

6 NATION

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- Kohima Peace Memorial & Eco Park inaugurated

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1,700 families hit; drive to continue today

Major eviction drive clears encroachments in Nagaon's forest area



HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Nov 29: A massive eviction drive was carried out on Saturday in Assam's Nagaon district to clear encroachments from government and forest land in the Greater Lutumari Forest Reserve under the Kampur Revenue Circle, affecting around 1,700 families.

The operation, undertaken jointly by the district administration, police and forest department, covered roughly 795 hectares (around 5,962 bighas) of land and

was conducted in line with a Gauhati High Court directive issued on August 18, 2025. The drive began in Lutimari area in the morning amid heavy deployment of security forces and continued till 4 pm, with officials confirming that eviction activities will resume on Sunday. Notices had been issued three months ago asking occupants to vacate within two months; after seeking an additional month, most families began moving out voluntarily.

According to District Commissioner Debashish Sarma, nearly 70 per cent of the affected families left prior to the deadline, and over 1,100 families had already shifted with their belongings before the demolition teams arrived. During the operation, approximately 2,070 kuccha houses and 192 pucca structures—including three mosques, seven Anganwadi centres, two lower primary schools, a primary health centre and three Jal Jeevan Mission water treatment units—were demolished with the help of nearly 50 excavators and thousands of security personnel stationed across four temporary camps.

The administration said the area had been encroached upon for decades, with some residents claiming they had lived there for over 40 years and were unaware the land fell within a reserved forest. The eviction sparked emotional scenes as several affected families pleaded (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Tribal students storm BTC Secretariat against ST status move

Angry protestors vandalise properties

Tension runs high; security beefed up

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Nov 29: Intense protests erupted in Kokrajhar on Saturday after students from Bodoland University and several tribal organisations marched against the Assam Cabinet's decision to approve the Group of Ministers' report recommending Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for six communities — Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Motok, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (Adivasis).

The protesters, who began their march from the university campus, covered nearly six kilometres before breaking through barricades and storming the assembly hall of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) Secretariat at Bodofo Nwgr, where they vandalised chairs, tables and other furniture. Officials said the situation escalated rapidly as sections of the agitated crowd forced their way into the hall, damaging properties and triggering heightened tension in the area.

Additional security forces were rushed to the secretariat, but the situation remained volatile till late in the evening. Many students held banners and placards and shouted slogans, arguing that extending ST status to the six communities — which they described as socially advanced and numerically strong — would dilute existing constitutional safeguards and compromise the rights, identity and political protections of recognised tribal groups in Assam.

The students had earlier boycotted their third-semester final examinations and staged demonstrations on the university campus opposing the Cabinet's move. On Thursday, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), along with several allied tribal bodies, organised a torchlight vigil in Kokrajhar town to protest the government's decision.

The protestors reiterated that granting ST status to more communities would directly impact education and job reservations meant for tribal communities and demanded immediate withdrawal of the Cabinet approval. Amid the escalating unrest, ABSU president Dipen Boro urged students to maintain democratic forms of protest and avoid acts of violence, stating that while the opposition to the Cabinet's decision is justified, the agitation must remain peaceful to convey the community's concerns effectively. Students at the protest echoed that they wished to protect the dignity and identity of existing tribal groups and would continue to oppose the decision until the government reconsidered its stand. (With inputs from PTI)



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House nod to council for Karbis living outside KAAC area

GUWAHATI, Nov 29: The Assam Assembly on Friday passed a legislation for setting up a welfare council for people of Karbi tribe residing outside the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) area.

Minister for Tribal Affairs (Plain) Ranaj Pegu moved 'The Karbi Welfare Autonomous Council Bill, 2025' for consent, which was passed by a voice vote. It will lead to the formation of a welfare council for Karbi people who do not live within the autonomous council area under Sixth Schedule of the tribe.

Seven other amendment bills pertaining to Mising, Rabha Hasong, Tiwa, Sonowal Kachari, Thengal Kachari, Deori autonomous (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam Assembly passes 6 education bills amid opposition

GUWAHATI, Nov 29: The Assam Assembly on Saturday passed six bills related to the Education department amid a walkout by opposition members who alleged that ruling party legislators had entered the House after the Speaker ordered closure of all doors for voting on amendments moved by them.

After over four hours of debate on four bills moved by Education Minister Ranaj Pegu, Congress, CPI(M) and Independent legislator Akhil Gogoi expressed dissatisfaction that not even a single amendment brought by them was accepted by the government.

Leader of Opposition Debabrata Saikia of the Congress demanded voting on the amendments, supported by CPI(M) MLA Manoranjan Talukdar and the Independent

6 education bills amid opposition

member. As Speaker Biswajit Daimary began the process of passing the bills, Saikia said they will not be withdrawing the proposed amendments.

Daimary ordered immediate closing of all doors of the House, barring any MLA from leaving or entering.

However, the opposition benches alleged that about 10 ruling BJP legislators entered the House even after the Speaker's order.

The treasury benches, however, refuted the charge. As the Speaker maintained he was unaware of any late entry, opposition members moved to the Well of the House and staged a walkout. Earlier, the members of the

Assam BJP slams Congress leaders over remarks against CM

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Nov 29: The Assam Pradesh Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday issued a strongly worded statement condemning what it described as "illogical, irresponsible and baseless" remarks made by Assam Congress President Gaurav Gogoi and All India Congress Committee spokesperson Pawan Khera during a press conference at the Manabendra Sharma Complex in Guwahati.

The BJP alleged that both leaders engaged in personal attacks against chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, calling the comments unfounded and politically motivated.

In an official release from the party headquarters, Atal Bihari Vajpayee Bhavan, BJP spokesperson

Assam BJP slams Congress leaders over remarks against CM

Manas Sarania said the Congress leadership, faced with what he termed its "moral bankruptcy and political frustration," had "no ethical or moral authority" to launch personal allegations against the chief minister.

According to the statement, the BJP-led alliance government, under the "decisive, visionary and courageous" leadership of Sarma, has been working since its first day in office towards the "comprehensive development of the indigenous people of Assam and the protection of the state's identity, security and progress."

The BJP claimed that every administrative step taken by the chief minister has been met with "overwhelming public acceptance," and asserted (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Formation of three new ST categories mooted

Interim report on ST status to 6 communities of Assam tabled in assembly

GUWAHATI, Nov 29: An interim report of the Group of Ministers (GoM) over the proposal to grant ST status to six major communities of Assam, was laid in the assembly on the last day of the winter session on Saturday.

It recommended three-tier classification of Scheduled Tribes in the state over the demand for ST status by the six communities — Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Matak, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (adivasis).

The report, laid by Tribal Affairs (Plains) Minister Ranaj Pegu, who also headed the three-member GoM, said the committee tried to formulate a way to (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

BCPL posts ₹3,579.20-crore revenue, maintains over 100% capacity utilisation in FY 2025-26

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Nov 29: Brahmaputra Cracker and Polymer Limited (BCPL) has reported a strong operational performance for FY 2024-25, achieving a capacity utilisation of 113 per cent and posting a marginal net profit on revenue from operations of ₹3,579.20 crore despite continued pressure from lower polymer realisations.

The company said it has maintained momentum in the current financial year as well, operating at over 100 per cent capacity as of October 2025.

BCPL's external credit rating was reaffirmed at AA+ by CRISIL and Acuite Ratings, while its net worth stood at ₹3,017 crore as of March 31, 2025.

The company noted that the Indian petrochemical sector is currently grappling with falling polymer prices and high feedstock costs, which have squeezed margins across the industry.

Even so, BCPL said its strategic emphasis on operational efficiency has allowed it to consistently run the plant at optimal levels.

The company employs 601 personnel and around 2,500 contractual workers, contributing significantly to regional employment.

During the year, BCPL inducted its eighth batch of



69 apprentices across technical and management disciplines.

A study being conducted on its socio-economic impact in Assam and the Northeast suggests that BCPL has generated approximately 47,000 direct and indirect employment opportunities to date.

BCPL has also intensified its CSR initiatives across healthcare, education, rural infrastructure, sanitation, sports and livelihood development.

Since FY 2020-21, the company has allocated ₹76.35 crore for CSR work, of which (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India re-elected to International Maritime Organisation Council with highest vote

LONDON, Nov 29: India has been re-elected to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Council with the highest vote in its category at elections held at its Assembly in London for the 2025-26 biennium.

India's election in Category B on Friday falls under the collection of 10 states with "the largest interest in international seaborne trade," alongside Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The newly elected Council will meet for its 136th session on December 4 and will elect its Chair and Vice-Chair for the next biennium, the IMO said.

"India re-elected to the IMO Council securing the highest vote in Category B with 154 votes," the Indian High Commission in London announced following the vote.

"We thank our partners for put-



ting their trust in India, and pledge to continue to work for the global maritime sector," the mission stated.

The IMO is the premier body that oversees the world's maritime sector, which in turn underpins international trade, transport and all maritime activities.

The Council is the executive organ of IMO and is responsible, under the Assembly, for supervising the work of the organisation.

In July, the Secretary at the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways had launched India's candidature for re-election as he revealed the ministry's plans to invest USD 1 trillion in the sector over the next 25 years.

T K Ramachandran invited representatives from around the world to "partner with India in this quest for us to become one of the leading maritime nations in the world."

"India embraces the philosophy of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future,' and we bring this vision to life through fostering robust and collaborative maritime efforts," said Ramachandran at the time.

"Under our Vision 2047, we see maritime growth as a corner of global progress, and we deeply value a growing engagement with the IMO and its member states... we have several pillars, including shipbuilding, ship recycling, ship financing, ship ownership and ship flagging, the entire ecosystem," he said. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Autonomous State under Article 244(A) possible, says Ronghang

HT Bureau
DONGKAMUKAM, Nov 29: Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Tuliram Ronghang, today said that the long-standing demand for an Autonomous State through the implementation of Article 244(A) "is possible," while addressing a blanket distribution ceremony at Dongkamukam in West Karbi Anglong. Speaking as the chief guest at the programme, where blankets donated (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Two-day celebration to honour legacy of Sabha pioneers and regional literary heritage

Chandrakanta Sandikei Bhawan centenary on Dec 2-3

HT Correspondent
JORHAT, Nov 29: The centenary celebration of Chandrakanta Sandikei Bhawan—built in Jorhat of the erstwhile undivided Sivasagar district under the supervision of then Assam Sahitya Sabha General Secretary Sarat Chandra Goswami with donations from philanthropist Radhakanta Sandikei—will be held on December 2-3 at Zubeen Garg Kshetra.

Supported by the district Sahitya Sabhas of Jorhat, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Golaghat and Majuli, as well as branch Sabhas and people from all communities and faiths, the two-day event will begin with the hoisting of the main flag and one hundred accompanying flags under the leadership of Sabha President Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami.



Tributes will then be paid at Zubeen Kshetra by Jorhat District Sahitya Sabha President Mahendra Hazarika, former President Nalini Bala Hazarika and former President Bhaba Goswami, followed by floral homage at the residence of Radhakanta Sandikei.

Jorhat MLA Hitendra Nath Goswami will unveil a statue of Sarat Chandra Goswami, the Sabha's first General Secretary, on

the Sabha premises.

The venue will be inaugurated by Kumud Kochari, Working President of the Celebration Committee, while Jorhat Deputy Commissioner Joy Shivani will flag off the coordination procession with participation from presidents of various tribal literary bodies of Assam.

From 12:30 PM, the gathering of Life Members, Benefactor Members and Patron Members, presided over by Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami, will be inaugurated by Dibrugarh University Vice-Chancellor Dr Jiten Hazarika.

Nagaon University Vice-Chancellor Dr Hitesh Deka and Assam Women's University Vice-Chancellor Dr Ajanta Borgohain Rajkonwar will attend as distinguished (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Lovlina Boxing Academy, BCORE ink pact to boost high-performance training for young athletes

GUWAHATI, Nov 29: Assam's Lovlina Boxing Academy (LBA) has signed a MoU with the Bharat Centre for Olympic Research and Education (BCORE) at Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) in Gujarat's Gandhinagar to integrate sports science, analytics and athlete wellbeing, officials said.

The agreement is a major boost to India's high-performance sporting ecosystem, and marks the beginning of a strategic and long-term collaboration aimed at strengthening sports research, scientific training, athlete wellbeing, and advanced coaching methodologies, Tokyo Olympic medalist and academy founder Lovlina Borgohain said.

According to the terms of the MoU, both institutions will jointly work on sports science applications,

performance analytics, psychological training modules, injury-prevention frameworks and modernised high-performance systems.

RRU Vice-Chancellor Prof Bimal N Patel, speaking on the occasion, hailed the academy's mission to shape grassroots and elite sporting talent.

He emphasised that the collaboration aligns with RRU's national mandate of fostering excellence in sports through interdisciplinary research, state-of-the-art infrastructure, and institutional partnerships that contribute to India's broader sporting ambitions.

As part of the partnership, LBA will gain structured access to RRU's advanced sports science and research infrastructure, including biomechanics labs, performance analysis units, recovery science fa-

cilities, and academic expertise in sports technology, psychology and physical conditioning.

Joint research projects, athlete assessment protocols, training workshops, and knowledge-exchange programmes will be developed to strengthen the pathways for emerging and elite athletes associated with LBA, the officials said.

During the two-day visit to RRU from November 27, an LBA delegation also interacted with senior Gujarat Police officials, and discussed possibilities of collaborative opportunities in athlete safety and security awareness, discipline and leadership programmes, integration of police sports initiatives, and future joint events.

Gujarat Police officials expressed interest in supporting initiatives aimed at (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Air India a 'responsibility' not just business opportunity for Tata Group: Chandrasekaran

MUMBAI, Nov 29: Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran on Saturday said Air India, which is undergoing a transformation, is not just a business opportunity but a "responsibility" for the Tata Group.

The aviation sector faces continuing challenges, he said, adding that global supply chain issues make the availability of parts, infrastructure, and new aircraft pretty unpredictable.

When the Tata Group decided to buy Air India in 2022, people both publicly and privately asked me why. When the Group was doing well, why was it getting into this sector? Chandrasekaran asked in his keynote address at an event here to celebrate the 121st birth anniversary of the Tata Group founder, JRD Tata.

"But I firmly believe that for the Tata Group, Air India is just not a business opportunity. It's a responsibility," he said.

Tatas acquired loss-making Air India along with Air India Express in January 2022, and since then, the group has been working on an ambitious five-year transformation plan.

However, progress has been slower than expected due to various factors, including global supply chain woes that have led to aircraft upgradation and delivery delays.

"Every single percentage growth in GDP will give a 2 per



cent growth in the domestic aviation sector. (If) India grows 8 per cent, the aviation industry grows 16 per cent. And this game will play out, and will be continuing for a long time, at least the next three decades. So, this is going to be a very exciting phase of economic growth, and for the aviation sector in particular.

"But it's not easy. And it's increasingly difficult, because the aviation sector faces continuous challenges," Chandra said.

He said that the global supply chain makes the availability of parts and infrastructure pretty unpredictable, adding that "every plan that you have is becoming difficult, because of the situations that you face in this area."

Chandrasekaran also mentioned that aviation is a very capital-in-

tensive business, and the industry margins are thin.

Noting that India is already the fourth largest economy (and) becoming the third largest economy, he said the 8.2 per cent GDP growth in the July-September quarter is "just fabulous."

And India will grow probably at 7 per cent at least, this fiscal year, he added.

According to him, there is increasing consumer confidence and consumption-led growth, and the public infrastructure spending will additionally drive growth.

"So, we will become a USD 5 trillion economy, and we will grow beyond that. And we will do it faster, and the pace at which we will add every additional trillion Dollar will be shorter, and we will create exciting opportunities. But

if this has to happen, one of the aspects that needs to work is connectivity," he said.

He said that there are several aspects (of the aviation industry) that one has to manage, while some can be managed because one is capable of managing them, while some are always a surprise. "Geopolitics is a surprise. Suddenly, your flight routes will change, because you cannot fly over a territory. If you cannot fly over a particular territory, your flights take longer. Your flights take longer, your fuel costs go up... We have to manage all of this," he said. The demand for air travel is very high, and the aspirations of Indians are growing as everybody wants to be connected and travel, he said. "So I think our commitment is to build a world-class airline," he said.

He said that the airline should have retrofitted all its domestic fleet by this year-end, and that the wide-body fleet will be retrofitted over the next couple of years.

It should have been done earlier, but supply chains caused delays, he said, adding, "and we will start getting new planes every month over the next three years, we should have almost 95 per cent or 99 per cent of our fleet modern. But we will work on each one of these dimensions. But that's the commitment that we are working towards. (But) It will take time," Chandrasekaran said. (PTI)

Indian airlines complete software upgrade on majority of A320 family planes

NEW DELHI, Nov 29: IndiGo, Air India and Air India Express on Saturday started carrying out software upgrade of A320 family planes to address a potential flight control issue, and requisite modifications have been done for the majority of the 338 affected aircraft, an exercise that also resulted in delays of hundreds of flights.

Sources said airlines have not made any cancella-

tions due to the system modification, but there have been flight delays of 60-90 minutes at various airports.

On Friday, Airbus said intense solar radiation could corrupt data critical to flight controls in a significant number of A320 family aircraft, and that the software changes required to fix the issue would cause operational disruptions. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

1,700 families hit;

for shelter, saying they had nowhere to go. Officials said relief and rehabilitation measures would be extended to those in need. Meanwhile, two individuals, Abdul Awal and Yusuf Ali, were arrested for allegedly extorting money from residents by circulating fake legal documents purportedly issued by the High Court.

The Lutamari operation forms part of a broader anti-encroachment effort across Assam. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has earlier stated that more than 160 sq km of land have been cleared of encroachments since May 2021, with over 50,000 people evicted during this period.

The state resumed such drives from June 16 this year, affecting more than 5,000 families, many of whom belong to the Bengali-speaking Muslim migrant community who say their ancestors settled in these areas after losing land to erosion in the Brahmaputra's char regions.

The administration said the current drive will continue until the entire encroached stretch at Bedetipar, Sankhula, Juriprar and Kendapara villages is cleared, and reiterated its commitment to implementing the High Court order in totality.

House nod to council

councils and Bodo Kachari Welfare Autonomous Council were also moved by Pegu. All the bills passed through voice vote deals with inserting new sub-clauses for enforcing financial discipline, strengthening transparency and accountability.

Two more amendment bills, Moran Autonomous Council (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and Matak Autonomous Council (Amendment) Bill, 2025, moved by minister for Social Justice and Empowerment department Pijush Hazarika were also passed by the House by voice vote.

Assam Assembly passes

Teachers and Re-organisation of Educational Institutions (Amendment) Bill, 2025, Assam Elementary and Secondary School Teachers (Regulation of Posting and Transfer) (Amendment) Bill, 2025, and Assam Education (Provincialisation of Services of Non-teaching Staff of Venture Educational Institutions) (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

Along with these four bills, two others - Azim Premji University Bill, 2025, and The North Eastern Regional Institute of Management (NERIM) University Bill, 2025 -- also moved by Pegu, were passed by a voice vote on the last day of the Winter Session. (PTI)

Assam BJP slams

that this popularity had left the Congress "unnerved" and "unable to cope with political reality." The party further alleged that the Congress has reacted to the government's growing public support with "irrational rhetoric" and "character assassination," which the BJP "strongly and unreservedly denounces."

Highlighting the state government's recent land-encroachment clearance efforts, the statement said that, in the post-Independence period, "no previous chief minister has demonstrated such boldness and political will" in freeing government land from "illegal occupation of suspected illegal Bangladeshi immigrants."

The BJP described the actions as a "historic milestone" in Assam's political and administrative history. The party criticised the Congress for expressing frustration over the BJP government's rollout of welfare schemes, employment-generation initiatives and women's empowerment measures, stating that these programmes have "intensified the Congress' despair" as its "organisational strength and public confidence continue to erode."

According to the BJP, the Congress is "wandering directionless" and attempting to regain relevance through "hollow and baseless allegations."

The statement added that the Congress' alleged habit of opposing every policy decision of the chief minister and "misleading the public with malicious commentary" has become a recurring feature of its political conduct. The BJP asserted that the people of Assam would "inevitably reject the Congress" in the coming days, leading to its "complete marginalisation" in the state's political landscape.

India re-elected to

The IMO Assembly normally meets once every two years in a regular session. It is responsible for approving the work programme, voting the budget and determining the financial arrangements of the organisation.

It also elects the organisation's 40-Member Council at these meetings for the next two-year period. (PTI)

BCPL posts ₹3,579.20

80 per cent has been utilised. Major initiatives include infrastructure upgrades at Assam Medical College and Hospitals in Dibrugarh, Jorhat Medical College, Lakhimpur Medical College, providing drinking-water facilities in schools in Dibrugarh district, upgrading sports infrastructure in Dibrugarh and Sivasagar, strengthening primary healthcare at Barbaruah, and delivering medical services to remote areas through a mobile unit.

The company has also supported livelihood programmes for unemployed youth and SHGs, built a multi-storied market complex at Barbaruah and introduced skill-development programmes with placement support.

To promote industry-academia collaboration, BCPL has signed several MoUs with academic and technical institutions to encourage research, innovation and hands-on training for students.

The company reaffirmed its commitment to sustainability, noting progress on its Net Zero roadmap and reiterating safety as a core operational priority through its HSE policy and enterprise-risk framework aligned with ISO 31000 and ESG standards.

Two key infrastructure projects — Butene-1 and HPG-2 — involving a combined investment of ₹2,817.92 crore, are under implementation and expected to become operational next year.

BCPL said it is also diversifying feedstock sourcing and strengthening supply chains to ensure long-term operational stability.

Managing director Pranjal Changmai expressed gratitude to the Government of India, Government of Assam, and promoter organisations Oil India Limited, Numaligarh Refinery Limited and GAIL (India) Limited for their continued support, and acknowledged the cooperation of the district administration, media and other stakeholders.

Lovlina Boxing Academy

youth engagement, fitness promotion, and national sporting excellence, they said. "This is a proud and important moment for us at LBA. By joining hands with RRU and BCORE, we are opening new doors for our athletes, doors that lead to scientific training, global benchmarks and structured pathways to success," Borgohain said.

Many young athletes, especially from small towns, dream big but lack access to the right support systems and 'this partnership will help bridge that gap and bring world-class knowledge and facilities directly to them', she added. (PTI)

Chandrakanta Sandikei Bhawan

guests. The evening cultural session will be inaugurated by artist Jayanta Nath. On the second day at 10 AM, the discussion session Assam Sahitya Sabha Patrika: One Hundred Years will be inaugurated by cultural researcher Dr Anil Saikia and presided over by Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami.

Speakers include Dr Pallabi Deka Buzarbaruah of Dibrugarh University, former Patrika editor Dr Ram Chandra Deka and Dr Jyotishman Das of Tezpur University. From 12:30 PM, the open session will be inaugurated by Jagannath Barooah University Vice-Chancellor Dr Jyotiprasad Saikia and presided over by the Sabha President.

Invited guests include retired Sahitya Akademi Secretary Dr K Srinivas Rao and former Sabha Presidents Dr Dhruvajyoti Bora, Dr Kuladhar Saikia and Dr Suryakanta Hazarika. Assam Government Minister Kaushik Roy will attend as a special guest.

Formation of three

grant ST status to the six communities without affecting reservation of the existing tribal groups. The GoM recommended the formation of a new category of 'ST (Valley)', and inclusion of Ahom, Chutia, Tea Tribes, and Kock-Rajbongshi (excluding undivided Goalpara district) in it.

For Moran, Matak and Kock-Rajbongshi (Goalpara), it said they can be included in 'ST (Plains)', and the existing communities in this category should not have any objection.

Limited copies of the report were laid in the House, with only legislative party leaders and the GoMs, among others, getting copies in sealed envelopes.

The opposition parties demanded discussion on the report, but the Speaker said it can be taken up another time. (PTI)

Autonomous State under

by Singdon Ronghang in memory of Basapi Teronpi were distributed, the CEM recalled the decades-long struggle for statehood during which dozens of people lost their lives, hundreds of families were displaced, many individuals were left physically handicapped and the community itself faced internal boycotts.

He said that the demand for an Autonomous State could be realised within the next decade and added that he considers himself fortunate to be the longest-serving CEM of KAAC.

He further announced that more development schemes will be taken up from January next year. Ronghang appealed to the Garo Christian voters of the constituency to support the BJP in the upcoming Assembly election.

The programme was attended by Veterinary Board Chairman Ditola Hasnu; PWD Board Chairman Longsing Tokbi; VDC Chairman Ramson Rongpi; Memmiji Lamps Chairman Bidhyaing Teron; Rongkhang Lamps Chairman Mongol Bey; and former KAAC Executive Members Bajong Tisso and Rensing Bey.

GRSE receives notice from NSE, BSE for non-compliance of corporate governance provisions

KOLKATA, Nov 29: Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd (GRSE) on Saturday said it has received notices from both National Stock Exchange and BSE for non-compliance with several corporate governance provisions under the SEBI listing obligations during the quarter ended September 30, 2025.

In a regulatory filing, the defence PSU said the exchanges have flagged violations of Regulations 17(1), 18(1) and 19(1)/19(2) relating to mandatory presence of independent directors, including a woman independent director, and constitution of audit committee and nomination and remuneration committee.

For these lapses, each exchange has imposed a fine of ₹ 9,77,040, inclusive of GST, the company said.

GRSE said it has responded to the notices, stating that as a Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Defence, appointments to its board — including independent and woman independent directors — are made by the Government of India through Presidential Orders.

The company said the non-compliance arose solely due to the government not appointing the required directors, a matter that is "beyond the control of the company". It has requested that the penalties be waived.

GRSE said that it is actively pursuing the Ministry of Defence, its promoter, to expedite the appointment of the requisite number of independent directors to ensure full compliance with SEBI's corporate governance norms. (PTI)

Nothing launches Phone (3a) Lite in India at ₹19,999

GUWAHATI, Nov 29: London-based tech company Nothing has launched the Phone (3a) Lite in India, adding a new Blue colour to its existing Black and White options. The device features Nothing's signature transparent design, a 6.77-inch AMOLED display, a 50 MP main camera supported by TrueLens Engine 4.0, the MediaTek Dimensity 7300 Pro chipset and a 5000 mAh battery.

It is priced at ₹20,999, which drops to ₹19,999 after bank discounts for the 8 GB + 128 GB variant.

The Phone (3a) Lite will be available across Flipkart, Vijay Sales, Croma and major retail outlets from December 5.

The handset continues Nothing's transparent aesthetic and comes with IP54 resistance, an aluminium internal frame and a lightweight build.

Its 6.77-inch flexible AMOLED display offers a 120 Hz adaptive refresh rate and 3000 nits peak HDR brightness.

The 50 MP main camera supports Ultra XDR, Night Mode and 4K video at 30 FPS, while the 16 MP front camera handles selfies and video calls.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Nur Alam SO-Late Dini Rahman of Village Khairakata, P.O. Chakrabasti, P.S. Dalgaoon, Mouza Pub-Dalgaoon, District Darrang (Assam), do hereby solemnly affirm that my correct name is Nur Alam and my wife's name Marjina Khatun and my daughter's name is Noor Amina. But in my daughter Noor Amina's birth certificate earlier submitted to KV 210 Cobra CRPF, Guwahati/Dalgaoon my name has wrongly been recorded as Md Nur Alam, my wife's name as Mrs Marjina Begum and my daughter's name as Miss Noor Amina. That I have now obtained the corrected birth certificate showing my name as Nur Alam and my wife's name as Marjina Khatun and my daughter's name as Noor Amina respectively. This affidavit is sworn in before the Judicial Magistrate, Darrang, Mangaldai for the purpose of her admission

Sd/-
Nur Alam

ENGAGEMENT OF HONORARY VISITING SPECIALIST (HVS) IN LUMDING DIVISION

No. H/15/HONY/Specialist/LM Dated:-11/11/2025

CHIEF MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT, Divisional Railway Hospital, Lumding for & on behalf of President of India invites applications for engagement of Honorary Visiting Specialists (HVS) in each of the specialities of Ophthalmologist, Radiologist, Pediatrician and Orthopedic.

Terms & Conditions :-

1. Educational Qualification & Experience :

- Specialist-Post-Graduate degree from recognized university. Minimum 3 years experience in the professional work related to concerned specialty in case of post graduate degree.
- Age Profile :- During first time engagement, the preferred age is between 30 years to 64 years. Upper age limit of continued engagement is 65 years.
- Current rate of honorarium to be paid :

Doctor's	Hours	Specialist
Ophthalmologist	04 Hours a day for 06 days/week	Rs. 78,000/- P.M
Radiologist	04 Hours a day for 06 days/week	Rs. 78,000/- P.M
Pediatrician	04 Hours a day for 06 days/week	Rs. 78,000/- P.M
Orthopedic	04 Hours a day for 06 days/week	Rs. 78,000/- P.M

4. Tenure of working:- Each time the offer is given for a year only. After expiry of one year, extension can be given on yearly basis subject to age limit.

5. Detail terms & conditions as per Railway Board's L/No. 2014/H-1/12/8/HVS/Policy dated. 19.06.2018 can also be obtained from office of Chief Medical Superintendent, Divisional Railway Hospital, N. F. Railway, Lumding, Hojai, Assam-782447. The detail documents is also available on Northeast Frontier Railway Website www.nfr.indianrailways.gov.in.

6. Short listed Doctors will be intimated in course of time after approval from competent authority.

7. The application in the format along with address, contact number, passport size photograph & self-attested copies of documents [MBBS Certificate, Postgraduate degree certificate, Post doctoral degree certificate (where applicable), Registration certificate, additional qualification & experience, PAN Card, e-mail ID and Phone number] may be submitted at the address below.

8. Address for correspondence - Chief Medical Superintendent, Divisional Railway Hospital, N. F. Railway, Lumding, Hojai, Assam-782447.

9. Last date of receipt of application 01:00 PM of 31/01/2026.

10. Date of interview on 15/02/2026 from 10:00 AM onwards at CMS chamber/Lumding.

Chief Medical Superintendent, Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

Serving Customers With A Smile

Progress inches up on NH-27, but key stretches still lag behind

Minister Kaushik Rai reviews progress of east-west corridor (NH-27)



HT Correspondent
HAFLONG, Nov 29: Kaushik Rai, Minister of Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs, Mines & Minerals, Assam, chaired a review meeting at 12:00 PM on Saturday in the Conference Hall of the Circuit House,

Haflong, to assess progress on the 4-lane East-West Corridor (NH-27) stretch from Jatinga to Harangajao. Since the previous review held on November 22, 2025, the overall completion percentage has increased from 85.71% to 86.13%.

The Minister stressed the need to expedite works in critical locations including Gerem, Jatinga, Miyungkro, Boro Muolkoi, Rekho and Dolaichunga. The meeting noted several challenges in the Jatinga-Harangajao section, which comprises multiple

bridges and culverts. Although the targeted completion date is January 31, 2026, officials stated that 7-8 km of the stretch will initially remain partially 4-lane and partially 2-lane. However, the project director, NHAI, assured that the entire 4-lane project would be completed by April 30, 2026.

Those present at the review meeting included Executive Member, NCHAC, Donpainon Thaoson; District Commissioner, Dima Hasao, Munindranath Ngatey, ACS; Principal Secretary, NCHAC, Partha Jahari, ACS; Secretaries of NCHAC; officials from NHAI and NHIDCL; the ADC; and other senior officials.

The minister reiterated the Government's commitment to timely completion of the East-West Corridor, underscoring its significance for connectivity, trade and socio-economic development in Dima Hasao and the wider region.

Celebrations erupt at tea estate after announcement of land pattas for tea workers



HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Nov 29: Celebrations broke out at Margherita Tea Estate on Friday afternoon, hours after tea garden workers watched the live telecast of the Assam Legislative Assembly, where chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Labour Welfare, Tea Tribes and Adivasi Welfare Minister Rupesh Gowala announced the decision to grant land pattas to tea estate workers across Assam.

Soon after the announcement, workers of the estate gathered at the Top Side Field, dancing, singing and bursting crackers to express

their joy over what they described as a historic and long-awaited step.

All tea workers under the Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS), Margherita Branch, observed a work stoppage and watched the Assembly proceedings together.

Harinanda Goh, Secretary of ACMS, Margherita Branch, said the decision marks a significant moment in the 200-year history of Assam's tea industry.

"For the first time, the contribution of tea garden workers has received formal recognition. We are deeply grateful to the dynamic leadership of Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and Minister

Rupesh Gowala for bringing this bill that will finally provide land pattas to tea garden workers," he said, adding that workers are thankful to the BJP-led governments at both the Union and State levels.

As celebrations continued, tea workers raised slogans praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, minister Rupesh Gowala, Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma and the BJP-led Government.

The decision is expected to have a transformative impact on the socio-economic security of tea garden communities, who have long demanded land rights.

NFR advances digital ticketing with new ATVM installations in Alipurduar division

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 29: In line with Indian Railways' commitment to digital transformation and improved passenger amenities, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has successfully commissioned 21 Automatic Ticket Vending Machines (ATVMs) across 15 key stations under the Alipurduar Division.

All ATVMs have been fully operational since November 17, 2025, marking a significant step in modernising unreserved ticketing services in the region.

The introduction of ATVMs aims to promote digital ticketing, reduce congestion at Unreserved Ticketing System (UTS) counters, and enable passengers to obtain unreserved journey tickets and platform tickets quickly through a seamless, cashless interface.

With the provision for smart card usage, passengers can now access faster ticketing services, particularly during peak travel hours, thereby cutting down waiting time at traditional booking counters.

ATVMs have been installed at the following stations: New Coochbehar (NCB), New Alipurduar (NOQ), Kokrajhar (KOJ),



Alipurduar Junction (APDJ), New Mal Junction (NMZ), Hasimara (HSA), Dinhat (DHH), Dalgaon (DLO), Fakirgram Junction (FKM), Jalpaiguri Road (JPE), Dhubri (DBB), Gossaigaon Hat (GOGH), Bamanhat (BXT), Dhupguri (DQG) and Falakata (FLK).

The commissioning of these machines is expected to substantially enhance passenger convenience by offering a user-friendly digital al-

ternative to manual ticket purchasing. With this development, the Alipurduar Division continues to strengthen efforts toward building technologically advanced, efficient and passenger-friendly station environments.

Northeast Frontier Railway remains committed to introducing innovative digital solutions and further enhancing the travel experience for millions of passengers across the region.

1st triennial conference of Jagiroad Senior Citizens Forum held

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, Nov 29: The 1st triennial session of the Jagiroad Senior Citizens Forum was held with a day-long programme at the Jagiroad Kalamandir premises on Friday.

The Forum's flag was hoisted by President Deba Bhuyan, followed by the lighting of the ceremonial lamp by Assam Sourav Awardee and Tiwa dance guru Nadiram Deuri.

Children's writer Akani Devi, Executive President of the Kuhu Sub-Committee of the Morigaon District Sahitya Sabha, attended the session as the special guest.

On the occasion, a tribute ceremony was also held at the portraits of Dr Bhupen Hazarika, Zubeen Garg, Syed Chadullah and renowned flutist Dipak Sharma.

The session re-nominated the earlier 21-member committee, with Deba Bhuyan as President and Laksheswar Kakoti as Secretary for the next term.

In the open session, presided over by President Bhuyan, several important resolutions were passed, including a call to higher authorities to employ local youth in the Tata Semiconductor Project currently under construction in Jagiroad.

The meeting was attended by Dr Harmohan Kalita, president, Morigaon District Sahitya Sabha; Dr Puniram Patar, advisor Satyabrata Barthakur; master athlete Anandhar Ram Das; advisor Dilip Kumar Majumder; Nadiram Deuri; and Dr Khagen Sharma, principal, Jagiroad Satriya Sangeet Vidyalaya.

Also present were Rajesh Bhuyan, director of Zubeen Garg's Roi Roi Binale; social worker Bani Barthakur; and Stutiprasad Bora, secretary, Jagiroad Shatadal Branch Sahitya Sabha.

A felicitation programme was presented by Arpita, Sadai Asom Lekhika Samaroh (Jagiroad branch), Jagiroad Shatadal Branch Sahitya Sabha, Jagiroad Satriya Sangeet Vidyalaya, and Janagosthi Oikya Manch Assam, Morigaon District Committee.

Earlier, the objectives of the programme were explained by Secretary Laksheswar Kakoti.

Renaming of 'Raj Bhavan' as 'Lok Bhavan'



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 29: In pursuance of the suggestion made at the Governors' Conference held in 2024, and following a communiqué issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (Memo No. 7/10/2025 (Part)-M&G dated 25/11/2025) requesting that the Offices of the Governors of States be renamed as Lok Bhavan instead of Raj Bhavan, it has been decided to adopt the new nomenclature.

Accordingly, the Office of the Governor shall now be referred to as "Lok Bhavan", while the Office of the Lieutenant Governor shall be known as "Lok Niwas."

With this, "Raj Bhavan, Assam" has been officially renamed as "Lok Bhavan, Assam", and all future references will follow the revised designation.

Jogeshwar Kalita honoured on 46th birth anniversary of Shri Shri Bhattacharya

A Correspondent

TEZPUR, Nov 29: On the occasion of the 46th Birth Anniversary of Shri Shri Bhattacharya — the devoted disciple of Dev Damodar Dev, founder of Assam's Satra culture, and widely regarded as the Father of Indian Prose Literature — the Sonitpur District Committee of the Mahapurush Shrimat Devdamodar Sangha organised an honouring ceremony at 4 PM on Friday.

As per the call of the central Sangha, Jogeshwar Kalita of Dipota, former President of Shri Shri Dakshinpat Satra Dipota Khat, preserver of Satra culture, social worker and stage actor, was honoured at his residence in the presence of his family.

He was conferred the title 'Samaj Hitaishi' (Social Benefactor), and presented with the Shri Shri Bhattacharya Baran Patra (citation), an Anga Vastra (shawl) and a Gol Vastra Gamochha (ceremonial cloth).

During the ceremony, District Sanghadhikars Arun Kumar Sharma, Deputy Sanghadhikars Bhupen Bordoloi and Bhupen Sharma recounted the life and contributions of Bhattacharya before the family members.

The final programme of the birth anniversary celebration was the public lighting of lamps by the Vaishnavas (devotees) and Ai Matris (elderly devout women) of Dakshinpat Satra Dipota Khat.

Following the lamp-lighting, Sanghadhikarta Dr Jugal Krishna Deka addressed those present.

In his brief remarks, Dr Deka expressed deep concern over the gradual loss of recognition of Bhattacharya's life journey and his identity as the creator of Indian Prose Literature. He urged the Government of India and the Government of Assam to officially recognise him as the Father of Indian Prose Literature.

10th Sivasagar Book fair begins tomorrow

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Nov 29: The 10th Sivasagar Book Fair 2025, organised by socio-cultural organisation Khoj, will begin at Boarding Field on Monday.

The 10-day fair will be inaugurated by Dr Kuladhar Saikia, former president of Assam Sahitya Sabha, in the presence of Dr Samujjal Bhattacharjya, chief adviser, AASU; Ayush Garg, district commissioner, Sivasagar; Bhaskar Chowdhary Netram, ED & asset manager, ONGC Assam Asset; Devajyoti Gogoi, IS, Sivasagar; Pramod Kalita, secretary, Asom Prakashan Parishad; Bhaskarjyoti Phukan, MD, Numaligarh Refinery; and Binayananda Bharali, chief residential executive, IOL, Duliaganj, among others.

Jayanta Baruah, MD and editor of Asomiya Pratidin, will be conferred the Khoj Rangpur Gaurav Award during the inaugural ceremony.

On the occasion of Asom Divas on December 2, a historical seminar on Mane Lekha Buranjhi will be addressed by Dr Raktim Ranjan Saikia, assistant professor, JB University.

On December 3, the Zubeen Garg Fan Club will organise a Zubeen Sangeet competition at the fair, followed by a cultural programme.

Ellora Bigyan Mancha will conduct a science model competition the next day, to be attended by Padmaresh Jadav Payeng.

DDIPR Barak Valley Zone bids adieu to MCP cultural wing Juri Goswami in Silchar

Colleagues recall her artistic journey since 1988 and celebrate her remarkable legacy



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 29: The Office of the Deputy Director of Information & Public Relations (DDIPR), Barak Valley Zone, Silchar, on Saturday bade an emotional and dignified farewell to Dr Juri Goswami, Manager-cum-Producer (Cultural Wing), marking the conclusion of her long and distinguished career in cultural service and public communication.

The farewell programme at the DDIPR office premises saw officers, staff, artists and former colleagues come together to honour her contributions.

Dr Goswami began her journey as a Cultural Staff Artist in Guwahati in 1988 and went on to participate in numerous government cultural programmes across the region and other states during her service.

Her artistic depth, cultural leadership and commitment to promoting regional heritage have left a lasting imprint on the department.

Speaking on the occasion, Assistant Commissioner and In-Charge of DDIPR Barak Valley Zone, Deepa Das, ACS, highlighted Dr Goswami's dedication, discipline

and creative vision.

She said Dr Goswami's ability to guide artistes, execute cultural projects with precision and uphold professional integrity made her an invaluable asset to the Cultural Wing.

Das also appreciated her warmth and simplicity, qualities that earned her respect among colleagues and artists alike.

UD Assistant Manimoy Dey shared heartfelt reflections, noting that her supportive nature and meticulous approach to every assignment set a high standard within the office.

Former Cultural Staff member Dilip Sinha also spoke with emotion, recalling years of collaboration and describing her as a compassionate colleague who consistently encouraged teamwork and upheld the spirit of cultural expression in government initiatives.

In her farewell address, Dr Juri Goswami expressed profound gratitude to the DDIPR family, recalling her journey since 1988 and the invaluable experiences gained while representing the department in cultural events across various regions and states.

DDC hosts awareness programme on HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and illicit trafficking

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, Nov 29: An awareness programme focusing on HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, drug use and illicit trafficking was organised at Deomornoi Degree College on Friday, in collaboration with Jannat Foundation, a prominent state-level NGO, and the college's Red Ribbon Club.

The programme began with Arup Kumar Sarma, Coordinator of the Red Ribbon Club, explaining the objectives of the event. Guests were felicitated with traditional Assamese phulam gamosa.

Dr Gitali Kalita, principal of the college, chaired the session and delivered the inaugural address, highlighting the severe health and social consequences of drug addiction and the use of tobacco and gutkha among students.

She urged students to avoid intoxicating substances and maintain cleanliness by refraining from spitting on classroom walls.

Murchana Medhi, counsellor at the District De-addiction Centre, Darrang, spoke on the factors contributing to vulnerability

to drug addiction and emphasised the crucial role of rehabilitation centres in recovery.

Dipak Saikia, district resource person of the Assam State AIDS Control Society (ASACS) and Counsellor at ICTC, Mangaldoi Civil Hospital, highlighted the rising HIV prevalence in Assam, particularly in the Northeast.

He revealed that more than 50 percent of e-rickshaw drivers in Darrang district are reportedly addicted to drugs, a statistic that alarmed the audience.

Saikia also shared the toll-free helpline number 1097 for confidential information and support related to HIV/AIDS.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Arup Kumar Sarma, HoD, Department of Geography and Coordinator of the Red Ribbon Club.

The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from students and faculty, reinforcing the institution's commitment to fostering a drug-free and health-conscious campus environment.

Elephant-proof mustard gives Udalguri farmers a safer, more stable harvest

Mustard farming reduces crop loss in elephant-affected villages of Udalguri

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 29: To strengthen support for communities living in high human-elephant conflict (HEC) zones, Aaranyak, with support from LIC HFL's CSR initiative, has continued its efforts to promote mustard cultivation as an elephant-resistant crop.

Mustard, being less palatable to elephants, offers a practical and sustainable alternative for farmers frequently affected by depredation of crops such as paddy.

As part of the initiative, 150 kg of mustard seeds were distributed to 45 farmers during October-November 2025 across the villages of Rangapani, No 1 Sikaridanga, No 2 Sikaridanga, and No 1 Samrang, No 3 under the Mazbat Development Block, and Bholatar, Nonaikhas, No 2 Samrang and Garuajhar under the Bhergaon Development Block of Udalguri district.

Udalguri is among the districts in Assam that face frequent crop damage during seasonal elephant

movement, particularly during the paddy-growing and harvesting periods.

Since a majority of households rely on agriculture, even moderate crop loss significantly affects household income and food security.

In this context, mustard cultivation has emerged as a safer and more viable option.

While elephants may occasionally enter mustard fields, they seldom feed on the crop, resulting in a considerable reduction in crop-raiding incidents and losses.

This shift not only supports human-elephant coexistence but also enhances livelihood stability for local farming communities. The intervention followed a need-assessment survey conducted among local communities to identify the most feasible alternative crop choices for mitigating elephant depredation impacts and addressing climate-related challenges.



Editor's Pick

Delhi summit to see a new strategic reset in India-Russia partnership

By: K Raveendran

An evolving convergence of political intent and economic pragmatism is giving fresh momentum to the India-Russia relationship, placing the forthcoming summit in New Delhi as a significant moment in a partnership that has already weathered decades of geopolitical shifts. The visit of President Vladimir Putin, framed within the terminology of a 'Special and Privileged Partnership', signals the desire on both sides to advance an agenda no longer restricted by earlier bottlenecks and no longer shaped solely by legacy compulsions. While oil had dominated negotiations for much of the past year, developments in global energy markets and ongoing conversations in Washington have eased the pressure around hydrocarbons, allowing New Delhi and Moscow to focus their attention on defence cooperation and broader strategic alignment. A key change enabling this shift is the recalibration of expectations around crude supplies. The fluctuations in global oil prices and the changing composition of India's energy basket have created an environment where the friction over Russian heavy crude versus American light crude has begun to lose relevance. India's ability to balance imports from multiple suppliers, coupled with the absence of direct competition between grades of oil it purchases, has reduced the scope for conflict between its partnerships with Washington and Moscow. This has, in turn, lifted a major burden from India's diplomatic bandwidth, enabling policy planners to revisit older templates of cooperation with Russia and explore new ones without the anxiety of antagonising another partner.

The widening space created by this shift is particularly evident in defence cooperation, which has long been the most visible pillar of the India-Russia equation. Both governments have acknowledged that the deepening of the defence relationship will be central to the Delhi summit. The discussions are expected to extend beyond the traditional buyer-seller dynamic that has shaped military ties since the Cold War. India, now more assertive in its push for indigenisation and self-reliance in defence production, is exploring models that combine technology transfers, joint manufacturing and longer-term collaboration in emerging domains such as cyber capabilities, space-based assets and advanced propulsion systems.

Moscow, for its part, sees value in retaining India as a trusted partner at a time when its own strategic landscape has undergone considerable strain. Western sanctions and shifting regional alliances have pushed Russia to diversify its economic and political engagements. India's large market, its expanding defence industrial base and its geopolitical weight offer Russia both stability and opportunity. The upcoming summit provides an avenue to reinforce these convergences, building on existing projects while outlining future pathways that reflect shared strategic calculations.

These dynamics also carry broader implications for New Delhi's foreign policy posture. India's long-standing emphasis on strategic autonomy continues to be tested by evolving global power structures. The shifting contours of US-China tensions, Russia's changing position in the international system and the uncertainties shaping West Asia have all placed new demands on India's diplomatic agility. In this environment, maintaining a robust partnership with Russia serves multiple objectives: it helps preserve India's freedom of manoeuvre, ensures diversity in its defence acquisitions and offers leverage in negotiations with other major powers.

Energy security remains intertwined with many of these calculations. India's diversification strategy has meant that no single country dominates its supply sources, but Russia continues to play a meaningful role. Its heavy crude fits into India's refining ecosystem, while American light crude provides flexibility and volume. As global markets adjust to changes in OPEC behaviour, the expansion of non-OPEC supplies and the broader volatility affecting commodity flows, the absence of conflict between Russian and American crude in India's import profile offers room for parallel engagements with both partners. This compatibility has not only lowered geopolitical risk but has also deepened India's capacity to pursue energy diplomacy that is both pragmatic and resilient.

The summit discussions are likely to touch upon broader economic possibilities as well, even if defence and energy dominate the headlines. Trade figures between the two countries have shown spurts of growth followed by periods of stagnation, indicating the need for structural interventions to unlock sustained expansion. Connectivity constraints, limited diversification of export baskets and regulatory hurdles have traditionally impeded progress. In the current environment, where de-risking supply chains has become a global priority, India and Russia may explore ways to stabilise bilateral commerce. This could involve enhancing cooperation in pharmaceuticals, agriculture, mineral resources and nuclear technology, areas where complementarities already exist.

Moreover, the geopolitical backdrop in which the summit is taking place is shaping the nature of conversations between the two countries. India's continued balancing between Western partnerships and its traditional friendship with Russia remains an exercise in nuance. New Delhi has avoided being drawn into great-power polarisation, instead leveraging its relationships with multiple actors to advance its own strategic interests. The reduction of oil-related tensions in Washington has eased one layer of complexity in this balancing act. It allows India to approach the summit with Moscow with greater confidence, knowing that it can defend its engagements without straining ties with other partners. Russia, too, recognises the value of India's growing profile. Its role in multilateral forums, its expanding economy and its evolving defence capabilities all contribute to Moscow's strategic calculations. The summit offers the Kremlin an opportunity to reinforce long-standing goodwill while signalling to other global actors that Russia continues to command partnerships beyond its immediate neighbourhood. For Moscow, maintaining a robust relationship with India is also a way of offsetting the risks associated with overdependence on any single partner.

The intangible dimension of the relationship—trust, reliability and political comfort—remains a strong factor underpinning the momentum around the summit. Despite shifts in the global order and India's closer engagement with the United States and Europe, the historical sense of partnership between New Delhi and Moscow has not dissipated. The terminology adopted for the summit, emphasising 'Special and Privileged Partnership', is not merely ceremonial. It reflects a relationship shaped by decades of cooperation, a relationship that both countries continue to value for reasons that blend legacy with strategic logic. (IPA Service)

The Power and Influence of Literature

... HIMANGSHU RANJAN BHUYAN ...

The history of human civilisation is an unbroken continuum of the evolution of human thought, consciousness, and emotions. The medium that preserves this continuum in its most powerful and vivid form is literature. To regard literature merely as a means of entertainment would be a mistake; it is, in truth, the deepest expression of the human soul and an unadulterated mirror of social life. From the cave paintings of primitive times to the printing presses of the modern age, human beings have always sought a medium to express their existence, and when that expression takes the form of art through words, literature is born. The power of literature is so immense that, without resorting to any physical weapon, it can radically transform a society, overturn the inner world of the human mind, and inspire an entire nation with new dreams.

The influence of literature upon the human mind is so subtle and profound that it may not be immediately visible, yet over time it shapes human values, thought processes, and behaviour in a way no other medium can achieve. Upon entering the world of literature constructed with words, a person is liberated from the limitations of everyday life and discovers an infinite universe. In real life a person can live only one life, but through literature he becomes capable of experiencing thousands of lives. By identifying with the joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, struggles and anguish of diverse characters, the reader rediscovers the humanity within himself. This mental connection awakens empathy and compassion in the human heart—qualities indispensable for building a healthy and humane society. When we learn through literature to feel the pain of others as our own, the narrowness of our minds dissolves, and we become truly broad-minded.

In the sphere of social reform and renaissance, literature has always played a pioneering role. A glance through the pages of history reveals that literature has invariably stood as a powerful voice of protest against superstition, evil customs, injustice, and oppression embedded in society. The maladies of society that law or administration cannot easily eradicate are challenged by literature through the awakening of human conscience. It is an eternal truth that the power of the word exceeds the power of the sword. For while a weapon can only wound the body or instil fear, literature strikes at the realm of thought. This very blow teaches people to question established systems. Literature instructs us that instead of blindly accepting any tradition or rule, it is the mark of a true human being to examine its underlying truth and rationality. The influence of writers and thinkers upon society endures far longer than that of ruling classes, because they do not govern—they inspire.

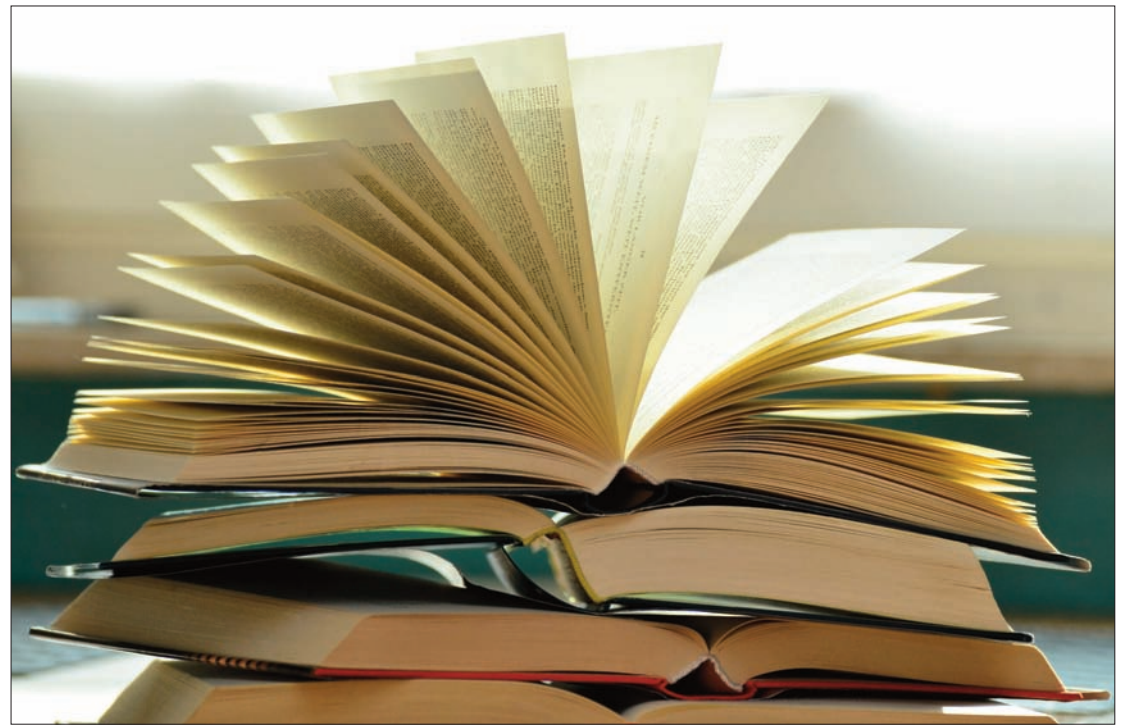
Another vital contribution of literature is the preservation and development of language. Language is not merely a medium of communication; it is the bearer of a nation's identity, culture, and heritage. It is in the lap of literature that language is nurtured and enriched. The creativity of writers endows the language with new

words, new metaphors, and new modes of expression, thereby enhancing its expressive capacity. The richer a nation's literature, the stronger its language and culture. Literature carries the knowledge and dignity of a language from one generation to the next. In the present storm of globalisation, when numerous smaller languages and cultures are marching towards extinction, literature offers people a rediscovery of their roots. Literature composed in one's own language awakens national pride and self-respect in the human heart. This pride is not merely emotional; it serves as a shield for the preservation of a nation's existence. Therefore, the practice of literature is not simply reading books; it is a silent struggle to keep one's identity alive.

In the present mechanical and competitive age, human beings are gradually becoming lonely and self-centred. Although the rapid spread of technology has physically connected us to the entire world, mentally we seem to be drifting farther apart from one another. In such a complex psychological state, literature can act like a healing elixir. Literature provides the best companionship in moments of solitude. A good book or a profound essay can dispel despair, anxiety, and depression from the mind and infuse it with fresh hope and enthusiasm. Literature grants us the mental strength and patience to confront the complexities of life. When we see in literature that struggle, failure, and suffering are not merely personal but universal and eternal, the burden of our own sorrow lightens of its own accord. Literature inspires us to control emotions, to become rational and equanimous—qualities essential for mental well-being.

One of the primary attributes of literature is its bestowal of vastness and depth upon the imaginative faculty of the human mind. Imagination lies at the root of all creation—whether science, philosophy, or art. Literature offers imagination a boundless sky in which to spread its wings. Freed from the rigid laws and limitations of the real world, literature creates an infinite realm where nothing is impossible. This creative imagination continually inspires human beings towards new discoveries, new thoughts, and new creations. The influence of literature is especially profound in the mental development of children and adolescents. It moulds within their tender minds concepts of morality, truth, justice, and beauty. The values acquired through literature in childhood play a decisive role in character formation throughout life. Good literature awakens and refines aesthetic sensibility. It bestows upon us a divine vision to perceive the exquisite beauty of nature, the intricacies of human relationships, and the mysteries of the universe with a fresh and sensitive gaze. This sense of beauty elevates human life from mere existence to an artistic plane.

Another indispensable aspect of literature is its impartiality and eternal quest for truth. A true writer never speaks on behalf of any particular side or is guided by any specific ideology; he speaks only for truth and humanity. History may conceal or distort truth for political or reli-



gious reasons, but timeless literature preserves truth in its authentic form. As a document of its contemporary society, the value of literature is immeasurable. Future researchers must turn to the literature of an era to understand its true picture, the psychology of its people, and its social conditions. Literature does not merely narrate events; it subtly analyses the psychological reactions and social impacts lying behind them. Hence literature is called the living history of society. Where politics, economics, or religion divide people into groups, literature unites them. Regardless of nation, religion, caste, or geographical boundary, literature repeatedly reminds us that the joys and sorrows, love and longing, hopes and despairs of all human beings are the same—this universal truth.

In the modern world, under the influence of cultural aggression and globalisation, the distinct identities of smaller nations and languages are on the verge of disappearance. In such a critical time, strengthening one's own literature is the most effective way to protect one's cultural identity. If we neglect our own literature, we risk losing our very soul. Yet this does not mean we should remain confined within our own literature alone. Only through exchange between our literature and world literature can the horizon of our thought expand. Through translated literature we can partake of the knowledge of the world's greatest thinkers and make our own thoughts known to the world. Such intellectual exchange enriches and dynamises human civilisation. Literature erects no barbed fences or borders. Like the wind it is free, like water it flows. Crossing the boundaries of one country, it can touch people in every corner of the globe. Thus literature serves as a powerful medium for fostering a sense of world brotherhood and universal humanism.

Literature does not stop at merely pointing out societal problems; it also carries hints of solutions. It compels people to think deeply by delving into the roots of problems. Through the characters of essays, novels, or plays, the writer unveils various facets of complex social issues, giving readers the opportunity to apply their own judgement. This

process helps build a conscious citizenry. A society advances only when its people are thoughtful, and the best way to make people thoughtful is through literature. Literature draws people somewhat away from material enchantment and attracts them towards spiritual and moral values. In today's consumerist society people wish only to take, not to give. Literature teaches us the glory of sacrifice and the joy of selfless service. It reminds us that the meaning of life lies not merely in accumulating wealth but in the pursuit of knowledge and humanity.

The influence of literature is not confined to the individual; it can have far-reaching effects in political and economic spheres as well. A single powerful piece of writing can force a government to change its policy or shape massive public opinion. In a democratic society, the freedom of literature and the media is of utmost importance. When writers fearlessly point out societal flaws, those in power are compelled to exercise restraint. Literature acts as a sentinel of democracy. It becomes the voice of the weak and oppressed, fighting for their rights. It is this combative spirit of literature that renders it great. It never compromises with injustice. Age after age, literature has sung songs of liberation against exploitation.

Human memory is limited, but literature grants immortality to human memory. The great sages, heroes, and heroines of the past and their magnificent deeds are kept alive among us by literature. Without literature we would have lost our past, and a nation without a past has no future. Literature connects us to our traditions and roots, so that no matter how modern we become, we do not lose our source. It is a vehicle of time through which we can travel between past, present, and future. From the wisdom of ancient seers to the ideas of modern scientists—everything is preserved in the bosom of literature. This treasury of knowledge is what propels the human race forward.

In the educational sphere too, the importance of literature is immense. Education is not merely the collection of facts; it is a process of character formation and mental development. The inclusion of literature in the curriculum not only helps students master language but

also fosters a positive outlook towards life. Literature increases curiosity and the tendency to question in students' minds—the very key to acquiring knowledge. Students who regularly engage with literature possess sharper thinking and analytical abilities than others. They can understand any subject deeply and express their opinions beautifully. Literature enriches vocabulary and enhances communication skills—qualities that are extremely vital for career-building in the present age.

There exists also an intimate relationship between spirituality and literature. Nearly all religious scriptures of the world are outstanding examples of literature. Through literature human beings seek God or the Supreme Reality. The insatiable desires of the human mind, the mystery of death, the meaning of life—these eternal questions are pursued by human beings within literature. Literature teaches us to think beyond this world. It makes us realise that we are not merely bodies of flesh and blood; we possess a soul whose development requires literature. Good literature purifies our soul and connects us to a higher level of consciousness. This spiritual connection bestows upon human beings mental peace and contentment that neither wealth nor power can buy.

In conclusion, it may be said that literature is an inseparable and indispensable part of human civilisation. It is the witness of our past, the fearless mirror of our present, and the guide of our future. The power of literature is the power to elevate human beings from bestiality to divinity, from darkness to light. Any nation or society that respects and practises literature can never perish. Creating a favourable environment for the pursuit of literature is the moral duty of us all if we are to build a healthy, strong, and humane society and future generation. Acquiring only textbook knowledge or technical skills does not make a person fully educated; true education and wisdom require immersion in the vast ocean of literature. Literature gives us knowledge, joy, consolation, and the true meaning of living. Only when everyone allows themselves to be illuminated by this inexhaustible source of literature's power can a beautiful, peaceful, just, and progressive society emerge.

INDIA'S DRUG EMERGENCY: A Silent War Threatening an Entire Generation

By: Lalit Garg

The growing prevalence of narcotic substances and the expanding deadly drug trade in India have today turned into a terrifying national crisis. Every other day, large consignments of drugs are seized in various states, painting a grim picture of the situation. This problem is no longer confined to any one state or region; it has spread in its most alarming form across Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Himachal, Delhi, Maharashtra and almost the entire nation. Particularly disturbing is the speed at which adolescents and the young generation are falling prey to the drugs—a warning sign of a dangerous future. Drug addiction is no longer just a personal illness; it has become a preface to social destruction. Youngsters wandering through dark alleys, the breakdown of families, rising crime, and the erosion of moral values—all are destructive consequences of this drug epidemic.

The menace has now engulfed not only adults but teenagers as well. To arrange money for drugs, many of them are slipping into the world of crime and committing all kinds of offences. In several recent criminal cases, juveniles confessed that they turned to crime solely to fund their addiction. A parallel crisis is the supply of counterfeit medicines. Recently, several children in different states died after consuming toxic cough syrup. Sensing this growing threat, a significant conference of drug controllers, police officials, and CID officers from seven states was held in Chandigarh to curb the circulation of fake medicines and narcotics. The aim was to bring these authorities onto a common platform for more effective action. It is commendable that for the first time, seven states have acknowledged the gravity of this crisis and begun a joint initia-

tive. This conference will surely illuminate the path toward resolving this deadly and deepening problem.

The drug trade and counterfeit medicines are not the problems of one state alone; they involve several national concerns. Massive consignments recovered from Punjab and coastal states have heightened the anxiety of the entire nation. A disturbing question arises: if such large quantities are being seized, how much more might be entering the country undetected? In Punjab's border districts, numerous cases have surfaced where drones from across the border were used to drop drugs and weapons. Recent statistics reveal that the drug trade is no longer restricted to narrow geographical boundaries. Punjab, which has only about 2.5% of India's total population, accounts for nearly half of the heroin seized in the country—an alarming indicator of how deep, widespread and organized the drug network has become.

In Haryana's border districts, nearly 90% of the state's drug-related cases in the last five years have emerged, signaling how trafficking routes pass through state borders and permeate society. Nationwide surveys indicate that addiction is no longer confined to youth; millions of children, adolescents, and especially women and young girls are getting exposed to various intoxicants. This is not merely a matter of concern—it is a serious warning regarding the future of the next generation. Under the grip of addiction, children and youth are falling behind mentally, physically, socially, and academically. Families are breaking apart, financial conditions are deteriorating, and crime rates continue to rise. Theft, robbery, violence, murder, and even sexual crimes are increasing due to addiction.

Another equally frightening dimension is that drug trafficking has evolved far beyond a secretive activity into a vast, well-organized smuggling system. Drone-based trafficking, international networks, manufacture of fake medicines, large-scale misuse of cough syrups and pharmaceutical drugs—all indicate that drugs are eating into India's social structure like termites. Drug mafias, criminal gangs, corrupt systems, and hostile neighbours together have created a parallel dangerous network that threatens law, morality, and human life. The Chandigarh conference brought forth many unsettling facts. Officials from Rajasthan, Ut-



tarakhand, Himachal, Delhi, Maharashtra, and other states agreed that if strict and coordinated measures are not taken now, the coming years could be disastrous. It is not an exaggeration to say that this crisis is severely damaging India's social fabric, youth power, and national progress.

To stop this uncontrollable and terrifying danger, the government, police, judiciary, society, and families—all must work together. Laws alone or occasional raids cannot solve the issue. Strengthening laws and ensuring

strict enforcement is essential. Drug trafficking, production of fake medicines, and illegal distribution must be met with punishments severe enough to instill fear in criminals. At present, offenders often escape with minor penalties or bail, emboldening them and allowing the illegal trade to flourish. Equally important is de-addiction and rehabilitation. Those trapped in addiction are not just offenders—they are victims. Families, society, and the government must understand them and provide support and ways to rebuild their lives. Although the number of de-addiction centres is increasing, their quality, facilities, medical support, counselling, and rehabilitation programs must be strengthened. People emerging from addiction need social acceptance, family support, and employment opportunities; otherwise, they fall back into the same dark world.

This is a time of alarm. If we fail to take the drug epidemic seriously today, future generations will not forgive us. Addiction is an enemy of humanity. It pushes youth into darkness, destroys families, and hinders national development. Therefore, the nation must resolve not to leave this fight solely to government machinery but to embrace it as a collective responsibility. The government must enforce strict, transparent, and effective policies against narcotic substances and counterfeit medicines. Society must treat addiction not as a matter of shame, but one of awareness and treatment. And the youth must understand that addiction gives neither strength nor joy; it only steals life and future. The time has come for India to unite and take decisive action against this crisis. This alone is in the interest of the nation, society, and the future of humanity.



By: Meenakshi Gogoi

The Celebration of Puberty

Smriti recalled how her grandmother restricted her from touching and eating pickles during her monthly periods. She was not allowed to enter her home temple or visit the temple outside, was forbidden from cooking food, and was made to sleep alone, depending on her mother and aunt to bring meals from the kitchen. Smriti's love for her grandmother used to diminish during her period days as she would make her feel untouchable by imposing such strict rules on her. She could find her mother and aunt helpless before her grandmother in a patriarchal household, to protest against such orthodox treatments on attaining her monthly periods. After her grandmother's death, Smriti's mother stopped practising such rules during her monthly periods. It was only the puberty celebration that the family decided to observe as a festival to welcome womanhood in girls

were not allowed to see her until the ceremony day arrived. It was a women's festival, after all, for all ages.

Smriti was adorned beautifully like a typical Assamese bride, and she was made to wear the beautiful Assamese silk Mekhela-Chador dress, her mother's gold bangles, and a beautifully designed necklace. She put a red bindi at the centre of her forehead, and laces of Bakul and Tagor flowers were tied on her hair bun. She was made to sit among married women, young girls, and her female school friends. The food and seating arrangements for the guests and relatives were made on the house lawn. The local caterers prepared the food.

Smriti felt like it was her wedding day as everybody teased her like a small bride. She recalled her grandmother strictly followed the rituals that day, from applying turmeric paste to her body to bathing her in a small shed made from banana plants in the house's backyard, where no men were allowed to enter. Smriti's grandmother scolded her for insisting on eating home-cooked spicy food and pickles during puberty. Her mother politely obeyed and followed the rituals as told by her grandmother. She felt that had her grandmother remained alive, she would have taken charge of Riya's puberty ceremony.

Smriti recalled how her grandmother restricted her from touching and eating pickles during her monthly periods. She was not allowed to enter her home temple or visit the temple outside, was forbidden from cooking food, and was made to sleep alone, depending on her mother and aunt to bring meals from the kitchen. Smriti's love for her grandmother used to diminish during her period days as she would make her feel untouchable by imposing such strict rules on her. She could find her mother and aunt helpless before her grandmother in a patriarchal household, to protest against such orthodox treatments on attaining her monthly periods. After her grandmother's death, Smriti's mother stopped practising such rules during her monthly periods. It was only the puberty celebration that the family decided to observe as a festival to welcome womanhood in girls.

At heart and mind, Smriti questioned the need to celebrate the puberty ceremony. She disliked the ceremony because it would compel adolescent girls to behave like adults who were supposed to laugh slowly and talk softly without raising their voices, and lose their temper. They were supposed to wear decent clothes without revealing the body, as imposed by older women and men of the patriarchal households. Meanwhile, Smriti's thoughts broke with Priya's loud

knock at her room's door. Priya entered her room and asked, "Can I borrow your brown lipstick and multi-colour bangles to wear with my long dress at Riya's puberty ceremony?" Smriti replied, "Sure, Priya. You seemed to be very excited about the day. Aren't you?" Priya replied, "Yes, I am. I must learn the rituals, as the next turn will be mine." Smriti was surprised to hear that from an eight-year-old Priya. They exchanged a burst of good laughter and soon, Priya left the room. It was evening, and Riya ate some fruit. Smriti's mother and aunt informed her father and uncle about Riya's attainment of puberty. Smriti's father said, "Let me know what things will be needed. I will make the guest list and arrange for the caterers." Smriti's mother handed him a list of small things, like a new comb, hair oil, mustard oil, raw turmeric, black lentils, and fruits for Riya.

Smriti and Pooja exchanged their thoughts on puberty the next day at college. Pooja did not have argumentative thoughts on the traditional way of celebrating puberty. However, Smriti had her own set of arguments and dislikes, primarily the imposition of rules on adolescent girls, which she strongly opposed. Pooja said, "We celebrate puberty like any other festival that brings joy to the household. It is a moment to celebrate fertility and share happiness among family members and relatives. Right?" "Yes. At this point, I agree. I would only celebrate because it will be a family gathering and to enjoy the day's activities," replied Smriti. She invited Pooja to come home and took charge of doing Riya's bridal dressing and makeup. Pooja happily agreed, and they left for their homes after lectures ended in college.

The day of the puberty celebration arrived, and Smriti's house was cleaned and decorated with flower laces, and guests and relatives poured in. Pooja arrived early in the morning to adorn Riya like a traditional Assamese bride. Riya was bathed with customary rituals by applying turmeric paste mixed with black lentils in their backyard under the banana plant shed. She wore a pinkish-golden silk-woven Mekhela-Chador dress, pieces of gold jewellery, and a light face makeup to enhance her beauty. Smriti and Pooja looked elegant in their Assamese silk Mekhela-Chador attire. Selfies and group photographs with family and friends kept them busy. Riya felt shy to be treated like a small bride. Smriti could feel Riya's emotions as she experienced them during her puberty. Priya, instead, had no great sense of the celebration, apart from having a day filled with happiness, good food, and guests gathering at home. She danced excitedly to a few Assamese modern

songs and entertained the women guests.

The guests relished the food. The function was over by evening, and all the guests had left. Riya went to her room, tired from the day-long ceremony. Priya slept with her that night.

While in bed, Smriti looked at the ceremony photographs at night and remembered her grandmother. She felt her grandmother would have loved to perform all customary rituals with perfection. Smriti was engulfed with thoughts about how older women maintained the puberty ceremony as a tradition for ages and passed it down effortlessly to succeeding generations. Puberty ceremonies used to excite Smriti when she was young, as she attended tuloni biya of her relatives and neighbours' daughters and enjoyed delicious food.

But, growing up, she began questioning puberty celebration because it would pressure girls in many households to be-

have like mature women of etiquette in a patriarchal household, which defined femininity primarily for older women. Smriti asked herself, "If puberty is celebrated to welcome womanhood, why let it accompany such strict orthodoxy? What is the need to publicly celebrate puberty like a wedding? Instead, why not parent's and families celebrate girls' achievements to support them in their endeavours? Will it not encourage girls to stand on their feet and succeed? Smriti was left with her mixed thoughts. The night grew darker, and she fell asleep after struggling with her thoughts on puberty.

The next day, as Smriti was leaving for college, she spotted a happily excited Riya while unpacking her gifts from the ceremony. She wondered how Riya would perceive the puberty celebration when she reached her age. Smriti smiled at Riya's innocence for the moment and left for her college.



It was a sunny August afternoon with no respite from the scorching heat. Smriti and her friend Pooja hired an autorickshaw from the college to escape the crowded town bus in the hot weather to reach their homes. Smriti was dropped at her house gate, and the autorickshaw drove Pooja to her home. Smriti spotted two neighbour aunts speaking to her mother after entering the gate. Her young cousin, Priya, came running to her and said, "The neighbour aunts have visited us after the news about Riya sister's puberty. I mean her tuloni biya." (Tuloni Biya refers to the girl's puberty celebration in Assam).

Smriti was not surprised, as it had been a decades-old festival of celebrating fertility in adolescent girls. She had to go through the celebration, as young girls in her family and neighbourhood did over the years. Smriti replied, "Okay, Priya. It is a traditional custom in Assamese households to celebrate the onset of puberty. You will enjoy the ceremony." Smriti phoned her friend Pooja and shared the news with her. Pooja felt excited and insisted on dressing up Riya like an Assamese bride for her puberty ceremony. Smriti agreed, and their phone conversation ended, with them hoping to see each other in college the next day.

Smriti quickly took a shower and went to meet Riya. She found her mother was present in Riya's room. Her mother said, "Riya attained puberty today at noon. We will celebrate her puberty ceremony." Smriti nodded and smilingly said, "So, you have entered adolescence. How are you feeling, Riya?" Riya replied, "I am nervous and scared to see the blood oozing out at short intervals. My stomach is aching a little." Smriti said, "It's normal to feel like that. It is natural for girls of your age to attain puberty. You don't worry, dear." Smriti gleefully said to lighten Riya's mood, "You will enjoy your puberty days as our

family will celebrate it like your small wedding." Riya smiled and felt comfortable after talking to Smriti.

Smriti asked her mother if Riya had been given a sanitary pad to wear. As she remembered, during her time, Smriti was made to wear a thick layer of cotton cloth, rather than a sanitary pad, to prevent leakage of menstruating blood. Smriti's mother said that she already gave Riya a sanitary pad packet to use. Smriti was relieved to hear that.

Smriti's mother arranged a mattress covered with a bed sheet on a woven mat and provided a soft pillow for Riya to sleep on for the next few days. Riya had learned about the puberty ceremony from her elders and how it was celebrated in Assamese families. It was her turn to experience her first puberty days with a ceremony to be followed. Smriti's parents were keen to mark the ceremony but on a small scale.

Smriti finished her lunch and went to take a short nap. But memories of her puberty celebration made her remain awake. She remembered the first day of puberty during her summer vacation break in grade eight. One afternoon, her skirt was stained red while she was playing with her friends in her garden. Smriti's aunt spotted her in this condition and immediately informed her mother. Soon, it was discovered that Smriti had attained puberty. Her grandmother took the lead in arranging the puberty celebration. She remembered sleeping on a thin mattress over a handloom-woven mat. The mattress was covered with a pink, embroidered bed sheet, accompanied by one pillow for sleeping. She was not allowed to eat fried and spicy food. Instead, she was fed rice, boiled potatoes, sagoo with milk, and fruits. She was bathed on the fourth day of attaining puberty. On the seventh day, Smriti's family invited their female relatives and neighbours, adolescent girls, and her female school friends to attend the puberty ceremony. Smriti recalled that her father, uncle, and other male family members

Vandana Kumari Jena's Swansong: A Portrait of an Entire Generation

By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

Reader's familiar with Vandana Kumari Jena's earlier works, such as *One Rotten Apple and Other Stories* or *Over the Edge*, will recognize her characteristic themes — the intersection of the personal and the institutional, the endurance of women in patriarchal systems, and the moral ambiguities of modern life. What distinguishes her latest book *Swansong* published from prestigious Rupa Publishing Company is its tone of acceptance. While her previous stories often examined struggle and survival, *Swansong* is about surrender — not defeat, but understanding. It asks whether peace can come not from triumph, but from reconciliation with imperfection. Jena's prose is remarkably clear, almost meditative in rhythm. She writes without ornamentation, relying instead on precision and observation. Her language carries the restraint of experience — there is no need to prove, only to reveal. Her ability to combine simplicity with substance gives the stories in *Swansong* its emotional resonance. Every scene feels lived, every line believable. She does not chase dramatic effect; instead, she allows empathy to do the work of art.

The relationships in *Swansong* — with family, colleagues, and lost loves — are drawn with delicate precision. Jena has an uncanny ability to portray intimacy without sentimentality. Her characters rarely say what they feel, but their silences speak volumes. A letter never sent, a phone call unanswered, a glance across a crowded room — these become the emotional anchors of the stories. Jena's years in the Indian Administrative Service lend authenticity to her depiction of bureaucratic life. The professional life, she suggests, is only one strand of identity; the private self, often neglected, is where the real reckoning happens. What makes the stories in the book stand out is the refusal to hurry. In an age of friction dominated by pace and spectacle, Jena trusts her readers to linger, to observe, to reflect. The stories move like life itself — measured, uneven, unpredictable.

The pace allows for introspection, not only by the characters but by the reader. There is a certain courage in that — to write slowly in a fast world, to trust that truth unfolds best in quietness.

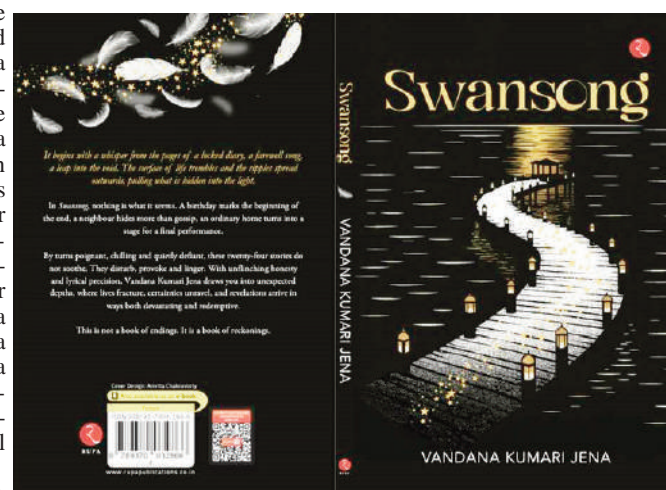
Vandana Jena's *Swansong* (2025) is not her last work (in a literal meaning) but certainly the latest collection of fiction from Rupa Publishing Co, a prestigious publishing house of Kolkata. In this book too Vandana Kumari Jena the eminent fiction writer cum Retd. IAS officer (1979 Batch) continues her literary journey, offering readers a meditation on endings, identity, and the quiet power of resilience. In this collection, Mrs. Vandana combines the discipline of her bureaucratic background with the emotional depth of a seasoned storyteller. The result is a narrative that feels both precise and profoundly humane — a tapestry woven with the threads of memory, regret, and grace. *Swansong* opens with a quiet scene that belies the emotional intensity that follows. There is a haunting melancholy and a thread of mystery running through all the 24 stories. Jena, who has seen human ambition and despair from the vantage point of governance, writes about ordinary people with extraordinary insight. Her protagonists could be anyone — a teacher, an official, a mother, a lover — yet through her, Jena paints a portrait of an entire generation struggling to balance self-realization with social expectation.

The titular story 'Swansong' is the story of Mala whose mother Palash jumps from Tiger Point in Lonavala and commits suicide the moment a man calls her 'Chhavi.' Mala accuses him of abetment to suicide. He, in turn alleges that Mala is not Palash's daughter. Questions hang loosely in the plot: Who was the man? And even more important, who was her mother? 'The Dark Night' is the tale of a father and son who get lost in the desert in Jaisalmer while in

search for someone, and are provided shelter for the night by a kind hearted man, who turns out to be the man they were looking for. 'Garima' is the story of a police officer in a Naxal afflicted district who finds his world crumbling down when he receives a parcel on his birthday and it turns out to be a parcel bomb. 'Father and Son' is the story of a man afflicted by kidney disease, whose adulterous wife committed suicide years ago, leaving behind a young son who, he suspects, is not his child. 'The Amish Quilt' takes us to the quaint Amish country in the US. 'Redemption' is the tale of a guilt-ridden son while 'Maya' is the story of a young doctor and his identity crisis. 'Climb Every Mountain' is a wonderful love story wavering between hope and despair. It is the story of a young man who falls in love with Neha, who has but one

later, his wife Sunidhi informs him of her affair with a colleague and leaves the house, finally shaking him up from his stupor. 'A Fantasy World' is the tale of a young maid while 'Childhood Monsters' is the tale of a young mother who while talking to her brother, is informed by her nephew that her son is missing from the playground. 'Dreams Die Last', 'The Boy Next Door' or 'The Sound of Silence' and 'The Wait' are enriched with psychological insight. I love reading 'Coming Home', 'Cardiac Arrest', 'Up in Smoke', 'Roosevelt Island' and 'Why Did I Forget' which made *Swansong* not the book of events but of emotions; not a collection of plot-driven tales but a character-driven meditation. The power of the stories lies in suggestion rather than revelation. The occasional restraint that gives the prose elegance can also make it feel distant to those seeking overt drama or confrontation. Its quietness is not emptiness; it is the silence of meaning.

The title, *Swansong*, is both literal and metaphorical. In literature and myth, the swan's final song before death is said to be its most beautiful — a gesture of transcendence in the face of ending. Jena's stories do not romanticize aging or failure; instead, they present the narratives as integral to wisdom. In doing so, Jena gives voice to a demographic often ignored in modern fiction — we all in the later stages of life, still capable of change, reflection, and grace. Rupa Publishing has honestly done a wonderful work as publisher. The cover page is excellent and it focuses on the deeply human nature about the story teller's art — it listens, observes, and forgives. (*International Tagore Awardee writer Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee, President Kolkata Indian American Society is a Former Affiliate Faculty Virginia Commonwealth University & multilingual International Poet cum Columnist. Email prof.ratanbhattacharjee@gmail.com*)



THE DEVIL'S

By: Otteri Selva Kumar

It was a dark and stormy night, the kind that made you want to stay indoors and lock the doors. But I had to get out, had to clear my head. I grabbed my jacket and headed to the local bar, a seedy little joint on the outskirts of town.

As I pushed open the door, the patrons turned to stare. I was the only one who didn't belong. The bartender, a gruff-looking man with a scar above his eyebrow, raised an eyebrow as I approached.

"What can I get ya?" he growled.

"Whiskey, neat," I replied, taking a seat at the bar.

He raised an eyebrow, but poured the drink without a word. I tossed it back, feeling the familiar burn in my throat.

Just as I was about to order another, a figure slid onto the stool beside me. I turned to see a suave-looking man with piercing green eyes and a charming smile.

"May I buy you a drink?" he asked, his voice low and smooth.

I hesitated for a moment, but something about him put me at ease.

"Sure, why not?"

He ordered a whiskey for me and a glass of red wine for himself. We clipped glasses and I took a sip, feeling the tension in my shoulders ease.

We talked for hours, about everything and nothing. He was easy to talk to, and I found myself opening up to him in ways I never thought possible.

As the night wore on, the storm outside grew fiercer. The thunder boomed and the lightning flashed, casting an eerie glow over the bar. Suddenly, my new friend leaned in and whispered, "Want to make a bet?"

I raised an eyebrow. "What kind of bet?"

"I'll bet you that I can drink a shot of whiskey faster than you can."

I laughed. "You're on."

He grinned and called out to the bartender, "Two shots of your finest!"

The bartender raised an eyebrow, but poured the shots without a word.

We stood up, glasses in hand, and the bartender shouted, "Ready, set, go!"

We tossed back the shots, the whiskey burning down my throat. But just as I was about to slam my glass down, I saw something out of the corner of my eye.

The man was smiling, his eyes glinting with a malevolent light. And then, everything went black.

When I came to, I was lying on the floor, my head pounding. The bartender was standing over me, a look of concern on his face.

"Hey, you okay?"

I sat up, rubbing my head. "What happened?"

"That guy you were drinking with, he left. Said you owed him a debt."

I stumbled out of the bar, into the stormy night. And that's when I saw it, scratched into the pavement:

"You'll pay the price, soon enough."

From that day on, I was never the same. I couldn't shake the feeling that I had made a deal with the devil himself.

And every time I looked in the mirror, I saw the man with the piercing green eyes, smiling back at me.

Rahul meets Kharge, Bihar leaders also present



NEW DELHI, Nov 29: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Saturday met party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and is learnt to have discussed the political scenario in Bihar, where the party was decimated in the recently-concluded assembly elections.

Sources said Gandhi drove down to Kharge's residence where he met leaders from Bihar.

Party in-charge for Bihar Krishna Allavaru and state party chief Rajesh Ram were also present during the meeting.

Gandhi and Kharge had earlier met Bihar leaders and all contesting candidates at Indira Bhawan in batches to ascertain the reasons for the party's drubbing at the hustings.

The candidates are learnt to have cited the NDA's ₹ 10,000 incentive scheme for women, internal squabbling and differences within Bihar Congress and late distribution of party tickets as some of the reasons for the defeat in the polls. (PTI)

Air pollution in Delhi like 'slow poison', govt must take strong steps: Congress

NEW DELHI, Nov 29: Likening the air pollution situation in Delhi to "slow poison", the Congress on Saturday said the government must hold discussions with all stakeholders on this "national problem" and even consider forming an MP-level committee to deal with the issue.

In a swipe at the BJP-AAP, the Congress also said governments will get lot of time to indulge in populist politics but if they will spend all the money on freebies there will not be funds for basic facilities.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters, party leader Sandeep Dikshit said Delhi's polluted air has crossed all limits and the current dire situation in Delhi is like "slow poison".

Doctors also say that Delhi's polluted air is shortening a normal person's lifespan by 6 to 7 years, and that sick people are at an even greater risk, he said.

There are many causes of air pollution, but as citizens, we must question governments and hold them accountable for their actions, Dikshit said.

"Only a small portion of air pollution comes from stubble burning and firecrackers during Diwali. A little pollution is felt during the winter, but these are not the major causes. The major cause of air pollution is vehicular pollution, which continues year-round. This accounts for around 35 per cent," he said.

Dikshit said the average person is suffering amid the accusations and counter-accusations between the BJP-AAP governments of Delhi and Punjab. The people of Delhi are suffering under the governments' deception, he said.

The government should control pollution, and if they are unable to do this, they have no right to be called a government, he said.

"All I have to say is this: stop misleading the public, because due to air pollution, this city is no longer habitable," Dikshit said.

"When Delhi was developing, the average traffic speed was 35 to 40 kilometers per hour. Today, due to the government's failure, traffic speeds have slowed. Road infrastructure is poor, and as a result, vehicular pollution levels have increased by two and a half times," he claimed.

Public transport in Delhi has "collapsed" and today, the number of people travelling by bus has decreased, while the number of vehicles has increased, Dikshit said. The question also arises as to why aren't new metro routes being built in Delhi, he asked.

"Another major cause of pollution is industrial pollution, which uses dirty fuel. Illegal factories in Delhi cannot operate without the connivance of the MCD, police, and politicians," he said.

When the then government removed many polluting industries in 2004-2005, why isn't this government taking similar steps, the Congress leader asked.

He further said there are piles of garbage in Delhi and garbage is being burned at various locations.

This is also a cause of air pollution, he added.

"Previously, dustbins were installed in many places in Delhi, where waste was kept separately. The people of Delhi participated enthusiastically in this, but now everything is gone," he said.

Many years ago, the technology of 'waste to energy plant' was introduced, but Arvind Kejriwal made a false claim that its smoke causes cancer, after which the plan was thrown into the dustbin, he claimed.

"I believe that the government must work seriously to address air pollution. The government should also discuss this issue with the public and take strong steps," he said. Dikshit said Rahul Gandhi has also urged the government to discuss this issue in Parliament.

"This is a national problem and the government should discuss this. I would demand that they should form a committee, probably at MP-level, and take all parties on board. I would also like to appeal to the Delhi Lieutenant Governor to get people together and do this as a people's movement," he said. (PTI)

'Coral reefs play a pivotal role as they provide natural coastal protection against storms' Andaman to get India's first coral reef research centre

SRI VIJAY PURAM, Nov 29: The government will soon set up the National Coral Reef Research Institute (NCRI) in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a senior official said.

NCRI, which will be set up at Rs 120 crore, will function as the nodal and monitoring agency for coral reef research across India, he said.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change will set up the first-of-its-kind centre at Chidiyatapu in South Andaman, he added.

"It will be an advanced coral reef research, conservation, and management centre," said Sivaperuman, the officer-in-charge of the Zoological Survey of India's Andaman & Nicobar regional centre.

"Coral reefs play a pivotal role as they provide natural coastal pro-

We still have the confidence that Karnataka will play a major role (in its revival): Shivakumar Leadership row: Siddaramaiah, DKS share meal, put up united front denying differences

BENGALURU, Nov 29: Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar broke bread on Saturday. Technically it was idli and vada but their breakfast meeting appeared to ease the power tussle between the two strongmen of Karnataka.

Addressing a press conference after their breakfast at the CM's residence Kaveri, the two leaders put up a united front, asserting there were no differences between them and that they would be united in the future as well.

The two men, who have been at loggerheads over the top job, said they will abide by the party high command's decision.

The breakfast meet was convened by the CM at the behest of the Congress high command to end the logjam over the issue bothering the 2.5 year old Congress government, with the opposition BJP warning of moving a no confidence motion should the power tussle between the CM and his deputy continue. Addressing the press conference, Siddaramaiah said, "I had a breakfast meeting with Shivakumar because some unwanted confusion was created. It was created by the media."

"We don't have differences.



Even today there are no differences, there won't be any in future as well. I will ensure that from now on it does not exist," he said.

The Chief Minister said they are united and together they will fight the 2028 assembly election.

Siddaramaiah also stressed that none of the Ministers and the ruling party MLAs are against the government.

"We will face the assembly. We have worked out a strategy on how to face the BJP and the JD(S). They are saying no confidence motion will be moved. If they bring adjournment motion then we will tackle it," he said.

On his part, Shivakumar said people had supported the Congress party and brought it to power. Hence, the Congress has to live up to their expectations.

Dismissing differences with the CM, Shivakumar said, "we don't have factionalism."

"We will go together, take everyone along and abide by the party high command."

Shivakumar, who is also the Congress state president, said that he discussed the strategy for the 2028 assembly polls to tackle opposition parties and also the ways to deal with the no confidence mo-

tion if the BJP moves it in the upcoming winter session of Karnataka legislative in Belagavi.

He also made it clear that the party would fight the 2028 assembly polls under the leadership of AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress MP Rahul Gandhi.

"The party is in a very difficult stage in the country. We still have the confidence that Karnataka will play a major role (in its revival). And we will repeat in 2028 (the 2023 poll victory)," he added.

Earlier, in a social media post after the breakfast meet, Shivakumar said the two leaders had a productive discussion.

"Met Hon'ble CM Shri @siddaramaiah avaru at Cauvery Residence this morning for a breakfast meeting. A productive discussion on Karnataka's priorities and the road ahead," he said.

All eyes were on the outcome of the meeting.

While Siddaramaiah has been asserting that he has got a mandate to remain as the chief minister for a full five-year term, Shivakumar has indicated that he was promised that he will be elevated after two-and-a-half years on a rotational basis. (PTI)

Raj Thackeray opposes move to axe trees for Sadhu Gram; says govt should not let matter escalate

MUMBAI, Nov 29: Opposition to the Maharashtra government's planned axing of trees to build 'Sadhu Gram' in Nashik ahead of the Kumbh Mela appears to be growing, with MNS chief Raj Thackeray on Saturday saying the Devendra Fadnavis dispensation should respect people's sentiments and not allow the conflict to escalate.

Accusing the government of indulging in "opportunism", he said it plans to cut the trees under the pretext of Kumbh Mela, and then donate the land to their "favourite industrialists". He also said that if the government takes a "confrontational stance", then his party would stand with people in the fight.

Actor and tree activist Sayaji Shinde, who is a member of the ruling Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, visited the Tapovan area in Nashik on Saturday and said he would go against the government if it is adamant on cutting trees.

The Sadhu Gram for religious leaders and seers is being planned over 1,200 acres of Tapovan area ahead of the Kumbh Mela, starting from October 31, 2026. As many as 1,670 trees were marked for removal with yellow paint. Nature lovers and citizens had claimed that some of the trees are 100 years old.

A notice issued by the Nashik Municipal Corporation to cut down trees received hundreds of objections. A hearing on the objections held on Monday witnessed chaotic scenes as green activists and citizens strongly opposed the proposed tree-cutting drive.

In a social media post, Raj Thackeray said this is not the first time that the Kumbh Mela is happening in Nashik.

"When the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) was in power in Nashik, many basic infrastructure works were carried out then. At that time, there were corporators who enabled a good dialogue between the administration that led to an excellent arrangement. When in



power in Nashik, the MNS did not feel the need to cut trees," he said.

The government should not give a hollow assurance that new trees will be planted at a different location, because that never happens. And if the government has space to plant five times as many trees elsewhere, then why not build Sadhu Gram there instead, he asked.

"The (state) government should not resort to opportunism by giving the pretext of sadhus to benefit industrialists. Today, using the pretext of the Kumbh Mela, the trees will be cut, the land be levelled in the name of Sadhus, and then it will be donated to their favourite industrialists! That is the only thought this government seems to have!" the MNS president said.

"Otherwise, what else is going on in Maharashtra right now? Swallowing up land or working as brokers for industrialists - that is what the current ministers, MLAs, their relatives and their circles seem to be doing!" he alleged.

Nashik residents are strongly opposing this tree felling, he added.

"I urge the people of Nashik to stand firm. We will oppose the move even after the (local body) polls. I urge the government not to escalate the matter and respect the views of people. If the government takes a confrontational stand, then the MNS will be with the people in this fight and will always be," Thackeray said.

His attack on the state government comes a day after his cousin and Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray said Tapovan, where the proposed sadhu gram is to come up, is the place where it is widely believed that Lord Ram,

Sita and Lakshman resided during their exile.

"This cutting of trees is corruption in the name of Hindutva. BJP's Hindutva is fake and the trees are being cut to benefit the contractors," he had said.

During his visit on Saturday, Sayaji Shinde said, "Trees are our parents. We should not allow cutting of even a single tree for Sadhu Gram. Even if sadhus come and go, it does not make any difference, but the disappearance of trees will affect our lives and our future generations. Only trees are celebrities in this world. There is a need to protect them...do not implement a hidden agenda."

"Not a single tree should be cut for Sadhu Gram. If our own people deceive us, how can we call them as our own people?" he asked.

"Sadhus, mahants are good people, but if 1,000 people come when 10 are needed at a place, they cannot be called sadhu, mahants. Such people should not come here and destroy Nashik. Local residents should come together to oppose this," Shinde said.

Despite requests of not cutting the trees, the government is adamant. So if needed, we will go against the government on the issue, Shinde added.

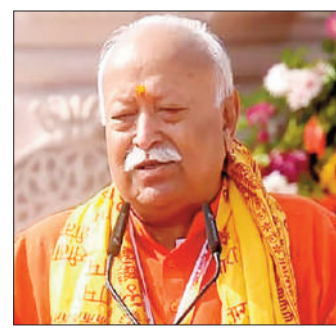
Cutting of trees is an insult to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Sant Dnyaneshwar and Sant Tukaram, he said.

Shinde criticised minister Girish Mahajan and said he should desist from making controversial statements.

Hitting out at Shinde over the issue, Mahant Sudhir Das Maharaj of Akhil Bharatiya Panch Ramanandi Nirvani Akhada, said, "Sayaji Shinde does not know what Kumbh Mela is. Four hundred banyan trees will not be cut in Nashik. It seems that he has been misled and brought here. He should not criticize sadhu, mahants and Kumbh Mela."

"Agitation is his right, but he should not speak against Kumbh Mela and sadhu, mahants. He is not aware of the Kumbh tradition," he said. (PTI)

India's tradition rooted in fraternity, dispute not in our nature: Bhagwat



MUMBAI, Nov 29: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Saturday said engaging in disputes is not in India's nature and asserted that the country's tradition has always emphasised fraternity and collective harmony.

Speaking at the national book festival in Nagpur, Bhagwat said that India's concept of nationhood differs fundamentally from Western interpretations.

"We do not have any argument with anyone. We stay away from disputes. Having a dispute is not in our country's nature. Being together and fostering fraternity is our tradition," he said, adding that other parts of the world evolved in situations filled with conflict.

"Once an opinion is formed, anything apart from that thought becomes unacceptable. They close doors to other thoughts and start calling it '...ism'," he remarked.

Bhagwat also said that India's concept of nationhood differs fundamentally from Western interpretations.

"They do not understand our views about nationhood, so they started calling it 'nationalism'. Our concept of a 'rashtra' is different from the Western idea of a nation. There is no difference of opinion amongst us about whether it is a nation or not — it is a 'rashtra', and it has existed since ancient times," he stressed.

"We use the word nationality, not nationalism. Excessive pride about the nation led to two world wars, which is why some people fear the word nationalism," he claimed.

Bhagwat observed that if we

Bengal LoP accuses state administration of manipulating electoral rolls during SIR

SILIGURI/COOCH BEHAR (WB), Nov 29: Leader of the Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, on Saturday alleged that the state administration was involved in manipulating the electoral rolls during the ongoing SIR, and that senior officials were personally intervening to retain ineligible names in the voter list.

He said the Election Commission (EC) should have acted "a little more swiftly" during the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

Speaking to reporters in Siliguri in north Bengal, Adhikari said, "The EC depends on the state machinery, which is indulged in fraud."

"The state machinery is trying to include the names of Bangladeshi infiltrators in the voter list," he alleged.

Adhikari claimed that senior officials were making direct calls to district-level authorities, including the district election officers, electoral registration officers and assistant electoral registration officers, to ensure certain names remain on the voter rolls "in a wrong manner".

"These allegedly included dead voters, duplicate voters, fake voters and Bangladeshi infiltrators," he said.

However, the BJP leader welcomed the EC's intervention on Friday, after it appointed observers directly in the state and across all zones.

Retired IAS officer Subrata Gupta has been named the Special Roll Observer for the SIR exercise in West Bengal, an official said.

The EC has also appointed 12 IAS officers as 'Electoral Roll Observers' to oversee key aspects of electoral roll preparation following the SIR and assist district election officers (DEOs) and electoral registration officers (EROs) in taking corrective measures, he said.

Adhikari further said that the BJP has deployed the highest number of booth level agents (BLAs) in the state during the ongoing revision exercise. Earlier in the day, he visited the home of Indian cricketer Richa Ghosh in Siliguri and felicitated the sports person for her outstanding performance in the ICC Women's World Cup 2025.

He praised the young wicketkeeper-batter for her batting in the semi-final and final, calling her a "true daughter of West Bengal" who has achieved the rare feat of winning the ICC Women's U-19 World Cup, the Women's Premier League and the senior ICC Women's World Cup at a young age.

Meanwhile, high drama followed after police objected to setting up a podium obstructing vehicular traffic on a highway at Chhangrabandha in Cooch Behar district for a rally scheduled to be addressed by Adhikari, leading to protests by BJP activists. (PTI)

BSF committed to eradicate Maoists from Odisha by March 2026: IG

BHUBANESWAR, Nov 29: The BSF is committed to eradicate Maoists from Odisha by March 2026, which is a top operational target of the force, a senior officer of the paramilitary force said here on Saturday.

Speaking to media persons, BSF IG Shiv Aadhar Shrivastava said, "We are conducting technology-driven, hard-hint-based, meaningful operations in association with Odisha police and other central armed police forces to eradicate Maoists from the state by March 2026."

One of the most celebrated achievements is transforming the erstwhile cut-off region, once a Maoist hotbed, into Swabhiman Anchal, he said.

Now, BSF personnel have been redeployed in the district of Kandhamal. New units have been set up, and anti-Maoist operations are being carried out for longer duration in difficult terrain, the IG said.

BSF has been operating anti-Maoist operations in Odisha since 2010. At present, six battalions of the force have been deployed in Koraput, Malkangiri, Boudh, Kalahandi, Kandhamal, Rayagada and Nabarangpur districts of the state, he said.

So far, during the operations in Odisha, the BSF has achieved significant milestones, including neutralisation of 86 Maoists, arrest of 710 Maoists, surrender of 2,508 Maoists and their supporters. Besides, 566 IEDs and live bombs were defused, he said.

The operations are being conducted with specific intelligence input given by the state police and particularly blocking the routes the Maoists have adopted to get into Odisha from neighbouring Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh, the BSF officer said. (PTI)

consider the definition of a nation as understood in the Western context, it typically involves a nation-state with a central government managing the region. However, India has always been a 'rashtra', even under different regimes and during periods of foreign rule.

The RSS chief said India's nationhood was not born out of arrogance or pride but out of deep interconnectedness among people and their coexistence with nature.

We are all brothers, as we are children of Bharat Mata, and there is no other human-created basis such as religion, language, eating habits, traditions or states. Despite diversity, we remain united as that is the culture of our motherland, he said.

He also stressed the importance of knowledge that leads to wisdom and underlined that practical understanding and living a meaningful life matter more than mere information.

True satisfaction, he said, comes from helping others — a feeling that stays throughout life, unlike temporary success.

Meanwhile, interacting with young writers at the event, Bhagwat said that the advent of technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) cannot be stopped, but we should remain its masters and maintain our dignity while dealing with it.

AI should be used for the benefit of mankind, to make humans better, he said.

To a query on the challenge of globalisation on language and culture, the RSS chief said, "It is an illusion currently. The real era of globalisation is yet to come, and India will bring it."

India has had the concept of globalisation right from the beginning, and it is called 'vasudhaiva kutumbakam' (the world is one family), he said.

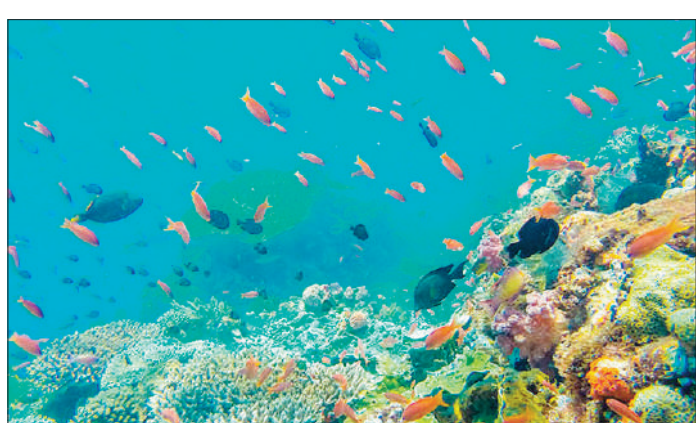
"We don't make a global market, but we will make one family, which will be the real essence of globalisation, and that era is yet to come. Hence, remove the fear or misunderstanding about globalisation from our hearts," Bhagwat said. (PTI)

Delhi court extends gangster Anmol Bishnoi's NIA custody till Dec 5

NEW DELHI, Nov 29: A Delhi court on Saturday extended the NIA custody of deported gangster Anmol Bishnoi for seven more days. Special Judge Prashant Sharma ordered the extension till December 5 in the hearing conducted at the NIA headquarters amid high security.

Wanted in connection with the killing of NCP leader Siddique, firing at actor Salman Khan's residence in April 2024, the killing of Punjabi singer Sidhu Moosewala, among other crimes, Anmol was "removed" from the US on November 18. He was detained in the US in November last year.

Earlier on November 19, Anmol, the brother and close aide of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, was sent to 11 days of NIA custody. (PTI)



tection against storms, working as a cushion against waves. The reefs help prevent loss of life and properties in the coastal region," he said, addressing a workshop on Coastal and Marine Biodiversity of Island Ecosystems here on Friday evening.

Nicobar Islands are one of the four biodiversity hotspots in India, and have a rich collection of both indigenous and migratory species.

Expressing concern over the rising sea levels and increasing temperatures, Chandra highlighted the impacts of climate change on marine habitats, particularly coral reefs.

"Our government is actively encouraging biodiversity enthusiasts by providing opportunities to name newly discovered species. The government is providing all assistance to interlink agriculture and island biodiversity in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands," he said.

A total of 20 personnel from various agencies, including the Indian Coast Guard, INS Jarawa, Indian Army, Andaman & Nicobar Police, took part in the three-day workshop that concluded on Saturday. (PTI)

Sivaperuman said a QR code-based system will be introduced at the ZSI Museum in Sri Vijay Puram, enabling people to digitally access photographs and information related to displayed species.

ZSI's former director Kailash Chandra said the Andaman and

Kohima Peace Memorial & Eco Park inaugurated

KOHIMA, Nov 29: The Kohima Peace Memorial and Eco Park, a joint initiative of the Governments of Japan and Nagaland, was inaugurated on Friday, with leaders describing it as a powerful symbol of remembrance, reconciliation and a shared commitment to peace.

Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio, in his address, said the site stands as "a reminder of the past, a celebration of the present, and a promise for the future, deeply rooted in the history of the Second World War".

He said the serene location in the heart of Kohima echoes the courage, sacrifice and resilience of those who fought during the Battle of Kohima—regarded as one of the fiercest Allied battles—and of the Naga people who endured immense hardship as war reached their doorstep.

Calling the battle "very dear" to him, Rio shared personal reflections on his father's service in the British Indian Army and how wartime memories shaped his up-

bringing. He noted that the memorial and Eco Park, supported by Japan, also represent enduring friendship, strengthened by frequent visits from Japanese families and ongoing Japanese-assisted projects, including the JICA-funded 400-bedded hospital and skill development initiatives in Nagaland.

Rio urged students and citizens to visit the memorial to understand the devastating impact of war, calling the facility a "treasure for generations" that must be preserved with care.

He encouraged the promotion of Naga products in the newly opened shops while allowing limited space for items linked to Japanese and British wartime history. Emphasising discipline and meritocracy, he said learning from Japanese values of hard work and focus would help build a better society.

Environment, Forest & Climate Change Minister C.L. John said the project reflects a mature partner-

ship between Japan and Nagaland, born from the tragedy of World War II and now carrying a strong message of peace and brotherhood.

He said the Peace Memorial stands on the very ground where soldiers fell, and the Eco Park components funded under the JICA-assisted Nagaland Forest Management Project will also support women self-help groups through dedicated stalls. John expressed hope that the landmark will become a vibrant space that promotes culture, reconciliation and Nagaland's biodiversity.

Advisor to the chief minister and IDAN Chairman Abu Metha highlighted Kohima's global wartime importance, comparing it to historic sites such as Hiroshima, Pearl Harbour and the River Kwai.

Metha said the Naga people have transformed the pain of war into a commitment to unity and harmony, and the Peace Memorial and Eco Park stand as a testament to this resolve. (PTI)

'Entrepreneurship and skilling of youth is critical for state's growth story'

Meghalaya CM releases ₹ 130-cr scholarship for 70,000 students

TURA, Nov 29: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Friday released the second and final instalment of the Umbrella Post Matric Scholarship amounting to ₹ 130 crore for nearly 70,000 students for the 2024-25 academic year.

The programme was held at the district auditorium here, attended by Education Minister Lakhmen Rymbui, Commissioner and Secretary (Education) Vijay Kumar Mantri, West Garo Hills Deputy Commissioner Vibhor Aggarwal and Director of Higher and Technical Education Hazel D B Sangma.

Addressing the gathering, Sangma said the state government was releasing the full scholarship amount from its own resources as the funds from the Centre had not yet been received. The decision to release the amount in advance was taken to ease the difficulties faced by students, he said.

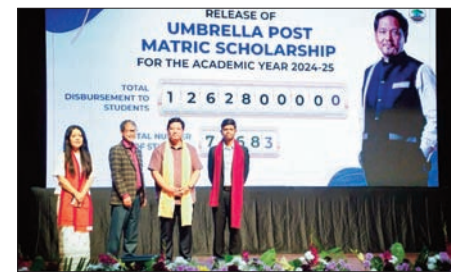
Sangma said earlier rules did not allow the advance transfer of scholarships, but the state had now worked out a mechanism with the Centre to enable early release.

Once the ₹ 130 crore is transferred to Meghalaya Rural Bank, the processing and account verification will require a few days before students receive the money, he said, urging students to ensure their bank accounts are Aadhaar-linked.

Sangma said education continued to be a top priority for the government, and announced that reforms to resolve long-pending issues faced by ad hoc and SSA teachers were close to being finalised and could be implemented from the next financial year. With thousands of students joining the programme virtually from 200 locations across the state, Sangma also outlined the government's long-term vision, including youth-focused programmes such as CM Elevate, YESS Meghalaya, PRIME, MGMP, STAR and Hello Meghalaya.

"Entrepreneurship and skilling of the youth is critical for the state's growth story," he said.

He said the government had planned economic growth not just for the coming years but till 2047, with policies and programmes designed to position the youth as key drivers.



"You will be in the driver's seat to take us into that phase of 2047 where Meghalaya should become one of the best states in the country," Sangma said.

In his remarks, Education Minister Lakhmen Rymbui described the day as a "red-letter day" for the student community, marking the fulfilment of commitments made by the government to strengthen and expand access to education.

The programme was attended by heads of institutions, teachers, students and officials of the education department, with around 7,000 students participating online. (PTI)

Ohiwot Laloo receives Bharat Scouts and Guides Silver Star Award

JOWAL, Nov 29: Ohiwot Laloo, a senior school teacher and an active youth influencer in Meghalaya's West Jaintia Hills, has been conferred with the prestigious Silver Star Award of the Bharat Scouts and Guides (BSG) at a ceremony held in Uttar Pradesh capital Lucknow recently, officials said on Saturday.

Laloo is the first BSG member from the district to receive the honour from the male (Scouts) section in recognition of "special, distinguished and continuous dedicated service rendered to the scout/guide movement".

Associated with the scouting movement since 1979, Laloo is widely respected as a teacher par excellence, scoutmaster and first-aid professional certified by the Indian Red Cross Society and St John Ambulance India.

He currently holds key positions as district commissioner (Scouts) and state commissioner (Headquarters) in the BSG, besides serving as district secretary of the Indian Red Cross Society, West Jaintia Hills. Over the decades, Laloo has received several recognitions, including the Medal of Merit, Long Service Medallion and the District Teacher Award.

Officials said he has been instrumental in strengthening the scouting movement in the district, initiating notable programmes such as the Open Unit in Jowai town, the first Meghalaya Bharat Scouts and Guides Sports Meet and the annual winter camps for district scouts and guides.

His long-standing contributions at the national, state and district levels earned him the Silver Star Award, one of the highest honours of the organisation, they added. (PTI)

Phase-I election training for presiding and polling officers held

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Nov 29: Phase-I Election Training for Presiding Officers and Polling Officers for the upcoming Itanagar Municipal Election 2025 was conducted today at Siddhartha Hall, Gompa Mandir.

The training aimed to strengthen the preparedness of polling personnel by providing clarity on their roles, responsibilities, legal powers, and procedures essential for ensuring a smooth, fair and transparent polling process. Officers were briefed on election protocols, polling station management, and

the guidelines issued by the State Election Commission.

Shri Sougata Maity, Master Trainer (EVM), explained the functioning and handling of the Electronic Voting Machine.

The programme was led by Shri Khoda Lasa, APCS, Assistant Commissioner (Election), who underlined the crucial responsibility of Presiding Officers in maintaining voting secrecy, preventing malpractice, and ensuring the conduct of a free and fair poll.

A total of 541 polling officials took part in the training programme.

Police outlines Hornbill Festival security, traffic plan

KOHIMA, Nov 29: Nagaland Police has made a comprehensive security and traffic plan for the 26th edition of the Hornbill Festival to begin from December 1, a senior officer said on Saturday. ADGP (Administration) Renchamo P Kikon told reporters at the Police headquarters that a three-tier security arrangement has been put in place and expressed confidence that the festival will be incident-free as in previous years.

He said managing traffic remains a major concern for the public, but the department has observed "significant improvement" in recent editions.

Additional SP (Traffic) Puzoto Khatsa presented detailed traffic regulations and pass categories. Vehicles have been divided into seven pass categories, each assigned specific entry

points and parking zones. Z-category (VVIP) vehicles will enter through Gate 2 and park near the Main Arena and World War II Museum. X and Y-category vehicles and PWD vehicles will use the main parking near Gate 2.

Organisers and artists will enter through Gate-1, while vendors will enter via JCC College and Legislature Park at regulated timings. Heavy vehicles will be prohibited between 7 am and 10 pm on the festival route. Parking on the stretch from Old Phesama Check Gate to Kisama Heritage Village will not be allowed, and violators will face towing penalties. A free shuttle service will operate from Kigwema Ground, while NST will run paid shuttle services from PHQ and ISBT to the festival venue.

Police also announced that no visible armed personnel will be permitted inside the main arena, except designated close protection officers, who are restricted to concealed small arms.

Kikon urged visitors to follow traffic advisories and cooperate with police to ensure a safe and enjoyable Hornbill Festival. Hornbill festival is the annual tourism promotional event of the Government of Nagaland and the coming together of all the tribes of the state under one roof at Naga Heritage Village, Kisama, some 12 km south of the state capital. It showcases the vibrant culture and tradition of the state also brings tribes from other northeastern states, while also showcasing the business and investment opportunities through business roundtables during the 10-day event. (PTI)

Delegates from 13 nations attend Meghalaya's inaugural Northeast India Organic Week

SHILLONG, Nov 29: In a bid to place Meghalaya and the region firmly on the global organic map, the state government on Friday inaugurated the first Northeast India Organic Week, a multi-nation platform that brought together delegations and buyers from 13 countries to boost trade and innovation in the sector.

The event was organised in partnership with the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), the Union Commerce Ministry and IFOAM-Organics Asia.

Officials said representatives from Malaysia, Taiwan, Mongolia, Indonesia, New Zealand and several other countries are participating at the event, signalling the region's growing potential as a gateway for global organic trade.

APEDA general manager Dr Saswati Bose described the initiative as a "significant milestone for India and the global organic community", noting Meghalaya's biodiversity and strong community farming traditions.

She said APEDA had helped products such as turmeric, ginger, niche spices and fruits enter West Asia markets in recent years.

Meghalaya Agriculture Commissioner and Secretary Dr Vijay Kumar D said the



state was among the fastest growing in the country, driven largely by agriculture.

"Meghalaya is the second fastest growing state behind Tamil Nadu and the only one with 10 per cent growth over the last four years post-COVID," he said.

He said Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma's vision was to more than double farmers' income by 2028 and highlighted the government's "hub-and-spoke model" linking village-level centres to major processing hubs.

A new ginger processing unit worth Rs 25 crore has been set up as the largest organic spice processing facility in the Northeast, he added.

Dr Kumar said Lakadong turmeric, with up to 13 per cent curcumin content, was among the finest in the world.

The state is also establishing an extraction unit for bio-cummin tablets and aims to bring one lakh hectares -

nearly 25 per cent of the state's cultivated area - under certified organic agriculture by 2028.

He also cited ongoing climate action efforts under the 'Green Meghalaya' initiative and said bamboo-based biochar could help revive the state's acidic soils.

APEDA chairman Abhishek Dev said Meghalaya had "significant export potential" in organic produce and emphasised the need for strong partnerships with state governments to improve last-mile connectivity.

He also highlighted the rollout of the eighth edition of the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP), which focuses on strengthening certification systems.

IFOAM-Asia executive director Jennifer Chang said the event was a major milestone for the global organic movement. Referring to her visit to a Khasi mandarin orchard in

Mawphu, she said farmers in the region were "organic by default" and served as "stewards of nature".

IFOAM adviser Brendan Hoare called the organic movement "borderless and collaborative" and urged long-term cooperation among stakeholders.

Following the inauguration, dignitaries opened an exhibition featuring certified organic products from farmer producer organisations, cooperatives and enterprises across the Northeast.

A dedicated Meghalaya Organic Pavilion displayed produce from state-supported collectives alongside kiosks from APEDA, the Tea Board, the Directorate of Food Processing and other agencies.

A presentation by CRISIL associate director Priyanka Uday described Meghalaya as an emerging powerhouse in India's organic sector.

She said exports of organic ginger to Dubai had reached 15 metric tonnes between 2019 and 2023, while sales of organic black pepper had doubled.

GI-tagged Khasi mandarins have also made inroads into Gulf markets through the Lulu Group, she added. The afternoon sessions included a buyer-seller meet and discussions on NPOP regulations and labelling norms. (PTI)

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL

OFFICE OF THE KHANGAR BASTI A/C BEAT UNDER WESTERN RANGE
BORLANGPHER: KARBI ANGLONG WEST DIVISION, DIPHU

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

It is for general information to all the intending bidders that 01 (one) no. of Cane (Raidang) at Khangar Basti A/C Beat office under Western Range Borlangpher, will be on public Auction sale on 01.12.2025 at 11:00 am positively at the premises of Khangar Basti A/C Beat office Under Western Range, Borlangpher, Karbi Anglong West Division, Diphu. Vide DFO's order No. B/KAW/auction/Cane(Raidang)/2025-26/1932 dtd. 19/11/2025. The

Following terms and conditions are as follows:-

- The Auction will be conducted by the in charge of the A/C Beat officer of Khangar Basti A/C beat officer under Western Range, Borlangpher, Karbi Anglong West Division.
- The interested bidders are asked to inspect the said auction Cane (Raidang) at Thabong nala area for self confidence. No complain under any circumstances will be entertained later on.
- The successful bidder will have to deposit the entire bid value in the Auction table in Cash. If the highest bidder fails to deposit the tendered value the item will be settled with the 2nd highest tender subject to fulfilment of the terms and condition of the notice.
- The successful bidders will have to sign. at the site of declaration after completion of the auction.
- The undersigned is not bound to assign any reason for rejection of the bid.
- If the officer does not function on the date of Auction for any reason etc. the next working day will be treated as auction date.
- The successful bidder will have to obey and follow all rules and regulation.
- G.S.T & I.T will be realized from the highest from the highest bidder as per their Bid offered amount.
- Quantity contain 35000 Rmt. Of Cane (Raidang) at up stream of Thabong nala and 50000Rmt.of Cane (Raidang) at down stream of Thabong nala.
- Total quantity of cane (Raidang) contain in this auction are 85000 Rmt.
- As per the schedule rates of Royalty leviable on all classes of forest product in Assam vide notification letter no.FRS.1/2024/Pt/47 Date Dispur, the 1 st. Sept./09 is mention that the rate of cane (Raidang) are Rs.20/72Rmt. So the Govt. value of this tender will starting from exact value is i.e Rs.23611.00 rupees (twenty three thousand six hundred eleven).

Sd/-

i/c B.O. Khangar Basti A/C Beat Officer
K/A West Division

Sd/-

Khangerbasti A/C Beat office
K/A West Division

KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL
OFFICE OF THE KHANGAR BASTI A/C BEAT UNDER WESTERN RANGE
BORLANGPHER: KARBI ANGLONG WEST DIVISION, DIPHU

SHORT TENDER NOTICE

It is for general information to all the intending bidders that 01 (one) no. of Satkora (Citrus fruit) at Khangar Basti A/C Beat office under Western Range Borlangpher, will be on public Auction sale on 01.12.2025 at 11:00 am positively at the premises of Khangar Basti A/C Beat office Under Western Range, Borlangpher, Karbi Anglong West Division, Diphu. Vide DFO's order No. B/KAW/auction/Satkora (Citrus fruit)/2025-26/1931 dtd. 19/11/2025. The Following terms and conditions are as follows:-

- The Auction will be conducted by the in charge of the A/C Beat officer of Khangar Basti A/C beat officer under Western Range, Borlangpher, Karbi Anglong West Division.
- The interested bidders are asked to inspect the said auction Stakora (Citrus fruit) at Thabong nala area for self confidence. No complain under any circumstances will be entertained later on.
- The successful bidder will have to deposit the entire bid value in the Auction table in Cash. If the highest bidder fails to deposit the tendered value the item will be settled with the 2nd highest tender subject to fulfilment of the terms and condition of the notice.
- The successful bidders will have to sign. at the site of declaration after completion of the auction.
- The undersigned is not bound to assign any reason for rejection of the bid.
- If the officer does not function on the date of Auction for any reason etc. the next working day will be treated as auction date.
- The successful bidder will have to obey and follow all rules and regulation.
- G.S.T & I.T will be realized from the highest from the highest bidder as per their Bid offered amount.
- Total quantity of Satkora (Citrus fruit) are 5000 Pes.
- Govt. value of Satkora (Citrus fruit) @ Rs. 4.50/pes. + 30% Monopoly Fees + G.S.T etc.

Malaysia, Netherlands off to winning start in FIH Men's Jr WC

MADURAI, Nov 29: Malaysia and Netherlands started their FIH Men's Junior World Cup campaign on a positive note, getting the better of Austria and England respectively in Pool E matches here on Saturday.

While Malaysia blanked Austria 5-1 in the first match of the day here, Netherlands defeated England 5-3.

Danish Khairil (56th, 57th minutes) scored two field goals for Malaysia, while Harris Osman (28th), Adam Johari (47th) and Naaveesh Panicker (55th) were the other goal getters for the winners. Austria's lone goal was scored by Julian Kaiser from a penalty corner in the 56th minute.

Earlier in the day, Jan van't Land (2nd, 49th) scored two field goals in Netherlands' win over England. Casper van der Veen (26th) also struck a fine field goal, while Joppe Wolbert (39th) found the net from a penalty stroke and Danilo Trieling (54th) from a penalty corner to hand Netherlands a comfortable win.

England's goals were scored by Kaden Draysey (11th), Michael Royden (29th) and George Fletcher (49th).

Later in the day, Canada will take on reigning champions Germany in their second Pool A match, while Egypt will be up against Namibia in Pool D. (PTI)

HC allows Shanth Kumar's candidacy for KSCA president's post, Prasad to have competition

BENGALURU, Nov 29: Veteran sports administrator KN Shanth Kumar on Saturday expressed relief after the High Court declared his nomination papers for the post of Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) valid, setting aside an earlier decision of the Electoral Officer.

The Karnataka High Court order means that former India pacer Venkatesh Prasad will now have competition for the KSCA president's post during the elections scheduled on December 7.

"There's only one way you can view it. It's a welcome development. I'm very relieved that the court has seen that I'm eligible. And now we're working towards building for the election," Shanth Kumar, who wore many hats as a sports administrator over three decades, told PTI.

Shanth Kumar, Director of The Printers (Mysore) Private Ltd, is a former president of Karnataka Olympic Association (KOA) and the Karnataka Badminton Association (KBA).

The seasoned administrator has also been a steward of the Bangalore Race Course, besides being a council member of the Indian Golf Union (IGU).

He was also the non-playing captain of the Indian golf team during the 2002 Asian Games held in Busan, South Korea.

In today's order the state High Court also asked the KSCA Electoral Officer to publish the list of candidates for the post of president.

While setting aside EO's order dated November 24, Justice Suraj Govindaraj said the remaining electoral process should be conducted as per the calendar earlier decided by the High Court.

So, does Shanth Kumar need to file a fresh nomination?

"From what I can understand, the (existing) nomination holds because what the court has done is... it has quashed the order of the electoral officer. The electoral officer had rejected my nomination. And that is the (EO's) order with which we went to the court, appealing to quash it.

"So the court has set aside the electoral officer's order of rejecting my application. Therefore, the nomination stands," Shanth Kumar, whose nomination was earlier rejected on technical grounds, said.

Apart from Prasad and Shanth Kumar, other prominent contestants are: former cricketers Sujith Somasundar (Vice-president, Secretary) and Avinash Vaidya (Joint Secretary and Managing Committee member).

Both the panels under Prasad and Shanth Kumar have vowed to bring back top-flight cricket to M Chinnaswamy Stadium soon.

At present, the famed venue is deprived of high level action on security grounds after a stampede near the stadium caused the death of 11 fans on June 4 during the IPL victory celebrations of Royal Challengers Bengaluru. (PTI)

I do not have a definitive answer to India's spin trouble: KL Rahul

RANCHI, Nov 29: Stand-in ODI skipper KL Rahul on Saturday conceded that Indian batters' repeated struggles against spin, especially on home tracks, remain a concern but he didn't have a "definitive answer" to the decline of their traditional strength. His comment comes amid a worrying pattern of Indian batting line-up's repeated buckling against spinners on home tracks in Test cricket over the last two seasons -- once their fortress.

New Zealand in 2024 and then South Africa recently whitewashed India 3-0 and 2-0 respectively, on the back of relentless spin bowling led by left-arm spinners Mitchell Santner, Ajaz Patel (NZ) and off-spinner Simon Harmer (SA) on pitches that had dollops of turn.

"We haven't played spin well enough in the last couple of seasons. I really don't know why we did it earlier and why we aren't doing it now. I don't have a definitive answer. All we can do is to look at how to get better individually and as a batting group," Rahul said on the eve of the first ODI against South Africa here.

Rahul said the batters will have to explore technical and tactical adjustments and it will be a long haul.

"It won't change overnight. We'll look at what improvements we need and hopefully by the time

Defending champs MI to take on RCB in WPL Season 4 opener on January 9

MUMBAI, Nov 29: Harmanpreet Kaur-led defending champions Mumbai Indians will face 2024 winners Royal Challengers Bengaluru in the opening match of the fourth Women's Premier League on January 9 at the DY Patil Stadium in Navi Mumbai.

In a first for the tournament, the WPL final will not be held on a weekend, with the summit clash scheduled for a Thursday (February 5), likely to avoid a clash with the men's T20 World Cup, which begins the same week in India and Sri Lanka. The T20 World Cup opens with a match between Pakistan and Netherlands on February 7 (Saturday) in Colombo.

The 28-day, 22-match WPL will be played across two venues.

DY Patil Stadium, which witnessed India's maiden women's ICC global title -- the ODI World Cup win over South Africa earlier this month -- will host the first 11 matches, including afternoon double-headers on January 10 and 17, as per the schedule announced on Saturday.

All the remaining games in this leg will be evening fixtures.

The league will then shift to the Kotambi Stadium in Vadodara, which will stage the remaining 11 matches, including the Eliminator on February 2 and the final on Feb-



ruary 5.

This is also the first time the WPL will be played in a January-February window as the previous three editions were held in February-March, just before the IPL, often overlapping with international fixtures.

The format remains unchanged: with the five teams -- Mumbai Indians, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, UP Warriorz, Gujarat Giants and Delhi Capitals -- to play each other twice in a double round-robin.

The top team progresses straight to the final, while the second and third-placed sides face off in the Eliminator for the remaining spot.

Mumbai Indians have won two titles in three seasons, with RCB lifting the trophy in 2024.

Delhi Capitals have finished runners-up in each of the three editions, while Gujarat Giants and UP Warriorz are yet to reach a final.

Ten days after the WPL concludes, the Indian women's team will embark on an all-format tour of Australia, featuring three T20Is,

three ODIs and a Test from February 15-March 9.

WPL Season 4 schedule

In Navi Mumbai: January 9: Mumbai Indians vs Royal Challengers Bengaluru; Jan 10: UP Warriorz vs Gujarat Giants and Mumbai Indians vs Delhi Capitals; Jan 11: Delhi Capitals vs Gujarat Giants; Jan 12: Royal Challengers Bengaluru vs UP Warriorz; Jan 13: Mumbai Indians vs Gujarat Giants; Jan 14: UP Warriorz vs Delhi Capitals; Jan 15: Mumbai Indians vs UP Warriorz; Jan 16: Royal Challengers Bengaluru vs Gujarat Giants; Jan 17: UP Warriorz vs Mumbai Indians and Delhi Capitals vs Royal Challengers Bengaluru

In Vadodara: Jan 19: Gujarat Giants vs Royal Challengers Bengaluru; Jan 20: Delhi Capitals vs Mumbai Indians; Jan 22: Gujarat Giants vs UP Warriorz; Jan 24: Royal Challengers Bengaluru vs Delhi Capitals; Jan 26: Royal Challengers Bengaluru vs Mumbai Indians; Jan 27: Gujarat Giants vs Delhi Capitals; Jan 29: UP Warriorz vs Royal Challengers Bengaluru; Jan 30: Gujarat Giants vs Mumbai Indians; February 1: Delhi Capitals vs UP Warriorz

Eliminator: Feb 3; **Final:** Feb 5 (both in Vadodara). (PTI)

Aditi is tied-11th, Avani moves into top-20 at Open de Espana

MALAGA (SPAIN), Nov 29: Aditi Ashok was just outside top-10 but Avani Prashanth made a good move up to get into the top-20 at the halfway stage of the Andalucia Costa del Sol Open de Espana here.

Aditi, a former winner of this event, shot 2-under 70 and moved to 5-under 139 and was tied 11th.

Avani brought home the best second round card of 3-under 69, to get to 4-under and was tied 17th.

Among the other three Indians, Pranavi Urs (71) was T-47 at 1-over total, Hitaashee Bakshi (76) and Diksha Dagar (75) were both T-64 at 5-over.

There are two more rounds to go in the season-ending event.

Hitaashee, Pranavi and Avani are coming off Top-5 finishes in the Hero Women's Indian Open and are looking at a good finish at the season-ending event.

Thailand's Trichat Cheenglab fired a course record of 63 (-9) to lead by seven strokes at the halfway stage. The 2023 LET Order of Merit winner began the day in a share of the lead and started well with three birdies on the trot on holes two, three and four at Real Guadalhorce Club de Golf.

Cheenglab rolled in back-to-back birdies on the sixth and seventh holes before adding another on 12, and she finished in style with three birdies in a row to set a new course record and the lowest round of her Ladies European Tour career.

Aditi who had a rather modest round had three birdies against one bogey, while Avani had six birdies in an aggressive round but she also gave away a bogey on the third and a double bogey on the 16th in her 69.



Diksha had one birdie against two bogeys and a double bogey and Hitaashee had three birdies against five bogeys and a double bogey in her round of 76.

The 30-year-old Trichat earned a trophy to commemorate the course record by Real Guadalhorce Club de Golf and leads the season finale with a score of 15-under-par at the 36-hole mark.

Italy's Alessandra Fanali recorded a round of 66 (-6) on day two in Spain to climb up to second place in the leaderboard. French duo Nastasia Nadaud and Celine Herbin are in a share of third place on seven-under-par at the end of day two.

Six players are one shot further back on six-under-par including England's Mimi Rhodes and Singapore's Shannon Tan, who are battling for the 2025 LET Order of Merit title.

The duo both fired rounds of 67 (-5) on day two in Malaga and will tee it up in the same group for the third day in a row. (PTI)

Drona, Annika, Naina card under-par winning scores in different age groups in US Kids Golf

GURUGRAM, Nov 29: Drona Singh Dhull, Annika Chendira and Naina Kapoor brought home superb under-par scores to win titles in different age groups as the local Tour of the US Kids Golf India came to an end with a double-header at the Classic Golf and Country Club here.

The sixth and final event, which was the Tour Championship, carried double points and saw a spate of excellent scores of par or below.

Three girls and three boys made it back-to-back victories. Leading them among the boys was Drona Singh, who shot the day's best score of 4-under 68 in Boys 11. The other two repeat winners were Keon Aggarwal in Boys 7 and Zowra Sikand in Boys 8.

Dhull played contrasting nines. On the front side of the course, he had four birdies and no bogeys and on the back nine it was pars all the way for a total of 4-under 68.

Annika shot another under par round, this time even better than during her win in the fifth leg. She carded 3-under 69, two shots better than the fifth leg.

Naina in Girls 13-14 carded a winning score of 2-under 70 and Naaysha S Sinha, who had a 2-under round in the fifth leg, shot even par in the sixth leg. Annika had a stunning back nine with four birdies and an eagle alongside two bogeys after an even par front nine with one birdie and one bogey. Her closest rival Anya Dandriyal shot even par to finish second. (PTI)

Three tied for 3rd-round lead at the Australian PGA

BRISBANE, Nov 29: Adam Scott and Marc Leishman were two strokes off the lead heading into Sunday's final round of the Australian PGA Championship at Royal Queensland.

The Australian veterans rarely play back home due to Scott's reduced PGA schedule and Leishman's tenure on the LIV Tour. And there are only two high-level pro tournaments left in Australia, this week's PGA and next week's Australian Open at Royal Melbourne.

The 45-year-old Scott shot a 5-under 66 Saturday and 42-year-old Leishman 67 and were tied for sixth place.

The third-round lead was held by three players -- European tour regulars David Puig (65) and Ricardo Gouveia (66) and Australian Anthony Quayle (67), who had former Tiger Woods caddie Steve Williams on his bag.

The trio had a 54-hole total of 13-

Sultan Azlan Shah Hockey India trounce Canada 14-3 to storm into final



IPOH, Nov 29: Jugraj Singh scored four goals as the Indian men's hockey team thrashed Canada 14-3 in a high-scoring encounter to top the pool standings and make the final of the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup here on Saturday.

Having lost only to Belgium by a goal earlier in the tournament, India were upbeat after a sensational 3-2 win against New Zealand in their previous game.

India will play Belgium in the summit clash on Sunday.

The match began with an early goal by Nilakanta Sharma in the fourth minute, followed by a 10th minute goal by Rajinder Singh who has been in good nick, since his debut in the senior side.

It was a thrilling start to the game with Canada responding to the early goals by creating PCs and even converting from them. In the 11th minute, Brendan Guraliuk converted a fine PC.

Two more goals were scored in the following minutes through Jugraj Singh and Amit Rohidas in the 12th and 15th minute respectively.

The 4-1 lead put India in good stead to build on their performance in the second quarter. With senior stars in the team rested for this tournament, the onus to outshine was on a younger lot and they did well to hold off pressure from the Canadian defence.

A flurry of goals continued in this quarter with Rajinder scoring in the 24th minute, Dilpreet Singh in the 25th minute and Jugraj scoring his second goal in the 26th minute.

Ahead by 7-1, India were unstoppable but Canada came into the third quarter with slight modifications in their attack that led to a penalty stroke in the 35th minute.

Matthew Sarmento made no mistake in pumping this one into the post to take the scoreline to 7-2.

Meanwhile, Jugraj scored his hat-trick in this quarter when he struck in the 39th minute, and Selvam Karthi scored in the 43rd minute to extend India's lead to a massive 9-2.

The final quarter was just a formality but this is where maximum goals came with both teams upping the ante. Six goals were scored in this quarter.

It all began with Rohidas's PC in the 46th minute followed by Jugraj's penalty stroke conversion in the 50th minute.

Both teams continued to trade PCs and Canada ended up scoring from it too with Jyothswaroop Sidhu's goal taking the score line to 3-11.

Sanjay put his name on the scoresheet with his goal in the 56th minute from a penalty stroke, while Abhishek scored a double in the 57th and 59th minute to end the proceedings on a high. (PTI)



Rahul said their influence was crucial in a dressing room looking to regain momentum after the Test series reversal.

"Their importance at any point is huge. To have

senior players in the team obviously makes the dressing room feel a lot more confident.

Having their presence and experience helps out a lot of players in the dressing room and helps out the team. So, we are really happy that they are here.

"Winning is the most important thing. So, that is what we are trying to focus on. Trying to forget what happened a week ago and focus on the game tomorrow and see how we can put in a collective performance," he said.

Rahul also welcomed the return of veteran all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja for the first time since the ICC Champions Trophy in March.

"Jaddu has done the job for India time and again. His experience is huge for us," he said.

Rahul said someone like Rituraj Gaikwad was unlucky to miss out regularly due to a settled top-order but stressed that opportunities will come.

"Rutu is a top-class player. He will get his opportunity at some stage and we are looking forward to giving him the chance and letting him show what he can do and do the job for the team. There is never a question mark about his skill and how good he is as a player. It is just about the right opportunities and the right timing has come," he said.

Rahul said the playing XI will be finalised later

and he did not commit to giving a start to Rishabh Pant, though said he is good enough to play as a pure batter.

Going by the hints, it looks like Pant won't be a part of the final XI. Rahul had kept wickets during the training session.

"He is someone who has been with the team for a long time and everyone has seen what he can and can't do for the team. The players who are already in the team and who are coming to perform, sometimes you just have to wait for your opportunity.

"You will find out tomorrow who will be playing and who will be left behind. But obviously, he is good enough to play as a batter as well. But if he is in the 11th, then obviously he will take the gloves," he noted.

Rahul, who will continue at No. 6, said India's ODI focus remains on rhythm and tactical discipline.

"ODI cricket is about mindset. Everyone is good technically. It's about reading situations better," he said.

On MS Dhoni possibly attending the match in his hometown, Rahul said even the team gets energised by his presence.

"We all grew up watching MS. If he's at the stadium, the players and the crowd both feel the buzz," he said. (PTI)