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A month on Assam mourns Zubeen death ● Memorial programmes organised across state

Family, fans await answers on singer's final moments

GUWAHATI, Oct 19: Even a month after Zubeen Garg's death, people in Assam continue to mourn his loss and seek answers on the final moments of the singer.

Garg died while swimming in the sea in Singapore on September 19.

Garg's wife Garima said the family, along with the people of the state, are waiting to know what happened in his final moments, and expressed faith in the legal system to unravel the truth.

Thousands thronged Garg's cremation site at Sonapur, on the outskirts of Guwahati, since early this morning, paying tributes to their beloved singer-composer.

Fans and friends of the singer-composer also visited his residence at Kahilipara area of the city and his studio in Zoo Road area to be with his family and join them in remembering him.

Memorial programmes were organised across the state, with people uniting in demanding expeditious investigation into the circumstances of death.



A 10-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) of state police's CID is probing his death, with seven persons being arrested so far.

Singapore Police is also conducting its investigation, with SIT officers from Assam set to visit the Southeast Asian nation as part of its own probe.

Vedic rituals related to the occasion were organised by the family at his studio, with

Garg's father, wife, sister and others joining it.

Speaking to reporters outside the studio, Garima said, "The studio was dear to him. Since the initial rituals were performed at our residence and Jorhat, we decided to perform the Vedic rituals on completion of one month here."

Asked for her comment on police probe into Garg's death, she said, "We have faith in the investigation. Whom do we trust if not our own legal system? Zubeen was a straight-forward person and we want straight-forward investigation."

"We are all waiting peacefully to know what happened. People of Assam are waiting to know what happened in his last moments," Garima added.

Italian opera singer Gioconda Vessichelli, with whom Garg had collaborated for his yet-to-be released movie, also reached Guwahati to pay tributes to the cultural icon.

"Zubeen da used to say that she (Garima) is his tigress, who (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM announces land allotment, job quota for tea tribes

Major welfare measures unveiled at ATTSA conference at Mariani

JORHAT, Oct 19: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday announced a series of welfare measures for the uplift of the tea tribes community, including land allotment for workers and new reservations in government jobs.

Addressing the 19th Biennial Conference of the Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTSA) at Mariani College playground, Sarma said a bill would be introduced in the Assam Legislative Assembly on November 25 to allot tea estate land to workers.

He said a worker's life remained insecure without land ownership and reminded that he had made a similar commitment in the Assembly three years ago.

The chief minister also announced 3 per cent reservation for

members of the tea tribe community in category one and two posts in the civil services, in addition to the existing 3 per cent quota in Grade III and IV posts.

"This will ensure greater participation in administration and empower the community further. Our youth can now aspire to become magistrates and DSPs," he said.

In the education sector, Sarma announced that four seats would be reserved for tea tribe students in each of the 14 medical colleges across the state.

He added that 100 new high schools would be opened in tea garden areas in January 2026, in addition to the 115 schools already established by his government.

The chief minister said these initiatives were significant given that no high or (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

KAAC EM refutes oppn charge over teacher regularisation list

DIPHU, Oct 19: Opposition parties have criticised the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and the State government after only one Karbi candidate featured in the list of 215 teachers regularised for Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts by the Directorate of Elementary Education, Assam.

The critics alleged the move undermined the powers of the KAAC guaranteed under the Sixth Schedule and reflected the government's indifferent attitude towards the region.

Responding to the allegations, KAAC Executive Member (Education) Richard Tokbi clarified that only one Karbi candidate had applied for the online process initiated by the Directorate.

Addressing a press conference at his residence on Saturday, Tokbi said the regularisation drive covered teachers who had worked under the Sarba Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) for five years or more as of July 31, 2024.

He said, "This was not a new recruitment process but regularisation of existing contractual teachers. Across Assam, 35,133 candidates applied online, of which 225 were from Karbi Anglong. The Directorate's list for both Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong contained 219 names. After one death and two rejections on technical grounds, the total came to 215 — and only one Karbi name was among them because only one had applied."

Urging against politicising the issue, Tokbi said, "There should not be politics in education if our society wants to progress. Under the leadership of CEM Tuliram Ronghang, the education sector in Karbi Anglong has improved considerably. The district's HSLC results have risen from below 50% to over 75% in the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Judgments must be free from external influence, says SC judge Ujjal Bhuyan

GUWAHATI, Oct 19: Supreme Court judge Justice Ujjal Bhuyan on Sunday emphasised that judgments must be delivered without any form of external influence to preserve public faith in the judiciary.

Justice Bhuyan was delivering a special lecture on 'Judicial Professionalism, Etiquette and Expectations from Judicial Officers' here after launching the official website of the All Assam Judges Association.

The apex court judge expressed confidence that the newly launched website would serve as an effective platform to facilitate better communication and foster fraternal bonds among members of the association.

In his address, Justice Bhuyan emphasised that the faith of the public in the judicial system must remain unshaken through fair and impartial deliverance of justice.

He maintained that the legitimacy of the judiciary in public perception rests on various factors, including how judicial officers are

viewed by society. "For this, it is essential that judgments are pronounced in an atmosphere free from any form of external influence. The judiciary should never be seen to be bestowing any kind of favour," he said.

Justice Bhuyan urged judicial officers serving in the districts to act pragmatically and uphold the spirit of the Constitution in their duties.

Stressing the importance of maintaining professional integrity, he cautioned that members of the judiciary should avoid close proximity with members of other services and maintain restraint in both professional and public life.

Highlighting the vital role of the district judiciary, Justice Bhuyan said a strong and robust judicial system at the grassroots is a sine qua non for stability and credibility at the apex level.

Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court, Justice Ashutosh Kumar, was also present on the occasion, along with other dignitaries. (PTI)



NTPC inks MoA with ACCF for cancer screening project in Kokrajhar

GUWAHATI, Oct 19: Power major NTPC has entered into an agreement with the Assam Cancer Care Foundation (ACCF) for a cancer screening project in Kokrajhar district.

The NTPC, Bongaigaon, will be implementing the community-based project under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a company statement said.

The Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the two sides was signed on Saturday.

The ₹ 33-lakh project aims to provide preventive and diagnostic cancer care to around 81,000 people across various villages, ensuring last-mile outreach through four Block Primary Health Centres (BPHCs) and approximately 80 Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs).

The initiative will focus on early detection of oral, breast and cervical cancer, conduct awareness and sensitisation programmes, and offer home-based palliative care for patients in need.

Head of projects, NTPC Bongaigaon, Arnab Maitra, appreciated the efforts of the ACCF in promoting cancer prevention, early detection and treatment across the state.

He maintained that this collaboration would significantly benefit the communities of Kokrajhar by enhancing access to quality healthcare and creating awareness at the grassroots level. The year-long project, which is being funded for the second (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Lithoclasts ejected from crater found to be composed of sandstone

Samples of India's only active mud volcano in Andaman date back 23 million years: GSI

PORT BLAIR, Oct 19: The samples collected from India's only active mud volcano at Baratang in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands belong to the Oligocene age, which was around 23 million years ago, a Geological Survey of India (GSI) official said.

The lithoclasts ejected from the crater were found to be composed of sandstone and shale of the Mithakari Group, belonging to this geological period, he said.

The Oligocene is a geological epoch that lasted from around 33.9 to 23 million years ago, marked by the expansion of grasslands, global cooling, and the evolution of several modern mammal species, including the first elephants, cats, and dogs.

"We visited the site on October 8-9 to assess the mud eruption reported on October 2. We had collected the mud sample and found that it belonged to the Oligocene age," GSI's Deputy Director General Santanu Bhattacharjee told PTI.



"A total of four clusters of mud volcanoes consisting of several small vents have been observed, spread over an area of about 500 sqm with a height of about 2 metre at the centre. This marks a significant increase in the area of the eruption site from the earlier record of 100 sqm and height of one metre. All clusters of vents were continuously emanating liquid mud and gases," he said.

Bhattacharjee said the surface temperature of the mud volcanoes ranged from 29.3 degrees to 30.07 degrees Celsius, with a pH between 8.0 and 8.3,

indicating the weakly alkaline nature of the mud fluid.

"An oily blackish sheen was also observed at a few vents as thin layers on the surface of the muddy material," he said.

When asked about the origin of the eruption, Bhattacharjee said that it could be attributed to several processes.

"This includes diapiric movement of over-pressured surface shale layers due to loading of terrigenous sediments, rapid subsidence or lateral tectonic compression, hydrocarbon generation in deep subsurface and expulsion of fluid from depth along deep-seated fracture/fault," he said.

The GSI has asked the Andaman and Nicobar administration to restrict public access and construct a viewpoint at the end of the approach way to maintain a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM assures stronger border security, ₹10 lakh aid for slain Karbi youth's family

Himanta Biswa Sarma meets Karbi Anglong delegation; promises permanent police camp and development push in border areas

DIPHU, Oct 19: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has assured a series of measures to strengthen security and address concerns arising from the recent border violence in West Karbi Anglong, in which a Karbi tribesman was killed by miscreants from Meghalaya.

A delegation of social organisations from Karbi Anglong met the chief minister in Dispur on October 18 to discuss the incident and demand lasting peace along the Assam-Meghalaya border.

Chief Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Tuliram Ronghang was also present at the meeting.

The delegation comprised representatives of the Karbi Students Association (KSA), Joint Action Committee for Autonomous State (JACAS), Karbi Youth Association (KYA), Karbi Farmers Association (KFA), Karbi Unemployed Youth Association (KUYA), Karbi Students' & Youth Council (KSYC) and Karbi Anglong Women Justice Forum (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)


India developing 200 MW nuclear reactors to power ships

NEW DELHI, Oct 19: India is developing 200 MW nuclear power reactors, compact in size that can be deployed on commercial ships.


"Nuclear power is generated by causing nuclear fission to create heat that leads to electricity production. You can put the reactor wherever you want, even on a ship," a senior official said here.

He said scientists at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) are developing two nuclear power reactors of 55 MW and 200 MW that could be deployed at captive power plants used by energy-intensive companies such as cement manufacturers.

"These nuclear reactors are very safe and can even be used to power merchant navy ships," the official said, sidestepping questions of their use to power nuclear submarines. He said these Bharat Small Modular Reactors (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



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দীপাৱলীৰ শুভেচ্ছা



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Exports record positive growth in 24 nations in Apr-Sep; reflect market diversification

NEW DELHI, Oct 19: Reflecting a clear trend of market diversification, Indian exporters registered positive growth in 24 countries during the first half of the current fiscal year, even as shipments to the US declined due to high tariffs in September, official data showed.

These 24 countries include Korea, UAE, Germany, Togo, Egypt, Vietnam, Iraq, Mexico, Russia, Kenya, Nigeria, Canada, Poland, Sri Lanka, Oman, Thailand, Bangladesh, Brazil, Belgium, Italy and Tanzania.

"24 countries with a total export of USD 129.3 billion recorded positive growth in export in April-September 2025-26 as against the same period last fiscal, amounting to a share of 59 per cent of India's exports," an official said.

During April-September this year, exports increased by 3.02 per cent to USD 220.12 billion, and



imports rose 4.53 per cent to USD 375.11 billion, leaving a trade deficit of USD 154.99 billion.

However, according to the Commerce Ministry data, India's exports to 16 countries have registered negative growth during the first six months of the current

geographies, including Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

"The trend will continue in the coming months as well," the exporter said.

India's merchandise exports to the US declined by 11.93 per cent to USD 5.46 billion in September due to the high tariffs imposed by Washington, according to the data.

During the April-September period of this fiscal, the country's exports to the US increased by 13.37 per cent to USD 45.82 billion, while imports rose 9 per cent to USD 25.6 billion, the data showed.

The US has imposed a sweeping 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering American markets from August 27. The two countries are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement to boost two-way commerce.

The US was the largest trading partner of India in 2024-25. (PTI)

Festive binge: Swiggy, magicpin see massive surge in food delivery orders

NEW DELHI, Oct 19: As India revels in the spirit of the festive season, food delivery platforms Swiggy and magicpin have reported a massive surge in orders, highlighting how culinary cravings are now central to the country's celebrations.

Anshoo Sharma, CEO & Co-founder of magicpin, India's third-largest food delivery platform, told PTI the platform is gearing up for even higher volumes as Diwali approaches.

"We expect to double last year's numbers on food delivery," Sharma added.

Sidharth Bhakoo, Chief Business Officer of Swiggy's Food Marketplace, shared that cities like Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata led the indulgence, while emerging hubs like Surat, Thiruvananthapuram, and Vadodra joined in with equal enthusiasm.

According to Bhakoo, choco lava cakes topped dessert orders across metros, while Kolkata's long-standing love for biryani remained intact.

"The data reflects one clear trend -- food delivery has become the heart of how India celebrates together," he added.

Echoing similar sentiments, magicpin CEO and co-founder Sharma noted that vegetarian and thali orders surged by nearly 40 per cent around Navratri across the platform's active markets.

Post-Dussehra, there was a marked rebound in demand for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian cuisines, as consumers returned to their regular dining preferences, Sharma said.

magicpin also reported a 2.5x spike in bulk and party food delivery orders after Navratri. The momentum continued into the second week of October, with a 30 per cent jump in food delivery orders on October 10 compared to regular days. (PTI)

'Ride Now, Pay in 2026!' offer makes Classic Legends motorcycles easier to own

Company rolls out festive finance scheme with EMI holiday till 2026 for Jawa, Yezdi and BSA motorcycles in partnership with L&T Finance

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 19: Classic Legends has launched a festive finance offer, 'Ride Now, Pay in 2026,' allowing customers to take home their dream motorcycle immediately and begin EMI payments only in 2026.

The scheme, introduced in partnership with L&T Finance, aims to make its range of classic performance motorcycles more accessible to buyers. Under the offer, buyers can take delivery of Jawa, Yezdi or BSA motorcycles after paying the requisite down payment.

For the first two months after loan disbursement, only the interest accrued needs to be paid, with principal EMIs beginning in January 2026 if the loan is sanctioned in October 2025.

According to an official statement, the total loan tenure extends

up to 36 months, including the two-month EMI holiday. The offer also covers the BSA Gold Star 650, available at its pre-GST 2.0 price.

Sharad Agarwal, chief business officer, Classic Legends Pvt Ltd, said the offer would help riders fulfil their festive aspirations with financial ease.

"Our buyers can welcome a Jawa, Yezdi or BSA into their lives right away, while our offer takes the pressure off EMI payments until 2026," he said.

Jinesh Shah, chief executive, Urban Secured Assets & Third-Party Products, L&T Finance Ltd, said the partnership would make legendary motorcycles more attainable.

"By offering financial flexibility, we are helping turn the dream of owning a legendary motorcycle into an achievable reality," he said.

Facilitated by L&T Finance, the loan scheme features interest rates starting at 6.99 per cent, instant approval within 10 minutes, and a small down payment based on customer profile.

The offer is available until November 30, 2025, at over 450 authorised Jawa, Yezdi and BSA dealerships across India, subject to basic banking documentation.

Classic Legends stated that the festive season has already seen strong demand for models such as the 2025 Yezdi Roadster, Yezdi Adventure, and Jawa 42 FJ.

The company's motorcycles are backed by the 'Jawa Yezdi BSA Ownership Assurance Programme,' offering up to six years of extended warranty, roadside assistance for up to eight years, and a five-year comprehensive AMC package, the statement concluded.

Reliance Retail operationalises 600 dark stores pan-India to scale hyper-local delivery

NEW DELHI, Oct 19: Reliance Retail has operationalised over 600 dark stores pan-India and plans to add more to enhance its coverage of less than 30-minute deliveries across its extensive network.

Addressing an analyst query after quarterly results, Reliance Retail CFO Dinesh Taluja said JioMart is better placed with an extensive physical store network and dark stores being set up in select locations.

Reliance Retail has already operationalised 600-odd dark stores and is also investing in more to amplify its play in quick hyper-local deliveries, in which JioMart registered a 42 per cent Q-o-Q growth and 200 per cent-plus Y-o-Y growth in average daily orders.

"JioMart continued to operate as the fastest-growing quick hyper-local commerce platform, with operations extending across 5,000 pin codes and serviced by over 3,000 stores in more than 1,000 cities," said an earnings statement of the parent entity, Reliance Industries.

Its e-commerce platform JioMart, which is competing with quick commerce players such as Zomato-owned Blinkit, Swiggy Instamart, and BigBasket, probably has become the largest in the country with

its vast network and strategically located dark stores. Six months before, in the March quarter, Reliance Retail had said its hyper-local deliveries covered 4,000 pin codes across the country.

Moreover, Reliance Retail has also extended its quick hyper-local deliveries to the electronics and accessories categories, promising 30-minute delivery across 10 cities.

"JioMart achieved a significant surge in customer acquisition, with 5.8 million new customers added. This represented a Q-o-Q growth rate of 120 per cent," it said.

The platform's seller base grew 20 per cent Y-o-Y, and the live catalogue selection was further expanded to augment the customer choice.

Reliance Retail, which had 19,821 stores, operating retail operations at 77.8 million sq ft area pan-India, is significantly scaling it with plans to open dark stores to expand the coverage area.

Earlier, Reliance Retail had said that as part of the strategy, the JioMart app is using its Reliance Retail store network, delivering within a three-kilometre radius. (PTI)

IDBI Bank Q2 net profit surges 98% to ₹3,627 crore



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Oct 19: IDBI Bank Ltd has reported a net profit of ₹3,627 crore for the second quarter of FY2026, marking a 98% year-on-year increase.

The bank's operating profit for the quarter stood at ₹3,523 crore.

Net Interest Income (NII) rose to ₹3,285 crore, with the Net Interest Margin (NIM) recorded at 3.71%.

The cost of deposits was 4.69% for Q2 FY2026, compared to 4.65% in the corresponding quarter last year.

The bank's Capital to Risk (Weighted) Assets Ratio (CRAR) improved to 25.39%, up by 341 basis points year-on-year.

Return on Assets (ROA) increased to 3.55% from 1.97% in Q2 FY2025, while Return on Equity (ROE) stood at 29.64%.

Asset quality showed further improvement, with gross NPAs declining to 2.65% from 3.68% a year ago, and net NPAs marginally up to 0.21% from 0.20% as on September 30, 2024.

The Provision Coverage Ratio (PCR) remained robust at 99.26%, compared to 99.42% in the previous year.

Jewellers, retailers in Bengal report brisk sales on Dhanteras

KOLKATA, Oct 19: High prices of gold have not deterred jewellery stores in Kolkata and other parts of West Bengal from witnessing brisk business on Dhanteras this year, with traders posting steady sales, boosted by improved consumer sentiment. GST benefits, and reaffirmation of the precious metal as a robust asset class.

Retailers of various goods also gained as a buying spree among consumers was noticed across markets in the state.

Key markets in Kolkata, including Gariahat and Burrabazar, saw an overwhelming response on the Dhanteras and Diwali festivals, with long queues seen outside jewellery shops.

"A combination of reduced GST slabs, strong emotional sentiment around the festival, and gold's reputation as a safe investment has spurred record demand. India's traditional market movement is phenomenal this year," Calcutta Gem & Jewellers Welfare Association president Ashok Bengani said on Sunday.

He added that celebrity endorsements have further boosted trust and authenticity in the market.

Jewellers observed a mix of sentiment and strategy among buyers this year.

Families continued to buy gold for auspicious reasons, while younger and budget-conscious shoppers opted for smaller, lighter pieces and flexible payment plans.

Senco Gold & Diamonds MD and CEO Suvankar Sen said, "Dhanteras this year tells two stories. Families still want to mark the festival with something precious, while newer and more budget-savvy choices have risen quickly. We're expecting a 20-25 per cent

rise in value terms compared to last year, though volumes are down by around 12-15 per cent, showing that buyers are prioritising design and emotional value over quantity."

Sen noted that studded and diamond jewellery continues to gain traction, while gold remains the preferred choice for weddings.

"There's also a noticeable increase in men purchasing chains and bracelets, not just as adornment but as investment," he added.

Retailers highlighted a growing trend among young women and students choosing lightweight, fashion-friendly jewellery, while men's jewellery is witnessing unprecedented demand.

"The younger generation is now using gold as an investment class in a big way. Many see better long-term returns in gold than in equity," Bengani said.

Anjali Jewellers Director Annargha Uuttiya Chowdhury said sales are 7-8 per cent higher than last year.

"Customers are buying both heavy and medium-weight jewellery ahead of the wedding season to beat potential price hikes. Working women and students prefer lighter pieces, and the men's segment - brooches, chains and bracelets - is on an uptrend," he added.

While stores were initially cautious as gold prices crossed ₹ 1,32,400 per 10 grams in major metros, the market turnaround exceeded expectations. Silver prices also retreated by as much as ₹ 7,000 per kilogram from their peaks, settling around ₹ 1,72,000 per kilogram, which is still over a 65 per cent jump compared to last Dhanteras. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

Family, fans await answers

stood by him in good and bad times. And he was right," Vessichelli said, standing alongside Garima. She recalled her earlier visit to Guwahati to shoot with Garg, when she came into contact with his family.

"There is so much love in the family. I feel Zubeen da is here. I already feel the gods have done justice to Zubeen Garg," Vessichelli added, referring to lakhs of people coming out to pay their last respects to the singer's mortal remains and participating in his funeral procession.

Fans came in cars and buses to be at the final resting site of Garg, which has been drawing visitors for the last one month.

"We are a group of over 100 people and booked two buses. We wanted to be here with Zubeen da and pay our homage," said a woman who had come from Boko in Kamrup district.

Another group of women from West Karbi Anglong district arrived with a framed photograph of Garg as a mark of respect.

People brought 'gamosas' (Assamese scarf) with lyrics of his songs written, his photographs and other items, besides lighting earthen lamps and incense sticks, in front of his cremation site.

Fans raised slogans like 'Joi Zubeen da' and 'Justice for Zubeen' at the site.

'Naam' (Vasihavite prayer songs) were performed at the site by people from different places, with programmes featuring Garg's songs and others lined up for the day.

From political parties to civil society organisations to individuals, all organised memorials across the state for their favourite icon.

Naam-kirtans were organised and popular artistes performed Garg's songs for the public, as fans continued to pay tribute to the late singer.

Social media platforms saw an outpouring of emotions, with users posting messages using the hashtag #JusticeForZubeen. (PTI)

CM announces land

higher secondary schools had been set up in tea estate areas since Independence.

"Through sustained efforts, students from the tea tribe community have excelled as doctors, professors, engineers and professionals across various fields," he said.

Highlighting the government's cultural initiatives, Sarma said that the mega event Jhumoir Binandini 2025 held in Guwahati had showcased 8,000 dancers from the tea tribes.

He announced that similar cultural programmes would now be organised in New Delhi and later on an international stage.

Commending ATTSA for its continued efforts to uplift the community, the chief minister recalled that the organisation, founded on December 28, 1947, had evolved into a strong voice for the tea tribes.

A new executive committee of ATTSA was formed during the conference, with Jagdish Baraik elected as president and Sunil Tirkey as general secretary.

Among those present were Assam cabinet minister Rupesh Gowala, Kaziranga MP KP Tasa, Mariani MLA Ruppjyoti Kurmi, former Union minister Paban Singh Ghatowar, former Lok Sabha MP Pallab Lochan Das, outgoing ATTSA president Dhiraj Gowala, and Padma Shri awardee Dulal Manki.

India developing 200 MW

(BSMR) will be the mainstay in the expansion of the share of nuclear power in India's energy mix.

Currently, India operates two home-built nuclear submarines -- INS Arihant and INS Arighaat -- which are powered by 83 MW reactors. A third nuclear-powered submarine, INS Aridhman, is undergoing trials.

The government has also announced that it would amend the Atomic Energy Act (AEA), 1962, to allow the entry of private players in the civil nuclear sector.

According to the plans, the government may allow private players to operate nuclear power plants and also handle the front-end of the nuclear fuel cycle.

As per the discussions on the amendments to the AEA, the government may also allow private companies to procure fuel from foreign countries for the nuclear power plants, with a provision to take back the spent fuel to the country of origin.

The amendments to the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLND) also seek to cap the liability of suppliers of nuclear equipment, as mentioned in the contract between the supplier and operator.

The amendments under discussion also seek to define 'supplier' as the provider of critical equipment.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a target of achieving 100 GW nuclear power capacity by 2047, from the current 8.8 GW. (PTI)

CM assures stronger

(KAWJF). They submitted a memorandum seeking a permanent solution to recurring violence in the inter-state border areas.

In response, the chief minister announced that a permanent Assam Police Battalion camp would soon be established at Tapat to strengthen security.

The State Government will also provide ₹10 lakh ex-gratia to the family of the deceased, Lt Oriwel Timung, and offer a job through the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council to a family member.

Sarma reiterated that the border remains demarcated as per the Government Notification of November 17, 1951, and said proper border pillars would be reinstalled.

He affirmed that Block 1 and Block 2 in West Karbi Anglong, as per the same notification, are part of Karbi Anglong and that there would be no change to this boundary.

The chief minister further assured that development projects, including healthcare facilities, schools, and welfare schemes, would be prioritised in the border areas.

He also informed the delegation that he would personally visit Tapat in November to review the situation.

NTPC inks MoA

time since its inception in 2024-25, will adopt a phased approach to screening, awareness and linkage of confirmed patients to government health schemes for cashless or reimbursable treatment, reducing the financial burden on families. The initiative will also strengthen the public health system by expanding the reach of existing government programmes into remote areas.

The ACCF is a joint partnership between the Assam government and Tata Trust to create a first-of-its-kind, three-level cancer grid in the state. (PTI)

KAAC EM refutes

last decade." He added that salary delays affecting some teachers had been resolved by the State finance department. Tokbi also informed that there were 954 vacancies at the ME and secondary levels in the district -- including 431 graduate posts, 311 intermediate posts and 52 subject teacher posts -- and that an advertisement for recruitment would be issued soon after state approval.

The EM further said that under the Sixth Schedule Special TET for Karbi Anglong, 198 sanctioned posts had already received the Chief Minister's approval and were awaiting clearance from the finance department, after which advertisements for interviews would be issued by November.

The press conference was attended by District Primary Education Officer Nilima Teronpi, DPO (SSA) Nayan Pathak and DMC (West Karbi Anglong) Hakim Rongpi.

Samples of India's only

safe distance between the vent clusters and visitors. "We have asked them to reinforce fencing and hazard signage for sensitising the public regarding the unpredictability of violent mud eruptions, and maintain closure of all other approaches other than the viewpoint," Bhattacharjee said. (PTI)

Cong alleges investigation being used to protect accused close to Himanta Biswa Sarma Gogoi accuses SIT of shielding CM's links in Zubeen Garg death probe

GUWAHATI, Oct 19: Assam Congress president Gaurav Gogoi on Sunday alleged that the investigation into the death of the state's icon Zubeen Garg in Singapore is not moving in the right direction.

He alleged that the state government constituted the Special Investigation Team (SIT) to save Shyamkanu Mahanta and Sid-dhartha Sharma, currently in judicial custody, as they have close ties with Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and the BJP.

"As an investigation is going on, it is the duty of the government to make public all information on Shyamkanu Mahanta and Sid-dhartha Sharma. Nothing should be kept hidden," Gogoi told reporters on the sidelines of a memorial organised for the singer-composer by the opposition parties here.

"The way Himanta Biswa Sarma is taking forward the investigation through the SIT, it feels that the chief minister had formed the SIT to hide his close relation with Shyamkanu Mahanta," he alleged.



Garg had died on September 19 while swimming in the sea in Singapore, where he had gone to attend the 4th North East India Festival (NEIF).

A 10-member SIT of the state police's CID is investigating the case, and seven people have been arrested so far -- NEIF organiser Mahanta, Garg's manager Sharma, his cousin and police officer Sandipan, band members Sekharjyoti Goswami and Amritprava Ma-

hanta, and his personal security officers Nandeswar Bora and Prabhin Baishya.

The festival organiser is the younger brother of former DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, who is at present the chief of the Assam State Information Commission. Another elder brother of his is Nani Gopal Mahanta, who was the Education Advisor to the CM before becoming the vice chancellor of Gauhati University.

Gogoi, the deputy leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha, also alleged that the SIT was formed to hide the relationship between Garg's manager and the BJP.

Alleging that the probe is not moving in the right direction, he said, "Legal experts, those who know criminal laws, the court system, all are questioning the investigation."

"The chief minister is taking the lead in the probe and seems he is more concerned about saving his image," he claimed.

Gogoi maintained that in Garg's death, Assam lost a voice that spoke bravely for its people, its culture and its nature.

"In his absence, we do feel a little lost. Our duty is to take forward his dream, Bhupen Hazarika's dream of a 'Bor Asom' (greater/ united Assam)," he added.

Leaders of different opposition parties participated in the memorial, with singers performing evergreen numbers of Garg amid placards, demanding 'Justice for Zubeen' and 'No Justice, No Rest'. (PTI)

Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan activities pick up pace in Kokrajhar

Village-level engagement drives grassroots development efforts



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Oct 19: The Kokrajhar district is witnessing increased community participation as village-level activities under the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan gather momentum. Initiatives such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), transect walks, social mapping and the setup of Adi Sewa Kendras are being actively carried out across notified villages.

Led by Village Mission Teams and Nodal Officers, the campaign is fostering awareness about the Abhiyan's objectives and encouraging community involvement. These efforts have helped villagers develop a sense of ownership while offering valuable insights into developmental needs and opportunities.

The feedback and data collected from the ground will inform Village Action Plans, which will then shape the broader District Action Plan. This bottom-up planning model ensures that development initiatives are aligned with local priorities and aspirations. The Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan aims to drive sustainable and inclusive development at the grassroots level. The Kokrajhar District Administration has reaffirmed its commitment to making the most of this initiative to empower local communities.

College professor died in Bilasipara road accident

HT Correspondent
BILASIPARA, Oct 19: A tragic road accident on National Highway No 17 at Suryakhata has left the town in mourning after a college professor lost his life in a head-on collision between a motorcycle and a passenger bus on Friday.

The deceased has been identified as Zahurul Islam, Assistant Professor in the Department of Botany at Bilasipara College and a resident of Upartari village. The accident occurred when a high-speed passenger bus (registration number AS 01 NC 1275), traveling from Dhubri towards Guwahati, collided with the motorcycle (AS 05 B 7551) ridden by the professor.

Eyewitnesses reported that the bus was moving at high speed and hit the motorcycle head-on, killing Islam instantly. The incident has triggered grief and outrage among the local community with residents demanding a thorough investigation and strict action against the bus driver.

Police reached the scene shortly after the accident, recovered the body for post-mortem and have launched an investigation into the incident.

The fatal crash has once again highlighted growing concerns over road safety and reckless driving on highways.

Cachar Forest Division to re-auction seized bamboo lots

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 19: In a move aimed at ensuring transparency in forest resource management, the Cachar Forest Division has announced the re-auction of eight seized bamboo lots through an electronic tender process.

The bamboo consignments, confiscated during various anti-illegal logging operations are currently stored at Range Headquarters, Beat offices and designated depots across the division. These lots will now be made available for commercial purchase through a competitive bidding system.

As per the Notice Inviting Tender, the e-auction will be conducted in accordance with the "Assam Sale of Forest Produce Coups and Mahal Rule, 1977" and its amendments from 2000. This legal framework is designed to ensure fair pricing and prevent unauthorised exploitation of forest resources.

Officials stated that the use of a digital auction platform will ensure complete transparency in the disposal process. Details such as lot specifications, base prices and terms and conditions will be accessible on the Assam Forest Department's official portal at

www.assamforestonline.in starting October 22, 2025.

Prospective bidders are advised to register on the platform in advance and review all tender documents before participating.

This initiative reflects the department's continued efforts to combat illegal bamboo trade and supports the state government's broader push toward digitalisation in public procurement. Genuine buyers and bamboo traders are encouraged to take part in the auction and contribute to sustainable forest resource management in Cachar district.

NFR enhances freight services and logistics efficiency



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 19: The North-east Frontier Railway (NFR) implemented a series of proactive measures in September 2025 aimed at improving customer satisfaction and boosting freight revenue. These initiatives focused on enhancing logistics efficiency, ensuring smoother cargo movement, and supporting the growth of regional agricultural and industrial supply chains.

As part of these efforts, Molvom

station in Nagaland and Sairang station in Mizoram under the Lumding Division were opened for handling all inward and outward goods traffic from September 2 and September 12, respectively. Additionally, Sairang station began handling automobile traffic from September 19. Baihata station under the Rangiyra Division was also opened for inward movement of iron and steel consignments from September 26, a move expected to support growing logistics

needs in the region.

Under the Business Development Unit (BDU) initiative, NFR achieved notable freight movement during the month. Noteworthy among the consignments were 21 wagons of rice loaded from New Coochbehar (Alipurduar Division) to Jirania (Lumding Division), and a total of 1,474 wagons of stone chips transported from various locations within the Lumding Division. These included: 262 wagons from Shokhuvri to Jirania and Lumding, 62 wagons from Salchakra to Bairabi, 588 wagons from Ditokcherra to Jirania, Belonia and Bihara, 245 wagons from Bihara to Jirania and Belonia, 147 wagons from Panchgram to Udaipur, Jirania and Belonia and 170 wagons from Bairabi to Lalabazar and Sairang.

NFR remains committed to improving its freight services and customer interface through continuous innovation and infrastructure upgrades. These steps aim to ensure faster, safer and more efficient transportation solutions, while significantly contributing to the logistics and supply chain ecosystem in the region.

Diwali spirit dampen in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Oct 19: Unlike previous years, Diwali celebrations in Dibrugarh have taken a subdued turn following the untimely demise of iconic Assamese singer Zubeen Garg in Singapore on September 19. The usually vibrant festival has been marked by mourning, with minimal decorations and a noticeable drop in festivities.

Traditionally, homes and business establishments in Dibrugarh are adorned with decorative lights during Diwali. However, this year, many have chosen not to illuminate their spaces in a show of respect and grief. The sale of firecrackers has also seen a significant decline compared to previous years.

"There's no enthusiasm this year. Everyone is in mourning. Usually, the New Market area is filled with lights and firecracker stalls, but this time only a few are seen," said Surajit Das, a local resident.

Fans and admirers of Zubeen Garg gathered to pay tribute to the late singer on the one-month anniversary of his passing. Candle-light and lamp-lighting ceremonies were held in front of his posters as a mark of remembrance.

Pathik launches Sunday OPD to provide free medical consultations

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 19: Many patients visiting hospitals often leave without completing their treatment. To address this, Pathik, a voluntary organisation in Assam, has launched a new initiative called "Sunday Outpatient Department (OPD)." After consulting with reputed doctors and supporters, Pathik introduced this project to help those in need. Sunday OPD is the 15th initiative by Pathik, which has been serving the community through projects like Muktipath (funeral and transportation services), Jalasandan (clean drinking water), Niza (rural sustainable development), Shreemoyee (women's health and sanitation), Mau (child health and nutrition), Ratodot (voluntary blood donation), Organdaan (organ donation), Suravardhan (solar energy in rural areas), Gramyabikhyan (rural economy) and Cloth-bank (clothing donations).

On the one-month anniversary of the late Zubeen Garg, the world-famous "Humming King," Pathik officially launched Sunday OPD, offering free doctor consultations to all. The ribbon-cutting ceremony took place at Angel Diagnostic Centre, Narengi, led by Dr Amal Chandra Katakai, former Director of Dr B Barooah Cancer Institute. Lanterns were lit in front of portraits of the late Dr Benu Gogoi, former Pathik president and Zubeen Garg.

Dr Katakai praised the initiative, stating, "Pathik has done remarkable work in the past, and Sunday OPD introduces a new model of social service."

AJYCP stages hunger strike demanding justice for Zubeen

HT Correspondent

JORHAT, Oct 19: As part of a State-wide agitation, the Jorhat district unit of the Asom Jatiyabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) held a hunger strike at Baruah Chariali on Saturday demanding justice for legendary singer Zubeen Garg.

During the protest, members of the student body paid homage to the late artist in front of a large portrait displayed at the venue. The protesters expressed deep concern over the lack of clarity surrounding Zubeen's death in Singapore a month ago, terming the circumstances as mysterious.

They stated that the people of

Assam were still waiting for the truth to come out and would not rest until justice was delivered. "Only when the actual facts are revealed and justice is ensured will there be closure in this case," one of the protesters said.

AJYCP further demanded an investigation by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) into the financial transactions of those arrested in connection with the case, urging strict action against anyone found guilty. The demonstrators noted that Zubeen Garg's untimely demise has left a deep void in Assam's cultural landscape and an emotional impact on the people, who continue to mourn his loss.

Bikers from GHY pay tribute to Zubeen Garg

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Oct 19: A condolence meeting was held at the State Women and Child Home in Nagaon to pay tribute to iconic singer Zubeen Garg, who passed away recently.

The programme was organised by Bikers of Assam in collaboration with the Nagaon district administration, Motorhead United Assam and Motorcycle Association Nagaon. Bikers from Guwahati were welcomed by Nagaon Deputy Commissioner Debashish Sarma and other officials. A moment of silence was observed in honour of the late singer. Children of the home performed "Mayabini," one of Zubeen Garg's popular songs, as a heartfelt tribute.

To commemorate Zubeen's philanthropic legacy, the Bikers of Assam donated a laptop to the State Home. On the occasion of her birthday, Gracy Aliya, daughter of a biker, donated gifts to the children.

Several participants performed Zubeen Garg's songs during the event. Singer Hina Khatun and other guests paid musical tribute. Dignitaries present included Additional Deputy Commissioner Sudip Nath, DSP Parmita Sarkar, DTO Simanta Bora and Asom Gaurab awardee Minakshi Das. The event was anchored by Satyendra Madhab Mahanta.

Truck with 300 cartons of IMFL seized in KA

HT Correspondent

BOKAJAN, Oct 19: Karbi Anglong police seized 300 cartons of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) from a truck at Khatkhathi on the Saturday evening. The truck, bearing registration number AS 011 TC 6847, was intercepted during routine checking. The cartons were labelled "For sale in the state of Meghalaya only" and were reportedly en route to Manipur. The police seized the vehicle and the liquor in the presence of witnesses. The truck driver, Azad Khaklary, son of Nagna Khaklary from Lutumari Block-2, Phuloni, Karbi Anglong, has been detained. Karbi Anglong has emerged as a key smuggling route due to the prohibition in neighbouring Nagaland and Mizoram. IMFL, smuggled from states like Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh, is sold on the black market at more than double the retail price.

ATASU responds to Aditya Khaklari on ST status demand

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Oct 19: Reacting to Assam Tribal Sangha (CTOA) secretary Aditya Khaklari's remarks on the demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for six ethnic communities in Assam, ATASU president Basanta Gogoi addressed the press on Sunday and criticised Khaklari for making what he called unconstitutional statements, while the six ethnic groups are striving to create a peaceful environment by raising their legitimate demands.

Basanta Gogoi welcomed Khaklari's call for a socio-economic case study of the six ethnic groups prior to granting tribal status and urged the government to form an expert committee to conduct a thorough socio-economic study of all tribal communities in the state. He recalled that in 1971, the Bodos were granted tribal status and have since progressed significantly.



"They are advancing under the State within State policy. Once they gain financial power, they may eventually demand a separate state," Gogoi said. Responding to Khaklari's remarks that the Ahoms are a developed ethnic group who ruled for six centuries and therefore should not receive ST status, Basanta Gogoi expressed regret over what he

termed a misinterpretation of the rationale behind the ST demand. He urged Khaklari to refrain from making such comments. Gogoi further emphasized the historical importance of the Ahoms, stating, "If the Ahoms had not stopped foreign powers from entering Assam 17 times, the state's environment, language and culture would be very different today."

Kati Bihu celebrated at Ahatguri by Agriculture department

HT Correspondent

MORIGAOON, Oct 19: In a vibrant celebration aimed at promoting agricultural prosperity, the Morigaon District Agriculture Office observed the traditional Assamese festival of Kati Bihu at Bezbarua Pather in Ahatguri on Friday.

The festival, rooted in the hope and resilience of Assamese farmers, featured the lighting of lanterns in fields and under basil (Tulsi) plants, symbolising prayers for crop protection and farmer welfare. The celebration reflected the community's optimism even during challenging times.

As part of the programme, seeds of pulses were distributed to select farmers under the National Food Security Mission. The event was moderated by District Agriculture Officer Tapan Kumar Brahma.

District Fisheries Officer Bhaskar Jyoti Nath, along with other officers and staff from the District Agriculture Department also took part in the event, making the celebration a meaningful and collaborative effort.



Job fair sees 72 candidates shortlisted by 11 private firms across multiple sectors

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Oct 19: A job fair cum recruitment drive was successfully held on Saturday at the Jwhlao Nileswar Brahma Auditorium, Bodoland University. The event was jointly organised by the District Employment Exchange, Kokrajhar and the Placement Cell of Bodoland University. This marks the first recruitment initiative conducted by the university.

The programme was inaugurated by the Vice-Chancellor of Bodoland University, Prof B L Ahuja, in the presence of Academic Registrar Dr Manjil Basumatary, deans, faculty members and officials from the Employment Exchange.

A total of 11 private firms from



sectors such as banking and insurance, hospitality and tourism, education, IT and automobiles participated in the drive. Out of

372 job-seekers, 72 were shortlisted by employers.

In his inaugural address, Prof Ahuja emphasised the importance

of ethical conduct and career-building. He also interacted with the participating firms and thanked them for their involvement. Dr Manjil Basumatary encouraged the placement cell to organise such initiatives regularly.

Employment Officer Kunal Kanti Boro welcomed the attendees and highlighted the government's commitment to supporting employment for the state's youth. Registrar Dr Subung Basumatary also visited the event and appreciated the participating employers.

Prof A Ibemcha Chanu, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies and Chairperson of the Placement Cell, extended gratitude to all firms and job-seekers for their enthusiastic participation.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

When all else is lost, the future still remains.
—Christian Nestell Bovee

Blow for RJD ahead of polls

The framing of corruption charges by the Delhi High Court against the three members of the Lalu Yadav Family, Lalu, Rabri Devi and their son Tejashvi on the eve of the crucial assembly elections in Bihar, has stunned even the detractors of their party RJD as Tejashvi is the chief minister face of the INDIA Bloc and he is the main campaigner of the Mahagathbandhan. The irony is that Tejashvi was only 15 years old when the alleged scam took place. He was a student then. The charges against him enjoin upon the voters, the people of Bihar, to believe that Tejashvi who was an adolescent when the irregularities in the award of the operational contracts for two IRCTC hotels to a private firm took place, was one of the prime accused. Judicial system even did not have second thoughts of what kind of message it was reaching to the people. Already it is said that it is the part of the greater conspiracy designed by the ruling BJP to restrain him from electoral campaigning. Decision of Special Judge Vishal Gogne to list the examination of the prosecution witnesses for October 27, just ten days ahead of the polling on November 6, has added to the controversy. The RJD people look at this as a deep-rooted conspiracy of the ruling BJP to ensure that Tejashvi, the prime campaigner, gets entangled in a legal battle and is denied time to campaign.

If this action of Amit Shah has angered the INDIA rank and file, his design to allot seats to the NDA allies, especially to JD(U), has infuriated its chief Nitish Kumar. What has shocked Nitish is Amit Shah not taking him in confidence. The BJP leaders say that Amit Shah who is to arrive on October 16 on a three-day tour would formally announce the names of the candidates. According to the seat-sharing formula, BJP and JD(U) will contest 101 each. This decision virtually relegated Nitish and snatched his status of BIG Brother. Chirag, the bete noire of Nitish has been awarded for his loyalty to Amit Shah in the 2025 election, by handing over 29 seats. Incidentally LJP has not a single member in the outgoing assembly. Nitish Kumar wants the JD(U) to contest in its traditional strongholds, but the BJP has allocated most of such seats to Chirag.

The Supreme Court refusing to entertain a plea seeking SIT probe into Rahul Gandhi's Voters' List fraud has surprised the common people. Court unnecessarily dragging the SIR case and allowing the ECI to have enough space for endeavouring the case in its favour has already been an issue of acute heated discussion. The latest refusal to entertain the case against ECI has further turned the people sceptical of the final electoral outcome.

Cruising the Brahmaputra: Fuelling India's next wave of tourism growth

By: Sarbananda Sonowal

The Brahmaputra has always been more than just a river. For centuries, it has served as the lifeline of Assam and the Northeast—a conduit for culture, commerce, livelihoods, and collective memory.

Today, it is being reimagined as something even greater: a river of opportunity, capable of transforming tourism, boosting local economies, and driving sustainable development across the region.

Historically seen as difficult to navigate, the Brahmaputra is now emerging as a central pillar in India's inland waterways transformation. The success of the MV Ganga Vilas—the world's longest river cruise launched in 2023 by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji from Varanasi to Dibrugarh—proved that Indian rivers can redefine luxury and adventurous cruise tourism.

Now, attention is turning to the Brahmaputra as the next frontier for global river cruising.

This shift is the result of strategic vision and sustained policy intervention by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI). Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, since 2014, inland waterways have moved from the periphery to the core of India's transport and tourism policy. His vision of blending "economy with ecology" has inspired projects that align infrastructure development with environmental sustainability.

Guided by PM's vision, our ministry has been working to reposition Brahmaputra as an engine of growth. From developing cruise terminals to promoting community-led tourism, his stewardship has ensured the Northeast is an integral part of India's mar-

itime ambitions. This philosophy extends to river tourism, where each initiative seeks to balance ecological integrity, cultural richness, and community livelihoods.

The Ganga Vilas journey from holy city of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh to Heritage city Dibrugarh in Assam, spanning over 3,200 kilometres across 27 river systems in five Indian states and two countries, showcased the potential of India's waterways to support world-class cruise experiences. While that cruise captured international attention, the Brahmaputra offers a more distinctive blend—home to unmatched biodiversity, centuries-old cultural heritage, and majestic landscapes.

From the monastic Satras of Majuli to the iconic wildlife of Kaziranga, the river promises an immersive cruise experience that's both luxurious and authentic.

The growth of river cruising in India is evident, particularly on National Waterway-2 (Brahmaputra), where the number of cruise vessels has risen dramatically—from just 3 in 2013-14 to 25 by 2025. This surge reflects a broader national trend, with annual river cruise voyages across the country witnessing a notable 20% increase.

This growth has been enabled by IWAI's focused infrastructure development—ensuring adequate depth for navigation, round-the-clock aids to navigation, dedicated terminals, electric shore power, and pilotage services, all designed in close consultation with cruise operators.

Private sector confidence is rising. Viking Cruises, a global leader in luxury river cruising, has announced the launch of two vessels on the Brahmaputra with an investment of ₹250 crore. This landmark development is set to attract both international tourism



and global capital.

Building the Foundations of River Cruise Tourism

To further enhance cruise infrastructure, IWAI completed construction of two steel gangway tourist jetties at Pandu and Bogibeel in August 2025 to ease the embarkation and disembarkation of cruise passengers. Two more are under construction at Pandu, set to be completed by the end of 2025. The Inland Waterways Authority of India is actively developing essential infrastructure in the Northeast to promote and support river cruising on the Brahmaputra. This includes development of modern jetties at Pandu and Bogibeel. In Dibrugarh, the restoration of a heritage building is 80% complete and expected to finish by October 2025—creating a key tourism hub in Upper Assam.

Four new tourist terminals at Silghat, Biswanathgarh, Neamati, and Gujjan are being developed in Assam. These terminals will extend the reach of river cruises, providing new embarkation and disembarkation points. IWAI, in collaboration with (Director General of Lighthouses and Lightships) DGLL, is also developing lighthouses at Pandu (Dharapur), Silghat, Biswanath, and Bogibeel,

with geotechnical investigations and designs already completed. A dedicated cruise terminal in Guwahati is also on the horizon, positioning the city as a central hub for river tourism in the Northeast. River tourism goes beyond luxury—it plays a vital role in strengthening community connectivity. To support this, IWAI has deployed Ro-Pax vessels on key routes such as Neamati-Kamlabari and Sualkuchi-North Guwahati-South Guwahati. Operated by the Government of Assam, these services provide safe, reliable and secure ferry transportation for the region's riverine communities.

The Brahmaputra corridor runs close to Kaziranga and Manas National Parks, both UNESCO World Heritage Sites—offering unparalleled eco-tourism experiences. Passengers can disembark for safaris in Kaziranga or explore the spiritual and cultural life of Majuli, creating immersive, authentic journeys.

River tourism also channels revenue towards conservation and community development, ensuring that growth supports environmental and cultural preservation. Inland waterways are among the most energy-efficient modes of transport. With a lower carbon

footprint than road or rail, the sector is transitioning to green vessels, including hybrid, electric catamarans, and even hydrogen fuel cell ships, aligning with India's net-zero emissions target by 2070. Cruise terminals are being designed with eco-friendly features, including electric shore power and sustainable waste management systems. For too long, the Brahmaputra was viewed primarily through the lens of its challenges. Today, it stands as a river of promise—driving tourism, logistics, and community transformation. Luxury cruises are putting the region on the global map, waterway transport is reducing environmental stress, and riverine communities are gaining new economic lifelines.

The India Maritime Week 2025, scheduled from 27th to 31st October in Mumbai, will feature a dedicated session on shaping the future of river cruise tourism in India. Policymakers, investors, cruise operators, environmental experts, technocrats, and community leaders from around the world will converge to chart a collective roadmap. At the heart of this dialogue will be the Brahmaputra—a model and a symbol of sustainable river tourism.

Driven by the vision of PM Narendra Modi, the groundwork by IWAI, and the entry of global players like Viking Cruises, Brahmaputra is poised to emerge as India's premier river cruising destination. By seamlessly integrating tourism, logistics, heritage, and ecology, the Brahmaputra can showcase a modern, green, and inclusive model of development. The river and its people have waited long enough. Now is the time to let the Brahmaputra flow forward—as India's next engine of tourism growth, carrying with it the promise of a greener, more vibrant, and prosperous future.

Diwali: Origin and Significance

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Diwali is a festival that holds a profound place in the heart of Indian culture. Known as the "Festival of Lights," it symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. The origins of Diwali are deeply rooted in ancient Indian mythology, historical contexts, and philosophical values. This festival is not merely confined to religious rituals; it represents a beautiful amalgamation of human struggle, hope, and unity. The light of Diwali guides people toward the path of truth, justice, and prosperity, fostering a sense of unity and positivity in society.

According to the Hindu epic Ramayana, Diwali is celebrated to commemorate Lord Rama's return to Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile. Having defeated the demon king Ravana of Lanka and rescued his wife Sita, Rama returned as the king of Ayodhya. This event is regarded as a symbol of the triumph of good over evil. The people of Ayodhya, in their joy at Rama's return lit lamps in every home, a tradition that remains a central element of Diwali today. Reflecting on the depth of this story, it becomes clear that Rama's victory is not merely over an external enemy; it serves as a philosophical symbol of righteousness, patience, and steadfast adherence to truth. The narrative of Rama's life inspires individuals to confront their inner darkness and seek the path of light. His struggles, sacrifices, and unwavering commitment to ethical principles during his exile imbue this story with a universal message. It teaches that by steadfastly following the path of truth and righteousness in any circumstance, victory is assured. Through this narrative, Diwali conveys a message of hope, unity, and morality to society. The lamps lit in every home echo the message that no matter how deep the darkness, the power of light will always prevail. This tradition encourages people to bring positive changes to their lives and remain steadfast in their moral values.

Another significant story associated with Diwali's origin involves Lord Krishna. According to mythology, on the day of Diwali, Krishna vanquished the tyrannical king Narakasura. After freeing the world from Narakasura's oppression, people lit lamps in celebration. This story highlights another facet of Diwali—the triumph of justice over tyranny and oppression. Narakasura is not only seen as a demon king but also as a symbol of ignorance, greed, and arrogance in human life. The lighting of lamps following his defeat establishes Diwali's significance as a celebration of freedom and liberation. The philosophical essence of this story is profound, urging individuals to combat their negative traits and walk the path of truth through the light of knowledge. The tale of Narakasura's defeat conveys that remaining steadfast in the pursuit of justice and truth amidst life's struggles inevitably leads to success. Through this narrative, Diwali's light inspires people to dispel the darkness within their minds and embrace the path of knowledge and morality. This story lends Diwali a universal significance that transcends religious boundaries and applies to all aspects of human life. It teaches that by fighting darkness in every sphere of life, one can find the path of light. Through this narrative, Diwali reinforces the importance of justice, truth, and liberation in society.

In ancient India, Diwali was also associated with agrarian society. The festival is typically celebrated during the new moon of the Kartik month, a time when the harvest season con-

cluded. Farmers expressed gratitude for the crops reaped through their hard work and prayed for prosperity in the coming year. This agrarian tradition established Diwali not only as a religious festival but also as a social and economic one. The practices of cleaning homes, purchasing new items, and sharing sweets fostered a sense of unity and prosperity in society. During this time, merchants began new account books, further emphasizing Diwali's economic significance. This historical context reveals Diwali as a festival that unites people from various strata of society. The agrarian tradition has given Diwali a multidimensional character, blending religion, culture, and economy harmoniously. The practice of cleaning homes symbolizes not only external cleanliness but also the purification of the mind and a fresh start. During this time, people strive to abandon old habits and embrace new resolutions for a renewed chapter in life. Through these traditions, Diwali fosters unity, prosperity, and positivity in society.

The philosophical significance of Diwali is a vital aspect of its origin. The core theme of the festival is the triumph of light over darkness. This light is not merely the external glow of lamps but also the inner light of knowledge. In Hindu philosophy, knowledge is considered the most powerful weapon against darkness. The tradition of lighting lamps on Diwali keeps this philosophical message alive. People strive to dispel the darkness in their homes as well as their minds. The festival encourages individuals to confront their weaknesses, fears, and ignorance with courage. Through its light, Diwali inspires people to seek the path of truth, justice, and virtuous qualities. This philosophical significance establishes Diwali as a universal festival, inspiring not only Hindus but people of all faiths and communities. The light of Diwali urges individuals to overcome mental darkness and progress on the path of knowledge and truth. It teaches that seeking light in every situation is the true essence of the human spirit. Through this philosophical message, Diwali brings profound transformation to human lives, guiding individuals to discover their inner strength and walk the path of truth and justice in every sphere of life.

The spiritual significance of Diwali is profound and far-reaching. The festival is not only about illuminating homes with external light but also about embarking on a spiritual journey to dispel inner darkness and ignite the light of knowledge. The tradition of lighting lamps amidst the deep darkness of the new moon conveys the message that no matter how intense the darkness, the power of light can overcome it. This light is not merely external; it represents the inner light of knowledge that dispels ignorance, fear, and negativity. The meditation, worship, and spiritual discussions during Diwali provide individuals an opportunity to reflect deeply on their life's purpose. The tradition of cleaning homes symbolizes both external cleanliness and mental purification. During this time, people strive to free themselves from negative thoughts, resentment, and envy. Diwali's light helps individuals discover their divine inner strength and become aware of life's true purpose. Through this spiritual journey, Diwali inspires people to dispel the darkness in their lives and progress on the path of light. It teaches that true happiness and peace lie not in external wealth but in the purity of the mind and the light of knowledge. This spiritual significance establishes Diwali as a universal festival, inspiring people of all faiths and communities.

The festival unites people from different

walks of life, fostering mutual love, respect, and cooperation. During Diwali, family members come together, exchange sweets and gifts, and observe the festival's rituals collectively. These collective efforts create a deep emotional bond within families. Moreover, Diwali's traditions foster a sense of unity within communities. The exchange of gifts among neighbors and friends revitalizes social relationships. The festival teaches that true happiness lies in mutual love and cooperation. Diwali's light conveys the message that despite differences in caste, religion, or economic status, all people are bound by the thread of unity. This sense of social unity establishes Diwali as a noble festival, reminding people of their responsibility toward their community and inspiring them to work for societal welfare. This social significance makes Diwali not only a religious festival but also a social and cultural one.

The light of Diwali lamps dispels fear, doubt, and negativity from people's minds. The festival inspires individuals to start anew and adopt a positive outlook toward life. The decoration and cleanliness of homes purify both the external environment and the inner world of the mind. Diwali's joy alleviates mental stress and the monotony of daily life. It encourages people to move forward with hope and courage in every situation. This psychological significance establishes Diwali as a universal festival that fosters positivity and self-confidence in people's minds. The light of Diwali helps individuals discover their inner strength and inspires them to walk the path of truth and justice in every sphere of life. The use of firecrackers and fireworks during Diwali adds to the festive cheer, but awareness of the resulting air and noise pollution is crucial. While celebrating Diwali, we should adopt practices that minimize environmental harm without dampening our joy. Extending help to the poor and helpless during this time is also a moral lesson of Diwali. We should not only light up our homes but also strive to spread the light of hope and happiness in the lives of the underprivileged and marginalized sections of society. Such actions make our celebration truly meaningful. This environmental and social responsibility makes Diwali relevant in the modern context.

The lamps of Diwali represent the noble ideal of sacrificing oneself to illuminate others. They teach the values of self-sacrifice and dedication to the welfare of others. The worship and rituals performed during Diwali highlight the need to balance the three pillars of life—wealth, knowledge, and strength. The festival calls upon people to abandon pride, greed, and negative traits and lead a balanced and righteous life. Diwali's light makes people aware of life's true purpose and helps them discover their divine inner strength. It teaches that true happiness and peace lie not in external wealth but in the purity of the mind and the light of knowledge.

Due to its vastness and depth, Diwali has become an integral part of our cultural identity. The festival not only keeps ancient traditions alive but also fosters a progressive mindset in society. Diwali's light conveys the eternal message that no matter how deep the darkness, the hope of light must never be abandoned. This light inspires people to walk the path of truth, justice, and positivity in every sphere of life. Each flame of Diwali is a vibrant expression of humanity's eternal values, morality, and hope. The festival reminds us that true joy and success in life are found in uniting with others, spreading the light of knowledge, and working for the welfare of society.

Present economic situation of India: Growth, challenges, and the road ahead

By: Chafikhur Rahman

India, the world's most populous country and one of the largest emerging economies, stands at a critical stage of its economic journey. In 2025, India continues to be one of the fastest-growing major economies, with GDP growth projected at around 6-6.5%. This growth, while impressive, comes with its own set of challenges and opportunities that will shape the nation's future.

A Strong Growth Story: India's economic progress is driven by a number of key factors. The services sector remains the backbone of the economy, contributing significantly to GDP. Information technology, digital services, and outsourcing continue to attract global clients, making India a hub for digital innovation. In addition, the government's initiatives such as Digital India and Start-up India have encouraged entrepreneurship and innovation, particularly among the youth. The manufacturing sector is also seeing growth due to the "Make in India" campaign, which aims to boost domestic production and reduce reliance on imports. Sectors like electronics, automobiles, and defence manufacturing are expanding with both local and international investments. Infrastructure projects, including highways, airports, and metro networks, are further fuelling economic activity while creating jobs.

Another area of growth is renewable energy. With increasing investments in solar and wind power, India is moving toward becoming a leader in green energy. This not only reduces dependence on fossil fuels but also positions India as a responsible player in the fight against climate change.

Domestic Demand as a Growth Engine: One of India's greatest strengths lies in its population. With a young and growing middle class, domestic consumption remains a strong driver of growth. Rising incomes have led to higher spending on housing, education, healthcare, and consumer goods. This demand creates opportunities for businesses and attracts investment, both domestic and foreign. The financial sector has also expanded, with digital payment systems, mobile banking, and UPI transactions making India a global leader in digital finance. This has brought millions of people into the formal financial system, boosting economic activity across rural and urban areas.

The Challenges Ahead: Despite these positive signs, India faces significant economic challenges that cannot be ignored. Inflation remains one of the major concerns, particularly in food and fuel prices. For ordinary households, rising prices reduce purchasing power and put pressure on daily living costs. Unemployment is another critical issue. While the economy is growing, job creation has not always matched the pace of population growth. This is particularly worrying for the youth, who represent a large share of the workforce. Many educated young people struggle to find suitable jobs, leading to frustration and underutilization of talent.

In rural areas, farmers continue to face difficulties due to fluctuating crop prices, high input costs, and unpredictable weather conditions. Agriculture still employs a large section of the population, but incomes remain low, creating inequality between rural and urban India. Global factors also pose risks. The slowdown in the world economy, high crude oil prices, and

geopolitical tensions, such as conflicts in Europe or West Asia, affect India's trade and currency stability. A weaker rupee raises the cost of imports, further pushing inflation upward.

Balancing Growth and Stability: For India, the challenge is to maintain strong economic growth while addressing these pressing issues. Policymakers must strike a balance between encouraging investment and ensuring social welfare. Creating jobs, controlling inflation, and reducing income inequality must remain top priorities. The government is taking steps in this direction. Programs like PM Gati Shakti aim to speed up infrastructure development, while schemes for start-ups, MSMEs (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises), and agriculture are designed to provide financial support. Skill development programs are also being expanded to prepare young workers for modern industries. Monetary policy by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is focused on controlling inflation while supporting growth. Interest rates, liquidity management, and banking reforms are crucial tools in maintaining economic stability.

India in the Global Economy: India's role in the global economy is growing. As global supply chains shift, many countries are looking to India as a reliable partner for manufacturing and trade. Foreign direct investment (FDI) flows into India remain strong, particularly in sectors like technology, renewable energy, and consumer markets.

India is also emerging as a leader in digital innovation. The success of UPI payments has drawn attention from around the world, with several countries adopting similar systems. This shows how India can contribute solutions not only for its own people but for the global economy as well. The Road Towards a \$5 Trillion Economy: The government has set the ambitious target of making India a \$5 trillion economy in the coming years. While this goal is achievable, it requires consistent policies, strong governance, and cooperation between the public and private sectors.

Key steps to reach this target include:

1. Strengthening the manufacturing base under Make in India.
2. Investing in education and skill development to prepare the workforce.
3. Expanding renewable energy and sustainable practices.
4. Supporting farmers and improving rural incomes.

5. Encouraging innovation and research in science and technology.

6. If these steps are taken effectively, India can not only achieve rapid growth but also ensure that development is inclusive, reaching all sections of society.

Conclusion: India's present economic situation reflects both its strengths and vulnerabilities. On one hand, it is one of the fastest-growing economies, driven by strong services, manufacturing, infrastructure, and digital innovation. On the other hand, challenges like inflation, unemployment, rural distress, and global uncertainties remain obstacles. The future of India's economy will depend on how well it manages this balance. With its large working population, growing middle class, and focus on technology, India has the potential to become a global economic powerhouse. The path forward must combine growth with stability, innovation with inclusiveness, and progress with sustainability.

Diwali : Balancing ancient tradition with Environmental responsibility

By: Dipak Kurmi

As the autumn air grows crisp and the anticipation builds across millions of households in India and throughout the global Indian diaspora, preparations intensify for one of the most cherished celebrations in the Hindu calendar—Diwali, the Festival of Lights. This five-day extravaganza, which symbolizes the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil, has been celebrated for millennia with religious fervor, familial warmth, and exuberant festivities. However, as we stand at the crossroads of tradition and environmental consciousness, this ancient festival finds itself at the center of a crucial conversation about sustainability, climate responsibility, and the delicate balance between cultural heritage and ecological preservation.

Diwali occupies a unique position in the tapestry of Indian cultural celebrations, bringing together families across continents as they observe religious rituals, share meals, exchange gifts, and illuminate their homes with countless lights. The festival's traditional observance spans five days, each with its own significance and prescribed rituals. The days leading up to Diwali are marked by solemn prayers, thorough cleaning and decorating of homes, and preparations for the grand celebration. As Diwali morning unfolds with sacred ceremonies and worship, the atmosphere undergoes a dramatic transformation when evening descends. What begins as a contemplative, spiritual observance transforms into a spectacular celebration as darkness falls, with homes ablaze in brilliant illumination, streets echoing with songs and laughter, and the night sky erupting in cascades of color from endless fireworks displays.

The sensory experience of a traditional Diwali celebration is nothing short of overwhelming. The air fills with the acrid smell of gunpowder, the deafening cacophony of exploding firecrackers, the visual spectacle of rockets shooting skyward leaving trails of sparks, and the unbridled joy of children

and adults alike reveling in the pyrotechnic display. For generations, this combination of light, sound, and celebration has been synonymous with Diwali itself, an integral component that many consider non-negotiable in marking the festival appropriately. The crackling of firecrackers and the boom of aerial fireworks have become as much a part of Diwali's identity as the oil lamps and sweet delicacies that accompany the celebration.

Yet this cherished tradition now faces mounting scrutiny and criticism from environmental activists, health professionals, and increasingly aware citizens who recognize the devastating impact these celebrations have on air quality and public health. The correlation between Diwali fireworks and a dramatic spike in pollution levels has been extensively documented, with several Indian cities experiencing hazardous air quality indices in the days following the festival. Cities like Delhi, Mumbai, and Kolkata, which already struggle with poor air quality throughout much of the year, witness pollution levels surge to dangerous heights during Diwali celebrations, creating a public health emergency that affects millions of residents, particularly vulnerable populations including children, the elderly, and those with respiratory conditions.

The environmental implications extend far beyond the immediate aftermath of the celebration. In an era where climate change represents an existential threat to human civilization, and when international agreements call for urgent action to reduce carbon emissions and environmental degradation, the question of whether traditional celebrations can continue in their current form becomes increasingly pressing. Environmental advocates argue persuasively that individual actions matter, that collective behavioral changes can produce meaningful results, and that cultural practices must evolve to reflect our contemporary understanding of environmental stewardship. They contend that every person bears responsibility for reducing their carbon footprint, and that this obligation extends to how we celebrate



brate our most cherished festivals and traditions.

This call for change has not been merely rhetorical. Concrete alternatives have emerged, offering pathways to celebrate Diwali while significantly reducing environmental harm. The Indian National Environmental Engineering Research Institute has pioneered the development of green crackers, innovative pyrotechnic products designed to minimize environmental damage while preserving the festive experience. These environmentally conscious alternatives utilize recycled paper in their construction and eliminate harmful chemicals, most notably barium nitrate, which produces the dense, toxic smoke characteristic of traditional firecrackers. Furthermore, these green crackers generate sound levels substantially below the ear-splitting 160 decibels produced by conventional fireworks, adhering instead to standards established by the Noise Pollution Control Board. For families feeling pressure from children eager to participate in the explosive festivities, these green crackers represent a reasonable compromise between tradition and responsibility.

The movement toward sustainable Diwali celebrations encompasses far

more than just addressing the firecracker issue. A comprehensive reimagining of how we observe this festival involves examining every aspect of the celebration and identifying opportunities to reduce environmental impact. Consider the seemingly simple matter of illumination, which lies at the very heart of this Festival of Lights. The proliferation of electric lighting has transformed Diwali decorations, with homes festooned in elaborate displays of bulbs, LED strips, and illuminated decorations consuming vast amounts of electricity. However, returning to traditional earthen lamps, known as diyas, offers an elegant solution. These small clay vessels filled with oil and fitted with cotton wicks produce minimal pollution while consuming zero electricity. Unlike their modern counterparts, earthen diyas are reusable, sustainable, and biodegradable, embodying principles of conservation that align perfectly with environmental values.

The contrast with alternatives illuminates the wisdom of this traditional choice. Candle diyas, now widely popular, present as convenient options but reveal significant drawbacks upon closer examination. Being petroleum-based products, they can be used only

once before disposal. During combustion, they release toxins into the air, contributing to indoor and outdoor air pollution. Electric diyas and incandescent bulbs, while reusable, demand substantial energy consumption, whereas energy-efficient LED and CFL alternatives offer better options for those unwilling to abandon electric lighting entirely. The choice of lighting becomes not merely aesthetic but reflects deeper commitments to environmental sustainability.

The decorative elements that adorn homes during Diwali similarly present opportunities for environmentally conscious choices. The vibrant floor patterns called rangolis traditionally welcome guests and celebrate the festival's beauty. However, the commercial rangoli color powders readily available in markets often contain synthetic dyes and chemicals that can harm the environment. Creating rangolis using fresh flowers, rice paste, or dry rice flour returns to authentic practices while eliminating chemical pollution. These natural materials decompose harmlessly, unlike their artificial counterparts which may persist in the environment or contaminate water sources.

Door hangings, or torans, represent another decorative tradition ripe for sustainable reinvention. The market floods with mass-produced plastic decorations each Diwali season, creating tremendous waste and contributing to the global plastic crisis. However, handcrafted alternatives using colorful fabric, particularly repurposing vibrant dupattas and sarees, offer beautiful, reusable options that honor both tradition and environmental stewardship. These cloth decorations can be preserved and reused for years, or even passed down through generations, creating meaningful connections while reducing waste.

Creative alternatives to traditional firecrackers demonstrate that celebration need not require environmental destruction. Filling colorful balloons with glitter and confetti, then bursting them to create a shower of color and sparkle, provides visual excitement and partici-

patory fun without the pollution, noise, or safety hazards of conventional fireworks. While admittedly different from traditional pyrotechnics, such innovations preserve the spirit of joyful celebration while protecting the environment and public health.

The exchange of gifts during Diwali, another cherished tradition, generates substantial waste through packaging materials. Plastic gift bags and glossy wrapping paper, often containing plastic backing, create mountains of non-biodegradable trash. Utilizing cloth bags, creative natural wrapping materials, and reusable containers transforms this practice into an environmentally positive activity. The extra effort required becomes itself a gift, demonstrating care both for the recipient and for the planet we all share.

Even the preparation and distribution of sweets and delicacies presents opportunities for environmental consciousness. While convenient, purchasing sweets from commercial vendors involves excessive packaging, artificial colors, and preservatives. Preparing traditional recipes at home and sharing them using reusable steel or glass containers eliminates this waste while adding personal touches that enhance the gift's meaning and value.

The transition toward sustainable Diwali celebrations requires neither abandoning tradition nor diminishing the festival's joy and significance. Rather, it demands thoughtful reconsideration of how we honor these traditions in ways that acknowledge our responsibility to future generations. The essence of Diwali—celebrating light's victory over darkness—takes on profound new meaning when we recognize that protecting our environment represents precisely such a battle. By choosing sustainable practices, we illuminate a path forward that honors both our cultural heritage and our planetary home, ensuring that future generations can celebrate this magnificent festival in a world still capable of sustaining life, beauty, and joy. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmi@ptd@gmail.com)

Mother Goddess Kali, Kali Puja & the significance

By: Diganta Barooah

The Divine Mother's magic is ancient as life itself. She existed before gods and mortals, and she will still exist even after the great dissolution. Mother is pure energy in subtle form, but in times of need or just out of a desire to play, she manifests. The ancient legend of the Devi, the great Mother Goddess, has been handed down by generations of Hindus and stems from a sacred book of the Shakta Tantras, called the Chandi. Although it is understood that the tale's bewildering gore and sentimentality are allegorical, one still wonders what it means to Hindu society today. From a religious as well as a social standpoint, this legend reaffirms the protecting power of the archetypal Mother who is an integral part of Hindu households. In the West, the woman in the family is mostly seen in her role as the wife, while in India, the woman of the house is always the "mother." Even an unmarried woman without children is often addressed as "mother." It is a gesture of respect, because Hindus consider the position of a mother as supreme. Hindus, especially in Bengal, worship the great Mother with ceremonies of great splendor. Once a year during an autumn festival called Durga Puja, they reenact the story of the fierce protectress and, side by side, intellectuals and illiterates worship the Mother in temples, homes and in makeshift pandals in the street. In return for their efforts, the great Mother reassures them every year that the good will always overpower the bad—eventually. From a philosophical standpoint, this legend is an allegorical representation of the constant war going on within all of us—between our divine and demonic natures. In the great Mother Goddess legend, every dominant passion and vice has its special demon representative: Sumbha is the embodiment of lust, Nisumbha is greed, and Mahishasura represents anger. The Indian scholar Sashi Bhusan Das Gupta wrote an article called "Evolution of Mother Worship in India." He said: "Whenever our passions are in danger of being eradicated or suppressed, they change their form and color and try to escape in disguise. This has been illustrated by the story of some of the demons changing their shape when challenged by Shakti, the divine Power. Our passions and instincts are so deeply rooted in us that they often seem to be indestructible, since one that is killed is replaced at once by another, and so on. This is well illustrated by the Goddess' fight with the demon Raktabija, from whose every drop of blood shed on the ground sprouted a demon with fresh vigor and ferocity. It is the awakening of the Mother within, that is, full consciousness of the divine Power working in and through him, that makes man strong and surcharged with the immense power of God." Some Hindus talk about their great Mother Goddess with the vehemence of a child who threatens another child while wrestling for a toy: "My mother will punish you if you don't give it to me!" This strong belief in a Goddess that takes care of one's earthly and spiritual wants appears childish to some people living in a rational, grown-up world. But if we dig through our carefully built-up layers of society-dictated values, most of us will admit that somewhere deep in the heart is a very soft spot reserved for our earthly as well as archetypal mother. Great people throughout history have believed in a powerful Mother Goddess as the governing force in the universe. Take, for example, Swami Vivekananda. He became famous in the East and the West for teaching the highest form of Vedanta - Ahimsa brahmasmi (I am Brahman, I am God). Don't bow down to any other God except to the Self within you. Yet, even the high-minded, rational Swami Vivekananda had to acknowledge Mother Kali. On rare occasions, he spoke to special devotees about his inner passion for the Divine Mother. The following is transcribed from a talk that Swami Vivekananda gave to a small group of people assembled in a wooden cottage in Thousand Island Park: "Mother is the first manifestation of power and is considered a higher ideal than Father. The name of Mother brings the idea of Shakti, Divine Energy and Omnipotence; the baby believes its mother to be all-powerful, able to do anything. The Divine Mother is the Kundalini sleeping in us; without worshipping Her we can never know ourselves. All-merciful, all-powerful, omnipresent—these are attributes of the Divine Mother. She is the sum total of the energy in the universe. Every manifestation of power in the universe is Mother. She is life, She is intelligence, She is love. She is in the universe, yet separate from it.

She is a Person and can be seen and known—as Sri Ramakrishna saw and knew Her. Established in the idea of Mother, we can do anything. She quickly answers prayer. She can show Herself to us in any form at any moment. The Divine Mother can have form, rupa, and name, nama, or name without form; and as we worship Her in these various aspects, we can rise to Pure Being, having neither form nor name. . . . A bit of Mother, a drop, was Krishna; another was Buddha; another was Christ. The worship of even one spark of Mother in our earthly mother leads to greatness. Worship Her if you want love and wisdom."

The Evolution of Mother Worship in India :

Worshipping the mother as God is a most natural thing to do. Belief in a Mother Goddess can be found in almost all races and religions, and especially in ancient history the Mother Goddess played an important role. Considering that the first being a child relates to its nurturing mother, and considering that primitive people who had no scientific knowledge must have watched the miracle of birth with wonder and awe, it comes as no surprise that our remote ancestors greatly revered the mother. When ancient people began to conceive of a higher supernatural being that would nourish and protect them from evil, they naturally conceived it in the image of a mother. As we evolved, we began to understand that there cannot be any creation unless there is the union of two—the male and the female. Extending human analogy to the creation of the universe as a whole, we came to believe in a Primordial Father and a Primordial Mother which formed the first pair. All the pairs in the universe are said to be replicas of this original pair. In India from the age of the Indus Civilization of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa down to the present time, the Father God is represented by the linga (the male symbol) and the Mother Goddess by the yoni (the female symbol). This representation of Shiva-Shakti by the linga-yoni is a popular religious practice in India, and in most of the ancient and modern temples of Shiva, the twins are worshipped in their symbolic representations. In the Tantra literature (both Hindu and Buddhist) the Lord (Bhagavan, the male deity) is symbolically represented by a white dot (shweta-bindu), thus suggesting the likeness with semen, while the Creatrix (Bhagavati, the female deity) is represented by a red dot (shona-bindu), to suggest the analogy with the menstrual blood contained in the ovum. India has many places famous for Mother worship, but Hindus consider especially sacred those where pieces of the Devi's body fell in her manifestation as Sati. According to legend, the Divine Mother in the form of Sati married Shiva against the will of her father Daksha. Since he thought of Shiva as a marijuana-smoking, good-for-nothing beggar, Daksha not only refused to accept him into his family, but also denounced Sati and forbade her to return to his kingdom. For many years, Shiva and Sati lived happily on Mount Kailas, high up in the Himalayas. Until, one day, the sage Narada arrived with the news that Daksha was planning a big festival and sacrifice which all Gods and their families were asked to attend. Neither Shiva nor Sati had been invited. Upon Sati's insistence to attend the sacrifice, Shiva gave in and asked his carrier, the old bull Nandi, to take Sati to her father's court. Upon arrival, Sati was glad to see her father after such a long absence. She was about to embrace him, but he pushed her away. "Why did you come here? A beggar's wife!" shouted Daksha. He then proceeded to curse Shiva. Sati blushed deeply. "Words such as these, the faithful wife must never hear," said Sati. "My ears have listened to you and are now defiled. You gave me life. Now take it back. I shall not keep it after such dishonor." All color drained from her body and she fell dead at Daksha's feet. The attendant Nandi sadly returned to Kailas and told Shiva about his wife's death. Shiva's instant grief and wrath were beyond control. He shook his matted locks and out of them leapt a whole army of giants, snakes and ghosts. They turned Daksha's palace to ashes in no time. Meanwhile, Shiva picked up the dead body of Sati and, bearing it upon his shoulders, he began a terrible dance of destruction. His footsteps shook the world, causing earthquakes and tidal waves that threatened extinction to all. To save mankind, Vishnu hurled his discus again and again at Sati's corpse until her body fell to the earth, piece by piece. It took fifty-one throws to destroy Sati's body. As soon as Shiva felt her weight gone, he withdrew to Kailas and solitary meditation. He became so absorbed that the Divine Mother, reborn later as Uma, had difficulty in arousing him to forget Sati and marry

her. Wherever the fragments of Sati's body had fallen to the earth, they sprouted sacred Shakti pithas (places dedicated to Mother worship). Ancient temples stand on these spots and, daily, hundreds of pilgrims come to pay their homage to the great Mother. Sati's toes fell to the earth at Kalighat in South Calcutta, and she is worshipped there as Mother Kalika. The gem of Sati's earring fell on Manikamkaghat in Benares. Sati's right and left breasts fell at Jalandhara and Ramgiri—she is worshipped there as Tripuramali. Sati's sexual organ (yoni) fell at Kamakhya in Assam. The Kamakhya Temple is one of the most famous temples dedicated to Mother worship and is especially associated with disciplines practiced according to Tantra. It houses the Mother's image in the form of a yoni-shaped cleft in a rock that hides a natural spring, keeping the cleft moist. Tantrics say that the earth's menstruation takes place there in the Hindu month of Asar (around July/August). During Ambuvachi (July-August), after the first burst of the monsoon, a great ceremony takes place, for the water runs red with iron-oxide, and the ritual drink is symbolic of the rajas or ritu of the Devi, her menstrual blood. Widows do not eat cooked food for three days during this period nor do they cook for anybody else. In the Shakti pithas across India, traditions differ somewhat and the Goddess' name varies with each location. The Divine Mother likes to play different roles. When Sati had trouble getting permission from Shiva to attend the sacrifice arranged by her father Daksha, she showed herself to him in ten terrible forms, known as the dashamahavidya. Sati became, one after another—Kali, Tara, Sodasi, Bhuvaneshvari, Chinnamasta, Bhairavi, Dhumavati, Bagala, Matangi and Kamala. She so successfully terrorized Mahadeva (the great God) that he gave in to her wishes. Each of these ten Goddesses has a specific universal function. The black Kali is the embodiment of time—the primordial energy. Tara, of dark blue color, personifies the power of aspiration and spiritual ascent. Sodasi represents perfection and Bhuvaneshvari the infinite space. Both these Goddesses appear in the color of the rising sun. Sodasi is a 16-year-old girl of reddish complexion who sits astride the prostrate body of Shiva. Bhuvaneshvari nourishes the three worlds with her large breasts that ooze milk. Chinnamasta is the end of existence and wears the color of a million rising suns. She stands in the cremation ground on the copulating bodies of Kama, the God of lust, and his wife Rati. Chinnamasta is shown decapitated, holding her own head while drinking her own blood that streams from her neck. Bhairavi is the embodiment of destruction; her complexion is red, and her breasts are smeared with blood. The ashen-colored Dhumavati, clad in dirty white clothes, is the night of cosmic slumber. Her hair is disheveled; she has no teeth and her breasts are long and pendulous. Bagala, who is the embodiment of illusion, has a yellow complexion, and her head resembles that of a crane. Bagala holds a club in one hand while another pulls on a demon's tongue. Matangi dispels evil, and the color of her skin is black. She is intoxicated, reels about, and frightfully rolls her eyes. Kamala is beautiful, and her complexion is the color of lightning. Kamala, who reveals herself in good fortune, is seated on a lotus. She is surrounded by elephants who pour pitchers of water over her. Aside from the Goddesses depicted in the dashamahavidya, there are so many other names and forms of the same Divine Mother. In the Devi-kavacha attached to the Chandi, the Mother Goddess as Navadurga is described as Shailaputri (the daughter of the mountain), Brahmacharini, Chandraghanta, Kushmanda, Skandamata, Katyayani, Kalaratri, Mahagauri and Siddhidatri. Among the Mother Goddess' many shapes, the most popular are Parvati or Uma, the daughter of the Himalayas; Durga, the powerful protectress who is seated on a lion; Lakshmi, the Goddess of fortune, seated on a lotus; Saraswati, the Goddess of learning, seated on a swan. The Divine Mother manifesting as Chamunda is seated on a corpse, Varahi on a buffalo, Aindri on an elephant, and Vaishnavi on Garuda—the legendary large bird and carrier of Vishnu. The Divine Mother as Narasimhi, Shivaduti, Maheshwari, and the white Goddess Ishwari is depicted as seated on a bull. As Kaumari, she sits on a peacock, and as Brahmni on a swan. Hindu imagination is vast, and one wonders how these particular carriers of Hindu Goddesses were selected. Weight seems to be of no importance. For instance, the Goddess Kaumari sits on a peacock, and the chubby elephant God Ganesha has an even tinier

carrier. Ganesha's bulky body sits on a mouse. But what most puzzles people in the West is the Hindu's preference of worshipping Goddesses associated with gore. Even most liberal-minded Westerners look upon Kali as terrible and cruel. She is killing the demons who are also her children if she, indeed, is the Mother of the universe. "The Divine Mother Kali is ever blissful," says the Shakti worshipper. How can she be cruel? By punishing the demons, she brings balance to this world. Besides, Shaktas (Shakti worshippers) believe that stories about fierce Goddesses stimulate our imagination. They are supposed to horrify and shock, so that we may strip away our pretensions and dare to confront the Cosmic Truth. What is the truth? According to the Shakta, the truth is that we are all deluded, attached to finite things, and incapable of comprehending the absolute, infinite Truth. And the cause of this illusion is Maya, which is the Divine Mother. Whoever seeks freedom from this dilemma must worship the Mother. By her grace alone can one uncover and regain the Truth. All prosperity comes to the person who worships Shakti—energy. While dwelling within this world of maya (illusion, worldly existence), Hindus worship many Gods, but when they think of the Infinite, there is only one, all-encompassing God—called Brahman by the Vedas. Brahman is the transcendental all-pervading Reality of the Vedanta philosophy. What Brahman actually is cannot be described, but for the sake of reference, the Vedas refer to Brahman as Sat-Chid-Ananda—Absolute Existence, Absolute Knowledge, and Absolute Bliss. Brahman is the impersonal, sexless, tranquil Infinity. Brahman is, it is "isness" itself, motionless, beyond thought and comprehension. When the incomprehensible Brahman begins to agitate, it creates and therefore manifests with the help of its own cosmic ignorance. In this state, Brahman becomes Shiva and Shakti, the male and female aspect of being. Shiva and Shakti are two aspects of the same truth—the static and the dynamic, the abstract and the concrete, the male and the female. Creation is not possible without them. Although they differ in form and activity, they are inseparable like the ocean and its waves, the milk and its whiteness. If one thinks of one, one must automatically think of the other. Hindus also refer to Shiva and Shakti as Purusha (soul) and Prakriti (nature)—the principle behind the pair of opposites, the Yin and Yang. If we accept good, we equally must accept bad—hot/cold, love/hate, war/peace. Prakriti is Maya, Brahman's veiling power. This world, as we perceive it, is Maya—an illusion—and because most of us cannot behold Brahman, Maya is real to us. But, just like fog that lifts when the sun comes out, Maya disappears when the knowledge of Brahman dawns. One then transcends the pair of opposites, and only the One remains. Only Brahman is. Prakriti consists of three gunas (qualities) known as sattva (calmness), rajas (activity), and tamas (inertia). Due to the vicinity of Purusha, Prakriti begins to vibrate and the three gunas lose their balance. And then, when the gunas start to vibrate, creation begins. The first manifestation of Prakriti is Cosmic Intelligence, called the buddhi tattva or mahat tattva (Great Principle), and from it arises the individual consciousness, the ego. From the sattvic part of the individual consciousness comes the mind, the five organs of knowledge (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin) and the five organs of action (speech, hands, feet, genital organ, and the organ of evacuation). From the tamasic part come the five tanmatras (subtle elements: sound, sight, touch, taste, and smell) and the gross elements (space, air, fire, water and earth). The sattva guna is the source of happiness and everything becomes full of delight. A person filled with sattva guna is cheerful. Such a person possesses wisdom, balance, integrity, truthfulness, cleanliness, faith, forgiveness, fortitude, mercy, bashfulness, peace and contentment. The color of the sattva guna is white. The raja guna is wonderful but not pleasant. Its color is red. A person under the influence of rajas is tremendously active. Although this may be a good thing sometimes, rajas, in general, is the source of many troubles. It brings restlessness, anger, pride, enmity, sleeplessness, egoism, vanity and arrogance to the mind. The tama guna is black. From tamas arises laziness, ignorance, sleep, poverty, fear, miserliness, insincerity. A person steeped in tamas should try to counteract his or her negative tendencies with rajas. Through work and discipline, one can overcome laziness. Later on, when established in rajas, one can overcome the qualities of this guna through sattva.

RAJ THACKERAY; DEMANDS CLEAN-UP BEFORE LOCAL POLLS 96 LAKH 'FAKE' VOTERS IN MAHARASHTRA

MUMBAI, Oct 19: MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Sunday alleged that 96 lakh fake voters have been added to Maharashtra's electoral rolls and challenged the Election Commission, asking how it will hold the local body polls without cleaning up the voters' list.

Addressing booth-level agents of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), Thackeray said if polls are held by rigging the voters' list, then it is the biggest insult to electors. He urged his party workers to verify the voters' list to find out fake voters.

Various Opposition parties, including the Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress, NCP (SP) and MNS, recently met the State Election Commissioner and Chief Electoral Officer, while claiming that there are duplicate names in the electoral rolls across different addresses and assembly segments.

The Opposition has called for "rectification" in the electoral rolls and removal of "anomalies" ahead of the rural and urban body elections, which are to be completed



by January 31, 2026.

The Maharashtra State Election Commission on Saturday said that no political party can tamper with the electoral rolls and that corrections and updates on the voter lists

are being managed securely.

Raj Thackeray on Sunday alleged, "An attempt is being made to finish regional parties. I have learnt that 96 lakh fake voters have been enrolled in the voters' list in

Maharashtra for the upcoming polls. They had also done this during the state polls as well."

He claimed that 8 to 10 lakh fake voters have been added in Mumbai and 8 to 8.5 lakh in

Thane, Pune and Nashik. "They have done it in every village and city. Will polls take place like this in the country? If polls are held like this, then it is an insult to voters in Maharashtra and the country," he said.

Thackeray said the ruling parties are upset when the Opposition hits out at the Election Commission because that hurts them. "The Election Commission should show how it conducts the local body polls before cleaning up the electoral rolls. If polls have to be held peacefully, then clean the voters' list first," he warned.

Without naming the ruling BJP, Thackeray said it wants to face the polls by putting fake electors in the voters' list.

"It does not matter whether you cast a vote or not. The match has been fixed. What kind of democracy is this?" he asked.

Hitting out at those who scorned him for poor electoral performances, Thackeray said how will his party have MLAs and MPs if the

voting arithmetic itself is "compromised".

Thackeray's party drew a blank in the state polls last year.

He said everyone knows how the ruling party won the 2024 assembly polls in Maharashtra.

When the BJP was in the Opposition, it used to make the same charges against the poll body, Thackeray said.

He also claimed that the operations of Mumbai airport will soon be shifted to the Navi Mumbai airport.

In some days, even the cargo will be shifted to the Vadhavan Port (coming up in neighbouring Palghar district) and land around the Navi Mumbai Airport and port will be given to the Adani group, Thackeray further claimed.

"I will not tolerate development built over the tomb of Marathi people," he said.

Thackeray also claimed that it was India's first Home Minister Vallabhbhai Patel, who first opposed the merging of Mumbai with Maharashtra. (PTI)

Ancient Indians propagated culture, didn't conquer or convert: Bhagwat

MUMBAI, Oct 19: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday said Indians in ancient times travelled world over to propagate culture and science, but never conquered or indulged in religious conversion.

Speaking at the launch of the Arya Yug Vishay Kosh encyclopedia here, Bhagwat said many invaders have looted and enslaved India, and the last ones to invade looted the minds of Indians.

"Our ancestors travelled from Mexico to Siberia and taught science and culture to the world. They didn't convert anyone or conquer. We went with sadbhavna (goodwill) and a message of unity," he said.

"Many invaders came and looted us and made us slaves. The last ones to invade looted our minds. We forgot our strengths and what we can share with the world," he said.

"Spiritual knowledge is still flourishing and we, as descendants of Aryavrat, have science and weapons, strength and power, faith and knowledge," Bhagwat said. (PTI)

NMC approves 10,650 new MBBS seats, 41 new medical colleges for 2024-25



NEW DELHI, Oct 19: In a significant move aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pledge on Independence Day 2024 to create 75,000 new medical seats over five years, the National Medical Commission (NMC) has approved 10,650 new MBBS seats for the academic year 2024-25.

This increase is part of a broader strategy to enhance the availability of medical education in India.

The addition of 41 new medical colleges has also brought the total number of medical institutions in the country to 816. According to NMC Chief Dr Abhijit Sheth, out of the 170 applications received for expanding undergraduate (UG) seats, comprising 41 from government colleges and 129 from private institutions, a total of 10,650 MBBS seats have been approved.

This will raise the overall MBBS seat count to 1,37,600 for the 2024-25 academic year, including seats in Institutes of National Importance (INI).

For postgraduate (PG) courses, the NMC has received over 3,500 applications for new and renewed seats.

Dr Sheth stated that the commission expects an increase of around 5,000 PG seats, taking the total to 67,000 PG seats nationwide. The overall increase in both UG and PG seats this year will be approximately 15,000.

While the final approval process

and counselling have experienced some delays, officials have assured that these procedures will be completed within the prescribed timelines.

A blueprint detailing the schedule for accreditation, examinations, and seat matrix approvals for the upcoming academic year will be published soon. Additionally, the portal for 2025-26 applications is set to open in early November.

Notably, Dr Sheth highlighted that this year marks the first time in recent history that all appeals against the Medical Assessment and Rating Board (MARB) decisions were resolved without any court interventions.

In an effort to enhance the quality of medical education, Dr Sheth also announced that the NMC is exploring the integration of clinical research into the mainstream medical curriculum.

Plans are underway for a collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) to strengthen research infrastructure and promote clinical research in medical education.

The NMC's efforts are seen as a step towards improving medical education capacity in the country, in line with the government's vision of expanding healthcare infrastructure and addressing the growing demand for medical professionals. (PTI)

Foreign firms being allowed to acquire Indian banks imprudent, poses substantial risks: Cong

NEW DELHI, Oct 19: The Congress on Sunday said foreign firms gradually being allowed to acquire Indian banks was "imprudent" as it poses substantial risks and recalled that the Jan Sangh had criticised then prime minister Indira Gandhi for not nationalising foreign banks in July 1969.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh's assertion came after Emirates NBD Bank, the second largest in the UAE, expressed interest in acquiring a majority 60 per cent stake in RBL Bank for Rs 26,853 crore -- the biggest ever financial sector deal in value terms.

"Foreign firms are gradually being allowed to acquire Indian banks. These imprudent moves pose substantial risks," Ramesh said on X.

First, Laxmi Vilas Bank was acquired by Singapore's DBS Group and the Catholic Syrian Bank was acquired by Canada's



Fairfax, he said.

"Third, Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation took over Yes Bank. Now comes news that Dubai's Emirates NBD is acquiring RBL Bank," the Congress leader said.

"And, of course, India's first full privatisation of a public sector bank is expected to be completed in this financial year. This

is the sale of IDBI Bank," he added.

Just as a matter of historical interest, Ramesh said, the Jan Sangh had criticised Indira Gandhi for not nationalising foreign banks in July 1969.

He also shared a news report dated December 28, 1969, after the Jan Sangh's meeting in Patna the previous day in which it had

called for the takeover of all big foreign firms.

The acquisition plan of Emirates NBD Bank to hold a controlling stake in RBL Bank through an infusion of approximately USD 3 billion (about Rs 26,850 crore) marks the largest-ever foreign direct investment in India's financial services sector.

The proposal comes days after Japan's SMBC picked up a 24.9 per cent stake in Yes Bank for a total consideration of Rs 16,333 crore.

The board of RBL Bank while approving the quarterly financial number approved the proposal for raising up to Rs 26,853 crore from Emirates NBD Bank subject to various regulatory filing, the bank said in a regulatory filing.

About NBD Bank's deal, RBL Bank in a statement said that the landmark transaction represents a strong vote of confidence in the bank's business model, governance and growth potential. (PTI)

Union min Giriraj Singh courts controversy with remark against a minority community

PATNA, Oct 19: Union minister Giriraj Singh has once again courted controversy by making a scathing remark against a minority community, saying that he doesn't need the votes of 'namak haraams' (betrayers).

He made the remark while addressing a public rally in Bihar's Arwal district on Saturday.

The BJP MP from Begusarai said, "Once I asked a 'maulvi' (cleric) whether he had Ayushman Bharat health card and he replied in the affirmative. I asked whether such cards were distributed on the basis of Hindu-Muslim and he replied in the negative."

"When I asked him whether he had voted for me, he replied in the affirmative but when I asked him to swear on Khuda (God), he said no, he didn't. Muslims take the benefits of all central schemes but don't vote for us... Such people are called 'namak haraam'. I

told maulvi sahab that I don't want votes of 'namak haraams'," he added.

The BJP leader also said that he asked the Muslim cleric whether Prime Minister Narendra Modi had abused him, to which he replied in the negative.

"I also asked him whether I had insulted him, to which he said 'no'. Then I asked him what my fault was that he did not vote for me. Someone who doesn't acknowledge kindness is called 'namak haraam'," the Union minister said.

The NDA government has done a lot of infrastructural work for the overall development of Bihar, Singh said.

"Roads have been built in Bihar not only for NDA leaders and workers but for the masses... Bihar has changed now... The NDA government works for every section of society, but Muslims do not vote for the BJP," he

said.

Echoing a similar view, JD(U) spokesperson Neeraj Kumar told PTI, "It is true that the central government never discriminates in the distribution of welfare measures to the beneficiaries... Still, it does not get the votes of a particular community... This is certainly a matter of concern. As far as language and the terminology used in his (Giriraj Singh) speech is concerned, he is free to use words as per his choice."

Reacting to Singh's statement, RJD state unit spokesperson Mrityunjay Tiwary told PTI Videos, "It's a well-known fact that BJP leaders can't say anything except Hindu-Muslim. They can't talk about growing unemployment, price hike, better education and medical facilities... Whenever you talk to them about development, they start discussions on Hindu-Muslim issues and try their best to

divert the attention of people from core issues."

Independent Lok Sabha MP from Purnea, Rajesh Ranjan alias Pappu Yadav, slammed the Union minister for his comments.

Speaking to reporters in Patna, he said, "Giriraj babu must tell us the names of those who supported the British during India's freedom struggle."

"Those who supported the British should be called 'namak haraam'. All those individuals and organisations who supported the enemy (British) during the freedom movement must be identified," Yadav said.

The firebrand BJP leader had earlier also courted controversies on multiple occasions for his remarks.

The 243-member Bihar Assembly will go to polls in two phases on November 6 and 11, with results set to be announced on November 14. (PTI)

Modi to launch Bihar polls campaign on Oct 24 with two back-to-back rallies



PATNA, Oct 19: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch his campaign for the Bihar assembly polls next week, with as many as four election rallies scheduled by the end of this month, state BJP president Dilip Jaiswal said on Sunday.

Addressing a press conference here, Jaiswal said Modi will kick off his campaign with a rally in Samastipur on October 24, followed by another election meeting in Begusarai the very same day.

"The PM, who is among the world's tallest leaders, will visit Karpoori Gram, the birthplace of Bharat Ratna Karpoori Thakur, in Samastipur district, and pay his tributes to the former Bihar CM before addressing his first rally. His second rally will be in Begusarai in the afternoon," he said.

Jaiswal said the PM will be back in the poll-bound state on October 30, when he will be addressing rallies in Muzaffarpur and Chhapra, the town where Saran district is headquartered.

"The PM's rallies are also scheduled on November 2, 3, 6 and 7. Details of these will be shared in due course," he said.

The assembly elections will be held in two phases, with 121 seats going to polls on November 6 and voting scheduled in the remaining 122 constituencies on November 11. (PTI)

'Record' tourist footfall in Ayodhya this year; more to visit for Deepotsav

LUCKNOW/AYODHYA (UP), Oct 19: Ayodhya received over 23.82 crore devotees this year between January and June in a record footfall, officials said on Sunday, as the city readied itself to receive more visitors for Deepotsav.

An official statement by the Uttar Pradesh government said the Deepotsav celebration has increased Ayodhya's appeal both nationally and internationally. "As a result, the number of tourists visiting Ayodhya has been steadily rising. While domestic tourists make up a large portion, foreign tourists' interest in the sacred city of Lord Shri Ram has also grown," it said.

According to the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Department, tourist inflow has risen over the years, from 1.78 crore visitors in 2017 -- the first year of Deepotsav celebrations -- to about 1.95 crore in 2018, 2.05 crore in 2019. It saw a dip in 2020 to about 61 lakh visitors due to the pandemic, and an increase again to about 1.57 crore in 2021,

2.39 crore in 2022, 5.75 crore in 2023, and 16.44 crore in 2024. These numbers reflect both domestic and international tourists.

The number of foreign visitors to the holy city shows a similar uptick. This year, it added up to about 50,000 between January and June.

Backed by "robust infrastructure", four-lane and six-lane highways, a world-class airport, and a modern railway station, Ayodhya has emerged as a "symbol of both spiritual resurgence and economic growth" under the Yogi Adityanath government, the UP government said in the statement.

The growth trend shows Ayodhya's renewed global prominence following the construction of the Ram temple, officials said, adding that the rising number of devotees has also generated thousands of local employment opportunities.

Crediting the Deepotsav tradition, the statement said Ayodhya is now a "major global pilgrimage



and tourism hub".

Meanwhile, extending a warm welcome to the visitors and devotees in the city, the office of the UP chief minister said in a post on X in Hindi, Ayodhya is ready for the grand and divine Deepotsav-2025.

A statement said following a collaboration between Dr Ram

Manohar Lohia Avadh University and the Ayodhya district administration, preparations have been completed to make Deepotsav 2025 a "historic event".

Nearly 33,000 volunteers will play a key role in this event, lighting over 26 lakh lamps to set a Guinness world record, officials

said. The university's VC Colonel Bijendra Singh said in a statement, "This Deepotsav will be extraordinary and unforgettable. The message of equality and harmony will reach the entire world from Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Shri Ram."

He said that a team of over 2,000 university members has been deployed at 56 ghats along the Saryu river.

Sant Sharan Mishra, the nodal officer for Deepotsav, said a Guinness Book of World Records team is counting the number of diyas on a ghat-wise basis, and about 28 lakh diyas have already been arranged.

At Ghat no. 10, university volunteers created a huge symbol of "Swastika" with 80,000 diyas, conveying a message of auspiciousness, he said.

Officials said tight security arrangements have been made, and entry without ID cards will not be permitted on the ghats. (PTI)

VHP demands Delhi be renamed 'Indraprastha', writes to minister Kapil Mishra

NEW DELHI, Oct 19: The Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) on Sunday demanded that Delhi be renamed 'Indraprastha' to connect the national capital with its ancient history and culture.

In a letter to Delhi Culture Minister Kapil Mishra, the Delhi unit of the VHP has also demanded renaming Indira Gandhi International Airport as Indraprastha International Airport, Delhi Railway Station as Indraprastha Railway Station and Shahjahanabad Development Board as Indraprastha Development Board.

"The name of Delhi should be changed back to Indraprastha so that the name of the capital can be associated with its ancient history and culture," VHP Delhi prant secretary Suredra Kumar Gupta said in the letter.

"Names aren't mere changes; they mirror a nation's consciousness. When we say Delhi, we only see a period of 2,000 years. But when we say Indraprastha, we connect with a glorious history spanning 5,000 years," he said.

The VHP functionary demanded that Delhi's heritage walk should include forts, temples, and monuments of Hindu kings to ensure a "balanced presentation" of the city's overall history.

"Wherever there are memorials to Muslim invaders, Hindu heroes, sages, and sites from the Pandava period should also be introduced and memorials should be built near them," he said.

A "grand memorial" in the name of King Hemchandra Vikramaditya and a King Hemchandra Vikramaditya Military School should be established in Delhi, Gupta said.

The history of Hemchandra Vikramaditya and Indraprastha during the Pandava period should be included in Delhi's education curriculum, he added.

In the letter, Gupta said that these demands have been made based on the suggestions given by scholars, historians and public representatives at an event, 'Indraprastha Punarjagan Sankalp Sabha', held recently here. (PTI)

Guv Parnaik graces event celebrating fitness, valour and civil-military unity in Arunachal Ziro honour run concludes with patriotic fervour and community spirit

ZIRO, Oct 19: The maiden edition of the 'Ziro Honour Run' concluded with great enthusiasm and patriotic spirit in Ziro, Lower Subansiri district, as Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd.), attended the finale as Chief Guest and felicitated the winners.

Held on Sunday the event saw more than 800 participants from across India, including civilians, armed forces personnel, and local youth, competing in 21 km, 10 km and 5 km races. Winners were awarded medals and cheques by the Governor in a grand ceremony at the scenic venue.

In the 21 km race, Teshwar Kurmi won the Men's (Under 30) category, while Samir Kolye secured first place in the Men's (50+). Among women under 30, Makakmayum emerged as the winner and Rifleman Dalvir of 16 Punjab topped among armed forces. In the 10 km category, Tailyan Hari won in the Men's (30-35) group, Renu Loyi in the Women's (30-35), and Agniveer Tehender of 13 Raj Rif among uni-



formed participants. In the 5 km Children's Run, Master Tapuk Weshi claimed the winner's medal.

The Governor praised all participants and highlighted the significance of the run in promoting unity, fitness and patriotic values. He paid tribute to the heroes of the 1962 Indo-China War, particularly Rifleman Neelam Tebi, whose memory is honoured at a memorial in Keyi Panyor District.

Applauding the efforts of the Indian Army, 56 Infantry Division, local administration, police and the people of Ziro, the Governor said the event reflected Arunachal's deep-rooted spirit of national pride and community strength. He encouraged the youth to aim for global sporting platforms such as the 2030 Commonwealth Games and 2036 Olympics.

He also emphasised the impor-

tance of the Fit India Mission and urged the youth to lead a life of discipline and health, staying away from social evils like alcoholism and drug abuse. "Sports shape resilience and courage - essential traits for building a strong nation," he added.

The Governor also interacted with participants of the Shaurya Motorcycle Rally, lauding their role in fostering civil-military harmony. Leaders from the armed forces, including GOC 56 Infantry Division Major General Vivek Bakshi and Commander 22 Infantry Brigade Brigadier Gaurav Shrivastava, participated in the run alongside their spouses and other forces like Assam Rifles and ITBP.

Official sponsors State Bank of India and Pramerica supported the event, underscoring their dedication to national pride and community engagement.

The Ziro Honour Run successfully combined patriotism, fitness, tourism and social awareness and is expected to become a recurring annual event in Arunachal Pradesh's calendar of public celebrations. (PTI)

Assam Rifles rescues two kidnapped labourers in Tirap

Joint operation with Longding police foils NSCN-K abduction attempt in Arunachal

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Oct 19: In a swift and coordinated operation, the Khonsa Battalion of Assam Rifles, in collaboration with Longding police, successfully rescued two labourers kidnapped by insurgents of the NSCN-K from Tirap district in Arunachal Pradesh.

According to official sources, the labourers, employed by M/S Agarwal for road construction in the general area of Village Lahu under Dadam Circle, were abducted by a group of 7-8 armed insurgents on October 18, 2025. Acting on credible intelligence, Assam Rifles launched a rescue mission and set up ambushes at multiple locations, including the general areas of Ngisa K Nokna and Nginnu K Nokna tracks.

Although no movement was detected during the night, a deliberate search was initiated at first light. At around 5:50 AM on Sunday, one of the rescue columns came under fire from the insurgents. The team responded with controlled use of small arms and mortar fire, prioritizing the safety



of the kidnapped labourers. In the ensuing firefight and subsequent area clearance, both abducted workers were safely rescued. The operation is ongoing and highlights the unwavering commitment of the Assam Rifles to maintaining peace and security in the insurgency-affected region.

The NSCN-K has been involved in frequent kidnappings and extortion in eastern Arunachal Pradesh, primarily targeting workers and contractors

engaged in infrastructure projects. Local residents expressed frustration over the continuing threats, stating, "Because of insurgency, development has suffered. The rebels are targeting businessmen and construction workers. We are tired of this and want a permanent solution."

The incident once again underscores the challenges faced in the region and the need for continued security efforts to ensure safety and developmental progress.

Tripura CM seeks hike in ceiling for externally aided projects to ₹ 10,000 cr

AGARTALA, Oct 19: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Sunday said he has requested Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to raise the ceiling for externally aided projects (EAPs) for the state to at least ₹ 10,000 crore to speed up development activities.

Speaking at a party programme at Rabindra Bhavan here, Saha claimed that while there is no EAP ceiling for mainland states, it is ₹ 3,000 crore for northeastern states.

"During my recent visit to Delhi, I met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and urged her to either withdraw the ceiling or enhance it to at least ₹ 10,000 crore to speed up development activities in Tripura," the chief minister said.

He said the Union minister has asked him to send the state's finance secretary to Delhi for a meeting with the Centre's counterpart to discuss the issue.

Saha said the government has been working for infrastructure building and welfare of people.

"We have initiated the process to boost infrastructure for overall growth of the state. The state's annual budget has been increased from ₹ 27,000 crore in 2024-25 FY to ₹ 32,000 crore during 2025-26 FY. The government has earmarked ₹ 7,000 crore for capital expenditure", he said.

The CM said the government has been releasing DA to employees in order to reduce the gap with the central government employees.

"In my tenure, I have released 29 per cent in 29 months. Still there is a gap of 22 per cent DA between the state and central government employees", he said.

Saha added steps have been taken to fill up the vacant posts in various government departments since 2018.

"Over 20,000 regular posts have been filled up in the government departments during the past seven years. Besides, 6,000 people have been employed in the government sector on a contractual basis. We are trying to fill up all the vacant posts at the earliest", he said. (PTI)

Guv extends Deepawali greetings to people of Arunachal Pradesh

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Oct 19: The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVSM, UYSM, YSM (Retd.), has extended his warm greetings and best wishes to the people of the state on the auspicious occasion of Diwali.

In his message, the Governor expressed hope that the spirit of Diwali will strengthen the bonds of love, harmony, and brotherhood among all sections of society. He described Diwali as the festival of lights that carries the timeless message of hope, the victory of light over darkness, good over evil and wisdom over ignorance.

The Governor urged everyone to celebrate the festival with reflection, renewal, and gratitude by lighting not only lamps in their homes but also lamps of compassion, kindness and righteousness in their hearts.

He also appealed to the people to observe a safe and eco-friendly Diwali by refraining from the use of loud and polluting firecrackers that harm both people and the environment. Safeguarding air quality, health and surroundings is the true way to honour the spirit of this festival, he said.

Concluding his message, the Governor wished that the divine light of Diwali illuminate lives with joy, wisdom and serenity, guiding everyone towards a brighter and more prosperous future.

AOA elects new team, welcomes annual Arunachal State Games

HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Oct 19: The Arunachal Olympic Association (AOA), during its Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on Sunday, expressed unanimous appreciation to Chief Minister Pema Khandu for his announcement to conduct the Arunachal State Games every year instead of every two years as practiced earlier.

The AGM resolved to organise future editions of the State Games in close collaboration with the Sports Authority of Arunachal (SAA) and the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs. The meeting also adopted the Administrative Report for the 2021-2025 tenure presented by Secretary General Bamang Tago and approved audited accounts for the financial years 2021-22 through 2024-25. The appointment of the statutory auditor for the 2025-2029 terms and the ratification of the Arunachal Olympic Athletes Commission Rules, 2025 were also unanimously approved.

Elections for office bearers of the AOA for the 2025-2029 terms were conducted

smoothly by retired Justice Dr Indira Shah as Returning Officer, assisted by Advocate Puto Bui.

In the result, Er Taba Tedir was elected unopposed as president, while Bamang Tago narrowly retained his position as Secretary General by one vote over Kipa Ajay. Tai Hepik was elected Treasurer, defeating Tenzing Sonam by five votes.

Other elected members include Abraham K Techi (senior vice president), Sikka Gapak (vice president), and Tadar Niglar and Donyi Ori (Joint Secretaries), along with five Executive Council Members. One Vice President post remains vacant due to nomination errors, with elections for the position to be held within 30 days as per the Returning Officer's notification. The proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks to all participants and officials. The meeting was attended by observers John F Kharshing from the Meghalaya Olympic Association, Gumnya Karbak, Director of SAA and Nada Apa, Sports Officer from the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs.

The development comes after a meeting of the NPF legislature party held at the CM's residential office on Saturday after the NDDP's resolution for merger with NPF. Rio, in a social media post, said, "I am humbled to be elected leader of the NPF legislature party. Along with NPFLP, we met Hon'ble Speaker Shri Sharingam Longkumer & submitted our documents. Grateful to my colleagues & party organisations for reposing faith in my leadership & to the Almighty for His guidance & blessings."

Sources said NPF president Apong Pongener and secretary general Achumbemo Kikon also

Nagaland CM Neiphiu Rio elected leader of NPF legislature party

KOHIMA, Oct 19: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio has been elected as the leader of the NPF legislature party (NPFLP).

The decision was taken after Rio's Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP) on Saturday adopted a resolution for merger with the Naga People's Front (NPF).

The development comes after a meeting of the NPF legislature party held at the CM's residential office on Saturday after the NDDP's resolution for merger with NPF. Rio, in a social media post, said, "I am humbled to be elected leader of the NPF legislature party. Along with NPFLP, we met Hon'ble Speaker Shri Sharingam Longkumer & submitted our documents. Grateful to my colleagues & party organisations for reposing faith in my leadership & to the Almighty for His guidance & blessings."

Sources said NPF president Apong Pongener and secretary general Achumbemo Kikon also

officially submitted the merger acceptance documents to Speaker Longkumer. With the merger, the NPF, which had only two members in the House of 60, has now grown to 34.

NPF will mark its 63rd foundation day with a general convention-cum-official welcome ceremony in Kohima on October 21. Rio had resigned as the then home minister in S C Jamir's Congress government in 2002, and floated Nagaland People's Council (NPC), which was later renamed as Nagaland People's Front (NPF) to broaden its base beyond Nagaland, particularly into Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

Under Rio's leadership, NPF won three consecutive assembly elections -- 2003, 2008, and 2013 -- before he vacated his seat in 2014 to serve as a Lok Sabha MP. However, following internal differences, Rio left the NPF in 2017 and nurtured the formation of the NDPP.

In alliance with the BJP under a 40-20 seat-sharing formula, the NDPP contested the 2018 elections and formed the People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) government. While the NPF, led by then Chief Minister T R Zeliang, emerged as the single-largest party with 26 seats, it failed to garner the support needed to form the government.

The NDPP-BJP alliance (NDPP 25 and BJP 12) returned to power in 2023, backed by other parties including NCP (7), NPP (5), LJP (Ram Vilas) and RPI (Athawale) (2 each), JD(U) (1), and Independents (4).

The NPF, reduced to two MLAs, extended unconditional support to the Rio-led government, rendering the 14th Nagaland Assembly oppositionless.

However, following the proposal of the NPF to Chief Minister Rio to return to the regional party and take over its leadership, series of meetings were held by the NDPP. (PTI)

NES president urges united effort for Tali's sustainable development

Prof Tana Showren calls for biodiversity protection, eco-tourism, and end to money culture in politics

HT Correspondent

TALI, Oct 19: Nyishi Elite Society (NES) president Prof Tana Showren on Saturday urged all sections of society and stakeholders in Arunachal Pradesh to work collectively for the protection of biodiversity, promotion of eco-tourism and sustainable development in the region, particularly in Tali Sub-Division of Kra Daadi district.

Addressing a large gathering at the NES "Tali Kaqwr (Look Back)" programme at Loa in Tali Township, Prof Showren said that the NES is on a mission mode through the "Look Back Tali" initiative to assess the progress made since the society's visit in 2016. "Tali remain one of the most underdeveloped towns in the state, despite its rich history and valiant people who even con-

fronted the British in 1912," he said.

Highlighting the historical importance of the area, Prof Showren noted that Tali Circle office was set up in 1957 and a primary school came up in 1961, yet the region continues to lag behind in basic development indicators. He stressed that NES has consistently pursued the matter of development in Tali, motivating people and encouraging cooperation with elected leaders and government officers.

"Do not compromise when it comes to development. No matter your party, clan, or community, development must be the top priority," he said. Prof Showren also called on people to reject harmful social practices like polygamy and money culture in elections, and instead focus on improving educa-



tion, healthcare and connectivity. He acknowledged the improved road connectivity in Tali and Pip-Sorang, stating that infrastructure

development paves the way for overall progress. "We've seen significant infrastructure growth since 2016. The cooperation and wel-

coming nature of the people give us hope that development will continue at a steady pace," he said.

NES General Secretary Heri Maring, Tali MLA Jikke Tako, former MLA Markio Tado, public leader Gichik Taji Khiohi, NES Kra Daadi Chairman Techi Tabang and NES leader ST Zara also addressed the event.

Earlier, the NES delegation received a warm welcome from the public at Yangte, Lingdum and Tali. A night interaction programme was held, attended by a wide range of participants including HoDs, PRI leaders, former elected representatives and student leaders. A 50-member NES delegation took part in the Tali Look Back programme, which aimed to engage with locals and assess development at the grassroots level.

BJP show-causes Tripura MLA for comments against party leaders

AGARTALA, Oct 19: The ruling BJP in Tripura on Sunday issued a show-cause notice to its MLA Tafazzal Hussain following his remarks against MP Biplab Kumar Deb and former Union minister Pratima Bhoumik.

Speaking during a match of the MLA Cup at Boxanagar in Sepahijala district on Saturday, Hussain accused Bhoumik and Deb of not providing funds for the construction of the football ground's gallery.

"I had approached Pratima Bhoumik and Biplab Kumar Deb to fund the construction of the gallery, but they did not. When I requested Rajib Bhattacharjee for it, he readily agreed and sanctioned ₹ 50 lakh as part of his MPLAD fund," he had said.

Bhattacharjee, the state BJP president, was present on the dais when Hussain was speaking.

The notice issued by state BJP general secretary Amit Rakshit said, "Such public criticism of senior party leaders amounts to gross indiscipline and a deliberate violation of party code of conduct. Your conduct has not only tarnished the image of the party but has also caused embarrassment to the party leadership."

"Therefore, as directed by the president BJP, Tripura Pradesh, you are hereby directed to show cause within five days of the receipt of this notice as to why disciplinary action shall not be taken by you for such act of indiscipline and deliberate violation of party norms," it added. The notice said that failure to submit a satisfactory reply within the stipulated time will entail appropriate disciplinary action. (PTI)

AUSTRALIA FOIL ROKO SHOW TO ETCH SEVEN-WICKET WIN OVER INDIA IN 1ST ODI

PERTH, Oct 19: The grand comeback party of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma endured a quick 22-ball ending, and their lowkey outing reflected in India's seven-wicket defeat against Australia in the rain-affected first ODI here on Sunday.

Asked to bat first, India laboured to a sub-par 136 for 9, after the match was revised to 26 overs for a side courtesy several rain interruptions, leaving the hosts to chase a DLS target of 131, which they duly reached in 21.1 overs.

Travis Head fell to Arshdeep Singh early, slashing the left-arm pacer to Harshit Rana at deep third man, and Matthew Short too walked back without any significant contribution.

But skipper and local man Mitchell Marsh (46 not out, 52 balls) used his brute power to keep Australia ahead of the curve with a crucial 55-run partnership with Josh Philippe (37, 29b).

The Indian pacers — Arshdeep, Mohammad Siraj and Harshit Rana — could not replicate the control of their Australian counterparts, offering plenty of freebies to the hosts' batters.

Marsh fed on them with glee, crunching a six each of all three. An inside-out smash off Siraj over covers was the highlight.

Philippe gave his captain ample support with a busy knock, and his dismissal was a minor irritant in Australia's march, which culminated in them taking 1-0 lead in the three-match series.

Earlier, India were robbed of the momentum by the constant weather interventions and relentless Australian new ball bowlers,



except when KL Rahul (38, 30 balls) was in the middle.

But before the skies opened up on several occasions, Australian bowlers used the extra bounce on the Optus Stadium pitch to get rid of two old foes. Rohit (8), who was also playing his 500th match for India, walked in alongside new captain Shubman Gill to loud cheers from the Perth crowd, but his stay was snapped after just 14 balls.

Rohit played a sumptuous straight drive off Mitchell Starc, which offered a heady time ride back to the glory days.

But that was it for the day for the Mumbai man, as Josh Hazlewood's ability to find steep bounce from the quarter length ended his tenure.

The ever-rising ball kissed the sticket of Rohit's bat and travelled to debutant Matthew Renshaw at second slip.

Kohli walked in amid even louder cheer, but the familiar ODI greatness was nowhere to be seen. In a pre-match chat, Kohli had detailed how Australia had often brought the best out of him as a batter.

But on this instance, Starc elicited the worst out of Kohli — first through a habitual prod outside the off-stump. It eventually consumed Kohli. A drive on the up off the left-arm pacer took the

edge of his bat and Cooper Connolly at backward point snaffled a wonderful catch to curtail Kohli's agonising eight-ball innings.

It was Kohli's first duck in Australia. Now, the veterans need something substantial in the subsequent ODIs at Adelaide and Sydney to convince the powers that be of their fire for a longer journey.

Unlike his senior colleagues, skipper Gill looked assured but a rather casual attempt to flick Nathan Ellis resulted in a down the leg side catch to wicketkeeper Philippe.

Vice-captain Shreyas Iyer perished in the same way. Hazlewood strangled him for space with a bouncer on ribcage that Iyer gloved to Philippe as India slid to 45 for four in the 14th over.

Finally, India found their wheels moving through a 39-run fifth-wicket alliance between Axar Patel (31) and Rahul before the former fell to spinner Matthew Kuhnemann. Rahul was quite impressive in his knock, dealing with the bounce effectively while getting on top of the ball nicely.

The straight drive and pull off Ellis off successive balls for fours were from the top draw. Rahul slipped into overdrive once spinners were introduced, and slammed Matthew Short for two sixes in a row.

Rahul and Washington Sundar added 30 runs for the sixth wicket. But the limited number of overs and late flurry of wickets affected India's acceleration in the backend. (PTI)

Day 2 protests by La Liga players against game in Miami still censored on TV

BARCELONA, Oct 19: For a second straight day, protests by La Liga players against staging a regular season game in Miami in December were censored or not fully broadcast for television audiences.

The television feed of Barcelona's home game against Girona switched right before kickoff to an exterior view of the stadium which only showed part of the field from distance. That impeded home audiences from seeing the teams' players standing still for the first 15 seconds in opposition to La Liga's plan to hold the Barcelona-Villarreal game across the Atlantic on Dec. 20.

The broadcasts of the initial moments after kickoff of the day's other three games — Sevilla-Malorca, Villarreal-Real Betis and Atletico Madrid-Osasuna — focused closely from directly above on the center circle, instead of taking a wide angle of the field.

Barcelona's and Villarreal's players joined the protests even though they were exempted by the Spanish soccer player's association which organized it.

"We were not part of the (protest) but we felt that we needed to follow along out of respect for our fellow professionals," Barcelona midfielder Pedri González said after his team's 2-1 win. The players' union announced the protest plans on Friday, saying all the captains of the top flight teams supported it for games in the ninth round from Friday through Monday. The play-by-play commentator on Saturday did briefly mentioned the protest, in contrast to Friday when it was completely

censored from the broadcast of Oviedo-Espanyol. For that first protest, TV audiences saw only the exterior of the stadium for the first 25 seconds after kickoff.

The union said the symbolic action was to protest the "lack of transparency, dialogue and coherence of La Liga regarding the possibility of playing a game in the United States."

Spain's soccer supporters association, FASFE, applauded the players' protest against what it called "La Liga's obsession with going forward with its demented plan to rob our communities of soccer."

The league argues the game will be good for promoting Spanish soccer globally.

Coaches also against Miami match Barcelona coach Hansi Flick and veteran midfielder Frenkie de Jong have criticized the Miami game, saying it adds unnecessary extra travel to their already packed schedules. Real Madrid coach Xabi Alonso called the Miami game "an adulteration of the competition" when asked about it in a news conference on Saturday.

The former midfielder also backed the protests by players.

"The protests are positive because they represent what many clubs feel," Alonso said. "We are against unilateral decisions. If there is unanimity and all the participants believe that it is possible, then fine, go ahead, but that is not the case." La Liga: Miami game will boost revenues Barcelona president Joan Laporta backs the move by saying it represents an opportunity to further push into the American sports market. (AP)

Tanvi's run ends with a silver at World Junior Championship

GUWAHATI, Oct 19: Indian shuttler Tanvi Sharma's bid to script history by winning a gold medal at the BWF World Junior Championships ended in heartbreak as she lost in straight games to Thailand's Anyapat Pichitpreechak in the women's singles final here on Sunday. The 16-year-old, who followed in the footsteps of former world No. 1 Saina Nehwal and Aparna Popat to become only the third Indian female shuttler to reach the final of the tournament, lost 7-15 12-15 to the second-seeded Thai.

Tanvi thus signed off with a silver medal — India's first at the World Junior Championships in 17 years.

Saina (gold in 2008 and silver in 2006) and Aparna (silver in 1996) are the only other Indian women to have won medals at the event.

It was a tight affair right from



the start as both players moved neck and neck from 2-2 to 4-4, riding on each other's unforced errors. The Thai's deceptive returns caught Tanvi at the front court as Pichitpreechak opened up a 10-5 lead, with the Indian finding the net twice.

Two smashes from the Thai and a wide shot from Tanvi put Pichitpreechak two points away from taking the opening game, which she eventually sealed when another backhand from the Indian buried into the net. After the change of ends, Tanvi surged to a 6-1 lead with

some precise deep returns. But errors crept in again. Two net mistakes allowed the Thai to narrow the gap to 5-7.

Pichitpreechak went wide next, giving Tanvi a slender 8-5 lead at the interval. However, the Thai made Tanvi lunge forward repeatedly, forcing more errors to move to 7-8 before levelling the score when Tanvi sprayed one long.

Another smash into the net gave Thailand player 9-8 advantage. A down-the-line smash followed by another beautifully constructed point saw the Thai inch ahead 11-8.

Now dictating the rallies with confidence, Pichitpreechak extended her lead to 12-8 with a lucky net cord. Tanvi managed to halt the run with a neat net dribble, but the Thai continued to produce sharp cross-court winners that left the Indian searching for answers. (PTI)

BERLIN, Oct 19: Harry Kane scored again as Bayern Munich dealt Borussia Dortmund its first Bundesliga loss of the season by winning der Klassiker 2-1.

Bayern, the defending champion, dominated and delivered a statement to its closest rival after six rounds. "It was first versus second. So yeah, there's a lot on this game, especially for momentum," Kane said. "We talk a lot about trying to keep our momentum and keep pushing and keep trying to win every game that's possible, and we're doing that so far." The England forward launched the first good chance, while defending. He eluded two Dortmund forwards, and sent the ball forward. Michael Olise drew a save from Gregor Kobel, who then secured Luis Diaz's effort from the rebound.

Kane scored in the 22nd minute with a header to Joshua Kimmich's corner. It was his 22nd

goal for club and country this season and stretched his scoring streak in the Bundesliga to five games that have yielded nine goals. Olise grazed the left post with another shot. The only complaint Bayern could have at the break was that it was leading only 1-0. "Probably just weren't clinical enough in the final third," Kane said.

Dortmund improved significantly after the interval when Felix Nmecha went close, Serhou Guirassy fired over, and Karim Adeyemi failed to capitalize on a rare Kimmich mistake.

It mattered little, as Olise sealed the win by sliding in to cut out substitute Jobe Bellingham's attempted goal-line clearance in the 79th. That move started with a brilliant cross-field ball from Kane for Diaz, whose cross Bellingham needed to clear.

Substitute Julian Brandt scored seconds after his introduction but



Kane defended as Bayern held on for its 11th consecutive win across all competitions.

"We did well in the second half to kind of hang in in certain moments. We got the second goal. Disappointing to concede so quickly after, but ultimately it was about digging deep," Kane said. Bayern, the only undefeated team left, opened a five-point lead over Leipzig, while Dortmund dropped to fourth behind Stuttgart.

Leverkusen wins 7-goal spectacle Alex Grimaldo scored twice and was booked for complaining as Bayer Leverkusen almost squandered a two-goal lead before beating Mainz 4-3.

Grimaldo converted a penalty and Christian Kofane got another goal before Lee Jae-sung pulled one back for Mainz. Grimaldo scored again before the break but was booked in the 69th when he clearly didn't agree with referee Florian Exner's decision to award Mainz a penalty when Philipp Mwene fell under minimal contact from Arthur.

The decision survived a VAR review despite little evidence of a foul, and Nadiem Amiri scored against his former side from the spot. Martin Terrier thought he sealed Leverkusen's win late, then Amiri sent Armando Sieb through to score in the 90th to ensure a nervy finish for the visitors. (AP)

Kamarbari Football XI win final match of Gobha Deurja Knockout Football Tournament

JAGIROAD, Oct 19: The final match of the Gobha Deurja Knockout Football Tournament, organized by the Sadao Nakhola Sports Association of Jagiroad, was played at the Palachung Nakhola Sports Association Ground in Jagiroad on Saturday. The final was contested between Kamarbari Football XI of Nellie and Palachung Football XI of Jagiroad. Kamarbari Football XI (Nellie) won the match by 3-0.

The winners received a cash prize of ₹50,000 along with a trophy, while the runners-up received ₹30,000 and a trophy.

The Best Player award went to Bishnu Bardoloi, the Best Goalkeeper award to Akash Deuri, the Best Scorer award to Manish, and the Best Consistency award to Jonabil Football XI.

The final match was inaugurated by Apurba Deka, Personal Secretary to Cabinet Minister Piyush Hazarika. The event was attended by Jagiroad Gaon Panchayat President Sonjyoti Nath, Sitajala Dairy Producers' Cooperative Society Secretary Biman Sharma, social workers Babul Karmakar, Manindra Deka, and Kumud Chandra Deka, along with retired teachers Monoram Deka and Nabin Deuri as distinguished guests.

Several prominent citizens were also present on the occasion.

Desperate Sri Lanka in search of maiden win in Women's World Cup clash against Bangladesh

NAVI MUMBAI, Oct 19: With their Women's World Cup campaign in disarray, Sri Lanka will hope for some respite as they seek maiden win in the tournament when they take on another struggling outfit in Bangladesh, here on Monday. Like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka have two points in their account but both of those were earned in washed out matches. Three defeats in five matches have kept the World Cup co-hosts on the penultimate spot in the eight-team competition.

Bangladesh have fared a tad better given their win against the bottom-placed Pakistan had helped them open their account in the points table, but despite running the top formidable teams such as South Africa and England close, they could not get over the line.

Both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are in a desperate situation of keeping their hopes alive of making the semifinals. It will also depend on other results to go their way if they win each of their remaining two matches.

None of the eight teams are out of the race for the semifinals yet, in which two spots have been booked by Australia and South Africa and there are three teams placed above — India, England and New Zealand — who have better chances of making the final. Sri Lanka would be particu-



larly pleased moving out of the rain-hit Colombo where two of their matches were washed out, with incessant rains taking away any possibility of Chamari Athapaththu's side using the home advantage as six of their seven matches were scheduled at the R Premadasa Stadium. While there is no imminent rain threat here, the weather will remain hot and humid for the day-night match which will be DY Patil Stadium's first of the four fixtures confirmed for this tournament including one semifinal.

However, the island nation's team will have to return to Colombo for their final fixture against Pakistan hoping weather allows a full game, but then, even that would not be enough as Sri

Lanka are now dependent on other results. Sri Lanka will not only have to win their last two matches but also hope India lose each of their remaining three matches and wish for England's win over New Zealand.

Similarly, Bangladesh would have to win their remaining two matches against Sri Lanka and India and hope England do them a favour by winning their remaining two matches against New Zealand and India. Bangladesh would feel they are better-placed than Sri Lanka in terms of how they have performed across departments but still fielding is one area in which the Nigar Sultana-led side will have to make significant improvements.

Bangladesh will also look to em-

ulate their batting show from the contest against South Africa in which they put 232 for six in the first half producing an all-round show, but eventually failed to defend the target.

They will also draw a lot of heart from having England on the mat in a low-scoring game, having reduced the opponent to 78/5 while chasing 179. Coming off a 10-wicket hammering against South Africa in a rain-truncated game, Sri Lanka will have to pick themselves up and look to emulate their batting show which they had produced against New Zealand, piling up 258 for six.

Teams (from): Bangladesh: Nigar Sultana (c&wk), Fargana Hoque, Sobhana Mostary, Rubya Haider, Sharmin Akhter, Rabeya Khan, Ritu Momi, Shorna Akter, Sumaiya Akter, Fahima Khatun, Fariha Trisna, Marufa Akter, Nahida Akter, Nishita Akter Nishi, Sanjida Akter Meghla.

Sri Lanka: Chamari Athapaththu (c), Anushka Sanjeevani (vc&wk), Imesha Dulani, Vishmi Gunaratne, Hasini Perera, Harshitha Samarawickrama, Nilakshika Silva, Kavisha Dilhari, Piumi Wathsala, Dewmi Vihanga, Achini Kulariya, Sugandika Kumari, Malki Madara, Udeshika Prabodhani, Inoka Ranaweera. Match starts at 3:00pm IST. (PTI)

Another spin challenge for South Africa as Maharaj is set to return for final test against Pakistan

RAWALPINDI (PAKISTAN), Oct 19: World test champion South Africa will be heavily relying on its fit-again spinner Keshav Maharaj to level the two-test series against Pakistan as yet another dry pitch is prepared for the second test, starting on Monday.

Pakistan notched an emphatic 93-run victory inside four days on a turning wicket in Lahore in the opening test of the new World Test Championship cycle for both teams with left-arm spinner Noman Ali bagging a match-haul of 11 wickets.

Maharaj missed out on the first test because he was recovering from a groin injury back home, but his return will bolster South Africa's inexperienced spin resources that lacked discipline at times in the first test.

The formula of preparing turning pitches has helped Pakistan beat England 2-1 before drawing 1-1 against the West Indies earlier this year.

"Great to have him (Keshav) back in the camp, he brings lots of experience and really good skill sets as well," South Africa captain Aiden Markram said on Sunday. "It's an opportunity for us to (not only) level this series, but also to keep improving in these conditions and fixing some of the stuff that we feel needs fixing from the first game." Maharaj is the most successful South African test spinner with 203 wickets in 59 test matches and is likely to team up with another

left-arm spinner, Senuran Muthusamy, who took 11 wickets at Lahore and was twice denied a hat-trick.

South African middle-order batters found it tough to negotiate Pakistan spin duo Noman and Sajid Khan in Lahore and conceded a 109-run first-innings lead despite Tony de Zorzi scoring a gritty 104 and Ryan Rickleton reaching 71. Markram said his batters have to adapt to spin conditions quickly.

"We're expecting the same (spin wicket)," Markram said. "When you get to spinning conditions, the guessing game is always how long until it really starts to spin exaggeratedly... we'll have to assess that as quick as we can."

Markram, who is leading the side in the absence of Temba Bavuma, himself struggled, scoring 3 and 20 before falling to Noman in the first test.

"I feel like I'm mentally in a really good space and very hungry to contribute towards the team and lead from the front," he said. "We know how this game works, it doesn't always work out, but as I always do, live and die with my heart on my sleeve and give it a good fight." Pakistan's top-order batters were among the runs after the hosts won the all-important toss at Lahore with captain Shan Masood, Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Rizwan and Salman Ali Agha all hitting meaningful half-centuries in a strong first-innings score of 378. (AP)