

**6 WORLD**

- Death toll rises to 55 in Hong Kong fire, 279 still missing
- Imran Khan is in 'completely good health inside Adiala Jail': Jail authorities

**8 NATION**

- PM Modi launches Skyroot's facility in Hyderabad
- Success of Op Sindoor stands as defining moment in India's counter-terror: Prez

# CM vows to table UCC Bill if voted back to power

Assembly passes Anti-Polygamy Bill • Women's rights 'non-negotiable': Himanta

**HT Bureau**  
**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** The Assam Legislative Assembly on Thursday passed the Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025, making polygamy a punishable offence across most parts of the state, with a maximum imprisonment of 10 years.

The law will not apply to areas under the Sixth Schedule or to Scheduled Tribe communities protected by customary practices.

Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, reiterating the government's stance on women's empowerment, said women's rights in the state are "non-negotiable".

In a statement on X, he said the government is moving forward with "unshakable commitment to ensure justice, dignity and legal safeguards for women", adding that the legislation reflects Assam's



adherence to the principles of Nari Shakti.

The Bill defines polygamy as contracting another marriage while a prior marriage remains valid.

It proposes up to seven years' imprisonment for anyone entering a second marriage during the subsistence of the first, and up to ten years for hiding an existing marriage.

A repeat offender will be liable for double the prescribed punishment.

The legislation also holds accountable village heads, qazis, priests, guardians or any persons who knowingly conceal facts or aid the solemnisation of an unlawful polygamous marriage.

They may face up to two years' imprisonment and fines ranging from ₹ 1 lakh to ₹ 1.50 lakh.

The Bill further bars convicted offenders from state-funded employment, government-aided benefits, and contesting elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies.

It also provides compensation and legal protection to women affected by polygamous marriages.

Sarma told the House that the law is **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## Over 520 teaching posts remain vacant in institutions

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** More than 520 teaching posts reserved for SC, ST and OBC categories are lying vacant in government colleges and universities across Assam, the state assembly was informed on Thursday.

In a written reply to a query by the Leader of Opposition Debabrata Saikia, Assam Education Minister Ranaj Pegu informed the House that a total of 522 teaching posts, belonging to the SC, ST and OBC categories, in state-run colleges and universities presently remain vacant.

## Mastermind of human-trafficking arrested in Tinsukia

**HT Correspondent**  
**DIBRUGARH, Nov 27:** Police on Wednesday arrested the alleged mastermind of a child-trafficking racket from the Phillabari area under Phillabari Police Station in Assam's Tinsukia district.

The accused has been identified as Peter Sona.

Sona is suspected to have trafficked at least half a dozen children

from tea garden areas to neighbouring Arunachal Pradesh.

According to police, he had been hiding in Pengree, from where he was apprehended.

"Peter had been absconding for many days after his accomplices were arrested recently at Duarmara Singpo village when they attempted to take away a minor," a police official said.

During that incident, one of the accused, Dipak Phukan, was caught by villagers and handed over to police.

His interrogation led to the arrest of five more individuals linked to the trafficking network — Umakanta Chetri, Boby Deori Sona, Rohit Khadal, Peter Sabashi and Ajit Munda. Sona, believed to be the **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## Assam govt approves GoM's report on granting ST status to 6 communities

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** The Assam cabinet has approved a report of the Group of Ministers (GoM) regarding the proposal for grant of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six major communities of the state, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

Members of these six communities — Tai Ahom, Chutia, Moran, Motok, Koch-Rajbongshi and Tea Tribes (Adivasis) — have been demanding ST status for a long time.

The report of the GoM will be submitted by the state's Tribal Affairs Department to the assembly, and 'we will request the Speaker to table it in the House before the winter session ends on Saturday', Sarma said at a media briefing after the cabinet meeting on Wednesday evening.

The three-member GoM was headed by Education Minister Ranaj Pegu, while the other two members are Water Resources Minister Pijush Hazarika and Infor-

mation and Technology Minister Keshab Mahanta.

The cabinet has also approved the modification and transfer of 99 acres of land under the Handloom, Textiles and Sericulture Department, to the Cultural Affairs Department for the establishment of a state-of-the-art museum, where the famed devotional textile 'Vrindavani Vastra' will be on display, after being brought on loan from the British Museum in London, Sarma said.

The 'Vrindavani Vastra', a 16th-century silk textile depicting the life of Lord Krishna, was created under the guidance of Assamese cultural icon Srimanta Sankardeva at the request of Koch king Nara Narayan. The museum, a priority initiative aimed at preserving and showcasing one of Assam's most significant heritage textiles, will be developed with the support of JSW I&P Holdings Pvt Ltd as their Corporate Social Responsibility initiative, he added. (PTI)

## Mass resignation hits Congress in WKA

**A Correspondent**  
**BAITHALANGSO, Nov 27:** The Congress in West Karbi Anglong witnessed a major setback on Thursday after a group of senior leaders, led by West Karbi Anglong District Congress Committee (WKADCC) vice president Rupsing Bongrun, tendered their mass resignation from the party.

Those who resigned include WKADCC general secretaries Jenison Teron, Sotosing Teron and Anthony Teron; vice president Dilipsing Hanse; and secretary Indro Sen.

Several other leaders and members from district and Mandal committees also joined the move.

Before submitting their resignations, the leaders took out a procession from Dongkamukam Forest IB to the WKADCC office in Dongkamukam, where they handed over their collective resignation letter to WKADCC organising secretary Ajit Dera.

Speaking to reporters, former WKADCC vice president Bongrun alleged that the Congress was no longer functioning in accordance with its own rules and regulations.

He claimed that newcomers were being given undue preference, sidelining long-time workers, which compelled them to step down. Bongrun added that the group **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## CEM lauds Rengma community for its rich cultural heritage

### Rengma Naga community celebrates Ngada festival in Karbi Anglong

**HT Bureau**  
**DIPHU, Nov 27:** The Rengma Naga tribe on Thursday celebrated Ngada—its traditional post-harvest and thanksgiving festival—with a central programme organised by the Rengma Naga Cultural Society (RNCS) at the open stage of the Arboretum-cum-Craft Centre, Matipung.

The event brought together members of the Rengma community from across Karbi Anglong.

The celebration began with the hoisting of the RNCS flag by its president, Dwelo Sebu, followed by an opening prayer offered by Rev Jonathan Nyenthang, Pastor of the Rengma Baptist Church, Diphu.

Member of the Au-



tonomous Council (MAC) Phenpiga Rengma delivered the welcome address and explained the significance of the festival.

Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Karbi Anglong

unity and the joy of community. It marks the completion of the harvest season and symbolises the values of co-operation, respect for nature and harmony among families and villages," he said.

The CEM lauded the Rengma community for its rich cultural heritage—its songs, dances, crafts and customs—which he said enrich the wider cultural landscape of the region.

Their indigenous knowledge, whether in farming, weaving, healing or community governance, "is not only an inheritance from your ancestors but also a guiding light for sustainable living today," he noted.

Highlighting the longstanding **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## State to have quasi-judicial body to protect Vaishnavite centres

### House passes Satra Preservation and Development Commission Bill

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** The Assam Assembly on Thursday passed a bill to set up a quasi-judicial body — the Satra Preservation and Development Commission — for the protection, maintenance and regulation of Vaishnavite monasteries.

During the passage of 'The Assam Satra Preservation and Development Commission Bill, 2025', Revenue and Disaster Management Minister Keshab Mahanta said Satras were facing challenges such as encroachment, fragmented records and weak institutional co-ordination, impeding lawful protection, conservation and sustainable management of the

centres.

The bill will establish the Assam Satra Preservation and Development Commission as a specialised, quasi-judicial body to protect, preserve, manage, maintain and regulate Satras and their lands, he added.

The Commission will also entertain appeals against orders of district commissioners, undertake surveys and suo motu inquiries on encroachment, and recommend conservation measures for heritage structures and artefacts.

For effective adjudication and enforcement, the Commission is vested with powers of a civil court and exercises jurisdiction to the ex-

clusion of civil courts on matters it is empowered to determine.

The officials in the Commission will be deployed on deputation to ensure functionality without creating a permanent establishment burden, Mahanta said.

"The state government may issue policy directions and assign additional duties, actions done in good faith are protected, and a limited power to remove difficulties is provided, consistent with the Act," he added.

The bill, therefore, creates a coherent, accountable and legally robust framework to preserve Assam's Vaishnavite heritage, protect Satra **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

## ASSEMBLY CLEARS AMENDMENT BILL

### Moh Juj to be excluded from animal cruelty law

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** The Assam Assembly on Thursday unanimously passed an amendment bill to exclude traditional buffalo fight from the ambit of an existing law to prevent cruelty to animals, similar to Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu.

During the passage of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Assam Amendment) Bill, 2025, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Minister Krishnendu Paul said the original law recognises the need to exempt certain traditional practices from its provisions.

He noted that traditional buffalo fight or 'Moh Juj' has played a significant role in preserving and promoting tradition and culture among the people as well as playing a vital role in the continuance of native breeds.

"It has been decided to exempt the conduct of 'Moh Juj' in the state from the purview of 'cruelty' under the existing provisions of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960," Paul said.

He said it will be in line with the exemption of Jallikattu in Tamil Nadu, and bullock cart race in Maharashtra and Karnataka.

"The amendments are essential to bring such **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

NCBC chairman conducts hearing on inclusion of 7 communities in nat'l OBC list

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** Chairman of the National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC), Hansraj Gangaram Ahir, on Thursday held a public hearing where representatives of seven communities submitted their demand for inclusion in the central list of Other Backward Classes (OBC).

The seven communities are Bishnupriya Manipuri, Bhar/Rajbhar, Newar, Bhujel, Sabar, Satnami and Kiran Sheikh.

The demands of these communities have been noted, Ahir told the media after the public hearing.

"These communities have already been **(CONTD. ON PAGE-2)**

সত্যমেব জয়তে  
অসম চৰকাৰ

**শ্ৰীশ্ৰীভট্টদেৱ জয়ন্তী**

ধৰ্ম প্ৰচাৰক, সমাজ সংস্কাৰক শ্ৰীশ্ৰীবৈকুণ্ঠনাথ ভাগৱত  
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## GST rate rationalisation boosts consumption; economy to maintain growth momentum: FinMin report

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: The GST rate rationalisation gave a "measurable" boost to consumption, and the Indian economy is on a stable footing to navigate risks and maintain growth momentum through the current fiscal, a finance ministry report said on Thursday.

The Finance Ministry's Monthly Economic Review for October said that with inflationary pressures easing and recent tax reforms boosting household disposable incomes, the near-term consumption outlook appears increasingly positive.

Retail inflation has reached an all-time low in the current series, dropping to 0.25 per cent in October 2025, down from 1.44 per cent in September 2025.

The decline can largely be attributed to the complete impact of reduced GST rates, a favourable base effect, and significant falls in food inflation, the ministry said.

"The rationalisation of GST rates has provided a measurable boost to consumption, as reflected in the strengthening of high-frequency indicators, including higher e-way bill generation, record festive-season automobile sales, robust UPI transaction values, and a notable rise in tractor sales," said the October Monthly Economic Review.



It said that these developments point to broad-based improvements in demand conditions across both urban and rural segments.

"The full impact of GST rationalisation on spending behaviour would become more evident over the next two quarters," it added.

Effective September 22, the GST rates on about 375 items were slashed, making mass consumption items cheaper. Also, GST rates of 5, 12, 18, and 28 per cent have been clubbed into two rates of 5 per cent and 18 per cent, resulting in a reduced price of 99 per cent of daily use items.

The finance ministry report said the external environment remains characterised by elevated trade policy uncertainty, though global pressures have moderated relative to earlier peaks.

With regard to growth prospects, it said that various independent economic assessments place real GDP growth for Q2 FY26 in the range of 7-

7.5 per cent, indicating continued strength in underlying economic activity.

Overall, the economy enters the second half of FY26 on a stable footing, anchored by well-contained inflation, resilient domestic demand and supportive policy dynamics, even as global uncertainties warrant continued vigilance, it added.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) is scheduled to release the Q2 (July-September) GDP growth data on November 28. Economic growth was at a 5-quarter high of 7.8 per cent in Q1.

The finance ministry report further said that global uncertainties — including shifting trade policies, geopolitical frictions, and financial market volatility — pose potential headwinds to exports, capital flows, and investor sentiment.

"Notwithstanding these challenges, the confluence of well-anchored inflation expectations, sustained public capital expenditure, and firming

rural and urban demand places the economy on a stable footing, positioning it to navigate emerging risks and preserve its growth momentum through the remainder of FY26," said the Monthly Economic Review. The report said that corporate performance remained healthy during the month, with sustained profitability and stable balance sheets. Domestic financial markets continue to draw strength from firm institutional participation.

The report called for structural reforms to sustain and accelerate job creation in the economy.

In a bid to reform the labour markets, the Government of India has implemented 4 Labour Codes: the Code on Wages, 2019; the Industrial Relations Code, 2020; the Code on Social Security, 2020; and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, streamlining 29 prevailing labour laws.

This historic move modernises labour regulations, moving beyond colonial-era structures, improves workers' welfare, and aligns the labour ecosystem with the changing world of work. It lays the groundwork for a future-ready workforce and stronger, resilient industries, supporting labour reforms for Viksit Bharat @ 2047, the report added. (PTI)

## HDFC Bank tops Kantar BrandZ List of India's most valuable brands 2025

Brand value rises 18% YoY to \$44.9 billion

HT Bureau  
GUWAHATI, Nov 27: HDFC Bank, India's largest private-sector lender, has been ranked the country's most valuable brand in the Kantar BrandZ Top 100 Most Valuable Indian Brands 2025 report.

The bank's rise to the top spot is attributed to sustained digital innovation and customer-centric initiatives. HDFC Bank's brand value grew 18 per cent year-on-year to \$44.9 billion, up from \$38.3 billion in 2024. Since the first BrandZ India Report in 2014, the bank's brand value has surged 377 per cent. It has retained the No. 1 position in eight of the 12 editions of the report.

In its editorial note, Kantar said, "HDFC Bank's growth has been driven by continuous innovation and investment in new technology to enhance the customer experience, including the launch of Vigil Aunty, its superhero-style persona designed to educate users about financial fraud. With a strong commitment to digital banking, HDFC Bank continues to set the standard for brand leadership in India."



Reacting to the ranking, Ravi Santhanam, group head (Brand, Retail Marketing & Customer Analytics) and chief marketing officer, HDFC Bank, said, "We are happy to be recognised as the country's top brand by Kantar. For us, the mantra is to stay true to our principles, solve customer problems and keep raising the bar on customer experience, safety and trust. Over three decades, we have stayed the course—keeping the customer at the core and evolving with their needs. Our campaigns focus on consumer awareness and education to promote safe digital banking practices. This recognition demonstrates the collective efforts of

all employees at the Bank."

Kantar BrandZ rankings are based on a consumer-centric methodology that evaluates Financial Value (corporate earnings attributable to brand assets) and Brand Contribution (Demand Power, Pricing Power and Future Power).

The report notes that HDFC Bank has strengthened its brand through user-centric innovation across services ranging from payments to personal finance. Its Banking Correspondent Centres and e-Mitra kiosks have expanded access to rural and semi-urban markets.

Highlighting product-level innovation, the report adds, "Its digital 'Xpress Car Loan' service comes with an industry-first 30-minute guarantee. And online, HDFC's Vigil Aunty persona educates people about cybersecurity best practices while highlighting the bank's safety features. The result? Strong growth and a clear advantage as India's most Meaningfully Different Financial Services brand." The Kantar BrandZ India report is released annually and is based on extensive consumer research across categories.

Contd. from Page 1...

## CM vows to

"irrespective of religion and not against Islam as being perceived by a section". "Hindus are not free from polygamy. This Bill will cover people from Hindu, Muslim, Christian and all other societies," he said.

Despite the chief minister's appeal for unanimity, amendments moved by AIUDF and CPI(M) were defeated by voice vote. CPI(M) MLA Manoranjan Talukdar sought sending the Bill to a Select Committee for deeper scrutiny, but the proposal did not pass.

Calling the legislation a "decisive move towards justice", Sarma said it is not merely a legal measure but "a social commitment to protect the rights and honour of our mothers and sisters".

The chief minister also linked the passage of the Bill to the broader goal of introducing a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Assam.

He assured the Assembly that, if voted back to power in 2026, his government would table the UCC Bill in the first session of the new House.

Sarma further announced that the government will introduce a bill against deceptive marriages—often referred to by him earlier as "love-jihad"—by the end of the February session.

He had recently stated that the state would bring legislation to curb such practices.

The Assam Prohibition of Polygamy Bill, 2025, marks one of the most far-reaching steps taken by the state government in recent years to safeguard women's rights and ensure uniformity in personal laws. (With inputs from PTI)

## State to quasi-judicial

lands from encroachment and misuse, and enable planned, culturally sensitive development in the public interest, Mahanta said. He also said that this bill is enacted as part of the implementation of the Clause-6 of Assam Accord. (PTI)

## NCBC chairman conducts

audited to the state OBC list and the process of including them in the central list has also been initiated", the chairman said. There are certain Supreme Court directives regarding the guidelines and parameters to be followed for including them in the central list and only after checking all related documents can they be included, he said.

The Assam government, led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has also expressed the desire that those communities in the state OBC list should be included in the central list, Ahir said.

"We assure him that it will be done soon", he added.

"The central government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given us constitutional rights to carry forward the task but we have to check the necessary papers first", he said.

Hearing was also held on the demand of Motok and Moran communities who claimed that they are different tribes

Ahir also called Sarma and the duo discussed steps to strengthen social justice and inclusive development. (PTI)

## Moh Juj to be

legislation which may allow hosting or observance of traditional events like the buffalo fight during Magh Bihu celebrations or on such days as may be notified," the minister said.

No party brought any amendment to the bill and the House passed it unanimously.

In December last year, the Gauhati High Court quashed an Assam government SOP of 2023 which had allowed buffalo and Bulbul bird fights during the Magh Bihu festivities in the month of January every year.

The court had further held that the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was in violation of a Supreme Court judgment of May 2014.

On January 15 last year, traditional Bulbul bird fights were organised after a hiatus of around nine years following a new set of guidelines issued by the Assam government. It was earlier stopped due to restrictions imposed by the judiciary.

Both the events resumed after the state Cabinet approved the SOP in December 2023. The SOP focussed on safety of the animals, including ban on use of any intoxicating drugs or sharp weapons to control the animals.

The Bulbul bird fight is famously held at Hayagriva Madhav temple in Hajo of Kamrup district on Magh Bihu day in mid-January, attracting hundreds of visitors.

Likewise, the buffalo fights take place at the same time in Morigaon, Sivasagar and some Upper Assam districts, but Ahatguri in Morigaon is the most celebrated. (PTI)

## Mastermind of human-trafficking

kingpin, had been on the run since then. "We received information that Peter was hiding in Pengree. We launched an operation and arrested him from his hiding place," the official added.

Sources said Sonu misused the name of the Assam Tea Tribe Students' Association (ATTTA) to gain the trust of poor tea garden families.

"He took Adivasi children and sold them in Arunachal Pradesh, claiming he was an ATTTA leader. His arrest will help police uncover the full network," a source said, adding that Sonu had been active in the racket for several years.

A leader of ATTTA said Sonu was a former member of the organisation.

"He took advantage of his past association. We condemn his actions and demand strict punishment. The poor Adivasi people were misled by him," the leader said.

Phillobari Police Station officer-in-charge Ajit Sonowal confirmed the arrest.

"We have arrested Peter Sonu in connection with a case registered at the station. Earlier, six persons associated with child trafficking were arrested. We received a lead and nabbed him from his hideout," he said.

Police have also seized a vehicle — AS 23AF 5952 — allegedly used by the traffickers to transport the children. "Peter Sonu was the driver of the vehicle and was directly involved in the incident," Sonowal added.

## Over 520 teaching

SC and 96 for ST are vacant at present, the minister said. On the other hand, 49 teaching posts for OBC, 13 for SC and 31 for ST are vacant in different universities, he added. (PTI)

## Mass resignation hits

has not yet decided whether they will join any other political party.

## Rengma Naga community

bond between the Rengma and Karbi communities, Ronghang said both groups have lived as "brothers" for generations, sharing spaces, struggles and celebrations.

He pointed out the close parallels between clan names—such as Jishing (Ronghang), Nandü (Ingiti), Sebü (Terang), Himbü (Hanse) and Resho (Rongpi)—as an example of this deep-rooted harmony.

Ronghang also outlined several initiatives undertaken by KAAC for the welfare of Rengma Naga villages.

These include construction of the Rengma Naga Students' Union (RNSU) hostel at Matipung; a cultural hall at Rengma Colony, Diphu; boundary wall, approach road and ringwell at the Western Rengma Baptist Association complex at Jongpha; establishment of the Rengma Naga Literature Board office; posting of teachers to teach the Rengma language in LP schools; creation of a Rengma Naga customary law court; enhancement of financial assistance for organising the annual Ngada festival from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh; and employment initiatives for Rengma youth.

Appealing for continued unity, the CEM urged both Rengma and Karbi communities to work together for "development, peace and progress".

Addressing the youth, he said, "Your culture is your strength. Preserve your heritage proudly while embracing future opportunities."

The programme featured cultural demonstrations, including traditional war cries performed by Semson Resho, Rowel Nandu, Tali Sebü, Nyheno Kempu and Asong Nandu. A display of traditional Rengma attire by RNCS, Diphu Zone, formed another highlight.

Dignitaries present included KAAC Executive Members Madhuram Lekthe, Kache Rongpipi and Tilutomma Hasnu; MAC Johnny Timung; Karbi Cultural Society president Humsing Bey; Hill People Cultural Forum chairman Laichan Englung; RNCS office bearers; and members of the Ngada Festival Celebration Committee led by chairman Sepenga Rengma.

The event concluded with a vote of thanks by the committee's general secretary, Danilo Sebü Rengma.

## Gold declines ₹ 640 to ₹ 1,29,460/10g amid weak global cues

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Gold prices declined by ₹ 640 to ₹ 1,29,460 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday due to poor offtake by stockists and retailers amid weak global trends, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.5 per cent purity decreased by ₹ 640 to ₹ 1,28,860 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes).

"Gold edged lower in range-bound trading on Thursday. Easing geopolitical tensions, driven by progress toward a potential Russia-Ukraine peace deal, which reduced the geopolitical risk premium and prompted some profit-taking," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. (PTI)

## Sensex, Nifty close marginally up after scaling record highs; financial, IT shares advance on rate cut hopes

MUMBAI, Nov 27: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty scaled fresh lifetime highs in intra-day trade on Thursday before paring some gains to close marginally higher amid positive global trends on growing hopes of a US Fed rate cut and foreign fund inflows.

Rising for the second day, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 110.87 points or 0.13 per cent to settle at 85,720.38. During the day, it hit a record high of 86,055.86, reflecting a jump of 446.35 points or 0.52 per cent. However, profit-taking by investors in the second half dragged the index from record high levels.

The earlier lifetime high of the benchmark was 85,978.25, hit on September 27, 2024.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ended marginally higher by 10.25 points or 0.04 per cent at 26,215.55. During the day, the benchmark rallied 105.15 points or 0.40 per cent to hit an all-time high of 26,310.45. The broader index had earlier scaled its record intra-day high of 26,277.35 on September 27, 2024.

Among Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Hindustan Unilever, Bajaj Finserv, HCL Tech and HDFC Bank were the major gainers.

However, Maruti, Eternal, UltraTech Cement and State Bank of India were among the laggards.

"Indian markets steadied after a volatile session where both the Nifty and Sensex



briefly touched record highs before profit booking ensued," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

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

Equity markets in Europe were trading marginally lower. US markets ended higher on Wednesday.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹ 4,778.03 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) also purchased stocks worth ₹ 6,247.93 crore in the previous trade.

"Indian markets soared to record highs on Thursday, lifted by a sharp improvement in global risk appetite amid rising expectations of an interest-rate cut by the US Federal Reserve. The upbeat sentiment across global equities provided a strong tailwind

for domestic markets," Punmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

The BSE smallcap gauge dipped 0.38 per cent and mid-cap ended marginally down by 0.01 per cent.

BSE Financial Services climbed 0.31 per cent, followed by BSE Focused IT (0.24 per cent), IT (0.20 per cent), bankex (0.15 per cent) and tech (0.03 per cent).

Really dropped 0.76 per cent, energy (0.55 per cent), consumer discretionary (0.48 per cent), capital goods (0.48 per cent) and consumer durables (0.45 per cent).

So far this year, the BSE benchmark has jumped 7,581.37 points or 9.70 per cent, and the Nifty zoomed 2,570.75 points or 10.87 per cent. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, dipped 0.05 per cent to USD 63.10 per barrel.

On Wednesday, the Sensex jumped 1,022.50 points or 1.21 per cent to settle at 85,609.51. The Nifty zoomed 320.50 points or 1.24 per cent to end at 26,205.30. (PTI)

**DESIGN, SUPPLY, ERECTION, TESTING AND COMMISSIONING WORKS**

**E-Tender Notice No. TRD/LMG/22 of 2025-26 dated: 25-11-2025.** E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works:  
**Tender No. EL-TRD-NFR-LMG-OHE-MOD-44 dated: 25-11-2025.**  
**Name of work:** Design, supply, erection, testing, and commissioning of 25 kV, 50 Hz, single-phase railway electrification and TRD modification works in connection to the rebuilding of existing bridge no. 14 by PSC slab between Chaparmukh Jn.-Senchoa Jn. section of Lumding Div. N.F.Rly. (0.00 RKM / 0.7 TKM).  
**Tender Value:** ₹ 61,49,644.46/-  
**Earnest Money:** ₹ 1,23,000/-  
**Date & Time of Closing of Tender:** 15.00 hrs. on 19-12-2025. The complete information of above e-tender will be available in website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)  
**DEE/TRD/Lumding NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY**  
*Serving Customers With A Smile*

**GOVT. OF ASSAM  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
OF POLICE :: UDALGURI  
:: DISTRICT :: UDALGURI ASSAM**



The above is photograph of Tulsi Biswakarma (25 Yrs.), W/O- Nabin Biswakarma, along with her son namely Nihal Biswakarma 2 Yrs.), Vill- No.2 Phuhurabari, PS- Udalguri who has been missing since 17/11/2025 from Udalguri.

This refers to Udalguri PS GDE No-48, Dtd. 19/11/2025 and this office Man Missing Register Entry No. 111/11/2025

**Descriptive Roll of the Missing Person:**

1. Complexion - Swarthy
2. Age - 25 Yrs
3. Height - 4.5 Feet
4. L/Known - Nepali, Assamese & Hindi
5. Wearing - Kurti

All efforts may be made to trace out / recover the above noted missing person at the earliest and result thereof may be intimated to this office at the following helpline numbers for further necessary action: 6026901138 (Cell phone).

Sd/-  
Superintendent of Police,  
Udalguri, Assam.

DIPR /D/HLT/233/28-Nov-25

**GOVT. OF ASSAM  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
OF POLICE :: UDALGURI  
:: DISTRICT :: UDALGURI ASSAM**



The above is photograph of Nasima Khatun (28 Yrs.), W/O- Saiful Islam, Vill- Mohanpur, PS- Udalguri, Dist.- Udalguri who has been missing since 24/10/2025 from Mohanpur.

This refers to Udalguri PS GDE No-22, Dtd. 12/11/2025 and this office Man Missing Register Entry No. 110/11/2025

**Descriptive Roll of the Missing Person:**

1. Complexion - Swarthy
2. Age - 28 Yrs
3. Height - 5 Feet
4. L/Known - Bengali
5. Wearing - Not noted

All efforts may be made to trace out / recover the above noted missing person at the earliest and result thereof may be intimated to this office at the following helpline numbers for further necessary action: 6026901138 (Cell phone).

Sd/-  
Superintendent of Police,  
Udalguri, Assam.

DIPR /D/HLT/232/28-Nov-25

## KA Women's Forum demands action against man for abusing tribal woman

HT Bureau

**DIPHU, Nov 27:** The Karbi Anglong Women Justice Forum (KAWJF-CEC) has submitted a memorandum to the District Commissioner, Karbi Anglong, demanding immediate action against Kaushik Kurmi for verbally abusing and humiliating Karbi tribal woman Kareng Rongpharpi at Golaghat's Saburi market on November 24. The forum said Kurmi used derogatory, tribe-specific language in public, causing trauma to the victim and outrage among the tribal community. KAWJF has urged Golaghat police to register an FIR under relevant IPC and SC/ST (POA) Act sections, arrest the accused, ensure victim protection and prevent harassment of tribal women vendors.

The memorandum, signed by KAWJF president Beulet Bepi and general secretary Preciella Terongpi was also forwarded to the SPs of Golaghat and Karbi Anglong, Assam State Commission for Women and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes.

## Three arrested in connection with Lapangap violence

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** Meghalaya Police have arrested three youths in connection with the October 9 violence at Lapangap that led to the death of a Karbi man, officials said Wednesday.

The arrested individuals are Pyrchang Dkhar (25) of Lapangap, Everyshing Tyngkan (25) of Saba and Deibormi Bhoi Lamare (27) of Barato-B in West Jaintia Hills. The arrests followed a case registered at Nartiang police station and investigations are ongoing.

The victim, Orivel Timung (45) from Tapat village in Assam's West Karbi Anglong district was killed during a clash with Lapangap residents over a disputed paddy field.

## District Entrepreneurship Conclave inaugurated in Hojai

HT Correspondent

**HOJAI, Nov 27:** The district-level "District Entrepreneurship Conclave" commenced in Hojai on Wednesday and will continue until November 30. The event has been organised jointly by the Assam Small Industries Development Corporation Limited and the District Industries and Commerce Centre, Hojai, under the RAMP (Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance) scheme of the Ministry of MSME, Government of India. The conclave aims to provide a strong platform for young and women entrepreneurs to foster and promote their entrepreneurial initiatives.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by District Commissioner Bidhyut Bikash Bhagawati, who inaugurated the conclave by cutting the ribbon and inspected the various stalls set up by participating entrepreneurs at Kachari Maidan. In his address, Bhagawati highlighted a growing entrepreneurial awakening across Assam, noting that under the leadership of Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, large investors are coming to Assam through the "Advantage Assam" initiative, boosting awareness in the industrial sector.

He also emphasised the central government's MSME programs for developing small and micro enterprises at the regional level and cited state-level schemes aimed at economically empowering youth and women.

Social worker Habib Mohammad Choudhury, present as a special guest, shared his journey from starting an enterprise with just Rs 500 to becoming a successful entrepreneur, motivating attendees to persevere in their ventures.

The conclave was chaired by Dekarjai, Director of the District Industries and Commerce Centre, Hojai, with the welcome address delivered by Chaturthi Rani Biswas, Chairperson of Hojai Municipal Council, and the event objectives explained by Pranjana Rajmedhi, Chief Manager of the Centre. Officials from various departments, including Animal Husbandry, Handicrafts and Silk, along with local entrepreneurs, were also present. The conclave provides a key platform for entrepreneurs to showcase their products, network and explore new business opportunities.

## Gossaigaon Circle Office employees protest for OPS revival

HT Correspondent

**GOSSAIGAON, Nov 27:** Employees of the Gossaigaon Circle Office staged a pen-down strike on Wednesday, demanding the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS). The demonstration held in front of the Circle Office was part of a broader statewide protest by various employee unions across Assam.

Protesters voiced strong dissatisfaction with the New Pension Scheme (NPS), arguing that it fails to provide post-retirement financial security. They emphasised that under the OPS, pensioners received a fixed amount based on their last drawn salary, en-

## Union Home Minister says move will strengthen constitutional values Constitution launched in Bodo and Kashmiri languages

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** On the occasion of the 76th Constitution Day, the Government of India launched the Constitution in Bodo and Kashmiri for the first time, aiming to make constitutional values accessible to people in these linguistic regions. The initiative, undertaken under the guidance of the President was lauded by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, who said it will help residents "imbibe constitutional values and make them central to national life."

Congratulating the people of Jammu & Kashmir and the Bodoland Territorial Region, Shah said, "From Kashmir to Bodoland, our Constitution goes from strength to strength." He added that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has ushered in an era of peace, development and



effective governance in these regions by actualising constitutional principles on the ground. The launch forms part of a

broader effort to promote inclusivity, democratic awareness and legal literacy among citizens. Officials highlighted that having the

Constitution available in local languages will empower students, educators and citizens to better understand their rights, duties and the foundational principles of India's democracy.

The initiative also aims to strengthen regional identity while fostering national unity, ensuring that communities in Bodoland and Kashmir actively engage with the Constitution's provisions. Educational institutions in these areas are expected to integrate the regional-language versions into teaching and awareness programs to reach a wider audience.

This milestone was celebrated alongside other events marking Constitution Day across the country, including discussions, seminars and student-led activities promoting the understanding of the Constitution's values.

## Massive protests erupt in Kokrajhar against ST status for six communities

HT Correspondent

**KOKRAJHAR, Nov 27:** Widespread outrage erupted across the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) following the Assam Cabinet's decision to grant Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to six communities. In Kokrajhar, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and several tribal organisations staged a massive protest rally on Thursday evening, calling for the immediate withdrawal of the decision.

The protest was joined by major tribal bodies including ABSU, CCTOA, BTC Tribal Coordination Committee, Tribal Sangha, Garo Students' Union, All Rabha Students' Union, Rabha Women Council, Bodo Samaj and Bodo Sahitya Sabha. Thousands of tribal residents marched from Bodofa Children's Park along JD Road to the Kokrajhar Government Higher

Secondary & Multipurpose School playground, carrying banners and placards with slogans such as "We Reject ST Status for Six Communities" and "Withdraw Cabinet Decision."

Khwrwmdao Wary, ABSU Vice President, warned that the tribal community will not accept the move, arguing that the six communities are already socially, economically, politically and educationally more advanced than existing ST communities. He cautioned that the decision would undermine the rights and safeguards of indigenous tribes and urged the government to revoke it, warning of intensified protests if ignored.

Similar demonstrations took place in Udalguri, where ABSU and allied tribal organisations held a rally against the Cabinet decision. Dipen Boro, ABSU presi-

dent, emphasised that tribal people across Assam will continue protesting until the decision is withdrawn.

At Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, students staged a strong protest, boycotting their 3rd semester final examinations and assembling at the main gate to oppose the ST status extension. Protesters argued that granting ST status to additional communities would dilute the rights and constitutional protections of existing tribal groups, affecting educational and employment opportunities. The university authorities subsequently postponed the 3rd semester exams in response to the unrest.

The protests reflect mounting tribal discontent across the region, signaling potential further unrest if the Assam government does not address their demands.

## Scholar Prof Udo Saikia wins top research supervision award in Australia

HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, Nov 27:** Professor (Dr) Udo Saikia, a distinguished Assamese scholar from Jorhat and Professor at Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia, has been awarded the 2025 Vice-Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Higher Degree Research (HDR/PhD Supervision). The award, among the top honours at the university was presented on November 26 at a ceremony held on campus.

A graduate of the London School of Economics, Prof Saikia has served at Flinders University for 24 years. His supervisory approach emphasises empathy, flexibility and respect for each student's unique journey, tailoring guidance to individual goals, learning preferences and life circumstances.

Prof Saikia has previously received the 2024 Vice-Chancellor's Award for Research

Leadership, the university's Best Teacher Award in 2011 and the Australian Government's Citation for Outstanding Contribution to Student Learning in 2012. Over his career, he has supervised 27 PhD researchers from 13 countries, reflecting his commitment to global research collaboration.

Commenting on the award, Prof Saikia said it reflects not only his dedication to developing research talent but also the shared journey with students, many from culturally diverse and underrepresented backgrounds. He described the honour as a validation of his belief that supervision is about investing in people and empowering future leaders, not merely producing theses.

Prof Saikia is the son of the late Dr Padmadhar Saikia, a prominent economist and former Director of the North-East India Agricultural-Economic Research Centre.

## Nagaon authorities plan eviction from Lutumari RF

HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, Nov 27:** The Nagaon district administration in coordination with the police and Forest Department is set to evict encroachers from the Lutumari Reserved Forest under Kamrup revenue circle. The authorities are fully prepared to demolish illegally occupied areas.

According to an official release, the eviction drive will commence on November 29, 2025, at 7:00 AM. The administration has appealed to all concerned to cooperate with officials during the operation.

## NPS employees strike in Nagaon, demand OPS implementation

HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, Nov 27:** Employees under the New Pension Scheme (NPS) across Nagaon district joined a statewide strike on Thursday, aligning with similar protests in other districts of Assam. The employees gathered at the District Forest Officer (DFO) office in Nagaon to press for the implementation of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and the scrapping of both the NPS and Unified Pension Scheme (UPS).

The protesters voiced strong dissatisfaction with the government's introduction of the UPS, insisting that the OPS remains the only viable option to secure their financial future. Offices across the district, including the District Commissioner's office, Revenue Circle offices, educational institutions and other government departments, observed a complete shutdown as employees raised slogans demanding OPS implementation. Appearing directly to the Chief Minister of Assam, the striking employees urged immediate action on their demands and warned that the agitation would be intensified if their concerns were not addressed.

## Construction of Gati Shakti cargo terminals progressing rapidly

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is rapidly developing six new Gati Shakti cargo terminals in Assam to boost the region's freight logistics. The Baibata terminal in Kamrup Rural, constructed by BR Transcon Ltd at ₹ 245 crore, is nearing completion and expected to handle over 25 freight rakes monthly.

The terminal features three goods lines, an electronic weigh-bridge, two goods platforms, high-mast lighting and a special ramp for automobiles, enabling round-the-clock operations. Other terminals under construction include Habaipur (Lanka), Jogihopa, Kendukona, Basugaon (HPCL), and Chayagaon.

These projects, part of the PM Gati Shakti initiative, aim to strengthen Assam's logistics network, improve multimodal connectivity and reduce freight costs for industries across the Northeast.

## Milk product competition held on National Milk Day

HT Correspondent

**TEZPUR, Nov 27:** On the occasion of National Milk Day, a milk product competition was organised jointly by the Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Department and the Dairy Development Department, Sonitpur, at the Block Veterinary Dispensary in Balipara on Wednesday.

The event was attended by Dr Runu Dutta (Retd Director, T&D Department), Kishore Barma (Assistant Dairy Development Officer), Dr P K Roy (District AH & Veterinary Officer) and other officials from both departments. Participants showcased a variety of milk-based products, primarily desserts like kheer and paneer, which were judged on visual appeal, organoleptic qualities, hygiene, uniqueness and marketing potential.

During the programme, speakers highlighted the importance of National Milk Day and discussed the growing potential of the milk economy and value-added dairy products. They encouraged participants to use resources like YouTube tutorials and veterinary guidance to enhance milk production and product quality. Emphasis was also placed on hygienic milk production, active participation in farmer discussions and developing marketing strategies through organised chains.

## Jorhat MP criticises Election Commission over voter roll revision

HT Correspondent

**JORHAT, Nov 27:** Lok Sabha MP from Jorhat and Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, Gaurav Gogoi, criticised the Election Commission of India (ECI) for failing to provide machine-readable software for revising electoral rolls, during a press meet at Jorhat District Congress Bhawan on Wednesday.

Gogoi described the ongoing Special Summary Revision (SSR) in Assam as a "mock exercise," arguing that Booth Level Agents (BLAs) lacked sufficient time to update rolls manually within the one-month timeframe. He claimed that BLAs in other states faced extreme pressure, with reports of suicides and accused the ECI of not acting on repeated warnings from Congress leaders, including Rahul Gandhi, regarding the need for reliable software to prevent manipulation.

The MP also alleged that BJP workers were being brought from other states to influence Assam's elections, threatening the political rights of indigenous communities, while large tracts of land were being acquired by industrialists.

Earlier, Gogoi addressed Congress block presidents from seven districts—including Jorhat, Golaghat, Sivasagar, Charaideo, Majuli, and Tinsukia urging them to strengthen the party at all levels. He also called on the public to remain vigilant to prevent inclusion of fake voters or wrongful exclusion of genuine names from the electoral rolls.

Later, Gogoi took part in a rally organised by Jorhat District AICC under the theme "Assam's future in the hands of Assamese."

## KA celebrates Ngada Festival with traditional fervour

HT Correspondent

**DILLAI, Nov 27:** Karbi Anglong came alive as the two-day 'Ngada' – Rengma Naga post-harvest festival 2025, was celebrated at Hada Rengma Gaon, Khatkhathi on November 26-27. The festival highlighted traditional dances, folk songs, rituals and post-harvest customs,



drawing enthusiastic participation from villagers, youth groups and cultural troupes. Roland Kiling, president of BJP Karbi Anglong District Committee, attended as a special guest, praising the Rengma Naga Cultural Society (Borjan Zone) for preserving and promoting the community's cultural heritage. He emphasised the importance of cultural traditions in fostering unity, grassroots development and peaceful coexistence in the district. The festival served as a vibrant celebration of the Rengma Naga community's identity, heritage and post-harvest joy.

## Poacher caught with rare Pipli Chang fish in Orang National Park

HT Correspondent

**MANGALDAI, Nov 27:** Forest officials in coordination with Kharupetia police, arrested a 23-year-old poacher on Tuesday for illegally fishing the highly priced Pipli Chang, locally known as China Burkha in Orang National Park and its surrounding areas. The accused, Mafidul Islam of Kachomari Sonari village under Dalgaon police station was caught red-handed while attempting to sell seven live specimens of the rare fish at a house in Alikash village. The seized fish are estimated to be worth several lakhs of rupees in the illicit market.

Acting on specific intelligence, the police team conducted the raid, apprehending Islam along with the contraband. During interrogation, he admitted to repeatedly entering restricted areas of the national park in recent days to catch Pipli Chang for illegal trade.

The recovered fish and the case were handed over to the Forest Protection Officer of Orang National Park. Mafidul Islam was produced before a magistrate and remanded to judicial custody the same day. Authorities have ramped up patrolling in and around the park to curb poaching of high-value aquatic species, which face rising demand in black markets.

## Excise department raids multiple locations in Nagaon

HT Correspondent

**NAGAON, Nov 27:** The Nagaon District Excise Department intensified its operations against illicit liquor with a major raid conducted across several locations in Nagaon town on Thursday. The week-long crackdown has targeted illegal liquor production and sales in the district.

A team led by Excise Inspector Chandra Kumar Baruah carried out searches in Bebejia, Sensowa, Kachamari, and Borbheti under the Nagaon Sadar Circle. During the operation, the department seized and destroyed 1,700 liters of spurious liquor, 10 liquor-making machines and a large quantity of illicit brew. Two women involved in the illegal liquor trade were arrested and are being processed as per departmental norms.

The Excise Department said the operation is part of ongoing efforts to curb the production and distribution of illicit liquor in Nagaon, marking a significant step in its enforcement drive.

## Four die, eight injured in Powai Tea Estate ambulance accident

HT Correspondent

**MARGHERITA, Nov 27:** Four workers, including one dependent of Powai Tea Estate lost their lives on November 25 when the estate ambulance met with a tragic accident near Makum in Tinsukia district. Eight others, comprising workers and their dependents, sustained serious injuries and are undergoing treatment.

The Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha (ACMS) Margherita Branch, along with office-bearers of the Powai, Nagapara and Kalghar Divisions, organised a tribute programme at Powai Tea Estate on November 26 for the deceased. ACMS Secretary Harinanda Gohr condemned reports by some vested-interest leaders and social media journalists that allegedly politicised the incident.

The union has demanded that the injured workers receive proper medical care until full recovery with attendants granted full attendance, ration and all entitled benefits. Families of the deceased should receive adequate compensation under the law and one member of each bereaved family should be provided employment at the estate.

ACMS has also called for a thorough investigation into why twelve individuals were sent in the ambulance to Dibrugarh Medical College and whether the vehicle was capable of safely carrying that many passengers. Appropriate disciplinary action is to be taken against anyone found negligent in the matter.

## Awareness programme on road safety, drugs and child marriage

HT Correspondent

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, Nov 27:** A day-long awareness programme on road safety, anti-drug measures and child marriage prevention was organised on Thursday at Biswanath College by Biswanath Chariali Police Station in collaboration with the college. The event aimed to educate students on the importance of following traffic rules, the risks associated with drug abuse and the social implications of child marriage.

The programme featured detailed presentations by experts on each topic, followed by an interactive session where students actively engaged with the speakers. The event was attended by Senior Superintendent of Police Biswanath Ajagwan Basumatary, Dr Chinta Mani Sharma Principal of Biswanath College, Paban Gayan Officer-in-Charge of Biswanath Chariali Sadar Police Station, faculty members and a large number of students.

## Free medical check-ups and medicines reach over 120 villagers in Golaghat district

## Cairn organises community health camp in Hazarigaon

HT Bureau

**GUWAHATI, Nov 27:** Cairn Oil & Gas, part of the Vedanta Group, organised a free Community Health Camp at Hazarigaon in Golaghat district, reinforcing its commitment to improving primary healthcare in remote communities. The initiative is part of Cairn's broader CSR efforts to enhance access to essential medical services for rural populations across Assam.

The camp provided free health check-ups, consultations and essential medicines to residents of nearby villages. A team of qualified doctors and medical professionals from Jorhat Medical College & Hospital attended to over 120 villagers, addressing common ailments, promoting preventive health measures and guid-



ing participants on early diagnosis.

This camp follows earlier successful initiatives in Agchamua and Gharpalia-Maibalia villages. Cairn continues to focus on ex-

panding healthcare access in regions where medical facilities are limited and essential services are difficult to reach.

Dr Madhavjyoti Bora, attending

physician and cardiologist, said, "For many families here, travelling to a hospital requires time and expenses they cannot afford. Camps like this bring healthcare to their doorstep. Early treatment and accurate diagnosis can prevent complications."

Local resident Pranab Saikia expressed relief, saying, "We rarely get the chance to consult a doctor without spending an entire day travelling. Today, we received check-ups and medicines right here. This is a huge relief."

Cairn's ongoing healthcare initiatives emphasise preventive care, early intervention and community health, strengthening rural health ecosystems and contributing to a healthier, more inclusive future.

## QUOTE OF THE DAY

The great advantage about telling the truth is that nobody ever believes it. -Dorothy L. Sayers

## New labour codes

After a thumping win in Bihar Assembly elections, the BJP led central government has started to implement its hidden agendas, which it kept pending for more than five years. On November 21 last, it notified the four labour codes, which were waiting for the dawn of implementation since 2019 and 2020. The government claims that India's Labour Codes mark a major reform by modernizing labour laws, ensuring decent working conditions, timely wages, and long-term protection for workers across all sectors. Terming it a historic decision, the Government of India has announced that the four Labour Codes - the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020 are being made effective from 21st November 2025, rationalising 29 existing labour laws. By modernizing labour regulations, enhancing workers' welfare and aligning the labour ecosystem with the evolving world of work, this landmark move lays the foundation for a future-ready workforce and stronger, resilient industries driving labour reforms for Aatmanirbhar Bharat. The government states that the implementation of the four Labour Codes addresses this long-pending need to move beyond colonial-era structures and align with modern global trends. Together, these Codes empower both workers and enterprises, building a workforce that is protected, productive and aligned with the evolving world of work - paving the way for a more resilient, competitive and self-reliant nation.

Now under new codes, it will be mandatory to issue appointment letters to all the workers, this written proof will ensure transparency, job security, and fixed employment. Under Code on Social Security, 2020 all workers including gig & platform workers to get social security coverage. All workers will get PF, ESIC, insurance, and other social security benefits. Under the Code on Wages, 2019, all workers to receive a statutory right minimum wage payment. Minimum wages and timely payment will ensure financial security. Employers must provide all workers above the age of 40 years with a free annual health check-up. It will promote timely preventive healthcare culture. Now it will be mandatory for employers to provide timely wages, ensuring financial stability, reducing work stress and boosting overall morale of the workers.

To increase women's participation, under new codes, women are permitted to work at night and in all types of work across all establishments, subject to their consent and required safety measures. Women will get equal opportunities to earn higher incomes - in high paying job roles. Previously, ESIC coverage was limited to notified areas and specific industries; establishments with fewer than 10 employees were generally excluded, and hazardous-process units did not have uniform mandatory ESIC coverage across India. Now ESIC coverage and benefits are extended Pan-India - voluntary for establishments with fewer than 10 employees, and mandatory for establishments with even one employee engaged in hazardous processes. Social protection coverage will be expanded to all workers.

## Five years late, Still not a revolution

By: Satyabrata Borah

The four new labour codes that the Centre notified last week have created quite a stir. Television channels are calling them "historic" and "game-changing". Some anchors even used the word "revolutionary". On the other side, a few trade unions have already announced a countrywide protest, saying these codes will take away whatever little protection workers still enjoy. Both sides sound a bit dramatic, because the truth lies somewhere in the middle, and it is far less exciting than either camp wants us to believe.

First, let us understand what actually happened last week. The central government simply "notified" four codes that Parliament had already passed between 2019 and 2020. Notifying means the government has finally decided these laws will start applying from a certain date. In normal language, the codes were born five or six years ago; last week they were only taken out of the incubator and shown to the world. Calling this step revolutionary is like celebrating the printing of wedding cards as the marriage itself. The real wedding happened years back.

These four codes replace 29 old labour laws. Instead of juggling dozens of rule books, we now have four thick volumes: one on wages, one on social security, one on occupational safety and working conditions, and one on industrial relations. The idea behind merging them was simple: make life easier for companies, make rules clearer for workers, and bring millions of unorganised workers under some basic safety net. Whether the final product achieves all three aims is a fair question, but the basic intention was practical, not earth-shattering.

Take the most talked-about change: the rule about laying off workers. Under the old Industrial Disputes Act, any factory with 100 or more workers needed government permission before retrenching staff. Nineteen states, including Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Haryana, had already raised this limit to 300 workers through their own amendments over the last two decades. The new Industrial Relations Code simply copies what these states were already doing and makes it the national rule. Companies with fewer than 300 workers can now close factories or lay off people without asking the government first (they still have to give notice and pay compensation). Is this a big new gift to employers? Not really. Big companies were already enjoying this freedom in half the country. The code only spreads an existing practice to the remaining states. Workers in West Bengal or Kerala will feel the difference more than workers in Gujarat or Madhya Pradesh, where nothing much changes on the ground.

Another change that worries unions is the easier rules for hiring contract labour and fixed-term employees. Again, this is not brand new. Factories and construction sites have been hiring contract workers in huge numbers for years. The difference is that the new codes openly accept this reality instead of pretending it does not exist. They lay down some basic rules: contract workers must get the same wage as regular workers for the same job, and fixed-term employees must get gratuity if they work long enough. These are small mercies, but they are written into law for the first time. Whether companies will follow them is another matter; enforcement has always been the weak link in Indian labour laws. On the positive side, the codes try to bring gig workers, home-based workers, and platform workers (think delivery agents and cab drivers) into the social security net. The Social Security Code says the government will create schemes for them. Details are still missing, and the money will have to come from somewhere, but at least the law now recognises that India has moved beyond the old image of factory workers in blue overalls. A delivery boy sweating on a scooter in Delhi traffic is as much a worker as a lathe operator in Jamshedpur was seventy years ago. The law has finally caught up with that reality.

Trade unions are angry because they feel their bargaining power has been reduced. Strikes now need fourteen

The prospects for peace and prosperity in South Asia have always been shaped by the shifting dynamics between India and Pakistan, two nations whose shared history, territorial disputes, and competing national narratives have too often overshadowed the immense opportunities for collective progress. The reflections of Sunanda K. Datta-Ray bring clarity to a question that has lingered for decades: Can South Asia truly prosper without a substantive détente between its two largest and most consequential states? As India's ruling coalition secures political dominance, recently demonstrated by the landslide victory in the Bihar Assembly elections, the responsibility to rethink the contours of regional diplomacy has grown sharper. This new political confidence at home, Datta-Ray argues, should translate into a serious re-consideration of outreach toward Pakistan, particularly in a region where cooperation, rather than confrontation, holds the key to unlocking vast socioeconomic potential.

The context of this debate is inseparably tied to South Asia's complex post-colonial history. Pakistan's political evolution, shaped by cycles of military dominance, fragile civilian governments, and persistent identity-driven nationalism, remains central to its relations with India. Datta-Ray recalls that even during the era of Iskandar Mirza and Ayub Khan, Pakistani leaders invoked doctrinal justifications to delegitimise democratic rule, presenting literacy deficits as reasons for authoritarian necessity. The country's judiciary, often entangled with military influence, further entrenched these political distortions. Yet Pakistan's attempt to claim that its military was compelled to hold power due to vulnerabilities following the 1947 partition remains unconvincing when viewed against its internal record of repeated coups, manipulated elections, and the overbearing presence of intelligence establishments in civilian life.

At the heart of continuing dis-

cord lies the unresolved dispute over Kashmir, the emblematic flashpoint that continues to cloud regional relations. Datta-Ray describes the fixation with Kashmir as the strongest national glue in a country divided by ethnic, linguistic, and ideological fault lines. Even today, the belief that control over Kashmir is integral to Pakistan's national identity remains embedded in state policy. This obsession is reinforced by decades of strategic alliances with external powers, particularly the United States, whose Cold War compulsions tied military aid and arms supplies to Pakistan's role as a geopolitical outpost against Soviet influence. The resulting asymmetry in US engagements with India and Pakistan contributed to regional militarisation, emboldening Pakistan's defence establishment while complicating efforts toward meaningful peace negotiations.

India, meanwhile, has charted its own complex journey shaped by democratic resilience, rising economic strength, and expanding global partnerships. Yet the structural imbalance between India's democratic architecture and Pakistan's military-centric polity has often hindered diplomatic engagements. Pakistan's armed forces, historically consuming more than twice the resources allocated to India's military as a percentage of GDP relative to national capacity, built themselves up at the expense of social welfare and long-term development. While India expanded parliamentary democracy

across multiple levels of governance, Pakistan experienced recurrent cycles of army interventions, from Zia-ul-Haq's Islamised authoritarianism to the dismissal of elected governments under various pretexts. Even the return of civilian rule under leaders like Nawaz Sharif or Benazir Bhutto was repeatedly cut short by military interference or politically engineered instability.

In this context, the United States' oscillating policy approach in the region—supporting Pak-

## DEGREE OF THOUGHT

By: Dipak Kurmi

istan militarily while seeking deeper economic and strategic cooperation with India—has created contradictions that linger to this day. Datta-Ray notes how Washington often managed to appear responsive to both sides, even as it practised what amounted to diplomatic sleight of hand. During key moments, including the India-Pakistan standoffs of the 1990s and 2000s, US demarches frequently sought to defuse tensions without addressing root causes. The perception that Washington has preferred a transactional approach, supporting Pakistan as a frontline state while simultaneously deepening ties with India as a strategic counterweight to China, has complicated trust on both sides.

Yet amid these diplomatic shifts, India's internal political developments signal an opportunity to reframe the region's strategic outlook. With its growing economic clout, India stands as one of the few developing nations capable of reshaping regional architecture in a meaningful way. Pakistan's domestic turmoil, marked by political polarization, economic fragility, and conflicts between civilian leaders and the military, has further exposed the urgent need for structural transformation. Rather than perpetuate a cycle of reactive posturing and mistrust, both nations stand to gain from a cooperative economic union, one that could emulate models seen in ASEAN or the European Union, where former adversaries discovered mutual benefit through interdependence.

The idea of such cooperation is not utopian; it is rooted in practi-



cal logic. South Asia remains one of the least economically integrated regions in the world despite geographic contiguity, cultural overlaps, and complementary markets. Trade between India and Pakistan has been reduced to a fraction of its potential due to political hostility, stringent restrictions, and frequent breakdowns in dialogue. Datta-Ray points out that a stable economic partnership would allow South Asia to tap into its collective strengths, addressing shared challenges such as poverty, unemployment, energy deficits, and climate vulnerabilities. India's growing role as a global economic power offers a structural anchor for such cooperation, provided there is political will on both sides.

Security cooperation remains equally vital. Datta-Ray stresses that enduring peace cannot be achieved through confrontation or zero-sum strategies. The lesson from decades of hostility is clear: militarised borders, heated rhetoric, and periodic escalations have only weakened the subcontinent, allowing external powers to exert undue influence. Instead, a cooperative security framework—drawing on intelligence sharing, demilitarised corridors, counter-terrorism coordination, and confidence-building measures—would offer a more sustainable path. Such a framework would reduce opportunities for destabilising incidents, ease the burden on national defence budgets, and reassure populations that have long been hostage to fear and uncertainty.

Reimagining South Asia requires revisiting the vision articu-

lated by leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, who believed that a federation or economic union could ensure long-term stability. The idea that India and Pakistan, alongside other regional partners, might co-create a unified economic system, develop interlinked energy grids, or coordinate infrastructure development is not merely theoretical. It reflects a pragmatic assessment of what the region stands to gain. Countries like Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh have already demonstrated how economic linkages with India can generate growth and stability, offering replicable models for future partnerships.

The path to détente, however, requires political courage. Pakistan's leadership must reckon with the reality that perpetual military dominance cannot deliver long-term prosperity. Civilian institutions require strengthening, extremist ideologies demand containment, and constructive diplomacy must replace maximalist rhetoric. India, for its part, must navigate its rising global stature responsibly, ensuring that its diplomatic outreach is inclusive and forward-looking rather than reactive or exclusionary. Confidence-building measures—humanitarian exchanges, cross-border trade openings, cultural diplomacy, and structured dialogues—could restore trust piece by piece.

Ultimately, the prosperity of South Asia hinges on the ability of India and Pakistan to transcend historical animosities and embrace a shared future. Datta-Ray's reflections remind us that the region's geopolitical reality cannot be reconfigured through isolation or aggression.

Instead, it demands a willingness to engage, to compromise, and to imagine a peace that offers both nations the possibility of escaping the cycle of mistrust that has consumed generations. The choice before the subcontinent is stark yet simple: persist in mutual suspicion that perpetuates instability, or pursue a détente that may finally unlock South Asia's long-suppressed potential. (The writer can be reached at dipakkurmipltd@gmail.com)

## Why India's seventh entry into the UNHRC is a troubling tale for people?

By: Edgar Kaiser

On October 14 this year, India was elected to the UN Human Rights Council for the seventh time from the Asia group, along with Pakistan, Vietnam, and Iraq. While this may read as a diplomatic triumph for the state and a national prestige for the citizens at the outset, a deeper look into the UN Human Rights System and the situation at home tells us a truly disconcerting tale. Behind the immaculate flags and the loud applause lies thousands of silenced voices and blood stained clothes, calling for scrutiny by the Indians and the international community.

Needless to say that the fundamental idea behind the creation of the United Nations was to protect human rights after the toll of the bloody wars of the 20th century. The UN Commission on Human Rights, under the ECOSOC system and the 1235 public procedure, proved to be inefficient, over-politicised by diplomatic considerations and was replaced by the UNHRC in 2006. The new system, at least on paper, introduced robust mechanisms to review the state's human rights records and to address specific situations. The new procedure to review the state's human rights record is called Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and the thematic arrangements, including fact findings and ad-hoc inquiries, were primarily brought under the UN Special Procedures (UNSRs).

Now, the core question is, why should India's election to the UNHRC trouble us? Does it really matter?

As we look deeper, the glaring truth becomes impossible to ignore. The General Assembly Resolution no. 60/251, which created the UNHRC, mandates that states that are members of the council should uphold "the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" and "fully cooperate with the Council."

If this is the case, has India been faring well in its human rights protection? And if the country's record doesn't match the promise, how did it still walk into the Council unhindered? These tensions cut straight through the celebrations' grandstanding rhetoric, revealing that the victory was less about the state's human rights record and more about the fissures in the UN system. The situation of human rights in India is self-explanatory today. It is evident from the enormous condemnation from genuine actors both within and outside India. Nonetheless, what needs to be examined is a more magnified view towards its actions. Article 51(3) of the Indian Constitution says that the state shall "(c) foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another."

More specifically, Article 253 says, "Parliament has power to make any law for the whole or any part of the territory of India for implementing any treaty, agreement or convention with any other country or countries or any decision made at any international conference, association or

other body."

In addition, Sections 2(d) and 12(f) of the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 make direct references to the International Conventions and the state's human rights obligations, not to mention the numerous Supreme Court verdicts endorsing international norms. From an International lens, the UN charter and articles 26 and 27 of the Vienna Convention clearly stipulate India's international human rights obligations. Reading all these together will give any prudent reader a clear understanding that India is obliged to respect UN deliberations and give effect to International law through legislation.

Treaty bodies, formed by treaties which state become a party to, consist of experts who monitor the implementation of specific treaties, handle complaints and create obligations to enact laws to give effect to the treaties. If as a reader you feel remote to the treaties, taking a look at the Vishaka (1996) guidelines and the POSH Act will prove you otherwise. It was a direct effect of India's ratification of the CEDAW Convention. So we are not talking about fancy treaties that do not have any impact on the ground, needless to mention the impact of the POSH Act in India. While this is something laudable, India has paid sheer disrespect and obstructed the impact of international conventions at many levels. The reservation that India made to Article 29 and the declaration under Article 5(a) and 16 of CEDAW negatively impacted marriage equality in India, also violating the Committee's General Recommendation No. 20. India has also not ratified the Optional Protocol i.e Indian women cannot make individual complaints to seek international redress if they are denied justice at the domestic level. India houses one of the largest numbers (400 million) of migrant workers in the world with millions toiling in the informal sector without social security or legal protection. Despite this, India has not ratified the Convention on Migrant Workers, nor does it have a domestic law to protect the millions of migrant workers.

India has a sizable number of refugee and asylum seekers but it has not ratified the Refugee Convention, nor does it have a law to protect the rights of refugees. Contrastly, it came up with the discriminatory the Citizenship Amendment Act which excluded certain groups of vulnerable refugees, not to mention the whole array of human rights abuses still persisting against those who questioned it. Rohingya being thrown into the sea and their homes being raided by the police are called 'fanciful ideas' by the Supreme Court because there is no domestic law nor there is international obligation due to non-ratification. Same with the non-ratification of the Torture convention, making it one of the dozen countries who have not done it, despite paying lip services since 1997. With no torture law, several international organizations have called out the situation of torture in India.

India's voluntary pledge for the candi-

date in the UNHRC this year reinstated its commitment towards the highest standard of human rights protection, which is quite paradoxical to its deeds in the council. India has foul played and not implemented the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review, the prime function of the council. Another core feature of the council is the special procedures which undertakes inquiries, country visits and reports.

Since 2017, there have been no special rapporteur visit in India with more than 25 pending requests and some reminders unaccepted by the government. In addition, several communications from different Special Rapporteurs over a period of time have received very little response from the government (18 out of 78).

Now, we have come to answer the last question of this rather disconcerting revelation i.e 'Why despite such a poor human rights record India was elected to the council?'

The answer is stark and unvarnished: politics and diplomacy. It goes against the very spirit of the council and why its predecessor was abolished in 2006. In principle, what has to be a competitive election based on human rights record has turned today into a ritualistic symbol with 14 candidates contesting for 14 seats in an uncompetitive manner, like in the past.

Saddeningly, many of the candidates failed to meet the council's criteria as revealed by the ISHR Scorecards. India fulfilled only two of the 17 criteria among. Among the two, the NHRC's accreditation is also recommended to be downgraded. In an era of democratic backsliding around the world, bending the UNHRC processes for purely diplomatic, political and symbolic gain is nothing but betrayal of the founding values of the UN. 'We the peoples' will lose trust in the UN framework when 'uncompetitive elections undermine the Human Rights Council's reputation and work, making it possible for less than ideal candidates to sail through and stall human rights initiatives.'

Ultimately, this election is a clarion call. Regardless of the credibility of the UN framework, the Indian citizenry should rise up to the situation and demand the government give effect to its international obligations, respond to the UN expert communications and allow visits by the Special Rapporteurs. The state should commit practically to the obligations, not for its symbolic presence at the council, but for truly upholding "the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights" serving the most needy of the country. On the other hand, it is a call to the UN system and the international community: can we celebrate while injustice thrives? Can we applaud while pain persists? If we do nothing and allow politics to overshadow principle, the promise of the United Nations withers. The question is no longer distant or abstract, it is immediate, personal, and urgent: will we bow to rituals or results? (IPA Service)

# Superstar Dharmendra's demise marks the end of Bollywood's golden age

## Indian film industry has been really poorer after the loss of this legend

By: T N Ashok

When Dharmendra breathed his last on November 24, 2025, at the age of 89, something intangible yet profound died with him. It wasn't just the loss of one man, however legendary. It was the final, irreversible closing of a chapter in Hindi cinema that can never be rewritten—a chapter written in celluloid dreams, muscular heroism, and an authenticity that today's green-screen spectacles can never replicate.

With his passing, the last towering pillar of Bollywood's golden era has crumbled. The gallery of immortals—Ashok Kumar, Dev Anand, Dilip Kumar, Raj Kapoor, Shammi Kapoor, Shashi Kapoor, and the bridge generation's Sanjeev Kumar, Vinod Khanna, Vinod Mehra, and Rajesh Khanna—have all departed now.

Dharmendra was the final guardian of an age when cinema was about presence, not pixels; about raw charisma, not CGI enhancements; about stories that touched the soul, not algorithms that track eyeballs.

The Hindi film industry will continue. Movies will be made. Box office records will be broken. But something irreplaceable has been lost—a connection to the very DNA of Indian popular cinema, to a time when stars were not manufactured by publicity machines but were born from the sheer force of talent and personality.

What makes Dharmendra's death particularly poignant is the recognition of what the industry failed to acknowledge during his lifetime. Here was a man who delivered over 300 films across six decades, who transformed every genre he touched—action, romance, comedy, drama—with an ease that made the difficult look effortless. Yet he never received the Filmfare Best Actor trophy that his work so richly deserved. The Lifetime Achievement Award they handed him in 1997 felt like a consolation prize, a pat on the back for someone who deserved a standing ovation.

Consider Satyakam (1969), directed by Hrishikesh Mukherjee. As Satyapriya, Dharmendra delivered what critics now recognize as one of the finest performances in Hindi cinema—a man wrestling with conscience, integrity, and disillusionment in a corrupt world. The film won the National Award for Best Hindi Feature, yet Dharmendra's towering central performance went unrecognized. Perhaps he made it look too easy. Perhaps the industry, dazzled by his physique and charm, couldn't see past the "He-Man" exterior to the nuanced actor within.

Then there was Phool Aur Patthar (1966), where he portrayed a man grappling with redemption and harsh realities with a depth that belied his action-hero image. In Anupama (1966), working again with Mukherjee, he brought sensitivity and restraint to a role that demanded emotional intelligence rather than physical prowess. These performances revealed layers that audiences and critics too often overlooked.

Even in his most celebrated work—Sholay (1975)—Dharmendra's Veeru was a masterclass in balancing machismo with vulnerability, humour with heartbreak. Watch the scene where he contemplates suicide on the water tank, his drunken bravado masking genuine despair. That moment encapsulates everything Dharmendra could do: make you laugh, make you cry, make you believe.

And Chupke Chupke (1975), that delightful comedy where he played a botany professor masquerading as a driver, showcased his impeccable comic timing and intellectual wit. Here was the macho hero proving he could deliver Shakespearean-style comedy with grace and intelligence.

The numbers tell a story the awards never acknowledged. Out of those 300-plus films, 94 recovered their investments, 74 were declared hits, including seven blockbusters and thirteen super-hits. In some peak years, he delivered multiple successes while juggling an impossible workload. He remained relevant



when others faded, transitioning from leading man to character actor without losing his star power.

Yet the mathematics that truly matters cannot be quantified. How do you measure the impact of a smile that could light up a screen? How do you calculate the value of a screen presence that could make mediocre films watchable and good films unforgettable? How do you assign numbers to the way he made audiences feel—the young women who swooned, the men who wanted to be him, the families who found in him the perfect blend of strength and sensitivity?

Dharmendra's death arrives at a moment when Hindi cinema is in the midst of a profound transformation. The industry he helped build—where storytelling was king, where character trumped spectacle, where songs were woven into narrative rather than inserted as commercial breaks—has given way to a new paradigm.

Today's Bollywood is domi-

nated by the Khans—Shah Rukh, Aamir, Salman—who brought their own revolution, combining old-school star power with modern marketing savvy. Alongside them, actors like Hrithik Roshan and Anil Kapoor represent a transitional generation, one foot in the past, one in the present.

Now emerges the yuppie generation—Rajkumar Rao, Vicky Kaushal, Vikram Massey, alongside Deepika Padukone, Alia Bhatt, Kiara Advani, Kriti Sanon, and Yami Gautam. They are immensely talented, bringing fresh sensibilities and new narratives. They navigate streaming platforms as comfortably as cinema halls. They understand social media, content creation, and the global marketplace in ways Dharmendra's generation never needed to.

But something has been lost in translation. The new cinema is often technically superior, visually stunning, narratively ambitious. Yet it lacks a certain warmth, a human connection

that actors like Dharmendra provided simply by existing on screen. Today's films are made with precision; yesterday's films were made with passion. Today's stars are managed; yesterday's stars simply were.

Dharmendra's personal life played out like a Bollywood melodrama—two marriages, two families, six children, thirteen grandchildren, and a patriarch who somehow held it all together through sheer force of personality and, perhaps, genuine love. His marriage to Prakash Kaur at nineteen gave him four children, including Sunny and Bobby Deol, who carried forward the family's cinematic legacy. His later marriage to co-star Hema Malini, controversial and tabloid-fodder for years, produced two more daughters.

What strikes one now, in retrospect, is not the scandal but the humanity. Here was a man who refused to abandon either family, who lived between two worlds, who somehow maintained rela-

tionships that should have been impossible. His first wife, Prakash Kaur, remained dignified throughout, never courting publicity, simply holding her family together. Hema Malini, the glamorous Dream Girl, accepted an unconventional arrangement for the sake of her children.

The fact that it took nearly thirty years for Esha Deol to meet her father's first wife speaks to the complexity of the arrangement. Yet when that meeting finally happened—Esha touching Prakash Kaur's feet, seeking blessings—it symbolized something beautiful: reconciliation, acceptance, the triumph of family over ego.

In that sense, Dharmendra's life mirrored the very films he starred in—messy, complicated, sometimes contradictory, but ultimately guided by the heart.

With Dharmendra's passing, Hindi cinema loses more than an actor. It loses a living bridge to its own history. He worked with the legends, learned from them, and in turn became one himself. He witnessed the industry's evolution from the studio system to independent production, from black-and-white to colour, from single-screen theatres to multiplexes, from film to digital.

He remembered when actors took trains to outdoor shoots, when film sets were collaborative playgrounds rather than corporate enterprises, when a song sequence could be improvised on the spot if the mood struck. He embodied a time when stardom was earned through years of work, not engineered through a single viral moment. The younger generation of actors—talented as they are—have no memory of that world. They cannot tell stories about working with Bimal Roy or Guru Dutt, about the craftsmanship of Hrishikesh Mukherjee, about the wild creativity of Nasir Hussain. Those stories die with Dharmendra.

Fittingly, Dharmendra's family orchestrated his funeral with the same dignity he brought to his craft. They declined to turn it into the spectacle that other star cremations have become—no jostling cameras, no celebrity

photo opportunities, no vulgar displays. It was a private goodbye to a public man, a final act of respect for someone who gave everything to his audience but deserved something for himself at the end.

Perhaps that decision, more than anything, captures the difference between then and now. Dharmendra belonged to an era that understood the distinction between public and private, that knew some moments were too sacred for commodification.

The sets are quieter now. The last of the giants has departed, leaving behind a changed industry, a grieving family, and millions of fans who grew up with him. School children today may not know his name, may not have seen Sholay or Chupke Chupke, may not understand what made him special.

But for those who remember, for those who witnessed his magic, the loss is profound. It's the loss of certainty that someone out there still remembers how things were, how things could be, how cinema at its best could make you feel completely alive.

Dharmendra—the He-Man, the romantic hero, the versatile performer, the flawed father, the loyal husband to two wives, the patriarch of a dynasty—is gone. But every time someone discovers Satyakam, every time Sholay airs on television, every time a young actor tries to balance strength with sensitivity, his spirit endures.

The cameras have stopped rolling. The lights have dimmed. But the legend, mercifully, lives forever in the only place it ever truly existed: on screen, where Dharmendra remains eternally young, eternally charismatic, eternally the man we wanted to be or wanted to love. Hindi cinema has lost its last He-Man. The silence he leaves behind echoes louder than all the noise of the new age. A soul has gone out of Hindi cinema but a rhythm of life he created in the 70s will shine for ever on the celluloid for a generation that adored him and the survivors of that generation will adore him watching reruns of his movies. (IPA Service)

## Marks are not everything in Life

By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

Academic marks are the ultimate measures of success in today's world. From a tender age, the achievement of the marks is the yardstick that measures the worth of the child. This kind of mind-set has been instilled on children by parents, teachers, and society at large. While academic excellence is important to a certain degree, it should not be the only determinant of an individual's potential or future success. Life, in its full complexity, offers so much more than just the numbers on a report card.

It is easy to believe that good grades will pave the way to a successful life. After all, high marks unlock the doors of prestigious colleges and universities, and these in turn unlock the prospects of promising careers. However, this belief always forgets that happiness, satisfaction, and ultimate success do not come merely because of academic performance. Life is shaped by a person's adaptability, ability to solve problems, and their passion. In fact, some of the most successful individuals in the world did not excel in their marks during their schooling years, yet their persistence, creativity, and determination led them to extraordinary success.

Consider, for example, the stories of Steve Jobs of Apple and Richard Branson of Virgin Group. Steve Jobs quit college and did not complete any formal education. He revolutionized the technology industry with innovative ideas, making the world the way it is today. In the same manner, Richard Branson was also a poor academic and was even diagnosed with dyslexia. He still went on to create a global business empire, thus proving that perfect grades are not always a pre-requisite for success. Both of these influential people succeeded not in academics but by thinking out of the box, taking risks, and pursuing their passions.

It does not mean that academic excellence is to be discarded. Education has a great deal to do with the future of a person. A good academic background opens the doors for more learning and professional opportunities. However, marks only represent a fraction of the picture. Life goes beyond memorization of facts and answering questions in an examination. It demands more practical skills, emotional intelligence, and the capacity for critical and creative thinking. These qualities are not always captured in traditional examinations, yet they are essential for success in the real world.

In fact, excessive concentration on academic performance may sometimes become detrimental. Pressure to do well on exams generally leads to stress and anxiety while bringing the fear of failure. Students may become so occupied with maintaining high marks that they forget about their mental well-being or passions. Such a constant effort to be perfect can suppress creativity and stifle personal growth. Instead of encouraging the love

for learning, the educational system can turn into a race where the highest score is all that matters and the personal cost does not matter.

Academic success is not always a guarantee of competence in the real world. There are countless examples of people who were excellent in their academics but found it difficult to navigate the everyday challenges of life. Many of those who failed miserably in school have, after all, grown up to achieve remarkable success in their careers and lives. What separates them is not the grade they received, but rather how they learn to adapt and gain from experiences while applying what they know to the real world.

Failure, for that matter, is part of growth as well. Most of the world's highly successful people encountered many setbacks and failures on the way to where they are today. These failed attempts did not define them but instead helped in achieving their personal and professional goals. Such failures usually become the drive for innovation in many individuals, hence inspiring them to be creative, persistent in facing challenges, and finding new solutions to problems. Ultimately, it is not the fear of failure but the courage to move forward despite it that leads to success.

Adaptability is one of the most important qualities a person can possess in today's fast-paced, ever-evolving world. The job market is constantly changing, and the skills that were in demand a few years ago may no longer be as relevant today. What is important now is the ability to think critically, work collaboratively, and solve problems creatively. These skills are developed through experience, exposure to diverse ideas, and a willingness to learn—not through rote memorization or standardized exams. As parents and teachers, it is crucial to shift the focus from purely academic achievement to a more holistic approach to education. Students should be encouraged to find their interests, develop their skills, and learn as much as they can outside the classroom. Education should stimulate curiosity, creativity, and love for learning instead of forcing the students to gain the highest grades. When students are allowed to pursue their passions and engage with the world around them, they will gain the confidence and skills needed to navigate life's challenges.

Conclusion: While academic marks most definitely have a place in our educational system, they should not be the only measure of success for a person. Life is much more than just grades on a paper. Success is about discovering what one likes to do, acquiring practical skills, and adding meaning to the world. Adaptability, learning, and growing are qualities that cannot be quantified by an exam or report card. Instead, students need to be reminded that their value goes beyond the grades they have. The future belongs to those who think critically, who innovate and can create—the very qualities that exist far beyond the classroom.

## Centre's decision to set up system for rare earth magnets is a game changer

By: R. Suryamurthy

India's decision to establish a domestic rare-earth magnet industry may seem like a technical footnote in a week crowded with political and economic headlines. In reality, it marks one of the country's most important strategic turns in years. The Union Cabinet's approval of a ₹7,280-crore scheme to build a complete ecosystem for sintered rare-earth permanent magnets (REPMs) is more than industrial housekeeping. It is New Delhi's clearest admission that India can no longer afford to be a passive spectator in the global race for minerals that power the 21st century.

For two decades, China has dominated the critical minerals landscape with remarkable discipline and foresight. It did not merely mine these materials; it mastered the refining, separation, alloying, and processing stages where true value and geopolitical leverage sit. The result is a level of concentration that would be alarming in any strategic sector: Beijing controls most of the world's rare-earth magnet output, a decisive share of lithium conversion, and an overwhelming percentage of the processing of cobalt, manganese, and graphite.

India, like most countries, has relied on this ecosystem because it was convenient, competitive, and seemingly reliable. But the last few years have shown just how fragile this arrangement is. Export controls, diplomatic tensions, price shocks, and geopolitical signalling have all demonstrated the risks of depending on a single supplier for minerals that underpin everything from EV motors to missile guidance systems. India's own import bills tell the story. Lithium-ion battery imports have soared into the billions, and key intermediates such as lithium carbonate, nickel sulphate, cobalt sulphate, and LiPF<sub>6</sub> are still entirely sourced from abroad.

The newly approved REPM scheme is significant because it targets the segment that China has used most effectively as leverage: the midstream. The plan is not merely to assemble magnets, but to create full-stack capacity—converting rare earth oxides into metals, metals into alloys, and alloys into high-strength magnets. The government will back the initiative with heavy incentives, global competitive bidding, and a seven-year support structure that gives companies both the time and confidence to invest.

For India, rare-earth magnets are only the starting point of a larger strategic repositioning. Over the past year, the government has rolled out a series of decisions that indicate a new seriousness about critical minerals. Incentives now extend beyond exploration to refining, precursor chemicals, and high-purity processing—the very activities that India long ignored while China quietly fortified its

industrial moat. Mining reforms have been aligned with industrial policy, and the National Critical Mineral Mission has been tasked with coordinating what used to be a fragmented policy space.

Just as important is India's newfound diplomatic clarity. Recognising that no domestic strategy can succeed without diversified global access, New Delhi has intensified its partnerships with Latin America, Africa, Australia, and Canada—the geographies that hold the greatest reserves of lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earths. India's state-backed vehicle, KABIL, has become more active in securing stakes and offtakes in overseas assets. Quiet but significant progress has been made in Argentina's lithium triangle; exploratory ties are being deepened with mineral-rich African states; and India's relationships with Australia and Canada—two of the world's most stable providers of battery metals—have begun shifting toward long-term, strategic mineral cooperation.

These moves are not about rivalry for rivalry's sake. India's goal need not be to replace China—a task no country can accomplish soon—but to ensure that India is not exposed to one-sided risks in technologies central to its own growth and security. A balanced reading of global politics shows that mineral concentration is not a theoretical threat; it can manifest overnight in the form of export restrictions, price squeezes, or quietly withheld shipments during diplomatic friction. India's energy transition, industrialisation, and defence modernisation cannot be built on supply chains that remain vulnerable to external shocks beyond its control.

At the same time, India's domestic mineral base, while promising, is not something it can fully rely on. Many high-profile finds remain in the early inference stage. Mining and refining are long-gestation activities with complicated environmental and community considerations. For the foreseeable future, India will have to build a hybrid model: secure resources abroad, refine strategically at home, and recycle aggressively to recover materials from retired batteries and electronic waste. Recycling, in particular, is the fastest path for India to reduce import dependence. Recovery technologies for lithium, nickel, and cobalt have improved sharply, and India has the scale of end-of-life products to build a circular ecosystem around them.

There is, of course, a risk that India falls into its old patterns: fragmented decision-making, slow permits, policy drift, and the lure of cheaper imports that undermine domestic investments. That would be the fastest way to lose this race before it even begins. A laser-like focus on execution is essential. Mineral strategies require decades of consistency; without continuity, India will end up with

scattered projects instead of a coherent industrial base. Getting the REPM scheme right—commissioning plants on schedule, achieving global quality standards, securing supply for defence and EV sectors, and eventually exporting magnets—will be a litmus test for whether India can execute complex industrial programmes.

But there are reasons for cautious optimism. India's market today is large enough to justify full domestic value chains. EV demand is rising, grid storage is expanding, and renewable energy has become mainstream. These industries cannot grow on imported uncertainty. They require stable, predictable supplies of refined minerals. That urgency creates political alignment. It also gives Indian companies the confidence to invest in technologies that were once seen as too niche or too capital-intensive.

The geopolitical context further tilts in India's favour. Many countries are searching for mineral partners that are both reliable and not entangled in great-power rivalries. India occupies a unique position: large enough to matter, trusted enough to partner with, and increasingly willing to bring diplomatic muscle to its industrial goals. If it can synchronise domestic incentives with overseas partnerships—something the REPM scheme hints at—India can carve out a meaningful place in global mineral supply chains without having to mirror China's scale.

Still, realism is necessary. China's dominance will not erode because India has announced a few strategic schemes. It will erode only if India stays committed for the long haul—building refineries, training metallurgists, investing in R&D, scaling recycling, securing overseas equity, and maintaining consistent policies across elections and budgets. This is a generational undertaking, not a typical five-year plan.

The magnet scheme is important because it marks the first concrete step toward that long horizon. It tells industry that India is ready to put money on the table. It tells partners abroad that India is serious about diversifying supply chains. And it tells China—quietly but unmistakably—that India is no longer content to occupy the weakest link in the minerals-to-manufacturing chain.

India's fight to end dependence on China's mineral muscle will be long, uneven, and at times frustrating. But for the first time, the country seems prepared for the effort. The clean-energy economy of the future will belong not just to the nations that build batteries, motors and turbines—but to those that can secure the minerals behind them.

India has taken its first step. What it does next will decide whether this becomes a turning point or another unfinished ambition swept away by the next cycle of cheap imports and lost opportunities. (IPA Service)

# Death toll rises to 55 in Hong Kong fire, 279 still missing

BEIJING/HONG KONG, Nov 27: The death toll in a deadly fire in multiple high-rise towers in Hong Kong has risen to 55 with 279 people still missing, Chinese official media reports said on Thursday.

Three men have been arrested for suspected manslaughter in the fire that broke out in Wang Fuk Court on Wednesday, Hong Kong Police Force was quoted as saying by state-run Xinhua news agency.

Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) John Lee said that 279 people are still missing in the worst fire in Hong Kong's history involving multiple high-rise blocks.

At least sixty-eight people are in hospital, with 16 in critical condition and 25 deemed serious, the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

Police investigation suggested that the protective nets, waterproof canvas and plastic cloth covering



the buildings might fall short of fireproof standards.

The police also found that polyurethane foam was used to seal windows of elevator lobbies in an unaffected building in the residential area, and pointed to the flammable material as a possible

cause for the rapid spread of fire, the report said.

The three men arrested by police were executives of a construction company responsible for installing these materials for the renovation of the buildings. The suspects aged between 52 and 68 include two

company directors and a project consultant whose gross negligence was believed to have caused heavy casualties, it added.

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday night extended condolences over the deadly residential building fire and directed authorities to make all efforts to put out the blaze.

He immediately sought updates on the rescue efforts and casualties and instructed the director of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR to convey his condolences and sympathies to HKSAR Chief Executive John Lee.

Xi directed the Hong Kong and Macao Work Office of the CPC Central Committee and the liaison office to support the HKSAR government in making all-out efforts to put out the fire, do everything possible in search and rescue, treat the injured, and comfort the victims' families, Xinhua reported. (PTI)

# 2 National Guard members shot in an ambush attack just blocks from WH



WASHINGTON, Nov 27: Two West Virginia National Guard members who deployed to the nation's capital were shot Wednesday afternoon just blocks from the White House in a brazen act of violence that the mayor described as a targeted attack.

FBI Director Kash Patel and Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser said they were hospitalized in critical condition.

The rare shooting of National Guard members, on the day before Thanksgiving, comes as the presence of the troops in the nation's capital and other cities around the country has been a flashpoint issue for months, fuelling court fights and a broader public policy debate about the Trump administration's use of the military to combat what officials cast as an out-of-control crime problem.

A suspect who was in custody also was shot and had wounds that were not believed to be life-threatening, according to a law enforcement official who was not authorised to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to AP on condition of anonymity.

The 29-year-old suspect, an Afghan national, entered the US in 2021 through Operation Allies Welcome, a Biden administration programme that evacuated and resettled tens of thousands of Afghans after the US withdrawal from the country, officials said.

The initiative brought roughly 76,000 people to the US, many of whom had worked alongside US troops and diplomats as interpreters and translators. It has since faced intense scrutiny from Trump and his allies, congressional Republicans and some government watchdogs over gaps in the vetting process and the speed of admissions, even as advocates say it offered a lifeline to people at risk of Taliban reprisals.

The suspect, who has been living in Washington state, has been identified by law enforcement officials as Rahmanullah Lakanwal, but authorities were still working to fully confirm his background, two law enforcement officials and a person familiar with the matter said. The people could not discuss details of an ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Lakanwal arrived in Bellingham, Washington, about 79 miles (127.1 kilometres) north of Seattle, with his wife and five children, said his former landlord Kristina Widman.

Wednesday night, in a video message released on social media, President Donald Trump called for the reinvestigation of all Afghan refugees who entered under the Biden administration.

"If they can't love our country, we don't want them," he said, adding that the shooting was "a crime against our entire nation."

Jeffery Carroll, an executive assistant DC police chief, said investigators had no information on a motive. He said the assailant "came around the corner" and immediately started firing at the troops, citing video reviewed by investigators.

"This was a targeted shooting," Bowser said.

West Virginia Gov Patrick Morrisey initially said the troops had died, but he later walked that statement back to say his office was "receiving conflicting reports" about their condition.

The Trump administration quickly ordered 500 more National Guard members to Washington. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Trump asked him to send the troops.

Nearly 2,200 troops currently are assigned to the joint task force operating in the city, according to the government's latest update.

Troops held down the shooter

The shooting happened roughly two blocks northwest of the White House near a metro station. Hearing gunfire, other troops in the area ran over and held down the gunman after he was shot, Carroll said.

"It appears to be a lone gunman that raised a firearm and ambushed these members of the National Guard," Carroll said, adding that it was not clear whether one of the guard members or a law enforcement officer shot the suspect.

"At this point we have no other suspects," Carroll said at a news conference.

At least one of the guard members exchanged gunfire with the shooter, said another law enforcement official who was not authorised to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Social media video shared in the immediate aftermath showed first responders performing CPR on one of the troops and treating the other on a glass-covered sidewalk.

Witnesses saw people fleeing

Stacy Walters said she was in a car when she heard two gunshots and saw people running. Almost instantly, law enforcement swarmed the area. "It's such a beautiful day. Who would do this? And we're getting ready for the holidays?"

Emma McDonald, who exited a metro station just after the shots were fired, said she and a friend sought safety with others in a cafe. McDonald told AP that minutes later she saw first responders rolling a stretcher carrying a National Guard member whose head was covered in blood.

Police tape cordoned off the scene, and fire and police vehicle lights flashed and helicopter blades thudded overhead. Agents from the Secret Service and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives were there, and National Guard troops stood sentry nearby. At least one helicopter landed on the National Mall.

"I think it's a somber reminder that soldiers, whether they're active duty, reserve or National Guard, our soldiers are the sword and the shield of the United States of America," Vice President JD Vance said in Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where he delivered a Thanksgiving message to troops.

Gen Steven Nordhaus, chief of the National Guard Bureau, scrapped plans to spend the holiday with troops at Guantanamo Bay in order to travel to D.C. and be with guard members there instead.

Army Secretary Dan Driscoll said on social media that he visited the wounded National Guard members in the hospital and that his "heart breaks for them."

Troops deployed to DC under emergency order

Trump issued an emergency order in August that federalised the local police force and sent in National Guard troops from eight states and the District of Columbia. The order expired a month later, but the troops remained. Last week a federal judge ordered an end to the deployment, but she also put her order on hold for 21 days to allow the administration time to either remove the troops or appeal.

The guard members have patrolled neighbourhoods, train stations and other locations, participated in highway checkpoints and been assigned to pick up trash and guard sports events. (AP)

## Political prisoners released in Myanmar mass amnesty

BANGKOK, Nov 27: Excited families greeted relatives released from Myanmar's Insein Prison on Thursday as part of a mass amnesty granted by the country's military rulers ahead of next month's election.

At least eight buses carrying prisoners were welcomed outside the gate of the Yangon prison at 11:30 am by relatives and friends who had been waiting since early morning.

The military administration granted amnesty to more than 3,000 people locked up for opposing army rule and dropped charges against more than 5,500 others, state-run broadcaster MRTV reported Wednesday. The amnesty was intended to ensure eligible voters could participate in the December 28 elections, it said.

An official from Insein Prison, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorised to release information, confirmed prisoners would be released starting Thursday but did not say how many or who they were. In past amnesties, releases have taken several days.

There was no sign that the prisoner release would include former leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who led the National League for Democracy government ousted in the military takeover in 2021 and who has been held virtually incommunicado since then. (AP)

## Imran Khan is in 'completely good health inside Adiala Jail': Jail authorities

LAHORE, Nov 27: Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan is in "completely good health inside Adiala Jail", the jail authorities said on Thursday, rejecting rumours on social media about his medical condition.

"The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership has been informed regarding Imran Khan's health. All necessary care is being provided to the PTI chief," the Adiala Jail administration said in a statement issued here on Thursday.

Khan, 73, has been in jail since August 2023 in multiple cases.

Several social media accounts on X have shared unverified claims of Imran Khan's death, with some foreign media also reporting on the alleged rumours about his health. The trend "Where is Imran Khan?" was also trending on X on Thursday morning. There is no truth to the rumours being circulated on social media about his medical condition, the statement said.

The development comes as Imran Khan's three sisters have been repeatedly denied a meeting with him for the last six weeks, leading them to question the whereabouts of the ex-prime minister. They also staged sit-ins outside the Adiala jail.

The Adiala Jail administration further clarified that reports about shifting Imran Khan from Adiala Jail are entirely baseless.



"Imran Khan is in Adiala Jail and is healthy. The social media rumours about his transfer are unfounded," the jail administration said.

The PTI has demanded that the government lift the undeclared ban on Imran Khan's meetings and immediately arrange a meeting between the former premier and his family.

In a statement issued early on Thursday on X, the PTI demanded that the current government and the interior ministry clearly dismiss and clarify the rumour and immediately arrange a meeting between Imran Khan and his family.

"A formal and transparent statement should be issued on behalf of the state regarding the health, security and current status of Imran," the party demanded.

It further called on the state to investigate those responsible for spreading rumours of a sensitive nature and demanded that the

facts be presented before the nation.

"The nation will not tolerate any uncertainty regarding the status of Imran Khan. The government is directly responsible for protecting Imran's security, human rights and constitutional rights," the PTI said.

The party vowed to take every legal and political step to counter these rumours and bring the truth to light.

PTI leader Meher Bano Qureshi, who is also the daughter of former foreign minister and PTI vice chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi, said on X that rumours regarding Imran Khan's health were concerning.

"The government is responsible for Khan sahib's safety and is duty-bound to issue a statement updating the nation. As far as putting an end to these rumours goes, the best, most credible way possible is to allow Khan sahib's sisters, lawyers and party members to meet with him," Qureshi said.

Interestingly, Adiala Jail comes under the administrative control of the Punjab government of Maryam Nawaz.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, daughter of three-time premier Nawaz Sharif, has already stated that she has no control over Khan's meetings.

Earlier, Khan claimed that an army Colonel is in charge of the Adiala Jail matters. (PTI)

## Torrential rains, landslides kill 31 people in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Nov 27: Torrential rains, floods and landslides have left 31 people dead in Sri Lanka with nearly 4000 affected in the last 11 days, as the island nation grapples with one of its worst weather-related crises.

Sri Lanka's Disaster Management Centre said on Thursday that 18 deaths were reported from the central hill districts alone due to landslides.

In a terrifying incident, a passenger bus got trapped in rising floodwaters in Kumbukkana. Emergency teams managed to rescue twenty-three passengers successfully, Daily Mirror Online reported.

Nearly 10 people have sustained injuries, while 14 persons are reported missing, Adaderana news portal reported.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake had called a crisis meeting to assess the deteriorating situation in 17 of the 25 administrative districts.

According to the weather bureau, the island's southeast periphery had developed a low-pressure situation, which had developed "into a depression and is centred 210 km southeast of Batticaloa. (PTI)

## Bangladesh court sentences ousted PM Hasina to 21 years in jail

DHAKA, Nov 27: A Dhaka court on Thursday sentenced ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina to 21 years imprisonment and her two children to five years each over alleged irregularities in allocation of plots under a government housing project after their trial in absentia. Dhaka Special Judge Court-5 handed down the sentences to 78-year-old Hasina, her son Sajib Wajed Joy and daughter Saima Wazed Putul in three cases over corruption charges in the government housing project at Purbachal adjacent to the capital.

"The plot was allotted to Sheikh Hasina without any application and in a manner that exceeded the legally authorised jurisdiction," Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun said while delivering the judgment.

Hasina was sentenced to seven years in each of the three cases involving the alleged allocation totalling 21 years in

prison. Apart from the Hasina family, 20 others, including former junior minister for housing Sharif Ahmed and officials of the housing ministry and Rajdhani Unyan Kartipakkah, were tried in the cases and except one, all were sentenced to varying prison terms. The man who was acquitted is a junior officer of the ministry. Only one of the accused faced the trial in person and he was sentenced to three years. Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission filed six cases between January 12 to 14 and submitted charge-sheets in all of them on March 10 while the verdict on the three cases came on Tuesday.

Authorities tightened security in and around the court complex in the old part of Dhaka as the judgment came 10 days after a special Bangladesh tribunal sentenced Hasina to death on charges of committing "crimes against humanity". (PTI)

## Macron unveils new French voluntary military service



VARCES, Nov 27: President Emmanuel Macron unveiled a new national military service plan Thursday as France seeks to bolster its armed forces to address growing concerns over Russia's threat to European nations beyond the war in Ukraine.

Macron announced that volunteers aged 18 and 19 will start serving next year in a 10-month new military service programme.

"A new national service is set to be gradually established, starting from next summer," Macron said in a speech at the Varcès military base, in the French Alps.

Young volunteers will serve in France's mainland and overseas territories only, not in France's military operations abroad, Macron said.

Earlier this year, Macron announced his intention to provide French youth with a new option to voluntarily serve in the military. Conscripted, which France ended in 1996, is not being considered. He explained then that France seeks to boost its defences as Russia's war in Ukraine puts the European continent at "great risk."

"The day that you send a signal of weakness to Russia — which for 10 years has made a strategic choice to become an imperial power again, that's to say advance wherever we are weak — well, it will continue to advance," he told radio RTL on Tuesday.

Macron has announced 6.5 billion euros (USD 7.6 billion) in extra military spending in the next two years.

He said France will aim to spend 64 billion euros in annual defence spending in 2027, the last year of his second term. That would be double the 32 billion euros in annual spending when he became president in 2017.

France's military currently comprises around 200,000 active personnel and over 40,000 reservists, making it the second largest in the European Union, just behind Poland. France wants to increase the number of reservists to 100,000 by 2030.

France's new army chief of staff, Gen. Fabien Mandon, last week sent a warning about the nation's need to get prepared to "lose its children" in the event of a potential conflict with Russia — words that prompted an outcry across the political spectrum.

Russia annexed 20 per cent of Georgia's territory in 2008, Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Gen. Mandon said.

"Unfortunately, Russia today, based on the information I have access to, is preparing for a confrontation with our countries by 2030. It is organising itself for this, it is preparing for this, and it is convinced that its existential enemy is NATO," he said. (AP)

# Russia's frozen assets at centre of negotiations over Ukraine peace deal

BRUSSELS, Nov 27: Money is as central to Europe's vital support of Ukraine as ammunition and intelligence. Yet, the bloc's most viable funding mechanism involves seizing billions of dollars worth of Russian assets that US President Donald Trump has proposed taking over.

The first draft of Trump's 28-point peace plan called for an investment scheme for Ukraine's reconstruction controlled by the US but financed by USD 100 billion in frozen Russian assets matched by another USD 100 billion from the European Union — with 50 per cent of profits sent back to Washington.

The plan surprised Europeans, who have spent years fiercely debating the fate of Russia's frozen fortune.

Those funds are central to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen's plan to both maintain pressure on Russia and increase support for Ukraine as mysterious drone incursions and sabotage operations rattle European capitals.

"I cannot see any scenario in which the European taxpayers alone will pay the bill," she said Wednesday in Strasbourg, France, to applause from lawmakers in the European Parliament.

The 27-nation EU has sent Ukraine almost USD 197 billion since Russia invaded Ukraine nearly four years ago. While there's no consensus on how to provide more aid, there's near unanimity on seizing the Russian assets to cover the estimated USD 153 billion



for Ukraine's budget and military needs for 2026 and 2027.

The Commission has proposed paying that bill with joint debt taken on by the EU and grants by individual nations, but its main source is the USD 225 billion assets frozen at Euroclear, a Brussels-based financial institution.

That is, if the Trump administration doesn't get them first.

Perks of the deal

Trump's brash negotiating style left many in Europe suspecting he wants a quick deal that forces Europeans to make it work and pay for it. All while the US profits.

Analysts say the proposal was essentially a

US attempt to snatch these assets, coming as Brussels and Washington relaunch trade negotiations over tariffs.

Agathe Demarais, a senior fellow at the Berlin-based European Council on Foreign Relations, said the proposal was akin to a "signing bonus" for a peace deal heavily slanted towards Russia.

Fabian Zuleeg, chief executive of the Brussels-based European Policy Centre, called the US takeover of the assets "outrageous," but suggested it might also be acceptable to Europeans "if that is ultimately the price to pay for a good deal." After intense discussions between the US, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and representatives from the European Commission, the investment scheme was removed from the new draft peace plan. Russia has already signalled its total rejection of the new draft.

The assets frozen in Belgium

A quick seizure of Russia's frozen assets by the EU would not only secure Ukraine's defence budget, but also empower Brussels at the negotiation table, Demarais said.

"If the EU rushes to seize Russia's central bank assets before Washington grabs them, the bloc may be able to drastically curb Trump's interest in a bad deal," she said.

The European Commission has proposed taking direct ownership of the assets. Under von der Leyen's leadership, it could then issue a loan to Ukraine, which would be repaid only if Moscow provides war reparations to Kyiv.

# Guv inaugurates 69<sup>th</sup> National School Games in Itanagar

*Parnaik urges scientific talent grooming, stronger sports infrastructure nationwide*



**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Nov 27: Governor, Lt General KT Parnaik, PVS, UYSM, YSM (Retd), inaugurated the 69th National School Games at the Khelo India Indoor Stadium here on Tuesday, marking a historic first for the state as host of the prestigious event.

Declaring the Games open, the Governor said the National School Games represents a celebration of youth, talent and the spirit that shapes the nation's future. Extending his best wishes to the young athletes, he reminded

them that the competition is an opportunity to learn, bond and grow together. He urged participants to embrace challenges, play with passion, respect opponents and uphold true sportsmanship.

The Governor expressed pride in witnessing the determination, talent and camaraderie of the participants and hoped the event would help create a strong pool of young athletes capable of representing India globally in taekwondo and weightlifting. He encouraged the students to dream big, aim high and strive to be

champions in both sports and life.

Highlighting India's rising sporting aspirations, the Governor stressed the need for a scientific approach to nurturing talent, including the promotion of sports medicine to align students' abilities with suitable sporting disciplines. He called upon schools and sports departments across the country to invest in playgrounds, coaches and proper infrastructure so that every child feels motivated to participate and realise their potential.

Parnaik noted that despite

being one of India's youngest states and a new member of the School Games Federation of India, Arunachal Pradesh has achieved a milestone by hosting the 69th National School Games. With boxing already completed and taekwondo and weightlifting underway, he said this was the first time in 71 years that SGFI had entrusted the event to the state, reflecting its growing commitment to sports and youth development.

The Governor commended the Department of Education for its efforts in organising the event, stating that such competitions enrich the state's sports calendar and nurture discipline, teamwork and healthy competition among children and youth.

MLA and Advisor to the Home & Education Minister Mutchu Mithi and Education Commissioner Amjad Tak also addressed the gathering, highlighting the significance of the Games.

A total of 1,291 participants, including 843 girls, from 26 states, six Union Territories and eight central organisations are taking part in the two disciplines earmarked for this edition. The competitions feature 890 taekwondo players and 401 weightlifters, supported by 140 technical officials with nearly 200 parents also attending the event.

## DNGC launches Arunachal Pradesh's first Curious Minds Innovation Hub



**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Nov 27: Dera Natung Government College (DNGC), Itanagar inaugurated the State's first Curious Minds Innovation Hub on Tuesday, marking a major step toward promoting experiential learning and scientific curiosity among students. The initiative was launched by the Department of Physics in association with the Indian Association of Physics Teachers (IAPT) Regional Council 17 in collaboration with the IAPT Innovation Hub RC 06, CDPE, University of Rajasthan and CIST, IIS (Deemed to be University), Jaipur.

Students from various departments of DNGC and several institutions from the Itanagar Capital Region, including Vivekananda Residential Public School and Vivekananda Central School, participated and benefitted from the event.

Chief Guest Prof Y K Vijay, former Director of CIST, Jaipur deliv-

ered an interactive and inspiring session. As a key figure behind the establishment of IAPT Innovation Hubs across the country, he shared his mission of making physics learning enjoyable, accessible and rooted in experimentation. He introduced the concept of Innovation Hubs, showcasing nearly 50 copyright-free scientific models developed over eight years to simplify complex ideas through play and hands-on exploration.

Prof Vijay demonstrated several concepts—atomic configuration, crystal defects, photon-atom interactions, Van der Waals potential, total internal reflection and the Raman effect using simple models. He also reminded students of India's rich scientific legacy shaped by C V Raman, Meghnad Saha and S N Bose. With 2025 celebrated as the Centenary of Quantum Science, he said the inauguration of the Hub at DNGC was timely and meaningful.

He added that the new Hub

forms part of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of IAPT and is the 86th such Hub in the country. Calling on students and teachers to actively engage with the models, he encouraged them to innovate, experiment and share their work with the broader scientific community.

Principal and Patron Dr M Q Khan described the Hub as a transformative step for the institution. He noted that education has moved beyond traditional classrooms and emphasised the need for platforms that foster experimentation, tinkering and collaborative projects. "The Innovation Hub is yours," he told students, urging them to see the space as one where curiosity thrives and bold ideas take shape. He expressed his aspiration to make DNGC a centre of creative excellence through interdisciplinary learning and collaborations with scientific bodies and industry partners.

Special Guest Anil Kumar, Principal of Vivekananda Residential Public School, encouraged students to nurture reasoning skills, analytical thinking and a questioning mindset. Citing Article 51A (h) of the Constitution, he reminded them that developing a scientific temper is a fundamental duty of every citizen. He praised DNGC and IAPT for creating a platform that encourages observation, experimentation and independent thinking.

## BJP rejects China's claim on Arunachal; condemns incident at Shanghai airport

**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Nov 27: The Arunachal Pradesh unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday strongly rejected China's repeated claims over the state and condemned the recent incident involving an Arunachalee woman at Shanghai airport.

Addressing the media, BJP chief spokesperson and Roing MLA Mutchu Mithi said Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India and recognised as such by the international community. He termed China's behaviour "highly condemnable".

Referring to the incident involving Pema Wangiom Thongdok, who was reportedly harassed at Shanghai airport, Mithi said the act was "shameful" and should never have occurred. "They should refrain from doing so," he stated.

Mithi recalled the historic support extended by the people of Arunachal Pradesh to Indian forces during the 1962 Indo-China conflict and said China must stop such actions and behaviour towards the people of the state. "Such incidents have no place in bilateral international relations. Arunachal Pradesh is in the heart of India," he added.

President of the Arunachal Pradesh Himalayan Suraksha Manch, Tarh Tarak also condemned the incident, reiterating that Arunachal Pradesh has never been part of China. He said the woman had been stranded for more than 18 hours at Shanghai airport during transit from London to Japan, calling the treatment "unfortunate and condemnable".

*Union alleges ₹ 200 crore misappropriation in Package-IV & V; demands suspension of officials*

## AUSDLSU seeks re-verification of Frontier Highway land compensation



**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Nov 27: The Upper Subansiri District Law Students' Union (AUSDLSU) on Wednesday urged the Arunachal Pradesh Government to constitute a fact-finding committee and conduct re-verification of land compensation under the Arunachal Frontier Highway Package-IV and V in Upper Subansiri district. The union also demanded suspension of the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and the District Land Revenue & Settlement Officer (DLRSO) until the

verification process is completed. Addressing reporters at the Arunachal Press Club, AUSDLSU president Tatu Maying alleged large-scale mismanagement and misappropriation amounting to nearly ₹ 200 crore in the disbursement of compensation. He claimed the District Administration had "indecisively" prepared the compensation list, resulting in multiple irregularities.

"Interestingly, crores of rupees have been issued against no-man's land," Maying alleged, adding that

available documents suggest serious lapses and possible misuse of public money.

The union further questioned the administration's decision to appoint an Extra Assistant Commissioner (EAC) as DLRSO in-charge despite the presence of a full-time DLRSO in the district. This, they said, created suspicion of manipulation in the compensation process.

AUSDLSU also alleged that the DLRSO in-charge conducted land surveys without the involvement of supporting officials, calling it a sign of ill intention on the part of authorities.

The union demanded immediate suspension of all officials involved in the compensation exercise and warned that legal action would be initiated if the government fails to take necessary steps.

"If the matter remains unresolved, we will seek justice through the court," the union cautioned.

## Businessman, PRI leader kidnapped near Indo-Myanmar border

**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Nov 27: Director General of Police (Incharge) Chukhu Apa on Thursday confirmed that a businessman and a Panchayat Raj Institution (PRI) leader from Tirap district have been kidnapped and held hostage by militants across the Indo-Myanmar border. He said efforts are underway to secure their safe release at the earliest.

Speaking to the media at Police Headquarters, Apa identified the abducted individuals as businessman Vijay Shankar and Panchayat leader B Lamati. The incident reportedly occurred near the border area, and initial information suggests that cadres of NSCN-K (Rebel) are behind the kidnapping.

According to reports received from Tirap district, both individuals had voluntarily crossed into Myanmar through Longwa village in Nagaland before being detained by the militant group. "The district police have registered a case and launched a coordinated search and rescue operation," Apa said. Recounting previous incidents, the DGP Incharge noted that on August 18, two non-tribal labourers working for contractor Vijay Shankar on the Lahu-Tisa road were abducted by NSCN-K (Rebel) cadres following an extortion demand of Rs 50 lakh. Though the labourers were rescued, the contractor later received a fresh demand of Rs 1 crore, after which he halted construction work.

Apa further stated that on October 30, two more local individuals working on the Sanliam-Longbo road were kidnapped by the Ang Mai faction after allegedly ignoring extortion calls.

He said that on November 20, the Market Secretary travelled to Lungwa village with Rs 5 lakh after prolonged negotiation in an attempt to secure the release of Vijay Shankar and Bamnye Aniyam of Thinsu village. As per available information, militants picked up the individuals from the house of the Lungwa village chief and transported them about 1 hour and 45 minutes inside Myanmar. While two abducted persons were released to the Market Secretary, Vijay Shankar and the PRI leader were retained by the militants. Apa expressed optimism that the remaining captives would be released soon. "Negotiations are on and the Army has launched a massive combing and search operation on the Indian side, maintaining strict vigilance on movement across the border," he added.

## DC inspects progress of 43 km Jido-Palling PMGSY road

**HT Correspondent**  
YINGKIONG, Nov 27: Upper Siang Deputy Commissioner Talo Jerang, accompanied by SP Token Saring and RWD EE Er. Gatling Lipir on Wednesday inspected the ongoing construction of the 43 km Jido-Palling PMGSY road. Owing to the rough condition of the stretch, the team travelled on a tractor to assess the work progress.

The PMGSY project, executed by the Yingkiang RWD Division, aims to provide road connectivity from Palling CO Headquarters to

Tuting Sub-divisional Headquarters, covering Jido, Angging, Singging and Palling villages. Palling is already linked to Yingkiang District Headquarters through a 61 km PWD road from the opposite direction.

According to the engineering team, formation cutting has been completed up to Palling village with final cutting expected to finish by January 31, 2026. The construction of culverts, CC drains, retaining and breast walls, GSB, WBM and blacktopping is targeted for completion by March 31, 2026.

During the site visit, the DC appreciated the efforts of the contractor's engineers, machine operators and workers for maintaining steady progress. He instructed the engineers and RWD officials to strictly adhere to quality standards at every stage of execution.

PMGSY roads are built under the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, a central government scheme launched in 2000 to provide all-weather road connectivity to unconnected rural habitations, aimed at improving socio-economic conditions in rural regions.

## Hundreds join rally seeking justice for Late Tadu Haro

**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Nov 27: Hundreds of people from different walks of life joined a public referendum rally in Itanagar on Tuesday demanding justice for Late Tadu Haro.

The rally was organised by the Apatani Students' Union (ASU) and the Apatani Youth Association (AYA) and saw participation from members of the All Nyishi Youth Association (ANYA).

Addressing the gathering, ANYA president Jamru Ruja said the organisation stands firmly with ASU and AYA in their fight for justice. "Today we have carried out this rally in support of the victim's family," he said.

Ruja informed that a candlelight rally was held on November 16 and a memorandum was submitted to the state government the following day. He added that another memorandum submitted on Tuesday sought restrictions on all alleged students involved in the case, strengthening of anti-ragging mechanisms and the declaration of November 1 as Anti-Ragging Day.

He also reminded the authorities of the seven-day ultimatum served by ASU and AYA. "This is not about any particular community or tribe. Anyone can face such incidents in the future," he said, urging the government to act swiftly.

According to Ruja, the state government has indicated that a reply to the earlier memorandum concerning reforms in anti-ragging measures and the introduction of moral science in schools will be issued soon.

The rally began at the Tennis Court area and concluded with the submission of a memorandum to the Governor near Raj Bhavan.

*CM hails Tawang capacity-building workshop as milestone for modernising cooperatives*

## Khandu projects cooperative sector as engine of Arunachal's economic growth

**HT Correspondent**  
ITANAGAR, Nov 27: Chief Minister Pema Khandu on Thursday positioned the state's cooperative sector as a key driver for economic future, describing the just-concluded five-day capacity building-workshop for cooperative rejuvenation in Tawang as a transformative milestone.

He said the initiative had not only strengthened the leadership capacity of cooperative functionaries across the state but also set the tone for modern, innovation-driven cooperative governance.

Termining the initiative a push towards restructuring and modernising the cooperative landscape, Khandu in a post on X said, "A milestone for the Cooperative movement in Arunachal Pradesh!" The workshop, organised in partnership with Tribhuvan Sahkari University (TSU), Gujarat is the first such intensive training programme undertaken by the state.

According to the chief minister, the sessions brought together experts, practitioners, and emerging



cooperative leaders for in-depth modules that addressed both structural challenges and new possibilities within the sector.

He said the training covered "cooperative governance, strategic and entrepreneurial thinking, business plan formulation, dairy and fisheries societies, financial operationalisation and inter-departmental convergence," ensuring participants received holistic exposure to the mechanics of running

modern cooperatives.

Khandu emphasised that the collaborative approach, bringing together government departments, cooperative societies and academic experts, was essential for building resilient grassroots institutions.

He added that many local cooperatives, especially in rural regions, require renewed capacity, professional management practices and a clearer roadmap to become financially viable and community-

driven.

"Appreciation to the eminent TSU faculty for their valuable insights, which have laid a strong foundation for a revitalised and future-ready cooperative sector," the chief minister said adding, their guidance had introduced participants to innovative operational models that could be adapted to Arunachal's unique geographical and socio-economic context.

Khandu also underlined the

workshop's role in advancing the state's broader development vision.

"This initiative is a meaningful step towards empowering cooperative leaders and advancing grassroots economic development for a self-reliant Arunachal Pradesh," he said.

The chief minister added that a strong cooperative network is vital for expanding livelihood opportunities in sectors such as dairy, fisheries, agriculture and handicrafts, areas where community participation and shared economic models can yield long-term sustainability.

The week-long event is expected to serve as a foundation for a series of reforms aimed at rejuvenating dormant cooperatives, promoting entrepreneurship and improving financial discipline and accountability within the sector, officials said here.

Follow-up activities and structured mentorship are likely to be introduced to ensure continuity and effective implementation at the ground level. (PTI)

# Success of Op Sindoor stands as defining moment in India's counter-terror: Prez

**NEW DELHI, Nov 27:** The success of Operation Sindoor stands as a "defining moment" in the country's counter-terror and deterrence strategy, President Droupadi Murmu said on Thursday and asserted that the world took note of not only India's military capability but also its "moral clarity to act firmly, yet responsibly" in the pursuit of peace.

In her address at the inaugural session of the third edition of Chanakya Defence Dialogue, a key conclave hosted by the Army here, she emphasised that guided by India's civilisational ethos of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", "we have shown that strategic autonomy can coexist with global responsibility".

"Our diplomacy, our economy, and our armed forces together project an India that seeks peace, but is prepared to protect its borders and its citizens with strength and conviction," Murmu said.

The President asserted that the Indian armed forces have exemplified professionalism and pa-

triotism in guarding the sovereignty of India. "During every security challenge, whether conventional, counter-insurgency, or humanitarian, our forces have displayed remarkable adaptability and resolve," Murmu said.

Army Chief Gen Upendra Dwivedi, who was present on the dais, also delivered an address on the occasion. President Murmu, in her speech, recalled Operation Sindoor, India's decisive military action in May in the wake of the deadly Pahalgam attack.

"The recent success of Operation Sindoor stands as a defining moment in our counter-terror and deterrence strategy. The world took note not only of India's military capability but of India's moral clarity to act firmly, yet responsibly in the pursuit of peace," she said.

India launched the military operation early on May 7 and decimated multiple terror infrastructure sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK).



Pakistan also launched offensives against India, and all subsequent counter-offensives by India were also carried out under Operation Sindoor. The military conflict between the two nuclear-armed neighbours halted after they reached an understanding on the evening of May 10.

Murmu, in her address, further said, "I am happy to know that beyond its operational role, the Indian defence forces remain a pillar of national development. Apart from strengthening our frontiers, they have also helped in border area development through infrastructure, connectivity, tourism, and education."

She underlined that today's geopolitical landscape is "changing rapidly".

"The international system is being rewritten by contesting power centres, technological disruptions, and shifting alliances. New domains of competition -- cyber, space, information, and cognitive warfare are blurring the lines between peace and conflict," the President said.

In her address, she laid emphasis on the Army's endeavour to transform itself through quantifiable deliverables under its 'Decade of Transformation' vision.

"It is reforming structures, re-orienting doctrines, and redefining capabilities to be future-

ready and mission-capable across all domains. I am confident that these defence reforms will help in making India self-reliant, Murmu asserted.

She also laid emphasis on the Army investing in youth and human capital.

"It is instilling patriotism in youth through education, NCC expansion, and sports. The expansion of the contribution of young women officers and soldiers, both in role and character, would promote the spirit of inclusion. It will also inspire more young women to join the Indian Army and take up other professions," Murmu said.

She expressed hope that the discussion and outcome of this dialogue will provide valuable insights to policymakers for shaping the future contours of the national policy. "I am confident that our armed forces will continue to strive for excellence and move ahead with resolve and determination to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047," said the President, who is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. (PTI)

## BJP misleading people on issue of illegal migrants, its govt failed to act in last 11 years: Pilot

**RAIPUR, Nov 27:** Senior Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Thursday accused the BJP of misleading people on the issue of illegal migrants, and said the party-led government at the Centre failed to take concrete action against them despite being in power for the past 11 years.

Talking to reporters in Jagdalpur, the headquarters of Bastar district, Pilot, the Congress in-charge for Chhattisgarh, also alleged that the BJP government resorted to "gimmicks", and said there was a difference in what it speaks and its actions. He sought to know how many illegal migrants the Centre actually identified and deported in the last 11 years.

"Anyone who is an illegal migrant has no right to stay in the country as per the law. Action must be taken against those living here illegally, and we fully support such action. But for the past 11 years, they have only been misleading people through speeches. There is a BJP government in Assam, they should present data and show what action they have taken there (against illegal migrants)," he said.

"This is nothing but a gimmick used during elections to mislead people and falsely claim that the Congress stands with illegal migrants," Pilot added. He said a Director General of Police (DGP) conference will be held in Chhattisgarh (from Friday) to discuss law and order across India, but questioned accountability for crimes within the state itself.

"Loot, exploitation, and crimes against women are taking place in Chhattisgarh, yet no one is taking responsibility. This is all about projection and perception, with no substance on the ground," he alleged.

On the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, Pilot sought to know why the Election Commission was not acting on documents and data regarding alleged voter list fraud presented by the Congress.

"The question arises how lakhs of names were removed from the Bihar voter list? Rahul Gandhi ji held a press conference showing evidence of vote theft and deletion of names. Unfortunately, the EC did not even consider ordering an inquiry," he said, stressing that elections must remain "free and fair." He said that Congress fears genuine voters from Dalit, Adivasi, poor and backward communities may be targeted (during the SIR exercises).

"We want no genuine voter in this country to be excluded. We will keep up the pressure to ensure fair-



ness," he said. "BJP leaders repeatedly use the term 'infiltrators' to mislead the public. I want to clearly state that anyone who is an illegal migrant and is voting unlawfully should not be allowed to do so. But in the last 11 years, how many people has the BJP government actually identified and deported? There is a clear gap between their words and actions. Questions were asked in Parliament, yet no clear figures were given," Pilot said.

"If someone in Chhattisgarh is poor, backward, vulnerable or uneducated, does that make them an infiltrator? Farmers who are sowing and harvesting now, do they have time to run around collecting documents? Many cannot even manage two meals a day. The Congress stands with such people," he said. Re-lying to a question about Congress' stand on the encounter of top Maoist commander Hidma, Pilot said the Congress has a long history of fighting extremism.

"I am surprised that our stand is being questioned. Since the pre-Independence era, and over the past 75 years, the Congress has always prioritised the unity, integrity and sovereignty of this nation. Our leaders sacrificed their lives rather than bowing before terrorism. Whether Naxalism, terrorism or separatism, we have always confronted and defeated these forces," he said.

"Anyone who resorts to violence, works against national interest, or violates the law must face strict action. The Congress lost an entire generation in the Naxal attack in Chhattisgarh. How can anyone accuse us of supporting such forces? For us, the nation and its security come first, and party and ideology come later," Pilot added. (PTI)

## PM Modi launches Skyroot's facility in Hyderabad

### Tributes paid to martyrs on 26/11 anniversary

**HYDERABAD, Nov 27:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday virtually inaugurated Indian space startup Skyroot's Infinity Campus, here, and also unveiled the company's first orbital rocket Vikram-I, which has capability to launch satellites to orbit.

In his address, the PM highlighted the government's 'historic' space reforms and said that opening up the space sector to private players has resulted in Skyroot and others coming up with such innovations.

The PM said that today in India's space ecosystem, private sector was emerging with flying colours. Over 300 space startups were giving new hopes to the sector. "The Infinity Campus is a reflection of India's new thought, innovation and the bigger youth power. Youth's innovation, risk taking-ability and entrepreneurship are touching new heights," the PM noted. Today, the country's space sector was becoming attractive for global investors. India's private space talent was making its own identity across the globe.

"India's private space talent is making its own identity in the world. Today, India's space sector is becoming an attractive destination for global investors. Today, the demand for small satellites is increasing rapidly in the world," Modi said. He traced the journey of the Indian space programme from its nascent stages -- where rocket parts were moved in a bicycle, to building the "most trusted launch vehicle." The journey might have started with limited resources but the growth proved determination decides dreams, Modi said. In these changing times, space sector



is expanding so much, covering the areas of communication, weather prediction, urban planning and national security, among others.

"So that is why we have made historic reforms in space sector, opened it up to the private sector, made new space policy. Startups and industry were linked with innovation, set up In-Space," he said.

He further said plans were there to open up the nuclear sector also to private players. Skyroot's state-of-the-art facility will have around two lakh sq.ft. workspace for designing, developing, integrating and testing multiple launch vehicles, with a capacity to build one orbital rocket every month. Skyroot is India's leading private space company, founded by Pawan Chandana and Bharath Dhaka, both IIT alumni and former scientists of ISRO.

In November 2022, Skyroot launched its sub-orbital rocket, Vikram-S, becoming the first Indian private company to do so.

The rapid rise of private space enterprises is a testament to the success of the transformative re-

forms carried out by the NDA Government in the last few years, reinforcing India's leadership as a confident and capable global space power, an official release had earlier said. In his address, Modi recalled that India's space journey started with limited resources, but its ambitions were never limited.

For decades, ISRO has given new wings to the country's space journey, he said, and stressed that credibility, capacity, and value have established India's distinct identity in the sector.

The space agency's facilities and technologies were made available to the startups, he said, pointing out that India's space sector has been transformed into an open, cooperative and innovation-driven ecosystem in the last six-seven years.

He said India's youth always place national interest above all and make the best use of every opportunity. Modi said when the government opened the space sector, the country's youth, especially the Gen-Z generation, came forward to take full advantage of it.

"Today, over 300 Indian space

startups are giving new hopes to India's space future. Most of these space startups began with small teams—sometimes two people, sometimes five, sometimes in a small rented room—with limited resources but with determination to reach new heights. I had the opportunity to meet them," he said, adding this spirit gave birth to the private space revolution in India.

The Prime Minister said today, Gen Z engineers, Gen Z designers, Gen Z coders and Gen Z scientists are creating new technologies. Be it the propulsion system, composite materials, rocket stages, satellite platforms, India's youth are working in areas that were unimaginable a few years ago, he said.

India possesses space sector capabilities that only a few countries in the world have, the Prime Minister said emphasising that its space capability is both cost-effective and reliable, which is why the world has high expectations from the country. He remarked that global companies want to manufacture satellites in India, avail launch services and seek technology partnerships, and stressed that the nation must make the most of this opportunity. He highlighted that over the past decade, a new wave of startups has emerged across diverse sectors such as FinTech, AgriTech, HealthTech, ClimateTech, EduTech and DefenseTech, with India's youth, particularly the Gen-Z generation, providing innovative solutions in every field.

Modi further said that more than 10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs have already been set up to instill a spirit of research and innovation among students. (PTI)

## Adityanath conducts review of Noida airport

**NOIDA, Nov 27:** Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday carried out a detailed on-site inspection of the under-construction Noida International Airport at Jewar, officials said. He also held a high-level meeting with senior officials.

Adityanath inspected the domestic terminal, the proposed inauguration venue, security management systems, traffic arrangements and various construction activities at the greenfield airport, the Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL) said. Following the inspection, the chief minister held a meeting with Union Civil Aviation Minister K Ramnohan Naidu, senior officials from the Civil Aviation Ministry, DGCA, Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, CISE, Airport Authority of India, NIAL, district administration, police and the construction agency.

The meeting was also attended

by Noida International Airport CEO Christoph Schnellmann, COO Kiran Jain, NIAL and Yamuna Expressway Authority CEO Rakesh Singh, and project's nodal officer Shaileendra Bhatia. During the review, Adityanath noted that the airport is yet to receive its aerodrome licence. He directed officials to urgently coordinate with security agencies and complete all pending compliance work, according to an official present in the meeting. "The Noida International Airport is an ambitious project of the state. Any remaining security or operational requirements must be completed at the earliest and with the highest standards of quality," he said.

The CM further stressed that the project will play a pivotal role in boosting UP's development and global investment prospects, and instructed all departments to ensure that preparations for the inauguration are completed on time. (PTI)

## No 'Vande Mataram', 'Jai Hind' slogans in Parliament: Congress slams BJP

**NEW DELHI, Nov 27:** The Congress on Thursday hit out at the BJP after the Rajya Sabha Secretariat reminded MPs not to use slogans like 'Vande Mataram' and 'Jai Hind' in Parliament to maintain decorum, and said those who did not lose anything in the freedom movement and sided with the British have problems with slogans associated with the independence struggle.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said earlier the British had problems with these slogans which were used in the freedom struggle and now the BJP is having problems.

On November 24, the Rajya Sabha Secretariat reminded members not to use slogans like 'Vande Mataram' and 'Jai Hind' inside or outside the House to maintain decorum, citing them as a breach of parliamentary etiquette.

"I am shocked. What on earth is the objection to these slogans - the British had a

problem with them, and now the BJP folks have too? What kind of people are they made of, those who find it difficult to utter the two most famous slogans of the freedom struggle in the House," Shrinete said in a video message.

She said 'Jai Hind' means the victory of Hindustan - may India always be victorious of the freedom struggle as it beats in the heart of every Indian. "It was composed in 1907 by the revolutionary Chempakaraman Pillai from Travancore, Kerala. Between 1914-1918, Pillai was active in the Indian freedom movement in Germany. He was the first to use 'Jai Hind' as a greeting and slogan among Indian revolutionaries living abroad.

"In 1943-44, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Azad Hind Fauj made 'Jai Hind' their official greeting and slogan, making it even more popular." (PTI)

## INS Vikrant, stealth frigate Udaygiri in Colombo for 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sri Lanka Navy

**NEW DELHI, Nov 27:** India's first indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant and multi-mission stealth frigate Udaygiri have arrived in Colombo for an international fleet review to mark the 75th anniversary of Sri Lanka Navy, officials said.

This also marks INS Udaygiri's first foreign visit since its commission on August 26, 2025.

"In a display of naval cooperation, three warships representing Bangladesh and India made port calls in Colombo on November 25 and 26, for the International Fleet Review (IFR) 2025, scheduled to be held on November 30," according to the Sri Lanka Navy website.

The visiting ships were welcomed by the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) in accordance with time-honoured naval traditions, it said.

"India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, INS Vikrant, ar-



rived in Colombo for her maiden participation in SLN IFR 2025 -- a significant milestone in regional maritime cooperation. The warm reception sets the tone for deeper collaboration, enriched exchanges, and a strengthened maritime partnership." INS Vikrant's official X handle posted on Wednesday. It also shared some photographs of the indigenous aircraft carrier after its arrival in Colombo. The High Commission of

friendly relations between India and Sri Lanka," it said.

According to the Sri Lanka Navy website, INS Udaygiri has also made a port call at Colombo for the International Fleet Review 2025.

The state-of-the-art Project 17A multi-mission stealth frigates Udaygiri and Himgiri were commissioned at the Naval Base in Visakhapatnam on August 26 this year.

It was the first occasion when two frontline surface combatants -- constructed at two different shipyards -- were commissioned simultaneously, underscoring the growing maritime importance of India's eastern seaboard.

INS Udaygiri and INS Himgiri are follow-on ships of Project 17 (Shivalik) class frigates. Both these vessels incorporate significant improvements in design, stealth, weapon and sensor systems and are capable of executing the full spectrum of maritime

missions in Blue Water conditions, the Indian defence ministry had said earlier.

Udaygiri, built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd in Mumbai, and Himgiri, constructed by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers in Kolkata, showcase the nation's growing shipbuilding prowess, as well as the synergy between India's premier defence shipyards, it had said.

Udaygiri also holds the distinction of being the fastest ship of its class to be delivered post-launch, a result of the modular construction methodology adopted by Indian shipyards, the ministry had said ahead of its commissioning.

The IFR 2025 will be complemented by a series of cultural and community activities, including a beach clean-up initiative, sporting fixtures, a musical band performance, a food gala, and a city parade featuring foreign naval personnel, it says. (PTI)

## National Lok Adalat in Goalpara on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2025

A National Lok Adalat will be organized in Goalpara District Judicial Court Campus on 13th December, 2025 (Saturday) from 10.00 am onwards by the District Legal Services Authority, Goalpara, as part of the National Lok Adalat to be held throughout the country on that day under the aegis of the National Legal Services Authority, where pre-litigation (Negotiable Instruments Act cases under section 138, money recovery cases, labour and employment dispute cases, electricity, water bills and other bill payment cases, maintenance cases etc.) and pending cases (Criminal compoundable offenses, Negotiable Instruments Act cases under section 138, money recovery cases, motor accident claims cases, labour and employment dispute cases, electricity, water bills and other bill payment cases, matrimonial disputes (excluding divorce), land acquisition cases pending before civil courts and tribunals, services matters relating to pay & allowances and retiral benefits, revenue cases pending in district courts and other civil cases such as rent, easmentary rights, injunction suits, specific performance suits etc.) will be taken up by several Lok Adalat benches comprising of a Judicial Officer and one or more conciliators for amicable settlement by consent of the parties. Court fees of pending cases settled in the Lok Adalat will be refunded to the litigants.

Notices to the parties concerned have already been issued requesting them to attend the Lok Adalat on the aforesaid date, time and venue. For further information, the office of the District Legal Services Authority, Goalpara may be reached via email at [disagoalpara@gmail.com](mailto:disagoalpara@gmail.com).

Sd/-  
Secretary  
District Legal Service Authority  
Goalpara  
DIPR/D/HLT/231/28-Nov-25

## NOTICE INVITING TENDER

NIT No. BSPD/T/32/2025/1800

Sealed tenders in the prescribed form affixing non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight and Paise Twenty Five) only and eventually to be drawn in the A.P.W.D. F-2 Form of contract are hereby invited from the intending registered Contractors of appropriate category having up to date registration under Irrigation Department, Assam for the year 2025-26 for the following works and will be received by the undersigned up to 1-00 P.M. up to 16-12-2025 in this office and will be opened on the same date and place at 2-00 P.M.

Sl. No	Name of work	Approx. value of work (Rs.)	Earnest Money	Time of completion
1	Contingency part for Installation of Peragaon Pathar Solar Powered MDTW (2 Points) Irrigation Scheme under SOPD-G for the year 2023-24.	Rs. 0.65700 L	2% of approximate value of works (1% in case of SC/ST/OBC/UGE etc.)	30 (Thirty) Days

Rates should be quoted on percentage basis i.e. Below/ As per/Above the estimated rate. The detailed particulars of works, terms and conditions, specifications etc. may be seen in the office of the undersigned during office hours on all working days. The detailed tender papers will be issued on written request and on payment of Rs. 100.00 (Rupees One Hundred) only in cash up to 12 Noon up to 16-12-2025.

In case of the date of receiving and opening of tender is a non working day, the tender will be received and opened on the next working day at the same time and venue. The intending tenderers or their authorised agents may remain present at the time of opening of tender, if they so desire.

The Tender Inviting Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any bid/tender and to cancel/annul the bidding process and reject all bids at any time prior to award of contract.

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer,  
Bhawanipur-Sorbhog-Pakabhetbari  
Division (Irrigation)-Sorbhog  
DIPR/C/HLT/234/28-Nov-25

## M'laya: East Jaintia Hills administration exploring Net shutdowns, jammers to secure job exams

**KHLIEHRIAT, Nov 27:** In a move to strengthen transparency in government recruitment, Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills District Administration on Thursday said it was exploring the use of CCTVs, internet shutdowns and signal jammers during District Selection Committee (DSC) examinations.

The decision was taken at a meeting convened by the administration with Kliehriat MLA Kyrmen Shylla, Sutnga-Saipung MLA Santa Mary Shylla, MDCs, DSC members, school principals, legal representatives and other stakeholders to address concerns raised over recruitment procedures.

The meeting followed a letter submitted by R. Siangshai and advocate K. Ksoo, flagging issues such as disclosure of cut-off marks, interview ratios and the need for clearer communication with candidates. Officials said the committee has resolved to publish qualifying or cut-off marks after the declaration of final results to enhance transparency.

It was also reaffirmed that the 1:2 ratio for shortlisting candidates for personal interviews will continue. To ensure timely updates,



the DSC will notify candidates of all recruitment stages through email and SMS.

Both the Provisional Answer Keys and final Answer Keys will be uploaded on the DSC website after examinations.

After the conclusion of the recruitment process, the marks of all candidates will be made public on the official district website, the administration said.

The district authorities reiterated their commitment to fairness, transparency and efficiency in recruitment.

Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the outcome and suggested that such consultative meetings be held regularly to facilitate continuous feedback and improvement. (PTI)

'A time will come when the IPFT will also be finished like other regional parties due to lack of unity'

## Meghalaya CM, TMP founder pitch for unity among NE regional parties at 'One North East' rally

**AGARTALA, Nov 27:** Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma and Tipra Motha Party (TMP) founder Pradyot Manikya Debbarma on Thursday sought to unite regional parties of the North East in a bid to boost the region's bargaining power.

Addressing the 'One North East Unity' rally here, they claimed that regional parties have little value to the national leaders.

The National People's Party (NPP) headed by Sangma, and the TMP are allies of the BJP in Meghalaya and Tripura, respectively.

Thursday's rally was organised around three weeks after leaders from various states of the North East 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, Debbarma, former Nagaland minister Daniel Langthasa and several others were part of the proposed entity named 'One North East'.

Besides Sangma, Debbarma and Langthasa, People's Party (Assam) leader Ajoy Edwards, Indian Gorkha Janashakti Front founder RK Meghan and several other leaders of the region joined the rally.

"The voice of the North East has not been as strong as expected due to division among the people. We are walking on different paths. The situation today is different compared to what our ancestors used to have," Sangma said while addressing the rally.

Sangma said that only the strongest minds could bring unity among the people, to



which the One North East is working hard.

"We have to come together for a common cause and face whatever challenges come our way. We feel bad when the people of the Northeast face discrimination in mainland India in the name of caste and creed," the Meghalaya CM said.

"We shall remain united to face challenges in uniting the Northeast. Our roads might have been different earlier, but today we are travellers of the same journey," he said.

Attacking the national parties, Debbarma

alleged that regional parties have little value to them.

"Parties like the Asom Gana Parishad, Shironami Akali Dal, Shiv Sena and the BJD in Odisha have suffered due to their alliance with national partners. A chief minister from a regional party requires 10 days to meet national leaders," he claimed.

Debbarma also asserted that the TMP is no longer a lone warrior because the people from Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Sikkim joined the rally. "Earlier, there was no unity because

people were divided on the basis of religion, creed, and political colours such as Khasi, Jaintia, Naga, Tiprasa and Manipuri," he said.

The TMP founder claimed that he had invited the Indigenous Front of Tripura (IPFT), another BJP ally in the state, to join the rally, but they did not.

"A time will come when the IPFT will also be finished like other regional parties due to lack of unity," he asserted.

Both the IPFT and the TMP are tribal-based parties.

Debbarma further said his dream of 'Greater Tipraland', a slogan which had played a key role in the TMP's rise in the state's political landscape during the 2023 Assembly elections, will be achieved sooner or later.

"Today we may not achieve Greater Tipraland, but we will get it five years or ten years later," he said.

The 'Greater Tipraland' idea is not restricted only to Tripura, and seeks to include Tripuris living in Assam, Mizoram, and parts of Bangladesh.

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.

NPP working president Mmholumo Kikon and former Manipur assembly speaker Hemochandra Singh also addressed the rally. (PTI)

## IISF curtain raiser at NIT Nagaland



**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Nov 27:** Meteorological Centre Kohima organised a curtain-raiser event at National Institute of Technology (NIT) Nagaland on Wednesday, ahead of the India International Science Festival (IISF) 2025 as part of its efforts to foster scientific temper and raise awareness among science enthusiasts.

The event witnessed participation from faculty members, students and officials from NIT Nagaland and Meteorological Centre Kohima, an official release said on Thursday.

The IISF 2025 will be held at Panchkula, Chandigarh, from December 6 to 9. The festival will feature 14 thematic frontiers focused on future technologies, sustainability, and broad scientific outreach, showcasing the theme "Vigyan Se Samridhi-For Atmanirbhar Bharat".

During the programme, a brief presentation was made about IISF 2025, highlighting its objectives and importance by Nalnish Kumar Chaudhary, scientist-D & head, Meteorological Centre Kohima. A video presentation on IISF 2025 was also screened, providing participants with a glimpse of the upcoming national event at Panchkula.

Dr Manoj E Prabhakar, registrar, Dr P Chinnamuthu, associate professor, and Dr Jay Chandra Dhar, assistant professor, NIT Nagaland, highlighted the objective and importance of science & technology in everyday life.

Meteorological Centre Kohima showcased various instruments of the automatic weather stations and their functioning.

The curtain raiser served as a platform to inspire young minds and encourage participation in the forthcoming IISF 2025.

## NSF condemns RSS chief's 'Hindu Rashtra' comment

**HT Correspondent**

**DIMAPUR, Nov 27:** The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) on Thursday condemned the public statement of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat proclaiming India as a "Hindu Rashtra" during an event in Lucknow recently. "Such remarks are not only unconstitutional but strike at the very foundation of the Indians' secular, pluralistic and democratic ethos," the federation said in a release.

Stating that India's secular character is not an optional principle open for reinterpretation, the NSF said it is a binding constitutional mandate that guarantees equal rights, dignity and protection to all citizens irrespective of religion, belief or cultural identity.

It said the narrative of a singular "Hindu Rashtra" dangerously undermines the constitutional promise of equality and violates the secular character of the Republic.

The federation said it was deeply disturbed that such divisive statements continue to be issued from positions of influence, emboldening majoritarian narratives at the cost of minority communities.

"Across the country, we have witnessed a pattern of discrimination, targeted violence and institutionalised prejudice against religious and cultural minorities, including Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and tribal indigenous groups," it stated.

According to the federation, from the desecration of places of worship, mob violence, coercive conversion claims, to systemic profiling, the minority communities have increasingly borne the brunt of intolerance, often with inadequate state response.

"As indigenous peoples of the Naga homeland, whose identity, faith and customs predate the political formation of India, we find such majoritarian assertions deeply concerning," it said.

## Couple found dead in car, pistol seized; Police probe multiple angles

**HT Correspondent**

**AGARTALA, Nov 27:** A tragic incident came to light in a forested area near Garjee of Tripura's Gomati District on Wednesday after police discovered an abandoned car containing the bodies of a young couple.

Superintendent of Police (SP) Kiran Kumar said that personnel patrolling the area spotted the vehicle and, upon inspection, found a boy and a girl inside. The girl believed to be a school student was

already dead. The boy, identified as Julius Mia from Kakraban in Gomati District, was found critically injured with what appeared to be bullet wounds.

"He was immediately sent to the hospital, but he succumbed to his injuries in the ambulance before reaching," SP Kumar confirmed.

A locally made pistol was recovered from the car. Police said the girl bore no visible external injuries, but preliminary suspicion points to possible strangulation.

Her school uniform and bag were also seized from the scene as part of the investigation.

"We are not ruling out the possibility of a love affair, but we are examining all angles to determine the exact sequence of events," the SP said, adding that a forensic team has been dispatched to assist in the probe.

Further information is expected once the forensic examination and detailed investigation are complete.

## Revised traffic regulations in Dimapur from today

**HT Correspondent**

**Dimapur, Nov 27:** The Dimapur commissionerate of police has issued a revised traffic advisory for Dimapur town with new regulations to be enforced from 7 am on November 28.

It said the two-way traffic has been designated on the route from Deluxe Point to Holy Cross Police Point and vice versa.

The stretch from Khermahal to Deluxe Point will also operate as two-way traffic.

Vehicles coming from Khermahal/Eros Lane toward Deluxe Point will be allowed entry only towards the new flyover and will

not be permitted to move towards NyamoLotha Road.

Vehicles coming from MP Road will be allowed entry towards NL Road or the new flyover, while entry toward Khermahal will be restricted.

All earlier traffic regulations that are already in force will remain unchanged, the advisory said.

The police urged all road users to strictly follow all traffic norms and signage, including no parking, no entry, parallel parking, angular parking, and other regulatory instructions.

protection and management, it said.

This prestigious international honour highlights the Centre's and the Sikkim government's unwavering commitment to biodiversity conservation, sustainable ecosystem management, and community-led environmental protection.

Located in the Eastern Himalayas, Khangchendzonga National Park spans over approximately 1,784 sq. km and encompasses Mount Khangchendzonga (8,586 m)—the world's third-highest peak.

The park is globally renowned for its rich biodiversity, pristine glaciers, alpine meadows, and landscapes, representing a unique blend of natural and cultural heritage.

In 2016, the park was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site under the Mixed Heritage Category - the first of its kind in India - recognising both its ecological significance and spiritual heritage. (PTI)

## IUCN recognition to Khangchendzonga park shows Sikkim's commitment to conservation: Minister

**GANGTOK, Nov 27:** The IUCN recognition to the Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP) in Sikkim shows the state's holistic approach towards conservation, where nature and culture coexist in harmony, a minister said.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has declared the national park as one of the 'Best Managed Protected Areas' in the world.

The IUCN has also rated Khangchendzonga National Park as 'Good' in its 2025 global review of natural world heritage sites, making it India's only site to secure this grade, according to a statement issued by the Forest and Environment Department on Wednesday.

State Forest and Environment Minister Pintos Namgyal Lepcha said, "This recognition is a matter of great pride for the state. It reaffirms Sikkim's holistic approach towards conservation, where nature and culture coexist in harmony. The efforts of the forest officials and staff



are commendable."

The statement said that the IUCN World Heritage Outlook, launched in 2014, provides a global assessment of all natural and mixed world heritage sites and evaluates their conservation prospects over time.

These assessments, conducted by independent experts using referenced evidence, summarise the current state and trends of each site's values, the threats they face, and the effectiveness of their



অসম সাহিত্য সভা

গ্ৰন্থ ছপা কামৰ বাবে বাজহুৰা জাননী

অসম সাহিত্য সভাই ২০২৫-২৬ বৰ্ষৰ কাৰ্যনিৰ্বাহক সমিতিৰ অনুমোদনৰ ভিত্তিত গ্ৰন্থ প্ৰকাশৰ আঁচনি গ্ৰহণ কৰিছে। গ্ৰন্থ ছপাবৰ বাবে ইতিমধ্যে চৰকাৰৰ অনুমোদিত নিৰিখ কৰ্ণধাৰ সমিতি আৰু কাৰ্যনিৰ্বাহক সমিতিয়ে অনুমোদন জনাইছে আৰু সামৰ্থ্য থকা ইচ্ছুক ছপাশালৰ পৰা সেই নিৰিখত কাম কৰিবলৈ সম্মতি প্ৰকাশক পত্ৰ সভাৰ প্ৰধানসম্পাদকলৈ ১৫ ডিচেম্বৰ, ২০২৫ৰ ভিতৰত পোৱাকৈ আবেদন পত্ৰ আহ্বান কৰা হৈছে। চৰ্তসমূহ তলত উল্লেখ কৰা হ'ল।

- ১। আবেদনকাৰী প্ৰতিষ্ঠানৰ ছপাশালৰ যোৱা বছৰৰ ধনৰ লেনদেন কমেও ৫০,০০,০০০.০০ (পঞ্চাশ লাখ) টকাৰ হ'ব লাগিব।
- ২। ছপাশালৰ মালিকীস্বত্ব আবেদনকাৰীৰ নিজৰ হ'ব লাগিব। ছপা কৰিবলৈ দিয়া গ্ৰন্থসমূহৰ ডিজাইন, লে-আউট, বাইণ্ডিং (হাৰ্ড আৰু পাৰফেক্ট), পেকেজিং উন্নতমানৰ হ'ব লাগিব। তদুপৰি সংশ্লিষ্ট ছপাশালৰ নিজস্ব বৰ্গাণ্ডছিব সুব্যৱস্থা থাকিব লাগিব।
- ৩। আবেদনকাৰী ছপাশালৰ চৰকাৰী আৰু সন্ত্ৰমপূৰ্ণ বেচৰকাৰী প্ৰতিষ্ঠানৰ গ্ৰন্থ ছপা কৰাৰ অভিজ্ঞতাৰে সমৃদ্ধ হ'ব লাগিব।
- ৪। আবেদনকাৰী ছপাশালে প্ৰস্তুত হোৱা গ্ৰন্থ ক্ৰয় কৰিব বিচাৰিলে অসম সাহিত্য সভাক এই বিষয়ে প্ৰস্তাৱ দিব।
- ৫। আবেদনকাৰী ছপাশালে অসম সাহিত্য সভাই নিৰ্বাৰণ কৰা সৰ্বনিম্ন নিৰিখত ছপা কাম কৰিবলৈ সম্মত হ'ব লাগিব।
- ৬। আবেদনকাৰী ছপাশালে প্ৰতি 'ফাৰ্মা' হিচাপে আৰু প্ৰয়োজনীয় সকলো দিশ সামৰি নিৰিখৰ সকলো দিশৰ সৰ্বিশেষ উল্লেখ কৰিব লাগিব।
- ৭। বৰ্তীণ বেটুপাত (হাৰ্ডকভাৰ আৰু জেক্ট) ছপাৰ নিৰিখ সুকীয়াকৈ উল্লেখ কৰিব লাগিব আৰু পুথি মুদ্ৰণৰ বাবে ব্যৱহাৰ হ'বলগীয়া কাগজৰ মান উল্লেখ কৰিব লাগিব।
- ৮। আবেদনকাৰী ছপাশালৰ আয়কৰ, জি.এছ.টি. পঞ্জীয়ন নং আৰু শেহতীয়া বৈধ কৰমুক্ত প্ৰমাণ-পত্ৰ দাখিল কৰিব লাগিব।
- ৯। এই বাজহুৰা জাননী প্ৰকাশ পোৱাৰ সাত দিনৰ ভিতৰত ছপাশালে আবেদন পত্ৰ বন্ধ খামত অসম সাহিত্য সভাৰ গুৱাহাটী কাৰ্যালয়ত জমা দিব লাগিব।
- ১০। নাকচ হোৱা আবেদনৰ বাবে অসম সাহিত্য সভা জগৰীয়া নহ'ব।

তাৰিখ ১ ২৭-১১-২০২৫ খ্ৰীষ্টাব্দ

ভগৱতীপ্ৰসাদ বৰুৱা ভৱন, আমবাৰী, গুৱাহাটী - ১

প্ৰধান সম্পাদক  
অসম সাহিত্য সভা

## Indescribable loss: Hema Malini shares pictures in first post since with Dharmendra's death



Hema Malini shared a series of family photographs with late husband Dharmendra on Thursday, three days after the cinema icon passed away, and said he was "everything" to her -- a partner, guide and friend.

In her first post since Dharmendra's death on Monday, Malini said the loss is "indescribable" and the vacuum left behind will remain for the rest of her life.

"My personal loss is indescribable and the vacuum created is something that will last through the rest of my life. After years of togetherness, I am left with myriad memories

to relive the many special moments," Malini wrote on X.

The 77-year-old remembered Dharmendra, 89, as a loving husband and an adoring father to their daughters, Esha and Ahaana.

"Dharam ji. He was many things to me. Loving Husband, adoring Father of our two girls, Esha & Ahaana, Friend, Philosopher, Guide, Poet, my 'go to' person in all times of need - in fact, he was everything to me! And always has been through good times and bad.

"He endeared himself to all my family members with his easy, friendly ways, always showing affection and interest in all of them," said Malini.

Malini, who acted with Dharmendra in many blockbusters such as "Sholay", Seeta aur Geeta" and "Pratigya", said his talent and humility despite immense popularity, and universal appeal set him apart as a "unique icon unparalleled among legends".

"His enduring fame and achievements in the film industry will last forever," she added.

In the subsequent posts, Malini shared more photos of her and Dharmendra, captur-

ing moments from birthdays and anniversaries over the years. There were also photos of their daughters Esha and Ahaana.

"Togetherness over the years - always there for us... Some special moments," she wrote in another post.

Hours later, Malini posted another set of pictures, which were not published earlier. "I know it is a surfeit of photos but these have not been published and my emotions are unfolding as I see these," she said in the caption.

Dharmendra, who would have turned 90 on December 8, had been unwell for some time. He was cremated quietly at the Pawan Hans crematorium in Mumbai's Vile Parle, with the family maintaining silence about his death right till the end.

On November 11, several media houses reported his death, leading to a sharp rebuke from Malini.

"What is happening is unforgivable! How can responsible channels spread false news about a person who is responding to treatment and is recovering? This is being extremely disrespectful and irresponsible. Please give due respect to the family and its need for privacy," she had posted on X.

A day later, he was discharged and taken to his Juhu home, where he breathed his last.

The family will hold a prayer meet at Taj Lands End hotel in Bandra on Thursday, which is expected to be attended by several members of the Hindi film industry. (PTI)



## BIHAR: NALANDA LITERATURE FESTIVAL'S INAUGURAL EDITION TO BE HELD FROM DEC 21-25

The inaugural edition of the Nalanda Literature Festival (NLF) will take place from December 21 to 25 at Rajgir in Bihar with an aim to promote India's civilizational heritage, linguistic diversity, and literary traditions, a statement issued by the organisers said on Thursday.

The festival will "bridge the wisdom of the past with the imagination of the present" through "thought-provoking sessions, interactive workshops, and vibrant performances", it said.

NLF will host a dedicated Northeast segment spotlighting tribal languages, inscriptions and the vibrant linguistic journeys of the Seven Sisters.

Congress MP and author Shashi Tharoor will hold an interactive session on literature with professor Sachin Chaturvedi, filmmaker Aador Gopalakrishnan will interact with Naveen Chaudhury and Anupam Kher with Sachchidanand Joshi.

A special book review

session is also scheduled wherein Sonal Mansingh will converse with Vikram Sampath, and Abhay K and Shashank Shekhar Sinha with Milee Ashwarya, among others.

The festival will be organised by Jashn-e-Adab, the Centre for Indian Classical Dances, the Shining Muskan Foundation, and Dhanu Bihar in collaboration with Nalanda University.

Festival Director Ganga Kumar said, "We want the Nalanda Literature Festival to be an experience that moves beyond sessions and discussions, something that connects people emotionally to India's civilizational story".

The programme will be held at Rajgir Convention Centre, the organisers said.

According to a statement issued by the NLF, the festival will celebrate the "grandeur of India's knowledge, culture, and heritage at the provenance that once stood as the world's foremost centre of learning".

Festival curator Pankaj

Dubey said, "Curating a festival in Nalanda feels like giving new words to an ancient voice. It's about letting the world rediscover India's timeless storytelling tradition, where wisdom, history, and creativity meet in one powerful space".

The festival is set against the backdrop of the ancient Nalanda Mahavihara, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It is aimed to "promote India's civilizational heritage, linguistic diversity, and literary traditions while inspiring younger generations to engage with ideas, creativity, and dialogue".

Each day of the festival will begin with yoga and meditation sessions, which will be conducted by the Bihar School of Yoga. Live cultural performances, including a special showcase by Sonal Mansingh on one of the days, will cap the daily events.

Registrations and tickets are open now at the Nalanda Literature Festival's website and BookMyShow. (PTI)

## IN10 Media Network rebrands as The EPIC Company

IN10 Media Network on Thursday announced its transformation into The EPIC Company, unveiling a bold new identity that reflects its evolution into a tech-enabled storytelling enterprise.

The announcement coincides with the company's tenth anniversary marking a decade of creating culturally rooted, globally resonant stories for audiences in India and across the world, stated a press release.

The EPIC channel has expanded into a multi-format, multi-platform ecosystem of 14 diverse brands. The rebrand signals the company's vision for a platform-agnostic content engine, creating and distributing films, series, documentaries, shorts, audio formats, and digital-native storytelling.

The new EPIC Company logo was unveiled in the presence of Anand Mahindra, Chairman, Mahindra Group; Krishna Kumar Pittie, Founder & Chairman, Pittie Group; Prasanth Kumar, Chief Executive Officer -

South Asia, WPP Media; Shashi Sinha, Executive Chairman, IIPG Mediabrands India; and Ajit Varghese, Partner & Group CEO - Media & OOH, Madison World.

"We have always believed that great stories can come from anywhere and belong everywhere. This transformation is not just a visual refresh; it is a mindset shift: from being platform-led to creation-led, and from being a platform network to becoming a storytelling universe," said Aditya Pittie, Managing Director, The EPIC Company.

The newly revealed logo embodies this transformation. The three-dimensional frame around the word "EPIC" represents a creative window into the stories the company intends to bring to life across screens and platforms, a release said here.

At the event, the company also introduced its unified content philosophy, a blueprint for a storytelling ecosystem that adapts to personal tastes, reaches audiences everywhere,



and operates through an integrated creative-and-technology engine what the company defines as a "24/7 story factory with zero downtime".

"This is not a pipeline. It's a power plant," added Pittie. (PTI)



## Ahmedabad to host week-long culture fest of Gujarat Vishwakosh Trust from Nov 30

A week-long 'Vishwa Sanskriti Parv' (World Culture Festival) will be held in Ahmedabad from November 30 to mark the foundation day of the Gujarat Vishwakosh Trust, its organisers said on Thursday.

The celebrations, which will continue till December 6, will see participation of prominent personalities from different walks of life, including literature, cinema, theatre and music, they said.

"The festival is a rich blend of dialogues, artistic performances, lectures, an award ceremony and theatre performance," Gujarat Vishwakosh's trustee Kumarpal Desai told reporters.

The Gujarat Vishwakosh Trust was founded on December 2, 1985 under the guidance of renowned scholar Dhirubhai Thaker to create a comprehensive Gujarati-language encyclopedia. The first volume of Gujarati Vishwakosh was published in 1989.

The Trust's online encyclopedia, which includes more than 24,000 articles across 170 subjects in Gujarati, is used every month by nearly 2.75 lakh people worldwide, a release said.

The festival will commence on Sunday with renowned actor Amol Palekar and noted screenplay writer Sandhya Gokhale engaging in a conversation on Palekar's book "Viewfinder: A Memoir".

On December 1, singers Amar Bhatt and Himali Vyas Naik, along with other artists, will present 'Surla Sambharana' (a musical

show). Renowned Indian Hindi-language poet and critic Ashok Vajpeyi will deliver a special lecture titled 'Hamara Samay, Hamara Sahitya' (Our Times, Our Literature) on December 2, coinciding with Vishwakosh's foundation day, the release said.

On December 3, celebrated screenwriter and filmmaker Abhijit Joshi, known for Hindi films, including "Lage Raho Munnabhai", "3 Idiots" and "PK", will share insights on creativity in film content and the process of developing impactful cinematic ideas.

The next day, the prestigious 'Chinubhai R Shah Jeevanhilpi Award' will be conferred upon Arun Dave, Chancellor of Lokbharti University, Sanosara. Rajendra Khimani and Niranjana Kalarthi will address the gathering during the ceremony.

A special documentary session on December 5 will feature Makarand Waikar from Pune, presenting "My Radio, My Life", an award-winning documentary that explores the cultural legacy of radio before the era of television, mobile phones, and social media.

The festival will conclude on December 6 with a stage presentation of "Anahata", a play based on the novel by Kumarpal Desai.

The organisers said the festival aims to bring together diverse voices and promote intellectual and cultural dialogue, reaffirming its commitment to the enrichment of Gujarati literature and culture. (PTI)

## I was born with a love for movies: Manish Malhotra on his debut as producer with 'Gustaakh Ishq'

Cinema has always been Manish Malhotra's first and only love, which first inspired him to become a celebrated costume designer and now a filmmaker, eagerly awaiting the release of his maiden production venture "Gustaakh Ishq: Kucch Pehle Jaisa".

For Malhotra, the foray into production marks the realisation of a dream he first nurtured as a six-year-old child in love with movies.

"I'm that odd child who was born in love with movies. From the age of six, I was very fond of films. I didn't study as much as I loved films. I'm very grateful to my mother that she never stopped me. I watched a lot of films -- everything from their music to their clothes to lifestyle.

"When I saw 'Naseeb', where Mr Bachchan sings 'John Jani Janardhan', I remember thinking in the theatre, 'Will I ever be at a party like that?' And when I saw Yash Chopra's 'Silsila' in 1981, I noticed every minute detail. That's why I always loved clothes and wanted to get into costumes," the renowned fashion designer told PTI in an interview.

Malhotra began his career as a costume designer in the early 1990s, becoming one of Bollywood's most sought-after stylists. He was praised for redefining on-screen fashion through films such as "Rangela", "Dil To Pagal Hai", "Kuch Kuch Hota Hai" and "Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham".

He later launched his own couture label, which grew into a leading fashion house known for its craftsmanship and celebrity clientele.

As a movie lover, Malhotra said he always wanted to "write, direct and produce" but got busy with his career.

"I have never had a day without work. I had film after film, then I launched my brand. I always wanted to get into production and direction but the brand took over my time," he added.

It was during the COVID-19 pandemic when he thought of finally taking a plunge into filmmaking.

"I felt that if I don't do it now, I won't get the time later. People keep personal time for themselves -- I used that time to make the film. I was



like, 'I have to do this now', he said.

"Gustaakh Ishq", which is set to be released in theatres on November 28, is described as a tribute to old-school romance, blends poetry, nostalgia and the timeless charm of classic love stories. It features an ensemble cast of Naseeruddin Shah, Vijay Varma, Fatima Sana Shaikh and Sharib Hashmi.

Directed by Vibhu Puri, the story unfolds across the bylanes of Purani Dilli and the fading kothis of Punjab, exploring themes of passion and unspoken desire.

"I was attracted to the world of 'Gustaakh Ishq', loved the poetry, the Delhi-rooted world and the cinematic tone," said Malhotra, who believes that as a producer, one must encourage the director to realise his vision.

"Where you come in with experience is script, length, costumes and art. Vibhu has a keen eye for art, he has a style, and you must allow that. You have to be honest to the world you're creating; you cannot drag it elsewhere," he added.

Malhotra also spoke about roping in Shah for the project, someone he has known and admired for years.

"This was my first meeting to discuss his fee. It was a Sunday evening, his house is 5-7 min-

utes away, and I kept thinking, 'How will I discuss with him his fee?' Then I told myself --

'You're a producer now, you have to do it'. The meeting was lovely. It was great working with him because Vibhu already knew him. One day I got a text from him: 'You're one of the best producers I've worked with'. That meant everything."

"Gustaakh Ishq" also features the song "Aap is Dhoop Mein", penned by cinema icon Gulzar, composed by Vishal Bhardwaj and sung by Arijit Singh.

"When Vibhu first mentioned Vishal ji and Gulzar sahib, I was like -- I love them but I don't know them. But I felt the film needed them. Working with Vishal ji was a cherished memory. He was so receptive and understanding. I would love to work with him again," he added.

Recalling his first meeting with Gulzar, Malhotra said he had gone in with a simple request -- a song built around the word "musafir".

"When I met Gulzar sahib... I told him I wanted a song around the word 'musafir'. We went to his house, and I reminded him of 'Musafir Hoon Yaaron' from 'Parichay' and a song from 'Namkeen'. Even Vishal ji said, 'You remember 'Namkeen' songs?' That's how deeply I love RD Burman-Gulzar music."

Malhotra said he was struck by the legendary writer's warmth and openness.

"At 91, he is so open. He said, 'First drink tea, then we'll discuss'. I love open-minded people -- even my interns have a voice. Creativity needs openness. That's why I've survived 35 years. Recently Vishal ji said, 'Manish, you're a very good producer. I want to direct a film, let's make a small one'. I said, 'Let's make a big one!'"

Besides "Gustaakh Ishq", Malhotra's banner is ready with two more movies -- "Bun Tikki", starring Shabana Azmi, Zeenat Aman and Abhay Deol, and "Saali Mohabbat", which marks the directorial debut of actor Tisca Chopra.

"I want to make different films. All my first three films are different from each other," Malhotra said. (PTI)

# FIH Junior WC: Confident India look to reclaim title after nine years on home soil

CHENNAI, Nov 27: Hosts India, the joint second-most successful team in the tournament's history, will look to reclaim the title on home soil after nine years when they open their campaign against Chile in their opening pool match of the Men's Junior Hockey World Cup here on Friday.

Two-time champions India, who last won the tournament in 2016 in Lucknow under the guidance of now senior women's coach Harendra Singh, are favourites to progress from Pool B.

Besides India and Chile, Oman, who replaced Pakistan after the neighbours refused to travel to the country citing security reasons following Operation Sindoor, and Switzerland are the other teams in Pool B.

India have won the title twice — 2001 at Hobart and 2016 in Lucknow. Germany are the most successful team in the tournament, which started 46 years ago in 1979, with seven titles.

Argentina share the bragging rights for the second-most successful team along with India, having won the title in 2005 and 2021.

Pakistan had won the inaugural edition in 1979 in Versailles (France), and Australia in 1997 beating India in Milton Keynes.

In the last edition in Kuala Lumpur in 2023, India finished fourth, losing to Spain 1-3 in the bronze-medal match with Germany lifting the trophy.

For the first time, 24 teams will fight it out for the title in Chennai and Madurai, the host cities.

The teams will be split into six groups of four each in a round-robin format. After the



preliminary round, the group winners and the two best-second placed teams will advance to the quarterfinals.

Ranked second in the world, India are close contenders for the title. Germany are the world's top-ranked side in the under-21 category.

The tournament will be the biggest test for two-time Olympic medalist goalkeeper-turned-coach PR Sreejesh, who will be keen to prove his coaching credentials with an eye on mentoring the senior side in future.

Fresh off a silver medal at the Sultan of Johor Cup in Malaysia, India have the momentum and a distinct home advantage.

But penalty-corner conversion, which was evident during the Sultan of Johor Cup, re-

mains a concern. India scored only eight goals from 53 penalty corners in the tournament.

But Sreejesh is aware of the shortcoming and has taken corrective steps.

"Yes, penalty-corner conversion was a concern in Malaysia but we have addressed the issue. We have put extra emphasis on both PC and PC defence. We have good drag-flickers, who are flicking 200-300 times a day. They have gained experience from the tournament and are now better equipped," Sreejesh had said on return from Malaysia.

India skipper Rohit will have to take some extra responsibility on the penalty corner front as the most experienced drag-flicker

Arajiyet Singh Hundal, who has played with the senior side as well, is out with a shoulder injury.

The tall forward, who has 21 senior caps and has scored five goals, has been a prolific goal-getter at the junior level with 33 goals in 40 official Under-21 appearances.

Bikramjit Singh and Princedeep Singh are the two goalkeepers, while the backline will feature captain Rohit, Amir Ali, who was part of the previous edition of the tournament, along with Anmol Ekka, Talem Priyo Barta, Sunil Palakshappa Bannur and Shardanand Tiwari.

The midfield will be manned by Ankit Pal, Adrohit Ekka, Thounaojam Ingalemba Luwang, Manmeet Singh and Rosan Kujur while Sourabh Anand Kushwaha, Arshdeep Singh, Ajeet Yadav, Dilraj Singh and Gurjot will be in charge of the forward line.

Sreejesh will also have prepared his wards for fast counter-attacks by the rivals, which was an issue during the Sultan of Johor Cup. India had struggled to deal with fast counter-attacks from teams like Pakistan and eventual winners Australia in Malaysia.

Chile, placed 18th in FIH rankings, are not expected to trouble India much on Friday, but the hosts can't take any side lightly.

In other matches on Friday, Germany will play South Africa in Madurai, Canada will face Ireland (Madurai), Argentina will take on Japan (Chennai), Spain will face Egypt (Madurai), New Zealand will play China (Chennai), Belgium will clash with Namibia (Madurai) and Oman will be up against Switzerland (Chennai). (PTI)

## Mbappé scores 4, PSG hits 5, Arsenal topples Bayern and teenage scorers shine in Champions League

PARIS, Nov 27: On a wild Champions League night with stellar teenage scorers, Kylian Mbappé also struck four including the second-fastest Champions League hat trick ever to show the old guys have still got it.

Arsenal took Bayern Munich's top spot in the standings with a 3-1 win, title holder Paris Saint-Germain romped to a 5-3 win over Tottenham with Vitinha scoring a hat trick, and Liverpool slumped to another loss at Anfield, 4-1 to PSV Eindhoven.

The 26-year-old Mbappé scored three times for Real Madrid between the 22nd and 29th minutes, and again in the 60th, of a 4-3 win at Olympiakos.

At age 17 — the same as when Mbappé was launching his Champions League career at Monaco — Lennart Karl and Viktor Dadason both scored Wednesday, and so did 18-year-old Geovany Quenda.

Karl's exquisite first-timer for Bayern leveled the game in the first half but barely bothered Arsenal in a clash of the Premier League and Bundesliga leaders. It was Bayern's first loss this season.

Only Arsenal now has five straight wins in the Champions League after Inter Milan lost 2-1 at Atletico Madrid, whose captain José María Giménez won it with a stoppage-time header — the 42nd and last goal on the nine-game slate.

In Copenhagen, Dadason set the Danish champion on its way to a three-goal lead in a 3-2 win over Kairat Almaty.

In Lisbon, Quenda opened the scoring in Sporting's 3-0 win over Club Brugge, spinning almost a full circle to hook a left-footed shot into the corner of the net. The exciting wing-back will join Chelsea after the season.

At the other end of the age scale, 38-year-old David Luiz scored with a soaring header to help Pafos to a 2-2 draw with Monaco. He became the second-oldest scorer in the Champions League, behind only another veteran defender Pepe, who was approaching his 41st birthday when he scored for Porto two seasons ago.

Atalanta won 3-0 at Eintracht Frankfurt with three goals in five

minutes starting with Ademola Lookman in the 60th.

**Mbappé's fast hat trick**

Three goals in a span of six minutes, 42 seconds was fast by Kylian Mbappé, but not quite the fastest ever in the Champions League.

That was Mohamed Salah's in six minutes, 12 seconds for Liverpool against Rangers in October 2022.

Mbappé is now second fastest, with his second hat trick in the competition this season, and fifth of his Champions League career. He's also now top scorer this season with nine, ahead of the now-injured Victor Osimhen who has six for Galatasaray.

**Dadason's big future**

Viktor Dadason already was the third-youngest scorer in the Champions League's 34-season history last month in Copenhagen's 4-2 loss at Borussia Dortmund. Only Ansu Fati and Lamine Yamal were younger than the Iceland youth international when they scored their first goals for Barcelona.

The 6-foot-3 (1.93 meter) Dadason set Copenhagen on the way to a three-goal lead Wednesday with a header in the 26th. The Danish champion had to hang on for a 3-2 win over Kairat Almaty, which scored twice late on yet ended the night 35th in the standings above only hapless Ajax.

**Veteran David Luiz**

David Luiz returned to Europe at age 38, after four years in his native Brazil, to help Cyprus champion Pafos in its debut Champions League season.

The former Brazil star scored his first goal in the competition since October 2017 with a powerful header into the Monaco net at a corner. His previous Champions League goal came in his second spell at Chelsea where he was key in the 2012 Champions League title-winning team.

Monaco held a 2-1 lead from the 26th, when United States forward Folarin Balogun intercepted a pass by goalkeeper Neofytos Michaeland to score with a low shot. Pafos leveled in the 88th when the ball struck Monaco defender Mohammed Salisu after rebounding from the crossbar for an own goal. (AP)

## Nottingham Forest vs Malmö Europa League clash evokes 1979 Munich memories

NOTTINGHAM, Nov 27: The fifth round of games in the Europa League on Thursday includes two rematches of past European Cup finals. Nottingham Forest hosts Sweden's Malmö FF, which was a semi-professional team in 1979 when it lost the European Cup final 1-0 in Munich to the English side, which also went on to retain the title the following year.

Forest has invited players from both 1979 teams and they will be greeting the fans before the Europa League match at the City Ground.

The legendary forward Trevor Francis, who headed the only goal of the game in the final 46 years ago, died in 2023.

Forest is boosted by a 3-0 triumph over Liverpool at Anfield in the Premier League on Saturday and is seeking a second victory in this season's Europa League, under new coach Sean Dyche. Malmö is yet to win.

Feyenoord also faces Celtic, the side it beat in the 1970 European Cup final.

The two teams have been struggling in the second-tier Europa League and three points would be vital as they both battle to advance to the knockout stages. Feyenoord is 29th in the 36-



team table, Celtic 27th.

Aston Villa seek a fourth win in five games, against Swiss side Young Boys, which lost 3-0 in Bern to the English team in the Champions League last season.

Europa League leader Midtjylland visits Serie A pacesetter Roma, which is looking to bounce back from two home losses in the competition.

In other games, Real Betis meets Utrecht, Maccabi Tel Aviv plays Lyon and point-less Rangers host Braga.

In the third-tier Conference League, Crystal Palace travels to Strasbourg and Fiorentina faces AEK Athens. (AP)

## Formula E CEO Jeff Dodds constantly looking for opportunities to bring race back to India

BENGALURU, Nov 27: Formula E CEO Jeff Dodds and his team is constantly exploring possibilities to bring the race back to India in the near future.

The India round was dropped from the calendar after the opening race in Hyderabad in 2023 following a change in government in Telangana.

In January 2024, Formula E announced the cancellation of the Hyderabad race alleging a contract breach from the new Telangana government.

Speaking to PTI on the sidelines of a Mahindra Racing event here, Dodds said India remains a massive market for the FIA sanctioned World Championship.

"It's a massive market for us. Just look at the population of India, the passion of the people here when it comes to automotive and sport so it's an incredibly important market to us and our ambition will be to race here in the future in India," said Dodds.

"We have three very large Indian part-

ners that we work with (Mahindra, Tata owned Jaguar and Infossys). So India is an incredibly important part of our championship. We will continue to look to find the right opportunities to bring our incredible racing product back here to India."

Is Formula E talking to different state governments in India for a potential street race like they had in Hyderabad?

"So we have lots of conversations with cities all over the world so not me personally but I have a team that does that. Alberto Longo our chief championship officer he does that extensively so he will have a list as long as my arm of different cities that either we're approaching or who have approached us but not anything I can reveal today (on India)," said the CEO.

"We know the growth in the EV market in this country will be huge, it's an incredibly important market for electric vehicle penetration in the world so we're committed to racing in India in the future as we always have been," Dodds added. (PTI)

## Slot in 'shock', facing full-blown crisis at Liverpool after thrashing by PSV in Champions League

LIVERPOOL, Nov 27: Arne Slot was facing a full-blown crisis at Liverpool on Wednesday after the beleaguered English champion lost by a three-goal margin for the third straight game and plunged into its worst run of form in more than 70 years.

PSV Eindhoven pulled away for a 4-1 win at Anfield in the Champions League to leave Liverpool with nine defeats in its last 12 games, a scarcely believable streak for a team that cruised to the Premier League title a matter of months ago and then spent \$570 million on new players in the summer transfer window.

"This is a shock. This is very, very unexpected," said Slot, whose position is coming under increasing scrutiny.

The Dutchman said it was inevitable there would be speculation over his future, given the run of results.

"If any manager around the world loses football games, let alone as many as we have lost, it's quite normal people have an opinion about that. If it's fair or unfair, it's for other people to judge. Is that normal? I think it is. If you lose so many times, people start talking about that."

The last time Liverpool lost nine games in a 12-game streak in all competitions was in the 1953-54 season, stats company Opta said.

The Reds were coming off 3-0 losses in the Premier League at Manchester City before the international break and then at home to Nottingham Forest on Saturday. Liverpool also lost 3-0 at Anfield to Crystal Palace in the English League Cup last month.

"This used to be a place where you hated to come, with the fans, with us, how we played. How we pressed, we were absolute dogs and then we have the ball and play," Liverpool midfielder Curtis Jones said. "Now, we hardly even play. There's times when we do

play but off-the-ball stuff, that's the stuff that has to change."

**Defensive mistakes**

Defensive blunders have been largely to blame for Liverpool's issues and they were more against PSV, the Dutch champion and current Eredivisie leader that has already beaten Napoli 6-2 in the Champions League this season.

Firstly, Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk's raised his arm at a corner and handled the ball to give away a penalty, converted by 36-year-old Ivan Perisic for the opener. Van Dijk complained a push in his back threw him off-balance but his appeals were ignored.

Dominik Szoboszlai equalized 10 minutes later but after Guus Til regained the lead for PSV, Liverpool center back Ibrahim Konate — a target for criticism from fans and pundits alike in recent months — missed the ball completely to let the visitors in on goal again.

U.S. forward Ricardo Pepi shot against the post and Couhaib Driouech was there to convert the rebound. Minutes later, Konate was taken off.

Liverpool was bedraggled and Driouech added a fourth in stoppage time to complete the humiliation.

"We just have to face what we are in and fight really hard," Slot said.

Liverpool sits 13th in the 36-team Champions League standings and is in 12th place in the 20-team Premier League.

**Another injury**

Adding to Slot's problems was an apparent back injury to striker Hugo Ekitike, who was forced off in the 61st minute.

Liverpool currently only has five senior defenders available and one of them, Joe Gomez, was not brought off the bench because he has a nagging knee issue.

First-choice goalkeeper Alisson Becker didn't feature, either, reportedly because of illness. (AP)

## Deepti returns to UP Warriorz for 3.20 cr

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Deepti Sharma expectedly fetched the big bucks at the WPL auction here on Thursday as UP Warriorz used the Right to Match card for the India all-rounder, securing her services for ₹ 3.20 crore.

Mumbai Indians bought last season's joint highest wicket taker New Zealand all-rounder Amelia Kerr for ₹ 3 crore.

The seasoned duo of Australian Meg Lanning and Kiwi Sophie Devine were also among the top buys in the marquee set that featured eight players.

Gujarat Giants bought Devine for ₹ 2 crore while UP Warriorz bagged Lanning, who led Delhi Capitals to three consecutive finals, for ₹ 1.90 crore after a bidding war with DC.

Warriorz, who entered the auction with the highest prize purse ₹ 14.5 crore, was very active as they exercised their RTM card once again to buy back leading England spinner Sophie Ecclestone for ₹ 85 Lakh.

South African opener Laura Wolvaardt went to DC for ₹ 1.10 crore while the Giants purchased India pacer Renuka Singh for ₹ 60 lakh. Australia captain Alyssa Healy was the first name to go under the hammer and surprisingly found no takers. (PTI)

## DC co-owner Parth Jindal says more teams in WPL imminent, wants home and away format

NEW DELHI, Nov 27: Delhi Capitals co-owner Parth Jindal sees "one or two new teams" being added to the Women's Premier League in the near future, allowing the BCCI to move to the "ideal" home and away format.

For the first three seasons and the upcoming fourth one, the BCCI has stuck to the caravan format with the five-team tournament being held in two to four cities.

The fourth edition will be held in Navi Mumbai and Vadodara from January 9. Responding to a PTI query, Jindal said he would love to see home and away format in the WPL just like they have it in the established IPL.

"We would love to see the WPL home and away as well, this caravan format is okay, but it's not ideal. I'm sure that the BCCI is working on it. The amount of time that they



get is very short and that's why in order to, to fit the WPL within this window but I hope we get a bigger longer window for the WPL going forward," said Jindal.

"And it is imminent that, either

## What can a coach do? Ashwin comes to Gambhir's defence amid mounting criticism



sacked, but that's not how it should be," Ashwin said in his YouTube show 'Ash ki Baat'.

"I've never been that kind of person. It's not about supporting anyone, Gautam is not my rival. I could also point out 10 mistakes. Yes, mistakes happen, but anybody can make them. It's just that when they cost you, they become very expensive," he added.

Ashwin, who is retired from in-

ternational cricket as well as the IPL, said he understands the need to pin responsibility given India's formidable home record in the past but it is unfair to only target the coach and not ask questions of the players.

"We want to ask for responsibility. It's easy, because in Indian cricket, you know it and I know it — there's a lot to gain and a lot of money involved," he said.

"So many people are ready to take the job, and there will always be people putting their hat in the ring. But the fact is, a coach cannot pick up the bat and go out to play.

"What can a coach do? I'm asking you a simple question. Put yourself in the coach's position. You may say a player needs continuity and that there has been a lot of rotation, fine, agreed. But the skill to play and perform is the player's responsibility," he added.

Ashwin urged the players to also take responsibility.

"I haven't seen enough responsibility taken by enough players to say the coach is the problem...I didn't see enough from the players' side to blame decision-making alone. Sure, decision-making can always be better, no doubt," he said. "But I personally don't like this individual attack, because we always look for someone to blame," Ashwin added. (PTI)

## Nagal bows out of Australian Open Asia-Pacific wild card play-off tournament

CHENGDU (CHINA), Nov 27: India's top singles player Sumit Nagal bowed out of the Australian Open Asia-Pacific wild card play-off tournament after losing to Yunchaokete Bu of China in straight sets in the quarterfinals here on Thursday.

Nagal, seeded sixth in the tournament, lost 2-6 2-6 to the top-seeded Chinese opponent.

The Chengdu event, which runs from November 24-29 at the Sichuan International Tennis Centre, offers the men's and women's singles winners wild card entry into the main draw of the 2026 Australian Open.

The Indian's path had been clouded earlier by visa uncertainty. His initial application to enter China was rejected, prompting Nagal to publicly appeal to Chinese officials.

The issue was later resolved, and he was cleared to travel. (PTI)

# SA loss: Selectors might be tempted to look at senior domestic stars

**NEW DELHI, Nov 27:** Specialists could be back in vogue in Indian Test cricket after the series whitewash against South Africa as the Ajit Agarwal-led selection panel recalibrates its approach towards crucial positions like the number three slot in the batting line-up.

The spot, which was sealed by the likes of Rahul Dravid and Cheteshwar Pujara for a better part of the last three decades, is now up for grabs.

Karun Nair couldn't clinch it in England despite being given four Tests and B Sai Sudharsan, with an average 27 across 11 innings, has shown that he is still very much a work in progress.

There are a lot of technical issues in his game, especially on the spin-friendly sub-continental tracks, and he needs time in domestic cricket and time with pathways team (India A) to get ready for Tests.

Test cricket isn't a place to correct elementary mistakes when stakes are very high and India have been learning this again and again in the most painful way possible.

There is a strong possibility that the selection committee will now seriously consider some of the seasoned domestic names to lend some solidity to the line-up going forward.

While doors are mostly shut on Sarfaraz Khan and Abhimanyu Easwaran, three battle-hardened domestic veterans Rituraj Gaikwad, Rajat Patidar and Rinku Singh could keep the team management interested going forward.

Among the new crop of red-ball players Smaran Ravichandran (first-class average 78) and Yash Rathod (960 runs last Ranji season) have prolific numbers as middle-order batters.

"People might blame Ajit and his commit-



tee for not selecting Abhimanyu and Sarfaraz but then do the head coach (Gautam Gambhir) and new captain (Shubman Gill) have faith in their abilities? If not what will Ajit alone do?" asked a former selector, familiar with how the system works, when PTI reached out for a comment. But possibly time has come to once again go back to the drawing board and bank on specialists rather than placing faith in non-existent all-rounders.

"Let's be clear on one thing, Kapil Dev was the last world-class all-rounder and the last competent Test level all-rounder was Manoj Prabhakar, who could open batting and bowling.

"In case of Hardik (Pandya), his body didn't permit (him to carry on)," the former selector said.

"But Nitish Reddy is a bits and pieces guy. He can play at best T20s not even ODIs and Gautam needs to understand that," he added. Reddy's batting average in 10 Tests is 26, largely due to that hundred in Australia, and he has bowled only 86 overs in 15 innings, which is not even six overs on an average. The stats indicate that Reddy isn't even proficient in one of the two departments.

Those in Delhi cricket, who have seen Gambhir operate, know about his fascination for all-rounders.

"When Gauti was Delhi captain, he liked the idea of all-rounders more than the actual all-rounders. Remember Manan Sharma? He was more of a left-arm spinner but Gauti made him bat No.3 for sometime before he was dumped for good," a former Delhi teammate recalled.

## Need for specialists

At this point, the need of the hour for the Test team is a proper, tough number three and a reserve number five, who will give the team some solidity as and when required.

Rituraj Gaikwad is believed to be the player, who can be a stable number three with an average of 45-plus in 43 first-class games.

He has already scored two hundreds and a 90-plus in Ranji Trophy this season, is a reasonably successful IPL captain, already played for India and looks like a man with the right mindset.

Second name is Rajat Patidar, whose first coming in Tests wasn't very encouraging. He was in the middle of a tremendous domestic season when he got injured but is expected to get fit in some time.

He already has a 45-plus average across 74 first-class games. Last but not the least is Rinku Singh, who enjoys a near-60 first-class average in 52 first-class games.

But to pick these proven performers, who have played for India and are at the right age, Gambhir and Gill need to take a leap of faith.

The youth-only policy, at times, only looks good on paper as seen in the South Africa series where only Washington Sundar looked the part.

"You will be a fool if you take every Gauti statement at face value. He can be ruthless if there's non-performance. Before you know, you might see Sudharsan and Reddy fall by the wayside come 2026. He only backs performers," the former selector said.

When asked if he sees a Gaikwad, Patidar or Rinku making the cut, he quipped, "Sitting in November, you want me to suggest how Gauti's mind will work in August next year? Only a soothsayer can do that." (PTI)

## AZLAN SHAH CUP India conquers New Zealand 3-2

**IPOH (MALAYSIA), Nov 27:** Selvam Karthi produced the winning goal in the last quarter as India defeated New Zealand 3-2 in the Sultan Azlan Shah Cup, here on Thursday.

India, who had eked out a thrilling 4-3 win against the hosts Malaysia on Wednesday, scored through Amit Rohidas (4'), Sanjay (32'), and Selvam

ing a fast-paced first quarter. The Black Sticks showed a lot of purpose in the second quarter and even earned a penalty corner, but were thwarted by an alert Indian defence throughout the second quarter.

India began the second half on the front foot and doubled their lead through captain Sanjay, who converted a penalty corner in the



(54'), while George Baker (42', 48') netted twice for New Zealand.

New Zealand tried to dominate the midfield in the opening minutes but the Indian defence held firm. India had their first real chance through a well-crafted move that resulted in a penalty corner in the fourth minute and stalwart Rohidas made it count with a ferocious drag-flick to open the scoring.

India were denied a second goal after the New Zealand keeper deflected Abhishek's shot from close range, thus concluding a fast-paced first quarter.

32nd minute. New Zealand earned a couple of penalty corners of their own but couldn't break through the Indian defence.

Pawan was sensational in the goal but his resistance was finally broken when Baker (42') helped New Zealand pull one back.

New Zealand began the fourth quarter in search of their second goal, and managed to restore parity at 2-2 through a penalty corner with George Baker (48') on target.

India struck back soon after as Abhishek's pass was neatly finished off by Selvam, helping the five-time champions retake the lead.

India will next play Canada on Saturday. (PTI)

## Vineeth's fifty in vain as India A lose by 65 runs against Afghanistan in U-19 Tri-series

**BENGALURU, Nov 27:** VK Vineeth's fighting fifty went in vain as India A suffered a 65-run loss to Afghanistan in an inconsequential last league match of the Under-19 Tri-Series, here on Thursday.

This was India A's second defeat in the tournament, having earlier gone down to the same opponents by six wickets on November 1.

Skipper Mahboob Khan (50) and Azizullah Miakhil (60) struck solid half-centuries to guide Afghanistan to a competitive 233 for eight after being sent in to bat.

In reply, India were bowled out for 168 in 30.2 overs, despite a strong 62-ball 63 from Vineeth, studded with 11 fours and a six.

The chase began disastrously as opener Wafi Diamond Kachchi was run out by Miakhil off the very first ball. Pacer Abdul Aziz (3/48) then rattled the top order, cleaning up Lakshya Rajesh Raichandani for a duck to leave India A reeling at 0 for 2.

Skipper Vihaan Malhotra (13) was dismissed in the fourth over by medium pacer Salam Khan (3/35), who also removed Abhigyan Kundu (12) and Mohamed Enaam (1), reducing India A to 85 for five inside 11 overs.

Left-arm spinner Roohullah Arab piled on further misery, dismissing Kanishk Chouhan (16) and the set batter in Vineeth in the 21st and 23rd overs respectively, to all but end India's resistance. (PTI)

## Vitinha's hat trick helps PSG rally twice to beat Tottenham 5-3 in Champions League

**PARIS, Nov 27:** Midfielder Vitinha showed his shooting prowess with a hat trick as Paris Saint-Germain twice came from behind to beat Tottenham 5-3 in the Champions League on Wednesday.

He scored the first with his right foot, the second with his left and then converted a penalty.

"Without doubt (it's special), I think it's the first time I even scored two goals in a match in my career," he said. "It shows the character of the side, it's not the first time (we have been behind) in a game."

Fellow midfielder Fabian Ruiz and defender William Pacho also scored as defending champion PSG coped well in attack without its star forwards.

Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembélé was on the bench after returning from injury and Désiré Doué, who scored twice in last season's 5-0 win against Inter Milan in the Champions League final, is still recovering from injury.

Tottenham took the lead from a swift counter-attack in the 35th minute with a well-worked move down the left.

Following a neat interchange of passes, Archie Gray clipped a cross to the back post and Randal Kolo Muani — who is on loan from PSG this season — nodded the ball across goal to give Brazil forward Richarlison an easy close-range header.

But Tottenham's defense failed to close down Vitinha on the edge of the penalty area and he deftly guided a shot into the top right corner moments before halftime.

The 25-year-old Portugal international curled his second goal into the left corner from just inside the area in the 53rd, after again being given too much space. It came three minutes after Kolo Muani had put Spurs in front 2-1.

PSG then scored in quick succession from



Ruiz's low shot and Pacho's effort from close range following a corner as Tottenham's defense cracked for the second time in a matter of days, and the team was beaten for the fourth time in six games. The Europa League winner lost 4-1 to Premier League leader Arsenal on Sunday.

Coach Thomas Frank's team had caused PSG problems in the season-opening UEFA Super Cup in August, leading 2-0 before losing in a penalty shootout following a late PSG rally.

Tottenham's slick attacking proved difficult to stop and Kolo Muani pulled it back to 4-3 in the 73rd after Vitinha made a rare mistake and lost the ball near PSG's area.

Moments later, Vitinha completed his hat trick from the penalty spot after defender Cristian Romero blocked his shot with his arm.

Vitinha was third in the men's Ballon d'Or vote but, prior to Wednesday night, had not stood out that much for his scoring, netting a modest 21 goals in 170 games.

He was given a standing ovation by the Parc des Princes crowd when he was substituted near the end of injury time. (AP)

## ISSF, BWF bank on India to ensure CWG return; delighted that Ahmedabad hosting 2030 Games

**NEW DELHI, Nov 27:** The world governing bodies of shooting and badminton are delighted that India has bagged the hosting rights of the 2030 Commonwealth Games as they feel it brightens their chances of returning to the event after being dropped from the 2026 edition.

International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) and Badminton World Federation (BWF) welcomed the Commonwealth Sport general assembly's unanimous decision to award the Games to the Indian city of Ahmedabad on Wednesday.

The 2030 Games will feature 15 to 17 disciplines, a significantly higher number compared to the scaled down 10-event Glasgow 2026 edition. Glasgow dropped, among others, shooting and badminton to cut down the cost of the Games.

"The International Shooting Sport Federation is pleased to see Ahmedabad, India, approved as the hosts of the 2030 Commonwealth Games at Commonwealth Sport's General Assembly today, providing a strong case for our sport's return to the programme," the ISSF stated.

"With India hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games, Commonwealth Sport has an exceptional opportunity to tap into one of the world's most engaged badminton markets," said BWF.

The eight confirmed sports that will feature at the 2030 Games are athletics and Para athletics, swimming and Para swimming, table tennis and Para table tennis, bowls and Para bowls, weightlifting and Para



powerlifting, artistic gymnastics, netball and boxing.

The sports under consideration for inclusion are archery, badminton, 3x3 basketball and 3x3 Wheelchair basketball, beach volleyball, T20 cricket, cycling, diving, hockey, judo, rhythmic gymnastics, rugby sevens, shooting, squash, triathlon and Para triathlon and wrestling.

The final programme will be finalised next year and would include at least seven more sports.

"We are encouraged by India's passion for shooting sport, providing a strong case for its conclusion in 2030. A record 13,522 athletes competed in the 2024 National Shooting Championship Competition, showing its growing popularity," the ISSF said.

The BWF cited badminton's "long and proud history at the Commonwealth Games" to make its case.

"Badminton is India's leading racket sport and ranks third overall in

popularity (after cricket and football). 43 per cent of the population support badminton, second only to cricket. 32 per cent of Indians actively participate in badminton.

"At Paris 2024, badminton was the most followed sport in India, engaging 21 per cent of viewers. India is also a global leader in Para badminton, presenting a perfect opportunity for both badminton and Para badminton to be integrated into the sports programme," it stated.

BWF President Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul said the sport has long been a "cornerstone of the Commonwealth Games."

"...we fully support Commonwealth Sport's vision to make the Games more sustainable and relevant for future generations. As part of this evolution, it is vital that badminton remains in the programme, given its deep roots and passionate following across the Commonwealth. (PTI)

## Coach can only prepare team but players have to deliver: Gavaskar



**NEW DELHI, Nov 27:** Former India captain Sunil Gavaskar has come out in defence of the embattled Gautam Gambhir, saying the head coach can only prepare the team and it is the players who have to deliver on the field.

Gambhir has come in for some scathing criticism following the massive 408-run loss to South Africa in the second Test in Guwahati, which helped the visitors sweep the two-match series.

This was India's third Test series defeat under Gambhir. In the

16 months he has been at the helm, India have lost to New Zealand at home 0-3, away to Australia 1-3, and now finally to the Proteas.

"He's a coach. The coach can prepare a team. The coach can tell, you know, a guy with his experience. But it's out there in the middle that the players have to deliver," Gavaskar told 'India Today'.

Gavaskar added that Gambhir is the same coach who helped India win the Champions Trophy and Asia Cup and now critics were baying for his blood after the home series loss.

"Now, to those who are asking, you know, for him to be held accountable, my question, counter-question is: what did you do when India won the Champions Trophy under him? What did you do when India won the Asia Cup under him?"

"Did you say then - you're asking for a sacking now - did you say then that he should be given an extended contract, a contract for life for one-day cricket and for T20 cricket? You didn't say that. It's only when a team doesn't do

well you look at the coach," Gavaskar said.

The legendary batter cited the example of New Zealander Brendon McCullum, who is England's all-format coach, saying there was nothing wrong with Gambhir carrying on as head coach in all forms of the game.

"You have coaches, for example, Brendon McCullum is a coach for all three formats for England. A lot of countries have a coach who is there for all formats. But we tend to only look and point a finger at somebody when the team has lost."

"You're not prepared to give him credit. If you're not prepared to give him credit for the Champions Trophy and the Asia Cup win, then please tell me why you want to blame him for the team out there on that 22-year-old, not doing well. Why are you blaming him?"

Former India off-spinner R Ashwin too has defended Gambhir, saying it is not right to call for his sacking at a time when not enough responsibility has been shouldered by the players. (PTI)

## Manasi Joshi targets World Championship gold as hectic 2026 season looms

**NEW DELHI, Nov 27:** Former world champion Manasi Joshi is gearing up for a hectic season with her sights firmly set on a strong showing at the World Championships in February, where she hopes to reclaim the gold medal she won in 2019.

The 36-year-old, who won the World Championship gold in 2019 -- the same year two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu clinched the able-bodied crown -- has so far accumulated seven medals in the tournament, including back-to-back bronzes in the SL3 women's singles category over the last two editions.

"Normally, every year we have one big tournament. But post COVID, the whole cycle got messed up. In 2025, we have the World Championships in February and the Asian Games in October. So next year is going to be extremely hectic," Joshi, who will be participating at the Godrej Industries Assistive Tech Conference on Friday, told PTI.

"Yesterday (Wednesday), I received the official invitation from our federation for the World Championships and I got selected in all three events: singles, doubles and mixed doubles. It's a matter of real pride for me to be playing all three."

Joshi has been in good form in the buildup, claiming a gold and bronze in women's doubles and mixed doubles with Thulasimathi Murugesan and Ruthick Raghupati at the Japan International earlier this month.

She also bagged a gold and bronze in mixed doubles (SL3-SU5) and women's singles in Australia, besides a silver and bronze in Indonesia.

"After the Paralympics, my ranking had dropped because I didn't play many tournaments. So I had to push



hard to upgrade my world ranking and also stay in the top 3 in India," said Joshi, who took up para badminton after an accident in 2011 which led to amputation of her leg.

"With (the entry of) a lot of younger players, I think competition has practically changed. So I am working hard... I wish I win the gold this time at the World Championship."

On the rigours of playing across formats, she said: "Playing three events is definitely challenging, it drains your energy but that's the reality of our sport. We train 6-8 hours every day, and then in a tournament, we play a 45-minute match. So the main thing is recovery: finish one match, recover quickly, and be ready to put full energy into the next one."

Joshi had prepared single-mindedly for the Paris Paralympics but exited in the group stage, missing out on a medal. (PTI)

## Pant says sorry for Test debacle against SA; promises team will regroup and refocus

**NEW DELHI, Nov 27:** India's Test vice-captain Rishabh Pant has apologised for the team's shambolic performance in the 0-2 series loss to South Africa, asserting that the team will "regroup, refocus and reset" to come back stronger. India were handed a 0-2 drubbing in the series that ended with the second Test in Guwahati on Tuesday. Pant led the home side in this match as regular skipper Shubman Gill was nursing a knee injury.

The team lost the game by a mammoth 408 runs, further denting the aura of invincibility around its home record and making its path to World Test Championship final more difficult. "There is no shying away from the fact that we didn't play good enough cricket over the last two weeks. As a team and as individuals, we always want to perform at the highest level and bring smiles to billions of Indians," Pant, who is personally drawing flak for his reckless shot selection during the series, said in a post on 'X'. "Sorry we couldn't live up to expectations this time, but sport teaches you to learn, adapt and grow - both as a team and as individuals... We know what this team is capable of and we will work hard, regroup, refocus and reset to come back stronger and better as a team & individuals," he added. (PTI)