

**6 WORLD**

● Israel has handed over 15 more Palestinian bodies, hospital officials in Gaza say

● Kremlin confirms US envoy's visit as talks on ending war in Ukraine gain momentum

**8 NATION**

● Shah stresses 'zero tolerance' for terror

● Fake, dubious names being included in Bengal rolls at TMC's behest: BJP tells EC



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## Younger generation should know about the injustices meted out to Assam: AASU

### Placing of twin reports 1983 Assam violence evokes mixed reaction



GUWAHATI, Nov 26: The placing of reports of two panels on the 1983 violence in Assam, including the Nellie massacre, in the assembly evoked mixed reaction, with the opposition claiming that the ruling BJP has done it to create division among people, while the AASU said people need to know the situation that led to the clashes.

The Tewary Commission was offi-

cially constituted by the then chief minister Hiteswar Saikia of the Congress, while the non-official Mehta Commission was formed by a civil society group.

Their reports had contradicting views on the Nellie massacre, which claimed over 2,000 lives in a single day, and other incidents of violence which took place as assembly polls were held during President's Rule in 1983 amid a boycott call

by the protagonists of the Assam Agitation.

The BJP-led government in Assam circulated the reports in the assembly on Tuesday, more than four decades after the bloodshed, ahead of the assembly elections due next year.

Leader of the Opposition, Debabrata Saikia of the Congress, said the reports have been placed in the assembly with

the aim to further 'communalise the prevailing situation' in the state.

The then Congress government had not made the Tewary Commission report public as it did not mention the alleged involvement of several national leaders who had instigated violent protests in the state then, Saikia claimed.

"Both the Tewary and the Mehta Commission reports had excluded many im-

portant aspects of the Assam agitation that led to widespread violence in the state", he told PTI.

The placing of the reports at this stage, ahead of assembly polls next year, was to create a communal situation in the state and divide the society, Saikia alleged.

Assam Jatiya Parishad General Secretary Jagadish Bhuyan, who was AASU's central (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## CM claims major drop in child marriage cases

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 26: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday underscored a "major turnaround" in the state's battle against child marriage, saying a combination of stringent enforcement and systemic reforms has led to significant declines in under-age marriages and boosted legal accountability.

Sarma claimed that according to NFHS 4 (2015-16) data, 31.8 per cent of women in Assam aged 20-24 were married before turning 18 — a rate that exceeded the national average.

Moreover, district-level fact-sheets had recorded alarming prevalence — in districts such as Dhubri, South Salmara, Barpeta and Nagaon, as high as 40-55 per cent.

However, the state now claims a decisive shift. Between 2023 and 2024 alone, more than 8,600 arrests were made in coordinated crackdowns under both the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act

(POCSO) and the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA).

According to the Chief Minister, in 2022 the number of cases registered stood at 224 — sharply up from just 149 in 2021 — indicating a steep rise in enforcement.

Sarma said, "Beyond arrests, Assam has formed district-level task forces, headed by superintendents of police, to track and intercept impending child marriages. Community-level workers — including ASHAs, Anganwadi staff and schoolteachers — are now required to report suspected cases in real time."

"Several districts have also reportedly established digital databases and child-protection tracking mechanisms", he added.

The CM claimed that these measures have borne fruit: in hotspot districts the incidence of child marriage fell by 8-17 per cent within a year, and more than 3,000 planned child marriages were prevented in 2023-24 alone. Notably, the Assam (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Tripartite talks on Assam Accord implementation likely by Jan 2026: Min

GUWAHATI, Nov 26: Tripartite talks between the Centre, Assam government and AASU regarding the implementation of the Assam Accord is likely to take place by January next year, the assembly was informed on Wednesday.

Replying to a query from AGP MLA Ramendra Narayan Kalita, Implementation of Assam Accord Minister Atul Bora said All Assam Students' Union (AASU) has requested the government to hold tripartite talks for the execution of Justice (Retd.) Biplob Kumar Sharma Committee report on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord.

"The CM has taken an initiative in this regard and contacted the Union Ministry of Home Affairs. Accordingly, tripartite talks are likely by January," he added.

The minister also said that the Justice Sharma Committee report on the Assam Accord has made 67 recommendations, of which 40 fall under the jurisdiction of the state government. On February 25, 2020, the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## Govt mulls capping fees of pvt minority schools

### Assam Non-Government Educational Institutions (Regulation of Fees) (Amendment) Bill, 2025 tabled in Assembly

GUWAHATI, Nov 26: The Assam government on Wednesday proposed to bring private minority schools and rural educational institutions under a regulated fee structure.

Tabling 'The Assam Non-Government Educational Institutions (Regulation of Fees) (Amendment) Bill, 2025' in the Assembly, Education Minister Ranaj Pegu said that currently minority institutions are exempted from the purview of fee fixation.

"There are more than 200 minority schools in the state currently running without having a fee certificate issued by competent authorities, which allows them to collect the fees in accordance with their convenience," he added.

While private schools in the state are governed by the parent Act and the fees are monitored by the state government, private mi-



nority schools — educational institutions established by religious or linguistic minority groups — remain outside its purview.

Pegu in the Statement of Objects and Reasons of the bill also said these minority institutions also raise fees every year "without any

justification".

"In some cases, it is found that they are charging higher fees to meet some expenditure, which are not related to the school's matter. Hence, this amendment is proposed," he added.

Regarding private schools in rural areas, the minister said non-government educational institutions in panchayat areas of the state are charging fees almost on a par with those from urban areas.

"Since the cost of maintenance of schools in rural areas is comparatively low, the amendment is proposed for the greater interest of students living in panchayat areas," he added.

The bill proposes to cap fees charged by private schools in rural regions at 25 per cent lower than the comparable admission rates in urban areas to ease the financial burden on rural students. (PTI)

## KAAC to mark Khorsing Terang's 71st death anniversary tomorrow

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov. 26: The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Diphu, will observe the 71st death anniversary of Khorsing Terang, the first Chief Executive Member of the then Mikir Hills District Council, on November 28 at the Khorsing Terang Memorial Park (Old and New), near the CEM's Bungalow in Diphu.

The programme will begin at 8:00 AM with the garlanding of the statue of Khorsing Terang, followed by a multi-faith prayer meeting. Klarjir Tissopi, great-granddaughter of Khorsing Terang, will offer a tribute. A Special Guest will (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## ARSA-TTP linked terror suspect arrested

HT Correspondent

MANGALDAI, Nov 26: Darrang Police had arrested a suspected jihadi, identified as Munsher Ali of West Kamarpara village under Kharupetia Police Station, for allegedly maintaining links with foreign terrorist outfits and planning attacks in Assam, said our correspondent on Wednesday.

Police sources said the accused had developed contacts with the Myanmar-based Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and certain jihadi (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## 1,416 of 32,000 identified foreigners deported from Assam since 2021: Min

GUWAHATI, Nov 26: Over 32,000 foreigners have been detected in Assam since 2021, when the Himanta Biswa Sarma government assumed charge, and only 1,416 of them have been deported so far, the assembly was informed on Wednesday.

In a written reply to a query from Congress MLA Abdur Rahim Ahmed, Implementation of Assam Accord Minister Atul Bora said a total of 32,207 foreigners staying illegally in Assam have been detected from

2021 to October 31 this year.

"Of them, 1,416 have been deported from Assam," he added.

Giving a year-wise breakdown, Bora said 6,304 foreigners were detected in 2021, 8,790 in 2022, 6,703 in 2023, (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

## On Constitution Day, PM urges citizens to fulfil their Constitutional duties; improve access to justice: CJ

NEW DELHI, Nov 26: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday urged citizens to fulfil their Constitutional duties and said freedom is not only about rights, but duties and unity too, as leaders across the political spectrum underscored the need to follow the Constitution in letter and spirit.

In a letter to citizens on the occasion of Constitution Day, the prime minister also struck a personal note, saying it was the power of the Constitution that enabled a person like him, coming from a humble and economically disadvantaged family, to serve as the head of the government continuously for over 24 years. Modi was chief minister of Gujarat before becoming prime minister in 2014.

The Constitution Day or Samvidhan Divas commemorates the official adoption of the Indian Constitution on November 26, 1949. The government of India declared November 26 as Constitution Day in 2015.

Multiple events were held across the country including at the Central Hall of the Old Parliament building and Supreme Court.

As the Constitution Day sparked a political slugfest between the BJP and the Congress, President Droupadi Murmu said the Constitution is the cornerstone of the nation's identity as also the guiding document to shun colonial mindset and adopt nationalistic thinking. She made these remarks at the Central hall event.

In his letter, Modi recalled Mahatma Gandhi's belief that rights flow from the performance of duties, stressing that fulfilling duties is the foundation for social and economic progress.

"Our country has given us so much and this brings out a deep sense of gratitude from within. And, when we live with this feeling, fulfilling our duties becomes integral to our nature. To carry out our duties, it becomes imperative to put in (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Developed epoxy coating has shown improved performance compared to standard epoxy

## IIT-G scientists develop epoxy coating to protect steel structures

NEW DELHI, Nov 26: Researchers from Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati have developed a corrosion-resistant epoxy coating for protecting steel structures exposed to seawater and high-salinity environments.

The research has been published in the journal Advanced Engineering Materials.

According to Chandan Das, Professor at IIT-Guwahati's Department of Chemical Engineering, corrosion is a natural and gradual process that weakens metal surfaces and shortens the lifespan of essential structures, particularly those exposed to saltwater environments, such as offshore platforms, coastal bridges, port infrastructure, and marine



pipelines.

"It has also played a role in major industrial incidents such as the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy and the 1992 Guadalajara explosion. Corrosion also causes environmental degradation, and impacts human

and aquatic life.

"Although barrier coatings are widely used for corrosion protection, they do not completely protect the surface and develop microscopic defects over time, allowing moisture and salts to penetrate and

damage the underlying metal," he said.

To address this challenge, researchers worldwide have experimented with strengthening epoxy coatings by adding different types of nanomaterials. Nanomaterials are ultra-small particles, thousands of times smaller than the width of a human hair, that can enhance the strength, durability, and protective performance of coatings.

While many studies have explored individual materials or simple combinations, no previous work has brought together reduced graphene oxide (RGO), zinc oxide (ZnO), and polyaniline (PANI) within a single epoxy coating for marine (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

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• Winners announcement: 10 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 2025	• Winners announcement: 10 <sup>th</sup> Dec. 2025
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Nifty inches near record high on US fed rate cut hopes

## Sensex jumps 1,022.50 points

MUMBAI, Nov 26: Snapping the three-day falling streak, benchmark Sensex rebounded by 1,022 points while Nifty reclaimed the 26,000 level on Wednesday on across-the-board buying aided by a rally in global peers amid growing hopes of a US Fed rate cut and fresh foreign fund inflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,022.50 points or 1.21 per cent to settle at 85,609.51. During the day, it surged 1,057.18 points or 1.24 per cent to 85,644.19.

The 50-share NSE Nifty zoomed 320.50 points or 1.24 per cent to end at 26,205.30, just 10 points shy of its all time closing high. The broader index scaled record intra-day high of 26,277 on September 27, 2024.

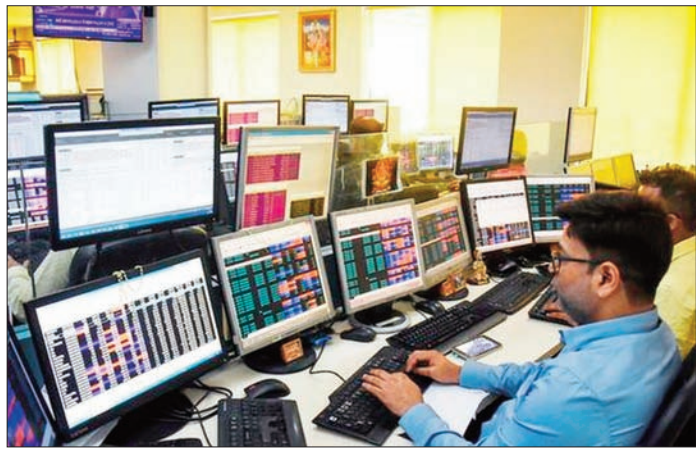
In intra-day trade, Nifty rallied 330.35 points or 1.27 per cent to 26,215.15.

Increasing optimism surrounding a potential truce between Russia and Ukraine also bolstered the investor sentiment, experts said.

Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Tata Steel, Reliance Industries, Sun Pharma, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Axis Bank and Infosys were among the major gainers.

Bharti Airtel and Asian Paints emerged as the laggards from the pack.

Market participation was broad-based, with metals, energy and IT leading the gains. Mid-cap and



small-cap indices also advanced over 1 per cent.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled in positive territory. Kospi surged 2.67 per cent, Nikkei 225 index jumped 1.85 per cent and Hang Seng index climbed 0.13 per cent. Shanghai's SSE Composite index, however, ended lower. Markets in Europe were trading in the green. US markets ended higher on Tuesday.

"Indian markets staged an impressive rally on Wednesday, with broad-based buying across sectors reflecting the sharp risk-on sentiment in global equities.

"The upmove was supported by growing expectations of a US Federal Reserve rate cut in December, after the latest US economic re-

leases — including September retail sales and producer price data — signalled softening demand and cooling inflation," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Foreign Institutional Investors bought equities worth ₹ 785.32 crore on Tuesday, and Domestic Institutional Investors (DII) also purchased stocks worth ₹ 3,912.47 crore, according to exchange data.

The BSE midcap gauge jumped 1.32 per cent and smallcap index climbed 1.23 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal surged 2.08 per cent, oil & gas jumped 1.81 per cent, followed by energy (1.68 per cent), capital goods (1.65 per cent), services (1.63 per cent), power (1.59 per cent) and commodities (1.58 per cent).

BSE Telecommunication emerged as the only laggard.

A total of 2,800 stocks advanced while 1,371 declined and 154 remained unchanged on the BSE. "On a global scale, market sentiment improved with rising expectations of a US Federal Reserve rate cut in December, alongside softer US yields and a weaker dollar. Furthermore, increasing optimism surrounding a potential truce between Russia and Ukraine is enhancing risk appetite, fostering a positive outlook for the upcoming year," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, went up marginally by 0.03 per cent to USD 62.50 per barrel.

"Renewed optimism over a potential rate cut by the US Federal Reserve in December, along with expectations of a 25-basis-point repo rate cut by the Reserve Bank of India early next month, improved investor sentiment.

"Additionally, easing crude oil prices—driven by hopes of progress toward peace between Ukraine and Russia—provided further support," Ajit Mishra — SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

On Tuesday, the Sensex dropped 313.70 points or 0.37 per cent to settle at 84,587.01. The Nifty declined 74.70 points or 0.29 per cent to 25,884.80. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

## Younger generation should

executive member during the Assam agitation, told PTI it was 'absolutely irrelevant' now to place reports submitted four decades ago. "The aim is to polarise and destabilise the society ahead of the assembly elections. But people have not given any importance to the issue," he claimed.

Besides, there are several commissions, the reports of which have not been implemented in the state, and the government should focus on those that impact the society, Bhuyan added.

AASU advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya, however, countered, asserting that the issue was still relevant today and the people in the state, country and the world should know how elections were then "manipulated" in Assam. The AASU was one of the driving forces behind an agitation against illegal foreigners during 1979 and 1985. "Democracy was murdered in the state. People, particularly the younger generation, should know about the injustices meted out to Assam by the then central government," the AASU leader told PTI.

The Mehta report was already in the public domain, and the 'people definitely have the right to know what is there in the Tewary Commission,' he added. For farmer Suleiman Ahmed Qasimi, who had lost 12 family members and two other relatives visiting them on that fateful day of February 18, 1983, however, said that the placing of the reports holds no meaning as most of those against whom cases were filed are no longer alive.

"More than 42 years have passed, but no action has been taken. We do not expect any justice now but only hope that there is no further politics on this matter," the survivor, who was then 12 years old, told PTI.

"Maybe the chief minister who usually talks against the 'Miyas' is trying to appease us for a change by placing the report of the Nellie massacre in the assembly," he said. Miya is a pejorative term for immigrant Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam. Qasimi said that they will be thankful to him if his government can 'give us justice in some way'. Himanta Biswa Sarma had mentioned that the placing of both the reports in the assembly was an 'academic exercise' and would bring to the fore a 'big chapter in Assam's history'. The highlight of the report is not about the incidents but the demographic changes that have taken place in Assam since 1951, how the farmland of the local population declined during that period and how the Assamese at large were losing its political, economic and cultural identity, he added. "The report has beautifully narrated the situation of the Assamese people way back in 1983. I think the report is still relevant and it is a part of our history which should not be kept hidden under lock and key, so we decided to publish the report for the better understanding of the people at large," Sarma said.

The Tewary commission and the non-official Mehta panel reports had contradicting views, with the former concluding that the decision to hold the elections cannot be blamed for the violence, while the latter blamed the incumbent central government, the Election Commission, and politicians who wanted to capture power by any means. There was a series of violent incidents in the run-up to the elections. But on February 18, 1983, in the small town of Nellie in Central Assam's Morigaon district, over 2000 people, most of them immigrant Bengali-speaking Muslims, were killed allegedly by Tiwa (Lalung) tribals, while almost three lakh people lived in relief camps for months. (PTI)

## Tripartite talks on Assam

committee had submitted its report on the implementation of Assam Accord to the then chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal for handing it over to Union Home Minister Amit Shah as the High-Level Committee (HLC) was formed by the Centre. In October 2021, the Assam government had set up an eight-member committee to prepare a framework within three months for the implementation of all clauses of the 40-year-old Assam Accord, especially Clause 6. As per Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards, as may be appropriate, shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the culture, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people. The Assam government and the AASU, in September last year, for the first time discussed the implementation of Justice Sharma committee's recommendations on Clause 6 of the Assam Accord to protect the interests of the indigenous population.

The Assam Accord was signed in 1985 after a six-year-long violent anti-foreigner movement. It stated, among other clauses, that the names of all foreigners coming to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 would be detected, deleted from the electoral rolls and steps would be taken to deport them.

Bora further said that a total of 1,35,901 people have been identified as illegal foreigners in the state since 1971, but only 30,130 of them have been deported so far. (PTI)

## CM claims major

government's recent actions — from sustained crackdowns to setting up institutional safeguards — reflect a far more aggressive stance on child marriage than seen in earlier years, when the practice was largely treated as a social issue rather than a crime.

## 1,416 of 32,000

6,120 in 2024 and 4,290 in 2025. As per legal provisions, only the Foreigners Tribunals can declare a person foreigner in Assam, and subsequently, higher courts can be approached if the verdict is not favourable.

According to the Assam Accord, the names of all foreigners coming to Assam on or after March 25, 1971 would be detected, deleted from the electoral rolls and steps would be taken to deport them.

Regarding barbed wire fencing along India-Bangladesh border, Bora said that work on 228.541 km has been completed out of a total 267.5 km of international border with the neighbouring country spread across Dhubri, South Salmara-Mankachar, Cachar and Sribhumi districts.

"Due to objections by the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), fencing work on 4.35 km of border on the bank of Kushiya River in Sribhumi is remaining," he added. (PTI)

## KAAC to mark Khorsing

also speak on the life and contributions of the late leader. The second session includes an on-the-spot painting competition for students of Classes VIII to X. The prize distribution ceremony will be held at 11:00 AM in the presence of the Chief Executive Member, KAAC, Tuliram Ronghang, along with members of the Terang family. The programme will conclude at 5:00 PM with the illumination of the Khorsing Terang Memorial Park (Old and New).

## ARSA-TTP linked terror

networks operating from Bangladesh and Qatar. He reportedly used social media and modern communication tools to stay in touch with these organisations. Ali, who had been working in Tamil Nadu and returned home a few days ago, was suspected to be preparing for major attacks in Kharupetia and other locations in the state.

A case (No. 134/2025) has been registered under Sections 147, 148, 152 and 196 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, read with Section 39(2) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, on charges including waging war against India, criminal conspiracy, promoting enmity between groups and supporting a terrorist organisation.

The accused was produced before a local court and remanded to judicial custody. Multiple agencies are interrogating him, and the scope of the investigation has been widened. Police described Ali, who is educated below matriculation level and earns his livelihood through farming and cow dung trading, as an individual radicalised through online jihadi networks. Further details are awaited.

## On Constitution Day

our full capability and dedication in every task," he said. "When we work with this sense of duty, our nation's social and economic progress will multiply manifold." In his message read out during the flag-off ceremony of 'Unity March' in Karamsad town of Gujarat's Anand district, Modi said Constitution Day reminds the countrymen that freedom is not only about rights, but also about duties and a call for unity. From the judiciary side, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant highlighted the importance of the constitutional promise of access to justice.

"Without such access, liberties become ornamental and constitutional guarantees lose their resonance in the lives of ordinary people," said Justice Kant, who took oath as the new CJI on Monday.

Justice Kant told the audience at the Supreme Court event that if access to justice is our moral and constitutional north star, then predictability, affordability and timeliness form its core supports.

"Despite that, when we look closely at the functioning of our justice delivery system, there is still a disquieting gap between the constitutional vision and the experiences of many, particularly those on the margins for whom the ideals of access to justice remains elusive due to exorbitant cost, language, distance and delay."

The CJI said these barriers weaken the very overarching goal we seek to protect and in doing so, magnify existing inequalities. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said India will become a developed country by 2047 if the Constitution is followed in letter and spirit. At another function organized by the Supreme Court, President Murmu said the Constitution is a national text and "it is our national duty" to conduct institutions, personal lives in accordance with the values enshrined in the document. The Congress and other opposition parties accused the RSS-BJP of attacking and undermining the Constitution, claiming that the Centre is taking forward this agenda by "subverting constitutional principles" and "bulldozing" federalism. Stressing that the Constitution is the protective shield of the poor, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi urged people to pledge that "we will not allow any attack" on the guiding document and said he will be the first to stand up against any assault on it.

In a post on X, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge underlined the need to protect the fundamental principles of the Constitution such as justice, equality, freedom, mutual brotherhood, secularism, and socialism, adding these hallmarks of India are in danger today under the BJP rule.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh took to X to take a swipe at Modi over his call to citizens to fulfil their Constitutional duties, saying the prime minister's commitment to at least four such duties is "demonstrably suspect", including that of abiding by the Constitution and respecting its ideals and institutions.

The BJP hit back at Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, asking them to "look within" and recall how their party "tore constitutional norms" after independence, before saying anything about the Modi government.

BJP MP and chief spokesperson Amnil Baluni reminded Kharge about the imposition of Emergency by the Indira Gandhi government in 1975. Chief ministers of states ruled by Opposition parties vowed to uphold true federalism and protect the rights of every state. In a post on X, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said when democracy is at stake, secularism is in an "endangered situation" and federalism is "being bulldozed" and therefore people must protect the valuable guidance that the Constitution provides.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin said everything will be done to uphold true federalism as enshrined in the Constitution and protect the rights of every State. (PTI)

## IIT-G scientists develop

corrosion protection. "We combined these three materials into one coating system. The novel nanocomposite has been developed by attaching zinc oxide nanorods to reduced graphene oxide and then wrapping this structure with polyaniline. The composite was then blended into an epoxy coating and evaluated using several characterization methods," Das said. "The developed epoxy coating has shown improved performance compared to standard epoxy. It formed a denser and more uniform barrier, showed stronger adhesion to the steel surface, and slowed the movement of corrosive elements more effectively," he said.

These characteristics make it suitable for applications in marine infrastructure, offshore platforms, shipbuilding, coastal pipelines, and other steel structures that must withstand continuous exposure to saltwater, he added. Das explained that the incorporation of RGO-ZnO-PANI nanocomposite into epoxy coating offers a promising strategy for achieving long-term corrosion resistance in harsh marine environments.

"As the next step, we are working towards assessing the long-term durability, real-world performance and life-cycle impact of this coating," he said. (PTI)

## TRAI cracks down on over 21 lakh fraudulent numbers

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 26: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has urged mobile users to report spam calls and SMS through the TRAI DND App, emphasising that blocking numbers on personal devices does not curb spam at the source.

In the past year, acting on citizen complaints, TRAI facilitated the disconnection and blacklisting of more than 21 lakh mobile numbers along with around one lakh entities involved in sending spam and fraudulent messages.

The regulator said this large-scale action underscores the crucial role of user reporting in preventing telecom misuse across the country.

According to TRAI, reports filed through the official DND App enable authorities and telecom service providers to trace, verify, and permanently disconnect offending numbers.

Merely blocking a number on a handset only hides it for that particular user, while scammers continue targeting others through new numbers.

In its advisory, TRAI appealed to citizens to download the DND App from official app stores and use it to report spam instead of relying on handset blocking features.

It also urged mobile users to avoid sharing personal or banking details over calls, messages, or social media; to immediately disconnect any suspicious or threatening calls; to report cyber fraud to the National Cybercrime Helpline (1930) or cybercrime.gov.in; and to use the "Chakshu" feature on the Sanchar Saathi portal to flag attempted fraud through misuse of telecom resources. TRAI said it remains committed to ensuring a safe and trustworthy telecom ecosystem, supported by enforcement measures, technology-driven monitoring, and active public participation.

## Sebi mulls relaxed framework for issuing duplicate securities certificates

NEW DELHI, Nov 26: In a bid to ease investor compliance and eliminate inconsistencies in documentation, Sebi has proposed doubling the monetary threshold for simplified documentation required to issue duplicate securities to ₹ 10 lakh from the current ₹ 5 lakh.

"Due to non-standardization of documents and different approaches followed by RTAs/listed companies, investors feel the pain of going for varied documentation for various listed companies," Sebi noted.

The regulator also noted that the existing ₹ 5 lakh threshold for availing simplified documentation, where investors are exempted from filing copies of FIRs, police complaints, court orders or newspaper advertisements, was set several years ago. Since then, India's securities market has grown significantly in terms of market capitalisation, investor participation, and average portfolio sizes.

Given this expansion, Sebi noted that the value of individual security holdings has risen materially. As a result, retaining the earlier limit no longer aligns with current market realities and ends up creating avoidable procedural hurdles for investors.

"In view of the above and to provide ease of investment and procedural convenience to investors, it is proposed to increase the limits for simplified documentation for issuance of duplicate securities from ₹ 5 lakh to ₹ 10 lakh," Sebi said in its consultation paper.

To further streamline the process, the regulator has proposed introducing a common affidavit-indemnity form, which would also reduce the cost of obtaining duplicate securities.

Additionally, it has been proposed that stamp duty be applied



based on the investor's state of residence, in line with the practice followed by the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority.

Sebi also highlighted that, in practice, most listed companies already issue newspaper advertisements on behalf of investors reporting loss of securities. To formalise this market practice, the regulator has proposed clarifying that listed companies should be responsible for issuing these advertisements.

"The suggested measures aim at ease of investments for investors and help restate investor rights in securities that may have been held in physical form. As duplicate securities issued would be necessarily in dematerialised mode, this will result in increased dematerialisation," Sebi said.

At present, for issuing duplicate securities, investors are required to submit multiple documents, including copies of FIRs or police complaints detailing the security and certificate numbers, advertisements in widely circulated newspapers, and separate affidavits and indemnity bonds executed on non-judicial stamp paper.

Market experts believe that the proposal will directly address a long-standing challenge faced by small retail shareholders.

Feroze Azeez, Joint CEO, Anand Rathi Wealth, said the move will help in building a more investor-friendly equity ecosystem and encourage smoother retail participation at a time when engagement is already rising sharply.

Demat accounts have crossed 19.24 crore in FY25, with 4.11 crore new accounts opened during the year, which indicates strong grassroots interest in capital.

Ranjit Jha, MD & CEO, Rush Financials, said that a surprising amount of India's generational wealth is still trapped in paper formats, and the arduous process of obtaining duplicate certificates often acts as a deterrent to bringing those assets into the modern financial system.

The proposal to double the simplified limit is a significant step toward unlocking this 'trapped capital', he added.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought public comments till December 16 on the proposals. (PTI)

## GIGABYTE, Intel draw 15,000 visitors at first Comic Con Guwahati 2025



GUWAHATI, Nov 26: GIGABYTE and Intel registered a strong presence at the inaugural Comic Con Guwahati 2025, held on November 22-23 at Sarusajai Stadium, attracting more than 15,000 visitors.

Fans, gamers and creators explored GIGABYTE desktops, monitors and laptops powered by Intel processors, marking the booth one of the most popular attractions of the event.

The turnout reflected the rapid growth of the gaming and creator community in the Northeast.

The two-day showcase featured an immersive racing simulator, daily mini tournaments with prize pools of ₹25,000, hands-on AAA gaming zones and custom GIGABYTE PC builds that emerged as a major visual draw.

Visitors also joined creator-led learning sessions, including a live PC building session with Jimmy

**PROVISION OF OVER HEAD TANK, DEEP TUBE WELL, IRON REMOVAL PLANT**

E-Tender Notice No. LMG/Engg/78 of 2025; Dated: 24-11-2025. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN. 1. Brief Description of Item:** "Provision of Over head Tank, deep tube well, Iron Removal plant in the Section Panikhati-Bar langfer S under the jurisdiction of Sr. DENW/Lumding".

Tender Value: ₹ 48,00,000.50. Earnest Money: ₹ 3,84,100.00. E-tenders will be closed at 15:00 hrs. on 18-12-2025 and opened at 15:00 hrs. on 19-12-2025. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15:00 hrs. of 18-12-2025 in website <http://www.irps.gov.in>.

DRM (Works), Lumding

**NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
Serving Customers with a smile

**NAME CORRECTION**

My wife's actual and correct name is Saidun Nesa and correct Date of Birth is 01/01/1974, which was wrongly recorded in my AR: e-Sheet Roll Regl No. 2850922M as, i.e., name, Sadun Nesa and Date of Birth as 01/01/1969, and the village's name was also wrongly recorded as Shukpura instead of the correct name Sukhpura.

Asgar Ali, Rank No. G/2850922M Sub(GD),  
S/o- Ahmed Ali,  
Vill.- Sukhpura,  
PO & PS- Sukhpura, Dist.- Ballia, Uttar Pradesh

# Nellie massacre reports tabled after 42 years, Assam revisits dark chapter

State Assembly receives Tewary and Mehta panel findings ahead of elections

**GUWAHATI, Nov 26:** The wounds of the Nellie massacre, considered the worst incident of communal violence in Assam, have festered for long, and the placing of the reports on it in the assembly on Tuesday brought to the fore the state's darkest chapter again after 42 years.

On the cold morning of February 18, 1983, in the small town of Nellie in Central Assam's Morigaon district, over 2,000 people, most of them immigrant Bengali-speaking Muslims were killed allegedly by Tiwa (Lalung) tribals, while almost three lakh people were rendered homeless, according to reports available in the public domain.

The Himanta Biswa Sarma government laid in the assembly the reports of two probe panels - T P Tewary Commission set up by the government and T U Mehta Commission formed by a civil society group and supporters of the Assam Agitation on Tuesday, months before the assembly elections.

The violence too had occurred against the backdrop of the holding of the assembly polls in the state in 1983, despite opposition by the supporters of the Assam agitation against illegal foreigners in the

state. The state was then under the President's Rule.

The agitation that began in 1979 was spearheaded by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP), and they called a boycott of the elections, which received popular support and even led to the resignation of over 150 government and public sector officials in the state.

In the run-up to the elections, over 150 supporters of the agitation died due to police firings and an estimated 5,000 people had lost their lives in the ethnic and communal clashes at various places including Nellie, Gohpur, Khoirabari, Sipajhar, Jamugurihat and Silapathar.

A fear had been created among the indigenous population, including the Tiwas, at that time, that reserved tribal lands were being taken over by the immigrants for cultivation, their cattle stolen and finally they would permanently settle on these plots.

The immediate trigger was rumours spreading that immigrant Bengali Muslims had kidnapped and gang-raped four young women from a Tiwa family, killed



six children, illegally cultivated Tiwa lands and stolen cows, along with attacking a Bihari village in that area.

There was, however, neither any FIR nor records of criminal proceedings against the alleged perpetrators.

The Nellie massacre, which lasted over seven hours in a single day, started in the village of Borbori and spread to

Nellie and 14 other Muslim-majority villages in the area.

In Nellie, a mob burnt a large number of houses and guarded all roads and exits to the village, killing anyone who tried to escape.

The massacre ended with the arrival of the CRPF personnel in the evening with survivors alleging that the local police

had abetted in the violence and had even initially stopped the central security personnel from entering the villages.

Police filed 688 criminal cases, of which 378 cases were closed due to "lack of evidence" and 310 cases were slated to be charged. However, all cases were dropped by the Government of India as a part of the 1985 Assam Accord and as a result, none were prosecuted. The six-year-long Assam Agitation ended with the signing of the Accord.

A commission, headed by bureaucrat T P Tewary was set up by the government, but the AASU and the AAGSP did not testify. Following that, the 'Assam Freedom Fighters' Association' took the initiative to constitute the non-governmental Mehta commission in January 1984 to probe into the incident.

The Assam Cabinet had recently decided to place the Tewary Commission report in the state assembly, following which the AASU requested that the Mehta Commission be also placed in the house.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had said that in 1987, the then AGP government headed by Prafulla Kumar Ma-

hanta had placed the report in the assembly and had promised that he would provide printed copies to legislators. It was, however, not given to the MLAs and MPs and even the assembly library does not have it.

Mahanta himself had led the agitation as the AASU president and later formed the political party Assam Gana Parishad (AGP), storming to power as the then youngest chief minister after the signing of the Assam Accord in 1985.

Sarma said the state cabinet decided that the report will be circulated among the members of the legislative assembly and copies will also be provided to the assembly library.

He said that the placing of both the reports was an 'academic exercise' and will bring to fore a 'big chapter in Assam's history'.

As the incumbent CM had said, the house did not discuss the two reports on Tuesday.

Sarma had also claimed that the "highlight" of the Tewary commission report is its documentation of "demographic change" and the prevailing tensions during that period. (PTI)

## State Handloom Expo opens in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

**MORIGAO, Nov 26:** The State Handloom Expo (Hathkargha Mela) 2025-26 was inaugurated on Wednesday at Jeoti Moral Sangha's Field in Chiring Charpori, Dibrugarh marking the start of a 14-day exhibition aimed at promoting indigenous textile traditions and strengthening market access for local weavers. Organised by the North East People's Development Federation (NEPDF), Guwahati and sponsored by the Development Commissioner for Handlooms under the National Handloom Development Programme, the event brings together artisans from across the region.

The inauguration was attended by Dibrugarh Mayor Dr Saikat Patra, NEPDF Principal Advisor N N Rana Patgiri, Jeoti Moral Sangha president Manoj Kr Baruah, Handloom and Textiles Circle Inspector Pallav Saikia, entrepreneur Bidyut Acharya, retired forest officer Nitya Nanda Dihingia, NEPDF Additional Director Kamal Kr Baruah and NEPDF Director and CEO Bidyut Rana Patgiri. Thousands of weavers, artisans, entrepreneurs and local residents joined the opening day, reflecting strong community involvement.

More than 60 weavers, entrepreneurs, societies and NGOs are participating in the expo, displaying an extensive range of traditional handloom products. Organisers said the exhibition aims to encourage artisans, support indigenous weaving practices and expand commercial linkages for handloom producers across the Northeast.

The expo will remain open to the public for the next two weeks, offering a platform for cultural exchange, craftsmanship and celebration of India's diverse handloom heritage.

## BTC venture school employees demand proper implementation of BTR Accord

Association urges government to address concerns over Assam Education Bill



HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR, Nov 26:** The All BTC Venture Senior Secondary School Employees' Association has voiced strong opposition to the Assam Education Bills proposed in the ongoing winter session of the Legislative Assembly, urging the

government to fully implement Clause 6.3 of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Accord.

At a press conference held at the Kokrajhar Press Club, Indrajit Basumatary, General Secretary of the Association, expressed dissatisfaction with the recent Cabinet deci-

sion on the provincialisation of venture schools. He said both the State and Central governments have so far failed to take concrete steps to implement Clause 6.3, which safeguards the protection and development of educational institutions in the BTC region.

Basumatary highlighted that the current Assam Education Bill does not provide exemptions or special provisions for venture schools in the Bodoland Territorial Region, causing frustration among thousands of teachers and staff who have long sought fair treatment and regularisation.

The Association appealed to the government to review the Bill, uphold the commitments under the BTR Accord and take immediate measures to protect the rights and interests of venture schools and their employees in the region.

## KA DDMA urges citizens to use Smart Axom App

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Nov 26:** The District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Karbi Anglong has urged all citizens and government officials to download and use the Smart Axom App, following directions from the Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA).

Developed by the Government of Assam, the Smart Axom App offers real-time alerts, GPS-based information on relief centres and medical facilities, weather updates and essential emergency contact details, helping users stay informed and prepared during emergencies.

The District Administration has requested residents to download the app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store, complete the registration process and actively support disaster preparedness initiatives. Citizens are also encouraged to share the advisory widely to enhance public awareness and contribute to building a safer, more resilient community.

## UPPL Youth Wing urges action against illegal gambling in BTR



HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR, Nov 26:** The Youth Wing of the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) on Wednesday submitted memorandums to the District Commissioners and Civil SDOs of all five districts in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR)—Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpur and Udalguri demanding strict action against illegal gambling activities conducted under the guise of melas and fairs.

While district-level committees handed over memorandums to their respective District Commissioners, the central committee of the UPPL Youth Wing submitted a memorandum to Kokrajhar District Commissioner Masanda Magdalin Pertin. The memorandum expressed concern over widespread gambling in fairs, which reportedly involve minors and women and warned that such activities are corrupting the social and cultural fabric of the region.

The UPPL Youth Wing noted that the sudden rise of unauthorised gambling has caused economic, social and cultural damage and tarnished the image of the BTR. Youth Wing president Irakdo Brahma highlighted that these so-called fairs often promote betting and unregulated alcohol sales, pushing many youths toward financial and moral decline. The organisation urged district administrations to take immediate action to shut down illegal gambling units and liquor outlets, issue clear guidelines prohibiting gambling at fairs and conduct vigilance drives to prevent such activities. Brahma stressed that safeguarding the interests of the younger generation and maintaining law and order must remain a top priority.

## New Look Academy raises awareness on rabies

HT Correspondent

**SIVASAGAR, Nov 26:** New Look Academy, a premier senior secondary school, organised a seminar on Wednesday to educate students about rabies, a deadly viral disease transmitted through the saliva of infected domestic and wild animals. Dr Margina Begum and Dr Minaxi Kalita Bora served as resource persons, discussing the symptoms, causes, precautions and vaccines for rabies. They also highlighted the risks associated with keeping pets such as dogs, cats, rabbits and rats, noting that most rabies cases in India arise from domestic animal bites or scratches.

The speakers emphasised that India accounts for 36% of global rabies cases and that vaccines remain insufficiently available, with nearly 60,000 deaths annually. They called for a cooperative approach from society to combat the disease. The school authorities and Principal Borthakur were lauded for organising the informative session.

## Constitution Day celebrated across Assam

Schools, colleges, political groups and NFR reaffirm commitment to democratic values

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Nov 26:** Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Karbi Anglong commemorated Constitution Day with a series of activities aimed at promoting awareness about citizens' rights, responsibilities and the democratic values enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The programme saw active participation from KVK staff, scientists, farmers, students and local community representatives.

The event began with the reading of the Preamble, reaffirming commitments to justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Staff and participants highlighted the historical significance of Constitution Day, marking the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1949 and emphasised citizens' role in upholding democratic ideals.

KVK scientists conducted a special awareness session on constitutional duties and participatory democracy in rural development. Dr M K Doley, Senior Scientist and Head, KVK Karbi Anglong, spoke on how constitutional values guide inclusive growth, agricultural progress and empowerment of farming communities. Scientists from ICAR-NRC on Mithun, Medziphema, Nagaland, Dr J K Chamua and Dr Narendra, also participated, leading an interactive session on goat rearing, including feeding, health, housing, breeding and integration of mithun-based livelihood models.

As part of the celebration, KVK Karbi Anglong, with support from ICAR-NRC Mithun, distributed 120

goat kids to 60 farmers across 15 villages and provided 20 kg of garden pea seeds to promote double cropping in rice-fallow areas. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks, appreciating the proactive involvement of all participants.

**Our Jagiroad Correspondent adds:** Jagiroad College (Autonomous) commemorated Constitution Day with a programme organised by the NSS Unit in collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC). The event began with teachers and students collectively reading the Preamble, reaffirming the core values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Dr Chitta Ranjan Sarkar, IQAC Coordinator, addressed the gathering, highlighting the Constitution as the backbone of the world's largest democracy and encouraging students to uphold its values in daily life. A special talk on this year's theme, 'Our Constitution, Our Pride,' was delivered by Partha Jyoti Phukan, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, who discussed the historical significance of the Constitution, the vision of its framers and the responsibility of youth in preserving democratic ideals.

To add an interactive dimension, a quiz competition on constitutional themes was conducted, with students displaying enthusiasm and awareness. The programme was coordinated by Dr Gargi Phukon, NSS Programme Officer, with support from Chandan Sarkar,

Literature and Debate Secretary of the Jagiroad College Students' Union. The event concluded with renewed appreciation for the Constitution and inspired students to contribute meaningfully to the nation.

**Our Nagaon Correspondent adds:** The Nagaon District Congress Committee in collaboration with the Nagaon District Congress Sevadal, observed Constitution Day on Wednesday with a rally and public gathering. The rally moved from Swahid Bhawan to Rajiv Bhawan, with participants carrying placards bearing the slogan "Save Constitution, Save Country."

Addressing the gathering, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee president Gaurav Gogoi accused the current BJP government in Assam of attempting to destroy democracy and establish a monarchy. He criticised the state administration for allegedly selling 40,000 bighas of land to outsiders and neglecting the welfare of indigenous communities. Gogoi urged citizens to utilise government schemes while rejecting their politicisation and also criticised the promotion of liquor shops alongside the closure of educational institutions.

MP Pradyut Bordoloi emphasised the need to protect the Constitution, which he said was under threat and reiterated Congress's commitment to safeguarding its values. MP Rakibul Hussain assured the public of the party's support in their struggle for justice. The Constitution Day event aimed to raise awareness about the importance of the

Constitution and the need to defend it from attempts to undermine democratic principles.

**Our Maligaon Correspondent adds:** The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) observed Constitution Day (Samvidhan Diwas) at its headquarters in Maligaon, commemorating the adoption of the Indian Constitution. The NFR (Construction) Organisation also marked the occasion at the GM (Construction) Office, with celebrations held across all five divisions—Tinsukia, Lumding, Rangiya, Alipurduar and Katihar as well as at major railway stations, schools and offices.

The programme began with the solemn reading of the Preamble, led by General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava, with senior officers and employees participating actively. At the GM (Construction) Office, Chief Administrative Officer/Construction Anjali Kumar led a pledge-taking ceremony emphasising the importance of upholding the Constitution's principles.

Addressing the gathering, Shrivastava highlighted the Constitution as the cornerstone of India's democracy and underscored the duty of every citizen and public servant to protect its values. He paid tribute to Dr B R Ambedkar and the members of the Drafting Committee for their historic contribution.

The Northeast Frontier Railway reaffirmed its commitment to fostering constitutional awareness, integrity and responsible governance across all its units.

## Centenary celebrations of Chandrakanta Handique Bhawan from December 2

HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, Nov 26:** Preparations are underway to mark the centenary of the historic Chandrakanta Handique Bhawan of Assam Sahitya Sabha with a two-day programme starting December 2. The events will be held at the Jorhat District Library and the Freedom Fighter Sri Sri Pitambar Dev Goswami Auditorium.

In a press note, Debojit Bora, Principal Secretary of Assam Sahitya Sabha, stated that the centenary of the Sabha's journal, Patrika will also be celebrated. A special discussion on 'Assam Sahitya Sabhar Patrika: Esho Bosor' (One Hundred Years of Assam Sahitya Sabha's Journal) is scheduled at 10 AM on December 3. The session will be chaired by Sabha president Dr Basanta Kumar Goswami,

inaugurated by Dr Anil Saikia, retired principal of Moran College and feature panelists Dr Pallabi Deka Buzarbaruah (Dibrugarh University), Dr Ram Chandra Deka (retired vice-principal, Sipajhar College) and Dr Jyotishman Das (Tezpur University). On December 2, a grand 'samanyan Sobhajatra' (procession of integration) will take place at 10 AM, featuring the participation of 14 ethnic literary bodies of Assam, including Bodo, Deuri, Mising, Karbi, Nepali, Tiwa, Dimas, Sarania Kachari, Sonawal Kachari, Bishnupriya Manipuri, Bangla, Tea Tribes, Motok and Moran Sahitya Sabhas. Bora emphasised that the participation of these bodies highlights Assam's cultural diversity and commitment to linguistic integration.

## Guwahati family donates ambulance to Deepsikha Foundation in memory of Late Pannalal Jain

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Nov 26:** In a gesture of deep social commitment, the family of Jhumramal Pannalal Jain (Gangwal) of Hathigola Fancy Bazar, Guwahati donated an ambulance to the Deepsikha Foundation in memory of the late Jain, who passed away peacefully on November 23, 2025.

The donation, marking the third ambulance contributed by the Gangwal family to the foundation is intended to support the foundation's ongoing work with cancer patients. Representatives of the Deepsikha Foundation expressed heartfelt gratitude, noting that the family's gesture embodies compassion, gener-

osity and a lasting dedication to community service. Senior social worker Anandil Sethi blessed the ambulance with a swastika at the beginning of the program, symbolising auspiciousness and goodwill.

A large gathering of relatives, community leaders and members of the public attended a meeting at Mahavir Sthal, Fancy Bazaar, commemorating Pannalal Jain's life and legacy. Organisers highlighted that the donation not only serves a practical purpose but also continues the late Jain's lifelong commitment to humanity, creating a "sacred pilgrimage" of service through the family's ongoing contributions.

### NOTICE

One unidentified male deadbody age about 40 yrs found at Khagrabari (Ahatguri) under Baganpara OP, Barbari PS. In this regard enquiry has done over the deadbody and sent to Dr. Rabi Boro, Civil Hospital, Mushalpur, Dist- Baksa for PM examination. After PM examination the deadbody was kept at Dr. Rabi Boro, Civil Hospital, Mushalpur, Dist- Baksa Morgue house for 72 hrs for identification. The photograph of the dead person is attached below.

To ascertain the identity of the person kindly circulate the photograph in local newspapers and other medium. If identified then inform/communicate to IC Baganpara OP, Mobile No.- 8638003150 under Barbari PS, of Baksa District.

### UNKNOWN DEAD BODY



Sd/-  
Sr. Superintendent of Police,  
Baksa, Mushalpur

DIPR /D/HLT/229/27-Nov-25

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

*If you want a guarantee, buy a toaster.*  
-Clint Eastwood

## India's persistent trade deficit

The government may disagree but India's persistent trade deficit is ruining the country's economy despite its impressive growth. Last month, import-happy India's trade deficit reached a record high level of US\$41 billion as exports witnessed the sharpest monthly decline over a year. Unfortunately, a big surge in gold imports during October by the country, having the world's largest number of people living in acute poverty (234 million individuals) as recorded by the 2024 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), is a reason behind the massive trade deficit. The continuous trade deficit is pushing the country toward more external borrowings, diminishing the value of Indian Rupee (INR). The country's external debt had gone up to nearly \$718 billion at the end of December 2024, which was an increase of \$69.2 billion from December 2023, pushing up the external debt to GDP ratio to 19.1 percent. By the end of June, this year, the external debt surged to \$747.2 billion. The question is: why is the country not drastically compressing import of non-essentials such as gold, silver, precious metals, consumer electronics and gadgets, products like air-conditioners, headphones, footwear, plastic-based items, furniture and home décor, and food products like apples, almonds, and cashew nuts? In fact, the country is witnessing a continuous rise in non-essential goods imports, driven by consumer demand from the rich and upper middle-class, and also by industry, which are contributing to a widening trade deficit.

Although the government is believed to be lately monitoring some of these imports, including electronics, and certain consumer durables, the steps taken to curb their import growth through measures like higher import duties, implementing Quality Control Orders (QCOs), and imposing restrictions on certain goods like laptops and phones, are simply not restrictive enough. A massive forex saving out of the import of oil from Russia at a discounted rate had little impact on the overall trade deficit because of the growing imports of non-essential goods. Surprisingly, gold has been left out of the recent selective increase in import duties to the delight of Mumbai's Zaveri Bazar-based India Bullion and Jewellers Association. The association operates nationwide and plays a key role in determining daily gold rates in the country. A significant portion of India's historical and current bullion trade has strong ties to the Gujarati community, and major entities like the Gujarat Bullion Refinery in Ahmedabad.

It is time that the government takes a strong position to link the country's import of non-essentials with its export earnings. India must provide a strong policy boost over a period of time to improve its export manufacturing and global competitiveness. The character of India's exports also needs a change in keeping with the world market trend. India has faced a persistent trade deficit for many years, largely driven by its reliance on imports for energy (especially crude oil), gold, and electronics.

## India, US energy alignment shapes a quieter trade push

A quieter phase has set in around discussions on a potential trade agreement between India and the United States, yet the subdued optics conceal a period of more intense negotiation. Officials on both sides describe a process that has deliberately stepped away from public signalling, opting instead for steady and less visible exchanges. This recalibration reflects a broader shift in the strategic logic underpinning India's engagement with Washington, where the language of energy security that long justified New Delhi's outreach to Moscow is giving way to an emphasis on economic security. The evolution suggests that India's priorities are being redefined in line with a changing global oil calculus and the broader reordering of geopolitical alignments.

The India-Russia energy equation was once treated as a non-negotiable axis in New Delhi's foreign policy. When oil markets destabilised following the Ukraine conflict, India defended higher import volumes of Russian crude by stressing affordability and the need to insulate its economy from volatility. The argument rested on a clear, technocratic rationale: discounted crude offered relief to an economy heavily dependent on imported energy. That justification, repeated by Indian officials at various multilateral forums, served as a shield against western pressure and anchored India's claim to strategic autonomy. Yet those discounts were always susceptible to erosion, with the pricing advantage fluctuating as global supply chains adjusted and shipping risks varied. Over the past few months, Indian officials have become more candid in acknowledging that these discounts are neither static nor decisive in shaping long-term policy.

In contrast, India's energy ties with the United States have expanded in ways that carry structural, not tactical, implications.

The signing of a major LPG supply agreement marks a significant milestone in this deepening partnership. India is now one of the world's largest importers of the fuel, and securing consistent US volumes helps meet domestic cooking gas demand while providing predictable cost structures. The deal is expected to be followed by larger flows of US crude into Indian refineries, building on trends that have been evident for several years. The shift is not simply about replacing one source with another; it signals an effort to integrate India more firmly into supply chains anchored in allied economies, reinforcing wider strategic cooperation in defence, technology and investment.



*The India-Russia energy equation was once treated as a non-negotiable axis in New Delhi's foreign policy. When oil markets destabilised following the Ukraine conflict, India defended higher import volumes of Russian crude by stressing affordability and the need to insulate its economy from volatility. The argument rested on a clear, technocratic rationale: discounted crude offered relief to an economy heavily dependent on imported energy*

This subtle redistribution of weight within India's energy portfolio is being interpreted in Washington as evidence of New Delhi's growing convergence with the US on economic resilience. American officials have long pushed for India to broaden its sourcing patterns, arguing that volatility in Russian supplies created systemic risk for an economy of India's scale. The current shift aligns with a wider global movement, in which countries are reassessing over-reliance on single suppliers and recalibrating their positions to mitigate exposure to geopolitical shocks. For India, economic security now encapsulates not only price stability but supply predictability, diversification, and the ability to embed itself within the energy architecture of key strategic partners.

The changing tone around Russia also reflects a sharpened Indian assessment of market dynamics. At the height of discounted Russian crude, India's refiners had little incentive to diversify. As freight rates soared and insurance complications mounted, the effective margins narrowed. Simultaneously, fluctuating output from OPEC producers has altered supply conditions, and the US shale industry continues to demonstrate resilience. These shifts have combined to make Russian barrels relatively less indispensable, especially when balanced against the advantages of long-term strategic engagement with the US. Indian policymakers now argue that markets are too fluid for any single discount to dictate procurement strategies. This narrative offers India flexibility while signalling to Washington that the country's choices are increasingly driven by macroeconomic considerations rather than geopolitical brinkmanship.

These developments are influencing the

wider atmosphere surrounding trade talks. Earlier discussions were marked by public statements about disagreements on issues such as digital taxation, market access, and tariffs on specific goods. The new phase is defined by fewer outward expressions of frustration, suggesting that both sides believe progress is possible if politically sensitive areas are handled discreetly. Energy cooperation has become an important stabilising factor in this engagement, providing common ground that may help offset disputes in other domains. American negotiators see India's shifting energy preferences as a sign that the broader strategic relationship is moving in a direction conducive to a trade agreement, even if a comprehensive deal remains some distance away.

For India, the strategic calculus is equally nuanced. While it remains committed to preserving an independent foreign policy, New Delhi recognises that its long-term economic interests are tied increasingly to technological cooperation and investment from the US. Smoother energy ties strengthen this foundation. The LPG supply deal and anticipated increases in US crude imports support an argument within Indian policymaking circles that aligning with US energy markets enhances India's bargaining position, not only in trade negotiations but across a broader spectrum of bilateral engagement. Diversification towards US energy also offers additional benefits, such as potentially deeper collaboration on clean-energy technologies, storage solutions and critical mineral supply chains.

Yet India is careful not to telegraph an abrupt departure from its relationship with Russia. The diplomatic language remains measured, ensuring that Moscow does not perceive these adjustments as a strategic abandonment. New Delhi continues to emphasise the operational needs of its energy

system, maintaining the position that decisions are market-driven rather than ideologically influenced. This balancing act is intended to preserve long-standing political ties while signalling to western partners that India is responsive to global economic realities. The shift away from championing the scale of Russian discounts further softens the geopolitical optics of a potential reorientation in sourcing.

This approach is consistent with India's broader foreign policy template, which seeks to avoid binary alignments. The evolution of its energy choices fits into a pattern of calibrated adjustments designed to reinforce national interests without announcing geopolitical shifts. Inside trade negotiations, this posture translates into a willingness to engage constructively while managing domestic sensitivities around tariff structures and regulatory autonomy. The emphasis on economic security strengthens India's case for flexible policy space, particularly regarding data governance, agricultural protections and subsidy regimes. American officials, aware of these constraints, appear more inclined to pursue incremental progress rather than push aggressively for sweeping reforms.

The backdrop intensity of the talks reflects this pragmatic pathway. Technical teams are reportedly working through issues related to standards, regulatory compatibility and specific market access requests. The absence of public confrontation indicates that discussions are unfolding in a more disciplined environment, supported indirectly by stronger bilateral engagement in other sectors. Energy has emerged as an anchor, reducing volatility and deepening the shared economic agenda. If India continues to tilt towards diversified energy sourcing that includes greater US involvement, trade negotiations may find a steadier footing. (IPA Service)

## Reforms in Assam's education system - Some relevant thoughts

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The true picture of a society is reflected in its education system, because education not only opens the doors of knowledge but also lays the foundation of human resources for a country or state. For a culturally diverse and geographically challenging state like Assam, bringing about reforms in education is a complex yet absolutely essential process. It is a matter of utmost importance for the future of the state. The objective of these reforms should not merely be to increase the pass percentage of students, but to make them mentally, intellectually, and morally strong enough to successfully face the challenges of the twenty-first century. The system has to be restructured by treating education as a tool of social justice so that no section of society is deprived of quality education. The thinking behind these reforms must be multi-layered, encompassing every aspect from the primary level to higher education, teacher quality improvement, modernisation of the curriculum, and appropriate use of technology. Only through this comprehensive vision can education in Assam bring about a revolutionary transformation.

One of the most complex challenges facing Assam's education system at present is the vast regional disparity in educational standards and the educational inequality created by this disparity. The enormous difference in infrastructure, availability of teachers, and supply of teaching-learning materials between urban-centred institutions and schools in rural or remote areas often deprives students from weaker sections of society of access to quality education. Primary education is regarded as the foundation of the entire educational structure, and if this foundation remains weak in rural areas, its negative impact at the higher education level is inevitable. Therefore, the first and foremost task of educational reform is to eliminate this infrastructural disparity. It is extremely urgent to ensure the provision of basic infrastructure such as safe and suitable classrooms, pure drinking water, hygienic toilets, and electricity connection in every rural school. In addition, establishing digital tools such as computers, internet connectivity, and digital classrooms in schools has become one of the essential needs of the present time. The development of this infrastructure should not depend solely on government funding; it can also be turned into a movement through active participation of the local community and school management committees. To ensure equitable education, the government must adopt a special financial policy that gives greater priority and funding allocation to regions that are lagging behind in educational standards. Only by achieving parity in infrastructure can the goal of equality in education be attained.

Teachers are the backbone of any education system. The entire quality of education depends on their qualifications, skills, and commitment to imparting knowledge. In many educational institutions of Assam, especially in important subjects like science, mathematics, and languages, the lack of qualified and permanent teachers is a deep-rooted problem. To remove this shortage, it is essential to make arrangements for appointing an adequate number of permanent teachers under a well-organised and



time-bound schedule. The appointment process must be completely transparent, merit-based, and grounded in the required educational qualifications. Along with appointments, implementing a continuous training programme for the professional development of teachers is highly necessary. This training programme should provide detailed knowledge on modern teaching techniques, educational psychology, new methods of assessment, and appropriate use of information technology. Teachers should not be treated merely as machines for completing the syllabus; they must be encouraged to play an active role as guides and mentors in the mental development, individual needs, and overall life-building of students. Measures such as improving the working environment for teachers, providing them appropriate remuneration, and enhancing their social status will make them more attracted to and responsible towards this profession. Aligning teachers with new curricula and changes in educational policy through timely refresher training is a fundamental part of these reforms.

Radical reform of the curriculum and teaching methods can become a revolutionary step for Assam's education system. The current curriculum largely emphasises theoretical knowledge, which is insufficient to meet the requirements of a twenty-first-century knowledge-based society and the world of employment. The curriculum must be designed in such a way that it develops students' analytical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, creativity, communication skills, and collaborative mindset.

Instead of rote learning, greater importance should be given to practical-based learning, inquiry-based activities, project-based education, and field studies. Integrating vocational and technical education with the mainstream curriculum right from the school level is extremely urgent. Introducing various vocational courses based on local market demand, Assam's re-

sources and industries, agriculture-based enterprises, and traditional knowledge will enable students to acquire not only degrees but also the practical skills necessary for employment. Moreover, including arts, culture, and sports as integral parts of education will ensure the holistic and balanced development of students. These curriculum reforms must be implemented under a long-term plan in collaboration with experienced educationists, subject experts, and industry representatives.

Ensuring appropriate and widespread use of digital technology in the education system is an indispensable reform of the present era. Information technology can bring about a revolutionary change in the teaching-learning process, providing both students and teachers access to world-class knowledge and modern teaching tools. It is urgent to establish high-speed internet connectivity and computer labs in every school in Assam, especially in rural schools. Through these facilities, students will be able to avail themselves of online learning platforms, digital libraries, and high-quality educational videos.

The government must arrange special training to make teachers proficient in digital teaching techniques so that they can effectively use technology in the classroom. Digital systems can bring transparency and efficiency in assessment processes, monitoring of student attendance, and administrative tasks of school management. However, it must be ensured that the use of technology does not deprive any student of education due to the digital divide. For students who do not have access to digital facilities at home, schools should be used as centres to provide internet and computer facilities. Digital education can bring Assam's education system in line with the world's leading educational practices.

The issue of imparting education through the mother tongue is a fundamental and emotional aspect of educational reform in Assam. Educa-

tionists universally accept the principle that teaching through the mother tongue at the primary level is essential for a child's mental and intellectual development. Since various ethnic communities live in Assam, recognising the importance of local languages in primary education is highly necessary. It helps students easily understand basic concepts and fosters respect for their own language and culture. The government must give special emphasis to appointing mother-tongue teachers, preparing textbooks in local languages, and supplying educational materials. At the same time, it must be ensured that students also gain proficiency in other powerful languages necessary for higher education and the job market. Language education should be viewed through an integrated approach in which knowledge of other languages is built upon the foundation of the mother tongue. Special attention should be paid to effective methods of language teaching, such as developing skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In this way, even while providing education through the mother tongue, students can remain connected to the universal stream of knowledge.

Without reforming institutions of higher education such as universities and colleges, improvement of the entire education system is impossible. Institutions of higher education should not remain merely centres for completing syllabi and awarding degrees; they must be transformed into hubs of knowledge creation, research, and innovative thinking. For this, universities must be granted greater autonomy and academic freedom. Curricula should be modernised with an interdisciplinary approach so that students can integrate knowledge from various subjects and acquire problem-solving skills. To encourage research and innovation, the government must provide adequate funding, establish advanced laboratories, and increase collaboration with national and international institutions. Institutions of higher education must work closely with industry and the employment sector so that curricula meet market needs and students emerge ready for employment. A strict quality determination and accreditation system must be introduced to maintain standards in higher education. Research and publication should be considered criteria for professional advancement of teachers.

Reform of the examination and evaluation system is an important step towards improving the quality of education. The current examination system is largely based on testing students' memory power, which fails to assess their actual skills, comprehension, and analytical abilities. A reform-oriented evaluation system should emphasise the overall development of students, giving special importance not only to annual examinations but also to continuous and comprehensive evaluation. This evaluation should include students' daily classroom work, project-based activities, group work, and creative efforts.

Changing the pattern of examinations to reduce exam pressure is highly necessary, giving greater weight to open-ended questions, application-based questions, and analytical questions. Evaluation results should be regularly discussed between teachers and parents so that weaknesses can be identified and appropriate

remedial teaching measures taken. Only through these reforms can students be freed from the mindset of chasing marks or grades and guided towards genuine knowledge acquisition and skill development.

A strong, transparent, and efficient administrative and regulatory framework is indispensable in the education system. Decentralisation of administration is appropriate to remove bureaucratic complexities and delays in the functioning of the education department. Granting a certain degree of autonomy to educational institutions will enable them to take effective decisions according to local needs. A robust supervision and monitoring system is needed to ensure transparency and accountability in education. Making all information regarding teacher appointments, transfers, promotions, and school financial transactions public through digital means can greatly reduce the possibility of irregularities.

Political interference in policy formulation should be minimised, and educationists, subject experts, and experienced members of society should be encouraged to play a more active role. Establishing proper coordination and communication between the government and school management committees is also extremely urgent. Only a strong administrative structure can help implement reforms correctly and effectively.

Creating social participation and awareness in educational reform is a highly important aspect. Improving the quality of education is not the sole responsibility of the government or teachers; parents, local communities, and students themselves must also be actively involved. Awareness programmes and regular meetings should be organised to make parents more conscious and responsible towards their children's education. When the local community actively participates in school infrastructure development and management, a common environment for education will emerge. It is urgent to provide training and empowerment to strengthen and make school management committees more accountable. Only by creating public awareness about the importance of education and the necessity of reform can the effort towards educational reform take the shape of a mass movement. Students should also be encouraged to take responsibility for their own education and express their needs.

In conclusion, it can be said that reforming Assam's education system is a long-term and complex process, yet it is an indispensable investment for the future of Assam. The qualitative standard of the state's human resources, economic development, and social progress will largely depend on the successful implementation of these reforms. This massive transformation will be possible only through a well-thought-out, well-organised, and inclusive policy. Only by shaping education not merely as a means of securing employment but as a medium for holistic human development can students successfully face every challenge of life. This comprehensive reform requires continuous cooperation and coordination among the government, educationists, teachers, parents, and all sections of society. Only through this collective effort can Assam's education system attain a new dimension and move forward towards a bright future.

# Iran's Water crisis: Historical roots, ideological dimensions and policy challenges

By: Kamyar Kayvanfar

Iran's water story is intertwined with its modern political evolution. During the Pahlavi era, the country's national strategy centred on industrialisation and modernisation. Through the White Revolution (1963), the Shah sought to transform Iran into a modern, industrial state capable of rivalling Western economies. Agriculture was not neglected maliciously but deprioritised, a calculated choice that reoriented capital, labour, and infrastructure towards factories, oil, and heavy industry.

Land reform broke up large estates and dismantled the landlord-peasant hierarchy. Aimed at equity, it instead disrupted efficient farming and alienated rural elites. Lacking capital or irrigation infrastructure, many smallholders saw the Shah's modernisation as a betrayal of Iran's agrarian roots.

This resentment became politically significant. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 found many of its earliest supporters among disaffected rural and small-town populations. Clerical leaders, including Ayatollah Khomeini, who came from a modest rural background, capitalised on this grievance. After the Revolution, policy underwent a decisive shift: agriculture was transformed from being an economic sector to an ideological symbol of national authenticity and revolutionary justice.

The government promoted extensive agricultural expansion, constructing dams and subsidising water-intensive crops such as wheat, rice, and sugarcane, even in arid regions.

The Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) further reinforced this shift. Wartime self-reliance fostered the ideology of "khod-kafa'i", meaning self-sufficiency. Food production became an emblem of resilience against foreign dependence. The government promoted extensive agricultural expansion, constructing dams and subsidising water-intensive crops such as wheat, rice, and sugarcane, even in arid regions.

In Shia tradition, the denial of access to water during the Battle of Karbala — when Imam Hussein's camp was cut off — be-

came a powerful moral reference. After the Revolution, this symbolism shaped welfare policy, where the state declared that no one should be denied water. Regulatory barriers to household access were loosened, enshrining water as a right rather than a commodity. This theological commitment, however, encouraged overconsumption and reduced incentives for conservation, setting the conditions for long-term depletion.

## Cultural and Ideological Dimensions

Water in Iran is not merely a natural resource; it is an ideological artefact, woven into revolutionary identity. The Islamic Republic presents access to water and bread as proof of divine justice and government compassion. Subsidies, particularly for rural farming, have become mechanisms of political inclusion and loyalty. Farmers, long considered the "guardians of the revolution," benefit disproportionately from cheap electricity and irrigation water.

This is more than populism; it reflects the regime's rural roots. Early leaders saw agriculture as a sacred labour and a revolutionary duty, enshrining self-sufficiency as moral virtue, while subordinating industry to social equity and privileging loyalty over efficiency. Bread, in this context, is ideological. It appears in countless Persian idioms symbolising honour, livelihood, and divine blessing. To suggest that bread or the water that produces it should be treated as a priced commodity is politically toxic.

Thus, proposals for water pricing reform are routinely denounced as "anti-Islamic" or "elitist." The symbolic resonance of bread in Persian and Islamic culture amplified this commitment. Ensuring that "bread is always on the table" and "is not coming from alien foreign countries" became both a social contract and a theological duty.

Decision-makers, many of whom rose through revolutionary or wartime institutions rather than bureaucratic channels, approach the water crisis through a wartime lens where shortages are to be endured, not prevented. Scarcity becomes another battlefield on which citizens must display patience and faith. Such framing discourages reform: subsidies persist, consumption continues, and the very narrative that once united the state and society now impedes the strategic planning required for sustainability.



**Current Challenges**  
The consequences of these intersecting forces are profound. Iran's water crisis now encompasses structural, governance, and social dimensions.

**Infrastructure and Industrial Conflict:**  
While early post-revolutionary governments invested heavily in dams and canals, the "water mafia" built dams that were rarely filled. This caused the water tables in the plains to drop from the 1990s onwards, turning once-fertile lands to dust.

More critically, the state is now both the regulator and a competitor. Many of Iran's largest water-consuming industries, including steel, petrochemicals, and energy, are

state-owned or linked to quasi-military foundations. The government thus profits from the same inefficiencies it is tasked to correct. Any regulatory reform that would constrain industrial water use would also threaten its own revenue streams.

**Corruption and Illegal Extraction:**  
The widespread illegal drilling of wells exacerbates depletion. Thousands of unauthorised wells continue to extract groundwater unchecked, often with political protection. Corruption and weak law enforcement mean that even where laws exist, they are selectively applied. Officials who benefit from these networks have little incentive to impose penalties.

**Technocratic Gaps and Policy Inertia:**  
Following the Iran-Iraq War, many veterans entered the civil service. Their revolutionary credentials ensured loyalty but not technical expertise. Decision-making in water policy remains dominated by military and ideological figures rather than hydrologists or economists.

Consequently, solutions tend to mirror wartime logic — reactive, short-term, and framed as resistance rather than reform.

Investment cycles remain short, with a preference for visible, rapid projects such as building dams rather than long-term basin management.

**Emergency Governance:**  
Iran's broader political culture reinforces this short-term approach, where the state operates in perpetual emergency, responding simultaneously to sanctions, inflation, energy shortages, and social unrest. In such an environment, water reform is perpetually deprioritised. Investment cycles remain short, with a preference for visible, rapid projects such as building dams rather than long-term basin management.

**Social and Security Implications:**  
Rural areas, once pillars of revolutionary legitimacy, are now epicentres of discontent. The drying of rivers like the Zayandeh Rood in Isfahan has provoked repeated protests by farmers demanding state accountability. In Khuzestan, where mismanaged dams and industrial diversions have devastated agriculture, demonstrations have turned violent. Migration from desiccated villages to urban centres adds to unemployment, housing shortages, and public

discontent.

## The Way Forward

Iran has the scientific capacity to manage its water resources more sustainably, but its political structure and ideological imperatives obstruct reform.

## Agricultural Diversification and Imports:

Iran could reduce pressure on its aquifers by importing water-intensive crops such as rice and sugarcane, focusing instead on drought-resistant varieties. However, this clashes with the doctrine of self-sufficiency, a pillar of revolutionary identity. Politicians fear that admitting reliance on imports would symbolically betray the Revolution's promise of independence. Beyond crop diversification, Iran could modernise irrigation networks by replacing flood irrigation with efficient drip systems, thereby optimising agricultural water usage. Small-scale groundwater recharge projects, combined with soil moisture monitoring, could help stabilise rural livelihoods without the large capital requirements of new dams.

## Reforming Subsidies and Governance:

A rational pricing system could discourage water wastage, but removing subsidies risks alienating the regime's most loyal base: rural farmers. The experience of 2019, when fuel price hikes sparked nationwide unrest, remains a deterrent. More fundamentally, as the state itself is a major water consumer, genuine regulation would require the government to restrict its own enterprises, something it has consistently resisted. Complementary to pricing reform, investment in urban wastewater recycling and industrial water recirculation could reduce total freshwater withdrawals. Desalination, though renewable energy-intensive, could provide a strategic reserve for coastal cities like Bandar Abbas and Bushehr, easing pressure on inland aquifers.

Small-scale groundwater recharge projects, combined with soil moisture monitoring, could help stabilise rural livelihoods without the large capital requirements of new dams.

## Technocratic Empowerment:

Replacing military and clerical decision-makers with technically trained administrators would en-

sure more consistent water management. However, such a transition would require shifts in authority that the Islamic Republic is unlikely to endorse. As long as key decisions are shaped by a "resistance" framing of scarcity, policy responses are likely to continue emphasising short-term rationing and tighter control over demonstrations, instead of pursuing broader structural reforms.

## Institutional Independence:

Iran's water agencies require autonomy from political and industrial interests. The government must cease to act simultaneously as producer, regulator, and beneficiary. Only then can regulation be credible. But this would entail disentangling vast networks of patronage and parastatal control, a challenge few within the system are willing to confront.

## Structural Barriers:

Ideology remains a major obstacle, but it is compounded by other factors: the rural social foundation of the regime, the symbolic centrality of bread, and the entrenched belief that endurance equals strength. These collectively prevent rational recalibration. The leadership's wartime mentality of expecting citizens to "fight through droughts" perpetuates short-termism and discourages development.

## Conclusion

Iran's water crisis is no longer a resource issue; it is a mirror of inept governance. The same revolutionary values that once stabilised the regime now obstruct its adaptability. Self-sufficiency has become self-defeating, and ideological loyalty has become institutional inertia.

Corruption, mismanagement, and competing state interests compound the problem. Each new "solution" is reactive, be it water rationing, ad-hoc transfers, or temporary desalination plants.

Iran's leadership faces a strategic choice: either continue rationing scarcity or redefine water as a national, not ideological asset. This would require depoliticising agriculture, empowering technocrats, and planning in terms of decades rather than electoral cycles. Without such a shift, Iran risks a future where its wells, like its political power, run dry. (Courtesy: ORF)

## Why did Australia drop its bid to host the COP31 climate talks?

By: Wesley Morgan

At the last possible minute, Australia backed away from its bid to host COP31, the United Nations climate summit next year, in Adelaide alongside Pacific nations.

Under a compromise struck with rival bidder Türkiye, the 2026 talks will be held in the Turkish city of Antalya. In return, Australia will shape the agenda and federal Minister for Climate and Energy Chris Bowen will preside over the two weeks of formal negotiations. The Pacific will host a pre-COP event ahead of the summit.

Struck in the final days of the COP30 summit in Belem, Brazil, the compromise deal comes as a bitter disappointment to many — including me. It follows three years of concerted Australian diplomacy to host the world's biggest climate talks.

At a press conference in Brazil, Bowen said: "Obviously, it would be great if Australia could have it all. But we can't have it all. This process works on consensus." He described Australia's role as COP president as a "significant concession" offered by Türkiye.

The deal does salvage some important wins for Australia and the Pacific.

Australia will have a central role to play over the next year in maintaining global momentum in shifting away from fossil fuels and accelerating the renewable rollout even faster. Pacific Island countries also have a chance to shape summit outcomes and attract vital investment as they push to reach 100 percent renewables. Bowen will be holding the gavel in Antalya instead of Adelaide, but his workload will begin now. Australia will need to carry forward the agenda set in Brazil.

## How Did This Happen?

The Australia-Pacific bid was widely favored to win. Bowen has effectively been auditioning to head the talks by taking on key roles in recent years.

What happened? Partly United Nations procedure and partly domestic politics.

The annual summit is rotated between five different U.N. country groupings. In 2026, Australia's grouping — "Western Europe and Other" — has its turn. By convention, countries choose a host country by consensus. Australia's bid had overwhelming support within its U.N. grouping, as 26 of 28 countries in the group backed it publicly.

But Türkiye simply refused to give way. This was deeply frustrating for Bowen and Pacific Island leaders. Palau's president Surangel Whipps Jr called for Türkiye to "clear the way" for an Australia-Pacific summit. After withdrawing an earlier bid in 2020, Türkiye's leaders felt it was their turn. It's not how the process formally works, but it meant Türkiye wouldn't give up.

For well over a year, Australian and Turkish diplomats engaged in drawn-out negotiations. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan last year and wrote to him in recent days to ask him to withdraw his bid. Bowen and Foreign Minister Penny Wong recently discussed the issue with their Turkish counterparts.

If neither Türkiye or Australia had backed down this week, the talks would have reverted to Bonn,

Germany, the home of the U.N. climate process. As negotiations reached a crunch point at COP30, Australia struck a deal.

The long-running saga took a domestic political toll. Internal support within the Labor government had reportedly dropped in recent months.

What Does This Mean for Australia?

The backdown is a significant economic and diplomatic blow. It's a major loss for Adelaide especially. The South Australian government had estimated hosting the talks would be a A\$500 million boon, from tourism receipts to a chance to attract vital investment for Australia's ongoing energy transition and for future clean energy industries such as critical minerals and green iron. U.K. government analysis of the 2021 Glasgow talks found the net benefit of hosting was double the cost, bringing around A\$1 billion in benefits, including trade deals and foreign investment. Australia will miss out on much of this. That said, having an Australian president of the COP31 talks is more than a consolation prize. Bowen will hold the pen when the world decides a path forward for climate action next year. This will be useful in attracting investment. More than 70 percent of all investment in clean energy in Australia comes from international sources.

It's unusual for a host country to not preside over the COP talks, but it has been done before.

What Does This Mean for the Pacific?

For Pacific nations, the news will come as a blow. Pacific nations have been instrumental in pushing the world to go faster on climate. The region is hugely exposed to climate threats, from rising sea levels to intensified natural disasters to coral bleaching to acidifying oceans.

Australia had hoped to host COP31 for strategic reasons as well as economic. Hosting would have shown Canberra's commitment to address the Pacific's key security threat at a time of increasing geopolitical rivalry.

As the deal stands, Australia has salvaged a commitment to hold a pre-COP meeting in the Pacific. This will showcase Pacific plans to become the first region powered 100 percent by renewables. Australia should work with Pacific leaders to ensure this is a serious event shaping expectations for COP31.

It will likely also act as a pledging conference for countries to commit finance to the Pacific Resilience Facility, a Pacific fund to help island nations adapt to changes already arriving.

## What's Next?

As the COP30 talks headed toward their conclusion, Brazil was hoping to broker an unexpected breakthrough: a global roadmap to phase out fossil fuels. Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva surprised observers by calling for this roadmap to be a signature outcome. While countries had already agreed to "transition away from fossil fuels" at climate talks in 2023, leaders had yet to agree on a plan to actually do this. The roadmap wasn't expected to be central to this year's talks, but increasingly became so, with Lula adding to the furor.

In the end, that effort failed. The roadmap was blocked from the final COP30 declaration, but Lula declared that it would continue as a voluntary process. (Courtesy: The Diploma)

## In the Deccan plateau, vulture population declines

By: Sneha Mahale

High on the sandstone cliffs of Telangana's Kaghaznagar Forest Division, long-billed vultures (*Gyps indicus*) once nested in dozens. Their rhythmic flights in the skies were a familiar sight for local people. Today, however, only a handful remain. A 14-year study has now found that these critically endangered birds are breeding less successfully.

The long-billed vulture has undergone severe population declines across the Indian subcontinent, primarily due to diclofenac (a veterinary drug) poisoning. It's also a slow reproducer, typically raising only one nestling per year," says Ravikanth Manchiryal, a researcher from the Department of Zoology and Wildlife Biology, AVC College, Tamil Nadu, and the first author of the study.

"Most earlier studies were short-term or focused on multiple species of Gyps and offered only general insights. This one, however, specifically tracked this species' breeding ecology, nest success, and how environmental factors affect reproduction over time," he added.

## Tracking a slow decline

Between 2010 and 2023, researchers monitored 23 nests across two cliff-nesting colonies in the Kaghaznagar Forest Division and adjoining parts of the Deccan Plateau, at the junction of Telangana, Maharashtra, and Chhattisgarh states. These cliffs, known as Palarapu and Lakkamed, lie along the Peddavagu stream and Pranhita river, a landscape that also serves as a corridor linking the Kawal, Tadoba-Andhari, and Indravati Tiger Reserves.

Fortnightly surveys from observation points about 200 metres from the cliffs documented each phase of the breeding cycle, from the onset of breeding to late nestling rearing. Breeding results were compared annually against environmental variables including temperature, rainfall, wind speed and direction, surface pressure, dew, and local water toxicity. Statistical models were used to identify which factors most influenced breeding success.

"This long-term dataset revealed detailed insights into their breeding biology. The dataset also captured annual variations in nesting success and nestling survival," says Aamer Sohail Khan, wildlife biologist and a HDR Fellow from the School of Animal and Veterinary Science, University of Adelaide, and the study's co-author. He added that the data set also highlighted patterns of consistent site use (site fidelity) and resilience in certain colonies.

## The paper trail

During the study period, the researchers recorded 161 pairs that had occupied nests,



attempting to breed, which laid 116 eggs, of which 85 chicks successfully reached the stage to leave the nest and fly. However, the numbers sharply declined over the years: from 23 occupied nests in 2019 to 15 in 2020, four in 2021, and just one in both 2022 and 2023.

The strongest negative influence was found to be the level of toxicity in the effluent discharged from the Sirpur Paper Mill into the Peddavagu stream. The effluent, a dark-black liquid containing chemicals, is a known environmental hazard. Previous analyses found that many of these parameters exceeded the Bureau of Indian Standards safety limits.

"Vultures drink large quantities of water after feeding. The Peddavagu stream, used by humans, cattle and wildlife, is their primary water source," says Nagarajan Baskaran, from the Mammalian Biology Lab, AVC College, and corresponding author of the study.

After the reopening of the Sirpur Paper Mill, which was shut from 2014 to 2017, hazardous effluents re-entered the stream, likely affecting adult health and egg viability, he says. "Vultures' long lifespans and scavenging habits make them especially vulnerable to chronic chemical exposure and bioaccumulation," Baskaran adds.

The field teams also documented three adult carcasses near the stream between 2019 and 2023. While toxicological testing wasn't performed on these birds, prior water assessments indicated high concentrations of cadmium, copper, lead, nickel, and zinc, all toxic to birds.

Environmental factors also shaped breeding outcomes, the study found. Hatching success was higher in cooler years, while heavy

rainfall reduced egg survival. Interestingly, wind speed had a positive effect.

"Higher wind speeds enhance flight efficiency, reducing adults' energy costs during foraging and allowing them to feed chicks more regularly. Better airflow may also ventilate nests, lowering heat stress and parasite load," explains Manchiryal.

At the microhabitat level, nest depth and vegetation cover mattered. Nests deeper into cliffs or shaded by greenery fared better, whereas those closer to human activity had lower success rates.

## Regional conservation crisis

India is home to about 97% of the global population of long-billed vultures, estimated at just over 12,000 individuals. While some recovery has been seen in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, the Deccan colonies appear to be in decline.

"The current fledging success rate is barely sufficient to sustain a stable population, given the species' slow breeding cycle and long developmental stages. Prolonged breeding increases exposure to environmental hazards and human-related threats, raising the risk of reproductive failure. Even small declines in breeding success could accelerate population loss and jeopardise the species' long-term survival in the region," says Khan.

The researchers recommend immediate steps such as necropsy of carcasses, physiological monitoring of stress and reproductive hormones, detailed water contamination analysis, stricter industrial discharge monitoring, and establishing "Vulture Safe Zones" in collaboration with state forest departments. "Targeted strategies addressing pollution, habitat degradation, and legacy threats like diclofenac, are crucial to prevent collapse," says Baskaran. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

# Israel has handed over 15 more Palestinian bodies, hospital officials in Gaza say

**KHAN YOUNIS, Nov 26:** Hospital officials in Gaza said Wednesday that Israel handed over 15 more Palestinian bodies, completing the latest swap of the ceasefire as the first phase of the agreement nears a conclusion and officials convened to discuss moving to the second.

It came a day after Palestinian militants returned the remains of Israeli hostage Dror Or, who the Israeli military says was killed by the militants in their October 7, 2023 attack. Israel has agreed to return 15 Palestinian bodies for each hostage returned.

With the latest swap, Israel has sent back to Gaza a total of 345 Palestinian bodies since the exchanges started last month, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

Two hostages — one Israeli and one Thai national — remain in Gaza. Hamas said Wednesday it was determined to uphold its side of the agreement and return them both. Turkish, Qatari and Egyptian officials met Wednesday in Cairo to discuss the second phase of the ceasefire, which began in October and has held despite accusations by both sides of violations.

The next phases of the agreement include deploying an international stabilisation force and

developing an international body to govern Gaza and oversee reconstruction.

An armed international stabilisation force will be tasked with keeping security and ensuring the disarmament of Hamas, a key demand of Israel. Indonesian officials have said they plan to deploy 20,000 peacekeepers to the force.

Major questions hang over nearly every part of the plan and the timeframe for implementation. In the meantime, nearly all Palestinians remain displaced and dependent on humanitarian aid. Hamas retains significant control over nearly half of Gaza and the rebuilding of the territory has barely begun.

**Palestinian bodies returned and hostage remains identified**  
Gaza's Health Ministry said only 99 bodies out of the 345 Israel has returned have been identified. They say identifying the remains is complicated by a lack of DNA testing kits in Gaza.

Meanwhile, Israel mourned the latest hostage to be returned by the Palestinian militants, Dror Or.

Israel's military said Or and his wife, Yonatan Or, were killed by militants who overran their community of Kibbutz Beeri on October 7, 2023.



Before they were killed by the militants, the couple evacuated two of their children from their burning house through the window, said the Hostages Families Forum. The decision ultimately saved the children's lives — Alma and Noam were abducted by the militants and released in a hostage deal in November 2023.

The Forum remembered Or as a devoted father and talented cheesemaker who spent years working at the Be'eri dairy, eventually managing it. The group said Or was also a chef and yoga teacher.

In total, Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people across southern Israel and abducted 251

to Gaza in their October 7, 2023 attack that kickstarted the war in Gaza. With the return of Or's remains, almost all of the hostages or their remains are out of Gaza.

Hazem Qassem, the spokesperson for Hamas, said Wednesday that the militant group was committed to handing over the remaining two hostages and wrapping up the exchange. Writing on his Telegram channel, he called for mediators to pressure Israel to stop its "violations" of the ceasefire.

**Israeli troops shoot Palestinian man in Gaza, health officials say**  
A Palestinian man was killed when Israeli troops opened fire

Wednesday on a group of people in central Gaza, a hospital said.

At least two others were wounded in the attack that took place east of the Maghazi refugee camp, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital which received the casualties. They were the latest casualties among Palestinians since a ceasefire deal brought the war to a halt in Gaza last month. Israel's military did not immediately respond to request for comment on the report.

Also Wednesday, the military said its troops struck a group of six militants in the southern city of Rafah, killing one. The military statement said that the militants had "most likely emerged from the underground terror infrastructure in the area."

Since the ceasefire took effect on October 11, the Gaza Health Ministry said, 345 Palestinians were killed and 889 were wounded in the strip as of Tuesday.

It said at least 69,775 Palestinians have been killed and 1,70,863 injured in Israel's offensive in Gaza. It does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its figures, but has said women and children make up a majority of those killed.

The ministry is staffed by med-

ical professionals and maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by independent experts.

**Turkish, Qatari and Egyptian officials meet on ceasefire**

Turkey's intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalin met in Cairo on Tuesday with Qatar's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and Egypt's intelligence chief Hasan Reshat to discuss advancing to the second phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement, a Turkish security official said.

The talks also centred on intensifying joint efforts with the United States to strengthen the truce, according to the official who requested anonymity in line with Turkish regulations.

The three also agreed to deepen cooperation with the Civil-Military Coordination Centre (CMCC) to remove obstacles and prevent violations, ensuring the ceasefire is upheld without interruption, the official added.

**Indonesia prepares troops for Gaza stabilization force**

Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation with a long experience in UN peacekeeping missions, is among the countries the US has discussed the ISF

plan with, in addition to Azerbaijan, Egypt and Qatar.

"We are now in the selection phase for the peacekeeping force," Gen Agus Subianto, Chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces or TNI, told reporters Tuesday after a hearing with lawmakers in the capital, Jakarta. "Later, it's planned that the mission will be led by a three-star general."

He said the contingent will form a composite brigade consisting of health, engineering and mechanical support battalions. TNI is also preparing supporting assets for the mission in Gaza, including three hospital warships, the C-130 Hercules military transport aircraft and a helicopter.

Defence Minister Sjafride Sjamsoedin added that the final deployment awaits an official order from President Prabowo Subianto but "troops are already undergoing mission-specific training."

Prabowo has repeatedly declared that his country was ready to deploy 20,000 peacekeepers to Gaza at any time.

The UN reported that Indonesia had been the fifth-largest uniformed personnel contributor, deploying 2,731 individuals on peacekeeping operations as of September. (AP)

## China's pressure on Japan is a familiar tactic that could last for some time

**BELING, Nov 26:** Just days after China issued an advisory against travelling to Japan, the cancellations started.

About 3,000 Chinese visit Rie Takeda's tearoom in an alley in Tokyo's historic Asakusa district every year. Some 200 have already cancelled bookings for her tea ceremony class, as far ahead as January.

"I just hope the Chinese tourists return by Chinese New Year," she said, referring to the major holiday period in February. Past experience suggests it may take longer than that.

China's government is turning to a well-used playbook to express its displeasure with Japan for refusing to retract a statement by its new prime minister on the hot-but-not issue of Taiwan.

As with its tariffs on Australian wines in 2020, and restrictions on Philippine banana imports in 2012, Beijing is using its economic clout to pressure Tokyo while also hurling a torrent of invective at its government. The only question is how far China will go and how long the measures will last.

"China's countermeasures are all kept secret and will be rolled out one by one," said Liu Jianguo, an international relations professor at Tsinghua University in Beijing. "Everything is possible, because this involves the core of the nation's core interests."

**Disputes can drag on for more than a year**

China was angered by a statement of Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi earlier this month that its military could get involved if China were to take action against Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing says must come under its rule.

Japan is trying to keep the feud from escalating but has shown no sign of backing down. That dovetails with how some other governments have reacted to China's pressure: Stick to their positions and endure the pain, allowing the disputes to fester for a year or more.

"The diplomatic challenge for both sides is that they have their

own domestic audiences and so they don't want to be perceived as backing down," said Sheila A Smith, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and author of "Intimate Rivals," a book on Japan-China relations. With several countries, the disputes persisted until a political change brought in a new leader unencumbered by the baggage of past statements.

Australia's trade with China has gradually returned to normal since Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's election in 2022 — the last step was the reopening of the lobster market. Canada is the latest country to start repairing relations under the new prime minister, Mark Carney.

**The travel advisory starts to bite**

It's not the first time Japan has faced China's economic wrath. In 2012, protesters attacked Japanese businesses in China and boycotted their goods after a dispute erupted over a group of uninhabited islands that both countries claim. Group tours to Japan were cancelled.

Based on what happened then, when Chinese visitors fell by one-fourth, Nomura Research Institute economist Takahide Kiuchi has estimated the current travel advisory could cost Japan 1.8 trillion yen (USD 11.5 billion), knocking 0.3 percentage points off its already low annual economic growth.

Many group tours have been cancelled again, hitting businesses that rely on them. Gamagori Hotel in central Japan's Aichi prefecture said it had lost more than 2,000 guests. Nichu Syomu, a Japan-based tour company focusing on Chinese tourists, said 300 bookings have been cancelled, describing the loss as comparable to 2012.

China had been on track this year to displace South Korea and return to its pre-pandemic position as the top source of tourists to Japan.

More than 8 million Chinese visited in the first 10 months of this year, or 23 per cent of the total, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization. (AP)

## 13 people killed in fire in Hong Kong

**HONG KONG, Nov 26:** Thirteen people were killed in a fire that spread across multiple high-rise apartment buildings in a Hong Kong housing complex, the city's fire services said Wednesday.

Nine people were declared dead on the scene and four others who were sent to the hospital were later confirmed dead, authorities told reporters. About 700 people have been evacuated to temporary shelters.

The raging fire sent up a column of flames and thick smoke as it spread on bamboo scaffolding and construction netting that had been set up around the exterior of the housing complex in Tai Po district, in the New Territories. Video from the scene showed at least five buildings close to each other ablaze, with bright flames and smoke shooting out of many of the apartments' windows as night fell.

Lo Hiu-fung, a Tai Po District Council member, told local TV station TVB earlier Wednesday that most of the residents trapped in the fire were believed to be elderly people.

The blaze started mid afternoon and after nightfall authorities upgraded it to a level 5 alarm, the highest level of severity, the Fire Services Department said. (AP)

## 'Professionalism' of armed forces during May conflict enhanced Pak's global stature: Munir

**ISLAMABAD, Nov 26:** Pakistan Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir claimed on Wednesday that the "professionalism" of the armed forces displayed during the conflict with India in May enhanced his country's global stature. He made the remarks while addressing participants of the National Security Workshop-27 (NSW-27) who visited the General Headquarters (GHQ), Rawalpindi.

The participants received comprehensive briefings on Pakistan's regional and internal security landscape and prevailing national security environment, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the army, said in a statement.

The briefing was followed by an interactive session with Munir, who noted that Pakistan is a country of consequence and is destined to reach its rightful place in the comity of nations. "The professionalism, resolve, and commitment of the armed forces displayed during Marka-i-Haq (have) enhanced the global stature of Pakistan," Munir said.

"Our greatest strength lies in national unity, and together, we shall defeat the nefarious designs of our

foes," he said.

The army chief highlighted the fluid regional environment shaped by heightened geopolitical competition, cross-border terrorism, and hybrid threats.

He underscored that despite complex challenges, including externally supported militancy and information-centric warfare, Pakistan's armed forces, intelligence agencies, and law-enforcement institutions continue to demonstrate unwavering professionalism and resolve to safeguard national security.

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in retaliation for the Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians. The strikes triggered four days of intense clashes that ended with an understanding on stopping the military actions on May 10.

At least a dozen Pakistani military aircraft, including US-origin F-16 jets, were destroyed or damaged in Indian strikes, according to India's Air Chief Marshal A P Singh. Separately, the Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran, Ali Larjani, on Wednesday called on Munir at the GHQ. (PTI)

## Kremlin confirms US envoy's visit as talks on ending war in Ukraine gain momentum

**KYIV, Nov 26:** A senior Kremlin official confirmed Wednesday that US special envoy Steve Witkoff is set to visit Moscow next week as efforts to find a consensus on ending the nearly four-year war between Russia and Ukraine pick up speed.

But Yuri Ushakov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign affairs adviser, insisted that Kremlin officials still have not seen a US peace proposal, even though representatives of the United States, Russia and Ukraine held talks in Abu Dhabi earlier this week.

"Contact is ongoing, including via telephone, but no one has yet sat down at a round table and discussed this point-by-point. That hasn't happened," Ushakov told Russian state media. Ukrainian officials didn't confirm whether US Army Secretary Dan Driscoll, who in recent weeks has played a high-profile role in the peace efforts, would be in Kyiv in the coming days, as Trump indicated Tuesday.

Trump's plan for ending the war became public last week, setting off a spate of diplomatic manoeuvring. The initial version appeared heavily slanted toward Russian demands for



halting its invasion of its neighbour.

After weekend talks in Geneva between US and Ukrainian officials, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the plan could be "workable," although key points remain unresolved. A Ukrainian official said Zelenskyy hoped to meet with Trump in coming days.

Witkoff's role in the peace efforts came under a renewed spotlight Tuesday when a report indicated he coached Ushakov, the Putin aide, on how Russian leader should pitch Trump on the Ukraine peace plan.

Trump described Witkoff's reported approach to the Russians in the call as "standard" negotiating procedure.

"He's got to sell this to Ukraine. He's got to sell Ukraine to Russia," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One as he flew to his home in

Florida on Tuesday night. "That's what a dealmaker does."

Russia's grim war of attrition in Ukraine continued as a backdrop to the diplomatic jockeying.

The southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia came under a large Russian drone attack overnight, damaging more than 50 residential buildings, including a university dormitory filled with people, the head of the regional military administration, Ivan Fedorov, said Wednesday. The attack injured at least 19 people, he said.

Russian air defences, meanwhile, downed 33 Ukrainian drones overnight over various Russian regions and the Black Sea, according to the Russian Defence Ministry.

European countries, who are alarmed by Russia's aggression and see their own future at stake in negotiations over Ukraine, are fighting to make their voice heard in the talks as the United States takes the lead.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said Wednesday that Europe wants the war to end as quickly as possible.

"But an agreement negotiated by great powers without the approval of

the Ukrainians and without the approval of the Europeans won't be a basis for a real, sustainable peace in Ukraine," he told lawmakers in Berlin.

"Europe is not a plaything but a sovereign actor for its own interests and values," he said.

The head of the European Union's executive, Ursula Von der Leyen, was upbeat about recent developments, saying there is "an opportunity here to make real progress" toward peace.

She insisted that any settlement must include future security guarantees for Ukraine. At the same time, she said a deal cannot contain limitations on Ukraine's armed forces or block its path to NATO membership. Those limits were part of the initial proposal. "As a sovereign nation, there can be no limitations on Ukraine's armed forces that would leave the country vulnerable to future attacks," she said during a speech at European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

"This is as much about deterrence as it is about Europe's security, because Ukraine's security is Europe's security." (AP)

## Pak Govt issues notices to shut down 35 Afghan refugee camps in KPK

**PESHAWAR, Nov 26:** The Pakistan government has issued notices to shut down 35 Afghan Refugee Camps in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, an official said on Wednesday. A total of 42 refugee camps were established across the province, seven of which have already been closed. The schedule for shutting down the remaining camps is now moving forward rapidly, an official from the provincial Home Department said.

The phased evacuation is already underway, and several additional camps are expected to be fully cleared by next week, the official added.

Officials are briefing Afghan refugees about alternative arrangements after the closure of camps.

More than half a million Afghan refugees had been living in these facilities for decades.

The Pakistan government has de-

cided to carry out a structured screening process and launch a possible enforcement operation targeting undocumented migrants, citing security reasons.

Federal agencies will lead the initial phase of operations, the official said.

The provincial government has been formally engaged in the process, and it is expected that the upcoming Apex Committee meeting will put forward strict policy recommendations regarding the future handling of Afghan refugees, he added.

District administrations across the province have been directed to closely monitor refugee registration, movement and business activities.

Meanwhile, the voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees continues, with border officials reporting that dozens of families are returning to Afghanistan daily. (PTI)

## As Russia pummels Ukraine's energy systems, Kyiv hopes US gas will fill gap

**KYIV, Nov 26:** The soil surrounding the gas facility in Ukraine was once pitch-black before it was burned to a rusty red by a massive Russian drone and missile assault.

Scattered remnants of Shahed drones littered the reservoir designated for storing tanks of liquefied propane gas. Nearly a month after the October 30 attack, several tanks lay empty and in ruins.

"It hurts to look at all this (damage) because I saw firsthand (the facility's) establishment, construction and development," said Victor, who has worked there for 28 years and who cannot be named in full for security reasons. "But we have, what we have and we must continue to work."

The Associated Press gained exclusive access to Naftogaz's gas extraction fields in central Ukraine last week. The AP is the first and only news outlet to be allowed to film and photograph war damage at the facilities. Due to strict security protocols, the AP cannot name the facility or its exact location.

Russia has targeted Ukrainian gas extraction this year in a bid to hurt morale and force Ukraine to import large quantities of expensive gas which it can ill afford. Without the attacks, Ukraine would be able to cover the overwhelming majority of its consumption using its domestic extraction.

Two devastating attacks on Ukraine's gas extraction facilities in March and October mean the country must import an additional 4.4 billion cubic metres this winter. To fill the gap, the Ukrainian state gas company, Naftogaz, said it is negotiating with US government lenders to secure financing to buy American liquefied natural gas. Ukraine's energy crisis has played into the negotiations for a peace deal over the past week, a senior Ukrainian official told AP on condition of anonymity because they're not authorised to speak to the media.

"It is urgent because of Ukraine's energy situation, urgent because of what Ukrainians need this winter, urgent in terms of the fight," the official said. The attacks on the country's electricity and gas infrastructure are imposing heavy costs on Ukraine and its economy a scenario that could repeat next year if the war continues. Gas is vital for Ukrainians to heat their homes in winters that can reach -20 Celsius (-4 Fahrenheit), as well as for centralized hot water systems. It is also essential for Ukraine's industry and, in some cases, it's used to generate electricity.

"Given that gas infrastructure has no relation to military needs, the destruction of gas extraction, gas storage, gas transportation has only one aim: manic terror attacks so that Ukrainians are left without gas, heating and electricity" said Serhii Koretskyi, Naftogaz's CEO, in an interview in Kyiv on Friday.

**Damage pushes up import costs**  
Ukraine's domestic extraction facilities produce roughly 21 billion cubic meters of gas per year, according to the last published data from its energy regulator in 2023, before Russia began to attack gas infrastructure in earnest. Without attacks, it would still need import 2 to 3 billion cubic metres a year, said Koretskyi. But the second major attack in late October devastated extraction capabilities, meaning Ukraine needs to import an additional 4.4 billion cubic metres, at a cost of roughly USD2 billion, said Koretskyi, noting that some parts of the extraction system had been successfully repaired. Naftogaz has secured 70 per cent of the money needed for the 4.4 billion cubic metres, mostly through European loans and a few grants, said Koretskyi. He said they are trying to obtain the remaining 30 per cent through a loan from the US International Development Finance Corporation and EXIM, another US government lender. (AP)

**MELBOURNE, Nov 26:** The Australian government said young children will be banned from social media next month as scheduled despite a rights advocacy group on Wednesday challenging the world-first legislation in court.

The Sydney-based Digital Freedom Project said it had filed a constitutional challenge in the High Court on Wednesday to a law due to take effect on December 10 banning Australian children younger than 16 from holding accounts on specified platforms.

Communications Minister Anika Wells referred to the challenge when she later told Parliament her government remained committed to the ban taking effect on schedule.

"We will not be intimidated by legal challenges. We will not be intimidated by Big Tech. On behalf of Australian parents, we stand firm," Wells told Parliament.

Digital Freedom Project presi-



dent John Ruddick is a New South Wales state lawmaker for the minor Libertarian Party.

"Parental supervision of online activity is today the paramount parental responsibility. We do not want to outsource that responsibility to government and unelected bureaucrats," Ruddick said in a statement.

"This ban is a direct assault on young people's right to freedom of political communication," he added.

The case is being brought by Sydney law firm Pryor, Tzannes and Wallis Solicitors on behalf of two 15-year-old children.

Digital Freedom Project spokesperson Sam Palmer could not say whether an application would be made for a court injunction to prevent the age restriction taking effect on December 10 before the case is heard.

Technology giant Meta last week began sending thousands of Australian children suspected to

be younger than 16 a warning to download their digital histories and delete their accounts from Facebook, Instagram and Threads before the ban takes effect.

The government has said the three Meta platforms plus Snapchat, Tik Tok, X and YouTube must take reasonable steps to exclude Australian account holders younger than 16 or face fines of up to 50 million Australian dollars (USD 32 million).

Malaysia has also announced plans to ban social media accounts for children under 16 starting in 2026. Malaysian Communications Minister Fahmi Fadzil said this week his Cabinet approved the move as part of a broader effort to shield young people from online harm like cyberbullying, scams and sexual exploitation.

He said his government was studying approaches taken by Australia and other countries, and the potential use of electronic checks with identity cards or passports to verify users' ages. (AP)

## Urges citizens to uphold constitutional values and fulfill Fundamental Duties Guv and CM extends Constitution Day greetings to people

**ITANAGAR, Nov 26:** Governor Lt Gen (Retd) K T Parnaik on Wednesday called for an evolving Constitution, deeper citizen responsibility and renewed national commitment to constitutional ideals.

On the Constitution Day celebration at the Assembly here, the governor underscored that the Constitution is the nation's supreme guiding document, one that safeguards rights, defines powers, and anchors India's democracy.

Paying tributes to Dr Rajendra Prasad, Dr B R Ambedkar, and the founding fathers, Parnaik said their visionary leadership shaped not just a legal text but the national destiny, an official release said.

He said the collective reading of the Preamble during the programme reaffirmed the people's faith in the Constitution and its democratic principles.

Citing Dr Ambedkar, he reminded the audience that even the best constitution depends on the sincerity and integrity of those who implement it.

Parnaik emphasised that while



the Constitution has served the nation remarkably, it must continue to adapt to new challenges.

He called for periodic and participatory reviews involving experts, civil society and citizens to keep it responsive to issues such as digital privacy, technology, environmental concerns and social justice, ensuring that rights, dignity and equality remain protected for future generations.

Stressing the theme of the celebration, "Citizen of India: From enjoying Fundamental Rights to fulfilling Fundamental Duties," the

governor said citizens often emphasise entitlements while overlooking responsibilities.

He urged renewed focus on fundamental duties, upholding democratic ideals, protecting heritage and contributing meaningfully to national development.

"As India moves toward the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047 under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, disciplined and responsible citizen participation will be crucial," Parnaik added.

He later presented prizes to winners of debate, essay, and cover-

design competitions held as part of the Assembly's Golden Jubilee celebrations.

Chief Minister Pema Khandu in his message, saluted the vision of B R Ambedkar and the members of the Constituent Assembly, stating that the Constitution continues to serve as the cornerstone of India's democratic ethos.

"Today we salute the vision of B R Ambedkar and the members of the Constituent Assembly who gave India a constitution founded on justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. Let us live these values every day and build a stronger, united and self-reliant Bharat," he said.

Observed annually on November 26, Constitution Day commemorates the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1949.

The day honours the work of the Constituent Assembly and reinforces the importance of the fundamental rights, duties and values that guide the nation. It is an occasion for citizens, institutions and governments across India to reaffirm their commitment to constitutional ideals and democratic responsibilities. (PTI)

### 37ZPM candidates remain uncontested after nomination deadline

**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, Nov 26:** Thirty-seven Zilla Parishad Member (ZPM) candidates in Arunachal Pradesh remain uncontested after the final day of filing nomination papers for the ongoing panchayat elections. All candidates for Zila Parishad, Gram Panchayat, municipal councillor and corporator posts submitted their nominations before the deadline. The scrutiny of nomination papers held on November 26, followed by the last date for withdrawal of candidature on November 29. The final list of contesting candidates, along with their party affiliations, will be available thereafter.

According to sources from the State Election Commission, Arunachal Pradesh has 27 Zila Parishads with 245 Zila Parishad constituencies and 2,103 Gram Panchayats comprising 8,181 Gram Panchayat constituencies. Additionally, the Itanagar Municipal Corporation has 20 wards, while the Pasighat Municipal Council has eight wards. Nominations for all these seats have been filed.

As of now, 37 ZPM candidates have been declared uncontested across several districts. These include West Kameng (2), Bichom (2), East Kameng (3), Kurung Kumey (2), Kra Daadi (3), Lower Subansiri (10), Upper Subansiri (4), Leparada (1), Lower Siang (1), Siang (1), Dibang Valley (2), Lower Dibang Valley (1), Namsai (1), Changlang (1), Tirap (1) and Longding (2). The panchayat elections continue to progress as administrative preparations move into the scrutiny and withdrawal phases.

## Lower Siang reviews poll preparedness in coordination meeting

**HT Correspondent**

**LIKABALI, Nov 26:** A coordination meeting involving the Election Observer, Returning Officers (ROs), Sector Officers, the Superintendent of Police and Nodal Officers of Lower Siang District was held on Tuesday in the Conference Hall of the Circuit House, Likabali, to assess preparations for the upcoming Panchayati Raj Election 2025.

Chaired by Election Observer Kanki Darang (SAG), the meeting opened with a welcome address by Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer (PR) Rujjum Rakshap. He underscored the need for strict adherence to election guidelines and called for efficiency at every stage of the elec-

## APLA@50 debate at RGU concludes; inaugural session cancelled after Dr Tai Nyori's demise

**HT Correspondent**

**RONO HILLS, Nov 26:** The Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly (APLA) and Rajiv Gandhi University's Centre for Distance and Online Education (CDOE) concluded their Institution-Level Debate Competition on Tuesday under the ongoing APLA@50 Outreach Connect, the flagship initiative commemorating 50 years of the state's Legislative Assembly.

The inaugural session of the programme was called off following the sudden demise of Dr Tai Nyori, former Registrar and former Controller of Examinations of RGU.

The gathering observed two minutes of silence in honour of the late academician, whose contributions to the university and the state were widely acknowledged as pioneering and invaluable.

With the formal inauguration withheld, proceedings began with remarks from Moyir Riba, Assistant Professor at RGU and Nodal Officer for the APLA@50 Outreach Connect. She welcomed the judges, participants, APLA representatives and faculty members, outlining the purpose of the Golden Jubilee celebrations focused on strengthening constitutional values, democratic awareness and youth engagement in civic processes.

The debate was held on the motion, "Safeguarding indigenous rights and promoting equitable development in Arunachal Pradesh do not depend on implementing the Sixth Schedule." Best speakers from institutions across the state,



who had previously won their respective institutional competitions, represented their colleges in the state-level event.

Prof Miaz Hazam, Head of the Department of English, RGU, presided over the session as Speaker of the House. The judging panel included Mama Tang, Deputy Registrar of the Arunachal Pradesh State Human Rights Commission; Irani Sonowal, Managing Editor of NEWSFY, Itanagar and Dr Saurav Mitra, Faculty at CDOE, RGU. APLA representatives Dedu Poyom, Librarian and S. K. Dey, Senior Reporter, also attended and interacted with participants.

The debate featured well-reasoned arguments anchored in constitutional frameworks, administrative practices and socio-cultural considerations. A reverse-order rebuttal round added momentum to the session, with participants responding sharply to

opposing viewpoints. Prof Hazam commended the students for their clarity, discipline and adherence to parliamentary decorum.

Dr Nyajum Lollen, Assistant Professor at CDOE and coordinator of the programme was acknowledged for his key role in steering the four-month-long statewide outreach series to its conclusion. Results of the State-Level Mega Debate Competition will be announced on 26 November, coinciding with Constitution Day at the Arunachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly.

The APLA@50 Outreach Connect, which reached over 20 colleges with lectures on fundamental rights, duties and governance, engaged more than 3,000 students. The initiative blended informative sessions with youth participation, reinforcing civic responsibility and leadership while celebrating five decades of legislative history in Arunachal Pradesh.

## Chowna Mein graces 57<sup>th</sup> Central Chalo Loku Festival in Khonsa

Festival draws 112 foreign tourists as Nocte community celebrates heritage, unity and harvest traditions



**HT Correspondent**

**KHONSA, Nov 26:** The 57th Central Chalo Loku Festival, the premier agricultural celebration of the Nocte community was held with grandeur and cultural splendour at Nehru Stadium, Khonsa, with Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein attending as chief guest. The festival, celebrated centrally since 1968, remains a defining symbol of Nocte heritage, agricultural prosperity and community unity.

This year's celebration witnessed an unprecedented turnout of international visitors, with 112 foreign tourists from eight countries travelling to Tirap district to witness the Nocte cultural traditions. The district Tourism Department facilitated their participation as part of efforts to boost cultural and heritage tourism.

Extending his greetings, Mein reflected on the cultural depth of Chalo Loku, explaining that "Chalo" denotes paddy and "Loku" signifies the transition from summer to winter. He highlighted that rituals such as Phamlamja, Chamkatja, Thanlangja and Rangsom Hum continue to embody the spiritual and cultural

essence of the Nocte people.

The Deputy Chief Minister urged the youth to protect indigenous identity in an era of rapid globalisation. He said that while young people are embracing creativity and innovation, cultural grounding must remain strong. Mein also recalled the historic recognition accorded to the Nocte, Wancho, Tutsa and Tangsa tribes under the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order Amendment Bill, 2018, which rectified a long-standing issue of tribal identity.

Speaking on development in the Tirap-Changlang-Longding (TCL) region, Mein noted substantial improvements in infrastructure. He said the upcoming 80th Year Commemoration of World War II, to be observed alongside the Pangsau Pass Winter Festival is expected to further boost tourism and international engagement.

He informed that 66 border villages across the TCL region have been included under the Vibrant Village Programme, providing improved connectivity, livelihood opportunities, housing and critical infrastructure along the Indo-Myanmar border.

Reiterating the ethos of Unity in Diversity, Mein said that Arunachal Pradesh's many tribes and cultures together form 'One Arunachal, One Family, One Culture'. He appreciated the efforts of young leaders working towards greater cultural integration and encouraged inter-community engagement.

Several literary and cultural works were released on the occasion, including 'Miles Bronson and His Works Among the Noces' by Wangtum Lowang and 'Odyssey - the Chalo Loku Souvenir' edited by Denhang Bosai. Mein also launched the Nocte Traditional Shawl initiated by Khunlong Matey and Khowang Hakhun, along with two new Nocte audio albums, 'Jovi Din' and 'Oni Na'.

Guest of Honour and MLA Seppa East, Ealing Tallang, encouraged youth participation in cultural preservation and stressed the importance of maintaining cultural identity for future generations. Chief Patron Wanglin Lowangdong, MLA Borduria-Bogapani, described Chalo Loku as a festival of joy and unity marking the post-harvest season and called for GI tagging of Nocte Salt Well products.

In his welcome address, Jiten Wangchha, president of the 57th Nocte Chalo Loku Celebration Committee, thanked the dignitaries and highlighted the festival's significance as both the end of the harvest and the beginning of the Nocte New Year calendar.

The day-long celebration featured log drum performances by Borduria and Khoathong villages, folk dances, group presentations by UKYA, Paniduria village and Nocte Jancho, culminating in the grand Loku Dance and a community feast that brought the festivities to a close.

### APTEET 2023 conducted successfully; results declared by SCERT Itanagar

**HT Correspondent**

**ITANAGAR, Nov 26:** The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Itanagar successfully conducted the Arunachal Pradesh Teacher Eligibility Test (APTEET) 2023 on 23 November 2025 across designated examination centres. The examination was held smoothly with strict adherence to fairness, transparency and all prescribed protocols.

After completion of evaluation and the Answer Key Challenge process, SCERT officially declared the APTEET 2023 results on Tuesday. A total of 1,134 candidates appeared for Paper I, out of which 344 qualified, registering a pass percentage of 30.33 per cent. For Paper II, 2,177 candidates appeared and 817 qualified, marking a pass percentage of 37.53 per cent.

The overall performance this year shows a marked improvement compared to the most recent National CTET examination, declared in December 2024, which recorded only 24.17 per cent pass percentage for Paper I and 12.31 per cent for Paper II. Candidates can access their results on the official portals: [www.arunachal.tet.in](http://www.arunachal.tet.in) and [www.scert-arunachal.nic.in](http://www.scert-arunachal.nic.in).

SCERT, Itanagar expressed appreciation to all officials involved in conducting the examination, including coordinators, observers, centre heads, invigilators, magistrates and police personnel for their cooperation and disciplined execution of duties.

## First phase of polling officials' training begins in Dibang Valley



**HT Correspondent**

**ANINI, Nov 26:** Dibang Valley District on Tuesday formally commenced the first phase of the Training Programme for Presiding Officers and Polling Officers ahead of the Panchayat Election 2025. The session held at the DC's Conference Hall, marks a key step in strengthening the district's preparedness for the smooth conduct of the upcoming polls.

Addressing the trainees, Deputy Commissioner-cum-District Election Officer Bekir Nyorak underlined the gravity and sanctity of the electoral process. He urged all officials to perform their duties with diligence, integrity and professionalism, emphasising that elections are the backbone of democratic governance and require precision, impartiality and collective commitment. Expressing confidence in the team, he said that strict adherence to procedures and coordinated efforts will help ensure transparent, fair and peaceful polling.

Sub-Divisional Election Officer

Lijum Ete briefed the gathering on the training modules and the operational readiness expected from each polling official. He outlined essential guidelines, procedural responsibilities and the need for uniform compliance across all polling stations. He advised participants not to seek exemptions except in cases of genuine medical need, stating that disciplined preparation is vital for smooth conduct of polling duties.

Master trainers Dilip Linggi, Raju Pulu and Kabang Lego conducted hands-on demonstrations for 81 officials, covering critical aspects of election management. The modules included step-by-step polling procedures, handling and safeguarding of polling materials, meticulous documentation and proper operation and sealing of the Ballot Box. The training aimed to enhance technical proficiency while instilling confidence among polling staff, ensuring that Dibang Valley is fully prepared for its electoral responsibilities in the Panchayat Election 2025.

## Khandu hails transformation of Bomdila museum into centre for creativity

**ITANAGAR, Nov 26:** Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Wednesday lauded Raag-Vista, a new cultural and skill-development initiative launched at the newly renovated district museum at Bomdila in West Kameng district.

He said it was a model for youth empowerment, heritage preservation and community engagement.

"A truly praiseworthy initiative, creating opportunities for unemployed youth, nurturing cultural learning among children and building a sustainable model for the maintenance of the museum," he said in a post on X.

The chief minister commended the effort for converting a conventional museum space into a dynamic centre for learning and creativity.

Conceptualised by West Kameng deputy commissioner Akriti Sagar, Raag-Vista has transformed the museum into a lively cultural hub that blends music education with heritage awareness.

A music trainer conducts structured lessons in guitar, piano, drums, vocals and other disciplines, enabling children to explore artistic expression and gain confidence beyond academics.

"By integrating skill development with heritage preservation, Raag-Vista is strengthening youth engagement and leading the way for cultural sustainability in Bomdila," Khandu said.

The CM urged parents and residents to enrol their children in the programme and support the initiative. (PTI)

## Anini emerges as India's next adventure frontier

Remote Arunachal hub gains national spotlight through world-class treks

**HT Correspondent**  
**ANINI, Nov 26:** Anini, a secluded town in Arunachal Pradesh's Dibang Valley, is rapidly transforming into one of India's most sought-after adventure destinations. Surrounded by towering Himalayan ranges and dense alpine forests, the region home to the Idu Mishmi community remains one of the country's last untouched wilderness corridors, now drawing national and global attention for its extraordinary trekking experiences.

At the centre of this rise is the Seven Lakes Trek, now regarded as the valley's signature expedition. The six-to-seven-day trail covers nearly 40 kilometres across meadows, forests and high ridges touching 13,000 feet. Named after seven pristine high-altitude lakes, the route has seen 625 successful trekkers since its formal opening in 2019, with 95 completing it this year alone. Its growing popularity stems from both its rugged terrain and its quiet, introspective appeal.

Parallel to its fame is the Aeyo Valley Trek, a seven-day journey following an ancient Idu Mishmi hunting route through dense coniferous forests and sweeping valley floors. Recognised nationally as the Best Adventure Destination and listed among Northeast India's top five offbeat travel experiences, the trek reached an altitude of 3,300



metres and recorded 81 completions this year, signalling steady eco-tourism momentum.

Anini's trekking map continues to expand with routes like the Zambra Valley trail known for sightings of the endangered Mishmi takin the Pomo Winter Trek, the region's only tourist-accessible snow trail and the culturally significant Athu-Popu pilgrimage trek. These routes have simultaneously created new livelihoods for local guides, porters, wildlife interpreters and cultural storytellers, ensuring indigenous communities remain central to the region's tourism growth.

The valley's rising profile has been recognised at the national level. At the Outlook Traveller Awards, Anini secured Silver for Best Offbeat Destination in 2023 and Gold for Best Offbeat Mountain Destination in 2024. Improved access, strategic promotion and strong community participation have further established the region as a hub for sustainable, experience-driven travel.

As adventure tourism gains pace, the emphasis in Anini remains on conservation and community-led stewardship. With its raw Himalayan landscapes, rich tribal heritage and rare wildlife, the valley offers an immersive alternative to crowded mountain circuits. For travellers seeking depth over popularity, Anini stands ready as India's next big adventure story one rooted in both discovery and protection.

## Fake, dubious names being included in Bengal rolls at TMC's behest: BJP tells EC



**NEW DELHI, Nov 26:** The BJP on Wednesday alleged that "fake and dubious" names are being included in the electoral rolls in West Bengal at the behest of the ruling TMC and urged the Election Commission to take action.

Approaching the Election Commission (EC) here, a BJP delegation also requested the poll panel to assure the Matua community members and those of other "Hindu groups" including Buddhists and Jains that their names will be included in the voters lists during the ongoing special intensive revision (SIR) of the electoral rolls in the state.

The BJP delegation, which met the EC officials with a memorandum of demands, comprised party's co-incharge for West Bengal Amit Malviya, state unit president Samik Bhattacharya and MP Khagen Murmu.

After the meeting, Malviya told reporters, "We highlighted the irregularities that have been observed in the first phase of the SIR so far. We brought to the Election Commission's notice that TMC workers and the chief minister (Mamata Banerjee) herself are intimidating the BLOs into accepting fraudulent and fake entries."

He said the BJP delegation also brought to the notice of the EC that "several dead voters" and continue to be included in the electoral rolls under pressure from the Trinamool Congress (TMC) workers and the "lower level bureaucracy".

"We also gave examples to the Election Commission where artificial family linkages have been established," to include dubious voters in the list, Malviya said.

He claimed that "dead or shifted (migrated)" voters are being falsely shown as parents or relatives of new applicants to create "fraudulent linkages".

"The person's father-in-law is also shown as the father for the purpose of SIR. We also highlighted how in several instances the age of the mother is less than the age of the son," he said, adding, "This cannot be possible unless there is wide-scale rigging that is being attempted in West Bengal."

Malviya said the BJP delegation urged the EC to use technology including AI and data management tools "to identify and flag such fraudulent entries". The delegation also suggested that UIDAI (Aadhar) data and West Bengal health ministry data be used to establish the identity of those who have died.

"We have requested that the Matua community and several other Hindu groups are assured by the EC that they would not be penalised in the process because they have come to India and sought refuge because of the religious persecution in Bangladesh," he said.

"This includes Hindus, Jain, Sikhs and Buddhists. It is important that they are made to feel comfortable and assured that they will be included in the voter rolls," he added.

Malviya said the BJP delegation also brought to the notice of the EC several media reports on "large numbers of illegal voters" in West Bengal and urged the panel to take measures to detect such names, instead of merely going by the entries sent by the block level officers (BLOs).

"We have requested the EC to appoint independent electoral roll officers at the district level and a senior person at the state level so that the process of voter roll creation is clean and proper," he added.

The BJP delegation also requested the EC to look into the people who have been appointed as BLOs in West Bengal, Malviya said, alleging that several contract workers who owe their allegiance to the TMC have been appointed as the BLOs.

"We have indicated to the election commission that several officials appointed as the AEROs and EROs are below the rank of sub divisional officer which is a violation. These people are amenable to political pressure and will end up doing what the TMC wants them to do," the BJP leader said. Malviya said that the BJP delegation also conveyed to the EC that if the BLOs are feeling overworked as the West Bengal chief minister claims, then she is responsible for it.

"The West Bengal government has not approved ₹ 18,000 that was to be given to the BLOs as part of the (SIR) exercise. We also apprised the Election Commission that the data entry operators who would have helped BLOs with this exercise have not been appointed," he said. "In fact, the TMC is using a political agency for data entry. This must be completely unacceptable to the sanctity of the process," he added. (PTI)

# Shah stresses 'zero tolerance' for terror

Tributes paid to martyrs on 26/11 anniversary

**MUMBAI/NEW DELHI, Nov 26:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said the Modi government's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism is clear, and the entire world is appreciating and providing broad support to India's anti-terrorism campaigns. Paying respects to security personnel who sacrificed their lives during the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, Shah said that terrorism is not a curse for just one country, but for the entire human race.

In Mumbai, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis paid floral tributes at the city police headquarters to those who made the ultimate sacrifice while fighting terrorists during the Mumbai terror attack.

Family members of the policemen who lost their lives during the terror attack also paid homage to the fallen heroes on the occasion.

In her message on the 17th anniversary of the attack that claimed 166 lives, President Droupadi Murmu asked all citizens to reaffirm their commitment to combat terrorism.

In his message on X, Shah said terrorism is not a curse for just one country, but for the entire human race.

"I pay my respects to the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives while facing the Mumbai terrorist attacks, and I offer my tributes to all the people who lost their lives

in the cowardly attack. The Modi government's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism is clear, and the entire world is appreciating and providing broad support to India's anti-terrorism campaigns," he said.

"On the anniversary of 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, I pay my humble tribute to the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives to protect the people of our country. The nation remembers their supreme sacrifice with gratitude," Murmu said in a post on X.

"Let us reaffirm our commitment to combat terrorism in all forms. Let us move forward together on the path of progress with a resolve to build a stronger and more prosperous India," the president added.

As many as 166 people lost their lives and more than 300 were injured after 10 terrorists from Pakistan launched simultaneous attacks in several parts of Mumbai on November 26, 2008.

The armed militants of the Pakistan-based terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) entered the city via the sea and carried out a series of coordinated attacks at multiple high-profile locations.

The attacks, which lasted for 60 hours, were one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Indian history, targeting prominent locations such as the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, the Oberoi Trident, the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower hotel, the



Leopold Cafe and the Nariman House. The attacks prompted global condemnation and led to significant changes in India's counter-terrorism measures.

On Wednesday, several people also paid homage at CSMT, Cama and Alless Hospital, and other locations in Mumbai targeted by the Pakistani terrorists.

They also paid respects at "Pre-rana Sthal", the statue of Assistant Sub Inspector Tukaram Omble, who fought with terrorists with a lathi and was killed while nabbing terrorist Ajmal Kasab at Girgaon Chowpaty.

In a statement on X, the US Embassy in India said it honours the memory of the victims and stands in solidarity with the survivors and

families.

"The United States has long supported India's efforts to ensure those responsible for these attacks are brought to justice," it said, noting that the US extradited Tahawwur Hussain Rana to India this year for his role in planning the horrific attack which claimed the lives of six American citizens among others.

"Rana's extradition is a critical step toward seeking justice for the victims who were killed in the heinous attacks and their families. As we remember the victims of 26/11, we reaffirm our determination to continue to fight against acts of terror together with the Government of India to ensure the safety and security of our citizens,"

the US Embassy said.

Consul General of Israel in Mumbai, Yaniv Revach, on Wednesday said his country and India are not only fighting terrorists, but also false narrative wherein the attackers pretend to be the victims.

Addressing an event organised by the Consulate General of Israel in Mumbai, Revach said both the countries suffered due to terrorism for many years.

"Today, the two nations are fighting not only the terrorists, but also the false narrative they try to create and spread - where the attackers pretend to be the victims," he said.

A document detailing major terror attacks orchestrated from across the border between 1947 and 2025 was released on Wednesday by NatStrat, a think tank, to coincide with the Mumbai terror attack anniversary.

"The history of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism against India needs to be told and retold," the report compiled by NatStrat, an independent, not-for-profit centre for research on strategic and security issues, said.

The report chronicles the significant acts of aggression and terror-related activities originating from Pakistan or territory under its control, illustrating a decades-long policy of hybrid warfare against India. (PTI)

## Govt approves ₹7,280 cr scheme to promote manufacturing of rare earth magnets



**NEW DELHI, Nov 26:** The government on Wednesday approved a ₹ 7,280 crore scheme to promote manufacturing of rare earth permanent magnets, a move which would help reduce India's dependence on China.

Rare earth magnets are vital for a number of sectors like electric vehicles, renewable energy, electronics, aerospace, and defence applications.

The "Scheme to Promote Manufacturing of Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPMs)" was approved at a Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The scheme will promote manufacturing of rare earth permanent magnets. The aim is to create capacity of 6,000 MTPA (metric tonne per annum)," Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnav told reporters here.

The scheme will support the creation of integrated manufacturing facilities, involving conversion of rare earth oxides to metals, metals to alloys, and alloys to finished magnets.

It envisions allocating the total capacity to five beneficiaries through a global competitive bidding process. Each beneficiary will be allotted up to 1,200 MTPA ca-

capacity. The minister said that the detailed guidelines will be released soon. The total duration of the scheme will be seven years from the date of award, including a 2-year gestation period for setting up an integrated magnets manufacturing facility, and 5 years for incentive disbursement on the sale of the product.

The total financial outlay of the scheme is ₹ 7,280 crore, comprising a sales-linked incentives of ₹6,450 crore on REPM sales for five years and capital subsidy of ₹ 750 crore for setting up 6,000 MTPA of REPM manufacturing facilities. Each beneficiary will be allotted up to 1,200 MTPA of capacity.

Driven by the rapidly growing demand from electric vehicles, renewable energy, industrial applications, and consumer electronics, India's consumption of REPMs is expected to double by 2030 from 2025. At present, India's demand for these goods is met primarily through imports from countries including China.

"With this initiative, India will establish its first ever integrated REPM manufacturing facilities, generating employment, strengthening self-reliance," an official statement said.

This initiative is a step toward strengthening the domestic REPM manufacturing ecosystem and enhancing competitiveness in the global markets.

By fostering indigenous capabilities in REPM production, the

scheme will secure the REPM supply chain for domestic industries, it added. The announcement is important as restrictions imposed by China, who is the major supplier of these magnets, has created shortage and impacted manufacturing in sectors such as automobiles and electronics.

China controls over 90 per cent of the global processing capacity for magnets, used across multiple sectors including automobiles, home appliances and clean energy. The Chinese government has put restrictions, with effect from April 4, mandating special export licences for seven rare earth elements and related magnets.

Vaishnav said India's requirements for permanent magnets are constantly increasing. India can look at collaborating with countries including Australia and Japan for this. At present, India requires about 4,000-5,000 MTPA rare earth magnets per year.

"Both public and private sector companies can participate in this," he said adding companies will be selected through a transparent mechanism.

When asked why India is entering into this sector when certain countries are withdrawing from it, the minister said it is a strategic sector and "we have to be present" as it is an important negotiating factor now a days.

India has an estimated 6.9 million tonne of rare earth element reserves. (PTI)

## NRC real intent behind SIR, alleges Mamata

**KOLKATA, Nov 26:** West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday alleged the special intensive revision (SIR) of electoral rolls was aimed at implementing the NRC "through the backdoor", and creating fear among the ordinary people. Speaking to reporters after garlanding the statue of BR Ambedkar at the Red Road on the occasion of Constitution Day, Banerjee alleged that the fundamental rights were under threat.

"I am observing with sorrow that people's voting rights are being taken away, their religious rights are being taken away. Attacks are being made using vile language, and no one is being spared, not even Dalits, minorities or the common Hindu voters," she said, with the Constitution in her hand. "NRC is the real intent behind this. We are shocked and saddened. This is why I take the pledge here today to protect India's democracy," she added. Banerjee alleged that people who have "nurtured the soil of this country for years" were now being asked to prove their right to live in India.

"In the name of citizenship rights, an atmosphere of intense fear has been created," she added. In a post on X earlier in the day, she said that when democracy is at stake, secularism is in an "endangered situation", and federalism is "being bulldozed", people must protect the valuable guidance that the Constitution provides.

Banerjee said the Constitution is the backbone of the nation, masterfully weaving together the diversity of India's cultures, languages, and communities. "Today, on this Constitution Day, I pay my deepest respect and tribute to the great Constitution that we have, to the great document that binds us in India. I also pay my tribute today to the visionary framers of our Constitution, especially Dr B.R. Ambedkar, its principal architect," she said. "On this sacred day, we reaffirm our commitment to the core democratic values enshrined in our Constitution and commit to vigilantly safeguarding the sacred principles that define and sustain us as a nation," she said. Interacting with reporters, the CM claimed that people of the state were distressed by the SIR exercise.

"People are crying uncontrollably. Unless you witness that heart-rending grief and their desperate cries, you cannot understand. Those who are doing politics over this are a shame to the country. I condemn them," she said. "In the recent Bihar election, they went door to door offering ₹ 10,000 before the polls, and then after the votes were cast, they looted everything. People's houses have been demolished in Bihar. We have to unite against this," she added. The CM questioned the role of the Election Commission, alleging that fear and pressure have been created in the name of SIR, leading to the deaths of several BLOs, not just in West Bengal but across India.

On the demonstration by the BLOs outside the CEO's office, Banerjee said, "BLOs are persisting under work pressure not just in Bengal but also in states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu." (PTI)

## Maha govt will write to Centre seeking to change IIT Bombay's name to IIT Mumbai: Fadnavis

**MUMBAI, Nov 26:** The Maharashtra government will write to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the education ministry seeking to change the name of IIT Bombay to Mumbai, CM Devendra Fadnavis said amid a row over Union minister Jitendra Singh's remarks on the nomenclature of the premier institute.

The Minister of State for Science and Technology had said that thankfully, IIT

Bombay's name is not changed to Mumbai, inviting a sharp reaction from MNS chief Raj Thackeray, who said the remarks show the government's mindset.

"As far as IIT Bombay is concerned, thank God it still is this name. You have not changed it to Mumbai. So that's another compliment to you. And also true for Madras. It remains IIT Madras," Singh had said, addressing a function at the Indian In-

stitute of Technology Bombay on Monday. Interacting with reporters in Nagpur on Wednesday, Fadnavis said, "First of all, everyone knows that BJP leader Ram Naik had made the biggest contribution in changing (the name of) Bombay to Mumbai. We always say Mumbai, and not Bombay. We have been consistently trying to ensure that 'Bombay' be replaced with 'Mumbai'." "I will write a letter to the Prime Minister and

the HRD (Education) Minister to change the name of IIT Bombay to IIT Mumbai," he said. Indicating that the Marathi identity will be the key agenda in the upcoming Mumbai civic body polls, Raj Thackeray said something similar to the Centre's "bid" to "wrest" Chandigarh from Punjab's control is brewing for Mumbai.

The plot to separate Mumbai, which has always belonged to the Marathi people,

from Maharashtra was foiled by Marathi leaders and the public, the MNS chief said in a post on X.

"Our Marathi Mumbai remained in Maharashtra. Now, the bitterness that's been festering in their bellies for decades is starting to spill out once again," he said. "People of Mumbai and all Marathi folks living in the entire Mumbai Metropolitan Region should open their eyes now." (PTI)

## India's green economy may attract \$4.1 trillion investments, create 48 million jobs: Study

**SRINAGAR, Nov 26:** Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary on Wednesday alleged that the BJP "helped the People's Democratic Party secure a win" in the recently held Budgam bypoll.

"Do you think the BJP had no role to play in PDP's success? Did the BJP not field the proxy candidates? It was all manipulated," he told reporters here. The ruling National Conference (NC) lost the bypoll to the PDP by over 4,000 votes. The poll was necessitated after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah vacated the seat following his election from the family bastion of Ganderbal as well in last year's assembly polls. The result of the bypoll was declared on November 14.

Choudhary added, "But we are proud that the people stood by the NC candidate. The whole [BJP-led central] government was working to ensure PDP's win."

The deputy chief minister said People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti had met Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha before the election." (PTI)

**NEW DELHI, Nov 26:** India could attract USD 4.1 trillion in cumulative green investments and create 48 million full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs by 2047, according to an independent study by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW).

The analysis further projects that India could also unlock a USD 1.1 trillion annual green market by 2047. The first-of-its-kind national assessment identifies 36 green value chains across energy transition, circular economy and bio-economy and nature-based solutions that together represent a defining green economic opportunity for India's journey towards Viksit Bharat.

A green economy is often viewed narrowly as solar panels and electric vehicles.

However, the study highlights a far broader opportunity that extends to bio-based materials, agro-forestry, green construction, sustainable tourism, circular manufacturing, waste-to-value industries and nature-based livelihoods, each of which could scale into billion-dollar sectors over the next

two decades while strengthening resource security and resilience.

"India's green transition is fundamentally net positive: it can create millions of jobs, accelerate growth, improve public health and strengthen national security by shifting to domestic energy sources. The value chains identified in this CEEW study point to where this trillion-dollar opportunity lies," said Jayant Sinha, president, Everstone Group and Eversource Capital and former Union minister of state.

"Policy stability addressing bottlenecks like land and usage of blended finance tools is now needed to de-risk investment. With a whole-of-government approach, India can mobilise the capital required to drive a green frontier development model," he added.

Amitabh Kant, former G20 Sherpa and former CEO, NITI Aayog, said as India moves beyond a USD 3 trillion economy, the country cannot follow the development models of the West.

"With much of our infrastructure yet to be built, we have a unique chance to design cities, in-



dustries and supply chains around circularity, clean energy and the bioeconomy. Just as digital public infrastructure enabled India to leapfrog technologically — achieving in seven years what would have taken decades — we must now pole-vault into a green economy.

"While much of the world remains locked into legacy systems, a Viksit Bharat built on circular and resource-efficient value chains can define a new development pathway and set a global benchmark for green growth," he said. According to CEEW analysis,

energy transition alone could generate 16.6 million FTE jobs and attract USD 3.79 trillion in investments across renewables, storage, distributed energy and clean mobility manufacturing.

Electric mobility would be the single largest employer within the green economy, driving over 57 per cent of all energy-transition jobs. Bio-economy and nature-based solutions, anchored in India's rural and peri-urban landscapes, could create 23 million jobs and unlock USD 415 billion in market value.

The top job-generating value

chains within this segment include chemical-free agriculture and bio-inputs (7.2 million FTE jobs), agroforestry and sustainable forest management (4.7 million FTE jobs), and wetland management (3.7 million FTE jobs).

Abhishek Jain, director, Green Economy and Impact Innovations, CEEW, said pursuing a green economy will not just create jobs and economic prosperity for India, it will also help us secure the fuels and resources of the future.

"India today imports 87 per cent of its crude, which can be reduced to zero with electric vehicles, solar energy and next-generation bioethanol and biodiesel. We import 100 per cent of our lithium, nickel and cobalt, and even 93 per cent of copper ore — all of which can become zero-import with a circular economy.

"We are heavily dependent on fertiliser imports — all of our potash is imported, and 88 per cent of urea is directly or indirectly import-dependent. With bio-inputs for agriculture and the bioeconomy at large, we can secure our food and material needs." (PTI)

## Mizoram Govt approves greenfield city project on proposed Thenzawl peace city

**AIZAWL, Nov 26:** The Mizoram government has approved the proposal for a greenfield city within the proposed Thenzawl peace city in Serchhip district, an official statement said.

During a meeting of a core committee on Thenzawl peace city, chaired by its chairman and Chief Minister Lalduhoma in Aizawl, experts from a global development consultancy group which is preparing a master plan for the peace city, presented and explained in detail the greenfield city plan, it said.

The meeting approved the proposal for greenfield city within the peace city, which will be referred to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

Mizoram Urban and Poverty Alleviation Department Secretary Lalmalsawma Pachuau informed the meeting that Rs 150 crore component of greenfield city can be implemented under Urban Planning Reforms of Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) scheme.

The greenfield city proposal was made based on tourism department and animal husbandry and veterinary department's lands available within the jurisdiction of the proposed Thenzawl peace city, he said.

Officials said that efforts are being made to establish a peace city (Muanna Khawpui) in Thenzawl and the surrounding areas in Serchhip district. The proposed peace city will host about 10-15 lakh population, they said.

Earlier, Lalduhoma had discussed the peace city plan with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and sought financial assistance for the project. He had said that the proposed peace city seeks to decongest the state capital Aizawl, which has seen increasing migration from other parts of Mizoram.

According to the chief minister, about 80 per cent of the town population in Mizoram is residing in Aizawl. (PTI)

## Union minister seeks report from NHIDCL on status of alternative highway in Tripura: Official



**AGARTALA, Nov 26:** Union Minister for Tribal Welfare Minister Jugal Oram on Wednesday sought a report from the National Highways Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd (NHIDCL) on the deplorable condition of an alternative national highway in Tripura, a senior official said.

The highway from Agartala to Kumarghat via Khowai and Kamalpur, which was given a facelift by the NHIDCL a year ago, has allegedly deteriorated sharply and turned into a "death trap" at several stretches.

The poor condition of the road had prompted Chief Minister Manik Saha to take up the matter with Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari

in July.

Oram, who arrived here on Tuesday, went to Kailashahar in Unakoti district to review central government-sponsored schemes with ministers and senior officials.

"During the meeting, the Union minister expressed dissatisfaction over the condition of the highway," Unakoti district magistrate Tamal Majumder told PTI over the phone.

He added that Oram sought a report from the NHIDCL on the status of the alternative highway.

Majumder further said the Union minister expressed satisfaction with the implementation of centrally sponsored schemes, including those under Tribal Welfare, and urged officials to ensure their speedy completion. (PTI)

## Meghalaya Cabinet clears SOP on use of VIP beacons, sanctions funds for electrification

**SHILLONG, Nov 26:** Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Wednesday said the state cabinet has approved a standard operating procedure (SOP) to regulate the use of beacons, flashers, sirens, tinted glasses and similar equipment in official vehicles.

He said the SOP will clearly outline which officials are authorised to use sirens and beacons and who may use tinted glasses or flashers.

The cabinet agreed on the need for strict regulation to prevent misuse. Sangma said the cabinet approved the Additional Households Electrification under the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS).

Under RDSS, many households and villages were electrified based on the 2011 census, leaving out several newly formed villages and houses.

"In 2022, I requested the Government of India to include these excluded areas. I'm glad to share that the Government has now approved this request and sanctioned nearly Rs 500 crore to cover the updated list submitted at the time," Sangma said in a post on X.

The CM said the cabinet cleared a proposal to purchase land for exchange with Defence land to facilitate the expansion of the Shillong airport. He said the expansion is essential to enable the airport to accommodate larger aircraft and that the tendering process is already in progress. The deputy chief minister in-charge of transport has been asked to continue consultations with the local community and the headman to ensure a smooth land exchange and acquisition process, Sangma said.

He added that the Cabinet has given in-principle approval to move ahead with the proposal. (PTI)

## Sikkim student selected to represent Team India at World Skills Asia 2025 competition

**GANGTOK, Nov 26:** For the first time, a student of a private university in Sikkim has secured a place in Team India for the prestigious World Skills Asia 2025 competition to be held in Taipei from November 27-29.

Radhika Chettri, a student of Emergency Medical Technology (EMT) at Medhavi Skills University, will represent India in the Health and Social Care category of the competition, the varsity said on Wednesday.

Radhika had won a silver medal in the India Skills contest last year, marking Sikkim's first-ever medal at the national competition and establishing Sikkim-based MSU as India's youngest university to win there, it said.

The World Skills Asia competition stands among the world's most respected platforms for demonstrating technical excellence, innovation and vocational



training.

Bringing together young professionals from across the continent, the competition is often regarded as the "Olympics of Skills" where only the top national champions compete.

Jayant Chaudhary, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, recently flagged off India's first-ever contingent for World Skills Asia 2025.

Preparing for the forthcoming event, Radhika has undergone high-intensity training which includes cutting-edge

## 'The real issue we are facing is illegal immigrants' New villages sprouting along highways, outsiders claiming ancestral land: Manipur BJP MLA

**IMPHAL, Nov 26:** A Naga BJP MLA of Manipur on Wednesday alleged that new villages were "sprouting along the highways" and that "outsiders" were claiming ancestral land in areas inhabited by the Zeliangrong community.

In a post on his official Facebook page, D Gangmei wrote, "Our concern now is the growing issue of infiltration and land encroachment in our areas where the Zeliangrong people reside, particularly in Manipur."

"New villages are sprouting up along the highway, and outsiders are claiming ancestral land rights. As a peace-loving community, the Zeliangrong people feel targeted and vulnerable," Gangmei said.

Zeliangrong are part of the Naga community in Manipur.

## 'Aerial survey shows nearly 700 acres of poppy cultivation in Kangpokpi'

**IMPHAL, Nov 26:** Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Wednesday claimed that an aerial survey conducted recently showed nearly 700 acres of illicit poppy cultivation in Kangpokpi district.

Singh also said the scale of destruction of state forests and the threat to the cultural heritage is real and that intensified action is absolutely necessary.

In a post on X, Singh said, "Many people did not believe our government when we warned that the deadly drug corridor, the so-called Golden Triangle, was expanding towards India through Manipur. Vast stretches of forest had already begun to disappear under mass poppy cultivation, yet these warnings were often ignored."

Singh said that the "present government, along with Army, Assam Rifles, CRPF, BSF, NCB, Manipur Police and all other concerned authorities, is doing commendable work by destroying poppy fields across multiple regions every single day."

Appreciating the coordinated efforts of the security forces, Singh said the challenges are still enormous and "certain areas...require huge manpower and month-long campaigns to eradicate poppy cultivation permanently."

Sharing aerial footage of illicit poppy cultivation, Singh said, "an aerial survey conducted on November 24, 2025 detected close to seven hundred acres of poppy cultivation in the Makhon village hill ranges under the jurisdiction of Sapomeina Police Station in Kangpokpi district. This entire zone lies within the Kangleitong Kangpokpi Reserved Forest. It is also close to Mount Koubru, a sacred site deeply revered by the Indigenous people as a holy pilgrimage site." (PTI)

## Improvised rocket with 40 kg explosive found in Manipur's Churachandpur

**IMPHAL, Nov 26:** An improvised long-range rocket with nearly 40 kg of explosive was seized from Manipur's Churachandpur district, police said on Wednesday.

The seizure was made in an operation by security forces from Gelmol village on Tuesday, they said.

A rocket launching stand and a battery were also recovered along with the rocket, they added.

In another operation in Kangpokpi district, a large cache of arms was recovered by the forces, police said. Among the items recovered were a German rifle, two bolt-action rifles, four pull mechanism rifles, an improvised mortar, two hand grenades, and detonators, along with a radio set. The recovery was made from the vicinity of Songlung village. (PTI)

simulation-based training, critical-care scenarios and hands-on practice at Vidyanta Skills Institute and Medanta Hospital, Gurugram.

"Representing India at World Skills Asia is a milestone I'm truly honoured to achieve. With the support of MSU, my mentors, and my family, I am preparing with full dedication to make my state and my country proud," Radhika said.

MSU founder and Vice Chancellor Praveesh Dudani said, "Radhika embodies the grit, skill and excellence that define Medhavi. Her accomplishment is a proud moment for MSU, Sikkim, and the entire North-East. We are confident that she will shine at World Skills Asia."

"Radhika's rise from Sikkim to an international platform demonstrates the transformative impact of strong, skill-based education. This is the future of India's workforce," Kuldip Sarma, MSU Pro-Chancellor, said. (PTI)



Gangmei further alleged that the issue was linked to the presence of illegal immigrants. "The real issue we are facing is

illegal immigrants. Let's go and see these highways — the Tamei side (in Naga-dominated Tamenglong district) and the Kangpokpi

side. Lots of new villages. I don't know where they come from. They are occupying our land and claiming it as their ancestral lands or something... especially in Manipur, land encroachment is happening in front of us," he said.

NH-37 passes through Tamenglong district, while NH-2 goes through the state's Kangpokpi district.

The MLA said the "silence" of the community on the matter was proving detrimental to its collective well-being.

"It's time for the present generation to stand up and assert our rights, protecting our land and heritage. This issue demands attention and collective action to preserve our community's future," he added. (PTI)

## North Tripura district committee secy among 4 CPI(M) workers injured in attack

**AGARTALA, Nov 26:** Four CPI(M) workers, including the party's North Tripura district committee secretary Amitabha Datta, were injured on Wednesday when unidentified miscreants attacked a party's rally in Dharmanagar, police said.

The incident came a day after unknown attackers allegedly attempted to set fire to the Congress district headquarters in Dharmanagar town, escalating political tension.

"The injured CPI(M) activists were taken to the Dharmanagar district hospital after the incident. Their condition is stable", sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), Dharmanagar, Jayanta Karmakar, said.

Around 15-20 CPI(M) leaders

and supporters were holding a rally under the banner of the All India Krishak Sabha (AIKS) as part of a nationwide programme when the attack took place.

"Suddenly, around 150 unknown miscreants attacked the rally with bamboo sticks. Four CPI(M) workers, including district committee secretary Amitabha Datta, were injured. They are admitted to the district health facility," the SDPO said.

He added that no case had been lodged so far, and security in the area has been intensified to prevent further escalation.

Strongly criticising the attack, CPI(M) state secretary Jitendra Chaudhury claimed that at least seven party activists were injured. "BJP goons carried out the at-

tack on CPI(M) workers in the presence of police in Dharmanagar town. This happened despite Chief Minister Manik Saha's claims about improved law and order. I appeal to democratic-minded people to resist such activities of the saffron party," he said.

Tripura Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) president Asish Kumar Saha also condemned the previous night's alleged attempt by BJP workers to torch the Congress district office.

"BJP supporters tried to set the district Congress headquarters on fire on Tuesday night, but local people saved our party office. I request police to take action against those who are behind the act", he said. (PTI)

## Mizoram's community bonds reflect constitutional fraternity: Guv

**AIZAWL, Nov 26:** Mizoram Governor Vijay Kumar Singh on Wednesday said the state's strong community bonds, mutual trust and peaceful coexistence embody the constitutional principle of fraternity.

Addressing a Constitution Day (Samvidhan Diwas) programme here, which marks the adoption of the Constitution, Singh described the document as "the soul of democracy" and the judiciary as its guardian.

He said the Constitution is a visionary document that continues to guide India towards a brighter future, and the Aizawl bench of Gauhati High Court bears an important responsibility in upholding

justice and protecting the rights of the people of Mizoram under its framework.

The governor also praised the community bond and the tradition of living in harmony among people of the state.

"Mizoram's strong community bonds, mutual trust, and tradition of living in harmony perfectly reflect the constitutional principle of fraternity mentioned in the Preamble," he said.

Praising the legacy of the Constituent Assembly, Singh said it had crafted a living Constitution capable of evolving with time.

The Assembly had successfully enshrined the noble ideals of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity

for all citizens while keeping the nation's long-term progress in view, he said.

The governor also said the true power of the Constitution lies in citizens being aware of their rights and duties.

He called upon legal professionals to deliver justice impartially, safeguard individual freedoms without disturbing national security, educate the younger generation about the Constitution's value, promote inclusivity and strive tirelessly to preserve harmony and fraternity.

Gauhati High Court judges Justice Marli Vankung and Justice Kaushik Goswami also addressed the event. (PTI)

## Constitution is life of all Indians: N Biren Singh



**IMPHAL, Nov 26:** Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Wednesday said the Constitution is the life of all Indians and called on people to renew our pledge to uphold the rights of every citizen, strengthen the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, and carry out our duties with sincerity and responsibility.

Speaking at the sidelines of a Constitution Day function, Singh told reporters, "From 2015, Constitution Day has been observed. It was started by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Our constitution is the life of all Indians. The constitution has included everything on how to peacefully co-exist, secularism, loving and respecting one another." Singh also extended his best wishes to the citizens of the country as well as to the people of the state on the occasion of Constitution Day.

The former CM also called all to "renew our pledge to uphold the rights of every citizen, strengthen the principles of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, and carry out our duties with sincerity, responsibility and dedication." On the recent clashes between security forces and displaced persons when they attempted to return to their native homes, Singh said, "There is no place for violence. As a politician and a public leader, I would say to the police not to use any excessive (force) on public. Respecting the public is very important. Public should be treated in a friendly and humane manner." On holding the Sangai festival despite boycott calls by displaced persons and several civil bodies, Singh said, "It is the wisdom of the government. Those who want to come, let them come, and those who don't want to, don't go. It's a democracy. However, the government had decided to hold the festival. What can we do?" (PTI)

### NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from Md Parul Hussain Laskar to Parul Hussain Laskar by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, Hojai (assam)Md Parul Hussain Laskar and Parul Hussain Laskar same and one person. Parul Hussain Laskar Pachim Nilbagan, Hojai (Assam)

### NAME CHANGE

I have changed my name from Md Shamim Hussain Laskar to Shamim Hussain Laskar by swearing a notarial affidavit at Srimanta Sankardev Nagar, Hojai (assam)Md Shamim Hussain Laskar and Shamim Hussain Laskar same and one person. Shamim Hussain Laskar Pachim Nilbagan, Hojai (Assam)

### GOVT. OF ASSAM

OFFICE OF THE ASSTT. DIRECTOR DAIRY EXTENSION SERVICE DIPHU,  
DAIRY DEV. DEPARTMENT  
KARBI ANGLONG AUTONOMOUS COUNCIL

No. ADED/Esstt.-12/2025-26/196

Date 26/11/2025

### NOTICE

The interview/viva-voce/skill test for the post of L.D.Asstt., Plant Operator & Peon under Dairy Development, Karbi Anglong will be held as per time, Date and venue against the post mentioned below:-

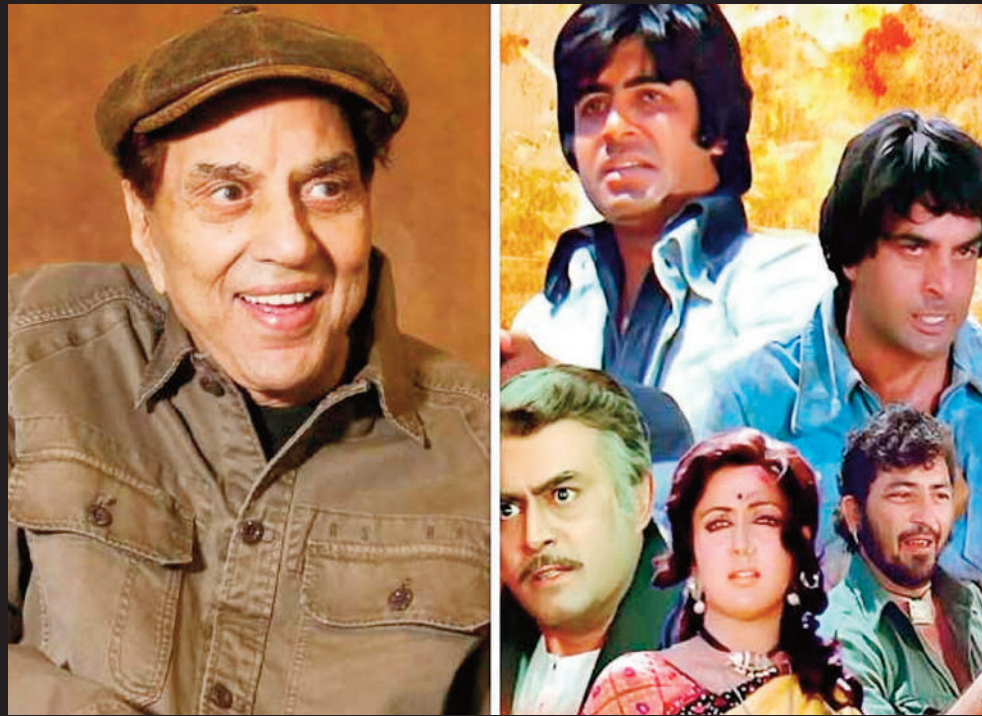
SL No	Name of Post	Date skill test viva-voce	Time of viva-voce & skill test	Venue
1	L.D.Asstt.	16/12/2025	10.00 A.M (skill test) 12.00 P.M (viva-voce)	Office of the Asstt. Director Dairy Extension Service,
2	Plant operator	-do-	-do-	Diphu, Rongkhelan
3	Peon	-do-	10.00 A.M	

- The List of eligible candidates for interview can be seen in the notice board of the office of the Assistant Director Dairy Extension Service, Rongkhelan, Diphu, Karbi Anglong
- Candidate are requested to collect their admit cord from the office of the undersigned during office hours before 16th December, 2025
- Candidates are requested to bring their requested original certificates while attending the interview/viva-voce.
- No Ta/DA Will be provided for the interview

Sd/-

Asstt. Director  
Dairy Extension Service  
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

## IFFI to pay homage to Dharmendra at closing ceremony, 'Sholay' screening cancelled



The 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) is organising a special tribute for actor Dharmendra at its closing ceremony later this week, an official said.

The veteran actor passed away on Monday morning at his residence in suburban Mumbai. He was 89.

"We received the unfortunate news of Dharmendra ji's passing away on Monday. A minute's silence was observed at the closing ceremony of the Film Bazaar as a mark of respect.

"We will also be paying homage to the beloved legend during the festival's closing ceremony," Prakash Magdum, Managing Director, NFDC, told PTI.

A screening of "Sholay" in 4K restored version was scheduled on November 26 at IFFI but has been cancelled with organisers citing technical reasons.

The festival will also host a session, titled, "50 years of Sholay: Why 'Sholay' Still Resonates?" will be held on November 27 with the movie's director Ramesh Sippy.

The bike from "Sholay" has been put on display in a glass enclosure at the INOX theatre in Panjim since the first day of the festival, but it has now become a tribute of sorts for Dharmendra, who shot the hit song 'Yeh Dosti' with Amitabh Bachchan on the bike.

"The motorcycle displayed on the festival premises was introduced as a special attraction this year to mark the celebration for 50 years of 'Sholay'. But it has also become a tribute to Dharmendra ji now, as visitors can't help but recall the iconic song 'Yeh Dosti' and his unforgettable presence when they see it," Magdum said.

The bike was put on display to celebrate 50 years of the Amitabh Bachchan and Dharmendra-starrer film where they play Jai-Veeru. The two friends ride around in the motorcycle with a sidecar while singing 'Yeh Dosti Hum Nahi Todenge'.

The five-minute song sequence, which was shot on this bike took 21 days to shoot, read the information that is displayed alongside the bike.

"BSA WM20 was part of BSA's massive wartime contribution to Britain's war effort, 1937 was its first year of production that would last until the late 1950s. The 'W' in the model designation signifies that it was specifically designed to be a military motorcycle," the display further read. (PTI)

## WE GOT A BIGGER OPENING AFTER EVERY INCIDENT: KAPIL SHARMA ON SHOOTING AT HIS CANADA CAFE



Actor-comedian Kapil Sharma on Wednesday said the three incidents of firings at his cafe in Canada's Surrey has forced authorities to act against such attacks in the country.

Sharma's Kap's Cafe, which opened in Surrey, British Columbia, in July, was first targeted by unknown people on July 10, followed by two more attacks on August 7 and October 16. No one was injured in the incidents and no group has claimed responsibility for it.

At the trailer launch event of his latest film "Kis Kisko Pyaar Karoon 2", the actor-comedian was asked about the firings.

"What I feel is that the rules there and the police perhaps don't have power to control (such incident). But when our case happened, it went to federal government

and there was a discussion in Canadian parliament," Sharma said.

"In fact, after every firing incident, we got a bigger opening at the cafe. So it is all ok if god is with me," he added.

Sharma said that many people reached out to him after the attacks.

"I believe whatever god does we don't get to know the story behind that... I got calls from a lot of people from there who told me that there were a lot of things happening but after the firing at my cafe, it became a news and now steps are being taken to improve the law and order situation there," he said. The 43-year-old actor said he had never felt unsafe in Mumbai or anywhere else in India.

"I never felt unsafe in Mumbai or in our country. There is no other city like Mumbai," he added. (PTI)

ZEE5 unveils trailer of Tisca Chopra's directorial debut 'Saali Mohabbat', film to release on Dec 12

OTT platform ZEE5 on Wednesday released the trailer of its upcoming original film "Saali Mohabbat", a genre-bending how-dunnit that marks actor Tisca Chopra's feature directorial debut and is set to stream from December 12.

Produced by Jio Studios and designer Manish Malhotra's Stage5 Production, the film features an ensemble cast of Radhika Apte, Divyendu Sharma, Anurag Kashyap, Anshuman Pushkar, Sharat Saxena and Sauraseni Maitra.

"Saali Mohabbat" follows Smita (Apte), a woman who lives a sheltered, near-invisible life in the quiet, wintry town of Fursatgarh.

"But everything fractures when a shocking double murder shatters the town's peace. As hidden tensions and motives rise to the surface, it becomes clear that things are not as simple or complicated as they once seemed. (PTI)

## Prime Video unveils first look of Bhumi Pednekar-starrer 'Daldal' at IFFI 2025

Streaming service Prime Video on Wednesday unveiled the first look of its upcoming psychological crime thriller "Daldal" at a special showcase during the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) here.

Headlined by actor Bhumi Pednekar, the series is based on Vish Dhamija's bestselling novel "Bhendi Bazaar" and follows Mumbai's newly appointed DCP Rita Ferreira, whose pursuit of a brutal killer forces her into the city's moral grey zones and compels her to confront buried memories.

"Daldal" is created for series by Suresh Triveni and directed by Amrit Raj Gupta. It hails from production banner Abundantia Entertainment and also features Aditya Rawal and Samara Tijori. The first-look showcase included an exclusive teaser preview, followed by an in-conversation session, titled "Beyond the Stereotype: Redefining Women and Power in Modern Storytelling".

The session brought together Pednekar, Triveni, the writing team, and Nikhil Madhok, director & head of originals at Prime Video India, to discuss the show's exploration of female complexity and the platform's broader approach to women-led narratives.

Pednekar said her character Rita Ferreira's power lies in restraint.

"From the women in my home, I learned that power doesn't need to be loud. It can be quiet, resilient, and rooted in constantly questioning the world around you. That's

something I saw my mother do every day, and something Rita does too. She doesn't say much, but she does a lot. If actions speak louder than words, I don't think there's a character who embodies that more than Rita Ferreira," the actor said.

She said the character was among the most challenging roles of her career.

"For the first time, I didn't have dialogues or even expressive eyes to rely on. I had to communicate through the smallest physical cues: how her neck tightens with guilt or how her body responds to anger.

"It took months to come out of it. But it was also deeply satisfying because I was pushed, really pushed, by a team that believed in complexity, in darkness, in writing anti-hero traits for women. Very few characters like this get written for us," she added.

Madhok said Prime Video is consciously expanding opportunities for women both on-screen and behind the scenes.

"At Prime Video, our approach to female-driven storytelling is completely intentional. For decades, mainstream cinema centred the male hero, while television kept women confined to domestic narratives. Streaming allowed us to break that pattern," he said.

Producer Vikram Malhotra, founder & CEO of Abundantia Entertainment, said the company's focus has always been on authentic stories rather than labels. (PTI)



## Grammy-nominated devotional singer Acyuta Gopi to perform at IFFI 2025 closing ceremony

Grammy-nominated devotional singer Acyuta Gopi will headline the closing ceremony of the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI), the organisers announced on Wednesday.

The New York-based singer, known globally for her devotional music and kirtan tracks such as "Radhe Govinda", "Lagan Tumse Laga Baithe" and "Tu Bas Gaya Kitni Dur", will present a specially curated act for the festival finale on Friday.

Sanjay Jaju, secretary in the information & broadcasting ministry, said in a statement that the growing interest of young audiences in spiritual and devotional music made Gopi a natural choice for the cultural showcase.

"Across the world, we are witnessing a remarkable cultural shift where young peo-

ple, especially Gen Z, are embracing spirituality and finding joy in coming together over bhajans and devotional music. This resurgence shows how our traditions continue to evolve with the times, creating experiences that are uplifting, inclusive, and genuinely celebratory," Jaju said.

"As part of the cultural programme for IFFI's closing ceremony, we felt it fitting to invite Acyuta Gopi, whose Krishna bhajans have a unique way of bringing communities together. I am confident her performance will offer audiences a refreshing and memorable experience," he added.

The evening will open with a performance by Miracle on Wheels, the inclusive dance initiative featuring differently-abled artistes known for their innovative choreographic work. (PTI)

## Once camera switched on, there was another side to him: Raghavan on directing Dharmendra in 'Ikkis'

After "Johnny Gaddar", both Sriram Raghavan and Dharmendra were keen to work together and that's how "Ikkis", which turned out to be the actor's last screen performance, happened. Raghavan says Dharmendra is wonderful in the war drama.

The screen icon died on Monday at the age of 89.

For Raghavan, who grew up on Dharmendra's movies, it is a personal loss. He said the team was happy with the love they garnered after unveiling the poster of the screen icon from "Ikkis" early in the day, before they received the news of his death.

"When my flight landed in Mumbai, my producer called me and we headed to the crematorium. Suddenly in the night, it all overwhelms you," Raghavan, who bonded with Dharmendra on the sets over movie trivia, told PTI in an exclusive interview.

Asked if "Ikkis" will be a fitting tribute to Dharmendra, the director said he hopes it turns out to be a memorable moment for everyone.

"He has got a substantial role, it's very important in the film. He is a fine actor and he is wonderful in the film," he said.

"He (Dharmendra) basically missed

being in front of the camera, he was fully on, charged up (during 'Johnny Gaddar'). This was the case with 'Ikkis' also. He would be a little tired but once the camera switched on, suddenly there was another side to him," Raghavan recalled.

A huge fan of Dharmendra, Raghavan said he paid a tribute to the actor in "Johnny Gaddar" by adding some of the songs from his older movies.

"I've seen all his films like 'Anupama', and many others. We would chat about his films and scenes. All my love for him and his movies came pouring out when we were making 'Johnny Gaddar'. So, all the background songs in the film are from his films -- 'Naya Zamana', 'Yakeen', 'Bandini', 'Mere Gaon Mera Dosh' and many others."

Raghavan still remembers how nervous he was when he approached the actor for his 2007 movie, "Johnny Gaddar".

"I thought of him in the role of Shesu. I wanted to work with him. When I went to meet him, I was quite nervous. He was an MP and he was not actively working in films, so I didn't know if he would do a neo-noir pulp story.

"I told him 'I'm nervous', and he



said, 'It's good to be nervous as it keeps you on your toes'. So, that's how we broke the ice," the director recalled.

Raghavan shared that Dharmendra recommended certain changes in the second half of "Johnny Gaddar" and even contributed to the dialogues of the film.

"I remember when I started narrating the story (of 'Johnny Gaddar') to him, he enjoyed it and kept asking, 'What happens next'. I didn't want to give spoilers but I told him the rest of the story and he said, 'The second half is a bit weak'. I went back and

thought, 'Maybe he is right' because we were too happy with what we had written.

"He said, 'Something is missing, you think about that but otherwise it's a very good story'. Then we came up with this character, of a cop in the film, and he comes in the second half, and is played by Govind Namdev. When I told him, I introduced this character. He said, 'Very good. Can I play the cop instead?' I told him, 'That was not supposed to be the role you were to do'."

The dialogue in "Johnny Gaddar",

'Shuruwat Majboori Se Hoti Hai Dheere Dheere Majboori Zaroorat Ban Jaati Hai, Aur Phir Zaroorat Aadat Ban Jaati Hai', was given by Dharmendra, he revealed.

"I felt this was a wonderful line, so we had a scene around it. He was very much (involved). I would discuss the scenes, and he would add certain scenes, he would add lines as well. A lot of dialogues have been crafted by him."

Raghavan recalled the post "Johnny Gaddar", the veteran actor would often ask him if there was any role for him.

"After the film, we were in touch, and he would often ask me, 'Have you found something?' When I heard this story ('Ikkis'), I felt this is terrific and he will be wonderful in the movie. I went and narrated the story to him, and he loved it. He would often ask me, 'When are you starting that film?' But COVID-19 pandemic delayed things a bit.

Raghavan said he wanted to work with Dharmendra in "Agent Vinod" as well but it didn't work out in terms of dates.

"We were shooting in different cities and had different schedules. It was a cameo for 'Agent Vinod', which was

my next movie after 'Johnny Gaddar'. We are selfish as directors and we think, 'I want this actor again'.

When I got the story of 'Ikkis', I felt this was god sent," he added.

Raghavan said while working on "Johnny Gaddar" and "Ikkis", they would chat a lot about films of the past.

"I was interested in knowing about his experience of working with Bimal Roy and Hrishikesh Mukherjee, and other stalwarts. I would have great educational conversations with him."

"Our conversations were mostly about, 'How was it to work with Bimal Roy?' 'How was it while working on 'Chupke Chupke' and things like that. It was all about film related educational trivia... I'm neither a foodie, nor into sports like him (Dharmendra), so our conversations would revolve around movies of the earlier era," he added.

Produced by Dinesh Vijan via his banner Maddock Films, "Ikkis" is set to release in theatres on December 25. It is a biopic on lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, India's youngest Param Vir Chakra hero.

In the film, Dharmendra will be seen in the role of the father M L Khetarpal to Agastya Nanda's war hero. Jaideep Ahlawat is also in the movie. (PTI)

# Chelsea beats 10-man Barcelona 3-0 as Guardiola's much-changed City loses in Champions League

**LONDON, Nov 26:** On a night of changes, blunders and a glorious individual goal by 18-year-old Esteveo, defensive lapses cost Manchester City and Barcelona dearly as both teams slumped to notable losses in the Champions League.

In Pep Guardiola's 100th Champions League game as City coach, his team struggled to cope with Bayer Leverkusen's quick transitions in a 2-0 defeat, while Barcelona had an own goal and a red card in its 3-0 loss at Chelsea.

Guardiola made 10 changes to his starting lineup following Saturday's loss to Newcastle in the Premier League, with Erling Haaland among those on the bench, but it didn't have the desired effect.

Alejandro Grimaldo fired home Leverkusen's first goal with a low shot into the far corner in the 23rd and Patrik Schick headed in a second in the 54th.

"It feels wonderful and we gave everything till the last second," Schick told broadcaster DAZN.

Esteveo stars and Barcelona stumbled. Chelsea comfortably beat 10-man Barcelona 3-0 at Stamford Bridge to earn its third league-phase win and move closer to the top.

It was the second loss for Barcelona, which went down a man after defender Ronald Araujo was shown a second yellow card just before halftime for a forceful tackle on Marc Cucurella.

Jules Kounde's own goal handed Chelsea the lead in the 27th as Barcelona defenders got tangled up in the goalmouth.

The hosts stretched their advantage with a fine individual goal by Esteveo in the 55th as he held off two defenders, and a close-range shot by Liam Delap in the 73rd.



Barcelona's fourth loss in 10 games in all competitions could mean more criticism of coach Hansi Flick's approach.

City would have moved atop the table with a win but the night ended with the top three unchanged. Bayern Munich, Arsenal and Inter Milan all play Wednesday.

Borussia Dortmund rose to fourth and Chelsea is fifth after both won to join City on 10 points, while Barcelona is down in 15th and Juventus improved to 21st with a

win as the Italian club tries to turn around its campaign.

**Mourinho's Benfica finally wins**

While Guardiola had an unexpected loss, his old foe José Mourinho picked up his first Champions League win with his new club Benfica as left back Samuel Dahl's early goal set the stage for a 2-0 win over troubled Ajax. It was No. 36 vs. No. 35 in the pre-game standings as the two winless teams met in Amsterdam.

Dahl scored an unstoppable volley in the sixth and Leandro Barreiro added a second goal in the 90th. Ajax has lost all five of its Champions League games and won only one of its last 10 games in all competitions.

Aubameyang shines for Marseille. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang scored twice in four minutes early in the second half to turn the game around for Marseille in a 2-1 win over Newcastle.

Serhou Guirassy scored two goals as Dortmund routed 10-man Villarreal 4-0 to end a three-game winless run in all competitions.

Juventus won 3-2 on its trip into the Arctic Circle to face Bodo/Glimt and needed a stoppage-time winner from Jonathan David after the Norwegian host leveled the score in the 87th. David scored on the rebound of a shot by Kenan Yildiz, who was brought on at halftime and had a hand in all three Juventus goals.

Canadian forward Promise David scored the only goal as Belgium's Union Saint-Gilloise won 1-0 at injury-depleted Galatasaray. The Turkish club was without injured Champions League top scorer Victor Osimhen, and finished with 10 men after 18-year-old defender Arda Ünyay picked up two yellow cards.

McTominay scores again. Scott McTominay scored the opening goal as Napoli won 2-0 against Azerbaijan's Qarabag, whose player Kevin Medina seemed to be knocked unconscious by another McTominay shot and was later substituted. Napoli fans commemorated the fifth anniversary of club legend Diego Maradona's death.

Athletic Bilbao was frustrated in a 0-0 draw with Slavia Prague which leaves both clubs outside the qualifying places after five games. (AP)

# Cristiano Ronaldo set to avoid ban at World Cup after FIFA red-card verdict offers probation



**GENEVA, Nov 26:** Cristiano Ronaldo will likely avoid missing any Portugal games at the World Cup despite his red card in a qualifying game for elbowing an Ireland opponent.

FIFA published a disciplinary verdict that imposed a three-game ban, which judged Ronaldo's action as "violent conduct" or "serious foul play," but with two of those games deferred for a one-year probation period.

Ronaldo served a mandatory one-game ban when Portugal played its final qualifying game last week — a 9-1 win over Armenia that sealed its place at the World Cup in North America.

The superstar has been expected to be banned for at least one more game and start what will be his record sixth World Cup on the sidelines.

FIFA cited its disciplinary rules that allow for parts of a sanction to be probationary, though it is rare in cases of a three-game ban for two of them to be deferred.

In two cases judged by FIFA this month, players from Armenia and Burundi were banned for three games after getting red cards for acts of aggression in World Cup qualifying games and neither got a reduction on probation.

"If Cristiano Ronaldo commits another infringement of a similar nature and gravity during the probationary period," FIFA said in a statement, then the remaining two games will be activated.

FIFA has disciplinary authority over national-team games and Portugal is scheduled to play two friendly matches in March, then

likely one or two warmup games in late-May or June. The World Cup co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico starts June 11.

Ronaldo swung an arm and struck Ireland defender Dara O'Shea with an elbow during a 2-0 loss in Dublin two weeks ago.

**VIP visit**

The FIFA verdict comes one week after Ronaldo met U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House for a formal dinner with Saudi Arabia's crown prince Mohammed bin Salman. FIFA president Gianni Infantino also attended the event and posed for a selfie photo with Ronaldo.

Ronaldo has played in the Saudi league for three years at one of the clubs majority owned by the kingdom's sovereign wealth Public Investment Fund that the prince chairs. Saudi Arabia will host the 2034 World Cup and has been a major financial backer of FIFA in the past two years.

**Appeal path**

FIFA said its disciplinary verdict of "the three-match suspension is subject to appeal to the FIFA Appeal Committee."

It was unclear who could have legal standing to challenge the verdict, and if that might be the soccer federation of Ireland or Portugal's opponents at the World Cup.

Trump is due to attend the draw ceremony Dec. 5 at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., where Portugal, one of the 48-team tournament's top seeds, will learn its three opponents in a round-robin group. (AP)

## Kuchar trying to decide if it's worth using a career money exemption for a full PGA Tour card

**ST SIMONS ISLAND, Nov 26:** Matt Kuchar finished his 19th consecutive season on the PGA Tour and ended it at No. 118 in the FedEx Cup, which would have been enough to keep his full card any year but this one, with the tour dropping the cutoff to the top 100 instead of the top 125.

The next step for the 47-year-old Kuchar would seem to be taking one of his exemptions for career money, only it's not that simple.

This is a different PGA Tour when he first joined in 2002. There are eight signature events, four majors. The Players Championship and three FedEx Cup playoff events. Kuchar goes into 2026 not eligible for any of them.

"I don't know how many starts I'll get," Kuchar said after he finished at the RSM Classic. "I don't know if using an exemp-

tion will get me any different starts. It's a tricky one. It's not going to get you into any elevated events."

The question is whether his conditional status as No. 118 in the FedEx Cup will get him into roughly the same number of events as taking a career money exemption.

"We're in somewhat uncharted territory," he said. "I'm guessing they've run the numbers, but I don't know how well their scenarios work out."

PGA Tour officials estimate that players between No. 101 and No. 110 in the FedEx Cup — they keep that ranking all year — will get into about 16 of the 19 tournaments, and then have all of the FedEx Cup Fall except for Japan.

Kuchar is eight spots below that group, and subject to drop if he doesn't play well out of the gates. (AP)

## World Cup stars expected to fetch lucrative deals at WPL auction

**NEW DELHI, Nov 26:** India's World Cup-winning stars Deepti Sharma, Kranti Gaud and Shree Charani are expected to bag high-value deals, while overseas bigwigs Laura Wolvaardt and Sophie Ecclestone are also likely to attract huge bids at the first-ever Women's Premier League mega auction here on Thursday.

A total of 277 players -- 194 Indian and 83 overseas -- will go under the hammer at the mega auction. The five teams are looking to fill a maximum of 73 slots, including 50 Indians and 23 overseas. The minimum squad size is 15 and the upper limit is 18.

The marquee set features India's Deepti and pacer Renuka Singh, New Zealand's Sophie Devine and Amelia Kerr, leading England spinner Ecclestone, Australians Alyssa Healy and Meg Lanning, and South Africa's Wolvaardt.

Indian players are expected to draw strong interest after their historic ODI World Cup triumph

earlier this month.

Seasoned all-rounder and World Cup Player-of-the-Tournament Deepti, released by UP Warriorz soon after the final, is likely to secure a lucrative deal.

Kranti, who started off as a net bowler for Mumbai Indians before being bought by UP Warriorz last season, and left-arm spinner Charani, who was released by Delhi Capitals, may match Deepti's price tag, given their starring roles in India's title run earlier this month.

Batter Harleen Deol, who played for Gujarat Giants for the first three seasons, and all-rounder Sneha Rana are also in the fray.

Overseas stars, who did well at the World Cup like Wolvaardt and Nadine de Klerk, Phoebe Litchfield and Alana King along with experienced campaigners such as former Australian captain Lanning are also expected to fetch lucrative deals. (PTI)

## 2026 World Cup draw can separate top-ranked Spain, Argentina, France and England until semifinals

**GENEVA, Nov 26:** The 2026 World Cup draw next week will reward the four highest-ranked teams — Spain, Argentina, France and England — who will be placed in separate sections of a new tennis-style seeded tournament bracket.

FIFA said the top four teams in the latest men's rankings will, if they finish top of their respective round-robin groups, avoid each other until the semifinals of the June 11-July 19 tournament being co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Defending champion Argentina with Lionel Messi and top-ranked European champion Spain with Lamine Yamal therefore can ensure they do not meet until the final at MetLife Stadium near New York.

"To ensure competitive balance, two separate pathways to the semifinals have been established," FIFA said in a statement, aiming to reward teams whose consistent good results have raised their world ranking.

At previous World Cups, the path for teams into and through the knockout phase was decided by which group they were drawn into.

The draw ceremony for the first 48-team World Cup will be held Dec. 5 at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in the presence of U.S. President Donald Trump.

The 42 teams that already qualified include Iran and Haiti which FIFA expects will play exactly where they are drawn regardless of complicated politics those countries have with the U.S. The 16 host venues for the 104 games include 11 cities with NFL stadiums in the U.S., three in Mexico and two in Canada.

The other six entries will be decided in March when European and global playoffs brackets are scheduled, and those teams all will come out of the draw pot of lowest-ranked teams.



That means four-time champion Italy could be a dangerous option in the draw on Friday of next week which will set the match schedule by placing teams in 12 round-robin groups of four teams each.

Europe has 16 teams in the lineup and a maximum of two can be drawn into any one group. The other 32 teams in the tournament cannot be drawn in a group with a team from the same continent.

The three co-hosts are among the 12 top seeds in the draw, which is scheduled to take about 45 minutes during a show lasting about an hour and a half, FIFA said. The U.S. will open on June 12 against a team from pot 3, then face a team from pot 2 and close the group stage against a team from pot 4.

**World Cup draw seedings**

**Pot 1:** Spain, Argentina, France, England, Brazil, Portugal, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, United States, Mexico, Canada.

**Pot 2:** Croatia, Morocco, Colombia, Uruguay, Switzerland, Japan, Senegal, Iran, South Korea, Ecuador, Austria, Australia.

**Pot 3:** Norway, Panama, Egypt, Algeria, Scotland, Paraguay, Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Uzbekistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa.

**Pot 4:** Jordan, Cape Verde, Ghana, Curacao, Haiti, New Zealand, European playoff winner 1, European playoff winner 2, European playoff winner 3, European playoff winner 4, Intercontinental playoff winner 1, Intercontinental playoff winner 2, Intercontinental playoff winner 3, Intercontinental playoff winner 4. (AP)

## Napoli fans honor Diego Maradona on 5th death anniversary

**NAPLES, Nov 26:** Napoli and its fans paid tribute to Diego Maradona on the fifth anniversary of his death.

A video of Maradona was shown on the big screens in the stadium before Napoli's match against Qarabag in the Champions League on Tuesday, with the stadium announcer saying: "Napoli wants to remember you with a special video. Five years ago the greatest of all time left us."

The whole of the stadium chanted "Diego, Diego." In the 10th minute — Maradona's shirt number — fans started chanting "there's only one Maradona" and singing songs about him, at the same time as they waved flags, scarves and team shirts in his honor.

Maradona died of a heart attack at age 60 on Nov. 25, 2020, two weeks after being released from a hospital in Buenos Aires following surgery for a blood clot on the brain.

He led Napoli to its first two Serie A titles in 1987 and 1990 and the club's stadium was renamed Stadio Diego Armando Maradona after his death.

Maradona, who famously led Argentina to victory in the 1986 World Cup, is regarded as one of the greatest soccer players of all time. (AP)

## Sindarov becomes youngest player to win FIDE World Cup

**PANAJI, Nov 26:** Uzbekistan's Jakovhir Sindarov beat China's Wei Yi to win the FIDE World Cup here on Wednesday, becoming, at 19, the youngest ever player to achieve the feat.

The Uzbek was an overwhelming favourite of Grandmaster Sahaj Grover, who minced no words while placing his money on Sindarov once the quarterfinals arrived.

As it turned out, Wei Yi played out another easy draw with white pieces but Sindarov was at his best as he cracked through white's defenses in the second game itself.

The Uzbekistan youngster went home richer by USD 120,000 (over ₹ 1 crore) despite starting as the 16th seed in a competition that is

known for its heartbreaks.

Both Sindarov and Wei will play in the Candidates and the latter earned USD 85,000 for his performance here over the last few weeks.

As things stand, Sindarov, Wei Yi and Andrey Esipenko of Russia are the qualifiers from this World Cup, and they will be joined by Fabiano Caruana of the USA, Anish Giri of Holland and Matthias Bluebaum of Germany.

R Praggnanandhaa and Hikaru Nakamura are almost certain to make it unless a hurricane hits the chess circuit.

Sindarov has come out as the second biggest star from Uzbekistan after Nodirbek Abdusattorov and it seems that the Russian dominance

in the sport has finally ended. It remains to be seen how far the Uzbek stars continue to dominate, but for now, it is clear that it is not Europe sans Magnus Carlsen but Asia that dominates the chess world.

Sindarov simply dominated Wei Yi right from the early stages of the middle game even though the computer gave a different evaluation. As the game took shape in the middle game out of an Italian open from the second game, Sindarov had things to worry but he activated his rooks just in time to cause the final damage.

Earlier in the first game Wei Yi seemed secure enough to go for another solid draw but clearly his tactics did not work out well. (PTI)

## You can't take cricket for granted, we need to get better: Stand-in skipper Pant

**GUWAHATI, Nov 26:** Stand-in skipper Rishabh Pant on Wednesday conceded that India needed to get better as a Test team, and said results cannot be taken for granted just because of playing in home conditions.

South Africa towelled India by 408 runs in the second Test here to complete a 2-0 series sweep, the first such instance for the visitors since their triumph under Hansie Cronje in the 1999-2000 series.

"It's little disappointing. As a team we need to get better. We need to give credit to the opposition. They dominated the series but at the same time, you can't take cricket for granted (because of playing at home)," said Pant in the post-match presentation.

Pant said India will have to learn from the series and get better in future.

"We need to take the learning and stick as a team. We needed to be clear with our mindset. In the future, we need to learn from it and get better."

The wicketkeeper-batter admitted that South Africa played better cricket throughout the series. "They played better cricket, cricket demands that you need to capitalise as a team. And we did not do that and that cost us the whole series. "The positive will be focussing on our own plan and that's what we will take from this series," he added.

South Africa captain Temba Bavuma was delighted to sweep the series.

"It's massive. For me personally, I've been out of the game for a couple of months with injury. Not every day you can come to India



and walk away with a 2-0 series win.

"What's special is that we had dark days as a group and it's a credit to them. There's a big shift in our mindsets in terms of what we want to do. I think our preparation is something -- guys go out there looking to contribute," he said. Bavuma lauded spinners Harmer and Keshav Maharaj for their consistency in the series.

"Simon has the experience of playing here in India in 2015. He complements Keshav quite well. Bit more guile with the ball, it's a struggle to take the ball out of their hands. Simon was the man for us in this series," he said.

Off-spinner Harmer was adjudged the player of the series, and he said he will leave these shores with fond memories. "Like I said in the last Test, it's been a long road. 10 years later, a completely different feeling. Will leave with a lot more fonder memories from then. To beat a very good Indian team is a hell of an effort."

"I was just watching our second innings, after 40 overs, the ball got softer and it became easier. But there was the odd-ball, the ball that Rishabh got. Nice to contribute, nice to get wickets and nice to get a fifer in India," said Harmer. Marco Jansen was the player of the match for his all-round performance here,

93 runs in the first innings, and a match haul of seven wickets.

"Winning any game is a nice feeling and winning in India is special. It's a team performance. We spoke about sticking to our own things. Got to give credit to Shuks (SA head coach Shukri Conrad), he told me to go out and play my game, I was nervous in the first Test."

"Everyone is working hard, our prep as a team and in an individual capacity. We see where we can get better and on the field we give our best," he added.

Opener Aiden Markram was happy to conclude a tough assignment on a happy note. "It's a great feeling. A great effort by everyone to be fair. No easy task coming to India and winning. We needed a few moments of good luck I suppose along the way, very proud of the team."

The opener said they did not want to keep any demons in their minds ahead of the series. "A lot of it was preconceived ideas about conditions. A lot of chat about spin, and quality seamers with the new ball. You don't want to have demons in your mind before facing your first ball." Markram gave due credit to his bowlers for keeping Indian batters under pressure.

"Credit to the bowlers, they get the balls in the right areas and you try to catch them and make them happy. Spinning the ball different ways helps in conditions like this. You have to do that for long periods of time and that's where the control comes in," he said. (PTI)

## GAMBHIR'S INDIA SURRENDERS MEEKLY TO SOUTH AFRICA

## Second whitewash at home

**GUWAHATI, Nov 26:** A clueless Indian team, which seemed lacking in both skills and resolve, succumbed to its biggest defeat in terms of runs, losing the second Test to South Africa by a whopping margin of 408 here on Wednesday, giving the visitors their first series triumph in the country in 25 years.

This was the second time in a space of mere 13 months that India ended up whitewashed at home, severely denting their chances of qualifying for the World Test Championship final.

Under head coach Gautam Gambhir, India have now lost five Tests against New Zealand and South Africa at home.

A chase of 549 was never possible but what one expected was a semblance of fight which wasn't there on a day five Indian track presenting itself in all its might on which the ball bounced like a hissing snake and turned as if on a hairpin Himalayan bend.

Marco Jansen, who played the perfect all-rounder in this Test match, took a one-handed stunner to skittle India for 140 in 63.5 overs and give the Temba Bavumalade side a victory to cherish for a long time.

"It's little disappointing. As a team we need to get better. We need to give credit to the opposition. They dominated the series but

India slip to 5<sup>th</sup> in WTC rankings after SA drubbing

**NEW DELHI, Nov 26:** India's chances of reaching the World Test Championship finals (WTC) took a major hit as they slipped to the fifth spot in standings following their embarrassing 0-2 series whitewash to South Africa at home.

The 408-run loss in the second Test in Guwahati on Wednesday marked India's heaviest defeat in terms of runs in the traditional five-day format.

The loss means the team, which had drawn the series against England earlier this year, slipped below Pakistan and are now at the fifth place with their PCT (percentage) dropping to 48.15.

India have played nine Test matches in the current WTC cycle, winning four, losing four, and drawing one game. They will travel to Sri Lanka for a two-match series August next year followed by a rubber against New Zealand in October-November. On the other hand, South Africa's first Test series victory in India in 25 years has strengthened the Proteas' position in the standings.

The defending WTC champions currently occupy the second position, right behind leaders Australia, with 36 points from their four Tests. Their PCT improved from 66.67 to 75. (PTI)

## What Gambhir Wants: Players who are not playing to the gallery, care for dressing room

**GUWAHATI, Nov 26:** Gautam Gambhir didn't blame any individual for the debilitating 408-run defeat against South Africa in the second Test but dropped enough hints that he was livid with India's stand-in skipper Rishabh Pant for "playing to the gallery".

Gambhir's par-for-the-course fiery post-match press conference had one anomaly though -- he was a bundle of contradictions through and through those 15 odd minutes.

India were 95 for one, but things went downhill from thereon with the hosts left stuttering at 122 for seven, largely due to Marco Jansen's exploits with the red cherry.

Pant gave charge to Jansen when he needed to show some discretion, and that shot possibly was the worst of all the dismissals. After the 0-2 series defeat, Gambhir was asked if he would have expected better from Pant, who is now one short of 50 Test matches.

"You don't blame one individual shot. You don't blame one individual playing in a certain way. You blame everyone. So, we're talking about an individual, I've never done that. I am not going to do it," Gambhir said in a no-nonsense manner after fronting up at the media conference.

He was very clear that he didn't want to "brush things under the carpet".

"The reality is, we still need to improve a lot in red ball cricket. Whether it's mentally, whether it's technically, whether it's absorbing pressure, whether it's sacrificing, whether it's putting the team ahead of your individual self. And most importantly, not playing for the gallery," his answer was anyone's guess that he was talking about Pant.

But when a senior reporter asked how does one fix the quantum of accountability, his reply didn't leave any room for playing the guessing game.



at the same time, you can't take cricket for granted (because of playing at home)," said a downcast India skipper Rishabh Pant in the post-match presentation, trying to make sense of his team's recent home record.

Courtesy Gambhir's inexplicable tactics and selection calls, the aura of invincibility that once accompanied the team at home lay in tatters at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium on a slightly nippy Wednesday afternoon.

But the man was his usual combative self in the aftermath.

"I am the same guy who got you results in England and was coach for Champions Trophy," he asserted in the post-match press conference.

"You don't blame any individual or any particular shot. Blame lies with everyone. I never blamed individuals and won't do it going forward," he added.

Off-spinner Simon Harmer's career got a second wind as he decimated the Indian team with turn, bounce and zip off the same surface on which home bowlers looked pedestrian.

Once Pant (13) was dismissed failing to counter the bounce, the writing was on the wall.

"I have been coming to India but never thought that we will walk away with a 2-0 series win," an expectedly delighted Bavuma said

later. The likes of Sai Sudharsan, Washington Sundar, Dhruv Jurel and Nitish Reddy, which is the new brigade in Test cricket simply didn't have enough preparation to read a spinner from his hands.

Sudharsan scored 14 in 139 balls but was about to be dismissed about six times and looked like getting out to every delivery.

His lack of readiness was the buck that would stop at Gambhir's door for his poor choice of personnel.

Gambhir's obsession with bits and pieces cricketers in the traditional format has left them team in a flux with none of the players sure about their places and roles in the team.

The impact of this defeat will have far reaching implications in terms of confidence and psyche of the red-ball team going forward.

It wasn't an easy pitch to survive on but the poor technique was disappointing along with the inability to read the drift, not playing with a soft bottom hand and a completely non-existent backfoot play.

Only Ravindra Jadeja (53) walked the talk when it came to putting up a good fight but there was no one at the other end to help the veteran.

In the end, lack of planning was evident and for the time, India look easily conquerable at home. (PTI)

Hyderabad, Nov 26: Skipper Urvil Patel went on a six-hitting spree en route to a ruthless unbeaten 119 as Gujarat blew away Services by eight wickets to open their Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy campaign on a rampaging note in a Group C fixture here on Wednesday.

In another Group C match, Puducherry defeated Haryana by five runs.

Pouggajendy Akash smashed a 23-ball 60 as Puducherry posted 201 for nine, riding on a solid show by the top and middle-order batsmen after Haryana opted to bowl.

In reply, Haryana could only manage 196 for six, despite a 47-ball 90 by opener Arsh Ranga and a 31-ball 52 by Yashvardhan Dalal. Skipper Aman Khan (4/28) was the pick of the bowlers, taking four wickets.

**Brief Scores:** Gujarat 183/2 in 12.3 overs (Urvil Patel 119 not out; Mohit Rathee 2/39) beat Services 182/9 in 20 overs (Gaurav Kochar 60; Arzan Nagwaswalla 2/38, Hemang Patel 2/21) by 8 wickets

Punjab 153/5 in 13.5 overs (Anmolpreet Singh 43; Vaibhav Arora 2/23) beat Himachal Pradesh 147/8 in 20 overs (Inness Mahajan 33, Nikhil Gangta 35; Harpreet Brar 2/14).

Puducherry 201 for nine in 20 overs (Pouggajendy Akash 60; Nishant Sindhu 2/28) beat Haryana 196 for 6 in 20 overs (Arsh Ranga 90; Aman Khan 4/28) by five runs. (PTI)

## Smaran shines in Karnataka victory, Rajasthan drub TN

**AHMEDABAD, Nov 26:** Ravichandran Smaran gave another reminder about his unlimited potential with a well-timed fifty, guiding Karnataka to a five-wicket win over Uttarakhand in the opening Group D match of the Syed Mushtaq Ahmed Trophy here on Wednesday.

Once Uttarakhand posted a competitive 197 for five in 20 overs, Karnataka's task was cut out.

Skipper Kunal Chandela (88, 49 balls, 7x4, 5x6) and Aanjaneya Suryavanshi (54, 36b, 5x4, 3x6) added 122 runs for the fourth wicket as Uttarakhand recovered from a shaky 32 for three.

Pacer Vidwath Kaverappa was the stand out performer for Karnataka, taking three wickets while conceding 37 runs.

Karnataka slipped to 15 for two, losing Karun

Nair and KL Shriji with Mayank Agarwal and Smaran took their side to 99 through an alliance of 84 runs for the third wicket.

But quick wickets of skipper Agarwal, Smaran and Abhinav Manohar reduced Karnataka to 128 for five in 13.2 overs.

The former champions needed 70 runs off 6.4 overs at that stage.

But late-order batters Praveen Dube (38, 24b) and Shubhang Hegde (29, 18b) knocked off those runs to take Karnataka past the target in the last ball of the match.

Left-arm pacer Rajan Kumar (3/24) was the most successful bowler for Uttarakhand.

**Brief scores:** Uttarakhand: 197/5 in 20 overs (Kunal Chandela 88, Aanjaneya Suryavanshi 54; Vidwath Kaverappa 3/37) lost to Karnataka:

198/5 in 20 overs (R Smaran 67, Praveen Dube 38 not out, Shubhang Hegde 29 not out; Rajan Kumar 3/24) by 5 wickets.

Karnataka: 4 points; Uttarakhand: 0.

Tripura: 123 all out in 19.3 overs (M Muralisingh 56, Hanuma Vihari 31; Jaydev Unadkat 3/19, Chirag Jani 3/19) lost to Saurashtra: 124/6 in 16 overs (Ruchir Ahir 29 not out, Vishvaraj Jadeja 28; Swapnil Singh 2/12) by 4 wickets.

Saurashtra: 4 points, Tripura: 0.

Tamil Nadu: 169/8 in 20 overs (Sonu Yadav 43 not out, N Jagadeesan 29; Ashok Sharma 4/40, Manav Suthar 2/22) lost to Rajasthan: 170/4 in 16.3 overs (Deepak Hooda 76 not out, Kartik Sharma 36; T Natarajan 2/16) by 6 wickets.

Rajasthan: 4 points; Tamil Nadu: 0. (PTI)

## Asalanka's SL captaincy under a cloud leading to World Cup

**COLOMBO, Nov 26:** Charith Asalanka's tenure as skipper of the Sri Lanka team was thrown into uncertainty after the southpaw came back home from Pakistan in the middle of the triangular series there.

He was replaced by Dasun Shanaka whom Asalanka had succeeded in 2023. Asalanka, who was captaining the team in the bilateral ODI series in Pakistan, wanted the tour abandoned and allegedly encouraged some of his teammates to withdraw from the tournament and return home following a suicide bomb explosion in Islamabad, which killed nine people.

This did not go down well with Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), which threatened stringent ac-

tion for their demand to return. The team was convinced to stay on and continue the tour while the last two games in the bilateral series were rescheduled. Then came the announcement that Asalanka was returning home due to ill health with Shanaka taking over the captaincy.

"We got him to return to Sri Lanka due to viral fever," chairman of selectors Upul Tharanga told reporters here Wednesday.

However, Tharanga added that Asalanka's form in the T20s is a cause for concern.

"His T20 performances dropped while Shanaka with his wider T20 experience and performance was seen as a better candidate to replace him," Tharanga said. (PTI)



"It comes from care. What you care about the dressing room, how much you care about the dressing room and the team. Because accountability and the game situation can never be taught," Gambhir said.

"... Ultimately when you go in, if you keep putting the team ahead of your own self, not thinking that this is how I play, and this is how I will get the results, and this is how I play, I don't want to play the second, I don't have plan B. So, sometimes, you will get these kind of collapses as well," the head coach's statement could have only been pointed at one man.

"How much you care about Indian cricket and how much you care about the team and people sitting in the dressing room is important as well," he couldn't have been more precise with his response.

**'People who do well in white ball shouldn't forget what they did in red ball'**

Gambhir spoke about prioritising red ball cricket, citing examples of playing domestic cricket when free as a matter of policy.

"Come the white ball formats, if you get

runs in white ball formats, suddenly you forget about what you have done in red ball cricket. That should never happen.

"You know, first and foremost, people who do well in white ball cricket should not forget what they've done in red ball cricket. Very easily, media, us, fans, everyone stops forgetting about what they've done in Test cricket," he said, his both statements in contrast to each other.

"And I don't want to forget it. To be honest, we go forward, we've got a lot of white ball cricket. If someone gets a 40 ball, 50 or 80 ball 100, the reality is that we still need to keep getting better in red ball cricket," he said in another contradictory remark.

Asked if he has understood where India lost the second Test, he immediately cited the collapse that happened on the third afternoon.

"Yeah, absolutely. I just said it. From 95/1 to 122/7, I'm sure that is not technical. That is more mental and that is about how much you care for the dressing room and how much Test cricket means to all of us in that dressing room."

Gambhir did blame the scheduling where the squad played two Tests against West Indies, went to Australia for a white ball series and within four days of playing the last T20I, were up in whites against South Africa. For Gambhir, this kind of scheduling affects planning.

"Look, obviously scheduling does make a difference. Imagine three days back, three days before the start of the first Test match, we were in Australia. And suddenly you come back from there and you have to join a Test team and you have got two days to plan with the Test side."

"But that again is not an excuse. And I am not going to give that excuse as well. Sometimes we can probably prioritise this better," he said. (PTI)

## Urvil Patel's 37-ball 119 powers Gujarat to 8-wkt win



**HYDERABAD, Nov 26:** Skipper Urvil Patel went on a six-hitting spree en route to a ruthless unbeaten 119 as Gujarat blew away Services by eight wickets to open their Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy campaign on a rampaging note in a Group C fixture here on Wednesday.

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## PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas the Government of Assam vide its Notification No. ECF-708361/4 dated 03-10-2025 has constituted a One Man Inquiry Commission to be headed by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Soumitra Saikia, Judge, Gauhati High Court under The Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952 to inquire into the facts and circumstances leading to the unfortunate death of Late Zubeen Garg in Singapore on the 19th of September, 2025 with the following terms of reference:-

- To inquire into the facts and circumstances leading to the death of Late Zubeen Garg.
- To ascertain the sequence of events in the period preceding and following the incident.
- Examine whether there were any lapses, acts of omission or commission, or negligence on the part of any individual, authority, or institution connected with the incident.
- Ascertain whether any external factors, including the possibility of foul play, conspiracy, or unlawful acts, contributed to or were connected with the incident.

Accordingly, a Notice was issued on 17.10.2025 intimating all persons having knowledge of the facts and circumstances relating to the above incident, as mentioned in the Four (4) Terms of Reference; to submit their statements by way of a duly notarised Affidavit.

Whereas, it is considered expedient to issue another notice extending the time for submission of statements by persons having knowledge of the facts and circumstances relating to the mandates notified, Notice is hereby given to all persons having knowledge of the facts and circumstances relating to the above incident, as mentioned in the Four (4) Terms of Reference and to submit their statements by way of a duly notarised Affidavit till the date, time and at the venue mentioned below.

All persons intending to furnish their statements before the \*Commission as mentioned above, shall also furnish a list of documents, if any, in support of the facts stated in the affidavit by them, on which they propose to rely upon alongwith the originals or true copies of such documents in their possession or control and shall also state the name(s) and address(es) from whom the remaining documents may be obtained.

Given under my hand and Seal of the Commission on this 22nd day of November, 2025

**Extended Date: Till 12<sup>th</sup> of December, 2025 (Friday) (except Sundays)**

**Time : 10.30 AM to 4.00 PM**

**Venue : Office of the One Man Inquiry Commission headed by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Soumitra Saikia vide Notification No. ECF-708361/4 dated 03.10.2025**

**Location : Assam Khadi & Village Industries Board, Maniram Dewan Road, Chandmari, Guwahati-781003**

By Order & in the name of the Commission

Sd/-  
Secretary, One Man Inquiry Commission

**DIPR /D/HLT/230/27-Nov-25**