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- Israeli forces kill at least 10 in southern Syria raid, residents say
- Hong Kong firefighters make final search for survivors after apartment tower blaze kills 128

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- New India never bows nor hesitates from protecting its people: PM Modi
- Rahul seeks debate in Parliament on Delhi air pollution, questions PM Modi's silence

House passes Bill allowing 'labour line' land allocation to tea workers

A historic mistake corrected: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Nov 28: The Assam Assembly on Friday passed an amendment bill which will enable the government to distribute land in tea estates' labour lines among the workers for housing ownership, amid noisy scenes created by opposition AIUDF demanding land rights in 'char' (riverine) areas inhabited mostly by Bengali-speaking Muslims.

The ruling BJP legislators countered the commotion by raising 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma zindabad' slogans, as AIUDF MLAs trooped into the well of the House with posters and slogans demanding land 'patta' in char areas.

Earlier, taking part in the discussion on 'The Assam Fixation of Ceiling of Land Holdings (Amendment) Act, 2025', Sarma claimed that a historic mistake was being corrected by providing land rights to the workers who have been toiling in tea gardens for the last 200 years, uprooted from their native land and brought here by the British.

He said the demand for land rights in char areas will also be looked into by the government and survey of such areas has been started already.

"The contribution of the tea garden workers to Assamese society over the last 200 years is immense



and we are acknowledging it through this," Sarma said.

He maintained that the British had 'enslaved' the workers like in Western countries and these 'shackles' have been freed by this amendment bill which will provide them right over their land.

Under the proposed Act, 'labour lines' (tea garden labour colonies) will be excluded from the definition of ancillary purpose in tea estates in the original law.

It will enable the government to identify surplus land for development and redistributive use, and facilitate integration of tea garden labour housing into mainstream government housing, social welfare and public health pro-

grammes.

The extent of land to be allotted per tea garden worker's family will be notified by the government periodically.

The bill identifies a tea garden worker as a permanent or temporary labourer and descendants of workers residing within the labour lines areas of a tea estate on the date of commencement of the Act, belonging to Tea tribes and Adivasi communities as notified by the government from time to time.

The total number of tea estates in Assam is 825 and the area under labour colonies is around 2,18,553 bighas.

The total amount of compensation to be paid to affected parties

tentatively at the rate of Rs 3,000 per bigha will come to around Rs 65.57 crore.

Elaborating various schemes undertaken for tea workers' welfare, Sarma also referred to Prime Minister Narendra Modi working as a tea seller in his early years.

"After Modi ji became the prime minister, he asked us to work for the development of the tea tribes," he added.

Sarma said the government will also launch a scheme to provide monetary support to the tea workers to construct houses in their allotted land.

On the demand for rights on char land raised by the AIUDF, the CM said a survey of those areas was being done and eligible people will be provided rights in due course.

He asserted that evictions will continue to clear all encroached land and urged the AIUDF MLAs to persuade the illegal settlers, mostly Bengali-speaking Muslims, to clear out voluntarily.

Members of the ruling as well as opposition benches participated in the discussion, with all supporting providing land rights to the tea workers.

The discussion also witnessed some heated exchanges between the chief minister and Independent legislator (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assembly to have detention room for suspended MLAs

Speaker Daimary accepts minister Bimal Bora's proposal

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 28: In an unprecedented move aimed at maintaining discipline and decorum during legislative proceedings, the Assam Legislative Assembly is preparing to establish a dedicated detention room within its premises for Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who are suspended for disruptive behaviour.

Speaker of the Assembly, Biswajit Daimary, confirmed on Friday that the Assembly Secretariat will soon draft a detailed framework, including rules and operational procedures, governing the use of the proposed facility.

The initiative is intended to deter



persistent disturbances that hinder the smooth conduct of House business.

The decision follows a series of disruptions during Question Hour by suspended (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM launches scheme to provide stipend to students appearing for class 10 Board exams

GUWAHATI, Nov 28: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday launched a scheme for providing support to students appearing for the class 10 board examinations.

Under the 'Prerona' scheme, the state government will give Rs 300 per month till the exams are completed to ensure that they get basic amenities, including nutrition, the chief minister said at the launch programme here.

The government has already provided the money to the examinees for this month, and their board exam is scheduled in February next year, officials said.

"Many students appearing for the matriculation examinations come from poor backgrounds and lack the basic amenities like books, notebooks, stationery and even a cup of milk. This scheme will ensure that they are not deprived of the basics and are able to appear for the examination in the right frame of mind," Sarma said.

He said that the government is investing in the bright future of each child in the state and after school, there are schemes for girl students for admission to colleges.

"The scheme will empower 4.4

lakh students and will boost their confidence, reduce mental stress and result in fewer dropouts," he said.

Those appearing for the High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) under Assam State School Education Board (ASSEB), or the 10th board examinees who study under CBSE in Adarsha Vidyalayas and are domiciled in Assam will be eligible for the scheme, irrespective of their economic status.

Sarma urged the students to adopt a positive frame of mind towards studies and not stress about the examinations.

The CM also asked them not to be affected by any negative aspects like lack of adequate money to pursue studies.

"We are there to take care of the financial part, you just study sincerely and appear for the examination with a positive attitude," Sarma added.

He said that the scheme will reduce dropout rates among poor and rural students, increase overall pass percentage in the board exams and increase enrolment in government/provincialised schools and Adarsh Vidyalayas.

Students continue protests in Kokrajhar against move to grant ST status to six communities

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Nov 28: Student protests continued for the second consecutive day in Kokrajhar after the Assam Cabinet accepted the report of the Group of Ministers recommending Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for six communities of the state.

The decision has triggered widespread discontent among tribal student organisations, leading to demonstrations across Kokrajhar and other parts of Assam.

At Kokrajhar Science College, members of the ABSU students' unit staged a large protest opposing the Cabinet's move, arguing that the

six communities are socially and economically advanced and that according ST status to them would jeopardise the rights and identity of existing tribal groups.

The students locked the main entrance of the college and held a prolonged sit-in demonstration, raising slogans against the government's decision.

The college campus witnessed a charged atmosphere with students holding placards and shouting slogans such as "Stop ST status for six communities," "Assam government down," and "Anti-tribal go back."

Several hundred students joined the agita-

tion, blocking entry to the institution and pressing the government to withdraw the proposal.

The protest by Kokrajhar Science College's ABSU unit reflects growing unrest among tribal groups, who fear that extending ST status to the six communities will dilute longstanding tribal safeguards.

Student bodies said they will intensify protests in the coming days if the government proceeds with the recommendation.

More demonstrations are expected across the state as tensions continue to escalate over the issue.

Dibrugarh Police arrest trafficker, rescue three minors

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Nov 28: In a major breakthrough against child trafficking, Dibrugarh Police on Thursday evening apprehended a notorious trafficker, Vijay Patnaik (46), during a coordinated operation at Tinsukia Railway Station. The operation led to the rescue of three minors—two girls and one boy—who were reportedly on the verge of being transported out of Assam.

Police said a suo motu case has been registered at Lahowal Police Station, and Patnaik has been booked under Sections 137(2) (kidnapping) and 143(5) (trafficking of person) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

He has been remanded to judicial custody. The joint operation was carried out by personnel from Chabua and Lahowal police stations following specific intelligence inputs on the suspect's movement.

Patnaik, a resident of Kadamoni in Chabua, was intercepted just as he was preparing to board a train with the victims.

"We arrested the accused from Tinsukia

Railway Station and rescued three minors from his clutches. He was attempting to sell them outside Assam. We have taken him into custody and initiated further investigation," a police official said.

The official further stated that police received credible inputs indicating that Patnaik had been travelling with the minors and intended to traffic them outside the state.

"Based on the information, we launched a joint operation and successfully nabbed him," he added.

Initial investigations suggest that Patnaik is a key operative in a longstanding trafficking network, suspected of transporting numerous women and minors from Assam to other states for financial gain.

Police sources confirmed that he had been under surveillance for a considerable period.

Authorities said efforts are underway to identify additional members of the trafficking ring and trace earlier victims. The rescued minors have been placed under the care of child protection services.

71st death anniversary of Khorsing Terang observed in Diphu



HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 28: The 71st Death Anniversary of Khorsing Terang, the first Chief Executive Member of the then Mikir Hills District Council—now Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)—was observed on Friday in Diphu, the administrative headquarters of KAAC.

Chief executive member Tuliram Ronghang led the tributes by garlanding the statues of the late leader at both the old and new Khorsing Terang Memorial Gardens in the morning.

Senior officials, public representatives and members of cultural organisations joined in offering floral tributes. Speaking on the occasion, CEM Ronghang recalled (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Assam becomes first state to roll out MCU system

New facility to help criminal identification: ADGP

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 28: Assam has emerged as the first state in the country to operationalise the Measurement Collection Unit (MCU) mechanism under the Criminal Procedure Identification Act, 2022, in a significant step towards strengthening scientific crime detection and modernising policing practices.

The introduction of the MCU system marks a major shift from conventional methods of record-keeping, as it enables law enforcement agencies to gather and preserve a comprehensive range of biometric and physical data of accused persons through advanced forensic techniques.

Additional Director General of Police Munna Prasad said the new facilities would play a critical role in preventing repeat offences and improving the accuracy of criminal identification.

"The MCU initiative ensures that habitual offenders are effectively tracked and brought to justice. It is an important milestone in our journey towards scientific policing," he said on Friday.

Till now, police databases were largely limited to digitised fingerprints. Under the new system, authorities will additionally record retina scans, body measurements and other unique biometric attributes, creating a more de-

tailed and tamper-proof profile of suspects.

This information will be stored in a secure digital network that can be accessed by law enforcement agencies across various states, significantly strengthening interstate coordination during investigations.

Senior Police officials said that MCU facilities have already been established at all district headquarters in Assam, placing the state at the forefront of forensic technology integration in India.

The networked system will allow rapid cross-verification of identities, speeding up investigations and reducing the scope for errors.

The MCU mechanism is expected to be particularly effective in cases related to crimes against women and children.

DNA profiles of accused persons in such cases will be preserved as part of the database, enabling more efficient investigation of both current and future cases involving repeat offenders.

Sources within the police department indicated that the system would enhance transparency, streamline investigative procedures and strengthen the overall reliability of criminal identification. With the implementation of this (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

India to host UNESCO meet on intangible cultural heritage from Dec 8-13 at Red Fort

NEW DELHI, Nov 28: In a first, India is set to host a UNESCO meeting on safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage from December 8-13 at the historic Red Fort in Delhi, and preparations are underway for the key event.

A senior official of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Friday said the 17th century fort complex will be closed from December 5-14 in view of the event.

Built by Mughal emperor Shah Jahan as the palace fort of his capital Shahjahanabad, the Red Fort complex is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a centrally protected monument.

The twentieth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage will take place from December 8-13 in New

Delhi, UNESCO has said.

Security is expected to be tightened at and around the fort area, as the meeting will take place nearly a month after a high-intensity blast in a car near the Red Fort killed 15 people and injured more than two dozen on November 10.

The session will be chaired by Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of India to UNESCO, Vishal V Sharma.

"This is the first time India will host this UNESCO session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and so it is a matter of great pride," Sharma told PTI.

The upcoming December session comes a year-and-a-half after New Delhi hosted the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee

(WHC) from July 21-31, 2024 at the Bharat Mandapam.

Sharma had served as chairperson of the WHC during the 2024 event.

In an exclusive interview to PTI Videos on the sidelines of the WHC meet, he said that it had taken "four years of hard work" to bring the WHC session to India.

The envoy, based in Paris, had then also said that India's recent past has been full of confidence in consonance with 'Vikas Bhi, Vivasat Bhi' and the country's attention to preservation and conservation of its rich cultural heritage had "entered a new dimension".

The Ministry of Culture and its autonomous body, the Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) are the nodal (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Study seen as a major step in documenting the hidden biodiversity of the Northeast

13 new amphibian species discovered in Northeast India: Scientists

SHILLONG, Nov 28: Scientists have discovered 13 new species of amphibians in Northeast India, researchers at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) said.

Of the 13 newly described species, six were found in Arunachal Pradesh, three in Meghalaya, and one each in Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland and Manipur, officials said.

The study was carried out between 2019 and 2024 with support from the National Geographic Society and the Meghalaya Biodiversity Board.

The species belong to the genus Raorchestes and include R lawngtalaiensis (Mizoram), R barakensis (Assam), R narpuhensis and



R bouldengeri (Meghalaya), R monolithus (Manipur), R khonoma (Nagaland), and several others from Arunachal Pradesh, such as R

eaglestensis, R magnus and R nasuta.

The findings are the result of a major taxonomic study spanning

several years, led by Bitupan Boruah, a PhD scholar at WII, along with herpetologist Dr Abhijit Das of WII and Dr Deepak Veerappan of the Natural History Museum, London, and Newcastle University, UK.

The study is seen as a major step in documenting the hidden biodiversity of the Northeast, which forms part of two global biodiversity hotspots.

It used acoustics, genetics and morphology to identify the new species, they said.

According to the researchers, the century-old museum specimens from the India-Burma region that are kept in natural history institutions (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Airtel MD launches 'Safe Second Account'

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 28: Bharti Airtel Vice Chairman and Managing Director Gopal Vittal has issued a cautionary message to customers amid a surge in digital scams, warning that linking primary bank accounts to UPI and payment apps increases vulnerability to fraud.

In a letter addressed to Airtel users on Thursday, Vittal also announced the launch of Airtel Payments Bank's Safe Second Account, designed to keep day-to-day digital payments separate from main savings accounts.

Highlighting scams such as fake parcel delivery calls, phishing attempts and digital arrest frauds, Vittal said Airtel has strengthened its safety measures using advanced AI, including instant spam alerts and automatic blocking of fraudulent links. "Any crime or fraud on our network pains us deeply at Airtel. Your safety is and will always remain our highest priority," he said, adding that the new Safe Second Account offers an additional layer of financial security.

Explaining the features, he said the account is meant primarily for digital transactions and requires only a small balance while offering interest. Since Airtel Payments Bank does not extend credit, customers do not need to maintain large sums, reducing exposure to potential fraud.

LOST

I, Mamita Kumari Singh daughter of Ramashish Singh resident of Pub-Silputa, Bakulia, Karbi Anglong lost my Higher Secondary (HS) Admit Card bearing Roll No.20252018A079. If anybody found kindly contact

FDD BASED WIRELESS TACTICAL EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

E-Tender Notice No. SNT-03-LMG-2025-26-RT dated: 26-11-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **E-Tender No. SNT-03-LMG-2025-26-RT dated: 26-11-2025.** Name of work & Place: Trial of LTE-FDD based wireless tactical emergency communication system in Lumding-Badarpur section of Lumding Division. **Tender Value:** ₹5,20,73,530.49/- **Earnest Money:** ₹4,10,400/-. **Date & Time of Closing of Tender:** At 15.00 hrs. & opening at 15.30 hrs. on 12-01-2026. The complete information of above e-tender will be available in website www.ireps.gov.in

DSTE,Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

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CONSTRUCTION OF RCC OVERHEAD TANK

E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/77 of 2025 dated: 25-11-2025. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **Brief Description of Item:** Construction of RCC overhead tank 20,000 gallon capacity & repairs to 120 Nos. Quarter including provision of individual overhead Tank for supply of water in Quarters under the jurisdiction of SSE/W/ South/Lumding. **Tender Value:** ₹2,96,59,636/- **Earnest Money:** ₹2,98,300/-. **Date & Time of Closing of Tender:** 15.00 hrs. on 22-12-2025 & opening at 15.00 hrs. on 23-12-2025. The complete information of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. of 22-12-2025 in website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM(W),Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

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ASSOCIATE SIGNALLING WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

E-Tender No. : SNT-27-LMG-2025-26-RT; Dated: 25-11-2025; E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work. **Name of work :** Associate signalling works in connection with TTR(FS+TWS+WCMSC)-17 sets (1:12) & TTR(TWS+WCMSC)-18 sets (1:12) Guwahati- Chaparmukh section and TTR(TWS+WCMSC)-14sets (1:12) & TTR(FS+TWS+WCMSC)-31 sets (1:12) Chaparmukh- Lumding section. **Tender Value:** ₹62,28,991,77/- **Bid Security:** ₹1,24,600/-. **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hours and opening at 15:30 hours on 17-12-2025.** Complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website www.ireps.gov.in

DSTE, Lumding

NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY

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AFFIDAVIT

I Abdul Jabbar,S/O-Late Abdul Satar,Vill -Islam Nagar,P.O- Nilagan,PS- Hojai,Dist -Hojai (Assam). That my actual and correct name is Abdul Jabbar.That is my son Indian Passport Vide No - J1795531, Date of issue 02/09/2011, File No - GUWA01520611, Wherein my name wrongly has been recorded as Mihammad Abdul Jabbar instead of actual and correct name Abdul Jabbar. Mihammad Abdul Jabbar and Abdul Jabbar one and same person.Abul JabbarIslamnagar,Hojai (Assam)

LOST

I lost my Class 12 Pass Certificate bearing date 25/06/2020, Roll 0602, No. 10125 on 22/11/2025. Contact No. 9678744715. Akas Rongpi, S/O- Biswa Rongpi, Rukasen, Anlapaty, Diphu, Dist. Karbi Anglong, Assam

Indian economy remains world's fastest growing despite US tariffs

NEW DELHI, Nov 28: India's economy grew at a higher-than-expected 8.2 per cent - the fastest pace in six quarters - in July-September, as front-loading of production ahead of GST rates cut boosted consumption that helped offset the impact of steep US tariffs.

The 8.2 per cent gross domestic product (GDP) growth, which follows a 7.8 per cent expansion in the preceding April-June quarter, helped India retain the title of the world's fastest growing major economy, according to official data released on Friday.

The GDP growth came ahead of the festive season consumption boost on the back of the implementation of a significant reduction in the goods and services tax (GST). It, however, does not factor in the full quarter impact of an additional 25 per cent punitive tariff on Indian exports that took the total levy to 50 per cent in August.

The expansion, which was more than China's 4.8 per cent, was driven by higher public investments, services demand, industrial output and firm consumption, besides statistical effects of a low base (the economy grew at a below-average 5.6 per cent in the same quarter last fiscal).

A low GDP deflator also lent some buoyancy. Inflation based on both the Consumer Price Index and the Wholesale Price Index was lower in the second quarter compared to the first. Lower food inflation stoked discretionary spending.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi termed the GDP growth as "very encouraging."

"It reflects the impact of our pro-growth policies and reforms. It also reflects the hard work and enterprise of our people. Our government will continue to advance reforms and strengthen Ease of Living for every citizen," he said in a post on X.

Following the GST rate cut announcement by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day address, factories stepped up their output to meet



the festive season demand. The GST rate cut came into effect on September 22.

Private consumer spending, which accounts for around 57 per cent of GDP, rose 7.9 per cent in July-September - the second quarter of the current 2025-26 fiscal - compared to a 7 per cent rise a quarter ago, according to data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO).

Manufacturing output rose 9.1 per cent against a growth of 7.7 per cent in the preceding quarter and 7.6 per cent in the year-ago period, while construction expanded 7.2 per cent from 7.6 per cent in the previous quarter. Government spending decelerated, declining 2.7 per cent in Q2, compared to a growth of 7.4 per cent in the previous quarter.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the GDP print shows that reforms and fiscal consolidation drove the Indian economy's robust growth and momentum.

"Various high-frequency indicators also point to continued economic momentum and broad-based consumption growth," she said in a social media post. "The GDP estimates released today show the robust economic growth and momentum of the Indian economy. With a Real GDP growth rate of 8.2 per cent for Q2 - FY 2025-26 (July-September), India is the world's fastest-growing major economy."

The growth, she said, has been driven by sustained fiscal consolidation, targeted public investment, and various reforms that have strengthened productivity and improved ease of doing business.

The government is committed to sustaining

this growth momentum and advancing reforms that support long-term economic growth, she added.

Commenting on the GDP numbers, India's Chief Economic Adviser V Anantha Nageswaran said the Indian economy is expected to cross USD 4 trillion in the current fiscal year, given the current rate of growth.

India's GDP was USD 3.9 trillion in FY25, which ended March 31.

As India's economy recorded an 8 per cent growth rate in the first half of the current financial year, he said, the full-year outlook for GDP growth rate is now 7 per cent, or north of 7 per cent.

The third quarter (October-December) of the current fiscal year has commenced on a sound footing, he pointed out. Further, the rural demand remains resilient while urban demand is gaining traction post-GST rate cut.

While the real GDP growth at 8.2 per cent in the second quarter exceeded expectations, the nominal print was modest at 8.7 per cent.

The difference between real and nominal is the smallest since the third quarter of fiscal 2020.

The third quarter is expected to continue benefiting from a low base and deflator. Also, aiding is the GST rate cut that bolstered private consumption, complementing reduced income tax and interest rates cuts because of the RBI repo rate reductions.

Dharmakirti Joshi, Chief Economist, Crisil Ltd, said the GDP series is getting revised to a new base of 2022-23 from 2011-12, which will capture the economy better, but can lead to deviation from current esti-

mates.

DBS Bank economist Radhika Rao said the impact of deflator and low base was also reflected in the sub-9 per cent nominal GDP, which is running below the budgeted pace.

The RBI, she said, faces a challenging act at the December rate review, with the mix of a strong growth print and record low inflation.

"We expect an emphasis on forward-looking growth guidance and a high real rate buffer due to weak inflation, to justify a move to lower rates further."

Upasna Bhardwaj, Chief Economist, Kotak Mahindra Bank, said the single-digit nominal GDP growth continues to signal tepid underlying activity.

"Despite the high real GDP growth, we retain our expectations of a 25 bps rate cut in the upcoming policy as the inflation trajectory remains benign."

Vedanta Chairman Anil Agarwal said the GDP growth shows India's economy is "amazingly resilient".

"At a time of global headwinds, a growth rate of over 8 per cent is very impressive. Domestic demand and deregulation can take it to double digits. We are continuously strengthening our position as the world's fastest-growing major economy," he said.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is currently in the process of revising the base year of National Accounts from 2011-12 (Current Series) to 2022-23 (New Series).

Therefore, the quarterly estimates will undergo revisions due to changes in the methodology of estimation at the current and constant prices, incorporation of updated and new data sources, and updation of the annual benchmark, among others, it said.

"Users should take these factors into consideration while interpreting the subsequent revised estimates. The next quarterly GDP estimates based on the New Series will be released on February 27, 2026," it added. (PTI)

Stock markets close flat in highly volatile trade ahead of macro data



MUMBAI, Nov 28: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty closed almost unchanged in a highly volatile trade on Friday as investors stayed on the sidelines ahead of key macroeconomic data announcements in post-market hours.

Halting its two-day rally, the 30-share BSE Sensex slipped by 13.71 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 85,706.67. During the day, it hit a high of 85,969.89 and a low of 85,577.82, gyrating 392.07 points.

The 50-share NSE Nifty skidded 12.60 points or 0.05 per cent to 26,202.95.

The key indices had raced to record highs in intra-day trade on Thursday but ended almost flat due to profit-taking by investors in the second half of the session.

"Markets traded lacklustre on Friday and ended almost unchanged, taking a breather after hitting fresh record highs," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare

Broking Ltd, said.

Fresh foreign fund outflows and largely muted global market trends kept the stock markets range-bound, analysts said.

Among Sensex firms, Power Grid, Eternal, Bharti Airtel, Axis Bank and Infosys were the biggest laggards.

However, Mahindra & Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Kotak Mahindra Bank and State Bank of India were among the major gainers.

The BSE smallcap gauge dipped 0.13 per cent and midcap index edged marginally lower by 0.04 per cent. Among sectoral indices, oil & gas declined 0.97 per cent, telecommunication (0.91 per cent), energy (0.64 per cent), power (0.57 per cent) and utilities (0.37 per cent).

Auto, consumer discretionary, healthcare, metal and services were among the winners.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark climbed 474.75 points or 0.55 per cent, and the Nifty

went up by 134.8 points or 0.51 per cent.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said, "Indian equities stayed resilient, even as selective profit booking emerged in the broader market after the recent upswing."

Official data released in post-market hours showed that the Indian economy recorded a six-quarter high growth of 8.2 per cent in July-September, as factories churned out more products in anticipation of a consumption boost from the GST rate cut.

The government will release IIP data on Monday, December 1.

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

Markets in Europe were trading mostly lower. US markets were closed on Thursday due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 1,255.20 crore on Thursday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) bought stocks worth Rs 3,940.87 crore, according to exchange data.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, went up by 0.25 per cent to USD 63.50 per barrel.

Rising for the second day on Thursday, the Sensex climbed 110.87 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 85,720.38. During the day, it hit a record high of 86,055.86. The Nifty ended marginally higher by 10.25 points or 0.04 per cent at 26,215.55. During the day, the benchmark hit an all-time high of 26,310.45. (PTI)

India actively negotiating trade pacts with US, EU: Goyal

NEW DELHI, Nov 28: India is at present negotiating free trade agreements with a number of trading partners, including the US and European Union, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Friday.

India is working with its 'trusted' trading partners through these agreements to boost economic ties, he said.

"We have all seen trade being weaponised. We have all seen the importance of having trusted partners around the world," he said, adding that at this moment, India is in talks with individual countries and groups of nations totalling about 50.

The remarks come at a time when a steep hike in tariffs by the US has disrupted global trade. The Donald Trump administration has imposed a 50 per cent import duty on Indian goods entering American markets since August 27.

The minister informed that GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) too is interested in trade pact talks. GCC is a union of six countries in the Gulf region — Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.

New Delhi has already implemented a comprehensive trade agreement with the UAE. Talks with Oman are on the verge of completion.

Bahrain and Qatar want to enter into negotiations with India, he said, adding that the GCC is also talking.



"The whole six-nation group would like to engage. We are talking to New Zealand... We are in active discussions with the US and with 27-nation EU," the minister said here at the Ficci annual general meeting.

India and the US are negotiating a bilateral trade agreement. So far, six rounds of negotiations have been completed. They have aimed to conclude the first phase of the pact by the fall of this year.

Further, the minister stated that India is reviewing its trade pacts with 10-nation ASEAN bloc and with Korea to bring more balance to it.

Asian members include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

"We are working with Eurasia (EAEU), which has started negotiations yesterday or the day before yesterday. We are equally engaged to start negotiations very quickly with Israel. Canada and India are looking at CEPA (comprehensive economic partnership agreement). Next week, they are going to start a conversation around that," he

added.

The five-member South African Customs Union (SACU) and Mercosur group also want to negotiate, he said.

SACU nations include South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Eswatini, and it is the world's oldest customs union, over a century old.

Mercosur is a trading bloc in Latin America, comprising Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.

India and the five-nation grouping, the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), on August 20, inked the terms of reference for the agreement.

Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan are the five member countries of EAEU.

India and Canada have agreed to resume negotiations for the CEPA with an aim to increase the two-way trade to USD 50 billion by 2030.

In 2023, Canada paused negotiations for a free trade agreement with India.

In a trade agreement, two or more countries negotiate provisions either to significantly reduce or eliminate import duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. They also ease rules to promote the movement of professionals and attract investments. India has so far implemented such agreements with a number of nations, including Singapore, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Australia. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

A historic mistake

Akhil Gogoi as both levelled accusations against each other over their past. The AIUFD, while supporting the move, created noisy scene as Speaker Biswajit Daimary placed the bill to be passed.

They walked into the well of the Houses, holding posters and raising slogans for ownership rights in char areas. As the bill was passed by a voice vote, the AIUFD legislators staged a walk out. (PTI)

Assembly to have

MLA Akhil Gogoi, whose continued attempts to interrupt proceedings triggered renewed uproar in the House on Thursday.

The repeated disorder led to calls from within the government benches for stricter measures to enforce discipline inside the Assembly.

Soon after Gogoi's suspension, Minister Bimal Borah advocated the creation of a designated space within the Assembly complex where suspended members could be confined temporarily to prevent any further disruption of proceedings.

His suggestion received backing from several members who expressed concern over the frequent disturbances affecting the functioning of the House.

Responding to the growing demand for institutional safeguards, Speaker Daimary formally announced that arrangements to set up the detention room would be initiated at the earliest.

He stated that such a facility would help ensure that the Assembly's business is conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner, while also reinforcing respect for legislative norms and procedures.

The proposal has generated considerable political attention, especially in the wake of recent confrontational sessions and strong criticism of the government from certain opposition members.

While supporters describe the move as necessary to preserve the dignity of the House, critics view it as controversial and potentially excessive.

Officials said further clarity on the location, duration of detention and safeguards for members would be provided once the Secretariat finalises the guidelines.

The move marks a significant shift in how the Assembly intends to manage indiscipline on the floor, underscoring a tougher stand on disruptions during legislative proceedings.

Uproar in Assam

being addressed. Dissatisfied, the Leader of Opposition walked out of the House.

After Saikia left, Borah remarked that the Congress "does not have the patience to listen to affairs of the tea garden workers" and treats them merely as a vote bank.

The comment triggered a sharp reaction from Congress MLAs, who rose to their feet to protest.

Saikia also returned to the House and joined his party MLAs in questioning government initiatives for the tea sector.

As noisy scenes continued, deputy speaker Numal Momin adjourned proceedings for 20 minutes. (PTI)

New facility to help

initiative, Assam has taken a decisive step towards building a more technology-driven, accountable and efficient law enforcement framework, aimed at deterring recurring criminal activity and improving public safety across the state.

71st death anniversary

Terang's contributions to the growth and equitance of the region and described him as a pioneering figure whose service continues to inspire generations.

An all-religion prayer was also organised for the eternal peace of the departed leader.

A drawing competition for children was held as part of the commemorative programme.

Those present included MP Amarsing Tisso; KAAC Chairman Raju Tisso; Executive Members Ritesh Engli, Madhuram Lekhe and Richard Tokbi; Karbi Cultural Society president Humsing Bey; District Commissioner Nirola Phangchopi; Padmasree Dhaneshwar Engti; Members of the Autonomous Council; chairpersons of various boards and several dignitaries.

India to host UNESCO

agencies to host the December meet of UNESCO in December.

The global event "underscores India's intent to align tangible and intangible heritage and highlight its role in cultural diplomacy under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," the ministry has said.

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was established under the framework of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage.

The 24 member states currently serving on the committee are - France, Germany, Spain, Slovakia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Barbados, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Paraguay, Bangladesh, China, India, Malaysia, Viet Nam, Angola, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, Algeria, Mauritania and the United Arab Emirates, according to UNESCO website.

Preparations are underway for its 2025 session which will host delegates from several countries.

Throughout the session, a series of side events on the theme of safeguarding living heritage are expected to be organised outside the plenary meetings, it is learnt.

These events are meant to enrich and complement the main session by providing opportunities to discuss, share experiences, celebrate achievements, while exploring collaborations to promote and safeguard cultural diversity.

The venue of the session -- the Red Fort complex -- is famous for its massive enclosing walls, and is a popular tourist attraction in the national capital. Its construction was completed over a span of ten years, between 1638 and 1648.

In 2023, the fort site was the venue for the maiden India Art, Architecture and Design Biennale (IAADB) held from December 9-15. It also included seven "especially-curated" thematic exhibitions, which were housed in three British-era barracks located on the premises of the Mughal-era monument. (PTI)

13 new amphibian

abroad are also examined, helping clarify long-standing classification gaps.

Based on sampling across 81 localities in eight states, including 25 protected areas, the researchers also revised species distributions and synonymised four previously described species. With the latest discoveries, the number of known bush frog species in India has risen from 82 to 95.

Published in the latest volume of the journal Vertebrate Zoology, the work helps resolve longstanding taxonomic gaps surrounding the tiny "tik-tik" bush frogs of the region and opens new avenues for understanding their conservation status and ecology, officials said. (PTI)

Government rolls out integrated planning blueprint for 10 major cities under Doh Shafer Ek Rupayan

CAPs launched to drive citizen-led urban transformation in state

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 28: The Government of Assam, in partnership with Janaagraha, recently launched eight City Action Plans (CAPs) under its flagship urban development programme Doh Shafer Ek Rupayan, marking a major shift toward participatory and integrated city planning.

The Plans were unveiled by Housing & Urban Affairs Minister Jayanta Mallabarua in the presence of municipal leaders, government officials, partner institutions and civil society representatives.

Designed as citizen-centric vision documents, the City Action Plans serve as blueprints to guide sustainable transformation across ten rapidly growing urban centres—Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, North Lakhimpur, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Tezpur, Nagaon, Nalbari, Dhubri and Silchar.

Based on extensive consultations at SHG and ward levels, the Plans compile community-identified priorities in areas such as solid waste management, sanitation, drinking water, mobility and blue-green infrastructure.

Inputs gathered from these consultations were consolidated into a thematic project pipeline, which was then prioritised and approved by the Municipal Planning Com-



mittee chaired by the District Commissioner.

The body includes the Municipal Chairperson, city heads, and representatives of key departments such as AMRUT, SBM, PHE, PWD, AUWSSB, Pollution Control Board and Transport, enabling cross-departmental coordination.

Officials said the CAPs form the operational foundation of Doh Shafer Ek Rupayan, which brings together multiple missions and funding streams under one unified framework.

The model seeks to break departmental silos, minimise duplication and ensure that resource

allocation aligns with ground-level needs identified directly by residents.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Jayanta Mallabarua said the initiative marks a significant administrative reform and will be expanded to all 104 Urban Local Bodies in Assam.

He stressed that cities adhering to their Action Plans would be incentivised with additional funding.

"Very often departments work in silos, resulting in overlaps and inefficient use of funds. Integrated planning is essential. Under the leadership of the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam's urban initiatives

are being recognised as best practices by other states," he said.

Mallabarua added that the State has begun prioritising the protection of water bodies, identifying more than 2,000 such assets and operationalising The Assam Urban Water Bodies Act across ULBs to ensure long-term conservation.

Commissioner & Secretary, Housing & Urban Affairs, Kavitha Padmanabhan, IAS, said the programme represents India's first truly city-centric planning model.

"These Plans reflect what citizens actually want. They are not documents prepared from behind a desk," she said.

Janaagraha CEO Srikanth Viswanathan described Doh Shafer Ek Rupayan as a pioneering effort that could serve as a model for mid- and small-sized cities across India.

He said the integrated approach provides a unified vision that informs financing and annual budgeting in a manner responsive to real urban needs.

Officials said the launch marks only the beginning, as cities prepare to implement the Plans with continuous community engagement and coordinated governance to shape sustainable, well-managed urban growth over the next decade.

Bodoland University signs MoU with Thailand's Surindra Rajabhat University



HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Nov 28: Bodoland University has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Surindra Rajabhat University, Thailand, marking its first academic collaboration with a public university in Thailand.

The agreement was formalised on Thursday during the IASTEM 2025 Conference held at Surindra Rajabhat University in Surin Province.

The MoU aims to enhance cooperation in developing joint academic programmes, curricula, and high-quality educational activities

aligned with international standards.

The partnership will facilitate the exchange of faculty members and students for teaching, seminars, and cultural programmes.

It will also support joint academic supervision for student internships and the organisation of short-term training programmes, including Thai and English language courses, business studies, and intercultural exchange activities.

Both universities will collaborate on research initiatives and jointly host conferences, seminars and workshops in areas of mutual

interest.

The MoU was signed by Surindra Rajabhat University president Dr Chalong Sukthong and vice president Dr Amnway Wattankonsiry.

Representing Bodoland University were vice chancellor Prof BL Ahuja, registrar Dr Subung Basumatary, and Prof A. Ibemcha Chanu, Dean of Commerce and Management Studies.

While the vice chancellor, registrar and other senior officials attended the ceremony online, Prof Chanu was present in person.

The signing ceremony was attended by faculty, staff, large groups of students from Surindra Rajabhat University, and international delegates participating in the IASTEM 2025 Conference.

Surindra Rajabhat University is widely recognised for its work in promoting indigenous cultures and strengthening STEM education.

As per the agreement, the MoU will remain valid for five years and may be extended for an additional five-year term unless either party gives six months' notice before its expiration.

Any modifications to the agreement will require written consent from both institutions.

Customer Awareness Drive on unclaimed bank assets held

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Nov 28: A customer awareness meeting on the settlement of unclaimed bank accounts and long-inoperative LIC policies was organised on Friday at the Boarding Field by the Lead District Manager of Punjab National Bank in association with other nationalised banks and the Sivasagar District Administration.

The programme was held as part of the Reserve Bank of India's initiative to help customers reclaim assets that have remained unoperational for more than 10 years.

Lead Bank District Manager Debangshu Pal, who led the discussion, said that customers in Sivasagar district currently have over ₹ 26 crore lying unclaimed with the RBI, while LIC policyholders have ₹ 1.67 crore pending as of October 1.

He informed that following the launch of the campaign, customers have so far received ₹ 1 crore back from banks and about half of the dues from LIC.

At the state level, Pal said the total amount of unclaimed deposits transferred to the RBI now stands at over ₹ 662 crore from bank customers, while ₹ 257 crore remains unclaimed from LIC policyholders.

Officials said the campaign, which aims to streamline claim procedures and facilitate customer access to their dormant assets, will conclude on December 31. Rajdeep Borgohain of the RBI and several lead bank managers were present at the programme.

Tutor Teachers' Association announces agitation over pending demands

HT Correspondent

BISWANATH CHARALI, Nov 28: The Tutor Teachers' Association of provincialised schools in Assam has announced a series of protest demonstrations in support of their long-pending demands. The decision was disclosed by office-bearers of the All Assam Provincialised Teachers (Tutor) Association at a press conference held at the Inspection Bungalow in Jamugurihat on Thursday evening.

According to the association, around 16,000 tutor teachers will gherao the residence of Education Minister Dr Ranaj Pegu on November 29 as part of the agitation.

The members expressed dissatisfaction with the Education Department, alleging that the government has increased their remuneration by only ₹720 over a span of five years. They said the increment amounts to merely six per cent of their monthly income. The association highlighted that tutor teachers engaged in provincialised schools continue to receive only ₹12,000 per month, a figure they described as inadequate given rising living costs and increased workload.

The leaders reiterated that several representations made earlier to the authorities have not yielded any meaningful response.

Thursday's press meet was addressed by Bhuban Sarma, state committee secretary; Rudra Upadhyaya, central executive member; Rudra Newar, block president; and members Mojamal Haque, Nurul Amin, Geeta Dey and Naba Kr Bania.

Painter Skill Training Programme concludes

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Nov 28: A four-day Painter Skill Training programme organised by the Internal Quality Assurance Cell of Nagaon University in collaboration with Global Hunt Foundation, Delhi, and supported by AkzoNobel, concluded today.

Over 70 unemployed youths and painters from rural areas participated in two batches.

The training was conducted by Subrata Kumar Roy, regional technical trainer from Kolkata, who covered various aspects of quality painting.

Participants received certificates and gift kits from Global Hunt Foundation.

The programme was inaugurated on November 25 by Registrar-in-charge Dhrubajyoti Baruah in the presence of IQAC director Dr Bhuban Chandra Chutia.

Roy distributed certificates on the final day. Vice-Chancellor Dr Hitesh Deka thanked the organisers and conveyed best wishes to the trainees.

Dayaram Kanda sentenced to life imprisonment for 2015 murder of brother

HT Correspondent

MARGHERITA, Nov 28: Bringing an end to a decade-long wait for justice, the Additional Sessions Judge (FTC-1) Margherita, Anil Kumar Basfor, on Friday sentenced Dayaram Kanda to rigorous life imprisonment for murdering his elder brother, Rameswar Kanda, in 2015.

The judgment, delivered after ten years of trial, closes one of the district's most disturbing cases of fratricide.

The incident dates back to October 10, 2015, when Rameswar Kanda, an employee of the PWD and a resident of Makum Changmari, visited the home of his middle elder brother, Dayaram Kanda, at Raidang Bengali Gaon under Digboi Police Station.

During the visit, Dayaram attacked Rameswar with a heavy piece of wood. Rameswar died on the spot from his injuries.

The next day, their brother Liladhar Kanda lodged an FIR at Digboi Police Station, following which Digboi PS Case No. 187/2015 under Section 302 of the IPC was registered. Dayaram was arrested shortly thereafter.

Over the past ten years, the case saw extensive legal proceedings, including examination of numerous witnesses and detailed scrutiny of evidence.

After completing the trial, Judge Basfor pronounced the verdict on November 28, holding Dayaram Kanda guilty of murder and sentencing him to life imprisonment along with a fine.

A source close to the case described the verdict as a strong reaffirmation of justice, noting that incidents of violence within families often go unreported or unresolved. The judgment has been welcomed by the community and the bereaved family, who described it as long-awaited closure after years of emotional distress.

Himanta most corrupt CM in independent India's history: Pawan Khera

GUWAHATI, Nov 28: Congress leader Pawan Khera on Friday alleged that Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is the most corrupt CM in the history of independent India.

Addressing a press conference, Khera claimed that Sarma knows that the people of Assam will defeat him in the forthcoming assembly polls.

"Hence, he is taking the help of the police to arrest people who oppose him; and the Election Commission, which has directed the conduct of a Special Revision of electoral rolls in the state," he alleged.

"The Special Revision is being conducted in Assam to bring in voters from outside the state and their names are being inserted in the voter list," Khera claimed.

BJP workers from outside the state will be brought to the state during the assembly polls and this will "weaken the voting rights of the people in Assam", he claimed.

"The right to vote is the identity of the people and this has been attacked by this government," Khera added. Assam's people will not tolerate this injustice and corruption and will give a decisive answer in the polls, he said.

The global reputation of the state was built by icons

like Zubeen Garg, but it is now being tarnished by the present government, Khera said.

He claimed that if Sarma loses power, he would "not be able to survive outside and will be sent where he deserves to be -- in jail".

"What happened to all the ED and CBI cases filed against Sarma? He entered the BJP washing machine and became clean," he alleged.

The Congress challenges the chief minister to reveal the land and other properties acquired by him and his family during the last seven years, he said.

"We have full faith that the media will expose the chief minister and his family's corruption and not let him hide behind the Special Revision by taking help of the Election Commission," he said.

Assam is waiting for a change for the better, and "our leader Rahul Gandhi has sent a young person like Gaurav Gogoi to bring it about".

Khera said that when Tarun Gogoi was the chief minister, he firmly established Assam on the development map, and when BJP's Sarbananda Sonowal came to power, there was a "comma", but with Sarma, "development has come to a full stop".

The chief minister, however, has so far not responded to these allegations. (PTI)

AAFPSDA submits memo to Union minister Assam govt's move to divert wheat allotment draws objection

HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Nov 28: The All Assam Fair Price Shop Dealers' Association (AAFPSDA) has raised strong objections to a recent decision of the State government to separately allocate foodgrains, including wheat, to tea garden management. The association has submitted a memorandum to Union Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Prahlab Venkatesh Joshi, urging intervention to prevent what it termed a violation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

According to the association, tea garden labourers are already covered as beneficiaries under NFSA, and any parallel mechanism for distributing the same entitlement would undermine the integrity and uniformity of the public distribution system.

It said that routing foodgrains through tea garden management instead of fair price shops would bypass the established PDS framework and severely affect thousands of fair price shop dealers across Assam who depend on the system for their livelihood. The association warned that diverting NFSA entitlements to private or parallel channels contradicts the spirit and provisions of the NFSA Act, 2013.

It referred to an existing directive of the Assam government (Order No. FSA/6/2006/PT/678 dated December 18, 2014), which explicitly prohibits allotment of wheat or rice to tea garden management or associations.

Any attempt to revive such a system, it said, would constitute a serious breach of this binding instruction. AAFPSDA further urged the government to hold consultations with stakeholders before implementing any changes in the distribution mechanism.

It argued that allocating scarce food resources through a separate channel for a specific group could result in discrimination, distort the operation of the PDS, and create avoidable administrative complications.

NFR upgrades pit lines at Kamakhya to prepare for Vande Bharat & Amrit Bharat Trains

Electrified pit lines and new maintenance pedestals ready Kamakhya Junction for next-generation train services

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 28: Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has completed the electrification of both pit lines at Kamakhya Junction, a key upgrade that enhances the station's capacity to maintain and service upcoming Vande Bharat and Amrit Bharat trains.

The modernised pit lines mark a major step toward readying the region for next-generation premium train operations.

Alongside electrification, eight new pedestals have been constructed to support Pantograph (Panto) and Roof Mounted Package Unit (RMPU) maintenance—functions essential for Vande Bharat and Amrit Bharat train sets.

Officials said the installations will enable safer and faster periodic service

of advanced rolling stock.

NFR has also completed comprehensive staff training to equip maintenance teams with the technical skills required for working on the electrified lines and specialised components.

The training included sessions on pit line safety, Panto and RMPU servicing, and modern maintenance protocols.

Railway officials said the upgrades align with Indian Railways' broader vision of infrastructure modernisation and its Net-Zero mission for 2030.

With the improvements now in place, Kamakhya Junction is closer to hosting upgraded train services and delivering higher-quality, energy-efficient rail travel to passengers in the Northeast.



Educo Cultural and Literary Festival in Tezpur concludes

HT Correspondent

TEZPUR, Nov 28: The eight-day Educo Cultural and Literary Festival for Children, organised by the Educo School of Art and Music, concluded on Thursday with a Parents' Conclave and the 110th edition of Golpokothe, the popular storytelling-and-music series by writer Atanu Bhattacharyya and singer Mitali Dey.

The festival, held from November 16, hosted an array of literary, musical and dance competitions showcasing the talents of children from the region.

At the Parents' Conclave, Dhubri Medical College psychiatrist Dr Syamanta Das delivered the keynote address on "Technology, Child Mental Health and Parental Awareness".

He raised concerns over the impact of prolonged exposure to digital devices on children and emphasised the need for informed and active



parental involvement to support mental well-being.

Assistant Professor Ananya Banjyotsna of Tezpur University spoke on "Mechanisation in Students' Lives and the Need for Music—A Different Perspective", highlighting music's growing importance in modern education and its potential for interdisciplinary study.

Paediatrician Dr Shyama Saikia and psychiatrist Dr Aparajita Baruah

also addressed the gathering, offering guidance on nutrition, mobile phone regulation and mental health.

Parents participated in an interactive session, raising long-pending concerns that were addressed by the experts.

The concluding evening witnessed a large turnout for Golpokothe, with audiences arriving from Tezpur, Sootea, Nagaon, Biswanath Chariali and neighbouring areas, filling the

open-air venue of the school.

During the programme, Bhat-tacharyya and Dey released Henguliya, a handwritten children's magazine featuring stories, poems and travel narratives written by young participants.

The school also unveiled its first wall magazine, Pratyasha, released by Pradakhina Kapili, a Class IX student who was adjudged the festival's best literary contestant.

The closing function included a cultural presentation by winners of competitions in singing, dance, piano, guitar and violin.

Guest artiste Ananya Banjyotsna performed two songs at the valedictory ceremony. Prizes were later distributed to the winners.

Festival founders Raktim Goswami and Lipika Goswami thanked parents and audiences for their support and announced plans to expand the festival further in 2026.

MALE DEAD BODY



The above is the photograph of one dead body of Bikram Das aged about 28 years had been found dead at MU-1, AMCH, Dibrugarh, Assam on 25.11.2025. The address of the deceased is unknown.

This refers to Borbari O.P. GDE No 782 dt 26.11.2025.

The Descriptive Roll of the dead body.

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| (a) Complexion | - Swarthy. |
| (b) Built | - Thin |
| (c) Height | - 5'4" |

All out efforts may be taken to trace out the family members of the dead person at the earliest and result thereof may be intimated to EO ASI Surya Narayan Singh M/No 9954234097 for further necessary action.

Sd/-

Superintendent of Police,

DIPR /D/HLT/237/29-Nov-25

NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

Sealed quotations are hereby invited from reputed and experienced printing firms/individuals for the printing and supply of Court Diaries and Attendance Registers for use in the Establishment of the District & Sessions Judge, Majuli.

1. Items Required :

- Court Diary - (as per sample available in the office)
- Attendance Register (as per sample available in the office)

2. Terms & Conditions:

1. Eligibility: Bidders must be registered firms/suppliers and provide proof of registration (GST registration, Trade Licence, PAN etc.).
2. The quotation must clearly mention the rate per unit, taxes (if any), and the total cost.
3. Samples/specifications may be inspected in the office of the undersigned on working days during office hours.
4. The materials supplied must strictly conform to the approved specification/sample quality.
5. The quotation should be submitted in a sealed envelope superscribed "Quotation for Printing of Court Diary and Attendance Register".
6. Quotation must reach the office of the undersigned on or before 15th day of December, 2025 during office hours.
7. The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all quotations without assigning any reason thereof.

3. Submission Address:

Office of the District & Sessions Judge, Majuli, Assam-PIN: 785104.

For further details, interested parties may contact Shri Nabajyoti Das, In-Charge, Chief Administrative Officer, Mobile No. 94353-52316.

Sd/-

District & Sessions Judge, Majuli.

DIPR /C/HLT/236/29-Nov-25

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it—William Arthur Ward

Tackling winter pollution

Come winter, the discourse over air pollution gets shriller in India. It is this time of the year when burning agricultural stubble and bursting fire-crackers make the air more noxious. India can take a leaf out of China's book to find a way out of the toxic haze. After all, it kills many and extracts a high economic cost. Looking back at the early 2000s China faced a similar air pollution hazard. It could be traced to industrialisation and urbanization leading to greater carbon emission. The fallout of this tradition was visible at the turn of the century. Smog, jaundiced skin and polluted rivers came in the wake of development. Fine particulate matter such as PM 2.5 led to serious hazards in China. The deprecation of PM 2.5 on public health in India is well documented. To combat the situation, Beijing made heavy investments in pollution control technology. It also mobilised well-piled tiers of bureaucracy and the party. Electric vehicles were adopted to reclaim the blue skies. Entire fleet of buses were electrified. Sources of local pollution were plugged. The environment was not cleaned overnight but these measures have led to remarkable improvement in China's air quality in recent years. It is no cakewalk for India to clean its air adopting China's template. There is no denying the difficulties arising from political and economic scenario of India which stands in the way of sweeping reforms to make way for a cleaner environment.

India is a multi-layered democracy. It is not in a position to tackle the challenges posed by the sloth of its bureaucracy. Both India and China have introduced environmental laws pertaining to air pollution. Yet there are differences in direction. China focuses on long term action. India's preferences are for localised intervention. India's populace has poorer access to cleaner and affordable sources of power. Agricultural stubble is a ready fuel to light their kitchen fire. Hence domestic emission is a burden to India. It cannot be wished away. Yet there are two areas in which India can take lessons from China to tackle air pollution. But they are not easy ones. A stronger political will to end air pollution without a thought for the vote bank will go a long way to ensure a cleaner environment. A similar mindset should be taken towards structural impediments.

These are vehicular and industrial pollution. There needs to be crackdown on their sources and patrons. The two countries do not enjoy the best of relations. But there ought to be areas and initiatives to better the ties. Scientific cooperation and knowledge sharing can smoothen the rough edges. This is a unique way to improve bilateral relations.

A Living Court for a Living Constitution

By: Satyabrata Borah

The Supreme Court of India changing its mind is not a weakness. It is one of its greatest strengths. On the very day India was celebrating the 75th year of its Constitution, a two-judge bench expressed pain over what it called a "growing trend" of larger benches overturning earlier decisions. Many newspapers highlighted the remark, some even suggested the court is becoming unstable. I believe the opposite is true. The fact that the Supreme Court can look back at its own judgments, admit that times have changed, that society has moved forward, or that an earlier bench simply got it wrong, is something every Indian should feel proud of, not worried about.

Think of the Constitution as a living person, not a stone tablet. When it was born in 1950, India was a young nation stepping out of centuries of colonial rule. Women had just got the vote, caste discrimination was legally banned but socially deep-rooted, homosexuality was a crime, the idea of privacy barely existed in law, and the government could arrest anyone under sedition laws almost at will. Seventy-five years later, the country is different. People are more aware of their rights, technology has entered every home, and old ideas of morality and justice no longer feel fair to millions. If the Supreme Court kept repeating the same judgments it passed in the 1950s or 1970s just to appear "consistent", it would become a museum, not a protector of the people.

History shows this beautifully. In 2013, a two-judge bench brought back the colonial-era Section 377 and re-criminalised gay sex, overturning an excellent Delhi High Court judgment. The decision shocked the country and hurt millions. Five years later, a five-judge bench threw out that 2013 verdict and said love between consenting adults is not a crime. The court openly said the earlier bench had made a mistake. Was that a moment of shame? No. It was a moment of courage and growth. Lakhs of LGBT Indians could finally breathe freely because the court was willing to change its mind.

Privacy tells the same story. For decades, small benches had said there is no fundamental right to privacy, or at best it is a minor right. Then came the Aadhaar case. A nine-judge bench sat, looked at how the world had changed with phones, internet, and data collection, and declared in 2017 that privacy is a fundamental right rooted in dignity and liberty. Eight earlier judgments were overruled in one sweeping, beautiful decision. Today every Indian enjoys stronger protection against

illegal surveillance because the court refused to stay stuck in the past.

Sedition law is another example. For years the Supreme Court had upheld Section 124A, saying it is needed to protect the state. Yet in practice the police were using it to silence critics, students, journalists, even cartoonists. In 2022, the court virtually froze the law and asked the government to reconsider it. Larger benches have repeatedly narrowed its scope. Step by step, the court is correcting a 150-year-old colonial weapon that had no place in a modern democracy.

Look at the right to choose a partner. In 2018, the court struck down instant triple talaq, protecting Muslim women from arbitrary divorce. In the same year, it decriminalised adultery, saying a woman is not the property of her husband. In 2022,

it expanded the right to abortion for unmarried women too. In 2023, while it stopped short of legalising same-sex marriage, it asked the government to ensure queer couples get basic rights like joint bank accounts and medical decisions. Each time an older, narrower view gave way to a more humane one.

Even on reservation, the court has walked a long journey. From the early cautious judgments that almost killed affirmative action to the 1992 Indra Sawhney ruling that set the 50 percent cap, and then in 2018 the court said economically weaker sections among forward castes can also get reservation. In 2022, it upheld EWS reservation. Many criticised these shifts, but the court was simply responding to a society that was asking new questions about justice and equality.

The two-judge bench that spoke on Constitution Day probably worries about certainty in law. Lawyers and businesses do need to know what the rule is today. But certainty cannot come at the cost of justice. If an old judgment is causing suffering, or if it was based on outdated ideas, keeping it alive just for the sake of consistency is not wisdom; it is laziness dressed as principle.

Other countries celebrate when their highest courts change course. In the United States, Brown versus Board of Ed-

ucation in 1954 overturned the "separate but equal" rule that had allowed racial segregation in schools for decades. Almost no American today says the court should have stuck to the old decision for consistency. When the US Supreme Court recognised gay marriage in 2015, it overruled earlier judgments. The world applauded.

In South Africa, after apartheid ended, the new Constitutional Court threw out dozens of old racist laws and interpretations. In Canada, in Ireland, in Taiwan, every time courts expanded rights for women or sexual minorities, they had to overturn older decisions. That is how constitutional courts breathe life into a constitution. Of course, overturning should not be done lightly. It needs a larger bench, strong reasoning, and respect for the earlier judges. Indian practice already demands this. A two-judge bench cannot overrule another two-judge decision; it takes at least three, five, seven, or more judges depending on the importance of the issue. This system protects against casual flips. But when a larger bench does decide to correct course, it is usually because millions of Indians are living with the pain of an outdated ruling.

The real danger is not in changing old judgments. The danger is in refusing to change when change is needed. Imagine if the court had said in 2018, "We are bound by the 2013 verdict on Section 377 because consistency is important." Lakhs of young Indians would still be criminals in their own country just for loving someone. Imagine if the nine-judge bench had said, "Many earlier benches denied the right to privacy, so we cannot create it now." Every phone tap, every data breach would have judicial blessing.

On Constitution Day, instead of feeling pain at the idea of revisiting old verdicts, we should feel gratitude. Gratitude that we have a court that treats the Constitution as a promise to the future, not a prison of the past. The men and women in black robes are not perfect, but when they sit in larger numbers and decide to correct an injustice, they remind us why Dr Ambedkar called the Supreme Court the "heart and soul" of our Constitution.

So the next time you read that a five-judge or seven-judge bench has overruled an older decision, do not rush to worry about instability. Ask instead: whose life will become easier because of this? Whose dignity has been restored? Whose freedom has been protected? More often than not, the answer will be ordinary Indians like you and me. That is not a court in crisis. That is a court doing its job, bravely, humanely, and proudly. And that is something to celebrate, not lament.

Modinomics: The Architecture behind GST reforms

India's growth narrative has undergone a decisive transformation over the past decade, shaped significantly by a governance model that prioritised inclusion, efficiency, and structural reform. When the Modi government assumed office in 2014, it carried with it the expectations of a nation seeking renewal after years of policy stagnation and fragmented development. What followed was a sustained push to fundamentally reshape the dynamics of India's economy, beginning with revolutionary steps like the Jan Dhan Yojana, which catalysed one of the world's largest financial inclusion movements. For the first time, millions were able to access banking facilities with ease, a reform that laid the foundation for Direct Benefit Transfer systems. This marked an end to an era once epitomised by Rajiv Gandhi's famous observation that only 15 paise of every rupee released by the government reached the intended beneficiary. In contrast, today the full amount reaches the citizen directly, thanks to Aadhaar-linked bank accounts and streamlined digital governance.

The government's reform journey expanded with the introduction of initiatives such as MUDRA Yojana for entrepreneurship, GST for tax rationalisation, PM-Kisan for farmer income support, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana for housing, and Make in India for industrial revival. These efforts aimed to build a self-sustaining economic ecosystem that values transparency, innovation, and grassroots empowerment. The latest chapter in this trajectory arrived with the Next Generation GST Reforms, unveiled at a time when the global order is undergoing its own shifts. The world is grappling with economic rebalancing, supply chain realignment, and geopolitical uncertainty, yet India has positioned itself as a stable, self-reliant force under the broader vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Simplifying GST slabs from four categories to just two—18 percent and 5 percent—has been a landmark shift, making taxation more predictable and easing burdens for businesses and consumers.

Many essential goods have been moved to the lower slab or exempted entirely, reflecting an empathetic approach to public welfare. The timing of the GST reforms, coinciding with the festive season, has further amplified their impact. At a symbolic level, the reforms were framed as an offering of respect during Navratri, honouring the sacred feminine spirit of Maa Durga. At a practical level, these reforms continued the legacy of the 2017 GST rollout, which ended decades of tax complexity rooted in an assortment of levies like VAT, Octroi, and Excise. By establishing a unified tax structure, the government eliminated fiscal fragmentation and facilitated easier business

operations. The supply chain landscape has improved dramatically as inter-state movement of goods became smoother, reducing delays and logistical costs. The benefits have cascaded across the economy: sellers gained operational freedom, consumers gained price relief, and the wider market experienced conditions conducive to organic growth.

One of the most transformative effects of the reforms has been felt in household economics. The government, which earlier expanded access to clean cooking fuels by providing LPG cylinders to every home, has now slashed taxes on basic utensils, reducing the cost burden for families. Most significantly, food items and groceries have become more affordable, easing pressure on household budgets at a time when inflation has been a global concern. This demonstrates a governing philosophy that is acutely attentive to the needs of ordinary citizens, ensuring that macroeconomic gains translate into tangible improvements in daily life.

Healthcare, too, has received focused attention. Historically neglected, the sector witnessed a major shift with the launch of Ayushman Bharat, one of the world's largest public health insurance programmes. The latest reforms have gone further by placing health and life insurance under the zero percent GST slab. This makes insurance more accessible while encouraging a culture of financial protection that India has long lacked. The reduction in taxes on medical equipment, medicines, and related supplies has further lowered healthcare costs. These steps represent a commitment to long-term public health preparedness, which became particularly vital in the wake of the pandemic.

The combination of affordability and expanded coverage lays a robust foundation for a healthier and more resilient population. Education has been another focal point of the government's development strategy. From building new schools to implementing the National Education Policy of 2020, reforms have aimed to make education more inclusive, skill-oriented, and globally competitive. The GST changes, which reduce prices of books, stationery, and educational materials, align with the broader mission of strengthening learning outcomes and ensuring that economic constraints do not hinder access to learning. A nation that invests consistently in education invests in its future intellectual capital, which ultimately determines its long-term economic strength.

Agriculture, the backbone of India's work-

force, has seen multiple layers of intervention. The PM-Kisan Yojana simplified income support for farmers, and the recent GST reforms have added momentum by reducing tax rates on tractors from 18 percent to 5 percent. Farm machinery, bio-pesticides, micro-nutrients, and essential equipment have become more economical. This not only boosts productivity but also helps farmers transition toward modern and sustainable agricultural practices. By easing financial pressures in both input and output markets, the reforms empower the agricultural

developers and buyers respond enthusiastically to the reduced costs. The toy industry, which was revitalised after the Prime Minister's call to support Swadeshi toys, has now received another boost. The sector, already projected to reach USD 3 billion by 2028, will likely exceed expectations under the new tax framework.

The cumulative effect of these reforms extends far beyond individual sectors. Small-scale traders, large industries, MSMEs, and startups all stand to gain in different ways. India's MSME sector—employing nearly 62 percent of the country's workforce according to the McKinsey Global Institute—will play a pivotal role in absorbing the benefits and driving the next phase of industrial expansion. The government's push for Swadeshi goods has reinforced this momentum. From Zoho Mail becoming the choice of the Home Minister to initiatives like Vocal for Local, Swadeshi consciousness has grown steadily. Citizens are increasingly embracing indigenous products, creating economic opportunities at home and boosting national pride. When people purchase locally made goods, they support domestic enter-

prises, enhance job creation, and help build a resilient economic base. The startup culture, strongly supported by the government, has become a powerful force in expanding India's Swadeshi footprint. Initiatives like One District One Product promote regional specialities, while the Prime Minister's call for technological innovation encourages entrepreneurs to build solutions that can compete on a global scale. India has the potential to create the tech giants of the future, and with a young population, a thriving digital ecosystem, and rising global confidence, the vision of becoming a global tech capital is increasingly within reach.

As India steps into a period of profound economic acceleration, these reforms collectively signal a reimagining of national prosperity. They move beyond short-term relief to establish a long-term architecture of growth that is inclusive, sustainable, and deeply rooted in self-reliance. The new GST regime, along with the broader policy ecosystem built over the last decade, reflects a developmental philosophy grounded in empowerment rather than entitlement, efficiency rather than complexity, and innovation rather than inertia. Together, these elements form the blueprint for a rising India, ready to harness its demographic strength, human ingenuity, and cultural identity to build a future of enduring progress. (the writer can be reached at dipakkurmigpltd@gmail.com)



community to be more competitive in a globalised economy.

In an age where technology has become indispensable, the government has aligned its policies to meet the needs of a digitally driven society. Electronics such as televisions, air conditioners, and home appliances have become more affordable due to tax cuts. This has spurred a surge in purchases during Diwali and Dhanteras, making the season particularly vibrant for retailers and consumers. The automobile sector is another major beneficiary. Financial institutions have reported unprecedented demand for motor vehicles, driven by lower prices and rising aspirations of the middle and lower-middle classes. With one sweeping reform, the government has invigorated the industry, which had been recovering from global supply shocks and high input costs.

The textile industry, a lifeline for millions of Indian workers, has also witnessed a positive upswing due to cheaper raw materials and reduced cost burdens. During festivals, when families traditionally buy new clothes, the reduced GST rates have increased sales substantially. Meanwhile, in the real estate sector, essential construction materials like cement, marble, and granite blocks have become cheaper, lowering housing costs and energising the government's mission of affordable housing for all. Real estate, a major employment generator, is poised for renewed growth as both

Farmers must not be blamed as easy target for Air pollution

By: Dr Gyan Pathak

Stubble burning by farmers of Punjab and Haryana has been chiefly blamed for years for deterioration of air quality in the National Capital Territory Delhi by the Government of Delhi while keeping a blind eye on other major factors and veiling its own failure. The latest data shows that stubble burning is only a small factor for pollution in National Capital Region.

Delhi government has been politically indulging in such a political game for over a decade every year during October-November, when Air Quality Index (AQI) deteriorates from bad to worse, to severe level. Similar strategy has been also resorted to this year by the BJP led Delhi government, which chiefly blamed Punjab, where its arch political rival Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is ruling. AAP had been doing the same thing when it ruled Delhi for a decade during which he always blamed Haryana and Punjab when rival political parties were in power. In 2022, when AAP came to power also in Punjab, they started saying that they are working to improve the situation, but failed. The simple reason was that the stubble burning was only a small factor in Delhi's pollution, but chiefly blamed for it.

BJP came to power in Delhi in February 2025, and thereafter, started the same blame game. It is politically convenient for BJP to blame Punjab for pollution in Delhi, since its arch rival AAP is in power there. The chief blame has still been shifted on farmers of Punjab for stubble burning, while it says that BJP led government in Haryana is doing its best to curb stubble burning in the state. Blame game is going on as political expediency. The reality is quite different. The latest data by Decision Support System (DSS) under the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences clearly shows that farm fires contributed only a little in the deterioration of AQI in Delhi. Since October 1, 2025, there was only once on November 12, farm fire contributed highest 22.47 per cent in total deterioration of AQI. On other days its contribution in Delhi's pollution was very low compared to other factors. On November 12, Delhi's AQI was 418.

In the first week of October, contribution of farm fire in Delhi's AQI was negligible, only a little above zero per cent. By October its share in pollution rose to 2.62 per cent only when Delhi's AQI rose from about 120 in the beginning of the month to 250. AQI deteriorated to 418 by November 12, but it improved to above 325 during November 18-20, while contribution of farm fire sharply declined to the range of 2.8 per cent to 5.4 per cent.



As per the DSS data of November 2025, transport contributed 19.7 per cent, cities around the capital contributed 29.5 per cent, residential areas 4.8 per cent, peripheral industries 3.7 per cent, construction work 2.9 per cent, waste burning 1.7 per cent, energy 1.4 per cent, road dust 1.5 per cent, and others contributed 34.8 per cent in the pollution of Delhi. Contribution of farm fire was only 1.4 per cent in AQI of the National Capital Territory.

On November 27, the air quality of the national capital was recorded in very poor category in the morning, with average AQI at 355. It is 13th consecutive day when Delhi is battling poor air quality. As per the Central Pollution Control Board, an AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 to 100 "satisfactory", 101 to 200 "moderate", 201 to 300 "poor", 301 to 400 "very poor" and 401 to 500 "severe".

The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) has revoked action under Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) Stage-II in the national capital, and are now reported to focusing on intensifying their actions under Stage-I and Stage-II. On November 11, an order was passed to invoke actions under Stage-III, which is done when the air quality is 'Severe'.

The GRAP Stage-III restrictions include 50 per cent work from home and hybrid school classes have been lifted. It should be noted that CAQM has ordered that construction and demolition projects, which were issued closure orders on account of non-compliance or violation of statutory rules or guidelines, will not resume operation under the present circumstances.

Nevertheless, these ad hoc arrangements to reduce pollution level in the Na-

tional Capital Territory need a fresh thinking on the issue. The Centre and the state governments of Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan must join hands together to solve the problem of pollution in the NCT Delhi. Blame game is only an expediency. Concrete work is required.

The Supreme Court of India hearing the case on Delhi-NCR air pollution has said today November 27, 2025 that they do not have a magic wand to disappear pollution, and solution lies with domain experts. The bench stressed on the need for expert-led, multifaceted strategies to combat the persistent air quality crisis, as it commits to ongoing hearing and comprehensive action plan. The bench headed by Chief Justice of India, Justice Surya Kant, which also included Justice Joyimalya Bagchi, has assured that the court would now go beyond the "ceremonial listing" of the air pollution case every year before Deepavali, and proceed to hear the issue on a continuous basis. The case has been listed for further hearing on December 1.

It should be recalled that the former CJI BR Gavai had largely focused on stubble-burning by farmers, particularly of Punjab, as the chief source of pollution. Nevertheless, CJI Surya Kant has clearly said that the pollution cannot be blamed on one source. He said, "There is no such one reason for pollution. Be very clear about that. People are under a bona fide misconception that it is due to a particular reason. There are multiple sources. Neither us nor you are experts... We are also like any other resident facing hardship, but neither we nor you are experts in this issue... Domain experts and scientists have to bring up the solutions to this problem." (IPA Service)

Careers bridging Language and Technology

By: Jyoti Tiwari

Ever found yourself fascinated by the way people speak, the patterns in their words or the way language evolves? Well, you might just have the makings of a linguist! Linguistics is the scientific study of language-how it's structured, how it changes over time, how it reflects our culture and thoughts and even how it shapes our reality.

Who is a Linguist?

Being a linguist doesn't mean you have to speak a dozen languages (though that would be cool!). A linguist is someone who dives deep into understanding the intricacies of language itself. From the sounds we make (phonetics) to the structure of sentences (syntax) and from the meaning of words (semantics) to how we use language in different contexts (pragmatics)-a linguist studies it all.

It isn't just about diving into dusty old books or grammar rules. It's about discovering how language connects us all, how it's shaped by our society, history and even our brains. As a linguist, you could explore how children learn to speak or even how computers can understand human language (hello, AI!).

How is Linguistics Different from Literature Studies?

While literature studies dive into the beauty and analysis of written works, linguistics is more about the nuts and bolts of language. It's the difference between enjoying a beautiful painting (literature) and understanding the chemistry of the paints used to create it (linguistics). Both are important, but linguistics offers a more technical, scientific approach to language.

Interdisciplinary Connections

Linguistics bridges various fields, offering diverse career paths. It connects with sociology by exploring how language reflects society, psychology by examining how our brains process language and philosophy by delving into the nature of meaning. In speech therapy, linguistics aids in treating communication disorders. Moreover, it plays a crucial role in computers, AI and machine learning, where linguists help develop technologies like natural language processing and voice recognition. This versatile field opens doors to exciting opportunities across multiple disciplines.

Specialisations

Here's where it gets fun! Linguistics is like a buffet- you can choose what excites you the most:

- **Phonetics and Phonology:** Love sounds? Study the smallest units of sound and how they come together in different languages.
- **Morphology and Syntax:** Interested in structure? Look at how words are formed and how sentences are constructed.
- **Semantics and Pragmatics:** Fascinated by meaning? Explore how words carry meaning and how context influences our interpretation.
- **Sociolinguistics and Psycho-linguistics:** Want to know how language interacts with society and the mind? These are your go-to fields.
- **Applied Linguistics:** Prefer to see your studies in action? From language teaching to speech therapy, this is linguistics in the real world.

Other Careers in Linguistics

Education: If you have a passion for teaching, a career in education could be your calling. Lin-

guistics opens doors to teaching languages at various levels-from primary schools to universities. But it doesn't stop there! With a background in linguistics, you can also get involved in curriculum development, where you'll design innovative language programmes that help students of all ages grasp new languages more effectively. You could even specialise in language acquisition-researching and developing strategies to help people learn languages more quickly and efficiently, including those with learning disabilities.

Publishing: Crafting and Curating Words: If you're a lover of words, the publishing world might be your playground. As a linguist, you could become an editor, refining manuscripts to ensure clarity, accuracy and readability. Or perhaps you'd enjoy the meticulous work of a lexicographer, someone who compiles dictionaries-tracking the evolution of words, their meanings and usage. Technical writing is another avenue, where you'll translate complex information into easy-to-understand guides, manuals and reports. And don't forget content creation- crafting educational materials, text books, or even creating content for online platforms that focus on language learning and development.

Communication: Connecting People and Ideas: Linguistics is all about understanding how we communicate, so it's no surprise that careers in media, public relations and translation are natural fits. In the media sector, you could work as a language consultant or content strategist, ensuring that the message resonates with diverse audiences. In Public Relations (PR), your expertise in language can help shape public perception and manage communication during crises. Translation and interpretation are also critical roles, especially in our globalised world, where accurate communication across languages is vital. As a linguist, you can specialise in translating complex texts, legal documents or even real-time interpretation during international conferences.

Research: Pushing the Boundaries of Knowledge: For those who love digging deep into the mysteries of language, a career in research is incredibly fulfilling. Whether you choose to work in academia, where you'll contribute to scholarly knowledge and mentor the next generation of linguists or in research organisations, where you might focus on applied linguistics to solve real-world problems, there's a wealth of opportunities. You could study anything from endangered languages and how to preserve them, to the cognitive processes behind language learning or even how language influences social behaviour. Your research could shape educational policies, inform AI development or contribute to our understanding of human cognition.

Forensics: The Language Detective: Yes, you read that right-linguists can help solve crimes! Forensic linguistics is a fascinating field where language analysis is used in criminal investigations. You might analyse ransom notes, threat letters or even the language used in wiretapped conversations to help identify suspects. By studying speech patterns, dialects and writing styles, forensic linguists can provide crucial evidence in court cases. Your expertise could help law enforcement agencies catch criminals or prevent crimes before they happen. It's like being a detective, but with words!

Where to Study Linguistics?

In India, many prestigious universities offer programmes in linguistics, starting from the bachelor's level all the way to doctoral research. And if you're dreaming of studying abroad, universities worldwide offer top-notch linguistics programmes.

Some of the popular colleges/ universities offering courses in Linguistics are as follows:

1. Acharya Nagarjuna University (ANU) - Guntur, Andhra Pradesh
2. Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) - Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh
3. Amity University - Gurgaon, Haryana
4. Amity University - Noida, Uttar Pradesh
5. Banaras Hindu University (BHU) - Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh
6. Barkatullah University (BU) - Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
7. Bharathiar University (BU) - Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu
8. BJB Autonomous College (BJB) - Bhubaneswar, Odisha
9. Delhi University (DU) - New Delhi, Delhi NCR
10. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University (BAMU) - Aurangabad, Maharashtra
11. IIT Guwahati (IITG) - Guwahati, Assam
12. IIT Madras (IITM) - Chennai, Tamil Nadu
13. Jaipur National University (JNU) - Jaipur, Rajasthan
14. Jadavpur University (JU) - Kolkata, West Bengal
15. Jamia Millia Islamia University (JMI) - New Delhi, Delhi NCR
16. Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) - New Delhi, Delhi NCR
17. Madhyanchal Professional University (MPU) - Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh
18. Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda (MSU) - Vadodara, Gujarat
19. Martin Luther Christian University (MLCU) - Shillong, Meghalaya
20. Nagaland University - Zunhebotta, Nagaland
21. Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College - Mumbai, Maharashtra
22. St. Xavier's College - Mumbai, Maharashtra
23. Tamil Nadu Open University (TNOU) - Chennai, Tamil Nadu
24. University of Hyderabad (UOH) - Hyderabad, Telangana
25. University of Lucknow (LU) - Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Linguistics offers a thrilling journey into the heart of human communication, blending science, creativity and technology in ways that shape our world. As language continues to evolve and intertwine with cutting-edge fields like AI and data science, the opportunities for linguists are more exciting and diverse than ever. By choosing linguistics, you'll not only explore the mysteries of language but also play a vital role in the future of human-machine interaction, global communication and beyond. So, if you're curious about how words work and eager to make a difference in tomorrow's world, linguistics could be your perfect path.

Emerging Careers in Linguistics in the Age of AI and Beyond

As we march further into the digital age, linguistics is playing a pivotal role in shaping the technologies that are becoming integral to our daily lives. The intersection of linguistics with cutting-edge fields like Machine Learning (ML), Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data science is creating exciting new career opportunities that didn't exist just a few years ago. Let's take a closer look at how these emerging fields are revolutionising the landscape of linguistics and the vital roles linguists are playing.

Machine Learning (ML) and Artificial Intelligence (AI): The Language Teachers of Tomorrow: Machine Learning and AI are rapidly transforming industries across the globe and linguists are at the heart of this revolution. In these fields, linguists are not just passive observers but active creators, teaching machines how to understand, interpret and generate human language. This involves working on complex tasks such as developing Natural Language Processing (NLP) systems, which enable computers to comprehend spoken and written language just as humans do.

Consider virtual assistants like Siri, Alexa and Google Assistant- these AI-powered tools rely heavily on linguistic expertise to interact with users in a natural and intuitive way. Linguists help these systems recognise and respond to the subtleties of human speech, including tone, context and even sarcasm. Moreover, as these systems are deployed globally, linguists are crucial in ensuring that they can understand and speak multiple languages, adapting to regional dialects and cultural nuances.

Beyond virtual assistants, AI-driven customer service chatbots are another area where linguistic expertise is invaluable. Linguists help design these bots to handle a wide range of customer queries, ensuring that the interactions are not only accurate but also feel human. This requires a deep understanding of dialogue systems, context management and even emotional recognition- all areas where linguistics and AI intersect.

Data Science: Analysing Language at Scale: In the era of big data, language data is one of the richest sources of information. Linguists who venture into data science find themselves analysing vast amounts of text and speech data to uncover patterns, trends and insights that drive decision-making in various industries. For example, by analysing social media posts, customer reviews or transcriptions of conversations, linguists can help companies understand consumer sentiment, predict market trends and even tailor their products better to meet customer needs.

Data science also opens the door to corpus linguistics, where linguists work with large collections of text to study language use across different contexts, time periods and social groups. This research can inform everything from the development of educational tools to the creation of more inclusive and accessible technology.

Furthermore, in fields like sentiment analysis, linguists use their skills to teach machines how to detect emotions, opinions and attitudes expressed in text. This is particularly valuable for businesses that want to gauge public opinion on their products or for political analysts trying to understand voter sentiment.

Computational Linguistics: Building the Brains of Modern Technology: At the core of

many of these innovations is computational linguistics, a field where linguists and computer scientists collaborate to develop algorithms that allow computers to process and generate human language.

This discipline is the backbone of everything from search engines to translation apps, making it a critical area of growth as our reliance on technology increases. In computational linguistics, linguists contribute to the creation of language models- mathematical representations of how language works. These models are used to power a variety of applications, such as machine translation systems (like Google Translate), speech recognition software (which converts spoken words into text) and even content recommendation engines that suggest articles or videos based on your previous behaviour.

Another exciting area within computational linguistics is the development of voice-activated technologies. As voice search and voice commands become more prevalent, linguists are essential in ensuring that these systems can accurately interpret and respond to a wide range of accents, dialects and speech patterns. This requires a deep understanding of phonetics, syntax and semantics, as well as the ability to translate this knowledge into algorithms that machines can use.

Ethical AI and Language: A New Frontier: As AI systems become more advanced, there is a growing concern about the ethical implications of these technologies. Linguists are uniquely positioned to contribute to this conversation, particularly when it comes to issues of bias in language models. For instance, if an AI system is trained on biased data, it may reproduce or even amplify harmful stereotypes in its outputs. Linguists can help identify and mitigate these biases, ensuring that AI systems are fair, inclusive and respectful of all users.

Moreover, the rise of AI-generated content, such as deepfake videos or automated news articles, presents new challenges for authenticity and truth in media. Linguists can play a key role in developing tools that detect and prevent the misuse of language in these contexts, helping to safeguard the integrity of information in the digital age.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration: The Future of Linguistics: The future of linguistics lies in interdisciplinary collaboration. As technology continues to evolve, linguists will increasingly work alongside computer scientists, engineers, psychologists and other experts to create innovative solutions that enhance human-computer interaction. Whether it's through developing more sophisticated AI, analysing language data to improve user experiences or ensuring that new technologies are ethically sound, the role of linguistics in the digital age is more important than ever.

In summary, the age of AI and beyond is an exciting time for linguists. With opportunities in machine learning, data science, computational linguistics and ethical AI, those who choose to enter this field will find themselves at the forefront of technological innovation, shaping the future of how we interact with the world and each other through language.

(The author is a web content writer. Feedback on this article can be sent to feedback.employmentnews@gmail.com)

Oriental Insurance Recruitment 2025 – 300 Administrative Officer Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 15/12/2025.

Oriental Insurance Company Limited (OICL) has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 300 Administrative Officer Posts in Scale I cadre. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here.

Name of post: Administrative Officer

No of posts: 300 posts

Category-wise vacancy:

SC: To be updated

ST: To be updated

OBC: To be updated

EWS: To be updated

UR: To be updated

Pay: Basic Pay of Rs 50925/- in the scale of Rs 50925-2500(14)-85925-2710(4)-96765 and other admissible allowance as applicable.

Age Limit: Candidates must have a minimum age of 21 years and a maximum age of 30 years.

Age Relaxation: Permissible relaxations in upper age limit for different categories are as under:

SC/ ST: 5 years

OBC: 3 years

Ex-Servicemen: 3 years

PwBD: 10 years

Educational Qualification: To be updated

Application Fee:

Candidates have to pay a certain amount as application fee depending up on their category. The details are as given below:

Category Fee

SC/ ST/ PwBD To be updated

Others To be updated

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy through online mode by visiting official Recruitment Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply for Oriental Insurance recruitment.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section.

Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process by clicking "New User? Register Now".

In the next stage, click on "Online Application Form" Link and Login.

Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.

Make payment of application fee as per your category and submit the form.

At the end, take a print out of the application form.

Starting date to apply online: 1st December 2025

Last date to apply online: 15th December 2025

BSSRV Recruitment 2026 – 2 Junior Assistant & Office Assistant Posts

Last Date: 04/01/2026.

Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya (BSSRV), Golaghat has released an employment notification for the recruitment of 2 Junior Assistant and Office Assistant Posts in Birangana Sati Sadhani Rajyik Vishwavidyalaya (BSSRV), Golaghat. Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here.

1. Junior Assistant

No of posts: 1 post (UR)

Pay Scale: Rs. 14,000 – Rs. 60,500 + Grade Pay Rs. 6,400/- as per 7th CPC.

Educational Qualification: Candidates must have a Bachelor's Degree in Arts, Science, Commerce, or any stream from a recognized university. Candidates must possess a minimum 6-month diploma or certificate in computer proficiency from a government-

recognized institution is mandatory. Proficiency in MS Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access), Internet is required.

Desirable: Should have experience in higher educational institutions.

2. Office Assistant

No of posts: 1 post (UR)

Pay Scale: Rs. 14,000 – Rs. 60,500 + Grade Pay Rs. 6,400/- as per 7th CPC.

Educational Qualification: Candidates must have a Bachelor's Degree in Arts, Science, Commerce, or any stream from a recognized university. Candidates must possess a minimum 6-month diploma or certificate in computer proficiency from a government-recognized institution is mandatory. Proficiency in MS Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access), Internet is required.

Desirable: English typing speed of 35 wpm (10,500 KDPH) and having experience in higher educational institutions.

Age Limit: Candidates must have a minimum age of 21 years and a maximum age of 40 years as on 04/01/2026.

Age Relaxation: Permissible relaxations in upper age limit for different categories are as under:

SC/ ST: 5 years

OBC: 3 years

PwBD: 10 years

Application Fee: Candidates have to pay a certain amount as application fee depending up on their category. The details are as given below:

Category Fee

SC/ ST/ PwBD/ BPL NIL

Others Rs 1500/-

Interested and eligible candidates may apply online for these vacancy through online mode by visiting official Recruitment Portal. Candidates may follow below mentioned steps to apply for BSSRV Recruitment.

Scroll down, go to Important Web-Links section.

Click on the "Online Application Form" and complete the registration process by clicking "New User? Register Now".

In the next stage, click on "Online Application Form" Link and Login.

Fill your all personal and educational details and upload necessary documents.

Make payment of application fee as per your category and submit the form.

At the end, take a print out of the application form.

Starting date of submission of online application: 24th November 2025

Last date of submission of online application: 4th January, 2026

Last date of receipt of hardcopy of online application: 19th January, 2026

NABARD Recruitment 2025 – 91 Assistant Manager Posts, Online Apply

Last Date: 30/11/2025.

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has released an advertisement for the recruitment of 91 Assistant Manager posts in Grade 'A' in National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). Interested and eligible candidates may apply online here.

Name of post: Assistant Manager in Grade 'A'

No of posts: 91 posts

Discipline wise vacancy:

Assistant Manager (RDBS): 85

Assistant Manager (Legal): 02

Assistant Manager (Protocol & Security Service): 04

Category-wise vacancy:

UR: 40 posts

SC: 14 posts

ST: 9 posts

OBC: 20 posts

EWS: 8 posts

Pay scale: Selected candidates will draw a starting basic pay of Rs.44,500/- p.m. in the scale of Rs. 44,500 – 2500 (4) – 54,500 – 2850 (7) – 74,450 – EB – 2850 (4) – 85,850 – 3300 (1) – 89,150 (17 Years) applicable to Officers in Grade 'A' and they will be eligible for Dearness Allowance, Local Compensatory Allowance, House Rent Allowance, and Grade Allowance as per rules in force from time to time.

At present, initial monthly gross emoluments are approximately Rs. 1,00,000/-.

Educational Qualification:

Assistant Manager in Grade 'A' (RDBS)

(i) General:

Bachelor's Degree in any subject from any recognized University/Institution with a minimum of 60% marks (SC/ST/PwBD applicants - 55%) in aggregate OR Post Graduate degree, MBA/PGDM with a minimum of 55% marks (SC/ST/PwBD applicants - 50%) in aggregate OR CA/ CS/CMA/ ICWA OR Ph.D from Institutions recognized by GOI/UGC.

(ii) Chartered Accountant

Bachelor's degree in any discipline from any recognized University/Institution with Membership of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). The Membership of ICAI must have been obtained on or before 01-11-2025.

(iii) Company Secretary

Bachelor's degree in any discipline from any recognized University/Institution with Associate/Fellow membership of Institute of Company Secretaries of India (ICSI). The Membership of ICSI must have been obtained on or before 01-11-2025.

(iv) Finance:

BBA (Finance / Banking) / BMS (Finance / Banking) from any recognized University / Institution with 60% marks (SC/ST/PwBD applicants - 55%) in aggregate

OR

Two years full time P.G. Diploma in Management (Finance) / Full time MBA (Finance) / MMS (Finance) degree with 55% marks (SC/ST/PwBD applicants - 50%) in aggregate from Institutions / Universities recognized by GOI/UGC with Bachelor's Degree in any discipline. Candidates will be required to submit a certificate from Institution/University regarding specialization in finance.

OR

Bachelor of Financial and Investment Analysis with 60% marks (SC/ST/PwBD applicants- 55%) OR

Bachelor's degree in any discipline from any recognized University/Institution with Membership of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI). The Membership of ICAI must have been obtained on or before 01-11-2025. OR

Bachelor's degree in any discipline from any recognized University/Institution with Membership of Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of India (ACMA/FCMA/ICWA). The Membership of ICAI must have been obtained on or before 01-11-2025. OR

Bachelor's Degree in any discipline from any recognized University/Institution with Chartered Financial Analyst certification from (CFA Institute-USA) or Financial Risk Manager (FRM) certification from Global Association of Risk Professionals (GARP).

(v) Computer/Information Technology

Four years Bachelor's Engineering/Technology Degree in Computer Science/ Computer Engineering/ Computer Applications/ Information Technology / Electronics / Electronics & Telecommunications/ Electronics & Communication/ Data Science / Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning from any recognized University/Institution with 60% marks (SC/ST/PwBD applicants 55%) in aggregate

OR Post Graduate degree in Computer Science/ Computer Engineering / Computer Applications/Information Technology / Electronics/ Electronics & Telecommunications/ Electronics & Communication/ Data Science / Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning with 55% marks (SC/ST/PwBD applicants 50%) in aggregate from any recognized University/Institution OR Graduate with 60% marks (SC/ST/PwBD applicants 55%) in aggregate from any recognized University/Institution AND having passed Department of Electronics and Accreditation of Computer Courses (DOEACC) 'B' Level.

(vi) Agriculture Engineering

Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture Engineering from any recognized University with a minimum of 60% marks (PwBD applicants - 55%) in aggregate OR Post Graduate degree in Agriculture Engineering with a minimum of 55% marks (PwBD applicants - 50%) in aggregate from any recognized University/ Institution.

(vii) Plantation & Horticulture

Bachelor's Degree in Horticulture from any recognized University with a minimum of 60% marks (PwBD applicants - 55%) in aggregate OR Post Graduate degree in Horticulture with a minimum of 55% marks (PwBD applicants - 50%) in aggregate from any recognized University/Institution.

(viii) Fisheries

Bachelor's Degree in Fisheries Science from a recognized University/Institution with 60% marks (ST/PwBD applicants 55%) in aggregate OR Post graduate degree in Fisheries Science with 55% marks (ST/PwBD applicants 50%) in aggregate from any recognized University/Institution.

Israeli forces kill at least 10 in southern Syria raid, residents say

DAMASCUS, Nov 28: Israeli forces in southern Syria raided a village and opened fire when they were confronted by residents on Friday, killing at least 10, Syrian media and officials said, as Israel fights on a number of fronts while the shaky ceasefire in Gaza moves forward.

The Syrian state news agency SANA said Israeli forces entered the village of Beit Jin, aiming to detain local men and opened heavy fire after protests by residents. Dozens of families fled the area.

Israel said on Friday it conducted an operation following intelligence information to apprehend suspects from Jamaa Islamiya, or Islamic Group, operating in Beit Jin to attack Israeli civilians. During the raid, several militants fired at Israeli troops, injuring half a dozen soldiers who were evacuated to a hospital, the military said.

Israeli troops fired at the militants and also responded with aerial assistance, the military said. It said the operation had concluded, all of the suspects were apprehended, and a number of militants were killed.



Israel has regarded the new authorities in the Syrian warily since the fall of former President Bashar Assad in a lightning offensive led by Islamist insurgents in December 2024. Since Assad's fall, Israeli forces have seized a formerly UN-patrolled buffer zone in southern Syria set up under a 1974 disengagement agreement. Israel has launched hundreds of airstrikes on Syrian military sites and pushed for a demilitarised zone south of

Damascus. The two countries, which do not have diplomatic relations, have been negotiating a potential security agreement to de-escalate.

Syrian officials have condemned the Israeli incursions as a violation of Syria's sovereignty but did not immediately comment on Friday's raid.

A local official in the village, Walid Okasha, told The Associated Press that those killed were civil-

ians, and one of them had celebrated his wedding the day before. "The situation is miserable," he said.

In a previous raid on Beit Jin in June, Israeli forces captured several people who they said were Hamas members — a characterisation disputed by residents — and killed a man whose family said he had a history of schizophrenia.

Ongoing conflicts in the region have fuelled concerns that unrest could spill over and undermine the fragile truce in Gaza.

The deaths in Syria followed a series of strikes by Israel's air force in parts of southern Lebanon on Thursday. Israel says its ongoing strikes are aimed at preventing Hezbollah from rebuilding after a devastating war last year ended with a ceasefire. The United Nations on Tuesday said Israel had killed at least 127 civilians, including children, in its strikes on Lebanon since the ceasefire a year ago. Things escalated earlier this week with a rare strike in Lebanon's capital of Beirut, killing a senior Hezbollah official who Israel described as the group's chief of staff. (AP)

Hong Kong firefighters make final search for survivors after apartment tower blaze kills 128

HONG KONG, Nov 28: Hong Kong firefighters searched through a high-rise tower complex apartment-by-apartment Friday for more victims after a massive fire engulfed seven of its eight buildings, killing at least 128 people in one of the city's deadliest blazes.

Crews were prioritising apartments from which they received more than two dozen calls for assistance during the blaze, but were unable to reach. Derek Armstrong Chan, a deputy director of Hong Kong Fire Services, told reporters.

The toll rose Friday afternoon to 128 after more bodies were found in the blackened towers, and Secretary for Security Chris Tang told reporters at the scene that the search for victims was continuing and the numbers could still rise.

The fire started midafternoon Wednesday in one of the Wang Fuk Court complex's eight towers, jumping rapidly from one to the next as bamboo scaffolding covered in netting in place for renovations caught ablaze until seven buildings were engulfed.

It took more than 1,000 firefighters, some 24 hours to bring the blaze under control, and even nearly two days later, smoke continued to drift out of the charred skeletons of the buildings from the occasional flare-up.

The final search of the buildings was expected to be completed later Friday, at which point officials have said they will officially end the rescue phase of their operation at the complex in Tai Po district, a northern suburb near Hong Kong's border with mainland China.

It was unclear how many people could possibly be inside the buildings, which had almost 2,000 apartments and some 4,800 residents. "We will endeavour to force entry into all the units of the seven blocks concerned so as to ensure that there are no other possible casualties," Chan said.



He said an updated figure on the number of missing people cannot be calculated until the search and rescue operation is complete.

The apartments from which a total of 25 unanswered rescue calls were received, which are being prioritised, were primarily on higher floors, where the fire was last to be extinguished, he said.

More than 70 people were injured in the blaze, including 11 firefighters, and about 900 people were housed in temporary shelters.

Most of the casualties were in the first two buildings to catch fire, Chan said.

The apartment complex housed many older people. It was built in the 1980s and had been undergoing a major renovation. Hong Kong's anti-corruption agency said on Thursday it was investigating possible corruption relating to the renovation project.

Three men, the directors and an engineering consultant of a construction company, have been arrested on suspicion of manslaughter, and police said company leaders were suspected of gross negligence.

Police have not identified the company where the suspects

worked, but The Associated Press confirmed Prestige Construction & Engineering Company was in charge of renovations in the tower complex. Police have seized boxes of documents from the company, where phones rang unanswered Thursday. Authorities suspected that some materials on the exterior walls of the high-rise buildings did not meet fire resistance standards, allowing the unusually fast spread of the fire.

Police also said they found plastic foam panels — which are highly flammable — attached to the windows on each floor near the elevator lobby of the one unaffected tower. The panels were believed to have been installed by the construction company, but the purpose was not clear.

Authorities planned immediate inspections of housing estates undergoing major renovations to ensure scaffolding and construction materials meet safety standards.

The fire was the deadliest in Hong Kong in decades. A 1996 fire in a commercial building in Kowloon killed 41 people. A warehouse fire in 1948 killed 176 people, according to the South China Morning Post. (AP)

Death toll from floods in Thailand reach 145

BANGKOK, Nov 28: The death toll from flooding in southern Thailand has reached at least 145, officials said on Friday, as receding waters started to reveal devastating damage across the region.

More than 1.2 million households and 3.6 million people have been affected by floods triggered by heavy rains in 12 southern provinces, the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation said on Friday.

Government spokesperson Siripong Angkasakulkiat said in a news conference in Bangkok that flooding has killed 145 people in eight provinces, particularly in Songkhla province, which recorded at least 110 deaths.

He said search and rescue efforts have become more successful as floodwaters started to recede further.

Songkhla province recorded a sharp increase in the death toll after flooding began to subside. News reports showed rescuers gained more access to residential areas that had previously been submerged under high water and recovered more bodies, particularly in Hat Yai, the largest city in the south.

The disaster department reported on Friday morning that waters have receded in most of the affected areas, but levels remain high in some locations. The Meteorological Department said rainfall has decreased in the south but warned of thunderstorms in some areas.

The flooding caused severe disruption, leaving thousands of people stranded, rendering streets impassable and submerging low-rise buildings and vehicles.

Videos and photos from the affected areas on Friday show damaged roads, fallen power poles, household appliances and debris washed away by floodwaters piled along the streets. Abandoned cars were overturned or stacked atop one another, apparently swept away by powerful currents. (AP)

Pak condemns shooting of 2 soldiers of US National Guard by Afghan national

ISLAMABAD, Nov 28: Pakistan on Friday strongly condemned the shooting of two soldiers of the US National Guard by an Afghan national in Washington, saying the incident "heralds a troubling resurgence" of terrorism on a global scale.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the departed soldier, and wish the injured a swift and complete recovery. We also extend heartfelt sympathies to the families affected as well as to the Government and people of the United States," the Foreign Office (FO) said in a statement.

It further stated that the targeted attack was undoubtedly an act of terrorism and a heinous assault on

United States soil, adding that Pakistan, for the past two decades, has endured countless similar terrorist incidents, with clear linkages to Afghanistan.

"This incident signifies the challenges posed by transnational terrorism and underscores the need for enhanced global cooperation to confront this menace," it said. The FO highlighted that the US incident heralds a troubling resurgence of terrorism on a global scale and asked the international community to take note and reinvestigate collective efforts in counter-terrorism.

Pakistan remains committed to working with the US and the wider international community to address the shared challenge of terrorism, the FO said. (PTI)

Military-run Myanmar plays host to goodwill visit by Belarusian leader

BANGKOK, Nov 28: Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko arrived in Myanmar on a goodwill visit, state media there reported Friday, becoming only the second foreign leader to visit the Southeast Asian country since it came under military rule in 2021.

The visit comes just a month before an election in Myanmar that has been characterised as neither free nor fair by critics. Lukashenko's goodwill visit is seen by critics as giving the appearance of support to the polls.

Since the takeover, Belarus has been a major supporter and supplier of Myanmar's military government, along with China and Russia.

It is one of only a few countries that have been visited by Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, the head of Myanmar's military government, who travelled there in March and June. Like Myanmar, the government of Belarus is widely seen as authoritarian.

Myanmar's military government has been shunned and sanctioned by many Western nations for ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, and for committing major human rights violations in trying to crush the resistance to army rule that arose after the takeover.

The only other foreign leader to visit Myanmar since 2021 was Cambodia's then-Prime Minister Hun Sen, in his capacity as chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2022.

A report in the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper said Lukashenko's Thursday night arrival at the military airport in the capital Naypyitaw saw him welcomed by Myanmar's Prime Minister Nyo Saw and other Cabinet members with full state honours and cultural performers. The report said Lukashenko will meet with Min Aung Hlaing to discuss strengthening friendship and cooperation across various sectors, with agreements and memorandums of understanding between the two countries to be signed during the visit.

During Min Aung Hlaing's visit in March to Belarus, Lukashenko pledged to support the military-organised election and promised to send observers to monitor it.

Critics have denounced the planned election as a sham to normalise the military's grip on power, and several opposition groups, including armed resistance forces, have said they will try to derail the polls.

Justice For Myanmar, a rights advocacy group that seeks to expose the financial underpinning of the military, said in a statement released Thursday that Belarus has provided Myanmar's military with arms, equipment and training that builds the army's technical capacity and its domestic arms industry.

Transfers from Belarus include a Myanmar Air Defence Operational Command system, radar technology and ground-based missile systems, the group's statement said. (AP)

Imran's sister files petition in Islamabad HC for not being allowed to meet Pak's jailed former PM

ISLAMABAD, Nov 28: Imran Khan's sister on Friday filed a contempt of court petition in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) against the Adiala Jail superintendent and others for not being allowed to meet Pakistan's jailed former prime minister.

Aleema Khan filed the petition in the presence of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi and other leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The petition referred to the IHC's March 24 order, in which the court had reinstated the twice-a-week meeting schedule for the 73-year-old, who has been languishing in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail since August 2023.

It said Aleema sought the initiation of contempt of court proceedings "on account of the willful non-implementation of the orders passed by this honourable court, particularly with respect to the authorities' failure to allow" her meetings with Khan.

It added that despite directions for allowing visits on Tuesdays and Thursdays, "the respondents did not comply with or implement the same".

The petition stated that Aleema had "remained deeply concerned about the well-being, legal rights and humane treatment of her brother during his ongoing incarceration". Those named in the petition include Adiala Jail Superintendent Abdul Ghafoor Anjum, Sadder Beroni police station SHO Rajia Aizaz Azeem, Federal Interior Secretary Capt (retd) Muhammad Khurram Agha and Punjab Home Department Secretary Noorul Amin. Both Aleema and Afridi were part of the 16-hour long sit-in that began on Thursday and ended early Friday when they were not allowed to meet Khan.

Meanwhile, after failing to meet the chief justice of the IHC, Afridi said that his party would not allow the parliament to hold its session. "We received a message from the chief justice that I cannot meet you, we have decided that neither the National Assembly nor the Senate will be allowed to hold a session today," he was quoted as saying by Dunya News TV.

Local media showed PTI lawmakers raising slogans in the Senate against the continued incarceration of Khan. Afridi also said that next Tuesday, they will



gather outside the high court and Adiala Jail.

There were rumours about the deteriorating health of the former prime minister but authorities rejected the concerns and Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry told the parliament on Thursday that Khan was doing well and "enjoying facilities like personal chef which are not available to any other prisoner".

Afridi last month replaced Ali Amin Gandapur as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister and announced that his first priority was to get the former cricket-turned-politician out of jail.

However, Afridi has not been able to meet the PTI founder in jail despite his strenuous efforts.

On Thursday, when he came to meet Khan, Afridi was stopped near the prison on the Adiala Road where he gave a "dharna" with dozens of PTI party followers and his protest continued for about 16 hours.

Afridi, however, said that he would not back down from the demands to meet Khan and get information about his health. "We will not retreat from our protests and sit-ins," he asserted. He also said his party used "all constitutional and legal options" in an attempt to meet the PTI founder, but to no avail. (PTI)

Anti-corruption raid targets Zelenskyy's prominent chief of staff

KYIV, Nov 28: Anti-corruption units have raided the home and reportedly also the office of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff, Andrii Yermak, in an unwelcome distraction for Kyiv officials as they battle to defeat Russia's invasion and persuade US officials to accommodate their concerns in peace proposals.

Two national agencies fighting entrenched corruption in Ukraine said their searches targeted Yermak, a powerful figure in Ukraine and a key participant in talks with the United States, confirmed they searched his apartment inside the presidential compound in downtown Kyiv, where checkpoints limit public access. Media reports said Yermak's office was also searched, but investigators declined to comment on that. It was not clear where Zelenskyy was at the time of the morning raid.

"The investigators are facing no obstacles," Yermak wrote on the messaging app Telegram. He added that he was cooperating fully with them and his lawyers were present.

The National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the Specialised Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office are Ukrainian anti-corruption watchdogs. They are behind a major investigation into a USD 100 million energy sector corruption scandal involving top Ukrainian officials. (AP)

Pope Leo XIV receives enthusiastic welcome from Turkiye's Catholics as he opens key day in first trip

ISTANBUL, Nov 28: Pope Leo XIV encouraged Turkiye's tiny Catholic community to find strength in its small size as he embarked on the key day of his first trip, which is meant to bolster Christians and pursue their centuries-old quest for unity.

Shouts of "Papa Leo" and "Viva il Papa" (Long Live the Pope) erupted along with cheering and clapping inside and outside Istanbul's Cathedral of the Holy Spirit as Leo arrived to begin his first full day in Turkiye.

Leo presided over a prayer with Turkiye's Catholic clergy and nuns before taking part in the key reason for his visit, the first of his pontificate. He will commemorate the 1,700th anniversary of one of the most important moments in Christianity: the 325 AD gathering of bishops that produced the Nicene Creed, a statement of faith that millions of Christians still recite today.

The gathering happened at a time when the Eastern and Western churches were still united. They split in the Great Schism of 1054, a divide precipitated largely by disagreements over the primacy of the pope. But even today, Catholic, Orthodox and most historic Protestant groups accept the Nicene Creed, making it a point of agreement and the most widely accepted creed in Christendom.

As a result, celebrating its foundations is an important marker in the centuries-old quest to reunite all Christians.

Speaking at the cathedral, Leo said the creed wasn't merely a doctrinal formula, but the "essential core of the Christian faith."

"Therefore, its development is organic, akin to that of a living river, gradually bringing to light and expressing more fully the essential heart of the faith," he said.

The anniversary commemoration will take place in Iznik, the



site of the Council of Nicaea gathering, about 150 kilometres (93 miles) from Istanbul. Presiding with Leo will be Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians. Leo arrived in Turkiye on Thursday, emphasising a message of peace as he met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip

Erdogan. It's a message he'll bring to Lebanon on Sunday, the second and final leg of the trip for history's first American pope.

At the cathedral on Tuesday, Leo sought to encourage Turkiye's tiny Catholic community, which numbers around 33,000 in a nation of 85 million, most of whom are Sunni Muslims. He praised especially the church's work with migrants and newcomers to Turkiye.

"The logic of littleness is the church's true strength," Leo told them in English. "The significant presence of migrants and refugees in this country presents the Church with the challenge of welcoming and serving some of the most vulnerable."

It was a message that resonated with the crowd outside, which reflected the multinational face of the Catholic Church in Turkiye.

"With all my heart, I am so happy," said Debora Martina Da Silva, a political science student from Guinea-Bissau. Mateusz Zajdecki, a 21-year-old from Szczecin, Poland, recognised the ecumenical significance of Leo's visit.

"I think it is important for Turkiye to be united at one table, eucharistic table, and to pray together to one father who is in heaven," Zajdecki said. (AP)

Israeli soldiers kill Palestinian men in West Bank after they appear to surrender

JERUSALEM, Nov 28: Israeli soldiers on Thursday killed a pair of Palestinian men in the occupied West Bank after they appeared to surrender to troops, drawing Palestinian accusations that the men were executed "in cold blood." The Israeli military said it was investigating.

The killings, captured in a pair of videos shown on two Arab TV stations, came as Israel pressed ahead with its latest offensive in the West Bank, where the army has stepped up its activities over the past two years. Israel says it is cracking down on militants, but Palestinians and rights groups accuse Israel of using excessive force and say dozens of unarmed civilians have been killed.

Israel has been fighting on a number of fronts as a shaky ceasefire in Gaza moves forward. On Thursday, Israel carried out another round of airstrikes on suspected Hezbollah sites in southern Lebanon. Ongoing conflicts in the region have fuelled concerns that unrest could spill over and undermine the fragile truce in Gaza. A Palestinian-American teenager held in Israeli detention for nine months was also released on Thursday night. The 16-year-old emerged visibly thin and was embraced by his crying family.

Israeli soldiers accused of executing Palestinian men in West Bank

The Israeli military announced it was opening an investigation into the deaths Thursday of the two men, which Palestinians have called an execution. In video shown by the Egyptian TV station Al-Ghad, which have no sound, the men are seen on the ground in front of the troops. They are then ordered to the entrance of a garage. Both men lifted up their shirts to show they are not carrying explosives or large weapons, and one of the men held his hands in the air as they moved. As they are on the ground and surrounded by troops, gunshots are heard and the men slump down, apparently lifeless. At least one soldier appears to fire his weapon.

In a statement, the Israeli military said the two men were wanted militants in the northern town of Jenin who had thrown explosives and opened fire at troops. (AP)

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CM urges people to strengthen grassroots democracy Khandu launches rural poll campaign



ITANAGAR, Nov 28: Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Friday launched the BJP's panchayat election campaign in Tawang, urging people to strengthen grassroots democracy by supporting what he called "candidates of development, accountability and a brighter future."

Khandu, in a social media post, said the campaign began with the spirited call of 'Vande Mataram'

and heartfelt salutations to 'Maa Bharti', as enthusiastic party workers, leaders and youth echoed chants of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai!'

"People of Tawang today came out in overwhelming numbers, not just to participate, but to stand firmly with the BJP," he said in a post on X after addressing an election rally.

The chief minister added that with the BJP governing at the

Centre, in the state, and deeply rooted at the grassroots, the state now had a historic opportunity to change the destiny of the people.

Calling for unified support ahead of the local body polls, Khandu appealed to voters to stand behind his party's nominees.

"As we move towards the upcoming panchayat elections, I appeal to every citizen to place their faith in BJP candidates; the candidates of development, account-

ability, and a brighter future for our villages," he said.

Panchayat polls and municipal elections in Itanagar and Pasighat will be held simultaneously on December 15.

According to the State Election Commission (SEC), the panchayat polls will cover 27 zilla parishads with 245 constituencies and 2,103 gram panchayats comprising 8,181 constituencies.

In the municipal areas, the Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC) has 20 wards, while the Pasighat civic body has eight wards.

A total of 8,31,648 voters are eligible to cast their ballots, including 7,59,210 for panchayat bodies and 72,438 for the two municipal bodies.

For the smooth conduct of the polls, the SEC has set up 2,171 polling stations for the panchayat elections, 67 for the IMC and 12 for the PMC.

Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) will be used in the municipal elections, while the panchayat polls will be conducted using ballot boxes. Counting of votes will take place on December 20. (PTI)

Leadership workshop at RGU stresses need for stronger school protocols on suicide risk

HT Correspondent
RONO HILLS, Nov 28: A leadership engagement workshop aimed at strengthening school-level responses to suicide risk was held at Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU), bringing together principals and headmasters from 12 private and government institutions under the Itanagar Capital Region and Papum Pare district.

The workshop was organised under the ongoing ICMR Multi-state Implementation Research Study on Suicide Risk Reduction and Mental Wellbeing among school and college students, being implemented by AITS, RGU, with funding from the Indian Council of Medical Research and support from the Department of School Education.

The day-long session focused on assessing institutional preparedness and developing formal protocols for handling crisis situations related to student mental health.

Officials said the discussions centred on the urgent need for schools to adopt clear guidelines to deal with completed suicides, attempted suicides, and cases where students exhibit high-risk behaviour or strong suicidal ideation.

Several school heads shared that they had previously dealt with incidents involving student suicides, attempts, or severe emotional distress. However, participants acknowledged that while individual efforts are being made by teachers and administrators to counsel students and engage parents, none of the institutions currently have stan-



dardised procedures or documented protocols for responding to such incidents.

Speakers noted that this gap often leaves schools unprepared during crises and increases the emotional burden on staff.

Resource persons highlighted that suicide cases tend to create a "ripple effect", leaving classmates, close friends, and families at heightened risk due to trauma, grief, or secondary stress.

They emphasised that a structured institutional mechanism is essential not only for immediate crisis management but also for ensuring long-term support for affected students and preventing further incidents.

As part of the project, several participating institutions were formally onboarded to work toward building more resilient and mentally supportive school environments.

The schools include Alphabet Public School, Nirjuli; Alphabet

Girls Residential School, Nirjuli; Government Higher Secondary School, Nirjuli; VKV, Nirjuli; Little Star School, Papunallah; Abotani Vidya Niketan, Pachin; Little Rose School, Naharlagun; Government Secondary School, Pachin; Government Higher Secondary School, Polo Colony; PMSHRI Government Higher Secondary School, Doimukh; Government Secondary School, G-Sector, Naharlagun; St. Thomas Residential School, Naharlagun; and VKV, PTC Banderdewa.

Officials involved in the initiative said the next phase of the project will involve developing school-specific protocols, capacity-building sessions for teachers, and establishing mental health support systems tailored to each institution's needs.

The programme aims to create a model of comprehensive suicide-risk management that can be adopted by schools across the state.

15th NCORD meeting in East Siang reviews gains in district's anti-drug campaign

HT Correspondent
PASIGHAT, Nov 28: The 15th monthly NCORD meeting chaired by East Siang Police at the Deputy Commissioner's Conference Hall today reviewed the district's ongoing anti-drug initiatives and highlighted key milestones achieved through coordinated efforts of government departments, community-based organisations, NGOs and civil society.

Deputy Commissioner Sonalika Jiwani, while reviewing the Action Taken Reports submitted by various departments, commended the proactive steps taken to strengthen the district's anti-drug campaign.

She said the progress made so far reflects encouraging momentum in East Siang's fight against substance abuse. Jiwani stressed the need to empower recovering youths by linking them with self-employment opportunities and directed departments to intensify outreach in Sudharghars (rehabilitation centres).

She advised officials to conduct regular awareness sessions on vocational and skill development courses offered by institutions such as RSETI Pasighat and the Department of Skill Development and Industries.

Earlier, SP East Siang Pankaj Lamba briefed the meeting on the police department's recent initiatives, including anti-drug awareness drives, strict enforcement of the NDPS Act, and joint operations conducted with other departments.

He informed that the Voice Against Drug Abuse (VADA) clubs, in collaboration with WASE and recovered warriors, reached 1,300 individuals this month across five villages under Mebo Sub-division.

He also reported the organisation of the "Drug-Free East Siang Police Fest" as part of community outreach efforts.

Kepong La Day commemorated in Upper Siang with ceremonial tribute to frontier guardians



HT Correspondent

TUTING, Nov 28: Kepong La Day was commemorated on November 17 with ceremonial grandeur and patriotic fervour across the Upper Siang frontier, with events organised by Spear Corps in coordination with the Upper Siang district administration, an official statement said on Friday.

The observances highlighted the strategic significance of the region and paid homage to the soldiers and civilians who defended the frontier during the 1962 Battle of Kepong La.

The presence of Lt Gen Abhijit S Pendharkar, AVSM, VSM, GOC Spear Corps, and Tuting MLA Alo Libang lent prominence to the commemorations and underscored the Army's long-standing commitment to safeguarding India's northern borders.

The day's events began at Tuting, a frontier town known for its strategic location and steadfast loyalty to the nation.

At Tuting Top, a 72-foot National Flag was inaugurated with full military honours.

The installation, completed through the contribution of philanthropist Uma Maskai and the efforts of Indian Army personnel, was described by officials as a symbol of national unity and the resilience of the border population.

A 30-foot iron-forged "TUTING" signage was also unveiled, marking the site as a landmark of frontier identity.

The commemorations continued at Gelling, the first Indian village where the Tricolour meets the morning sun. Located at the point where the Siang River enters Indian territory, Gelling holds both strategic and symbolic importance as the northern

gateway of the valley.

On these grounds, Lt Gen Pendharkar visited the cemetery at Kepong La Pass to honour the memories of soldiers and civilians who held the line during the 1962 conflict.

During the solemn ceremony, he laid a wreath at the Chorten dedicated to the fallen personnel of 2 MADRAS and 11 Assam Rifles who died during the Battle of Kepong La. Officials said the tribute reaffirmed the Army's respect for the sacrifices made in one of the most remote and challenging terrains of the eastern frontier.

The cemetery, bearing the engraved names of the fallen, stands as a reminder of the courage and discipline that shaped the defence of the region.

As part of the observance, a bike rally was held from Tuting to Kepong La, with 25 civilian riders from nearby border towns participating.

Their involvement reflected the close bond between the local population and the Armed Forces and added public enthusiasm to the commemorative events.

An inter-school sports meet was also organised in Vibrant Village Tuting, featuring performances by AMAR-trained children, further strengthening community participation.

The day concluded with calls to uphold the resilience, unity and national resolve associated with the frontier. Officials said Kepong La Day serves as an enduring reminder of the sacrifices made in the region and the collective responsibility to safeguard India's sovereignty.

Governor Parnaik expands global outreach to promote Arunachal Kiwi

HT Correspondent
ITANAGAR, Nov 28: The Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, Lt Gen KT Parnaik (Retd), has stepped up efforts to promote Arunachal Kiwi by sending the state's organic produce to various embassies and consulates, marking a significant expansion of Raj Bhavan's annual outreach.

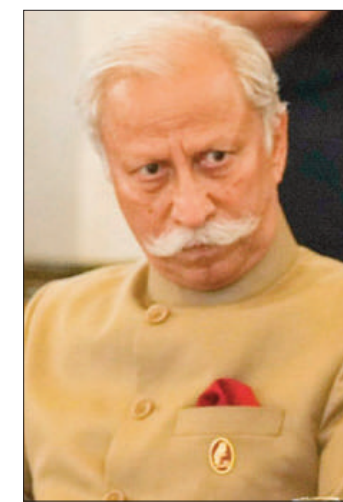
The initiative is part of his ongoing campaign to bring national and international attention to the work of kiwi farmers and the State's emerging strength in horticulture.

Every year, Raj Bhavan dispatches curated boxes of Arunachal Kiwi to the country's top dignitaries, including the President, Vice President, Prime Minister, Union ministers, Governors and chief ministers.

Officials said that this year the outreach has gone global with kiwi consignments sent to foreign missions as part of an effort to explore new international markets and strengthen brand visibility for the state's produce.

Raj Bhavan noted that Arunachal Pradesh accounts for nearly 40 per cent of India's domestic kiwi production, a figure that highlights both the State's favourable climate and the sustained efforts of local farmers.

Arunachal is also the first state in the country to secure organic



certification for kiwi, placing it at an advantage as consumer demand for chemical-free, high-quality produce grows in both domestic and international markets.

In his acknowledgment of the gift, the Prime Minister praised the gesture and said the kiwis symbolise the fertile land, natural wealth and industrious spirit of the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

He said the State's rise as India's largest producer of kiwi reflects the determination of its people and the focused work undertaken by the government to convert local resources into new economic opportunities.

He added that the flavour of the

produce would remind him of the warmth and goodwill of the people of the State.

According to the State Horticulture Department, Arunachal Pradesh produced more than 70 lakh kilograms of kiwi this year, involving close to 1,500 farmers across 3,582 hectares.

While West Kameng and Lower Subansiri remain the major kiwi belts, new cultivation zones are emerging in Dibang Valley, Anjaw, Shi Yomi, Tawang, Upper Subansiri and Kurung Kumey, as well as in Keyi Panyor, Kamle's Kamprojo circle, Sagalee in Papum Pare, and areas under Upper Siang including Mariyang, Singa and Gelling.

Officials said the Vibrant Village Programme has played a role in introducing kiwi cultivation in frontier villages such as Singa and Gelling, where early outcomes show encouraging prospects for long-term livelihood growth.

To bolster market access, agencies including the Department of Horticulture, Arunachal Pradesh Marketing Board and APEDA are working with farmers to connect them to national buyers and explore export avenues. Officials said the combined efforts aim to ensure that the gains of increased production translate into sustainable income and long-term stability for kiwi-growing communities.

Presiding and polling officers trained for Pasighat Municipal Elections

HT Correspondent
PASIGHAT, Nov 28: Ahead of the Pasighat Municipal Elections 2025, the first round of training for Presiding Officers and Polling Officers was conducted today at the DC's Conference Hall and the IGJ Auditorium. The session aimed at preparing election personnel for the smooth, fair and transparent conduct of polling for the election of Councillors to the Pasighat Municipal Council (PMC).

Municipal Returning Officer Tatling Pertin, addressing the trainees, urged them to familiarise themselves thoroughly with all operational procedures to be followed on polling day.

He emphasised that the officers form a crucial part of the election machinery and are entrusted by the State Election Commission (SEC) of Arunachal Pradesh under the provisions of the Arunachal Pradesh Municipal Election Act, 2009.

Pertin reminded them that their designated responsibilities must be discharged with diligence, impartiality and sincerity to uphold the integrity of the electoral process.

The training was held under the supervision of Assistant Municipal Returning Officer Yamo Tamut. Master Trainers Dr Alakesh Phukan (Assistant Professor), Kasep Tayom (ADES) and Er Bapu Tabing (AE, RWD) conducted the sessions, which included detailed briefings on the roles and duties of polling personnel as well as practical demonstrations on the operation of Electronic Voting Machines.

Arunachal SEC introduces on-the-spot voting facility for personnel engaged in civic poll duty

ITANAGAR, Nov 28: The State Election Commission (SEC) has, for the first time in Arunachal Pradesh, introduced on-the-spot voting facility for personnel engaged in poll duty for the upcoming municipal elections, instead of exercising their franchise through postal ballots.

According to an order issued by SEC secretary Taru Talo on Thursday, the polling personnel, hailing from Itanagar and Pasighat — where the civic polls will be held — will have to apply for the facility to their respective municipal returning officer at least three days before the scheduled polling date, and attach a copy of the election duty appointment order.

The MRO, after verifying the identity and appointment order of the personnel, will mark the voter's name on the electoral roll and provide a ballot paper for on-the-spot voting. The order allows the MRO to fix the date, time, and place for casting the vote and mandates that contesting candidates, their election agents, or authorised representatives be informed and remain present during the voting.

Voters would cast their ballots either by sealing the ballot paper in an envelope given to the MRO or using the ballot box procedure under the Election Duty Certificate (EDC). The MRO will retain the counterfoil of the ballot paper in a sealed cover for security and transparency, the order stated.

The order has been issued in exercise of the plenary powers conferred by Article 243ZA of the Constitution, which aims to ensure that officers serving on election duty do not miss their right to vote, thereby strengthening democratic participation.

The 12th general election to panchayat bodies and third municipal polls for Itanagar and Pasighat will be held simultaneously on December 15.

There are 27 zilla parishads with 245 constituencies and 2,103 gram panchayats with 8,181 constituencies in the state.

The Itanagar Municipal Corporation (IMC) has 20 wards, while the Pasighat Municipal Council (PMC) has eight wards.

A total of 8,31,648 voters are eligible to vote — 7,59,210 for the panchayat and 72,438 for municipal elections.

Upper Subansiri district has the highest number of panchayat voters at 61,142 while Dibang Valley has the lowest at 4,249.

In the municipalities, Itanagar's ward number 19 has the highest number of voters (5,106), whereas Pasighat's ward number 6 has the lowest (812).

SUBANSIRI FINISHES RUNNER-UP Lohit crowned champion in state's 1st Women's Shooting Ball League



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Nov 28: Lohit emerged as the champion and Subansiri finished runner-up in the first-ever Asmita Khelo India Women's Shooting Ball League 2025-26, marking a major step forward for women's sports promotion in Arunachal Pradesh.

The league was organised by the Shooting Ball Association of Arunachal Pradesh (SBAAP) under the Asmita Khelo India initiative and concluded on Thursday.

The inaugural edition brought together six district teams — Siang, Lohit, Subansiri, Tawang, Kameng and Papum Pare — in what officials described as a breakthrough platform for women athletes in a discipline steadily

gaining popularity. Lingdum Anju from the Lohit team was adjudged the Best Player of the League for her standout performance.

At the closing ceremony, All Arunachal Contractor's Welfare Association president Nabam Akin Hina attended as chief guest, while IMC Ward No 18 official candidate Gigi Rina Camdir graced the event as guest of honour.

Both encouraged the participating teams to continue nurturing their sporting aspirations and to inspire others to join competitive sports. Earlier, at the inaugural session, Director of Sports Tadar Apa urged athletes to remain disciplined and committed in order to achieve ex-

cellence. He said that while the state has abundant talent, proper guidance and channelled effort are essential for helping young players excel at higher levels.

Citing success stories of sportspersons from Arunachal at state and national events, Apa advised athletes to balance academics and sports, maintain physical and mental well-being, and strive to make the most of opportunities such as the sports quota in government jobs.

Arunachal Olympic Association general secretary Bamang Tago encouraged participants to use the league as a stage to showcase their potential and gain competitive exposure.

"Do not participate just for certificates. Participate to gain experience," he said, adding that events like this will play a significant role in changing perceptions about women in sports and building their confidence.

Certificates were also presented to athletes who recently represented Arunachal Pradesh at the national-level Shooting Ball League.

SBAAP president Tako Taluk said the introduction of the league in the state aligns with the national vision to enhance women's participation in sports.

He emphasised that Arunachal has many promising female athletes who only need proper platforms to display their abilities.

Officials said the success of the league is expected to boost interest in shooting ball and widen opportunities for women across the state.

Rahul seeks debate in Parliament on Delhi air pollution, questions PM Modi's silence



NEW DELHI, Nov 28: Ahead of the Winter session of Parliament, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday demanded a detailed discussion in the House on the issue of air pollution in the national capital as he questioned the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on this "health emergency".

He also demanded a strict, enforceable action plan to tackle air pollution and asked why the Modi government was not showing any urgency or accountability on the issue.

Gandhi held an interaction with a group of mothers at his residence on the issue and shared a video of his conversation with them, with several of them raising concerns over the impact of pollution on the health of their children.

"Every mother I meet tells me the same thing: her child is growing up breathing toxic air. They are exhausted, scared and angry."

"Modi ji, India's children are choking in front of us. How can you stay silent? Why does your government show no urgency, no plan, no accountability?" he asked in a post on X.

"India needs an immediate, detailed Parliament debate on air pollution and a strict, enforceable action plan to tackle this health emergency," the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said.

"Our children deserve clean air - not excuses and distractions," he asserted.

In the video, the former Congress president noted that everybody is affected by pollution - the poorest person living in Delhi and the richest person living in Delhi.

"The reason there is pollution is because there are

stakeholders who benefit from the pollution and to put it bluntly they are more powerful than you are.

"Now when you are talking of political will, consequences of this power affect political will. If you have 500 to 1000 commercial units who are polluting Delhi, they have political power and the problem is that the average citizen is not organised at all. So, he has no political power," the Congress leader said in the video while interacting with the women.

He told them that while they already have a choice in terms of dealing with air pollution, many people in India don't have that.

"You can go to the doctor, but there are many who don't... Pollution problem is the tip of the sphere."

"I am more than happy to help you because I think it is important. I breathe the same air and it is terrible. My niece and nephew grew up with it. You can't escape it, there is no way," he said.

To a suggestion by one of the mothers to have a debate in Parliament, Gandhi said, "There would be a fair goal to let us have a debate on air pollution in Parliament."

He also asked them how they were seriously thinking about organising people and how they are going about it.

During the conversation, a woman told Gandhi that there are almost 500 children under five years who die every day in India because of air pollution and yet this has never been an emergency.

Another woman said that even though this is a chronic national medical emergency, yet there is no advisory from the government and asked what it was doing for a whole generation of kids and why was the government silent on it.

She said, "If we don't act now, it is going to be like a bomb in the next 10 years".

Delhi has been battling very poor air quality for the past 15 days.

According to the forecast by the Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi, the air quality is likely to remain 'very poor' over the coming week.

With Delhi's air quality slipping deep into the 'very poor' and 'severe' categories this winter, doctors have stressed the need for regular diagnostic screening to detect early signs of pollution-linked health deterioration, especially among smokers, asthma patients, children and people with pre-existing cardiac or respiratory conditions.

Experts said preventive health checks are becoming increasingly important as toxic air triggers airway inflammation, reduces lung function and aggravates underlying diseases. (PTI)

New India never bows nor hesitates from protecting its people: PM Modi

UDUPI (KARNATAKA), Nov 28: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said previous governments may have hesitated to respond after a terror attack but new India neither bows nor hesitates from protecting its people.

The PM said the crux of national security is believing in taking everyone along but stand up to protect Dharma.

"Previous governments used to sit idle after terror attack but new India neither bows nor hesitates from protecting its people," the Prime Minister said addressing people in the temple town of Udupi.

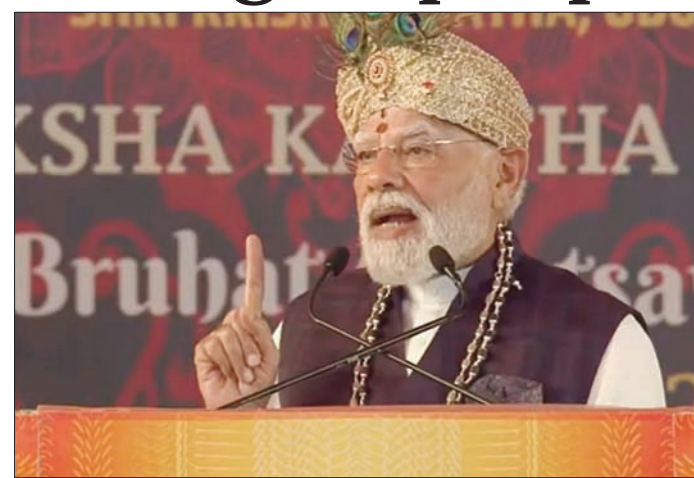
He was here to take part in the "Laksha Kantha Gita Parayana," where one lakh people recited Srimad Bhagwad Gita. The event was organised by Sri Krishna Math in Udupi.

"Gita teaches us to strive for peace and truth and also the need to crush perpetrators of atrocities. We believe in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Mother earth as one family) and also recite 'Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitah' (Dharma protects those who protect Dharma)."

Recalling the Pahalgam terror attack in April this year in which 26 persons, mostly tourists, were killed, Modi said people from Karnataka were among the victims.

He said the nation saw the government's resolve during Operation Sindoor, India's military response to the ghastly incident where precision attacks were carried out on terror launchpads in Pakistan.

"We give Krishna's message of compassion from Red Fort and also announce Mission Sudarshan Chakra," he said.



Explaining, he said Mission Sudarshan Chakra provides a security wall around key locations, industrial and public places.

Hailing Udupi, he said the town presented a new governance model five decades ago, which today guides national policies on cleanliness and water supply.

Lauding Swami Vishwesha Teertha of Pejavara Math of Udupi, he said the whole nation knows how big was his role in the Ram Janna Bhoomi movement.

His guidance to the temple movement led to flag hoisting at Ram temple in Ayodhya recently, he said.

Modi told the gathering that Ram temple in Ayodhya is significant for Udupi because a special arch gate has been built dedicated to Sri Madhwacharya, the founder of Madhwa sect of Dvaita (dualism) philosophy.

Speaking about the importance of Bhagwad Geeta in public life, Modi said its teachings have been relevant in every era as it continues to give direction to formulate na-

tional policies.

"Lord Sri Krishna tells us in Gita to work for public welfare. Slogans like 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' and 'Sarvajan Hitaya' are inspired by the verses of Geeta. It tells us to help poor which helped us lay foundation for policies like Ayushman and PM Awaas Yojana," Modi said.

The Prime Minister said the lessons on women safety and women empowerment from the life of Bhagwad Gita guided the Centre to formulate "Naari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam" (Women's Reservation Act).

Earlier, Modi visited the historic Kanaka Mantap, here and offered floral tributes to Kirthanakar Kanakadasa, the revered 14th-15th century AD saint-philosopher. Kanakadasa is credited with the legendary episode of Lord Krishna's idol turning westward at the Udupi Sri Krishna Temple.

Later, the Prime Minister participated in the "Laksha Gita Pathana" accompanied by Paryaya Puthige Math seer, Sugunendra Thirtha, Karnataka Governor

Thawarchand Gehlot and others. The PM read out the hymns.

Modi also offered prayers at the Sri Krishna Temple, where he was received with traditional honours by Sugunendra Thirtha, along with the Diwan of the Math and senior temple officials.

The PM spent time inside the sanctum precincts, acknowledging the significance of Kanakadasa's devotion and the enduring cultural legacy associated with the temple.

He was given a Poorna Kumbh swagatham (welcome with traditional honours) as he entered the Krishna Math precincts. He was presented with a silver clad Tulasi Japa mala and Mudras containing Shankha, Chakra, Gada, and Padma, which the Madhwas and most of the Brahmin communities use for their daily Pooja rituals in South India.

Modi had visited the Krishna temple in 2008 when he was the Chief Minister of Gujarat. Even then, the same Swamiji was the administrative head of the Krishna Math.

Upon his arrival at the temple town, Modi held a grand road show. The PM landed at the Mangaluru Airport and proceeded to Udupi by a helicopter.

Standing on the running board of his vehicle, Modi waved at the enthusiastic gathering, which showered his convoy with flower petals. Modi reciprocated by throwing flowers back at the people waiting on either side of the road. Saffron festoons and BJP flags dotted the route.

The celebratory atmosphere was further elevated by performances from various cultural troupes that showcased the vibrant traditions of coastal Karnataka. (PTI)

₹ 1.20 crore for top leaders Odisha revises Maoist surrender & rehabilitation policy

BHUBANESWAR, Nov 28: To eradicate left-wing extremism in the state, the Odisha government has launched a revised Maoist surrender and rehabilitation policy with a provision of maximum financial assistance up to ₹ 1.20 crore and also enhanced reward money for surrendered firearms.

Additional Director General of Police (Anti-Naxal operation), Sanjeeb Panda said: "Top Maoist leaders like central committee members, politburo member or central military commission member if they surrender in Odisha will get ₹ 1.20 crore, which includes ₹ 10 lakh as financial assistance."

Similarly, state committee member/special zonal committee member of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) will get ₹ 65 lakh, including ₹ 10 lakh as financial assistance. Regional committee member ₹ 33 lakh, divisional committee secretary/commander of military platoon ₹ 27.50 lakh, divisional committee member/deputy commander of military platoon/area committee secretary ₹ 22 lakh and ₹ 11 lakh for commander, local organising squad/local guerrilla squad.

As per the provisions of the new surrender policy, a 'deputy commander, local organising squad/local guerrilla squad' to get ₹ 5.50 lakh, while provision of paying ₹ 2.75 lakh is made for members of special teams like technical team/intelligence team/supply team/medical team/gana natya sangha and central regional command (CRC). Even the Dalam

members/cadres/ party members will be entitled to get ₹ 1.65 lakh, the official said.

"If the surrendered Maoist carries any reward money declared by the government, he/she will be paid either the financial assistance or the declared reward amount," the notification issued by the Odisha Home department on Thursday said.

If the Maoist surrenders with weapons in working condition, live ammunition, and explosives, he/she will be entitled to the benefits of enhanced financial assistance. He/she will avail ₹ 4.95 lakh assistance if surrender with light machine gun (LMG), AK-47 rifle (₹ 3.3 lakh from ₹ 10,000 earlier), SLR/Insas rifle (₹ 1.65 lakh from earlier ₹ 10,000), and .303 rifle (₹ 82,500 from earlier ₹ 5,000).

According to a notification issued on Thursday, the surrendered cadres will be classified into two categories, category A and B. High-ranking cadres such as central committee secretaries, central military commission chiefs, politburo members, central committee members, state committee members or equivalent rank, special zonal committee members, and regional committee members come under category A.

Similarly, the lower rank cadres, including divisional committee secretaries, military platoon commanders, divisional committee members, area committee secretaries, and area committee members, are part of category B. (PTI)

Local body polls: SC asks Maha SEC to hold elections

NEW DELHI, Nov 28: The Supreme Court on Friday asked the Maharashtra government and its state election commission to conduct local body elections and made it clear that poll results of all bodies, including where 50 per cent ceiling on quota have been breached, will depend on its verdict.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi also said that as many as 27 pleas concerning OBC reservation in local bodies will be taken up for final hearing by a three-judge bench on January 21, 2026.

In May 2025, the bench had directed the Maharashtra government and the SEC to conduct the long-pending elections within four months, and to grant OBC reservation based on the legal framework that existed prior to the Bantia Commission report.

At the outset, senior advocate Balbir Singh, appearing for the state election commission (SEC), said that 50 per cent ceiling on quota has been breached only in 40 municipal councils and 17 nagar panchayats.

He said there are a total 246 municipal councils and 42 nagar panchayats where the poll process has begun and there are "only 40 municipal councils, out of 246, where reservation is exceeding 50 per cent and similarly, there are 17, out of 42 nagar panchayats, where this ceiling is breached".

Taking the statement into consideration, the bench said the SEC can proceed with the election but the results will be dependent on the final outcome of the case.

The bench also said the state poll panel may proceed with the elections for other zila parishad, panchayat samiti and nagar parishad, where the issue of breach of 50 per cent quota is not there. However, the results of these local bodies will also depend on the final verdict in the case, the

bench said.

"Today we are making only a temporary arrangement, till matter is finally heard. On January 21, a three-judge bench can hear. There should not be any objection from either side," the CJ said.

Earlier, the bench had pulled up the SEC for non-compliance of its order and directed it to hold local body polls, stalled since 2022, to be completed by January 31, 2026 without further extension.

Earlier on November 19, the bench had asked the state government to consider deferring the process of nomination for local body elections till the issue of grant of 27 per cent reservation for the Other Backward Class (OBC) is adjudicated upon by it.

Senior advocate Vikas Singh argued that previous orders, including a July 2022 direction by a three-judge bench led by Justice A M Khanwilkar, since retired, approving the Bantia Committee recommendations, had created confusion.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the state government, had said that state authorities acted under a "bona fide interpretation" of the court's orders.

In December 2021, the top court stayed the quota, holding that it could only be implemented after fulfilling the triple-test requirement laid down in earlier judgments.

The triple test contains the establishment of a commission to study backwardness, and second, determination of the specific proportion of reservation based on the commission's findings and third, ensuring that the total reservation for SCs, STs, and OBCs does not exceed 50 per cent of the total seats.

The state had constituted the Jayant Kumar Bantia Commission in March 2022 to determine empirical data for OBC reservation. (PTI)

Double-murder case: SC rejects anticipatory bail pleas of ex-MLA, brother

NEW DELHI, Nov 28: The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed anticipatory bail pleas filed by a former Andhra Pradesh MLA and his brother in a double murder case, and said it was "amazed" by the reach of the accused, who filed statements of some persons recorded by the investigating officer.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta observed that the manner in which the petitioners procured these documents "shows conspiracy" as even the chargesheet has not yet been filed in the case.

It said, "Whatever way you have got it, it is totally unacceptable. This is interference in investigation. You go inside. How could you get hold of this?" The bench was hearing the pleas filed by former MLA and YSRCP leader Pinnelli Rama Krishna Reddy and his brother Pinnelli Venkataram Reddy.

The apex court dismissed their pleas and directed them to surrender within two weeks.

The petitioners had challenged an August order of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, which dismissed their plea seeking anticipatory bail. Hearing the matter on September 4, the Supreme Court said that "by way of ad interim order, in the event of arrest", the petitioners be released on bail in connection with the case registered in Palnadu district subject to executing personal bonds of ₹ 25,000 with one or more sureties in the like amount.

During the hearing on Friday, the counsel appearing for the complainant told the bench that the petitioners have filed statements of some persons recorded by the investigating officer in the case.

When the bench asked about it, senior advocate Siddharth Dave, appearing for one of the petitioners, said they got the documents from the court in a legitimate way.

"It can't be," the bench said, adding the court can never give the case diary.

Senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appearing for Andhra Pradesh, also expressed concern



and said he was shocked by how the petitioners got these documents.

"The manner in which you (petitioners) procured this shows conspiracy on the face of it," the bench said. It observed that one of the petitioners has said that he was implicated on the basis of a telephonic conversation.

"How does the petitioner know the intrinsic details of the investigation?" the bench asked. Dave said the petitioners were implicated in the case due to "pure political vendetta".

"We are amazed by the reach the accused has," the bench observed.

Senior advocate Shobh Alam appeared for the other petitioner.

The state's counsel argued before the high court that both the petitioners were key conspirators in the case of the murders of J Venkateswarlu and J Koteswara Rao in May and the investigation was at a crucial stage.

"Considering all the facts and circumstances of the case as well as the gravity of the offences, this court views that granting of anticipatory bail to the petitioners could hinder the ongoing investigation," the high court said. (PTI)

AI, digital intelligence platforms to transform India's disease surveillance approach

NEW DELHI, Nov 28: India is set to transform its disease surveillance approach from traditional detective methods to a predictive model by integrating cutting-edge technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), real-time data analytics, and digital intelligence platforms.

This paradigm shift will significantly enhance the country's ability to identify outbreaks before they escalate, enabling faster decision-making, rapid response, and proactive containment.

Officials at the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) said the move builds upon the success of AI-based event surveillance systems already in use under the Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP) of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP).

The Media Scanning and Verification Cell (MSVC) has been leveraging an AI-powered pipeline that scans millions of online news reports daily across 13 Indian languages, extracting structured

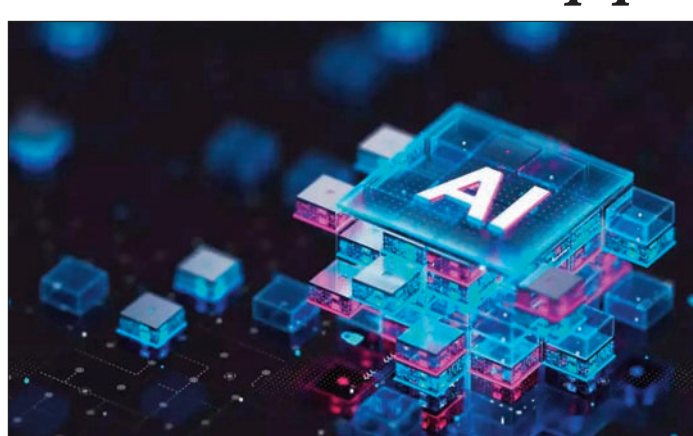
health event data, including the disease type, location, and scale.

The system has already processed over 300 million news articles since 2022, flagging more than 95,000 unique health-related events - a 150 per cent increase in detection capacity over manual systems, with 98 per cent reduction in workload for surveillance teams, they said.

This transformative technology, known as Health Sentinel, acts as a "digital watchdog", automatically identifying unusual spikes in diseases like dengue, chikungunya and other public health threats, which are then verified by experts for accuracy.

The shift to predictive surveillance will leverage these powerful analytical capabilities to forecast disease trends and enable intervention even before the first case is reported, marking a major stride in India's pandemic preparedness, an official said.

Further strengthening this transition, the newly established Metropolitan Surveillance Units



(MSUs) under the PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) have demonstrated real-time surveillance capabilities, officials said.

In a recent incident involving suspected paediatric Acute Encephalitis Syndrome (AES) cases in Chhindwara district, Madhya Pradesh, the MSU Nagpur promptly flagged the occurrence to the Central Surveillance Unit, enabling rapid coordination among

stakeholders across two states.

Swift expert deployment by the National Joint Outbreak Response Team (NJORT), in collaboration with ICMR, NIE and CDSCO, helped mount an immediate field response.

The case illustrates the evolving capacity of India's surveillance ecosystem to rapidly detect unusual clinical patterns and trigger early intervention even in complex urban health settings, officials said.

This approach also underscores the focus on collaborative surveillance that IDSP, NCDC has embarked upon and is cementing it further.

Experts note that the upcoming predictive model will integrate AI surveillance, laboratory intelligence, climatic data, population movement patterns, and digital diagnostics to anticipate outbreak trajectories. This proactive disease intelligence network will empower health authorities to detect early warning signals before clinical manifestation, rapidly mobilise resources and field teams and strengthen district-level risk mitigation.

Besides it will prevent large-scale outbreaks through advanced forecasting.

Officials emphasised that this shift aligns with the government's vision of creating a future-ready public health system, enhancing national readiness against infectious diseases, climate-related health risks, and potential pandemics. (PTI)

SIR in Gujarat: BLO dies of heart attack

MEHSANA, Nov 28: A school teacher working as a Booth Level Officer (BLO) for the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Gujarat's Mehsana district died of a heart attack during the early hours of Friday, a police official said.

While the opposition Congress and teachers' union linked the BLO's death to excessive work pressure and lack of facilities, police denied the allegations.

"Dinesh Raval (50), a resident of Sudasana village, died of a heart attack in his home in the intervening night of Thursday and Friday. He was a teacher in a government primary school in the village and was recently made BLO for carrying out SIR," Satlasana police station sub inspector Udaysinh Zala said.

"He was rushed to a government hospital in Vadnagar after his health deteriorated at his home. The post mortem report put the cause of death as heart attack. Neither his family nor his colleagues have made any allegations against anyone so far," Zala added.

Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi, however, alleged BLOs

are under immense pressure to finish the assigned work in time.

President of Gujarat State Primary Teacher Association, Digvijaysinh Jadeja, said he came to know from other teachers that Raval was under pressure due to BLO related work.

"I urge the government to find an alternative because teachers who are deployed as BLOs are under immense pressure. They have to work as teachers and also as BLOs the whole year. Some are working overnight to finish the task," said Jadeja.

On November 20, Rameshbhai Parmar, a school teacher working as a Block Level Officer (BLO) in Gujarat's Kheda district, died of a heart attack, with his family attributing his death to "excessive work pressure" linked to the ongoing SIR.

On the next day, Arvind Vahder, a school teacher deployed to work as BLO allegedly ended his life in Gujarat's Gir Somnath district. His family claimed he left a note citing "mental stress and exhaustion" from SIR work.

SIR is currently underway in 12 states and Union territories. (PTI)

Meghalaya govt extends VAT exemption on fruit wine

SHILLONG, Nov 28: The Meghalaya government has extended Value Added Tax (VAT) exemption on fruit wine from three years to 10 years, a move that is expected to give a major push to the state's growing wine economy. Excise Commissioner Matsiewdor War said on Friday.

The decision was taken recently and is expected to ease the tax burden on small producers and encourage higher standards for those aiming to sell in wider markets.

War, speaking at the two-day Meghalaya Wine Economy Summit 2025 at the State Convention Centre, said the government had also amended Rule 377 of the Excise Act to allow the setting up of 'wine boutiques' that can sell only registered homemade wines in specified premises or as part of stand-alone food establishments.

She said the policy would allow visitors to experience Meghalaya's wine culture and encourage entrepreneurs to set up wine boutiques.

The Meghalaya Fruit Wine Makers Association highlighted the long but largely undocumented history of fruit-based wines in the Northeast, noting that traditional fermentation practices date back centuries and once relied on millet, rice and indigenous fruits such as sohiong.

Association president Bryan Dally Kharpran said

wine-making in the region was "as old as the hills," recalling that English settlers also produced fruit wines.

He cited the example of Captain Hunt, who in 1947 obtained a licence to manufacture cherry wine and cherry brandy in Mawphlang. The products became popular among Assam tea planters and were even available in Kolkata before the winery collapsed in the 1980s.

Kharpran said the tradition survived in pockets of society, receiving a major boost in 2004 when Michael Syiem, an activist, organised a wine festival in Shillong and advocated for the legitimisation of fruit wines to promote livelihoods.

The North East Food Show in 2019 further showcased the sector's potential, drawing strong interest from consumers and entrepreneurs.

A key breakthrough came in 2020, when the state government amended the Assam Excise Rules to legalise fruit wines as a commercial venture, paving the way for structured production and market expansion.

Kharpran said the recent policy developments reflect growing recognition of fruit wine as both a cultural legacy and an emerging economic opportunity.

He added that the association remains committed to strengthening the sector and supporting local communities involved in wine-making. (PTI)

Five arrested in connection with death of man in rehabilitation centre

DIMPUR, Nov 28: Five people, including the owner of a rehabilitation centre, have been arrested in connection with the death of a 46-year-old man in Nagaland's Chumoukedima district, police said on Friday.

The arrests were made after injury marks were discovered on the body of Pradeep Basumatary, a resident of Aojan, Ganeshpur, Urimghat in Assam's Golaghat district.

According to officials, Diphuphar police station received a call from Referral Hospital on Wednesday at around 3:00 pm, informing them that a deceased individual had been brought in from the rehabilitation centre in Chekiye.

A police team reached the hospital, where the attending doctor confirmed that the man had been declared dead on arrival, prompting police to register a suo motu FIR and open a full-scale investigation.

A mandatory inquest revealed multiple visible injuries, including bruises on both lower limbs and buttocks and marks on the legs, left cheek, and left hand, suspected to be caused by blunt-force assault.

Police said these findings raise a strong suspicion that Basumatary was physically assaulted prior to his death. The body has since been shifted to Dimpur District Hospital for post-mortem examination to determine the exact cause of death.

Following the initial findings, police said four individuals directly involved in the incident, along with the rehabilitation centre's owner, were taken into custody.

Dimpur Police stated that a detailed investigation is underway, with all forensic, technical, and procedural steps being meticulously documented to ensure accountability and swift justice.

The incident has also triggered a parallel inquiry into the rehabilitation centre's operations. Police will examine its licensing status, overall compliance with operational regulations, and the adequacy of in-house medical and mental health facilities.

The Commissioner of Police, Dimpur, confirmed that the case is being pursued with utmost seriousness and that strict action will follow based on the investigation's outcome. (PTI)

Meghalaya HC orders status quo on demolition of historic Bidhan Bhavan

SHILLONG, Nov 28: The High Court of Meghalaya has ordered a status quo on the proposed demolition of 'Bidhan Bhavan' or 'Roy Villa', a heritage property.

Bidhan Bhavan, also known as Roy Villa, was constructed before 1923 by Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy, who later became Chief Minister of West Bengal, and it served as a summer retreat for his family.

A Division Bench comprising Justice Hamarsan Singh Thangkhiw and Justice Biswadeep Bhattacharjee on Thursday directed that the matter be placed before the regular PIL bench of the Chief Justice and that the status quo on the property be maintained until the next hearing.

A PIL concerning the property, currently functioning as state Circuit House, was registered earlier this month following a letter addressed to Chief Justice Soumen Sen. The letter highlighted the villa's historical and architectural significance.

During Thursday's hearing, a short affidavit was filed on behalf of the state government. (PTI)

Fossil evidence of presence of thorniness in bamboo in Asia during Ice Age discovered in Manipu

IMPHAL, Nov 28: Scientists conducting a field survey in Manipur's Imphal West district have discovered fossil evidence indicating that thorniness in bamboo was already present in Asia during the Ice Age, a government release said.

Researchers from the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences (BSIP), an autonomous body under the Department of Science and Technology (DST), found a bamboo stem with unusual markings in silt-rich deposits along the Chirang River in Imphal Valley.

Their detailed analysis identified these as thorn scars, prompting further investigation into its identity and significance, it said.

The team studied the fossil's morphology—including nodes, buds and thorn scars—in the laboratory and assigned it to the genus *Chimonobambusa*. Comparisons with living thorny bamboos such as *Bambusa bambos* and *Chimonobambusa callosa* helped reconstruct the plant's defensive traits and ecological role.

"This is the first fossil evidence that thorniness in bamboo—a defence against herbivores—was already present in Asia during the Ice Age. Its preservation is particularly significant because it comes from a period of colder and drier global climates, when bamboo was wiped out in many other regions, including Europe. The fossil shows that while harsh Ice Age conditions restricted bamboo's global distribution, Northeast India provided a safe refuge where the plant could continue to thrive," the release said. The discovery published in the journal *Review of Palaeobotany and Palynology* is remarkable for capturing fragile details like thorn scars—features that almost never fossilise. The finding also highlights the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot as a crucial refugium during the Ice Age. While colder and drier climates eliminated bamboo



from places such as Europe, the warm and humid conditions of Northeast India allowed it to persist.

"This research by H Bhatia, P Kumari, NH Singh and G Srivastava adds a new dimension to our understanding of both bamboo evolution and regional climate history. It also emphasises the role of this part of Asia in safeguarding biodiversity during times of global stress, making the discovery not only a botanical milestone but also an important contribution to palaeoclimatic and biogeographic studies, the release added.

Meanwhile, geologist N Herojit Singh of Geological Survey of India, a member of the team which discovered the fossil, told PTI, "The fossil was discovered back in 2021-22 at the silt-rich deposits of 'quaternary deposits exposed' west of Senjam-Chirang village in Imphal West district. Several samples were collected, some of which measured nearly one feet.

Findings of the studies stated that the discovery of the "fossil bamboo culm" is from "late Pleistocene sediments in eastern India." (PTI)

'We cannot go beyond the international border, but we have Naga friends across borders'

Nagaland CM Rio calls NPF-NDPP merger 'historic'

KOHIMA, Nov 28: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio described the merger of the NDPP and NPF as a "historic coming together" undertaken for the cause of the Naga people.

Addressing the Central Executive Council (CEC) meeting of the Naga People's Front (NPF), which he took over as the president following the formal merger on October 21 in Kohima, Rio on Thursday said the unified regional platform would succeed only if its members "work smoothly and together with sincerity".

Rio thanked party leaders for their support of his leadership both as chief minister and as party president, acknowledging his own limitations while emphasising that the purpose of the merger was larger than individual interests.

"Our coming together is not for ourselves, but for the cause of the Nagas—to uphold our history, tradition, culture and identity," he said.

Rio stressed that the Nagas have limited written records of their own history and that the present political unification also forms "a good record for our people".

Calling the NPF the oldest regional party in the Naga political landscape, Rio said the contributions of those who benefited from the party, whether present, departed, or now in other parties, must be recorded.

He urged members to continue fighting for Naga rights and identity, saying the merger itself has "created history".

Rio acknowledged challenges in organisational restructuring, including the formation of divisions and committees, and urged party workers to adjust and cooperate when decisions do not meet individual expectations.

He also noted the pressures faced by the secretary general due to lobbying and appeals for accommodation within the new organisational structure, saying these concerns would be addressed gradually.

On the broader regional identity, Rio said the NPF is not confined to Nagaland alone, with its presence in Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh, and aspirations to build a footprint in Assam as



well. "We cannot go beyond the international border, but we have Naga friends across borders. Let us work with that spirit," he said.

The CEC, meanwhile, adopted a series of resolutions concerning the party unification, structural reorganisation and the Naga political issue.

The CEC resolved that the merger was undertaken in the "paramount interest of the Naga people". The party said the unification aims to strengthen shared values, preserve identity and advance a collective regional vision. It also appealed to other like-minded regional forces to join the united platform and sought continued public support.

The two regional parties of the state - NDPP with 32 MLAs and NPF with 2 MLAs officially merged on October 21, marking the 63rd foundation day of the oldest regional party in the Northeast.

Reiterating its political stance, the CEC resolved to continue supporting the ongoing peace process and affirmed its commitment to an "honourable, acceptable and inclusive" so-

lution to the Naga political issue.

It also endorsed the January 6 Nagaland Cabinet Resolution, seeking withdrawal of the re-imposed Protected Area Permit (PAP), urging the Centre to act in the interest of the people of Nagaland.

Approving the creation of separate party divisions for Meluri, Chumoukedima and Shamator, it resolved that appointment of office bearers for the three new divisions would be carried out as per the party constitution.

As part of internal reforms, the CEC resolved to amend certain provisions of the party constitution and constituted a Constitution Amendment Committee. The committee will include the secretary general as the convener, with the convener of the Central Legal Cell as member secretary, and the presidents of the Central Women Wing, Central Youth Wing and Central Farmers' Wing as members.

The House further authorised the party president to constitute a Central Finance Committee. (PTI)

GOVT OF ASSAM

DIRECTORATE-CUM-ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER

PWD(R&B), HILLS, ASSAM,
DIPHU.

No.ACEH/CS/AAP/75/2025-26/3,

Date.27.11.2025.

PRESS NOTICE

Director-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer, P.W.D.(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu, on behalf of Governor of Assam invites Item Rates bids from registered contractors of Class-1 (A&B) category for the work "Construction of ICBP Road from Diphu Matipung via Mensing Ronghang to Hemari Bey under AAP (KAAC) for the year 2025-26" Details may be seen at e-procurement portal website www.assamtenders.gov.in, and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 01/12/2025 to 15/12/2025. The Bidders must be registered with the E-Tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam.

Sd/-

Director-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer,
P.W.D.(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu.

Memo NoACEH/CS/AAP/75/2025-26/3-(A),

Date 27/11/2025.

GOVT OF ASSAM

DIRECTORATE-CUM-ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER

PWD(R&B), HILLS, ASSAM,
DIPHU.

No.ACEH/CS/AAP/76/2025-26/3,

Date.27.11.2025.

PRESS NOTICE

Director-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer, P.W.D.(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu, on behalf of Governor of Assam invites Item Rates bids from registered contractors of Class-I (A&B) category for the Various works: 1. "Construction of CC Block road Zirikideng to Rngnihang road to Thatskai from Ch.0.00 m to Ch. 1535.00 m, L=1,535 km under AAP (SOPD Council Sector) for the year 2025-26", 2. "Construction of C.C. Block road Zirikideng to Rongnihang from Ch. 0.00 m to Ch.4300.00 m, L=4.300 KM under AAP (SOPD Council Sector) for the year 2025-26", and 3. "Construction of CC Block road Thatskai Tinali to Jirilaskar from Ch.0.00 m to Ch. 2784.00 m, L=2.784 Km under AAP (SOPD Council Sector) for the year 2025-26", Baithalangso Roads Division, Donkamokam. Details may be seen at e-procurement portal website www.assamtenders.gov.in, and also in the office of the undersigned during office hours from 01/12/2025 to 15/12/2025. The Bidders must be registered with the E-Tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam.

Sd/-

Director-Cum-Additional Chief Engineer,
P.W.D.(R&B), Hills, Assam, Diphu.

Memo NOACEH/CS/AAP/76/2025-26/3-(A),

Date 27/11/2025.

Nagaland CM Rio seeks urgent PAP clearance ahead of Hornbill Festival for foreign delegates



KOHIMA, Nov 28: With the 26th edition of the 10-day long Hornbill Festival set to begin on December 1, Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio once again written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah seeking immediate clearance of Protected Area Permit (PAP) applications for international delegates.

He also reiterated the state's long-pending demand for lifting the PAP regime entirely.

PAP is a travel document required for

foreigners to visit certain sensitive or protected areas in India.

Rio had on November 18 written to Shah on the same matter, while this is his second letter within this month.

In his letter on Friday, Rio said the Hornbill Festival—coinciding with State Commemoration Day—is a major cultural event that attracts thousands of visitors and significantly drives Nagaland's economy through tourism, employment and allied services.

This year's festival will host representatives from six Partner Countries, expected to participate in cultural presentations, business roundtables and networking events. While preparations are complete, the chief minister said PAP clearances for foreign delegates remain pending with the Ministry of Home Affairs, creating "serious concern" with only days left.

Rio sought the Union home minister's "immediate and personal attention" to ensure urgent issuance of permits. He again pressed for removal of the PAP regime, noting that despite earlier positive assurances, the requirement continues to hinder tourist inflow and affect the state's image.

Citing Nagaland's longstanding association with the NDA and governance under the PDA coalition, Rio said lifting PAP restrictions would enhance tourism, ease travel and strengthen the state's integration with the rest of the country.

He added that a favourable decision would send a "strong and reassuring message" to the people of Nagaland. (PTI)

It's tough to get good work in both India and US, says actor Suraj Sharma



Actor Suraj Sharma, best known for his performance in the Oscar-winning movie "Life of Pi", says straddling between India and the US for work hasn't been easy but he tries his best to pick the right stories. "I take a lot of time to choose what I want to do. There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes before choosing something, I've always been picky about the stories and the characters I want to play, and the people I want to work with."

"I've been lucky enough to keep myself going in this industry, in India,

trying to keep a foot on both continents. It's been tough, but it's been a great one for me, and I'm very lucky to be one of the few people who get to do both," the actor told PTI in an interview. Sharma found global fame after he starred in filmmaker Ang Lee's 2012 movie "Life of Pi", adapted from author Yann Martel's 2001 book of the same name.

In the movie, which won four Academy Awards, including best director for Lee, the actor played the role of Pi Patel, a 16-year old Indian, who is left stranded on a lifeboat for

227 days after a shipwreck along with a Bengal tiger named Richard Parker.

The actor, who has also featured in films and shows like "Phillaari", "Gulmohar", "Wedding Season", "Homeland" and "How I Met Your Father", said it's the story and the character that attracts him to do a film, whether it's in India or in the US.

"They are very different industries, but they both have good stories to tell, and that's what I'm trying to be a part of. It's so great to be seen in both. I'm trying to focus on quality. There's a lot in the pipeline for India right. I'm really looking forward to it. I miss working in India. It has been a couple of years since 'Gulmohar' released."

"We've been building these projects to shoot in India and projects that are a bridge between the US and India. I want to focus on making good things, just not a lot of things," he added. Sharma is currently attending the 56th edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), where he is presenting his new movie "The Tempting Madness".

"The Life of Pi' premiere happened at IFFI in Goa, so one of my most prized memories is actually right here, and it's so nice to be back in Goa for this one," the actor said about returning to the film gala.

"The Tempting Madness" features Sharma alongside Simone Ashley of "Bridgerton" fame.

The American feature, directed by Jennifer E Montgomery, is centered

on a woman haunted by the man she loves and memories she can't trust.

The film follows Mia (Ashley), who awakens from a coma after a near-fatal fall to find her past shattered, her husband missing, and her family's quiet vigilance hinting that the danger she fears may not be entirely behind her.

Montgomery said she is happy about the world premiere of her debut film at IFFI.

"I don't think this is a niche film; it is a psychological thriller. It's so interesting because it taps into the human psyche and all the things that we deal with as part of a society and as humans that we're sometimes just scared to talk about."

"We hope it's something that people see and it resonates with them and they want to talk about it afterwards and process it," she said.

Montgomery said after watching the audition tape of Sharma, she instantly felt he was apt for the film.

"The footage was a big favourite of our casting director, and our casting director told me right from the get that he would be fantastic for the role, and when she showed me his tape after having already sung his praises, I immediately was drawn to him. He's just so talented as an actor."

"He's so layered, and he was one of the best things that could have happened to the project. I feel so lucky to have worked with him, and I would love to work with him again," the filmmaker said. (PTI)

I SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A STAR, I BROKE ALL RULES AND MADE EVERYTHING IMPRACTICAL: AAMIR KHAN



I don't know how I became a star, says actor Aamir Khan, stressing that in his career of over 30 years, he did everything that broke the many "rules" of stardom.

Speaking at a session during the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), the 60-year-old actor said his filmography comprises of films that were "impractical".

"I don't know how I became a star. By all logic, I should not have been a star. I broke all the rules and I made everything impractical. So, I feel grateful that I received so much respect and success. Otherwise, practically speaking, none of the steps I took were from the point of view of achieving success," Aamir said.

Whether it was "Sarfaroosh", "Lagaan", "Ghajini", "Taare Zameen Par", or his latest "Sitaare Zameen Par", the actor said all of them were experimental and shouldn't have worked at the box office.

"In fact, almost every film I used to pick, I used to be like, 'I don't know whether this is going to work.' Like 'Sarfaroosh' and 'Lagaan', when we were releasing the film, we had no idea if people are going to like it or not."

"Then 'Lagaan', there was even 'Dil Chahta Hai' which was very unusual for its time and now 'Sitaare Zameen Par', all these films that I have picked, they were not meant to be successful," he added.

During the session, titled "The Narrative Architect of Social Transformation", Aamir said he likes to "surprise my audience and myself" as an actor.

"I don't want to do the same thing again and again. It's just out of how I am as a personality that I have picked different scripts. And I have always gone with what excites me, personally."

Aamir said these days a lot of film people tend to try and second guess the audience.

"They are like, 'What is it that I should make today?' The obvious answer is what people are watching and what are the films running nowadays in the market. So, you try and make that genre."

"If it's action, you make action. If it's comedy, you try and pick up a comedy film. But I have never thought that way. I have not been able to think that way. I pick films based on my own personal excitement towards the story. And most often, that goes against what is the norm at that time."

Aamir said when he did "Ghajini" in 2008, action films were not being made in the industry.

"Everyone told me that, 'Man, you are doing action now. Action films are not running nowadays.' So, 'Ghajini' came in and with it, action came in to fashion," he said.

Aamir's last release was "Sitaare Zameen Par", which released in theatres in June, followed by its digital release on YouTube under pay per view model.

Directed by R S Prasanna, the movie featured Aamir as Gulshan, an assistant coach of a major basketball team. After being fired from his job, he is ordered to either go to jail or do 90 days of community service as the coach of a team of specially-abled basketball players.

Aamir said he was surprised by the success of the film, which earned over Rs 250 crore at the box office.

"The audience has proved everyone wrong in the way the film got a reaction. The kind of love and respect the film got was unprecedented. So, I am really happy that audiences don't only want to watch one kind of film."

"At the end of the day, it doesn't matter what genre you are making it, what genre you are working in, but every film that you make has to be really hitting on the right notes. So, even if you are making an action film, at the end of the day, you need a good story for that."

Aamir's films have often been praised for providing entertainment with a dose of message, whether it was "Sitaare Zameen Par", which spoke about neurodivergent children or his earlier films like "Taare Zameen Par", "Dangal" and "3 Idiots".

The actor, however, stressed that he is not someone who picks up social causes actively.

"I am not an activist and nor am I someone who is interested in actively taking up issues. That's not me. What is me is storytelling, what is me is films. That's my world. And I am very sharply aware that when a person comes to a cinema hall, he or she is not coming there for a lesson in sociology. For that, they would go to a college," he said.

His first and primary responsibility is to entertain audiences and Aamir said he is aware of that.

"But the word entertain is not just make you laugh. I can make you cry also and entertain you. Basically, I want to engage you in one way or the other. I can scare you by making a horror film. I can make a suspense thriller. I can make a family drama. I can make different genres."

The actor said he is now looking for his next film.

"I am deciding which one to do. So, I am not thinking and have never thought that which is the next social topic I should pick up. And does not occur to me at all. So, the first attraction for me is the great script. And if that great script is also telling us something which is socially relevant, it's all the better. But I am not trying to look for social themes," Aamir said. (PTI)

Madhuri Dixit essaying serial killer in new JioHotstar series 'Mrs Deshpande'

Bollywood star Madhuri Dixit will play a serial killer in "Mrs Deshpande", a new thriller series from streaming service JioHotstar.

Billed as an exploration of identity and hidden truths, the show will premiere on December 19. It is directed by Nagesh Kukunoor and produced by Applause Entertainment in association with Kukunoor Movies.

The show follows the unsettling story of a seemingly ordinary woman whose quiet, everyday life masks far darker secrets, according to the official logline.

A teaser released by the OTT platform on Friday offered a glimpse into the world of "Mrs Deshpande", showing Dixit in a deglam, restrained avatar as she calmly chops vegetables while a radio bulletin warns of a serial killer on the loose.

The series promises a slow-burning narrative built with "remarkable restraint and precision". "Mrs. Deshpande" has been a truly fascinating and enjoyable journey for me. As I worked on the script, I saw only Madhuri in the title role and to have her play this complex character was an absolute joy.

"The deglamorised look is just the beginning as her character constantly keeps the audience second guessing the secrets that she hides behind the million watt smile. This character is a significant departure from anything the audience has ever seen her do and I guarantee that they will be blown away by her nuanced performance," Kukunoor said in a statement.

Dixit said the role pushed her into unfamiliar territory.

"It's raw, unfiltered, and strips away the glamour, audiences usually associate with me. She is the most complex character I've ever played - you constantly feel like you know her, till you don't. Playing a character with so many shades of grey has been both exciting and nerve-wracking! I'm eager for the audiences to see this thrilling, new side of me," she added.

"Mrs Deshpande" will also feature Siddharth Chandekar and Priyanshu Chatterjee in pivotal roles. (PTI)

'Amaran' a proud feather on my shoulder, don't feel burden of its success: Rajkumar Periasamy



Film director Rajkumar Periasamy says he feels overwhelmed by the love people have showered on his war drama movie "Amaran", a war drama starring Sivakarthikeyan and Sai Pallavi.

The 2024 Tamil-language film, which served as the opening film of the Indian Panorama section of the ongoing International Film Festival of India (IFFI), is based on the true story of Indian Army officer Major Mukund Varadarajan, played by Sivakarthikeyan.

The story, adapted from a chapter of the book "India's Most Fearless: True Stories of Modern Military Heroes", chronicles Varadarajan's journey from college to his military service in Kashmir, and the sacrifice that he makes during a counter-terrorism operation in 2014. Pallavi essays the role of Mukund's wife Indhu Rebecca Varghese, who received the Ashoka Chakra award on behalf of her late husband.

"I don't remember the process of 'Amaran', or the screenplay order. By the time I gave away the film from post production centers for the release until then I was carrying the film within me. Once, I gave it out, then the audience owns it and we are burden free. I don't have the burden of success on me. I'll wear 'Amaran' as a proud feather on my shoulder," Periasamy, who made his debut with the 2017 Tamil film "Rangoon", told PTI.

"Since, the time it was released the love that has been showered upon the film, cast and crew, and me, is overwhelming. When I look back, the process for the film was more than six to six-and-half years, so it took a lot of time, but it was worth-while," he said.

The filmmaker further said he is glad viewers connected with the film for its true purpose -- telling the real-life story of a soldier who sacrificed his life for the country.

"Every time I receive an award or felicitations or I'm at a screening, I only think of the sacrifices made by our Indian army, soldiers, and the families of the soldiers," Periasamy said. The film, which released across the country on October 31, 2024, reportedly earned over Rs 300 crore at the box office. It is produced by veteran actor Kamal Haasan's banner Raaj Kamal Films International.

The filmmaker said he feels "blessed" to have had two exceptional performers -- Pallavi and Sivakarthikeyan -- leading the film. (PTI)

Making action films in Finland was an impossible dream: 'Sisu: Road to Revenge' director

Filmmaker Jalmari Helander says his love for action cinema goes back to his childhood but pursuing that passion felt impossible while growing up in Finland, a country with no tradition of big-budget action filmmaking.

Helander, who has come out with his new movie "Sisu: Road to Revenge", said he used to watch action movies, especially the James Bond movies, with his father as a child. He was inspired so much that he had made up his mind on becoming an action director by the age of 11.

But Finland, with a small population of around five million, had no significant tradition of producing action cinema because large-scale action required substantial budgets.

"I think people in India also like action films. For me, I think it started in my childhood, when I was a kid watching James Bond films with my dad. When I was 11-year-old, I was certain that I would do action films when I grew up."

"But that's kind of an impossible dream being a kid in Finland (because) we had zero action films in Finland. There were only five million

people living in Finland, basically you don't have money to do big action films. But I'm happy to be here now (making action films)," Helander told PTI in an interview.

The filmmaker started his feature film career with the 2010 hit "Rare Exports: A Christmas Tale", and followed it up with 2014's "Big Game" and "Sisu" in 2022.

"Sisu: Road to Revenge" is the sequel to the "Sisu" and sees actor Jorma Tommila reprising his role as Aatami Korpi, a reclusive former commando who embodies sisu, a Finnish spirit of unbreakable grit and resilience.

In the sequel, Korpi has settled into a quieter life after securing his gold but peace is short-lived as a new group of dangerous criminals and corrupt operators threaten his hard-earned freedom.

Making an action film like "Sisu: Road to Revenge", comes with its own set of challenges, said Helander.

"There were a lot of difficult action set pieces, especially the big explosions, because it's like you have one take and then you have to plan it for days. Basically, you've one shooting



day when you only get the explosion, it's very time consuming, but it's nice when it happens," he said.

One of the standout moments from "Sisu: Road to Revenge" is the 'Motor Mayhem chapter', a sequence Helander said was quite difficult to shoot.

"I don't remember how many days we were shooting it, maybe ten or something or even more. But that was really time consuming, you've a lot of moving vehicles and cameras moving also, and that takes a lot of planning to have the timing right. And that was probably the hardest," he said.

The 49-year-old director, who is also a fan of Sylvester Stallone's "Rambo" and Arnold Schwarzenegger-led "Terminator" franchises, is

now excitedly working on his next feature.

The project serves as a prequel to the "Rambo" franchise and is currently titled "John Rambo". Actor Noah Centineo is set to step into the shoes of Sylvester Stallone, who played the iconic character in five films -- "First Blood" (1982), "Rambo: First Blood Part II" (1985), "Rambo III" (1988), "Rambo" (2008), and "Rambo: Last Blood" (2019).

"I'm in Bangkok in pre-production with the new 'Rambo' film and I'm pretty happy about that. It's going to be my take on what I like about 'Rambo' franchise, combined with the style I like to do it. So, I'm just trying my best and I hope it works," Helander said about the project. (PTI)

2nd Pasang Wangchuk Sona State Level Hockey Championship begins in Chimpu

HT Correspondent

CHIMPU, Nov 28: The 2nd Pasang Wangchuk Sona State Level Hockey Championship 2025 began on Friday in Chimpu with 378 athletes from across Arunachal Pradesh taking part, marking one of the largest state-level hockey gatherings in recent years.

Organised under the aegis of Hockey Arunachal (HA), a permanent member of Hockey India and the Arunachal Olympic Association, the championship has drawn teams from multiple district units, reflecting the growing spread of the sport across the state.

A total of 270 male and 108 female players are participating this year.

Officials said the strong turnout from both categories indicates ris-

ing enthusiasm for hockey among young players and a visible improvement in grassroots sports development.

The tournament will follow a pool-based format for men and women, with teams competing in the group stage before advancing to the knockout rounds.

In the men's category, Hockey Capital Complex, Hockey Kurung Kumey, Hockey Pakke Kesang and Hockey East Kameng are placed in Pool A.

Pool B includes Hockey West Siang, Hockey Lower Subansiri and Hockey Papum Pare.

Pool C consists of Hockey Siang, Hockey Leparada, Hockey Upper Subansiri and Hockey Tawang, while Pool D features Hockey Keyi Panyor, Hockey

Lohit, Hockey Kamle and Hockey Kra-Dadi.

For the women's division, Hockey Papum Pare, Hockey West Siang and Hockey Kra-Dadi have been grouped in Pool A, while Pool B includes Hockey Kurung Kumey, Hockey Upper Subansiri and Hockey Kamle.

Tournament officials said the balanced distribution of teams is expected to ensure a competitive championship in both categories.

Hockey Arunachal stated that the aim of the championship is to provide a structured platform for emerging players from all districts and to nurture sporting excellence.

The organisation added that the increasing number of women players is an encouraging sign for the state's sporting ecosystem and



aligns with ongoing efforts to promote inclusive participation.

The tournament is being supervised by Tournament Director

Hillang Nima and Assistant Tournament Director Karge Riba. HA conveyed best wishes to all teams, expressing hope for a disciplined

and high-calibre competition throughout the event.

The opening ceremony was attended by Sports Authority of

Arunachal Chairman Neelam John as the chief guest, with SAA director Gunya Karbak serving as the guest of honour.

Several representatives from different sports bodies were also present.

Speakers at the event commended Hockey Arunachal for its organisational efforts and said such state-level tournaments help strengthen the talent pipeline and improve the overall standard of hockey in Arunachal Pradesh.

Matches will continue in the coming days, with district units vying for a place in the final stages of the tournament.

Organisers said they anticipate enthusiastic participation from the local sporting community as the championship progresses.

India U20 women's football team to play two friendlies against Uzbekistan

NEW DELHI, Nov 28: The Indian U20 women's football team will play two friendly matches against Uzbekistan on November 29 and December 2 at the FC Madras Academy in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu.

Both matches, being held during the FIFA women's international match window, will be played behind closed doors and will kick off at 5pm IST.

Head coach Joakim Andersson has named a 24-member squad for the two games, which will form part of India's preparations for the 2026 AFC U20 Women's Asian Cup.

The Young Tigresses have been drawn with Japan, Australia and Chinese Taipei in Group C of the Asian Cup. Uzbekistan have also qualified for the same tournament and have been placed in Group B with DPR Korea, Korea Republic and Jordan.

The Indian team has been camping at the FC Madras Academy since November 11. Last month, the Young Tigresses played two friendly matches against Kazakhstan U19 in Shymkent, winning 3-2 and drawing 1-1.

The 24-member squad:

Goalkeepers: Melody Chanu Keisham, Monalisha Devi Moirangthem, Ribansi Jamu.

Defenders: Alina Chingakhom, Cindy Remruatpui Colney, Jubi Singh, Nishima Kumari, Remi Thokchom, Sahena TH, Shubhangi Singh, Thoibisana Chanu Toijam, Viksit Bara.

Midfielders: Anju Chanu Kayenpaibam, Arina Devi Nameirakpam, Bhumika Devi Khumukcham, Khushbu Saroj, Monisha Singha, Neha.

Forwards: Babita Kumari, Deepika Pal, Lhingdeikim, Shilji Shaji, Sibani Devi Nongmeikapam, Sulanjana Raul. (PTI)

Kamboj shines as Haryana edge out Punjab via Super Over



HYDERABAD, Nov 28: Chennai Super Kings pacer Anshul Kamboj dismissed washbuckling India opener Abhishek Sharma twice in the game as Haryana piped Punjab via Super Over in a thrilling Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy match here Friday.

Set a target of 208, Punjab ended their innings at the same score to take the match to Super Over, where Kamboj got the wickets of Abhishek and Sanvir Singh in three deliveries. Nishant Sindhu then hit a first-ball boundary to score the required two runs and seal the contest in Haryana's favour.

Earlier in the match, CSK speed-

ster Kamboj accounted for the wickets of openers Abhishek (6) and Prabhshimran Singh (20) to rock Punjab at the start of their chase after Sindhu (61 off 32 balls) and skipper Ankit Kumar (51 off 26 balls) propelled Haryana to a competitive total with their blazing knocks.

At 28 for two in the third over, Punjab were in a spot of bother but Anmolpreet Singh had other ideas as he blasted his way to 81 off a mere 37 deliveries to bring his side back into the contest.

Anmolpreet added 68 runs for the third wicket with Salil Arora (22 off 18) and then 49 with Nehal Wadehra (11) to keep Punjab in the

game.

Anmolpreet though could not finish the game for Punjab as Samant Jakhar had him caught at a crucial juncture to swing the game Haryana's way.

However, the explosive Sanvir (30 off 16 balls), in the company of Ramandeep Singh (13 off 9) and Harpreet Brar (10 off 4), helped Punjab match Haryana's total to extend the contest.

Besides Kamboj (2/26 in 4), there were two wickets apiece for Jakhar (2/37 in 4) and Yuzvendra Chahal (2/40 in 4).

After the dismissal of Sindhu and Ankit, Sumit Kumar (28 off 14 balls) and Jakhar (19 off 13) propped up Haryana.

Ashwani Kumar was the best bowler for Punjab, returning fine figures of 3/31 in four overs.

Brief scores:

Haryana 207/9 in 20 overs (Nishant Sindhu 61, Ankit Kumar 51; Ashawani Kumar 3/31) beat Punjab 207/7 in 20 overs (Anmolpreet Singh 81, Sanvir Singh 30 not out; Anshul Kamboj 2/26) in Super Over.

Puducherry 166/9 in 20 overs (Aman Khan 72; Raj Limbani 3/35) beat Baroda 149 all out in 18.5 overs (Shivalik Sharma 56; Adil Ayub Tunda 4/30) by 17 runs.

Himachal Pradesh 199/6 in 20 overs (Mridul Surroch not out 75; Ekant Sen 49; Vishal Gaur 2/31) beat Services 116 all out in 16.5 overs (Arpit Guleria 3/12, Vaibhav Arora 3/16, Aryaman Singh 2/19, Rahul Chauhan 2/14). (PTI)

Title holders Germany beat South Africa 4-0 in FIH Junior WC opener

MADURAI, Nov 28: Reigning champions Germany thrashed South Africa 4-0 in their opening match to begin their FIH Men's Hockey World Cup campaign on a rousing note here on Friday.

Justus Warweg struck a brace for seven-time winners Germany, scoring field goals in the 19th and 56th minutes, while Ben Hasbach (43rd minute) and Paul Glander (44th) converted two penalty corners.

In the first match of Pool A, Ireland beat Canada 4-3 in an engrossing contest.

Ireland took the lead in the 13th minute through a meticulous field effort from Louis Rowe before Canada equalised in the 26th minute through a field goal from Gurnoor Bhullar.

Rowe scored another fine field goal in the 33rd minute.

Gregory Williams made the scoreline 3-1 for Ireland, converting a penalty corner in the 35th minute.

Milo Thompson extended the lead when he scored another impressive field goal.

Trailing 1-4, Canada didn't bow down and dominated the later stages of the match, scoring two goals.

Leighton De Souza converted two penalty corners in 48th and 53rd minutes to give his side some hope.

But Canada couldn't equalise as they failed to breach the Irish defence in the final seven minutes.

The tournament is being co-hosted by Chennai and Madurai from November 28 till December 10. (PTI)

Ayush Mhatre to lead India in U19 Asia Cup



NEW DELHI, Nov 28: Promising batter Ayush Mhatre was on Friday retained as captain of a 15-member Indian team for the upcoming U19 Asia Cup in which the focus will be again on teen batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi.

The age-group continental tournament will be held in Dubai from December 12-21 in 50-overs format.

Mhatre had also led India during a multi-format tour of Australia in September and October.

Vihaan Malhotra has been appointed as the vice-captain for the tournament which will serve as a preparatory ground for the U19 World Cup, to be played in Zimbabwe and Namibia in January-February next year.

Sooryavanshi, the 14-year-old batting sensation, recently shone in the Rising Stars Asia Cup when he hit a 32-ball century for joint third-fastest in men's T20 format, while

scoring 144 off only 42 balls against the United Arab Emirates.

Kishan Kumar Singh has been picked in the squad subject to fitness, the BCCI said in a statement.

India will open their campaign against a yet-to-be-confirmed opponent (qualifier) on December 12 before their match against Pakistan on December 14. They will play another qualifier on December 16.

The semifinals are scheduled for December 19 with the final slated two days later on December 21.

India U19 squad: Ayush Mhatre (c), Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Vihaan Malhotra (vc), Vedant Trivedi, Abhigyan Kundo (wk), Harvansh Singh (wk), Yuvraj Gohil, Kanishk Chouhan, Khilan A. Patel, Namik Pushpak, D. Deepesh, Henil Patel, Kishan Kumar Singh*, Udhav Mohan, Aaron George.

Standby players: Rahul Kumar, Hemchudeshan J, B.K. Kishore, Aditya Rawat. (PTI)

Atiqa Mir seals highest qualifying spot by a female racer in F1 Academy-backed COTFA series



AL AIN (UAE), Nov 28: Indian racing sensation Atiqa Mir outpaced a battery of world class male drivers to qualify fourth in the COTFA international karting series, the highest finish for a female in the championship's history.

With the series supported by Formula 1 Academy, it was the perfect stage for Atiqa to showcase her rare talent and the 11-year-old did that with an unprecedented fourth place in qualifying of the mini category before finishing in the same position in the final on Day 1.

The Formula 1 Academy and Akcel GP backed driver missed the podium spot by just 0.07 seconds, a testament to the highly competitive nature of the grid.

In the final on Day 2, Atiqa came up with another impressive effort in qualifying, setting the fifth fastest time.

She was in podium contention for majority of the race. A daring overtake on the last lap put her in fourth place and with a podium at stake, Atiqa understandably

pushed herself to the limit, leading to a loss of three places. She still managed to finish a creditable seventh out of 28 drivers.

"Some tough racing this week with top drivers. I had good pace through both days and was able to deliver the results in quality and the Finals. Scored good haul of championship points. Looking forward to the season finale next week," said Atiqa, who hails from Jammu and Kashmir.

Her father Asif Mir, a former Formula Asia vice-champion, was pleased after a productive weekend.

"Super performance by Atiqa this week. She delivered consistent performances against worlds best drivers and beat them as well. It is an encouragement and reward for all the hard work we have put in over the last few months. Will keep working and improving her."

The season finale of the Champions of the Future Academy (COTFA) series will take place in Al Forsan next week. (PTI)

Portugal wins FIFA Under-17 World Cup title against Austria

DOHA, Nov 28: Portugal won the FIFA Under-17 World Cup title Thursday, beating Austria 1-0 in the final of a 48-nation tournament where European teams took the first three places.

Benfica forward Anisio Cabral narrowly stayed outside to receive a pass across the goalmouth and score into an empty net in the 32nd minute.

It was Cabral's seventh goal of the tournament, one fewer than Austria's Golden Ball winner Johannes Moser.

It was Portugal's first U17 title and came in the 20th edition of an event FIFA has expanded and now organizes annually instead of every two years.

Qatar staged this edition and also will host in each of the next four years.

Earlier in Doha, goalkeeper Alessandro Longoni saved two penalties as Italy beat Brazil 4-2 in a shootout after a 0-0 draw in the third-place game. (AP)

MANCHESTER (ENGLAND), Nov 28: Manchester United's proposed new stadium has been named as a venue for the 2035 Women's World Cup.

A redeveloped Wrexham Racecourse Ground and Birmingham's yet-to-be-built Powerhouse Stadium have also been included in the United Kingdom's official bid, announced Friday.

In total, 16 host cities have been included in the joint bid by the soccer federations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The U.K. was widely expected to be named host of the tournament, with FIFA president Gianni Infantino indicating in April there was just one "valid bid". The United States made the only expression of interest to host in 2031.

United's inclusion in the bid, having been left out of the U.K. and Ireland's plans for the men's 2028 European Championship, is

evidence of the Premier League club's confidence it will have completed what it describes as the "world's greatest" soccer stadium in time for the tournament.

Costing around 2 billion pounds (\$2.6 billion), United said earlier this year it could be ready by the 2030-31 season.

The U.K. bid said the intention was for the new stadium to be considered "once plans are confirmed."

Wrexham is in the process of redeveloping its stadium and increasing capacity to 18,000. The U.K. bid said the club, which has gained worldwide appeal since being bought by Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney, is planning to further increase capacity before 2035, which would meet FIFA requirements.

Birmingham only unveiled plans last week for its new 62,000-seater stadium, which it believes could be

India to host Sri Lanka for five women's T20Is from Dec 21 to 30

NEW DELHI, Nov 28: The Indian women's team will take on Sri Lanka in a five-match T20I series in Visakhapatnam and Trivandrum from December 21 to 30, the BCCI said on Friday, days after a scheduled rubber against Bangladesh was postponed due to political tensions between the two countries.

This will be the first assignment for the 'Women in Blue' after their ODI World Cup-winning campaign earlier this year.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announces the schedule for the upcoming Women's T20I series as India hosts Sri Lanka for a five-match contest next month. The series will begin in Visakhapatnam before moving to Thiruvananthapuram for the remaining fixtures," the BCCI said in a statement.

As per the original schedule, the Indian women's team was supposed to play a home series against Bangladesh during the same time.

The Sri Lankans will be playing a T20I bilateral series in India for the first time since 2016, which the hosts won 3-0.

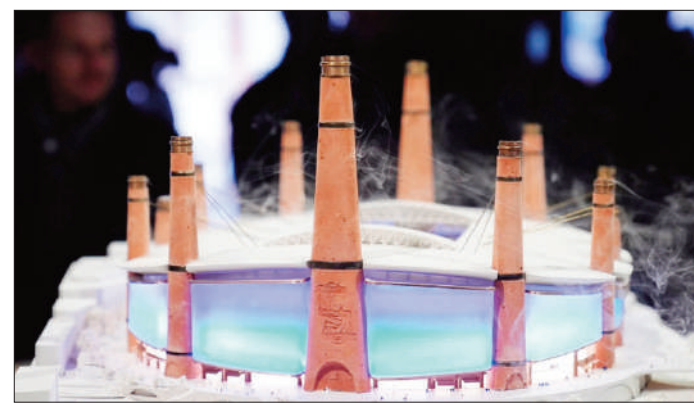
India last played a T20I series in July this year, when they registered a historic win in England. India won that series, their first in England, 3-2.



Schedule:

- 1st T20I: December 21, Visakhapatnam
- 2nd T20I: December 23, Visakhapatnam
- 3rd T20I: December 26, Thiruvananthapuram
- 4th T20I: December 28, Thiruvananthapuram
- 5th T20I: December 30, Thiruvananthapuram (PTI)

Man United, Wrexham and Birmingham yet-to-be-built stadiums lined up for 2035 Women's World Cup



built by 2030.

Chelsea has also been included despite the U.K. bid saying its Stamford Bridge stadium does not meet FIFA's technical specifications. Whether it is included in the final plans is dependent on the venue being redeveloped or a new ground being built.

Arsenal, Tottenham, Manchester

City and Everton are among 21 stadiums listed. Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow will be host cities outside of England.

England hosted the men's World Cup in 1966, the one time its national team has won the tournament.

The Women's World Cup would follow the U.K. and Ireland's joint-

staging of the 2028 men's Euros.

"Hosting the FIFA Women's World Cup would be a huge privilege for our four home nations," the federations of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland said in a joint statement. "If we are successful, the 2035 tournament will be the biggest single-sport event held on UK soil with 4.5 million tickets available for fans."

England hosted the women's Euros in 2022 and won the tournament. The Lionesses retained the trophy this year.

"The Lionesses' success has inspired girls across our country, and we'll build on that momentum by welcoming millions of football fans from around the world to a tournament that will benefit communities and businesses in host cities up and down the UK," said British prime minister Keir Starmer. (AP)

Juyal, Veer star as Uttar Pradesh rout Jammu & Kashmir by 109 runs

KOLKATA, Nov 28: Aryan Juyal struck his second successive fifty, while Prashant Veer produced an fine all-round effort as Uttar Pradesh outclassed Jammu and Kashmir by 109 runs in their Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy Group B match here on Friday.

This was Uttar Pradesh's second win on the trot as they went to the top of Group B standings with eight points.

Fresh from a match-winning 93 not out against Goa, the promising wicketkeeper-batter Juyal was in his elements again, smashing three sixes and four fours in a 40-ball 51 to guide UP to 193/6 after Jammu and Kashmir opted to bowl.

Veer, the left-arm spin-bowling all-rounder, later returned with 3/20 to go with a blistering unbeaten 10-ball 37 (4x6, 3x4), including 24 runs in the final over off pacer Auqib Nabi, to give the UP innings a decisive push.

Earlier, skipper Karan Sharma (32 off 24; 4x4, 1x6) and Juyal put on a free-flowing 73-run opening stand as UP cruised through the Powerplay without losing a wicket.

Umran Malik was brought in to break the stand and he troubled the batters with raw pace.

He even had Juyal caught behind, only for the delivery to be called a no-ball for overstepping.

The breakthrough came in the ninth over when he dismissed Karan, before Priyam Garg fell to spinner Murugan Ashwin.

Umran got Juyal soon after the



latter reached his fifty, removing him off the fifth ball of the same over. UP suddenly slipped to 97/4, losing four wickets for 24 runs, as J&K's decision to bowl first seemed vindicated.

But Veer turned the momentum again. He found a solid ally in Sid-dharth Yadav (24 18b; 2x4, 1x6) as the pair rebuilt with a fifty-plus stand before Veer's late carnage off Nabi.

Jammu and Kashmir's chase never took off as they folded for a meek 84, with skipper Shubham Khajuria absent hurt.

Opener Qamran Iqbal top-scored with 20 before the spin duo of leg-spinner Vipraj Nigam (3/25) and

Veer tightened the noose. Umran showed some late hitting with one six and a four, but he fell to a superb diving effort by Rinku Singh near the boundary.

Sunil Kumar took 2/11 from 3.3 overs, while veteran India seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar returned 1/14 from two overs.

Prithvi Shaw slams 66
Prithvi Shaw roared back to form with an explosive fifty, while Arshin Kulkarni struck an unbeaten 89 as Maharashtra cruised to an eight-wicket win over Hyderabad.

Maharashtra were assured and clinical in their chase of 192. Shaw and Kulkarni added 117 for the opening wicket, aided by Hyder-

abad's sloppy fielding and several dropped catches.

Eyeing a good outing ahead of next month's IPL mini-auction after going unsold last season, Shaw, who had a fruitful first half of Ranji season for his new domestic state, capitalised on a reprieve and smashed three sixes and nine fours in his 36-ball 66.

Kulkarni, dropped three times, stayed unbeaten on 89 off 54 balls to finish the job.

Following Shaw's dismissal, IPL veteran Rahul Tripathi joined Kulkarni to seal the chase with eight balls to spare.

Venkatesh Iyer shines
Venkatesh Iyer produced an all-

round show at his former IPL home ground as Madhya Pradesh registered a commanding 62-run win over Bihar.

Teen sensation Vaibhav Suryavanshi (13 off 9) failed after a brisk start, and Bihar folded for 112 in 19.2 overs to suffer their second straight defeat.

A key member of KKR's 2024 IPL-winning squad, Iyer -- released ahead of next month's auction after an underwhelming season despite a Rs 23.75 crore price tag -- struck a composed 55 not out off 34 balls (3x4, 2x6).

Along with wicketkeeper-batter Harsh Gawli (50 off 44), he lifted MP to an above-par 174/8 after Bihar chose to bowl.

Mohammed Izharr claimed 4/39 for Bihar.

Brief Scores
Hyderabad 191/8; 20 overs (Chama Milind 35 not out, Tanay Thyagarajan 32; Jalaj Saxena 2/25) lost to Maharashtra 192/2; 18.4 overs (Arshin Kulkarni 89 not out, Prithvi Shaw 66, Rahul Tripathi 26 not out) by eight wickets.

Uttar Pradesh 193/6; 20 overs (Aryan Juyal 51; Umran Malik 3/37) bt Jammu and Kashmir 84; 15.2 overs (Prashant Veer 3/20, Vipraj Nigam 3/25) by 109 runs.

Madhya Pradesh 174/8; 20 overs (Venkatesh Iyer 55 not out, Harsh Gawli 50; Mohammed Izharr 4/39) bt Bihar 112; 19.2 overs (Bipin Saurabh 32; Shivang Kumar 3/25, Tripuresh Singh 2/11, Shivam Shukla 2/20) by 62 runs. (PTI)

Mhatre's maiden ton, Dube blitz fire Mumbai to seven-wicket win over Vidarbha



LUCKNOW, Nov 28: Ayush Mhatre's 53-ball 110 not out and India all-rounder Shivam Dube's unbeaten 39 powered Mumbai to a comprehensive seven-wicket victory over Vidarbha in their Elite Group A match of the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 Trophy here on Friday.

The defending champions recovered from early blows riding on Mhatre's knock to overhaul the target of 193 with 13 balls to spare, making 194/3 in 17.5 overs at the Ekana Stadium.

The 18-year-old Mhatre peppered the on-side with eight sixes and hit an overall eight boundaries to make his maiden T20 ton.

Mumbai were rocked twice as Darshan Nalkande trapped Ajinkya Rahane (0) in the second over and then they lost Hardik Tamore (1) to slip to 21/2.

India T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav continued with his return to form with a strokeful 35 off 30 balls with four fours and a six, while putting on 88 runs for the third wicket with Mhatre to lead Mumbai's revival.

However, Yash Thakur had Suryakumar caught by Yash Rathod in the 12th over which brought Dube at the crease. Dube hit three sixes and three fours to make 39 not out from only 19 balls, adding 85 runs from only 35 balls.

Earlier, half-centuries from Atharva Taide (64) and Aman Mokhadde (61) took Vidarbha to a formidable 192 for nine. Openers Taide and Mokhadde set the platform for Vidarbha with their 115-run stand inside the first 10 overs, but yet they finished under 200.

Taide made 64 off 36 balls with nine fours and a six, whereas Mokhadde displayed his all-round game to hit two sixes and seven fours in his 61 off only 30 balls. But courtesy Dube's 3/31 and

Sairaj Patil's 3/33, Mumbai were able to keep Vidarbha to 192 for nine.

In the morning, India wicketkeeper-batter Sanju Samson fell for a 25-ball 19 in Kerala's 32-run defeat against Railways.

Samson was dismissed by Karan Sharma in the 10th over with Kerala slipping to 43 for three, and they failed to resurrect their chase, making a modest 117 for eight in 20 overs in reply to Railways' 149/7.

Andhra crushed Odisha by 66 runs after Prithvi Raj Yarra (3/4) and Saurabh Kumar (3/23) shared six wickets between them in the contest played in Lucknow.

Batting first, Andhra's inning was consolidated by wicketkeeper-batter KS Bharat (42), Ashwin Hebbbar (39) and skipper Ricky Bhui (47), as they scored 184 for seven. Odisha captain Bipal Samantray took 3/20.

However, Odisha were bowled out for 118 in 17.2 overs.

Brief scores:
Vidarbha 192/9 in 20 overs (Atharva Taide 64, Aman Mokhadde 61; Atharva Ankoledkar 2/30, Shivam Dube 3/31, Sairaj Patil 3/33) lost to Mumbai 194/3 in 17.5 overs (Ayush Mhatre 110 not out, Suryakumar Yadav 35, Shivam Dube 39 not out; Darshan Nalkande 1/35) by 7 wickets.

Railways 149/7 in 20 overs (Navneet Virk 32, Ravi Singh 25; NM Sharafuddeen 2/32, KM Asif 3/27, Akhil Scaria 2/18) beat Kerala 117/8 in 20 overs (Sanju Samson 19; Atal Bihari Rai 3/23, Shivam Chaudhary 2/19) by 32 runs.

Andhra 184/7 in 20 overs (KS Bharat 42, Ashwin Hebbbar 39, Ricky Bhui 47; Bipal Samantray 3/20) beat Odisha 118 in 17.2 overs (Sourav K Gowda 24; Prithvi Raj Yarra 3/4, Saurabh Kumar 3/23) by 66 runs. (PTI)

MIXED DAY FOR INDIANS

Aditi on 10th, Avani 27th and Pranavi 45th at Open de Espana

MALAGA (SPAIN), Nov 28: It was a mixed opening day for India as Aditi Ashok, multiple winner on the Ladies European Tour shot 3-under 69 to be tied 10th after the first day at the Andalucia Costa del Sol Open de Espana here.

She was three shots behind Denmark's Smilla Tarning Soenderby and Thailand's Trichat Cheenglab who shared the lead at six-under-par.

Rookie Avani Prashanth (71) was the next best Indian at T-27th, while Hitaashee Bakshi, who made the season-ending event on the strength of her third place finish at Hero Women's Indian Open last month, carded 73 and was T-45.

Pranavi Urs, who recently won a title playing in a field that included men in a home event on the new IGPL Tour, shot 2-over 74, as did Diksha Dagar. Both were T-49.

Aditi began on the first and bogeyed the third but made up on the fourth.

She turned in even par. She began the back nine with an eagle on Par-5 10th but gave away a shot on Par-5 12th. She landed



two birdies on the 16th and the 17th for a 69.

Avani teed off from the tenth and birdied her first hole but gave away shots on the 11th and the 14th. She made amends on the second nine with birdies on second, fourth and the sixth.

However a bogey on the ninth, her closing hole saw her total 71. Pranavi playing alongside Avani

was 2-under through 11 holes but bogeys on the 12th and the 18th and a double bogey on the 17th spelt disaster and she shot 74.

Hitaashee had four birdies against five bogeys, while Diksha had two birdies against four bogeys in her 74.

The co-leaders Soenderby and Cheenglab both bogey-free at Real Guadalhorce Club de Golf.

Cummins ruled out for pink ball second Test as Australia name unchanged squad

SYDNEY, Nov 28: Australia skipper Pat Cummins was on Friday ruled out of the second Ashes Test as the hosts named an unchanged 14-member squad for the day and night game in Brisbane.

In Cummins' absence, stand-in skipper Steve Smith led Australia to an eight wicket victory in the first Test as the hosts took a 1-0 lead in the five-match series. The second Test is slated for December 4.

Cummins, however, will travel to Brisbane to continue his return as he's likely to be back for the third Test in Adelaide from December 17.

The Australian pace spearhead was seen in a rigorous training session at the SCG on Friday, bowling to Smith.

With Cummins ruled out, Brendan Doggett, who bagged five wickets in Perth, is likely to share paced duties with Mitchell Starc and Scott Boland. Josh Hazlewood, who is also nursing an injury (hamstring), has already been ruled out.

Left-handed opener Usman Khawaja, who suffered back spasms in the opening Test, retains his place in the squad, but he will need to prove his fitness before the second Test. (PTI)

New women's boxing coach Nieva aims to push India 'beyond a single bronze' at LA Olympics

NEW DELHI, Nov 28: Newly-appointed Indian women's boxing head coach Santiago Nieva believes the current squad is brimming with potential, as he sets sights on creating history by going "beyond a bronze medal" at the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Nieva, who earlier served as India's high-performance director from 2017 to 2022 and worked predominantly with the men's team, returns to the country in a new capacity, to shape the future of the women's squad.

"The Indian women's team is really strong and I think it's important to win those Olympic medals that weren't possible to secure in Paris," Nieva told PTI from Australia.

"So, I thought that with the potential there is with the women's team and all those excellent boxers, I would like to contribute there so that we can make history in LA and go beyond a single bronze medal."

So far, only three Indian boxers have won Olympic medals -- Vijender Singh (2008), MC Mary Kom (2012) and Lovlina Borgohain (2020) -- and all of them have been bronze. In the last edition at Paris, Indian pugilists returned empty-handed.

Nieva is no stranger to breaking new ground. Under his guidance, Amit Panghal won India's first and only silver medal in the men's World Championships, while the



country also achieved its highest-ever participation at the Tokyo Olympics.

He joins ahead of a demanding 2026 season packed with major events, including the Asian Games and Commonwealth Games. One of the first things on his agenda will be "tackling" the selection policy.

"I need to see what model they're using and how it works in theory. The important thing is that we select the best boxers so that we don't miss out on the best boxers."

"Then you have to see what is practical with all the international calendar going on. You have to see what is considered fair among the boxers or the community and deci-

sions should not be biased. There are a lot of factors to take into account."

The Boxing Federation of India's current selection policy states that "based on certain circumstances, BFI may choose between selection trials or evaluation."

"There are different models and there are different types of competitions where you might use different systems. But it's way too early for me to speculate. I have no blueprint at the moment. I'm sure that will be one of the first things that we need to tackle before the Commonwealth and Asian Games."

Nieva, who is expected to formally begin his tenure in about a

month's time after completing visa formalities, said he does not intend to make sweeping changes right away given the good run of the boxers.

Indian women boxers have enjoyed a strong run this year, returning with four medals, including two gold from the World Championships.

"I need to come to India to see how things are going. I know that the women are doing really well. So obviously something is being done right. Of course I have my way of working, and I have my previous experience in India. A lot of that I'm sure can be used."

"But I need to come there and take it step by step. I did that last time I came to India as well. The first two weeks I just observed and saw how things were going and then I implemented some changes which I thought could bring improvements. But not everything at once."

Nieva, who stepped down as HPD in May 2022 and has since been working with the Australian team, admitted he hasn't followed the Indian boxers closely enough to fully prepare for the new role, but has kept a reasonable eye on their performances.

"We have been at the same competitions. So obviously, I have seen all of the Indian boxers. Maybe not in every single fight, but at some point I have seen all or most of them," he said. (PTI)

Chameera's 4 wickets against Pakistan lifts Sri Lanka into the final of T20 tri-series



RAWALPINDI, Nov 28: Fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera grabbed 4-20 and stifled Pakistan in the final over as Sri Lanka breezed into the final of the T20 tri-series with a six-run victory on Thursday.

Pakistan, which had already qualified for Saturday's final with three successive wins, was held to 178-7 with captain Salman Ali Agha's career-best unbeaten 63 going in vain.

Opening batter Kamil Mishra's 76 off 48 balls had earlier anchored Sri Lanka to 184-5 in a game the team had to win in order to reach the final instead of Zimbabwe.

"Proud of how the boys bounced back," Sri Lanka captain Dasun Shanaka said. "Everybody contributed. ... Of course Chameera (exhibited) world-class bowling."

Chameera denied Pakistan's chase with figures of 3-3 in the

power play and then returned for the final over to concede just three runs when Pakistan required 10 for victory.

The tall fast bowler deceived Sahibzada Farhan (9) with a slower ball and had him caught at short cover before pinning Pakistan's premier batter Babar Azam lbw for two-ball duck.

Left-handed batter Saim Ayub (27) once again couldn't convert his aggressive start off 18 balls before he dragged Eshan Malinga back onto his stumps. Chameera had Pakistan on the mat at 4-43 in the sixth over when Fakhar Zaman held out at mid-on.

Agha and Usman Khan (33) put the chase back on track with an aggressive 56-run stand before Wanindu Hasaranga broke through in the 13th over and Khan sliced a catch to short third.

But Agha and Mohammad

Nawaz (27) cut lose in the death overs with a rapid 70-run stand off 36 balls before Malinga struck in the penultimate over and had Nawaz caught at long-on. Chameera then sealed the game by hitting the right lengths.

Earlier, after being asked to bat first, Mishara and Kusal Mendis (40) gave Sri Lanka a breezy start of 58-1 inside the first six overs after Salman Mirza had Pathum Nissanka (8) bowled in the third over.

Mendis smashed six boundaries and a six before he was undone by Abrar Ahmed's quicker delivery that skidded into him and had him trapped plumb leg before wicket.

But Mishara kept scoring at a good pace as he swept well in front of the wicket before he eventually perished in the 17th over when he held out at deep mid-wicket.

Janith Liyanage (24 not out) and captain Shanaka (17 not out) then smashed 24 runs of the final two overs of Mirza and Mohammad Wasim which proved enough for Sri Lanka to defend.

"I think it was gettable with the dew coming in and we lost too many wickets in the powerplay and gave away too many runs in the powerplay," Agha said. "If you give too many runs in the powerplay, you'll always be chasing the game. I would have been happier if I had finished the game but it was good to spend some time out in the middle." (AP)