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## Guwahati civic body launches campaign to make city clean, green with citizen awareness

'Sikun Guwahati Survekshan' a citizen feedback, which plays vital role in evaluating the overall cleanliness and public satisfaction across wards

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** To motivate stakeholders to manage waste at ground level, the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) has come out with a campaign for handling the mounting garbage to make the city clean and green with enhanced citizen awareness, an official said.

As part of 'Sikun Guwahati - Mor Guwahati' (Clean Guwahati - My Guwahati) campaign of GMC, each ward is being assessed on the basis of 10 parameters.

Social scientists and common residents of the city also hailed the move and opined that it has the potential to bring positive changes in society.

Guwahati, the gateway to North-east India and the largest city of the region, generates around 700 tonnes of waste every day, and almost 300 tonnes of that trash remains untreated, aggravating the problem with each passing day.

"We have launched the 'Sikun Guwahati - Mor Guwahati' campaign with an aim to make the city clean and green. It will be done primarily through enhanced citizen awareness, efficient solid waste

management and the promotion of urban greenery," GMC Commissioner M S Lakshmi Priya told PTL.

Under this campaign, monthly ward-level assessments are being conducted to evaluate cleanliness standards and monitor progress across the city, she added.

"The first round of assessments has already been completed, covering all wards on 10 key parameters. We assessed the wards on a 25-day performance," Priya said.

The GMC evaluated the wards on several criteria like residential areas, commercial zones, public spaces, water bodies, public toilets, educational institutions, tourist locations, parks, bulk waste generators and RRR (reduce, reuse, recycle) centres.

Each ward was assessed by a team of three trained assessors, supervised by sanitary inspectors and junior technical officers, under the guidance of the executive officer of the respective ward.

"To ensure transparency and data-driven monitoring, GMC developed a dedicated 'Sikun Guwahati Survekshan' web portal and

mobile application. The assessments are conducted digitally using this platform, which features an interactive dashboard modelled on the Swachh Survekshan framework of the Government of India," Priya said.

An important component of the 'Sikun Guwahati Survekshan' is citizen feedback, which plays a vital role in evaluating the overall cleanliness and public satisfaction across wards.

Speaking about the initiative, the GMC Commissioner expressed confidence that the campaign will not only improve on-ground cleanliness and waste management systems, but also foster greater citizen engagement.

"The corporation is committed to achieving a significant improvement in the upcoming Swachh Survekshan 2025 by the central government, building upon the lessons and progress made in previous years," she added.

The Guwahati city ranked 402 out of 458 Indian cities in 2023 in its category of 1-10 lakh population in Swachh Survekshan survey. This (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Nation to celebrate 150 years of Vande Mataram

'World of culture and social media' has lent Sanskrit a new lease of life: PM at Mann Ki Baat Radio address



**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the national song 'Vande Mataram' depicted a vibrant and magnificent image of India, and urged citizens to make the 150th year of the song memorable by carrying forward its values for future generations.

In his monthly 'Mann Ki Baat Radio' address, he said many programmes related to 'Vande Mataram' will be organised throughout the country to commemorate 150 years of the national song penned by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and first sung by Rabindranath Tagore in 1896.

In his 30-minute address, the prime minister touched upon several unique initiatives undertaken by citizens in different parts of the country, including efforts to revive mangroves in Gujarat, setting up of Garbage Cafes in Chhattisgarh and attempts to revive lakes in Bengaluru.

The prime minister also lauded the efforts of the paramilitary forces - BSF and CRPF - to induct Indian dog breeds in their units and recalled that a Mudhol Hound had won laurels at a competition leaving behind dogs of foreign breeds.

"Our indigenous dogs have also displayed amazing courage. Last year, during a patrol in a Maoist-affected area of Chhattisgarh, an indigenous dog of CRPF detected 8 kg of explosives," Modi said.

He said the BSF and CRPF have inducted Indian breeds such as Rampur Hounds, Mudhol Hounds, Mongrels, Kombai and Pandikona in their dog squads and some of these will take part in the parade organised at Ekta Nagar in Gujarat to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on October 31.

Modi also lauded the efforts to cultivate coffee in Odisha's Koraput, which is benefiting people in the region. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Assam court sentences man to life term imprisonment for raping daughter



**NAGAON, Oct 26:** A POCSO court in Assam's Nagaon district has sentenced a 50-year-old man to life imprisonment for raping and impregnating his 13-year-old daughter, a senior official said on Sunday.

Additional District and Sessions Judge-cum-Special Judge of Nagaon POCSO Court, Chitra Rani Saikia, pronounced the judgment on Friday evening.

The court also ordered the convict to pay Rs 5 lakh as compensation to the survivor. Failure to pay the amount would attract an additional six months in prison.

Nagaon ASP (Crime) Jayanta Baruah said the incident took place in Amsoi area in Raha police station earlier this year.

The convict had raped his daughter inside their residence during the absence of his wife, he added.

The crime came to light after around five months, when the mother noticed the physical changes of the girl due to pregnancy.

Accordingly, the survivor's mother lodged an FIR on June 3 and the police filed the chargesheet within 28 days at the Nagaon POCSO court, Baruah said.

"The survivor has given birth to a child," he added. (PTI)

## ASEAN SUMMIT

### 2026 will be ASEAN-India year of maritime cooperation: PM Modi

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** The India-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership is emerging as a powerful foundation for global stability and growth, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday.

In a virtual address at the India-ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) annual summit, Modi also said that the grouping is a key pillar of New Delhi's Act East Policy.

"India has always fully supported 'ASEAN centrality' and ASEAN's outlook on the Indo-Pacific," he said.

"Even in these times of uncertainty, the India-ASEAN Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has

made steady progress. Our strong partnership is emerging as a powerful foundation for global stability and growth," Modi said.

The prime minister said India has "stood firmly with its ASEAN friends" in every crisis and the two-way cooperation in the spheres of maritime security and the blue economy is growing rapidly.

"In light of this, we are declaring 2026 as the ASEAN-India year of maritime cooperation," he announced.

"We are also vigorously advancing mutual cooperation in education, tourism, science and technology, health, green energy and cybersecurity. We will continue

to work together to preserve our shared cultural heritage and strengthen people-to-people ties," he said.

ASEAN is considered one of the most influential groupings in the region, and India and several other countries, including the US, China, Japan and Australia, are its dialogue partners.

The ASEAN-India dialogue relations started with the establishment of a sectoral partnership in 1992. This graduated to a full dialogue partnership in December 1995 and a summit-level partnership in 2002.

The ties were elevated to a strategic partnership in 2012. The two-way (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## INS Sutlej completes joint hydrographic survey in Mauritius

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** INS Sutlej has successfully completed a joint hydrographic survey with the Mauritius Hydrographic Service, covering an area of nearly 35,000 square nautical miles, the Indian Navy said on Sunday.

The initiative will significantly contribute to marine charting, coastal regulation, resource management, and long-term environmental planning, thereby supporting Mauritius' Blue Economy goals, a Navy spokesperson said.

The survey was conducted in close coordination with national agencies under the existing MoU between India and Mauritius.

As part of the mission's capacity-building efforts, six personnel from various Mauritian ministries em-



barked on board INS Sutlej for hands-on training in modern hydrographic techniques, the Navy said.

In addition, INS Sutlej carried out joint Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance and anti-piracy

patrols with the the Mauritius National Coast Guard, strengthening regional maritime security, the spokesperson said.

At a ceremony held on board INS Sutlej, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## ULFA(I) militant arrested in Arunachal

**ITANAGAR, Oct 26:** A militant belonging to the banned United Liberation Front of Asom (Independent) outfit has been nabbed in Arunachal Pradesh's Namsai district, a defence spokesperson said on Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, a joint operation by Assam Rifles and Arunachal Pradesh Police was launched in Manfeisang-Hanthi Camp area on Saturday.

During the operation, 24-year-old self-styled Corporal Thawseng Asom, alias Anupom Dohatiya, a resident of Makum Bariakoli in Assam's Tinsukia district, was arrested, Defence Spokesperson Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said in a statement.

The militant is suspected to



have been involved in the attack on an Army camp at Kakopathar in Tinsukia on October 17, he said.

Subsequent searches in Pathar-gaon led to the seizure of one MQ-RAS1 rifle, three magazines, 151 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, a rifle grenade and a hand grenade.

The apprehended cadre, along with the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Khatkhathi Stadium nears completion: Boost to sports infra in Bokajan

**DIPHU, Oct 26:** In a significant step toward enhancing sports infrastructure in Karbi Anglong, Numal Momin, Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, on Sunday visited the Khatkhathi Stadium site to review the ongoing construction work.

During the inspection, Momin expressed satisfaction over the steady progress of the project, noting that it has reached its final stage of completion.

Engineers and departmental officials accompanying him briefed him on the final phase of the construction, assuring that the remaining work will be completed shortly. Once inaugurated, the stadium is



expected to become a major sporting hub and a centre for youth engagement and talent development in the Bokajan area.

Speaking to the media, Momin emphasised the government's commitment to promoting sports and physical well-being among the youth, stating that infrastructure projects like the Khatkhathi Stadium

are vital to nurturing local talent and encouraging community participation.

He added that such developments reflect the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma in transforming Assam's infrastructure landscape and empowering rural and semi-urban regions through sports and recreation.

The upcoming facility will not only serve as a venue for football and athletics but will also host community events and youth training programmes, fostering a culture of discipline, teamwork, and excellence among young athletes.

Momin extended his gratitude to the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## EC to hold presser on pan-India SIR of voters' list today evening

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** The Election Commission will hold a press conference to announce pan-India Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voters' list on Monday evening.

While the invite only mentions a press conference at 4.15 pm, officials said it is about intensive revision of electoral rolls.

The poll authority is likely to announce the first phase of SIR in which 10 to 15 states will be covered, including those going to Assembly polls in 2026.

Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry are scheduled to go to polls next year. (PTI)

## Bhagavad Gita 'nectar of wisdom' for modern world, say Chinese scholars

**BEIJING, Oct 26:** The Bhagavad Gita is the "nectar of wisdom" and a "miniature history of Indian civilisation" offering answers to the spiritual and material dilemmas faced by people in modern times, noted Chinese scholars said articulating a rare public reverence for the ancient Indian scripture.

Speaking on Bhagavad Gita at a symposium on 'Sangamam - A Confluence of Indian Philosophical Traditions' organised by the Indian Embassy here on Saturday, Chinese scholars termed Gita as a philosophical encyclopaedia of India, highlighting its timeless insights on achieving harmony between material and spiritual pursuits.

The star speaker at the event was 88-year old Prof Zhang Baosheng, who has translated Bhagavad Gita into Chinese.



Terming Gita as a spiritual epic and a philosophical encyclopaedia of India, he said its translation was necessary because it revealed India's spiritual outlook — its ideas of duty, action, and detachment — which still moulds Indian life today.

Recounting his experiences in India (1984-86) from Cape Comorin (now known as Kanniyakumari) in the south to Gorakhpur in the north, Prof Zhang said everywhere, he sensed Lord Krishna's presence — a living moral and spiritual idol.

Through such encounters, Prof Zhang said he saw that Gita is not a remote scripture but a living influence on Indian psychology, morality, and social life — a "cultural anthropology" of the Indian soul.

He called the Bhagavad Gita "a miniature history of Indian civilisation itself — a dialogue that captures its ethical crisis, philosophical synthesis, and religious rebirth."

Bhagavad Gita struck a chord with the rest of the world, including in China, leading to its translation into all major languages, he said.

In his address, Prof Wang Zhicheng, Director of the Centre for Oriental Philosophy Research at the Zhejiang University said Bhagavad Gita, a dialogue from an ancient (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## US looking at expanding strategic relationship with Pak, but it will not be at expense of ties with India: Rubio

**WASHINGTON, Oct 26:** The US sees an opportunity to expand its strategic relationship with Pakistan but it will not be at the expense of its historic and important ties with India, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said.

Ahead of his meeting with External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in Kuala Lumpur on Monday, Rubio, referring to India's energy ties with Russia, said New Delhi has already expressed a desire to diversify its procurement of crude oil.

The US secretary of state was interacting with journalists ahead of his trip to Malaysia for the ASEAN summit.

Rubio, to a question on the US' ties with Pakistan, said New Delhi is "concerned for obvious reasons" and that Washington's relationship with Islamabad will not be at the expense of the ties with New Delhi.

"But, I think they (India) have to understand we have to have relations with a lot of different countries. We see an opportunity to expand our strategic relationship with Pakistan," he said.

"I think the Indians are very mature when it comes to diplomacy and things of that nature. Look, they have some relationships with countries that we don't have relationships with. So, it's part of a mature, pragmatic foreign policy," he said.

"I don't think anything we're doing with Pakistan comes at the expense of our relationship or friendship with India, which is deep, historic, and important," Rubio added.

The US-Pakistan ties have witnessed an upswing in the last six months, especially after US President Donald Trump's meeting with Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir following the military conflict between India and Pakistan in May.

While India rejected Trump's repeated claims that he brokered a ceasefire between the two countries, Pakistan credited the US president for ending the hostilities between the two countries.

To another question on if India will be willing to really shove off its purchases of Russian oil for a trade deal with the US, Rubio said New Delhi has already expressed an interest in diversifying its oil portfolio.

"If they diversified their portfolio, the more they buy it from us, the more they'll buy it from someone else. But I wouldn't prejudice or -- I'm not negotiating trade deals. So I'm not going to speak on that," he said.

"But I know they've (India) already expressed a desire to diversify their oil portfolio, even before all of this came up. So, obviously the more we sell them, the less they'll buy from (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

# OVL seeks legal advice after US sanctions oilfield with Indian stake

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** ONGC Videsh Ltd has sought legal opinion after the United States imposed sanctions on a Russian oilfield in which a consortium of Indian companies holds a 49.9 per cent stake, sources said.

US President Donald Trump on October 22 announced new sanctions against two of Russia's largest oil companies, Rosneft and Lukoil, in a bid to pressure Moscow into ending its war with Ukraine.

As part of these, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated a number of Russia-based Rosneft and Lukoil subsidiaries in which they, directly or indirectly, held a 50 per cent or more stake.

The list of subsidiaries thus blocked includes CJSC Vankorneft, in which OVL has a 26 per cent stake, and an Indian consortium comprising Oil India Ltd (OIL), Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) and Bharat PetroResources Ltd, which holds 23.9 per cent. The remaining 50.1 per cent is with Rosneft.

While a plain reading of the OFAC sanctions indicates that the restrictions do not apply to Indian companies, OVL is seeking legal opinions from domestic and international law firms to ensure it does not violate any sanctions, two sources with direct knowledge of the matter said.

The OFAC sanctions should not apply to Indian companies, as they do not hold a 50 per cent stake in



Vankorneft, which has been designated as a sanctioned entity, they said.

Additionally, Indian firms do not receive any equity oil, a share of the oil and gas produced from the field in proportion to their equity stake.

Instead, they are entitled to dividends from the joint venture's earnings from oil and gas sales.

Also, Indian companies are not the operators of the fields, they said, adding the oil produced from the field is sold to traders who, in turn, sell it to refineries globally.

The Vankor field, spread over an area of 416.5 square kilometers, is located in the north-eastern part of the West Siberian Basin, around 142 km from Igarka in Russia. OVL in May 2016 paid Rosneft USD 1.284 billion to acquire a 15

per cent stake in CSJC Vankorneft, a company organized under the law of the Russian Federation, which is the owner of Vankor Field and the North Vankor license.

This 15 per cent stake gave OVL, the overseas investment arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), 4.11 million tonnes of oil and oil equivalent gas. It acquired an additional 11 per cent in October 2016 for USD 930 million, getting access to 3.2 million tonnes of oil equivalent.

That year, the consortium of OIL-IOC-BPRL bought 23.9 per cent in Vankorneft for USD 2.02 billion, giving them 6.56 million tonnes of oil equivalent. Vostok Oil LLC (an affiliate of Rosneft) holds 50.1 per cent in the fields.

Because of sanctions on Russia,

Indian companies have not been able to repatriate dividends they earn from Vankorneft for the last three years. They have together accumulated some USD 1.4 billion in their Russian bank accounts.

Sources said OVL wants to be 100 per cent sure it is not violating any sanctions and has sought legal opinions on the stakes Indian firms hold in a designated (sanctioned) entity, Vankorneft.

Following the October 22 action, "all property and interests in property of the designated or blocked persons that are in the United States or in the possession or control of US persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC," the US Treasury Department said on its website.

In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, individually or in the aggregate, 50 per cent or more by one or more blocked persons are also blocked."

Unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC, or exempt, OFAC's regulations generally prohibit all transactions by US persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of blocked persons. Violations may result in the imposition of civil or criminal penalties on US and foreign persons.

For Indian companies, the risk of any violation of sanctions may lead to being blocked from raising overseas funds as well as restrictions on the use of US dollars in any foreign transaction. (PTI)

## Significant percentage of manufacturing leadership appointments were external hires: Report

**MUMBAI, Oct 26:** A significant percentage of executive movements in the manufacturing sector over the past year were external hires, highlighting a clear preference among organisations to bring in fresh leadership rather than promote from within, says a report.

According to a report by CIEL HR Services, based on an analysis of executive-level movements within the Indian manufacturing sector over a 12-month period, said that nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) of senior hires in the manufacturing sector in the past year were external appointments.

The report's insights are based on proprietary data collected from a combination of publicly available sources, including professional networking platforms, company announcements, press releases, and verified databases tracking senior management appointments.

The report further revealed that leadership churn was most visible at the very top.

Nearly half (47 per cent) of all tracked movements were at the CEO/President/MD level, highlighting that boards are actively re-

thinking leadership for the future, the report found.

"When nearly half of leadership moves are happening at the CEO and MD level, it tells us something profound, manufacturing firms are not shying away from tough choices at the very top.

"This level of churn points to companies preparing themselves for digitalisation, energy transition, and new global supply chains. Leadership today is being seen less as a position of stability and more as a lever of transformation," CIEL HR Services Group CEO Aditya Mishra said.

The automotive and auto components sector emerged as the most active segment, accounting for 35 per cent of all senior-level movements, reflecting the sector's size, strategic importance, and fast-paced transformation agenda.

Meanwhile, the report revealed that manufacturing contributed 23 per cent of all leadership movements across industries in the last year, ranking second only to IT and ITeS.

The report further highlighted that while women accounted for

only 14 per cent of overall movements, they were more likely than men to rise through internal promotions.

While only 14 per cent of executive hires were women, 42 per cent of those women were promoted internally, compared to 36 per cent of men, the report noted.

The auto sector distinguished itself as a leader in gender representation, with women making up 26 per cent of its executive hires, nearly double the industry average.

However, data stated that women leaders in the auto sector remained heavily concentrated in HR (30 per cent), pointing to the need for greater inclusion in operations, technology, and core business leadership roles, the report said.

When it came to geographies, senior executive movements within the manufacturing sector have been most concentrated in Delhi/NCR, which accounted for 27 per cent of total transitions.

Mumbai followed with an 18 per cent share, while Bengaluru and Pune saw comparable activity, each capturing 11 per cent of the total executive moves, it stated. (PTI)

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## Nation to celebrate

"There are people in Koraput who are cultivating coffee through their sheer passion. There also are many women whose lives have been pleasantly transformed by coffee," the prime minister said.

He said Indian coffee is becoming very popular all over the world be it Chikmagalur, Coorg and Hassan in Karnataka; the areas of Pulney, Shevaroy, Nilgiri and Annamalai in Tamil Nadu; the Biligiri region on the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border; or the areas of Wayanad, Travancore and Malabar in Kerala - the diversity of Indian coffee is truly remarkable. The prime minister said the world of culture and social media has lent Sanskrit a new lease of life and many young people were speaking in and about the language through reels.

"Many even teach Sanskrit through their social media channels. One such young content creator is Bhai Yash Salunke. What's special about Yash is that he is both a content creator and a cricketer. His reel on playing cricket while speaking in Sanskrit has been very popular," Modi said. (PTI)

## Guwahati civic body

poor performance considerably improved in 2024, when the capital city of Assam jumped to rank 44. To foster community involvement in the 'Sikun Guwahati - Mor Guwahati' campaign, ward-level committees chaired by ward councillors were formed. These committees organised awareness programmes on source segregation, promoting waste separation into four categories - wet, dry, domestic hazardous and sanitary.

Presently, Guwahati generates 600-700 tonnes of municipal solid waste per day. Out of these, only around 417.5 tonnes are processed at different facilities across the city.

Another senior GMC official said several new waste processing units are being set up, and once these are ready, the problem of mounting garbage will be contained to a large extent.

Commenting on the initiative, Handique Girls' College Assistant Professor (Political Science) Pallavi Deka said the solid waste management system in Guwahati is severely hampered by public unawareness and administrative apathy, especially regarding segregation at source.

"Waste continues to be dumped without sorting, and initiatives like 'Sikun Guwahati' have the potential to make positive changes, provided it is implemented with proper planning and intent. However, such initiatives were lacking in the past, limiting their effectiveness," she added.

The social commentator further said that in commercial areas, the absence of designated waste disposal points leads to drain blockages and waterlogging, especially during the monsoon season.

"Over-reliance on landfilling has caused serious environmental and health hazards. Critically, Deepor Beel, a Ramsar site, faces ecological degradation due to nearby waste dumping," she added.

Deka said that a shift towards decentralised waste management with strict enforcement, community participation and sustainable practices is essential to address these growing challenges.

The residents of the city are also appreciating the GMC's plans to engage all stakeholders to mitigate the perennial crisis of waste management.

"This is a very good initiative by the local civic body. We have been facing the waste problem for a long time. There were other programmes earlier too, but those were not very effective in handling the crisis. The fact that the civic body has realised the lacunae and started this new initiative gives us hope," senior journalist Bidisha Singha, a resident of Ward No 34, said.

Likewise, Hiranya Sarma from Ward No 57 said that earlier waste was not collected regularly and it used to decompose on the roads itself, but by GMC's efforts, segregation of the waste nowadays after they attended a few meetings, organised by GMC officials.

"Because of the proactive nature of the people, the entire locality's overall cleanliness has improved considerably. We have now decided to continue work like this for our ward in the future too, irrespective of the competition," he added. (PTI)

## 2026 will be ASEAN

relations between India and ASEAN have been on a significant upswing in the last few years, with focus being on boosting cooperation in the areas of trade and investment as well as security and defence. (PTI)

## INS Sutlej completes

the fair-sheet of the completed survey was formally handed over to Mauritian authorities in the presence of Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed, Minister of Housing and Lands, Mauritius, and Anurag Srivastava, High Commissioner of India to Mauritius, the statement said.

The deployment marks the 18th joint hydrographic mission between India and Mauritius - "a testament to the enduring maritime partnership and shared commitment to safe navigation, sustainable ocean management, and regional cooperation", the Navy said. The successful completion of the mission reaffirms the deep-rooted bonds of friendship between the two nations, aligned with the vision of 'MAHASAGAR' or Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Region, it said. (PTI)

## Khatkhathi Stadium nears

Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and all stakeholders for their cooperation and assured that Bokajan will soon witness a vibrant new chapter in its sporting journey once the stadium is officially inaugurated.

## ULFA(I) militant

seized arms and ammunition, has been handed over to the Arunachal Pradesh Police for further investigation and legal proceedings, he added. (PTI)

## US looking at expanding

someone else. And, but, we'll see where we wind up on all that," he said. (PTI)

## Bhagavad Gita 'nectar

Indian battlefield over 5,000 years ago, transcended time to answers the anxieties and confusions people face today. Terming Gita as a "nectar of wisdom," he said, "Krishna's answers were engraved into the 700 verses of the Bhagavad Gita. These words are not outdated maxims, but 'spiritual keys' that have crossed millennia." He outlined to the mostly Chinese audience the "core" of three "wisdoms to solve life's problems" - which are the Karma Yoga, Sankhya Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga - propounded by Krishna which provide a way out to deal with the problems faced by the people in the modern world.

Highlighting the famous words of Krishna, "whenever dharma (righteousness) declines and adharma (un-righteousness) prevails, I manifest myself on earth," he said, "The wisdom of Gita is the light that 'manifests' when we are lost".

"When you feel anxious, remember to 'let go of attachment to results,' when you feel lost, remember to 'recognise your true self,' when you feel empty, remember to 'give more'," he said.

Prof Yu Longyu, Director of Centre for Indian Studies, Shenzhen University said the key points emerged from the studies carried out by various Chinese scholars was that India, as a great civilisation, possesses a profound cultural and philosophical heritage that deserves deep study and transmission.

"In modern times, China's leading scholars have often embodied 'threefold learning - Chinese, Western, and Indian'. I therefore call upon Chinese scholars to study Indian culture with dedication, contributing to China's rejuvenation, to India-China harmony, and to peace in the world," he said.

Earlier, welcoming the array of Indian scholars, Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat said it was an extension of last year's conference on Ramayana held by the Embassy.

"Over millennia, India's philosophical traditions have sought to answer the most fundamental questions: 'What is truth? What is the nature of reality? How do knowledge and action lead to ultimate freedom?'"

"The darsanas or philosophical schools - from Nyaya's logic to Yoga's discipline, from Vedanta's introspection to Buddhism's compassion - present diverse pathways to the same quest for wisdom and harmony," Rawat said. (PTI)

## US life insurers, not LIC, led recent Adani investments

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** Life Insurance Corporation of India's investment in Adani group companies may be under the spotlight, but recent data shows that some of the largest investments in entities controlled by billionaire Gautam Adani have come not from the state insurer but from major US and global insurers.

In June 2025, a month after USD 570 million (₹ 5,000 crore) investment by Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) in Adani Ports & SEZ, US-based Athene Insurance led a ₹ 6,650 crore (USD 750 million) debt investment in Adani's Mumbai International Airport, joined by several leading international insurance firms.

Apollo Global Management - Athene's parent company - in a statement on June 23 stated that its managed funds, affiliates, and other long-term investors had completed a USD 750 million "investment grade rated financing" for Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL).

This was Apollo's second large financing for MIAL, following its previous financing that provided operational flexibility to deleverage.

Other fund raises included Adani Green Energy Ltd raising around USD 250 million from a group of global lenders, including DBS Bank, DZ Bank, Rabobank, and Bank SinoPac Co Ltd. In all, the group signed new credit facilities of more than USD 10 billion in the first half of the year across the port unit (APSEZ), renewable energy arm

(AGEL), flagship firm (Adani Enterprises Ltd) and power transmission unit (Adani Energy Solutions Ltd), according to an August report by S&P Global Ratings. LIC's investments in the Adani group were under the spotlight after The Washington Post reported that government officials influenced LIC's investment decisions amid global investor hesitation.

On Saturday, LIC called the report "false, baseless and far from the truth" and said its investments in Adani group companies were made independently and in accordance with its board-approved policies, following detailed due diligence.

India's largest insurer has, over the years, made investment decisions across companies based on fundamentals and detailed due diligence. Its investment value in India's top 500 companies has grown 10-fold since 2014 - from ₹ 1.56 lakh crore to ₹ 15.6 lakh crore - reflecting strong fund management.

Its exposure to the Adani group is less than 2 per cent of the ₹ 2.6 lakh total debt of the conglomerate. Also, Adani is not LIC's largest holding - Reliance Industries Ltd, ITC, and Tata Group are. LIC owns 4 per cent (worth ₹ 60,000 crore) of Adani stocks versus 6.94 per cent (₹ 1.33 lakh crore) in Reliance, 15.86 per cent (₹ 82,800 crore) in ITC Ltd, 4.89 per cent (₹ 64,725 crore) in HDFC Bank, and 9.59 per cent (₹ 79,361 crore) in SBI. LIC holds 5.02 per cent of TCS worth ₹ 5.7 lakh crore. (PTI)

## No short-term impact of H-1B visa fee hike, future resourcing plans will change: Tata Tech CEO & MD

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** The fee hike for the US H-1B visa by the Donald Trump administration has no short-term impact on Tata Technologies Ltd, although it will change resourcing plans for the future, according to its CEO and Managing Director, Warren Harris.

The global product engineering and digital services firm, by virtue of its staffing architecture, which has about 70 per cent of its employees in any country coming from that nationality, is less exposed to visa issues than other "Indian competitors that are India out," Harris told PTI. "We are not an India-out company. We were very much a global company, with the majority of our employees in different territories who were nationals of those countries. We have Americans running our US operation. We have the Chinese team running our China operation, unlike many of our Indian competitors that are India-out. They are much more exposed to visas," he said.

Harris was responding to a query on the implications of the hike in the annual H-1B visa fees to USD 100,000 announced in September by Trump. "We are cognizant of the challenge," he added.

Harris further said, "It will certainly change our resourcing plans for the future, but there is no short-term impact associated with the H-1B decisions that the United States has made."

As of the September quarter of this fiscal year, Tata Technologies had a global workforce of 12,402.

"We are present in 18 different geographies. One of the principles around which we've architected the company is that we want about 70 per cent of employees in any country to come from that nationality or region. That is what underpins the type of special relationship that we have with our customers, and it is through that we leverage the engine that we built here in India," he noted. When asked about the US tariff situation and its impact, he said, "At the beginning of the fiscal year, when the tariffs were announced, it prompted many of our customers to revisit their product plans. "Not only did they need to look at the products themselves and the viability of the products against the backdrop of the tariffs, but they also needed to look at their supply chains. I think what we've seen is that reset of strategies and plans is now largely played out."

He further said, "The customers that we were expecting to work to make decisions at the beginning of the fiscal year are now making those decisions."

It has helped improve the company's performance in the second quarter, Harris said, adding that its aerospace vertical has been essentially immune to the slowdown in automotive and the tariffs, and has thereby continued to grow. (PTI)

## Equal work, unequal wages: Pay gap persists for gig workers in India

The report by a workforce staffing services and HR Solutions provider is based on a Digipoll survey among 1,550 professionals across industries



**MUMBAI, Oct 26:** Even as festive hiring for the year surged, wage parity between gig and permanent employees remained unresolved, with 47% of respondents believing there is a pay gap, a report has revealed.

When asked how the hourly pay of gig or freelance workers compares to that of permanent employees for the same role, 11% respondents said earnings were up to 10% less, 23% said wages were 10-25% lower and 13% revealed the gap exceeds 25%, according to the report by Genius

HRTech (formerly Genius Consultants).

Collectively, the report found that nearly half of the workforce - 47% - believe gig workers are paid less than their permanent counterparts, revealing a persistent disparity that continues to shadow India's festive hiring landscape.

The report by the workforce staffing services and HR Solutions provider is based on a Digipoll survey among 1,550 professionals across industries during September 1-30, 2025.

"The festive economy thrives on the agility and

contribution of gig workers, yet our data shows they continue to operate on unequal terms. The principle of 'equal pay for equal work' must extend beyond permanent contracts.

"Fair compensation, skill-building, and transparency are key to creating a future-ready, motivated gig workforce that can truly power India's seasonal demand," Genius HRTech Chairman and Managing Director R.P. Yadav added.

The report further revealed that 73% of respondents believe that festive gig workers should receive the same hourly pay as permanent employees for identical work, underscoring a clear sentiment across the workforce in favour of pay parity.

From the employer's perspective, however, most justify gig-permanent pay gaps by citing flexibility.

Over 56% of employers cited the absence of long-term benefits or obligations as the main reason, followed by 24% who pointed to short-term employment duration and 10% who attributed it to perceived lower skill or training levels.

However, only 3% have confirmed there has been no difference in pay between gig and permanent employees, said the report.

When asked about non-monetary benefits that would improve satisfaction among gig workers, 43% voted for skill development for future roles, it said.

This was followed by 31% preferring flexible shifts, 13% citing transport and meal facilities, and 9% calling for career transition opportunities to permanent employment, it stated. (PTI)

Dhubri Police operation exposes child exploitation network in Coochbehar, two arrested

# Assam Police busts human trafficking racket in West Bengal

HT Correspondent

**DHUBRI, Oct 26:** In a major operation, Dhubri Police rescued a minor girl allegedly kidnapped and forced into prostitution, leading to the arrest of two persons in West Bengal's Coochbehar district on Sunday.

The rescue followed a joint raid conducted by a team led by Inspector Ratul Haloi, Officer-in-Charge of Bilasipara Police Station, with Sub-Inspector Manash Pratim Nath, Woman Sub-Inspector Diki Talukdar, and others, assisted by Pundibari Police Station in Coochbehar. The operation targeted the Narayan Hotel, where the victim was found confined under inhumane conditions.

Two individuals, identified as Shyamal Das, the hotel manager and his associate Raju Sen, were arrested during the raid. Both were brought to Bilasipara Police Station for further legal action.

Police said the girl had been forced into sexual exploitation by multiple individuals, revealing a suspected human trafficking racket. The investigation is now focused on uncovering the wider network involved in the crime.

The case, registered as Bilasipara PS Case No



338/25, invokes relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023 and Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012. The FIR was initially lodged after the victim's alleged kidnapping by her sister-in-law.

Dhubri Police have confirmed that all legal procedures are underway as efforts continue to trace other culprits linked to the trafficking network.

# BJP holds 'Nyay Yatra' seeking justice for Zubeen Garg

HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, Oct 26:** The Sonitpur district unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) organised a 'Nyay Yatra' in Tezpur on Saturday, demanding a speedy and transparent judicial probe into the death of popular singer Zubeen Garg. The rally saw participation from party leaders, workers and supporters across the district's five assembly constituencies, along with local residents.

The procession, which began at around 3:30 PM from the Collegiate Field, moved through the town with participants carrying banners, placards and singing Zubeen's song "Mayabini." It concluded near the Tezpur Court Chariali area.

Addressing the gathering, Naduar MLA and senior BJP leader Padma Hazarika urged the Special Investigation Team (SIT) to expose the real culprits and submit its report without delay. "Zubeen Garg was a priceless asset of Assam. His sudden de-



mise has left a void in the state's cultural landscape. The truth must come out and justice must be ensured," Hazarika said. Other leaders, including AMTRON Vice-chairman Ritubaran Sarma and Sonitpur District BJP president Madhusmita Deka Hazarika, also addressed the gathering and expressed solidarity with the demand for justice.

# Dr Numal Momin inspects Wangala festival site

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Oct 26:** Bokajan MLA and Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly, Dr Numal Momin, inspected the site for the upcoming Wangala Festival 2025 to review the ongoing preparations. The festival is scheduled to be held from November 5 to 7.

Dr Momin expressed satisfaction over the progress of work and lauded the efforts of officials, organisers, and volunteers for their dedication in ensuring a grand celebration. He said the preparations reflect the unity and enthusiasm of the local community to showcase their cultural pride.

Highlighting the significance of the Wangala Festival, also known as the Harvest Festival of the Garos, Dr Momin said it represents gratitude, pros-

perity, and social harmony. "It is heartening to see our people coming together to celebrate their roots and traditions. The Wangala Festival is a proud reflection of our rich cultural heritage," he said.

Dr Momin also mentioned that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP National President JP Nadda, and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the government continues to support initiatives that preserve indigenous culture, promote tourism and strengthen social harmony in Assam. The Wangala Festival 2025 is expected to draw visitors from across the region, featuring traditional dances, music, cultural exhibitions and local cuisine. Dr Momin thanked all stakeholders for their efforts and assured continued government support for the event's success.



# Shushrusha Setu health camp to be held at Kapila College

HT Correspondent

**DONGKAMUKAM, Oct 26:** A mega health camp titled 'Shushrusha Setu' will be organised at Kapila College in West Karbi Anglong on October 28, offering screening, diagnostics and treatment services.

Announcing the event at a press conference held at Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhawan, Ghelani, Block Programme Manager of the National Health Mission, Aldrin Phangocho, said that ten special-ist doctors along with other medical staff will provide services covering around 50 health conditions, including congenital heart diseases, cleft lip and palate, neurological disorders, endocrine issues and developmental conditions. The camp will primarily focus on individuals aged 0 to 18 years.

The Assam Cancer Care Foundation (ACCF) will conduct cancer screening, while the District Social Welfare Department will set up a Disability Counter for issuing and renewing disability certificates. Phangocho added that AYUSH services promoting traditional healing systems will also be available alongside modern medical care. Tests such as haemoglobin (Hb %), blood glucose, CBC, and liver function will be conducted.

Officials from the District Health Society and medical officers stated that the initiative aims to make specialised healthcare more accessible to children and vulnerable groups in remote areas who face challenges in reaching medical facilities.

# Former ASEB employee Punyadhar Borkotoky passes away

HT Correspondent

**SIVASAGAR, Oct 26:** Punyadhar Borkotoky, a former employee of ASEB and resident of Phukan Nagar, Sivasagar, passed away on Wednesday at the age of 86 due to age-related ailments. He was known as an amicable social worker in the region.

He is survived by his wife, three daughters, and their families. His cremation was performed at the Santidham crematorium. Madhavdev Namghar Samaj, Barowari Puja Samity, and the All Assam United Brahmin Council have mourned his demise.



# Borjan Education Mega Event underway in KA

HT Correspondent

**BOKAJAN, Oct 26:** The Borjan Education Mega Event is currently underway at Rongthelu Pathu Aklam, Karbi Anglong, organised by Assam Gaurav Binong Teron from October 25 to 27. The three-day event features participation from 20 schools and includes competitions in group song, solo song, dance, essay, skit, debate, drawing, extempore speech, poem recitation, handwriting and a sci-

ence exhibition.

The inauguration on October 25 was attended by singer Pokhila Lekthepi, lyricist and singer Chandra Kanta Terang, and Assistant Inspector of Schools Katharson Ingti. On the second day, Hidipi High School secured first place in the group song competition, followed by Dillai High School in second place and Tob Visionary Residential School in third.



People buy Bamboo Baskets, Fruits, Vegetables and others items ahead of the Chhath Puja festival in Guwahati on Sunday. HT Photo

# Free cancer screening camp for Namdang workers



**MARGHERITA, Oct 26:** The Indian Red Cross Society Margherita Sub-District Branch, in collaboration with Hindustan Oil Exploration Company Limited under its CSR scheme and supported by Assam Cancer Care Foundation Tinsukia unit and The Hans Foundation, organised an awareness meeting and free medical camp for tea garden workers at Namdang Tea Estate, Tinsukia district.

Pabitra Borgohain, general secretary of the Red Cross Society, highlighted the causes, symptoms and treatment of cancer and stressed the importance of awareness through such camps. Specialist doctors Dr Mamta Upadhyay from Assam Cancer Care Foundation Dibrugarh and Dr Jinand Singh from The Hans Foundation, along with medical staff, screened nearly 200 workers for oral, cervical and breast cancer.

The camp also included tests and treatment for high blood pressure, anaemia during pregnancy, diabetes and other health issues, with free medicines provided to all participants.

# Voices through the lenses contest showcases river life, culture and sustainability in Assam

## Young filmmakers celebrate Brahmaputra through mobile storytelling

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** The Brahmaputra, central to Assam's culture, livelihoods and imagination for centuries, recently became the focus of creative expression through "Voices through the Lenses," a mobile short video contest organised by Care Luit with support from the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI). Held under the theme "Echoes of the Brahmaputra - Stories Flowing through Time and Tide," the contest invited participants from across Assam to present compelling stories of life along the river using mobile phones. From intimate glimpses of riverine communities to vivid portrayals of the Brahmaputra's ecological and emotional significance, participants highlighted the river as a living heritage through visual storytelling.

A distinguished jury panel featuring filmmaker Pervez Ahmed and Gayatri Sarma, president of the Guwahati Theatre Society, selected the standout entries from dozens of submissions. The prizes were presented by Prabin Bora, Director (I/C), Regional Office, IWAI, Pandu, Guwahati, alongside the jury at the GALPAKATHA event organised by the Guwahati Theatre Society at New Art Players, Guwahati, on October 25.

The winners included Sangeeta Medhi for Best Documentary with



"Salmora - A River Diary" (₹ 50,000 + Certificate), Bondip Sarma, Akash Deep, and Mridupawan Parashar for Best Fiction with "Nadiya Ke Dui Paar" (₹ 50,000 + Certificate), and Suhasini Handique received a Jury Special Mention for "Shifting Shore: Unscripted Brahmaputra Diaries" (₹ 25,000 + Certificate).

Speaking at the event, Prabin Bora said, "The Brahmaputra is more than a river - it is a living heritage. Through creative storytelling, young filmmakers are not

only celebrating its beauty but also highlighting the need for ecological sensitivity and sustainable co-existence." Gayatri Sarma added that the films stood out for their authenticity and ability to let the river "speak," noting the power of art to advocate for the environment.

A spokesperson from Care Luit highlighted that the contest reflects their mission to blend sustainability, culture and community voices. "By using simple tools like mobile phones, we can democratise storytelling and bring the Brahmaputra's

many untold stories to light," they said. Founded in 2007, Care Luit is a non-profit trust dedicated to sustainable development, art and culture. It has promoted sustainable livelihoods, flood resilience, environmental conservation and heritage preservation in Assam, working closely with artists, educators, researchers and local communities to inspire positive change. The "Voices through the Lenses" contest stands as a testament to the enduring bond between Assam's people and the Brahmaputra.

# Five Markaz Academy students qualify IOQM 2025

HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, Oct 26:** Five students from Markaz Academy, Hojai have qualified in the Indian Olympiad Qualifier in Mathematics (IOQM) 2025, conducted by the Mathematics Teachers' Association (India) in collaboration with the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE), Mumbai, on behalf of the National Board for Higher Mathematics (NBHM) under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Government of India.

This achievement has brought pride to the institution. The IOQM aims to identify and nurture mathematical talent among pre-university students across the country, paving the way for Indian participation in the International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO). The management of Markaz Academy congratulated the successful students, their parents and teachers and expressed gratitude to Mir Mukul Ali, IOQM coordinator of the academy, for his dedication and efforts in achieving this success.

# Sukapha's descendants to visit Assam

HT Correspondent

**SIVASAGAR, Oct 26:** A delegation from Myanmar, believed to be descendants of Chao Lung Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom dynasty, will visit Assam on November 7 to trace their ancestral roots. The team of 10 to 12 members will explore ancient Ahom heritage sites across Sivasagar and Charaideo districts.

Addressing a press conference at Yug Textiles in Sivasagar, Society for Tai Ahom Resurgence (STAR) president Dr Hemant Kumar Gogoi said the visit aims to strengthen age-old ties between the Tai Ahom community and their counterparts in Myanmar.

On their arrival, a grand welcome programme will be organised, which will be attended by Assam Deputy Chief Minister Sauna Menji and a Khamti cultural troupe. A cultural evening will also be held, showcasing performances such as Ai Sing Lao, Khamti, Ahom Tai modern dance, Tai peacock dance, Katou dance, Hengdang dance and Tai music, along with traditional food displays.

Dr Gogoi said the visit will open opportunities for further collaboration in cultural, social and historical research at an international level. The press meet was attended by several social activists, including Tultal Handikoi, Krishna Kamal Lahan, Sanjay Chetia, Sanjeev Rajkonwar, Vijay Gogoi, Rima Bora, Megha Gogoi and Parismita Handique.

# NFR to observe Vigilance Awareness Week

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** North East Frontier Railway (NFR) will observe Vigilance Awareness Week from October 27 to November 2, 2025, under the theme "Vigilance: Our Shared Responsibility." The initiative aims to promote integrity, transparency and accountability across all divisions, workshops and construction units.

The observance will begin at NFR headquarters in Maligaon with the administration of the Integrity Pledge, followed by street plays to engage employees and the public. Similar activities will take place across divisions, including interactive sessions, seminars, essay, drawing and painting competitions at schools and training institutes.

Nukkad Nataks and short films promoting anti-corruption messages will be showcased, culminating in a prize distribution ceremony on October 31 at the GM/Vigilance Conference Hall. NFR encourages all employees, stakeholders and the public to participate actively in fostering a culture of ethical conduct and collective responsibility.

# MLA Ronghang pushes for girls' education in KA

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Oct 26:** Howraghat MLA Darsing Ronghang held a grass-roots meeting at Kamini Sarkar Girls High School, Rongkut, focusing on creating an inclusive learning environment for girl students. The discussion emphasised improving school infrastructure, upgrading classrooms and introducing modern learning tools to enhance education quality. Ronghang highlighted the importance of parental involvement and community participation in shaping the future of students.

"Parents play a vital role in shaping a child's future - not just by encouraging them to study, but by supporting and guiding them every day," he said. He also praised the dedication of teachers and staff, encouraging them to continue mentoring students with quality education and care. The initiative aims to transform Kamini Sarkar Girls High School into a model institution where girls can learn, grow and lead with confidence.

# Governor extends greetings on Chhath Puja

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Oct 26:** Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya has conveyed his warm greetings and best wishes to the people of the state and all devotees on the occasion of Chhath Puja. In his message, the Governor highlighted that Chhath Puja exemplifies faith, purity and devotion, reflecting the rich cultural heritage and spiritual values of the people. The festival honors the Sun God and Chhathi Maiya for sustaining life and granting prosperity and well-being.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

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

## Lokpal's BMW fixation

The very idea of a Lokpal riding in a BMW, reeks of irony so strong that it almost feels like satire. The institution that stands as the sentinel of public probity, the watchdog against corruption, has managed to draw ridicule upon itself by its desire for luxury wheels. A BMW-driven Lokpal is not merely a bad idea—it is an affront to the moral spirit of a democratic ombudsman. The notion of the anti-corruption authority zipping past traffic in a German-made luxury sedan, while preaching restraint and ethics to the political class, captures the collapse of symbolism in our public institutions. The Lokpal's demand for BMWs is not a harmless administrative choice. It is outrageous, obscene even, because it betrays an insensitivity to both the economic condition of the nation and the ethical foundations on which the office is built. India's developmental journey is still marred by poverty, unemployment, and stark inequality. It is a country where millions walk to work, where farmers still struggle to make ends meet, and where middle-class taxpayers scrape through life paying the price for every policy misstep. For the Lokpal—an office meant to represent the highest standards of rectitude—to seek a fleet of BMWs from the public exchequer is not just insensitivity; it is an insult to the people who fund it.

One cannot overstate the symbolism of the vehicle in public life. A government official or public representative choosing a modest vehicle sends a message of humility, service, and solidarity with the people. It creates trust. It reminds citizens that those in authority do not see themselves as a privileged class but as public servants. A Lokpal seated in a BMW, however, conveys the exact opposite. It signals distance, privilege, entitlement, the very traits the office was meant to challenge. The contradiction is so glaring that it turns the image of the Lokpal from one of moral authority into one of moral decay. It is therefore entirely fitting that Amitabh Kant, the former CEO of Niti Aayog and one of the sharpest administrators in the country, has spoken out against this grotesque display of misplaced priorities. Corruption does not always come wearing the mask of bribery or embezzlement. Sometimes it comes cloaked in entitlement, in the subtle misuse of public money for private comfort. The Lokpal's BMW fixation is precisely that form of corruption—soft, sophisticated, and self-justified.

The citizens of this country do not expect their public servants to live like monks. But they do expect them to live with a sense of proportion. When institutions built to fight corruption begin to emulate the habits of those they are meant to monitor, the moral compass of governance tilts dangerously. If the Lokpal's office cannot distinguish between what is right and what merely looks impressive, then its capacity to hold others accountable stands compromised from the start.

## Student politics - some relevant thoughts

Student politics is regarded as a dynamic force in society that not only fosters awareness among students but also plays a significant role in shaping the future of society. From raising social and political consciousness among students to building the courage to confront various societal issues, student politics simultaneously creates opportunities and faces challenges. Through this medium, students learn to advocate for their rights, develop leadership qualities, and actively participate in societal transformation. Their youthful minds and enthusiastic ideologies awaken a sense of responsibility towards societal and moral values. However, at times, student politics can also disrupt the academic environment, leading to deviations from the primary goals of students.

The primary reason for the rise of political awareness among students is the need to voice out against injustice, exploitation, and inequality in society. A glance at history reveals that students have consistently acted as a powerful force for societal change. Their young minds, deeply rooted in notions of justice and equality, motivate them to protest against societal injustices. Through these protests, they not only raise their voices for their rights but also play a crucial role in improving educational standards and addressing the issues of the student community in an organized manner. Student politics provides a platform where they can express their opinions and actively contribute to resolving broader societal problems. This process fosters a sense of responsibility, positively impacting both their personal lives and society at large. However, there is a risk that their idealistic mindset may sometimes be exploited by larger political parties for their own interests. In such situations, the core objectives of student politics may be lost, diverting students' focus from education to excessive political activities. Nevertheless, if guided and managed properly, student politics can become a powerful force for

social change.

The student community is a vital force in shaping the future of society. During the critical phase of their lives as students, their minds develop notions of morality, justice, and equality. Student politics provides a platform to translate these ideals into action. Through this platform, students work towards resolving issues within their educational institutions while also addressing broader societal problems. From improving educational standards to enhancing the institutional environment, strengthening teacher-student relationships, and fighting for students' rights, they contribute significantly. This process instills a sense of responsibility, motivating them to struggle not only for their own rights but also for the rights of others in society. This activism fosters leadership qualities, which play a crucial role in their future lives. However, excessive politicization sometimes shifts students' focus from education, leading to a deviation from their primary objectives, which negatively impacts their academic lives. Moreover, in some cases, student politics may take a violent form, disrupting the peaceful environment of educational institutions. Such situations affect students' mental health and diminish their interest in education. Despite these negative aspects, student politics plays a significant role in fostering awareness and responsibility among students.

Students feel responsible not only for their education but also for the betterment of society as a whole. This sense of responsibility gives them the courage to confront various societal issues. They raise their voices for problems within educational institutions, such as students' rights, educational standards, or improving teacher-student relationships. Through this process, they learn the importance of working collectively, which is significant for both their personal and social lives. Their organized efforts sometimes pave the way for broader societal changes. However, excessive emo-

tional involvement or immaturity can lead students astray. Their enthusiasm and idealism may be exploited by certain narrow interest groups, causing a deviation from the core objectives of student politics and negatively impacting their lives. Additionally, divisions among students may arise, affecting their unity. Nevertheless, if student politics is managed correctly, it can become a powerful medium for positive change among students.

Another significant aspect of student politics is the development of leadership qualities among students. Through this medium, students get opportunities to work collectively, discuss solutions to various problems, make decisions, and strive to implement them. This process fosters leadership qualities that play a vital role in their future lives. They understand the importance of teamwork, acquire conflict resolution skills, and develop the ability to lead in various societal domains. These leadership skills guide them toward success not only within educational institutions but also in broader societal contexts. However, this process may sometimes lead to excessive ambition or a desire for power among students. In such cases, their primary objectives may be sidelined, and they may become more involved in political activities than in education, negatively affecting their academic lives. Moreover, excessive politicization may lead to a decline in morality and values, with students prioritizing power and influence over ideals, which can have negative consequences for their future. Nevertheless, with proper guidance, student politics can become a powerful medium for developing leadership qualities among students.

In the context of Assam, student politics holds a unique position. It is not confined to the boundaries of educational institutions; it serves as a powerful medium for social, educational, and political transformation across society. Historically, the student community in Assam has played significant roles at various

times. During the colonial era, students actively participated in the freedom struggle against British rule, contributing to the awakening of national consciousness through various initiatives. This tradition continued post-independence, with student politics in Assam gradually becoming more organized. Students have fought for linguistic, cultural, and social rights, playing a crucial role in the awakening of Assamese nationalism. This historical backdrop helps understand the current dynamics and nature of student politics in Assam. It has fostered a sense of responsibility and social awareness among students, which remains its driving force today.

A distinctive feature of student politics in Assam is its spontaneity and deep connection with the public. The student community in Assam has always been sensitive to societal issues, focusing on social justice, educational reforms, and environmental protection. Students address issues within their educational institutions while also raising their voices for broader societal problems. Their activism has brought significant changes to Assam's social fabric. However, excessive or exaggerated activities have sometimes led to criticism of student politics. Nevertheless, its overall impact on shaping Assam's society is profound. Student politics has awakened a sense of nationalism among the youth, providing a new direction for societal transformation.

The strength of student politics lies in the energy of the new generation and their open-minded approach to new ideas. The idealistic mindset and sense of responsibility towards society make students a powerful force. Their enthusiasm provides fresh perspectives on societal issues. By raising questions about curricula, examination systems, and teacher quality, students have paved the way for educational reforms. Their activism unites diverse communities, working towards a stable society. However, the weaknesses of student politics are evident. It often falls

under the influence of partisan politics, deviating from its core ideals. Political interference has led to divisions among student organizations, weakening their unity and strength. This has raised questions about the spontaneity and morality of student politics. Additionally, in some cases, student politics has taken a violent form, harming the academic environment and creating distrust among the public.

If students engage in politics without deviating from their primary educational objectives, student politics can become a positive force for society. They can work towards improving their educational institutions while actively addressing societal issues. This activism can play a significant role in societal transformation. However, this requires proper guidance and management. Teachers, parents, and other members of society have a responsibility to guide students on the right path. Channeling their idealistic mindset correctly can make student politics a positive force. Moreover, educational institutions must create a healthy environment for student politics, enabling students to remain committed to both their education and societal responsibilities.

In conclusion, student politics is a medium that plays a crucial role in fostering social awareness, leadership qualities, and a sense of responsibility among students. It empowers students to confront societal issues and creates possibilities for positive change. However, its negative aspects, such as deviation from primary objectives, disruption of the academic environment, and the risk of being manipulated by larger political parties, raise concerns. Nevertheless, with proper guidance and management, student politics can be shaped into a positive force. In the context of Assam, it has served as a powerful medium for social, educational, and political transformation. By properly channeling students' enthusiasm and idealism, student politics can play a significant role in societal change.

## The Tiwari Commission Report

## Assam's Path toward historical accountability

By: Dipak Kurmi

On October 23, 2025, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma made an announcement that would finally pierce through four decades of silence surrounding one of independent India's darkest chapters. The state government declared its intention to table the long-suppressed Tiwari Commission report on the 1983 Nellie Massacre during the upcoming winter session of the legislative assembly in November. This decision marks a watershed moment in Assam's tumultuous history, promising to unveil truths that have remained buried in classified government archives since 1984.

The Nellie Massacre stands as one of the most devastating instances of communal violence in post-partition India, yet it remains largely unknown outside the northeastern state. On the morning of February 18, 1983, in the central Assam region now part of Nagaon district, a carefully orchestrated campaign of violence unfolded that would claim between 2,000 and 3,000 lives within a span of just seven hours. The victims were predominantly Bengali-speaking Muslims residing in fourteen villages surrounding Nellie, including Alisingha, Khulapathar, Basundhara, and others. Armed with machetes, spears, and sticks, mobs comprising members of the indigenous Tiwa community, local Bodos, and other groups descended upon these settlements with brutal efficiency, burning houses, blocking escape routes, and killing anyone who attempted to flee.

The scale of the carnage was staggering. While official government figures placed the death toll at 1,819, including 1,327 women and 253 children, human rights organizations and independent scholars have consistently argued that the actual numbers were significantly higher. Three journalists who witnessed the aftermath, Hemendra Narayan of The Indian Express, Bedabrata Lahkar of The Assam Tribune, and Sharma of ABC, documented scenes of unimaginable horror with bodies strewn across fields and entire families wiped out. The death toll was particularly devastating among the most vulnerable populations who could not outrun their attackers. Most victims had been living in these areas since the 1930s, yet they were branded as foreigners and Bangladeshis by the perpetrators.

The massacre did not occur in isolation but represented the violent culmination of years of mounting ethnic tensions during the Assam Movement, also known as the Anti-Foreigners Agitation. This movement, which began in 1978 when irregularities were discovered in electoral rolls during a by-election in the Mangaldoi Lok Sabha Constituency, was led primarily by the All-Assam Students Union and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad. The discovery that the electorate had grown phenomenally due to alleged mass inclusion of illegal migrants sparked widespread concern among Assamese communities about demographic changes threatening their cultural identity. The agitation demanded the detection and deportation of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and the deletion of their names from voter lists, with protesters fearing that an unchecked influx would fundamentally alter the state's composition.

The immediate trigger for the Nellie violence was Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's controversial decision to proceed with state assembly elections in 1983 despite fierce op-

position from the Assam Movement leaders. Twelve of Assam's fourteen Lok Sabha seats had remained vacant since 1980, and the state assembly had been dissolved in 1982. The central government's determination to hold elections without first addressing demands for revised electoral rolls that would exclude undocumented Bangladeshi immigrants created a powder keg atmosphere. When elections were announced for January through February 1983, the Assam Movement supporters declared a boycott, yet the government pressed ahead. Prime Minister Gandhi's decision to grant voting rights to approximately four million Bengali Muslims was seen by many indigenous communities as a calculated political move to secure Congress's vote bank, further inflaming tensions.

In this charged environment, rumors spread rapidly through indigenous communities about alleged atrocities committed by immigrant Bengali Muslims, including claims of kidnapping, gang-rape of young Tiwa women, murder of children, illegal cultivation of Tiwa lands, and cattle theft. Reports also circulated that on February 13, Muslim communities had attacked a Bihari village in the area. However, no First Information Reports could be located to substantiate these claims, nor did any criminal proceedings against alleged perpetrators ever materialize. None of the individuals later interviewed in Nellie could confirm that such incidents had actually occurred. Nevertheless, Tiwa chiefs reportedly decided they must kill at least 700 Bengalis for each tribesman killed, setting the stage for catastrophic violence.

Even prominent national political figures contributed to the inflammatory atmosphere. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, during a speech in Assam, expressed concern about government inaction toward foreigners, stating that if such immigration had occurred in Punjab, people would have dealt with them harshly and chopped them into pieces. Following this speech, violence erupted in Nellie. Upon returning to New Delhi, Vajpayee strongly condemned the massacre, but the damage had been done. This quote was later presented in Parliament by former CPI-M MP Indrajit Gupta during a 1996 trust vote debate and went unchallenged.

The response of law enforcement during the massacre has remained one of its most controversial aspects. Despite deploying 400 companies of Central Paramilitary Force and 11 brigades of the Indian Army to guard the state during elections, and despite police having identified Nellie as one of the "troubled spots" where holding elections was deemed nearly impossible, the local police allegedly failed catastrophically to protect victims. Survivors consistently reported that local police personnel misled CRPF troops, convincing them that smoke rising from the area came from burning agricultural waste rather than houses, and diverting battalions to patrol the national highway while claiming no roads led to the massacre site. The violence only ended when a woman from the village managed to stop CRPF trucks and physically lead them to the area. These allegations of police complicity remain officially unverified but may be among the key findings in the Tiwari Commission report.

In the aftermath of the massacre, the Congress government headed by Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia established a commission led by IAS officer Tribhuvan Prasad Tiwari to in-

vestigate the causes, identify culprits, and recommend action. The commission submitted its comprehensive 600-page report in 1984, but the government made the fateful decision never to table it in the assembly or make it public. Only three classified copies were retained in government archives. More than 600 FIRs were filed and chargesheets prepared in approximately 300 cases, yet most were eventually dismissed due to claimed lack of evidence. Even more controversially, as part of the 1985 Assam Accord signed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi with AASU leaders to end the agitation, all remaining cases were dropped, ensuring that not a single perpetrator was ever prosecuted for what has been described as one of the worst pogroms since World War II.

The Assam Accord established March 24, 1971, as the cutoff date for identifying and removing illegal foreigners from electoral rolls, with January 1, 1966, serving as the base year for detection.

However, Ram Pradhan, the Union Home Secretary who negotiated the accord, later revealed that Rajiv Gandhi did not seriously pursue its implementation because doing so would have impacted Congress's Muslim vote bank. The survey to identify illegal immigrants, though part of the accord, was never conducted as it would have seriously impaired Congress's electoral prospects.

For forty years, successive governments maintained a wall of silence around the Tiwari Commission report. Chief Minister Sarma has now explained that the primary reason for non-disclosure was questions about the report's authenticity. The available copies lacked the signature of Tribhuvan Prasad Tiwari, who headed the commission and later served as Governor of Puducherry before his death in 2015 at age 93. However, the current government has interviewed clerks who worked on the commission and conducted forensic tests, confirming the document's genuineness. As CM Sarma stated, the previous government feared taking a courageous step, but some government must present this chapter of history.

The decision to finally make public the Tiwari Commission report represents more than historical disclosure. It acknowledges the need for truth and accountability, even decades after tragedy. For survivors and descendants of victims who have waited four decades for acknowledgment, this moment carries profound significance. The report's release during the November 25 session will allow historians, social scientists, and the public to finally access accurate information about what transpired during those seven horrific hours in February 1983.

The Nellie Massacre serves as a grim reminder of how political expediency, inflammatory rhetoric, ethnic tensions, and government inaction can combine with devastating consequences. As Assam continues grappling with questions of identity, immigration, and demographic change, confronting this dark chapter honestly becomes essential not just for historical record but for preventing future tragedies. Chief Minister Sarma's government has taken the significant step of ensuring that neither past injustices go untold nor deliberate attempts at altering Assam's demography go unaddressed. The truth, however painful, must finally see light after forty years in darkness. *(the writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)*

## The great Indian count goes digital

By: Chafikhur Rahman

The Census of India 2027 will be one of the most important exercises in the country's history. It will not only count every person living in India but also mark two major changes, Self Enumeration and Enumeration of Caste. These new features will make the census more modern, inclusive and informative.

## What is the Census of India?

The Census is the largest administrative exercise in India, conducted every ten years. It collects detailed information about the people living in the country: their age, gender, literacy, occupation, housing, religion and many other details. The first census in India was conducted in 1872 and since then, it has helped the government plan development and welfare programmes.

The upcoming Census of India 2027 will be the 17th national census and the first to be fully digital. It will be carried out under the supervision of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, which works under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

## Why the Census is Important?

The Census is not just a count of population. It forms the base for:

- Government policy making
- Allocation of funds to states and local bodies
- Planning for schools, hospitals, roads, and housing
- Distribution of food, electricity, and water resources
- Identification of backward regions and vulnerable groups

Without accurate census data, it is impossible to plan for the future or understand how the population is changing.

## Feature 1: Self Enumeration: Empowering Public Digitally:

For the first time, the 2027 Census will allow Self Enumeration, meaning general public can fill in their own census details online, using web portal.

How It Works: SE Portal registered each household will receive a unique code through SMS or email. Using that code, family members can log in to the official website and enter their information directly. The questions will be available in multiple Indian languages, making it easy for everyone to understand.

For those who do not have access to SE portal, traditional enumeration by government staff will still continue. Thus, both options will exist side by side.

## Benefits of Self Enumeration:

- Convenience: People can fill in their details anytime without waiting for a government official.
- Accuracy: Since people provide their own information, chances of human error reduce.
- Time-Saving: Data collection becomes faster, reducing the time needed for tabulation.
- Transparency: People can verify and edit their information if necessary.
- Eco-Friendly: Less paper will be used, supporting India's green initiatives.

## Ensuring Data Security:

The government has promised strong data protection measures. All data will be encrypted and stored securely. The Census Department has clarified that personal information will not be shared with any other agency or department and it will be used only for statistical purposes.

Training and awareness campaigns will also be launched to help people understand how to use the online platform safely.

## Feature 2: Enumeration of Caste — A Sensitive but Important Step:

Another major feature of the 2027 Census is the inclusion of Caste Enumeration. This means the census will collect information about the caste of every person and household in India.

Caste has always been a key social and economic factor in Indian society. However, the last full caste census was conducted in 1931 during British rule. After independence, the regular census included data on Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), but not on other caste groups.

Now, after almost a century, the government has decided to include caste enumeration for the entire population.

## Why It Is Being Done?

1. Better Understanding of Social Structure: India's society is complex and caste plays a role in education, employment and social mobility. Updated data will help understand inequalities and progress.

2. Targeted Welfare Schemes: With accurate caste data, welfare schemes can be better planned for communities that need them most.

3. Policy and Reservation Review: Current reservation policies are based on outdated data. A caste census will provide a clearer picture for reviewing and updating them.

4. Academic and Research Use: Social scientists and researchers will benefit from authentic caste data for policy studies.

## Challenges and Concerns:

While the caste enumeration has many benefits, it also faces challenges:

Data Sensitivity: Caste information is socially sensitive and may lead to political misuse.

Accuracy Issues: People might hesitate to disclose their caste correctly.

Administrative Burden: Collecting and processing caste data for over 1.4 billion people will require strong planning and technology.

The government has assured that caste data will be used only for developmental and research purposes, not for political targeting. Strict confidentiality laws will protect individuals' privacy.

## Digital Transformation of the Census:

The Census 2027 will be digital-first, using tablets and mobile devices for data collection instead of traditional paper forms. Enumerators will carry secure tablets preloaded with census software.

## Key digital features include:

- Mobile app for enumerators and SE Portal for Public
  - Cloud-based data storage and analytics
  - Real-time monitoring of progress
  - Automatic error checking and validation
- This digital transformation will make the census faster, cheaper and more reliable. It will also generate early results within months, unlike earlier censuses that took years to publish data.

## Public Participation: The Heart of the Census:

Both Self Enumeration and Caste Enumeration depend heavily on public participation. For the census to succeed, people must cooperate, provide correct information, and encourage others to do so.

The government plans to launch awareness campaigns through television, social media, schools and local bodies to ensure that every citizen knows how to take part.

Community leaders, NGOs and local representatives will play a major role in building trust and explaining the importance of giving truthful information.

## Looking Ahead:

The Census of India 2027 is not just a counting exercise; it is a step toward Digital Governance and Social Justice. By combining technology with social understanding, India is moving towards a more transparent and inclusive future.

If implemented carefully, the new census will: Give every citizen a voice, provide accurate and updated data for planning, Help address social inequalities through better policies, Strengthen India's democratic and administrative framework.

## Conclusion:

The Census of India 2027 will be remembered as a turning point in India's demographic history. With Self Enumeration, public will take part in shaping the nation's data directly. With Caste Enumeration, the country will finally have a clearer picture of its social reality.

Together, these two features represent a new age of participation, transparency, and inclusion. The success of the 2027 Census will depend not only on technology and government planning but also on the cooperation and awareness of India's people, because every number in the census tells a human story and every story counts.

# Chhath Puja: The sacred bond between Sun, Faith, and Nature

By: Dipak Kurmi

In the vast tapestry of Indian religious observances, few festivals embody the profound connection between humanity and nature's celestial forces as magnificently as Chhath Puja. This ancient Vedic festival, predominantly celebrated across the northern and eastern regions of the Indian sub-continent, stands as a testament to the enduring reverence for Surya, the Sun God, and Chhathi Maiya, the sixth form of Goddess Prakriti. Unlike many contemporary religious celebrations that have evolved with elaborate temple rituals and priestly mediation, Chhath Puja retains its pristine authenticity, requiring devotees to engage directly with the divine forces of nature through rigorous austerity, unwavering devotion, and absolute purity of body and mind.

The origins of Chhath Puja stretch back into the mists of antiquity, finding mention in various sacred Hindu scriptures including the Rigveda, where hymns dedicated to the Sun God illuminate the spiritual significance of solar worship. Mythological narratives attribute the genesis of this festival to several legendary figures from Indian epics. One particularly compelling account associates Chhath Puja with Draupadi and the Pandavas from the Mahabharata, suggesting that they performed this worship to regain their lost kingdom and overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Another tradition credits Karni, the tragic hero and son of Surya, as the primordial practitioner of this ritual, performing his daily ablutions and prayers to his celestial father in the flowing waters of rivers. The Ramayana also finds its place in Chhath's mythological heritage, with some scholars believing that Lord Rama and Sita observed this sacred fast upon their return to Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile, offering prayers to the setting and rising sun to express gratitude for their victorious

homecoming.

Historically, archaeological evidence and ancient texts suggest that this form of solar worship has been practiced for over three thousand years, making it one of the oldest surviving religious traditions still observed with such fervor and dedication. The festival's persistence through millennia speaks volumes about its deep cultural embedding within the communities that celebrate it, primarily in the Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand, eastern Uttar Pradesh, and certain regions of Nepal, where it transcends mere religious observance to become an integral component of regional identity and cultural heritage.

The ritualistic framework of Chhath Puja unfolds over four meticulously structured days, each laden with specific ceremonial requirements and spiritual significance. The festival commences with Nahay Khay, typically falling on the fourth day after Diwali, corresponding to the Kartika Shukla Chaturthi according to the Hindu lunar calendar. On this inaugural day, devotees undertake a purifying bath, usually in holy rivers such as the Ganges, and maintain strict dietary discipline, consuming only a single meal prepared with utmost sanctity. The house is thoroughly cleaned, and brass or earthen utensils are exclusively used for cooking, emphasizing the emphasis on purity that pervades every aspect of the celebration.

The second day, known as Kharna or Lohanda, intensifies the spiritual rigor considerably. Devotees observe a complete fast throughout the day, abstaining from even water, breaking it only after sunset with a specially prepared prasad consisting of kheer made from jaggery, rice, and milk, along with chapatis and fruits. This prasad is first offered to Chhathi Maiya before being distributed among family members and neighbors. Following this meal, devotees embark upon a thirty-six-hour fast without water, a test of physical en-



durance and spiritual resolve that distinguishes Chhath Puja from most other Hindu festivals.

The third day represents the ceremonial zenith of Chhath Puja, known as Sandhya Arghya, when devotees offer evening prayers to the setting sun. Preparations begin well before sunset, with families preparing elaborate offerings consisting of thekua, a traditional sweet made from wheat flour, jaggery, and ghee, along with seasonal fruits displayed in beautiful bamboo baskets called daura or soop. As the sun descends toward the western horizon, devotees, predominantly women though men increasingly participate, wade into rivers, ponds, or other water bodies, standing waist-deep in the water while offering arghya, the ritualistic offering of water mixed with milk, flowers, and other sacred items to the setting sun. The sight of hundreds or thousands of devotees standing in water, their hands raised in supplication as the crimson sun dips below the

horizon, creates a spectacle of extraordinary spiritual power and collective devotion that leaves indelible impressions on observers and participants alike.

The festival culminates on the fourth day with Usha Arghya, the morning offering to the rising sun. Before dawn breaks, devotees return to the same water bodies where they offered prayers the previous evening, awaiting the emergence of the sun from the eastern horizon. As the first rays of the morning sun pierce the darkness, devotees offer their final arghya, seeking blessings for prosperity, health, and the well-being of their families. The completion of this ritual marks the conclusion of the demanding thirty-six-hour waterless fast, and devotees break their fast by consuming prasad and the traditional ginger-water mixture. The bamboo baskets and remaining offerings are immersed in the water, symbolizing the return of material

offerings to nature and completing the sacred circle of giving and receiving between humanity and the divine.

The festival's unwavering emphasis on environmental consciousness and ecological harmony distinguishes it remarkably in an age of increasing environmental degradation. Chhath Puja mandates absolute purity and cleanliness, compelling devotees to clean riverbanks and water bodies before the ceremonies. The offerings consist entirely of biodegradable materials including fruits, vegetables, sweets prepared from natural ingredients, and earthen lamps, ensuring minimal environmental impact. This inherent ecological sensitivity has prompted many environmental activists to champion Chhath Puja as a model for sustainable religious practices, demonstrating how ancient wisdom can inform contemporary environmental ethics.

The social dimensions of Chhath Puja extend far beyond

individual spiritual practice, fostering remarkable community cohesion and social harmony. The festival transcends barriers of caste, class, and economic status, with wealthy and impoverished devotees standing shoulder to shoulder in the same waters, united in their devotion. Extended families gather from distant locations, renewing kinship bonds and creating opportunities for younger generations to connect with their cultural heritage. Neighborhoods transform into spaces of collective celebration, with community ghats being specially prepared, decorated, and maintained through voluntary labor and shared resources.

The scientific community has increasingly recognized potential health benefits associated with the rigorous practices of Chhath Puja. The practice of standing in water during sunrise and sunset exposes devotees to specific wavelengths of sunlight that scientists believe may have therapeutic properties. The waterless fast, while demanding, is said to detoxify the body and boost immune function. The early morning and evening sun rays, filtered through the atmosphere at these times, contain optimal levels of ultraviolet radiation that can enhance vitamin D synthesis without the harmful effects of midday sun exposure. The mental discipline required to maintain the fast and perform the rituals with unwavering focus may also contribute to psychological resilience and emotional well-being.

In contemporary times, Chhath Puja has witnessed remarkable diaspora expansion, with Indian communities across the globe organizing celebrations in countries including the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and various Southeast Asian nations. These overseas celebrations, while maintaining the core ritualistic elements, often require creative adaptations such as using swimming pools or lakes instead of traditional rivers, and coordinating timings to accommodate work schedules. De-

spite these modifications, the essential spirit of devotion and the maintenance of cultural continuity remain paramount, serving as powerful anchors of identity for expatriate communities navigating the complexities of multicultural existence.

The festival also confronts contemporary challenges, particularly concerning water pollution and the degradation of natural water bodies where ceremonies traditionally occur. Urban encroachment, industrial waste, and inadequate sewage management have rendered many traditional Chhath ghats severely polluted, raising health concerns and spiritual dilemmas for devotees. In response, community organizations, environmental groups, and government agencies have initiated collaborative efforts to clean and restore these water bodies, at least temporarily during the festival period. Some progressive communities have begun constructing artificial water tanks designed specifically for Chhath celebrations, though purists argue this undermines the festival's fundamental connection with natural water bodies.

Chhath Puja ultimately represents far more than a religious festival; it embodies a comprehensive worldview that recognizes the interdependence of all existence, honors the life-giving forces of nature, and affirms the human capacity for self-discipline and devotion. In an increasingly fragmented and materialistic world, the festival's emphasis on simplicity, austerity, direct communion with natural elements, and community solidarity offers profound lessons about sustainable living and authentic spirituality. As the golden rays of the sun illuminate the upturned faces of devotees standing in sacred waters, Chhath Puja continues to illuminate pathways toward harmony between humanity and the cosmos, individual aspiration and collective well-being, ancient wisdom and contemporary challenges. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

## Chhath Puja: A celebration of Sun and Devotion



By: Satyabrata Borah

Chhath Puja is one of the most ancient and revered festivals in the Hindu calendar, celebrated with immense devotion and fervor, particularly in the eastern states of India such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and parts of West Bengal, as well as in the southern parts of Nepal. This four-day festival is dedicated to the worship of the Sun God, Surya, and his consort, Chhathi Maiya, who is believed to be the goddess of life and energy. The festival is a vibrant expression of gratitude toward nature, particularly the sun, which is considered the source of all life on Earth. It is a time when devotees come together to offer prayers, perform rituals, and seek blessings for health, prosperity, and well-being. Unlike many other Hindu festivals, Chhath Puja is marked by its simplicity, austerity, and deep spiritual connection with nature, making it a unique celebration that transcends social and economic barriers.

The origins of Chhath Puja are steeped in ancient traditions and mythology, with references found in sacred texts like the Rigveda, which contains hymns dedicated to the Sun God. The festival is also linked to stories from the Mahabharata, where Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas, is said to have performed similar rituals to seek blessings for her family's well-being during their exile. Another legend associates Chhath Puja with Lord Rama and Sita, who are believed to have offered prayers to the Sun God upon their return to Ayodhya after 14 years of exile. These stories highlight the festival's deep-rooted significance in Hindu culture, emphasizing gratitude and reverence for the sun's life-giving energy. Over time, Chhath Puja has evolved into a community-driven festival, bringing people together in a shared expression of faith and devotion.

The festival spans four days, each

marked by specific rituals that reflect discipline, purity, and devotion. The first day, known as Nahay Khay, sets the tone for the festival. Devotees begin by taking a holy dip in a river, lake, or pond, as water bodies are considered sacred during Chhath Puja. This bath is not just a physical cleansing but a spiritual purification, preparing the devotee for the rigorous rituals ahead. After the bath, the household is cleaned, and a simple meal is prepared, typically consisting of rice, dal, and vegetables like pumpkin. This meal is cooked with utmost care, using pure ingredients, and is offered to the deities before being consumed by the family. The emphasis on purity is a cornerstone of Chhath Puja, with devotees adhering to strict vegetarian diets and maintaining cleanliness in their homes and surroundings.

The second day, called Kharna, involves a day-long fast that culminates in the evening with the preparation of a special prasad, or offering. This prasad typically includes kheer, a sweet dish made from rice, milk, and jaggery, along with roti or puri. The preparation of this prasad is a sacred act, often performed by the women of the household, who undertake the fast with great dedication. The fast is broken after offering the prasad to the deities, and it is then shared among family members and neighbors. This day strengthens the sense of community, as people come together to partake in the offerings and pray for the well-being of their loved ones. The act of fasting is not merely a physical exercise but a spiritual one, symbolizing self-discipline and surrender to divine will.

The third day, known as Sandhya Arghya, is the most significant day of Chhath Puja, as it involves the offering of arghya to the setting sun. Devotees gather at the banks of rivers, ponds, or other water bodies, carrying baskets filled with offerings such as thekua (a traditional sweet made from wheat flour and jaggery), fruits, and other items. These baskets, known as soop, are meticulously prepared and are a symbol of devotion. The devotees stand in knee-deep water, facing the setting sun, and offer arghya by pouring water and milk toward the sun while chanting mantras. This ritual is a profound expression of gratitude for the sun's life-sustaining energy. The atmosphere at the ghats, or riverbanks, is one of serene devotion, with the air filled with the sound of devotional songs and the glow of diyas, or oil lamps, creating a mystical ambiance. For many, this moment is the heart of Chhath Puja, a time to connect deeply with nature and the divine.

The fourth and final day, Usha Arghya, involves offering prayers to the rising sun. Devotees return to the same water bodies before dawn, repeating the ritual of arghya, this time facing the rising sun. This act symbolizes renewal, hope, and the cyclical nature of life. After the arghya, devotees break their 36-hour fast, which is one of the most challenging aspects of the festival. The fast, known as Nirjala, meaning without water, requires immense willpower, as devotees abstain from both food and water during this period. Breaking the fast is a joyous occasion, marked by the sharing of prasad and blessings among family and friends. The completion of the rituals fills devotees with a sense of fulfillment, as they believe their prayers have been heard and their vows fulfilled.

What sets Chhath Puja apart from other Hindu festivals is its emphasis on nature and equality. The festival does not require elaborate temple rituals or priestly intervention; instead, it is performed in the open, often at the banks of rivers or other natural water bodies. This connection with nature underscores the festival's eco-friendly ethos, as devotees use biodegradable materials like bamboo baskets and clay diyas for their offerings. The absence of caste or class distinctions is another hallmark of Chhath Puja. People from all

walks of life participate in the rituals, standing side by side in the water, united by their shared devotion. This inclusivity has made Chhath Puja a symbol of unity and harmony, transcending social boundaries.

The festival also highlights the pivotal role of women, who are often the primary participants in the rituals. Women undertake the fasts and perform the offerings with unwavering dedication, praying for the long life and prosperity of their husbands, children, and families. However, the festival is not limited to women; men also participate actively, reflecting its universal appeal. The rigorous nature of the fasts and the rituals demands physical and mental strength, and the devotion of the participants is a testament to their faith. For many, Chhath Puja is not just a religious event but a way of life, a time to reconnect with their roots and express gratitude for the blessings they have received.

In recent years, Chhath Puja has gained prominence beyond its traditional strongholds, with communities in urban centers like Delhi, Mumbai, and even abroad celebrating the festival with equal enthusiasm. Migrants from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have carried the tradition to different parts of India and the world, setting up makeshift ghats in cities and performing the rituals with the same devotion. This diaspora has helped spread awareness about the festival, making it a symbol of cultural identity for those far from home. In urban settings, where access to natural water bodies may be limited, devotees often create artificial ghats or use public water bodies, ensuring that the essence of the festival remains intact.

Chhath Puja is also a time for music and folklore, with traditional songs, known as Chhath geet, playing a central role in the celebrations. These songs, often sung in Bhojpuri, Maithili, or Magahi, narrate the glory of Chhathi Maiya and the significance of the rituals. They are passed down through generations, preserving the cultural heritage of the festival. The melodies create a festive atmosphere, bringing communities together in song and prayer. The festival also fosters a sense of environmental consciousness, as devotees clean the ghats before and after the rituals, ensuring that the water bodies remain unpolluted.

Chhath Puja is a celebration of life, nature, and gratitude. It is a time when people pause to honor the sun, the ultimate source of energy, and seek blessings for their families and communities. The festival's simplicity, inclusivity, and deep connection with nature make it a unique and cherished tradition. For those who observe it, Chhath Puja is a spiritual journey, a reminder of the importance of faith, discipline, and harmony with the natural world. As the sun rises and sets during the festival, it illuminates not just the sky but the hearts of millions, filling them with hope, devotion, and a renewed sense of purpose.

## Chhath Puja: Five sacred ghats in India where devotees embrace the divine Sunrise Rituals



By: Askari Jaffer

As the sun prepares to rise on Chhath Puja 2025, riverbanks across Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and beyond are set to transform into sanctuaries of devotion and light. The four-day festival, dedicated to Surya Dev (the Sun God) and Chhathi Maiya, will be celebrated from October 25 to October 28, 2025, bringing together millions of devotees who fast, pray, and offer Arghya (water oblations) to the setting and rising sun.

Known for its deep spiritual significance and austere rituals, Chhath Puja symbolises gratitude, purity, and the eternal bond between humans and nature. From dawn to dusk, devotees immerse themselves in the sacred rivers, singing hymns and lighting lamps in honour of the life-giving energy of the sun. Each ghat across India has its own charm and spiritual resonance, but a few stand out for their unmatched devotion and grandeur.

**Here are the five most sacred ghats in India where the divine sunrise rituals of Chhath Puja come alive with unmatched fervour:**

### 1. Patliputra Ghat – Patna, Bihar

Perched on the banks of the Ganga, Patliputra Ghat is one of Bihar's most significant sites for Chhath Puja. As dawn breaks, thousands of devotees gather along the shimmering waters, their prayers and chants blending with the morning light. The ghat's serene surroundings and sacred atmosphere make it a favoured destination for worshippers seeking Surya Dev's blessings for health, prosperity, and peace.

### 2. Assi Ghat – Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh

At the confluence of the Ganga and Assi Rivers, Varanasi's Assi Ghat radiates an aura of timeless spirituality. During Chhath Puja, the ghat becomes a spectacle of faith — devotees dressed in traditional attire stand waist-deep in the holy waters, singing Chhath geet and offering Arghya. The rising sun over Varanasi's skyline paints a mesmerising backdrop to one of India's most ancient rituals.

### 3. Triveni Sangam – Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh

Considered one of the holiest confluences in India — where the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati meet — the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj holds immense spiritual weight. Pilgrims from across the nation converge here during Chhath Puja to take a holy dip and offer their prayers. The tranquil convergence of rivers amplifies the sanctity of the sunrise ritual, creating an unforgettable spiritual experience.

### 4. Gandhi Ghat – Patna, Bihar

Another revered site in Bihar's capital, Gandhi Ghat is a symbol of both history and holiness. Known for its cleanliness and organised arrangements during Chhath Puja, the ghat welcomes thousands of devotees who gather to offer Arghya to the setting and rising sun. The air reverberates with devotional songs, and the glow of countless diyas (lamps) reflects beautifully on the Ganga's surface.

### 5. Yamuna Ghats – Delhi-NCR

Even amid the bustling heart of India's capital, the Yamuna Ghats offer a peaceful haven during Chhath Puja. Devotees from the city and nearby regions assemble here, carrying baskets of offerings and singing traditional hymns. The rhythmic chants and fragrance of incense fill the air, preserving the festival's rural essence within an urban setting.

Witnessing Chhath Puja at any of these sacred ghats is more than a ritual — it's an awakening of faith, community, and reverence for nature. As the first rays of the sun kiss the holy waters, the devotion of millions shines even brighter, illuminating the timeless spirit of India's cultural heritage. (Courtesy: Hans India)

**'MY FATHER NEVER COMPROMISED WITH COMMUNAL FORCES IN THE COUNTRY'****Waqf Act will be 'thrown into dustbin' if INDIA bloc voted to power in Bihar: Tejashwi**

**KATIHAR/KISHANGANJ, Oct 26:** If the INDIA bloc is voted to power in Bihar, the Waqf (Amendment) Act would be "thrown into the dustbin", the opposition coalition's CM candidate Tejashwi Yadav said on Sunday.

Addressing public rallies in the Muslim-dominated Katihar and Kishanganj districts, Yadav said his father, Lalu Prasad, the RJD chief, never compromised with communal forces in the country.

"But Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has always supported such forces, and it is because of him that the RSS and its affiliates are spreading communal hatred in the state as well as in the country. The BJP should be called 'Bharat Jalao Party'. If the INDIA bloc comes to power in the state, we will throw the Waqf Act into the dustbin," he said.

The Waqf (Amendment) Act was passed by Parliament in April. The ruling BJP-led NDA has hailed the law as a step towards transparency and empowerment for backward Muslims and women in the community, while the opposition has criticised it, alleging that it infringes upon the rights of Mus-



lims. On Saturday, RJD MLC Mohammad Qari Sohaib stirred a controversy by stating that if Yadav becomes the CM of Bihar, "all bills will be torn apart, including the Waqf bill", inviting a barrage of attacks from their opposition, who questioned how a central law could be changed by the chief minister of a state.

Yadav, meanwhile, claimed that this election is a fight to protect the Constitution, democracy and brotherhood.

"People of the state are tired of the 20-year-old Nitish Kumar government. The CM is not in his senses. Corruption is rampant in each and every department of the government. The law and order situation has completely collapsed in

the state," he alleged.

He claimed that the NDA government has done nothing for the development of the Seemanchal region. "If we come to power, we will set up the Seemanchal Development Authority for the overall development of the region. A world-class university will be built here, besides a super-specialty hospital and a centre of the Aligarh

Muslim University," he said.

Yadav alleged that even after Kumar as CM for 20 years and Narendra Modi as PM for 11 years, Bihar has remained the most backward and poor state in the country. "Seemanchal is the poorest region of the state. This is the time to teach them a lesson," he added.

The region, comprising Purnia, Araria, Kishanganj and Katihar districts, has a significant Muslim population.

The RJD leader alleged that the NDA government was copying the election promises he was making.

"We promised an increase in the old-age pension. The Nitish Kumar government increased it from Rs 400 per month to Rs 1,100 per month. I promise, we will increase it to Rs 2,000 per month," he said.

Yadav also hit back at Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

"A few days ago, when Amit Shah came to Bihar, he was threatening us that he wouldn't leave us in a condition to contest elections. I will fight and I will win. We are Biharis, true Biharis, we do not fear outsiders. 'Ek Bihari sab pe bhari' (one Bihari is stronger than everyone else)," he said. (PTI)

**CYCLONE MONTHA****Andhra govt prepares action plan for relief, essential supplies**

**AMARAVATI, Oct 26:** The Andhra Pradesh government has prepared an action plan for relief and essential supplies in pre-cyclone preparedness for Cyclone Montha.

According to the Meteorological Department, the deep depression over southeast Bay of Bengal is very likely to cross Andhra Pradesh coast between Machilipatnam and Kalinapatnam near Kakinada on October 28 evening. It is located about 780 km east-southeast of Chennai, 830 km south-southeast of Visakhapatnam, 830 km southeast of Kakinada, 930 km south-southeast of Gopalpur, said the Met Department.

It is expected to move northwestwards, then north-northwestwards, intensify into a severe cyclonic storm by morning of October 28, and cross Andhra Pradesh coast in evening.

Maximum sustained winds are expected at upto 100 kmph, gusting to 110 kmph along the coast, with very heavy rainfall in some districts, it said.

State Civil Supplies Minister N Manohar said the action plan covers stock positioning of Public Distribution System (PDS) commodities, fuel inventory management, paddy procurement steps, food supply to relief shelters and post-cyclone relief distribution.

"The Andhra Pradesh government has prepared an action taken report detailing the pre-cyclone preparedness measures for Cyclone Montha, ensuring readiness before landfall," Manohar said in an official release late on Saturday.

The supply of food grains to all fair price shops in coastal areas shall be completed by October 26 and sufficient stock is already placed at Mandal Level Stock Points, he said.

According to officials, 40 per cent stock movement has been com-

pleted in coastal districts, and Global Positioning System (GPS) exemption has been granted for second-stage food grain movement based on requests from district collectors.

On fuel preparedness, Manohar instructed the state nodal officer and oil marketing companies to fully stock petrol, diesel and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) outlets in vulnerable districts.

District collectors were directed to coordinate with Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) to ensure diesel availability for power backup at telecom towers, control rooms, hospitals and cyclone shelters during disruptions.

On paddy procurement, officials informed the minister that procurement is expected to start in full scale in the first week of November, but centres will be opened wherever farmers arrive with harvested paddy to provide immediate relief.

Nearly 1,500 mills have been tagged to Rythu Service Kendras (RSKs) in coastal districts, and millers have been asked to provide drying space and covers for wet paddy, and not to distress farmers over high moisture levels owing to adverse conditions.

Further, 50,000 tarpaulins with ropes, sandbags and plastic sheets have been kept ready at RSKs for crop protection on a need basis.

District Collectors have been authorised to draw essential commodities from MLSPs for food preparation in cyclone shelters and disaster camps, and expenditure can be adjusted under Treasury Rule (TR)-27. For post-cyclone relief distribution, sufficient stock has been placed at Mandal Level Stock Points (MLSPs) for supply as per the scale set by the Disaster Management Department under the notified relief norms. (PTI)

**UK evinces interest in India's e-courts project**

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** The United Kingdom has evinced interest in the e-Courts project that seeks to digitise entire court records, and a delegation from that country would be in the national capital next week to interact with top union law ministry officials.

The ambitious e-Courts project is currently in its third phase with an aim to upgrade the digital infrastructure of subordinate judiciary across the country.

Officials told PTI that a delegation from the United Kingdom will visit the Department of Justice here on November 6 and interact with top officials and members of the e-committee of the Supreme Court.

The e-committee is the governing body charged with overseeing the e-Courts Project conceptualised under the "National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the

Indian Judiciary-2005".

Under the ongoing phase three of the project, a total of 3,108 crore documents will be digitised.

As part of Phase-III, the system will be migrated to cloud technology and the cost estimated for providing 25 petabytes (according to existing requirement) of cloud storage is Rs 1,205.20 crore. The project also seeks to establish and expand the scope of virtual courts for hearing of cases by creating a robust digital infra-

structure. A sum of Rs 413.08 crore is the cost estimate for establishment of 1,150 virtual courts.

The phase three of the project was cleared by the Union Cabinet in September 2023.

The project also involves integration of duty holders such as courts, jails, police stations and forensic laboratories with the Inter Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS).

Digitisation of court records

also enables processes to become more environment friendly by minimising paper-based filings and reducing the physical movement of documents.

Besides, virtual participation in proceedings can reduce costs associated with court proceedings such as travel expenses for witnesses, judges, and other stakeholders, while payment of court fees, fines and penalties can be made from anywhere and anytime. (PTI)

**Union Min Suresh Gopi pitches for AIIMS in Alappuzha**

**THRISSUR (KERALA), Oct 26:** Union Minister Suresh Gopi on Sunday said Alappuzha, a district he described as having been "destroyed by Communist ideologies," should get an All India Institute of Medical Sciences to aid its reconstruction and development.

Speaking during an interaction programme at Puthurkkara in the central district, Gopi said he had been demanding an AIIMS in Alappuzha even before becoming the MP of Thrissur. He added, "I have only one father", underscoring that there was no change in his demand for an AIIMS in Alappuzha.

The minister clarified that neither he nor the union government had promised that Thrissur would get the premier medical facility. "As an MP, it is my right to ask for an AIIMS in Thrissur. But if the Centre says there is only one AIIMS for the state, then I should act as a Malayali. In my opinion, Idukki and Alappuzha are in the worst situation," he said in response to a question. Considering geographical factors and functionality, he said, "Among the two districts, it should come in Alappuzha." "Alappuzha is a district which has been destroyed by Communism. So, to uplift it from underdevelopment and for its overall rehabilitation, the AIIMS should come into the district," Gopi added. (PTI)

**Indian coffee becoming popular globally: Modi**

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said Indian coffee is gaining popularity globally, driven by the diverse varieties grown in states, including Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

In his 127th edition of his monthly radio address Mann ki Baat, the Prime Minister also said the Northeast is also progressing in coffee cultivation and this is further strengthening the identity of Indian coffee worldwide.

"Indian coffee is becoming very popular all over the world. Be it Chikmagalur, Coorg and Hassan in Karnataka; the areas of Pulney, Shevaroy, Nilgiri, and Annamalai in Tamil Nadu; the Nilgiri region on the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border; or the areas of Wayanad, Travancore, and Malabar in Kerala -- the diversity of Indian coffee is truly remarkable," he said. Modi added that Koraput (Odisha) coffee is also gaining popularity.

Some people, he said, have left lucrative corporate jobs to pursue their passion for coffee cultivation. "...they liked coffee so much that

they entered this field and are now successfully working in it. There are also many women whose lives have been pleasantly transformed by coffee," the prime minister said.

Koraput region is known for its unique agro-climatic conditions suitable for high-quality Arabica coffee. In the state, about 5,000 hectares of land is under coffee cultivation.

The Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation of Odisha Ltd (TDCCOL) is an apex-level cooperative institution that ensures end-to-end processing, right from procurement to drying, grading, and marketing of the commodity.

Arabica and Robusta Coffee are the two commercially cultivated coffee types worldwide, including India.

Karnataka accounts for about 70 per cent of the country's coffee production. It is followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Andhra Pradesh and Odisha are non-traditional areas of coffee cultivation.

During April-September this fiscal year, the country's coffee exports rose 12.5 per cent to USD 1.05 billion. (PTI)

**Roads key to development, investment and employment in focus next: Bihar Minister Nitin Nabin**

**PATNA, Oct 26:** The NDA has focused on good roads as they are key to driving development and ensuring good governance, Bihar's Road Construction Minister Nitin Nabin asserted, as he expressed confidence that the ruling alliance will retain power in the state and focus next on bringing investment and creating employment.

With progress in road and highway development highlighted by the NDA as a major poll issue, the BJP leader said that connectivity was the main challenge the NDA sought to address after coming to power in 2005.

"In 2005, when the NDA government was formed in Bihar, connectivity was a big challenge. If you think about law and order, if you think of development, roads are the first phase of development in any state. And I believe that our Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and our then Minister Nand Kishore did well," Nabin said in an interview with PTI.

He said the defunct 'Pul Nirman Nigam' was revived, and road infrastructure was given priority.

"Today, we have reached a point after 20 years that everyone is talking about the roads of Bihar. Earlier, there was only one Mahatma Gandhi Setu bridge on the Ganga, connecting north and south Bihar. Today, at least half a dozen bridges -- almost 42 lanes of bridges -- are



being built," he said.

"There is a bridge on the Ganga every 40 km.... The prime minister gave special attention to Bihar. Overall, we got support of Rs. 4 lakh crore from the Centre for improving road infrastructure in Bihar," he said. Nabin also said the state was a pioneer in a policy for road maintenance after five years of construction. "We have been maintaining roads of 13,000 km since the last 10 years. And now, when we are going to the next phase, we are going for maintenance of 20,000 kms," he said. He said a policy has been made for the maintenance of bridges. "Now we are the first state in the country to have a bridge maintenance policy," he said.

The minister said they have come up with QR codes for bridges,

which can be scanned by anyone and will provide all relevant information about the construction, history and maintenance of the bridge. He said MoUs have been signed with IIT-Delhi and IIT-Patna for making health cards for the bridges.

"It is the era of expressways. We are making many expressways with central assistance, like the Purnia Expressway, Raxaul-Haldia, and Gorakhpur-Siliguri Expressway.

"Gorakhpur-Siliguri Expressway will be the lifeline of North Bihar; Patna's Marine Drive is also being talked about in every part of the country," he said. "We can say that today, the road infrastructure of Bihar is at a different level on the national scale." Asked about the opposition's charge that the highways and expressways have not helped

the poor, he said, "When roads are made, the income of that area increases. The economic value of that land increases. Growth is directly proportional to the infrastructure."

"Those who say that nothing has changed should remember how Rajendra Setu looked in the lantern (RJD's poll symbol) era.

"Today, there is a six-lane bridge in Aunta-Simari; Mahatma Gandhi Setu is the same bridge, which people used to call the white elephant. It was always under repair. Today, the old four-lane and the new six-lane bridge have been made," he said. Nabin stressed that women empowerment has also been a key reform in the NDA rule, calling it the biggest indicator of change.

"But, if you look at it in the light of a lantern, you will not be able to see it. For that, you will have to come in the light of an LED," he said. Asked about the vision for Bihar if the NDA returns to power, he said, "Bihar is moving ahead with a vision for 2047. Our vision is that by 2047, there should not be any village that does not have a four-lane road within 40 km," he said. "Every district will have local industrialisation, a local product. Today, we have made a land bank on 15,000 acres of land in different segments of Bihar. We have improved the investment policy," he said. (PTI)

**No wonder Modi's huglomacy not visible in Kuala Lumpur: Cong takes dig after Trump repeats 'Russian oil' claim**

**NEW DELHI, Oct 26:** The Congress on Sunday took a swipe at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over US President Donald Trump repeating his claim that India is cutting back on the purchase of Russian oil, saying "no wonder" the prime minister's "huglomacy" is not visible today in Kuala Lumpur.

The opposition party's jibe came after Trump, on his way to Malaysia to attend the ASEAN Summit, told reporters that "India is cutting back completely" on the purchase of Russian oil.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh, said, "Last night, aboard Air Force One on the way to Kuala Lumpur, President Trump repeated -- for at least the sixth time -- the claim that India is cutting down on the imports of Russian oil. This time, he has said

that India will zero the imports of Russian oil."

"No wonder, Mr. Modi's huglomacy is not visible today in Kuala Lumpur," Ramesh said, taking a swipe at the prime minister.

Ramesh also shared a video clip of Trump's interaction with reporters in which he repeated his claim of India cutting back Russian oil imports.

With the prime minister not travelling to Malaysia for the ASEAN Summit that commenced Sunday, and opting to participate in it virtually, the Congress on Thursday claimed that the reason for Modi not going there was that he doesn't want to be cornered by US President Trump.

Last week, Ramesh said that posting messages in praise of President Trump on social media is one thing, but to be seen hobnobbing physically with the man who has

claimed "53 times" that he stopped Operation Sindoor and also claimed "five times" that India has promised to stop buying oil from Russia is "far too risky" for the prime minister.

Malaysia invited Trump as well as leaders of several countries, which are dialogue partners of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for the summit.

Trump has reiterated his claim that India has agreed to "stop" buying oil from Russia and would bring them down to "almost nothing" by the end of the year.

However, he said it is a process and will take some time.

Trump also said that he would try to persuade China to do the same.

China and India are the two biggest buyers of Russian crude oil. (PTI)

**Dalit man beaten to death in MP village, kin torch house of accused**

**BHIND (MP), Oct 26:** A 35-year-old Dalit man was allegedly beaten to death by his neighbours following a dispute in Madhya Pradesh's Bhind district, prompting the authorities to deploy police as the situation turned tense in the village, an official said on Sunday.

The victim's death led to tensions in the village, as his relatives and other residents vandalised a house belonging to one of the accused.

The incident occurred at a village under Daboh police station limits, around 65 km from the district headquarters, on Saturday evening, the official said.

According to the police, the victim, Rudra Pratap Singh Jatav, had an ongoing dispute with a family in the neighbourhood.

The matter escalated on Saturday, and five members of the Kaurav family allegedly attacked him with sticks, leaving him seriously injured. An elderly man, who tried to intervene, was also hurt in the attack, said Rajesh Sharma, station house officer of the Daboh police station.

He said that Jatav was rushed to a

nearby hospital and later referred to Gwalior due to his critical condition for advanced health care, but he died on the way.

The news of Jatav's death triggered tensions in the village, as his relatives and other villagers vandalised a house belonging to one of the accused and set fire to it along with a car and a motorcycle parked outside.

Bhind Superintendent of Police (SP) Asit Yadav and his deputy Sanjeev Pathak arrived at the scene with police deployment to bring the situation under control.

Reinforcements from nearby police stations were also called in to restore order.

"A first information report (FIR) has been registered against the accused, Ranveer Kaurav, Ashu Kaurav, Prahlad Kaurav, Rajeev Kaurav and Kunwar Singh Kaurav, under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and a search has been launched for them. Additional police forces have been deployed in the village to maintain peace," SP Yadav said. (PTI)

## IMD predicts moderate rainfall in Arunachal on October 29, 30

ITANAGAR, Oct 26: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted moderate rainfall and thunderstorms in Arunachal Pradesh on October 29 and 30.

It said the weather on Monday is expected to remain largely dry to partly cloudy, with only light and isolated rain or thundershowers expected at a few locations. Conditions on Tuesday will remain similar, with predominantly dry skies and brief spells of light rain at isolated pockets. No warnings have been issued for both days.

Rainfall is likely to pick up from Wednesday, with moderate rainfall and thunderstorms expected over a wider spread of districts.

The IMD has issued 'yellow alert' (be aware) for several regions as scattered to fairly widespread rain accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning is likely.

The weather department has issued 'yellow alert' for the districts of Tawang, West Kameng, East Kameng, Kurung Kumey, Kra Daadi, Upper Subansiri, West Siang, Lower Siang, Lepa Rada, Pakke-Kessang and Lower Dibang Valley on Wednesday. (PTI)

## Four militants arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, Oct 26: Security forces arrested four militants belonging to various proscribed outfits in Manipur, police said on Sunday.

All the arrests were made on Saturday, they said. Two active cadres of the banned PREPAK (Pro) were apprehended from different locations of Thoubal district, while another member of the outlawed Kangleipak Communist Party (Taibang Nganba) was arrested from Porompat in Imphal East, a police officer said.

Besides, one active cadre of the Kanglei Yaowl Kanna Lup (KYKL) was nabbed from his residence at Singjamei in Imphal West, he said. The security forces also recovered arms and ammunition from their possession, including hand grenades, the officer added. (PTI)

## Army organises run in Arunachal to celebrate valour of infantry

ITANAGAR, Oct 26: The Indian Army organised a run at Menchuka in Arunachal Pradesh's Shi-Yomi district on Sunday to celebrate the grit, valour and unwavering spirit of the infantry, a defence spokesperson said.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from both serving personnel and local residents of Menchuka Valley, reflecting the unity, discipline and strong soldier-civilian bond, he said. Ahead of the Infantry Day on October 27, the run was held in the 2.4 km and 4 km categories and began with an energising warm-up session, followed by spirited participation across both routes, defence spokesperson Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said. Winners and special achievers, including the youngest and oldest runners, were felicitated during the prize distribution ceremony.

Infantry Day commemorates the historic landing of the 1st Battalion of the Sikh Regiment at Srinagar on October 27, 1947 during the Indo-Pak War, a decisive operation that safeguarded the sovereignty of Jammu & Kashmir.

The Menchuka event carried forward this legacy by bringing together soldiers and civilians in a shared celebration of fitness, camaraderie and national pride, he said.

The 'Day Run' reinforced the ideals of fitness, teamwork and unity of purpose, echoing the enduring spirit of the Infantry and its deep connection with the people, the spokesperson added. (PTI)

# Guv attends Ex-Servicemen Regimental Reunion at Meerut

'Governor reminds veterans that even after hanging up their uniforms, they remain invaluable assets of nation'



**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Oct 26: The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General K. T. Pamaik, (Retd), attended the Ex-Servicemen Regimental Reunion of the 2nd Regiment of Rajputana Rifles held at Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, on 25th October 2025.

The Governor, who was commissioned into 2 Rajputana Rifles of Tololing fame on 31st March 1972, and later went on to command the battalion, felicitated the Veer Naris and outstanding Ex-Servicemen for their sacrifices and contributions.

In his address, the Governor reminded the veterans that even after hanging up their uniforms, they remain invaluable assets of the nation. He urged them to continue contributing to the progress of the country and their local communities by sharing their experience, discipline, and leadership.

The Governor also encouraged the veterans to ensure that all their fellow Ex-Servicemen and their families avail the benefits of various welfare schemes and programmes launched by

the Central and State Governments.

He emphasised the importance of collective responsibility in taking care of Veer Naris and their children, ensuring that they receive due respect, support, and opportunities for a dignified life.

During the interaction, the Governor patiently listened to the concerns and suggestions raised by the Ex-Servicemen.

He suggested the formation of special committees of Rajputana Rifles Ex-Servicemen to look into issues concerning veterans and Veer Naris in different parts of the country.

The Governor exhorted the Ex-Servicemen to move forward with renewed camaraderie and reaffirmed the spirit of brotherhood that continues in service, in sacrifice, and in nation-building, binding the Rajputana Rifles fraternity together.

The Ex-Servicemen Regimental Reunion brought together a large number of veterans and Veer Naris from across the country to celebrate their shared legacy of courage, discipline, and service to the nation.

## Motorcycle expedition honouring fallen soldiers flagged off

ITANAGAR, Oct 26: General Officer Commanding, Gajraj Corps, Lt General Gambhir Singh on Sunday flagged off the Saddle Borne Warriors motorcycle expedition from Missamari in Assam to celebrate courage, discipline and patriotism and inspire the youth with renewed sense of duty and national pride, an official said.

Over 55 riders, including serving soldiers, veterans and women motorcyclists, will traverse more than 900 kilometres over seven days through the rugged and pristine terrain of the Eastern Himalayas, the official said.

Starting from Missamari Cantonment, the rally will traverse a scenic and historic route through Bhalukpong, Tenga, Bomdila, Sela, Jaswantgarh, Mago, Tulung La, Damteng, Tawang, and Jung, before returning to Missamari.

Defence PRO Lt Col Mahendra Rawat said the rally aims to commemorate the reinvigoration of the historic Chhetri Memorial at Tulung La in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, which stands as a tribute to the valour and supreme sacrifice of four gallant soldiers of 5 Assam Rifles who laid down their lives in 1975. The expedition is a powerful expression of the Indian armed forces' indomitable spirit of courage, endurance, and unity, reflecting the unbroken bond between serving personnel and veterans, the official said. At every halt, the participants will pay homage at war memorials, honouring the courage and sacrifice of India's fallen heroes.

He said the riders will symbolise the spirit of adventure, patriotism, and resilience that defines the men and women of the Indian army while riding through the breathtaking landscapes of Arunachal Pradesh. The initiative by Gajraj Corps not only honours the legacy of bravery but also reinforces the spirit of camaraderie and motivation among troops and ex-servicemen alike, Lt Col Rawat added. (PTI)

## Capital Police organises marathon to promote cyber security awareness

**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Oct 26: The Itanagar Capital Police on Sunday morning organised a 5 km marathon race, which began and concluded at IG Park, as part of the "National Cyber Security Awareness Month" (NCSAM).

Itanagar Capital SP Jummur Basar flagged off the race in the presence of several senior officers of the Capital Police.

Speaking to the media, SP Basar said that the event aimed to promote cyber awareness and safety among citizens, particularly students.

He stated that in the digital world, it is necessary for every citizen to remain alert about cyber frauds and cheating carried out by

unknown individuals from distant locations.

Over 200 participants from the Capital Complex, including students from schools, colleges and the university, took part in the marathon.

The event focused on spreading awareness about online safety, financial frauds, cyber bullying, phishing, and other cyber crimes.

SP Basar highlighted the importance of sharing cyber awareness within families and communities.

He explained measures to maintain privacy on social media, various modus operandi of financial fraud, identity theft, impersonation, digital arrest and sextortion.

He advised citizens to stay calm

and verify unknown callers demanding money instead of responding immediately.

Further, SP Basar encouraged students and the public to call the pan-India toll-free number 1930 or visit cybercrime.gov.in to report cyber-related crimes.

Dy SP Chamrak Arun and SI W. Tangiang, OC Cyber PS Itanagar, also spoke on common complaints and ongoing cyber crime cases. Police personnel from various police stations in Itanagar participated in the marathon to further spread awareness among local residents.

The month of October 2025 is globally observed as National Cyber Security Awareness Month (NCSAM).



## Ex Manipur CM calls for deployment of police force along border with Mizoram

IMPHAL, Oct 26: Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Sunday called for adequate deployment of police personnel along the border with Mizoram to prevent any influx of illegal immigrants from Myanmar who have set up villages in the neighbouring state.

Manipur's Churachandpur and Pherzawl districts share around 95 km border with Mizoram.

Singh told reporters at the sidelines of a programme, "The majority of influx in Mizoram, particularly those in connection with the establishment of 11 new villages, is mostly after the 2021 conflict in Myanmar with the Junta. Manipur's case is different, and influx from Myanmar has been present for long time back. Student bodies in the neighbouring state have called for the abolition of the illegal villages in that state."

Singh's statement came in the wake of the Mizo Students Union urging the Mizoram government to immediately abolish villages illegally established in the state by illegal immigrants.

"What happens when that (abolition happens)... since we share border with Mizoram, who is going to check and stop any influx of illegal immigrants driven out of Mizoram," the former CM said.

"State police, consisting of Naga, Meiteis, and Kukis, must be deployed on the Mizoram and Manipur border to prevent influx of illegal immigrants," Singh said. He also said, "I will also convey to the governor to deploy state forces along the border with Mizoram to deploy appropriate forces and to prevent any influx of illegal immigrants. I want the entire Manipur to unite on the issues related to illegal immigrants and drugs." (PTI)

## Over 2,200 runners participate in 'Sikkim Soldierthon' Marathon

GANGTOK, Oct 26: Over 2,200 people participated in the second edition of 'Sikkim Soldierthon' (Hill half marathon) here on Sunday.

The marathon was flagged off by Mizoram Governor Gen V K Singh (Retd) in the presence of Sikkim Governor Om Prakash Mathur at the Paljor stadium here.

The event, themed 'Great Himalayan Connect', aimed to strengthen the bond between the Indian Army and the citizens of India, particularly the youth, while promoting fitness and sports tourism in the Himalayan state of Sikkim as part of "Great Himalayan Connect".

The marathon featured three categories: 5 km, 10 km and 21 km, in which over 2,200 people, in-

cluding soldiers from Sikkim Scouts, Ladakh Scouts and Dogra Scouts, participated in the event.

Eastern Command and Trishakti Corps, in collaboration with Raj Bhavan, Sikkim and 'Fitistan: Ek Fit Bharat', hosted the 'Sikkim Soldierthon'. Winners received attractive prizes, every participant received an achievers medal and promotional items. Cash prizes were sponsored by Sikkim Raj Bhavan. The event also showcased diverse cultural performances, adding to the exhilarating and electrifying atmosphere.

Mathur described the event as an inspiring initiative towards the state's youth power, military-social coordination and civil consciousness. He congratulated the organ-

ising committee, army officers, participants and all the co-operative organisations for this successful event.

Lieutenant General Ram Chander Tiwari, GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, in his address stated, "Every step you take is a tribute to the valour and sacrifice of our soldiers guarding our borders. I am honoured to be part of this new vibrant initiative to promote a 'Fit India' and strengthen the bond between the Indian Army and our citizens".

Lieutenant General Man Raj Singh Mann, GOC, 33 Corps, said Soldierthon is a unique event that offers a lifetime opportunity for civilians to run with the brave soldiers who stand vigil round the clock on the borders. (PTI)

## APUWJ, APC observe sixth death anniversary of veteran journalist Taro Chatung

**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Oct 26: The Arunachal Pradesh Union of Working Journalists (APUWJ) and the Arunachal Press Club (APC) on Sunday observed the sixth death anniversary of veteran journalist Taro Chatung at the Press Club here, paying rich tributes to the pioneer of journalism in Arunachal Pradesh.

The media fraternity fondly remembered Chatung for his unwavering dedication, fearless reporting, and trailblazing contribution to the growth of journalism in the state.

Often hailed as the founding father of electronic media in Arunachal Pradesh, Chatung was a state gold medal awardee whose legacy continues to inspire generations of journalists.

Born on March 1, 1963, Chatung passed away on October 26, 2019, due to cancer at TRIHMS, Naharlagun.

Speaking on the occasion, APC Vice President Bengia Ajum recalled Chatung's remarkable contribution to the state's media landscape and urged young journalists to emulate his passion and commitment.

"As journalists, we should uphold his legacy by pursuing problems, not people; by focusing on issues, not agendas," Ajum said, adding that Chatung's life remains a guiding light for the press fraternity.

Taro Bina, wife of the late journalist, also spoke emotionally about her husband's devotion to journalism.

"Chatung was ambitious and

deeply committed to his work. Journalism is not an easy profession; it comes with challenges that today's generation must understand," she said.

Expressing gratitude to the media community for their continued support, she added, "I feel privileged that the press fraternity has always stood by me during difficult times. It shows how much they truly respected Chatung and his work."

Among others, APC General Secretary Damien Lepcha and APUWJ General Secretary Sonam Jelly recalled Chatung's humility, wit, and uncompromising integrity.

Earlier, floral tributes were offered to Chatung's portrait, followed by a minute's silence as a mark of respect to the departed soul.

## EKSWCO marks 47th foundation day, calls for unity

**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Oct 26: The East Kameng Social Welfare and Cultural Organisation (EKSWCO) celebrated its 47th Foundation Day-cum-Federal Assembly of Clan Based Organisations on Friday at Lumdung in Debayar Circle of East Kameng district.

Held under the theme "Together for Social Change and Cultural Pride," the event brought together elders, youth leaders, community representatives, government officials and students for open discussions on the district's key challenges.

A major highlight was the induction of 78 clan-based community organisations into EKSWCO's federal unit, aimed at strengthening coordination among community bodies to address social and developmental issues.

Home and Border Affairs Minister Mama Natung

urged people to adopt a positive mindset and collective approach for the district's progress, stressing that "a destructive mentality is harmful for society."

EKSWCO chairperson Raya Flago Taniang reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to tackling issues such as drug abuse, education and social harmony.

The meeting also discussed matters like polygamy, revenge killings and the alleged Lada-Sarli Frontier Highway compensation scam, with participants calling for transparency and accountability.

The event concluded with the felicitation of outstanding students and sportspersons, recognising their achievements as inspiration for the youth.

Founded in 1978, EKSWCO continues to play a key role in community mobilisation, welfare and cultural preservation in East Kameng.

# Yak Mela 3.0 successfully conducted at Pangkangteng Tso

'Festivals not only promote tourism but also help boost the local economy'

**HT Correspondent**  
TAWANG, Oct 26: The Yak Mela 3.0 was successfully conducted on Sunday at Pangkangteng Tso (PTSO), Tawang.

The mela was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner, Tawang, Namgyal Angmo, IAS, and Commander, Tawang Brigade, Brigadier Bhupal Singh, Sena Medal, in the presence of Zila Parishad Chairperson, Leki Gombu, Abbot Jamyang Choekorling Venerable Doble Rinpoché, and other dignitaries.

The event was organised by Monyul Society, an NGO, in collaboration with the Tawang Brigade of the Indian Army and the District Administration, Tawang, with the support of chief minister Pema Khandu.

The mela witnessed enthusiastic participation from yak grazers across the district, who were provided with emergency tents, gumboots, solar lights, blankets, and animal feed by the National Research Centre on Yak, Dirang.

Various cultural troupes, including those from

the Indian Army and local artists, presented vibrant performances that added colour and joy to the event.

In her address, DC Tawang, Namgyal Angmo, highlighted the crucial role of the yak in the livelihood of the Brokpa nomadic community.

She stated that the Yak Mela provides an important platform to understand the Brokpa way of life and to preserve both the yak species and traditional heritage through modern scientific approaches.

She emphasised that such festivals not only promote tourism but also help boost the local economy.

The DC encouraged departments to explore yak milk products beyond traditional ghee and churpi to meet the demands of tourists and enhance Brokpa income.

She also stressed on maintaining hygiene and cleanliness at tourist spots and focusing on attracting quality tourists.

She lauded the organisers for successfully conducting the Yak Mela for three consecutive years

and extended gratitude to the Indian Army and all supporting partners for their contribution to the welfare of Tawang's people.

ZPC Tawang, Leki Gombu, spoke on the government's ongoing welfare measures for Brokpas and initiatives for yak preservation.

Special guest, Lhamo Yangchin, appreciated the organisers for their efforts in promoting Tawang through its age-old Brokpa traditions.

She underscored the importance of preserving the yak and encouraging the Brokpa community to continue their rich cultural heritage.

Earlier, Festival Director, Tenzin Jordan, in his welcome address, announced that the Yak Festival will now become an annual calendar event, with continued support from chief minister Pema Khandu and Guardian Minister of Tawang, Mama Natung.

The event also included the reading of a message from the Home Minister and Guardian Minister of Tawang, delivered by Co-Director of the Yak Festival, Tenzin Lhendup.



# England crush New Zealand by 8 wickets to deny Devine a fairytale farewell



**VISAKHAPATNAM, Oct 26:** England rode on their spinners' fine effort to register a dominating eight-wicket win over New Zealand in their final group match of the Women's World Cup here on Sunday. It was the final ODI appearance of New Zealand skipper Sophie Devine, and there was

no fairytale ending as her side could only last 38.2 overs, getting bundled out for a tournament-lowest 168. The White Ferns were already eliminated from the ICC showpiece, but the win helped England to leap to No. 2 on the table with 11 points behind leaders Australia (13).

England's march was facilitated by their spinners, who dominated the middle overs even without their talisman Sophie Ecclestone, who injured her shoulder while fielding. Left-arm spinner Linsey Smith was the pick of the bowlers with 3 for 30 from 9.2 overs, while off-spinner Alice

Capsey (2/34) gave her fine support. Charlie Dean and Ecclestone, who bowled just four balls before getting injured, chipped in with one wicket each, while seamer Nat Sciver-Brunt (2/31) also bagged two wickets as New Zealand collapsed after opting to bat.

England's comprehensive chase — completed in 29.2 overs — would have boosted their confidence ahead of Wednesday's semifinal against South Africa as a higher finish could prove decisive in the event of a washout in Guwahati.

Teams with more wins progress to the next round in case of an abandonment due to rain as per the tournament playing conditions.

England's response to the small chase was never in trouble, especially after a 75-run opening stand by Beaumont and Jones. They looked in total command from the outset, racing to 75 for no loss inside 15 overs to lay a solid foundation.

The stand between Beaumont and Jones was their fourth 50-run opening partnership in this World Cup and also England's highest first-wicket stand of the tournament. Beaumont, mixing her elegant drives with deft placements, made 40 off 38 balls with seven fours before falling leg before to Lea Tahuhu, following an unsuccessful review.

By then, England's required rate had dropped to under three runs per over, with just 90 needed from 35 overs.

The wicketkeeper-batter Jones, who had been in patchy form earlier in the tournament, found rhythm just when England needed it the most. (PTI)

## Brook makes 135 but England's Ashes stars struggle in the first ODI against New Zealand

**MOUNT MAUNGANUI (NEW ZEALAND), Oct 26:** Harry Brook hit 11 sixes in an extraordinary captain's knock of 135, outshining other England Ashes stars in a four-wicket loss to New Zealand Sunday in the first one-day cricket international.

Brook came to the crease with England was 4-2 in the second over, survived more disarray as it slipped to 56-6, then batted through to be the last man out in England's innings of 223 from 35.2 overs.

New Zealand reached 224-6 target with 80 balls remaining.

Among other players potentially bound for the Ashes series which starts in Perth, Australia in less than a month, Ben Duckett made 2, Joe Root 2, Jacob Bethell 2, Jos Buttler 4 and Sam Curran 6. New Zealand lost Kane Williamson for a golden duck in his first international match in seven months and slipped to 24-3 before Daryl Mitchell and Michael Bracewell shared a 92-run partnership for the fifth wicket.

Bracewell made 51 after being dropped by Root at slip on 2 and Mitchell steered New Zealand home, finishing 78 not out after being dropped on 33. Mitchell's father John coached the England team to victory in the Women's Rugby World Cup in England last month.

Brook shone for the imperious nature of his innings in a losing cause. Matt Henry and Zak Foulkes had shared six wickets as they wrecked the England top order after New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner made a hesitant decision to bat after winning the toss. Brook contributed more than 60% of England's total, posted his second ODI century and highest score in the format, passed 1,000 ODI runs during his innings and at its end his batting average in New Zealand across all three formats was 76.

He put on 87 for the seventh wicket with Jamie Overton who posted his highest ODI score of 46 and 57 for the last wicket with Luke Wood (5). Apart from Brook and Overton, the England scoreboard read 0, 2, 2, 4, 6, 0, 4 and 5.

"I felt like I was in good touch," Brook said. "Obviously, we didn't get off to a great start and I tried to take it on myself to have a counterpunch and fortunately it came off today."

"It's a do or die moment and fortunately I've been on the right side of that a few times. I thought we started really nice with the ball, just struggled to take wickets throughout the middle."

Santner paused after winning the toss and admitted he was unsure his decision to bowl was the right one. There were patches of light grass on the wicket at Bay Oval but otherwise it looked a good batting track. Brook was unequivocal: he would have batted first. Santner's reservations would have melted away when the first ball of the match bowled by Henry seamed back through Jamie Smith's defensive push and shattered his stumps.

Foulkes, bowling for the first time in a one day international, had Duckett superbly caught by wicketkeeper Tom Latham with the third ball of the second over and bowled Root three balls later.

England was 5-3 and went on to lose five wickets in the first 10-over power play for only the second time in an ODI away from home. Foulkes bowled Bethell and England was 10-4. Buttler was caught by Latham off Henry at 33-5.

Brook turned the tide with typical aggression. He hit two fours from the seventh over bowled by Henry and a huge six from the eighth over bowled by Foulkes.

Henry had maintained an excellent length and off stump line, using a wobble seam which made the ball move unpredictably off the pitch. Foulkes bowled the ball in the air, bowling Bethell with a superb in-swinging yorker.

Brook tried to worry to bowlers off their length and, when possible, to get under the ball and hoist it over the field. His half century, raised with a six off Nathan Smith, came from 36 balls with seven fours and three sixes when England was 78-6.

Overton joined Brook at 56-6 and the two rebuilt the England innings between the 12th and 26th overs. (AP)

## Australia beat US to win LPGA's International Crown for the first time

**GOYANG (SOUTH KOREA), Oct 26:** Australia beat the United States Team to win LPGA's International Crown tournament on Sunday, clinching the title after Minjee Lee and Hannah Green took both of their singles matches, with each winning, 2 and 1, over Angel Yin and Yealimi Noh, respectively.

The foursomes match between Australians Stephanie Kyriacou and Grace Kim and Americans Lilia Vu and Lauren Coughlin finished in a tie, but was inconsequential when Green secured victory at the 17th hole in the second singles

match at the New Korea Country Club. It's the first win for Australia at the match-play tournament, which eluded them in 2023 when current No. 1 ranked Jeeno Thitikul and Thailand beat them in the final at TPC Harding Park in San Francisco.

The World team finished in third place after Charley Hull and Lydia Ko both had impressive victories in their singles matches against Japan to take an unassailable lead in the three match tie.

Hull led out for the World team with a 4 and 3 win over Ayaka Furue and Ko sealed the third place

finish with a 3 and 2 win over Rio Takeda.

Mao Saigo and Miyu Yamashita beat Brooke Henderson and Weiling Hsu 4 and 3 in the foursomes to narrow the deficit for the Japanese.

Earlier Sunday, Kyriacou and Kim beat Wei-Ling and Ko of the World team on the 20th hole to clinch a place in the final for the Aussies after the singles had finished at one win apiece.

Hull had edged past Hannah Green 2 and 1 to put the World team ahead after the first singles match, before Minjee Lee rallied in

her tie against Canada's Henderson to win 1-up and level the match.

The top-seeded United States team had a more straightforward path to the final as Yin had a 2 and 1 win over Japan's Takeda, before Noh sealed the Americans spot with hole wins at the 13th, 15th and 16th for a comfortable 4 and 2 victory over Yamashita.

Furue and Saigo took a consolation victory for Japan and ended the United States perfect record this week when they had a 1-up win of Lilia Vu and Lauren Coughlin in the foursomes.

Under the tournament format,

seven countries and a "rest of the world" team compete in two pools. The teams and their players were determined by the women's world ranking.

The top two countries from each pool advanced Sunday's semifinals and final that consisted of one foursomes (alternate shot) and two singles matches.

Last week Sei Young Kim won the BMW Ladies Championship, also in South Korea. The LPGA's Asian swing continues in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia next week and concludes in Shiga, Japan from Nov. 6-9. (AP)

## 19-year-old Lakshadweep's Mubassina conquers odds to stake claim as a rising talent

**RANCHI, Oct 26:** The far-flung and inaccessible Lakshadweep islands have no proper stadium and track-and-field athletes there run on mud tracks. Despite the lack of infrastructure, 19-year-old Mubassina Mohammed, daughter of a coconut plucker, has become the first international athlete from the Union Territory and is fast emerging as a top long jumper in the country.

Mubassina, who is representing the country in the SAAF Senior Championships here, has defied all odds, including financial hardships and lack of facilities in the tiny Union Territory, which measures around 32 square kilometres and has a population of less than 70,000. Mubassina became Lakshadweep's first international track-and-field athlete when she competed in the 2022 Asian U18 Championships in Kuwait, where she clinched a silver medal each in long jump and heptathlon.

She had won gold in the National U23 Championships earlier this month with a jump of 6.36m, though World Athletics has not recognised the mark due to lack of wind speed measurement.

Mubassina has also done 6.30m while winning gold in the National U20 Championships, which has put her in the top-six among Indian long jumpers this season.

She recently came under the tutelage of the country's top horizontal jump coach Robert Bobby George who runs an academy in Bengaluru with his wife and long jump legend Anju.

"The whole of Lakshadweep has no proper stadium. There is no synthetic track for running and no 400m track. I am from Mini-coy Island which has one 200m mud track for running," Mubassina told PTI in an interview. "If it rains, we can't run on

the mud track and do long jump. Also, if people play football, which is the most popular sport in Lakshadweep, in that lone ground, we hardly get space for long jump practice or running," said the youngster who has also qualified for next year's World U20 Championships.

Athletics has been in the blood of Mubassina's family as his father Mohammed used to do long-distance running in his young age, including 'mini marathon' races organised in the Union Territory with prize money.

"My father is a coconut climber/plucker. People call him to pluck coconuts and pay him for the service. He also used to run mini-marathon races and get prize money. Even I ran a 6km race when I was in class V and got prize money," she said with a smile. "We have a small tea stall which my mother -- Dubina Banu -- runs to sustain our family."

Mubassina's childhood coach Ahmed Jawad Hassan is based in Lakshadweep's capital Kavaratti but she couldn't travel due to lack of transport facilities. So, the family shifted base to Kavaratti for nearly two years so that she could train under Hassan.

"There is only one ferry/shift in a day to go to Kavaratti. So, you can't go there and return the same day. But I need to do training. So, my parents decided that all of us will shift to Kavaratti for two years. My sister and two younger twin brothers took school admission there and I also did my class XI and XII in Kavaratti."

After that Mubassina shifted to Kerala and trained at the National Centre of Excellence in Thiruvananthapuram for one-and-a-half years, before joining the Anju Bobby George Foundation.

Under Hassan, she competed in heptathlon and long jump. (PTI)

## Norris takes pole in Mexico as Piastri struggles; Hamilton shines for Ferrari

**MEXICO CITY, Oct 26:** The Formula 1 driver championship fight stormed into the Mexican Grand Prix with points leader Oscar Piastri struggling in qualifying while McLaren teammate Lando Norris took the pole.

Norris won his fifth pole of the season — first one at Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez — while Piastri was a distant seventh in Saturday qualifying.

"I am happy to be back on pole, it's actually been quite a long time so it's a good feeling," said Norris, who was last on pole in Belgium six races ago. "I've had some good races here in the past, so I just focus on what I can control and that's what I can do."

Piastri called it a "frustrating session" and said his speed was just off.

"Everything felt pretty normal,

the lap times just haven't been there," said Piastri, who said he fight focused on gaining positions at the start of Sunday's race.

A bigger surprise was the performance from Ferrari, with Charles Leclerc and Lewis Hamilton qualifying second and third. It's the best qualifying effort for Hamilton since he joined Ferrari this season.

"This is an amazing feeling, it's the first time we've both been up here in the top three," Hamilton said. "I think our race pace is not too bad, but it's difficult to say."

George Russell of Mercedes qualified fourth while four-time reigning champion Max Verstappen will start fifth. Verstappen is quickly clawing his way back into the championship picture as the Red Bull driver has not given up on winning a fifth consecutive

title.

Verstappen has won three of the past four races, as well as the sprint race at the United States Grand Prix last weekend.

Piastri holds the driver standings lead, 14 points ahead of Norris and 40 ahead of Verstappen with five races remaining. But Verstappen was 104 points behind Piastri only five races ago.

Norris didn't sound like a driver ready to concede any ground to Verstappen in Mexico City.

"I am here to win, I will be looking forward," Norris said. "I am expecting a battle, I am not expecting it to be easy and it is eyes forward and I'll see how much I can win by."

The Mexican Grand Prix will celebrate its 10th anniversary with another sold-out crowd — an accomplishment celebrated by

promoters who worried the absence of Sergio Perez in the field this year would cause a decline.

Approximately 150,000 people are expected Sunday at Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez.

Alejandro Soboron Kuri, the founder and CEO of promoters Grupo CIE and OCESA, said Perez not having a ride this season forced them work harder to sell out the race. Tickets go on sale nearly a year in advance and because the Mexican driver was still with Red Bull at the time, there was an initial early rush on purchasing.

But when Perez was fired at the end of the season, sales slowed, Kuri said Saturday.

"It was an interesting year for us because of the absence of Checo, who is very much beloved by the Mexican fans," he said.

"But we were very sure that we had a lot of traction with the community. They're very fond of Formula 1, very knowledgeable about Formula 1, and again, another sellout."

Perez has been hired alongside Valtteri Bottas to be the first drivers for the Cadillac F1 team launching next season — a boost that already has led to at least one additional suite sale for General Motors for the 2026 race. With Perez expected to be back on the grid in Mexico City next year, promoters are eager to open the ticket sales window.

"It was 90% sold at the beginning (when Perez had a ride), and then it smoothly reached the sold-out mark," Kuri said. "We're going to go on sale in three weeks, almost 11 months in advance." (AP)

## Disappointing, wanted to go out on a high: Emotional Devine bids farewell to game

**VISAKHAPATNAM, Oct 26:** New Zealand captain Sophie Devine was "disappointed" not to end her illustrious career on a winning note but expressed pride in witnessing the growth of women's cricket during her journey.

She was also grateful for the friendships she built and memories cherished for nearly two decades in the sport.

Devine bid a quiet farewell to her career as New Zealand suffered a eight-wicket loss to England in their final group-stage match of the tournament.

Devine said she had hoped to "go out on a high", but credited the English side for executing their plans well.

"Disappointing. Not to make it about myself, I wanted to go out on a high and today's performance wasn't that. Credit to Eng-

land, they stuck at it and did the job with the bat," she said during the post-match presentation. The 36-year-old said announcing her decision to retire earlier has helped her come to terms with the emotions of her farewell match.

"Actually didn't cry as much as I thought I was going to. Great thing about announcing it was I was able to process emotions," she said.

"It was about enjoying it today and going back to the roots of 19 years ago and why I play." Devine said it was particularly special to share the field one last time with long-time teammate and close friend Suzie Bates.

"Nice to finish with Suzie Bates bowling down the other end, to share that was really special. We'll celebrate in the changing room and have a few drinks tonight. They've shut up shop, so

I don't know, they've left me out to dry."

Reflecting on her team's future, Devine said she was excited about the young talent emerging through the ranks.

"Just confidence and belief. We spoke about it after the T20 WC win. When we play our best cricket, we can beat anyone in the world."

"Excited about the talent coming through. They've got such a high ceiling, it's just self-belief and knowing their best is good enough." Devine said she was proud of how far the game had grown since her debut and advised the youngsters to enjoy the sport.

"Incredible to think of the growth of the game, to see where it's got to is almost unrecognisable. I'm so excited about that, to see how far it can grow," she said.

"Sport teaches you a lot, we're professional athletes and you're judged on that but it's so much bigger. To play alongside your mates, it's so much more valuable and rewarding. Gives you perspective."

"Enjoy it while it lasts but realise cricket is just a game. Not fully done just yet so sure I'll be annoying people around the grounds."

England skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt was delighted with her team's performance in the final group-stage outing, describing the win as a complete team effort that reaffirmed their confidence heading into the semifinals.

"Really wanted to put in a performance today. The ways that we've gone about cricket in this tournament have been largely successful, so happy to put in that performance," Sciver-Brunt said.

Batting in the middle order, Sciver-Brunt said conditions dictated the need to be proactive.

"Being proactive with the bat in the middle order — conditions played a part today. With the ball, it was about reaffirming plans and making sure execution was high. In the field, it was about keeping the energy up and showing how much we care," she added.

Providing an update on Sophie Ecclestone, who left the field during the match, Sciver-Brunt said the move was precautionary.

"Don't know anything further but it was a precaution with a huge match coming up. Wouldn't want to risk anything," she said. She praised Danni Wyatt and Sophia Dunkley for their contributions and reserved special praise for opener Amy Jones, who anchored England's chase with a composed innings. (PTI)