

**6 NATION**

**KABHI SEEMA, KABHI SWEETY, KABHI SARASWATI**

- 'Vote chori' system evolved by PM, EC; will be deployed in Bihar too: Rahul
- Rahul trying to create anarchy by demanding reservations in defence forces: Rajnath

**7 NE**

**GOLDEN FIELDS CELEBRATE 'TEP' FOR UPON BIHAR**

- Rio calls for Naga unity to resolve common issues
- Pradyot slams BJP Govt for delays in Tiprasa Accord, VC polls

## Rajen Gohain joins Assam Jatiya Parishad

### BJP accused of 'encouraging communal politics and dividing Assamese society'



**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Nov 5: Former Union Minister and four-time Nagaon MP Rajen Gohain on Wednesday formally joined the

Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), marking a significant political shift in Assam's evolving political landscape. Gohain, who resigned from the

BJP on October 9 citing "growing discontent" with its leadership and direction, joined the regional party at a programme held at the PWD Auditorium in Guwahati in the presence of AJP president Lurinjyoti Gogoi, working president Chitta Basumatary, general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan and other senior leaders.

The veteran leader, who had represented the Nagaon parliamentary constituency for four consecutive terms from 1999 to 2019, also served as the Union Minister of State for Railways from 2016 to 2019.

Addressing reporters after joining the AJP, Gohain said that he resigned from the BJP as the party had "failed to fulfil the promises made to (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

Rich tributes paid to Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika on his 14<sup>th</sup> death anniversary

## Process of securing UN recognition for 'Manuhe Manuhor Babe' on: CM



**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Nov 5: Assam on Wednesday paid heartfelt tributes to Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika on his 14th death anniversary with programmes held across the state to honour the legendary cultural icon whose music continues to inspire generations.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma led the state in paying homage at the 'Samannay Kshetra' in Jalukbari, Guwahati, where the bard of the Brahmaputra was cremated.

The 'Shradhdhanjali' programme was organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of

Assam, and witnessed massive participation by citizens, artistes, students, and youth.

As part of the event, a human chain was formed and participants rendered Dr Hazarika's immortal composition 'Manuhe Manuhor Babe' in unison.

The song was simultaneously sung across all 35 districts and 27 sub-divisions of Assam, with more than two lakh people joining in from both Barak and Brahmaputra valleys and from Assamese communities living abroad.

Expressing his gratitude to the people for their overwhelming participation, chief minister Sarma said the

government has initiated the process of securing recognition from the United Nations for 'Manuhe Manuhor Babe' as a "Global Song of Humanity."

He expressed confidence that just as the state succeeded in obtaining UNESCO World Heritage status for the Charaideo Maidam and Classical Language status for Assamese, it would also achieve international recognition for Dr. Hazarika's universal message of brotherhood.

The chief minister announced that every town in Assam will soon have a road named after Dr. Bhupen (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Tejashwi and Lalu stand for Babur-Aurangzeb: Himanta in Bihar



**PATNA, Nov 5:** Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday asserted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi stood for ideals embodied by Lord Ram while INDIA bloc chief ministerial candidate Tejashwi Yadav, and his father Lalu Prasad who heads the RJD, represented the legacy of "Babur-Aurangzeb".

The senior BJP leader made the remarks while addressing a rally in Champatia assembly segment of the poll-bound state's West Champaran district, where he also slammed AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi for advocating that a Muslim should become the chief minister of Bihar.

"Only one who worships Lord Ram and is devoted like Laxman deserves to be the chief minister of Bihar. The people of the state will choose a leader on their own. They do not need Owaisi's advice. And if he is getting too restless, I offer him to get a ticket to Pakistan. He can get people of his choice elected there", said Sarma.

the ideals embodied by Ram and Laxman. On the other hand, Tejashwi and Lalu represents the legacy of Babur-Aurangzeb. The assembly polls are a battle between these two visions".

"It is after a long time that in the country Hindus are able to live, speak and move freely. That has been made possible by the leadership of Modi, who in Bihar, is assisting Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. I am sure the people here will vote for the NDA", Sarma added.

Later, talking to the media, Sarma, who was with the Congress till 2015, criticised the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi who had on Tuesday spoken of the armed forces having less than proportionate representation of the deprived castes.

"Rahul Gandhi is an enemy of the country", said the Assam CM, who also alleged that opponents of the BJP were criticising the SIR because "they depend on votes of Bangladeshi immigrants to win elections". (PTI)

## India to cut direct Russian crude imports from December amid US sanctions

**NEW DELHI, Nov 5:** India is set to reduce its direct imports of Russian crude from late November, following new US sanctions on Rosneft and Lukoil, effective November 21.

Indian refiners accounting for more than half of the country's import of Russian crude oil, which is turned into fuels like petrol and diesel in refineries, are expected to comply with the latest sanctions on Moscow's two largest oil exporters, ana-

lysts said.

This, according to maritime intelligence firm Kpler, will trigger a sharp decline in Russian arrivals in December, with gradual recovery projected through early 2026 via intermediaries and alternative trading routes.

Top importer Reliance Industries Ltd, which has a long-term supply contract with Rosneft, will stop taking Russian oil. Two other state-controlled refiners have said they are stopping

Russian oil imports. Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd and HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd, a joint venture of steel tycoon Lakshmi Mittal's Mittal Energy and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL), have announced plans to suspend future imports.

The three accounted for more than half of the 1.8 million barrels of Russian crude oil imported in the first half of 2025. However, Nayara Energy's

Vadinar refinery, partially owned by Rosneft and already under EU sanctions, is likely to maintain its Russian crude intake.

According to Sumit Ritolia, Lead Research Analyst (Refining & Modelling) at Kpler, Russia remained India's top crude supplier in October, followed by Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Russian shipments to India reached 1.6-1.8 million barrels per day (mbd) before the sanctions, with declines (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Former militant escapes from Dima Hasao jail

**HAFLONG, Nov 5:** A former militant escaped from Haflong sub-jail in Assam's Dima Hasao district on Wednesday, an official said.

The incident has raised serious security concerns as several accused in grievous crimes as well as two accused in the Zubeen Garg death case are also lodged in the prison.

The former militant of DNLA outfit, Betsing Jidung, managed to escape from the prison around noon, the official said.

A possible security breach or negligence on part of the jail staffers is suspected, he said. "As soon as the escape (CONTD. ON PAGE 2)

## Installation of gas pipeline from Tripura to Mizoram in progress: Official

**AIZAWL, Nov 5:** Installation of a gas pipeline to Mizoram from neighbouring Tripura is underway, officials said on Wednesday.

The project, when completed, will facilitate gas pipeline connection to households in Mizoram, particularly in Aizawl.

Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Minister B Lalchhanzova chaired a meeting on Tuesday to review the progress of the ongoing project under the North East Gas Grid (NEGG).

The pipeline is being installed between Tripura's Panisagar to Sihhmui near Aizawl, the officials said.

The project will cover a total length of 119 km, of which 104 km will be inside Mizoram and the rest in Tripura.

It was pointed out at Tuesday's meeting that 23.5 per cent (28 km) of the project has already been completed, the officials said.

They said that the state government is making massive efforts for early completion of the project, and the Indradhanush Gas Grid Limited, which is executing the project, is also taking steps to expedite installation on the remaining stretch. (PTI)

Participants highlight need to modernise dairy infrastructure and strengthen start-up ecosystem

## Conclave focuses on strengthening dairy, allies sectors in Assam



**GUWAHATI, Nov 5:** A two-day conclave aimed at strengthening the dairy, livestock and cooperative sectors in Assam concluded on Wednesday.

The meet, which brought together experts, policymakers, academics and practitioners to share insights and innovative strategies, was organised at the initiative of Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, an official statement said.

The second day of the conclave witnessed a series of thematic sessions and a lead lecture that focused on advancing

dairy technology, improving livestock management and promoting sustainable poultry development.

Participants highlighted the need to modernise dairy infrastructure and strengthen the start-up ecosystem to create new opportunities for rural youth and women entrepreneurs.

Discussions also emphasised the critical role of financing models from NABARD and MSME in enabling sustainable dairy-based entrepreneurship.

A lead lecture on the 'Status of Live-

stock Sector in Assam' was delivered by Jayanta Kumar Goswami, director, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, Assam, who provided an overview of the sector's current landscape, its challenges and emerging opportunities.

He highlighted that livestock and allied activities play a vital role in enhancing rural livelihoods, ensuring nutritional security and empowering women, particularly among smallholder and marginal farmers.

Speakers stressed on the importance of bio-security measures and hygienic meat processing systems to promote viable and safe piggery ventures in the state.

The potential of the piggery sector as a major contributor to rural income and nutrition security was strongly advocated.

Experts emphasised the need to adopt scientific breeding and sustainable fodder systems to increase the productivity of goat and sheep farming in rural areas.

The session on poultry development addressed issues related to backyard and commercial poultry farming, feed efficiency, hatchery management and bio-security.

It also highlighted the need to strengthen local poultry breeds, improve market linkages and expand cold chain infrastructure to ensure profitability and sustainability in the sector. (PTI)

**Chief Minister's Jibon Prerana Scheme**

Handholding Fresh Graduates of Assam

Assistance of ₹2,500 per month for 1 year

Last Date for Application 30 November 2025

**Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma**  
Chief Minister, Assam

**Objectives**

- Support Fresh Graduates in their Job Search
- Encourage Fresh Graduates to prepare for Competitive Exams
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# India consistently protects interests of vulnerable sectors in FTAs: Goyal

AUCKLAND, Nov 5: Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday said India consistently protects the interests of vulnerable sectors like dairy and MSMEs in free trade agreements.

He also said that significant progress has been made in the negotiations of the proposed trade agreement with New Zealand.

The fourth round of negotiations is underway here for a pact between senior officials of India and New Zealand.

"India never compromises on the interests of dairy, farmers and MSMEs. We consistently protect the interests of vulnerable sectors," Goyal told reporters.

The remarks are important as New Zealand is a major dairy player in the world, and it may seek greater market access in the sector.

The minister said that both countries have agreed to respect each other's sensitivities.

India has never given any duty concessions in any of its previous trade agreements. Dairy and agriculture are politically sensitive areas.

"We respect each other's sensitivities...we will not touch such issues," he said, adding that "a trade deal is clearly on the table".

He, however, said that India can look at increasing cooperation in farming technologies, like dairy machinery.

Goyal is here on a four-day official visit. He is leading a business delegation.

When asked if more rounds of negotiations would happen, the



minister said, "We may not need many more rounds as significant progress has been made".

He also said that various sectors hold huge potential between India and New Zealand to enhance co-operation, including in defence, agriculture, space, education and tourism sectors.

When asked about the movement of skilled professionals in the FTA, Goyal said it is part of the services chapter.

"Services also get included in FTAs. We can compete in services and business, and in that, automatically, service providers have to come. To that extent, the FTA will benefit from that (movement of professionals). But we never discuss immigration in FTAs."

Mobility is more for service provision, or student mobility, or internship, or training for 2-3 years, he said, adding that one should be cautious about fraudulent agents, who make false promises for admission and jobs in

foreign countries.

When asked whether the trade deal between India and New Zealand is going to happen before the pact with the US, Goyal said: "I don't think we ever discuss deadlines when we finalise, or discuss, or negotiate a treaty. Every agreement stands on its own legs, and every agreement is important. Every agreement is tailored based on the situation in each country, and every agreement will happen at the right time".

Goyal also met New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and addressed the media jointly on trade and other issues.

In a social media post, Luxon said both countries are working on the trade pact that would create massive opportunities for Kiwi businesses in the Indian market.

Luxon held about 15 minutes of intense talks with Goyal and New Zealand Trade Minister Todd McClay, even as his cavalcade was waiting.

"We will have a good deal which will protect the mutual interest of both countries. This deal will be finalised after taking into account all the sensitive things in which we do not have to make any kind of compromise; we have agreed that we will not choose those things in which we have difficulty," Goyal said.

He added that one should not conclude a deal in a hurry, as it may lead to mistakes.

Briefing the media with the prime minister and Goyal, Todd said the bilateral trade is growing, and now it is the job of the two ministers to ensure that businesses of both sides form strong relationships.

"...there are always challenges in a trade negotiation. What Minister Goyal and I have agreed is that rather than our negotiators arguing, we will find solutions together. And so far, I think we've made great, great progress," Todd said when asked if the exclusion of the dairy sector from the pact would be a deal breaker.

Talking about sensitivities involved in these trade pact talks with different nations, Goyal said: "What I do with the EU, for example, a USD 20 trillion economy, or what I do with the 10-nation Asean group, collectively a very large population and economy, cannot become a benchmark for what I will be able to do with New Zealand".

The size and scale of a country will have to be taken into consideration while negotiating these trade deals, he said, adding that India's market size is huge. (PTI)

# All-new Hyundai VENUE and VENUE N Line make global debut

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Nov 5: Hyundai Motor India Limited (HMIL) on Wednesday unveiled the all-new Hyundai VENUE and Hyundai VENUE N Line in a global debut, redefining the compact SUV segment with a bold design, advanced technology, and enhanced performance.

Priced from ₹7,89,900 (ex-showroom), the new VENUE aims to make future mobility more accessible and aspirational.

Speaking at the launch, Unsoo

Kim, Managing Director of HMIL, said the all-new VENUE marks a new chapter in Hyundai's journey in India and is the first product to roll out from its Pune manufacturing plant. He noted that Hyundai has announced an investment of over ₹45,000 crore and plans to launch 26 new products by 2030.

"The launch of the all-new Hyundai VENUE and VENUE N Line represents a significant milestone in our journey of automotive excellence," Kim said.

Tarun Garg, Whole-Time Director and COO of HMIL, said the VENUE has been among Hyundai's most successful SUVs since its debut in 2019, with over seven lakh units sold.

He added that the new VENUE models embody disruptive design, advanced safety, and superior driving dynamics.

"The all-new Hyundai VENUE will now be exclusively manufactured in India for global markets, reinforcing the 'Make in India for the World' vision," Garg said.

# Panattoni plans to set up ₹ 800-crore logistics, industrial park in Kochi

**MUMBAI, Nov 5:** Industrial real estate developer Panattoni on Wednesday said it plans to set up a ₹ 800-crore Grade A+ multi-client logistics and industrial park in Edayar Industrial Area of Kochi in collaboration with Edayar Zinc.

The facility will be developed in two phases, with phase I spanning 20 acres and featuring 5.2 lakh sq ft of infrastructure, catering to e-commerce, FMCG, third-party logistics, and pharmaceutical clients, a statement said. The construction on the park will begin in February next year, with phase I operations targeted for February 2027, it added.

This also marks Panattoni's entry into Kerala and will serve as the anchor project within the Kerala Logistics & Industrial City (KLIC), an initiative by Edayar Zinc that will position Kochi as a gateway for global industrial and logistics investment, as per the statement.

The proposed future developments at KLIC include the Global Machinery, Equipment and Technology (GMET) corridor, a pioneering platform designed to bring together global OEMs, technology providers, and industrial leaders, and the Industrial Gala, offering state-of-the-art, built-to-lease spaces for manufacturing, assembly, and allied operations, the statement said.



Together, these developments will position KLIC as a future-ready industrial ecosystem, integrating world-class infrastructure, sustainable industrial planning, and comprehensive amenities, it added.

"This partnership with Edayar Zinc Ltd reflects our shared commitment to developing world-class, sustainable, and flexible logistics infrastructure. The Kochi project exemplifies our model of combining global expertise with local entrepreneurship to unlock industrial potential and create employment opportunities that strengthen regional economies," said Norbert Sumislowski, Managing Director for International Project Management at Panattoni.

Backed by the Kerala government's industrial and logistics policies, this development is poised to redefine regional connectivity, enhance supply chain efficiency, and accelerate sustainable economic growth across southern India, the statement said.

"With plans to host over 50 industrial units and generate more than 5,000 direct and indirect jobs, and with over ₹ 1,500 crore of projected investments from diverse industrial and logistics projects, KLIC is designed to become a self-sustaining ecosystem that drives sustainable industrial progress and Kerala's next phase of economic development," said Mohamed Bismith, Managing Director, Edayar Zinc Ltd. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Process of securing

Hazarika. He further informed that a 100-foot-tall statue of the musical legend will be installed at the zero point of the Dhola-Sadiya Bridge to immortalise his contribution to strengthening the cultural bond between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

As part of the centenary celebrations of Dr Hazarika's birth anniversary—launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September—the state government will organise similar cultural programmes in Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad, culminating in a grand concluding function in the national capital.

The chief minister also announced that during Rongali Bihu celebrations, one evening will be dedicated exclusively to the memory of Dr Hazarika, with additional grants to Bihu committees for the same.

Sarma further said that another iconic song, 'Swahid Pranamo Tumak', written during the Assam Agitation, will be sung across the state on December 10 to mark Swahid Diwas (Martyrs' Day).

Cultural affairs minister Bimal Bora, Additional chief secretary Dr B Kalyan Chakravarthi, director of cultural affairs Rahul Das, Kamrup (M) deputy commissioner Sumit Sattawan, Dr Hazarika's younger brother Samar Hazarika, and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Earlier in the day, Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya paid floral tributes to Dr Hazarika at a solemn ceremony held at Raj Bhavan.

Describing him as "a symbol of Assam's cultural pride and human values," the Governor said Dr Hazarika's timeless creations continue to inspire with messages of harmony, justice, and universal brotherhood.

He said the multi-dimensional contributions of the Sudhakantha as a singer, lyricist, composer, poet, and filmmaker reflected his deep commitment to humanity and social harmony, urging the youth to draw inspiration from his life and ideals to build a society rooted in peace, culture, and mutual respect.

Memorial programmes, musical tributes, and cultural performances were held across the state by government departments, cultural organisations, and educational institutions, as Assam united in remembrance of the bard whose voice still echoes in the hearts of millions. (With inputs from PTI)

## Rajen Gohain joins

the people of Assam and betrayed the indigenous communities by allowing outsiders to settle in the state." He further accused the party of "encouraging communal politics and dividing the centuries-old Assamese society."

Gohain expressed his dissatisfaction with the BJP's current functioning, saying the party had "drifted far from the ideals of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and veteran leader LK Advani."

"I have been patient for a long time, but the present state of affairs is deeply disappointing. We did not join this party to witness personality-driven politics. It has now gone into the hands of people who have little connection with the party's founding values," Gohain remarked.

The former minister also alleged that the state's natural resources were being "handed over to outsiders" and called for a stronger regional voice to protect Assam's identity and interests.

He said that the Assam Jatya Parishad should consider building an understanding with like-minded parties to ensure that the interests of the Assamese people are protected in the upcoming assembly elections.

Following his induction, Gohain said, "Wherever I am, I have always tried to perform my duties with honesty and commitment. I will continue to do so here as well."

His decision to align with the BJP underscores his belief that a strong regional force is essential for safeguarding the interests of Assam and its people.

The assembly elections in the state are due next year. (With inputs from PTI)

## Former militant escapes

came to notice, a manhunt was launched by the jail authorities and police to track down the fugitive," he said. Besides accused and convicts in different crimes, including former militants, two of the accused in Zubeen Garg death case -- his band members Shekharjyoti Goswami and Amritprabha Mahanta -- have been lodged in the Haflong sub-jail.

Security had been tightened since the arrival of the two high-profile accused to ensure no breach in any manner. (PTI)

## India to cut direct

observed post-October 21 as refiners avoided potential US OFAC exposure. Analysts say Russian barrels are unlikely to disappear entirely, but future imports will rely on more complex logistics and trading arrangements.

To offset reduced Russian flows, Indian refiners are increasing procurement from the Middle East, Latin America, West Africa, Canada, and the United States. US crude imports hit 5,68,000 barrels per day (kbd) in October, the highest since March 2021, driven by economics and arbitrage opportunities rather than sanctions. Flows are expected to normalise to 250-350 kbd in December and January.

"We see reductions in Russian crude arrival in post-November 21," he said.

"Most Indian refiners are expected to comply with US sanctions and halt or reduce direct crude purchases from Rosneft and Lukoil. This is likely to trigger a sharp decline in Russian crude import in December, followed by a gradual recovery through mid-to-late Q1 2026, as new trading intermediaries emerge and alternative routes are established."

In contrast, Nayara Energy's 400 kbd Vadinar refinery is unlikely to alter its current procurement pattern, as it is already almost entirely reliant on Russian crude.

"To offset reduced direct Russian inflows, Indian refiners are expected to increase procurement from the Middle East, Brazil, Latin America, West Africa, Canada, and the United States," he said.

"However, higher freight costs could limit the scale of substitution by eroding arbitrage opportunities."

Overall, refiners are likely to broaden their import baskets, with higher inflows from Latin America (Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Guyana), the United States, West Africa, and the Middle East. While near-term Russian imports may dip starting in December, Russian barrels will continue reaching India through intermediaries, he said. (PTI)

**CORRIGENDUM NO. 06 FOR TENDER NOTICE NO.: CON/2025/AUG/05, DATED: 18-08-2025**  
Corrigendum -06 for Tender Notice No. CON/2025/AUG/05 against Tender No. CE-CON-DK-TN-2025-04 has been published. For details please visit in website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).  
**Chief Engineer/Con-6, N.F. Railway, Maligaon, NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY Construction Organization**  
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**NAME CORRECTION**  
I, Manish Kumar son of Dinanath Chauhan resident of Pub Silputa (Chauhan Basti), Bakulia, Karbi Anglong like to mention that, my name wrongly written as Munit Kumar in My HSLC Admit Card but it should be Manish Kumar.

**NAME CORRECTION**  
I, Shri Ram Lakhan Singh resident of Pub-Silputa (Chauhan Basti), Bakulia, Karbi Anglong would like to mention that in my Passbook - earlier LDRB now Assam Gramin Bank, my name wrongly written as Ram Lakhan Singh but the correct name is Ram Lakhan Singh.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I have changed my name MOHAMMAD MASTOFA AHMED to MASTOFA AHMED by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, Hojai (Assam). Form today onwards I will be known as MASTOFA AHMED for all purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I have changed my name MD MOSTOFA AHMED to MASTOFA AHMED by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, Hojai (Assam). Form today onwards I will be known as MASTOFA AHMED for all purposes.

**NAME CHANGE**  
I have changed my name MD IMAMUL HOQUE to IMAMUL HOQUE by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, Hojai (Assam). Form today onwards I will be known as IMAMUL HOQUE for all purposes.

**NAME CORRECTION**  
I, MONJUARA BEGUM, W/O Jainal Abidin Ahmed, R/O Ward No. 7, Kharupetia Town, PO & PS Kharupetia, Dist. Darrang (Assam), declare that:  
- My actual name is MONJUARA BEGUM, but it is recorded as Manju Ara Begum in my Elector Photo Identity Card.  
- My father's actual name is ABDUL SATTAR, but it is recorded as SATTAR ALI in NRC Voter details of 1966, No. 73 Dalgaoon LAC (data code 320-4035-1401, Voter SL No. 433, Block No. 30, Village No. 1/2 Baruahar), and as Abdus Sattar in my educational testimonials. Monjuara Begum and Manju Ara Begum are the same person. Abdul Sattar, Sattar Ali, and Abdus Sattar are the same person.  
Sd/-  
MONJUARA BEGUM

# Franklin Templeton launches Franklin India Multi-Factor Fund

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Nov 5: Franklin Templeton (India) has announced the launch of the Franklin India Multi-Factor Fund (FIMF), an open-ended equity scheme that follows a Multi-Factor-based Quantitative investment strategy.

The newly introduced fund adopts a data-driven, systematic approach to stock selection, leveraging factors such as Quality, Value, Sentiment, and Alternatives (QVSA) to achieve long-term, risk-adjusted returns.

The investment universe of FIMF comprises the top 500 listed companies in India by market capitalization. By blending technology-led quantitative models with expert human oversight, the fund seeks to provide investors with a disciplined and diversified investment strategy capable of adapting to varying market cycles.

The New Fund Offer (NFO) will be open for subscription from November 10 to November 24, 2025, with units priced at ₹10 per unit during the offer period.

Speaking on the launch, Avinash Satwalekar, President, Franklin Templeton-India, said that the fund marks an important milestone in the integration of technology and investment management. "Technology is deeply embedded in our everyday lives, reshaping how we work, communicate, and make daily decisions. With advancements in artificial intelligence, it is now possible to analyse vast data sets to identify investment opportunities," he said, "Franklin India Multi-Factor Fund exemplifies this integration of technology and data analytics with human expertise, offering investors a structured, risk-aware, and adaptive approach to equity investing."

Adam Petryk, Executive Vice President & Head of Franklin Templeton Investment Solutions, noted that the global investment team manages over USD 98 billion and draws from more than 160 years of combined

investment experience. "Our quantitative investment process blends traditional fundamentals with forward-looking indicators. By combining factors such as ROE, valuation, and earnings momentum with macroeconomic signals, we provide a flexible and evidence-based strategy for Indian investors," he said, "Human judgment remains central, ensuring that analytical insights are guided by seasoned portfolio expertise."

Explaining the fund's operational framework, Arihant Jain, Fund Manager of Franklin India Multi-Factor Fund, said the model evaluates over 40 indicators grouped into four core categories — Quality, Value, Sentiment, and Alternatives.

Each of these factors is measured through multiple sub-metrics designed to capture performance dimensions across different market environments.

"Different factors perform differently across market cycles. Investing across quality, value, momentum, and low volatility helps reduce the downside risks associated with single-factor exposure," he added.

The investment process emphasizes diversification, with careful management of sectoral, size, and style biases to minimize unintended risks.

Risk management mechanisms and portfolio optimization strategies are integrated to ensure a balanced mix of stability and opportunity.

The fund's model continually reassesses its factor framework, incorporating new data and signals to stay responsive to changing market conditions.

Franklin Templeton stated that FIMF is designed for investors seeking exposure to Indian equities through a quantitative, factor-based approach that blends data analytics, machine learning, and traditional investment discipline. With its structured model and flexible human oversight, the fund aims to deliver sustainable, long-term value for investors across market cycles.

## Saregama Q2FY26 net slips 2 pc YoY to ₹ 43.8 crore

**KOLKATA, Nov 5:** Saregama India Ltd, part of the RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group, on Wednesday reported a 2 per cent year-on-year decline in consolidated net profit at ₹ 43.8 crore for the quarter ended September 30, 2025, compared to ₹ 44.9 crore in the same period last year. Revenue from operations fell 5 per cent to ₹ 230 crore from ₹ 241.8 crore in the corresponding quarter of FY25, mainly due to a sharp drop in the video content segment, the company informed bourses.

The company's profit before tax (PBT) stood at ₹ 60.1 crore, marginally higher than ₹ 59.3 crore a year

earlier, while adjusted EBITDA rose slightly by 1 per cent to ₹ 84.7 crore, maintaining a healthy margin of 37 per cent.

Segment-wise, music (licensing and artiste management) revenue grew 12 per cent year-on-year to ₹ 165.3 crore, supported by successful releases and strong brand tie-ups. The retail business, led by its Carvaan music players, saw a modest 2 per cent decline to ₹ 20.7 crore, while the video segment revenue dropped sharply by 70 per cent to ₹ 21.8 crore due to fewer film and digital releases. (PTI)

# MakeMyTrip's 'Travel Ka Muhurat' maps India's expanding travel footprint

Six days, properties booked in 1,441 Indian cities and 834 cities globally across 109 countries

**HT Bureau**  
GUWAHATI, Nov 5: Preliminary data from MakeMyTrip's inaugural 'Travel Ka Muhurat' (October 29-November 3) reveals strong participation by travellers across domestic and international destinations, indicating a sharp uptick in advance bookings, destination discovery, and preference for premium stays.

Early bookings for year-end flights have doubled compared to the previous base period, serving as a positive lead indicator for the accommodation segment.

The first six days saw flight bookings spanning all major Indian cities, while international bookings covered 362 airports across 115 countries through 113 airlines.

In accommodation, domestic travellers booked 40,038 unique properties across 1,441 Indian cities,

including 603 that sold for the first time in over a year. Internationally, bookings spanned 7,911 properties in 834 cities across 109 countries.

Premiumisation remains a key trend. Every third domestic hotel booking was for a 4- or 5-star property, with the average stay length rising slightly from 1.7 to 1.8 nights.

Internationally, premium stays accounted for 64.5% of bookings, with an average stay of 4.9 nights.

Value-conscious travellers made the most of offers, with 96% of domestic hotel bookers availing discount coupons and partner deals with banks such as HDFC, ICICI, and Axis, as well as Visa and RuPay networks.

Goa, Jaipur, Udaipur, and Lonavala were among the top domestic leisure destinations, while Dubai, Pattaya, Bangkok, Phuket, Singapore,

Kuala Lumpur, Bali, London, Krabi, and Langkawi emerged as leading international choices.

Timed promotions such as the evening "Lightning Drops" (6:00-9:00 PM) witnessed strong engagement, driving competitive bookings through limited-time deals.

MakeMyTrip Co-Founder and Group CEO Rajesh Magow said, "It's encouraging to see travellers engaging earlier in the planning cycle and making more considered choices.

With 'Travel Ka Muhurat,' our intent is to create a platform that benefits travellers, partners, and the industry at large by enabling better planning, greater value, and more predictable demand."

The campaign will continue through November with new weekly themes and partner offers designed to sustain traveller engagement.

'Manuhe Manuhor Babe' echoes across the state of Assam

# Bhupen Hazarika death anniversary observed across state

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, Nov 5:** The 14th death anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika was observed in Karbi Anglong district on Wednesday, along with the rest of the state.

Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Tuliram Ronghang, KAAC Chairman Raju Tisso, Deputy Chairman Avijit Kro, and Karbi Anglong District Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi, ACS, paid floral tributes to the cultural icon at a commemorative event organised jointly by the District Administration and the Department of Cultural Affairs at the Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) Stadium.

As part of the programme, around 5,000 students from government schools under Diphu and Howraghat LACs, along with 2,500 members from cultural troupes representing various ethnic groups, participated in a mass rendition of Hazarika's timeless song "Manuhe Manuhor Babe."

Despite light rain, the participants stood in formation for nearly two hours.

The ceremony began at 11 am with the lighting of the inaugural lamp and floral tributes to Hazarika's portrait, followed by the singing of the State song "O Mur Apunar Dex." The gathering then joined in a medley of Hazarika's popular songs, including "Axom Amar Rupohi, Buku Hum Hum Kore, Aami Asohiya Nohou Dukhiya, Ami Ekekhon Naore Jatni," and "Moi Eti Jajabor."

Addressing the gathering, CEM Tuliram Ronghang said, "Today, we gather at KASA Stadium to remember Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika, born on September 8, 1926, who passed away on November 5, 2011.

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, the state will celebrate the birth centenary of this great artist across Assam."

He also expressed grief over the demise of singer Zubeen Garg, who passed away in Singapore on September 19.

"Two bright stars of Assam's cultural world—Dr Bhupen Hazarika and Zubeen Garg—have left us. Their contributions to music and art will remain eternal," Ronghang said.

The CEM highlighted Hazarika's multifaceted genius as a singer, lyricist, composer, filmmaker, journalist, professor, and painter.

He recalled Hazarika's connection with Diphu, noting that during the 49th session of the Assam Sahitya Sabha held there in 1982, Hazarika composed a song in honour of the town, which remains beloved to this day.

Ronghang further mentioned that Hazarika composed songs celebrating the diversity of various tribes, wrote the National Anthem of Arunachal Pradesh, and directed acclaimed films in Assamese, Bengali, and Hindi—winning a

National Award for his music in the Hindi film "Aarop."

Concluding his address, Ronghang urged the younger generation to follow the ideals and artistic vision of Dr Bhupen Hazarika, whose music continues to inspire harmony and brotherhood across communities.

A Baithalangso Correspondent adds: In West Karbi Anglong, the day was marked at Serdihun Aklam, Baithalangso, under the aegis of the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Assam, in association with the West Karbi Anglong District Administration.

Member of Parliament for Diphu Lok Sabha constituency Amarsing Tisso, Howraghat MLA Darsing Ronghang, and West Karbi Anglong Deputy Commissioner Sarangpani Sharma were present at the commemorative event.

Students, teachers, and headmasters from various schools of the district also participated in the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, MP Amarsing Tisso said that to build a healthy and progressive society, the younger generation must move forward by upholding the ideals and values propagated by Dr Bhupen Hazarika.

**Our Tezpur Correspondent adds:** The historic Church Field in Tezpur resonated with the immortal song "Manuhe Manuhor Babe" as over 5,000 participants joined voices to pay homage to Bharat Ratna Dr Bhupen Hazarika on his 14th death anniversary.

The Sonitpur district administration organised a daylong tribute and memorial programme in remembrance of the cultural icon.

The formal ceremony began with the lighting of the ceremonial lamp before Dr. Hazarika's portrait by Member of Parliament Ranjit Dutta and Deputy Commissioner Anand Kumar Das.

In his welcome address, DC Das expressed gratitude to all attendees for joining in honouring the legacy of the maestro.

Addressing the gathering, MP Dutta reflected on Dr Hazarika's musical journey and philosophical vision, noting that his creative roots lay in Tezpur.

A collective musical presentation followed, featuring one hundred artistes from Tezpur and neighbouring areas performing some of Dr Hazarika's most beloved compositions, filling the venue with a soulful atmosphere.

On the occasion, the district administration felicitated ten distinguished artistes of Sonitpur with a Cheleng and citation.

The awardees included veteran lyricist and Baan Theatre president Bankim Sarma; vocalists Kirti Bania and Sachidananda Bora; Sahitya Akademi awardee and translator Jnan Bahadur Chetri; and celebrated folk artistes Dinaram Boro, Girish Nath, Nowaz Topno, Gokul Saha, Bipul Mech, and Namita Brahma.



The programme, coordinated by Pankaj Barua, Working President of the Sonitpur Press Club, was attended by Tezpur MLA Prithiraj Rabha, Superintendent of Police Barun Purkayastha, Assam Housing Board Vice Chairman Subhash Dutta, District Development Commissioner Lakhinandan Saharia, and social worker Madhusmita Hazarika Deka, among others.

Meanwhile, the Tezpur Sahitya Sabha organised a floral tribute ceremony at its Bhawan, presided over by President Dhrubajyoti Das and conducted by Secretary Dr Pallab Bhattacharyya.

Former president Dr Bhupen Saikia, Ramesh Chandra Kalita, theatre personality Mrigen Chandra Bora, singer Sanjay Krishna Gohain Barua, and other noted cultural figures paid homage.

Dr Saikia and Dhrubajyoti Das also delivered speeches reflecting on Dr. Hazarika's philosophy and artistic contributions.

Earlier in the day, under the initiative of Deepa Das, President of the Prahlada Chandra Das Memorial Dance Academy, a group dance performance based on Dr Hazarika's songs was held.

At Trimurti Udyan, former Education Minister and Udyan Committee President Brindaban Goswami inaugurated a memorial event and felicitated veteran actress Bakul Das.

Sonitpur Zila Sahitya Sabha, in collaboration with the Napam Branch Sahitya Sabha, also observed the day with floral tributes and a commemorative lecture programme at Napam.

Speakers included Publicity Sub-Committee Executive President Mahendra Kumar Nath, Sonitpur Zila Sahitya Sabha President Dr. Sukdev Adhikari, former Assam Sahitya Sabha Principal Secretary Jadb Chandra Sarma, and noted citizen Siraj Khan.

Later in the evening, the historic Baan Theatre hosted the inauguration of the

All-Assam Group Bhupendra Sangeet Competition, featuring around twenty teams from across the state. Various cultural organisations, including Jyoti Bharati, Tarun Asom Sangha, Asomiya Club, All Assam Lekhika Samaroh Samiti (Tezpur Branch), and Srimanta Sankardeva Temple, Majgaon, also organised remembrance programmes to mark the day.

**Our Nagaon Correspondent adds:** The historic Nehrubali field in Nagaon came alive on Wednesday as over 5,000 students and locals gathered to pay tribute to the legendary singer and Bharat Ratna, Dr Bhupen Hazarika, on his 14th death anniversary.

The event was organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Assam, in collaboration with the Nagaon District Administration.

The programme began with the rendition of the Assamese national anthem, followed by the lighting of ceremonial lamps and floral tributes to Dr Hazarika. Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Keshab Mahanta graced the occasion as the chief guest.

In his address, he lauded Dr Hazarika's immense contributions to Assamese culture and music, which, he said, continue to inspire generations.

A major highlight of the programme was when more than 5,000 students and attendees joined hands to form a human chain and sing Dr Hazarika's iconic song "Manuhe Manuhor Babe" (Humanity for Humanity).

The song, which advocates universal brotherhood and compassion, has been recognised as a song of national importance by the chief minister of Assam, who has also appealed to the United Nations to adopt it as an anthem for humanity.

During the event, local artists Ratimohan Nath and Ranjan Bezbaruah were felicitated for their contributions to the

field of music.

Other performers also paid tribute through soulful renditions of Dr Hazarika's timeless compositions.

In his speech, District Commissioner Debashish Sarma urged the younger generation to preserve and promote Dr. Hazarika's artistic and humanitarian legacy.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks, followed by the singing of the Assamese national anthem. Among the dignitaries present were MLAs Rupak Sarma, Dipu Ranjan Sarma, and Sashi Kanta Das, Nagaon Zila Parishad president Gitanjali Hazarika, and senior district officials, an official press note stated.

**Our Sivasagar Correspondent adds:** Undeterred by intermittent rain, thousands of people in Sivasagar gathered at the historic Boarding Field today to sing "Manuhe Manuhor Babe," the immortal song of the Bard of the Brahmaputra, Dr Bhupen Hazarika, on his 14th death anniversary.

Transport and Lok Nirman Minister Jogen Mohan attended the event as the chief guest.

Among others present were Demow MLA Sushanta Borgohain, former Thowra MLA Kushal Duwori, Sivasagar Deputy Commissioner Ayush Garg, Superintendent of Police Subhas Baruah, DDC Samiran Bora, and BJP District President Bitopan Raidongia.

The programme began with a welcome address by DC Ayush Garg, followed by a speech from minister Jogen Mohan, who reaffirmed the government's commitment to preserving and promoting the legacy of the legendary singer.

Local artistes from Sivasagar opened the event with a medley of Dr Hazarika's songs, followed by the mass rendition of "Manuhe Manuhor Babe."

In another function held near Dr Bhupen Hazarika's statue at Doulmukh Chariali, organised by Dekhowporia Sanmilita Yuva Sangha in association with the Sivasagar Press Club, cultural workers and media fraternity members paid floral tributes to the legendary singer, composer, journalist, and filmmaker.

The ceremonial lamp was lit by Dr Sabyasachi Mahanta and Zehiruddin Khan.

Artists Hema Saikia, Rajkumari Falguni, and several young talents performed some of Dr Hazarika's immortal songs, making the occasion a heartfelt tribute to Assam's cultural icon.

**Our Margherita Correspondent adds:** The 14th death anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhupen Hazarika was observed with solemn reverence and cultural fervour at Uttar Margherita Rangmancha, organised by the Margherita Co-District Administration in collaboration with the Department of Cultural Affairs.

The programme began with floral tributes, followed by a welcome address by Co-District Commissioner Rahul Doley,

who described Dr Hazarika as a visionary who preached compassion, brotherhood, and justice through his art.

A chorus of "Manuhe Manuhor Babe" was performed by 500 students from 12 educational institutions. During the event, local artist Mahendra Das created a live portrait of the maestro.

Margherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma, present as Guest of Honour, said Dr Hazarika's creations continue to inspire unity and cultural pride.

Cultural associate Prabin Rajkhowa also recalled Dr Hazarika's global influence as Assam's cultural ambassador.

The event was attended by government officials, academicians, media persons, and local residents.

Meanwhile, Sudhakantha Smriti Suraksha Samity observed the day before Dr Hazarika's statue at Jaya Nagar, where MLA Bhaskar Sharma, Dr Shankar Patowary, Dr Pabitra Bharali, Dr Ranjit Dutta, Barun Borah, Rana Jyoti Neog, and Dr Kripa Prasad Upadhyay paid homage.

A souvenir titled "Jeevan Sandhu," edited by Pabitra Borgohain, was unveiled on the occasion.

The observance reflected the people's enduring reverence for Dr Bhupen Hazarika, whose songs continue to inspire harmony and humanity across generations.

**Our Hojai Correspondent adds:** The 14th death anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. Bhupen Hazarika was observed with grandeur at Kachari Maidan, Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, where thousands from all walks of life gathered to pay tribute to the legendary artist by singing his immortal song "Manuhe Manuhor Babe."

The event, organised by the Hojai District Administration, saw the presence of Kaziranga MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa as chief guest, along with Hojai MLA Ramakrishna Ghosh, Lumding MLA Shibu Mishra, and District Commissioner Bidyut Bikash Bhagwati.

The programme began with a tree-planting drive, followed by the lighting of lamps and floral tributes before Dr Hazarika's portrait.

In his inaugural address, DC Bhagwati lauded the late artist's ideals, versatility, and lasting contributions to society.

MP Tasa and the MLAs highlighted the timeless relevance of Dr Hazarika's music, stating that his message of humanity and compassion continues to unite people beyond religion and boundaries.

The highlight of the day was a mass rendition of "Manuhe Manuhor Babe" by over 5,000 participants, symbolising unity and reverence for the music maestro.

Students, teachers, government officials, members of various organisations, political representatives, and local residents attended the event, which concluded with DC Bhagwati expressing gratitude for the people's enthusiastic participation.

## NHM Morigaon staff stage 3-day cease work demanding equal pay

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, Nov 5:** Employees of the National Health Mission (NHM), Morigaon, launched a strong protest against the state government, demanding immediate implementation of the "Equal Work, Equal Pay" policy.

Around 600 NHM employees participated in a three-day cease work programme from November 3 to 5 at the premises of the Joint Director of Health Office in Morigaon.

During the protest, they raised slogans seeking job security and parity in wages with regular government employees.

The agitating employees also submitted a memorandum to chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma through the Morigaon MLA, urging the government to address their longstanding grievances at the earliest.

## BJYM Assam holds workshop to strengthen Booth Yuva Bahini

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 5:** The Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM), Assam Pradesh, held an organisational workshop at the BJP State Office on Wednesday to discuss the formation and strengthening of the Booth Yuva Bahini across the state.

The meeting, presided over by BJYM State President Rakesh Das, was attended by BJP General Secretary (Organisation) GR Ravindra Raju, BJYM State General Secretary Rituparna Sarma, BJP General Secretary Anup Barman, and 39 district in-charges.

The workshop finalised a strategy to induct 20 youth members per booth in Assam, with all organisational data to be maintained digitally for efficiency and accountability.

Addressing the gathering, BJYM President Rakesh Das said the Booth Yuva Bahini would act as BJYM's frontline youth force, spreading awareness of government welfare initiatives and strengthening the organisation at the grassroots.

He added that the initiative aims to ensure that the developmental vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and chief



minister Himanta Biswa Sarma reaches every household.

Das also said disciplined and active youth at the booth level would remind people of the misgovernance during the Congress era and prevent such instability from returning.

BJYM, he added, is committed to building a dynamic and socially responsible youth force dedicated to the unity and progress of Assam.

## Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council delegation visits BTC

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, Nov 5:** A delegation from the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) led by Deputy Speaker Avijit Kro visited the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) on Tuesday.

The delegation was accorded a warm welcome upon their arrival in Kokrajhar.

An interactive meeting between officials of both councils was held at the BTC Secretariat Conference Hall, Bodofa Nwgrw in Kokrajhar.

The meeting was chaired by BTC Chief Executive Member Hagrama Mohilary, and attended by deputy chief Rihon Daimary, along with senior representatives from both BTC and KAAC.

During the meeting, the delegations exchanged views on governance models, development priorities, administrative challenges and welfare initiatives in their respective autonomous regions. The discussions emphasised the need to strengthen inter-council cooperation, share best administrative practices, and explore collaborative pathways for socio-economic development.

Both sides underlined the importance of working together to address common regional issues and improving the delivery of development and welfare schemes at the grassroots level.

The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to continue such engagements in the future to enhance coordination, regional harmony and collaborative progress across Assam's autonomous council areas.

## Ballot-based election held for first time in Batadrava Than Management Committee

**HT Correspondent**

**MORIGAON, Nov 5:** For the first time in the history of the Batadrava Than Management Committee, the birthplace of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardev, the General Secretary was elected through a ballot paper voting system.

The historic general meeting, held under the chairmanship of Dr Samudra Gupta Kashyap, Chancellor of Nagaland University, and in the presence of Nagaon Deputy Commissioner Debashish Sharma and Superintendent of Police Swapnil Deka, saw wide participation from Vaishnav devotees, lifelong members, and representatives from Satras across the district.

In the election, Lachit Bordoloi secured 147 votes, Pranjal Bora 127, and Bhaskar Bora 54.

With the highest votes, human rights activist Lachit Bordoloi was elected General Secretary for a three-year term.

The meeting also resolved to form a six-member special investigation committee to probe alleged corruption and irregularities in the previous committee's functioning, directing it to submit

its report within six months.

Controversies over mismanagement at Batadrava Than had reached the Supreme Court earlier this year, leading to the dissolution of the former committee and the formation of an ad-hoc body under Biraj Mani Bordoloi.

Following court directives and administrative intervention, the dispute was finally settled.



A new management committee was constituted for three years, with Amlan Jyoti Dev Goswami as President, Gobin Das as Executive President, Lachit Bordoloi as Secretary, Pranjal Hazarika and Sandeep Kalita as Assistant Secretaries, and Badan Kalita as Treasurer.

The meeting, conducted under tight security, began with a bargeet and concluded with Hari naam chanting.

## NFR extends festival special train services

Extension aims to ease congestion and assist waitlisted passengers



**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, Nov 5:** To manage the festive rush, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has extended the services of four pairs of festival special trains during November 2025.

The extended trains include New Tinsukia-SMVT Bengaluru (05952/05951), Kamakhya-Ro-

htak (05625/05626), Katihar-Amritsar (05736/05735), and Kishanganj-Amritsar (05734/05733).

These trains will continue with existing schedules, timings, and stoppages.

Train No 05952 (New Tinsukia-SMVT Bengaluru) will run on November 6, while the return service (05951) will run on November 10.

The Kamakhya-Rohtak (05625) service has been extended from November 14 to 28, operating every Friday, and the return train (05626) from November 16 to 30, every Sunday.

Similarly, Katihar-Amritsar (05736) will operate from November 12 to 26, every Wednesday, with the return service (05735) running from November 14 to 28, every Friday.

Kishanganj-Amritsar (05734) will run on November 20 and 27, with the return (05733) on November 22 and 29.

The extension aims to ease congestion and assist waitlisted passengers on these routes.

Details of timings and stoppages are available on the IRCTC website and NFR's social media platforms. Passengers are advised to check before travel.

## Huge consignment of foreign cigarettes seized in Srirampur, two arrested

**HT Correspondent**

**GOSSAIGAON, Nov 5:** In a major breakthrough against illegal smuggling, Gossaigaon Police in coordination with Srirampur Police, seized a large consignment of foreign-made cigarettes during a late-night operation on Monday.

The police team intercepted a truck bearing registration number MH 12 MV 3914, which was reportedly transporting cartons of foreign cigarettes without valid documents.

Upon thorough checking, authorities recovered nearly 12,000 pieces of foreign cigarettes, estimated to be worth over ₹20 lakh in the open market.

According to police sources, the consignment is suspected to have been smuggled into the state through illegal trade routes.

Two individuals from Uttarakhand — Zul Fikar and Robar Khan were arrested in connection with the case.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the



truck had entered Assam earlier and was attempting to transport the contraband to another

state under the guise of legitimate goods.

Police officials informed that the smugglers had concealed the cartons in a hidden compartment inside the vehicle to evade detection.

The authorities are now probing the broader smuggling network involved and tracking the intended recipients of the seized items.

"The operation was part of our continuous drive against smuggling and illegal trade activities along the border areas," said a senior police official, "such operations will continue to ensure that these unlawful networks are dismantled."

The seized truck and contraband have been taken into custody for detailed investigation.

Legal proceedings have been initiated against the accused under relevant sections of the law.

Police have appealed to the public to remain alert and report any information related to smuggling or suspicious movements in the region to help curb the growing menace.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

I don't want to be interesting. I want to be good -Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Growing e-waste crisis

E-waste — or electronic waste — has emerged as one of the fastest-growing environmental threats of our time. The increasing number of electronic devices in modern life has undoubtedly made daily living more convenient, but once these gadgets become obsolete or fall out of use, the waste they generate poses a serious danger to both the environment and human health.

In developing countries like India, where awareness about waste segregation and safe disposal remains limited, e-waste has become a critical hazard. Devices such as old computers, mobile phones, televisions, refrigerators, and printers contain toxic elements like lead, mercury, and cadmium. When these seep into soil and water, they cause irreversible contamination, affecting ecosystems and human health.

Recognising the urgency of the issue, the Government of India adopted the theme "E-waste disposal" for this year's Swachhta Month 2025. Several public and industrial institutions across the country have launched initiatives to promote responsible waste management.

Talking Points

News lost in dopamine hits

By: Narvijay Yadav

The world of communication has quietly shifted layers, like a snake shedding its skin. For decades, it meant a formal press release, a press conference, half-page coverage, and a polite follow-up call to the reporter.

Watching veteran communicator Neeraj Jha in conversation with another sharp newsman, Vishal Krishna, on his Beyond My Brand podcast was a gentle yet firm reminder that we have entered an age where perspective matters more than platforms. Journalism today is fatigued, losing agency, and slowly surrendering editorial freedom.

This is the Bliss Lens moment, where clarity pierces through the fog of digital noise. From a wellness standpoint, today's media mirrors a collective restlessness. The attention span of humanity has shrunk into eight-second dopamine hits called Reels and Shorts.

In this era of ChatGPT, influencer reels, AI prompts, and algorithmic amplification, the CorpCom Head is no longer just a spokesperson. They are a silent crisis monk, managing perception in a watertight chamber where leakage is more dangerous than silence.

Another sharp truth he mentions deserves reflection: "Journalism can be taught, but reputation management cannot be taught in any school." That is why journalists with a decade of field experience often become the most natural PR leaders.

As I reflect, one thing becomes crystal clear: the future belongs to those who can merge communication with consciousness. The frenzy of posting should not bury the purpose of presence. Reels without perspective are noise. Press releases without authenticity are dead on arrival.

As the Bliss community often reminds us, "Whatever you think, you get." If communication leaders think only in terms of visibility, they will gain attention without trust.

Majuli's Ras festival - A glimpse

The river island of Majuli is known not only as the largest river island in the world, but also as the vital centre of the Neo-Vaishnavite religion and Satriya culture introduced by Srimanta Sankardeva. Every year on the full moon day of autumn, the historic Ras festival is celebrated in the heart of this Majuli, which is no longer confined to a mere religious ritual, but has transformed into an essential element of the lifestyle of the people of this region.



The roots of the history of Majuli's Ras festival are very deep and intricately linked with the Satriya tradition. According to historical records and popular belief, around 1762 Shabdab, that is, in the middle of the eighteenth century CE, this Rasleela was first staged in Dakshinpat Satra, one of the four major royal satras of Majuli.

The artistic and dramatic style of Majuli's Ras festival is highly characteristic, bearing the hallmark of every subtle art of Satriya culture. In the dramatic style of Rasleela, all the rules and traditions of the Mahapurush's Bhagna are followed, where there is an incomparable assemblage of gayan-bayan, the skilful use of the sutradhar, bargit, nat, and Satriya dance-songs.

The word "Rasotsav" holds deep philosophical and spiritual significance. The core principle of this festival lies in the word "ras", which means joy, emotion, or the assemblage of the nine rasas.

leela displayed by Lord Krishna expresses the pure love and self-surrender of the jivatma towards the Paramatma. According to this philosophical principle, the gopis are considered symbols of the jivatma, who renounce all worldly bonds, attachments, affections, and maya to eagerly seek the proximity of the supreme Brahman, Lord Krishna.

The artistic and dramatic style of Majuli's Ras festival is highly characteristic, bearing the hallmark of every subtle art of Satriya culture. In the dramatic style of Rasleela, all the rules and traditions of the Mahapurush's Bhagna are followed, where there is an incomparable assemblage of gayan-bayan, the skilful use of the sutradhar, bargit, nat, and Satriya dance-songs.

The influence of Majuli's Ras festival is not limited to the spiritual or cultural sphere; it also plays a major role in the economy, education, and cultural preservation of this river island. During the Ras festival, a large number of tourists and devotees arrive, as a result of which local trade and economy gain significant momentum.

cellent examples of Majuli's traditional craftsmanship. These masks add an important dimension to the drama of Rasleela and take the audience to that mythical world. The costumes and ornaments used in the performance are prepared according to Satriya tradition, using silk or muga cloth.

The most notable aspect of Majuli's Ras festival is its symbolic value of social harmony. This festival is not confined to the bhaktas of the satras, but is considered a common endeavour and festival of unity for the entire public of Majuli. Besides the satras, Rasleela is staged on local open-air theatres in more than sixty villages of Majuli.

I feel, when authoritative pronouncement comes from the Delhi High Court in the matter of Ani Media (P) Ltd. v. Open AI Inc, India's first major AI copyright challenge, this case is going to influence how AI and intellectual property are going to be regulated in our country.

Mind or Machine: Who owns the work

By: Dipak Kurmi

The influence of a lawyer thrives where the law leaves room for interpretation. The strength of law resides in navigating the grey zones where the law remains uncertain. Presently, Indian jurisprudence makes no categorical distinction between outputs generated by machines and those conceived through human creativity.

One often wonders whether time has come where Victorian-era copyright rules and regulations are getting crushed under the weight of the machines they have created. With artificial intelligence developing at such breathtaking velocity that a shred of doubt lingers, it can be said with some certainty that a human mind can create, AI cannot—at least not in its present iterations of emotion or feeling.

Be that as it may, but what the human mind can create through its intricate web of memories, imagination, and interplay of emotions and cultural influences can an AI do that? It may not be wrong to say the AI is also the creator of the human mind only. Very interestingly, this issue has been described in the words of J. Winterson, who describes AI as "Alternative Intelligence and Creativity."

Our nation stands at the crossroads of its legal evolution, confronting the collision between booming economic systems and rich cultural heritage. Everyone is watching how India is going to respond to AI—a conundrum which will not only impact its creator but also its innovator.

Let's throw a glance at the developments in recent times, where even diametrically opposite views have been expressed by different jurisdictions. In 2023, the US Copyright Office made a paradoxical decision: it granted copyright to the AI-generated graphic novel Zarya of the Dawn, but rejected protection for other AI-generated images.

or created by any human invention—however subsequently, US copyright office issued a policy statement clarifying AI assisted creations may qualify for copyright, where human authorship is demonstrably significant, which is in other words known as "significant input test."

On the other hand, the UK and Ireland preferred to have different parameters in both jurisdictions granting copyright protection. Protection was provided for computer generated works. However, both the government's advisory councils strongly recommended for removal of the same.

Interestingly, as far back as in 1937, in the well-known case of Donoghue v. Allied Newspapers Ltd., UK, the High Court had given an interesting finding: "Mere transcribing or typing do not make anyone entitled to own a copyright in respect of what he has typed or transcribed. The owner of the copyright is the author of the work who dictates."

In India, section 2(d)(vi) of Copyright Act, 1957 extends protection to authors who create works with the use of a computer. The copyright is the author of the work who dictates. Justice Farewell of the Delhi High Court, in the case of Eastern Book Company v. D.B. Modak, established the "skill and judgment" test for originality, by rejecting the "sweat of the brow" doctrine which holds that copyright requires more than mere labor and effort alone.

In the matter of Ani Media (P) Ltd. v. Open AI Inc, India's first major AI copyright challenge, this case is going to influence how AI and intellectual property are going to be regulated in our country, particularly in reference to provisions of the Copy Right Act, 1957, and potentially may be followed worldwide.

especially the mask art of Samaguri Satra along with other cottage industry products see sales increase manifold. This festival creates temporary income opportunities for many locals and helps keep their traditional handicrafts and craftsmanship alive. Similarly, the staging of Rasleela aids in imparting education of Satriya culture to the new generation.

In the present time, this glorious Ras festival of Majuli has maintained its heritage intact, although it faces some important challenges, which need to be discussed in detail. The biggest threat among these challenges is the terrible erosion by the Brahmaputra, which poses a permanent threat to the geographical existence of the Majuli island.

In conclusion, it can be said that Majuli's historic Ras festival is a glorious cultural landmark for the Assamese nation. This festival is not just a worship, but a sacred way of life that has flowed through centuries. Starting from Dakshinpat Satra and held in every village, this Rasleela propagates spiritual knowledge, devotional rasa, and human values through Lord Krishna's leela.

Amidst erosion and other social challenges, the people of Majuli are determined to protect this invaluable cultural heritage. The light of this festival will illuminate Majuli's cultural sky forever and inspire every Assamese to take pride in their heritage. Thus, Majuli's Ras is the epic narrative of Assamese culture, whose description will continue for ages.

# India's maritime moment: Vision to Global leadership

By: Kishore Upadhyay

Across the vast oceans runs the current of India's economic vitality. Nearly 95 percent of the nation's trade by volume and around 70 percent by value still flows through its maritime routes — a testament to the sea's enduring role as the lifeblood of India's commerce. From crude oil and coal to textiles, electronics, and agricultural produce, the arteries of global trade pulse through India's ports, connecting the subcontinent to markets across continents.

As globalisation deepens interdependence and India rises as a manufacturing and energy hub, the performance of its maritime infrastructure directly shapes its competitiveness in the world economy. Recognising this, India has set its course toward a bold maritime transformation — a journey that blends economic ambition with strategic foresight, sustainability, and technological innovation.

Maritime India Vision 2030: Charting the Course Ahead

In 2021, India launched the Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030, a future-oriented blueprint aimed at positioning the country as a global maritime powerhouse. Anchored on more than 150 strategic initiatives, the Vision unites port modernisation, shipping expansion, inland waterway development, and green innovation within a single integrated roadmap.

The underlying idea is not merely infrastructural expansion, but transformation — an alignment of sustainability with scale, commerce with community, and growth with global leadership. The Vision sets forth targets to double port capacity, boost coastal and inland water transport, and embed green technologies into every layer of maritime operations.

**A Decade of Transformation (2014–2025): From Aspiration to Achievement**

The decade from 2014 to 2025 marks one of the most remarkable chapters in India's maritime story. Over these years, the country has moved from lagging port performance and fragmented waterways to building a cohesive, modern, and globally competitive maritime ecosystem.

**Ports: From Gateways to Growth Engines**

India's port sector has undergone a structural renaissance. Port capacity has nearly doubled — from 1,400 MMTPA to 2,762 MMTPA, powered by sustained public-private collaboration, automation, and efficiency enhancement. Cargo handling volumes surged from 972 MMT to 1,594 MMT, with major ports alone handling over 855 million tonnes in FY 2024–25, their highest ever.

The focus on operational efficiency has been transformative. The average

vessel turnaround time dropped from 93 hours to just 48 hours, while the operating ratio improved from 73% to 43%. These figures signal not only faster logistics but a culture shift in governance, digitisation, and competitiveness.

Financially, the sector's annual surplus jumped ninefold, from ₹1,026 crore to ₹9,352 crore, proving that efficiency and profitability can go hand in hand. Flagship ports such as Jawaharlal Nehru Port, Kandla, and Vizhinjam have become global-standard facilities, featuring green hydrogen bunkering, AI-based traffic systems, and digitised cargo management.

India's ports are no longer peripheral gateways — they are becoming anchors of industrial ecosystems and hubs of global trade that extend India's economic reach from the Arabian Sea to the Indo-Pacific.

**Shipping: Expanding India's Oceanic Footprint**

The merchant fleet — once modest in scale — has grown steadily, reflecting confidence in the sector's reforms. The number of Indian-flagged vessels increased from 1,205 to 1,549, and gross tonnage expanded from 10 million to 13.52 MGT.

More importantly, coastal shipping — long underutilised — has emerged as a cost-effective, low-emission alternative to road transport. Coastal cargo movement nearly doubled, from 87 MMT to 165 MMT, spurred by incentives, improved port connectivity, and simplified regulations.

India has also become a global powerhouse in maritime human resources. The number of Indian seafarers has grown from 1.25 lakh to over 3 lakh, making India one of the top three suppliers of trained seafarers in the world. Today, roughly 12 percent of the global seafaring workforce is Indian — a testament to the country's maritime education reforms, simulation-based training, and the rise of world-class academies under the DG Shipping framework.

**Inland Waterways: Reviving the Nation's Liquid Highways**

Equally impressive is India's revival of its inland waterways — the "liquid highways" that had long lain underdeveloped. Between 2014 and 2025, cargo movement on inland waterways skyrocketed from 18 MMT to 146 MMT, representing an astonishing 710 percent growth.

The number of operational National Waterways expanded from 3 to 29, enabling cheaper, greener cargo transport across major river systems. The Haldia Multi-Modal Terminal in West Bengal exemplifies this integrated approach. Built with World Bank support and operated through a public-private partnership, it links waterways with rail and road, creating a seamless multimodal lo-

gistics chain.

Meanwhile, ferry and Ro-Pax services have carried over 7.5 crore passengers in 2024–25, connecting remote island and riverine communities to economic hubs — transforming not only logistics but lives.

**Financing the Waves: Investment and Innovation**

Transforming the maritime sector requires financial depth and institutional innovation. Under MIV 2030, ₹3–3.5 lakh crore of investment has been planned across ports, shipping, and waterways.

A recent ₹69,725 crore package for shipbuilding and maritime ecosystem development has become the cornerstone of this mobilisation. Key initiatives include:

- Maritime Development Fund (MDF) — a ₹25,000 crore long-term financing mechanism for shipbuilding, port modernisation, and fleet expansion.

- Shipbuilding Financial Assistance Scheme (SBFAS) — ₹24,736 crore to offset domestic cost disadvantages and promote ship recycling.

- Shipbuilding Development Scheme (SbDS) — ₹19,989 crore for greenfield clusters, capacity expansion, and risk mitigation.

- The Indian Ship Technology Centre (ISTC) in Visakhapatnam — a ₹305 crore project — will act as a national R&D and design hub, fostering indigenous innovation and advanced ship engineering.

- In Northeast India, over ₹1,000 crore is being invested in inland waterway infrastructure. Two luxury cruise ships worth ₹250 crore are under construction at Hooghly Cochin Shipyard, aimed at boosting tourism and trade on the Brahmaputra, a flagship project under Cruise Bharat Mission.

**Sagarmala: The Engine of the Blue Economy**

The Sagarmala Programme is the beating heart of India's maritime revolution. As a pillar of both MIV 2030 and the Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, it integrates port-led development with coastal employment and industrialisation.

Under Sagarmala, 840 projects worth ₹5.8 lakh crore are planned through 2035. Of these, 272 projects worth ₹1.41 lakh crore are complete, and 217 worth ₹1.65 lakh crore are under active implementation. These projects aim to cut logistics costs, develop coastal economic zones, and strengthen global connectivity.

Major undertakings include the Vadnavan deep-water port in Maharashtra (₹76,000 crore), the Bahuda Greenfield Port in Odisha, and the Great Nicobar Transshipment Terminal — all crucial for India's strategic depth and Indo-Pacific presence.

**India Maritime Week 2025: Showcasing Maritime Ambition**

India's maritime ascent took centre



stage at India Maritime Week (IMW) 2025, held in Mumbai from October 27–31, 2025. With the theme "Maritime Ambition in Motion," the event convened over 100 countries, 500 exhibitors, and 100,000 delegates, making it one of the world's largest maritime gatherings.

The event led to the signing of 27 MoUs worth ₹66,000 crore, expected to generate 1.5 lakh jobs across sectors like shipbuilding, port infrastructure, green shipping, and maritime finance.

**Highlights included:**

- The Bahuda Port announcement (150 MTPA capacity).

- The Water Metro Project in Patna using electric ferries.

- A joint venture between the Shipping Corporation of India and oil PSUs to reduce dependence on foreign vessels.

IMW 2025 thus became not just an exhibition, but a living testament to India's maritime momentum — where policy met investment, and ambition turned into action.

**Green Maritime: The Path to Sustainability**

At the heart of India's maritime future lies a commitment to sustainability. During Green Maritime Day at IMW 2025, India reaffirmed its pledge to reduce carbon emissions per ton of cargo by 30% by 2030, and 70% by 2047, in line with the Net Zero by 2070 target.

Programmes like Harit Sagar Guidelines, the Green Port Framework, and the National Green Hydrogen Mission are ensuring that ports evolve into smart, carbon-neutral ecosystems. Ports such as VOC, Paradip, and Deendayal are being developed as green hydrogen hubs, anchoring a new clean-fuel economy.

India is also pioneering Green and Digital Shipping Corridors (GDSCs) with Singapore and Rotterdam — establishing zero-emission trade routes that symbolise the future of global shipping.

Ports like JNPA have introduced electric trucks, shore power systems, and

battery-operated cargo handling, cutting emissions and improving operational efficiency. These steps firmly place India among the world's leaders in sustainable maritime development.

**Defence Shipbuilding: Public-Private Synergy**

A historic milestone in 2025 was the partnership between Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. and Swan Defence & Heavy Industries Ltd. for the construction of Landing Platform Docks (LPDs) for the Indian Navy — marking India's first major public-private defence shipbuilding collaboration.

This synergy represents a paradigm shift: leveraging public-sector expertise alongside private-sector agility. Supported by an overall ₹70,000 crore shipyard modernisation drive, India is now emerging as a hub for both commercial and defence shipbuilding.

The Cochin Shipyard is constructing India's largest dry dock, worth \$200 million, expanding repair and refit capacity for global clients. Meanwhile, the National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal, Gujarat, celebrates India's 5,000-year-old maritime tradition — from Harappan trade to modern sea power — symbolising continuity between past and future.

**Blue Economy and Global Partnerships**

The Blue Economy — a model that aligns ocean health with sustainable growth — lies at the philosophical core of India's maritime vision. The government's Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 envisions nearly ₹80 lakh crore in long-term investments in ports, green fuel, and digital logistics, positioning India among the top five shipbuilding powers by its centenary of independence.

India's maritime diplomacy has expanded through initiatives like MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), strengthening cooperation among Indo-Pacific and Global

South nations. Strategic connectivity projects such as the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor, the Eastern Maritime Corridor, and the North–South Transport Corridor are redrawing global trade routes — placing India at the crossroads of Europe, Africa, and East Asia.

**Ports as Engines of Transformation**

Modern Indian ports are no longer just docking points — they are engines of regional growth. With automation, AI-driven logistics, and blockchain-enabled tracking, India is building smart ports that improve efficiency and transparency.

The "One Nation, One Port Process" initiative has unified port operations across the country through digitisation and standardised procedures. As a result, average container dwell time has dropped below three days, outperforming many developed economies.

Such progress has catapulted India up the World Bank Logistics Performance Index, showcasing how digitalisation and innovation can reshape national competitiveness.

**Maritime States: Anchors of Regional Prosperity**

India's 13 coastal states and Union Territories, spanning over 11,000 km of coastline and a 23.7 lakh sq. km Exclusive Economic Zone, form the backbone of its maritime development. Together, they contribute nearly 60 percent of India's GDP, sustaining over 800 million people whose livelihoods are tied to the sea.

At IMW 2025, states like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh highlighted opportunities in shipbuilding, fisheries, and coastal tourism — proving that decentralised maritime growth ensures balanced regional development and inclusive prosperity.

**Sailing into the Future: From Vision to Voyage**

India's maritime transformation is not merely infrastructural — it is civilisation. From the ancient dockyards of Lothal to the green hydrogen ports of today, the nation's relationship with the sea has come full circle. The ocean, once a boundary, is again becoming a gateway to opportunity.

With Maritime India Vision 2030 as its compass and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 as its horizon, India is turning its 7,500-kilometre coastline into a canvas of prosperity. Green ports, clean fuels, autonomous vessels, cruise tourism, and smart logistics are reshaping a maritime narrative rooted in innovation and inclusion.

As the world seeks resilient supply chains and sustainable growth models, India's maritime sector stands ready not only to advance national interests but to help steer the global trade system toward balance, inclusivity, and sustainability.

## The end of a 52-Year wait India's daughters become WC Champions



By: Ajay Kumar

That evening in Navi Mumbai will forever be remembered. November 2, 2025 the date when India's women's cricket team crowned themselves world champions for the very first time. This victory was not just the result of a match; it marked the end of a 52-year-long wait. It was the story of faith and determination that India's daughters turned into reality through their hard work, courage, and resilience. The final match at the D.Y. Patil Stadium was tied to the heartbeat of the entire nation. Team India's captain, Harmanpreet Kaur, won the toss and chose to bat first. When the early wickets fell, a wave of worry spread through the stadium. But then, Shafali Verma and Deepti Sharma took charge. Shafali batted with visible confidence, scoring 87 runs to put India in a strong position. Deepti Sharma added a composed 58 runs and later showcased her brilliance with the ball. India posted a total of 298 runs for 7 wickets in their 50 overs.

The target was not small, but South Africa too had big ambitions. Their opener, Laura Wolvaardt, struck a brilliant half-century, and for a moment, Indian supporters fell silent. But Renuka Singh and Poonam Yadav turned the game around. Deepti Sharma's spectacular bowling performance claiming 5 wickets sealed the fate of the match, as South Africa were bowled out for 246. The moment the last wicket fell, the entire stadium was drenched in the colors of the Indian tricolor. India won by 52 runs a symbolic number representing the 52 years of waiting that had finally come to an end. What happened on that field was not just a sporting victory; it was a moment that changed history. When Harmanpreet Kaur lifted the trophy, her tears reflected not just joy but also the weight of all those years when Indian women's cricket was neglected when they had no proper grounds to practice, limited facilities, and endless questions to face. Today, those questions were answered with the tricolor waving proudly in the sky.

This triumph also belongs to the greats who paved the way for this day Diana Edulji, Mithali

Raj, Jhulan Goswami, and Anjum Chopra who planted the seeds that have now borne fruit. Their struggles became the path for future generations, and now that path has become wider and brighter.

The entire nation erupted in celebration after this win. Streets were filled with parades, fireworks lit up the sky, and social media echoed with the names of India's daughters. People compared this moment to the 1983 men's World Cup win, when Kapil Dev's team ignited India's cricketing dream. Now, Harmanpreet's team has taken that dream to new heights. Following this historic victory, the Indian Cricket Board announced record-breaking rewards for the players, and the government too declared honors for them. The Prime Minister called it a symbol of the strength of India's daughters and said that it would inspire generations to come.

This win is not just about a trophy it's a victory for a change in mindset. Now no one can say that girls can't play cricket. Parents will now see in their daughters the spark of Shafali, the patience of Deepti, the leadership of Harman, and the confidence of Smriti Mandhana. Sports facilities in schools and small towns will grow, and cricket will no longer be seen as just a man's game it will belong to everyone.

Fifty-two years of waiting, half a century of struggle, and finally this golden dawn. India's daughters have shown that dreams come true only when one refuses to give up. Today, when a young girl picks up a bat, the hopes of an entire nation rise with her. When a father drops his daughter at the cricket field, pride fills his heart. This victory is a torch for the future one that will reach every street, every school, and every family.

Now India's name is etched in the list of Women's World Cup champions, and that recognition stands not only for sport but for an idea that given the chance, India's daughters can reach any height. They have written history and given future generations the confidence that if you have the courage, even a 52-year wait can come to an end. This is not just a victory on the field; it is the triumph of every girl who ever said, "I will play and I will win."

## When the Bansuri Wept Dipak Sarma's Journey from Panigaon to Eternity

By: Dipak Kurni

The dawn of November 3rd, 2025, brought with it a profound silence to the world of Indian classical music. At precisely 6:15 in the morning, the melodious notes that had once flowed from the flute of Dipak Sarma fell silent forever in a hospital room in Chennai. The internationally acclaimed flautist, who had traveled to the southern metropolis seeking advanced medical intervention for his deteriorating health, succumbed to chronic liver disease at the age of 57. His passing has left an irreplaceable void in Assam's vibrant cultural tapestry and sent ripples of grief across the global music community that had long celebrated his artistry.

Born on August 23, 1968, in the modest village of Panigaon in Nalbari district, Dipak Sarma's journey from the rustic landscapes of rural Assam to the glittering stages of international concert halls epitomizes the transformative power of dedication and talent. A resident of Ambikagiri Nagar in Guwahati, Sarma had been battling the ravages of chronic liver disease for several years, a struggle that saw him receiving treatment at Nmcare Hospital in Guwahati before his final journey to Chennai. Despite the physical toll of his illness, the maestro's spirit remained indomitable, and his commitment to his craft never wavered—a testament to the depth of his passion for music.

Sarma's musical lineage traces back to one of the most revered traditions in Indian classical music. As a devoted disciple of the legendary Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia, he inherited not merely technical proficiency but the soul of classical flute playing. Under the tutelage of this living legend, Sarma refined his technique and developed a distinctive voice that could make his instrument sing with both the gravitas of ancient ragas and the accessibility of contemporary melodies. He carried forward his guru's legacy with extraordinary grace and devotion, becoming a torchbearer for the North Indian classical tradition in the northeastern region of India. His command over the bansuri was nothing short of magical—each note he produced seemed to carry within it the whispers of Assamese rivers, the rustle of tea gardens, and the timeless wisdom of classical music.

Throughout his illustrious career spanning several decades, Sarma established himself as a bridge between tradition and modernity, between regional identity and global appeal. His collaborations read like a who's who of Assamese cultural royalty. He worked exten-

sively with Dr. Bhupen Hazarika, the legendary singer-composer whose songs became the voice of Assamese identity and whose music spoke of rivers, humanity, and social justice. This partnership allowed Sarma to infuse classical sensibilities into folk and popular music, creating a synthesis that resonated deeply with audiences. His association with contemporary music icon Zubeen Garg further demonstrated his versatility and willingness to experiment across genres. These collaborations were not merely professional arrangements but artistic dialogues that enriched Assam's musical heritage and demonstrated Sarma's ability to adapt his classical training to diverse musical contexts.

Beyond the concert stage, Sarma made significant contributions to Assamese cinema as a music director. His film credits include notable works such as "Jonky Pano" and "Jatinga Ityadi," where his compositions added emotional depth and cultural authenticity to the narratives. At the time of his passing, he was engaged in composing for "Luitak Vetibo Kunc," a project that will now stand as a poignant reminder of his unfinished symphony. His approach to film music was distinctive—rather than overwhelming the visual narrative, his compositions complemented and elevated it, using the flute's ethereal quality to evoke emotions that words alone could not capture.

Sarma's discography reflects his artistic range and ambition. His album "Story of Love," released by Raaga and Rocks International Company Ltd., showcased his ability to blend Indian classical music with contemporary sounds, creating something that honored tradition while speaking to modern sensibilities. "Beyond the Horizon" further demonstrated his experimental spirit, pushing the boundaries of what could be achieved with the flute as both a classical and fusion instrument. These recordings remain as lasting testimonies to his creative vision and technical mastery.

His talents extended beyond regional boundaries into the realm of national television. Sarma composed music for the serials "Karm" and "Wazir," both broadcast on Zee TV, bringing his unique musical perspective to millions of households across India. His participation in an instrumental jugalbandi for "Kaleidoscope" on Star Plus, where he performed alongside western instruments in a fusion of classical and contemporary styles, highlighted his versatility and openness to musical dialogue across traditions. He also contributed to the background score of this popular program,

his flute adding layers of texture and emotion to the visual storytelling.

The recognition Sarma received throughout his career reflects the profound impact he had on the musical landscape. In 2006, he was honored with the Best Musician of the Year award by N.E.T.V. Private Channel, an acknowledgment of his growing stature in the regional music scene. The following year, 2007, proved particularly fruitful as he received both the Sangeet Prabha Award and the Assam Sports Cultural Jury Award, cementing his position as one of the state's foremost musicians. In 2008, he was honored with the Jams of Assam award, and later received the Azim Hazarika Award from the Sivasagar Press Club, recognizing not just his artistic excellence but his contribution to preserving and promoting Assamese cultural identity through music.

The news of Sarma's demise has cast a deep pall of sorrow across Assam's cultural fraternity and beyond. His passing comes as a particularly cruel blow to a state still reeling from other losses in its artistic community. The parallel drawn to the untimely demise of Zubeen Garg underscores the fragility of artistic life and the void that such losses create in regional cultural landscapes. These are not merely individual tragedies but collective losses for a society that derives its identity and cohesion from its cultural expressions.

Dipak Sarma's legacy transcends the notes he played and the awards he received. He represented a generation of artists who remained rooted in their regional identity while achieving international acclaim, who honored classical traditions while embracing contemporary innovations. His melodies transcended linguistic and geographical boundaries, speaking a universal language of beauty and emotion. In his hands, the flute became more than an instrument—it became a voice for Assamese aspirations, a bridge between past and present, and a testament to the enduring power of artistic dedication. As Assam mourns the loss of this musical gem, the silence left by his passing resonates louder than any note he ever played. The challenge now falls to the next generation of musicians to fill this void, to carry forward the traditions he cherished and the innovations he championed. Dipak Sarma's journey from a village in Nalbari to the concert halls of the world reminds us that true artistry knows no boundaries—it flows like the music from his flute, eternal and transcendent, leaving echoes that will resonate for generations to come. (the writer can be reached at [dipakkurni@gmail.com](mailto:dipakkurni@gmail.com))

# 'Haryana polls 'stolen' with 25 lakh fake entries, EC colluded with BJP'

## 'Vote chori' system evolved by PM, EC; will be deployed in Bihar too: Rahul

**NEW DELHI, Nov 5:** Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday claimed that a "systematic vote chori" method, evolved by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Election Commission to "kill Indian democracy", will be deployed in the Bihar assembly polls as well.

A day before the polling for the first phase of the Bihar assembly polls, the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha made the remarks at a press conference during which he put up a presentation to back his claim that the Haryana assembly polls last year were "stolen".

"It is very clear to us that who is responsible for the vote theft. (Pointing to a picture of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and the two election commissioners, Gandhi said). These gentlemen colluded with the BJP to ensure that the Congress could not win the election in Haryana. The Election Commission is in a partnership with the prime minister and the home minister (Amit Shah) and they have destroyed the democratic foundations of this country," Gandhi alleged.

"It is pretty clear to us that now this is a system, this is something that has now been industrialised and it can be used in any state and it is going to be used in Bihar. I am confident that after the Bihar elections, we will get the same records and we will show you that the same thing has happened in Bihar," the former Congress chief said.

Responding to Gandhi's vote manipulation charge, EC officials said it is "unfounded" as no appeals were filed against the electoral rolls in Haryana.

In his presser, Gandhi said political parties cannot work to foil "vote chori" designs as voters list comes at the last minute before the elections.

"This is the systematic method that has

been evolved by the prime minister, the BJP and the Election Commission to kill the Constitution and to kill Indian democracy," he said.

Gandhi also called on stage some people from a Bihar village whose names have been deleted in the special intensive revision of electoral rolls.

One of the people whose name had been deleted from the electoral roll claimed that the names of 187 people in his village had been removed, the Congress leader said.

"This is the tip of the iceberg, we are absolutely certain, we will be able to do the same presentation for you once the data comes (for Bihar polls). We have no doubt... This is the state of Indian democracy," Gandhi said. Responding to a question, he also said voters list integrity is not the responsibility of any political party, but that of the EC.

"What the Election Commission does is that it tries to put the onus on the political parties to solve the problem. We cannot solve the problem. If you give us the data we will solve the problem but we cannot solve the problem unless they give us the database," he said.

In September, Gandhi had accused CEC Kumar of protecting those who "destroyed democracy" and cited data from the Aland assembly constituency in Karnataka to claim that votes of Congress supporters were being systematically deleted ahead of elections.

In August, Gandhi, citing data from the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, had claimed that over one lakh votes were "stolen" through manipulation in Mahadevapura assembly segment in Karnataka.

The Bihar polls will be held in two phases on November 6 and 11, and results will be announced on November 14.

The opposition INDIA bloc, which has



the RJD, the Congress and the Left parties as the main constituents, has declared RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav its chief ministerial candidate.

Meanwhile, the 2024 Haryana assembly polls were "stolen", Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged on Wednesday, citing electoral roll data to claim that 25 lakh entries were fake and the Election Commission colluded with the BJP to ensure its victory.

The 'centralised plan' included a Brazilian model whose photograph was used 22 times in 10 booths in the Rai assembly constituency using names such as "Seema, Sweety and Saraswati" for her, the former Congress president said at a press conference during which he put up a presentation "The H-files" to back his claim. The BJP dismissed the allegation of mass vote theft as "false and baseless" and accused the Congress leader of raising questions on the Election Commission to hide his failures and defame the country's democracy.

If there is any irregularity with the voting, then one must flag it with the EC

or approach the court, said BJP's Kiren Rijju. "But he never does it," the minister said. Election Commission officials also trashed the allegation as unfounded, saying no appeals were filed against the electoral rolls in Haryana.

According to Gandhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini are "not legitimately in government". "The message is that the Gen Z and youth have the power to restore our democracy with satya and ahimsa. Peacefully, but by expressing their desire for a democratic India, by fighting for a democratic India and by resisting this wholesale theft of democracy and murder of the Constitution and democracy," he said while addressing the media at Indira Bhawan.

Training his guns on the Election Commission, Gandhi alleged that it "colluded" with the prime minister and the BJP to launch "Operation Sarkar Chori" to convert the Congress' landslide victory in the state into a loss in 2024. The Leader of Opposition in Lok

Sabha said he is questioning the Election Commission and the democratic process in the country and is doing so with 100 per cent proof.

Gandhi alleged that Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar and the two election commissioners colluded with the BJP to destroy democratic foundations and to ensure the ruling party's victory in Haryana.

He cited the electoral list of Haryana to claim that 25,41,144 were fake voters with 5,21,619 duplicate voters, 93,174 invalid addresses and 19,26,351 bulk voters. "One in eight voters in Haryana are fake and despite that the Congress loses by 22,779 votes which was the difference in eight seats," Gandhi said, adding that 1,24,177 fake pictures of voters were used.

"The big picture is that 22,000 is the margin and 25 lakh is this... You can understand that there was no election in Haryana. There was a theft (of elections) in Haryana and it is very clear who is responsible for the theft."

The Congress leader also alleged that the CEC lied to the people of India when he stated that "house number zero" is given to homeless people.

CEC Kumar had said crores of people have 'zero number' in their house addresses because the panchayat or the municipality has not given the number to the house. "Why is the Election Commission not removing duplicates? It is because if it does so, it would result in fair elections and it doesn't want fair elections," Gandhi alleged.

Gandhi claimed that thousands of people associated with the BJP voted both in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.

Showing the photograph of the woman he claimed was a Brazilian model, he said she is "one of 25 lakh

such records in Haryana which is proof of a centralised operation".

According to Gandhi, "Sarkar Chori" has destroyed India's democracy and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) issue is the latest weapon.

This system of "vote chori" is now being implemented in Bihar and it is being industrialised, he said a day ahead of the first phase of Bihar polls.

"It is going to be used in Bihar and I am confident that after Bihar elections, we will get the same records and will show that the same thing has happened in Bihar. Gandhi said his party will coordinate with opposition parties against SIR, but alleged that democracy in the country has been murdered.

"Every single opposition party understands this, they can see this... If the voter list is a lie, there is no democracy. My role as an opposition leader is to let you know the real world that you are living in," he said.

"How the opposition proceeds... we will coordinate and we will work together, but the fundamental thing that the youth of India and the people of India have to understand is there was no election in Haryana. It was a lie and we have proved it."

Asked about moving the courts, he said, "The Supreme Court, the highest court in the country, is watching... it is not hidden." Gandhi also played out a video of now Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini saying two days before counting that the BJP would win and also making this statement - "We have a system in place". "We suspected, once we did Mahadevapura and Aland (in Karnataka), that this is not happening in just one constituency but this is being done at the state and national level," Gandhi said. (PTI)

## SC asks ED to trace, secure absconding Mahadev betting app accused

**NEW DELHI, Nov 5:** The Supreme Court has directed the Enforcement Directorate to trace and secure the absconding Mahadev betting app co-founder, who has fled from Dubai to an undisclosed location, saying the white-collar crime accused cannot be allowed to treat courts and probe agencies as "instruments to play around with".

A bench of Justices MM Sundresh and Satish Chandra Sharma took serious note of the accused Ravi Uppal evading the law enforcement agencies and said, "This shocks our conscience and the court has to do something about it." Uppal, who is evading law enforcement agencies in India, has reportedly fled Dubai, where he was under surveillance, to an undisclosed location forcing the UAE authorities to initiate steps for closure of his extradition proceedings. "For kingpins like him, the courts and investigating agencies are mere instruments to play around with. We have to do something about it," the bench said, asking the ED to trace and secure him.

"We will dismiss his petition. Find out how to secure him. He seems to be quite resourceful flying from one place to the other," the court said on Tuesday. The top court was hearing a plea of Uppal in which he has challenged the Chhattisgarh High Court order of March 22 directing him to join the trial in the money laundering case pending before a Raipur trial court.

Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED,

informed the court that Uppal seems to have escaped from Dubai, where he was detained in 2023. Raju said the accused, who are involved in financial crimes often try to flee to locations where there are no extradition treaties with India like the country has with the United Arab Emirates.

"You can be extradited from the UAE as India has an extradition treaty with them. So, he may have gone to locations like the British Virgin Islands as India does not have an extradition treaty with that country," he submitted. The bench, which posted the matter for further hearing on November 14, as his lawyer sought time, asked the counsel to convince Uppal to return to India and face the proceedings. Justice Sundresh said, "He cannot keep running all the time. He has to participate in this process. In matters of granting bail, we are liberal. We will consider his bail application at the appropriate stage." The bench told Raju to examine whether the recent verdict of the apex court that allows probe agencies to summon lawyers representing the accused under exceptional circumstances, can be used to get details of those absconding the law. The top court told Uppal's lawyer that no more adjournment shall be granted in the matter. Uppal was detained in Dubai in December 2023 due to an Interpol red notice and the ED, which is probing the Mahadev betting app case, then initiated the extradition proceedings by writing to the UAE authorities in 2024. (PTI)

## Rahul trying to create anarchy by demanding reservations in defence forces: Rajnath



**JAMUI/GAYAJI, Nov 5:** Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday alleged that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was "trying to create anarchy" in the country by "demanding reservation in the armed forces".

Singh also took a jibe at Gandhi, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha, over his recent fishing bid during a poll campaign in Bihar, alleging that the Congress leader has "no option left but to jump into a pond".

He also slammed Gandhi for levelling the 'vote chori' allegation against the Election Commission, claiming that the Congress MP is "targeting constitutional bodies without any basis".

Addressing a public rally in Bihar's Jamui district, Singh said, "What happened to Rahul ji? He is raising the issue of reservations in the defence forces. He is simply trying to create anarchy in the

country by demanding reservation in the defence forces... our forces are above all these." The BJP leader also claimed that Gandhi should know that "running the country is not a game for children". The defence minister hailed the armed forces for their success in Operation Sindoor, a retaliatory strike following the Pahalgam terror attack that claimed the lives of 26 people in April.

"Operation Sindoor has been halted, not stopped. If terrorists attempt to attack India again, we will retaliate strongly," Singh said.

"India does not provoke anyone, but if anyone provokes us, we will not spare them," he said.

During his address at Gayaji rally, the defence minister claimed, "Rahul Gandhi is targeting constitutional bodies, like the Election Commission, without any basis. He knows his party's defeat is certain."

His comment comes hours after Gandhi alleged that the Haryana assembly polls last year were "stolen", and cited electoral list data to claim that "25 lakh entries were fake and the Election Commission colluded with the BJP to make the party win".

Earlier in the day, addressing another rally in Banka, Singh said there was "not a single corruption case against Bihar CM Nitish Kumar".

"There is a clear wave in favour of the NDA and the ruling alliance will form the next government in the state with a two-thirds majority," he asserted. Singh accused the RJD of threatening people during its rule in the state.

"We talk about development, but RJD tells people about 'katta' (unlicensed country-made handgun). The RJD leaders are shameless, indulge in corruption, and are now seeking your support during the polls," Singh alleged at the Jamui rally.

The BJP leader also alleged that the Congress had "never wanted better roads in border areas".

Singh claimed that the NDA never creates discrimination among people on the basis of caste, creed and religion, and the alliance can only work for 'Vikshit Bihar'.

He also alleged, "RJD leaders used to threaten people and had never worked for Bihar's development." "We keep telling people. We remain committed to our promises. 'Pran jaye par vachan na jaye'. We do not go back on what we promise, he said. (PTI)

## NDA wants to form govt in Bihar through 'vote chori': Priyanka

**BETTIAH (BIHAR), Nov 5:** Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Wednesday alleged that the NDA wants to form the government in Bihar through 'vote chori' and claimed that the names of 65 lakh people, including women, have been deleted from the electoral rolls through SIR.

She alleged that the "NDA is indulging in vote theft" because it is aware of the fact that "the people are fed up with its 20-year rule".

Addressing back-to-back rallies in Valmiki Nagar and Chhanpata in West Champaran district, the Congress general secretary claimed that the current situation in the country is akin to the British Raj, and raised suspicion whether the country would continue to witness elections in the future. "My brother Rahul today gave an account of 'vote theft' in Haryana," she said, alluding to the allegations of the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha of widespread and systematic irregularities in assembly elections in the northern state in 2024 when Congress faced a defeat against the BJP.

"NDA will destroy everything... It is not clear whether there will be elections in the future... Why are you silent? Chase them out of power," Vadra told people attending the rally.

Attacking Prime Minister Narendra Modi, she said that he seems to be more concerned about the absence of RJD leader and INDIA bloc's CM candidate Tejashwi Yadav's photograph from a

Congress poster than controlling crime and corruption, and educating the youth.

"Whereas, Modi himself does not keep Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar alongside him on stages of political rallies," she claimed.

NDA seems to be more concerned about the future of Rahul Gandhi and Tejashwi Yadav than that of Bihar's youth, Vadra quipped.

The Congress leader said that people of Bihar will receive free treatment of up to Rs 25 lakh if the INDIA bloc is voted to power. "We will try our best to give at least one government job per poor family... We will fill up lakhs of vacancies in various departments," she said.

Vadra claimed that all factories were being set up in Gujarat, the home state of Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and attacked the NDA, saying, "Try to understand their intentions... Those who hand over land and resources to corporates will never work for the poor."

She alleged that the "Modi government works for Ambani and Adani for five years" and comes back to people during elections. "She alleged that farmers of Bihar were unable to increase their income due to taxes and high input cost in agriculture.

"Under 'Modi Empire', farmers don't get MSP and they spend their entire lives repaying loans while the liabilities of a few businessmen are waived off," she alleged. (PTI)

## Rahul's claims on vote manipulation in Haryana unfounded: EC officials

**NEW DELHI, Nov 5:** Rahul Gandhi's vote manipulation charge is "unfounded" as no appeals were filed against the electoral rolls in Haryana, Election Commission officials said on Wednesday.

The poll body officials were reacting to Gandhi's claim that 25 lakh entries were "fake" and that the Haryana assembly polls last year were "stolen".

Poll body officials also questioned why Congress' booth agents did not flag voters who had cast vote multiple times in the Haryana assembly elections in October 2024.

"Why were no claims and objections raised by INC's Booth Level Agents during revision to avoid multiple names?" an official said countering Gandhi's allegation.

Booth-level agents or BLAs are appointed by political parties to flag irregularities, if any, in electoral rolls.

Further hitting out at Gandhi, EC officials underlined that "zero appeals" were filed against electoral rolls and only 22 election petitions were currently pending in the Punjab and Haryana High Court. An election petition can be filed within 45 days of the announcement of results in the high court of that state.

"What were the polling agents of INC doing in the polling stations? They are supposed to object if the elector has already voted or if the polling agents doubt the identity of the elector," the official said.

Referring to EC's efforts to clean up the voters' list across states, officials wondered whether Gandhi is supporting the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) which removes duplicate, dead and shifted voters along with verification of citizenship.



"Or is he opposing SIR," an official asked. "Why were no claims and objections raised by INC's BLAs during revision to avoid multiple names in Bihar. Why were no claims and objections raised by INC's BLAs during revision to avoid multiple names in Haryana," the official quipped.

The BJP won 48 seats in the 2024 Haryana assembly polls. The Congress, which was predicted to win by many exit polls, won 37 seats. The INLD won two seats while independent candidates bagged three in the 90-member Assembly.

On the issue of zero house number, they said 'House Number Zero' is also for houses where Panchayat and Municipalities have not given house numbers. House Number zero has been given by booth-level officers where no house number is allotted by municipalities/panchayats. (PTI)

## Govt introduces surveillance mechanism, training modules for chemical emergencies

**NEW DELHI, Nov 5:** The Centre has introduced training modules for public health professionals to enhance their preparedness for rapid response to chemical hazards, aided by a surveillance mechanism for early warning, assessment and mitigation of health risks due to chemical exposure.

Three specialised training modules have been developed by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) under the Health Ministry in partnership with NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority), with technical support from the WHO India.

From early detection to onsite response and timely medical help, these modules work in cohesion, developing a framework that tackles all-round chemical emergency management. The three modules are: preparedness, surveillance, and response for public health management of chemical emergencies; pre-hospital management of chemical emergencies and medical management of chemical emergencies.

According to the plan, each district should form a Chemical Emergency Rapid Response Team (RRT). This team will include



members from the health department, police, fire services, disaster management units, ambulance services, and paramedical staff.

They will receive technical training in identifying chemical hazards, using personal protective equipment (PPE), decontamination procedures, and providing chemical first aid. When necessary, the RRT will reach the incident site, move affected individuals to decontamination units, and collect chemical samples for testing and reporting. India is rapidly emerging as a major global hub for industrial and technological development. As

chemicals form an integral part of modern industrial systems, the pace of industrialisation has simultaneously heightened the risk of exposure to chemical hazards, the document said.

Uncontrolled releases of such substances can have serious implications for public health and the environment, potentially resulting in chemical emergencies. These chemical emergencies have a profound impact on human health, often resulting in casualties, long-term consequences, and damage to property and the environment. Effective management of chem-

ical emergencies can help minimise the potential damage caused by such events, the document said. Emergency planning and preparation can help identify potential hazards and develop procedures for responding to emergencies, including notification, evacuation, and communication protocols, it stated.

Surveillance is a crucial public health measure to be undertaken for raising timely alerts and early warnings. While infectious disease surveillance is well-established in India through the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), chemical surveillance remains underdeveloped, the document highlighted.

"Currently, no mechanism for medical surveillance exists for identifying or alerting to cases with plausible chemical exposure, as also highlighted in the NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority) guidelines on chemical disaster. Hence, a surveillance mechanism to generate timely early warning signals for chemical incidents was perceived by integrating it into the existing IDSP program and developing mechanisms for reporting through the IHIP portal," it said. (PTI)

## Rio calls for Naga unity to resolve common issues

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Nov 5:** Nagaland chief minister Neiphiu Rio on Wednesday called for unity among the Nagas to resolve common issues facing them, including the Indo-Naga issue.

"Unity has always been and must continue to be our greatest strength. Our collective hopes and dreams as Nagas must be guided by this spirit of togetherness," he said, addressing the golden jubilee celebration of the Tenyimi Union Dimapur at Dimapur district sports complex stadium as its host.

Rio made a fervent appeal to all sections of the Naga society to move forward with determination, conviction, and compassion, toward reconciliation, unity, and oneness.

He pointed out that the Naga issue had been historically recognised - first by the British through the implementation of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation of 1873, and later by the Government of India through the inclusion of Article 371(A) in the Indian Constitution.



Stating that these acknowledgements affirm the distinct identity, culture, and traditions of the Nagas, he said: "Whether within the Indian Union or beyond, we must con-

tinue to recognise and uphold who we are as a people - proud of our roots, steadfast in our values, and united in our purpose."

He emphasised that the Naga brothers and

sisters anywhere must strive to resolve the common issues "among ourselves" and with others through dialogue, understanding, and unity.

Rio observed that the Naga society today is a more educated and enlightened society, shaped by the coming of Christianity and guided by the principles of good governance and the rule of law.

"Let us remember that individualism, clanism, and tribalism should never stand in the way of our shared aspirations. Nagaism, which is the spirit of unity, integrity, and mutual respect, must remain our benchmark," he said.

On the protection of indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland through the inner line permit (ILP) system, Rio emphasised that the effective implementation of the ILP regime cannot depend on the government alone.

He added that the success of this measure requires the active cooperation of the civil society organisations, community leaders, and every vigilant citizen.

## Pradyot slams BJP Govt for delays in Tiprasa Accord, VC polls

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Nov 5:** Tipra Motha chief Pradyot Kishore Debbarma on Wednesday reiterated that the welfare and future of Tripura's indigenous community stand above political affiliations and personal interests.

He launched a strong attack on the BJP-led state government for delaying the implementation of the Tiprasa Accord and the long-pending Village Committee (VC) elections.

Speaking to reporters after arriving in Agartala from New Delhi — where he attended the launch of One North East, a unified platform of indigenous political groups from the region — Pradyot said the initiative transcends party lines and seeks to ensure a stronger future for the tribal population of the Northeast.

"For me, what matters most is the welfare and dignity of our tribal people — not the party, brand, or even Bubagra," he said, underscoring his priority of community welfare over political identity.

The Tipra Motha chief accused the Tripura BJP of intentionally delaying the VC elections, which have not been held in over nine

years. He said he was compelled to approach the Supreme Court to seek justice.

"I had no choice but to move the apex court. The matter is likely to be heard on Monday, and only after that did the state government express willingness to conduct the elections," he added.

Pradyot also expressed frustration over the delay in implementing the Tiprasa Accord, signed nearly two years ago. He alleged that some sections within the BJP leadership in Tripura are reluctant to act on the agreed terms. However, he noted that Chief Minister Dr. Manik Saha has shown willingness to move forward.

"I have spoken with the Chief Minister, who seems positive about implementing the accord, but much depends on when the actual process begins," Pradyot said.

He further indicated that the prolonged delay in both the accord's implementation and the VC elections has widened the gap between the BJP and Tipra Motha — partners in the ruling NDA alliance in Tripura. Despite this, Pradyot reiterated his continued commitment to securing constitutional and developmental rights for the state's tribal communities.

## Tripura CM lays foundation stone for ₹ 900 crore private super-specialty hospital at RK Nagar

**AGARTALA, Nov 5:** Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Wednesday laid the foundation stone for a Rs 900 crore private super speciality hospital at RK Nagar, about 20 km from here.

Speaking at the foundation stone laying ceremony, Saha said the state government has allotted 28 acres of land for the establishment of the Shija hospital. He added that the Manipur-based Shija Hospitals group has also expressed plans to develop a medical college in Tripura.

"We look forward to providing the best possible support to investors who wish to invest in Tripura. This project will not only strengthen healthcare services but also generate significant employment opportunities for local people," the CM said. "We have ensured that only reputed institutions with proven track records are given such opportunities. A strong monitoring system is in place to ensure smooth progress of the project," he said. The CM also said that the proposed ring road around Agartala city will pass near the new hospital, improving connectivity for patients and healthcare professionals.

He further revealed that a Silchar-based group has shown interest in setting up a cancer hospital in Tripura, which the government has welcomed. Additionally, the state capital will soon witness the construction of another flyover and a 'Unity Mall' to enhance infrastructure and trade.

"Tripura is on a fast developmental track," the CM asserted, adding that during the recent business summit held in Guwahati, investors committed to investing ₹ 30,000 crore across the North Eastern region, with ₹ 15,000 crore earmarked for Tripura alone. Expressing optimism about the state's growth trajectory, Saha said, "Tripura will soon look completely transformed and emerge as a model state once the ongoing six major tourist spots are completed." (PTI)

## Nagaland Police solve murder of basketball player, prime accused victim's uncle arrested

**KOHIMA, Nov 5:** Nagaland Police has cracked the murder of 22-year-old state-level basketball player Vihozhonu Zao, whose death on October 25 shocked the state capital.

The prime accused, identified as Samuel Zao (31), the victim's adopted paternal uncle, has confessed to the crime, Kohima SP Krodhi Rhetso said during a press conference here on Wednesday.

He said Zao was arrested on Tuesday.

The incident came to light on October 25 when the body of the victim was found under suspicious circumstances outside her house in Old Minister's Hill here.

A team from South Police Station secured the scene and initiated investigation procedures, with assistance from the Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL), Dimapur, said Rhetso.

Following a complaint by another uncle of the victim, Vekethozo Zao, a case was registered at Kohima Women police station, he said.

Police constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) on October 26, headed by Additional Superintendent of Police K. Soriso. Terming it a "blind case," police said the crime scene was suspected to be a secondary site, making it difficult to establish a clear motive or sequence of events.

However, through sustained and meticulous investigation, the SIT identified the accused and brought him in for questioning.

During interrogation, Samuel Zao confessed to killing his niece in a fit of rage, police said, adding that the accused admitted that he had asked the victim to make tea around 2 pm, but she was preoccupied with her phone and responded dismissively, police said.

Enraged, he struck her on the head with a piece of firewood, causing her to collapse, Rhetso said, adding that the accused then covered the victim's head with a sweater, switched off her phone, removed the SIM card, broke the handset, and disposed of the parts in a garbage truck the next morning.

He later hid the body in his room before dumping it near a ring well in the basement of the house, Rhetso said. (PTI)

## Three-day community volunteer training begins at Tajgi, Param Putu

**HT Correspondent**

**KEYI PANYOR, Nov 5:** The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Keyi Panyor, inaugurated a three-day Community Volunteer Training Programme at Tajgi village under Param Putu circle on Wednesday, marking a significant step toward building a more disaster-resilient community in the district.

The initiative, organised under the directive of the Department of Disaster Management, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, seeks to strengthen local capacities for disaster preparedness, mitigation, and response at the grassroots level.

The programme aims to develop a cadre of 100 trained community volunteers drawn from some of the most disaster-prone villages across the district.

These volunteers will serve as first responders during emergencies, working in close coordination with the DDMA and other line departments to provide timely assistance during natural calamities such as floods, landslides, forest fires, and earthquakes.

They will also help spread awareness on risk reduction and preparedness among rural populations. The inaugural session witnessed enthusiastic participation from youth, community leaders, and local representatives from Param Putu circle. The next two phases of the training will be organised at Deed from November 10-12 and at Yazali from November 13-15, ensuring wider community coverage across Keyi Panyor district.

A key highlight of the training is the involvement of seven previously trained community volunteers, who underwent advanced training with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and are now serving as instructors.

They will lead hands-on practical sessions focusing on real-life emergency scenarios, rescue techniques, and team coordination.

Additionally, two personnel from the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) of the Re-



gional Response Centre (RRC), Ziro, are acting as resource persons, imparting expert knowledge on technical and operational aspects of disaster management.

During the training, volunteers will attend both theoretical and field-based sessions covering a wide range of topics — including the fundamentals of disaster management, community-based first aid, Basic Life Support (BLS) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), search and rescue operations, fire safety, forest fire management, rope-based rescue, and emergency evacuation procedures.

They will also learn disaster-specific safety measures relevant to the region, such as responses to earthquakes, landslides, flash floods, and lightning incidents.

In his address at the inaugural ceremony, the District Disaster Management Officer (DDMO) emphasised the importance of empowering local communities to act as the first line of defence during disasters.

"Trained volunteers are the backbone of com-

munity resilience. Their readiness, courage, and quick response can prevent loss of lives and reduce damages when disaster strikes," he said.

The DDMO also expressed gratitude to the NDRF, SDRF, and all participating institutions for their continued cooperation in strengthening disaster management infrastructure in Keyi Panyor district.

The DDMA, in its message, urged community leaders, youth organisations, and women's self-help groups to actively engage with disaster awareness programmes and contribute to building a culture of safety and preparedness.

The authority reaffirmed its commitment to conduct more such training programmes across all vulnerable areas of the district, ensuring that every village is equipped with trained and alert volunteers ready to respond in emergencies.

The ongoing training programme at Tajgi reflects the state's broader vision of creating disaster-resilient communities through inclusive participation, capacity-building, and sustainable local preparedness.

## Governor participates in Guru Nanak Jayanti celebrations in Naharlagun

**HT Correspondent**

**NAHARLAGUN, Nov 5:** The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt General KT Parnaik, (Retd), joined devotees in celebrating the 556th birth anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji at Gurudwara Saheb, Naharlagun, on Wednesday.

The Governor offered prayers before the Guru Granth Sahib and took part in the Anand Sahib Path and Ardaas, the solemn Sikh prayer seeking divine guidance and blessings for all.

Extending warm greetings to the people, particularly the Sikh community, on this sacred occasion, the Governor said Guru Nanak Jayanti reminds all that the true essence of religion lies in righteousness, truthfulness, selfless service, and in recognising the divine spark in every being.

He highlighted that Guru Nanak Dev Ji's message of peace, humility, and compassion continues to hold great relevance in the modern world. Reflecting on the timeless teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the Governor said the Guru's philosophy of justice, equality, and human service transcends time and boundaries, inspiring all to lead lives rooted in truth and moral courage.

He described the Guru Granth Sahib as a universal scripture that guides humanity toward purity of thought, honesty in action, and service to mankind.

The Governor commended the Sikh community for upholding the noble tradition of Seva (selfless service) and community welfare, noting that their contributions have set an enduring example of devotion, compassion, and unity.

## Arunachal CM participates in 'Zhik Tsang Kora' festival in Tawang

**ITANAGAR, Nov 5:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday attended the fifth Sarong Zhik Tsang Kora, an annual religious festival observed by the residents of Shyaro, Jangda and Rho villages in Tawang district.

The chief minister said the celebration is a testament to the strength of local faith and cultural values.

"The four-day festival, held grandly in the courtyard of the Tashi Samten Chhoi Ding Sarong Gonpa, beautifully reflects the living harmony between faith, community, and tradition in our Himalayan heritage," Khandu said in a post on X.

During the festival, the chief minister sought blessings from Tulku Rinpoche, whose presence, he said, "graced the occasion with spiritual warmth and guidance".

Earlier in the day, Khandu offered prayers at the Sarong Gonpa located high in the Hi-



malayan ranges.

Emphasising the cultural significance of the Zhik Tsang deity, he said, "Born of the valley's spirit, Zhik Tsang subdues all negativity, restoring harmony between humanity and the natural world."

The chief minister said

deities like Zhik Tsang "embody the timeless integration of indigenous spiritual forces into the larger Buddhist tradition", highlighting the intrinsic link between tribal heritage and Tibetan Buddhism practiced in the region.

The festival, being celebrated for four days, continues to draw devotees from across Tawang district who participate in traditional rituals, prayers, and circumambulation in honour of the protector deity, officials said. (PTI)

**ASSAM RIFLES PUBLIC SCHOOL (HIGH), DIPHU (ASSAM)**  
(CBSE AFFILIATED SCHOOL)

**VACANCY FOR TEACHING STAFF**

1. Walk in interview will be conducted on **24 Nov 2025** at ARTC&S, Diphu to fill up the following vacancies in Assam Rifles Public School (High), Diphu, Assam:-

POST	VACANCIES	QUALIFICATION
TGT (Science)	01	(a) MSc / MSc (Hons) or equivalent and B.Ed from recognized university will be preferred.
TGT (Social Science)	01	(b) MA (Political Science) or equivalent and B.Ed from recognized university will be preferred.
TGT Computer	01	(a) B.Sc Computer Science/ BCA/ Bachelor of Information Technology  OR Graduate Degree in any subject with mathematics as a subject and 3 years Diploma in Computer Engineering/ IT from an Institution recognized by AICTE/ University  OR Graduate Degree in any subject with mathematics as a subject and one year Diploma in Computer Engineering/ IT from an Institution recognized by AICTE/ University  OR 'A' level from DOEACC  AND (b) Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) from an institute recognized by NCTE will be preferred.
PRT	01	(a) Nursery Teachers Training (NTT) and Graduate

2. Candidates who are willing to work in Assam Rifles Public School (High), Diphu only to apply. Application with mobile number of the candidates and copy of Aadhar card must reach by hand or before, by post **20 Nov 2025** at the following address:-

OIC  
Assam Rifles Public School (High), Diphu  
ARTC&S  
Karbi Anglong Assam  
PIN: 782460

3. For any queries, please contact 9957607131 (Admin Staff) or email at [principalhighschooldiphu@gmail.com](mailto:principalhighschooldiphu@gmail.com).

4. All expenses will be borne by the candidates themselves.

5. Pay and perks will be as per prevailing scales in comparable institutions.

**Note: All candidates are required to carry PAN Card / UID or any other valid Identity Card & original certificate for educational qualification**

# They (WI) really put pressure on us: New Zealand captain Santner

## Santner surge in vain as West Indies defends 164 to beat NZ by 7 runs

AUCKLAND, Nov 5: The West Indies bowled superbly in defense of a moderate total to beat New Zealand by seven runs on Wednesday in the first game of a five-match Twenty20 series.

Captain Shai Hope top-scored with 53 from 39 balls as the West Indies made 164-6 after losing the toss and batting first on a pitch that was two-paced and unpredictable.

New Zealand was then going well at 70-2 in the 10th over, before losing seven wickets for 37 runs to slump to 107-9 in the 17th over.

The match seemed over but New Zealand captain Mitch Santner fanned home fans' hopes with an outstanding display of power hitting as he made 55 from 28 balls.

Santner hit four fours and a six from the 18th over bowled by Matthew Forde, then three fours from the first three balls of the 19th over from Jason Holder.

New Zealand came to the final over needing 20 to win and Santner hit the third ball from Romario Shepherd for six.

But Santner couldn't keep up the assault, taking only two runs from the next two balls before hitting a boundary from the final delivery.

"I think the way the West Indies bowled in the middle there, they really put pressure on us," Santner said. "I guess we weren't really able to go anywhere. We were reasonably happy with 164 at the turns but it was one of those nights I guess."



The West Indies came to New Zealand from their series in Bangladesh and it seemed likely they would struggle in very different conditions where the ball swings and the bounce is more pronounced. Eden Park usually provides pace and

face. The West Indies lost Brandon King (3) to the last ball of the first over of their innings from Jake Duffy. Alick Athanaze (16), who was lucky to avoid being run out at the non-striker's end when he was 2, was eventually caught by Mark Chapman off Kyle Jamieson when he skied a pull shot.

The West Indies were 32-2 after the first power play.

Hope reached his ninth T20 half century with a six off Zak Foulkes' bowling, then was clean bowled next ball swinging across the line at a delivery that stayed low.

Roston Chase (28) and Rovman Powell (33) put on 49 for the fifth wicket. Powell hit two fours and two sixes in a 23-ball knock, giving impetus to the innings as the West Indies added 53 in the last five overs.

New Zealand was 48-1 after the power play, losing Devon Conway (13) in the fourth over to a ball from Matthew Forde that was angled sharply in to the left-hander and pierced his tentative defensive shot. Tim Robinson (27) was out to the first ball after the power play.

New Zealand then became bogged down. Boundaries were rare and the fall of wickets regular as the Black Caps fell behind the run rate.

Chase bowled four excellent overs of off-spin to claim 3-26 and Jayden Seales took 3-32.

The teams meet again at the same venue on Thursday. (AP)

# Time for Gill to up the ante as India look favourites vs Australia



CARRARA (GOLD COAST), Nov 5: Shubman Gill will be looking to turn the tables with a big knock after what has been an underwhelming tour when a confident India aim to go one up against a depleted Australia in the fourth T20 International here on Thursday.

The series is locked at 1-1 after three games and the absence of Josh Hazlewood in the previous game did make a difference to Australia's defence of a standard total of 186.

Going into the fourth game, there won't be any Travis Head for Australia as the opener is set to play Sheffield Shield to prepare for the Ashes.

With two pillars of the rival team unavailable, this is the best chance for India to go 2-1 up before the final game at the Gabba and wrap up a series win.

In the last game, India finally did look to get their combination right within their ambit of having an all-rounder at No. 8.

However, what will slightly bother the Indian team management is skipper Shubman Gill's form in the series as he has now played six games without a half-century.

The sequence of scores since the start of the ODI series reads 10, 9, 24, 37 not out, 5, and 15. The only time he looked in good nick was at Canberra when he stitched a nice little stand with skipper Suryakumar Yadav.

Gill has been troubled by fuller deliveries with a hint of movement and throughout the better part, he hasn't exactly looked in the regal touch which has made him the player that he is.

At the other end, Abhishek Sharma has done his reputation no harm as the world's No. 1 T20 batter with a fine half-century and two quick starts in the series.

However Gill, who will have to switch on to the red ball mode in a week's time, will certainly get a lot of confidence if he gets some runs irrespective of the format he is playing.

Skipper Suryakumar Yadav has shown some glimpses of his vintage self in the first and third

matches with two good starts. But he would also like to get some runs under the belt now that there will be a month-long break before the next series against South Africa.

In between, one would expect Suryakumar to play Mumbai's Ranji Trophy game against Puducherry.

The bowling department, with the inclusion of Arshdeep Singh, looks way more compact even as Kuldeep Yadav has been sent back to prepare for the Test series against the Proteas.

The team management's main issue has always been that both Kuldeep and Arshdeep can't be played together.

If Kuldeep plays in these conditions, then Harshit Rana, with better batting skills, needs to be fitted in. When Arshdeep plays, they have to somehow get a Washington Sundar inducted and one saw the result as his 23-ball 49 decisively swung the third game in favour of India.

The Australian side will depend a lot on skipper Mitchell Marsh and Tim David for the firepower in batting. With no Head in the line-up, Marsh might have Matthew Short as his opening partner.

However, it is the bowling department where Australia need to do some rejigging as Sean Abbott certainly didn't look the part and one among Ben Dwarshuis or Mahli Beardman might just come in his place.

**Teams:**  
**India:** Suryakumar Yadav (C), Abhishek Sharma, Shubman Gill (VC), Tilak Varma, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Shivam Dube, Axar Patel, Jitesh Sharma (WK), Varun Chakaravathy, Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Harshit Rana, Sanju Samson (WK), Rinku Singh, Washington Sundar.

**Australia:** Mitchell Marsh (captain), Matthew Short, Josh Inglis (wk), Josh Philippe (wk), Mitchell Owen, Glenn Maxwell, Matt Kuhnemann, Adam Zampa, Mahli Beardman, Benn Dwarshuis, Xavier Bartlett, Nathan Ellis, Marcus Stoinis.  
Match Starts at 1:45 pm. (PTI)

## Coco Gauff eliminates Jasmine Paolini



RIYADH, Nov 5: Defending champion Coco Gauff revived her chances of advancing at the WTA Finals with a 6-3, 6-2 win over Jasmine Paolini.

Gauff also improved her serving, hitting only three double-faults — far fewer than the 17 that she produced in her opening match, a three-set loss to Jessica Pegula.

"Definitely a turnaround from my first match," Gauff said. "It's the beauty of this tournament and to have another chance to prove yourself."

Gauff next faces top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka to determine if she advances in the season-ending event for the top eight players, while Paolini was eliminated from contention with two losses.

Sabalenka leads the group after beating Pegula 6-4, 2-6, 6-3.

Paolini is also playing doubles at the event with partner Sara Errani.

"I don't think Jasmine was 100% today," Gauff said. "Playing singles and doubles is not easy." (AP)

## India A vs SA A: Siraj, Rahul, Kuldeep, and Bavuma eye red-ball time ahead of Test series

BENGALURU, Nov 5: India A skipper Rishabh Pant will look to build on the gains from the first match, while the likes of Mohammed Siraj and Kuldeep Yadav will aim for crucial red-ball game time in the second four-day match against a Temba Bavuma-led South Africa A here from Thursday.

Pant managed to log trouble-free 139.3 overs as wicketkeeper besides playing 133 balls as a batter, which included a typically colourful 90 in last week's first four-day game at the BCCI Centre of Excellence (COE) grounds.

With the fitness worries firmly behind him, the left-hander will now be eager to put himself through the rigours once more before the two-match Test series against South Africa, beginning from November 14. Siraj, KL Rahul and Kuldeep were a part of India's ongoing white-ball tour to Australia before returning home, and they can now polish their red-ball skills against a competitive opposition in South Africa A.

The visitors will be eager to level the series after the hosts recorded a three-wicket win in the first match. From a batters' perspective, the South Africa A pacers employed the short-pitched ball strategy to good effect on the final day of the first match to rattle the Indians, including Pant himself.

Whether the senior South African side follows a similar path is a matter of debate, but it certainly might have got the feedback on how some



of the highborn Indian batters looked distinctly uncomfortable against the lifters. With the COE pitch offering a fair bit of assistance for pacers in the form of consistent bounce, the South African 'A' bowlers might be tempted to press those snorters into service once again. If so, the India batters playing here will get some good work-out ahead of the showdown against the likes of Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen barely two weeks later. India A too have pacers like Prasidh Krishna, who was substituted after getting hit on the head by Australia A fast bowler Henry Thornton at Lucknow recently, and Akash Deep, looking to force their back to the Test side.

The last Test appearance of Prasadidh, who was in the India squad for the home series against the West Indies, and Akash was in the fifth Test against England at the Oval. In this interim, Prasadidh played

one away ODI against Australia while Akash has been working out steadily for Bengal in the Ranji Trophy without being spectacular.

They will be eager to take that third seamer's slot in the national team with a good outing against Proteas A, behind Jasprit Bumrah and Siraj. Kuldeep was released from the white ball side following a request by the team management, and the left-arm wrist spinner will get ample overs here to sharpen his bewitching set of skills ahead of the series against South Africa.

Meanwhile, Sai Sudharsan, who opened in the absence of an injured Narayan Jagadeesan in the first match here, was struggling for timing in both the innings — 94-ball 32 and 38-ball 12. He will not read too much into it but the left-hander will be looking to regain that characteristic silken-smooth shot-making here, possibly during the course of a big knock. (PTI)

## Williams dropped permanently from national team over drug addiction

HARARE, Nov 5: Former Zimbabwe cricket captain Sean Williams won't be selected for his country again after disclosing that a drug addiction was the reason he skipped some matches, the national federation said.

Zimbabwe Cricket held an investigation into why Williams suddenly withdrew from the squad on the eve of a Twenty20 World Cup qualifying competition in September. During the investigation, "Williams disclosed that he has been struggling with drug addiction and has voluntarily entered rehabilitation," ZC said in a statement.

Williams' withdrawal was likely because of potential drug tests at the competition, ZC said. Zimbabwe hosted and went on to win the eight-team African tournament to qualify for the T20 World Cup early next year in India and Sri Lanka.

ZC did not give any details on which drug Williams admitted using but said he had "a history of disciplinary issues and repeated unavailability," though it commended him for entering rehab.

The 39-year-old batter will not be considered for the national team again and his contract will not be renewed when it expires at the end of this year, ZC said. Williams made his debut for Zimbabwe in 2005 and ended up playing for his country for 20 years, appearing in 24 tests, 164 one-day internationals and 85 T20 internationals. His highest test score of 154 came last December against Afghanistan. (AP)

## Pakistan tail hangs on to beat spirited South Africa by 2 wickets in ODI series opener

FAISALABAD, Nov 5: A full-strength Pakistan beat a spirited South Africa by two wickets in their ODI series opener to mark the return of international cricket in Faisalabad after a 17-year absence.

Pakistan tailenders hung in to reach 264-8 in the last over as an inexperienced South Africa fought gallantly to claim four wickets in the last five overs and pushed the home team to the limit.

South Africa, which lost its sixth straight toss across formats on its tour of Pakistan, couldn't capitalize on half-centuries from debutant Lluandre Pretorius (57) and Quinton de Kock (63) before it got bowled out for 263 in 49.1 overs.

Agha and Rizwan dig in Top-scorer Salman Ali Agha (62) and Mohammad Rizwan (55) saw Pakistan cruising to 196-3 in the 39th over before Pakistan nearly slipped in what appeared to be a straightforward run-chase. Rizwan smashed a half-century in his first ODI after being removed from the captaincy and was replaced by Shaheen Shah Afridi as he shared 91-run stand with Agha to put the chase back on track.

Rizwan and Agha gauged the slow wicket perfectly after Pakistan lost three wickets in the space of 18 runs as they kept rotating the strike with picking up singles and twos.

The left-handed opening pair of Fakhar Zaman (45) and Saim Ayub (39) combined in a 87-run partnership against a second-string South Africa pace attack as the Proteas rested key fast bowlers Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen for the three-match series.

Off-spinner Donovan Ferreira, one of the three South African debutants, pegged back the chase with the pitch offering plenty of assistance to the spinners. Ferreira removed both openers in his successive overs when Ayub was adjudged plumb leg before wicket as he tried to cut the off-spinner and Zaman holed out at long-on while attempting a big shot against Ferreira. Babar Azam, whose half-century helped Pakistan clinch the T20 series at Lahore last Saturday, lasted only 12 balls before he was lbw by left-arm spinner Bjorn Fortuin's delivery that skidded into the right-hander and struck him low on the pads.

Rizwan and Agha then dug in by rotating the strike as the former dominated the spinners with his trademark strong sweep shots before he holed out to deep mid-wicket of Corbin Bosch's shot ball, but mistimed the pull shot. (AP)

# He's a tough one, the one we'll have to look out for: Short on mystery tweaker Varun

CARRARA (GOLD COAST), Nov 5: Australian batter Matthew Short on Wednesday conceded that Indian mystery spinner Varun Chakaravathy has been hard to figure out but the home team is doing all it can to decipher him before next year's T20 World Cup in the sub-continent.

Chakaravathy has picked up four wickets so far in the ongoing T20 series that is locked 1-1 after three games with the fourth one scheduled here on Thursday.

"Oh, he's tough. I think what makes it harder is just how quick he bowls. We've obviously watched a lot of footage and what not. But, yeah, that's probably going to be the other challenge heading to India if it is spinning or Sri Lanka as well," Short said when asked about the "mystery spinner" in the pre-match press conference.

The World Cup is set to be staged in India and Sri Lanka come February-March.

"So here in Australia, there's probably not as much spin as subcontinent, obviously. So, yeah, he's a tough one. But, yeah, one we'll have to look out for," he added.

Short has been an integral part of the ongoing series as Australia look to finalise their squad for the T20 World Cup. He is enjoying the opportunity to face "world-class" Indian bowlers though he understands that conditions at the World Cup would be completely different.

"There's always ways to improve. Probably looking at the World Cup, looking at India and Sri Lanka is probably my game against spin. Probably needs a little bit of work," Short said.



"Especially if you look at our squad and the power hitters we've got through the middle, Tim David and Glenn Maxwell and Mitchell Owen, Marcus Stoinis, you know, guys who have had that experience in India before and have that real power game against spin.

"Conditions are going to be a lot different (during World Cup)," he added.

The 29-year-old was all praise for the world champion opposition which reaffirmed its supremacy by winning the Asia Cup T20 trophy in September.

"...India have brought out a pretty strong side, probably the strongest side. So, it's been

nice to kind of get our match-ups against them and see how they go about it. You know, they're obviously number one for a reason. They bat really low," he said.

"They've got world-class bowlers. So, it's been awesome to face up against India here in Australia. But, the conditions and game plans are going to change when we get over to India."

Primarily a top-order batter, Short said he doesn't mind moving down if that helps him find a place in the World Cup squad.

"It would be massive. I missed out in the one in the West Indies. I was a travelling re-

serve. But I love playing cricket for Australia...Personally I think I'm suited to the top of the order.

"But, yeah, having conversations with selectors and coaching staff, I think looking forward to the T20 World Cup. I know that sort of top four, top five is going to be pretty locked," said the player, who impressed as an opener in the Big Bash League (BBL).

"So if I was to make the 11 in the World Cup, the chances are throughout the middle and lower order. So, we're probably using this series to see guys in different positions and really looking ahead to that World Cup."

Reflecting on the challenges of batting down the order compared to opening, Short said: "It probably changes a little bit. Obviously, when you open the batting, you've got all 20 overs to face. So you could probably ease your way into the game.

"But coming in through the middle and later in the innings, you pretty much have to go from ball one. A lot of guys say it's the easiest spot (at the top) to bat, while the ball's still nice and hard and only two fielders out. "So, yeah that's probably the other challenge in coming through the middle and at the end of an innings with all the fielders out of the ring."

In the remainder of the series, Australia will be without their premier pacer Josh Hazlewood, who will now shift focus to Ashes preparations, but Short is confident the rest of the bowling unit can deliver.

"...it is a big loss. But we've got a great squad together and hopefully other guys can stand up and get the job done," he said. (PTI)