

**6 NATION**  
 ● High turnout '65-volt' shock to Oppn: Modi  
 ● Rahul's 'dukaan' will be shut in Bihar as INDIA bloc will be wiped out in polls: Shah

**7 NE**  
 ● CM announces major hike in Karamveer Dorjee Khandu Merit Scholarship amounts  
 ● Tripura gov't working on modality for screening of suspected HIV cases: CM

## Two-day drive to clear encroachments from forest land in Goalpara dist from today Notices served on 580 households in Dahikata

**GOALPARA, Nov 8:** A two-day eviction drive will be undertaken from Sunday to clear encroachments from over 375 acres of forest land in Assam's Goalpara district, a senior official said. He said notices have been served to 580 households, asking them to clear out of the encroached lands in Dahikata reserve forest, with about 70 per cent of them already leaving the area, he said.

"The eviction drive will be undertaken to clear encroachments from 1,140 bighas (376 acres) of forest land. It will be carried out over two days from tomorrow," Goalpara District Commissioner (DC) Prodir Timung said on Saturday. "We have divided the area into five blocks... and only in one



block, some people are still there. In the other blocks, most have left," Timung said. "We have allowed the people to dismantle and move out with their things by today, and most have gone," he added.

The DC said the eviction drive is being undertaken as per Gauhati High Court's directives, with three petitions regarding the operation

being earlier heard by the court. "We are hopeful of a peaceful drive. There is sufficient security deployment and there has been no resistance so far," Timung added.

The Himanta Biswa Sarma-led government has been carrying out eviction drives to clear encroached lands. He had earlier asserted that eviction drives will continue till all encroached lands were cleared, claiming that huge tracts are under the possession of "illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and doubtful citizens".

Sarma had said that 29 lakh bighas (more than 9.5 lakh acres) of land is still under encroachment in the state and 1.29 lakh bighas (over 42,500 acres) have been cleared in the last four years. (PTI)

## FM lays base of Swahid Kanaklata state varsity

Centre invested ₹ 21,000 cr in Northeast's edu sector in 11 years: Sitharaman



**GOHPUR, Nov 8:** Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday claimed that the central

government has invested ₹ 21,000 crore in the education sector in the Northeast in the last 11 years. Con-

nectivity has also received a boost in the region during the period, with new states put on the railway map and several greenfield airports constructed, she added.

Sitharaman, who was on a two-day visit to Assam since Friday, was speaking after laying the foundation stone for the state's first university focussed on technical and vocational education and training at Bholaguri in Gohpur in Biswanath district.

The 'Swahid Kanaklata Barua State University' will be built at a cost of ₹ 415 crore on a total area of 241 acres, with a built-up area of 7 lakh sq ft. "Since 2014, the Centre has (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## CEM distributes ex-gratia among 2004 ethnic clash victims' kin

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Nov 8:** Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Dr Tuliram Ronghang today distributed cheques of ₹ 5 lakh as an ex-gratia to the next of kin of the deceased, who lost their lives in the 2004 ethnic clash from Sarpo Teron and Sarthe Engti village of Langvoku.

The cheque distribution programme was held at Langvoku picnic spot was attended by Assam Minister for Water Resources, Information, Public Relations etc., Pijush Hazarika; Chairman, KAAC, Raju Tisso; MLAs Darsing Ronghang and Bidyasing Englung including Borjan Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) and

Executive Member (EM), KAAC, Surjya Rongphar and other dignitaries and officials.

On March 24, 2004 an ethnic violence erupted in the hill district of Karbi Anglong between two ethnic communities, which resulted in loss of lives of at least 27 people and rendering hundreds of families homeless.

During the clash, on the pretext to have a discussion with the elderly men of Langvoku Sarpo Teron and Sarthe Engti, the suspected Kuki militants called the villagers at one place and mercilessly killed all the 19 villagers present.

Following the clash, the KAAC had announced for a one-time financial assistance of Rs. 5 lakh to the next of kin of those (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Three alert frontline rly staff feted

**GUWAHATI, Nov 8:** Three frontline railway staff whose alertness prevented a mishap after tracks were damaged in a suspected IED blast in Assam last month were felicitated by the authorities, an official statement said on Saturday. Loco pilot Jitendra Kumar, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Money-laundering case against PFI ED attaches fresh assets worth ₹ 67 cr

**NEW DELHI, Nov 8:** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday said it has issued a fresh attachment order to freeze assets worth ₹ 67 crore as part of its money-laundering probe against banned terrorist organisation Popular Front of India (PFI). (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

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## New initiative to promote new cultural ties: Arunachal Dy CM

Myanmar descendants of Chaolung Sukapha in Assam seeking ancestral roots

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIBRUGARH, Nov 8:** A five-member delegation from Myanmar arrived in Assam on November 7 to trace their ancestral lineage connected to Chaolung Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom dynasty.

The group will explore historical monuments across Sivasagar district, Charaideo, and Tipam, retracing the footsteps of their illustrious ancestors. The Society For Tai Ahom Resurgence (STAR) organised a grand convention at Yuva Dol, Sivasagar on Friday to welcome the delegation. Arunachal Pradesh Dy Chief Minister Chowna Mein graced the occasion, describing it as a "moment of great pride" witnessing the reunion of Tai Royal families from both nations.

Prof Dr Hiranmani Borgohain Gogoi stated that the Myanmar delegation's visit aims to strengthen centuries-old social-cultural and historical-economic ties between the communities.

The event featured vibrant cultural performances by the Khamti cultural troupe, including traditional Ai Sing Lao, Ahom Tai modern dance, Tai peacock dance, Katou dance, Hengdang dance, and demonstrations of Tai musical instruments. Mein said that the reunion celebrates shared heritage, language, and cultural bonds transcending borders. "The Tai Ahom legacy continues to inspire generations through its values of courage, wisdom, and unity," he stated, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Discovery highlights the 'rich and unique biodiversity of my state: Khandu

**Rare Hoya species of plants discovered in Arunachal**

**ITANAGAR, Nov 8:** Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday said scientists at Botanical Survey of India's regional centre here discovered two rare Hoya species of plants, marking a significant milestone in the documentation of the state's floral diversity.

Hoya chinghungensis has been reported for the first time in India, while Hoya acuminata has been recorded for the first time in Arunachal Pradesh.

Sharing the information on X, Khandu said, "Heartiest congratulations to the entire team of Botanical Survey of India, Arunachal Pradesh Regional (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)



জনেত্ত্ব চৰকাৰ

सरकार असम

Government of Assam  
School Education Department

### Sustained Endeavour of Transparent and Merit-based Appointments

## Distribution of Appointment Letters to 5,550 TET Qualified Candidates

**Chief Guest**

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

In august presence of

**Dr Ranaj Pegu**  
Minister, Education, etc., Assam

**Timeline of Recruitment**

Till 21 July 2025	1,21,243
9 November 2025	5,550

**9 November 2025**

**3 PM**

Veterinary Science College  
Playground,  
Khanapara, Guwahati

Post	Recruited Candidates
Lower Primary School Teacher	3,800
Upper Primary School Teacher	1,750

Total Recruited

1,26,793

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# Centre notifies new deep-sea fishing rules: What it means for fishermen cooperatives

**NEW DELHI, Nov 8:** In a significant move to unlock the potential of India's vast marine resources, the Centre has notified new rules for deep-sea fishing in the country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), with a focus on empowering fishermen, cooperatives and small-scale fishers, while banning foreign vessels from operating in Indian waters.

The rules, notified on November 4, fulfil the Budget 2025-26 announcement and are expected to open new avenues for India's marine fisheries sector, particularly in tapping high-value tuna resources that have remained largely under-utilised despite neighbouring countries harvesting them in the Indian Ocean region, the fishery ministry said in a statement.

The new framework prioritises Fishermen Cooperative Societies and Fish Farmer Producer Organisations (FFPOs) for undertaking deep-sea fishing operations using technologically advanced vessels.

A key innovation is the introduction of the mother-and-child vessel concept, which allows mid-sea transshipment under Reserve Bank of India (RBI) regulations, particularly beneficial for the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands, which account for 49 per cent of India's EEZ area.

To protect the marine ecosystem, the rules ban harmful fishing practices such as LED light fishing, pair trawling and bull trawling.

Minimum legal sizes for fish species will be prescribed, and Fisheries Management Plans will be developed in consultation with stakeholders, including state governments. Under the new rules,



mechanised and large-sized motorised vessels will require an Access Pass, which can be obtained free of cost through the online ReALCRaft portal.

Traditional and small-scale fishers operating motorised or non-motorised crafts are exempted. The digital system is designed to be time-bound, allowing boat owners to apply with minimal documentation and track applications in real time without visiting any office.

Currently, around 2.38 lakh fishing vessels across 13 coastal states and Union Territories are registered on the portal. While about 1.72 lakh smaller vessels are exempt, some 64,187 mechanised fishing vessels will be required to obtain Access Passes for EEZ operations.

Crucially, foreign fishing vessels are not allowed to get access pass under any arrangements, to safeguard the interests of small-scale fishers. The ReALCRaft portal is being integrated with the Marine

Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) and the Export Inspection Council (EIC) for issuing Fish Catch and Health Certificates, key requirements for exporting seafood to premium international markets.

This integrated digital system ensures end-to-end traceability, sanitary compliance and eco-labelling, enhancing the global competitiveness of Indian marine products.

The rules also bring regulatory reforms recognising fish resources from the Indian EEZ beyond the contiguous zone as 'Indian origin' under revenue and customs norms, so that they are not treated as 'imports' while landing at Indian ports.

The government will provide comprehensive support through training programmes, international exposure visits and capacity-building initiatives across the value chain, including processing, value addition, marketing, branding and exports.

Access to credit will be facilitated under flagship schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) and the Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF). To ensure safety and security, the rules mandate the use of transponders for deep-sea fishing vessels and QR-coded Aadhaar Card/Fishers ID Card for identification.

The ReALCRaft application has been integrated with the Nabhmitra Application used by fishermen for safe navigation, which will also help marine enforcement agencies, including the Indian Coast Guard and Navy, strengthen coastal security. India's 11,099 km coastline and EEZ of over 23 lakh square kilometres provide livelihood to more than 50 lakh people in the fishing community.

India ranks second globally in fish production and aquaculture, with seafood exports valued at ₹60,000 crore.

However, the full potential of the country's EEZ, especially high-value resources in the deep-sea, including tuna, has remained underutilised.

Countries including Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia, Iran and European nations currently catch substantial quantities of tuna in the Indian Ocean region, while Indian fishing fleets have been largely limited to nearshore waters.

The new rules mark a shift towards community-led models combining digital innovation with sustainable fishing practices, aimed at strengthening India's position in the global seafood trade, while protecting marine ecosystems. (PTI)

# India, NZ trade pact likely to boost trade, investment ties

**AUCKLAND, Nov 8:** The proposed free trade agreement between India and New Zealand is expected to enhance trade flows, deepen investment linkages and strengthen supply-chain resilience, the commerce ministry said on Saturday. It may also provide greater predictability and market access for businesses in both countries, it said. Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal was here to give an impetus to the trade pact negotiations with his New Zealand counterpart Todd McClay. The fourth round of negotiations on the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) concluded on November 7, in Auckland and Rotorua.

The ministers "acknowledged the steady progress made during this round and reaffirmed their commitment to work towards a modern, comprehensive, and

future-ready FTA," it said. Both delegations held detailed engagements across key tracks, including trade in goods, trade in services, economic and trade cooperation, and rules of origin. "The ongoing discussions reflect the shared resolve of both nations to expedite the process and work towards an early, balanced, and mutually advantageous conclusion of the agreement," it said. India's bilateral merchandise trade with New Zealand stood at USD 1.3 billion in 2024-25, marking a year-on-year growth of nearly 49 per cent. "The proposed FTA is expected to unlock further potential in sectors such as agriculture, food processing, renewable energy, pharmaceuticals, education, and services, creating new opportunities for businesses and consumers alike," it added. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## New initiative to promote

expressing confidence that renewed connections between Assam and Myanmar's Tai communities would promote new cultural and historical collaborations.

Tributes were paid to Zubeen Garg during the ceremony, with distinguished citizens including Tultul Handique, Dr Hemanta Kumar Gogoi, Krishna Kamal Lahon, and several others attending the historic gathering.

## FM lays base of Swahid

invested ₹ 21,000 crore in the education sector in the Northeast. Over 850 new schools have been opened. The first AIIMS in the region has become operational, and over 200 new skill development institutes have been operationalised. The country's first sports university is also coming up in the region," Sitharaman said.

In Assam alone, 15 new medical colleges have been built, while South Asia's largest cancer care centre is coming up in the state and the state will also soon have the region's second IIM, she added. "To boost the education sector, the Centre is working in coordination with the state governments of the region," the Union minister said.

Besides developing roads, bridges and tunnels, the Centre is also working on the aviation and railway sectors in the region. Sitharaman said. She said that in the last 11 years, 10 new greenfield airports have been built in the region. Manipur and Meghalaya have been added to the country's railway map for the first time during this period, she added. Paying tributes to freedom fighter Kanaklata Barua, Sitharaman said, "At the age of 17 years, when she should have been entering a university to study, she sacrificed her life for the nation to keep our national flag high. A university in her name should have come up a long time ago."

Barua was a member of the "Mrityu Bahini" during the freedom struggle and was killed in police firing while leading a procession to hoist the national flag at Gohpur police station on September 20, 1942, during the Quit India Movement. Sitharaman said that while conserving the Gohpur police station or building a memorial there will attract people, the university in her name will inspire generations of youth, and lauded the initiative as a step in the right direction. She maintained that it was a privilege for her to lay the foundation stone of a varsity dedicated to the memory of Barua and exhorted the youth who will enrol to carry in them the essence of deep patriotism that Barua and other freedom fighters of the area embodied.

The university will offer courses in various technology domains, including artificial intelligence and machine learning, cyber-security, blockchain, drone and navigation technology, quantum computing, brain computer interface, internet of things, and smart cities and smart environments. It will feature academic blocks for 2,000 students, hostels for 1,620 students, residential quarters, a guest house and a student facility centre. (PTI)

## CEM distributes ex-gratia

persons killed in the clash. While distributing the cheques the CEM said that it was a very sad event during that clash as 27 individuals had lost their lives. "They died for the cause of the community. They are regarded as martyrs," he said. The CEM further said that so far the KAAC has compensated the next of kin of more than 300 persons, who have lost their lives during Autonomous State movement, killed by militants or during ethnic clashes. The families were given ₹ 5 lakh as one-time financial assistance.

Going by the memorandum submitted by the Society of Sarpo Teron, Sarthe Engti and Amreng Engti villages, the CEM said in the meeting that very soon tenders would be called to start road construction work from Sarth Kraamsa village to NH 29. Work on the road from Rongplimlam to Kongching village will begin soon.

As the Sainik School is coming up at Langvoku with a project cost of ₹ 375 crore, the CEM assured that all grade III and IV posts will be offered to local candidates.

For those families having no land pattas will be covered under Purthimi Akemang 2.0, he said. "As demanded by the village the construction of a cultural complex is under way. Under Asom Darshan a church building will also be constructed for Langvoku Baptist Fellowship. The statue of a noted Karbi literary figure Bonglong Terang will also be installed. Solar lights will be provided to the villages," the CEM informed.

## Three alert frontline

senior loco pilot Sailendra Kumar Keshari and train manager Bholaram Das were honoured recently with cash awards and certificates in recognition of their dedication to duty, it said.

Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava felicitated the frontline railway staff for their exemplary vigilance, professionalism and prompt action. A suspected Improvised Explosive Device (IED) explosion had taken place at around 1 am on October 23, around 5 km away from the Kokrajhar railway station towards Salakati in Alipurduar division of the NFR, leading to damage to tracks.

A goods train was passing between Kokrajhar and Salakati stations when the crew sensed a sudden heavy jerk. They immediately stopped the train, alerted control authorities and discovered damage to the railway track caused by the suspected blast. Their swift action prevented further damage, ensured timely restoration of train operations and safeguarded both railway property and lives. (PTI)

## ED attaches fresh assets

The federal probe agency, in a statement, said these properties were "beneficially owned and controlled" by the PFI and held in the name of various trusts, apart from that of its political front -- Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI). The Centre banned the PFI in September 2022, after coordinated raids were carried out by the ED, National Investigation Agency (NIA) and various state police forces, calling it an unlawful association that indulged in terror activities.

The SDPI was founded in 2009. It is also registered as a political party with the Election Commission (EC). A provisional order was issued on November 6 to freeze assets worth ₹ 67.03 crore, the ED said.

With the latest attachment, the total assets placed under freeze in the case stands at ₹ 129 crore now. The properties are registered in the names of various entities, such as Green Valley Foundation, Alappuzha Social Cultural and Education Trust, Pandalam Educational and Cultural Trust in Pathanamthitta, Islamic Centre Trust in Wayanad, Haritham Foundation (Poovanchina) in Malappuram, Periyar Valley Charitable Trust at Aluva, Valluvanad Trust in Palakkad and some plots of the SDPI in Thiruvananthapuram. The ED said its probe has found that the PFI conducted physical education training programmes and built sheds on a number of such properties, including at Valluvanad House Pattambi and Malabar House (Haritham Foundation).

"PFI was conducting extensive PE classes on the properties registered under dummy owners' names for imparting offensive and defensive manoeuvres using various arms.... The PE classes were aimed to prepare cadres and members for fulfilling their Jihadist agenda and using them for committing various unlawful activities," the federal agency said. PFI ideologues were former members of the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), which in turn, was the students' wings of the Jamaat-e-Islami, according to the ED.

"The history of origin of PFI can be traced back to the ban of Jamaat-e-Islami after the demolition of Babri Masjid. At that time, properties of Jamaat-e-Islami were attached and sealed under the UAPA.

"Taking inspiration from these developments, senior PFI members who were part of National Development Front (NDF) at that time, deliberately formed various trusts all across Kerala and registered various properties owned and controlled by PFI under them," it said. The agency has quantified the alleged proceeds of crime (funds generated illicitly) accumulated by the PFI at ₹ 131 crore.

"These proceeds were used for furtherance of criminal conspiracy to carry out violent and terrorist activities in India to achieve the goal of forming an Islamic nation of India, jeopardising our secular fabric and disrupting the unity and integrity of the nation," it said. The ED said the PFI was raising and collecting funds from within India and abroad through banking channels, hawala, donations etc. for committing and financing terrorist acts across India. The agency has filed multiple chargesheets in the case and arrested 28 PFI leaders and cadre, including SDPI national president M K Faizy. (PTI)

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## Rare Hoya species of plants

Centre, Itanagar for their remarkable scientific contribution."

The discoveries were made during extensive floristic explorations conducted in the districts of East Kameng, Pakke Kessang, and Longding, he said. Khandu lauded the scientists for their dedication, stating that the discovery once again highlights the "rich and unique biodiversity of Arunachal Pradesh".

"Proud moment for our scientists and researchers. Many more such discoveries await in our forests!" he said. The discovery by BSI researchers underscores Arunachal Pradesh's position as a global biodiversity hotspot, with many of its forested regions remaining biologically unexplored. The Hoya genus, commonly known as wax plants, is prized for its beautiful star-shaped flowers and ecological significance in forest ecosystems. Experts believe that these findings not only expand India's floristic records but also emphasise the importance of continued scientific exploration and conservation efforts in the Eastern Himalayas. (PTI)

# SC doesn't interfere in policy matters of economic considerations: CJI

**NEW DELHI, Nov 8:** Judiciary has been a steady guardian of the rule of law, Chief Justice of India B R Gavi said on Saturday while emphasising that the apex court has ensured it does not interfere in the policy matters of economic considerations unless there is a violation of fundamental rights or other provisions of the Constitution.

Speaking at the Sixth Full Meeting of the Standing International Forum of Commercial Courts, he said in commercial and corporate matters, the apex court has been vigilant in ensuring transparency and integrity, rejecting attempts to misuse legal or corporate structures for fraudulent gain.

"The Supreme Court has ensured that it does not interfere in the policy matters which have economic considerations involved unless there is a violation of fundamental rights or other provisions of the Constitution.

"Similarly, the Court has reaffirmed that any interpretation of a commercial statute must be in consonance with the legislative intent while maintaining fairness and public interest," the CJI said.

Gavi said the Supreme Court has consistently upheld the delicate balance between economic freedom, regulatory discipline, and fairness.

"It has reinforced that the power of the State, particularly in matters of taxation and regulation, must rest on a clear statutory foundation and operate within the limits of the Constitution.

"The Court has emphasized that while regulatory bodies must preserve financial stability and public confidence, their measures must always be proportionate and reasonable," he said.

"In commercial and corporate matters, the Court has been vigilant in ensuring transparency and integrity, rejecting attempts to misuse legal or corporate structures for fraudulent gain.

"It has underscored that the discipline of timely resolution and accountability is vital for the health of the financial system, while also recognising that commerce must ultimately serve human welfare and social justice," he said.

The CJI said across diverse areas, such as corporate governance, insolvency, arbitration, and environmental accountability, the Court's approach has been principled rather than interventionist.

Gavi said as India transitions to a digital and green economy, commercial law must promote sustainability and ethical enterprise.

"Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) norms are not foreign imports. They resonate with Article 48A and the spirit of trusteeship in our constitutional philosophy.

"Increasingly, Indian companies are integrating ESG principles in corporate reporting. This is a welcome trend, for markets function best when anchored in responsibility. Profit must be aligned with purpose," he said. (PTI)

# Tea Board for effective adoption of food safety standards by industry

**KOLKATA, Nov 8:** The Tea Board called for an effective adoption of food safety standards, asserting that such a measure will enable the industry to achieve long-term sustainability.

In the new plant protection code (PPC) released by the board, it said that the food safety standards will also help the industry safeguard the plantation environment and ensure the welfare of workers and small farmers. The PPC aims to achieve sustainability through good agricultural practices, including integrated pest management and promotion of alternative pest control strategies, to gradually reduce dependence on chemicals, according to it.

Large-scale adoption of integrated pest management from the very beginning of the season will be crucial in ensuring food safety and adequate crop protection, the Tea Board said.

According to the board, consumers are now increasingly demanding products made without adversely impacting the environment. "Given this situation, there is a need for a judicious usage of plant protection formulations," it said.

The PPC document will help the industry in getting guidelines for the safe usage of plant protection formulations in tea cultivation.

The Tea Board said that compliance with the code will not only improve competitiveness amongst the tea farms, but will also facilitate them in meeting various national and international regulatory standards. The climatic conditions of tea growing regions in the country are conducive to attracting pests and insects, which need to be managed to avoid huge crop loss, it said.

The board said pest and insect attacks cause a crop loss, ranging from 15 per cent to 30 per cent annually. "It is imperative for tea growers and manufacturers to maintain the yields and quality of tea leaf production, which can be accomplished by using plant protection formulations. (PTI)

# DTC to expand its EV charging infrastructure for heavy commercial vehicles

**NEW DELHI, Nov 8:** The Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) is preparing to expand its electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure by establishing charging facilities for heavy commercial vehicles at nine depots across the city, officials said on Saturday. This initiative aligns with the Delhi government's plan to fully convert the public transport fleet to electric vehicles within the next year and a half. The DTC has begun setting up the charging infrastructure at the following depots: Rohini Sector 37, Keshopur, Nangloi, Kalkaji, Sukhdev Vihar, Nand Nagri, Ghazipur, and Hasanspur, according to a transport department officer. (PTI)

# Singapore Canada-based startups keen to explore Indian market

**NEW DELHI, Nov 8:** Several international startups from Singapore and Canada have expressed interest in expanding into India, citing its massive market potential, rapid economic growth, and supportive startup ecosystem.

The startups have expressed their intent to explore the Indian during interactions with PTI on the sidelines of EPIC 2025, a global pitch competition organised by the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTP) that concluded on Friday evening. Out of 1,200 applications from more than 70 economies, 100 startups, including two from India, were shortlisted into three categories: Digital Health Tech, FinTech, and GreenTech.

The annual event provides a platform for founders to connect with global investors, corporate partners, and emerging markets.

In a statement to the media, Sunny Chai, Chairman of HKSTP, said, "We are turning Hong Kong's connectivity into momentum, helping ideas move and scale across borders.

"EPIC 2025 is a testament to this, where entrepreneurs connect with emerging markets, enthusiastic investors, and world-class innovation ecosystems." Bryan Oh, Founder & CEO of Singapore-based NEU Battery Materials, said, "Our priority is to grow our business beyond Singapore, because battery recycling is not just a problem for Singapore or Hong Kong, it is a global problem. We want to solve it using our process and technology."

When asked about plans for India, he said India is a big market with an ecosystem for startups, and a couple of startups involved in battery recycling are doing well there.

"It has a huge amount of two-



wheelers and three-wheelers... It's definitely a market we are looking at (to recycle batteries). I would love to know more about government initiatives and policies in India," said the EPIC 2025 winner who participated in the GreenTech category. Jayden Lu, Product Engineer at Belli, said India is a fast-growing economy and it will be great to be a part of this journey.

He said India stands as a great opportunity for any investor to build their customer base, given its high population. The country has a big startup foundation. "I see a great future for startups in India," said Lu. Singapore-based Belli, which develops air cargo software for airlines, participated in the FinTech category in EPIC 2025.

Amol S Karnick, President and CEO of Canada-based KA Imaging, said, "We are exploring the possibilities of entering India, we need to find the right partners, investors to allow us to accelerate work there."

Sharing his views on Indian government policies for startups, he said, "Recently, we have seen the Indian government putting funding into science and medical technology. That's an interesting opportunity for us. The fund is the most important. I need to explore more how policies can support us." KA Imaging, which has developed colour X-ray technology for real-time images of human organs for early detection of cardiac and lung-related diseases, participated in the HealthTech category at EPIC 2025. (PTI)

### HIRING OF VEHICLE

E-Tender Notice No. CON-D-K-DMV-NOV-2025-01 Dated: 06-11-2025. Open tender through e-Tendering system is invited from experienced and reputed contractor (s)/firm (s) for the following works.

Tender No. DYCE-C-D-K-DMV-HV-2025-01. Name of work: Hiring of 13 (Thirteen) Nos. (Non AC) motor vehicles having Four wheel drive (4 WD, Mahindra Scorpio / Bolero or similar vehicle) 1 (one) no. for Dy.CE/CON/Dimapur, 3 (Three) nos. for AXEN & XEN/CON/Dimapur and 9 (Nine) nos. for supervisors which are required for inspection of Railway Construction works under the jurisdiction of Dy.CE/CON/Dimapur, for the period of 24 (Twenty Four) months in connection with the construction of New BG Railway line from Dimapur to Kohima (Nagaland).

Approx. Value: ₹2,79,84,715.20/- Earnest Money: ₹2,90,000/- Date & Time of closing of tender: At 15.00 hrs. & opening at 15.30 hrs. on 03-12-2025. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available in website www.ireps.gov.in

Dy. Chief Engineer/CON, Dimapur

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY (Construction Organisation)

DAY TO DAY MAINTENANCE OF RUNNING ROOM

E-Tender Notice No. Sr. DEE/ G&CH/LMG/29 of 2025-26; dated: 04-11-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: SN.1; Tender No: EL/LM/25-28/28; Name of work: Day to day maintenance of Running Room at Mulvorum Railway Station including the work of cleaning, meal preparation and serving, collection, washing and Distribution of linen for a period of 02 Years (730 days). Tender Value: ₹60,28,743/-; Earnest Money: ₹1,20,600/-; E-tender will be closed at 11:00 hrs. on 26-11-2025 and Opened after 11:30 hrs. on 26-11-2025. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 11:00 hrs. on 26-11-2025 on website http://www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. DEE/G&CH, LMG/29 NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY (Serving Customers with a smile)

Central team visits affected areas to assess losses and containment measures

# ASF outbreak devastates pig farmers in Sivasagar and Charaideo



**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, Nov 8:** Pig breeders in Sivasagar and Charaideo districts are reeling under the devastating impact of the African Swine Fever (ASF) outbreak, which continues to spread rapidly across the region. Over 1,731 pigs have been culled in 29 operations across 30 epicentres in Sivasagar district, while hundreds more have died from the viral infection, many of which have gone unreported to the Veterinary Department.

Sivasagar District Veterinary Officer Dr Rajen Sharma informed that a three-member Central government team visited several epicentres on Friday to monitor the ongoing culling operations at Hatimuria Gharphalia Gaon. The visiting experts included Dr Vijay Kumar Teotia Joint Commissioner DAHD, Government of India, Dr Rajkumar, Principal Scientist,

ICAR-NISHAD and Dr Malay Das Livestock Officer, DAHD. The Central team exchanged information with the state expert group comprising Dr Ripunjay Chakravarty (DVO Jorhat), Dr Babu Gogoi (DVO Charaideo) and Dr Rupjit Kakoti (DVO Tinsukia) during a meeting at Sukapha Bhawan. They noted that the ASF virus exhibits genetic variation each year, leading to changes in symptoms—while diarrhea was common last year, many pigs this year have shown signs of loss of appetite for several days.

The Pig Farmers Association submitted a memorandum to the visiting team, detailing their heavy financial losses. According to sources, around 95 percent of pig farmers in both districts have been affected by ASF since its initial outbreak in 2019. Areas such as Demow, Nitai-Panidihing, Bokota,

Konwarpur, Betnari, Janjhi, Amguri, Nati, Kalugaon, Morapathar, Desangmukh, Dikhowmukh, Dihingmukh, Luthurigaon, Soladhora, Hatimuria and Bailung Gaon remain under active culling operations. Many farmers who had taken bank loans to start pig farming are now facing severe financial distress. The Krishak Mukti Sangram Samity (KMSS) has demanded immediate compensation and loan waivers for the affected farmers. KMSS secretary Ritumoni Hazarika accused the government of neglecting the crisis, stating that over 2,000 pigs have died in 28 farms across Sivasagar district alone.

Veterinary officials clarified that ASFV can be confirmed only after laboratory reports from Guwahati. Meanwhile, both district administrations have imposed a complete

ban on the sale and transport of pigs to and from affected areas. However, reports indicate that pork trading continues in several localities, with some traders allegedly importing pigs from Punjab and Haryana with police collusion. The administration has been urged to take strict action against such illegal activities.

The Veterinary Department has issued directives to all primary centres to conduct pre-monsoon vaccination drives for pigs, cattle, goats and poultry to prevent further disease spread. Many farmers reportedly avoid notifying pig deaths due to the lack of compensation from previous outbreaks.

Despite the state government's focus on development in other sectors, the Veterinary Department appears to be lagging behind. Many veterinary doctors and field assistants reside away from their designated areas, affecting timely service delivery in remote villages. Several facilities, including Katori Dispensary and veterinary hospitals at Charing, Namti Karunasaga and Nitapukhuri are in a dilapidated state.

Due to poor infrastructure, lack of field supervision and administrative apathy, the department has failed to meet the expectations of animal rearers, turning what could be a vital economic sector into a burden for rural farmers and the state's economy.

# International conference on Traditional Knowledge at Bodoland University

Over 800 participants explore indigenous knowledge, sustainable practices and modern research integration



**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, Nov 8:** The two-day international conference on "Decoding Traditional Knowledge: A Multidisciplinary Approach" concluded on Friday at Bodoland University, Kokrajhar. Organised by the Department of Biotechnology in collaboration with the EMWSSA Project, NEC Shillong (MDoNER), the event drew over 800 participants, including researchers, traditional healers, progressive farmers and academicians from India and abroad.

The conference featured 61 research paper presentations, four parallel technical sessions and six

keynote lectures delivered by experts from the USA, China, Bhutan and India. It provided a platform to explore the relevance of indigenous knowledge in modern science, sustainable development and community well-being.

The inaugural session was attended by Rabiram Narzary, Executive Member (Education), BTC, as Chief Guest, along with Derhasat Basumatary, EM Health & Family Welfare, BTC and Prof Ganesh Chandra Wary, Vice-Chancellor of Kokrajhar University, as guests. Prof Babu Lal Ahuja, Vice-Chancellor of Bodoland University, presided over the session.

A special highlight was the felicitation of 30 traditional healers from across Assam, many of whom have served their communities with indigenous healing practices for over five decades. In addition, more than 60 progressive farmers and rural entrepreneurs shared field-level applications of traditional knowledge, emphasising its practical significance.

The valedictory session was addressed by Prof Jatin Sarmah, Rector of Bodoland University, Prof Khagen Basumatary of Govt. Ayurvedic College & Hospital, Guwahati and other senior academicians. Participants stressed the importance of preserving, documenting and integrating traditional knowledge systems into contemporary research frameworks to support sustainable livelihoods and enhance community welfare.

The conference received support from NTPC-Bongaigaon, IDBI Bank, EMWSSA Project - NEC Shillong and Bodoland University, highlighting collaborative efforts to promote traditional knowledge alongside modern scientific research.

## AYUS to host 4-day spiritual conference for women

**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, Nov 8:** The four-day Adhyatmik Yuva Sammilan (AYUS), a spiritual orientation programme for women under 45, will be held at Sibsagar University's Parag Chaliha Stadium from November 13 to 16. The conference, the second of its kind after the 2023 Zengraimukh Conference in Majuli is being organised under the guidance of Sri Sri Dakshinpat Satra Sadradhikar Nanigopal Goswami.

The event will feature addresses by prominent spiritual and academic figures, including the Sadradhikar Prabhu of Dakshinpat Satra, Basistha Bujarbarua, Prasarak of Asom Kshetra, RSS, Princh Yadav, Satya Prakash Yadav from AIMS Guwahati, Deva Prasad Mishra, Director of Administrative Staff College, Dr Chandraditya Gogoi, Giniva Goswami, Dr Pradyunma Goshwami and Dr Dibyajyoti Kalita. Pradyunma Dutta, secretary of AYUS, highlighted the programme's objective to spiritually orient over 3,000 women, while Mon Rajguru, principal secretary, spoke about the organisation's efforts to guide the new generation away from disintegrating influences.

Nanigopal Goswami emphasised the divine presence in all living beings and urged participants to unite their collective energy to achieve transformative results. He called for support in promoting moral and spiritual traditions among women.

## NFR felicitates frontline staff for averting Kokrajhar blast disaster

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Nov 8:** The General Manager of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR), Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, felicitated three frontline railway staff for their exemplary vigilance, professionalism and prompt action that helped avert a potential disaster. Jitendra Kumar (Loco Pilot - Goods/APDJ), Sailendra Kumar Keshari (Sr ALP/APDJ) and Bholanar Das (Train Manager - Goods/APDJ) were honoured with a cash award and certificate in recognition of their alertness and dedication while on duty.

On October 23, 2025, at around 00:57 hrs, a goods train carrying sugar was passing between Kokrajhar and Salakati stations in the Bodoland Territorial Region when the crew sensed a sudden heavy jerk. Demonstrating remarkable presence of mind, they immediately stopped the train, alerted control authorities and discovered damage to the railway track caused by a suspected blast near OHE Mast No 228/1. Their swift action prevented further damage, ensured timely restoration of train operations and safeguarded both railway property and lives.

The damage was promptly repaired within a few hours through the coordinated efforts of frontline workers, engineers and security personnel who worked tirelessly in a war-footing mode. Their dedi-



cation and teamwork ensured the swift clearance of debris, replacement of damaged sleepers and rail tracks and thorough inspection and securing of the site, enabling the safe resumption of train operations.

NFR also acknowledged the devotion, promptness and teamwork of all frontline staff and workers who, under challenging circumstances, displayed unwavering commitment to operational safety. Their readiness to respond at a moment's notice and mobilise resources allowed the rail network to return to normalcy with minimal disruption. This felicitation not only honours individual courage but underscores NFR's commitment to vigilant railway operations, passenger safety and infrastructure resilience.

## KAAC Executive Member survives car accident

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Nov 8:** Suriya Rongphar, Executive Member of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), escaped unharmed after his Innova car skidded off the road and plunged into nearby bushes earlier on Saturday. Sources said the vehicle lost control due to a slip on the uneven surface. Quick reflexes by the driver and the presence of dense bushes minimised the impact, preventing serious injury. Eyewitnesses confirmed that while the car was damaged, Rongphar and his accompanying team remained safe. Party colleagues, well-wishers and members expressed relief and gratitude for his safety. Rongphar is reported to be in good health and has assured everyone of his well-being.

## Bharatanatyam workshop

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Nov 8:** A three-day Bharatanatyam workshop was organised by Sadhana Sanskritik Academy, Dhing, in collaboration with Antara Kalakendra, Nagaon and supported by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, from November 5 to 7, 2025. The workshop aimed to promote classical dance and cultural learning among young enthusiasts.

The sessions were conducted by Guru Mandira Bhattacharjee, founder and principal of Antara Kalakendra and a renowned Bharatanatyam performer and choreographer. Participants of different age groups engaged with enthusiasm and dedication throughout the workshop. At the closing ceremony, participants received certificates of participation. Rupjyoti Kar, head of the academy, expressed gratitude to all participants and guests for their support in making the workshop a success.

## KAAC to distribute land pattas

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Nov 8:** The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Department of Revenue, will organise a free distribution of Land Pattas programme under the initiative "Purthimi Akamang" for residents of West Karbi Anglong District, especially in the Rongkhang MAC Constituency.

The event is scheduled for November 9 at 11:00 AM at Amguri Salona Playground, Rongkhang MAC Constituency. The programme aims to provide rightful land ownership to local residents, strengthening their land rights and ensuring secure landholding for future generations.

## New KAWJF branch in Khatkhati-Lahorijan

**HT Correspondent**  
**BOKAJAN, Nov 8:** The Karbi Anglong Women Justice Forum (KAWJF) has constituted a new branch at Khatkhati-Lahorijan with Angana Begum as president and Sweete Devnath as general secretary. The branch was formed during a meeting held at Lahorijan PWD (IB), Karbi Anglong aimed at promoting women's rights and combating atrocities against women.

Other office bearers include vice president Ranu Soni, assistant general secretary Sila Yadav and office secretary Sultana Begum. The meeting was attended by KAWJF president Beaulat Beypi and social worker Molen Teron, among others. KAWJF is rapidly establishing itself as a key women's organisation in Karbi Anglong.

## NTPC Bongaigaon marks 51st Raising Day

**HT Correspondent**  
**KOKRAJHAR, Nov 8:** NTPC Bongaigaon, Salakati celebrated its 51st Raising Day on Thursday, commemorating five decades of NTPC's journey since its inception. The vibrant programme began with the hoisting of the NTPC flag by Arnab Maitra, Head of Project, followed by a cake-cutting ceremony and the release of NTPC-themed balloons to mark the milestone.



In his address, Maitra highlighted NTPC's growth from its beginnings in Singrauli in 1975 to becoming India's largest integrated power producer with a capacity exceeding 84 GW, including standalone and joint venture operations. He emphasised the 750 MW NTPC Bongaigaon station's role in supplying round-the-clock power to the North Eastern region, maintaining a Declared Capacity (DC) of 98.61%,

demonstrating operational excellence. The event was attended by Anurag Gupta, GM (O&M), LN Meitei, Commandant, CISF, Kasturi Maitra, president of Bardwi Shikla Ladies Club, senior officers, union representatives and members of welfare bodies.

As part of the celebrations, six employees received Power Excel Awards for their dedication and exemplary service, while four Master Trainers under the Rastriya KarmYogi Training Programme were felicitated for their contributions to professional development. To mark 150 years of "Vande Mataram," employees performed a collective rendition of the national song, fostering patriotism and unity. The day also featured a Walkathon within the township promoting fitness and community participation and a mass plantation drive by the Environment Monitoring Group (EMG), where over 2,000 saplings were planted, reaffirming NTPC's commitment to sustainability and green initiatives.

## Congress boosts presence in Kokrajhar with new observers

**HT Correspondent**  
**GOSSAIGAON, Nov 8:** With an eye on the 2026 Assam Assembly elections, the Kokrajhar District Congress Committee has appointed observers across all five Assembly constituencies to strengthen grassroots organisation and enhance public outreach. Addressing a press conference at the Gossaigaon Press Club, District Congress president Prem Hasda and vice-president Nur Alam Sheikh said the decision follows directives from the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) under State president Gaurav Gogoi. The move aims to reinforce booth-level committees

under the state-wide programme "Amar Booth, Amar Dayitva" (Our Booth, Our Responsibility). The appointed observers for the respective constituencies are: Gossaigaon LAC - Mofidul Islam Ahmed, Shohin Brahma, Dinesh Sharma, Dotma LAC - Jahirul Islam Mondal, Malek Mohibul Haque, Manjila Bibi, Kokrajhar LAC - Sibrom Basumatary, Nur Jamal Sheikh, Mohini Mohan Brahma, Baukhungri LAC - Sunil Narzary, Khairul Zaman Mondal, Mamoni Brahma and Parbatjhora LAC - Nur Alam Sheikh, Abu Bakkar Ali, Jahar Ali. The observers will supervise and coordinate organisational activities

within their constituencies, working closely with block, mandal and booth Congress committees to ensure effective implementation of APCC directives.

Speaking at the conference, District vice-president Bishwanath Poddar, general secretary Jahar Ali and National Mazdoor Union district president Tapan Roy expressed optimism about Congress's growing support across the state, including the BTC region. They noted that people from all communities are increasingly backing the party, a momentum they believe will translate into significant success in the 2026 elections.

## Tai Ahom descendants from Myanmar receive warm reception

Delegation celebrates Tai Ahom heritage with cultural performances and historic site visits

**HT Correspondent**  
**SIVASAGAR, Nov 8:** Tracing their roots in the Ahom land, a five-member Tai Ahom community delegation from Myanmar arrived in Sivasagar on Friday to celebrate their shared heritage over the centuries and foster collaborations across different sectors.

On the occasion of a reunion of Tai relatives, a grand function was organised by The Society for Tai Ahom Resurgence at Yuvaudol Auditorium. The event was graced by the Deputy Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Chowna Mein. Welcoming the delegation, Mein said it was a pleasant moment for the people of Tai roots and expressed hope that the visit would strengthen cultural and historical relations between the two countries. He added that the Tai Ahom legacy continues to inspire generations through its values of courage, wisdom and unity.

Dr Hiranmoni Borgohain Gogoi of Dibrugarh University remarked that the delegation's visit would help reinforce social, cultural, and economic ties between the communities.



cultural performances by the Tai Khamti cultural troupe, including Ai Sing Lao, Ahom Tai modern dance, Handing dance, Peacock dance, KTo dance, Tai chorus and performances on traditional Tai musical instruments. The delegation also embarked on a tour from Sivasagar to Charaideo and Tipam visiting several historical monuments that chronicle their illustrious ancestors' legacy.

Earlier in the visit, the delegation paid tribute to music icon Zubeen Garg. Distinguished citizens, including Tultul Handique, Dr Hemanta Kumar Gogoi and Krishna Kamal Lahon, attended

the historic gathering. The Tai-Ahoms migrated to the Brahmaputra valley in the 13th century from Mong Mao in China's Yunnan province or Myanmar's Hukawng Valley. Sukapha, a Tai prince from Mong Mao, arrived in Assam in 1228 and established the Ahom dynasty, which ruled the region for nearly 600 years until the advent of the British.

The delegation's visit aims to reinforce centuries-old social, cultural and historical-economic ties between the communities while celebrating the enduring legacy of the Tai Ahom people.

## MAC Johnny Timung distributes poultry units to SHGs

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Nov 8:** Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) Johnny Timung participated in a poultry distribution programme organised by the Government Pig-cum-Poultry Farm, Diphu under the Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department, Karbi Anglong at his official residence on Saturday.

Timung distributed poultry units to several Self Help Groups (SHGs) within his constituency, an initiative aimed at enhancing rural livelihoods, boosting household incomes and promoting self-reliance in Karbi Anglong.

Addressing the gathering, Timung highlighted the role of animal husbandry as a sustainable income source for rural families and said such initiatives support



the government's mission to build a self-reliant rural economy.

"This effort not only uplifts families but also encourages entrepreneurship in our villages. Together we are working toward a

more sustainable and progressive society," he said.

The beneficiaries expressed gratitude for the support extended by the department and Timung's leadership.

## Retired couple attacked by domestic help

**HT Correspondent**  
**NAGAON, Nov 8:** A retired headmaster and his wife were brutally attacked early Friday morning at their Morikolng residence near Nagaon town by their former domestic help, police said. The accused, identified as Prabhat Hazarika, allegedly broke into the house around 2 am and attacked Harendra Nath Bora and his wife, Dipti Bora with a sharp object resembling a stiff knife. Both sustained serious injuries and are currently receiving treatment at a private hospital. Dipti Bora is a retired employee of the education department. Preliminary investigations suggest that Hazarika had been demanding ₹ 50,000 from the couple, which they refused to pay, prompting the attack. Sources said the accused is in his mid-40s reportedly having three wives, had previously threatened the couple over money and is now absconding. Police are actively tracking him down.

## Editor's pick

## The Great Silence

By: Satvabrat Borah

Imagine staring up at a night sky so vast it swallows your thoughts. Billions of stars flicker like distant campfires, each potentially warming a world of its own. For over sixty years, humanity has pointed its most sensitive ears toward those lights, hoping to catch a murmur, a beep, anything that says, "You are not alone." Yet the cosmos has returned only silence. No alien hello, no cosmic postcard, just the quiet hum of background radiation and the occasional crackle of a passing pulsar. This great hush, often called the Fermi Paradox after the physicist who famously asked "Where is everybody?", sits at the heart of our search for extraterrestrial intelligence. It is a mystery that feels both thrilling and unsettling, like knocking on a door in an empty house and wondering if anyone ever lived there at all. The story begins in 1960 with a young astronomer named Frank Drake. Armed with a 26-meter radio dish in Green Bank, West Virginia, he aimed at two nearby sun-like stars and listened for artificial signals. Project Ozma, as it was called, lasted just a few weeks and heard nothing unusual. But it lit a spark. Drake later crafted an equation to estimate how many communicative civilizations might exist in the Milky Way. Plug in optimistic numbers and you get thousands; dial them down and you still expect dozens. Either way, someone ought to be chatting. Radio waves travel at the speed of light, and our galaxy is only about 100,000 light-years across. A signal sent from the far side today would arrive in 100,000 years, a blink in cosmic time. Civilizations that broadcast for even a million years should leave echoes we can detect. So why do our receivers stay mute?

One answer lies in the sheer scale of space. The observable universe contains roughly two trillion galaxies, each with hundreds of billions of stars. Even if intelligent life is common, the average distance between chatty neighbors could be millions of light-years. Picture trying to overhear a conversation across a crowded stadium using only a paper cup and string. Our telescopes have surveyed perhaps a million stars in detail, a respectable number until you realize the Milky Way alone holds 100 to 400 billion. We have dipped a thimble into an ocean and declared it empty of fish. Time compounds the problem. The universe is 13.8 billion years old, but Earth's technological civilization is a toddler at roughly a century old. If most civilizations rise and fall within a few thousand years, their radio bubbles expand like ripples in a pond and then vanish. We might be listening during a quiet interlude between overlapping broadcasts. Imagine tuning into a radio station exactly when the DJ steps out for coffee. Miss the window and all you hear is static.

Another possibility is that we are simply using the wrong technology. For decades, SETI has hunted narrowband radio signals, the kind a purposeful beacon would produce. Early human television and radar leaks create exactly this signature, so it seemed a safe bet. But an advanced society might abandon radio altogether. Optical lasers can carry more data in a tighter beam, using far less power. Neutrino beams pass through planets as if they were fog. Quantum entanglement, if ever harnessed for communication, would be undetectable with classical instruments. We could be standing in a crowded room shouting "Marco!" while everyone else whispers "Polo!" in ultraviolet. Some researchers suggest the silence is deliberate. The Zoo Hypothesis paints us as exhibits in a galactic wildlife preserve. Older civilizations watch but do not interfere, perhaps bound by an ethical code akin to our own Prime Directive in Star Trek. Contact might disrupt a culture's natural evolution, much as introducing smartphones to a stone-age tribe would scramble their trajectory. From this view, the quiet is a form of courtesy. Others propose a darker variant: the galaxy enforces a "do not call" list. Any species that announces itself too loudly risks attracting predators or competitors who sterilize noisy newcomers. In game-theory terms, silence becomes a survival strategy.

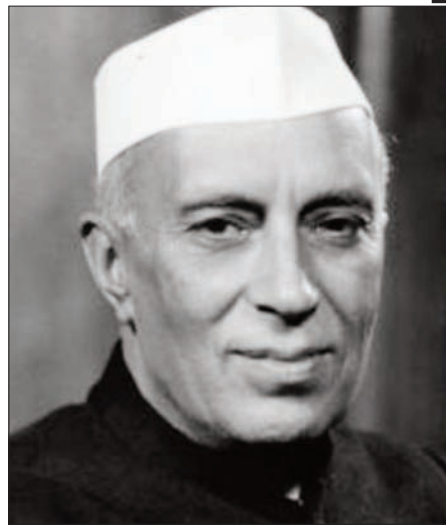
A more sobering explanation is rarity. Life itself may be common, microbial goo thriving under alien oceans or inside rocky mantles. But the leap to complex, tool-using intelligence could be a staggering fluke. On Earth it happened once in four billion years, and only after a gauntlet of catastrophes: snowball glaciations, mass extinctions, asteroid strikes. Each filter winnows the field. Add the requirement for language, fire, agriculture, industry, and electronics, and the odds plummet. The Great Filter might lie behind us, meaning we are among the lucky few, or ahead, dooming most civilizations to self-destruction through war, ecological collapse, or misaligned artificial intelligence. If the filter is ahead, our own future looks fragile. Even our search methods carry blind spots. Most SETI efforts target sun-like stars within a few hundred light-years, assuming aliens prefer familiar real estate. Yet life could flourish around red dwarfs, which make up three-quarters of all stars and burn steadily for trillions of years. Planets there face tidal locking, one side eternal day, the other endless night, but twilight zones might cradle oceans teeming with possibility. We have barely scratched such systems. Moreover, we assume aliens want to be found. A civilization a million years ahead might encode messages in the structure of planetary rings or the timing of gamma-ray bursts, signals we dismiss as natural.

Recent years have brought glimmers of hope. The Allen Telescope Array in California listens to dozens of stars simultaneously, while China's FAST dish, the world's largest single-aperture telescope, scans swaths of sky no western instrument can reach. Citizen-science projects like SETI@home once harnessed idle computers worldwide; today machine-learning algorithms sift petabytes of data for anomalies human eyes would miss. Breakthrough Listen, funded by billionaire Yuri Milner, plans to survey a million nearby stars and a hundred galaxies over a decade. Meanwhile, infrared telescopes hunt technosignatures: waste heat from Dyson swarms, vast shells built to capture a star's entire energy output. A single anomalous infrared blob could betray a civilization cloaked in darkness to radio eyes.

Space-based observatories are changing the game too. The James Webb Space Telescope peers into exoplanet atmospheres, searching for biosignatures like oxygen paired with methane, gases that vanish quickly unless replenished by life. Future instruments such as the Habitable Worlds Observatory will image Earth-sized planets in the habitable zones of nearby stars. If we spot continents, oceans, and seasonal vegetation changes, the question shifts from "Are we alone?" to "Who do we call first?" Still, every null result chips away at optimism. In 2015 the Wow! signal, a 72-second burst recorded in 1977, briefly reignited excitement until follow-up searches found nothing. Countless other candidates have crumbled under scrutiny. Each disappointment reminds us how easy it is to mistake a glitch for destiny. Yet the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Absence only tells us where not to look, or how not to listen. The psychological toll of the silence is subtle but real. It forces us to confront our place in the scheme of things. If we are alone, the responsibility to preserve Earth's biosphere becomes absolute; we are the universe's only known stewards of consciousness. If we are not alone, the knowledge that others thrive somewhere out there reframes every human achievement as a local footnote. So we keep listening. Not because answers are guaranteed, but because the act of searching defines us. Every sweep of a telescope is a vote of confidence in curiosity. Every line of code written to filter noise is a refusal to accept isolation without proof. The silence may endure for centuries, or it may shatter tomorrow with a signal so clear it rewrites textbooks overnight. Until then, the night sky remains both a question mark and an invitation. We stand on a pale blue dot, craning our necks toward the dark, ready to greet whatever, or whoever, looks back.

## From Nehru to Modi - the political evolution of India

A close examination of the political evolution of India and its profound transformations reveals a multi-layered, complex, and extensive history that begins with the idealistic stance of the country's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and extends to the pragmatic and strong central leadership of the current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. After gaining independence in 1947, India faced immense and fundamental challenges, where merely establishing the foundation of a new democratic nation was not sufficient; issues such as the pain of partition, the amalgamation of countless languages and cultures, vast disparities in caste and religion, and economic weakness were all intertwined. Nehru, taking charge of governance at that time, crafted a model of administration based on a specific philosophy that emphasized secularism, a socialist socio-economic structure, and a non-aligned foreign policy that avoided taking sides in international affairs. His goal was not just political independence, but to liberate society from superstitions through science, rational thinking, and modern education, guiding it toward modernity. This model served as a powerful guide for the first three decades of Indian democracy, during which parliamentary norms, constitutional institutions, and government bodies gained stability and distinctiveness. However, even during this period, there was considerable scope for criticism regarding the balance of power between states and the center, land reform issues, and poverty alleviation, as Nehru's concept of socialism was not sufficiently effective in truly improving the living stan-



dards of the country's millions of poor people. The foundational pillars of India's multi-party system and media freedom were strengthened during his era, forming the backbone of Indian democracy capable of withstanding subsequent political upheavals.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT  
By: Himanshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Nehru's long-term leadership helped establish the Indian National Congress as a central and influential force in the country's politics, where his personality controlled both the party and the government. Although opposition voices were limited during this time, their participation solidified the core foundation of parliamentary democracy. An initial effort to decentralize power and respect regional aspirations was evident through the formation of linguistic states, which was extremely important for a vast and diverse nation like India. The higher education institutions and five-year plans he established were the main driving forces behind India's economic development. After Nehru's era, Lal Bahadur Shastri's brief but powerful leadership united the country's people with the mantra "Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan." His leadership kept the seeds of uncontrolled elements from germinating in the depths of Indian politics. But after his untimely death, when Indira Gandhi took the reins of power into her own hands, a profound and fundamental change occurred in the country's political landscape. The core of this change was the rise of popularity-centered politics and the gradual decline of internal democracy within the party. This new trend shifted the central focus of politics from party structure to a strong individual personality.

During Indira Gandhi's time, the tendency toward centralization of power became very evident. She disregarded the old and influential leaders within the Congress party and created direct appeal among the common people, strengthening her position

with popular slogans like "Garibi Hatao." Her socialist policies, especially the nationalization of banks and the abolition of princely privy purses, skyrocketed her popularity among ordinary people. But this led to constitutional conflicts among institutions, particularly between the executive and the judiciary. As a result, questions were raised about the basic structure of the constitution, marking an important and controversial chapter in the history of Indian democracy. The emergency imposed in 1975 shook the foundations of Indian democracy. During this period, citizens' fundamental rights were suspended, and opposition political parties were severely suppressed. Although democracy was restored after the emergency and Indira Gandhi admitted her mistake, this event permanently changed Indian politics. It proved that Congress's dominance was not permanent and that the Indian public was highly aware of democratic rights. This incident laid a strong foundation for the later rise of regional parties and led to the formation of the first non-Congress government in India through the Janata Party, although that government's stability did not last long.

In the period following the emergency, active participation of regional and backward class people increased in Indian politics. The 1980s was a time of rising extremist rebellions in Punjab and Assam, which highlighted the need for greater attention to center-state relations. Even though young leadership like Rajiv Gandhi introduced some reforms in technology and modernity after Indira Gandhi's assassination, allegations of power misuse and corruption also surfaced during his tenure. Incidents like the Bofors scandal significantly affected the Congress party's popularity and created distrust in the political system in the public mind. From 1989, a new trend began in Indian politics—coalition politics. During this time, no single party could achieve a majority in parliament, giving birth to weak and short-lived coalition governments at the center. This coalition era gave regional-level parties an opportunity to play a strong role in national politics, gradually shifting the balance of power from Delhi's central control to state capitals. The power of regional leaders increased, and they became capable of exerting significant influence on central government policy-making.

The 1990s are known in Indian political history for three important fundamental changes: economic liberalization, the rise of social justice politics due to the implementation of the Mandal Commission report, and the strong presence of Hindutva

politics through the rise of the Ram Temple movement. The economic liberalization adopted in 1991 under P. V. Narasimha Rao's leadership shook the foundation of Nehru's socialist and state-controlled economic model and integrated India with the global economy. This brought radical changes in the country's economic structure, employment, and citizens' lifestyles. The government's role transformed from regulator to facilitator. On the other hand, the implementation of the Mandal Commission report dramatically increased the political power of backward classes, making the issue of social justice the centerpiece of national politics. It broke traditional political equations and created new caste-based equations, aiding the rise of various regional and caste-based parties. In parallel, programs like the Aayodhya Ram Temple movement gave a strong base to Hindutva political forces like the Bharatiya Janata Party. These three forces together radically changed India's political environment.

Amid this complex political environment, the Bharatiya Janata Party rose. Under Atal Bihari Vajpayee's leadership, the Bharatiya Janata Party formed a stable coalition government, showing that a party with Hindutva ideals could successfully govern the country. His leadership initiated a new trend in national politics—consensus politics and emphasis on economic development. Although he did not completely reject Congress's secular policy, he protected his party's cultural nationalism within the coalition. During Vajpayee's time, the country advanced in nuclear power, and India's role in international relations became clearer. The infrastructure development schemes started by his government played an important role in India's economic progress. In 2004, the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance regained power. Under Manmohan Singh's leadership, this government achieved high economic growth rates and implemented important welfare schemes like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme for rural poverty alleviation. These schemes directly impacted the lives of the country's poor and brought the Congress party back closer to the people. However, toward the end of this period, several corruption allegations and policy paralysis created adverse public sentiment toward the government, leading to political instability and a new public opinion for change. In particular, the expansion of social media and spontaneous public movements added a new dimension to pressuring the government. This proved that India's politics is no longer based solely on elections, but public opinion and media influence also play crucial roles in government

stability.

In 2014, under Narendra Modi's leadership, the Bharatiya Janata Party achieved a single-party majority and took power, marking the influential role of a single party in Indian politics after Nehru's era. This change was not just a government transition, but the beginning of a fundamental transformation in India's political philosophy and governance style. Modi's politics moves away from the secular and socialist framework established by Nehru, accumulating power around a strong nationalist and cultural nation concept. His governance style is centralized, personality-driven, and focused on effective implementation of welfare schemes. He presents himself as an active prime minister directly involved in every important policy. Modi presents a vision of "New India," with special attention to infrastructure development, economic reforms, and establishing India as a strong power on the world stage. Through various schemes like Jan Dhan Yojana, Digital India Mission, and health insurance schemes, he connects directly with the public, weakening the old intermediary politics. His political philosophy shows a blend of Hindutva and development, which has given him massive electoral success. He emphasizes suppressing regional parties and revitalizing central power.

In this transformation trend, the concept of economic planning from Nehru's time has also largely changed. Five-year plans have been abolished, and NITI Aayog has been formed, which allows states to participate in policy-making while strengthening central control. A fundamental change has also occurred in foreign policy. Replacing Nehru's non-alignment policy, India now actively forms alliances with various global powers based on its interests. India's international image has become significantly stronger during his time. However, this new political trend has its own challenges. Centralization of power, weakness of the opposition, and debates over secularism are important issues in modern Indian politics. Questions about citizens' freedoms, media independence, and the autonomy of constitutional institutions are also raised from time to time. Many critics argue that the space for political tolerance and debate that existed in Nehru's time has made politics more divided and polarized under Modi's leadership.

From Nehru's beginning to Modi's present, this long journey of Indian politics indicates not just changes in prime ministers, but also the evolving changes in the social, economic, and cultural mindset of the Indian nation. Nehru's ideal was nation-building through institutions and seeking unity in diversity, with ample space for consensus and democratic debate. In contrast, under Modi's leadership, politics is more action-oriented, goal-based, and reliant on strong central control, with greater emphasis on the party's ideological position. This journey proves that India's democracy is resilient, but its political structure and public aspirations are continually changing with the flow of time. Each era had its own challenges and opportunities, guiding Indian democracy's path in new directions, but the core issue is the intactness of the country's fundamental democratic nature and constitutional values. Both leaders have left a deep imprint on the trajectory of Indian politics in their respective times, with far-reaching effects clearly present in India's current and future. The model Nehru established has been given a new form by Modi, preparing Indian politics to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.

## Ramcharan Bharali: The Sun of Nagara Naam

By: Dipak Kurmi

When the drums fall silent after a lifetime of devotion, they leave behind not emptiness but a resonance that reverberates through generations. At the stroke of midnight on November 6, 2025, Assam lost one of its most cherished cultural custodians—Ramcharan Bharali, the legendary Nagara Naam Pathak whose life embodied the sacred marriage of rhythm and spirituality. His passing at his residence in Kumarikata, Nalbari district, marks the end of an extraordinary journey that transformed village gatherings into transcendent experiences and elevated folk art to the realm of divine worship.

Born in 1939 in the tranquil village of Dehar Kalakuchi in Nalbari district, Ramcharan Bharali emerged from modest beginnings that would later inform his artistic authenticity. His parents, the late Lalit Chandra Bharali and Lakshmi Bharali, instilled in him the values of simplicity and discipline—qualities that would become the foundation of his artistic philosophy. His early education at Dehar Kalakuchi Primary School and subsequent years at Jagara High School until Class X provided him with fundamental learning, but it was the cultural milieu of rural Assam that truly shaped his consciousness. The rhythms of village life, the devotional practices of his community, and the oral traditions that flowed through lower Assam like an invisible river all contributed to the formation of an artist who would eventually become synonymous with Nagara Naam itself.

The year 1958 marked a pivotal turn in Bharali's life when he joined the 'Pragati Jatra Party', stepping onto the stage for the first time. For eleven years, he im-



mersed himself in the vibrant world of folk theatre, learning the nuances of performance, the art of connecting with audiences, and the power of cultural expression to move hearts and minds. These formative years in the jatra tradition—a theatrical form that combines music, drama, and social commentary—honed his instincts as a performer and deepened his understanding of how art could serve as both entertainment and spiritual elevation. The stage became his classroom, and every performance a lesson in the delicate balance between artistic excellence and emotional authenticity.

However, it was in 1967 that Ramcharan Bharali truly found his calling. That year, he founded the 'Dehar Kalakuchi Yuvak Naam Party', a cultural ensemble that would revolutionize the practice of Nagara Naam in Assam. Nagara Naam, a traditional form of devotional music centered around percussion and collective singing, had long been a part of Assamese spiritual life. But in Bharali's hands, it transcended its conventional boundaries. He

transformed ordinary village gatherings into profound spiritual experiences where rhythm became prayer and percussion became meditation. His voice, commanding yet filled with devotion, coupled with the thunderous resonance of the nagara drums, created an atmosphere that transported listeners beyond the mundane into the sacred. The poetic precision of his verses, drawn from the rich Vaishnava tradition of Assam, spoke directly to the hearts of his audiences, making each performance not merely a concert but a communion.

The true measure of Bharali's cultural significance became apparent during one of Assam's most tumultuous periods—the Assam Agitation of 1979. During this time of social and political upheaval, when the state was gripped by movements for identity and autonomy, Bharali composed a Nagara Naam performance that brilliantly wove together patriotic fervor and spiritual emotion. This composition resonated so deeply with the collective consciousness of Assam that it became an anthem of sorts,

performed repeatedly across the state by public demand for years afterward. It demonstrated Bharali's unique ability to make traditional art forms relevant to contemporary concerns, to use ancient spiritual practices as a vehicle for expressing modern aspirations and anxieties.

Recognition for Bharali's contribution to Assamese culture came in many forms. In 1994, he received a one-time assistance grant, but the most significant acknowledgment arrived in 1998 when the Assam Government bestowed upon him a state artiste pension—making him the first Nagara Naam Pathak to receive such an honor. This recognition was not merely ceremonial; it represented the state's acknowledgment that Bharali's work was essential to preserving Assam's cultural heritage. The accolades continued to flow throughout his career: the prestigious 'Nagara Surya' title from Asom Natya Sanmilitan in 2002, the 'Nibarana Bora Award' from Purvanchal Lok Parishad in 2008, and the 'Jeevan Jora Sanskriti Sadhana Award' in both 2008 and 2011. The 'Dr Ambedkar Kalashree Award' from Bharatiya Dalit Sahitya Akademi in 2010 recognized his work's social dimension, while the 'National Folklore Support Centre's Tata Fellowship' in 2012 acknowledged his importance to India's broader folk tradition. Later honors included the 'Enajori Bota' in 2015, the 'Mohan Baira Bota' in 2017, and the 'Naam Shiromoni Bota' in 2022. Each award testified to different facets of his artistic genius and cultural impact.

Yet Bharali's legacy extends far beyond stage performances and awards. Understanding the importance of documentation and preservation, he produced an im-

pressive 105 audio cassettes and 30 audio-visual cassettes, ensuring that future generations could access and learn from his interpretations of Nagara Naam. This foresight proved crucial in an era of rapid cultural change, where traditional art forms faced the constant threat of obsolescence. His artistic versatility also led him to cinema, where he appeared in short films including 'Biswa Boiragi', 'Neelam and Silent Killer', and the feature film 'Dithokot Heral Sapon', bringing the aesthetic and spiritual sensibility of Nagara Naam to new media and audiences.

What distinguished Ramcharan Bharali from mere performers was his understanding of Nagara Naam not as entertainment but as an offering—a sacred act that bridged the human and divine realms. His performances were characterized by sincerity rather than spectacle, by devotion rather than showmanship. He approached each performance as a form of worship, and this authenticity resonated with audiences who sensed they were witnessing not just art but prayer made audible.

Now, as the drums have fallen silent in his earthly home, Ramcharan Bharali leaves behind a legacy that transcends mortality. Known reverently as the 'Nagara Naamor Surjya'—the Sun of Nagara Naam—he will be remembered not merely as a performer but as a spiritual artist who transformed rhythm into devotion and silence into eternal music. His voice may have stilled, but its echo will continue to reverberate through the temples, courtyards, and hearts of Assam for generations to come, a testament to the enduring power of art rooted in devotion and authenticity. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpld@gmail.com)

# WHY YOUR BRAIN NEEDS A BOOK, NOT A SCREEN

By: Satvrat Borah

I came across a piece the other day that stopped me in my tracks. It was about how our brains crave books, not screens, and it hit me hard because, like most people, I spend way too much time scrolling. My phone's always in my hand, pulling me into a vortex of quick hits like social media posts, news snippets, random videos. But a neuroscientist's warning made me pause and think: maybe it's time to trade the screen for a book. Not just for fun, but for my brain's sake. October, with the Nobel Prize for Literature announcements, feels like the perfect moment to talk about this. It's a time when the world celebrates words, stories, and the power of reading, yet so many of us are drifting away from books. And science is telling us we might be missing out on something big.

Grégoire Borst, a professor of developmental psychology and cognitive neuroscience at Université Paris Descartes, shared some eye-opening insights in an interview with France 24 English. He explained that reading isn't just a nice way to pass the time. It's like a workout for your brain. Every page you turn is doing something to your mind, reshaping it, carving out new pathways for how you process information. It's not just about escaping into a good story (though that's a perk). Reading actively rewires your brain, making it sharper, more empathetic, and even more resilient as you age. I don't know about you, but the idea that something as simple as picking up a book could do all that feels like a revelation.

Let's talk about what happens when you read. Borst points out that the act of reading creates new neural connections. Your brain isn't static. It's constantly adapting, and every time you dive into a book, you're giving it a chance to grow. Whether it's a novel, a biography, or even a dense philoso-

phy text, the type of book matters because each one challenges your brain in different ways. A novel might pull you into someone else's perspective, forcing you to imagine their emotions and choices, which builds empathy. A nonfiction book might make you wrestle with complex ideas or memorize new facts, strengthening your memory. Even poetry, with its rhythm and imagery, lights up parts of your brain that don't get much action when you're just skimming headlines. It's like taking your mind to the gym, but instead of lifting weights, you're lifting ideas.

What struck me most was Borst's point about how just 10 minutes of reading a day can make a difference. Ten minutes! That's less time than I spend scrolling through my phone in the morning before I've even had coffee. Yet those 10 minutes can sharpen your thinking, boost your memory, and even help protect your brain from cognitive decline later in life. It's not about finding hours to get lost in a book (though that sounds lovely). It's about making reading a small, consistent habit, like brushing your teeth or taking a walk. And the benefits stack up over time. I think about my grandparents, who are still sharp as tacks in their 80s, and how they've always had a book on their nightstand. Maybe there's something to that.

But here's the kicker: fewer people are reading books these days. Global surveys show a decline in book reading, especially among younger generations. We're all so glued to our screens that picking up a book feels like a chore. I get it. Screens are easy. They're designed to hook us, to keep us scrolling with endless dopamine hits. A book, on the other hand, asks for effort. You have to focus, imagine, and engage. There's no algorithm feeding you the next sentence. But that effort is exactly what makes reading so powerful. It's not passive like watching a video or skimming

a post. It's active, and that's what makes your brain work harder and grow stronger.

I've been guilty of letting my reading habit slip. There was a time when I'd devour books such as novels, history, whatever I could get my hands on. But somewhere along the way, life got busy, and my phone became my default. I'd tell myself I didn't have time to read, but I'd still find 20 minutes to scroll through X or watch random clips online. Borst's interview made me realize I'm shortchanging myself. Reading isn't just about entertainment; it's about keeping my brain healthy. And honestly, it's about staying human in a world that's increasingly digital. When I read a book, I feel more connected to myself, to other people, to ideas. Scrolling doesn't do that—it just leaves me feeling empty. One of the coolest things Borst talked about is how reading builds empathy. When you read a novel, you're not just following a plot. You're stepping into someone else's shoes. You're living their joys, their pain, their choices. Your brain has to work to imagine their world, and that process makes you better at understanding people in real life. I think about books like "To Kill a Mockingbird" or "The Kite Runner", where I felt so deeply for the characters that it changed how I saw the world. That's not something you get from a quick video or a meme. Empathy is like a muscle, and reading is one of the best ways to strengthen it. In a world where we're often so divided, that feels more important than ever.

There's also the mental health angle. Reading can be a refuge, a way to slow down and escape the noise of the world. I've noticed that when I read, even for just a few minutes, I feel calmer, more grounded. It's like meditation, but with a story. Science backs this up—studies have shown that reading reduces stress, improves focus, and can even help with anxiety and depression. Borst



mentioned that reading regularly can protect against cognitive decline, which is a big deal as we age. Alzheimer's and dementia are scary prospects, but something as simple as reading might help keep them at bay. It's not a cure, but it's a step, and that's enough to make me want to pick up a book. So why aren't we reading more? Part of it is time, sure, but I think it's also a habit. We've trained ourselves to reach for our phones instead of a book. I'm as guilty as anyone—my Kindle app is right there on my phone, but I still end up on social media instead. Borst's advice to read for just 10 minutes a day feels doable, though. It's not about overhauling your life; it's about small changes. Maybe it's keeping a book on your nightstand or reading during your com-

mute. Maybe it's setting a timer to stop scrolling and start reading. I've started leaving a paperback on my couch, so it's the first thing I see when I sit down. It's a little nudge, but it's working.

October, with its focus on literature, feels like the perfect time to start. The Nobel Prize for Literature reminds us how powerful stories can be, how they shape not just our minds but our cultures. Whether it's a classic novel, a new best-seller, or even a collection of essays, there's something out there for everyone. And the science is clear: reading isn't just a luxury. It's a necessity. It makes us smarter, kinder, and healthier. So maybe it's time to put down the phone, even for just 10 minutes, and pick up a book. Your brain will thank you. I know mine's already starting to.



By: Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee

The mist rolled like ghostly silk over the Kaziranga forest, soft and spectral in the pale light of dawn. The call of a hornbill broke the silence once, then again, before fading into the stillness. On the bank of the Brahmaputra, the waters moved lazily, holding secrets as old as time. Beneath the towering elephant grass and ancient sal trees, something stirred—something that didn't belong to the waking world. Dr. Aarav Sen, a wildlife researcher from Guwahati University, adjusted his field binoculars and scanned the distant grasslands. The Kaziranga National Park was his second home—a land of rhinos, elephants, and tigers—but also a place of unseen forces. He had spent years studying nocturnal animal behaviour, but lately, reports from forest guards spoke of strange purple lights flickering among the trees at night, followed by sudden disappearances of deer and even one rhino calf. They called it "The Purple Shadow."

It was an unscientific term, of course, but in Kaziranga, myths moved as silently as the wind. Aarav's assistant, Rimali, joined him near the watchtower. "Sir, Biju from the guard post said he saw it again last night," she whispered. "By the Binoli Beel—a purple light moving just above the ground. And the next morning, they found a carcass with no marks. Just... no blood." Aarav frowned. "No blood? Impossible. A tiger kill, maybe scavenged." But there were no tracks. No footprints. Not even birds around it." Rimali said, her voice trembling slightly. He made a note in his worn journal. "Tonight, we'll go ourselves." The two set up a camp near Binoli Beel that evening. The forest turned into a breathing thing as darkness descended—crickets singing, frogs croaking in rhythm, and distant trumpets of elephants echoing across the plain. The air grew thick with the smell of damp earth and orchids.

Aarav's infrared camera was ready, positioned toward the water. The moon hid behind drifting clouds. Rimali checked the batteries, her fingers cold despite the heat. Then, sometime past midnight, a strange hum began to fill the air—low, almost like a vibration be-

## The Purple Shadow

neath the ground. The grass near the edge of the Beel shimmered faintly. Aarav lifted his binoculars and froze. There—a faint glow. Violet, almost luminous, floating barely a foot above the ground. It moved like a living creature, twisting and pulsing, casting shadows that seemed alive. "What in the world..." Aarav whispered. Rimali's breath caught. "Sir, it's real."

The purple light drifted toward the water, illuminating the reeds with an eerie fluorescence. Then, suddenly, everything went silent—no insects, no croaking—just the sound of the river breathing. Aarav lifted his camera to capture the moment, but the screen went black. The generator died. The air became heavy with the smell of burning ozone. Then they saw it.

From the light, a shape began to emerge—tall, thin, and indistinct. It shimmered like mist taking form, vaguely human, but the face was lost in shadows. A faint whisper floated through the air, as though a voice spoke from under water. Aarav's pulse raced. "Who's there?" The figure turned toward them, and for a split second, its eyes gleamed purple. Rimali screamed. And then everything went black. When Aarav woke, the sun was high, and the forest was once again filled with sounds. The purple light was gone. Rimali lay unconscious beside him, her pulse faint but steady. His watch had stopped at exactly 2:13 a.m. He helped her up, both shaken. "We're going back," he said. Back at the camp headquarters, Aarav downloaded the memory card. Most of the footage was corrupted—static, distortions, and then one strange frame: a flash of violet fog and the faint outline of a woman's face. Later that day, he met an old forest guard named Bhupen, who had worked in Kaziranga for forty years. When Aarav mentioned the purple shadow, Bhupen's face turned pale. You shouldn't go near the Beel after dark," the old man warned. "That's not for you to see."

"What do you mean?" Aarav asked. Bhupen looked away toward the river. "Many years ago, before the park was formed, a woman lived in a small village where the Beel now lies. Her name was Puhor. She was known for her healing—herbs, charms, forest remedies. But the British accused her of witchcraft after a soldier died of fever. They tied her to a tree and burned her hut." Aarav's throat went dry. "They say she cursed the place," Bhupen continued. "When the Beel flooded the next year, her house was swallowed. Since then, when the moon hides behind clouds, she walks—her soul glowing purple like the herbs she once burned. Animals vanish. Sometimes people too."

Rimali listened, silent and pale. "Superstition," Aarav muttered. Yet a chill crept up his spine. That night, the forest rumbled with thunder. Aarav couldn't sleep. He kept staring at the corrupted image—that faint face, its sorrow etched like smoke. Something inside him urged him to return. Against reason, he left the camp alone with a flashlight and his notebook. Rain began to fall, soft but steady, making the forest glisten. He reached the Beel—the same place where he had seen the light. He stood by the water's edge and called out softly, "Puhor?" The name hung in the air. For a moment, there was nothing. Then the mist thickened, swirling like breath. The purple glow returned—softer this time, almost mournful. Aarav felt neither fear nor courage—only a strange calm. A

woman's outline took shape again, clearer than before—long hair flowing as if underwater, her eyes like amethyst. She raised her hand toward him, and in that instant, he felt the weight of centuries—grief, injustice, fire, and silence. He whispered, "What do you want?" The answer came not in words, but in vision. He saw flashes—the woman tied to a post, villagers watching, the forest burning, her herbs scattering into the river. He saw her fall, her face calm as she whispered a prayer to the forest gods. And then, the purple flame rising as the Brahmaputra swallowed her home. When the vision ended, she looked at him—not with anger, but sorrow. Aarav said softly, "You want to be free." The light flickered, as though in response. He knelt and placed his notebook—filled with her story—on the wet ground. "You won't be forgotten," he whispered. For a moment, the glow brightened, flooding the Beel with violet light. Then, like mist in sunlight, she was gone. Only the smell of rain and wildflowers remained.

The next morning, Rimali found Aarav asleep near the water, the storm cleared. The air smelled fresh, alive. Around them, the birds sang louder than ever. And in the distance, a herd of elephants crossed the plains in quiet procession—something unseen in weeks. When Aarav returned to Guwahati, he sent his field report—not the one about the ghost, but about the mysterious bio-luminescent phenomenon possibly linked to phosphorescent fungal spores in decomposed flora. It was a scientific explanation—plausible, respectable. Yet, in the final line of his private journal, he wrote: "Science records what is seen. But the forest remembers what is felt. In Kaziranga, even the dead bloom with colour."

Months passed. The purple lights never appeared again. The guards stopped reporting animal vanishings. The Beel remained quiet—peaceful. But one evening, as the sun set over the Brahmaputra, Aarav received a parcel without a return address. Inside was a dried violet flower pressed between old parchment. The paper carried one faint line in Assamese: "The forest keeps its promise."

Years later, tourists at Kaziranga would still speak in whispers of The Purple Shadow—the spirit of a woman who once healed the land and whose soul now guarded it. Some said, on stormy nights, the Beel glowed faintly with a violet haze, not menacing but gentle—like a sigh of peace. Dr. Aarav never returned to that spot, but sometimes, in his dreams, he would walk through Kaziranga again—the rhinos grazing, elephants moving like ancient memories, and the river breathing secrets. In the heart of the forest, the purple light would flicker once—not in warning, but in gratitude. He would wake with the scent of wild orchids still lingering in the air, and he knew—some mysteries were not meant to be solved, only respected. Because in Kaziranga, where life and death, man and myth, science and spirit meet, even shadows have colours. And somewhere beyond the mist, the Purple Shadow still walks—soft, unseen, eternal. (International Tagore Awardee Poet Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee a former Affiliate Faculty of Virginia Commonwealth University is the writer of the story. Email profatanbhattacharjee@gmail.com)

in the passenger seat. As they drove, Ravi stole a quick glance at her. She seemed calm but slightly uneasy, as if weighing whether she had made the right choice by accepting a stranger's help.

"My name's Ravi," he said to break the silence.

"Anjali," she replied softly. The hum of the car filled the quiet between them until Ravi asked, "So where are you headed?"

"To my aunt's place in Trichy. I had gone to visit a friend in the next village. Didn't expect the scooter to give up on me."

Ravi chuckled lightly. "Machines have their own moods sometimes."

As darkness fell, the road grew lonelier. Ravi switched on the headlights, and the beams cut through the mist beginning to rise. Anjali shifted nervously. "Is this road safe at night?" she asked.

"It should be," Ravi answered, though even he wasn't entirely sure. Stories of highway robberies and accidents had made rounds in recent months.

Suddenly, as if to test their nerves, a truck thundered past in the opposite direction, honking loudly. Both of them jumped at the noise, then exchanged a laugh that eased the

tension. Minutes later, Ravi noticed a small teal stall glowing dimly on the roadside. He decided to stop. "Let's get some tea. A break will do us good."

They sat on wooden benches under a flickering bulb, sipping hot tea poured into steel tumblers. The stall owner, an old man, asked casually, "Long journey?"

"Yes," Ravi replied. "Just passing through." The old man nodded. "Drive carefully. This road is quiet, but sometimes too quiet. Always keep your eyes open."

His words echoed in Ravi's mind as they resumed their trip.

When they finally reached the outskirts of Trichy, city lights appeared in the distance. Anjali's face brightened. "Thank you so much, Ravi. I don't know what I would have done without your help."

Ravi smiled. "Sometimes the road throws surprises at us. Today, it was you."

She laughed gently and waved as she got down near her aunt's lane. Ravi watched her disappear into the narrow street, then started his engine again.

The road still stretched ahead, mysterious and endless, but Ravi felt strangely lighter. Helping someone had turned his tiring journey into a memory he would never forget.

## Echoes of a Promise

### A Love Story Beyond Time

(CONTD. FROM PREV ISSUE)

By: Chafikhur Rahman

The evening sky over Diphu was painted in deep orange when Rudra Baruah stepped out of his office. The air smelled of damp soil and smoke from cooking fires. Birds flew in a rush toward their nests, filling the sky with noisy wings. The town was settling for the night, but Rudra's mind was anything but calm.

All afternoon he had carried the weight of the file—Case No. 13/1995—and the faces inside it. Ratneswar and Kabita. A boy and girl who should have lived, should have married, should have grown old telling their children stories by the fire. Instead, their love had been cut down, their story left unfinished.

And the strangest part—the faces looked like his and Kabita's. It was not a small resemblance; it was as if the mirror of time had shown their younger selves.

When Rudra reached his quarter, he saw a white jeep standing near the gate. Kaberi Mahanta stepped out, her cream shawl wrapped neatly over her shoulders. Her eyes caught the way they had at the roadside the first day—calm yet carrying some storm inside.

"Good evening," she said softly. "Good evening," Rudra replied, surprised. "I didn't expect you."

"I couldn't sit still," Kaberi said. "That photograph has been haunting me since afternoon. May I come in?"

"Of course." They went inside. The caretaker Biren brought tea in two steel glasses and quietly left them. They sat across the table where Rudra had spread the file earlier. The photographs lay in a plastic pouch, safe but heavy with silence.

Kaberi leaned forward. "Tell me everything you read."

Rudra opened the file slowly and went through the pages with her—how Ratneswar was a poor farmer's son, how Kabita was the headman's daughter, how their love was first accepted and then resisted, how they were last seen walking to the river, and how their bodies were found. He showed her the informal note about the headman's possible anger, and the nephew, Nirmla.

Kaberi listened without speaking, her fingers clenched together. When he finished, she said in a low voice, "I don't believe this is only coincidence. Their faces—our faces—it means something. Maybe we don't understand it yet. But we cannot ignore it."

Rudra nodded. "I feel the same. But the law needs reasons, not feelings."

"Then let us find reasons," Kaberi said firmly. "You must reopen this case."

Rudra looked at her. "Do you really want this? Once we start, there will be resistance. Old wounds will open. Some powerful people will not like it."

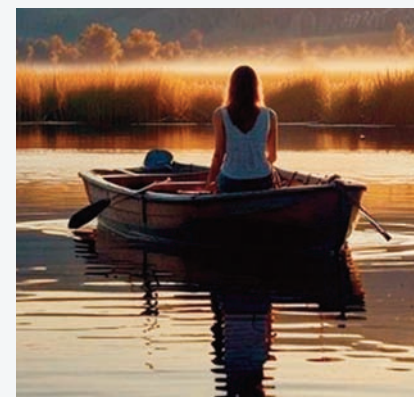
Kaberi's eyes did not waver. "I am not afraid. Justice delayed is still justice. If we can give peace to those souls—even after thirty years—it is worth it."

Her words struck Rudra deeply. He had spent years chasing criminals, solving cases, following law. But this felt different. This was not only duty—it was destiny.

"All right," he said. "I will move an application to the court. We'll reopen the file as a cold case investigation."

Kaberi exhaled as if a burden had shifted. For a moment, neither spoke. The silence between them was not empty; it was full of shared resolve. The night deepened. Outside, the cicadas sang. A dog barked far away. Rudra placed the photographs on the table again. He and Kaberi looked at them side by side.

Ratneswar and Kabita—smiling, holding books.



Rudra and Kaberi—alive now, staring at their shadows in another time.

"Do you feel it too?" Kaberi asked softly.

Rudra met her eyes. "Yes. It feels like we were there. Like some part of me remembers this river, this temple, even though I have never been here before."

Kaberi shivered slightly. "When I saw that girl's eyes, it was like looking into a mirror of my soul. I don't know if I believe in past lives, but—" She paused, searching for words. "—but maybe love is too strong to die once. Maybe it returns until it finds its end."

Rudra said nothing. But inside, he knew she had spoken his own thought.

By the time they finished tea, they had made a plan.

1. Secure the file—photocopies and digital scans would be made.
2. Meet the witnesses again—friends, relatives, teachers, anyone still alive.
3. Visit the river site and the old temple—to see the place with their own eyes.
4. Speak to the old father—Hari Rahang, who still wandered the forest, calling for his son.

Kaberi said, "I will use my office to help. We can arrange old records from the college too—admission registers, teacher notes. If anyone remembers, we will find them."

Rudra nodded. "And I will track down the investigating officers. If they left notes outside the file, I want to hear them."

They agreed to begin the very next morning with the river and Ratneswar's father.

When Kaberi rose to leave, she stood at the doorway a moment longer. The night wind carried the smell of pine and damp earth. The lamplight from inside fell on her face.

"Rudra," she said, not formally "Superintendent" or "Sa'ab." Just his name, soft. "I don't know what this journey will give us. But something tells me—it is not only about them. It is about us too."

Rudra's throat tightened. He wanted to say many things, but the words stayed locked. He only said, "We will see it through. Together."

Kaberi gave a small nod. Their eyes held for a long moment before she stepped into the waiting jeep.

As the sound of her car faded into the night, Rudra felt again the whisper he had heard before—like a name carried on wind. He closed his eyes and heard it clearly this time: "Ratneswar..."

He opened his eyes quickly. The road was empty. The trees stood still. But his heart beat faster.

Meanwhile...

At the edge of the river, under a moonlit sky, an old man sat on a stone. His white hair shone in the silver light. He dipped his hands in the water and whispered again and again, "Ratneswar... Ratneswar..."

The river answered with ripples, carrying the name downstream, as if the hills themselves were listening.

And somewhere in the stillness, the story of thirty years ago stirred awake. (CONTD. ON NEXT ISSUE)

By: Otteri Selva kumar

The sun was beginning to sink behind the trees when Ravi tightened his grip on the steering wheel. He had been driving for six hours straight, his little sedan humming tirelessly down the empty highway. The road stretched ahead like a black ribbon, bordered by golden paddy fields swaying gently in the wind. He was tired, but something inside urged him to keep going—he needed to reach his hometown before nightfall.

Just as he crossed a bend, Ravi noticed a figure waving by the roadside. It was a young woman, probably in her early twenties, standing beside a broken-down scooter. The way she kept glancing at the road made it clear she had been waiting for help for a while. Ravi slowed down, hesitated for a moment, and then pulled over.

"Do you need help?" he asked, lowering the window.

She looked relieved. "Yes, please. My scooter just stopped, and I don't know much about engines. Could you at least drop me at the next town? It's getting late."

Ravi nodded. "Of course. Put your things in the back."

She quickly gathered her small bag and sat

# India moving fast on path of development: PM Narendra Modi

**VARANASI, Nov 8:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said infrastructure is a major factor in the economic growth of developed countries around the world, and India is also moving fast on the path of development.

He said spiritual tourism has ushered in development in Uttar Pradesh, with devotees visiting pilgrimage sites contributing thousands of crores of rupees to the state's economy. The PM was speaking after flagging off four new Vande Bharat Express trains from the Banaras railway station in Varanasi, his Lok Sabha constituency.

"In developed countries across the world, the biggest reason for economic growth has been their infrastructure. In every nation that has achieved major progress, the driving force behind it has been infrastructure development," Modi said.

"Infrastructure is not just about big bridges and highways. Whenever such systems are developed anywhere, it sparks the overall development of that region," he said. Underlining India's fast-paced progress, the prime minister said, "With so many Vande Bharat trains running and flights arriving from countries across the world, all these developments are now linked to growth. Today, India is also moving rapidly on this path."

"Trains like Vande Bharat, Namoo Bharat and

Amrit Bharat are laying the foundation of a new generation of Indian Railways.

"Vande Bharat is a train of Indians, built by Indians for Indians, of which every Indian is proud," he said. Now even foreign travellers are amazed by Vande Bharat. Today, India has launched a campaign to improve its resources for a developed country and these trains are going to be a milestone in that, he added.

With the addition of the four new trains, Modi said, more than 160 Vande Bharat Express trains are now operational in the country.

Modi further said that spiritual tourism has become a major source of income and has ushered in development in Uttar Pradesh.

"In our country, pilgrimage has been considered a medium of national consciousness for centuries. These journeys are not merely routes for darshan of deities, but a sacred tradition that connects the soul of India," Modi said.

"Places like Prayagraj, Ayodhya, Haridwar, Chitrakoot and Kurukshetra are the centres of our spiritual beliefs," he said.

Today, as these sacred destinations are being connected through the Vande Bharat network, it is also linking India's culture, faith and development.

This is an important step towards making sym-



bols of India's heritage a representation of national growth, he said. "These journeys also have an economic aspect, which is often not discussed. Over the past 11 years, the development work done in Uttar Pradesh has elevated pilgrimage tourism to a new level," the PM said.

"Last year, more than 11 crore devotees came to Kashi for Baba Vishwanath's darshan, and since the construction of the Ram Temple, over 6 crore people have visited Ayodhya to seek the blessings of Ram Lalla.

"These devotees have contributed thousands of crores of rupees to Uttar Pradesh's economy and provided steady income to hotel owners, transport operators, local artists and boatmen," he said.

This has created new opportunities for the youth, Modi noted.

"Hundreds of young people in Varanasi are now starting new ventures, from transport to local businesses. Because of all this, the doors of prosperity are opening in Kashi and across Uttar Pradesh," he said. To realise the dream of a 'Viksit Bharat' (Developed India) from a 'Viksit Kashi', numerous infrastructure projects are being undertaken here, Modi said. Today, Kashi is experiencing continuous expansion, development and qualitative improvement, with facilities ranging from good hospitals, good roads, gas pipelines, and internet connectivity, he said. Work on the ropeway is progressing rapidly, he said.

"Our effort is to make visiting Varanasi, staying in Varanasi and enjoying the amenities of Varanasi a special experience for everyone," he added.

Modi said the government is also striving to improve health services in Varanasi.

He said 10-11 years ago, BHU hospital was the only option for people seeking treatment for serious illnesses. Due to the large number of patients, one could not get treatment even after waiting overnight. "For serious illnesses like cancer, people would sell their land and farms, and travel to Mumbai for treatment.

"Today, our government has worked to alleviate all these concerns of the people of Kashi. Ma-

hamana cancer hospital for cancer, Sankara Neralaya for eye treatment, state-of-the-art trauma centre at BHU, and divisional hospital at Shatabdi Chikitsalaya, Pandeypur, have all become a boon for Kashi, Purvanchal, and the surrounding states," he said. Due to Ayushman Bharat and Janashadhi Kendras in these hospitals, millions of poor people are saving crores of rupees. Kashi has become known as the health capital of this entire region, the prime minister said.

As the prime minister concluded his speech, slogans like "Hum Bharat ke wasi, dekh rahe hain viksit Kashi (We Indians are seeing a developed Kashi)" rent the air. Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath were also present at the event.

Kerala Governor Rajendra Arlekar, Union ministers Suresh Gopi, George Kurian and Ravneet Singh Bittu, and other dignitaries attended virtually.

The new Vande Bharat Express trains will operate on Banaras-Khajuraho, Lucknow-Saharanpur, Firozpur-Delhi and Ernakulam-Bengaluru routes.

The semi-high-speed trains will significantly reduce travel time between major stations, enhance regional mobility, promote tourism and support economic activity across the country, according to an official statement. (PTI)

## High turnout '65-volt' shock to Oppn: Modi

'I had started my campaign by visiting the birthplace of Bharat Ratna Karpoori Thakur'



**SITAMARHI/BETTIAH, Nov 8:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday claimed that people have given the opposition INDIA bloc a "65-volt jhatka" in the first phase of assembly elections in Bihar, and now they are spending "sleepless nights".

Modi wound up his extensive campaign for assembly polls in Bihar, where he cautioned voters that if the RJD-led opposition came to power, it would order them to hold their "hands up" by placing a "katta" on their head.

The PM seemed confident of an NDA win, claiming that the high turnout in the first phase was in favour of the ruling coalition. "You have given a 65 volt shock

to the opposition which is now having sleepless nights", said Modi, referring to the 65.09 per cent turnout registered across 121 assembly segments where voting was held on November 6.

He urged the electors to "break the record of the first phase on November 11" and ensure that the NDA not just wins "all the seats but established a lead in every booth".

Modi, who addressed a total of 14 rallies across the state, besides a roadshow in Patna, packed in a timespan of less than one month, reflected on his campaign at his final election meeting in Bettiah, where he also promised to be back again "for swearing in ceremony of a new NDA government".

"I had started my campaign by visiting the birthplace of Bharat Ratna Karpoori Thakur, and today I am bringing it to a close at the land where Bapu Gandhi transformed into the Mahatma", said Modi, in West Champaran district, recalling his first rally at Samastipur.

"My campaign ends today but canvassing will continue tomorrow. But voters' job begins on the day of polling. I will come again for the swearing in of an NDA government," said the Prime Minister.

Modi, whom Chief Minister Nitish Kumar accompanied only at his inaugural rally in Samastipur, providing some cannon fodder to the opposition, showered encomiums on the JD(U) supremo for having put an end to "jungle raj".

The PM, who has popularised "katta" as a metaphor for the RJD's alleged high-handedness, charged the main opposition party with having pointed a country-made, unlicensed pistol at the head of the Congress when the ally was refusing to back Tejashwi Yadav as the Chief Ministerial candidate.

Asserting that the people of Bihar "do not want a katta sarkaar", Modi voiced alarm over the RJD's poll campaign, in which children came on stage declaring that they wished to become "rangdaar" (street bullies), armed with unlicensed pistols and double barrel guns (dumaali).

"People are not voting for jungle raj wallahs because they know if these people come to power they will hold a katta at the head of the public with the order to hold hands up. People of Bihar do not want hands up but start ups, which only the NDA can facilitate," he said.

Although the Prime Minister refrained from mentioning leaders of the RJD and the Congress by names, he made ample references to "royal families" running these, "one most corrupt in the country" and the other "most corrupt in Bihar".

Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi was lampooned as a "Congress ke naamdaar" who was "practising drowning", a tongue in cheek reference to Gandhi's jumping into a muddy pond last week to interact with fishermen. (PTI)

## Op Sindoor very big inflection point for India's policy: Gen Naravane

**MUMBAI, Nov 8:** Operation Sindoor has been a very big inflection point as far as India's policy is concerned, former Army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane (Retd) has said.

Speaking at the CNBC-TV18 Global Leadership Summit 2025 in Mumbai on Friday, Gen Naravane also said India made it clear that it will not differentiate between terrorists and those who sponsor terrorism.

"Operation Sindoor has been a very big inflection point as far as our nation's policy is concerned.

"It has demonstrated to the world that not only do we have the political will but also the military capability to carry out whatever actions or operations are required for us," he said.

The former Army chief stressed the need to strengthen capabilities in emerging domains such as drones and unmanned systems.

Gen Naravane said that the phrase "If you want peace, prepare for war", attributed to Roman general Vegetius, is one of his favourite quotes.

Vikas Swarup, former Ambassador to Canada, said the operation was a shift from "dossiers to decisive force" against cross-border terrorism.

Operation Sindoor also affirmed India's stance against external mediation, despite US President Donald Trump's claims of de-escalating tensions, he said. (PTI)

## Rahul's 'dukaan' will be shut in Bihar as INDIA bloc will be wiped out in polls: Shah

**PURNEA (BIHAR), Nov 8:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday hit out at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, stating that his 'dukaan' (shop) will be shut in Bihar as the INDIA bloc will be wiped out in the assembly polls and the NDA would form the government after securing over 160 seats.

Addressing back-to-back election rallies in Purnea, Katihar and Supaul, Shah alleged that Gandhi and RJD's Tejashwi Yadav were "hell-bent" on making Bihar's Seemanchal region a "den" of infiltrators, and asserted that the Centre will detect and identify every illegal immigrant, delete their names from electoral rolls and deport them.

"Rahul Gandhi and Tejashwi Yadav are hell-bent on turning the Seemanchal region of Bihar into a den of infiltrators... We will detect and identify every illegal immigrant, delete their names from electoral rolls and deport them to their country," he added.



"If you don't want infiltrators to decide the next CM of Bihar, defeat the RJD-Congress combine that took out a yatra to save them," Shah said, while hitting out at Gandhi's 'Voter Adhikar Yatra'.

"Rahul Gandhi's 'dukaan' will be shut in Bihar as the INDIA bloc will be wiped out in the polls... NDA will form the government by securing 160 seats in the 243-member House," he said.

Attacking the Mahagathbandhan, Shah said RJD supremo Lalu Prasad and Congress leader Sonia Gandhi were worried about their sons, Tejashwi Yadav and Rahul Gandhi, respectively, while asserting that no seats were vacant for them either in Bihar or Delhi.

"Half of the state has already shown the door to the Congress-RJD combine," he claimed, referring to the first phase of the polls held on November 6.

Hitting out at the RJD, he said, "I agree with Tejashwi that Prime Minister Narendra Modi can't do in 'seven births' what Lalu did... He can't indulge in multiple scams."

A roadmap is ready to establish Bihar as an industrial centre through petroleum refinery and other projects, he said.

Waters from Nepal's rivers, which wreak floods and destruction in Bihar, will be used to irrigate farmers' fields, Shah added. (PTI)

## PM Modi flags off 4 new Vande Bharat trains from Banaras railway station

**VARANASI/LUCKNOW/BAREILLY (UP), Nov 8:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday flagged off four new Vande Bharat Express trains here from the Banaras railway station.

The new Vande Bharat Express trains will operate on the Banaras-Khajuraho, Lucknow-Saharanpur, Firozpur-Delhi and Ernakulam-Bengaluru routes.

The semi-high-speed trains will significantly reduce travel time between major stations, enhance regional mobility, promote tourism and support economic activity across the country, according to an official statement.

The Banaras-Khajuraho Vande Bharat will connect prominent cultural and religious destinations, including Varanasi, Prayagraj and Chitrakoot, officials said.

Addressing a gathering after the launch of the four trains, the prime minister said, "With so many Vande Bharat trains running and flights arriving from countries across the world, all these developments are now linked to growth. Today, India is also moving rapidly on this path."

"Trains like Vande Bharat, Namoo Bharat and Amrit Bharat are laying the foundation of a new generation of Indian Railways," he said.

Heavy security personnel were deployed for the prime minister's visit to Varanasi. Outside the railway station, a huge cutout of Modi became a centre of attraction for people.

Modi also interacted with children who gathered at the railway station and inside the Varanasi-Khajuraho Vande Bharat Express.

The children shared poems they had written with Modi. Later, in his speech, the PM lavished praises on the kids present at the event, saying that as the MP from Varanasi, he "felt so proud that my Kashi has such talented children".

Modi pitched the idea of a kids

'kavi sammelan' (poets' meet) while interacting with a group of children here during the flagging off ceremony of Vande Bharat trains on Saturday.

"The best 8-10 among them will be taken across the country for poetry recitals... As the Member of Parliament from Kashi, I had a very special and pleasant experience today. I heartily congratulate these children," Modi said.

"I was just talking to some students inside the Vande Bharat train. I congratulate Ashwini (Vaishnav) ji. He has started a wonderful tradition.

"Wherever the Vande Bharat train is launched, competitions are held among the children on various subjects -- regarding development, regarding Vande Bharat, pictures imagining a developed India and poems," the prime minister said.

UP Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak took part in the launch of Lucknow-Saharanpur Vande Bharat Express virtually.

The Lucknow-Saharanpur Vande Bharat train was given a grand welcome on arrival in Bareilly. UP's Forest and Environment Minister Arun Kumar Saxena, MP Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar and Mayor Umesh Gautam were present at the station.

Officials said the train is expected to cover the journey in approximately 7 hours and 45 minutes, saving nearly 1 hour of travel time.

The Lucknow-Saharanpur Vande Bharat Express will benefit passengers from Lucknow, Sitapur, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly, Moradabad, Bijnor, and Saharanpur while also improving access to the holy city of Haridwar.

By ensuring smoother and faster intercity travel across central and western Uttar Pradesh, Vande Bharat trains will play a key role in enhancing connectivity and regional development, the government said. (PTI)

## Himachal: BJP MLA from Churah booked under POCSO

**SHIMLA, Nov 8:** Three-time BJP MLA from Churah assembly segment Hans Raj has been booked under POCSO, a day after an FIR was filed against his personal assistant and another close aide on charges of kidnapping following a complaint from the father of the alleged victim.

The statement of the victim was recorded, and a case was registered against the MLA on Friday for alleged aggravated sexual intercourse under Section 6 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and sexual intercourse by making a false promise of marriage under Section 69 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), police said on Saturday.

Raj, who is a former deputy speaker of the Himachal Pradesh Assembly, has denied the allegations against him and claimed that they were politically motivated.

The alleged victim, belonging to a minority community, had claimed that she was a minor at the time of the incident.

Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Chamba Hitesh Lakhpanal confirmed to PTI on Saturday that a case has been registered. (PTI)

## India joins Brazil-led forest fund as observer, calls for stronger ambition 10 yrs after Paris pact

**NEW DELHI, Nov 8:** India has said global climate ambition remains inadequate even a decade after the Paris Agreement, as it joined Brazil's new global fund for tropical forests as an observer and called for developed nations to accelerate emission cuts and deliver promised climate finance.

Delivering India's statement at the Leaders' Summit of COP30 in Brazil's Belem on Friday, Indian Ambassador to Brazil Dinesh Bhatia reaffirmed the country's commitment to multilateralism and the Paris Agreement, which marks its 10th anniversary this year.

"India welcomes and supports Brazil's initiative in establishing the Tropical Forests Forever Facility (TFFF), representing a significant step towards collective and sustained global action for the preservation of tropical forests. India is pleased to join the Facility as an observer," Bhatia said.

Launched on Thursday, TFFF is a Brazil-led global fund to reward tropical countries for protecting and expanding forests. It aims to mobilise around USD 125 billion through public and private investment, using returns to pay nations that conserve forests.

India said COP30 is an opportunity to reflect on the global response to the challenge of global warming and to celebrate the legacy of the Rio Summit, where the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities were adopted.



Ten years after the Paris Agreement, the country said global ambition remains "inadequate" and that "many nations' NDCs (nationally determined contributions) fall short".

"While developing countries continue to take decisive climate action, developed countries that have disproportionately appropriated the global carbon budget must accelerate emission reductions and deliver the promised, adequate and predictable support," the ambassador said.

India urged developed nations to reach net zero much sooner than they have declared

and invest substantially in reaching net negative emissions.

While acknowledging the importance of mitigation, India stressed that it is equally important to focus attention on adaptation to address climate risks and vulnerabilities at the local level, more so in developing countries.

Bhatia said access to affordable finance, technology and capacity building is vital for developing countries to implement ambitious NDCs.

"Equitable, predictable and concessional climate finance remains the cornerstone for achieving global climate goals," he said.

NDCs are national climate plans under the Paris Agreement that set targets to cut emissions and adapt to climate change, guiding global efforts to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Countries are required to submit their third round of NDCs, referred to as "NDCs 3.0", for the 2031-2035 period this year.

Officials have said that India could submit its updated NDCs ahead of COP30 scheduled from November 10 to 21.

Highlighting India's domestic progress, Bhatia said the country has consistently pursued a low-carbon development pathway and achieved several of its climate targets ahead of schedule.

Between 2005 and 2020, he said, India reduced the emission intensity of its GDP by

36 per cent and this trend continues.

The ambassador said non-fossil fuel-based power now accounts for over half of India's total installed capacity, enabling it to meet its revised NDC target five years early.

He said India's forest and tree cover has expanded to 25.17 per cent of its geographical area, creating an additional carbon sink of 2.29 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide, equivalent to the period from 2005 to 2021.

"With around 200 GW of renewable energy, India is now the world's third-largest producer of renewable energy, while ambitious programmes in solar, wind, green hydrogen and biofuels are transforming its energy landscape," he said.

The ambassador also highlighted India's leadership in launching the International Solar Alliance with France in 2015, which now unites over 120 countries to promote affordable solar energy and South-South cooperation.

"Together, let us ensure that the next decade of climate action is defined not only by targets but by implementation, resilience, and shared responsibility based on mutual trust and fairness," he said.

Bhatia said the coming decade of climate action should focus not just on setting targets but on concrete implementation, building resilience and ensuring shared responsibility rooted in mutual trust and fairness. (PTI)

Khandu inaugurates new academic, administrative blocks at Dorjee Khandu Government College

## CM announces major hike in Karamveer Dorjee Khandu Merit Scholarship amounts

**HT Correspondent**

**TAWANG, Nov 8:** Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Saturday, inaugurated two new blocks — one academic and one administrative — of the Dorjee Khandu Government College, Tawang. Lauding the efforts of Principal Dr Yeshe Gyetsen, the Chief Minister commended the institution for its rapid growth on both academic and infrastructural fronts since its inception in 2016 with a temporary structure.

"With this new infrastructure, we take another firm step towards nurturing the next generation of thinkers, leaders and change-makers from the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh," he said.

Highlighting the transformative reforms under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, Khandu said that Arunachal Pradesh is implementing the policy in letter and spirit to ensure access, equity, quality, affordability and accountability in education. He informed that all educational institutions in the state are being strengthened in line with this national framework.

The Chief Minister expressed satisfaction that in a short span, Dorjee Khandu Government Col-



lege has emerged as one of the most disciplined and result-oriented institutions in the state. Urging students to uphold this tradition, he said, "Discipline is the foundation of success. I urge all students to carry this value with you beyond this campus and throughout your professional journey."

Responding to a memorandum submitted by the college principal, Khandu informed that the process for sanctioning additional faculty and ministerial staff is already un-

derway. He also directed the Tawang Deputy Commissioner to coordinate with the principal on the procurement of furniture, boundary demarcation and issuance of a land allotment certificate, assuring that funds will be provided for the construction of a boundary wall.

Recognising the importance of sports in education, the Chief Minister proposed developing a dedicated playground for the college near the Tawang Stadium. He suggested repurposing old structures

in the area and assured phased development of more infrastructures in the coming years.

Khandu also conveyed heartfelt gratitude to the college fraternity for honouring the legacy of his late father, after whom the college is named, through the Karamveer Dorjee Khandu Merit Scholarship, which his family has been sponsoring.

He announced a major enhancement of the scholarship amounts from the current academic year. The awards, earlier fixed at ₹ 35,000 for the first position, ₹ 23,000 for the second and ₹ 15,000 for the third, have now been enhanced to ₹ 5 lakh, ₹ 3 lakh and ₹ 2 lakh respectively.

Expressing pride over the college's outstanding performance, Khandu noted that the institution has consistently maintained over 95% pass percentage, achieving 100% results in the last two academic sessions.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Advisor (Education) Mutchu Mithi, MLAs Phurpa Tsering, Tsering Lhamu and Namegy Tsering, along with Education Commissioner Amjad Tak and the Deputy Commissioner of Tawang.

## Tripura govt working on modality for screening of suspected HIV cases: CM

**CM Manik Saha highlights plans for HIV screening and drug rehabilitation**



**AGARTALA, Nov 8:** Expressing concern over HIV infections in the state, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday said his government is working on preparing a modality to conduct screening on suspected HIV positive cases.

While speaking at a programme of the Association of Surgeons of India, Tripura chapter, he said government officials and various agen-

cies have been trying to control drug abuse in the state.

"Everybody knows the drug consignment is coming from Myanmar to Tripura via Assam and Mizoram. Tripura has become a corridor for drug smuggling," he said.

Saha said seizure, arrest and conviction in drug-related cases have increased with security agencies trying to contain the problem.

"Opposition parties pass adverse opinions when drugs are seized and people are arrested. The drugs are recovered because of proactive action taken by the law enforcement agencies. We know action was mild during their rule," he said.

"The government is working to prepare modalities to conduct screening of suspected HIV positive cases because many people don't want to undergo HIV screening. The more screening is done, the more cases of HIV positive cases will come up," he said, adding that only advanced cases of HIV carriers develop AIDS.

Saha said the government is also working for the proper rehabilitation of drug victims with a modern drug de-addiction centre coming up in Sepahijala district's Bishramganj with financial assistance from the North Eastern Council (NEC).

Noting that the government has already announced to set up de-addiction centres in each district for proper rehabilitation of drug abusers, the chief minister said 2,183 HIV carriers and AIDS patients are getting ₹ 2,000 each from the government. (PTI)

## NU organises precursor event for National Space Science Symposium

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Nov 8:** As a precursor to the National Space Science Symposium 2026, Nagaland University hosted a regional outreach programme titled "Igniting Young Minds through Science & Space" at its Lumami campus on Friday, according to a university release on Saturday.

The symposium, initiated by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Bangalore and the North East Space Applications Centre (NESAC), Umiang, Meghalaya will be held at NESAC in February next year. The outreach programme aimed to inspire students and young researchers in the Northeast to explore opportunities in space science and technology.

Prof Jagadish K Patnaik, Vice-Chancellor of Nagaland University and chief guest at the event, highlighted the journey of Bodhisattwa Sanghapriya, founder of IG Drones. He noted that Sanghapriya's contributions during Operation Sindoore demonstrated the transformative potential of student-led innovations on a national scale.

Himanshu Pandey from ISRO Bangalore, guest of honour, encouraged students to pursue careers in space research and highlighted ISRO's efforts in nurturing young talent. Dr Arup Borgohain, senior scientist at NESAC, spoke about the initiative's objectives, stressing the importance of fostering scientific curiosity in the region.

The programme included two technical sessions. Pandey provided an overview of India's space programme, covering major space centres and planetary exploration missions. Borgohain elaborated on the societal benefits of space technology, such as satellite navigation, disaster management support, agricultural technology applications and geotourism analytics. The outreach event served as a platform to connect students with leading scientists, providing insights into the evolving landscape of space science and emphasising the role of innovation in shaping the country's future.

## MANITEX 2025 marks return of Manipur textile expo

**IMPHAL, Nov 8:** After a two-year hiatus due to the Manipur violence, the Manipur International Textile Expo (MANITEX) returned this year, signaling a step towards normalcy and peace in the state. The five-day event was inaugurated on Saturday by Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla at Urban Haat, Nilakuthi, Imphal with participation from 16 countries.

Organised by the Directorate of Handlooms and Textiles under the Department of Textiles, Commerce and Industry, MANITEX 2025 carries the theme "Weaving a Sustainable Future: Manipur's Handloom Heritage to Global Fashion." The event showcases the state's rich handloom, handicraft and textile traditions, emphasising eco-friendly fabrics, natural dyes and sustainable weaving practices.

Addressing the inaugural function, Governor Bhalla said the expo celebrates Manipur's identity, creativity and craftsmanship. "Each weave tells a story of our people, our culture and our en-



during connection to the land," he said, highlighting the role of artisans, especially women in transforming skill into livelihood and bridging tradition with innovation.

Additional chief secretary Anurag Bajpai noted that the re-

turn of MANITEX represents another step toward restoring normalcy in the state. The event includes participation from international buyers and designers from Japan, the United States, Europe and the Middle East along with Indian designers like Krishna Mehta

Studio and Prama by Pratima Pandey. Expert sessions cover brand development, market access and sustainable production, while machine manufacturers, yarn suppliers and the National Handloom Development Corporation ensure full representation of the textile value chain.

As part of the inaugural ceremony, 3,000 frame looms and accessories were distributed to weavers under the National Handloom Development Programme and financial assistance was provided to 60 ex-trainee artisans for tool kits. The Governor also released the Data Book of National and State Awardees of Manipur and unveiled the Handlooms & Textiles Calendar 2026.

The Directorate of Handlooms and Textiles described MANITEX 2025 as a declaration of Manipur's enduring spirit, aiming to harness sustainable handloom heritage for inclusive economic growth and strengthening the state's global identity. (NNN)

## Namdapha Butterfly Festival 2025

**ITANAGAR, Nov 8:** The Namdapha Butterfly Festival in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district will be held from November 26 to 28, an official said.

Namdapha National Park & Tiger Reserve (NNP&TR) Field Director AK Deka said the event, which celebrates the rich biodiversity of the region, will take place at Khachang village in Miao. The three-day festival aims to bring together nature enthusiasts, researchers and local communities, he said. The festival is being organised by the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department in collaboration with several community groups, including the Khachang-Matungkhim Youth Forum, he added.

The Namdapha National Park and Tiger Reserve is known as one of the world's most biodiverse hotspots and is home to over 500 species of butterflies, making the festival a crucial platform for ecotourism and conservation awareness. It is home to the world's most spectacular butterflies, including Kaiser-i-Hind, the Blue Mormon, Peacock Pansy and the rarely seen Zig-zag Flat and Yellow Veined Lancer, the official said. (PTI)

## Manipur groups urge Sangai Festival funds be diverted to IDPs

**IMPHAL, Nov 8:** Following several organisations' calls to cancel this year's Sangai Festival, Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), has urged the government to allocate funds meant for the festival to help Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) still struggling due to the ongoing ethnic crisis.

The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity in a press conference held at its office in Lamphelpat on Friday said that diverting the festival's budget towards IDP welfare would be a more humane and responsible decision at a time when thousands remain displaced.

COCOMI co-convenor Yumkhaibam Surjitkumar Khuman said the situation of IDPs continues to be grim since violence erupted on May 3, 2023. "Many people from

Moreh, Churachandpur, Kangpokpi and other areas have been living in relief camps under dire conditions. The government's aid through Direct Benefit Transfer has been inconsistent and many received only partial assistance," he stated.

He criticised the government for prioritising celebrations over humanitarian needs, urging it to ensure fair relief distribution and focus on rehabilitation measures instead.

The Sangai Festival, named after the state's endangered brown-antlered deer, is Manipur's biggest annual tourism event. It has been celebrated since 2010, usually held for ten days from November 21 to 30. However, it was suspended for the past two years due to the state's turmoil.

Meanwhile, three prominent women's organisations - the All Ma-

nipur Women's Social Reformation and Development Samaj (Nupi Samaj), Ereipak Enaat Chanura Loinasillon Apunba Lup (EECHAL) and the All Manipur Tammi Chingmi Apunba Lup have also opposed the state government's plan to resume the festival this year.

Their leaders on Thursday at Manipur Press Club, Imphal said it was inappropriate to host a celebratory event when thousands of families are still living in relief camps, high-winds remain insecure and normal life has not yet returned.

The MAPI Council and United People's Front (UPF) have also appealed to the government to cancel the event, saying that holding the festival amid such suffering "amounts to ignoring the pain and tears of thousands affected by the ongoing crisis." (NNN)

## NPCC collects over 2 lakh signatures in 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' campaign

**KOHIMA, Nov 8:** The Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee (NPCC) has collected over two lakh signatures under the 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' campaign, which aims to promote clean elections and raise awareness against alleged electoral malpractice across the country, a party leader claimed on Saturday.

NPCC working president Khriedi Theunuo told reporters that while the AICC had set a target of 1.5 lakh signatures, the NPCC surpassed it, gathering 2,08,057 signatures from 12 District Congress Committees (DCCs).

Kohima contributed the highest with 72,000 signatures, followed by Dimapur with 50,000 and Mokokchung with 10,000.

Theunuo said the signatures will be submitted to the AICC headquarters in New Delhi, after which the Congress high command will forward them to the President of India.

The campaign, he noted, protests against alleged vote manipulation by the ruling BJP and its allies and seeks to uphold democratic integrity.

"The 'Vote Chor, Gaddi Chhod' campaign is a democratic awareness movement," Theunuo stated. NPCC president and Lok Sabha MP S Spongmeren Jamir congratulated party workers for the successful completion of the state-wide signature drive.

"Our first aim was to reach out to the grassroots people and focus on a clean election," Jamir said, adding that the campaign also marks the beginning of the Congress's preparation for the 2028 Assembly elections.

He reiterated that the Congress will "fight for a clean election" and highlight issues of misgovernance in the country.

"We are not going against individuals, but against policies and programmes that are not being delivered to the people," he said.

Jamir said that the campaign was not limited to Congress supporters.

"The signature campaign was open to all voters who value their precious vote. It is a conscious stand against vote manipulation, irrespective of party lines," he said. (PTI)

## Manipuri films shine at 56<sup>th</sup> IFFI

**IMPHAL, Nov 8:** Manipur State Film Development Society (MSFDS) announced a proud comeback for Manipuri cinema at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) 2025, with two films selected in the feature and non-feature categories, after a disappointing absence at last year's Indian Panorama.

Filmmaker Borun Thokchom's feature-length documentary 'Battlefield', an 80-minute exploration of the untold stories of the Second World War's Imphal battle has been selected in the non-feature section. Debutant Dinesh Naorem's 102-minute feature film 'Oitharei' ("Save My Soul") secured a spot in the feature section, marking a major milestone for Manipuri cinema. 'Battlefield' was incubated and developed at MSFDS' "Imphal Documentor," a five-day documentary development lab organised in collaboration with the Documentary Resource Initiative (DRI), Kolkata in 2022. (NNN)

## Three militants arrested in Manipur

**IMPHAL, Nov 8:** Security forces arrested three militants belonging to various proscribed outfits from Manipur's Imphal East district, police said on Saturday. A 22-year-old cadre of the banned Prepak was apprehended on Friday from her residence at Andro, a senior officer said.

Two active members of the banned People's Liberation Army were arrested from Khurai Lamlong and Porompat areas on Thursday, he said.

A firearm, ammunition and unaccounted cash of ₹ 60,300 were recovered from their possession.

They were accused of being involved in extortion from schools, brick-making units, hospitals and pharmacies in Imphal East, police said. Security forces have been conducting search operations in Manipur since ethnic violence broke out two years ago. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kukis-Zo groups since May 2023. (PTI)

## Glacier expedition underway to study climate change

**ITANAGAR, Nov 8:** The fourth Khangri glacier expedition, a major scientific mission to study the response of Himalayan glaciers to climate change, commenced on Saturday in the Mago Chu basin under the towering Gorichen Mountain in Arunachal Pradesh's Tawang district, an official said.

The week-long expedition, to be continued till November 15, is jointly organised by the Centre for Earth Sciences & Himalayan Studies (CESHS) and the National Centre for Polar & Ocean Research (NCPOR), he said.

Led by scientist Dr Parmanand Sharma, one of India's leading glaciologists, the expedition brings together a multidisciplinary team of scientists and engineers from CESHS, NCPOR, Nagaland University, and North East Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST). CESHS director Tana Taze said.

Despite the vast glaciated ex-



ppanse of the Arunachal Himalayas, scientists point out that very few glaciers in the region have been studied in detail, making it one of the least explored 'white spots' of the Indian cryosphere.

While the state is home to 161 glaciers covering nearly 223 square kilometres across four major basins - Manas, Subansiri,

climate, he said.

Researchers will also examine the evolution of glacial lakes in the region and assess the potential risks of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), which pose serious threats to downstream communities and infrastructure.

These glaciated basins are of critical hydrological importance as they form the headwaters of the Brahmaputra river system, a lifeline for millions across the north-eastern region.

Scientists believe that insights from this expedition will play a key role in understanding the intricate linkages between climate, cryosphere and hydrology in the Eastern Himalayas, Taze said.

By shedding light on one of the least understood glacial systems in the Indian Himalayas, the expedition is expected to make a significant contribution to the study of climate change impacts and to the long-term water security of the region, he added. (PTI)

The expedition's primary objective is to conduct systematic studies on glacier mass balance and movement to understand their differential responses to the changing

## APLA@50 Outreach Connect inspires civic awareness

**HT Correspondent**

**PASIGHAT, Nov 8:** The APLA@50 Outreach Connect, part of the Golden Jubilee celebration of the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, reached Jawaharlal Nehru College (JNC), Pasighat marking another milestone in its academic engagement across the state. Organised in collaboration with Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU) through its Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE), the event aimed to foster civic awareness, political understanding and youth engagement in democratic processes. The programme began with a debate on the motion "Implementing One Nation, One Election streamlines the electoral process," showcasing students' awareness of governance, electoral reforms and democratic responsibility.

Dr Tasi Taloh, Principal of JNC, in his welcome address, stressed the role of academic collaboration in nurturing informed and responsible citizens. Dr Saurav Mitra, Assistant Professor, CDOE, RGU and Coordinator of the Outreach Connect, explained that the initiative has been engaging students from 25 affiliated colleges across Arunachal Pradesh through debates, essay writing and poster competitions to promote critical thinking and civic learning. Prof Tomo Riba, Vice Chancellor of Arunachal Pradesh University, delivered the keynote address, urging students to develop civic consciousness and active citizenship. He emphasised awareness, positivity and participation in democratic processes as foundations of responsible citizenship and national unity. MLA Tapi Darang, representing the 38th Pasighat East Assembly Constituency, delivered the Chair's Address, recalling the special Assembly session of August 18, 2025 and highlighting the importance of connectivity in development. He underscored the need for both strong governance and a vigilant opposition for a healthy democracy and urged students to cultivate ownership of their institutions as a step toward national pride and progress.

# Ice broken with PCB, options being worked out to bring back Asia Cup trophy: Saikia

**NEW DELHI, Nov 8:** The cricket boards of India and Pakistan have managed to "break the ice" on the Asia Cup trophy dispute and will work towards finding a plausible solution in the coming days, BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia told PTI after meeting PCB chairman Mohsin Naqvi on the sidelines of an ICC gathering in Dubai.

The Asia Cup Trophy wasn't presented to India by Naqvi, who also happens to be the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) chairperson, after the winning team refused to accept it from him due to his anti-India position.

Suryakumar Yadav's men defeated Pakistan in the final of the T20 event held in Dubai on September 28.

"I was a part of both the informal and formal meeting of the ICC. PCB chairperson Mohsin Naqvi was also present. During the course of a formal meeting, it was not on agenda but ICC facilitated a meeting between myself and the PCB chief separately in the presence of a senior ICC office-bearer and another senior official," Saikia told PTI on Saturday.

"It was really good to start the process of negotiation. Both sides cordially participated in the meeting which took place on the sidelines of the ICC board meet," he added, assuring that a solution will be worked out soon.

While Saikia didn't wish to name any ICC official, it is reliably learnt that deputy chairman Imran Khawaja and CEO Sanjog Gupta initiated the discussions between the two cricket boards.



"Definitely, in coming times, if things go in a positive way, the issue will be sorted at the earliest," Saikia sounded positive.

The trophy has been lying at the ACC headquarters in Dubai with the staff there instructed by Naqvi to not move it without his permission. Naqvi, who is also the interior minister of Pakistan, has insisted that the Indians will have to accept the top prize from him.

"Both sides will work out something to solve the issue at the earliest. The ice has

been broken now, so various options will be worked out.

"There will be options from the other side as well and we will also give options on how to settle this issue and come to an amicable solution," Saikia said.

While there was speculation that a dispute resolution committee will be formed by the ICC to handle the matter, the BCCI secretary categorically denied any such move by the world body.

"Although one of the senior persons from

ICC is involved in the process of negotiation, there is no requirement of any such thing (a committee) at this stage. The issue will be resolved before any such drastic step is taken by the ICC," Saikia assured.

The two teams clashed thrice during the Asia Cup and tensions were high in all the matches. The Indians maintained a no-handshake policy with their Pakistani counterparts for the entirety of the tournament as a gesture of solidarity with the Pahalgam terror attack victims.

As hostilities mounted, players from the two teams openly mocked each other through offensive gestures resulting in penalties on both the sides for "bringing the game into disrepute."

## ICC lauds Women's WC in India

Saikia also informed that the ICC Board of Directors congratulated the BCCI for successfully hosting the Women's World Cup in India and Sri Lanka. The Indian women's team led by Harmanpreet Kaur defeated South Africa in the final in Navi Mumbai to claim its maiden ICC title.

"...they appreciated India's efforts...They congratulated India and South Africa (the two finalists) for their wonderful performances. The South African women's team was congratulated for three successive final appearances.

"It is now clear that South African women's team's graph is on the rise," said Saikia, who also attended the Financial & Commercial Affairs (F&CA) meeting as well as HR and Remuneration Committee meetings of the ICC. (PTI)

## India clinch T20I series against Australia as rain washes out 5<sup>th</sup> T20I

**BRISBANE, Nov 8:** India clinched the five-match T20 International series against Australia 2-1 after the fifth and final game was abandoned due to rain here on Saturday.

Put in to bat, India made a blazing start with openers Abhishek Sharma (23 not out off 13 balls) and Shubman Gill (29 not out off 16 balls) going on the offensive.

But lightning stopped play with India cruising at 52 for no loss in 4.5 overs. Soon after, heavy rain lashed the Gabba, forcing the match to be abandoned.

Earlier, Australia had their chances to remove the dangerous Abhishek early but failed to capitalise on them.

Glenn Maxwell dropped a sitter after the left-hander miscued a shot in the opening over, while Ben Dwarshuis spilled a regulation catch in the fourth over when Abhishek was on 11.

Three balls later, Abhishek thrilled the Indian fans with a powerful flat six over mid-wicket.

Gill, meanwhile, took a special liking to Dwarshuis, cracking three boundaries off the left-arm pacer in the third over to keep India's brisk start intact.

The first T20I had also been washed out, while Australia won the second game by four wickets.

However, India bounced back strongly to win the third and fourth matches by five wickets and 48 runs respectively.

Australia had won the preceding ODI series 2-1. (PTI)



## Hockey: Sanjay to lead India in Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, seniors rested

**NEW DELHI, Nov 8:** Defender Sanjay will lead the Indian men's hockey team at the 31st Sultan Azlan Shah Cup with several senior players rested for the prestigious invitational tournament scheduled to be held in Ipoh, Malaysia, from November 23 to 30.

Both of India's first choice goalkeepers Krishan Bahadur Pathak and Suraj Karkera have been rested and their places will be taken by Pawan and Mohith Honnenahalli Shashikumar. Regular skipper Harmanpreet Singh, the experienced midfielder Manpreet Singh and striker Mandeep Singh will also give the tournament a miss.

Sanjay, Jugraj Singh and Amit Rohidas are three senior players who have been named in defensive line. The defensive unit also includes Poovanna Chandura Boby, Nilam Sanjeev Xess and Yashdeep Siwach.

The midfield will be marshalled by Rajinder Singh, Raj Kumar Pal, Nilakanta Sharma, Rabichandra Singh Moirangthem, Vivek Sagar Prasad and Mohammed Raheel Mousen. The attack will be led by Sukhjeet Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Selvam Karthi, Aditya Arjun Lalage, Dilpreet Singh and Abhishek. The standbys for the tournament include Varun Kumar, Vishnu Kant Singh, Hardik Singh and Angad Bir Singh.

"The Sultan Azlan Shah Cup has always been a key tournament in



the international hockey calendar, and we are excited to participate with a balanced squad," Indian men's hockey team chief coach Craig Fulton said.

"Our focus has been on sharpening our structure in both attack and defence, improving decision-making under pressure, and maintaining consistency throughout the game. This group has shown great discipline and hunger in training, and we believe they are ready to take on the challenge," he said.

"We look forward to strong performances in Ipoh and using this tournament as an important step in our long-term 2026 World Cup and Asian Games cycle," he added.

India will open their campaign against Korea on November 23, followed by matches against Belgium (November 26) and New Zealand

(November 27) and Canada (November 29).

The tournament will be played in a round-robin format, with the top two teams qualifying for the final scheduled for November 30.

India last won the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup title in 2010 and finished as runners-up in 2019.

**Squad: Goalkeepers:** Pawan, Mohith Honnenahalli Shashikumar. **Defenders:** Chandura Boby, Nilam Sanjeev Xess, Yashdeep Siwach, Sanjay, Jugraj Singh, Amit Rohidas.

**Midfielders:** Rajinder Singh, Raj Kumar Pal, Nilakanta Sharma, Moirangthem Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Mohammed Raheel Mousen.

**Forwards:** Sukhjeet Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Selvam Karthi, Aditya Arjun Lalage, Dilpreet Singh, Abhishek. (PTI)

## ISL crisis: Mohun Bagan halt football activities, EB appeal BCCI for financial help



**KOLKATA, Nov 8:** Reigning Indian Super League champions Mohun Bagan Super Giant on Saturday suspended all their football activities indefinitely a day after the AIFF failed to receive a single bid for ISL's commercial rights, and said they will review contracts of players and support staff next month.

Late on Friday, the AIFF announced that it had not received any bid for the commercial rights of the already delayed ISL, leaving the future of the country's domestic football into disarray.

"Our players were to assemble on Monday for the camp from next day. But now our camp has been suspended indefinitely till there is clarity on the Indian Super League," a Mohun Bagan official told PTI.

"Now that the season is delayed with uncertainty on ISL, we will review all contracts next month. But we have not stopped anybody's salary, everyone is paid," the official added.

The AIFF had floated the Request for Proposals on October 16 for a 15-year contract to monetise the league's commercial rights. The submission deadline was November 7, with bids scheduled to be opened on November 11.

The Bid Evaluation Committee, headed by (retired) Justice Nageswara Rao and appointed on the orders of the Supreme Court, will meet later in the day to discuss the future course of action.

The Mohun Bagan official also said that the club would not suspend the salary of head coach Jose Molina who is on a "break" following his outburst against the team management after their Super Cup exit.

Molina had criticised the club management, saying he does not have any say in team selection after the group stage exit from the Super Cup on goal difference after playing out a draw against arch-rivals East Bengal.

The club management had earlier said a decision on his future would be taken only after there was clarity on the status of I-

League. "His contract runs till the end of the season, around April-May in a normal year. Now that the season is delayed with uncertainty on ISL, we will also review his contract next month. But we have not stopped his salary."

Business as usual for EB In contrast, East Bengal, who made the Super Cup semifinals after edging out Mohun Bagan on goal difference, have not suspended their operations and will resume training on Monday to prepare for the knockout leg scheduled for December 4.

As per the fixtures announced on Friday, East Bengal are slated to face Punjab FC in the semifinals, while FC Goa will meet Mumbai City FC. The final is scheduled for December 10.

"We have not yet suspended our operations. I personally feel ISL will go on. Indian football cannot stop like this. I strongly believe the Union Sports Ministry, AIFF and former officials will definitely not let it happen," East Bengal senior executive committee member Debabrata (Nitu) Sarkar told PTI.

"The Super Cup will also happen. Maybe there will be some changes or delay, but the knockouts will take place. I cannot talk about other clubs, but at East Bengal, our stakeholders have not taken any such decision to stop facilities or salaries. We will resume our camp from November 10 as per my information," Sarkar added.

## EB appeal BCCI

Sarkar also urged the BCCI, which is the richest cricket governing body in the world, to step in and support Indian football to bail out from the current crisis.

"Personally, I have an appeal. Football is the most popular sport worldwide and also in India. So my appeal is if the BCCI gets ready to sponsor Indian football for at least four-five years, for them Rs 100-150 crore is not much. If they take responsibility, Indian football can move forward in a better way. It can't get better than this," he said. (PTI)

## I prepared myself well for Australian conditions: Abhishek

**BRISBANE, Nov 8:** Abhishek Sharma prepared himself "mentally and technically" for months to take on the Australian challenge, and the results showed as the young opener took the "player of the series" award in India's hard-fought 2-1 triumph Down Under.

Having impressed with his aggressive batting at the top, the 24-year-old said he had for long looked forward to testing himself on the bouncy Australian pitches and against high-quality pace attack. He ended with 163 runs in five outings even as two matches were rained out.

"I have been waiting for this tournament. When I got to know we're going to Australia for the T20Is, I was very excited," Abhishek said after India sealed the rain-affected series 2-1 on Saturday.

"Throughout my career, I've seen that Australia is very batting-friendly, and I wanted to prepare myself for these kinds of bowlers and conditions."

The left-hander said his preparation focused on facing world-class fast bowlers and adapting his game to Australian surfaces.

"If you want to play good cricket and do well for your team, you have to face world-class bowlers. I was practicing for these kinds of bowlers because that's how you improve as a player," he said, when asked if Josh Hazlewood's absence in the



last three T20Is made it a bit easy for the India players.

He was also asked about his ultra-aggressive approach and Abhishek credited the Indian team management for giving him the freedom to play his natural game.

"The captain and coach have given me the clarity and confidence to just go and express myself. As a batter, when you're scoring 20s and 30s, you know you can go longer, but the clarity to set the momentum for the team has really helped me," he said. The Punjab youngster said the series had strengthened his resolve to push for a T20 World Cup berth next year.

"It will be a dream come true if I get to play the World Cup. As a kid, I always dreamt of winning it for India. I will make sure I'm ready for that tournament," he said. (PTI)

## Indian recurve archers eye revival at Asian Championships

**DHAKA, Nov 8:** India's recurve archers will look to end a prolonged medal drought and restore lost pride when they line up at the season-ending Asian Archery Championships, beginning here on Sunday.

The continental event will also serve as a crucial test for the squad ahead of next year's Asian Games in Japan.

India finished second behind Korea in the previous edition with three gold, one silver and three bronze medals (6-2-3 for Korea), thanks largely to their compound specialists.

The men's recurve contingent drew a blank, continuing a worrying slide that saw them return empty-handed from the World Championships this year and manage just four medals -- three bronze, one silver and no gold -- across four World Cup stages this year.

It also meant they could not qualify for the World Cup Final this year.

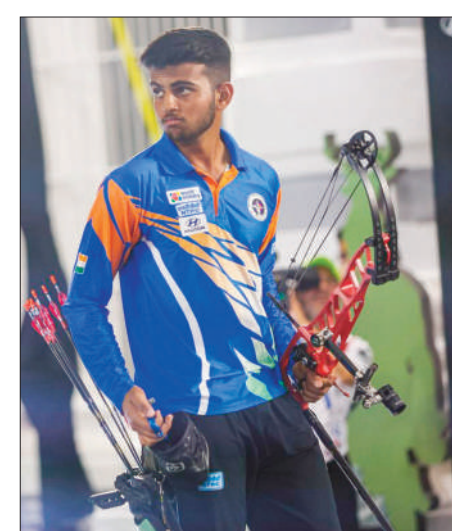
With archery powerhouse South Korea fielding a second-string side this time -- missing Olympic champion Kim Woo-jin and world No. 1 Kang Chae-young -- the Indian recurve teams, especially the men, will fancy their chances to end the barren run.

For India, it will also be a battle against rustiness as the archers return after a two-month-long break following the World Championships in September. In between some of them though competed at the inaugural Archery Premier League in October.

Atanu Das returns

The men's recurve lineup sees the return of former India No. 1 and two-time Olympian Atanu Das, who is in fine form having topped the selection trials.

Das last competed at the Antalya World Cup in June before missing out on the World Championships berth.



He will team up with Asian Games-bound Dhiraj Bommadevara, the country's top-ranked male recurve archer, and Yashdeep Bhoge, who returns after four years since his last appearance at the Chengdu World University Games in 2021.

The Korean men's team will be led by 33-year-old Jang Chae-hwan, alongside Jang Jiho, Seo Mingi (who topped their trials), and 20-year-old rookie Kim Yechan, the Chengdu University Games gold medalist.

In women's recurve, Deepika Kumari and Ankita Bhakat bring experience, and are joined by Anshika Kumari and debutant Sangeeta.

The Indian quartet will look to capitalise on Korea's relatively inexperienced women's side, which is missing its celebrated trio of Kang Chae-young, Lim Si-hyeon and An San.

Even without them, Korea remain formidable, led by Shanghai World Cup gold medalist Lee

Gahyun, former world champion Jang Min-hee (returning to international competition after four years), Olympic silver medalist Nam Su-hyeon, and veteran Kim Surin.

Jawkar back in compound fold In compound section, which has been India's strength over the past few years, the spotlight will be on Pratham Jawkar.

The Maharashtra archer returns to his pet discipline after briefly switching to recurve last year in pursuit of an Olympic medal.

With compound archery now included in the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, the 22-year-old 2023 World Cup winner has returned to compound as he would look to reclaim his form and rhythm after slipping to world No.105.

India's men's compound team of Abhishek Verma, Prathamesh Fuge, Sahil Jadhav (World University Games champion) and Jawkar will aim to improve upon their bronze from the last edition.

Veteran Verma will also look to go deep in the individual event having bagged a bronze in 2023.

In women's compound, veteran Jyothi Surekha Vennam spearheads a young lineup featuring Chikitha Taniparthi, Prithika Pradeep and Deepshikha, who returns after two years.

With Parneet Kaur, the defending champion, missing out this time, Jyothi's leadership will be crucial as India target another dominant showing after winning team gold last year.

## Teams: Recurve, Men:

Dhiraj Bommadevara, Atanu Das, Rahul, Yashdeep Bhoge; Women: Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat, Anshika Kumari, Sangeeta.

**Compound, Men:** Abhishek Verma, Prathamesh Fuge, Sahil Jadhav, Prathamesh Jawkar; Women: Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Chikitha Taniparthi, Prithika Pradeep, Deepshikha. (PTI)

## Sabalenko overcomes Anisimova and lines up Rybakina in title match at WTA Finals

**RIYADH, Nov 8:** No. 1-ranked Aryna Sabalenka reached the title match at the WTA Finals for the first time in three years after overcoming Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 3-6, 6-3 in the semifinals.

Sabalenka will play first-time finalist Elena Rybakina on Saturday.

No. 6 Rybakina beat No. 5 Jessica Pegula 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 on the back of 15 aces. Sabalenka was pushed to the brink by No. 4 Anisimova, who matched Sabalenka's power and aggression for more than two hours in a rematch of the U.S. Open final.

The first set lasted an hour. Anisimova missed five break chances and racked up 24 unforced errors.

But she halted that in the second set and broke Sabalenka three times to force a deciding set. Sabalenka made the decisive break for 4-3.

"Honestly, I wouldn't care if I would've lost this match because I think we played an incredible match and both of us deserve this place in the finals," Sabalenka said. "That was an incredible fight and I'm super happy to get the win."

Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion from Kazakhstan, has won all four of her matches this week, and clinched the win over Pegula on her first match point.

"It was not easy to come back but I'm glad I managed to find my way in the second set and win it in this three-sets battle," Rybakina said.

"The serve, when I needed it, helped me."

Pegula reached the final in 2023. (AP)