

6 NATION This is how democracy should work, hope to see this in India: Tharoor
7 ARUNACHAL Punjab BJP Mahila Morcha protests against AAP govt
Khandu announces full digital revamp of ILP system
Governor reviews PM Gati Shakti implementation

Pressure to be maintained on movement of illegal settlers: CM 'Miyas vote together and our votes are scattered'

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma claimed on Saturday that 'Miyas' vote unitedly, which has ensured that they are moving 'forward politically', whereas the votes of "our people" are scattered. He asserted that 'pressure' has to be maintained on illegal settlers so that they cannot "move ahead further" from the districts of Lower Assam, the western part of the Brahmaputra Valley.



Talking to reporters on the sidelines of various programmes, Sarma said, "The Miyas vote together, in a chunk. That is why they are moving forward politically. Our votes are scattered. That's why I tell our people to vote together, for whichever party or person it could be."

failed to solve the problems of the people who had voted for it over the years. "The Congress was in power here for 60 years. They could have given land 'patta' but they didn't do it," he said, referring to massive encroachment of forest and other government land mostly by Bengali-speaking Muslims. "They were staying in the forest and other lands, and if they were shifted out of those areas and land rights given to them, evictions would not have been necessary now. They voted for the Congress, but the party didn't work for them. They will surely question the party," Sarma added.

Threat to scribe: Case registered against ex-IAS officer

CM foresees 'patch up' between journalist and retired official

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: A journalist of a Guwahati-based satellite channel has lodged a complaint with the police, accusing a former bureaucrat of threatening him and his family over a news broadcast recently. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that Deka and the retired officer were apparently "old friends and are likely to "patch up soon". State Congress president Gaurav Gogoi criticised the CM for the "casual reaction" and said such an attitude is "unacceptable".



The bureaucrat's son, an Assam Police Service (APS) officer who was posted in Baksa, was on duty outside the jail to control the situation, and he was caught on camera baton-charging peaceful protestors. A police officer said that a case has been registered based on the complaint, and an investigation has started into the matter. Deka alleged that the ex-IAS officer told him to say that the broadcast video was morphed and threatened him with dire consequences if he failed to do so. He had even threatened harm to Deka's eight-year-old son, the

journalist alleged in the complaint, while submitting audio recording of the telephonic conversation. Sarma, talking to reporters on sidelines of a programme, said, "From what I have understood, they were in close touch from earlier time. They were sounding like old friends. Have to also consider whether the conversation was made with a 'journalist' or with "Rana". "It seems that both will patch up soon and become friends again," he claimed. Asked about the aspect of lack of security of journalists, Sarma retorted that if needed, PSOs (personal security officers) can be provided to the scribe who was asking the question. On whether the case will be pursued, the CM, who also holds the Home department, said, "I can take the case but there should be no compromise later." Congress leader Gogoi questioned the (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

CM says BMC, Engineering College to be functional soon

Announcement comes as CM rolls out fresh support for women entrepreneurs and major road projects

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday announced that the Bongaigaon Medical College and the Engineering College will start functioning soon, marking a major boost to the district's healthcare and education infrastructure. The chief minister made the announcement while launching the distribution of seed capital cheques of ₹10,000 each to 23,949 women under the Mukhyamantri Mahila Udyamita Abhiyan (MMUA) in Abhayapuri LAC. Of the beneficiaries, 22,641 are from rural areas and 1,308 from urban localities. Speaking at a programme held at the playground of Abhayeswari Higher Secondary and Multipurpose School, Sarma said women in 40 of Assam's 126 constituencies have already received the first instalment of the scheme and the remaining constituencies will be covered shortly. He expressed satisfaction that beneficiaries who received funds in August and September had used the amount responsibly for constructive and income-generating activities. He said the goal of MMUA is to help women become financially independent and evolve into "Lakshmi Baideo", in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of enabling three crore women across India to achieve that milestone. Explaining the model, the chief minister said that depositing the first instalment in a self-help group can help build a collective capital of ₹1 lakh, enabling women to start new ventures.

After six months, the government will assess progress and extend additional support of ₹25,000 and ₹50,000 to those who utilise the funds productively. Sarma urged women of Abhayapuri to focus on livelihood activities such as goat rearing, poultry, dairy and piggying and avoid unproductive expenditure. He cited the success stories of Jinuprava Barman of Tarali SHG and Chandrama Devi of Nandini Seuj SHG, both of whom became Lakshmi Baideo. Highlighting the impact of MMUA and Orunodoi, he said the schemes have enhanced women's dignity and strengthened their role as pillars of their households. In Abhayapuri constituency, 29,683 beneficiaries have already received Orunodoi benefits and another 3,400 are set to be included. Similarly, 2,772 female students have benefitted from the Chief Minister's Nijut Moina scheme. Under the Asom Mala scheme, major road projects—including the Oudubi-Jogighopa-Bongaigaon road, Talguri-Basugaon road, Shahid Bedi-North Salmara Junction road—and four new bridges are being taken up in Abhayapuri. The chief minister added that the medical and engineering colleges at Bongaigaon would become operational soon. He also said that old-age pensions would be increased shortly and announced that a scheme similar to Nijut Moina for boys will begin from January. Reiterating the government's commitment to social reforms, he referred to the proposed legislation on (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Modi proposes four initiatives at G20, including one to counter drug-terror nexus

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 22: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday called for a profound rethink of the global development parameters and proposed setting up of a G20 initiative to counter the drug-terror nexus and a global healthcare response team. Addressing the opening session of the G20 Leaders' Meeting here, Modi said the G20 has long shaped global finance and growth, but prevailing models have deprived large populations of resources and driven the over-exploitation of nature — challenges felt acutely in Africa. Modi also presented the principle of Integral Humanism — part of India's civilisational values



-- which he said showed a way forward in striking a balance between development and nature. The prime minister outlined four path-break-

ing new initiatives — the Global Traditional Knowledge Repository, the G20-Africa Skills Multiplier Initiative, the G20 Global Healthcare Response Team, and the G20 Initiative on Countering the Drug-Terror Nexus. Acknowledging that the G20 Leaders Summit was being held in Africa for the first time, Modi said the focus on striking a balance between development and environment was more appropriate, given that the continent has been a victim of overexploitation of natural resources. "Now is the right moment for us to revisit our development parameters and focus on growth that is inclusive and (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

Proud to see ACA stadium become Test venue: Himanta

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed delight that Guwahati made its debut as the newest test centre on Saturday as India took on South Africa in the second and final game of the two-match series. He said this will inspire youngsters and fuel their ambitions. "Guwahati creates history! Proud to see ACA Stadium become India's 30th Test venue, bringing the pinnacle of cricket to Assam," Sarma said (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

'There is a deal that will take a while to explain because so much is in it' UN climate conference nears conclusion with critics unhappy over proposal

BELEM (BRAZIL), Nov 22: United Nations climate talks appeared to be nearing a conclusion after spilling into overtime Saturday, with a result likely to disappoint countries and advocates for stronger action to wean the world from the coal, oil and gas that is heating the planet. Several observers told The Associated Press that the general framework of a deal is formed, but some sticking points still remain. The conference's leaders are aiming for a late morning meeting with all nations to approve the deal. That's a place where some nations could try to scuttle it if they prefer no deal to what they consider a feeble agreement. "The deal informally is there from what we know," said former Philippines negotiator



Jasper Inventor, now at Greenpeace International. "It's a weak outcome." COP30 President Andre Correa do Lago told Amazonia Vox on Saturday morning that there is a deal that will take a while to explain because so

much is in it. But a proposal for a road map to transition away from fossil fuels — which more than 80 countries called for, as did Brazil's president — will not be in there. Instead, a fossil fuel transition plan will be in a separate proposal issued later by do Lago's team that won't carry the same weight as a deal accepted by nations at the United Nations conference. The annual talks this year are being held in Belem, a Brazilian city on the edge of the Amazon rainforest. They were scheduled to wrap up on Friday, but negotiators blew past that deadline and worked through the night. Financial aid and other key issues Some of the biggest issues negotiators have worked on include how to distribute USD 300 billion a year — a sum previously agreed upon — in financial aid for vulnerable countries hit hardest by climate change, getting countries to toughen up their national plans to reduce Earth-warming emissions (CONTD. ON PAGE-2)

A NEW ERA for Women Workforce. The nation is proud of its workforce. Shramev jayate! Prime Minister, Narendra Modi. FOUR LABOUR CODES IMPLEMENTED. MODI GOVERNMENT'S GUARANTEE FOR WOMEN WORKFORCE. Gender discrimination prohibited, Equal pay for equal work, Permitted to work in night shifts with consent, Provision for work from home, Medical Bonus of ₹3,500, Permitted to work in all types of work (including underground mining and heavy machinery). Labour Reforms for Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

From margins to mainstream: Indian gig workers finally get formal safety net

NEW DELHI, Nov 22: The newly notified labour codes represent a transformative and historic reform for India's gig economy, finally bringing this vast segment of workers under formal regulatory recognition and social security.

For the delivery partner dropping off groceries or the driver navigating city traffic, this move signals the end of legal invisibility, transitioning them from the fringes of the "unorganised" sector into a formal social security net.

The introduction of uniform employment rights, mandatory appointment letters, and access to benefits such as provident funds, ESIC, and insurance has laid a new foundation for stability and predictability for millions of gig and platform workers across India, experts say.

However, the implementation poses operational challenges owing to the fluid and varied nature of gig work, requiring robust compliance mechanisms and behavioural adaptations from both platform companies and workers.

"For the first time, this rapidly expanding segment of the workforce, traditionally excluded from the conventional employer-employee relationship, gains legislative recognition and a foundational layer of social security, Preetha S, Partner, JSA Advocates & Solicitors, said.

This shift presents both a significant opportunity to enhance worker protection and a new dimension of compliance responsibility for platform companies operating in India, compelling them to contribute to the social welfare of their associated workforce, she said.

Major players in the gig economy have welcomed the move, signalling a readiness to adapt to



the new regulatory landscape.

"We welcome the government's intent to implement labour reforms, and we are evaluating the changes that have to be ushered in," an Amazon India spokesperson said.

"We welcome this progressive step that recognises how India's work ecosystem has evolved. Strengthening social security for gig and platform workers is vital for long-term resilience and inclusion," a Rapido spokesperson said.

In a regulatory filing, Eternal, the parent entity of Zomato and Blinkit, said the labour codes will help strengthen social security access for gig workers, and that it does not think the financial impact of these rules will be detrimental to the long-term health and sustainability of its business.

"For Zepto, this means stronger social security for our delivery partners, without losing the flexibility that powers quick commerce," a Zepto spokesperson said, adding that the codes bring clarity and protect workers while supporting ease of doing business.

In 2020-21, 77 lakh workers were engaged in the gig economy.

The gig workforce is expected to expand to 2.35 crore workers by 2029-30, according to NITI Aayog. According to TeamLease Services, India's current gig workforce is around one crore.

"For years, the country's gig workers subsidised its growth from the margins. Today, they step into the system. This reform has liberated labour to a large extent... This creates flexibility for entrepreneurs and safety for workers. The country is finally playing catch-up with the future," TeamLease Regtech CEO Rishi Agrawal said.

According to Puneet Gupta, Partner, People Advisory Services-Tax, EY India, the new codes bring clarity, digitisation, and consistency across compliance requirements.

"For workers, the impact is significant; formal employees gain stronger protections and uniform benefits, while gig and platform workers are included in social security schemes for the first time. This transformation will reshape compensation structures, HR policies, and employment models, creating a more inclusive and

future-ready labour ecosystem, Gupta said.

However, industry veterans caution that harmonising the inherent volatility of the gig economy with the rigid structures of formal labour laws will be the real test of the new regime.

Gig assignments shift in duration, hours, and income sources, making documentation and the continuity of benefits harder to pin down.

"The real test will be fitting a steady employment framework into a world where work is fluid. There will also be variation in how employers read their obligations. Some will adapt quickly, while others will need support on compliance and record-keeping. Workers will need simple, direct communication so they understand their rights and the value of a safety net.

"These are manageable challenges. With clear rules, stronger digital rails and steady enforcement, the transition can work. The direction of the codes is sound, but the ecosystem will need discipline and cooperation to make it real, said Kartik Narayan, CEO of jobs marketplace Apna.

Lohit Bhatia, President of India & Global Operations at Quesq Corp, said, "Ensuring real-time compliance, benefit contributions, and grievance resolution at scale in a highly mobile workforce will require strong systems and behavioural change from workers and partners.

"However, with simplified compliance, national licensing, and unified registers, the codes also remove many previous bottlenecks and create a more modern, digital-first environment. This is exactly the kind of regulatory foundation that will help gig work grow responsibly, Bhatia said. (PTI)

IESA welcomes implementation of India's four Labour Codes

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: The India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) has welcomed the Government's commitment to creating a pro-worker, pro-industry and growth-oriented labour ecosystem as the implementation framework for the four Labour Codes progresses.

IESA said the reforms would strengthen blue-collar employment in electronics manufacturing by ensuring better wages, expanding opportunities for women, improving safety standards in chemical and SMT processes, and enhancing social protection for workers. A more formal and future-ready workforce, the organisation noted, would help reduce attrition and improve productivity across factories.

However, the association acknowledged that compa-

nies may face higher wage and compliance costs as benefits expand, and that MSMEs will require an adjustment period to adopt the new norms.

"This is a major step toward building globally competitive ESDM and semiconductor ecosystems in India," said Ashok Chandak, president, IESA and SEMI India.

Sharing IESA's overall position, the association noted that the modernisation of the labour framework after several decades aligns India with global standards and marks a shift toward a more inclusive, transparent and productivity-driven labour environment.

"For the electronics and semiconductor sectors—key pillars of India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision—these reforms will accelerate investment, manufacturing scale, and workforce development," the statement added.

Exports clock fall in 14 months: Crisil

KOLKATA, Nov 22: India's merchandise exports fell 11.8 per cent year-on-year, since August 2024, to USD 34.38 billion in October, Crisil said in its report.

This follows a 50 per cent increase in US tariffs on August 27 this year, a move that has subdued exports for the second month in a row, the report said.

The decline in exports was broad-based across petroleum products, gems and jewellery and core sectors.

Petroleum products exports declined 10.4 per cent year-on-year in October, compared to a growth of 15.1 per cent in September. Similarly, core exports slipped to 10.2 per cent compared to 6.1 per cent growth in September 2025, the report said.

Merchandise exports to US decreased 8.6 per cent year-on-year to USD 6.3 billion in October. This was an improvement from the 11.9 per cent decline in September, according to the report.

The announcement by the US on November 16 to cut tariffs on 254 food items bodes well for some of the agricultural exports, such as tea and spices, the



report said.

Exports to non-US markets fell 12.5 per cent year-on-year, compared to 10.9 per cent growth in September.

The report said that India's current account deficit (CAD) is expected to remain manageable, supported by robust services trade, remittances and softer crude prices.

India's merchandise imports remained stable in October 2025 at USD 76.06 billion, the report said. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 1...

UN climate conference

and dealing with climate trade barriers. Poorer nations have requested a tripling of financial aid for adapting to extreme weather and other climate change harms, and observers said a version of that appears to be in the deal.

The United Nations and host Brazil are also touting dozens of "action plans" to make progress on past deals.

Whatever deal is proposed still needs a consensus approval from what's left of the nearly 200 nations that came to the two-week conference. Some delegates, observers and others had to leave Saturday morning when the cruise ships lodging them set sail.

Earlier this week, Lago issued what he had hoped to be a final proposal. It was roundly criticised by the European Union, small island nations and Latin American countries as too weak on fossil fuels and pushing nations to sharpen their new climate-fighting plans. But other countries, including Saudi Arabia, pushed back against the call to transition away from fossil fuels.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva had pushed for a stronger plan to move away from fossil fuels, as did more than 80 countries. But the earlier proposal by do Lago — a Lula appointee — didn't even mention the words "fossil fuel."

Striking a final deal

Agreements coming out of COP30 technically have to be approved by consensus. But in the past, individual countries' objections have been overlooked by the chair in the rush to gavel everything to the end.

One of the loudest proponents of a stronger plan to transition from fossil fuels is the European Union, which is harder to overlook because of its size and wealth. It's not clear how far the EU, or countries such as Colombia and small island nations, would take their objections during Saturday's meetings.

"It's a question of how far they will push it," the inventor said.

One of the points that negotiators will highlight is language sprinkled in the document that won't be an explicit road map away from fossil fuels, but will refer back to previous agreements to maintain momentum and "live and fight another day," said Alden Meyer, a veteran analyst for the European think-tank E3G.

It's not enough, Greenpeace's inventor said: "We need to reflect on what was possible and what now appears to be missing: the road maps to end forest destruction and fossil fuels and an ongoing lack of finance. We rise up, though, and continue the fight." (AP)

CM says BMC

polygamy and the ongoing drive against child marriage.

GAD minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass, MP Phani Bhushan Choudhury, MLA Diptimoyee Choudhury, and several senior officials attended the programme.

Later in the day, the chief minister unveiled the statue of Rani Abhayeswari Devi on the premises of Abhayeswari Higher Secondary and Multipurpose School.

Remembered for her commitment to education and welfare during her tenure as a member of the Bijni royal family, she established schools, Sanskrit tuls and temples and promoted music and dance. Sarma paid tribute to her legacy while unveiling the statue.

Himanta pins Oppn's

as Tipu Sultan and Babur, describing it as a positive step in reshaping historical narratives in school education.

The event in Abhayapuri saw a large turnout, with students, beneficiaries and local residents gathering in significant numbers to attend the ceremony and hear the Chief Minister's address.

Modi proposes four

sustainable. India's civilisational values, especially the principle of Integral Humanism offers a way forward," Modi told the session on "Inclusive and sustainable economic growth leaving no one behind."

Recognising that many communities across the world preserve eco-balanced, culturally rich, and socially cohesive ways of living, the prime minister proposed the creation of a Global Traditional Knowledge Repository under the G20.

India's Indian Knowledge Systems initiative can form the base for this platform, he said.

The repository will document and share traditional wisdom that demonstrates time-tested models of sustainable living, ensuring that this knowledge is carried forward to future generations.

The prime minister proposed the G20-Africa Skills Multiplier with a train-the-trainers approach across sectors, supported and financed by all G20 partners.

"The collective target is to create one million certified trainers in Africa over the next decade, who will then help skill millions of young people," he said.

Voicing concern over the rapid spread of lethal synthetic drugs such as fentanyl, the prime minister warned of their grave impact on public health, social stability, and global security.

Modi proposed a dedicated G20 Initiative on Countering the Drug-Terror Nexus, aimed at unifying financial, governance, and security tools.

"The initiative will help disrupt trafficking networks, choke illicit financial flows, and weaken a major funding source for terrorism," Modi said.

He also proposed the setting up of a G20 Global Healthcare Response Team. "We are stronger when we work together in the face of health emergencies and natural disasters. Our effort should be to create teams of trained medical experts from fellow G20 nations who are ready for rapid deployment in case of any emergencies," the prime minister said.

Earlier, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa welcomed Modi at the Summit venue with a 'namaste'. Modi was seen interacting informally with global leaders such as UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres among others. (PTI)

Proud to see ACA

in a post on X. "This moment will inspire countless young talents and elevate our sporting ambitions even higher. Onward to a new innings for Assam!" he added. Guwahati, known as the 'Gateway to the North East', is the only international cricket venue in the region and had earned the distinction of hosting ICC World Cup matches for the first time earlier this year. South Africa lead the two-match series 1-0 after winning the first Test in Kolkata by 30 runs. (PTI)

Threat to scribe: Case

chief minister for "trivialising" the matter.

"I strongly condemn the chief minister's casual reaction to a life threat involving an 8-year-old child and journalist Rana Deka. The journalist was clearly terrified after hearing a threat to his young child, yet the CM brushed it off lightly," Gogoi said in a post on X.

"Is this how he treats threats to citizens and their children? Will he provide security to everyone facing such danger, or will he continue dismissing these incidents?" he questioned.

The opposition leader maintained that such attitude is 'unacceptable' and a chief minister must protect the people, not trivialise their fear. (PTI)

'Miyas vote together

Liberal (UPPL) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF). "Going forward will require some crafting; new equations will be needed. Discussion with our allies will be held soon," he said. (PTI)

Axis Bank launches curated salary programme for start-up employees

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: Axis Bank, one of India's leading private sector lenders, has launched a Curated Corporate Salary Program for employees of start-ups under its New Economy Group (NEG).

The initiative reinforces the Bank's focus on supporting new-age enterprises and their workforce with tailored financial, lifestyle and wellness offerings, strengthening its position as a preferred banking partner for start-ups from the growth stage to IPO.

The announcement was made at the Bank's flagship Start-Up Social event in Bengaluru, a platform that brings together founders, investors and industry enablers to promote collaboration and innovation.

Designed exclusively for employees of funded start-ups and digital businesses, the salary programme offers zero-balance savings accounts, comprehensive insurance cover, exclusive credit card privileges and personalised loan options.

It aims to align with the aspirations of the Gen Z and Gen Alpha workforce, providing value across health, fitness, travel, education and entertainment.

The programme's "Switch to Save" feature offers annual savings ranging from ₹46,000 to ₹2.4 lakh, depending on the account variant, with benefits tailored to enhance the financial well-being of each salary account holder.

Vijay Mulbagal, Group Executive - Wholesale Banking Coverage, Corporate Salary, Sustainability

and CSR, Axis Bank, said the programme is designed to empower professionals driving India's digital economy.

"It offers a comprehensive range of benefits across insurance, home loans, credit cards and lifestyle privileges, including exclusive discounts for the next-generation workforce," he said.

Sanjiv Bhatia, President & Head - New Economy and Multinationals Coverage, Axis Bank, said start-ups are reshaping employment patterns with highly skilled tech professionals.

"Our Curated Corporate Salary Program is built around their unique needs, combining everyday banking with differentiated lifestyle benefits," he added.

Power Ministry honours MPK Steels

NEW DELHI, Nov 22: MPK Steels (I) Ltd has been recognised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power, Government of India, for its outstanding efforts in adopting and implementing advanced energy-efficient technologies within its manufacturing facilities. The company will be felicitated at an award ceremony scheduled for 15 November 2025 at the Radisson Hotel, Jaipur, in recognition of its leadership in driving sustainable, future-ready steel production. Founded in 2006 and headquartered in Jaipur, M.P.K. Steels is one of India's trusted manufacturers of high-quality mild

steel structural products, including M.S. Channels, Angles, Rounds, Flats, and Square Bars, catering to critical sectors such as railways, infrastructure development, power, and telecom. Over the years, the company has built a reputation for reliable quality, precision manufacturing, and customer-centric solutions.

Guided by its vision of creating a "Strong Base for a Strong Future," M.P.K. Steels continues to advance its operations through sustainable practices, stringent quality control systems, and continuous investment in research and development. (PTI)

NITI Aayog, Janaagraha launch City Data and Analytics Platform to boost data-driven urban development

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: NITI Aayog, in collaboration with Janaagraha, has launched the City Data and Analytics Platform (CDAP), an integrated system for urban data aimed at strengthening data-driven policy-making across India's cities.

The platform, introduced on November 20, serves as a dedicated microsite on the National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP).

CDAP was unveiled by Anurag Jain, chief secretary of Madhya Pradesh, during the inaugural session of NITI Aayog's Data Forum 2025 in Bhopal.

The session began with an address by Anna Roy, principal economic advisor and programme director at NITI Aayog, followed by an introduction to the platform by Srikanth Viswanathan, CEO of Janaagraha.

The launch was attended by senior state officials, central government representatives, academics, researchers and international experts.

World Bank Senior Economist Thomas Danielewicz and Madhya Pradesh Additional Chief Secretary (GAD) Sanjay Kumar Shukla were also present.

India's urban population is projected to exceed 800 million by 2050, with the contribution of cities to GDP expected to rise from 63% to 75% by 2040.

NITI Aayog noted that achieving the potential of India's urban centres will require targeted reforms grounded in reliable, verified and integrated data.

At present, urban data is maintained in silos across departments, urban local bodies and parastatal agencies.

CDAP seeks to bridge these gaps by aggregating data from national, state, district and city levels.

E-AUCTION LEASING FOR PARCEL SPACE			
E-Auction for the contract of leasing of LVPH/VP on round trip basis & the contract of leasing of SLRs for 03 years in trains originating from Lumding Division. Description: Parcel Space in SLR Coach (Single compartment). Rate Unit: Per Trip Licensing Fee.			
Auction Catalogue No. LEASE-LMG-51-25			
Seq No.	Lot No./Category	Trips	
AA/1	55608-SLR-F1-GHY-MNDP-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	314	
AA/2	55687-SLR-F1-DLCR-SCL-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	783	
AA/3	55620-SLR-F1-GHY-MNDP-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/4	55688-SLR-F1-SCL-DLCR-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	783	
AA/5	15655-SLR-F1-KYQ-SVDK-25-1 (Parcel-SLR)	157	
AA/6	55601-SLR-F1-GHY-LMG-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	471	
AA/7	55661-SLR-F1-MSSN-SCL-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	940	
AA/8	55676-SLR-F1-DMR-AGTL-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/9	55665-SLR-F1-SCL-VNPG-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/10	55689-SLR-F1-DLCR-BPB-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	783	
AA/11	55690-SLR-F1-BPB-DLCR-25-3 (Parcel-SLR)	783	
AA/12	55804-SLR-F1-GHY-NBQ-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/13	55662-SLR-F1-SCL-MSSN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	940	
AA/14	55675-SLR-F1-AGTL-DMR-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/15	55666-SLR-F1-VNPG-SCL-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/16	55685-SLR-F1-MSSN-SCL-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	939	
AA/17	55606-SLR-F1-SKHV-GHY-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	313	
AA/18	55604-SLR-F1-MBO-GHY-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/19	55605-SLR-F1-GHY-SKHV-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	314	
AA/20	55678-SLR-F1-DMR-SCL-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	313	
AA/21	55686-SLR-F1-SCL-MSSN-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	939	
AA/22	55602-SLR-F1-LMG-GHY-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	471	
AA/23	55802-SLR-F1-GHY-NBQ-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/24	55810-SLR-F1-GHY-NBQ-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AA/25	55603-SLR-F1-GHY-MBO-25-2 (Parcel-SLR)	1096	
AB/1	12505-12506-VP-1-KYQ-ANVT-25-1 (Parcel-Parcel Van)	1096	
AB/2	15668-15667-VP-1-KYQ-GIMB-24-1 (Parcel-Parcel Van)	105	
AB/3	15630-15629-VP-1-SHTT-TBM-25-3 (Parcel-Parcel Van)	157	
AB/4	19616-19615-VP-1-KYQ-UDZ-25-1 (Parcel-Parcel Van)	157	
AB/5	15662-15661-VP-1-KYQ-RNC-25-1 (Parcel-Parcel Van)	157	
AB/6	15603-15604-VP-1-GHY-LEDO-25-1 (Parcel-Parcel Van)	1096	
AB/7	15640-15639-VP-1-KYQ-PURI-25-1 (Parcel-Parcel Van)	157	
Auction Start Date & Time: 10.00 hrs. & Closing Date & Time: 15.40 hrs. on 05-12-2025. Initial Cooling off period is 30 minutes. Lot wise closing time can be viewed in e-Auction module of IREPS.			
Note: Prospective bidders are requested to visit E-Auction Leasing Module on IREPS website www.ireps.gov.in for more details.			
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NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY			
Serving Customers With A Smile			

49-km East-West corridor stretch to open soon, focus on timely delivery and public convenience Minister Kaushik Rai reviews NH-27 works, targets January 2026 completion

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: Minister Kaushik Rai, in charge of Food, Public Distribution & Consumer Affairs, Mines & Minerals, visited the East-West Corridor (NH-27) stretch from Harangajao to Jatinga to review ongoing construction and maintenance activities. During the inspection, he interacted with National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) officials regarding development progress.

Later, at a review meeting held at Circuit House, Haflong, the Minister discussed road connectivity, infrastructure development and public convenience with key officials of the line departments. Emphasising timely completion, he instructed authorities to ensure smooth transportation and directed NHAI to expedite pending works.

It was decided that the 49-km stretch from Nrimbanglo (Maibang Sub-division, Dima Hasao) to Harangajao will open to the public in January 2026. Of this, 7-8 km will remain partially four-lane and partially two-lane with 85.3% of the work already completed.

The Minister was accompanied by Kanad Purkayastha M P (Rajya Sabha), Mihir Kanti



Shome MLA (Udarbond), Niharanjan Das MLA (Dholai) and senior officials including Donpainon Thaosen Executive Member, NCHAC, Partha Sarathi Jahari Principal Secretary, NCHAC and Munindra Nath Ngatey DCoF Dima Hasao. Civil society representatives also raised concerns regarding compensation matters, which were directed to be resolved promptly.

Woman brings banking to doorstep of Manikpur villagers

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 22: In the remote Manikpur village, where accessing a bank once meant a grueling 25-kilometre journey, Bindurekha Narzary has transformed the financial landscape for thousands of villagers. Her initiative has brought essential banking services directly to the community, ending long trips and tedious waits.

A member of the Jwngma Self Help Group under Fami Village Organisation, Bindurekha has emerged as a shining example of women-led empowerment under the Assam State Rural Livelihood Mission (ASRLM). Growing up in a family dependent on livestock farming and educated up to Class XII, Bindurekha was intimately familiar with her community's struggles. In 2018, determined to provide accessible banking, she launched a Business Correspondent Agent (BCA) outlet at Langhin Bazar with support from ASRLM and Assam Gramin Vikash Bank (AGVB).



Her outlet now offers services including cash withdrawals and deposits, new account openings, insurance enrolments, premium collections and basic financial literacy. Since its inception, the centre has processed over 12,000 transactions, handling an average of 500 transactions monthly. Bindurekha earns around ₹ 6,000 per month with a peak income of ₹

25,000 in a single month. Balancing her role as a mother of two with her responsibilities as a community financial leader, Bindurekha has not only eased the lives of villagers but also inspired many rural women to pursue similar initiatives. Her work stands as a testament to how determination, opportunity and empowerment can transform entire communities.

Women's Conclave 2025 inspires Nari Shakti for nation building



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: The Women's Conclave 2025 was held on Saturday at the Phandihar Datta Seminar Hall, Gauhati University under the theme "Vikshit Bharat @2047 - Strengthening Nari Shakti for National Development and Leadership." The event was organised by the Council for Teacher Education Foundation (CTEF), Assam Chapter, under the Vikshit Bharat Abhiyan of the Government of Assam in collaboration with the Department of Education, Gauhati University, Bharatiya Shikshan Mandal, UAP, and Rashtriya Sevika Samiti, UAP. The programme was powered by Antariksh Information Technology.

The conclave focused on leadership, innovation and nation building, with special emphasis on empowering women to play a cen-

tral role in national development. The programme was presided over by Prof Nilima Bhagabati, Chairperson of CTEF, who delivered the welcome address. She highlighted the aims and objectives of the conclave and spoke about the four main pillars of the nation's Amrit Kal: youth power, women power, farmers and the people. She stressed that a nation can progress only when women are empowered, as they form the backbone of homes and society. Prof Bhagabati also emphasised the importance of promoting women in defence, science, technology, innovation, administration and policy making.

The event was divided into four technical sessions. The first session, chaired by Prof Pranayee Datta, former professor at Gauhati University, focused on women in entrepreneurship, science, technol-

ogy, and innovation. Dr Swapnali Hazarika, Senior Scientist at CSIR-NEIST Jorhat, spoke about strengthening Nari Shakti through science and technology, highlighting various central government schemes for women and the challenges they face in these fields. Entrepreneur Bhargav Bhagawati discussed women's participation in the aquaculture industry, ornamental fish farming, pearl farming and modern systems like RAS and biofloc. The second session, chaired by Prof Padmini Bhuyan, highlighted women in administration, policy making and economic empowerment. Resource persons Krishna Baruah, Former Commissioner of Assam and Indraneel Baruah, IPS, Central Western Range, encouraged young women to pursue leadership roles in public service and contribute to national development. The remaining sessions focused on women in defence and women entrepreneurship. Speakers discussed the increasing role of women in the armed forces and emphasised the need to support women-led businesses to drive economic growth.

Over 100 students from seven colleges and universities, including Gauhati University, Dispur College and B Baruah College, participated in the conclave. Stalls showcasing handmade products provided participants an opportunity to display their skills and creativity.

Dy Chairman visits pineapple farm in West KA

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Nov 22: With horticulture gaining momentum among farmers in the Amri Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) constituency, the Deputy Chairman of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), Avijit Kro visited a pioneering pineapple farm in the region on Friday.

The farm, owned and managed by Gildeep Timung, an educated and progressive cultivator has emerged as a model of modern horticulture farming. By focusing solely on pineapple cultivation, Timung has turned his farm into a hub for learning and innovation for growers across the district.

During his visit, Kro closely observed the farm's production techniques, including soil preparation, sapling spacing, organic care and harvesting methods. He engaged with the processes that have contributed to the farm's success and praised Timung's dedication and vision.

Kro described Timung as an inspiration for young farmers embracing modern agricultural practices. He encouraged other farmers in the constituency to visit the farm and gain hands-on knowledge to improve the quality of their saplings and cultivation methods.



The Deputy Chairman emphasised that such interactions strengthen the relationship between the administration and farming communities while paving the way for agricultural development in Karbi Anglong. He noted that with model farms like Timung's leading the way, the district is moving toward innovation, self-reliance and enhanced rural livelihoods.

7th Phangcho Nokhom Chingrum Amei celebrated with great enthusiasm

HT Correspondent

KHERONI, Nov 22: The 7th Phangcho Nokhom Chingrum Amei, a two-day annual gathering of the Phangcho clan was held with enthusiasm at Hemari Phangcho Arong in Dolamara, Karbi Anglong. The theme for this year's discussion session was "Chingrum Ra Chilir Nang" (The Need for Unity).

The event brought together Phangcho descendants from across Assam, Meghalaya and even other states, highlighting the clan's com-

mitment to strengthening family bonds, promoting mutual acquaintance and contributing to the broader development of Assam and Northeast India.

During the meeting, intellectuals of the Phangcho community stressed the importance of mutual respect among clan members and discussed the clan's history and its role in nation-building and social progress. Distinguished guests included Longki Phangcho, Member of the North East Council (NEC)

and Nirola Phangchopi, District Commissioner of Karbi Anglong who encouraged the community to achieve success through dedication and hard work despite challenges.

Participants hailed from various regions, including Dolamara, Chowkikhola, Diphu, Guwahati, Jorhat and Meghalaya. The annual gathering serves as a platform for unity, cultural preservation and collective contribution toward the advancement of the Karbi community and greater Assamese society.

JD Institute hosts 20th Annual Design Awards in Guwahati

Students showcase futuristic concepts under the theme 'Last Invention'



HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: The JD Institute of Fashion Technology celebrated the 20th edition of its Annual Design Awards on Friday at City Centre Mall, where 70 students from Fashion, Interior and Jewellery departments presented an impressive display of creativity and design innovation.

Marking two decades of design education in the Northeast, the institute showcased curated interior installations, a jewellery exhibition and a high-energy fashion show. The theme for this year, "Last Invention," challenged students to imagine a world transformed by one final breakthrough—encouraging futuristic, sustainable concepts aimed at solving global problems.

Judges for the event included architect Ritul Sharma of Akriti, Managing Director Rupal Dalal, Director Harsh Dalal and the Centre Directors. Sharma applauded the interior design students for their sustainable prototypes, noting innovations such as acoustic panels made from mushroom material and lamps crafted from lemon-grass, which naturally repels insects.

Echoing his appreciation, Rupal Dalal praised the fashion and jewellery departments for their bold experimentation, highlighting a

fashion collection infused with natural fragrance that intensifies after each wash. Director Harsh Dalal acknowledged a standout jewellery line fashioned from repurposed broken tiles, turning discarded material into intricate wearable pieces.

Centre Directors Sumita Dey Deka and Ushmita Dey Hazarika congratulated the participants and the organising team for successfully presenting the landmark 20th edition. They said the event reflected the institute's mission to nurture design talent through industry exposure, collaborations and public showcases.

The ceremony concluded with recognition of outstanding performers whose work best interpreted the theme "Last Invention": Best Design Award: "The Earth Bound Essence" by Harshita Das and Dipshika Bharali (3rd Year, B.Voc Fashion Design), Best Design Award: "Mighty Architectonic" by Riter Doka (2nd Year, Advance Diploma in Fashion Design) and Best Design Award: "Eco Aura" by Sushilia Sonam (3rd Year, B.Voc Interior Design).

The evening ended with applause and appreciation as emerging designers received insights from industry leaders, reaffirming the institute's commitment to shaping the future of design in the region.

Kokrajhar University signs MoU with NIELIT to promote ICT education

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Nov 22: Kokrajhar University has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Institute of Electronics and Information Technology (NIELIT), Guwahati to strengthen ICT-based education and digital skilling in the region. NIELIT, an autonomous body under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) is a premier national institute for ICT training and capacity building.

The collaboration will provide students access to certified technology training programs aligned with industry standards and national skill development initiatives. One key outcome is the proposed establishment of a NIELIT Study Centre at the university, offering ICT-based skilling programs under the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF), promoting digital literacy and providing career-oriented technical training

for students and youth. Already, 304 students have enrolled in the Certified Office Automation and IT Assistance Course for the 2025-26 session.

Representing Kokrajhar University at the ceremony were Prof Ganesh Ch Wary Vice-Chancellor, Dr Dimacha D Mwchahary Registrar, Dr Shikna John Wary Academic Registrar (i/c) and Dr Bimal Kanti Basumatary Dean of Students' Welfare (i/c). The NIELIT Guwahati team included Santanu Borgohain Scientist-E, Soumya Deb Purkayastha Senior Technical Officer, Dr Bipul Roy, Scientist-D and Kamal Kumar Baglari Senior Technical Officer.

Following the MoU signing, the NIELIT team visited the university's Computer Centre to review ongoing training initiatives and assess infrastructure for upcoming ICT skill-based courses. The partnership is expected to significantly enhance employability and digital empowerment among students and youth in the region.

Guwahati Comic Con makes a vibrant debut in the Northeast

Massive fan turnout marks first-ever edition; global and Indian creators headline Day 1

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: The Northeast's pop-culture fandom witnessed a milestone moment on Friday as Comic Con India debuted its maiden Guwahati edition at the Arjun Bhogswar Baruah Sports Complex. Presented by Maruti Suzuki Arena and powered by Crunchyroll, the event opened to an enthusiastic crowd of fans, creators, gamers and cosplayers from across the region.

Chief Secretary Dr Ravi Kota graced the opening day, which featured creator sessions, performances, cosplay showcases and immersive experiences that kept visitors engaged throughout.

Globally acclaimed Archie Comics artist Bill Gollither interacted with fans, while 16 Indian creators showcased their latest works. Among them were Arunachal Pradesh's renowned illustrator Tadam Gyadu—known for contributions to Marvel titles such as Spider-Man, Iron Man, Ghost Rider and The Avengers and Assam's digital storyteller Debojyoti Choudhury, celebrated for his culture-rich art and strong online following.

The day also highlighted engaging sessions including a storytelling showcase by Studio Kapi, an interactive talk with artist



Rajesh Nagulakonda and the launch of 'Raj Rahman: The Weight We Carry' by Bullseye Press. Amar Chitra Katha's special session revived classic Indian narratives for a new audience. On stage, attendees enjoyed an interactive WingStar-themed activity by Tinkle, a high-energy performance by Unity One Crew and a comic set by Krishnendu Paul. Musician Kai RJ captivated listeners with English-Japanese fusion tracks, before MC Headshot closed the evening with a

powerful live set. One of the biggest attractions was Guwahati's largest cosplay competition, featuring characters ranging from Deadpool, Iron Man and Hellboy to anime favourites like Mitsuri (Demon Slayer) and Quaxi (Chainsaw Man), as well as gaming characters like Azir from 'League of Legends'. Cosplayers posed with fans as they competed for the ₹ 30,000 top prize. Visitors also enjoyed immersive installa-

tions, including a Spy x Family room and Demon Slayer zone at the Crunchyroll booth. Additional attractions included the Maruti Suzuki Arena reflex zones, NOD-WIN Gaming Challenger Arena, RedBull Gaming Ground, Logitech Race for Real simulator, a VR cricket experience by Royal Challenge Packaged Drinking Water and a PSP zone.

With strong participation and high-impact performances, Day 1 set a promising tone for Guwahati Comic Con's future editions. Day 2 will feature leading esports personality Scout (Tanmay Singh), who will meet fans, participate in live gaming challenges and share insights into India's evolving esports landscape.

Comic Con India CEO Shefali Johnson said the debut marks a special milestone for the platform. "The Northeast is full of energy, passion and creativity and today's crowd has reaffirmed just how vibrant this community is. Our aim is to create a space where fans, artists and storytellers can come together to celebrate the worlds they love, while inspiring the next generation of creators in a region so rich in stories, talent and imagination," she said.

Editor's pick

Supreme Court opens a small door for Rule-Breakers

By: Satyabrata Borah

The Supreme Court of India recently did something that surprised many people. In May 2025, a bench of the court had put a complete stop to the practice of giving environmental clearances after projects had already started or even finished. That order came in a case filed by an organisation called Vanashakti, and it felt like a strong message: no more shortcuts, no more breaking the law first and asking for permission later. But a few months later, a larger bench of the court took another look and partly reversed that decision. Post-facto environmental clearances are back, though in a much narrower form. The court did not throw the rule book out of the window, but it opened a small door that many fear could slowly become a highway again.

To understand why this matters, we have to go back to the basic idea of environmental clearance in India. When someone wants to build a big factory, a dam, a highway, or a housing complex that will affect forests, rivers, or air quality, the law says they must first get permission. An expert committee looks at the plan, studies how much damage it might do to nature and to people living nearby, suggests ways to reduce the harm, and only then says yes or no. This process is called Environmental Impact Assessment, or EIA. The whole point is to think before you act, not after the trees are cut and the concrete is poured.

For years, however, many builders and companies ignored this rule. They started work without clearance, and when the government caught them, they simply applied for permission later. The Environment Ministry even brought out office orders and notifications that made such "post-facto" clearances almost routine. Pay a fine, promise to plant a few trees, and carry on. Activists and lawyers kept shouting that this was illegal because the law clearly says clearance has to come first. The Supreme Court itself had said the same thing many times. In 2017, in a case called Common Cause, and again in 2020 while hearing Alembic Pharmaceuticals, the court made it clear that if prior clearance is compulsory, you cannot legalise the violation afterwards. The May 2025 order in Vanashakti took these earlier judgments to their logical end: no post-facto clearance at all. It struck down the ministry's 2017 notification and the office memoranda that had turned the exception into the rule.

Then came the twist. Some companies that had already received post-facto clearances in the past went back to the court and said, "Wait a minute. You cancelled the new ones, but you left the old ones untouched. That is unfair to us and unfair to future violators." A larger bench heard them and agreed that leaving the old clearances alone while banning new ones created unequal treatment. So the court decided to reopen the whole question.

The new majority judgment does not say the old "clearance first" rule is dead. It still calls that the main principle. But it carves out a small exception. If a project has already spent huge amounts of money and stopping it would cause massive loss, the authorities can consider "regularisation" after imposing heavy penalties and strict conditions. In simple words, breaking the law is still breaking the law, but in rare cases the government can choose to punish and correct instead of demolish.

Many environmentalists are disappointed. They feel the court has diluted a strong stand. Once you allow even a small window for post-facto clearance, they argue, powerful builders will find ways to push through it. The whole purpose of EIA is to prevent damage before it happens. Once the forest is cleared or the river is polluted, no amount of fine or patchwork mitigation can bring things back to the original state. A clearance given after the harm is done is not really prevention; it is just damage control dressed up as permission.

There is another worry. India already has a long history of projects starting illegally and then getting regularised because "too much money has been invested" or "thousands of jobs will be lost." Politicians and officials often cite these reasons to protect violators. If the Supreme Court itself says such factors can be considered, the message that goes out is that if you are big enough and rich enough, you can bend the rules and still get away.

The court's concern about fairness is understandable. When Vanashakti order cancelled future post-facto clearances but let the old ones stand, it did create two categories of violators: those who broke the law before May 2025 and got away, and those who break it tomorrow and face stricter punishment. Nobody likes different rules for the same crime. But the way to fix that inequality is not by making the new rules weaker. The fairer solution would have been to revisit the old clearances as well, tighten them, impose fresh penalties where needed, and send a message that the law will eventually catch up with everyone.

Environmental law in India has grown on the idea that nature must be protected before it is too late. From the 1990s onwards, court judgments kept repeating the "precautionary principle" and the "polluter pays" principle. The public trust doctrine says the government holds natural resources in trust for the people; it cannot allow them to be destroyed just because someone started destroying them first. Post-facto clearance goes against all these ideas. It rewards the rule-breaker and punishes the honest builder who waited for permission.

The court has left the door slightly open, but it has also reminded the Environment Ministry that post-facto clearance must remain the rare exception, not the new normal. The ministry now has a heavy responsibility. It must frame strict guidelines: what kind of cases qualify for regularisation, how heavy the fines should be, how to ensure the damage already done is truly repaired. If the ministry goes back to its old ways of freely granting post-facto permissions, the exception will swallow the rule again, and we will be exactly where we started.

The real solution lies in stronger enforcement on the ground. If district officials and state pollution boards do their job and stop illegal construction the moment it begins, there will be no need for post-facto debates. Projects will not reach the stage where crores have been spent and demolition looks impossible. Prevention is always cheaper and cleaner than cure.

The Supreme Court has balanced competing concerns: the need to protect the environment and the practical reality that some violations have already gone too far to be simply undone. It has not abandoned the principle that clearance must come first. But it has sent a gentle warning that principles sometimes have to bend a little when reality is messy. The question now is whether the government will treat this bending as a minor adjustment or as an invitation to return to business as usual. For the rivers, forests, and people whose lives depend on them, the answer to that question matters a great deal.

Zubin Garg's Achievement as a Lyricist

The most profound and analytically rich aspect of Zubin Garg's impeccable creative talent is his achievement as a lyricist. His songs were the pulse of time that could intensely attract the minds of every generation, capable of touching all levels of emotional, social, and philosophical aspects of Assamese life with simple yet profound language. Zubin Garg's journey as a lyricist was not merely the process of creating a few songs; it was a new awakening in Assamese poetics, where a edifice of modern attitudes and social responsibility was built upon the foundational roots of tradition. His songs represented the emotions of the youth of that era, while also establishing a strong connection between the old and the new, resulting in his creations gaining a universal appeal. This multifaceted creativity established him in Assamese society not just as an artist, but as a cultural architect and a magician of words, every word of which still inspires many to think deeply and search for the meaning of life.

The core characteristic of Zubin Garg's songwriting talent was a multidimensional and complex portrayal of love, which reformed the traditional romantic stream of previous lyric poetry. His love songs were not confined to the turbulent emotions between boys and girls; they deeply unveiled the philosophical, spiritual, and psychological dimensions of love. In his writing, love was sometimes the rarest dream of the human mind, which easily shatters in the harshness of reality; sometimes an eternal agony of separation, where sorrow was adorned with poetic beauty; and sometimes a quest for the soul, where through love, a person discovers the deepest truth of their existence. He expressed themes like the incompleteness of love, disillusionment, and betrayal with great courage and sincerity, reflecting the emotional reality of the youth generation of that time. His word choice was simple yet heart-touching, making the complexity and depth of love comprehensible and experiential even for the common listener. This skill in mapping detailed emotional landscapes established Zubin Garg as an undisputed artist in the realm of love songs, whose creations formed a lasting connection in the hearts of every generation. This renewed philosophy of love is an important milestone in Assamese lyric poetry.

A central theme in Zubin Garg's songs is a deep consciousness of humanity and social responsibility. The songs he composed were like moral guardians of society, fearlessly exposing contemporary Assamese society's social injustices, political hypocrisy, corruption, and cultural decay. His songs were not merely expressions of personal emotions; they were manifestations of a commitment to the larger society. In his word selection, a tone of intense anger and unrest was very evident, which not only questioned the status quo but also compelled the public to think deeply about the world around them and adopt a healthier stance. In his lyric poetry, one finds a realistic and emotional description of the sweat of laborers, poverty, and the pains and sufferings of ordinary people's lives. He did not merely touch these social issues superficially but presented their

fundamental roots, the profound reactions they create in the human mind, and their lasting impacts with subtle contemplation. As a lyricist, his commitment was not limited to creating melodies and rhythms but transformed into a revolutionary call to society, where he envisioned a dream of a better, pure, and value-filled humane society. His song collection is a kind of social document that captures the complexities, struggles, and glimpses of hope for the future in Assam's social system of a specific time. This deep social realization has made the essence of his songs more extensive, universal, and timeless. His songs represent the voice of the common people of society, who rarely get the opportunity to express their pains and sufferings. The style of these social songs was multifaceted—sometimes filled with anger and frustration, intensely protesting against societal inconsistencies; and sometimes compassionate and emotional, expressing the sorrows of the weak and oppressed. These songs played a crucial role in awakening and uniting the youth generation. Furthermore, another very vibrant and powerful element in Zubin Garg's songs is the deep connection and sincerity towards nature and his homeland Assam. In many of his songs, one finds a poetic and vivid description of Assam's enchanting natural environment, its rivers, hills, vast fields, and green forests. This depiction of nature is not limited to external beauty but is a lively expression of his immense affection, sincerity, and deep emotion towards his homeland. In his words, the scent of Assam's raw soil, the pulse of its folk culture, and a deep respect and honor for its heritage emerge. This connection has given his songs a strong regional and national identity, binding the entire Assamese audience with a thread of unity and awakening a sense of pride in them. The elements of nature in his songs often merge with the emotional states of the human mind, where the flow of rivers represents the unstoppable pace of time, and the stability of mountains symbolizes the firmness and patience of the human soul. His lyric poetry, built on this natural and cultural foundation, has played an important and honorable role in presenting Assam's tradition and identity on the world stage. This deep patriotism and love for nature has given the essence of his songs a high national dimension, elevating him not just as an artist but as a national symbol. His songs have strengthened the eternal relationship between the land and its people.

Another important aspect is the subtle analysis of the philosophy of life, philosophy, and spirituality found in the songs composed by Zubin Garg. His songs deeply touched fundamental questions of human existence, such as the meaning of life, the play of fate, the dynamism of time, and uncontrollability. He presented life's sorrows, successes-failures, and uncertainties with a philosophical acceptance. His songs were like a continuous self-inquiry, where he transformed his own experiences and questions into universal truths. This philosophical thought expressed through his word

choice was simple yet extremely influential, capable of making complex subjects comprehensible and heartfelt even for the common listener. He gave the transience of life and the play of emotions such a heart-touching form that it inspired listeners to contemplate the deeper meaning of their own lives. This level of deep contemplation transformed Zubin Garg's songs from mere songs into a philosophical guide for living and a source of mental peace. It is because of this eternal appeal that his creations remain equally relevant today without being lost in the flow of time.

The word selection and artistic construction techniques of lyricist Zubin Garg are a subject of deep study. He used the Assamese language in such a unique form that even ordinary words gained a new and powerful meaning. The simplicity and clarity of his language made his songs easily acceptable to listeners of all classes. But behind this simplicity lies a deep poetry and contemplation. By accurately using local dialects and cultural expressions, he brought his songs closer to the hearts of Assam's common people. A major achievement of lyricist Zubin Garg is his linguistic innovation, the uniqueness of word selection, and the proficiency in imagery skills. He had deep knowledge of the phonetic and emotional power of every word in the Assamese language. In his songs, one finds such a beautiful assemblage of pure Assamese words, which successfully harmonized the traditional beauty of the language with modern colloquial simplicity. He was able to create an extraordinary poetic emotional atmosphere even with very ordinary daily words. His use of metaphors, imagery, and symbolic language was extremely skillful and creative, giving his songs a visual and tactile appeal. He depicted rivers, hills, rain, moonlight, and pictures of Assamese villages and lands in such a way that listeners could vividly see them before their eyes while hearing the songs. This imagery style provided a new dimension to the language of Assamese songs and established

his songs as an integral part of Assamese life.

This proficiency in linguistic aptness elevated Zubin Garg from just a lyricist to a magician of words and language. The rhythm and expression in his songs have overall given a new dimension to contemporary Assamese lyric poetry, preparing a strong foundation for the next generation.

Zubin Garg broke away from traditional, ornamental poetics and expressed the language of the minds of the current youth generation through songs. The lyrics of his songs were simple, direct, and emotionally expressive, providing a platform for young men and women to openly speak their minds. The dialogue-like elements he used in songs gave them a dramatic appeal, as a result of which listeners could easily form an intimate relationship with the song's characters. This modern and simplified style made his songs equally popular in every village and town of Assam. In this way, he brought a revolutionary change in the language of Assamese songs, transforming



songs from a high art to a part of the common people's lives. This style of his proves that he was a lyricist who understood the pulse of time.

A large part of Zubin Garg's lyrical achievement depends on the cultural commitment and active integration of folk elements seen in his songs. His writing was like a modern translation of Assamese folk culture, Bihu, Bongeet, and other indigenous elements. Through songs, he gave birth to a distinct consciousness in the context of cultural identity, attracting the youth generation to their own roots. He showed how powerful and relevant indigenous elements can be in the field of modern music. This effort in cultural preservation and promotion gave a new dimension to his role as a lyricist in terms of social responsibility. His creations expressed the cultural soul of the Assamese nation in a new form.

In conclusion, it can be said that Zubin Garg's achievement as a lyricist is the result of an unforgettable and unique talent. His word selection techniques, his sincerity towards the Assamese language, and the use of simple yet profound meaning-bearing sentences have given his songs a special place. The rhythm and simplicity of language in his songs touch the hearts of ordinary people, but their deep meaning compels even scholars to think. His creative empire has created a new chapter in the history of Assamese music, providing a new path for the lyricists and artists of subsequent generations. His songs will certainly continue to reflect human feelings for ages. His songs are like a dictionary of life, giving us courage and inspiration to think deeply about love, society, rebellion, life, and existence. The essence of Zubin Garg's songs is a holistic philosophy of life: a sweet, meaningful, and eternal combination of love, society, rebellion, nature, and existence. His songs are a kind of life mantra, providing us courage, hope, and faith in life in every situation, and will shine forever as an invaluable and unrivaled asset of Assamese culture.

DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Nitish Kumar's 10th Term: Political endurance meets development imperative

By: Dipak Kurmi

In the labyrinthine world of Indian politics, where careers are built on ideological convictions and destroyed by their absence, Nitish Kumar stands as an enigmatic paradox. His recent swearing-in as Chief Minister of Bihar marks not merely another transition of power but an extraordinary milestone in contemporary Indian democracy—his tenth term at the helm of one of India's most challenging states. At 74, when most politicians contemplate retirement or elder statesman roles, Kumar has orchestrated what can only be described as a masterclass in political endurance, demonstrating that in the ruthless arena of electoral politics, adaptability trumps ideology every single time.

The numbers themselves tell a compelling story. The Janata Dal (United), Kumar's political vehicle, doubled its previous tally to secure 85 seats in the recent elections, providing the National Democratic Alliance with a decisive majority. This remarkable electoral performance cannot be attributed to mere chance or favorable circumstances. Rather, it represents the culmination of three decades of meticulous social engineering, where Kumar has painstakingly constructed a formidable coalition that transcends traditional caste boundaries while remaining deeply rooted in Bihar's complex social fabric.

The foundation of Kumar's political architecture rests upon his cultivation of the Extremely Backward Classes, a constituency he has nurtured with unwavering attention since the early days of his career. This EBC vote bank, augmented by substantial support from Dalit communities and women voters across these sections, has provided him with an electoral fortress that has weathered numerous political storms. When combined with the BJP's traditional support base and contributions from other NDA allies, this

multi-caste, multi-class coalition has created a social edifice formidable enough to withstand the forces of anti-incumbency that have toppled countless governments across India.

Kumar's political journey reads like an improbable thriller. Beginning his career in the Janata Dal alongside Lalu Prasad Yadav, he engineered the 1994 rebellion that birthed the Samata Party, demonstrating early on his willingness to break with the past when circumstances demanded. His strategic alignment with the BJP in 1996 catapulted him to national prominence, particularly during his tenure as Railway Minister under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, where he earned recognition as a competent administrator capable of delivering tangible results.

His first tryst with the Chief Minister's office in 2000 lasted barely seven days, a humiliation that would have ended many political careers. Instead, Kumar returned with renewed vigor in 2005, unseating Lalu Prasad Yadav's 15-year reign and initiating what many consider Bihar's reconstruction phase. For nine years, he governed with a focus on infrastructure development, law and order, and administrative efficiency, earning the moniker "Sushasan Babu"—the gentleman of good governance. This period witnessed significant improvements in road connectivity and bridge construction, tangible achievements that voters could see and experience daily.

Then began a decade of political turbulence that would have destroyed lesser politicians. In 2013, Kumar broke with the BJP, citing his opposition to Narendra Modi as the prime ministerial candidate—a move that appeared principled but carried enormous political risks. Two years later, he staged a dramatic comeback by forming the Mahagathbandhan with his old rival Lalu Prasad, demonstrating that in politics, yesterday's ene-



mies can become today's allies. This alliance, however, proved short-lived. In 2017, Kumar abandoned the Mahagathbandhan and rejoined the BJP fold. The pattern repeated itself in 2022 when he switched sides again, only to return to the NDA before the 2024 elections.

Critics have labeled him "Kursi Kumar"—the chair-obsessed politician—accusing him of opportunism and ideological bankruptcy. Yet such criticism, while perhaps morally satisfying, misses the fundamental nature of Kumar's political genius. He has understood what many ideologically rigid politicians fail to grasp: that in a democracy, sustained relevance requires not just winning elections but surviving between them. His serial realignments, far from representing weakness, demonstrate an almost preternatural ability to read Bihar's political currents and position himself advantageously regardless of which way the wind blows.

The voters' continued support for Kumar, despite his frequent political somersaults, reveals a profound truth about democratic politics. Citizens have prioritized welfare deliveries and administrative competence over political consistency. The targeted benefits distributed by his government—scholarships for girls, bicycle schemes for students, and various

other welfare programs—have created a constituency invested in his continuation in power. These doles, while criticized by economists as unsustainable, have effectively insulated Kumar from anti-incumbency sentiments that typically plague long-serving governments.

However, electoral success cannot obscure the harsh reality confronting Bihar. Despite Kumar's lengthy tenure, the state remains mired at the bottom of virtually every socioeconomic indicator in India. Bihar continues to be the country's largest source of out-migration, a damning indictment of its inability to generate adequate employment opportunities for its youth. The state's economy remains trapped in a vicious cycle: agriculture is hampered by fragmented landholdings and concentrated ownership, while the services sector remains largely confined to government employment. The near-total absence of organized industry and Bihar's chronic failure to attract private investment represent governance failures that transcend political partisanship.

Years of administration have prioritized visible infrastructure like roads and bridges while education and healthcare have languished in neglect. The state's human capital remains underdeveloped, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and un-

derdevelopment. These structural deficiencies have not escaped notice, yet the Opposition has proven spectacularly incapable of converting economic distress into political momentum. The Rashtriya Janata Dal's limited social coalition, the Congress party's organizational weaknesses, and the Left's confinement to pockets of support have collectively failed to present a credible alternative vision for Bihar's future.

As Kumar embarks on his tenth term, with the JD(U) occupying a pivotal position at the Centre, excuses for continued stagnation have evaporated. The government must pivot decisively toward securing sustainable livelihoods for Bihar's population. This requires catalyzing sectors like food processing that can leverage the state's agricultural fertility, creating an enabling environment for investment through transparent governance and infrastructure development, and perhaps most controversially, implementing land reforms that transfer holdings from absentee landowners to actual cultivators.

Kumar's absolute majority provides him with unprecedented political capital to undertake difficult reforms. His legacy will ultimately be measured not by the number of terms served or the cleverness of his political maneuvers, but by whether his tenth term marks an inflection point in Bihar's development trajectory. The question remains: will the ultimate political survivor transform his instinct for self-preservation into genuine, lasting reform? Or will Bihar continue its dependence on transfer payments and handouts while its youth seek opportunities elsewhere?

At 74, Nitish Kumar has achieved what all politicians aspire to—lifelong relevance. Whether he can now achieve what Bihar desperately needs—transformative development—remains the defining challenge of his final act in power. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

Sonowal stresses need for trained human resources in ship repairing sector

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Saturday stressed the importance of trained human resources to meet the demand in the shipping sector, and highlighted the strategic importance of the North East in shaping an advanced maritime ecosystem.

The Union minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of Underwater Welding, Offshore Repair and Additive Manufacturing (3D Printing) initiative at IIT Guwahati here.

He also distributed certificates to seven youth who successfully completed the Underwater Welding Certification Programme at the Technology Innovation Hub (TIH) of IIT Guwahati, supported by the Indian Register of Shipping (IRS).

The minister lauded the collaborative effort between IIT Guwahati and IRS, and observed a live demonstration of 3D metal



printing-based repair of a marine propeller undertaken by the IIT Guwahati team.

Speaking on the occasion, Sonowal maintained that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "strong and visionary leadership has rapidly strengthened India's maritime capacity and skilled workforce, modernised port connectivity, expanded inland wa-

terways and accelerated the growth of the blue economy".

"Assam and the North East continue to play an important role in this national advancement," he added.

Sonowal said the skill development and innovation initiatives underway at IIT Guwahati have opened a "practical and result-oriented pathway" for build-

ing advanced capabilities in underwater welding, offshore repair and next-generation manufacturing.

"Assam has the potential to become a leading hub for underwater repair and advanced manufacturing, and TIH at IIT Guwahati is poised to become the epicentre of this future," he maintained.

Highlighting the strategic importance of the North East, the minister said the region's natural waterways and geographical advantages give it a crucial role in shaping an advanced maritime ecosystem.

"Technologies such as underwater welding, offshore repair and 3D printing are essential for building a faster, reliable and cost-effective maritime and ship repair network," Sonowal said.

"Traditional dependence on dry docking and imported components increases costs and delays operations. The solution

being developed at IIT Guwahati paves the way for practical alternatives that strengthen self-reliance," he added.

Sonowal expressed satisfaction at the successful completion of the certification programme by the first batch of seven candidates, who now hold globally applicable qualifications.

He urged major shipyards, dockyards, inland waterways authorities and maritime industries to collaborate closely with IIT Guwahati to build a robust ecosystem.

"We remain firmly committed to fostering innovation, strengthening maritime infrastructure and creating skilled employment opportunities for our youth," Sonowal said.

The ministry will respond positively to outcome-oriented proposals from IIT Guwahati and its partners under existing policy and financial frameworks, he added. (PTI)

BJP ally TMP to hold 'One Northeast' rally with NE regional parties on Nov 27



AGARTALA, Nov 22: The Tipra Motha Party (TMP), an ally of the ruling BJP in Tripura, on Friday announced that a 'One Northeast' rally of the regional parties of the NE will be held here on November 27.

TMP supremo Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma said that Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, who is also the president of the National Peoples' Front (NPP), and several other prominent leaders of the regional parties in the northeast are set to join the rally.

The NPP too is an ally of the BJP.

"We had a very good meeting on the concept of One Northeast, a common platform of the regional parties of the northeast to speak in one voice. We are making significant progress in the process," Debbarma told reporters.

Claiming that the Centre has no time to hear the voices of 10 parties, he said the bargaining capacity of the northeast will be enhanced if the leaders and people of the region come together and speak in one voice.

The TMP founder's assertion came days after leaders from various states of the Northeast jointly declared on November 4 in New Delhi that they would form a single political entity in the next 45 days to raise issues of the region. Sangma of Meghalaya, Debbarma of Tripura, and Nagaland leader Mmhomluno Kikon who is a former BJP spokesperson, were part of the proposed entity.

On Saturday, Debbarma said that the leaders of the regional parties want to create a new idea for the entire northeast to speak in one voice for the common cause of the people of the region.

"Different organisations need to be amalgamated to create a common platform without losing their identity. We are working on how we can speak in one voice because the people of Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong and Arunachal Pradesh will come together," he said.

Debbarma said the rally of the leaders of regional parties will be held at Swami Vivekananda ground on November 27 to define the mission of 'One Northeast'.

On the recent violence in Khumulwng and Jampuijala in Tripura, the TMP leader said their party office was burned down, and leaders and workers were beaten up by miscreants. "Miscreants have no political ideology. They sometimes take up Tipra Motha's flags and someday the BJP's festoon. If they get an opportunity, they will not hesitate to work for the Congress or the CPI(M). We want the police to take strong action against the miscreants who are involved in violent activities in Khumulwng and Jampuijala," he said.

Workers of the BJP and TMP were engaged in clashes in Khumulwng in West Tripura and Jampuijala in Sepahijala district, leading to panic among the people. Chief Minister Manik Saha and Forest Minister Animesh Debbarma of the TMP visited violence-hit areas separately on Friday.

The TMP, which used to be the main opposition party of Tripura, joined the BJP-led government in the state ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in 2024. It now has 13 MLAs in the 60-member state assembly and two ministers. (PTI)

Tripura CM visits violence-hit Khumulwng, says police will act against attackers

AGARTALA, Nov 22: Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday said he has asked the police authorities to take strong action against those who are involved in attacks on the BJP's party offices, leaders and workers at Khumulwng in West Tripura district.

Workers of the ruling BJP and its ally, the Tipra Motha Party (TMP), have been engaged in clashes at Khumulwng in West Tripura district and Jampuijala in Sepahijala district in the past few days, leaving several people from both sides injured. Police pickets have been posted in Khumulwng and its adjoining areas.

"Following reports about attacks on the party office and party workers at Khumulwng, I have arrived here to see the ground reality. What I have seen here is not tolerable. I have spoken to a violence victim who was molested by the miscreants," the CM who visited Khumulwng during the day told reporters.

A TMP minister, who also visited the troubled area later, claimed that his party did not begin violence there, and offices of his party were also attacked.

Without naming the TMP, the chief minister said, "I hope the leaders of the party, the workers of which are involved in violent activities, make them understand that nothing can be achieved through force."

Saha said that miscreants vandalised the BJP office at Khumulwng while robbing valuable articles from the house of a woman who was also molested.

The chief minister said he has already instructed the police to deal with the situation strongly.

Soon after the CM left Khumulwng, TMP leader and Forest Minister Animesh Debbarma visited the same area and spoke to the party leaders and workers.

"The Tipra Motha has not begun violence at Jampuijala or Khumulwng, but we are being blamed for the violent activities in these areas. I have not identified the attackers through satellite. I would ask the police to take action against whoever are involved in the violence," he said.

"Two party offices of ours were vandalised and four workers injured in the attack by miscreants. Two shops belonging to the TMP workers were looted but the police remained silent," the minister claimed.

Debbarma said he would speak to party supremo Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma over the issue. "When the time comes, we will bring everything to the public. What has been happening at Jamapujala and Khumulwng should not be blamed on Tipra Motha. We are also part of the government," he said.

Clashes between supporters of the TMP, which is a tribal-based party, and the BJP are being reported as the election in the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAACD) is nearing.

The TTAACD area is two-thirds of the state's territory and is the home to the tribals. In the TTAACD election held in April 2021, the TMP bagged 18 of the 28 seats that went to polls.

The TMP, which used to be the main opposition party of Tripura, joined the BJP-led government ahead of the Lok Sabha elections in 2024. (PTI)

Powerful groups trying to divert attention from issue of illegal immigrants in Manipur: Biren Singh

IMPHAL, Nov 22: Former Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh claimed that certain powerful groups are deliberately trying to divert attention from the core problem of illegal immigrants in the state.

Singh also said anti-nationals and anti-state elements must not be allowed to distract from the real issue of infiltrators.

"When we began identifying illegal immigrants and refugees from the neighbouring country during the NDA government under my leadership, there was strong criticism from leaders of nearby states," he wrote on X on Friday evening.

Singh also said, "Today, every neighbouring state, including Nagaland and Mizoram, has finally realised the gravity of the situation and has taken up strict action."

His statement came in the wake of recent media reports of the Mizoram government completing 58.15 per cent of the biometric enrolment of 31,214 Myanmar refugees sheltered across 11 districts of the state.

"Mizoram is moving at an impressive pace in identifying illegal immigrants. Yet Manipur, the state that first took responsibility, has gone quiet on this burning issue in the name of ethnic violence," Singh said.



Claiming that the shift in priority is not an accident, he said, "Certain powerful groups are deliberately trying to divert attention away from the core problem of illegal immigrants so that state and central authorities get trapped in secondary issues and forget the primary threat facing Manipur."

Singh also appealed to the state and the central governments "to stay firm" and "continue the detection and deportation of illegal immigrants and refugees to their original countries".

He said that the public deserves to know how much biometric verification has been done of illegal immigrants in the state.

Singh asserted that anti-nation-

als and anti-state elements must "not be allowed to distract from the real issue".

"The safety, stability and future of Manipur depend on keeping our attention firmly on the core issue that started this entire crisis," he said.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The Centre had, on February 13, imposed the President's rule in Manipur after Singh resigned as the chief minister.

The state assembly, which has a tenure till 2027, has been put under suspended animation. (PTI)

Meghalaya CM expands scholarship scheme to promote tribal studies

SHILLONG, Nov 22: Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Friday announced the expansion of the Chief Minister's Research Grant to support 75 scholars this year, saying the initiative would strengthen research on the roots, history and culture of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo tribes.

Speaking on Day 2 of the Shillong Literary Festival 2025, Sangma said the event had grown from a small gathering into a major platform for literature, ideas and creative exchange.

"Next time, we should have a writing competition. Meghalaya should become a place where writing becomes part of our system, our culture," he said.

The CM highlighted an estimated economic return of Rs 133 crore from recent cultural investments and reaffirmed his vision of positioning Shillong as India's next arts and literary capital. He also said a dedicated team was already conducting an in-depth study on the three major tribes of the state. Sangma informed that Ward's Lake would undergo a major transformation, with ₹ 20 crore sanctioned and an additional ₹ 30 crore expected. The upgrades will include laser light installations depicting Meghalaya's history and permanent arenas for year-round cultural events.

Day 2 of the festival featured multiple book launches, including 'River Traveller - Journeys of the Tsangpo-Brahmaputra from Tibet to the Bay of Bengal', 'Wad ia ka malade' (Khasi), 'European Writing in the Khasi Hills, BSF and Meghalaya - Through the Lens of a Border Man, and From Isolation to Integration: Geopolitics of India's Northeast'. In the session 'Life Beyond the Metro', actors Vinay Pathak and Rajat Kapoor and filmmaker Dominic Sangma discussed changing landscapes of Indian cinema. Kapoor spoke on the challenges of independent filmmaking, saying, "The spirit of filmmaking is alive, but where is the audience?"

Sangma recalled listening to oral stories from elders and said he is working on the third part of his trilogy. Pathak said he was grateful to be part of the festival and looked forward to future collaborations. A poetry session featuring writers from the Garo Hills — Prince S.R. Marak, Sengsim A. Sangma, Jakmachi M. Sangma, Rhinkle Mrong and Fivebilson R. Marak — drew strong audience appreciation. Mountaineer Jamling Norgay, in 'The Everest Challenge', revisited the historic Tenzing-Hillary ascent and expressed concern over increasing crowds and risks on Mt Everest. (PTI)

ZORO opposes Centre's plan to fence Indo-Myanmar border

AIZAWL, Nov 22: An organisation representing the Chin, Kuki, Mizo and Zomi tribes of India, Bangladesh and Myanmar on Friday expressed their opposition to the central government's plan to fence the Mizoram section of the Indo-Myanmar border.

The Mizoram-based Zo Re-Unification Organisation (ZORO) claimed that the Centre has recently re-initiated the plan to fence the international border after a brief halt following stiff opposition from the state government and various groups. Mizoram shares a 510-km-long border with Myanmar's Chin state and the Mizos share ethnic ties with the Chin people living in the neighbouring country. "We consider this plan unacceptable because it seeks to divide the people who share the same ancestry, lineage, and blood. We therefore reiterate our firm opposition and declare that we will continue to resist the construction of the border fencing with utmost seriousness," ZORO vice president L Ramdilliana Renthlei said in a press conference.

The organisation described the unified resistance from the state government and other stakeholders to ensure that the Centre does not erect fences on the boundary as 'Indanna bang' or 'barrier wall'.

Renthlei said that the ZORO has thoroughly studied the Indo-Myanmar border

fencing proposal and recognised its "grave negative implications" and the tremendous hardship it will cause to the ethnic Zo people of both countries. He said that the Zo communities living in Myanmar and India share close ethnic ties, and marriage among people from both sides of the boundary is still in practice. "If the border is fenced, these natural social bonds will be abruptly severed, cutting off close relatives and creating deep divisions among families. Such an outcome is harmful to our identity and alarming, especially as it provides a tool for others to weaken and dominate us," the ZORO vice-president said.

Renthlei alleged that fencing the border will severely damage unity among Mizos of the two countries and will also adversely affect their lands.

He said that Mizoram lost a vast stretch of land as proposed fencing is to be erected inside 150 metres from the boundary, which will in turn cut off significant stretches of agricultural land, grazing areas, paddy fields, rivers, sand resources and hunting grounds resulting in the loss of livelihood by several families.

He claimed that Mizoram lost 12 villages while others were divided in the middle when fencing was erected along Mizoram-Bangladesh border. (PTI)

Four militants among 5 arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, Nov 22: Security forces arrested four militants belonging to various proscribed outfits in Manipur for their alleged involvement in extortion activities, police said on Saturday.

A person was also apprehended from his residence at Itham Awang in Thoubal district after weapons were recovered from his possession on Friday, a senior officer said. Three active cadres of the banned People's Liberation Army were arrested from Keishampat Thouda Bhabok Leikai area in Imphal West district on Thursday, he said, adding that they were allegedly involved in extortion activities. One pistol and ammunition, along with documents related to the outfit, were recovered from their possession, the officer said. Security forces also arrested a member of the proscribed Prepak on Thursday from the Luwangsangbam area in Imphal East district, he said. The militant was accused of demanding money from people in the valley area. One SLR rifle loaded with 12 rounds of bullets and two radio wireless sets were recovered from the person who was arrested in Thoubal, the officer added. Security forces have been conducting search operations in Manipur since ethnic violence broke out two years ago. More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023. (PTI)

People displaced by Manipur's ethnic violence demonstrate, seeking to return home

IMPHAL, Nov 22: Hundreds of people displaced by the ethnic violence in Manipur on Saturday attempted to return home in Churachandpur from the camps in Bishnupur district where they have been living for the last two and a half years, but were stopped by security forces, prompting them to hold a demonstration.

These violence-affected people, who belong to the Meitei community, lived in the Kuki-dominated Churachandpur district before the ethnic clashes broke out in May 2023. Over the last two years, they have been living in camps in Bishnupur, which is a part of the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley.

Similarly, Kukis living in the Valley districts have fled to the hill districts where they dominate.

As these internally displaced persons (IDPs) marched towards Churachandpur, security forces stopped them at Kwakta, nearly 11 km from the

border of the district, officials said.

The forces put up barricades, barbed wires and parked heavy vehicles on the road to prevent any further movement, they said.

After being stopped, the IDPs started a demonstration, demanding that they be allowed to return to their homes. They also raised slogans against the Sangai festival, organised by the government.

Similar attempts were also made on Friday, and the IDPs were stopped at Phougakchao Ikhai, leading to a clash with the forces.

In Imphal West district's Canchipur, a group of women also demonstrated against the festival.

Meanwhile, the Kuki-Zo Council expressed concern over the attempts made by the IDPs to march towards their homes in Churachandpur district, calling it a "provocation". The council reiterated its demand for the creation of a Union Territory for the Kuki Zo people. (PTI)

Rio flags off Air India Express aircraft at Dimapur airport

HT Correspondent

DIMAPUR, Nov 22: Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio flagged off Air India Express plane, a newly inducted Boeing 737-8 aircraft featuring a livery Tsungkotepu warrior shawl, at Dimapur airport on Saturday.

Rio, while inaugurating the selfie point at Dimapur airport, stated that Nagaland is pleased to welcome Air India Express with a special Tsungkotepu-themed livery as the tourist partner for Nagaland tourism and Hornbill Festival.

"This collaboration marks an important step in strengthening connectivity, enhancing the visitors' experience and showcasing Nagaland to the rest of the country and also to the world," he said.

Rio stressed that it is an endeav-



our undertaking and a corporate partnership that will provide greater opportunities for tourism, cultural exchange and economic

growth.

Aloke Singh, MD, Air India Express, said his organisation was honoured to partner with the

Nagaland government for the Hornbill Festival 2025.

He said Tsungkotepu livery on the new aircraft VT BWD is a tribute to Nagaland's artistic legacy.

"Today's ceremony reflects the state's creativity, energy and cultural pride. We look forward to welcoming guests from across India to explore more of Nagaland and participate in the Hornbill Festivities this year," he added.

The Air India Express has decided to offer 15% discount for bookings from or to Dimapur made till December 10, 2025, applicable for travel till December 15, 2025, using the promo code 'HORNBILL' on the airline website and mobile app to encourage travellers to visit Nagaland during the festive season.

This is how democracy should work, hope to see this in India: Tharoor

NEW DELHI, Nov 22: Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Saturday lauded the cordial meeting between US President Donald Trump and New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani, saying this is how democracy should work and hoped to see this happen in India.

Seizing the opportunity, the BJP expressed hope that Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi would get the message.

Posting on X a video of the meeting between the US President and the New York City Mayor-elect, Tharoor said, "This is how

democracy should work. Fight passionately for your point of view in elections, with no rhetorical holds barred. But once it's over, and the people have spoken, learn to cooperate with each other in the common interests of the nation you are both pledged to serve." "I would love to see more of this in India, and am trying to do my part," the Congress MP from Thiruvananthapuram said.

Reacting to Tharoor's remarks, BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla was all praise of Tharoor for his remarks and hoped Rahul Gandhi would get the message.

"Once again, Shashi Tharoor reminds Congress to put India first, not Parivar. To behave democratically and not like sore losers. But will Rahul Gandhi get the message? One more Fatwa loading against Shashi?" Poonawalla posed in a post on X. After months of vitriolic attacks against each other during the New York City mayoral election, Trump and Mamdani adopted a mutually warm tone during their first meeting at the White House in Washington DC, with the US president terming it "very productive".

Trump also expressed confi-

dence that Mamdani "can do a very good job".

"We've just had a great meeting, a really good, very productive meeting. We have one thing in common, we want this city of ours that we love to do very well. "I wanted to congratulate the Mayor. He really ran an incredible race against a lot of smart people, starting with the early primaries, and he beat them easily," Trump said in the Oval Office, as Mamdani stood next to him.

When asked if he would feel comfortable living in New York City under a Mamdani adminis-

tration, Trump responded emphatically. "Yeah, I would, especially after the meeting. Absolutely".

He added that they agreed on "a lot more than I would have thought. I want him to do a great job, and we'll help him do a great job. He may have different views. I would feel very, very comfortable being in New York, and I think much more so after the meeting." Mamdani "appreciated" the meeting with Trump, also describing it as a "productive", one focused on a place of shared admiration and love, which is New York City. (PTI)



Cong divided over tie-up with MNS for civic polls: BJP



MUMBAI, Nov 22: The Congress in Maharashtra appeared divided on allying with the MNS in the upcoming local body polls, with senior leader of the grand old party Vijay Wadetiwar favouring a united contest, while MP Varsha Gaikwad said it was firm on not aligning with the Raj Thackeray-led party in Mumbai.

Wadetiwar, however, suggested that the Congress wouldn't compromise on its ideology for forging alliances. He referred to NCP (SP) chief Sharad Pawar's statement underlining the importance of Opposition unity for defeating the BJP.

"Ultimately, ideology matters. We are positive towards a united fight, including Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS). Everyone must come together to defeat the BJP," the Congress Legislature Party leader told reporters on Saturday.

He referred to the MNS's participation in the 'Satyacha Morcha' organised by the opposition MVA in Mumbai earlier this month against the alleged discrepancies in the voters' list.

Wadetiwar's open support for MNS flies in the face of the Mumbai Congress unit, which had announced to go solo in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) polls.

Reacting to Wadetiwar's remarks, Mumbai Congress chief Varsha Gaikwad said she spoke about alliances at the state level, while the party's Mumbai unit has already made its stand clear that it will not align with the MNS for the BMC polls.

She had earlier said that the Congress will never tie-up with those people who take the law into their hands and intimidate others.

Elections to the 246 municipal councils and 42 nagar panchayats in the state will be held on December 2, while the civic corporation polls are expected to take place in January 2026.

State Congress chief Harshwardhan Sapkal has reiterated that the party would never join hands with "those who indulge in violence".

The growing proximity between Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT), a member of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), and MNS headed by his cousin Raj Thackeray, had apparently shaped the Congress's decision to contest elections independently.

Wadetiwar, meanwhile, claimed that the BJP's internal surveys predicting significant gains for the party in the upcoming Mumbai civic polls were "fabricated".

"It is a fictional narrative created by the BJP. This is a desperate attempt to influence public perception. Many new voter identity cards mysteriously appeared in Mumbai yesterday; perhaps the BJP wants to repeat what they did in Bihar. They want to end democracy," he alleged.

Senior BJP leader and Maharashtra minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule criticised the Congress for what he described as its "politically convenient" shift in stand over aligning with the MNS.

Bawankule said the Congress had earlier firmly opposed any alliance with the MNS due to the latter's aggressive agitations against Hindi-speaking people.

"The party leadership had adopted that stance, fearing a backlash from voters in the recently held Bihar assembly elections. Now the Congress is changing its stand for its own convenience ahead of civic polls in Maharashtra," he alleged.

Meanwhile, reacting to MNS leader Sandeep Deshpande calling Congress an amoeba, Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant said, "Science tells how an amoeba holds its ground. And politics tells how some change colours." (PTI)

Global jurisprudence needs urgent evolution for emerging climate, tech phenomena: Jitendra Singh

LUCKNOW, Nov 22: Union Minister of State for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh on Saturday said that judicial leadership and global jurisprudence must urgently evolve to address emerging challenges like those of the deep ocean, space debris, and artificial intelligence.

The minister said there are four vital changes required, beginning with "strengthening international environmental law, regulating new technologies, updating outdated legal frameworks, and embedding intergenerational equity into judicial thinking".

The remarks came at the 26th International Conference of Chief Justices of the World at the City Montessori School here. The event was also attended also by astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla.

Singh said international environmental law can no longer function in silos as countries today face "interconnected crises" ranging from climate change to ocean degradation. He stressed the need for regulations to govern emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and automation, noting that societies must "tame ourselves (and know where) to stop".

Referring to issues such as space



debris and cyber threats, Singh said several matters confronting courts today were never imagined two decades ago, yet judges are increasingly required to rule on them without established legal provisions. Therefore, he said, legal frameworks must be updated to meet contemporary realities.

The minister also emphasised the incorporation of intergenerational equity into jurisprudence, stating that judicial decisions responding to present-day grievances have long-term consequences.

"The effect of a judgement will be felt by the next generation. Cli-

Punjab BJP Mahila Morcha protests against AAP govt

'Every day, cases of snatching, assault, and crime surface across the state, exposing the grim reality of Punjab's deteriorating security situation'

CHANDIGARH, Nov 22: Punjab BJP's Mahila Morcha on Saturday held a protest against the AAP government in the state for allegedly failing to fulfil its poll promise of giving ₹ 1,000 monthly to women.

Protesters, led by Morcha president Jai Inder Kaur, tried to force their way through police barricades to gherao the chief minister's camp office.

Their attempts were scuttled by the Chandigarh police, who detained them later.

A heavy police force, including women cops, was deployed outside the Punjab BJP office here to stop the protesters from heading towards the chief minister's camp office in Chandigarh.

Addressing a gathering of protesters, Kaur said ahead of the 2022 assembly polls, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) had promised to give ₹ 1,000 to every woman.

No woman in the state has yet got what was promised, despite AAP nearing completion of four years in the government, she alleged. The state government now



owes ₹ 45,000 to every woman, she claimed, adding that women feel cheated, and the government has committed a "fraud".

Slamming the Bhagwant Mann government over the law and order in the state, Kaur also alleged that with snatching incidents happening every day, women were not feeling safe.

"Every day, cases of snatching, assault, and crime surface across the state, exposing the grim reality of Punjab's deteriorating security

situation," she said.

The protesting women said the AAP supreme, Arvind Kejriwal, had made the poll promise at a rally in Moga in November 2021, and the government should honour the promise.

Kaur said the people of Punjab were "wise" and fully understood the "disastrous misrule" of this government.

"The countdown has begun for AAP, and in the 2027 Vidhan Sabha elections, the women of

Probe into case of loan misappropriation by Ex-MLA Anvar reveals financial irregularities: ED

MALAPPURAM(KERALA), Nov 22: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) probing the alleged loan misappropriation by former MLA P V Anvar from Kerala Financial Corporation (KFC) said on Saturday that it has unearthed financial irregularities linked to the political leader's business dealings.

ED has carried out raids on the residences and businesses of Anvar here on Friday. The ED is probing about the ₹ 7.5 crore loan, the KFC had granted to Malamkulam Constructions in 2015.

Later, loans to the tune of ₹ 3.05 crore and ₹ 1.56 crore were sanctioned to Pee Vee Aar Developers, using the same collateral properties within a short interval, resulting in a total NPA of approximately ₹ 22.3 Crore, a statement from ED said.

As many as 15 bank accounts held in the names of different persons, alleged to be benamis, from which suspected transactions have taken place, were identified, the statement said. The seized materials are being examined to identify the Proceeds of Crime, quantify the diversion of loan funds, establish the layering mechanism and determine the extent of benami holdings.

According to ED, preliminary evidence indicates diversion of the sanctioned funds, use of nominal shareholders and directors, and suspected benami ownership of assets.

"During the searches, Anvar admitted to being the real beneficial owner of Malamkulam Constructions, despite the company being held in the names of his nephews and driver. He confirmed that loan amounts were used for the large township project Pee Vee Aar (PVR) Metro Village," ED said.

According to ED, the statements of his associates revealed that documents were routinely signed at his instruction, funds were diverted to associated entities, and certain cash collections were handled outside reg-

ular accounting channels.

It is also found that certain buildings were constructed in PVR Metro Village by Malamkulam Constructions Pvt Ltd without proper approvals from the local regulatory body, and Proceeds of Crime have been infused in the said construction, ED said.

ED officials said that searches at the premises of Bis Manjeri LLP and PVR Metro Village indicated extensive construction and commercial activity, including schools, amusement parks, resorts, villa projects, and apartment blocks.

"Evidence collected suggests transfer of loan proceeds between related entities and utilisation for purposes unrelated to sanctioned activities. During the searches, various incriminating documents and digital evidence related to sale agreements, financial documents and property papers, multiple records and digital devices, have been seized," ED said.

According to ED, statements of KFC officials recorded during the operation revealed procedural lapses, non-verification of prior mortgages, and re-use of the same collateral for subsequent loans.

"The Technical Officer admitted that valuation reports were re-used without fresh inspection, and the legal officer acknowledged that earlier encumbrances went undetected," the statement by ED said.

ED initiated the investigation after the Kerala Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau (VACB) recently registered a corruption case related to loan misappropriation at the KFC Malappuram office.

Last month, the ED recorded the statement of Murgesh Narendran, the complainant in the VACB case.

Anvar, a former MLA from Nilambur, parted ways with the LDF following differences and later contested the Assembly by-election on an All India Trinamool Congress ticket early this year. (PTI)

Terror not linked to any religion; people should not fall for divisive narratives: J-K BJP

JAMMU, Nov 22: Jammu and Kashmir BJP spokesperson Tahir Chowdhary on Saturday said the recent Delhi blast was a terror attack aimed at India, and urged people not to fall for narratives that divide people or demonise any community.

He appreciated the coordinated efforts of the security agencies investigating the November 10 blast that killed 15 persons in the Red Fort area, and said invoking the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and other stringent provisions against the culprits was not only justified but essential.

"Terrorists want chaos. They want mistrust. They want to weaken our social fabric. Giving this attack a communal colour is exactly what they want. We cannot allow that," Chowdhary said in a statement here.

He said the arrests, including individuals detained from Pulwama, indicate a wider conspiracy and show that the attack was neither random nor impulsive. He called the attack a "planned terror strike" aimed at a high-footfall area with immense national symbolism. Coming out strongly against what he calls "irresponsible and dangerous attempts" to give the incident a communal colour, he asserted that the explosion was a terror attack on India.

"People must understand this clearly — the attackers did not target Hindus or Muslims. They

targeted India. They targeted every citizen who believes in peace. Terror has no religion, and attempts to link this incident to any community, especially Muslims, are completely baseless," he said.

The BJP leader stressed that the choice of location was deliberate.

"The Red Fort is where the country looks every Independence Day. It is a symbol of our democracy and unity. Striking in its shadow is meant to send a message to the nation. That message has nothing to do with communal identity — it has everything to do with destabilising India," he said.

He said the nature of explosives, the manner of execution and the timing point to an organised operation.

"This was a clear attempt to spread fear, not a communal provocation. The public must not fall for narratives that seek to divide people or demonise any community," he said.

"This fight is against terror networks, not against any religion. India must remain united," he said. He said that while the Red Fort blast was a grim reminder of the threat India faces, it has also reaffirmed the country's resolve.

"Delhi has moved ahead, but it has not forgotten. And India will not forgive those who tried to attack our spirit. Justice will be delivered — without fear, without bias and without delay," he said. (PTI)

Sri Sathya Sai Baba inspired millions to follow path of service: Prez

PUTTAPARTHI (ANDHRA PRADESH), Nov 22: President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday said revered spiritual leader Sri Sathya Sai Baba inspired millions of people to follow the path of selfless service.

Addressing the birth centenary celebrations of Sathya Sai Baba at Puttaparthi in Sri Sathyasai district, the President said Sathya Sai Baba propagated the belief that 'Service to Mankind is Service to God'.

"He linked spirituality with selfless service and personal transformation. Sai Baba inspired millions to follow the path of service," said Murmu.

According to the President, Sathya Sai Baba urged his followers to align spirituality with public welfare.

It was heartening to see his devotees in so many countries serving the underprivileged, she said, adding that Sri Sathya Sai Baba's message of selfless love through selfless service is inspiring the Sri Sathya Sai organisation to volunteer for service.

Sathya Sai Baba's message— love all and serve all and help ever and hurt never— are eternal and universal. Sathya Sai Baba viewed the world as a school in which the five human values of truth, good conduct, peace, love and non-violence form the core curriculum, said the President.

The President said since ancient times our saints and sages have guided the society through their actions and words undertaking numerous initiatives for public welfare.

She noted that Sri Sathya Sai Baba exemplified this tradition by turning ideals into reality through extensive welfare work.

The Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust provides high-quality free education that combines academic excellence with character-building, she added.

Meanwhile, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said practising the principles of Sathya Sai Baba would lead to world peace.

Recalling Baba's welfare activities, the CM said he undertook drinking water projects in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu. (PTI)

Governor reviews PM Gati Shakti implementation

Parnaik urges full use of digital platform, suggests dedicated state application



ITANAGAR, Nov 22: Governor Lt Gen KT Parnaik (Retd) on Saturday reviewed the implementation and utilisation of PM Gati Shakti in the state at Raj Bhavan. Chief Secretary Manish Kumar Gupta, Planning Commissioner Ankur Garg briefed the governor about the PM Gati Shakti portal and its processes, while Arunachal Pradesh Pace Application Centre director Dr H Dutta made a presentation on its applications. The governor emphasised that every department of the state must make full and effective use of the

PM Gati Shakti repository while planning and executing development projects, an official statement said. The platform, with its wealth of integrated data can significantly enhance the state's ability to plan smarter, avoid delays and ensure better coordination across sectors, he said. Parnaik suggested that in addition to Gati Shakti, the state should consider developing its own dedicated application, an integrated digital tool designed to support governance. He said such an appli-

cation would help officials analyse data more efficiently, plan projects with greater precision and monitor progress in real time. This would assist in efficient governance, strengthen administrative effectiveness and also ensure that development reaches people faster and more transparently, the governor said. He advised the officials to explore applications for Vibrant Village Programme monitoring and analysis, disaster management, anti-drugs and agri-horticultural projects. (PTI)

OIL achieves safe capping of Well 76 at Kharsang

HT Correspondent
DIBRUGARH, Nov 22: Oil India Limited (OIL) has successfully completed the capping of Well KSG-76 at the Kharsang Oil Field in Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh marking a significant milestone in its ongoing well-control operations. The well, operated by GeoEnpro Petroleum Ltd (GEPL) had suffered a blowout on October 30, 2025 during service operations, leading to an uncontrolled release of gas.



flow to the top of the stack and ensuring containment. With the assembly secured, the BOP was closed, completely stopping the gas discharge from the well.

OIL stated that the successful capping demonstrates the company's engineering capability, detailed planning and strong collaboration between global specialists and local teams. The remaining phases of the well-control roadmap will proceed as per established protocols. The company lauded the efforts of its Crisis Management Team, Cudd Well Control specialists, GEPL personnel and field workers who operated tirelessly throughout the operation. OIL also extended its gratitude to the Arunachal Pradesh district and state administration, the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas and the local community for their consistent support. OIL reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining safe, sustainable and efficient operations across all its activities.

OIL's Crisis Management Team aided by experts from Cudd Well Control, USA and the GeoEnpro team, assumed control on November 1 and immediately began the high-risk task of removing the damaged Blowout Preventer (BOP). The operation, carried out under challenging conditions, required precise coordination and technical expertise. After the safe removal of the BOP the pre-positioned capping stack was accurately installed on the wellhead, successfully redirecting the gas

Historic Buddhist village cries out for basic amenities



HT Correspondent
MARGHERITA, Nov 22: Wakhetna, a serene Singpho village just 7 km from Bordumsa town in Arunachal Pradesh's 49th Bordumsa-Diyun Assembly Constituency, remains isolated even 78 years after India's independence. Established in 1953, Wakhetna is home to the Sumangala Buddha Vihar, a more than 70-year-old monastery that houses India's only pagoda designed by artisans from Myanmar. The spiritual site attracts domestic and international pilgrims, drawn by its architectural uniqueness and tranquil ambience.

Despite its historic and cultural significance, villagers face daily hardships. There is no all-weather road, forcing residents to wade through slush during monsoons. Children have no high school nearby and often drop out after primary education. The village lacks tap water under the Jal Jeevan Mission, compelling households to fetch water from distant streams. There is no primary health centre, making medical emergencies perilous and mobile network coverage is patchy, leaving basic telecommunication a luxury. Venerable Pannasiri, head monk of Sumangala Buddha Vihar, expressed deep concern over the lack of facilities for pilgrims, including the absence of a study room or a guest house, despite repeated appeals to local authorities and the MLA of Bordumsa. Wakhetna boasts 100% literacy and relies on agriculture, mainly areca nut and tea cultivation. However, poor road connectivity hinders market access, limiting economic opportunities. Residents lament that despite voting faithfully in every election, development promises remain unfulfilled. With panchayat elections scheduled from December 15, villagers have urged the BJP-led Arunachal Pradesh government and the local MLA to prioritize development in Wakhetna. They stress that the community deserves basic infrastructure, water, education, health facilities and dignity. As India looks toward a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, the residents of Wakhetna continue to wait for the recognition and development their historic village deserves.

New platform to enable real-time monitoring of visitors, migrant workers and violators

Khandu announces full digital revamp of ILP system

ITANAGAR, Nov 22: Chief Minister Pema Khandu has announced that the state government is set to implement a comprehensive digital overhaul of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system, calling it the "most significant step" in enhancing the monitoring of non-Arunachali movement into the state.

Speaking to media at Koloriang in Kurung Kumey district on Friday, Khandu said the digital integration process has been underway for nearly three years and the project has now entered its final stage. Technology partners have already completed the backend integration and the new ILP system is expected to go live within the coming months, he said.

The upgraded digital platform, Khandu said, will provide the state with complete and real-time records of all visitors, migrant workers and existing ILP holders. "We will finally have the data we have been waiting for. Many people have come in, now we must know who they are, how long they have stayed and whether their ILPs are valid or expired. Even those with ILPs who are overstaying will now be visible in the system," the chief minister stated.

He added that a detailed note on the reform would be shared once the rollout is completed. Responding to questions on the presence of illegal Bangladeshi nationals, Khandu urged the public not to panic over social media claims but assured that verification and enforcement would continue strictly. He said intensive ILP checks have already been conducted across districts following directives issued to the DGP, Home Department, ACPs and SPs. Citing official data, the chief minister said around 5,000 ILP vi-



olators were detected between January and November this year, each of whom was pushed back. "We do not discriminate between Hindu, Muslim or Bangladeshi Muslim. Anyone violating ILP norms is sent back," he said. Once the ILP system is fully digitised, monitoring and accountability will become more robust, tightening the state's control over illegal entry and overstaying, he added. Arunachal Pradesh is protected under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR), 1873, which mandates that all non-residents, including Indian citizens from outside the state, must obtain an ILP before entering. The ILP system serves as both a regulatory and protective mechanism, helping safeguard the state's indigenous communities, land rights and cultural identity. The upcoming digital upgrade, officials said, is expected to modernise enforcement while maintaining the historical safeguards guaranteed under the BEFR Act. (PTI)

New website for Lohit Youth Library Network launched



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Nov 22: Senior Director of NIC Itanagar, Yagru Linggi on Saturday launched the new website of the Lohit Youth Library Network (thejoyofreading-arunachal.org), expressing gratitude for being part of the ongoing Reading Movement in Arunachal Pradesh. Speaking at the National Informatics Centre, Linggi said he was honoured that NIC could contribute to promoting reading habits across the state. He appreciated the long-standing support of NIC teams at Roing, Tezu and Namsai in disseminating library activities and paid special tribute to Willa Namchoom, DIO Namsai for developing and maintaining the Network's first website until his recent illness. Linggi also congratulated Dipak Roy and Dormie Gogoi for creating the newly launched site. Sokhep Kri, Director, Department of Indigenous Affairs and Convenor of the Lohit Youth Libraries, highlighted the achievements of the library movement and hoped the revamped platform would reach many more readers. Library coordinator S Mundayoor expressed heartfelt thanks to NIC officers, noting that in the early years—when laptops were rare and internet connectivity weak—the movement relied almost entirely on NIC's support. He recalled that NIC's contribution continued with the development of the first website by Namchoom and then DIO Roing, Yagru Linggi. Prem Khandu Thungon, Director (IT), NIC Itanagar appreciated Mundayoor's lifelong service to nurturing a reading habit among Arunachali youth, despite the challenges of earlier decades. Cautioning students against overdependence on online resources, he stressed the importance of analytical thinking and warned them about online risks such as data theft and deepfake traps. He urged web administrators to strengthen cybersecurity in managing digital platforms. Junior volunteer Arpita Ram, a Class 9 student of GHSS Tezu, shared how the Bamboosa Library shaped her learning journey. Senior Directors June Kadu and Radhe Hinda also congratulated the team on strengthening the library network's digital outreach. Earlier, senior volunteer Banika Kri welcomed the gathering, while Siwani Pul expressed gratitude to NIC for its long-standing patronage and thanked RPETA Trust, New Delhi for sponsoring the new website.

Children's Corner brings colour, creativity and storytelling magic to Lit-Fest



HT Correspondent

ITANAGAR, Nov 22: One of the liveliest spaces at the 7th Arunachal Literature Festival was the second edition of the Children's Corner, which buzzed with laughter, learning and creative energy as young readers immersed themselves in a day filled with stories, art and interactive activities. Continuing the initiative to create a dedicated platform for children, the sessions offered a rich blend of storytelling, illustration workshops and visual creativity led by renowned artists and educators. The Children's Corner opened with an engaging session by Canato Jimo, illustrator and art director at Pratham Books, known for popular titles such as 'The Very Wiggly Tooth', 'Bobo and the Worms' and 'Snip', a wordless picture book for early readers. He was joined by award-winning Arunachali illustrator Ogin Nayam of the Tagin tribe, co-creator of 'Asamo, Is That You?', a picture book that brings alive monsters from Northeastern folklore. Winner of the 2025 Mehli Gobhai Award for Children's Illustration of the Year and the FICCI Publishing Award for Best Cover Design for 'When the Sun Sets', Ogin captivated young participants with his vibrant storytelling. Together, the duo showcased how picture books rooted in folklore can preserve oral traditions while igniting children's imagination. A storytelling session by Padmashree Satyanarayan Mundayoor—affectionately known as Uncle Moosa—further enlivened the atmosphere. A beloved figure in Arunachal's reading movement, Uncle Moosa left his government job in Kerala in 1979 to promote literacy in Lohit. His pi-

oneering efforts, including community libraries in Dibang Valley and the celebrated Bamboosa Library network under the Lohit Youth Library Movement, have inspired generations of young readers. His expressive performance, supported by Vamika Kri, Shivani Pul and young contributor Arpita Ram, brought stories such as 'Pet Porcupine' and 'The Gruffalo' alive with warmth and humour. The third session returned to illustration with Ogin Nayam, who conducted a workshop titled 'World Building - When the Sun Sets.' The activity encouraged children and families to explore imagination and perspective, sparking discussions on how stories often grow from the smallest ideas. The room soon filled with colours, laughter and unique characters as participants created their own miniature worlds. The final session was a comic-making workshop conducted by Pankaj, a self-taught illustrator and children's book creator from Assam, known for his work with Pratham Books and Comixense. He guided children aged 9 to 12 through the basics of creating characters, panels and short visual narratives, helping them craft their own simple comics. Day one of the Children's Corner concluded with renewed enthusiasm, inspiring children to think creatively, express confidently and explore new storytelling forms. Organisers noted that Arunachal's rich oral traditions—shaped by folklore, myths and recitations—found natural resonance in the sessions. Through listening, imagining and retelling, the Lit-Fest continues to nurture young storytellers who will carry forward the cultural legacy of the state's indigenous communities.

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Three arrested for vehicle thefts at TRIHMS

ITANAGAR, Nov 22: Police have arrested three persons involved in vehicle thefts at the Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHMS) premises, an official said on Saturday. Naharlagun Superintendent of Police (SP) Neelam Nega said the arrests were made following written complaints on November 19, regarding multiple theft incidents at TRIHMS. Acting on

CCTV footage, police identified one of the suspects involved in breaking into parked vehicles. The accused, identified as Md Anwar Hussain (29), a resident of Fatehpur village in Assam's Lakhimpur district, was apprehended by constable Ganesh Upadhyay of the TRIHMS Police Outpost while he was lying on a hospital ward bed, disguising himself as a patient to avoid de-

tection. During interrogation, Hussain named two more accomplices identified as Md Sheikh (33), a resident of Dharmopur village in Assam's Lakhimpur district, and Jakir Hussain (20), a resident of Karunabari village in Assam's Lakhimpur district, from Panchayat Colony, the SP said. He said the arrests were carried out by a police team led by sub-inspectors Vivek Linggi and Niri Rama, head

constable Lham Tsering. During questioning, the trio confessed to a specific pattern of committing thefts, the official said. They randomly inspected parked vehicles to see if doors were unlocked and stole cash or valuables when accessible. They also exploited half-open windows, which allowed them to reach inside and unlock doors. Nega said they targeted multiple locations, including market areas, hospitals, offices, and household parking spaces. A fourth accomplice involved in the network of thefts is currently absconding, and efforts are underway to trace and apprehend him, he said. Meanwhile, the SP has appealed to the general public to remain alert, properly secure their vehicles, and immediately report any suspicious activity to the nearest police station or dial 112. (PTI)

Police Sports Fest 2025 launched in East Siang to promote drug-free community

District Police, 5th IRBN mobilise youth through two-day sports event in Pasighat

HT Correspondent

PASIGHAT, Nov 22: The East Siang District Police, in partnership with the 5th IRBN Pasighat, kicked off the "Celebrating Police Sports Fest 2025" at Jarkong on Friday with the theme "Drug-Free East Siang." The inaugural day witnessed large participation from youth across the district. East Siang Deputy Commissioner Sonalika Jiwani, inaugurating the event, urged young people to embrace sports as a path to a healthier and drug-free society. Addressing the gathering, she lauded the enthusiasm displayed by participants and stressed that sports not only ensure physical well-being but also contribute positively to society. Calling for a renewed focus on integrating sports into the lives of children and youth, the DC administered a pledge to all players

to jointly work towards a drug-free East Siang and Arunachal Pradesh. "When the demand for drugs ends, the supply will end itself. You all are our hope for a drug-free district," she said. Superintendent of Police Pankaj Lamba informed that the two-day sports fest includes football (8 teams), volleyball (12 teams), cricket and badminton with notable participation of women in volleyball and badminton. He said the event aims to strengthen community engagement and promote the district's anti-drug campaign through sportsmanship and youth involvement. Commandant of 5th IRBN Garima Singh, SDPO Dr Akansha Milind Tamgadge, Dy SP Ayub Boko, police personnel and young sportspersons attended the inaugural programme.



Bowlers give India upper-hand, South Africa end day one at 247/6

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: Temba Bavuma paid price for his momentary indiscretion while Tristan Stubbs fell prey to Kuldeep Yadav's guile as bowlers put India on top in the second Test, reducing South Africa to 247 for six on an attritional opening day's cricket, here.

It was a track with a difference where survival, unlike Kolkata, wasn't difficult but at the same time, it wasn't a better either where a team could just race away with a flurry of boundaries.

The Indian bowlers -- especially Kuldeep (3/48) and Jasprit Bumrah (1/38) -- displayed immaculate control and mastery on a track that was reasonably good for batting with no signs of variable bounce whatsoever.

Ravindra Jadeja (1/30) didn't get much help off the surface but dismissing Bavuma (41 off 92 balls) was one of the turning points of day one.

It was an over-pitched delivery and Bavuma went to play the lofted drive over mid-off. The ball stopped on him and hit slightly higher part of the bat and never got the elevation required. Yashasvi Jaiswal pounced it smartly.

This was after his 84-run stand with Tristan Stubbs (49 off 112 balls) and South Africa were looking good to carry on with the momentum.

Following Bavuma's dismissal, Tristan Stubbs, playing his first innings of note in the series, also lost concentration.

It was a delivery from Kuldeep that was angled across Stubbs who wanted to play a non-existent steer as a practice catch went to KL Rahul at the first



slip.

Stubbs did look good after some initial jitters as he used his big 6 feet 4 inch frame to come down the track, defend the deliveries based on length and attack when need be. Both his sixes off Kuldeep -- one over long-on and other over long-off -- were a result of picture-perfect footwork.

The two quick wickets resulted in a third as Wiaan Mulder (13) also repeated the mistake made by Bavuma. The bowler this time, though, was Kuldeep, who had tossed one up outside the off-stump, enticing him to go for an inside out drive over extra cover.

Once again there was no elevation and Jaiswal made no mistake as South Africa from a comfortable 166 for 2 slumped to 201 for 5.

At the fog end of the day, Mohammed Siraj produced a beauty where the ball deviated late to get

Tony de Zorzi (28 off 59 balls) nick one to a diving Rishabh Pant behind the stumps.

His was another case of a batter getting set and not converting the start.

While the pitch hasn't shown signs of wear and tear but it is occasionally troubling the batters which is par for the course.

After an under-prepared track that messed up things for India in the opening game in Kolkata, the Barsapara Stadium track remained firm while offering some lateral movement due to the underlying moisture in the first hour and half.

But all the Proteas batters were guilty of throwing away the initial hardwork. They survived those anxious moments, got their eye in but could not turn their knocks into substantial ones.

Aiden Markram (38 off 81 balls) was beaten time and again during

Bumrah's probing opening spell when the pacer beat both inside and outside edges of his willow with lateral movement.

But just at the stroke of tea, Bumrah fired one fuller with the angle and Markram went for a needless expansive drive when all he could have done was play for time after adding 82 with Ryan Rickleton (35 off 82 balls).

The dismissal did affect Rickleton but it was Kuldeep, who just two ball post tea, got one to drift in and then turn enough to kiss the outside edge of Rickleton's bat into skipper Pant's hand.

Pant's captaincy also stood out as he was pretty good with his bowling changes, giving all the bowlers reasonable spells to set-up the batters.

The opening day had a retro like feel from 1980s and 90s as the first was hour saw Bumrah being lethal while deliveries bowled by Washington Sundar and Kuldeep did jump and turn.

Even with the old ball, Bumrah got appreciable inward movement while Mohammed Siraj, who was also steady bowled some sharp bouncers to trouble the Proteas middle order batter.

In between, Bavuma was a picture of concentration as he defended well, survived DRS appeals and occasionally played those drives.

What South Africa would rue after the end of the opening day was all their top-order batters played in excess of 80 deliveries but didn't convert which could hurt them in context of the final outcome of the game. (PTI)

Travis Head's century leads Australia to an 8-wicket victory over England in Ashes opener

PERTH, Nov 22: Travis Head flipped the narrative and dominated the England pace bowlers with one of the great centuries in Ashes cricket Saturday as Australia raced to an eight-wicket victory with three days to spare in the first Test.

Head turned England's "Bazball" tactics back on the visitors, clobbering a century from 69 deliveries after being promoted up the order to open the innings when Usman Khawaja was injured.

Australia captain Steve Smith said Head offered to open the innings and he told him: "Go for your life!"

"That innings from Travis Head was out of this world," Smith said.

In three innings across five sessions, fast bowlers were right on top as 30 wickets fell for 468 runs 113 overs in Perth -- 19 on a chaotic Day 1 and 11 before the tea interval on Day 2.

Set 205 to win, Head went in as a makeshift opener and plundered 123 from 83 balls, hitting boundaries to all parts of the ground as he hit the rope 16 times and cleared it on four occasions.

He was caught in the outfield trying to rush to victory, with Australia needing just 13 runs to win at 192-2.

Marnus Labuschagne leveled the scores with a six and was unbeaten on 51 when Australia reached 205-2.

Australia extended its unbeaten run in home Ashes tests to 16, with 14 victories and two draws since losing the 2010-11 series. Momentum swinging test England was on top for the first four sessions but lost control with a batting collapse after the lunch interval on Day 2.

Stokes won the toss, batted and England was skittled for 172, with veteran Australian paceman Mitchell Starc leading an under-strength bowling attack with a career-best 7-58.

Australia was then bowled out for 132,

with the highest individual score of 26 and Stokes snaring a five-wicket haul after some early fireworks from his seamers.

In its second innings, England was cruising at 65-1 until the big momentum shift. At 76-2, England lost three wickets without scoring -- lucky not to be 4-0 because of a dropped catch -- and slid to be all out for 164.

That set up the last innings, with Australia having three days and one session to chase a moderate victory target.

Enter the mustachioed match-winner, Travis Head.

England's second innings demise

The statistics suggested the pitch at Perth Stadium was playing like a minefield for most of the first two days.

Starc had 10 wickets for the match including the 7-58 in the first innings, starting Day 2 with a spectacular return catch to remove Zac Crawley and also removing Joe Root and Stokes as England was dismissed for 164 in its second innings.

England lost three wickets without scoring in a momentum-shifting spell after lunch on Day 2.

Australian pace bowler Scott Boland had Ollie Pope (33) caught behind and Harry Brook (0) caught at slip in the space of four balls. Two balls later, Starc removed Root (8) for the second time in the match -- the England batter dragging one onto his stumps.

Pope, Brook and then Root were all out trying the same thing, reaching to play drives, and all with the total at 76.

It could have been worse for England, but Khawaja dropped a regulation catch off Jamie Smith at slip that would have made it four wickets without a run.

Starc then dismissed Stokes (2) to really send a tremor through the England lineup at 88-6, collecting his 10th wicket for the match. (AP)

Lakshya Sen enters Australian Open final

Lakshya looked patchy early on while Chen was far more precise with his shot selection and execution, which allowed the Taiwanese to dominate the rallies



SYDNEY, Nov 22: Star Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen stormed into the men's singles final of the Australian Open Super 500 with a gritty three-game win over world No. 6 Chou Tien Chen of Chinese Taipei, here on Saturday.

Lakshya, a 2021 World Championships bronze-medallist, showed immense mental toughness to recover from an opening-game setback and outlast the second seed 17-21, 24-22, 21-16 in an 86-minute semifinal.

The 24-year-old, who reached the Hong Kong Open final earlier this year but is yet to win a title this season, will face either Japan's Yushi Tanaka or Chinese Taipei's fifth seed Lin Chun-Yi in Sunday's summit clash.

Lakshya looked patchy early on while Chen was far more precise with his shot selection and execution, which allowed the Taiwanese to dominate the rallies. His steady play earned him a 11-6 lead at mid-game interval.

Chen's aggressive backcourt attack paid off as he raced to 14-7. Lakshya briefly halted the run with a big smash to the deep corner, but Chen immediately won back the serve with a sharp cross-court winner. The Indian kept feeding shuttles into Chen's hitting zone, and the Taiwanese repeatedly unleashed his power smashes.

A net error from Lakshya made it 19-13 before Chen, who had committed a few soft mistakes, steadied himself again. At 19-15, the two played a 44-shot rally that ended with Chen delivering a killing blow to earn five game points. Lakshya saved two, but then drove one into the net to concede the opener.

After the change of ends, both players took time to adjust, trading errors as the score moved from 2-2 to 4-4. Chen's pinpoint attacks began clicking again as he pulled ahead 7-4. But Lakshya fought back superbly, levelling at 9-9 with Chen's defence beginning to fray. The Taiwanese's aggression softened and his accuracy dipped as Lakshya applied pressure to

take an 11-9 lead with a fine net shot.

Chen clawed back to 12-all after Lakshya pushed a smash wide. At 14-13, Lakshya showcased his defensive grit with a series of exceptional saves before finishing the point with a smash.

Chen won another attacking exchange and moved to 16-17 after Lakshya suffered an unfortunate net chord. The Taiwanese made it 17-all with a smash around the Indian's hips and then edged ahead when Lakshya hit the net.

Lakshya sent one ballooning long and followed it with another mis-hit to hand Chen two match points.

But the Indian responded with a deep-corner winner, and Chen then hit the tape to make it 20-20. A tight net duel saw Chen claim his third match point, only to send the next shuttle long as the scores were levelled again.

Lakshya earned a game point with a smash that clipped the line. Chen saved it with a smash of his own, but the Indian grabbed a second opportunity with another brilliant winner and roared back into the match when Chen went long.

The difference in age seemed to come into play as a 24-year-old Lakshya looked more fresher than the 35-year-old Chen, whose movement grew laboured and errors mounted in the decider.

Lakshya raced to a 6-1 lead as Chen struggled for precision. Lakshya's length improved, his net game turned sharper, and he read Chen far better.

Chen's authority, which he had shown in the opening game, dissipated as Lakshya extended his lead to 10-5. He entered the interval 11-6 after Chen went long again.

The Indian extended it to 14-7 ahead. A service error from Chen pushed Lakshya to 17-9, and a crisp cross-court smash earned him eight match points. Chen saved four but eventually netted the shuttle, as Lakshya sealed an impressive comeback victory. (PTI)

New Zealand beats the West Indies by 4 wickets to sweep the ODI series 3-0

HAMILTON (NEW ZEALAND), Nov 22: Mark Chapman made a gritty half-century to guide New Zealand to a four-wicket win over the West Indies in the third one-day international Saturday and a 3-0 series sweep.

Chapman reached his fourth ODI half-century from 58 balls and went on to score 64 in a 75-run fifth-wicket partnership with Michael Bracewell as New Zealand chased down the West Indies' 161 with 19.3 overs remaining.

New Zealand held a 2-0 lead after winning the first match by seven runs and the second by five wickets.

The West Indies chose to bat first after winning the toss but managed only 161 on a pitch at Seddon Park which had more menace than its relatively placid appearance suggested.

First through Matt Henry with the new ball, then with effective use of the short ball and later with Mitch Santner's spin, New Zealand dismissed the tourists in 36.2 overs.

"It was quite a slow surface so probably looked a bit different to how you want to go about your work here at Seddon Park," Henry said. "It's a small ground all round so you want to be taking wickets throughout to put teams under pressure. "Thankfully we could keep doing that with some bowling from the whole team."

New Zealand faced real difficulties in its chase, stumbling to 32-3 after Will Young was brilliantly caught by Khary Pierre in the 11th over in one of the highlights of the match. Pierre dived full length at short cover to pick off Young's drive off Matthew Forde in mid air.

New Zealand was 70-4 when Tom Latham was out for

10 after grafting for 25 balls. The West Indies kept New Zealand under early pressure with tight lines and hustle in the field.

But Chapman and Bracewell eased the pressure in a partnership which was the largest of the match. Chapman reached his 50 with a six in an over in which he took 17 runs from the bowling of Forde. It was his fifth score of 50 or more in his last seven innings. Bracewell finished 40 not out from 31 balls.

West Indies captain Shai Hope was happy to bat first on what looked to be a docile pitch at Seddon Park, dry and sparsely grassed. But there was a little swing early and, when that abated, New Zealand's persistence with a shorter length paid off as batters made a start but often fell to soft dismissals.

Henry dismissed Akeem Auguste and Keacy Carty within the space of three balls in the fifth over after the West Indies had made a bright start. The tourists scored at a run a ball through the first 10-over power play but lost three wickets in that period which exposed the middle order.

Four wickets fell for 36 runs in the next 10 overs -- the West Indies were 96-7 -- and the tail again was called on to come to the rescue.

Roston Chase bolstered the innings with 38 from 51 balls before falling to a short ball from Henry which flew to Bracewell at extra cover.

Khary Pierre, playing for the first time in the series, showed some defiance with an unbeaten 22, including two sixes before Henry finished the innings with the wicket of Jayden Seales. Henry took 4-43 and Santner 2-27. (AP)

Jayshree Nath shines with gold at Yogasana World Cup

HT Correspondent

HOWRAGHAT, Nov 22: Jayshree Nath, a resident of Dakhin Dighalipar village in Howraghat, Karbi Anglong, has won one gold and four silver medals at the 6th Yogasana World Cup held in Karnal, Haryana, from November 13 to 16.

Jayshree, a woman police officer who joined the force through



sports quota, represented both Assam and India at the interna-

tional competition, which featured participants from eight countries. She has so far won more than 30 gold and silver medals in various competitions across Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. Jayshree has also won gold medals at the international level and has been selected to participate in the upcoming Asian Games.

Sotomayor urges Indian athletes to prioritise discipline



NEW DELHI, Nov 22: World record holder high jumper Javier Sotomayor on Saturday said that discipline and mindset, not facilities alone, decide the success of an athlete, and urged the Indian youngsters to do the same.

The Cuban legend said India is currently at the right stage to produce world class athletes, but added that the drive has to come from within.

The 1992 Olympic champion, whose 2.45m high jump record still stands, said there is no fixed formula to break records. He insisted that time is ripe for India to make a breakthrough in athletics.

"I frankly don't have the answer to how someone can break the record, but if at all a record should be

broken, it should be now," Sotomayor said in an interaction with PTI Videos on the sidelines of Ekamra Sports Literature Festival here.

"All the conditions are ideal. There is technology now, there is support now. All you need is discipline. Once you have the discipline, you can have the result," he said.

He highlighted discipline and mental strength as the two non-negotiables for any athlete seeking world-class consistency.

"It depends on the person, it changes from person to person. The first thing is the mentality and then all the support comes in. The structure, the training -- all that comes in later," Sotomayor said. "It really depends on the athlete and how they want to excel."

The 58-year-old reminded that elite performance is built over years of commitment, and external motivation can only spark, not sustain, a career.

"Athletes are not made in a day, or with a few words of mine. It takes their years," he said.

"I can just give them a slight push or good advice, but after that it is their own journey. A word of encouragement helps. There were people who encouraged me, so I can also do the same and try to give them a push and sort of inspire them."

Talking about the event, he said, "It is the first time I am participating in a literature sports festival, and it's an honour to be invited here."

"I would like to share my experience as an athlete and what it continues to mean for us." (PTI)

Shami, Akash Deep in Bengal's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy squad



KOLKATA, Nov 22: Out-of-favour India pacer Mohammed Shami, who picked 20 wickets in four matches in the first phase of Ranji Trophy, has been included in Bengal's Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy squad.

The fit-again Shami, having recovered from his leg injury, has played four of Bengal's five matches in Ranji Trophy this season. His 15 wickets in the first two matches were key to Bengal's two back-to-back wins over Uttarakhand and Gujarat at the start of the season as they lead the group C standings.

Shami was on Friday named along with another India pacer Akash Deep in Bengal's 17-member squad to be captained by Abhimanyu Easwaran.

The Indian selectors seemed to have moved past the veteran pacer, having sidelined him for the white

ball series in Australia and then the ongoing Test rubber against South Africa.

But the veteran pacer, however, is keen to make a comeback again.

"My motivation is to stay fit and be available for the India team. It's not my job to update selectors on fitness," Shami had said earlier during the Ranji Trophy.

The Bengal squad also has promising keeper-batter Abhishek Porel who is back after playing for India A in the Rising Asia Cup tournament. Shakir Habib Gandhi is the second keeper in the squad.

Placed in group C, Bengal will face Baroda in their opening encounter of this T20 tournament in Hyderabad on November 26.

Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Services, Puducherry and Haryana are the other teams in their group.

Bengal Squad

Abhimanyu Easwaran (Captain), Sudip Gharani, Abhishek Porel (WK), Shakir Habib Gandhi (WK), Yuvraj Keswani, Priyanshu Srivastav, Shahbaz Ahmed, Pradipta Pramanik, Writick Chatterjee, Karan Lal, Saksham Chaudhary, Mohammed Shami, Akash Deep, Sayan Ghosh, Kanishk Seth, Yudhajit Guha, Shreyan Chakraborty. (PTI)

Two Manipur participants win Gold and Silver at National Abilympics 2025

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Nov 22: Manipur delivered an impressive performance at the National Abilympics 2025, with two participants from the state winning top honours at India's Work Skill Olympics for Divyangians.

The national event, held at the Civil Services Officers Institute (CSOI) in New Delhi, featured 59 finalists from more than 20 states following a four-city regional selection process across Chennai, Mumbai, Lucknow and Guwahati.

Organised by Sarthak Educational Trust in collaboration with the National Abilympic Association of India (NAAI), and supported by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), TPCDD and IndusInd Bank, the competition awarded 26 medals this year, including eight Gold, ten Silver and eight Bronze across key skill categories.

Yunnam Naresh Singh, who is visually impaired, won the Gold medal in Massage Services, emerging as one of the strongest performers in the services category.

His technique and precision helped him outperform contenders from Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir and Delhi, drawing strong appreciation from jurors and guests.

"Massage is an art for a visually impaired person. I dedicate this award to my mother—every step I have taken is because of her. I want more people in Manipur and the Northeast to know about Abilympics so that hidden talent can be recognised and supported," Naresh said.

Manipur's second winner, Abujum Arunkumar Meitei, who has a locomotor disability, won the Silver medal in

Basket Making.

Competing against participants from Jammu & Kashmir and other northern states, his design skill and craftsmanship placed him among the country's top performers in the craft category.

"This Silver medal is not just mine—it belongs to my family and my state. Basket making has always been my strength, and today it feels like my hard work has finally been seen," he said.

Officials noted that the results highlight the growing visibility of the Northeast in India's disability-inclusion and skilling ecosystem, with Manipur continuing to perform strongly in vocational arts and therapeutic skills.

Dr Jitender Aggarwal, secretary-general of NAAI and founder-CEO of Sarthak Educational Trust, congratulated the winners.

"Manipur's performance stands out for its depth of skill, discipline and spirit. Naresh and Abujum are shining examples of how talent thrives when given the right platform. We look forward to seeing them train for Finland 2027 and represent India with pride," he said.

The national winners are now closer to representing India at the 11th International Abilympics in Finland in 2027, the global Work Skill Olympics for Persons with Disabilities.

Their achievements underscore India's growing capacity to build inclusive, skill-driven pathways for economic empowerment.

For Manipur, the medals serve as a reminder that opportunity, training and recognition can unlock extraordinary human potential.