025. Winners will be awarded first, second, and third prizes. For registration or inquiries, participants can contact 7002067307, 9678813065 or 9854066403.

On November 5, a drawing competition will be conducted in the afternoon, followed by tributes and lighting of earthen lamps in the evening. Cultural programmes will take place later, concluding with the distribution of competition prizes.

Heroin worth ₹ 15 lakh seized, two arrested

HT Correspondent
BOKAJAN, Oct 24: Assam police in Karbi Anglong seized 13 heroin packages worth ₹ 15 lakh and arrested two smugglers at Lahorijan Patrol Post on Thursday.

During routine vehicle checks, an Innova car from Dimapur with registration number AR 01 P 9113 was stopped at the 6th mile NH-29 check gate. On searching the vehicle, the contraband was recovered.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Raju Subba and Jayanta Barman.

Hoduo Tai-Ahom Chatra Hontha protests for land, ST status

HT Correspondent
BOKAJAN, Oct 24: The Hoduo Tai-Ahom Chatra Hontha, Karbi Anglong District Committee, held a three-hour protest dharna in Bokajan demanding land pattas and recognition of Schedule Tribe status.

The dharna was attended by the organisation's president, Milon Borgohain, secretary Bhaskar Jyoti Borgohain and other members.

After the protest, memorandums outlining their demands were submitted to the chief executive member of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Tuliram Ronghang and the Assam chief minister through Bokajan SDO (Civil).

House gutted in Hawaipur fire

HT Correspondent
KHERONI, Oct 24: A fire broke out last night in the house of Dilbahar Gurung in Hawaipur, West Karbi Anglong, destroying household goods, documents, jewellery, cash and livestock.

Neighbours attempted to douse the flames with buckets of water but were unsuccessful. Firefighters later contained the blaze, preventing it from spreading further. The family is now homeless, but no injuries were reported. The cause of the fire is unknown, though an LPG cylinder was found on the roof of the burnt house.

Cong slams BJP over corruption in Assam

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Oct 24: AICC Media Coordinator Dr Onika Mehrotra criticised the BJP as the "Bhrastachar Janata Party" and accused it of looting and plundering Assam during a Media Interaction Programme at Rajiv Bhawan, Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee (KADCC) office on Friday.

Dr Mehrotra alleged large-scale corruption, highlighting Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Chief Executive Member Tuliram Ronghang as key figures involved. She also claimed significant land transfers to BJP associates, naming companies like Patanjali and Godrej.

The event, organised by the Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao Media Department of the Indian National Congress, was chaired by Charishma Rongpipi, APCC media panelist and attended by KADCC president Raton Engti and APCC Media Coordinators Happy Gogoi, Amaan Wadud and Samvid Sharma.

Tuliram to patron Assam Sahitya Sabha 2026

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Oct 24: The Reception Committee of the Assam Sahitya Sabha met Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Tuliram Ronghang, regarding his role as Patron of the Organising Committee for the upcoming Assam Sahitya Sabha session, scheduled from January 31 to February 3, 2026.

The delegation, led by organising committee chairman Hira Lal Bora, included Reception Committee Vice President Dr Bishnu Ram Nunisa and General Secretary Biju Medhi, among others. They briefed Ronghang on the preparatory plans for the event.

Ronghang accepted the invitation and assured full support and co-operation for the successful conduct of the Sabha session.

AAUBC to observe 3rd foundation day

HT Correspondent
SIVASAGAR, Oct 24: The All Assam United Brahmin Council (AAUBC) will observe its 3rd foundation day on October 30 at Amolapaty Hindu Dharma Namghar in Sivasagar. The event will be held in a simple manner in view of the widespread grief following singer Zubeen Garg's demise.

The public meeting will be presided over by AAUBC Executive President Promod Chandra Goswami. Smriti tarpan will be performed by former Auniati HS School principal Amarjyoti Borthakur and the ceremonial lamp will be lit by Rajendranath Borthakur. During the meeting, the Sivasagar district committee of AAUBC and the Brahmin Women Council will also be formed, informed AAUBC general secretary Gopal Pandey.

PPMS seeks Bharat Ratna for Zubeen Garg

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 24: A delegation of the Purvottar Pradesh Marwari Sammelan (PPMS) called on the Governor of Assam, Lakshman Prasad Acharya, at Raj Bhavan and submitted a memorandum urging the Government of India to confer the Bharat Ratna award upon the legendary singer of Assam, Zubeen Garg.

The delegation was led by Kailash Kabra Provincial President, and included Basant Surana National Organisation Secretary, Ramesh Kumar Chandak Provincial General Secretary, Manoj Jain Kala Provincial Organisation Secretary and Vivek Sanganeria Provincial Public Relations Officer. The memorandum was formally submitted through the Governor for onward transmission to the Central Government.

During the meeting, the delegation apprised the Governor that the untimely demise of Zubeen Garg — the voice of Assam, the soul of music, and a beloved icon of millions — has deeply saddened people across the region and the nation. They described his loss as an irreparable one, not only for Assam but for the entire country.

The organisation has posthumously conferred upon Zubeen Da the title of "Jan Nayak of Assam" (People's Hero of Assam) and appealed that the Government of India recommend conferring the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour, upon him. Such



an honour would not only recognise Zubeen Da's unmatched contribution and personality but also bring immense pride to the people of Assam and his admirers worldwide.

The delegation further said that Zubeen Da's sensitivity, humanity, and dedication towards society continue to inspire countless youths. National recognition of his work and life would serve as a motivation for all. On this occasion, the delegation also extended warm greetings and best wishes to the Governor on the occasion of Deepawali and shared the sentiments of the Marwari community residing across the North Eastern region.

Meeting for Great Assam School Shakeout 2025

HT Correspondent
NAGAON, Oct 24: The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Nagaon, organised a District-Level Coordination and Orientation Meeting for the Great Assam School Shakeout Programme-2025 at the Nagaon Zila Parishad Conference Hall on Friday.

The meeting was held in two sessions, first with Circle Quick Response Team (CQRT) members and Aapda Mitra volunteers, followed by School Focal Point Teachers (SFPTs) from selected schools in the district.

District Project Officer, DDMA, Nagaon, outlined the procedures for the upcoming mock drill activities scheduled for October 29, 2025.

Railways runs 12,011 special trains for festive season

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Oct 24: Indian Railways (IR) has ramped up operations to meet the surge in passenger demand during the ongoing festive season. To ensure smooth travel for Puja, Diwali, and Chhath, IR is running 12,011 special trains this year, up from 7,724 during the same period last year. In the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) zone, 48 special festival trains are operating, covering a total of 620 trips from September to December 2025. Special arrangements have been made at major stations, including Katihar, New Jalpaiguri, Guwahati, Jorhat, and Kishanganj, with holding areas, passenger announcement systems, fans, additional ticket counters and automatic ticket vending machines. Round-the-clock war rooms and extra staff, including RPF personnel, have been deployed for effective crowd management and passenger assistance.

Special trains are running to key destinations such as Katihar, Kishanganj, New Jalpaiguri, Sonpur, Dauram-Madhepura, Agartala, New Tinsukia, SMVT Bengaluru, Amritsar, Patna, Dibrugarh, Gorakhpur, Silchar, Naharlagun, Kolkata, Guwahati, Ranchi, Charalipalli, Mumbai Central, Agra Cantt, Jorhathi, Lumding, Howrah, Gomti Nagar, Anand Vihar and Kamakhya.

Ishan Mwshahary memorial celebration at Kokrajhar University



HT Correspondent
KOKRAJHAR, Oct 24: The 43rd edition of the Ishan Mwshahary Memorial Celebration commenced on Thursday on a vibrant note at Kokrajhar University complex, marking the beginning of a three-day cultural and literary festival. The opening day saw enthusiastic participation from several institutions, including Aronai College, Girls' College Kokrajhar, PM

SHRI Girls' Higher Secondary School Kokrajhar, Janata College Serfanguri, Bagadhar Brahma Kishan College, Mushalpur College, Koklabari Chhapaguri College, Bengol College, Bireswar Brahma College, UN Brahma College, Udalguri College and Kokrajhar University.

The day began with a formal introduction and welcome ceremony, followed by a drama competition,

one of the major highlights of the event. The competition was judged by NSD (New Delhi) actor-director Jayanta Narzary and noted actor-director Paul.

Colleges presented diverse and thought-provoking plays — Koklabari Chhapaguri College staged 'Koklabari' and Bengol College performed 'Gwdan Nokor'. Kokrajhar University presented 'Adra Simang', Udalguri College enacted 'Hinjaw Godai' and Bengol College performed 'Hangma'.

Sahitya Akademi awardee and retired professor Anjalee Basumatary, writer Rani Helen Wary and several other noted literary figures graced the occasion.

Organised by the Kokrajhar University Bodo Students' Literary Society, the event commemorates the literary legacy of Ishan Mwshahary and seeks to inspire students to preserve and promote Bodo literature and culture.

The 'Made-in-India' Surgical Robot Yatra reaches Dibrugarh, empowering doctors

SSII MantraM showcases surgical robotics at ASACON 2025

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Oct 24: SS Innovations International (SSII), the makers of India's first indigenously developed surgical robotic system, marked another milestone as the SSII MantraM 'Made-in-India' Surgical Robot Yatra arrived in Dibrugarh to participate in ASACON 2025, the annual conference of the Assam Chapter of the Association of Surgeons of India, hosted by Assam Medical College from October 24 to 26.

The initiative, aimed at democratising access to advanced healthcare, showcased the state-of-the-art SSII MantraM surgical robotic platform to doctors, students and the public. Through the MantraM Mobile Simulation Bus, participants experienced the advanced capabilities of the Mantra 3.0 surgical robotic system, reinforcing India's growing leadership in medical technology.



The event featured live demonstrations and expert training sessions, highlighting how robotic-assisted surgery is redefining precision, safety and accessibility. The MantraM Mobile Tele-Robotic Surgery Unit will remain stationed at ASACON 2025

for two more days of interactive sessions and technology showcases. Welcoming the initiative, Dr Subhash Khanna, laparoscopic surgeon and Director of Swagat Hospitals, said the MantraM Yatra represents a transformative moment in India's medical innova-

Jorhat Sahitya Sabha ex president Indrajit Barua passes away

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Oct 24: Indrajit Kumar Barua, 77, a retired Assam Government Joint Secretary and former president of Jorhat Zila Sahitya Sabha, passed away from a cerebral stroke on Thursday night at JMCH.

A resident of Sankardev Path, Jail Road, Barua is survived by a son, a daughter and numerous relatives and well-wishers. He was actively associated with various socio-cultural and literary organisations and authored several books.

Before joining the Assam Civil Services, Barua served as a faculty member in the English department of the then Jagannath Barooah College, now upgraded to a university. His death was widely mourned, including by the Assam Sahitya Sabha. His mortal remains were brought to the Chandrakanta Handique Bhawan, the central office of Assam Sahitya Sabha, on Friday, where people paid their last respects.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Quality is everyone's responsibility.
-W. Edwards Deming

Bihar polls and women voters

In electoral politics, voters play a crucial role. Their support will be key in determining whether Nitish Kumar secures his tenth term as Chief Minister after the Bihar state assembly polls in November this year. For two decades, Kumar has prioritised women's issues, resulting in important political reforms. As he approaches what may be his last election, understanding the support of women for him is vital. Nitish's health has declined, and he is rarely seen in public, showing signs of confusion. This has led the BJP to consider appointing its own chief minister. The future of both JD(U) and Nitish remains uncertain. While Nitish Kumar may face criticism on various issues in the upcoming polls, his support from the women voters continues. Nitish Kumar's ban on alcohol has garnered strong support from women and has contributed to his prolonged tenure in office. In a state where poverty and patriarchy are significant issues, Kumar's policies have delivered benefits, including bicycles, jobs, cash grants, and regulations on an abusive husband's drinking. In 2010, Bihar recorded a high turnout of women voters, a trend that has persisted. Kumar has gained strong support from women, thanks to improved law and order, which has made them feel safer and more confident to vote.

Support for Kumar varies from district to district along caste lines.: Upper-caste, non-Yadav OBC, EBC, and Dalit women tend to support the NDA, while Muslim and Yadav women as also a substantial part of dalits largely favour the Grand Alliance. Mahagathbandhan led by the RJD. In the previous elections, the NDA targeted women voters, winning 60.5 percent of seats in constituencies with a higher proportion of women than men. Of the 243 total seats, the NDA secured 72 in female-majority constituencies, while the Mahagathbandhan won 42. This shift in electoral behaviour highlights the growing influence of women in Bihar politics. One of the reasons is that with the rise of education and empowerment among women, they can significantly influence electoral outcomes, promoting political parties to revise their manifestos to better appeal to them. A primary motivator for voting is the belief that every vote counts.

The upcoming Bihar elections will demonstrate the significant role women voters play in India. Since 1962, the number of women voting has increased. In 1962, 63.3% of men voted, while only 46.6% of women did. By 2014, the difference was down to 1.5%, and in 2019, women even voted more than men by 0.17%. This change is partly due to the education of women in the 1970s, which helped them understand and appreciate their right to vote.

Green Manifesto for Assam

By: Mowsam Hazarika

Assam, blessed with fertile plains, mighty rivers, lush forests, and vibrant biodiversity, has always been a land where nature and human life coexisted in harmony. Yet, in recent decades, this balance has been disturbed. The pressures of unplanned development, urban expansion, deforestation, pollution, and population growth have placed immense stress on the state's natural resources.

As Assam stands at a crucial crossroads of ecological vulnerability and development demand, the need for a Green Manifesto has never been more urgent. Such a manifesto must serve not merely as a political document but as a moral and environmental commitment to protect the land, water, forests, and air that sustain life in the region.

• Understanding the Green Manifesto

A Green Manifesto for Assam envisions a development path that balances ecological integrity with economic progress. It recognises that real prosperity cannot be achieved at the cost of environmental degradation. The manifesto must therefore integrate principles of sustainability into every sphere of governance — agriculture, industry, urbanisation, transport, and education.

At its core, the Green Manifesto should be built on three fundamental pillars:

1. Protection of natural resources,
2. Promotion of sustainable livelihoods, and
3. Participation of communities in environmental governance.

• Protecting Assam's Land and Ecosystems

Land, for the people of Assam, is not just a means of production — it is identity, inheritance, and culture. However, large tracts of fertile agricultural land are rapidly being converted for non-agricultural purposes. Forests are shrinking, wetlands are disappearing, and the ecological foundation of the state is weakening.

The Green Manifesto must include a comprehensive land-use policy that prevents indiscriminate land conversion and promotes the conservation of cultivable areas, wetlands, and forests. It should strengthen laws to protect biodiversity, regulate mining and construction in ecologically sensitive zones, and prioritise the restoration of degraded lands.

• Water and River Management
Assam's lifeline, the Brahmaputra, along with its many tributaries, defines the state's ecology and economy. Yet, these rivers are now threatened by pollution, erosion, and siltation. The annual cycle of floods and droughts reflects deep ecological imbalance caused by deforestation, unscientific embankments, and encroachment on wetlands.

The Green Manifesto must pro-

vide scientific river management — focusing on watershed conservation, reforestation in catchment areas, and restoration of natural wetlands. Community-based water conservation models and river-cleaning initiatives should become central to policy action.

• Sustainable Agriculture and Livelihoods

Agriculture remains the backbone of Assam's economy and the lifeline of rural society. However, declining soil fertility, erratic weather, and overuse of chemicals are reducing productivity and harming ecosystems.

To address this, the Green Manifesto must promote organic and climate-resilient agriculture. Encouraging the use of traditional seeds, integrated farming systems, and soil health management can help restore ecological balance. Farmers should be supported with training, incentives, and markets for organic produce.

• Green Urban Development
Urbanisation in Assam, particularly in Guwahati and other growing towns, has expanded rapidly, often without environmental planning. Hills are being cut, wetlands filled, and waste management remains inadequate. The result is waterlogging, heat islands, and poor air quality.

The Green Manifesto should push for eco-friendly urban policies — promoting green architecture, energy-efficient housing, sustainable transport systems, and rainwater harvesting. Urban local bodies must be empowered to enforce building codes that preserve natural drainage and green spaces. Smart cities must first be green cities.

• Renewable Energy and Climate Action

Assam's growing energy demand must be met responsibly. The Green Manifesto should commit to a renewable energy transition, promoting solar, wind, and bioenergy to reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Every government building, school, and panchayat office should gradually move towards renewable energy sources.

Moreover, Assam should implement a state-level Climate Action Plan to address the impacts of floods, droughts, and heatwaves. Local disaster management systems must be strengthened with scientific data and community training.

• Community Participation and Traditional Wisdom
One of Assam's greatest strengths is its community-based resource management system. Indigenous communities across hills and plains have practised sustainable living for centuries — protecting forests, conserving water, and

maintaining ecological balance through customary laws. The Green Manifesto must recognise and empower these local systems. Development should not be imposed from the top down but built from the grassroots. Village-level institutions should be given a role in natural resource management, ensuring that people are partners, not passive beneficiaries, in sustainability.

maintaining ecological balance through customary laws.

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• Environmental Education and Institutional Strengthening

Environmental awareness must begin at the school level. The Green Manifesto should advocate for strong environmental education across curricula, so that future generations grow up with a scientific and ethical understanding of sustainability.

An empowered Assam Environmental Council could coordinate policies among departments, monitor implementation, and ensure accountability in environmental decisions. Research institutions and universities must also be engaged in developing eco-innovations suited to Assam's conditions.

• A Roadmap for a Green Future

To summarise, the key components of a Green Manifesto for Assam should include:

1. Protection of agricultural land, forests, and wetlands.
2. Restoration of rivers and water bodies.
3. Promotion of organic and climate-resilient agriculture.
4. Green urban planning and waste management.
5. Renewable energy development.
6. Environmental education and awareness.
7. Strengthened environmental governance.
8. Community-based conservation initiatives.

This manifesto should not remain a policy on paper but become a living document — continuously reviewed, updated, and implemented through collaboration among government, academia, and citizens.

Conclusion: A Shared Responsibility

The future of Assam depends on how wisely we treat our natural heritage today. Environmental conservation is not a task for the government alone — it is a collective responsibility. Each citizen has a role to play, from conserving water and reducing plastic use to planting trees and supporting green policies.

If we can blend the wisdom of our ancestors with modern science, and if we act with courage and foresight, Assam can emerge as a model of sustainable development for the entire region.

The Green Manifesto is not just an environmental agenda — it is a vision for life itself. It calls upon every Assamese to join hands in creating a greener, cleaner, and more resilient Assam — a state where progress thrives in harmony with nature.

FORENSIC REPORT AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN CRIME INVESTIGATION

The role of forensic reports in the field of crime investigation is profoundly significant and indispensable. These reports provide a clear and reliable depiction through the scientific analysis of evidence collected from crime scenes. This depiction assists investigative teams in unraveling the complex structure of a crime, identifying the perpetrator, and protecting innocent individuals from unjust punishment. The application of forensic science has not only made crime investigations faster and more reliable but has also played a crucial role in establishing justice in society.

A forensic report is a written document detailing the scientific analysis of evidence collected from a crime scene. This report contains information on the analysis of physical evidence, such as fingerprints, bloodstains, hair, clothing fibers, weapons, or other materials recovered from the crime scene. These pieces of evidence are examined using various branches of science, including biology, chemistry, physics, and digital technology. Forensic scientists draw conclusions based on the information obtained from this evidence, which helps investigative teams understand the timeline, circumstances, and potential perpetrators of the crime. The primary objective of a forensic report is to present the facts related to the crime in an organized, impartial, and credible manner. This information is used as evidence in legal proceedings, paving the way for justice.

The accuracy and reliability of forensic reports determine the direction of the investigation. The clarity and scientific foundation of these reports make them an essential component of the investigation process. Through forensic reports, the complex structure of a crime can be simplified, serving as a guiding light for investigative teams. Each piece of information in the report sheds light on some aspect of the

crime, thereby accelerating the pace of the investigation.

The process of preparing a forensic report is highly meticulous and complex. Every step of this process requires precision and caution. From collecting evidence at the crime scene to analyzing it in the laboratory and finally presenting the findings in the report, every task must be performed with utmost care. Even a minor error during evidence collection can compromise the quality of the evidence. For instance, if physical evidence is handled carelessly, fingerprints or biological material may be damaged. Such errors can lead the investigation in the wrong direction or render the evidence inadmissible in court. Furthermore, maintaining the chain of custody is critically important. This chain refers to the accurate documentation of every step, from evidence collection to its presentation in court. Any deviation in this chain can raise questions about the credibility of the evidence. Forensic scientists use advanced equipment and technology in laboratories to ensure the reliability of the data. The conclusions presented in the report are based on these test results. These conclusions are entirely grounded in scientific data, leaving no room for personal opinions or biases. This impartiality makes forensic reports admissible in court and a valuable asset in investigations.

The application of forensic reports in crime investigations is extensive. Their role is particularly evident in the investigation of heinous crimes such as murder. In murder cases, biological evidence, such as bloodstains, hair, body parts, or other biological materials, often provides critical information about the circumstances of the crime through testing. Analysis of bloodstains can determine the nature of the struggle between the victim and the perpetrator, the type of weapon used, or the nature of the

injuries. For example, the pattern of bloodstains can reveal the type of injury or the movements of the perpetrator. Additionally, DNA testing can confirm an individual's identity and establish their connection to the crime. This information helps investigative teams narrow down the list of suspects. The accuracy and reliability of forensic report data clarify the direction of the investigation, reducing the likelihood of wasting time on incorrect leads. These reports not only aid in identifying the perpetrator but also help answer complex questions that arise during the investigation. For instance, in a murder case, precise information about the time of death, the nature of injuries, or the circumstances at the crime scene can guide the investigation in the right direction.

The importance of forensic re-

ports is not limited to murder investigations. They play a crucial role in investigating other crimes, such as theft, rape, fraud, or digital crimes. In recent times, digital forensics has enabled the recovery of data from computers, mobile phones, or other digital devices to uncover information related to crimes. Forensic reports prepared based on this data provide new directions to investigations. Similarly, toxicology tests determine the cause of death, aiding in shaping the course of the investigation. The versatile application of forensic reports has made them an integral part of modern investigative processes. They help establish connections between various aspects of a crime, reducing the complexity of the investigation. For example, in a theft case, analyzing fingerprints recovered from the crime scene can identify the perpetrator. Thus, forensic reports are equally effective in investigating various types of crimes.

Although forensic reports are scientific and reliable, they have certain limitations. If proper procedures are not followed during evidence collection or errors occur in the laboratory, the accuracy of the report may be questioned. Additionally, in some cases, the lack or insufficiency of evidence may prevent forensic analysis from reaching clear conclusions. In such situations, the investigation may slow down. However, advancements in forensic science technologies and methods are gradually reducing these limitations. By improving the skills and training standards of forensic scientists, the reliability of these reports has further increased. For instance, modern DNA testing methods have become more precise and reliable compared to earlier techniques, making it possible to obtain critical information from even small amounts of evidence.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

juries. For example, in a murder case, if a forensic report establishes a suspect's connection to the crime, proving their guilt becomes easier. Conversely, if there is no evidence linking an accused individual to the crime, they may be declared innocent. Thus, forensic reports serve as a powerful tool in establishing justice. Their accuracy and impartiality enhance their admissibility in court. When forensic scientists testify in court, they explain the information in their reports clearly, making it easier for judges and juries to understand the circumstances of the crime. Through these reports, the legal process becomes more transparent and just.

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Advancements in science and technology have continuously improved the accuracy and efficiency

of forensic analysis. The application of artificial intelligence and machine learning has opened new possibilities in the field of forensic science. These technologies enable faster and more accurate analysis of large volumes of data. For example, artificial intelligence can analyze fingerprints or bloodstain patterns more quickly and accurately. Furthermore, advancements in digital forensics have provided new directions in cybercrime investigations. The enhanced application of forensic reports will make future crime investigations more efficient and effective. Their role in establishing justice in society will become increasingly significant.

As crime rates rise, fear and instability grow in society. Forensic reports simplify the process of identifying and punishing perpetrators, fostering a sense of security in society. Moreover, these reports protect innocent individuals from unjust punishment, thereby increasing public trust in the law. The application of forensic science has not only made crime investigations scientific but also more transparent and just. Thus, forensic reports serve as a powerful medium for establishing peace and justice in society.

In conclusion, forensic reports are an indispensable part of crime investigations. Their scientific methods, impartial analysis, and accurate data play an unparalleled role in resolving the complexities of crimes. From investigating heinous crimes like murder to probing digital crimes, the application of forensic reports is extensive. They not only facilitate the punishment of perpetrators but also ensure justice for innocent individuals. With advancements in science and technology, the efficiency and reliability of forensic reports continue to improve, making future investigative processes more precise and effective. The importance of these reports in establishing justice in society is profound, and their application has provided a new direction in the fight against crime.

Zubeen Garg: Assam's Feral Maestro and the Quest for Justice

By: Dipak Kurni

The state of Assam is currently engulfed in a wave of grief, reflection, and demand for accountability following the untimely death of Zubeen Garg in Singapore. As the slogan "Justice for Zubeen" gains momentum across the state, it is crucial to move beyond the superficial image of the artist derived from a handful of his songs and examine who Zubeen Garg truly was. Beyond his musical genius, he was a phenomenon whose life and work reflected the aspirations, contradictions, and collective emotions of Assam. For those who loved him, his death is more than a personal loss; it is an invitation to reflect on the role he played in shaping the cultural, social, and emotional landscape of the state.

Zubeen Garg was a musician of extraordinary versatility. Over a career spanning nearly three decades, he sang approximately 38,000 songs in over 40 languages, wrote and composed hundreds of pieces, mastered dozens of instruments, and directed and acted in films and music videos. His prodigious output created a near-cult following that extended far beyond the conventional boundaries of Assamese society. He was fearless, audacious, and unafraid to challenge social norms and hierarchies. He made people uncomfortable, whether by questioning why the heads of Assam's Vaishnavite monasteries were addressed with the honorific Prabhushwar or by performing acts of sheer spontaneity, like climbing poles to reach his audience in open fields. Yet, in spite of—or perhaps because of—his unpredictability, Zubeen's death was mourned across Assam by people from every walk of life. Rich and poor, old and young, insiders and outsiders to the definitional orbit of Assamese identity, they all came together to grieve. This is a testament to the extraordinary and rare nature of his presence: he was far more than a singer; he was a cultural phenomenon.

Zubeen became a symbol for the emerging Assamese middle class at the turn of the twenty-first century, a time when liberalisation had opened up opportunities for urban Indians elsewhere but left Assam's aspiring middle class wanting and waiting. In the absence of a robust cultural infrastructure, limited visual media, audio gadgets, and music cassettes became not mere entertainment but a sustenance for dreams. In this context, Zubeen's music transcended the limitations of material aspiration. His voice became a medium through which ordinary Assamese could articulate hope, desire, and longing. He bridged the gap between the local and global, the traditional and modern, infusing his songs with the emotional depth and resonance needed to give meaning to life in a region grappling with uncertainty. Through albums such as Anamika, Maya, Asha, Mukti, and Pakhi, Zubeen explored themes of freedom, love, existential uncertainty, and belonging, reflecting the emotional and political pulse of Assam itself.

Zubeen's journey into the cultural heart of Assam was neither immediate nor easy. Early in his career, he was an outsider, someone who could be heard but was not yet taken seriously as an artist. He was not, at the time, placed alongside doyens like Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Bishnu Rabha, or Bhupen Hazarika, whose work shaped modern Assamese identity. Yet by the late 1990s, Zubeen began to carve his own

space. He modernised Bihu folk songs, infused devotional music with contemporary melodies, and breathed new life into timeless compositions of the earlier generation. He also performed Kishore Kumar and Mohammed Rafi songs with sincerity and soulfulness, connecting Assam's local sensibilities with the broader Indian musical landscape. His genius lay in his rootedness to the local culture, his engagement with the indigenous music of different tribes, and his fearless social commentary.

A fiercely independent mind, Zubeen did not conform to the norms of political correctness or social convention. He openly declared himself a socialist leftist, an unapologetic janyeu-less Brahmin, and a godless singer. He wore his defiance and individuality like a badge of honour, challenging accepted hierarchies while remaining deeply committed to humanity. His concern for nature, exemplified by his protests against the culling of trees in Guwahati, his love for the environment, and his advocacy for social justice, marked him as a custodian of moral conscience. Yet, despite his complexity and unpredictability, the people of Assam embraced him wholeheartedly. His death is therefore felt not just as the passing of a star, but as the loss of a symbol of fearless creativity and social engagement.

The paradoxes of Zubeen Garg were many. He was a man deeply in love with trees and nature, whose desire to ascend to the height of a eucalyptus tree symbolised his longing for freedom and transcendence. Yet, his death by drowning in the ocean—tragically poetic—reflects the unpredictable and almost mythic narrative of his life. Even in his final days, his appearance in a t-shirt inscribed with the word "killer" at Bhupen Hazarika's funeral demonstrated his complex engagement with the cultural and moral landscape of Assam. He challenged conventions, questioned revered authorities, and remained unyielding in his pursuit of artistic and social truth.

Zubeen's appeal lay in his authenticity. He never relied on image-building, publicity machinery, or conventional markers of "high culture" to win affection. He spoke the unspeakable, addressed issues that society often avoided, and engaged in cultural rebellion, challenging elite sensibilities with the raw force of his talent. In a world that often demanded measured and refined artistry, Zubeen remained blissfully untamed. His feral creative power was admired because it was real, immediate, and unmediated. He exemplified the rare combination of extraordinary skill, cultural rootedness, and social courage that is seldom found in one individual.

The unprecedented mourning that followed his death—people pouring into the streets, singing his songs, and paying tribute across towns and cities—demonstrates the profound emotional and social role he played in Assam. The widespread outcry and the ongoing chorus for "Justice for Zubeen" reflect not only the tragedy of his death but also the public's demand for accountability. Legal mechanisms now appear insufficient to uncover the truth behind the circumstances of his passing, and the calls for justice must not be allowed to dissipate amid political convenience. Zubeen's death has transformed into a movement, a collective insistence that society recognises the extraordinary nature of his life and holds responsible parties accountable.

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Zubeen Garg's cultural significance cannot be overstated. He was the quintessence of Assam's aspirations, particularly for the younger generation. At a time when Assam grappled with social unrest, insurgency, and political ambiguity, his music provided a sanctuary of hope, a bridge to broader musical worlds, and a language through which the youth could articulate their frustrations and dreams. He embodied a rare combination of rootedness and cosmopolitanism, connecting Assam's indigenous music with global sensibilities while staying deeply committed to his land and its people. His personal choices, including the decision to remain in Assam despite opportunities elsewhere, underline his deep attachment to his homeland and a sense of responsibility towards his community.

Beyond artistry, Zubeen's life represents a moral and social philosophy. He was a socialist, a humanist, and an advocate for the powerless. His songs, public statements, and social engagement reflect a vision of society that transcends conventional hierarchies of caste, religion, and class. In his death, Assam lost not only a musical genius but a custodian of humanity—a figure whose life provided both aesthetic pleasure and ethical guidance. His legacy is one of inclusion, courage, and relentless commitment to cultural and social truth.

The challenge that lies ahead is to sustain the unity and inspiration his life generated. Mourning alone cannot carry the transformative power of Zubeen Garg's vision. The youth of Assam, in particular, are now charged with the responsibility of translating the emotional solidarity of these days into lasting social consciousness and civic engagement. To honour Zubeen truly is to embody his principles: to resist injustice, to nurture creativity without compromise, and to approach life with courage, authenticity, and empathy. His work provides the template for a society where human values transcend parochial divides, where art is both a refuge and a clarion call, and where love for the land is inseparable from respect for its people.

Zubeen Garg's passing is tragic, yet it also opens a space for reflection and transformation. In mourning him, Assam is collectively acknowledging the power of art to unite, to challenge, and to heal. His life and work compel the state to consider what it means to embrace creativity, compassion, and courage in a society often torn by division and despair. The ongoing demand for justice is part of this reckoning, an insistence that Zubeen's extraordinary contributions be recognised and protected from neglect, negligence, or obfuscation.

In the final analysis, Zubeen Garg was more than a musician, more than an icon; he was a moral and cultural compass for Assam. His artistry and audacity created a shared sense of belonging in a society fraught with complexity. His death leaves a void, but it also leaves a challenge: to continue the work of imagining Assam as a place where creativity, courage, and humanity are not optional, but central to the life of the community. Justice for Zubeen is not merely a legal demand; it is a reaffirmation of his vision, a promise that the values he stood for—compassion, integrity, and fearless creativity—will not be allowed to fade. Assam mourns, reflects, and resolves: the feral maestro may be gone, but the legacy he left behind will resonate for generations to come. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)

What is a chief Human Resources Officer and how to become a CHRO

By: Jeanne M. Stafford

The chief human resources officer has evolved from an operational administrator into one of the most powerful architects of organizational success. In an age of constant change, this role now defines how companies grow, attract, and retain talent, and achieve continuous improvement.

The CHRO no longer just manages people. They build efficiency into the system. CHRO turnover rose 15% in the first quarter of 2025, reaching 32% above the six-year average. Meanwhile, 87% of CHROs say they are actively reimagining HR delivery to lower costs and increase speed.

The message is clear: As transformation accelerates, companies that fail to modernize HR leadership risk losing both their best people and their market relevance. The CHRO is not a cost line but a competitive advantage.

What Is A CHRO?

The CHRO is the senior-most executive responsible for the company's people strategy, overseeing workforce planning, culture, compensation, inclusion, learning and succession. They typically report directly to the CEO and partner closely with the CFO and board on growth strategy and enterprise risk.

CHROs operate in nearly every industry, from tech and health care to finance, retail and manufacturing. Their influence is magnified in organizations navigating fast change. In these firms, the CHRO is the integrator between people and performance, aligning business strategy with human potential.

Job Responsibilities

A CHRO's day revolves around four core outcomes: strategic alignment, leadership development, culture design and workforce readiness. Their time today is distributed across three main priorities, according to Deloitte's 2025 Global Human Capital Trends report:

- Talent strategy and skills transformation (35%) – building future-ready talent pipelines and addressing skills gaps.
- Culture and inclusion (30%) – shaping purpose-driven workplaces that attract and retain top performers.
- Digital transformation and HR tech (25%) – implementing analytics, AI, and automation to drive performance.

The remaining 10% spans crisis response, compliance and board advisory work. Korn Ferry data shows that modern CHROs spend over half their week in cross-functional strategy sessions rather than traditional HR operations.



This is a dramatic shift from "personnel management" to "enterprise leadership."

The CHRO Versus The CPO

The chief human resources officer and chief people officer roles share common DNA, but their emphasis differs. CHROs often oversee global HR infrastructure, risk and strategy. CPOs tend to focus more on employee experience, culture and engagement.

In high-growth organizations both are accountable for outcomes that tie people investments directly to business performance. This is measured not in morale surveys but in retention rates, innovation output, and recruitment agility. This shift signals that the future of HR leadership is not about hierarchy. It's about human capital strategy as a profit center.

What Defines A Successful CHRO?

Today's CHRO must be part data scientist, part psychologist and part business operator.

- Technical: Analytics, workforce modeling, AI-driven talent systems and change management.
- Strategic: Scenario planning, organizational design and C-suite influence.
- Interpersonal: Empathy, coaching, resilience and the ability to unify across generations and geographies.

The CHRO must speak the language of both finance and emotion. They must be able to quantify culture and human behavior in business terms. The post-digital enterprise demands that HR leaders anticipate rather than react.

"The more we can be proactive, the less re-

active we have to be. There will always be things to navigate. You want to make sure you have the right systems in place. The more that you are aligned to long-term thinking on your values and proactively anticipating the needs of the future as fast as we're going, it's a way to keep that through line as the changes happen," Stephanie Kramer, Chief HR Officer of L'Oreal, USA shared in an interview.

According to PwC, 60% of CEOs cite CHROs as important business partners, not just talent support. The CHRO's mandate has evolved from "managing workforces" to engineering ecosystems that enable speed, innovation, and trust. When asked, "What technical, strategic, and interpersonal skills matter most?" Kramer added, "You have to have courage and encourage and sometimes they can be at odds with each other."

The best CHROs use emotional intelligence to interpret culture, business acumen to drive outcomes, and data fluency to predict risk. "I don't want them to have to dig through a policy and a website. I want them to have access to it," Kramer noted.

"And whether that's through an AI assisted tool or it's through our shared services, or it's from their HR business partner or it's from their people manager, the information is important to that individual, but it's also really important that you communicate that to your entire organization so they know how to best support their teammates." The CHRO amplifies the impact

of every other executive through alignment, feedback and clarity.

How Do You Become A CHRO?

1. Education

The foundation of a CHRO career is often a degree in business administration, organizational psychology, human resources or industrial relations. Increasingly, MBAs and specialized master's programs in people analytics, organizational leadership, or change management are considered accelerators.

What's changed is the emphasis on statistical literacy. Today's CHRO must be as comfortable interpreting dashboards as developing leaders. Continuing education in AI, workforce analytics and DEI strategy is becoming essential.

Many CHROs also pursue certificates in strategic HR transformation (SHRM-SCP), leadership and inclusion (Cornell ILR, Wharton, MIT Sloan), or executive coaching. These signal readiness to influence beyond HR boundaries.

2. Experience

It typically takes 15 to 20 years of progressive leadership experience to reach the CHRO level. Successful candidates have rotated across talent development, compensation, organizational design and business partnership roles, often adding exposure in operations or finance to build credibility with the C-suite.

Cross-industry mobility is now an advantage. A CHRO who's led in tech, retail and manufacturing brings an adaptability essential to today's market. What matters most is not tenure. It's the breadth of transformation experience and measurable business impact.

Many CHROs began in consulting, legal or communications, fields that strengthen the influence and systems thinking demanded of modern HR leadership.

3. Certifications

Certifications such as SHRM-SCP, SPHR and emerging programs in people analytics, DEI, or future of work strategy demonstrate commitment to continuous reinvention. In an environment where the half-life of a skill is now less than five years, according to the World Economic Forum, adaptability is the differentiator.

4. Leadership

Leadership readiness remains the single biggest predictor of CHRO success. The role requires calm amid complexity, balancing empathy with accountability. CHROs who thrive tend to have led major cultural transformations or crisis responses before ascending.

5. Networking

Networks accelerate visibility and readiness. Board connections, cross-functional peer

groups, and executive mentorship circles provide early access to opportunities and insights. Platforms like SHRM, HRPAA and the Forbes HR Council are critical spaces for professional influence and exchange.

What Is The Salary Of A CHRO?

CHRO compensation scales with impact and scope. According to Equilar's 2025 midyear recap, base salaries average:

- \$325,000 to \$450,000 in midsize firms
- \$600,000 to \$800,000 or more in global enterprises
- Total compensation often exceeds \$1 million for Fortune 500 leaders

Pay correlates strongly with the size of workforce, global footprint and role in business strategy. In firms where HR drives measurable growth, CHROs are among the highest-compensated executives after the CEO and CFO.

Why Is A CHRO Important?

Without a CHRO, companies operate with a leadership blind spot, misaligned culture, unmeasured engagement and lost innovation. According to Gallup, when talent and trust erode, turnover climbs, costing anywhere from 40% to 200% of their annual salary. A strategic CHRO mitigates these costs by aligning workforce design with business performance. They oversee reskilling, diversity, and leadership pipelines, functions that directly correlate with shareholder returns and brand trust.

The Future Of The CHRO Role

The CHRO of tomorrow is part strategist and part futurist. They are leading through:

- AI integration: 74% of CHROs expect to use GenAI in people operations within 12 to 18 months, according to PwC.
- Skills architecture: Firms shifting to skills-based hiring outperform peers in innovation and retention.
- Culture intelligence: Using data to measure belonging, trust, and team cohesion as leading indicators of growth.

The next decade will reward the CHROs who lead boldly at the intersection of human intuition and machine intelligence. The most forward-thinking ones already see HR not as support but as a strategic growth engine.

The Bottom Line On CHROs

The CHRO has become one of the most vital, visible and visionary executive roles in business. Their influence extends beyond people. It defines an organization's capacity for reinvention. Becoming a CHRO today is not just a career path. It is a leadership calling that demands courage, intelligence and devotion to what makes organizations thrive: human potential.

NEEPCO Apprentice Recruitment 2025 – 98 Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 08/11/2025.

North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 98 Graduate Apprentice, Trade Apprentice and Technician Apprentice Vacancy for FY 2025 - 2026 under the Apprenticeship Act 1961. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here.

1. Graduate Apprentice
No of posts: 46 posts
Place of training:
Assam Gas Based Power Station (AGBPS), Bokuloni, District Dibrugarh, Assam: 4 posts
Agartala Gas Based Power Station (AgGBPS), Ramchandra Nagar, Tripura: 6 posts
Doyang Hydro Power Station (DHPS), Wokha, Nagaland: 1 post
Kameng Hydro Power Station (KaHPS), Kimi, West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh: 8 posts
Kopili Hydro Power Station (KHPS), Umrongso, Dima Hasao, Assam: 3 posts
Pare Hydro Power Station (PHPS), NEEPCO, Doimukh, Papum Pare District, Arunachal Pradesh: 8 posts
Panyor Lower Hydro Power Station (PLHPS), NEEPCO, Yazali (43 KM) Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh: 5 posts
Tripura Gas Based Power Station (TGBPS), Monarchak, Sonamura, PO Dhanpur, Tripura: 7 posts
Tural Hydro Power Station (THPS), POTural Hydro Power Station, District-Kolasib, Mozoram: 3 posts
Monthly stipend: Rs. 18,000/- per month
Essential Qualification:
a) A Degree in Engineering or Technology granted by a Statutory University.
b) A Degree in Engineering or Technology granted by an Institution empowered to grant such degree by an Act of parliament.
2. Technician Apprentice (Diploma in Engineering or Technology)
No of posts: 26 posts
Place of training:
Assam Gas Based Power Station (AGBPS), Bokuloni, District Dibrugarh, Assam: 4 posts
Agartala Gas Based Power Station (AgGBPS), Ramchandra Nagar, Tripura: 3 posts
Doyang Hydro Power Station (DHPS), Wokha, Nagaland: 3 posts
Kameng Hydro Power Station (KaHPS), Kimi, West Kameng District, Arunachal Pradesh: 2 posts
Kopili Hydro Power Station (KHPS), Umrongso, Dima Hasao, Assam: 3 posts
Pare Hydro Power Station (PHPS), NEEPCO, Doimukh, Papum Pare District, Arunachal Pradesh: 4 posts
Tripura Gas Based Power Station (TGBPS), Monarchak, Sonamura, PO Dhanpur, Tripura West: 5 posts
Tural Hydro Power Station (THPS), POTural Hydro Power Station, District-Kolasib, Mozoram: 2 posts
Monthly stipend: Rs. 15,000/- per month
Essential Qualification:
a) A Diploma in Engineering or Technology Granted by a State Council or Board of Technical Education established by a State Government.
b) A Diploma in Engineering or Technology from a University.
c) A Diploma in Engineering or Technology granted by an Institute recognized by the State Govt. or Central Govt. as equivalent to (a) and (b) above
3. Graduate or Equivalent in General Streams such as B.A, B.Sc & B.Com.
No of posts: 18 posts
Assam Gas Based Power Station (AGBPS), Bokuloni, District Dibrugarh, Assam: 2 posts
Agartala Gas Based Power Station (AgGBPS), Ramchandra Nagar, Tripura (West): 2 posts
Doyang Hydro Power Station (DHPS), District/P.O-Wokha Nagaland: 1 post
Tripura Gas Based Power Station (TGBPS), Monarchak, Sonamura, PO Dhanpur, Tripura West: 3 posts
Tural Hydro Power Station (THPS), POTural Hydro Power Station, District-Kolasib, Mozoram: 3 posts
NEEPCO Corporate Office, Brookland Compound, Lower New Colony, Shillong: 7 posts
Monthly stipend: Rs. 15,000/- per month
Essential Qualification:
a) A degree in any subject (other than engineering/ technology) of a minimum three years duration granted by a Statutory University.
b) A degree in any subject (other than engineering/ technology) of a minimum of three years duration granted by an Institution empowered to grant such degree by an Act of parliament.
c) Graduate examination of professional bodies recognized by the Central Gov-

ernment as equivalent to a degree (other than engineering/ technology)

4. Trade Apprentice
No of posts: 8 posts
Place of training:
Doyang Hydro Power Station (DHPS), District/P.O-Wokha Nagaland: 2 posts
Kopili Hydro Power Station (KHPS), Umrongso, Dima Hasao, Assam: 1 post
Panyor Lower Hydro Power Station (PLHPS), NEEPCO, Yazali (43 KM) Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh: 2 posts
Tripura Gas Based Power Station (TGBPS), Monarchak, Sonamura, PO Dhanpur, Tripura West: 3 posts
Monthly stipend: Rs. 14877/- per month
Essential Qualification:

- # Electrician: 10th & ITI Pass
- # Lineman: 10th & ITI Pass
- # Plumber: ITI Pass

Resident-ship: The candidate should be a resident of North East India.

- Qualification Date:
For Graduate Engineering & Diploma Engineering, the candidate should have completed his / her Graduation / Diploma not before 31st March,2024.
For Non-Engineering Graduate or equivalent in general streams such as B.A, B.Sc & B.Com, the candidate should have completed his / her Graduation / Diploma not before 31st March,2024.
For ITI Trade Apprentices, the candidate should have completed ITI course.
Id Proof: The candidate must have Aadhaar Card (compulsory) / Pan Card/ Voter ID Card/ Passport which is required for online registration.
Age Limit: Maximum age 28 years as on 01-09-2025, but not less than 18 years.
Age Relaxation: Age relaxation is allowed for Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe/ Other Backward Classes/ Persons with Disability/ Ex-servicemen, as per applicable Govt. of India rules.
Reservation: Reservation for Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribe/ Other Backward Classes (NCL)/ Persons with Disability/ Economically Weaker Section, will be as per existing Govt. of India rules.

- (A) For Graduate Engineering & Diploma Engineering
> Candidates must apply online at National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) and no other mode of application will be accepted.

- Step I
> The Candidates must get himself / herself enrolled / registered with Board of Practical Training (BOPT), through online enrollment at National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS), in <https://nats.education.gov.in/> and possess a valid enrollment ID generated after successful enrollment.
> For instance, there may be candidates who possess qualification of both B.Tech and Diploma. If he/ she apply against Technician (Diploma) training slots, he/she must register as Diploma only in the NATS portal.

- Step II
> After successful online registration at <https://nats.education.gov.in/> and receipt of a valid enrollment ID, the candidate is advised to log in using your registered ID and Password and apply against the mentioned Establishment of NEEPCO and opt for the desired stream in line with fulfillment of educational qualifications and eligibility criteria.

- (B) For Non-Engineering Graduate or equivalent in general streams such as B.A, B.Sc & B.Com
> Candidates must apply online at National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS) and no other mode of application will be accepted.

- Step I
> The Candidates must get himself / herself enrolled / registered with Board of Practical Training (BOPT), through online enrollment at National Apprenticeship Training Scheme (NATS), in <https://nats.education.gov.in/> and poses a valid enrollment ID generated after successful enrollment.

- Step II
> After successful online registration at <https://nats.education.gov.in/> and receipt of a valid enrollment ID, the candidate is advised to log in using your registered ID and Password and apply against any one of the mentioned Establishment of NEEPCO and opt for the desired stream in line with fulfillment of educational qualifications and eligibility criteria.

- (C) ITI Trade Apprentice (Electrician, Lineman, Plumber & Fitter)
> Candidates must apply online at National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) (www.apprenticeshipindia.gov.in) and no other mode of application will be accepted.

- Step
> The Candidates must get himself / herself enrolled / registered with National Promotion Scheme (NAPS), through online enrollment at www.apprenticeshipindia.gov.in and poses a valid enrollment ID generated after successful enrollment.

- # Starting date of submission of online application: 16th October 2025
- # Last date of submission of online application: 8th November,2025

National AYUSH Mission Recruitment 2025 – 73 Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 24/10/2025.

National AYUSH Mission (NAM), Assam has released a number of employment notifications for the recruitment of 73 Programme Manager, Finance Manager, Consultant (AYUSH Health & Wellness Centre), Consultant Procurement, Consultant HR, District Program Manager, Data Entry Operator and Medical Officer posts for SPMU and DPMU under National AYUSH Mission (NAM), Assam. Interested and eligible candidates may apply here .

1. Programme Manager
No of posts: 01 post
Remuneration: Rs. 68,750.00 with provision of annual enhancement of 05% based on satisfactory performance.
Educational Qualification:
Graduation degree in any discipline including AYUSH and MBA in Healthcare Management/Human Resource (HR)/ Masters in health/hospital administration/post Graduation diploma in Hospital & healthcare management (Two years) from AICTE recognized institute.
Exposure in social sector schemes/Govt. missions at national, state and district level.
Experience: Minimum five years working experience in Public health programmes in Government / PSU or reputed private sector organizations.
2. Finance Manager
No of posts: 01 post
Remuneration: Rs. 50,000.00 with provision of annual enhancement of 05% based on satisfactory performance.
Educational Qualification:
MBA- Finance/M. Com/ICWA/C.A. from AICTE recognized institute or university.
Exposure to financial management operations, Government accounting, funds flow management, utilization certificates and scheme-wise expenditure reporting in a Govt. set up and development of accounting packages will be an added advantage.
Exposure in social sector schemes/Missions of Government at national, state and district level.
Experience: Minimum 3 years experience in government or any other reputed organization in finance management of major programme /project.
3. Consultant (AYUSH Health & Wellness Centre)
No of posts: 01 post
Remuneration: Rs. 50,000.00 with provision of annual enhancement of 05% based on satisfactory performance.
Educational Qualification:
Degree in Ayush Stream from recognized University Institution.
Exposure of working in health sector including AYUSH.
Experience: Minimum 5 years experience in government or any other reputed private organization.
4. Consultant Procurement
No of posts: 01 post
Remuneration: Rs. 50,000.00 with provision of annual enhancement of 05% based on satisfactory performance.
Educational Qualification:
Post Graduate with minimum 5 years experience in procurement/ logistics/supply chain management in reputed institute/ organization or post Graduate Diploma in Procurement logistics management Or Diploma in Health/Hospital Administration.
Certificate course in computer operation (minimum 6 months).
5. Consultant HR
No of posts: 01 post
Remuneration: Rs. 50,000.00 with provision of annual enhancement of 05% based on satisfactory performance.
Educational Qualification:
MBA(HR)/PGDBM(HR), minimum two years duration from recognized university/institution.
Exposure in social sector schemes/missions of Govt.at National, State and District.
Experience in HR functions in management organizations is desirable.
Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
Ability to complete multiple tasks and should be a team player. Knowledge of governmental recruitment, filling process and procedure in Human Resource Management will be an advantage.
Desirable knowledge of law related to human resource.
Computer proficiency in MS-Office, MS-Word, Power Point and Advanced Excel Skills.
Experience: Minimum five (5) years experience in relevant fields.
6. District Program Manager
No of posts: 27 posts
Remuneration: Rs. 40,000/- Subject to yearly increment based on performance.
Educational Qualification:
Graduation degree in any discipline including AYUSH or MBA in Healthcare Management/ Masters in health/hospital administration/post Graduation diploma in Hospital & healthcare management (Two years) from AICTE recognized institute with minimum 3 years working experience in Public health programme.
Exposure in social sector schemes/missions at national, state and district level and computer knowledge including MS Office, MS Word, MS Power Point, MS Excel would be desirable. Preference will be given to persons having experience of working in Health sector including AYUSH.

'Now is the time for all parties to support ongoing peace efforts, rather than to derail them'

Gaza peace deal 'landmark' step towards stability in Middle East: India

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 24: The recently signed Gaza Peace Agreement is a "landmark" step towards stability in the Middle East, India has said, reiterating that a two-state solution remains "the only pragmatic path" to achieving durable peace between Israel and Palestine.

Speaking at the United Nations Security Council's quarterly open debate on the situation in the Middle East on Thursday, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, said, "It is India's earnest desire to realise the vision of a stable and peaceful Middle East... deprivation and indignity cannot be part of daily life; civilians must not die due to conflict."

India stands fully ready to contribute to this endeavour, he said.

Harish said New Delhi hoped the "positive diplomatic momentum" generated by the peace summit in Sharm el-Sheikh earlier this month would lead to "lasting peace in the region".

Welcoming the signing of the "landmark" peace deal, the envoy lauded the US, "especially" President Donald Trump, for playing an instrumental role in forging the deal, and also commended Egypt and Qatar for their contributions.

Reiterating India's longstanding position, Harish said, "The two-state solution is the only pragmatic path."

"Now is the time for all parties to support ongoing peace efforts, rather than to derail them," he said.

India has consistently advocated a sovereign, independent, viable State of Palestine, living side by side in peace and security with Israel, within secure and recognised borders.

"Dialogue and diplomacy, and the two-state solution, are the means to achieve peace. The landmark initiative of the United States has generated diplomatic momentum towards peace, and all parties must adhere to their obligations in this regard," Harish



said, adding that India is firmly opposed to any unilateral moves by parties concerned.

The ambassador recalled that since the October 7, 2023 conflict, India had consistently condemned terrorism, called for an end to civilian suffering, demanded the release of hostages, and stressed the need for unimpeded humanitarian aid to Gaza.

He said India viewed the new peace agreement as "an enabler and a catalyst" for these objectives. "The short-term gains of the recent diplomatic outcomes must pave the way for medium to long-term political commitments and practical action on the ground towards the realisation of a two-state solution," he said.

Underscoring India's support

for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, the envoy referred to last month's UN high-level conference on implementing the two-state solution, saying it had "underlined the way forward". On the humanitarian front, Harish noted that India had extended over USD 170 million in total support to Palestine, including USD 40 million worth of ongoing projects and 135 metric tons of medicines and relief supplies in the past two years.

"Palestinian people cannot rebuild their lives without the support of the international community," he said, calling for the creation of economic frameworks conducive to investment and employment. "Peace and calm on the Palestinian front have implications for the wider region... Talks must continue and there must be abiding faith in the efficacy of dialogue and diplomacy," Harish said.

Harish also touched upon broader regional issues, including Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen, un-

derlining India's continuing humanitarian and peacekeeping contributions.

On Syria, he reaffirmed India's backing for a "Syrian-led, Syrian-owned political process" and paid tribute to Brigadier General Amitabh Jha, who was killed while serving as Acting Force Commander of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in December 2024.

India is the third-largest troop contributor to UNDOF.

He also stressed the safety of UN peacekeepers in Lebanon, where India is the second-largest contributor to UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon), and expressed hope that the Lebanese Armed Forces would soon take full control once the mission's sunset clause takes effect in 2026. Harish also called for an "immediate cessation of hostilities" in Yemen to allow humanitarian aid to reach civilians, saying such assistance "must be above politics". (PTI)

3 policemen killed in twin blasts in northwest Pak



PESHAWAR, Oct 24: Three policemen including a senior officer were killed and another injured on Friday in two back-to-back blasts in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, officials said.

The blasts occurred in the Hangu district of the province, according to the police.

The initial explosion targeted the Ghulmina police check-post, spreading panic in the area.

Upon receiving information about the blast, Superintendent of Police (SP) Operations Asad Zubair, accompanied by a heavy contingent of police, proceeded to inspect the site.

Their vehicle was struck by a remote-controlled bomb, killing SP Zubair and two other police officers on the spot, while injuring another officer. The injured policeman was shifted to a nearby hospital, where his condition is reported to be critical.

Security forces have cordoned off the area, sealing all entry and exit points, and launched a search operation to trace those responsible.

No group has claimed responsibility for the blasts yet.

Meanwhile, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi strongly condemned the blasts and sought an immediate report from the Inspector General of Police.

He has also convened an Apex Committee meeting in Peshawar to review the province's security situation.

"The incident is extremely tragic, and those involved will be brought to justice," Afridi said, adding that all available resources will be utilised to ensure peace in the province.

The chief minister also offered prayers for those killed and extended condolences to their bereaved families. (PTI)

Iraq faces elections at delicate moment in Middle East

BAGHDAD, Oct 24: Iraq is weeks away from parliamentary elections that will set the country's course during one of the Middle East's most delicate moments in years. While the ceasefire in Gaza may have tamped down regional tensions, fears remain of another round of conflict between Israel and Iraq's neighbour, Iran. Iraq managed to stay on the sidelines during the brief Israel-Iran war in June.

Meanwhile, Baghdad faces increasing pressure from Washington over the presence of Iran-linked armed groups in Iraq. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani came to power in 2022 with the backing of a group of pro-Iran parties but has since sought to balance Iraq's relations with Tehran and Washington. The Nov 11 vote will determine whether he gets a second term — rare for Iraqi premiers in the past.

Who's missing from the elections

A total of 7,768 candidates — 2,248 women and 5,520 men — are competing for 329 parliament seats. The strongest political factions running include Shiite blocs led by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, cleric Ammar al-Hakim, and several linked to armed groups; competing Sunni factions led by former parliament speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi and current speaker Mahmoud al-Mashhadani; and the two main Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

The contest is just as notable for who is absent.

The popular Sadrist Movement, led by influential Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, is boycotting. Al-Sadr's bloc won the largest number of seats in the 2021 elections but later withdrew after failed negotiations over forming a government, and it continues to stay out of elections.

In the suburb known as Sadr City on Baghdad's outskirts, a banner posted on one street read, "We are all boycotting upon orders from leader al-Sadr. No to America, no to Israel, no to corruption."

The Victory Coalition, a smaller group led by former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, also announced a boycott, alleging corruption in the process.

Meanwhile, some reformist groups emerging from mass anti-government protests that began in October 2019 are participating but have been bogged down by internal divisions and lack of funding and political support.

Vote-buying and political violence

There have been widespread allegations of corruption and vote-buying. Political analyst Bassem al-Qazwini described these elections as "the most exploited since 2003 in terms of political money and state resources."

A campaign official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was talking about alleged illegal conduct, asserted that almost all candidates, including major blocs, are distributing money and buying voter cards, with the price of a card going as high as 300,000 Iraqi dinars (around \$200).

The Independent High Electoral Commission asserted its commitment to conducting a fair and transparent process, saying in a

statement to The Associated Press that "strict measures have been taken to monitor campaign spending and curb vote-buying."

It added that any candidate found guilty of violating laws or buying votes will be "immediately disqualified".

Campaigning has been marred by political violence.

On Oct 15, Baghdad Provincial Council member Safaa al-Mashhadani, a Sunni candidate in the al-Tarmiya district north of the capital, was killed by a car bomb. Two people were arrested on suspicion of the killing, the First Karkh Investigative Court said Thursday. It did not name the suspects but said the crime was believed to be "related to electoral competition".

Aisha Ghazal Al-Masari, a member of parliament from the Sovereignty Alliance to which al-Mashhadani belonged, described the killing as "a cowardly crime reminiscent of the dark days of assassinations," referring to the years of security vacuum after Iraq's former autocratic leader, Saddam Hussein, was ousted in the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. The role of militias

Political parties linked to Iran-backed militias are leveraging their significant military and financial influence. They include the Kataib Hezbollah militia, with its Harakat Huqouq (Rights Movement) bloc, and the Sadiqun Bloc led by the leader of the Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia, Qais al-Khazali. The Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of militias that formed to fight the Islamic State group, was formally placed under the control of the Iraqi military in 2016 but in practice still operates with significant autonomy.

Al-Sudani told journalists recently that armed factions that have transformed into political entities have the constitutional right to participate in elections.

"We cannot prevent any group from engaging in politics if they renounce arms. This is a step in the right direction," he said.

The US State Department said in a statement that Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with al-Sudani on Monday and "highlighted the urgency in disarming Iran-backed militias that undermine Iraq's sovereignty, threaten the lives and businesses of Americans and Iraqis, and pilfer Iraqi resources for Iran."

Al-Sudani seeks another term

Al-Sudani has positioned himself as a pragmatist focused on improving public services. Polling shows that Iraqis are relatively positive about the country's situation. Al-Mustakella Research Group, affiliated with Gallup International Association, found that over the past two years, for the first time since 2004, more than half of Iraqis polled believed the country is heading in the right direction. In the latest poll, in early 2025, 55% of Iraqis surveyed said they had confidence in the central government.

However, only one Iraqi prime minister, Maliki, has served more than one term since 2003. Ihsan al-Shammari, professor of strategic and international studies at Baghdad University, said that the premiership "does not depend solely on election results but on political bloc agreements and regional and international understandings" to form a government. (AP)

Japan's new leader vows to further bolster defence buildup, spending as regional tensions rise

TOKYO, Oct 24: Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, in her first major policy speech on Friday, pledged to further accelerate Japan's military buildup and spending and complete an early upgrade of the country's security strategy as tensions rise with China, North Korea and Russia.

Takaichi took office on Tuesday after being elected Japan's first female leader. That ended months of a political vacuum amid power struggles within her party following consecutive election defeats that led to the ruling coalition's loss of a majority in both houses of parliament.

Takaichi said on Friday her government will hit an annual military spending target of 2 per cent of gross domestic product by March, instead of by 2027 under the initial plan. She will revise the security strategy early and have it ready by

the end of 2026, she said. Japan used to revise its strategy about once a decade, the last time in December 2022.

Japan will upgrade its strategy early due to a change in the security environment, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Middle East conflict, she said.

"The free, open and stable international order that we were accustomed to is violently shaken in the face of historic change of power balance and intensifying geopolitical competitions," Takaichi said in her speech at parliament. "In the region around Japan, military activities and other actions from our neighbors China, North Korea and Russia are causing grave concerns." "Japan needs to proactively push for its fundamental build-up of its defense power," she said.

Her pledge Friday comes days before US President Donald

Trump's Oct. 27-29 visit to Tokyo for a summit, where she is expected to face tough demands from Trump, such as a further increase in Japan's defense spending and more purchases of costly American weapons. Her meeting with Trump is part of a major diplomatic test that also includes two regional summits.

Takaichi said she plans to discuss with Trump further strengthening the Japan-US alliance while fostering the two sides' personal relationship based on trust.

She noted that Japan needs to establish a constructive and stable relationship with China, but that there are "security concerns" between the two sides.

Her hawkish politics and views of wartime history, as well as her past regular visits to Yasukuni Shrine, which Asian victims of Japan's colonial-era atrocities view

as a lack of remorse, could undermine Tokyo's relations with Beijing, experts say.

The upgrading of the security strategy may involve more offensive military roles for Japan's Self-Defense Forces, further easing of restrictions on arms exports and increased military spending, but she did not elaborate on how she plans to fund them.

To achieve any of her pledges or policies, her minority government needs cooperation from the opposition. Her immediate task at home is to tackle rising prices and sagging wages, and win back support from conservatives.

Her Liberal Democratic Party's new ruling alliance with the right-wing Japan Innovation Party, which replaces an earlier coalition with the dovish centrist Komeito, has raised concerns about Japan's further shift to the right. (AP)

Xi to visit South Korea for APEC Summit

BEIJING, Oct 24: China on Friday confirmed that President Xi Jinping will visit South Korea to attend the APEC Summit, during which he is expected to hold crucial talks with his US counterpart Donald Trump to ease escalating trade tensions between the two countries.

Earlier, the White House had announced that Trump and Xi would meet on October 30 in South Korea.

At the invitation of South Korean President Lee Jae-myung, Xi will attend the 32nd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Gyeongju and pay a state visit from Oct 30 to Nov 1, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told reporters here.

Replying to a question, Guo said China and the US are maintaining close communication on a

potential meeting between the two heads of state.

While Trump was open about his plans to meet Xi, Beijing was guarded in confirming the meeting. On Thursday, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told a media briefing in Washington that Trump will "participate in a bilateral meeting with President Xi" on October 30 in South Korea.

The meeting will take place at the end of a three-nation Asia trip to Malaysia, Japan and South Korea by the US president.

The meeting will take place in the South Korean city of Busan, ahead of the official start of the main Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit scheduled for October 31 to November 1, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

The meeting between the heads of the top two world economies comes amid heightened tensions as Beijing signalled tighter control over rare earth exports, while Washington threatened additional tariffs and new curbs on key technologies.

Trump, who had earlier threatened to scrap the meeting amid the trade war flare-up, said on Wednesday he hoped for a deal "on everything".

Speaking to reporters in Washington on Thursday, the president said during his talks with Xi, he will raise "some big issues" like the plight of US farmers, but the "first question" that he'll ask him will be aboutentanyl exports, referring to the US' accusation that China has failed to curb precursor shipments linked to America's opioid crisis. (PTI)

EU accuses Meta, TikTok of breaching transparency rules

BRUSSELS, Oct 24: The European Union on Friday said Meta and TikTok had breached their transparency obligations after an investigation that could result in billions of dollars in fines.

The inquiry found both companies had violated the Digital Services Act, the EU's trailblazing digital rule book that imposes a set of strict requirements designed to keep internet users safe online, including making it easier to report counterfeit or unsafe goods or flag harmful or illegal content like hate speech, as well as a ban on ads targeted at children.

"We are making sure platforms are accountable for their services, as ensured by EU law, towards users and society," said Henna Virkunen, the EU's executive vice president for tech sovereignty, security and democracy, in a post on X. "Our democracies depend on trust. That means platforms must empower users, respect their rights, and open their systems to scrutiny. The DSA makes this a duty, not a choice."

The 27-nation bloc launched investigations in 2024 into both Meta and TikTok. They found that the companies did not allow easy access to data for researchers. They also found that Meta's Instagram and Facebook did not make it easy for users to flag illegal content and effectively challenge moderation decisions. "Allowing researchers access to platforms' data is an essential transparency obligation under the DSA, as it provides public scrutiny into the potential impact of platforms on our physical and mental health," according to a statement by the European Commission, the EU's executive body. (AP)

Canada Post issues Diwali stamp celebrating cultural diversity

OTTAWA, Oct 24: Canada Post has released a new Diwali-themed stamp to celebrate the country's multicultural fabric.

In a social media post on Friday, the High Commission of India in Ottawa thanked Canada Post for unveiling the stamp featuring a traditional Rangoli pattern to celebrate Diwali.

In a recent press release, Canada Post said, "in recognition of the country's cultural diversity", it is "proud to issue a stamp marking Diwali, a major festival observed by Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and other communities in Canada and around the world".

"Intricate floor patterns called Rangoli are works of art meant to be swept or washed away. Often made with grain, flower petals, coloured sand or rice, they adorn living rooms, courtyards and entranceways during Diwali," it said, noting their cultural significance as expressions of creativity and welcome.

Canada Post has been issuing Diwali-themed stamps annually since 2017.

The 2025 issue, designed by Indian-origin artist Ritu Kanak, features an image of a Rangoli pattern and includes the word "Diwali" in Hindi and English. (PTI)

Booker Prize charity launches new Children's Prize worth 50,000 pounds

LONDON, Oct 24: The charity behind one of the world's most significant literary prizes on Friday announced a new 50,000-pound Children's Booker Prize for fiction, to be selected by a combined panel of child and adult judges.

The Booker Prize Foundation, behind the prestigious annual prize for fiction also worth 50,000 pounds, said the first edition of the children's award will open for nominations in 2026 to be awarded annually from 2027. It will celebrate the best contemporary fiction for children aged eight to 12 years old, written in or translated into English and published in the UK and/or Ireland.

"The Children's Booker Prize is the most ambitious endeavour we've embarked on in 20 years — and we hope its impact will resonate for decades to come," Gaby Wood, Chief Executive of the Booker Prize Foundation.

"It aims to be several things at once: an award that will champion future classics written for children; a social intervention designed to inspire more young people to read; and a seed from which we hope future generations of lifelong readers will grow. "In other words, the Children's



Booker Prize is not just a prize — it's part of a movement: a cause that children, parents, carers, teachers and everyone in the world of storytelling can get behind," she said.

Supported by education charity AKO Foundation, at least 30,000 copies of the shortlisted and winning books will be gifted to ensure more children can own and read the world's best fiction.

"The evidence linking reading for pleasure to improved educational outcomes and greater social mobility is compelling, and this initiative aligns closely with our priorities as a funder," said Philip

Lawford, AKO Foundation CEO.

The UK's Children's Laureate and multi-award-winning children's book author and screenwriter, Frank Cottrell-Boyce, has been confirmed as the inaugural Chair of judges for the new prize. While Cottrell-Boyce will select a shortlist of eight books, three child judges will be recruited — with the support of schools and a range of partners across the culture and entertainment industries — to join the panel to choose the winning book.

"Stories belong to everyone. Every child deserves the chance to

experience the happiness that diving into a great book can bring," said Cottrell-Boyce.

"The Children's Booker Prize will make it easier for children to find the best that current fiction can offer. To find the book that speaks to them. By inviting them to the judging table and by gifting copies of the nominated books it will bring thousands more children into the wonderful world of reading," he said.

British author Penelope Lively will give a keynote speech on the new children's prize at this year's Booker Prize ceremony in London on November 10.

Delhi-born author Kiran Desai is shortlisted for her novel 'The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny' and in line for a double win of the coveted literary prize, having won for 'The Inheritance of Loss' in 2006.

The Booker Prize dates back over 55 years and this week's announcement marks the first major new prize from the foundation in two decades — since the launch of the International Booker Prize in 2005. First awarded in 1969, it is considered a leading literary award in the English-speaking world that rewards outstanding works of fiction. (PTI)

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CM terms Japan visit as 'immensely productive'



ITANAGAR, Oct 24: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday concluded his Japan tour, terming the visit "immensely productive" as he held a series of high-level engagements aimed at boosting tourism, cultural exchange, academic collaboration and strategic partnership between the East Asian country and India's North East.

In a series of posts on X, Khandu said the visit helped build a roadmap for deeper engagement with Japan in line with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On the final day of his tour, Khandu met Dr Atsushi Sunami, President of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF), and senior officials at the SPF headquarters. He said the interaction helped consolidate key learnings and future

areas of cooperation.

"We discussed key takeaways and a future roadmap for deeper engagement with Japan across various sectors," Khandu said in a post, expressing gratitude to SPF for facilitating meetings with policymakers, academia, journalists and business leaders.

"We will continue to take forward the shared agenda through close collaboration with SPF and the Indian Embassy," he added.

Earlier, the chief minister held a meeting with eminent Japanese scholars and media representatives, including Ryohei Kasai, Takenori Horimoto, Mayumi Murayama, Yujiro Futori, Toru Takahashi and Akiko Suzuki, along with senior members of SPF.

Khandu described the exchange as "a won-

derful opportunity to share insights about the North East, particularly Arunachal Pradesh, its culture, tourism potential and development story".

The chief minister also met Hiroshi Tamamura, executive director of the Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA), during the day, where both sides discussed ways to boost tourism linkages.

The talks centred on enhancing cooperation between Japan and India's North East, with a special focus on Arunachal Pradesh and promoting two-way travel.

Khandu said the discussions were "productive" as they explored new avenues to attract Japanese travellers and encourage people-to-people exchange.

During the visit, Khandu also interacted with representatives of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Tokyo.

He met Dr Tsewang Gyalpo Arya and Tashi Yangzom, expressing happiness over the well-being of the Tibetan community in Japan.

"Happy to know that the Tibetan community in Japan is doing well and is thriving with the continued support of the Government of Japan," he wrote in another post.

Khandu's multi-city Japan tour focused on building partnerships spanning tourism, cultural diplomacy, academic collaboration and strategic understanding of the North East, with the chief minister expressing confidence that the initiatives discussed would translate into long-term cooperation. (PTI)

UD case converted to regular case; police begin investigation, raids underway

Successive suicide cases stir concern in Arunachal Pradesh



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Oct 24: A series of suicide cases has created concern in Arunachal Pradesh, with police converting an earlier case of unnatural death (UD) into a regular case at Nirjuli Police Station under the State Capital Region.

This was informed by Naharlagun SP Dr Nyelam Nega.

According to the SP, police received information on Thursday morning regarding the death of a 19-year-old youth, identified as Gomchu Yekar, who was found dead in his rented room at Lekhi village where he was residing with his elder brother.

A UD case was initially registered, and police conducted on-spot examination and formal procedures.

However, around two hours later, a FIR was lodged by the deceased's father, alleging abetment to suicide and naming two individuals.

The FIR was submitted along with handwritten suicide notes reportedly recovered from the room.

Based on the FIR and the Investigation Officer's report, the UD case was converted into a regular case under relevant sections pertaining to abetment of suicide and other provisions, SP Dr Nega said.

Later, police received information from Tirap district that one of the individuals named in the suicide note, Executive Engineer Likwang Lowang, had also died by suicide on Friday night.

"We have incorporated the developments into the ongoing investigation," the SP added.

Post-mortem of the deceased has been completed, and the family has been requested to take the body for last rites.

Police have seized the mobile phones of the deceased individuals and have requested forensic examination, including blood sample analysis.

"This is a sensitive case, and we will conduct a thorough and fair investigation," SP Dr Nega said.

He confirmed that police have conducted raids at multiple locations and further enquiries are in progress. He clarified that as the case is cognizable, no arrest warrant is required at this stage.

As per earlier reports, the deceased youth, originally from Daporijo in Upper Subansiri district, had come to public attention in connection with a case relating to impersonation of a magistrate.

He had earlier been temporarily engaged to assist patrolling activities at Indira Gandhi Park.

The case has drawn significant public attention due to the nature of the allegations made in the suicide notes and the mention of senior government officials.

Police have appealed to the public to avoid speculation and allow the investigation to proceed as per law.

APIYO holds protest rally

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Oct 24: The Arunachal Pradesh Indigenous Youth Organisation (APIYO) carried out a protest rally in the state capital on Friday, demanding immediate identification and deportation of illegal immigrants and action against alleged illegal constructions of Jama Masjid and Madaras in the Twin Capital Complex.

APIYO leaders expressed concern over the increasing presence of illegal immigrants, stating that the influx is straining the state's limited resources and affecting opportunities for indigenous communities.

"We are not against any religion or community. However, anyone coming to Arunachal Pradesh must obtain proper Inner Line Permits (ILP) with correct addresses," they said.

The organisation submitted a charter of demands to the authorities, which included: Cancellation of alleged illegal Jama Masjid/Madarsa constructions within the Twin Capital Complex; immediate identification and removal of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants in Itanagar and Naharlagun; official recognition of only two legal Jama Masjids within the Twin Capital Complex to ensure transparency; ban on weekly markets in and around the Twin Capital Complex, including Doimukh and Hollongi, citing law-and-order concerns.

Highlighting the seriousness of the issue, APIYO leaders announced a 15-day ultimatum to the state government.

They warned that failure to address the matter would prompt further democratic movements to safeguard the rights and security of indigenous people.

The protest rally was aimed at creating mass awareness about the issue and pressuring the authorities to take immediate action.

Tawang Marathon 3.0 draws thousands to 'Run Above the Clouds'



HT Correspondent

TAWANG, Oct 24: Amid the mist-covered valleys and the spiritual backdrop of Tawang Monastery, the third edition of the Tawang Marathon was held on Friday, drawing thousands of runners from across India and abroad.

Situated at nearly 10,000 feet above sea level, Tawang transformed into a vibrant venue of endurance, unity and cultural celebration.

The marathon was inaugurated by Lieutenant General Gambhir Singh, General Officer Commanding of the Gajraj Corps, who highlighted the importance of such events in promoting fitness, adventure sports and national integration

in the Himalayan region.

This year's marathon featured four categories — the 42 km full marathon, 21 km half marathon, 10 km and 5 km runs — making it accessible to participants of varied skill levels.

More than 6,200 runners, including around 1,200 women and three international athletes from Kenya, took part in the event.

The marathon route included winding mountain roads flanked by rhododendron forests, cliffs and traditional monasteries, offering runners scenic yet physically demanding terrain.

Despite chilly winds and thin air at high altitude, participants showcased strong resilience and deter-

mination.

The event saw active support from local residents, volunteers of the Indian Army, SSB, ITBP, students and district authorities, who ensured smooth organisation.

The marathon has continued to strengthen the bond between the armed forces and civilians in the district.

Recognised as more than a sporting event, the Tawang Marathon has grown into a celebration of community, perseverance and the spirit of the Himalayas.

As the event concluded, participants described the experience as both challenging and inspiring — truly "running above the clouds."

Yobin Tribe Forum seeks recognition of cultural and constitutional rights

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Oct 24: The Yobin Tribe Fundamental Rights Forum (YFRF) held a press conference at the Arunachal Press Club in Itanagar on Friday, highlighting the historicity, ethnicity, constitutional status, and contributions of the Yobin community to the state and the nation.

Avia Ngwazah, leader of the forum, emphasized the longstanding presence of the Yobin tribe — also known as Lishu — residing in the international border areas of Vijayanagar in Changlang district.

He said the tribe, belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language group, has played a significant role in the socio-political and territorial integrity of Arunachal Pradesh and India.

Ngwazah stated that recent misinformation about the Yobin community prompted the press

conference.

"We are here to clarify matters and appeal to people to refer to books, photographs, museums, libraries, and media archives to understand our community," he said.

The forum also addressed the issue of ST certificates. While some Yobin people had previously faced denial of Scheduled Tribe recognition, Ngwazah clarified that the matter is now a technical issue and not a constitutional one.

The Yobin Tribe Fundamental Rights Forum



called for rightful inclusion and acknowledgment of the community within the broader framework of the Indian Constitution and urged respect for their distinct cultural identity.

DyCM flags off Walong cycling expedition

ITANAGAR, Oct 24: Arunachal Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein on Friday flagged off the Walong cycling expedition commemorating the 63rd Walong Day at the Golden Pagoda (Kongmu Kham) in Namsai.

The deputy chief minister said the cycling expedition is more than a sporting endeavour, it is a tribute to the state's history of bravery, endurance and patriotism.

"What began as a humble initiative has grown stronger each year. The state government remains committed to supporting and expanding this remarkable tradition," he said.

Mein paid rich tributes to the martyrs of the 1962 India-China War, recalling their courage in the face of adversity, an official statement said.

"In the most challenging conditions, our soldiers courageously confronted the Chinese forces, scripting a glorious chapter in our military history," he said, saluting their supreme sacrifice.

Affirming that Arunachal Pradesh has always stood as a symbol of national unity,



he added that the people have always stood shoulder to shoulder with the Indian Army, leaving no room for separatism.

"Even during Operation Sindoor, our veterans expressed their readiness to serve the nation once again," Mein said.

Highlighting upcoming initiatives to honour the region's wartime legacy, Mein said that a Second World War Museum will soon be established at Jairampur in Changlang district to mark the 80th anniversary of World War II.

The museum will showcase the historical significance of the Stilwell Road, the strategic route connecting India to China through Myanmar during the Burma Campaign.

He also announced a village jeep expedition from Pasighat to Jairampur through the historic Pangsau Pass area to retrace wartime routes.

"These initiatives will preserve our wartime legacy, strengthen patriotic spirit, and boost adventure and heritage tourism in the region," he said.

The event was also attended by GoC of Dimapur-based 3 Corps Lt Gen S Pendharkar, GoC of 2 Mountain Division Maj Gen R.S. Chandel, along with senior Army officials. The expedition saw enthusiastic participation from 100 cyclists, including 50 Indian Army personnel and 50 local riders. (PTI)

Minister calls on Manohar Lal, discusses restructured PM SVANIDHI scheme

ITANAGAR, Oct 24: Arunachal Pradesh Urban Affairs minister Balo Raja on Friday called on Union Minister Manohar Lal in New Delhi on Friday and discussed with him the implementation of the restructured PM SVANIDHI scheme, an official said.

The meeting focused on reviewing the progress of the restructured PM SVANIDHI scheme and exploring ways to enhance its outreach and benefits to street vendors in Arunachal Pradesh, urban local bodies director Hano Takka said.

In the meeting, both ministers deliberated on strategies to streamline the implementation of the scheme, emphasising the importance of digital transactions, financial inclusion, and capacity building of street vendors, the official said.

The duo also discussed the role of state governments in facilitating the socio-economic upliftment of beneficiaries and their families.

The meeting highlighted the government's commitment to empowering street vendors and promoting urban livelihoods, he said.

The official added that with renewed focus on the PM SVANIDHI scheme, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, along with the Arunachal Pradesh government, is poised to make a significant impact on the lives of street vendors in the state.

Launched by PM Narendra Modi in 2020, the PM SVANIDHI aims to provide affordable working capital loans to street vendors, enabling them to resume their livelihoods affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the extension of the scheme till March 2030, the government aims to benefit over 1.15 crore street vendors, including 50 lakh new beneficiaries. (PTI)

Moso Bamboo Walk draws large crowds in Keyi Panyor District



HT Correspondent

YACHULI, Oct 24: The Moso Bamboo Walk at Moso Bamboo Park in Yachuli, Keyi Panyor district, has emerged as a major attraction, drawing large crowds and boosting eco-tourism in the region.

Located near the Yachuli Police Station, the site has become popular for its serene natural surroundings and well-maintained bamboo trail.

Around 200-500 visitors are reported on regular days, while the foot-fall rises to 500-750 on peak days.

The initiative began following the visit of PCCF (HOFF) P Subramanian to the Yachuli Forest Range on May 10, 2024, during an official tour to Ziro.

He advised forest officials, including the Range Forest Officer (RFO), to create a bamboo walk to promote eco-tourism and public awareness. Acting on the suggestion, the then RFO Toko and his team developed the walkway using locally available materials.

Two traditional resting huts were also constructed using toko patas from Chiputa in Papum Pare district, entirely through personal contributions without departmental or external funding.

The Moso Bamboo Walk was opened to the public on May 30, 2024, free of charge for the first three months.

However, with more than 10,000 visitors during this period, maintenance costs increased, prompting the introduction of a nominal entry fee of ₹10.

Following heavy monsoon rains, parts of the walkway and a resting hut were damaged, resulting in a temporary closure for repairs.

The site has since been redeveloped, with separate entry and exit routes added for better visitor management.

The Deputy Commissioner of Keyi Panyor district extended support by arranging the construction of a public toilet facility through the Urban Development Department.

The facility is now complete and will be opened soon. Due to increased labour expenses, the current entry fee has been revised to ₹20, which the forest authorities state is temporary and may be reduced once maintenance stabilises.

Moso Bamboo (*Phyllostachys edulis*), a giant timber bamboo species native to China and Taiwan, was originally introduced in the region for research.

Over time, its natural aesthetic appeal has made the bamboo trail a popular leisure and nature-tourism spot.

Located near the Yachuli Forest Check Gate, the site holds strong potential to be developed into a full-fledged eco-park and tourism destination.

The authorities and local community have expressed hope for continued government support to further enhance the initiative for public benefit and the growth of tourism in the district.

PM launches Bihar poll campaign with two rallies NDA WILL BREAK ALL ELECTORAL RECORDS: MODI

SAMASTIPUR/BEGUSARAI, Oct 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched his Bihar assembly poll campaign with back-to-back rallies in Samastipur and Begusarai districts, asserting that the NDA under Chief Minister Nitish Kumar will break all previous electoral records.

The PM also called the INDIA bloc a "mahalathbandhan" (a tie-up in which people beat each other with sticks), a mocking reference to 'Mahagathbandhan' or grand alliance, as the opposition coalition is commonly known.

He also alleged that leaders of the RJD and the Congress, the two largest constituents of the INDIA bloc, were "most corrupt and out on bail", and, despite having been out of power for decades, they were arrogant enough to snub alliance partners like JMM, and "take for a ride" the Vikassheel Insaan Party, which did not get a favourable share of seats but its founder Mukesh Sahni has been promised the deputy CM's post.

At both the rallies, the PM asked the crowds to switch on the lights of their mobile phones, and in a dig at the RJD, said, "When there is so much light all around, there is no need for the lantern". The 243-member Bihar Assembly will go to polls in two phases on November 6 and 11, with results set to be announced on No-



At the Samastipur rally, the PM said unlike the INDIA bloc, the NDA was cohesive, pointing towards JD(U) president Nitish Kumar, Union Ministers Chirag Paswan and Jitan Ram Manjhi, the chiefs of Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) and Hindustani Awam Morcha respectively, and Rajya Sabha MP Upendra Kushwaha, who heads Rashtriya Lok Morcha, all of whom were present on the stage.

In Begusarai, Modi raked up the alleged mistreatment meted out to late Sitaram Kesri, "the pride of Bihar and a towering backward leader" from whom the post of Congress president was snatched away at the instance of "the parivaar" (Nehru-Gandhi

family). Showering praise on Nitish Kumar, who seeks a fifth consecutive term in office, Modi alleged, "He came to power in 2005, but nearly a decade of his tenure was hampered by a hostile Congress-led UPA government at the Centre, which was constantly blackmailed by the RJD that it would withdraw support if cooperation was extended to the NDA government in Bihar".

The PM added, "The central assistance extended to Bihar in the last 11 years is three times what the state had received from the previous government. The state has turned the corner. It is now exporting fish, a far cry from the days when it was dependent on other states for its own needs. Makhana, which is a famous pro-

duce of Bihar, has access to markets far and wide".

"Bihar is now an attractive investment destination. I foresee a future in which every district will be teeming with startups of local youths", Modi said.

"All this would not have been possible had there been 'jungle raj' in Bihar. Don't you remember that a former PM had said that of every rupee spent by the government, only 15 paise reached the people. The money used to be devoured by a blood-stained hand (khooni panja)", said Modi, in an obvious reference to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the poll symbol of Congress, the RJD's alliance partner.

Modi asserted that Bihar will keep the 'jungle raj' at bay and vote for good governance.

The PM also urged women voters, whom he called "worst sufferers of 'jungle raj'" to "slam your doors shut on Congress and RJD", and remember that leaders of these parties had opposed the women's reservation bill when it was brought in Parliament.

"Nayee raftar se chalega Bihar, phir jab aayegi NDA sarkar" (Bihar's growth will speed up once NDA returns to power), RJD and Congress indulged in scams, their leaders are out on bail, and now they are trying to steal the 'Jannayak' title of Bharat Ratna Karpoori Thakur," he added.

"Also, under the RJD rule, a dozen-and-a-half districts of Bihar were infested with Maoist insurgency. Hundreds of people were murdered. When I came to power in 2014, I pledged to bring Maoism to an end. With utmost humility and satisfaction, I can say that we have broken the spine of Maoism. Soon, the entire country will be free of the menace. This is Modi's guarantee", the PM added.

Modi also said, "In the last assembly polls in Gujarat, where the party has been in power for 30 years, all previous records were broken. Similar was the case in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Haryana. I am confident that in Bihar, too, under Nitish Kumar, the NDA will break all previous records," he said.

Prior to addressing the rally, the PM had visited Karpoori Gram, the village named after former Bihar Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur, a backward class stalwart on whom the Bharat Ratna was conferred, posthumously, about a couple of years ago.

Modi also thanked the people for "turning up in such large numbers, even though the upcoming festival of Chhath must be putting a demand on your time".

He also referred to the recent revision in GST rates and remarked, "hope you all are enjoying the festival of savings (bachat-utsav), too". (PTI)

20 killed as Bengaluru-bound private bus catches fire in Andhra's Kurnool



KURNOOL (ANDHRA PRADESH), Oct 24: A Bengaluru-bound private bus from Hyderabad caught fire in this district on Friday after colliding with a two-wheeler, leaving 20 people dead, most of them charred beyond recognition, police said. Among the deceased was the biker. President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and his Telangana counterpart A Revanth Reddy expressed anguish over the incident. Some of the bodies were charred beyond recognition, prompting officials to call forensic teams to collect DNA samples of the deceased. Several passengers couldn't escape the tragedy because it struck at night while they were sleeping, an official said. PM Modi also announced an ex-gratia.

DNA samples of the charred bodies, said Praveen.

The Road Traffic Association should enforce stringent action if bus operators fail to follow safety measures and use proper materials to prevent similar devastating incidents in the future.

The DIG noted that no fire control measures were present in the bus that caught fire, highlighting lapses in safety compliance and emergency preparedness during travel.

"The loss of lives in a tragic bus fire accident in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh is deeply unfortunate. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members and pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," President Murmu said in post on X.

PM Modi expressed grief over the loss of lives in the incident.

Extremely saddened by the loss of lives due to a mishap in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh," Modi said in a post on X.

"My thoughts are with the affected people and their families during this difficult time. Praying for the speedy recovery of the injured," the prime minister said.

"An ex-gratia of ₹ 2 lakh from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of each deceased. The injured would be given ₹ 50,000," the PM said.

Chandrababu Naidu expressed shock over the incident.

He said he has spoken to the District Collector and SP. The injured persons were receiving treatment.

"I am shocked to learn about the devastating bus fire accident near China Tekur village in Kurnool district. My heartfelt condolences go out to the families of those who have lost their loved ones. Government authorities will extend all possible support to the injured and affected families," he said in a social media post.

Telangana CM Revanth Reddy expressed anguish over the accident and conveyed condolences to the bereaved family members.

Reddy directed the Collector and Superintendent of Police of Gadwal district in Telangana, neighbouring Kurnool, to visit the accident site as part of relief measures.

The Telangana government set up a helpline to assist the kin of passengers of the Hyderabad to Bengaluru private bus.

The government said in a release that its officers -- M Sriramachandra (M 9912919545) and E Chittibabu (M 9440854433) -- can be contacted for help.

Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar also expressed sorrow over the tragic incident. (PTI)

CPI(ML) to carry out 'Sankalp yatra' in Bihar

PATNA, Oct 24: The CPI (ML) Liberation will carry out a 'Sankalp yatra' in the Bhojpur area of Bihar on October 26 to mark the 15th death anniversary of its Dalit leader Ram Naresh Ram, and will also launch its 'Sankalp Patra' for the upcoming assembly polls, party sources said.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist -Leninist) Liberation's Sankalp Patra will stand as a guarantee for implementing the manifesto of the Mahagathbandhan, they said.

The Mahagathbandhan, which includes Congress, RJD and VIP apart from CPI(ML), CPI and CPI(M), is scheduled to release its manifesto for Bihar on October 28.(PTI)

Destiny of J-K changed under PM Modi's leadership after Article 370 abrogation: Rijiju

JAMMU, Oct 24: Union minister Kiren Rijiju on Thursday said following the abrogation of Article 370 under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, Jammu and Kashmir's "destiny" has changed, paving the way for peace and development in the region.

Rijiju, in a reference to assembly polls in Bihar, said there is "Modi wave" across the country, and people everywhere believe that India's future is safe and bright under his leadership. "I have personally felt that under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi and after the abrogation of Article 370, the destiny of Jammu and Kashmir has changed. Today, Jammu and Kashmir is moving forward on the path of peace and development," Rijiju told reporters here.

"The world wants to see Kashmir — it is such a beautiful place — and when there is both peace and progress here, it will look even more mag-

nificent," he said during an event where job letters were handed out to youth at Katra as part of a nationwide programme chaired by the prime minister. "I have been coming to Kashmir for many years — I came in the 1970s, in the 1980s, and even after the 1990s and 2000s. But the kind of development that began in Jammu and Kashmir after 2014 had never happened before," Rijiju said.

The parliamentary affairs minister said that before constitutional changes were made while revoking Article 370, several provisions of the Indian Constitution and reservation policies were not applicable in J-K. Many central schemes could not reach the people before but after the removal of Article 370, a lot of work has been done, he said. Rijiju said that during his time as the sports and law minister, sports facilities, auditoriums, multi-sports centres, training centres, court infrastructure projects,

including high court buildings, were initiated in various places. Commenting on political developments in Bihar, Rijiju said "Today, the prime minister is beginning his campaign from the birthplace of (former Bihar chief minister and Bharat Ratna) Karpoori Thakur ji in Chhapra. "This will send out a very strong message. The entire Bihar knows that only under the leadership of Modi ji can Bihar reach new heights. No one wants to see the return of 'Jungle Raj'."

On RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav being named the INDIA bloc's CM face in Bihar, the minister said, "Just naming someone doesn't mean anything. Public acceptance is what truly matters."

"This is a democracy, and people are supreme. Today, there is a wave of Modi ji across the country, and everywhere people believe that India's future is safe and bright under his leadership." (PTI)

Victims and perpetrators of terrorism cannot be equated: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: India on Friday cited Pakistan's attempts to protect at the UN Security Council the terror outfit that claimed responsibility for the Pahalgam attack to point out that the global body's work has been "gridlocked" in the absence of urgent reforms.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar also criticised those equating victims and perpetrators of terrorism in the name of global strategy, in an apparent reference to hyphenation of India and Pakistan in the context of the dastardly terror strike.

Jaishankar was speaking at an event that celebrated the 80th anniversary of the United Nations (UN).

In his remarks, the external affairs minister said "all is not well" with the UN as its debates have become "increasingly polarised" and its working "visibly gridlocked".

"Any meaningful reform is obstructed using the reform process itself," he said adding sustaining the UN even while seeking its re-invention is clearly a major challenge before the world. "Few examples are more telling about the challenges facing the UN than its response to terrorism. When a sitting Security Council member openly protects the very organisation that claims responsibility for the barbaric terror attack such as at Pahalgam, what does it do to the credibility of multilateralism," Jaishankar asked. (PTI)

Nitish will not be made Bihar CM if NDA voted to power, claims Tejashwi at poll rally

KURNOOL (ANDHRA PRADESH), Oct 24: A Bengaluru-bound private bus from Hyderabad caught fire in this district on Friday after colliding with a two-wheeler, leaving 20 people dead, most of them charred beyond recognition, police said. Among the deceased was the biker.

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and his Telangana counterpart A Revanth Reddy expressed anguish over the incident. Some of the bodies were charred beyond recognition, prompting officials to call forensic teams to collect DNA samples of the deceased. Several passengers couldn't escape the tragedy because it struck at night while they were sleeping, an official said. PM Modi also announced an ex-gratia.

According to initial reports, the motorcycle collided with the bus near

Chinnatekur in Kurnool and got dragged underneath with its fuel cap open, triggering the blaze.

"So far, 19 bodies have been retrieved from the charred bus. Biker's body is in the mortuary," Kurnool Range DIG Koya Praveen told PTI.

He added that a complete picture of casualties and survivors would emerge only after a thorough investigation and identification of all those involved in the accident. The bus door got jammed due to a short circuit and the vehicle was completely gutted within minutes. Most survivors were aged between 25 and 35 years, police added.

District Collector A Siri said 41 people were travelling in the bus, including the driver. Of the 41 onboard, 21 have been traced.

Those who escaped the accident are stable and out of danger, she said.

Many passengers could not escape the tragedy as it occurred during the night when they were asleep, she said,

adding that the bus door did not open immediately as some wires got snapped, which worsened the severity of the incident.

Most of the passengers belonged to Hyderabad, Siri added.

Officials had initially said that the bus was bound for Hyderabad in neighbouring Telangana. Police are taking safety precautions and emptying the diesel tank of the bus.

Meanwhile, a team of medical experts reached the spot to collect DNA samples of the charred bodies, said Praveen. The Road Traffic Association should enforce stringent action if bus operators fail to follow safety measures and use proper materials to prevent similar devastating incidents in the future.

The DIG noted that no fire control measures were present in the bus that caught fire, highlighting lapses in safety compliance and emergency preparedness during travel. (PTI)

Working to empower youth: PM Modi at Rozgar Mela

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said the BJP-led NDA government is working to empower the youth and has created avenues to connect candidates, who have narrowly missed government jobs, with prospective employers in the private sector.

In a recorded message at the 17th Rozgar Mela, PM Modi said even the country's foreign policy was being shaped keeping the interest of the youngsters in mind.

More than 51,000 candidates received appointment letters for government jobs at Rozgar Melas held across the country.

PM Modi said more than 11 lakh recruitment letters have been issued so far through Rozgar Melas.

The prime minister said the government has started a new initiative -- the 'Pratibha Setu Portal' -- which offers opportunities to candidates who reached the final list of UPSC but were not selected.

"Their efforts will not go in vain, as both private and public

institutions are now engaging with these talented individuals through the portal," PM Modi said. He said such optimal utilisation of youth talent will showcase India's potential to the world.

"Empowering the youth is a priority of the BJP-led NDA government," the prime minister said.

PM Modi said India has entered into investment partnerships with several European countries, creating thousands of new job opportunities. "We have also signed multiple agreements with nations like Brazil, Singapore, South Korea, and Canada to boost investment and support startups and MSMEs. These collaborations will strengthen exports and open up new avenues of growth and opportunity for India's youth," he said.

"Even our foreign policy is being shaped with the interests of India's youth in mind. Our diplomatic engagements and global agreements are increasingly focused on youth training and employment generation," Modi said. The prime minister said the re-

cent reduction in GST rates has marked a major reform in the country and its impact went far beyond just increasing people's savings.

"The next generation GST reforms are also expanding opportunities for employment and growth," the prime minister said.

He said when everyday goods become cheaper, demand rises, which accelerates production and supply chains.

The higher factory output leads to the creation of new jobs, he said, adding that the GST Bachat Utsav is also transforming into an "employment festival".

The prime minister said record-breaking sales witnessed during Dhanteras and Diwali demonstrate how GST reforms have given a fresh momentum to the nation's economy.

He noted the positive impact of these reforms on the MSME sector and retail trade, which are now generating new employment opportunities in manufacturing, logistics, packaging, and distribution. (PTI)

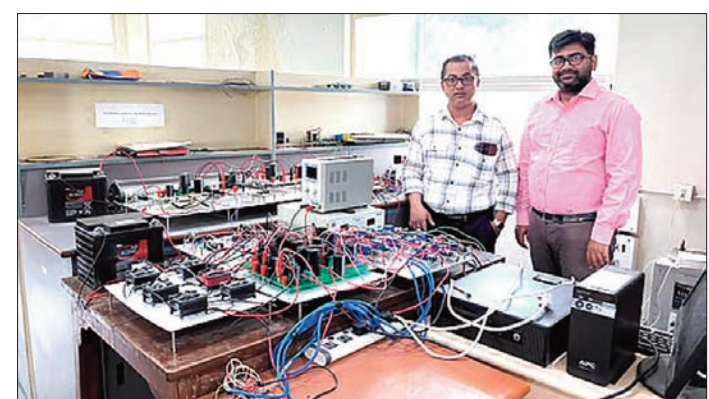
NIT Rourkela develops intelligent hybrid microgrid to manage renewable energy flow

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Researchers at the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela have developed an intelligent control system that can automatically regulate electricity flow from solar, wind, and battery sources, officials said.

The innovative "hybrid microgrid" can provide clean and continuous power to rural areas lacking access to the main electricity grid, they said. The findings of the research have been published in the journal IEEE Transactions on Industry Applications.

Arnab Ghosh, assistant professor at NIT Rourkela said the primary objective of the research is to reduce reliance on fossil fuel reserves and supply power to remote regions not covered by the main grid.

"Hybrid microgrids are being researched globally, where renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power are combined with battery storage. However, the integration remains complex and prone to fluctuations, leading to



unstable supply and even interruption," he said.

He said a dynamic Power Management Scheme (PMS) that enables all energy producers and storage units to coordinate seamlessly has been developed to address this issue. This technique allows batteries to store energy safely and efficiently, enhancing capacity and lifespan, while reducing overall costs, he added.

Ghosh explained that automatically switching converters according to the most readily available

resources -- solar in the morning, and wind, Biomass Gasifier (BMG), and Pico Hydropower (PH) during the rest of the day -- ensures active power flow is balanced across different loads. "This multi-source converter-based hybrid setup, which is hardly ever present in current markets, can provide an effective solution for the needs of remote communities and can be a source of approximately 10 kWh of dependable energy, sufficient for four households," he said.

Krishna Roy, Assistant Professors, Department of Electrical Engineering, NIT Rourkela said, "the research focuses on power management among different sources, loads and storage systems. Energy management techniques in renewables-integrated microgrids provide social benefits by ensuring reliable electricity access, especially in remote communities".

"They promote sustainable development, create local employment opportunities, and improve living standards. Additionally, they reduce dependence on fossil fuels, enhance energy security, and support community resilience through cleaner, affordable, and more equitable energy solutions," Roy said.

The researchers claimed that their system works under several real-world scenarios, such as fluctuating solar radiation, changing wind speeds, and varying electrical loads. The proposed system would also be effective in electric vehicle charging stations and standalone renewable energy systems. (PTI)

Sikkim gets its first multiplex

GANGTOK, Oct 24: Sikkim's first multiple-screen movie theatre complex was inaugurated in Gangtok on Friday.

The three-screen multiplex at Westpoint Mall was inaugurated by state Rural Development Minister Arun Upreti and Gangtok MLA Delay Namgyal Barfungpa.

The multiplex has 482 seats across three auditoriums equipped with modern features.

PVR INOX Limited Managing Director Ajay Bijli said, "We are thrilled to bring world-class entertainment to the people of Sikkim." (PTI)

JCC to intensify stir over IAS induction issue



HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Oct 24: The joint co-ordination committee (JCC) of the state service associations has decided to intensify the ongoing pen-down strike and tools-down strike from October 27, demanding transparency, meritocracy and adherence to due process in the induction of officers into the IAS in Nagaland.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the JCC with the All Nagaland Government Drivers' Association, Nagaland Civil Secretariat Drivers' Association, All Nagaland Directorate & District Government Drivers' Union and the Nagaland Civil Secretariat Grade-IV Staff Employees Association on October 19, the media cell of the JCC said in a release.

The committee said even though the pen-down strike entered its 10th day on Thursday, the state government showed no signs of urgency in resolving the issue.

"It can be safely assumed that the political establishment is deeply involved in the selection process, thereby confirming that the IAS induction process reeks of manipulation and favouritism over merit."

"Procedural errors and the bureaucracy have been relegated to mere scapegoat in their quest to facilitate their favoured candidate," the release stated.

The JCC affirmed that the democratic agitation will continue to intensify phase by phase until its demands are met by the government and transparency and merit are restored by way of restoring the March 10 vacancy circular and withdrawing the non-Nagaland Public Service Commission/backdoor candidate from the panel list, or cancellation of the panel list.

Over 10 people were targeted for opening their shops in attack

No one will be spared, perpetrators will be nowhere in coming days: Tripura CM



HT Correspondent

AGARTALA, Oct 24: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday said that no one will be spared and those who were involved in the attack will be nowhere in the coming days.

His statement came after a violence in Santirbazar village of Dhalai District has rocked the state following the 24 hours strike

called by Tripura Civil Society led by Tipra Motha Party MLA Ranjit Debbarma on Thursday.

Saha said this on Friday after visiting GB Pant Hospital to enquire about the health conditions of the victims who were attacked at Santirbazar of Salema in Kamalpur during the bandh called by Tripura Civil Society yesterday. In the attack over 10 people

were targeted for opening their shops including Block Development Officer and Engineer.

On Friday, Saha said that following a strike, officials and many people have come under attack and were injured at Santirbazar under Kamalpur subdivision on Thursday.

"We have seen what happened. Entire night I was monitoring the incident and the situation. I have given proper direction. Today I have come here to enquire about the health condition of the victims. This is really unacceptable. The way they attacked with sticks, rods, and snatched chains — I don't understand what kind of protest this is. I have directed Tripura Police to take proper steps and the law will take its own course of action," said Saha.

He said no one will be spared and assured that they will be punished.

"Around 12 persons were injured and some are under treatment at Kamalpur only. Huge police personnel were deployed. On social media I have identified who was engaged. No one will be tolerated and accepted. They will be nowhere in the coming days. Just wait and see what will happen," he added.

NSDMA launches 'Safer Nagaland' weather mobile application

KOHIMA, Oct 24: The Nagaland State Disaster Management Authority (NSDMA) on Friday launched a new mobile application titled 'Safer Nagaland', designed to provide accurate, real-time weather information and alerts across the state.

The weather mobile application, developed by the NSDMA, was officially launched by Advisor for NSDMA and New & Renewable Energy Z Nyusitho Nyuthe.

Nyuthe described the launch as a significant milestone that reflects Nagaland's growing capacity and commitment to harnessing technology for public safety and resilience.

He stated that the initiative goes beyond a digital platform as it represents the state's dedication to using timely information and public awareness as tools to reduce disaster risks.

The Safer Nagaland app provides real-time weather updates, location-based forecasts, and early warning alerts, ensuring that vital information reaches citizens across both urban and remote areas.

It also complements the existing NSDMA Weather Portal, forming an integrated weather monitoring and forecasting system for the state.

Nyuthe commended additional secretary Sentiwapang Aier, Joint CEO Johnny Ruang-

mei, and the entire NSDMA team for their leadership and dedication in bringing the project to fruition.

He urged citizens to use the app proactively to enhance preparedness, and reaffirmed the government's commitment to building a safer, informed, and climate-resilient Nagaland.

Introducing the app, Johnny Ruangmai, Joint CEO NSDMA, described it as another milestone in the government's efforts to strengthen disaster preparedness and public safety through technology.

He explained that the 'Safer Nagaland' App currently focuses on weather dissemination, but will gradually integrate other emergency response features under a single platform.

The app will provide hourly and weekly forecasts, district-specific alerts, and live updates based on data from 34 existing weather stations, with an additional 32 stations to be installed by the end of the year.

The data, collected directly from NSDMA's ground stations, ensures more accurate local forecasting compared to cloud-sourced platforms.

Ruangmai noted that the app will soon feature AI-assisted feedback and alert systems, allowing users to report issues directly and receive updates on severe weather, lightning, and other hazards. (PTI)

Mizoram govt making efforts to evict illegal immigrants: CM



AIZAWL, Oct 24: Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma said his government is currently taking steps to evict illegal immigrants and non-tribal people who are living in the state without valid permits.

The CM also said that he discussed the matter with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently.

"With permission from our governor, I informed our prime minister and union home minister about our intention to carry out eviction drives against non-tribal, who are living in the state without a valid ILP. We have been implementing the exercise in some localities of Aizawl," Lalduhoma said.

He was addressing the ongoing general conference of Young Mizo Association (YMA) at Sakawdrai

in Aizawl district near the Manipur border.

The chief minister also discussed with the leaders of central YMA about evicting the illegal settlers.

He said that an Inner Line Permit (ILP), which restricts illegal entry into Mizoram, was implemented in the state under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) of 1873, about 152 years ago, to protect the tribal people and the tribal area.

Under the BEFR, which was introduced by the colonial British government and adopted by the Indian government after Independence, non-tribal people can't buy land in the state, he said.

According to him, the state government has already launched ILP online, which is being revised and

upgraded to prevent any illegal influx. Lalduhoma also sought the cooperation of YMA, local and village councils to prevent illegal influx and drive out illegal immigrants from the state.

He also said that the widening of National Highway- 306/06 into four lanes was delayed for quite some time due to compensation issues and the inability to get forest clearance.

The highway, which is the primary lifeline of the state, has been in deplorable condition as its widening work could not be undertaken in time, he said.

Lalduhoma added that the construction of the gas pipeline from Tripura and the trade facilitation centre at the India-Bangladesh border could not be expedited due to forest clearance issues. (PTI)

No.Misc/2/XXXV/1859 Dtd.24/10/2025

SHORT TENDER NOTICE
Sealed tender in prescribed form affixing court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & paise twenty five) only for each group separately are hereby invited from Registered Contractors of Irrigation Deptt., Assam for the following works under M & R for the year 2025-26 and will be received up to 2.00 P.M. on 07-11-2025 and will be opened on the same date and place at 3.00 P.M. by the undersigned in presence of tenderer or their authorised representative if any so desire.
In case of any unavoidable circumstances or any Govt. Holiday being declared on that day, the same will be received and opened on the next working day at the same place and hour.

Sl No	Name of Scheme	Approximate value of works	Time of completion
1	Repairing of C.C. lined Canal of Madhutoia F.I.S.	Rs. 9,00,000.00	3 (three) months.
2	Repairing of Earthen Canal of Odlaguri F.I.S.	Rs. 9,00,000.00	3 (three) months.

Location :- Kokrajhar West Sub-Division (Irrigation), Ramfalbil.
Approx. Value of Work :- Rs. 18.00 L.
Time of Completion :- As per Group List.
Earnest Money :- 2% of the value of the Work (1% for S.C/S.T/ O.B.C. & M.O.B.C. Category)

Detailed specification of item & other terms and condition may be obtained from O/O the undersigned on written request on depositing a sum of Rs. 300.00 (Rupees Three hundred) only by cash on all working days during office hours.
Sd/- Executive Engineer
Gossaigaon Kokrajhar West Division (Irrigation), Gossaigaon.

IPR(BTC)/C/2025-26/3002

NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST.

Under the provision of Rules 32(1) & (2) of Assam Mines and Minerals sealed tender are hereby invite for grant of Mining Permit/ Contract for collection of Sand/Stone as per Annexure 'A' the prescribed from to be obtained from the undersigned and will be received up to 3:00 PM (IST) on or before 12/11/2025.

ANNEXURE-'A'

STATEMENT SHOWING THE LIST OF MAHAL OUTSIDE RESERVE FOREST UNDER KARBI ANGLONG EAST DIVISION, DIPHU.

Sl. No.	Name of Mahal	Quantity	Period	GPS Coordinate	Earnest Money	Govt. Value
1	Karkanthi River Sand Mahal, Sukraghat	6,000	2 Years	1. 26°13'59.6" N 93°07'11.7" E 2. 26°13'59.1" N 93°07'18.3" E 3. 26°13'55.3" N 93°07'19.4" E 4. 26°13'46.4" N 93°07'24.1" E	10% 84,000/-	8,40,000/-
2	Dikharu River Sand Mahal Kasojan, Ajoy Tokbi Gaon (No. 1)	4,000	2 Years	1. 26°15'02.5" N 93°03'15.7" E 2. 26°14'59.1" N 93°03'09.6" E 3. 26°14'54.4" N 93°03'05.8" E 4. 26°14'55.1" N 93°03'01.06" E	10% 56,000/-	5,60,000/-
3	Dikharu River Sand Mahal Kasojan, Ajoy Tokbi Gaon (No. 2)	4,000	2 Years	1. 26°15'16.4" N 93°03'22.3" E 2. 26°15'12.6" N 93°03'18.8" E 3. 26°15'08.0" N 93°03'18.0" E 4. 26°15'03.4" N 93°03'16.3" E	10% 56,000/-	5,60,000/-
4	Dikholpani River Sand Mahal Pukdikharu Area	4,000	2 Years	1. 26°09'22.3" N 92°59'03.1" E 2. 26°09'23.7" N 92°58'47.3" E 3. 26°09'29.8" N 92°58'24.5" E 4. 26°09'21.6" N 92°58'15.1" E	10% 56,000/-	5,60,000/-
5	Dikharu River Sand Mahal, Bura Phangcho Gaon, Bhelughat	4,000	2 Years	1. 26°18'02.1" N 93°04'55.1" E 2. 26°17'52.4" N 93°04'43.6" E 3. 26°17'36.6" N 93°04'10.6" E 4. 26°16'48.0" N 93°03'39.8" E	10% 56,000/-	5,60,000/-
6	Borgaon Sand Mahal Dhansiri River	Sand= 6,000 M ³	2 Years	1. 26°17'55.25" N 93°52'35.18" E 2. 26°17'55.90" N 93°52'33.78" E 3. 26°17'37.70" N 93°52'11.06" E 4. 26°17'37.65" N 93°52'08.39" E	10% 84,000/-	8,40,000/-

Sd/-
Divisional Forest Officer,
Karbi Anglong East Division,
Diphu

NIT-Meghalaya, NESAC scientists work to boost 5G, 6G signals in world's rainiest place Sohra

SOHRA (MEGHALAYA), Oct 24: Scientists at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Meghalaya and the North Eastern Space Applications Centre (NESAC) have embarked on a joint research project to develop new methods to improve 5G and 6G connectivity in Sohra, the rainiest place on Earth.

After shifting to their permanent campus here earlier this year, researchers found themselves "fascinated and occasionally frustrated" by the sheer size of each raindrop that falls over Sohra in the state East Khasi Hills district.

"The size and intensity of rainfall here are unlike anywhere else in the world. It disrupts communication signals and challenges existing network models," said a scientist involved in the project.

Dr Anup Dandapat, Dean (Academic Affairs) at NIT Meghalaya, said the research aims to turn Sohra's weather extremes into an advantage.

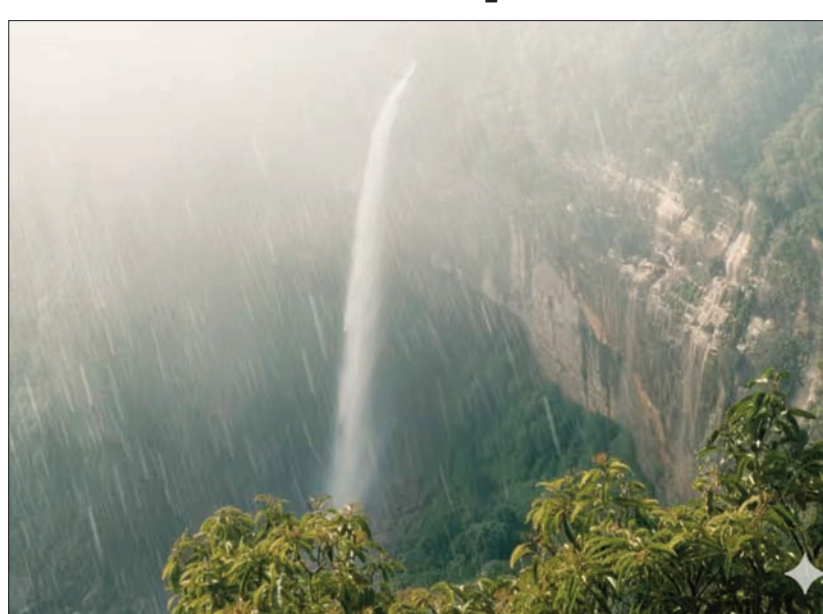
"Instead of seeing heavy rainfall as a barrier, we want to use it as a natural laboratory," he added.

"Understanding how each droplet interacts with high-frequency signals could help us design networks that are more adaptive and resilient, not just for Meghalaya but for other rain-prone regions as well," he said.

The unusually large droplets, coupled with the high frequency of rain, have prompted scientists to launch a detailed study on how precipitation affects signal transmission and how to adapt future networks to extreme weather conditions.

The study is expected to help develop rain-resilient communication systems, particularly vital for remote and hilly regions that face frequent connectivity disruptions during the monsoon.

Nestled among misty hills and cascading waterfalls, Sohra, once known as Cherrapunji, continues to inspire both



poets and scientists. For the NIT and NESAC teams, every downpour is now not just a spectacle of nature, but also a data point in their quest to make technology weather the storm.

In a separate achievement, NIT Meghalaya researchers have also successfully designed and fabricated the state's first integrated chip (IC), under the Special Manpower Development Program (SMDP) of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

The team of faculty members comprising Dr Prabir Saha, Dr Shubhankar Majumdar and Dr Pradeep Kumar Rathore, along with PhD scholars Geetima Kachari, Parishmita Goswami, and Deibaphira Suchiang, developed a Finite State Machine (FSM) chip, fabricated at the semiconductor laboratory (SCL) foundry using the 180-nanometre process technology.

Designed to provide precise control in irrigation systems and tensiometers, the chip has potential applications in advancing India's agricultural technology sector.

The chip was presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the SEMICON India 2025 summit, highlighting the role of academic research in strengthening India's technological self-reliance.

Dr Dandapat said the twin achievements — tackling monsoon connectivity challenges and pioneering IC design — reflect the growing research ecosystem in the Northeast and the region's contribution to building a Viksit Bharat.

The NIT team is working on a second chip. It has also been submitted for fabrication, which will aid in agricultural development by comparing various environmental factors to obtain accurate measurements for monitoring plant growth, the official said. (PTI)

PRASOON JOSHI, RAVEENA TANDON AND OTHERS CONDOLE ADMAN PIYUSH PANDEY'S DEATH

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Prominent film industry figures, including Raveena Tandon, Hansal Mehta and Prasoos Joshi, on Friday paid tributes to veteran ad-filmmaker Piyush Pandey, calling him "one of India's finest storytellers" whose authenticity and laughter will echo forever.

Pandey, one of India's most celebrated advertising minds whose works included the 2014 election slogan 'Ab ki baar, Modi sarkar', died on Friday morning at a private hospital in Mumbai. The 70-year-old was undergoing treatment for the last few days after complaining of respiratory complications.

Joshi, the current chief of Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and an ad-filmmaker himself, shared pictures of Pandey on X handle and remembered him as a "man who made work feel like life itself".

"In transit overseas. Hard to believe Piyush's laughter is now

only in memory. What a remarkable era — a man who made work feel like life itself. One for whom emotion was strategy, and simplicity, craft. Farewell, Piyush — the ad world will forever carry your signature and magic, and in so many of us, your authenticity and laughter will echo forever. Om shanti. #PiyushPandey," he wrote.

Tandon re-shared a post about Pandey's death on her Instagram story and wrote, "Make heavens bubblier and more cheerful with your wit! Dear Piyush."

Mehta wrote on his X handle, "Fevicol ka jod toot gaya. The ad world lost its glue today. Go well Piyush Pandey."

Actor-politician Smriti Irani said Pandey was a legend.

"Piyush Pandey wasn't just an ad man — he was one of India's finest storytellers. He taught us that emotion is the truest language of creativity. His words made brands human, and ideas

immortal. Farewell to a legend who made us feel, think, and smile," she wrote.

Actor Vivek Oberoi tweeted, "From 'Daag acche hai' to 'Har ghar kuch kehta hai'. These were never mere slogans—they were a perspective, a way to live life with an open heart. That is the true, lasting magic of Piyush Pandey Ji. Now that you are taking your curtain call, we would all like to thank you for making TV time fun and enriching at the same time."

Pandey joined Ogilvy India in 1982 and rose to become its global creative chief, transforming Indian advertising by rooting it in local language, humour, and emotion.

The Jaipur-born ad-filmmaker gave memorable ads for brands such as Cadbury's (Asli Swaad Zindagi ka), Fevicol (Yeh Fevicol ka Jod Hai, Tutega Nahi) and the famous political slogan 'Abki Baar, Modi Sarkaar'.

Honoured with the Padma Shri in 2016 and the Legend Award at the London International Awards in 2024, Pandey made history in 2004 as the first Asian to chair the Cannes Lions jury. He made his acting debut with filmmaker Shoojit Sircar's acclaimed 2013 film 'Madras Cafe'. In the John Abraham-led movie, Pandey played a minor role of the cabinet secretary of India.

Quizmaster Siddhartha Basu, who also featured in the movie, shared a still from the film and wrote, "Fellow Stephanian and blockmate, Piyush Pandey gave Indian ads a desi heart — from 'Mile Sur' & 'Fevicol' to 'Incredible India', the 'Ummeed se Dugna' campaign for 'KBC2' was his."

"A joy to share the frame with him in 'Madras Cafe'. He rose with heart, wit & warmth - and left a lasting legacy," he added. (PTI)



PURE ART HAS NEVER BEEN MADE FOR MASSES: NAWAZUDDIN SIDDIQUI ON WHY INDIE CINEMA MUST SURVIVE



MUMBAI, Oct 24: Actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui says there is a need to preserve independent cinema despite the challenges it faces, as he believes that if such films cease to be made, it would be "very bad" for the creative industry.

"I'll keep doing independent cinema. It is very important to balance it with a certain kind of mass film," Siddiqui, who has carved a niche for himself with independent films like "Gangs of Wasseypur", "The Lunchbox", "Miss Lovely" and "Photo-

graph", told PTI.

The actor said many filmmakers today are attempting to make independent or art-house films, but such projects often don't get much visibility or space.

"I think it will be very bad if it happens (independent cinema fizzles out). I think it should continue to be made... It is said that our classical forms, be it songs, dance, etc have never been popular, it is only because a few people can understand it.

"If you want to do it for the masses, and if you want to do it in an artistic way, then that is a different thing. If you want to do it for the masses, then you have to include certain things in it but the pure art and classical things have never been made for the masses," Siddiqui said.

The 51-year-old actor, who has acted in big ticket Hindi movies like "Kick", "Bajranghi Bhaijaan", "Raees", "Housefull" and "Heropanti 2", said mainstream blockbuster films allow him to reach a wider audience and ultimately benefits his independent projects.

"The biggest advantage of big films is that more people see you, so when you see small films and if we get even five percent of the audience then that's the biggest benefit.

"More people started to know about me with these films. The thing is that most of the independent films are released on a smaller level. Well, they get fewer screens and more people do not come to watch it," Siddiqui said.

In his latest film, "Thamma", which is part of the Maddock Horror Comedy Universe (MHCU), the actor features as the antagonist. The film, directed by Aditya Sarpotdar of "Munjya" fame, also stars Ayushmann Khurrana and Rashmika Mandanna in the lead roles. (PTI)

Allu Arjun lauds Rishab Shetty's 'Kantara: A Legend Chapter-1': Mind-blowing film

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Telugu cinema star Allu Arjun penned a lengthy note on social media praising Rishab Shetty for his latest directorial "Kantara: A Legend Chapter-1" and said he was in a "trance" watching it.



Directed by Rishab, who features in the lead role in the film, "Kantara: A Legend Chapter-1" released on October 2 and is a prequel to the 2022 film "Kantara".

Produced under Hombale Films, the film also has Rukmini Vasanth, Gulshan Devaiah and Jayaram among others.

Arjun shared a post on his X handle on Friday and said Rishab has "excelled in every craft".

"Watched #Kantara last night. Wow, what a mind-blowing film. I was in a trance watching it. Kudos to @shetty_rishab garu for a one-man show as writer, director, and actor. He excelled in every craft," he wrote.

"Aesthetic performances by @rukminitweets garu, #Jayaram garu, @gulshandeveiah garu, and others. Brilliant work by the technicians... especially the music by @AJANEESH garu, cinematography by @AravindKashyap garu, art direction by @Dharani-Gange91 garu, and stunts by #ArjunRaj garu," he added.

The film has already earned over Rs 700 crore at the worldwide box office "Big congratulations to producer @Vikragandur garu and the entire @hombalefilms team. Honestly, words fall short to describe the experience. Lots of love, admiration, and respect," Arjun concluded. (PTI)

It is like a perfect marriage: Ayushmann Khurrana on Sooraj Barjatya film



MUMBAI, Oct 24: Working with Sooraj Barjatya, known for his family dramas, is like a dream come true moment, says Ayushmann Khurrana, who describes their union as a "perfect marriage".

Khurrana is headlining the next movie of the filmmaker, best known for "Maine Pyar Kiya", "Hum Aapke Hain Koun", "Vivah" and "Uunchai". It will feature Sharvari as the female lead.

"It is very exciting. The good thing is that this Prem is very closer to me. Through this film, I have come closer to Sooraj ji... It is like a perfect marriage," Khurrana told PTI.

"He makes very few films but he is one of the most successful directors in our country, his track record and success record is the highest in India. It is a matter of pride for me that I'm working on a film with Sooraj Barjatya. It was my childhood dream. We will start work from

November 1 on the film. Whenever I meet him, I touch his feet because he is like that, he has that kind of vibe, and he deserves it."

The film will see Khurrana step into the iconic role of Prem, a character that has become synonymous with Barjatya's family-centric movies, often portrayed by superstar Salman Khan.

"Prem is like (Lord) Ram to me because the main character in his (Barjatya's) films is a very cultured, well-mannered man, and how a man should be in a society, that is Prem. Perfect green flag is Prem," the actor, who became the poster boy of middle-of-the-road cinema like "Vicky Donor", "Badhaai Ho", "Bala", "Shubh Mangal Saavdhan", and "Dream Girl", said.

Khurrana currently stars in "Thammas", the new movie in the Maddock Horror Comedy Universe that also features "Stree", "Bhedhiya" and "Munjya". (PTI)

Hardy Sandhu releases new track 'Ki Haal Aa'

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Punjabi singer-songwriter Hardy Sandhu released his latest track "Ki Haal Aa", which "integrates traditional Punjabi influences with contemporary sounds".

The track is infused with a delightful blend of upbeat melodies and powerful rhythms, all anchored by Sandhu's signature vocal prowess.

The song seamlessly integrates traditional Punjabi influences with contemporary sounds, according to a press release.

Sandhu, known for tracks such as "Bijlee Bijlee", "Kya Baat Ay" and "Naah", said he tried to encapsulate the celebratory essence of Punjabi culture with a sound that appeals to a global audience.

"With 'Ki Haal Aa,' I aimed to encapsulate the celebratory essence of Punjabi culture while crafting a sound that appeals to a global audience. The track's melodies are upbeat and vibrant, designed to make everyone want to dance and celebrate life." Sandhu said in the statement.

The music for the track

has been composed by Jaymeet and Shevv.

Bollywood singer-composer Sachin Sanghvi arrested for sexually assaulting woman

Bollywood singer and music composer Sachin Sanghvi has been arrested on charges of sexually assaulting a woman by promising her a chance in a music album and marriage, police said on Friday (October 24, 2025).

Sanghvi, known for hit songs in 'Stree 2' and 'Bhedhiya' was arrested on Thursday (October 23) under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

The complainant, in her 20s, claimed she came in contact with Sanghvi in February 2024, and he had sent her a message on Instagram. The singer-composer allegedly promised her a chance in his music album, and they exchanged phone numbers.

The woman has alleged that Sanghvi called her to his studio, where he proposed marriage, and sexually assaulted her on multiple occasions, a police official said. (PTI)



Ranji Trophy Elite Group B Jadeja's presence bolsters Saurashtra against MP

RAJKOT, Oct 24: Saurashtra will be bolstered by the presence of India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja against a strong Madhya Pradesh when the second round of the Ranji Trophy Elite Group B matches begins across the centres from Saturday. Jadeja's left-arm spin will boost Saurashtra's bowling unit here on the Niranjan Shah Stadium pitch where 31 wickets fell to spin in their opening round match against Karnataka last week.

Saurashtra's middle-order had a rather flimsy look to it against Karnataka, particularly after the retirement of Cheteshwar Pujara.

But Jadeja's arrival will lend some amount of solidity to the home side's batting. The 36-year-old India allrounder had made an unbeaten 104 against the West Indies in the first Test in Ahmedabad.

Madhya Pradesh will hope that skipper Rajat Patidar, who made an unbeaten 205 against Punjab, Venkatesh Iyer, and Yash Dubey will continue to make some hefty contributions.

Similarly, Saurashtra will want their younger names such as Harvik Desai, Prerak Mankad and the seasoned Arpit Vasavada to come good against a capable MP bowling unit.

The visitors will pin their hopes



on spinners Kumar Kartikeya, Shubham Sharma and Saransh Jain to keep Saurashtra on the backfoot.

They had nearly spun MP to a win over Punjab, plucking five wickets in the second innings be-

fore rain washed out the rest of the final day's proceedings. Karnataka eye Goa scalp

After squandering a golden chance to garner three points against Saurashtra, Karnataka will be looking to pocket as many points as possible against a confident Goa at Shimoga.

On the paper, Karnataka are firm favourites to gain at least three points but the way Goa hammered Chandigarh for an innings victory underlines that they are no longer mere pushovers.

They have some proven performers like Lalit Yadav, Darshan Misal and Suyash Prabhudesai who can challenge any team on their days.

Karnataka, on the other hand, will eye some big runs from their premier batters to pile pressure on Goa.

Skipper Mayank Agarwal, Devdutt Padikkal, Karun Nair and R Smaran, all reached fifties against Saurashtra without converting them into a big score.

On the bowling front, they have enough resources in Shreyas Gopal, Shikhar Shetty and Mohsin Khan to keep Goa batters on tenterhooks.

In other Group B matches, last year's runners-up Kerala will face Punjab at Mullanpur while Chandigarh will be up against Maharashtra at home. (PTI)

B'desh ends wait for ODI series victory after leaving West Indies in a spin

MIRPUR, Oct 24: The Bangladesh spinners were responsible for all 10 wickets as their team thrashed West Indies by 179 runs in the third and final ODI to take the series 2-1 on Thursday.

The dominant victory, its second largest overall and biggest ever against the Caribbean side, helped



Bangladesh claim its first ODI series triumph since March 2024. In between, it has lost four such encounters.

Leg-spinner Rishad Hossain capped a successful spell with 3-54, taking his wicket-tally to 12, the highest by a Bangladesh spinner in an ODI series. West Indies was bowled out for 117 in 30.1 overs.

Left-arm slow bowler Nasum Ahmed also took 3-11 to rip through the top order while off-spinner Mehidy Hasan Miraz and left-arm Tanvir Islam picked up

two wickets each.

Mustafizur Rahman, the lone paceman in the side, didn't even have to bowl.

Earlier, Bangladesh openers Saif Hassan and Soumya Sarkar put on 176 to give their side a solid start after captain Mehidy had won the toss and opted to bat first.

Sarkar hit an 86 ball-91 with seven fours and four sixes while Hasan, who raised a maiden fifty in his sixth ODI, was dismissed for 80 from 72 balls. He cracked six fours and as many sixes as Bangladesh piled up 296-8.

Akeal Hossain, who led West Indies' breathtaking Super Over victory in the second game to level the series, took a career-best 4-41.

But he was largely ineffective when Sarkar and Hasan were batting on a pitch that was better than the previous two matches, with the bounce appearing to be even this time.

Najmul Hossain Shanto also made 55 before Akeal claimed three wickets in an over. Nasum then took three wickets to leave West Indies reeling on 35-3.

The sides will now play a T20 series in Chattogram, starting on October 27. (AP)

Theegala starts with a steady 68 at Bank of Utah Championship

UTAH (USA), Oct 24: Indian-American golfer Sahith Theegala began his week at the Bank of Utah Championship with a steady 3-under 68 to be tied-21st and three shots behind the co-leaders.

Starting on the 10th, Theegala birdied the 10th and the 15th to get to 2-under. He gave up one of those shots on the first but birdied the Par-3 third before bogeying the fourth at the Black Desert Resort course. Birdies on the seventh and ninth took him to 3-under for the day.

He was three shots behind co-leaders Austin Cook, Thorbjorn Olesen, Jesper Svensson and David Lipsky who posted 6-under 65.

Theegala drove the ball superbly, finding nearly 93 per cent of fairways and averaging 309 yards off the tee, while also hitting 78 per cent of greens in regulation.

Though his putting left a couple of birdie chances untapped, it was a confident start for the 2023 Fortinet Championship winner. (PTI)

Aussie allrounder Maxwell set to return for T20I series against India

SYDNEY, Oct 24: Charismatic Australian all-rounder Glenn Maxwell is set to return for the T20I series against India after recovering from a fractured wrist, while young pacer Mahli Beardman is a surprise pick in the squad for the high-stakes clash beginning in Canberra on October 29.

The five-match T20I series, to be played after the ongoing ODIs, will see the 37-year-old Maxwell and Beardman available for selection for the last three games, while pace stalwart Josh Hazlewood and bowling allrounder Sean Abbott will be available for the first two and three games respectively.

Maxwell suffered a wrist fracture while bowling in the nets ahead of Australia's three-match T20I series in New Zealand in September.

Beardman is a notable pick for the series against India following the 20-year-old's commendable performance in the five List A games and two Big Bash matches he has played.

He was the star of the Australian U19 World Cup-winning side in 2024, bagging three wickets in the final. He also toured England with the senior ODI side last year but was not included in the playing XI. (PTI)

Aston Villa, Roma stunned in Europa League, Nottingham Forest wins

LONDON, Oct 24: Sean Dyche achieved in his first game what predecessor Ange Postecoglou couldn't in eight matches in charge: a victory.

Under its new coach, Nottingham Forest presented a concentrated display resulting in a 2-0 victory over Porto in the Europa League on Thursday.

It was the first victory for Nottingham in the competition and only the second overall this season, while Porto was defeated for the first time this term.

Morgan Gibbs-White converted from the penalty spot in the 19th minute at the City Ground. Igor Jesus doubled the advantage from another penalty in the 77th.

Former Burnley and Everton manager Dyche replaced Postecoglou, who was fired in ruthless fashion on Saturday around 20 minutes after Forest's 3-0 home loss to Chelsea that left the team in the Premier League relegation zone.

Postecoglou had been in the job for only 39 days and didn't win any of his eight matches in charge.

Roma upset
Czech team Viktoria Plzen scored twice through Prince Kwabena Adu and Cheick Souare within two minutes in the first half to stun Roma 2-1 at Stadio Olimpico.

Paulo Dybala reduced the deficit from the spot early in the second half.

Elsewhere, Braga, Lyon and Midtjylland maintained their 100% records.

Kerem Akturkoglu converted from the spot for Fenerbahce in a 1-0 win over Stuttgart.

Early goals three minutes apart from Jens Odgaard and Thijs Dallinga put Bologna en route to a 2-1 victory over FCSSB in Bucharest. Lille was handed a 4-3 home defeat by 10-man PAOK.

The kickoff of Feyenoord's home game with Panathinaikos was twice changed because of a storm forecast before the Dutch hosts prevailed 3-1.

Villa's winning streak ends
Mats Deijl's second-half goal for European newcomer Go Ahead Eagles completed a 2-1 comeback victory over Aston Villa 2-1.

It was the first defeat for the Premier League club after two wins in Europe's second-tier competition. The Dutch team recorded its second victory.

Deijl controlled the ball with his chest before firing a left-footed shot past goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez on the hour mark in the Dutch city of Deventer.

Evann Guessand struck early from inside the penalty area off Jadon Sancho's cross to put Villa ahead in the fourth minute. It was the Ivory Coast forward's first goal for his new club.

Mathis Suray equalized three minutes before interval with a lob — scoring the historic first goal in the Europa League for the hosts.

Villa's Emi Buendia wasted a chance to equalize from the spot 11 minutes before the end, sending the penalty over the crossbar.

The loss ended Villa's five-game winning streak in all competitions.

Braga, Lyon and Midtjylland keep winning
Fran Navarro and substitute Mario Dorzeles scored one each for Braga to beat Red Star Belgrade 2-0 for the third win from three for the Portuguese team.

Corentin Tolisso netted from close range in the third minute and substitute Afonso Moreira scored in the final minute in Lyon's 2-0 home win over Basel.

Danish club Midtjylland took home three points from neutral site Backa Topola, Serbia with a 3-0 win over Israeli team Maccabi Tel Aviv on two goals from Franculino Djú and another one from Philip Billing.

Pointless Rangers, victorious Celtic
Emil Kornvig scored five minutes before the break and Norway's Brann topped struggling Rangers 3-0.

Jacob Sørensen headed in the second in the 55th as the Scottish team didn't look capable of finding an answer to the aggressive play of the hosts. Noah Holm finished them off 11 minutes from time.

Rangers hired former Sheffield Wednesday manager Danny Rohl as its new coach on Monday to replace the fired Russell Martin.

Rangers are without a point in Europe. It was the second victory for Brann.

Rangers arch rivals Celtic came from a goal down to edge 10-man Sturm Graz 2-1. Liam Scates canceled out the opening goal by Tomi Horvat before Benjamin Nygren headed in the winner at Celtic Park. Minutes after the goal, Graz midfielder Tochi Chukwuani received a red card.

In the third-tier Conference League, Crystal Palace was stunned 1-0 by AEK Larnaca in London.

A game between Rijeka and Sparta Prague was suspended due to heavy rain after 12 minutes in Croatia. Play resumed after two hours but was abandoned after the first half and postponed until Friday. (PTI)

NOTICE INVITING FOR SALE OF REMA (PHULJHARU), CANE & FISHERY MAHAL UNDER KARBI ANGLONG EAST DIVISION DIPHU FOR THE YEAR 2026.

Sealed Tender are invited for Sale of Rema, Cane & Fishery Mahal under Karbi Anglong East Division, Diphu. Details of Tender Paper will be available in the Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, Karbi Anglong East Division, Diphu in any working days within working hours.

Intending Tenderers are requested to collect the Tender Form etc, by paying Rs. 100/-for each Form and the Tender will be received up to 3:00 P.M. (IST) on 13/11/2025 in the office of the undersigned.

S C H E D U L E
Period of Operation (01-01-2026 to 31-12-2026)

Sl. No.	Name of Mahals	Name of Range	Probable Quantity	Govt. Value	Earnest Money
1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Rema Mahal No.7 (B)	North Western Range, Parkup Pahar	50 M.Ton	Rs. 2,50,000/-	2% general, 5,000/-1% ST(H) 2,500/-
2	Rema Mahal No.7 (C)	W. Range, Dokmoka	90 M/ Ton	Rs. 4,50,000/-	2% general, 9,000/-1% ST(H) 4,500/-
3	Rema Mahal No. 5	-do-	65 M/Ton	Rs. 3,25,000/-	2% general, 6,500/-1% ST(H) 3,250/-
4	Cane Mahal No. 4	-do-	Sond-4,000 Bdis Lizai-3,000 Bdis Raidang1,000 Bdis	Rs. 48,000/- Rs. 24,000/- Rs. 20,000/- Rs. 92,000/-	2% general, 1,840/-1% ST(H) 920/-
5	Rema Mahal No. 8	Central Range, Manja	75,000 Kg	Rs. 3,75,000/-	2% general, 7,500/-1% ST(H) 3,750/-
6	Cane Mahal No.3	-do-	Sond-14,000 Nos Lizai-12,000 Bdis Raidang-6,000 Bdis	Rs. 1,68,000/- Rs. 96,000/- Rs. 1,20,000/- Rs. 3,84,000/-	2% general, 7,680 1% ST(H) 3,840/-
7	Rema Mahal No.3	NE/Range, Silonijan	70,000 Kg.	Rs. 3,50,000/-	2% general, 7,000/-1% ST(H) 3,500/-
8	Rena Mahal No.11	-do-	60,000 Kg.	Rs. 3,00,000/-	2% general, 6,000/-1% ST(H) 3,000/-
9	Cane Mahal No. 5	-do-	25,000 Bdis	Rs. 4,00,000/-	2% general, 8,000/-1% ST(H) 4,000/-
10	Fishery Mahal No. 5	-do-	-	Rs. 50,000/-	2% general, 1,000/-1% ST(H) 500/-
11	Rema Mahal No. 4	E/Range, Bokajan	8,000Kg	Rs. 40,000/-	2% general, 1,000/-1% ST(H) 500/-
12	Dhansiri Mahal No.1	-do-	10,000cum	Rs. 7,00,000/-	
13	Rema Mahal No. 7 (A)	N/Range Dolamara	50 Ton	Rs. 2,50,000/-	2% general, 5,000/-1% ST(H) 2,500/-
14	Cane Mahal No. 1	-do-	8,500 Bundles	Rs. 1,70,000/-	2% general, 3,400/-1% ST(H) 1,700/-

Sd/-
Divisional Forest Officer,
Karbi Anglong East Division,
Diphu

India can be at forefront of where women's cricket can go: Sophie Devine



NAVI MUMBAI, Oct 24: With WPL finding its pride of place in the calendar, India in future can be at the forefront of where women's cricket can

potentially reach, legendary New Zealand skipper Sophie Devine said after her team's defeat to India which dashed their hopes of reaching World Cup semi-final.

Devine, who captained New Zealand in her fifth World Cup, is set to retire from ODIs on Sunday as the White Ferns crashed out of the race to semi-finals with a huge loss to India here.

"We've got to be realistic about it (that) these things don't happen overnight. We're not like India. We don't have one billion people to be able to call upon. We're literally a small country at the bottom of the world with five million people," she said when asked about domestic cricket in New Zealand can improve.

"You guys have got a billion people here, and how you work your domestic systems and structure is going to be very, very different to how we do it back in New Zealand."

"I'm really excited about where the future of the women's game goes, the support, the attention that it's had over here is really exciting, and I think India can be at the forefront of where the women's game can go. We've obviously seen the WPL and

the level of interest in that," she added.

Devine, however, said her job of stepping aside becomes easier knowing New Zealand have a good bench strength.

"When you think about the likes of Izzy (Isabelle Gaze), Brooke (Halliday), Melie Kerr (Amelia Kerr), (and) Eden Carson, the way that they're starting to really grow into themselves, it certainly makes it easier when I do step away after the next game, not before," she said.

This New Zealand team is like her baby and on cusp of retirement, Devine let her "maternal instincts" take over.

"But yeah, it is. You're a bit like a proud mother, aren't you? You've been involved in this side at New Zealand cricket for so long that you're so invested. I'm sure I'm going to go through a few different emotions over the next couple of days, but will take time to reflect on that," Devine added.

The 36-year-old Devine got emotional while wondering if there was anything different that her side could have done in terms of preparations after New Zealand's campaign ended.

"I thought I was going to get through this press

conference without crying, but it's tough, isn't it?" she said.

"Because I know I've spoken about the weather, the weather's followed us, jokes have been made about it. At the end of the day, you just want the opportunity to play cricket, and unfortunately... we had fate in our hands, we lost the first two games, put ourselves under pressure, (and then) we lost today."

"It's hard to reflect when nearly half your games had weather impacted by it, but we haven't been good enough, and that's really tough, because the work that this group has put in over the last 12 months has been phenomenal."

"... and that's what sucks about sports sometimes, you can work harder than anyone in the world. You can do all the right things, but it doesn't guarantee your results out there when it matters," she said.

Devine continued, "So that's probably going to be the hardest pill to swallow about this campaign, I'm not sure what else we could have done as a group to be better prepared, to be fitter, to be more connected. I don't know. But we've got to dissect

it and figure out where we went wrong and where we can improve, which, yeah, it does, it sucks... it sucks."

Devine also praised her Royal Challengers Bengaluru teammate Smriti Mandhana after the India vice-captain smacked a 95-ball 105.

"I think she's smashed so many records this year, a number of runs, hundreds, and to think she's still pretty young as well. I'm glad I'm retiring so I don't have to deal with her," she said.

"You don't get to her level of skill without being an incredibly efficient trainer and knowing where your game needs to go and continue to develop. She's going to continue to get better, and I'm going to just watch from the sideline and say good luck to whoever else has to play against her," Devine added. Devine said New Zealand would look to go out with their heads held high after their last game against England on Sunday.

"We'll pull ourselves up, we'll dust ourselves off, and we'll go bloody hard at these English people and give them a good run for their money, and hopefully on Sunday, we can leave with our heads held really high," she said. (PTI)

Last Dance Down Under India fret over bowling attack in Ro-Ko's Australian swansong



SYDNEY, Oct 24: The emotional quotient will be at an all-time high with a lot of moistened eyes expected to witness an embattled Virat Kohli and his partner in many a fight Rohit Sharma playing what could be their last appearance on Australian soil in the third ODI, here on Saturday.

While Rohit Sharma has rightfully earned some breathing space with a fighting 73 off 97 balls albeit in a lost cause, Kohli's back-to-back ducks, his first ever in international cricket, has definitely made his die-hard fans contemplate whether this is the beginning of the end.

Rohit first came here for the CB Series in 2007-08 while Kohli's first tour with the senior team was in the 2011-12 season when he made an instant impact with a Test century at Adelaide. With no ODI series in Australia in the next two years, it is impossible to think that the duo will again be seen Down Under in India blues.

Whether Kohli, in particular, continues to play post Australia series is a matter of conjecture but the final ODI at the iconic SCG will be more than a mere "dead rubber".

However at SCG, the fans would want those punchy cover drives to come out of the closet and a few of those on-drives and the inside-out lofted shot over extra cover from the modern-day legend.

The match is of consequence as the Gautam Gambhir-coached Indian team looks to avoid a 0-3 whitewash, which will certainly not look great although the ODI World Cup is a good two years away.

To make matters worse, in the last five ODIs between India and Australia at the SCG, the "Men in Blue" have won only once.

Skipper Shubman Gill and Kohli are both due for a big knock and Gambhir will expect both to fire in the final game.

Clinically outwitted in the last two games, a battered Indian team will be keen to revisit its template of shoring up the batting at the cost of compromising with bowling resources, especially ignoring a genuine match-winner like Kuldeep Yadav, who could have been more than a handful at the Adelaide Oval where the Australian batters struggled to read Axar Patel and Washington Sundar.

The current Indian team has been bullish about playing multi-skilled cricketers but most of them are bordering on being bits-and-pieces players.

Someone like Nitish Kumar Reddy remains under-utilised at No. 8 in the batting order and his deliveries, in early and mid-120s, hardly have had any venom to trouble international standard batters on a regular basis.

In the case of Harshit Rana, the marked drop in pace in his second and third spells speaks volumes about why he isn't yet ready for international cricket. To come back and bowl second and third spells with the same intensity only comes with years of toil in red-ball cricket, bowling in different match situations and in different conditions.

Prasidh Krishna's presence in the playing eleven is the need of the hour.

From the first two games, the only takeaway has been Axar Patel punching above his weight, his improvement as a batter and the steady overs that he has been bowling.

If Axar keeps performing like this, India wouldn't be hard-pressed to recall Ravindra Jadeja in 50-over cricket.

As far as the Australian team is concerned, they have started their two-year journey towards the next ODI World Cup in earnest.

The likes of Matthew Short, Mitchell Owen and Cooper Connolly have displayed admirable technique and lots of cricketing smartness when it has come to planning and execution in slightly pressure cooker scenarios.

In the playing eleven, Matt Kuhnemann, who tormented India in the rain-curtailed opening game, might join forces with Adam Zampa.

This is something that augurs well for the hosts who would want their opener Travis Head to play one of his signature innings that didn't come off in the first two games.

Squads
India: Shubman Gill (captain), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (wk), Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Mohammed Siraj, Harshit Rana, Arshdeep Singh, Dhruv Jurel (wk), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Kuldeep Yadav, Prasidh Krishna.

Australia: Mitchell Marsh (captain), Xavier Bartlett, Alex Carey (wk), Jos Inglis (wk), Cooper Connolly, Nathan Ellis, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Jack Edwards, Mitchell Owen, Josh Philippe, Matthew Renshaw, Matthew Short, Mitchell Starc, Adam Zampa, Matt Kuhnemann.

Match Starts at 9 am IST. (PTI)

Alyssa's injury in focus as Australia face South Africa in Women's World Cup

INDORE, Oct 24: Australia would be hoping their "three-in-one" skipper Alyssa Healy is fit and raring to go in the top-of-the-table Women's World Cup clash here on Saturday against South Africa, who have displayed remarkable resilience and fortitude to emerge as strong contenders for the prestigious trophy.

Healy, who performs the triple role of captain, opener, and wicketkeeper, had suffered a calf injury during training ahead of the match against England here on Wednesday with Tahlia McGrath leading the seven-time champions to a big win against the arch-rivals.

With the Proteas showing the intent to go the distance this time around by winning five consecutive games after the 10-wicket humiliation by England in the opener, the 35-year-old Healy's fitness becomes all the more important to counter the threat as she has been in great touch with the bat in the tournament.

Healy scored back-to-back centuries, against India and Bangladesh, which puts her third in the list of highest run-getters in the ongoing tournament behind India's Smriti Mandhana and Pratika Rawal despite playing two fewer games.

Healy's absence against England forced quite a bit of juggling in the batting order but the team still won the contest with ease, with Annabel Sutherland and Ashleigh Gardner, who pushed themselves down the order, stitching together an unbeaten 180-run partnership.

The kind of depth in Australia's batting, complemented by their array of pace and spin bowlers, makes them the team to beat, and it would require a huge effort from South Africa to stop the juggernaut.

The game against England gave an insight into the Southern Stars' fighting qualities where despite losing the top four -- Phoebe Litchfield, Georgia Voll, Ellyse Perry and Beth Mooney -- cheaply to be reduced to 68/4, the team dug



deep into its reserves of experience to still score a facile win with Sutherland and Gardner scoring unbeaten 98 and 104 respectively.

South Australia skipper Laura Wolvaardt would be well aware of the great depth in Australian batting and would be banking on her fiery pace-bowling stalwart Marizanne Kapp to deliver a memorable performance.

Having started sedately, Kapp has seamlessly slipped into her allrounders' role by taking six wickets and scoring two half centuries. But it's the trio of openers Wolvaardt, and Tazmin Brits and top-order batter Sune Luus who will have to do the bulk of the scoring, as the Proteas do not have the same batting depth as their opponents.

The turnaround from the 10-wicket loss to England in the opening games has been simply outstanding.

But Australia are a different cup of tea and gauging their strengths and weaknesses before the knockouts would be a great way to staking claim to the title.

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

South Africa: Laura Wolvaardt (c), Anneke Bosch, Tazmin Brits, Nadine de Klerk, Annerie Dercksen, Sinalo Jafta, Marizanne Kapp, Ayabonga Khaka, Masabata Klaas, Sune Luus, Karabo Meso, Nonkululeko Mlaba, Tumi Sekhukhune, Nondumiso Shangase, Chloe Tryon.

Match starts at 3pm IST. (PTI)

Pakistan withdraw team from Junior Hockey World Cup in India

NEW DELHI, Oct 24: Pakistan has pulled out of the Junior Hockey World Cup to be held in India in November-December, the International Hockey Federation (FIH) confirmed to PTI on Friday.

FIH said Pakistan's replacement team for the November 28-December 10 event, to be held in Chennai and Madurai, will be announced soon.

"We can confirm that the Pakistan Hockey Federation has notified the International Hockey Federation (FIH) that its team initially qualified for the upcoming FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup Tamil Nadu 2025 won't participate eventually," FIH said in a statement released to PTI.

"The team replacing Pakistan for this event will be announced soon," the statement added.

Pakistan were placed in Group B alongside India, Chile, and Switzerland and it remains to be seen which team replaces them.

This is the second event in India that Pakistan has pulled out from after the men's Asia Cup in Rajgir, Bihar held from August 29 to September 7 this year.

The sporting ties between India and Pakistan have deteriorated since the April 22 Pahalagam terror attack and India's subsequent Operation Sindoor.

The Indian government recently announced a new policy under which it will not engage in bilateral sporting contests with Pakistan but will continue to compete against them in multi-nation tournaments. (PTI)

NFR hosts All India Inter-Railway Boxing Championship 2025



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 24: The 79th Men and 18th Women All India Inter-Railway Boxing Championship 2025 began at the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) Boxing

Stadium, Maligaon, running from October 24 to 27.

Organised by the Northeast Frontier Railway Sports Association (NFRSA), the event was inaugurated by NFR General Manager

Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, along with senior railway officials and dignitaries.

The championship features 140 boxers, both men and women and around 50 board officials from 14 Indian Railway zones, including NFR, CLW, NWR, SER, SECR, ECoR, CLR, SCR, NR, NER, ER, SR and CR.

The event aims to identify and nurture boxing talent within the Railway fraternity and promote sports and fitness among personnel, providing a competitive platform for all participants.

Oscar Piastri draws on past experiences to fend off Max Verstappen in F-1 title race

MEXICO City, Oct 24: In the past, Oscar Piastri struggled in the final races of a season while trying to secure a racing championship. The Australian driver hopes that the past can help him cope with his current circumstances in F-1 starting this weekend in the Mexican Grand Prix.

Piastri won seven of the first 15 Gran Prix races this season to build a comfortable 104-point lead over reigning champion Max Verstappen, who has been in great form since and has taken advantage of McLaren's troubles to cut that lead to 40 in just four races.

"I think he's been very consistent in the last few weekends. And, being strong as well, there's no denying that," Piastri said Thursday. "But there's no benefit worrying about that, the thing that's going to help me win this championship is trying to get the most out of myself."

Piastri found himself in similar situations before in his career. In 2019 in the Renault Eurocup, he had a 40-point lead over Victor Martin, who cut it to 5 1/2 points, but Piastri secured the championship in the last race of the season.

Something similar happened to Piastri in the 2020 season of Formula 3, where he lost a 25-point lead and then trailed Logan Sargeant by seven points, but finished strong



in the last races to win the crown.

"There are some similarities, yes. I think ultimately in this championship, I feel stronger than I did in that year, and some things are a bit different. I think it's also similar to the Formula Renault championship I had," Piastri said.

"I think it is a good thing I have evidence that I can pull it off and win both of those championships. Those are nice things to look back on. But I also know that just because I've done it before doesn't mean it's automatic to happen this time around."

tape fine</h2><h2 />Red Bull was fined 50,000 euros (around \$58,000) by FIA after the stewards found out that a member of the team tried to remove Lando Norris' grid tape before Max Verstappen's United States Grand Prix win last weekend. Under the current rules, tampering with tape markers is not illegal, but some Red Bull critics pointed out that it could be considered to be poor sportsmanship.

"I guess it took a bit longer for whatever reason and the gate closed," Verstappen said. "If he was distracted or not, the right way was to stay out of it, I think is quite clear. How do you explain it? Also the stewards. So I think that is quite understandable that you get fined for that." Piastri was politically correct when asked about the incident.

"I don't have that much to add, but they're within their rights to do it. But obviously, in Austin, they were on the grid too late doing it," the Australian driver said. "I guess gamesmanship. But everyone will have their own opinion on whether it's necessary or not."

Ferrari's closing on a one-year anniversary without wins

The Autódromo Hermanos Rodríguez saw a Ferrari driver at the top of the podium nearly a year ago, when Carlos Sainz won the

Mexican GP on Oct. 27, 2024, and that streak could be extended according to Charles LeClerc.

"I remember very much last year where Carlos was actually very strong the whole weekend, and it was difficult for me to get close, but at the moment it doesn't seem very likely that we are going to fight for the win this weekend," LeClerc said. "But, never say never."

The 28-year-old driver has six podium finishes this season including a third place last weekend at Austin. His teammate Lewis Hamilton has yet to reach one.

"There are many things we've learned from from last weekend. I hope that we can bring it here," Piastri said. "However, I would like to lower the expectations, it doesn't mean that we'll see the same kind of performance this weekend."

Ferrari is third in the constructors race already won by McLaren, but it has just a three-point lead over Red Bull.

"Last year was a very positive weekend for the team in Mexico. I hope we can reproduce that, but I feel like we are further away compared to the last year," LeClerc said. "Until the end of the season, it's going to be very tough to win races without any strange things happening." (AP)