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**Final voters' list to be published on February 10 next**

## EC orders 'Special Revision' of Assam poll rolls

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: The Election Commission on Monday ordered 'Special Revision' of electoral rolls in Assam and the final voter list will be published on February 10, 2026.

According to instructions issued by the poll panel for the chief electoral officer of Assam, January 1, 2026 will be the qualifying date for the state to carry out the Special Revision.

According to officials, the Special Revision stands somewhere between the annual special summary revision and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

"It is in a way an upgrade of special summary revision... instead of enumeration forms, booth-level officers will verify electors on a pre-filled register," a senior functionary explained.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma welcomed the Election Commission's decision to undertake Special Revision of the



electoral rolls in the state and assured the government's full cooperation.

"The Govt of Assam welcomes the Election Commission of India's decision to undertake a Special Revision of the electoral rolls with 01.01.2026 as the qualifying date," the chief minister posted on X.

"This will help ensure clean, updated and accurate electoral rolls for all eligible citizens. Assam will extend full cooperation to the

@ECISVEEP to complete the revision in a transparent and time-bound manner," he added.

According to the schedule, the door-to-door verification will take place from November 22 to December 20.

The integrated draft electoral roll will be published on December 27 and the final roll on February 10 next year.

For field verification, the booth level (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Himanta hails EC's decision

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 17: The Assam government would welcome the Election Commission of India's (ECI) decision to conduct a Special Revision of the electoral roll with January 1, 2026 as the qualifying date, calling it a timely step toward maintaining clean, updated and accurate voter lists ahead of upcoming electoral exercises, said Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday.

Sarma mentioned that Assam would extend "full cooperation" to the ECI to ensure that the revision process is completed in a transparent, efficient and time-bound manner. In a statement posted on X, the Chief Minister said the initiative would help ensure that (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Tuliram hints at creating more Karbi distts in future

KAAC marks 74<sup>th</sup> Karbi Anglong Day with enthusiasm

● Sacrifices of Karbi leaders remembered

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 17: The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) celebrated the 74th Karbi Anglong Day today at Taralango with enthusiasm, vibrant cultural spirit and reverence for the region's historic journey.

The celebration honoured the sacrifices and struggles of past leaders while showcasing the progress and development witnessed over the decades.

The celebration began with the ceremonial flag hoisting in front of the Sertalin Auditorium by Chief Guest Tuliram Ronghang, Chief Executive Member of KAAC, followed by the solemn garlanding of portraits of past leaders who laid the foundation for autonomy and development in Karbi Anglong.

Past leaders Sarsing Teron (Langkung Habe) and Semson Sing Ingti, the founder president and sec-



retary respectively of the erstwhile Karbi Adorbar; Moniram Teron Langne, David Long Inghi, Song Bey, Bonglong Terang, Kabon Neli Timungpi Khongmen, Raidang Ingti, Soiso Terang, Joysing Doloi, Bareleng Terang and several other leaders were honoured.

An open session was held to

highlight the sacrifice and contribution of past leaders in the formation of the present Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts and the constitution of the Karbi Anglong District Council (now KAAC). The session began with an opening song performed by employees of KAAC. (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Bhagwat arrives in Guwahati for 3-day tour

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 17: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) Sarsangchalak Mohan Bhagwat arrived in Assam on Monday for a three-day tour, marking an important leg of the organisation's nationwide programmes commemorating its 100th year.

Bhagwat landed at Guwahati's Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport on Monday, where senior RSS functionaries and state-level coordinators received him.

From the airport, he headed straight to the Sudarshanalaya at Barbari, the organisation's key Karyalaya in the city, where closed-door interactions and internal meetings happened.

The visit is part of the broader centenary calendar of the RSS, which has lined up a series of outreach, organisational and intellectual programmes across the country. Assam holds particular importance (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Several questions still remain unanswered

## State gears up to mark Zubeen's b'day amid grief



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 17: What could have been the birthday of Assam's beloved singer and cultural icon Zubeen Garg, the state is bracing for an emotionally heavy observance marked by tributes, memories and an undercurrent of grief that refuses to fade.

At Sonapur, the Zubeen Khetra has been transformed with elaborate decorations.

Traditional gamosas, fresh flowers and vibrant garlands now drape the site, giving it a festive yet poignant appearance. Organisers have lined up cultural perform-

ances, musical tributes and remembrance meetings that will continue through the day.

Visitors began arriving since early morning on Monday, many carrying flowers, candles or framed photographs of the late singer.

For several fans, this is their first visit to the memorial space ahead of his birthday, making the moment even more overwhelming. Emotional scenes unfolded as admirers gathered to pay homage, share memories, and reflect on the void left behind.

The significance of the day is particularly intense as this will be the first birth anniversary observed without Zubeen.

Alongside the tributes, demands for justice surrounding the circumstances of his death have grown more pronounced.

Many who visited Zubeen Khetra voiced frustration, urging authorities to speed up the investigation and ensure transparency.

Tributes, however, are not limited to Sonapur.

Preparations are underway across the length and breadth of Assam. Fan clubs, cultural organisations, youth (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 44 detained on suspicion of 'doubtful identity'

TINSUKIA, Nov 17: A group of 44 people claiming to be from Jammu and Kashmir have been detained for ascertaining their 'identity' at the New Tinsukia Railway station in Assam on Monday, police said.

The group had arrived by Chandigarh Express and were detained by some local youth on suspicion of their 'doubtful identity'.

The Government Railway Police (GRP) and the police at the Hijiguri police outpost were informed about the matter, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Ousted Bangladesh PM Hasina sentenced to death for crimes against humanity

DHAKA, Nov 17: Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina was on Monday sentenced to death in absentia by a special tribunal for "crimes against humanity" over her government's brutal crackdown on student-led protests last year.

In its verdict that followed a months-long trial, the country's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) described the 78-year-old Awami League leader as the "mastermind and principal architect" of the violent repression that killed hundreds of protesters.

It also handed the death sentence to former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal on similar charges.

Hasina has been living in India since she fled Bangladesh on August 5 last year in the face of the massive protests. She was earlier declared a fugitive by the court.

Hours after the verdict, Bangladesh's foreign ministry demanded that Hasina and former home minister Kamal be immediately handed over under an extradition treaty in view (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 42 Indians dead in bus accident in Madina

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: Forty-two Indian Umrah pilgrims from Telangana were among 44 people killed in a collision involving their bus and a fuel tanker near Madina in Saudi Arabia in the wee hours of Monday, people familiar with the matter said.

It has been confirmed by local authorities that there is one Indian survivor and he is undergoing medical treatment, they said. It is learnt that two local facilitators on board the bus were also killed in the accident.

The mortal remains of the deceased have been transferred to King Fahad Hospital, King Salman Hospital and Al Miqat Hospital, and officials from the Indian mission in Jeddah are coordinating with the local authorities

to handle the situation, the people cited above said.

"The families of the deceased will have an option after mortal remains have been identified for repatriation to India or a local burial at Jannatul Baqi (cemetery in Madinah) as per local customs," one of the people said.

The accident took place nearly 40 km from Madina at around 11 pm local time (1:30 am, IST), the people said.

The bus had stopped on the side of a road, and during this stoppage, an oil tanker collided with the bus, resulting in an explosion, they said.

Saudi Authorities are currently investigating the circumstances that led to the accident.

The bus was learnt to be on

its way from Mecca to Madina.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and other leaders conveyed condolences to the families of the deceased.

"Deeply saddened by the accident in Madinah involving Indian nationals. My thoughts are with the families who have lost their loved ones. I pray for the swift recovery of all those injured," Modi said on 'X'.

"Our Embassy in Riyadh and Consulate in Jeddah are providing all possible assistance. Our officials are also in close contact with Saudi Arabian authorities," he said.

Jaishankar, currently on a visit to Russia, expressed deep (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Assam's tea, handloom and cane items drawing crowds at trade fare

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: Premium Assam tea, finely crafted bamboo and cane items, and a variety of handloom and handicraft offerings are drawing crowds at the Assam Pavilion during the ongoing 44th India International Trade Fair (IITF) 2025 at Bharat Mandapam here.

Featuring 41 MSME stalls, innovative startups, and an extensive range of One District One Product (ODOP) displays, the pavilion showcased Assam's diverse craftsmanship and growing industrial landscape, a release issued by the Assam government said.

The Assam Pavilion emerged as one of the standout attractions at the IITF 2025, captivating visitors with a (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## UR was 5.1 per cent in April as per the first PLFS bulletin Unemployment rate remains steady at 5.2 pc in October: Govt survey

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: The rate of unemployment for those aged 15 and above remained steady at 5.2 per cent in October, according to a government survey released on Monday.

The unemployment rate (UR) was 5.2 per cent in September, 5.1 per cent in August, 5.2 per cent in July and 5.6 per cent in May and June, as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).

The UR was 5.1 per cent in April as per the first PLFS bulletin released in May 2025.

"The UR among persons of age 15 years and above re-



mained unchanged at 5.2 per cent between September, 2025 and October, 2025," an official statement said.

According to the statement, a marginal decline in the rural

unemployment rate, from 4.6 per cent in September 2025 to 4.4 per cent in October 2025, coupled with a moderate rise in urban UR from 6.8 per cent to 7.0 per cent, resulted in overall

stability in the pace of joblessness among persons aged 15 years and above.

It stated that UR among females aged 15 years and above declined to 5.4 per cent in October 2025 from 5.5 per cent observed during September 2025.

The drop in UR among rural female, from 4.3 per cent in September 2025 to 4.0 per cent in October 2025, mainly contributed towards the decline in overall female joblessness rate.

Among males, the rate of unemployment remained stable at 5.1 per cent in October 2025 as compared to previous month. A minor decrease in rural (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

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# First phase of India-US trade deal nearing closure; to address tariff issues: Official

**NEW DELHI, Nov 17:** The first phase of the proposed India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA) is 'nearing closure' and would address the hefty 50 per cent tariffs imposed by the Trump administration on Indian goods, in addition to resolving America's market access issues, a government official said on Monday.

The US has imposed a 25 per cent reciprocal tariffs and another 25 per cent on Indian goods entering American markets for buying Russian crude oil.

"We are engaged with the US on the BTA. It has two parts. One part of negotiations will take time. The other part is a package which can address reciprocal tariffs. We are working on both aspects. The package that can address reciprocal tariffs is more or less near closure and we should get it soon," the official said.

The official added that the deal is expected to address the issue of 25 per cent penalty on India, otherwise the agreement would have no meaning.

The official added that the BTA has multiple packages or tranches and this will be the first tranche to address the tariffs.

The deal will be announced on a mutually agreed date and both



countries would do that.

On the issue of India's state-run oil companies signing a one-year deal to import cooking gas LPG from the US in 2026, the official said, "It was something in the works for long. This is in the overall context of keeping the trade with the US. It is not part of any negotiations package per se but definitely as part of our endeavour to balance trade with the US."

The move is seen as an attempt to narrow India's trade surplus with the US -- a sticking point for President Donald Trump, who has slapped a 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering America.

India and the US are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement. So far, six rounds of talks have been completed. Both sides have announced plans to finalise the first tranche of the deal by fall of 2025.

A team of Indian officials, headed by Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, was in Washington last month to hold trade talks with their US counterparts. The three-day talks ended on October 17. Negotiations for the pact are important, as relations between the two countries have been under severe strain since US President Donald Trump administration imposed a steep 50 per cent tariff on

Indian goods. It includes a 25 per cent additional import duty for buying Russian crude oil.

The proposed pact aims to more than double the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from the current USD 191 billion.

The US is seeking greater market access for its products such as almonds, pistachio, apples, ethanol and genetically modified commodities.

The US remained India's largest trading partner for the fourth consecutive year in 2024-25, with bilateral trade valued at USD 131.84 billion (USD 86.5 billion exports). It accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in the country's total merchandise trade.

India's merchandise exports to the US declined 11.93 per cent to USD 5.46 billion in September due to the high tariffs imposed by Washington, while imports increased 11.78 per cent to USD 3.98 billion during the month, according to commerce ministry data.

Trump has recently stated that to the US is "pretty close" to reaching a "fair trade deal" with India, adding that he will lower tariffs imposed on Indian goods at "some point". (PTI)

## ITR forms, rules under new Income Tax Act to be notified by January: CBDT chief

**NEW DELHI, Nov 17:** The I-T department will by January notify the ITR forms and rules under the simplified Income Tax Act, 2025, which will come into effect from next fiscal beginning April 1, Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) chief Ravi Agrawal said on Monday.

The intent of the department is to keep the I-T Return forms simple to ease compliance under the new law, which replaces the six-decade old Income Tax Act, 1961, he said.

"We are in the process of designing forms and rules. We are working towards putting this in place by January so that taxpayers have sufficient time to adapt their processes within their system," Agrawal told reporters after launching the Taxpayers' Lounge at the India International Trade Fair (ITTF).

The intent is to keep the income tax return (ITR) forms simple for taxpayers to ease compliance, he added.

The Income Tax Act, 2025 was passed by Parliament on August 12.

All the different forms applicable under the Income Tax Act, like TDS quarterly return form and ITR forms, are being reworked, and the Directorate of Systems is working with the tax policy division to make the forms taxpayer-friendly.

After vetting by the law department, the rules will be notified and laid before Parliament, an official said.

The Income Tax Act, 2025 will come into effect from next financial year, beginning April 1, 2026. The new Act will make tax laws simple and reduce wordage in the legislation making it easy to understand.

The new legislation does not impose any new tax rate and has only simplified the language, which was required for understanding the complex income tax laws.

The new law removes redundant provisions and archaic language and reduces the number of sections from 819 in the Income Tax Act of 1961 to 536 and the number of chapters from 47 to 23.

The number of words has been reduced from 5.12 lakh to 2.6 lakh in the new law, and it has introduced 39 new tables and 40 new formulas, replacing the dense text of the 1961 law, to enhance clarity. (PTI)

## Finance Commission submits report to President Murmu

**NEW DELHI, Nov 17:** Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission Arvind Panagariya on Monday submitted to President Droupadi Murmu the panel's report, which will provide the formula for devolution of taxes between the Centre and states.

The commission, which was mandated to submit its report by October 31, was given an extension of one month till November 30.

"Members of the 16th Finance Commission, led by its Chairman, Dr Arvind Panagariya, called on President Droupadi Murmu and submitted the Commission's report for 2026-31," Rashtrapati Bhavan said in a post on X.

As per the terms of reference, the 16th Finance Commission is mandated to determine the formula for states' share of central taxes and the grants-in-aid for five years beginning 2026-27.

The commission has visited all states and Union Territories as a precursor to firming up its views on states' share in grants in aid and taxes.

The commission has four members-- Retired bureaucrat Annie George Mathew and economist Manoj Panda are full-time members of the Commission, while SBI Group Chief Economic Advisor Soumya Kanti Ghosh and RBI Deputy

## From vision to commitment: IESA members champion investments under India's ECMS policy

**HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Nov 17:** The India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) has applauded MeitY for approving the second tranche of ECMS applications amounting to ₹7,100 crore.

The ECMS initiative marks India's push into high-value electronics components, including HDI and multi-layer PCBs, camera modules, copper-clad laminates and passive components, all of which are vital for defence, telecom, EVs, renewable energy, automotive and consumer electronics manufacturing.

Speaking at the session on "Celebrating the Success of ECMS"

held in New Delhi, and attended by Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, minister of state Jitin Prasad and MeitY Joint Secretary Sushil Pal, IESA president Ashok Chandak said India's electronics value-addition is now accelerating from policy to production.

He noted that with semiconductor projects already underway and the ECMS scheme gaining momentum, IESA member companies feature among the earliest approvals, with more applications in the pipeline. India, he said, is building a strong foundation in component manufacturing, reducing import dependence, strengthening supply chains and creating high-skill jobs

for the global electronics economy.

The ECMS scheme complements India's wider initiatives, including the Electronics Manufacturing PLI, the India Semiconductor Mission for fabs and OSATs, the DLI scheme for fabless design and RDI for research and innovation, completing an integrated value chain from materials to components, chips to devices and design to manufacturing.

India is steadily translating its vision into reality, emerging as a trusted global hub for electronics manufacturing and taking a significant step toward becoming a true "Product Nation", Mr. Chandak added.

## Stock markets rally for 6<sup>th</sup> day; Sensex up 388 pts, Nifty revisits 26k level

**MUMBAI, Nov 17:** Stock markets rose for the sixth straight session on Monday, with the benchmark Sensex climbing 388 points and Nifty closing above the 26,000 mark following an across-the-board rally and strong quarterly performance by corporates.

Rising for the sixth consecutive day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 388.17 points, or 0.46 per cent, to close at 84,950.95. During the day, the BSE benchmark surged 425.31 points, or 0.50 per cent, to hit an intraday high of 84,988.09. The broader NSE Nifty rose by 103.40 points, or 0.40 per cent, to settle at 26,013.45. In the intraday session, the NSE Nifty advanced 114.15 points, or 0.44 per cent, to hit a high of 26,024.20.

Traders said strong buying by domestic institutional investors fueled the rally.

"The market has maintained its positive momentum, hovering near the key psychological level of 26,000, as investors anticipate a strong catalyst for further upward movement. "A potential trade deal remains a crucial trigger that participants are closely monitoring. Currently, the risk-reward ratio is largely favorable, bolstered by stronger-than-expected Q2 earnings from Midcaps, which have reinforced confidence in growth revival and point to potential future earnings upgrades," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

From the Sensex pack, Eternal, Maruti Suzuki India, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Tech Mahindra, Titan, HDFC Bank, PowerGrid, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finance and Larsen & Toubro were among the gainers. On the other hand, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Asian Paints, UltraTech Cement, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, Hindustan Unilever, ITC, Tata Consultancy Services and Reliance Industries were the only laggards.

"Indian benchmark indices closed sharply higher on

November 17th, with the Nifty reclaiming and firmly holding above the 26,000 level. Expectations of a major trade deal added to the optimism, acting as a potential catalyst for the next leg of the rally.

"The up-move was further supported by the NDA's decisive victory in Bihar, which reinforced confidence in policy continuity and political stability. Softer inflation data also contributed to the improved market sentiment," Bajaj Broking Research said.

The BSE Midcap gauge rose 0.66 per cent, and smallcap went up 0.59 per cent.

All the sectoral indices ended in green. Auto rose by 0.86 per cent, Power by 0.83 per cent, Bankex by 0.77 per cent, Financial Services by 0.78 per cent, Consumer Discretionary by 0.70 per cent, Capital Goods by 0.60 per cent, Industrials by 0.59 per cent, Healthcare by 0.57 per cent, and Utilities by 0.54 per cent.

A total of 2,211 stocks declined while 2,082 advanced and 204 remained unchanged on the BSE.

In Asian markets, Hong Kong's Hang Seng, Shanghai's SSE Composite index, and Japan's Nikkei 225 benchmark ended in the negative territory while South Korea's Kospi settled in the positive zone.

Markets in Europe were trading in the red zone. The US markets ended largely lower on Friday.

Brent Crude, the global oil benchmark, dipped by 0.70 per cent to USD 63.94 per barrel.

Meanwhile, foreign institutional investors remained net sellers for the fifth day in a row and offloaded equities worth ₹ 4,968.22 crore on Friday. However, domestic institutional investors sustained their buying spree and picked up stocks worth ₹ 8,461.47 crore, according to exchange data.

On Friday, the BSE Sensex ended 84.11 points higher at 84,562.78, while the NSE Nifty went up 30.90 points to settle at 25,910.05. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## EC orders 'Special

officers (BLOs) will be given a pre-filled BLO register containing the details of existing electors in their respective part for a house-to-house field visit.

The household is the basic unit for conducting the house-to-house survey and to get the said details verified or corrected from the elector or the head of the household.

It said the details of D-Voters (doubtful voters) will not be included in the register, as no verification is required in their case.

D-Voters are a category of voters in Assam who are disenfranchised by the government on account of their alleged lack of proper citizenship credentials. D-Voters are determined by special tribunals under the Foreigners Act, 1946, and the person declared as a D-Voter is not given a voter card.

All related particulars, such as name, age and photograph, of the D-Voters will be carried forward to the draft electoral roll without any change. (PTI)

## Himanta hails EC's

all eligible citizens are included in the rolls while removing discrepancies. The special revision, which aims to streamline the enrollment process and address gaps identified in previous rolls, comes at a sensitive juncture for Assam. The state has, in recent years, witnessed intense political and administrative scrutiny over issues of citizenship, documentation and voter roll accuracy -- particularly in the context of migration and the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The Election Commission had earlier faced criticism after Assam was inadvertently omitted from the list of states covered under a recent pan-India electoral roll update, a development that triggered questions from political parties and civil society groups. The omission, described as a "technical oversight" in several quarters, had generated apprehension in a state where voter roll integrity is closely tied to socio-political debates over identity and demographic change.

The EC has argued that the revision will allow fresh enrollment of eligible youth who turn 18 by January 1, 2026, correction of existing entries, and deletion of ineligible or duplicate entries. Assam government officials have also indicated that district administrations will be instructed to coordinate closely with ECI observers, ensure systematic verification at the booth level, and run awareness campaigns encouraging eligible citizens to update their documents. With Assam's political climate often shaped by debates on citizenship and cross-border migration, the special revision is expected to draw significant public interest as well as scrutiny from opposition parties, which have frequently questioned the accuracy of the existing rolls.

## Tuliram hints at

Principal Secretary of KAAC, Mukul Kr Saikia, delivered the welcome address, presenting the historical journey from the formation of the Mikir Hills District Council in 1951 to the present-day Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and its contributions to governance, identity and development.

He said the KAAC, with its present team of dedicated officials and staff, is working tirelessly to bring development to the people. He called for a stronger work culture for greater progress in the district.

The CEM, in his address, said, "Karbi Anglong Day marks the moment in history when the Mikir Hills District was officially created on 17 November 1951, giving the Karbi people, for the first time in many centuries, a chance to live under a single administration."

He added, "The truth is that the Karbi hills were once a single, homogenous region inhabited by our people across the central ranges of the Northeast. But over centuries, due to forced occupation by neighbouring powers, wars and administrative divisions, the Karbi people were separated politically. The Karbis were under the Ahoms at certain times, under the Kacharis, under the Nagas and under the Jaintia kingdom -- not by choice, but by circumstance." He further said, "Since 1951, Karbi Anglong has grown, developed and transformed. We today have two districts, Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong, and in the future we may have more, just as the Garo Hills, Khasi Hills, Mizo Hills and Naga Hills evolved into several districts. What keeps them together is the unifying structure of their statehood or their autonomous councils."

He stated that the Amri, Chinthong and Rongkhong areas came under the Jaintia Raja only due to occupation. Yet, even then, the Karbis preserved their culture, traditions and systems of self-governance.

When the British arrived, they found Karbis spread across a wide region -- from the Garo Hills in the west to the Patkai in the east and even to the northern bank of the Brahmaputra -- with the largest population in the Mikir Hills of Nowgong, Sibsagar and the Jaintia Hills.

Recalling the contributions of past Karbi leaders, he said that when India was preparing for Independence, Karbi leaders like Samsonging Ingti, Khorsing Terang, Sarsing Teron, Chhatrasing Teron and many others submitted memoranda demanding that the Karbi people be united under one administration.

Unlike other tribes who sought separation from India, the Karbi leaders asked only for unity, protection and development within Assam. KAAC Advisor Alwin Teron reflected on the socio-political conditions of Karbi Anglong before and after Independence, paying tribute to the leadership that fought for constitutional safeguards and autonomy. He emphasised the continued aspirations of the people and the significance of Article 244(A). Twenty leaders who have passed away were felicitated along with their family members.

## Ousted Bangladesh PM

of their sentencing. "We call on the Indian government to immediately hand over these two convicted individuals to the Bangladeshi authorities," the foreign ministry said in a statement in Bengali. "This is also a duty for India, as per the extradition treaty existing between the two countries," it said.

"It would be an extremely unfriendly act and a contempt for justice if any other country were to grant asylum to these individuals convicted of crimes against humanity," the ministry said.

In her reaction, Hasina said the judgement has been made by a "rigged tribunal established and presided over by an unelected government with no democratic mandate." (PTI)

## 44 detained on

and they reached the railway station to investigate the matter. The group reportedly claimed they had travelled from Jammu and Kashmir on the invitation of a contractor, but none of them could clearly mention the contractor's name, the police said. During questioning, some said they were visiting Tinsukia for the first time and had come for labour work related to tower erection, earth digging and also for a project extending in Arunachal Pradesh. An individual also said that they were supposed to proceed to Dibrugarh, the official said. The police were verifying their identity and their purpose of travel, he added. (PTI)

## State gears up

groups and local committees in different districts are arranging prayer meetings, community gatherings, art and music events, and public memorials in honour of the late icon.

From Jorhat to Barak Valley and from Tezpur to Dhemaji, communities are preparing unique ways to celebrate his legacy -- be it through unplugged music sessions, charity activities or screening of his films and music videos.

Even in the midst of sorrow, the collective effort reflects the profound place Zubeen Garg continues to hold in the hearts of Assamese people. For many, the day is not just a remembrance of his life, but also a reaffirmation of the cultural renaissance he helped shape through his music, activism and unyielding spirit.

## Bhagwat arrives in

for the Sangh, given its rapidly expanding network in the Northeast and the organisation's focus on cultural consolidation, community engagement and cadre training in the region. This is Bhagwat's second visit to Assam in the same year. In February, he spent five days in Guwahati during which he met karyakartas drawn from different districts of the state. That trip included an in-depth organisational review, discussions with senior pracharaks on ongoing initiatives, and an address at the Rashtra Sevika Samiti programme held at IIT Guwahati.

## 42 Indians dead

shock over the accident. "Our Embassy in Riyadh and Consulate in Jeddah are giving the fullest support to Indian nationals and families affected by this accident," he said.

"Sincere condolences to the bereaved families. Pray for the speedy recovery of those injured," he said.

The Indian mission in Jeddah has set up a 24x7 control room to coordinate assistance and sent officials to the site of the accident. As soon as the Consulate of India in Jeddah learnt of the accident, a team of officers rushed to the incident site and to hospitals where the accident casualties were taken, the people cited above said.

They have been in regular touch with families and are liaising with local authorities for further action, they said. Officials from the Indian Consulate in Jeddah will continue to remain in touch with the local authorities. (PTI)

## Assam's tea, handloom

vibrant blend of economic potential and cultural heritage under the national theme 'Ek Bharat, Shrestha Bharat', the release said. Visitors were particularly drawn to the state's signature products such as premium Assam tea, finely crafted bamboo and cane items, agarwood products, and a variety of handloom and handicraft offerings.

The pavilion also highlighted the state's expanding agro-based industries through an array of food processing products. Beyond commerce, the pavilion offered an immersive cultural experience. Exhibits spotlighted Assam's UNESCO world heritage sites, including 'Charaideo Maidam' and Kaziranga National Park.

Live performances of traditional dances, most notably the lively Bihu and the graceful Bagarumba, added to the pavilion's appeal. "Through a harmonious presentation of tradition and modernity, the Department of Industries, Commerce & Public Enterprise, government of Assam, positioned the state as a hub of creativity, resilience, and economic promise, said Umesh Kumar, Director of Assam Pavilion. (PTI)

## Unemployment rate remains

male UR, from 4.7 per cent in September 2025 to 4.6 per cent in October 2025, was offset by a slight uptick in urban male UR from 6.0 per cent to 6.1 per cent during the same period, which contributed to overall stability.

The overall Worker Population Ratio (WPR) in October 2025 was 52.5 per cent, which is consistently rising since June 2025, it stated. Rise in the female workforce in rural areas has brought about this increase. Overall WPR among females of 15 years and older increased steadily for the fourth month in a row, rising from 30.2 per cent in June 2025 to 32.4 per cent in October 2025, it stated.

The female workforce in rural areas has increased consistently for four months, reaching 36.9 per cent in October 2025 from 33.6 per cent in June 2025. The overall LFPR (labour force participation rate) among persons of age 15 years and above continued to increase for the four successive months to 55.4 per cent in October 2025 from 54.2 per cent recorded in June 2025. LFPR in rural areas also increased steadily from 56.1 per cent observed in June 2025 to 57.8 per cent in October 2025. Overall LFPR reached a six-month high of 55.4 per cent in October 2025, it stated. The overall LFPR among female aged 15 years and above reached 34.2 per cent in October 2025, marking the highest since May 2025, driven by the increase in female LFPR in rural areas. (PTI)



Governor T Rabi Sankar are part-time members.

Besides suggesting tax devolution between the Centre and states, and revenue augmentation measures, the commission has also reviewed the present arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives with reference to the funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Finance Commission is a constitutional body that gives suggestions on Centre-state financial relations. The 16th Finance Commission was set up on December 31, 2023.

The 15th Finance Commission, under NK Singh, had recommended that states be given 41 per cent of the divisible tax pool of the Centre

during the five-year period, 2021-22 to 2025-26, which is at the same level as was recommended by the 14th Finance Commission under YV Reddy.

According to 2025-26 Budget documents, the Centre is projected to transfer ₹ 14.22 lakh crore to states as their share in taxes, out of the ₹ 42.70 lakh crore total tax that the central government has budgeted to collect this fiscal.

Historically, finance commissions have determined states' share in central taxes based on a weighted sum of population, area, demographic performance, fiscal effort, income distance and forest cover.

The issue has long been a point of friction between the Centre and states, particularly Opposition-ruled ones, which said they have not received their fair share. Southern states have also objected to the use of population as a criterion for devolution, arguing that it penalises them despite their success in controlling population growth. The 15th Finance Commission had given 15 per cent weightage to population, 15 per cent to area, 12.5 per cent to demographic performance, 10 per cent to forest cover and ecology and 2.5 per cent to tax and fiscal efforts. (PTI)

## Over 3,600 children screened at sixth LAC-wise health camp under Sushrusha Setu Mega Child Health Camp highlights Assam's healthcare transformation

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 17:** MP Parimal Suklabaidya on Monday hailed Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma's "visionary leadership" for bringing a revolution in healthcare across Assam while addressing the LAC-wise Mega Child Health Camp held at Swadhin Bazar High School, Sonai. The camp organised by the Cachar District Administration under the Sushrusha Setu programme, marked a major step toward early detection and timely treatment of health conditions among children.

Suklabaidya said the Chief Minister's reforms have made advanced screenings accessible even in rural areas and stressed that screening children aged 0 to 18 for multiple health conditions will significantly strengthen long-term health indicators in the state. He also lauded interdepartmental coordination and the dedication of on-ground teams.

The camp saw a massive turnout, with 3,641 children screened and 414 referred to



higher medical centres for specialised treatment. Sonai MLA Karim Uddin Barbhuiya thanked the Chief Minister for enabling screening for 59 critical diseases and appreciated the support of District Commissioner Mridul Yadav, police, Silchar Medical College & Hospital and line departments. He termed the initiative a milestone in safeguarding

children's health.

District Commissioner Mridul Kumar Yadav praised the Health Department's efficiency and assured full administrative support for future camps. Calling this the sixth such camp in Cachar, he said the initiative reflects the administration's commitment to ensuring no child in need of care is left behind. He acknowledged the tireless

work of medical teams, grassroots workers and officials.

Welcoming the gathering, Joint Director of Health Services Dr Shibbananda Roy explained that the Mega Health Camps—launched to mark the Prime Minister's birthday—aim to ensure timely screening and medical intervention for every child in Assam. He said all referred children will receive treatment at specialised centres and urged parents to attend follow-up consultations at SMC&H.

Senior officials, including Assistant Commissioner Deepa Das, ACS, DIO Dr Sakh, SDM&HO Sonai Dr Eijaz Ahmed Laskar and DPM NHM Cachar Rahul Ghosh, attended the programme alongside anganwadi workers, volunteers and health teams.

As Cachar continues LAC-wise health melas, the district administration reiterated its mission to ensure every child is screened, treated and supported through a robust healthcare framework aimed at building a stronger, healthier generation.

## Kamakhyaguri railway station renovation nears completion

Upgrades under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme includes enhanced passenger amenities



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 17:** The redevelopment of Kamakhyaguri Railway Station under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS) is now nearing completion, North-east Frontier Railway (NFR) announced on Monday.

The station has undergone major upgrades, including a new station building with an improved en-

trance lobby and circulating area, renovated platforms with Kota-stone surfacing, modern signage and a 12-meter wide Foot Over Bridge (FOB) with lift facilities. Passenger amenities such as new waiting halls, enhanced toilet blocks, expanded parking and multi-theme lighting have also been added. The station's surroundings have been beautified

with local art and cultural elements, creating a modern, accessible and aesthetically enriched environment.

Under ABSS, 92 stations across Northeast Frontier Railway are being redeveloped in phases—50 in Assam, 23 in West Bengal, 9 in Bihar, 4 in Tripura and 6 in other Northeastern states. Upgrades include enhanced passenger amenities, improved accessibility, revamped circulating areas, modern station façades and multimodal integration, aiming to provide safe, convenient and future-ready infrastructure.

NFR reaffirmed its commitment to delivering world-class facilities and modern travel experiences to passengers in Northeast India and adjoining states, with the ongoing transformations marking a significant step toward cleaner, safer, and more efficient railway stations in line with the national vision for a modernized railway network.

## Karbi Employees Association reshuffles leadership

**HT Correspondent**

**BOKAJAN, Nov 17:** The Karbi Employees Association Hanjlangso Zonal Committee underwent a leadership reshuffle at a meeting held at Hanjlangso Kalyan Ashram on Sunday.

The reshuffle followed the retirement of the incumbent president, Barim Engti and office secretary, Chandra Terang from government service.

Jayanta Kumar Teron has been appointed as the new president, while Hillson Timung takes over as the office secretary. The meeting was attended by former president Barim Engti, along with president Hakim Rongpi and secretary Dilip Rongpi.

## DMIT test conducted at Brahma Baba Techno School

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, Nov 17:** The Dermatoglyphics Multiple Intelligence Test (DMIT) was conducted at Brahma Baba Techno School on Monday, aiming to help students identify their innate strengths and potential career paths.

Prof RN Sinha, Chairman of the DMIT Committee of RRR Foundation, explained that the scientific assessment uses fingerprint patterns to reveal students' natural talents, learning styles and multiple intelligence areas, enabling better academic and career planning. Students from Nursery to Class XII participated in the test, conducted with the school's modern facilities and infrastructure.

The DMIT Committee has been actively introducing the test across



schools under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) to promote a holistic educational approach. Dr Ranjit Kumar Narzary, committee member, said the initiative extends to both government and private schools to support informed guidance for students' future growth.

Results will be available within ten days, providing valuable insights for parents and teachers.

Parents and educators have appreciated the initiative for its scientific and practical approach to identifying and nurturing student talents.

## Boro Sahitya Sabha marks 74th foundation day

**HT Correspondent**

**HOWRAGHAT, Nov 17:** The 74th foundation day of the Boro Sahitya Sabha was celebrated on Sunday across Howraghat Tin Ali, Panjuri, Haoraghat Nagar and Dighali Ati. The event was organised by the Karbi Anglong District Boro Sahitya Sabha in collaboration with Dengaon Primary Boro Sahitya Sabha.

The celebration was graced by vice-president of Boro Sahitya Sabha Bishweshwar Basumatari, Sahitya Akademi Awardee Ritu Raj Basumatari, Ratneshwar Narzary, Dr Premanand Mosahari, Thaneshwar Gahari and other dignitaries. The program was moderated by secretary Dharmendra Khakhari with office bearers of Howraghat Tin Ali Regional Leading Boro Organisation also present.

Flag hoisting by all Bodo organisations marked the occasion. Yogen Baglari inaugurated the meeting, while Bhavananda Khakhari delivered the welcome speech. The event was inaugurated by Karbi Anglong District ABSU vice-president Khaudam Basumatary and Assistant Professor Lankeshwar Hainari of Rukasen College attended as chief guest. The meeting was chaired by Maheshwar Basumatari and attended by retired teacher Karuna Kanta Boro among other dignitaries.

The celebration highlighted the continued efforts of the Boro Sahitya Sabha in promoting Bodo language, literature and culture in the region.

## 'Lions Club of Guwahati Pride' celebrates Children's Day

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 17:** The 'Lions Club of Guwahati Pride' organised a special service program on Children's Day at Panchkanya Veda Vidyaapeeth (Gurukul), Basistha on Sunday. All club members attended the event wearing their official badges, reflecting discipline, unity and enthusiasm. The program began with Vedic chanting by the Gurukul students, creating a spiritually uplifting atmosphere.

Club members then served fresh and nutritious meals to the students and Gurukul family, embodying the Lions motto, "We Serve." Gifts including blankets, sweaters, stationery sets, chocolates and juice packs were distributed to children and staff, bringing

joy and excitement to the occasion. The event also featured the presentation of Charter Certificates and Joining Kits to members, highlighting commitment and camaraderie within the club.

The celebrations concluded with a fellowship lunch, group photographs and visits to nearby temples for blessings. Prominent attendees included club president Anup Kumar Jajodia, secretary Manish Jain, Treasurer Uttam Kumar Agarwal and several other members. The program, led by Convenor Anil Agarwal and Co-Convenor Anil Bhartia, beautifully showcased a blend of service, spirituality and compassion, reaffirming the Lions spirit — "Where there is a need, there is a Lion."

## CM's vision spurs civic dialogue on Silchar elevated road project

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 17:** The Cachar District Administration has announced a public meeting on November 19 at 3:00 PM at Bhanga Bhawan, Silchar, to discuss the proposed "Construction of Elevated Road from Trunk Road near Capital Point to Rangirahri Point." The initiative aims to ensure transparency, community participation

and inclusive planning for the landmark infrastructure project.

Organised by the Land Acquisition Branch, the meeting will bring together residents, stakeholders and local representatives to provide feedback on the project's alignment, land-related issues and overall impact on urban connectivity. The district administration

emphasised that public suggestions will play a crucial role in shaping the final framework of the elevated corridor, which is expected to ease traffic congestion and improve mobility across Silchar.

Minister of Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs; Barak Valley Development; Mines & Minerals, Koushik Rai will lead the

discussions, along with MPs and MLAs from Cachar district, highlighting the project's significance in the region's infrastructural development. The administration has extended an open invitation to all residents to attend and contribute their views, stressing that active public participation is vital for the project's smooth implementation and long-term benefits.

## Annual CA Students' festival brings enthusiasm, creativity and fun-filled competitions Fusion Fiesta 2025: EICASA celebrates talent and learning



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 17:** The Guwahati Branch of EICASA successfully hosted its annual CA Students' Festival, Fusion Fiesta 2025, marked by high energy, creativity and active participation. The event was held under the leadership of CA Vikash Kr Choudhary, Chairman of EICASA and received strong support from CA Raginee Goyal, Chairperson of Guwahati

Branch of EIRC, CA Anjani Kumar Munda, Vice Chairman, Jay Prakash Gupta, Branch Secretary and CA Piyush Birmiwai, Branch Treasurer.

Jaitra Pareek, Vice Chairman of EICASA and Vibha Jain, Secretary, meticulously organised a day filled with learning opportunities and talent showcases. Participants competed in a variety of events including The Vocal Icon (Singing),

Battle of the Beats (Dance), Trivia Quest (Quiz), The Grand Scavenger (Treasure Hunt), The Living Canvas (Face Painting), RangFusion (Rangoli), The Persona Crown (Mr & Ms EICASA), No Flame Feast (Fireless Cooking), Splash the Quest and the newly introduced High Stake (Bidding Wars).

High Stake, the festival's newest attraction, drew enthusiastic participation in a stock auction-style competition that quickly became the highlight of the day. More than 100 students joined in the festivities, demonstrating creativity, skill and sportsmanship across all events.

The festival concluded with awards for winners of all competitions and collective appreciation for every participant, volunteer and mentor, celebrating the spirit of camaraderie and talent among CA students. Fusion Fiesta 2025 once again reinforced its status as a platform where learning meets fun and creativity.

## Sahitya Sabha marks centenary of Chandrakanta Handique Bhawan

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZPUR, Nov 17:** The Assam Sahitya Sabha celebrated the centenary of the historic Chandrakanta Handique Bhawan with a grand "Suwag Tola" ceremony in Majuli on Sunday. Presiding over the event, Sabha president Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami said the Sabha aims to reach every section of society through cultural initiatives and keep Assamese cultural life vibrant. He praised philanthropist Radhakanta Handique, whose generous contribution in memory of his two sons led to the construction of the Bhawan, calling his legacy a source of pride and cultural enrichment.

Dr Goswami added that the Sabha envisions creating an environment where future generations will take pride in the institution. Chief guest Prof Nirod Kumar Baruah, Vice-Chancellor of Majuli Cultural University, remarked that while criticism of the Sabha is easy, its contributions are unmatched. Special guest Dr Sadanan Deori, president of the Deuri Sahitya Sabha, said the Chandrakanta Handique Bhawan has grown into an institution and that the Sabha continues to guide Assamese society like the 'Bor Kokoi'.

In his thematic address, Sabha Principal Secretary Debajit Bora noted that Handique's donation built more than a structure—it shaped the integrated identity of the Assamese people. He said the Bhawan, enriched by the presence of distinguished personalities over decades, stands today as a symbol of collective pride. Vice-pres-



ident Padum Rajkhowa unveiled the commemorative volume Suwag-Sourav, urging all to join the Sabha and contribute to the state's cultural journey. Former Majuli College Principal Naren Thakuria also praised the Sabha's recent initiatives.

The programme opened with an inaugural address by Dr Debojit Saikia, Principal of Majuli

College, who highlighted Handique's irreplaceable contributions. Majuli MLA and reception committee chairman Bhuvan Gam delivered the welcome speech. The open session at the Banishgopal Natya Mandir of Sri Sri Garmur Satra saw attendance from several dignitaries, including Majuli SP Haren Tokbi, Central Office Secretary Dr Jyotirekha Hazarika, Organising Secretary Dulal Nath, Publicity Convener Sankusiddha Nath and executive members such as Bhupen Dutta, Prabhat Bora Burhabhakta, Mahim Chandra Nath and Tilak Rajkhowa.

The day began with an environmental cleanliness drive at 7:30 AM., followed by a tree plantation led by Sri Sri Paramananda Deva Goswami, Sadradhikar of Sri Sri Garmur Satra. At 9 AM, the flag was hoisted by Majuli District Sahitya Sabha president Prafulla Kumar Baruah and branch presidents, followed by a memorial tribute led by Central Organising Secretary Ram Sagar Nath and district vice-president Khagen Hazarika.

A highlight of the celebration was a grand cultural procession at 10 AM, inaugurated by Padma Shri Dr Hemchandra Goswami, Sadradhikar of Sri Sri Chamaguri Satra. Featuring thousands of literature lovers and cultural troupes carrying the emblem of the century-old Bhawan, the procession captivated spectators. The celebrations concluded in the evening with cultural performances, including scenes from Sri Sri Krishna Rasliya, marking a memorable end to the historic centenary observance.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction. -William Blake*

## Jolt for INDIA Bloc in Bihar

The NDA led by the BJP has swept the assembly polls in Bihar stunning the RJD and the other constituents of the INDIA Bloc by the extent of the win of the NDA constituents in the 243-member state assembly. The initial results till this afternoon indicate that the NDA has got 202 seats as against 35 received by Mahagathbandhan and six by others. This 2025 verdict can be taken as a disaster for the INDIA Bloc in Bihar led by RJD as in 2020 assembly elections, the MGB was nearly scraping through with a majority. The NDA got 122 seats as against 114 by MGB while others got seven seats. The RJD emerged as the single largest party in 2020 with 75 seats as against 74 by the BJP. The JD(U) was the third party five years back. At a time when the MGB was gripped with big optimism after the projection of Tejashwi Yadav as the potential chief minister of the MGB and Rahul Gandhi led movement against SIR took the character of a massive movement against the Election Commission as also centre, what went wrong in the strategy and poll campaign of the MGB?

Nitish Kumar is no push over. This 2025 election has rehabilitated the chief minister. He has proverbial nine lives. The BJP has got the largest number of seats singly at 92 as against 82 received by JD(U), but Nitish Kumar is due to be administered the oath with full powers and the state BJP leadership has to wait for as long as the JD(U) supremo keeps physically fit. The women's support has certainly gone mostly in favour of NDA due to Nitish Kumar. The announcement of additional funds for the women just a few days before the elections had its big impact. Nitish Kumar could get the first advantage of such revisits as he was in power. The RJD leader's follow up announcement failed to garner that impact. In fact women participation in the polls and their assertion of voting rights aggressively are the outcome of the various women centric schemes including cash transfer to women.

Each state election needs a different poll strategy. For Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, the electoral scenario is set, but in Assam, it is still fluid. Only one step has been taken forward, a few more steps are needed for the final victory of INDIA Bloc in Assam which is possible with a proper poll strategy. INDIA Bloc leaders have to meet, do painstaking analysis and take steps for the April/May 2026 state assembly elections. One more assembly election battle in 2025 after Delhi has been won by the BJP. But for the 2026 battles, INDIA bloc can not afford to lose any.

# Data Law 2025: Citizens Last, Secrecy First

It has been more than eight years since the Supreme Court of India declared that privacy is a fundamental right. That landmark judgment in 2017 filled millions of us with hope. We thought a strong law would soon protect our personal data from companies that track every click and from governments that sometimes watch too closely. After years of waiting, twists and turns, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act finally became law in 2023. Many celebrated because the rules looked simpler than earlier drafts and promised some real safeguards for ordinary people.

Yet the joy was short-lived. Hidden inside the new law were huge exemptions for government agencies. They can collect and keep our data with almost no questions asked. The Data Protection Board, meant to be the referee, was born weak, picked entirely by the government and given very little power to punish big offenders. Worst of all, the law quietly changed the Right to Information Act in a way that feels like a betrayal. For almost twenty years the RTI Act has been our strongest tool to hold power to account. With one stroke, the new data law said public officials can now refuse to share any information that might reveal something personal, even if it is needed to expose corruption or wrongdoing.

On November 14, 2025, the government finally released the detailed rules that tell us exactly how the 2023 Act will work in daily life. Most of us expected these rules to fix at least some of the problems. Instead they have made things worse in important ways and delayed almost everything that could help ordinary citizens.

Imagine you run a small online shop. The rules say you must ask every customer for clear consent before using their data, tell them exactly why you need it, and let them withdraw consent whenever they want. You must appoint a data protection officer, allow people to erase their data, and report every breach within six hours. These are

good ideas, but the rules push the start date for most of these duties to April 2027 for big companies and even later for smaller ones. Until then companies can continue doing pretty much what they were doing before. The only part that started immediately is the part that hurts transparency: the change to the RTI Act.

Now when you file an RTI application asking why a government contract was given to a certain firm, or how much money a politician spent on travel, the officer can simply say "this contains personal information" and reject your request. Earlier the law said personal information could be withheld only if it had no connection to public activity. After these rules that narrow exception has become a wide gate. Almost anything can be called personal and kept secret. Citizens who spent years using RTI to uncover scams, track school funds, or question hospital bills suddenly find the door half shut.

The timing of the rules adds insult to injury. The draft rules were already late. Then the government stretched a three-month public consultation into something much longer, with very little explanation. When the final rules were ready they were released on the very day Bihar declared its assembly election results, when newspapers and television channels were busy with something else. Many people feel this was deliberate, a quiet way to push through unpopular changes while attention was elsewhere.

Why does all this matter so much to ordinary Indians? Because our personal data is no longer just phone numbers or addresses. It is our health records, our banking details, where we travel, what we read, whom we love, what we believe. When companies mishandle this information we lose money or face embarrassing leaks. When governments collect it without limits we risk a future where dissent becomes dangerous. The promise



of the 2017 privacy judgment was that none of this would happen without strong checks and real accountability.

Instead we have a law that treats the data of citizens as something

the state can use freely while making it harder for those same citizens to ask questions. The Data Protection Board still has no chairperson and no members more than two years after the Act was passed. No one knows when it will start working. Fines for companies that break the rules can reach crores but the rules for actually imposing those fines are still missing. Everything that could protect us is postponed, everything that weakens us is in force today.

Some will say we should be patient. Building institutions takes time, they argue. But patience feels very different when you are the one whose RTI application has just been rejected for the first time in fifteen years. It feels different when you realise the government gave itself unlimited exemptions while asking every small startup to hire lawyers and compliance officers years before the watchdog is

ready. India is one of the world's largest data markets. Hundreds of millions of people are online for the first time, trusting apps and websites with information they have never shared before. They deserve a law that matches the scale of that trust. What we have instead is a half-built bridge. One side, the side that restricts citizens, is complete and open for traffic. The other side, the side that protects citizens, is still under construction with no clear date when it will be ready.

The story of data protection in India is turning into a story of too little, much later. Eight years after the Supreme Court spoke of privacy with dignity, most of the dignity is still waiting. The rules notified on November 14, 2025, could have been a chance to correct the course. They chose instead to delay the corrections and hurry the damage. For anyone who believes that transparency and privacy must walk together, not one at the cost of the other, this is a painful moment. The fight for both is far from over, but the road just became longer and steeper than we feared.

*Now when you file an RTI application asking why a government contract was given to a certain firm, or how much money a politician spent on travel, the officer can simply say "this contains personal information" and reject your request. Earlier the law said personal information could be withheld only if it had no connection to public activity. After these rules that narrow exception has become a wide gate*

### DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Satyabrata Borah

## Bihar's Verdict Jolt: A New political grammar emerges

By: Dipak Kurmi

The Bihar Assembly election verdict has arrived with the force of a political earthquake, completely unforeseen in its magnitude and transformative in its implications. The National Democratic Alliance, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Janata Dal (United), secured a landslide victory, capturing 202 out of 243 seats with a combined strike rate exceeding 83 percent. This represents not merely an electoral triumph but a fundamental reworking of Bihar's political landscape, one that defies conventional wisdom, challenges traditional vote-bank arithmetic, and exposes the widening chasm between opposition narratives and ground realities.

The numbers themselves tell a story of unprecedented dominance. The BJP emerged as the single largest party for the first time in Bihar's electoral history, winning 89 seats from the 101 constituencies it contested, representing an 88 percent strike rate. The JD(U) posted its best performance since 2010, securing 85 seats with an 84 percent success rate. Union Minister Chirag Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) contributed 19 seats, while smaller allies like the Hindustani Awam Morcha and Rashtriya Lok Morcha added five and four seats respectively. This coalition of diverse political forces, spanning different caste configurations and ideological positions, demonstrated remarkable cohesion in translating its organizational strength into electoral success.

The scale of the NDA's sweep becomes even more striking when examined through the lens of vote share distribution. The BJP secured approximately 20.5 percent of the overall vote share, while the JD(U) garnered around 19 percent. Together with their allies, the NDA commanded a substantial plurality of Bihar's electorate. In stark contrast, the Rashtriya Janata Dal, despite securing the highest individual vote share at approximately 23 percent, managed to win merely 25 seats, barely three more than its worst-ever tally of 22 in 2010. The Congress party, often perceived as a weak link in opposition alliances, performed dismally with just five seats and 8.7 percent vote share. The entire Mahagathbandhan, comprising the RJD, Congress, and Left parties, could muster only 35 seats combined, falling far short of even a respectable opposition presence.

This dramatic disconnect between the RJD's vote chori pitch,

which allegedly resonated with voters' concerns, and the actual electoral verdict demands deeper examination. Probably the Congress's vote chori narrative, which was disconnected from the voters' lived reality and concerns, failed to translate into electoral gains. Repeatedly emphasizing the grievance narrative henceforth may be perceived by voters as excuse-making rather than addressing genuine development and governance issues. The Opposition's campaign centered heavily on allegations of voter roll manipulation, claiming that over six million names were deleted through the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision exercise. Rahul Gandhi travelled extensively across Bihar, covering approximately 1,300 kilometers during his Aakrosh Yatra, visiting 20 districts and 110 constituencies. The party claimed that the strike rate was much lower than 10 percent, as out of six crore voters tested, probably the party's vote chori pitch was seen as disconnected from voter's concerns.

Most importantly, the Congress's accusation-heavy campaign appears to have backfired spectacularly. While opposition parties alleged these deletions disproportionately harmed minorities, women, and migrant workers, the actual voting patterns told a different story. Bihar recorded its highest voter turnout since 1951, reaching 67.1 percent, with women voting in greater numbers than men. Female voter turnout stood at 71.6 percent compared to 62.8 percent for men, suggesting that far from being disenfranchised, women participated enthusiastically in the democratic process. This demographic's overwhelming support for the NDA, particularly in response to welfare schemes like the direct transfer of 10,000 rupees to over 10 million women and increased pension benefits for senior citizens, demonstrates the power of targeted governance over abstract rhetorical rhetoric.

The BJP's strategic approach to this election merits careful analysis. Rather than relying solely on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal appeal or Nitish Kumar's governance record, the party engineered a sophisticated coalition-building exercise that transcended traditional caste lines. The success of the Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) in Dalit-heavy constituencies, combined with the Hindustani Awam Morcha's performance and the BJP's own penetration into Extremely Backward Class communities constituting 36 percent of Bihar's population, including 10 percent

Muslims, reveals a deliberate strategy of social engineering. Prime Minister Modi's characterization of the mandate as redefining MY from Muslim-Yadav to Mahila-Yuva (women and youth) was more than mere wordplay; it represented a fundamental shift in how political parties must conceptualize their support bases in contemporary Bihar.

The Opposition's failure cannot be attributed solely to organizational weaknesses or resource constraints. The Rashtriya Janata Dal, led by the charismatic Tejashwi Yadav, conducted an aggressive, digitally-savvy campaign featuring AI-generated videos, memes, and massive rallies. Yadav pledged to create millions of jobs and positioned himself as the champion of backward castes, Dalits, and the economically marginalized. Yet this approach, which had yielded significant dividends in 2020 when the RJD emerged as the single largest party with 75 seats despite losing the election, failed to replicate its earlier success. The party's vote share of 23 percent, the highest among individual parties, translating into merely 25 seats exposes the limitations of concentrated vote banks in a first-past-the-post electoral system where broad-based coalitions enjoy structural advantages.

Perhaps the most dramatic illustration of the Opposition's collapse came in the RJD's traditional stronghold of Raghapur, the Yadav family bastion where Tejashwi Yadav himself contested. During counting, Yadav trailed behind BJP candidate Satish Kumar for extended periods before ultimately securing a narrow victory margin of approximately 13,000 votes. His brother, Tej Pratap Yadav, suffered an even more humiliating defeat in Mahua, finishing third behind both the winning LJP candidate and the RJD's own nominee. These results in constituencies considered impregnable Yadav fortresses signal a fundamental erosion of traditional loyalty structures that have sustained the RJD for decades.

The role of allegations regarding electoral integrity deserves particular scrutiny. Opposition parties, led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, made serious accusations against both the government and the Election Commission, alleging systematic voter suppression and manipulation of electoral rolls. Gandhi's statements suggesting the government and Election Commission were stealing votes represented a frontal assault on India's democratic institutions. The Election Commission re-

sponded forcefully, dismissing these allegations as factually incorrect and misleading, and challenged opposition leaders to substantiate their claims under oath or apologize to the nation. When Tejashwi Yadav claimed his name had been removed from voter lists, the Election Commission declared the EPIC number he displayed to media was fake and demanded he submit the allegedly fraudulent voter ID card for investigation.

These accusations and counter-accusations created a political atmosphere charged with suspicion and mistrust. However, the actual conduct of the election, with its record-breaking turnout and peaceful voting process across two phases on November 6 and November 11, suggested that voters themselves remained confident in the electoral process's integrity. The deployment of 243 Returning Officers and an equal number of Counting Observers, combined with technological safeguards and extensive monitoring, provided institutional credibility that the Opposition's rhetorical attacks could not undermine. Prime Minister Modi explicitly congratulated the Election Commission for conducting peaceful elections and noted that youth support for the alliance demonstrated desire for purified electoral rolls, effectively turning the Opposition's own talking point against them.

The strategic lessons from Bihar's election extend far beyond the state's borders. The BJP has now recorded a series of emphatic Assembly victories since its setback in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, where it fell short of a simple majority in Parliament and required coalition partners to form the government. Victories in Haryana, Maharashtra, Delhi, and now Bihar have restored the party's political capital and momentum heading into crucial assembly elections in West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry scheduled for April-May 2026. Modi's assertion that the BJP's victory march would follow the Ganga's course from Bihar to Bengal carries particular significance, as West Bengal represents one of the few major states where the BJP remains in opposition despite substantial vote share.

The implications for Bihar's governance and Nitish Kumar's political future are equally profound. Kumar, the 74-year-old veteran who has governed Bihar for nearly two decades, will take oath as Chief Minister for a record tenth time. His political journey, marked by shifting alliances and pragmatic realign-

ments, has been vindicated by this electoral mandate. Once a fierce opponent of Modi, Kumar's decision to rejoin the BJP-led NDA now appears strategically prescient. The apprehension that a loss in Bihar could split his party and threaten Modi's federal coalition, which relies on his 12 lawmakers in Parliament, has been decisively dispelled. Instead, Kumar emerges strengthened, his position within the coalition more secure than at any point in recent years.

However, victory brings its own challenges. The NDA's campaign made ambitious promises, most notably the pledge to create 15 million jobs in a state where youth unemployment and out-migration remain persistent problems. Many young Biharis are forced to migrate to other states for work due to lack of opportunities, making job creation and youth empowerment not merely electoral promises but existential necessities for Bihar's future. Both the NDA and the Mahagathbandhan recognized this reality, with pledges of government jobs for every household, skill centers, and massive investment packages. Now the NDA must deliver on these commitments or risk facing the same anti-incumbency that destroyed the Opposition's prospects.

The emergence of Prashant Kishor's Jan Suraj Party as a potential third force, though ultimately unsuccessful in this election, adds another dimension to Bihar's evolving political landscape. Kishor, the renowned election strategist who orchestrated successful campaigns for various parties before launching his own political venture, undertook an extensive padayatra between October 2022 and October 2024, walking over 5,000 kilometers and visiting more than 5,500 villages to engage directly with local communities. His focus on governance, education, clean politics, and breaking traditional vote-bank arithmetic represented an attempt to offer voters an alternative to both NDA and opposition alliances. While Jan Suraj failed to win seats in this election, Kishor's criticism that the JD(U) received only 11.6 percent vote share in the 2024 by-elections and his positioning as the NDA's primary opponent rather than the RJD's suggest he views the political landscape differently from conventional analysts.

The broader implications for India's opposition parties, particularly the Congress, are sobering. The party's poor performance in Bihar follows similar disappointments in other states, raising fun-

damental questions about its organizational capacity, messaging strategy, and leadership effectiveness. Rahul Gandhi's campaign against the BJP, focusing on allegations of vote theft and institutional manipulation, failed to resonate with voters who appear more concerned with tangible development issues, employment opportunities, and welfare benefits than with abstract constitutional debates. The Congress's inability to function as an effective anchor for opposition alliances, combined with its declining vote share and seat tallies, threatens the entire framework of opposition unity that the INDIA bloc represents.

The NDA's victory also carries implications for the Rajya Sabha composition in coming years. Bihar currently elects 16 members to the Rajya Sabha, with the RJD holding five seats, BJP five, JD(U) four, Congress one, and Rashtriya Lok Morcha one. Two RJD members, Prem Chand Gupta and AD Singh, are set to retire in 2026. The decisive NDA majority in the Bihar Assembly essentially guarantees the alliance's ability to elect more Rajya Sabha members when these vacancies arise, without needing support from opposition legislators. Additionally, several sitting Rajya Sabha MPs have terms ending in April 2030, and because Rajya Sabha elections to fill these seats will occur before the new Assembly is constituted after the 2030 state elections, the NDA's current legislative strength will determine who replaces them, providing structural advantages that extend well beyond this electoral cycle.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Bihar's verdict is what it reveals about the disconnect between elite political discourse and mass voter sentiment. The opposition's narrative centered on democratic backsliding, institutional capture, vote theft, and minority marginalization found little purchase among voters who prioritized immediate material concerns and visible governance outcomes. The NDA's campaign emphasizing welfare schemes, infrastructure development, women's empowerment, and Kumar's law-and-order record proved more compelling than abstract institutional critiques. This gap between what opposition parties believed voters cared about and what voters actually rewarded at the ballot box suggests a fundamental misreading of Bihar's political sociology.

The election also exposed the limitations of caste-based mobilization in an era of increasingly complex social coalitions. The

RJD's traditional dominance among Yadavs and Muslims, while remaining intact in terms of vote share concentration, could not overcome the NDA's broader alliance spanning upper castes, Extremely Backward Classes, Dalits through various sub-caste configurations, and significant Muslim representation. The BJP's success in attracting female voters across caste lines and youth voters seeking employment opportunities demonstrates that identity politics, while still relevant, no longer provides sufficient foundation for electoral majority-building.

As Nitish Kumar prepares for his tenth term as Chief Minister and the BJP consolidates its position as Bihar's largest party, the challenge of governance looms large. The state's infrastructure, though improved significantly under Kumar's tenure, requires massive additional investment. Education and healthcare systems need fundamental strengthening. The employment crisis demands immediate attention through both skill development and industrial investment attraction. Agricultural productivity and farmer welfare remain concerns in a predominantly agrarian economy. Managing these developmental challenges while maintaining the social coalition that delivered electoral victory will test the NDA's administrative capacity and political will.

The Bihar verdict ultimately represents more than a single state's electoral outcome. It signals the consolidation of a new political paradigm where welfare delivery, targeted benefits, broad social coalitions, and effective organizational machinery trump traditional identity mobilization and grievance-based narratives. For the opposition, it presents an uncomfortable truth: accusations of institutional manipulation and democratic backsliding, however sincerely believed, cannot substitute for credible governance alternatives and positive programmatic visions. The politics of perception has collided with the reality of voter priorities, and in this collision, it is not perception but reality that has emerged triumphant. Whether opposition parties can learn from this defeat and reconstruct their political strategies accordingly will determine India's democratic contestation in the years ahead. For now, Bihar has spoken, and its voice carries implications that extend far beyond the state's boundaries into the heart of India's evolving democratic experiment. *(the writer can be reached at dipakurmigpltd@gmail.com)*

## THE VOICE THAT BECAME WATER

Remembering Zubeen Garg on his 53<sup>rd</sup> birthday

By: Dipak Kurmi

Today, November 18, 2025, would have marked the fifty-third birthday of Zubeen Garg, the man who transformed himself from a humble boy cycling out of Jorhat into the eternal heartbeat of Assam. Yet this year, the celebrations are muted by grief, the songs tinged with sorrow, and the remembrance heavy with loss. Exactly two months ago, on September 19, 2025, the world lost not merely a singer but a cultural phenomenon, a voice that had given melody to the aspirations, struggles, and dreams of millions across North-east India and beyond. As we honor what would have been his birthday, we find ourselves not celebrating a life present but commemorating a legacy that refuses to fade.

Zubeen Garg's sudden death in Singapore, where he had traveled to perform at the North East India Festival, sent shockwaves across the subcontinent. According to Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Zubeen drowned after removing his life jacket while swimming off a yacht, a tragic accident that cut short a life brimming with artistic vitality and social commitment. He was administered CPR and rushed to Singapore General Hospital, where he was pronounced dead in the intensive care unit around 2:30PM IST. The disbelief was immediate and overwhelming. How could a man so full of life, whose voice had chronicled every heartbeat of Assam, suddenly fall silent?

The grief that followed was unprecedented in its scale and intensity. When his body was brought back to Assam, lakhs of people gathered at the Sarusajai Stadium to catch a final glimpse of their beloved icon. Businesses shut down voluntarily, schools closed their doors, and the entire state seemed to pause in mourning. His song "Mayabini" became an anthem of remembrance, sung in unison across Assam by people who felt an inexplicable personal loss. Zubeen was cremated with full state honours on 23 September with a 21-gun salute, a recognition not merely of his artistic achievements but of his profound role in shaping Assamese consciousness.

Born on November 18, 1972, in Jorhat, Zubeen was destined for music long before the world recognized his name. His mother was a singer, his father a poet, and their home was filled with rhythms and words that nourished his spirit from childhood. This blend of litera-

ture and music created in him not just a performer but a storyteller whose songs could carry the weight of both philosophy and feeling. Yet Zubeen's journey was never one of privilege or ease. He often spoke of leaving Jorhat on a bicycle and dreaming of returning in a Range Rover, then a Rolls Royce. This was not arrogance but ambition—a metaphor for daring to dream bigger in a region where opportunities seemed limited.

When he released his album Anamika in the early 1990s, it marked a seismic shift in Assamese music. The album was not merely a collection of tracks; it was a cultural awakening for a generation caught between tradition and modernity, between rural memory and urban aspiration. Young men and women found their heartbreaks, longings, and triumphs reflected in his melodies. From that moment, Zubeen became more than an artist—he became the emotional heartbeat of Assam, the voice that gave sound to unspoken sorrows and joys.

Over three decades, Zubeen sang more than 40,000 songs in an estimated 40 languages and dialects, a staggering output that demonstrated not only his versatility but his deep commitment to representing the diverse cultures of India. His voice could glide effortlessly from the raw intensity of Assamese folk tunes to the polished grandeur of Bollywood ballads. Songs like "Ya Ali" in the film Gangster gave him national recognition, yet even as fame stretched beyond Assam's borders, he remained "Zubeen da"—the brother who sang Bihu with tenderness, the son who carried an entire people's aspirations in his throat.

But to call him merely a singer is to diminish his range. Zubeen was a multi-instrumentalist and played more than 12 instruments, a composer, lyricist, actor, director, and philanthropist. He was a complete artist whose creativity knew no bounds. His genius lay not only in technical mastery but in his ability to fuse traditional Assamese melodies with contemporary rhythms, giving local music a global feel without losing its cultural soul. He modernized Borgeets and Bongeets—classical and spiritual songs at risk of fading from memory—making them accessible to younger generations while respecting their sacred essence.

What distinguished Zubeen from his contemporaries was his fearless social consciousness. He was not content to remain a distant celebrity; he walked the streets during anti-



CAA demonstrations, spoke to the homeless, offered monetary help to strangers, and gave away his own jackets to those shivering in the cold. During Assam's turbulent years of insurgency and secret killings, he lent his voice not to empty slogans but to songs that could pierce silence with truth. Tracks like "Dia Ghurai Dia Prithibi Amar," "Sonere Sojua Poja Johi Khoi Jai," and "Shanti Dia Mukti Dia" became cultural instruments of conscience, decrying violence and championing peace.

He often identified himself as a socialist who was not bound by caste, religion, or language. This self-perception found deep resonance among people who saw in him a rare embodiment of egalitarian ideals. His humanitarianism was expressed not through lofty rhetoric but through consistent acts of generosity. Numerous accounts emerged after his death of the countless ways he extended help to the needy—from funding medical treatments to supporting struggling artists, from offering his building as a COVID care center to mentoring aspiring musicians. In doing so, Zubeen personified a moral leadership that cut across conventional structures of power and privilege.

Seven years before his death, while traveling between Nagaon and Lumding, Zubeen wrote a poem that now reads like prophecy: "My identity is like water, you cannot bind me." The poem flows with water's patience and inevitability—quiet yet unstoppable, gentle yet transformative. Its concluding lines, "If you

dare to block me, I will break your stronghold... Be water, be shapeless," now strike with haunting resonance. Through these words, he reminded us that art, like rivers, cannot be contained; it will always find a way, even if the banks of circumstance try to restrict it.

The investigation into his death continues to unfold. More than 60 FIRs were filed across Assam demanding a thorough investigation, and a Special Investigation Team headed by Munna Prasad Gupta was formed. The Singapore Police Force stated that based on preliminary investigations, they do not suspect foul play, though investigations may take up to another three months. The Assamese public, devastated by his loss, has demanded transparency and accountability, flooding social media with the hashtag #JusticeForZubeenGarg. Yet beyond the legal proceedings and investigations, what remains most profound is the collective grief that transcends formal inquiries—a grief born from genuine love and the recognition that something irreplaceable has been lost.

Today, on what would have been his fifty-third birthday, we remember Zubeen not through the silence of absence but through the continuation of his music. His songs remain companions to life itself—played at weddings and protests, hummed in tea gardens and university hostels, whispered in moments of heartbreak and sung in celebrations of joy. From "Mayabini" to "Aami Axomiya," from "Jantra" to "I Love You Buli Kolu Moi," every compo-

sition carries the intimate weight of shared experience. His music was never background noise; it was identity itself.

Zubeen's influence extended far beyond Assam. In Cooch Behar, West Bengal, authorities have decided to honor him by erecting a statue and dedicating the stage at the upcoming Rash Mela to his name. His rendition of the Bhawaiya classic "Kande Kanai Bajeya re Shanai" in the album Moner Aina remains a treasured memory for the people of that region, a testament to how he bridged cultural divides through song. His ability to embody both the deeply local and the universally human made him a phenomenon that transcended geographical and linguistic boundaries.

As we mark this birthday without him, we are reminded that true artists never truly leave. They become platforms, benchmarks, and cultural heights of a civilization. Zubeen's absence will be felt in every Bohag Bihu celebration, in every street where his voice once echoed, in every young artist who looked to him as proof that ambition was not too big for small-town beginnings. Yet his presence endures in the continued singing, in the memories circulating online, in the tears of fans who still cannot believe he is gone.

The challenge now lies in sustaining the unity and inspiration his life generated. Mourning alone cannot carry the transformative power of Zubeen Garg's vision. The youth of Assam, in particular, carry the responsibility of translating the emotional solidarity of this moment into lasting social consciousness. To honor Zubeen truly is to embody the principles he stood for—to resist injustice, to nurture creativity without compromise, to approach life with courage, authenticity, and empathy.

On this day, we remember that Zubeen Garg was more than a musician. He was a current of life, a force of nature, a living anthem for Assam and the Northeast. He taught us that music is not a luxury but a lifeline, not entertainment but the very language of identity. His voice has not vanished; it has simply shifted into eternity. Like the water he once wrote about, his spirit flows through every heart that dares to remember, every throat that dares to sing.

Happy birthday, Zubeen da. The songs refuse to end. The echo refuses to fade. And in that refusal lies your immortality. (The writer can be reached at dipakurmigpltd@gmail.com)

## From Stage to society: Zubeen Garg's cultural journey

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Few cultural icons in Assam's modern history have occupied a space as deep, emotional and expansive as Zubeen Garg, and his passing has turned that cultural presence into a collective wound. The news of his death did not merely announce the end of a life; it marked the end of a voice that had become a companion, a symbol and, for many, a reflection of their own lived emotions. The silence that followed his departure has been felt not only in music rooms and concert grounds but also in the inner corridors of Assamese society where his songs, his words and his restless spirit had long found a home. His journey from a young artist with boundless creative energy to one of the most influential cultural personalities of Assam is inseparable from the story of the society he sang for, fought for and loved with fierce sincerity.

Zubeen Garg emerged during a time when Assamese music was searching for new directions and the youth were seeking new ways of expressing their identity. His arrival reshaped this landscape. He stepped into a world still dominated by traditional melodies, devotional compositions and established voices, yet he managed to create a sound that stood apart. His early works blended the melodic richness of Assamese tradition with the vibrancy of contemporary genres. This fresh musical vocabulary resonated with a generation hungry for something that reflected their changing sensibilities. Young listeners found in him not just a performer but someone who articulated the complex emotions of a society standing on the threshold of modernity. His songs became more than entertainment; they became emotional companions for students, dreamers, workers and migrants navigating the uncertainties of life.

His foray into the world of cinema, across multiple languages, expanded his artistic presence beyond Assam. His success in Hindi and Bengali films brought him national recognition, but it also carried a deeper meaning for Assamese people. It signalled that talent from a small state could stand tall on larger cultural stages without losing its identity. Even as he composed for major films and sang for national audiences, he repeatedly returned to Assamese music with renewed commitment, proving that fame did not detach him from his roots. This dual identity—one that bridged the local and the national—made him a cultural ambassador of sorts, showcasing Assam's artistic richness to the wider world.

Yet his influence cannot be confined to music and cinema alone. His personality, often marked by raw honesty, unpredictability, emotional openness and a disarming disregard for carefully

curated celebrity behaviour, made him an icon unlike any other. He did not try to shape a flawless public image; instead, he offered something much more powerful—authenticity. This authenticity, at times messy and controversial, resonated deeply with people who saw in him a reflection of their own imperfections, vulnerabilities and hopes. His concerts were not mere performances but gatherings of shared energies where boundaries between artiste and audience dissolved. He spoke to people not from an elevated pedestal but from a place of intimacy, and that intimacy now makes his absence immeasurably painful.

His relationship with activism was an important aspect of his cultural journey. At crucial moments in Assam's recent socio-political history, he took positions, voiced concerns and participated in movements that he believed mattered to the region's identity. His involvement was not always methodical or politically calibrated; it was emotional, instinctive and intense. This sincerity drew both admiration and criticism. Some questioned the political implications of his statements, while others saw in him a voice of conscience—a voice that refused to remain silent when the cultural and social equilibrium of Assam felt endangered. His words carried weight not because they were perfect but because they emerged from genuine concern, and this concern transformed him into a social figure whose influence extended beyond the stage.

Zubeen Garg embodied a form of masculinity and celebrity that was starkly different from the polished, carefully measured public figures of today. His unfiltered emotional expressions—whether joy, anger, grief or affection—made him both relatable and human. His imperfections humanised him, making him not just a star but someone the public felt personally attached to. This deep emotional connection explains why his death has left a void that feels as though a part of Assam's collective self has been lost. His journey reminds us that cultural icons are not defined solely by their talents but by the emotional landscapes they help create.

His philanthropic work, often understated and without publicity, forms a significant part of his legacy. He contributed to healthcare initiatives, helped struggling families, supported emerging artists and stood by communities during environmental and humanitarian crises. These gestures were extensions of his generous heart, not obligations of his celebrity status. People who received his help often recount the warmth and immediacy with which he responded to distress. His death has brought these stories into renewed public memory, turning them into reminders of the compassion that coexisted with his artistic genius.

One of the most meaningful aspects of his journey was his commitment to preserving and revitalising Assamese folk traditions. By integrating Bihu rhythms, Zikir influences, ethnic beats and indigenous instrumentation into contemporary compositions, he made traditional elements accessible to younger generations. This creative effort was not merely an artistic choice but a cultural responsibility. In an era of globalised music consumption, he demonstrated that regional identity could be celebrated and modernised without compromising its essence. His dedication to promoting Assam's cultural heritage now stands as one of the most enduring pillars of his contribution.

His influence on Assamese cinema, too, remains significant. As an actor, composer and producer, he infused the industry with new energy. His involvement often attracted attention and commercial viability to films that might otherwise have struggled for visibility. More importantly, he helped shape a cinematic expression that blended modern aspirations with regional authenticity. His presence brought both credibility and a sense of familiarity to Assamese cinema. With his passing, the industry has lost not just a multi-talented contributor but a visionary who believed in the potential of Assamese films to tell powerful stories.

The intensity of his fandom is another remarkable element of his cultural journey. To many, being a follower of Zubeen Garg was not simply an act of admiration; it became a form of identity. His concerts transformed into spaces of shared cultural belonging where people across age groups, districts and backgrounds found unity in music, emotion and pride. His absence has left these spaces eerily incomplete, as though the collective rhythm they once carried has suddenly fallen silent. A society that had emotionally invested in his music and personality now finds itself grieving not just a star but a part of its cultural heartbeat.

His ability to reinvent himself over the years highlights the depth of his artistic instinct. Even as the music industry evolved, digital platforms reshaped listening habits and new artists emerged, he remained relevant. He adapted stylistically yet remained true to the emotional core of his music. His songs continued to capture the mood of the times, and his voice remained a constant companion for generations navigating shifting realities. This ability to remain rooted while evolving made him timeless. His death has abruptly ended a journey that was still unfolding, leaving fans and admirers imagining the songs that will now never be sung.

The suddenness and finality of his passing have brought an overwhelm-

ing sense of incompleteness. People who grew up with his music are now grappling with a silence they never expected to confront so soon. His absence has triggered not only personal grief but a cultural reckoning about the fragility of icons. The emotional weight of his death has also highlighted the profound responsibility placed on figures like him—individuals who inspire, unite, comfort and awaken society through their art. The mourning that has swept across Assam is not merely for a singer but for a presence that shaped memories, expressed unspoken emotions and embodied a collective spirit. It reflects the realisation that he was more than a cultural participant; he was a cultural force.

Yet even in death, Zubeen Garg continues to influence Assam's cultural consciousness. His songs echo in homes, gatherings and public events with a new depth, and his words are reinterpreted with renewed poignancy. His legacy now carries a layered meaning—one that includes not just the melodies he created but also the emotional bridges he built. His life story becomes a reminder of what art can achieve when it is inseparable from honesty, love and social awareness. The tributes pouring in from across communities show that his journey was not an isolated artistic career but a shared cultural experience that people lived through together.

His cultural journey, when viewed in its entirety, reveals the story of a man whose life intertwined with the rhythm of a region. His music captured the joys and sorrows of his people; his activism articulated their anxieties; his generosity softened their hardships; his imperfections mirrored their humanity. His death has turned this journey into a legacy, one that will continue to influence Assamese society for years to come. There is grief, but there is also gratitude—gratitude for the songs, the words, the courage and the love he offered without restraint.

From stage to society, Zubeen Garg became more than an artiste. He became a voice that carried the emotional weight of a generation, a symbol that reflected the pride and struggles of Assam, and a companion who stood by his people in moments of joy and unrest alike. His passing may have taken him away physically, but it has only deepened his place in the collective memory of the region. Through melodies that refuse to fade, through social awakenings he helped shape and through the cultural confidence he inspired, his journey continues. His life reminds us that art at its most powerful is not a performance but a bond, and even in silence, his voice will remain an enduring echo in the heart of Assam.

## A Tribute to Zubeen Garg on his Birthday

By: Diganta Barooh

Zubeen Garg was an enigma. Only those people who were close to him understood him, his restlessness, his madness and his commitment to his people. He is no less than the incarnation of the Lord or the Almighty. Infact in reality he is an incarnation of the Lord. He knew the business of religion going on in our society and how some people are exploiting the ignorant masses with their preachings about God. Zubeen rightly said - "I don't belong to any particular community, I don't belong to any particular religion and I don't have any Gods, I am free and I am the Kanchanjangha (the mountain)."

Zubeen was a common man's friend and he liked to mix with those people who were good at heart. He knew that the world of the rich is full of artificiality and so he didn't at all like this world of rich and always mixed with the world of the common man. He was a genuine person without any element of artificiality. Whatever he spoke, he spoke right from the core of the heart and he always stood by his words. Zubeen rightly expressed his views that is happening in our society without caring for the double standards that our so called political leaders and parties maintain with the public for their own selfish interests and ambitions.

Zubeen Garg was a divine child of the Almighty. We need to have eyes to see the divinity that he had. To me Zubeen is not dead. He still exists within everyone of us who understands him and his genuine love for music. The legacy of Zubeen Garg will live forever in the hearts of genuine music lovers. It feels disgusting when it is seen that some people who disliked Zubeen Garg when he was physically alive, are now writing praises for him in order to get recognition with the masses. The Government should severely punish those bastards who are resorting to piracy of Zubeen Garg's last movie, 'Roi Roi Binaale'. These people are the enemies of our state Assam and its culture.

The people of Assam will never ever forgive the culprits who conspired to kill Zubeen Garg with their conspiracy and carelessness. The people of Assam will love Zubeen Garg forever and ever. We should never ever forget the killers and the conspirators.

People cried a lot listening to the songs of Zubeen Garg and the memories associated with him in those bygone days of their lives. Zubeen Garg was not a trained singer like other singers. He sang right from the core of his heart with total genuineness and commitment. Nobody in this world has ever sung more than thirty eight thousand songs in their entire music career. Zubeen Garg was one and only. Zubeen Garg is rightly given the title of Humming King of the world.

One question that people of Assam want to ask to the people of the world - "Can you cite any instances of a person after whose death people are still pouring in his 'Samadhi Sthal' (his pyre) regularly and continuously for more than months without any break from morning to night?" It is one and only piece called Zubeen Garg. Zubeen Garg lives in people's blood and his music runs through every stream of blood among genuine lovers of music.

The people of Assam will never ever rest unless and until the authority and the Government give justice to Zubeen Garg by punishing the conspirators who conspired to kill Zubeen Garg. Zubeen Garg was a divine child of the Mother Earth. The entire existence cried when he died. The birds, the animals, the existence knew the depth of his genuineness and that's why the entire existence stood still when he died.

There are evidences in the media of a crowd standing beside Zubeen Garg's image after his death, a monkey holding Zubeen's image, a dog saluting Zubeen, a cat lying beside Zubeen's image, an owl sitting in front of Zubeen's image, some horses standing in front of Zubeen's image, a cow standing beside Zubeen's image with tears in its eyes and above all an egret (Bogoli in Assamese) standing in front of Zubeen's image the whole day and at the end of the day dying at the very place without moving from the side of Zubeen's image. These are all examples to show that Zubeen Garg was the divine child of the Mother Goddess Earth and the entire creation and the existence missed him. Does anyone need any proof of the fact that Zubeen Garg was an incarnation of the Almighty?

Zubeen Garg was a genuine lover of nature. He inspired people to plant trees wherever they can. He openly protested cutting down of trees in the name of so called development activities. He particularly loved the 'Nahor' plant and encouraged everyone to plant trees. Zubeen's entire life was an open book. A common man's friend, Zubeen's generosity towards the common man and the downtrodden are still remembered by people and will be remembered forever and ever.

Today, on his birthday, people of Assam don't have any words to express their feelings for Zubeen. There are many more memories associated with Zubeen Garg with the people who knew him in those bygone days of their lives. The music lovers of the world will cherish those sweet memories forever in their heart till eternity. Zubeen, please come back among all of us by taking birth wherever you can and lead an entire generation of Assam with your music and love towards the people.

Happy Birthday Zubeen.  
#JusticeForZubeenGarg  
With tears in everyone's eyes we all are waiting for your comeback Zubeen.

# Operation Sindoor showcased India's strength to world: CM Adityanath

LUCKNOW, Nov 17: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday said that Operation Sindoor showcased India's strength to the world, and Uttar Pradesh stood firmly with the nation's armed forces.

He also said that during Operation Sindoor, drones developed by the youth of Uttar Pradesh left Pakistan stunned.

Addressing the convocation ceremony of the Babu Banarasi Das University, a private university, Adityanath said, "Operation Sindoor showcased India's strength to the world. Uttar Pradesh stood firmly with the nation's armed forces, contributing significantly to defence capabilities. The BrahMos missile is being manufactured in Lucknow, for which the state government provided land free of cost."

He added that once the BrahMos unit begins operating at full capacity, Uttar Pradesh is expected to receive Rs 300-7500 crore annually in GST. The land was offered in



2020 and formally allocated in 2022; its developed value was only Rs 200 crore, yet now the state is receiving returns many times higher, he said.

Adityanath further stated that Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a major hub for AI, data centres, and cutting-edge technologies such as robotics and drone systems. He urged universities to in-

tegrate these emerging technologies into their academic framework by introducing short-term, certificate, and diploma programmes. He encouraged institutions to promote practical work in drones, robotics, IoT, and AI, highlighting their rising importance in multiple sectors.

"Technology does not take away jobs; it creates new opportunities. It is up to us to harness them effectively," he said, and recalled that when computers gained prominence in the early 1990s, many feared job losses, but technology ultimately expanded employment opportunities.

Highlighting the growing significance of artificial intelligence, he said, "AI has become essential in every field, but it must remain under human direction." He added that India has made substantial progress in robotics and that engineering institutes should proactively adopt emerging technologies.

AI will prove valuable not only for students but also for farmers, workers, and professionals across sectors, he said.

He also spoke about the evolution of the convocation tradition, tracing its roots to the ancient Gurukul system. "There was a time when the world followed us. But when we began to follow others, we compromised with our own strength," he said. (PTI)

# Oppn demands probe against CPI(M) BLOs boycott SIR work across Kerala after officer's suicide

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Nov 17: The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in Kerala was affected across the state on Monday as booth-level officers (BLOs) boycotted work following the suicide of an officer allegedly due to work strain.

Aneesh George, 44, a BLO in Payannur, Kannur, was found hanging at his house on Sunday.

Family members and residents alleged that he took the extreme step because of work-related pressure linked to the SIR exercise.

Various trade unions of state government employees, including the Action Council of State Government Employees and Teachers and the Joint Committee of Teacher Service Organisations, held protests at the Chief Electoral Officer's office in Thiruvananthapuram and district collectorates, demanding that authorities refrain from exerting excessive pressure on BLOs and consider postponing the SIR.

The Kerala NGO Association also staged protests across the state, demanding that SIR procedures be stopped to prevent further suicides.

Meanwhile, the body of George was handed over to his relatives after the postmortem on Monday.

George's family reiterated that he had been under severe work pressure related to the SIR.

"He did not even get time to have food and sleep properly. He was under severe strain to complete work assigned as part of the SIR exercise," Saiju, George's brother-in-law, told reporters.

Saiju added that George was frequently contacted by senior officers for updates.

"Seeing the severe workload, George's father told him not to worry even if he loses his job," he said.

Leader of Opposition V D Satheesan said that a preliminary probe indicated that the role of CPI(M) workers in George's suicide should also be examined.

"We came to know that George was threatened after a Congress booth-level agent accompanied him for enumeration," he alleged.

He also alleged that both the BJP and CPI(M) were attempting to keep traditional Congress voters off the rolls.

"While the BJP is implementing SIR with ill intent, CPI(M) is carrying it forward in Kerala. We will oppose it strongly, legally and politically," he said.

Satheesan urged the state government and the Election Commission of India (ECI) to ensure the safety of BLOs and conduct a thorough investigation.

"A majority of BLOs are women. There are around 700-1,200 voters in a booth, and BLOs have to visit each house multiple times to meet targets in a short period," he added.

Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president Sunny Joseph said a telephonic conversation by George revealed that he was threatened by CPI(M)



workers for accompanying Congress booth-level agents during enumeration.

"The conversation revealed that CPI(M) threatened to file a false complaint against George, accusing him of distributing Congress pamphlets at houses. Apart from work strain, this political threat led to his suicide," Joseph said.

He added that the Congress party fully supports the protesting BLOs.

"We hope that the protest by BLOs will compel the Election Commission to open its eyes. Despite our repeated requests, the Commission decided to conduct SIR at a time when the local body election had already been announced," he said.

Joseph said the party would approach the Supreme Court against the SIR process.

"By considering the 2002 voters' list, even I don't have voting rights. Several political leaders will not figure in the voters' list. The Government of India and the Election Commission are eliminating the basic democratic rights of citizens," he alleged.

The Indian National Muslim League (IUML) has also decided to approach the Supreme Court seeking a postponement of the Social Impact Register (SIR) process.

IUML leader P K Kunhalikutty said the SIR was being carried out in haste, which raised doubts about the exercise.

"The procedures that must be conducted with care are being rushed. Even Rahul Gandhi had raised suspicion in Bihar. Why this rush?" he asked.

CPI(M) leader E P Jayaraj denied the allegation that party workers had threatened George.

"Only the Congress can say such things. It is a totally fake allegation. Nothing like that happened," he said.

He said George's family had told them that he was under strain due to SIR-related work.

"They told us he had a severe workload, and there was no political party intervention. You should not give importance to the standard allegations of the Congress," he said. (PTI)

# SC issues notice to Rajasthan govt on plea challenging validity of anti-conversion law

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: The Supreme Court on Monday sought response from the Rajasthan government and others on a petition challenging the validity of the Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act, 2025.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued notice to the state and others, seeking their replies on the plea filed by the Jaipur Catholic Welfare Society.

"We have raised issues of legislative competence as well as excessiveness in terms of constitutional limitations," senior advocate Rajeev Dhavan, appearing for the petitioner, said.

The bench observed that petitions raising similar issue were pending consideration before the top court.

"We have raised an entirely different question," Dhavan said.

"We will issue notice and call the other side and then we will hear you," Justice Nath said, as the bench issued notice on the plea and posted the matter for hearing after four weeks.

It also tagged the plea with the pending petitions raising similar issue.

On November 3, the top court agreed to hear two petitions challenging the validity of several provisions of the law against illegal religious conversions that came into force in Rajasthan.

It issued notice to the Rajasthan government seeking its response within four weeks on the pleas against the 2025 Act that was passed by the state Assembly in September.

Also in September, another bench of the apex court sought the stand of several states on separate pleas seeking a stay on their respective anti-conversion laws.

The top court had then made it clear that it would consider the prayer for staying the operation of such laws once the replies were filed.

The bench was then dealing with a batch of petitions challenging the constitutional validity of anti-conversion laws enacted by several states, including Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand and Karnataka. (PTI)

# Delhi pollution: SC for long-term solution, refuses to ban polluting activities year round

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: Barring for a long-term solution for air pollution in Delhi-NCR, the Supreme Court on Monday refused to impose year-round restrictions on all activities prohibited under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) -- a set of emergency measures to control pollution.

The top court asked the Punjab and Haryana governments to strictly follow the directions of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) on the issue of stubble burning in the two states.

"If the CAQM's suggestions to Punjab and Haryana are implemented, then stubble burning can be adequately tackled. Thus, we direct both states to have a combined meeting and ensure that the CAQM's suggestions are scrupulously implemented," a bench comprising Chief Justice B R Gavai and Justices K Vinod Chandran and N V Anjaria said.

"It is also stated that the Union environment minister held a meeting on November 11 and that within a day, appropriate instructions could be taken to find out appropriate steps to be taken to deal with the menace of pollution," it said.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Aishwarya Bhati was asked to apprise the court of the complete plan of action on November 19, the next date of hearing, when the court will also issue directions in the case.

At the outset, the bench said that from time to time, several orders have been passed to deal with the high level of air pollution.

"However, we are of the view, which is agreed by amicus (curiae) and the ASG, that the issue cannot be looked at with a temporary solution and a long-drawn solution needs to be looked at," it said.

Senior advocate and amicus curiae Aprajita Singh said that though Punjab's affidavit said that stubble burning incidents have gone down, there is no reduction in pollution levels.

Noting the submissions of senior advocate Gopal Sankarnarayanan, appearing for one of the parties, the bench said he stated that Delhi has become a gas chamber and that all activities prohibited from GRAP I onwards should be prohibited for the entire year.

"The restriction to be imposed on



activities in Delhi in (a) graded manner taking into consideration AQI standards has been finalised by the expert(s) in the field on scientific data. We do not possess expertise to deal with the same. We are therefore not inclined to act on the submission of Mr Sankarnarayanan that all activities (prohibited from GRAP I onwards) be stopped in Delhi," the CJ said.

"A large chunk of the population depends on various activities for their livelihood in the capital... We agree with the amicus and the ASG that a long-term solution is needed to tackle the menace of pollution in a graded manner. For that, a combined action by the MoEFCC (Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change) along with Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana officials is needed," he said.

The bench also asked the Delhi government and other authorities to file affidavits or a note to dispel the notion that their machines, used to measure AQI, are not advanced. The amicus pointed out news reports about water being sprayed around pollution monitoring stations in Delhi.

"There are videos and newspaper reports. Sprinkling is happening around AQI monitors," she said.

The ASG opposed the submissions, saying that this sprinkling of water is happening across the city and "political parties are spreading such videos."

"Let the GNCTD (Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi) file an affidavit explaining the nature of equipment being used

and its efficiency to gauge AQI monitors. Please bring it day after tomorrow," the bench said.

GRAP is a framework designed to tackle air pollution in Delhi-NCR through a tiered system of measures based on the severity of air quality according to the Air Quality Index (AQI). According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), an AQI between 0-50 is considered 'good', 51-100 'satisfactory', 101-200 'moderate', 201-300 'poor', 301-400 'very poor', and 401-500 'severe'.

GRAP I restrictions come into force when the AQI is between 201 to 300, GRAP II restrictions come into force when it is between 301 to 400 and GRAP III restrictions come into effect when it is between 401 to 450. GRAP IV restrictions are imposed when the AQI crosses 451.

The bench said temporary or piecemeal measures cannot offer a sustainable solution. It noted that despite a reported fall in stubble burning incidents in Punjab, air quality levels have not shown corresponding improvement.

On November 12, taking note of further deterioration of the air quality in Delhi-NCR due to stubble burning, the court asked the Punjab and Haryana governments to apprise it about the action taken to control the situation.

On November 3, the top court directed the CAQM, the Centre's air quality panel, to file an affidavit detailing the steps taken by it so far to prevent the pollution levels in Delhi-NCR from worsening further. (PTI)

# Will continue to consider terrorists and their backers alike: Army Chief

NEW DELHI, Nov 17: India will continue to consider the terrorists and their supporters alike, and it will respond firmly to terrorism, Chief of Army Staff Gen Upendra Divedi said on Monday, in a firm message to Pakistan. In an interactive session, the Army Chief also broadly said that there has been improvement in India's relations with China in the last one year following talks between the leadership of the two countries. On cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, Gen Divedi said New Delhi has been following a policy of new normal in dealing with Pakistan, and it will be a challenge for the neighbouring country if it continues to support terror groups targeting India.

"India focuses on progress and prosperity. If someone creates obstacles in our course, then we will have to take some action against them," he said. "We have said that talks and terror can't go together; blood and water cannot follow together. We are for a peaceful process, which we will cooperate with. Until then, we will treat terrorists and their sponsors alike," the Army Chief said. (PTI)

# Home Minister Amit Shah chairs Northern Zonal Council meet



FARIDABAD (HARYANA), Nov 17: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday chaired the 32nd meeting of the Northern Zonal Council here and discussed issues concerning the states and Union territories of the region.

The Northern Zonal Council comprises the states and Union territories of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and Chandigarh.

Chief Ministers Nayab Singh Saini (Haryana), Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu (Himachal Pradesh), Bhagwant Mann (Punjab), Bhajan Lal Sharma (Rajasthan), Rekha Gupta (Delhi), Omar Abdullah (J&K), Punjab Governor and Administrator of Chandigarh Gulab Chand Kataria, Lieutenant Governors Manoj Sinha (J&K) and V K Saxena (Delhi) attended the meeting, officials said.

Issues like education, health, water, electricity, speedy investigation of cases of sexual offences against women and children, among others were discussed at the meeting, they said.

At the outset, the meeting observed a minute of silence to pay respect to those who lost their lives in the November 10 blast near the Red Fort.

Senior officials from the central and state governments and Union territories also attended the meeting.

The zonal councils provide an excellent forum for resolving and progressing issues and disputes between the Centre and the member states and Union territories, among the member states and Union territories, and within the zone, an official said.

In the meeting of the zonal council, broad issues of national importance, including the speedy

# NIT-Rourkela patents green technology to revive India's black terracotta craft

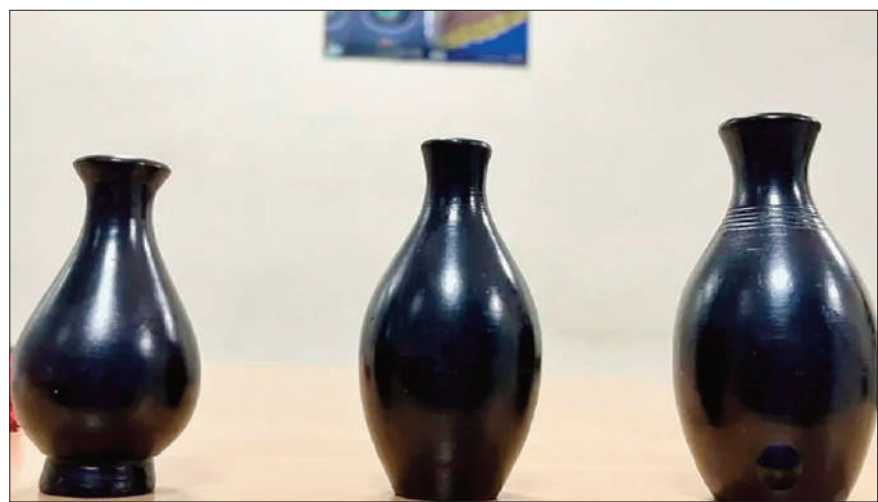
NEW DELHI, Nov 17: Researchers from the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela, have patented an eco-friendly method to produce black terracotta wares, according to officials.

The research team, led by Swadesh Kumar Pratihar, Professor of Ceramic Engineering, along with Shiv Kumar Verma, Senior Technical Assistant, and Rupesh Mandal, a research graduate from NIT-Rourkela, has developed the process, which merges traditional artisan knowledge with modern technology to produce black terracotta sustainably.

The word terracotta comes from Italian and means "baked earth". In India, it has been extensively used for kitchenware, temple sculptures, and roofing tiles. The most common variety is red terracotta, made by firing clay in the presence of air.

According to Pratihar, the presence of iron in the clay, when exposed to fire, leads to oxidation, resulting in its characteristic red colour. In chemical terms, ferric oxide produces the red colour in the process. On the other hand, black terracotta wares are known for their contrasting shine and mirror finish.

Black pottery is made in India and its neighbouring regions using techniques that are generations old. One such example is



the Nizamabad Black Pottery of Uttar Pradesh, where semi-finished wares are coated with a glaze made of clay and organic vegetable matter native to the area, referred to as "kabiz."

Polishing with mustard oil gives the surface a mirror finish. It is then fired in a sealed iron vessel along with cow dung, straw, and wood chips. Crafting beautiful black ware requires time, effort, constant monitoring, specialised clay, skilled hands, and organic fuel in solid form.

In Tibet's Nixi village, artisans use coarse red clay mixed with white sand and powdered black baked quartz. The wares are covered with wood logs during firing, and once the desired temperature is reached, the fire is extinguished using sawdust. The smoke produced in this final step turns the pottery black.

"The existing production method typically requires two days to complete the open-pit firing process, which releases smoke containing many toxic gases, such

as carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, sulfur oxides, and nitrogen oxides, that adversely affect the health of associated workers, including breathing difficulties," Pratihar said.

"With the aim of eliminating the major drawbacks of these generation-old processes and focusing on sustainable development, the patented method developed by us reduces the total firing process to less than seven hours without any adverse impact on the health of working associates and the climate," Pratihar said.

The researchers explained that the key to this process is the indirect heating of as-fabricated bodies in an enclosed vacuum (air-depleted) chamber.

"During this heating, pyrolysis of the carbonaceous oil produces carbon monoxide and carbon soot, which helps in reducing the reducing atmosphere required for the development of back colour wares. This method produces a uniform black finish and does not require open fires, skilled workers or specialised clay," he said.

"The process significantly shortens the firing cycle and eliminates environmental pollution associated with burning large quantities of organic materials. Unlike older methods, this approach can be a key technology to produce black terracotta wares, anywhere," he added. (PTI)

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Mein inaugurates infrastructure and pledges development of Walong as a historical and cultural hub

## Deputy CM Chowna Mein honours Walong martyrs, vows tourism boost



**ITANAGAR, Nov 17:** Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein has stated that the sacrifices of the martyrs of the 1962 Battle of Walong will forever remain engraved in the nation's collective memory, as he pledged to develop Walong into a major historical and tourism destination of the state.

Leading the 63rd commemoration of the historic Battle of Walong in Anjaw district of the state on Sunday, Mein recalled how 800 Indian soldiers held their ground for 27

days against nearly 4,000 enemy troops in the harsh terrain of Kibithoo, Nanti and the tri-junction, an official statement said here on Monday.

The deputy chief minister stated that the bravery and devotion of the Indian Army remain 'one of the most valiant chapters' in the country's military history. He also acknowledged the unwavering support of the local community, calling their solidarity with the Army a 'shining example of unity and na-

tional integration'.

Mein expressed deep gratitude to the families of the soldiers present at the event, honouring their resilience and sacrifice.

He said this year's commemoration was the grandest ever and affirmed that the tradition of honouring India's heroes would continue with greater commitment.

Reiterating the government's resolve to promote Walong as a historical and tourism centre, the Deputy Chief Minister high-

lighted initiatives such as the annual sunrise festival, a war memorial museum and major enhancements in digital and road connectivity. He also lauded the Dao Division of the Indian Army for organising treks, expeditions, the Walong half-marathon and vibrant cultural performances by the Monpas, Tai Khantis, Army personnel of Northeast India and Gatka teams. After arriving in Walong on Saturday, Mein inaugurated a high flag post bearing the National Tricolour and new tourist infrastructure at Bara Kundun under Kibithoo circle in the border district.

The project, he said, is another step towards boosting border tourism, improving connectivity and creating new opportunities for local communities. Mein also visited the Helmet Top war memorial at 8,500 feet and offered floral tributes to the soldiers who fought valiantly during the 1962 battle. He interacted with soldiers of 16 Bihar B-Coy stationed at the post.

During the observance, Mein met honorary Captain (Retd) Karnail Singh, a veteran of the Battle of Walong who fought with the 4 Sikh Regiment at the age of 24 and was held captive by the PLA for six months before being released.

He also interacted with Maj Gen (Retd) Narpat Singh Rajpurohit from Jodhpur, who continues to work for the welfare of ex-servicemen as part of the Akhil Bharatiya Purva Sainik Seva Parishad.

Among those present were state Women and Child Development minister Dasanglu Pul, MLAs Dr Mohesh Chai, Mopi Mihi and Puniyoo Apum, Lt Gen Ram Chander Tiwari, GOC-in-C Eastern Command and Lt Gen A S Pendharkar, GOC 3 Corps, along with senior Army officers and soldiers. (PTI)

## Sardar Patel @150 Padyatra held in Itanagar

Youth-led march celebrates the Iron Man's legacy, unity and Swadeshi spirit



**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, Nov 17:** To mark the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, a Sardar Patel @150 Padyatra was organised in Itanagar highlighting his pivotal role in unifying the nation and shaping India's modern administrative and constitutional framework.

The event was graced by Nabam Rebia, MP (Rajya Sabha), Chau Zingnu Namchoom, MLA & Advisor to the Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports and Tamme Phassang, Mayor, along with faculty, youth volunteers and students. Organised by MY Bharat, Itanagar in collaboration with the state government, the Padyatra started by Dera Natung Government College and concluded at Tennis Court, IG Park. Participants included MY Bharat volunteers, NSS and NCC cadets, youth leaders and civil society members.

The programme began with a floral tribute to Sardar Patel and

patriotic cultural performances by NSS volunteers. Dignitaries also planted saplings under the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" initiative, promoting ecological responsibility.

Nabam Rebia lauded Sardar Patel as the Architect of United India and urged youth to embody his values of courage, discipline and self-reliance to contribute to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat mission. Chau Zingnu Namchoom spoke on Patel's integration of over 560 princely states and establishment of All India Services, while Tamme Phassang praised the organisers for connecting history with youth-led nationalism.

The Padyatra was jointly flagged off by the dignitaries amid patriotic slogans and concluded peacefully at IG Park, reinforcing unity, patriotism and community engagement. The initiative forms part of a statewide movement to inspire youth with the ideals of national pride, Swadeshi values and nation-building.

## EC underscores need for smooth, transparent elections

**ITANAGAR, Nov 17:** Election Commissioner S S Sandhu on Monday underscored the need for smooth, inclusive and transparent elections.

Sandhu, accompanied by Arunachal Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) P K Sain, Deputy CEO Shania Mize held a comprehensive review of election-related matters with Tawang district officials to assess the ongoing electoral arrangements.

District Election Officer Namgyal Angmo presented an overview of Tawang's unique geographical challenges and the district's continuous preparedness efforts, an official statement said here.

Sain and Mize briefed the Election Commissioner on state-level progress, achievements and initiatives undertaken to strengthen electoral systems and improve voter facilitation.

Election officials from across the border district shared field-level experiences and suggestions aimed at enhancing efficiency and streamlining the election process.

Sandhu appreciated the constructive feedback and reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to robust and accessible election management even in remote terrains.

After the review meeting, Sandhu inspected several polling stations near the district headquarters to assess facilities. He is scheduled to visit remote interior polling stations near the international border on Tuesday. (PTI)

## APLA@50 Outreach Connect concludes successfully at Tezu

**HT Correspondent**

**TEZU, Nov 17:** The APLA@50 Outreach Connect, part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly (1975-2025), concluded successfully on Monday at Indira Gandhi Government College (IGG College), Tezu. Organised by the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi University and coordinated by the Centre for Distance and Online Education, the programme marked a significant step in promoting democratic awareness among students across the state.

The day began with a lively Debate Competition, where participants demonstrated analytical skills and a thorough understanding of constitutional and governance-related topics. The main programme commenced in the afternoon with the National Anthem, followed by a Welcome Address by Dr Kangi Megu, Principal of IGG College, who expressed appreciation to APLA and RGU for bringing such an impactful initiative to the college. He noted that the programme serves as a bridge between higher education and governance, enhancing students' civic awareness.

Dr Saurav Mitra, Assistant Professor at CDOE-RGU and Institutional Coordinator, outlined the objectives and achievements of the APLA@50 Outreach Connect. He shared that the programme has visited over twenty higher education institutions in Arunachal Pradesh, aiming to instil civic responsibility, constitutional literacy and informed engagement among the youth.

Longman Ronrang, Deputy Secretary of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, delivered an

informative address on the functioning of the State Legislature. He explained the roles, powers and functions of the Assembly, highlighted historical legislations that shaped state governance and detailed the responsibilities of the Speaker, Ministers and MLAs. Ronrang also elaborated on the budgeting process and emphasised the crucial role of the Opposition in ensuring accountability, encouraging students to appreciate and actively engage with democratic institutions.

The Keynote Address was delivered by Prof Ashan Riddi from the Department of History, Rajiv Gandhi University. He traced the evolution of Arunachal Pradesh's political identity from traditional tribal governance to modern democratic structures. Prof Riddi also discussed the significance of Fundamental Rights and Duties, stressing that the balance of rights and responsibilities is essential for maintaining national unity and social harmony.

The programme concluded with a Prize Distribution Ceremony, recognising the best performers of the debate competition. SK Dey Senior Reporter of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, delivered the Vote of Thanks, expressing gratitude to dignitaries, faculty and students for their enthusiastic participation. He highlighted that the Outreach Connect at Tezu exemplifies the Assembly's commitment to engaging youth meaningfully during its Golden Jubilee year.

The event reinforced the importance of youth participation in democratic processes and provided students with an enriching platform to deepen their understanding of governance, legislative functions and constitutional values.

## Reiba urges youth to uphold Patel's vision of unity, swadeshi

**ITANAGAR, Nov 17:** Rajya Sabha MP from Arunachal Pradesh, Nabam Rebia on Monday called on the youth of the state to adopt Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's ideals of unity, discipline and swadeshi, asserting that Aatmanirbhar Bharat must be pursued as a 'national mindset' rather than merely an economic mission.

He said Patel's courage as a satyagrahi and his leadership in building a united India should inspire young citizens to take greater responsibility in nation-building.

"The essence of Sardar Patel's vision must reflect in our commitment to make India truly self-reliant. Aatmanirbhar Bharat is rooted in unity, responsibility, skill, dignity of labour and the swadeshi spirit. The youth of the state must emerge as frontline contributors to this mission, carrying forward the ideals of national integrity that Sardar Patel lived for," he said. The MP's remarks came during the 'Sardar Patel @150 Padyatra' (March), organised to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of the Iron Man of India.

Organised by MY Bharat Itanagar, in collaboration with the state government, the Padyatra began at Dera Natung Government College (DNGC) and concluded

at Indira Gandhi Park, here.

Hundreds of MY Bharat volunteers, NSS volunteers, NCC cadets, faculty members and civil society representatives joined the march, which aimed to revive swadeshi values and strengthen the spirit of national unity.

Namsai MLA Chau Zingnu Namchoom highlighted Sardar Patel's integration of more than 560 princely states and his establishment of the All India Services, including the IAS and IPS, institutions that continue to anchor India's administrative system.

Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC) Mayor Tamme Phassang in his address, praised the organisers for linking historical awareness with youth-led patriotism, calling the padyatra a strong platform to connect the younger generation with India's nation-building legacy.

As part of the nationwide 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' initiative launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the dignitaries planted saplings to promote environmental responsibility and sustainable living.

The event forms part of a statewide youth mobilisation campaign aimed at strengthening national pride, resilience and the ethos of Aatmanirbhar Bharat across Arunachal Pradesh. (PTI)

## WCD Papum Pare hosts awareness camp on women and child laws

**HT Correspondent**

**BALIJAN, Nov 17:** The Department of Women and Child Development (WCD), Papum Pare District, organised a sensitisation-cum-awareness camp on the Domestic Violence Act, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (POSH) Act and Adoption Regulations under Mission Vatsalaya at Balijan on Monday.

Addl. Deputy Commissioner, Balijan, Takar Rava attended the programme as Chief Guest. He appreciated the WCD Department's efforts in conducting awareness camps and encouraged participants to understand the legal provisions protecting women and children. He also requested similar programmes for PRI members after the Panchayat elections in December 2025.

Jaya Taba, Deputy Director, District ICDS Cell, Yupia, delivered the welcome and keynote address, highlighting the department's ongoing initiatives to spread knowledge on women and child-related laws. She emphasised the importance of sharing this information for societal well-being. Resource persons included Likhia Asha Nyekam Advocate & Member (JJB) on the Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Tana Chammaro CDPO, on the POSH Act, 2013 and Tarh Nagu, Advocate & Legal-cum-Probation Officer (DCPU) on Adoption Regulations.

The camp saw participation from over 50 attendees, including police personnel, government officers, gaon burahs and local residents of Balijan.

## Candlelight rally demanding justice for late Tadu Haro

**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, Nov 17:** A massive candlelight rally was held in Itanagar on Sunday evening, demanding justice for the late Tadu Haro. The event saw participation from hundreds of people, including youths and was supported by various organisations.

The All Nyishi Youth Association (ANYA) execu-

tive members, led by president Jamru Ruja, spearheaded the candle march along the city roads, expressing solidarity and calling for justice for the young student.

The rally highlighted widespread public concern and support for the cause, reflecting the community's demand for accountability and justice.

## Arunachal prepares for 7<sup>th</sup> Literature Festival

Celebrating stories, ideas and voices: Arunachal Literature Festival returns



**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, Nov 17:** The 7th Arunachal Literature Festival (ALF) is set to take place from November 20 to 22 at the Dorjee Khandu Convention Centre, Itanagar. The festival, organised by the Department of Information & Public Relations in collaboration with the Arunachal Pradesh Literary Society (APLS) will feature a host of literary activities and eminent guests from India and abroad.

Addressing the media at the Arunachal Press Club, ALF Advi-

sor Mamang Dai said the three-day festival will host author conversations, poetry readings, prose sessions, panel discussions, workshops, storytelling performances and children's activities. The sessions will explore themes such as indigenous narratives, translation, contemporary fiction, world literature, gastronomy writing, literature in the age of AI and more.

This year, the festival will welcome international guests, including Japanese author Mami Yamada and Bhutanese writer Kunzang

Choden, along with Maria Gil Burman from Instituto Cervantes, Spain. Renowned Indian oral historian and author Aanchal Malhotra will also participate. Children's engagement remains a key focus, with storytelling sessions and creative workshops featuring Canato Jimo, Pankaj Saikia, Ogin Nayam and Uncle Moosa from Bamboosa.

Oju Mission School will serve as a satellite venue, allowing storytellers to interact directly with students. The convention centre halls have been named Pakke Hall and

Namdapha Hall, after local tiger reserves, to highlight Arunachal's natural heritage. The inaugural session on November 20 will feature Commissioner to the Chief Minister, Sonam Chombay, discussing his new book 'In Between the Blurry Lines', moderated by Ranju Dodum. Mamang Dai appealed to the public, literary enthusiasts, students and media representatives to attend the festival, which aims to celebrate ideas, stories and voices while promoting the rich literary landscape of Arunachal Pradesh.

## LPU student Nangram Mama dies in road accident

**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, Nov 17:** Nangram Mama, a second-year student of Lovely Professional University (LPU), Phagwara, Jalandhar, Punjab, tragically passed away in a road accident on Children's Day, November 14. His funeral was held in Itanagar, witnessed by hundreds of family members, relatives, friends and well-wishers.

Nangram Mama's father, Nangram Kali, said his son was pursuing a Diploma in Architecture at LPU. "We lost our young son in this tragic accident. We brought his body here and the last rites and funeral services were conducted at Senki View. I thank everyone who turned up to pay their respects," he said.

The president and Executive Members of the Nangram Welfare Society (NWS) expressed gratitude to the Air Force authorities, officials of the Resident Commissioner's office, Special Commissioner of Delhi Police Robin Hibu and the LPU student union members from Arunachal Pradesh and other Northeast states. The NWS also acknowledged a candle march held by the student community at Law Gate, Phagwara in solidarity and prayer for the departed soul.

Among those present at the funeral were Koloriang MLA Pani Taram, former Minister Kahfa Bengia, public leaders, social workers and members of the general public.

The pro-Sinner crowd chanted its customary 'Ole, Ole, Ole, Ole; Sin-ner, Sin-ner'

# Jannik Sinner beats Carlos Alcaraz to retain ATP Finals title before his home fans

**TURIN, Nov 17:** The final installment of the "Sincaraz" rivalry for 2025 went to Jannik Sinner.

The second-ranked Sinner beat top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz 7-6 (4), 7-5 for the ATP Finals trophy on Sunday in the sixth meeting this year between the two players who are dominating men's tennis.

Sinner defended the title before his home Italian fans for only his second victory over Alcaraz this year after also beating the Spaniard in the Wimbledon final.

"It was an incredible season," Sinner said. "To finish it this way, before my Italian fans, is very special for me."

Alcaraz had already secured the year-ending No. 1 ranking and was contesting his first final at the event for the year's top eight players.

Alcaraz still leads his career meetings with Sinner, 10-6.

Sinner and Alcaraz have met in the last three Grand Slam finals. Alcaraz beat Sinner in a fifth-set tiebreaker to win the French Open; Sinner gained a measure of revenge at Wimbledon, then Alcaraz again came out on top at the U.S. Open.

They also clashed this year in the Italian Open final (won by Alcaraz) and the Cincinnati Open final (won by Alcaraz when Sinner retired due to illness).

"I hope you are going to be ready for next year because I will be ready to hopefully play more finals against you," Alcaraz said during the trophy ceremony.

To which Sinner added that he hopes they



have "great, great battles ahead of us."

Sinner also won the Australian Open — beating Alexander Zverev in the final — so he and Alcaraz each won two majors this year.

In all, Alcaraz has won six majors and Sinner has won four.

St. Sinner Already early in the first set, the pro-Sinner crowd chanted its customary "Ole, Ole, Ole, Ole; Sin-ner, Sin-ner."

One fan even held up an image of Sinner

depicted as a saint.

Sinner saved a set point at 5-6 in the tight first set with a big second serve that Alcaraz couldn't return. Then the Italian took control of the tiebreaker by running down a drop shot and responding with a lob that led to an overhead put away.

"I'm extremely happy with how I handled the situation," Sinner said of saving the set point.

Added Alcaraz, "He came up with a sec-

ond serve 185-190 kph (115-118 mph) that surprised me."

Alcaraz's thigh Alcaraz had his right thigh treated by a trainer on two occasions — and got it wrapped after the first set.

"Didn't affect me too much, to be honest, because I could run well," Alcaraz said.

Alcaraz broke Sinner's serve in the opening game of the second set but Sinner then evened it at 3-3.

Sinner then got the crowd going again in the next game when he won a long rally and held his finger to his ear — signaling for more noise inside the Inalpi Arena.

Sinner broke Alcaraz again to close it out when the Spaniard missed a backhand wide — then fell down to the court on his back in relief.

"It was a huge emotion," said Sinner, who was banned for three months earlier in the year after settling a doping case.

Alcaraz led 28-25 in winners but also had more unforced errors, 26-24.

Sinner said he wanted to improve his serve after the loss to Alcaraz at the U.S. Open and he led 8-5 in aces but also had five double-faults to Alcaraz's none.

It was Sinner's 10th straight win at the finals stretching back to his loss to Novak Djokovic in the 2023 final. What's more is that Sinner hasn't lost a set in that stretch.

Sinner also extended his winning streak on indoor hard courts to 31 matches.

In the doubles final, Harri Heliövaara and Henry Patten beat Joe Salisbury and Neal Skupski 7-5, 6-3. (AP)

## Shooting World C'ships: Gurpreet fetches silver in 25m centre fire pistol; India end 3<sup>rd</sup>



**CAIRO, Nov 17:** Olympian Gurpreet Singh came agonisingly close to becoming the world champion in men's 25m Centre Fire Pistol event but eventually got a silver after losing on inner 10s to Ukraine's Pavlo Korostylov at the Olympic Shooting Range here.

This was Gurpreet's second individual medal in the World Championships, the first also being a silver won back in 2018 at Changwon in the 25m Standard Pistol event. Yann Pierre Louis Fridrici of France won the bronze here.

India thus ended their World Championship campaign in third place with a total of 13 medals, including three gold, six silver and four bronze behind China. The Chinese team mustered 12 gold, seven silver and two bronze.

South Korea secured seven gold, three silver and four bronze medals to end second in the overall standings.

Gurpreet shot a total of 584-18x over two days of competition in the precision and rapid stages, while Korostylov shot 29 inner 10s and a perfect score of 100 in the final rapid round to edge away with the gold medal.

The Indian shooter, who was placed ninth after the precision stage with a score of 288-8x (95,97,96), bounced back on the second day to shoot a brilliant score of 296-10x (98,99,99) in

the rapid stage to clinch the silver medal.

The Ukrainian, who was leading after the precision stage with a score of 291-14x, shot 293-15x in the rapid stage to level Gurpreet's score and win the gold on inner 10s.

Harpreet Singh, who was in contention for a medal after the precision stage with a score of 291-10x that placed him second, could only manage 286-6x in the rapid stage which saw him eventually finish in ninth place.

The other Indian shooter in fray, Sahil Choudhary, finished 28th with a total score of 561-14x (Precision - 272-4x, Rapid - 289 - 10x). The three shooters also finished outside the team medal places, ending fifth.

Samrat Rana (10m Air Pistol), Ravinder Singh (50m Standard Pistol and 10m Air Pistol Team) won the gold medals.

Aishwary Prapat Singh Tomar (50m Rifle 3 Positions Men), Anish Bhanwala (25m Rapid Fire Pistol), Gurpreet Singh (25m Centre Fire Pistol), Esha Singh and Samrat Rana (10m Air Pistol Mixed Team, 10m Women's Air Pistol Team and 50m Men's Standard Pistol Team) secured the silver medals.

Esha (25m Sports Pistol), Elavelil Valarivan (10m Air Rifle), Varun Tomar (10m Air Pistol and 10m Women's Air Rifle Team) won bronze medals for India. (PTI)

## Princeson Teron wins Rapid Chess Tournament

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Nov 17:** The second Rapid Chess tournament, organised by Diphu Chess Academy, concluded successfully on Sunday at Chandra Sing Teron High School, Diphu.

The tournament featured five age categories, a girls' category, and recognition for the top five overall positions. In the Top-5 rankings, Princeson Teron secured 1st place, followed by Rihan Ahmed in 2nd, Rangina Bey in 3rd, Anindya S. Daolaguphu in 4th and Raj Chetry in 5th.

In the age categories, the winners were: Under-7: Honkuru Engti, Under-9: 1st Arim Engti, 2nd Smairngdi Difoosa, 3rd Harshil Sharma, Under-11: 1st Biswajit Ronipi, 2nd Anupol Kashyap, 3rd Nibir Nandan Bora, Under-13: 1st Supritom Nandan Bora, 2nd Sar Nongklar Terang, 3rd Pragyop Prachurja Borah and Under-15: 1st Angthik Engti, 2nd Plengbong Teron, 3rd Akash Dutta.

In the girls' category, Klaribon Terangpi won 1st place, followed by Ritisha Khaklary in 2nd and Klarika Terangpi in 3rd.

The tournament was officiated by International Arbitrator M Arun Singh as Chief Arbitrator and organised by the Diphu Chess Academy committee, including president Alam Hazarika, secretary Salma Sultana and Coach Girish Ch Borah.

## Sangakkara reappointed as Rajasthan Royals' head coach

**NEW DELHI, Nov 17:** Rajasthan Royals on Monday announced the appointment of Sri Lanka legend Kumar Sangakkara as their head coach for the 2026 Indian Premier League (IPL) season, following the exit of Rahul Dravid from the role.

Dravid had left the franchise in August this year and Sangakkara, who has been the franchise's Director of Cricket since 2021, will be returning as the head coach having served in the same role from 2021-2024.

"Director of Cricket Kumar Sangakkara will also take charge as Head Coach for IPL 2026," Rajasthan Royals posted on X.

RR's lead owner Manoj Badale

said in a statement, "We are delighted to have Kumar return as head coach. As we looked at what the team needed at this stage, we felt that his familiarity within the squad, his leadership and his deep understanding of the Royals culture would bring the right balance of continuity and stability."

"Kumar has always had our complete trust as a leader. His clarity, calmness and cricketing intelligence will play an important role in guiding the squad into this next phase," he added.

It was an abrupt end for former India captain Dravid's tenure after returning to the franchise for the 2025 season with a multi-year contract.



The T20 World Cup-winning former national coach exited after a "structural review" of the team's poor performance earlier this year. The franchise endured a terrible run, finishing ninth in the 10-team event with just four wins from 14 games.

Sangakkara's return as head coach comes days after the Royals completed the trade of their wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson, who will join Chennai Super Kings.

In return, Ravindra Jadeja and Sam Curran have been roped in by the Royals' camp.

RR have released a total of seven players, including three overseas, ahead of the mini auction to be held on December 16 in Abu Dhabi.

Among the players released by the Royals are Akash Madhwal, Ashok Sharma, Fazalhaq Farooqi, Kumar Kartikeya Singh, Kunal Rathore, Maheesh Theekshana and Wanindu Hasaranga. (PTI)

## No matter who sits out, South Africa find a way to win: Kagiso Rabada

**KOLKATA, Nov 17:** South African pacer Kagiso Rabada, who missed the first Test against India here due to a rib injury, is in awe of his team's ability to rebound from setbacks and "find a way to win" no matter who is left out.

The reigning World Test Championship winners completed a 30-run win inside three days over India in the opening Test here defending a modest 123 on Sunday. The win, which was their first on Indian soil in 15 years, gave them an unassailable 1-0 lead in the two-match series.

"No matter who sits out, we can still find a way to win. (Skipper) Temba (Bavuma) has been crucial for us, but he hasn't played every game. I haven't played this game,"

Rabada said in a video shared by Cricket South Africa. Bavuma returned to the playing XI after missing their preceding two Tests in Pakistan, where South Africa bounced back to draw the series 1-1.

"That doesn't matter. Whoever is gonna get out on the field, we believe that they can do the job," Rabada said.

The visitors outplayed the hosts on a dry wicket here with variable bounce and turn. Rabada hailed South Africa's individual performances, including skipper Bavuma's match-winning 55 in the second innings that gave the travelling bowlers something to fight for.

"We had a good start in the first innings with Aiden (Markram) and (Ryan) Rickelton. They set the tone.

Marco (Jansen) stood up, Boschi (Corbin Bosch) stood up at crucial times. Everyone chipped in and really, that's the hallmark of what this team is made of," Rabada said.

It remains to be seen if Rabada, who had to undergo multiple scans in the lead-up to the first Test, would be available for the second Test to be played in Guwahati from November 22-26.

Rabada said the victory in a low-scoring thriller at Kolkata would rank among the top three wins for South Africa this season.

"(The victory is) definitely right up there. With the types of wins that we've had this season, it's hard to say, because we've had some pretty epic wins, but this one is definitely (in the) top three," he said. (PTI)

## Satwik-Chirag pair anchors India's hopes in Australian Open

**SYDNEY, Nov 17:** With India's singles stars still searching for rhythm, the spotlight will once again be on Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty as the top-seeded men's doubles pair eyes its first title of the season at the Australian Open Super 500 starting here on Tuesday.

The Asian Games champions have been the bright spots in an otherwise troubled season for Indian badminton, weaving together a second World Championships bronze and back-to-back runner-up finishes at the Hong Kong Super 500 and China Masters Super 750.

The two, who spent 18 weeks as world No. 1, had slipped to No. 27 in May but fought their way back to No. 3. They will be eager to put together another strong run ahead of the World Tour Finals. The Commonwealth Games champions will open against Chinese Taipei's Chang Ko-Chi and Po Li-Wei.

Bruised by injuries and lean patches but intermittently shining with flashes of brilliance, India's top singles stars, including Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy,

will hope to find the consistent rhythm that has eluded them for much of the year.

Lakshya seemed to have rediscovered his form with a final appearance at the Hong Kong Open after enduring a run of poor results since his heartbreaking fourth-place finish at the Paris Olympics.

The 24-year-old from Almorah looked sharp in Japan last week before bowing out in the semifinals. Seeded seventh here, he will hope to build on the momentum when he opens against Chinese Taipei's Su Li Yang.

Prannoy, a 2023 World Championships bronze medalist, has fond memories of this tournament, having finished runner-up last year.

The 33-year-old, one of India's most consistent performers in recent years and winner of the 2023 Malaysia Masters, returned from injury in Kumamoto last week.

He defeated Malaysia's Jun Hao Leong before losing in the second round to Denmark's Rasmus Gemke. Prannoy will look to regain full rhythm when he faces Canada's Brian Yang. (PTI)

## PCB hands Sarfaraz full responsibility of Shaheens, U-19 setup

**KARACHI, Nov 17:** Former captain Sarfaraz Ahmed has been made the director of Pakistan Shaheens and Under-19 teams, marking a significant restructuring move by its Cricket Board (PCB).

The 38-year-old Sarfaraz, who has been associated with the board since last year, will now head all

"He will also be part of any decisions taken on appointing coaches or support staff for the two teams," the source added.

Sarfaraz initially joined the board last year as a mentor of one of the domestic teams in the now-defunct Champions Cup and then was named advisor to the Chairman on cricket affairs.

But apparently the former skipper himself was more interested in working with the young talent and coaches and accepted the new responsibilities.

Pakistan last won a ICC title

under his captaincy when they surprised India in the final of the Champions Trophy. The Pakistan board has shown a tendency to keep on changing coaches and support staff of the Shaheens and under-19 teams and even the captains, but apparently Sarfaraz has advised the Chairman to make long term appointments so that there is proper accountability and players are also groomed properly. (PTI)



operations concerning both squads. "He is, you can say now the Director of the Pakistan Shaheens and junior team and will also travel with them abroad where required," a PCB source said.

According to the source, coaches, selectors, support staff members of the Shaheens and under-19 sides will all now report to Sarfaraz who will then coordinate with the board.

## Linn Grant breezes to her 2<sup>nd</sup> LPGA title at The Annika

**BELLEAIR, Nov 17:** Linn Grant of Sweden had so much control of her game that she played 52 holes consecutive holes without a bogey, a streak that ended on the final hole when it no longer mattered. She closed with a 5-under 65 for a three shot victory over Jennifer Kupcho in The Annika.

It was Grant's second LPGA title, and the second time she received a trophy from Swedish great and tournament host Annika Sorenstam. Grant won the Scandinavian Mixed in Sweden when Sorenstam and Henrik Stenson were co-hosts.

"You made this course look easy. It's not easy," Sorenstam told her on the 18th green. It must have felt that way to Grant, who was never under much stress. She finished at 19-under 261 and had a chance to set the tournament record until a bogey on the final hole, her first one since her opening hole Friday.

"There are weeks where everyone feels like their game is really good and there could potentially be a win. It's just really nice to see it go all the way and to really walk off 18 and be able to pat yourself on the shoulder and feel like I actually did it this week," Grant said.

She is the first Swedish winner of the tournament that began in 2020, even more meaningful to Grant because she remembers going to clinics Sorenstam held in Sweden when she was a girl and recalls watching Sorenstam hit wedges to someone catching them with a baseball glove.

"I started doing that with my dad, so thanks for that," Grant told Sorenstam.



Kupcho birdied the first hole to tie for the lead, but only briefly. Grant birdied the next hole and never trailed again. The Swede had to make a 15-foot birdie putt to stay one ahead through five holes, and then she seized control on the par-3 ninth.

Kupcho made her second bogey of the front nine, and Grant rolled in a 10-foot birdie putt to extend the lead to three shots. No one got any closer the rest of the way.

Kupcho also closed with a 65.

"I'm glad she was playing well because I think that really pushed me to play better," Grant said. "And overall, I just had the

thought of whoever wins is going to have a really good job."

Gaby Lopez of Mexico birdied four of her last six holes for a 65 to finish third.

Brooke Matthews also came away a winner in two respects. She made a hole-in-one with a 9-iron from 140 yards on the 12th hole to win a two-year lease on a Lamborghini Huracán. Two holes later, Matthews chipped in for eagle and all those great shots mattered.

It added to a 65 — a card that included scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 — to tie for ninth, giving her enough points to move into the top

60 of the Race to the CME Globe. That qualifies her for next week's season-ending CME Group Tour Championship, where the winner gets \$4 million.

"It was wild," Matthews said. "All week I was like, I want to win the Lamborghini. ... Just saw it bounce. I still can't believe it. I blacked out. I can't wait to watch it on film because I still can't really remember it."

Nataliya Guseva had her own big moment. She holed out with a gap wedge from 109 yards on the final hole for birdie — she had to lay up out of a fairway bunker — giving her a 68 that moved the Russian into the top 60. Lucy Li also advances to next week down the coast in Naples. Her birdie on the final hole gave her a 66 and moved her up 13 spots to No. 58.

Grant was running out of time to extend her streak of winning each year somewhere in the world dating to 2020, when she was still an amateur and won twice on the Nordic Golf League. She has won titles on the LPGA, Ladies European Tour, LET Access Series, Ladies Sunshine Tour, Nordic Golf League and even the European Tour, which co-sanctioned the Scandinavian Mixed.

"My dad is a man of good words," she said. "When he looked at someone else's career he always said, 'If you have a win every year that's pretty solid.' I guess that's what it is."

Defending champion Nelly Korda, a three-time winner at Pelican Golf Club, started six shots behind and couldn't keep pace with Grant. She closed with a 69 and tied for 15th. (AP)